

When Romance languages *meet* English – A (socio)linguistic study of the linguistic interferences

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The continuous process of globalization, the advancement of technology, and the sociolinguistic context are just three of the most important factors that influence the language practices of the Italian, Spanish, French, and Romanian speakers. Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to explore the nature and expanse of English influence on these linguistic varieties. From a methodological point of view, the study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, including linguistic and comparative analyses, in order to investigate the impact of English, as well as the implications of the interferences on language use and communication. In particular, the analysis will focus on the “communication accommodation theory” that “explores why and how people modify their communication to fit situational, social, cultural, and relational contexts” (Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis 1973, 177). Ultimately, the entire article reinforces the concept of language as a living entity, having a dynamic nature and a great power in a globalized world.

Keywords: *Romance languages, English loanwords, sociolinguistic study*

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, English has become a “global language” (Crystal 2003) or a “lingua franca” (Grosjean 2010, 11), significantly impacting languages all over the world, including Romance languages. In this context, it is important to understand that “a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role² that is recognized in every country” (Crystal 2003, 3). Therefore, the present paper investigates the linguistic interferences between English and four Romance languages: French, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish, based on a contemporary journalistic corpus. Focusing on journalists' use of English in their communication,

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² Crystal (2003, 3) describes the “special role” “as serving as the native language of the majority (such as English does in the United States or Australia), serving as the official language, or achieving the status of the priority foreign language (i.e., the foreign language of choice for children in schools).”

the study examines how English affects language practices in formal, written contexts.

1.1. Aim and objectives

The aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, it examines the nature and extent of English influence on these linguistic varieties, and, on the other hand, it describes the factors that determine the interference. The derived objectives are as follows:

- ♦ to identify the lexical interferences that occur between English and Romance languages;
- ♦ to analyze the extent of English influence on each of the investigated languages;
- ♦ to identify and explain the (sociolinguistic) factors that determine these interferences;
- ♦ to explore the implications of this phenomenon for language use, diversity, and evolution.

1.2. Methodology

From a methodological point of view, the study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, including linguistic and comparative corpus analysis, in order to describe the use of English words in the journalistic discourse of Romance languages. In the absence of a corpus encompassing all four languages under investigation, I resorted to a section of the contemporary journalistic corpus (ROAMED corpus, available at <https://roamed.unitbv.ro/en/corpus-roamed>) that I had constructed between 2020 and 2022. The corpus selected for the present article comprises online articles from two magazines in each of the four Romance languages. One magazine, *Elle*, has an international circulation, while the other (*Femme Actuelle* - French, *Una Donna* - Italian, *Femeia* - Romanian, and *Mujerhoy* - Spanish) is aimed primarily at a local female audience. The articles span a five-year period (2015-2019) and comprise a total of 212,559 words (around 50,000 words for each language). Furthermore, in order to find and use the most suitable investigation tools, the articles in each language have been categorised into two domains: Beauty and Health.

The field of media communication, encompassing television, radio, online platforms and print media, is a vast and diverse domain characterised by a multitude of linguistic and non-linguistic styles. According to Bussmann (2006, 609), journalistic language has

features conditioned by the structure of mass communication and depend individually on the intended audience (sensational newspapers, political magazines), frequency of publication (daily, weekly), circulation (regional, national, international), covered topics (sports, business), types of texts (commentaries, weather reports), among other factors. (...) Today, journalistic language is seen as an important factor in language change, since it is often responsible for the introduction, maintenance, and changing of linguistic norms (such as the spread of neologisms and jargon).

Therefore, I consider this type of communication to serve as a crucial conduit for the global dissemination of the English language. The selected articles encompass a range of content, including beauty and health pieces of advice, event presentations and celebrity interviews, written in French, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish by native journalists. The diversity of content and the involvement of celebrities influence the choice of words employed by journalists and celebrities alike.

The best way of explaining these choices is by using the “communication accommodation theory” (CAT), i.e. “a theory that explores why and how people modify their communication to fit situational, social, cultural, and relational contexts” (Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis 1973, 177). Originally developed as “speech accommodation theory” (SAT), CAT explains that people may adapt their communication to be more similar to or different from others based on various contexts. As McKenzie (2010, 33) noted,

CAT is derived from Tajfel’s (1974, 1981) social identity theory (also known as intergroup theory), where the central component is the motivation of the individual to develop or maintain a positive self-image. In social identity theory, individuals are not only concerned with the attainment of inter-individual rewards and a positive self-esteem but also crave a favourable group identity.

It is therefore obvious that an understanding of the relationship between language and society is fundamental to this sociolinguistic study, in which one of the objectives is to explain why journalists make use of so many loanwords in their online articles. “Examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people convey and construct aspects of their social identity through their language” (Holmes 2013, 1).

1.3. Structure of the paper

After the introduction, the paper continues with a short presentation of English as an international language and of the Romance family of languages, completed by a few observations about the history and nature of contact between them. The following two sections present, firstly, the quantitative and qualitative results of the corpus analysis and, secondly, an interpretation of these results, focusing on the factors that determine the insertion of many English words in the journalistic discourse. In the end, the concluding section summarizes the findings and reinforces the argument that the study illustrates the value of adopting a comparative approach within the field of contact linguistics.

2. Preliminary aspects

2.1. Terminological distinctions

A terminological distinction is necessary from the start, since the terms ‘borrowing’, ‘loanword’ and ‘foreign word’³ are used in free variation or have divergent definitions in many linguistic studies. There is certainly a synonymous relationship between these terms, but their use differs from one researcher to another or even from one paper to another. It is therefore necessary to provide a clear definition of each of these terms, for which I have drawn upon the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (Bussman 2006).

