ENGLISH ORIGIN NEOLOGISMS
IN ROMANIAN AND RUSSIAN –
A COMPARISON OF CONTEXTS

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Abstract

The influence of English lexis on various countries vocabulary has increased, with English becoming the lingua franca worldwide and with the penetration of IT and business terminology, due to the need to cover new realities, and up to the youth tendency to communicate fashionably. Political contexts have favored this trend in countries such as Russia and Romania. Therefore, the paper aim is to comparatively analyze anglicisms related paradigms under several aspects in these two countries, focusing on identifying similarities and differences. The investigation didactic consequences are outlined, for a tertiary education engineering faculty context with multicultural groups.

Keywords: lexical studies, neologisms, anglicisms, comparative approach, multicultural
             groups

1. Background and paper aim

English has become a real *lingua franca* at international level over the last decades. Similarly, there have been massive borrowings from the lexis of English in quite numerous languages worldwide. The factors that have been influential in this respect are mainly an increasing technologization, enabling access to information – mostly in English – to people, irrespective of social category, economic status and culture, a tendency towards extending patterns and means of communication, and, in some cases, local political, social and cultural conditions, as will be shown in this paper.

In countries such as Romania, Russia and Moldova, that will be discussed from this point of view in this paper, the lexical panorama of the last 20 years or so has been characterized by several waves of borrowings from English, most of them generated by the need and/or wish to:
(i)   update local terminology in various domains,
(ii) get rid of the old *wooden language* of the communist era,
(iii) but, to a certain extent, also in order to communicate orally and in writing in a
       manner specific to the somehow understandable fashion to be detected

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especially among the young generations, that of an *avant-garde* of innovation, understood as liberation from communist oppression.

Political contexts in these countries have lately displayed a range of similarities, but there have also been certain differences, at all levels: linguistic, cultural, as well as features pertinent to the political and social paradigms characterizing each of them. Equally, there are similitudes in terms of the fields where anglicisms have been massively accepted to a quite high extent.

Therefore, the main aim of this study is to comparatively analyze the issue of anglicisms in Romanian and Russian, from the perspective of the *scope* of the phenomenon, its possible *causes*, current *trends* and future vistas. Subsequently, the relationship between *use vs abuse*, as well as that between *acceptance vs rejection* are approached.

As our interest is that of a researcher, but also that of an English language trainer in higher education, whose task is to provide support to the youth as regards their awareness raising and mentality shaping attitudes, the final section of the paper will present an approach to designing course activities, meant to guide the learners in this respect, not only for their study period, but also for their future activity as **young professionals in multinational companies, in their countries or abroad.**

2. On anglicisms – a comparison of viewpoints in several national contexts

The approach to revisiting the literature on the issue of anglicisms in various languages, countries and cultures in a comparative approach should firstly refer to the early 2000s, with a series of impressive and comprehensive works (Görlach, 2001; Görlach, 2002a &2002b; Görlach, 2003), that represent a huge effort to collect anglicisms penetrating 16 languages of different types – e.g. Germanic, Romance and Slavonic, with Romanian and Russian included in the research.

In just two years, a vast bibliographic list of European anglicisms was published by the same research group; then a series of studies depicting the national level situation emerged from the activity of the same group of scientists. The cycle was concluded by a monograph tackling the most important themes related to borrowings from English in the 16 languages, aiming at providing an array of views and opinions as to their causes for occurrence, degree of acceptance and so on.

By contrast, in the countries under focus in this paper, the history of borrowings from English can be divided into two distinct phases:
  - firstly, the relatively normal amount of English neologisms that entered both Russian and Romanian in the 20th century, before the political

transformations in the 1990s, gradually replacing in frequency borrowings from French, and sometimes German, and,
- secondly, the post-communist waves of words of English origin that have massively invaded the two languages lately, with the advent of the Internet & IT, as well as with that of the spirit of linguistic (and not only!) liberation, specific to the newly created democracies in both countries.

Therefore, in what follows, each of these contexts will be explored in its main paradigms, by reviewing opinions, so as to finally discover main similar and different elements.

As far as *Romania* is concerned, one substantial work dealing with the topic of anglicisms in Romanian (Avram, 1997) stands for the starting point for numerous other approaches, focusing on issues such as:
- morphological aspects – best ways of localizing English terms,
- risks of turning use into abuse, due to a range of causes, such as the desire to be fashionable, particularly with the young generations,
- the appropriate ratio between rejection and acceptance, with a reasonable position of educated acceptance, but also with a cautious warning against exaggerations in any direction.

