

Enregisterment of English Borrowing as an Advertising “voice” in French Advertisements



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ABSTRACT:

The use of English Borrowings (EBs) in French ads remains a widespread practice. Through a systematic analysis of 175 French ads extracted from French news articles, this essay evaluates features of EBs usage, introducing the notion of enregisterment as an analytical framework. Specifically, the fourfold aim of this essay is to examine the frequency of EBs; the types and perceived meanings of EBs; the visual presentation and graphic integration of the EBs in the ads; and the extent of awareness among native French speakers regarding the use of EBs in French ads. Nearly 42% of ads reviewed contained EBs. Notably, borrowings were commonly associated with automobile-related products, constituting a leading domain where EBs were used to communicate desirable qualities such as efficiency, durability and novel technology (but perception varied as a function of whether the product advertised was domestic or foreign). Typically, the ads used familiar or easily interpretable EBs that were often set off by graphic cues. The foregoing represents possible mechanisms of the enregisterment of EBs in the “voice” of French advertising.

RÉSUMÉ:

L'utilisation des emprunts à l'anglais (EA) dans les publicités françaises reste une pratique répandue. À travers une analyse systématique de 175 publicités en français, cet article fait une évaluation des caractéristiques des EA, susceptibles de créer une sorte de 'enregisterment' associé au langage publicitaire. Plus précisément, l'article a pour but l'examen des quatre éléments suivants : la fréquence d'utilisation des EA dans les publicités françaises ; les types d'EA utilisés avec des produits spécifiques et les perceptions associées ; la représentation visuelle et l'intégration au niveau graphique des EA dans les publicités ; le degré de sensibilisation des Français par rapport à l'utilisation des EA dans les publicités françaises. Près de 42% des publicités examinées ont utilisé des EA. Notamment, ces derniers étaient souvent associés à l'industrie automobile, en chef de file donc des produits où les EA étaient censés communiquer les qualités positives telles que l'efficacité, la durabilité et les nouvelles technologies (mais en variation selon que le produit annoncé était national ou étranger). Généralement, les publicités ont employé des EA qui sont familiers, souvent mis en relief à l'aide des astuces graphiques. Les éléments précédents représentent des mécanismes potentiels menant à 'enregisterment' des EA caractérisant le langage de la publicité française.

KEY WORDS / LES MOTS CLÉS

advertising voice, English borrowings, enregisterment, French ads
langage de publicité, emprunts à l'anglais, 'enregisterment', publicités françaises

1. INTRODUCTION

To begin appropriately with a definition of enregisterment, the theory of enregisterment entails a “process through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (Agha, 2003,



p. 231). For certain linguistic features to become identifiable within a language as being emblematic of the dialect or register of a group or class of people, those features have to be perceptually linked with a certain sociocultural scheme separate from other variants (Johnstone et al., 2006; Johnstone, 2009). For example, the received pronunciation (RP), sometimes called the Queen's English or BBC English, has become enregistered and thus indexes an accent that is socially valued. The accent has become recognized as the standardized British English accent that is mostly linked with the speech of the upper social class and educated elite. A linguistic form has been enregistered once it comes to be interpreted and evaluated as being linked with a way of speaking or register associated with a personal or social identity (Agha, 2003; Silverstein, 2003; Johnstone et al., 2006; Johnstone, 2009). Enregisterment works in tandem with and is reinforced by commodification, the process through which a linguistic feature is considered simply as a commodity. Thus, both a standardized variety and dialectal varieties of a given language may be commodified with each helping to sell specific items (Beal, 2009; Johnstone, 2009; Remlinger, 2009; Comeau & King, 2011; Picone, 2014, pp. 144-145). For example, while the orthography of standardized American English may help sell dictionaries of the language, non-standardized forms may be more useful in selling slogan-emblazoned t-shirts (Eble, 2009; Picone, 2016, p. 334).

Of course, in the context of advertising, the language of advertisement does not represent a dialect in a traditional sense which then gets enregistered through media and becomes recognized as a regional way of speaking. However, it seems the conventions associated with advertising language, including repeated use of English borrowings in the case of French advertising, may lead to enregisterment in the public imagination, creating the same kind of recognizable voice that helps sell products. While purist punditry targeting English has been longstanding, beginning famously with Etiemble (1964), an account of the plausibility of enregisterment associated with advertising language in French is heretofore lacking in the published literature. Hence, this study attempts to enhance and systematize the understanding of how English borrowings operate in French and does so by expanding and enlisting the notion of enregisterment, showing how English insertions become indexical of a particular kind of discourse or "voice" associated with positive values in relation to French advertising.

