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Research article

## A Case Study in Slovak Translators' Training: English Loanwords


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**Abstract.** The topic of English loanwords is discussed in various fields like, e.g. in linguistics or translatology. Translators are responsible for choosing adequate words in their translations so they often decide for the forms which seem to be the most appropriate for the given context. Education of future translators is highly challenging and demanding as students need to get general knowledge and practice for their future work. This study deals with the use of English loanwords and their different forms in Slovak journalistic texts. It presents the views of Slovak linguists on foreign words coming into the Slovak language, and shows how English loanwords are perceived by students of translation studies (N = 39) and professional translators (N = 21). These specific groups of language users tend to use loanwords when looking for adequate solutions in the process of translation, regarding different aspects of translation. Students and translators tend to use assimilated forms of English loanwords instead of their original forms and when considering the appropriate form of a loanword, they primarily take into account the reader and the comprehensibility of the text. The research findings show there is not a universal insight into the topic in the groups of students and translators so education in this area is inevitable.

**Key words:** translators' training, education, mother tongue, English loanwords, Slovak language

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### Introduction

It seems that adopting foreign words is a natural phenomenon in every language. Within current globalization and internationalization tendencies, the emphasis is put not only on linguistic, but also on philosophical, ideological and cultural aspects (Mooij, Hofstede, 2010).

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In contemporary Slovak, loanwords are most often adopted from English. The reasons are numerous, e.g. direct and indirect contact between languages, English recognized as a global media language; the prominence of English among the most taught foreign languages worldwide, its use as a second communication language in addition to the mother tongue, or as a supplementary language (Dudok, 2012). English has become a global language (so-called lingua franca) which affects other languages in Europe as well as around the world (Gorlach, 2004; Khonamri et al., 2020, Telezhko et al., 2019).

The issue of adopting English loanwords into Slovak has already been described and explained from various aspects by many Slovak linguists (Dolnik, 2010, 2011; Horecky, 1989, 1994; Kacala, 1997; Kralcak, 2009; Lancaric, 2008; Olostiak et al., 2006; Oravcova, 1995; Ondrejovic, 1999, 2008; Orgonova, Bakosova, 2005; Orgonova, Sedlackova, 2010a, 2010b; Simkova, 1994; Stulajterova, 2005; Jesenska, 2007). J. Dolnik argues that foreign words enrich the lexicon of the Slovak language on various levels, and there are different attitudes towards this phenomenon – from extreme purism to absolute tolerance. He states that language development on an international scale, and a recent manifestation of linguistic internationalization represents a small step towards a convergence of language communities (Dolnik, 2010). On the other hand, the expansion of English loanwords raises the question of how this process may affect national languages. L. Kralcak understands the adopting of foreign words as the tension between constant and receding or progressive elements (Kralcak, 2009). L. Kralcak claims that language – as a system of elements – reflects external and internal factors, and it is connected with the culture of particular community (Kralcak, 2009). Thus it is perceived as a dynamic and adaptable phenomenon.

Many linguists have studied the influence of English on other languages and they have described the process of adapting words from English as “language borrowing”. The foreign lexical elements are often called “borrowings”, “borrowed words”, “loan words” or “anglicisms”. S.T. Jaafar, D. Buragohain, H.A. Haroon provide explanations and classifications of borrowings or loanwords in linguistic context according to the source and target language (Jaafar et al., 2019). D. Crystal notes that the terms “borrowings”, “loan words”, “loan blends” and “loan shifts” are rather misnamed, as words are not “given back” in a reciprocal sense (Crystal, 1992). For the purpose of this paper, the term “loanwords” is used to refer to all lexical items adopted from English into Slovak, from the original, not-assimilated to fully-assimilated forms.

According to G. Entlova and E. Mala, incorporating these words (called Anglicisms or English borrowings in their study) is one of the most productive ways of any modern language vocabulary enrichment (Entlova, Mala 2020). It is also an important necessity for Slavic languages to enlarge their lexicons as this process requires denotation of the actual and constantly changing reality. They further state that Anglicisms are considered beneficial from both the perspective of enriching the vocabularies of the Czech and Slovak languages and the perspective of easier international communication among the language users.

A. Bohmerova argues that although the number of English loanwords is relatively low and their pragmatic functions rather limited, their influence and function in certain spheres of communication is significant (especially in slang, com-

mon spoken language, media and advertising, show business, or electronic communication) (Bohmerova, 2012). However, they can be found in the sociolect of young people who usually bring dynamic innovative tendencies into languages. Moreover, in the language learning process, an individual does not only process the language structure, but also recognizes the language culture and creates a relation to language and culture (Stranovska et al., 2013).

