

THE DANGERS OF BORROWING
MORE THAN INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH WORDS:
THE MUTATIONS INSIDE IDIOMS AND COLLOCATIONS

Through decades, linguists all over the world have been trying to find the perfect definition of idioms, ignoring the fact that perfection does not exist. Not surprisingly at all, the variety of opinions led the way to a definition that came closer to the linguistic reality named „idiom”. Thus, Makkai (1972) considers that idioms

„should be made of at least two words and that the meaning of an idiom is not predictable from its component parts, which are emptied of their usual senses.” (Makkai 1972: 122, 118, in Fernando 1996: 4).

Earlier, in 1964, Wood had approached idioms comparing and contrasting them with **phrasal verbs**. In his opinion, phrasal verbs such as *to put up* or *to fall out* in ‘put up your hands’ and ‘the baby fell out of the perambulator’ are not to be considered idioms, but ‘to put up with something’ and ‘to fall out with someone’ are idioms (Wood 1964: V). Both the definition and the distinction above are accurate and describe an idiom, hence only such expressions will be considered **idioms** and will be analysed in the present paper.

Idioms are often discussed in relation to collocations, but the latter are a lot easier to define, and the dictionary definition is most often enough to understand their behaviour:

„the way in which some words are used together, or a particular combination of words used in this way: ‘commit a crime’ is a typical collocation in English” (LDOCE 2003).

However, not every combination of words is a collocation, just like not every metaphor is an idiom. Hill and Lewis (2002) exclude from the class of collocations those combinations made of common words, leading to ‘common collocations’ – such as ‘fast car, have dinner, a bit tired’ – and adjectives such as *good, bad, big, small* etc. forming pseudo-collocations in most of the cases, but real collocations in some of them, e.g. ‘bad/good luck’ (Hill and Lewis 2002:7)

It goes without saying that both idioms and collocations are specific to each and every language and, in most of the cases, they do not correspond to the linguistic realities of other languages. Translating them requires, more often than not, adapting these expressions to their equivalent in the target language (TL). A collocation such as 'a merge pe bicicletă' would create confusion if translated word for word into English: 'to walk on a bike'. Replacing the word 'walk' with 'go' – to go on a bike – would bring an improvement to this particular case, but it would still lack precision. 'To go on a bike' would be appropriate only in the particular case of someone asking „How did he go home?” and somebody else answering „He went there on his bike”, but in Romanian 'a merge pe bicicletă' also means to ride the bicycle for fun, not having a destination, thus not going anywhere.

Moving forward to English words and expressions borrowed into Romanian mention has to be made that this process happens in two ways and has two causes.

Certain English words are borrowed into Romanian by taking the words as such and pronouncing them approximately as in English, e.g. *targhet* (target), *biznis* (business), *dedlain* (deadline), *star*, *top-model*, *bord* (board), *hit*, *okay*, *fani* (funny), *smart* etc.. Some other English words are borrowed into Romanian by adapting the English word to the Romanian lexico -grammar: *a aplica* (to apply), *ataşament* (attachment), *a foruarda* (to forward), *a şerui* (to share) etc.

As far as the causes of this phenomenon are concerned, one possible explanation could be the fact that the reality denoted by certain English words did not exist in the Romanian space and had to be introduced in our language as a result of the technological development. In many of these cases the English words were borrowed as such. Nevertheless, there are quite numerous instances nowadays when English words are borrowed and used out of snobbism by people who try to sound 'cool' (the very word *cool* is used by numerous Romanian speakers). Many of these English words have a perfectly functional equivalent in Romanian, but the English words tend to be preferred due to their being more fashionable.