In order for English borrowings to lend themselves to a process of enregisterment, it is important to recognize the backdrop of multiple vectors that have contributed to the appeal of the English language and its resultant commoditization at an unprecedented level. The status of English is of course linked partly to the population of its native speakers, representing an economic powerhouse in its own right. Subsequent American dominance on the world stage as a military and economic superpower after World War II, coinciding with its growth and expansion in communication technology, has led to the spread in tandem with a heightened awareness of the English language and American culture in a way that has conferred prestige on both (Wise, 1997). Hence, English has become a valuable commodity worldwide not only due to its international status as a lingua franca (Tan & Rubdy, 2008), but also due to non-utilitarian motivations. Based on perceived technological achievement

coupled with the cultural prestige of post-World War II American society, English began to be emblematic of advancement and gained the potential to trigger positive reactions among different populations, such that the use of English appeals to many consumers. Indeed, American imagery and English borrowings have been prominent features in French ads up to the present. Martin (2002, 2007) argues that the mere presence of English in ads associates the product with positive images such as modernity and quality. The presence of English imbues a product with both social and economic value, which may be extended to products advertised with English borrowings. In most cases, ad copywriters exploit the prestige status to promote and increase consumption even in countries where English is not used in everyday discourse (Friedrich, 2002; Martin, 2006; Kasanga, 2010). In some cases, available French equivalents exist but are not used, plausibly to lend an air of prestige to the product being advertised, which is then transferred to the potential consumer who wants to self-project as modern or global in outlook. The younger generation who desires to identify with modernity and globalization is more inclined to use English borrowings and to have a positive attitude toward their usage in ads. The expressions *c'est too much*, *c'est tout meuch* (Kramsch, 2014) and the use of neologisms such as *nexter*, *must-have*, *over-size* (Fridrichova-Mudrochova, 2018) have all been associated with young French speakers' ways of speaking. Ad copywriters will thus not hesitate to include these words and expressions in French ads.

On the other hand, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, in many cases, the presence of English has been associated with simple need, rather than prestige. In other words, English borrowings are used to fill a linguistic gap due to insufficient lexical options to convey information, particularly in specialized domains (Winford, 2003). Most of the borrowings (90%) and new creations found in the body of the ad copies, especially those used in association with automobiles, did not have French equivalents; *park assist*, *ecoboost* (fuel economy and power) are examples of this. It is worth mentioning that the rate at which media and advertising have evolved over the past decades, leading to more exposure to English, has led to more efforts undertaken by French language officials to reduce especially the English influence on the French language. The 1994 Toubon Law, which expanded on the 1975 Bas-Lauriol Law, is a case in point. The law regulates the use of foreign language in official domains including commercial contexts, where the use of foreign terms is banned unless French equivalents do not exist, in which case a French translation would be required. To that effect, a terminological commission in France (*Commission Générale de terminologie et néologie*) is charged with the task of creating new terms to replace foreign words that designate new concepts. Replacing English borrowings appears to have gained much attention due to the pervasiveness of the use of English in French through media and advertisements. The *Journal Officiel* and *Le Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique (GDT)*, which constitute publications of terminological commissions in France and in Québec (*L'Office Québécois de la langue française*), contain new terms coined by the commissions to replace foreign borrowings. Determining the effectiveness of these initiatives remains another research question beyond the scope of this study. However, it is undeniable that in France, ad copywriters employ different strategies to evade the requirements of Toubon Law and still use English borrowings.





For example, *le GDT* proposes the term *coussin (de sécurité) gonflable* for *airbag* and criticizes the word's continuous use in France. The frequent use of *airbag* has been recorded multiple times in previous studies on English borrowings in French (Martin, 2007; Ruellot, 2011; Barffour, 2016). Ad writers do not consider its use to cause any intelligibility concerns since it has become familiar to the French and assimilated into the French language by repeated exposure (Ruellot, 2011). The term also appears to have been copyrighted, making it possible for ad copywriters to successfully evade Toubon Law (1994), which would require the use of the French translation *coussin gonflable de protection* (Martin, 2007).

As a corollary, the use of English borrowings in French has also been associated, to an extent, with certain structural propensities characterizing the two languages. Picone (1992) asserts that the synthetic approach to word-building, which is a tendency of English, predisposes the language for easy lexical creations of a synthetic nature to meet the contemporary accelerated demand for product nomenclature, in contrast to the traditionally analytic nature of French word-building. The resulting dynamic is, on the one hand, borrowings of nomenclature from English, and on the other hand, imitative non-traditional liberties taken in the generation of French nomenclature (see Barffour & Picone, 2019; Barffour, 2020). In the present study, the focus will be on the former, that is, on borrowings from English. As we have explained, these borrowings may be linked to prestige or need or both; indeed, both remain operational in French, as evidenced by the results presented in this study. The complexity of reasons for the continuous use of English borrowings in French makes the current study significant. However arrived at, the resultant enregisterment of English borrowings in the language of French advertising, it is asserted, helps explain their continued pervasive use in French ads.

Therefore, the main goal of this study, which builds upon and extends the scope of a prior study (Barffour, 2016), is to explore the enregisterment of English borrowings in the contemporary French advertising "voice". To do so, it is necessary to examine the frequency of usage, the types of borrowings used with specific products and their presumed intended social meanings, that is, the social semiotics associated with their usage (Halliday, 1978), and the visual representation of the borrowings in French ads. It is also crucial to assess the extent of awareness among native French speakers regarding the use of English borrowings in French ads.

By way of summary, the specific research questions follow:

- (1) What factors facilitate the enregisterment of English borrowings as a feature associated with the "voice" of advertising?
 - a. How frequently are English borrowings used?
 - b. What types of English borrowings are used?
 - c. What products are often advertised with English borrowings?
 - d. How are English borrowings presented and integrated into the French ads?
- (2) What perceptions on the part of native French speakers reflect the enregisterment of English borrowings as a feature associated with the "voice" of advertising?
 - a. What proportion of native French speakers are aware of the frequent use of the English borrowings?

