

MANAGING NEOLOGISMS AND POLYSEMY IN BULGARIAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH

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The following paper is focused on basic linguistic changes which have occurred in the Bulgarian language due to borrowings from English. Certain instances of language contact in the past couple of decades have brought forth some noteworthy changes in the Bulgarian language regarding changes in connotative meaning, resemantization, translation variants, and various new synonyms and/or synonymic expressions, especially in light of neologisms in the modern age of global communication. Haugen's classification is taken into account when categorizing the current condition of neologisms, borrowings, and hybrid words in Bulgarian under the influence of English.

Keywords: neologisms, polysemy, translation variants, loan words, semantic changes

Introduction

Language contact has always been a complicated and intricate process, yet its problematic character is further aggravated in the case of loanwords, especially when the word in the source language is polysemous. When this source language is English and the target one is Bulgarian, the influence the former has had on the latter for the past twenty or so years is made even more complex in the light of the ongoing political, socio-economic and cultural changes in Bulgaria.

Besides, in the last couple of decades, owing to the rise of computer technology and the age of communication, a fascinating process can be observed in Modern English which combined with the sheer popularity and practicality of English as an international language has led to some interesting neologisms and additional new meanings to previously existing words.

Motivation for borrowing

Lexical borrowings are necessitated for many reasons: a need to designate new (imported) things (Weinreich 1953, Hock & Joseph 1996), lexical gaps, introduction of new lexical items imparting more "prestige" to a discourse community, a necessity to differentiate spe-

cial nuances of expression (Fritz 1998 in Grzega 2002a), political, economic and cultural dominion of one country over another, bilingualism, etc. With regard to Bulgarian, the political turn which has started since 1989 brought about a plethora of new borrowings with English as its main source. This new orientation of the country towards Western values was accompanied by the concurrent advances in technology and global communication with the Anglo-Saxon world being at the forefront of this modern revolution, spawning innumerable new vocabulary to designate new objects, activities and processes.

Integration of borrowings

The integration, or nativization, of a word in a borrowing language is not a smooth or an easy process to account for. The integration of a foreign word can be hindered by a number of factors, related to phonological, morphological and semantic patterns (Bellmann 1971: 36). Sometimes the loanword does not fill a semantic or lexical gap but fulfills a „power“ role, supplanting an already existing word by being more politically correct, a case in note is the word *sex* in English, which when referring to one being either female or male, has been deemed abusive, so the more neutral term *gender* has been in use. Similar things have been happening with words of political coloring pertaining to the old regime, so *predpriyatie*¹ became *firma* (*firm*) or *kompaniya* (*company*). Whether all new borrowings will hold is another matter and depends on the degree of conventionality the specific instances of lexemes will obtain – a process contingent on both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors.

General Classifications of borrowings

Although many studies have been dedicated to the problem of borrowings, the classical classification propounded by Betz (Betz 1949 in Grzega 2002a), Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1950) is considered still valid (Grzega 2002a). To Haugen's division of "importation" and "substitution", Duckworth later added "partial substitution" (Duckworth 1977). Haugen (1950) distinguishes between three types:

Loanwords – they show morphemic importation without substitution.

Loanblends – they show morphemic substitution as well as importation.

¹ Here and throughout this paper the Bulgarian words are given only in a transliterated form without their original in Cyrillic (Editor's note).

Loanshifts – they show morphemic substitution without importation.

Duckworth (1977) enlarges Betz scheme with “partial substitution“, and offers the most comprehensive classification, based on three “pillars”:

Importation:

Borrowed word

Foreign word (unassimilated) – a non-integrated word from a foreign language – *café* in English from French.

Loanword (assimilated) – an integrated word in a foreign language, linguistically and sociolinguistically adapted to the receiving language – *biznes* in Bulgarian from *business* in English.

Partial Substitution:

Loanblend – a composite word in which one part is borrowed, another – substituted – *chatya* in Bulgarian from *to chat online* in English.

Substitution:

Loan coinage;

Loan formation;

Loan translation – translation of the elements of the foreign word: e.g. Bulgarian *nebstargach* from English *skyscraper*.

Loan rendering – translation of part of the elements of the foreign word – Bulgarian *tarsachka* from English *search engine*.

Loan creation – coined word different from the foreign word, but created with the desire to substitute it – Bulgarian *profil* to replace the English *account*.

Loan meaning – indigenous word to which the meaning of the foreign word is transferred – Bulgarian *svalyam* from English *download*.

