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# Communication of Ukrainian Schoolchildren in Social Networks: Linguistic and Pedagogical Aspects

Komunikacja ukraińskich uczniów w sieciach społecznościowych. Aspekty językowe i pedagogiczne

**Summary:** The article presents the study of the influence of network communication on the development of communicative competence in the native language of schoolchildren in the Ukrainian social network environment. It has been verified statistically that the use of English is quite common in the everyday discourse of the higher grade students (ninth through eleventh grades), with the number of English words integrated in their communication in Ukrainian rising with the age of the students. The ways of such integration (anglicism adaptation mechanisms) have been defined (neoderivatives, neoborrowings, neosemanticisms) based on the analysis of Telegram chats of students of the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades. It has also been proved that students do not tend to apply a conscious approach to their use of English words, and thus, when informed of the necessity to preserve the purity of their mother tongue, resume to the choice of Ukrainian words avoiding unnecessary use of English. Specific pedagogical procedures help the students be aware of their communicative competence development in relation to the use of foreign words in their social network interactions.

Streszczenie: W artykule przedstawiono badanie wpływu komunikacji sieciowej na rozwój kompetencji komunikacyjnej w języku ojczystym uczniów w ukraińskim środowisku sieci społecznościowych. Stwierdzono statystycznie, że używanie języka angielskiego jest dość powszechne w codziennym dyskursie uczniów starszych klas (klasy 9–11), a liczba angielskich słów zintegrowana z ich komunikacją w języku ukraińskim wzrasta wraz z wiekiem uczniów. Sposoby takiej integracji (mechanizmy adaptacji anglicyzmów) zostały zdefiniowane (neoderywatywy, zapożyczone słowa, neosemantyzmy) na podstawie analizy czatów w sieci Telegram uczniów klas 9, 10 i 11.

Udowodniono również, że uczniowie nie mają tendencji do świadomego posługiwania się słowami angielskimi, a zatem poinformowani o konieczności zachowania czystości języka ojczystego, przystępują do wyboru słów ukraińskich, unikając niepotrzebnego używania języka angielskiego. Konkretne procedury pedagogiczne pomagają uczniom zdawać sobie sprawę z rozwoju kompetencji komunikacyjnych w zakresie używania obcych słów w interakcjach w sieci społecznościowej.

#### Słowa kluczowe:

sieci społecznościowe, komunikacja w sieciach społecznościowych, adaptacja amglicyzmu, czystość języka ojczystego, kompetencje komunikacyjne

#### Introduction

Our globalized world makes the Internet an integral part of communication practice in society. Social networks, seen as platforms providing specific forms of interpersonal and social communication, have become quite significant in the daily activities of modern people. They have become a tool that helps a large number of global network users gain additional communication and dissemination capabilities. It has been argued that social networks do not only influence the specificity of interpersonal communication, but also change the way communicators use the language. Their great popularity is due to the fact that they provide users an opportunity to conduct a public polylogue, express personal opinions promptly, express views on events and situations, create virtual images, post articles and publications for further public discussion, etc. Under conditions of such promotion of social networks, the language of communication changes, it becomes spontaneous, concise and creative. The relatively new communication environment of social networks generated new ways of communication and created new forms of language existence.

Although we can boast of the appearance of new forms and modes of language and communication (Internet language, netspeak, to name but a few), these novelties and changes often bring about negative influence on language development. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that such influence can be felt in the case of the Ukrainian language, which has experienced the side effects of the popularity of English and American cultures in Ukrainian society.

One of the key factors influencing Ukrainian (as well as other minor languages) through social networks is that the most common language for communication in those services (including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube as the most popular ones) is English. This has been noted, in particular, by David Crystal (2011), Brenda Danet (2001), Simon Davies (2016), MaryAnn Christison and Denise Murray (2014). At the moment, about 80% of all social network users speak English, meaning that there is a rapid increase in the number of non-native English users. On the one hand, as Annika Lantz-Andersson emphasizes, such process encourages social network users to learn English, especially when extremely favourable conditions for learning English as a second language are being created in social network environment (Lantz-Andersson, 2017). On the other hand, this also provokes new tendencies in language development: the influence of English on native languages and the impact the way people use English, its lexical, grammatical, stylistic, punctuation, and other norms, which often resonates with the tendencies of language purity, clogs social network users' native languages with unwanted anglicisms and slang, to name but a few.

