

CULTIVATING THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION – NO TO ANGLICISMS?

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Abstract

Borrowing English words has become quite common in many world languages, and Croatian is no exception. Despite the great benefit of borrowing foreign words that contribute to easier communication with people from all parts of the world, improve language and society, and offer the possibility of easier employment, such words threaten the originality of the language that accepts them and represent the danger of losing significant parts of that language. Languages have never been static and have always been changing. Today, we use foreign words without feeling that we are destroying our mother tongue while ignoring the norms of the Croatian language. In order to preserve the mother tongue and to contribute to its cultivation, the author of this paper investigates the awareness of using English versus Croatian words in business communication, with an emphasis on professional terminology. The research was conducted among the students of the Business Department of the Polytechnic “Nikola Tesla” in Gospić, based on a questionnaire compiled for the purpose of the research. The assumption is that the majority of students use English words, almost accepting them as Croatian words, without giving too much thought to preserving our language and its cultural significance, which was later confirmed by the analysis of the survey questionnaire.

KEYWORDS: *Croatian language, anglicisms, professional terminology, business communication, students*

Introduction

In an era marked by globalised business exchanges, the role of language in communication cannot be overstated. Preserving and nurturing the Croatian language in business communication is pivotal for Croatia, a nation rich in cultural heritage and linguistic uniqueness. It is an inevitable reality that today all languages are to some extent under the influence of the English language, and “there is no language that can escape that influence ever” (Kovačec 2004: 61). Speaking of the influence of English as the dominant language, Drljača reminds that it has prevailed in the second half of the 20th century, with the development of public communication means and strong computerisation on a global level. Furthermore, she says that “economic terms are the one area that is lexically more susceptible to the influence of the English language than others, and as Croatia has joined the world market, it is gradually becoming a part of its economic expansion, to which it is adapting” (Drljača 2006: 65).

This paper delves into the imperative of cultivating Croatian linguistic identity within the business sphere by advocating a reduction in the use of anglicisms. It aims to underscore the significance of maintaining Croatian linguistic integrity in the dynamic world of business. On the other hand, Opačić highlights that “some authors speculate that the greater use of anglicisms is the result of laziness, fashion, or servility“ (Opačić 2012: 6).

1. Language as a Pillar of National Identity

Language, more than a mere tool for communication, stands as a foundational pillar of a nation's identity. For Croatia, a country with a rich tapestry of historical narratives and cultural nuances, the Croatian language is not merely a means of conveying thoughts but a living testament to its sovereignty, resilience, and unique heritage. It encapsulates the collective wisdom, shared experiences, and the very essence of what it means to be Croatian. The Croatian language holds the power to unite the diverse regions and communities that form the nation. Its roots run deep in Croatia's historic fabric, embodying centuries of linguistic evolution influenced by various historical, political, and cultural factors. Each linguistic transformation marks a chapter in Croatia's historical journey, from the medieval Glagolitic script to the

standardised modern Croatian language. In the context of business communication, the language becomes a poignant expression of national pride and identity. The choice to communicate in Croatian extends beyond a practical decision - it is a deliberate act that reaffirms a commitment to cultural continuity and distinctiveness. When Croatian businesses employ their native language, they not only convey information but also transmit a deeper message about who they are, about their values and their connection to the broader Croatian community. One of the unique aspects of the Croatian language is its capacity to encapsulate the spirit of the nation. It is not merely a tool for transactional exchanges but a carrier of cultural nuances, traditions, and the collective consciousness of the Croatian people. From the poetic beauty of its expressions to subtle regional variations, the Croatian language serves as a mosaic reflecting diversity within unity, a mosaic that defines the Croatian identity. Furthermore, the language serves as a marker of historical continuity. The preservation of Croatian in the face of external influences and historical challenges is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Croatian people. In business communication, the use of Croatian becomes a bridge that connects the contemporary business landscape with the historical roots of the nation. An effective communication is the cornerstone of successful professional relationships in today's globalised business landscape. However, concerns have arisen in recent years regarding the growing prevalence of anglicisms in Croatian business communication, leading to the potential dilution of the native language. Some people believe that anglicisms are necessary to communicate effectively in the modern business world, while others view their use as a threat to the purity and integrity of the Croatian language. Babić points out that "other people's language should be used only for the concepts that we literally do not have good substitutes for in our language and/or we cannot easily create them" (Babić et al. 2000: 56). *Prestige* is a frequently used word when we speak about English, and according to Perić and Škifić, "the prestige of English is fairly obvious and understandable as it has become the dominant language in the world today" (Perić, Škifić 2015: 80). However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of promoting the use of the Croatian language in business communication. In the globalised arena, where English often takes the spotlight as the *lingua franca* of business, the decision to uphold Croatian in business communication becomes a conscious choice to resist linguistic homogenisation. It is a declaration that, even in the realm

