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ASPECTS OF ENGLISH BORROWINGS IN ROMANIAN

A popular name for the phenomenon of English borrowing in contemporary Romanian is 'romgleză'. This term was coined by Eugen Simion and subsequently used by language purists and not only, to decry the mixing of English and Romanian words into a seemingly hybrid and debased linguistic variety. The term in itself suggests a process which is gratuitous, haphazard and not governed by any rules, and as such has fuelled an attitude of criticism and rejection towards this area of linguistic innovation in present-day Romanian. In this context, the main purpose of this article is to study English borrowing in Romanian in several of its linguistic aspects, thus answering a call (Hristea 1984, Avram 1997) for the objective investigation of this phenomenon, rather than blind criticism and rejection. The study will be conducted on a corpus consisting of the business and financial publication *Capital*, and will examine English-origin elements both in their evolution over time, and with respect to their synchronic behaviour at a given moment (the year 2005). We believe that due to its uninterrupted circulation and broad coverage in terms of topics discussed, the above mentioned publication gives a reliable picture of the on-going contact between English and Romanian.

The origins of the contact between English and Romanian culture, and within it the English influence on the Romanian language can be traced back to the sixteenth century according to some authors (Mociornita 1980, 1983, 1992). However, the major influence of English on Romanian started in the second half of the 19th century, with the intensification of the cultural and economic relations between the two countries (Constantinescu, Popovici and Stefanescu, 2002), this influence being recorded in the lexicographic works of the time. Thus, Diaconovici's encyclopedic dictionary (1898- 1904) as well as other lexicographic works published around the turn of the century contain

English borrowings like *baseball, cent, dolar, gallon, lady, sir, sport, tennis, tory, whig*. Hristea (1982 quoted in Constantinescu et. al. 2002) shows that the neologisms Romanian started to borrow from English in the 19th century, came almost exclusively through the intermediacy of French, many of them belonging to the sports terminology: *aut, baschet, base-ball, bowling, bridge, corner, dribbling, fault, finiș, fotbal, henț, ofsaid, meci, outsider, polo, pressing, ring, rugby, scor, set, skeet, sportsman, start, șut, tenis, volei, etc.* Besides this intensification of relations, a minor source of influence is reported to have been the emigration of many Romanians from Transylvania and Banat to America between 1880 and the first World War, some of whom returned to their native villages.

A very important wave of English borrowings in Romanian began at the turn of the 20th century, and coincided with the intensification of economic and cultural contacts, being encouraged by Romania's industrial and economic development on West European models, many of them of British origin. Thus, English technological methods, and with them English terminologies were brought to the attention of specialists in oil drilling, mining, finance, steel production, shipbuilding, weaving, etc. To these economic elements, others were added such as military and political circumstances- Romania's joining the Triple Entente countries in 1916 or the fact that Queen Maria, the wife of Ferdinand I, king of Romania from 1914 to 1927, was a grandchild of Queen Victoria, born in England. Although growing in importance the English influence on Romanian was still mediated by other languages, such as French, German, Italian or Russian. Such an influence is obvious from the works of Sextil Pușcariu (*Limba română, vol 1, Privire generală*, 1940), Iorgu Iordan (*Limba română actuală. O gramatică a "greșelilor"*, 1943) and Alexandru Graur's press articles collected in the volume *Puțină gramatică* (1987, 1988).

The second half of the 20th century saw a further intensification of this influence, in spite of political, economic and cultural barriers existing between east and west Europe. The various, mainly political circumstances of the time, resulted in changing attitudes towards English. Thus, while the 1950s are thought to have been the years "most intensely marked by xenophobia", more and more English words found their way into technical terminologies and the standard language in the 1970s, when Romania began to assume an air of independence, with Russian models

being increasingly discarded. This period was marked by an inflow of translations of scientific and literary writings. Constantinescu et.al. interpret this phenomenon as a form of opposition to communism:

In the second half of the twentieth century, the influence of English grew steadily in spite of the purist attitude which was favoured for political reasons. One may interpret the interest in Anglo-American culture and civilization as a spontaneous form of opposition to communist indoctrination. (2002: 169).

