

“English Loanwords in Informal German”

SUMMARY

Linguistic borrowing is a universal phenomenon that according to the earliest written records has been present in German since the eighth century. However, it was with the growing importance of the British Empire in the nineteenth century that a significant number of English words entered the German language. The language contact between English and German intensified then in the post-war period, as one of the consequences of the political and cultural dominance of the United States. Nowadays, the use of English loanwords in contemporary German can be regarded as one of the effects of globalization and linguistic primacy of English as an international medium of communication.

The present thesis aims to provide a linguistic description of English loanwords in the informal variety of German. It is composed of four chapters, three of which offer a theoretical framework that navigate the readers through the main concepts adopted in the study. Chapter One consists of two main sections that provide an overview of the historical influence of English on German from its early beginnings in the fifth century until the most recent contact. Chapter Two attends to the term ‘Anglicism’ and selected typologies of borrowing applied in previous studies on English and German. Apart from that, it addresses stylistic, pragmatic, and social functions of lexical borrowings. Chapter Three demonstrates that there is a close link between language and social relationships in that it delineates and juxtaposes two concepts of linguistic variation, which are ‘informal language’ in English and ‘Umgangssprache’ in German. Chapter Four explores the usage of 267 lexical units as evidenced by more than 900 quotation examples selected from the German-language press, television shows and series, fiction, textbooks, social media, podcasts, and music. Such a variety of lexical sources attests to the extensive use of English loanwords in informal German and provides evidence for a significant role of the German-language media in popularisation of the borrowed words.

Each lexical unit analyzed in the present study was assigned thematically to one of nine semantic domains. The largest number of English loanwords in informal German was observed in the domain of emotional feelings, states, and attitudes, whereas the least numerous lexical group was represented by English loanwords that refer to body and mind. The layer of meaning covered also dictionary definitions provided by the English dictionary

Lexico, as confronted with definitions included in Duden and DWDS. The contrastive analysis, which aimed to determine semantic relationships between English lexemes used in German and their English equivalents, was based on Ryszard Lipczuk's classification (1985). It was demonstrated that German tends to borrow one selected meaning of an English word. However, among the analysed lexical units were also monosemous words and those related to their English equivalents on the basis of inclusion and equipollence.

Apart from the meaning of the extracted lexical units, the present thesis examined the use of stylistic labels in the dictionary of the English language Lexico and in the dictionaries of the German language – Duden and DWDS. It was shown that the majority of English words has its source in informal English. As far as German dictionaries are concerned, they show considerable inconsistencies in the use of stylistic labels. Another important observation was made with regard to the absence of English loanwords in the dictionaries in question. It was shown that some of lexical units from the data set of the present study has not been included in Duden or DWDS, which may account for either their recent status in the German language or the approach of dictionary compilers towards their inclusion in the dictionary.

The lexical set of the present study includes, in the descending order of their occurrence in informal German, nouns, adjectives, verbs, interjections, and adverbs. The distinctive features of the analyzed words are their monosyllabic and disyllabic forms, as well as their emotive, expressive, playful, or disparaging character. That English loanwords in informal German serve a wide range of purposes, i.e. emotiveness, humorous purposes, brevity, lowering the register, belittlement, familiarity, was illustrated by quotation examples. Discourse markers borrowed from English can express agreement or objection, and introduce a new topic. Rhetorical and stylistic devices used in quotation examples are conceptual metaphor, onomatopoeia, allusion, word play, and antithesis.

The linguistic description of English loanwords in informal German would not be complete without a list of sources (Appendix 1) and a list of lexis (Appendix 2), which comprise an integral part of the present thesis.