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# COLOUR-BASED ANGLICISMS IN THE SERBIAN LANGUAGE

*Abstract: English as the dominant language of global communication has a significant influence on the Serbian language through the process of lexical borrowing. This study focuses on the phenomenon of lexical borrowing from English, examining lexemes containing colour components (e.g., Black Friday, Red Bull, blue jeans) that have been adopted into Serbian in their original form. Such borrowings not only enrich the Serbian lexicon but also reflect the language's adaptation to new social, cultural, and technological realities.*

*Keywords: Anglicisms, Serbian language, colour, lexical borrowing, globalisation, language contact, cultural identity.*

## 1. Introduction

Language behaves like a living thing, it grows, adapts, and responds to its environment. Just as human societies change over time, so do the languages they speak (Bugarski, 2003). Each language, through its structure and origin, reflects the way of life of its speakers, simultaneously carrying the spiritual and collective knowledge of a nation (Humbolt, 1988:p.106). For this reason, language should not be viewed as an isolated or uniform phenomenon, but rather as one shaped through constant interaction with diverse social and cultural forces.

Languages come into contact with one another on both geographical and cultural levels. According to Ivić (2007), Serbian has historically been influenced by Greek and Latin, and during the Ottoman Empire by Turkish. Over time, its vocabulary and structure have been shaped by Hungarian, German, French, Italian, and more

recently by Russian and Czech. In the present day, as in much of the world, the influence of English has become increasingly dominant.

There is barely a language that has not been influenced by English, whether through the impact of British, American, or other Anglo-phone cultures. English has become the world's foremost language (Prćić, 2009:p.110), a naturalized foreign language (Prćić, 2023:p.39).

As early as thirty years ago, Filipović (1990:p.20) observed a phenomenon often called anglomania, an excessive interest in everything English, which today largely translates into American cultural influence. Americanisation is considered a synonym for globalisation, and the establishment of English as the primary means of global communication becomes inevitable (Šajinović-Novaković, 2012).

In the Dictionary of the Serbo-Croatian Literary Language (1967:p.83), the term Anglicism is defined as a feature or characteristic of the English language; it is a word taken from English. Prćić (2005:p.59) expands this definition to include general words or bound morphemes (prefixes or suffixes) such as bodybuilder, which integrate into the Serbian linguistic system, as well as phrases or sentences whose usage follows English norms. Filipović (1986:p.192) describes Anglicisms as loanwords whose source language is English and which denote objects or concepts originating in English or American material and spiritual culture. Many Anglicisms are also true internationalisms (Bugarski, 2003:p.205) that permeate various spheres of everyday life.

Languages adopt foreign words primarily to name new objects or concepts encountered through cultural and technological developments (Filipović, 1995:p.106). These borrowings vary in the degree of linguistic adaptation. We will focus on lexical borrowing that arises from the need to name novel objects, phenomena, or ideas, rather than on adaptation processes. According to Filipović (1990), these lexical gaps in a language are filled by: (a) creating new words from native elements; (b) borrowing words from foreign languages; or (c) changing or expanding the meaning of existing words. Deroy (cited in Burnić, 2021) emphasises that lexical borrowing stems from both practical necessity, the need to name new entities, and emotional needs, such as the prestige associated with the source language. Today, linguistic borrowing can also result from fashion trends, frequent social media use, or media propaganda.

In the context of **Anglicisms involving colour terms**, we encounter not merely lexical borrowing but **conceptual integration** within speakers' cognitive-linguistic systems. As Muhić (2024) observes, "narrative and conceptual mechanisms serve to preserve noetic security," a principle that clearly extends to language adoption:

colour-based Anglicisms act as **semantic safety fields** preserving familiar conceptual mappings and allowing speakers to navigate new linguistic terrain.

This process aligns with Trask's (2005:pp.142–143) insight that speakers often (un)consciously import features from languages they frequently encounter. Bloomfield (1984:p.471) classifies this phenomenon as **cultural borrowing**, where language change is driven not only by linguistic necessity but also by **extralinguistic factors** such as culture, media, and communication. Reflecting on this, Bugarski (2003) introduces the notion of **cultural contact**, observing that intense interaction with a global language like English through media, the Internet, and cultural exchanges deeply influences the lexicon and cognitive frameworks of other languages.

Borrowings can occur at all linguistic levels and, over time, become integrated into the recipient language, enriching its lexicon (Burnié, 2021:p.322). Usually, borrowings begin at the lexical level but may extend to phonology, morphology, or syntax if the contact is intensive and long-lasting. Borrowings can take different forms: they can enter a language as full-word loans, semantic loans where parts of a word are integrated, or calques (loan translations).