The first term to be defined, in accordance with the alphabetical order, is ‘borrowing’. This represents “the adoption of a linguistic expression from one language into another, typically occurring when no term exists for the new object, concept, or state of affairs” (Bussman 2006, 139). Later on, Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009) posit that the term ‘borrowing’ has at least two distinct meanings, a general sense and a more restrictive interpretation. The first sense refers to “all kinds of transfer or copying processes, whether they are due to native speakers adopting elements from other languages into the recipient language, or whether they result from non-native speakers” imposing properties of their native language

³ In Romanian, for instance, some researchers also use the term ‘barbarism’ when discussing the topic of borrowings. However, this is defined by the same dictionary as “a term in classical rhetoric for the improper use of a word”, which is why I have chosen not to use it in the present paper. “Originally coined for the unusual use of foreign words, barbarism was later used for mistakes in orthography, pronunciation, and agreement. A barbarism violates the rhetorical style of correct speech” (Bussman 2006, 120).

onto a recipient language. “The term is used in a restrictive sense when referring to the incorporation of foreign elements into the speakers' native language” (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 36). We should note here that the restrictive sense is employed in the present paper.

The second term to be examined is ‘foreign word’ or ‘foreignism’. This concept has its origins in the mid-seventeenth century and is defined as “a linguistic expression adopted from one language into another (usually together with that which it denotes) and which, in contrast to a loan word, has not been phonetically, graphemically, or grammatically assimilated into the new language” (Bussman 2006, 420).

As we can see, the definitions of these terms are not entirely clear and can be misleading. In some cases, even the linguists themselves have difficulties explaining them. However, the situation can be clarified by making the following distinction. In any language, there are two categories of loanwords: those that are not adapted to the recipient language's system, which are referred to as ‘foreignisms’ (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 43) or *non-assimilated loans*, and those that have been assimilated and integrated into the language, which are known as *assimilated loans*. The aforementioned authors also establish a correlation between the concepts of ‘foreignism’ and ‘single-word switch’, wherein the latter is less integrated than the former, “to the point of not being (clear) members of the language’s lexicon. Integration would thus be the degree to which a word is felt to be a full member of the recipient language system” (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 43).

Last but not least, we should take into consideration the definition of the term ‘interference’, as this is probably the most problematic. Bussmann (2006, 581) gives us the following definition and explanation: “the influence of one linguistic system on another in either (a) the individual speaker (transfer) or (b) the speech community borrowing, language contact). In an individual, interference is seen as a source of errors (error analysis, contrastive analysis); in a speech community, as a cause of language change”.

There are various types of linguistic interferences, as they affect all the linguistic domains. Consequently, at the **phonetic** level, the **interferences** involve the influence of one language's sound system on the pronunciation of another. For example, a native Spanish speaker may pronounce English words, such as ‘internet’, with a rolled ‘r’, whereas an Italian speaker may adopt the English ‘r’ sound in borrowed terms. The **syntactic interference** refers to the phenomenon whereby the grammatical structures of one language exert an influence on sentence construction in another. In our particular case, alterations to Romance sentence structure and grammatical conventions will be observed, influenced by

the presence of English. The following examples illustrate this point: the increasing use of the passive voice in French, influenced by English syntax; the adoption of English-style relative clauses in Spanish; the construction of certain types of relative clauses in Romanian that copy the English patterns. As concerns the **pragmatic** or **discursive interference**, this focuses on the influence of cultural norms and conversational strategies from one language on another (use of discourse markers and politeness strategies, changes in communication styles). A very good example here is the use of English fillers, such as 'you know' or 'like', in all conversations from the Romance languages.

The **lexical** type of **inference** was intentionally left for the end of this section, as it is the specific focus of the current investigation. Lexical influences encompass the borrowing of words or phrases from one language and their subsequent use in another. One of the most conspicuous manifestations of English influence on Romance languages is the adoption of borrowings in domains such as business, technology, and entertainment. Examples of such borrowings include words such as 'weekend', 'marketing', 'blog', 'computer', and 'smartphone', which can be readily identified in numerous Romance languages. In French, for instance, these terms are rendered as '(le) weekend', '(le) smartphone', '(le) blog', while in Spanish, they appear as '(el) marketing', '(el) smartphone', and '(el) blog'. Similarly, in Italian, they are '(il) computer', '(il) weekend', and '(il) manager', and in Portuguese, they are '(o) blog', '(o) site', and '(o) marketing'. In Romanian, they are 'internet(ul)', 'blog(ul)', and 'weekend(ul)'.

As previously stated, the present article focuses exclusively on lexical interferences, specifically English borrowings, as they are the most readily identifiable, accessible, and explainable. To avoid repetition, the terms 'foreign word', 'loanword' and 'borrowing' will be used interchangeably throughout this study to refer to English words that are used by journalists in their articles for a variety of reasons. Of particular interest are words that have been borrowed but retained in their original English spelling and pronunciation, despite having been incorporated into the dictionaries of Romance languages.

2.2. English and the Romance family

2.2.1. *English as a 'global language'*

English is a Germanic language with significant Latin influence—that has interacted with Romance languages in various multilingual contexts, and this 'familiarity' between them has led some researchers to note that, "from a lexical point of view, English is in fact far more a Romance than a Germanic language" (Crystal 2003, 8).

The considerable influence that English exerts over a multitude of languages can be attributed to the political, economic, military, and technological power of its people. "Language exists only in the brains and mouths and ears and hands and eyes of its users. When they succeed, on the international stage, their language succeeds. When they fail, their language fails" (Crystal 2003, 7).

In fact, this is a status (of international language) once achieved also by Latin, French, Spanish, or Greek, among others, despite their degree of learnability.

A language does not become a global language because of its intrinsic structural properties, or because of the size of its vocabulary, or because it has been a vehicle of a great literature in the past, or because it was once associated with a great culture or religion. These are all factors which can motivate someone to learn a language, of course, but none of them alone, or in combination, can ensure a language's world spread (Crystal 2003, 9).

Crystal also posited that, in contrast to the dissemination of Greek and Latin as a consequence of successful military and maritime expeditions, the position of the English language would not have been maintained were it not for the rise of American economic power, which was bolstered by the development of technology.

