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English borrowings in two contemporary Polish lexicons of anglicisms

In a couple of my articles I have claimed that English is not a threat to Polish as some polonists claim; it will not replace Polish as a language of communication in Poland and, what is even more important, its impact on Polish is relatively insignificant. To prove this I have provided five arguments of different sorts, which will be briefly summarized in the first part of this paper, and another argument concerning the occurrence of English loans in two contemporary Polish lexicons of anglicisms will be dealt with in the second section.

Five arguments supporting the thesis of this paper are as follows.

First of all, an analysis of the data taken from Polish dictionaries of frequency is presented. Thus, in the modified version of *Słownik frekwencyjny polszczyzny współczesnej* by Kurcz, Lewicki, Sambor, Szafran and Woronczak (1990), the authors analyse the data collected during the period 1963-1967. Evidently the result of such investigation cannot be fully satisfactory as this comparatively new lexicon is in fact outdated. The same observation concerns another dictionary of frequency written by Imiołczyk (1987). Its scope differs from Kurcz *et al.*'s (1990) lexicon since Imiołczyk refrains from constructing his range lists on the basis of continuous written texts as Kurcz and others do but on the basis of five dictionaries of foreign languages, two lexicons of the Polish language and Kurcz *et al.*'s (1974-1977) dictionary of frequency. The material analysed by Imiołczyk again dates back to the sixties and seventies. Unfortunately, no other lexicon of frequency has been published in Poland so far. However, to get a general idea concerning the frequency of English loanwords in the Polish language I have analysed the range list of absolute frequency in Kurcz *et al.* (1990). It appears that out of 10 355 enumerated lexical items 59 constitute English loans (40 words and 19 derivatives). Although the outdated list of the most often used anglicisms

in Polish is not fully adequate, it indicates a general tendency toward the frequency of English borrowings in Polish.

Similar conclusions may be drawn from analysis of the range list found in the above-mentioned lexicon by Imiołczyk (1987). Here the range list consists of over 5000 items and only thirteen anglicisms are enumerated. In general, it may be observed that the number of English borrowings in Polish is not very high.

This is supported by the examination of two relatively recent dictionaries. The first, a minimum lexicon of Polish by Kurzowa and Zgólkowa (1992) consists of 1520 entries of the highest frequency. Only twelve English loanwords are included therein. They are: *autobus* (E *bus*), *bar*, *dżem* (E *jam*), *eksporter* (E *exporter*), *film*, *komputer* (E *computer*), *kontener* (E *container*), *parking* (E *car park*), *rower* (E *Rover* 'bicycle'), *tramwaj* (E *tramway*) and *wagon*. The second work under consideration is Markowski's (1995) dictionary of foreign words used in the mass media. This book contains 1100 words of foreign origin used in the television, radio and press. As we are told in the preface, Markowski has tried to include as many English loans as possible. Despite this, only 126 borrowings and 11 semantic loans from English can be found there. This constitutes a little over 10% of foreign words included in the dictionary. The majority of lexemes are borrowings from Latin and, less frequently, from Greek. On the basis of the above it may be concluded that the influence of English on Polish is less than that of the classical languages (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1996).

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that the influence of English on Polish before the Second World War was much greater than is generally assumed. In the well-known, and often quoted article, by Koneczna (1936-1937) only 531 anglicisms are documented. However, according to my calculation far more English loans were known before World War II. This has been proved by an analysis of M. Arct's *Słownik wyrazów obcych, wyrażzeń i przysłów cudzoziemskich* published in 1936, where over 1300 English borrowings are to be found. Besides, it is interesting to observe that 65% of the anglicisms that were in common usage in that period are nowadays considered to be ephemeral, which most probably would be the case of many contemporary English loans (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2003).

Thirdly, it should be stressed that although there are many English borrowings used by, for instance, certain professionals – to cite the most obvious example of specialists in computer science – in fact an average speaker of Polish does not understand them and thus uses them sparingly. This statement may be readily supported by research conducted by the 1999 CBOS poll, in which it transpired that little over 50% of the respondents were capable of explaining the meaning of particular lexemes well. For instance, 91% of correct answers were given for *supermarket*, 82% for *business*, 75% for *talk-show*, 70% for *dealer*, 50% for *fast food* and only 49% for *miting* (after Nettmann-Multanowska 2003). It is clear that such variables as sex, age and education correlated with the comprehension of these items. However, in order to prove that the knowledge of the semantics of even well-assimilated anglicisms is negligible, which correlates with their low

