

THE ADOPTION OF ANGLICISMS BY THE ROMANIAN ONLINE PRESS IN TIMES OF CRISIS: GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND LOCAL ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONAL SPEECHES

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Abstract

Global crises over the past few years, such as the pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and economic challenges, have led to the emergence of key terms like “coronavirus,” “military conflict” and “inflationary crisis,” which have become central to the online press, media and political discourse. These terms have impacted language use, with definitions evolving over time and influencing both lexical comprehension and public perception, as seen with the shifting definitions of the term “COVID-19” in dictionaries and the rise of concerns over military conflicts and inflation. The paper explores the use of English terms and expressions that describe these global realities in the Romanian online press. Loan translations often occur when an English concept or expression is introduced to Romanian, with the translation based on the components of the original term or phrase. This process enhances clarity and precision in communication. For example, terms such as “austerity measures” (măsuri de austeritate), “stimulus package” (pachet de stimulare economică), “hybrid warfare” (război hibrid), “war crimes” (crime de război), and “displaced persons” (persoane strămutate) illustrate this practice. Additionally, the paper examines how internationally relevant speeches, delivered by figures in positions of authority, are adapted for local audiences in the Romanian online press.

Keywords: anglicisms, borrowings, loan translations, linguistic evolution, terminological consistency

JEL Classification: Z13

1. Introduction

The global crises over the past three years such as the post-pandemic crisis, the geopolitical crisis, the energy crisis, the inflationary crisis have propelled several terms, which have become standout terms in the political discourse, media and everyday conversations. The first of these terms, “coronavirus”, was a standout term during the years 2020-2022. The pandemic had far-reaching impacts on public health, economies, and daily life around the world, making “coronavirus” and related terms (for example, “COVID-19”, “mask”, “isolation”, “symptomatic”, “asymptomatic”) omnipresent in media coverage, scientific literature, and everyday conversations.

Researchers hypothesize that this marked increase in frequency can lead to an increase in lexical accessibility [Kleinman D. et al., (2022)]. Furthermore, through four experiments, they show that lexical expectations and

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comprehension can shift due to rapid changes in a listener's real-life linguistic environment, and that such changes can persist over at least ten months (Ibidem). [Stewart, (2020)] highlights that when "Covid-19" was first added to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) in April 2020, it was defined as "an acute respiratory illness". Due to the epidemiological complexity, the Oxford English Dictionary revised the definition of "Covid-19" to "An acute disease in humans caused by a coronavirus, which is characterized mainly by fever and cough and is capable of progressing to pneumonia". Similarly, other dictionaries like the Cambridge Dictionary, updated their definitions, describing "Covid-19" as "an infectious disease caused by a coronavirus (= a type of virus), that usually causes fever, tiredness, a cough, and changes to the senses of smell and taste, and can lead to breathing problem and severe illness in some people".

The second term, "military conflict", has caught significant attention due to the ongoing military conflicts in Ukraine and Israel recently. These conflicts have been subjects of intense international focus, receiving extensive media coverage and prompting diplomatic efforts to address underlying issues. Furthermore, several factors such as the rising prices, supply chain disruptions, monetary policy, commodity prices, inflationary dynamics in the economy, geopolitical tensions and trade disputes have led to widespread concerns about inflationary pressures and their potential implications for economic stability, monetary policy, and living standards. Consequently, another frequent term is "inflationary crisis", which has become a prominent topic of discussion among policymakers, economists, investors, and the public.

2. Anglicization of the Online Press in Times of Crisis

It is important to note that language evolves in response to societal changes, and the impact on language may be dynamic and ongoing. Additionally, the adoption of new words can be influenced by factors such as the level of public awareness, the degree of media coverage, and the duration of a crisis. English serves as the prevailing language across various sectors, including diplomacy, economics, and technology, thereby reinforcing its prominence in media coverage of crisis-related events. Tracking language developments in the online press, public discourse, and official communications can provide insights into how languages evolve and how English can influence them, in response to current events. English-language media outlets often take the lead in reporting on significant global developments and possess substantial global reach and influence, shaping public discourse and framing discussions surrounding crises, which further receive media coverage locally. Consequently, the Romanian online press has increasingly incorporated English terms and phrases, which are either partially or fully translated in Romanian. These instances frequently involve technical or specialized terminology related to public health, energy, or geopolitics. Occasionally, we observe fully or

partially translated terms or phrases in Romanian, or the use of Romanian terms, phrases, or acronyms and their English equivalents in brackets, followed sometimes by accurate definitions in Romanian. Examples include:

“În opinia sa, insistența cu care se promovează cu orice preț *politica grean deal* nu avea cum să ducă la un alt deznodământ.”¹⁷

“Presa economică internațională folosește obsesiv termenul ”*stagflație*” adică o stare a economiei caracterizată prin inflație persistentă combinată cu șomaj ridicat și o stagnare a creșterii cererii agregate.”¹⁸

“Ei sunt mai înclinați să aleagă programe de tipul „*cumperi acum, plătești mai târziu*” (BNPL, acronimul din limba engleză – “buy now, pay later”), pe care le vedem în retail, scrie The Atlantic.”¹⁹

“Ca privire de ansamblu, ne mai uităm și la *productivitatea totală a factorilor* (Total Factor Productivity). E un indicator care măsoară, practic, eficiența economică dintr-o țară.”²⁰

As shown by research conducted during the pandemic, anglicization is a complex and multifaceted process. While English influences many languages, the extent and nature of this influence vary across regions and cultures. The degree of anglicization depends on historical, cultural, and linguistic factors in each linguistic community. For instance, the research conducted by [Belkina, (2021)] facilitated the identification of several distinct features in the development of the French language during the pandemic. These include the process of assimilating internationalisms, notably the naming of COVID-19, the nuances of incorporating borrowings from English, and the general trend of neologization. Other investigations contribute to the understanding of public notices within the context of crises by delineating the various forms, functions, features, and how the crisis context influences the effectiveness of public notices [Jianxin, Y. & Feng. Q., (2022)]. As for the dynamic nature of a language, several researchers [Asif *et al.*, (2021)] emphasize a language can be considered a blend of ideas and thoughts, which automatically generates and coins new words to accomplish the needs of conversational situations. Their

¹⁷ My translation: *In his opinion, the insistence with which the hard-deal policy is promoted at all costs could not possibly lead to a different outcome.*

¹⁸ My translation: *The international economic press uses the term “stagflation” obsessively, meaning a state of the economy characterized by constant inflation combined with high unemployment and a stagnation in the growth of aggregate demand.*

¹⁹ My translation: *They are more predisposed to choose programs of the type “buy now, pay later” (BNPL, the English acronym – “buy now, pay later”), which we notice in retail, writes The Atlantic.*

²⁰ My translation: *As an overview, we also look at the total productivity of the factors (Total Factor Productivity). It is an indicator, which actually measures the economic efficiency of a country.*

study explores and analyzes the neologism in the perspective of the outbreak of COVID-19, starting from a theoretical framework based on the model of neologism introduced by Krishnamurthy in 2010 (i.e. word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation).

Romanian language has mechanisms to adapt the borrowed words, and they may coexist with native terms or undergo semantic shifts over time. In times of significant events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the energy crisis and the military conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas, the Romanian language has been impacted and new words or expressions have entered ordinary language to capture the unique aspects of these situations. Many terms and phrases have equivalents in Romanian. We can also notice the adaptation of the loanwords by adjusting their spelling, pronunciation, morphology, and meanings to align with the linguistic characteristics of the Romanian language. This adaptation ensures that the loanwords seamlessly integrate into the Romanian lexicon, remaining understandable and consistent with the structure of the language, as shown in the examples below:

Lockdown/izolare, carantină
Social Distancing/distanțare socială
Epidemic Plateau/Platou epidemic
Incidence/incidență
Confirmed case/caz confirmat
Face mask/mască de protecție
WFH (Work from Home)/Lucru de Acasă (LDA)
Covidiot/Romanian: covidiot
Vaccine hesitancy/reticență față de vaccinare
Remote Learning/învățare la distanță, școală online
Austerity measures/măsuri de austeritate
Sanitizer/Dezinfectant
Scarcity of energy/sărăcie energetică
Vulnerable businesses/ afaceri vulnerabile
Vulnerable households/gospodării vulnerabile
Price-cap/plafon de preț
Stimulus package/pachet de stimulare economică
Hybrid warfare/război hibrid
War crimes/crime de război
Displaced persons/persoane strămutate
Sanctions/sancțiuni
Escalation/escaladare
Normalization/normalizare
Drone/dronă
Activate air defence/a activa apărarea aeriană