The global spread of the English language commenced in the 18th century with the European colonization of Asian and African countries (McKenzie 2010, 1), and it has been particularly rapid and unprecedented. Since then, numerous attempts have been made to classify and account for the various ways in which English is employed in different countries (see, for example, Gorlach 1990; Strevens 1992; McArthur 1998; Crystal 2003; Seidlhofer 2004; Dornyei et al. 2006; Kirkpatrick 2007; Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008; Sharifian 2009). In Romanian, valuable contributions have been made over the last three decades. Most of the studies concentrate on purely linguistic issues: etymology, orthographic(al), phonological and morphological assimilation (Avram 1997; Bota 1978; Gruitã 1974; Hristea 1995), but less attention has been given to the social and cultural implications of the borrowing process (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2006, 222).

2.2.2. *The Romance family*

Derived from Latin, the Romance family encompasses many languages, with French, Italian, and Spanish being the most prominent, and these sister-languages have been a topic of interest for researchers in various fields since ancient times. Unfortunately, Romanian has often been left aside from these studies, as it is a rather complicated language and quite difficult to investigate due to the small number of corpora. It is precisely this fact that led to the construction of an

innovative, comprehensive corpus comprising samples of the Romanian language alongside the other three Romance languages previously mentioned. Of course, there are many aspects that individualize Romanian in the Romance context, given the Slavic influences, but there are certainly also many common features of these sister-languages.

2.2.3. The relationship between English and the Romance languages – a historical perspective

From a historical perspective, it seems appropriate to discuss the development of these languages and the influence they have exerted on each other, to varying degrees. All five languages (English, French, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish) are members of the Indo-European language family that

was spread by peaceful processes of expansion, which naturally resulted in different groups. While Romance languages originated from Vulgar Latin (spoken in the streets and bars as opposed to the elite written form studied at schools), the similar process might be recognized while speaking about Germanic languages (German, English, Danish, Dutch, Swedish and Icelandic), as all developed from Old German before evolving their own identities (Russell, 1993) (quoted in Bérešová 2016, 29).

It is clear that all languages have been subject to many influences and interferences (both with each other and with languages that are totally distinct) over time. Historically, “English, French and Spanish had close relations both through marriages of royalty and nobility representatives and during the long-lasting wars between England and France and between England and Spain” (Bérešová 2016, 32).

Nowadays, the phenomenon of linguistic interference is a natural consequence of globalization⁴, of human mobility (including migration), and of the advancement of digital communication, including the use of social networks, email, and video conferencing platforms, such as Skype. In addition to the fact that internet was already undergoing an unprecedented global expansion, the period of

⁴ “Globalisation has resulted in greater competition between languages, on both a regional and a worldwide scale, with both winners and losers” (Maurais and Morris 2003, 1-3). “(...) Indeed, the importance of English throughout the world is reflected in the publication of ever-increasing number of monographs and edited volumes (see above) as well as in the continued existence of three well-established journals – namely English Worldwide (founded 1979), World Englishes (founded 1984), and English Today (founded 1985) – whose focus is specifically related to the role of English in a wide range of international contexts” (McKenzie 2010, 1).

the global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus led to a significant increase in the use of social networking sites and other forms of online communication, as people increasingly felt the need to communicate with one another. Crystal's observations represent the most accurate picture of this complex phenomenon:

There are no precedents in human history for what happens to languages, in such circumstances of rapid change. There has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places. There has never been such a strain placed on the conventional resources of translating and interpreting. Never has the need for more widespread bilingualism been greater, to ease the burden placed on the professional few. And never has there been a more urgent need for a global language (Crystal 2003, 14).

Consequently, it is not surprising that English, known and used by very many speakers as L2, has gained more and more power, irrevocably influencing the language practices of L1 speakers. Researchers have proven the impressive power of English for many of the world's natural languages, rightly calling it a "global language" (Crystal 2003) or a "lingua franca" (Grosjean 2010, 11). But not only English was the one to influence other languages.

Throughout its history, English has been subjected to influences from foreign cultures and languages, for example, through expansion of the Roman Empire, the migrations of the Scandinavians, Christianization, the development and growth of science and the humanities, French borrowings on and off since the Norman conquest, and more recent borrowings from dozens of languages in modern times, especially through the growth of telecommunications and universal travel (Busmann 2006, 139).

Under colorful nicknames, such as 'Franglais', 'Romglais', 'Tex-Mex', 'Chinglish', 'Japlish', 'Spanglish', 'Denglish' or 'Angleutsch', and so on, we can find everywhere mixed varieties involving English. It is important to note that, although this phenomenon was initially received with skepticism or even opposition from many native speakers (especially linguists), the general attitude is gradually shifting, because, "when these 'mixed' languages are analyzed, it is found that they are full of great complexity and subtlety of expression – as we would expect, if people have the resources of two languages to draw upon, rather than one" (Crystal 2003, 165).

One might ask what makes English so 'special' and 'internationally appealing'. Besides the aforementioned social, political, economic, and even military contexts, this language surely has some inherent and self-evident features.

One of them is undoubtedly the ‘familiarity’ of its vocabulary. “The ‘welcome’ given to foreign vocabulary places English in contrast to some languages (notably, French) which have tried to keep it out, and gives it a cosmopolitan character which many see as an advantage for a global language” (Crystal 2003, 8). This point was also emphasized by Bérešová (2016, 31), who noticed that, “while defining word stock of English, it is necessary to take into account that Modern English is made up of three layers of vocabulary: Anglo-Saxon (with additions from the Viking language, Old Norse), French, and Latin (with additions from Greek, often through Latin)”. According to Crystal (1995, *apud* Bérešová 2016, 31-32), “the rate of French borrowing reached a peak in the second half of the 14th century and French influence on the English lexicon is clearly recognizable in words related to administration, law, religion, military, food and drink, fashion, leisure and the arts, science and learning, etc.”. Therefore, given the close connection between the two languages – English and French –, it is not surprising that a considerable number of occurrences of English words has been identified in French journalistic discourse, as we shall see in the corpus analysis section.

