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## **The role of the form-meaning relationship in the process of loanword adaptation<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

The aim of the present study is to analyze and comment on some intriguing cases of synonymy and word variance in the Polish and Czech languages. A common feature of the examples we discuss is that they illustrate the role of the relationship between form and meaning in the process of loanword adaptation. We assume the form of a word is not irrelevant: the form can bear on the meaning, it can direct the word's development and, in cases of lexical borrowing, it can influence the way the word becomes adapted in a recipient language.

Although our examples come from Polish and Czech, we do not deal with Polish loans in Czech or Czech loans in Polish. Instead we focus on words that Polish and Czech borrowed independently from other languages, comparing them with their native synonyms and looking for differences. We also compare spelling variants of the same loanword, looking for differences in their use. Drawing on examples from two languages, Polish and Czech, makes our observations more credible, we believe, than they would have been if based on one language only.

This study has been conducted as part of a Polish-Czech project concerned with the perception, reception and adaptation of loanwords (see footnote). Within this project, we seek to identify various factors of loanword adaptation, partly through a detailed analysis of pairs (also triples, quadruples, etc.) of synonym words and variant forms, partly through psycholinguistic investigation of the reception of the elements of the

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pairs. In this paper, we will not be dealing with the results of psychological experiments, but will restrict ourselves to what we can find in texts, in other cultural artifacts and in the language itself. More about the project can be read on its website (<http://www.approval.uw.edu.pl>). In particular, several dozen case studies have been made available there and further studies are on the way.

### **The aim of the work**

The phenomenon of lexical loans is ubiquitous: just as ideas migrate from one place to another, so do words spread out between language communities. And just as ideas can be adopted without asking anybody's permission, so too can words be borrowed freely, without asking the users of the donor language. In addition, lexical borrowings need not be returned after a definite time. This makes the notion of 'word borrowing' somewhat misleading (see Haugen 1950: 211); 'word adoption' would be a better term, firstly, because it does not suggest a similarity between words and material objects, and secondly, because it brings to mind another name which is relevant here, viz. 'word adaptation'. Though the verbs 'adopt' and 'adapt' are unrelated etymologically, the link between adopting a word and adapting it is clear: words do not pass from language to language unchanged.

The changes a loanword may undergo in the recipient language are manifold. They may affect its pronunciation, spelling, morphology, syntactic characteristics, collocability, meaning, pragmatic features, and stylistic distribution, to mention only the main possibilities. In this paper, it is the meaning of a loanword that we concentrate upon. We analyze cases in which a given loanword has an exact synonym in the recipient language — i.e. a synonym of the same designative meaning — and we search for non-designative features in which the two words may differ. More precisely, we compare what are known as synchronic loans, i.e. words whose foreign origin is obvious to non-specialists, with their native synonyms. Long-established borrowings which are no longer recognized as foreign could be treated like native words and compared with synchronic loans of the same meaning, but for the time being we have excluded them from our study.

A word can be borrowed to name a new object or a new phenomenon which was previously nonexistent or unknown. Far more interesting, however, are borrowings unmotivated by communicative needs, having an exact synonym in the recipient language at the moment of their entrance. Studying the meaning and use of such words is essential for answering the question of why they are borrowed at all. In effect, it helps us to understand the very process of lexical borrowing.

The reverse situation — i.e. when a native word is coined to eradicate a loanword from a language — is of interest too, given that purists' attempts to substitute a foreign word with a native coinage are often fruitless: both words remain in use and sooner or later diverge in meaning or usage. Is this because the language does not tolerate truly synonymous words and forces them to develop in different directions?

We assume that no two words of a language can be fully equivalent functionally and we are particularly interested in semantic differences which can be explained, at least partially, with reference to word spelling and/or pronunciation. A foreign form evokes different associations from a native form, so even when a loanword and its native equivalent are exact synonyms, they may develop in different directions and eventually exhibit considerable differences in meaning. The phenomenon will be illustrated with some examples further on in this paper.

We are also interested in cases of lexical variance in which one variant retains original or nearly-original (foreign) spelling, while the other is more native in form.<sup>2</sup> Variants have the same meaning by definition, but may differ in other respects, just like synonymous words can. Some interesting examples will be provided below, e.g. variants tending to be used in different domains and variants perceived as more or less prestigious depending on their spelling or pronunciation. As the examples will show, the form of a word itself may affect some aspects of its meaning and use.

