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Exploring Anglicisms in the Digital Transformation: Lexical Evolution in Italian

Abstract

The digital transformation has changed the way of communicating. Particularly, digital tools such as ICT, social media and the Internet have channeled new vocabulary of English-based adaptations into everyday Italian (Bombi 2017; Gualdo 2019). English has been the main donor language for Italian since the 1950s (Pulcini 2017), and Italy’s younger generations now appear inclined to adopt web-related lexical Anglicisms. In the light of this, the present paper provides fresh insights into the socio-linguistic dimensions of Anglicisms welcomed by young Italians, discussing how digital tools influence the language of 35 university students (aged 19-25) of intermediate English level. Through questionnaires, interviews and English/Italian translation tasks, the research focuses on loan patterns, frequencies, and participants’ attitudes. We investigate how, why and where Anglicisms are used, so as to identify current trends in the lexical evolution of Italian – which have implications for language teaching. The students’ repertoire includes both well-integrated lexical hybrids (*chattare*) and pure forms (*feedback*) (Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015), and features mainly entries that are related to ICT and computer-mediated communication (*email, web*), hobbies and leisure (*happy hour, selfie*), daily routines and feelings (*comfort, mood*). This can be accounted for in terms of feelings of modernity and fashion, cultural prestige, structural features (brevity, phonic effect, word-formation flexibility), lack of L1 equivalents.

1. *Background*

Modern societies are strongly influenced by globalization, which has led to innovations in all spheres of life. This internationalization process has affected not only lifestyles and cultures, but also languages. Particularly, the spread of English as a global language has changed the way we communicate and interact through all media, technologies, the Internet, leaving relevant traces in other

languages (Crystal 2001). Historically, the diffusion of English language in Italy started from the 18th century due to the Industrial Revolution, the British colonial Empire, the American Revolution, which enhanced the prestige of Anglo-Saxon countries (Gualdo and Scarpino 2007, 54). Then, in the 19th century the economic and military successes of Great Britain and the United States gave rise to a feeling of admiration for the two English-speaking countries, both in Italy and in Europe (Ibid.: 55). At the beginning of the 20th century, the US power reinforced the role of English as a donor language in many areas of society, such as music, advertising, cinema, information technology, the Internet and social media (Luján García and Pulcini 2018). “English has been the most important donor language for Italian from the 1950s, mainly due to the social, cultural and political prestige of the countries where it is spoken as a first language” (Pulcini 2015, 90) and Italian has appeared as one of the most receptive languages for English words (Coco, Giovanardi and Gualdo 2008).

Contemporary Italian is intensively affected by an ‘Anglicization’ process (Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015) and appears to receive English loanwords to fill lexical gaps and enrich vocabulary with modern voices: “the appeal of English words [to the Italians] is due not only to their cultural prestige, but [...] also to their structural features: their brevity and phonic effect, their flexibility in word-formation” (Pulcini 1997, 79).

Within the economy of this paper, *Anglicism* is understood as “any individual or systemic linguistic feature adapted or adopted from English or inspired or reinforced by English models and used in intralingual communication in a language other than English” (Gottlieb 2005, 20). The terms *Anglicism*, *English loanword* and *borrowing* will be used interchangeably, since they denote any type of lexical items which entered the lexical system of a target language. Loanwords experience different accommodation phases, once arrived in the receiving language. For this reason, we consider *pure* or *adopted Anglicisms* (e.g. *leader*) as the “retained words, obviously of English heritage, [that were] imported in their original spelling” (Pulcini 2017). *Adapted Anglicisms* (e.g. *bistecca* ‘beef steak’) are “camouflaged words or items that are inspired by English language phenomena” (Ibid.: 67). *Indirect Anglicisms* are those words that have been remodeled in the recipients’ languages through some hybrid creations.

Cappelli (2005) distinguishes *translation calques* (*grattacielo* ‘skyscraper’) from *semantic calques* (*implementare* ‘to implement’). As Gualdo (2019, 30) argued, the network welcomes a lot of English nouns presented in their pure

form (*blog, desktop, chat*), while verbs appear in hybrid features (*chattare, cliccare, loggare*).

On the basis of the historical scenario outlined, it can be deduced that the influence of English in Italian through Anglicisms is not a new phenomenon, but it is a part of the natural evolution of the language. Besides, “English-induced lexical borrowing in the third millennium is still in an in-progress exploration” (Pulcini 2017, 31). Tagliatela (2011, 77, my translation) testified that the rush to Anglicisms has become progressively more evident, sometimes with the aim to appear “more technical even when there is no need”, other times “for lack of lexical equivalents”. Moreover, the colloquial and youthful Italian shows a noticeable “permeability to new coined words” (ibid.?). It is undeniable that in Italian “the influx of Anglicisms is widely produced by the technological progress and the advent of new mass media” (Bencini and Manetti 2005, 339) and most of the phenomena of linguistic borrowings are channeled by mass media. Coco, Giovanardi and Gualdo (2008) underline in this respect that in the younger generations there is a sensitivity to easily familiarize with entire lexical series of Anglicisms related to the world of computers, Internet, social media or music. Accordingly, their linguistic code seems to have a symbiotic and enthusiastic relationship with these tools, considered “catalyst of the evolution and the linguistic renewal of current Italian” (Fanfani 2003, 67).

2. *Methodology*

This research attempts to identify frequent patterns of adoption or adaptation of web-related Anglicisms into Italian, by examining three areas where these items appear extensively, and outlining main usage reasons by young people. The research question behind this study is to investigate the extent to which Anglicisms influence youngster’s language, and, second, to explore the main areas of exposure to Anglicisms in Italian.¹ More particularly, our research hypotheses dealt with the following questions:

1 This research is part of the PhD thesis *Anglicisms Across Languages: A Descriptive and Comparative Study*, conducted in 2020 and 2021. The project involved a total of 115 participants from different countries: 15 from Croatia, 35 from Italy, 32 from Spain, 16 from Turkey, and 17 from Latin America.

1. How Italian university students use Anglicisms in their native language?
2. To what extent do Anglicisms influence EFL/ESL students' language?
3. What are the main areas of exposure to Anglicisms for Italian young adults?

The first research question – “How do Italian university students use Anglicisms in their native language?” – serves as the foundation for this study, which explores the integration and utilization of English-origin words within the everyday speech of Italian students. This inquiry aims to uncover the patterns, contexts, and motivations behind the adoption of Anglicisms, providing insight into their prevalence and function in contemporary Italian. By examining the linguistic behavior of university students, this research delves into the broader implications of language contact, cultural exchange, and the evolving dynamics of modern Italian. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the study seeks to illuminate how and why Anglicisms are employed, shedding light on their impact on the Italian language and its speakers.

