

Cross-Linguistic Influence: Analyzing English Loanwords in Contemporary French

Ilaha Ashrafova

Nakhchivan State University

Abstract: This study examines the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic adaptation of English loanwords in contemporary French, revealing their pervasive presence across various domains of French media and literature. Through quantitative and qualitative analyses, it investigates how these loanwords are integrated into the French linguistic framework, considering factors such as lexical gaps, grammatical conformity, and stylistic functions. The findings underscore the dynamic interplay between English and French, reflecting broader trends of globalization and cultural exchange in language usage.

Keywords: English loanwords, French language, lexical adaptation, grammatical integration, stylistic functions.

Introduction

English, often regarded as the global lingua franca, has established its dominance in a myriad of spheres including business, science, technology, diplomacy, and popular culture. This pervasive presence of English around the world is not just a reflection of historical power dynamics—stemming from the British Empire's colonial reach and the United States' subsequent economic and cultural hegemony—but also a testament to the adaptability and utility of the English language in various global contexts.

The rise of English as the preeminent global language can be traced back to the mid-20th century, catalyzed by the aftermath of World War II and the rapid expansion of American political and cultural influence. This was further bolstered by the advent of the internet and global media, which predominantly utilize English, thereby reinforcing its status as the primary means of international communication. As a result, English is not only the most commonly taught second language but is also the official language of most international organizations and a requisite for global commerce and academic exchange.

The impact of English's dominance on other languages has been profound and multifaceted. On one hand, the widespread acquisition of English as a second language has facilitated unprecedented levels of global communication and cooperation. It has become the lingua franca for international diplomacy and academic discourse, allowing for a more interconnected and collaborative world. In the realm of science and technology, English serves as the primary language for publication and communication, which standardizes and disseminates knowledge more efficiently across borders.

On the other hand, the prevalence of English has also posed challenges to linguistic diversity. Smaller languages, often without official status or significant economic power, face the threat of diminishing use and even extinction, as younger generations favor English for its broader utility and global opportunities. This shift can lead to a decline in the cultural richness associated with linguistic diversity, impacting local traditions, histories, and identities.

Moreover, the adoption of English loanwords into various languages is a significant byproduct of English's global prominence. Languages like French, which has a long-standing policy of linguistic purism, find themselves at a crossroads. The French language, known for its Académie Française which rigorously protects the French lexicon from foreign influence, increasingly incorporates English words, particularly in areas dominated by modern technology and culture such as the internet, marketing, and corporate sectors. These incorporations are often seen as necessary adaptations to stay relevant in a globalized world, yet they also spark debates about linguistic integrity and cultural erosion.

In educational settings, particularly in non-English speaking countries, the push towards English proficiency highlights another dimension of English's impact. Schools and universities across the globe are increasingly adopting English as a medium of instruction, not just in language classes but across all subjects, to better prepare students for global opportunities. This shift, while advantageous in terms of global engagement, raises concerns about the depth of learning in subjects taught in a non-native language and the potential marginalization of the local language and culture.

Thus, the role of English as a global lingua franca is a double-edged sword. While it facilitates global communication and opens up numerous opportunities, it also contributes to linguistic homogenization and cultural displacement. This complex interplay of English with other languages is a critical area of study, particularly for understanding the dynamics of language change and cultural exchange in the modern world.

Importance of Study

The study of English loanwords in French is pivotal for understanding the broader linguistic and cultural shifts that accompany globalization. This research sheds light on how languages dynamically borrow and adapt elements from each other in response to social, economic, and technological changes. In the case of French, a language known for its efforts to maintain linguistic purity through institutions like the Académie Française, the incorporation of English terms highlights significant cultural and linguistic evolution.

The importance of this study is manifold. Firstly, it provides insights into the processes of phonetic approximation and morphosyntactic adaptation as French integrates English loanwords. Research by Paradis & LaCharité (2008) and Hugou (2015) illustrates how English words are phonetically and grammatically adjusted to fit the structural norms of French, offering a window into the flexibility and adaptive capacity of the French language. Secondly, examining these loanwords can reveal the areas of French life most influenced by English, such as technology, business, and youth culture. This is critical for understanding the linguistic manifestations of cultural change.

