# THE FRENCH INFLUENCE ON CLOTHING TERMINOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN

**Didona FETEA** (MA student)
University of Craiova

**Abstract**

The article deals with some French loan words belonging to the clothing domain in point of their etymon, meaning, integration and evolution in Romanian. Clothing types vary according to multiple criteria. The terminology reflects the clothes purpose, style and form. Numerous terms have entered everyday language

**Key-words**: *clothing, borrowing, French influence, noun, terminology*

**Résumé**

Cet article traite quelques emprunts d'origine française dans la terminologie vestimentaire: de l'étymon, adaptation, sémantique et le mode d'évolution en roumain. Les types de vêtements varient en fonction de plusieurs critères. La terminologie reflète le but de l'article vestimentaire, le style, la forme, etc. De nombreux termes sont entrés dans le lexique commun.

**Mots-clés**: *vestimentation, emprunt, influence française, nom, terminologie*

The craft of cutting out and sewing clothes was turned into an art in Romanian culture. It is this tendency which is evinced by the media and therefore the 'backstage' aspects regarding the work and requirements of true professionalism in the domain of fashion are overlooked. Social and cultural progress leads to new ways of interpreting reality, a fact which is obvious even in the domain of fashion.

Fashion is a universal act which has more to do with socialising than with comfort, i.e. preserving a constant body temperature. Depending on what each of us chooses in point of assumed identity, relating to others or situation appropriacy, many clothing styles have appeared – *city style*: classical blouses, straight midi skirts, trousers, overcoats; *casual style*: long blazers and short skirts; *disco style*: mini skirts and dresses, low waist trousers, bustiers, T-shirts; *ethno style*: trousers, blouses; *fun style*: jabot

BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)

blouses with laced flounce sleeves, overlapped flowered skirts, jackets of black velvet embroided with golden thread; *hippy style*: gypsy skirts, Tunisian shirts, multicolored knitted waistcoats, torn fringed jeans; *military style*: flaring trousers, coats; *the minet style*: open neck shirts, leather coats, jeans-type trousers made of corduroy, short flounced skirts, tight blouses; *office style*: elegant skirts and blouses, trousers and blazers, dresses, suits, deux-pieces, shirts and trousers, tailor-made suits, etc.

Therefore, clothes are different, depending on the occasion, place, time (weather or day time). For example, there are *work clothes*: overalls, suits, uniforms; Friday clothes are worn before the weekend[1]: blue-jeans, shirts, suits, dresses; *beach clothing*: bathing suits, monokini/bikini; *mountain clothing*: anoraks, ski trousers, polo neck sweaters (with or without a hood), waterproof overalls and trousers; *bedtime clothes*: peignoirs, pyjamas, night gowns; *underwear*: bras, undershirts/halter tops, knickers, chemises, petticoats/undergarments, corsets; *house coats*: dressing gowns, peignoirs, negligees; *summer clothes*: strap dresses, short-sleeved shirts, shorts or Capri pants, T-shirts, long or short skirts, trouser-skirts, deep cleavage tops, short-sleeved suits and blouses; *winter clothes*: ourson coats, pants, fur coats, jackets, overcoats, cardigans, waistcoats, sheepskin coats; *spring* and *autumn clothes*: anoraks, polo neck blouses, trousers, coats, sweaters, shirts, burnouses, fur cloaks, demi-saisons, deux-pieces, jackets, overcoats, skirts, suits, trois-quarts.

Our article analyses some aspects of the French influence on clothing terminology. Some terms, borrowed from French, will be analysed lexico-semantically (making reference to their meaning(s) both in French and Romanian), orthographically and orthoepically in order to notice the possible changes in spelling and pronunciation. The exemples analysed are taken from contemporary Romanian press articles.

In Romanian, some of the terms referring to clothing are French or borrowed through French, which evinces the strong influence that this Romance language has on the vocabulary specialised for the semantic field

[1] Doina Berchină, *Provocările modei. Mic ghid de comportament vestimentar*, Bucureşti, Editura Nemira, 1996, p. 89.

BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)

of fashion. It is a domain where imitation, manifested both in clothing and communicative behaviour, makes neologisms highly difussible and easily assimilated, this being a distinct reflex of a general tendency in contemporary language: "[...] răspândirea neologismelor, pătrunderea lor în limba unor cercuri tot mai largi de vorbitori constituie, fără îndoială, una dintre caracteristicile importante ale limbii noastre actuale"[2]/ "the speading of neologisms, their entering the language of ever larger categories of speakers undoubtedly represents one of the major characteristics of our contemporary language".

Some terms have multiple etymologies. An example is the word *blazer* (< Engl., Fr. *blazer*) which designated the piece of clothing appeared in Romania in the ninth decade of the last century (though its British history began in 1880). Initially, it designated "a vividly-coloured fleece jacket", "jachetă din flanelă, de culoare aprinsă", then it became popular since it referred to the red clothes worn by the members of *Lady Margaret* Cambridge canoe club. Nowadays, the word is registered in Romanian as having two meanings: "1. jachetă bărbătească din stofă, catifea, etc. (cu buzunare aplicate)/ a jacket for men made of fabric, velvet, etc. (with applied pockets); 2. jachetă de damă, purtată la ocazii, peste rochie"/"a jacket for women worn over the dress on special occasions" (*DEXI*: 229). Thus, we find the word with these two meanings, used in the following contexts: (1) "Este mai mult decât o asociere de stiluri şi materiale: un mix global între diferite culturi şi stiluri tradiționale. Rochiile şi *blazer*-ele Balenciaga şi Nicolas Ghesquiere ilustrează cel mai bine acest trend care va fi aplicabil anul acesta cel mai mult în ceea ce priveşte moda străzii: suprapuneri de texturi şi materiale, pe cât de inedite, pe cât de şocante uneori, totul pentru a creea un look «multicultural»"/"It is more than a combination of styles and materials: it is a global mixture of traditional styles and cultures. Dresses and blazers by Balenciaga and Nicolas Ghesquiere best illustrate this trend which will be mostly applicable in street fashion: overlaps of textures and materials, sometimes being equally

[2] Guțu Romalo, *Corectitudine şi greşeală*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiințifică, 1972, p. 182.

**BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)**

unusual and shoking, everything to create a 'multicultural' look." (*Ele*, 27.08.2007, *Fashion report*: *Primele tendințe ale toamnei*); (2) "O altă modalitate de a apela la denim în vestimentația ta este să-ți achiziționezi o vestă. Şi Kim Kardashian a «jucat» această carte şi a ieşit căştigătoare. Fie că alegi să o porți ca actrița, pe deasupra unei cămăşi, sau pe sub un *blazer*, efectul va fi cel scontat. Trebuie să ai totuşi o regulă după care să te ghidezi atunci când alegi o vestă"/"Another way of wearing denim is to purchase a waistcoat. Kim Kardashian played this card too and she won. Whether you choose to wear it over a shirt, as the actress did, or under a blazer, you'll get the wanted effect. Nevertheless, you must have a rule to guide yourself by when choosing a waistcoat." (*Eva*, 07.08.2009, *Blugii care te fac vedetă*)

The term *brasieră*, (cf Engl. *undershirt* – for men; *halter top* – for women) entered the French vocabulary round 1278 and meant "garnitură interioară plasată sub armură pentru a apăra brațele"/" undergarment placed under the armour to protect the arms"; the word evolved and acquired new meanings, so that in 1838 it designated almost the same thing as today. In Romanian it was borrowed with two meanings: "1) cămaşă mică şi scurtă pentru nou-născuți, care acoperă pieptul; 2) Obiect de lenjerie pentru femei, care susține sânii; sutien"/"1. small, short chemise for the newly-born, covering the chest; 2. undergarment for women, meant to support the breasts; bra." (*DEXI*: 245).

