

Sloglish or the Mixing/Switching of Slovene and English in Slovene Blogs

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Prispevek obravnava splošni vpliv internetnega medija na jezik in podrobneje analizira slovenske bloge, v katerih se pogosto prepletata slovenščina in angleščina oz. t. i. *sloglish*. Za novo diskurzivno zvrst, ki združuje elemente pisne in govorne komunikacije, so po eni strani značilne visoka stopnja interaktivnosti, variabilnost, fleksibilnost in jezikovne inovacije, po drugi pa ji nekateri očitajo preveliko globaliziranost, uniformiranost in ogrožanje jezikovne norme. Slovenski blogi so analizirani z jezikovnega vidika (besedje, skladnja, pravopis) in interpretirani s sociolingvističnega in pragmatičnega vidika (vprašanje osebne, kulturne in družbene identitete uporabnikov; odnos med lokalnim in globalnim).

The article discusses the impact of the Internet on language use and, more specifically, analyzes the frequent mixing/switching of Slovene and English in Slovene blogs (so-called *Sloglish*). This new discourse type, combining elements of written and oral communication, is highly interactive in nature and allows for flexibility, variation and language innovation. On the other hand, some see it as too globalized and uniform as well as a threat to the language norm. Slovene blogs are analyzed linguistically (vocabulary, syntax, spelling, punctuation) and interpreted from the sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives (the issue of personal, cultural and social identities of bloggers; local vs. global).

Ključne besede: blogi, *sloglish*, kodno preklapljanje, slovenščina, angleščina, identiteta

Keywords: blogs, *sloglish*, code switching, Slovene, English, identity

1 Introduction

The globalization process currently under way has left an indelible mark on almost every aspect of human activity, language included. The almost visible shrinking of the world has given rise to the need for a fast and effective means

of communication that would allow for virtually instant interaction among people anywhere in the world. The Internet is the one invention that ideally meets this demand and has, in so doing, not only changed our lives in unprecedented ways, but also greatly affected the language used on this new medium. Not only is English now the most influential language in the world, it has also become the most widely used language on the Internet. As such it is undergoing considerable changes, adapting and adjusting to the specific requirements of this new type of communication. The differences between English used for other purposes than Internet communication and online English are such that the new type of linguistic medium has even been given the special name *netspeak* (Crystal 2001). Occasionally, it is also referred to as *globespeak*, *Netlish* (from Netspeak + English), *Weblish* (from web + English), *Internet language*, *cyberspeak*, *Webspeak* and the like. (Ibid.).

English exerts a substantial influence also on those Internet users who, in their Internet communication, opt for other languages. It is the purpose of this article to examine the principles of language use (mainly English) on the Internet in general and then focus specifically on the same aspects in the case of Slovene Internet users. By so doing, I will try to determine to what extent English has become part of their usage and is thus shaping their netspeak or, put differently, to what extent this has become Sloglish, a mixture of Slovene and English.

2 Methodology

The observations and findings in this study are based on the analysis of selected Slovene blogs retrieved from <http://www.sloblogi.net> in September and October 2008. Even though other forms of computer-mediated communication such as e-mail, discussion forums, text messaging and wikis could be taken into account, only blogs were selected because of their recent popularity and because, while they do not differ from other types of Internet communication in any essential ways (except for the format), they are usually nevertheless longer and provide for a more interesting read. Fifty blogs were examined and typical examples, which I believe are a fairly accurate reflection of the current situation, are presented for illustration purposes. The entries are first examined from the linguistic perspective in terms of vocabulary, syntax and spelling. They are then placed into a broader social perspective and an attempt is made to interpret them in as far as their extralinguistic, particularly cultural and global dimensions are concerned.

3 Features of Netspeak

Netspeak refers to language used on the Internet medium. This has very specific requirements that have to do primarily with speed, efficiency and the interactive nature of communication. While other languages are by no means ruled

