

## **Phonological Adaptations of Anglicisms in Polish and Czech. A Critical View**

Indubitably, the influx of English vocabulary items into Czech and Polish has increased considerably over the past two decades to an unparalleled extent, the main factors responsible for this growth being of both a linguistic and extra-linguistic nature. Seemingly, the issue of Anglicisms in Czech and Polish has been quite thoroughly investigated: some attempts have been made to collect, compile and catalogue all possible loanwords from English, and finally include all of them in the most current reference books.

Although since the early 1990s, hundreds of new loanwords have entered the Polish and Czech lexicons in entirely new ways, i.e. via different types of new electronic media, through dramatic technological progress and last but not least by direct contact with the donor language, not many efforts have been made to confront the new linguistic data with old, well-grounded and axiomatic assumptions concerning the theory of adaptation of loanwords. Additionally, the theory itself attempts at formulating language universal rather than language specific rules, i.e. it aims at absolute rules which are operational in most, if not all languages. Mańczak-Wohlfeld, when discussing English lexical elements in Polish, claims that every loanword appears in the recipient language as a quotation introduced in its original form and then it undergoes a slow process of gradual adaptation on the graphic, phonological, morphological and/or semantic levels, which is a process of transfer rather than substitution (cf. Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1994, s. 9–10).

Similar attitudes prevail in the analyses of adaptation processes of Anglicisms in the Czech language, where the main emphasis is placed on the fact that the process of loanword adaptation is gradual, which is reflected in the existence of different categories and subcategories of loanwords showing different stages of their developments: from original non-integrated items like *science fiction*, through those items which remain unchanged graphically but have been adapted morphologically and whose pronunciation has not yet been fully Bohemized, those items which have an optional Czech spelling, to fully adapted loanwords whose foreign origin is hardly recognized (cf. Svobodová 2007, s. 26–28).

Another evident problem is that the phonological and phonetic aspects of new Anglicisms in Polish and Czech are usually examined together with the graphic, morphological and semantic ones, which is quite understandable, yet hardly ever receives as meticulous attention as the aforementioned ones (Svobodová 2007, s. 27). Phonological adaptation problems are hardly ever dealt with independently and are mostly discussed together with orthographic issues, the two being closely interrelated (cf. Svobodová 2007, s. 31). Thus, even though there exists a voluminous literature on Anglicisms in both Czech and Polish, the problem of their phonological adaptation tends to be a side issue. This situation may result from the firm conviction that the written form of a loanword is superior to its phonological shape by nature (cf. Bartmińska 1978, Kavka 2004). True as this belief is, it may discourage some researchers from making the problem of the phonological aspect of loanword adaptation the key issue of their study. Consequently, a phonological analysis of Anglicisms in Czech and Polish is seldom conducted independently and is usually carried out in connection with other language levels, the preferable levels for an independent study being the graphic form, semantics or morphology.

Instead the main emphasis is placed on practical lexicology, i.e. keeping track of the most recent changes in the sphere of lexis and consequently creating new corpora. Pronunciation clues provided by reference books, albeit generally helpful, in many cases, in Polish

reference sources especially, are far from being absolutely reliable, and sometimes evidently erroneous, which is in stark contrast with the superior quality of the semantic side of particular entries (cf. Jarosz 2001).

Irrespective of the fact that the linguistic and extra-linguistic conditions have changed beyond recognition (new electronic media have improved access to potential loanwords and consequently made it possible to transfer a word from one language to another, e.g. from English to Czech or Polish, without referring to its pronunciation) the mutual impact of the two forms of loanwords has always been disproportionate, the written form being more influential than the spoken one. Although theoretically the process of orthographic adaptation is a reflection of the completion of the process of phonological adaptation, a closer analysis may lead to a less unequivocal conclusion.

The process of phonetic adaptation is more difficult to grasp and tends to be based, both in the case of Polish and Czech, upon certain tacit assumptions, one of them being that at the earliest stage of lexical adaptation the original donor language pronunciation is used (cf. Svobodová 2007, s. 26), as borrowings are introduced into the recipient language by linguistically competent, bilingual users who tend to imitate the native speaker-like pronunciation to the highest degree, which is clearly not the case as far as the latest borrowings are concerned. One can even pose a question as to whether the original pronunciation stage is really indispensable. It also leads us back to the definition of true bilingualism (cf. Jassem 1993, s. 35)

Similarly, the issue of unadapted loanwords remains open to question. The preservation of the original orthography of such items appears to be unequivocal evidence for assuming no significant changes in their pronunciation in the recipient language. Yet, one should bear in mind that what appears to be for instance a genuine Latin, Greek, French or English pronunciation for a Czech or Polish user, may not be recognized as such by a native speaker of the language, unless the user has achieved truly great fluency, which is quite infrequent.

