

ANGLICISMS IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE: LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

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The primary objective of this article is to observe the phenomenon of “anglicism” in the French language and to study the causes and the reasons for the frequent use of English borrowings. English, as an international language, influences French strongly despite the efforts of French purists to protect their language from it. This article describes and analyses the influence of the English language on the French language. It addresses the notion of *franglais* as a social phenomenon in French that can be observed at different levels of life. Borrowings from English, or anglicisms, represent one of the most important types of semantic neologisms in the French language. There are six types of anglicisms in French: semantic, lexical, syntactic, morphological, phonetic and graphical. The repeated use of borrowings in French results in the modification of their semantic structure according to the peculiarities and needs of the French language. Anglicisms in French acquire different shades of meaning. The most frequent English borrowings have the suffix *-ing* like *shopping* or *camping*. The English suffixes *-are* and *-al* have been transformed into the French suffixes *-aire*, *-eur*, *-el*, which are more typical for the French language. Many popular English words are used in the business sphere, not only in France but all over the world (*brainstorming*; *mainstream*; *process*; *workshop*; *bullet points*; *burnout*; *conference call*; *desk*; *one-to-one*). Language policy in France, with its main representative the Académie française, tries to control the redundant use of English words in this era of globalisation.

Keywords: anglicism; *franglais*; borrowings; semantics; equivalent; meaning; language politics.

Introduction

Today it is impossible to imagine a French conversation without words like “business”, “shopping” or “Wi-Fi”. Nevertheless, the way these words have appeared in the Dictionary of French language is very long and debated. According to a study written by Médiaprim and published in the well-known French newspaper *Le Parisien*, almost 90 per cent of French people use a lot of English words in their everyday life, that is to say, speak *franglais* every day (Delvaux, 2016). This term, “*franglais*”, which means the mixing of English and French, appeared in 1959, and is still used as the principal term that covers this linguistic and social phenomenon.

Most French linguists are persuaded that it is possible to find an equivalent to English words in the “language of Molière” and thus avoid using English in conversation. Discussions started long ago and have been continuing with a great deal of passion. The use of English borrowings in the French language was the key issue in the works of researchers such as Guilbert (1975), Pergnier (1988), Lenoble-Pinson (1991), Picone (1996), Bulley (2005), Stuart (2006), Bogaards (2008), Planchon (2017) and many others. Most of their works focus on the sources of anglicisms, spheres of use and different grammatical, semantic and phonetic transformations. Apart from that, attention should be paid to the social aspect of this problem in terms of globalisation.

So, the *purpose* of our research is to describe and analyse the phenomena of “anglicism” in French and determine the principal reasons for the use of English borrowings and their impact on the development of the French language.

In order to clearly envisage the issue of anglicisms in French we used some traditional methods such as qualitative and quantitative analysis to get some data about the percentage of French people who use anglicisms; the number of English words in French, etc.; some forms of discourse analysis to analyse the use of anglicisms in some concrete contexts; a linguistic ethnographic method to study the cultural and social context of problematics and others.

English borrowings are called “anglicisms”, the word that is commonly used in French mass media. However, the term “anglicism” is used in two quite different ways. Firstly, this term means a word that is in English (*Le Petit Larousse*, *Le Petit Robert*). Secondly, it’s a borrowing from English (*Le Petit Robert*).

Most British and American dictionaries define Anglicism as noun – an English word or phrase that is used in another language: “Le week-end” is an Anglicism used by the French. The Collins dictionary, however, as well as the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, contains three different definitions of Anglicism: 1. A word, phrase, or idiom peculiar to the English language, especially as spoken in England; 2. An English attitude, custom, etc. 3. The fact or quality of being English (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2014).

The authors of *Le Petit Robert Dictionary* divide English words into two groups: the words that have been properly integrated into the French language (such as *rail*, *tunnel*); and the new words that are badly

integrated into French (Le Petit Robert, 2016). Those that are badly integrated are called anglicisms, but they are still commonly used in French speech (*crash test*, *addiction* and so on).

The romanist Hofler (1982) comments in his “Dictionnaire des anglicismes”, explains that he included only those words that are full borrowings in terms of grammatical, semantic, and phonetic adaptation. He gives his own classifications of anglicisms: words that are fully borrowed (*jazz*, *test*); anglo-latinisms (*supporteur*); not-real anglicisms, the words that don't have a real model of adaptation (*curry*, *tandem*). The matter of the appearance and adaptation of anglicisms in French is always very problematic because of the unbending attitude of French linguists known as purists (p.20).

