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WHAT ARE PSEUDO-ANGLICISMS AND HOW CAN WE DEFINE THEM? **

Abstract

Although it is a well-known fact that many languages borrow words and phrases from English, there are also many words coined from English elements that do not exist in varieties of English used by native speakers. These words are described as anglicisms in a broader sense, but since they are created by speakers of other languages, contain English elements, but do not appear in English, they are often referred to as pseudo-anglicisms. Pseudo-anglicisms differ across languages in terms of how they are formed and how they are defined by local linguists. It is possible to say that pseudo-anglicisms are often compounds, but according to various linguists, some languages also use derivation, semantic shift, or other processes to create them. In this paper, we will analyze different types of words described as pseudo-anglicisms in several European languages and attempt to provide a comprehensive definition based on their common features.

Key words: anglicisms, pseudo-anglicisms, borrowing, languages in contact

English is often referred to as a global language due to its influence and widespread use around the world. Its impact is evident in many languages,

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** This paper was originally presented at the *English Language & Literature Studies: Modern Perspectives and Beyond* conference, which took place on October 20-21, 2023, at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade.

which makes it a major donor language. Words or phrases borrowed from English are usually called anglicisms. Although some authors include calques from English under this term, for the purposes of this paper, we will adhere to the definition which is limited to English or English-based words and phrases.

This paper will focus on a particular group of anglicisms – pseudo-anglicisms, also known as false anglicisms. These words or phrases consist of English elements, but do not exist in varieties of English used by native speakers. However, this definition is meant to introduce this concept, it is not definitive, and it is important to emphasize that many authors offer different definitions of pseudo-anglicisms.

Pseudo-anglicisms are coined by speakers of other languages whose proficiency in English is often limited, but still sufficient to create a new word from English elements (Furiassi 2010: 60-61) because English holds a prestigious status in their communities.

We can start by providing a simple but often cited definition of pseudo-anglicisms in German, which are described as German neologisms composed of English elements (Duckworth 1977: 54). Another definition of the same concept in German linguistics states that pseudoanglicism “describes the phenomenon that occurs when RL [receptor language] uses lexical elements of the SL [source language] to create a neologism in the RL that is unknown in the SL” (Onysko 2007: 52).

In the case of Russian, where pseudo-anglicisms are also used, we can cite a definition provided by Dyakov: “Pseudo-anglicisms are understood as: a) units borrowed from the English language by another language that have a different meaning than in the source language and are used in contexts and situations in which they are never used in English; b) Russian word formations created by using a combination of English morphemes or imitating the English word’s form or its phonetic appearance¹” (Дьяков 2012: 115).

When describing pseudo-anglicisms in Serbo-Croatian, Filipović (1986: 193), defines them as “words or expressions composed of elements of English origin, (i.e., anglicisms), but the whole they form is not taken from English because it does not exist in it”. The author concludes that they are formed in only three ways, which include composition, derivation, and ellipsis (Filipović 1986: 194). In the case of the same language, Prčić (2023: 208) states that pseudo-anglicisms are “English words and affixes combined in some other or third language”.

According to Furiassi (2010: 34), who focused on pseudo-anglicisms in Italian, “a false Anglicism may be defined as a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language even though it does not exist or is used with a conspicuously different meaning in English“. Furiassi (2010: 38-39) went on to divide Italian pseudo-anglicisms into eight categories based on the processes of their formation: autonomous compounds (*recordman* = record holder), autonomous derivatives (*footing* = jogging), compound ellipses (*basket* = basketball), clippings (*happy end* = happy ending), semantic shifts (*mister* = trainer or coach in sports), eponyms (*pullman* = bus), toponyms (*new jersey* [sic!] = type of median barrier which separates lanes in highways) and generic trademarks (*Autogrill* = motorway restaurant).