Let us now turn our attention to the four languages, with a view to gaining insight into their relationship with English and briefly capture the speakers’ attitude towards the latter. As stated before, the considerable number of borrowings, coupled with their dissemination in the Romance languages, have prompted concerns among some parties, as they were perceived as a potential threat to the recipient language and even to the national identity. Perhaps the most vehement opposition was articulated by the French community, who have traditionally regarded language as a marker of ethnic identity. “While the educated elites of French-speaking countries tend to be bilingual in English, there is a certain cultural pressure to avoid English loanwords (...), and neologisms based on French words are promoted by language-planning bodies and have a good chance of being accepted (e.g. ‘courriel’ for ‘e-mail’)” (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 47). This cultural resistance to loanwords is referred to as ‘purism’. It was frequently manifested in published recommendations and even through the existence of language authorities (e.g. national academies), whose recommendations were likely to be followed by teachers, journalists, and so forth. A comparable phenomenon was also observed in Romanian, but these Romance languages (French and Romanian) contrast with other European languages, such as Italian, German, and Dutch, where the educated elites are more receptive to English loanwords (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 47).

In Romania, the phenomenon of extension was met with a wave of Anglophone criticism and opposition, and it was referred to as ‘Anglomanie’, a

term that has been used to describe the spread of English-derived vocabulary and expressions across languages. Nevertheless, as Mioara Avram (1997, 9) stated:

The English influence is not a negative phenomenon in itself, and there is no reason for it to be more dangerous than other foreign influences". In addition, "given the great hospitality of the Romanian language, coupled with its capacity for assimilation/integration of borrowings [...], it is to be assumed that Anglicization will be overcome, just as Slavicization, Greekization, Russification, Italianization or Francization have been overcome in time Avram (1997, 9).

It was through French that the first English loans have been introduced in the Romanian vocabulary in the second half of the 19th century, but the 'invasion' of the English loanwords began, as in most European languages, after the World War II (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2006, 219).

As concerns Italian, Berruto's study reveals that since the 1980s, Italy has emerged as a favored destination for immigrants, with notable populations from Eastern Europe and a multitude of non-European countries. This is why it is practically impossible to establish an exact number or an exhaustive list of the languages present in Italy today (Berruto 2018, 494-495), but the presence of English is unquestionable.

Finally, the situation from Spain was similar, and the English influence is continuous, as Spanish is the third most spoken language globally, after English and Mandarin Chinese, and it is regarded as the most extensively studied Romance language, primarily by native English speakers. Like other sister-languages, "the Spanish language developed from Vulgar Latin, being also influenced by Arabic and other Romance languages. It is less intelligible with French than with Italian as they do not differ very much in grammar, vocabulary and have a very similar phonological system" (Bérešová 2016, 32).

In conclusion, the significant integration of English terms into European languages in recent decades represents a natural phenomenon that is intensifying in response to a pervasive tendency among speakers of these languages to use English in international communication.

3. Corpus analysis: results

The above discussion has attempted to contextualize the investigation as well as to illustrate the complex and changing sociolinguistic landscape of the English language within the Romance languages family. It is all known that all these languages have been involved in numerous instances of language contact, and,

while this phenomenon is obvious at all levels of the language system, the lexicon is the area that has been most affected by external influences. “Contrary to a somewhat dated view, language contact does not necessarily imply physical presence, contemporaneity, and orality: as far as the lexicon is concerned, contact can happen over time and space, particularly through written media” (Thibault and Lovecchio 2020, 1).

The journalistic language is undergoing a period of significant development in the context of global relations, encouraged by the growing internationalization of languages. In recent times, global companies have been using English as a widely recognized ‘code’ in international business. This is why, as Crystal (2003, 114) notes, “if a language is a truly international medium, it is going to be most apparent in those services which deal directly with the task of communication – the postal and telephone systems and the electronic networks”.

3.1. Quantitative and qualitative results

In accordance with the definitions set forth in section 2.1., the English words used by the French, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish journalists in their articles are as follows:

- borrowings that have entered the vocabulary of the four investigated Romance languages and were phonetically adapted: e.g. Ro. *sendviș* ‘sandwich’ – ‘assimilated loanwords’;
- borrowings that have entered the vocabulary of the four investigated Romance languages, but were not phonetically adapted: e.g. *weekend*, *brand* – ‘foreignisms/non-assimilated loanwords’ (some of them accepted by the dictionaries, some not).

Although both types can be identified within the journalistic discourse of all four Romance languages, only the last category has been selected for the present analysis. This is graphically evidenced in written texts by using quotation marks or italics. In my corpus, I noticed that some journalists use these graphic markers, while others do not mark them at all and use them just like any other words:

- (1) Sp. – *De entre todas sus funciones, las vinculadas al deporte y la salud son una de las grandes bazas de estos nuevos 'gadgets' así que, si eres una 'fit girl', toma nota* (Elle, 2015)

‘Among all their functions, those linked to sport and health are one of the great assets of these new gadgets, so if you are a ‘fit girl’, take note’

- (2) Fr. – *Ma méthode est un réel **challenge** mais en sortant le corps de sa zone de confort, on parvient à des résultats spectaculaires.* (Elle, 2015)
 ‘My method is a real challenge, but by taking your body out of its comfort zone, you can achieve spectacular results’

The results of the corpus investigation are summarized in Diagram 1:

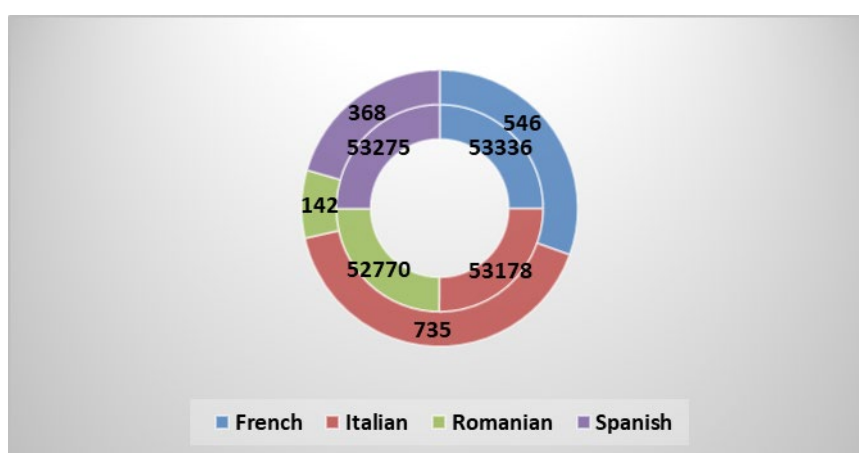


Diagram 1. *The distribution of English words in each of the Romance sub-corpora*

In the middle circle, the corresponding number of words for each of the investigated Romance languages is presented, while the exterior circle shows the corresponding number of English words identified. The greatest number of English words was identified in the Italian articles (735 items in 53,178 words of the Italian sub-corpus), and was followed by French, in which 546 English terms were identified in 53,336 words. Spanish occupies the third position, with 368 English terms identified in 53,275 words. Finally, Romanian is in the lowest position, with only 142 English words identified in 52,770 words of the Romanian sub-corpus.

Considering the Diagram above, the findings of the research were both surprising and intuitive. Why surprising? From my own experience of travelling through the most significant cities of Italy, Spain, and France, I have found that French speakers display the greatest reluctance to English. It was therefore anticipated that a minimal number of English terms would be identified in French. More precisely, it was hypothesized that French would have the least number of English words, while Romanian would have the highest number (or, at least, a higher number). However, the results of the research showed that my initial hypothesis was not confirmed. Neither French nor Romanian showed the expected

behavior. Conversely, Italian had the highest number of English terms, with French on the second position, while Romanian had the lowest (see Diagrams 1 and 2).

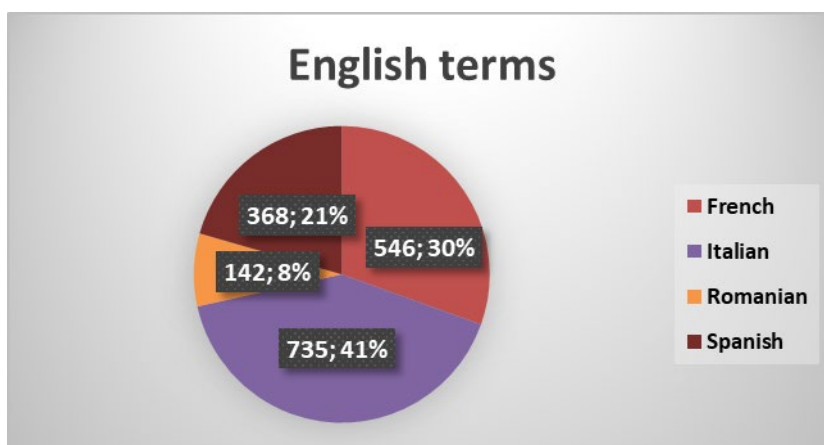


Diagram 2. *The distribution and frequency of English words in the selected corpus*

As a native Romanian speaker, one is aware that Romanian incorporates a considerable number of English words that are used in everyday communication. This personal observation is also supported by a recently published Romanian Academic Dictionary (DOOM₃ 2021), which included 3,500 new words, the majority of which have an English origin and are increasingly used in oral or written communication (for example, ‘breaking news’, ‘all-inclusive’, ‘afterschool’, ‘like’, ‘fake news’, ‘take-away’, etc.). Two of the authors noted in the Dictionary’s Introduction: “Beyond mere fashion and easy imitation, many of these words name new realities, enrich the language with synonyms and often have the advantage of brevity and univocality; on the other hand, they present certain problems of spelling, pronunciation and/or grammatical behavior” (Aranghelovici and Vintilă-Rădulescu 2021, 12). This is another reason why the results of the corpus analysis were particularly unexpected for me. Should we consider that Romanian journalists do not adhere to the same linguistic norms as they do in their spoken communication? This is a question that requires further investigation and will undoubtedly become a future research objective.

Why intuitive? Because I expected the international magazine (IM=*Elle*) to include a greater number of loanwords than the national magazines (NM) corresponding to each language. (*Femme Actuelle* - French, *Una Donna* - Italian, *Femeia* - Romanian, and *Mujerhoy* - Spanish), and this is precisely what the investigation revealed (see Diagram 3).

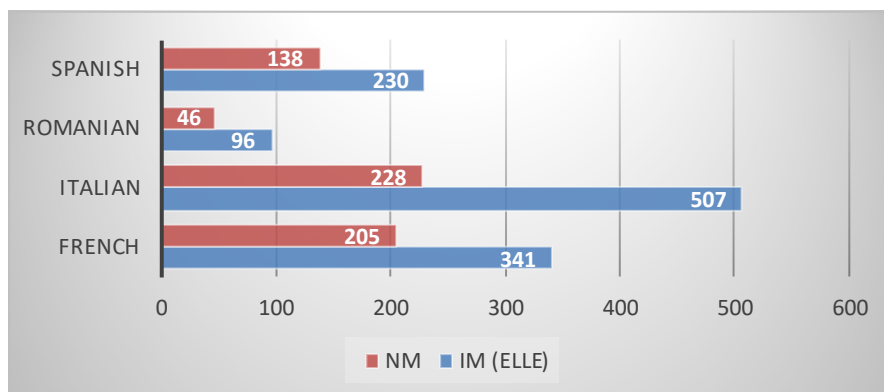


Diagram 3. *The distribution of English words in the investigated articles*

In addition, considering the domain of the articles, it was anticipated that there would be a greater number of terms in the Beauty articles than in the Health articles. The results of the research demonstrated that these expectations were also valid (as illustrated by Diagram 4).