Our targets were Italian students enrolled in the three-year BA-level Programme in “Mediators for Interculture and Social Cohesion in Europe” of the Department of Social Sciences and Education of the Mediterranean Area of the University for Foreigners “Dante Alighieri” of Reggio Calabria. Approximately 40 undergraduate students² were invited to participate, but only 35 took the questionnaire (see Section 3), while 18 also performed the translation task and sat the interviews (see Section 4). The survey was conducted remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, between February 2020 and January 2021. Empirical data stemmed from three methodological instruments delivered in English in three separate stages: a questionnaire, translation tasks and individual interviews.

The current study dealt with so-called *frequency Anglicisms*,³ categorized into three main areas including a wide range of entries that appeared very popular among youngsters.⁴ These three thematic areas were: ICTs, social media

2 Participants were informed that the survey was for research purposes only and not an integral part of their curriculum.

3 Several authors, such as Araúz Gómez-Cadiñanos (1991), Echeverría Arriagada (2016), Luján García (2017) and Núñez Nogueroles (2018), have dealt with the frequency of Anglicisms in other languages.

4 The data suggest that these domains generally represent a great motivational potential for young people and provide fertile ground for Anglicisms.

and the Internet; recreational activities; feelings and daily life. We focused on a delimited group of Anglicisms, namely 80 frequency or handy Anglicisms, considered as student-friendly loanwords. The linguistic repertoire and the sampling words are shown in Table 1.

DOMAIN	LEMMA	TOTAL
ICT, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET (computer, email correspondence, TV, videogames)	advertising – back up – blogger – brand – chat – crack – click – cyber – database – download – email – follower – laptop – link – login – marketing – mouse – online – news – newsletter – password – post – privacy – scanner – selfie – social media – username – web	28
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES (hobbies, leisure, sports, travelling, current events, personal interests)	bestseller – basketball – brunch – cocktail – comfort – club – coach – fan – fashion – fast food – fitness – football – happy hour – hobby – mall – party – pub – relax – shopping – show – skateboard – talent show – team – video games – volleyball – weekend	26
DAILY LIFE (personal background, routine and habits, immediate needs, dreams and hopes, study, employment, food and drink)	boom – business – cash – cool – feedback – feeling – flop – full-time – hotdog – jeans – leader – management – manager – mood – performance – self-service – shorts – snack – standard – T-shirt – start-up – stress – target – top – trend – workshop	26

Table 1. Anglicisms in the study: Domain.

We have focused mainly on the following linguistic features: lexical units, morpho-syntactic integration into the receiver language and usage frequency. We detected mostly nouns, which tend to be the largest class of loanwords, while verbs⁵ form the smallest class, and we found calques or adaptations. We needed to take into account that the degree of integration of Anglicisms also strongly depends on the phonological and morphological structures of the donor language. As a matter of fact, divergences between the morphological structures of the two languages often delay or prevent the integration of loanwords (Rodríguez González 2008).

⁵ Unlike borrowed nouns and adjectives, which often remain unadapted, verbs usually adapt to the grammatical system of the recipient languages (Filipović 1996, 80).

The research method, which, as said, integrates the three data collection instruments (questionnaires, translation tasks and interviews), was characterized by a mixed approach, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures: the quantitative analysis (raw frequencies) helped us detect the percentage of the Anglicisms used; the qualitative one has been applied to describe respondents' attitudes. Thus, a multiple-choice and open-ended questionnaire and some translation tasks mainly provided quantitative data, while interviews provided more qualitative data and gave personal insights into the topic. The questionnaire, administered via the Internet by using Google forms, includes items based on the influence of English borrowings on the language of young adults, in order to discover their linguistic repertoire and attitudes towards the borrowings under study and to reveal their use extent. It is composed of 16 questions and was designed using Dörnyei's (2010) model to gather data on learners' linguistic backgrounds, personal and linguistic backgrounds, and attitudes towards the English language. The first section, consisting of five items, allowed for precise profiles of the samples. The second section, consisting of ten questions, provided a framework for learners' linguistic backgrounds. The final section, consisting of one item, presented forms of Anglicisms, allowing for clarification of the phenomenon. The questionnaire was intended to allow participants to actively apply their knowledge. The survey, then, focused on some everyday contexts of the young adults and thus, we could learn the attitudes of our young population,⁶ related to how, why, and where students use Anglicisms in their native language.

3. Questionnaire: Data Analysis

Out of the 40 Italian students approached, only 35 voluntarily decided to complete the questionnaire. The initial section of the questionnaire asked for relevant demographic information and queried participants' level of proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). When asked to self-rate their knowledge

⁶ The method of survey administration was as follows: the students were contacted for availability to be involved in the project; they were informed of the research topic and completed privacy information forms before starting experiments. They were informed that their survey involvement was voluntary and anonymous and data would be stored appropriately and personal information would not appear in the data collection.

of English, most of the participants declared that it ranged between A2 and B1 levels (namely, elementary or pre-intermediate competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference; CEFR 2020) as per outcomes of a standardized placement test. Based on these questions, we decided to explore some individual characteristics of our students. Italian was the mother tongue for all respondents. The most studied foreign language for everyone was English, followed by Spanish (50%), French (35%), Arabic (1%), Russian (1%). There was a higher proportion of females (23) than male (12) participants.

The next question was about the incidence of English outside the learning context: “Where and to what extent are young adults exposed to English input outside the education setting?” English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students expressed their perceptions about the English input they usually receive outside the classroom, and generally agreed that there are many opportunities to be exposed to English outside the educational context as follows: on the ICTs, Internet and social media (71%), in recreational activities (18%), in daily life (11%). The procedure utilized in the experiments was designed to align with and address the third research question: “What are the main areas of exposure to Anglicisms for Italian young adults?” Through a series of carefully structured activities and data collection methods, the study aimed to identify and analyze the various contexts in which Italian university students encounter and adopt Anglicisms. These experiments included surveys, interviews, and observation of linguistic behavior in different settings, such as academic environments, social media interactions, and everyday conversations. By focusing on these specific areas, the research sought to pinpoint the primary sources and situations that contribute to the integration of English-origin words into the students’ native Italian language. The insights gained from this approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the exposure pathways and the factors influencing the prevalence of Anglicisms among young Italian adults.