- b. How do they socially circumscribe the products advertised with English borrowings?

The next sections present the methodology, results and analyses, and the concluding remarks for the current study. In the methodology section, the data source, the data collection procedure and study participants are presented. The results section presents, analyzes, and discusses advertising strategies associated with the use of English borrowings that could lead to an enregisterment of English borrowings in French ads. The results section also examines native French speakers' level of awareness of English borrowings' usage and discusses how such awareness may reinforce enregisterment. The section ends with the strengths and limitations of the study. The conclusion provides a summary of how further enregisterment studies may be conducted to enhance the exploration of this question.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study draws on data collected between 2010–2015 which assessed the nature of English borrowings in French print media and ads, and the perceptions of native French speakers from France toward such usage (Barffour, 2016). The use of mass media as the data source for the original study, and for the present extension of it within the framework of enregisterment, is deemed appropriate and necessary because the media (and Internet) represent the dominant domain where English has had the most influence (Picone, 1996; Wise, 1997; Winford, 2003). The journals examined were selected due to their focus and electronic availability. The selected journals were deemed appropriate since they are representative of the different domains of French society and thus expected to provide a representative sample of English borrowings. They include *Les Inrocks* (cultural journal, predominantly about music and cinema), *La Croix* (focuses on religious news and events related mostly to the Catholic faith), *Le Figaro Quotidien* (focuses on general local and foreign news), and *Paris Match* (focuses on news related to celebrity lifestyle). Within the given time span, three publication years were randomly selected for each journal with three issues chosen from each daily newspaper (*La Croix* and *Le Figaro Quotidien*) and one issue from each magazine (*Paris Match* and *Les Inrocks*). The latter selection approach was taken to ensure a review of a comparable quantity of writings across the four journals. As an illustration, one magazine's issue corresponded to approximately three issues from the daily newspapers.

A total of 24 journal issues were selected for analysis, spanning the years 2010–2015. To extract English borrowings in advertisements, we focused on the first 23 pages of each issue. The 23 pages were selected to ensure uniformity since 23 was the smallest number of pages applicable to all previously selected journal issues. Both full-page and small ads which appeared on the selected pages were considered. In total, 37 ads were retrieved from *La Croix*, 84 from *Le Figaro Quotidien*, 30 from *Paris Match* and 22 from *Les Inrocks*. In order to better analyze the visual representation of the ads in the current study, other journals were sometimes considered in order





to locate an identical ad in a source that had a clearer image. In the event that an ad published in the selected journals also appeared in a different journal, such as *L'Express*, the ad with the better visual quality was used. In order to argue that a possible enregisterment of English borrowings has taken or is taking place, a systematic review of the 175 French ads appearing in the 24 issues was done manually. The goal of the review was to examine the frequency of English borrowings, the type of English borrowings used with specific products, and the representation of the English borrowings in the French ads. To assess the status of the borrowings (in terms of origins and to attempt to gauge the level of assimilation), dictionaries including *Le Petit Robert* (Robert, Rey-Debove & Rey, 1995), *Le Dictionnaire des anglicismes* (Rey-Debove & Gagnon, 1984) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, for etymological origins only) were consulted.

The second part of the current study examined native French speakers' level of awareness of a possible voice in French ads due to the use of English borrowings. To explore this question, the present study draws on the collected data (Barffour, 2016) concerning native speakers' opinions and perceptions toward the use of English in French. The data was collected from 41 native French speakers from France, between ages 21 and 71, who completed a questionnaire that consisted of both open and closed types of questions, focusing on different domains of English usage in French. Participants were invited to participate in the survey through Facebook and through personal contacts. The survey was made available for a period of about two months to give ample time for volunteers to respond. (A detailed description of the methodology has been reported in Barffour (2016, 2020).) In an attempt to develop the perceptual part of the present study regarding native French speakers' level of awareness of the use of English in French ads, two main questions in the questionnaire were considered appropriate. In the first main question, native French speakers were asked to indicate the level of frequency with which they see English words or expressions in French ads. The participants in the study were asked to indicate the degree of frequency as follows: *always, often, sometimes, rarely* and *never*.

In the second main question considered in this study, participants were asked to imagine attributes or "images" that they associated with the products advertised with English borrowings. The specific questions are presented below:

1. Indiquez le degré de fréquence auquel vous remarquez des mots ou expressions de langue anglaise dans les publicités publiées dans les magazines et journaux français.¹

Le degré de fréquence comprend toujours, souvent, parfois, rarement, jamais.²

Êtes-vous surpris(e) de votre choix ci-dessous ? Oui ____ Non ____³

Veuillez expliquer la raison de votre choix.⁴

1 Indicate the degree of frequency with which you notice English words or expressions in French ads published in French magazines and newspapers.

