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Recent English Loanwords in Slovene

Summary

The paper discusses Slovene-English language contact in general and English loanwords in Slovene in particular. The focus is on recent loanwords, where a great deal of variability in their pronunciation and spelling can be observed depending on the time of their borrowing, the channel of transmission (oral or written) and the degree of their linguistic and social integration into Slovene. Sociolinguistic variables such as the age and education of the users play a role as well, as do the differences between the phonological and orthographic systems of the two languages. In addition to phonological, morphological and orthographic aspects of English loanwords, their meaning and its occasional adaptations and modifications will be addressed. Data for illustration purposes will be taken primarily from the media, especially electronic ones (blogs, forums), since this is the field in which various forms of loanwords feature most frequently.

Key words: Slovene-English language contact, loanwords, vocabulary, integration, language development

Novejše angleške sposojenke v slovenščini

Povzetek

Avtorica se ukvarja z vprašanjem jezikovnih stikov na splošno, bolj podrobno pa z sposojenkami iz angleščine v slovenščino. Poudarek je na novejših sposojenkah, kjer opazamo visoko stopnjo variabilnosti v izgovorjavi in pisavi, kar je odvisno od njihove starosti, od načina prenosa (ustni ali pisni) in od stopnje njihove jezikovne in družbene integracije v slovenščino. Prav tako igrajo pomembno vlogo dejavniki, kakršni so starost in izobrazba uporabnikov ter glasoslovne in pravopisne razlike med obema jezikoma. Poleg glasoslovnih, oblikoslovnih in ortografskih vidikov angleških sposojenk se avtorica dotakne tudi pomena in njegovih občasnih prilagajanj in modifikacij. Ponazoritveni podatki so vzeti v glavnem iz medijev, zlasti elektronskih (blogi, forumi), saj je to področje, kjer se sposojenke v različnih oblikah najpogosteje pojavljajo.

Ključne besede: slovensko-angleški jezikovni stik, sposojenke, besedje, integracija, jezikovni razvoj

1. Introduction

Loanwords or borrowings represent an interesting and often intriguing part of any language's vocabulary. In this respect, Slovene is no exception. If we focus on borrowing from English, we see that the first English loanwords were accepted into Slovene as early as the 17th and 18th centuries. They were not very numerous, though, and were adopted mostly from written sources and more often than not via an intermediary or mediating language such as German. Among the examples of such loans are the words *šport* and *keks* (Šabec 2005). The phenomenon of borrowing from English is thus by no means new; the extent to which it has intensified in the past few decades, however, has exceeded anything seen in the past and would have been hard to imagine half a century ago. This is of course due mostly to the impact of globalization and heightened exposure to English in practically all areas of life. We thus witness the importation of new words of English origin into Slovene on an almost daily basis. Naturally, some genres and registers are more susceptible to borrowing than others. Thus, the frequency of English loanwords is particularly high in the media, especially new electronic ones such as internet blogs and forums, and also in the spoken, often slangy language of the young, particularly teenagers.

2. Integration of English Loanwords into Slovene

Once English words are borrowed into Slovene, they may undergo very diverse and interesting changes. A number of factors affect their development, from linguistic to sociolinguistic ones. The former refer to the degree of compatibility between the two languages in terms of their phonological and orthographic systems, the latter to the age of loanwords and various characteristics of their users such as their age, education (especially their proficiency in English) and their attitudes toward English/American language and culture.

Compared to the phonologically, morphologically and orthographically totally integrated and well-established loanwords that no longer sound foreign and that are in fact treated like any other word in Slovene, recent loanwords are much more unstable. This instability and variability can be observed on various levels from spelling to pronunciation.

For the purpose of this article, we will only briefly touch upon the older, fully integrated loanwords so as to be able to compare them to the more recent ones which are the focus of our discussion.

2.1 Older Loanwords

These are the loanwords that have been successfully integrated into Slovene and that adhere, in their usage, to the rules of Slovene grammar. Generally, speakers, even if they might be aware of the foreign origin of the words in question, do not treat them any differently from the rest of the Slovene vocabulary.

