

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF ANGLICISMS IN THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE OF MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, we will explore the laypersons' attitudes towards the use of Anglicisms in medical language. Some communication difficulties may arise between patients and their doctors because patients' knowledge of medicine and medical terminology is insufficient. Therefore, they often remain uninformed and misunderstood.

A questionnaire-based study was carried out among 100 laypersons in Rijeka, Croatia. It aimed to explore understanding, acceptance, use, and need for Croatian equivalents, which show their attitudes towards using Anglicisms in medical communication. The findings show some statistically significant differences in terms of understanding and use of Anglicisms with respect to the age of the respondents and the level of their education. The respondents mainly justify the use of English medical terms in medicine when there is no adequate Croatian equivalent. However, a high percentage of them support the need for creating Croatian equivalents, which should be more understandable and transparent than the English ones. We can conclude that Anglicisms are widely used in the Croatian medical language, but the Croatian equivalents should be created in collaboration between doctors and linguists.

Keywords: the language of medicine, medical terminology, Anglicisms, loan words



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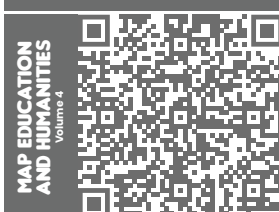
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1. Introduction

English has become the most widespread language in the world, *lingua franca*, due to the dominant role of the United States of America in the fields of science, technology, commerce, business, and culture. The use of English has been growing in all national languages due to the (new) information that it carries (Maher, 1986: 208). A field in which English has been a contributor of terms is that of medicine and the health sciences. The impact of English on other languages has been largely investigated, but it usually showed the linguists' attitudes towards linguistic borrowing. The attitudes of average speakers have been somewhat neglected. Some authors notice that the interest in wider public perception of Anglicisms and their native equivalents should be greater (Picone 1996). Anglicisms have been widely studied in the Croatian language as well. Croatian linguists were under a strong influence of language purism due to the fact that Croatian was, for most of its history, exposed to strong foreign influences, and that was a way of protecting and preserving the linguistic and national identity and independence (Turk, Opašić 2008: 81–82). Some authors notice that the use of Anglicisms clearly reflects Croatian speakers' snobbery, indifference, conformism, and spiritual laziness, which might eventually lead to forgetting who we are (Babić 2004; Opašić 2006). However, Anglicisms are not understandable to people of different social classes, ages, and educational levels. It is especially evident in medical communication, in which Anglicisms and foreign words are used in order to fill a lexical gap. The communication in the doctor-patient relationship should be clear and non-ambiguous. In this communication, the patient is always inferior due to the scarce knowledge of medicine and poorer linguistic competencies. In today's modern technology world, speakers are oriented to Internet information and media sources which borrow English terms. It frequently leads to misunderstanding and confusion. For example, during the Covid 19 pandemic, the term *booster vaccine* was incorrectly interpreted as "the third dose". It led to confusion in public opinion. The correct translation would be "dodatna ili dopunska doza" – *additional dose*.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the attitudes of Croatian lay persons towards the use of Anglicisms in the language of medicine.

