Article

NEW WORDS AND NEW FORMS OF LINGUISTIC PURISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ITALIAN DEBATE

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Abstract

Unlike communities of speakers of other Romance languages such as French and Spanish, it has often been noticed that many Italian speakers are not particularly concerned by the inflow of foreign (mainly English) words. One reason for this, according to some scholars, is that standard Italian does not stir up linguistic identity for many native users, while English enjoys great prestige as the international language. In this paper, positions on neologisms of foreign origin are illustrated, using recently updated monolingual Italian dictionaries and also comments on neologisms collected from blogs and websites. Although they have a different status and degree of representativeness, the latter respond faster than dictionaries to doubts concerning the use of loans in Italian texts.

Key words: lexical borrowing, Anglicism, dictionary use, Italian, English

1. A brief background on purism in Italy

It seems that many native speakers do not consider the Italian language a valuable heritage (Marazzini 2018: 47, 239-240). Even in academia, those who are against the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Italian Universities are criticised and called purists, while in actual fact they are merely in favour of bilingualism, preserving both courses given in Italian and in English (see Maraschio and De Martino 2012; Beccaria and Graziosi 2015).

Pro-EMI scholars see the ‘English-only’ policy as a tool supporting Italian research by gaining a wider readership for it abroad, while those in the opposite camp fear that it will deprive new generations of Italian scientists of the awareness that the Italian language is not of itself an obstacle to research.

With regard to Italian, then, the current linguistic situation cannot be said to show any evidence of the kind of purism surfacing towards the end of the 19th century and the
beginning of the 20th century,¹ which led Lepschy and Lepschy (1977, 28) to claim that “it
seemed to be taken for granted that the pollution of linguistic purity must come from the
external sources; in the case of Italy from below (dialects) and from outside (foreign
languages”).

Instead, there is evidence of a form of neo-purism, Sgroi’s (2017) label for the stance of
the Presidents of the Italian language academy, the Accademia della Crusca,² from the
post-World War II period to the present time. Sgroi speaks of neo-purism to emphasize
these scholars’ careful attitude: they do not a-priori reject foreign words, but rather make
distinctions between their use in everyday language, which should and can often be
avoided, and their use in specialist domains where they might be accepted.

In 1905, the journalist Alfredo Panzini published il Dizionario moderno, recording new
words and locations from their earliest appearance. The distinguishing factor of this work
was its vast documentation. It was in fact the first volume paving the way for many others
collecting new words without any form of censorship, as evidence of linguistic and social
change. The original volume was followed by eight editions. The last one, published post-
humously, was edited by two outstanding linguists, Alfredo Schiaffini and Bruno
Migliorini, in 1942.

In 1933 Paolo Monelli, also a journalist, published a book with the title Barbaro domi-
nio (‘Barbarian domination’) an obvious reference to the foreign domination stigmatized by
Niccolò Machiavelli in his Principe. Monelli, who applied the language policy dictated by
fascism, though with a great deal of irony, was inimical to non-adapted foreign words.
He commented, providing the history and etymology of the words as well as anecdotes
to entertain the reader, about five hundred esotismi, that is to say foreign expressions.
He accepted for example the French word bistouri but without the letter o; in fact, it is now
spelled bisturi in Italian, meaning ‘surgical scalpel blade’; he rejected the English boxing
term uppercut in favour of the Italian montante and, in lieu of the English word partner, he
suggested the Italian words coniuge, compagno, socio, collega. By the second edition
(1943), the number of esotismi had grown to 650.

In 1923 a tax was levied on foreign words used on shop signs. At the beginning of the
Second World War a law banned foreign words altogether. The impact of this policy of lin-
guistic autarchy (see Raffaelli 1983, Klein 1986) was limited, since very few of the substi-
tutes adopted to replace the foreign words have survived (one instance being It. tramezzino
for Eng. sandwich), whereas a more permanent result was the forced Italianization of place-
names in areas inhabited by linguistic minorities.

General linguists – among them Tullio De Mauro, who authored several dictionaries –
tend to accept foreign words, both adapted and crudi ‘raw, non-adapted’ or translated as
calques. In their work, they usually consider lists of banned words ridiculous and substitu-
tions unrealistic, also because they sound as obvious reminders of the failed fascist attempt
to impose Italian forms by forcefully Italianizing foreign words. Frequently folk linguistics
and prescriptive linguistics are stigmatised as suffering from some ideologically puristic
bias.³ Schwarze (2017: 114) reports seven types of popular ideas about language change
that often appear in newspaper columns devoted to language. She follows Maitz (2014),
who draws these notions from his own analysis of German ‘public opinion’. They are listed
below because they perfectly fit also the linguistic landscape depicted by some Italian
newspaper columnists or non-professional bloggers. Now and then, in weaker forms, they
appear also in professional informative articles.
The seven folk ideologies can be synthesized as follows:

1. the language is being corrupted;
2. linguistic variation is not desirable, a single model of good language should be promoted;
3. in the language there are defects which are harmful and should be amended;
4. purism, that is to say using autochthonous language resources, is always better than adopting foreign expressions;
5. linguistic elitism, that is to say upper-class usage is better than lower-class usage;
6. there is a geo-linguistic variety which is superior to all other varieties;
7. standardism, that is standard language has better qualities than non-standard language.

The attitudes above incorporate the notion of variation (see Berruto 2011), though with different meanings; in 2, as different linguistic codes being used by the same speaker; in 5, with a focus (via the word usage) on diastratal varieties of the same linguistic code; in 6, focusing on diatopic varieties as regional varieties of a national language. Neo-purist attitudes involve also diaphasic or situational varieties according to which a foreign unadapted lexical borrowing might be accepted in certain contexts (e.g. written communication between specialists) but should be avoided in everyday discourse or in advertisement slogans.

