

Pragmatic borrowing from English into Serbian: Linguistic and sociocultural aspects



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Received 17 August 2016; received in revised form 14 January 2017; accepted 14 January 2017

Available online 11 February 2017

Abstract

The article focuses on the incorporation of discourse-pragmatic features from English into Serbian, proposing the term 'pragmatic Anglicisms' to denote a range of directly or indirectly borrowed forms from English with pragmatic functions. The article offers a descriptive and taxonomic framework for the study of pragmatic Anglicisms in Serbian and analyzes their formal and functional characteristics, as well as sociolinguistic, sociopragmatic and sociocultural aspects of their use, related to the users, registers, stylistic and communicative markedness, motivational factors, perception and evaluation by Serbian native speakers, *post hoc* effects, and cultural influences.

Apart from the commonly identified classes, such as interjections and discourse markers, the article recognizes the use of (calqued) discourse formulas from English in situations where there are either existing Serbian ones or a discourse 'gap' (i.e. when both the previously non-existent communicative act and the formulaic expression are adopted from English). This subclass is particularly interesting since it is not only a novel linguistic element that is thus introduced, but a novel communication and cultural pattern from the Anglo-American globalizing culture that gets adopted through new discourse formulas.

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Keywords: Pragmatic borrowing; Anglicism; Discourse marker; Discourse formula; Hidden Anglicism; Discourse gap

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of linguistic borrowing, extensively studied by various disciplines such as lexicology, contact linguistics and sociolinguistics, has been particularly investigated in relation to borrowing from English into various recipient languages (RLs). Due to the recent pragmatic turn, the research focus has shifted from formal and semantic properties of Anglicisms to their study in context and in use, including motivational factors, perception and *post hoc* effects of the use of Anglicisms. The globally present anglicization, rather than been viewed as lexical changes in various RLs, has come to be seen as anglicization of native cultures, manifested in the change of discourse patterns, interactions and sociocultural norms and values.¹

This article addresses the topic of borrowing from the pragmatic perspective by focusing on the incorporation of discourse-pragmatic features from English into Serbian. Section 2 first specifies some terminological issues, proposing the distinction between the terms 'pragmatic borrowing' (PB, for short) and 'pragmatic Anglicism' (PA), and then gives a brief overview of the previous research on Anglicisms and pragmatic borrowing in Serbian. Section 3 presents the descriptive and analytical approach to the study of pragmatic Anglicisms in Serbian, while section 4 focuses on general

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¹ For an overview of borrowing cf. Treffers-Daller (2007/2010), for Anglicisms and anglicization in various languages cf. Fisher and Pułaczewska (2008), Furiassi et al. (2012) and Furiassi and Gottlieb (2015), *inter al.*

types of pragmatic Anglicisms in Serbian (raw, obvious and hidden) and analyses several structurally and functionally different examples. Going beyond the linguistic level, in section 5 the article discusses some sociocultural aspects of pragmatic borrowing. The final section, which outlines directions for further research on PB in Serbian, also indicates a broader perspective for the study of pragmatic borrowing and pragmatic Anglicisms in particular.

2. Theoretical framework

This article is theoretically grounded in the rich literature on linguistic borrowing, Anglicisms, and, in particular, the pragmatic aspects of borrowing, as well as in the research on the influence of English on Serbian.

2.1. Pragmatic borrowing and pragmatic Anglicisms

Among the many different treatments and understandings of the phenomenon of borrowing in relation to pragmatics,² in this article the notion of pragmatic borrowing is very broadly taken to refer to “[t]he field of research that [...] captures various aspects of pragmatics, and its different strands include motivational factors, the discourse-pragmatic products of borrowing, as well as post hoc effects” (Andersen et al., 2017), as was the general adopted conception reflected in the variety of individual contributions to this issue.

However, more specifically, pragmatic borrowing is here understood as defined by Andersen (2014:17) to refer to “the incorporation of pragmatic and discourse features of a source language (SL) into a recipient language (RL)”. To deal descriptively with the discourse-pragmatic products of borrowing, i.e. the incorporated pragmatic and discourse features, Andersen (2014:18) uses the term “pragmatically borrowed items”: “[they] carry signals about speaker attitudes, the speech act performed, discourse structure, information state, politeness, etc.”. He gives an extensive illustrative list of categories of pragmatically borrowed items that includes interjections, discourse markers, greetings/leave-taking formulas, politeness markers, expletives, vocatives, general extenders, tags, quotatives, focus markers/discourse-structuring devices, and even intonation and paralinguistic phenomena, as exemplified from studies of various languages (Andersen, 2014:18–23). They can be direct borrowing of (adapted) forms, or indirect borrowing that involves the contact-induced use of RL material.

In order to set out a more systematic descriptive study of the products of pragmatic borrowing from English into other languages, this article proposes a more constrained understanding regarding the variety of categories of pragmatically borrowed items and suggests the term ‘pragmatic Anglicisms’ to denote them.

Broadly defined, an Anglicism is “any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models, used in intralingual communication in a language other than English” (Gottlieb and Furiassi, 2015:17), or, more specifically, “words, phrases and sentences with varying degrees of integration as well as those whose use reflects or follows the orthographic, grammatical, semantic or pragmatic norm of English” (Prčić, 2011:59).

Therefore, combining the notions of borrowing and Anglicism, for the purpose of this study, the term “pragmatic Anglicism” (PA, for short) is adopted to denote a range of directly or indirectly borrowed forms from English with pragmatic functions, here illustrated with a few examples from Serbian³:

- 1) discourse markers, interjections, abbreviations, etc. adapted or calqued from English.
baj-baj, okej, vau, ups, pliz, sori, (BYE-BYE, OK, WOW, OOPS, PLEASE, SORRY)
- 2) adapted or calqued discourse formulas from English used in communicative situations when there are corresponding and common formulas in the RL.
Da li mogu da Vam pomognem? (CAN I HELP YOU?), instead of the usual Serbian “Izvolite?” (in shops)
- 3) adapted or calqued discourse formulas from English used when there is a sort of a ‘discourse gap’ in the RL. In some cases the RL does not require a particular communicative act in a particular setting (e.g. a particular type of a speech act, a greeting/politeness formula, etc. in a service encounter). However, the RL adopts such an act from the SL and its concomitant expression, usually with the calqued RL formula, so the discourse gap is filled by the incorporation of both the speech act function and the expression.
Hvala što ste koristili naše usluge (THANK YOU FOR USING OUR SERVICES), written at an ATM screen or on a receipt/bill

² For a more detailed account and references cf. Andersen et al. (2017).

³ As for the typographic conventions used in this article, the Serbian word/phrase that is considered a pragmatic Anglicism is given in italics, the English original in (smaller font) small caps in brackets, and the customary Serbian formula in regular script (and, where necessary, in inverted commas). For raw PAs, such as *No comment*, there is no need to provide the original; for quoted illustrations of PA use, the English translation is given below, in square brackets.

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