

“Thanks from the mountain!”: Humorous Calques in Ponglish as an Output of Language Contact and Language Creativity

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Abstract: Since the enlargement of the European Union beginning in 2004, there has been a huge wave of migration to the United Kingdom from Poland. The UK, unlike other EU countries, allowed full access to its labor market to nationals of eight accession countries, including Poland. The diaspora formed new communities and a new contact variety emerged among them, commonly referred to as “Ponglish.” Although Ponglish has enjoyed some attention within linguistics, the humorous, “technically incorrect” literal translations of Polish words and phrases into English, usually by Poles with a rather high proficiency in English, have remained unexamined to date. This article analyzes the phenomenon of literal translations in Ponglish in detail, based on a number of websites dedicated to the subject, and attempts a classification.

1. Ponglish as a New Contact Variety in the United Kingdom

The Annual Population Survey data of the Office of National Statistics shows that in 2012 Polish was the most common non-British nationality in the United Kingdom. At that time, 700,000 residents in the UK were Polish, which amounted to 14.4% of all non-British nationals in the UK. The Polish diaspora has increased immensely since 2004 and Poland’s entrance into the European Union (cf. ONS 2013). This increase has received widespread attention in the British press (see Rainey 2013) and to a certain degree also in scientific literature (see Burrell 2009). These studies, however, mainly focus on demographic, social, and economic aspects of the migration wave, rather than on linguistic considerations.

The only study which deals elaborately with linguistic (both structural and sociolinguistic) aspects of the contact situation in the UK is a doctoral thesis from the University of Cracow (Błasiak 2011; an earlier

article on the topic by the same author was published in 2008).¹ In this work many interesting aspects of the Ponglish phenomenon are addressed. Błasiak, who spent two years working and studying in the UK herself, analyzed the Polish-English bilingual situation from 2007 to 2009. In her research she found that most (56%) of Poles in the UK had come there for work, with the vast majority (86%) having lived there for more than 24 months already (Błasiak 2011: 62). Approximately half of them speak English very well (according to their own estimations). Rather than the product of accidental mistakes that occur due to limited mastery of English as a foreign language, Ponglish as a contact variety is spoken and created by its agents intentionally and not out of necessity.

For Błasiak (2011: 84), the term Ponglish refers to the code which Polish immigrants in the UK use for everyday communication and in which Polish usually acts as the recipient and English as the donor language. Consequently, one can speak of a mixed variety, which has arisen in a contact situation of language maintenance (see Winford 2006: 11), involving mainly lexical borrowing.² In addition to the practice of mixing Polish grammar and English lexis, Ponglish also includes literal translations both from English into Polish and, more frequently, from Polish into English (Błasiak 2011: 85).

Apart from its mere denominating function, Ponglish serves the purpose of an in-group code which provides social cohesion and is characteristically potent in terms of expressiveness and linguistic creativity, meaning the practice of Ponglish involves “ingenious, artful or playful activities that are unconventional in the very broad sense of not being subject to everyday routine” and thus “inseparably linked with intelligent human behavior” (Langlotz 2006: 6).

2. Humorous Calques in Ponglish

It is this humorous and refreshingly bold way of playing with the two languages which deserves further attention by linguists. Ponglish possesses a set of words and phrases that are the result of literal transla-

¹ Majdańska-Wachowicz 2014, which deals with linguistic and didactic aspects of Ponglish, should also be mentioned.

