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# ENGLISH – A THREAT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD?

Empirical  
study

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## Keywords

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## Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to present our view on the spread of English as a global language / lingua franca; the invasion of Anglicisms in all languages, hence the problem of translation, or not translating professional terms; common mistakes made by non-native speakers. This paper will not develop on the positive and on the negative consequences of the global spread of English, but on the necessity of learning it, as according to statistics, English is the most used instrument of communication in the world.*

It is common knowledge that *globalization* is the process by which the world is becoming *smaller* and increasingly interconnected as a result of massively developed trade, cultural and scientific exchange. Globalization has increased the production communication, as well as the production of goods and services. The big companies are no longer national, but multinational corporations with subsidiaries almost all over the world. Although globalization has existed for hundreds of years, it has speeded up greatly over the last decades. Then phenomenon has led to: increased international trade, companies operating in more than one country, greater dependence on the global economy, free movement of capital, goods, services and labour, recognition of brands such as Coca Cola, Nike, Adidas, McDonalds, and many others. All the above mentioned effects have called for a global instrument of communication. According to Moise J., Para I., (2008:492): “Due to a series of historical, economical and political factors, English was promoted as the first world language. Millions of people all over the world have to communicate with one another meaningfully, because their livelihood depends on the outcome of their meaningful communication. Many people have important jobs in multinational companies, foreign subsidiaries, or in foreign trade, so English is used as a lingua franca; it is the instrument of communication which they use.” Therefore, English is identified by many as the universal symbol of globalization. It is impossible to deny that, lately, English has “flooded” all means of communication and expression globally. This phenomenon of prevalence of English as a *lingua franca* has outstanding effects on people throughout the world. The benefits of studying it have evident in science, technology, economics, education, culture and politics, so English is constantly being learned as a second language for many specific purposes. According to Anchimbe, E.A, (2006:7) “there are 375 million speakers of English as a second language (ESL) and 750 million speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL)”. It is the language of global economy and commerce, of modern technology and the Internet, and above all, the language of science. According to the specialists, over 80% of the information stored in computers is in English and more than half of the world’s technical and scientific papers are published in English as well. And, most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that English is the standard instrument whereby people choose to communicate with one another, all over the world. Therefore, the widespread of English has a tremendous impact on globalization and it is one of the most influential languages, even in countries where English is not the first language. It is used as the official language in many countries, where the

first language is not necessarily English, but it is mandatory to learn it for practical purposes. A largely globalized transnational economic market with distribution coordinated between English speaking countries, also implies that people should speak English in the emerging markets (e.g. the East-European countries), too.

However, there are different views on this topic, of different authors. Barber, (1993:234-235), states that: “Even at the time of Shakespeare’s writings, considered a milestone in the development of the English language, English had little value outside of England and was unknown to the rest of the world, not even having established itself fully in Ireland or Wales”. According to Eco, (1995:331): “Had Hitler won World War II and had the United States been reduced to a confederation of banana republics, we would probably use German as the universal language”. David Crystal, (1997:7) stated that “English did not become the global language because it is intrinsically better than any other language, but rather due to cultural, political, economic and social factors.” “If the spread of English continues at the current rate, by the year 2000 its non-native speakers will outnumber its native speakers.” (Kachru, B 1983, Introduction; the other side of English. In Kachru, B (ed) *The Other Tongue – English Across Cultures*, Pergamon.). According to Honey, 1997:249: “English is the world language – at least for the next five hundred years, or until the Martians arrive. Something like a quarter of the total population of the globe now speak, or are trying to learn English – a proportion without precedent in the history of world.”

Nobody can predict whether or not English will maintain its current position in time. Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, and French were once world languages too, although on a smaller scale in comparison with English nowadays. Therefore, learning how to speak it and translate is a must. Since Romanian is not an international language and we do need to interact, to do business, to travel, to read in a global language, English is the most suited language to this end.

