

# explorations



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## English borrowings in the sociolect of Polish climbers

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**Abstract.** Rock climbing and mountaineering are now becoming more and more popular in Poland. As a consequence, a specific language variety has developed – a multi-layered and varied social dialect of Polish climbers. This article describes English lexical borrowings in the language of this social group. More specifically, the author focuses on the lexical units which have been borrowed from English climbing vocabulary. The article also presents the causes behind the borrowing of lexical items from the vocabulary of English-speaking to Polish-speaking climbers and examples of such lexical units. Finally, the degree of adaptation of the borrowings into the Polish climbers' sociolect is discussed in greater detail.

**Key words:** Lexical borrowings, loanwords, social dialect, Polish climbers, climbing community.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to present a selection of lexical units which have been borrowed from English to the social dialect of Polish climbers. In this study, I would like to explain how the discussed social group uses these borrowings in context and how these elements have been adapted to the rules in the recipient language, that is, Polish.

The social dialect of Polish climbers (otherwise called a sociolect) includes vocabulary created from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century up to the present day. I collected this vocabulary in my monograph (Niepytalska-Osiecka 2014), where I described over 740 lexical units constituting the so-called *distinguishing layer* (Markowski 1990) of the sociolect under analysis. The vocabulary of this social dialect consists of two main layers: first, the vocabulary known to the whole climbing community (high altitude climbers, cavers and rock climbers), and second, the vocabulary specific to a particular group of climbers. The lexicon of the social dialect of Polish climbers can also be classified as follows:

1. formative neologisms – about 32% (*rozpierzaczka, bularstwo, spitownica* etc.)
2. general vocabulary with changes (shifts) in meaning – about 23% (*agrafka, fortepian, garnek* etc.),

3. specific phraseology created in the society of Polish climbers – about 20% (*parcie na cyfrę, złapać Elvisa* etc.),
4. borrowings from other social dialects – about 15% (*klarować, czasówka* etc.),
5. borrowings from foreign languages – about 10% (*rajbung, horolezka, spit, rest, drytool* etc.) (Niepytalska-Osiecka 2014, 13).

I gathered the lexical material described in the above-mentioned monograph from a variety of sources. I used written texts from mountaineering literature, diaries from trips, guidebooks, handbooks and spoken texts, as well as Internet sources, e.g., forums and article comments. I collected spoken texts using the method of *participant observation*, which was described in Polish social research by Szacka (2003). This method was also discussed by other scholars, e.g. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002, 7) define *participant observation* as “the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities”.

I understand participant observation the way Szacka (2003) and DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) do, and I employed their methods in my research. In fact, I became a member of the climbing community and continued my research as a user of their social dialect, participating in the activities of the climbers. The analysis in this paper presents one type of vocabulary found in the Polish climbers’ sociolects.

## 2. WHO ARE POLISH CLIMBERS?

The climbing community can be divided into several groups. These are alpinists climbing high mountains (high altitude climbers), climbers exploring caves (cavers), and rock climbers who climb with a rope and without it (boulderers). The phrase ‘social dialect of Polish climbers’ refers to the communication of all the above-mentioned groups constituting the climbing community.

## 3. TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE PAPER

Borrowing always takes place between *donor* and *recipient languages*. The *donor language* is understood as a source from which the other language borrows, and the *recipient language* as the language which receives foreign lexical units (see Durkin 2009).

The concept of *lexical borrowing* (otherwise called *borrowing proper*) is defined in Polish linguistic literature as a lexical unit which has been borrowed with the form and the content (meaning) from the donor language to the recipient one (Markowski 2012, 127). Markowski (2012) distinguishes the following categories of borrowings: *lexical* (the recipient language or variety borrows both the form and the meaning), *semantic* (the language or variety borrows only the meaning from the donor language and attributes it to the lexical unit which already exists in the recipient language) and *structural borrowings* or *calques* (when the foreign structure is copied to the recipient language). On the other hand, Durkin (2009, 134) understands the term *lexical borrowing* more broadly and presents the following typology of lexical borrowings: *loanwords*, *loan translations*, *semantic loans* and *loan blends*. It seems that Markowski’s (2012) term *lexical borrowing* is tantamount to Durkin’s (2009) *loanword*. In this paper, I will use the

terms *borrowing* and *loanword* interchangeably and consider them as synonyms. I will present a selection of borrowings from English into the social dialect of Polish climbers as defined by Markowski (2012, 127), that is including both the form and the meaning.

