

## **Insights into Terminological Anglicisms in ESP Teaching**

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**Abstract:** Having in mind the fact that, due to the powerful and uncontrollable influx of Anglicisms in recent years, terminological Anglicisms in Serbian are predominant in the fields such as economics, IT, sports, as well as in many other specialized fields, the paper investigates the ways how these Anglicisms should be treated and whether their dominance in different fields may facilitate process of vocabulary acquisition in ESP classrooms. The analysis showed that these terms deserve specific attention in the process of vocabulary acquisition in ESP due to various reasons, which are elaborated on in the paper.

**Keywords:** Anglicisms, terms, ESP, teaching

### **1. Introduction**

Due to the powerful and uncontrollable influx of Anglicisms in recent years, the Serbian language is constantly faced with the various linguistic challenges. Some of the issues which are constantly the subjects of linguistic research are related to the influx of Anglicisms in different specialized fields, processes of adaptation of such Anglicisms on different levels of linguistic analysis, terminological standardization, and so on.

This paper focuses on Anglicisms from different perspective – ESP teaching perspective, with the intention to reveal how all those linguistic issues reflect on teaching technical vocabulary in ESP and how terminological Anglicisms, which belong to this part of vocabulary, should be treated in the teaching process, due to their linguistic characteristics. Besides, the paper aims to answer the question: Whether the fact that Anglicisms in Serbian are dominant in the terminology of some

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specific field may facilitate the process of technical vocabulary acquisition in that particular field, due to the fact that most of the terminological Anglicisms are 'widely, even internationally known' as technical terms in different fields.

Initially, the research was triggered by the author's personal experience in teaching Business English to students at the Faculty of Foreign languages – department of English language and literature in Belgrade. These ESP classes, attended by the students who were not in the business field, were constantly bringing the whole range of challenges in the process of terminology acquisition – particularly when it comes to terminological Anglicisms.

Because of that, the authors decided to elaborate on this topic, try to answer the questions posed and propose some ideas which can facilitate acquisition of technical vocabulary in ESP.

## 2. ESP and teaching technical vocabulary

Prior to discussing the circumstances in which ESP classes are taking place, some linguistic challenges related to terminology and ideas which may contribute teaching technical vocabulary in ESP classrooms we will briefly define some ESP terms relevant for this topic, and refer to some relevant research related to technical vocabulary acquisition in ESP, which have been done so far.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) ESP is an approach to language teaching directed 'by specific and apparent reasons for learning'. Teaching vocabulary which is the central part of the research in this paper is only one out of many tasks teachers and students are to deal with in ESP classrooms.

Vocabulary in ESP may be divided into different classes. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 83), for example, divided vocabulary into the following categories:

1. Semi-technical vocabulary: Vocabulary that is used in general language but has a higher frequency of occurrence in specific and technical descriptions and discussions.
2. Technical vocabulary: Vocabulary that has specialized and restricted meanings in certain disciplines and which may vary in meaning across disciplines.

On the other side, Baker (1998: 92) classifies vocabulary as follows:

1. Items which express notions general to all or several specialized disciplines, e.g. *factor, method, function*.
2. Items which have specialized meanings in one or more disciplines, in addition to a different meaning in general language. Term *bug*, in computer science, for instance, is different from *bug* as we know it in everyday use. The same can be said for the term mouse.
3. Items which are not used in general language but which have different meanings in several specialized fields. Term *morphological*, for instance, means different things in linguistics and botany.

4. Items which are traditionally viewed as general language vocabulary, but which have restricted meanings in certain specialized disciplines. For instance, term *corner*, which is used in football.
5. General language items which are used, in preference to other semantically equivalent items, to describe or comment on technical processes and functions. For example, *take place* and *occur* can be considered a subtechnical vocabulary.
6. Items which are used in specialized texts to perform specific rethorical functions. Baker mentions the examples given by Dudley-Evans and St John (1980): ‘One explanation is...’, ‘Others have said’ and ‘It has been pointed out by ...’

Based on the previous classifications, the vocabulary can simply be put into the following three groups: technical, semi-technical and general (academic) vocabulary.

Each part of the vocabulary is of great importance in the teaching process, but the majority of authors claim that the priority in ESP teaching should be given to the academic and semi technical vocabulary, due to their higher frequency of occurrence.