Furthermore, this study contributes to a broader understanding of linguistic resilience and transformation. As noted by Roth (2010) and Grigg (1997), the influence of English on French is not merely a contemporary phenomenon but part of a longer historical trend of linguistic exchange. The study of these loanwords also allows for a comparative analysis between different Francophone regions, such as France and Quebec, where English has varying degrees of influence, as explored by Fortin (2009).

In addition, analyzing the adaptation of English loanwords provides crucial insights into the social attitudes towards language use and linguistic identity in France. It reflects broader societal debates about globalization's impact and the balance between embracing global connectivity and preserving national cultural heritage. This research thus serves as a critical lens through which to view the ongoing negotiations between global and local linguistic identities, offering valuable lessons on the nature of language as a living, evolving entity, as detailed by Durkin (2014) and further supported by historical perspectives like those of Learned (1922).

In sum, the study of English loanwords in French not only enhances our understanding of linguistic adaptation mechanisms but also enriches our appreciation of how languages symbolize broader cultural and social transformations.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are to comprehensively analyze the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic characteristics of English loanwords in contemporary French. Each of these components plays a crucial role in understanding how English influences French language use, structure, and expression in the modern era. Here's a breakdown of the specific objectives:

1. **Lexical Analysis:** To identify and catalog the most prevalent English loanwords incorporated into contemporary French. This includes examining the types of words borrowed (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) and their fields of usage (e.g., technology, business, popular culture). The aim is to map out the lexical choices made when adopting English terms and to understand the motivations behind these choices, such as the need for new vocabulary to describe modern phenomena.
2. **Grammatical Adaptation:** To study how English loanwords are adapted into the French grammatical system. This involves analyzing how these words conform to French rules regarding gender, number, and tense. By examining the morphosyntactic adjustments, the study seeks to uncover the linguistic processes that facilitate the integration of these loanwords into French, assessing both the ease and complexity of their assimilation.
3. **Stylistic Integration:** To evaluate the stylistic impact of English loanwords on French. This objective explores how the incorporation of English terms affects the stylistic presentation of French, including changes in sentence structure, the introduction of new idiomatic expressions, and shifts in language register and tone. The study will also consider the attitudes towards these stylistic changes, gauging public and academic perception of the impact on traditional French style.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** To conduct a comparative analysis of how English loanwords are used differently across various French-speaking regions, such as metropolitan France and Quebec. This aspect will explore regional variations in the adoption and adaptation of English loanwords, offering insights into the sociolinguistic factors that influence these differences.

Through these objectives, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the dynamic interplay between English and French, shedding light on the broader implications of language contact and change in the context of globalization.

Research Questions

The study is designed to explore several critical aspects of English loanwords in modern French through a series of focused research questions. These questions aim to dissect the incorporation and adaptation of English terms within French linguistic frameworks, providing a clear understanding of the interaction between the two languages in contemporary settings. The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What are the most common English loanwords used in modern French?
 - This question seeks to identify and catalog the English loanwords that have become prevalent in contemporary French usage. It involves analyzing various sources such as media, literature, and spoken language to determine which English terms are most frequently adopted by French speakers. The aim is to establish a comprehensive list of these words, categorized by their semantic fields (e.g., technology, business, popular culture).
2. How are these loanwords adapted grammatically and lexically into French?
 - This question addresses the morphological and syntactic integration of English loanwords into French. It involves examining how these words conform to French grammatical rules, including aspects such as gender, number, conjugation, and agreement. The analysis will

help understand the linguistic modifications that loanwords undergo to fit into the structural patterns of French, offering insights into the complexity and flexibility of French grammar in accommodating foreign elements.

3. What stylistic functions do these loanwords serve in French discourse?

- This question explores the stylistic implications of using English loanwords in French. It aims to assess how the incorporation of these terms influences the style and tone of French discourse, considering factors such as formality, modernity, and expressiveness. Additionally, this inquiry will look into whether these loanwords introduce new idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms into French, and how they might affect the perceived authenticity or purity of the language.