frequency of usage, I have drawn up a questionnaire consisting of 50 well-adapted anglicisms extracted from *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms. A Usage Dictionary of Anglicisms in Sixteen European Languages* edited by M. Goerlach.¹ Although the lexicon was published in 2001 the collection of the data was concluded by 1995, which means that the headwords found in this book should theoretically be readily understood by the average speaker of Polish. The questionnaire was distributed among 25 first year students of one English teacher training college and among 25 first year students of another English teacher training college in October 2001. The aforementioned students were given a list of 50 English borrowings² and asked to provide their definitions in Polish. Every response was deemed acceptable irrespective of its semantic accuracy. Generally speaking, the results of the investigation were similar, namely there were 22.16% of questionable responses in one college and 29.5% of erroneous answers in the other. It is worth explaining that originally I was planning to give the questionnaire to students attending various kinds of schools but I obtained such poor results from even well-educated students that it led me to the obvious conclusion that the knowledge of anglicisms among the students from lower educational background – and usually weaker command of English – would be even worse (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2002).

Furthermore, similar results supporting the claim that the occurrence of anglicisms in Polish is relatively low have been presented by Otwinowska-Kasztelanic (2000). She scrutinised the degree of impact of the English language on spoken Polish among the younger generation of Poles (aged between 19 and 35) with regard to three areas: lexical, semantic and syntactic. As far as the first area is concerned, the corpus consists of 288 tokens of English loanwords, which constitutes 0.41 percent of all the running words of the corpus (70 178 items). Many of the loans present in the records have been found neither in the literature of the subject nor in the dictionaries of contemporary Polish. A majority of anglicisms are borrowings from the field of computing, which lends support to the above-mentioned claim that the usage of English loans prevails in some semantic areas. The corpus also indicates that the use of English borrowings is connected with one's idiolect, e.g. one speaker used 97 tokens of loanwords and some subjects used only one token, while 14 out of 41 speakers did not use any English loanwords. Besides, it must be added that the evidence of the influence of English in the two other areas, that is semantic and syntactic, is of even lesser significance.

Finally, it should be stressed that the impact of English on Polish is comparable, if not to a lesser extent, to the influence of English on other languages.

¹ The dictionary indicates whether a lexical item is well-assimilated in a particular language.

² Since there are not many entries beginning with letter A, items starting with letter B have been taken into account.

In order to substantiate the above statement, again the quoted *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* must be cited. This is the first lexicon of its kind as it includes sixteen European languages from different language families but it excludes those in close contact with English (such as Irish or Welsh). Thus, the corpus has been collected from four Germanic languages (Icelandic, Norwegian, Dutch and German), four Slavonic (Russian, Polish, Croatian and Bulgarian), four Romance (French, Spanish, Italian and Romanian) and four other languages (Finnish, Hungarian, Albanian and Greek), which allowed for the analysis of a number of contrasts – Western vs. Eastern countries, regional comparisons (e.g. the Balkans), purist vs. open communities. As the editor of that particular lexicon pointed out, the *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* “is a documentation of the lexical input of English into European languages until the early 1990s (with a cut-off date of 1995); earlier loans are included, but we have concentrated on the modern lexis imported after World War II” (Goerlach, ed. 2001: XVI). Altogether over 3000 anglicisms have been collected. A word is included in the lexicon if it is recognizably English in form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology) and present in at least one of the languages tested. It means that internationalisms (e.g. *telephone*) as well as words transmitted via English (e.g. *avocado*) are excluded. Also as a rule names like *Amnesty International* are not included since their status is different in different languages in the sense that it is only in some languages that they become generic nouns. Only anglicisms that are known to the general educated reader are included which results in the omission of hundreds of lexemes belonging to the field of computing, economics, various technologies, sports or drug cultures.

My calculation concerning the proportion of the number of anglicisms present in Polish versus other languages has concentrated on three letters chosen at random, namely letters A and J (both of which have relatively few entries – less than ten pages each) as well as letter D (with an average number of head-words – 20 pages). Two remarks have to be added: 1) derivatives are treated as separate entries in this lexicon, 2) as mentioned above, the collection of the data was concluded by 1995; therefore new anglicisms present in Polish that are not included in the dictionary have been considered in my calculations as well, e.g. *doughnut* or *jet lag*. Thus, if we take into account letter A, it becomes evident that out of 97 items listed only 26 appear in Polish, which constitutes about 27%. In the case of letter J the situation differs since out of 80 English borrowings, 37 are present in Polish, which amounts to 46%. As far as letter D is concerned out of 218 items, 73 are found in Polish, which gives us 33%. Thus we are led to the conclusion that Polish in the context of other languages certainly does not belong to the group of languages abundant in English borrowings (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2004).

