# LANGUAGE BORROWINGS IN A CONTEXT OF UNEQUAL SYSTEMS: ANGLICISMS IN FRENCH AND SPANISH

CHRISTOPHER ROLLASON, M.A., Ph.D - rollason54@gmail.com

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*This article examines a number of aspects of the phenomenon of anglicisms in contemporary French and Spanish. The discussion is confined to the written language (essentially in its journalistic, technical and business registers; reference is not made to the literary register); and to the French of France and the Spanish of Spain only. The issue of anglicisms is placed in a wider international context, taking account of such phenomena as globalisation and the Internet. Reference is also made to theoretical perspectives that regard individual languages as systems in their own right. All translations from French and Spanish are the responsibility of the present author.*

This is the text of a paper given at the University of Surrey, England, in June 2004. It incorporates some material from two earlier texts by the author: 'The Use of Anglicisms in Contemporary French', in: *Crossing Barriers and Bridging Cultures: The Challenges of Multilingual Translation for the European Union*, ed. Arturo Tosi (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2003), pp. 21-37; and 'Unequal Systems: On the Problem of Anglicisms in Contemporary French Usage', in *In and Out of English: For Better, for Worse? (Translating Europe)*, eds. Gunilla Anderman and Margaret Rogers (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2005, pp. 39-56). Neither of these two earlier texts deals with Spanish.

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## I - THE GLOBAL HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH

The international role of the English language today is nothing but controversial. In the wake of economic and technological globalisation and the conversion of the US into the world's single superpower, we are fast entering a situation where the most significant division among the world's languages is that between English, the master-language, on the one hand, and all other languages, on the other. Reactions to this development vary from the triumphalist (an attitude typical among native anglophones, and one which, despite being such an anglophone myself and giving this paper in English, I assure you I do not share) to the defensively hostile (a position found notably among some, but by no means all, speakers of other large languages, including the two with which this paper will be concerned, French and Spanish).

A representative account of the role of English as hegemonic global language may be found in Tom McArthur's book *The Oxford Guide to World English* (2002). McArthur sees English, in the version variously known as 'world English', 'international English' or 'global English', as 'the

universalising language of the human race', or 'the world's default mode', or, again, 'the world's main medium of international expression'[1]. His presentation of this phenomenon, through its multiple local and regional variants, is basically upbeat, though he does admit the attendant risks of cultural and mental homogenisation ('No language has a perfect "take" on the world we live in'[2]) and concedes (though scarcely enlarging on the point) that there is a need for 'global linguistic damage control'[3]. In the conclusion to his book, McArthur subdivides the world's languages into a number of categories according to extent of use, but significantly places English in a category of its own, 'a set with a membership of one', 'distributed more or less equally worldwide', and 'serving as the primary vehicle of the world's commerce, science, technology, computer activity, electronics, media, popular culture and entertainment'[4]. Such a statement may be contested in the detail, but, even if exaggerated, it is representative enough of the triumphalist declarations that are made daily, above all by free-market pundits in the anglophone world.

Another anglophone linguist, Robert Phillipson, however, offers a far more critical perspective on world English. In his book *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy* (2003), Phillipson, addressing the global English phenomenon from a European perspective, darkly asks 'whether the contemporary expansion of English poses a serious threat to all the other languages of Europe'. He declares that 'English may be seen as a kind of linguistic cuckoo, taking over where other breeds of language have historically nested and acquired territorial rights, and obliging non-native speakers of English to acquire the behavioural habits and linguistic forms of English', and asks whether 'a single privileged language, along with the paradigms associated with it, represents a threat to other ways of thinking and their expression'.[5] Among the phenomena which Phillipson identifies as affecting the rest of Europe's languages today are 'marginalization, domain loss, attrition, and a loss of cultural vitality'[6]; he further observes the emergence of an unequal power-relationship, commenting: 'Communication between native speakers of EN and those for whom English is a foreign or second language is asymmetrical'[7].

This problem of an unequal power-relationship is effectively identified by both McArthur and Phillipson, independently of the ideological take of each on the matter. Both commentators exhibit in their texts the growing tendency to create a binary opposition between English and all other languages, which even applies to large languages such as Chinese, Arabic, French or Spanish: McArthur speaks of 'English and other world languages' and, for Europe, of English versus 'mainland languages'[8]; while Phillipson too refers to 'other languages' and to 'continental languages'[9], thus, despite his critical ideological position, into the familiar anglophone language trap of reducing all non-English European cultures to the hold-all category of 'continental', implying that because they lack the god-given privilege of being anglophone they are ultimately all the same. This same tendency may be seen at work in the writings of other anglophone linguists, as in David Crystal's *Language and the Internet* (2001), which, while an excellent piece of exposition as far as it goes, betrays its anglocentric prejudice in its title (the book is 99% about English and would have been more accurately titled 'English and the Internet), and whose author is capable of such revelatory formulations as: 'most of the English technical terms used on the Web have still not been translated into other languages'[10]. Those poor benighted 'other languages' again: 'here be dragons', indeed!