The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception to the influence of crises on human language [Loudovikou, A., Tsagkaris, C., Papakosta, V. *et al.*, (2022)]. In the dynamics of the vocabulary used during the pandemic, a contradiction between norm and usage is manifested by the Romanian journalists' preference to use the English terms "booster" and "PCR-PCR" in phrases translated partially in Romanian (e.g., "doză booster", "teste PCR-PCR", "proteină spike"). The terms have permeated various aspects of life as individuals discuss and navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. Terms like "WFH" (Work from Home) and "remote learning" have become relevant to a large portion of the population as remote work and online education became more frequent during the pandemic. They were coined or popularized by the online press and media and became part of the lexicon of the public reflecting how they talk about and perceive certain issues, individuals and the public figures' actions. Media has a broad reach and influence, and the repetition of equivalent terms such as "mască de protecție" (face mask), "covidiot" (covidiot), "antivaccinist" (antivaxxer), "symptomatic" (simptomatic), "asimptomatic" (asymptomatic), "autoizolare" (self-isolation), "dronă" (drone), "escaladare" (escaladare), "sanctiuni" (sanctions) led to their adoption and integration into everyday conversations. Additionally, their use in headlines or articles sparked discussions passing on their usage.

„Avertismentul unui profesor român de la Oxford: „O *escaladare* în Israel ar crește riscul de atentate în Europa”²¹

„Atac cu *drone* al rușilor, în mai multe regiuni din Ucraina”²²

The term "covidiot" is an English neologism borrowed by the Romanian press during the Covid-19 pandemic to describe a person who ignores or does not comply with the rules or recommendations regarding public health during the COVID-19 pandemic, putting others at risk or contributing to the spread of the virus. Although it has been widely used online with the meaning entered in the Cambridge Dictionary, Romanian lexicographers have not included it in the traditional dictionaries, probably because they predicted its frequency would diminish in the future. In the following examples, the term "covidiot" is used pejoratively to criticize individuals, groups or public figures for their perceived failures or irresponsibility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The blend of "COVID" and "idiot" makes it catchy, humorous and memorable. When applied metaphorically to politicians by the journalists, it adds a layer of colloquial language and wordplay that can resonate with readers and contribute to the impact of the critique.

²¹ My translation: *The warning of a Romanian professor from Oxford: An escalation in Israel would increase the risk of attacks in Europe*

²² My translation: *Russian drone attack in several regions of Ukraine*

“Cum a ajuns PNL *COVIDiotul* util al lui Iohannis”²³

“Iohannis și Orban se poartă tot mai des ca niște *democrați asimptomatici*.”²⁴

“Prin ceea ce fac de cinci luni încoace, Iohannis și partidul său demonstrează că au vrut să *bage* chiar *democrația în carantină*.”²⁵

“Elon Musk este *Covidiotul* tech nr. 1 din vremea pandemiei”²⁶

“*COVidiotul* Voiculescu dă înapoi și anunță că TOATE REGULILE privind înmormântările se schimbă.”²⁷

In the first headline, the term “covidiot” is used pejoratively to imply that the National Liberal Party’s actions were irresponsible or detrimental in the context of the pandemic. It suggests that the National Liberal Party has become instrumental or complicit in the President’s handling of the pandemic in a manner that can be considered irresponsible or foolish. The metaphorical use of “asymptomatic” in the phrase “asymptomatic democrats” adds a layer of complexity to the critique, suggesting that the issues with democratic governance may not be immediately apparent but are nonetheless present and potentially harmful. The next statement criticizes President Iohannis and his party for their handling of the pandemic, suggesting that their actions undermined democratic principles. By labeling Musk a “covidiot,” the second headline suggests that his behavior was irresponsible or ignorant in the context of the pandemic, given his influence in the tech industry. In the last headline, the term “COVidiot” is used to criticize Voiculescu, the Minister of Health, for his handling of COVID-19 regulations regarding funerals, implying that his actions or decisions were reckless and fallacious.

