

# Do we have to speak Maclish?

*Biljana Naumoska regrets the anglicising of the Macedonian language.*

I love the English language. In fact, teaching English is my livelihood and I love teaching others to love it as much as I do and to help them understand and appreciate the wonderfully creative and unlimited potential the English language offers: the great variety of phrasal verbs, the rich vocabulary, the grammatical structures, the spelling system, the interesting and diverse idioms, proverbs.

It goes without saying that English is nowadays accepted as an international language, the lingua franca of the modern age. Thus, there are accepted varieties now such as Spanglish, Frenghish, Japlish, and Denglish, a combination, or a mix of English and Spanish, French, Japanese, and German, respectively, where English components and English vocabulary have been introduced into the said language. However, there is a phenomenon taking place in the Macedonian language that I honestly fail to see the reason for, and that is the persistent and relentless massacre of the Macedonian language by English. Namely, it seems to be 'in' or fashionable nowadays to replace perfectly good Macedonian words, words that are neither archaic nor old-fashioned, with words from the English language. To make the irony even worse, this trend is further supported by public personae: journalists, singers, actors and TV hosts, people who have wide audiences and who have a significant amount of influence on the young. I cannot understand the logic behind the need to anglicise the Macedonian language to such an extent, and overnight at that.

I understand and accept the fact that this influx of English vocabulary makes the language more expressive, but what is the reason behind replacing perfectly acceptable Macedonian words with English equivalents? To make matters worse, sometimes both the Macedonian word and its English equivalent are used together, as if they represent two different notions! So, are the Macedonian words less worthy? Inferior? Do the English equivalents carry more weight? Are they more expressive than the Macedonian words? Does using foreign words and phrases make people think they sound intelligent? Educated? Sophisticated? Different from others? Maybe, but carrying it to the extreme seems to defeat the purpose and only achieves the opposite effect. How can you sound different from others if everybody else is doing it for the very same reasons?!

Yes, it is a fact that a great many people in Macedonia know English to some degree. It would not be incorrect to also say that English has practically reached the status of an unofficial second language in the country. For example, the great majority of job announcements, if not all, require that the potential applicant has some level of proficiency in English, and in fact, some job announcements go so far as

to appear in English only, or with a very brief note in Macedonian.

Certainly, there is no need to be fanatical in terms of wanting to keep the language, any language, 'pure'—i.e. to only accept and use those words that have origins in that particular language—because then the language is not given the opportunity to grow and develop. Languages evolve and encompass words and expressions from neighbouring languages and the culturally dominant language. The English language itself is an amalgam and consists of numerous words borrowed from other languages and that does not appear to have had a harmful effect on its development at all, quite the contrary, in fact. However, in my opinion, there is something very disturbing and unnatural in not valuing and appreciating your own mother tongue so as not only to allow it, but also to encourage it to be suppressed and undermined. All languages have their own characteristics that make them special and unique, different from other languages. Those differences are in no way a bad thing; in fact, they provide diversity, and diversity is what makes and keeps things interesting.

In conclusion, I am going to repeat what I said at the beginning, but slightly modified. I love the English language. Teaching English is my livelihood and I love teaching others to love it as much as I do, and to help them understand and appreciate the wonderfully creative and unlimited potential the English language offers. However, I also love my native language, my mother tongue, Macedonian, and I do not, for one moment, think that using English words will make me sound smarter, more interesting or better. The meaning is in the content of what is said, not in the form. In order to fully love, understand and appreciate other languages, you have to first love, understand and appreciate your own. The point is to keep what is yours and add to it, enrich it, and not to destroy everything that makes you unique or change it beyond all recognition.

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