



## ARTICLE

# The Influence of Anglicism on French Language——Enrichment or Danger

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: 13 July 2020

Revised: 20 July 2020

Accepted: 24 July 2020

Published Online: 31 July 2020

#### Keywords:

Anglicism

Linguistic

Target language

### ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of Anglicism is one of the hot linguistic topics which exists in almost every language in the world, especially in the French language. We look back to the history of English and French, and introduce the definition and classification of Anglicism. Considering the predominant place of the UK and the USA in many fields, the English language undoubtedly becomes Lingua franca in recent years.

In certain high-tech domains, there are some irreplaceable words or the words which can't be translated properly in the target language. In order to introduce relative concepts, we have to ask the original language for help. That's how the Anglicism appears. And since then, the Anglicism has grown rapidly.

By analyzing the history of the two languages, the origin of Anglicism and its development, we try to find out whether the phenomenon of Anglicism causes positive or negative effects for the French language.

## 1. Introduction

The French and English languages maintain innumerable links for historical reasons, and there is always a phenomenon of borrowing words between the two. But this phenomenon has gradually tilted to one side over the last century, the influence of English on French is much greater than that of French on English, and the Anglicization of French language is becoming more evident.

In this paper, we firstly define and classify Anglicism. Secondly, we present the main causes of Anglicism and have a general idea of its influence on the French language. At last, we would like to analyze this complex and changing phenomenon and try to find out whether it is an enrichment or a danger for the French language.

## 2. Anglicism Et Its Classification

Here is an advertisement in the Parisian street, “*Sur présentation de ce ticket, un sandwich offert pour un menu maxi best of acheté. Offre valable au restaurant, it means* “When you buy the maxi menu and present this ticket in the restaurant, a sandwich will be offered for free.”

With the increase of English-speaking media and the global spread of American culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, many English terms have incorporated popular usage into other languages. With the globalization, the language also experiences the same case.

According to linguists, anglicism is an English word used in a wrong way instead of the correct French word. Or an English term, or influenced by English, the frequency of the use of which is high enough to be considered as

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being integrated (good or bad) into the French lexicon and therefore be listed in dictionaries and glossaries.

There are six kinds of anglicisms.

(1) The Semantic Anglicism: it is the attribution to a French word of a meaning which it has only in English (false friends), or the literal translation of an English idiom. *As vol domestique for vol intérieur*<sup>[1]</sup>.

(2) The Lexical Anglicism: words or expressions borrowed from English, such as *feedback*<sup>[2]</sup>.

(3) The Syntactic Anglicism: copy of the syntactic constructions of English, *être en charge de (in charge of): être chargé de*<sup>[3]</sup>.

(4) The Morphological Anglicism: these are errors in word formation (*genre, suffixations, etc.*), *les actifs d'une société (the assets): l'actif*<sup>[4]</sup>.

(5) The Phonetic Anglicism: a pronunciation error, *cent (Canadian dollar or euro) pronounced / sent*<sup>[5]</sup>.

(6) The Graphic anglicism: it is the use of an orthography or a typography which follows the Anglo-Saxon usage<sup>[6]</sup>.

Finally, it is the use of the decimal point instead of the comma and the English quotation marks “?” instead of the French quotation marks”.

### 3. The History of Anglicism

In fact, Anglicism is not a new term: in the 16th century, the French experienced a wave of words imported from Britain. In the 18th century, American English vocabulary were added, known as Anglo-Americanism, which was introduced into the language by travel stories.

#### 3.1 Where Does Anglicism Come From?

The concept of Anglicism does not come from a scholar, but from a freelancer who defended every word in his language. In the early 20th century, the eastern part of Quebec, a region of Quebec located near the American states of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, were predominantly English-speaking. For the French-speaking families who settled there, resisting the contagion of English was a tough task, as testified by Father Étienne Blanchard, parish priest of Weedon and language columnist for the newspaper *La Tribune de Sherbrooke*. It is worth noting that today's French are under the same threat as they were in Weedon in 1912: “the French, the Walloons, the Moroccans actually and virtually deported the United States, carrying a baggage of Anglicism to escape customs.”