Another word borrowed from French is *combinezon*. The multiple meanings of the word in French are to be found in Romanian too: "1. Obiect de lenjerie pentru femei, confecționat din pânză, mătase, nailon etc., care acoperă corpul, sub rochie, de la umeri până deasupra genunchilor; furou; 2. Îmbrăcăminte de protecție împotriva murdăririi în timpul lucrului, mai ales pentru muncitorii care execută lucrări de reparații. ♦ Salopetă"/"1. "undergarment for women, made of linen, silk, naylon, etc, worn under the dress, going down above the knee; chemise; 2. dirtproof clothing worn by workers during repairing activities. ♦ overalls" (*DEXI*: 405). One more meaning is added to the already existing ones, and it refers to sports clothes: "Înotătoarea olandeză Marleen Veldhuis (29 ani) a stabilit două recorduri mondiale, unul la 50 m liber – 23sec 96/100 şi unul la 50 m fluture – 25 sec 33/100, duminică la Amsterdam, în cadrul Campionatelor de natație ale

BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)

Olandei. În proba de 50 m fluture, olandeza a folosit un *combinezon* Jaked, iar în cea de 50 m liber, a purtat un *combinezon* Lazer Racer Speedo". (*Adevărul*, 20.04.2009, *Înot*: *Marleen Veldhuis a reuşit să stabilească două recorduri mondiale*)

The term *crinolină* designates "fusta lungă şi foarte largă, în formă de clopot, susținută în interior de arcuri subțiri de oțel sau de balene, la modă pe la mijlocul sec.al XIX-lea; malacof"/"long, very large, bell-like skirt sustained by a frame of thin steel hoops, in fashion round the middle of the XIX-th century" (*DEXI*: 471).

*Flanela* was originally the name of a material. It was adopted in Romanian, meaning "jerseu" or "pulover". Therefore, it represents an article of clothing made of wool or cotton, knitted in the form of a collarless waistcoat or shirt, "articol de îmbrăcăminte, de lână sau de bumbac, tricotat în formă de pieptar, de cămaşă sau de vestă, fără guler" (*DEXI*: 741).

The term *hanorac/'anorak*' is taken from the Eskimos' language through French at the beginning of the XX-th century; its cut-out was adjusted, becoming a practical, comfortable, affordable type of coat. The anorak, *hanoracul*, is made of thick, usually waterproof linen and it has a hood attached. It is used in some sports competitions and even on trips[3].

*Jupă* – 'petticoat' is a term with a rather old story. It initially designated an article of clothing for both men and women. After 1672 it became used exclusively by women. The term has several meanings, identical with the ones from the source language and it refers to a type of skirt worn under the dress: "o fustă care se îmbracă pe dedesubtul rochiei; fustă" (*DEXI*: 1006).

*Malacoful* derives from the name of a fortress (Malahov) in Sevastopol, conquered by the French in 1855. The explanation is that the type of skirt under discussion came in fashion during the Crimean War[4].

[3] "Even if you go to a resort just to walk it's good to have in your baggage an anorak made of 'polar' (a matt fabric), a waterproof jacket, a pair of adherent outsole boots, a pair of comfortable trousers, a cap and a knapsack." (*Ele*, 22.10.2008, *5 outfits for your wardrobe*)

[4] http://kaisariany.blogspot.com/2008/05/costumul-romanesc-in-sec-19.html.

**BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)**

The term *malacof* is a French loanword adapted only graphically in Romanian; the word, a synonym of *crinolină* (*DEXI*: 1086), was borrowed rather for its cultural connotations than to fill an empty space (in the same way *couturier* rarely substitutes *croitor*)[5]. For example: "Costumul citadin era la curent cu toate noutățile din moda pariziană, şi internațională, în războiul de independență femeile din armata românească purtau fusta până la genunchi, peste pantaloni, modă lansată de Miss Bloomer, doar cu câțiva ani mai devreme. Pentru noi *crinolina* era denumită *malacof*, iar jacheta scurtă era cațaveica."/"City suits reflected French and international fashion; during the War of Independence the women in the Romanian Army used to wear a skirt going down to the level of the knee and overlapping a pair of trousers, that fashion being launched by Miss Bloomer a few years earlier. In Romanian *crinolina* was called *malacof*, and the short jacket was called *cațaveică*." (http://kaisariany.blogspot.com/ 26.05.2008)

*Paltonul* designates "o haină lungă, confecționată din stofă groasă, căptuşită cu vatelină sau cu blană, care se poartă peste celelalte obiecte de îmbrăcăminte" (*DEXI*: 1362). It is a term which entered Romanian in the period when French governesses were highly appreciated. Unlike French, Romanian preserved only one meaning of this word.