De Mauro (2003: xviii) pointed out how the most innovative areas of the Italian lexicon are concerned with the scientific and technical domains, e.g. medicine, computer science and economics, which to this day remain the most productive ones with regard to neologisms.

2. Italian monolingual dictionaries and their present attitude towards foreign words

Dictionaries do involve attitudes and positionings on foreign words. However, before detailing these attitudes we need to clarify the terms designating the process whereby words or locutions from other languages and cultures access a recipient language (RL).

The best-known Italian study, now considered a classic in this regard, is Gusmani (1986). Here, given the predominance of English foreignisms in Italian, we share the typology and English terminology produced by Pulcini, Furiassi, and Rodríguez González as shown in Fig. 1.

Direct borrowings from a source language (SL) are those in which formal evidence of the SL is detectable. As we shall see further on, they can take different forms: loanwords, false loans, hybrid loans. Indirect borrowings such as calques and semantic loans are not

Fig. 1. Types of lexical borrowings from Pulcini, Furiassi and Rodríguez González (2012: 6).
immediately evident, because the SL model is reproduced in the RL through native elements: through a translation equivalent in calques or, in the case of semantic loans, by adding a new meaning to an already existing RL word. The Italian linguistic tradition uses “direct and indirect lexical borrowing” to refer to the history of the access and consolidation in the RL, directly or through mediating languages. When the donor language is not a Romance language, the word has already been acquired in a domesticated form, often through French. Nowadays Italian no longer adjusts the orthographic form of words imported from languages using the Latin alphabet and only adjusts their pronunciation. Thus, if we take into account etymological and historical factors, direct borrowings often appear under a new light.

One of the best examples of direct lexical borrowing from American English is blue jeans, which according to the 2019 edition of the Zingarelli dictionary first appeared in an Italian written text in 1956 (1957 according to De Mauro 1999): jeans alone was recorded in Italian with the meaning of ‘casual trousers made of denim or other cotton fabric generally blue but also in other colors’ in 1959. Its etymology however shows a highly complex journey through Medieval Latin and Old French. In English, jeans is the Mid-19th century plural for jean. And jean as an adjective dates back to the late 15th century.6

When the orthographic and pronunciation systems of SL, RL and sometimes of the mediating language are different, the resulting word form can be an indicator of indirectness and such indirectness is again affected by the time period when the form first entered Italian. The process becomes more evident with languages which need transliteration from a different alphabet because transliteration rules have often evolved (see Marello and Masla 2016 for an analysis of Russianisms in Italian lexicography). The entry ukase in present-day Italian, as shown in the 2019 edition of the monolingual dictionary by Zingarelli (1) is a good example, where we are led to notice that the former transliteration, which was closer to the Italian orthographic system, is now disus(ato), that is to say ‘obsolete’.

(1) ukása /ʊˈkæsə/ o (disus.) ucása
   [vc. russa (uksz), propr. ‘editto imperiale’, dal v. ukazat ‘indicare’ 1785] s. m. inv.
1 nell’antica Russia, fino al XIX sec., editto o decreto imperiale, tipica espressione e strumento del dispotismo zarista
2 (est.) decisione, ordine e sim. imposto d’autorità, indiscutibile e inappellabile (Zingarelli 2019) [Russian word (ukáz), ‘imperial edict’, from the verb ukazat ‘to show’; first record in Italian, 1785]
Masculin noun, invariable
1. In old Russia until the 19th century, imperial edict or decree, typical expression and tool
   of Zarist dispotism.
2. (Extended meaning) authoritarian decision, order which cannot be discussed.

The word loanword, It. prestito, literally involves a return, while as suggested by Alinei (who speaks of the It. regali, that is ‘presents’: 2009: 37-38) and emphasized by Sgroi (2010, 20182: 27) prestiti should be seen more as doni, that is ‘gifts’. This reflects different aspects of the phenomenon: a loan implies that the loaner still has the loaned object, whereas a giver loses ownership of the gift. The present global circulation of words might suggest that re-borrowings might increase. For instance troika – borrowed by many RLs in the 19th
century with the meaning ‘A Russian vehicle pulled by a team of three horses abreast’ – returned to the Russian donor language as an internationalism with a different, additional meaning.\textsuperscript{7} In present-day Russian it might be considered both a semantic loan and a re-borrowing.

The prestige of a foreign language sometimes causes the rise of false loanwords, words which appear formed with SL material but are not used at all by native speakers (for a detailed analysis of false Anglicisms in European languages see Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015). Instances in Italian are the (false English) words footing and smoking respectively for the (genuine) English jogging and tuxedo or the (false Spanish) word espadrillas for the genuine Spanish alpargatas.

Hybrid lexical borrowings combine a word in the RL with one from the SL. They are often compounds or multi-word units for instance in Italian di default, corresponding to the Eng. by default, is made up of the Italian preposition di and the specialized English meaning of default\textsuperscript{8} in the language of computers.