In recent years, with the massive penetration of words of English origin in domains such as IT, business, sports, fashion or advertising, sometimes not necessarily in order to fill in a gap of meaning in Romanian, but as it seemed to be *trendy* to do so, particularly in communication among professionals in international companies and similar, a number of studies were dedicated to this phenomenon, illustrating various positions.

It is not our main objective to provide in this study long lists of anglicisms already existing in Romanian - or in Russian for that matter, but rather to analyze a cross-section of the attitudes towards the phenomenon expressed by some national authors in each of the countries discussed here, to identify examples of reasonable viewpoints and good practices in terms of educating the young generations in this respect.

For Romania, as pointed in the literature (Buzatu, 2007) dealing with the theory of contacts between languages, viz. between English and Romanian, some of the causes underlying the rationale of the presence of anglicisms in Romanian are the contacts between the two "economies, cultures and even nations". One plausible hypothesis is advanced, namely that of the occurrence of a newly created linguistic entity, which the author calls "RomEnglish" – and examples can be found everywhere in domains such as Computer Science, business communication, advertising, social media etc.

In spite of some purists' opinions regarding the risks of abuse, conducive to an attitude of strong rejection of such borrowings which, they believe, could be detrimental to the Romanian language, the majority of authors can be positioned on a potential *continuum* from rejection to full acceptance, mainly around positions of *moderation*. Such scientists accept borrowings only if they are generated by the need for creating terminology which does not exist in our language. Moreover, some even try to justify and/or understand to a certain extent the deep causes for some (frequently juvenile) abuse, occurring as a form of counterreaction to the communist regime and its impositions at spiritual and cultural levels.

However, there are authors who are more reticent on this aspect. Thus, mentions of the current "invasion" of anglicisms in the language of journalism, attributable to instances of snobbish behavior still exist in the literature (Muresan, 2015).

A comprehensive discussion of the issue of anglicisms in the Romanian language (Şerban, 2012) tries to organize and present most of the aspects of interest in the matter, in an as objective manner as possible – a must for any researcher who wishes to analyze the field from any viewpoint; the work is remarkable by its completeness, degree of objectivity and richness of exemplification.

As far as *Russia* is concerned, it could be interesting to present and critically analyze some recent views of the same phenomenon, taking into account the main linguistic differences between the two languages, a Romance (Romanian) vs a Slavonic (Russian) one, therefore the latter having a different alphabet and rules of adapting foreign words that are quite specific, but with a background of social, political, economic and cultural features that may be overlapped quite successfully on those in our own context.

We will mainly be interested in matters of causality and attitudes emerging from causes, with an emphasis on the recent years, with the development and massive penetration of technology and communication, and against the same newly acquired freedom background from the previous authoritarian communist status of the country.

Thus, as early as 2008 a clear trend among researchers (Proshina, 2008) can be noted, which considers that the degree of penetration of English in the Russian language, named 'nativization of English", will soon lead to the "appearance of Russian English as a variety of Worlds Englishes".

It is really interesting to remark that, in spite of Russian being a language of international circulation, with many millions of speakers worldwide, the author accepts that the use of English within Russian will facilitate "interlinguistic communication" to a higher extent than the mere use of a Russian language devoid of the presence of anglicisms.

Such a position, we believe, might be appropriate for a certain period of time, but it should not be taken for granted for a longer interval, as a wide range of contextual changes might reposition Russia at a different (better, perhaps) level internationally. This situation is dissimilar to a certain extent from that of Romanian, which has never been a language of international circulation. Hence, a major difference in the position that the two countries could take in terms of accepting borrowings from English.

As pointed in numerous very recent Russian studies (Bogdanovici & Zuionok, 2016), with the young generations this trend of full acceptance, if not abuse, of anglicisms, can be explained by the penetration at massive social scale of the pop culture in English (or American English, which does not change anything in the essence of the phenomenon!), with "films, sitcoms, popular music and TV programs" literally omnipresent in Russia. A subtle linguistic remark of the authors also points to the fact that English words are "short and simple", thus facilitating the expression of the young people's "thoughts and feelings".

As far as the domains where English borrowings are quite frequent in Russian are concerned, they refer – and exemplify – for the following ones:
- politics and economics – *summit, briefing*;
- food and trade – *hot dog, second-hand*;
- culture and social service – *hit, fitness, thriller*.

Again, one can note that all these terms have penetrated in the Romanian language as well, due to interwoven causes, on the one hand because there were no terms to name those realities, and, on the other hand – and more powerful in terms of causality, we maintain – because of the newly emerged trends and fashionable jargon of the professionals in those domains, particularly the young ones.

From the long lists of *types of borrowings* to be found in this recent work, we have designed a tabular figure inventorying several examples in the two languages (adding Romanian and Comments), in order to facilitate the approach to the phenomenon in its similarities and differences – see Table 1 below.