In our educational endeavour, we will insist upon speaking, rather than upon translation. When speaking face-to-face or over the telephone, one has to be spontaneous, while when communicating in writing, computers and dictionaries will help us a lot. However, translation should also be taught, to have our students prepared for real life situations, in which they have to translate for others, translate documents, or instructions. In this respect, we will not consider teaching translation as an old teaching method (grammar-translation), but as a skill which our students must possess. Therefore, translation must also be introduced into the language learning classes, but only to a certain extent, since we do not

prepare translators but specialists who are able to speak and translate.

The simplest definition of translation is given by Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture: “an act, process, or instance of translating; as a rendering from one language into another”. Of course, there are hundreds of definitions of the term, given by scholars such as: Nida, Catford, Basnett, Bell, Newmark, Bantas, Chitoran, Kohn, Punga (Fratila), and we shall not insist upon the theoretical considerations, but on the practical aspects we have to take into consideration during our teaching activities. Nevertheless, in our opinion translation is not only a process of conveying a message across linguistic and cultural barriers; it is a communicative activity (whether oral or written) and the aim of teaching translation is to prepare the students for the real life situations.

Every translation activity has one or more specific purposes, and whichever they may be, “the main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among peoples” (Gerding-Salaz, C., 2000:2). In the past few decades, this activity has developed because of rising international trade, increased migration, *globalization*, the recognition of linguistic minorities, and the expansion of the mass-media and technology. Therefore, translation has an important role in transmitting bilingual or multilingual cross-cultural information. If in general it is said that *we learn to communicate by communicating*, we can extend this truth to *we learn to translate by translating*, and translation is something we only learn by doing (the experimental method *learning by doing*). Therefore we, teachers, may facilitate our work and task, and also that of our students, if we make use of the appropriate tools and strategies.

Sometimes translation may be seen as something “boring, pointless, difficult, irrelevant and uncommunicative”; this is true only if we associate translation activities with grammar-translation as a method of teaching foreign languages. To make this activity more attractive we need to make the most of all our skills and teaching abilities, so as to turn this “boring” activity into a very proactive one. Translation, as a didactic activity, may become more appealing if we use translation procedures and strategies in which students must constantly make choices, so as to decide which term is the most convenient for the transfer of ideas of what needs to be translated. In other words, it means adapting the most suitable strategies and techniques to the requirements of the piece of translation, rather than adopting a certain technique and making use of this one only. However, we must bear in mind that “linguistic competence is a necessary condition, but not yet sufficient for the professional practice of translation (Delise J., 1980:16).

According to Alan Duff (1994) there are at least five reasons why translation should be used in the classroom: *Influence of the mother tongue*; it shapes our way of thinking and our use of the foreign language to some extent. Translation helps us to better understand the influence of one language on the other. *Naturalness of the activity*; if translation is going on all the time in real-life situations, outside the classroom – offices, banks, etc., why not inside the classroom too? *The skill aspect*; language competence is a two-way system. Our students need to communicate in both directions, into and from the foreign language; translation is a perfect means for practicing this skill. *The reality of language*; authentic texts should be used so as to bring the learner into touch with the “real language”, and never use “doctored”, or adapted texts. *Usefulness*; as a language learning activity, translation is important as it helps students to cooperate (pair/group work; oral debates). Translation develops essential qualities to all language learning, i.e. *accuracy* (find the most appropriate words), *clarity* (to convey what is meant), *flexibility* (to train the reader to search). Depending on the students’ needs and wants (the texts should not only be related to their future career, but also linguistically appropriate), and on the syllabus, we must select the most relevant materials.

As for the best methods of translation to be used, we start from Newmark’s theory on the subject of translation (Newmark, 1988). In his classification of the methods of translation, he mentions: word for word translation; literal translation; faithful translation; semantic translation; adaptation; free translation; idiomatic translation; communicative translation.

I will insist upon *communicative translation*, as “it attends to render the exact contextual meaning of the original, in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (1988:45-47); of course we will extend it from translated texts to oral communication (face-to-face, telephone, mobile phone applications).

In addition to linguistic competence, the knowledge of specialized subjects driven from specialized training (the economic students, in our case), a certain cultural background, as well as the global vision of cross-cultural and interlingual communication, is a must in dealing with the strategic and tactical tools for a good performance in translating.