2.1.1 Pronunciation

The pronunciation of older loanwords is typically characterized by the replacement of English phonemes by their nearest Slovene equivalents.

e.g. the English word *thriller* is pronounced as /tri:ler/

In addition to the difference in the vowel quality (short /ɪ/ in English vs. long /i:/ in Slovene; semi-vowel /ə/ in English vs. /ɛ/ in Slovene), the most salient difference occurs in the replacement of the English fricative /θ/ by the Slovene dental stop /t/.

Other typical Slovene deviations are also common in the pronunciation of English loanwords. For purposes of illustration, just a few are listed:

- the under-differentiation of vowel contrasts: /ɪ, i:/ > /i:/
e.g. *chip/s* > *čip/s*
- a closer realization of some vowel phonemes /æ/ > /e, ɛ/
e.g. *band* > *bend*
- a simplification of certain diphthongs /ou/ > /o/
e.g. *goal* > *gol*
- the pronunciation of final -ng as /ŋk/ instead of /ŋ/
e.g. /iŋ/ > /iŋk/

Occasionally, differences in word stress and intonation can be found as well.

e.g. *Canberra* pronounced as /kan'beral/ instead of as /'kanbərə/

2.1.2 Spelling

Orthographically, older loanwords are stable and in most cases consistently spelt in the same way. Typical English letters that do not exist in Slovene are replaced by their Slovene near-equivalents (*weekend* > *vikend*, *boycott* > *bojkot*, *sherry* > *šeri*, *Chicago* > *Čikago*, *coca-cola* > *koka kola*). The same applies to combinations of double consonants and vowels (*tennis* > *tenis*, *boomerang* > *bumerang*).

It should be noted that in some cases we observe double or even multiple orthographic forms of certain loanwords such as *team* vs. *tim*, but this phenomenon is far less common than in the case of less stable recent loanwords.

2.1.3 Morphology

As for morphology, older loanwords follow the morphological rules of Slovene: nouns are inflected for gender, number and case (the same applies to some adjectives such as *kompatibilen-na/-no* from *compatible*, but not to others such as *izi* and *fensi* from *easy* and *fancy*), and verbs for the category of gender, person, number as well as tense, aspect and mode. Rules of agreement are generally applied in the case of nouns, some adjectives, and verbs. However, we should point out an interesting aspect regarding gender assignment of nouns borrowed from English. While animate nouns represent no problem, inanimate nouns which are, as a rule, neuter in English, fall into either masculine or feminine in Slovene (there are no occurrences of the third category, neuter). The criteria for gender assignment may depend on various factors from similarity of phonological shape of the nouns to (semantic) analogy, homophony and shape of suffix (Poplack et al. 1988, Winford 2003).

Examples:

- *yacht* > *jahta* (feminine on the analogy of semantically similar Slovene nouns such as *ladja* / *ship*, *jadrnica* / *sailboat*)
- *shock* > *šok* (masculine due to the suffix form)
- *Parkirali* so kar ob cesti in si privoščili *dva sendviča* in *okusen hamburger*. (agreement of nouns, adjectives and verbs)
/They parked by the road and ate *two sandwiches* and *a tasty hamburger*./

Similarly, loanwords follow the same word formation patterns as native words. Older loanwords may thus, for instance, be used as a base to form compounds or derive new words.

e.g. *hockey* > *hokej*, *hokejist* (a hockey player), *hokejsko prvenstvo* (a hockey championship), *hokej na ledu* (ice hockey), *hokej na travi* (field hockey)

2.1.4 Calques

In addition to loanwords, Slovene has a number of calques or loan translations from English. These are word-by-word translations from English, where the English elements are literally replaced by Slovene ones.

e.g. *brainwashing* – *pranje možganov*

2.2 Recent Loanwords

Compared to older loanwords, more recent ones are more susceptible to variation than older ones. They are usually borrowed directly from English either through oral sources or through the Internet, which is why they are much closer to the original than the older loanwords (which were often modified due to the mediating language and/or the general distance between the donor and the recipient languages).