² Most English loanwords in Ponglish stem from the area of working life. Some of them are adapted: morphologically (*waiterka* for *waitress*), orthographically (*tumorół* for *tomorrow*), or phonetically (Slavic alveolar trill [r] instead of English alveolar approximant [ɹ]).

tion from Polish into English. Thus, they would be understood neither by speakers of Standard English nor by speakers of Standard Polish alone, but only by the Ponglish community in the UK. Błasiak observes that, as is the case with Ponglish in general, these utterances are not the result of incomplete learning but must be considered as a kind of language game which has been deliberately created by Polish migrants who possess a relatively high degree of proficiency in English.³ Błasiak lists about a dozen examples, which she comments on in a general manner, rather than analyzing them in detail:

"[One] są dosłowymi tłumaczeniami z języka polskiego na język angielski, pomijającymi reguły przekładu oraz zasady językowe i stylistyczne angielszczyzny. Te interesujące konstrukcje składniowe oparte niekiedy na homofonii, homonimii, czy też polisemii, wskazują na istnienie poziomu nadkompetencji, rozumianej jako kreatywność językowa." (Błasiak 2011: 90)

[‘They are literal translations from Polish into English which ignore the rules of translation and the principles of English language and style. These interesting syntactic constructions—sometimes based on homophony, homonymy, or polysemy—indicate the existence of a high level of competence, understood as language creativity.’]

As these humorous calques are probably the most interesting aspect of Ponglish, it is the aim of this paper to analyze them in more detail, to identify different groups of expressions from this field, and to examine their function and the motivation behind their creation. The corpus, consisting of 50 examples, most of which are individually presented and analyzed in the following, has been compiled on the basis of Błasiak (2011: 89f.) and other sources retrieved from the following websites: <http://www.ponglish.org>, <http://englishblog.pl/thanks-from-the-mountain>,

³ According to this definition, the examples on the website <http://www.jobland.pl/aktualnosc/Thank-you-from-mountains-a-151.html>, which are mentioned by Błasiak (2011: 90, footnote) as well, also have a humorous effect but do not count as Ponglish. They are merely results of insufficient knowledge of English and the wrong choice of meanings from the dictionary, respectively. An example is the translation of *marymarka wojenna* ‘navy’ as *military jacket*.

<http://bareizmy.pl>, and <http://tazzy.soup.io/post/48628912/Thanks-from-the-mountain-Dzi-kuj-z> (last accessed 10 October 2014).⁴

2.1. “Wrong” Translations of Homonyms

The first group consists of examples where a newly-created Ponglish phrase is based on a homonym whose different meanings are played with. In some cases the central homonyms (underlined in the examples) do not change their form regarding their part of speech, meaning a noun stays a noun and an adjective stays an adjective:⁵

- (1) Ponglish: *Room with you!*
 Polish original: *Pokój z wami!*
 Meaning: ‘Peace [be] with you!’
- (2) Ponglish: *to go to the second page of the street*
 Polish original: *przejsć na drugą stronę ulicy*
 Meaning: ‘to cross the road’
- (3) Ponglish: *Denmark from chicken*
 Polish original: *dania z kurczaka*
 Meaning: ‘chicken dishes’
- (4) Ponglish: *sugar in one’s ankles*
 Polish original: *cukier w kostkach*
 Meaning: ‘lump sugar’
- (5) Ponglish: *kiosk of movement*
 Polish original: *kiosk ruchu*
 Meaning: ‘newspaper kiosk’
- (6) Ponglish: *victim for the church*
 Polish original: *ofiara na kościół*
 Meaning: ‘offering for the church’

The homonyms in these examples are (1) *pokój*, which can mean both ‘room’ and ‘peace’, (2) *strona*—‘page’ and ‘side’ and (3) *dania* (sg. *danie*),

⁴ Many examples appear in more than one source.

⁵ There are no examples of other parts of speech in the corpus.

which can mean 'dishes' and, written with a capital letter, 'Denmark'. It should be noted that there is a slight difference in pronunciation which, however, does not seem significant enough to pose a problem for the users of Ponglish: *Dania* 'Denmark' is pronounced with a glide /j/ whereas *dania* 'dishes' involves a palatalized nasal /n/. In example (4), *kostki* (sg. *kostka*) is translated as 'ankles' instead of 'lumps, cubes'. Example (5) is interesting because the original meaning of *ruch* refers to the company Ruch S.A. Example (6) plays with the two meanings of *ofiara*: 'victim' and 'offering (in church)'.