### Methodology

**Research materials.** For our research, we used English loanwords from Slovak daily newspapers (HN, Pravda, and Sme). We excerpted 500 lexical units according to the frequency of occurrence. Subsequently, we selected the 45 most frequent units and divided them into two groups according to the typology of English loanwords.

Inspired by the works of Z. Kumorova and P. Jesenska, we referred to the loanwords as the following (Kumorova, 2015; Jesenska, 2007):

- original written form – the loanwords with their original orthographic or orthoepic form (e.g. catering; coach);
- assimilated form – the loanwords which have been assimilated by the Slovak language (their form has been adapted and codified, e.g. katering; kouč);
- Slovak equivalents – adequate equivalents of the loanwords (e.g. poskytnutie hotových jedál; tréner)

**Research technique.** We placed the selected items with the original sentences in a questionnaire and designed other forms of loanwords (to make multiple-choice) using dictionaries and codification manuals (see examples in the questionnaire below).

After completing the questionnaire, we distributed it to the research participants. They were asked to choose an adequate form of the English loanword in the given context with regard to the type of text, reader and comprehensibility of the text (Azizi, Kralik, 2020)

In the first part of the questionnaire, the research participants had to choose from four options – original written form, assimilated form, Slovak equivalent, or they could suggest their own solution.

*Example 1.* S novou technológiou meníme ... kávy.

- image
- imidž
- celkový vzhľad
- .....

In the second part of the questionnaire, they had to choose from three options – original written form, Slovak equivalent, or their own suggestion. In this part, we tested the use of English loanwords which have not been fully adapted or codified in the Slovak language.

*Example 2.* Militanti novinárku zabili a potom jej ... profil používali ako pascu na priateľov.

- facebookový
- fejsbukový
- .....

**Research participants.** Based on the study of English loanwords entering the Slovak language, we analysed the tendencies of their use in contemporary journalistic texts. The research was conducted at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. It was carried out on two groups of language users: (1) students of translation studies (semi-professionals) with basic translation skills (they practice translation at translation seminars), profound knowledge of linguistics (both in the foreign language and in Slovak), and theoretical knowledge of translation methods; (2) professional translators with sufficient experience and adequate education.

The research was attended by 39 second-year MA students of Translation Studies and 21 professional translators.

The participating students studied the following language combinations: 13 students – English and Slovak (study programme marked TAS), 8 students – English and German (TAN), 9 students – English and Russian (TAR), 5 students – English and French (TAF), 1 student – Russian and Slovak (TRS), and 3 students – German and Slovak language (TNS). For the purpose of our research, we divided the students into two groups: students of English and another foreign language (English-German, English-Russian, and English-French), and students of Slovak and a foreign language (Slovak-English, Slovak-Russian, and Slovak-German).

Professional translators had different education: there were 13 MA Translation Studies graduates, 5 MA Teacher Education Programmes graduates, and 3 graduates of other education. Out of total 21, 15 professional translators had studied English and 6 other types of education.

**Research assumptions.** We assumed that the research participants would choose the forms of English loanwords according to the level of their professional experience (students vs. professional translators), the type of their education (translation studies vs. other study programmes), and the level of their English knowledge. We expected a correlation between the type of education and the level of English knowledge: students and translators who study (or had studied) English would prefer different forms of English loanwords than those who do not study (or have never studied) English.

Assumption 1: Students of English and another foreign language will prefer the original written form of English loanwords to the Slovak equivalent or their own suggested form.

Assumption 2: Students of English and another foreign language will prefer the original written form.

Assumption 3: Translators who had studied English will prefer the original written form of English loanwords to the Slovak equivalent or their own suggested form.

Assumption 4: Translators who had studied English will prefer the original written form.

## Results

To check Assumption 1 we compared the results of two groups of students using the first part of the questionnaire. See the results in Table 1.

After processing the data, we found out that the first group of students chose the assimilated forms of loanwords in 43% of cases, the Slovak equivalents in

33%, the original written forms in 24%, and they suggested their own forms in 1%. Similar results can be observed in the second group of students: the most frequent option was the assimilated form (47%), then the Slovak equivalent (32%), the original written form (19%), and own suggestion (1%).

In both groups, students chose assimilated forms of English loanwords most frequently.

Table 1

**Students' choice of English loanwords in the first part of the questionnaire**

Students	Relative frequency of English loanword form selection in the first part of the questionnaire (4 options)			
	Original written form	Assimilated form	Slovak equivalent	Own suggestion
1st group (TAN, TAR, TAF)	24%	43%	33%	1%
2nd group (TAS, TRS, TNS)	19%	47%	32%	1%

Assumption 1 was rejected as the students of English did not have the tendency to choose the original written forms of English loanwords.