When the words borrowed from English are parts of fixed expressions, two other phenomena occur. Either the entire expression is translated into Romanian, e.g. *autosuficient* from *self-sufficient*, *companie scoică* from *shell-company*, *pieţe de capital* from *capital markets* etc. or only one word is translated, the other being preserved in English (for two-word expressions), e.g. *canal de retail* from *retail channel*, *public target* from *target*

public, background *educațional* from educational background etc. (Postolache, 2015: 108)

While borrowing words which denominate new realities and for which there are no equivalent words in Romanian, or for which the English loanwords sound more accurate is acceptable and sometimes even desirable, replacing perfectly functional words in Romanian with English words is a sign of either snobbism, or lack of solid knowledge of Romanian. Even worse are the cases when Romanian speakers borrow whole expressions to replace the Romanian ones creating what I call, **mutant expressions**. To be more explicit, **mutant expressions** are those expressions which belong to a source language (SL), are borrowed by a TL and are given different meanings or replace valid expressions in the TL while sounding unnatural. The present article focusses on some of the most relevant **mutant expressions** identified in daily communication in Romanian trying to explain the phenomena which led to their creation.

- **'a face sens' – to make sense**

'A face sens' is a word-for-word translation of its English counterpart *to make sense* this being a case when a perfectly functional Romanian expression is replaced by the equivalent English expression. Since the expression used in Romanian to render the meaning of the English 'to make sense' is *a avea sens* (to have sense), it is beyond our understanding why a valid and still new expression such as *a avea sens* is replaced by another expression, especially one which sounds very strange to the educated. The problem is largely discussed on the Internet, where numerous educated people have been trying to convince the Romanians that the expression *a face sens* is wrong. But how did this expression become so popular in the first place? Could it be the Romanians' need to do something (*a face*) instead of only having something (*a avea*)? Or is it maybe the need to sound more modern, more in touch with such a successful language as English? Regardless of the reason, abusive borrowings are unacceptable. The opinion is also clearly stated by Radu Paraschivescu, a Romanian writer, translator, journalist and editor who fights a difficult battle against this phenomenon:

„Una dintre expresiile de pe podiumul calchierilor este expresia 'a face sens', care traduce literal (și idiot) expresia engleză 'to make sense'. Bineînțeles, forma corectă a expresiei la infinitiv este 'a avea sens', pe când 'a face sens' este o stupizenie.” (One of the expressions which take the cream is 'a face sens' which is the word-for-word (and idiotic) translation of 'to make sense'. Of course, the correct infinitive form of this expression is 'a avea sens', whereas 'a face sens' is simply stupid. – our translation) (*Pastila de limbă. Calchierea din engleză și posesivul forțat,*

at <https://www.digi24.ro/magazin/timp-liber/cultura/pastila-de-limba-calchiera-din-engleza-si-posesivul-fortat-793650> last visited on October 9, 2018)

Despite the tenacity with which Radu Paraschivescu has been trying for years to draw our attention to the fact that Romanian is heavily bombarded with English expressions, the phenomenon has not stopped and our guess is that it will increase rather than decrease. This is a reality we have to face because the younger generations no longer get their culture from printed books, carefully written by highly educated people and even more carefully edited by people whose job is to “comb” the text and to eliminate the language mistakes. Nowadays, almost everything happens on the Internet. News, stories, blogs, comments and other different texts are posted by people whose professions have nothing to do with writing or even with the grammatically correct use of Romanian. In addition, more and more people all over the world learn English in order to communicate and to have access to more information. Under the circumstances, speakers unintentionally replace valid Romanian expressions with their English counterparts and this happens naturally, because viruses and genetic mutations are also natural. The speed with which information travels exceeds dramatically the speed with which researchers and linguists can write books about changes in language and that is why we should no longer consider the Internet a source which is not worth our attention. The realities change and the English language influences all the languages whose speakers are able to understand it and use it. And they are more and more numerous. For instance, the French also borrowed „to make sense” as Ana Iorga reports for a Romanian television station:

„Nu vă faceți griji, nu suntem singurii care se luptă cu ‘face sens’. Se pare că francezii s-au îndrăgostit și ei de expresie: ‘ca fait sens’, spun ei, sau ‘ca fait du sens’. Așa că Academia Franceză a declarat război anglicismului.” (Do not worry, we are not the only one fighting against this expression. It seems that the French also fell in love with it: they say ‘ca fait sens’ or ‘ca fait du sens’. Therefore, the French Academy declared war on this kind of borrowings. – our translation) (Ana Iorga, *Pe cuvânt*, Antena 3, September 1st 2017, at <https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/educatie/pe-cuvant-cu-ana-iorga-de-ce-nu-are-sens-sa-folosim-expresia-face-sens-431125.html>, last visited on October 9, 2018)

It is believed that the people who borrow expressions from another language, trying to sound more educated or trendy, are those who are less educated. It is true indeed, but this does not mean that people with higher education will not cave in and start using them, as well. A famous politician who is also a teacher is used by Cristian Tudor Popescu as an

example to prove this. During a speech, the politician in case used the expression 'a face sens' seven times:

„Dar a făcut și o nefăcută: a făcut sens. De șapte ori! Le-am numărat. (...) E un barbarism specific mediocrităților snoabe. (...) Când vorbești despre educație, despre cetățeni care trebuie învățați și spui de șapte ori 'face sens' sună ca dracul.” (But he also did it: he 'made sense'. Seven times! I counted them. It is an unnecessary loan phrase which characterises mediocre people. When you talk about education, about citizens who need to be taught, and you say 'makes sense' seven times, it sounds like hell. - our translation)

(Cristian Tudor Popescu: *Domnul Iohannis 'a făcut sens' de șapte ori*, at <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/c-t-popescu-dl-iohannis-a-facut-sens-de-sapte-ori-588103> last visited on October, 2018)

- **a da un pont (cuiva)** – to give somebody a tip

I heard this expression in August or September 2018 while I was listening to the radio. It was used in a commercial meant to let the audience know that they were about to receive some important piece of information: 'Lasă-mă să-ți dau un pont' (*Let me give you a tip.*) The problem is that 'a da cuiva un pont' (to give somebody a tip) is not a genuine Romanian expression and the people who wrote the script of the commercial no longer know that the correct expression, for Romanian, is 'a **vinde** cuiva un pont' which includes the verb 'a vinde' (to sell) instead of 'a da' (to give). Most probably the original commercial was in English and the people who adapted it for the Romanian radio stations made a mistake. Is this lack of attention? Or is it lack of education? Is it the desire to sound 'cool'? Or is it Google translate? I thought it was, but I introduced 'let me give you a tip', on Google Translate and the variant provided was 'Permiteți-mi să vă dau un sfat!' (Allow me to give you a piece of advice) which is a lot better than 'Lasă-mă să-ți dau un pont': It even used something that does not exist in English: the so-called pronoun of politeness! Then, why was the variant 'Lasă-mă să-ți dau un pont' used in the commercial? The original Romanian expression 'a **vinde** cuiva un pont', in which a tip was **sold** not **given**, suffered a mutation under the influence of the English 'to give a tip'. This mutation would not have been possible if the expression 'a vinde cuiva un pont' (to sell somebody a tip) had not been obsolete (the reality denominated by it has disappeared). 'A vinde cuiva un pont' comes from the card game of poker and it was probably used in the 19th and 20th centuries (I actually heard this expression when I was a child), but it seems to be no longer in use. There are some very professional and popular poker websites with Romanian content and none of them mentions the Romanian expression in case. For example, on Pokerstars.ro the closest word to 'pont'

is 'pot', but it does not mean the same thing. 'Pot' is an English word borrowed as such, most Romanian sites dedicated to poker using numerous English words and expressions borrowed in the same way. It seems that nobody can play poker anymore without knowing the appropriate words in English.

