

# The Influence of English on Hungarian Language from 1950s to the Present Day / Utjecaj engleskoga na mađarski jezik od 1950. do danas

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**Utjecaj engleskoga na mađarski jezik od 1950. do danas**

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## **The influence of English on the Hungarian from the 1950s till the present day**

**Abstract:** This paper investigates the occurrence of English words in the Hungarian language, their acquisition in the Hungarian language, the process of their adaptation (morphological, semantical, grammatical, lexical), and how English came into contact with Hungarian in the modern age. It is a well-known fact that the English language is present almost everywhere. Owing to the internet, globalization, and digitalization, the English language has managed to spread rapidly in the last 70 years and influence many languages around the world. One of these languages is Hungarian. A language that has always been regarded as different with no neighbouring languages being even remotely similar to it. It is also an isolated language as Hungarian neighbors are mostly Slavic countries. This paper aims to prove the growing impact of English on the Hungarian language from the 1950s to the present reflects linguistic growth and socio-cultural shifts due to technology, education, and globalization.

**Keywords:** English, Hungarian, internet, digitalization, influence, language

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## 1 Introduction

Much has changed in the domain of communication in the last 70 years. The Internet was invented, globalization started to thrive, and worldwide connections among people in general have become more accessible. We have become so advanced that we can speak to people on the other side of the globe without issues. To illustrate, a person in China can contact another individual in Brazil and get a response in a matter of seconds. With worldwide communication being as revolutionary as it is, it should come as no surprise that different languages and cultures come into contact with each other every day. This occurrence is very peculiar because there are no rules regarding what languages borrow from each other once they come into contact. To what extent does word borrowing occur? What are the causes? Why does it even occur? Do only similar languages borrow from each other? Does geography matter in language contact? This topic is important because there is so much to uncover and explore. Language contact is a fascinating and complex phenomenon that gives insight into the ever-changing nature of human communication. I decided to research what happens when two completely unrelated languages come into contact and how a more dominant one, English (also *lingua franca* nowadays) influences a language that is exclusive to one country only, Hungarian. This study explores how English, a dominant *lingua franca* with a vast global influence, impacts Hungarian, which is more geographically confined and has a limited international presence. The goal is to provide a deeper understanding of how languages influence each other in our interconnected world.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 English in contact with Hungarian

The 'language contact' phenomenon is surrounded by various types of internal and external language interactions (Rot 1986). These interactions vary from educational bilingualism to regional multilingualism, meaning we have situations such as Hungarian-English bilingualism among students in Hungarian schools and colleges or non-native speakers acquiring the language abroad, for example in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia. Rot's comparative analysis of English and Hungarian language systems reveals numerous common linguistic elements and structural patterns, particularly in their vocabulary and semantics. People sometimes incorrectly label these similarities as Anglicisms, Americanisms, Canadianisms, or Australianisms in Hungarian and Hungarianisms (Magyarisms in English). The most common example of an accidental phenomenon is the word *house*, the word used for a building for human habitation. In English, we call it 'house' and in Hungarian 'ház'. There are also common structural and morphological phenomena that are part of both English and Hungarian language tendencies, for example, words with similar meanings in both languages exhibit structural analogy in their formation. In English, the word "to touch" can mean both physical contact "he touched my hand" and emotional impact "it touched me to the heart". Likewise, the Hungarian word "érint" also covers physical contact ("A gyerek érintette az arcomat") and emotional significance ("ez engem közlelről érint"). These examples illustrate the phenomenon where words share similar semantic structures across languages. Rot also discusses linguistic interference between the two languages which primarily affects Hungarian and to a lesser extent English vocabulary. Three types of lexical borrowing occurred: 1) Loanwords: direct borrowing of words from American English such as hippy or hippie (an unconventionally behaving young person), written in Hungarian as hippi. 2) Lexical

penetrations: word borrowing where the concept already had a native term, such as team (group of people working together) where the original Hungarian term was csoport. 3) Lexical calques which in essence are loan translations: Structural-semantic loanwords that are a direct translation of a phrase, for example: hideg (cold) + háború (war) = hidegháború (cold war). Hybrid translation loanwords: fusing foreign and native elements, such as flanelling (flannel shirt) from the English word flannel and the Hungarian word ing (shirt). Semantic translation loanwords: expanding the meaning of an existing word, such as daru (type of bird, crane) to mean a machine for lifting weights on a construction site. Many linguists argue that language purists prefer loan translations over direct borrowing to protect their native language from foreign influences (Rot 1986).

