

**ARTYKUŁY**

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## On dictionary definitions of selected Polish Anglicisms and their English etymons\*

### Definicje słownikowe wybranych anglicyzmów i ich angielskich etymonów

#### Abstract

It is generally agreed that in the process of borrowing both form and meaning are transferred from the donor language to the receptor. It is also assumed that in most cases fewer senses are transferred from the source language to the recipient tongue. The aim of the present paper is to analyze an arbitrarily chosen corpus consisting of the oldest Polish Anglicisms, namely those from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, in order to determine whether the above assumption is correct, as well as to compare the scope of the English and Polish definitions of the selected vocabulary items. The Polish lexemes are considered to be of English origin on the basis of present-day knowledge. Their definitions have been attested in two comparable large dictionaries, i.e. those which include over 100,000 entries: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (2011) and *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* (2010).

**Keywords:** Anglicisms, borrowing, dictionary definitions, corpus, meaning

#### Abstrakt

Powszechnie wiadomo, że w trakcie procesu zapożyczenia dochodzi do przeniesienia zarówno formy, jak i znaczenia wyrazu z języka dawcy do języka biorcy. Na ogół przyjmuje się, że mniejsza liczba znaczeń jest przenoszona z języka źródłowego do języka docelowego. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przeanalizowanie arbitralnie wybranego korpusu najstarszych polskich anglicyzmów, czyli tych, które zostały zaświadczone na przełomie XVIII i XIX w., aby stwierdzić, czy powyższe założenie jest słuszne, a także porównanie struktury angielskich i polskich definicji wybranych wyrazów, których angielskie pochodzenie zostało potwierdzone przez najnowsze ustalenia etymologiczne. Omawia

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się definicje pożyczek i ich angielskich etymonów na podstawie dwu porównywalnych wielkich słowników, a więc liczących ponad 100 000 haseł: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (2011) i *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* (2010).

**Słowa kluczowe:** anglicyzmy, zapożyczenie, definicje słownikowe, korpus, znaczenie

## 1. Introductory remarks

The purpose of the present paper is to analyze an arbitrarily chosen corpus consisting of the oldest Polish Anglicisms, namely those from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, in order to firstly, determine whether, following a generally accepted assumption, fewer senses are transferred from English to Polish and secondly, to compare the scope of the English and Polish definitions of the selected vocabulary items.

We should start our analysis with defining the terms Anglicism, English loanword and English borrowing, terms, which will be used interchangeably in this paper. There is no single definition accepted in the literature. For instance, Gottlieb (2005: 163) suggests a fairly general definition: "...any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired [...] by English models, used in intralingual communication in a language other than English."

Görlach's (2003) identification of an Anglicism is based on its formal criteria. The scholar (2003: 1) suggests the following understanding of the term: "A word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language." According to Görlach, internationalisms (e.g. *telephone*), proper names (such as *Greenpeace*) as well as words of exotic origin enriching European languages via English (e.g. *avocado*) are not considered to be English borrowings. Additionally, it is worth observing that not only the form, as mentioned above, is transferred from the donor language to the receptor, but also its semantics, which is also noted by Görlach (2003: 102), who claims:

Linguists widely agree in that meanings are established in individual languages by contrasts of similar items in semantic fields; as a consequence, semantic structures (meanings and components) do not match cross-linguistically. It follows that even the content of monosemous words cannot be identified in the source and receptor languages – as is very frequently assumed. At best we can expect to find referential equivalence (that is, equivalence is most likely to occur in technical terms).

Therefore, the solution suggested by the scholar is to disregard both connotations and collocational restrictions and concentrate on the so-called "core" senses which are made up of basic semantic definitions and their

designations. This standpoint seems to be reasonable and will be adopted in the following discussion.

