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# English Loan Translations in Polish

Word-formation Patterns, Lexicalization,  
Idiomaticity and Institutionalization



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EDITION

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Among the many possible ways of expanding the lexical stock of a language, word-formation processes, semantic changes and borrowing foreign language material constitute the most effective means. Word-formation processes, some of them endlessly productive, either alter the internal structure of a lexeme or use the bonding potential of native (and assimilated foreign) morphemes or fragments of words to supplement the lexis. Semantic changes, which occur either independently of or under a foreign influence, alter the meaning of a lexeme, which contributes to its novel collocational patterns. Borrowing foreign language material ranges from the adoption of complete lexemes with their forms and meanings to the copying of foreign structural and syntactic patterns. These three methods of enriching the vocabulary of a language operate on different principles and so are usually treated separately in linguistic studies. Yet they come together and are all at play when loan translations are formed. Among the various strategies in lexical development and filling lexical gaps in a language, the literal translation of foreign set expressions is unique in the sense that it involves all three processes: borrowing, word-formation and semantic change.

The present work deals with loan translations from English in contemporary Polish, which, apart from loanwords, loanblends and semantic loans, constitute yet another possible result of an influence one language exerts over another. The following study is a continuation of the research on English semantic loans in Polish, whose results were published in 2007 in a monograph *Anglosemantyzmy w języku polskim – ze słownikiem*.<sup>1</sup> An integral part of that study is a dictionary of English semantic loans in Polish, which have been defined and exemplified with authentic contexts of use. In the course of research for *Anglosemantyzmy...*, it became clear that there was a need for further research into the field of loan translations from English whose appearance could be witnessed daily by users of Polish. The first step towards the present study is an Appendix to that 2007 monograph, which lists over two hundred and forty English loan translations (*P. kalki strukturalne*) in Polish, including phraseological replicas of English idiomatic expressions. Since that collection was accumulated as a sort of “side effect” of the main research on semantic loans and as such was not supplemented with any theoretical background or analysis of the collected material, the need

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1 Witalisz (2007a), English summary available at: [http://pbc.up.krakow.pl/Content/5198/Alicja\\_Witalisz\\_English\\_semantic\\_loans\\_in\\_Polish.pdf](http://pbc.up.krakow.pl/Content/5198/Alicja_Witalisz_English_semantic_loans_in_Polish.pdf).

for further research was stated in the Conclusions, and the field was left open. In the face of copious language material, the need for further theoretical studies leading to a systematic classification of this type of loans and a discussion of the semantic processes that are present during and after the formation of a loan translation seems self-evident. The present study addresses morphosyntactic, semantic and extralinguistic issues in the context of one- and multi-word expressions loan translated from a foreign language.

It seems sound to assume that a comprehensive study of loan translations must be carried out from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. The recognition of the borrowing process, historical by nature, must involve a comparison of the various stages of the recipient language to identify innovations. Whether the innovations are contact-induced requires their comparison with the possible foreign models in the donor language (see e.g. Haugen 1950: 227). While in earlier studies on the subject of loan translations much attention was devoted to the very outcome of the calquing process, the present work endeavours also to address the semantic, lexical and morphological changes whose occurrence has been evidenced in a preliminary analysis of the research material. Loan translating includes onomasiological and semasiological processes, both during the borrowing process, which involves the creation of a new complex expression in the recipient language, semantic importation of a foreign sense and the semantic development of one or more of the constituents that are part of the newly-formed expression, and at the post-borrowing stage, which may bear witness to further semantic development of a loan translation, the formation of derivatives and lexical adaptation. One other attempt is to define a set of identification criteria which will be used to trace the origins of the loan translations in question. We shall also propose a classification of loan translations, taking into account a number of criteria, such as morphological patterns, exactness of translation, types of deviation from the foreign etymon, degree of idiomaticity and other.

