

PRONUNCIATION OF LOAN WORDS IN SLOVAK LANGUAGE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Hana Vančová

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, Trnava University in Trnava,
Priemyselná 4, 918 43 Trnava, Slovakia

Abstract

The submitted paper outlines the process of loaning and usage of words of foreign origin in Slovak language of electronic media. The main focus is on loan word integration with attention to phonetic level of language, comparison of pronunciation of the loan words in their original and Slovak language, and the analysis of the use of vocalic and consonantal inventory of Slovak language while pronouncing these words. Loan words are divided to groups according to the degree of difference of their original pronunciation and pronunciation in Slovak language.

Key words: loan words, pronunciation, electronic media, vowels, consonants, diphthongs, triphthongs, Slovak language, English language, RP pronunciation, GA pronunciation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Loan words in journalistic texts

The concept of loan word is not new to linguistic research. M. Haspelmath (2009, p. 36) defines loan word as “a word that at some point in the history of language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing (or transfer of copying)”.

One of the key studies on loan words is the one by Haugen (1950) who classified loan words, followed by other research focusing on the reasons for loaning words, their level integration to word stock of recipient language, their morphological and phonetic structure, the semantic fields they influence and other related topics. This contribution concentrates on the pronunciation of loan words in Slovak electronic media.

The journalistic vocabulary, especially the one used in electronic media, is the most open to use of loan words in its need to convey immediate and up-to-date news and in the lack of time to check existence of counterpart word in the recipients' language. The texts in electronic media are often created simultaneously while reporting the information and the lexical level of any language is the most flexible to change. The semantic fields enriched by loan words are mostly fields of physical world, animals, food and drink, quantity, time, social, political and religious relations and modern world words (Haspelmath&Tadmor, 2009). The new loan words belong mostly to content words, primarily nouns.

The globalized world and need for information requires one common language. These days, the lingua franca used in international communication is English; therefore most of the loan words are communicated to other languages through English as the primary language, even though the loan word coming from English to other languages does not need to be a word of English origin.

Although journalists reporting news may be speakers of the language they borrow new word from, their native phonetic inventory may not contain the same set of phonemes. The pronunciation of the loan word similar to original pronunciation within the text in recipient language is unnatural; that is why the pronunciation of loan words is usually changed – either simplified or completely altered.

1.2 Brief comparison between phonetic inventory of RP and Slovak

In general, Slovak has tendency to pronounce the words as close to their orthographic form as possible. That is why the /r/ sound in final position in words (e. g. *bird*) tends to be fully pronounced, which makes it in this aspect closer to rhotic General American pronunciation (GA), on the other hand the letter “o” in some words (e. g. *dog*) tends to be pronounced as rounded /ɔ/ sound, which makes it closer to Received pronunciation (RP).

The list of phonetic differences on both, segmental and suprasegmental, levels between Slovak and RP in English is long and beyond the scope this contribution. An exhaustive comparison between the phonetic inventories of both languages can be found in the publication of R. Pavlík (2000). For the purpose of this contribution, some of the most prominent differences on vocalic, consonantal and suprasegmental level of both languages will be listed. When relevant, pronunciation of GA will also be pointed out.

1.2.1 Vocalic inventory of RP and Slovak

English RP pronunciation distributes twelve distinctive vowel sounds:

/ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /e:/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ/, /ɔ:/, /ʊ/, /u:/, /ə/, and /ɜ:/.

There are only eleven vowel sounds in Slovak – /i/, /e/, /a/, /ɔ/, /u/ and their long counterparts, and an /æ/ sound, used only rarely.

From this list of vowel sounds we can see, that Slovak system of vocalic inventory is simpler than RP vocalic inventory. Pavlík (2009) also identifies another difference: the RP vowels are more “pure” in the sense that they are produced at the near maximum positions and also, Slovak short vowel sounds are produced in almost the same way as long vowel sounds, which means that Slovak speakers produce only six different vowel sounds and the difference is only in their quantity. There is also difference in the types of phonetic quantities in RP and Slovak – while Slovak vowel sounds are either short or long, the RP recognizes also shortened short and shortened long vowels in addition to regular short and long vowels. That is why also in phonetic transcription different symbols is used, as they represent different sounds in RP and Slovak.

1.2.2 Diphthongs in RP and Slovak

There are eight diphthongs in RP and four in Slovak, none of them occurs in both languages.

