

ENGLISH AS *LINGUA FRANCA* IN ACADEMIA – IN BETWEEN GLOBALISING TRENDS AND EMERGING THOUGHT PATTERNS

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Over the last few decades there has been a substantial increase in the globalisation of research and teaching practices in academia worldwide. The globalising trends in the educational environment have had great implications over the academic discourse, noticed not only in the Anglophone context, but wherever scientific exploration went beyond the local linguistic and cultural background. Such hybridization comes with a cost, for globalization takes its toll of standardization and levelling, quite often making the local colouring fade away as it almost turns its uniqueness into disuse and obliviousness. This paper is concerned with the way in which the hegemonic tendencies of English, as *lingua franca* in academia, come to influence and affect the lexical and socio-pragmatic dimension of the Romanian language.

Keywords: *globalisation, lingua franca, academic discourse, hybridization.*

ENGLEZA CA *LINGUA FRANCA* ÎN MEDIUL ACADEMIC – PERSPECTIVE GLOBALIZANTE ȘI NOI TIPARE DE GÂNDIRE

În ultimele decenii am asistat la o acutizare a fenomenului globalizării, inclusiv la nivelul practicilor de cercetare și predare din lumea universitară de oriunde. Tendințele globalizante din mediul academic și-au lăsat amprenta asupra discursului științific, fenomen circumscris nu doar contextului anglofon, ci oricăror orizonturi în care cercetarea și explorarea au depășit contextul local al dimensiunii lingvistice și culturale. O astfel de hibridizare nu este lipsită de consecințe, cu atât mai mult cu cât globalizarea înseamnă standardizare și uniformizare, cel mai adesea în detrimentul specificului și culorii locale, care ajung să fie estompate până la abandon și uitare. Această lucrare se concentrează asupra felului în care tendințele hegemonice ale limbii engleze, ca *lingua franca* în mediul academic, ajung să influențeze și să afecteze dimensiunea lexicală și sociopragmatică a limbii române.

Cuvinte-cheie: *globalizare, lingua franca, discurs academic, hibridizare.*

Introduction

Academia is by far one of the most dynamic and challenging fields that has taken globalisation to the utmost level of rationale and articulated utterance. It is within this framework that we intend to investigate the way in which English, as the world's academic *lingua franca*, is used, *misused* and *overused*. Needless to insist upon what seems to be one of the axioms of the century, namely the vital need to share a common system of linguistic reference with the rest of the world. The wish to read, write and be quoted by other fellow scholar colleagues has determined many academics to speak and publish in English. If Shakespeare's misfortunate Prince of Denmark was caught within the whirling rhetoric of the famous '*to be or not to be*', today's academia seems to face an equally overwhelming reality, namely the hegemony of a language which, according to R. Phillipson [1] year after year, builds up an almost exclusively English-only Europe.

The germs of this article must have sprouted the very moment I recorded the first Anglicism deliberately introduced by the speaker in his/her discourse with the clear intention to mark a territory of, presumably, substantial intellectual width and oratorical performance. It was in the late autumn of the year 2000, while attending a business seminar held by Romanian trainers to equally Romanian trainees, when I realised, much to my surprise, the length to which someone may go with an ostentatious display of words chaotically taken from English and ever more nonsensically inserted into a discourse that seemed to have been '*language-orphan*', for neither of the two linguistic dimensions could accommodate it accurately. Little did I foresee, at that moment, the magnitude such phenomenon would reach in a matter of years and ever-growing intercultural dialogue.

Research Methods

This paper analyses the results of a qualitative survey of eight lectures delivered by Romanian academics using Romanian as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, mention has to be made that different academic environments have been visited, ranging from engineering-related disciplines, to business, hospitality industry and humanities. The lectures have been thus selected as to accommodate a variety, not merely of topics, but

also of academic approaches, ranging from introductory seminars, lectures proving theorems and formulae, as well as theoretical discourses. All the lectures were aimed at classes of undergraduates, with a minimum of 30 attendees. Each lecture was voice recorded only to be afterwards 'revisited' and Anglicisms spotted out. It was, as mentioned previously, a qualitative approach that intended to focus on the borrowed lexical body and not on the redundancy with which (some of) these terms would mark their presence. Table shows the profile of each of the eight lectures analysed:

Table

Class description and lecture type

	<i>Class description</i>	<i>Lecture type</i>
Lecture 1	Business administration	Theoretical
Lecture 2	Statistics	Models
Lecture 3	Applied mathematics	Theorems and formulae
Lecture 4	Hospitality	Course introduction
Lecture 5	Ethics	Theoretical
Lecture 6	NLP	Models
Lecture 7	Finance	Models
Lecture 8	Plant breeding	Course introduction

Since this paper does not want to point an accusatorial finger towards any of these analysed lectures, comments will address a general ensemble.