In order to reflect on the metalinguistic implications of the long-standing influence of English on the students’ daily lives, the next question was intended to gather information on how students perceive the current impact of English on Italian: “Do you think your language is very influenced by the English language?” We learned that the majority of Italian respondents (90%) think their native language is heavily influenced by the English language, while only a small portion (10%) of them disagreed on that.

Indeed, in order to understand the Anglicisms-related habits of the participants, it was necessary to discover what kind of Anglicisms they use most frequently. Given the range and extent of these English-derived words, we opted for a restricted list of specific topic-related Anglicisms spread on a global scale in fields with which young people are generally familiar, such as computers and technology, fashion and entertainment, food (Figure 1).

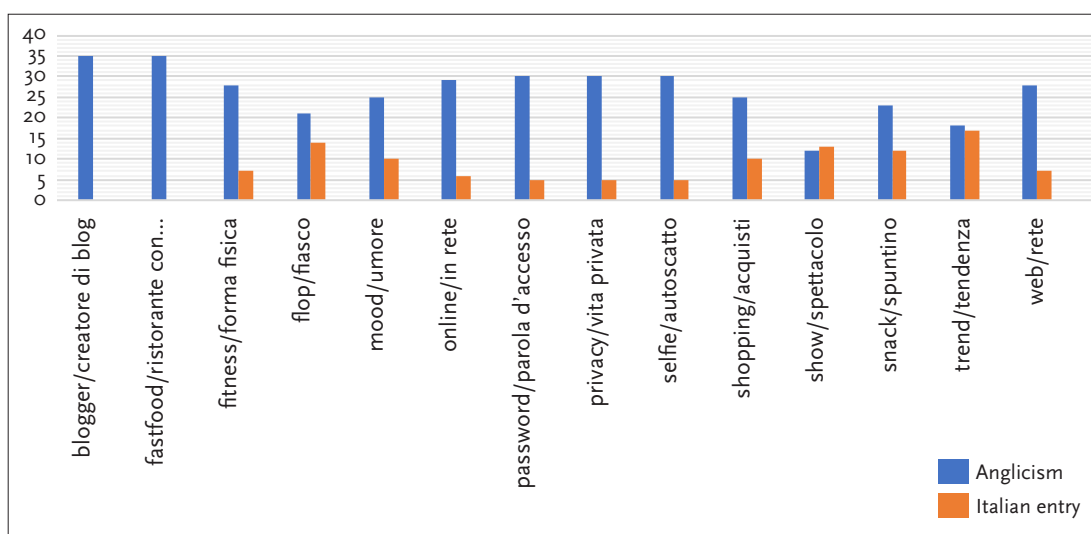


Figure 1. Anglicisms and LI equivalents.

What we notice from the graph is that there is a clear preference for English terms over their native equivalents, mainly we-related entries such as online-password-selfie-web. Students' choices demonstrate that the selected Anglicisms represent a network of interconnected words that spread widely and deeply in the youth lexicon. Certainly, to have a broader perspective, it is necessary to look not only at each Anglicism, but at the relations they entertain with common youth language, so that they are not considered as a simple collection of isolated loans, but rather as a deeply interwoven, increasingly proliferating network in the Italian lexicon (Zoppetti 2017). These words appear with high frequency in youngsters' language, yet respondents graded only the words they felt were more likely to be part of their normal vocabulary. For example, the entries *blogger* and *fast food* resulted to be chosen just in English, as if the Italian equivalent did not exist. *Fast food* was bor-

rowed into Italian in the eighties. Additionally, the lemma *food* belongs to those borrowings that form a network of interconnected words, such as *junk food* (1987) or *trash food* (2001), *slow food* (1989), *street food* (2000), *finger food* (2001) (cf. Devoto-Oli 2018). On the other hand, the Anglicism *trend* can be replaced in any context with equal effectiveness by the Italian equivalent *tendenza*. In this regard, Cortelazzo (2015, 30; my translation) explains: “the tacit decision of the community of speakers, or an authoritative part of it, [...] has now permanently accepted *trend* as a synonym for ‘*tendenza*’”. Furthermore, the term *selfie*, unknown before 2013, has a unique and clear-cut connotation – as per Cortelazzo (2015, 30)’s definition, “a photo taken of oneself with one smartphone or a webcam, which is generally then shared on social networks” – that explains why it is not considered as the perfect synonym for the Italian equivalent *autoscatto* (self-portraits obtained through a remote self-timer that shoots autonomously after a certain number of seconds). Finally, Gualdo (2019, 271) pointed out that some of the most common loanwords such as *show*, *flop*, *stress* were quickly introduced in Italian thanks to their brevity and prestige.

4. *Translation Task: Data Analysis*

After the questionnaire, 18 out of the 35 students performed translation tasks. While the questionnaire and the interview serve as essential scientific methodological tools, the translation stage of this research is also considered a pedagogical experiment. Questionnaires and interviews are fundamental in gathering qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell and Creswell 2014), enabling researchers to explore complex phenomena. However, translation is a useful method in these experiments because it goes beyond mere linguistic conversion; it is an educational tool that fosters cross-cultural understanding and enhances language proficiency (Newmark 1988). In this study, the translation tasks assigned to participants not only facilitated data collection but also provided a practical exercise in applied linguistics, supporting the development of their linguistic and cognitive skills (Baker 2011). Thus, while the questionnaire and interview methodologies anchor the scientific rigor of the research, the translation component enriches the pedagogical dimension, creating a comprehensive learning experience for the participants. During this phase, stu-

dents were asked to translate two texts⁷ taken from some weblogs and other sentences from webpages (see Appendix 1). The choice of the text sources is motivated by the fact that surfing the web is one of those activities that young people usually do during their free time.

We know that the wide-ranging forms of online communication have reinforced the opportunities to learn English words. Therefore, by engaging with the media, EFL learners have ample exposure to Anglicisms. Advertising, TV, Internet and music are fundamental parts of young people's lives, and most types of media provide passive linguistic input and can convey a kind of involuntary acquisition (Martin 2006).

Involuntary acquisition of English is a significant aspect of language development, as highlighted by Pavesi and Ghia (2020) who argue that exposure to English through media and everyday interactions contributes significantly to language acquisition outside formal educational settings, particularly among younger learners who frequently engage with English through digital platforms and social media.

