

# The Italian-English “Cocktail” on Italian Social Networks\*

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## Abstract:

The article deals with anglicisms (integral or partially adapted) in the language of social network users in Italy. Such anglicisms are divided into computer technicalities, pseudotechnicisms linked to the various social networking platforms, luxury loans and terms that lie somewhere between technicality and jargon; the motivation to their use goes from a real necessity to the reinforcement of a sense of belonging to a community, when not simply to give greater expressivity to the text. Some examples taken from social networks of the ongoing debate on anglicisms are analyzed and, in conclusion, the topic of the general distrust of Italians for anglicisms is discussed.

Keywords: *Anglicisms, Computer-Mediated Communication, Social Networking, Sociolinguistics*

## 1. The use of English in Italy

The tradition of borrowing words from English, so-called *prestiti linguistici*,<sup>1</sup> has a long history in Italian, dating back centuries.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, there are areas of the language in which this phenomenon seems particularly relevant:

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<sup>1</sup> “Si ha prestito linguistico quando la nostra lingua utilizza e finisce per assumere un tratto linguistico che esisteva precedentemente in un'altra lingua e che non esisteva nella nostra” (“We have a linguistic loan when our language uses and ends up assuming a linguistic trait that previously existed in another language and did not exist in our language”; Dardano, Trifone 1995: 638 [all translations are made by the author]). Mario Alinei prefers to call them *acquisizioni* ‘acquisitions’ or *regali* ‘gifts’, “che come tali di solito arricchiscono e non impoveriscono la lingua che li riceve” (‘that as such usually enrich and do not impoverish the language that receives them’; Alinei 2009); Antonio Zoppetti (2017: 29) defines them *voci importate* ‘imported words’.

<sup>2</sup> For a short history of anglicisms in Italian (and their reception) see Fanfani (2010) and Grochowska (2012).

for instance in business, many English terms have become part of a seemingly unavoidable (but not universally accepted) jargon (see Antonelli 2009): *business plan, forecast, how to, know how, management, mission, reason why*, etc. Sabatini (2016) lists some other very common anglicisms in use in the field of marketing and politics such as *location, performance, competitor, default, welfare, spread, spending review, range, fund raising, election day, open day, reception, exit strategy, follow-up, endorsement*. We have further examples in politics (*devolution, jobs act, question time, stepchild adoption*) and wellness (*fitness, kettlebell, running, spinning, step, squat, workout*, etc.). Some call this language *itanglese*.<sup>3</sup>

English is also very popular in the fashion industry, with both technical terms and rather unnecessary foreignisms (*prestiti di lusso*<sup>4</sup>) such as *clutch, front row, jumpsuit, glam, leggings* (not so far ago these were called *fuseaux*, borrowing a French word), *low budget, outfit, smart jacket, total black*, etc. Music is likewise rich in anglicisms, with several definitions that cannot be easily translated such as *jingle, live, lounge music, mixer, mood, vibe*, etc.

Another field rich of English words is that of information technology, a fact far from surprising: it happens often that the terminology of a discipline enters a language together with the discipline itself (see Marri 1994). So in Italian we have *browser, hard disk, mouse, pen drive, tablet*, etc. The relevance and depth of this penetration is testified by the amount of English terms – mainly verbs – partially adapted to Italian morphology that can be considered, at this point, traditional in computer science, like *backuppare* from *to backup*, *bustrappare* from *to bootstrap*, *crackare* or *craccare* from *to crack*, *formattare* from *to format*, *uploadare* from *to upload*, but *hackerare* (and not the apparently more predictable *hackare*) from *to hack*, or, rather, from *hacker*: we will be back to this anomaly later on.

The concentration of anglicisms in specific fields might give the impression that the use of English words in Italian is very pervasive: articles in newspapers show that many people think that this is ruining the Italian language, and therefore ask for a stricter national language policy (see Scorrane 2014; Russo Spina 2018 talks about the invasion of anglicisms).

If we consult the GRADIT (De Mauro 1999-2000), which is one of the richest contemporary Italian monolingual dictionaries, of its 260.709 monorematic entries 9.389 are marked “esotismi” i.e. foreignisms; of these, 6.123 are English: although this number represents the majority of foreignisms, it is only the 2,34% of the vocabulary. The last edition of the GRADIT dates

<sup>3</sup> We have an overview of these in Rando (1990), so this is not a too recent phenomenon.