The names of some fictional characters are transferred to names of clothes. *Pantalonul*, "îmbrăcăminte exterioară, purtată peste lenjerie"/"piece of clothing worn over the underwear", is inherited from *Pantalone*, the rich and miser father of an innocent young girl, the two being characters in Commedia dell'Arte[6].

The term *pardesiul* belongs to the same semantic field as *palton*; both in Romanian and in French, *pardesiu* designates a long overcoat, made of fabric or other materials, worn over ordinary clothes in spring and autumn: "haină lungă, mai subțire decât paltonul, confecționată din stofă sau din alte

[5] http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/filologie/Zafiu/27.htm.

[6] http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/Social/39784/Hainele-spun-lucruri-trasnite .html.

Cf. Saint Pantaleon was a doctor from Asia Minor, martyred at the beginning of the IV-th century. He is the patron of doctors and midwives.

BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)

țesături care se poartă primăvara şi toamna peste îmbrăcămintea obişnuită" (*DEXI*: 1380)

*Peignoir* is a French loanword which was adapted to Romanian neither in pronunciation nor in spelling. The meaning is taken as such from French: "halat de baie, rochie de casă"/"bath robe, house coat" (*DEXI*: 1415).

*Taiorul* is a suit worn by women beginning with the XX-th century; it is made up of a skirt and a jacket, "costum purtat de femei, mai ales începând cu sec. al XX-lea, compus dintr-o fustă şi o jachetă" (*DEXI*: 1976). Initially, in French the word designated the tailor who made clothes for men. Nowadays the term *taior* is used either alone, or in the syntagm *costum taior* (both in Romanian and in French, the source language).

In Romanian a large part of the presented terms have become common nouns of neuter gender, marked for number (*blazer*, *combinezon*, *hanorac*, *malacof*, *palton*, *pardesiu*, *peignoir*, *taior*). Another category is represented by feminine nouns (*brasieră*, *crinolină*, *jupă*, *flanelă* – the last with a neuter gender variant: *flanel*, *-e*). The masculine noun *pantalon* detaches from all the rest, being usually used in the plural form.

Some of the borrowed words generated new words in Romanian. This was done by suffixation: *flanelat*, *flaneluț*, *flaneluță*, *paltonaş*, *pantalonar*, *pantalonaş*, *pardesiaş*, *taioraş*.

At the same time, some terms appear in syntagms with various determiners – some specialised and restricted to these collocations (cf. *evazat*): *pantalon pescăresc*, *pantalon cloş*, *pantalon drept*, *pantalon bufant*, *pantaloni scurți*, *pantaloni lungi*, *pantaloni conici*, *pantaloni mulați*, *pantalon şalvar*, *pantalon slim*, *pantalon evazat*, *pantalon de călărie*, *pantalon sport*; *palton vintage*, *palton midi*, *palton tunică*, *paltoane cambrate*, *palton scurt*, *palton lung*, *palton kimono*, *palton trei sferturi*, *palton elegant* and some are part of a compound: *pantalon-trening*, *pantalon-tub*, *pantalon-cigaretă*; *costum-taior*; *fustă-pantalon*.