Table 1. Types of borrowings from English – a selective comparative approach

No	ENGLISH	ROMANIAN	RUSSIAN	COMMENTS
1	*weekend* *talk-show*	*weekend* *talk-show*	*уикенд* *ток–шоу*	Direct borrowing: Although spelt in Russian alphabet observing specific transposition rules, in both languages these anglicisms preserve their original meaning
2	*manager*	*manager*	*менеджер*	Phonetic borrowing: The only difference is that the Russian word is adapted graphically to the Russian alphabet, but the pronunciation remains (almost!) the English one in both cases – same

No	ENGLISH	ROMANIAN	RUSSIAN	COMMENTS
				meaning preserved
3	*know-how*	*know-how*	*ноу–хау*	<u>Jargon</u>: used as a sign of openness to modern trends in both host languages, mostly in business environment
4	*second-hand shop*	*magazin second-hand*	*магазин second-hand*	<u>Compounds</u>: two distinct parts, the one in English being fully preserved in both Romanian and Russian (even in terms of alphabet used!)
5	*OK Wow*	*OK Wow*	*Уoy OK*	<u>Emotional</u>: maintained as such in both host languages, as "non-integrated" words/whole phrases

As can be noted, there are similar terms that were accepted by both languages, with their meaning more or less preserved. One particularity is the graphic form some of them have taken in Russian, where they generally appear transcribed using the Russian alphabet, although the pronunciation tends to remain the original one in most cases – which seems absolutely natural, considering that the presence of English in some instances is due to the need for becoming fashionable or trendy of the user, to a higher extent than because of the lack of terminology in the host language for that particular meaning.

A very honest recent study (Kravchenko & Boiko, 2018) warns the community of the potential effects of the "hybridization" of Russian, with – as they anticipate – a "possible effect on society as a living system", which requires careful research in order to "offer an explanation of the driving force behind the occurring changes in the Russian written culture".

The obvious explanation of the massive acceptance of anglicisms in Russian today is of a psychological and social-political type, viz. the society in post-communist Russia comprises "freedom-hungry individuals". However, abusing this tendency can play "a bad joke" to the same people if there is no just measure kept in accepting them, as abuse can be destructive of their own language, "thus jeopardizing the integrity of society as a historical living system".

We should comment on this important statement, as it might be rather difficult for a population coming from a black period in their history to contain such tendencies, as in both Russia and Romania, English is perceived as having a strong association of ideas with what the authors call "better life".

Moreover, as the literature points out from statistical data (Fenogenova et al, 2017) extrapolated from various social network texts, the proportion of anglicisms to be found in such texts does not depend to a statistically significant degree on social gender or age group.

In order to triangulate our investigation, a third viewpoint is briefly presented in what follows, namely the case of *Moldova* in terms of policy regarding borrowings from English. We hope that this may add nuance to our analysis, as it is also a recently democratized country, where Romanian is spoken, but there are historical – past and present – influences from Russian, as well. We can find there the same lucid awareness of the risks of exaggeration in terms of borrowings over the acceptable and well-justified limits of the need for covering meaning (Timpul.md, 2010).

A comprehensive study (Graur-Vasilache, 2003) synthetically raises a range of problems which should be taken into account when approaching the issue of borrowings in a language, which are briefly listed in what follows as an interim conclusion of our comparative investigation. Against the axiomatic statement that no language can reject borrowings fully, certain recurrent aspects generated by abuse should be analyzed, such as:
- partial or total adaptation of neological terms,
- accepting or not polysemy and synonymy in specialized terminology per domains,
- observing or not monosemantism of scientific terms a.s.o.

A superb piece of humour that we will quote here from Graur-Vasilache's study (op.cit.) as a sound argument in favour of the need for awareness raising action in order to shape an appropriate mentality and – consequently – attitude towards using but not abusing of anglicisms in any host language, comes from a newspaper in Moldova. The quoted journalist explains that the postcommunist establishment members combine in a very original way anglicisms, Russian calques and Moldavian specific terms. Here are some examples: "La noi *nu se primeşte* marketingul, *am precăutat* lista dealerilor, el *la mine* e un cowboy". Therefore, in a concrete pragmatic manner, the best advice seems to be to avoid mixing such means in an uneducated manner; moreover, it is only time that will finally decide what will be kept and what will disappear.

As has become obvious from the literature review carried out in this section, there are common *causes* for the acceptance and/or rejection of anglicisms, mainly those influenced by the political and social contexts, with the major risk of abusing instead of reasonably encouraging the use of those terms that really fill in a meaning gap in the host languages.