2. A review of previous research in Croatia and some European countries

Although researches on Anglicisms in medical language are scarce, the ones related to the standard language have been carried out in Croatia and in other European countries. Drljača Margić (2012) conducted a questionnaire-based study among 244 students at the University of Rijeka. The study's findings indicate that today's presence of Anglicisms is predominantly seen as an inevitable and expected phenomenon but also as a manifestation of linguistic snobbery. The present use of Anglicisms in Croatian is also perceived to result from the lack of the popularization of their native equivalents. The minority of the respondents fear language or identity loss and relate the present use of Anglicisms to the un(der)development of the Croatian language. Penjak and Karninčić (2017) explored whether the strength of a country's national identity can determine extensive use of English instead of Croatian equivalents among Croatian students of kinesiology, both in their professional (expressions related to sport) and everyday language usage. The results show a negative correlation between the strength of national identity and the knowledge of Croatian equivalents. In 51% of cases, in sports terminology, students do not know the native word and 78% prefer using English sports terms. Also, the strength of one's national identity does not influence better knowledge of Croatian terms or their frequency of use. Matić (2013) carried out research to investigate the ICT students' attitudes towards Anglicisms and their Croatian equivalents in computer magazines. The results show that the English element and unadapted forms in ITC magazines are, on average, not only accepted but preferred among students, while the Croatian adaptations of Anglicisms are dispreferred. Skopljak and Dubravac (2019) conducted research among 200 adult Bosnian speakers to explore the impact of English as the global language and the use of English words in Bosnian. The analysis revealed that English has gained a prominent status in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not rarely being preferred over the native structures with similar or equivalent meanings. The majority of the respondents claimed to gain regular exposure to English, either in written or spoken form. The results also indicate that the younger the participants are, the more preference for English expressions they show. Panić-Kavgić (2006) carried out

research among 80 adult Serbian speakers. The results show a relatively low level of understanding of Anglicisms, as in half of the participants, the meaning of the word was unfamiliar. In the questionnaire survey of Endrštova (2010), 165 Czech respondents from three generations took part. Noticeable differences in language attitudes among age groups were confirmed. The results suggest that older generations tend to have rather negative attitudes towards the borrowings. The younger respondents' assessment of English borrowings was markedly positive. Consequently, they are less concerned about the future of their mother tongue. A small number of speakers regard English borrowings as beneficial to their mother tongue, as only one in four respondents viewed Anglicisms as an enrichment of Czech. However, a large majority of survey participants appeared to especially appreciate the role of English loanwords in specialized terminologies. In Slovakia (Panocova 2020), the attitudes to borrowings from English find a place between two poles. On the one hand, there are Slovak users (not only linguists) who are strongly against borrowings, especially Anglicisms. Some even consider them a serious threat to Slovak as a national language which is part of Slovak identity. On the other hand, some users are keen to use English words in their Slovak. Sanchez and Sirpa (2014) focus on the opinions and judgments of 15 randomly selected native Finnish speakers with regard to the use of Anglicisms in Finnish and other cultural-linguistics-related issues, including technology, social media and healthcare. Their data were collected through surveys and interviews and show divided opinions. On the one hand, despite general accepted use of Anglicisms, 3 Finnish participants hold negative views towards these borrowings. Specifically, these speakers think that using Anglicisms instead of their equivalent native words is a "shame", that their widespread use may bring "social inequality", and that English is "taking over" Finnish. On the other hand, the other 12 speakers think that by being "open and flexible" one can "work its way" through situations where English is not only helpful but also necessary. Taking gender into account, they found out that 3 out of 4 men in the group had moderate purist attitudes regarding the influence of English in Finnish. The 11 women were fully welcoming that influence. The authors relate it to the gender paradox in sociolinguistics, which states that women usually conform more closely to linguistic norms but they can be initiators of linguistic change.

3. The present research

3.1. Objectives

The aim of our research was to investigate the laypersons' attitudes towards the use of Anglicisms in medical language. Our goal was to investigate the intelligibility of the English terms, their linguistic acceptability, frequency of use, and the need to create Croatian equivalents with respect to age and education. The respondents had the possibility of suggesting native equivalents to English terms. Furthermore, we also investigated the use of Anglicisms in doctor-patient communication and everyday speech.

3.2. Materials and methods

3.2.1. Participants

The research was conducted in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Croatia, in the period from April to May 2021. The study was conducted using an anonymous survey. Respondents were randomly selected.

The group included 100 respondents, who were divided according to education and age. 56 respondents had a university degree (high education levels), and 44 respondents had attended secondary school. According to age, respondents were also divided into three groups: up to 30 years of age (21), from 31 to 50 (45), and over 50 (34). From the above data, it is evident that middle-aged respondents predominated in the age group. All the respondents were native speakers of the Croatian language.