In English sociolinguistic literature, the term *sociolect* is used interchangeably with *social dialect* (e.g. Holmes 2008; Trudgill 2003). The first person who used the term *sociolect* in Polish sociolinguistics was Wilkoń (1989). According to Wilkoń (1989, 99), *sociolect* is the language variety of such social groups as class, community or professional group<sup>1</sup>. The author emphasizes the fact that the sociolect can exist only when a social group whose members are closely connected (the contacts are professional, social or cultural) exists. The concept of *sociolect* will be understood in this paper following Wilkoń (1989).

#### 4. REASONS FOR BORROWING FOREIGN WORDS INTO THE SOCIOLECT OF POLISH CLIMBERS

Foreign borrowings are a relatively small group of lexical units in the discussed sociolect (10%). The most numerous group of vocabulary are formative neologisms accounting for approximately 32%. However, very often these formative neologisms are constructed on the basis of adapted foreign loanwords. English borrowings are the most frequent, while loanwords from other foreign languages (German, Russian, Slovak and others) are less numerous. The majority of borrowings have been incorporated in the social dialect of Polish climbers from English climbing vocabulary, not from Standard English.

The English language is a contemporary *lingua franca* not only in politics, business and diplomacy, but also in sports, alpinism and many other fields. English has a significant influence on a majority of the varieties of the Polish language (e.g. corporate jargon). Nowadays, English is becoming a common language for tourists, fans of outdoor and extreme sports, globetrotters, backpackers and climbers all over the world. After the fall of communism in 1989, contacts between Polish and foreign climbing societies became more frequent. Climbing trips to the West became cheaper and easier to organize for Polish alpinists and rock climbers. In 1989, the Polish borders were opened and, consequently, new opportunities for the Polish climbing community have opened up since then. Western companies entered the Polish market offering new climbing equipment and, consequently, new climbing techniques were introduced in Poland. All these factors facilitated the migration of some lexical units from English climbing social dialect to the communication of Polish climbers.

Borrowing foreign elements is a comfortable strategy, applied not only in the discussed social dialect. Transferring new elements of reality is naturally connected to the need to borrow new vocabulary. Linguists, e.g. Durkin (2009), recognize two causes of borrowing – need and prestige, and they distinguish between *borrowings because of need* and *borrowings because of prestige*:

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<sup>1</sup> The definition has been translated by the author of this paper.

Typically, borrowing because of need is said to occur when a new thing or concept is encountered which already has a name in the donor language but not in the borrowing language, or at least not one known to the borrower. Borrowing because of prestige is sometimes said to occur when a speaker perceives that there is greater social cachet attached to a word from another language (Durkin 2009, 142).

According to Haspelmath (2009, 46), loanwords can be divided into cultural borrowings which designate a new concept coming from outside, and borrowings which duplicate meanings for which a native word already exists. This division can also be applied to social dialects. In the research material representing the social dialect of Polish climbers, I found that most borrowings designate something new in the reality. These loanwords are also called *loanwords by necessity* (Haspelmath 2009, 46).

As indicated above, Polish climbers borrow words which are closely connected with their discipline and are needed to name new things or phenomena. This is also the case of paragliders' vocabulary described by Pędzich (2013). Paragliders (as well as climbers) do not borrow words which are not connected with their discipline. Polish climbers adapt the borrowed words to the Polish language system and after some time they start creating a series of derivatives on their basis, e.g. *boulder* → *boulderować*, *przeboulderować*, *zaboulderować*, *boulderownia*, *boulderowiec*, etc. The borrowed lexemes transferred to the sociolect of climbers have been adapted to the Polish language system, partly (they have original English spelling but are declined or conjugated by climbers according to the Polish patterns), or in their entirety (in terms of simplified spelling, inflection and after certain time also derivatives).