of commerce and trade, the Croatian language remains an integral part of the nation's identity and an asset that distinguishes Croatian businesses on the international stage. In essence, a language, especially the Croatian language, transcends its utilitarian function. It is an inseparable part of the cultural heritage, a living repository of shared memories, and a dynamic force that shapes and reflects the national identity of Croatia. As businesses navigate the intricate terrain of global markets, the conscious decision to prioritise the Croatian language becomes not just a linguistic choice but a commitment to preserving and perpetuating the very essence of what it means to be Croatian.

2. The Pervasion of Anglicisms in Croatian Business Communication

In the dynamic landscape of global business, the pervasion of anglicisms in Croatian business communication reflects a complex interplay between the demands of international trade and the preservation of linguistic identity. Anglicisms, or the adoption of English terms and expressions, have become an integral part of the business lexicon worldwide. In Croatia, as in many countries, this linguistic phenomenon presents both challenges and opportunities, prompting a critical examination of its impact on communication, professionalism, and cultural identity. The influence of English on the Croatian language is very strong, and Perić and Škifić claim that this influence “goes beyond anglicisms because some English loanwords have been adapted to the language system and can therefore be tolerated. Discussions and debates are mainly focused on the growing number of unadapted English words and phrases which are used arbitrarily, despite the numerous Croatian alternatives that Croatian native speakers have at their disposal” (Perić, Škifić 2015: 84). One of the primary drivers behind the influx of anglicisms is the globalisation of business. As Croatian companies engage in international transactions, collaborations, and negotiations, the use of English as a *lingua franca* becomes almost inevitable. English, with its status of a global business language, often serves as neutral ground for communication among professionals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, Croatian professionals may find themselves incorporating anglicisms to align with international business norms and facilitate smoother interactions. However, this

adoption of anglicisms is not without consequences. While the intention may be to enhance clarity and align with global business practices, an overreliance on anglicisms can lead to the erosion of the linguistic richness that Croatian brings to the communication table. Balenović and Grahovac-Pražić explain it very directly when they say “we don’t care if there is a word for it in the Croatian language, but the assumption is that everything in English is better, more precise, smarter” (Balenović, Grahovac-Pražić 2016: 142). The subtle nuances, cultural connotations, and historical resonances embedded in the Croatian language risk being diluted when supplanted by English terms that might lack the same depth of meaning. The influence of anglicisms extends beyond semantics; it shapes perceptions and contributes to the formation of professional identities. In the realm of business, a language is not merely a tool but a symbolic representation of professionalism and competence. The pervasive use of anglicisms may create an impression of modernity and international savvy, but it also poses a challenge to the authentic representation of Croatian businesses. Striking a balance between international professionalism and the preservation of linguistic identity becomes a delicate art that requires careful consideration. Moreover, the pervasion of anglicisms introduces a layer of complexity to communication within Croatia itself. As English-derived terms infiltrate daily business discourse, there is a risk of creating a linguistic divide between those proficient in English and those who are not. This potential exclusionary dynamic within the business community may inadvertently create barriers, hindering effective communication and collaboration among Croatian professionals. The use of anglicisms, therefore, demands a nuanced approach. While some argue that it is a pragmatic response to the demands of the globalised business world, others emphasise the importance of preserving the authenticity and cultural identity embedded in the Croatian language. The challenge lies in navigating this linguistic tightrope - maintaining international relevance while ensuring that the Croatian language remains a vibrant and integral part of business communication. It is to be concluded that the pervasion of anglicisms in Croatian business communication reflects the intricate dance between the demands of a globalised business environment and the imperative to preserve linguistic and cultural identity. While the adoption of English terms is an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of the business world, a mindful approach is required to ensure that the Croatian language retains its depth, nuance, and authenticity in the professional

sphere. Balancing the global and the local is not just a linguistic challenge but a nuanced negotiation that shapes how Croatian businesses are perceived on the international stage.

