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ENGLISH-POLISH CONTACTS IN CORPORATE SPEAK

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents corporate speak in Poland, a social variety of the Polish language, noticeably marked by the presence of English borrowings. It is featured in accordance with the status of English as the *lingua franca* for corporate communication world-wide. Therefore, this study aims at presenting a certain perspective on language contact in an era of globalization. The survey research was conducted on the cohort of 84 corporate employees to expose the sociolinguistic reflections of the English-Polish contact visible in corporate speak. The research enabled a better understanding of certain underlying phenomena of incorporating English lexical items into the social variety of Polish.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language, as the tool for transferring thoughts, both describes reality and creates it. English, the present global *lingua franca*, is increasingly coming into contact with national languages and their varieties. On the global map of World Englishes (Kachru 1985: 12) English speakers are placed within the *Inner Circle* (native speakers), the *Outer Circle* (speakers from post-colonial countries) and the *Expanding Circle*: “the third and the largest group of speakers constitute those who use English as a foreign language. It is often called the language of international communication since it is spoken by people who do not necessarily communicate with native speakers of English” (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2011: 122). Polish corporate employees belong to the *Expanding Circle* and use English, “the *lingua franca* for corporate communication” (Boussebaa et al. 2014) to communicate within both international and Polish teams.

Changes in contemporary Polish language occurring thanks to the contact with a foreign language are predominantly due to the impact of English. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the social variety of Polish observed in the corporate environment in Poland. Within this community, the Polish language itself is not sufficient in the process of transferring thoughts. This is evident in the case of the “corporate reality” that is both described and created by the use of abundant English loanwords.

Sociologically and economically, the Polish corporate world is depicted annually in the reports of the *Association of Business Service Leaders in Poland* (ABSL). The pur-

pose of this paper is to shed some light on the sociolinguistic aspects of this world, up until now this area has received little scholarly attention¹. This survey research was undertaken in order to investigate this corporate speak reality. The gathered material was delivered by a cohort of Poles employed in various international companies in Poland. A total of 84 interviewees responded to the questionnaire designed specifically for the study. The goal of the research was to extract empirical data as to a) examine the hypothesis that Poles employed in international corporations noticeably incorporate English words and phrases into their daily communication in Polish, b) to zoom in on “Polish corporate speak”, understood as a specific variety of the Polish language characterized by a vast reception of Anglicisms. In this paper, “Polish corporate speak” is defined by the term *corpolect*² (Cierpich 2015a, 2017). These terms can be used interchangeably, but only the first one was used in the questionnaire. Also, in order to refer to the adapted English linguistic elements, the terms *borrowing* and *loanword* were utilized. According to Haugen (1950: 212), “The heart of our definition of borrowing is the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another”. The data collected on the basis of the open-ended questions shows that the considered lexemes do undergo both graphic and morphological adaptation (e.g. English: *assignment* → Polish: *esajment*, English: *I scheduled* → Polish: *zaskedżulowałam*). Due to the formal restrictions of the paper, the discussion on terminological matters cannot be included but they have been comprehensively covered by Mańczak-Wohlfeld (2012: 165–175) (cf. Podhajecka 2006; Busse, Görlach 2007; Kuźniak 2009).

¹ Much has been written on the corporate communication taking place in English (cf. Zajac 2013, Gruzca, Allnajar 2015, Allnajar 2016). Nevertheless, the variety of the Polish language marked by the visible presence of the English lexemes by now has not yet lived to see an exhaustive monographic description. There have been, however, a couple of papers published during recent years (cf. Wasilewski 2009, Kuć 2011, Kolasa 2014, Cierpich 2015a, 2015b, Naruszewicz-Duchlińska 2016, Cierpich 2017). On the other hand, the topic has received considerable media attention and has been discussed repeatedly for example in newspapers, on the Internet and on breakfast television.

² The previously conducted linguistic analyses were useful so as to understand the complexities of the investigated language variety. They were followed by an attempt to classify “Polish corporate speak” by placing it within the broader context of language varieties. The commonly held idea of a “corporate sociolect” was challenged due to its insufficiency in explaining the existence of differences within the branches and divisions of particular companies. Consequently, a new notion of *corpolect* (Cierpich 2015a, 2015b, 2017) was introduced. The research (*ibid.*) helped to delineate a number of different sociolects which function in certain companies, as well as their internal sub-varieties (i.e. varieties used only in a branch of a corporation, or even only by members of small teams of the branch, often related to specialized vocabulary). It has been proven that linguistic items of different corporate sociolects overlap at some points. As a result, it is evident that most types of such sociolects do share a common ground, that is the whole set of English loanwords, commonly understood and used within the Polish corporate community. Therefore, *corpolect* should be understood as an umbrella term encompassing a range of corporate sociolects and systematizing them.