Much theoretical work has been done on loan translations and a number of articles discussing and exemplifying the phenomenon in reference to other European languages have appeared over the last century (for an overview see Chapter 2). Yet a study of English loan translations in Polish is justified for several reasons. The number of English set expressions loan translated into Polish in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is overwhelming and continually growing. The speakers of Polish are witnesses to daily language innovations whose origins must ultimately be sought for in English. A literal interpretation of expressions such as *P. gorący ziemniak* (E. 'hot potato') or *P. białe kołnierzyki* (E. 'white collars'),

which is to be expected from an average user of Polish, poses a communication problem. There is a need to record and analyze loan translated set expressions and define their idiomatic senses that have been imported from English. No such study has been offered for Polish so far. While Obara's 1989 work on calques is a thorough account of both East- and West-European theoretical research, it was written at a time when only scarce instances of loan translations from English could be found in Polish and so the work is based on single exemplifications of calques from classical languages, as well as from German and French. In his largely theoretical work, Jerzy Obara expresses hope for a future comprehensive account of calques in Polish based on a sizeable corpus of research material, though in 1989 he may not have meant expressions loan translated from English. Thirdly, there is still room for a theoretical discussion of the semantic processes that accompany and follow the borrowing process, such as semantic lexicalization and semantic development of loan translations, which have rarely been addressed in previous studies. Moreover, a careful observer of the ways in which English set expressions are loan translated into Polish faces questions related to the origins and lexical content of loans. E. *skyscraper* has been loan rendered in Polish as *drapacz chmur* (E. lit. 'scraper of clouds') rather than \**drapacz nieba* (E. lit. 'scraper of sky'), which may raise questions about the former's relation to the German *Wolkenkratzer*, H. *felhőkarcoló*, and Cz. *mrakodrap*, which also, unlike F. *gratte-ciel*, It. *grattacielo*, Sp. *rascacielos* and Rus. *небоскрёб*, deviate lexically from the English etymon. Polish computer users have translated E. *network war* as *wojna w sieci* (E. lit. 'war in the network') rather than \**wojna sieciowa*, yet they use the polysemous adjective in the loan rendered *hotel sieciowy* (E. lit. 'chain hotel'), where it has a different sense.

Studies on English linguistic influence on Polish to date have been devoted chiefly to loanwords and the more recent ones to semantic loans and hybrid formations,<sup>2</sup> which has been dictated by the nature of the linguistic influence

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- 2 For studies on English loanwords in Polish see e.g. Koneczna (1936–37); Fisiak (see bibliography); Grabowska (1972); Cyran (1974); Rybicka (1976); Mańczak-Wohlfeld (see bibliography); Dunaj (1993); Sękowska (1993); Walczak (1997a); Otwinowska-Kasztelaniec (2000); Anisimowicz (2001); Witalisz (2013, 2014d); Zabawa (2004b, 2009, 2011a, 2012, 2013b, 2014b); for semantic loans from English see e.g. Kurkowska (1976); Faust (1982); Markowski (1992a, 2000, 2005); Witalisz (2004a,b, 2006b, 2007a,b,d); Zabawa (2004a, 2008a,b, 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2014a); for a discussion of hybrid creations with English combining forms see e.g. Przybylska (1995); Ochmann (2000, 2002, 2004); Wyrwas (2004); Waszakowa (2005); Rostowska (2009); for English loans used in specific discourse see e.g. McGovern (1992); Chłopicki – Świątek (2000); Zabawa

of English. Loanwords, involving morphemic and semantic importation, were the first observable traces of English in the Polish lexicon, found already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first English loanwords were culture-specific and their number in non-specialist Polish grew from eight items, attested in *Merkuriusz Polski Ordynaryjny* from 1661 (e.g. *lord major*, *mylord*, *par*, *spiker*), to approximately two thousand by 2010 (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2006: 18, 2010: 8). The first English semantic loans and loan translations, still scarce at that time, appeared in Polish in the 1960s (Kurkowska 1976; Ożdżyński 1970: 69). As late as 1993 a publication on the most recent loans from English qualifies loan translations as rare and only three examples are cited, *P. kobieta interesu* (< E. *businesswoman*), *P. lekarz domowy* (< E. *family doctor*) and *P. profesor wizytujący* (< E. *visiting professor*) (Sękowska 1993: 247). Their number began to grow quickly in Polish after the political changes in 1989. Poles both as individuals and as a community willingly adopted the Western cultural patterns. Polish as a language of people long hidden behind the Iron Curtain began to draw extensively from English, already a global *lingua franca*, to fill in lexical gaps created by the rapid political, economic, cultural and social changes that Poland and Poles have been experiencing since 1989. Unlimited access to the Internet since the late 1990s and early 2000s marked a steady growth of all types of loans from English and irreversibly altered the face of the Polish lexical, semantic and derivational systems.