The proposed activity required students to first explore the texts and then deal with a subsequent translation from L₂ (English) to L₁ (Italian). The decision to carry out our investigation through a translation task was determined by the fact that translation is a useful and exploitable terrain for the comparison between the source language (L₂) and the target language (L₁), since students were providing us their own translations. Translation helps to highlight the possible transfers from one language to another, allowing us to discover whether students would pick pure Anglicisms or their Italian equivalents. The test case for translation enabled us to focus on authentic language use – or the real, original, and everyday usage by young people without any modifications or revisions – so as to observe the students' tendency to transfer some tokens directly from L₂ to L₁, and to infer that Anglicisms can be considered a source of positive transfer that facilitates optimal L₂ development (Osman 2008).

⁷ The two texts were gathered from two weblogs in November 2019 and these sources are not publicly available because they can only be accessed by subscribed members. The selection of these recent blogs was determined by their use of contemporary or newcomer borrowings. The thematic areas of the two texts covered the following domains: one text concerned social media and business (141 words), while the other one was related to leisure and recreational activities (204 words). The other 8 sentences were taken from several webpages.

Specifically, the two rather short texts not only dealt with topics deemed student-friendly but were also designed with the needs and interests of students in mind, so that they could carry out the tasks fairly easily and quickly, without needing a dictionary. The two texts appeared very similar both in terms of text types and in their display/use of (verb) tenses. Each text was structured in paragraphs with an average length of 150/200 words. Additionally, the articulation of verb tenses was predominantly in the simple present and future. This uniformity in structure and tense usage suggests a deliberate effort to maintain consistency in style and readability across both texts. Such consistency can be particularly useful in educational settings where uniformity aids in comprehension and comparison.

The purpose of our translation task was to scrutinize students' linguistic choices about Anglicisms so as to realize if the translation activity could embody a valid tool in the process of Anglicisms inclusion. This task could be related to the following research question "How do Italian university students use Anglicisms in their native language?" Translation assignments also aimed at arousing a deeper linguistic awareness of the lexical differences/similarities between L1 and L2 by learners. This task intended to assess students' attitude: whether their tendency was to keep Anglicisms intact, to forge hybrids, or to resort to L1 equivalents. Actually, it turned out that the awareness of Anglicisms embedded in their L1 lexicon indirectly helped the students cope with anxiety and difficulty in facing translation tasks, because they could rely on this existing vocabulary and draw upon a vast and available lexical resource.

The hypothesis to be tested concerned how learners are able to extract loanwords from the L2 text and then transfer them in the L1 text (Musacchio 2005, 84), and this approach enabled us to observe whether participants transfer models, reproduce identical lexical patterns or choose Italian equivalents. The selected Anglicisms are not isolated loanwords but are grouped into topic-related categories. Indeed, the first text was characterized by a varied range of words mostly related to computing (*email, follower, login, password, username, website*) and business (*advertising, marketing, start-up*). The second text was characterized by words related to the domain of hobbies (*volleyball, basketball, videogames*) and leisure (*shopping, mall, fitness*). Each of the two texts included an overall number of 20 Anglicisms for a total of 40 entries. The results are summarized in Table 2.

ANGLICISM	HITS (18 participants)	L1 EQUIVALENT
1. <i>business</i>	11	affari – commercio
2. <i>database</i>	13	banca dati
3. <i>email</i>	16	posta elettronica
4. <i>feedback</i>	12	commento – retroazione
5. <i>flop</i>	10	fiasco – insuccesso
6. <i>follower</i>	13	seguace – sostenitore
7. <i>leader</i>	12	capo – comandante
8. <i>link</i>	15	collegamento
9. <i>login</i>	16	accesso
10. <i>manager</i>	13	direttore – amministratore
11. <i>marketing</i>	14	commercializzazione
12. <i>online</i>	14	in linea – in rete
13. <i>password</i>	16	parola d'accesso
14. <i>performance</i>	11	esibizione – prestazione
15. <i>social media</i>	15	mezzi di comunicazione sociale
16. <i>start-up</i>	13	nuova impresa
17. <i>target</i>	11	destinari – gruppo di riferimento
18. <i>username</i>	11	nome utente
19. <i>website</i>	3	sito internet
20. <i>workshop</i>	10	seminario

Table 2. Occurrence per Lexical Item in Text N°1.

ANGLICISM	HITS (18 participants)	L1 EQUIVALENT
1. <i>basketball</i>	2	pallacanestro
2. <i>club</i>	9	locale – associazione
3. <i>comfort</i>	8	comodità – conforto
4. <i>fashion (addicted)</i>	3	(dipendente dalla) moda
5. <i>fitness</i>	4	forma fisica
6. <i>football</i>	1	calcio
7. <i>hobby</i>	13	passatempo – svago
8. <i>laptop</i>	10	portatile
9. <i>mall</i>	3	centro commerciale
10. <i>mood</i>	7	umore – spirito – clima
11. <i>news</i>	6	notizie
12. <i>relax</i>	13	riposo
13. <i>selfie</i>	16	autoscatto
14. <i>shopping</i>	15	acquisti – compere
15. <i>snack</i>	15	spuntino
16. <i>stress</i>	16	tensione
17. <i>team</i>	4	squadra
18. <i>video games</i>	5	video giochi
19. <i>volleyball</i>	2	pallavolo
20. <i>weekend</i>	8	fine settimana

Table 3. Occurrence per Lexical Item in Text n°2.

Tables 2 and 3 comprise Anglicisms and their Italian translations, which present morphological modifications (adaptations, calques, hybrids). For instance, *basket* (11 occurrences), *chattare* (14 occurrences), *confort* (3 occurrences), *downloadare* (4 occurrences), *loggarsi* (4 occurrences), *implementare* (15 occurrences), *sito web* (8 occurrences).

In detail, the tables highlight the presence of various morphological modifications such as the term *basket* which appeared 11 times, demonstrating a direct borrowing from English, while the verb *chattare* was used 14 times, indicating a common adaptation where the English verb *to chat* is Italianized. Similarly, *confort* appeared 3 times, showcasing a calque where English *comfort* is slightly modified to fit Italian morphology. Moreover, the term *downloadare* was recorded 4 times, exemplifying a hybrid form that combines the English *down-*

load with the Italian verb ending *-are*. Another hybrid, *loggararsi*, appeared 4 times, merging English *log* with the Italian reflexive verb ending *-arsi*. The verb *implementare* was notably frequent, with 15 occurrences, indicating its widespread acceptance and use in Italian. Additionally, the phrase *sito web* was used 8 times, combining the Italian *sito* with the English *web* to create a calque that conveys the concept of a website. These instances reflect the dynamic nature of language adaptation and the influence of English on contemporary Italian, particularly in the context of technology and digital communication. The frequency of these terms also suggests their integration into the everyday lexicon of Italian speakers, highlighting the ongoing process of linguistic borrowing and adaptation. Different combinations of foreign and native words are possible (Cacchiani 2020; Ten Hacken and Panoková 2020) when Italians decide to incorporate both Italian and English terms within a single utterance. Italian speakers, especially university students, often blend Anglicisms with their native language to convey specific meanings, emphasize certain ideas, or simply because the English term might be more widely recognized or fashionable. This fluidity showcases the versatility of speakers and highlights the ongoing cultural and linguistic exchange between Italian and English, reflecting globalization trends and the increasing influence of English in various domains.

