

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF SECURITY IN SKOPJE REGARDING THE MEANING OF THE ANGLICISM *ВЕТУИЊ* (*VETTING*) WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SECURITY

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## Abstract:

Over the last few years, the Anglicism *ветуињ* (*vetting*) has increasingly been used in Macedonian media, but also in official documents, texts, and statements by official persons. Taking into consideration the fact that, inter alia, *ветуињ* (*vetting*) is used in the context of law enforcement and security institutions, we attempted to assess the level of familiarity with this concept of persons who are educated for working in these fields. To achieve this goal, we conducted a research with the students from the Faculty of Security in Skopje, and the results are presented and discussed in this paper. Our initial assumption was that the students follow the latest practices in their prospective profession and are acquainted with the meaning of *ветуињ* (*vetting*). The research results presented and discussed in this paper, will also give answers about the possible reconsideration and modification of the English language syllabus and its adaptation to the real needs of the students.

**Key words:** *ветуињ* (*vetting*), *Anglicism*, *meaning*, *security*, *law enforcement*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Evolution is an inevitable feature of all living languages. It necessarily implies certain level of a language change motivated by external and internal factors. The external factors for a language change encompass language contact which occurs when two or more languages “touch” one another mainly through interaction between their speakers. Such contact creates conditions for influence. The languages either influence each other mutually or one of the languages imposes itself as dominant in the interaction.

Usually, languages influence one another lexically, i.e. by penetration of words from the source language to the recipient language. In the recipient (target) language, these words acquire the status of lexical borrowings, which can also be referred to as *borrowings*. A *borrowing* may be defined as “a linguistic form taken over by one language or dialect from another” (Crystal,

2008:58), while the whole process, called *lexical borrowing*, means “the adoption of individual words or even large sets of vocabulary items from another language or dialect” (Hock, 1991:380).

There are many reasons for borrowing words from other languages, but the two most important ones seem to be the following:

- *The need for naming new concepts*

The need for naming new concepts is a natural process that goes hand in hand with the evolution of a language. It follows the advances in the fields of technology, science and other domains of human life. This mainly refers to concepts that are derived from a certain culture, and are lexically shaped in the language spoken by members of the respective culture, so when introducing the concepts into other languages new lexical solutions for them should also be worked out.

This is mainly achieved in two ways:

- a) By coining new words based on the paradigms for word formation specific for the given language; or
- b) By copying (taking over) the lexical solution from the language that has initially lexicalized the notion, or from the language that has a stronger influence on the target language.

Although in many countries considerable efforts are being made for maintaining the so-called language purism that will “guard” their languages against external lexical influences by adopting the first approach mentioned above, practice shows that in many languages the speakers are much more easily inclined towards using the word from the language where the new concept has originally been lexicalized. Taking into consideration the fact that the English language is “the mother tongue of some of the most advanced societies and developed economies” (Rosenhouse & Kowner, 2008:13), it is logical that to a great extent for naming new concepts speakers of other languages tend to borrow lexical items from English. These lexical items in the target languages acquire the status of Anglicisms. Such practice, inter alia, prevails among speakers of Macedonian, which results in an increasing influx of Anglicisms in various areas of human life, including security – the area we are focused on in this paper.

- *The prestige associated with the “dominant” language and cultural community*

In many cases, the speakers of a language insert words from other languages for naming concepts that have already been lexicalized in the “recipient language”. There is no justified need for such practice. The speakers voluntarily decide to name concepts from their everyday life with words from other languages instead of relying on the lexical repertoire of their native language, and such practice mainly refers to words that they are often exposed to through the media, social networks etc. This leads to the so called “cultural imitation of entire dominant groups” (ibid), i.e. of the speakers of the dominant language from where the lexical solutions are taken. The use of the language of the dominant group is identified with the prestige it enjoys, which enables the speakers of the recipient language to feel more superior, valuable, and “prestigious” compared to the other speakers of their language. In the past, this status of a prestigious language was enjoyed by Latin and French, but today English is considered the most prestigious one. It enjoys this status among native speakers of Macedonian as well.

Once they have entered the recipient language, lexical borrowings go through the process of adaptation to its phonetic and morphological system. The borrowings are also adapted

semantically. They may replicate the meaning from the original language, but they may also enter the recipient language with a limited meaning (this process is called semantic narrowing), they may keep the meaning from the original language and add other meanings to the original meaning (this process is called semantic broadening), or in some cases they may even shift their meaning in the target language.