Loanwords, defined as lexemes borrowed from a foreign language with their form and meaning, constitute just one of the possible outcomes of linguistic borrowing. It is “covert borrowing [that] is so much more important than the more obvious loanwords” (Haugen 1956: 766). Semantic loans and loan translations, which make use of the native lexical stock of the recipient language, have been creeping into Polish almost imperceptibly. There is much less opposition among average language users to the new senses attached to familiar lexemes or to novel word combinations built of native linguistic material than to formally foreign loanwords whose pronunciation, graphic form and meaning betray their foreign provenance and pose a problem for a person not acquainted with English. Velten’s (1930: 332) early observation that large numbers of loan translations and semantic loans “that cannot be recognized at first sight are entirely overlooked” might still hold true. In his study, Velten maintains that intense language contact may cause covert loans to outnumber loanwords.

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(2004b, 2009, 2011a,b); for English loanwords in a single semantic field see e.g. Fisiak (1964); Ożdżyński (1970); Mańczak-Wohlfeld (1992); Cudak – Tambor (1995); Górnica (2000); Bartłomiejczyk (2006).

It has traditionally been assumed in the literature and proved by the history of foreign linguistic influence on Polish before 1989 that loan translations are much less frequent than loanwords because language users choose loan translating as a method of borrowing from a foreign lexical system only when the foreign linguistic influence is not welcome for political reasons, cf. the influx of German loan translations in Polish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Walczak 1987). An analysis of the contact-induced lexical changes Polish has been experiencing in the last two decades indicates that this condition does no longer hold. Translating foreign set expressions has become yet another effective means of rendering foreign concepts in Polish, the reasons for which will be discussed in this volume.

The term ‘borrowing’, often used ambiguously in studies on language contact, will be employed in the present study to refer to a process, not to the result of the process. The results of the process of borrowing will be labelled generally as loans unless a more specific reference is made to their various types, such as loanwords, loan translations, semantic loans, etc. It must be pointed out that the hyperonymic term borrowing, or loan, referring generally to any language element of foreign origin, has been used freely in the literature. That is, no definite specifications have been offered concerning the frequency with which or the period of time over which a foreign language element has to be used in the recipient language to be considered a loan. Polish studies on English loans represent divergent approaches to this issue. On the one hand, Elżbieta Mańczak-Wohlfeld in her early studies on anglicisms (see References) represents the more conservative but safer approach and defines loanwords from English as those foreign lexical items that are attested in general dictionaries of Polish. Their inclusion in a dictionary proves their high frequency in the recipient language.<sup>3</sup> At the other end of the scale comes the recent research on anglicisms found in the language of the Internet, where single occurrences of English lexemes in Polish private blogs are counted as loans (cf. Zabawa 2010: 208). Precision calls for a distinction to be made between what might be termed a nonce borrowing and an established loan. In the latter case, the foreign element’s inclusion in a dictionary serves as a criterion for its recognition as a loan. However, the pace at which English lexical items are borrowed by Polish exceeds the frequency with which new editions of lexicographic works are published. Therefore dictionary reference cannot be the only criterion for defining the status of loans, many of which are characterized by

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3 The latest dictionary of anglicisms by Mańczak-Wohlfeld (2010, SZA) lists also these English lexemes that are used in the Polish mass media but have not been attested in general dictionaries of Polish.

