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“POSZUKIWANY *PROPERTY LOCATOR*” — THE USE AND ABUSE OF ENGLISH CONSTRUCTIONS IN POLISH PRESS AND INTERNET ADVERTISEMENTS

Marcin Zabawa

1. INTRODUCTION

It is beyond doubt that nowadays English exerts a strong influence on many European languages, including Polish. It is only natural to expect that the changes in the Polish language will be most readily visible in the area of vocabulary. As Arabski asserts, “Polish borrows from English several new lexical items every week” (ARABSKI, 2007: 16). However, other areas, such as semantics, syntax, morphology or even pragmatics are not free from the influence of English, either. Consequently, we can distinguish various types of borrowings (cf. Section 2).

The aim of this study is to describe the overall influence of English upon Polish used in press and Internet advertisements. Similar publications have naturally appeared in the past (cf. e.g. CHŁOPICKI and ŚWIĄTEK, 2000; ZABAWA, 2004, 2007), but most of them concentrated on the lexical influence only, with the exception of the one written by CHŁOPICKI and ŚWIĄTEK (2000). Their book is, however, as they themselves admit (page 16), not meant for linguists, but for general public.

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, some theoretical preliminaries will be given, followed by authentic examples quoted from press and Internet advertisements.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. DEFINITION

It seems only natural that it is first necessary to establish a general definition of a borrowing¹. It appears that one of the most succinct definitions was given by Haugen: “The heart of our definition of borrowing is then the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another” (HAUGEN, 1950: 163). The definition provided by Haugen, albeit short, is particularly suited for the purpose of the present paper, as it encompasses not only lexical borrowings, but semantic, grammatical (morphological and syntactic) or pragmatic as well.

2.2. LEXICAL BORROWINGS

Lexical borrowings do not form a homogenous group; several subclasses can be distinguished (HAUGEN, 1950; WEINREICH, 1974)²:

- loanwords proper, where both the form and meaning are borrowed, usually with some degree of assimilation, e.g. Polish words *komputer*, *mecz*, *weekend*, *bukować* from English *computer*, *match*, *weekend*, *(to) book*.
- loanblends (also referred to as hybrids), where only part of the form is of foreign origin, while the rest is native, e.g. *Rywingate*³, or such slang forms, as *spoks*, *dzięks* or *ubikejszyn* (ARABSKI, 2007: 19)
- loan translations (also referred to as calques), where the morphemes of the borrowed words or phrases are translated one by one, e.g. *nastolatek* from English *teenager*, *telewizja kablowa* from English *cable television*.

¹ It is worth mentioning that the very term ‘borrowing’ was often perceived as inadequate, since “the borrowing takes place without the lender’s consent or even awareness, and the borrower is under no obligation to repay the loan” (HAUGEN, 1950: 163). A similar view was expressed also by other linguists, cf. e.g. HOCKETT (1958: 402) and JESPERSEN (1964: 208). Nevertheless, the term ‘borrowing’ will be retained here, since — as linguists themselves admit — it is hardly possible to invent a better one.

² This is a revised version of the classification used previously in an article and in the doctoral dissertation by the present author (ZABAWA, 2004, 2006).

³ *-gate*, however, is sometimes also treated as a morphological borrowing from English, cf. the article by KREJA (1993).

2.3. SEMANTIC BORROWINGS

Semantic borrowings, also referred to as loan shifts or ‘loan-meaning’ (cf. CRYSTAL, 1997; LEHNERT, 1986: 134), constitute a special group of loans where the meaning is borrowed, while the form is native, e.g. the Polish word *okno* used in the meaning of ‘*an area within a frame on a computer screen*’⁴.

2.4. GRAMMATICAL BORROWINGS

Grammatical borrowings, which comprise syntactic and morphological loans, are much less common than lexical loans.