Diphthongs are defined as gradual gliding movements from one vowel sound into another within a single syllable (Roach, 2009). That is why RP divides diphthongs into closing or centring – depending on what direction the gliding sound goes to:

Closing diphthongs: /eɪ/, /aɪ/ /ɔɪ/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/

Centring diphthongs: /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/

In Slovak, there is opposite approach to making diphthong sound – the sound in three cases starts with /i/ and ends with /a/, /e/ or /u/ sound. The fourth diphthong is /uə/.

These Slovak diphthong sounds can be found only in words of Slovak origin. Combination of these diphthong letters in words of foreign origin (e. g. *fi-alka* – violet) and all other vowel letter combinations within one syllable (e. g. *E-urópa* – Europe) are called vowel clusters, acting as separate syllables in words.

1.2.3 Triphthongs in RP and Slovak

In RP, there are five triphthong sounds created by adding the mid central vowel /ə/ sound to five closing diphthongs.

In Slovak, there are no triphthong sounds and therefore they are hardly recognized and pronounced by Slovak learners of English. Usually, mid central /ə/ sound in final position is substituted by pronouncing the alveolar trill /r/ sound, both when speaking English and adapting loan words of English origin.

1.2.4 Consonantal inventory of RP and Slovak

The consonantal inventories of both languages is the most exhaustive and complicated aspect when comparing both languages.

There are twenty-four consonant sounds in RP and twenty-seven consonant sounds in Slovak.

On the basis of these two tables by Pavlík (2000), several observations can be made.

	Plosive	Affricate	Fricative	Nasal	Lateral	Approximant
Bilabial	p b			m		w
Labiodental			f v			
Dental			θ ð			
Alveolar	t d		s z	n	l	
Post-alveolar						r
Palato-alveolar		tʃ dʒ	ʃ ʒ			
Palatal						j
Velar	k g			ŋ		
Glottal			h			

Table 1: A table of English distinctive consonants, by Pavlík 2000

	Plosive	Affricate	Fricative	Nasal	Lateral	Trill	Approximant
Bilabial	p b			m			
Labiodental			f v				
Alveolar	t d	ts dz	s z	n	l	r	
Palato-alveolar		tʃ dʒ	ʃ ʒ				
Palatal	c ɟ			ɲ	ʎ		j
Velar	k g		x				
Glottal			ɦ				

Table 2: A chart of Slovak distinctive consonants, by Pavlík 2000

In the manner of articulation, RP consonantal inventory lacks trill consonants, which in case of Slovak is the pronunciation of alveolar /r/ sound.

In the place of articulation, Slovak lacks RP dental sounds /ð/ and /θ/ and the /r/ sound is a post-alveolar sound in RP.

In English, there are two different phonemes with their distinctive functions /v/ and /w/; in Slovak, they are just allophonic realization of Slovak consonant sound /v/.

RP lacks Slovak palatal plosives /c/ and /j/, alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, velar fricative /x/, palatal nasal /ɲ/ and palatal lateral sound /ʎ/. These typical Slovak consonant sounds can be allophonic realization of RP consonant sounds.

The aforesaid tables provide very comprehensible comparison of RP and Slovak consonant sounds in isolation. They are rarely, if ever, pronounced in isolation, so their distribution and allophonic realization is much more complicated and governed by many rules. For closer inspection and further reference, see Pavlík (2000) or Král' (2009).

1.2.5 Suprasegmental features of English and Slovak

Suprasegmental features of speech are those that can be found on level higher than a segment, a phoneme. Since the aim of this contribution is to provide the illustration of pronunciation of loan words in Slovak, this part will deal with word stress, assimilation and elision, omitting sentence stress, rhythm and intonation.

1.2.5.1 Word stress in English and Slovak

While the word stress does not have distinctive feature in Slovak, in English primary word stress can not only change the meaning of the word, but also it can change the word category of a word (e. g. /'ɒb.dʒɪkt/ (n.) – /əb'dʒekt/ (v.)). In both languages, three levels of stress can be recognized – the strongest of them is the primary, the secondary level of word stress, and on the third level is an unstressed syllable.

In English, the distribution of primary stress depends on word class of the word. Nouns have general tendency to be stressed at the beginning of a word, the verbs are primarily stressed towards the ends of words (Roach, 2009), and the placement of primary stress also depends on morphological structure of given word. In phonetic transcription, it is usually indicated by mark / ' /.

In Slovak, the primary stressed is strictly at the first syllable of a word and is usually not indicated in phonetic transcription.