Since this study focuses on Anglicisms containing colour components, it is essential to consider the concept of colour itself. Colour, both as a physical phenomenon and as a linguistic and cultural category, fascinates linguists and anthropologists alike. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, used the same word (*iwen*) to denote both colour and being (Terzić, 2024:p.4005). The division and naming of colours vary across languages and cultures, reflecting the fluidity of colour systems and explaining the emergence or borrowing of new colour terms. In fashion journalism, new colour terms such as *baby blue* and *mocha mousse* are often adopted directly from English, as it can be seen nowadays in headlines like *Baby blue suits everyone* (Ultra magazine, March 16, 2023) and *Mocha Mousse: A new neutral for a new era* (Ultra magazine, December 5, 2024).

Basic colour terms in world languages range widely from as few as two to over ten core colour categories. Once considered significant mainly in visual arts, colour is increasingly recognised as a powerful communication tool, prominent in verbal and nonverbal interactions.

Besides perception, colour carries cultural and linguistic significance (Brenko, 2009). Colours possess universal archetypal meanings but also ethnically marked symbolism, reflecting the linguistic worldview of different cultures. The understanding of colour depends to some extent on the cultural context in which it appears (Ajdačić, 2015:p.136). This cultural and linguistic conditioning is especially apparent in language contact, where colour-based Anglicisms introduce semantic

subtlety that cannot be fully translated into the recipient language. This phenomenon explains why many such expressions enter Serbian in their original form. The analysis of lexemes in this paper will demonstrate which colour-based Anglicisms have become an integral part of the Serbian lexical inventory.

## 2. Methodology

The subject of this study is the analysis of English lexemes with colour components used in Serbian as loanwords. To achieve this, we analysed various dictionaries of Anglicisms and foreign words in Serbian, including that of Filipović R. (1990) *Anglicisms in Croatian or Serbian Language*, Klaić (1987) *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, Klaić N., Anić Š., Domović Ž. (2002) *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, Klajn I., Šipka M. (2008) *The Large Dictionary of Foreign Words and Expressions*, Prćić T., Dražić J., Milić M. (2021) *Serbian Dictionary of Recent Anglicisms, and the Dictionary of Serbo-Croatian Literary Language* (1967) by Matica Srpska I–VI. The assumption is that the Serbian language has adopted lexical items from English, which exist in their original form in the aforementioned dictionaries. The examples we list here were selected based on whether Anglicism contains a colour component in English.

The first aim of this study is to demonstrate the existence of lexical items that have been borrowed in their original English form and whose names contain a colour meaning derived from English. A more detailed analysis at another level exceeds the scope of this paper; therefore, we limit ourselves here to listing lexical items with colour components found in Serbian dictionaries. The second aim is to determine the extent of lexical adaptation in the dictionaries, i.e., which colours are most represented in lexical borrowing, and to provide explanations as to whether these borrowed words originate from media, science, economy, technology, or culture.

The research method used in this study is the analytical method, the analysis of foreign word dictionaries and Anglicism dictionaries which constitute the corpus of this study. In addition, the theoretical background is supported by relevant literature addressing this issue.

In the following section, we present the most prevalent colours found in Serbian loanwords by listing all identified lexical items, offering their definitions or Serbian equivalents, and categorising them according to the domain of everyday life to which the borrowing pertains, namely media, science, economy, technology, or culture. Lexical items appearing in multiple dictionaries will be referenced only once.

### 3. Results

The analysis revealed numerous colour-based Anglicisms in Serbian. The most frequent were lexemes containing blue and green (8 lexemes each) then black (7 lexemes). Lexemes with white, red, and brown were less frequent (4 lexemes each), while yellow and pink were the least represented. No lexemes with the colours grey, orange, or purple were found.

#### 3.1 Lexical Examples by Colour

##### 1) Black

**blackbottom** (American dance, culture),

**black-out** (signal loss, science),

**blackout** (a deliberate suppression or withholding of information by authorities, often in politics or crisis, to control public perception or prevent unrest. This may include media censorship, restricted access to news, or the intentional omission of facts from public discourse, or culture).

**blackwood** (a type of hardwood from certain tree species, science)

**blackjack** (a popular card game, culture)

**black** (tar/pitch, culture)

**Black Friday** (a retail event held on the Friday following the American holiday of Thanksgiving characterised by significant sales promotions and discounts offered by stores and online retailers. Originally an American tradition, Black Friday has become a global phenomenon, often marking the beginning of the holiday shopping season, culture)

##### 2) White

**White Star Line** – a transatlantic shipping line operating between Liverpool and New York (technology/transport)

**whiteboys** – a secret society of poor Irish Catholics in the 1760s, named after their white attire; known for opposing harsh landowners and officials (culture)