One significant dimension of the hegemony of English, and that on which I shall concentrate in this paper, is the increasing use of anglicisms in other European languages. This is related to the problems identified by Phillipson as 'domain loss' and 'attrition' - the loss of a language's capacity to generate new words and expressions, as English loan-words, adapted or not, invade an increasing number of semantic domains, pushing out the existing native terms or making it hard for new native terms to take root. The phenomenon of anglicisms is noted, though not described in any detail, by both McArthur and Phillipson. McArthur states: 'English is currently going … into Dutch, German, French and other languages in Europe', and: 'Anglicisms are

flowing freely into all major mainland languages'[11] (his lexical selections - 'going into', 'flowing freely into' - themselves suggesting a cultural takeover); while Phillipson observes: 'Loan words [from English] are of course being adopted in all European languages … Borrowing often triggers a readjustment of the semantic space, sometimes displacing and sometimes replacing local words', adding the significant remark that 'linguistic shift occurs only in one direction'[12].

In the general context sketched out, from their different positions, by McArthur and Phillipson, I shall now offer some more detailed considerations on the situation regarding anglicisms today, first in French and then, more briefly, in Spanish. For reasons of space and clarity I shall focus entirely on the French of France (not of Belgium or Switzerland) and the Spanish of Spain: in particular, the non-European cases of Québecois, Latin American Spanish and other variants of the two languages would require a quite separate examination.


## II - ANGLICISMS IN FRENCH

Anglicisms and pseudo-anglicisms are scarcely a new phenomenon in French, as such long-established usages as 'le dandy' and 'le smoking' (for 'dinner-jacket') attest. A degree of cross-linguistic contamination has always been inevitable between such close neighbours as Britain and France, and until relatively recently the process has been a two-way one, with French enriching English with such usages as 'maître d'hôtel' or 'nouvelle cuisine'. In the last few decades, however, the question has taken on a clearly different dimension, as the prime source of anglicisms in French - as in all other languages - is no longer Britain, a country with approximately the same population and political and economic weight as France, but the United States, since 1989 the planet's sole hegemonic power. The issue of anglicisms now appears in France as an aspect of a much broader problem, namely the identity of Europe and its defence against perceived US domination in the economic, political and cultural fields.

The urgency of the issue has, indeed, been ratcheted up a few notches in France very recently, with the publication in 2004 of the first-ever example of a new lexicographic genre, the anti-anglicisms dictionary, *Évitez le franglais, parlez français* ('Don't speak franglais, speak French'). This volume, compiled by Yves Laroche-Claire and graced with a preface by the well-known media personality Bernard Pivot, lists close on three hundred pages' worth of anglicisms and offers the user 'authentic' French alternatives to every single one. Of the alternatives, some are in general and or official use, while others have actually been invented by the compiler. This polemical volume testifies to the passions raised, at least in some circles of the French intelligentsia, by the invasion of anglicisms. In his preface, Pivot writes: 'Si [les mots] qui constituent notre patrimoine, notre sensibilité, notre imaginaire, notre identité sont boutés dehors pour laisser la place à d'autres, qui relèvent d'une histoire ni plus ni moins respectable que la nôtre, mais qui n'est pas la nôtre, ne sommes-nous pas contraints à une mutation culturelle que nous n'avons pas souhaitée?' ('If [words], which make up our heritage, our sensibility, our imagination, our identity, are thrown out to be replaced by others that come from a history which is no more or less respectable than our own but is not our own, are we not being forced into a cultural mutation which we haven't asked for?'). He inveighs above all against the sheer quantity of anglicisms: 'Ce qui agace, c'est la déferlante; ce qui révolte, c'est l'excès issu d'une seule et même origine' ('What is infuriating is the fact that this goes on and on; what is revolting is the excess [of words] of one and the same origin')[13]. What Pivot is objecting to is, clearly, cultural colonisation by the US, in its linguistic manifestation; and this point is taken up by the compiler proper, Laroche-Claire, who in his own introductory remarks states: 'Pas un seul jour ne passe sans qu'un nouveau vocable ou qu'une nouvelle locution nous vienne d'outre-Atlantique' ('Not a day goes by without a new word or expression reaching us from across the Atlantic'), and vehemently condemns the consequent loss of native French vocabulary: 'L'usage quotidien d'une

langue française anglicisée à l'excès, relayé par les médias et la publicité, lamine inexorablement et insidieusement notre vocabulaire, mettant en péril des centaines de mots bien français' ('The daily use of an over-anglicised French, relayed by the media and advertising, is inexorably and insidiously whittling away at our vocabulary, endangering hundreds of good French words'). The Pivot-Laroche-Claire project is consciously offered as a weapon in an anti-American combat to the disgruntled, to 'tous ceux désireux de refranciser leur vocabulaire' ('all those who wish to re-gallicise their vocabulary')[14]. The battle lines, then, are clearly drawn. Ideology apart, however, it is useful to take a closer look at the matter from a linguistic point of view, and this we shall now do, with examples.