In the article ‘The Role of Vocabulary in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Teaching and Learning’, M. Brooks points out that ‘there are technical words that are quite familiar to learners (even if learners are not studying the specific discipline to which the technical words belong), because the words are widely, even internationally, known’. Examples include *program*, *browser*, *Internet*. However, Brooks points out, that apart from such words, terminology ‘can be beyond ESP teacher’ and ‘[w]hen dealing with technical words, the teacher will need to consider to integrate or skip these words depending on the needs and aims of the learners’. The same author writes about several specific circumstances in which teachers should provide timely help with vocabulary acquisition – ‘when learners are reading specialized texts with a large number of unknown technical words which cannot be ignored by learners because of their close connection with the topic being discussed’, when learners ‘find it a bit difficult to understand general words used as technical words’, ‘if a technical word is not used in the same manner as in student’s native language’, when there is no ‘one-to-one relationship between the terms in English and the learner’s L1’, to mention some of them.

### **2.1. ESP and competence in the subject-specific field**

There are a lot of specific circumstances, which may influence technical vocabulary acquisition and consequently should be taken into consideration when discussing ESP teaching. Being relevant to the context of this research, we will discuss about some of them: teachers’ (technical) competence in the specific field and students’ (technical) competence in the specific field.

It is a well-known fact that ESP teachers usually have no technical expertise in the subject specific field. It may cause some difficulties, particularly when it comes to understanding the meaning of some terms which inevitably reflects on teaching technical vocabulary. Besides, ESP teachers, sometimes even claim that it is not their responsibility to teach technical vocabulary (Barber 1962; Higgins 1966; Cowan 1974). Nevertheless, being the only qualified instructors, they cannot avoid it, which with no knowledge about the specific field – may be quite a challenge (Strevens 1973: 223).

Apart from that, the problems related to vocabulary acquisition in ESP classrooms, may appear when ESP courses are attended by students who are not familiar with the specific field. For example, courses of Business English nowadays are quite often included in the syllabus as the obligatory courses at the English Language Departments, which means that these courses are attended by students who are not familiar with the business field.

Such conditions, i.e. ESP courses taught by the teacher who has no expertise in a specific field and attended by students who are not familiar with the specific field may significantly affect the process of technical vocabulary acquisition. Consequently, in order to achieve successful vocabulary acquisition, it is essential to establish good cooperation between a subject teacher and ESP teacher. Such ESP classes require a lot of engagement of all the participants in ESP classroom.

### **3. ESP and linguistic obstacles in the process of acquisition of technical vocabulary**

Apart from the previously described challenges which may appear in teaching terminology in ESP, problems related to teaching vocabulary may arise because of the terminology standardization issues in the Serbian language and certain linguistic characteristics of the terminological Anglicisms.

#### **3.1. Terminological Anglicisms and standardization**

Whenever terminology standardization in Serbian is discussed, questions related to Anglicisms at some point have to be included. Anglicisms are generally defined as terms borrowed from English as a source language and adopted to the system of Serbian as a target language (Prčić 2005: 120). Their introduction in a language is justified when contributes to brevity and economy of language, and when new lexemes denote a brand new concept that has not existed in the system of the target language (Prčić 2005: 134). Many authors wrote about Anglicisms in Serbian (previously Serbo-Croatian), and phases they went through on their way to the complete integration in a target language, in our case Serbian – e.g. Filipović (1986), Surdučki (1978). Nowadays, this topic is quite popular among Serbian linguists and it seems that new linguistic questions related to Anglicisms constantly appear. The term *terminological Anglicism* in our paper refers to transliterated English word forms

which are used in Serbian as technical terms in a specific field. Nowadays most such word forms are used as international terms in various specific fields in different languages worldwide.

Due to the quick and massive influx of new specialized terminologies along with new developments in different fields the issues of terminological standardization are the latest huge challenge for Serbian linguists, which have to be carefully considered. The situation is the same when it comes to the whole range of different fields such as sport, IT, economy. Unfortunately, the influx of new terms is not followed by the procedures of standardization, which causes difficulties in the terms systems. According to the official Committee responsible for standardization of the Serbian language (Odbor za standardizaciju srpskog jezika), the field of terminology is the most problematic part of Serbian language standard (Brborić, 2006), and deserves specific attention and engagement of both linguists and the experts from the particular field, as well as the engagement of the whole society.