There are, naturally, many more factors that influence the adaptation of loanwords, some connected with the structure of the donor and recipient languages, others rooted in their history and, in particular, their past contacts with other languages. In the case of Czech, an important fact to bear in mind is the equally strong position of the two varieties of the language, one formal (*spisovná čeština*) and the other colloquial (*obecná čeština*) — a situation which has no counterpart in contemporary Polish.<sup>3</sup> This paper, however, is concerned with only one factor bearing on loanword adaptation, namely the form-meaning relationship.

## Methodology and sources

We adopt a broad notion of meaning, loosely related to the proposal of Leech (1981: 9–23), who partitioned meaning into seven components (‘seven types of meaning’, in his own words): conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning and thematic meaning. This is not to say that we agree with each detail of his proposal: we would certainly change some of his examples and explanations, but this is understandable in view of the fact that Leech had both word meaning and sentence meaning in mind, while we are concerned with lexical meaning only. On the other hand, we supplement Leech’s typol-

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<sup>2</sup> Consider for instance *lobby*, borrowed into Polish from English and used in its original spelling, and compare this to Polish *lobbysta*, which has a form close to the original English (*lobbyist*), but slightly changed, as opposed to the more assimilated Polish variant *lobbista*.

<sup>3</sup> Only the formal variety of Czech is codified in dictionaries and language guides. However, when so many lexical loans, especially of English origin, are being introduced into the language, these publications can hardly keep up with the changes. The absence of a new word in a dictionary need not mean the word should be avoided, but may cause uncertainty among language users. In such conditions, it is necessary to rethink and perhaps to redefine the criteria for judging newly borrowed words as correct or incorrect, see Svobodová (2009).

ogy with other components of a word's functional characteristics, so as to include word structure and etymology, grammar and usage. We also take facts from a word's history into account.

We thus arrive at a matrix of features, a tabular structure which we fill with data relating to the meaning and use of the words we compare. As we are linguists, not psychologists, we obtain data mainly from texts and similar sources, e.g. iconography. We use language corpora, press archives, digital libraries, library catalogues<sup>4</sup>, websites, Google images, language guides, scholarly linguistic studies and other technical literature (when needed), as well as encyclopedias and dictionaries, of course. We also look for evidence in the language itself, e.g. we treat the frequency of a word as indicative of its importance to the users. Secondary uses of a word (e.g. *Don't be a pig!*), its derivatives (e.g. *pig-headedness*) and idioms (e.g. *to make a pig of oneself*) are worth attention too, because they may reveal some of the typical associations the word calls up in the minds of its users and help to draw the stereotypical image of its referent.

For sake of consistency, a common description format was defined and it is applied to all Polish and Czech words described in the project (see the project website for details). Frequencies, stylistic distributions, collocation images and examples of usage come from reference corpora: the National Corpus of Polish (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego, <http://nkjp.pl>) and the Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus, <http://www.korpus.cz>). The PWN Corpus of Polish (Korpus Języka Polskiego Wydawnictwa Naukowego PWN, <http://korpus.pwn.pl>) is also used as an auxiliary source of examples.

### Previous research

Comparative analyses of synonyms have been already performed, the most notable example in Polish being “Dystynktywny słownik synonimów” (“The Distinctive Synonym Dictionary”) by Nagórko et al. (2004), in which approx. 1500 words are grouped into over 200 entries for comparative purposes. Unlike the majority of synonym dictionaries, “Dystynktywny słownik synonimów” provides abundant information on particular words, not only labels, but also definitions and comments, examples quoted from a reference corpus of Polish, syntactic schemes, collocations, sometimes even etymologies. In addition, each entry opens with a short discussion of the similarities and differences between the words compared.

In an extensive introduction to the dictionary, the authors make a point which is worth citing here (Nagórko et al. 2004: vii):

A faith in absolute synonymy seems to be irreconcilable with the economy-of-effort principle which is observed universally, both in human communication and in other spheres of human activity gov-

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<sup>4</sup> An on-line library catalogue can provide the frequency of a word in book titles and offer additional data on its stylistic distribution.

erned by rational laws. According to that principle, to duplicate means, for whatever reason, is to waste energy unnecessarily.<sup>5</sup>

Other authors, as well, have expressed skepticism about the existence of absolute (or true, total, exact) synonymy. Among lexicographers, Johnson is worth listening to, when in the “Preface” to his renowned “Dictionary of the English Language” (1755) he says:

Words are seldom exactly synonymous; a new term was not introduced, but because the former was thought inadequate: names, therefore, have often many ideas, but few ideas have many names. (quoted after Atkins, Rundell 2008: 135)

In a similar vein, Chmielowski (1903: 56), a Polish literary historian and critic, notes:

Strictly speaking, there is not even a single pair of synonyms with exactly the same meaning [...]. Each quasi-synonymous word has a shade of meaning peculiar to itself.<sup>6</sup>

Although he allows some place for true synonymy — in particular, when one word is of foreign origin, the other one being native — he admits that the choice of one synonym over another makes a stylistic difference.