The next example, where *pociąg* is translated as 'train' instead of 'penchant', is syntactically wrong because the article is missing.⁶ However, this was probably done on purpose to stick to the strict pattern of literal translation and simultaneously to allude satirically to a typical translation mistake from Polish, a language without articles, into English, which has articles, presupposing the speakers' high proficiency in English.

- (7) Ponglish: *I feel train to you.*
 Polish original: *Czuję do ciebie pociąg.*
 Meaning: 'I feel drawn to you.'

In the following sentence, the central homonym is not a noun, but an adjective: *drogi* (fem. *droga*), which means both 'dear, valuable' and 'expensive':

- (8) Ponglish: *My girlfriend is very expensive to me.*
 Polish original: *Moja dziewczyna jest mi bardzo droga.*
 Meaning: 'My girlfriend is very dear to me.'

Whereas in the examples above the word class of the central homonym stays the same, it can also change such as from adjective to noun, from noun to preposition or from verb to noun:

- (9) Ponglish: *my way Mary*
 Polish original: *moja droga Mary*
 Meaning: 'my dear Mary'

⁶ This is a typical translation mistake from Polish into English.

- (10) Ponglish: *white without*
 Polish original: *biały bez*
 Meaning: 'white lilac'
- (11) Ponglish: *I'll animal you.*
 Polish original: *Zwierzę ci się.*
 Meaning: 'I confide in you.'

In example (9) the speaker plays with the various possible word classes of *droga*, as it can be either a noun with the meaning 'way' or an adjective with the meaning 'dear' (female form). Something similar happens in (10): *bez* is translated as the preposition 'without' in the Ponglish construction, whereas in the Polish original it stands for the noun 'lilac'. Utterance (11) is interesting because the verb *zwierzyć się* 'to confide' is not only transformed into the noun *zwierzę* 'animal' (and on the way deprived of its reflexive particle), but 'animal' additionally takes over the function of the verb and shows additional creativity.

In one case there are even two "wrong" translations in one Polish phrase, which makes it rather impossible for outsiders to understand the meaning:

- (12) Ponglish: *Do you divide my sentence?*
 Polish original: *Czy podzielasz moje zdanie?*
 Meaning: 'Do you share my opinion?'

Firstly, *podzielać* is translated as 'to divide', which is wrong because *podzielać* (in the imperfective aspect) does not exist on its own. It only exists in combination with words such as *zdanie* 'opinion', *opinia* 'opinion', or *teza* 'thesis'. 'To divide' would have to be expressed using the verb *dzielić* or *rozdzielać*. This example also demonstrates a less strict approach, because the central word is not transferred as a whole. Rather, the original Polish word and its translation only share the same stem. The same also applies to the two following examples:

- (13) Ponglish: *Universal Pregnancy Law*
 Polish original: *Pravo Powszechnego Ciążenia*
 Meaning: 'law of universal gravitation'

- (14) Ponglish: *without corpse*
 Polish original: *bez zwłoki*
 Meaning: 'without delay'

The two related words *ciężenie* 'gravitation' and *cięża* 'pregnancy' in utterance (13) are both derived from the stem *cięż-/cięż-* which generally refers to some kind of weight (cf. *ciężar* 'weight, burden', *ciężyć* 'to become heavy', *ciężarówka* 'truck', etc.). In example (14), *zwłoka*, which the Polish phrase refers to, means 'delay'. The genitive form, *zwłoki*, on the other hand, means 'corpse' if it is interpreted as nominative. This makes the sentence ungrammatical because the preposition *bez* 'without' requires the genitive; the genitive of *zwłoki* would be *zwłok*.

2.2. Literal Translation of Idiomatic Phrases

The second group consists of Polish phrases that do not translate into English. Rather, the phrase is translated literally, which often leads to humorous outcomes. Phrase (15) serves as an example:

- (15) Ponglish: *Railway on you.*
 Polish original: *Kolej na ciebie.*
 Meaning: 'It's your turn.'