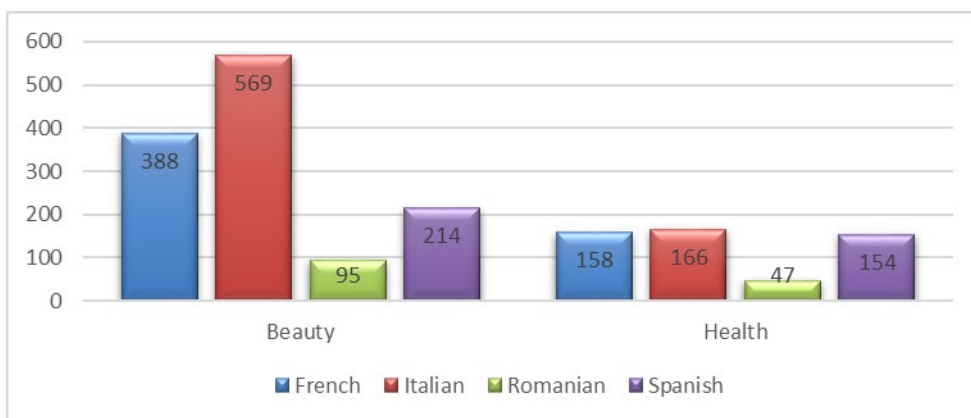


Diagram 4. *The distribution of English words in the articles corresponding to domains*

As results from the Diagram 4, the articles related to the Beauty domain consistently exhibit higher numbers than those from the Health domain across all investigated languages. It can be reasonably deduced that the type and purpose of the language employed in these articles is the determining factor. On the one hand, the initial category, comprising articles from the Beauty domain, evinces the use of

an advertising language, characterized by a transparent persuasive objective. This is because a considerable number of these articles are employed for the purpose of promoting products or services. Persuasive communication is a carefully planned discourse, characterized by the most effective employment of linguistic means, one of which is the incorporation of ‘international words’. This idea was also supported by McKenzie, who discussed the results obtained by Haarmann in two studies (1986 and 1989) concerning the “use of English and French in television advertising in Japan. Haarmann demonstrated that whilst both languages were employed as symbols of prestige in commercials as a means of enhancing the products advertised, the use of English, in particular, was believed to promote stereotypical associations of ‘international appreciation’. In contrast, French was employed in order to promote images of ‘high elegance’ and ‘a sophisticated lifestyle” (Mckenzie 2010, 12-13). On the other hand, the vocabulary employed in Health articles is highly specialized and characterized by the prevalence of medical terminology, which is not intended to persuade the reader. This is the reason why the use of English terminology is less prevalent.

We should also take into consideration the fact that many of these English words are visible on an international scale and are used by international celebrities on social media platforms. This is why, during an interview with a celebrity, the journalist selects vocabulary from his language (such as French), while the celebrity employs English terminology (for example, ‘followers’).

(3) Fr. – *Instagram est un outil formidable qui me permet de communiquer avec mes fans. J’ai toujours été moi-même avec mes **followers** et je pense qu’ils le savent.* (Elle, 2015, interview with Kayla Itsines)

‘Instagram is a great tool that allows me to communicate with my fans. I’ve always been myself with my followers and I think they know that.’

In addition, the corpus revealed another linguistic phenomenon, called ‘code-switching’. Grosjean notes that “code-switching can be described as the act of switching from one language to another, typically from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2), and then back to the first language again. Borrowing, on the other hand, involves the introduction of English terms into another language, specifically from L2 into L1” (2010, 70). For instance, in Italian, I have found situations in which the article begins with an entire sentence in English (4, 5) or the article’s title is in English (6, 7, 8):

- (4) It. – *E, **last but not the least**, ricordiamoci di proteggere i capelli dal sole, dal sale del mare o dal cloro con prodotti di qualità.* (Elle, 2018)
'And, last but not least, remember to protect your hair from the sun, sea salt or chlorine with quality products'
- (5) It. – ***First things first**, è imperativo lavorare sul modo in cui parliamo di problemi di salute mentale.* (Elle, 2018)
'First things first, it is imperative to work on the way we talk about mental health issues'
- (6) It. – ***It's Milan Design Week 2015 baby!*** (Elle, 2015)
- (7) Sp. – ***Run baby run!*** (Elle, 2015)
- (8) Sp. – ***Love is in the... Oscar.*** (Elle, 2017)

The analysis revealed the presence of common expressions specific to the spoken language. It may therefore be presumed that the journalists' use of English slang and expressions in their speech demonstrates their engagement with global (youth) culture and social media.

- (9) It. – *E se si vuol essere in armonia con la tavolozza dei blu Valextra, il consiglio è giocare con look concettuali, in pelle e blue chien **of course.*** (Elle, 2015)
'And if you want to be in harmony with the Valextra blue palette, the advice is to play with conceptual looks, in leather and blue chien of course'
- (10) Sp. – *Cuál es tu producto '**low cost**' favorito?* (Elle, 2015)
'What is your favorite low cost product'

I noticed that there are articles in which no English word is used, but also articles that abound in such terms. This phenomenon can be attributed to the stylistic preferences of individual journalists, which, in turn, reflect the journalists' current linguistic practices. This observation holds true for all language users, irrespective of their field of activity. It is difficult to believe that a journalist who does not use English terms in his everyday language would employ such terms in an article, regardless of the article's objective (e.g. to reach a broad audience, to gain international visibility). Conversely, a more conservative journalist, one who has a deep affinity for his native language, will try to identify the most appropriate terminology within his own language to convey the information without resorting to words from other languages. This fact determines the use of many words in free

variation, i.e., sometimes, in English, sometimes, in French/Italian/Spanish/Romanian: Fr. 'maquillage' and Eng. 'make-up' (spelled 'make-up', 'make up' or 'makeup'), Fr. 'beauté'/Ro. 'frumusețe' and Eng. 'beauty', Ro. 'moda' and Eng. 'fashion'.

