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SEMANTIC ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC BORROWINGS FROM THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE POLISH SOCIOLECT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The paper focuses on the analysis of semantic aspects of linguistic borrowings from English in the Polish sociolect of information technology. After a brief discussion of the processes of computerisation of every day life and the creation of information society the article presents a definition of the Polish sociolect of information technology. The main categories of loanwords from the English language – quotes, loanwords proper and semantic borrowings – are elaborated upon. History of research done by Polish linguists on the semantics of linguistic borrowings from English is summarized. An analysis of semantic changes of loanwords proper in the recipient language is conducted. Processes on the level of semantics pertaining to the category of semantic loans are explained. Major semantic fields within the sociolect are distinguished. Examples of semantic loans: klient (client), wirus (virus), adres (address), klucz (key) are analyzed in order to illustrate identified semantic processes. It is pointed out that some computer terms are taken over by the general language as a result of the process of “emancipation of scientific and technical terminology”. Attention is drawn to the fact that a significant number of specialized vocabulary has the status of internationalisms.

KEY WORDS: *information society, linguistic borrowings, quotes, loanwords proper, semantic loans, addition of meaning, extension of meaning, metaphorisation.*

The phenomenon of linguistic borrowings takes place to a smaller or greater extent when two nations are in contact on cultural, economic, commercial, scientific or technological level. Evidently, the linguistic impact of the nation which is more developed exceeds the influence of the less developed partner. Contacts between members of various linguistic groups result in linguistic borrowings, also called loans. Borrowing is a process of taking a word or phrase from a foreign language and assimilating it in one's own language.

It is worth pointing out that the term borrowing is somewhat misleading. It suggests that the linguistic item which has been borrowed will be

returned. In reality the item is assimilated in another language and it is never given back (Haugen 1950).

The broad definition of the term borrowing presented by Haugen: “reproduction in one language of patterns found in another” seems to be most convincing as it covers the reproduction of whole patterns from one language to another (Haugen 1950, p. 212). The patterns comprise several categories that linguistic borrowings fall into. Lexical borrowings are by far the most common group. The remaining loanwords can be divided into broad categories of semantic and grammatical borrowings.

The result of changes brought about by the process of computerization of everyday life is the creation of information society where high-tech equipment is used on a common basis. Constant technological progress causes that both private and professional sides of life are inseparably linked with computer technology. An incredible rate of progress in the area of computer science led to the necessity of accepting new vocabulary in the Polish language in order to name new designates. The sociolect of information technology is an area of the Polish language strongly influenced by English due to the fact that Poland imports ready made technological solutions from the Anglo-American civilization. Poles reach for computer technical terms of English origin in order to designate new phenomena in the field. A widespread transfer of English computer vocabulary into the Polish language was witnessed in the 1980's, the 1990's and the first years of the XXI century.

The sociolect of information technology is a variety of the Polish language used by two communities: computer professionals and an ever-growing group of people who spend a considerable percentage of their free time working on computer. The latter group includes especially large numbers of young people, the so-called inter-nauts, whose main hobbies seem to be surfing the internet, electronic conversations by means of chat, playing online games, etc. The sociolect of information technology comprises all lexical units being names of designates in the area of computing used by the above mentioned two communities.

Loanwords from the English language into the Polish sociolect of information technology can be divided into three main categories: **quotes**, **loanwords proper** and **semantic loans**. Lexical borrowings which are unassimilated on the lev-

els of orthography and morphology have the status of quotes. It should be emphasized that speakers of the recipient language pronounce quotes using sounds that function in the phonetic system of their language. In that sense quotes undergo the process of phonetic substitution. In case of loanwords proper processes of substitution take place on the levels of orthography, phonetics and morphology. In the process of adaptation loanwords proper undergo changes in their spelling in accordance with the rules of the recipient language. As far as morphological adaptation is concerned, loanwords proper are inflected and are subject to morphological substitution. In a later phase some of them can take on derivational affixes. Finally, semantic loans occur when lexemes already functioning in the recipient language take on new meanings under the influence of a foreign tongue.