“The greatest danger to Canadian-French nationality is Anglicism. Have we successfully resisted Anglicization by political means and by violence? As the penetration of

Anglicism is dull and peaceful, we cannot resist it. It is an enemy who watches us and watches us everywhere. Every time he manage to creep into our language and dethrone a French word, he will wave his hands in a triumphant way. To dominate us, it takes the wide open path of books, newspapers, magazines, commercial catalogs, fashion magazines, advertising circulars, etc.”

#### 3.2 The Status of English after World War II

The political, economic, social and military situation inherited from the Second World War made the English language an unprecedented position in the history of world language. It is carried by an exceptional economic-political power. We hear more Anglo-Americanism than Anglicism in the French language. This dominant English is more American than British. Recent technological inventions or concepts are often baptized from words of English technical jargon. Consequently, non-English speaking countries hesitate to create words in the same way as the English speakers, and adopt words with English etymology. The social and economic supremacy of the United States, from which flows a powerful “cultural” hegemony, has made English, in a few decades, the indisputable universal language of communication. There are hardly any precedents for this socio-linguistic situation, except for the case of Latin, from the end of Antiquity to the Renaissance.

The English language sometimes, tends to totally colonize the workplace even in French speaking countries. In some big French companies and banks, meetings among managers are held in English with French accent. This is how the jargons are anglicized imperceptibly. Some ministries also accept that the European Union to submit the documents in English and they will respond in the same language. Some administrations accept, formally or informally, foreign documents written in English, at the same time, they require all documents written in languages other than French to be certified-translated, which is quite spiny for European countries. For example, a candidate from the United States is easier and cheaper than a candidate from Germany.

#### 3.3 The Development of Frenglish

Affected by Anglicism, there are more and more anglicized words in French, and the frenglish appears. The *Franglais* (sometimes in English *Frenglish*), portemanteau word created from both French and English, designates the use of strongly anglicized French, in written or oral expression.<sup>[1]</sup> It is frequently served as a foil to the proponents of the purity of French, against the invasion of

Anglicism.

The term “franglais” was created by the grammarian Max Rat and was used for the first time in an article on *France-Soir* published in 1959. It became popular following the publication of “Parlez-vous franglais?” in 1964 by René Étiemble, a French writer. He became the spokesperson, “the” critic of Anglo-Saxon influences, for these concerns by publishing this book. There are various reasons to explain the development of Frenglish: (1) the regression of Greek and Latin in studies, (2) the hegemony of English as a language of international communication, (3) cultural mimicry.

A distinction is made between well-established English borrowings into French, and other words and structures regarded as incorrect.

Occasionally governments of both Quebec and France have undertaken strenuous efforts to eradicate Anglicism, with some success, although in modern times there has been a more relaxed attitude. Sometimes a new word is coined in French that succeeds in replacing the Anglicism — for instance, *logiciel* (“software”).

However, the Académie française’s directives don’t always consider appropriate; for instance, it has decreed that “online chat” be replaced by *causette* or *parlotte*, but these are terms for “chat” that are not commonly used. In Quebec, a different solution has been found to translate “online chat.” The word *clavardage* is increasingly gaining acceptance. This neologism is a portmanteau word coined from the words *clavier* (“keyboard”) and *bavardage* (“chat”); an English equivalent portmanteau might be “keyversation.”

Quebec French and European French tend to have entirely different Anglicism for historical reasons. Quebec French acquired its Anglicism in a gradual process of linguistic borrowings, resulting from living among and alongside English speakers for two and a half centuries since the Battle of the Plains of Abraham of 1759. European French, on the other hand, mostly adopted its Anglicism in recent decades due to the post-Second World War international dominance of English. Furthermore, the use of English words is less of a mark of “coolness” in Quebec than in France. Thus, the people of Quebec and France often consider each other’s Anglicism to be incorrect or humorous while considering their own to be perfectly normal. In Quebec, Anglicism never appears in formal documentation (government papers, instruction sheets) and rarely used in informal writing (magazines, journals). Where the use of an Anglicism is unavoidable, it is generally written in italics.