3.2.2. Methods

The study was conducted by an anonymous survey with the aim of collecting data related to the respondents' attitudes towards the use of Anglicisms in the Croatian medical language. The questions were constructed with fixed response options and unstructured (or semi-structured) response options.

The survey consisted of two parts.

The first part of the survey contained 16 Croatian sentences taken from medical publications (*Medicina fluminensis*, *Liječnički vjesnik*, *Medix*, *Narodni zdravstveni list*) in which the English term was used to note a concept. The respondents were asked to state whether they understand the mean-

ing of the term, how often they use it, whether the term is linguistically acceptable and if there is a need to create native equivalents. The second part of the survey contained 13 statements aimed at exploring attitudes and opinions using English terms in doctor-patient and everyday communication. The survey used a quantitative and qualitative approach in order to examine the relationship between the examined variables and investigate the significance of the obtained results. Out of descriptive statistical indicators, arithmetic median values and standard deviations for the variables were calculated. Chi-square test was used to calculate the differences in answers. To be more clearly illustrated, the obtained results are presented graphically.

3.3 Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the relationship between the respondents' age and the understanding of English medical terms, the use of these terms, and the need to create Croatian equivalents.

Respondents aged 31 to 50 years have significantly more correct answers than those over 50. There are no significant differences between other age groups. Respondents of the three age groups did not differ significantly in their assessment of the understanding and use of these terms and the need for Croatian equivalents.

This result is according to our expectations since younger and middle-aged speakers are more skilled in foreign languages, and their knowledge is better. There is a statistically significant difference in the number of correct answers between respondents aged up to 30 years and from 31 to 50 years compared to the respondents over 50. Namely, the respondents of the first two groups have a significantly higher number of correct answers than the respondents of the third group.

First, we explored the relationship between the age of the respondents and their understanding of the English term. There is no statistically significant difference between the respondents and the result is almost the same in all three test groups. However, according to the chart, the result is slightly higher in the 31-50 age group. It can be attributed to the fact that the respondents of the middle-aged group have learned English from an early age, and to some extent they are familiar with the terminology. In addition, they use the Internet and are up to date with developments and technology in general.

Table 1.

The relationship of age with the total number of correct answers, understanding of the terms, the use of these terms, and the need for native equivalents

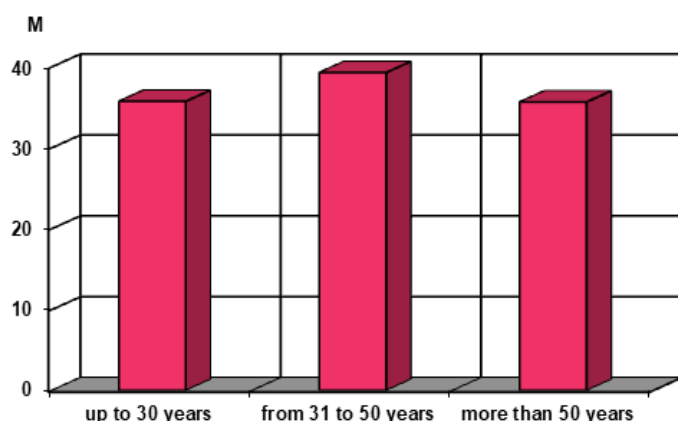
AGE groups	M	SD	F ; p
TOTAL NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS			
1. up to 30 years	2,25	2,05	F = 3,48; p = 0,037 2 > 3
2. from 31 to 50 years	2,58	3,12	
3. over 50 years	0,83	1,44	
UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM			
1. up to 30 years	35,73	8,66	F = 2,15; p = 0,13
2. from 31 to 50 years	39,29	5,28	
3. over 50 years	35,65	7,04	
THE USE OF THE TERM			
1. up to 30 years	19,27	3,52	F = 0,91; p = 0,41
2. from 31 to 50 years	21,13	4,60	
3. over 50 years	19,89	4,54	
THE NEED FOR CROATIAN EQUIVALENTS			
1. up to 30 years	5,73	1,85	F = 1,23; p = 0,30
2. from 31 to 50 years	5,85	2,38	
3. over 50 years	6,70	1,66	