The act of translation is not merely replacing a word from one language into another. During the act of translation we may encounter a lot of difficulties, as the languages are not symmetrical. One difficulty which must be considered by us when translating – we should control the sound effect and cadence of the translated text, i.e.

translating “with the ear”, to avoid cacophonous combinations and calque, loans from the source language (when translating from Romanian, the outcome may be Romglish/Romenglish).

Some examples that we use in everyday Romanian, and we identified them in Ziarul Financiar (August, 2014) are: “*divizia de cafea a Kraft*”; “*un operator de cafenele i restaurant*”; “*liniile de business care au înregistrat cre teri*”; “*primesc telefoane de la clien i în cadrul unor promo ii*”; “*magazine Aldo cu loca ii în Bucure ti City Mall*”, “*pentru care operatorul ofer* ”, “*num rul promo iilor practicate de retailer*”, “*aceast firm are o linie de produc ie*” As for the loan words which were not assimilated to Romanian, we could enumerate some examples that we use on daily basis: *back-office, business, boom-ul, exit-uri, call-center, CEO, chief, corporate, deal-ul, fashion, general, like-for-like, mail-uri, mall, marketing, management, manager, mix-uri, online, offline, property, real estate, retail-ul, retailer, takeover, test-drive, top, unit-linked* (identified in the mass-media).

Another difficulty we may come across during the act of translation are those “not found terms” even in the best dictionaries (new words or words do not have a Romanian equivalent). Such is the case of “specialized English terms used in business, technology and communication, and other new domains of activity, which have developed rapidly due to globalization and the changes in the political systems all over the world. New terms are coined almost every day, due to new realities, or due to the linguistic need to express new concepts.” (Para, I., Moise, J., 2009:1001).

These terms also make up a kind of *specialized vocabulary*, especially for the people working with multinationals. Consequently, translation of new words is only necessary in cases when this terminology needs to be understood by common people, too. In business, it also depends on who one’s partner is; one has to make some agreement with each and every partner / customer / client as to what is the proper language to be used. One has to know what kind of terminology the interlocutor prefers (which is difficult to assess, as it also depends on the educational degree of “the other”). In most cases, this calls for as much diplomatical as translational skills.

The “invasion of Anglicisms” is a world- wide issue, and the English terms are often compared to weeds. When they invade areas where there are no native terms for the concepts they stand for, they quickly take root and grow; once established in the new area, they are not easy to weed out. The translator’s job is not to do any weeding, s/he is to follow the trend and try to stay tuned to what terms are used on a day to day basis. It is, therefore, rather important that translators who specialize in fields where new terms and concepts occur frequently, to make sure they do not have (in our

case, a Romanian equivalent), and knowing exactly what the English word means is mandatory.

As for the language used by business people, it is mainly *businessese (afacereza)* and, therefore difficult to understand for laymen. Besides language skills, the translator is also supposed to have knowledge in the field, as economics is a very diverse and difficult science. Even a fully trained economist has sometimes little knowledge, or no knowledge at all, in quite a lot of fields (advertising, marketing, foreign trade, money market, etc.).

Many terms are nowhere to be found because they do not have a Romanian equivalent. For example, foreign banks may offer new services that are not yet known in this country, and the terms used are the English ones, as they do not have a Romanian equivalent yet. As the financial world is changing rapidly, mainly due to competition, new financial terms are introduced in the language of banking almost daily. The strategy to be used in such a situation is not a simple one. First of all, we are supposed to find its definition in the foreign language, by studying dictionaries, documents, articles in English, financial newspapers, watching business programmes on TV. This activity may be time consuming, but it may help the translator. At the same time, monolingual business dictionaries, or glossaries should not be ignored, and one should become familiar with the terminology used in this country. There are terms that one may consider to be new coinages, and have no equivalents in the target language, but after a closer look in a monolingual specialized dictionary, one may find that the terms have equivalents, still they are used as such, without being translated.