The Romanian word 'pont' has survived, but it is not part of the already extinct expression 'to sell somebody a *pont*'. The Romanian site ponturi-bune.ro, specialized in sports bets, presents the word 'pont' as having the same meaning with the word 'tip' in 'to give someone a tip' (<https://ponturi-bune.ro/pariuri-fotbal/>; also pariurix.com etc.). In this case, the mutation was just an accident waiting to happen.

- *nucă tare* – a hard nut (to crack)

This idiom suffered a mutation in the sense that the last part of it, 'to crack' did not make it to the Romanian language. There are a lot of headlines talking about a 'hard nut', but not a single 'o nucă tare de spart' could be found searching the Internet, the place where all the newspapers are. Mention should be made that the word "nut" does not necessarily mean "walnut", as it was translated into Romanian. This fact is due to the adaptation to the Romanian reality, walnuts being more present than other forms of nuts: peanuts, hazelnuts, chestnuts, coconuts, Macadamia nuts etc. The nut tree is spread all over the country and, traditionally, children are given apples and walnuts when they go carolling on Christmas Eve. Also, the recipes for the traditional Christmas sponge cake include walnuts and not other types of nuts. Regardless of the mutations suffered, the idiom in case – *a hard nut to crack* – is a positive example of adaptation to the Romanian language. It was not adopted by the academic circles, yet, and maybe it will never be, but the media makes it very popular:

„Venus Williams, o nucă prea tare” / Venus Williams, a too hard walnut (<https://www.cotidianul.ro/venus-williams-o-nuca-prea-tare>); „Bucureștiul, o nucă tare pentru partide” / Bucharest, a hard nut for the political parties (<https://www.zf.ro/politica/bucurestiul-o-nuca-tare-pentru-partide-3101921/poze/>), „Matematica, o nucă tare la bac” / Mathematics, a hard nut at the baccalaureate (<https://www.ziaruldevrancea.ro/actualitatea/stiri-locale/2894-matematica-o-nuca-tare-la-bac.html>) etc.

Google brought up 553,000 sites („approximately”, to quote the mentioned search engine) containing the phrase 'nucă tare' on 11 October 2018, 9:19 a.m.). On 22 October 2018 at 9:19 a.m. the same search engine brought up 578,000 sites containing the expression in case. We can only assume that the number will continue to increase.

The case of 'o nucă tare' is a less problematic case of adaptation because there is no Romanian equivalent expression containing the word 'nucă' or any other kind of nut. In addition to that, culturally speaking, choosing a walnut among all the existing nuts is justified by the existence of the phrase 'nucă pietroasă' (approximately *rocky walnut*) denominating a walnut hard to crack. Why has the phrase 'nucă pietroasă' not made it to mass-media in the 21st century? Why do Romanians say 'nucă tare' when they have had, for centuries, a similar, more suggestive phrase to express that – 'rocky walnut'? The answer may be a philosophical one: nothing lasts forever. Phrases, just like anything else in this world, are born, grow, reach maturity, get old and die. A simple research revealed the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of results for 'nucă tare' on Google, and only 12,700 for 'nucă pietroasă' brought by the same search engine on 22 October 2018 at 9:09 a.m.

- *om care ține singur un spectacol* – a one man show

The English idiom 'one man show' means a show with only one performer, according to various dictionaries including Collins at www.collinsdictionary.com. When borrowed into Romanian, this expression suffered a semantic mutation moving from 'a show performed by one person only' to 'a person who can perform an entire show by themselves'. It only seems to be the same, but it is, basically, the opposite:

„Camora e one-man show la antrenamentele CFR-ului din Polonia” / Camora is one-man show at the CFR training sessions in Poland” (<https://www.telekomsport.ro/video-camora-e-one-man-show-la-antrenamentele-cfr-ului-din-polonia-si-aschimba-t-postul-si-a-fost-inspirat-18210412>, last visited on 11 October 2018, at 3:27 p.m.);

„Chipirliu – one-man show” (<https://ziarulprahova.ro/2018/04/chipirliu-one-man-show/>) is the headline of a sports newspaper article from which we found out that a football player scored and saved a goal for his team, making the reader of the article believe that the player was alone on the field, playing the role of all the other 21 players.

