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## THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE UNDER THE PRESSURE OF ENGLISH CALQUES

### **Preliminary remarks**

It is always interesting to note how languages “communicate” and exchange elements of the lexicon in various manners. Interlexical communication is a given, and English seems to be the source of choice for most other recipient languages, including Romanian. So it is no surprise that on a daily basis we come across numerous Romanian structures that are recognizable for having “copied” English ones, and still feel a little alien or not completely integrated. Besides being “trendy”, these calques that are ever-present in contemporary Romanian are evidence that the English influence is inescapable, especially in today’s age of globality.

### **Definition of calques**

It seems quite difficult to obtain a unanimous view on the definition of calques. However, the common view is that a calque is “a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 32).

According to other more recent theories, a calque designates a complex lexical unit (either a single word or a phrase) that was created by a verbatim translation of a foreign pattern (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009: 39). This literal translation of its component seems to differentiate a calque from a borrowing or the frequently used adaptation, which are also essential means of enriching the lexicon of contemporary Romanian. Also called loan translation, it is regarded, more often than not, as a means of enriching the vocabulary of a language, thus allowing it to keep abreast of the newest developments in all areas of human knowledge (mostly, but not limited to, science and technology).

### **Typology of calques**

A clear-cut typology of calque may prove challenging, especially since scholars have different views on the matter.

Typically, calques are divided into four types: loan translations, loan renditions, loan creations and semantic loans (Görlach 2003: 96, Walsh 2016: 22). Unlike loanwords, whose spelling does not change or changes only slightly, loan translations are instead an idiomatic word or phrase that is translated literally into the TL, but used with the same or similar meaning as the original; it is the closest in meaning to the hyperonym calque. On the other hand, if the translation into the TL is only approximate, and not literal, the phenomenon is called loan rendition. A loan creation/formation/coinage is defined as a new word in the TL which fills a perceived semantic gap triggered by a SL. The manner of formation of this new word has no relation to the donor language. Cases in point are newly introduced religious terminology after the adoption of a new religion (mainly Christianity). Finally, a semantic loan occurs when "a native word undergoes extension of its meaning on the model of a foreign counterpart" (Mott & Laso, 2020).

In turn, Smith suggests five categories: the semantic calque, the phraseological calque, the syntactic calque, the loan translation and the morphological calque (2006: 29).

In the same vein, Larizgoitia speaks about semantic, lexical, lexical-phraseological, lexical syntactic, phraseological, morphosyntactic and discourse calques (2010:13-35).

### **Reasons for calque dominance**

Obviously, calques have always been faring quite well owing to a variety of reasons, among which the first that spring to mind are the following:

- faulty translation (it is quite common for Romanian speakers to be "stricken" by the oddity of a newly-coined term, causing comprehension difficulties and requiring clarification when encountered for the first time);
- language economy (it goes without saying that calques would be the most obvious choice over lengthy or awkward paraphrastic translations or other types of equivalents);
- ease of communication in a linguistic community proficient in English (nowadays most Romanian speakers have at least a basic command

of English, so that it is quite easy to "cut corners" and resort to calques instead of making the effort to adapt and integrate new terms through other translation procedures);

- brevity and straightforwardness (in today's rat race for maximum efficiency and ease of communication, calques are the shortest way to delivering the message, albeit not in an ideal form; in any case, Romanian speakers are not usually concerned with aesthetics, but favour conciseness and effectiveness most);

- lack of a precise equivalent (sometimes the precision of an equivalent in Romanian would be hard or impossible to achieve, so that the easiest way out would be to "copy" the English source term);

- cultural disparity (this lack of equivalence leading to the need for calques may well result from the cultural inequalities between the SL and the TL);

- inequality of realia between SL and TL (the cultural lack of equivalence may be triggered by the existence of different realia in English and Romanian, where the former is usually the progress initiator, and the latter subsequently needs to catch up).

