

## **The Use of Anglicisms in French Vocabulary: Principal Causes and Reactions of the French towards It**

Aung Myat Hlaing <sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Despite the fact that the French language and the English language are of different origins, these two languages share many similarities, both in grammatical and lexical fields. This paper studies the use of Anglicisms in the French language along with its causes and the French people's attitudes towards it. Studies have showed that widespread use of Anglicisms occurs in French owing to the dominance of English; in mass media, world's politics and economies, and modern technology. The government of France implemented a law called Toubon Law in 1994 to prevent the widespread use of Anglicisms in French. Nonetheless, it can still be observed that although French authorities have attempted to purify the French Language by legislative means, most of the French people are not reluctant to use English words in their daily conversations. This paper mainly deals with lexical studies, studies in other fields such as syntax or phonology could also be done. After doing extensive library and online research, descriptive and analytic methods have been applied to carry out the present research paper. The primary aims of the paper include analyzing the keys causes of Anglicisms in French and providing knowledge for Myanmar learners of French.

Keywords: Anglicism, French, English, causes, lexical

### **Introduction**

No language can be regarded as pure language. It can be assumed that languages have been in contact since people started speaking more than one language. Therefore, language development in a total isolation from other languages is hardly possible. It is because a language is not only a set of words; on the contrary, it has some cultural and historical context, or even psychological references (Bostina-Bratu, 2010). English and French are of no exception from this phenomenon mainly due to the following factors.

#### **1.1 Britain and mainland Europe: geographical**

Considering the geographical situation between the British Isles and mainland Europe, it is quite clear to see that France is the closest European country to Britain. The Channel between them is as narrow as 22 miles in some places. It promotes the interactions in different fields between these two countries.

#### **1.2 England and France: political**

In 1066, William the Conqueror of France invaded England and reigned it until 1087. He appointed his cronies, who were French speakers, in many important sectors of his administration.

The loss of Normandy, which happened in 1204, when John of England was defeated by Phillip, a Norman King, also strengthens the influence of the French language in the palace of England.

There was also a war called "Hundred Years War" that actually lasted 116 years (from 1337 to 1453), during which people of these two countries had a great deal of interactions.

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<sup>1</sup> U, Lecturer, Department of French, Mandalay University of Foreign Languages

### 1.3 English vs. French: linguistic and cultural

Experts have stated that French was the language of government, church and upper classes in England for over 300 years. And it remained as an important language of communication in Europe until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the importance of French at international stages has begun its downfall since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is quite evident that English took the role of French and has become the global lingua franca of today. It can be said that this is partly thanks to the rise of the USA\_ its dominance in international politics and commerce since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In this way, the vocabularies of the two languages have blended and consequently there appear Anglicisms, French loanwords, faux-ami, etc.

The term “Anglicism” can be defined as, “a word or expression which we borrow from the English language” (Forest & Boudreau, 1999).

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “Anglicism” as:

1. A characteristic feature of English occurring in another language
2. Adherence or attachments to English customs or ideas.

This paper principally presents the use of Anglicisms in today’s French vocabulary together with its key causes and the reactions of the French towards it. . It is also intended to help ease the difficulties caused by Anglicism to Myanmar learners of French.

#### **Aim**

The aim of this paper is to study the chief factors of Anglicization in French and to analyse the key ways that Anglicisms penetrate into French.

#### **Data and Methods**

Extensive library research was done meanwhile a certain number of online sources were used for reference. After that, descriptive and analytic methods have been applied in order to implement the purpose of the paper.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the principal causes of the spread of Anglicisms in French?
2. How do the French react to it?
3. Is the penetration and popularization of Anglicisms on the rise or fall?

#### **Literature Review**

Interactions between English and French exist in various fields such as cultural, politics, linguistics, etc. As a consequence, French loanwords can be found in English and vice versa.

Daw Z.Ja Htu Aung, former lecturer of French at MUFL, wrote an article on French words used in diplomatic English in an annual magazine of YUFL, in 2009. Such words include ‘chargé d’affaires’, ‘attaché’ etc.

Moreover, a research paper entitled “French loanwords related to cookery used in the English Language” by Daw Myint Myint Thu, an assistant lecturer from French Department of MUFL, was also published in MUFL research journal, vol.9, 2018.

The writer of present research once read a paper under the title “An introduction to French-English faux-amis” at an anniversary paper reading section of MUFL. Faux-amis are the words that look the same, but have different meanings. For example, French word ‘location’ means ‘rent’ in English, and ‘front’ in French means ‘forehead’ in English.

Concerning the use of Anglicisms in French, quite a few research papers can be found. Most of them were done at European universities. For example, “Anglicisms in the French language: a comparative study of English loanwords in French from France and Quebec” by Marie Fortin (Mid Sweden university), in 2009. In this paper, she mainly studied lexical Anglicisms used in French from France and Quebec, a Province in Canada where French is an official language.

Maryna Kostiak of Jeras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine studied Anglicisms in French through linguistic and social points of view, in her paper entitled, “Anglicisms in the French language, linguistic and social aspects”, in 2018.