Why this confusion? The reason is very simple: grammar. The adjective is placed before the noun in English, – a *red* apple, a *fast* car, a *one-man* show etc – whereas in Romanian, the adjective follows the noun – un *măr roșu* (an apple red), o *mașină rapidă* (a car fast). Therefore, *one-man show* was not felt as an adjective+noun combination, and it was interpreted according to the Romanian grammatical pattern: noun+adjective. Following this rule, the word 'show' in 'one-man show' became the adjective, leading to a structure close to 'omul spectacol' in which the

word 'spectacol' is seen as an adjective determining what is viewed as a compound noun: one-man. In other words, *one-man show* is a case which does not exist in Romanian: a compound adjective containing the word 'man'. We say 'o barcă de o persoană' sau 'un spectacol susținut de o persoană', but when an adjective has to be added to the word 'person' or 'man', then that person gets the characteristic named by the adjective. Therefore 'one-show man' is a mutation, because the adjective is transferred to the *man*, not to the *show*. Radu Paraschivescu has a simpler explanation for this phenomenon:

„Există destui vorbitori de română (numai eu cunosc cinci-șase) care cred că 'one man show' nu se referă la spectacol, ci la cel care-l susține. Asta poate și din cauză că dicționarul, care între timp a preluat termenul, mai degrabă derutează în loc să edifice. De ce? Fiindcă definițiile pe care le dă pentru 'one man show' sunt 'Artist care susține singur un spectacol' și 'Spectacol susținut de un singur artist'. Dintre aceste două definiții, vă sugerez să țineți cont doar de a doua și s-o lăsați pe prima în plata Domnului. Iar dacă-mi va pune cineva întrebarea 'Dar oare greșesc și dicționarele?', îi voi răspunde: 'Da, greșesc. Fiindcă sunt întocmite de oameni, iar oamenii, chiar și cei cu școli înalte, comit uneori greșeli.' (Pastila de limbă. Expresii preluate greșit din engleză at <https://www.digi24.ro/magazin/timp-liber/cultura/pastila-de-limba-ex-presii-preluate-gresit-din-engleza-488828>, 21.02.2016, last visited on September 29, 2018.)

There are not too many idioms borrowed from English, which have suffered mutations, yet, and this can be explained by two possible aspects. On the one hand, there is some sort of resistance to borrowing more complex structures, especially metaphors. Single words are easy victims. They stand alone, not having any support from other words with which they could create fixed phrases such as idioms. On the other hand, collocations are safer than single words, but weaker than idioms. Consequently, many English collocations cause mutations in their Romanian counterparts, as exemplified in the present paper.

The fact remains that single words are adopted to name realities which have not existed before or replace already existing words and this leads to the creation of the so-called **barbarisms**.

Many barbarisms are found in the discourse of multinational corporations which adopted English as the main language of communication.

Mihaela Apetrei, a Romanian public speaking specialist, re-created a dialogue which can be heard in multinational corporations, in Romania:

„Crezi că face sens să forcastăm în continuare pe pipeline-ul deja existent, în care customizăm produsele de end-user?”

„Poate dacă *sharuim* și cu *headquarterul* și ne dau *ok-ul* pentru *adresarea* ultimelor *probleme* de *suportare a clienților*.”

„Pe ce anume te *focusezi* în analiză? Pe noile aplicații la pozițiile de *top* sau pe *damage-ul* din *exit*?”

(*Conversații în romgleză. Cum se vorbește în multinaționale și cum afectează limba română*, Adevărul.ro, article published in February 4th, 2015 by Ioana Nicolescu at https://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/conversatii-romgleza-vorbeste-multinationale-afecteaza-limba-romana-1_54d22472448e03c0fd45e794/index.html last visited on October 15, 03.33 p.m.)

