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(UN)QUESTIONABLE USE OF ANGLICISMS IN ROMANIAN COMPUTERESE

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Abstract

In recent years, due to the fact that, on the one hand, English has become a lingua franca of communication, being all-pervasive in fields such as economics, business, IT or medicine and, on the other hand, to the fact that technology has evolved at a very fast pace, new specialised terms have emerged in order to accommodate this rapid change, which more often than not do not have equivalents in other languages. The present paper is intended to present the influence that English has had over the specialised terminology in the field of computer science, focusing on the English language as a primary source for a great number of lexical and morphological innovations in the Romanian information technology-related vocabulary. The paper will demonstrate that, although the use of Anglicisms may be the only solution due to the untranslatability of the specialised computer science terms in some cases, there are also instances in which the respective terms can either be translated or have a phonetically and orthographically adapted Romanian equivalent. The conclusion of the study is that the Romanian language displays a natural general disposition towards adopting and adapting borrowed information technology terms to the detriment of their perfectly functional Romanian equivalents. Most often, the translation of the specialised terms occurs when the respective word is used by and widely known to the general public, whereas the very specialised English terms are adopted as such when they refer to specific branches of IT.

Keywords: Anglicisms; information technology; borrowings; vocabulary;

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the increasing interest in achieving globalisation has led, from a linguistic point of view, to the tendency towards the prevalent use of English in numerous domains of activity, among which business, diplomacy, politics, higher education, medicine and the media.

On the other hand, the Romanian lexical system is characterised by an open character, a fact confirmed by the massive loans from different European languages such as English, French, Italian, German, Russian etc. in the last few decades. The specialised language of computer science, which plays an important and, at the same time, special part in this category of loans, is evolving at an astonishing pace, expanding worldwide at a scale which is difficult to match by any other domain, with an extremely

high rate of innovation and renewal, most IT texts being written in English, which functions as a lingua franca in this domain, too. As a consequence of this very fast pace of renewal, the translation of most IT terms poses a problem to many translators since the Romanian IT terminology can't always keep up with this evolution. That is the reason why most IT terms are translated into Romanian by using borrowings and calques, the more specialised the language the more borrowings and calques being used.

The present paper focuses on Anglicisms used in computer science and aims at providing a complex, yet not exhaustive, classification of these IT-based terms, the examples being selected mainly from English IT textbooks intended for computer science students and covering a wide range of areas in the field of IT such as hardware, software, databases, computer networks, or the Internet.

2. TERM TRANSLATION PATTERNS IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE OF IT.

In Vinay and Darbelnet's view (1958:85), borrowings or loans are commonly used in translation "to overcome a lacuna, usually a metalinguistic one (e.g. a new technical process, an unknown concept), borrowing being the simplest of all translation methods", whereas a calque is "a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements. The result is either i) a lexical calque (…), i.e. a calque which respects the syntactic structure of the TL, whilst introducing a new mode of expression or ii) a structural calque (…), which introduces a new construction into the language."

The Oxford Dictionaries mention the fact that the term *Anglicism* was first used in the 17th century and refers to an expression from English used in another language. According to DEX, an *anglicism* is "a specific English expression; a borrowed English word, without being necessary, in another language and not integrated into it." (our translation)

In the present paper, the term *Anglicism* includes both words of English origin, which are in the process of assimilation and terms which have not been fully adapted to the Romanian language rules.

According to Postolea (2017:169), whose classification will be used to group the approximately 250 IT terms, provided by the author of the present paper, computer science Anglicisms may be classified into three further categories, depending on their degree of naturalisation in Romanian, namely: full loans, acclimatised loans and assimilated loans.

2.1. FULL LOANS

As Sorina Postolea puts it, loanwords "which are used with the least possible amount of adaptation to and integration into the phonological, spelling or grammatical systems of Romanian (…) may be defined as pure or full borrowings." (2017: 169)

A common feature of all full loans introduced into Romanian is the fact that they are used as invariable forms, their transfer involving a transference of meaning, of structural-morphological and grammatical features. Therefore, for instance, although Romanian adjectives are variable and agree in gender, number and case with the nouns they determine, the IT adjectival forms borrowed from English are invariable, regardless of the form of the nouns they determine: *wireless, online, wi-fi, multimedia, flash, smart.*

In their turn, full loans are divided into: full words, acronyms and appellations.