2 The degree of frequency is *always, often, sometimes, rarely* and *never*.

3 Was your answer surprising to you? Yes ____ No ____

4 Please explain your choice.



2. Quelles images associez-vous immédiatement aux produits dans les publicités françaises qui utilisent quelques mots ou expressions anglais ? Veuillez sélectionner des images au-dessous des produits locaux et importés : branché, moderne, prestigieux, sophistiqué, ouverts aux autres cultures, contraire à la culture française antipatriotique, de meilleure qualité, de qualité inférieure, inutile, ridicule, envahissant.⁵

The characteristics provided for respondents consisted of commonly imagined attributes associated with products advertised with English as well as those documented in previous studies (Kachru, 1986; Takashi, 1990; Picone, 1996; Martin, 1998, 2002; Ruellot, 2011; Barffour & Picone, 2019).

Note in Tables 1 and 3 that the number of respondents for each question included in the questionnaire differs from the total number of participants in the study. This is because some participants chose not to answer all questions. Results for the questions above are presented in Table 1 arrayed in accordance with the Likert scale used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 WHAT FACTORS FACILITATE THE ENREGISTERMENT OF ENGLISH BORROWINGS AS A FEATURE ASSOCIATED WITH THE “VOICE” OF ADVERTISING?

3.1.A HOW FREQUENTLY ARE ENGLISH BORROWINGS USED?

The data for the current study suggests that English borrowings contribute to the enregisterment of an advertising voice in several ways. First, the use of English borrowings continues to be pervasive in French ads at a high frequency rate. Nearly 42% of all French ads reviewed (175) contained English borrowings. Out of the total number of French ads, 30% consisted of automobile related ads, which hence constitute a leading domain that appears to be lending itself to making English borrowings more visible. The frequent exposure and usage may represent an initial step toward possible enregisterment.

Considering the percentage of English borrowings identified in the French ads (at least one borrowing in nearly 42% of ads reviewed), and the continuous work of the terminological commission in France, it will be worthwhile to examine other motivations for the use of English borrowings in order to understand this paradox (see Barffour, 2021).

⁵ What images do you immediately associate with products in French advertisements that use some English words? Please select images from the lists provided under local and imported products: *fashionable (trendy)*, *modern*, *prestigious*, *sophisticated*, *open to other cultures*, *contrary to French culture*, *antipatriotic*, *better quality*, *inferior quality*, *useless*, *ridiculous*, *invading*.



3.1.B WHAT TYPES OF ENGLISH BORROWINGS ARE USED?

Secondly, the choice of English borrowings used in the ads represents a potentially significant factor in facilitating enregisterment. English borrowings were categorized under simple and compound nouns (45%), brand/product names and slogans (32%) and other (23%). Although the level of integration and familiarity of borrowings depends on several factors, 90% of the borrowings (excluding sentences) appeared to be familiar or easily interpretable words that typically do not pose intelligibility issues for native French speakers. Examples of the borrowings identified in this study include *cool*, *cute*, *design*, *streaming*, *now*, *open*, *parking*, *relax*, *shopping*, *le management*, *en clics*, *scanner*, *tablette*, *managers*, *le week-end*, *e-mail*, *E-club*, *business*, *briefings*, and *kit*. The majority (54%) of the borrowings were located in the descriptive text of the ad (i.e., the body of the copywriting), and in small print. Thus, these borrowings were not mainly intended as attention-getters. Nonetheless, the significant number (46%) of borrowings which appeared to have been positioned visibly cannot be overlooked. The latter, mostly in headlines, in large print, slogans, brand and product names as well as in signature lines, were found to be prevalent in previous studies (Martin, 2006, 2007; Ruellot, 2011). Borrowings in the body of the copy may indicate that they are used based on need, to fill a linguistic lacuna in the French language, but it can still be argued that they have become codified or “standardized” in the French ad discourse. In Fridrichova-Mudrochova’s (2018) study, which explored the level of knowledge and frequency of the use of Anglicisms in fashion, native French speakers identified established Anglicisms recorded in *Le Petit Robert* such as *brushing*, *(re)booster* and *blush* as those they understand and use the most. As a result, it will not be surprising for established or commonly used borrowings to be used in ads intended for this audience.

Other expressions and slogans documented include *way of life*, *new thinking*, *new possibilities*, and more “adapted” expressions such as *air conditionné*. These are borrowings that may require no or minimal interpretation due to the familiarity of the English words used in the expressions. In the two ads included, the borrowings *economy* (Figure 2) and *bye bye* (Figure 1) were likely deemed exploitable by copywriters because they would be understood by the targeted audience. The word *economy*, a cognate, and *bye bye*, a very informal word, create virtually no hindrance to understanding for native French speakers from France. The borrowings reflect and reinforce the now conventional trend of continuously selecting familiar English words for inclusion in French ads. Even familiar or easily interpretable borrowings such as *economy* and *bye bye*, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, can still function as attention-getters, by virtue of visually flagging or signaling their prominence (unlike most borrowings identified in other ads). By virtue of continuous exposure to familiar borrowings, either used as part of the body of the copywriting or made prominent to grab attention, consumers become accustomed to a particular communicative style or “voice” and associate it with advertising. In turn, the voice associated with the language of advertising can tend toward the creation or maintenance of stylistic enregisterment.

3.1.C WHAT PRODUCTS ARE OFTEN ADVERTISED WITH ENGLISH BORROWINGS?



