

## Degrees of Morphological Substitution of Anglicisms in Italian

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The author discusses degrees of morphological substitution of English loan-words in Italian based on the distinction between the stages of primary and secondary adaptation. In primary adaptation, the vast majority of English loan-words in Italian remain at the stage of either zero, or compromise substitution (transmorphemization). There are a few very restricted groups of English loan-words which sometimes undergo complete transmorphemization: learned words of Latin and Greek origin whose lexical elements are often replaced by Italian ones, some words from non-European languages which have entered European languages through English mediation, and a small number of early loans. Reasons for this marked resistance to the morphological adaptation of English loan-words in Italian are also discussed. The innovative potentials of the receiving language are shown in the stage of secondary adaptation, in which the process of word-formation is very much alive.

### Introduction

In the past fifty years, the influence of English on a number of European languages, including Italian, has been very strong. This can be seen in the number of English loan-words and the frequency of their use. English has thus completely superseded French, which was still the main source of loan-words in Italian in the first half of the twentieth century. The beginnings of English influence can be traced back to the 18th century, but instances of linguistic borrowing can be found even earlier. Thus, as early as the 16th century, the Venetian Republic had strong commercial ties with England, to which it sent its ambassadors in order to protect its commercial interests (Rando 1970: 104). In their reports, Venetian ambassadors often used English loan-words related to the objects, customs and institutions they

found there. The use of these early anglicisms was restricted to diplomatic circles and they did not have wider circulation. A few English loan-words that are still used today were first recorded in these reports.

The first important wave of anglicisms entered Italian in the 18th century, when England became a great industrial power and its political institutions and culture became a focus of attention. At that time, France acted as a mediator between England and the rest of Europe. The enthusiasm of French thinkers such as Montesquieu and Voltaire for English political institutions and ways of life soon became widespread. As a result, English books were widely translated and read, and English grammars and Italian-English dictionaries were published, such as Baret's *Grammatica inglese ad uso degl'italiani*, Altieri's *Dizionario italiano ed inglese*, and Bottarelli's *Dizionario italiano-inglese-francese*, which went through several editions in the course of the 18th century (Graf 1911:227). But the first dictionaries of this kind had appeared even earlier – the first English-Italian dictionary, entitled *Vocabolario italiano e inglese*, was compiled by Giovanni Torriano in 1659. (O'Connor 1977)

Nineteenth-century anglicisms were mostly related to industry, social life, transport, and sports. Some of these loans are recorded in dictionaries, even though they have gone out of use along with the objects they denoted, such as various types of carriages: *il break, il drag, il four in hand, l'hansom, il dogcart, la milord* (Messeri 1955:5).

At the end of World War II, a number of anglicisms related to the military and weapons entered Italian (e.g., *il bazooka, il combat team, il marine*) (Rando 1963:114). The number of anglicisms ranging from sport, music, and the film to science and technology has increased considerably in the past fifty years, in which process the press and the media have had an important role.

## Theory

Our analysis of the morphological adaptation of anglicisms in Italian is based on the theory of languages in contact by R. Filipović. According to this theory, there are two stages of morphological adaptation: primary and secondary. Changes undergone by a loan-word in the process of its adaptation to the morphological system of the borrowing language belong to the stage of primary adaptation. This stage consists of three degrees of morphological substitution, or transmorphemization: zero, compromise, and complete. English loan-words that enter the borrowing language as free morphemes undergo zero transmorphemization. Anglicisms with

final bound morphemes that do not conform to the morphological system of the borrowing language belong to compromise transmorphemization. Complete transmorphemization occurs when English bound morphemes are replaced by bound morphemes of the borrowing language (Filipović 1986).

In the stage of secondary adaptation, loan-words undergo changes of word-formation, and follow the same course of development as native words (Filipović 1986).

### **English and Italian lexical and morphological systems**

It seems that, with the increasing influx of English loan-words into Italian, the tendency to adapt them morphologically has considerably weakened. There may be several reasons for this. One of them is certainly sociolinguistic, and involves the prestige of English as an international language. While in 1961 only 2.05% of the Italian population knew some English, ten years later it became the first foreign language taught in secondary schools. Tourism has also contributed to the spread of English on a practical level (Rando 1973:120). The most important reason, however, is structural arising from the relative lexical and structural similarity between the two languages. A large part of the English word-stock is Romance in origin, which facilitates the process of linguistic borrowing. Furthermore, both English and Italian are analytical languages that have undergone a process of historical development from highly inflected languages to more simplified modern morphology.