In the subcategory of full loans, one may mention terms such as: *browser, web, server, applet, hyperlink, hypertext, click, enter, link, cookie, website, tag, bit, byte, mouse, laptop, pixel, router, cache, modem, switch, hub, blu-ray (disk), hotspot, online, scroll, gadget, bluetooth, hardware, drive, script, bitcoin, caps lock, desktop, drag and drop, font, (memory) stick, hacker, driver, firewall, software, hard disk, spam, joystick, trackball, touch pad, phishing, podcast, buffer, cloud, e-mail, bug, plotter, card, template, host, backspace, blog, bold, shift, zoom, tutorial, glitch, widget, scanner, mainframe, chip, proxy*. An idiosyncrasy of this category is that some terms are exclusively used in the ICT domain, while others are taken from general English and transferred into computerese, but with a totally different meaning (*cloud, bug, script, host, cookie, tag, stick* etc.). *Cloud* is a term used in computing to describe services provided over a network by a collection of remote servers, providing massive, distributed storage and processing power, which can be accessed by any Internet-connected device running a web browser, *bug* denotes an error in a software program, *script* is a computer language with a series of commands

within a file that is capable of being executed without being compiled, *host* is a computer or other device that communicates with other hosts on a network and it includes clients and servers that send or receive data, services or applications. Furthermore, *cookie* denotes, in computer science, a small amount of data generated by a website and saved by a web browser, its purpose being to remember information about the user, similar to a preference file created by a software application, a *tag* indicates what should be displayed on the screen when the page loads, being the basic formatting tool used in HTML and other mark-up language, whereas a *(memory) stick* is a type of flash memory used to store data for digital cameras, camcorders and other kinds of electronics.

Full loans also include examples of acronyms or initialisms such as: *CPU (Central Processing Unit), GPU (Graphics Processing Unit), USB (Universal Serial Bus), IT&C (Information Technology and Communications), HD (High Definition), ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange), SMS (Short Messaging Service), BIOS (Basic Input Output System), TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface), SD (card) (Secure Digital), SSD (Solid State Drive), LAN (Local Area Network), MAN (Metropolitan Area Network), MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group), 3D (three dimensional), 2D (two dimensional), CC (carbon copy), ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network), POS (Point-of-sale), HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language), http (hypertext transfer protocol), URL (Uniform Resource Locator), CD (Compact Disk), DVD (Digital Versatile Disk), PC (Personal Computer), RAM (Random Access Memory), ROM (Read-Only-Memory), www (worldwide web), HDD (Hard Disk Drive), LED (Light Emitting Diode), LCD (Liquid crystal Display), PIN (personal identification number), DBMS (Database Management System), PHP (Hypertext Pre-processor), SQL (Structured Query Language), FORTRAN (Formula Translator), ALGOL (Algorithmic Language), COBOL (Common Business-Oriented Language), XML (Extensible Mark-up Language), LISP (List Processing), MATLAB (Matrix Laboratory), BASIC (Beginners' Symbolic All-Purpose Instruction Code), IBM (International Business Machines), CPI (characters per inch), DPI (dots per inch), CRT (cathode ray tube), MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), API (application programming interface), DNS (Domain Name Server), ORB (Object Request Broker), ISA (Instruction Set Architecture), IC (integrated circuit), ALU (Arithmetic and Logic Unit), SLI (Scalable Link Interface)*.

The pronunciation of these acronyms or initialisms varies, some being pronounced as acronyms according to the Romanian phonology rules (*BIOS, LED*), others being pronounced according to the Romanian alphabet (*LCD, SSD, URL, PHP, HDMI* or *HDD)*, others oscillating between the English and the Romanian pronunciation (*CPU, GPU)* and, finally, some others tending to keep their English pronunciation in Romanian, even in the case in which they receive Romanian inflectional marks: *PC, CD, DVD, IP*.

Appellations also represent a consistent share of the foreign lexical stock present in the Romanian language of IT. Among them, the most well-known are: *Mozilla, Chrome, Linux, Intel, AMD, ATI, NVIDIA, ASUS, Android, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Borland, Apple, Oracle, Verbatim, Adobe, Yahoo, eBay, Hewlett Packard, Xerox, Dell, Adobe, Macintosh, Unix*.

2.2. ACCLIMATISED LOANS

Some of the above-mentioned full loans have also become acclimatised to Romanian, i.e. they received some of the phonological, spelling and/or grammatical features of their hosting language. According to Ciobanu (1996), the process of morphological adaptation of English loans precedes the phonological and graphemic one. Consequently, this type of loans keep their structural features as English words, but they also receive some enclitic determiners: *software-ul, disk-ul, hardware-ul, notebook-ul, display-ul, desktop-ul,, site-ul, device-ul* etc.

Another type of terms which are introduced into Romanian as acclimatised loans are intialisms or acronyms such as: *HDD –ul,, CPU-ul, LED-ul, USB-ul, PC-ul), CD-ul, DVD-ul, IP-ul, PIN-ul.*

2.3. ASSIMILATED LOANS

Assimilated loans show the highest degree of adaptation to the particularities of the Romanian language, suffering modifications in their spelling and grammatical features which make them resemble the Romanian words to a greater extent.

