Book Review

Sebastian Knospe


The publication by Sebastian Knospe is a contribution to studies on the influence of English on other major languages, and it fits in well with similar contact linguistic investigations that can be classified by the umbrella term of anglicism research (e.g. Carstensen and Busse, 1993, 1994, 1996; Stanlaw, 2004; Görlach, 2002; Furiassi et al., 2012). The book is based on Knospe’s Ph.D. thesis defended at the University of Greifswald (Germany) and presents a detailed and carefully conducted study of English language influence on German. The author takes an inclusive view on the notion of anglicism, which, in line with earlier research (Onysko, 2007), integrates borrowings from English with codeswitching and the creative use of English elements in German as evident, for example, in hybrid formations of English and German terms.

The empirical database of his investigation consists of 52 consecutive issues of the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel, ranging from issue 27 in 2006 to issue 26 in 2007. Also in this sense, Knospe’s study continues a line of research on anglicisms in German which has relied on that particular newsmagazine (see Yang, 1990; Onysko, 2007). This makes a comparison to earlier results possible.

At the beginning, chapters 2 and 3 establish a firm grounding of his research in major contact linguistic discourse, among others drawing on the work of Thomason and Kaufman (1988), van Coetsem (2000), Matras (2009), Thomason (2001), Winford (2003), and Clyne (1972). His discussion of the notion of loanword reaches back to Betz’s (1936, 1949) classification of direct and indirect (i.e. calquing) loan influences, which is compared to Haugen’s (1950) tripartite division of loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts. Furthermore, Knospe covers other major types of loans including hybrid creations, semantic changes, and so-called pseudo loans, always cogently citing from the vast previous literature on these phenomena. He also includes a section on the formal integration of
English loanwords which relies on previous and recent advances in this area (e.g. Winter-Froemel, 2011). At the end of an overall concise but comprehensive mapping of theoretical approaches to English loanwords, Knospe lays out how he uses the notion of anglicism. His definition builds on concerns voiced in Görlach (2003) and Glahn (2002), who do not consider any types of calques as empirically relevant for corpus studies that try to elicit the presence of English in a recipient language. Knospe also stresses the practical side of his decision in order to facilitate a comparison to previous research on anglicisms in the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel.

Before presenting the results of his empirical analysis, Knospe expands the theoretical discussion in chapter 4 as he discusses the role of codeswitching compared to other loan influences. He highlights the fact that written codeswitching can play an important part in contact situations even though the majority of codeswitching research has focused on oral codeswitching. While there has been some previous research on written codeswitching between Spanish and English (see Callahan, 2004; Montes-Alcalá, 2001), in some literary contexts (e.g. Māori codeswitching in the English prose of Māori writers, see Degani, 2012), and, most recently, in chat communication (see Androutsopoulos, 2013; contributions in Dorleijn, 2016), Knospe adds that written codeswitching can also happen in remote contact situations such as the influence of English on many major languages. He takes the reader on a brief but comprehensive journey through the main developments in codeswitching theory, lingering on the nonce loan debate, on flagged vs. unflagged codeswitches, on the differentiation of codeswitching in inter- and intrasentential switches, on Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model (1993), and, finally, on Muysken's (2000) tripartite division of codemixing types (insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization). Most of the space in chapter 4 is devoted to the presentation of Muysken's model since the author adopts that approach for his empirical analysis. In his discussion of insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization, Knospe points out a few difficulties in differentiating between the three categories. To him hybrid compounds that involve diamorphs (i.e. near homophones/homographs in German and English as in German Haus and English house), fall in between insertions and congruent lexicalizations when the German diamorph forms hybrid compounds with other English units (e.g. Beachhaus).

At this point, however, it would have been important to differentiate more clearly between established loans in a recipient language and nonce loans since the former can regularly enter into productive processes of word formation in German such as compounding. This differentiation is crucial as the mere occurrences of English loans in German with German-English cognates or shared