It should also be noted that most scholars follow the dominant view in contact linguistics, namely that in the process of borrowing fewer senses are transferred from the source language to the recipient tongue, as seen in observations expressed in both the 20th and 21st centuries, notably by Fisiak (1970) and the previously quoted Görlach (2003). Although these views are not recent, they are still valid. Both linguists agree that the process of borrowing involves the quantitative reduction of senses, although they refer to different models of language description. Thus, Fisiak (1970: 41) states that “lexical items are never borrowed as complete dictionary entries but only in concrete life situations in one of their senses, i.e. in the form of a concrete path,” a claim reworded in the following statement: “Lexical items which have more than one sense in the donor language have always fewer senses when they appear in the borrowing language” (ibid.). These statements can be illustrated by certain examples of English borrowings in Polish (figures in square brackets denote the number of senses): P *bluming* [1] < E *blooming* [7], P *bojler* [2] < E *boiler* [4], P *busz* [1] < E *bush* [10], etc. Görlach (2003) expresses the same opinion, although uses a slightly different approach. According to the linguist, reduction regularly happens to polysemous and homonymous contents of the etymon. He (2003: 103) writes: “Borrowing affects one sense at a time, and though a second or third borrowing event is not excluded to fill another lexical gap, we cannot expect the total content of a loanword, even after repeated borrowing, to become identical with the semantic range of the polysemous source word”. Similarly to Fisiak, Görlach provides a number of examples to prove his claim, however, he refers not only to one tongue, that is Polish, but to sixteen European languages (see Görlach, ed. 2001). For instance, the word *box* is characterized by 14 senses in English, whereas as an Anglicism it has 4 senses in German, Dutch, and Icelandic, 3 in Norwegian, Romanian, and Finnish, 2 in Italian, Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Albanian, and 1 in French, Spanish, Russian, and Croatian; the English vocabulary item *set* is associated with 20 senses but once it is borrowed, it has 4 senses in German and Icelandic, 3 in Norwegian, Spanish, Romanian, and Hungarian, 2 in Dutch, French, Italian, and Greek and 1 in Russian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Finnish, and Albanian; the English lexeme *twist* refers to 15 senses but as an English loanword it is related to 3 senses in Norwegian and Icelandic, 2 senses in German and Polish, and 1 in the remaining languages investigated, that is Dutch, Icelandic, French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Russian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Hungarian, Albanian, and Greek.

Both linguists, along with others, agree that in the process of borrowing apart from the quantitative reduction we are also confronted with qualitative changes on the semantic level, which again have different nomenclatures, but, in fact, all refer to the same idea, that is:

- specialization or narrowing, which means that the borrowed item narrows the content or field of reference,
- generalization or extension, which is the reverse process, as the loanword loses one or more of the restrictive features of the etymon and gains a new sense unknown in the donor language,
- shift of meaning, which refers to the one to one correspondence of the meaning attested in both donor and recipient languages.

These are the most general distinctions in the semantic changes that take place in the process of borrowing but some linguists enumerate others, such as: ellipsis or metaphorization (see, e.g. Mehmeti 1982).

In conclusion, to the above brief discussion it is worth highlighting that both quantitative and qualitative changes definitely occur (cf. Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2007), and a detailed analysis of the semantic changes of the analyzed corpus will be described in Section 2. It should be noted that the definitions might differ depending on the lexicographer's view of the level of encyclopedic information and the type of information presented (see Adamska-Sałaciak 2021).

The next point concerns the scope of the dictionary definitions of English etymons and Polish Anglicisms. Their definitions have been attested in two comparable large dictionaries, i.e. those which include over 100,000 entries: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (2011) and *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* (2010). Although both lexicons were published a number of years ago, it seems that the basic meanings of the analyzed items have not changed. To obtain a picture of the situation, the following earliest Anglicisms, which appeared in both the first Polish language dictionary (Linde 1807–1814) and also in a journal edited at the time (“Gazeta Narodowa i Obca”) will be analyzed: *budżet* < *budget*, *flanela* < *flannel*, *frak* < *frock*, *galon* < *gallon*, *klub* < *club*, *kwakier* < *Quaker*, *piknik* < *picnic*, *poncz/puncz* < *punch*, *porter* < *porter*, *rum* < *rum*. Ephemeral lexical items have been eliminated from the analysis (*bill*, *foksal*, *pikier*). The Polish lexemes listed are considered to be of English origin on the basis of present-day knowledge (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2022).