out, the language which meets these requirements most adequately seems to be English. It has adjusted to these demands both in terms of form and function and has, as a consequence, become a kind of lingua franca for Internet users across the globe. Among the typical features of English used on the Internet we first notice the tendency to compress the language and to be as brief and to the point as possible. This is reflected not only in the omission of more elaborate greetings and other polite formulas in e-mail as opposed to ordinary, traditional correspondence, but also in numerous abbreviations, acronyms and condensed or simplified syntax in all other forms of Internet discourse. The ultimate stage in this constant tendency to be fast and effective is the frequent substitution of words by images, emoticons and other non-linguistic representations, sometimes highly coded and unintelligible to an uninitiated audience. Another, equally important feature is language innovation, which is encouraged by the freedom and countless possibilities offered by the Internet. Users are free to experiment and netspeak abounds with creative discourse. New forms may be very informal, slangy or unusual and they may occasionally even come into conflict with so-called *nettiquette*, but for the most part they are perceived positively as an expression of the users' individualism and creativity. Furthermore, we notice dramatic changes in spelling. Anything from the already mentioned acronyms and abbreviations to random use of capitalization and punctuation, hybrid combinations of letters and figures to completely idiosyncratic usage goes, offering endless stylistic possibilities. All in all, netspeak tends to be very informal and, depending on the format, it could perhaps be placed somewhere in between spoken and written discourse, a kind of "typed interactive exchange/conversation". In fact, it is precisely its interactive function that gives netspeak its distinctive character.

The following excerpt of an essay written by a Scottish 13-year-old secondary school pupil and published in *The Sunday Herald* in 2003 has by now become a textbook example of netspeak and nicely illustrates some of its features:

My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2 go 2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3 :-@ kds FTF. ILNY, its gr8.

Bt my Ps wr so {-/ BC o 9/11 tht thay dcdd 2 stay in SCO & spnd 2 wks up N.

Up N, WUCIWUG -- 0. I ws vvv brd in MON. 0 bt baas &.

/Translation: My summer holidays were a complete waste of time. Before, we used to go to New York to see my brother, his girlfriend and their three screaming kids face to face. I love New York, it's a great place.

But my parents were so worried because of the terrorism attack on September 11 that they decided we would stay in Scotland and spend two weeks up north.

Up north, what you see is what you get – nothing.

I was extremely bored in the middle of nowhere. Nothing but sheep and mountains./
(<http://www.sundayherald.com/31826>)

In general, there are two kinds of attitudes toward netspeak. Some see it as a threat to the norm, a corruptive influence on standard language, others see it as a possibility for language innovations and new ways of expressiveness. In either case, the fact remains that it cannot be ignored because it is here to stay. English in its netspeak form is increasingly susceptible to language change because of the new medium. At the same time speakers of other languages adopting English completely or even just partially as a lingua franca contribute to this change as well, shaping it into an entirely new entity of a dynamic and rather unpredictable nature.

4 Slovene-English Netspeak or *Sloglish* in Slovene Blogs

Slovene blogs appeared shortly after the emergence of the first blogs, in the U.S.A.. Recently, they have gained in numbers and popularity. A survey of the selected blogs from <http://www.sloblogi.net> reveals that some bloggers write exclusively in Slovene, some in English and some in both languages. It is this last category of Slovene-English netspeak or *Sloglish* that I find the most intriguing and will analyze it in more detail.

4.1 Linguistic Aspects

From the linguistic standpoint we see that *Sloglish* used in the selected blogs generally follows the principles of the netspeak discussed in the previous section. This is certainly true of the originality, creativity and inventiveness of most bloggers, who see the Internet as a handy tool to express their individualism (under a real or assumed identity) and/or also as an opportunity to participate in the new wave of trendy citizen journalism. The specific features reflecting the mixing of Slovene and English on individual linguistic levels will be presented in the sections that follow.

4.1.1 Vocabulary

Lexical items taken from a donor language are those elements in any language contact situation that are the most salient and the easiest to accept, thus also the most numerous. The Internet-related terms themselves such as *blog*, *net*, *mail*, *link* and others are good examples of the dominant status of English in this medium. Other examples abound, too. Lexical items may be either part of code switched sequences (and will be dealt with in more detail in the section on syntax) or they may be adapted morphologically to Slovene. In this last case, Slovene suffixes/endings are added to English bases and the outcome are words that conform to the rules of Slovene grammar in terms of number, case, gender, person, tense, and agreement.

Examples of loanwords:

Zadeta od *lajfa*; Lonely *riderka*; Najlepša z *mejkapom 2*; *Ajm a fakin kaučpatejto*; *Maj prešes* :-D, *Fejker.net*; *betmenka.blogspot.com*; *muffini*.

On the surface, loanwords seem to have gone through a similar process as those used by Slovenes in English-speaking settings (e.g. Slovene Americans). A closer examination, however, reveals that in their borrowing of English words, bloggers are in fact closer to young Slovene speakers of slang than to Slovenes in the immigrant environments. While Slovene Americans resort to the use of English out of necessity to fill lexical gaps, bloggers use English as part of a more or less deliberate strategy whose primary purpose is to express their identity and a feeling of belonging to the global Internet community. In this sense I find parallels between their register and slang, which is also heavily influenced by (American) English. In fact, blogs are full of slangy terms, much more so than other text types. The words are often creative, playful, witty, sometimes also very unstable, even nonce words, made up by an individual blogger for a single occasion. Sometimes they imitate the spoken language or regional varieties.