The public speaking specialist mentions the fact that this is the kind of language people use at the office because many terms from English are more precise than the ones in Romanian, but that they do not use the same kind of language outside the place of work. Not for now, I would add. From speaking like in the example above at work and doing it outside the office is just a small step. A small step for man, a giant leap to changing Romanian significantly.

In the dialogue given as an example, there is a huge number of single words coming from English and being preserved as such or adapted to the Romanian language. Many of them are, indeed, more accurate than the Romanian ones and, in numerous cases, there are no Romanian words to be used. In such circumstances, borrowing English words is more than justified, but two of them (the expressions *adresarea problemelor* and *uportarea clienților*) represent mutations inside the Romanian language which do not bring any improvement in anyone's speech. On the contrary, they sound strange and give the impression that the speakers using them do not have a good command of Romanian. They are word-for-word translations of the English expressions *to address a problem* meaning to deal with a matter or a problem and *client (customer) support* which means helping customers. The two Romanian translations would not have been mutations if the words 'a adresa' and 'a suporta' (or 'suport') had not already had their own meanings in Romanian, different from the ones in English. It is a case of false friends turned into mutations at the level of expressions. As it usually happens, for people who do not use this kind of corporate language, the two expressions mentioned above sound ridiculous. *A adresa* in Romanian means *to talk to somebody*. *A suporta* means *to put up with*. Translated from corporate-Romanian to normal-Romanian, sentences such as 'Am adresat problema' and 'Trebuie să suportăm clienții' would mean 'We have talked to the problem' and 'We need to put up with the clients'. It is true that, in many cases, when working with clients, you have to put up with some of them, but for a 'customer suport line' to

become a 'customer put-up with line' is at least hilarious. This kind of mutant expressions expressed in a broken Romanian mixed with English are used more often than not without any good reason, the language such expression belong to being called 'romgleză' (Romglish).

- *a merge la giob* – to go to work

Even though it looks more like one of those pseudo-colocations mentioned by Hill and Lewis (2007), the expression "mă duc la giob" is worth analysing. To some Romanians, and not very few, the expression, *a merge la giob* (to go to... job) has, unfortunately, already become a collocation. The word "job" has more than one meaning in English, but the Romanians borrowed it with only one of its meanings: 'place of work'. The English word in case suffered a lexical mutation in the sense that, while it is widely used in expressions such as *mi-am găsit un giob* (I found a job), *mă duc la giob* (I am going to the job meaning I am going to work), *am un giob bine/prost plătit* (I have a well/poorly paid job) and other expressions in which the word 'job' is used with the meaning of place of work, it is never used in expressions such as: 'Good job! It's not my job! Job well done! It's a job for real men! A poor job' (meaning a job not well done) etc. Also, the saying 'Never send a boy to do a man's job' is not known to the Romanian speakers. This is, probably, due to the fact that the word was borrowed with one meaning only. Why did this happen? These are three possible explanations:

- 1) Following the law of the minimum effort, the expression 'loc de munca' (place of work) was replaced with only one word, making communication more efficient.

- 2) The word 'slujbă' which is used to mean 'place of work' was seen as too old, coming from other times. The fact that the above mentioned word also means 'religious service' was a catalyst for adopting the English word. Nowadays, the word 'slujbă' is used to denominate the religious service and in a fixed expression, 'a se pune în slujba a ceva' meaning to put oneself or one's energy at work in order to serve a purpose.