Results and Discussion

David Crystal [2] argues that *Englishization* has become a 21st century social phenomenon whose amplitude seems to have overshadowed, in times of peace, the hegemonic grip of long gone imperial ages. The new neo-liberal economic outlook of free markets and borderless areas is tightly linked to the expanding use of English, that has proven to be the most successful and enduring offspring of globalisation; since World War Two English has steadily and constantly become the most important linguistic instrument, not in terms of NSs, but of NNSs. It is not an overstatement to talk about the existing universal dimension of Anglicisation and Americanisation; on the contrary, there are few places on the face of the Earth where English would prove totally useless, case in which, most likely, it would only be replaced by the universal, nonverbal dimension of speech.

A double-angled perspective opens itself and decants the research perspective, constructive and destructive as it proves to be. The former refers to the lexical loans that permeate the Romanian vocabulary due to the latest scientific breakthroughs and state of the art technologies, whereas the latter entangles the destructive perspective of meaningless, unaccountable redundancy that replicates, almost without echo, semantic realities otherwise splendidly represented by the mother tongue. The image that comes to mind is that of a tree, majestic and superb in its splendour and uniqueness, though threatened to wilt because some greedy tenants, heterotroph organisms, extract its sap and fade its colours. The former angle recognises the importance of the part denotative English loanwords have played in the continuous renewal and recalibration of the Romanian lexis, accounting for its constant rejuvenation, modernity and flexibility. Furthermore, some of these *necessary loans*, as Ernst Tappolet would call them, have not only filled some inevitable lexical gaps, as they have also managed to add a touch of fineness and pragmatism, avoiding juxtapositions, paraphrasing or ambiguous translations.

Suffice to bring into discussion such Anglicisms as *marketing, management, mass-media, computer, banner, fast-food, laptop, hard, soft, mouse, airbag, CD-player, Blue-ray, modem, scanner, hub, blender, boiler, ABS, broiler, supermarket, prime-time, stress, broker, jet*¹, etc. to have a clear idea about this first dimension, that does not come as the main focus of this article.

¹ In this case even the pronunciation is borrowed, in order to avoid the confusion between two homographs (a) the English term *jet* [dʒet], mainly known for its first meaning, namely "a plane driven by jet engines" and (b) the Romanian word *jet*, "a strong, narrow stream of gas, liquid, steam or flame", that also comes as the second meaning of the English word.

It is the latter of the two angles, the redundant overlapping of two linguistic systems that has grown to describe an increasingly dramatic perspective that I would like to insist upon. And it is this latter dimension which I dare name *linguistic haemorrhage*. Let me explain what I mean, although the intense connotations of the medical term must have already drawn an exclamation mark (!) in the mind of the reader. This comparison to a severe loss of blood, the vital fluid of the organism aims at highlighting the importance of what Deborah Cameron [3] refers to as "*verbal hygiene*". The outline and logic of any discourse meets its roundness and essence only within the territories of a single utterance, for it is only within the realms of one language where the architecture of the mind can express itself to its fullest. This is not to say that a speech cannot be completed or nuanced by different utterances that better describe a given reality or concept at a certain, given moment; for there is a significant difference between highlighting, stressing something and deliberately tearing away the fabric of the discourse with the absurd use of foreign words. It is not only a question of inserting in one's discourse words that have a direct equivalent in one's mother tongue, as is the serious problem of having Anglicisms subjected to a distorting process that tries to accommodate them into the patterns of Romanian utterance. What the speaker intends to do is to adjust and adapt the mental imprint of words, by shaping the phonological mental imprint and trying to make it resonate as much as possible with the information already stored in his/her native language. I will offer some examples to better illustrate and support my statement, all of them extracted from the first quarter of one lecture and phonologically adjusted to the Romanian norms – "...*compania share-uește același punct de vedere...*" (the company shares the same point of view), "...*campania endorsează...*" (the campaign endorses), "...*trebuie să se focuseze pe...*" (one must focus on), "...*management-ul target-ează...*" (the management targets), "...*există o match-uială între...*" (there is a match between); for all these words, the lecturer could and must have turned to the Romanian equivalents, that would have made the discourse smooth and logic – "...*compania împărtășește același punct de vedere...*", "...*campania promovează...*", "...*trebuie să se axeze /concentreze pe...*", "...*management-ul urmărește să...*", "...*există o potrivire între...*".