## 2. VETTING/ ВЕТУНГ (VETING) – NOTION AND USE

The Anglicism *ветунг* (*vetting*) comes from the English word *vetting*. In English, *vetting* is derived from the verb *vet* and is broadly defined as 1) the process of carefully and critically examining something<sup>1</sup>. In a narrower sense, *vetting* refers to 1.1) the process of investigating someone thoroughly, especially in order to ensure that they are suitable for a job requiring secrecy, loyalty, or trustworthiness.”<sup>2</sup>

Such procedure of detailed pre-employment check on persons may be carried out in public institutions as well as private companies. The process of checking the eligibility of persons prior to their employment in certain companies, corporations, services, etc. in English is also referred to as *background investigation*. It denotes investigation of one’s personal history, i.e. one’s past, and on the basis of the findings determining the eligibility of a candidate for a specific job position. This term is synonymously used with *vetting* (Dempsey, 2011:240), and the investigations can refer to a wide range of professions. They can be carried out by private investigators, companies/firms specialized in this field or by the companies’ own personnel (ibid: 243), with the goal “to screen out dishonest or disreputable people” (ibid).

*Vetting* has particularly been used in transitional and post-conflict countries, mainly within the context of personnel reform in their public institutions. According to the United Nations’ publication “Rule-of-Law Tools for Post-Conflict States - Vetting: an operational framework” (2006:4), *vetting* is defined as “assessing integrity to determine suitability for public employment”, while the report of UN General Secretary entitled “The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies” states that within the context of countries from this category “vetting usually entails a formal process for the identification and removal of individuals responsible for abuses, especially from police, prison services, the army, and the judiciary” (2004:18). This practically means that the process of careful examination and investigation is primarily aimed at persons holding sensitive job positions, mainly in public, state institutions like the judiciary, police, etc.

These definitions imply that the core value subjected to this assessment process is integrity, i.e. the “quality of being honest and morally upright” (Hornby, 1989:652), with the aim to reject people “behaving or prone to behave in an untrustworthy, deceitful, or insincere way”<sup>3</sup> or persons “not considered to be respectable in character or appearance.”<sup>4</sup>

From the arguments presented above, one may conclude that the English term *vetting* refers to a complex notion which can be used both within broader and narrow contexts, depending on the specific situation the process it denotes applies to. In a broader sense, this process may be applied to a wide range of professions, in the public or private sector, and its implementation will probably depend on the employer’s policy, financial and human resources etc. However, there are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vetting>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dishonest>

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/disreputable>

sectors where this process is mandatory, particularly in public institutions, and the issue is regulated by law. There are countries which have adopted vetting laws, such as Albania where the vetting of the judges and prosecutors started in 2016 with the objectives of “strengthening professionalism across the sector, eradicating corruption, consolidating independence and impartiality and, ultimately, rebuilding public confidence in the judiciary”, according to a European Commission Report (2018:17).

The concept of vetting has recently become a topical issue in Macedonian public life following the announcements of relevant authorities regarding the introduction of vetting procedures in certain public institutions. More precisely, the emphasis has been put on the preparation of a vetting law and the commencement of a vetting process in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). According to the statements of the official representatives of the Macedonian Ministry of Interior, the vetting process of the MoI personnel will be implemented at three levels:

- The personal files of the employees (education, diplomas, etc.)
- The property status of the employees (from the moment of their employment), and
- The integrity of the employees (the positions they have hold in the Ministry, evaluation of their work, their behavior towards citizens and other employees etc.)<sup>5</sup>

The Anglicism *вeтунг* (*vetting*) can be found in a number of articles in Macedonian media published in the last few years. In their statements, oral reports and written texts, both official persons and journalists use the Anglicism *вeтунг* (*vetting*) as a Macedonian “equivalent” of the original English word *vetting*. As we can see from its spelling, the Anglicism *вeтунг* (*vetting*) has initially adapted to the Macedonian orthographic system (*vetting* → *вeтунг* (*veting*)). It has also adapted from a morphological aspect (*вeтунг* (*vetting*) → *вeтунгот* (*vetingot*)). However, in terms of its semantic adaptation, if we compare the definitions and the elaboration given above with the context in which it has entered the Macedonian lexical corpus, we can say that at the moment *вeтунг* (*vetting*) is being used in a semantically narrowed form. In most cases it is limited to the contexts of law enforcement and security, but there are also texts and articles addressing this issue in the context of the judiciary as well.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration the fact that the Anglicism *вeтунг* (*vetting*) has primarily been used in the context of law enforcement, within the wider context of security, we decided to carry out a research aimed at assessing the familiarity of the students from the Faculty of Security in Skopje with the meaning of this Anglicism. As future professionals who will work in these areas, we thought that they should be acquainted with the newly coined vocabulary relevant to their field of study.