- Examples of possible grammatical influence of English upon Polish include:
- the use of adjectives in the attributive position instead of the postpositive one, e.g. *komediowy serial* instead of correct *serial komediowy*, *wirtualna rzeczywistość* instead of correct *rzeczywistość wirtualna*⁵ (ARABSKI, 2007: 17; MAŃCZAK-WOHLFELD, 1993: 279—281; RUSIECKI, 2000; OTWINOWSKA-KASZTELANIC, 2000),
 - the use of noun+noun clusters, as in *auto-szyby*, *autonaprawa* (as one word, two separate words or hyphenated), *seksurystyka*, *Cambridge Dieta* (cf. also MAŃCZAK-WOHLFELD, 1993: 279—281).

As for morphological borrowings, one could mention here such examples as the use of the suffix *-er* to indicate the person who does something. Examples include *aborter* ‘*a person who terminates a pregnancy*’ and *tamersi* ‘*a group of people that obstructed the erection of the weir near Czorsztyn*’ (MAŃCZAK-WOHLFELD, 1993: 279)⁶.

⁴ The definitions of words in English are based on (or quoted from) *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (ed. by WEHMEIER, 2000) and *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (ed. by SOANES and STEVENSON, 2003).

⁵ Naturally, it is possible that such changes are a result of the internal development of Polish and general ‘linguistic carelessness’. Nevertheless, most scholars argue that they have been triggered (or at least intensified) by English.

⁶ Additionally, one can also mention other types of borrowings, such as e.g. cultural borrowings. They may include, among other things, changes in compliment responses (for details, see ARABSKI, 2004).

3. THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH UPON POLISH LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISEMENTS

3.1. LEXICAL INFLUENCE: LOANWORDS PROPER

As could be expected, this is by far the most common type of influence, manifested primarily by the existence of loanwords⁷. Most of them, however, appear not indispensable and could easily be replaced by Polish counterparts (cf. Examples (3), (4), (5)). As a consequence, their function is not purely linguistic, cf. also Arabski: “Lately, however, there have been more and more English loans which are used in Polish not to reduce the lexical deficit of vocabulary but to identify the speaker with English or American culture” (ARABSKI, 2007: 17):

- (1) *Żyj **fresh**.*
- (2) *Oczekiwania wobec kandydatów: doświadczenie w kierowaniu grupą przedstawicieli handlowych, w tym **coaching**, ocena, motywowanie podległego personelu.*
- (3) ***Topowe** dzwonki.*
- (4) ***Hitowe** gry Java.*
- (5) *Poszukiwany **regional salesman** — Śląsk.*
- (6) *Specjalista ds. **controllingu**.*

What is more, some of the English borrowings are almost completely unknown to Polish speakers, even those who know English (cf. ZABAWA, 2008). What is more, it is normally not easy to guess the meaning of such borrowings from the context (for more information on inferring the meaning of unknown words from the context, cf. ARABSKI, 1997). Selected examples include:

- (7) *Doświadczenie w sprzedaży **B2B** mile widziane.*
- (8) *Mile widziane doświadczenie jako przedstawiciel handlowy w branży **FMCG**.*
- (9) *Poszukiwany **property locator** — Katowice.*
- (10) *System oświetlenia „**coming home**”.*
- (11) *Każdy model ma unikatowe funkcje, jak na przykład: **tough solar**, czas światowy, alarm, stoper, podświetlenie i inne.*
- (12) *Pierwszy kompaktowy **crossover** tak dynamiczny, by rzucić wyzwanie miastu.*

⁷ It should also be mentioned that most of the English constructions found in advertisements were used only in the product and/or company name, e.g. *Nivea For Men*, *Nowe Renault Clio Grandtour* (for more details on this, see ZABAWA, 2004). Such borrowings are excluded from the present study.