Furiassi’s categorization seems to have become widely accepted among linguists interested in pseudo-anglicisms, but it cannot be applied to other languages without adaptation. In the case of Serbo-Croatian, an attempt to adapt this categorization was made just four years after the publication of Furiassi’s book. These categories are slightly different from Furiassi’s, and were developed by Savić (2014), but some of them were not substantiated with examples. Savić (2014: 472) introduces thirteen categories: autonomous compounds (*golman* = goalkeeper), autonomous derivatives (*fejslifting* = facelift), compound ellipses (*koktel* = cocktail party), clippings (*hepiend* = happy ending), toponyms (*teksas* = denim), eponyms (*martinke* = Dr Martens boots), generic trademarks (*starke* = Converse All Stars sneakers), autonomous compounds with Serbian suffixes (*striptizeta* = stripper), autonomous derivatives with Serbian endings (*barbika* = Barbie doll), clippings with Serbian endings (*bokserice* = boxer shorts), clippings with a Serbian translation (*info tačka* = info point), blends (*youniverse*; the author does not provide the meaning of this word in Serbian), and incorrectly spelled anglicisms that are consistently used in that incorrect form (examples in the cited paper are not clear).

In the case of Russian, Szabolcs (2018: 59) offers six categories: compounds (*бизнес-леди* = businesswoman), derivatives (*автостоп* = hitchhiking), ellipses (*паркинг* = parking lot), clippings (*хеппи-энд* = happy ending), semantic shifts (*олдтаймер* = classic or vintage car), and trademarks (*скотч* = adhesive tape).

German pseudo-anglicisms, i.e. words defined as such by the cited authors, can also be described in terms of Furiassi’s categories, and we

will present a model offered by Knospe (2015), which was published in a volume edited by Furiassi himself. In line with other German linguists, Knospe divides pseudo-anglicisms into three categories – morphological, semantic and lexical, which are in turn described using an adapted version originally developed by Furiassi (2010). Morphological pseudo-anglicisms comprise compound ellipses (*Basecap* = baseball cap) and clippings (*Happy End* = happy ending), but it is important to mention that the former category is rare in German (Knospe 2015: 109). Apart from that, there are some other pseudo-anglicisms which cannot be described using the original version of Furiassi's categorization, such as *Profi* (which refers to a professional and is a clipping with the diminutive suffix *-i*), or *Pulli* (= pullover), while *Smoking* (= tuxedo), which involves compound ellipsis and a semantic modification (Knospe 2015: 110).

Semantic pseudo-anglicisms are described rather vaguely in terms of Furiassi's categories. Although examples include words such as *Handy* (= cell phone), *Oldtimer* (= classic car), *kicken* (= to play association football) and the like, the reason for not using Furiassi's categories is in the fact that some examples from the German corpus are not transparent in terms of etymology (Knospe 2015: 113).

Lexical pseudo-anglicisms include autonomous compounds (*Dressman* = male model) and autonomous derivatives (*Shooting* = photo shoot) (Knospe 2015: 114-115).

Even after a brief examination of words described as pseudo-anglicisms in several languages, it is possible to notice that they do not share the same morphological, lexical, or semantic features. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to devise a set of categories that would include all of them and could be universally applied.

Let us now analyze some of the cited definitions of pseudo-anglicisms more closely to see how they are perceived among linguists.

Duckworth's view that pseudo-anglicisms in German are neologisms composed of English elements (Duckworth 1977: 54) is correct in the sense that they include English elements coined by German speakers (or speakers of any other language if the definition is taken universally), but focusing on neologisms narrows down the concept of pseudo-anglicisms and does not describe their real nature. A neologism is a new lexeme which has not gained wide acceptance, and describing pseudo-anglicisms as neologisms does not reflect the fact that many pseudo-anglicisms have become widely

accepted and fully integrated into many languages, e.g. *Talkmaster*, which refers to a talk show host in German.

Onysko's definition reiterates that pseudo-anglicisms are neologisms and adds they are unknown to speakers of the source language, although they consist of its elements (Onysko 2007: 52). Although this author provides a better definition, it seems that their "newness" is still perceived as a distinctive feature. We can agree that pseudo-anglicisms are neologisms when they appear for the first time, but it is not necessary to emphasize this fact since every new word in any language is a neologism by definition, while its status can evolve over time.