We should also note the category of “pseudoloans” (Grzeg 2002a). Especially pertinent in our case are the so-called “semantic pseudoloans” (Carstensen 1980a, 1981), i.e. foreign words showing meanings they do not have in the original (source language), e.g. the German word *Handy*, which does not exist in English with that meaning (of a mobile phone). The cases involving loan creation and loan meaning are not always clearly delineated and are subject to debate.

Due to the influence of the Cyrillic alphabet, when we speak of assimilation, we should bear in mind that the way foreign words exist in English (unassimilated) is impossible to happen in Bulgarian, so there is always “graphic integration” or transliteration, so, as some linguists

suggest, there are degrees of naturalization (Weinreich 1953, Cannon 1999). Loanblends are an interesting development in Bulgarian as words such as *advam*, *postvam* are such instances which in appropriate context supersede their Bulgarian equivalents.

Semantic changes triggered by language contact

We can outline the major types of change that occur with borrowings. First, the most common kind is characterized by borrowing a sense out of a polysemous word in the source language – e.g. *biznes* in Bulgarian from *business* in English. Second, a monosemous lexical item in the source language is mapped onto a polysemous one in the target language, e.g. *download* onto *svalyam*. The latter has a different core meaning in Bulgarian, but acquires a new designation into the Internet domain via a metaphorical transfer. A third case can be observed when a polysemous word in the source is borrowed, mapping its domain matrix onto a polysemous word in the recipient language, e.g. Bulgarian *sarfiram* from English *to surf* in the sense *to surf the net*. Another case of note is the instance where *resemantization* of the word in the recipient language obtains, due to foreign language interference, a case of onomasiological extension, e.g. Bulgarian *igrach* with the meaning of *svalyach* from the English *player* in the sense of *womanizer*. Another instance of this kind is *oblak/cloud* in the sense of an Internet repository site.

Methodology

The aim of this article is to draw attention to certain cases of language contact over the last two or three decades which led to a number of interesting cases of borrowings, most of which presenting both foreign language learners and translators alike with some difficulty. The research is not statistically significant, but the presented instances are typical and have high frequency value from the perspective of sociolinguistic observations. Most of the cases at hand are unassimilated borrowings, mainly connected with the newly-sprung domains of technology and communication.

Results

Onomasiological changes

Changes in the onomasiological base of a recipient word are common ways of integrating new meaning through extension, including metaphorical ones.

Transfer of sense of monosemous word in source language into polysemous words in target language

From the perspective of Bulgarian into English, the word *svalyam* in Bulgarian could lead to at least three different senses; in its basic, literal meaning, it roughly translates to *taking something down* from a shelf for example; when used as slang it means *picking up a woman* (for example in a bar); and the third meaning comes from computer technology and directly translates to *download (a file)*. The third and final meaning is the modern one that did not exist and would not have made any sense before the advent of computer technology. Basically it is a monosemous word in the source language (English) and it is later mapped onto a polysemous word in the target language (Bulgarian).

Transfer of sense of polysemous word in source language into monosemous word in target language

A case of loan translation, worthy of note is the lexical item *application*. It is another new entry in the Bulgarian language, as in “a piece of software in a computing environment” (as defined by Urban Dictionary); at first it seemed to be seamlessly translated (*prilozhenie* – clear case of calque in Bulgarian) but since the shortened version of the word – *app* – has gained popularity in the source language (English) and there seems to be no suitable shortening for its counterpart in the target language (Bulgarian), the shortened word has simply been transliterated (*ap*) and it is now actively used in everyday speech.

Transfer of senses of polysemous word in source language into polysemous word in target language

A fascinating case of *substitution* is “resemantization” – a word in a target (source) language, gaining new meanings due to foreign language interference – has occurred of late on social media websites. The word *player (igrach)*, used to simply mean professional athlete; the popularity of American cinema has added another, secondary meaning in Bulgarian, which now denotes a *ladies man*, without cutting out of existence the previously existing word for it *svayach* (a direct synonym for it in English would be *pick-up artist*). Currently both words are in use but speaking of social media and social networks, we should bear in mind

that the second meaning of *player* is gaining popularity and online chat-rooms and forums keep it in circulation.