Furthermore, I would suggest that the use of these *unnecessary loans* is disruptive and accountable for the breakdown of the communication process, and may also be regarded as assassins of creative thinking in one's mother tongue. With this displacement of lexis comes also a shift in thinking patterns that tend to become less and less flexible and versatile, gradually losing their elasticity and fineness. In the academic context, one of the environments that define and are defined by creativity and critical thinking, such accidents and slips should be not only avoided, but also banned, for the accuracy and fluency of a discourse, no matter how cryptic and elitist it proves to be, is a must for any scholar and student. In 1997, a reputed Romanian philosopher drew the attention upon the unprecedented, massive influence of English upon the Romanian language, a state of affairs that has augmented ever since. He was trying to provide an answer to the very simple question – "Do we still speak Romanian?" And his reply was:

"I think not. I think that we speak a language in which there are some very strange mixtures, a little bit of sawdust of wooden language, some Anglo-Romanian jargon, and pretentious ridiculosity..." [4]

Let us now contemplate some of the inadequate, redundant Anglicisms that flood the academic discourse. Our attention was directed towards terms that simply act as 'irritating' doublets of the Romanian words, most likely used out of snobbishness, as illustrated above, or, and that is even more alarming, almost unconsciously, as if the speaker did not have any other option offered by his /her mother tongue. What does concern us is the use of such massive loans within the realm of *that* environment of communication which is and has to be the flagpole of critical and creative thinking; and the mere and inconsistent act of duplicating and copying has always been at the antipodes of creativity. Thus, the following examples can be considered, as recorded on the tape scripts of the eight lectures: *workshop* (atelier), *background* (fundal), *trend* (direcție), *topic* (subiect), *item* (punct), *trend* (direcție), *panel* (jurați, grup lucru), *training* (instrucțaj), *trainer* (instructor), *deadline* (termen limită), *board* (consiliu director / tablă de scris), *meeting* (ședință), *job* (loc de muncă), *meeting* (ședință), *target* (țintă, obiectiv), *link* (legătură), *draft* (schită, proiect), *header* (antet), *chart* (grafic), *ice-breaker* (metodă de spargere a gheței), *focus* (accent), *blank* (gol, necompletat), *border* (limită), *cultivar* (soi, varietate), *label* (etichetă), *finish* (final), *review* (recenzie), *comment* (comentariu), *layout* (format), *input* (admisie), *job* (serviciu), *part-time* (jumătate de normă), *full-time* (normă întreagă), *staff* (personal, angajați), *cash* (numerar, bani lichizi), *look* (aspect, înfățișare), *fashion* (modă), *icon* (imagine), *brand* (marcă), *shopping* (cumpărături), *sale* (vânzare, perioadă reduceri), *discount* (reducere), *advertising* (publicitate), *showbiz*

(industria divertismentului), *live* (în direct), *entertainment* (divertisment), *abstract* (rezumat), *resume* (curriculum vitae), *supplier* (furnizor), *border* (limită), *research* (cercetare), *assignment* (temă, proiect), *file* (dosar), *check-in* (punct control), *speech* (discurs), *speaker* (vorbitor, invitat la o conferință), *frame* (cadru), *hit* (succes), *agreement* (acord), *tool* (unealtă), *focus* (accent), *step-by-step* (pas cu pas), *level* (nivel), *scholarship* (bursă), *intake* (absorbție), etc.

Conclusions

In the field of SLA (Second Language Acquisition), comprehension checks act as useful devices destined "to anticipate and prevent a breakdown in communication" [5, p.136]. When overlapping two linguistic systems almost haphazardly, it is precisely a breakdown in the communication process that is bound to happen. Let us consider one such example that draws all the conclusions such an article requires – the English noun *abstract*, incorrectly used in Romanian in contexts that replicate the meaning it has in its language of origin, namely "short piece of writing containing the main ideas in a document" (OED), thus disregarding the fact that the same homophonous and homograph word acts in Romanian only as an adjective, whose meaning is "existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical reality".

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