As has been alluded to, the following comments necessarily lead to the sixth argument supporting the claim of this paper. One lexicon taken into account was written by the present author and published in 1994. The data collected there

have been compared to that gathered ten years later, that is in 2004 (Mańczak-Wohlfeld, forthcoming). For the sake of brevity my comparison and calculation of the headwords in the two dictionaries have concentrated on the first three letters of the alphabet. As expected, the number of anglicisms has increased, however, not so significantly, especially if we still take into account the fact that some anglicisms present in 1994 have already disappeared. Generally, there are two reasons accounting for it: 1. some words already cited in 1994 as archaic are no longer used nowadays, 2. some items were only recorded in the mass media until the publication of the 1994 dictionary, and, it has turned out that then they have not entered the Polish lexicon.

There are relatively few entries beginning with letter A. For this reason only six English loans and one semantic borrowing have been added to the Polish lexis and no English loanwords have been eliminated from it. Here is a list of the lexical items: *AA* (E *Alcoholics Anonymous*),³ *abstrakt* (E *abstract*) 'a summary of the contents of a book etc.', *after shave* (E *after shaving*), *airport*,⁴ *aldosteron* (E *aldosterone*), *auditing / audyt* (E *auditing / audit*) 'an official examination of accounts'. The lexical item *audytor* < Lat *auditor* is one example of a semantic borrowing since the word *audytor* existed before in the meaning of a military or ecclesiastical judge.

An analysis of letter B is more rewarding for our research since more English words have been introduced into Polish and more have disappeared from it. Thus, the following 23 words have enriched the Polish lexicon: *back up* (E *back-up*) 'the procedure for making security copies for data', *baksy* (Am E slang *buck*, pl. *bucks*) 'a dollar', *banner* 'a large rectangular sign bearing a slogan or design and usually carried on two side-poles or a crossbar in a demonstration or procession', *bed and brekfast* (*BB*), *best*, *Big Brother*, *bikershop*,⁵ *billboard*, *billing* 'a list of telephone calls and their duration', *blog* = *weblog* (clipping), *blogger*, *blok* (E *block*) 'a fragment of the document marked in the computer text editor',⁶ *bodyguard*, *body-painting* (E *body painting*),⁷ *blue chip*, *boot* 'put a computer in the state of readiness', *boysband*, *bps* = *b(its) p(er) s(ecdnd)* (abbreviation), *brown sugar* 'a kind of heroin', *browse* 'read a survey data, files, etc.,

³ If the semantics of an English loan is the same in English and in Polish, the definition is not quoted. If, however, there are more senses of an English model, the semantic interpretation of a borrowing in Polish is suggested. Note that occasionally the meaning of an anglicism differs from its model (e.g. *cracker*, which denotes 'hacker' in Polish), then it is also cited. The definitions are quoted after *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1995), *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2002), Mańczak-Wohlfeld (forthcoming).

⁴ The last two examples are found only in written Polish.

⁵ This borrowing is present only in the written variety of Polish.

⁶ Other meanings of this word were found earlier (e.g. 'a large building, especially when subdivided').

⁷ The lexical item *body* has got as many as nine different senses but its full form *body-suit* is restricted to one semantic interpretation.

especially via a network', *browser* 'a person who reads or surveys data, files, etc., especially via a network', *brunch* = *br(eakfast)* + (*lu*)*nch* (clipping), *bungee* 'an elasticated cord or rope used in bungee jumping'.

During the analysed period of ten years the following four anglicisms recorded in the mass media did not enrich the Polish lexis: *bag*, *bandwagon*, *bar-keeper*, *bartender*. Two others, namely *bloomers* and *bord* marked as archaic in 1994 are not any longer prevalent in contemporary lexicons of the Polish language or of foreign words. Besides, one item (*brainstorming*) is nowadays used only as a Polish calque (*burza mózgów*).

An analysis of letter C provides us with slightly different results as there is a "better" proportion of recently introduced versus ephemeral anglicisms. It means that altogether nineteen English borrowings have been introduced into Polish and as many as nine anglicisms are no longer used. To start with the innovations, let me quote the following list: *callback* (E *call back*), which in Polish means a service provided by the telephone operator who calls the telephone user back and covers its cost, *call boy* 'a male prostitute who accepts appointments by telephone', *call center* (it is spelled according to the American English orthography, which may be rather due to the influence of the Polish graphic system than of the American English one; in British English it is spelt as *call centre*) 'helpline', *canyoning*, which in Polish denotes rafting in extreme conditions, *carding* 'illegal use of someone's credit cards on the Internet', *case study*, *cash flow*, *casting* 'the choice of actors or models to take part in a play, film or show', *citybike* (E *city bike*), *city light* 'illuminated advertisements displayed in the most frequented parts of a city', *clubbing*, *cluster* 'a close group of similar people, animals, things, etc.', *cottage* 'a small simple house, especially in the country', *cover* (E *cover version* / *cover*) 'a recording of a previously recorded song etc. made especially to take advantage of the original's success', *cracker* 'a hacker', *crazy* 'insane or mad', *CV* (Lat *curriculum vitae*, abbreviation pronounced according to the English phonetic rules), *cyberpunk*.