There is also the influence of the media, which uses English to a great extent. It is also the age at which people pay more attention to their health, and knowledge about medical topics is acquired in various ways. There are certain Croatian publications in which authors try to get closer to readers in terms of language, so they define foreign medical terms or explain them descriptively, thus bringing medical topics closer to readers. (See Figure 1) Compared to the results of Panić-Kavgić

(2006), whose participants showed poor knowledge of Anglicisms, as 50% of participants did not know the meaning of the words, Croatian speakers show far better results than Serbian ones. This difference can be explained by the fact that the Serbian research was conducted 15 years earlier.

Figure 1.

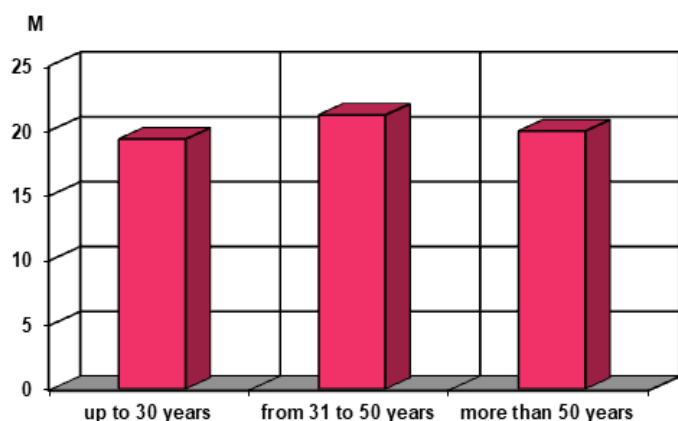
The relationship between the age of the respondents and the understanding of the terms



The use of English medical terms with respect to age was examined. The results between the three age groups did not show statistically significant differences, although the group aged 31 to 50 showed a slightly better result than the other two. Respondents aged 31 to 50 are more likely to use certain English medical terms than the other two. It was expected, given that the respondents in this group better understand English terms, so they use them as such. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2.

The relationship between the age of the respondents and the use of the terms

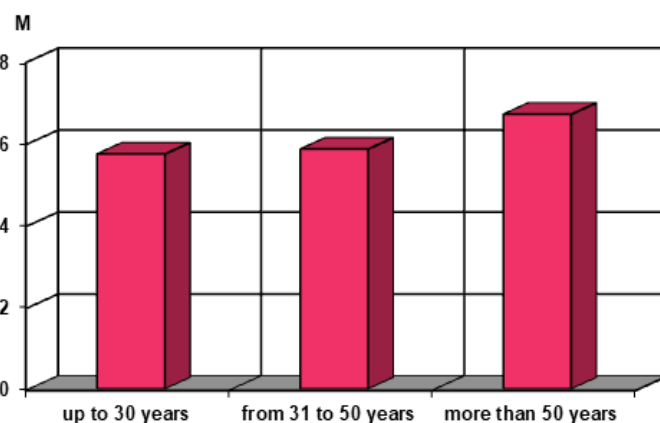


Our results correspond to those reported in Dubravac (2016), as the younger participants were those who preferred English words, and the older ones rather opted for the native equivalents.

The following results show the relation between the age of the respondents and the need for Croatian equivalents. We expected that older respondents would show a greater need for Croatian equivalents since the understanding and use of foreign terms were significantly lower than in the other two groups. Although there is no statistically significant difference between the three groups, the need of respondents over 50 for Croatian terms is slightly higher than in other groups of respondents. Since they have a poorer understanding of English terms, we expected they would show a greater need for Croatian equivalents. (See Figure 3) Our results are similar to those found in Skopljak and Dubravac (2019), who suggest that younger generations tend to be those who readily accept new words, growing up with them, while the older generations tend to rely more on the native language, probably not being familiar with all the expressions popular nowadays.