In this respect, the situation of the Ukrainian language is exacerbated: it finds itself in a triad of expansive influences – along with English it is also threatened by the Russian-speaking environment in Twitter, Facebook and VKontakte, since the latter language is significantly dominant in comparison with Ukrainian, with only 7% of messages (news, statuses) being published in Ukrainian. Experts at the Kiev International Institute of Sociology say that between 11% and 18% of Ukrainians (which constitutes about five to eight million people) communicate in surzhyk (Shpytalnyi, 2016).

In our study, we have made an attempt to analyze the influence of English on the language preferences of schoolchildren of Ukrainian schools (grades 9-11) and suggest some pedagogical procedures to eliminate the negative impact of globalization processes on the development of minor languages.

Thus, **the goal of the paper** is to investigate the frequency of the use of English borrowings in peer communication of Ukrainian schoolchildren. It also provides some pedagogical solutions for the problem under discussion.

## Theoretical background of the reseach

Social networks, as a unique phenomenon of the twenty-first century, have caused a true revolution in communication. The rapid development of technologies and social lifestyles contribute to the promotion of these communication platforms.

American Internet and communication experts Dana M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison suggest the following definition of social networks:

These are web services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within the system; to list the other users with whom they are in contact; the ability to view the contacts list of those who are on the system. The nature and list of contacts may vary depending on the site. (Ellison & Boyd, 2013, p. 152)

Moreover, social networks are unique because they allow people to create and publicly display their social relationships and bring together users with shared interests.

No doubt the popularity of such new media is explained by a number of its advantages, among which one can single out promptness, the accessible format of the presented information, the public nature and accessibility of the interface, the possibility of the instant and global dissemination of information, the ability of users to express opinions and discuss news. Theoretically, each user can be both the creator of the information and its user.

In addition, there is an idea of the existence of the so-called virtual culture being a new type of culture, formed, on the one hand, at the intersection of conceptual worlds and spheres of different nations, on the other, at the intersection of reality and virtuality as different spaces of human activity, different world images (Kompantseva, 2007).

Naomi S. Baron calls virtual culture the present-day "mainstream" which shapes each personality and the community at large, although the main target of personality changes is that of the culture of the youth. In fact, the vast majority of Internet users are people between the ages of 15 and 40 (though the age range is increasing constantly, both towards younger and older users) serving as the direct carriers of the Internet culture and Internet slang. Baron believes that online communication offers possibilities for unlimited borderless communication and endless opportunities for self-expression or self-presentation by means of social network profiles, allowing the creation of a new image (partly different from the real one), the image of one's "best days" (Baron, 2008, p. 164).

According to Baron, modern American society is significantly influenced by the youth culture, which in turn influences the tastes of adults and the older generation through the mediation of their children, concerning their lifestyle, clothing, hobbies, arts, food, as well as the language. By getting closer to their kids in an attempt to better understand their world, parents imitate their children's speaking style and adopt slang words from the youth vocabulary, which promotes the spread of slang among different age groups (Baron, 2008, pp. 65–71). At the same time, due to globalization, we can say that the Ukrainian society seems to experience similar trends.

Here it is important to mention the benefits of social network communication as seen by their users. In this respect, the ideas of Christian Fuchs can be cited (Fuchs, 2008, pp. 314–315): a) online communication can be completely anonymous. It depends on the environment in which it occurs, as well as the desire of the user (using a real name or just a nickname); b) the ability to create a new image which does not depend on the image in reality; in the online mode a person can become anyone; c) flexibility to participate online which determines the level of connection; d) interest sharing which unites users of similar interest preferences; e) continuity of communication (being offline, the user still is able to read the messages and produce a postponed response); f) organized communication, since there exist specific rules of online interaction; g) synchronization in time and space; h) voluntary participation in networking; i) global scale of communication; j) context free communication which is based solely on printed text and the use of emoticons; k) expressive communication due to the lack of responsibility for the produced discourse; l) fast communication development thanks to anonymity of interaction and the lack of face-to-face meetings; m) unprecedented socialization due to the ability to interact with multiple users at the same time.