As expected, in our experiments the dominant borrowing type was lexical, with several unadapted loanwords, i.e. integral Anglicisms without any kind of morphological or orthographic adaptation to the rules of the receiving language (Pulcini 1997, 2015, 2017). Non-adapted or non-integrated loans comprise graphemes unrelated to the Italian alphabet, and sounds different from Italian phonetics, e.g. *bars*, *films*. In contrast, adapted or integrated loanwords are assimilated to the Italian lexicon by adding final supporting vowels and foreign phonemes to others already present in the Italian repertoire, and conferring the gender mark (Coco, Giovanardi and Gualdo 2008, 72). Although our sample is numerically small (representing a part of the overall sample composed by various nationalities; see footnote 1), it still enabled us to observe the degree of Anglicization of Italian and confirmed that a wide variety of Anglicisms is embedded into the current Italian lexis.

Among the cases that fit into the mechanisms of word formation and arbitrary abbreviations, there is the entry *basket*: while in English, when referring to sports, this term is always combined with the word *ball* (otherwise it would have a completely different meaning), in Italian *ball* is omitted, since the word *basket*

does not create ambiguity for an Italian speaker. Likewise, the Italian entry *chat* is deemed an abbreviation of *chat room*. Indeed, the English term *chat* is usually combined with the word *room* or *line* to denote a very widespread online service that allows, through an Internet connection, to communicate in real time in a virtual environment, while the generic term *chat* only refers to a simple conversation. A similar case is *e-mail*, that sometimes in Italian turns into the false Anglicism *mail* (Furiassi 2010, 178). We also mention the word *manager* preferred to *direttore* or *responsabile*, because it carries connotations of further credibility, probably connected to American efficiency and prestige more than the Italian equivalent (Beccaria 2006). In certain cases, Anglicisms have more distinctive features than the Italian equivalents in terms of the denotative and associative meanings, as well as regarding the morpho-syntactic flexibility (Pinnavaia 2005).

Given English word formation processes (e.g. Verb-Noun conversion), Italian exploits this feature with the aim of creating new words that look or sound like English (Beccaria 2006). This is the case of the entry *relax*, included in the group of semi-adaptations, which corresponds to the English noun *relaxation*, so it is assumed that Italian started from the verb *to relax* and then converted it into a noun, without the use of affixes (Pinnavaia 2005). In this experiment, the word *relax* was chosen by 13 out of 18 students, instead of the Italian *riposo* and this result informs us on the widespread extent of the English entry. Similarly, *stress* was selected by most students (16 out of 18) because an Italian equivalent would not reflect the same nuance of meaning (Beccaria, 2006). A variety of word-formation processes emerged during the translation process, for example some morphological adjustments, such as the absence of the plural marker in the Italian version. The decision to use only the singular form of Anglicisms is strongly recommended by the Accademia della Crusca (consequently, *l'hobby*, *gli hobby*, *il film*, *i film*, etc.). Due to the complete absence of morphemes for plural formation, these cases can thus be regarded as adaptation phenomena to the target language. We found entries adopting the plural form in only three cases: *hobbies*, which appeared once in the Italian version; *followers*, which appeared twice; *snacks*, which appeared three times. Moreover, students picked up occasional hybrids, i.e. compounds of Italian and English components or distorted words, such as *basket*, *confort*, *chattare*, *downloadare*, *implementare*, *loggare* – resulting from a tendency towards code-mixing (Cenoz 2003). It turned out that verbs, in particular, are more frequently subject to adjustments or adaptations to the morphological rules of the receiving language than nouns – even though

there are a lot of noun samples such as *comfort* (orthographic justaposition), *week end* (morphological calque), *basket* and *chat* (phraseological clippings).

Moreover, some students relied on English and code switching. One example is *mood*, which is not easy to translate in Italian and for this reason is usually transferred using different equivalents, e.g. *predisposizione mentale* (state of mind), *spirito* (spirit), *atmosfera* (environment), *stile* (style). Notice that 15% of participants in the experiment translated the English word *mood* with the Italian *moda* (fashion), probably an outcome of orthographic and semantic juxtaposition. The variety of fine-tuned translation mechanisms gave us insights into the different reactions Italian students have when getting acquainted with Anglicisms and attempting to decode their meanings. Hereafter, we report the results from the other 8 translated sentences, where we observed phenomena of non-adapted Anglicisms (*feeling*), adapted Anglicisms (*lider*), and hybrid Anglicisms (*downloadare*).