2.2.1 Pronunciation

The pronunciation of recent loanwords is typically very unstable, depending largely on the linguistic competence of the speakers. This is generally higher with younger speakers who learn English at school, with more educated ones and those who are more mobile. In all cases, however, the comparison with the pronunciation of older loanwords shows that recent loanwords imitate their English models much more closely.

e.g. *notebook* > /*noutbuk*/

In the first syllable, /*o*/ is pronounced as /*ou*/ rather than as /*o*/, which would have been more likely in the case of older loanwords.

The degree of adaptation to Slovene or lack of it thus reflects the closeness of the speakers' contact with English. In addition, their attitudes matter: they are mostly young and have, because of their exposure to the English/American language and culture, a generally greater affinity for it.

2.2.2 Spelling

The unstable, changeable character of recent loanwords is perhaps most obvious in spelling, where loanwords often occur in multiple orthographic shapes and forms. The following examples illustrate the co-existence of various forms spelt not only with Slovene graphemes, but even those with English ones.

e.g. show/*šou/šov*; *software, softver*; *mobbing/mobing*; *tatoo/tatu*; *muffin/mafin*

Most typically, however, recent loanwords remain in their original English form. In the media, they are often written in inverted commas, in italics or they may even be accompanied by a gloss or a footnote, signalling their foreignness and occasionally the writers' attempt to explain them to the potential audience (in most cases, however, the addressee's understanding of the words is taken for granted).

Examples:

- Nekoč so mariborska podjetja propadala, zdaj baje cvetijo - tudi ali predvsem zato, ker se "outsourcajo" (selijo proizvodnjo v države s cenejšo delovno silo). (Večer, 13. 9. 2008, 18)
/In the past, the Maribor companies went bankrupt; today they supposedly flourish due to "outsourcing" (moving production to the countries with cheaper labor.)
- ... ki bo ob takšnem tempu potrebovala vsaj dve sezoni, da bo serija dobila oznako dostojnega "spin-offa"! (TV Večer, 11. 9. 2008, 16)
/...that would at this pace need at least two seasons for the series to be labeled as a decent "spin-off"!/
- ... kajti ta mladina se ne zna sprostiti ob *milk-shaku*, temveč ob drogah, *tatoojih* in naslajanju nad tujo usodo. (TV Večer, 12. 9. 2008, 17)
/...because these young cannot relax drinking *milk-shakes*, instead they need drugs, *tatoos* and gloating over other people's misfortune./
- Da je posredi vnaprejšnja ignoranca, kaže tudi *flop* z navajanjem Pekarne kot avtorja projekta... (Večer, 10. 9. 2008, 14)
/The *flop* with citing Pekarna as the author of the project is proof of apriori ignorance.../
- "Search engine marketing" je oblika trženja prek spletnih iskalnikov. (www.zurnal24.si, 13. 9. 2008, 35)
/"Search engine marketing" is a kind of marketing via internet search engines./
- Imam vsaj dve vrsti odzivov pri polarizaciji, to je tiste, ki se pridružijo zmagovalcem in ker nočejo glasovati za poražence, in drugo vrsto odziva, to so tisti, ki ne želijo podpreti zmagovalcev, ampak volijo 'underdoga', torej tiste, ki jim gre slabše. (Večer, 15. 9. 2008, 3)
/There are at least two kinds of reaction toward polarization: some join the winners and do not want to vote for the losers, others do not want to support the winners, but prefer to vote for the 'underdogs', that is, those who are not doing so well./

- Prva žrtev sindroma izgorelosti (burn-out syndrome) v javnem sektorju? (Delo, SP, 3. 1. 2009, 2)
/The first victim of the burn-out syndrome in the public sector?/

It should be noted that English spelling and punctuation occasionally also affect the spelling of Slovene words, especially in advertising and in names of companies and products (to achieve special effect) as well as in blogs and forums, where mostly the young use it as a kind of affectation and a sign of being "in."