## 2. Analysis

The analysis is conducted in the following way. First, the definition of an English etymon is given and then it is contrasted with that of the corresponding Anglicism attested in Polish. Next, comments concerning the number of meanings associated with each vocabulary item are provided and finally the remarks concerning the scope of the English and Polish definitions of each entry are given.

**2.1. budget** **1** the amount of money needed or available (for a specific item etc.) (*a budget of 200 pounds, mustn't exceed the budget*). **2 a (the Budget)** *Brit.* the usu. annual estimate of national revenue and expenditure. **b** an estimate or plan of expenditure in relation to income. **c** a private person's or family's similar estimate. **3 (attrib.)** inexpensive. **4 (archaic)** a quantity of material etc., esp. written or printed.

**budżet** zestawienie, plan przewidzianych na przyszły okres dochodów i wydatków; także ogół dochodów i wydatków, możliwości wydatkowania.

[‘statement, plan of income and expenses planned for the future period; also the total of income and expenses, and the possibility of spending’]

A cursory analysis shows that there are six distinct meanings in English and one in Polish, which supports the above mentioned claim. However, if we closely look at the Polish definition, it becomes evident that the archaic understanding of the word *budget* is not present in Polish, whereas the other meanings are mentioned within one definition divided into two parts by a semicolon or are present in the examples, e.g. Budżet państwa a. państwowy (‘state budget’). Budżet rodzinny (‘family budget’) is found in certain derivatives such as **niskobudżetowy**, which refers to ‘low paid’. Therefore, we may conclude that disregarding the archaic meaning the same number of senses are associated with the Anglicism as with its English etymon and additionally they are present in the same semantic field apart from the item qualified as archaic. In both entries the language of definitions is similar.

**2.2. flannel** **1 a** a kind of woven woolen fabric, usu. without a nap. **b** (in *pl.*) flannel garments, esp. trousers. **2** *Brit.* a small usu. towelling cloth, used for washing oneself. **3** *Brit. sl.* nonsense; flattery.

**flanela** miękka, ciepła tkanina wełniana lub bawełniana o splocie płóciennym z delikatnym meszkiem.

[‘soft, warm woollen or cotton fabric of a plain weave with a delicate fluff’]

In this case, the tendency mentioned above is confirmed since in English we find four different senses present in three semantic fields, whereas

in Polish only one meaning is attested. Again, both the English and the Polish definitions are constructed in a similar way.

**2.3. frock** **1** a woman's or girl's dress. **2 a** a monk's or priest's long gown with loose sleeves. **b** priestly office. **3** a smock. **4 a** a frock-coat. **b** a military coat of similar shape. **5** a sailor's woollen jersey.

**frak** **1.** część uroczystego, wieczorowego stroju męskiego, rodzaj surduta, zwykle czarnego, o połach z przodu obciętych, z tyłu wydłużonych. **2. pot. lekcew. a)** o codziennym domowym ubraniu. **b)** o ubraniu wierzchnim – swetrze, kurtce.

[**1.** part of a man's formal evening outfit, a kind of frock coat, usually black, with truncated front and elongated sides. **2. coll. disrespect. a)** about everyday home clothes. **b)** outer clothing – sweater, jacket']

If we consider the meanings of this lexical item in both languages, we see that in English it belongs to two semantic fields, with "clothing" being dominant, whereas in Polish it occurs only in the field of "clothing". In this field, the items refer to different kinds of cloth (six in English and three in Polish). The structure of English and Polish entries is alike.

**2.4. gallon** **1 a** (in full **imperial gallon**) *Brit.* a measure of capacity equal to eight pints and equivalent to 4546 cc, used for liquids and corn etc. **b** *US* a measure of capacity equivalent to 3785 cc, used for liquids. **2** (usu. in *pl*) *colloq.* a large amount.