2.1. Linguistic Homogenisation

The pervasive use of anglicisms contributes to a form of linguistic homogenisation where diverse linguistic expressions are gradually being replaced by a more standardised set of English-derived terms. This trend, if left unchecked, may erode the linguistic diversity within the Croatian business communication, diminishing the richness that linguistic variety brings to professional interactions. In navigating these challenges, businesses must recognise the importance of fostering a linguistic environment that values both international professionalism and the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage. Striking this balance requires a strategic and mindful approach, one that promotes an effective communication while embracing the unique linguistic tapestry that defines Croatia. By addressing these challenges head-on, businesses can create an inclusive and culturally resonant environment, where effective communication thrives and professional relationships flourish.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim of the research and the assumption

In order to preserve the mother tongue and to contribute to its cultivation, this paper aims to examine the awareness of using English words in business communication, with an emphasis on professional terminology. The assumption is that the majority of students deliberately use English words in business communication, although there are proper terms in Croatian, without giving too much thought to preserving the Croatian language and its cultural significance.

3.2. Sample and instrument

The research included 50 active full-time and part-time Business Department students of the Polytechnic “Nikola Tesla” in Gospić, students of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year. The instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of 12

multiple-choice questions, questions with three or four response options, created by the author of the paper. The research was anonymous and was conducted in January 2023 on the premises of the Polytechnic “Nikola Tesla” in Gospić during regular classes.

3.3. Discussion of the results

The students were asked to choose one out of three or four options for twelve given questions. An analysis of their responses has produced the following results, discussing all of the questionnaire’s questions:

Q1: How often do you use anglicisms in your business communication?

The students’ answers to this question reach a high 80 % in frequent use of anglicisms in business communication, 10 % answered they use them occasionally, and 10 % answered they use them rarely. This majority (80 %) suggests that a significant portion of the surveyed students use anglicisms regularly in their business communication, which could imply a high level of familiarity and comfort with incorporating English terms into their professional language. Possible reasons for such high-frequency usage might include the influence of global business practices, exposure to English language materials, or a perception that using anglicisms enhances professionalism. The 10 % of the respondents who indicated occasional use of anglicisms may represent a group that selectively incorporates anglicisms in specific contexts or situations. This group might find that using some English terms adds clarity or emphasis to their communication without making it the predominant style. The 10 % who answered they use anglicisms rarely might be more inclined towards using their native language or avoiding anglicisms in favour of a more traditional or culturally rooted communication style. This group may see value in preserving linguistic traditions and avoiding potential misunderstandings that can arise from using foreign terms.

Q2: Which of the following best describes your level of awareness regarding the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication?

Here we find out that 70 % of the respondents are well aware of using anglicisms instead of Croatian words, while the remaining 30 % of the respondents use them without thinking about their origin. This majority (70 %) indicates

that a significant portion of the surveyed group is conscious of using anglicisms in their business communication. They likely recognise the origin of these terms as English and consciously choose to incorporate them into their Croatian language. The 30 % of the respondents who use anglicisms without thinking about their origin suggest an interesting perspective. This group may perceive these English-origin terms as integral parts of the Croatian language, blurring the distinction between anglicisms and Croatian words.

Q3: How important do you think it is to use Croatian words and phrases in business communication?

More than half of the respondents, 60 % of them, say it is not important at all, the remaining 35 % say it is somewhat important, and only 5 % say it is moderately important. The majority of the respondents, comprising 60 %, indicate that they do not consider it important to use Croatian words and phrases in business communication. This suggests a prevailing sentiment that linguistic purity or adherence to traditional language norms might not be a significant concern in professional settings. The 35 % of the respondents who find it somewhat important might suggest a nuanced view. This group may see value in incorporating Croatian words and phrases to some extent, possibly for cultural representation or maintaining a connection with linguistic heritage, but they don't prioritise it as highly as other considerations. The smallest portion, 5 %, considers it moderately important. This minority may place a higher emphasis on using the Croatian language elements in business communication, possibly attributing importance to cultural preservation, national identity, or effective communication within the local business context.