Polysemous words in target language mirroring expansion in semantic domain of polysemous words in source language

An interesting case of true friends and false friends – similar sounding words in both languages with either similar (*music – muzika*) or different meanings (*magazine – spisanie*) – has already occurred in Bulgarian with the word *replica*; *replika* in Bulgarian used to have just one single meaning – *a line in a theater play*, which was, of course, explained by teachers as a false friend to learners of English; however, the same word has acquired an additional meaning in Bulgarian, which corresponds directly to the original one both semantically and in sound form, and is, nowadays, used to denote an item which is a copy of an original and hence cheaper in price. The previous word, widely in use only a couple of decades ago, denoting the same item in Bulgarian was *kopie* – or *copy*; it seems that a new synonym has cropped up, *replika*, which corresponds perfectly to the old word *kopie*, and there also seems to be a distinct line of everyday language use that separates millenials and, older generations of the 80s and 70s. *Replika* is another case of a loan word, transliterated without modification and thus expanding the number of synonyms in the Bulgarian language.

Another modern entry connected with computer technology is the word *cloud*, which recently acquired a brand new second meaning roughly synonymous with *computer server*. This new meaning however was cleanly added to the original one in Bulgarian, and the original word in Bulgarian was preserved (*oblak*) but has become polysemantic as it now denotes both meanings in the exact same manner as it does in English. The above-mentioned instance of Resemantization – words in the target language mirroring expansion in the semantic domain in the source language – has yet to provide the Bulgarian language with more synonyms and neologisms.

Importation and partial substitution

Clear cases of importation are impossible in Bulgarian, due to the Cyrillic alphabet, which necessitates graphic integration. Transliteration aside, loanwords in their initial stage of nativization abound in spheres

such as economics, advertising, computer technologies, communication, etc. Here, the stage of partial substitution is markedly pronounced as the borrowings gain ground in the recipient language. This process is specifically swift in spheres such as the new forms of communication – The Internet, mobile communication, etc. Some notable instances of loanblends are the verbs *chatya* (*chat*), *advam* (*add*), the nouns *frend-ove*, (*friends*), *ivent* (*event*), *shortlist* and *outlet* in Cyrillic, etc. It is important to say that these borrowings supplant the already existing Bulgarian equivalents but only in the domains the former appeared as loans. Thus, *advam* is used in social utilities, such as Facebook instead of the Bulgarian equivalent *dobavyam*, but outside of this context it is (still) non-existent. Similar lexical items are *flagship model*, *skrolvam*, *klikam*, *skriynshotvam*, *pleitvam*. There are cases, though, where a loan enters the recipient language through different domains and its senses are relatively independent: the English word *performance* is used in both the spheres of the arts and economics in Bulgarian in seemingly unrelated ways. This is perhaps owing to the different channels, through which the word has been integrated, thus retaining its (relatively) different meanings in the abovementioned spheres.

Transfer of sense of monosemous words

Click bait has occurred in Modern English, referring to a sensational headline in a newspaper online, for example, designed to entice people into following a link to another website. Since no ready-made phrase comes to mind in Bulgarian, the newly-coined term remains transliterated in Bulgarian (*klik-beit*) without any modification, and an actual adequate translation seems elusive at this point both on social media and in everyday speech.

If we turn to everyday speech again, a new synonym in Bulgarian has cropped up recently, especially on social media websites, seemingly out of the blue; *foodie* (also spelled *foody*) – a person who enjoys food for pleasure; the word has been transliterated (*fudi*) and is actively used on social media, despite the fact that there is an existing word denoting the same, only of Latin origin – *gastronome*, or *epicure*, and both synonyms exist in English as well as in Bulgarian. According to Urban Dictionary both synonyms to *foodie* have fallen out of use since the modern American consumer perceives them as elitist.

However, the average Bulgarian consumers are active social media members and borrowed words from Latin origin do not seem to bother them or strike them as odd. In fact, short or monosyllabic words, which, more often than not, carry additional meanings, together with phrasal verbs, which sound similar but differ tremendously, and, in contrast, longer, polysyllabic words of Latin origin, an average language learner would seem to prefer longer words of Latin origin since they rarely carry any secondary meanings and make communication unambiguous. (e.g. – *information* vs. *data* – both words carry almost the same meaning, and both words are of Latin origin but *data* is accidentally homonymous to the Bulgarian word for *date* (relating to a day, month, etc.), which, in that particular case, also makes it a false friend, and so learners still seem to prefer to use *information* in their everyday exchanges with native speakers of English).

Transfer of sense of polysemous words

A great number of loans being assimilated in Bulgarian are cases of importation, where only one sense of a polysemous word is borrowed. Examples include *business* in English, with its Bulgarian loan *biznes*.