The Polish phrase *kolej na ciebie* is translated into English as 'it's your turn', in which it maintains its idiomatic meaning. However, a literal translation would be completely different. The Ponglish phrase 'railway on you' makes no sense in Standard English. Translating *kolej* as 'railway' is the familiar Ponglish strategy of using homonyms.

The following example is a classic, probably the most frequently cited Ponglish phrase (cf. <http://www.jobland.pl/aktualnosci/Thank-you-from-mountains-a-151.html>, last accessed 10 October 2014):

- (16) Ponglish: *Thanks from the mountain.*
 Polish original: *Dziękuję z góry.*
 Meaning: 'Thank you in advance.'

Here, similar to example (15), the Polish *z góry* is translated literally as 'from the mountain' (*góra* 'mountain') rather than idiomatically as 'in

advance'. Overall, 19 examples of this type are found in the corpus, of which the most interesting ones include:⁷

- (17) Ponglish: *first from the shore*
 Polish original: *pierwszy z brzegu*
 Meaning: 'the first that comes along'
- (18) Ponglish: *without small garden*
 Polish original: *bez ogródek*
 Meaning: 'bluntly'
- (19) Ponglish: *coffee on the table*
 Polish original: *kawa na ławę*
 Meaning: 'plain talking'

It should be noted for example (18) that *ogródki* are 'small gardens (pl.)', so the translation should actually be *without small gardens* and the correct Polish phrase would be *bez ogródków* in this case. Example (19) traces back to the Polish idiom *wyłożyć kawę na ławę*, literally 'to put the coffee on the coffee table'.

Wordplay in Polish expressions specific to getting married is rather interesting, varying according to whether a man or a woman is the referent. If we take the Polish expression *wyjść za mąż* literally, the woman leaves home to follow her husband. By contrast, a Polish man would use a reflexive construction to express that he is getting married: *ożenić się*, literally 'to wife oneself'. Here is how the concept of getting married is expressed in Ponglish:

- (20) Ponglish: *I went out behind husband*⁸
 Polish original: *wyszłam za mąż*
 Meaning: 'I got married' (of a woman)

⁷ The other examples, which shall not be discussed in detail here, are: *You must step on my hand* from *Musicie pójść mi na rękę* 'You must make a concession'; *to break down the first ice-creams* from *przełamywać pierwsze lody* 'to break the ice'; *Tom divided their lottery coupon* from *Tom podzielił ich los* 'Tom shared their fortune'; *to get armed in patience* from *uzbroić się w cierpliwość* 'to prepare oneself for a long wait'.

⁸ Again, an article or possessive pronoun is missing here as a result of a strict literal translation from Polish into English.

- (21) Ponglish: *I wifed myself*
 Polish original: *ożeniłem się*
 Meaning: 'I got married' (of a man)

There are also several colloquial Polish expressions in the corpus on which Ponglish expressions are based:

- (22) Ponglish: *It's after birds.*
 Polish original: *Już po ptakach.*
 Meaning: 'It's too late.'
- (23) Ponglish: *But eggs!*
 Polish original: *Ale jaja!*
 Meaning: 'I'll be damned!'
- (24) Ponglish: *the weather under the dog*
 Polish original: *pogoda pod psem*
 Meaning: 'beastly weather'
- (25) Ponglish: *Don't make a village!*
 Polish original: *Nie rób wioski!*
 Meaning: 'Don't behave so embarrassingly!'

Example (26) plays with the literal meaning (at least partially) of *podrzucić (kogoś)* 'to give (someone) a lift'. *Podrzucić* means in standard Polish 'to toss (something up in the air)' but can also, with a twinkle in the eye, be understood literally as 'to throw (something) up':

- (26) Ponglish: *Can you throw me up?*
 Polish original: *Czy możesz mnie podrzucić?*
 Meaning: 'Can you give me a lift?'