Having dealt with the necessary terminological distinctions we now come to the main topic in this section, that is the attitude of Italian monolingual lexicography in terms of an ample or more restricted acceptance of foreign lexical borrowings. As one could expect, some dictionaries were quite open and others more cautious. Zingarelli, since its first edition during World War I (see Marello 2019), was moderately open to foreign loanwords (except for the editions which appeared during the Fascist period) and has been remarkably open over the last twenty years. Devoto and Oli (1971) exemplify a more watchful stance. The 2017 edition, il Nuovo DO, co-authored by Luca Serianni and Maurizio Trifone, has a special way of foregrounding or signaling “alternatives in Italian for English words which are redundant or difficult to comprehend” in the entries devoted to certain foreign loanwords: they are printed in colour as well as underlined and preceded by a symbol. Among such entries we find after-shave, It. dopobarba, (maschera) anti-age, It. antietà, session of make-up, It. trucco, gloss or lipgloss, It. lucidalabbra; workplace Anglicisms such as feedback, best practice, deadline, badge and meeting, for which they propose respectively risposta or riscontro, buona pratica or la migliore pratica, scadenza or termine ultimo, cartellino or targhetta or tesserino magnetico, incontro or riunione; web community terms, such as comunità virtuale or the hybrid comunità online, terms from the current affairs scenario such as baby bonus, It. bonus bebe’, spending review, It. revisione della spesa; other neologisms are e.g. coming out, It. dichiararsi, uscire allo scoperto, selfie, It. autoscatto (see: https://www.devoto-oli.it/le-rubriche/).

Italian monolingual dictionaries are in line with monolingual dictionaries of other European languages in that they show a gradual approach to registration: semantic borrowings are metabolized without major problems as new meanings; calques are also registered without difficulties since their alien origin is only conveyed by etymology;\textsuperscript{9} adapted borrowings were popular for loanwords from any language till the mid-twentieth century, but are now registered only if they originate from languages which are not written in the Latin alphabet; hybrids are only slightly better accepted than non-adapted borrowings, but if they are multi-words they are generally registered in the entry for the semantically most prominent word.

Di default is under default in Zingarelli 2019 and GDU; quantitative easing is an autonomous entry in Zingarelli 2019, because neither quantitative nor easing are entries.\textsuperscript{10} Non-adapted lexical borrowings are the most difficult to deal with in those monolingual
Italian dictionaries which register the orthographically non-adapted entry, providing it with SL morphological and phonetic information, along with RL adapted behaviour.

De Mauro in his 2003 volume on new words coming into usage in Italian – words which were included in the 2006 GDU– explicitly said that “fuoco amico […] seems to have completely replaced friendly fire which we relegated to etymology, whilst for instance, danno collaterale […] appears but has not for the moment come entirely to replace collateral damage, an English locution which we have in fact included” (De Mauro 2003: XII). Fifteen years later Zingarelli (2019) registers the above locutions under the separate entries fuoco, and both collaterale and danno respectively.

The difference between the time of acceptance within the more receptive speech communities and the time of lexicographic registration can be readily noticed in continuously updated digital dictionaries. Selfie stick, It. ‘asta per selfie’, is registered under selfie in Zingarelli 2019 together with the example condividere un selfie con gli amici while in Zingarelli 2015 only the entry selfie was available.

Discussions about registration policies surface in prefatory sections. For instance Valeria Della Valle and Giuseppe Patota, editors of the 2018 Nuovo Treccani (published by Istituto della Enciclopedia Treccani) state in their Premessa (‘Foreword’) that not all neologisms are included because they are better recorded in the volume completely devoted to neologisms (see Adamo and Della Valle 2018) which the Istituto Treccani was publishing at the same time. For such a move they invoke reasons of suitable dictionary size for a non-specialised audience. They do not fully discuss the well-known distinction between Luxuslehnwort and Bedürfnislehnwort ‘unnecessary and necessary loanwords’, which dates back to Ernst Tappolet (1913) and has periodically appeared since then. Della Valle and Patota agree with those who consider that such ‘necessary vs. unnecessary’ distinction is after all an imprecise and oversimplified classification. Indeed a widely shared opinion among many non-purist linguists, worried about the opacity of loanwords, is that unnecessary borrowings can be used when speakers need them in order to express their thoughts more clearly or more effectively, but writers or speakers using them should keep in mind the type and level of education of the audience they are addressing (see Sgroi 2017, 2018b).

3. Two recent Italian monolingual dictionaries and their treatment of the loanword hashtag

Hashtag is a particularly revealing entry for the main claims argued in the present study. Firstly, the dropping of the initial ‘h’ in the Italian adapted pronunciation entails the use of the Italian determiner l’; secondly, the entry has recently developed an extended meaning, and as such it displays the immediacy of perceptiveness and degree of accuracy concerning language change as captured by neologisms. The 2018 Nuovo Treccani boasts on its cover the subtitle #leparolevalgono, ‘#wordsmatter’. Hence it is worthwhile exploring this entry in recently updated Italian monolingual dictionaries such as the Zingarelli 2019 (2) and the Nuovo Treccani 2018 (3).

The Zingarelli, updated annually, mirrors the intense inflow of loanwords more than other dictionaries, and Nuovo Treccani published in 2018 is the most recent among dictionaries such as Devoto–Oli (2017), De Mauro (2000, free online as De Mauro 2016) and
Garzanti online,12 which are also comparable in terms of size, since they all consist of a single volume.

(2) **hashtag** /’hæstæɡ/ n. ingl. [comp. di hash, nome del simbolo #, e tag ‘etichetta, marcatore’ 2009] s. m. inv.
   • (Internet) parola o frase preceduta dal simbolo #, utilizzabile come chiave di ricerca in Twitter o in altri siti per reperire i testi che trattano l’argomento contrassegnato sing. Hashtag Plur. hashtag, (ingl.) hashtags (Zingarelli 2019)
   [English word formed by hash, name of the # symbol and tag ‘label, marker’; first record in Italian 2009]
   Masculin noun, invariable
   • (Internet) a word or sentence that has the hash symbol # in front of it, to be used as keyword in Twitter or other portal in order to find texts dealing with the specific topic.
   Sing. Hashtag Plur. hashtag, (Engl.) hashtags

(3) **hashtag** (pr. a`stågh) n. ingl. [comp. di hash (mark) “cancelletto” e tag “etichetta”], usato in ital. al masch. (pl. invar.). – In alcuni motori di ricerca o nei social network, parola o frase (composta da più parole scritte unite) preceduta dal simbolo cancelletto (#), che serve a etichettare post, articoli o immagini che riguardano un argomento per poterli rintracciare.
   (Nuovo Treccani 2018)
   [hashtag (pr. åástagh ) English word [composed by hash ‘mark’ and tag ‘label’] used in Italian as a masculine invariable word. A word or sentence (consisting of a sequence of words without any space between them) that has the hash symbol # in front of it. It is used to label posts, newspaper pieces or images dealing with a topic]

Zingarelli (2) gives two IPA transcriptions, first for the Italian adapted pronunciation of the word and then for the English one; the digital version also provides recordings of both as highlighted by the symbol [ ].

