How much is too much? – The treatment of anglicisms in the context of Croatian and German

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to establish the relevance of the results from a survey conducted among university students of English and German at the University of Osijek. The survey was construed in order to establish the degree of awareness among non-native users of English on how anglicisms are treated in the context of Croatian and German language systems and what strategies are used to cope with the pervasive influence of English vocabulary. Preliminary results show that English lexical borrowings from the field of IT technology are used very frequently in their communication via computers and mobile phones and the students are rather slow to acquire the suggested Croatian and German equivalents and neologisms in the IT terminology.

Three basic strategies of direct borrowing, phonological and morphological adaptation, and neologisms will be researched by applying a questionnaire with both lexical and visual prompts for the students. The goal is to elicit responses that will be analysed and put in the context of whether Croatian and German function as a "language of identification" or a "language of communication" (House, 2003).

Keywords: Anglicism, borrowings, neologisms, Croatian, German

Introduction

The process of language change is an essential and natural part of the development of every language and in this sense it abides by the principles of a descriptive approach to the study of (a) language. By its very nature, the process of describing the changing and fluctuating characteristics of language must rely on describing the external factors of change, namely, its speakers and their linguistic production such as it is. Approaching the language as it is spoken by its users follows the

tenets of the usage-based model of language (Langacker, 1987), which seeks to ground language structure in the actual instances of language – the usage event. Following the approach to language change as a natural process that spreads from the domain of historical linguistics into the area of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology and cognitive sciences in general (Aitchinson, 2004), linguistic changes can be studied at their micro and macro levels. Relevant in that sense are the length of the research period, which is usually labelled as a diachronic (longitudinal) approach, as opposed to the synchronic approach within a shorter period and at several sociolinguistic levels.

In the case of the research conducted in the classes of German and English as a second language, we adopted the synchronic approach of testing the current state of affairs with reference to a particular sociolinguistic group of young people, students at the Department of English and the Department of German at the University of Osijek, Croatia. Our aim was to establish how the most up-to-date lexical units from the field of IT technology, in our case lexemes, abbreviations and acronyms used in texting, chatting, emailing and social networking break the barrier of English as a source language and enter students' Croatian and German as mother tongue and other second language, respectively. We wanted to establish the degree of their awareness of potential equivalents to English terms and abbreviations and thus suggest some preliminary guidelines for the treatment of anglicisms in both Croatian and German language classes.

Three basic strategies of direct borrowing, phonological and morphological adaptation, and neologisms were researched by applying a questionnaire with both lexical and visual prompts for the students. Their responses will be analysed and put in the context of whether Croatian and German function as a 'language of identification' or a 'language of communication' (House, 2003). As a 'language of communication' English has established its firm leading position as a useful instrument for communicating in international encounters with others who do not speak one's own native language. Croatian has been recognized as a 'language of identification' by the participants in the survey and the elicited results in the use of English terms and their Croatian equivalents clearly point in that direction. The affective stance of Croatian students toward their mother tongue defines it as a 'language of identification', possessing the necessary affective-emotive quality necessary for the identification of an individual with a larger linguistic-cultural community. In our research German straddles a fine line between those two types because it is neither the students' mother tongue, nor the imposing *lingua franca*, but a second language taught at a tertiary level. Precisely thus, the results from the research conducted among the students of German as L2 show the most interesting results, pointing to a current battle between anglicisms, German

counterparts and Croatian equivalents as a potential buffer zone between the two camps. Due to the limitation of space, the affective element in the process of deciding between the counterparts has been left out and will probably be part of some further analysis.

English as a global language and a *lingua franca*

As Crystal observed (1997:2): "A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." The ways in which it may achieve its special status is either for it to become 'a second language', an official language of government and media and where the speakers learn it form an early age along with their mother tongue, or when it achieves priority status in foreign-language teaching in schools. English long ago acquired its status as *the* global language, mostly due to the phenomenon described by Crystal as the closest of links between language dominance and cultural power. The British political and industrial imperialism of the 19th century gave way to the American economic supremacy of the 20th century, which is now extending into the third millennium. Suffice it to say that the brunt of both types of power types produced a strong cultural revolution, mostly based on the ever-present entertainment industry and technological advancements.

The means of communication involving the keyboard-to-screen (KTS) channel (Jucker & Dürscheid, 2012) indeed put a spin on the famous description of English as 'the language on which the sun never sets' (Crystal, 1997: 67) since the virtual space of electronically powered devices enables its users to communicate day and night, spanning the reach of English both in space and time.