From a semantic point of view, most of these English terms designate **jobs**: 'make-up artist', 'skincare trainer', 'hairstylist', 'research manager'; **events**: 'fashion week'; **sports**: 'fitness', 'stretching'; **food**: 'crackers', 'muffins', 'energy drink', 'snack', 'smoothie', 'sandwich'; **beauty objects**: 'eye-liner', 'mascara', 'spray', 'lipstick', 'gloss', etc.

Morphologically, most of them are nouns, but I have also found adjectives (such as: 'nude', 'waterproof', 'trendy', 'curly', 'casual', 'antiage') and prepositions. In a very particular way, French also revealed two verbs: 'to zoom' and 'to boost':

(11) Fr. ***Zoom** sur ces pathologies qui font frémir pour savoir comment réagir de façon ciblée.* (Femme actuelle, 2017)

'Take a closer look at some of these frightening diseases to find out how to react in a targeted way'

(12) Fr. *En dégageant les contours du visage, vous **boosterez** l'éclat de votre regard.* (Femme actuelle, 2016)

'By clearing the contours of the face, you boost the radiance of your eyes'

As concerns the morphological adaptation of these words to the base/recipient language, there were many situations in which the nouns were given a plural form, a gender marker or an article when the borrowing language requires it: Sp. 'el look', 'unos sandwiches', It. 'il piercing', Fr. 'les relookings', 'des chunky highlights', Ro. 'businessul', 'gloss-ul', etc.

From a quantitative point of view, the data revealed that the words 'look', 'beauty', and 'make-up' had a significant number of occurrences in all four languages. Overall, five English words that were predominantly used were selected for the investigation of their distribution within the corpus, and this resulted into a Top 5, represented by Diagram 5:

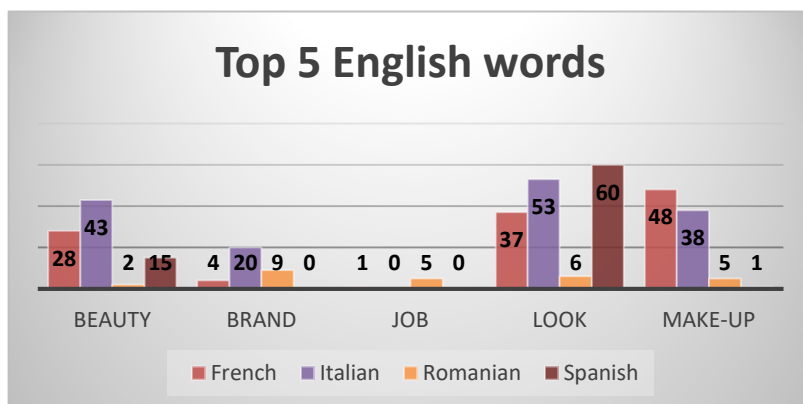


Diagram 5. Top 5 English terms used in the investigated languages

3.2. Results' interpretation

It could be argued that the findings of this corpus analysis are relatively straightforward to interpret, and that the use of so many English words in the investigated online articles is simply a consequence of the conventions of journalistic or/and advertising language. However, it is my conviction that this is not entirely the case. It seems reasonable to posit that the decision of journalists to use or avoid Anglicisms in their articles is significantly influenced by their individual stylistic preferences in language use, whether in written or oral communication. "The arguments are all to do with identity, and with language as the most immediate and universal symbol of that identity" (Crystal 2003, 125).

In accordance with the principles set forth by the CAT, it can be posited that an individual's social identity is largely shaped by his affiliation with specific groups, such as that of journalists or celebrities. These social categories, in turn, are often sought out with the intention of fostering a positive social identity. In addition, the use of English words is a highly motivating factor for journalists, as they are aware that this linguistic choice will facilitate communication with a larger audience than any other language. This provides a partial explanation for the journalists' choice to use a multitude of loanwords within their discourse, with the objective of portraying themselves in a more favorable light and, consequently, attaining a more positive social identity or distinguishing themselves from their fellow group members. Haspelmath and Tadmor consider that:

speakers adopt such new words in order to be associated with the prestige of the donor language. Like “puristic attitude”, “prestige” is a factor very difficult to measure independently, (...) but a factor with paramount importance for language change. (...) The way we talk (or write) is not only determined by the ideas we want to get across, but also by the impression we want to convey on others, and by the kind of social identity that we want to be associated with (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, 48).

Therefore, I am quite sure that many journalists believe that if they write in English or use a considerable number of English words, their work will have the potential to reach a global audience. This may entail a degree of compromise with regard to their cultural identity, as language is also said to be the essential instrument of the people’s culture. That is why countries with a remarkable culture (like France) have set up special institutions to defend and to promote their language. These institutions, run by specialists, carry on the language education begun in schools. The French Academy, for instance, continues to engage in discourse regarding the acceptance of new terminology into the dictionary, as it was the case three hundred years ago (Simion 2021, 24). Nevertheless, there are some segments of the population (such as the journalists) that “do not hesitate – often unconsciously – to replace older, worn-out French words or expressions with new ones from English. Hence the existence of new English words in today’s French, such as ‘cool’, ‘top’, ‘look’, ‘best of’, ‘too much’, and the like” (Grosjean 2010, 61-62).

3.2.1. Factors influencing the ‘meeting’ between Romance languages and English

In light of the aforementioned observations, it can be posited that the linguistic interferences between English and the other four languages under investigation were predominantly influenced by psycho-linguistic and social factors, including context, participants, topic and the purpose of communication. As concerns the first component, i.e. the setting or social context of the interaction (‘where is the communication taking place?’), we have to take into consideration the fact that all the investigated contexts were selections of written language displayed in formal settings. This implies a careful and conscious selection of words on the part of journalists, with very few or no spontaneous interventions, and with the possibility to come back to what has been written for possible corrections or changes. It is interesting to note that, in their writing, many journalists (especially the Spanish ones) have the tendency to flag the foreign English words with quotation marks or italics, as they are aware that the reader might be led astray if this precaution is not taken (Grosjean 2010, 56). In addition, every journalist (as we all do) usually

attempts to use the language that will be the most successful for communication or tries to find the right word ('le mot juste', as one would say in French), and this often motivates the use of an English term instead of a native word. The sociolinguistic environment of journalistic communication also involves language prestige, social integration, media consumption, and speakers' attitudes towards English, all of them having a significant impact on the nature and extent of linguistic interference.

