ENGLISH SEMANTIC LOANS IN ROMANIAN

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Abstract

When new things are imported from one culture into another, there are two main linguistic strategies the language of the borrowing culture can employ in order to name these things. One strategy is to borrow the foreign word together with the concept, according to the principle 'the word follows the thing'. This strategy leads to the appearance of loanwords. The other one is for the recipient language to use its own resources in order to designate new concepts, for example by borrowing only a foreign meaning and using it with a native word. This process is called semantic borrowing and its product is called a loanshift.

This paper analyses English loanshifts in present-day Romanian, by looking into aspects such as degree of relatedness between the imported and the native meanings, relation of the newly formed words to other words in the recipient language, and reasons for using semantic rather than lexical loans. The discussion is conducted along the lines set by Haugen (1953) in his classification of borrowings. Consequently, the concepts of loan homonyms and loan synonyms will be employed in order to structure the body of examples used in the analysis.

Most semantic loans from English double already existing words in Romanian, leading not only to synonymy in the language, but also to homonymy and therefore ambiguity in their interpretation. We believe that the reasons behind this kind of borrowing are the prestige of the donor language, and perhaps the high English proficiency of some speakers, which causes involuntary interference from this language. Other loanshifts seem to answer some denotative needs, as they fill gaps in the recipient language and are used to designate cultural novelties.

Key words: Meaning; Borrowing; Loanshift; Loan homonym; Loan synonym; Calque.

References


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