Furthermore, a good amount of English borrowings documented in this study were identified in automobile related ads (23 out of the 72). Due to the technicality of such borrowings, it is less likely that consumers would question such usage, especially if ready French equivalents do not exist or have little currency, as is mostly the case in the automotive domain. The frequency with which such borrowings appear in this domain seems to indicate that the targeted audience is accustomed to discourse seasoned with English and is expected to understand. The more French consumers notice English borrowings displayed daily in automobile ads, the more they associate certain attributes with these products. To elaborate on the idea just mentioned, English borrowings seem to link products with a particular social meaning (Halliday, 1978). The presence of English borrowings is expected to imbue the advertised products with some value that appeals to both local and international audiences. No doubt, this notion is related to the status of English as a language of international communication, as well as the economic and technological power associated with the Anglophone world, especially the United States.

This is exemplified in the ads in Figures 1 and 2. The borrowings *economy* and *bye bye* both have equivalents in French (*économie* and *au revoir* respectively). Hence, they are certainly not used out of necessity and the motivation for their inclusion must have another explanation. The most plausible one is that English is emblematic of modernity, practicality and sophistication, thereby imbuing the advertised products with these same qualities. For the same reason, English may crowd its way into brand names, descriptives and slogans: *smart*, *smart fortwo electric* and *open your mind* (Figure 1). Other English borrowings identified in other French ads related to the automobile in the current data (but not featured here with illustrations) include *Efficiency*, *CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIE*, *Dynamic Assist*, *EcoBoost* and *BlueMotion*. The choice of these borrowings is most reasonably explained as an attempt to consistently convey positive values, hence positioning the targeted consumer to favor these products for their imagined high quality and technological advancement.

Indeed, all three major French automobile manufacturers (Peugeot, Renault, and Citroën) identified in the corpus of ads chose to include English in their advertisements. Although other reasons, such as necessity (as in maintaining brand identity, intelligibility, see Barffour, 2021) can contribute to the use of English in French ads, the driving motivation arguably aligns with general perceptions about the positive values that are thereby conjured (*ibid.*), resulting in the enregisterment of an advertising voice having English borrowings as one of its features. As observed by Johnstone (2009) and others, enregisterment and commodification tend to go together and reinforce each other. The status of the English language, especially due to the popularity of American culture, has positioned English as a viable commodity in the marketplace. Hence, the use of English borrowings has become enregistered as a particular voice in French ads used purposely to achieve a marketing value.



3.1.D HOW ARE ENGLISH BORROWINGS PRESENTED AND INTEGRATED INTO THE FRENCH ADS?

Figures 1 and 2, provided for their representative value, are analyzed in the following.

As can be observed in Figures 1 and 2, the display of the borrowings in these ads — borrowings which native French speakers are more likely to be familiar with, as discussed earlier — is quite strategic. Mechanisms may include the use of stylized fonts, bold fonts, larger point size, upper case, salient colors, positioning the borrowings in headlines, and, by way of contrast, putting the obligatory French translations at the bottom in very small point size, making them less obvious or almost invisible to readers. Highlighted as such, the borrowings are clearly not random but intentional and meant to be emblematic. These mechanisms are used to accentuate the English borrowings, as a strategy of commodification, due to the impact they can have on potential consumers. Let us consider the examples in a more detailed manner.

In Figure 1 it can be observed that after the brand name *smart* and the English slogan *open your mind*, both located at the top right corner, and then the expression *bye bye* in the heading on the left, there is no more English until the end of the main text, accompanied by the circled slogan *LIVING ELECTRIC* on the bottom right. Thus positioned, the use of English may be quite strategic, as a kind of framing device, in accordance with the insertion of English as an attention-getter. Also in Figure 1, the English expression *bye bye* floats in isolation just above the French word *pompiste* and the product, lending it extra prominence as an attention-getting device. By way of contrast, but in order to achieve the same effect, in Figure 2, the English borrowing *ECONOMY* occupies the very center of the ad. To underscore the English borrowings and make them more prominent, larger point size and/or all caps are used with *smart*, *bye bye*, *LIVING ELECTRIC* (Figure 1) and *ECONOMY* (Figure 2). In both ads, then, English is positioned to be the clear focal point of the visual in order to enhance its communicative function of associating positive attributes — in this case modernity, plus convenience and economy based on advanced technology — with the product. Of course, neither of these two cars is manufactured in France, and hence the use of English in some of the brand names and slogans is meant to appeal to an international audience of potential consumers. This does not detract from but in fact enhances the ability of the English borrowings to function as described when aiming specifically at French consumers.

Regarding the translations in these ads, the 1994 Toubon law requires English in ad copies to be accompanied by French translations except English that is trademarked, which usually concerns company names, logos, and signature lines. Copywriters' choices of translations may vary in elegance and accuracy. The French translation for *LIVING ELECTRIC* is given as *vivre « électrique »* (Figure 1), the awkwardness of which, in French no less than in English, is metalinguistically signaled by the insertion of the guillemets (French quotation marks) in the translation. The awkwardness in both cases is owing to the conversion (sometimes referred to as “improper derivation”), by virtue of position alone, of an adjective to an adverb. Nevertheless, the translation is also innovative and dynamic, and thus fitting for the advertising genre. Other forms of English borrowings may be indirectly associated with the structures

smart
open your mind.™

Bye bye pompiste

>> Le plein de liberté à partir de 309 €^{mois}(1) sans apport

Vous avez sûrement soulé une relation forte avec votre pompiste depuis toutes ces années. Un plein par semaine, ça rapproche! Mais ça laisse aussi des traces dans votre porte-monnaie... Dites adieu à sa station mais soyez sympa, passez le voir de temps en temps avec votre smart fortwo electric drive, ça lui boostera le moral!

