

## **Some Reflections on Sports English and Serbian in the Global Socio-Linguistic Context**

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**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to describe the position of English as the international language of sport in the twenty-first century and its impact on Serbian sports terminology. The analysis is focused on the interactions between different socio-linguistic factors which led sport and English to the present-day status of being global phenomena and which, eventually, created English as the international language of sport which strongly influences Serbian sports terminology. Besides, the paper elaborates on latest sports trends and their various current linguistic consequences.

**Keywords:** Sports English, international language, sports terminology, terminology standardization, English, Serbian

### **1. Introduction**

Due to their global character in the twenty-first century, both sport and sports language play an important role in everyday lives of most people on the planet. Being important parts of human life from the very beginning these two phenomena were exposed to the influence of a wide range of different socio-linguistic and cross-cultural interactions throughout the course of history, which led them both to the present-day status. In order to reveal which events contributed most to the process of creation of Sports English as the international language of sports, what main linguistic traits of modern Sports English are and how English influences Serbian sports language, we will analyse the following issues:

- Sport through the course of history on the way to the present-day status in the world;

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- Spread of English as global language of sport;
- New sports trends and current linguistic issues in sports terminology in Serbian.

## **2. Sport through the course of history on the way to the present-day status in the world**

In the prehistoric period, the existing forms of physical activities didn't have sports character. They were closely connected to the challenges of survival. Later, in ancient times, certain sports disciplines appeared in Ireland, Middle and Far East and the Mediterranean. In the Middle Ages sports tradition was continued all around these areas. After the discovery of the American continent (1492), sports started to appear in this part of the world, as well. In the years to come, there had been some changes in the relation between society and sport. France's bourgeois Revolution (1789) significantly influenced the development of industry, culture, science, as well as the development of physical exercise and sport. (Šiljak 2007)

Nineteenth century was the turning point in the process of sports development. At that time, in England, the rules for a number of sports disciplines were established, and, for that reason, England is considered to be the cradle of modern sport. The establishment of the official sports rules in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was one of the turning points in sports history, as well as in the process of creation of sports language. Sport was fundamentally changed when the formal rules were established. What followed after that was the expansion of sports all around the world. That was the time when sports globalization started. During the twentieth century, professionalism and commercialization become the main traits of sport; numerous sports federations were created. Nowadays sports exist in more than 3,000 cultures around the world (Bjelajac 2006: 36).

According to Maguire (1999 in Skembler 2005: 53) the process of sportization consisted of the phases presented below:

1. First phase (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century)  
The early transition of English pastimes into sport.
2. Second phase (early and mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century)  
Further sportization of British pastimes.
3. Third phase (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century)  
The 'take off' and differential expansion of English sport throughout the entire European continent.
4. Fourth phase (1920s to 1960s)  
West (Anglo/Euro-American) hegemony over sport and sports organizations.
5. Fifth phase (since 1960s to now)  
African, Asian and South American nations increasingly challenge. Western control of sports since the 1960s.

### 3. English as the global language of sport

Almost at the same time when the sports globalization started, i.e. in the twentieth century, English as a lingua franca started to spread worldwide (Crystal 2003; Graddol 1998). It implies that sport as a global phenomenon and English as the international language at that time started their unified global expansion and consequently English became the international language of sports (Budinčić, 2013). The whole process was enhanced by the expanding use of television in the second half of the twentieth century and the Internet at the end of the twentieth century.

#### 3.1. Foreign influences on English sports terminology in different periods of history

Up to nineteenth century, due to the fact that there was little or no possibility for global interactions sports terminology developed separately in different regions on the globe. There was no a language which was predominantly used in sport and which had an international character, much the same as English has nowadays. However, being the country where the first ancient Olympic games were organized in 776 BC, Greece had an important role in both sports development and the development of sports terminology, which will be elaborated below.

Namely, due to historical importance of Greece and the Greek language, Greek terms can be found in different fields in languages worldwide and sports field is only one of them. Consequently, nowadays most sports terms which are considered international are originally from Greek. Apart from Greek, Latin played an important global language role in the past, and that is why nowadays there are a lot of international terms in sports and other fields which are originally from Latin. Up to nineteenth century Latin and Greek terms had been borrowed by different languages. But, after that, since the English influence on the languages worldwide has started, these terms along with the other terms from English, have entered other languages as English terms and now they have the international character.

