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ENGLISH BORROWINGS IN CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN: A LINGUISTIC-COGNITIVE ASPECT

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In the article, the linguistic-cognitive aspect of English borrowings in contemporary Italian is considered. The globalization of the English language is one of the driving forces that raises questions about language contacts and interactions in modern linguistics. The presented scientific investigation aims to identify the linguistic-cognitive features of the usage of English borrowings in Italian-language news discourse. The linguistic-cognitive approach allows for analyzing the behavior of speakers and the organization of conceptual space in human consciousness. The article discusses the factors and phenomena to which users of the linguistic code are subordinate, as well as the impulses of internal and external systems that accelerate the penetration of English equivalents into the Italian language. English borrowings are revealed taking into account the universal characteristics of open systems.

The article asserts that the analyzed linguistic-cognitive processes are universal-systemic, as they can be applied to the analysis of factors and phenomena of various natures, including linguistic and psychological.

Key words: *borrowing, anglicisms, language contacts, linguistic-cognitive aspect, linguistic-cognitive operation.*

Кондрук В.Ю. **Англомовні запозичення у сучасній італійській мові: лінгвокогнітивний аспект.**

У статті розглядається лінгвокогнітивний аспект англомовних запозичень у сучасній італійській мові. Глобалізація англійської мови є однією з рушійних сил, яка актуалізує питання мовних контактів та мовних взаємодій у сучасному мовознавстві. Представлена наукова розвідка має на меті визначити лінгвокогнітивні особливості вживання англійських запозичень в італомовному новинному дискурсі. Лінгвокогнітивний підхід дозволяє проаналізувати поведінку мовців та організацію понятійного простору у свідомості людини. У статті розглядаються чинники та явища, яким підпорядковуються користувачі мовного коду, а також імпульси внутрішніх та зовнішніх систем, що прискорюють проникнення англомовних відповідників у італійську мову. Англомовні запозичення розкриваються з урахуванням універсальних характеристик відкритих систем.

У статті стверджується, що проаналізовані лінгвокогнітивні процеси є універсально-системними, адже можуть бути застосовані до аналізу чинників та явищ різної природи, в тому числі мовних і психологічних.

***Ключові слова:** запозичення, англїцизми, мовні контакти, лінгвокогнітивний аспект, лінгвокогнітивна операція.*

Introduction. In the modern world, the English language is the most widely spoken and influential language in its various geographic and social manifestations. The dominance of the English language, albeit with varying degrees of political recognition and socio-cultural integration, has given it a strategic advantage, leading to its status as a lingua franca (Pulcini, 2023, p. 18).

The globalization of the English language in the modern world is one of the driving forces that raises questions about language contact and linguistic interactions in contemporary linguistics. Over the past decades, a large number of scholarly works have emerged addressing issues of language interaction and contact. The term “language contact”, widely used by many linguists following A. Martine and W. Weinreich, has replaced the term “code-mixing” introduced by G. Shuhardt in linguistics because the latter was not widely used due to its ambiguity. Alongside the term “borrowing” these terms are used regarding phenomena of language contact overall and “represent” the complex process of language contact as an interaction in which one or more languages act as givers while others act as receivers, or through which both languages enrich each other. (Esenova, 2002, p. 1). While borrowings can enrich a language by introducing new terms and concepts, thereby expanding its lexical repertoire, an overreliance on borrowed words may lead to linguistic dilution, potentially endangering linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Thus, the objective of this article is to investigate the linguo-cognitive characteristics of English borrowings in contemporary Italian and to examine the impact of the English language on the mental processes of Italian-speaking individuals.

Theoretical Background. Within the cognitive-discursive paradigm, borrowings are regarded as outcomes of cultural and linguistic contacts occurring within the context of cognitive and communicative processes:

- the cognitive approach is applied to analyze the primary meanings of borrowed words and their lexical representations in the recipient language, arising from cognitive challenges and the search for adequacy in filling existing categories with new constructions (Kozlova & Bednarczuk, 2018).
- analysis utilizing both social and cognitive approaches to language transformations allows for the association of language use models with

psycholinguistic characteristics of borrowed word frequency of usage (Pagel, Atkinson & Meade, 2007).

- analysis of the peculiarities of metaphorical usage of borrowings and the reflection of culturally embedded concepts (Landmann, 2023).
- The cognitive approach to terminalization of common words and borrowings involves transferring signs from one conceptual sphere to another with complete or partial reinterpretation, resulting in semantic changes and the formation of new terms (Voronina-Pryhodii, 2020).

From our point of view, the approach proposed by Kozlova & Bednarczuk allows us to explore productive models of lexical changes and interpret them from a cognitive perspective, as well as analyze the adequacy of filling existing Italian-language categories with new English-language constructions. The approach by Pagel, Atkinson & Meade enables the identification of factors and phenomena to which language users adhere, as well as the linguo-cognitive characteristics of using English borrowings in contemporary Italian. The approach proposed by J. Landmann allows for the identification of the reflection of culturally embedded English-language concepts and their application in the Italian language. The approach proposed by Voronina-Pryhodii assists in identifying semantic and lexical changes in borrowed anglicisms by transferring linguistic signs from one conceptual sphere to another.