### **Lexical calques**

According to the Romanian linguist Theodor Hristea (1997: 10), a lexical calque can imitate the structure of a foreign word, be it a compound or a derivative (morphemic calque), or it can enrich the semantic content of an already existing word, under the influence of a correspondent or "synonym" in a foreign language (semantic calque). Here are only a few examples:

*self-defense* = autoapărare

*overdose* = supradoză

*to realize* = a realiza (a-și da seama, a înțelege)

*horse-power* = cal-putere

*info-war* = info-război, război informațional

### **Semantic calques**

In this particular case, M. Smith provides the following definition:

"a semantic calque is the borrowing by a word in the receiving language of one or several meanings of the corresponding word in the donor language,

whose primary meaning is identical to the primary meaning of the word in the receiving language" (2006: 29).

Thus, the model appears to be semantically richer than the copy. The linguistic pattern is partially translated by the calque, and the remaining semantic values are borrowed.

Therefore, we are dealing with a semantic loan only if an essential condition is met, that of the existence of at least a common meaning between the calque and its polysemantic model (Iordan 1956: 111, Rizescu 1958: 8). This phenomenon gives rise to numerous improper or erroneous uses of the English calques in Romanian, as is apparent from the following examples:

*arrested* = arestat (uimit)

*assistance* = asistență (public, persoanele prezente)

*apologetic* = apologetic (laudativ)

*determined* = determinat (hotărât)

### **Phraseological calques**

From the very name, this category is quite difficult to delineate, as the definition of the concept of phraseology itself poses some problems. Modern linguistics considers phraseology to be an autonomous discipline, situated at the border between syntax and vocabulary. Thus, phrases are considered as self-contained lexical units that have nothing to do with syntax or lexicology. However, phraseological units cannot be completely separated from lexicology, as they are lexical units bearing unitary meaning, which makes calquing possible (Hristea 1977: 587-588). Just like the previous type of calques, this category occasions numerous awkward or downright erroneous structures in Romanian, as in the initial two examples below:

*to apply for a job* = a aplica pentru o slujbă (a candida pentru un post, a solicita un post)

*to make sense* = a face sens (a avea sens)

*to make a difference* = a face diferență

*clause of the most favoured nation* = clauza națiunii celei mai favorizate

### **Morphological calques**

This kind of calques is more difficult to spot, as they imitate the morphological structure of English, rarely managing to get established as

the norm. More often than not they are perceived as a linguistic error, as they sound awkward and unnatural, trying to bend the Romanian structure according to English models, which is not always feasible and sometimes leads to strange-sounding actualizations. Most instantiations refer to the transitive or intransitive status of the verb, or the prepositional regime of the verb or the adjective, as illustrated below:

*a teme* as a transitive verb

*a reuși* (în a face)

*a lua parte* (în)

*a insista* (pe)

*a se interesa* (despre)

*interesat* (în)

*dezamăgit* (în)

*îngrijorat* (despre)

*a se opri pe* (un subiect)

### **Syntactic calques**

Unnatural occurrences are also obtained in the case of syntactic calque formations, which are seen as imitating the syntactic structure of English in Romanian, resulting in awkward, alien constructions not acknowledged by the Romanian norms. In most cases, they are usually triggered by duplicating the specific English construction Nominative or Accusative + Infinitive (which paradoxically English, but not Romanian, inherited from Latin), as follows:

*I believe him to be a promotor* = Îl cred a fi un promotor.

*I suspect him to be cheating on me* = Îl bănuiesc a mă înșela.

*The autolab is not economical to use as a car* = Autolaboratorul nu este economic a fi folosit ca autoturism.

*The minor is presumed to have capacity as though he were an adult* = Minorul este prezumat a avea capacitate de parcă ar fi adult.

It may well be said that in the examples above it is the use of the infinitive that sounds alien to Romanian, as it prefers the use of a subordinate clause (Direct Object clause, attributive clause, etc.) and greatly restricts the use of infinitival clauses. Similarly, such examples would normally employ impersonal introductory structures, which may make use of the passive-reflexive that is so common in Romanian:

*I believe him to be a promotor* = Cred că (el) este promotor.

