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## An Exploratory Analysis of Hyphenated Phrasal Expressions in English vs. Italian Fashion Writing

### Abstract

Hyphenated phrasal expressions have been analysed by linguists as complex phraseological features found in languages such as English and German. In the specific context of English fashion discourse, studies have highlighted their distinctive use by fashion writers to formulate richly articulated descriptions and evaluations, while expressing their own unique discursive identities. Yet it is not known whether such usage has spilled over into Italian fashion discourse, representing a language that generally lacks such phrase-like compounds. This contribution explores the use of hyphenated phrasal expressions in Italian fashion journalism, which may reflect cross-influence from its English counterparts. Extending previous corpus-assisted research on these expressions in English fashion journalism, the analysis is replicated in a corpus of Italian fashion journalism compiled from the digital fashion magazine MF Fashion. Results indicate that hyphenated phrasal expressions are comparatively infrequent in the Italian fashion journalism corpus and tend to be conventionalized within the fashion world (e.g., *prêt-à-porter*) or appear in English within code-switching episodes. However, there were some cases of highly creative usage, for example, *il designer-dj-pr argentino*, which highlights the multiple identities and talents of a person of interest within the fashion world. The findings of the study offer a foray into the phenomenon of linguistic cross-fertilization within the global fashion discourse community in relation to hyphenated phrasal expressions.

### 1. *Introduction*

Multi-word items have generated much interest among linguists working in the area of phraseology thanks to their strong expressive and creative potential (Carter 2004; Jaki 2014; Kecskes 2016; Fetzer and Weber 2019). Over the years, various terms have been coined to refer to these linguistic devices, including

*phraseological units* (Howarth 1996), *multi-word units* (Lewis 1993), *formulaic sequences* (Wray and Perkins 2000), and *fixed expressions* (Moon 1998). Although it is difficult to pinpoint a precise definition of multi-word items due to their considerable variation in form, there is a general consensus that they are perceived as single units (Lewis 1993). However, following Moon (1997), there are other key factors that come into play when assigning the status of multi-word item, including conventionality of the expression, fixedness of the word sequence, and non-compositionality whereby the global meaning is not derived from the sum of each word. Yet all of these factors are not always present, or they are present to a greater or lesser extent, such that the specific nature of the multi-word unit often ultimately depends on the expression itself (Moon 1997; Granger and Paquot 2008).

### 1.1 *Multi-word Expressions: Issues and Challenges*

The terms used to refer specifically to multi-word items that have more than two constituents are also quite varied in the literature. These include *phrasal compound nouns* (Carter and McCarthy 2006, 321) and *phrasal structures* (Bauer and Renouf 2001, 104). The term *phrasal compound* has been adopted by some scholars but it does not always have the same meaning or describe the same type of multi-word unit. For example, conventional expressions such as *soon-to-be-divorced* and *circle-a-word* are considered *phrasal compounds* by Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013, 437-438) and Štekauer (2002, 108). Yet Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013, p. 437) also characterized as *phrasal compounds* more complex and less conventional multi-word items that constitute nonce formations or hapax legomena (e.g., *I-keep-forgetting-you're-watching-me smile*).

Other authors have similarly adopted the term *phrasal compound* but have identified specific syntactic criteria that must be present in order to achieve this status. Scalise and Bisetto (2009, 47) used *phrasal compound* when the syntactic features of nominal structures have multiple elements that precede the head noun, for instance, a coordinated noun phrase (e.g., *pipe and slipper husband*) or even a complete clause (e.g., *God is dead theology* as cited in Lieber 1992). For Trips (2012, 1), only structures whose left-hand elements are complex maximal phrases (e.g., *Learn what is there and don't question its attitude*) are to be

classified as phrasal compounds. In the same way, for Meibauer (2007, 248) a phrasal compound is a multi-word item with a nominal head, as exemplified by *Kaufe-Ihr-Auto-Kärtchen* ‘buy-your-car cards’.

Looking closely at the examples discussed above, another thorny issue can be detected: the non-consistent use of hyphenation between the constituents. As affirmed by Lieber and Štekauer (2009, 7), there is no “hard-and-fast rule”: discrepancies in how multi-word items are represented orthographically have been noted in the literature (Trips 2012; Wiese 1996). Some attempts have been made to address this issue, for example, by focusing on the grammatical function of the multi-word item. Missud (2018) referred to *phrasal compound adjectives* that contain at least three distinct elements joined by multiple hyphens (e.g., *get-out-of-bed bell*). Biber et al. (1999, 533) argued that the hyphen is a “clear objective indicator” of adjective status in compound adjectives, while Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013) observed that hyphens occur regularly in compound adjectives. Yet, regardless of word class, the intentional insertion of hyphens within a multi-word expression by a writer can indicate that it is perceived as a single unit and should be interpreted by readers as such (Giammarresi 2010), and perhaps this should be a guiding principle when examining this issue.