For the purpose of this research we designed a questionnaire with a single question: *How do you understand the term вeтунг (vetting)?*

In addition, we inserted the following two headlines from Macedonian media articles containing the word *вeтунг* (*vetting*), to illustrate the practical use of the term in context:

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<sup>5</sup> Speech by Mr. Oliver Spasovski, Minister of Interior Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, source: Stenographic notes from the 82th Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 31.01.2019, 82-00/16, available at: <https://cms.sobranie.mk/sessiondetails.nsp?sessionDetailsId=2c8fe39e-ea75-46be-a35e-128ef38006c7&date=31.1.2019>

- „МВР ќе чисти во своите редови- со ветинг до професионални полицајци“ (“*MoI to Purge their Ranks – with Ветинг (Veting) to Professional Police Officers*”)<sup>6</sup>
- „,,Ветинг“ во МВР: Ќе се чешлаат сите – од чистачка до министер (“*“Ветинг (Veting)” in MoI: Combing through Everyone – from Cleaning Lady to the Minister*”)<sup>7</sup>

Our hypothesis was that despite being a relatively new term, the students would be able to guess the meaning of *ветинг (veting)*, since they were not given the word in isolation, but in a specific context, as it can be encountered in Macedonian media. The questionnaire was distributed to 72 first cycle students who attend or have already attended English classes. The results were processed, and the findings and the conclusions will be elaborated on in the sections that follow.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research was based on a questionnaire that consisted of one open-ended question, which accounts for the heterogeneity of the answers. Such questions are a good choice from the aspect of the students’ creativity when expressing their views. However, the drawbacks of open-ended questions lay in the challenges of classifying the obtained answers, due to their versatility. Bearing this in mind, we decided to group the answers into 4 broader groups, based on the criteria explained below:

##### Group 1: **Acceptable answers**

In this group we included the answers that contained the following semantic features: a) check, and b) eligibility for a job position

##### Group 2: **Partially acceptable answers**

This group includes the answers that contain one of the semantic features listed above, or some other elements encompassed by the meaning of *ветинг (vetting)*.

##### Group 3: **Unacceptable answers**

Here, we included the answers that do not contain any of the two semantic features, as well as the incomprehensible/ambiguous answers.

##### Group 4: **“I don’t know”**

In this group we included the answer “I don’t know” and its synonyms.

**Table 1. Distribution of obtained answers**

	Number	Percentage
Acceptable answers	5	6.9 %
Partially acceptable answers	34	47.2 %
Unacceptable answers	10	13.9%
“I don’t know”	23	31.9%

As we can see from the obtained data, the majority of the students (51.4%) gave answers that could be counted as acceptable and partially acceptable. In other words, more than half of the students are able to recognize some of the semantic features encompassed by the notion of the Anglicism *ветинг (vetting)*. However, the very fact that only 6.9% of the students are able to

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://novatv.mk/mvr-ke-chisti-vo-svoite-redovi-so-veting-do-profesionalni-politsajtsi/>, Nova TV, 2.10.2018

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://kanal5.com.mk/videos/361286/-veting-vo-mvr-kje-se-cheshlaat-site-od-chistachka-do-minister>

recognize the key semantic elements that shape the concept of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) is a strong indicator that they have not yet mastered the meaning and the context of use of this word. This can be justified to a certain extent, taking into consideration the fact that *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) is not being widely used by speakers of Macedonian. However, we assumed that the very presence of the verb *comb through* in one of the headlines given in the questionnaire would make it easier for them to grasp the meaning of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*), considering the fact that *comb through* figuratively means “screen a field thoroughly, examine printed or other material, search something” (Конески et al. 2014:364). In the other example, the verb *purge* was used in a figurative sense, meaning “remove, free from something” (ibid: 371), but obviously the examples did not lead the students to a more profound understanding of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*). Among the answers that were considered acceptable, we will single out the answer “*Evaluation of MoI employees in terms of how much they meet the requirements for working in the ministry, i.e. how efficient they are in their work thus far, and accordingly, imposition of sanctions against anyone failing to meet the requirements.*”, where the key elements of the notion *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) are clearly outlined, and we will also mention “*The term ветуиџ (vetting) implies checking the employees, whether they have been employed regularly, without manipulations, and whether everyone is working correctly and responsibly.*” as a good example of accurate understanding of the term.