Such a lack of distinction between genuine native pronunciation and its imitation has a number of serious consequences. Firstly, a fair imitation of native pronunciation is not recognized as the initial stage of phonetic adaptation but is identified with the native pronunciation and treated as an ideal point of reference. Secondly, it is somehow axiomatically taken for granted that the above mentioned stage is always present and consequently, phonetic adaptation is a gradual process consisting in a transition from the genuine pronunciation based upon the phonemic inventory of the donor language to the adapted pronunciation based upon the phonemic inventory of the target language. It is assumed that during that process the subsequent sounds of the word from the donor language are substituted with the closest equivalents from the recipient language. The question that arises is whether the native speaker-like pronunciation is always taken as a model and whether or not it is always, at least passively, known to the user. The fact that a lexeme appears in a graphically non-integrated form is frequently cited as sufficient evidence that the user recognizes it as a 'barbarism' and consequently marks the item as foreign in the act of speech by supplying the exact native-like pronunciation. Such an assumption may be partially true in the case of lexical items pronounced as instances of jargon words pronounced by a bilingual specialist who has to utilize the recourses of another language in order to convey the information required in its most accurate form, e.g. there exists no equivalent technical term. The aforementioned situation supports the prevailing and somewhat idealized view that loanwords are first introduced into the recipient language by linguistically competent, bilingual users and serves as a good instance of borrowing from necessity.

Nonetheless, as is sometimes indicated, not all cases of borrowing words result from necessity and sometimes new loanwords are lexically redundant, as the intake of new lexemes may also be, and to a great extent is, a matter of fashion and prestige (cf. Berndt 1984: 49). Actually, the pronunciation of the so-called non-integrated loanwords is far from being close to the original, the phonetic shape being at least



partly adjusted to the requirements of the recipient language phonology. A vast majority of loanword lexemes which seem to fall into the category of unadapted borrowings are often foreign maxims or sayings, famous quotations, proverbs or at least noun phrases, the universal meaning of which is reinforced by the fact that they are pronounced in accordance with the original donor language, phrases like *in statu nascendi*, *to be, or not to be*, *c'est la vie* being typical examples. It happens quite frequently that such non-integrated items are technical terms used in a particular sphere of life, e.g. literature or pop culture and thus the original orthographic and phonetic shape conveys a somewhat broader contextual meaning, e.g. *nouveau roman*, *fin de siecle*, *gothic rock*. As for two-word noun phrases, their existence in an unadapted graphic form is undoubtedly due to the fact that in most cases the two constituent items hardly ever exist as independent borrowings in the recipient language, e.g. *fair play*, *heavy metal*, *native speaker*.

Irrespective of the structure of the non-integrated borrowings, claims that their phonetic shape shows the exact native-like pronunciation, are far from being justifiable. Unless the user of a particular loanword has an excellent good command of the donor language, one cannot venture an opinion that the original pronunciation has at least partly been preserved. This might lead us to the conclusion that an unadapted loanword is, in phonetic terms, a hybrid consisting of a different realization of phonemes belonging to the phonological inventories of both the donor and the recipient languages. However plausible such a tacit assumption sounds, it seems reasonable only in the case of a conscious, yet unsuccessful attempt at the correct native speaker-like pronunciation.

Alternatively, especially when the user's knowledge of the donor language is rather passive and superficial, the phonetic representation used may depend on the prescriptive form of a particular Anglicism found in a reliable and respected reference book or the user's own image of how a particular graphic representation of an English word should be pronounced.

In the former case, one cannot really regard such a reference book-based pronunciation of loanwords as partly preserving the phonetic peculiarities of realizations of individual English phonemes, unless special phonetic symbols are introduced, which, not at all surprisingly, an untrained user usually finds confusing and purposeless.