Words originating in English can pass through a whole series of vicissitudes in French, and can generate 'new' forms that are quite unfamiliar to native speakers of English. The possible transformations are legion, and pseudo-English forms have come into being across the whole range of linguistic levels. On the lexical level, modern French usage includes pseudo-anglicisms in the form of words that are non-existent in English: these may be invented nouns, such as 'le rugbyman', 'le tennisman', 'le recordman' (for 'rugby player', '[male] tennis player' and '[male] record holder'), or verbal nouns which scarcely exist in English as separate lexical items, such as 'le lifting' (for 'facelift') or 'le forcing' (approximately, an 'extra push'). On the semantic level, an English word may acquire a new meaning in French: 'le spot' has come to designate what is known in Britain as a 'commercial'. A legitimate English noun such as 'le snob' may generate a new French verb: 'snober' has established itself as an alternative to the native 'bouder', although no verb 'to snob' exists in English. Alternatively, the infinitive suffix '-er' may serve to naturalise an actually-existing English verb, as in 'coacher' ('to coach' in the management sense; existing alongside 'le coach' and 'le coaching'); another naturalisation strategy is to create a French abbreviation for an English word, as in 'le pull' for 'pullover', or, dare one add, 'McDo' for the much-disliked yet much-patronised McDonald's. An English term may also be semi-assimilated by gallicising the spelling, as in 'le bogue' ('computer bug'), a form which alternates in current usage with the more visibly alien 'le bug'. For nouns, assimilation also requires the assignation of a gender; and, if the obvious temptation is to give semantically neutral anglicisms masculine status (e.g. 'le fax'), the goal of naturalisation has, in some cases, been better served by the choice of the feminine gender, as in the use - for a media personality of either sex - of 'la star' (probably by analogy with the two grammatically feminine but semantically sex-neutral native terms, 'la vedette' and 'l'étoile'). Pseudo-anglicisms and adapted anglicisms are, then, quite widespread in today's French. The 'pseudo' nature of certain forms may well not be recognised by native French speakers, who are likely to assume they are genuine English forms, and to be surprised if, say, a real live anglophone fails to understand 'le baby-foot' ('table football').

At all events, there is no doubt that contemporary French writing in the journalistic register (newspapers, magazines, topical non-fiction books) is strewn with words and phrases deriving from English, whether they are genuine British and/or American forms or pseudo-anglicisms. Indeed, a fairly recent book, *Non merci, Oncle Sam!* ('No thanks, Uncle Sam!', 1999) by Noël Mamère, a Green politician, and Olivier Warin, a television journalist, which consists entirely of anti-American polemics, proved, on my own detailed examination, to contain, over its 187 pages, a total of 57 anglicisms (words or phrases, excluding repetitions), making an average of almost one fresh anglicism every three pages, including such gems as: 'les téléspectateurs zappent' ('TV viewers zap'), '[ils] surfent sur le Web' ('they surf the Web'), 'de confortables portefeuilles de stock-options' ('comfortable portfolios of stock-options'), or 'le record du monde des serial-killers' ('the world record in serial killers')[15]. The phenomenon affects most areas of public discourse (with the major exceptions of domestic politics and, above all, the law, where the difference of legal systems acts as a effective barrier to anglicisms), and is especially prevalent in the semantic domains of management and information technology.

It is interesting to consider briefly, from a sociolinguistic perspective, some of the possible motives for so widespread an employment of alien terms by writers and journalists, in a country that remains highly conscious of its cultural identity. Among the factors that may be identified are the following:

a) *terminological rigour*: an equivalent French word or phrase for the concept may not exist (or may exist only as a long-winded paraphrase). A French journalist writing on culturally or institutionally specific aspects of an English-speaking country would obviously be best advised not to translate terms which may have no exact equivalent. Examples from the UK might be Westminster politics or cricket.

b) *sectoral jargon*: in some subject areas, there is a whole arsenal of ready-made English-language terminology that is also highly specific. An example here is the world of non-classical musics, where borrowings from English go back to the early twentieth century, with 'le ragtime', 'le jazz' and 'le blues', and have in recent years included 'le rap', 'la techno', 'le trip-hop', etc.

c) *brevity*: 'le flop' is shorter than 'l'échec', 'le boom' than 'l'essor'. This is a practical consideration in contexts such as newspaper headlines.

d) *comprehensibility*: the 'approved' French word may not always be recognised: thus, 'le fax/faxer' are more likely to be understood than 'la télécopie/le télécopieur/envoyer une télécopie'.