The meaning of pseudo-anglicisms is also of importance. In some the definitions provided in the preceding sections, their meaning is described as different from the meaning in the source language (Дьяков 2012: 115; Furiassi 2010: 34), although many linguists, including those whose works are not cited, generally agree about that. To be more precise, Furiassi's definition of pseudo-anglicisms includes a "*conspicuously* different meaning" [italics added by N.T.], which indicates that a change in meaning does not always mean that a word is necessarily a pseudoanglicism. Even typical anglicisms that can be found in many languages, like *football*, *link* or *sport* usually retain just one sememe, while some anglicisms can even acquire additional meanings. For example, the Serbian anglicism *kauboj* can denote both a cowboy and a rough man whose manners are bad. In line with the previous definitions, we might hastily conclude that *kauboj* is both an anglicism and pseudoanglicism, which is not the case because this word acquired a new meaning which can easily be associated with the cowboy stereotype. There are no Serbian linguists who wrote about pseudo-anglicisms in Serbian and consider *kauboj* to be a pseudoanglicism.

Although semantic shifts are common, it would be useful to mention some pseudo-anglicisms and show how (in)significant these shifts can be. On the one hand, pseudo-anglicisms like *oldtimer* (= classic car in several languages), *dres* (Polish: tracsuit; Serbian: sports uniform) or *camping* (= campsite in several languages) retain an association with their original meanings in English. On the other hand, the Italian *mister* (= sports coach) is an example of semantic shift which is difficult to explain. Somewhere in between these two examples is the German word *Handy*, which refers to a cell phone, while the association can only be assumed; Knospe (2015: 114) mentions *handy* (adjective), *hand-held phone* or *portable handset* as potential sources. According to Gottlieb and Furiassi (2015: 18), "there

is no such thing as interlingual synonymy; having settled in a different lexicological context, with differing semantic distinctions and overlaps, no imported word is able to carry its foreign semantic field and network with it into a new language". Although the authors do not admit that this statement undermines their understanding of pseudo-anglicisms, it can still be said that semantic changes in the meaning of a word do not necessarily make that word a pseudoanglicism. Regardless of certain examples whose meaning is not easily associated with the English model, such as *mister* (= coach; Italian) or *new jersey* (= median barrier; Italian), most words that are described as pseudoanglicisms have more or less clear origins and their meaning can often be understood or at least inferred.

Apart from the semantic shifts of the forms which already exist in English, as is the case with those in the previous paragraph, there are two groups of pseudo-anglicisms which belong to Furiassi's categories termed compound clippings and ellipses, such as *parking* (= parking lot), *basket* (= basketball) or *happy end* (= happy ending), which are used in several languages. Although the English forms underwent morphological changes, it is possible to assume that some of these lexemes may also have undergone a semantic shift. If the creators of pseudo-anglicisms have at least some knowledge of English, as stated above, they may have decided to use *parking* as a lexeme with an extension of meaning. It is also possible to assume that *happy end* lost the *-ing* form because the creator was aware of its purpose in English and its redundancy in their language, but naturally, this is not an example of a semantic shift. We can also add that certain morphological processes, such as clipping, occur in English, such as *exam* (= examination) or *gator* (= *alligator*), but these words are still English. Thus, it would be possible to say that compound clippings and ellipses should not be termed pseudo-anglicisms.

Other categories of pseudo-anglicisms vary across languages, and the previously cited authors used Furiassi's categories in slightly modified versions which would suit the languages they describe. Since it is impossible to analyze each and every example or category, we will try to highlight the most interesting examples. Before doing that, it is important to emphasize that other categories are based on various morphological and derivational processes specific for each language and that it is not possible to apply them universally.

We can begin with eponyms like *pullman* (= bus; Italian), *martinke* (= Dr Martens boots; Serbian), toponyms, e.g. *new jersey* (= median

barrier; Italian) or *teksas* (= denim; Serbian) and generic trademarks such as *Autogrill* (= motorway restaurant; Italian), *starke* (= Converse All Stars sneakers; Serbian), *скотч* (= adhesive tape; Russian) or *džip* (= SUV, off-road vehicle; Serbian). It is obvious that *pullman*, *new jersey*, *teksas*, *Autogrill* and *jeep* simply underwent semantic change, while *martinke* and *starke* also underwent morphological adaptation. Except in the last two examples, all the other words have simply undergone semantic shift, while the categorization of *martinke* and *starke* should have been more precise since not all the changes were carefully noted.