The following three examples are remarkable because the device of strict literal translation has not been maintained here:

- (27) Ponglish: *Don't turn my guitar!*
 Polish original: *Nie zawracaj mi gitary!*
 Meaning: 'Don't get on my nerves!'

- (28) Ponglish: *What are you running about?*⁹
 Polish original: *O co ci biega?*
 Meaning: 'What do you mean?'

- (29) Ponglish: *Let's go horses on the beton.*
 Polish original: *Poszły konie po betonie.*
 Meaning: 'something irreversible has happened'

In example (27) the first-person personal pronoun in the dative singular becomes a first-person possessive pronoun in accusative singular. This constitutes a deviation from the original Polish sentence on the syntactic level. The strictly literal version would be 'Don't turn me (the) guitar'. Example (28) is noteworthy since the Polish pronoun in the dative is rendered nominative in Ponglish to the disadvantage of strict literal translation, such as 'What does it run you about?', for example. Perhaps the strictly literal translations sounded "too Polish" and not acceptable to the speakers, so the decision was made in favor of a phrase that sounds more correct in English. The last example is not the result of a literal translation either, because *poszły* does not mean 'let's go' but 'they went'; so the whole sentence, translated literally, would be 'the horses have walked over the (wet) cement' rather than solid concrete, meaning that something irreversible has occurred. A possible explanation is that the imperative construction has a more expressive effect than the present perfect construction, so the sentence was changed for the benefit of expressiveness.

2.3. Invention of New Words by (Partial) Literal Translation

So far, almost without exception, the words that are used in Ponglish expressions exist in English, but some inventions of new words can be found in the corpus as well. Among them are three place names, which have a kind of special status and are as such interesting insofar as proper names are mostly untranslatable (cf. Newmark 2004). However, this fact is not an obstacle to speakers of Ponglish, who simply di-

⁹ Example (28) can serve as a hint at high proficiency in English because it shows that the speakers of Ponglish are able to place the preposition correctly at the end in a question.

vide up recognizable or understandable parts of the word and translate them accordingly.¹⁰

- (30) Ponglish: *Beeftown*
 Polish original: *Wołomin*
- (31) Ponglish: *Boat City*
 Polish original: *Łódź*
- (32) Ponglish: *Oftenhide*
 Polish original: *Częstochowa*¹¹

In example (30), the similarity of *Wołomin* with *wołowina* 'beef' is used to translate the first part of the proper name. The second part *-in*, a common Polish suffix for place names (cf. *Konin*, *Ślesin*, *Jarocin*, etc.) is simply replaced by 'town' to mark the word as a place name. Similarly, *Łódź*, which literally means 'boat', is translated as such and given the additional element 'city'.

The last example is rather different, because both parts of the place name are translated and no place-name marker is added: *często* means 'often' and *-chowa* is understood synchronically as the third-person singular present form of *chować* 'to hide'.¹²

In addition to place names, there are two other compounds which have been created through literal translation:

¹⁰ The fact that place names are usually very old and originally meant something completely different is not considered here, since they are translated as they are understood synchronically.

¹¹ Translations in the other direction, i.e., from English into Polish, are a rare exception. Only two examples of this phenomenon (which also refer to place names) can be found in the corpus. Firstly, *Liverpool* is translated as *Wątrobowo*: *Wątroba* means 'liver', 'pool' is not translated literally but replaced by another Polish suffix for place names, *-owo* (cf. *Gniewkowo*, *Wejherowo*, *Działdowo*, etc. In colloquial Polish, the forms *Londynkowo*, *Berlinkowo*, and *Paryżowo* also exist). One source additionally mentions the translation of 'Glasgow' as *Szkoło poszło*, which literally means 'glass went'. This other direction of the translation is not broached in *Błasiak 2011* and only plays a minor role in Ponglish.

¹² Another proper name from the corpus, although not a place name, is the *Łódź* football team *Widzew Łódź*, which is somewhat clumsily translated as 'I see in boat' (i.e., as *widzę w Łódź*).

