GLOBALIZATION OF ENGLISH AS A CORPORATE LANGUAGE

ALINA MARIA ZAHARIA, RADU LOLESCU *

ABSTRACT: Linguistic and cultural knowledge are very important nowadays when doing business in an international environment. Due to the rapid development of trade in Romania and in the other Member States of the European Union business English has become more and more important in the economic field. The world’s language situation is undergoing some significant changes and that is why I will try to describe the development of English as a global language. The linguistic globalisation is not an internal language phenomenon but the result of a deliberate linguistic attitude, strictly determined by economic interests.

KEY WORDS: linguistic globalization, business English, borrowings, culture, communication

1. INTRODUCTION

Many scientific researchers talk about globalization in their works in terms of economic and political issues. According to Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, the term globalization covers a wide range of distinct political, economic and cultural trends. The same source states that in popular terms globalization is associated with the following phenomena: “free market”, “economic liberalization”, “westernization” or “Americanization”, “Internet Revolution” or “global integration”.

Globalization refers “to processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents” (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton, 1999: 15). Globalisation can also be associated with words like global, international, transnational, multinational or worldwide. According to Waters (2001:5) globalization can be defined as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly”. So, globalization is

* Assist. Prof., University of Craiova, Romania, alina.m.z@yahoo.com
Ph.D. Student, University of Craiova, Romania
not a simple phenomenon or trend, it is a complex process which covers not only the economic field but also the social, cultural and technological one.

However, little attention has been paid to the linguistic side of globalisation. In spite of this language has been affected by globalisation in different ways.

The world’s language situation is undergoing some significant changes and that is why I will try to describe the development of English as a global language trying to discover the ways in which English may become the European official language.

2. GLOBALIZATION OF ENGLISH

English is developing as a means of international communication. English for Specific Purposes and in this case business English in a European context is quite a controversial subject because there are many cultural differences in the legal sphere. But the globalization and the appearance of international bodies like the UN, NATO, EU, WTO have brought an increase in legal documentation as for example legislation, treaties, agreements where English is used as a common language. In the European Union all official languages are equal, theoretically speaking, but all the matters related to competition, certain laws are first drafted in English or French and in this case English may be thought to be the source language. EU institutions use three main working languages: English, French and German. The fact that the new Member States have preferred English has marginalized in a certain way the use of French and German.

A survey carried out by the “Special Eurobarometer 243” about the Europeans and their languages shows that German is the most widely spoken mother tongue with 18% of the speakers, while English is the most widely spoken language in the EU with 51%. This survey also shows that 100% of the Hungarians, 100% of the Portuguese, and 99% of the Greeks speak the state language as their mother tongue. Researchers have showed that the long-term objective for all EU citizens is to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. So, 56% of citizens in the EU Member States are able to hold a conversation in one language apart from their mother tongue. 28% of the interviewed persons say that they speak two foreign languages well enough to have a conversation. But in spite of these almost half of the respondents, 44%, admit not knowing any other language than their mother tongue.

Approximately 1 in 5 Europeans can be described as an active language learner. All in all, English remains the most widely spoken foreign language throughout Europe because 38% of EU citizens state that they have sufficient skills in English to have a conversation (apart from the citizens of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and Malta).

14% of Europeans indicate that they know either French or German along with their mother tongue. In 19 out of 29 countries polled, English is the most widely known language apart from the mother tongue, this being particularly the case in Sweden (89%), Malta (an ex-British colony) (88%) and the Netherlands (87%), while German and French is so in three countries. Moreover, the citizens of the EU think they speak English at a better level than any other second or foreign language. 77% of EU citizens believe that children should learn English. English either as a mother
tongue or as a second/foreign language is spoken by 51% of EU citizens, followed by German with 32% and French with 28% of those asked.

The results of this survey show the rise of English as a lingua franca. English is preferred by most of the foreign investors although it is not their mother language. Other surveys have demonstrated that the majority of foreign investors come from non-English speaking countries as for example Germany or French. And in spite of this they would rather choose English as the language of communication.

Linguistic and cultural knowledge are very important nowadays when doing business in an international environment. Due to the rapid development of trade in Romania and in the other Member States of the European Union business English has become more and more important in the economic fields. Therefore businessmen and many students have to master specific English skills from establishing a business relation to the signing of a contract. Thus, Business English has become a very important field of research in the context of English for Specific Purposes. Business English is a professional language that originates from LSP, or Language for Specific Purposes.

Language for Specific Purposes can be seen as the language used by a group of people who share an area of expertise (linguistics, economics, medicine, social studies, etc.) or a hobby or interest. LSP contains a range of domains which may be further divided into subdomains involving a number of sublanguages. This system may have a horizontal dimension involving the number of domains into which language can be divided (the medical language, the language of law, the language of engineering, etc.) and a vertical dimension specifying the layer of the domain. Since the early 1980s, research on English for Business Purposes (EBP) has flourished as English has become widely accepted as the primary language for international business. LSP reflects the relationship between knowledge, society and the individual without prioritizing any one of these.

According to David Carter the specialized language has been split into a variety of subsystems as for example:

- English as a restricted language;
- English for Academic and Occupational purposes which can be further divided into:
  - English for Science and Technology;
  - English for Business and Economics;
  - English for Social Studies;
- English with specific topics.