## 2.2 English loans in Hungarian

In spite of purism, languages cannot be regulated, and therefore direct borrowing can occur at any rate. There are countless examples: "blézer" from "blazer," "bikini" from "bikini," "dzseki" from "jacket," "short" from "shorts," "forró nadrág" from "hot pants," "szendvics" from "sandwich" (named after John Montague, Earl of Sandwich), "hot dog," "pop corn," "tonik" from "tonic," and "grill" from "grill." A pattern that can be observed here is that all the mentioned words are relatively new additions to the Hungarian lexicon, correlating with the invention of new concepts and objects that did not previously exist. We also have cultural terms that were borrowed from English. Examples: "klub" from "club," "show" from "show," "bugi-vugi" from "boogie-woogie," "rock and roll" from "rock and roll," "szving" from "swing," "sci-fi" from "science fiction," "pop-dal" from "pop song," "opművészet" from "op-art," "hifi" from "hi-fi," "bitnik" from "beatnik," "disc jockey" from "disc jockey." Also scientific and

technological terms: "lézer" from "laser," "radar" from "radar," "pace-maker" from "pace-maker," "crossbar" from "cross bar," "inzulin" from "insulin," "vécé" from "water closet," "dzsip" from "jeep," "buldózer" from "bulldozer," "komputer" from "computer," "bit" from "bit (of information)," "xerox" from "Xerox," "dömper" from "dumper," "fekete doboz" from "black box," "műhold" from "man-made moon." Rot listed only a couple of them, of course, a number of loanwords today is much higher with new concepts and stuff being invented every day.

### 2.3 English verb borrowing in Hungarian

Vishogradska (2017) discusses the adaptation of English verbs into Hungarian, focusing on a strategy where the borrowed lexemes usually end in the verbalizing suffix -l (-ol, -el, -öl). This process often results in anti-harmonic verb forms that go against the typical Hungarian vowel harmony rules where the choice of suffix should match the root vowel's harmony. Some examples are: "to bleed" - "blíd-ol", "to feed" - "fid-ol", "to print" - "print-el", "to dance" - "danz-el", "to check" - "csekk-ol", "to flame" - "flém-ol", "to click" - "klikk-ol" or "klikk-el", "to save" - "szév-ol" or "szév-el". The enigma here is whether this pattern is used to distinguish borrowed verbs from regular ones, whether it is an accidental occurrence or a language trend. It is worth mentioning that once they are integrated into the Hungarian language, the additional suffixes start following the vowel harmony properly. For example:

"blíd-ol" > "blíd-ol-ok" (1st person singular, present indicative)

"fid-ol" > "fid-ol-ok"

"print-el" > "print-el-ok"

"densz-el" > "densz-el-ok"

"csekk-ol" > "csekk-ol-ok"

"flém-ol" > "flém-ol-ok"

"klikk-ol" or "klikk-el" > "klikk-ol-ok" or "klikk-el-ek"

"szév-ol" or "szév-el" > "szév-ol-ok" or "szév-el-ek"

Additionally, some originally Hungarian words do not follow the vowel harmony, such as könyv-ek (not könyv-ök) or füst-ek (not füst-ök). With this in mind, it is apparent that defying vowel harmony is a characteristic shared among original Hungarian words and recently added loanwords. Vishogradska (2017) says that there is a need for further investigation to clarify things. It is completely true, however, the additional research should be postponed by a couple of years. New verbs borrowed from English need time to adapt to Hungarian orthography and the larger the number of verbs, the higher the chance to spot patterns shared among them. Eventually, it should become clearer how English verbs adapt to Hungarian and why their disregard for vowel harmony is a recurring issue. Hungarian, unlike English, is an agglutinative language, meaning it creates complex words by adding many suffixes to a root. This leads to a rich nominal and verbal morphology. When it comes to verbs in Hungarian, the language uses a range of suffixes to convey derivation, inflection, and aspectual meanings. Derivational suffixes are used to create new verbs from existing words or to convert the meaning of a verb. Lastly, the interaction between borrowed verbs and vowel harmony should be the focus point for future research on this topic. Vishogradska (2017) provided a starting point for understanding how languages influence each other in a bilingual context.