Some of the borrowings are unavoidable because there are no equivalent expressions in Polish but others do not seem to be justified being the result of a fashion for everything that comes from America or to a smaller degree England. A large role in spreading anglicisms play the mass media and experts in economic fields connected with information technology such as network systems, telecommunication, wireless technologies, database solutions, etc., who frequently tend to use specialized vocabulary of English origin.

This paper is an attempt to shed more light on the **semantics** of borrowings from English language into the Polish sociolect of information technology. Polish linguists investigating semantic loans usually concentrate on two aspects: dividing borrowed vocabulary into semantic fields and analyzing the changes in meaning that take place in the process of transfer from one language into another.

The following works are devoted to research done in a single semantic field: Kania and Pluta

analyzed anglicisms in military technical terms (Kania 1978; Pluta 1971; Pluta 1972); Ożdżyński (Ożdżyński 1970) focused attention on adaptation processes of terms in the area of sport; Borejszo and Parafinowicz devoted their works to borrowed vocabulary denoting various garments (Borejszo 1990; Parafinowicz 1972); Kajetanowicz investigated loanwords from English in the terminology of solid-state physics (Kajetanowicz 1993).

Three Polish linguists attempted at comprehensive classification of all anglicisms dividing them into semantic fields: Koneczna, Fisiak, Mańczak-Wohlfeld (1995) (Koneczna 1936-37; Fisiak 1970; Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1995). Koneczna (1936-1937) enumerated 531 linguistic borrowings from English falling into 21 semantic areas. Fisiak (1970) analyzed 721 loanwords that he divided into 12 categories and sub-categories. Finally Mańczak-Wohlfeld (1995) investigated 1700 linguistic borrowings which she divided into 45 categories and sub-categories. The semantic field of sport had the largest number of lexical units in the works of all three researchers.

In the process of adaptation of loanwords proper in the recipient language the following semantic changes take place: extension, narrowing (shrinking) or shift (importation). A shift (importation) of meaning occurs when the loanword is semantically equivalent to its prototype. A narrowing (shrinking) of meaning takes place when only some of the meanings of a lexical unit are borrowed from the donor language in the recipient language. An example of narrowing (shrinking) of meaning cited by Mańczak-Wohlfeld is the word *drink* denoting both an alcoholic and a non-alcoholic beverage in English while in Polish it only designates an alcoholic beverage (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1995, p. 75). Another example cited in literature is the loanword *dog*

which in Polish, contrary to its English prototype, is a name of a particular breed of the species, not the entire species. An example given by J. Fisiak is the word *keks* which comes from the English lexeme *cake*. It does not designate cakes in general but refers to a specific sort of cakes (Fisiak 1970, p. 46). An example of the extension of meaning provided by Mańczak-Wohlfeld is the word *barman* which in English denotes a person tending the bar while in Polish it also designates the owner of the bar (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1995, p. 75).

Mańczak-Wohlfeld was the first Polish linguist to distinguish the semantic field *computers*, comprising 53 lexical units such as: CD ROM, DOS, *dæojstik/joystick*, enter, hacker, hacking, hardware, input, *interfejs / interface*, internet, *kompatybilny, komputer, kursor, laptop, modem, mouse pad, notebook, PC, phreaker, phreaking, ploter / plotter, procesor, skaner / scanner, software* (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1995, p. 76). She noted that all lexical units belonging to that category had undergone the process of semantic shift (importation) as their meanings were identical to the meanings of their English prototypes.