Evidence of the increasing influence of the English language on Romanian is the recording of ever more Anglicisms in Romanian dictionaries starting with 1970. These dictionaries include works of a general nature such as “Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române” (DEX1 and DEX2), dictionaries of neologisms (DN3), and recordings of new words (Dimitrescu 1982, 1997: Dicționar de cuvinte recente- DCR1 and DCR2), as well as specialized dictionaries restricted to individual domains, e.g. computer science, finance and trade, marketing, sports, and medicine.

Finally, the contemporary period, i.e the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is characterized by what is usually referred to as “an unprecedented English influence” which manifests itself directly, that is without the intermediacy of other languages, mainly through second language teaching and the mass media, being supported by extra-linguistic factors such as fashion and prestige (2002: 171). This situation has led to a shift in attitudes towards English, some writers in the current public discourse- the written but also audio press- decrying this influence as an invasion of Anglicisms and an Anglicization of the language. The discourse about Anglicisms is based on several negative metaphors, the occurrence of English elements in Romanian being most often described as an invasion and a menace to Romanian, but also as an indecency, something low and degrading that should trigger reactions of repulsion and rejection. In this category are purist voices belonging to Romanian writers like Geo Dumitrescu, Octavian Paler, and Eugen Simion among others. Eugen Simion, for example, defines the obviously pejorative term ‘romgleză’ as

un jargon insuportabil care tinde să se împrăstie ca râia și să prostească, să urâtească limba prin utilizarea unor termeni din categoria xenismelor parazitari, izmeniți, demni de o doamnă Chirița reciclată în

limba engleză și trimisă în Parlament. (Eugen Simion, Tot despre „romgleză” în Curentul, 06.01.01).

Similarly, Octavian Paler ironically remarks:

Ajunși la porțile Europei, „miticii” tranziției nu se mai simt bine, se pare, în limba română folosită de „miticii” lui Caragiale, care se duceau, ca niște bieți provinciali, la „restaurant”, la „birt”, la „ospătărie”, la „bodegă” sau la „local”. Moda cere azi să mergem la „fast food”. O firmă ca „La Popescu” e de negasit în Bucureștiul anului 2006. Ea suna prea neaoș. În schimb, „romgleza”, ca să folosesc o expresie propusă, se pare, de Eugen Simion, amestec de fandoseală și snobism, e la mare cinste.

With all this declarative rejection of the English influence, Romanian normative linguists never went so far as to rule out the use of Anglicisms by law. For example, in the introduction to DOOM 2005 Eugen Simion wonders:

Cât de necesară este, mai ales, această „romgleză” pe care o ascultăm - de cele mai multe ori amuzați, alteori iritați - la TV sau la Radio, vorbită cu precădere de Chirițele mediei de azi și ale lumii politice?... Nu este totdeauna necesară, dar n-avem încotro, nu putem s-o interzicem. Și, de altfel, nici nu avem cum.

This situation leads Constantinescu et. al. to conclude that, in spite of attitudes like those quoted above the English influence has developed largely free of any philologic bias and purist constraints. (2002: 171)

As regards the various elements that have contributed to this inflow of Anglicisms, two factors are in our opinion the strongest predictors of borrowing from English into contemporary Romanian- need and prestige. Thus, many of the words that have been borrowed in the last two decades answer specific referential and communicative needs in various compartments of the Romanian society, e.g. economy, politics, culture, entertainment, science and technology. The dominant place English holds in the avant-garde of scientific advancement, as well as in business and other international relations, endows it with certain connotations of modernity, fashion and prestige, which in turn promote the borrowing of words not motivated by need, the so called “luxury” or “unnecessary” loans.

At a macro-social level, the factors mentioned above combine with a third one, namely increasing levels of English/ Romanian bilingualism among younger groups of speakers. This is the product of educational programs placing a special emphasis on foreign language teaching, as well

as of the specificity of the Romanian society after 1989. Bilingualism in itself cannot be separated from the classical factors of need and prestige. After all, people learn a foreign language because they need it in order to engage in personal or professional relations with other people, because they want to identify with the culture of this language, or because of both of these reasons. This specific combination of elements can be used to claim an increasing intensity of contact and cultural pressure from English onto Romanian.

