

## CORPORATE LANGUAGE IN ROMANIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on the corporate language used in the business environment in Romania. English exerts the strongest influence on the Romanian vocabulary, influence appreciated by some politicians and businesspersons as beneficial, but at the same time, blamed by many linguists and cultural personalities. Corporate language is not a negative phenomenon by definition. But it becomes negative when used in excess or for no reason. In some cases, linguistic clichés turn into automatic formulas that limit thinking, while in others their use is not necessary. Corporate language manifests as a reality today both in terms of economic and social context in which organization evolves and as a distinct activity field of the organization. To meet the requirements imposed once with the internationalization of economic relations, sound professional training and a good grasp of specialized knowledge are just as important as communication skills in foreign languages, intercultural adaptation being a natural consequence.

**Keywords:** corporate language, Anglicisms, business environment, borrowings, communication.

### 1. Introduction

One of the premises that determine, in a first phase, the need to study communication in a multilingual context, in the business environment in Romania, is the causality relationship characterizing economic development and language. In addition to business activity, economic progress aims to the need for specialization in the field. Naturally, individuals who pursue specialization or even just their involvement in the economic field have to know, and use appropriately the specific terminology. As with other languages, economic language operates with a specialized vocabulary used predominantly in translations, treatises, manuals, scientific articles, but also in practical activities. Economic dimension of globalization, which was felt by opening economic markets in search of new workstations and through commercial networks expansion, triggered equally, a cultural dimension of this phenomenon, namely, the imposition of a common economic lexicon. It can be argued, therefore, that economic development can be one of the main causes of lexical diversity in language, which is why the economic field may be regarded as subject of linguistic interest. "Causality relationship at this level occurs because language is seen as a specific asset, necessary for national and international development and communication" (Kaplan 1997, 154).

Cultural dimension of globalization thus includes a transformation process of specialized vocabulary. Terminological diversity - defined by increasing the number of neologisms, rapid assimilation of borrowings and calques from other languages, called sources of linguistic influence, the penetration in writing of oral colloquial language or slang elements become, in this context, barriers to effective communication.

Currently, of all foreign languages, English exerts the strongest influence on the Romanian vocabulary, influence appreciated by some politicians and businesspersons

as beneficial, but at the same time, blamed by many linguists and cultural personalities like George Pruteanu, Octavian Paler or Eugen Simion. We live in a time during which, in vocabulary, there is a massive penetration of words from American and British English, a phenomenon that continues to grow at an accelerated pace, but which finds its motivation in the need to designate specific extralinguistic realities. According to Rodica Zafiu "at the moment, the influence of English on Romanian language is so strong and visible that it outshines any other source of lexical borrowings, semantic and phraseological calques" (2011, 56). In the works written to date on the influence of English on the current Romanian language, the term Anglicism designates "recent borrowings from British and American English, incompletely or not at all adapted" (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2010, 83), which is why they are written and uttered in a very close or even identical way to the original language.

Anglicisms began to conquer Western Europe after the Second World War and Eastern Europe after 1989. The phenomenon became global with the advent of the Internet and multinationals. Anglicisms' appearance is a normal phenomenon. "In fact, at the same time with information you also borrow the language from abroad. It's a matter of convenience". (Avram 2012, 23) The influence of English is a phenomenon not only European but also worldwide. The phenomenon of Anglicisms invasion has grown due to the factors mentioned above, but also because progress in certain fields of technology and the spread of American movie industry. Currently, we are witnessing a process of Anglicisms invasion in Romania, which is the manifestation of an international linguistic phenomenon. To all these factors of economic, social and cultural nature, which favoured entering the growing number of Anglicisms in Romanian lexicon, political factors are also added.

George Pruteanu considers that the use of Anglicisms has a psychological explanation: "English language seems more valuable, more modern than Romanian language - as the Romanian language would be outmoded, obsolete, embarrassing. Some, more radical, will say that this is related to globalization. I will answer them that it is snobbery, servilism" (2016). Apart from the natural need to use terms taken from the English language, there are some tendencies of certain social categories that use deliberately, English words, although there is translation into Romanian. High frequency in the use of English words, which, however, have correspondent in Romanian, designates shaping a linguistic trend.

## **2. Corporate wooden language**

Each of us indulge in a position to hide behind wooden language, for various reasons, such as directions imposed by the corporation, lack of training, lack of responsibility, routine or simply convenience. It is, in fact, a vicious circle that starts in school, where most books are written in a difficult language and often teachers teach in a rigid manner and too little focused on real life.