Two linguistic processes on the level of semantics can be witnessed in case of semantic loans in the Polish sociolect of information technology: extension of meaning and addition of meaning. As a result of these two processes, lexemes already functioning in the Polish language take on a new meaning under the influence of English. In case of the extension of meaning mechanisms of semantic generalization or particularization take place whereas addition of meaning occurs when there is no relation based on semantic generalization or particularization between the core and the new meaning. Due to the process of semantic borrowing, vocabulary functioning earlier in other varieties of the Polish language begin to desig-

nate new phenomena in the field of computer technology. Semantic loans comprise both words of Polish origin and earlier lexical borrowings from foreign tongues including English which have undergone assimilation.

Three major semantic fields can be distinguished within the sociolect of information technology: 1) software, 2) hardware, 3) internet and network systems. They sometimes overlap due to the phenomenon of fuzzy boundaries. In some cases it is possible to classify the same lexical unit to more than one semantic field. For example, *switch* is a device and as a piece of equipment it belongs to the category of hardware. However, it would also be justified to classify it in the semantic field of internet and network systems because switches are indispensable in the vast majority of computer networks. To provide another example, *internet browser* is a software application and as such it belongs to the semantic field of software. However, it enables internet users to access web pages. Therefore, it would be completely justified to classify it in the semantic field internet and network systems.

Examples of semantic loans

The lexeme *klient* (client) in its main meaning denotes a buyer in a shop, a hotel guest, a customer in a public notary office, etc. It is a fully assimilated linguistic borrowing from Latin in the Polish language. As a result of a semantic loan from English sociolect of information technology *klient* gained a new meaning in the realm of computer science. *Klient* is sensu stricto a software application which sends requests to a server and receives results of the queries. It is also used to denote workstations on which client software applications are installed.

The most common meaning of the lexeme *wirus* (virus) refers in medicine and biology to

the smallest living organisms, invisible by ordinary microscopes, which develop within cells causing diseases in plants, animals and humans. Due to the linguistic process of metaphorisation based on the similarity of performed functions, a phenomenon of the addition of meaning took place in the English sociolect of information technology. The principles of operation of computer viruses are analogical to their counterparts in the area of biology. Both types of viruses distribute through infection and bring about damages. After the term was coined in the English sociolect of information technology it was transferred to the Polish sociolect of information technology.

The most basic meaning of the lexeme *adres* (address) is the place of residence of a person or a location of an institution, an enterprise, a school, etc. It is a fully assimilated linguistic borrowing from French in the Polish language. Due to the semantic loan from English sociolect of information technology, *adres* gained new meanings in the field of computer science: 1) number identifying a single cell of computer memory, 2) number of cell in spreadsheets with two coordinates, 3) number consisting of four bytes identifying hosts in computer networks operating in accordance with the IP protocol.

The lexeme *klucz* (key) in its main meaning denotes an item used to open locks and padlocks. Nowadays it also acquired a new meaning in the area of digital cryptography where it denotes a string of characters applied to encrypt and decrypt data. The new meaning was transferred from English to the Polish sociolect of information technology. It is an example of the addition of meaning as the mechanism underlying the creation of the new meaning was the process of metaphorisation based on common associations of the core sense and the new sense.

The process of "emancipation of scientific and technical terminology" can be observed in the vocabulary of the Polish sociolect of information technology as computer science terms are taken over by the general language (Luciński 2000, p. 111). The phenomenon was brought about by the process of computerization of every day life leading to the situation where specialized computer terms came to denote common every day devices and concepts connected with them. This especially refers to main computer components, common software applications, basic terms in the field of internet communication, etc. As a result of the "emancipation", a sociolect lexical unit does not broaden its meaning but starts to operate in a different sphere maintaining the same denotative function.

It should be noted that a significant number of computer terms have the status of **internationalisms**, that is linguistic borrowings that have occurred in several languages with identical meaning. Differences in spelling and pronunciation are minor so that a considerable number of computing vocabulary is understandable between different languages. Internationalisms frequently spread together with innovations that they denote. Polish linguist H. Rybicka claims that "internationalisms play ever increasing role in specialized terminology forming a large percentage of vocabulary used nowadays" (Rybicka 1976, p. 53).