Naomi S. Baron, in her book *Always on: Language in an Online and Mobile World*, describes social networks as means of sharing information, a place for users to express themselves and socialize, a chance to create a new image the user would like to see of himself/herself and to be perceived by society (Baron, 2008, pp. 164–165).

The Ukrainian researcher Vera Kaptiurova notes that the main characteristics of discourse in social networks are intertextuality, interactivity, zapping (discontinuity of discourse formation), simulation, performativity, psychological comfort, depersonalization, collective authorship and formation of virtual self-identity. The author also mentions such quality as simulacrum – a phenomenon of imitation that does not really exist. In fact, users of social networks often replace the real with the signs of real, as a result, they live in irrelevant hyperreality. Thus, the Internet and communication in this space seem to be the imitation of a non-existent reality (Kaptiurova, 2013).

#### The impact of English in Ukrainian network communication

The Ukrainian language, like all minor Slavic languages, is significantly influenced by English, and the vast majority of slangisms in the language of social network users (with or without adaptation) come from English.

Ukrainians, for whom English is not their first language, consider it a prestigious language. That is why many speakers, especially young people, are trying in every possible way to borrow some vocabulary items from English, as well as abbreviations they encounter in the speech of social network users. This helps the young people to emphasize their status, to stand out among others, to look smarter and more creative, that is, to express themselves at the expense of their discourse, which is, in fact, one of the key representational factors of a social network user. This phenomenon is typical in the Slavic Internet space: young people overwhelmingly replace native words with English equivalents.

Actually, because online communication is recorded in writing, mistakes made by communicators are visible, although they have more time to think about what they are going to write than they do when talking. Baron talks about the phenomenon of linguistic indifference – "linguistic whateverism," caused by a specific understanding of the language by the young generation of social network users. For them, language is only a means of communication, so they do not pay attention to language rules or grammar. As long as the meaning of the message can be understood by the recipient, the creator of the message will not bother about the language rules that have been violated. In general, the researcher concludes that current trends in the development of language in the Internet media indicate the strengthening of the role of written communication as a representative of informal interaction. The instant messages that most Internet users interact with are, in fact, the same as spoken language (once considered as representative of informal communication), which, however, is recorded in writing (Baron, 2008, pp. 168–171).

Rachmatullina believes that Internet users are trying to attract the attention of readers; that is why they are ready to experiment with the text. Among the most common techniques for modifying the text, the following are distinguished: sound imitation, word reduction, the use of spaces, crossing out, font highlighting, other alphabets, different, often weird characters (Rachmatullina, 2009).

Ukrainian slang network researcher Kaptiurova claims that the use of abbreviations became more relevant with the introduction of a limited number of characters in some social networks, like Twitter. In addition, the popularity of acronyms for communicative efforts can be viewed as a chance to bring online dialogues as close as possible to real-time communication. Some of these abbreviations, being in the active vocabulary of users and active contributors to microblogging, gradually begin to be used by speakers when communicating offline (Kaptiurova, 2011, pp. 208–209). For the most part, abbreviations are used to indicate English phrases, and often are non-adaptable, thus used in their original form: LOL – "Laughing Out Loud," laugh function; BRB – "Be Right Back" – I'll be right back; AFK – "Away From Keyboard"; u2 – "You too"; 4U – "For you" and others.

Therefore, we can assume that the Internet is a new medium that requires a special form of discourse. When communicating online, oral and written speech are closely intertwined, creating a kind of spoken language recorded in writing, densely packed with neologisms, slangisms and borrowings. People try to minimize the time it takes to write or create a message and, at the same time, make it as emotionally intense as possible. Evidence of this can be the popularity of emoticons, visual content, animations and short videos, to name but a few.