e) *unconscious pro-American reflexes*, as an expression of fashion or as a result of over-exposure to US media. A key factor here may be the naturalisation of transatlantic free-market values and the attendant mass-consumption lifestyle - hence 'le management' and 'le manager' for 'la gestion' and 'le gestionnaire', 'le chewing-gum' for 'la gomme à mâcher', etc.

f) (conversely) *an ironic anti-Americanism*, which may dictate a conscious use of the English word, as a strategy to distance the French writer (and reader) from the US values being attacked. Possible examples here are 'le business/le businessman' (with specifically American connotations, as opposed to the more general 'les affaires/l'homme d'affaires'), and 'le serial killer' (for 'le tueur en série'), in contexts where certain characteristics of transatlantic society (free-market dogma, endemic social violence) are being openly called in question.

The French writer is also free to choose *not* to use anglicisms, and the deliberate selection of a French lexical item may be motivated by various factors, among them:

a) *officially organised hostility to anglicisms*. The existence of this tendency in France and the French-speaking world generally, and the consequent attempts to reduce the use of anglicisms, are well-known. The special case of Quebec falls outside the scope of the present study; the usual view, however, is that Québecois French has succeeded better than any other variant of the language in keeping anglicisms down and out. In France, it is the official task of the *Académie française* (the French Academy) to devise French equivalents for English neologisms. This activity is typically derided by the British, as representing the *dirigiste* antithesis to Britain's own empirical traditions; nonetheless, the Academy's coinages have in some notable instances succeeded in imposing themselves, especially in the computer field: thus, 'l'informatique' ('computer science') and 'l'ordinateur' ('computer') have become current coin in France. Other officially approved alternatives ('le palmarès' for 'hit-parade', 'la mercatique' for 'marketing', 'la jeune pousse' for 'start-up') have, however, been markedly less successful.

b) *the spontaneous generation of genuine French equivalents*. It occasionally happens that a genuine French counterpart to a US term springs up from the grassroots, a notable recent example being 'la malbouffe' for 'junk food'.

c) *systematic 'localisation' within a sector of activity*, leading to the creation of an entire terminological artillery in French. This has to a large extent happened in the computer/Internet field, where, for obvious operational reasons, a term has to have a specific and non-negotiable meaning.

In view of the particular importance - economic, cultural and linguistic - of the computer/Internet field, I shall now go on to devote further attention to it, with some concrete textual examples in the form of newspaper and magazine articles.

By now, a comprehensive arsenal of French computer terms exists. We have already mentioned 'l'informatique' and 'l'ordinateur', and to these should be added the equally well-established 'le matériel' ('hardware') and 'le logiciel' ('software'). The entire lexicon of the world's most commonly-used operating system has been laboriously translated into French, and it is those terms, not the English ones, that appear on the Gallic user's screen ('gestionnaire de fichiers' for 'file manager', 'panneau de configuration' for 'control panel', etc).

Even so, not all French IT coinages have succeeded, and those that do succeed do not do so all the time. 'Le logiciel' and 'le matériel' are certainly more frequent than 'le software' and 'le hardware', but that does not prevent occasional blatant use of the English terms. Thus, on 26 June 2003 the daily newspaper *Libération* published an article on IT rivalry between India and China, entitled 'Le partenariat obligé des deux géants rivaux' ('Forced partnership of two rival giants'), which quoted a Chinese politician as declaring in Bangalore: 'Vous êtes numéro 1 en termes de software, nous sommes numéro 1 en termes de hardware. Si nous combinons software et hardware, nous serons les numéros 1 mondiaux' ('You [i.e. India] are number one in terms of software, we [i.e. China] are number one in terms of hardware. If we combine software and hardware, we'll be the world's number ones')[16]. The journalist's failure to use the French terms may suggest an association, on some level, of technological advance in Asia with global Americanisation.

Meanwhile, 'le shareware' and 'le freeware' are far more likely to be found than 'le partagiciel' and 'le graticiel', and the coinages 'le fureteur' and 'le butineur' have made little headway against 'le browser'. In some cases, usage hesitates between the French term and the anglicism, as in 'le fichier attaché' or 'l'attachment' (or the adapted anglicism 'l'attach'), 'le lien' or 'le link', 'la Toile' or 'le Web'. In the last-named case, French adds an alternative sense deriving from a compression that does not operate in English, for by now-established usage 'le Web' can mean either 'the World Wide Web' or (in lower case) 'an individual website'. Conversely, however, where a genuine French term is employed, there are cases where French has evolved greater sophistication than English in differentiating senses: for 'email' (assuming the English word is not used), French has evolved 'la messagerie' or 'le courrier électronique' for the function, and 'le courriel/le mél/le mail' as alternative forms to refer to an individual message.