On the other hand, almost half of the students who participated in the research (47.2%) gave partially acceptable answers. Most of them were able to single out *check* as the key bearer of meaning that *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) conveys. Some students also used other words that can be counted as its synonyms, like *analyze, examine, investigate, evaluate*, etc. In some cases, this was the only information they provided, without going into detail about the types of *checks, examinations, evaluations*, etc. like in the statements “*Checking the staff*”, “*To analyse, examine, remove something*”, “*Detailed examination and checking*”, etc. Although these students failed to explain the elements that constitute this checking process, we decided to count these answers as partially acceptable, since they have obviously grasped the very general aspect of the meaning of this concept.

There are also students who guessed some of the aspects addressed in the vetting process, but failed to explain its aim, like, for instance, in the statement “*The term ветуиџ (vetting) represents the checking of something. e.g. checking one’s professionalism.*” Other students were able to explain the aims of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*), but focused only on one aspect, for instance the qualifications of the personnel, like in “*Purging i.e. firing of those employees who do not have the adequate qualifications for the performance of the function to which they have been appointed.*” Qualifications of personnel are related to their education, which is only one aspect of the vetting process, which is the reason why such answers could not be considered fully acceptable.

Also, we noticed that some students knew the aims of the process but did not explain how they would be achieved. This was noticed in some answers such as “*The term ветуиџ (vetting) means purging, renewing, employing new staff in all administrations linked to MoI*”. Another such example is “*The term ветуиџ (vetting) means firing from work of all employees who have performed their job unprofessionally*”, where the emphasis is put on firing the employees on the grounds of their unprofessionalism, without the explanation of the steps that will be taken for achieving this goal.

However, the very fact that the number of students from this category (34) was higher than the number of students who provided a more detailed definition of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) (5) is a clear indicator that the term *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) should be given greater attention not also in the English classes, but also in the other subjects taught at the Faculty of Security.

As far as the unacceptable answers are concerned, it can be noticed that in some cases the students mistakenly took the Macedonian verb *ветува* (*vetuva*) (*to promise*) as the root of the Anglicism *ветуиџ* (*vetting*), thus inferring that *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) is related to promising something. In other cases, the answers were too general. Thus, for example, the statement “*Ветуиџ (Vetting) is used in a given situation and explains it*” does not give us any details about the situation in question, and the type of explanation related to it. Similarly, in the answer “*Ветуиџ (Vetting) means that everybody is held liable for their work.*”, neither the liability nor the method for establishing that liability is explained more specifically. Thus, for instance, it may be established through a regular evaluation, not through vetting, in a manner explained in the official definitions of the term.

Eventually, we will single out the sentence “*Controlling the performance of the work within a particular institution.*”, which focuses on the work in an institution and the control related to it, but the word *control* used in this context more specifically refers to overseeing the work of an institution, while *check* is related to examination, making sure that something is correct, suitable, of good quality, etc. On the contrary, the use of *control* in the answer “*Ветуиџ (Vetting) implies controlling the employees in order to see whether they meet the job requirements*”, does not point to overseeing/supervising the employees’ work, but checking whether the work conditions have been met, which accounts for classifying this answer as partially acceptable.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the answers presented and elaborated on in the sections above, a conclusion can be drawn that in a general sense our hypothesis was confirmed, since the majority of the students provided a definition of *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) that can be counted as acceptable to a certain degree. However, the fact that most of these answers are only partially acceptable points to the necessity of putting a greater emphasis on the term *ветуиџ* (*vetting*) in the English classroom. By doing so, the students will have an opportunity to become better acquainted with the professional terminology in the areas of law enforcement and security as a necessary prerequisite for successful completion of the tasks related to the profession for which they are being educated.

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### Appendix 1. List with the obtained answers<sup>8</sup>

No.	Answer	Acceptable answer	Partially acceptable	Unacceptable answer	“I don’t know”
1	Checking, combing through and rejecting anyone who fails to meet the requirements for filling a particular position.	X			
8	Evaluation of MoI employees in terms of how much they meet the requirements for working in the ministry, i.e. how efficient they are in their work thus far, and accordingly, imposition of sanctions against anyone failing to meet the requirements.	X			
43	The term <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) means checking the employees’ files, the grounds on which they had been given the job. <i>Ветинг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) means a process of checking the employees, i.e. checking their knowledge and skills.	X			

<sup>8</sup> Considering the fact that in some answers we noticed some grammar and spelling mistakes, when inserting the answers in the table certain corrections were made, adapting them in terms of their form, but keeping their meanings from the original sentences.