Among linguists, Ullmann (1964: 142) is one of those who believe that exact synonymy is not frequent and he explains why:

[...] it is perfectly true that absolute synonymy runs counter to our whole way of looking at language. When we see different words we instinctively assume that there must also be some difference in meaning, and in the vast majority of cases there is in fact a distinction even though it may be difficult to formulate. Very few words are completely synonymous in the sense of being interchangeable in any context without the slightest alteration in objective meaning, feeling-tone or evocative value.

As ‘completely synonymous’ he mentions technical terms, e.g. *caecitis* and *typhlitis* can both be used with reference to the inflammation of the blind gut.

The opposite stance — that exact synonymy is common — also has many adherents, both among linguists (e.g. Apresjan 1974) and other scholars (e.g. Grodziński 1985, a Polish philosopher of language). Much depends on how synonymy is understood and what requirements two words have to meet to count as exact synonyms. For some linguists, such words should be mutually substitutable in a certain class of contexts, for others they must have the same semantic content. In addition, the borderline between semantic and non-semantic features is drawn variously, largely because the notion of word meaning varies, in particular with respect to its relation to scientific knowledge (e.g. Wierzbicka 1985). The first part of Apresjan’s (2000) “Systematic Lexicography”

<sup>5</sup> Wiara w istnienie synonimii absolutnej wydaje się nie do pogodzenia z zasadą ekonomii wysiłku dającą się obserwować powszechnie zarówno w komunikacji międzyludzkiej, jak i w innych sferach ludzkiej działalności rządzonej przez racjonalne prawa. Zgodnie z tą zasadą jakiegokolwiek dublowanie środków byłoby niepotrzebnym marnowaniem energii.

<sup>6</sup> Ściśle biorąc, nie ma dwu nawet synonimów, które by naprawdę to samo znaczyły [...]. Każdy z wyrazów bliskoznacznych ma jakiś odcień sobie właściwy.

gives some idea of the complexity of the issues and provides rich empirical material in the form of synonymous words grouped together in order to point out differences between them.

In view of the discrepancy of opinion regarding the essence and scope of synonymy, it is best, we believe, to assume that no two words are fully equivalent functionally. This is not to neglect that exact synonyms exist: we define exact synonyms as words having the same designative features, but we are not particularly interested in which features are designative, and which are not, since our intention is to search for any distinctions between words of similar meaning.

As was already stated, our primary interest is in the relation between meaning and form of close synonyms of which one is foreign, one native, as well as in the form-meaning relation between variants of the same loanword. The point that distinctions in meaning between such words may be reflected in their form — or indeed, that distinctions in meaning may actually result from distinctions in form — has not often been made. We are not familiar with any systematic survey, so we will restrict ourselves to a few examples.

In a short paper comparing the word *fan* (e.g. of pop music), a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century borrowing in Polish, with its native equivalent *wielbiciel*, Wróblewski (1991) notes that the loanword is much shorter than the native word, which makes it more attractive. In an answer to a reader's query concerning the spelling of musical terms of English origin, e.g. *cool* or *jazz*, Pisarek (1964) notes that nativized (i.e. phonetic) spelling makes them lose their exotic nature, which is not irrelevant for people fascinated by music. Both these observations, however, play a marginal role in the texts in which they appear.

A more detailed investigation into the role of form-meaning relationship in loanword adaptation was carried out by one of the authors of the present paper. The research took on the form of case studies, see Bańko (2008a, 2008b, 2009), Bańko and Hebal-Jezińska (2012). Each time the same questions were posed: why did a certain loanword enter the Polish language or why did a spelling variance appear in the process of loanword adaptation, and what purpose does the variance serve?