To look in more detail at an individual term, we may take the case of email 'spam'. Here, the attempts to avoid the anglicism have had only moderately success. The term 'spam' (meaning unsolicited and unwanted commercial email) is an interesting case of IT terminology embodying 'Anglo-Saxon' mass-cultural contamination, as it is derived - as Crystal explains in *Language and the Internet* - from a 1970 episode of a well-known British television show.[17] Theoretically, there are two French coinages to choose from to translate 'spam'. Both are portmanteau words: 'le publipostage' (from 'publicité' [advertising] and 'postage' [mailing]), and 'le pourriel' (from 'pourri' [rotten] and 'courriel', itself, as we have seen, a French term for 'email'). However, in practice it is usually the English usage that prevails, in 'le spam', 'le spamming' and 'le spammer' (sometimes morphologically gallicised to 'le spammeur'). Thus, in an article on the subject published in September 2003 in the business magazine *Capital* ('Rançon du succès, pirates et "spammers" détournent le Net pour se livrer au cybercrime' - 'The price of success: hackers and spammers abuse the Net to practise cybercrime'), one at once notes the anglicism in the title. The text further contains a revelatory reference to legislation whose aim is to 'interdire le publipostage (nom officiel des spams) sauf accord du destinataire' ('to outlaw "publipostage" [the

official name for spam] except where the recipient has opted in'). The author admits the existence of an official 'real French' term, before blithely going on to re-use the semi-naturalised English word: 'Microsoft a déposé quinze plaintes, en juin dernier, contre des spammers qui auraient envoyé 2 milliards de mails sur MSN, le portail maison' ('Microsoft took out fifteen suits in June against spammers who had sent two billion emails to MSN, the company's house portal'), and to describe Bill Gates as 'exasperé par les spammers, qui polluent le Web avec leurs messages' ('exasperated by spammers who pollute the Web with their messages')[18].

We may go on to consider, again in detail, the use of anglicisms in a longer article in the IT field, taken from the 10-22 December 1999 issue of the magazine *Le Nouvel Économiste*. This text, entitled 'La France bascule dans l'Internet' ('France moves on to the Internet'), exhibits a total of 25 anglicisms. While the core terminology used displays a certain oscillation ('Internet' alternates with 'le Réseau', 'le Web' with 'la Toile') and certain specifically French terms such as 'internaute' ('websurfer') do get a look-in, more often than not the authors take the line of least resistance and borrow the English term nearest to hand. Thus, we find: 'Ils sont des centaines de milliers ... à échanger des e-mails, ... à rechercher un job sur les sites d'emploi' ('In their hundreds of thousands ... they exchange emails ... and look for jobs on situations-vacant sites'); 'ils veulent juste des snacks ouverts 24 heures sur 24' ('they just want snack-bars open 24 hours a day'); 'tee-shirt, haut débit et fun' ('T-shirt, high performance and fun'); 'le directeur du marketing' ('the marketing director'); 'cette start-up star de la Bourse' ('this start-up star of the Stock Exchange'); 'leur business plan' ('their business plan'), etc. These examples reveal two tendencies, both relating to the uncritical replication of transatlantic attitudes. One is the wholesale assimilation of free-market values, as reflected in 'business plan', 'marketing', 'job', 'start-up star', etc. The other, equally insidious, is what might be called 'Disneyfication', the naturalisation of the 'entertainment' values of US mass culture, as manifested in usages like 'fun' (why not the native 'divertissement'?), 'snack' (adapted from 'snack-bar'; as if France did not have its 'brasseries'), and, indeed, 'tee-shirt' (with a curious variant spelling)[19]. Article texts like this may be found in the French press every day of the week, suggesting that Pivot and Laroche-Claire will have their work cut out to make their anti-anglicisms crusade succeed.


## III - ANGLICISMS IN SPANISH

I shall now pass from the situation in French to that in Spanish[20]. While, as with French, the focus will be on the European variant of the language, a word will be useful about the wider context. Spanish has been described as one of the few languages which can compete today with English, and it has the advantages of up to 400 million speakers and a particular status as the second most widely spoken language in the US. Within Europe, Spanish, unlike French with its Swiss and Belgian variants, is spoken as a native language within only one country, Spain. Paradoxically, inside Spain the capacity of Spanish to assert itself is constrained by competition with the three other officially recognised languages of the Spanish state - Basque, Galician and, especially, Catalan. Indeed, in 'progressive' circles in Spain (though not in Latin America) it is not considered politically correct to speak of 'el español' at all, the preferred term being 'el castellano' (Castilian). The Spanish of Spain does not start out from the most favourable circumstances in endeavouring to resist English.