According to Boudreau (1999) as cited in Fortin (2009) there are six types of anglicisms in French:

Semantic Anglicism (a word used in the French language where the original meaning has been kept or a different evolution has been realised over time where the meaning differs to some extent);

Lexical Anglicism (a word or an expression that has been borrowed either exactly as it is in English or with some minor adjustments);

Syntactic Anglicism (the “calque” of an English construction);

Morphological Anglicism (a rare borrowing which refers to when the form is borrowed but the meaning in French has a totally different meaning from the English one);

Phonetic Anglicism (when the pronunciation is borrowed);

Graphical Anglicism (a word written in a similar form to the English one or a word that does not follow the rule from the French language such as punctuation and type of abbreviation (ex.: *pm*, *blvd*) (Fortin, 2009).

The majority of the anglicisms belong to categories of lexical (80 %) and semantic (14 %) borrowings, semantic and graphic represented 3,5 % and 2,5 % respectively (Tattersall, 2003).

Short Historical Survey Of The Problem

The Ordinance of Villers-Cotterets (1539) marked the beginning of making French as an official language. In 1549, the French poet J. du Bellay wrote *Défense et illustration de la langue française* that is considered to be a manifest of the poets of Pleiade.

The creation of the Académie française in 1635, an official institution that monitors and regulates its language, was the next step towards strengthening the position of the French language. This institute was established by Cardinal Richelieu and then re-established in 1803 by Napoleon Bonaparte with the mandate to “set down certain rules for our language, making it pure, eloquent and capable of dealing with arts and sciences”. The Academy published its first dictionary in 1694 and identified the proper pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar for the French language. It is one of the longest standing institutions in the world that deals with matters pertaining exclusively to the use of language. Also, the Académie Française is an institute that is charged with maintaining the purity of the French language. Over the course of its existence, members have included such notables as Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Louis Pasteur, as well as many others.

In 1964 an important book of René Étiemble *Parlez-vous français? (Do you speak Français?)* denouncing the increasing Anglicisation of the French language appeared (Etiemble, 1991).

In 1789, the French Revolution started and French was the sole official language. This Revolution is a good example of a national identity when such values as “liberté, égalité et fraternité” were cherished by the nation. French language policy during the Industrial revolution made English the greatest linguistic threat.

In 1794, French was alone the official language and was used for all official documents.

In 1882 the Law of Jules Ferry declared French as the exclusive language of different educational institutions. And since the 1950s, French authorities have promoted the French language and defended it against a huge number of English borrowings.

The constitution of the 5th Republic (1958) stated in the second article that the language of the Republic is French. This constitution strengthened the status of French as the national language.

There are four laws that reflect the language policy of France: 1951 – Law Deixonne; 1975 – Law Bas-Lauriol; 1992 – Law constitutional; 1994 – Law Toubon. These laws sought to establish the obligatory use of French in all matters. For instance, all information on the radio and television was to be in French.

The real language policy started in 1966 when a special committee was created to defend the French language and in 1973 it was named “High Committee of the French language”. Thirty-five years later, in 2011, it became “General delegation for the French language”. Today it is called “General delegation for the French language and the languages of France” (Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France, DGLFLF) and is a unit of the Ministry of Culture and Communication in France that leads the language policy of the French and different regional languages. The DGLF has worked and with a number of different Francophone institutions such as Académie française, Conseil Supérieur de la langue française,

Agence de la Francophonie and many others. The organisation has a lot of aims: encourage French-speaking organisations to set themselves up on the Internet; promote the use of information highways as a means of communication among French-speaking institutions; promote the quality of the French language used on the Internet; ensure the juridical legislation concerning the presence of French on the Internet (Tattersall, 2003).

Then two important laws have been established: the Law Bas-Lauriol (1975) and the Law Toubon (1994). In 1992 France made an effort to maintain a purely French national identity. The law of 1994 proclaimed French as a fundamental element of the personality and the property of France. The Law covers all aspects of work, education, research, public life, the media and advertising.

An interesting poll was taken by SOFRES for the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1995 asking people about the restrictions on borrowings (Tornier, 1998). Only 23 % of the people were for the idea of restrictions, and 71 % were against emphasising that the language should accept foreign words to enrich and develop French.

The Académie has been working many years on the idea of the purity of French. It is clear that the use of English words and the developing of *Franglais* were never accepted, much less promoted, by the representatives of this institute. The Académie has been strongly encouraging people to not use English words that can be easily changed into their French equivalents. For example, one of the most popular words “email” can be easily changed into French “courriel”, which is the combination of “courrier” and “électronique”. Even the most frequent prefixes that are used before most French adjectives like, “super-” and “hyper-” can be easily changed into “très” or “trop”. The ideas of the Academy are positively received by the French people except those cases where the restrictions are not logical or seem strange.