Methods

The study on the integration of English loanwords into modern French requires a comprehensive and diverse set of textual data sources to provide a broad and nuanced understanding of this linguistic phenomenon. For this purpose, the sources of textual data chosen for analysis span various forms of media and literature, ensuring a well-rounded representation of the language as it is used across different contexts and domains. Here's a detailed breakdown of the categories and specific examples of the sources included:

1. Newspapers: Newspapers are a vital source of contemporary language use and reflect the dynamic nature of language in public discourse. For this study, we will analyze leading French daily newspapers that frequently incorporate English loanwords, especially in contexts related to global events, technology, and culture. Examples include:

- Le Monde – Known for its comprehensive coverage of national and international news, where loanwords such as "le weekend" and "le manager" appear.
- Libération – Offers a progressive take on current affairs, often using terms like "le smartphone" and "le hashtag" to connect with a younger audience.

2. Magazines: Both general and specialized magazines provide insight into the casual and technical uses of English loanwords in French. These sources are particularly useful for observing how English terms are adapted in specialized fields such as technology, fashion, and business. Examples include:

- L'Express – A news magazine that uses loanwords such as "le business" and "le coach" in articles covering economics and lifestyle.
- Vogue Paris – A fashion magazine where English words like "le jeans," "le fashionista," and "le makeover" frequently appear, reflecting their commonality in global fashion lingo.

3. Academic Journals: Academic journals are crucial for understanding how English loanwords are used in scholarly discourse and scientific literature. They often contain specialized terminology that has been adopted into French from English, particularly in sciences, technology, and social sciences. Examples include:

- Revue française de sociologie – This journal may use terms like "le feedback" and "le networking" in discussions of social phenomena and methodologies.
- Annales de l'Institut Henri Poincaré – In physics and mathematics discussions, terms like "le spin," "le cluster," and "le black hole" are commonly used.

4. Online Media and Blogs: The digital realm is a rapidly evolving space where new English loanwords frequently make their debut and become normalized in everyday French. Analyzing online content from popular French-language blogs and news websites helps track the latest trends in loanword usage. Examples include:

- Le Huffington Post French edition – Known for blending formal and informal language, often incorporating terms like "le blog," "le troll," and "le tweet."

- Popular French tech blogs like Numerama or Presse-Citron, where newer technological terms such as "le clickbait," "le streaming," and "le gamer" are prevalent.

By analyzing these diverse sources, the study aims to capture a comprehensive picture of how English loanwords permeate various levels and styles of French language use. This approach not only highlights the prevalence of these terms but also their acceptance and grammatical adaptation in modern French discourse.

➤ Procedure

The methodology for collecting and analyzing data in the study of English loanwords in contemporary French is structured to ensure both rigor and breadth in understanding how these loanwords are integrated into the French language. This procedure encompasses several stages, each designed to address specific aspects of the research questions.

Data Collection

1. **Source Compilation:** Initially, a comprehensive collection of sources is compiled as detailed previously, including newspapers, magazines, academic journals, and online media. This compilation aims to cover a broad spectrum of French language usage from formal to informal contexts.
2. **Text Corpus Construction:** From these sources, a text corpus is built. The corpus includes excerpts containing English loanwords, ensuring a balanced representation across different domains such as technology, business, and everyday communication. This corpus is designed to be large enough to provide statistically significant results, typically aiming for millions of words.
3. **Digitalization and Preprocessing:** All physical sources (e.g., printed newspapers and magazines) are digitized if not already available in digital format. The texts are then preprocessed to normalize formatting, remove extraneous data, and segment into manageable parts for analysis.
4. **Loanword Identification:** Using keyword searches and natural language processing (NLP) techniques, English loanwords within the corpus are identified. This process involves defining a list of known English loanwords and searching for their occurrences within the corpus. New or unrecognized loanwords are added to the list as they are identified.