<sup>4</sup> A *prestito di lusso* ‘luxury loan’, in the words of Coco (2003: 44), is used not because the lack of an equivalent in that language, but “per ottenere effetti stilistici ed espressivi, per darsi un tono, per snobismo, per il prestigio accordato ad una data civiltà e cultura” (‘to obtain stylistic and expressive effects, to give oneself a tone, for snobbery, for the prestige accorded to a given civilization and culture’).

back to 2007, and the situation is surely changed in more than a decade, but certainly not that much (see also Antonelli 2005).

## 2. *English in computer-mediated communication*

The use of English is one of the many known and thoroughly studied characteristics of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in Italy since the beginning in the early Nineties – with BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems), newsgroups and IRC, Internet Relay Chat – together with dialects, emoticons, enhanced punctuation, etc. (see Tavosanis 2011; Gheno 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2017). So, in Italian we can find twenty years of traditional English definitions pertaining to CMC such as *ban*, *crosspost*, *fake*, *flame*, *flamewar*, *flooding*, *killfile*, *lag*, *lurker*, *mailbombing*, *newbie*, *nickname*, *post*, *quote*, *reply*, *screenshot*, *spam*, *spoiler*, *subject*, *tag*, *tagline*, *thread*, *topic*, *troll*, etc., used “pure” as they are, as well as sometimes “italianized” through morphological adaptations that might cause some stir in linguistically more sensitive persons: *bannare*, *crosspostare*, *feic* (‘fake’), *flammare*, *floddare* (and not *floodare*), *laggare*, *loggarsi* and *sloggarsi* (‘to log on and off a service’), *lurkare*, *niubbi/niubbo*, *nickneim*, *postare*, *quotare*, *scrinsciottare* (‘to take a screenshot’), *spammare*, *taggare*, *trollare*, and *spoilerare*. In this last case, the verb is built from the noun *spoiler*, not from the verb *to spoil*; other examples of this kind of behavior are *hackerare* (from the noun *hacker*) and *stalkerare* (from the noun *stalker*). This is most certainly due to the fact that the nouns are well established in the Italian context, whereas the knowledge of the underlying verbs is not equally widespread. Thus, the speakers’ instinctive choice was to derive the Italian verb from the noun instead of using the English verb as a base (see Gheno 2016; Paoli 2017).

The new dynamics in the circulation of information that came from the massification of the Internet and social media have brought along other loans: *blasting* and *blastare*, *debunking* as well as the verb *debunkare*, *fact checking*, *fake news* (some Italians are mistakenly using \**fake new* as its singular form), *influencer*, *shitstorm*, etc.

## 3. *Social networking in Italy*

Social networking has become widespread after years of resistance to CMC: other forms of online communication (BBSs, newsgroups, chatlines, forums, blogs) have never acquired such a huge popularity. In 2008, Italy was still dubbed as a *bastion of digital indifference* (Fitzpatrick 2008) in an article published by *The Guardian*, for the seemingly general low interest towards online communication.

The current statistics are quite different: We Are Social’s Global Digital Report 2019 shows a total of 54.8 mil users (penetration: 92%); according

to We Are Social's data, three Italians out of five use one or more social platform: Italians not only go online, but use intensely social media.

#### 4. English on Italian SNSs

When analyzing the Italian SNSs, linguists can find traces of every layer of English usage mentioned until now: the general, often not completely necessary English, the IT English, the CMC English. There is also a newer English vocabulary that refers to the specific communication channels, used as they are or with some morphological adaptations, similar to those already seen. Here is a list of some of the most common anglicisms used in connection with a specific service; in some instances, I provided the Italian word(s) that might be used instead of the English one.