Polish reference books mostly deal with the problem of the transcription of foreign words in a threefold way. Firstly, Polish reference dictionaries provide the pronunciation of those items which are considered to be completely foreign and which are claimed to appear in Polish with an authentic non-integrated pronunciation. Secondly, no pronunciation hints are given in the case of a fully adapted loanword, the pronunciation of which is reflected in the adapted orthographic form. Similarly, foreign maxims and sayings are also left without any transcription, as it is taken for granted that they are only quoted by the most competent users. In the case of Polish reference sources, the special symbols used to show the transcription and consequently the prescriptive pronunciation of loanwords include such symbols as [u] for the non-syllabic [u] (cf. *Wielki słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* 2005) or [ã] to show the quality of one of the French nasal vowels, the former being sometimes substituted with the regular Polish [ɨ] (*Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* 2007). Stressed vowels are printed in bold type and sometimes additionally underlined (cf. *Wielki słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* 2005, *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* 2007). Regrettably, the pronunciation aspect of loanwords is occasionally terribly neglected in certain otherwise quite reliable sources, especially in the case of the latest borrowings. On the whole, the information on the transcription and consequently, pronunciation of non-integrated loanwords offered by the most authoritative Polish dictionaries is more often than not insufficient and the postulated pronunciation of certain loanwords is sometimes erroneously transcribed, especially in the case of words of English origin, e.g. *cherry brandy* [tszery brendy], *cheeseburger* [tszizburger], *chip* [tszip], *coverage* [kawereidź], (cf. Jarosz 2001), *air mail* [e'emejl] (Lubaś, Urbańczyk 1994).

Czech dictionaries of foreign words do not generally introduce any extra symbols or diacritical marks different from those used in the Czech language itself. No special symbols are introduced to show the quality of French nasal and front rounded vowels or the umlauted vowels in German, which is not at all uncommon in Polish reference sources where such symbols in the case of unadapted loanwords are quite possible, e.g. [püre] for *purée*, *piure* (cf. Jarosz 2001).

This arbitrariness in the treatment of non-native sounds (special phonetic symbols used optionally in Polish and not found at all in Czech) once again indicates that the initial stage at which loanwords are not integrated phonologically and phonetically with the system of the recipient language, i.e. the initial stage of loanword adaptation is not easy to describe, especially when it is defined axiomatically as the only possible and hence universal starting point of loanword adaptation.

It is worth noticing that although the last twenty years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of Anglicisms in Czech and Polish, there hardly exist any commonly used dictionaries of foreign words in the two languages which leave ample space for clarifying the rules of transcription and pronunciation of borrowings from the English language. On the contrary, the most popular and at the same time authoritative Polish reference books strangely enough still seem to favour French, paying special attention to the peculiarities of its pronunciation. When remarks on the pronunciation of Anglicisms are included, they are not free from certain oversimplifications and incongruities: Klimeš, for instance postulates substituting Czech [ts] and [dz] for English [č] and [ď], which seems quite unfortunate phonetically. However, the above rule which is strangely enough not at all applied in the dictionary itself. Instead, the regular substitutions the author uses for English [č] in Anglicisms is [t], as in *macbethovský* [mekbeto-], *thriller* [tri-], or [s] as in *commonwealth* [komentvels] (Klimeš 2005), the former being in accordance with the traditional Czech pronunciation of the spelling (now optional) in loanwords from classical Greek origin.

Consequently, one could put forward a working hypothesis that the process of phonetic and phonological adaptation of Anglicisms need not be a smooth and orderly transition from the original English, i.e. British or American, pronunciation to a pronunciation thoroughly integrated into the phonological system of the recipient language. Instead, the starting point for this process may be an allegedly English pronunciation, created by the user on the basis of his or her own ideas concerning the most salient features of the pronunciation of foreign items, English words in particular. Evidence supporting this unlikely assumption is far from scant. Such an approach as to how Anglicisms ought to be pronounced in an average user's opinion is reinforced by a number of relevant factors such as the frequent lack of agreement between the graphic representation of a word and its phonetic shape, the conviction that the written form is superior and last but by no means least, the great dialectal variation to which Polish and Czech users are constantly exposed. The above hypothesis seems equally plausible with respect to both Czech and Polish Anglicisms and can easily be exemplified, as there appear to exist a great many instances concerning individual consonantal and vocalic sounds and also such suprasegmental features as, e.g. stress placement