In Spain as in France, there is an official Academy that attempts to lay down usage, while there is also a long-established tradition of accepted anglicisms that precedes today's US-led free-market environment. Examples of older anglicisms are 'el líder' ('leader'), 'el boicot' ('boycott') and 'el mitin' ('meeting', of the political kind) - all, it should be noted, orthographically modified. As with French again, some anglicisms have entrenched themselves despite attempts to create home-grown alternatives: thus 'el fútbol' ('football'; again with a modified spelling) has long

since won out over the reverse calque 'el balompié' ('bálón' = ball; 'pié' = 'foot' - found in dictionaries but rarely used), although, conversely, for 'basketball' the truncated anglicism 'el basquet' is far less frequent than 'el baloncesto' (also a reverse calque - 'balón' = ball; 'cesto' = basket).

As with French, the most recent wave of anglicisms in Spanish has had particular incidence in such US-dominated fields as management and information technology, and, here too I shall, in the brief time available, concentrate my analysis on the latter field. One may note immediately the success of 'el ordenador' as the standard term in Spain for 'computer', parallel to the French 'ordinateur' (although 'la computadora' or 'el computador' tend to be preferred in Latin American countries), and, conversely, the failure of Spanish, unlike French, to generate widely-used native alternatives to 'el hardware' and 'el software' (for the latter, 'el logicial' exists in theory but is rarely found). The adapted anglicism 'formatear' seems, too, to have imposed itself for 'to format'. Nonetheless, various native coinages in the IT field have met with a fair degree of success: 'sistema operativo' for 'operating system', 'reenviar' for 'to forward', 'servidor' for 'server', 'navegador' for 'browser', 'buscador' for 'search engine', and the neatly idiomatic 'bajar' for 'to download'. In some cases there is an oscillation between anglicisms and native terms: thus, 'la Red' (literally, 'the network') alternates with 'la Web' and 'Internet'; the pseudo-anglicism 'el web' for 'website' is common, as in French, though 'el sitio' also exists; and for the noun 'link' and the verb 'to link', 'el link' and the awkward coinage 'linkear' share the field with the far more Spanish 'enlace' and 'enlazar'. In the case-analyses that follow, I shall draw on evidence from a fairly recent book and two rather more recent newspaper articles.

*La Red* ('The Internet') is the title of a book commissioned by the Club of Rome, whose second edition appeared in 2000 and whose author is the veteran Spanish journalist and media mogul Juan Luis Cebrián. The use of a native rather than an English term for the title is symptomatic of a visible, albeit not absolute, tendency on the author's part to prefer a 'real' Spanish lexicon where possible. A certain ambivalence is evident in Cebrián's introduction. He begins by laying an anglicism on the table: 'Cualquier adolescente de nuestros días sabe que un "pc" es un ordenador personal, y que esas letras son las iniciales de su nombre en inglés' ('Any adolescent of today knows that a PC is a personal computer, and that those letters are the initials of its English name')[21]; and then goes on to declare that, in writing his book, 'he tenido que batirme arduosamente con vocablos ingleses que todavía no han merecido traducción al castellano, o tienen una defectuosa' ('I have had to struggle arduously with English terms which still have no Spanish translation, or have only a faulty one'), and to state that he himself has submitted a list of Spanish cyber-neologisms to the Spanish Academy for inclusion in the next edition of its official dictionary[22].

In other words, Cebrián stresses both the difficulty and the necessity of developing native terms. This tension is evident across the text of his book, though it tends to be resolved where possible in favour of the nativist imperative. A number of anglicisms appear, including: 'bites' [sic]; 'megabites' [sic]; 'hardware' and 'software'; 'chips'; 'la web' (athough, later, la "tela de araña"' - literally, 'spider's web'); 'un módem' [hispanicised with an acute accent on the 'o'][23]. It should be noted, however, that for the most part these are terms for which no generally accepted native equivalent exists; and also that Cebrián consistently italicises them, thus maintaining a distance from their perceived non-Spanishness. Conversely, the book also offers numerous instances where an anglicism is *not* used. Among these are: 'cibernautas', not 'netsurfers'; 'autopistas de la información' and 'infopistas', not 'information highways'; 'sociedad de la información', not 'information society'; 'ciberespacio', not 'cyberspace'; and 'buzón electrónico', not 'mailbox'[24]. Besides, Cebrián's volume ends with an appeal for continued reflection and dialogue, addressed to 'los navegantes del ciberespacio' (literally, 'the voyagers of cyberspace'[25]). All in all, the reader

notes the author's consistent effort to keep anglicisms to the minimum and to use clear and accessible native terms wherever possible.