II. THE CORPORATE WORLD – A SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTLINE

1. Multinational corporations in Poland – a local market for global services

International corporations in Poland operate in the so-called modern business services sector. In Poland, foreign investors are attracted not only by highly-skilled specialist workers fluent in foreign languages, but also by far lower salaries awarded for equivalent posts abroad. Of considerable importance are also factors such as the country's economic stability or the suitable geographical location, the latter being convenient for strengthening the relations both with the West and with the East (e.g. India):

Poland's rise as one of the top locations on the global business services map is made possible due to investors rating it as a reliable and stable place to do business. The country is now an established part of a network of cross-border relations between international corporations and Polish companies providing business services. They find that having an office in Poland offers a competitive advantage and boosts their growth potential (ABSL Report 2016: 6³).

The Association of Business Service Leaders (ABSL) is a leading organization representing the sector and is made up of a number of different centres spread throughout the country. Their English acronyms (BPO, SSC, ITO, R&D) are also widely used among the Polish speaking business community and they stand for:

- a) BPO – *Business Process Outsourcing*
- b) SSC – *Shared Service Centres*
- c) ITO – *Information Technology Outsourcing*
- d) R&D – *Research & Development*

The ABSL Report provides an in-depth overview of the characteristics and the scale of the industry operations that are one of the fastest-growing areas of the Polish economy. Following the report, the number of jobs in the business services sector is consistently rising, thus the industry is placed among the major players on the job market in Poland (2016: 9). In the first quarter of 2016, there were 676 foreign and 260 Polish business services centres employing 177,000 and 35,000 people respectively, comprising a total of 212,000 jobs⁴. Unsurprisingly, already in 2017, the number of services centres in Poland has grown by 142, giving an overall total of 1,078. Of these, 748 were foreign-owned and 330 Polish-owned, employing respectively 198,000 and 46,000 workers, i.e. 244,000 in total (ABSL 2017 Report)⁵. More to the point, in 2017 alone, the centres of business services generated as many as 32,000 jobs and, according to the authors, such centres will employ at least 300,000 people by 2020. Corporations are locat-

³ <http://absl.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Raport_ABSL_2016_EN.pdf> [16.03.2018]; translation mine.

⁴ The present paper deliberately includes Polish-owned centers since the language that the employees use is also heavily marked with English borrowings. My research (conducted between 2012 and 2016) demonstrated that the use of anglicized jargon is not related to the origin of the company's capital but to the international character of the sector in which it operates, e.g. outsourcing.

⁵ <<https://www.everestgrp.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Business-Services-Sector-in-Poland-ABSL-2017-min.pdf>> [16.03.2018].

ed in over 40 Polish cities, the seven major ones being Kraków (almost 55,000 workers), Warsaw (almost 43,000), Wrocław (40,000), Trójmiasto (Tri-City) (19,000), the Katowice Agglomeration (19,000), Łódź (18,000) and Poznań (14,000). Together, they account for 86% of all jobs in the sector and Kraków is the largest such centres in Europe.

2. The Polish *homo corporaticus*

Corporations in Poland usually employ young university graduates who are fluent in foreign languages. The unique nature of their work requires them to be oriented towards personal and career development activities, resistant to stress and constantly mobile. Colloquially they are known as “corporate people” or, more pejoratively, as “corporats”. The term *homo corporaticus*, popularized by Joanna Krysińska’s book *Homo corporaticus, czyli przewodnik przetrwania w korporacji* [Eng *Homo corporaticus or how to survive in a corporation*] has also entered the popular parlance.

The advantages of working in a corporation include paid internships, job security and relatively high salaries complemented by various additional benefits [Pl *benefity*] and perks [Pl *perksy*]. Regarding the ABSL report (2016: 39), the most common advantages are private medical care, a Multisport card, group life insurance, flexible working hours and/or possibility of working from the home office working [Pl *home office*], a laptop and/or a mobile phone, reimbursement for training, a bonus for relocation to another city for work [Eng *relocation package*, Pl *pakiet relokacyjny*], an additional bonus for goal achievement, additional paid days off, vouchers for lunches, a parking space and a pension scheme. Additionally valued is the possibility both to work in a multicultural environment and to contribute to international projects. All of these entail high job satisfaction levels and a sense of professional prestige. According to the Tiger and TNS Polska 2015 report⁶, for 50 % of business centres employees in Warsaw, commonly known as “Mordor on the Domaniewska Street” [Pl *Mordor na Domaniewskiej*], their current job constitutes “the fulfilment of their dreams”. Furthermore, these types of corporate jobs can aid in advancing career paths, allowing even the most ambitious professionals to implement their plans.

