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# CHALLENGES IN THE PERCEPTION AND TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH BUSINESS TERMS IN THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE

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*We can all witness that the global economy, the use of the Internet and social media have resulted in a greater number of English business terms circulating on the global level, thus inevitably affecting the Croatian language as well. In this article, the authors observe different translations of certain frequently used business English terms from the course books and differences in their perception in English and Croatian language. These differences may be due to students' immersion in the new social and educational environment, their previous knowledge of English language and their acquisition of new vocabulary for specific purposes during their studies at the Polytechnic of Šibenik.*

**Keywords:** globalization, conceptual meaning, the language in context, social background, translations.

## 1. Introduction

Along with globalization continuing to change the world, the need for foreign language skills and intercultural knowledge has become more urgent and evident (Howard, 2006, pp. 61-83). Our graduates, if they want to become globally competent, need to act effectively and responsibly in multilingual and multicultural environments. As institutions of higher education, we have to strive to help students acquire cultural and linguistic expertise. English is the leading international communication tool in the modern world. Many spheres such as economics, technology, and science have been greatly influenced by the emergence of the English terminology. Language teaching for specific purposes which Jourdenais and Shaw stress (2005) leads to content-based instruction for specific employment and educational objectives as cited in Howard (2006, p. 62). The authors will, therefore, focus on the relationship between English and Croatian expressions in the process of their translation and implementation in the specific fields of economics and law (Bratić, Kardum Goleš, & Perica, 2015, p. 163). The authors focus on the analysis of preferences between using Croatian or English expressions and the differences in translating those expressions (Jurič, 2013, pp.

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567-579). When considering the international character of English and developments in the field of economics and information technology, very often no time is left for languages to develop their equivalents of English words. The authors of this article aim to emphasise challenges in perception and translations of certain frequently used business English terms from the course books. These challenges may be due to globalizing status of English or students' immersion in the new social and educational environment, their previous knowledge of English language and their acquisition of new vocabulary for specific purposes during their studies at the Polytechnic of Šibenik. Most of those words are either used as anglicisms, so students often miss the exact conceptual meaning, or have entered into Croatian without leaving time for those words to develop their own »equivalents«. The survey that the authors conducted among the students of the Polytechnic of Šibenik looks into some frequently used words from the field of economics and administration. The list of frequently used words was taken from two course books that are used as teaching material at the Polytechnic.

## **2. English as a globalized *lingua franca***

Globalization has favoured English as the medium for international communication. In the past few decades, with the development of industry, the global economy and the Internet, English has positioned itself as a *lingua franca* among non-native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011). Today, only every fourth speaker of English is a native speaker of English. According to Diamanovski (2005), English words make for 40% of new words in the field of food, drinks, informatics and mobile technology (p. 167). That is why we may attribute English with the adjective "global" based on its usage as the first foreign language to be learnt in schools all around the world. Crystal (1997) confirms that the reason why one language becomes a leading language and so widely spoken on a global level does not have to do with the number of people speaking that language or with the eventual simplicity of that language. Crystal explains that there is an obvious relationship between language dominance and the economic, cultural and even military power (in the case of great empires). That power is crucial in determining one language as a dominant one on a global scale (p. 6).

Few terms are currently enjoying greater popularity than the term globalization. It has become a keyword in theoretical and political discourse as well as in everyday life and language. Some experts argue that globalization has achieved a virtual hegemony over many aspects of our lives with an air of inevitability (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001, p. 8).

Globalization would involve "growing diffusion, expanding interdependence, more transnational institutions, and emerging world culture and consciousness" (J. Lechner & Boli, 2008, p. 2). Whether globalization is to be perceived as deterritorialization or as a process in which the constraints of physical space lose their hold on social relations it is a very powerful academic term (J. Lechner & Boli, 2008, p. 4). We have witnessed the globalization of pedagogic practices in universities with an increased number of internationalisation programmes which promote courses using English as a medium of instruction (Gotti, 2016, p. 12).