Examples of slangy terms:

- 47 ur brez interneta, *fak*, abstinenčna kriza.
- *Wanna* ride? Sure you do.
- *Wtf?!?*
- I'm *outta* time.
- I *wanna* meet this *freakin'* bird :D
- The depths of *ma* mind

Examples of word play:

- How to *tie a tie*?
- *Glista fashionista*.
- *Gambling* is bad, *m'kay*? *Gambling* je pa po drugi strani čudovita stvar.

4.1.2 Spelling and punctuation

Spelling is perhaps the one area that stands out the most because it deviates from the norm so visibly and with such high frequency. In fact, the lack and/or random use of both capitalization and punctuation often give the impression that this type of discourse knows no rules. The use of various images, emoticons, abbreviations and such only serve to further this impression. Despite the seeming disorder, however, some basic rules are beginning to take shape mostly due to the economy of communication.

Even though the mentioned characteristics naturally apply also to those parts of the blogs that are not affected by English, I find the parts of Slovene-English switched or mixed discourse more intriguing in terms of detecting various language contact-triggered phenomena. I will therefore highlight them in par-

ticular. The first thing that catches our eye is the frequent omission of Slovene letters or their replacement by English ones. While the use of *c, s, z* instead of *č, š, ž* is potentially justifiable (but only potentially) as a pragmatic solution in order to avoid software problems, whereby Slovene letters are sometimes changed into various kinds of triangles and other unintelligible characters, the use of exclusively English letters such as *y, w, x* that do not exist in Slovene, is a different story. Here the only explanation is a deliberate use of these letters either in order to impress the audience, play with new spellings or to imitate foreign models. Word play can take interesting turns. There is also a tendency on the part of some bloggers to make English spelling “friendlier” in that they “write as they speak”.

Examples of spelling deviations:

- CrazyLIKEme
- Itn@
- Štajerci hir I kum there I eat
- mišn (imposibl)
- rat-ON-crack
- Zee in pika
- “End d viner is” ...
- Men pa je kjutkan “the pinky finger” na predzadni fotki.
- Učer zvečer sem gledal Numb3rs, S01E08. Ob pogledu na sliko pa samo “LOL””, prvo seveda screenshoti @ (klik gor, pa mogoče ksn zoom)
- Sloncek’s personal blog
- Maxxi-jev trg resnice
- Sv3dralnik
- kruh & vino
- Morphix blog

Punctuation presents another major problem. English punctuation marks such as apostrophes are used randomly and in inappropriate places. A complete lack of punctuation is not unusual either. On the other hand, some bloggers test their creativity by inventing their own, extra “loud” individual punctuation, e.g. triple exclamation marks, or a combination of question and exclamation marks and the like.

Examples:

- That’s art!;-)
- A, .. ja!! Mi lahko kdo prosim pove zakaj mi moja lepa nova rumena rozica dnevno umira kljub vsej ljubezni in vodi ki jo dobiva???
- But...i’m back...tresem se od adrenalina ko sem spet na internetu :-) wow:-) kje so tableti za glavo že ...?!?
- iiiiiiiii kako lepo, bi se kar zjokala jaz pa pomislim na prav nič, se zagledam v eno točko in prazna glava.tkt ja najbolj hmhm mogoče to naredim prevelikokrat hehe!!!!

4.1.3 Syntax

Syntactic structures are much more resistant to language change than lexicon, which is why syntactic idiosyncrasies are much rarer and more difficult to detect than loanwords or spelling deviations. Nevertheless the Internet does encourage them, if for no other reason than because of the speed of writing which often prevails over the correctness of the form and precludes the formation of more sophisticated sentences. In the case of Slovene-English code switching, there are of course other factors at work as well since language contact implicitly works toward some degree of convergence and often triggers language change where we otherwise would not have expected it.

The blogs examined contain different types of Slovene-English netspeak. Some are examples of so-called intra-sentential code switching, where the switch between the languages occurs within a single sentence. Others are examples of intersentential code switching, where the two languages are used interchangeably over longer stretches of discourse and where entire sentences remain in either one or the other language.