At a micro-social or individual level, borrowing can be seen as a result of the role English has gained lately in many professional fields of activity. Especially in business and economics, various topics are frequently discussed in this language, and many of the individuals engaged in these fields have to be English proficient. In this context, the large number of borrowings in the studied corpus of *Capital* magazine should probably be seen as a consequence of this factor: journalists are particularly exposed to English as an instrument of global communication, many of the topics they report on being discussed in English as well.

The problem of the nature and role of English loanwords in Romanian must also take into account the possible specific reasons that have been triggering this unprecedented influx of borrowings since 1989. Thus, it is generally agreed that borrowing American/British terms to describe various cultural realities, such as *fast food*, *pop music*, *management*, *outsourcing* is considered a sign of internationalization of the Romanian vocabulary, while rejecting them is a manifestation of self-isolation and cultural provincialism (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2001, Ciobanu 2004). In the context of the emergence and growth of English as a global language following the spread and adoption of the American culture in many countries of the world, we believe that many of the English loanwords present in Romanian today can be described as cultural borrowings. This means they have entered Romanian together with the concepts, things, processes they designate, presenting the advantage of brevity, international character and lack of synonyms in Romanian. This is particularly true in the economic field, where many of the concepts are borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon space.

Other factors that are promoting borrowing from English into Romanian are social in nature. The relative prestige English is endowed with, as representing a powerful culture and civilization, as well as what we think is an increasing intensity of contact between the two languages,

will probably have resulted in a number of more intimate borrowings as well. To these, other causes can be added: the need to replace terms that are considered now compromised or worn out (for example *conducător*, associated with Ceaușescu), the specificity of the Romanian press after 1989 characterized by a free circulation of information, the diversity of information channels, the openness of the Romanian press towards English and American sources of information, its role as an “opinion leader”. Specific linguistic causes include such factors as the intermediacy of French, compatibility with the system of the Romanian language, international character, brevity and specialization of English technical terms, or the absence of a Romanian synonym.

In what follows we are going to see how this phenomenon is affecting a particular area of the Romanian language, namely the specialized vocabulary of business and economics. The analysis will be conducted on a corpus of one year of the Capital magazine (2005) on CD-Rom, consisting of Adobe PDF files.

A particular English-Romanian contact scenario is illustrated by the use of English proper names. Names of international institutions that could have been translated and having a very specific referential function illustrate the tendency to leave English terms unexplained in Romanian, a practice which testifies to a growing intensity of contact between the two languages in question. Such proper names are mainly built around words like *business*, *company*, *group*, *bank*, which are in this way brought to the attention of the Romanian public. Thus, for example the word *business* appears in over 450 proper names, *bank* is included in over 750, *consulting* in over 80, and *company* in over 20. In the sentences in which they appear, these terms are referred to by already integrated synonyms:

(1) *RG Holz Company, firma care aproape deține monopolul exploatărilor forestiere din zonă, a contractat deja...*

(2) *Se mai adresează aproximativ aceleiași segment, cu o prezență firavă, cooperativele de credit și o singură bancă - ProCredit Bank.*

In spite of the high occurrence of such words within proper names, they do not appear a lot independently, tending to remain tied to their name phrases. Thus, *bank* does not appear at all autonomously, *company* has no occurrence outside proper names, while *market* appears in 15

instances as a name, but only twice as a common noun. On the other hand, the occurrences of *holding* as a common noun match its frequency of use in proper nouns, i.e. over 100. This can be explained as a result of this word's longer existence in Romanian (it is recorded by DEX 1975), although we can assume it has gained more currency after 89. A similar example is *City*, used both as a proper name and as a common one:

(3) *Un recent raport la diviziei de statistică al Comisiei Europene arată că city-ul londonez este cea mai bogată regiune ... [two sentences later]. Londra are 7,1 milioane de locuitori, din care 1,9 sunt pensionari. 43% din ei trăiesc în City și peste jumătate dintre aceștia trăiesc în sărăcie.*