For example, some international terms originally from Greek are *athlete*, *marathon*, *Olympism*, *practice*, *rhythm*, *strategy*, *tactics*, *thron*, *trophy*, while terms such as *action*, *ambition*, *qualification*, *junior*, *individual*, *rival*, *duel*, *triumph* and *legend* originated in Latin (The Penguin English Dictionary, 1995).

In the period of the renewal of Olympic Games (1896), apart from Greek terms, a significant portion of French terms was introduced in sports thanks to Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin and French impact on sports development at that time. Some of these terms are *career*, *control*, *league*, *medals*, *offensive*, *point*, *rank*, *season*, *champion*, *chance*, *double*, *tournament*. (The Penguin English Dictionary, 1995)

However, Greek, Latin and French terms are not the only foreign terms in Sports English. Throughout the history English borrowed from a lot of other

languages (Kemmer; Katsiavriades & Quereshi). Some consequences of the foreign influences in sports register in English are analysed in the paper *On Loan Words in English Sports Terminology* (Budinčić, 2014). The analysis, which included English sports terms from more than 200 sports (Sportovi – Vizuelna enciklopedija 2007; The Sports Book 2007), showed that sports loan words in English have several common characteristics (Budinčić 2014: 1848-1849):

- The borrowed terms are mainly adapted to the English orthography and/or pronunciation.
- Some sports terms are unassimilated into English (e.g. *Rumba d'amore*, *pesäpallo*) and can be considered foreign words.
- Every sport (along with its terms) in some way depicts the culture of the country where it originated. For example, when sports terms from the Far East are used in some language they evoke associations with the culture of the country of origin.
- Most of the loan words in English sports terminology belong to the martial arts which originated in the Far East (e.g. *karate*, *kung fu*, *taekwondo*, *sumo*, *kendo*, *aikido*, *ju-jitsu*), but the foreign language influence in English is also visible in the term systems of other sports (e.g. *hurling* from Ireland, *lacrosse* from India, *sombo* from Russia, *shinty* from Scotland, *sepak takraw* from Malaysia) (The Sports Book 2007, Sportovi – Vizuelna enciklopedija 2007).

It can be concluded that throughout the history English sports language was far from being impervious to foreign language influences. In different periods its vocabulary was enriched by the influx of foreign vocabulary from different languages, which was previously explained and exemplified. Due to all these influences Sports English consists of the terms from different languages which is considered to be an advantage of an international language.

#### **4. New sports trends and current linguistic issues in sports terminology in Serbian**

Due to a quick, abundant and uncontrollable influx of new sports terms in recent years, the process of standardization of sports terminology in Serbian turned out to be quite a challenging task. The power of English influence on Serbian sports terminology and the question of sports terminology standardization in the Serbian language has been the subject of different linguistic analyses (Milić 2013a; Milić 2013b; Budinčić 2012; Budinčić 2013; Budinčić 2016).

New trends in sports development in the twenty-first century cause some new linguistic challenges to emerge (Budinčić 2016). As the result of the tendency of sports lovers to escape from professionalism, and prove their abilities in the activities which are not part of a professional sports milieu, recently, the popularity of some unusual, recreational and extreme sports activities is increasing. Along with all these

new sports activities new sports terms are being created worldwide and along with sports leaving the boundaries of the countries of origin, terms belonging to them are being borrowed in different countries, as well (e.g. *parkour*, *paintball*).

In such circumstances, some new sports terms are frequently being used in the original English forms in Serbian which is not in accordance to the Serbian orthography standards. For example, some terms denoting new sports concepts such as *birding*, *airsoft*, *fun fun*, *body combat*, *body pump*, *aerobiclow*, *cardio box*, *cbs – chair body sculpt*, *cxworx*, *fit ball*, *airsoft*, *snow-kiting*, *ice climbing*, *hang-gliding* are used in Serbian in the original English forms and it is quite a challenge for a lot of Serbian speakers to use and understand them appropriately. These new terms are mainly related to new programs in gyms and wellness centers, extreme sports and some new unusual sports. On the other side, terms such as *bowling* and *gym*, even though they have lexical equivalents in Serbian, they are still sometimes used in original English forms. The question related to the borrowings in this particular case which is to be posed here is whether such language use should be accepted due to the fact that it can facilitate the process of sports terminology unification or it should be restricted due to the fact that it is not in accordance to the standards of the Serbian language.