An example of a European French Anglicism not used in Quebec: *sweat*: short for *sweatshirt*, but pronounced like the English word “sweet”. An example of

a Quebec French Anglicism not used in France: *frencher*: to French kiss.

There are also some words that were borrowed from English into French centuries ago, such as *clown* (pronounced “kloon”), *square* (meaning “public square”) or *spleen* (meaning “melancholy” rather than the organ). These are not considered Anglicism but are fully accepted as French words by the Académie française.

In young generations, English tends to acquire the status of prestige language to the detriment of the mother tongue, in the same way that French enjoys the status of prestige language in French-speaking African countries, to the detriment of the local languages. We can say that it is a kind of linguistic invasion or contamination. The use of Anglicism has experienced a very significant development in France since the 2000, and leads to a lesser interest for the defense of French language.

The influence of English exists in other languages as well. For example in German there is *denglisch*, in Spanish there is *spanglish*, etc. This invasion is always opposite the purists.

## 4. Reasons for the Popularity of Anglicism

### 4.1 Internal Causes

So we wonder why Anglicism becomes so widespread?

Le français est une langue vivante qui a besoin d’oxygène: l’usage. Nous ne devons pas l’empêcher de respirer et de grandir. Chacun sa place, chacun sa tour. Depuis des siècles, des évolutions s’imposent. Elle s’est enrichie tout au long de l’histoire. On peut distinguer plusieurs périodes.

French is a living language that needs oxygen: usage. We cannot prevent it from breathing and growing. Everyone has its turn and Changes happen. The French language has been enriched throughout the history, which can be divided into several periods.

In the Middle Ages, two major events came to influence French: the crusades and the Latin translations. The crusades borrow from the Arabic language technical terms, in the fields of medicine, chemistry, mathematics and astronomy: zero, number, alcohol which are widely used in medicine.

The 16th century was marked by a strong Italian influence, the 17th century with borrowings from Spanish vocabularies. At the beginning of the 18th century, there was an opening towards the Anglo-Saxons. The words borrowed mainly related to the specific terms of their lifestyle. Since then, it is from our English and American neighbors that we draw our inspiration.

In fact, by the end of the 14th century, when Anglo

mania was in vogue somewhere, French used its words to designate a construction, however unknown in France and Europe at that moment, by manufacturing “gratte-ciel”, imitation of the American expression sky-scraper. It is a similar case at present, the American expressions are taken up by the media, without any translation reaction.

## 4.2 External Causes

Each phenomenon has its origin. Anglicism is not an exception. There are economic, socio-cultural, geographic and demographic factors. All of them play an important role in the language.

### 4.2.1 The Most Popular Factor: Politics

For example in Canada, English speakers have a prestigious status in society, but the cultural and socio-political situation of French speakers reflect the lack of power in politics and economy, etc.

### 4.2.2 Economic Factor

The more a language is used in different sectors of economic and financial activities, the higher its economic capital becomes. After the Second World War, the English-speaking countries became increasingly strong in almost all aspects, especially the United States. The American or British techniques, the economic policies occupy a predominant place in the world market, as well as the American culture. In Quebec, French takes a lower position than English in economic life and the French speakers, although majority, occupy the bottom of the income scale.

In trade, it's almost the same thing: booster les ventes meets much more often than pousser les ventes, or even promouvoir les ventes. Similarly, “top” is used at every end of the sentence while there are *sommet*, *fait*, *comble*, *sumum*, *apogée*, *zénith*, *cime*, *pinacle*, *plus haut de*, *au mieux de* in French. “un PC au top de la technologie”, (the best of), “You’re on top, ma fille” (in top shape, beautiful, radiant), “Une solution tip-top” (ad hoc, ideal, perfectly adapted), etc.<sup>[1]</sup> The trademarks, the company and services follow the vogue as well: FashionShopping.com, Actus People, LiveTransport, Top announcements, Top music, Must Institute, Creditmust, Best of Dordogne Périgord.<sup>[2]</sup>

In business management, the monthly operating report of the marketing department (sales promotion) accelerates the fall in stock options (purchase options or optional actions) of the staff (staff in office).