The importation of English names combines with a parallel tendency in the corpus to use English productively in order to name Romanian organizations, products and events. Examples of English names used for this purpose include: *Cătălina Advertising* (advertising agency in Bucharest), *Militari Center*, *Moga Center* (names of shopping centers in Bucharest), *Carpatair* (the name of an airline company headquartered in Timișoara), different shopping centers with *Mall*, *Lotus Market* (a shopping center in Oradea), *Credit Bank* (the name of a Romanian bank), *DTH Television Grup* (a TV service provider in Bucharest), *Best Manager SRL* (a management company in Cluj), *Banu Andronache Building*, etc. This tendency is also evident in the names of Romanian web-pages. The prominent role English has gained in the language of commerce and advertising in particular, can be explained solely from the perspective of English as a prestigious language, its use making the products described seem more fashionable, modern and desirable.

There are, however, cases when the exclusive naming function of a proper name is eroded, so that it departs from its initial referential frame, and is grammaticalized as a common noun. This happens by means of semantic bleaching, and can be seen in cases like *Bluetooth*, *walkman*, *ePayment*, *Explorer*, *ibook*, *ibutton*. Such a transition from proper to common nouns explains the vacillation between small and capital letters in the writing of these words, but also brings about the difficulty of drawing a very clear line between words used as names and words used with a general meaning:

(4). Când îți cumperi un telefon te interesează să aibă Bluetooth?

(5). După părerea mea, ePayment este cel puțin la fel de important ca și RAV.

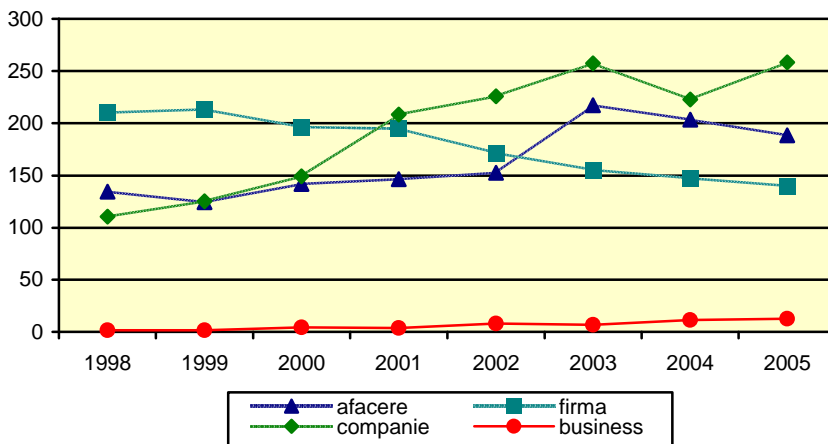
(6). Adevărata surpriză a venit din partea explorer-ului de la Mozilla.

Some of the most common English nouns in the studied corpus include *marketing*, *management*, *manager*, *leasing* as well as other words which have already been adopted in the language, being actually recorded by older dictionaries (DEX 1975). We have chosen to include them in the present study as we believe they have gained currency after 1989, even if they existed in Romanian before that date. However, the other words that show a very high frequency of occurrence, i.e. over 100 tokens, are used to designate new concepts, objects, activities, etc which are new to the Romanian society, thus being prototypical examples of cultural loans. Such recent borrowings include *brand*, *business*, *supermarket*, *trend*, *retail*, *rating*, *job*, *bonus*, *ATM*, *futures*, *low-cost*, *outsourcing*, *advertiser*, *spot*, etc.

In order to obtain a more faithful image of the status these English words have in the Romanian vocabulary, we have tried to follow their evolution over several years of the same publication (Capital 1998-2005), such an approach allowing for more general conclusions regarding the fate of recent borrowings in Romanian. Several distinct situations can be abstracted from this analysis. First, there is a category of older borrowings which did not have dramatic evolutions from 1998 to 2005. This category includes words like *management*, *manager*, *marketing*, but also abbreviations such as *USD*, which is not very relevant as it is rarely used inside sentences. Another category is constituted by those Anglicisms that have had a spectacular evolution, some of them growing in frequency by more than ten times in eight years. Such cases of dramatic increases are going to be analysed in relation with their native equivalents, as it can be expected that the latter have been somehow affected by the abrupt entry of the corresponding English words.