Q4: Which of the following reasons do you think contribute to the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication?

The results provide valuable insights into the perceived reasons contributing to the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication. The majority, comprising 70 % of the respondents, believe that the use of anglicisms contributes to professionalism and modernity in business communication. This suggests a prevailing view that incorporating English-origin terms enhances the contemporary and forward-looking image of communication in a professional context. Only 10 % of the respondents attribute the use of anglicisms to the lack of knowledge of the Croatian language and terminology. This suggests

that, for the majority, the choice to use anglicisms is not primarily driven by a linguistic deficit but rather by other considerations such as perceived professionalism. A notable 20 % of the respondents attribute the use of anglicisms to media influence. This could indicate that exposure to English-language media, business practices, or international trends plays a significant role in shaping language choices in the professional sphere.

Q5: Do you think that the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication has a negative impact on the Croatian language?

The majority, constituting 85 % of the respondents, believe that the use of anglicisms does not have a negative impact on the Croatian language. Instead, they express the view that it is necessary to keep up with global business trends and communication. This suggests a recognition of the global dominance of English and a willingness to integrate it into local business communication for practical reasons. A smaller portion, 15 %, responded as “not sure.” This group may have reservations or uncertainties about the impact of anglicisms on the Croatian language, indicating a more cautious or ambivalent stance.

Q6: Do you think the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication is a sign of professionalism?

The responses go up to 90 % saying yes, while 10 % says no. Here, it is confirmed that the respondents perceive anglicisms as going along with modernity, innovation, professionalism, and prestige.

Q7: How do you think the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication affects the image of Croatian businesses?

The results indicate a strong consensus among the respondents regarding the perceived impact of using anglicisms in Croatian business communication on the image of Croatian businesses. The overwhelming majority, comprising 95 % of the respondents, believe that the use of anglicisms makes Croatian businesses appear more modern and innovative. This suggests a positive association between the incorporation of English-origin terms and a forward-looking contemporary image in the business context. A small percentage (5 %) responded as “not sure.” This group may have reservations or uncertainties about the direct impact of anglicisms on the image of Croatian businesses or may not hold a strong opinion about this matter.

Q8: What do you think are the reasons for the increased use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication?

Analysing this question brings us back to the perception of English as a global language that implies modernity and professionalism. Therefore, 60 % of the respondents see the influence of global business trends as the reason for the increased use of anglicisms, 30 % expressed the desire to sound more modern and professional, while the remaining 10 % claim the lack of suitable Croatian equivalents, which is also true to a certain extent.

Q9: How often do your course teachers use anglicisms rather than Croatian words in business communication?

The majority, constituting 70 % of the respondents, claim that their course teachers often use anglicisms in business communication. This suggests that teachers play a significant role in setting linguistic norms and practices, and their choices may contribute to the normalisation of anglicisms in the educational context. A significant but smaller portion (30 %) of the respondents state that their teachers use anglicisms occasionally. This group may still observe the influence of anglicisms but to a lesser extent, possibly in specific contexts or situations.

Q10: Do you believe that the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication may make it more difficult for some people to understand?

The majority, comprising 75 % of the respondents, expressed uncertainty about whether the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication may make it more difficult for some people to understand. This could suggest a perception that English proficiency is widespread and the potential for difficulty in understanding might not be a significant concern. A smaller portion, 25 % of the respondents, believe that the use of anglicisms may indeed make it more difficult for some people to understand. This group may be more attuned to potential language barriers or the diversity of language proficiency levels among communication partners.

Q11: Which of the following do you think is the most effective way to reduce the use of anglicisms in Croatian business communication?

Here again the majority, comprising 75 % of the respondents, believe that anglicisms are necessary in business communication. This suggests a strong

conviction among a significant portion of the surveyed group that the use of English-origin terms is essential for effective and modern business communication. On the other hand, a smaller but noteworthy portion (25 %) considers using a Croatian language style guide as the most effective way to reduce the use of anglicisms in business communication. This group may prioritise linguistic and cultural preservation and see formal guidelines as a means to achieve this goal.