Examples:

- *O'glasna* pošta (advertisement for postal gift services with a redundant apostrophe and a possible word play on the words meaning *glas/voice* and *oglas/advertisement*)
- Tri sobni apartma, plazma v vsaki sobi, *spa &* dodobra založena kuhinja, v *resortu* še obvezna savna in bazenček (<http://trik.sopca.com>; posted September 4, 2008)
/A three-bedroom suite with a plasma in each room, *spa &* well-stocked kitchen, with an adjoined sauna and a small swimming pool in the *resort*/
- *tyashy*, *kayica*, *ovchka* (usernames/nicknames on forums and blogs with frequent omission of Slovene letters š,č,ž and the use of English ones: x,y,w)

3.3.3 Morphology

In view of their newness, recent loanwords show a much lesser degree of integration and often resist the inflectional patterns of Slovene. This is not surprising, as some are only used on one or a couple of occasions, for reasons of prestige or with a specific audience in mind. Their fate is in fact uncertain and it is not clear which ones will take root and which ones will fall into oblivion. According to Gorlach (2004, 4), they “do not usually become part of the core vocabulary and are therefore open to being quick imports (because of the novelty or fashionable appeal of the concepts and words) and equally to being quickly lost (because the things designated go out of use or the terms are replaced by more trendy and attractive ones)”. While this statement is largely true, counterexamples of widely used words such as “internet” can be found as well.

Examples:

- ...SNS pa je tradicionalno 'antiestablishment' stranka, kar privablja določen odstotek volilcev. (Večer, 15. 9. 2008, 3)
/...SNS is traditionally an 'antiestablishment' party, which attracts a certain percentage of voters./
- Dostop do vrhunskega tujega *know-how-a*. (election campaign leaflet)
/Access to top-notch foreign *know-how*./

As for word-formation, recent English loanwords are less prone to form derivatives and compounds than older ones due to their lower degree of integration into Slovene. There are exceptions, however, such as the extremely productive *blog*, which has formed an entire word family. Stramljič Breznik (2008, 155–6) cites the following derivatives, compounds and blends:

blogada, blogajna, blogastično, blogat, blogataš, blogator, blogocizem, blogika, bloginja, bloginje, bloginjštica, blogirati, blognat, blogniti, blognje, blogok, blogji, blogon, blogovina, blogovišče, blogovit, blogovnica, blogovski, blogulja, blogun, bložanski, bložki, zablogiran, zablogiranec; brezbložje, medbložje, pribložje; blogodajalec, blogaboječ, blogodržec, blogofil, blogoglasno, blogojemalec, blogokleten, blogoskop, Blogoljub, Blogoljuba, blogoljuje, blogologija, blogolom, Blogomil, blogomor, blogopis, blogopisec, blogoskrunstvo, blogoslovje, blogoslužje, blogostrastno, blogosumje, blogošpegec, blogotaj, blotgotišje, blogotožje, blogotrebec, blogotvorec, blogovid, blogoznanstvo, blogodržen, blogomrzje, enobloštvo, mnogobloštvo; deblogirati, izblogirati, najboljši, Nebložje, poblogati se, razblogirati, sobložje, trnasblogirati, zablogati se, hvala-blogu, zabloga, blogme, blogsigavedi and blogopališče (from blog + pokopališče).

3.3.3 Calques

Recent calques seem to be more numerous than the old ones, which can be attributed to much closer contact with the English/American culture in the globalized context of today than was the case in the past.

e.g. *hate speech – sovražni govor*

At times, they co-exist with other English-based loanwords.

e.g. *public relations/odnosi z javnostjo/javnostmi/ PR/piarovstvo*

Due to their relative newness, calques are frequently less stable and less consistent; some may be even modified and quite unfamiliar to those who are not able to decipher their meaning from either the context or from English.

A good example is the sentence: *Mitja Gaspari, nekdanji finančni minister in guverner Banke Slovenije, na Bajukovo sporočilo potrošnikom, kupujte z nogami: “Upoštevajte pravila, kupujte z nogami, je dobro za rekreacijo.”* (Večer, 13. 9. 2008, 46).

