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THE INFLUENCE OF JARGON IN LEXICAL BORROWING FROM ENGLISH

"The involvement of a minority culture with new technologies is not only a question of allowing its users to live a full life in that language, but challenges the antiquarian illusion, the notion that somehow minority languages are unable to cope with the complexity of modern life and technology."
M. Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* (2003)

1. THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL AND SUB-CULTURAL JARGONS

As maintained by Appel and Muysken (1987: 164), there is hardly a language which has not borrowed words from other languages, just as there is no culture developed fully from scratch. Moreover, it seems that there is no language which has not at some time borrowed from English, both from its standard and non-standard varieties. As far as the Serbian language is concerned, presently, in the process of borrowing from English there is a considerable influence of jargon, which embraces two language varieties: (1) specialised terminologies closely linked with the activities of professional groups; and (2) sub-cultural jargon, which governs the bonding of people who share the same interests or hobbies. Admittedly, the process of borrowing in this case has a sociolinguistic side: the rise of information technology, Internet and mass media of the western world have had their effect on the Serbian-speaking community, and consequently on the lexicon of the language, while the jargons of the above mentioned areas of interest have been a significant factor in borrowing under the circumstances. The introduction of a new product or concept into everyday life, popular culture or specific disciplines within the Serbian-speaking community is a major sphere of influence on the expansion of the lexicon.

In the context of lexical borrowing the impact of modern technology can hardly be over-stressed. Technological inventions and products inevitably introduce new terms into the vocabulary of the borrowing language, which is most obvious in the field of computing and the Internet. When the first

computers were brought to Serbia in the mid-eighties, they were called *računari*, which is a translation of the English word *computer*. However, this particular word has gradually been overshadowed by the borrowed term *kompjuter*. Some of the extensively used borrowed terms in the same subject field include *hard dražv* (Eng. *hard drive*), *kompakt disk* (Eng. *compact disc*), *DVD* /di vi di/, /de ve de/ (Eng. *DVD* /di:vi:di:/), as well as translations of the English models, such as *grafička kartica* (Eng. *graphic card*) and *miš* (Eng. *mouse*). The fast development of electronic communication via the Internet left practically no time for Serbian to derive or create new words, and the names of certain programs and applications were instantly adopted from English, as, for instance, *internet* (Eng. *Internet*), *sajt* (Eng. *site*) and *spem* (Eng. *spam*). It should also be noted here that certain borrowed words have come to be used along with their Serbian equivalents, e.g. *četovati/ćaskati* (Eng. *chat*), *inboks/sanduče* (Eng. *inbox*), *imejl/elektronska pošta* (Eng. *e-mail*). However, samples of texts written in Serbian show that borrowed terms are favoured, presumably due to two reasons: (1) they are a sign of expert knowledge of the author, and (2) they have a specialised meaning. For instance, *ćaskati* refers to small talk among people who can see, or at least hear each other, whereas *četovati* is specifically used for chatting taking place in the Internet's cyberspace.

Currently, a noteworthy influence of a professional jargon may be monitored within film production and distribution. Many English terms from the area have become incorporated into the vocabularies of film-makers, critics, journalists and the audience in the Serbian-speaking community. The immense popularity and international appeal of films produced in the English-speaking countries (especially the USA) expedites the borrowing of terms into the Serbian language, including *kameo* (Eng. *cameo*), *hajp* (Eng. *hype*), *MekGafin*¹ (Eng. *Macguffin*), *postprodukcija* (Eng. *post-production*), *stedikem* (Eng. *steadicam*), *storibord* (Eng. *storyboard*), *sitkom* (Eng. *sitcom*), *specijalni efekti* (Eng. *special effects*), *trejler* (Eng. *trailer*). These terms have become widespread not only among the limited group of experts who work in the film industry or write about it, but also among the general public. For example, any Serbian daily paper would frequently describe a certain series as *sitkom*, or announce *trejler* for an upcoming release of a film.

Film and literary genres are another aspect rich in borrowed terms. The genre of horror in both artistic domains is commonly referred to as *horor* in Serbian, although *Filmska enciklopedija* (1986/1990) records only the term *film strave* (Eng. *horror film*), while *Rečnik književnih termina* (1992) lists a literary genre of *roman strave* (Eng. *horror novel*). In spite of the renowned terms in Serbian literary and film vocabulary the elliptical form *horor* is predominant in literary essays and film criticism. This may be due to the fact that there were next to no academic or popular writings devoted to this genre in Serbian before the encyclopaedia was published, whereas the few that followed relied mostly on English critical theory². Also, Serbian imported the term *čepbuk*³ from English (*chapbook*) to designate a small book featuring novelettes or essays by a single author, distributed through specialized bookstores or mail. Originally, this is one of the earliest forms of literary publications initiated

in the 18th and 19th centuries as booklets containing stories, poems, sermons, accusations or defences, anonymously published and distributed in city squares and fairs. Similarly, the term *fenzin*, modelled on English *fanzine* (*fan(maga)zine*) with no semantic modifications, refers to an amateur magazine containing a greater variety of texts devoted to a special-interest group, such as fans of science fiction or comic books.