Furthermore, original English terms are also very often used when it comes to the official names of Fitness Centers in Serbia (e.g. *Jungle Power Fitness*, *Body Active*, *Garden gym*, *Teretana Pump it Up*) or sports events (e.g. *We run Belgrade*, *Open fitness day*, *Košutnjak Challenge race*, *Aerobik happening*). (Budinčić 2016)

All these language issues deserve to be very thoroughly considered in the light of both linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects, and all the relevant activities, i.e. the tasks related to terminology standardization, should be entrusted to linguists, sports professionals and be supported by the overall community.

In order to provide more efficient communication in a particular field, any science tends to the global unification of its terminology. That is an ongoing process in the sports field and it is enhanced by the fact that English is both lingua franca and the international language of sports. Besides, Sports English is composed of a numerous adopted foreign terms from different languages, which is considered to be a strongly valuable advantage of an international language (Crystal 2003: 8). On the other side, the process of sports terminology unification is being supported by the fact that other languages are open to the influence of English terms in a sports field. It is interesting to mention that owing to the fact that it is globally recognized as the international sports language, new sports notions, even when they are being created in the countries outside English speaking regions, may be termed in English in order to be easily accepted worldwide. It can be exemplified by the term *wheelball* (*vilbal* is an adopted Serbian form) coined to denote a new sport created in Serbia a few years ago.

However, the international character of a term should not be the only criterium for terminology creation. What's more, some Serbian linguists believe that we should opt for an English term (adopted to Serbian) instead of Serbian only if

there is no Serbian word for some new concept or when English term possesses more characteristics of an ideal term (i.e. preciseness, transparency, sistematicity, productivity, conclusion, frequency) than the Serbian equivalent (Prčić 2005, Milić 2013b).

#### **4.1. Standardization of sports terminology in Serbian and contact language culture**

Having in mind all the previously described circumstances, it can be concluded that linguistic issues related to sports terminology in English and Serbian which constantly arise are quite complex and should be treated with a particular attention.

In order to keep pace with all the global changes in the sports field and the field of sports terminology on the global scale and, at the same time, protect the standards of the Serbian language, all the relevant Serbian language institutions should take an active part in the process of terminology standardization, which, according to Radovanović (1979: 85) consists of the following procedures:

- 1) Selection of the norm,
- 2) Description of the norm,
- 3) Codification of the norm,
- 4) Elaboration of the norm,
- 5) Acceptation of the norm,
- 6) Implementation of the norm,
- 7) Expansion of the norme,
- 8) Cultivation of the norme,
- 9) Evaluation of the norme,
- 10) Reconstruction of the norme.

As already mentioned, in order to have all these procedures carried out successfully, linguists, sports professionals, media and educational institutions should take active roles throughout the whole process of standardization. Moreover, Prčić (2005: 192-198) believes that special attention should be payed to the segment of education and suggests that the course *Contact language culture* should be incorporated into the syllabus on different levels of education. *Contact language culture* would be the course dealing with theoretical and practical aspects of adaptation of English terms in the Serbian language.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Sports English as the international language of sport emerged out of the complex sociolinguistic changes which have been taking place throughout the course of history. Nowadays, due to its international character, the English language strongly influences languages worldwide. Terminologies in different fields are being

composed by numerous English terms and English terms are predominant in Serbian sports terminology.

The official rules for most sports were established in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when sports spread throughout the globe. The English language, at the same time, began to be used as an international language. With the expanding use of television and the Internet in the twentieth century, sports and language globalization 'were joined by new significant allies'.

The data presented in this paper showed that, due to all the traces which have been left on English sports language throughout the course of history, English sports register can be considered a unique socio-linguistic mirror in which these global linguistic and cross-cultural interactions clearly reflect. It can be concluded that the process of sports terminology unification is in progress and consequently the influx and use of new English sports terms in languages worldwide may be expected and because of that the special attention should be paid to the sports terminology standardization in those languages. In order to protect language standards in Serbian, all the responsible language institutions should take part in the process.

We believe that the insights into the English language as the international language of sport, its impact on Serbian sports terminology and issues related to sports terminology standardization in the Serbian language presented in this paper may contribute to the further research on sports language, language borrowing in this field and interactions between sports and languages as two globally interlaced phenomena.

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