To test Assumption 2, we used the second part of the questionnaire to compare the outcomes of two groups of students. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2

**Students' choice of English loanwords in the second part of the questionnaire**

Students	Relative frequency of English loanword form selection in the second part of the questionnaire (3 options)		
	Original written form	Slovak equivalent or translation by description	Own suggestion
1st group (TAN, TAR, TAF)	64%	35%	1%
2nd group (TAS, TRS, TNS)	63%	35%	2%

The results show that when choosing an adequate form of an English loanword, both groups preferred the original written form. In the first group, it was an overwhelming 64%, then followed by Slovak equivalents (35%) and own suggestions (1%). Comparable results were observed in the second group of students: the original written form represented 63%, Slovak equivalent or description 35% (the same result as in the first group), and own suggestion 2% of all options of loanword forms.

Assumption 2 has been confirmed because students of English tended to choose the original written forms. The same tendency was observed in the group of Slovak language students.

To put Assumption 3 to the test, we compared the results of two groups of students using the first section of the questionnaire. The results may be seen in Table 3.

A comparison of relative frequencies shows that the most frequent translators' choice was the assimilated form of English loanwords. In the first group of translators (with MA degrees in English), the assimilated form scored 51%, the Slovak equivalents 25%, the original written forms 20%, and own suggestions 3%.

Table 3

**Translators' choice of English loanwords in the first part of the questionnaire**

Translators	Relative frequency of English loanword form selection in the first part of the questionnaire (4 options)			
	Original written form	Assimilated form	Slovak equivalent	Own suggestion
1st group (MA degree in English)	20%	51%	25%	3%
2nd group (MA degree in other fields of study)	12%	61%	21%	6%

In the second group of translators (MA degrees in a field of study other than English), the most frequent choice was the assimilated form of English loanwords (61%), followed by the Slovak equivalents (21%), the original written forms (12%), and own suggested forms (6%). The most significant difference between the choice of the first and the second group can be seen in the category of the original written form (20% in the first group and 12% in the second group).

Assumption 3 was rejected since the translators with MA degrees in English did not tend to choose the original written forms of English loanwords.

We used the second section of the questionnaire to compare the findings of two groups of students to test Assumption 4. Table 4 summarizes the findings.

Table 4

**Translators' choice of English loanwords in the second part of the questionnaire**

Translators	Relative frequency of English loanword form selection in the second part of the questionnaire (3 options)		
	Original written form	Slovak equivalent or translation by description	Own suggestion
1st group (MA degree in English)	66%	30%	4%
2nd group (MA degree in other fields of study)	69%	23%	8%

As the results show (Table 4), in the second part of the questionnaire, translators in both groups preferred the written forms of English loanwords to the Slovak equivalents and their own suggestions. The first group of translators most often opted for the original written forms of English loanwords (66%), then the Slovak equivalents (30%) and finally their own forms (4%). Similar results can also be seen in the second group of translators: original written forms (69%), Slovak equivalents (23%) and own suggestions (8%).

Assumption 4 was confirmed since the translators with an MA degree in English tended to choose the original written forms of English loanwords rather than their Slovak equivalents.

**Discussion**

We suggested that studying English would influence students' decisions so that they would prefer the original written forms of English loanwords to other forms (this form would be more natural for them). The analysis of the data showed (Table 1) that in the first part of the questionnaire both student groups

preferred assimilated forms of English loanwords, no matter what foreign language they studied. The research showed that the type of study and good knowledge of English did not influence the students' choice. The assignment probably played an important role: the students were asked to choose an adequate form for a journalistic text, regarding the Slovak reader. Another fact is that students get acquainted with the rules of Slovak grammar and codification at their linguistic and translation seminars. They could easily recognize adequate forms for the given context. Finally, their decisions were probably influenced by a high frequency of assimilated English loanwords used in current journalistic texts. Assimilated forms of English loanwords perhaps represent a kind of compromise between the original form and the Slovak equivalent.

It seems that less-adapted English loanwords do not have a firmly-established form in Slovak, nevertheless, they are quite often used in the Slovak language in their spoken forms. A higher preference for the original forms of English loanwords in this part of the questionnaire was partially caused by the choice of English students, but this preference can surprisingly also be seen by the students of the Slovak language. In this case, the main reason was probably an economizing aspect. We believe that the Slovak equivalent or description would make the text more comprehensible, in some cases it could be considered too long or vague, e.g. think-tank (Slovak equivalent given by description: “skupina odborníkov zameraná na súčasné problémy politiky, ekonomiky, zahraničných vzťahov a podobne”, English definition: “a group of experts brought together, usually by a government, to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action”, see Cambridge Online Dictionary<sup>1</sup>).