- Blogging platforms: *blogger*, *bloggare/rebloggare*, *blogstar*, *foodblog*, *outfit blog*, *taggare* (*un post*);
- Facebook: *addare/friendare* ('aggiungere', 'amicare'), *blockare*, *detaggare/staggare*, *followare/defolloware/unfolloware* ('smettere di seguire'), *hide/hidare/haidare* ('nascondere'), *like*, *likare/laicare* ('mettere *mi piace*', "mipiaciare" [this verb does not exist officially, but is used in informal contexts online]), *pokare*, *quotare* ('menzionare'), *subbare/unsubbare* ('sottoscrivere'), *sharare* ('condividere'), *taggare* ('in una fotografia'), *unfriendare* ('togliere [dagli amici]');
- Tumblr: *tumblare/ritumblare*;
- Twitter: *defolloware/unfolloware*, *followare*, *follower* (some translate it 'seguitore', which is missing the almost "religious" connotation of 'seguace', instead of the even easier 'iscritto' or 'sottoscrittore'), *hashtaggare*, *retwittare/ritwittare*, *trending topic*, *twit/tweet*, *twittare/twitterare/tuittare* (some use 'cinguettare', but mostly in semi-serious contexts), *twitterzombie*, *twitstar/twitterstar*.
- Other, miscellaneous definitions that can be found on SNSs and similars are *socialnè* and *socialino*, both for *social network*; the semi-serious italianization of the names of the various SNSs, such as *Is-tagra* (Instagram), *Feisbu* (Facebook), *Frenfi* (Friendfeed, a social network that was closed in 2015), *Tuitte* (Twitter), *Tàmble* o *Tumblero* (Tumblr); some names, again, have generated also verbs connected to them, like *tumbl(e)rare* or *ritumbl(e)rare*, *instagrammare* for 'taking a picture and putting it on Instagram', *regrammare* ('reshare an image from another Instagram account through an app called Regram'), *shazammare* ('recognize a song using Shazam') as well as *whatsappare* ('communicate through Whatsapp').

In several cases, the Italian translation of a specific verb would take up much more space (as for *taggare*, which could be something like ‘indicare o nominare le persone che compaiono in una data fotografia’).

Some English words or derivatives might be considered “inelegant” from a strictly linguistic point of view, but they are not completely unnecessary in a certain context. In other cases, the choice of an English word instead of the Italian correspondent is not driven by linguistic efficiency, but is mainly due to stylistic reasons. In some instances, the English word with the exact same meaning of the Italian one is perceived as more specific: *quotare* (from *to quote*) means, in Italian, ‘citare’, but the English equivalent feels more “precise” for the context of CMC. Same goes for *blockare* instead of ‘bloccare’: *bloccare* is ‘to block’, in all its meanings; for an Italian who uses SNSs, *blockare* is the action of blocking somebody on a SNS, so to prevent him/her from contacting or interacting with us.

### 5. Acronyms and their derivations

On Italian SNSs, we find occurrences of “traditional” English acronyms as well as newer ones: AFAIK ‘as far as I know’, AKA ‘also known as’, ASAP ‘as soon as possible’, BOFH ‘bad operator from hell’, BSOD ‘blue screen of death’, BTW ‘by the way’, CUL8R ‘see you later’, FAQ ‘frequently asked questions’, FYI ‘for your information’, IMHO/IMO/IMVHO/IYHO ‘in my/your (very) humble opinion’, LMAO ‘laughing my ass off’, LOL ‘laughing out loud’, OP ‘original poster’, OT ‘off topic’, PITA ‘pain in the ass’, RL ‘real life’, ROTFL ‘rolling on the floor laughing’, RTFM ‘read the fucking manual’, etc.

Among the newer ones, there is a widespread use of FTW (‘for the win’<sup>5</sup>), LMGTFY (‘let me Google that for you’<sup>6</sup>) and OM(F)G (‘oh my [fucking] god’) – a series of posters for the launch of the second season of the very popular American TV series *Gossip Girl* in 2008 might have helped in spreading this acronym (Marsi 2008), which is still used online after more than a decade – and WTF (‘what the fuck?’); these last two are probably used also as a form of self-censorship, to avoid the explicit use of curse words.

Other acronyms, as the already mentioned LOL and ROTFL, are so widely in use that we find the verbs *lollare* or *rotflare* for ‘to laugh’. The meaning, or the origins, though, are not always clear to everybody, especially to the younger generations.

<sup>5</sup> “Being the best; being great, awesome, amazing or spectacular; sure to succeed (used as a term of approval, similar to *long live*)”, see <bit.ly/1ndaUBg>.

<sup>6</sup> “For all those people who find it more convenient to bother you with their question rather than google it for themselves”, <lmgtfy.com/>.

The use of acronyms has decreased in the last years, probably due to the fact that access to social media has become so common that it is not considered a privilege anymore, thus lessening the importance of using a dedicated jargon for online interactions. Besides, the fact that the majority of users connects from mobile devices, mainly cellphones, which are usually equipped with tools for predictive text input or for autocorrection, have encouraged the use of a more standardized language in writing (see Gheno 2018).