a high frequency of use in the Polish National Corpus but are unattested in dictionaries. Since the phrase 'high frequency' is relative and since it seems impossible to define the number of necessary occurrences of a foreign language element in the recipient language for it to be considered a loan, it is reasonable to combine the two approaches and regard a single occurrence of a loan translation in the Polish National Corpus as sufficient attestation. Through such a decision we risk registering in the present study those loan translated expressions that may in the course of time prove ephemeral or become obsolete. What we gain, however, is a record of their existence at a certain point in time, which should be one of the objectives of lexicographic works. The main aim of the study is to provide as comprehensive an account of English loan translations in Polish as possible and to discuss the processes that accompany the formation of loan translations in the recipient language. Following the principles of corpus linguistics saying that reliable language analysis should involve field-collected samples, i.e. natural contexts, the corpus used in this paper comprises a variety of authentic texts. Registering material recorded in actual language production rather than relying solely on dictionaries allows us to capture the continual contact-induced lexical, semantic and derivational changes, typical of a living language. Therefore the research material used in this study is limited neither by the number of occurrences of loan translations in the corpus nor to the sources of material excerption. Professional jargons, though, will not be included (with the exception of commonly understood computer and economic terms).

The material used in the present study has been excerpted mainly from the Polish mass media, as well as from lexicographic works including general dictionaries of Polish and scholarly works on the subject. The authentic contexts of use that exemplify the use of loan translations come from written and spoken texts found in the Polish National Corpus (NKJP). In 1974, L. P. Jefremov believed that a dictionary of loan translations is something we can only dream of (Jefremov 1974 qtd. in Obara 1989a: 5). It may, of course, be impossible to compile a comprehensive dictionary of loan translated expressions (in any language), including those sourced in various languages and borrowed in various periods of time as well as loan translations representing all semantic fields, professional jargons and different registers. That is the reason why no claims are made that the material gathered in this study is complete. But an attempt will be made to accumulate enough instances of English loan translations for them to constitute a representative sample of the phenomenon, which will allow for their further classification and formulation of valid conclusions.

English loan translations in Polish appear not only in the course of a translator's work, but are brought to life by journalists, professionals, students and

average language users who are bilingual enough to introduce translations of English set expressions. Unlike in early works on language contact (cf. e.g. Bloomfield 1933: 461; Haugen 1950: 210; Weinreich 1953: 39), the bilingual context is not understood in the present work as the physical coexistence of two speech communities speaking two different languages, but as a situation in which the donor language is a foreign language to the recipient language users whose competence of the foreign tongue varies. English-Polish language contact occurs between languages that are not in immediate physical contact so English loans in Polish do not emerge as a result of a simultaneous use of two languages by a community that forms a political and geographic unity.

Interlingual loans result from cultural contacts, exchange of thoughts, “migration of [...] the arts and crafts and their names” (Velten 1930: 332), from the wish to describe the cultural patterns and experiences of other communities, and from the need to present the conquests of science and technology. The appearance of loan translated expressions, and loans in general, in the recipient language is just a reflection or the final stage of this intercultural communication. Therefore, my interests are both linguistic and cultural. Since language changes are “linguistic results of cultural events” (Velten 1930: 333) and are inseparable from the life and history of a community, it is necessary to emphasize the role of the socio-cultural context in the creation of loan translations. The lexical stock of a language and phraseological units in particular are a reflection of the cultural background of a speech community. One cannot discuss linguistic borrowing without addressing cultural influences, which in the case of English loans in Polish are so much in evidence. Also, the fact that every culture has its key concepts and every language has its key words proves useful for purposes of loan identification where this is frequently a decisive factor.

The present study analyzes English loan translations that appear in Standard Polish spoken in Poland and are used by the Polish mass media published and broadcast in Poland. The phenomenon of loan translating is also known to other varieties of Polish, spoken by Polish diasporas in English-speaking countries, e.g. by the Polish community in Chicago whose language has been referred to as American Polish (*P. amerykańskopolski*) (e.g. Dubisz – Sękowska 1990: 220) or by the recent immigrants to the United Kingdom who are said to speak Ponglish (Błasiak 2011: 84).<sup>4</sup> These varieties of Polish, however, are not investigated in the present account of loan translations.

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4 For a full bibliography of studies on English loans in the varieties of Polish spoken outside of Poland see Sękowska (1992) and Witalisz (2013).