Nuovo Treccani (3) (currently available only in the paper version) provides the Italian adapted pronunciation.

The Zingarelli dictionary, though showing the hashtag icon, omits the word cancelletto. It provides both the English and the Italian plural in the click-on part of the microstructure, despite loanwords being invariable in Italian. It also provides the division into two syllables: hash-tag.

Adamo and Della Valle in their Neologismi volume (2018) furnish a more complete and updated definition for hashtag (4) than the two above, since they explicitly specify that the extended meaning taken on by the word hashtag identifies the topic of the sequence of words immediately following the hashtag label.

(4) **hashtag** s. m. inv. Cancelletto: simbolo grafico molto usato in informatica, che è poi stato adottato dalle reti sociali, come Twitter, per classificare gli argomenti di discussione; per estensione, gli argomenti stessi.

[Hashtag Masculin noun, invariable a graphic symbol, often used in computer science, adopted by social networks such as Twitter in order to classify the topics submitted for discussion; the topics themselves constitute the extended meaning]

• L’hashtag #occupyIsernia sale subito in vetta alle tendenze mondiali […] (Anna Rita Rapetta, Sicilia, 3 maggio 2012 p. 25, Noi oggi) • Mentre [Stefano] Caldoro attraverso l’hashtag #assicurazioni fa sapere in un primo twitt […] (Valerio Esca, Mattino, 3 febbraio 2014, p.4, Primo Piano) • […] ennesima prova generale di un congresso itinerante che
Dall’ingl. hashtag.

Gia’ attestato nell’Unità del 20 febbraio 2011, p. 7, Esteri.

[From the English hashtag. First record in the Italian newspaper Unità February 20th 2011 p. 7 Foreign Affairs]

Adamo and Della Valle (2018: 332-333; only the relevant parts of each newspaper text are reproduced here)

Three newspaper excerpts are offered, the first two displaying l’hashtag, i.e. the word with its determiner. Adamo and Della Valle (2018) also record hashtaggare (not yet recorded by Zingarelli 2019) and two examples from two different Italian newspapers are provided. Both Treccani publications, i.e. the dictionary Il Nuovo Treccani (Della Valle and Patota 2018) as well the collection of neologisms (Adamo and Della Valle 2018), convey the information that cancelletto is the verbal synonym for the graphic symbol hashtag. Neither study specifies that cancelletto cannot be used in Italian with the meaning of ‘a word or phrase that has the hash symbol (#) in front of it’. Zingarelli 2019 and Il Nuovo Treccani do not provide any examples, as is the case for loanwords in general dictionaries. Treccani also runs a free online tool deploying a section on neologisms which includes a file for hashtag, dated 2012 (5), with two newspaper passages featuring the determiner (l’hashtag, gli hashtag).

Apparently the extended meaning of the entry, which identifies the topic of the sequence of words immediately following the hashtag label, was not yet consolidated at the time.

(5) hashtag s. m. inv. In alcuni motori di ricerca e, in particolare, in siti di microblogging, parola o frase (composta da più parole scritte unite), preceduta dal simbolo cancelletto (#), che serve per etichettare e rintracciare soggetti di interesse.

[hashtag Masculin noun, invariable A word or sentence (consisting of a sequence of words without any space between them) that has the hash symbol # in front of it; used especially by social media and in microblogging to identify or search for subjects of interest]

E gli articoli sulla crisi di governo o sulle manifestazioni di piazza, se corredati di hashtag, sembran subito più moderni. L’hashtag è il cancelletto, quello che precede sigle che servono a identificare un tema, in modo che una ricerca reperisca rapidamente tutti i tweet in merito: per la manifestazione degenerata a Roma l’hashtag era #150 (che stava per 150october) […]. (Guia Soncini, Repubblica, 5 novembre 2011, D, p. 90) • Su Twitter, gli hashtag #nevearoma e #alemanno presentano qualche commento irriferibile e parecchi indignati e documentati. (Maria Luisa Rodotà, Corriere della sera, 5 febbraio 2012, p. 3, Primo Piano). Dall’ingl. hashtag, a sua volta composto dal s. hash (mark) (‘cancelletto’) e dal s. tag (‘etichetta’).

(The entries for hashtag illustrated above show that Italian general dictionaries, when it comes to neologisms, for the moment deal with non-adapted lexical borrowings in a somewhat reductive fashion. Their sampling of actual use does not cover relevant features such as the correct determiner and/or recent additional meanings. Hence, many Italian speakers turn to corpora and to online services or query newspaper columns. To conclude, it is not surprising that Kosem et al. (2019: 110), in their survey of the ‘image’ of the monolingual dictionary across Europe, observe: “corpus integration enjoys a relatively high rank of importance and in three countries – Finland, Italy, and Macedonia – it makes it to the top three”.

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4. Public doubts and professional opinions

Newspaper columns giving advice on linguistic issues have been almost completely replaced by blogs and websites, which take a shorter time to answer queries. They also keep a record of all the questions asked with their respective answers and to a certain extent allow linguists rapidly to grasp the main concerns of Italian readers and writers. Schwarze (2017) deals with similarities and differences between the articles by Leo Pestelli, a leading ‘linguaculture’ opinionist in the 1950s, and the advice provided by the two online services described below.