Every consideration about the extent to which English influences other languages and other cultures must keep in mind the limitations of its linguistic system, or, rather, lack thereof, because, as House (2003:557) points out, some of the major characteristics of today's global English are its functional flexibility and its spread across many different domains. The typological mixture of English and its relative morphological simplicity is a basis on its own for the internal adaptability to new concepts to be linguistically encoded. Native speakers of English are themselves continuously producing innumerable examples of new, inventive lexical and idiomatic structures adjusting their vocabulary to the given linguistic system of English, but, at the same time, slightly shifting the boundaries of the already existing system in haphazard, but persistent processes of lexicalization and grammaticalisation. English has thus earned its role as a legitimate *lingua franca* of the modern world and more recently a strand of EFL research suggested a new term of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). According to House (ibid.), ELF can't be treated as either a pidgin or a language for specific purposes, or as a form of interlanguage in Selinker's terms, but as a type of a contact language for speakers

sharing neither a native tongue or national culture, who use English as their chosen language of communication. The position of the English language as a potential threat for native languages is thus defied by a free-willing approach to its use by a heterogeneous group of speakers from all strands of life and all around the globe. Rather than acting as a killer language, ELF can also give rise to the following paradoxical situation: using ELF as a language for communication often strengthens the use of native languages for identification purposes and as a vehicle of protest against ELF dominance.

We therefore witness today strong and healthy counter-currents, not only in particular language policies by different state authorities trying to promote vocabulary of a national language, but even among different generations of speakers of national languages, i.e. even among the members of the young generation who treat their national language as a first line of defence in the struggle for their personal identification.

The treatment of jargon and slang in SLA

As noted by Birdsong (2004: 86) the conceptualization of the mature state in the process of L1 or L2 acquisition presupposes incremental progress, and thus no absolute finality, in learning. This lack of finality subsumes all the aspects of language change mentioned above, particularly additions of novel lexical items (along with idioms, slang, dialectal variants, technical jargon, etc.) and occasional changes in surface morphological or phonetic forms, but not re-representation of the underlying grammar.

The classroom treatment of jargon (business jargon, medical jargon etc.) is, of course, a necessary element for any studiously created curriculum of English for Specific Purposes course, but in the cases of more general SLA class, when the use of terminology includes elements of a particular professional jargon (in our case IT terminology or KTS communication jargon), and the fluctuating basis of slang expressions, the teaching attitude should be approached from a more tentative angle and the advantages and disadvantages.

Methodology

The corpus consists of 20 electronic RAs in the field of general psychology consisting of 105 307 running words selected from two online journals available in PsychInfo base: *Motivaton and Emotion* (IF=1,339) and *Cognition and Emotion* (IF=1,901)[2]. The RAs were selected according to the following criteria. They were all original research reports of correlational studies published between 2008 and

2009. Additionally, they followed a standard IMRD framework and were approximately of the same length, ranging from 4,000-6,000 words. As for the data analysis procedure, the corpus was divided into four sub-corpora, each consisting of one of the four obligatory sections of RAs[3]. The text analysis was done by means of the lexical analysis software WordSmith Tools 5.0 (Scott, 1996), in particular its analytical tool Concordancer. The raw frequency counts were normed to a basis per 1,000 words, using the following method: raw frequency count/a total length of a text x 1,000 words= normed frequency count[4].

Results

Fig.1. presents the distribution of three categories of epistemic modality markers selected for frequency analysis across IMRD structure of RAs. As can be seen, the Method section shows the lowest incidence of epistemic markers, unlike the Discussion section with the highest frequency of epistemic modality markers. The most frequent type of epistemic markers used in Introductions includes epistemic modals, followed by epistemic lexical verbs, whereas in Discussions these two categories seem to be quite evenly distributed. The overall use of epistemic adverbs, adjectives, and nouns is the lowest in frequency although they show rather even distribution across Introductions and Discussions. Relative frequency of most commonly used epistemic markers across IMRD structure is given in Fig.2.

Discussion

As can be seen in Fig.1. the distribution of epistemic modality markers seem to match well with the rhetorical functions of each RA section. According to Nwogu's (1997) schemata of RA moves in medical RA, the Method section deals with the conventionalized descriptions of data collection and data-analysis procedures. This implies that writers generally do not need to qualify their claims in this section, which is reflected in low frequency of epistemic occurrences. The Result section is rhetorically different in that it generally refers to the presentation of the results of statistical analysis. The higher frequency of evaluative language in this section indicates that while presenting the research results, writers seem to simultaneously comment on them and to some extent qualify their claims tentatively, implying that there might be alternative explanations for the results obtained. (e.g. *It is possible that co-variation among the variables may account for this result*.). As is evident in Fig. 1, epistemic lexical verbs were used most frequently compared to the other two categories under study. Their overall use across IMRD tends to be largely conventionalized in academic discourse (see Fig.2), especially as constituents of frequently occurring lexical bundles such as: *Results suggest*. However, due to their polysemous nature, the pragmatic interpretation of their epistemic status demands a larger-scale study and is therefore beyond the scope of this paper.