In our article, the focus is on identifying the linguo-cognitive characteristics of using English borrowings in contemporary Italian, relying on the absence of linguistic investigation on this topic.

Methods. The study employs the method of pragmatic analysis, which allows for the investigation of communicative actions and features of speakers' speech behavior, as well as the identification of internal regularities governing the selection and use of borrowed lexical units.

Results and Discussion. The contact between Italian and English languages as part of intercultural interactions leads to transformations and shifts in the Italian-language worldview (Megec, 2015, p. 1). It is worth noting that language users operate on subconscious algorithms, influenced by a variety of factors and phenomena of different nature. The factors are as follows.

1) Linguistic factors:

- Lexical gaps. Italians often borrow terms from the English language to fill lexical gaps and achieve effective communication. For example, in the field of technology, the Italian language may lack specific terms, so words such as

“computer”, “internet”, “router”, “software”, “e-mail” etc. do not have direct equivalents in Italian. Thus, individuals' subconscious tendencies incline towards English as a reservoir of borrowings, owing to its universal applicability and the simplicity of its linguistic structures:

*La notizia che farà felice i clienti italiani è che Starlink, contestualmente al lancio del nuovo kit, ha abbassato i prezzi per l'acquisto di antenna e **router** e anche quello che riguarda l'abbonamento mensile (Pisa, 2023).*

- The principle of economy in the functioning of open systems manifests as the reduction of semantic structures within the internal form of linguistic signs. Reduction is considered a universal feature of linguistic communication, where the English language holds a prominent position. Certain propositions regarding reduction, such as the hypothesis of probabilistic reduction and the hypothesis of gradual signal reduction, pertain to informational content. Therefore, the more predictable a word or sound is, the greater the likelihood of its reduction.

Both external and internal reduction can be identified. External reduction occurs through the assimilation of borrowed words and their adaptation to the recipient language system, including the abbreviation of their own informational structures. In this case, reduction represents an inertial simplification, as language elements are shortened due to inertia, driven by an inherent inclination towards effort economy in speech, which may lead to distortion of meanings. The speaker consciously or subconsciously abbreviates everything that is implied in a particular speech situation, namely the data and information that, being known to the interlocutors, form the background of their communication.

Internal reduction is characterized by changes at various levels of language: phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic. External form reduction of borrowings may indicate internal reduction through the process of adapting borrowed elements by the recipient language to its own linguistic norms and rules.

By its nature, the human mind tends to think in extreme categorical terms and simplifies the process of communication to a primitive model for easier orientation in the real and holistic world, where it carries out various operations, including linguistic-communicative ones, and acts within the boundaries set by this world. For mutual understanding, speakers reduce and simplify the data of their worlds to a minimal set of features, through which they find common solutions. As a result, the worldview is reduced and correlated with the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing: English-language concepts offer universal reduced features that are

perceived by all speakers, ensuring swift and adequate information exchange, thus achieving the desired communicative effect:

*Perché l'anguria sui **social** è diventata il simbolo della Palestina?* (Ottolina, 2023).

In the first case, the word *social* is a reduced form of the English term *social media* or instead, one could use the Italian equivalent *reti sociali*, which is also longer than the English counterpart.

*Ha a che fare con **l'algospeak**, ma anche con radici culturali e storiche* (Ottolina, 2023).

In the second case, the English term *l'algospeak* is a simplified form formed from the English words “*algorithm*” and “*speak*”. Alternatively, one could use Italian equivalents such as *algoritmo del parlare* or *algo-lingua*, which are also significantly longer both in writing and pronunciation.

*Nel 1984, dopo aver annunciato il suo ritiro dal cinema a causa della sua incapacità di produrre un **sequel** (imul. continuazione, seguito) del suo film del 1972 *Lucifer Rising*, ha pubblicato il sequel del suo libro più famoso* (La Repubblica, 2023).

The simpler and shorter word *sequel* can help save the speaker's effort in achieving the desired communicative goal.

*Nel 2022 questo paniere ha superato i 7,4 miliardi di euro di **sell-out** (imul. tutto esaurito), pari a +6,0% rispetto all'anno precedente, mentre i volumi di vendita sono diminuiti di -5,2%* (Foresti, 2023).

The construction *sell-out* is a shortened form of the Italian phrase *tutto esaurito* and is a simpler and more direct construction for conveying the necessary information.

2) Psychological factors.

Inertia as one of the universal characteristics of open systems. As known, language is a set of symbolic forms and images that exist in the consciousness of its speakers and can be constantly destabilized by human linguistic behavior (Matyash, 2014, p. 40). Each linguistic personality as a component of the linguo-social space adopts universal turns, succumbing to inertia, using English terms and replacing or completely displacing the Italian equivalent, acting “like everyone else”. In this case, the speaker inertially follows common patterns, succumbing to trends and tendencies in the use of English borrowings:

*Si sommano ad analoghi incentivi per **startup** innovative* (La Repubblica, 2019).