## 1.2 *Multi-word Expressions across Languages*

On a cross-linguistic level, the degree to which multi-word items occur in a particular language varies considerably. For example, in English and German, they are quite common and their linguistic features have been studied from various perspectives (Wiese 1996; Meibauer 2007; Trips 2014; Missud 2018; Günther, Kotowski and Plag 2020), albeit using different terms of reference as discussed in the previous sub-section. These studies have also examined their phrasal and often ad hoc nature by offering examples of hyphenated forms such as *figure-it-out-as-you-go process* (Günther, Kotowski and Plag 2020, 79) and “*Man-muss-doch-über-alles-reden-können*”-*Credo* ‘one-should-be-able-to-talk-about-everything motto’ (Hein 2017, 119).

Italian is a language that is instead not characterized by such phrase-like hyphenated compounds. According to Bisetto (2015, 395), “Romance languages seem to lack phrasal compounds of the kind present in some

Germanic languages”, while noting that Italian does not have phrasal compounds of the type exemplified by *floor-of-a-birdcage taste*. In her qualitative analysis of the ItTenTen10 corpus (an Italian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet), she categorized some items as phrasal compounds, but they were limited to only a particular syntactic structure, specifically [N+NP] as in *fine anno calcistico* ‘end of the football year’ (Bisetto 2015, 416). Moreover, in this study the issue of hyphenation is not addressed at all and only one of the many examples discussed presents hyphens: *circolo virtuoso patria-costituzione-unità sociale* ‘social unity-constitution-home virtuous circle’. In contrast, with specific reference to hyphenation, Fetzer and Weber (2019, 393) noted that Romance languages do have lexicalized hyphenated items such as *va-nu-pieds* ‘homeless’ or *non-ti-scordar-di-me* ‘forget-me-not’, but they tend to be conventional, relatively short, and “cannot simply be formed at will by any language user”, as is the case with English and German.

Drawing on the literature reviewed in the previous paragraphs, the aim of this study was to explore trends in the use of hyphenated phrasal expressions (hereafter HPEs), a term I coined to overcome possible terminological confusion when referring to multi-word items that contain at least three constituents joined together by at least two hyphens. The research was set within a specific communicative context, namely professional fashion writing, and was undertaken from a contrastive perspective to identify potential differences in Italian vs. English fashion journalism. In the next section, I provide background on fashion discourse and potential cross-linguistic influences to set the scene for the analysis that follows.

## *2. Fashion Discourse and Multi-word Expressions*

The fashion discourse community comprises an eclectic group ranging from industry professionals to journalists to celebrities to ordinary consumers. Within this community, fashion journalism plays an important role in integrating such varied domains of experience which comprise modernity, consumerism, communication, and the media (Wylie 2012). As far back as Roland Barthes’s (1990 [1967]) ground-breaking analysis of fashion magazine editorials, fashion journalism has been shown to be fertile ground for crea-

tive forms of linguistic expression. More recent studies have highlighted the presence of vibrantly descriptive adjectives and rhetorical devices including alliteration, rhyming, hyperbole, metaphors, and irony (Borrelli 1997; König 2006) in English fashion journalism. With particular reference to various types of multi-word units, including HPEs, Crawford Camiciottoli (2016, 2019, 2020) found them to be key features of texts written by professional fashion journalists and fashion bloggers. In both cases, they were used to communicate highly expressive descriptions and evaluations of fashion entities in which the visual dimension takes center stage, but also to carve out distinctive authorial identities.

The global reach of the fashion industry that impacts people around the world begs the question of whether fashion journalists writing in other languages might be assimilating distinctive features of English (such as HPEs), as the “‘lingua franca’ of the transnational field of fashion” (Rocamora 2009, 81). However, it is not known whether the use of HPEs is a phenomenon limited to English fashion writing, or whether it might also spill over into other languages, for example, Italian, representing a lingua-culture associated with a globally pre-eminent fashion industry (Scarpellini 2019) in which Italian fashion journalism has a strong tradition (Franchini and Soldani 2004). A related issue is whether the linguistic cross-fertilization seen in the relatively common English borrowings (e.g., *cardigan*, *outfit*) found in Italian fashion discourse (Lopriore and Furiassi 2015; Ondelli 2015) also occurs with HPEs that may remain in their English form when embedded into code-switching episodes.