# Adaptation methods of English borrowings (anglicisms)

As a result of our own research by means of the analysis of Telegram chats of Ukrainian students in grades 9–11, we were able to find more than 100 English

borrowings (anglicisms) of different nature. Some of the collected words have Ukrainian equivalents, but the English versions are preferred by Ukrainian students.

In the literature, there is a variety of classifications of adaptation of anglicisms in Ukrainian. Kyrylova, in her article *Features of Anglicisms in Modern German and Ukrainian Languages* (Kyrylova, 2013, p. 176), cites the following:

- Neoderivatives new words created in the Ukrainian language system based on irregular word-formation patterns. They dominate among the borrowings that exist in the lexicon of Ukrainian social network users: *aphreidyty* (upgrade), *banyty* (ban), *vebka* (web), *dzhimejlivski* (that of gmail), *serchyty* (search), *spojler* (spoiler), *fejkovyi* (fake).
- Neoborrowings words of English origin adapted to the system of Ukrainian by means of transcription or transliteration: best (best), *hou* (go), *nekst* (next), *noutifikeishn* (notification), *pipl* (people).
- Neosemanticisms words that have acquired a new meaning as a result of borrowing: *like, notebook, stream.*

Other linguists use other terms to indicate the nature of borrowed words: transplants – foreign-language units (expressions, phrases, word forms, morphemes and letters) that are represented by means of a donor language graphic system (Kaptiurova, 2013, pp. 47–57); hybrid composites – a type of barbarisms, the first basis of which is a foreign language in a non-adapted form, mainly in a foreign language graphic system, and the second – a notional word (Kaptiurova, 2013, pp. 19–22).

We use the classification suggested by Kyrylova, since it seems the most elaborately worked out and reveals all the possible cases of adaptation of English borrowings. The words we have collected should then be divided into three groups according to the level of adaptation.

The majority of the collected words are verbs: of the 104 examples collected, 43 are verbs with specific Ukrainian or partly Ukrainian morphological features in the process of adaptation. The second largest group comprises 29 instances of nouns, followed by 13 units of English-language exclamations: *okay* (*ok*, *okay*) – OK; *sorri* (*sori*, *sorian*) – sorry; *kamon* (*kmon*) – come on; *eu* – oh; *enivej* – anyway; *hai* (*hey*) – hi; *senks* (*senks*) – thanks; *kul* – cool; *bai* – bye; *oops*; *rilli* (*rili*) – really; *pliz* (*pls*, *plz*, *plis*) – please; *votsap* – what's up. Another relatively significant group is made up of adjectives and adverbs, six in total: *izichnyi* (easy), *topovyi* (top), *nekst* (next), *sirisli* (seriously), *kulnyi* (cool), *fejkovyi* (fake). Interestingly enough, there is no typical manner of writing down anglicisms: some are written in the

original language, inserted within the Ukrainian tekst, and some are transliterated in Cyrillic letters. The latter principle is mostly applied for phrases (*trai hard* – try hard) which are often spelt together as one word (*traihard*).

**Graphic adaptation.** Adaptation of the physical characteristics of words occurs at the phonetic and graphic levels, which are inextricably linked. It is important that this process proceeds according to certain rules, which results in qualitative, phonetic and graphically acceptable borrowings that do not contradict the language of the recipient.

A typical way of adapting borrowings for the Ukrainian language is transcription, that is, recording the phonetic sound of a language using the letters of the recipient language alphabet. However, it should be noted that due to some differences between the Ukrainian and English phonetic systems, we have noticed the presence of several ways of transcribing certain words, for example: *kamon*, *komon* (come on), *trabl* (trouble), *pipl*, *piipl* (people), etc.

Another way to adapt the graphic words is transliteration. It consists in the mechanical transmission of text and individual words, as described by the graphic system of the donor language, by means of the graphic system of the recipient language. In this case, it is necessary to neglect the sound accuracy of the adapted word: *dezhaviu* (djvu), *sori*, *sorri*, *sorian* (sorry), *rili*, *rilli* (really), *komment* (comment), *sirsli* (seriously), etc.