One example in this respect is *business*. The frequency with which this word was used in the studied period grew dramatically, from 27 occurrences in 1998 to 321 in 2005. This surge can be seen in Figure 1b.

However, its effect on the native words *afacere*, *companie* and *firma* are marginal and actually difficult to establish with any certainty. The numerical impact of *business* as compared to these words is very small, as Figure 1a below shows. Thus, although on a clearly upward trend, this Anglicism is far from approaching the token frequencies of its Romanian equivalents, some of which also saw an increase during this period of time. Actually, the fall in the word *firmă*, for example, can be better explained as a result of the corresponding rise in *companie* and *afacere*, rather than as having a direct connection with *business*. This shows that what looks like a relevant evolution in a borrowed word will not necessarily have a direct or significant impact on other words of the native vocabulary.



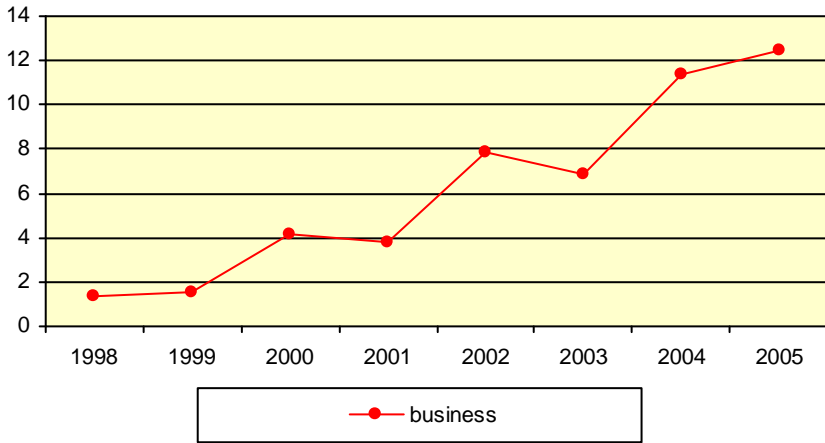


Figure 1 (a,b) Token frequency of "afacere", "companie", "firmă", "business" in Capital 1998-2005

However, sometimes a borrowed word can impact directly on the number of occurrences of a native equivalent. Thus, Figure 2 below shows that the rise in the number of occurrences of *brand* was paralleled by a proportional fall in the tokens of *marcă*. On the basis of these evolutions, it can be predicted that *brand* will reach the same frequency of usage as *marcă* or it will even overtake it in absolute terms.

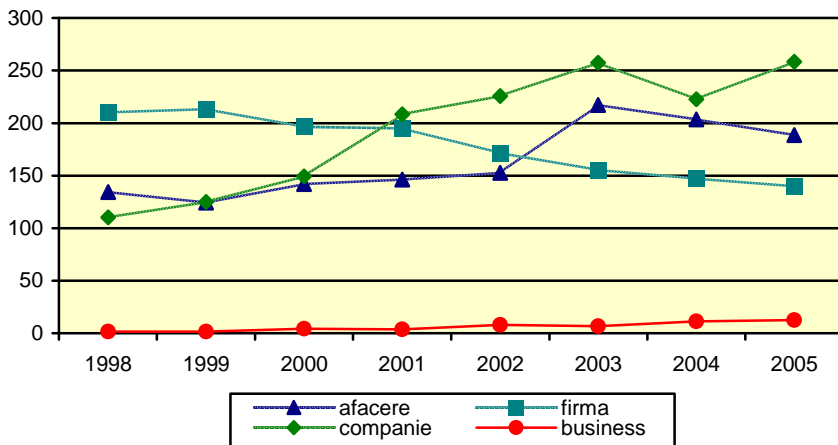


Figure 2 Token frequency of "marcă", "brand" in Capital 1998-2005

An even more representative case of the way in which a borrowed word can almost displace a native equivalent is provided by the Anglicism *retail*. In 1998, this word did not appear at all in the studied corpus, while *cu amănuntul* was used for 76 times, and *en-detail* for 7 times. All three terms had a surge in 2000, probably as a result of the arrival of large supermarket chains in Romania, and after that moment *retail* clearly gained a lot of ground in front of the two native synonyms, and it probably continued its upward trend after 2005. This firm position held by *retail*, which we believe will continue to gain ground in the future as well, is reinforced by a similar evolution in *retailer* and *detailist*.