Another example of note is the word *ghost* – as a noun it is still translated in the sense of *spirit* or *spectre*; as a verb it has acquired a new meaning in slang, connected with dating, and more specifically – *ceasing all communication with a person, without giving any notice or explanation, hoping that the person would get the hint and realize you are no longer interested in dating them*. A similar meaning related to *cancelling plans with friends with no notice what-so-ever* also exists, and *doing nothing at work and being hard to find*. Since social media language has already gained popularity and newly-coined expressions seem to spring up from social media networks, the new, additional meaning has yet to be translated into Bulgarian and for now it is simply transliterated and is occasionally given a Bulgarian suffix to indicate person and tense (transliteration with slight modification). In addition, there seems to be another meaning which is related to white boards in the classroom. When purchasing a white board, those of poor quality usually prove hard to erase and whatever is written stays there, perfectly legible, only somewhat faded in shade – this is known as *ghosting*. Vendors of good quality items, usually, while listing var-

ious advantages of said items, mention *no ghosting* on their website, brochures and newsletters.

Loans acquiring new meaning in recipient language

Some borrowings, once integrated into the recipient language acquire new meanings absent in the source language. One such word is the Bulgarian loanword *tuningovam*, which comes from *tuning* in English in the sense of enhancing a car performance. In Bulgarian this loan has undergone a process of generalization, so the word is now applied to other spheres such as plastic surgery. It has to be noted though, that such uses are substandard in Bulgarian, but are quickly gaining popularity.

Assimilation of loanwords

Loanwords – transliterated with or without modification – e.g. *business*, *selfie*, *spoiler*, *bug*, *troll*, *hater*, *ban*, and *mentor* – appear to have permeated the Bulgarian language on every single level, including social media and everyday exchanges. Intrasentential code-switching (Thomason 2001) is often used in specialized discourses (Facebook, mobile communication, etc.), mainly in actual speech in order to show knowledge of the foreign language, for want of relevant translation, or (in most cases) simply to conform to the norms of a sociolect.

It is noteworthy to mention adjectival derivation in Bulgarian stemming from loan words such as *bug* and *hater*; the adjective derived from *bug* in English, relating to computer software, is *buggy*, as in *buggy app*; however the adjective derived in Bulgarian from the loan word, uses a local suffix *-av* – typical for adjective-formation in Bulgarian; hence the adjective *bagav* has emerged in the language, as the local counterpart for *buggy* in English, and the very same adjective in Bulgarian is always and only associated with computer software. It is a similar case with the word *hater* – despite existing synonyms for it in the target language, Bulgarian; the new loan word has been seamlessly transliterated into Bulgarian without modification. However, the adjective derived from the loan word in the target language, once again uses a Bulgarian suffix, typical for adjective formation in the same language *-ski* – as in *heitariski* (*hateful* in English); thus a similar process has occurred as in with the above-mentioned case of *buggy* (*bagav*).

Homonymy in the source language

Phishing vs. *fishing* presents an interesting case of homonymy in the source language, where such homonymy is absent in the target language. According to Wikipedia, *phishing is the attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details, often for malicious reasons, by disguising as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication*. Since the term is relatively new, and quite specific in its association with online scams, no attempt at actually finding a counterpart in the target language has occurred. Despite the obvious metaphor (and, in addition, extended metaphor regarding *spear phishing*, which relates to targeting a specific individual), the same concept and metaphor is completely lost in Bulgarian; the word is merely transliterated (*fishing*) without any modification but readily-understood and widely in use. The fact that specific terms referring to sciences, technology, legal matters and medicine, often remain transliterated without any modification, should be taken into account. Generally speaking, when matters outside of everyday instances and routines take place, the Bulgarian language openly prefers longer, polysyllabic words of Latin origin; and since English has been an international language for quite some time, the influence of loan words into Bulgarian has been felt in various spheres of life.

Conclusion

A fascinating process has been going on in Modern English, especially in the last couple of decades, when computer technology and the age of communication, in addition with the sheer popularity and practicality of English have resulted in some interesting neologisms and additional new meanings to previously existing words; in addition, some new meanings of old words seem to stump not only learners of English but professional translators as well. To a person who is still learning a foreign language, it could be quite cumbersome to balance between the two languages or pick out the word or meaning that fits a particular context and modern-age technology seems to put on additional meanings to everyday speech in both languages. To a professional translator, it is more of a conscious choice what to preserve from the original and what to modify, especially when it comes to puns and polysemantic words. To a scholar, it is more of a multifacet-

ed matter and the ongoing shift in the Bulgarian language certainly deserves a more detailed analysis and precise research.

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