### 4.2.3 Media

The media include radio, television, music, movie, vid-

eotape, newspaper, book and magazine, etc. Globally, English is the language for most social, political and economic environment. In professional activities, English is used as a language of international diffusion. In recent years, Internet has become very popular and it seems that English is the only language on the Internet. It is a fact that cannot be denied.

On the Internet, we often get the following expressions:

Newsletter (and its partial francisation newsletter) = lettre d’information, bulletin d’information,

Spam = pourriel

Spamming = pollupostage

Messenger = messenger, messagerie instantanée

Chatroom = salon, bavardoir

Shopping = achats, magasinage (faire du shopping = faire les boutiques)

news = nouvelles, infos, actualités,

Webmaster = webmestre, administrateur de site

Home = accueil

Home page = page d’accueil, page d’ouverture

Podcast = balado

Podcasting = (tronc. de pod broadcasting, litt. *diffusion de capsules*) diffusion pour baladeur, baladodiffusion, baladiffusion, livraison de pizzas audio (humoristique)

Most French websites offer menus in Frenglish. However, on the quebécois personal pages, the use of the terms courriel, clavardage et webmestre is more and more frequent, but this is not the case for spam and podcasting. For the professional webs (TV channels, radios, companies, etc.), they officially use these terms.

In IT, the word “logiciel” has the same meaning as “software” in English, but the professionals use overwhelmingly the English expression. Let’s take a look at the predominant English terms: *Je reboote (redémarre, voire Je fais un hard boot) pour que les drivers (pilotes) que je viens d’updater (de mettre à jour) soient loadés (chargés) sans que le système ne bugue.*<sup>[1]</sup>

As the time goes on, the French vocabulary tends to replace the initial Anglicism since the corresponding concepts become sufficiently familiar. Words like “logiciel” (on the model of “matériel”) have also been adopted by the public (without however dislodging hardware and software from professionals and technicians).

## 5. Anglicized then Re-Frenchified Words

Many anglicized words that we find today are in fact the terms that were borrowed from us a few centuries ago. We consider that to retrieve these terms today is to take back what belong to us.

So we say, languages enrich each other. If the French language currently borrows a lot from English for the

reasons explained above, the opposite has been true as well in the past (in particular with the invasion of England by William the Conqueror in 1066 and the possession of vast provinces on the territory of the old France during the Middle Ages, by the crown of England). The English language contains many Gallicisms, some of them gave birth to new words employed by the French speakers, and we call it re-borrowings.

Here are some examples:

E-mail (abbreviation. of electronic mail, courrier électronique or courriel), the word mail comes from malle-poste.

Marketing: market, marché;

Management: ménagement already disused, instead of gestion;

Rosbif comes from roasted beef, bœuf rôti (the English word is originated French, beef is for the meat served on the table, and the Anglo-Saxon word “ox” is for the live animal);

Roasted comes from the old French rosté (instead of cooked, more idiomatic), because of the fact that the new masters of England after 1066 imposed their table language but left their servants free to speak theirs in work.

Tennis comes from the French word *tenez*, it is an expression in the Palm Game, ancestor of tennis taken over by English, then changed the word “tenez” into tennis;

Cash evolved from the french word *caisse*;

Interview comes from *entrevue*, the meaning of the word have evolved since the interview is intended for an audience, whereas the interview is more general.

Test is borrowed directly from the old French “test” which designated a pot used for testing gold.

## 6. Different Opinions of Anglicism

### 6.1 The Favorable Reasons

For those who prefer *Franglais*, there are various reasons.

