A PERSPECTIVE OF ENGLISH LINGUISTIC LOANS IN FRENCH WITH FOCUS ON THEIR PRESENCE IN ADVERTISING

Alexandra Georgiana Sălcianu
PhD. Student, University of Bucharest

Abstract: Today technological possibilities allow connections between people from different countries and cultures; this process has lately been facilitated by the omnipresence of English as a universal language. Its terms are borrowed, and more or less adapted, in many countries. This study aims to analyze the way the French, citizens and authorities alike, accept linguistic loans from English. We will discuss their perspective on this borrowing process, the main focus being on the presence of anglicisms in French advertising.

Keywords: anglicisms, borrowings, language preservation, assimilation, advertising

1. Foreign loans – evolution of the concept

The concept of borrowing terms from another language has been a permanent presence with mankind; it shows glimpses of the history of each country, covering wars, occupations, medical evolution or gastronomic exchanges.[1] Today, in the context of globalization, this phenomenon is definitely more present than ever. The purpose of this paper is therefore to analyze the attitude of France towards borrowing English words, the study focusing on the universe of advertising, as well as to review possible solutions of coping with the recurrent wave of English loans.

Although historically, in the 17th and 18th centuries, French was considered the language of aristocracy, mostly in Europe, at present it is the English language that is monopolizing domains such as computer science, business and some others. English terms and expressions are spread via media communication - and this process seems so natural that people may not even notice it any longer.[2]

2. An approach to English loans presence in French

2.1. Legal issues concerning attitude towards borrowings

Every multinational company owner's purpose is for their business to penetrate as many places as possible, but some countries have such a difficult legislation as regards terminology that the owner's journey towards accomplishing their goals may indeed become a real maze. When we talk about the laws regarding the preservation of the national language "purity", such regulations can actually make investors' job harder.

Being the most important language of international circulation of our times, English breaks cultural and linguistic barriers and it penetrates numerous cultures/countries by means of songs, advertising campaigns or product names. English has a variety of roles, for example, when used in advertising campaigns, it functions as a linking instrument between

[1] Bourgeteau, S.; 2015; *L'augmentation des Anglicismes dans la Communication*; available online: https://www.institut-kervegan.com/actualite/laugmentation-des-anglicismes-dans-la-communication/
[2] Idem

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the audience and the commercial. Similarly, English used in commercials makes the public associate the product or service being advertised with modernity and globalization.[3]

Indeed, according to Martin, English is one of the best choices when creating advertising campaigns, due to its prestige. As she states, this language adds value to those brands that use it, given the strength of its international status. It also represents the best option for an advertising creator who wants to be sure that the attention of the public is caught.[4]

Nevertheless, such an opinion is not totally shared by certain French philosophers and other intellectuals. They strongly contradict such hypotheses and have proven themselves keen on keeping French equivalents for English words, such as "email" or "chewing gum".[5] According to *Wordreference*, a well-known online translating program, the French versions for "email" are "mél"[6] (which seems to be a French adaptation for "email") or "courrier électronique"[7] (this seems to be a version which is more specific to French language). For "chewing gum", the alternative is "gomme à mâcher"[8], but the dictionary explains that this is a rarely used term, because French people tend to use the English term mentioned above, so, apparently, in colloquial language ordinary people do accept anglicisms.

This strong wish to preserve the national language went so far that in October 2013 Rory Mulholland, an Irish journalist based in France[9], published an article focused on "Boycott the English language says top French intellectual", in *The Guardian*, about philosopher Michel Serres's negative reaction regarding products and videos in English. As a matter of fact, in France, the Minister of Culture also supports replacing English terms with French equivalents.[10]

Starting 2013 things have changed a bit; this statement is supported by the article of Fleur Pellerin, the then Minister of Culture in France, in which she talks about the way linguistic loans enrich the French language and about how the general opinion against these loans has lately changed in France. The author exemplifies, showing how French adopted the English term "manager" instead of the French term "gérante".[11]

Another evidence of this radical change of attitude is the fact that recently French musicians have used English lyrics, presumably in order to increase their popularity. In the same vein, French authors have started designing advertising using English.[12]

Such a change of perspective is a normal thing, mostly due to globalization. As a matter of fact, more and more countries are adopting the omnipresent English language in order to create a link that interconnects them and facilitates communication.