**galon** jednostka objętości ciał ciekłych i sypkich używana w krajach anglosaskich 4,546 litra (galon angielski) lub 3,375 litra (galon amerykański). [‘unit of volume for liquids and powder used in Anglo-Saxon countries, 4.546 litres (English gallon) or 3.375 litres (US gallon)']

Görlach (2003) claims full equivalence (also called quasi-absolute or interlingual symmetry) is most likely to occur in technical terms and this is the case with the word *gallon/galon*. Although it might seem that in English there are three distinct senses and only one in Polish, in fact it is a matter of a different wording, which means that in English the discussed item has three meanings, but in Polish two. Thus, the conclusion is as follows: even in the case of technical terms, there is not necessarily one to one correspondence. However, the language of description can be said to be similar, if not the same.

**2.5. club** **1** a heavy stick with a thick end, used as a weapon etc. **2** a stick used in a game, esp. a stick with a head used in golf. **3 a** a playing-card of a suit denoted by a black trefoil. **b.** (in *pl*) this suit. **4** an association

of persons united by a common interest, usu. meeting periodically for a shared activity (*tennis club, yacht club*). **5** an organization or premises offering members social amenities, meals and temporary residence, etc. **6** an organization offering subscribers certain benefits (*book club*). **7** a group of persons, nations, etc., having something in common. **8** = CLUBHOUSE. **9** a structure or organ, esp. in a plant, with a knob at the end.

**klub** **1.** organizacja, stowarzyszenie skupiające ludzi określonego środowiska w celu organizowania wspólnych rozrywek, gier sportowych, dyskusji światopoglądowych, kształcenia zawodowego itp. **2.** lokal, siedziba takiej organizacji. **3.** *polit.* forma organizacji politycznej grupującej zwykle najaktywniejszych polityków, powstała w Anglii w XVIII w., szczególnie rozpowszechniona we Francji w okresie rewolucji 1789–1799, zastąpiona z czasem przez partię polityczną.

[‘**1.** an organization, an association bringing together people in a specific environment in order to organize joint entertainment, sports, games, ideological discussions, vocational training, etc. **2.** premises, seat of such an organization. **3.** *polit.* a form of political organization or grouping of usually the most active politicians, founded in England in the 18th century, especially widespread in France during the revolution of 1789–1799, replaced in time by political party’]

If we look at both entries, we see a discrepancy in the number of senses: nine in English and three in Polish, yet the situation is more interesting since in the English language the item *club* is present in six semantic fields, whereas in Polish it is restricted to two fields, which means that it is an illustration of specialization or narrowing. Besides, it is worth underlining that the third sense of the Polish definition has an encyclopedic character, which is not found in the English. This leads us to the conclusion that the content and style of the entries are different.

**2.6. Quaker** a member of the Society of Friends, a Christian movement devoted to peaceful principles and eschewing formal doctrine, sacraments, and ordained ministers.

**kwakier** *rel.* członek grupy wyznaniowej, powstałej w XVII w. w Anglii, przyjmującej za źródło wiary natchnienie indywidualne, głoszącej pokojowe zasady, równość społeczną oraz prostotę sposobu bycia, mowy i ubioru.

[‘*rel.* member of a religious group founded in the 17th century in England, accepting individual inspiration as a source of faith, proclaiming peaceful principles, social equality and a simplicity in the way of being, speech and clothing’]

In this case, we are confronted not only with one meaning in both languages, but with a more detailed definition in Polish. However, it is worth noting that the Polish definition is more encyclopedic than its English etymon, which is understandable if we take into account that The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is not well-known in Poland.

**2.7. picnic 1** an outing or excursion including a packed meal eaten out of doors. **2** any meal eaten out of doors or without preparation, tables, chairs, etc. **3** (usu. with *neg.*) *colloq.* something agreeable or easily accomplished, etc. **piknik** *książk.* zabawa towarzyska na wolnym powietrzu, zwykle za miastem, połączona ze zjedzeniem zabranych ze sobą posiłków; majówka. [*'bookish* social fun in the open air, usually outside the city, combined with eating meals taken with you; picnic']

It is readily observed that the English etymon is associated with three meanings present in two semantic fields, yet the Anglicism has only one meaning, which again illustrates the process of specialization or narrowing. Both descriptions of the headwords are presented similarly.