The business environment is, in fact, most conducive to the development and perpetuation of wooden language. Sharing corporate expressions, sprinkled with a gossip from the industry is not missing from a business event or business lunch. In a company, the form of address is imposed at the level of company policy, is influenced by internal organizational culture and folded on management style of leadership. Why many companies approach the rigidity of expression, especially in external communication? Because it is easier when we have nothing to say or to hide behind a

stereotypical language. However, it also occurs the fear that direct exposure of the company will create vulnerability. "The most frequent users of wooden language are those who are afraid of responsibility and do not dare to support their own statements" (Gross 2015, 86).

It is half Romanian, half English, it has very short words, because most are acronyms, and it is spoken especially in meetings. A newcomer in a company feels like an immigrant in a country whose language he/she does not speak. It is a strange one, with terms that sound good and seem to be important. In an IT company, domain baptized by a short term in English, information technology, the story is complicated. "Here, everyone is talking about *ping* and *router*, technical terms that have not equivalent in Romanian, but they may have a story" (Trif 2006, 74). *Ping* is the kind of doctor, specialists explain, sent in the network to find out if there is a communication problem between computers and, if so, who is to blame. *Router* is the call centre operator that calls everyone and takes care to make each one the phone connection needed. There are also a number of English terms used in more and more private companies in Romania without any technical motivation. For example, if the newcomer in a bank comes across an important meeting, all speakers will tell him about the *LOI* he has to do. And if he finds a courageous fellow, he/she will find out that *LOI* is the shortcut from *letter of intent*, that *intalnirea* is *meeting* and is scheduled by a *request*. The difference between talking about *ping* and talking about *meeting* is exactly that between using necessary jargon and the artificial one.

Romenglish is used in corporations on documentation or communicating with colleagues. When you express yourself or read in English at a rate of 50% of the entire communication process, it is natural to take over in the current conversation, certain words that are part of specialized terminology or simply express more precisely and faster certain nuances. However, these borrowings should be made judiciously; the limit should be represented by distortion of certain meanings that words have already taken in Romanian. Here is a sample of dialogue that I have encountered in the corporate world:

- Crezi că face sens să forcastăm în continuare pe pipeline-ul deja existent, în care customizăm produsele de end-user?
- Poate dacă sharuim și cu headquarterul și ne dau ok-ul pentru adresarea ultimelor probleme de suportare a clienților.
- Pe ce anume te focusezi în analiză? Pe noile aplicații la pozițiile de top sau pe damage-ul din exit? " (www.adevarul.ro)

Romenglish has appeared because we do not have in Romanian the meaning of words that exist in English and are related to technical field. Perhaps there is a Romanian word that should translate what we say, but not exactly, the word in English fits better that's why we prefer to use it. A regular user of Romanian language, unfamiliar with this professional jargon, does not understand much. Maybe he/she does not know the meaning of *pipeline*, *headquarter* or *damage*. However, the sides reach an agreement, but beyond this it may be signalled the existence of barbarisms that exceed normal and useful borrowings. For example, *a face sens* - is one of the worst calques that we encounter in Romenglish. We have the appropriate expression *a avea sens* which means exactly the same thing with *to make sense* in English. Word for word translation is the unjustified speakers' convenience, lack of basic respect for language. Similarly, *suportarea clientilor* (to support customers), gives rise to a

ridiculous situation. We cannot say *sa ne suportam clientii* but *sa-i sustinem, sa-i sprijinim*. The words *forecast, end-user, top, damage* and *exit* could be translated with a bit of effort, by: *prognoză, utilizator final, de vârf, pericol* and *ieşire*. However, while they are used only as a professional jargon, between members of a community, they are not so intrusive used in English, because they do not exist in Romanian, possibly with other meanings. *Pipeline* is, again, a term that can be expressed in Romanian only through a whole structure: it means *conducta*, but in business is used with the meaning *a fi pe agenda de lucru, a fi in proiect*. *Top* exists in Romanian, either with the meaning *top de hartie* or *clasament*, different from the example given above.

There are more natural borrowings such as: *customizare, share, headquarter* and *focus*. They do not exist (yet) in DEX, but their use can be somewhat justified by the fact that the nuances expressed do not exist in Romanian equivalents: *personalizare* is not the same as *potrivire, adaptare pentru client*, *share* is not the same with *partajare* or *împărtaşire* and *headquarter* can be translated, very pretentious, by *cartier general* – yet who would use this obsolete structure? Not even *sediu central* sounds quite good, even if there is a more modern adaptation. Regarding the last word, *focus*, I believe that its adoption should come very quickly, because *focalizare* (Romanian correspondent) seems very inappropriate and *concentrare* contains a significant semantic difference.