There are some other examples that deserve our attention. Serbian pseudo-anglicisms, as described by Savić (2014: 472), include autonomous derivatives (*fejslifting* = facelift), autonomous compounds with Serbian suffixes (*striptizeta* = stripper), autonomous derivatives with Serbian endings (*barbika* = Barbie doll), clippings with Serbian endings (*bokserice* = boxer shorts), and clippings with a Serbian translation (*info tačka* = info point). The first one, *fejslifting*, includes an English morpheme (-ing), and it is a noun in Serbian, while *facelifting* can be used as a gerund in English, i.e. it can function as a noun in many cases, e.g. *reasons for facelifting*, *the art of facelifting* etc. The next example, *striptizeta*, actually consists of the word *striptiz* (= striptease) and *-eta*, which is a noun-forming suffix, although it is not very frequent in Serbian. While *info tačka* is simply a hybrid anglicism, *barbika* and *bokserice* are similar to *Pulli* (= pullover) and *Profi* (= professional), which are used in German. Since clipping has already been explained, we can just add that in these cases there are no significant semantic changes which would deserve any special attention. In *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms*, Görlach (2005) seems reluctant to classify certain words cited here, such as *parking* (= parking lot), *basket* (= basketball) or *camping* (= campsite), as pseudo-anglicisms. The author also describes certain words, like *Pulli* or *Profi*, as morphological adaptations.

Despite the arguments presented in the preceding paragraphs, we are not claiming that pseudo-anglicisms do not exist, but just that this term needs to be reexamined and refined. Pseudo-anglicisms can be identified in numerous languages, and the following examples will provide a clearer classification of such words.

To begin with, let us look at examples such as *recordman* (= record holder; Italian and French), *go(a)lman* (= goal keeper; several languages), *autostop* (= hitchhiking; several languages), *бизнес-леди*

(= businesswoman; Russian), *Basecap* (= baseball cap; German), *Talkmaster* (= talk show host; German) or *Dressman* (= male model; German). What these words have in common is obvious – they are compounds, there is no semantic shift, and they do not exist in standard English. They consist of two roots or of their replicas which are never combined in English, and which have never existed in English in the given combinations. The examples from the previous paragraphs included semantic shifts in the already existing English words, addition or deletion of morphemes and derivational processes, which also happen within one language. Creating new words from elements of a foreign language, which are never combined in that language is something different and can be described as “pseudo” or “false”. Even though all the words included in this paper (and those in the cited papers) are “unEnglish”, there is a difference in the degree of their “falsehood”, since words which are merely modified, morphologically or semantically, can only be described as adapted. Adaptation of already existing English units is one category, while creation of absolutely new words and new meanings from English elements is another. In other words, there is obviously a terminological issue when describing pseudo-anglicisms. It would therefore be useful to redefine the very terms (both pseudoanglicism and false anglicism) and to introduce a new term, and a category, which might contribute to solving this problem.

Even prominent authors who wrote about pseudo-anglicisms are aware of the problem with the terminology. Gottlieb and Furiassi (2015: 6) state that “ideally a neutral label like *English-based neologism* might replace the commonly used terms false Anglicism and pseudo-Anglicism, the latter of which has been preferred in most scholarly publications”, and even mention other terms, e.g. *creative coinage* or the aforementioned *English-based neologism*, although they admit they use the term *pseudoanglicism* for practical reasons. Apart from that, it is possible to notice that *creative coinage* is too broad, while *English-based neologism* would also be a problem since words which are fully accepted and become a frequently used integral part of another language are no longer neologisms.