Generally well-known disadvantages of this type of employment contract are the constant time-pressure and long hours. Daily excessive stress at the office can also contribute to the spirit of rivalry often interpreted as the so-called “rat race”. The above-mentioned report (Tiger and TNS Polska 2015) draws attention to the appalling fact that in Warsaw 44% of corporation employees regularly work overtime and as many as 40% work 14 hours or more a day. Surveys indicate that 40% of workers acknowledge suffering from burnout and 30% have a “disturbed work-life balance”. The profile of a typical worker requires deeper sociological and psychological analyses. Suffice to say that a corporate environment is better suited to people who are good at teamwork, flexible and able to align their tasks with those of other group members. This alignment applies also to various methods of communication and the language used.

⁶ <<http://www.marketing-news.pl/message.php?art=45205>> [16.03.2018].

III. THE STUDY

The research material was collected during the “Career Days” (*Pl Dni Kariery*) arranged by the AIESEC organization at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and at the Cracow University of Economics in March 2015. Annually, this job fair⁷ provides 60,000 students with an opportunity to engage and interact with 250 companies through workshops and presentations and to meet their prospective employers. The paper-and-pencil questionnaire was distributed among 84 representatives of 26 following companies: Accenture, Alexander Mann Solutions (AMS), Aon Hewitt, Brown Brothers Harriman (BBH), Capgemini, Capita, CITI Handlowy, Delphi, Elektrolux, Heineken, HSBC, International Airlines Group (IAG GBS), IBM, International Paper (IP), Schwarz Gruppe, MBE Group, Mars, Motorola, Nestlé, Nokia, OTCF (4F), Philip Morris International (PMI), Raiffeisen Polbank, RWE GBS, TRANSPOREON, Valeo.

The questionnaire was designed as a set of closed-ended and open-ended questions printed on paper. The introductory part of the questionnaire included the author’s name, surname and her affiliation with the Jagiellonian University. The following line stated the purpose of the survey, i.e. the examination of the influence of English borrowings on Polish corporate speak. Below, for the sake of clarification, there was a subsidiary sentence added with the phrase “corporate speak” [*Pl korpomowa*] to be colloquially understood as a “combination” of the Polish language and English borrowings. Terms such as “social variety”, “sociolect” or a “corporate variety of the Polish language” were disqualified in favour of the term generally accepted in the Internet discourse. The respondents were asked to provide six socio-biographical data items referring to their individual characteristics such as: sex, age, education, the name of the corporation they are employed in, the employment period and finally the business position held.

Of the study population, over four fifths of the subjects disclosed their sexual identity (49 women, 19 men). However, the result seems inconclusive due to the fact that 16 participants failed to respond. The recruited interviewees, aged between 23–37 years, had been employed in their corporations from between two months and ten years. When education is taken into consideration, the examined group turned out to be highly diversified, yet they had mainly graduated from numerous departments of the humanities. Most commonly, professions such as foreign philology graduates (16), economists (16), psychologists (8), financial experts (5), managers and lawyers (4) and sociologists (3) were mentioned. Additionally, 7 respondents provided imprecise answers regarding their education background. An unspecified ‘humanities’ profile was demonstrated by 10 survey participants and a ‘technical’ profile was shown by 7 others. Last but not least, 4 individuals left that blank unfilled.

The respondents’ answers about professional terms used at work (i.e. English or Polish) showed that as many as 74% of employees selected the English language. Remarkably, almost all of the participants wrote down⁸ their full professional positions:

⁷ See: <<http://aiesec.at/events/career-days/>, <http://dnikariery.pl/welcome/#newsy>> [16.03.2018].