Certain voices warn us about modern society as being „McDonaldized“, homogeneous, disregarding particularities for the benefit of the progress and ultimately, profit (Ritzer, 1996). Scollon and Wong Scollon (1995) claim that the spread of English has had relevant

ideological and ethical implications as it has often been seen as a factor of marginalisation or even obliteration of important existing differences among non-English speaking communities thus preventing the authentic intercultural discourse as cited in Gotti (2016, p. 48). Canagarajah (1999) states that globalizing trends commonly rely on covert strategies that are aimed at reducing participants' specificities and they will hybridise local identities in favour of Anglo-centric textual models as cited in Gotti's work (2016, p. 48). Whether this is the case at our institution will be discussed in the following sections and survey analysis.

### **3. Language acquisition and social dimension**

Considering the history of linguistics and language apprehension and acquisition in general, the idea that social environments influence how people perceive a foreign language does not appear to be a new one. Already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American linguists argued this very issue. American linguist Edward Sapir (1921) supports the idea that human language is strongly influenced by one's social environment and conditions in which we live. No activity such as talk and subsequently the development of language could be developed without social circumstances in which that language is acquired. He states that:

"Speech is a human activity that varies without an assignable limit as we pass from social group to social group because it is a purely historical heritage of the group, the product of long-continued social usage. (...) Walking is an organic, an instinctive, function (not, of course, itself an instinct); speech is a non-instinctive, acquired, "cultural" function." (Sapir, 1921, p. 2)

B. L. Whorf followed Sapir's ideas and together they contributed to the principle of the linguistic relativity, which was later known as "the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" according to which language we speak has a great influence on our thoughts and perception of the world around us (C. Levinson, 2012), so speakers of different languages think and perceive reality in different ways and each new language has its view of the world (Hussein, 2012).

Skinner (1957) provided one of the earliest explanations of language acquisition. He based his assumptions on behaviouristic theory according to which our language is influenced and determined by the human environment in which we live. When talking about language acquisition in general, Skinner provided explanations of how language is acquired at the earliest stage of our life. According to him:

"Verbal behaviour is shaped and sustained by a verbal environment— by people who respond to behaviour in certain ways because of the practices of the group of which they are members." (Skinner, 1957, p. 226)

Skinner's and other behaviouristic theories were largely criticised by Noam Chomsky who states that language cannot be acquired just by reinforcement and that there must be some kind of inner structure or component that helps us to acquire language and if it was not so, small children would need much more than two years to learn how to speak (Lemetyinen, 2012). He believes that linguistic theory is "mentalistic" since "it is concerned with discovering a mental reality underlying actual behaviour" (Chomsky, 1965, p. 4).

The authors of this article consider Sapir and Whorf's idea that language, once it is acquired, can influence the way we perceive other languages since our native language or mother tongue is under constant social influence. Taking this into consideration, in

connection to what the authors are trying to present, and referring to their professional experience of working as foreign language teachers on higher education institutions, they believe that the translation into Croatian of certain business English terms and expressions is highly influenced by the social and educational environment in which our students live and study.

Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to investigate whether there is a difference in perception of certain words from English to Croatian under the influence of respondents' social and educational environment and to analyse the influence of globalization regarding preferences in using business terms.

#### **4. Method**

The authors surveyed the students of the Polytechnic of Šibenik, asking them to answer to some questions referring to their social background as well as to give translations of the specialised language that is largely used in business as selected from two course books (Trappe & Tullis, 2005) (Widdowson, 2010). It is interesting to observe translations that they have provided in the survey and the way those translations vary or differ from the official translations offered in major English vocabularies.

The survey was conducted in January 2019 on a sample of 81 respondents from the first and second year of undergraduate studies of management and public administration at the Polytechnic of Šibenik. The research was put in the form of a questionnaire to examine certain social and cultural determinants that the authors felt would reveal further influence on conceptual differences in the translation of particular business terms from English to Croatian. The survey was conducted through Google forms during regular lectures of English at the Polytechnic.

