

Frequency and Nature of Anglicisms in Written French Advertisements: A Review of Ads in French Journals

Antoinette Barffour

Missouri State University, USA

Abstract

The use of Anglicisms in French advertisements is widespread. However, the frequency and nature of Anglicisms, as well as their effect on the French language remain incompletely understood. This study takes a systematic approach to characterize and examine Anglicisms occurring in four French journals between 2010 and 2015 to determine the nature of the Anglicisms, their frequency, and trends. A total of 22 (Les Inrocks), 30 (Paris Match), 84 (Le Figaro Quotidien), and 37 (La Croix) ads were reviewed and analyzed. Results showed that about 40% of all ads reviewed contained at least one Anglicism, with the highest prevalence occurring in the cultural magazine (les Inrocks). Although Anglicisms were mostly identified in the domains, including entertainment, business or financial services, and fashion, automobile-related products were deemed most favorable to the use of Anglicisms. Despite the prevalence, the use of Anglicisms appears to have decreased over time within the observed six-year period. Anglicisms were mostly recorded with slogans, brand, and product names, but results also showed an increased occurrence of compound structures in French considered as innovative ellipsis typical of the English synthetic compound structure.

Keywords: Anglicisms, Ads, borrowings, French, compound nouns.

1. Introduction

It is widely known that English words are often included in non-English language advertisements (ads) and commercials, including French language ads. The motivation for such usage has been attributed to global consumerist practices dominated by Anglophone, especially American culture. Anglicisms are predominantly used in French's especially in product names, in soundtracks, slogans, signature lines, in voice-overs, and in descriptive copies to attract attention (Martin, 2007, 2008; Piller, 2001; Ruellot, 2011). The potential impact of this practice on the French language remains misunderstood, although there are concerns that this might negatively affect the integrity of the structure of the French language (Etiemble, 1964). In France, efforts to limit the growing influence of the use of English in French has led to the establishment of formal institutions and language legislations charged to protect French from foreign language influence. The mandate of these institutions and policies is to regulate and ban the use of foreign language items especially English from being used in French in especially professional and commercial settings. The 1975 Bas-Lauriol Law and its expansion in the 1994 Toubon Law are a case in point. In addition to these laws, a language body, Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France, is mandated to publish regularly in *Le journal officiel de la République française* approved words recommended using in place of English words. In light of this, it is of interest to study the scope and the extent to which English might be impacting the French language.

Specific research questions include:

1. What is the nature of the Anglicisms that occur in written French advertisements?
2. What is the frequency and trend with which they occur?

2. Background

English, being a language of wider communication, has become a viable choice to portray the image of prestige, sophistication, competence, innovation, and also elegance (Martin, 2002; Picone, 1996; Piller, 2003; Ruellot, 2011). In the studies of Martin (1988, 2002) and Ruellot (2011), the large majority of Anglicisms used in French advertising copies are the type of borrowings that relate to these positive advertising images. The ads portraying the dynamism of business practices contain borrowings such as *business, efficiency, top, design, quality, organization, management, leadership, boss, marketing, and manager*. Ruellot (2011) affirms that the commonly used adverb in colloquial discourse *very* was frequently used with other cognates as in *very irrésistible, very élégante* in the ads on fashion and cosmetics to portray sophistication and elegance. The perceived reactions related to such usage vary across languages and audiences. In environments where English use appears to be transforming the host language, such a tendency has been viewed as detrimental and invasive (Kachru, 1986). In a country like France where the notion of language purism has strong historical roots with the elite interested in preserving the "pure" form of the language, the incorporation of English in French has generally not been considered positive. For some critics, the continuous influx of English has the potential

to transform the structure of the French language (Etiemble, 1964). The impact of English on French has been recorded in the domain of French compounding where simply juxtaposed, N+N, compounds are on the increase in French due to continuous English compound borrowings into French. These structures are at odds with the traditional analytic structure that requires a relational particle *N de N* in French. Hence, the forms are innovative and contribute to the changing profile of the French lexicon (Barffour&Picone, 2019). Regardless of the language laws put in place to limit such impact in France, it appears that ad copywriters would still risk using English in ads due to the assumed positive impact it may have on consumers (Martin, 2007). With the continuous use of English often intended to portray an image of prestige, sophistication, competence, innovation, and elegance (Chécrici, 1995; Martin, 1998,2002, 2006, 2007; Picone,1992a, 1996; Piller, 2003; Ruellot, 2011; Takashi, 1990). The use of advertising may provide a unique and valuable data source for exploring the scope and trend in the use of Anglicisms in French, a domain that has had a limited focus in previous studies. Hence, the current study aims to expand the current understanding of nature, and trends of Anglicisms in French ads.