LIVING ELECTRIC
55 kWh

www.smart.com smart - une marque de Daimler

*Une autre table de la vie. Bye Bye : en week-end. Living electric : vélo électrique. Concessionnaire smart de la smart électrique : 15,3 190€/100 km; émissions de CO₂ 0 g/km; autonomie environ 145 km (cycle mixte européen); chargement sur une prise 230 V de 0 à 100 % en 7 heures. Le reste de crédit est individuel. Révis de routine, les conditions de circulation, les dépenses en énergie et l'entretien du véhicule de circulation/entretien, etc. sont exemptés de facture. Assurance des véhicules. (1) Ex. Location Longue Durée. Pour une smart fortwo coupé électrique drive mixte(2) au prix tarif conseillé de 16.000€/2014, sur 48 mois avec 3 livraisons de 309€^{mois} et 30€ de frais de gestion correspondants au forfait électrique pour 5 254€^{total} et la location de batterie pour 45€^{mois} (dont 10€ par le client sans réserve d'équilibre) et borne électrique, et sans de 42 livraisons mensuelles de 309€^{total} y compris la location de la batterie soit 69€^{total}. Frais de dossier : 124€^{total} inclus dans le 1^{er} livra. (2) Véhicule et accessoires. (3) Ex. sans autres conditions et pour <= 6000 km maximum. (4) Ex. location 12 mois, renouvelable par tacite reconduction par période de 12 mois, sans pouvoir excéder 10 ans. Offre valable pour toute commande entre le 21/04/2014 et le 30/09/2014 et limitée à 2000 unités par réservation d'exception de dossier par Mercedes-Benz Financial Services France S.A. - 6, rue de Chagny - 93870 La Plaine, 933 Versailles 938 976 205, 01 6834 0700/077 704 en vigueur à la date d'impression.

FIGURE 1: English borrowings in a French ad. (source: *L'Express*, April 30, 2014)

Réalisé sans trucage.

Ceci est bien le prix de l'entretien de votre véhicule de plus de 5 ans chez Volkswagen. Cerise sur le capot, votre assistance Volkswagen est prolongée de 2 ans (1) en cas de panne et d'accident.

FORAITS ECONOMY 99€ (2)

Volkswagen Service. Le temps passe, votre voiture reste.

Das Auto.

(1) Retrouvez les modalités de Volkswagen Assistance sur volkswagen.fr (2) Prix client TTC (TVA à 21%) conseillé au 1/10/2014, pièces et main d'œuvre comprises. Offre réservée aux particuliers et non cumulable avec toute autre offre en cours valable en France métropolitaine. Pour les modèles Golf IV - Polo de 2002 à 2006 - Ibiza - Passat de 2001 à 2006. Offre comprenant le remplacement de 1 litre moteur (huile synthétique minérale : 502 00 / 503 00 / 503 01), du filtre à huile, du bouchon au joint de rouage et de la purge de filtres à gazole (selon moteur). Itinéraire : Allemagne, Das Auto : La Voiture

FIGURE 2: English borrowings in a French ad. (source: <http://www.michelrolland.fr/apres-vente/>)



FORFAITS ECONOMY ‘economy package / plan / rate’ and *Volkswagen Service* in Figure 2. Both examples could be considered structural calques influenced by English (due to the borrowings *economy* and *service* and their position in conjunction with *forfait* and *Volkswagen*, respectively) to the extent that they dispense with the more usual prepositional expression of the relationship between nouns, which are juxtaposed here. Rather, the two positionally conjoined words create a kind of a binomial (noun + noun) construction similar to the compounding structure most commonly used in English (see Barffour & Picone, 2019). Moreover, concerning *Volkswagen Service*, the head of the binomial (*service*) would be preposed if the traditional French compounding configuration was maintained. French, considered to be analytical in nature when it comes to modificational order, typically opts for head-initial arrangements in what is referred to as the progressive order of modification (that is, structures which advance progressively from the head noun to its qualifying modifier). Of course, this compounding structure is still the prevalent standard in French, but the influx of English borrowings seems to have increased the use of the English-style regressive order in head-final compounds in contemporary French (that is, structures which advance regressively from the qualifying modifier to the head noun). This tendency, probably due partly to the now constant exposure to the English pattern, was highly restricted in traditional French but has now accelerated significantly due to the contemporary quest to create a multitude of new lexical items corresponding to an explosion of products and technologies. More detailed results regarding the influence of English compounding structures on French, in concert with other factors, have been reported in prior studies (Picone, 1996; Loock, 2012; Barffour & Picone, 2019).