2. THE ADAPTATION OF LOANWORDS

The examination of examples of loans in a corpus of specialized texts may suggest that importation is a dominant process in the transfer of words from English into Serbian. Terminological items are more readily imported than translated, which is rationalized by the fact that the vocabularies of professional communities strive towards internationalization, English having already assumed the role of the 'international' language of technology. The written corpora provide illustration of different degrees of adaptation with loanwords borrowed from English professional and sub-cultural jargons. As illustrated in Vasić *et al.* (2001), English loans may demonstrate quite diverse levels of morphological adaptation in Serbian, which range from zero to complete (Vasić *et al.* 2001: 14).

The inferences drawn from the analysis of morphological features of loans in the corpus may be fully supported by the analysis conducted in Filipović (1986). Initially, the process of morphological adaptation of a borrowed lexical item to the system of the borrowing language can be classified into primary and secondary. In primary adaptation, once an English noun is completely phonologically adapted in Serbian, the rules of nominal declension of the borrowing language apply to it without exception: an imported nominal loan is marked for number and case by Serbian inflectional morphemes. When borrowed, English nouns ending in a consonant mainly preserve the form of the model; thus, an integrated noun ending in \emptyset morpheme is of masculine gender, subject to the rules of the first type of nominal declension in Serbian, with the word forms reading, for instance, 'na *vebu*' (Eng. *web*), 'adrese *soketa*' (Eng. *socket*), 'sa *ruterima*' (Eng. *router*), 'prema *boksofisu*' (Eng. *box-office*), 'u *prikvelu*' (Eng. *prequel*), 'o *slepstiku*' (Eng. *slapstick*). In secondary adaptation a borrowed noun frequently introduces an English bound morpheme into the language by retaining the original form. The importation of the English derivational suffix *-er* into Serbian is common in lexical borrowing, and involves examples such as *spleter*⁴ (Eng. *splatter*) and *slešer*⁵ (Eng. *slasher*), the names of horror film subgenres. Finally, in complete morphemic adaptation borrowed items are supplied with Serbian derivational suffixes, typically those highly productive in the language, as in derivation of adjectives such as *kultni autor* (Eng. *cult author*), *kultni film* (Eng. *cult film*), or the somewhat puzzling example of *butabilan disk* (Eng. *bootable disc*).

Additionally, the analysis reveals a strong tendency displayed by newly borrowed nouns to remain orthographically and morphologically unadapted in the position of a pre-modifier. In that sense, unmarked for case, gender

and number in Serbian, such nouns can be plainly identified as foreign. Most recent examples include numerous phrases in computing literature, such as *administrators grupa*, *custom indeksa*, *dictionary napadi*, *extended particije*, *offline povezivanje*, *verify opcije*.

In contrast, substitution is a regular occurrence in the process of morphological adaptation of verbs borrowed from English, including verbs created by conversion. In Serbian these are clearly marked for person, tense and mood, and fully integrated into the language by receiving the native suffixes (e.g. *-ira*, *-nu*, *-ka*, *-ova*, *-ija*, *-eva*) and the ending *-ti*, as in the instances of *apgrejdovati* (Eng. *upgrade*), *kliknuti* (Eng. *click*), *logovati se* (Eng. *log*), *mapirati* (Eng. *map*), *printati* (Eng. *print*), *rutirati* (Eng. *route*), *semplovati* (Eng. *sample*).

Unlike importation, calque, i.e. transference of meaning by literal translation applied to complex or compound words, is a minor occurrence in the corpus examined here, although, as held in Prčić (2001: 2), calques are highly motivated and contribute to a better understanding and interpretation of the message. In calque the accent is put on content rather than form, as in the sporadic example of *mač i magija* (Eng. *sword and sorcery*), taken from film terminology. As argued in Fawcett (1997: 35), calques often first appear not in translations but in newspaper articles, which may account for the inconsistency in the translating of foreign terms into Serbian.

2.1. REMARKS ON TRANSCRIPTION

On referring to a number of journals specialized in computing and film industry it can be concluded that the majority of the English loanwords have not been transcribed to fit the orthographic system of Serbian. Some examples have been quoted above with reference to unadapted pre-modifiers from the register of computing. Other examples illustrating the point include *boot*, *bindery*, *cluster*, *dial-up*, *logging*, *spooler*, *spanning*, *storage*, plus certain examples variably written either as *e-mail*, *homepage* and *web* or as *imejl*, *houmpejdž* and *veb*. Film terminology includes *biopic*, *blockbuster*, *fantasy*, *flashback*, *footage*, *remake* and *sneak preview*, among many.

From the vocabulary of video-games and comics Serbian has borrowed numerous terms, names and nicknames, typically not subjected to orthographic/phonemic adaptation. Thus, the names of video-games, such as *Doom*, *Tomb Raider*, *Resident Evil*, may be found in their original English form in Serbian texts, without any formal modifications or translation. The nicknames of individual super-heroes have been used in writing in unaltered form, to the detriment of associations they invoke, e.g. *Spiderman*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Hulk*, *Daredevil* and *Robocop*. Indeed, some *Daredevil* comics have been published in 'Eks Almanah' (Dečje Novine, Gornji Milanovac) under the title *Nebojša*, which was ridiculed by the Serbian public, since *Nebojša* is a personal name (unlike *Daredevil*) with no apparent connotation. Similarly, whereas *Spiderman* comics have been published as *Čovek-pauk*, the film was distributed as *Spiderman*, presumably due to the distributor's attempt not to digress from *Superman* and *Batman*, well known among the Serbian audience.