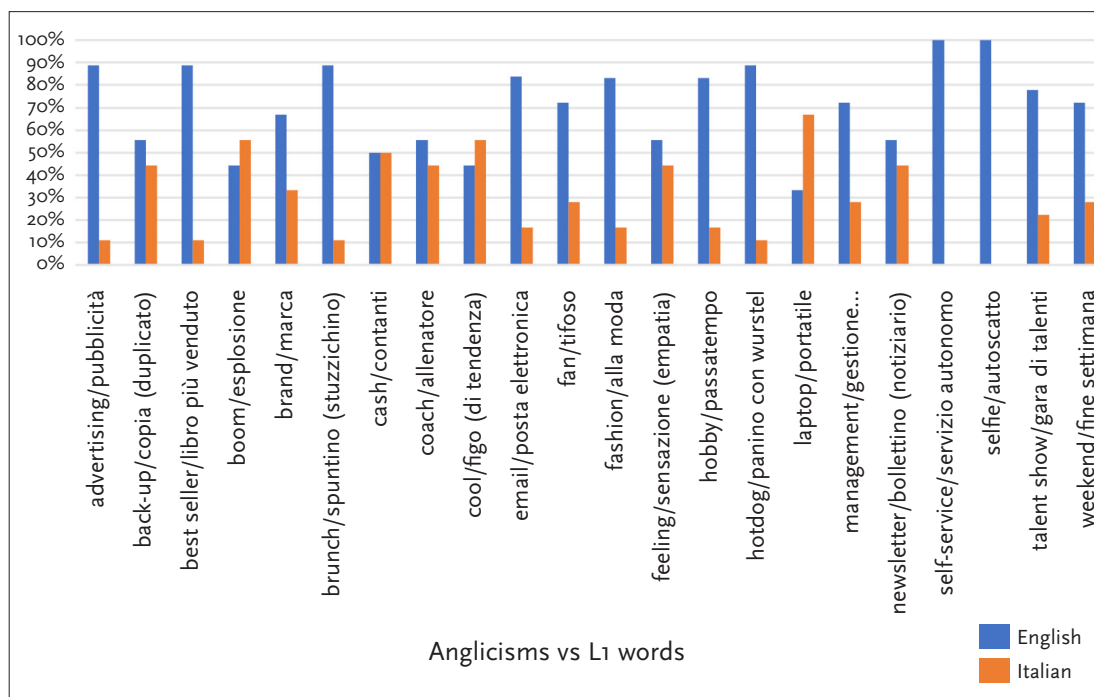


Figure 2. Italian learners' lexical choices.

The data offer an opportunity to discover learners' habits – who appears to prefer English words over their Italian equivalents. The only exceptions are *cool* (44%), since the Italian equivalent *figo* (56%) is preferred, and *laptop* (33%),

which is mainly replaced by *portatile* (67%). The linguistic decision to choose Anglicisms instead of Italian equivalents is explained as an Italian habit that has developed over the years, leading to the use of these loanwords even when there is no real lexical gap (Gualdo and Scarpino 2007). Pinnavaia (2005) believes that Italians often prefer using English words to avoid a more complex word turn, especially in informal juvenile speech. Accordingly, *brunch* (a portmanteau blend of *breakfast+lunch*) may have entered Italian because it is short. In any case, it cannot be rendered by the Italian word *aperitivo*, which is a pre-meal drink or a light meal with drinks that takes place at the end of the workday.

As for the mechanisms of word formation, Italian sometimes uses arbitrary abbreviations at a phraseological level, as the case of the entry *talent*, which in English is usually combined with the word *show*. In Italian, we may find only the word *talent*, with the omission of *show*, because it is unambiguous and the element *show* is considered superfluous. This is an example of clipping. Going back to the list of Anglicisms mentioned above, Beccaria (2006, 243) believes that the entry *bestseller* belongs to that group of untranslatable Anglicisms, which convey nuances that their Italian equivalent cannot express. Another case is *fan*, which has a clear connotative meaning compared to its Italian counterpart, *sostenitore*. As for conciseness and immediacy, students certainly like to opt for simple and short words, now widely used in Italian, such as *boom*, *cash*, *cool*, *fan*.

The Italian linguistic scenario appears to be made up of several adapted and hybrid forms, such as some denominal verbs that take the Italian suffix *-are* – *cliccare*, *loggare*, *craccare*, *downloadare* – classified, in scholarly texts, as “Italianized” verbs through morphological adaptations. These phono-morphologically adapted forms now enjoy excellent acclimatization conditions (Giovanardi 2015, 40). The lemma *leader*⁸ (dating back to 1834, according to Devoto-Oli 2018) first entered the political domain, but it is now used in the socio-cultural field as well, and it has a strong connotative meaning compared to its Italian equivalent *capo*, because it carries further nuances associated with both prestigious and emotional aspects (Pinnavaia 2005). This means that it is not chosen for brevity, but rather due to meaning. The corresponding Italian

8 *Leader* now appears in almost all European languages (Görlach 2005, 182). It is among the most used words in the core vocabulary of Italian (Tullio De Mauro 2016), and features among the 10,000 basic words of Italian in Devoto-Oli (2018).

adaptation *lider* is not so commonly used, but it is listed in the Vocabolario Treccani Online (n.d.) as a rare graphic and phonetic adaptation of English *leader*. We also found some interference errors, such as: *crac* (3 occurrences); *lider* (2 occurrences); *loging* (3 occurrences); *scaning* (3 occurrences); *dlic* (4 occurrences); *daunlodare* (2 occurrences); *ciattare* (2 occurrences) and this mechanism of interference errors and distorted forms can easily happen during an intralingual translation (Kaweera 2013). Figure 3 shows the linguistic choices of students translating the eight sentences from English into Italian.

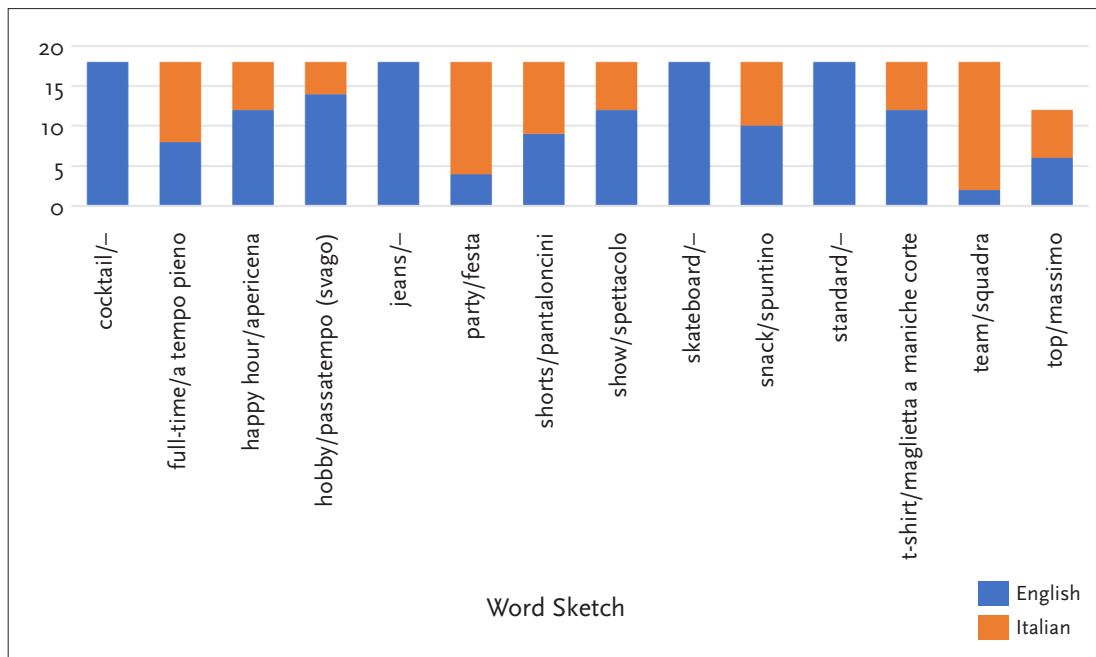


Figure 3. Students' lexical choices.