⁸ This section includes original spelling.

team leader, resource specialist, principal resource specialist, spend analyst, contract administrator, onboarding investor specialist, credit control, Junior HR Specialist, Recruitment Specialist, Test engineer, process lead, Product Manager, Senior employer branding specialist, coordinator, accountant, Senior HR administrator, Executive Assistant, Line Manager, Management Developer Manager, HR Specialist, Financial Reporting Representative, HR Business Partner, staffing consultant, recruitment coordinator, HR Recruitment Assistant, Junior Recruitment Specialist, Sr. Recruiter Specialist, Finance & Accounting Process Analyst, Junior Employer Branding Specialist, Recruitment Consultant, Junior Financial Analyst, Senior Administrator, Recruitment Administrator, HR Administrator, Junior OTC Administrator, RTR Administrator, Sourcing Specialist, Sr. GL Accountant, Trainee in Recruitment Team, Jr. Payroll Specialist.

In the questionnaire, a few questions concerning the socio-biographical data were included, however, some of them were left unanswered. As a result, there was no possibility to correlate the data with the outcomes of the survey. For instance, since 16 participants indicate their sex identity, evaluating any answer in relation to gender was not possible. Other socio-biographical aspects (age, education, employment period) were often neglected as well.

On average, the employee, born after 1980, is either a university graduate, or works in a company while studying, presumably in the field of humanities. More relevantly, the Pole speaks English fluently in order to work in a company that is located in Poland, yet, which headquarters is frequently in other parts of the world. Owing to this, the employee of the company communicates with his/her co-workers in English worldwide, or more likely, in the so-called Ponglish to facilitate both the communication and cooperation among the Polish teams. Finally, it seems worth mentioning that all the respondents were willing to participate in the questionnaire. In fact, only one company invited was unable to fill in the survey due to the fact that their manager refused to give her permission. Many interviewees were very interested in the research.

IV. POLISH CORPORATE SPEAK CLOSE-UP: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following section presents ten closed-ended questions. The response parameters include the assessment of the collected data, as well as the three open-ended questions with the analyses of the answers formulated by the interviewees.

1. Corporate speak at the workplace – closed-ended questions

1.1 Recognizability, attitudes, language use

Question No. 1: “When did you first hear about *Polish corporate speak*?”.

Possible answers: a) before being employed in a corporation
 b) after being employed in a corporation.

Results: In this cohort of 84 respondents, 62% claimed that they heard about *Polish corporate speak* for the first time before being employed in a corporation. In light of the above, we may conclude that Poles ages 23–39 recognize this phenomenon.

1) Question No. 2: “How many of your co-workers incorporate *Polish corporate speak*?”.

- Possible answers:
- a) all
 - b) 60%–80%
 - c) less than 50%

Results: Nearly half of the participants (49%) acknowledged that everybody used corporate speak in their workplace, 43% stated that their co-workers fell into the 60%–80% range. Only 8% of the interviewees circled answer (c). Therefore, it is clear that a majority of the Poles employed in international corporations use this social variety of Polish.

The study also measured workers’ attitude to the notion of corporate speak.

2) Question No. 3 was phrased as follows: “What is your attitude towards *Polish corporate speak*?”. The survey included three answers referring to the degree of approval of this language variety:

- Possible answers:
- a) I like it
 - b) I don’t like it
 - c) I don’t care

Results: Almost one fourth of those who completed the questionnaire (22%) affirmed that they liked Polish corporate speak. Interestingly, also 22% of the surveyed marked the negative answer (b): “I don’t like it”. Since 56% opted for answer (c) “I don’t care”, there is an apparent indifference to corporate speak within the majority of the participants. The assimilation process at the workplace is evidently connected with the acquisition of the discussed social variety of Polish, which seems to become an intrinsic part of the working environment quite easily. Thereby, according to the surveyed, this social variety is of pragmatic nature. The point of reference to these results is displayed below, in the paragraph covering the replies to the open-ended questions.

The functional character of Polish corporate speak is also confirmed in questions No. 7 and 8. Their objectives were to determine the length of time the interviewees devoted to getting accustomed to this social variety of Polish and, more significantly, to developing the skill of efficiently applying it in practice.

1.2 The process of acquisition

3) Question No. 7: “How long did it take you to get used to *Polish corporate speak*?”. They were offered three options:

- a) several days
- b) several weeks or months
- c) I still fail to understand some words or phrases

Results: Over half of all the recruited individuals (53%) acknowledged that they developed the habit of communicating in Polish corporate speak within a period of several weeks or months. Unsurprisingly, over one third of the employees (38%) acquired it within only several days. 8%⁹ of the study populations opted for (c): they still misunderstand some lexical items.