### 6. *English for... fun*

As already highlighted, English is used also for plain expressiveness. Sometimes the use of a foreign language (English for the most) reflects the personal linguistic competences of the user, although this is not always the case. Mostly people just love to mix languages for no other reason than fun. Some will thus rely on English with cases of voluntary code switching, like in this example, taken from a discussion on the now defunct Friendfeed:

- (1) [flames ready to go] Il flame sui poveraccy che si lamentano sul socialino di tasse, stipendi bassi e tagli ingiusti l'abbiamo già fatto?<sup>7</sup>

Even if not English speakers, most users will drop an English word or utterance here and there, in a sort of code-mixing, mainly for fun. In this case, English is neither technical nor necessary: the main goal is not clarity or semantic precision, but linguistic *divertissement*.

In an almost exclusively textual communicative situation as this, language serves (or rather: served) as a social glue. But all the characteristics we have already listed are not enough: there are changes all the time, and users want to find new ways of “impressing” the others, verbally speaking. People also want to have fun, so they take English and play with it, distorting it, for example giving a playful phonetic transcription (by Italian parameters) of the original word. Of course, those who play with English rely on a common encyclopaedia, so the words used are seldom complicated, and are usually part of a basic English knowledge. We find instances of *attenscionuorismo* (‘something that is done to attract attention, being an attention whore’), *denghiu* (‘thank you’), *donuorri* (‘don’t worry’), *ghèttati una laif* (‘get a life’), *laicare* (‘to like’), *lovvare* (‘to love’), *pliz* (‘please’), *roghehroa* (‘rock and roll’). This way of distorting English is not new and is not limited to the context of social media: a chain of very popular gyms in Rome is called, for instance,

<sup>7</sup> ‘Have we already done the flame on the *poveraccy* who complain on the *socialino* of taxes, low salaries and unfair cuts?’.

*Dabliu*, and the name is nothing else than the English pronunciation of the letter *W* “phonetically transcribed” in Italian.

In the following examples, taken from the SNS Friendfeed, we also read *commiuniti* for *community* and *sceimonme* for *shame on me*.

- (2) a. la commiuniti già mormora<sup>8</sup>  
 b. Ho messo come avviso messaggio il cinguettio di un uccello. Il mio salotto si affaccia su un cortile pieno di uccelli. #sceimonme<sup>9</sup>

The two messages below create the word *attenscionuorismi* for *attention-whorisms* and *endorsare* for *to endorse*. In both cases, Italian suffixes are used to create linguistic cross-overs.

- (3) a. neanche un commento. Mah, non è più il socialino di un tempo<sup>10</sup>  
 b. attenscionuorismi persi come lacrime nella pioggia<sup>11</sup>  
 c. poi non pretendo che mi si prenda sul serio, ho failato al livello di endorsare giannino 6 minuti prima che uscisse la roba del master, quindi fate voi!<sup>12</sup>

And here is an example from Guia Soncini's Twitter feed,<sup>13</sup> which contains the word *rituìt* for *retweet* and *anfolouano* as a derivative of *anfolouare* for *to unfollow*:

- (4) tre file ordinate: quelli che al terzo rituìt di complimenti nascondono i rt, quelli che silenziano del tutto, quelli che anfolouano.<sup>14</sup>

The linguistic game goes so far that non-existent English words are created, such as *puccyness*, which roughly stands for ‘cuteness’, or *OALDare*, from OALD, that is an Italian variation of *old*, meaning something that has been already posted several times so is not a novelty even if the poster thinks so. In the example below, where a user asks for the meaning of OALD, another user answers with a Spanish word (*viejo* ‘old’). This is a typical example of the apparent multilingualism of this type of online interactions.

<sup>8</sup> ‘the *commiuniti* already murmurs’.

<sup>9</sup> ‘I put the chirping of a bird as a warning message. My living room overlooks a courtyard full of birds. #sceimonme’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘not even a comment. Well, it's not the *socialino* it was in the past anymore’.

<sup>11</sup> ‘*attenscionuorismi* lost as tears in the rain’.

<sup>12</sup> ‘then I don't pretend to be taken seriously, I failed at the level of endorsing Giannino 6 minutes before the stuff of the master came out, so now it's up to you’.

<sup>13</sup> Guia Soncini (guiasoncini.com) is an Italian writer and journalist. Her Twitter feed can be found at @lasoncini.

<sup>14</sup> ‘three ordered rows: those that at the third retweet of compliments hide the rts, those that silence completely, those who unfollow’.



