

THE USE OF ANGLICISMS IN GERMAN AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE LEXICAL SYSTEM

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Abstract. The rapid spread of English as a global language has significantly influenced the vocabulary of contemporary German. This thesis examines the use of Anglicisms in German, the main domains in which they occur, the mechanisms of their phonological, morphological, orthographic and semantic adaptation, and their impact on the German lexical system. The study is based on descriptive and comparative analysis of commonly used examples such as Computer, Smartphone, Meeting, Feedback, downloaden, posten and liken. The findings show that Anglicisms perform several functions: they nominate new realities, increase lexical economy, create stylistic effects and contribute to word-formation productivity. At the same time, excessive or unnecessary borrowing may cause competition with native equivalents and raise questions of comprehensibility and language policy. Overall, English borrowings should be regarded not simply as foreign elements, but as an important mechanism of lexical development in present-day German.

Keywords: Anglicisms, German language, lexical borrowing, vocabulary, language contact, adaptation, neologisms, word formation.

INTRODUCTION

Language contact is one of the major sources of lexical change. In the modern period, English has become the most influential donor language for German because of globalization, science, technology, business, popular culture and digital communication. English-derived words are especially visible in information technology, economics, advertising, entertainment, social media, sport and youth language. Duden notes that many recent German borrowings are connected with domains in which English functions as an international lingua franca, for example Website, E-Commerce, Streaming, Start-up, Influencer and Feedback [1].

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that Anglicisms affect not only the quantity of lexical units, but also the internal organization of the German lexicon. Borrowed nouns, verbs and adjectives enter paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, participate in derivation and compounding, develop new meanings and compete with native or earlier borrowed equivalents. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to describe the principal forms of Anglicisms in German and to assess their influence on lexical enrichment, semantic differentiation and word-formation patterns. The methods used are descriptive analysis, lexical-semantic classification and comparative observation of English source forms and their German adaptations.

MAIN PART

An Anglicism can be defined as a lexical, phraseological or structural element adopted from English into another language. In German linguistics, a distinction is often made between foreign words that still preserve noticeable formal features of the donor language and loanwords that have become strongly

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integrated into German. The boundary is gradual rather than absolute. Frequently used English nouns tend to adapt to German inflectional patterns; for instance, der Computer forms des Computers, while nouns such as Baby and Party take the German plural forms Babys and Partys [2]. This demonstrates that borrowing is not simple copying: the recipient language reshapes the imported element according to its own grammatical system.

The largest group of Anglicisms consists of direct lexical borrowings. Examples include Computer, Software, App, Meeting, Manager, Team, Job, Online-Shop, Podcast and Streaming. Their distribution is uneven across semantic fields. Duden lists particularly high concentrations in technology, business, advertising, entertainment, social media, sport, fashion and science [3]. This domain concentration reflects extralinguistic developments: new technologies and cultural practices are often first named in English, and the designation is then transferred together with the concept. Consequently, borrowing often fills a lexical gap more rapidly than native word formation.

A second important process is morphological integration. English verbs are regularly adapted by adding the German infinitive suffix -en, as in downloaden, posten, liken, chatten and streamen. Once integrated, they can be conjugated according to German patterns: ich poste, er postet, wir haben gepostet. Research on verbal Anglicisms indicates that frequently used borrowed verbs tend to follow German argument-structure tendencies rather than mechanically preserve all grammatical properties of their English equivalents [4]. This supports the view that the receiving language actively reorganizes borrowings within its own system.

Anglicisms also influence German word formation. Borrowed bases participate in compounds and hybrid formations such as Online-Unterricht, Fitnessstudio, Jobangebot, Teamarbeit, Marketingstrategie and Kundenfeedback. In such combinations an English element may be joined with a German component, creating hybrid lexical units. This process expands the derivational potential of the vocabulary and makes borrowed elements productive building blocks rather than isolated foreign words. In addition, some English-looking forms are created in German itself and are therefore pseudo-Anglicisms, for example Handy and Showmaster [3]. These forms show that English material can be reinterpreted creatively by German speakers.

The semantic influence of Anglicisms is equally important. Borrowings may introduce new concepts, but they may also coexist with German synonyms and develop stylistic specialization. For example, Job and Arbeit are not always exact equivalents: Job may suggest temporary, occupational or informal employment contexts, while Arbeit has a broader semantic range. Similarly, Event can signal a commercially organized or prestigious occasion more strongly than Veranstaltung. In such cases, the borrowed item contributes to semantic differentiation rather than merely replacing a native word. Studies of items such as Star, Celebrity and VIP show that English-derived designations can develop specific meanings, frequency patterns and stylistic functions in German [5].

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Anglicisms often index modernity, internationality, technological competence and youth identity. Their use can therefore be motivated not only by lexical necessity but also by prestige and communicative effect. Barbe emphasizes that the influence of English in German is associated with the prestige of English and with the stylistic effects speakers seek when choosing English forms [6]. In advertising and media discourse this function is especially visible, because an English expression may appear shorter, more fashionable or more globally recognizable than a native alternative.

Nevertheless, the spread of Anglicisms also produces criticism. Opponents argue that unnecessary borrowings may reduce transparency for speakers with limited English proficiency and may displace

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established German words. Supporters, by contrast, regard borrowing as a normal historical mechanism of language development. Contemporary scholarship tends to view the process in a balanced way: the German lexicon has always absorbed material from other languages, while English is currently the dominant source because of its international status. Kudrikova argues that the debate between linguistic purism and acceptance of borrowings reflects broader social attitudes, and that administrative restriction cannot easily stop natural language change [7].

Recent lexical research further shows that Anglicisms differ greatly in their degree of integration, stylistic value and diffusion. Cantarini, using data from the German neologism dictionary in OWID, notes that English-derived neologisms represent different areas of lexical change and vary in how fully they become established in the language community [8]. Thus, the impact of Anglicisms cannot be evaluated by counting foreign-looking words alone; it is necessary to consider frequency, semantic function, productivity, grammatical integration and communicative domain.

Table 1. Examples of Anglicisms and their lexical integration in German

German form	Source form	Type of integration	Example of use
Computer	computer	noun; German declension	der Computer / des Computers
posten	to post	verb with -en; German conjugation	sie postet / sie hat gepostet
Feedback	feedback	direct lexical borrowing	ein positives Feedback
Online-Unterricht	online + Unterricht	hybrid compound	Online-Unterricht anbieten
Handy	English-looking form	pseudo-Anglicism	mein Handy

CONCLUSION

Anglicisms are a dynamic component of contemporary German vocabulary. Their growth is closely related to the global role of English in technology, science, media, business and popular culture. The analysis shows that English borrowings are integrated into German at several levels: they adopt German inflectional patterns, participate in derivation and compounding, develop specialized meanings and form stylistic contrasts with native lexical items. As a result, they enrich the lexical system not only quantitatively but also structurally and semantically.

At the same time, the influence of Anglicisms is not uniform. Some words remain restricted to particular professional or social groups, while others become ordinary elements of everyday German. The most productive effect is visible when borrowed units generate new compounds, verbs and semantic distinctions. Therefore, Anglicisms should be assessed according to their communicative function and degree of integration rather than judged only as foreign intrusions. The German lexical system demonstrates a strong capacity to absorb, adapt and reinterpret English material while preserving its own grammatical organization.

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