

## **Assessment of *Echoes of English* by Henrik Gottlieb**

### Introduction

On September 16, 2020, the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Copenhagen appointed an assessment committee consisting of Professor Gisle Andersen, Norwegian School of Economics, Professor Bertus van Rooy, University of Amsterdam, and Professor Peter Harder, University of Copenhagen (Chair), to evaluate the dissertation *Echoes of English Anglicisms in minor speech communities – with special focus on Danish and Afrikaans* by Henrik Gottlieb for acceptance for the defence of the doctoral degree. The assessment follows below.

### **Overall argument**

*Echoes of English* deals with the influence of English on Danish and Afrikaans. Henrik Gottlieb presents an analysis and synthesis of different views on the notion of Anglicism, and investigates the occurrence of Anglicisms in language data, synchronic and diachronic corpora and electronic texts in the case of Danish, and through secondary sources in the case of Afrikaans. He examines attitudes towards Anglicisms, and relates the occurrence of Anglicisms to underlying factors enabling the changes.

He finds that power and prestige are major factors in the propagation of language contact phenomena, and as the prestige and/or power of a language shifts relative to another language that it is in contact with, the degree of influence changes. Thus, as contact between English and Danish/Afrikaans increases, and as the relative power and prestige of English in the world generally (in the case of Danish) or in the immediate geographical environment (in the case of Afrikaans) increased, so did the influence of English on these languages, and thus the prevalence of Anglicisms increased. He also finds that Anglification in Afrikaans is further advanced than in Danish, which is attributed to the longer period of contact and the stronger directness thereof, but identifies a paradox that stronger Anglification and stronger negative reactions towards Anglicisms occur together in the case of Afrikaans.

### **Chapter 1**

The definition of the concept Anglicism is presented in this chapter, reviewing both dictionary treatments and scholarly definitions. A number of key dimensions, including motivations for borrowing, types of borrowing and attitudinal aspects, are reviewed. Contact as requirement for influence across languages, and the contrast between direct and indirect contact are presented. The value of dictionaries as evidence for the study of Anglicisms in a language, and problems posed by differences between dictionaries for comparability of results, are noted.

### *Assessment*

The definitions and review are clear, and the candidate offers his own synthesis (p. 32). Connection to current research on language contact, especially the notion of overt/covert cross-linguistic influence, which overlap with the characterization of Anglicism, might have strengthened the theoretical framework, as would engagement with (or selection of) a grammatical framework for the analysis and presentation of the linguistic phenomena studied in the thesis. Overall, in chapter 1 and 2, the possible connections between Anglicism and language contact more generally, might be

explored in more detail. There is clearly a sense in which contact with English is unique, but also important similarities.

## Chapter 2

A refined definition and more detailed classification framework for different linguistic manifestations of Anglicisms are presented in chapter 2. The taxonomy from p. 75 onwards is a thorough foundation for the rest of the study. The question of probabilistic acceptance of innovations linked to English is set out.

### *Assessment*

The analysis framework is thorough and is used systematically in the rest of the study. The connection between the definition and the classification framework is transparent and meaningful. With regard to the author's (by now, well-known) definition of Anglicism, it is reasonable that replacement words such as GER *Klimaanlage* should be excluded, and that items inspired by English – English-induced formal or functional change, such as change in word order (*Venligst vent*), novel discourse marker usage (*når det kommer til*), etc. – are included. However, merely frequency-boosted items like *ekspert vis-à-vis fagmand*, *rørende vis-à-vis gripende* are much more controversial, as they entail no formal or functional adaptation, merely a boost in frequency of domestic forms. Thus, there is a need to argue more strongly why they should be included in the concept of Anglicism.

The overlap between this chapter in chapter 9 (from section 6 onwards) is unfortunate – it could have strengthened the understanding of the notion of Anglicism, especially its societal and political dimensions, if the literature on Afrikaans (and Dutch and Danish) reviewed in chapter 9 had been integrated in chapter 2 already. Possible salient differences in approach could be highlighted and put to the test through data analysis of Danish and Afrikaans in subsequent chapters. Linguistic concepts for the analysis of probabilistic phenomena would also have strengthened the exposition of the overview of Anglicism presented in the chapter.