- (5) (ma OALD che vuol dire in contesto fifi?)  
 (Viejo)  
 (OALD = vecchio, già visto)  
 (ah ecco grazie)<sup>15</sup>

### 7. *Two special cases: professional poker and MMORPGs*

There are specific fields in which adapted (or, for somebody, corrupt?) English is almost unavoidable for the user to be recognized as part of the “tribe”. Here is an excerpt from the post of a professional poker gamer, Michela Antolini, nicknamed Micia:

- (6) apro da utg [‘under the gun’] con AJ [...]. quello che non ci sta ASSOLUTA MENTE ([...] se mi fossi giocata l’all in contro di lui sarei morta) è la giocata successiva. Il chipleader che è molto aggressivo apre da cut off. [...]. io mando tutto con KQs e il tizio lì col cappuccio FOLDA AK da big blind. mossa as surda. va bene che io posso pushare anche con AA o KK [...]. il chipleader apre TUTTO, io lo so, quindi è standard per me pushare [...] quello che deve fare è repusharmi lui.<sup>16</sup>

Would it have been possible to formulate the same thoughts in Italian? Of course, but it would have been much less immediate for an insider. For a poker professional, Micia’s phrases are completely understandable. We find ourselves on the debatable thin red line between technical and tribal jargon: her fellow players easily understand what she is talking about; any outsider, though, missing the technicalities of professional poker play, would probably fail in understanding Micia’s communication, probably blaming it on the use of English or semi-English words and acronyms. In this case, though, the real problem is not mainly the use of a foreign language, but the specificity and the technical nature of the lexicon: the message might remain unclear even if the player chose exclusively Italian words.

English and pseudo-English are very commonly used in massive multi-player online roleplaying games or MMORPGs, such as *World of Warcraft*. When asked about the language used in this context, a young university student compiled, in 2013, this list of anglo-Italian verbs commonly in use

<sup>15</sup> ‘(but what does OALD mean in the context of Friendfeed?) (Viejo) (OALD = old, already seen) (ah thank you)’.

<sup>16</sup> ‘I open from utg [‘under the gun’] with AJ [...]. what I ABSOLUTELY did not see coming ([...] had I played all in against him I would have died) is the next game. The chipleader that is very aggressive opens from cut off. [...]. I send everything with KQs and the guy there with the hood FOLDS AK from the big blind. absurd move. okay that I can push even with AA or KK [...]. the chipleader opens EVERYTHING, I know that, so it’s standard for me to share [...] what he has to do now is to repush me’.



among players during the game.<sup>17</sup> I have added the English derivation between square brackets; for further references see Francalanci 2018.

- CASTARE [*to cast*] – to cast a spell (which takes a few seconds to load);
- CHEATTARE [*to cheat*] – to use any type of cheat;
- CRITTARE – to inflict a critical hit, or perform a particularly strong attack (which does not depend on the player, but on statistics of his equipment and probability regulated by the game);
- DROPPARE [*to drop*] – referring to objects that a npc [non playing character] drops after being killed;
- FARMARE [*to farm*] – methodically performing an action that allows you to get something specific;
- LEECHARE [*to leech*] – indicates the action of joining a group of players without actively participating in the game;
- LEFTARE [*to leave*. When a player leaves a fight, the phrase “x has left the fight” appears on the screen. Thus, this action is defined as *left*] – abandoning a battle;
- MANABURNARE [*to burn the mana*] – to badly organize mana;
- MISSARE [*to miss*] – to miss the target;
- POWERUPPARE [*to power up*] – to use points in the game to improve an aspect of the game (e.g. buy a more powerful weapon, or unlock a new skill);
- QUESTARE [*to quest*] – to level up through “quests”, or the secondary missions of the game;
- RAIDARE [*to raid*] – to face a raid;
- STUNNARE [*to stun*] – to stun another player, who cannot move for a certain number of seconds;
- WHISPARE [*to whisper* (missing a syllable!)] – write to a player through “whisper”, or private chat.

Can these be considered examples of real technical jargons? And how much of the English used in these contexts is necessary, or is it just a way, again, of being part of a group? We can argue, in a sense, that we are not dealing with “real” technical jargons, but with *community markers*: those who are members of these specific communities recognize each others (in a computer-mediated interaction) thanks to the language used. The pseudo-anglicisms are the way members of the “tribe” check whether they are dealing with a fellow member. There is an unmistakable element of self-indulgence in using these words that make them more of a tribal jargon, a way of feel-

<sup>17</sup> During the game, players can chat with each others either via voice or using an instant messaging system.

ing part of a close-knit community. These terms are not, in fact, used only for clarity and precision, but also, plainly, for fun (or for making fun of the outsiders, in which case their use tends toward cryptolalia) (see Gualdo 2009; Gheno 2017: 33).