Difficulties and misunderstanding related to new technical terms in everyday communication, particularly in the communication in the specific fields, may be caused by the fact that there are no strict (orthographic) rules which can be applied on every single term, or, which is equally frequent, people are not familiar with the existing ones. For example, original English orthography in the Serbian language is not generally accepted, but in some situations, such forms are still used. For example, *snowboarding* (in sport), *attachment* (in IT) are the terms which are sometimes used in original English word form in Serbian. Such examples are very numerous.

All the terminological issues described above reflect on ESP classrooms. They particularly affect the process of technical vocabulary acquisition. What causes these difficulties is the fact that when terminology is not standardized it is quite a challenge for both students and teachers to use these terms appropriately, which means that they are faced with various dilemmas related to precise meaning, acceptable orthography and so on.

### **3.2. Terminological Anglicisms and synonyms**

According to Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics (1996: 1164) 'in the strictest sense', [synonym is] 'a word or expression that has the same meaning as another word or expression.' Anglicisms as synonyms can be divided into the following groups (Prčić 2005: 147-8):

1. Inertial synonyms (e.g. start vs. početak)
2. Translated synonyms (e.g. beach volley vs. odbojka na pesku)
3. Hypo synonyms (e.g. kompjuter vs. laptop)

As the result of strong English influence on Serbian, the occurrence of terminological synonyms in Serbian is quite frequent and standardization issues, which are previously described, are closely connected to the frequent use of terminological synonyms in different specialized fields. Quite often both Serbian

terms and Anglicisms are used to denote the same concept, which may cause misunderstanding in the specific field.

An ideal term is supposed to have no synonyms. Characteristics, such as preciseness, transparency, systematicity, productivity, concision, frequency are some of the main terms' characteristics, according to some authors (Bugarski 1996: 109; Dubuc 1997: 154-8; Šipka 1998: 128-9). In spite of that, many specialized terms nowadays are synonymous, and they usually appear in the following forms: original English words, transliterated English words, descriptive phrases, Serbian equivalents. Here are some examples: *tag* (engl. tag) vs. *oznaka*; *prilog* vs. *atačment/ attachment* (engl. attachment); *mejl* (engl. mail) vs. *pošta*; *download* vs. *preuzimanje*; *upload* vs. *postavljanje*; *arej* (engl. array) vs. *niz*; *fan* (engl. fan) vs. *obožavalac*; *bandžidžamping* (engl. bungeejumping) vs. *skakanje sa elastičnim konopcem*; *bičvolej* (engl. beach volleyball) vs. *odbojka na pesku*, *het-trik* (engl. hat trick) vs. *tri pogotka istog igrača na utakmici*; *starter* (engl. starter) vs. *igrač u prvoj postavi tima*.

Without relevant (updated) terminological dictionaries available, when faced with some particular terms, teachers may be in doubt how to single out the appropriate equivalent of an English term in Serbian. Being exposed to different terms which denote the same concept (particularly if we are not experts in the specific field) may be quite confusing, for both students and teachers.

In our opinion, when it comes to synonymous terms in ESP classrooms, the best would be to provide all the forms in which some particular concept is given, which means provide every single synonymous term, refer to the form which is justified, point out that terms as a specific part of vocabulary should have certain characteristics, and emphasize that original English orthography should be avoided (according to *Pravopis srpskoga jezika* 2010).

Apart from the standardization issue, which is previously described, there are some other possible pitfalls students and teachers may encounter when it comes to teaching and learning technical terms, i.e. terminological Anglicisms in ESP. Some of them may arise due to not being familiar with false friends and changes in semantic extensions in particular specific fields, which will be explained in the following paragraphs.

### **3.3. False friends and changes in semantic extension**

According to Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics (1996: 405) 'Term [...] 'false friends' denote[s] word pairs from different languages which, in spite of similarities in form, have different meanings. Frequently such similarities lead to interference errors in second language acquisition.'

Whenever it comes to teaching terminology in any specialized field, false friends and changes in semantic extension have to be carefully identified in order to avoid language interference and errors in the process of vocabulary acquisition.

Here are some examples:

The term *reprezentacija* in sports terminology in Serbian is not an equivalent of the English term *representation*. In sports register in English this concept is termed *national team*.

The term *reket* (engl. racquet) in Serbian is used to denote equipment in both tennis and table tennis, but in English, there are two different terms which are used for the same concept in these two sports. They are *racquet* and *bat* respectively. Apart from being used in sport, term racquet is used in criminology, as well.