Examples of code switching:

- *Nov coffee mug & crappy* začetek tedna
- *Wishlist* oz. zgodnje pismo Božičku :-)
- *The cutest* vselitveno darilo
- Zdaj grem pa res spat! Jutr imam fax *all day long, no joking....: S night*
- Na srečo imamo pri slovenščini romantiko, *which makes me happy*, ker je zelo grozljivo in trapast in nerealno in POLNO, neobvladljivo in noro...in ja (Pa še POE!<3...*and all I loved, I loved along. *Ijubim**). In poleg tega ni samo slovenščina, še Maja je, moja Maja, ki gre z mano na *skvoš* in potem skupaj predebatirama dečke in ljudi (ni isto, ne! :-D) in naju in svet in življenje. Samo *skvoša* ne. XD (In jutri greva v park po pouku prebarvat moje kavbojke na rumeno. Voooooo! @) Lepo je ugotoviti, da nisi edini, ki misli, da ne premore čustvene zrelosti, (Ker čustvujem, intenzivno in globoko in zmeraj. Pač ne znam obvladovat same sebe, *geez!*) (http://www.ednevniki.si/entry.php?w=Keya&e_id=74681)

Finally, we should mention instances where Slovene syntax (word order) has been changed under the influence of English. These refer mostly to the use of nominal phrases in which other nouns or nominal phrases function as premodifiers.

Examples of Slovene word order modified under the influence of English syntax:

- Za v avto kupujem kvalitetno *bluetooth slušalko*, ki dobro stoji v ušesu in ima kvaliteten zvok.
- Nekje sem že dolgo nazaj prebrala (ali pa mi je bilo..ko zmanjka *post-it listkov*. moti me...
- Za nagrado sem tri revce namalala z vijoličnim *shimmer lakom*.
- *Esmeralda manija* 10 let pozneje. Mami me je včeraj vprašala, kdo za boga je ta...Pa sem mislila, da Slovenija ne bo več doživela *Caught in the act manije*.

Such word order is typically English and contrary to the spirit of Slovene, where different means would be used to express the same concept (e.g. ... ko zmanjka *listkov Post-it*) This type of structure imitating the English word order has become so widely used, though, that some Slovene speakers and certainly most bloggers have become quite accustomed to it.

4.2 Socio-cultural Aspects

Languages are typically used within a social context and the same applies to Slovene-English netspeak. The speech community using it of course differs from the traditional ones in the “real” world (as defined for instance by Labov 1966 or by Milroy 1980) in that it is not constrained by a physical location, but its members do nevertheless share conventions, albeit relatively loose, of linguistic communication. Netspeak serves as a tool of information exchange and socio-emotional expression as well as to build social constructions. The kind of English that is an integral part of this communication is not any specific variety of English such as British, American or perhaps Australian variety (even though the American influence prevails), but rather a kind of international, global English. As pointed out, it is used not only for communication, but also as a social marker indicating the users’ belonging to a particular online community. The users’ resorting to English could be interpreted as their desire to be seen as “fashionable”, “cosmopolitan”, “sophisticated”, “worldly”, more “attractive”, “fancy” and/or “in”. In either case, bloggers seem to perceive English as a prestigious language that separates them from those who do not use it and thus bonds them together in some sort of in-group solidarity. In this and in some others aspects of language use, they resemble slang speakers: they strive toward original and creative use of it and they are predominantly young.

Sloglish can be analyzed from a cultural perspective as well since language and culture are closely intertwined. The language choice involved in code switching in particular has very deep cultural implications and may be indicative of the user’s identification with a particular culture. Thus some bloggers express their most intimate thoughts and feelings in English rather than in Slovene. It is not unusual for some to choose English slogans and quotations to represent their blogs.

Examples:

– ... when I’m feeling sad

I simply remember my favourite things

Čokolada, dr. house, lak za nohte, bacek, spanje med vikendom, zares, mkdsp, avtobusi, *mejkap*, pisarniški material, omare, kopalnice v izložbah, dela in ležanje na kavču pri barbari, tomažu, andražu in tinkari doma, napolnjen urnik, *gmail*, sestanki, sedenje za mizo pri urši in neži, sedenje pri gašperju in tei na balkonu, anžetova muska, *mike skinner*, hubert, pivo, sedenje na klopci v študentskem nasleju z nežo c. in vaskotom
And then I don’t feel so baaaaad. (<http://kai.sopca.com/2008/10/19/my-favourite-things/>)