#### 8. *Good or bad? Ongoing discussions*

The presence and relevance of English in Italian has been the subject of controversy for decades. Castellani's *Morbus Anglicus* (1987) is an example of one of the quite common attitudes in Italy toward the use of anglicisms. Antonelli (2014) notes that, although it is unarguable that in the last years more English words have entered Italian than before, the pervasiveness of English is more an impression than a real issue.

This feeling of being invaded by English words, in fact, could be compared to that *perceived temperature* that we often hear about in the summer news. As the meteorologists explained to us, at an objective temperature (measured by the thermometer) corresponds – on hot summer days – a higher perceived temperature, because it is conditioned by the considerable humidity. What happens for anglicisms is not very different: an objective presence contained in physiological percentages is perceived as a worrying invasion because it is amplified by the mass media.<sup>18</sup>

So, in a sense, Italy's linguistic situation does not show signs of succumbing to English, or any other language, for now. De Mauro, in an interview given to Picchiorri and published on the Treccani website in 2008, argues also that 'the abuse of technicalities and little-known words (exotic or not) belongs to the culturally low variety of speakers, to those that in Naples we call *half-socks*'.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere, he also states the well-known fact that learning another language (or other languages) does not mean forgetting one's mother language, *au contraire*: a better knowledge of every linguistic system used by a person ensures that the usage of each of them gets better and better (De Mauro 2018: 108-111). In other words, those who use too many anglicisms appear to be those who have general problems moving through the linguistic spectrum(s).

<sup>18</sup> 'Questa sensazione di essere invasi dalle parole inglesi, infatti, potrebbe essere paragonata a quella *temperatura percepita* di cui tanto spesso si sente parlare nei telegiornali estivi. Come ci hanno spiegato i meteorologi, a una temperatura obiettiva (misurabile tramite il termometro) corrisponde – nelle calde giornate d'estate – una temperatura *percepita* più alta, perché condizionata dal notevole tasso di umidità. Quello che succede per gli anglicismi non è molto diverso: una presenza obiettiva contenuta in percentuali fisiologiche viene avvertita come preoccupante invasione perché amplificata dai mezzi di comunicazione di massa'.

<sup>19</sup> "L'abuso di tecnicismi e parole poco note (esotismi o no) appartiene alle fasce culturalmente basse dei locutori, a quelli che a Napoli chiamiamo *mezze calzette*".

In any case, discussions on the use of English words, as well as on their possible translations, are quite common on SNSs themselves. This example is again from Friendfeed (every dot is a distinct comment).

- (7) La saggezza di mia suocera. “Ma che vuol dire ‘streaming?’” “È un termine gergale che in questo caso in pratica vuol dire ‘In diretta’ ” “E perché non dite ‘In diretta’ ”?
- già, perché non diciamo “in diretta”? :)
  - Perché non significa “in diretta”, pure i film si vedono in streaming ma non sono in diretta.
  - È più “trasmesso in remoto e visualizzato in tempo reale” per distinguere rispetto a “salvato localmente”, direi.
  - Comunque mia suocera si riferiva all’uso di streaming che si sente adesso in politica: la direzione del PD in streaming, le riunioni m5s in streaming etc. Qui si intende “in diretta”.
  - Concordo che si potrebbe agevolmente sostituire con “diretta (via) web/ internet” e la gente capirebbe meglio.
  - Ma sai che non sono d’accordo? Anche fosse in differita, il concetto base è “trasmessa”, imho. Non conta sapere se in diretta o meno.
  - [...] +1, a tua suocera dai la chiosa “in diretta su Internet”
  - + 1 [...] (nonostante a mia anglofobia).
  - Va beh, allora per tenere conto dell’obiezione di [...], basterebbe dire “trasmessa via internet”. Non è una questione di anglofilia o fobia, è che a sapere che vuol dire streaming sarà l’un percento della popolazione al massimo.
  - “scorrente”, ché a me il Duce e il Vate fanno un baffo “in diretta streaming” l’ho sentito non so quante volte
  - “in diretta” mi fa pensare a una trasmissione broadcast. “streaming” mi fa pensare a qualcosa di più interattivo, sicuramente unicast.
  - manfatti non vuol dire in diretta, vuol dire “ascolting mentre scariching”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “The wisdom of my mother-in-law. “But what does streaming mean?” “It is a slang term that in this case in practice means Live” “And why don’t you say Live?”