4.1 Consulenza Online

DICO – acronym for Dubbi sull’Italiano Consulenza Online ‘Doubts about Italian. Online Consulting’ (http://www.dico.unime.it/chiedilo-a-dico/) – is a website created in March 2015 by Fabio Rossi, who teaches Italian linguistics at the University of Messina and runs it together with Fabio Ruggiano, also teaching at the University of Messina. Using a plain language style, their website answers queries from a non-specialised audience and also works as a portal through which many other resources for Italian can be accessed. Going through its archive, we notice that neology and foreign borrowing are not discussed frequently. The same is true in Il Linguista, a blog edited by Massimo Arcangeli for the daily newspaper la Repubblica, whose readers are mainly interested e.g. in the use of the subjunctive mood or the transitivity of certain verbs or in young people’s jargon.

4.2 Linguistic Advice and the New Words section in the Accademia della Crusca website

On its website, the Accademia della Crusca highlights that the Accademia has been incessantly asked to express opinions about language facts throughout its nearly five centuries of existence, even though, unlike the Académie Française or the Real Academia Española, its public role was never formally acknowledged by the government.

It is worthwhile to examine the archive of the section Consulenza linguistica. Answers to people’s questions on linguistic doubts can be read at http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/lingua-italiana/consulenza-linguistica/domande-risposte. [The data reported refer to 08/06/2019]. Among the 825 answers in the archive, more than 66 are labelled as anglicismo, 24 as francesismo, and 4 as ispanismo. The answers span more than a decade, from questions such as “Is there any Italian equivalent for pit-lane, paddock, motor-home?” dated 2005 (the answer “no, there is none” was printed in the journal La Crusca per voi and copied on the website) to very recent ones such as, for instance, the solution proposed for body shaming, ‘derisione del corpo (altrui)’, dated May 31, 2019.

Checking the questions we find that many deal with verbs, derived from some foreign (English) base, that have been Italianised via endings in -are, for example scannare, scannerare, scannerizzare, (2002), stalkare, stalkerare or stalkerizzare, (2013), priorizzare, priori-tare, prioritizzare, prioritizarizzare (2011), whatsappare (2015), inputare (2018). Some of these are entries not only in the yearly updated Italian dictionary Zingarelli and in GDU (2006) but also in the recent Il nuovo Treccani (2018). Either their currently most popular form is entered, for instance stalkerare, or a list of competing forms may be included, as in the case of scannare, scannerizzare, scanisionare. Reading the answers, which are friendly but scholarly in nature, we discover that some words are not of English origin, as the author of the query might suppose, but reach Italian speakers through French – the case of...
performante ‘high-performance’, microondabile ‘microwaveable’ – or through German and Swiss Italian – the case of asilante, ‘person who asks for asylum’.

However, many questions and many answers are not oriented towards banning foreign loans, but rather tend to ask for advice on how to write their plural forms correctly in Italian texts (e.g. murales, ‘wall paintings’ or doula ‘a woman who is trained to provide psychological and practical support to women during pregnancy and the period of time following the birth’ pl. doule, doulas, that is the plural of this word in English, French and German, never became established in Italian). Another frequent concern is to attribute the right article to words from languages wherein gender may be absent altogether, or a given word may have a different or a neuter gender: il or la Brexit, il or la flûte, il or la font, il or lo or la emoticon, il or lo or la showroom, il or la graphic novel. People also ask about the gender morphology (and the appropriate article) of words which begin with or contain a problematic sound: il or lo jihadista, lo or la yogi or yoghi, yogico or yoghico.

The column Parole nuove, ‘new words’, on the Accademia website deals with four types of new words:

1. recent neologisms that are registered by few dictionaries in their most recent editions;
2. words that have been in existence for a while, but which are still not registered by dictionaries;
3. words already existing in Italian and registered in Italian dictionaries which underwent a revival in popular use, often with a different meaning;
4. semantic neologisms, i.e. Italian words which have gained a new meaning after a foreign input as for instance It. tassa piatta for the Eng. flat tax.

The section contains records about words which are not necessarily recommended by the Accademia della Crusca. Readers can in fact put forth their own suggestions, and also endorse suggestions by clicking on them. The editors may then decide to write an article devoted to the most frequently clicked ones.

Some of these words have entered the recent Zingarelli and Treccani editions, e.g. chattare, taggare, spoilerare. Some are amusingly connected with successful singers (e.g. vascologia ‘vascology’, all about Vasco Rossi, a famous Italian singer), others are old Italian words brought back to life by the dubbing of the Harry Potter saga or by an advertising slogan (e.g. babbano ‘muggle’, merendare ‘to have a snack’); others still are newcomers from the world of advertising such as inzupposo ‘dippable, said of biscuits’. These suggested forms may show a desire to simplify or make Italian more transparent such as entusiasto in the place of entusiasta, which is both masculine and feminine, and docciarsi, in lieu of fare la doccia ‘to take a shower’, while dimmerare, killare, hotspottare represent the trend of Italianising a foreign verb mentioned above, but are not yet included in dictionaries.