**Grammatical adaptation.** The process of borrowing and adapting words from English into Ukrainian is quite complicated and interesting because of the genealogical and morphological remoteness of both languages. Thus, in the English language, which refers to the analytic languages, the relationship between words in a sentence is expressed by the functional words and the order the words are arranged in a sentence. Instead, in Ukrainian, which is a synthetic language, the relation between words is expressed precisely by the forms of words in which the word form conveys both lexical and grammatical meaning. Here we consider the meaning of phrases that reproduce the grammatical relations of words. The grammatical adaptation of anglicisms in the system of Slavic languages is most often associated with the category of the gender, less frequently with the category of the number, as well as the conjugation of nouns and adjectives, and verbs.

**Morphological adaptation.** The vast majority of examples collected were adapted precisely by the addition of Ukrainian morphemes to the English bases, mostly by means of suffixation, and less frequently by means of prefixation: *sheryty, sharyty* (to share), *postanuty, postyty* (to post), *kliknuty* (to click),

*livaty* (to leave), *izichnyi* (easy), *yuzery* (users), *zahuhlyty* (to google), *cheknuty* (to check), *helpanit* (help), *apnutysia* (to go up), *spoileryty* (to spoil), *dezinfa* (disinformation), etc.

Having analyzed the ways of adapting borrowed anglicisms at the phonetic, grammatical and morphological levels, we are convinced that these words are easily adapted in the Ukrainian language system, which contributes to their understanding and dissemination among a wide range of social groups. The first level of adaptation that goes through all the borrowed words is the transcription or transliteration of neoderivatives or neoborrowings, and we can observe the dominance of transcription. The most numerous groups of borrowed words are verbs and nouns, as well as adjectives, adverbs and exclamations. Grammatical adaptation is a rather complicated and interesting process due to the morphological and genealogical distance between Ukrainian and English. That is why the most interesting changes occur with the category of gender and number, as well as with the respective declension and conjugation of nouns and verbs. A large proportion of borrowed words are subject to morphological adaptation by means of suffixation and prefixation.

### **Research methodology**

To investigate the frequency of the use of English borrowings in the social network communication of Ukrainian young people, we have analyzed the chats of students of the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades of one of the schools in Lviv, Western Ukraine (with Ukrainian being the language of study). Being located in the west of the country, Lviv can be characterized as a Ukrainian speaking city, so the majority of the schoolchildren would consider Ukrainian as their native (mother) language (out of the 262 participants of the study, there were only three Russian speaking students, two of whom appeared to be studying in Lviv as refugees from eastern Ukraine due to the military conflict with Russia).

The following research questions were formulated: 1) How frequent are the English borrowings in the speech of Ukrainian schoolchildren? 2) Do the schoolchildren realize the consequences of the English language influence on the development of their native language? 3) Do special educational procedures help to rid the native language of unwanted English borrowings?

The total number of students participating in the research was 262 persons: 96 students of the eleventh grade, 93 tenth-grade students of the and 73 ninth-grade students. The chats were provided by the administrators of class Telegram accounts. Calculations were conducted on the basis of the frequency of English borrowings per every 1000 words of chat. Five thousand words in each class chat were analyzed (a total 45,000 words – 15,000 words in each grade group, since there were three classes of students in each grade group).

The results of the analysis are provided in Table 1.

	Grade 9-A	Grade 9-B	Grade 9-C	Grade 10-A	Grade 10-B	Grade 10-C	Grade 11-A	Grade 11-B	Grade 11-C
1 <sup>st</sup> 1000 words	30	22	21	39	44	41	56	52	57
2 <sup>nd</sup> 1000 words	19	23	29	43	40	42	54	52	56
3 <sup>rd</sup> 1000 words	32	28	20	41	41	38	59	58	52
4 <sup>th</sup> 1000 words	28	31	19	41	37	41	54	49	57
5 <sup>th</sup> 1000 words	21	22	27	38	38	43	50	54	50

Table 1The quantity of English borrowings used per each 1000 analyzed words

The mean of the progression of English borrowing usage is depicted in Figure 1.