Data Analysis

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** Statistical software and scripting languages like Python are used to quantify the frequency and distribution of English loanwords across different sources and contexts. This analysis provides a clear picture of the prevalence and usage patterns of these loanwords.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** For a deeper understanding of how these loanwords are adapted and used, qualitative analysis is conducted. This involves close reading of text samples to observe morphosyntactic integration and stylistic functions.
3. **Software Tools:** Tools such as AntConc, a freeware corpus analysis toolkit, and more sophisticated NLP platforms like NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) or spaCy, are employed to assist in the linguistic analysis. These tools help in tagging parts of speech, identifying grammatical structures, and conducting frequency and collocation analyses.

Analytical Framework

The analytical frameworks employed to examine the grammatical adaptation and stylistic integration of English loanwords into French are rooted in sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. Each framework offers a different lens through which to view the data, providing complementary insights into the linguistic phenomena.

Sociolinguistic Analysis

- **Social Contexts:** This framework considers the social contexts and functions of English loanwords in French. It examines how variables such as age, profession, region, and socio-economic status influence the adoption and usage of these loanwords.
- **Attitudinal Data:** Surveys and interviews are conducted to gather attitudinal data from native French speakers regarding their perceptions of English loanwords. This data helps to understand the social implications and acceptability of these loanwords.

Corpus Linguistics

- **Frequency and Distribution:** Corpus linguistics techniques are used to analyze the frequency and distribution of loanwords within the corpus. This analysis identifies patterns of use and changes over time.
- **Grammatical Integration:** The corpus is analyzed to determine how loanwords conform to French grammatical rules, such as gender agreement and pluralization. This part of the analysis uses tagging and parsing tools to dissect and categorize the grammatical features of loanwords.
- **Collocational Frameworks:** Examining the collocational environments of loanwords reveals how they are integrated into French syntax and semantics. This involves looking at the words that commonly surround the loanwords, which can indicate how naturally they fit into French sentence structures.

By integrating these methodologies and frameworks, the study aims to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the integration of English loanwords into French, highlighting not only how these words are used but also their broader cultural and linguistic implications. This comprehensive approach ensures that the study captures the complex dynamics of language change and adaptation in the context of global linguistic influences.

Results

The quantitative analysis of the corpus generated from diverse French media sources yielded detailed insights into the frequency and distribution of English loanwords in modern French. This analysis was essential to identify the extent of English influence on French vocabulary and to understand the domains where this influence is most pronounced.

The frequency analysis of English loanwords across various sources revealed significant disparities based on the type of media and the subject matter covered. For instance, technology and business magazines displayed a higher frequency of English loanwords compared to traditional news outlets. Words such as "startup," "email," and "manager" were predominantly found in business-oriented publications like *L'Express*, where the context often involves discussions of global business practices and innovations.

Newspapers, particularly those with a focus on international news, showed a moderate use of loanwords. Terms like "leader," "meeting," and "weekend" were commonly used, reflecting their integration into everyday French language. This suggests a normalization of certain English words within French journalistic language, as noted by Roth (2010) who discusses the naturalization process of loanwords in media over time.

The distribution of loanwords varied not only by source type but also by region. For instance, publications from Paris were more likely to incorporate English loanwords than those from other parts of France. This trend highlights the cosmopolitan nature of the capital and its openness to linguistic influences, which is consistent with Durkin's (2014) findings on the geographic variations in language borrowing.

In academic journals, English loanwords were frequently used in the context of scientific and technical discussions. Terms like "algorithm," "data," and "network" were often used without

French equivalents, which reflects a broader trend in academia to maintain English technical terms for clarity and international comprehensibility.

Comparative analysis between different genres of media showed that lifestyle and entertainment magazines and digital blogs tend to use loanwords more liberally and in a more colloquial manner. Phrases such as "cool," "fashionista," and "chat" are examples where English has filled a stylistic niche in French, offering nuances that the native lexicon might lack or that convey a certain global, modern image.

This extensive use of English loanwords in various media forms not only confirms the permeation of English into French but also suggests an evolving linguistic landscape where English and French coexist in a complex, sometimes competitive, relationship. The quantitative data thus provides a critical foundation for further qualitative analysis to delve deeper into the implications of these findings on French language and culture.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis focuses on the lexical adaptation of specific English loanwords and their grammatical integration into French. This examination helps to understand how these foreign elements are assimilated into the existing linguistic structure of French, both morphologically and syntactically.