2. Methodology and Data Source

This current study was a component of a bigger study designed to characterize the use of Anglicisms in French mass media published between 2010 and 2015. Different years were selected as substitutes if issues for the randomly selected years were not readily accessible. Issues reviewed for the bigger study were randomly selected from journals including *Les Inrocks*(weekly cultural magazine), *Paris Match* (weekly people and celebrity magazine), *Le Figaro*(*Quotidien*)(daily local and international newspaper), and *La Croix* (daily catholic faith-based newspaper). These journals were selected due to their presumed ability to reach different readership and report on different fields of interest, and hence an expectation of a more representative sample of English borrowings. Within six years, three publication years were randomly selected for each journal followed by a selection of three issues from each publication year for each of the newspapers, and one issue from each publication year for each magazine. To ensure uniformity and to reduce potential biases, the number of issues was determined based on the number of pages available in each journal issue. As an illustration, three issues from a newspaper was comparable to one issue from a magazine. A total of 24 journal issues (18 newspapers and 6 magazines) were reviewed for Anglicisms focusing mainly on news articles. For the current study, the ad copies found in the selected journal issues were also reviewed for Anglicisms. The review of ads was limited to the first 23 pages of each of the previously selected issues. Since 23 was the least number of pages among all the issues, the first 23 pages were selected to ensure that the same number of pages were reviewed for all the journal issues. All ad types were considered, including full-page and small ads. Overall, 37 ads were reviewed for *La Croix*, 84 for *Le Figaro*, 30 for *Paris Match*, and 22 for *Les Inrocks*. A pre-developed template (Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet) was used to document any word, phrase, sentence related to English that was located within the ad. The visuals and imagery that accompanied the ads, the position of the ads, the Anglicism (such as headline or body copy), and the font sizes were also documented (although examined in a separate study).

2.1. Definitions and analyses

For the current article, an ad was defined as a picture, image or drawing used to create awareness about a product, service, or events. The definition included ads regarding the sales of a product or ads used in making announcements about an event. Anglicism, English item, or English borrowing are used interchangeably in this article and defined as any English item appearing in the text, on the product label, in the slogan, or the logo of any given ad in the journal issue pages examined. To determine the frequency and trend of Anglicisms used in the ads per journal, the frequency was expressed as the total number of ads that contained English borrowings relative to the total number of ads reviewed per each journal. This was converted to rate in two ways. Subsequently, the ads occurring across the four journals were pooled and categorized into 18 product domains. Additional categorizations included slogans, brand, product name, compound nouns, simple nouns, hybrid, acronyms, calques, and other classifications based on parts of speech. For each category, the frequency was expressed as the total number of ads containing Anglicisms per the number of ads in the sub-category reviewed. Tables and charts of the Anglicisms and frequency for each year reviewed were provided to depict the prevalence and the trend over time. To accurately determine the source language (English) of the borrowed items and to examine their level of assimilation in the recipient language (French), various dictionaries were consulted. They consisted of the Anglicism dictionary, *Le Dictionnaire des Anglicisms* (Rey-Debove & Gagnon, 1984), the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the monolingual French dictionary, *Le Petit Robert*. The use of the dictionaries helped clarify the source of the borrowing, their meanings, entry dates, and their orthographical features. These characteristics were necessary for analyzing the type and level of integration of the Anglicisms.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the total word count of ads with English observed in each journal and the frequency of the English borrowings (EBs) identified. A total of 173 ads were examined among which 70 (40%) were ads that contained at least one English borrowing (EB). On the whole, ads were more likely to appear with English in the selected magazines (*Les Inrockuptibles* or *les Inrocks*, *Paris Match*) than in Newspapers (*Le Figaro Quotidien*, *La Croix*).