Similar conclusions may be drawn from two articles on IT subjects which appeared in the same edition of the national daily *El País*, on 18 April 2004, entitled respectively 'Una supercomputadora para España' ('A supercomputer for Spain'), and 'La evangelización de Windows' ('Evangelising Windows'). The first article, which concerns a plan by IBM and the Polytechnic University of Catalonia to install Europe's fastest supercomputer (to run on Linux, not Windows) in Barcelona, has, indeed, a title featuring the adapted anglicism 'supercomputadora'. It nonetheless compensates by employing the more Spanish 'superordenador' several times in the text, and otherwise confines its anglicisms to a relative handful: 'bytes', 'gigas' [for 'gigabytes'], 'terabytes', 'gigaflops', 'teraflops', 'PCs', 'software' (in italics) and 'chip'. At the same time, the text employs a number of native terms where the temptation to lapse into easy anglicisms might have prevailed: thus, we find 'velocidad pico' (not 'peak speed'), 'procesador' (not 'processor'), 'sistema operativo' (not 'operating system') and, perhaps most interestingly in the context of the article's anti-Microsoft thrust, 'código abierto' (not 'open source')[26]. A similar pattern may be found in the second text, whose subject is Microsoft's attempts to sell the virtues of Windows on the server market. The sole anglicisms visible in this half-page article are 'software' (italicised) and 'página web' (with 'web' in italics); otherwise, we find a virtuously Spanish presence of such terms as 'ordenadores personales' (not 'PCs'), 'servidores de red' (not 'network servers'), and 'piratas informáticos' (not 'hackers'), and a perfectly idiomatic sentence like 'Windows, en realidad, ya gana por goleada a cualquier otro sistema operativo en los ordenadores personales' ('Windows is in reality already the multi-goal winner against all other operating systems for PCs')[27].

The evidence from the three texts selected, then, suggests that, at least in the sector studied (IT), the Spanish of Spain is, with laudable resilience and resourcefulness, managing quite well in the face of the transatlantic tidal wave of anglicisms - indeed, and although further research is of course needed, arguably with greater success, if with rather less sound and fury, than the French of France. The reasons for this relative success in Spain may include not only linguistic purism but also the pragmatic need, as the IT user constituency expands, to make its language accessible to users who may know no English. A comparative study would, however, have to establish whether the causal factors apply differently or to a greater extent than in France, and, if so, why. None of this, however, means that the encounter between English and Europe's so-called 'other' languages can fairly be called a battle of equals, as we shall see in the next section.


## IV - CONCLUSION: LANGUAGES AS SYSTEMS

In order to evaluate the impact of this process, it is here useful to make brief reference to certain theoretical perspectives. The concept of *languages as systems*, which has been gaining ground in recent years, is advanced in the work of Itamar Even-Zohar, who, in his essay 'Polysystem Theory' (1990), states: 'The idea that socio-semiotic phenomena, i.e., sign-governed human patterns of communication (such as culture, language, literature), could more adequately be understood and studied if regarded as systems rather than conglomerates of disparate elements has become one of the leading ideas of our time'. Even-Zohar considers that a given culture is a 'polysystem', or system of systems, while stressing that where cultures interact we are dealing with a dialogue between (poly)systems: '[the "culture" of one community] maintain[s] systemic relations with other systems organizing the "cultures" of other communities. In history, such "units" are by no means clear-cut or forever finalized. Rather, the opposite holds true, as the borders separating adjacent systems shift all the time, not only within systems, but between them'. By allowing for shifting boundaries between systems, this definition implicitly raises the

question of the *power-relations* between systems: one system may, at a given moment in history, be stronger than another. Hence, Even-Zohar argues, 'a certain culture may be interfered with by another culture, as a result of which repertoires are transferred from one polysystem to another'.[28]

Even-Zohar's polysystemic model is usefully applied to translation issues. Thus, the Spanish scholar Dora Sales Salvador, in a essay of 2003, 'La relevancia de la documentación en teoría literaria y literatura comparada para los estudios de traducción' ('The importance of documentation in literary theory and comparative literature for translation studies'), explicates the application of polysystem theory to the practice of translation in the following terms: 'La traducción es una realidad del sistema literario y cultural. Traducir no es neutro. Desde esta asunción, nos parece importante que quienes practican la traducción sean conscientes de la necesidad de reflexionar crítica y auto-críticamente sobre este ejercicio.' ('Translation is a reality of the literary and cultural system. To translate is not a neutral act. Starting from this assumption, we believe that those who practise translation have to be aware of the need to reflect on their act in a critical and self-critical fashion'). From this 'polysystemic' perspective, translation is a *dialogue between systems*; thus, in an ethically aware practice of translation, 'se presta atención tanto a las palabras como al sistema que se encarga de otorgarles sentido' ('one pays equal attention to the words and to the system responsible for giving them sense').[29]

