A MASLOWNIAN APPROACH TO THE COMMON USAGE OF UNADAPTED ENGLISH LOANWORDS

Bianca DABU*

Abstract: *The unadapted English loanwords circulating in Romanian language acquired an important role in the process of communication, whether general or specific, becoming a label of the social status. After trespassing the area of terminologies, English has insinuated gradually into the common language. According to Maslow's theory people's drives have a pyramid structure. A social status placed at a higher level may be represented by the acquisition of a set values common to people pertaining to that level. As product of social norms, the language is an evolving system that moulds group culture and perceptions about the world. Social identity theory explains how individuals can act similarly or differently according to the various social groups. Tajfel and Turner show that there are three processes to create an in-group/outgroup mentality.*

Keywords: *theory of needs, unadapted English loanwords, in-group mentality.*

Nowadays, the circulation of unadapted English words in Romanian has increased due to many reasons. Given the fact that English penetrated the social and group consciousness as a feature of globalization, it became more than a necessary instrument of communication in specialised fields. After trespassing the area of terminologies, English has insinuated gradually into the common language. Although some linguists think that the intrusion of Anglicisms in Romanian language is obtrusive and endanger its identity[1] (Slama-Cazacu, 2000:122), others are less involved emotionally and regard the spectacular expanding of English language as a means of conveyance of a globalizing culture[2], studying the interplay between cultural and linguistic affectivity (Picone, 1996:27).

Social Groups and Communication

The social group, from the sociological viewpoint is an association of two or more persons who have a common representation of the identity and interact according to patterns structured on mutual expectations (Baron, Byrne, 1997/2001:434)[3]. The group is defined by identifiable features: conducted interactions, interdependence, stable relations, common targets, group appurtenance consciousness (*ibidem*). Social life is

* University of Pitesti, biancadabu@yahoo.com

[1] Slama-Cazacu makes clear her pozition and emotional inolvement regarding the phenomenon, calling it "invazia brutală, năvală intempestică, avalanşă care a luat amploare, ofensiva deşănţată a termenilor străini recent împrumutaţi".

[2] "Hence, to explain English domination, one can point, in the first instance, to a host of technological, economic and political factors. Here we see that it is not the mere presence of English that causes any language to become a borrower, but rather the fact that English, more than any other living language, exists in association with an archi-culture whose elements are being accepted and elaborated internationally".

[3] Additional reading on the same ideas: R. Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics within and between Groups*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 2 and the following.

BDD-A29955 © 2017 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:56:03 UTC)

built up on the life of social groups[1] (Chelcea, 2008) in which are involved in formal or informal groups, professional or recreational groups, interest groups, friendship groups[2] etc. Nevertheless, while the groups are the backbone of every society, societies in themselves are different up to the degree to which the group is seen as primary element of social organization (Douglas, 1982:183-254)

Tajfel and Turner's (1979:277) social identity theory explains how individuals can act differently according to the different groups they belong to but, at the same time, how personal perceptions create an in-group mentality focusing on a set of common coordinates. They conclude that there are three processes to create an in-group/outgroup mentality: social categorization (identifying the category and adjusting to it); social identification (adopting the identity of the group and the way of acting of the members) and social comparison (comparing the group one belongs to with others in order to maintain or raise personal self-esteem). As a consequence, a social status placed at a certain level may be represented by the acquisition of a set values common to people pertaining to that level. The higher the level of needs according to in-group mentality, the more demanding expectations are on behalf of the group members.

People adjust their behaviour according to their social status or the position of the people they are put into contact with and the cultural pattern promoted by the society and shared by everybody at a given moment. Society, in general, is a complex canvas of social roles and statuses against which interpersonal relations are developed and individual access to esteem and prestige is insured (Linton, 1965:11). The social status may be symbolically professed through garments, titles or privileges, language and behaviour or goods or services the individual can afford.

The interaction at the group level is achieved through language.

As product of social norms, the language is an evolving system (Amado, Guittet, 2007:46) which becomes, in its turn, an integral label of the social status [3]. A group intending to display its identity designs a type of language to represent and individualize it. Thus, the assimilation of unadapted linguistic borrowings and their promotion in the common daily usage will be relevant for the referential social group. The identity of the group enhances with a specific vocabulary, expressions or idioms that can make the difference and strengthens the in-group cohesion[4].

