LOANWORDS AND LOAN-TRANSLATIONS- LOSS OF IDENTITY ORACHIEVE-MENT OF PRESTIGE?

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Abstract: The paper aims to approach both major advantages of loanwords and loan-translations, i.e. prestige and modernity in one's speech, and a major disadvantage, which seems to be the loss of identity of the speaker's discourse once loanwords and loan-translations become part of it.

Key words: loanwords, loan-translations, advantages, disadvantages, English

1. Loanwords and loan-translations - overview

The easily accessible definitions of the two terms were extracted from the website www.wikipedia.org: "A **loanword** (or **loan word** or **loan-word**) is a word borrowed from a donor language and incorporated into a recipient language without translation. It is distinguished from a **calque**, or *loan translation*, where a *meaning* or *idiom* from another language is translated into existing words or roots of the host language".

Loan-translations are specific forms of calques, which seem to be among the options preferred and adopted by the purists. Loan-translations represent the faithful rendering of the original word or phrase. Besides, there are *loan-renditions* (which somehow deviate from the original meaning) and *loan creations* (free and independent renderings of the original etymon (be it word or phrase)[1]. They all represent alternatives to *loanwords*.

Greenall (2005: 212) states that the problems related to the acceptance or denial of English are mainly due to the existence of two opposite categories of people: "those who are more or less strongly concerned about the <<pollution>> and possible future eradication of their

[1] All the three definitions were taken from Görlach (2007: 9).

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languages […] and on the other hand there are those who do not seem to mind so much that English seems to be claiming some territory within their language". The former refer to the English words that are used instead of native words as a bad habit and perceive such terms or phrases as "bad language" (Jarvad[2] 1995: 123).

2. Advantages and disadvantages of borrowed words

Even the most tolerant people, who either seem not to care about the impact of English upon their mother tongue or who do not consider English an ultimate threat to their own language, might draw an alarm signal and raise awareness on not allowing languages to be totally replaced by English. Tolerance is one thing, but we should also acknowledge that there should be limitations. A foreign language should be used for specific purposes and should not become part of our everyday life.

Non-native speakers of English use it due to the many **advantages** it provides:

- easier grammar than that of other languages (Romance idioms included), which makes it easier to remember and use[3], given its "synthesizing power" (Burges 1981:192 *apud* Ceramella 2012: 14)
- simplicity and precision
- prestige
- modernity which leads to popularity
- high frequency
- stylistic purposes.

Nevertheless, one should not ignore the major **drawbacks** that English might bring about if we consider its impact on one's mother tongue:

- might lead to lexical competition arising between the English words and their correspondent in the recipient language (Styblo 2007: ii) which can only end in two different and divergent ways: either in lexical addition (the loanword will be included in the vocabulary of the target language) or in lexical replacement (the loanword will replace the native term, which will be perceived as obsolete). The two possibilities are also found in Styblo (2007: 7). The author does not include in his discourse a third possibility, which he prob-

[2] Apud Greenall (2005: 212).

[3] There are authors who argue in favor of the idea that English does have grammar, but which may be learnt faster than the grammar of Romance languages, for example.

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ably sees as very unlikely or rather extremely rare: the loanword proves useless and is therefore excluded from the vocabulary of the target language.

- might lead to the loss of identity[4] of the recipient words and eventually language (in front of the dominant and oppressive character of English).

English is referred to in various ways by different authors, with both positive and negative implications: "mother tongue" (Ceramella 2012: 9), "common unifying factor" (Ceramella 2012: 9), "global English" or "the language of globalization", "the language of power and opportunity, free of […] limitations" (Kakhru 2002: 218 *apud* Johnson 2009: 134), "a killer language" (Hurst 2015).

There has been a natural tendency of languages to borrow and combine words form one another once they come in contact (be it directly or indirectly). This trend has, of course, led to the disappearance of some minor languages, but this is not the fate of Romanian. It is a long-term resistant idiom, with a rich history, tradition and culture.

3. Language vs. identity

It is a well-known fact that the way in which someone speaks or uses words in a given language somehow asserts his own identity[5]. Identity has become a rather ambiguous concept since it has two meanings or, even better said, since it goes in two divergent directions, which should eventually become convergent: national identity and personal identity. Despite making reference to both a nation and an individual, one comprises the other. The individual should become part of the nation and, therefore, identify himself with the nation.

Some authors consider that *identity* should also be discussed in relation with *language* and *culture*. They claim that identity can be saved if we attempt to save our own language. It is somehow closer to the purist and conservationist attitude that some people adopt (Dastgoshadeh, Jalilzadeh 2011: 659).

We share the same opinion as Spolsky[6] (1999) who states that "Language is a central feature of human identity. When we hear someone speak, we immediately make guesses about

[4] To such purposes, see also Andronache (2014), an article which refers specifically to the relationship between Italian and English.

[5] To such purposes, see the article "Is English a Killer Language or an international Auxiliary? Its use and function in a Globalized World" by Nick Ceramella (2012: 9-23).

[6] *Apud* Dastgoshadeh, Jalilzadeh (2011: 661).

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his or her gender, education level, age, profession, and place of origin. Beyond this individual matter, a language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity".

Restricting the discourse, one may come to think that if he includes in his speech too many words and phrases borrowed from another language (English in our specific case), his own identity may be lost, and he will eventually not recognize himself any longer. Still, it does not mean that if an individual uses loanwords or loan-translations excessively, this may affect the national identity of a language. It is an isolated case determined by the individual's choice of using foreign words and phrases.

Moreover, accepting influences from other languages is not synonymous with losing or giving up the national identity of a language. Any idiom should be open to borrowings as well as it should be aware of limiting the number of borrowed words/ phrases. The grammatical system of a language should adopt and adapt some of the loanwords and preserve the form and structure of those considered inappropriate to the system. Time will decide if they should be adopted or excluded from the recipient language (in case they are no longer needed). In this respect, Bevitori (2002: 49) speaks of "permeability", a trait that all languages should possess.

Linguists like Crystal (2004) admit that English has already changed and will go on changing other languages, given its acquired status (the language of globalization, the new lingua franca, a world language, an international language etc.). Still, he is not very explicit; he does not say if it is for the better or for the worse of the given language. Depending on their attitude towards their mother tongue, people will either consider English a source of enrichment of their own language or a threat that should be fought against and eventually eliminated.

4. Conclusions

We should start acknowledging both and advantages and disadvantages of using loanwords and loan-translations, being more balanced when it comes to including them in our daily discourse (be it written or oral), and try to cope with them both, since it is rather impossible to borrow words only for the benefits they provide and ignore their drawback(s). In conclusion, we should not go as far as to state that borrowing and using words of a foreign origin debilitates a language and exhausts it of all the culture, tradition and background it owns. On the contrary, time has proven quite the opposite: it strengthens and enriches the receptor language.

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It is the role and duty of the speakers to discern and to use appropriate words (borrowed or not) at the right time and in the right context.

Another conclusion that we have reached is that there will be a never-ending controversy on the topic since there will always be "defenders" of the mother tongue (the so-called purists) and those who will argue in favor of using words of foreign origin (still, not excessively) in their discourse (referred to as "open speech communities" by Görlach 2008: xv).

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