#### **5. Results and discussion**

The age group of respondents was mainly from 18 to 24 and 96.4% of the respondents were born in Croatia, 1.2% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 2.4% in Germany. Taking into account regional distribution of respondents, 45.67% of students are from the Šibenik-Knin County while the remaining comes from the Split-Dalmatia, Dubrovnik-Neretva, Sisak-Moslavina, Bjelovar-Bilogora, Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, and Herzeg-Bosnia Counties.<sup>2</sup>

The respondents were given the question about the circumstances in which they use English and multiple answers were allowed. The results reveal that 92.7% of them used English at the Polytechnic, 89% on social networks, 40.2% at work ( which can be explained by a large share of part-time students who work during their studies and this is connected with the fact that their study programme is professional and they start working relatively early on as part of their regular practical training at the Polytechnic ), and 1.2% playing online games, listening to music, in everyday communication and among friends respectively. 98.8% of the respondents believed that English is important for communication in today's business world.

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<sup>2</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina is a neighbouring state of Croatia.

However, when asked about their preference in using English or Croatian expressions when writing their seminar papers, 79.3% preferred to use Croatian terms while only 20.7% gave preference to English versions. What is of particular importance to this research is the students' contribution to translating a selection of business terms in English either pre-taught during the teaching process at the Polytechnic or in specialized literature and business or the public environment in Croatia. Single words and compounds were given to students who translated them and they are the following words: background, brainstorming, business, feedback, leader, management, marketing, outsourcing, template and tender. 91.9% of the respondents answered that the word *background* means *pozadina* (Engl. *background*<sup>3</sup>), 14.6% agreed that the word *brainstorming* refers to *oluja mozgova* (Engl. *storm of brains*), 7.3% of them translated it as *mozganje* (Engl. *speculation, pondering*), but the authors have also found interesting other alternative singular suggestions like: *intezivno razmišljanje* (Engl. *intensive thinking*), *potraga za novim idejama* (Engl. *search for new ideas*), *protok ideja* (Engl. *flow of ideas*), *razmišljanje* (Engl. *deliberation, reflection, consideration*). 78% of respondents translated *business* as *posao* (Engl. *work, job, business*), 80.4% translated the word *leader* as *vođa* (Engl. *leader, conductor*), while the word *leadership* 40.2% of them referred to as *vodstvo* (Engl. *guidance, leadership*). 58.98% of the respondents translated the word *management* as *menadžment*. As far as for the word *manager*, 31.7% translated it as *menadžer* while 8.5% of the respondents offered the translation of *menadžer* as *upravitelj* (Engl. *manager*). There were also other translations of the word *manager* like: *menadžer voditelj* (Engl. *manager*), *menadžer upravitelj* (Engl. *manager*), *voditelj* (Engl. *leader, director*) and other similar suggestions. Moreover, 48.8% of respondents translated the word *marketing* as *marketing* while there were also other Croatian variations interesting to take into consideration; like *marketing u poslu* (Engl. *marketing in business*), *reklamiranje* (Engl. *advertising*), *promocija* (Engl. *promotion*), *oglašavanje* (Engl. *advertising*). 14.6% of the respondents translated *outsourcing* as *vanjski suradnici* (Engl. *external associates*), 4.9% as *vanjski izvori* (Engl. *external sources*), about 25% of respondents did not give an answer or just answered negatively while it was interesting to observe alternative translations of the word *outsourcing* like: *izvori* (Engl. *sources*), *premještanje poslova* (Engl. *transfer of jobs*), *prebacivanje poslova vani* (Engl. *transferring jobs out*), *prikupljanje informacija* (Engl. *collecting information*), *vanjska suradnja* (Engl. *external cooperation*), *vanjsko obavljanje djela* (Engl. *outdoor performance of the work*) and others. 15.9% of respondents translated the word *template* as *predložak* (Engl. *specimen – in this edition the word template is not present*), while more than 50% of respondents did not give any answer. Other singular interesting suggestions were *obrazac* (Engl. *form*) and *tema* (Engl. *theme*). Word *tender* was translated as *ponuda* (Engl. *offer, tender*) in 20.7% of cases while the greater part of respondents did not present any answer. Although translations of some words (where offered) are correct and much in accordance with translations in major Croatian dictionaries (such as Bujas, Kljajić, Anić, Klaić, Domović) there are words which have not been successfully translated or translated altogether. These words were pre-taught at the Polytechnic so the findings suggest that students have not acquired them. Our students are expected to be at B1 (intermediate) level of language proficiency but it can be concluded that many of them did not meet this requirement.