One may conclude that under an 'ideal' theoretical model, a particular pair of systems (French and English, Spanish and English) would be perceived as being of equal value and importance; but in the real conditions currently obtaining, it is essential for the translator to be conscious, critically and self-critically, of the actually existing imbalances within such a pair. This theoretical perspective has a number of implications for the issue of anglicisms. We may here recall the asymmetrical relationship identified by Phillipson between English and the world's so-called 'other' languages, as well as Pivot's complaint at the invasion of French by words that originate in an alien history[30]. Meanwhile, except in certain limited areas such as cuisine, very few words are today making it the other way, from any of the languages of mainland Europe, across the Atlantic (or even the Channel): in other words, it is *not* a two-way process. The relationship between the languages of Europe and American English is not an equal one: it is predicated on the economic, military and mass-cultural power of the US. If the relationship between two languages is an encounter between two systems, what happens when one system permeates the other but not vice versa? The most likely result is to undermine the creative and generative capacities of French or Spanish *as system*, in a sapping operation whose objective impact cannot be denied, even if it is strongest in a particular set of lexical fields. It does seem to be the case (at least on the evidence of the type of text examined in this presentation) that - in contrast to what is apparently happening to some other languages - the influence brought to bear by American English on the French of France, and on the Spanish of Spain, is essentially lexical and not syntactic. The syntactic norms of both languages appear, for the moment, to be holding up well. Despite this, a lexical contamination that affects a large and important group of semantic fields is enough on its own to impact strongly on both the theory and practice of inter-language relations.

If one system dominates the other beyond a certain point, the risk arises that the second system will lose its autonomy and become a subsystem of the first. While things have certainly not gone that far between US English and French or Spanish, anglicisms already pose certain concrete problems for translation. When a text containing anglicisms is translated into English, should those anglicisms be automatically transposed back into English? There will obviously be a strong temptation to do so, especially by the less linguistically aware, but context would suggest caution. As the French social and cultural macro-context is different from the American one, there is no guarantee that an apparently transparent term like 'le coaching' will always, in all micro-contexts, mean exactly the same in (anglicised) French as in English; yet it is highly likely

to be retranslated back *tel quel* (as if translation were the 'neutral act' that Dora Sales most perceptively warns us it is not). A provisional conclusion might be that, while the onrush of anglicisms does not *abolish* the status of other European languages as separate systems, it is disturbingly likely to *occlude* that status and render its perception by users more problematic. More theoretical and practical work in this field would certainly illuminate what is a new and growing - but insufficiently visible - problem for inter-language relations.

Some might here argue that there is actually nothing to worry about for the users of any language, and claim that linguistic miscegenation could actually prove to be a cultural and communicational asset, improving writers' expressiveness by allowing them to draw on the resources of different cultures. This is a potentially interesting point - English itself was, after all, originally the product of a miscegenation between Anglo-Saxon and Latin/French elements - but today a serious problem arises over defending anglicisms on such grounds, namely the question of (in)equality. Reciprocal influence, while theoretically possible, is scarcely happening at all. Those concerned about the survival of the unique expressive character of French, Spanish or any other language might wish to consider the proposition that anglicisms could usefully be confined to the absolute minimum (to phenomena specific to anglophone countries, and to technical terms where a reasonably concise local equivalent has not yet emerged) - and that writing professionals could set an example here. It is well enough known that France is the country spearheading the European position in international forums in favour of preserving 'cultural diversity'. This policy applies in the first place to the audiovisual sector, but cultural diversity also implies linguistic diversity. It is also curious that, on the evidence examined in the present study, in Europe at least Spanish, with less obvious cultural militancy, seems to be holding up more firmly than French against the transatlantic onslaught of anglicisms. The price of linguistic diversity is eternal vigilance, and those who preach diversity on the international stage could usefully remember that vigilance begins at home.

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[1] McArthur (2002): 2, 13, 434.

[2] McArthur: 15.

[3] McArthur: xiii.

[4] McArthur: 415.

[5] Phillipson (2003): 3, 4, 80.

[6] Phillipson: 176.

[7] Phillipson: 40.

[8] McArthur: 125, 15.

[9] Phillipson: 5, 18.

[10] Crystal (2001): 223.

[11] McArthur: 416, 125.

[12] Phillipson: 72.

[13] Pivot (2004): 6.

[14] Laroche-Claire (2004): 15, 9, 14.

[15] Mamère and Warin (1999): 10, 17, 49, 185.

[16] Ollivier (2003): 8.

[17] See Crystal: 53-54.

[18] Zarachowicz (2003): 56.

[19] Bertolus and Garigue (1999): *passim.*

[20] My thanks to the various Spanish-language correspondents who commented usefully on my draft of this section. In particular, I have incorporated a number of observations made by Javier Vicente Dámaso Blanco, of the University of Valladolid.

[21] Cebrián (2000): 49.

[22] Cebrián: 55.

[23] Cebrián: 62, 166, 70, 74, 122, 140, 197.

[24] Cebrián: 55, 57, 79, 98; 179 (twice).

[25] Cebrián: 277.

[26] 'Una supercomputadora para España' (*El País*, 2004): 34.

[27] Fernández de Lin (2004): 34.

[28] Even-Zohar (1990).

[29] Sales Salvador (2003).

[30] cf. notes 7 and 13 above.