Generally, the figure demonstrates the widespread use of Anglicisms in students' repertoire. For *skateboard* there is only the English lemma's default option: there is no Italian equivalent for this English term, which has become naturalized in the Italian vocabulary and cannot be considered an Anglicism of new acquisition. Indeed, *skateboard* and *hoverboard* are words without a circulating translation in the online dictionary of alternatives to Anglicisms (AAA 2018-2024: il dizionario delle Alternative Agli Anglicismi. Significati e sinonimi in italiano). The lemma *jeans*, an abbreviation of *blue jeans*, dates back to 1960 (Devoto-Oli 2018) and has become fully naturalized in Italian, after being initially considered a loanword out of necessity (Cappelli 2005). Other fully

naturalized lemmas are *cocktail* and *standard*. For these reasons, they won't receive further attention in the present paper. It should also be added that the high percentages obtained for *hobby* (14 out of 18 participants), *show* (12 out of 18 participants), *happy hour* (12 out of 18 participants) reveal that these entries belong to the group of high-frequency words in the Italian lexicon, for which no Italian equivalent is given. Other cases are *talent show* (*spettacolo dei talenti*), *full-time* (*a tempo pieno*), *weekend* (*fine settimana*), *club* (*circolo*).

5. Interview: Data Analysis

Interviews are usually designed to collect a richer source of information about attributes, behavior, preferences, attitudes, opinions, knowledge. In the third phase of our study, we therefore carried out one-to-one interviews. The purpose of the interviews, conducted exclusively in English, was to observe and capture the students' direct views on the usage and perception of loanwords. By engaging with students in their second language, we aimed to delve deeper into their attitudes and thoughts regarding the integration of Anglicisms into their everyday speech. This approach was closely associated with the research question: "To what extent do Anglicisms influence EFL (English as a Foreign Language)/ESL (English as a Second Language) students' language?" The insights gained from the interviews provided a nuanced understanding of how English loanwords are perceived, adopted, and adapted in their native language contexts, shedding light on the broader linguistic impact of Anglicisms on EFL/ESL learners. Interviews were semi-structured through closed multiple-choice questions and also open-ended questions, so that subjects were given opportunities to freely add any further information about habits and opinions.

Out of the 35 questionnaire respondents, only 18 agreed to be interviewed. The average duration of the interviews was around 10-15 minutes, and we decided to keep the questions as short, simple and quick as possible. This brevity was necessary since these were online interviews, consisting in dialogue-based interactions, not recorded, but with answer transcription. Considering their elementary level, the expectation for fluency was not high, and students just answered the questions without commenting on the topics too much. Interviews aimed to provide data on students' use of Anglicisms by answering a wide range of topic-related questions. To avoid any bias, the content of the

questions was not anticipated, but it was presented on the screen during the interviews on Google Meet, so that the format could be kept visible as a guide sheet. Given these premises, the interviews involved two test strands: the initial questions focused on the impact of English on students' lives; the remaining questions focused on the occurrence of Anglicisms in their daily language.

Before taking a closer look at the inclusion of Anglicisms in L1, and in order to warm up about the topic, we firstly elicited their opinions on the English influence on their L1 and, then, about the importance of the Internet and social media – through which the youth get in contact with English words. Next, students were asked to express their ideas about specific areas of contact with Anglicisms, as represented by the ten categories Advertisements (Ads); Business; Food & Drinks; ICT and Internet; Social Media; Leisure; Sports; Technical Language; Music; TV.

Therefore, the collected data described the respondents' awareness of the widespread use of English words in certain areas of daily life, and suggest that the most likely trace of contact is found on the ICTs and Internet (28%) and social media (23%), namely very popular areas in youth culture. Indeed, these fields are strongly Anglicized, especially given the clear dominance of the Anglo-Americans, and these sectors are significantly productive of Anglicisms, because the network is disseminated of English-words (Tagliatela 2011). The results confirm that ICT, social media, and the Internet provide an exposure opportunity to Anglicisms, since the globalized media usually fosters a bottom-up diffusion of loanwords and their rapid constant spread. It is beyond dispute that, as pointed out in Blommaert and Backus (2013, 30), social media is the leading source of new loanwords. Being daily at learners' fingertips, social media gives young people the opportunity to receive English inputs and outputs outside the classroom. The other domains returned the following results: Business and Ads reached respectively 10% and 9%, followed by technical language (8%), referred to as English for Special Purposes (ESP). The slightly low response rate (7%) for TV and Music (6%) is probably related to the fact that films and other audiovisual material are usually dubbed (or subtitled) in Italy. Food & Drinks received another low percentage (5%), together with sports (2%) and leisure (2%) because Italian students probably deemed Anglicisms not so popular in these sectors. Indeed, Ads contain occasionalisms, which are borrowings that emerge from time to time but do not become part of the target language dictionaries or solidify in usage as true neologisms.

Another widespread classification criterion of loanwords is the one that analyzes the semantic scope of belonging. It is no coincidence that the semantic areas that contain the highest number of English loans correspond to the areas of life that developed the fastest in the modern world, and that especially affect young people's daily lives (Coco, Giovanardi and Gualdo 2008). In certain domains, resorting to Anglicisms is precisely determined by the desire to give greater technicality and to demonstrate that these loanwords are in step with the times of globalization (Beccaria 2006, 118-19).

Based on the other research question ("To what extent do Anglicisms influence Italian language?"), other data reveals students' perspectives and provided feedback on the extent of English influence on Italian. This question did not yield controversial results but brought out fairly homogeneous opinions among the respondents. The majority of students agreed see Italian as influenced by English, with 54% talking about a significant influence. Only 2% claim that Italian is not influenced by English. Loanwords are often considered a means to fill a lexical gap in a given language, a process of introducing a word for which there is no proper equivalent; most students (67.9%) agreed with the statement that Anglicisms fill lexical gaps in a language, while 25% disagreed, and 7.1% said they had no idea about it. The main trend seems to confirm that Anglicisms are deemed essential because they fill a lexical void in a language. As argued in Gerding et al. (2014, 41),

[as] the coinage of new words is somewhat slow compared to the facts that need to be described, lexical gaps requiring the import of foreign words tend to be a common occurrence. Thus, the influence of one society on another may manifest itself in words borrowed from predominant cultures.