First of all, it’s the worldliness. For example: *faisons un break (une pause) et passons par la back door prendre un drink (de préférence un soft drink, sans alcool) au lounge, dont j’ai connu le barman sur le backstage d’un happening des plus in particulièrement cool, et non dans un backroom du Queen, contrairement au gossip répandu dans les forums de chat*, etc.<sup>[1]</sup> It cause the need to keep up to date, to be connected, often by seeking to neutralize negative judgments associated by the vulgars:

Making of (les coulisses du tournage),

Serial killer (assassin multirécidiviste = monstre),

Coming out (confession d’homosexualité = culpabilité,

délit),

Coach (entraîneur, conseiller, contremaître, maître, seigneur, sergent-chef),

Un black (un Noir = un nègre, avec même euphémisme de second degré en keubla (verlan pour black)).

With the American influence, the euphemism is however ambiguous, even paradoxical, to avoid the term “black” in the phrase “I have a black colleague”, even the expression “of color”.

Under the multilingual cultural environment, it is easier even among the French speakers to use English words directly to avoid searching for the proper word in their own mother tongue.

French graphy	agenda	agressif,ve	confus	cotation	domestique	réaliser
English graphy	agenda	aggressive	confused	quotation	domestic	realise

The *franglais* meets the need of some French peopole to get used to the modernity model.

### 6.2 Opinions against Anglicism

The French people share divided opinions on the measures vis-à-vis the proliferation of Anglicism in their language. The concerns and private positions in favor of the protectionist attitude have preceded far the definition of a state attitude.

We tried to show that the prevention of the contamination of French by English is a question that cannot be confused with the question of the expansion of English as an international language. The extension of the role of English in global communication and its undisputed preeminence as a reference language in many vital fields for modern societies can’t be ignored. It depends on the French community that this situation could change in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, it is likely that this role devolved to English will go on increasing.

The role of English rests on the economic, political and military power of a nation, and the world aspires to a transnational language.

### 6.3 Measures against Anglicism

The fight against *Franglais* provokes lively debates, and the opinions are divided. Despite all, the French speakers have done a lot to protect the purity of the French language. Because French has long been considered the language with the strictest grammar. The influences of Anglicisms on the language is noticeable in translation, especially in the media because of the false friends and expressions copied from English: *J’ai une opportunité*

*d'emploi (opportunity) pour possibilité d'emploi*. In IT for example, library is translated to “*librairie*” instead of “*bibliothèque*”, implemented as “*implémenté*” instead of “*appliqué*” “*réalisé*” or “*mis en œuvre*”.

The language legislation is a phenomenon as old as the languages themselves. Since the Treaty of Paris (1763), there has been a mixture of measures sometimes tolerant, sometimes repressive vis-à-vis the French language. We need a strong language policy to control the areas and conditions of speaking French.

The Act of Official Languages 1969 represents a linguistic development that, in Canada, French and English enjoy equal status.

The Act of Quebec 1774 (Law 22) provides guarantees for the use of the language.

The Charter of the French language (law 101), adapted on August 26, 1977, imposes five principles to enhance the status of French. It consolidated the status of the French language, and established the Superior Council of the French language and the Commission of Toponymie. The mission of the French Language Protection Commission is to ensure the compliance with the Charter of the French language.

## 7. Representative Figures and Organizations against Anglicism

### 7.1 Representative Figures

The French speakers, at least some of them, complained that their language was invaded by foreign words

Henry Estienne is a great denouncer of linguistic prejudices of his time. His most important text in this field is “Two Dialogues of the New French Language”, italianized and well disguised, mainly among the courtiers of that time (1578). Estienne was a Calvinist and the general Italophobia sometimes show the Calvinists’ hatred for the papacy. In other words, Estienne was a French puritan the same as a purist. He is also a perfect example of the “anti-court” characteristic trend at that moment. In fact, the court is Catherine de Medici, most often held responsible for the massacre of Saint Barthélemy. Estienne and the French Protestants did not just criticize the papacy and Machiavelli, they also attacked Castiglione. They viewed his dialogue “The Courtier” (1528), which filled with advice on how courtiers should express themselves, as a guide of hypocrisy, simulation and flattery (Burke 1995). In addition, Estienne was a printer, therefore he personally involved in the processes of fixing and standardizing linguistic forms, which made a significant contribution to the printing industry.