The second highest epistemically modalized section is Introduction, which is also in accordance with its rhetorical purpose. In this section writers primarily present the current state of knowledge taking positions towards them where relevant. Also they offer interpretations of the previous research in an attempt to establish a niche for their own (Swales, 1990). Unlike the Discussion section, where writers are more often the sources of epistemic judgments that make them more subjective in their evaluations, the epistemic judgments presented in Introductions are more descriptive (Nuyts, 2000), i.e. they are frequently reports of other people's evaluations. (e.g. *Ickes et al. (2000) proposed that women's typical advantage on tests of interpersonal sensitivity might be due to motivational differences stemming from the stereotypically female nature of such tasks.*). The results suggest the highest incidence of epistemic modal verbs, although the use of other categories does not seem to be significantly lower. Among the modal verbs, the findings indicate the predominant use of the modal verb *may*, which matches its chief semantic role as a hedging device (Coates, 1983), followed by *might,* indicating an even higher degree of tentativeness and indirectness.

Finally, the densest section regarding epistemic qualifications is the Discussion with the highest overall incidence of epistemic markers, which is motivated by its information structure. It is in this section that writers interpret their results, draw tentative conclusions, admit limitations of their research that might have contributed to the nature of their findings, and suggest possible implications of their research, which are some of the chief reasons why greater caution is required when presenting claims. The distribution of modal verbs (f/1000=5.61) and epistemic lexical verbs (f/1000=5.92) seems to be relatively close, which suggests their conventional use by psychology writers when making epistemic judgments. (e.g. *Indeed, it may be that self-discrepancies predict emotional distress predominantly among those individuals who believe that one's discrepancies are unlikely to change./This seems to indicate that dispositional pessimists neither plan nor prepare the task to be undertaken, which suggests they are in a state of helplessness.*)

Based on the research findings, the most salient pragmatic aspects of epistemic markers in the corpus indicate their hedging function. Authors hedge the strong, assertive claims, admitting, among others, that their findings can be considered plausible given the limited nature of the research conducted (Hyland, 1998). The reliability and plausibility of the research findings are to be viewed as the logical inferences of the research rather than as individual speculations. To sum up, the results of the corpus-based analysis point to some of the most salient aspects regarding the distribution and use of selected epistemic modality markers. However, this picture is far from complete and might be considered as the first step in

exploring the complexity of epistemic modality and its pragmatics in the field of psychology.

Figure.1. Distribution of anglicisms and their Croatian and German equivalents
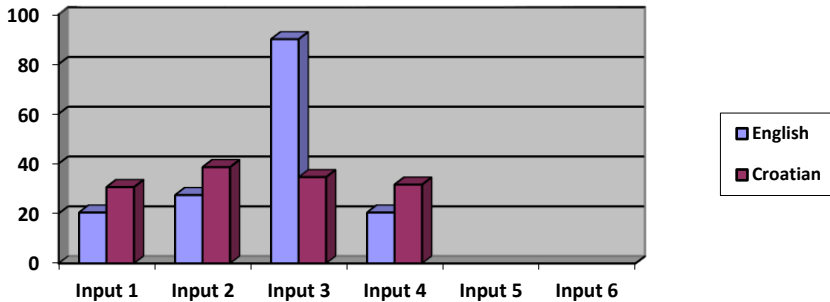

Figure 2. Relative percentage of most commonly used Croatian and German equivalents

English	Croatian			German	
favorites	2.05 71	0.04 1	0.25 5	3.03 79	**1.48 156**
download	1.35 47	0.24 6	0.60 12	2.57 67	**1.25 132**
password	0.37 13	0.40 10	1.80 36	1.19 31	**0.85 90**
attachment	0.80 28	0.08 2	0.10 2	1.69 44	**0.72 76**
update	0.66 23	- -	0.45 9	0.96 25	**0.54 57**
paste	0.28 10	0.04 1	0.35 7	0.65 17	**0.33 35**
file					
refresh					
edit					

record					

Implications for classroom teaching

The second section of the paper outlines the classroom tasks designed to acquire some information about the extent to which the undergraduates understand the concept of epistemic modality and use of epistemic markers in their field of study. It should be noted that the students were made familiar with the basic aspects of this linguistic category prior to the completion of tasks. The undergraduates are first-year students of psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Osijek. Given the length of the paper, the task instructions and only one example per task are outlined followed by a summarized discussion of students' responses.

Conclusion

Overall, the responses suggest that the majority of first-year students understand the concept of epistemic modality and can recognize its typical exponents in the authentic sentences extracted from a specialized RA corpus. We find that the inclusion of epistemic modality should be an integral component of EAP courses, due to the complexity of the concept which, however, has been proved to be one of the most characteristic elements of written academic discourse. At this level of language learning the students should be guided by being exposed to the highly frequent epistemic markers through awareness-raising tasks. These tasks should be based on authentic material, bringing students' attention to the actual language in use. Still, the production should be guided in the manner of providing prompts in the form of hedging devices (see Discussion point 3). Only at the higher level of language learning could we expect a greater degree of independent use of structures containing epistemic markers leading to the development of more advanced academic writing skills.

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