The above reflections can now be drawn upon to formulate the following research questions that will guide this study:

1. To what extent are HPEs present in Italian fashion writing in comparison with English fashion writing?
2. Is there any evidence of linguistic cross-fertilization between the English-speaking and Italian-speaking fashion journalism communities in the use of HPEs?

### 3. Corpora and Methodology

Extending previous research focusing on English HPEs in *Vogue* magazine (Crawford Camiciottoli 2020), a corpus of Italian fashion journalism (hereafter IFJC – Italian Fashion Journalism Corpus) was collected for the purpose of providing comparative insights into the potential use of multi-word hyphenated devices within the Italian fashion journalism community. The source of data was the digital fashion magazine *MF Fashion*, published by the Italian media conglomerate Class Editori S.p.A.,<sup>1</sup> whose text files were freely downloadable from Nexis Uni, an academic search engine that contains a wide variety of full-text sources of news discourse in English as well as other languages. The comparable English language corpus (hereafter EFJC – English Fashion Journalism Corpus) consisted of texts from *Vogue* that had been collected and analysed in Crawford Camiciottoli (2020), also freely available from Nexis Uni. Although a corpus compiled from *Vogue Italia*, the Italian language counterpart, would have been the ideal comparative source, unfortunately its texts had to be purchased at a considerable cost and, most importantly, were not available in a machine-readable format that is needed for analysis with corpus tools. However, after reading samples of *MF Fashion* articles, I determined that its linguistic and register features were in alignment with those of *Vogue Italia* and could therefore be considered to be representative of contemporary Italian fashion journalism.

For both corpora, in order to collect textual material with descriptions and evaluations of fashion products and entities in line with the objectives of the research, I implemented the advanced search tool of Nexis Uni to identify texts containing the words *fashion*, *trend*, *design*, or *collection*. In this way, I was able to filter out texts that were not relevant (e.g., reports of a financial or corporate nature, simple lists of content).

Table 1 provides an overview of the two corpora, which were largely comparable in terms of number of tokens and timeframes covered. The standardized type to token ratio (STTR), a widely used measure of lexical variation routinely calculated by corpus software, was very similar in both corpora, indicating that the particular language in question did not have an impact on this feature.

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1 <https://www.mffashion.com/> (accessed: 01/01/2023).

CORPUS	SOURCE	TIMEFRAME	TOKENS	TYPES	STTR
ITJC	MF Fashion	2004 2013-2014 2018-2019	133,185	15,517	52.15%
EFJC	Vogue USA	2003-2004 2013-2014 2018-2019	123,180	17,181	51.98%

Table 1. Overview of ITJC and EFJC.

To analyse the two corpora, the WordList function of *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott 2010) was used to identify all hyphenated items by unchecking the “hyphens separate words” box in the overall settings. In this way, in addition to all single-word items in the corpora, any hyphenated items also appear in the WordList. I then deleted all non-hyphenated items and items joined with a single hyphen so that only HPEs with at least three constituents united by at least two hyphens remained. The lists were then subjected to further filtering to remove unwanted items that were not of interest to the study, including numerical expressions (e.g., *nineteen-year-old*), proper names (e.g., *A-Cold-Wall* which is a British fashion brand), and non-standard orthographic representations of words with hyphenated affixes that do not qualify as multi-word items (e.g., *A-list-y*). Frequencies of HPEs were tallied for both corpora, followed by qualitative analysis in their context of usage to identify any prominent trends or patterns across the two corpora.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 2 reports the overall frequencies of HPEs in IFJC vs. EFJC. When comparing the normalized parameter of per 10,000 words (hereafter pttw), 11.61 in EFJC vs. 2.85 IFJC reflects a statistically significant higher frequency in the former (log likelihood score of 6.51,  $p < 0.5$ ). Moreover, HPEs in EFJC also showed a much higher degree of variation (STTR of 83.91 vs. 44.73 in IFJC), with the vast majority appearing only once and many cases of hapaxes which will be discussed in greater detail below. These results corroborate previous research on cross-linguistic differences in complex multi-word items with reference to Italian and English (Bisetto 2015; Fetzer and Weber 2019).