It is highly advisable to know the peculiarities of the business system, as parts of it may totally differ from one language to another, or other parts of it, coincide completely. There are business terms that may have several translations, (due to polysemantic words), but the specialists accept only one; therefore the translator should know which one is appropriate in each case. Specialized bilingual dictionaries issued by professional printing houses must be used to avoid unprofessionalism. For example, one word, such as Engl. *turnover* (Rom. *cifra de afaceri, migra ie, fluctua ie, rat a desfacerii unui produs, r sturnare*) could be translated in several ways.

In the case of English – Romanian dictionaries used in business, usually we come across difficulties in translating, because:

- The English word has no Romanian equivalent – in practice, the English word is used untranslated. e.g. *brand, boom, leasing*.
- The explanation given by dictionaries is too long, and sometimes ambiguous. e.g.

*know-how, feedback, holding, exit, outcome.*

- The English word has a Romanian equivalent; still, in the act of translating, the English word is used. e.g. *manager, trend, lider, marketing.*

In the practice of translation, we come across situations when, due to the capacity of English of expressing things in a more concise way, the text translated into Romanian is much longer, i.e. there is *no quantitative equivalence*. Still, the ultimate goal is to have an accurate product. In many cases the Romanian text contains additional information to avoid ambiguity, since the source text belongs to a different culture.

To illustrate the above mentioned statements, we have used examples from *Dictionar de marketing Englez – Român, 2003.*

“It employs selective mailings and package inserts such as the couponed offers sent out with **credit card statements.**” (pg. 82 PR. Week)

“Se folose te trimiterea selectiv prin po t a unui pachet de anun uri publicitare, de pild se expediaz oferte de cump rare înso ite de cupoane care dau dreptul la ob inerea de reduceri de pre impreun cu *extrasele de cont ale c r ii de credit.*”

“Coupons are fixed by reference to interest rates at the time **a gilt** is first issued.” (pg. 135 Investors Chronicle)

“Ratele cupoanelor se stabilesc luându-se ca referin ratele dobânzii la data primei emisiumi de **bonuri de tezaur ale guvernului britanic.**”

By comparing the above mentioned examples, both in English and Romanian, we wanted to underline that, some of the English terms either do not have Romanian equivalents, or they need additional information, which is necessary for clar understanding. The words belonging to the area of economics are not easy to translate, and it would be “Va fi o selec ie **multibrand** pe **middle segment**”, precizeaz Ghenea, care are un buget de 100.000 de euro pentru investi ii în **marketing, promotion** i **HR.**” (*Ziarul Financiar*, 10.04.2009)

„Deocamdat **retail-ul**, mai ales **online**, este cel mai dinamic segment în concep ia lui Ghenea, care nu pierde nicio ocazie când vine vorba de achizi ii.” (*Ziarul Financiar*, 10.04.2009)

“For the time being, **retail**, especially **online retail**, is the most dynamic segment in Ghenea’s opinion, who is not wasting time when it comes to acquisitions.”

“**Businessman-ul** Florentin Banu, care a dezvoltat re eaul de **supermarketuri** Artima i **brandul** de napolitane Joe, spune c **businessul** pe care-l conduce, axat în special pe dezvoltare imobiliar , a stagnat, o parte dintre angaja i fiind disponibiliza i în ultima perioad .” (*Ziarul Financiar*, 13.04.2009)

“**Businessman** Florentin Banu, who developed Artima **supermarket** network and the Joe wafers **brand**, says the **business** he runs, mainly centred

an impossible job for an unspecialized translator. The first thing to be done is taking into account the context in which they occur, since mistaken choices can lead to an ambiguous or incorrect translation. Moreover, there is also the problem of general dictionaries which do not contain the expected equivalence hence the conclusion is - translation is not as simple as it may appear at first.