We would therefore like to propose a different categorization and terminology. Words which have so far been known as pseudo-anglicisms can be divided into two categories: pseudo-anglicisms, and English-based coinages. In line with the cited definitions, pseudo-anglicisms could be described as words which consist of two English elements, two words or a word and an affix, which are created in a language other than English

by a non-native speaker, whose combination does not exist in any native English variety and does not involve semantic shift because the constituent parts retain their original meanings.

This definition is not very different from the previous ones, but it reduces the number of words that can be described as pseudo-anglicisms. Thus, words like *go(a)lman*, *recordman*, *Talkmaster*, *Dressman* or *footing* remain pseudo-anglicisms. At this point, it is useful to emphasize that the central component of our definition is the absence of semantic change in pseudo-anglicisms because the English elements keep the original meaning. A good example which illustrates this is the Italian word *footing*, which combines the English free morpheme *foot* and *-ing* to create a totally new meaning ('jogging'), and has nothing with the English noun *footing*, which refers to a basis, secure placement of the feet and other things that are in no way associated with jogging.

Other words described as pseudo-anglicisms in this paper are simply English-based coinages. English-based coinages include words like *martinke*, *striptizeta*, *Pulli*, *Profi*, or *bokserice*, which include an English root or base and non-English derivational endings, inflectional endings or affixes. They also include words like *boks meč* (= boxing match), *air-condition / erkondišn* (= air conditioning or air conditioner) (examples modified from Filipović 1986: 194) or *happy end*, where *-ing* was deleted. The common feature of these words is that they retain a strong association with the original meaning.

It is also possible to say that English-based coinages are just a subset of common anglicisms which undergo processes that typically occur when a foreign word is adapted. In some cases, the spelling remains the same, while in some it is adapted, which depends on the orthography of each language. While German generally retains the original spelling except for capitalizing the first letter of a noun, anglicisms and pseudo-anglicisms are always transcribed in Russian, sometimes in Serbian and Croatian, and not so often in Italian or French.

Although we have used a relatively small number of languages to illustrate pseudo-anglicisms as a phenomenon, it is still possible to say that the new perspective offered in this paper can be applied to Indo-European languages. Of course, this refers to the revised definition of pseudo-anglicisms, while Furiassi's categories of pseudo-anglicisms could be further adapted. In fact, these categories should be applied to English-based coinages as defined in this text. The adaptation of these categories

should be carefully developed for each language, since it is not always possible to find “pure” categories due to the fact that certain processes can happen concurrently.

Apart from the fact that each language is a unique system, which further exacerbates this problem, it is also important to note that languages are primarily described by their native speakers, who adhere to local linguistic traditions that are not always compatible with one another, which is why certain morphological and derivational processes are sometimes incongruent and cannot be applied universally.

In the end, it would be useful to provide a set of guidelines which would help us determine if a word is a pseudoanglicism and to mention potential flaws in the definition of pseudo-anglicisms we provided.

In order to categorize a word as a pseudoanglicism, the word must:

- not exist in any native variety of English;
- not undergo semantic shift;
- not be an affixed or clipped replica of an English model;
- be coined by a non-native speaker;
- be coined in a language that is not English, and
- consist of two words or of (at least) one word and one affix.

If all the criteria are met, then it is possible to categorize a word as pseudoanglicism. If not, the word is just an anglicism, or an English-based coinage.

The definition of pseudo-anglicisms provided in this paper can be applied generally, but it is difficult to develop a set of criteria that would better describe English-based coinages since national traditions describe morphological processes in different ways. For example, Furiassi (2010: 58) describes *autostop* as an autonomous compound in Italian, whereas the Russian counterpart *автомон* is defined as a derivative in Russian (Janurik 2018: 59).

Finally, it is not always easy to determine if a word is a pseudo-anglicism or an English-based coinage if it is impossible to determine its etymology. In some cases, such as the Italian *footing*, it is known that it comes from *foot*, and that *-ing* was simply added to make it sound English, while it has nothing to do with the English homonym. Without this information, it would be impossible to classify it as pseudoanglicism.

Regardless of the problems mentioned above, it is possible to say that the proposed solutions shed some light on the problems in terminology and classification of pseudo-anglicisms.

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Received: 26 October 2023

Accepted for publication: 10 November 2023