CORPUS	HPES (N)	HPES (pttw)	HPES types	STTR
IFJC	38	2.85	17	44.73%
EFJC	143	11.61	120	83.91%

Table 2. Overall frequencies of HPES in IFJC vs. EFJC.

Table 3 illustrates all the HPES found in IFJC together with a comparison of the same items in EFJC. For reasons of space, the analysis will focus primarily on HPES found in IFJC; the complete list of HPES in EFJC and corresponding frequencies are shown in the Appendix.<sup>2</sup> The overall distribution of HPES in IFJC is similar to EFJC in that most items appeared only once or twice. On the whole, there was very little overlapping, with only four items in common (1, 2, 6, 7 in Table 3). However, this result was also likely impacted by the much higher frequency and variation of HPES in EFJC compared with IFJC (see Table 2).

	HPE	IFJC		EFJC	
		N	Pttw	N	Pttw
1	prêt-à-porter	11	0.82	1	0.08
2	Net-a-porter	6	0.45	2	0.16
3	prêt-à-couture	4	0.30	-	-
4	ready-to-buy	2	0.15	-	-
5	see-now-buy-now	2	0.15	-	-
6	up-to-date	2	0.15	2	0.16
7	behind-the-scene(s)	1	0.07	1	0.08
8	intellectual-artistic-chic	1	0.07	-	-
9	mix-and-match	1	0.07	-	-
10	Net-à-porter	1	0.07	-	-
11	pied-de-poule	1	0.07	-	-
12	pop-à-porter	1	0.07	-	-
13	print-à-porter	1	0.07	-	-
14	sportycouture-à-porter	1	0.07	-	-
15	giallo-bianco-rosso	1	0.07	-	-
16	designer-dj-pr	1	0.07	-	-
17	mise-en-scènes	1	0.07	-	-

Table 3. Distribution of HPES in IFJC vs. EFJC.

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the grammatical and structural characteristics of these items, see Crawford Camiciottoli (2020).



As can be seen, the most frequent item in IFJC was *prêt-à-porter*. Interestingly, the well-established corresponding English form *ready-to-wear* did not emerge from the analysis of HPEs. In an effort to shed more light on this result, the item *ready* was searched in IFCJ and was retrieved in 10 occurrences of the non-hyphenated *ready to wear*. In contrast, the hyphenated version *ready-to-wear* occurred 8 times in EFJC, thus indicating differences in perceptions between Italian and English fashion writers in relation to the role of hyphenation of this particular item. *Net-a-porter* and *prêt-à-couture* ranked second and third in frequency, respectively. In contrast, only two corresponding French terms appeared in EFJC (items 1 and 2). Most of the other less frequent items in IFJC were conventional expressions borrowed from English (items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9) and French (items 11 and 17). The latter result supports the position of Zanola (2020) regarding the continuing influence of the French language in Italian fashion journalism, even if English has moved into a position of more prominence (Lorusso 2019). Although *prêt-à-porter* was the only complete French borrowing that appeared in EFJC, other items incorporated French words within them (i.e., *faux-pearl-necklace*, *mille-feuille-silk*) as further testimony to the enduring role of this language in the fashion world. In IFJC, there were only three items that could be described as hapaxes, two of which were maintained in English (items 8 and 16) and only one in Italian that described a colour combination (item 15). In the following subsections, I discuss these results in more detail together with illustrative examples.

#### 4.1 Variations of Prêt-à-porter

Variations inspired by *prêt-à-porter* accounted for 7 of the 17 different HPE types that emerged from the analysis: items 1, 2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 14. These variations recall the morphological process of productivity in which new words are created in a predictable way with the same form being used to produce new words (Bauer 1983, 2006). Follow-up analysis in context revealed that *Net-à-porter*, the second most frequent item, is actually the name of a global online fashion retailer established in 2000. In IFJC, *Net-à-porter* appears both with an added accent grave (item 10) and without the accent (item 2) as per the original name of the London-based retailer (examples 1 and 2).

- (1) A capirne il potenziale diversi supporter internazionali tra cui Carmen Busquets, tra i primi investitori di *Net-à-porter*.  
'Among those who understood the potential were various international supporters including Carmen Busquets, one of the first investors in *Net-à-porter*.'
- (2) *Net-a-porter* e molti altri hanno preso parte alla vendita e alla comunicazione del primo capitolo di Moncler Genius.  
'*Net-a-porter* and many others took part in the sale and communication of the first chapter of Moncler Genius.'