**Whitehall** – once a royal palace in London; now a major street housing UK government ministries (culture)

**white-trash** – a derogatory term for impoverished white individuals (culture)

##### 3) Red

**redwood** – a Californian tree species used extensively in the timber industry (science)

**Red Star Line** – a Belgian shipping company (founded in 1872) operating transatlantic routes (technology/transport)

**Red Bull** – a non-alcoholic energy drink containing caffeine, glucose, vitamins, and other additives (economy)

**Rednecks** – a derogatory term for poor, uneducated white Americans from the southern US (culture)

#### 4) Blue

**blue bird** – an artificial satellite from the American Intelsat II program (science)

**blue book** – a publication by the British Foreign Office containing diplomatic correspondence (culture)

**blue peter** – a signal flag (letter P in the international signal code) indicating that a vessel is about to leave port (technology)

**blue jeans** – durable cotton trousers, usually dyed blue (culture)

**blue-stocking** – a historically derogatory term for intellectual women who were perceived to neglect domestic duties (culture)

**blues** – a music genre developed by African Americans in the U.S. over 150 years ago (culture)

**bluezer** – a person who performs blues music (culture)

**Bluetooth** – a wireless technology for short-range data exchange between electronic devices (technology)

#### 5) Green

**greenheart** – a type of hardwood (science)

**greenhorn** – a term for a newcomer or beginner, especially a settler in the US (culture)

**Greenwich time** – time based on the meridian passing through the Greenwich Observatory in London (science)

**bowling-green** – a lawn used for lawn bowling (culture)

**evergreen** – metaphorically refers to something perpetually current or fashionable (culture)

**greenroom** – a backstage lounge for actors, traditionally painted green (culture)

**greenbacks** – US paper currency (named for its green-coloured back) (culture)

**greenfield** – previously undeveloped land designated for industrial or construction use (science)

#### 6) Yellow

**yellow metal** – an alloy consisting of 60% copper and 40% zinc, similar to brass (science)

7) **Pink**

**Pink Panther** – a character from the animated film series (culture)

8) **Brown**

**browning** – a type of firearm (technology)

**brownfield** – previously developed industrial or commercial land that may be contaminated (science)

**brownie** – a dark brown dessert square made from chocolate and nuts (culture)

### 3.2 Domains of Borrowing

When categorizing these borrowings according to their pertinence to everyday life, the highest number of Anglicisms appears in the domain of culture (21 lexical items: blackbottom, blackout, blackjack, black, Black Friday, whiteboys, Whitehall, white-trash, Rednecks, blue book, blue jeans, blue-stocking, bluezer, greenhorn, bowling-green, evergreen, greenroom, greenbacks, brownie, Pink Panther). This is followed by science (9 lexical items: black-out, blackwood, redwood, greenheart, Greenwich time, greenfield, yellow metal, brownfield) and technology (5 lexical items: White Star Line, Red Star Line, blue peter, Bluetooth, browning). Few, if any, colour-based Anglicisms were found in the domains of economy and media. It is important to note that this classification only applies to Anglicisms involving colour meanings and does not reflect the overall pattern of English lexical borrowings in Serbian.

### 4. Conclusion

In recent decades, English has become a central element of global communication, making its influence on many languages including Serbian inevitable. Through the analysis of Anglicisms in Serbian, this study has highlighted the process of lexical borrowing as a mechanism for linguistic enrichment and adaptation to evolving social, cultural, and technological realities. In this sense, the adoption of Anglicisms is not merely a linguistic shift, but a pragmatic response to the challenges of contemporary society. Expressions like Black Friday, Red Bull, and Bluetooth do not only expand the lexicon but carry culturally and technologically specific meanings. Terms such as greenbacks and blue jeans have deep socio-economic and cultural significance, while colours in technical contexts, like Bluetooth, serve necessary communicative functions. One is sure, examining colour-based expressions across various contexts like culture, technology, and science offers deeper insight into the interconnections between languages.

However, the question of the boundaries and justification for borrowing foreign linguistic elements should remain a subject of future research.

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## ANGLIZMI SA KOMPONENTOM BOJE U SRPSKOM JEZIKU

### *Rezime*

Ovaj rad istražuje uticaj engleskog jezika na srpski jezik kroz proces leksičkog pozajmljivanja sa posebnim fokusom na angлизме koji sadrže komponentu boje (npr. Black Friday, Red Bull, blue jeans). Analizira se kako ovi izrazi obogaćuju srpsku leksiku, ali i kako reflektuju šire društvene, kulturne i tehnološke promjene. Rad posebno ističe dvojaku ulogu boja u jeziku, prvo kao univerzalnih simbola, a potom i kao kulturno specifičnih elemenata koje oblikuju jezički i društveni kontekst. Angлизми sa oznakama boja često se preuzimaju u izvornom obliku upravo zbog značenja koja je teško precizno prenijeti u jezik primalac. Analizom funkcije izraza vezanih za boje u različitim domenima kao što su kultura, tehnologija i nauka rad pruža uvid u dinamiku jezičkog kontakta i promjenljivu prirodu srpske leksike.

► ***Ključne riječi:*** angлизми, srpski jezik, boja, leksičko posuđivanje, jezički kontakt, kulturni identitet.

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