<sup>3</sup> The English translations of the words that students offered as their translations were taken from (Drvodelić, 1996).

There are some interesting translations from this survey and that is how the respondents translated the word *business* as *posao*, *leader* as *vođa*, *leadership* as *vodstvo* (all correct translations) while in the case of words like *management*, *manager*, and *marketing* they preferred the English words in the form of anglicism. Croatian translation of the word *management* is *vodstvo*, *rukovodstvo*, *uprava*, *upravljanje*, for the *manager* it is *upravitelj*, *voditelj*, *ravnatelj*, and in the case of *marketing* it is *promicanje*, but the Croatian expressions were not used by our students. It seems that they prefer to use those English versions and not the ones offered by official Croatian dictionaries. It can be believed that English words are more appealing in the business environment because of the phenomenon of globalization and internationalisation. One possible conclusion could be that internationalised, globalized words are more accepted in the business environment and also highly present in the media because they are seem deterritorialized.

Moreover, emphasis should also be given to those words that have been entering Croatian and other languages where often almost no time is left for them to develop their version of those words which may be the case with words like: *outsourcing*, *tender*, *draft*, *template*, and others. In the business environment, there are always new notions to name and sometimes languages adopt foreign expressions without changing their orthography. These innovations pose problems because in translation they can rely on using the existing words with new meaning, descriptive forms or neologisms, and since English is perceived as *lingua franca* in professional communication, English expressions are widely used (Kovačić, 2014).

## 6. Conclusion

Internationalization in higher education and especially in professional study programmes taught at the Polytechnic offers great possibilities in terms of international dimension brought upon by the increased use of English in academic settings outside the Anglophone world. Emerging economies demand good language skills, student mobility and the knowledge of English is perceived as part of essential skills. What this survey reflects are the challenges that confront teachers of languages for specific purposes and their students who strive to achieve a compromise between the strongly globalized world and the need to protect the national language for specialized purposes. As a conclusion, the authors would like to stress the need for one constant strive in finding the proper translations of the commonly accepted English words. The fact is that we live in a globalized world where English undoubtedly has imposed itself as an internationalised language used today in the world of economics, technology, and tourism and almost in all spheres of life. But what is important is to cultivate in our students the awareness that languages in contact like English and Croatian can enrich the students' language skills in both languages through translation and comparison between different conceptions that words have in the respective cultures.

This study could provide important implications for the theory and practice of English in LSP classrooms of higher education institutions. The authors of this article hope that the findings will contribute to the raising of awareness among the teachers of English for specific purposes of the notion that our mother tongue and globalization may, to a certain extent, influence the way certain English words are perceived, and that they will stress the



importance of the need for correct translations of those English words. However, due to a very limited sample, it can be concluded that this research should be conducted on a wider set of examinees that incorporates graduates, teachers and possibly professionals from the business sector and, certainly, a larger selection of chosen words.

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#### Sažatak

### **IZAZOVI U PERCEPCIJI I PRIJEVODU ENGLESKOG POSLOVNOG NAZIVLJA U HRVATSKOM JEZIKU**

*Svi možemo svjedočiti da su globalna ekonomija, upotreba Interneta i društvenih medija rezultirali većim brojem engleskog poslovnog nazivlja koji kruži na globalnoj razini, što neizostavno utječe i na hrvatski jezik. Autori u ovom radu analiziraju različite prijevode pojedinih često korištenih izraza poslovnog engleskog iz udžbenika i razlike u njihovoj percepciji na engleskom i hrvatskom jeziku. Te razlike mogu biti posljedica uključivanja studenata u novo društveno i obrazovno okruženje, njihovog prethodnog poznavanja engleskog jezika i stjecanja novog vokabulara za posebne svrhe tijekom studija na Veleučilištu u Šibeniku.*

**Ključne riječi:** *globalizacija, konceptualno značenje, jezik u kontekstu, društvena pozadina, prijevodi.*