## Chapter 3

Chapter 3 examines in detail the role of translation in the dissemination of Anglicisms to languages in which translation from English plays an important role. A critical review is offered of the foreignization / domestication tension and the consequences of foreignization in a world where there is an imbalance in the direction of translations. The dominance of English, and the possible effects on other languages, are reinforced by foreignization. The chapter extends the discussion from translation-induced contact features to determine at what point these features find their way into original text produced in the recipient language.

### *Assessment*

The chapter builds a meaningful and convincing connection between concerns in translation theory, relevant empirical evidence from translations, and Anglicisms. The chapter contributes to a clearer understanding of one of the key mechanisms of indirect language contact between languages that may facilitate linguistic effects, but specifically and sensibly explains how the situation with English differs from other languages in contact.

## Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents a frequency analysis of Anglicisms in 168 randomly selected newspaper articles from 2000 and 2014, representing three different newspapers with different markets. The method is manual analysis by reading the individual articles. Different counting methods and normalisation methods are used, but an overall small absolute and larger relative increase in the occurrence of Anglicisms is found. The chapter concludes that the absolute numbers are not very large, but contextualised against the overall relatively low proportion of neologisms (not just contact-related) in Danish, the proportional share of Anglicisms is very large.

### *Assessment*

The manual analysis is an appropriate strategy, given the risk of overlooking relevant instances through automated methods of data extraction. The span of 14 years is relatively short, but the overall frequencies are sufficient to attach value to the numbers. A stronger statistical analysis strategy, beyond the eye-balling of differences that is employed in this chapter, would have enhanced the persuasiveness of the chapter. There is every reason to suspect that the findings are significant, but there is considerable variance in the data, and a more sophisticated look at the numbers, including considerations of the variables identified by the candidate, would have been welcome.

The corpus-based study would be strengthened if relative frequencies (pmw) were presented, rather than absolute figures per year. Although the same number of articles is selected for each subcorpus (n=28), we do not know the corpus size for each year (2000 vs 2014), and the length of articles could vary considerably. Relative figures are, however, offered as percentages on p. 154f, making this comparison more compelling. Significance testing of differences would strengthen this part of the study methodologically, as the author could then avoid impressionistic formulations such as “the increase was modest for two of the newspapers, and negligible for the third” (p. 154).

## Chapter 5

The frequency of selected Anglicisms in larger corpora and electronic text collections is examined in chapter 5, in order to determine if the overall frequency of Anglicisms has increased. This chapter complements chapter 4 by examining frequencies in much larger corpora to seek stronger quantitative confirmation of the trends reported in chapter 4. Two data extraction strategies are used: counting frequencies of “usual suspects”, known Anglicisms in Danish, and counting frequencies of randomly selected Anglicisms. Findings indicate a moderate increase in frequency for Anglicisms over time, with some variance.

### *Assessment*

The strategy to complement the manual analysis with a larger frequency comparison is well-chosen. The rationale for a non-random and random selection of forms for analysis is clear, but the description of the selection criteria for the forms included is not entirely clear.

Again, methodological issues related to the corpus-based comparison should be addressed. The presentation and processing of numbers are similar to the strategy in chapter 4 and therefore suffer from the same limitations, where variance is not really taken on board but only remarked on. Moreover, the four corpora/text archives are quite heterogeneous and differ markedly with respect to genre. ADL contains mostly fiction but also essays, poetry and drama. Korpus 90 and Korpus 2000

contain news text, novels and magazines, but the distribution of each genre type is unknown. The massive Infomedia text archive contains exclusively news text. Thus, one could expect that the author addressed the likely possibility that statistical differences could result from a genre effect due to the different composition of the corpora, especially since several of the phrasal expressions are quite “newsy” and not to be expected in fictional text (e.g. *i det lange løb, når det kommer til and det faktisk at*).

In the phraseological part of the study, and in the following “randomly selected” constructions, the author takes what has come to be known as a semasiological approach to Anglicism studies, investigating possible (Anglo/non-Anglo) realisations of a lexical variable. This is a well-suited approach for the research objective at hand. However, the terminology used is perhaps not optimal: each lexical set (e.g. *fjernundervisning/distance learning/...*) would better be termed “lexical variable” rather than “semantic field”. Moreover, a term such as “rating” in the meaning that seems to correspond to “ranking” also leads to some confusion in the reader’s interpretation of the quantitative reporting.