Corporate language is not a negative phenomenon by definition. But it becomes negative when used in excess or for no reason. In some cases, linguistic clichés turn into automatic formulas that limit thinking, while in others their use is not necessary. “Prone to using words that sound good but say nothing are less skilled employees and to whom it is easier to learn the jargon than the job” (Gutu Romalo 2013, 123). Corporate language is actually a language of clichés. For example, the word *provocare*, a linguistic calque for *challenge* is used as a cliché. In all interviews it is said that a certain situation is a *challenge*. In the category fashionable Anglicisms there is also the word *a prioritiza* a necessary word, because Romanian language lacks it, but rather barbaric or *a focusa*, which can be replaced with the Romanian word *a focaliza*. The emergence of these Anglicisms in the language of employees is a normal phenomenon. In addition, the presence of foreign managers transformed English in the official language of multinationals in Romania. Thus, the language is imported from the center and jargon and acronyms’ aim is to simplify the life of employees. However, for newcomers, jargon is a foreign language to learn in time. The negative impact on these employees is magnified if the employer does not care to provide them support. In the company they work for, each new employee receives a manual which has at the end a dictionary of acronyms containing the terms used in office conversations. *Training* replaces *cursul*, as well as *meeting* replaces *intalnire* and *leverage* has become a verb illustrating a whole idea – *folosirea eficienta a resurselor*. Corporate language is likely to accompany the employee who uses it excessively everywhere. When it is not meant to facilitate the work by naming a technical process, jargon is designed to give employees the company's prestige. And corporate language falls in the second category and becomes, in fact, a kind of wooden language. The more the field requires less complicated technical terms, the more such jargon words are used by employees. In general, “corporate jargon is used to mask incompetence by sophisticated words, some used absolutely free”, (Vintila Radulescu 2010, 41) as in the case of *sedinte* that have become *meetings*. On the same principle, in most private companies in Romania, English words are used to redesign in a more attractive manner less attractive

positions in Romanian language. This is the case of secretaries, for instance, that have become for a few years *manager assistant*.

Often, as in the examples above, borrowings seem perfectly translatable; in fact, in the field of work organization, specialisation is not so obvious as in computer technology, in finance: the new word expresses an idea quite trivial, linked to everyday life. Using the specialized term (*training, team building, planning, target*) is not imposed by scientific rigor of the field, but is rather a simple recognition sign, part of a code that differentiates connoisseurs from the others. In addition, this language is very predictable and full of clichés. Not every cliché is disturbing: “a scientific language is full with obscure terms for non-specialists and are repeated insistently” (Athu 2011, 52). The irritating clichés come from treating reality ideologically: consisting of mandatory values, positive attitude, dedication, dynamism, flexibility, communication skills, team spirit, capacity to manage crises etc. Those who refer to these clichés do not necessarily believe in the values which they imply; language tends to cancel the problems, to suppress the real debate, to solve everything through a magic formula. The fact is that they are used at the corporate level, are part of the organizational culture, and if not adopted, you are labelled as a misfit. There are words, idioms, phrases, taken from English where it is not necessary and used in Romanian language without needing them.

Therefore:

- Nu mai avem intalniri sau sedinte la serviciu, avem *meeting-uri*;
- Nu primim invitatie la o intalnire, sau solicitare de intalnire, primim *meeting request*;
- La intrare, pe receptie, nu mai avem condica, ci avem *timesheet*;
- Lucram intr-un *building*;
- Fisa postului este *job description*;
- Instrumentele cu care lucram (la calculator sau nu), sunt *tool-uri*;
- Nu facem ore suplimentare, ci facem *overtime*;
- La serviciu ecusonul este *badge*;
- Vinerea poti sa vii in blugi si papuci, nu neaparat imbracat *office*;
- Dupa munca, poti sa iesi cu colegii corporatisti la un *drink*; precis va fi *funny* ;
- Daca esti un colaborator care lucrezi zilnic in sediul clientului tau, esti *in-house*;
- Daca in munca ta ai de facut scenarii, ele se cheama *script-uri*;
- Continutul diverselor documente este *content*;
- Sala de sedinte se cheama *meeting room*;
- Locul de luat masa amenajat la birou este un *kitchen*, bineinteles, si precis are un *toaster* pentru paine, ca si un *sandwich maker*;
- Nu mai avem femeie de serviciu la birou, avem *cleaning lady*;
- Afacerea a disparut de mult, acum este un *business*;
- Nu mai suntem profesionisti, ci *profi*;
- Nu mai avem scop, plan, tinta de atins. Avem *target*;
- Primim pe mail *request-uri*, nu cerinte;
- Suntem evaluati, si daca am fost buni suntem bonusati, dupa diverse *incentive plans-uri*;
- Planul de afaceri este *business plan*;
- Relatiile cu publicul sunt *public relations*;
- Departamentele din companie, sunt *IT, Finance, HR, Operations, Sales, Research*;
- Nu mai asteptam reactii si raspunsuri la ceea ce am facut; asteptam *feed-back*;