45	The term <i>ветунг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) implies checking the employees, whether they have been employed regularly, without manipulations, and whether everyone is working correctly and responsibly.	X			
48	To check the staff whether they are competent and whether they have the necessary qualifications.	X			
17	The term <i>ветунг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) represents the purging of the ranks of a particular institution, i.e. removal of individuals who were employed with the institution unlawfully, by having provided false documents for their educations, etc.		X		
2	Selection/sorting according to a particular requirement.		X		
3	<i>Ветунг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) is the testing of one's capacities before offering them the job or checking [the capacities of] the people already employed.		X		
4	The term <i>ветунг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) means purging, renewing, employing new staff in all administrations linked to MoI.		X		
6	<i>Ветунг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) implies controlling the employees in order to see whether they meet the job requirements.		X		
7	To analyse, examine, remove something.		X		
9	Examining or checking the capacities of a person for the purpose of their evaluation.		X		
10	The term <i>ветунг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ), in my opinion, means to see whether people are qualified and ready for the job.		X		
11	<i>Ветунг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) is the investigation into institution's employees, whether all employees have been employed pursuant to their qualifications, whether they have been adequately employed with that institution.		X		
12	<i>Ветунг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) represents a method that is mostly used by internal control to "comb through" (check) the professionalism and qualifications of the employees. This method contributes to a better performance.		X		
15	Checking the capacities and the qualifications of employees in order to achieve greater professionalism within the ranks of the institutions.		X		
19	Purging i.e. firing of those employees who don't have the adequate qualifications for the performance of the function to which they have been appointed.		X		
21	I don't know the exact meaning of the word, but I understand it as checking, acquiring detailed knowledge of all information related to something/someone.		X		
22	<i>Ветунг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ), in my opinion, means that an investigation will be carried out into the entire MoI staff. The investigation is carried out in order to establish the irregularities with employments.		X		

23	The term <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) means firing from work of all employees who have performed their job unprofessionally.		X		
24	<i>Ветинг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) means to check everyone.		X		
26	The term <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) represents the checking of something. E.g. checking one's professionalism.		X		
27	<i>Ветинг</i> ( <i>Vetting</i> ) represents checking, in these cases, checking the professional police officers and checking the MoI employees.		X		
29	The word <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) represents re-examination of employment [labour relations].		X		
30	The word <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ), to me, means to check the MoI employees' property that they had acquired during their employment [labour relations].		X		
31	Purging, analysing.		X		
34	Checking the staff.		X		
35	Thoroughly investigating a person or learning information about something.		X		
36	Checking.		X		
37	In my opinion, it represents the purging of security services with the purpose of removing the unprofessional staff from the security institutions. Macedonia needs <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ).		X		
38	Considering that I have heard of it on television, I understand the concept of <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) as a system of controlling the employees of a particular sector, i.e. checking one's material and property status.		X		
39	Detailed examination and checking.		X		
40	In institutions where a particular number of people are employed, an investigation is carried out, examination of everyone.		X		
41	The term <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) means checking of the performance of [public] servants, of their knowledge and education, and of the area where they worked.		X		
42	The word <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) means purging.		X		
44	Checking the staff.		X		
47	The concept of <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ) implies a system of controlling the employees of a particular sector (checking of property and material benefits).		X		
49	The term <i>ветинг</i> ( <i>vetting</i> ), I believe, means a form of organising, purging, combing through (I mean, thinning out the ones who have been appointed to high positions). Introducing an order, responsibility pursuant to high standards.		X		
5	Checking the external intelligence officers within an institution who may jeopardise the security.			X	

13	<i>Вемунг (Vetting)</i> is used in a given situation and explains it.			X	
14	Controlling the performance of the work within a particular institution.			X	
16	Detailed investigation into something, so as to make it suitable for further procedure. Investigation at root.			X	
20	<i>Вемунг (Vetting)</i> – warning.			X	
25	Seeking qualified staff for a particular position/title.			X	
28	<i>Вемунг (Vetting)</i> means that everybody is held liable for their work.			X	
32	The term <i>вемунг (vetting)</i> means promising or undertaking an obligation by a competent authority or a competent person to perform or examine issues of their scope of work for the purpose of improving or examining the current factual situation.			X	
46	<i>Вемунг (Vetting)</i> includes the judges of the administrative court, of the supreme court, of the constitutional court, etc. <i>Вемунг (Vetting)</i> represents the promise of judges that they will be impartial in their decisions.			X	
64	I don't know, maybe corruption.			X	
33	I have heard of the term <i>вемунг (vetting)</i> on a number of occasions, but I don't know what it means.				X
50	I don't know. / I'm not familiar with this word. / I don't understand the word, etc.				X