There were two items (3 and 14) in which *prêt-à-porter* and *couture* (another traditional French fashion term) were blended with *couture* occupying different positions in the HPE, as shown in examples 3 and 4. *Prêt-à-couture* combines *prêt-à-porter* and *haute couture* to describe fashion that incorporates characteristics of both ready-to-wear and exclusive or custom-designed fashion. Particularly interesting is example 3, which contains two other French borrowings (*défilé* and *atelier*), again pointing to the key role of the French language in fashion terms (Zanola 2020).

- (3) A settembre, infatti, lanceremo il *prêt-à-couture* con piccoli défilé intimi, qui nell'atelier di place Vendôme.  
'In September, in fact, we will launch the *prêt-à-couture* with small intimate défilés here in the place Vendome atelier.'
- (4) La sua è una *sportycouture-à-porter* dal forte sapore contemporaneo e urbano.  
'His *sportycouture-à-porter* has a strong contemporary and urban flavour.'

Other productive processes involved HPEs that reflect new trends in the fashion industry, specifically *print-à-porter* (item 13) and *pop-à-porter* (item 12), shown in examples (5) and (6). The former refers to a new technology-driven technique for 3D printing on fabric, while the latter refers to so-called flash retailing with "pop-up" stores in which fashion goods are sold in spaces for a few days or weeks, often linked to a particular fashion event.

- (5) Van Noten rilassa con un *print-à-porter* paradossalmente mai sopra le righe.  
'Van Noten relaxes with a *print-à-porter* that is paradoxically never over the top.'
- (6) Il *pop-à-porter* di Iceberg invade le strade di Londra.  
'Iceberg's *pop-à-porter* invades the streets of London.'

#### 4.2 Code-switching: Conventionality/Semi-conventionality

Other HPEs that emerged in IFJC were French (examples 7-8) and English (examples 9-13) borrowings found in code-switching episodes. *Mise-en-scène(s)* is a conventional expression that is also commonly used in English in the context of theatre and stage production. *Pied-de-poule* can be described as a technical fashion-related term for a particular type of fabric (*houndstooth* in English). According to Ondelli (2015), the usage of French borrowings (e.g., *crêpe georgette*, *mélange*, *matelassé*) is common in Italian fashion writing, along with traditional fashion terminology such as *prêt-à-porter* and *couture*. Interestingly, the non-hyphenated version *pied de poule* was found 9 times in IFJC together with one instance of *pied de coq*, again highlighting the lack of consistency in hyphenation that appears to also occur with the use of French HPEs by Italian fashion journalists.

- (7) Dalle installazioni fantastiche per le vetrine del flagship parigino di rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré fino alle *mise-en-scènes* studiate per gli eventi della griffe in giro per il mondo. ‘From the fantastic installations for the windows of the Parisian flagship shop in Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré to the studied *mise-en-scènes* for the griffe’s events around the world.’
- (8) Vestono tagli dell’alta sartoria grazie a capispalla *pied-de-poule*. ‘They wear high fashion designs thanks to *pied-de-poule* coats.’

The English borrowings were similarly conventional expressions (e.g., *up-to-date*, *mix-and-match*) that can easily be found in dictionaries or the lexicon of native speakers (Gagné and Spalding 2006). There were three non-hyphenated occurrences of *mix and match*. In example (9), together with *up-to-date*, there was also the expression *un touch green*, apparently an adaptation of what in English would be *a touch of green*, which heightens the code-switching effect in this sentence. In example (10), *behind-the-scene* is an interesting case because it has been emphasized by quotation marks and also uses the singular form of *scene*, thus deviating from the obligatory plural form (*behind the scenes*) of this English HPE. This could reflect the dropping of the *-s* plural morpheme as a common error of native speakers of Italian when producing spoken and written English. The English borrowings in examples (11) to (13) could be characterized as semi-conventional in that they demonstrate slight variations on conventional expressions (Crawford Camiciottoli 2019): *ready-to-buy* vs.

*ready-to-wear* and *see-now-buy-now*, referring the ability to immediately purchase clothing items just seen in fashion shows, which is similar in form to the conventional expression *buy-now-pay-later*. However, both of these HPEs appear to have now become relatively common within the fashion industry as revealed by a simple Google search.