Figure 3.

The relationship between the age of the respondents and the need to find Croatian equivalents



In addition to age, respondents were also divided into two groups according to their education: higher education and secondary education, and we obtained statistically significant results.

Table 2.

The relationship between respondents' education and the total number of correct answers, understanding of the terms, use of the terms, and the need for a native equivalent

VARIABLES	1. HIGH EDUCATION		2. SECONDARY EDUCATION		t; p
	M	SD	M	SD	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS	2,38	2,76	1,09	1,99	t = 1,98; p = 0,052
UNDERSTANDING OF TERMS	40,14	4,54	33,86	7,32	t = 3,55; p = 0,001 1 > 2
THE USE OF TERMS	21,87	4,23	18,38	3,57	t = 3,20; p = 0,002 1 > 2
THE NEED FOR NATIVE EQUIVALENTS	5,97	2,28	6,40	1,73	t = 0,72; p = 0,47

The difference in the total number of correct answers between respondents with high and secondary education is at the borderline of statistical significance ($p = 0.052$). There is a tendency for respondents with a university degree to achieve a significantly higher number of correct answers. Highly educated respondents assess their understanding and use significantly higher than those with secondary education. There is no significant difference between the respondents with high and secondary education in the assessment of the need for Croatian equivalents.

We first investigated the relationship between education and the total number of correct answers. We expected the respondents with high education to achieve better results, which was proven by this research. Namely, respondents with high education had a significantly higher total number of correct answers, and the result itself is on the border line of statistical significance. It is clear that education has an impact on the knowledge of foreign languages because we assume that the respondents have continuously learned a foreign language and used it in their profession and additional training.

The relationship between respondents' education and understanding of English terms is also explored. The results show that, in this case, there is a statistically significant difference between re-

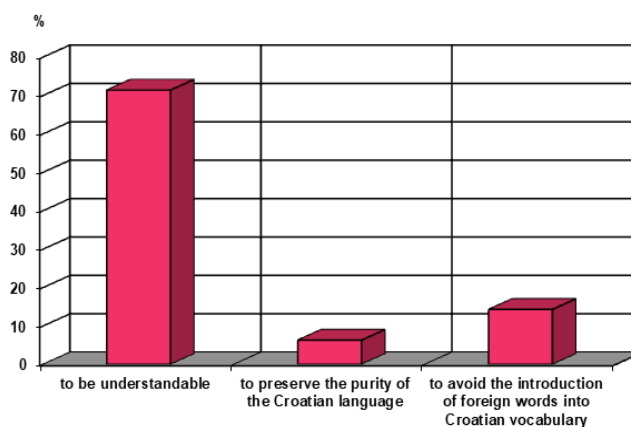
spondents with high education and secondary education. Namely, the respondents of the first group understand English much better than the respondents of the second group and therefore use it more often. We expected that education would play a major role in understanding and using English terms. If the term appears frequently and speakers understand its meaning, they tend to use it as well. However, if they do not understand, the situation is reversed, and the foreign term is not used.

Finally, the relationship between the respondents' education and the need for a Croatian equivalent was examined. We expected a statistically significant difference between the two groups, but it was not recorded. Both groups equally expressed the need for native equivalents, which proves that respondents, regardless of education, are more likely to use Croatian terms.

The second part of the survey referred to the attitude of respondents towards the words of English origin, the frequency of their use, their use in everyday speech, and the reasons for the daily influx of new English words into the language of medicine and the need to translate them. The first question referred to the reasons why medical terms need to be translated.

Figure 4.