Two of these studies deal with *click* and *wow*, two fairly recent loans in Polish. Why they have been borrowed is not at all clear in view of the fact that *click* had to compete with several native synonyms, all of which were advocated by some computer users and supported in books and computer journals, while *wow* was heavily criticized by linguists and ordinary people. Apart from other possible factors, such as the impact of English language technical literature (in the case of *click*), mechanically translated to Polish, or the influence of linguistic fashion (in the case of *wow*), a likely reason why the two words have been borrowed into Polish and managed to survive is a harmony between their phonological structure and the meaning they convey. The answer to the 'Why?' question, the two studies suggest, lies in the realm of sound-symbolic (or phonosemantic and phonostylistic) phenomena.

The other two studies mentioned above are concerned with two instances of spelling variance in Polish: *toreador* vs. *torreador* and *jazz* vs. *dżez*. While it is fairly easy to ex-

plain the duplication of ‘r’ in *toreador* (against etymology) with reference to the expressive values of the corresponding consonant (which is geminated in Polish) and perhaps by analogy to similar words, e.g. *corrida*, *horror*, *terror* (the same spelling in Polish and English), it is more difficult to say why the original spelling *jazz* still prevails substantially over *dżez*, almost a hundred years after the word was borrowed from English. It should be added that, for instance, *dżinsy* ‘jeans’ is far more frequent in Polish than *jeansy* — why then is the adaptation of *jazz* so slow? The answer may again lie close to the realm of sound-symbolic effects, though the harmony of form and meaning is now more abstract in nature.

Generally speaking, the spelling *jazz*, alien and strange to users of Polish, corresponds well with the ideas and feelings evoked by the word. At the very beginning it was the feeling of ‘westernness’ and modernity, since jazz came to Poland from the West and was perceived as a symbol of the new times; the music was also felt to be loud and exuberant. Shortly after World War II, during the time of Stalinism in Poland, jazz was banned from clubs and restaurants, so playing it became an act of civil disobedience, an expression of dissent and non-conformism. The myth of jazz as the music of political and social defiance lived long after the situation in communist Poland became less oppressive, even when jazzmen benefitted from the cultural policy of the state and were doing well (Pietraszewski 2012). With passing time, jazz waned in popularity and became elite music, thus acquiring one more symbolic value in its cultural image. It is largely because of such values, we believe, that the form *jazz* predominates in Polish: this form is simply more suitable to convey the historic and cultural connotations of the word. The original spelling prevails in most derivatives too, e.g. *jazzman*, *jazzowy* ‘jazz’ (attributive use), *jazzować* ‘to play jazz’, the only exceptions being slang words used in metaphorical meaning, e.g. *Ale dżez!* ‘What a lark!’ or *dżezi* ‘cool’ (showing approval). This further supports our thesis about a link between form and meaning: as the meaning of the aforementioned slang words does not associate with jazz music, they need not occur in the English spelling.

We devoted more space to the *jazz* — *dżez* pair, because its Czech counterpart, *jazz* — *džez*, was also an object of our investigation (Bańko, Hebal-Jeziarska 2012) and the results coincided with those obtained on the Polish material (although the position of the native variant in Czech proved stronger). An extended version of that research, on both Polish and Czech variants, is available on our project website.

The example of *jazz* demonstrates that a harmony between a word form and word meaning may slow down the process of loanword assimilation. Such a harmony may also affect the semantic development of a word, as shown in another study (Bańko 2013), concerned with the word *kurort* ‘health resort’, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Polish loan from German. Short after the word was borrowed into Polish, a native synonym *uzdrowisko* was coined in order to relegate *kurort* from the language. However, despite a century-long battle against it, *kurort* has managed to survive, changing its meaning to ‘popular and snobbish holiday place’. The change in meaning was very likely directed by the connotations of the word: some pre-war dictionaries state that *kurort* was most often used with reference to health resorts in Germany and the preference for foreign places in its use

is still visible in modern texts. Furthermore, the collocation image of *kurort* includes such features as exclusiveness (strangely enough, not in conflict with popularity), modernity, reputation and elegance, whereas in the collocation image of *uzdrowisko* it is tradition and aesthetic values that are best evident.<sup>7</sup>

### More examples of the influence of the form-meaning relationship on the adaptation of loanwords

In the rest of this paper we will discuss in brief several more examples of how the relation between word form and word meaning can affect loanword adaptation. All of these examples have already been described in more detail on our project website, in Polish and Czech. The description scheme, used for both Polish and Czech lexical material, is also available there, and so are the details regarding the sources and methodology. In what follows, only such information is given which can best illustrate the points we want to make.