Firstly, one of the most sweeping generalizations commonly applied by Czech and Poles about the pronunciation of Anglicisms both old and new ones, is that the letter should be pronounced just like in General American, i.e. not only prevocally as in most British dialects, but in all possible phonetic contexts, although new words seem to be borrowed regularly from either variety of English. Even some most respected Polish dictionaries seem to adhere to the unwritten rule mentioned above by mixing what is meant to be an attempt at the original English pronunciation with popular beliefs, e.g. *barbecue* [babikju], *billboard* [bilbod], *copywriter* [kopirajte], *corn-fleksy* [kon-flejksy] vs. *call girl* [kol-gerl] *air-mail* [er mejl], *cartridge* [kar-tridż], *hardware* [hardwe(r)] (Jarosz 2001). There seems to be no reason why the prescriptive pronunciations of such Anglicisms are so in-



consistent, as the distribution of [r] has nothing in common with, e.g. the degree of adaptation in Polish.

The preconsonantal or word final use of [r] is to some extent justifiable in Polish Anglicisms as it may be regarded as a substitute of the length of the preceding vowel, as Polish does not distinguish between long and short vowels and vowel length is naturally lost in the process of phonetic adaptation of Anglicisms in Polish. On the other hand, vowel length is mostly preserved in Czech Anglicisms as Czech itself makes use of long and short vowels in its phonological inventory. Another reason why vowel length is mostly preserved in borrowings from English into the Czech language is that the native [ó]<sup>1</sup> in Czech is peripheral in the Czech vocalic system and among other things is perceived as a sign of foreignness of a vocabulary item. This is also true, however to a lesser degree, of the Czech [e:] (cf. Vachek 1968, s. 127). It must be added that the very quality of the English [r] which makes it so distinct in both acoustic and productive terms from the Slavonic ones is immediately recognized as a typically English trait and a phonetic marker of Englishness.

The English [r] is not the only consonant that is occasionally mute in English and mostly present in Czech and Polish Anglicisms: [t] is present in such Czech and Polish Anglicisms as *wrestling*, [l] in Polish *walkower* (from Eng. *walk-over*), occasionally in Czech *knokout* (from Eng. *knockout*), [d] is pronounced in Pol. *sandwicz* or *sandwich*, Czech *sendvič* (English *sandwich*). Although in orthographic and pronunciation terms, the above examples fall into different categories of loanwords, they acknowledge the supremacy of the written form of the donor language in the process of loanword adaptation.

Another commonly held belief concerning English pronunciation is that intervocalic should always be pronounced as [z]. Examples of Anglicisms in which [z] is used instead of the expected original intervocalic [s] are quite frequent in Czech and Polish, e.g. Czech and Pol-

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<sup>1</sup>In the case of English long vowels, the graphic transcription symbol [v:] is used, whilst Czech long vowels are represented by means of [v].

ish *Basic* pronounced [bejzik], *leasing*. It seems probable that this specific generalization must have been taken from the phonological systems of other languages, e.g. German and Latin and extended to English.

What also emerges from a brief analysis of the phonological developments of Anglicisms in the two related Slavonic languages is that some of them tend to be incorrectly identified as borrowings from other languages and pronounced as such, which results in such forms as Polish [glamur] (with the main stress falling on the last syllable as in French) for Eng. *glamour*, Czech or Polish *puzzle* in colloquial and everyday language may be pronounced [putsle] as in German (cf. *Slovník nespisovné češtiny* 2006).

The adaptation processes of English vowels in Czech and Polish Anglicisms are even more opaque in comparison with the integration of English consonants into Czech and Polish.

The Czech vocalic system is somewhat closer in quantitative terms to that of English and, as a result, the phonemic quantitative differences between the English short and long vowels in Czech, unlike in Polish, are generally preserved, e.g. as in Czech *barbecue* [bár-bikjú], *outsourcing* [autsórs-], *lančmít*, *lunchmeat* [lančmít] (cf. *Nový akademický slovník cizích slov* 2006).