## 2.4 Codeswitching in Hungarian/English

Codeswitching and word borrowing are two different concepts. Codeswitching occurs when a speaker uses a certain English word in a sentence with minimal phonological adaptation, while word borrowing refers to words being fully integrated into the Hungarian language, phonologically, morphologically, and orthographically. We know that the suffix -l (-ol, el, öl) is used when word borrowing occurs, and now it has the same role in codeswitching. A couple of examples are:

- "cover-ol-ja" ([it] covers [it])
- "el-explain-el-ni" (to explain)
- "fel-pick-ol-t-am" (I picked him up)
- "fel-réz-ol-t-am" (I raised up)

Bolonyai (2005) claims for a foreign word to be used in Hungarian, it must be compatible with Hungarian grammar on three levels: 1) Lexical-conceptual structure (semantic and pragmatic features) 2) Predicate-argument structure (thematic role assignment) and 3) Morphological realization patterns (surface structure properties). The process usually involves shorter English verbs due to practicality in everyday speech:

- "born-ol-t-am" (I was born)
- "ki-found-out" (he/she found out)
- "turn-ol-t" (it turned out)
- "take-t-unk" (we took)

According to Bolonyai (2005), the process of adding the -l (-ol, el, öl) suffix dates back to the 9th century when the Hungarian started borrowing words from Slavic and Latin languages. In modern Hungarian, the structure remains: English verb stem + Hungarian verbalizer + obligatory Hungarian inflections. Some of the examples:

- order-ol-t ('he ordered')
- decide-ol-hat-sz ('you can decide')
- rent-ol-ja ('he rents')

There are also those which have adapted the morphology to suit the Hungarian language. Such as:

- park-ol ('to park')
- szkenn-el ('to scan')
- sopping-ol ('to shop')

The integration of English verbs into Hungarian through codeswitching and word borrowing shows how languages evolve and absorb characteristics from one another while maintaining their original structures and identities.

## 2.5 English words in Hungarian professional communication

Despite the internet being functional for over 70 years, businesses found it unusable until 1994 due to legal and technological barriers. Since 1994, online marketing has been developing rapidly, with its terminology primarily being distributed in English. This newly made English terminology significantly influenced the Hungarian language used in online marketing, leading to the English terms finding their way into Hungarian professional communication (Polcz 2017). One reason for this substantial use of English terms in English-Hungarian online

marketing could be that online dictionaries and glossaries haven't prioritized inventing the Hungarian equivalents due to the English ones being widely accepted. Regarding the lack of Hungarian equivalents, phenomena such as code-mixing (blending English and Hungarian) and double coding (using English and Hungarian terms together) are very prevalent in Hungarian professional communication. Even though the research on the influence of English on Hungarian terminology is still rather limited, it explored various areas including medicine, IT, chemistry, finance, marketing, and wellness. Kis (1993) analyzed advertisements in the Hungarian IT journal *Számítástechnika* and discovered that English influences at least 90% of Hungarian IT terms which were used in those advertisements. He observed the parallel use of English and Hungarian terms as synonyms and came to the conclusion that the extensive use of English words in this field is almost inevitable, yet completely natural. Regarding marketing, Szabó (2010) noticed hesitation among professionals in translating English marketing terms into Hungarian. This may be due to the high risks of mistranslation and misinterpretation. He emphasized the need to find suitable Hungarian equivalents to establish clear communication and advocated for the standardization of Hungarian marketing technology. Regarding medicine, Keresztes (2003) examined medical terminology in Hungarian lectures, textbooks, and journals, discovering that English terms are commonly used, particularly in professional journals and lectures. She noticed that the textbooks often provide Hungarian equivalents alongside English terms, while semi-professional journals prefer avoiding English terms. Interviews with medical professionals revealed generation differences in attitudes toward the use of English in their field. Younger and middle-aged professionals accepted English terms for their precision, accuracy, and clarity, while older generations were concerned with preserving Hungarian terminology. In another study, Keresztes (2007) examined translations by students, showing that English had a massive grammatical, orthographical, and lexical influence on Hungarian medical texts. She observed the presence of loan translations and



concluded that medical language is especially prone to borrowing words from English. In the case of finance, Vargáné Kiss (2007) inspected the financial documents of HVB (Central-European International Bank) and recognized various forms of borrowing from English, alongside international loanwords from Greek and Latin. She concluded that word borrowing has two purposes: filling lexical gaps where no Hungarian equivalent exists and using English terms to attract customers' attention. Concerning wellness, Fóris and Bérczes (2006) claim the problem is not the use of borrowed terms, but the absence of clear definitions which can often lead to confusion and misuse of certain terms.