### **Transmorphemization**

Most English loan-words remain either at the stage of zero (e.g., E *golf* > *il golf*) or compromise transmorphemization (E *brief-ing* > I *il brief-ing*; E *contain-er* > I *il contain-er*). It is interesting to note that anglicisms belonging to the stage of compromise transmorphemization, which is generally considered to be very unstable since English suffixes tend to be replaced by native ones, show no tendency toward further adaptation in Italian.

Complete transmorphemization is rather rare. It is limited to three groups of loan-words: 1) pre-eighteenth-century loans (e.g. E *ale* > I *il l'ala* (1498); E *good ale*

> *I la godala* (1531); *E lancers* > *I le lancette* (1551); *E mayor* > *I mero* (1498); *E parliament* > *I il parlamento*; *E sheriff* > *I lo sceriffo* (1498); *E yard* > *I la iarda* (1554) (Rando 1970); 2) words from non-European languages that have entered Europe through English mediation (e.g. *E albatross* > *I l'albatro*; *E alligator* > *I l'alligatore*; *E canoe* > *I la canoa*; *E jungle* > *I la giungla*; *E kangaroo* > *I il canguro*; *E moccasin* > *I il mocassino*; *E monsoon* > *I il monzone*; *E pyjamas* > *il pigiama*); and 3) learned words of Latin and Greek origin which were formed in English-speaking countries. Within the third group, English suffixes and other lexical elements are substituted by corresponding Italian ones (-*al* > -*ale*: *E terminal* > *I il terminale*; *E digital* > *I digitale*; -*ant* > -*ante*: *E deodorant* > *I il deodorante*; -*ent* > -*ente*: *E deterrent* > *I il deterrente*; -*ian* > -*iano*: *E Presbyterian* > *I presbiteriano*; -*ion* > -*ione*: *E recession* > *I la recessione*; -*ism* > -*ismo*: *E Pan-Americanism* > *I il panamericanismo*; -*ist* > -*ista*: *E Methodist* > *I il metodista*; -*or* > -*ore*: *E processor* > *I il processore*). In addition to the above groups, all English loan-verbs undergo the process of complete transmorphemization, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

## The adaptation of morphological categories

### 4.1. Nouns.

Owing to the lack of inflectional endings, nouns can be easily transferred from English into Italian without any morphological changes. This is important because nouns are the most numerous category of loan-words.

#### 4.1.1. Gender.

The main difference between the English and Italian noun systems is related to the concept of gender. Thus English natural gender has to be replaced by Italian grammatical gender, the obvious exception being nouns denoting persons, such as *la First Lady*, *la girl-friend*, and *il gentleman*. In most cases, nouns denoting professions can be either masculine or feminine: *il/la designer*, *il/la manager*. Apart from these loans, the strongest factor in the process is the masculine tendency. Thus, most English loan-words are assigned masculine gender, which actually functions as the »common gender.« Feminine gender is usually a result of semantic analogy, which means that an English loan noun receives the gender of a noun in the borrowing language to which it is semantically close, e.g., *la business school* (*la scuola*), *la chance* (*la possibilità*, *l'occasione*), *la house music* (*la musica*), *la middle class* (*la classe*),

*la Union Jack (la bandiera)*. The morphological form of a loan-word is weak as a factor determining gender, since there are very few English loans ending in -o or -a which would correspond to characteristic Italian endings. Some suffixes can also determine the gender of English loans: *-ion (-ione): la compilation, la connection, la fiction, la nomination; -ty (tà): la royalty; -ance (-anza/-enza): la performance*. In most cases gender is shown only by the form of the article, which means that most nouns remain in the stage of either zero or compromise transmorphemization.

#### 4.1.2. Plural.

Italian nouns ending in a consonant or a stressed vowel have the zero plural ending. This rule is usually applied to English loan nouns, most of which end in a consonant. English plural in -s, however, is found in a number of cases, as well as the parallel use of the zero and -s plural: *i club/i clubs, i container/i containers, i leader/i leaders, i partner/i partners, gli skinhead/gli skinheads*. Instances of the English irregular plural can also be found: *i cameramen, gli stuntmen, i supermen*.