Nevertheless, it is not obvious that the preservation of the original length in Czech Anglicisms results from a smooth and orderly transition from the original English pronunciation. This may also be due to the fact that English long monophthongs can, in many cases, be identified on the basis of their spelling, or else they can be prescriptively imposed upon the user by the authors of dictionaries of foreign words who tend to convert the transcription provided into a model Czech pronunciation. As the phonemic length of English vowels is always marked with the same diacritical mark, i.e. a colon, it is quite easy to identify the feature and transfer it into the Czech pronunciation. Be that as it may, such a 'conspiracy theory' should not be completely ignored. Besides, the distinction between short and long vowels in English is based on entirely different principles. Gimson maintains that,

„the opposition between the long and short vowels of English is sometimes alternatively referred to as an opposition between tense and lax, reflecting the fact that the short vowels are articulated with less muscular tension” (Gimson 2001, s. 96). Additionally the duration of English vowels depends on the phonetic context and sometimes a long vowel may be shorter than a corresponding short one, e.g. [i:] in *seat* (12.3 csec.) is shorter than [ɪ] in a word such as *hid* (14.7 csec.) (Gimson 2001, s. 96).

In Czech however the difference is purely qualitative by nature and not much context dependent, which means that the duration of vowels is not related to the voicing of the neighbouring consonants. As a result, the phonemic length of English vowels cannot and should not be simply transferred into Czech Anglicisms, and yet in the majority of cases, the long English monophthongs and also diphthongs seem to have been adapted into corresponding Czech long vowels. Sometimes the orthographic form of a vowel is misinterpreted, e.g. the Czech loanword *country* is often pronounced with [á], which is formally incorrect (cf. Klimeš 2005, s. 94). The important issue of long vowel adaptation in Polish Anglicisms is not generally recognized by both ordinary users of the language and lexicographers, as vowel length is not phonemic in Polish. Similarly to Czech, in Polish, [r] is mostly preserved, even in those cases in which it is mute in English, and therefore such a postvocalic [r] might be considered a length marker substitute.

The originally short vowels and diphthongs of Anglicisms in Czech and Polish seem to provide even more evidence for the hypothesis that the process of phonetic and phonological adaptation may start from an allegedly English pronunciation, created by the user on the basis of his or her own beliefs, rather than from an original English pronunciation model. Such pronunciations as Czech [ketering] or Polish [catering] (*catering*), *charleston* [cze'rlston] are perfect examples of morphological misinterpretations where the letter *IS INTERPRETED* as the English /ɛ/, and in consequence, mostly adapted as [e] or [a] in Czech and Polish).

In conclusion, it must be stated that even a very fragmentary and at the same time subjective analysis of the process of loanword adaptation in Czech and Polish may shed some new light on what is not usually considered a serious linguistic problem. The idea that the user's convictions and beliefs concerning the pronunciation of Anglicisms are as relevant as the original English native-like pronunciation and that the prescriptive pronunciation forms of Anglicisms seem to be by-products of the lexicographic process may seem absurd or even outlandish, yet as a working hypothesis it should be tested before it is totally rejected.

Pronunciation models of Anglicisms postulated in various normative reference sources often seem arbitrary and do not necessarily reflect the real usage. At the same time it seems that spelling based pronunciations are more likely to become formally adapted in the new Polonized or Bohemized graphic forms, so as to prevent them from being recognized as erroneous. However, such an attitude may often lead to a false assumption that the graphic adaptation of an Anglicism shows the pronunciation which is more frequently used and in a way preferable.

Sometimes the original spelling is imposed upon a borrowing, even though the process of phonetic adaptation, as is evident from common daily usage, has by no means been completed. Young users still seem, in many cases, favour the native speaker-like pronunciation of a particular Anglicism, even though the process of phonetic (and consequently graphic) adaptation has been declared successfully accomplished, which in some cases, is done hastily rather than thoughtfully. In Polish reference books such pronunciations as [kampɨ?g] instead of the prescriptive [kempi?g] are generally frowned upon (Lubaś, Urbańczyk 1994: 81), although [a] seems to be found in numerous Polish Anglicisms as a substitute of the English [ɛ], e.g. *ranking*, *tramping*.

Thus, the hypotheses that the initial phonetic form of an Anglicism in Czech or Polish need not be the original English pronunciation and the process of phonological adaptation in many cases is far from being



continuous should be challenged before they are categorically rejected. Both Czech and Polish phonological adaptations of Anglicisms share certain features that cannot be accounted for by applying the seemingly transparent and universal rules of gradual phonological Bohemization or Polonization. The breakneck pace at which new Anglicisms have been entering the Czech and Polish lexicons does not make it possible to collect all of them, not to mention attempts at establishing their normative pronunciations. Such a quantum leap cannot be analysed with the same old set tools and rules.

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