*I suspect him to be cheating on me* = Bănuiesc că mă înșală.

*The autolab is not economical to use as a car* = Nu este economic/rentabil să folosești autolaboratorul ca autoturism.

*The minor is presumed to have capacity as though he were an adult.* = Se presupune că minorul are capacitate de parcă ar fi adult.

### **Differences between loans and calques**

In the evolution of the languages in contact it is not a rare occurrence to observe instances when the direct loan and the calque coexist, sometimes with a similar linguistic distribution. Here are just a few examples:

*ufology* → ufologie (direct loan) ozenologie (calque)

*behaviorism* → behaviorism (direct loan) comportamentism (calque)

*skinheads* → skinheads (direct loan) capete rase (calque)

*chewing-gum* → chewing-gum (direct loan) gumă de mestecat (calque)

*supermarket* → supermarket (direct loan) supermagazin (calque)

*pre-recording* → prerecording (direct loan) preînregistrare (calque)

*hot line* → hot line (direct loan) linie fierbinte (calque)

*supershow* → supershow (direct loan) superspectacol (calque)

*teleshopping* → teleshopping (direct loan) televânzare (calque)

The existence of such cases is accounted for by the different approaches taken by the Romanian speakers, some of whom most likely felt the need for further clarification and thus tried to "explicitate" the direct loan by totally or partially calquing it. In any case, the calque seems to lose ground in contemporary Romanian, as more and more pressure is felt from the English language, prevalent in the media. In addition, the younger generations naturally turn to using direct loans, as they generally have a good command of English as a foreign language and no longer require "transparent" terminology.

### **Xenisms**

This pervasive presence of the English loans in present-day Romanian brings us to the issue of xenisms, defined as those borrowings that are incorporated into the target language by means of no phonological or morphological transformation. This phenomenon is explained by Newmark (1988:81) as the translation process of transference, by means of which the target language hosts a source language term, thus becoming a

“loan word”. In his opinion, xenisms show the respect of translators towards the SL culture, but in some cases they may become unnecessary or obscure, as the translator’s task is to translate and, therefore, to explain and convey a clear message to the potential recipients.

However, García-Yebra considers that loanwords and adaptations are not translation procedures, but a reluctance to translate on the translator’s part (García-Yebra, 1984), which tallies in with the common idea that xenisms may be the perfect illustration of the phenomenon of linguistic economy and the “path of minimal resistance” .

### Conclusions

It is quite obvious that Romanian is very prone to enriching its lexicon, especially as far as specialized terminologies are concerned, by means of English calques. Although French seems to be statistically superior in calque production, English is fast claiming superiority in this area, mainly due to the advent of social media and its status as lingua franca, as well as the younger generation of Romanian speakers’s propensity to having a quite good command of English and foreign languages in general. The typology of calques is extremely varied, ranging from simple lexical calques, to more intricate morphological, syntactic and even phraseological ones. However, more often than not calques are a source of linguistic errors in Romanian, because of the dissimilar linguistic structure of the two languages in contact.

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## LA LANGUE ROUMAINE SOUS LA PRESSION DES CALQUES ANGLAIS

**Résumé:** L'article se donne pour but d'examiner les types de calques anglais que l'on trouve à présent en roumain contemporain (lexicaux, sémantiques, morphologiques, syntaxiques, phraséologiques etc.), vus d'une perspective multiple, en essayant de justifier leur dominance actuelle.

**Mots-clés:** *emprunt, langue source, langue cible, xénisme, équivalence.*

**Abstract:** The present paper examines the types of English calques to be found in contemporary Romanian (lexical, semantic, morphological, syntactic, phraseological etc.) from a variety of points of view, trying to account for their dominance.

**Keywords:** *loan, source language, target language, xenism, equivalence.*