- Kaj pa vem...ko pogledam skozi okno se počutim bolj *yellow*:
*"I drew a line
I drew a line for you,
Oh what a thing to do.
And it was all yellow."* Coldplay.
Anyway, modra je moja najljubša barva.... Zakaj se pa reče "feeling blue"? Od kod izvira ta izraz? Hmmm Mr. Google mi ne zna odgovorit.
(<http://www.vichyblog.com/si/2008/10/20/feeling-blue/>)
- *All that you can leave behind ("You laugh at me, because I'm different, I laugh at you because you are all the same."* Jonathan Davis.)
(<http://www.imlearningtofly.blogspot.com/>)
- "But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the cat: "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm..." (Quote of the day (PeBKoc))
(flickr.com/photos/7153354@N04/2959231312/in/set-72157600867182134/)
- Yes, this is my life and yes, you should care. (http://www.ednevnik.si/entry.php?w=Keya&e_id=74681)

Others use English nicknames, blog titles and blog entries. Possible reasons for such use may be sought in the impact of popular culture or simply in their desire to reach a larger audience. For some bloggers, their global identity seems to take precedence over their local one. The issue becomes more complex if we take into account the fact that the Internet allows for multiple, changing and/or deceptive identities and anonymity. The freedom of expression is seemingly without limits, the imagination is given free rein, which is why a relatively high number of those who choose to present themselves in English is very telling in as far as the personal, cultural, social and even global identity of individual bloggers is concerned.

Examples of bloggers' names and nicknames and of blog entry titles:

- Ursha, Bubbles, LanceVance, Junior, ANGEL girl (Maychi), Alesh, Latisha, free-thinker,
- feeling blue; Wild @ Heart; Sucker za srečne konce; My first summer day ali kradem šmenkastično

5 Conclusion

The development of the Internet so far has offered numerous new ways of communication and has encouraged the creation of so called netspeak. In view of rapid technological advances and the fast growing number of the Internet users (e.g. citizen journalism) as well as current world trends (globalization, democratization, individualization) it is likely that it will continue to exert its influence on language change both in the case of English and the other lan-

guages with which it comes into contact. The same is true of cultural values and attitudes and of identity issues, which is why much more research is needed to provide at least some answers to the constantly emerging questions in this largely elusive field.

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SLOGLISH ALI PREPLETANJE SLOVENŠČINE IN ANGLEŠČINE V SLOVENSKIH BLOGIH

Sodobni globalizacijski procesi prinašajo pospešen vdor jezikovnih elementov iz angleščine v slovenščino. To je še posebej očitno v elektronskih medijih, ki postajajo zlasti med mladimi vse popularnejši način sporazumevanja.

V prispevku se lotevam dveh vprašanj: splošnega vpliva internetnega medija na jezik in bolj specifičnega področja spletnih dnevniških zapisov, t. i. blogov, v katerih opažam prepletanje slovenščine in angleščine. Glede internetnega vpliva na jezik obstaja več pogledov nanj: od negativnih, ki vidijo v njem grožnjo jezikovnim normam in nevarnost uniformiranosti pod vplivom globalizacijskih trendov, do pozitivnih, ki gledajo nanj kot na osvežitev, ki uporabnikom prinaša nove možnosti v smislu ustvarjalnosti, fleksibilnosti in jezikovnih inovacij. V obeh primerih se zdi, da gre za nastanek nove diskurzivne zvrsti, ki jo nekateri imenujejo kar »spletni jezik« in ki zaradi svoje izrazito interaktivne funkcije združuje elemente pisne in govorne komunikacije. Zanj je značilna visoka stopnja variabilnosti, kljub temu pa je mogoče v navidezni neurejenosti vendarle zaznati nekatere obrise postopoma nastajajočih konvencij pisanja v tem mediju. V drugem delu se osredinjam na analizo izbranih blogov slovenskih piscev/blogerjev. Zanje je značilno, da so nekateri pisani v celoti v slovenščini, nekateri izključno v angleščini, v večini pa se oba jezika prepletata. Te zadnje analiziram z jezikovnega vidika (besedje, oblikoslovje, skladnja, pravopis), pri čemer posebno pozornost posvečam različnim načinom in stopnjam prepletanja obeh jezikov. Interpretiram jih tudi s sociolingvističnega in pragmatičnega vidika. Zanimajo me vzroki za prepletanje slovenščine in angleščine in s tem povezano vprašanje osebne, kulturne in družbene identitete blogerjev, namen njihovega pisanja in njihov odnos do ciljnega občinstva. Internet je namreč v vseh svojih pojavnih oblikah predvsem orodje za družbeno komunikacijo (z globalnim vplivom), zato jezik, v katerem se izražajo uporabniki, nosi v sebi določeno sporočilno vrednost in hkrati vpliva tudi na mogoče jezikovne spremembe. Kot tak nikakor ni zanemarljiv dejavnik, ampak si zasluži ustrezno raziskovalno pozornost.