4) Question No. 8 was closely related to the previous request in order to collect more extensive data about the effectiveness of *Polish corporate speak* in the process of communication: “How long did it take you to successfully communicate in *Polish corporate speak*?”:

- Possible answers:
- a) several days
 - b) several weeks or months
 - c) I still am frequently unable to do it

Results: Taking into account the indicated statistics, in the case of less than three fourths (68%) of the interviewees, the process of the acquisition of *Polish corporate speak* lasted for several weeks or months. Of the examined group, just one quarter opted for (a), several days at work sufficing to become competent in speaking this linguistic variety. Approximately 5% of the participants admitted that they still had problems with applying certain vocabulary to their daily communication at work.

However, the pace of acquiring corporate speak declared in the abovementioned questions refers to the people who are a part of the corporate environment. During the recruitment process, candidates are required to submit to their future employers not only their university diploma but also at least one foreign language proficiency certificate, preferably the one in English. Typically, in order to get a job in a corporation, individuals are obliged to pass through multi-level recruitment procedures. Their knowledge, skills and competences are verified, along with the interview conducted in English for the sake of assessing their linguistic competence as declared in their job application.

In an attempt to determine the participants’ proficiency in English, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) classification was cited.

5) Question No. 9: “What is your proficiency level in English?”.

There were three possible answers:

- a) A1 – A2 – Beginner
- b) B1 – B2 – Intermediate
- c) C1 – C2 – Advanced

Results: CEFR is a commonly known guideline that ranks learners’ advancements in foreign language skills. The participants’ responses were based upon a self-evaluation. Undoubtedly, the majority of the interviewees (99%) are linguistically competent speakers. Nearly three fourths of the subjects (70%) showed that their English proficiency level was advanced, and almost one third (26%) of the recruited group indicated the intermediate level. To verify the hypothesis that more advanced English proficiency enhances the acquisition of Polish corporate language variety, we formulated a complementary request:

⁹ The remaining 1% included additional descriptive answers which at this point appear irrelevant.

6) Question No. 10: “Does your English proficiency level facilitate acquisition of *Polish corporate speak*?”.

Results: Participants were offered the dichotomous Yes/No response. 79% selected “yes”, confirming the hypothesis.

1.3 Linguistic politeness (vulgarisms)

Having scrutinised the linguistic habits of corporation employees as well as various interrelated comments in Internet fora or blogs, another fundamental research area that emerged, is the issue of linguistic politeness. As was previously mentioned, the scope of the questionnaire imposed some limits, therefore only two close-ended questions were asked. They both referred to the use of vulgar, non-standard expressions at work:

7) Question No. 14: “Are there any vulgar words used in your daily communication in your corporation?”. The Yes/No scale was used as a research tool in this study approach.

Results: Unbelievably, nearly four fifths of the subjects (79%) admitted that they used vulgar words, while less than one fifth (17%) said “No”¹⁰.

8) In Question No. 15 the subjects’ task was to estimate the level of the language vulgarisation in the case of the word *fuck*: “If the English word *fuck* is used in your company communication, you consider it to be:

- a) vulgar
- b) neutral?”.

Results: Less than three quarters of the interviewees (63%) confirmed that the selected word was vulgar. Over one third of the population (32%) was of the opinion that the word was neutral.

Perhaps these two questions should have been reformulated. Although the phenomenon of language vulgarisation exists, the current study fails to demonstrate its aspects in detail.

Prior to asking participants to express attitudes towards words and or phrases assumed to be vulgar, a question should have been postulated to better understand their opinion on the definition of vulgarisms. This conclusion was drawn after having evaluated the responses to question No. 15 that clearly indicated the dissimilarities in the participants’ understanding of the term “vulgar” (63% opted for “vulgar” connotations whereas 32% went for “neutral”). Comparing the two results, note that for over one third of the population, the vulgar English word (*fuck*) is not equivalent to its Polish vulgar counterpart. More to the point, the interviewees’ replies also attested to the fact that another English vulgar lexeme “fuck up” was neutral and had gained the status of having a non-vulgar meaning, so as to be acceptable to use on a daily basis.

¹⁰ The missing fraction in this correlation entails both unfilled gaps in the survey and additional, descriptive answers which could not have been taken into account. Nevertheless, the lack of this part seems statistically irrelevant since the discrepancy between the answers is huge.

These findings reveal the need for further investigation of the phenomenon of linguistic politeness observed among Polish corporate workers.

2. Corporate speak in the workplace – open-ended questions¹¹

2.1. Reasons for incorporating borrowings into corporate speak

In an attempt to frame a more comprehensive sociolinguistic picture of Polish corporate speak, the following open-ended questions were introduced: Question No. 4 “Will you please briefly explain your answer to question No. 3, why you like / you do not like or / you do not care about *Polish corporate speak*?”, and Question No. 13 “Please enumerate some of your favourite / or most interesting phrases included in daily corporate speak”¹².

