3 Necessary and Luxury English Loanwords in Some Romanian Online Newspapers and Magazines

3.1 Introduction

After the 1989 fall of the communist regime, but particularly after the 2007 accession to the European Union, Romania has kept on strengthening the socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political ties with the rest of the world. In such a situation, ‘a “contact language” between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture’ (Firth, 1996: 240) was obviously needed. As English is the 21st century ‘contact language’ (Crystal, 2012), the Romanian government has encouraged the teaching of English in the Romanian public schools. English has, thus, become the most taught foreign language in the Romanian public schools as the 2012’s ‘Key Data on Teaching Languages at Schools in Europe’ published by The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of The European Commission proves it (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/143EN.pdf).

A direct and expected consequence of such a situation is the increasing number of borrowed English words in the Romanian language. Besides the socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political relations among various nations, other factors that contribute to the borrowing of foreign words into a language in general, and in Romanian in particular, may be worth mentioning. For example, the continuous scientific and technical development that characterises the contemporary society favours the borrowing of foreign words (Hristea, 1984: 39-40). The scientific discoveries and the fast technical progress bring about new concepts which are quickly adopted by the Romanian language. One of the reasons for which such an adoption rapidly takes place is the fact that the new inventions are swiftly replaced or complemented by others, so that there seems to be no time to find Romanian equivalents for the new concepts that keep on appearing one after another. The scientific and technical development contribute to the improvement of people’s lifestyle, and thus, to the change in their perspective on life, which is viewed as another factor that creates the necessary framework within which the borrowing of foreign words into Romanian may take place (Hristea, 1984: 39-40). The borrowing process is also favoured by the way in which the donor culture, and implicitly language, is perceived by the recipient culture and language (Haspelmath, 2009: 35). The superior, more advanced culture tends to be valued by the inferior, less developed culture. In our case, the English-speaking cultures are considered by the Romanians to be role models, and as such, English is more prestigious than Romanian. In such a context, the use of English words when speaking or writing
Romanian, although it is not always necessary, confers the stretch of discourse, and in some cases, the sender, a certain degree of prestige. Finally, the grammar of the two languages may also favour the borrowing of words from one language into the other (Haspelmath, 2009: 35). For example, from a grammatical point of view, nouns ‘receive, not assign, thematic roles’ (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 239), and therefore, they tend to be less adapted than verbs and easier to borrow (Haspelmath, 2009: 35; Şimon & Suciu, 2014).

Taking into account the functional need of the Romanian language to borrow English words, the present study focuses on the English loanwords present in thirty Romanian online newspapers and magazines, which were analysed in September 2014, and on their classification into necessary and luxury loanwords. In the final part of the present study, some concluding remarks with respect to the most frequently encountered English loanwords are put forward.

3.2 Theoretical background

The borrowing of foreign words into a language has concerned many linguists interested in the evolution of various languages. For example, in Romania, studies were made on the origin of the loanwords present in the Romanian language (Hristea, 1984), on the phonetical, morphological, lexical, and semantic adaptation of the foreign words to the Romanian language (Avram, 1997; Ciobanu, 1991; Pârlog, 1971; Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, 2006), or on the field of activity from which they have been borrowed (Greavu, 2011; Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, 2006). The aforementioned studies (Avram, 1997; Ciobanu, 1991; Greavu, 2011; Hristea, 1984; Pârlog, 1971; Stoichiţoiu-Ichim, 2006) also try to clarify the terminological issues regarding the words borrowed from one language into the other, making recourse to both the national and international literature. In the following sections, only some of the most important and relevant aspects will be discussed.

