

ROMENGLISH – A WORTHY EFFORT IN THE EU INTEGRATION?

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Since the 1991 Maastricht summit, the general tendency within Europe has been oriented towards creating a unifying community that relies on institutions and legislation that promise stability and advance. The effort has been animated by the hope of shaping a multinational and multicultural community that would cohesively cohabit and progress in spite of obvious differences. EU has become an imperative, an urge, a landmark, an economical, political and cultural promise that European powers strive to make come true, enlarge and reinforce.

If for Romanians the EU integration count down seems to have started ticking, equaling a major change and challenge at any level, when referring to language, the prospect of allying to the recent years' tendency in developing “a standard European language” might stir anxiety rather than elatedness. English has already assumed this dominant role within EU and has consequently inroaded most of the European languages. In concord with the latest trend, Romanian has lately become the subject of an intense linguistic Europeanization process that we aim at pointing to and signaling the effect.

In many respects, globalization seems to imply movement in two directions: toward increasing simplification (mono-lingualism, the globalization of sameness and imperial domination), while alternately toward intricate complexity (the contact of multiple languages and cultures, the economic diversification of the marketplace, the participation of new groups in the global economy, and cultural diversity and multiplicity). EU is intended to be a global village that celebrates diversity, aiming at unifying political and economic policy, respecting in the same time cultural differences. EU represents an economic and political union established in 1993 after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty by members of the European Community, which forms its core. In establishing the European Union, the treaty expanded the political scope of the European Community, especially in the area of foreign and security policy, and provided for the creation of a central European bank and the adoption of a common currency by the end of the 20th century. The European globalization can be framed both as a promise and a threat. On the one hand, we can think of Europeanization as collaboration, collective processes, hybrid fusions, free exchange of ideas and creations, fertile transculturations, the opening of economic, social and political alliances. On the other hand, it is also perceived as leading to cultural and economic imperialism, the monopolization by multinational corporations of the marketplace, the loss of rich cultural distinctiveness, the destruction of local cultures and economies, the imposition of dull cultural uniformity. When

founding the European Community, it was felt necessary to guarantee the language of every member state an equal status under the European Charter - even though it was evident from the outset that some languages would be "more equal than others" when it came to the practical day-to-day running of Community affairs. It is perhaps going too far to assert, as does George Steiner, that English seems "to embody for men and women throughout the world - and particularly for the young - the feel of hope, of material advance, of scientific and empirical procedures" (1975, p. 468). For the majority of young Europeans, we might suspect, English is seen rather as the language of MacDonal'd's and Hollywood, of quick and relatively cheap gratification with little substance behind it. The alleged ease of learning English, which as any second-language teacher can attest extends only to the most basic, tense-free, idiom-free levels of the language, if anything must reinforce this attitude. Steiner himself speaks of "a thin wash, marvellously fluid, but without adequate base" (1975, p. 470).

Under the circumstances, English, which is already, in some form or another, widely used and understood by people in EU countries, tends to become the European *lingua franca* (English as lingua franca for Europe - ELFE), imposing a standard use of English within the European Union. Despite controversy, English has already assumed the position of a medium of international communication and functions as a mouthpiece of the Occident. According to a Eurobarometer (www.answers.com) survey in 2001, 47% of the citizens of the EU spoke English well enough to hold a casual conversation. English is also the most commonly taught second language to children in Europe, largely because of the enormous impact of the United States in politics, economics and culture around the world.

Though, the first waves of interest in the English language and culture in Europe can be traced back to the 18th century, having a massive impact after the World War II, it can be said that English in Europe spread from the north to the south, which is reflected in the levels of language proficiency and frequency of use. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, English is spreading very fast throughout Eastern Europe. In the latter's case, English loanwords were often used with a higher degree of intentionality than in the West. Generally speaking, purist efforts of different ideological persuasions have only had a limited effect in trying to stop the spread of English. We have illustrated the intense intrusion of anglicisms into Romanian with examples taken from a very popular and widely read economic newspaper *Capital* and a political magazine *Cadran Politic* that provided us with more material than we would have desired.

The choice of corpus has been motivated by our assumption that the economic area has been highly contaminated with anglicisms. Many professionals are already largely

tied to a global community: area experts, teachers, technicians, researchers, persons in the medical field, negotiators, diplomats, commercial experts and business people, public servants, social workers, etc. In fact, almost no field appears to have remained un-touched by the effects and demands of the globalized community. Yet, if we might rank among them, we could undoubtedly consider the economic area – which already disposes of a conceptual apparatus, maybe not as modern as that – as having made major importations from English.

As a result of massive lexical borrowing, a large number of European anglicisms have acquired the status of internationalisms. Once adopted in a language, English loanwords often start life of their own, sometimes becoming unintelligible to native speakers of English due to various changes in form or meaning. For instance, there are items adapted to Romanian in point of form and pronunciation: *francizorul* (a: 19) (=the franchiser), *lider* (b: 11) (=leader), *shipas* (a:58) (=skypass).