In 1998 Jacques Chirac signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that aims to protect and promote some languages used by minorities.

In 2011 the Academy created a new section on its website called “Dire, ne pas dire” that lists undesirable anglicisms.

Today the language policy is still active. Scientists and researchers discuss the importance of the French language and its purity. There are a lot of organisations that maintain and promote the French language. There are three global networks: the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (Francophone University Agency), the Alliances Françaises and the Instituts français. The Francophone University Agency (AUF) is the Francophonie’s institutional operator in the areas of higher education and research. Founded in Montreal in 1961, the AUF specialises in providing support for University Activity in French. The Alliance Française (AF) is today the largest cultural and associative network in the world. A huge number of people of all ages go there to learn French and take part in cultural activities in French. The Institut français (IF), a network represented in different countries, offers special courses in French as a Foreign Language (FFL), French for Specific Purposes (FSP) (business, tourism, law, medicine, science, international relations, etc.), preparation for language certification (DELFL, DALF and TCF but also Professional French Diplomas of the Paris Île-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry).

People pay attention to the increasing role of English in France today. The French president Emmanuel Macron uses English a lot, for example in his conferences on the European Union and in his tweets. This is a very important tendency which contrasts with positions of previous presidents. Jacques Chirac, for instance, protested in 2006 against some French delegates that addressed the audience in English.

Factors contributing to the use of English in French

In the 21st century, English has a very strong impact on other languages. But if we look at the historical record we can see that that was not always the case. During the period of the Norman invasions, that is to say the Norman Conquest, it was French that influenced English and other languages. In 1066 the Duke of Normandy, Willam, won the battle of Hastings and became the king of England. The Norman Kingdom was established and automatically Norman-French became a language of the English court, administration and culture. During the period of Middle English, French influenced the language on different linguistic levels. Many French words and idioms entered English and are still used. Especially a large number of words from the religious sphere, art and culture were borrowed. Grammar and pronunciation have also changed, for example, in favour of diphthongs.

Today, English is an international language that is used all over the world. English has become the language of communication, business, science, technology, aviation, television, music – and Anglicisms have entered many languages.

There are a lot of sources of English borrowings. First of all, France, as many other countries, experiences the intense political, economic and cultural influence of the USA. In the era of the internet, most all new gadgets and technologies have been created in the USA or Japan, which has spurred a huge number of new words.

Another important source is mass media. Sometimes, journalists use English words without translating them into French. They don't take enough time to properly work on the article, so they just use an English word without thinking of its future impact. In French advertisements, a lot of English words and phrases are used without translation. Even well-known French companies use English to make their advertisements more modern, for instance, "*Oasis is good*", "*vittelfun*" or "*Serial Cleaner*". Specifically: the well-known French car company, Renault, has in their advertisement the English phrase "French touch"; and the most popular French airline, Air France, has their slogan "France in the air".

Sometimes even the names of English films are not translated into French: e.g. "*Men in black*" or "*Monsters*". Even French producers name their films in English in order to attract attention of the young audience: "*Subway*" of Luc Besson, "*Forever Mozart*" by Jean-Luc Godard. The same tendency can be observed in the names of French books – "*People*" by Stephane Denis for example. Singers "catch" some new English words very quickly which leads to the addition of a huge number of English words in songs and even in their names ("*For Me Formidable*" of Charles Aznavour).

There are different reasons why French people use English words in their conversations: the absence of an equivalent (*fact checking*); the need for economy of language (*crash d'un avion*); the usage of international words (*leader, speaker, embargo*); the use of fashionable words (*look, show, flashmob*) and others. There are some English words that don't have equivalents in the French language such as "*bulldozer*", "*scanner*" or "*drone*". It's obvious that teenagers use more English than adults or elderly people. The journal "*Le Parisien*" gives an interesting example of teenager's speech: "*trop swag, qui, entre deux nuggets, va liker sur facebook pour faire le buzz parce que c'est fun de booster sa life*" (Delvaux, 2016).

The French linguist Maillet (2016) as cited in Sollier (2016) explains that there are more than 10 per cent of English words in the French vocabulary and that nowadays this number increases very quickly. Maillet gives a number of reasons for the ubiquitous appearance of Anglicisms in French. One of the most frequent reasons given is that many English words are simply shorter and their use became automatic. Jean Maillet notes that the French language has a very rich vocabulary with has a many synonyms. For example, instead of the usage of the English word "look" the French can easily use 4 or even more equivalents : *aspect, apparence*, especially the younger generation, prefer the English word "look" (Sollier, 2016).