---

[1] Chelcea (2008:184) makes a taxonomy of various types of social groups and defines the social group: „Termenul de grup social se referă la o gamă extinsă de fenomene sociale precum cuplurile matirale, diadele formate diin două persoane între care s-au stabilit relaţii de prietenie sau de iubire dar şi comunităţilşe urbane sau rurale, confesiunile religioase, clasele sociale sau naţiunile în întregul lor."

[2] S. P. Robbins, *Organizatonal Behaviour*, Pearson Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2005, cap VIII makes the entire presentation of the fundamental social groups and their manner in which they network and interact at the level of the entire society.

[3] For example, Received Pronunciation is the accent of Standard English in the United Kingdom reflecting a high social prestige.

[4] "The creation of group identities involves both the categorization of one's "in-group" with regard to an "out-group" and the tendency to view one's own group with a positive bias vis-a-vis the out-group. The result is an identification with a collective, depersonalized identity based on group membership and imbued with positive aspects" (Islam, 2015:1781).

BDD-A29955 © 2017 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:56:03 UTC)

The control over the communicative resources varies according to the position of the individual within the speech community (Gumperz, 1968:381)[1]. The need of using a certain level of language is generated by the limits imposed by personal performance within a homogeneous social environment. "Differences of speech within a community are due to differences in density of communication" (Bloomfield, 1933:46).

A Psychological Motivation for the Acquisition and Usage of Unadapted English Loanwords

Is there a psychological motivation for the acquisition and usage of unadapted English loans in everyday language by the Romanian speakers within social groups? Is the usage of such lexical elements necessary from a social or individual point of view? Why do speakers tend to use sometimes English unadapted loanwords when profess their belonging to a certain social group?

According to Maslow, individual needs for esteem are different from individual to individual against the social and cultural background. In his theory - *A Theory of Human Motivation* - (1954:35-58) he describes the hierarchy of needs in normal situations, the reverse hierarchy in stressful or disturbing situations, the unconscious character of needs, the cultural specificity and generality of needs or multiple motivations of behaviour.

People's drives have a pyramid structure covering two types of needs: the basic needs are what Maslow calls *deficit needs* and the top needs also defined as *being needs*. As he himself confessed, the description of these needs is made in an attempt to cover the unity of perception about what they represent as a whole for all people and not the inherent cultural differences which are likely to individualize them[2].

The deficit needs cover the psychological needs connected to physiological needs, safety needs, love (also called belonging) and social needs, esteem needs. Each of these needs well gratified spurs the individual to step up to another level until reaching the highest of his/her potential in relation with the others and within a certain group of peers.

The category of being needs is represented by self-actualization needs and "refers to man's desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially" (Maslow, *op.cit*:46).

Most people tend to cover the stages of deficit needs by integrating themselves in a social group and acquiring a social status in conformity with his/her own aspirations. Maslow emphasizes that the satisfaction of our basic needs is rendered by a

[1] Gumperz defines the Speech Community as "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage".

[2] "This classification of basic needs makes some attempts to take account of the relative unity behind the superficial differences in specific desires from one culture to another. Certainly, in any particular culture an individual's conscious motivation content will usually be extremely different from the conscious motivational content of an individual in another society. Our classification of basic needs is in part an attempt to account for this unity behind the apparent diversity from culture to culture. No claim is made yet that it is ultimate or universal for all cultures." (Maslow, 1954:54)

BDD-A29955 © 2017 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:56:03 UTC)

set of cognitive capacities (perceptual, intellectual, learning)[1] which become adjustive tools used for the purpose of covering the respective needs. They are used by every individual in accordance with his personal potential and purpose of human existence.

Thus, considering Maslow's theory people placed at the level of physiological or safety needs are prone to the usage of a more limited language variations within their speech community. In such a psycho-social environment, the contact with English loanwords is lower and their usage limited due to a reduced access to information and the lack of linguistic competence of the locutors. In such a case, the message could not be decoded[2] (*apud.* Nadolu, 2007:75) given the speakers' low level of English knowledge, most of them being unconscious incompetent users or at the very most, conscious incompetent uses[3] (Beebe, Masterson, 1997:23).

If, on the contrary, people having deficit social or esteem needs are brought into discussion, it is obvious that the level of communicative competence is higher. A larger sphere of interest for and access to English loanwords enable the speakers within the linguistic community to be prepared and use the language tools that describe their social status. Thus, the usage of such linguistic devices in not only justified but also necessary for the acceptance of the respective individuals within the social group they belong to or they work in. They are more acquainted to English through interest and access, the speakers reaching the level of conscious competence or unconscious competence.