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of ads with Anglicisms in selected French journals (2010-2015)

Journal Type	Total number of ads	Ads with at least 1 English word (%)
<i>Les Inrockuptibles</i> (LI)	22	15 (68.1)
<i>Paris Match</i> (PM)	30	19(63.3)
<i>Le Figaro Quotidien</i> (LFQ)	84	28(33.2)
<i>La Croix</i> (LC)	37	8(22.0)

Figure 1: Prevalence of Anglicisms' use across magazines

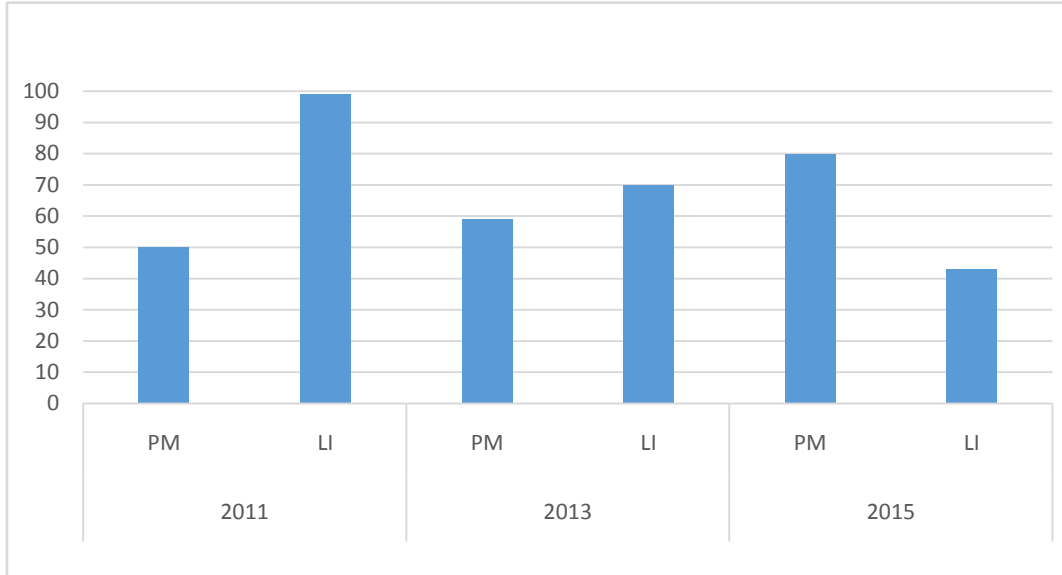
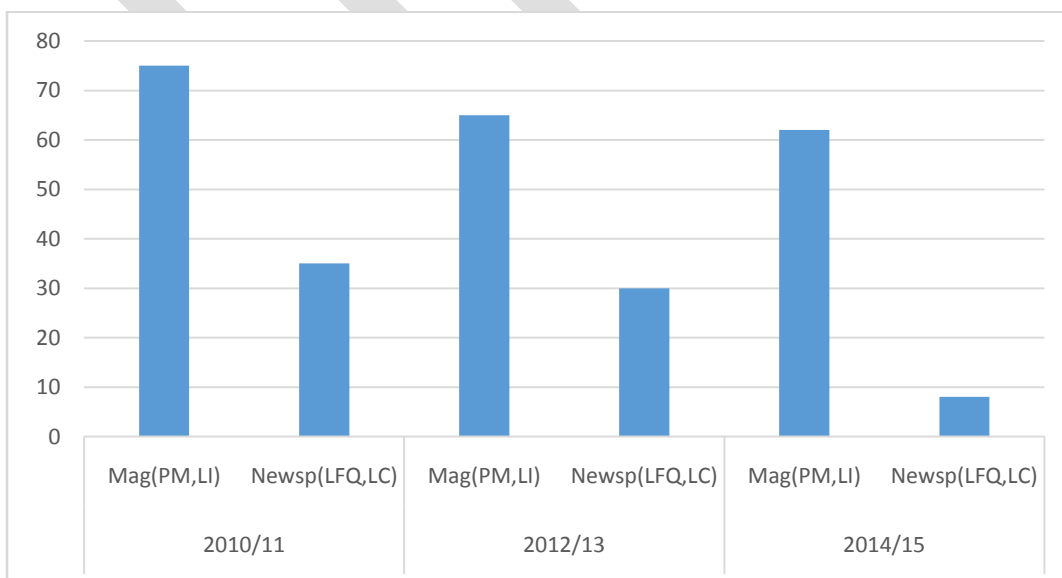