The terms ‘loanwords’ or ‘borrowings’ designate the ‘words taken from one language and transferred into another’ (Şimon & Suciu, 2014: 6). The two languages involved in this process are the donor language and the recipient language. The donor language is also called the source or original language, while the recipient language is termed the target or replica language as well (Fasold & Connor–Linton, 2006: 294; Furiassi, Pulcini & Gonzales, 2012: 12). The first one lends words to the second one, but these are never returned: ‘When one language takes lexemes from another, the new items are usually called loanwords or borrowings – though neither term is really appropriate, as the receiving language does not give them back.’ (Crystal, 2005: 126)

Researchers on this topic have noticed that the loanwords are taken differently into the recipient language. So, Haugen (1950: 210-231) distinguishes between loanwords, loanblends and loanshifts. Loanwords preserve their form and meaning
in both languages. For example, the word *airbag* is an English loanword in Romanian, as it is used with the same spelling and meaning both in the donor language and in the recipient language. Loanblends consist of two parts, one borrowed from the donor language and one belonging to the recipient language. For instance, the Romanian word *scanare* is a loanblend in Romanian because it comes from the English *scanning*. In this particular example, the English suffix –*ing* is replaced by the Romanian suffix –*are*. Loanshifts copy only the meaning of the word taken from the donor language. A common example of loanshift is the Romanian word *zgărie-nor* which actually is a translation of the two words that compound the English word *skyscraper*. Both the Romanian *zgărie-nor*, and the English *skyscraper* designate the same object.

Apart from Haugen's classification of loanwords, which mainly takes into account their form, another important classification is made from the perspective of their contribution to the enrichment of the recipient language. For example, Myers–Scotton (2002: 239) distinguishes between cultural and core borrowings. The cultural borrowings designate new objects or concepts, for example, *espresso*, *banner*, *Zeitgeist* or *Apartheid*, while the core borrowings duplicate lexemes already existing in the recipient language, for example, *popcorn*, *party*, or *look*. Other authors label the presence of such foreign words in a recipient language as necessary and luxury loans (Danesi & Rocci, 2009: 162; Furiassi, Pulcini, & Gonzales, 2012: 46). The necessary loans are foreign words borrowed by the recipient language because they designate new objects, institutions, concepts or situations that have not been termed before. The luxury loans, as they are called, duplicate the already existing words in the recipient language, although they do not add any new senses. In other words, some scholars prefer the dichotomy cultural - core borrowings, while others the dichotomy necessary – luxury loanwords. Both of them actually designate the same linguistic phenomena.

Taking into account the contribution of the English loanwords to the enrichment of the Romanian language, some linguists have expressed their opinion on this matter. For example, Ciobanu (1997) considers that the necessary loanwords are adopted ‘for their informative function’ (1997: 91), as they describe new realities, while the luxury loanwords are adopted because they confer the user ‘cultural and social prestige, or, to put it more bluntly, there is a good deal of snobbishness involved in such preferences’ (Ciobanu, 1997: 92). Avram (1997: 9) and David and Tǎlmǎcian (2013) have a more tolerant attitude towards the borrowing of the English words into Romanian. They consider that English ‘has an important Latin component’ (David & Tǎlmǎcian, 2013: 41) and as such, the English loanwords, even the luxury ones ‘continue the process of re-Latinization of the Romanian language’ (2013: 41). This means that the new influx of English loanwords into Romanian only revives the language without putting its identity in danger (Sim, 2007: 988, cited in David & Tǎlmǎcian, 2013: 41).
3.3 Necessary and luxury English loanwords in some Romanian online newspapers and magazines

Most of the corpus on which the present study has been carried out was also used in a previous article which mainly dealt with the most frequently encountered speech category to which the loanword belonged (Şimon & Suciu, 2014). The corpus is made up of 205 loanwords (28 adjectives/adverbs, 170 nouns/noun phrases and 7 verbs/phrasal verbs) identified in thirty Romanian online newspapers and magazines in September 2014. For the completion of the present study some of the latest dictionaries dealing with the loanwords in Romanian (Bucă, 2014; Ciobanu, 1996; Crăcea, 2012; Dejica, 2013), but also some other traditional or online dictionaries (Bantaş, 1999; https://dexonline.ro/; http://ro.bab.la/; http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/) have been checked.

The adjectives and adverbs identified in some Romanian online newspapers and magazines are: casual, chic, classic, classy, collected, cool, easy, fit, funky, fresh, fulltime, glam, live (music), nude, offline, online, open, second-hand, sexy, skinny, single, slim, smart, smokey, stylish, sun-kissed, trendy, and wireless. The words live, offline, online and wireless are the only ones that do not have a Romanian corresponding word, which means that they are the only necessary loanwords in the above list of adjectives/adverbs, all the others being the luxury ones.