Analysing the data, we found that in the first part of the questionnaire both groups of translators preferred assimilated forms of English loanwords. We assume that the tendency to choose this option in such a great extent (compared to student results in the same category 43 and 47%) was influenced by the experience of translators. Their decisions are formed and influenced by readers who are, to a certain degree, evaluators of translations. An experienced translator has the ability to choose more or less adequate words for translations, considering different aspects of translation process. We think that the translators' tendency to prefer the assimilated form of English loanwords to the other forms was influenced by their own experience and they aimed to choose the most suitable form for the reader.

In the group of translators, we expected similar results as in the group of students. The comparison of relative frequencies of English loanword form observed in the second part of the questionnaire confirmed our expectations. Though, it is interesting that the original written form was frequently chosen by the group of translators who had not studied English.

The second part of the questionnaire contains English loanwords which have not yet been adapted (or codified) in the Slovak language. We suppose that an economizing aspect played the most significant role in the translators' decision making (translators wanted to express the meaning more effectively).

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

## Conclusion

The use of foreign words in language still seems to be a popular and inspiring topic. Linguists differ in their opinions on the issue of English loanwords in contemporary Slovak since there are various aspects that can be taken into account: necessity, function, fashion, economizing aspect, or absence of an adequate lexeme. Nowadays, a huge number of loanwords enter the Slovak language through mass media, and translators are discussing ways how to deal with them in the process of translation.

In our research, we aimed at exploring the tendencies of using English loanwords in Slovak journalistic texts. The research was conducted on two groups of participants: students of translation studies (semi-professionals) and experienced translators (professionals). We examined the influence of the selected aspects on the use of English loanword forms.

We expected that research participants who studied (or had studied) English and another foreign language would tend to choose the original written form of English loanwords (a form identical to the lexeme they recognize in English). However, our results show that the choice of the loanword form (original written form, assimilated form, Slovak equivalent and translator's own suggestion) does not correlate with the participants' education. Within the examined sample, the study of English influenced the choice of the original written form of those English loanwords that have not been adapted (or codified) in Slovak yet. The research participants did not have any preference to choose the original written forms of English loanwords that have already been codified. To conclude, the study of English did not influence participants' choice in such a way that they would prefer their original written forms.

However, the research indicates that the use of the original written forms of English loanwords is related to the fact that some loanwords have been adopted into the language recently, or they still do not have an adequate Slovak equivalent (adequate in terms of accuracy).

A positive finding of the research is observed in the fact that all participants, regardless of the group they belonged to (semi-professionals vs. professionals, MA degree in English vs. MA degree in other fields of study), had a tendency to choose an option which seemed to be the most appropriate for the reader. We did not notice any preference to choose the original written forms of loanwords in any of the categories. In all their decisions, the translators considered the reader and they aimed to ensure comprehensibility of the text. Hence, the assumptions about the use of English loanwords as 'fashion words' in journalistic texts are rejected.

The aim of the study was to provide an innovative insight into the issue of English loanwords from the point of view of Translation Studies. It seems that adequate knowledge of the Slovak language and translation assignment is crucial in students' and professional translators' decision making. The results of this research show that the choice of English loanword forms mostly depends on the language users themselves: they choose those lexical elements which are most suitable for the given context, so they can fulfil the communicative intention.

The research shows that in some aspects, students and translators differ in their decisions to choose English loanwords and their forms so the importance of education is significant. The research in machine translation indicates similar results: incon-



sistent translations of English loanwords are main problems in machine translation outputs at lexical level. The aim of the further research is to find correspondence between human translation and machine translation even in the presented topic.

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Исследовательская статья


## **Кейс: английские заимствования в процессе подготовки переводчиков в Словакии**

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**Аннотация.** Проблема английских заимствований поднимается во многих областях науки, таких как, например, лингвистика или переводоведение. Перед переводчиком стоит важная задача выбора адекватных средств выражения в зависимости от представленного для перевода текста. В системе подготовки переводчиков данному аспекту уделяется особое внимание. Исследование посвящено рассмотрению вариантов использования английских заимствованных слов и их переводу на словацкий язык в рамках журналистского курса. С этой целью проанализирована словацкая научная литература, связанная с проблемами перевода словацких заимствований на английский язык, а также изучено, как английские заимствования воспринимаются профессиональными переводчиками (N = 21) и студентами магистратуры, обучающимися на переводческих факультетах словацких университетов (N = 39). Результаты показали, что студенты и переводчики, как правило, используют ассимилированные формы английских заимствованных слов вместо оригинальных и при выборе подходящей формы заимствованного слова в первую очередь ориентируются на получателя информации, который должен правильно и точно понять переведенный текст. Полученные данные обосновывают необходимость и целесообразность усовершенствования методической работы в процессе подготовки переводчиков.

**Ключевые слова:** подготовка переводчиков, образование, родной язык, английские заимствования, словацкий язык

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