The material will be presented alternately: first a Polish word pair, then the corresponding Czech word pair, then again a Polish pair, etc. Examples are ordered from more straightforward to more complex and more intriguing.

#### *strofa* — *zwrotka*

*Strofa* and *zwrotka* are two Polish equivalents of the English term *stanza*. The former word — coming from the same Greek root as English *strophe* (though borrowed from Latin) — is older, used as early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The latter word is of domestic origin, almost an exact translation of *strofa*, coined presumably in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the period when Polish scientific terminology began to develop. For a long time both words were equally widespread in literary works and in technical literature, but around halfway through the 20<sup>th</sup> century *strofa* started to predominate in scientific texts. Nowadays *strofa* belongs to a higher register, being a literary word or a technical term, while *zwrotka* is stylistically unmarked and used in everyday language. For example, *zwrotka*, but not *strofa*, is used in reference to popular songs and children's poems. As appears from collocation analysis, *strofa* is the subject of aesthetic evaluation (cf. *piękne strofy* 'beautiful stanzas') and artistic activity (cf. *pisać, układać strofy* 'write, arrange stanzas'), while *zwrotka* is less frequent in such contexts; in addition, *strofa* can be recited, but *zwrotka* is sung. Only *zwrotka* collocates with the word *refren* ('refrain'), which confirms its connection to songs.

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<sup>7</sup> One of the anonymous reviewers of this paper pointed to the examples of *jazz* and *kurort* as illustrating the process of 're-anglicization' and 're-germanization' of long-established loans and even of the language itself. While we do not deny that such a process can sometimes be observed in both Polish and Czech, we do not think that *jazz* and *kurort* exemplify it in Polish. To our knowledge, *jazz* has always been more common than *dżez*, even when in some dictionaries the former word was cross-referenced to the latter. Likewise, *kurort* has never gone out of use, and despite the competition of *uzdrowisko*, it has been gaining popularity again since the 1960s (Urbańczyk 1962).

The distinctions in use correspond to the distinctions in form, and are likely to result from them. The strange shape of *strofa*, non-transparent to laymen, contrasts to the familiar shape of *zwrotka*, easily recognized as related to other Polish words, e.g. *zwrot* ('turn'), and having the appearance of a diminutive (cf. its pseudo-diminutive suffix *-k-*). Moreover, the strange shape of *strofa* creates a distance between the speaker and the referent, which makes it a good vehicle for the contents suggested by the word: erudition and technical knowledge. The familiar form of *zwrotka*, on the other hand, evokes the feeling of a conceptual and emotional closeness of the referent.

*strofa — sloka — sloha*

In Czech the word *strofa*, a lexeme of Greek-Latin origin which was borrowed probably through German, has two equivalents: *sloka* and *sloha*. *Strofa* started to be used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was incorporated into Jungmann's dictionary. The equivalent *sloka* is in fact believed to be of Sanskrit origin, but it is treated as a fully domestic word, whose usage was supported by Josef Jungmann and other leaders of the Czech National Revival at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the idea of replacing all German and Romance loanwords with counterparts closer to Slavonic roots. The same is true also for the equivalent *sloha*, a word of Russian origin, which came during the Revival and today is archaic in the meaning of *stanza* (although remaining quite frequent in other meanings connected with documents, printed matter, administrative style, etc.). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century all of these lexemes were used in literary theory and literary works, later *strofa* and *sloka* prevailed and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *strofa* began to predominate as a technical term in scientific texts and the theory of literature. This is evident for example in collocations like *sapphická strofa* 'Sappho stanza', *antická strofa* 'antique stanza', *oněginská strofa* 'Onegin stanza', etc., connected with specific types of *stanzas*. *Sloka* is more widespread, it is used in general language and stylistically unmarked, no matter whether relating to poetry or songs — the latter more often, e.g. in connection with popular songs.

The contemporary usage of the words *strofa* and *sloka* is no doubt influenced by their forms: *strofa* is unfamiliar, containing among others the consonant *-f-* typical for loanwords, evoking technical terminology, something rigid or even outdated. On the other hand, *sloka* seems to be more familiar and easier, perhaps subconsciously closer to other Czech words (even if not etymologically connected).

*chipsy — czipsy*

The word *chipsy* — from English *chips* 'potato chips' — exemplifies the process known as depluralization, frequent in the adaptation of English loans in Polish (Fisiak 1961). In the process, a plural form is interpreted as if it were singular, despite retaining the plural ending from the donor language, and it receives singular or plural endings typical of the recipient language. As the word *chips* in Polish is used mainly in the plural,

it has in effect a double plural marking, i.e. the English suffix *-s* and a Polish inflectional suffix, different in different cases. However, the users of Polish do not find the double marking redundant (nor do they regard singular forms as contradictory), because they do not recognize a plural suffix in *chips*.