Strangely, in Footnote 149 on p. 178, we read that the data in the table represent “accumulated values for all relevant forms of the verbs involved” in connection with the expression *have sex*. This would seem to entail that the same does not apply to other expressions with verbs, i.e. *få enderne til at mødes, få tjek på, peppe op, bakke op*. Is this the case, i.e. were only the base forms retrieved and counted for these other expressions? Or were the full inflectional paradigms counted here also? Regardless of what was done, the methodological steps of the two corpus studies described in this chapter could have been explained in clearer terms. It would also be nice to see how the categories “established”, “predominant”, etc. were quantitatively operationalised in terms of Anglicism ratios (p. 186).

The chapter also contains an unfortunate, erroneous claim about Danish in the world: “All speakers of Danish live in Denmark” (p. 163). Danish is spoken in Greenland, Southern Schleswig and in minor speech communities in other parts of the world. See, for instance, the project “Danish Voices in the Americas” at KU’s LANCHART centre (<https://lanchart.hum.ku.dk/research/projects/danishvoices/>).

## Chapter 6

In contrast to the Anglicisms studied in chapters 4 and 5, the focus of chapter 6 is forms that are either misattributed to English or show substantial adjustment in their Danish use – pseudo-anglicisms. The main finding is that the coinage and frequency of these forms go down, and explained as a consequence of greater overall proficiency in English, leading to less acceptance of forms where the un-Englishness can be identified by English-knowing Danes.

The chapter develops a classification system for pseudo-Anglicisms and then determines the changes in frequency over the course of two decades. The final parts of the chapter compares the fortunes of such forms in Danish to other speech communities to reinforce the conclusion that new pseudo-Anglicisms are coined more when overall proficiency in English is lower.

The chapter illustrates a pervasive challenge for anyone addressing variational issues: the tension between the analytic advantages of having clearcut categories and the very gradual shades of difference between the observed phenomena. In (wisely) choosing a broad definition (p. 32) of anglicisms, involving “any individual or systemic feature adopted or adapted...”, HG necessarily takes on board a multiplicity of very different phenomena. This frequently puts him in a position where this tension becomes apparent.

In this context, as HG notes (p. 198), “it may be difficult to maintain the traditional distinction between pseudo-Anglicisms and *bona fide* Anglicisms”. The reason is (as expressed on p. 200) that “Since no Anglicism is an exact replica of its English etymon, there is always something non-English underneath”. Nevertheless, the quantitative part of the discussion is largely predicated on a clearcut bipartition between pseudo-Anglicisms and “*bona fide* Anglicisms” (e.g. p. 204). There is nothing wrong in this, but it might have been useful to address the issue more head-on, discussing precisely what choice lies behind the (useful and empirically illustrative) imposition of a dichotomous classification on the gradual cline that had been discussed previously.

#### *Assessment*

The focus of the chapter provides another welcome complement to the previous two chapters, with new insights into the way English influences other languages, in this case particularly insofar as proficiency in English becomes a factor in what is adopted into the recipient language. The empirical evidence is of a similar kind to the previous two chapters, focussing mainly on the newspaper article text archive due to its size and the relatively infrequent nature of the forms included in the pseudo-Anglicism search. In the case of chapter 6, the strategy makes good use of the possible evidence, given the rarity of the phenomenon, and a justifiable selection of items based on transparent criteria (p. 234). The similarity in the data collection strategy and corpora themselves enhances the comparability of the findings, especially insofar as estimation of overall frequencies is concerned.

#### **Chapter 7**

The historical shift in influence of German and English on Danish is traced in this chapter, with some passing reference to such shifts in the relative influence of Afrikaans and English on other South African languages. The comparative analysis of Anglicisms and Germanisms and their changing recent fortunes, against the backdrop of the much more established character of many of the Germanisms, forms the core empirical contribution of the chapter. Similar to chapters 4 and 5, the candidate uses a combination of handpicked “usual suspects” and random selection of possible forms to count in the data to determine the relative frequency of Germanisms and Anglicisms over time, and especially their direct competition. The finding is that Germanisms are still much more frequent in Danish, but there is a downward frequency trajectory, while Anglicisms are less frequent than Germanism but their frequency is on the rise over time.