As far as the official *attitude* towards allowing borrowings from English is concerned, there is no strict legislation, as the case goes with some countries, for instance France, with various social categories strongly inclined to use anglicisms at work, in the social media or in politics, for instance: young professionals, business people, IT workers etc.

There are voices (Bandov, 2017) in Russia that go as far as to foresee potential sources of social conflicts in the not-so-remote future between the adepts at anglicisms and those who are against them – the purists. The author sees such a sociolinguistic issue becoming even a "motive of social changes".

We can conclude at this point in this investigation of contexts that, in our capacity as trainers and mentality shapers, it is not enough to simply present the issue, it is paramount to act in order to support our trainees – in our situation, they are IT students in tertiary education – to understand the phenomenon, in all its facets, by raising their awareness of its presence in our language and to contribute, by the kinds of class tasks we can design and teach, to the development of their appropriate mentality in this respect. This is particularly true in our educational context, with multicultural groups, studying engineering with English as the language of tuition.

3. Some concluding recommendations – action in class

It is obvious that, as an English teacher, it is simply not enough – and even irrelevant! - to collect examples of anglicisms from various sources and present them as lists to the students, irrespective of their level. In an English class, whether it is General English, ESP or CLIL, what any trainer should do, in our opinion, is to design and teach a chain of tasks with the main goal of sensitizing the students as to the phenomenon of anglicisms in the host language – that can be Romanian or any other native tongue in a multicultural group of learners, as the discussions can take place on the basis of comparisons being carried out among various sets of examples produced by the students, each from their own languages.

In what follows, such a proactive approach is sketchily presented, starting from its *hidden agenda* – an awareness raising set of tasks, meant to help the students to develop the best attitude towards the anglicisms presence in their mother tongue.

As was pointed out in the study, as the phenomenon exists in numerous countries and languages influenced lately by borrowings from English, the proposal advanced here can be applied, with the necessary changes of focus and amendments generated by each educational context, to a variety of instructional environments.

It is not an easy task, as working on mentality, particularly when one deals with young adults, as the case is in the described educational situation in this study, can be rather difficult, for various reasons, such as: age of students, domain in which they study and/or work, that can already be impregnated with neologisms of English origin – for example IT, as well as the historical, political and social

conditions, encouraging the tendency to anglicize their oral and written discourse over commonsensical limits as an expression of individual freedom - and many others.

Therefore, the types of activity proposed to the students should be carefully designed as to take into consideration such features of the real context, that act as limitations quite often. An increase in the tasks aims should be envisaged – and if necessary shared with the learners, starting from *awareness raising* components, passing through discussions of *register*, *style*, *language* in general, per *domains of activity* of the students, and reaching in a subtle manner the realm of shaping up the trainees' *mentality*.

The chain of tasks should be based on a sound and clear framework of pedagogically justified principles, focusing on the development of all four skills. An eclectic approach with a communicative core is highly recommendable, as it can ensure a quasi-authentic environment for the students to communicate in lifelike situations.

It may be useful to remark that, at lower levels of language proficiency, the study of borrowings from English can be helpful in developing the active vocabulary of the students, as most of them, particularly in IT, are familiar with English origin terminology, although they do not fully realize its potential for their vocabulary expansion.

The chain of tasks should start from asking the students to analyze texts – oral or written input – proposed by the teacher first, in order to identify examples of anglicisms. Then the task of collecting examples can be assigned to the learners themselves – a discussion in class will be generated as to the causes for such borrowings, types of anglicisms, and, later on, about the most advisable attitudes towards the existence and use of such terminology. Articles and positions expressed by various people can be brought to the classroom, on paper and/or video/audio electronic support.

With multicultural groups, there are more possibilities of assigning project work to groups of 3-4 students whose mother tongue is not the same, with the learners having to show what the trends they perceive are as far as anglicisms acceptance or rejection are concerned in their languages. Expressing opinions and arguing for their ideas should be encouraged at this level. The *rationale* underlying such an approach is that the trainees will thus learn by discovering and by performing the tasks requirements.

Moreover, they will compare their views with those of their peers, hence an enlarged array of opinions to choose from that can be gradually developed. The activities can be extended to a discussion of the relationships between the domains

in which anglicisms occur at a certain (high) frequency and the causes for such occurrences.

It is absolutely clear that when it comes to moulding people's mentality and attitude, there is no immediate result; sometimes it may seem that there is no result at all. However, considering the quite positive feedback obtained from the students in the described educational context, who have produced numerous examples and advanced interesting viewpoints, it has emerged that this is an area that is worth putting effort in, as it might generate change that, minuscule as it might be, could be conducive to enriching our learners' abilities to face the current challenges in their educational and professional environments.

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