- (9) I decori garbati con un touch green (*sic*) che rende tutto *up-to-date*.  
'The decorations graced with a touch of green render everything up-to-date.'
- (10) Da lì sono stati creati una serie di brevi reportage "*behind-the-scene*".  
'From there a series of brief "*behind-the-scenes*" reportages were created.'
- (11) Il tweed si accosta al naplack in un moderno *mix-and-match*.  
'Tweed is juxtaposed with naplack in a modern mix-and-match.'
- (12) In passerella, un potpourri di collezioni *ready-to-buy*.  
'On the catwalk, a potpourri of ready-to-buy collections.'
- (13) Rappresentano la parte *see-now-buy-now* della collezione.  
'They represent the see-now-buy-now part of the collection.'

Semi-conventional HPEs were instead more prominent in EFJC, with numerous forms that were in some way inspired by more conventional ones. Some examples from the Appendix are: 1) *puce-and-magenta* (a variation of the conventional coordinated expression *black-and-white*); 2) *model-off-duty* (a variation on *off-duty*); 3) *not-quite-shoulder-length* (variation on *shoulder-length*) and *not-yet-up-and-coming* (variation on *up-and-coming*, but with a mildly sarcastic twist).

With reference to cross-linguistic fertilization from English to Italian, there is a growing trend already observed in Italian fashion writing in relation to single-word items (e.g., *look*, *casual*, and *outfit*) (Sergio 2015; Ondelli 2015; Lorusso 2019). Sergio's (2015) analysis also brought to light a few English compounds (e.g., *country-look*, *hot-pants*, *golf-coat*), as well as Italian compounds (e.g., *intarso-fregio*, *sciarpa-turbante*, *pantaloni-calza*), but did not reveal any with three or more constituents, other than the French term *piéd-de-poule*. Thus, the presence of HPEs in IFJC, albeit quite limited, could indicate the beginning of a shift towards greater complexity of hyphenated expressions in Italian fashion writing.

Ondelli (2015) offered a possible explanation for the use of English borrowings in Italian fashion journalism, observing that they can evoke a more positive connotation among native speakers of Italian. For example, a piece

of clothing that is *low-cost* could be perceived more favourably than one that is qualified as *a basso costo*. Similarly, Lorusso (2019, 91) discussed the phenomenon of “luxury loanwords” such as *look* and *glamour* that “give a taste of sophistication and modernity” and are therefore preferred to the Italian equivalent (*aspetto* and *fascino*). The usage of HPEs in IFJC reflects a similar function.

#### 4.3 Hapaxes: Creativity

Three HPEs in IFJC (items 8, 15, 16) were classified as hapaxes in that they appeared to have been created ad hoc to convey a specific meaning within a particular communicative context. Two were used in code-switching episodes as shown in examples (14) and (15).

- (14) E promette di consolare anche quella fascia *intellectual-artistic-chic* che era rimasta in un limbo dopo l’uscita di scena di Phoebe Philo.  
‘And promises to console even the intellectual-artistic-chic segment that has remained in limbo after Phoebe Philo left the scene.’
- (15) Una sfilata show attraverso la quale il *designer-dj-pr* argentino ha voluto raccontare tutto il suo mondo.  
‘A fashion show spectacle through which the Argentine designer-dj-pr wanted to tell all about his world.’

In English news writing in general, multi-word units have been described as having a pragmatic function to summarize complex notions into a compact and space-saving device (Bauer 2006). However, in English fashion writing, they have the additional function to foreground desirable attributes of people and entities associated with the fashion world (Crawford Camiciottoli 2019, 2020). In example (14), *intellectual-artistic-chic* in this code-switching episode is a concise way of describing a sought-after multi-faceted or eclectic nature, while also highlighting an interesting and perhaps unexpected contrast in the meanings of the three constituents. The same function was evident in EFJC (Crawford Camiciottoli 2020), particularly with HPEs that exploit the verb *meet* to create an innovative juxtaposition: *sporty-meets-couture*, *Mali-bu-meets-Marrakech*, *futurism-meets-classicism*. In example (15), *designer-dj-pr* carries out the function of spotlighting the multiple identities and talents of

the person in question, another desirable characteristic in the fast-paced and dynamic world of fashion that places a high value on change and novelty. The same usage also occurs in EFJC with HPEs such as *writer-director-producer* and *actor/slash-singer* in which the punctuation symbol (/) meaning *or* has been represented in word form.

The final example (16) illustrates the only Italian HPE *giallo-bianco-rosso*, which appears to be a compact way of expressing a list of three colours without punctuation and a coordinating conjunction. Similar HPEs for multi-colour descriptions have been found in other corpora of English fashion writing (Crawford Camiciottoli 2019), such as *black-white-pink (palette)*, *black-blue-and-purple (hair)*, with the inclusion of the coordinating conjunction *and* also reflecting variation on the ubiquitous *\*-and-\** pattern found in English fashion discourse.