In general, unadapted loanwords lead to the motiveless importation of letter symbols along with double letters (*y, sh, oo, ff*) non-native to Serbian. Such orthographic forms, incompatible with the system of the borrowing language, clearly demonstrate the level of integration of the loanwords. Orthographic adaptation, as a stage proper in the process of borrowing, logically follows from prior phonological adaptation, especially in the cases where the writing systems and phonotactics of the languages in contact differ considerably. The linguistic issue behind the phenomenon is a matter to deal with fundamentally in the borrowing language, to discontinue the chaotic influx of words from English. From numerous examples it is evident that unmodified orthographic forms virtually delay the subsequent phase of morphological adaptation, which is, generally, an unquestionable stage in the process. Even with the borrowing of terminology, which indisputably arises out of a sociolinguistic need, the orthographic discrepancy is factual and interferes with the integration of loanwords. On a number of occasions, this linguistic deviation, however marginal it may seem, is sharp, and, admittedly, currently unsettled. In that sense, lexical borrowing being systematic, crucial stages of the process should be determined. These imply the recognition of a need to import a term into a well-organized terminological system of the borrowing language, the observance of the requirements of the controlled and rule-governed borrowing, the standardization of borrowed terms, and their usage non-contradictory to the borrowing language system at any level.

3. CONCLUSION

A number of loanwords originating from professional and sub-cultural jargons of the English language presented in this paper indicate that specialised words are regularly borrowed into Serbian. Moreover, this is manifest in the fields which are not 'indigenous' to the borrowing language and culture. In view of that, the examples quoted from computer technology and film production and distribution in a broader sense reveal the widespread influence of major breakthroughs of industries of the English-speaking countries. Furthermore, terms from popular culture are effectively distributed through a variety of channels and media, spoken, written or electronic, owing to the American worldwide cultural, sub-cultural, commercial and political influence. Sociolinguistically speaking, newly designed products and artefacts of pop-culture commonly affect the lives of people with unrelated linguistic and cultural backgrounds, smoothing the progress of lexical borrowing.

The linguistic segment of the issue has indicated that importation is predominant in the borrowing, whereas translation has not been crucial for certain reasons. First, sub-communities are autonomous, well-defined and organised, and the unfamiliarity with the particular jargon inevitably excludes outsiders. Second, the interaction and exchange of ideas among fellow members is fully comprehensible due to transparency of terminology. On the

other hand, assessment of the corpus suggests that in importation not many loans have been properly adapted in the Serbian language, as they, for the most part, deviate from the system in their forms. The state of affairs may be indicative of two trends: (a) unadapted loanwords have not been established in the borrowing language community, and the process of adjustment is ongoing to eventually result in complete integration; or (b) the process of borrowing in Serbian is essentially spontaneous and lacking in a solid foundation. Still, (b) must not be an option.

A purist view is unambiguously not held here: loanwords are not considered redundant, particularly when they fill lexical gaps in a language in the course of rapid advancement of human knowledge and growth of the extra-linguistic environment. The idea sustained is that in the borrowing language, in this case Serbian, a rule-governed transfer of lexical items is indispensable to avoid nonce borrowings primarily in terminology and to sustain full integration of loanwords.

1 Event or a piece of knowledge serving to set the plot in motion, without any importance in itself.

2 Sava Damjanov writes about the elements of horror in Serbian literature in *Koreni moderne srpske fantastike* (1988), Matica Srpska, Novi Sad.

3 The Serbian society of Science Fiction 'Lazar Komarčić' has published a series of chapbooks in 1997/1998.

4 A type of genre film that focuses on the exploitation of gore and violence (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*).

5 Movies starring a killer, frequently masked, slashing all of the other characters. (*Halloween, Friday the 13th*).

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SUMMARY

THE INFLUENCE OF JARGON IN LEXICAL BORROWING FROM ENGLISH

In all natural languages, lexical borrowing is an inevitable process in the growth of the vocabulary. The English language having established its dominance and having assumed the position of the giving language in contact with other languages, the paper examines the impact English makes on Serbian vocabulary, in the field of jargon used by professional and subcultural groups. The analysis of written corpora within specialized areas of interest, e.g. electronics and film industry, points to numerous loan terms in the Serbian language. The models of loans belong to well-defined systems of specialized terminology in English, but the loans have not been completely adapted in their form. The instances of adaptation by translation are minor, while morphological adaptation is primarily unsystematic. From the sociological point of view, the corpus of terms borrowed from English reveals industrial and cultural influence of the English-speaking community over professional and subcultural groups of a dissimilar language.

KEYWORDS: jargon, lexical borrowing, morphological adaptation, importation, calque, transcription.