2.2. When English meets French – translation issues

[3] Martin, E.; 2006; *Language Mixing and Translation in French Advertising Copy*; in *Marketing Identities through Language*, pp. 164-211; *Palgrave Macmillan*, London; available online: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230511903_6

[4] Della Mora, M.; *The Presence of English in French Advertising*; available online: https://www.protemgl.com/articles/the-presence-of-english-in-french-advertising

[5] Idem

[6] Wordreference; available online: https://www.wordreference.com/enfr/email

[7] idem

[8] Wordreference; available online: https://www.wordreference.com/enfr/chewing%20gum

[9] https://muckrack.com/dogphone

[10] Della Mora, M.; *The Presence of English in French Advertising*; available online: https://www.protemgl.com/articles/the-presence-of-english-in-french-advertising

[11] Idem

[12] Martin, E.; 2006; *Language Mixing and Translation in French Advertising Copy*; in *Marketing Identities through Language*, pp. 164-211; *Palgrave Macmillan*, London; available online: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230511903_6

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It is a rather difficult situation for an advertisement creator to maintain the quality of their advertising campaigns. Therefore, if some laws regarding keeping the national language in advertisements pure are added, then their work may become even harder.

In France, international advertisers encounter a very serious problem: their advertising campaigns are not accepted there because of the lack of French versions of the slogans used in commercials. For example, the slogan found in a Sony commercial, "Make Believe", was barred because there was no French translation available included.

Similarly, it is stated in the current French legislation that any translation must be shown horizontally in order to be easier for the reader to perceive.[13]

Although French citizens seem so keen on keeping their linguistic identity as to ban advertising campaigns that are not translated, French has massively borrowed from English lately, and this is not the most surprising phenomenon: the latest English loans are not even assimilated from a phonetic point of view.[14] Due to the penetration of anglicisms, modern French has now turned into a hybrid or into what people call "franglais".[15]

There are a range of discussion paradigms that arise when transposition from English to French is involved. Thus, *assimilation* refers to the adjustments made to a foreign word so that it reaches the graphic and morphological standards of the target language. A word that is phonetically assimilated has its phonetic structure adjusted to the system of the "host language". When assimilated, the foreign word changes pronunciation, according to the rules of the "host language".[16] For example, the English borrowed term "riding coat", which describes a type of jacket, gradually became "redingote" in French, and this represents a typical case of a phonetically assimilated word. Being absorbed, this term does not seem foreign to French any longer, but the recent borrowings from English are still "raw" and, therefore, very noticeable.[17] Terms like "brainstorming" or "burn-out" are not phonetically absorbed yet, and the reason must be the fact that they are new concepts and there are no French alternatives for them, so it may be more complicated to create an alternative, rather than keeping the original handy term.[18]

In this equation, French is not the only one that borrows, if we mean to approach the current situation objectively. Thus, according to the *Wordreference* dictionary, English also accepted French terms such as "ballet", "machine" or "café", and those were not even phonetically absorbed in English, but they kept the original pronunciation.[19] In French, the word "café" has two meanings – "coffee" and "bar" – but English borrowed it with only one signification, namely that of "bar". The reason may be the fact that the English language already had the term "coffee" to designate the drink made of coffee beans.[20] Nevertheless, even though English holds the concept of "coffee", there are French terms referring to coffee that were borrowed by the English language because there is no substitute for them and these

[13] 2013; *En France, 43 publicités épinglées pour n'avoir pas traduit leurs slogans en français*; available online: https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/11/27/en-france-43-publicites-epinglees-pour-n-avoir-pas-traduit-leurs-slogans-en-francais_962392

[14] Idem

[15] *The Franglais Controversy: The English Words Used in French and When It's Okay to Use Them*; available online: https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/english-words-used-in-french/

[16] *Assimilation of Borrowings. Types of Assimilation. Degree of Assimilation*; available online: https://studfiles.net/preview/2226981/

[17] 2013; *En France, 43 publicités épinglées pour n'avoir pas traduit leurs slogans en français*; available online: https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/11/27/en-france-43-publicites-epinglees-pour-n-avoir-pas-traduit-leurs-slogans-en-francais_962392

[18] *The Franglais Controversy: The English Words Used in French and When It's Okay to Use Them*; available online: https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/english-words-used-in-french/

[19] *Assimilation of Borrowings. Types of Assimilation. Degree of Assimilation*; available online: https://studfiles.net/preview/2226981/

[20] Wordreference; available online: https://www.wordreference.com/enfr/cafe

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are “café au lait”[21] and “café crème”. [22] These loans designate types of coffee drinks, and instead of naming them “coffee with milk” or “cream coffee”, English has kept them as French versions.