- right, why don’t we say “live”? :)
- Because it does not mean “live”, even the films are seen in streaming but are not live.
- It is more “transmitted remotely and displayed in real time” to distinguish from “locally saved”, I would say.
- However my mother-in-law was referring to the use of streaming that is now heard in politics: the direction of the PD in streaming, the m5s meetings in streaming etc. Here we mean “live”.
- I agree that we could easily replace “direct (via) web / internet” and people would understand better.
- But do you know that I do not agree? Even if it were deferred, the basic concept is “transmitted”, imho. It doesn’t matter whether it’s live or not.
- [...] + 1, give your mother-in-law the gloss “live on the Internet”
- + 1 [...] (despite my anglophobia).

Another, more recent example comes from Facebook, from a well-established group of grammar lovers (when not *grammar-nazis*), *La lingua batte – Radio3*.<sup>21</sup>

(8) Ciao bella gente, vorrei sottoporvi qualcosa se avete un minuto da buttare lì: un cruccio linguistico, un acuto fastidio di resa e traduzione eventuale... il termine è “mainstream” e desidero ardentemente, non da oggi, trovare l’ideale versione italiana, quella parola cioè che ne sostituisca in toto i significati e le implicazioni. Cosa mi suggerite?

- in voga?
  - È complicato... “Convenzionale” è forse la traduzione corretta ma molto meno d’impatto. “Popolare” ormai è un termine pericoloso. “Di moda” a volte rende meglio, credo, dipende dai contesti.
  - La parte complicata è riuscire a rendere sia il significato sia il “giudizio” che si dà usandolo, e in questo senso non trovo un’unica parola corrispondente.
  - Il pensiero dominante; la corrente prevalente, il sentire comune.
  - [...]
  - Corrente principale, quella di ampio contenuto, che non può essere imbrigliata in un unico genere. Sintetizzare la parola pare difficile, ma questo dipende dalla connotazione della nostra lingua: Ecco perché ci sono termini inglesi che è meglio lasciare così.
  - Sì [...], ne sono consapevole, però in questo caso mi urta particolarmente non avere un chiaro equivalente italiano, proprio perché parliamo di un termine con un forte connotato astratto e di uso piuttosto intellettualistico, se mi passi il termine, proprio per questo amerei averne uno di schietto conio nostrano, o quantomeno una perifrasi fissa che copra decentemente tutto il campo semantico...
  - [...]
  - Andazzo.
  - Non copre a sufficienza il significato di cosa dominante in determinato ambito, ha troppe connotazioni negative.
  - Tradizionale.
  - Fiacco, troppo concentrato sul passato, troppo sfasato rispetto al senso della parola inglese.
  - No, in molti contesti è la traduzione esatta.
  - Ordinario.
- 
- Okay, then taking into account the objection of [...], it would be enough to say “transmitted via the internet”. It is not a question of anglophilia or phobia, it is that one percent of the population at the most knows the meaning of streaming.
  - “flowing”, because the Duce [Mussolini] and the Vate [Gabriele D’Annunzio] got nothing on me.
  - I have heard “live streaming” I don’t know how many times
  - “live” makes me think of a broadcast transmission. “Streaming” makes me think of something more interactive, certainly unicast.
  - but in fact does not mean live, it means “listening while downloading”.

<sup>21</sup> See <[www.facebook.com/groups/266491950145853/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/266491950145853/)>.

- Qualsiasi cosa può essere ordinaria e la musica pop, per quanto mi piaccia assai poco, non è semplicemente ordinaria è “mainstream”
- Ordinario vuol dire comune, consueto. E questo vuol dire mainstream, qualcosa che resta nel flusso principale senza emergere per altre qualità. E comunque se mainstream funziona meglio, meglio mainstream. Che fra l'altro è più mainstream.
- [...]
- “Ad ampio spettro di ricezione per la tipologia di pubblico cui è rivolta”. Meglio mainstream 😊<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> ‘Hello beautiful people, I would like to submit something to you if you have a minute to throw away: a linguistic concern, a sharp annoyance for a surrender and a possible translation ... the term is “mainstream” and I ardently desire, not today, to find the ideal Italian version, that is the word that fully replaces its meanings and implications. What do you suggest?