- Nu mai mergem la masa in pauza, ci mergem la *lunch*; ne luam *lunch break*, *coffee break*;
- Nu mai facem cursuri, ci *training-uri*;
- Nu mai avem reactii in urma training-urilor. Avem *testimoniale*;
- Cei care receptioneaza mesajele noastre, nu mai sunt receptori sau mai bine destinatari, sunt *recipients*;
- E-mail-urile noastre trebuie sa aiba *subject*, nu subiect;
- Cu colegii, mergem in *teambuilding*;
- Toti sefii de echipe sunt *team leaderi*, pentru ca echipa e un *team*;
- Nu ne concentram pe ceva, nu focalizam.... ci ne *focusam*;
- Nu suntem devotati, ci suntem *dedicati*;
- Problemele pe care le intalnim sunt *issues*. Sau chiar mai interesant, sunt *challenge-uri*;
- Nu stabilim prioritati, ci *prioritizam*;
- Nu avem liste de probleme de rezolvat, ci avem *task-uri* si *tasklist-uri*;
- Cand am terminat de rezolvat un *task* el nu-i gata, ci este *done*; iar daca nu-i gata, este *in process*;
- Nu facem, nu executam practic ceva, ci *implementam*;
- Nu avem activitati care trec si peste granita tarii, ci avem activitati *crossborder*;
- Nu suntem furnizori, ci suntem *vendori*;
- Nu mai avem experienta, ci *expertiza*;
- Trebuie sa fim *pro-activi* si *dedicated*;
- Nu suntem hotarati, ci *determinati*;
- Daca exista o crestere la anumite grafice, ele au un *trend ascendent*;
- Imprimanta este *printer*;
- Scrisorile sunt *letter-uri*;
- Serviciul este *job* iar noi suntem *busy*; avem foarte multa *pressure* pe cap;
- Nu mai folosim sabloane ci *template-uri*;
- Nu mai facem schite ci *draft-uri*;
- Nu oferim suport tehnic ci facem *helpdesk*;
- Nu suntem discreti, tacuti, retrasi, ci *we keep a low profile*;
- In cadrul unei activitati mai indelungate, nu mai avem de mult niste puncte de atins pe parcurs, ci avem un *timeline* de urmat;
- Nu mai urmarim ceva, ci facem *follow-up*;
- Nu mai avem termen limita la un proiect, ci avem *deadline*; iar treaba trebuie facuta *ASAP*;
- Nu mai suntem dezvoltatori, ci *developeri*; asadar, nu dezvoltam ci *developam*;
- Minuta sedintei - termen folosit in companii mai mici - este *meeting report* in mediul corporatist;
- O chestie la moda printre corporatisti, e *trendy*;
- Nu mai reglam, nu mai stabilim, ci *setam*;
- Analizele de profituri si pierderi sunt *P&L*;
- Nu suntem zapaciti de cap, ci *confused*;
- Nu mai atribuim ceva cuiva, ci *asignam* (to assign); *asignam taskuri* ;
- Nu mai candidam la un post, ci *aplicam* pentru un *job* (to apply);
- Nu mai stabilim intre noi o intelegere, ci un *agreement*;
- Nu mai anulam, ci *cancelam*;

- Diversii fluturasi cu reclame, sunt *flyer-e*; iar orice afis este *banner*;
- Apelurile ratate pe telefon sunt *missed call-uri*;
- Nu mai impart ceva cu cineva, ci *share-uiesc*. ([www.adevarul.ro](http://www.adevarul.ro))

The type of communication is linked to culture. On American soil, where open culture dominates, people are less focused on formalities and more on results, time efficiency and practical approach. Communication is therefore more direct, dynamic and, most often, to the point. What can we do to fix this professional deformation? To admit there is a problem is the first step towards healing. The correction of this deformity is totally unrealistic probably, as long as there will always be people and corporations to find a comfortable retreat in language to hide complexes. What we can do is to fight for freedom of expression. To avoid monotony and routine when we communicate, to create a trend strong enough to inspire and generate change. Let's use the power of persuasion to infuse dynamism in corporate communication.