The reasons why English terms in medical terminology should always be translated



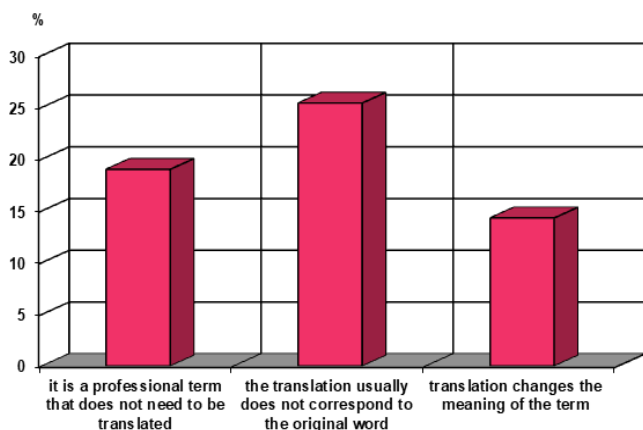
The results show that the incomprehensibility of the foreign term is one of the most substantial reasons for its translation. As many as 71.4% of respondents think that it is necessary to translate English medical terms to be understandable. 14.3% of respondents state that translation prevents foreign words from entering the Croatian vocabulary.

Only 6.3% favor purist tendencies of the Croatian language, which is achieved by creating Croatian equivalents. These data show that the intelligibility of a foreign term and the clarity of its meaning are the most important for the speakers. In medical communication, it means that the patient should be clearly informed about his/her condition. (See Figure 4)

The next question addressed the reasons why English medical terms do not always need to be translated, and we obtained the following results. The most significant number of respondents (25.4%) think that the translation usually does not correspond to the original word, 19.0% of them believe terminology should not be translated, and according to 14.3% of respondents, translation changes the meaning of the term. These respondents' attitudes should not be commented on because laypersons are not competent to evaluate professional medical terminology, but it should be judged by an expert from a certain field. (See Figure 5)

Figure 5.

The reasons why English medical terms do not always need to be translated

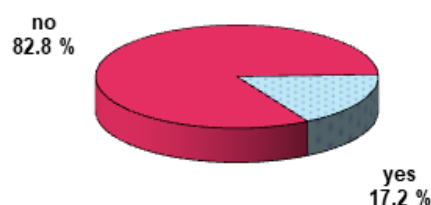


When asked about the linguistic acceptability of the translated English terms, 82.8% of respondents stated that the translated terms are not linguistically acceptable, while 17.2% stated that they convey the same meaning. The survey results are surprising because they show that the respondents' interest in medical terminology is greater than we thought and that they follow all changes and innovations in the language of the medical profession. This attitude of the respondents should be an additional motivation for physicians and lin-

guists to create appropriate Croatian equivalents. An example is the "centar za zdravlje" as the offered Croatian equivalent for the English terms *wellness center*, which was assessed by the vast majority of respondents as linguistically unacceptable and inappropriate. Linguistically, the term pattern "adjective + noun" would be more acceptable, i.e., "zdravstveni centar", but semantically it does not correspond to the English term. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6.

The opinion on whether translated English terms are always linguistically acceptable

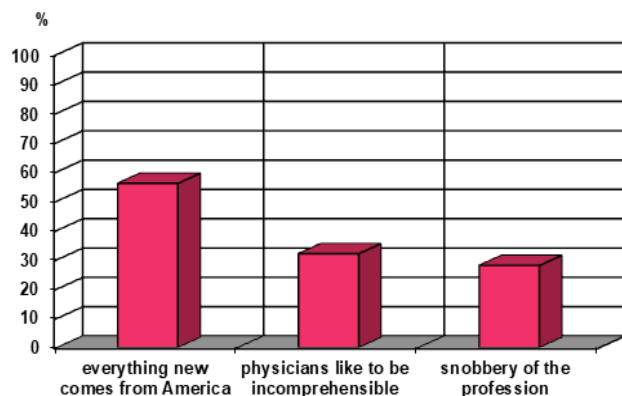


Regarding the reasons why there are more and more terms of English origin in medical terminology, 56% of respondents think that everything new comes from the USA and the presence of English is inevitable. As many as 32% think doctors like to be incomprehensible and use foreign terms. 28% think that the main reason for that is the snobbery of the profession.