The English nouns and noun phrases that were spotted in the selected online newspapers and magazines are alphabetically listed in Table 3.1.

In the table below, the words airbag, babysitting, banner, blog, blogger, brainstorm(ing), burger, casting, computer, derby, desktop, drive-in cinema, email, Facebook, Facebook-feeds, hardware, hippie, hipster, jeans, laptop, marketing, modelling, site, SMS, snowmobil, social media, software, spam, start-up, voucher, web, and web developer do not have a Romanian corresponding word, and therefore, are considered necessary loanwords as they enrich the existing Romanian vocabulary.

Finally, a few verbs and phrasal verbs were singled out: to feature, to leather up, to look, to rebrand, to plug in, to drag and to drop. From the listed verbs and phrasal verbs, there are only two that do not have a Romanian equivalent, namely to leather up and to rebrand, which are, thus, considered to be necessary loanwords.

The present study reveals that from the twenty-eight adjectives and adverbs, four are actually necessary loanwords, the other twenty-four being luxury loanwords with no informative function. Thirty-two of the one hundred and seventy nouns and noun phrases are necessary loanwords. Out of the seven verbs/phrasal verbs, there is one verb and one phrasal verb that can be considered necessary loanwords, the remaining five verbs and phrasal verbs have no informative function at all and are, therefore, considered to be luxury loanwords. In other words, almost 14% of the adjectives/adverbs, 19% of the nouns/noun phrases, and 29% of the verbs/phrasal verbs are necessary loanwords. The other 86% of the adjectives/adverbs, 81% of the nouns/noun phrases, and 71% of the verbs/phrasal verbs are luxury loanwords. From the
total number of two hundred and five loanwords identified in thirty Romanian online newspapers and magazines in September 2014, thirty-eight are necessary loanwords and one hundred and sixty-seven are luxury loanwords. To put it differently, almost 19% are necessary loanwords, while 81% are luxury ones. This rapport, which shows a tendency of the Romanian online journalists to favour the use of luxury loanwords of English origin, is clearly illustrated in the figure below.
3.4 Conclusions

The present study described the context in which English became the most often taught foreign language in the Romanian public schools, and therefore, adopted by many Romanians for their private and professional communication. Apart from this, various other factors that might contribute to the borrowing of foreign words in the recipient language were identified. The loanwords, loanblends and loanshifts were then defined in order to clarify the theoretical concepts that were useful for the present study. The loanwords were further classified into necessary and luxury loanwords.

The corpus on which this analysis was carried out was made of two hundred and five English loanwords that were singled out in September 2014 in thirty Romanian online newspapers and magazines. The identified English loanwords were twenty-eight adjectives/adverbs, one hundred and seventy nouns/noun phrases, and seven verbs/phrasal verbs. The analysis outlined that 14% of the adjectives/adverbs, 19% of the nouns/noun phrases, and 29% of the verbs/phrasal verbs were necessary loanwords. That meant that the other 86% of the adjectives/adverbs, 81% of the nouns/noun phrases, and 71% of the verbs/phrasal verbs were luxury loanwords. To put it differently, from the total number of two hundred and five English loanwords, thirty-eight were necessary loanwords and one hundred and sixty-seven were luxury loanwords. It followed that almost 19% of the selected English loanwords present in some Romanian online newspapers and magazines were necessary loanwords and 81% were luxury ones.

The present study showed a huge tendency of the Romanian online journalists to prefer English luxury loanwords in order to describe certain concepts, objects, in a...
word realities. As pointed earlier, the linguistic choices reflect the author’s perception on the relationship between the donor and the recipient language, that is the prestige of the donor language and culture in comparison to that of the recipient language and culture on one hand and on the other, they mirror the author’s wish to stand out, to attract the others’ attention even if this means to be labelled as a snob.

References


***, https://dexonline.ro/
***, http://ro.bab.la/
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Appendix: Romanian Online Newspapers and Magazine

Click!, http://www.click.ro/(accessed September 2014)