Figure 1 shows the trend of Anglicisms' in ads identified in the two magazines over time. What's interesting is the clear contrast in the trend between the two magazines. While prevalence increases over time in *Paris Match*, a decline over time in *Les Inrocks* was observed. Despite the high incidence of Anglicisms recorded in *Paris Match*, when all the journals were combined to determine the trend of the Anglicisms within the six-year period, there seemed to be a decline in Anglicisms' use in all the selected journals as can be observed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Trend of Anglicisms' use in all journals over time



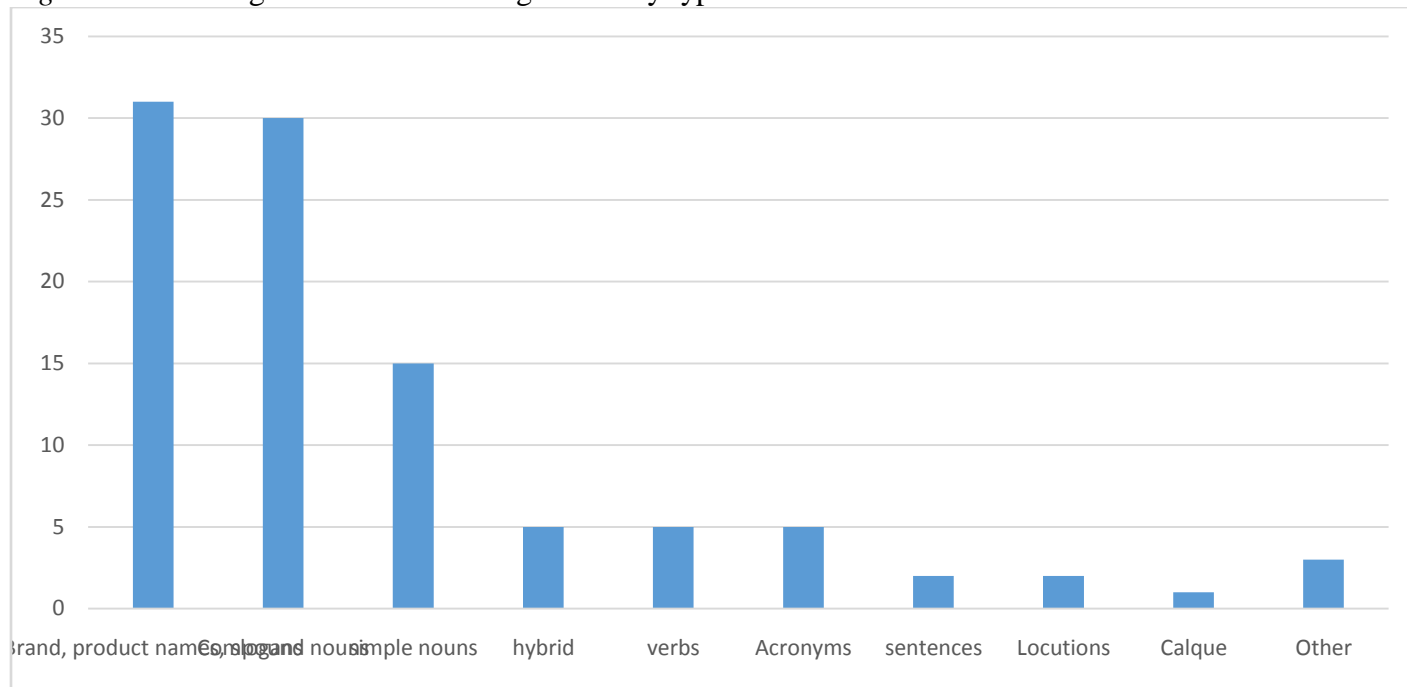
3.1. Distribution of English borrowings in product categories

A total of 70 (out of 173) ads that contained English were classified into 18 different product categories. The majority of the ads were related to automobile products and services and it is also the domain where English was used the most (30%). This was followed by products related to entertainment (13%); and financial services (8.5%). The remaining ads were classified in various domains as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of advertised products using Anglicisms