Lexical Adaptation and Grammatical Integration

English loanwords in French often undergo significant adaptation to conform to the grammatical rules and phonetic patterns of French. For instance, the English word "email" has been adapted into French as "e-mail," retaining the hyphen as a nod to French norms of compound word formation. The adaptation extends to pluralization, with "e-mails" being used rather than the English plural "emails."

Another example is the word "manager." In French, this becomes "manager," pronounced with a French accent and often written with a French definite article as "le manager" or "la manager," depending on the gender context, which is not always consistent with traditional French gender rules. This indicates a partial integration where the word's form adapts slightly but retains its original English pronunciation.

Moreover, the integration of English verbs presents an interesting case of grammatical adaptation. Verbs like "download" are often adapted into French as "télécharger," but in informal contexts, "downloader" can be used, following French verb conjugation rules (e.g., "je downloade," "nous downloadons"). This reflects a deeper linguistic process where English verbs are not only borrowed directly but are also conjugated according to French verb conjugation patterns, creating a hybrid form.

Stylistic Functions

The stylistic functions of English loanwords in French texts reveal much about the socio-cultural dynamics of language use. English loanwords are often employed to invoke a sense of modernity, innovation, or internationalism, which can be particularly appealing in marketing, technology, and business contexts. For instance, the use of "startup" instead of the French "jeune pousse" can convey a more dynamic and global image, appealing to a broader, more internationally aware audience.

In pop culture and youth-oriented media, English loanwords serve to connect with global trends and express identities that are aligned with contemporary, often Americanized, cultural values. Words like "cool," "fashionista," and "selfie" are adopted not only for their communicative value but also for their association with certain lifestyles and social groups.

Moreover, in artistic and literary contexts, English loanwords can be used to create a distinct style or voice, particularly in works that seek to break traditional norms or address global themes. Authors and artists might use English phrases such as "le feeling" or "le weekend" to

enhance the relatability or appeal of their work to a modern audience, or to convey a particular nuance that the French equivalent might lack.

These qualitative insights into the lexical adaptation and stylistic functions of English loanwords in French highlight the complex interplay between languages in contact. It shows how loanwords are not merely borrowed and used as is but are transformed and repurposed to fit the linguistic, social, and cultural fabric of the borrowing language.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

The findings from the study on the influence of English loanwords in modern French provide a compelling illustration of the dynamic interplay between English and French. The integration of English vocabulary into French showcases a significant linguistic shift driven by factors such as globalization, technological advancement, and cultural exchange. As demonstrated by the quantitative and qualitative analyses, English loanwords are not only prevalent in various domains of French media and literature but also undergo substantial adaptation to fit the structural and stylistic requirements of French.

The adaptation of English loanwords into French grammar involves complex morphological changes, as seen in the pluralization and gender assignment of words like "le manager" and "les emails." This process reveals the flexibility of French to accommodate foreign linguistic elements, reflecting a broader trend observed in many languages influenced by English. Moreover, the stylistic adoption of these loanwords, particularly in domains like technology, business, and youth culture, underscores English's role as a marker of modernity and internationalism in French discourse (Roth, 2010).

Comparative Insights

Comparing the situation in French with other languages experiencing similar influxes of English loanwords offers additional perspectives on this global phenomenon. For instance, the German language has incorporated numerous English terms, especially in technology and business. Like French, German adapts these loanwords to its grammatical systems, often changing their forms to fit German syntax and morphology, such as the Anglicism "downloaden," which is conjugated like regular German verbs.

Similarly, Japanese has experienced a significant influx of English loanwords, known as "gairaigo." Unlike French, which often adjusts the loanwords to match native pronunciation and grammatical structures, Japanese incorporates these terms by adapting them into its katakana syllabary, thus preserving their original English pronunciation to a greater extent. This difference illustrates varying linguistic strategies for handling English loanwords, which can be attributed to the distinct phonetic and syntactic characteristics of each language (Durkin, 2014).