As society becomes more and more technologically developed needs for special computer vocabulary grow. This tendency accounts for a high rate of linguistic borrowings from the English sociolect of information technology.

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SEMANTYCZNE ASPEKTY ZAPOŻYCZEŃ LINGWISTYCZNYCH Z JĘZYKA ANGIELSKIEGO W POLSKIM SOCJOLEKCIE INFORMATYCZNYM

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest omówienie semantycznych aspektów zapożyczeń z języka angielskiego w polskim socjolekcie informatycznym. Po krótkiej analizie procesów komputeryzacji życia codziennego i powstania społeczeństwa informacyjnego została zaprezentowana definicja polskiego socjolektu informatycznego. Następnie zostały wyszczególnione główne kategorie zapożyczeń z języka angielskiego w polskim socjolekcie informatycznym: wyrazy-cytaty, zapożyczenia właściwe oraz zapożyczenia semantyczne. Artykuł zawiera przegląd prac polskich lingwistów poświęconych aspektom semantyczno-leksykalnym zapożyczeń z języka angielskiego. W dalszej części została przeprowadzona analiza zmian semantycznych zapożyczeń właściwych i zapożyczeń semantycznych w języku-biorcy oraz wyróżnione zostały główne pola semantyczne w polskim socjolekcie informatycznym. W celu zilustrowania wyszczególnionych procesów semantycznych przeprowadzono analizę semantyczno-leksykalną czterech zapożyczeń semantycznych z języka angielskiego: *klient*, *wirus*, *adres*, *klucz*. Zwrócono uwagę, iż część słownictwa komputerowego jest przejmowana przez język ogólny w rezultacie „emancypacji terminologii naukowej i technicznej”. Odnotowano fakt, iż znaczna część terminów i profesjonalizmów komputerowych ma status internacjonalizmów.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: społeczeństwo informacyjne, zapożyczenia lingwistyczne, wyrazy-cytaty, zapożyczenia właściwe, zapożyczenia semantyczne, dodanie znaczenia, rozszerzenie znaczenia, metaforyzacja.

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LINGVISTINIŲ ANGLŲ KALBOS SKOLINIŲ LENKŲ INFORMACINIŲ TECHNOLOGIJŲ SOCIOLEKTE SEMANTINIAI ASPEKTAI

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami lingvistinių anglų kalbos skolinių lenkų informacinių technologijų sociolekto semantiniai aspektai. Trumpai apibūdinus kasdieninio gyvenimo kompiuterizacijos ir informacinės visuomenės kūrimo procesus, straipsnyje pateikiamas informacinių technologijų lenkiškojo sociolekto apibrėžimas. Straipsnyje analizuojamos tokios pagrindinės anglų kalbos skolinių kategorijos: citatos, tikriniai daiktavardžiai ir semantiniai skoliniai. Apžvelgiama lenkų mokslininkų lingvistinių skolinių semantikos tyrimų istorija. Analizuojami tikrinių daiktavardžių skolinių semantiniai pokyčiai lenkų kalboje. Aiškinami semantinio lygmens procesai, susiję su semantinių skolinių kategorija. Išskiriami pagrindiniai sociolekto semantiniai laukai. Semantinių skolinių, pavyzdžiui, klient (client), virus (virus), adres (address), klucz (key) analizė iliustruoja aprašomus semantinius procesus. Pabrėžiama, kad kai kurie kompiuteriniai terminai yra perimami bendrinės kalbos dėl „mokslinės ir techninės terminologijos emancipacijos“ procesų. Atkreipiamas dėmesys į tai, kad didžioji terminų dalis turi tarptautinių žodžių statusą.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: informacinė visuomenė, lingvistiniai skoliniai, citatos, tikrinių daiktavardžių skoliniai, semantiniai skoliniai, reikšmės papildymas, reikšmės praplėtimas, metaforyzacija.

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