Product category	Number of ads in category (%)
Automobile	21 (30.0)
Entertainment (music, audition, movie)	9 (12.8)
Business, financial services	6 (8.5)
Jewelry, watches	5 (7.1)
Furniture	5 (7.1)
Invitation -subscription, talk	3(4.2)
Fashion/clothing	3 (4.2)
Tourism, travel	2 (2.8)
Telecommunications	2(2.8)
Magazines, subscription	2(2.8)
Men Clothing	2(2.8)
Women fashion, clothing	2(2.8)
Home supplies, Housing	2(2.8)
Women's cosmetics	2(2.8)
Cosmetics-Men's perfume,	1(1.4)
Food, alcoholic beverages	1(1.4)
Health, women medication	1(1.4)
Cosmetics (unisex)	1(1.4)
Total	70 (100%)

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of Anglicisms by type



*Distribution based on about 124 Anglicisms.

Table 3 demonstrates the frequency and distribution of the types of Anglicisms found in the study. Slogans, brand/product names, and compound nouns represented about 31% and 30% respectively, followed by simple nouns (15%), hybrid, verbs, acronyms (5% each), other (3%) consisting of onomatopoeic expression, adjective, adverb, and a preposition, locutions and sentences (2% each), and calque (1%). The high incidence of slogans, brand/product names, and compound nouns in English is notable.

Table 3: Example of Anglicisms in slogans, brand/product names

ANGLICISM	TYPE
Automobile: <i>NEW THINKING NEW POSSIBILITIES*</i> . ‘Nouvelles idées, Nouvelles possibilités’ (Hundai Motors), <i>Way of life*</i> ‘un style de vie’, <i>ThinkBlue™</i> (volkswagen)	Slogans
<i>LEXUS HYBRID</i> (Toyota), <i>TWINGO</i> , <i>CLIO CAMPUS</i> (Renault)	Brand/product names
Cosmetics and Fashion: <i>A Diamond is Forever</i> (De Beers Group), <i>Keep exploring</i> (Destination Canada, tourism agency), <i>Timeless is Now</i> (Max Mara), <i>Wear it loud feed the World</i> (Denim), <i>IT’S YOUR TURN</i> , <i>HUGO JUST</i>	Slogans

<i>DIFFERENT</i> , (Hugo Boss)	
<i>REVITALIFT</i> (L'Oréal), <i>THE CREAM</i> (Nordstrom), <i>Men Redux-complexTM</i> (Samatoline Cosmetics), <i>PURPLE</i> (Pomellato); <i>Masters</i> (Gucci), <i>Chronomaster Open</i> (Zenith watch), <i>Nouvelle Ebel Classic Sport</i> (Ebel watch) <i>Swisslife</i> (Swiss Life Group insurance company)	Brand/product names
Entertainment: <i>DEADCANONCE</i> (Australian Musical project), <i>Taste It</i> (album by Jake Bugg)	Slogans
<i>FACTOR</i> , <i>SUB</i> , <i>POP</i> , <i>WARP</i> (UK & British record labels), <i>hold me Tight</i> (song title by the Beatles), <i>seeing is believing</i> (album),	Brand/product names (album titles or record labels)

*Borrowings provided with their translations

Article 2 of France's 1974 Toubon Law requires all slogans and ad messages accompanying trademarks to appear in French. Nevertheless, not all slogans and trademarked messages were translated. Furthermore, a closer look at the few translations provided in the slogans, seem to give more of an English feel than French since it is an exact calque of the English equivalents in terms of meaning and structure. It is also important to mention that these French translations appeared in the body copy of the ad in small print less likely to be evident to the potential consumers. Hence, translations may have been provided in an attempt to fulfil the law's requirement. The fact that the majority of the product companies using the English slogans and brand names are from countries where English is not the dominant language of its speakers is worth noting. The tendency provides insight into the status or role of English in this domain.