As far as orthoepics is concerned, a few situations are interesting:

**BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)**

| Romanian Spelling | French Pronunciation | Romanian Pronunciation |
|---|---|---|
| *blazer* | /blazɛ:ʀ/ or /blɛzœ:ʀ/ | /blèizăr/ |
| *brasieră* | /bʀasjɛ:ʀ/ | /brasiièră/ |
| *combinezon* | /kɔ̃binɛzɔ̃/ | /kombinezòn/ |
| *crinolină* | /kʀinɔlin/ | /krinolìnă/ |
| *flanelă* | /flanɛl/ | /flanèlă/ |
| *hanorac* | /anɔʀak/ | /hanoràk/ |
| *jupă* | /ʒyp/ | /jùpă/ |
| *malacof* | */malakof/* | /malakòf/ |
| *palton* | /palto/ | /paltòn/ |
| *pantalon* | /pãtalɔ̃/ | /pantalòn/ |
| *pardesiu* | /paʀdəsy/ | /pardesìu/ |
| *peignoir* | /pɛɳwa:ʀ/ | /penuàr/ |
| *taior* | /tajœ:ʀ/ | /taiòr/ |

Some of the discussed terms are homophones (if we leave aside the differences connected to the concrete realization of the phonemes; cf. Fr. /a/ and Rom. /a/ – and we consider the 'equal' phonemic structures): Fr. *malakoff /malakof/* and Rom. *malakof* /malakòf/; /pɛɳwa:ʀ/ and /penuàr/.

On the other hand, a series of the terms have homographic forms in French and Romanian: *blazer*, *pantalon*, *peignoir*; but there are also terms which were adapted orthoepically and orthographically in Romanian: *brasieră, combinezon*, *crinolină*, *flanelă*, *hanorac*, *jupă*, *malacof*, *palton*, *pardesiu*, *taior*.

In point of productivity one notices that the studied terms entered the current language; we must mention that French words denoting articles of clothing have been easily assimilated, the domain being of general interes and accessible to everybody.

The assimilated terms present almost the same characteristics as their French correspondents; these terms were borrowed in various periods: thus,

BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)

some refer to the military uniform, others refer to woman underwear and a third category designates unisex articles of clothing.

"Limbajul modei este în primul rând o colecție de termeni tehnici care pătrund destul de ușor în vorbirea curentă, o parte din ei având o existență efemeră"[7]/"The language of fashion is firstly a collection of technical terms which penetrate everyday language easily, some of them having an ephemeral existence". French borrowings have had an important role in constituting and enriching specialised vocabularies in Romanian.

Due to the French language, the Romanian vocabulary enriched with several thousands of words, referring to all the domains of material and spiritual life.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*** *Dicționar explicativ ilustrat al limbii române* (*DEXI*), Iași, Editura Arc & Gunivas, 2007.

*** *Dicționarul ortografic, ortoepic și morfologic al limbii române*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2005.

Berchină, Doina, *Provocările modei*. *Mic ghid de comportament vestimentar*, București, Editura Nemira, 1996.

Caragea, Cecilia, *Istoria vestimentației europene*, București, Editura Teora,1999.

Guțu Romalo, Valeria, *Corectitudine și greșeală*, București, Editura Științifică, 1972, p. 182.

**SOURCES**

*Adevărul*, 20. 04. 2009, 25. 02. 2009, 05. 11. 2008.

*Cotidianul*, 11. 05. 2009.

*Ele*, 22. 10. 2008; 27. 08. 2007.

*Eva*, 07. 08. 2009, 04. 08. 2009, 13. 07. 2009, 21. 01. 2009, 05. 12. 2008, 11. 03. 2008, 28. 08. 2007, 06. 02. 2006, 28. 11. 2003, 03. 08. 2001.

[7] Rodica Zafiu, *Limbajul modei*, in *Diversitate stilistică în româna actuală*, București, 2002: 27.

**BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)**

*Gazeta de Sud*, 27.07.2009, 06.06.2009, 04.03.2009, 18.04.2007, 13.08.2006.
*Mireasa*, nr. 1/2007.
http://www.lexilogos.com/francais_langue_dictionnaires.htm
http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portail:Mode
http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition
http://kaisariany.blogspot.com/2008/05/costumul-romanesc-in-sec-19.html
http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/filologie/Zafiu/27.htm

**BDD-A3827 © 2010 Editura Sitech**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:00:45 UTC)**