One more important thing is that the French are constantly finding in English convenient verbal shorthand for many situations. That is why they always use the word "burn-out", for example: it says everything in two syllables. Another interesting example is a phrase from everyday speech where a man uses this word instead of its French equivalent "*le syndrome d'épuisement professionnel*": "*Chérie, j'ai le burn-out*".

English words are used in different spheres of life (Chesley, 2010). There are 10 spheres where English borrowings are most commonly used:

- everyday life (*kit, baby-food, gadget*);
- politics (*leader, staff, sponsoring, charter*);
- economics and finance (*business school, cash-flow*);
- law (*fact checking*);
- sports (*tennis, free-style*);
- cinema (*fiction, pop star, superstar*);
- music (*remake, fan, folk, pop star*);
- fashion (*jeans, tee-shirt, top*);
- appearance (*lifting, top class, superwoman*);
- food (*fast-food, snack, hot dog*).

The influence of the Internet on the French language is a very important issue in socio-cultural context. The Internet has introduced a number of English words to the French language such as *Internet, web, cyberspace* and so on. The number of French-speaking users grows constantly that leads to the appearance of different ideas concerning French in the Net.

In 1996 Philippe Douste-Blazy, a French Minister for Culture proposed methods of improving the representation of the French language and culture on the Internet. The need for the development of three principal areas had been observed: *technology planning* (the importance of removing any technological obstacles which may trouble successful diffusion of French on network); *status planning* (that includes prestige planning) and *corpus planning* (French must possess all the words and expressions to express new concepts in the domain of science and technology). A year after, in 1997, French Minister of Justice Jacques Toubon said: "*the dominant usage of English on the Internet is a new form of colonization. If we do nothing, it will be too late, we will be colonized*" (Tatterstall, 2003). These ideas were maintained by the French government and French president Chirac that emphasizes on the necessity of a campaign for linguistic pluralism and cultural diversity on the information networks (Tatterstall, 2003).

Grammatical and semantic transformations of English words in the French language

There are a lot of English words that have been fixed in French dictionaries. For example, such words as “camping car”, “jogging” or “walkman” have been included in the Petit Larousse Dictionary since 1982. Before entering the Dictionary almost every borrowing goes through a number of transformations. For example, the English word “beefsteak” changed to “bifteque”.

The most frequent English borrowings have the suffix –ing and the base words remain unchanged such as in words like *shopping* or *camping*. But speaking about the pronunciation of these words it should be mentioned that they are pronounced with a French phoneme [ɲ]. The English suffixes –are and –al have been transformed into the French suffixes –aire, –eur, –el, which are more typical for the French language.

The “Dictionary of Anglicisms”, listing the most insupportable in the French office, was created by the well-known French journal *Le Figaro*, where it gives a list of commonly used English words in the office that seem unpleasant and strange for the French people (Perinel, 2014).

In this list there are a lot of popular English words that are used in the business sphere, not only in France but all over the world. French people are using them more and more often despite the fact that they have their own equivalents for most of them. For example, the popular abbreviation ASAP (As Soon As Possible) is used more and more often in the office despite the existence of two accurate French equivalents – “*le plus rapidement possible*” or “*dès que tu peux*”. In comparison with these French equivalents the English ASAP sounds more delicate and less brutal.

From a linguistic point of view the most used English borrowings in business communication are nouns and verbs. There are a lot of nouns in the US that have become very popular in France. These words aren't translated directly into French and that is why they are used by many people. Here is a list of the 12 most used English nouns in French offices: *brainstorming*; *mainstream*; *process*; *workshop*; *bullet points*; *burnout*; *conf call*; *desk*; *one-to-one (121)*; *personal branding*; *process*; *reporting* (Perinel, 2014).

This nominalisation led to the appearance of a huge number of verbs that are widely used in French offices. Here is a list of some English verbs without which typical French business communication sounds impossible: *debriefer*; *drinker*; *forwarder*; *implémenter*; *printer*; *switcher* and others. Sometimes these words turn into nouns and get typical endings of the first group of French verbs ending in “er” and are declined according to French grammar rules. For example: “*Il a déjà forwardé un mail à son collègue*” that is translated as “*He has already forwarded an email to his colleague*”. The verb “forwarder” is used in the past tense with ending for the first group of French verbs.

Interestingly, the French people regularly use the phrase “*Ça fait sens!*” which is a literal translation of the English “*It makes sense*”, but in French this phrase doesn't really reflect the meaning of the English phrase!