The secondary stress (marked in phonetic transcription as /,/) in English words can precede the primary stress; in Slovak, secondary stress can only follow the primary stress. Slovak words shorter than three syllables carry only primary stress; in words consisting of four or five syllables, the secondary word stress is on the penultimate syllable; in words longer than six syllables, the secondary stress is on each odd-numbered syllable from the beginning (Král', 2009).

1.2.5.2 Assimilation in English and Slovak

In English, both types of assimilation, progressive and regressive, are recognized. It means that under certain circumstances in connected speech, the phoneme can take phonological qualities of either following or preceding phoneme.

Slovak pronunciation does not recognize progressive assimilation, so there is only regressive pronunciation in Slovak, which means that the consonants can be either voiced or devoiced, depending on the quality of following consonant.

1.2.5.3 Elision in English and Slovak

In English, elision can appear in both, morpheme boundary and morpheme centre. In Slovak, elision appears only at morpheme boundaries.

In both languages, when two identical phonemes follow each other, it is pronounced only once but the quantity of the sound remains.

2. LOAN WORDS IN SLOVAK

Examples used in this comparison were retrieved from the online archive of *Hlavné správy* on TA3 news broadcasting company and the *Rádiožurnál o 18:00 h* at Rádio Slovensko which are two representatives of journalistic electronic news sources bringing the most up-to-date information, using loan words borrowed primarily from English.

The data were gathered from the period between March 2014 and May 2014.

The loan words are listed in bold in their original orthography complemented with RP phonetic transcription, contrasted by GA phonetic transcription when different in pronunciation.

These words are followed by their Slovak orthography in cursive and phonetic transcript. Differences between PR (and GA) and Slovak pronunciation are pointed out.

The Slovak counterpart of the loan word is also provided, when possible.

The loan words are divided into three groups, according to the degree of difference of their original pronunciation and pronunciation in Slovak language.

2.1 Pronunciation different, orthography of the root the same

To this group of words belong words that are loan words in both, English and Slovak. The word has existed in Slovak word stock for a long time with its pronunciation close to orthographical form; and it can be seen as a loan word when part of a new word or collocation. More examples from Slovak word stock could be found, in the period of data collecting only these two occurred significantly more often than others.

Scientology /saɪənˈtɒlədʒi/

Scientológia /stsi-entɔlɔ:gi-a/

From the etymological point of view, the word science comes from Latin word “scientia”.

From the morphological point of view, the word is a derived word consisting of the words “science” and “-ology”. The primary stress is placed on the third syllable.

Without taking into consideration the last suffix in both languages, pronunciation of this word in Slovak and RP is completely different. Whereas RP omits the letter “c” in pronunciation, the letter is pronounced as a palato-alveolar affricate consonant sound /ts/.

The sequence of letters “ie” in RP is pronounced as a triphthong /ɪə/, in Slovak the sequence of letters is pronounced as sequence of vowel sounds /i-e/ - not as a diphthong /ie/, because the root of the word is a loan word.

In the second half of the word, the open back /ɒ/ is in Slovak replaced by mid back /ɔ/.

The mid central vowel sound /ə/ is in Slovak replaced by mid back /ɔ:/ vowel sound.

The palate-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ is in Slovak replaced by velar plosive /g/ sound.

The root of the word is the word “science”, which is also used in the word “science fiction” /saɪəns 'fɪk.ʃən/ in the field of literary theory, or in its clipped form “sci fi” /'saɪ.fai/.

The word “science” keeps the pronunciation in all three words the same in RP, whereas in Slovak, there are differences.

The expression “science fiction” has the pronunciation in Slovak similar to RP. The clipped form “sci-fi” is close to its orthographical form, /stsi-fi/.

Pronunciation of these three words/expressions in Slovak is not consistent within the Slovak system of pronunciation.

In Slovak, its lexical counterpart to science fiction is “vedecká fantastika”.

Diet /'daɪ.ət/

Diéta /di-e:ta/

From the etymological point of view, the word diet comes from Latin “diaeta”.

In the RP, the sequence of vowel letters “ie” is pronounced as a triphthong /aɪ.ə/, in Slovak as a vowel cluster /i-e:/.

2.2 Pronunciation is simplified, spelling is the same

This group of words in relatively rich although linguistic section of Slovak Academy of Science tends to re-evaluate orthography of frequently used loan words and change it to the one closer to the pronunciation of the words. For now, following words occurring in electronic media belong to this category.