The assimilated spelling *czipsy*, based on the pronunciation of the word, is about ten times less frequent than the original spelling *chipsy*, which calls for explanation in view of the fact that the word was borrowed quite a long time ago, in the 1980s, and its Polonized spelling is almost as old as the original one. One reason why the original form prevails is certainly its presence on bags of potato chips. The name is a common noun, though, so the producers would have no problem changing the original spelling for the Polish one if only the latter gained in popularity. Is it only the use of the foreign spelling in trade that prevents the native variant from becoming more popular?

It is quite possible that the foreign spelling gives potato chips an air of something special or even exclusive. This supposition may sound surprising when compared with the mass consumption of potato chips, but finds grounds in the language and cultural snobbery, common in Poland, in the widespread belief that what comes from abroad and especially from the West is superior to what has domestic origin. Perhaps *chipsy* simply taste better than *czipsy*? Psychological research on the perception of the two forms should help to answer the question.

#### *chips(y)* — *čips(y)*

When comparing the variants *chipsy* and *čipsy* in Czech, we can notice that the variant with original English orthography is used more frequently and usually denotes either potato slices or some other pieces of foodstuff (sugar, cinnamon), and the latter case is connected only with the food-processing industry and its terminology. In everyday language, only the meaning ‘potato chips’ (of various flavours) is used. The graphically adapted form *čipsy* is treated as more colloquial (or even substandard) and appears not only in collocations denoting food, but also other small pieces of various materials, e.g. *dubové čipsy* (‘oak chips’ used by wine growers), *kokosové čipsy* (‘coco chips’ — plant fertilizer), *podlahové čipsy* (‘flooring chips’ — pieces of floor covering), etc. Nevertheless, this stylistic distinction is not automatic, there are many texts in which both forms are used as equipollent.

As for the morphological form, the variant *chipsy* is used also in its original English indeclinable form *chips* (as plurale tantum), e.g. in the quoted collocation *fish and chips*, in the stock-exchange term *blue chips* or in commercial names like *Bohemia Chips*. In other contexts the original morpheme composition changes, the English plural morpheme *-s* becomes part of the word root and the Czech plural morpheme takes its position. The same is true with the assimilated version *čipsy* (with the nominative singular form *čips*), where another loanword used in Czech *čip* (denoting electronic circuit) with the plural form *čipy* could inhibit any other morphological adaptation, as it could lead to misunderstanding.

*dealer — diler*

*Dealer* was borrowed into Polish in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Like many other lexical loans, it has a narrower scope of usage than in the donor language, English in this case: the word is applied mainly to car vendors, especially in authorized showrooms, as well as to drug sellers.

Both in the original spelling and in the Polonized one the word is most often used in the press, but the distribution of its variants there is different: *dealer* is almost twice as frequent as *diler* and used mainly with reference to car vendors, whereas *diler* has equal frequency in automobile and drug contexts. The distribution is quite different in literary texts: *diler* is twice as frequent as *dealer* and applied usually to drug sellers, whereas *dealer* is equally often used in automobile contexts. In addition, though the overall frequency of *dealer* is higher in reference corpora, *diler* predominates when it comes to drugs.

The predominance of *dealer* in journalism and of *diler* in fiction is no surprise. As a rule, the authors of literary texts want to involve their readers emotionally, so they usually avoid using foreign words and they avoid using foreign spellings if there is a choice between an assimilated and an unassimilated variant. Foreign words and foreign variants would create a distance between the readers and the plot.

It is much more interesting that *dealer*, especially in the press and in technical literature, more often refers to car vendors than drug sellers. A likely explanation is that the foreign variant is more prestigious and better suited to name the job of authorized vendors in car showrooms than the illegal and socially disapproved activity of people who sell drugs. The domestic variant, on the other hand, is unpretentious and corresponds well with the suspicious job of drug sellers.

Once again the process of loanword adaptation turns out to be directed, at least partially, by the tendency to maintain harmony between the form of a word and its meaning.