- (33) Ponglish: *undertowel*
 Polish original: *podręcznik*
 Meaning: 'manual; textbook'
- (34) Ponglish: *behind-eyes student*
 Polish original: *student zaoczny*
 Meaning: 'distance learning student'

The first Ponglish compound consists of the two elements 'under' and 'towel', translated from Polish *pod* and *ręcznik*. The same happens to the word *zaoczny* in example (34), which is interpreted as composed of the morphemes *za* 'behind' and *oczny* 'optic, eye-' and thus leads to the translation 'behind-eyes'. Furthermore, two new verbs are created:

- (35) Ponglish: *to underpepper*
 Polish original: *podpieprzyć* (fam., vulg.)
 Meaning: 'to steal'
- (36) Ponglish: *I got oaken.*
 Polish original: *Zdębiałem.*
 Meaning: 'I was dumbfounded.'

Example (36) is an interesting and creative example as it incorrectly interprets the Polish verb *zdębieć* (actually 'to puzzle, dumbfound') as a derivation of the noun *dąb* 'oak' (cf. also *dębowy* 'made from oak wood, oak-') and translates it as such, notwithstanding the fact that the verb 'to oak' does not exist in standard English.

2.4. Literal Translations Based on Polish Historical-Morphological Orthography

The most significant aspect of the last group of literal translations from Polish is that orthography is deliberately disregarded. Because of its historical-morphological orthography, the Polish language possesses many words with identical pronunciation but a different spelling and different meanings. The examples from the corpus are:

- (37) Ponglish: *to be sea*
 Polish original: *być może*
 Meaning: 'maybe'

- (38) Ponglish: *Don't boat yourself.*
 Polish original: *Nie łudź się.*
 Meaning: 'Don't fool yourself.'
- (39) Ponglish: *I tower you.*
 Polish original: *Wierzę ci.*
 Meaning: 'I believe you.'

The crucial differences of meaning that derive from different spelling in these examples are: *może* 'maybe' and *morze* 'sea', both pronounced /mɔzɛ/; *łudź* (imperative form of *łudzić* 'to fool, delude') and *łódź* 'boat', both pronounced /wudz/. To understand example (39) it is necessary to know that *wierz-* in *wierzyć* 'to believe' is pronounced /vjɛz/ just like *wież-* in *wieża* 'tower'; *wieże*, pronounced the same way as *wierzę*, the accusative form.

3. Recapitulatory Analysis

In analyzing the small corpus of Ponglish words and phrases that can all be described as witty and creative literal translations from Polish into English, four different groups can be identified.

- Constructions where a newly created Ponglish phrase is based on a homonym that is translated incorrectly.
- Idiomatic phraseological units whose meaning does not transferred to English because they are translated literally.
- Cases where new English words are invented on the basis of a Polish word.
- Constructions where the orthography is neglected, leading to "false" translations.

In addition to classifying the above examples, one should ask what else they tell us about the characteristics of these Ponglish calques.

Concerning the question of which linguistic levels are affected by Ponglish (in the sense that the rules of English grammar are not observed), it should be noted that Ponglish has morphosyntactic elements that do not exist in standard English. In regard to examples (11) and (39)—*I'll animal you* and *I tower you*—it is unusual for an English sentence to include an indirect object without including a direct object.

In such cases the Ponglish sentences are morphosyntactic calques of the English sentences. Sometimes the English article system is also affected, such as in the omission of the article under the influence of the article-less Polish language, as in (7) *I feel train to you*.

Furthermore, the examples also serve to illustrate how strictly the speakers adhere to the principle of literal translation when they create a humorous calque in Ponglish. Basically, the principle is upheld rather strictly, but with some exceptions. Example (28) *What are you running about?* deviates from the model morphosyntactically by rendering a dative as a nominative pronoun. Similarly, in (27) *Don't turn my guitar*, a personal pronoun in the dative is rendered a possessive pronoun in the accusative. Example (3), *Denmark from chicken* involves a small inaccuracy on the phonetic level because of the slight difference in pronunciation between *Dania* and *dania*. The greatest degree of variation can be found in example (29) *Let's go horses on the beton* (*beton* referring to wet concrete), where heightened expressiveness was considered as a possible explanation.