Terms related to specific events or situations may lose relevance once those events pass or are resolved. Thus, the usage of crisis-related terms by the media was dynamic, subject to change based on evolving circumstances nationally, shifts in Romanian public perception, and the emergence of new challenges at the international level. As a result, several terms that were prominent in one period have become less used over time, especially as restrictions were lifted.

3. Speeches Delivered by Authoritative Figures

Researchers reveal that language manipulation is evident in the speeches delivered in a context of war, by people in position of authority, who use

²³ My translation: *How PNL [The National Liberal Party] became Iohannis’s useful covidiot*

²⁴ My translation: *Iohannis and Orban behave more and more like asymptomatic democrats.*

²⁵ My translation: *By what they have been doing for the past five months, Iohannis and his party demonstrate that they wanted to put democracy in quarantine.*

²⁶ My translation: *Elon Musk is the number 1 tech covidiot of the pandemic*

²⁷ My translation: *COVidiot Voiculescu capitulates and announces that ALL RULES regarding funerals are changing*

linguistic strategies such as powerful word choices, modals, tenses etc., and rhetorical strategies [Abbadi, Renad & Kreishan, Lana & Al-Saidat, Emad, (2024)]. In addition, metaphors and storytelling play a significant role in leadership communication. According to [Gkalitsiou, K. and Dimosthenis K., (2023)], leaders consistently employ metaphors and storytelling to be more persuasive and empowering but the intensity of the crisis influences their frequency (Ibidem).

I selected excerpts from speeches delivered by two prominent international authorities: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the President of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. These selections were made due to their pivotal roles in guiding responses to global crises, fostering cooperation and collaboration, disseminating critical information, reassuring the public, and influencing policy decisions on a global scale. The first speech focuses on the importance of science and solidarity in combating COVID-19, while Olaf Scholz's speech addresses the geopolitical implications of President Putin's actions in Ukraine and advocates for a multilateral approach to global governance.

As the speeches were delivered in English, the Romanian journalists used translation to ensure the content reached the Romanian audience. This process involved accurately translating the speeches while preserving the original message and nuances. The translation employs various devices to convey the message effectively, ensuring clarity and fluency in Romanian. For instance, direct translation is employed to maintain the original wording, as seen in phrases like "războiul este un mijloc comun al politicii" (*war is a common instrument of politics*) from Scholz's speech. Additionally, idiomatic expressions and phrasing are adjusted to ensure naturalness and accessibility for Romanian audiences. This adaptation is evident in the translation's fluidity, which seamlessly integrates the speaker's intentions with linguistic nuances that resonate with Romanian readers. As for the cultural references, the translation incorporates nuances skillfully to resonate with the Romanian audience, ensuring that the essence of the original speech is preserved. For instance, in Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus's speech, the mention of „inegalitatea, diviziunea, negarea, iluziile și ignoranța deliberate” (*inequality, division, denial, wishful thinking, and willful ignorance*) highlights societal challenges relevant to both global and Romanian contexts. Similarly, in Olaf Scholz's speech, the phrase „națiunile independente trebuie să se alăture vecinilor lor mai puternici sau stăpânilor coloniali” (*independent nations have to submit to their stronger neighbors or their colonial masters*) addresses historical and geopolitical dynamics that resonate with Romanian history and identity.

The speeches differ in their thematic focus and rhetorical strategies but they use linguistic devices effectively to engage the audience and convey their

respective messages. In the first speech, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the President of the WHO, engages the audience through direct address techniques, employing phrases like „*Poate că suntem obosiți de COVID-19*”²⁸ and „*este momentul ca lumea să se vindece*”²⁹. Implicatures are evident in the first speech and play a crucial role in effective communication, allowing the speaker to convey messages indirectly while enabling listeners to interpret meaning beyond the literal words stated. For instance, the speaker’s statement „*Poate că suntem obosiți de COVID-19. Însă el nu s-a săturat de noi.*” (*We might be tired of COVID-19. But it is not tired of us*) implies resilience and determination in the face of adversity. In the translated version of this statement, the implicature is preserved in Romanian to maintain the communicative intent of the speech.