Proceeding with the Toubon-imposed translations, in Figure 1, the slogan *open your mind* is rendered *une autre idée de la vie*, which is a loose translation. A more literal version would incorporate *ouvrez, élargissez, or libérez votre esprit*. Regardless, the expression is intended to be perceived positively and to connect, no doubt, with a socially responsible awareness of the environment (this is, after all, an ad about a new electric car). Thus, an effort is being made to use an English borrowing that resonates with a growing modern urgency that requires advanced technological remedies. This is reinforced by the use of color as an important part of the ad’s visual effect. The electric car ad in Figure 1 appeals to people who want to save money; but the use of the green color also represents environmentalist ideals with the goal of creating a society that is ecologically sustainable. Advocacy aimed at protecting the environment is quite pronounced in France and in Europe as a whole. The dual textual and visual strategy links the color and the borrowings to current practices and concerns, increasing the positive values associated with the ad and its product, as intended by the ad creators. The analysis presented reinforces the idea that using English makes a product more desirable. However, since this is done for marketing purposes, it is also likely that English is being used by brand owners to maintain consistency for their brand across different European markets. Even though this strategy may actually be detrimental to the brand or product on the French market, advertisers continue to use English because of the value they place on consistency. As observed in Kasanga (2010), multinational companies in DR Congo use English in advertising as a means of maintaining their international brand identity.



In sum, English borrowings, which in this study are often identified with automobile related publicity, may become enregistered as a kind of advertising voice in French ads through the following mechanisms: English borrowings are used frequently in French ads (evidence from this study shows that 42% of French ads contained at least one English borrowing); they represent familiar or easily interpretable English words (90%); they are often made visually prominent (46% of English borrowings were written using large font sizes and located in slogans, brand names and signature lines). In this fashion, the English borrowings are rendered more visible in French ads and become a prominent feature of the advertising voice. The next section presents the results pertaining to the second main research question of the study by providing evidence of the extent of awareness of the use of English borrowings among native French speakers and by reporting the imagined attributes or “images” that native French speakers associate with products advertised with English borrowings. The degree of the native French speakers’ awareness of the use of English and the popular images associated with the products advertised with English borrowings seem to reinforce the enregisterment of the advertising voice in the perception of French consumers.

3.2 WHAT PERCEPTIONS ON THE PART OF NATIVE FRENCH SPEAKERS REFLECT THE ENREGISTERMENT OF ENGLISH BORROWINGS AS A FEATURE ASSOCIATED WITH THE “VOICE” OF ADVERTISING?

3.2.A WHAT PROPORTION OF NATIVE FRENCH SPEAKERS ARE AWARE OF THE FREQUENT USE OF THE ENGLISH BORROWINGS?

Native French speakers’ responses summarized in Table 1 seem to show the awareness of the frequent use of English borrowings in French ads. On a Likert scale where responses are weighted ranging from 5 to 1, and where 5 corresponds to “always” and 1 corresponds to “never,” a mean score of 3.8 was obtained (the sum of weighted subtotals divided by the number of responses: $126 \div 33 = 3.8$, see Table 1). Moreover, nearly 76% of native French speakers ranked the frequency with which English borrowings appear in French ads as “often” or “always.”

Perceived frequency	Responses tallied	Value assigned	Subtotal	% by response
<i>always</i>	3	× 5	= 15	9.09
<i>often</i>	22	× 4	= 88	66.67
<i>sometimes</i>	7	× 3	= 21	21.21
<i>rarely</i>	1	× 2	= 2	3.03
<i>never</i>	0	× 1	= 0	0.00
No response	(8)			
Total	33		126	100
Mean		3.8		

N = 41 respondents

TABLE 1: Native French speakers’ perceptions of the frequency of English borrowings in French ads.



In a follow-up question regarding native French speakers' perception of the frequency of English borrowings in French ads, 80% (33 out of 41) of the native French speakers expressed no surprise regarding the frequency rate. Even though most of the native French speakers did not provide reasons to support their answers, it is worthwhile to note that the few reasons that were provided (Table 2, translated into English by me) by 11 respondents (out of the 33 who responded to that question) seem to support the idea that the use of English in French remains a common practice of which native French speakers have become aware.

Reasons why the presence of EBs is not surprising for natives of France	English translation
Pas surprise parce que l'anglais est la langue internationale et que certains domaines (les nouvelles technologies par exemple) sont très anglophones.	Not surprised because English is the international language and because certain domains (new technology for example) 'are very Anglophone'.
C'est une langue internationale et comprise par le plus grand nombre.	It is the international language and it is understood by the greatest number of people.
Les emprunts à la langue anglaise ont toujours été présents en France, ils ont augmenté après la seconde guerre mondiale et explosé avec l'arrivée de l'informatique et d'Internet.	English borrowings have always been present in France, they increased after WWII and exploded with the arrival of information technology and the Internet.
Avec la globalisation, l'anglais est devenu la langue la plus partagée. En plus, en France, elle est perçue comme une langue "cool" :-)	With globalization, English has become the most shared language, and it is considered "cool" in France.
Cela fait partie du langage courant.	It is part of everyday language.
L'anglais devient la langue "à la mode" et de nombreux anglicismes sont aujourd'hui utilisés quotidiennement.	English has been becoming the fashionable language and now a lot of Anglicisms are used on a daily basis.
L'anglais est en quelque sorte devenu une langue "universelle".	English has become a sort of "universal" language.
C'est une tendance naturelle portée par la globalisation, et d'autre part la plupart des choses que je lis sont en relation avec les technologies et/ou leur impact.	It's a natural tendency brought about by globalization, and moreover, most of the things that I read are related to technology and/or its impact.
Il est devenu tellement courant d'avoir recours à des mots en anglais que cela ne me surprend pas beaucoup.	It has become so common to resort to English words that it is not so surprising to me.
Je comprends que l'anglais c'est la langue internationale et que beaucoup de mots anglais sont utilisés globalement.	I understand that English is the international language and that a lot of English words are used globally.
Il s'agit d'un constat auquel je suis habitué.	It is an observation that I am used to.