As far as the anglicisms that are not used any longer go, slightly more of them belong to the category of archaic lexical items. They are: *caddy*⁸ 'woman trousers popular in the thirties of the 20th century', *cakewalk* '1. a game developed from an American black contest in graceful walking with a cake as a prize, 2. a dance developed from this game, 3. the music for this dance', *capati* / *chapati* (E *chappati* / *chapatti* / *chuppati*), *chesterfield* 'a man's plain coat usually with a velvet collar', *cutaway* 'a coat with the front below the waist cut away'. The remaining lexemes recorded in the mass media are not nowadays present in Polish. They are: *challenger* 'someone who calls to take part in a contest or in a trial of strength', *controlling*, *cords* (E *corduroy* / *cords*), *corned beef* / *pork* (written Polish).

⁸ Its homonym used in the sense of a person who assists a golfer during a match by carrying clubs etc. is still used in contemporary Polish.

It is interesting to observe that most of the recently introduced anglicisms are of English origin, which means that they were already present either in Old English or in Middle English. However, it is worth noting some exceptions. These are: *AA* (*alcoholics* < medieval Lat *alcoholismus*, *anonymous* < Fr *anonyme* < Gr *anōnumos*), *aldosterone* (modern Lat *aldehyde* + Gr *stereos* + E *-one*), *bucks* (19th century, origin unknown), *bikershop* (E *bike* < E *bicycle* < Fr *bi* + Gr *kuklos*), in *bps* only *per is* of Latin origin, *browse* < Fr *broster*, *brunch – lunch* (16th century, origin unknown), *bungee* (origin unknown), *canyoning* < Sp *cañón* < Lat *canna* + E *-ing*), *cash flow – cash* < Fr *casse* or It *cassa* < Lat *capsa*, *CV* < Lat *curriculum vitae* as mentioned above, *cyberpunk – cyber-* < *cybernetics* < Gr *kubernētēs* + *-punk* (17th century, origin unknown, perhaps related to *spunk*).

As far as their assimilation is concerned, on the graphic level, in most cases, the analysed anglicisms follow the English graphic system. There are only a few exceptions: *abstrakt*, *audyt*, *audytor*, *baksy*, *blok*. Also some minor spelling changes occur, like the omission of a hyphen (P *backup* vs. E *back-up*), the treatment of one English word, e.g. *callboy* as two in Polish, i.e. *call boy* or vice versa, e.g. E *call back* vs. P *callback*.

The native speakers of Polish try to follow English patterns on the phonetic level but due to two different phonemic systems in the respective languages the pronunciation of English loans tends to be slightly polonized.

While analysing this group of English loanwords on the morphological level, we have to state that except for two verbs (*boot*, *browse*), two adjectives (*best*, *crazy*) and two abbreviations (*AA*, *bps*) all the remaining borrowings belong to the category of nouns, which is in agreement with the general tendency to mainly take over nouns from one European language into another. Some of them are modified by adjectives (*Big Brother*, *blue chip*, *brown sugar*) or by other nouns (*body painting*, *call boy*, *call center*, *case study*, *cover story*) and one is preceded by a preposition (*after shave*). Only a few nouns are simple like *body* while most of them are complex, e.g. *billboard*, *bodyguard*, *cracker*. A vast majority of them take the masculine gender. The only exceptions concern three items (*boysband*, *city light*, *cottage*), which, due to their semantic correspondence to Polish equivalents, seem to take the feminine gender and four items are attributed the neuter gender (either because of the word ending: *body*, *bungee* or because of Polish equivalents: *call center*, *case study*). Since Polish tends to adapt borrowings easily, therefore it is not surprising that most of the recorded nouns are declined (there are only a couple of exceptions, like *after shave*, *bed and breakfast*). A similar remark on exceptions refers to one verb (*browse*) and two adjectives which are not inflected while the other verb (*boot*) is polonized and thus follows the Polish pattern of inflexion.

As far as their semantics is concerned, we can generally conclude that the analysed English loanwords are part of varied lexical fields, however, they all share one common feature, namely reference to a new style of life and this is the main reason for their introduction into the Polish language.

All in all, we can only state that the relatively low number of new English loanwords introduced in the course of the last ten years, as well as the number of ephemeral anglicisms from that period attested in Polish support the claim put forward in this article that the Polish language is not greatly influenced by English and it will not be substituted by English.⁹

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⁹ Although we have provided a detailed analysis of only a fraction of the anglicisms (49 borrowings introduced in the course of the last ten years and sixteen disappearing, which leaves us the total number of 33 anglicisms beginning in letters A, B, C that have enriched Polish), it seems that the proportions and thus conclusions concerning other examples would be similar.

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