There are internal and external linguistic reasons for lexical innovation. Among the internal linguistic factors Weinreich (1963: 56–70) indicates for instance the loss of expressive force of certain native lexemes and the fact that some semantic fields in the recipient language are insufficiently differentiated in comparison to the ones existing within the donor language. On the other hand, the need to designate new concepts and the prestige attributed to the source language comprise external linguistic factors. Additionally, the non-linguist aspects are of cultural, psychological and sociological character (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1995: 18). The analysis of the comments provided by the interviewees validated the hypothesis that the Polish workers employed in corporations widely implement English loanwords in Polish corporate speak. The analysis established five general motives:

1) **Globalization of business and international work environment with English as a *lingua franca***

An international work environment was the most common reason given for using borrowings. The participants repeatedly emphasized the universal role of English as a basic communication tool in a globalized world. They perceive corporations as enterprises in which English is the unquestionable *lingua franca*. According to those surveyed, the ubiquity of English in Polish corporate speak is interrelated with the foreign capital of the companies, as well as their foreign management and contractors. English is the language of communication with employees in foreign branches of the company yet, increasingly, also with other teams in Poland.

2) **Documentation and software in English**

The respondents indicated that various areas of company life are based on the English language. Many companies impose English-only computer programs. Documentation, instructions and notifications are often available exclusively in English. In ad-

¹¹ The order of the open-ended questions was arbitrarily selected to enhance the respondents’ interest in writing down their own examples, ideas or opinions.

¹² The order of the aforementioned questions was selected arbitrarily so that the respondents were not discouraged by a long set of open-ended questions.

dition, some people use technical language studded with borrowings. Those surveyed acknowledged that the professional literature in their field is frequently only available in English. Consequently, the corporate language reality is to some extent shaped by English.

3) Economy of communication

The practical aspects of using borrowings were also repeated by the surveyed. Among them, apparently the most significant advantage mentioned was that of economy, i.e. the simplification and speeding-up of communication due the accuracy and precision in conveying messages.

4) Translation problems

Translation of English words and phrases in corporate communication is necessary. However, it often appears more difficult for the following reasons:

- a. **The lack of a Polish equivalent** (e.g. Pl *benchmark*, *challengować*) which is sometimes related to a particularly dynamic development in the field. Then the adoption of a given word can be so rapid in the usage that no one looks for a Polish equivalent.
- b. In some cases, a potential word or phrase seems too archaic, which respondents also remarked on.
- c. **Insufficient precision of the existing equivalent**, which occurs when the equivalent is known and obvious but in fact has a less precise meaning (e.g. Pl *call*, *mieć calla*, *feedback* – understood not only as Polish *informacja zwrotna* but as a process or a part of a process in the company).
- d. **The necessity to use a descriptive equivalent**, which takes place when the Polish translation requires a far longer phrase than the original one (e.g. Pl *deadline*, *employer branding*, *zbillować* as “to make out an invoice”, AP, CSR, HR¹³).

5) Group identity

Some replies suggest that corporate speak can influence the creation of group identity. As the respondents demonstrated, a particular way of using the language results from the established practices and intragroup dependencies. The answers to close-ended question No. 11 confirm this: “In your view, can the corporate speak used in the work environment be seen as a cohesive factor, integrating your team?”. Over half of the interviewees (56%) acknowledged this fact.

¹³ Various English acronyms are used also in order to compress the utterances, for example:

- a) AP (*Accounts Payable*) – “Trzeba *zaadresować* temat tych niezapłaconych faktur do AP” instead of: “Trzeba skierować temat tych niezapłaconych faktur do działu zarządzania zobowiązaniami” (additionally, the verb *zaadresować* used in the aforementioned meaning is a semantic borrowing).
- b) HR (*Human Resources*) – “Mam dzisiaj spotkanie z HR-ami” instead of: “Mam dzisiaj spotkanie z osobami z działu kadr”.
- c) CSR (*Corporate Social Responsibility*) – “Firma inwestuje w działania z zakresu CSR” instead of: “Firma inwestuje w działania z zakresu społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu”.