#### 4.2. Verbs.

In most European languages, verbs are usually the second largest category of loan-words. In Italian, however, this is not the case. The number of verbal loans is extremely low (in a corpus of around 1.500 anglicisms there are only 22 verbs). In order to function within the Italian morphological system, English verbs undergo the process of complete transmorphemization. They are given the Italian verbal suffix *-are* and are thus assigned to the first group of Italian verbs: E *bluff*>I *bluffare*, E *boycott*>I *boycottare*, E *flirt*>I *flirtare*, E *dribble*> I *dribblare*, E *lynch*>I *linciare*, E *sniff*>I *sniffare*.

#### 4.3. Adjectives.

As opposed to the small number of verbal loans, the number of adjectival loans is unusually high. Most adjectives remain at the stage of zero transmorphemization, showing no distinction between masculine/feminine or singular/plural forms: E *casual*> I *casual*; E *cheap*>I *cheap*; E *cool*>I *cool*, E *dark*>I *dark*, E *dry*>I *dry*; E *groggy*> I *groggy*; E *hard*>I *hard*; E *jumbo*>I *jumbo*; E *new*>I *new*; E *part-time*>I *part-time*; E *raglan*>I *raglan*; E *top*>I *top*; E *Tory*>I *tory*; E *Whig*>I *whig*; E *Yankee*>I *yankee*. They are used in attributive and predicative positions. English adjectival loans are compared in the same way as Italian adjectives, by adding the adverb *più*: *l'aspetto più underground, i locali più «in»*.

#### 4.4. Adverbs and interjections.

The two remaining groups of English loan-words are adverbs and interjections. Among the adverbs that have remained at the stage of zero transmorphemization we can mention the following: *by night*, *cheek to cheek*, *night and day*, *non stop*, *OK*, *why not*, and *all right*. Interjections are either imperatives, such as *geddup!*, *play!*, *ready!*, used in some sports, greetings: *bye-bye*, *good bye*, and *hallo*, or onomatopoeic expressions that are often found in comic strips, or cartoons: *gulp*, *grunt*, *slam*, *slurp*, *smack*, *snap*, *snort*, *splash*, and *wow*.

#### Secondary adaptation

While complete transmorphemization is rather weak in present-day Italian, the degree to which English loan-words have been incorporated in the receiving language is shown at the stage of secondary adaptation. The examples which follow consist of the English model (E), the primary adaptation form in Italian (I 1) and the secondary adaptation form in Italian (I 2): *boom* > (I 1) *il boom* > (I 2) *lo sboom*; E *broker* > (I 1) *il broker* > (I 2) *il brokeraggio*; E *film* > (I 1) *il film* > (I 2) *il filmetto*, *il filmino*, *il filmone*; E *jeans* > (I 1) *i jeans* > (I 2) *la jeanseria*; E *killer* > (I 1) *il killer* > (I 2) *il killeraggio*; E *sniff* > (I 1) *sniffare* > (I 2) *la sniffata*; E *software* > (I 1) *il software* > (I 2) *il/la softwarista*. At this stage, the process of word-formation is very much alive, showing the creative and innovative potentials of the borrowing language.

#### Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that the theory of languages in contact by R. Filipović can be successfully applied to the morphological adaptation of English loan-words in Italian. In the stage of primary adaptation, most English loans remain at the stage of zero or compromise transmorphemization. Early loans, some loans which entered European languages through English mediation, and learned words of Latin and Greek origin undergo complete transmorphemization. The only morphological category which undergoes complete transmorphemization in all cases are verbs. In the stage of primary adaptation, importation is much stronger than substitution. The stage of secondary adaptation is very productive, resulting in a large number of derivatives and compounds.

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STUPNJEVI MORFOLOŠKE SUPSTITUCIJE ANGLICIZAMA U TALIJANSKOM JEZIKU

Uvodni dio sadrži kratak prikaz povijesti ulaska anglicizama u talijanski jezik. U članku se nadalje analiziraju stupnjevi morfološke supstitucije anglicizama u talijanskom na temelju suvremene teorije jezika u kontaktu R. Filipovića. Većina anglicizama ostaje na stupnju nulte ili kompromisne transmorfemizacije. Malobrojni primjeri anglicizama koji se nalaze na stupnju potpune transmorfemizacije mogu se uglavnom podijeliti u tri skupine: 1) posuđenice koje su u talijanski jezik ušle prije 18. stoljeća 2) riječi koje su u europske jezike ušle putem engleskog kao jezika-posrednika; 3) europeizmi nastali od latinskih i grčkih leksičkih elemenata na engleskom jezičnom području. Dok je na stupnju primarne adaptacije tendencija importacije jača od supstitucije, faza sekundarne adaptacije izrazito je produktivna, te se javlja velik broj izvedenica i složenica.