The largest category of assimilated loans is represented by common nouns. Assimilated loans are different from acclimatised loans. If in the former category the Romanian enclitic definite articles are separated from the borrowed English word by a hyphen, in the latter one, they are usually spelt as a Romanian lexeme. Some examples of assimilated loans, using enclitic determiners are: *faxul, serverul, formatul, cardul, tonerul, tunerul, scanerul, clipul, cursorul, laserul, printerul*. Mention should be made that certain assimilated loans can exhibit plural morphemes like *–e* or *–uri*: *servere, foldere, tonere, laptopuri, carduri, clipuri* or proclitic determiners: *un/nişte plotter(e), un/nişte foldere, un/nişte printere* etc.

Moreover, there are some orthographically unadapted English verbs (*to browse, to upload, to download, to upgrade, to update*), which conjugate observing the Romanian morphological rules. In addition, numerous verbs are often created from English verbs or nouns using derivative suffixes such as *–a*: *a boota, a formata, a se loga, a printa, a se mapa, a downloada, a uploada, a blura, a reseta, a updata, a upgrada, a customiza* or *-ui*: *a zipui, a chatui, a şerui*.

2.4. CALQUES

An accurate description of calques is provided by the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. (p. 182) Unlike loans, which are imported from English through direct transfer, calques are the result of a process of translation. Humbley and Gomez Capuz divide calques into three main categories: homologues, analogues and homophones.

In the case of the first category, i.e. homologues, both words are similar in meaning, while the form is different. Here, one may talk of a translation proper. Some examples of homologues, which are usually semantic ones, include pairs such as: *bandwidth – lăţime de bandă; computation – calcul; background – fundal; board – placă; to download – a descărca; tray – tavă; network – reţea; file – fişier; to surf – a naviga; screen – ecran; core – nucleu; frame – cadru; to debug – a depana; to emulate – a imita*. These semantic calques imply the transfer of a sememe or unity of meaning with the conditions that the word in the TL should be at least bi-semantic and that at least one of its meanings should correspond to the meaning of the loanword.

As far as analogues are concerned, they may be considered to have a much higher degree of literalness, which is illustrated by examples such as: *peripheral – periferic; application – aplicaţie; system – sistem; virus – virus; version – versiune; to operate – a opera; to install – a instala; port – port; memory – memorie; tablet – tabletă; menu – meniu; channel – canal; partition – partiţie; to increment – a incrementa; redundant – redundant, to operate – a opera*.

In the third category, that of homophones, word pairs, according to Gomez-Capuz (1997: 86), are established "when both words only share the form, but without any similarity in meaning." As a consequence, most TL terms are mistranslations of their SL correspondents, but they are nevertheless used as such in Romanian IT texts. Some examples of homophonic pairs include: *to capture* (to save the information currently displayed on the computer screen) – *a captura* (to seize an enemy, to catch a criminal, to loot or to entrap a wild animal); *resolution* (the number of pixels contained on a display monitor, expressed in terms of the number of pixels on the horizontal axis and the number on the vertical axis) – *rezoluţie* (in Romanian, the term is used only in legal environments); *to support* (in IT, support refers either to functionality that is provided between or among products, programs, devices, modes or accessories or the personal assistance vendors provide to technicians and end users concerning hardware, operating systems and programs) – *a suporta* (the Romanian term is mainly used with the meaning of to bear, to endure, to suffer, to tolerate); *attachment* (a file – an image, video or text document – sent with an e-mail message) – *ataşament* (a feeling of strong affection towards someone or something).

3. CONCLUSION

Computer science is an extremely dynamic field where new words appear on a daily basis. As a consequence, the number of Anglicisms retaining the English form in IT is continuously rising, English terms being chosen for their conciseness and conceptual accuracy. The above presentation of IT Anglicisms displays the Romanian language hospitality and openness towards foreign loans, the assimilation of Anglicisms illustrating a process of acceptance of Romanian inflections for gender, number, case or of definite and indefinite articles.

Borrowings and calques represent the first-line procedure when dealing with the translation of IT terminology and, although most of them are intended to fill a lexical gap in the domain, some other, such as homophones, are questionably, if not incorrectly, translated into Romanian. One may also notice that in many instances in which an English IT term can be translated into Romanian, as there is a Romanian correspondent, the use of the English term is preferred, a few examples being: *printer (imprimantă), device/gadget (dispozitiv), login (autentificare), bug (eroare), background (fundal), template (șablon), delay (decalaj), computer (calculator), user (utilizator), cancel (a anula), gamer (jucător).*

To conclude, one may assert that borrowings represent a normal phenomenon in the evolution of any language as they enrich it. IT&C Anglicisms as originated from English, which is definitely the dominant language of international business and global communication, help speakers and professionals in the domain keep up with the progress in information technology and communications. Thus, it is of an utmost importance to understand and accept this as a natural and irreversible process in the development of the Romanian language.

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