The use of a definite or indefinite article in the Ponglish phrases is also subject to variation. Sometimes the rule of literal translation is taken so strictly that the article is omitted in Ponglish, thereby breaking the rules of English grammar, as in the already mentioned example (7). In the majority of cases, however, the article is inserted, as in (19), *coffee on the table*, or (25), *Don't make a village*. Hence deviation from strict literal translation is possible and does exist in a couple of cases, but on the whole it can be considered an exception.

Notwithstanding a more or less strict approach to literal translation, the data clearly show how creative and imaginative speakers can be with language. However, this finding also raises an important further question: What is the motivation for the creation of the humorous calques in Ponglish? Here, a look at the findings of contact linguistic research can be helpful. The two most frequently mentioned motivations for borrowing are need and prestige (see Winford 2006: 27). Need does not seem to be the decisive motivation here; all the literally translated phrases have a standard Polish equivalent which could equally well be used instead, and with much less effort. Prestige seems to be the more likely incentive here, in the sense that the creation and use of humorous calques can contribute to the prestige of the speaker within the group and to the cohesion of the group as a whole. Accordingly, the German linguist Karl Sornig, who analyzes analogous humorous calques in Austrian German (e.g., *life cake* for *Lebkuchen* 'gingerbread') calls them

"satirical" and "home-made prestige words" (Sornig 2000: 141), more correctly "prestige phrases." What we are not dealing with here is, as Sornig mentions elsewhere, "disguised infiltration" (Sornig 2000: 143), i.e., the non-deliberate transfer of English phrases into another language, in the present case Polish. This is happening more and more frequently in German, where, for example, the original standard German phrase *etwas ergibt Sinn* (literally 'something gives sense') has almost completely cleared the way for the literal translation from English *etwas macht Sinn* ('something makes sense'). By contrast, the creation of these humorous Ponglish calques is deliberate and has something very playful about it, and it displays numerous parallels with language games. Lefkowitz (1991: 38) describes these as "a deliberate manipulation of language" with "individual variability and innovation." The calques in Ponglish fulfill many of the functions mentioned by Lefkowitz, among which the most important are amusement, entertainment, and gaining prestige within the peer group.

4. Conclusion and Future Prospects

Although humorous calques are just one of many striking features of Ponglish, they constitute an important aspect of this mixed variety which appears not to have sparked the interest of linguists to date. Hopefully, this gap has begun to narrow. Ponglish literal translations are intriguing not least due to their creative value and the large variety of examples that have appeared over the past decade. An interesting starting point for further research would be to compare the findings about humorous calques in Ponglish with similar phenomena in comparable mixed codes, since this question cannot be addressed in the context of the present article. However, a cursory glance at Spanglish shows that Spanglish literal translations work the other way round, meaning English phrases are borrowed into Spanish as in the following examples from Sánchez 2008 (35): Spanglish *llamar pa'atras* is literally translated from English *to call back* instead of using the standard Spanish phrase *volver a llamar*; the same is true for *tener un buen tiempo*, translated from English *to have a good time* and meaning in standard Spanish *divertirse*. Consequently, there is a significant difference between Ponglish and Spanglish in this respect. Fischer (1993: 258) presents a collection of syntactic calques in the speech of Czech immigrants in Vienna, such as *voní to po růžích/na růže* 'it smells like roses' instead of the standard Czech version with an instrumental *voní*

to *růżemi*. However, in spite of the visible parallels with the Ponglish calques, the latter lack the humorous element. Other mixed varieties similar to Ponglish are yet to be investigated and compared in detail. Błasiak (2011: 87) suggests *czenglish*, *franglais*, *singlish*, and *język poluski*, the Polish-English mixed code in the USA, are all worth researching.

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