The globalization of Business English has led to some borrowings or calques in Romanian. That is why we often find many neologisms of English origin which have been adopted into the current use of business language, as for example: computer, hard disk, marketing, management, anti-dumping, broker, a plăti cash and so on. Therefore I think it is very important to know the historical roots of the words which describe and explain economic activities. In table 1. I picked up a few examples of English and the Romanian business terms and I tried to give the etymological explanation of the words.
As we can see from this table the English and Romanian variants of the business terms have similar forms, and most of the chosen terms have Latin or Greek origins. These borrowings from English may create difficulties in adaptation or they may not be well accepted by the speakers. In spite of these aspects we have to think of the strong Latin influences upon the English vocabulary and as we have seen in the above mentioned examples these English loans do not harm our vocabulary. The lexical units which have been phonetically adapted are of French origins, while the others are of English origin. These lexical borrowings like for example: management, marketing, microeconomics or clearing which have not been adapted phonetically are considered to be an expression of informational density (Olga Bălănescu, 1997, 27-37).

Table 1. English and Romanian business terms and their etymology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English term</th>
<th>Romanian term</th>
<th>Etymology of the word</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boycott</td>
<td>Boicot</td>
<td>The word boycott derives from the name of the Captain Charles Boycott, an Irish landlord. In 1880 all his tenants decided to protest against him and demanded a reduction in their rents. He decided to evict them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Buget</td>
<td>Budget comes from Old French bougette, diminutive from Lat. bulga, which means leather bag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Capital has its roots in the trade and ownership of animals. The Latin root is capita which means head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing</td>
<td>Clearing</td>
<td>Comes from the English verb to clear. Clearing involves the management of post-trading, pre-settlement credit exposures, to ensure that trades are settled in accordance with market rules, even if a buyer or seller should become insolvent prior to settlement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Economie</td>
<td>Comes from the Latin word oeconomia, from the Greek terms oikonomia &quot;household management&quot;, oikonomos &quot;manager, steward,&quot; and oikos &quot;house&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embargo</td>
<td>Embargo</td>
<td>The term designates a prohibitory order on the passage of ships; suspension of commerce. Comes from the Spanish noun embargo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomics</td>
<td>Macroeconomie</td>
<td>Greek Prefix makros which means on a large scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>Comes from the Latin profectus which means profit, progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Salariu</td>
<td>Comes from the Latin salarium which means salary, stipend, originally &quot;soldier's allowance for the purchase of salt&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of business English in Romania has increased after 1989 due to the liberalisation of trade, to foreign investments and also due to the privatisation of most of the state-owned factories. Starting with 2000 we can speak of a globalization of the business language in Romania and even of a corporate language. Yet, the term corporate language has not been adopted by linguists but it has a certain meaning. It acts like a sublanguage, a jargon, a language for a specific professional group (higher
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management, Human Resource management, and so on). It is characterized by borrowings and massive loans and therefore I can say it has a mixed English-Romanian vocabulary.

An eloquent example for the globalization of corporate language in Romania is the job advertisement posted by Romanian corporations in newspapers or online. The online recruitment process facilitates rapidity both for the company and for the applicant and therefore more and more corporations and companies tend to use this channel of communication. I have read and analysed a few examples of job descriptions from different fields. The examples have been taken from one of the well known Romanian recruitment websites. The results of my analysis have shown the following characteristics:

• many job titles are written in English: store accountant and controller, financial controller, chief accountant – insurance, customer sales support specialist, pricing analyst, project manager, accountant, sales agent, unit manager, etc.

• in many cases the job description and the responsibilities of the candidate are drafted in English, but there are also cases when the title is in English and the description is in Romanian.

After carrying out a comparative analysis of a few job advertisements, I noticed that large corporations as for example HP, Xerox, Siemens or Genpact publish their job advertisements only in English. This Anglicization of job offerings may pose great difficulties to many applicants, especially to the elderly ones. Although many job descriptions are in English the activity which will be carried out by the prospective employee does not involve English. For example experienced candidates from the field of accounting who do not possess thorough knowledge of English find these advertisements hard to understand and they often do not apply for such jobs even if they are highly qualified for that position.

Many of the above mentioned corporations prefer to use English as their official language of communication inside the respective organisation and that is why one of the requirements in those job descriptions is proficiency in English. Therefore I would also like to mention some frequently used examples of English neologisms and loanwords which are used in daily communication in a corporation: training, challenge, deadline, target, focus, a se centra, a se focaliza, a prioritiza. Some Romanian linguists are against the trend of adopting so many English words, while other consider the new English elements as necessary for a proper communication nowadays.

The linguistic globalisation is not an internal language phenomenon but the result of a deliberate linguistic attitude, strictly determined by economic interest.

3. CONCLUSION

In this article we tried to describe how the phenomenon of globalization acts on language and we focused on English because this language is developing as a means of international communication. English for Specific Purposes and in this case business English in a European context is quite a controversial subject because there are many
cultural differences in the legal sphere. A survey carried out by the “Special Eurobarometer 243” about the Europeans and their languages shows that German is the most widely spoken mother tongue with 18% of the speakers, while English is the most widely spoken language in the EU with 51%. The use of business English in Romania has increased after 1989 due to the liberalisation of trade, to foreign investments and also due to the privatisation of most of the state-owned factories. The term corporate language has not been adopted by linguists but it has a certain meaning. It acts like a sublanguage, a jargon, a language for a specific professional group.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is a research network funded by the European Union “Transfer skills and innovation to lead to develop vocational training in business policies and procedures Human Resources integrating social responsibility - HeRmeS-R project” (grant LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-FR-038). This project has been funded with support from the European Commision. This communication reflects the views of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein (Leonardo da Vinci Pilot projects).

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