- (16) Le ghirlande beneaugurali di fiori sono diventate collane di piccoli bottoni colorati in *giallo-bianco-rosso*.  
'The auspicious flower garlands have become necklaces of small yellow-white-red coloured buttons.'

While the hapaxes in IFJC showed some similarities with those in EFJC in terms of their functional aspects, they were relatively simple and non-clausal in nature in that none integrated clause-like structures with subjects and/or verbs. The latter were instead present in EFJC and included the following: *just-took-the-shears-to-my-own-ponytail (quality)*; *see-what-life-throws-at-you (kind of person)*; *couldn't-care-less-where-you-came-from* and *anything-can-happen (excitement)*; *slip-your-hand-into-the-blouse (thing)*; *booze-for-the-job-you-want (vibe)*; *so-limited-edition-they're-actually-numbered*. Thus, although HPEs are present in IFJC, they do not demonstrate the same level of complexity as those found in EFCJ.

In an effort to further explore this difference in complexity, I performed a supplementary analysis of compounds in IFCJ with only two constituents joined together with a single hyphen. The results showed that they were indeed relatively frequent (N=175; 13.13 occurrences pttw) and included English borrowings, Italian compounds, and hybrid compounds, for example, *must-have*, *horror-trash*, *press-darling*, *vedo-non vedo*, *colore-feticcio*, *Oriente-addict*, *fashion-salutista*. This suggests that Italian fashion journalists make frequent

use of highly creative hyphenated two-constituent structures, a phenomenon that would merit further investigation. However, the Italian writers do not appear to borrow to the same extent the type of ad hoc complex and phrase-like hyphenated items that are common in English.

## 5. *Conclusions*

The exploratory contrastive analysis of HPEs in Italian vs. English fashion writing carried out in the present study has revealed that these structures were significantly less frequent in the texts written by Italian fashion journalists (Research Question 1). This result is in line with the literature on cross-linguistic differences regarding the presence of HPEs in general language usage (Bisetto 2015; Fetzer and Weber 2019), suggesting that the creative journalistic context examined here does not have the type of impact on such usage as might be expected. However, because the IFJC corpus contained many and varied two-constituent items joined together with a single hyphen, it could be that the use of multi-word expressions in Italian fashion writing is still a developing trend and is perhaps starting with less elaborate but still quite creative expressions.

Among the HPEs that were used by Italian fashion journalists, conventional English borrowings were used in code-switching episodes, thus showing some evidence of cross-fertilization between the English-speaking and Italian-speaking fashion discourse communities in the use of these complex structures (Research Question 2). Although this study aimed to examine HPEs in English vs. Italian, the analysis also brought to light several French borrowings associated with traditional fashion terminology, testifying to the persistent influence of this language on Italian fashion journalism (Zanola 2020). As the most creative type of HPE, hapaxes are inherently less frequent than other multi-word items regardless of the language in question, but nonetheless they were produced by Italian fashion journalists. From a cross-linguistic perspective, they were very similar to their English counterparts in terms of rhetorical function that seems to transcend language and culture: placing a high value on innovation, eclecticism, and uniqueness, while emphasizing the multi-faceted attributes of the fashion products and the multiple talents of people in the fashion world.

For further insights into cross-linguistic trends in the use of HPEs, it would be necessary to investigate them in a wider sample of Italian fashion writing.

Hopefully, a greater variety of such texts will become more readily available to researchers in the future. It would also be interesting to examine the presence of HPEs in Italian journalism in general. To evaluate the feasibility of further research on this type, I skimmed a random sample of a corpus of Italian news articles available on SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). In addition to the type of lexicalized HPEs in Italian (*usa-e-getta*, *fai-da-te*) mentioned by Fetzer and Weber (2019), I found conventional English borrowings such as *on-the-go*, *one-to-one*, and *back-to-back* in code-switching episodes. Somewhat surprisingly, two extremely complex HPEs functioning as hapaxes also emerged: (1) *quei bellissimi nuovissimi vinili che attirano la polvere ma fanno tanto io-ammo-la-musica-vera-non-come-voi-che-la-mercificate-soltanto* ‘those very beautiful and brand new vinyl records that attract dust and are so I-love-real-music-not-like-you-who-only-commercialize-it’ and (2) *quel ciclo produci-consuma-crepa cui siamo tutti un po’ costretti* ‘that produce-consume-die cycle into which we are all somewhat forced’. Both seemed to carry out a function associated with criticism or sarcasm, suggesting a very promising area for future study. Lending support to this idea is the fact that such HPEs emerged in a corpus of journalistic texts but were apparently absent from a more general corpus of Italian web texts (Bisetto 2015).