#### *Assessment*

The data analysis and explanation make sense, and there is a sensible early frame of societal concerns early in the chapter. The historical contextualization of concerns about German influence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century provides good context for the understanding of the role of English in more recent language change in Danish. The technical aspects of the corpus analysis are similar to the previous chapters.

In terms of presentation of results, a summary table that covers the overall picture currently only in the details of Table 4, p. 272-273, would have enhanced the sight-interpretation of the reader.

#### **Chapter 8**

Chapter 8 is an ostensible side-track into the fate of names from English in Danish, with an extension to other settings, in Europe and beyond. The finding of changing patterns of selection and the gradual stigma attached to certain names as they are appropriated by lower socio-economic classes

provide interesting insight into how such sociolinguistic factors cut across the adoption of English-inspired names.

### *Assessment*

The unique data set in this chapter still connects sensibly to the overall thesis and offers another perspective on the influence of English in Danish language practices. The similarity of trends elsewhere in Europe, and the differences from Asian and South African practices, offer further important perspectives. The uniqueness of the post-colonial setting (in South Africa, and elsewhere in Africa, compared to China and Europe that were not colonised by the English) points to the need to make more of the details of the Kachru framework or other recent work on decolonisation than the treatment in chapter 5, where ESL and EFL are only distinguished in terms of extent of usage in society, without engaging with the historical and political dimensions of Kachru's view on the Outer Circle. The turn against English names in a context where the English language otherwise gains more traction in postcolonial settings can be explained better than in a depoliticised continuum of ENL/ESL/EFL. However, in terms of understanding the influence of English in Denmark, the chapter makes a valuable contribution.

## **Chapter 9**

The influence of English on Afrikaans is the topic of chapter 9. This is by far the longest chapter of the thesis, and incorporates a range of perspectives that overlap with the presentation of the influence of English on Danish in the first eight chapters. The chapter reviews basic background information on South Africa to contextualise the two languages involved – English and Afrikaans – in their larger multilingual ecology, while also reviewing pertinent historical facts. A strong focus of the analysis is on attitudes of Afrikaans scholars, politicians and commentators over the course of more than a century, to point to differences in attitude emerging between the Afrikaans and Danish speech communities in their response to the influence of English. The differences in politics and differences in patterns of contact are used to explain the differences in attitude. At the same time, the review of linguistic evidence points to more extensive English influence on Afrikaans than on Danish, including especially more grammatical influence. The heightened risk of domain loss, over and above the risk of the language changing very extensively under English influence, also comes to the fore in the analysis.

### *Evaluation*

The chapter is based on an extensive reading of primary sources, which is quite a feat for a scholar from the outside, especially in an additional language. The candidate's understanding of the sources and his broader interpretation of the material are sensible. Unlike the chapters on Danish, there is no primary data analysis, though. On a few minor points, the examiners would contest the candidate's historical interpretation or factual completeness, but given the overall length of the chapter, these points<sup>1</sup> do not invalidate the overall argument of the chapter. At times, the reliance on older data from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is justified in order to sustain the argument that the English influence on Afrikaans was more extensive earlier, but at times, the credibility of such analyses by

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include p. 338, where the extensive multilingualism of African language speakers at individual level is underrepresented in this study, although published work by South African scholars is available to document that; and p. 355, where the combative relationship between Afrikaans and other languages should be traced further back than 1795 when English first arrived in South Africa, as various other languages, including German and French as other heritage languages brought by European colonists where overrun by Cape Dutch, by official suppression policy even in the case of French, and where various Khoen and San languages were lost to Dutch over the course of the 150 years before the arrival of English.

older scholars would have benefitted from a more sceptical stance. Many of the works predating Donaldson (1988) would overanalyse Anglicisms and include what the candidate himself labelled pseudo-Anglicisms in his study of Danish.

The substance of the contribution, for scholars working on Afrikaans, would have been enhanced through original data analysis, if necessary in collaboration with Afrikaans scholars (although, as the PhD of Ana Deumert, published in 2004 by Benjamins, demonstrated, competent work on Afrikaans is perfectly possible for non-Afrikaans-speakers too). Another strategic choice would have been to integrate the Afrikaans and Danish studies more thoroughly in earlier chapters, to bring the comparative perspective and the added value of the differences in contexts to the fore more forcefully.