This leads us to the importance of context in choosing “the right word” with some extracts from the Romanian business newspaper, *Ziarul Financiar/ The Financial Newspaper*, edited both in English and in Romanian. By comparing the two versions, we can illustrate how English terms are used as such in Romanian articles. The abundance of Anglicisms in the business paper *Ziarul Financiar* is not because the author wants to impress the readers, but to address a segment of educated population and specialists in the field of economics; however, the author of the article prefers the English term, although there is a Romanian equivalent. “Compania La Fantana, cel mai mare îmbuteliatore de apa în **watercooler**, estimează afaceri în stagnare în acest an, dupa ce în 2008 a înregistrat un avans al vânzârilor de circa 20%, până la valoarea de 25 mil. euro.”

“La Fantana, the largest **watercooler** bottler on the Romanian market, forecasts stagnating business this year, after in 2008 it recorded an around 20% sales rise, to 25 million euros.” (*Ziarul Financiar*, 26.03.2009)

„ În acest an îns nu mai putem miza pe cre terea vânz rilor”, a declarat Cristian Amza, **CEO** i ac ionar minoritar al companiei La Fantana.” (*Ziarul Financiar*, 26.03.2009)

„However, this year we cannot rely on a sales increase anymore,” said Cristian Amza, **CEO** and minority shareholder of La Fantana.”

“It will be a **multibrand** selection, on the **middle segment**”, as Ghenea states, that has a 100.000 euro budget for investing in **marketing, promotion, and human resources.**”

around real estate development, has stagnated, with part of the employees being made redundant lately. By illustrating our statements with the above mentioned examples, we wanted to point out that Romanian “has literally been flooded with English words, most of them unassimilated to the borrowing language” (Hortensia Pârlog, 1995: 106). These terms were either adapted to Romanian, or derive from originally English roots, or were borrowed as such from English. Most of them are recorded in Florica Dumitescu’s and Georgeta Ciobanu’s dictionaries. As we can see from the above texts, most of them belong to the class of nouns (e.g. *exit, brand, business, retail, manager*), while other parts of speech are rather poorly represented. In the above quoted articles the English nouns are used without any translation or

explanation, as if they belonged to the reader's everyday vocabulary. Some of them have been slightly adapted from the morphological point of view (e.g. *leader, franciza, brand-uri, etc.*).

To sum up, the above examples have been quoted to illustrate how much English is used in our everyday language, even if we are not experts in economics. These Anglicisms are also to be found in books and studies on economics, in the language of negotiations, in the language used in business and financial organisations. They make up the *business jargon*, or *businessese*, used with the aim of expressing oneself accurately, in order to avoid ambiguities, misunderstandings, or make mistakes with catastrophic consequences.

In our experience we have learned that this is the situation when the translation is done by laypersons, or by computers, and the mistakes are irreparable and permanent. Translation problems cannot be solved by computers, and there will be always a great difference between computer assisted translated (CAT) texts and human translated texts, whether written or oral. If a CAT does not consider the logic of the text and uses the first meaning of a polysemantic word (e.g. "cultura romanilor" translated by "Romanian's crop"), a human translation will always make use of his/her creativity, intuition, cleverness, reflection and much more, therefore a computer will never replace humans. We should leave no room for ambiguity, misinterpretations and mistranslations. Therefore, one should undergo permanent training.

Globalization requires that each European citizen should speak at least two foreign languages; however, English is the most spoken language in the world, as a second language (L2). It is also the most important instrument of communication, and English words (Anglicisms) have invaded most of the languages. It was not our aim to develop on the positive and negative consequences of the global spread of English, but our aim was to underline the importance of speaking and translation abilities for any educated person. Speaking is the most important skill in communication, as we need to negotiate, socialize, etc.; still, translation is also important for practical purposes.

Since languages are not symmetrical, translation is not an easy job, as finding the right equivalent is sometimes almost impossible. When encountering translation problems such as not finding the right equivalent, or it's simply a slip of the tongue (except for the key words), it is better to remember Leon Levitchi's piece of advice: "when in doubt, leave out" (Levitchi, L., 1994). At the same time we should not forget that if communication is learned by communicating, we learn translation by being constantly exposed to real life situations in which we are exposed to the language and therefore instead of teaching and learning about translation, we should learn how to translate by doing so.

We should also remember Newmark's famous words: *those who can translate, translate, those who cannot translate write about it.*

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