Barter /'bɑ:.tər/ US /'bɑ:r.t̬ər/

Barter /barter/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “výmenný obchod”.

From the aforesaid phonetic transcript, there is difference between RP and GA pronunciation. In the first half of the word, the non-rhotic RP pronunciation does not pronounce alveolar tap /r/, which is

present in GA pronunciation. In the second half of the word, the RP does pronounce the alveolar tap /ɾ/, which in GA is replaced by rhotized mid central /ə/.

In Slovak, the orthography of the word remains the same, but the pronunciation is Slovak – the vowel sound in the first syllable is lax open front-central /ʌ/ instead of tense open back unrounded /ɑ/. In the second syllable, the front-central mid /e/ is pronounced clearly, followed by alveolar trill /r/. In this case, the Slovak pronunciation of the word is closer to the GA.

Bestseller /ˈbestˈsel.ər/ US /-ə/

Bestseller /best.tseɪlər/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “knižný hit”.

From the aforesaid phonetic transcription it can be seen that there is a difference between RP and GA pronunciation. In the second half of the word, the RP does pronounce the alveolar tap /ɾ/, which in GA is replaced by rhotized mid central /ə/.

From the morphological point of view, the word “bestseller” is a compound consisting of prefix “best”, root “-sell-”, followed by derivational suffix “-er”. The primary stress is on the root of the word.

In the Slovak pronunciation, the sequence of consonant letters –sts– causes that the pronunciation of the sequence is /s.ts/ and the ending of the word does not omit pronunciation of the front-central mid /e/ and the alveolar trill /r/ sound.

This word also requires attention because due to Slovak fix primary stress placement at the syllable, the difference in pronunciation in RP and Slovak is also on the suprasegmental level.

Chat /tʃæt/

Chat /tʃet/

The orthography of the word remains the same; the pronunciation of the vowel sound is Slovak. The RP near-open unrounded vowel /æ/ is replaced by Slovak mid front-central /e/.

Headline /ˈhed.laɪn/

Headline /hedlajn/

The Slovak counterparts of this word is “titulok, nadpis”.

The pronunciation of the first half of the word is the same in RP and Slovak; in the second half, the word contains typical RP closing diphthong /aɪ/ which in Slovak vocalic inventory does not exist. Therefore it is replaced by open central /a/ and palatal approximant /j/.

Highlight /ˈhaɪ.laɪt/

High-light /hajlajt/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “zlatý klinec”.

The pronunciation of the word is the same in RP and Slovak; the word contains typical RP closing diphthong /aɪ/ which in Slovak vocalic inventory does not exist. Therefore it is replaced by open central /a/ and palatal approximant /j/.

Interview /'m.tə.vju:/ US /-tə-/

Interview /intervju:/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “rozhovor”.

In the second syllable of the word, the RP mid central vowel sound /ə/ is in GA replaced by rhotized mid central /ə̃/ sound.

In the Slovak pronunciation, the mid front /e/ sound is pronounced, as well as the alveolar trill /r/.

Nonstop /,nɒn'stɒp/ US /,nɑ:n'stɑ:p/

Nonstop /nɒnstɒp/

From the aforesaid phonetic transcription it can be seen that there is a difference in RP and GA pronunciation.

While RP pronounces both vowel sounds as open back rounded /ɒ/, the GA pronounces them as open central-back /ɑ:/.

The Slovak pronunciation is similar to its orthography, using vowel sound from Slovak vocalic inventory; both vowel sounds are pronounced as mid back rounded vowel sound /ɔ/.

From the morphological point of view, the word “nonstop” is a compound consisting of the prefix “non-” and the root “stop”. That is why the placement of the primary stress is on the root of the word.

Due to Slovak fix primary stress placement at the syllable, the difference in pronunciation in RP and Slovak is also on the suprasegmental level.

Spam /spæm/

Spam /spam/

The word in RP pronunciation contains open front unrounded vowel sound /æ/, in Slovak the pronunciation stays close to orthography and the open central /a/ sound is pronounced.

Supermarket /'su:.pə,mɑ:.kɪt/ US /-pə,mɑ:r-/

Supermarket /supermarket/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “obchodný dom”.

From the aforesaid phonetic transcription, the difference between RP and GA pronunciation can be the noticed.