Also the Treccani site devotes a section (Segnala un neologismo) to neologisms mentioned or identified by readers (http://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/neologismi/). Readers are directly addressed as follows: “If you are aware of a neologism which is not yet included in our published work, please let us know. Our editors will consider your proposal. In case you are the first reader advancing the new suggestion and the proposal is judged to fit the Conditions of Use on our portal, it will become part of the encyclopaedic heritage of Treccani”. This section is (quite correctly) located next to a long list of recorded neologisms, each one shown in a newspaper excerpt and some also accompanied by the editors’ definition. The list ranges from abandonware (2005) to mediosfera (2017),
smartworking (2016), tecnopervasità (2019) and ultraproporzionalista (2019). Reading through these neologisms and the related newspaper texts, one cannot but share the concerns of many scholars (e.g. Pulcini, Furiassi and Rodríguez González 2012) that newspapers are the principal source of attestation and that Anglicisms may be over-represented in newspaper language since “the press makes large use of short-lived, high-impact vocabulary, especially English words, for stylistic purposes” (Pulcini, Furiassi and Rodríguez-González 2012: 19). On the one hand it is true that many of the neologisms in these lists, such as e.g. tecnopervasità and ultraproporzionalista, are bound to be short-lived. At the same time, when Adamo, Della Valle and others in Redazione Treccani decided to file and define a neologism, they regularly chose to include excerpts from newspaper texts which illustrate the kind of usage one would not categorize as “stylistically unusual”, thus siding with scholars who believe that newspaper articles are the best compromise when studying the vocabulary of general language.

5. Better to prevent than to ban: the INCIPIT Group

Since it is hard to try and restrict the use of a lexical borrowing already adopted by newspapers or in other large-circulation texts, a group of scholars known as INCIPIT – from the Latin verb ‘it begins’ – with a special focus on this issue was started within the Accademia della Crusca in 2015. The group, formed by Crusca Academicians, lexicographers and translators, decided to campaign against the uncritical acceptance of forestierismi incipienti, that is to say foreign words which might enter Italian public administration documents and governmental decrees.

The INCIPIT group emphasize that the use of foreign (above all English) terminology is not only a problem for Italian but also, more importantly, a hindrance to communication for many who perceive these foreign words to be entirely opaque. Words discussed by the group are e.g. caregiver, stepchild adoption, spending review, jobs act, whistleblower, voluntary disclosure, and flat tax for which they suggest respectively assistente familiare, adozione del figlio del partner, revisione della spesa pubblica, legge sul lavoro, allertatore civico, collaborazione volontaria, and tassa forfettaria, instead of the more popular, but definitely imprecise, tassa piatta. The newest INCIPIT press release (04/04/2019) deals with pornovendetta ‘revenge porn’ and congratulates the lawmakers on using the Italian locution, whilst criticising newspaper editorials which dress up their comments on the law with English words like sexting, revenge porn, slut shaming.

Their proposals were partly welcomed by institutions such as the Inland Revenue Agency which accepted collaborazione volontaria for voluntary disclosure, whereas in 2016 Italian banks refrained from using salvataggio interno and rather preferred to hide behind bail-in. In any case, the INCIPIT group is now consulted by members of Parliament while they are writing laws. This is obviously a sign of success.

6. The pragmatic turn in studies of borrowing

While foreign loanwords are much more noticeable than other linguistic traits, it should be said that current Italian also registers an imported use of commas, as well as an increasing use of the double dash to mark an interpolated phrase or clause and the single dash for reported speech, as noted by Ferrari and Buttini (2015) in their Aspects of contemporary punctuation. Italian speakers also welcome the pragmatic boosting of positive answers or
comments where the plain si (‘yes’) is reinforced by the adverb assolutamente: Assolutamente si, ‘Absolutely yes’. Carried into Italian through dubbing of USA films, it is now perceived as a standard Italian locution (see Marello 2004; Furiassi 2017 for phraseological Anglicisms in Italian performing illocutionary acts).

Italian native speakers trying to impress their interlocutors may sprinkle their speech with what they believe to be English idioms, producing false phraseological Anglicisms as illocutionary acts: Furiassi (2018) deals with such behaviour in a paper wittily titled Macaroni English goes pragmatic. Some examples are fly down, a literal translation of the Italian locution volare basso, En. ‘fly low’; I know my chickens, a calque of the Italian conosco i miei polli, meaning ‘to know who someone is dealing with’ which can be used to refer both to persons and (abstract or concrete) objects in Italian. Its genuine equivalent is En. ‘I know what they’re like’, to know one’s onions, which usually refers to abstract objects in English. Furiassi gives a social explanation for such creations: false phraseological Anglicisms are created by Italian ‘inventors’ with varying levels of proficiency in English because of the impact they want to make on their audience.

The charm and fun of playing with language is an important motivation for the rise of false phraseological Anglicisms and also for adopting shop signs and naming objects through ‘creative’ borrowing. Since the brand Eataly® associated the Italian sound /it/ in Italy with the spelling of to eat, the suggestion has become popular, vide the new Qualeaty pub in a university neighbourhood. More examples of this strategy: Tugò, the name of a rucksack “to go everywhere” advertised by Touring Club Italiano and Tenchiuverimac for ‘thank you very much’ appeared in a well-known weekly column.14

Whilst the model of mediated innovation is clearly to be expected as a linguistic aspect of our global world (see Sayers, 2014), the way in which Italian fans pronounce the name of the world-famous band U2 is an emblematic case of mediated conservation. The band was named after an American reconnaissance aircraft operated by the United States Air Force (USAF), the Lockheed U-2. In 1960, a CIA U-2A flying over the Soviet Union was shot down; another U-2 was shot down during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. On both occasions, the aircraft name was read in Italian /udue/ and so was the band name, since at the time most Italians were unaware of the ‘you too’ or ‘you two’ readings. Nowadays they know the correct pronunciation, yet Italian radio and TV still pronounce the name of the group /udue/ as they did when the band gave a concert in Milan in November 2018.