\*the first row of bars – represents the students of the ninth grade, the second row of bars – those of the tenth grade, and the third row of bars stands for eleven graders.

#### Figure 1.

Mean of the instances of English borrowing usage in three grade groups. Source: own research. On average, almost 2.6% of the lexicon of the nine graders consisted of English borrowings, just over 3% of words from English were traced in the discourse of the students of the tenth grade, and 5.5% of English words were found in the vocabulary stock of the eleven graders.

# Discussion

As can be seen from the data, the students of the older grade groups tend to use more English borrowings in their Telegram chats. This can be explained by their higher proficiency level in English as a foreign language (having received more exposure to English in the course of study), as well as the ability to get access to Internet resources in English (YouTube videos, Telegram channels, Internet websites, etc.) and understand their content with the help of a better developed communicative competence in English.

At the same time, we presume that the use of English borrowings is related to teenage fashion and globalized culture, rather than deliberate avoidance of using native language words but instead – their English equivalents. Thus, we decided to carry out a survey among the students to identify their understanding of the consequences of extended use of English borrowings for the development of their native language. The following were there key questions in the survey:

- 1. Do you like your native language?
- 2. Do you use English borrowings in your communication with peers?
- 3. Do you use English borrowings in your communication with parents?
- 4. Do you use English borrowings in your communication with teachers?
- 5. Do you consider the extensive use of English borrowings in Ukrainian to be a positive or negative tendency for the development of your native language?
- 6. Do you consider the task of helping the Ukrainian language to develop its purity and versatile vocabulary as one you can and will accomplish?

The majority of the surveyed participants gave a positive answer to the first question (97%). Approximately the same number of students confirmed the use of English borrowings in their communication with peers (95% of the respondents), while those who use them talking to parents or teachers where not numerous (15% and 2%, respectively). At the same time, most of the students consider the extensive use of English borrowings in Ukrainian discourse as a negative tendency (89%), again believing that they will accomplish the task

to make Ukrainian pure and rich in its own (rather than borrowed) vocabulary (93% of the survey respondents).

As a result, due to a positive attitude of the students to an attempt to make their native language develop in an efficient way, suggested pedagogical procedures were carried out during lessons of Ukrainian and English. There was also an event organized at school, which draw the attention of the students to the problem under discussion. This was called "A Week of Pure Ukrainian" – it implied that no English borrowings were allowed to be used in any mode of communication, be it real life chats with peers during breaks between the lessons, lesson discourse or virtual chats in Telegram or any other social networks.

After the events had been carried out, another analysis of the students' Telegram chats was conducted. According to its results, the students of the eleventh grade (the graduates) were the most conscientious in following the strategy of purification of the Ukrainian language (they either avoided the use of English borrowings in their chats, or if the cases occurred, they immediately were corrected by the other students): every 1000 words in a post-experiment analysis received from about 10 to 20 word loans in the eleventh grade, from 17 to 29 borrowed items in the tenth grade, which is about five times less in comparison to the pre-experiment analysis. Very similar figures appeared to be true for the ninth graders.

#### Conclusion

The process of globalization has brought about a number of advantages in the life of modern society, though downsides can be traced as well. These can be especially harmful for the development of minor languages, among which Ukrainian can be placed. The results of the study suggest that young Ukrainian speaking children in Ukraine tend to substitute once ordinary and common Ukrainian words with their English equivalents, which is considered to be fashionable in teenage discourse. Moreover, the research shows that such a tendency seems to acquire a systematic character as the students get older, probably due to greater interest in Internet resources in English and their increasing level of English communicative competence. Such extensive use of English borrowings in Ukrainian is believed by Ukrainian linguists to be causing damage to the development of the Ukrainian language. 80 / Liliya Morska, Iryna Simkova

The results of the study also demonstrate that when attention is drawn to the problem of the purity of their native language, the students become more conscious of the problem and the cases of the use of borrowings dramatically decrease in number. This suggests the necessity for school educators to take targeted and determined measures to eliminate the consequences of the unreasonable use of English borrowings in the speech of young citizens of Ukraine, those who are and will be responsible for the proper development of their native language.

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