In the first half of the word, the RP mid central vowel sound /ə/ is in GA replaced by rhotized mid central /ɜ-/ sound and in the third syllable, the alveolar tap /r/ sound, omitted in RP, is pronounced in GA.

In Slovak pronunciation, there is tendency to read words according to their orthographical form, therefore the close back /u/ sound is pronounced instead of RP close central-back /u:/, the mid front /e/ sound is pronounced both times, the alveolar trill /r/ is also pronounced twice.

Workshop RP /'wɜ:kʃɒp/ US /'wɜ:kʃɑ:p/

Workshop /vɔrkʃɔp/

The word “workshop” has its Slovak counterparts “seminár” or “tvorivá dielňa” which is direct translation of the English word.

From the above listed phonetic transcript, there is difference in RP and General American pronunciation in the last vowel sound. While RP pronunciation uses open back rounded /ɒ/, GA speakers pronounce open back unrounded /ɑ:/.

Slovak pronunciation in this word tends to be closer to RP pronunciation. Both orthography and pronunciation remain the same, although the phonemes are from Slovak inventory. So the English bilabial approximant /w/ becomes Slovak fricative labiodental /v/, English mid-open central /ɜ:/ becomes Slovak open-mid back /ɔ/.

2.3 Pronunciation the same, orthography simplified

To this group of words belong the words that have been used in Slovak for relatively long time and their orthography has been modified to suit the general tendency of Slovak language to pronounce the word the way they are written.

Billboard /'bɪl.bɔ:d/ US /-bɔ:rd/

Bilbord /bilbɔrd/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “reklamný pútač, tabuľa”.

From the above listed phonetic transcript of the word, there is difference between RP and GA pronunciation in the second syllable. The rhotic GA speakers also pronounce the alveolar tap /ɾ/.

Slovak pronunciation in this case is closer to GA, where the alveolar trill /r/ is pronounced and the previous tense open-mid back rounded /ɔ:/ is shortened to lax /ɔ/.

Leader /'li:.dɜr/ US /-dɜ-/

Líder /li:der/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “vedúci”.

The pronunciation in RP is the same as in Slovak, the orthography is different. The sequence of letters “ea” is replaced by letter “i”.

The non-rhotic RP pronunciation does not pronounce alveolar tap /r/, which is present in GA pronunciation. In the second half of the word, the RP does pronounce the alveolar tap /r/, which in GA is replaced by rhotized mid central /ɹ/.

Mail /meɪl/

Mejl=mail /mejl/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “elektronická pošta”.

The word contains typical RP closing diphthong /eɪ/ which in Slovak vocalic inventory does not exist. Therefore it is replaced by mid front /e/ and palatal approximant /j/.

The orthography of the word is dual in this case: both “mail” and “mejl” are possible; although form “mail” is preferred as a part of the word “e-mail”.

Summit /ˈsʌm.ɪt/

Samit /samiɪt/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “stretnutie, schôdzka”.

The word summit takes the original RP pronunciation although the orthography is Slovak – the letter “u” is replaced by “a” and one letter “m” is omitted in the standard Slovak.

Team /ti:m/

Tím /ti:m/

The Slovak counterpart of this word is “skupina, družstvo, družina”.

The pronunciation in RP is the same as in Slovak, the orthography is different. The sequence of letters “ea” is replaced by letter “i”.

3. CONCLUSION

As the aforesaid examples have shown, Slovak language is open to new vocabulary and one of the productive ways is the use of loan words. Main sources of loan words are electronic media, that closely cooperate on global level with each other and the acquiring of new vocabulary is very dynamic. The new loan word is usually used with its original pronunciation, later on, the pronunciation is either simplified to Slovak speakers and their phonetic abilities, or completely changed to correspond to their orthography (e. g. *scientology*), which is often with words of foreign origin; although the opposite process is more frequent – changing the original orthography to Slovak one while maintaining the pronunciation similar to the original one (e. g. *billboard*).

Since Slovak pronunciation of words tends to correspond to their orthography, the Slovak speakers have tendency to adopt the pronunciation that is the closest to the orthographical form of the word. That means, some words closer with their pronunciation to RP (e. g. *nonstop*) while the others to GA pronunciation (e. g. *billboard*).

Another characteristic feature of pronunciation of loan words from English is that the suffix –er is pronounced as /er/ in Slovak, there is no / ə/ sound or omitting the /r/ sound. Also, occasionally the Slovak word does not acquire the quantity of an English word (e. g. the syllable “ma” in the word “supermarket”).

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