2.2 Borrowings used in Polish corporate speak

Question No. 13: “Please enumerate some of your favourite / the most interesting phrases included in the daily corporate speech” was aimed at collecting, arranging and classifying the lexical elements frequently occurring in Polish corporate speak. The empirical material was divided into three distinctive grammatical categories: nouns, verbs and adjectives. The implications of the findings overwhelmingly support Whitney’s theses (1881). In the lexical units, 144 nouns, 51 verbs and 6 adjectives were distinguished. In the examples listed below, the original spelling was retained. When a word was reported more than once, the number of repetitions was included in parentheses.

a) Nouns:

*absentism, accept (2), approach, approval, attrition, back end, background, beck up, binka*¹⁴, *blockin point, blocking pointy, bullshit, brejk, brief (2), chasowanie, case (2), kejs (2), call (7), challenge (3), czelendź (2), czelendźowanie (3), client, coaching, conclusion, czekaltowanie, czekinowanie, dashboard, deadline (9), dedlajn (3), destynacja, esajment, feedback (3), fejs, floor, forward, forwardowanie (2), fuck up (2), fuck-up, fackap, fuckup, fakap, FAKAP, guys, googelowanie, Haery, headcount (2), home office, insight, inwojs, invoice, isiu/iśu, iszju (issue), juzer, konfcall, lunch, meating, meeting (4), menedźowanie, mentoring, minutki (“as meeting minutes”), open space (2), order, outcome, performance, placeholder, plejsholder, procesowanie, pushowanie, puszowanie (2), quality performance feedback, reject (2), requestowanie, safety, safety issue, scorecard, screen (3), shortlista, slide, small talk, space, supervajzer, target (11), task, team (3), template, templatka, time sheet, trak, turnover, update, vendor, visibility, workload.*

b) Verbs¹⁵:

(to adjust) *zadjustuj*, (to advise) *adwajśnij*, (to book) *bookować, zabookować*, (to brief) *zbrifować się*, (to call) *callnąć*, (to cancel) *skanseluj*, (to catch up) *catch up*, (to challenge) *challengować (2)*, *czalendźować, czelengować, czelendźować się*, (to chase) *czejsować, chasowanie*, (to clear) *sclearuj*, (to focus) *fokusuj się*, (to forward) *forwardować, forlarduj (2), sforwarduj (2), forlardnąć, folardnąć, forwardnąć, sforwardować, sforlardować, przeforwardować*, (to handle sth) *handluj, hendluje*, (to investigate) *inwestygować*, (to mail) *mailować*, (to match) *zmatchuj*, (to zmerdźować, (to pinge) *pingować*, (to print) *printować*, (to process sth) *procesuję, sprocesować*, (to resolve) *zriolwować*, (to request) *requestować, zariklestuj, zarequestuj (2), zarequestuję*, (to run) *runować*, (to schedule) *zaschedulować, zaskedulować, zreschedulować*, (to share) *szeruj!*, (to update) *zdatuj*, (to watch) *zwaczować coś*.

¹⁴ The meaning of the noun was not included.

¹⁵ Because the meaning of some of the adapted lexemes is sometimes difficult to decipher, the source language infinitive forms were appended in the brackets.

c) Adjectives:

accepted, approved (2), not deserving.

3. Corporate speak outside the workplace

To increase the reliability of the measures implemented in the study population, complementary variables concerning Polish corporate speak were included in close-ended questions. A longitudinal study attempted to examine the phenomenon of Polish corporate speak turned out to be sufficient to thoroughly scrutinise this intricate issue, particularly from the perspective of an outsider. Numerous informal conversations, three private meetings with several corporate-employee teams and officially conducted interviews¹⁶ demonstrated some intriguing findings. There is a tendency to introduce some elements of Polish corporate speak to private conversations in venues other than work (Cierpich 2015, 2017). The methodological approach taken in this research enabled us to confirm the validity of this statement. As regards these outcomes, the additional Yes/No question was aggregated: Question No. 6: “Have you ever used *Polish corporate speak* out of work – at home or in your private conversation?”. The reason being to obtain a filtered point of view shared by the participants. The following Question No. 7: “If your answer is ‘yes’, which word/phrase was it?” required respondents to disclose more information providing they marked the yes-answer option. Unsurprisingly, four fifths of those interviewed (80%) admitted having used some English vocabulary in their conversations in Polish, outside work. The availability of the free choice question largely contributed to compiling a list of both words and phrases proposed by the majority of the participants, thus testifying to the hypothesis that corporate employees do insert the English words or phrases into their private communication channels. The below examples illustrate the gathered data.

a) Words used in private conversations outside work:

approach, approve, aprooval¹⁷, ASAP, call, case, chargowanie, deadline, default, event, fejsing, interview, inwestygować, meeting, open space, performance, research, req, requirements, request, target, team leader, workload, skedżeling, zforwardować.

b) Phrases used in private talks outside work:

“Francuski jest *nice to have*.”