**2.8. punch** a drink of wine or spirits mixed with water, fruit juices, spices, etc. and usu. served hot.

**poncz** *kulin.* **a)** gorący napój alkoholowy z wina, araku, rumu, herbaty, cukru, cytryny i przypraw. **b)** syrop z dodatkiem alkoholu i syntetycznych aromatów spożywczych, używany do nasączenia ciast.

[*'culin.* **a)** a hot alcoholic drink made of wine, arrack, rum, tea, sugar, lemon and spices. **b)** syrup with added alcohol and synthetic food flavours, used for soaking cakes']

The English lexical item *punch* is a homonymous word and this is why it is found under four entries. One of these has been taken into Polish. As indicated above, in English it is attributed one meaning, whereas in Polish there are two that clearly belong to the same semantic field, namely “cooking” or “food and drink”. It remains an open question whether this case can be interpreted as an extension of meaning. The wording of both entries seems to be similar.

**2.9. porter 1 a** a person employed to carry luggage etc., esp. a railway, airport or hotel employee. **b** a hospital employee who moves equipment, trolleys, etc. **2** a dark brown bitter beer brewed from charred or browned malt (app. orig. made esp. for porters). **3 US** a sleeping-car attendant.



**porter 1.** *kulin.* mocne ciemne piwo, zawierające co najmniej 5,5% alkoholu, odznaczające się charakterystycznym słodkawym smakiem. **2.** *pot.* porcja tego napoju.

[‘**1.** *culin.* strong, dark beer, with a minimum alcohol content of 5.5% with a characteristic sweetish taste. **2.** *coll.* portion of this drink’]

In English, there are four senses attested, whereas in Polish two senses are present, which again illustrates specialization or narrowing. It is worth stressing that in both languages two different registers account for additional meanings, which in the case of English is that its American English variety is mentioned and in Polish its colloquial use. Besides, in the English language the lexical item is found in two different semantic fields, whereas in Polish only in one. As far as the definitions of the item found in both languages are concerned, they are similar in the sense that they provide certain, albeit different, characteristics of the liquid.

**2.10. rum 1** a spirit distilled from sugar-cane residues or molasses. **2** *US* intoxicating liquor.

**rum** napój alkoholowy o swoistym zapachu i smaku zawierający 40–80% alkoholu, otrzymany przez destylację sfermentowanej melasy z trzciny cukrowej i leżakowanie w dębowych beczkach.

[‘an alcoholic drink with a specific smell and taste, containing 40–80% alcohol, obtained by distilling fermenting molasses from sugar cane and aging it in oak barrels’]

In English, two meanings of the word in question are mentioned since although the American English interpretation is quoted they both belong to the same semantic field. In Polish one meaning of the lexeme is attested and its lexicographic description is more complex than the corresponding English explanation. Again, the Polish definition can be considered to be more encyclopedic.

### 3. Conclusions

The above analysis confirms the general assumption, that in the process of borrowing fewer senses are transferred from the donor language to the recipient tongue, is valid. Besides, this analysis, though limited to a small corpus, has shown that it is not only a matter of the number of senses being transferred from one language into another, but also the fact that the number of semantic fields associated with the borrowed vocabulary items is diminished in the recipient language.

A second conclusion refers to the scope of the entries in both languages. Out of the ten entries, three Anglicisms are characterized by encyclopedic definitions, whereas all the English etymons are written in a relatively informal language. This demonstrates that 30% of the Polish definitions are less informal, which supports the claim that Polish dictionary definitions tend to be rather more encyclopedic. It is difficult to account for the possible reasons why the three explanations are of more encyclopedic nature whereas the remaining seven items are characterized by the stylistic similarity of the definitions compared. The most obvious explanation that the “encyclopedic definitions” (*kwakier, klub, rum*) refer to the British realia is not convincing since *gallon, porter, punch* are also typical of the life in Britain and the United States. It seems that the difference of the character of these definitions is a result of the lexicographers’ preferences.

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