Nevertheless, no such work exists in Myanmar to the researcher’s knowledge. Thus, the present paper chiefly focuses on principal causes of the use of Anglicisms in French together with the reactions of the French.

### Findings and Discussion

It has been observed that Anglicisms penetrate into French vocabulary in almost every part of speech. French has the same number of parts of speech as its counterpart, English.

#### 1. Six types of Anglicism in French vocabulary

According to Forest and Boudreau, there are six types of Anglicism in French (1999: IX);

**Semantic Anglicism:** It is a word used in French where the original meaning has been kept or a different evolution realized with time where the meaning differs to some extent.

e.g. like (E) → liker (F), used only on Facebook

spoil (E) → spoiler (F), used only for movies

**Lexical Anglicism:** It is a word or an expression that has been borrowed either exactly as it is in English or with some minor readjustments.

e.g. marketing / week-end, etc.

**Syntactic Anglicism:** It is the “claque” of an English construction.

e.g. butterfly effect (E) – effect papillon (F)

honeymoon (E) – lune de miel (F)

**Morphological Anglicism:** This is a rare borrowing which refers to when the form is borrowed but the meaning in French is totally different from English.

e.g. footing (jogging), pull (sweater)

**Phonetic Anglicism:** It is when the pronunciation is borrowed.

e.g. ..... ing (velar nasal)

forcer → faire le forcing

**Graphical Anglicism :** It is a word written in a similar form to the English one or a word that does not follow the rule from the French language such as punctuation and type of abbreviation.

e.g. pm / Blvd.

Studies have showed that 80% of Anglicisms used in French are lexical Anglicisms.

## 2. Principal causes of Anglicisms

Looking back into previous centuries, it is common knowledge that Latin, Italian and French used to be *lingua francas*. However, as English has taken the place of these languages and, in today's world, it has become undoubtedly the *lingua franca*. It is one of the key reasons why the influence of English on French is becoming greater.

Great advances in technological evolution, mainly led by the US and the fact that the USA taking the leading role in world's politics and commerce also largely contribute the spread of Anglicisms in other languages. French, too, is no exception.

Other chief causes of Anglicisms in French include growing dominance of English press and mass media, and innovations in communication and information technology that provide an easier access to internet and social networks where the English language takes the pivotal role. Absence of equivalents for some English words makes the French adopt the English words willy-nilly. The words like cowboy, happy hour, etc. could be good example for this. Another thing to be taken into account is that some French people consider using English words, instead of their French equivalents, is more concise and expressive. Some scholars assume it as a matter of snobbism and fashionable integrity which could especially be true for youngsters.

## 3. Reactions of the French towards Anglicisms

These reactions could be categorized into two: the reactions of the authorities and those of the general public.

Unlike other languages, French has an official authority called "Académie Française" which was first set up in 1635 and was re-established in 1803 by Napoleon. Its primary function is to guide the development of French and advise the Government on proper use of the language. In order to reduce the use of Anglicisms, the Académie has proposed alternatives. These include:

- week-end → fin de semaine
- marketing → mercatique
- camping → campisme
- networking → réseautage
- smartphone → téléphone intelligent
- email → courrier électronique (courriel)

Moreover, the government of France, in an attempt to prevent the widespread use of Anglicisms, passed a law called "Bas-Lauriol Law" in 1975. According to the law, any text in public life must be in French.

Again in 1994, the government implemented a stricter law concerning the purity of French. That is called Toubon Law.

A year later, in 1995, a public poll for Toubon Law was carried out by a French magazine, *Le Figaro* and the results showed only 23% of the people asked said "For". 71% of them said "Against". Therefore, it can be implied that most of the French find the law unnecessary and they take no pains in using Anglicisms in their daily conversations.

## Conclusion

Nowadays, it seems hardly possible to hear French conversations without Anglicisms. Most of the people in France do not look uneasy to use them in their daily life. It is obvious that mass penetration of Anglicisms into French language is quite inevitable.

Linguists agree that "A language is alive". Therefore, the influence of more powerful languages on less powerful ones brings out no wonders. As French and English are living

languages, their interaction and influence on each other is just a natural phenomenon. So, as for the French, reality has to be recognized. This could be the reason why, Fleur Pellerin, French minister of culture and communications (2014-2016) said, during her term, “French is not in danger and my responsibility as minister is not to put up ineffective barriers against other languages, but to give all our citizens the means to make it live on”, while suggesting the lift of Toubon Law.

However, no reliable sources, for the time being, is available, except for the survey done by Le Figaro magazine in 1995, to definitely say what percentage of French population today is for or against the Toubon Law. The French appear to enjoy using Anglicisms, though.

As for learners of both languages, use of Anglicisms does not cause many difficulties. The study on these can be quite interesting and be of any support to language learning.

This paper presents the issues concerned only with lexical fields of both languages. So, other studies such as the comparison of the use of tenses in French and English or English and French phonology could also be done.

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