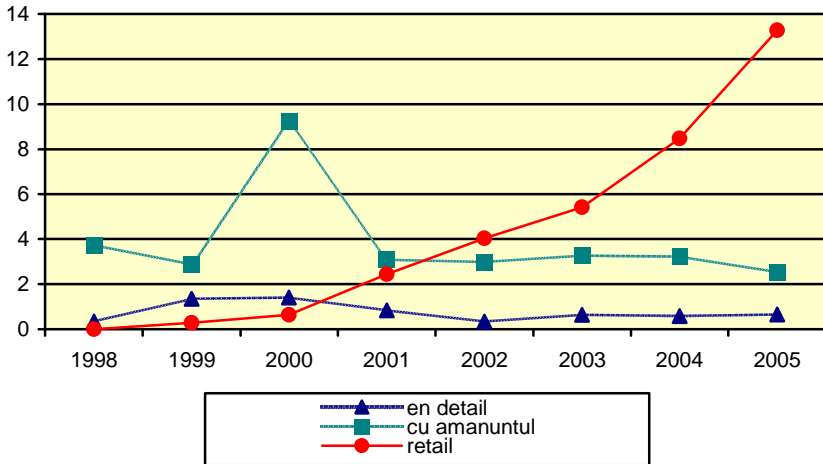


Figure 3 Token frequency of "en detail", "cu amănuntul", "retail" in Capital 1998-2005

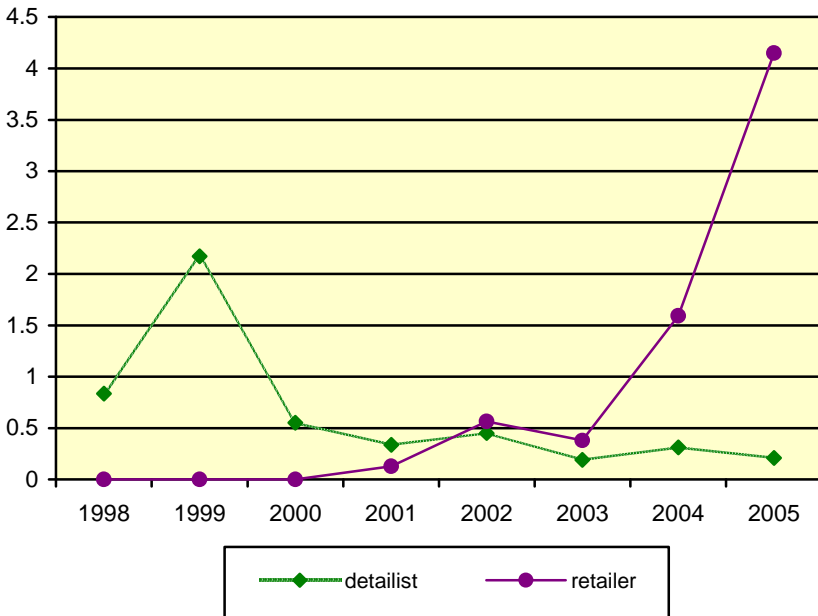


Figure 4 Token frequency of "detailist", "retailer" in Capital 1998-2005

To conclude our discussion on the quantitative impact of Anglicisms in the studied corpus of *Capital*, it is very clear that present-day Romanian is faced with a very distinct upward trend in this phenomenon. Cases such as those discussed above seem to confirm the structuralist belief that any change in the system of a language will trigger the reorganization of patterns elsewhere in this system. Thus, we agree with Weinreich (1968: 1) who drew attention to the fact that even in cases of lexical borrowing, that is when structural or grammatical elements are not involved, “It would be an oversimplification to speak of (...) mere additions to an inventory.”

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