## **Chapter 10**

The findings are integrated and the Danish-Afrikaans comparison developed more extensively in the final chapter. The chapter provides a clear characterisation of the differences in the less and more extensive influence of English on Danish and Afrikaans, explained in reference to directness of contact and historical depth. It also highlights the paradox of stronger negative attitudes towards English and more purists attitudes towards the mother tongue in the Afrikaans case compared to the Danish case.

### *Evaluation*

The final chapter offers a persuasive conclusion and capitalises on the value of the comparison between Afrikaans and Danish to derive more insight into Anglicisms than would have been possible through a study of only one of the two languages.

At the same time, viewed as a conclusion of the whole impressive volume, this chapter also illustrates one of its pervasive features: It is conceived as a many-sided approach to a many-sided topic, rather than as an endeavour to impose a monolithic format or one overarching conclusion on the issues. The concluding chapter is focused on a comparison between the Afrikaans vs the Danish case, and on the implications of this comparison for the issue of purism. Other issues, including questions of methodology, the merits of competing qualitative approaches, and the relative importance of different channels of change, are not revisited in this final concluding chapter.

### *Overall Assessment*

As a major thread in the overall argument, the suitability of the comparative study of Danish and Afrikaans in respect of Anglicisms makes good sense. While the main focus is on Danish, the Afrikaans comparison is a useful enhancement to the study, and adds a dimension that helps to make understand certain factors better, in both directions.

The theoretical concepts tied to Anglicisms and Anglification are grounded in a good analysis of previous work, and lead to a clear synthesis and proposal by the candidate in chapter 1 and 2. This aspect could have been enhanced further by integrating the analysis of the notion of Anglicism in Afrikaans, which is presented independently in chapter 9, but with reference to the definitions and conceptualisations developed by scholars focussing on Dutch and Danish alongside Afrikaans. The broader theoretical frameworks to examine language contact and grammatical change, especially at construction level (where morphological and syntactic transfer occurs through calquing

and probabilistic changes) could have been explored and presented in more detail. These frameworks would not so much have led to very different findings, but could have enhanced the interpretation of the data and the explanatory power of linguistic features.

There is also the occasional need for more convincing argumentation regarding trajectory of borrowings/relay borrowing. The English origin seems to be taken for granted in a number of cases where this origin could be questioned. How do we know, for instance, that *nog er nog, ovnklar, seksmåneders, opsparinger* or *det faktum at* necessarily stem from English? Could they not just as well be cases of domestic lexicalisation? References to literature or dictionaries in support of such claims, or (diachronic) corpus evidence would make the argumentation more convincing.

The corpus methods for analysing data on Anglicisms in Danish are generally straightforward. Selection criteria for search strings are stated clearly, combining "usual suspects" with selection strategies that are labelled "random". There is certainly a clear move towards non-biased selection in these methods, although their labelling as random is perhaps a bit optimistic, as no bottom-up/corpus-driven procedure is used. The reporting of the numbers without any statistical evaluation of patterns (significance, increases/decreases over time) could have been done more in a more sophisticated manner, which might have given more confidence in some of the patterns, although a fair part of the reported patterns are so clear that they do not need confirmation from more advanced evaluation.

The writing style and command of the medium are consistently good. The sequencing of chapters and development of the argument in connection with Danish are meaningful. It would have enhanced the study if those aspects of the treatment of Afrikaans that overlap with the treatment of Danish, especially in connection with conceptual (as opposed to empirical) issues, had been integrated in the earlier chapters, to present data on Afrikaans separately, but possibly also closer to where corresponding Danish data are presented. It would also increase readability if the first chapter gave an overview of the research that follows in the remaining chapters.

At times, clearer conclusions in chapters to synthesise the findings from individual studies and connect them to the overall development of the argument would have enhanced the presentation.

The critical comments made above, however, should in no way be allowed to overshadow the fact that *Echoes of English* fully lives up to the requirements for acceptance for defence of the doctoral degree. It presents a wealth of new empirical material and conceptual clarifications which can benefit future discussions, academic as well as public, of a politically and emotionally laden topic. The book consistently takes up both sides of controversial issues such as threats vs opportunities, purity vs enrichment, nationalism vs multilingualism in a pragmatic, good-humoured and discerning manner which, it may be added, is particularly salutary in an age where issues of identity politics can sometimes put obstacles in the way of knowledge accumulation in some areas where it may be most needed.

Copenhagen, February 22, 2021



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