*dealer — dýler — diler*

The English word *dealer* started to be used in Czech in the first half of the 1980s, when it denoted either dealers of drugs or various resellers and regraters selling cosmetics, fake perfumes, or other such articles. As many of the latter were not honest, and drug sellers were denounced by society all the time, the lexeme gained negative connotations to some extent. On the other hand, the same word is used as an official technical term in connection with the stock-exchange, and also for representatives of corporations and companies selling cars and other commodities. The word's usage frequency is relatively high, but we have to distinguish its technical, official and formal usage in the field of financial business and economics, where it is neutral or adequately stylistically marked, on one hand, from the meaning of distribution of drugs or doubtful reselling, where it has negative connotation, on the other.

All of the forms have been morphologically adapted in Czech, they are used as declinable animate masculine nouns. As for the graphic forms, the variant *dealer* no doubt

predominates, it is regarded to be standard (it has been incorporated into codification rules and manuals). Both the forms assimilated according to pronunciation, *dýler* and *díler*, occur only in the colloquial language usage and their frequency cannot be compared to the original form. The orthography of the latter is problematic in that the Czech rules of pronunciation determine the articulation of the syllable *dí* to be [d'í] in all the domestic words and are misleading for loanwords. The variant *dýler*, on the other hand, indicates a 'hard' pronunciation of the first syllable, and may perhaps be easier for the common language users.

The graphic adaptation goes hand-in-hand with modification in the semantic spectrum of both nativized variants *dýler* and *díler*. Only seldom do they occur in contexts different from the sphere of drug selling and addiction, connected with prostitution, crime, etc., which assigns negative connotations to them. Nevertheless, taking into account the general trend of formal adaptation, we can predict growth in their frequency and only the real usage can decide which of the adapted forms will prevail.

### *eksplozja — wybuch*

According to dictionaries, *eksplozja* 'explosion' and *wybuch* 'explosion, outbreak, outburst' refer to the same kind of events, but the phenomena referred to by the former word are stronger and more violent. This is rather surprising, because *wybuch* itself denotes a violent phenomenon. Apparently, there is a need for a gradation of events of this kind which the word *eksplozja* fulfills. The word has thus a hyperbolic function.

In its figurative uses, *wybuch* has a negative semantic prosody, cf. *wybuch wojny, pożaru, epidemii* 'outbreak of war, fire, epidemic', also *wybuch płaczu, złości, gniewu* 'outburst of tears, anger, rage'. In comparison with such collocations even *wybuch radości* 'outburst of joy' and *wybuch śmiechu* 'burst of laughter' sound disturbing. The semantic prosody of *eksplozja*, on the other hand, varies, cf. *eksplozja miłości* 'explosion of love' and *eksplozja nienawiści* 'explosion of hate'. In some contexts it is impossible to substitute *eksplozja* for *wybuch*, e.g. *wybuch wojny* 'outbreak of war', in some others such substitution is possible, but the resulting phrases are less frequent than the initial ones and sound more emphatic, e.g. *eksplozja radości* seems to be something stronger than *wybuch radości* (nb. the same holds for English, cf. *explosion of joy* and *outburst of joy*).

There is more to say about these words, in particular about their phonological structure which supports their meaning, but let us focus on the observation that *eksplozja* is more expressive than *wybuch* and serves as a hyperbole, especially in figurative contexts. Synchronic loans are often perceived as more emphatic compared with their native synonyms, further examples of this phenomenon can be found on our website. For instance, the adjective *kuriozalny* 'peculiar, bizarre', related to Latin *curiosum*, is half as frequent in Polish as its native counterpart *osobliwy* 'peculiar', but in parliamentary reports the former word prevails overwhelmingly. A closer inspection shows that Polish MPs need it to criticize their political opponents, e.g. *Pana poglądy są kuriozalne, panie*

*pošle* ‘Your views are bizarre, Mr. X’. An explanation why synchronic loans are more expressive than their native synonyms will be offered in the concluding remarks.

### *exploze — výbuch*

The word *exploze*, borrowed from Latin, started to be used in the Czech language in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and since its first occurrence it has denoted various types of explosions. It is used as a technical term in many branches, which is evident from the most frequent collocation *chemická exploze* ‘chemical explosion’, *jaderná exploze* ‘nuclear explosion’, *vulkanická exploze* ‘vulcanic explosion’, *exploze supernovy* ‘supernova explosion’, etc. It has a character of an ‘exclusive word’ not only because of these specialized meanings, but also due to its composition of phonemes, which implies strangeness (similarly as in the case of all the other words with the prefix *ex-*).