The publishing of dictionaries of anglicisms is steadily increasing in French culture. Of special interest is that of Jean Maillat “*100 anglicismes à ne plus jamais utiliser*” where the author proposes to change the English words that become so popular in the French culture into their French equivalents that are even more eloquent and appropriate in different contexts (Maillat, 2016). The English noun “*Stand-by*” for example, is quite often used in French can easily be changed into its French equivalent “*se tenir à coté*” or the English noun “*flyer*” into the “traditional” French noun “*prospectus*” (Develey, 2016).

In French culture we can still observe the preference for French words instead of fashionable anglicisms, especially by the older generation. French journalists criticise the excessive use of anglicisms that leads to ridiculous speech and encourages the use of French equivalents: for example, instead of OK just say the simple French “oui” (“yes”) or the non-verbal gesture of nodding the head. In *Figaro* we find a great example of the overuse of English words in a sentence that leads to a real “franglais” sentence and sounds bizarre: “*Quand Nathalie, Charles ou Maxime vous dissent qu'ils n'ont “plus le time” ou qu'ils sont “overbookés” (c'est selon) à cause des “conf-call” et des “pitch” qu'ils doivent réaliser “asap” avant que leur “boss” leur dise que leur mode “stand-by”, c'est “no-way”, on vous assure (sans trop exagérer) que c'est usant*” (When Natalie, Charles or Maxime tell you that they don't have time or that they are overbooked because of conf-call and pitches that they have to realise as soon as possible before their boss tells them that their fashion stands by and it is no-way) (Develey, 2016).

The French language through the prism of globalisation

France's national identity is based on three values of the well-known French motto “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*” that were established during the French Revolution. The notion of equality leads naturally to the role of language. That the French language is a symbol of the nation and the state is indicated in Article 2 of the current constitution. Nevertheless, France is linguistically diverse for two main reasons: languages of migration; and regional and minority languages.

In 2008 regional and minority languages were acknowledged as “*belonging to the heritage of France*” which confirmed the historical presence of regional languages. The French president Macron also acknowledges the linguistic diversity in France, but he emphasises that French is unique and therefore very important for the nation: “*France is held together by its language [French]... but this indivisible France is plural, it has other languages. It has its beautiful regional languages... that I wish to recognize, and that we will recognize. It has all of these languages... which must be able to live in the Republic, without threatening the French language in the slightest, but rather making our diversity and richness shine forth*” (McAuley, 2017).

The problem of the use of English in French is especially challenging in this era of globalisation. English is the current international language and has, therefore, an important status. French, as well, is an important international language and is one of the official working languages in different international organisations such as the UN, NATO, and UNESCO. Nowadays there is a tendency for every person who wants to be a participant in current events and to be a part of Globalisation to speak English. And French society is no exception. English is taught in French schools and universities and is spoken by a huge number of young people.

The language policy tries to control the unnecessary, and often redundant, use of English words. This effort is still effective and necessary according to most French linguists. It doesn't mean that the French resist globalisation on cultural ground, but vice versa, the French people, being an important part globalisation on cultural ground, are trying to keep their language and cultural identity, cultural, linguistic and cooking traditions. A well-known French philosopher Albert Camus once said: “my homeland is the French language”; this is very true for the French people.

Conclusions

Anglicisms in the French language should be treated in terms of social linguistics. Today many English borrowings are used in French and over time they enter official French dictionaries. English borrowings are called “anglicisms”, the word that is commonly used in mass media. French scientists highlight six types of anglicisms in French: semantic, lexical, syntactic, morphological, phonetic and graphical.

The language policy of France, with its most active representative the Académie française, is determined to maintain the purity of the French language, especially where the borrowing isn't perceived to be a good fit. The ideas of the Academy are positively received by the French people but they continue to use a huge number of anglicisms in their speech in different spheres: everyday life (*gadget*), politics (*leader*), economics and finance (*business school*), sports (*freestyle*), cinema (*pop star*), music (*fan*), fashion (*jeans*), food (*fast-food*) and many others. Even French president Macron uses English in his speeches and tweets. There are many sources of English borrowings and mass media is one of the most important ones.

The influence of the English language has increased during the last twenty years. It is connected with the development of new technologies and business communications. Sometimes the use of English words is inevitable, because there is no equivalent in the French language. In other cases, French speakers use English words to show their active way of life in the twenty-first century.

This article opens a large area for further research on the use of anglicisms in different spheres of life; the influence of other languages on French and the methods of language policy that deal with the purism of the French language.

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