The lexeme *penal* in Serbian (engl. penalty) borrowed two meanings from English (Mićunović 2002):

- 1) money that is given for failure to fulfill contractual obligations;
- 2) football: 'a *penalty* is a sanction called against a team for a violation of the rules'.

The term *penalty*, in both Serbian and English, is used in some other sports, such as water polo, handball with the same meaning as in football.

Serbian lexeme *rekord* (engl. record), from English borrowed the meaning – the greatest success achieved in some activity, particularly in some competition (Mićunović 2002). Apart from this one, the lexeme record has some additional meanings in English – report, record, archive file, the file, vinyl. Also, it is used as a verb meaning record, record (music, etc.), measure (ESSE 2005).

The focus on these linguistic elements should be present constantly throughout the course and it has to be incorporated in ESP classroom. That can be done by composing ESP Terminological Glossaries during the course.

In order to compose these glossaries appropriately students have to be guided and supported by teacher to use resources such as dictionaries in English and Serbian, Internet resources, talk to professionals from the field. Such an approach and students' active engagement in the activity may raise their awareness of the importance of standard use of terms.

Apart from making their own glossaries, the process of vocabulary acquisition may be enhanced by using pre-compiled word lists, for example, Academic Word List (Coxhead 1998), which includes general academic words which may be useful to ESP students and facilitate process of vocabulary acquisition.

*Serbian-English dictionary of false friends* (1997) (Srpsko-engleski rečnik lažni parova) composed by Serbian linguist Boris Hlebec, which includes numerous examples of false friends from different fields, may be used as a useful teaching material. However, composing additional ESP teaching materials which would include the examples of false friends in relevant ESP fields would be even more helpful for both students and teachers throughout ESP courses.

### **3.4. Results of the analysis**

Based on the previous discussion, the reasons why learning and teaching technical vocabulary, particularly terminological Anglicisms, may be a challenging task are summarized below:

- Most ESP teachers are not experts in the field;
- Some ESP courses are attended by students at the Linguistic Departments, e.g. students of English language and literature, who are not familiar with the specific field;
- Due to quick influx of Anglicisms, new terms which have to be learned at ESP courses haven't gone through the standardization procedures in Serbian;
- There are no enough terminological dictionaries and the data in the existing ones are not updated;
- There are no strict rules when it comes to the use of new Anglicisms, and consequently they are being used according to individual preferences;
- Students are not familiar with the existing rules related to adaptation of English terms in Serbian;
- Certain linguistic characteristics of Anglicisms may cause some misunderstanding and problems in terminology acquisition.

Some suggestions which may contribute the process of terminology acquisition in the specific fields in which Anglicisms are predominant, are listed below:

- Composing terminological dictionaries in different specialized fields, which should be carried out by the relevant institutions, with linguists and experts from the field involved in the process of the terminology standardization;
- Composing special ESP teaching materials which would explain some problematic terminological issues (e.g. false friends, synonyms);
- Regular updating of dictionaries and composing online terminological base of different specialized fields;
- Composing glossaries as the obligatory task for ESP students;
- Developing ESP students' awareness of terminology standardization, as well as developing their critical thinking when it comes to standard use of terms;
- Establishing constant cooperation between subject teachers and ESP teachers.

To put it briefly, in order to achieve successful vocabulary acquisition in ESP the whole range of linguistic and socio-linguistic issues have to be taken into consideration. Certain tasks which should be done in the future with the aim to facilitate technical vocabulary acquisition can be carried out by teachers and students, while some should be assigned to the experts from different fields and responsible institutions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Seeing that vocabulary acquisition goes beyond the level of recognizing the similar word forms in source and target language, it can be concluded that technical vocabulary, particularly terminological Anglicisms, deserve to be very carefully



treated in ESP courses, due to the various reasons which we elaborated on in our analysis.

Being most familiar with linguistic issues related to terminology in specific fields in Serbia, we analysed the potential obstacles speakers of Serbian may encounter in the process of acquisition of English technical vocabulary, (i.e. terminological Anglicisms in Serbian) in ESP classrooms and finally proposed some ideas which may facilitate the process of teaching and vocabulary acquisition in ESP.

We are hopeful that our suggestions, based on the relevant research related to the specialized terminology which has been done so far and our personal experience in the relevant field, may be applied to teaching ESP to speakers of any language in which terminology in the specific field is predominantly, or partially, composed of terms borrowed from English.

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