To conclude, the results of this analysis could find practical application in fashion journalism courses to raise awareness of aspiring fashion writers of the expressive potential of HPEs in general, especially when working with learners who are native speakers of languages in which HPEs are not common. In this way, learners can learn to leverage the strong potential of these items in terms of their creativity and to develop their own distinctive approach to fashion writing.



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Appendix – Complete list of HPEs and frequencies in EFJC

ready-to-wear (8)	floor-to-ceiling (1)
black-and-white (5)	fly-by-night (1)
head-to-toe (4)	frozen-in-time (1)
up-to-date (3)	futurism-meets-classicism (1)
green-and-ivory (2)	gin-and-tonics (1)
net-a-porter (2)	gold-and-crystal-embellished (1)
of-the-moment (2)	hairstylist-of-the-moment (1)
out-of-time (2)	hand-finished-leather (1)
over-the-top (2)	hand-me-downs (1)
turn-of-the-century (2)	heart-and-diamond (1)
up-and-coming (2)	hide-and-seek (1)
anything-could-happen (1)	high-wire-act (1)
back-to-back (1)	Hitler-by-way-of-Judy (1)
behind-the-scenes (1)	honest-to-goodness (1)
big-box-office (1)	hotel-and-spa (1)
bird-of-paradise (1)	just-took-the-shears-to-my-own-ponytail (1)
birds-of-paradise (1)	lace-and-satin (1)
booze-for-the-job-you-want (1)	lace-and-tulle (1)
brick-and-mortar (1)	laced-up-the-ankle (1)
burger-and-fries (1)	lamine-and-glass (1)
buyer-and-returner (1)	larks-and-diversions (1)
catwalk-designer-artist (1)	leather-and-net (1)
cauliflower-and-cream (1)	leather-and-tweed (1)
coming-of-age (1)	less-is-more (1)
couldn't-care-less-where-you-came-from (1)	lighter-than-air (1)
dance-and-sing-off (1)	limelight-and-spangles (1)
day-to-day (1)	male-to-female (1)
direct-to-client (1)	Malibu-meets-Marrakech (1)
do-it-yourself-style	man-around-town (1)
down-to-earth (1)	matter-of-factly (1)
end-Ghesquière-clad (1)	mile-an-hour (1)
enormous-on-anyone (1)	mille-feuille-silk (1)
ever-more-global (1)	model-off-duty (1)
faux-pearl-necklace (1)	model-of-the-moment (1)
fiberglass-and-leather	mom-and-pop (1)
field-slash-junkyard (1)	never-seen-before (1)
Finzi-Continis-based (1)	not-quite-shoulder-length (1)

not-so-good (1)  
not-yet-up-and-coming (1)  
off-the-runway (1)  
old-makes-new (1)  
one-for-all (1)  
one-of-a-kind  
one-of-kind (1)  
on-the-beam (1)  
out-of-the-way (1)  
out-of-town (1)  
out-of-towners (1)  
outside-the-box (1)  
over-the-knee (1)  
partner-in-crime (1)  
pepto-bismol-pink (1)  
pink-with-white (1)  
place-mat-size (1)  
plain-and-simple (1)  
prêt-à-porter (1)  
price-on-request-only (1)  
puce-and-magenta (1)  
python-and-leather (1)  
red-and-blue (1)  
rock-and-roll-and (1)  
rock-star-confident (1)  
rose-and-peony (1)  
sapphire-and-diamond (1)  
see-what-life-throws-at-you (1)  
silk-and-cotton (1)  
silk-and-leather (1)  
skirt-and-sweatshirt (1)  
slip-your-hand-into-the-blouse (1)  
so-limited-edition-they're-actually-numbered (1)  
soon-to-be (1)  
soon-to-be-launched (1)  
spa-and-fitness (1)  
sporty-meets-couture (1)  
state-of-the-art (1)  
stay-in-place (1)  
step-and-repeat (1)  
style-and-culture (1)  
well-cared-for (1)  
well-to-do (1)  
wool-and-silk (1)  
writer-director-producer (1)  
you've-got-to-be (1)