There is also Malherbe. In the 17th century in France,

from a purism in response to the change of Purism, in other words, a hostile response to the addition of foreign words, rather than a pure linguistic theory. Having lived in Aix, he wanted to set the French free from its southern influences, as he said, to “degasconner” the language. Calling himself a “tyrant of words”, he set out to oppose Latinisms, archaisms, patois and technical terms, thus fighting on two fronts: against the academic language and against the popular language. He would have said, on his deathbed, that he wanted “to maintain the purity of the French language” [1]. In every case, the critic Jean Chapelain will say to him and his successors that they “seek the purity of the French language”.

The lists of terms adopted are diffused in the form of brochures, published by the Official Journal. They then become compulsory employment for the State services and the public establishments, as well as in the cases predicted by the law of August 4, 1994 relating to the use of the French language. For example, the words *remue-ménages* (2000) and *courriel* (2003) have been proposed to replace brainstorming and email. We can consult the terms published on the website of the French General Delegation.

### 7.2 Organizations

In the countries where the mother tongue is French, the protection against Anglicism exists for a long time. For example in France, since the 1970s, the government has been working on fixing the official terminology by regulation after consulting the ministerial terminology commissions, specifying the foreign terms to avoid. This is how the word “*logiciel*”, proposed by Philippe Renard to the IT committee in 1970, replaced the English term “software” in less than ten years, while the word “*baladeur*”, designed by the committee of audiovisual and advertising in 1983, replaced “walkman”. The word “*informatique*” itself is a neologism created in 1962 by Philippe Dreyfus, contraction of the terms “information” and “automatique”, which has no exact equivalent in English, we find similar concepts, like information technology, computer science or data processing.

The decree of July 3, 1996 has profoundly reformed the system of enriching the lexicon of the French language which existed until then. The General Committee for Terminology and Neology is under direction of the Prime Minister, this committee coordinates terminology work, in conjunction with various partners, such as the French Academy, the Academy of Sciences, the French Association for Standardization (Afnor), the National Institute of the French Language (CNRS-INLF) and other terminology commissions from French-speaking

countries, such as the Quebec French language Office.

In Quebec, the French language Office (OLF) and the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs were created on March 24, 1961. On October 1, 2002, the OLF became the Quebec French language Office. Its role is to ensure that French is the language of work, communications, commerce and business in administration. OLF published an online dictionary, the Grand terminological dictionary, giving the French equivalent English or Latin terms in 200 fields of activity. It also offers the alternatives of more than 150 commonly used Anglicism and indicates the false friends.

Each year, the association “Defense of the French language”, a parody academy, awards the Price de la carpette anglaise to a member of the French elites who, according to their jury, distinguished himself by an initiative of promoting English to the detriment of French in France and in the European institutions.

## 8. Conclusion

Based on the reasons above, the Anglicism maintain a changing phenomenon. There is always an implicit or explicit judgment on its status in the language field, whether we like it or not. Few linguists would deny this evidence. There are, however, renowned linguists who declare that they have no opinion concerning the Anglicism by saying “borrowing from other languages is part of the normal process of language evolution”.<sup>[1]</sup> It is a little stupid to consider that any contribution made by the United States, such as language, technique and way of life, is negative and harmful, than to consider that these contributions are a progress by definition. Although the use of the English language facilitates the communication all over the world, it should be controlled. In my opinion, this phenomenon can be considered as a relative enrichment for the French language provided that we pay attention to the limit of use.

There is a passage About the French Language in our third year textbook. In this passage, we talk a lot about

the influences of Anglicism on French language. If it is difficult to understand the works written centuries ago, it might be caused by the language development, there are great differences between ancient and modern French. It’s understandable. However, if we do not even understand the articles published several years ago, and when we communicate with old people, they find it difficult to understand us because we abuse the Anglicism in French language. What shall we do? Will French language disappear?

In my opinion, acceptance does not mean replacement. Being a francophone, we are against the over mixed French, in order to avoid too much obstacle in the communication. Otherwise, we are complicating something which is simple. With regard to protecting the purity of French and the improvement of the English assimilation rate, it is better to promote the teaching of French.

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