Such a high percentage of respondents who believe that all innovations come from the States is not surprising because it is quite clear that the USA, with its scientific and medical achievements, occupies the first place in this field. However, we were surprised by the respondents' opinion that physicians, by using foreign terms, tend to be incomprehensible. Namely, according to the principles of medical ethics, physicians should use vocabulary that is accessible and clear to patients, but obviously, our participants do not share such experiences. As for the snobbery of the medical profession, almost 30% of respondents associate English terms in the medical profession with doctors who use them. (See Figure 7) Similar results regarding linguistic snobbery are reported in Drljača Margić (2012), suggesting that most respondents hold that the use of Anglicisms indicates linguistic snobbery among Croatian language speakers.

Figure 7.

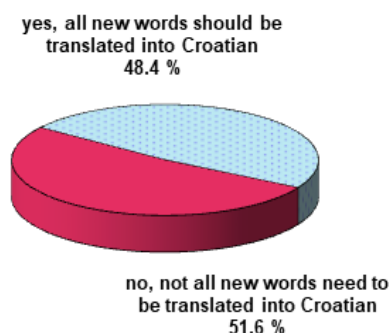
The reasons why there are more and more words of English origin in medical terminology



Regarding the daily influx of new English terms, the respondents' opinion on whether all words of foreign origin should be translated into Croatian, the respondents are divided: 48.4% of them think that all new words should be translated into Croatian, while 51.6% think that they should not. We think that age has had a decisive influence on this issue, as the older respondents are more likely to translate English terms, while the younger ones use the English terms more. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8.

The opinion on whether all new words of foreign origin should be translated into Croatian

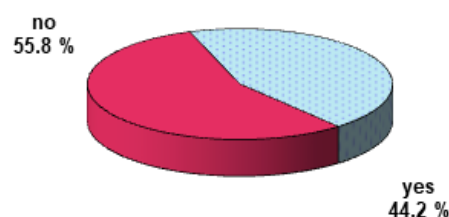


When asked about their opinion on the linguistic acceptability of loan translations, 55.8% of respondents think that English terms are not well translated, while 44.2% accept the translation. We expected this result since the attitude of the respondents was divided. It can be attributed to age but also education. Younger and highly educated respondents state that Croatian medical equivalents are vague and incomprehensible (such as

the Croatian equivalent for AIDS – *kopnica* or *tjelesni pretražnik* – body scanner) and are more likely to accept the English term. Some English terms are already widely accepted as *face lifting*, *bypass*, *fitness*, *anti-age program*, and so on, and as such, are used regardless of the existence of the native equivalent. (See Figure 9)

Figure 9.

The opinion on whether English terms are well translated into medical terminology



The next question is closely related to the previous one and refers to the respondents' opinions on whether translations retain the same meaning as English terms. As many as 61.0% of respondents think they do not, while 39.0% think they do. Namely, it is clear to the vast majority of respondents that English medical terms are translated spontaneously. We registered different translations of one term, e.g., *informed consent* – some translate it as *informativni pristanak*, the second as *informirano suglasje*, and the third as *informativna suglasnost*, while the patient does not understand what it means and is in doubt as to which term to use.

Regarding the creation of medical terminology, 79.4% of respondents think physicians and linguists should jointly participate in creating new loan translations, 11.1% would entrust this task exclusively to physicians, and 9.5% to linguists. Such a result clearly indicates that the respondents are well aware that only joint cooperation between the two can lead to the creation of Croatian equivalents. It should be achieved as soon as possible for the respondents to resolve their doubts about choosing the appropriate term.