- cool?
- It's complicated ... “Conventional” is perhaps the correct translation but much less impactful. “Popular” is now a dangerous term. “Fashion” sometimes makes it better, I think, depends on the contexts.
- The complicated part is being able to convey both the meaning and the “judgment” given by using it, and in this sense I don't find a single corresponding word.
- The dominant thought; the prevailing current, the common feeling.
- [...]
- Main current, that of wide content, which cannot be harnessed in a single kind. To summarize the word seems difficult, but this depends on the connotation of our language: This is why there are English terms that it is better to leave untouched.
- Yes [...], I am aware of it, but in this case it strikes me particularly not having a clear Italian equivalent, precisely because we are talking about a term with a strong abstract connotation and a rather intellectualistic use, if you allow me the term, just for this reason I would like to have one totally national term, or at least a fixed periphrase that covers the entire semantic field decently ...
- [...]
- bad habit.
- It does not sufficiently cover the meaning of the dominant thing in a certain area, it has too many negative connotations.
- Traditional.
- Weak, too concentrated on the past, too out of phase with the meaning of the English word.
- No, in many contexts it is the exact translation.
- Ordinary.
- Anything can be ordinary and pop music, as much as I like it very little, is not just ordinary it is “mainstream”
- Ordinary means common, usual. And this means mainstream, something that remains in the main stream without emerging for other qualities. And anyway if mainstream works better, better mainstream. Which by the way is more mainstream.
- [...]

In recent years, Italy has seen several campaigns against the use (or abuse) of anglicisms, met by a lot of favor from the general public, such as #diloitaliano, a petition started by Testa in 2015 with the endorsement of the president of the Accademia della Crusca, which gained significant attention from the media. There are also several publications that suggest Italian translations for a variety of English terms (see Zoppetti 2018). In other words, Italians are somehow more and more worried about the pervasiveness of English in their language, with frequent uproars against new anglicisms entering usage.

### 9. *The problem, though, might not be English...*

On an everyday level, it seems that everybody is discussing, offline and especially online, about anglicisms. In reality, English is certainly not taking over Italian, mostly because the majority of Italians do not go beyond a superficial level of English knowledge: it is what experts call *globish*,<sup>23</sup> made of not more than 1,500 words.

Let us also remind ourselves that recent statistics show that one Italian in two does not read even one book a year (see Mosca 2013, but these data show up year after year, see *Il Messaggero* 2018); and according to De Mauro, one third of Italians can be considered semiliterate, while only around 20% shows the competences and skills necessary to fully participate in today's information society (see De Mauro quoted in Simili 2012). So the problem is not the eventual death of Italian caused by English, but a general lack of linguistic competences, which makes our everyday oral and written language poorer, and us lazier in searching for the perfect lexical solution. This is, by the way, a problem that Calvino (1988) already highlighted in his *Six memos for the Next Millennium* [*Lezioni Americane*], especially in the lesson *Exactitude*:

It seems to me that language is always used in a random, approximate, careless manner, and this distresses me unbearably. [...] It sometimes seems to me that a pestilence has struck the human race in its most distinctive faculty –that is, the use of words. It is a plague afflicting language, revealing itself as a loss of cognition and immediacy, an automatism that tends to level out all expression into the most generic, anonymous, and abstract formulas, to dilute meanings, to blunt the edge of expressiveness, extinguishing the spark that shoots out from the collision of words and new circumstances.

- “With a broad spectrum of reception for the type of audience to which it is addressed”. Better to use mainstream 😊’.

<sup>23</sup> For information on *globish*, see <[www.globish.com](http://www.globish.com)>.

It is not very distant from what Baron (2008) writes in a much more recent essay, where she defines the rather sad concept of *linguistic whateverism*:

A convergence of forces is engendering a new attitude toward both speech and writing. We might dub this attitude “linguistic whateverism”. Its primary manifestation is a marked indifference to the need for consistency in linguistic usage. At issue is not whether to say *who* or *whom* [...] but whether it really matters which form you use. This challenge to the fundamental principle of language as rule-governed behavior is less a display of linguistic defiance than a natural reflection of changing educational policies, shifts in social agendas, a move in academia toward philosophical relativism, and a commitment to life on the clock.

As these two, quite distant examples show, in the end the problem is never the language, but its speakers. And probably the best way to avoid the use of unnecessary anglicisms without rejecting them *in toto* is to follow Sabatini’s simple advice: be sure of the meaning of the word you want to use; be sure you know how to spell it correctly as well as how to pronounce it; make sure that your interlocutor understands it. If these conditions are not fulfilled, it generally means that you are going to make a bad impression, or you are lazy to search for the right Italian word, or you are looking down on your interlocutor (Sabatini 2016: *Invito* 8).

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