Linguists and terminologists agree that dominant languages, like English, heavily influence the terminology of lesser-known languages, such as Hungarian. Another instance where this is evident would be in a marketing journal *Kreatív*. Even though the journal is aimed at professionals, one of its characteristics is that a broader audience of non-professionals can also read it. The Hungarian text contains various English terms like "inbound marketing," "lead generation," and "leads" in combination with some Hungarian elements. This code-mixing where two languages are used in the same sentence can make it difficult to discern which terms are already well-integrated in the Hungarian language and it might confuse non-professional readers. Terms such as "marketing" and "generálás" (generation) will in most cases be understood by educated non-professionals, but other terms like "inbound," "lead," and "nurturing" might pose a problem. Double coding is also present in *Kreatív*. In one instance, the word "lead" is later replaced with the Hungarian equivalent "potenciális érdeklődő" (prospect), and "lead nurturing" is rephrased as "gondozni kell őket" (they have to be catered to). According to Kotler and Armstrong, the terminology in online marketing comes from three sources: 1) Business and economics – includes terms from traditional offline marketing, for example "ad space," "cross-selling," and "conversion". 2) Information Technology – terms like "cookie," "crawler," and "search engine" come from the field of IT, reflecting the technical

aspects of online marketing. 3) Online Marketing-Specific Terms – jargon unique to online marketing such as "landing page," "click-through rate," and "sticky" are necessary for understanding and measuring online marketing efforts. The high frequency of word borrowing in technological fields raises important questions for language learning and translation. The most important one is whether or not to translate newly invented English terms into the target language. On one hand, it can be useful to translate these terms because then it can reach a broader target audience in their mother tongue. Those who are not educated enough or have a harder time understanding English can find these translations extremely useful and in most cases necessary for understanding. This poses a question about the quality of translation. We have already examined the problems with translating newly invented words in Hungarian. The first problem that arose was that the translation needed to be accurate and be practical. In the case of "lead," it was evident that there is almost no point in using the Hungarian equivalent "potenciális érdeklődő". The term is simply too long and impractical, meaning that probably the best a native speaker can do is to educate themselves enough to understand the basics of English and to become familiar with the English equivalent of the terms in the field they are working in. The term "lead" is shorter, easier to pronounce, and more memorable than its Hungarian equivalent. Furthermore, it also adapts well to Hungarian word formation rules which leads to its common use in lectures and specialized texts. The word "lead" is considered to be more precise and clear, creating a much smoother communication. In online marketing, the term "lead" particularly refers to information provided by website visitors that allows marketers to come in contact with them, whereas the Hungarian term "potenciális érdeklődő" is more general and could cause confusion without already provided context.

## 2.6 Minority communities outside of Hungary and their Hungarian

The study of language contact and its effects on minority languages in diaspora communities is a fascinating and complex topic within the field of sociolinguistics. Examining how Hungarian as a minority language adapts and changes in English-speaking environments like Australia and New Zealand is valuable because it gives insight into the dynamics of language preservation, change, and identity of immigrant communities. One especially interesting aspect is the focus on loan shifts where Hungarian words change meanings under the influence of English. This depicts the deep interaction between languages and how speakers view meaning across cultural and linguistic boundaries. It also brings important questions about the future of minority languages in such contexts, whether they are going to maintain their individuality or gradually, over time, converge with the dominant language, in the case of this paper - English.

The use of the Hungarian National Corpus to compare standard Hungarian with its diaspora variation is a reliable method for this kind of research (Forintos, 2015). Her paper investigates the functioning of the Hungarian language (L1) among two minority groups living in Australia and New Zealand which are English-speaking environments (L2). The study is based on the language contact situation where Hungarian immigrants are surrounded by predominantly speakers of English language. Forintos (2015) discusses the importance of studying written language in the context of language contact research which in most cases tends to prioritize spoken data. Typically linguists have undervalued written language despite its long tradition of mixing. Kurtböke (1998) criticizes this bias and emphasizes the need to explore written language to gain a fuller understanding of language contact phenomena, especially in the 21st century. The paper argues that written discourse, particularly in community newspapers of minority groups, offers valuable insights into general language use. Newspapers can be used as a solid basis for linguistic studies, with community newspapers being suited for examining minority language use in different countries. Specifically, the study is centered around the

Hungarian migrant groups in New Zealand which have not been as thoroughly studied as the Hungarian communities in other countries. In order to expand knowledge on this topic, the paper analyzes written language samples from *Magyar Élet* (MÉ) which is the Australian-Hungarian newspaper and the online board *Magyar Szó* (MSz) which is based in New Zealand.

