

Manfred Görlach (editor)

A Dictionary of European Anglicisms

Oxford University Press, xxvi+352pp, £65

ISBN 0 19 8235194

Published 20 September 2001

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English in Europe

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Twenty-five years ago I was asked to write a chapter for one of the first books to appear on the growing impact of the USA in Europe: Christopher Bigsby was editing *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe*, and he wanted a piece on the influence of American English. I accepted, but as soon as I settled down to write it I regretted it, for I quickly realized (a) that I knew next to nothing about what was happening to English in Europe, and (b) that nobody else did either. I looked for source materials, but found no surveys - only a few short and rather dated articles. So I fell back on the only course of action I could think of: I asked my academic friends in Europe, and they sent me a pile of examples. I got my article finished, as a consequence, but was left in no doubt that here was a mountain of a research project just waiting to be explored.

A quarter-century on, and the influence of English in Europe has grown far more than anyone would have dared predict. It is an immense mountain now, and it needs a mountain of a man to even attempt to climb it. In Manfred Görlach we have no better mountaineer. He is one of those extraordinary Germanic scholars who has mastered English so minutely that one can only marvel - and not just modern standard English, but the various stages of the history of the language and a great deal of its regional dialectology besides. He is an English scholar, linguist, and medievalist. My metaphor needs refining. He is a linguistic Sherpa Tensing leading a whole team of Hilarys.

For nobody can cope with this topic alone. It is easy to think of the English language as a hurricane blowing where it will throughout Europe, dropping its vocabulary like leaves in every country. The truth is a great deal more complex, even for the limited survey found in these books. Each country has its own story to tell, and there needs to be multiple collaboration in order to tell it.

Just sixteen countries were selected. Görlach made a point of choosing them from different language families, but excluded those in routine contact with English (such as Welsh): there are four Germanic (Icelandic, Norwegian, Dutch, German), four Slavic (Russian, Polish, Croatian, Bulgarian), four Romance (French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian), and four others (Finnish, Hungarian, Albanian, Greek). The selection was also guided by the need to display contrasts - of region, historical background, and internal attitude (some countries being much more puristically minded than others). And, in the final analysis, he had to find countries where there were willing collaborators. Once again, ask your friends!

The complexity can be seen even from a cursory glance at the *Dictionary*. It contains around 3750 or so entries, and for some 850 of these the way the word has spread across Europe is shown using an illuminating grid of 16 squares, one for each country. Countries are shown in white if a word has been fully accepted, black if it has not arrived, and shaded if it is used, but in a restricted way. None of the 850 score 16 whites. The nearest are *aerobics* and *gangster* - why, oh why these two? - with 15, and there are only another seven which have no black squares at all: *fifty-fifty*, *rally*, *rap*, *non-stop*, *playback*, *twist* (in gymnastics and dance), and *VIP*. The vast majority of loanwords are in some countries and not others.

Sometimes it's easy to see why. *Big Brother* is not common in Eastern Europe, because the Orwell book was not available there until relatively recently. But why is a potentially international word such as *recorder* ("apparatus for recording") found with white squares only in three languages (Dutch, Croatian, and Hungarian)? Why does *rap* the noun get into all 16 languages, but *rap* the verb get into only nine? I thought *AIDS* would be everywhere, but it is not in ten of the countries, which use their own acronyms - for example, *SPID* in Russian and *SPIN* in Bulgarian. A single word, such as *chips*, edges its way into Europe in a variety of different meanings and usages, and into languages at different rates and levels. And we mustn't forget that some English loanwords are not English words at all: *autostop*, *antidumping*, *antibaby pill*, and *smoking* ("dinner-jacket"), for example, are heard in parts of Europe now, but are not part of British or American English.

This is the first dictionary of its kind. Although individual countries have tried to keep tabs on the English words entering their language, there has never been an attempt at a comparative study. After all, how does one compare? Methods have to be established to make sure that the contributors research and present their findings in the same way. It took Görlach several years to establish his methodology: the contributors were instructed to present their information in a standardized framework, and the entries are a synthesis of this. Each entry records the various meanings of a word, as they have evolved, in the different languages, along with any variations in spelling, pronunciation, and grammar (e.g. what gender does a loanword take?). There is also an indication of when the word arrived, and (most important of all) a comment on how far it has been integrated into the language. Is the word part of the language now, or is it still felt to be foreign? This is a complex question, raising questions of currency, style, and acceptability.

Speed was of the essence. The European linguistic scene is changing so quickly (especially after the new Europe of 1989--90) that there is a real risk of data becoming out of date, especially in the former Eastern-bloc countries. After over five years of preparation, the *Dictionary* began in 1993. It is therefore a snapshot of how things were in the early 1990s - up to 1995, to be precise, and concentrating on the lexis which has arrived since World War 2. As every contributor to the companion volume affirms, the influx has been since that time, especially in the West. It is especially interesting to see the way the individual political histories of Russia, Poland, Hungary, and the other Eastern countries are reflected in their time-scales of borrowing.

English in Europe is a collection of essays, written by 16 scholars, almost all of them the same people who worked on the *Dictionary*, summarising the trends, language by language. This makes several important points. It is not possible to distinguish clearly between words from British English and those from American English.. There are significant differences between language communities divided by political boundaries: the Anglicisms in former West Germany are not the same as those in former East Germany, Switzerland, or Austria. Anglicisms do not always become a permanent feature of a European language: they come and go, subject to fashion and social change. Some words are borrowed more than once, often with a change in meaning. Nouns form the largest class of loanwords (over 80 per cent).

The use of a standard approach to the writing of these chapters, with each contributor following the same set of headings, makes comparison very easy: The length of the chapters varies enormously, reflecting the amount of impact of the phenomenon and the research which has been carried out. German has been well studied; Albanian least of all. The "state of the art" gradually becomes very clear. In particular, stylistic studies of the way loanwords have entered European languages are in their infancy.

These two books are part of a trilogy: I have not yet seen the third volume, *An Annotated Bibliography of European Anglicisms*, also edited by Görlach, but it is possible to sense from its title the way it will provide a scholarly underpinning to these first two books. The trilogy is a triumph of conception, design, and implementation. Sherpa Görlach is not yet at the top of the European mountain. There are other countries to be scaled, a later time-frame to take on board, and specialist domains of language use (such as computing and popular music) to be included. But in these books he has climbed further than I would ever have thought possible.