The difference between the correct spelling and the correct pronunciation of English or French words, and the fact that in Italian the spelling of foreign loanwords is no longer adapted as it used to be in the 19th century – while their pronunciation is – causes a great number of misspellings. Since 2000 a research group in Torino has been gathering examples of how people adapt loanwords in newsgroups or, even better, “Niusgrup”. Onesti (2007) lists apartaid ‘apartheid’, epaté le borsguà, for French ‘épater le bourgeois’, scoks for ‘adhesive tape’, il computier, ies ‘yes’, is ollrait ‘is all right’, cani peloucheosi ‘dogs as soft as plush’, Haltzeimr ‘alzheimer’, kitch ‘kitsch’, zupping ‘zapping’, tirabouchot for French ‘tire-bouchon’, tapirulan for French ‘tapis roulant’, pandan for French ‘pendant’, abitué ‘habitué’ and rotvailler ‘Rottweiler’, among others. A certain amount of misspelling for fun might be involved, but it seems that those newsgroup members – all of them high school graduates or with an even higher level of education – did not care for the correct spelling of loanwords in this activity of informal writing and simply tried to guess. The following is an interesting exchange, dated 2002:
A. C**** vuol dire free lands? Terre libere?
[what the f*** does free lands mean? Free lands?]

B. Se non sai come si scrive in inglese chiamali liberi professionisti o collaboratori sennò, fai uno sforzo, ti apri il dizionario di inglese e cerchi freelance, che è il termine esatto! Parlare male vuol dire pensare male!!! NUNC-IT Generic I, 2002
[if you do not know how to write it in English, call them liberi professionisti or collaborators. Otherwise, make an effort, open the English dictionary and look for freelance which is the correct term. To speak wrongly means to think wrongly]

This exchange, interpreting freelances as free lands, as well as the list of misspelled words mentioned above, suggest that the definition of borrowing given by Haspelmath (2009:36) is the best one. He takes into consideration not only native speakers ‘carrying’ elements from other languages into their own recipient language, but also what happens when non-native speakers impose properties of their native recipient language onto a source language.

7. Concluding remarks

Borrowing used to be considered as a key product of language contact. However, we now have remote language contact, that is to say the use of English in contexts connected with international business, travel, mass media and technology situations referred to as remote, “non-contiguous” contact scenarios (see Sayers 2014, Peterson 2017). Monolingual national ideologies have become less and less realistic in the age of globalization, transnationalism, and migration. In 2015 Italian linguist Laura Ricci coined the word migratismo, from the root migrat- in migrato, migratorio with the addition of the suffix –ismo, to refer to foreignisms originating in the native languages of recent migrants, usually referring to food, objects and customs typical of their native lands. Some migratismi are quite well-known, e.g. kebab and its derivative kebabbaro and falafel (or felafel), hummus, tabulè (or tabbule and tabbouleh). Others instead occur in the domain of migration literature, or in social networks managed by second-generation immigrants, and more frequently in the posters and shop signs of multiethnic neighbourhoods.

Pragmatics implies a reorientation of perspective from the borrowed lexemes per se, to how the use of borrowed items is constrained by cultural, social or cognitive factors. It can be said that Italian lexicography is not really helpful in determining the use of loanwords in this sociocultural respect. The Zingarelli dictionary, updated yearly, and the Nuovo Treccani represent two opposite policies on loanwords in recent Italian lexicography: the former tends to be inclusive whilst the latter is more selective. Other dictionaries are in between, but none gives examples of usage-in-context, which are necessary to grasp sociolinguistic features. Contexts are provided by historical dictionaries and by special collections such as those by Adamo and Della Valle, who publish neologisms in ONLI, the online databank of the Observatory of Italian Neologisms, and also present their data in printed volumes (Adamo and Della Valle 2008, 2018).

A dictionary article in an online dictionary might reach more people and be more effective, but blogs, linguistic columns, radio and television programmes together with online linguistic services answer queries in a short time, also providing examples in context. Dictionaries, by contrast, traditionally do not give examples for loanwords, above all for recent ones, and rightly take their time before registering lexical borrowings, especially if they are non-adapted.
Dictionaries do not provide certain morphosyntactic items of information (Which article? Which plural?) because lexicographers tend to think that such linguistic behaviours are governed by morphological and grammatical rules which should be known to all. As a matter of fact, when a new loanword enters Italian, users are exposed to many concurrent uses (e.g. an English plural or a plural in another foreign language vs. an invariable form for the Italian plural, gender attribution to words which come from languages with no gender distinction or more than two gender distinctions, such as the Lat. neuter plural *opera omnia* which is feminine singular in Italian because it ends by –a, the typical morpheme for singular feminine nouns and adjectives). People asking for advice are those who seek authoritative answers when new loanwords are in the process of being adopted. Paper dictionaries cannot proceed rapidly, Italian online dictionaries should, but for the moment they prefer to leave such a task to printed or online collections of neologisms or to online advice.

As for long-established loanwords, Italian is better served by its historical dictionaries, such as the five editions of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, the Tommaso-Bellini and its successor *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (GDLI Battaglia and Barberi Squarotti 1961-2002) which are all accessible on line. Finally one last historical dictionary, the VoDIM *Vocabolario dinamico dell’italiano moderno*, ‘Dynamic Dictionary of Modern Italian’, has just been started. It will combine online dictionary features and corpora of Italian texts post-1860 till the end of the 20th century, encouraging a more dynamic approach to lexical searches. Sample entries for loanwords in VoDIM seem very promising, as they provide all details, notably those requested by conscientious users of lexical borrowings.

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**Notes**

1. 19th century purism started mainly as a reaction against the excessive influence of the French language and culture during the growth of Napoleon’s power. The purists held up and advocated the purity of Florentine literature from which the Italian language originated. They published numerous lists of Latinisms, foreignisms, dialectalisms and neologisms to be censored. The volume *Lessico della corrotta italianità* (1877) by Pietro Fanfani and Costantino Arlia was a good example of their approach to lexicography. On the more moderate and tolerant side, *Neologismi buoni e cattivi più frequenti nell’uso odierno* (1886), by Giuseppe Rigutini, exemplifies the opposite attitude. For a review of puristic repertoires see Della Valle (1993, 70-74).