In this case, the word *startup* could have been replaced by equivalents such as *avvio* or *lancio*. However, the word *startup* has become established usage among speakers of various languages, including Italian. Therefore, users of this linguistic code “by inertia” use this English term.

Il Black Friday non va confuso con il Cyber Monday, tipicamente celebrato il lunedì che segue il venerdì nero e – almeno in origine – dedicato alle offerte nel mondo dell’elettronica (Mosca, 2023).

It is evident that *Black Friday* and *Cyber Monday* could also be replaced by the terms *Venerdì Nero* and *Lunedì Virtuale* respectively. However, the English variants remain widely used. Thus, the globalization of the English language and the trend of its usage represent an “impulse” from the external system, accelerating the penetration of English equivalents into other languages and determining the frequency of their usage. Consequently, this overcomes “internal inertia” (due to the “energetic” nature of the English language, whose linguistic constructions are more universal, standard, and easier to understand) and transforms into what is known as “new inertia” (a new norm that entails the use of English borrowings).

3) Cognitive-linguistic operations:

• mapping. In cognitive linguistics, mapping is interpreted as the projection of knowledge structures from one conceptual domain to another, such as analogical mapping of features and properties of entities from the source domain onto ontologically related entities in the target domain (Belekhova, 2011, p. 22). Conceptual mapping is broadly defined in research as a structure of knowledge representation, idealized cognitive models outlining generalized principles of categorizing informational structure through linguistic means (Kövecses, 2002, p. 247):

*Per certi versi, un nuovo paradigma di fare vacanze e gestire accoglienza in Val Taro, cercando di unire divertimento, **relax**, buone prassi di sostenibilità, buona musica ed educazione ambientale* (La Repubblica, 2023).

The borrowed word *relax* undergoes the operation of mapping within the existing linguistic system and lexically correlates with the concept of *rilassamento*, thereby mapping onto the concept of relaxation.

• scanning. The cognitive operation of scanning typically pertains to mental processes responsible for quickly reviewing and familiarizing oneself with information or linguistic code. The connection between cognitive scanning and lexical borrowings may be indirect and related to how people process and incorporate borrowings into their cognitive processes of recognition and

assimilation: cognitive scanning abilities come into play as individuals rapidly recognize and internalize the meanings of these words. In turn, borrowings may be used to simplify presented information and facilitate mental operations. The efficiency of cognitive scanning can impact how easily and quickly people perceive and understand borrowed lexical units:

Come per uno scuolabus, c'è un percorso con fermate, orari fissi e un regolamento da seguire. Ogni scuola può avere più linee di pedibus e bicibus che accompagnano gli studenti in tempo per l'inizio delle lezioni (La Repubblica, 2023).

In the given example, scanning involves checking the borrowed lexicon used in the expression. Linguistic scanning entails identifying specific borrowed English terms such as *scuolabus*, *pedibus* and *bicibus*, which are ultimately associated with transport.

- fusion. The operation of fusion serves to simplify the monitoring and management of linguistic and cognitive operations necessary for directing the speaker's responses and reactions by combining various linguistic options (Matras, 2000, p. 514). The phenomenon of fusion corresponds to the type of bilingual discourse marking, which, through extralinguistic factors, can lead to linguistic transformations. Fusion features in the functional model of language contact phenomena alongside integration, differentiation, and convergence, while the position of other approaches to bilingual discourse markers is considered in light of this model. (Matras, 2000, p. 505):

Come per uno scuolabus, c'è un percorso con fermate, orari fissi e un regolamento da seguire (La Repubblica, 2023).

The word *scuolabus* is formed by fusion of existing words. The origin of these words lies in the combination of lexical elements present in both languages: Italian *scuola* and English *bus*.

Conclusions and perspectives. Based on the conducted research, it can be noted that the use of English borrowings in contemporary Italian is determined by both linguistic factors (the need to “fill in” lexical gaps, the reduction of semantic structures in the internal form of linguistic signs to accentuate and highlight the most important information) and psychological factors (the tendency to succumb to the fashion of inertia in using the English language). In the process of using borrowings, speakers apply linguo-cognitive operations such as mapping, scanning and fusion, which are used to adapt borrowed words or concepts from one language to another, facilitating effective interlingual interaction.

As we can see, the involved linguo-cognitive processes are universally systemic, as they can be applied to analyze factors and phenomena of various natures, including linguistic and psychological ones. Moreover, they help ensure coherence between linguistic structures, adapt semantic concepts to the recipient language, facilitate the assimilation of cultural ideas and concepts through linguistic structures, and introduce new terms into the language, replacing or filling gaps that have arisen due to the absence of native Italian equivalents.

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