Some of the loans can simply be classified as fashionable, and thus unnecessary, although they are generally known and are not likely to cause any misunderstanding:

- (13) *Strona dla **singli** — mnóstwo **singli** z Twojej okolicy na nowej stronie internetowej.*
 (14) *Założ **bloga** w 3 minuty i publikuj siebie.*

Some of English constructions can be classified as partly justifiable: they do have Polish counterparts, but the English elements, which are generally known, are often preferred because of their brevity:

- (15) *Zainwestuj w indywidualne konto emerytalne. Wypełnij wniosek **online**.*
 (16) *Rozwiąż jedno z zadań **on-line** i wyjedź na Konferencję.*

Additionally, it is worth noticing that relatively new borrowings often have variant forms in spelling (cf. Examples (15) and (16)). In some other cases, the use of a loan can be at least partly justified for other reasons, e.g.:

- (17) *Twoja wiadomość może być **newsem** dnia!*
 (18) *Jeżeli jesteś zainteresowany/a naszą ofertą, prześlij do nas swoje **CV** ze zdjęciem i list motywacyjny na adres [...].*

In (17), the writer has most probably attempted to avoid the repetition of the word *wiadomość*. Still, it would have been perfectly possible to use native Polish synonyms, such as *informacja*, *wieść*, *doniesienie* or even *nowina*.

In (18), although the English borrowing (*CV*) has a native counterpart (*życiorys*), it seems that its use here can be justified, as Polish *życiorys* and English *CV* seem to have different connotations. *CV* would normally be associated with a tabular form, whereas *życiorys* would conform to the old style of 'essay-writing' (cf. the discussion in OTWINOWSKA-KASZTELANIC, 2000: 119).

Sometimes (though not very frequently), the English phrases are translated or otherwise explained in Polish:

- (19) *Kompleksowa obsługa klientów z portfela **SME** ('Małych i Mikro przedsiębiorstw') w zakresie produktów oferowanych przez Bank [...] kompleksowa obsługa klientów z portfela **VIP** zakresie produktów oferowanych przez Bank.*
 (20) *Nowa kolekcja filmów **Picture Box** dostępna dzięki usłudze **VOD**, czyli satelitarnej wypożyczalni filmów i programów na życzenie.*
 (21) *Poszukiwany **Real Estate Executive**/Specjalista ds. nieruchomości.*
 (22) *Poszukuję: **Trenera/coach**.*

As one can see, *VIP* is treated, rightly in my opinion, as a well-known English borrowing and thus is left without any further explanation. It is also worth paying attention to unnecessary use of capital letters, as in '*Małych i Mikro przedsiębiorstw*' or '*Bank*'⁸. In the remaining examples (especially (21) and (22)), however, the use of English loans is hardly justifiable, as it would seem much more logical to omit the English constructions altogether.

⁸ For more on this, cf. CHŁOPICKI and ŚWIĄTEK (2000).

In the remaining situations, the words of English origin are at least partly assimilated and generally known. What is more, they do not usually have native counterparts, which makes their use justified in a given context:

- (23) *Tania telefonia **internetowa**. Bez komputera, bez abonamentu, bez **roamingu**.*
- (24) *Teraz wszystkie modele w limitowanej serii z **ABS-em**, klimatyzacją i radiem z odtwarzaczem **CD**.*
- (25) *Zapraszamy na **videochat** z lekarzem dermatologiem.*
- (26) *8 gr za **SMS-a**.*

As was explained in Footnote 7, the names of products are excluded from the present study. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that sometimes the name of a product is accompanied by the Polish translation functioning as the explanation of what the product really is:

- (27) ***The Best Love... Ever! 4CD Deluxe edition**. Najlepsze miłosne piosenki na 4 płytach **CD!***
- (28) *Seria limitowana **Pack Clim**: klimatyzacja i radio **CD gratis**.*

Additionally, many English borrowings can be found in slogans. As one can see, sometimes an entire slogan is in English (cf. Examples (29)—(30), (32)—(33) and — what is more — it makes use of wordplay in English (cf. Examples (31), (32) and (33); cf. also ZABAWA, 2004: 144):

- (29) *Toshiba. **Leading Innovation**.*
- (30) *Honda. **The Power of Dreams**.*
- (31) ***Top Secret**. Nowa kolekcja wiosna 2008. **Już w sprzedaży**. *See you on the **TOP**.**
- (32) *Fiat: **you are, we car**.*
- (33) *Totally **LOND ON**.*

As I noticed earlier (ZABAWA, 2004: 144), however, it would seem much better to invent slogans and wordplay (including e.g. neologisms) in the native language. Some examples of such successful slogans are given below:

- (34) *Polisa inwestycyjna — sposób na **BESSEŃNOŚĆ**.*
- (35) *Gwarancja najwyższej **darmowości**.*
- (36) ***Czegotoniemające** telefony za 1 zł.*

3.2. LEXICAL INFLUENCE: LOAN TRANSLATIONS

English loan translations are considerably less frequent than loanwords. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to notice such influence. Selected examples are given below, with English models given in quotation marks:

- (37) *Aby osiągnąć **globalne cele**, Eureka inwestuje w **rzetelność**, **wiarygodność** i **stabilność finansową** lokalnych liderów i **jednoczy** najlepszych ‘**global aims**’.*

- (38) **Ekstremalny komfort** dla skóry ‘*extreme comfort*’.
 (39) Odpowiadający Twoim wymaganiom, smakowi i **stylowi życia** ‘*lifestyle*’.
 (40) Nastawienie na osiągnięcie **bardzo dobrych wyników sprzedażowych** ‘*very good sales results*’.
 (41) Umiejętność budowania **długotrwałych relacji biznesowych** ‘*long-lasting business relations*’.
 (42) **Zorientowanie na klienta** ‘*customer orientation*’.

3.3. SEMANTIC INFLUENCE

Semantic influence, though again not as frequent as lexical influence, can also be documented. English models, upon which the use of the Polish word is probably based, as well as the new meaning of the word and some other comments, are given in square brackets:

- (43) O ugruntowanej pozycji **lidera** w swojej branży [**leader** = ‘*an organization or company that is the most advanced or successful in a particular area*’, cf. ODE]⁹.
 (44) Aby osiągnąć globalne cele, Eureka inwestuje w rzetelność, wiarygodność i stabilność finansową lokalnych liderów i jednoczy najlepszych. **Grupa** oferuje szeroką gamę ubezpieczeń na życie i ubezpieczeń majątkowych, fundusze emerytalne i inwestycyjne [**group** = ‘*a commercial organization consisting of several companies under common ownership*’, cf. ODE].
 (45) Najlepsze **tapety** [**wallpaper** = ‘*an optional background pattern or picture on a computer screen*’, cf. ODE].
 (46) Z podaniem opisu referencyjnego: **Dystrykt/Śląsk** [**district** = ‘*a region*’].
 (47) Nowy Nissan X-trail. Niezwykle **uzdolniony z inteligentnym** systemem All Mode 4×4-i [**gifted; intelligent** — *such words were traditionally used in Polish to refer to people rather than inanimate objects*].

3.4. MORPHOLOGICAL BORROWINGS

Morphological loans, albeit not very frequent, can also be attested. Most commonly, they consist of the English morpheme *e* (meaning *electronic*, taken from *e-mail*). Selected examples include:

- (48) Otrzymasz w prezencie prenumeratę kwartalną miesięcznika *Forbes* oraz **e-prenumeratę** anglojęzycznego wydania “*The Wall Street Journal Europe*”.
 (49) Już teraz zamów **e-wydanie** “*Dziennika*”.
 (50) Witamy w sklepie z **e-prasą, e-książkami** i książkami audio.

⁹ The word *lider/leader* was also discussed by CHŁOPICKI and ŚWIĄTEK (2006: 249—253).

3.5. SYNTACTIC BORROWINGS

Syntactic borrowings are far less frequent than lexical or semantic borrowings. Examples include mainly noun+noun constructions, modelled on English:

(51) *1 grosz za minutę w taryfie Nowy Pakiet **Biznes Prestiż**.*

(52) ***Biznes Pakiet** dla Firm przez pierwszych 6 miesięcy za darmo.*

4. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the article was to briefly discuss the overall influence of English upon Polish press and internet advertisements. As one can see, only small percentage of such loans can really be described as justifiable and necessary. What is more, many of them are not widely known and are likely to cause misunderstanding and thus hinder comprehensibility. Finally, it is worth highlighting that many borrowings (especially semantic and syntactic) can be described as insidious, since most of them, in contrast to lexical ones, are most probably not even noticed by the people not trained in linguistics.

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