2. The Accademia was established with the purpose of "separating the flour (the good language) from the crusca ‘bran’ (the bad language)". In 1590, the *frullone*, the vessel used to separate the flour from the bran, was chosen as the symbol of the Accademia, together with the motto taken from a verse by Petrarch “il più bel fior ne coglie” (‘she gathers the fairest flower’).

3. Ideology is generally associated with prescriptive linguistics, but it might surface also in descriptivist stances, which appear neutral but show forms of 1) liberalism, that is to say assuming that changes are natural in the history of a language and therefore
any attempt to avoid them is pointless; 2) pluralism, uncritically considering natural
variation as an enrichment; and 3) egalitarianism, upholding that any language var-

ey should be preserved and appreciated.

4. In Italy, besides regional varieties there is a range of local language codes, called in It.
dialetti, which are, or better were, wrongly considered by some to be corrupted vari-

eties of Italian.

5. Adamo and Della Valle (2018: xiv) observe that 20.11% of the 3,505 neologisms in
their volume are of Angloamerican origin, while they amounted to 10% of the total
in their 2008 study. The role of advertising and media in the diffusion of foreign
words in Italian is discussed in works by D’Achille (2012), Vettorel (2013), Petralli
extracted, according to different time spans and usage domains, from recent electronic
editions of Italian dictionaries, see Pulcini (2017).

6. “Jean (as an adjective): from Old French Janne (now Gênes), from medieval Latin
Jama ‘Genoa’, the place of original production. The noun sense comes from Jean fus-
tian, literally ‘fustian from Genoa’, used in the 16th century to denote a heavy twilled
cotton cloth”. (From https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/jean accessed on 20 au-
gust 2019)

7. According to the typology by Pulcini, Furiassi and Rodrı́guez González (2012: 6),
troika settled in RLs as a more or less directly adapted loanword (for instance it
entered Italian as troyka in an 1884 journal, as troica in 1984 through Landolfi’s
Italian translation of Gogol’s Petersburg Tales, see GDLI under the entry troika). Its
new meaning from the language of newspapers – ‘an association of three in authority;
a group of three people or organisations working together, especially in an adminis-
trative or managerial capacity’ – thus entered Italian and other European languages
as a semantic loan. GDU records this meaning in a 1973 Italian text.

8. For this use of the multi-word unit di default against the Italian euphemistic use of de-
fault alone meaning It. fallimento, ‘bankruptcy’, see http://www.treccani.it/magazine/
lingua_italiana/articoli/parole/default.html

9. Even though calques consisting of more than one word, unlike borrowings consisting
of more than one word, do not at the moment hold the status of autonomous entries
in the paper versions and thus often end up as subentries or are grouped with “ways
of saying”. Calques formed by more than one word are however more visible in digit-
al versions, which have no restrictions of space.

10. The multi-word unit quantitative easing is not registered in Zingarelli 2015, De
Mauro 2007, Nuovo Treccani 2018, De Mauro 2000 on line, Garzanti online. The
notion is not even dealt with under allentamento monetario o allentamento quantita-
tivo, suggested as an Italian equivalent by Adamo and Della Valle (2018: 599).

11. Now that digital versions are no longer on physical media such as CD-ROM or DVD
or USB keys but can be downloaded from a publisher’s site or accessed online, it is
harder for researchers to know the edition being consulted online and to keep records
of added entries or changes, since they instinctively, and sometimes unavoidably, can-
cel the older version.

12. De Mauro (2000) is the abridged version of GDU. It was initially published by
Paravía (now Mondadori-Pearson) and it has become part of the online version called
Garzanti online is based on the paper edition of 2013; the entry hashtag is not present in Nuovo De Mauro but it appears in Garzanti with a distinctive feature: it is considered “n. m. o f. invar.” that is to say the noun can both masculine and feminine and the plural is invariable.

13. The INCIPIT group is formed by Michele Cortelazzo, Paolo D’Achille, Valeria Della Valle, Jean-Luc Egger, Claudio Giovanardi, Claudio Marazzini, Alessio Petralli, Luca Serianni, Annamaria Testa. All press releases by the group can be found at http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/search/apachesolr_search/INCIPIT.


15. Sgroi (2014) provides an excellent example of the use of borrowed items constrained by cultural, social or cognitive factors where he deals with quaquaraqua, a word from a Sicilian dialect used in a novel by Leonardo Sciascia, and its translations in various languages. It has (or hasn’t) been translated as an unadapted lexical borrowing, on account of its possible onomatopoeic origin and, according to Sgroi, of Italian dictionaries being excessively oriented to consider it a synonym for ‘snitch’.

16. Pulcini, Furiassi and F. Rodrı́guez González (2012:12) note, concerning Swedish, that “the inflectional suffix -s […] is apparently on the increase as a sign of competence in English grammar or prestige”. This is true also for Italian students whose proficiency in English leads them to use English borrowings in the plural in their written Italian texts, in spite of the Italian grammar rules stating that non-adapted borrowings are invariable.

17. Since April 2019 GDLI (see www.gdli.it) has been available in a (still) provisional version with rich search options on the Accademia della Crusca site, which also hosts the five editions of the Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca and the Tommaseo-Bellini.

18. VoDIM, notably its dynamic microstructure, is discussed in four articles, all of them available at http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/sites/www.accademiadellacrusca.it/files/page/2019/06/14/italiano_digitale_07.pdf. The article by Barbera is focussed on the entry Umwelt.

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