We investigated the respondents' opinions on the free acceptance of all words of foreign origin in the Croatian language. In this case, the opinion is also divided, so 50.9% of respondents think that the Croatian language should freely accept all words of foreign origin. In comparison, 49.1% insist on language purity and, therefore, do not accept all foreign words. The research results show that respondents are generally not burdened by linguistic

purism, and tend to accept and use words of foreign origin and, thus, English terms. However, a certain measure should be found because almost half of the respondents want to spare the Croatian language from unnecessary foreign influences. (See Figure 10)

Figure 10.

The opinion on the freedom to accept words of foreign origin in the Croatian language

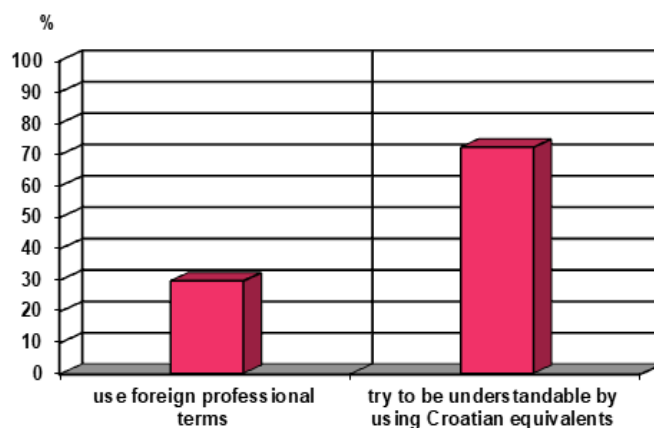


Regarding the communication with the doctor, i.e., whether physicians use foreign medical terms in their communication. 72.1% of respondents think that physicians try to be understandable by using Croatian equivalents, while 29.5% think that physicians use foreign medical terms. This is encouraging information that shows that physicians, despite the tendency to frequently use foreign medical terms in their communication with patients, choose how to approach them. Language is an important means of making close contact. We find that even for an educated patient, the following sentence is completely incomprehensible: »Intravitalna dijagnoza rupture disecirajuće aneurizme torakalne aorte«. (Intravital diagnosis of rupture of a dissecting thoracic aortic aneurysm.) (See Figure 11)

The last question referred to the respondents' personal assessment of Anglicisms and in everyday communication. The result surprised us because 92.5% of respondents use Anglicisms, while only 14.9% use Croatian words. This is another proof of the significant influence of the English language on Croatian because over 90% of respondents of different ages and education use English words under the strong influence of the media and the Internet. It corresponds to the conclusion of Skopljak and Dubravac (2019) that English is widely used as a common means of communication.

Figure 11.

The evaluation of the use of foreign professional names in communication between physicians and patients



4. Conclusion

This study shows a strong impact of Anglicisms on the language of medicine. According to the results, understanding of Anglicisms and their use is most common in the age groups up to 30 years and from 31 to 50, which was according to our hypothesis. Namely, these are younger or middle-aged people who use the Internet, follow the healthcare literature, and keep up with the times. Since Anglicisms are present everywhere, they are inevitable in medical terminology as well.

A small percentage of respondents do not understand the meaning of Anglicisms and therefore consider it necessary to create their Croatian equivalents. We expected this since it is a language for medical purposes. Although lay persons may know English well, this does not mean that they will understand medical terms and interpret them correctly, especially in certain branches of medicine, such as radiology, molecular biology, genetics, and proteomics, where almost all terms are English.

In everyday speech, all respondents use English, which proves our claim about the presence of English in all spheres of life.

Regarding the need for a native equivalent, respondents agree in large numbers that it is necessary to create Croatian equivalents of English medical terms in order to be clear and understandable to speakers. This is also expected as the intelligibility of the term is very significant.

The vast majority of respondents agree that both physicians and linguists should be involved in the formation of the Croatian equivalents, while a very small number of respondents would entrust it to physicians. These results lead to the conclusion that the standardization of medical terminology is necessary to avoid confusing situations for both physicians and patients. Great efforts are being made in the standardization of many professional terminologies due to the initiative of STRUNA, a project of the Institute for Croatian language and linguistics.

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