/Mitja Gaspari, the former minister of finance and governor of the Bank of Slovenia reacted to Bajuk’s message to consumers to buy with their feet by saying, “Follow the rules, buy with your feet, it’s good recreation.”/

/The original English *to vote with one’s feet* (i.e. to show that you do not support something, especially an organization or a product, by not using or not buying it anymore. (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 1998) has been replaced by *to buy with one’s feet* in Slovene to fit the context.

A similar case where we cannot help but guess at the influence of the English word *backyard* on the use of *zadnje dvorišče* is the sentence: *Evropski državljani se morajo končno naučiti, kaj se dogaja na njihovem zadnjem dvorišču, ki ga tako radi razglašajo za izvir svoje kulture.* (Večer, 3. 1. 2009, 8)

/European citizens should finally learn what is going on in their backyard that they so often proclaim as the source of their culture./

The noun *dvorišče* is highly unlikely to be premodified by the adjective *zadnje* in Slovene, especially since the first translation option for the word *zadnje* that comes to mind is *last* rather than *back* (*back* in turn being translated as *zadaj*).

3. Semantic Aspects

Semantically, English loanwords cover a wide range of domains from science and technology to popular culture. Rapid technological development, all sorts of technical innovations, new devices, the Internet and increasing mobility have changed our lifestyle in a way that has made at least some English almost a necessity for a large part of the world's population. This is true especially of the young, where in the case of Slovene the impact of English on their slang has to be pointed out as well. We list some examples from internet blogs and forums, where English frequently serves to make discourse more concise, technical, creative, playful and/or slangy.

Examples:

- *fejker, glistafashionista, zadetaodlajfa* (bloggers' names)
- lahko jest furam kaj jest vem kak *lajfstajl* pa mi ne bo nič dost pomagal (www.gape.org/egi-bin/yabb/YaBB.pl?num=1093341324/30; posted October 26, 2005)
/I can lead I don't know what kind of *lifestyle* and it won't really matter/
- Letos bo kot lani potekalo 4 dni, od četrta do nedelje, *free camping*, upam, da nam bo uspelo spet zrihtat. Novost bo *jumpbox* objekt (objekt ima "quoter", *flet, lending*...tak objekt je narejen za letet, heh) (<http://obala.net/blog/user.php?user=pivo>; posted 28. 6. 2007)
/Just like last year it will go on for 4 days, from Thursday to Sunday, *free camping*, I hope we can pull it off again. What is new is a *jumpbox* object (the object has a "quarter", a *flat, landing*....the kind of object that is made for flying, hah!)
- Ponedeljek, spet šola - o *fakkk!!* Zjutri šetkam do avtobusne postaje, in tam stoji en...čuden tip, tak *psycho look* je mel...*yuck*... (www.diva.si/blog.php?akcija=avtor &user_id=5033); posted September 22, 2008)
/Monday, school again - oh, *fuck!!* In the morning I walk down to the bus stop and there stands some...weird guy, with a *psycho look* about him...*yuck*.../

Finally, both older and recent loanwords occasionally undergo semantic changes when compared to their original meanings in English. Thus the word *šoping* (Eng. shopping), for instance, has a somewhat more frivolous connotation than *nakupovanje*, the word *manager* a more fashionable feel to it than *direktor*, the word *juice* a more restricted meaning (referring exclusively to orange juice) and the word *toast* a broader meaning in Slovene than in English (referring to a toasted ham-and-cheese sandwich).

4. Conclusion

What does the future hold for English loanwords? The only certainty is that there will be more of them. As to which ones will become integrated, which ones will continue to co-exist or even take precedence over Slovene ones and which will turn out to be just a passing phenomenon we can only speculate. One criterion that might play a role in determining this is their relevance: those

that either fill lexical gaps in certain domains (for instance, technical and scientific terminology) or contribute to the stylistic richness and specialization of the language are likely to persist, while some fashionable ones that are perceived as “unnecessary” or “too far fetched” may not – at least not in the long run. In either case it is a fact that English is currently the most important donor of new words to both Slovene and many other languages, which is why the continuous study of English loanwords and related processes is of great relevance to a better understanding of language development and change, thus remaining a constant challenge for linguistic research.

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