“Zmierzerali się” („o małżeństwie” [Eng “about marriage”]).

“Muszę podjąć *on the spot decision*.”

“A to akurat *randomowo* wybrałam.”

“Włączyłem *loud speaker* w telefonie.”

“Zaskedżulowałam *miting* z fryzjerem.”

“Kto ma jutro *lates*?”

“Zakupy to nie taki *easy task*.”

“To gdzie w końcu idziemy wieczorem, *zapdejtuj* mnie.”

¹⁶ In the period of 6 years, from 2012 to 2017.

¹⁷ In all cases, the original spelling was retained.

“To jest *step* niżej.”

This research provides an opportunity to advance the understanding of the tendency to insert corporate speak elements (English borrowings) into the everyday Polish language. The analysis of the abovementioned samples proves that some English borrowings, combined with Polish vocabulary, may totally distort the original word meaning (e.g. the phrase “zmerdżować się” has no implication of company fusion, instead, its intended meaning is “to get married”). Thereby, it is likely to reinforce some humorous functions in the discourse.) More to the point, English elements (e.g. “fejsing”, “mieć lates”) may be both incomprehensible and incorrect. The scope of the paper-and-pencil questionnaire did not permit the introduction of another open-ended question that might extend our data collection in this respect. Therefore, little is known about the rates of both the tendency and popularity of such linguistic transference. However, the implication of these findings is that the phenomenon of applying English corporate borrowings has the potential to reach Polish speakers other than corporation employees.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined a social variety of Polish language which has been visibly marked by the presence of English loanwords. The existence of Polish corporate speak was featured relating to the status of English as the *lingua franca* for corporate communication world-wide. Thereby, undertaking this study aimed at presenting a certain view on language contact in an era of globalization.

The first part of the article focused on multinational corporations which were presented as both the products of globalization and its key components. The Polish corporate community was characterized as a hermetic group of professionals whose job specification is strictly connected with the international character of their working environment.

In the second part of the paper, sociolinguistic reflections of the English-Polish contact visible in corporate speak were presented. The responses provided by a cohort of 84 corporate employees helped to expose this linguistic variety. It has become clear that corporate speak is well-known and widely used among the participants. Its acquisition is frequently a rapid process, for the most part because of the fact that the general proficiency level of English in this group is high. Additionally, the functional character of Polish corporate speak is its most distinctive feature.

The research enabled a better understanding of the underlying phenomenon of borrowing English lexical items. It confirmed the initial hypothesis that employees of Polish subsidiaries of international corporations noticeably incorporate English words and phrases into their daily communication in Polish. Having gathered the words and phrases enumerated by those surveyed, it seems visible that some of them might be incomprehensible for other English-speaking Poles. Also, the analysis consisted of establishing the rationale behind using Anglicisms in daily corporate communication, namely: the globalization of the business and international work environment with English as

a *lingua franca*, the documentation and software being available exclusively in English, economy of communication, translation problems and the sense of group identity. Moreover, the diverse lexical elements enumerated by the respondents shed light on the phenomenon of borrowing from the source language to the recipient language. Consequently, we can conclude that borrowing may be perceived as a process fuelling contact-induced changes.

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STRESZCZENIE

Kontakty angielsko-polskie w języku korporacji

Słowa kluczowe: mowa korporacyjna, zapożyczenia angielskie, kontakt językowy.

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest polskiej mowie korporacyjnej (pot. „korpomowie”), odmianie socjalnej polszczyzny, którą cechuje zauważalna obecność zapożyczeń angielskich. Funkcjonowanie badanej odmiany języka polskiego wiąże się ze statusem angielszczyzny, tj. *lingua franca* komunikacji korporacyjnej. Próba zbadania mowy korporacyjnej wiązała się z obraniem konkretnego punktu widzenia na zagadnienie kontaktu językowego w dobie globalizacji. W przeprowadzonym badaniu ankietowym wzięło udział 84 pracowników z różnych korporacji międzynarodowych. Uzyskane odpowiedzi pomogły zarysować socjolingwistyczne tło angielsko-polskich kontaktów językowych oraz przybliżyć tę socjalną odmianę polszczyzny. Ponadto opisano przyczyny wprowadzania angielskich jednostek leksykalnych do badanej odmiany języka.