The English language does not stop at words when making “gifts” to other languages, it also offers expressions. As Odile Canale (a member of the Ministry of Culture) states, English slogans such as Nike's "Just do it" are very impressive to the audience, but the French ones also impose themselves, as Air France did, for instance with "faire du ciel le plus bel endroit de la terre" ("to make the sky the most beautiful place on earth").[23]

Although France turned out to be little inclined when it comes to accepting linguistic loans, still there are English borrowings that appeal to different categories of members of the public. For example, French women fancy cosmetic terms such as "peeling" or "lifting", while French teenagers appreciate concepts such as "fun", "hit" and so on. Each category may represent a group of possible consumers, so commercial designers will consequently use English to reach the corresponding targeted sector of the market.[24]

3. Accommodating anglicisms in French – current views

With anglicisms being a part of the “lifestyle” of many countries and cultures, French people also have to try and find ways of integrating them, without sending the national language towards extinction. Obviously, receiving new words does not have to mean replacing the mother tongue, but enriching it, because languages are continuously moving organisms, prone to change.

When teaching French, instructors avoid the use of English loans, trying to preserve the "pure" language, but the truth is that anglicisms are now part of the French language - and this is the way many young people speak nowadays.[25] Considering the fact that linguistic borrowing is an enriching process, anglicisms should be accepted, and if a homogenous vocabulary is desired, then loans should, we think, be phonetically adapted.

After all, a real French speaker knows when an appropriate situation to use anglicisms arises, and the most popular ones are no longer a mystery for them. People encounter formal and informal settings during their life - and anglicisms usually belong in the latter category. Phrases such as "Je vais checker mon e-mail" (“I’m going to check my email”) or "Je l’ai liké sur Facebook" (“I gave it a like on Facebook”) are real brands that represent the France of today.[26] In the first example, the verb “checker” is an English version for the French “vérifier”[27] and “e-mail” stands for “courrier électronique”.[28] “Liké” is an accentuated form of the English “like”, which represents appreciating a photo on a social network. However, in formal business settings, most anglicisms should be avoided, except for those that do not have a French equivalent, for instance "marketing"[29]

[21] Wordreference; available online: https://www.wordreference.com/enfr/cafe
[22] Idem
[23] 2013; *En France, 43 publicités épinglées pour n'avoir pas traduit leurs slogans en français*; available online: https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/11/27/en-france-43-publicites-epinglees-pour-n-avoir-pas-traduit-leurs-slogans-en-francais_962392
[24] Martin, E.; 2006; *Language Mixing and Translation in French Advertising Copy; in Marketing Identities through Language*, pp. 164-211; Palgrave Macmillan, London; available online: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230511903_6
[25] *The Franglais Controversy: The English Words Used in French and When It’s Okay to Use Them*; available online: https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/english-words-used-in-french/
[26] Idem
[27] Wordreference; available online: https://www.wordreference.com/enfr/check
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A final remark in this respect should refer to learners of French as a foreign language. For them, it is important to acquire contemporary colloquial French as well, but definitely only after they have internalized the bases of the "pure" language they are studying. There is always time for using borrowed slang, but one should not let them interfere too much, or too early, in their process of learning.[30]

4. Final remarks

English, especially in advertising, represents nowadays a communication vehicle of interconnecting countries and cultures. It should not be seen as a threat, but as a way of enriching a country's language, offering trendy and productive synonyms to many terms, and also creating denominations for newly emerged concepts that do not yet have a name in other languages.

However, even if a language already holds the equivalent of a specific concept, in our opinion anglicisms should not be fully rejected, but phonetic adaptation is required in order for them to harmoniously blend into L1 vocabulary.

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8. Wordreference

[30] Idem

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