The equivalent *výbuch* is of domestic origin, it is a deverbal derivation with an old onomatopoeic root. Besides having semantics similar to that of *exploze*, it is also used in other contexts and everyday speech, denoting bangs or strikes of any sort, as well as floods of emotions (*výbuch žárlivosti* ‘burst of jealousy’, *výbuch hněvu* ‘flare-up of anger’, *výbuch smíchu* ‘burst of laughter’) and also failures and set-backs in the colloquial language. Its frequency is more than double when compared with that of *exploze*.

We can assume that both of the lexemes *exploze* and *výbuch* can be treated as stylistically marked in Czech, but in different ways: *exploze* is a technical term of evidently foreign origin, very strong in its meaning; *výbuch* is onomatopoeic, denoting usually something dangerous, destructive, etc.

## Conclusions

Let us summarize the main points of this paper. Firstly, the relationship between a word form and a word meaning is not irrelevant: in the process of loanword adaptation, a tendency can be observed to preserve harmony between the form and the meaning. The tendency can manifest itself in two ways: the form of lexical loans can adjust to their meaning (cf. the variants analyzed above), but also the meaning can develop accordingly with the form (cf. the synonym pairs).

Secondly, assuming a broad concept of meaning, one must conclude that fully equivalent words do not exist. This is not to deny the existence of absolute synonyms, as synonymy can be defined with respect to designative meaning only.

Thirdly, ‘strangeness’ turns out to be an important factor in any linguistic description of lexical loans. Their alien and strange shape, whether phonological or graphical, has to be kept in mind, as it accounts for many phenomena of loanword perception and adaptation that are otherwise difficult to explain.

Why is a loanword actually perceived differently from its native synonym and why do different spelling variants vary in perception? We would not like to go deep into the question before performing psychological tests, but the results published by Song and

Schwarz (2010) are worth mentioning here. These authors experimented with nonce words, some of them familiar in shape, some strange, and observed a correlation between the familiarity of a word and its perception. For instance, fictitious food additives with names difficult to pronounce were evaluated as more harmful than food additives with easy names. Similarly, roller-coaster rides in a fictitious amusement park were judged as more risky and more exiting when their names were strange and difficult. Song and Schwarz explain the effect with a mistaken projection of the difficulties the subjects experienced in processing the words onto the referents of the words: unaware of the source of difficulty, the subjects attributed it to the referents, judging them as more risky, more dangerous, more harmful, etc. (for a critical review of these studies see Rączaszek-Leonardi 2013).

Synchronic loans are usually less familiar than native words, so they may be perceived much like Song and Schwarz's unfamiliar words, e.g. they can be associated with more effort and more risk. Such associations might account for some differences in synonym and variant pairs, e.g. between *eksplozja* and *wybuch* (*exploze* and *výbuch*), but certainly not for all of them. One goal of our research is to identify the dimensions along which a loanword can differ conceptually from its native synonym or an unassimilated variant can differ from a well assimilated one.

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## SUMMARY

### The role of the form-meaning relationship in the process of loanword adaptation

**Key words:** loanwords, lexical borrowings, loan adaptation, synonyms, iconicity.

This paper reports on a research project concerned with the perception, reception and adaptation of lexical loans in Polish and Czech. In the project, two working hypotheses have been adopted: (1) no two words can be fully equivalent functionally, and (2) form and meaning bear on each other in the process of loanword adaptation. The paper explains these hypotheses, their premises and their significance for the study of language, but it also presents some of the project's results, paying attention to whether they conform to the hypotheses or not.

## STRESZCZENIE

### Znaczenie relacji formy i treści w procesie adaptacji zapożyczeń leksykalnych

**Słowa kluczowe:** wyrazy obce, zapożyczenia leksykalne, adaptacja zapożyczeń, synonimia, ikoniczność.  
**Key words:** loanwords, lexical borrowings, loan adaptation, synonyms, iconicity.

Artykuł jest relacją z projektu badawczego dotyczącego percepcji, recepcji i adaptacji zapożyczeń leksykalnych w języku polskim i czeskim. W projekcie przyjęto dwie hipotezy robocze: o nieistnieniu wyrazów funkcjonalnie równoważnych i o wzajemnym warunkowaniu się formy i treści w adaptacji wyrazów zapożyczonych. Artykuł wyjaśnia sens tych hipotez, ich przesłanki i znaczenie dla opisu języka oraz przedstawia wybrane wyniki projektu pod kątem ich zgodności z wymienionymi hipotezami.