In order to get to the heart of the interlingual issue about the invasive presence of these loanwords in Italian, students were asked to express their opinion on what Anglicisms can achieve or cause, based on the following indicators: (a) enriching a language; (b) creating confusion; (c) contaminating a language; (d) ruining a language; (e) other. Data shows that most respondents (57.1 %) deemed it possible that loans enrich a language, while 21.4% asserted that they contaminate a language; 14.3%, instead, thought that they cause confusion; finally, 7.1% stated that they ruin a language.

According to students' explanations, the option that Anglicisms enrich their language is closely related to a way of keeping up with modernity, ex-

pressing social prestige and charm. The Italian trend to welcome Anglicisms does not necessarily imply that the internal structure of Italian can be compromised or that new lexical entries can represent a sign of exploitation; rather, to them, it is a hint of enrichment and evolution of the language itself. Indeed, the adoption of these lexical innovations mirrors the acceptance of cultural patterns from a donor language as well as the necessity of new concepts by a receiving language (Luján García 2017; Luján García and Pulcini 2018).

Next, in order to investigate the students' personal habits regarding Anglicisms, they were asked to give reasons for choosing Anglicisms instead of their L1 equivalents. The results that emerged from this question indicate that the relative majority of respondents (47%) reported that they use an Anglicism because it is shorter and more immediate than its L1 equivalent, while 33% commented that they use it because it sounds better, and 13% declared that they use it because it is more fashionable and modern, leaving only the 7% of respondents that chose "other" options. This is a finding that deserves attention, as Anglicisms seem to be used to attribute distinctive linguistic traits (brevity, immediacy, sonority, trendiness) to a receiving language. Moreover, as Furiassi (2010, 63) highlighted, the reasons for choosing an Anglicism often seem correlated to "the taste for the exotic" and "the charm of a foreign language". Additionally, the need to use an Anglicism rather than the Italian equivalent is not often determined by the lack of an equivalent; as a matter of fact, they are adopted to confer stylistic and expressive effects, to give a different tone to an expression. This is the difference between necessity and luxury English loanwords (Öhmann 1961; Coco, Giovanardi and Gualdo 2008, 71).

Finally, the respondents indicated whether they had any suggestions about the inclusion of Anglicisms in EFL lessons by answering the following open-ended question: "Do you think it might be a good idea to include forms of Anglicisms in the teaching of the English language to better understand their use and meaning? Give reasons." Although this question might seem somewhat redundant, as it was highly likely that students would respond affirmatively, it served as a way to ensure that all participants believed in the potential benefits of Anglicisms for educational purposes. Additionally, the aim was to solicit students' suggestions and proposals on this matter. The question set the stage for the subsequent questions, which sought further insights and recommendations from the students regarding the use of Anglicisms in language teaching.

The open-ended questions complemented the results of the closed questions, prompting students to expand their views and comments. Encompassing Anglicisms in English-taught classes is considered by most of the respondents as positive for better learning and enhancing communicative and lexical skills, as we observed from their answers. In this teaching context, the use of Italian as L1, in some cases, is essential because the students' target proficiency level in English is not very high. Additionally, L1 is crucial for conducting a contrastive analysis between English and Italian, highlighting the frequency of Anglicisms in youth language. Using Italian, students can better understand linguistic differences and similarities, which assists with comprehension and language acquisition, making the learning process more effective and relevant to their everyday communication.

In conclusion, the fact that the majority of the responses declared that there could be benefits in learning Anglicisms confirmed that students are very interested in learning them for their EFL improvement. In order to provide a general overview, it was necessary to code answers into reason-related categories: for communicative purposes (3 respondents), for job purposes (3 respondents), for shortness (1 respondent), to improve English (2 respondents), to better understand English (4 respondents), to compare languages (1 respondent), to fill lexical gaps (2 respondents), to keep up with the times (1 respondent), to understand their meanings (1 respondent). In conclusion, most answers were rather positive about the exploitation of Anglicisms in class, and these statements suggest that it could be useful to include Anglicisms in English Language Teaching (ELT) practice. The responses could indeed be used as clues to be harnessed in future EFL classes.

6. Conclusions

Our research aim was to detect and analyze Anglicisms used in the Italian context in order to paint a picture of contemporary trends. As to data gathering, we reported observations that could explain the presence of the English loanwords in Italian. Within the framework of the global phenomenon of Anglicisms, this study has delved into the language of a small, though representative group of young Italians. We analyzed examples of authentic language use, raising students' awareness about the Anglicisms they are exposed to when using

social media and the Internet. The findings provided insights into the sociolinguistic dimensions of the repertoire of the Italian students exposed to a wide range of Anglicisms. Particularly, they brought to the fore not only the frequency and contexts of Anglicism usage but also the underlying social and cultural factors that drive this linguistic phenomenon.

The results partially revealed the Italian tendency to keep Anglicisms in their original spelling (pure Anglicisms). Most of the sampled English loanwords were highly frequent, and the experiment managed to raise students' awareness of their use of Anglicisms, based on metacognitive reflection of the system of Anglicisms that they use.

We hope that/Hopefully, the present study will contribute to lay the groundwork for future in-field research on Anglicisms in youth language, in language learning and language teaching. It should be pointed out, however, that the Anglicisms under scrutiny have been limited to a topic-based selection, two texts and few sentences. The study could be expanded to cover other lemmas. Another limitation of the study concerns the lack of direct contact with the participants: although the online format enabled us to gather large amounts of data, all three instruments were administered only remotely, thus limiting the efficacy of interventions, in comparison with in-person settings. To further our research, it would be interesting to observe directly recourse to Anglicisms or the way these are rendered by young students, through future EFL in-class interventions in other Italian university contexts.

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APPENDIX I
(Translation task)

Can you translate the following sentences from English to your native language?
(Time available: 15 minutes)

1. Are you coming here next weekend?
2. His soccer team is called the "Vests".
3. In the afternoon, we usually have a snack.
4. We're going to a party on campus.
5. There are a lot of celebrities in the show.
6. I really like wearing shorts in the summer.
7. Vicky has got a full-time job.
8. Tomorrow I'll go with Charles for a happy hour.
9. In my spare time I have many hobbies.
10. Anthony really likes going with his skateboard.
11. The informatic team will crack the enigma code.
12. Many bloggers make money by allowing advertisements to appear on their site.
13. A massive cyber-attack extended through the websites.
14. The building needs to be brought up to modern standards.
15. Place the image against the top left corner of the scanner.
16. Why don't you prepare a cocktail for our guests?
17. You need to double click the mouse.
18. Tina posted the pictures on Twitter.

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