Q12: How important is it for you to promote the Croatian language and its identity?

The results of this question shed light on the respondents' attitudes toward the importance of promoting the Croatian language and its identity. A significant portion, constituting 40 % of the respondents, emphasises the importance of promoting the Croatian language and its identity. This suggests a recognition of the value of preserving and actively promoting their linguistic and cultural heritage. Another substantial portion, 30 %, indicates that they don't think about the importance of promoting the Croatian language and its identity. This group may not actively consider the significance of language promotion or may have a more neutral stance on the matter. The remaining 30 % of the respondents express the view that promoting the Croatian language and its identity is not so important. This group may prioritise other factors in communication and identity, possibly emphasising practicality or global communication needs over cultural preservation.

4. Conclusion

This research has shown that the respondents, i.e. Business Department students of the Polytechnic "Nikola Tesla" in Gospić, prefer the use of anglicisms in their business communication since they perceive the usage of anglicisms as more professional and modern, with greater chances of better positioning on the global market. The research also shows that they don't think that the use of anglicisms harms the integrity of the Croatian language, moreover, their teachers use anglicisms rather than Croatian words. The benefit of this research was demonstrated later on, while discussing the results of the research, when the respondents raised the question of whether they should be more mindful of

the use of foreign words and try to use Croatian words instead, thus helping to promote the preservation and development of the Croatian language. With regard to this, they discussed possible ways of mitigating anglicisms, while still meeting the demands of a globalised business environment, such as the development of a comprehensive style guide tailored specifically to Croatian business communication, building terminology databases that compile Croatian equivalents for common anglicisms, or fostering a workplace culture that encourages the use of Croatian alternatives, for example, through internal communications, workshops, and awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of linguistic diversity. Cultivating the Croatian language in business communication is a journey that requires ongoing commitment and collaboration. Collaboration with language experts and institutions is crucial for developing language style guides, terminology databases, and other resources that facilitate the use of Croatian words and phrases in business communication. It is difficult to make a definite statement about whether anglicisms are welcome or not in Croatian business communication as opinions on the subject can be strongly held and vary depending on the context and situation. By saying “no” to anglicisms and actively promoting Croatian language usage, businesses in Croatia can not only navigate global markets but also contribute to the vibrancy and authenticity of the Croatian linguistic landscape. In the dynamic and evolving world of business, cultivating the Croatian language stands as a testament to the nation’s cultural richness and unwavering commitment to linguistic integrity.

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NJEGOVANJE HRVATSKOG JEZIKA U POSLOVNOJ KOMUNIKACIJI – NE ANGLIZMIMA?

Sažetak

Preuzimanje engleskih riječi postalo je sasvim uobičajeno u mnogim jezicima svijeta, a naš jezik u tome nije iznimka. Unatoč velikoj koristi od posuđivanja stranih riječi koje pridonose lakšoj komunikaciji s ljudima iz svih dijelova svijeta, unapređuju jezik i društvo te otvaraju mogućnost lakšeg zapošljavanja, takve riječi prijete izvornosti jezika koji ih prihvaća i predstavljaju opasnost od gubitka značajnih dijelova tog jezika. Jezici nikada nisu bili statični i uvijek su se mijenjali. Danas koristimo strane riječi bez osjećaja da uništavamo svoj materinski jezik, istovremeno zanemarujući norme hrvatskog jezika. U cilju očuvanja materinskog jezika, te doprinosa njegovanja istog, autor ovim radom istražuje svjesnost korištenja anglizama naspram hrvatskih riječi u poslovnoj komunikaciji, s naglaskom na stručnu terminologiju. Istraživanje je provedeno među studentima Poslovnog odjela Veleučilišta „Nikola Tesla“ u Gospiću na temelju anketnog upitnika sastavljenog za potrebe istraživanja. Polazi se od pretpostavke da studenti uvelike koriste engleske riječi, prihvaćajući ih gotovo kao hrvatske, ne razmišljajući pri tome o očuvanju hrvatskog jezika i njegova značaja, što je kasnije nakon provedene analize anketnog upitnika i potvrđeno.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *hrvatski jezik, anglizmi, stručna terminologija, poslovna komunikacija, studenti*