Guţu Romalo (2004:18) emphasizes the fact that "any linguistic competence of the speakers of a historical language is not generally reduced to only one option. Considering personal ability, linguistic experience and the degree of education the speaker has access, in an active or passive manner, to the linguistic resources of one variants of the respective language. The idiolect[4] – the individual linguistic competence – is relevant in the communication instances in which the speaker performs. The idiolect is characteristic to the type and conditions of communication imposed by the status of the individual within the social community he belongs to."

One may say that language moulds culture and perceptions about the world (McQuail, 1999:81). If efficient means of communication are used and the members of the speech community possess the same category of linguistic tools for in-group interaction, the usage of unadapted English loanwords within the group represents a form of adherence to the referential group. Although outsiders could label the process of in-group acquisition and usage of unadapted English loanwords as *language snobbery,*

---

[1] "Acquiring knowledge and systematizing the universe have been considered as, in part, techniques for the achievement of basic safety in the world, or for the intelligent man, expressions of self-actualization. Also freedom of inquiry and expression have been discussed as preconditions of satisfaction of the basic needs" (*ibidem:*48).

[2] Wilbur Scramm's model is taken into account who states that at the basis of each communicative process there are two fundamental components: coding (costructing the message by linking logically the signals and symbols) and decoding (the correct interpretation of the message without alterations).

[3] Beebe and Masterson provide four levels of communicational competence in small groups: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, unconscious competence.

[4] B. Bloch introduced the term *idiolect* to define the idiosyncratic form of language that is unique to an individual even at the social level. Thus, he contradicts Saussure's notion of *langue* as object of uniform social understanding. cf. B. Bloch, *A Set of Postulates for Phonemic Analysis*, în Language, 1948, p. 3-46

BDD-A29955 © 2017 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:56:03 UTC)

group members could accept it as a perfect choice for the group identity. Language discrimination features could be relied only to out-group relations.

As far as Romanians are concerned, belonging to a group trying to fulfil the esteem drives provides an individual with the opportunity to be highly rated if the respective member of the speech community employs words categorized as unadapted Anglicisms. In certain situations, they could be called *esteem Anglicisms,* mainly if it is about their usage in a professional field or with socio-cultural reference.

The higher the level of the deficit needs a person can reach, the higher the level of sophistication the individual will try to attain to in order to conquer the esteem of the group fellows. If the reference groups or *trend-setters* (Thompson, 1990:56) are also considered, the importance of the social pattern and the social status desired could be also explained by the acquisition and practical usage of the English loanwords in common.

Bibliography

Amado, G., A. Guittet, *Psihologia comunicării în grupuri*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2007

Baron, R., D. Byrne, *Social Psychology*, (ed a VIIIa), New Dehli, Prentice Hall of India, 1997/2001

Beebe, S. , J. Masterson, *Communicating in Small Groups,* Longman, 1997

Bloomfield, L. *Language*. New York: Holt, 1933

Chelcea, S., *Psihosociologie Teorie, cercetări, aplicaţii*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2008, cap. X.

Douglas, M. „Cultural Bias", *In the Active Voice* , London, Routledge, 1982, pp.183-254

Gumperz, J., „The Speech Community", în *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2nd Edition,Macmillan, 1968

Linton, R., *Fundamentul cultural al personalităţii*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1965

Maslow, A., *Motivation and Personality*, Harper & Row, New York, 1954, rev. ed. 1970

McQuail, D. , *Comunicarea,* Institutul European, Iaşi, 1999

Nadolu, B., *Sociologia comunicării de masă*, Excelsior Art, Timişoara, 2007

Picone, M., *Anglicisms, Neologisms and Dynamic French*, John Benjamis Publishing Company, New York, 1996

Slama-Cazacu, T., *Stratageme comunicaţionale şi manipularea*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2000

Online Resources

Gazi Islam, Social Identity Theory, uploaded on ResearchGate 2015, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281208338, accessed 2nd April 2018

Henri Tajfel, John C. Turner The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour, file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/Tajfel%20&%20Turner%2086_SIT_xs.pdf accesat 26 martie 2018

http://web.mit.edu/curhan/www/docs/Articles/15341_Readings/Intergroup_Conflict/Tajfel_%26_Turner_Psych_of_Intergroup_Relations_CH1_Social_Identity_Theory.pdf accesat 31 martie 2018

BDD-A29955 © 2017 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:56:03 UTC)