In this paper, I will attempt to describe two types of borrowings which occur in the discussed sociolect. The results of the study are presented in the following sections.

## 5. BORROWINGS WITH VARIOUS SPELLING

Many English loanwords in the climbers' sociolect can be found in the Internet sources in two spelling variants. Table 1 presents the most interesting examples of such borrowings. I use English definitions, which are available on the climbing websites. The definitions of the Polish equivalents were also presented in Niepytalska-Osiecka (2014).

Table 1. Borrowings with various spelling

Variant with unchanged spelling	Variant with assimilated spelling	Definition in the social dialect of Polish climbers	Definition in English climbing vocabulary <sup>2</sup>
<i>boulder</i>	<i>bulder</i> or <i>balder</i>	'mała formacja skalna (głaz), nadająca się do wspinaczki bez liny'	'a big rock typically climbed without a rope'

<sup>2</sup> The English definitions have been extracted from *Climbing Dictionary*, *Climbing Terms Dictionary* or *Glossary of climbing terms*.

<i>bouldering</i>	<i>buldering</i> or <i>baldering</i>	‘wspinaczka bez użycia liny, na małych formach skalnych’	‘climbing on rock without rope’
<i>campus 1</i>	<i>kampus 1</i>	‘przyrząd treningowy w postaci cienkich listewek przymocowanych do płyty ze sklejki’	‘equipment to build finger strength’
<i>campus 2<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>kampus 2</i>	‘podciąganie ciała siłą rąk opartych opuszkami palców na cienkich listewkach przymocowanych do płyty, najczęściej wykonanej ze sklejki’	‘the act of climbing without using any feet’
<i>crashpad</i>	<i>kraszpad</i>	‘materac asekuracyjny do bulderingu podkładany pod głaz w czasie wspinaczki’	‘a mat three to four inches thick, and roughly four feet square placed on the ground under a boulderer to cushion a fall’
<i>cru<sup>x</sup>4</i>	<i>kruks</i>	‘kluczowe miejsce drogi o największym stopniu trudności’	‘the most crucial, difficult part of the climb’
<i>on-sight</i>	<i>onsajt</i>	‘pokonanie drogi w pierwszej próbie bez znajomości jej przebiegu’	‘to climb a route on your first try with no prior knowledge’

All these foreign lexemes fit the borrowing language patterns of inflection, as in:

*Tomasz Berniak zrobił Bongo V7 – jest to kolejne przejście tego **bulderu**, który w tym roku ma już kilka powtórzeń. Powstał też nowy **bulder** na prawo od Los-kota [www.redpoint.pl].*

*Alternatywą dla wędki jest możliwość pokonywania niewysokich (około 6 metrów) dróg, asekurując się wyłącznie **crash-padami** [www.climb.pl].*

<sup>3</sup> English-speaking climbers use also the official term *campus board*.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the English climbing vocabulary the word *cru<sup>x</sup>* can also be found. A climb is said to be *cru<sup>x</sup>* if it has several hard sections interspersed with rather easy sections. In the social dialect of Polish alpinists this word has not been assimilated.

*Baia do Mexilhoeiro to płaska lita skala zanurzająca się w morzu. [...] Zdecydowanie w tym rejonie trzeba zwrócić uwagę na przypyły. Dość zresztą szybkie. Bo o ile zamiana bulderingu na DWS może stanowić swoistą atrakcję dla wspinacza, to zatopienie **kraszpada** w Atlantyku może nie być zbyt pożądane [„Góry”, nr 9 (184), 2009].*

*Czujne wspinanie po dziurkach, z **kruksem** na lekko połogiej płycie, przyjemne w nowych butkach [www.wspinanie.info].*

The above-mentioned examples show that the loanwords get Polish inflectional endings. Some of the loanwords which have been integrated into the Polish system can create derivatives in accordance with the Polish rules of derivation. For example, the prefixed derivatives *przyflashować* i *zaflashować* or (in Polish spelling) *przyfleszować* i *zafleszować* have been created on the basis of the lexeme *flash* (which has been adapted to Polish inflection), as in:

*W upalnej Polsce Damian Sobczyk **przyfleszował** Samotność Długodystansowca VI.5+ na Okienniku [www.wspinanie.pl].*

*Kolejnym, tym razem po części przymusowym (awaria auta) przystankiem na ich drodze stał się również popularny wśród polskich wspinaczy Chateaufvert, gdzie Lukasz **zafleszował** Method of our madness 8a+ [„Góry”, 9 (148), 2006].*

## 6. BORROWINGS WITH ORIGINAL SPELLING

This group of loanwords has appeared mainly in the vocabulary of rock climbers, but certain lexical units have also been assimilated to the vocabulary of high-altitude climbers. The following table (Table 2) presents examples of such loanwords.

Table 2. Borrowings with original spelling

Borrowings	Definition in the social dialect of Polish climbers	Definition in English climbing vocabulary
<i>big wall</i>	‘duża ściana skalna lub duża ściana na panelu wspinaczkowym’	‘a large expanse of steep rock taking a minimum of three days to climb with conventional methods (free and aid climbing, hauling a bag with food water and shelter)’
<i>deadman</i>	‘kotwica śnieżna, służąca do asekuracji w górach wysokich’	‘a metal plate placed into deep snow for use as an anchor’
<i>deadpoint</i>	‘dynamiczne podciągnięcie i sięgnięcie do najwyższego punktu na drodze wspinaczkowej’	‘catching a hold at the apex of upward momentum at the point where the climber will experience the least force’
<i>drytooling</i>	‘wspinaczka w skale przy	‘climbing rock with ice axes and

	użyciu sprzętu zimowego (raki, czekany)'	crampons'
<i>friend</i>	'mechaniczny przyrząd mimośrodowy, umożliwiający automatyczne klinowanie w szczelinie, służący do wspinania z własną asekuracją'	'a trigger-activated protection unit employing spring-loaded cam lobes in opposition'
<i>high-ball</i>	'blok bulderowy (głaz) dużych rozmiarów'	'a very high boulder, often with a hard landing'
<i>spotting</i>	'rodzaj asekuracji bez użycia liny podczas bulderingu, zabezpieczanie wspinacza przed upadkiem, amortyzowanie odpadnięć'	'a way of reducing the hazard for unroped climbers'

The following sentences present how Polish climbers use the above-mentioned English lexical borrowings in context:

[...] *potrzebne jest sześć kraszpadzików i kilku czujnych kolegów dla **spottingu*** [...] [www.wspinanie.pl].

*Padła w drugiej próbie, przy pierwszej ja padłem – wybrało mi psychę, wziąłem blok na **friendzie** i zjechałem* [www.wspinanie.pl].

*Buszując w tym labiryncie, każdy znajdzie coś dla siebie – wedle życzenia i preferencji, niezależnie od stopnia pokonywanych trudności: dachy, okapy, krawądkki, oblaki, ściski, techniczne wyjścia na głazy, **high-balle*** [„Góry”, nr 2 (141), 2006].

As in the case of borrowings described in section 5 of this paper, the above-mentioned loanwords have been adapted to the Polish morphological system (Polish inflectional endings). Some of them can create derivatives in accordance with the rules of the recipient language, for instance, *przyspotować*, *zaspotować*, *drytoolowiec* etc.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Borrowing lexical units from English is a natural way of enriching the language in a particular social group, especially if that group has contacts with English-speaking people. Also, as illustrated in this study, the process of borrowing enables one to name new designates which have recently appeared in the climbing reality. A majority of the loanwords in the sociolect of Polish climbers have been adapted to the orthography, inflection or conjugation and derivational system of the recipient language, that is, Polish. This adaptation process can be interpreted as a sign of language creativity in the climbers community. In this study, I have presented only a selection of English borrowings in this particular social dialect. The problems discussed only briefly in this paper require further investigation.

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