TABLE 2: Reasons why the frequent use of English borrowings was not surprising to native French speakers.

3.2.B WHAT IMAGES DO FRENCH NATIVE SPEAKERS ASCRIBE TO THE PRODUCTS ADVERTISED WITH ENGLISH BORROWINGS?



Consistent with the observations in Table 2 are the imagined attributes or images native French speakers in the study assigned to products advertised with some English words.

Images	Local/domestic products advertised with English borrowings	Foreign/imported products advertised with English borrowings
fashionable, “trendy”	0	12
modern	3	6
prestigious	0	4
sophisticated	0	4
open to other cultures	4	4
contrary to French culture	4	1
antipatriotic	3	1
better quality	2	2
inferior quality	2	1
useless	2	0
ridiculous	1	0
invading	1	1
Total responses	21	36

TABLE 3: Images associated with products advertised with English borrowings.

The figures in Table 3 clearly show a high number of respondents who associated the idea of *trendy* or *fashionable* to foreign products advertised with some English borrowings. Some respondents also viewed such products as *prestigious* and *sophisticated*. Both domestic and foreign products advertised with English borrowings were also considered as *modern*. Most of these images reinforce those that have been reported in other studies. Products advertised with English have been linked with positive concepts such as technological advancement, modernity, sophistication, innovation, quality and efficiency (Martin, 2006; Kasanga, 2010; Ruellot, 2011). This perception actually extends beyond France and into other Francophone regions.

However, in contrast to the above, it is important to also note the relative uptick in negative images assigned to domestic products that include English borrowings in their ads. They are less likely to be considered *fashionable*, *modern*, *prestigious* and *sophisticated*, and more likely to be considered *contrary to French culture*, *antipatriotic*, of *inferior quality* and *useless*. This points to a set of conflicting associations and loyalties.

Historically, the French language has been an important icon of national identity, unity, and patriotism. This is the background to the enactment of many purist language policies (including the 1994 Toubon Law) aimed in particular, in modern times, at influences stemming from English. Hence, the positive attributes associated with



English borrowings may be partly or wholly offset in relation to domestic products in particular, to the extent that the continuous use of English in French ads is perceived as potentially having a negative impact on the integrity or status of the French language and culture. In other environments, products advertised with English have been viewed similarly as contrary to native culture and as invasive (Kachru, 1986; for French, see also Barfffour, 2021).

Considering the explanations given by native French speakers (Table 2), the use of English borrowings in French ads is perceived as partly driven purely by the function of English as an international language, but this appears to work in tandem with the frequently cited images of efficiency or quality (except in some cases when used in association with domestic products, as noted). Indeed, the very nature of English as a global language is hard to disentangle from the usually positive attributes such as some of the ones cited, namely *fashionable* and *open to other cultures*. In addition, other imagined attributes designated by native French speakers, such as *modern*, *prestigious* and *sophisticated*, appear to reinforce a discernable enregisterment of English borrowings as a feature of the voice of French advertising, leading to the continuous use of English borrowings in French publicity.

3.3 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The main goal of this study was to explore possible enregisterment of English borrowings in French ads as a feature of an advertising “voice” and the way in which certain perceptions of native French speakers reflect and enforce such enregisterment. The study has been exploratory in nature, focusing on limited data in an attempt to formulate a preliminary response to the research questions. Hence, absolute generalizations cannot be made.

Nevertheless, this is a novel study that attempts to examine a sociolinguistic phenomenon, enregisterment, and extend its boundaries by applying it in the domain of French advertising. To the extent that the study has presented some initial evidence in support of possible enregisterment of English borrowings, it has the potential to build momentum for additional larger studies in this new domain.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings from this study are consistent with previous studies, which showed that the use of English in French advertising tends to evoke a perception of desirability. It is therefore plausible that the use of English borrowings in French ads represents a marketing strategy to make certain products more appealing to French consumers. Nevertheless, since this is a market, other factors, such as delivering consistency, may be at play. Unlike previous studies, the current study also examined evidence of the enregisterment of this practice by assessing the awareness among native French speakers from France. Overall, the data suggest that there is substantial awareness among native speakers regarding the use of English borrowings in French ads. The current analysis does not permit the quantification of the extent to which this

awareness further reinforces the continuing use of English borrowings in French ads; additional studies are needed to explore this question. However, the findings in this study shed light on mechanisms which may be facilitating the enregisterment of English borrowings in French ads. These include the frequency with which English borrowings are encountered in ad copywriting; the use of familiar or easily interpretable English borrowings; and the use of visual strategies giving the borrowings more visibility and prominence, all of which converge to imbue the borrowings with desirable positive values, leading to the creation of an enregisterable feature of an advertising voice recognized by speakers. Additional studies are needed to assess the full impact of the factors proposed here, as well as others yet to be determined, on the process of enregisterment.

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