3.2. Anglicisms in compound Nouns

Table 4: Distribution of borrowed constituents in compound structures

Frequency of compound structures	
N+N, ex. <i>Airbag</i> , <i>Application iPhone</i> , <i>Asset management</i> , <i>City Safety</i> , <i>Park Assist</i> , <i>Wealth management</i> , <i>Week-end</i> , <i>concept car</i> , <i>Asset services</i> , <i>Home Spirit</i> , <i>Lifestyle</i>	19
Adj +N, ex. <i>un smartphone</i> , <i>bi-color</i> , <i>Black Pack</i> , <i>Bluetooth</i> , <i>Efficient dynamics</i> , <i>Dynamic Light Assist</i> , <i>E-CLUB</i> , <i>Executive briefings</i> , <i>iPhone</i> , <i>EUROMONEY</i> , <i>Hotspots</i> , <i>unelivebox</i> , <i>private banking survey</i> , <i>cute cut</i>	14
N +prep+N, ex. <i>radar de recul</i>	1
Prep+ N, ex. <i>internet</i> , V+N, ex. <i>open-mic</i> , V+ Adj, ex. <i>sitbest</i>	4

3.2.1. Compound Nouns: Innovative Ellipsis

The second area where Anglicisms occurred the most (30%) was in compounding. The typical compound structure in French includes positions such as *wrap-dress* (entity X is both a wrap and a dress), *wonderboy* (entity X is both wonder (figuratively) and also a boy) (Barffour&Picone, 2019, 11), and structures considered as the genitive of juxtapositions as in *canapé-lit* or *hôtel-dieu* (Picone, 1996). Neither of the latter compound structures was identified in the current study. However, about 50% of the total compound structures identified in this study appeared to be innovative N+N forms which are non-traditional in French. Examples include *Airbags* ‘bag for air’, *Application iPhone* ‘application for iPhone’, *Asset management* ‘management of asset’, *City Safety* ‘safety for city’, *Wealth management* ‘management of wealth’, *Week-end* ‘end of the week’, *concept car* ‘car for showcasing a new style or technology’, *Asset services* ‘services for asset’, *EcoBoost* ‘boost for or to increase fuel economy’ etc. As can be observed in the later examples, the compound nouns seem to be repressing the subordination required of the analytic French structure (Picone, 1992b). These ongoing innovations have also been recently recorded in a recent study (Barffour&Picone, 2019). It appears that the continuous integral borrowings from English are boosting the use of N+Nelliptical structures typical of English compounding structure.

Other examples that seem to have had English impact include *CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIE* classified in this study as a collocational calque on the English word ‘creative technology’. In terms of word order, the adjective precedes the noun which is not impossible in French, but it seems to follow the English regressive modification structure. The traditional structure expected in French would be *la technologie créative* where the adjective follows the noun, but the order is inverted. Although *Technologie* is maintained with French spelling, the word is put in the upper case where the accent is not required in French.

Table 5: Other Anglicism types

ANGLICISM	TYPE	Dictionary attested borrowings
<i>Battle, bridge, cosmetics, Design, destockage, kit, Managers, NEOLOGY, pack, parking, shopping, tablette, le management, les stocks, Group, Internet</i>	Simple nouns	<i>design</i> (1965), <i>shopping</i> (1804), <i>parking</i> (1926), <i>stocks</i> (1656), <i>Wifi</i> , (2001)
<i>MP3, LED, WC</i>	acronym	<i>WC</i> (1887)
<i>Lecteur CD, la technologie FullHybrid*‘FullHybrid - totalement hybride’, technologie Connected drive, air conditionné (air conditioning), les système Start and Stop ‘Start and Stop</i>	hybrid	

system'		
<i>ClicClac</i>	Onomatopoeia	
<i>Relax, Open, scannez, testez, now, chic, cool, by</i>	Verbs, adv, adj, prep	<i>Cool</i> (1970)
<i>Design, le management, les stocks</i>	simple	
<i>En streaming, enclics, On tour, U snap</i>	locution	<i>streaming</i> (1998)

3.2.2. Simple nouns

Simple nouns represented the third domain where Anglicisms were mostly recorded. The most striking characteristic of the borrowings in this category is seemingly their level of familiarity. While some of the borrowings (table 5) are dictionary attested (including compound nouns such as the Internet (1995), email (1994), iPhone (2001)), others seem to be borrowings that have become part of the colloquial French lexicon or are infrequent use. The English borrowings presented earlier under slogans, product names, and compounds all seem to have constituents that may not cause comprehensibility issues to French speakers.