- 3) The Romanian adapted word *giob* was not given all the meanings of 'job' because there is a Romanian word, still powerful, i.e. *treabă*, having the meaning of 'job' in the expressions mentioned above. This word, unlike its English counterpart, lost its meaning of 'place of work' and specialized in... something else, meaning 'thing that is/was/will be done': 'Bună treabă!' (Good job!), 'Nu e treaba mea!' (It's not my job!), 'treabă bine făcută' (Job well done.), 'Asta e o treabă pentru oameni adevărați.' (It's a job for real men), 'treabă prost făcută/făcută cu picioarele' (a poor job). It

would be worth mentioning that there was an expression still in use in Romanian, when I was a child, where the word 'treabă' means 'place of work': 'a merge la treabă' – 'to go to work.'

To sum up, the word 'job' did not replace the word 'treabă' because the Romanian language borrowed only one sequence of its DNA, if it is to find a scientific equivalent. The lexical borrowing was possible because the Romanian words or phrases having the same meaning were considered too old and not very accurate.

As research often has it, answering a question might lead to another one. In this case, the question is: Why was the more modern word 'serviciu' (meaning service and place of work) also replaced by 'job'? Probably, in the context of globalization, the expression 'to apply for a job' brought the word 'job' with it because the verb 'to apply' was also borrowed in the adapted form of 'a aplica'. The verb 'a aplica' existed in Romanian before 'a aplica pentru un job' (to apply for a job), but it did not have this meaning. It was used mainly to denote the action of putting or spreading a substance onto something.

Conclusions

Borrowing words from a language which tends to become the official language of an entire planet is a normal thing. All the languages borrow words from other languages, according to the proximity and to how much the foreign language is used in the countries where it is not an official language. From this point of view, there is no doubt that English is the most successful language, for now. Problems occur when borrowings are made without taking into consideration the fact that there are similar words in the languages which borrow English words. A language is a living reality and it is as good as its parents are. With the word 'parents' I named the ones who give birth to words and sentences in that language: the native speakers. When they do not care about the beauty of their own language because of the poor command of it, unnecessary loanwords will appear.

So far, the Romanian language has borrowed a lot of single words from English, unnecessary or not, but there is a tendency to take this phenomenon to the next level: borrowing more complex structures, such as collocations and even idioms. If words are easier to deal with, collocations and idioms are very difficult to be naturalized because these complex structures are usually specific to the language they were born in. When the source idiom or collocation does not have a perfect equivalent in the TL, things are much easier, and idioms such as 'o nucă tare (de spart)', which is the word-for-word translation of 'a hard nut to crack' do not cause any

serious problems. Nevertheless, when the loan expression comes to replace an expression in the TL, usually a semantic and/or formal mutation will take place. We do not know, yet, whether things will evolve in this direction and if more complex structures from English will replace the valid ones in Romanian. What we know for certain is that it has already happened more than once. Most probably some of these expressions will disappear, but many will be adopted by the Romanian language and will become the norm. For example, 'one man show' is already in the dictionaries with the wrong meaning: 'artist care susține singur un spectacol' (DEX 2009). **Mutant** or not, these borrowed expressions will be part of our grandchildren's vocabulary.

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Abstract: There are numerous papers and studies devoted to Romanian loanwords which were adopted by Romanian speakers from English. Some of these words are useful and denominate realities for which the Romanian language does not have a formal and semantic equivalent, while others have a perfectly functional equivalent in Romanian, being thus unnecessary borrowings used especially out of snobbism. The present paper aims at going beyond individual words by exploring more complex lexical structures such as collocations and idioms. Borrowing such complex lexical structures, the so called 'chunks of language' or 'prefabricated structures', from English is a relatively new phenomenon in Romanian. There are not too many such structures, but the Romanian speakers who tend to integrate them in their speech have two easily noticeable problems, i.e. they either use them in the wrong context or try to adapt them to collocations already existing in Romanian, thus making them sound strange, to say the least. The examples analysed in this paper are meant to illustrate how the phenomenon/phenomena of "lexical mutation" and/or "structural mutation" make the collocations and idioms borrowed from English sound awkward and inappropriate in Romanian.

Key words: borrowed collocations, borrowed idioms, lexical mutations, structural mutations