What follows is a corpus-based descriptive and theoretical study of the Polish translations of English one- and multi-word polymorphemic expressions. The term 'loan translation' will be used to refer to both loan translations proper (exact loan translations) and loan renditions (inexact/approximate loan translations) despite the existence of hyperonymic terms, 'loan formation' and 'loan coinage', that embrace both categories. This terminological choice is motivated by a number of reasons. Firstly, the term loan translation has been much more frequently used in the literature. As will be pointed to in Chapter 2, it has been used in studies on language contact to refer to a wide variety of translated expressions including one- and multi-word lexemes, both idiomatic and non-idiomatic. Secondly, loan formation, as introduced by Betz (1949: 27–28, *G. Lehnbildung*) is a category reserved for one-word loan translations as opposed to *Lehnwendung* ('loan expression' or 'loan idiom'), which is used for multi-word loan translations. Also, in the present understanding of the term, loan translation excludes a special category of contact-induced substitution, namely loan creation (*G. Lehn schöpfung*), which is a hyponym of loan formation in Betz's typology (1949: 28). Loan coinage (*G. Lehnprägung*), on the other hand, is far too general a term for our discussion as it is hyperonymic to all types of substitutions and to loan creations in Betz's (1949: 28) and Duckworth's (1977: 40) classifications of loans, respectively. Since the term loan translation is often used interchangeably with the term 'calque', Chapter 2 offers, besides an overview of the research on loans, a discussion of the various types of calques and places loan translations within this broad category. It is interesting to note, as will be pointed out in Chapter 2, the different treatment of calques in relation to loans by Eastern and Western scholars doing research in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which incidentally coincided with the iron-curtain division of Europe. Rather than offer yet another classification of loans, the present work focuses on loan translations, i.e. structural calques, and aims at proposing several subcategories of this divergent group, partially with the use of the theoretical assumptions proposed by other scholars and partly in accordance with the nature of the research material, which to a large degree determines the shape of a more detailed classification of the English loan translations found in Polish. Chapter 2 presents also two sets of identification criteria that may be used to distinguish between contact-induced set expressions and independently-coined formations, and to decide on the English provenance of loan translations. Both linguistic and extralinguistic factors are discussed.

Chapter 3 opens with a diachronic account of the history of loan translations in Polish to show that the structural calques from English are a relatively new phenomenon. The subsequent sections of Chapter 3 offer a formal description and

classification of English loan translations in Polish. The background that is necessary for such an analysis includes a description of the sources of material and of the principles of its division. In prior studies on calques, the major classifications have been designed on the basis of the findings in the French, German, and English research material. Polish represents yet another language group, which may entail the necessity to introduce some other categories of loan translated expressions that may have appeared as a result of the structural differences between English and Polish.

The semantic processes that are part of the loan translating process and that may occur in the post-borrowing phase are addressed in Chapter 4. The notion of lexicalization, regardless of its various understandings in the literature, is well applicable to loan translations at various levels of their development. Since the majority of loan translated expressions are characterized by various degrees of non-compositionality, special attention is paid to the notion of semantic lexicalization in reference to loan translations. It is interesting to note that at the post-borrowing stage, loan translated expressions may undergo semantic development which may be contact-induced or independent of the foreign influence. Both types of semantic extension will be defined and exemplified with loan translations used in authentic contexts. Chapter 4 offers also a discussion of the process of ellipsis in loan translations, which results in a special type of loan for which the term 'bound semantic loan' will be proposed. It has been observed that the reappearance of the same lexical item in a number of loan translated expressions brings about a change in its collocability in the recipient language. Several instances of such collocational changes are shown towards the end of Chapter 4. Finally, we will put forward some quantitative conclusions concerning the semantic fields in which loan translations appear most often.

Loan translations will also be examined from the sociolinguistic perspective. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of the perception of loan translations in the recipient language. The process of the institutionalization of loan translations is discussed against the factors which facilitate and inhibit the integration of calqued expressions in the speech of the recipient language users. Research material excerpted has shown that multi-word loan translated expressions undergo various types of lexical adaptation in the recipient language, ranging from lexical substitution to idiomatic allusion and disintegration. All these types of lexical adaptation of loan translated expressions are discussed and illustrated with authentic contexts. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with placing loan translations within a broader category of internationalisms and with pointing to the Anglo-American cultural patterns that are adopted by speakers of Polish and reflected in culture-specific loan translations.