4. Discussion

Previous studies (Chesley, 2010; Martin, 2002,2006, 2007; Ruellot, 2011) have recorded continuous and increase in English borrowings in French ads. This notwithstanding, the present study didn't show any indication of borrowing increase. The trend of English borrowings in French ads showed a decrease across all journals reviewed within the six-year period. This finding (although based on limited data) provides rare evidence with regards to the trend in frequency with which English is used in French and also in other languages. The findings of this study as it pertains to the nature of Anglicisms in French ads also provide an invaluable insight attesting to the changing nature of the French lexical profile. The borrowings recorded as compounds mostly in the N+N structure appear to be innovative forms expanding in French media. Although these forms pre-existed in French under limited conditions, there seems to be a sturdy increase of these structures probably due to the influx of N+N English integral borrowings into French. Similar trends have been documented in a recent study (Barffour&Picone, 2019). Other significant instances of Anglicisms in the present study were identified as simple nouns. In a casual context (such as France) where borrowings occur through exposure to media or ads, nouns considered to be open class, are the most favorable for borrowing (Winford, 2003). Thus, the French lexicon remains the domain where English would have the most impact. It is also noted while those nouns recorded in this paper appear to have been well-integrated in the French lexicon either through dictionary attestation or daily use in ads, media, or in colloquial discourses. Similarly, Anglicisms were identified as more productive and more likely to be integrated into the French lexicon than borrowings from other languages (Chesley, 2010; Saugera, 2017). The continuous use of these borrowings seems to indicate that they are easily perceived and understood by French speakers. Furthermore, in the studies of Martin (1998, 2002) and Ruellot (2011), the large majority of English items used in French advertising copies were the type of borrowings that relate to positive advertising images. The ads portraying the

dynamism of business practices contained borrowings such as *business, efficiency, top, design, quality, organization, management, leadership, boss, marketing, and manager*. The commonly used adverb in colloquial discourse *very* was also recorded to have been frequently used with other cognates. Examples of its use were identified in *very irrésistible, very élégante* in the ads on fashion and cosmetics to portray sophistication and elegance. The current study seems to support the use of English mostly in technologically related domains especially automobiles. Hence, a tendency for English to portray an image of quality, modernity, or efficiency. English representing Anglophone and especially American culture, presumed to be prestigious and desirable, cannot be overlooked. As can be observed in the slogans, brands, and product names, the majority of the advertising companies' ads (including those from France L'Oréal, Renault, Citroën, Peugeot) originated from non-anglophone countries. The tendency for non-anglophone companies to exploit English has also been noted in previous studies in the same context (Friedrich, 2002; Luanga, 2010; Martin, 1998; Ruellot, 2011). In Luanga's (2010) research, while multinational companies strive to maintain their international brand identity, local companies are eager to be associated with international brands through the use of English in a variety of techniques. Thus, the presence of English in this domain seems to reinforce the general assertion that English, less arguably a language of wider communication, serves as a symbol of modernization, efficiency and to some extent, reliability, in French ads. These tendencies notwithstanding, the nature of the borrowings in this study especially as it pertains to their level of integration, seems to indicate that the presence of English borrowings may reinforce colloquialisms, comprehensibility, practicality, and also the assurance of reaching a larger population. Due to its prominence and prestige, English would remain the common source of borrowings in French and the French lexicon is likely to be impacted the most as a result of the nature of contact between the two languages in France.

4.1. Limitations

The main goal of this study was to examine the nature of English borrowings in French ads. However, because we could only review a limited number of journals, this may not be representative of the broader scope of advertising strategies used in French ads. It is also possible that there are more categories of these ads than presented in the current paper. Also, because our study only covers a six-year time interval, the ability to accurately depict the trend over time was limited. However, taking into consideration the dearth of findings regarding the issues raised in this study, this study has the potential to provide an impetus for additional research. Larger studies, spanning a long period of time may be necessary to expand knowledge in this field.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study support previous research in ads asserting that Anglicisms are generally used to portray positive images such as modernization, efficiency, and durability. Hence, their continuous presence in technologically related domains. Unlike other studies, we did not find an increasing trend in the use of Anglicisms over time, likely because of the smaller

number of journals sampled in this study. The results of this study are also consistent with previous research claiming that nouns are the most affected borrowing category. Nevertheless, the pattern of nouns recorded in this article provides new evidence that supports an increase in compound borrowings at variance with the traditional morphosyntactic structure of French compound formation.

The internal structural changes evidenced in the innovative compound structures, seem to indicate that English would have an impact on the French lexicon regardless of the decrease in borrowing.



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