The number of community language publications tends to decline, often depending on new immigration waves, meaning that these newspapers are crucial for the preservation of the Hungarian language in smaller communities. It is worth noting that some newspapers' Hungarian is written as it was at the time of the group's migration, with editors sometimes acting as purists with the purpose of maintaining language standards. According to Winford (2003), lexical borrowing is part of a broader creative process of lexical change that happens under contact with other languages, using both native and foreign resources. This process can often involve the selective adoption of foreign forms, giving them new meanings or integrating foreign concepts into native linguistic structures. Some results of lexical borrowing are innovations with no direct counterparts in the donor language, blending native and foreign materials. Furthermore, Matras (2009) presents three key presumptions about borrowing: it is influenced by the degree of exposure to language contact, the structural similarities and differences between languages, and the inherent properties of the affected linguistic categories. These three factors can help explain why certain elements of a language are more likely to be borrowed. Matras (2009) claims that borrowing involves long-term or permanent integration of a word or structure into the recipient language, making it convenient in a broader range of contexts. Moreover, Haugen (1950) established the difference between "important" (adopting foreign forms) and "substitution" (replacing foreign elements with native ones), which remains crucial. Winford (2003) classifies lexical borrowing into loanwords and loanshifts. Loanwords involve the importation of foreign morphemes with minimal changes, while loanshifts involve a mix of foreign and native elements, such as derivational blends (foreign stems with native

affixes) or compound blends (foreign and native stems combined). Loanshifts can be grouped into various subtypes:

- 1) Semantic loans: when a native word takes on a new meaning derived from a foreign counterpart. One example is the Hungarian word “regisztrál” (to register) which traditionally means “to record” but has extended its meaning to include “to recognize” due to the influence of the English word “to register” which is connected to formal or legal certification.
- 2) Loan translations (calques): direct translations of foreign expressions using native words. For example, “hivatalos órák” in Hungarian is a calque of the English phrase “office hours”, even though the standard Hungarian expression would be “félfogadás” or “fogadóóra.”

Winford (2003) also discusses creative word formation as a by-product of lexical borrowing.

These can be divided into:

- 1) Pure native creations: Winford elaborates on Haugen’s classification by identifying “creative” word formation” as another outcome of lexical borrowing. Native creations involve using native words innovatively to express foreign concepts. For instance, “hétvégi magyar iskolákban” (in weekend Hungarian schools) uses native words to illustrate the foreign concept of weekend schools.
- 2) Hybrid creations: blending native and foreign morphemes to express foreign concepts. A great example would be “microwave sütő” (microwave oven), where “microwave” is borrowed from English and “sütő” is the native Hungarian word for oven.

- 3) Creations using only foreign morphemes: terms made entirely from foreign elements but used within the native language context. Originally this category was not included by Haugen but rather added by Winford.

It is worth noting that in modern discussions, the differences made by Haugen are rarely used, with most references simply discussing “borrowing” or “loanwords” without differentiating between types. Overall, this analysis gives us insight into subtle yet important changes in the lexicon of a minority language, commonly mixing native and foreign elements in inventive ways.

## Conclusion

To sum up, this research gives insight into the complex dynamics of language contact, specifically between English and Hungarian. The word borrowing is revealed to be strongly influenced by various factors such as context and individual preference. Some English words are integrated into Hungarian to the point of becoming more popular than the Hungarian terms themselves while others did not reach the same level of prevalence. The study showed the interaction English and Hungarian have and also the influence of a dominant language on a geographically restricted one. By examining a couple of examples of word borrowing, we now have valuable insight into word adaptations and orthography of the Hungarian language. However, as language is never static and evolves day by day, a lot more research is needed to fully grasp complex terms such as word borrowing and codeswitching. One of the key findings is that English words have a formula while adapting into Hungarian. The requirement is for them to fit Hungarian grammatical structure and that is why the derivational suffix *-l* (*-ol*, *-el*, *-öl*) is always used, in a way conforming to the language's agglutinative nature and to prepare

the new words so additional suffixes may be added to it. Also, some professionals often hesitate to translate English terms into Hungarian due to the risk of wrong translation and they also possibly have a preference for the clarity of English equivalents. Studies have shown that in fields such as medicine and IT, English has a very strong influence, to the point of some professionals even being concerned about preserving Hungarian language. The study examined the challenges of translating new English terms into Hungarian, often finding that the English terms are more practical, easier to use, and better integrated into professional communication. This study hopefully contributed to a broader understanding of word adaptation and borrowing, as well as codeswitching in bilingual contexts since a person does need a certain level of bilingualism and understanding of another language for codeswitching to occur properly.

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