The second social factor is represented by the participants in the communication process, namely, 'who is talking to whom?'. From this perspective, there are, on the one hand, the journalists (the authors of the articles) and, on the other hand, the readers. It is assumed that the journalists are aware of the target audience of the investigated magazines, as this is one of the fundamental principles of journalism. As it is the case with many other professions in the modern era, the journalist job requires knowledge of two or more languages, and language proficiency is very important. The ability to communicate effectively in a multilingual environment is of paramount importance, given the frequency with which journalists are required to interact with individuals who speak more than one language.

The topic and purpose of communication are also important language-choice factors (what is being discussed talked about and why are the participants communicating?). From this point of view, the objective of the beauty articles is to persuade or even manipulate the reader, whereas the intention of the health articles is primarily to provide information. Some topics, such as those pertaining to the Beauty domain are simply better dealt with in English, given that they have a contemporary, youthful, and mostly urban target audience, while those from the Health domain make use of native words, as they target a more mainstream and mature audience. It may be that younger generations and urban populations, who are more exposed to English through social networks and global culture, are more likely to incorporate English influences into their speech as a marker of modern identity. Finally, concerning the function of the interaction, "we should keep in mind that people often communicate to achieve something and not just to pass information along to someone else. Thus there are many instances of choosing a particular language to raise one's status, to create a social distance, to exclude someone, to request something, or to give a command" (Grosjean 2010, 46-47).

In addition to these social factors, the ongoing process of globalization (including language contact) and the political, cultural, or economic developments (especially the advancement of technology) have also had a major impact on the language practices of Italian, Spanish, French, and Romanian speakers. "The process of globalization provides an enabling framework for the incorporation of

terms, expressions and linguistic patterns with international circulation into the Romanian language” (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2006, 24, 25), and this is also available for French, Italian, and Spanish. “The concept of *globalization* is viewed as a political and economic setting, favoring intercultural communication and language contacts between East and West” (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2006, 218). It implies the idea that the pervasive presence of English-language on social media exposes speakers of Romance languages to English, facilitating borrowing and influence. In addition, English is perceived to offer economic opportunities and cultural prestige, and this argument has led speakers of Romance languages to incorporate English terms and expressions in order to align themselves with these advantages.

3.2.2. The implications of linguistic interferences

After having discussed all these factors that motivate the use of English words in the Romance journalistic discourse, I can only briefly present the implications of the linguistic interference phenomenon. Maybe the most relevant consequence is language evolution. By introducing new vocabulary and influencing grammatical structures, the linguistic interference reflects the dynamic nature of language as a living entity.

Many specialized terms, in the Beauty or Health fields, are imported and used in—the investigated Romance languages for ‘advanced knowledge’. For instance, in the advertising articles, “English loanwords are employed in order to create new images of ‘old things’. In this way, the use of English loanwords in the naming of products can promote images of ‘a sophisticated western lifestyle’ and/or of ‘internationalisation’” (McKenzie 2010, 14). My analysis clearly demonstrates that the growing influence of English as a result of the globalization process contributes to the enrichment, modernization, and internationalization of the present-day French, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish vocabulary.

As a natural consequence, the influence of English gives rise to debates between those who adopt a purist approach to language, resisting borrowing in order to preserve linguistic integrity, and those who view language as a dynamic and evolving entity. In the end, these disagreements can be solved through a tolerant approach to borrowing and by considering Crystal’s theory (2000, 18) about the possible coexistence of two ‘opposite needs’: the need for national and cultural identity and the need for mutual intelligibility (Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2006, 221).

Another implication is, undoubtedly, the impact on communication in general, as well as on social relationships, because the interferences highlight the complex interplay between language and identity. This leads to another consequence, i.e. language education. An awareness of the impact of English on

the global linguistic landscape is crucial for the development of effective language education policies. These policies must strike a balance between the teaching of global English and the preservation and promotion of Romance languages.

4. Conclusions

The present study underscores the intricate relationship between Romance languages and English in the online media discourse. The aim of this research was to investigate and objectively present a real linguistic phenomenon, which is becoming more and more prominent, without expressing a personal opinion for or against. It was not the intention of this study to provide arguments or counterarguments in support of or in opposition to the opinions already formulated by linguists about 'Anglicization'. Rather, the aim was to conduct a comparative analysis of the corpus data and to identify the potential motivations behind the ways in which journalists adapt their linguistic practices when English *meets* Romance languages.

The results of the corpus analysis revealed the presence of English borrowings in all four investigated languages, with a prevalence in Italian, and French, regardless of the domain (Beauty or Health articles). As it has been demonstrated, the phenomenon of Anglicization exists in all investigated languages, and our attitude towards this phenomenon must be one of tolerance, acceptance of an inevitable reality, and understanding of the mechanisms/causes that triggered it and the factors that maintain and/or develop it. Following Jenkins (2009, 39), it might be considered that "beneficial or not, for the time being English as Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as an International Language (EIL) as it is still sometimes known, is a fact of life".

The use of English words in online media discourse is motivated, on the one hand, by sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors (such as the participants, the content and the context of their communication), and, on the other hand, by the very complex phenomenon of globalization, which implies linguistic contact and technological progress. The study also suggests potential new avenues of inquiry for researchers in the field, emphasizing the importance of undertaking more comprehensive comparative studies using the data available from numerous genetically related languages within the Romance language area. I believe that these studies will not only contribute to the development of overarching theories of variation and change and to the study of sociolinguistic norms, but will also address important aspects of language policy, such as the preservation and

promotion of linguistic diversity in an era of increased travel and migration, as well as issues related to globalization and the spread of English.

In the end, I accept the idea that the influence of English on Romance languages is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and the entire article reinforces the concept of language as a *living entity*, having a dynamic nature and a great power in a globalized world.

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