If the latter are to some extent absorbed into Romanian, and consequently easier to be digested, most striking sound those words or mixed combinations that insistently occur in the Romanian public discourse, that are neither necessary nor more informative than their Romanian counterparts. Such words are *trend* (b: 62), *rating* (a:27) (a: 50), *shift* (b:13), *a da "go"* (b:13)(=to allow starting a process), *puzzle* (b:19), *caz win-win* (b:23)(=a win-win case), *comportament like-minded* (b:23) (=like-minded behaviour), *parking* (b:67) , *contracte de wholesale* (a:21)(=wholesale contracts), *gadget* (a:21), *equity-ul brandului* (a:73)(= the equity of the brand), *sistem de billing* (a:21) (billing system), *companii low-cost* (a:1) (=low-cost companies), *facturi online* (a: 23) (=online bills), *job* (a:64), *boom* (a:41), *team-building* (a: 51), *piața de retail* (a:50) (=retail market), *top* (a:53) *speaker* (b:11). Within this class, words or phrases defining jobs and ranks are widely used, and seem to have imposed themselves in the company organisation such as *account director* (a: 73), *online sales director* (a: 74), *staff* (a:61), *PR* (a:61), *senior broker* (a:52), *land consultant* (a:52), *marketing manager* (a:52), *managing director* (a:1).

Some of these lexical items coexist in the same text with their Romanian equivalent *brand/marca* (a:73), or mixed phrases *extensie de brand în sens larg* are given within the text their English correspondent (*brand stretching*) (a:73), taking care to familiarize the Romanian reader with the English concept, should he come across it again.

Certain lexical items are given the Romanian form of neutral plural, either marked by a hyphen *land-uri din est* (=eastern land), *business-uri* (=pieces of business), *deal-uri* (5) (=deals), or not *branduri* (13)(=brands), *businessmenii* (3) (=businessmen). Words may also be accompanied by the definite article integrated in the noun, hyphenised or not: *topul* (1)

(=*the top*), *business-ul* (=the business) (19). Sometimes such words enter in combination following the Romanian compounding pattern *evoluția brandului-mamă* (73) (=the evolution of the mother-brand) or words change the grammatical category, equally following the Romanian pattern: *manager* (noun) > *managerial* (adjective) (b: 30).

Most legitimate may appear those terms referring to non-Romanian *realia*, since they are culture-bound phrases that seem to render an original flavour *hamburger, fast-food, walkman, fitness* (a:76) . J. Lyons argues at this point that referential or social/expressive function is therefore not so much universal as culture-bound (cf. Lyons 1981). There are also those words or syntagms that are internationally used to refer to recently emerged referents or concepts that invaded our life (mainly belonging to the computer science area (but not only) and which seem quite awkward to be referred to differently: *mouse, laptop, PC, site* (a:74), *banner* (a:74), *click* (a:74), *software* (a:22), *eLearning* (a:22), *mass-media* (b:1), *training* (a:38), *cash-flow* (a:38), *dealer* (a:33). They make up a whole arsenal of ready-made English-language terminology that is also highly specific, and are therefore preferred to the native counterparts.

The general opinion in attempting to explain this trend is that the Romanian equivalents seem dull, unexpressive for the modern and interesting world we are living in. Knowing and properly maneuvering such words is a “*must-have*” nowadays, which makes you “trendy” and keeps you “on the wave”: being “glamorous”, having a trendy “lifestyle”, owning a car that has successfully passed the “drive test”, being “popular” and attending the “high-class”, having fashionable “hobbies”, a good “job” and reaching a high “rating” on the “retail and wholesale market”, being therefore a famous “businessman” with profitable “deals”, owning “hifi technology” such as a “laptop”, a “mobile”, a “DVD player” and an “iPod” – this is but a sample of an intensely European connected discourse (and life model highly promotes in nowadays Romania) that we might hear on TV or read in newspaper daily.

More indulgent voices argue that in a world of rapid change and unprecedented technological progress, new words have to be coined on an almost daily basis, most of them coming into being in English-speaking countries, primarily the U.S.A. They even find reasons to account for this phenomenon. English words are shorter than their Romanian equivalents, they are easily recognized and more likely to be understood. However, we consider that the unconscious pro-English reflexes, as an expression of fashion or as a result of over-exposure to English media favor the intrusion and maintenance of English words. This phenomenon has become so intense that general dictionaries and even dictionaries of anglicisms or

neologisms can hardly follow this pace, so that new editions have to be published within short spans of time in an attempt to keep up to date.

We appreciate that the imperative that has been ruling our political, economical and social life for the last years, i.e. the European integration process, favour the intrusion of anglicisms into Romanian. Although some of them had already inroaded Romanian before the integration prospect got clear shaping, promoting the idea of “citizens of Europe”, Romanians feel more urged to adopt a suitable linguistic attitude that should give them the sense of linguistic belonging. Although we do not argue the benefits of Romania’ integration into the European community, which undoubtedly is a promising project, we only point out that the adoption of English terms into Romanian only to become better and more successful “citizens of Europe” is a linguistic and cultural process whose scope is not to be entirely envisaged yet.

It is becoming clearer that “culture,” in all its different manifestations, is no longer a protected resource within a national domain, but rather, an exchangeable and mobile commodity, open to the free market system of supply and demand.

In a sense, the national no longer serves as the foundation of a given language or a certain culture, nor that which can sufficiently define, defend or ground itself through and by it. Instead, we feel increasingly free to choose our cultural experiences and the language in which we can express them. It is right to recognize the value of foreign languages in creating international or at least European citizens. But, on the other hand, it is right to say that languages, if they are meant to enrich our culture and become part of it, cannot be simply bought as another commodity from the global menu. Speaking one’s native language dressed up with globalization sauce helps one maximize one’s performance in one’s field by simply ensuring communication with the international community? Globalization can open possibilities, or it can limit diversity. Can we choose to break out of the native language and prefer the uni-cultural straightjacket of an English-globalized uniformity? And must we?

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