According to the author Pavol Kvetko, "foreign words can become fully or partially assimilated, in terms of spelling, phonetically and morphologically, depending on the linguistic standards" (2005, 97). Words fully assimilated are those that appeared in the vocabulary of a language for a long time, so that not even their foreign origin is observed, they lose characteristics and foreign diacritics used in spelling. Partially assimilated words are the words that are not fully assimilated semantically, phonetically or from the grammar or spelling point of view. Pronunciation and spelling of these borrowings partially assimilated varies widely. Unassimilated words are those that have failed to be adopted and used as such, for example, *mouse*. Once they enter Romanian language, economic terms are subject to vocabulary dynamics and to changes affecting their semantic content.

### 3. Types of lexical borrowings

Terms can be borrowed from one language to another in a variety of ways. To capture the status of borrowing, a word must be taken without translation and made to comply with linguistic agreements in terms of spelling and pronunciation. Another type of borrowing, known as linguistic calque, is a translation of lexical unit taken from another language. A term that is used from another language without any spelling modification or pronunciation is just a foreign word.

Linguistic borrowings from English (British or American version) used in Romanian, "in a variant partially or not at all adapted to the Romanian language's rules are known as Anglicisms" (Zarojanu 2014, 99). Fairly widespread in linguistics, the term Anglicism was defined, interpreted and subject to classifications in various reference works. In *Dictionarul explicativ al limbii romane* the concept of Anglicism is defined as "English origin word borrowed, without necessity by another language and not integrated in it" (DEX 2010).

Anglicisms are divided into two categories: necessary borrowings and luxury borrowings.

*Necessary borrowings* are those words, phrases or phraseological units which do not have a correspondent in Romanian or, although having a lexical equivalent, shows some advantages over the local language term. Such advantages are precision, international circulation, their denotative and connotative motivation. Examples: *briefing, broker, cash and carry, consulting, marketing, supermarket, management,*

*leasing, factoring, merchandising, voucher, brainstorming, cash-flow, overdraft, discount, target, dumping.*

*Luxury borrowings* are unnecessary, related to the subjective tendency of some social groups to individualize the language in this way. These terms double the Romanian words without introducing additional information, hence the use of this category of borrowings is not strictly necessary, but occurs due to stylistic reasons. Examples: *job – slujba; talk-show – masa rotunda; advertising – publicitate; boss – sef, superior, brand – marca, firma; dealer – distribuitor, trend – tendinta.*

This classification adapted to Romanian language is according to the law enacted by George Pruteanu, which proposes translating all foreign terms that occur in public places, out of the desire to avoid confusion that can be caused among those who are not speakers of a foreign language, in addition, they allow the degradation of Romanian language. But there are some words that the late linguist George Pruteanu recommends to be used in their original version such as *brainstorming*, whose translation as *stoarcere a creierilor* is inopportune.

#### 4. Conclusions

In business environments engaged in international economic partnerships and multinational organizations, economic culture, symbols and reference systems in the country of origin are major coordinates according to which communication takes place. The presence of individuals from diverse cultures, well-defined organizational framework in the country's economic culture, the need to harmonize reality with language, facilitating communication process and ensuring fairness in the communication, all these aspects lead to the formation and implementation of a particular lexical fund, specific to the type of activity developed: industrial, commercial, banking and finance. Thus formed, corporate language is generally considered a language of clichés that does not offer the possibility of choice. Depending on the requirements of the working environment, employees of such media must be able to use appropriate language and understand exactly the social and cultural reality.

Corporate language manifests as a reality today both in terms of economic and social context in which organization evolves and as a distinct activity field of the organization. To meet the requirements imposed once with the internationalization of economic relations, sound professional training and a good grasp of specialized knowledge are just as important as communication skills in foreign languages, intercultural adaptation being a natural consequence. Regarded as a natural result of the need to convey some theoretical concepts by using a specific terminology, corporate communication is present at all levels of economic activity: management, work organization, project management, personnel recruitment, forming working teams etc. Given the scientific rigor of the field as well as the role that this language holds, the ability to understand and use words from other languages, mostly in English, should occupy a central place in the professional skills among employees in international business environments, regardless of the position occupied in such legal entities.

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