These comparisons not only highlight the widespread impact of English as a global lingua franca but also demonstrate diverse linguistic responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by this dominance. Each language's approach to integrating English loanwords reveals much about its structural flexibility, cultural openness, and linguistic evolution.

Implications for Linguistic Theory and Practice

The integration of English loanwords into French and other languages has significant implications for linguistic theory and practice, especially concerning language policy and education. From a theoretical standpoint, the phenomenon challenges traditional notions of linguistic purity and raises questions about the dynamics of language contact and change. The French case, with its regulatory body, the Académie Française, highlights the tension between language preservation and the practical needs of speakers in a globalized world. The Académie's gradual acceptance of some Anglicisms, albeit reluctantly, suggests a shift towards a more pragmatic approach to language management (Hugou, 2015).

In educational contexts, the prevalence of English loanwords necessitates a reevaluation of teaching practices. Language educators in French-speaking regions may need to address the reality of an increasingly Anglicized lexicon, ensuring that students are both aware of and proficient in using these loanwords appropriately. This is particularly important in higher education and professional settings, where English terminology may be unavoidable. Furthermore, understanding the use and function of English loanwords can enhance students' linguistic competence and prepare them for the realities of a globalized job market (Paradis & LaCharité, 2008).

Additionally, the study of English loanwords is crucial for ongoing linguistic research, particularly in the areas of sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. By analyzing how these loanwords are integrated and used in everyday language, researchers can gain insights into current linguistic trends and the social factors influencing language change. This can inform future linguistic policies and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of language evolution in response to global forces.

In conclusion, the influence of English on French vocabulary and grammar through the integration of loanwords is a multifaceted process that reflects broader cultural and technological trends. This phenomenon offers important insights into linguistic adaptation and highlights the need for flexible language policies that accommodate the evolving needs of speakers. As languages continue to interact and influence each other in our interconnected world, the study of these processes will remain a vital area of linguistic research.

Conclusion

This study has elucidated the significant impact of English on the French language through the lens of lexical, grammatical, and stylistic adaptation of loanwords. The major findings indicate that English loanwords are not only pervasive across various domains of French media and literature but are also integrated into the French linguistic framework with considerable adaptation to meet grammatical norms. Lexically, these loanwords often fill gaps in the French vocabulary, particularly in rapidly evolving fields such as technology and business. Grammatically, they are adapted to conform to French rules regarding gender, number, and conjugation, illustrating the flexibility and resilience of French grammar. Stylistically, English loanwords serve specific functions in French discourse, often injecting modernity and international flair into the language, especially appealing to younger demographics and professional contexts.

Limitations

While the study provides comprehensive insights, it is not without limitations. The scope of data, primarily sourced from printed and online media, may not fully capture the colloquial and informal uses of English loanwords in everyday French speech. The study's reliance on media sources might skew the understanding of how these loanwords are perceived and used across different social strata and regional dialects of French. Additionally, the analytical methods, while robust, are primarily quantitative and could be complemented by more in-depth qualitative research to capture the nuanced attitudes of French speakers towards these loanwords.

Future Research

The findings suggest several exciting avenues for future research. Comparative linguistic studies could be expanded to include a wider range of languages influenced by English to understand common patterns and unique deviations in the adaptation process. This could help illuminate global linguistic trends and the specific factors that influence how loanwords are integrated across different linguistic systems. Additionally, a deeper analysis of specific sectors where English influence is predominant, such as technical language in science and technology or youth slang in popular culture, would provide insights into the dynamics of language change in specialized contexts.

Further investigation could also focus on the sociolinguistic aspects of English loanwords, examining how factors like age, education, and region affect the acceptance and usage of these words. This could be particularly insightful for language policy makers and educators as they navigate the challenges of maintaining linguistic heritage while embracing necessary adaptations due to global influences.

Overall, the study underscores the complexity and dynamism of language contact and change, highlighting the need for ongoing research to adapt linguistic education and policy to the realities of a globalized world.

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