This following excerpt maintains a formal register suitable for official address, emphasizing the gravity of the subject matter and the professional context in which they are delivered. Despite the formality, they incorporate instances of emotional appeal, acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on health disparities, advocating for unity, and healing. Rhetorical devices such as parallelism „*învățare constantă, perfecționare constantă și responsabilitate constantă*”³⁰ and repetition are also employed to highlight key points and enhance persuasiveness. The use of sophisticated, even ironical language, including terms such as “*ambiții imperiale*” (*imperial ambitions*) and “*ordine mondială*” (*world order*) contributes to the authoritative tone, conveying a sense of expertise and credibility. The statement „*Nu putem negocia cu COVID-19 și nici nu putem închide ochii și spera că va dispărea.*” (*We cannot negotiate with it, nor close our eyes and hope it goes away*) employs the parallel structure (*We cannot... nor...*) for rhetorical effect, underlining the two actions are ineffective. Furthermore, it conveys a pragmatic implication that negotiation with the virus is not feasible or sensible, emphasizing the situation is getting worse and worse and it must not be ignored thereby the need for proactive measures. The use of the verb “negotiate” in relation to the Covid-19 virus is a metaphorical expression, which reflects the incapability to reason with it.

The excerpt from the speech delivered by Olaf Scholz, the Federal Chancellor of Germany, uses a variety of linguistic devices to persuade the public. Emotive language is employed strategically to elicit emotional responses from the audience, emphasizing the gravity of the situation. Hence the phrase “*Să privim neputincioși...*”³¹ conveys a sense of urgency and concern, aiming to grab the attention of the audience. Parallelism is used in this speech to enhance its rhythm and emphasize key points. The use of rhetorical

²⁸ My translation: *We may be tired of COVID-19*

²⁹ My translation: *It is time for the world to heal*

³⁰ My translation: *continuous learning, continuous improvement, and continuous accountability*

³¹ My translation: *Should we stand by helplessly...*

questions further engages the public, encouraging them to analyze the issues debated worldwide. For instance, the rhetorical question, “Să privim neputincioși cum unii vor să ne trimită înapoi într-o ordine mondială în care...”³² urges the audience to think about the implications of certain actions. Finally, metaphorical language is employed to illustrate complex concepts and situations. For instance, Scholz refers to “Revenirea imperialismului odată cu războiul președintelui Putin împotriva Ucrainei nu a fost un dezastru doar pentru Europa...”³³ using metaphor to convey the broader impact of geopolitical events. The chosen excerpts from these speeches provide significant insights into how the world responds to crises and how effective communication shapes public discourse.

Conclusions

The prevalence of anglicisms raises important questions for sociolinguists, lexicologists, and lexicographers. Sociolinguists can explore how *times of crises* influence language dynamics and public perception. Lexicographers, in turn, can address how these terms are assimilated into dictionaries and whether their inclusion is temporary or reflects enduring linguistic shifts. Translators, both in general and specialized contexts, navigate these complexities by deciding when to preserve English terms and when to adapt them.

The crises of recent years have introduced and popularized new terms, shaping public discourse and reflecting societal priorities. Terms like “lockdown,” “social distancing,” and “booster” during the pandemic, or “hybrid warfare” and “sanctions” during geopolitical conflicts and wars, illustrate how global events influence the lexicon. These borrowed terms often retain their English form or are partially translated to preserve expressiveness while ensuring accessibility for the Romanian audience:

- Direct borrowings like “PCR” and “booster” maintain technical precision.
- Partially translated terms, such as the “work from home” rendered as *Lucrul de Acasă (LDA)*, strike a balance between preserving the original meaning and integrating the term into Romanian syntax.
- Full translations are also employed, but sometimes they coexist with their English counterparts.

The motivations for this usage stem from the Romanian journalists’ need to communicate effectively, maintain the relevance of the terminology, and align with international reporting standards. Journalists play a pivotal role in the integration of anglicisms, particularly in rendering speeches by international

³² My translation: *Should we stand by helplessly as some want to send us back to a world order where...*

³³ My translation: *The resurgence of imperialism with President Putin’s war against Ukraine has not been a disaster only for Europe...*

authorities. This process often involves adapting idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and employing rhetorical devices to ensure the translated content resonates while preserving the nuances of the original text.

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