

# Anglicisms in the Discourse of Brexit: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Italian Newspapers

Valeria Fiasco – University Roma Tre, Italy

## Abstract

This study describes the Anglicisms used by three important Italian newspapers (*La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*) in reporting about Britain's exit from the European Union. More specifically, this mixed-method analysis focuses on technical English expressions from the fields of economics and politics. The aim is to investigate how they are used in newspaper articles and why English is preferred to an Italian word, thereby making it harder for the average Italian reader to understand. Preliminary results show that Anglicisms are often used without any explanation, even though newspaper journalists sometimes provide a description of the concept expressed by the English word. It is argued that such corpora can be used to aid learners of English for specific purposes in the acquisition of specialized lexis.

## 1. Introduction

This study investigates the use of Anglicisms—i.e., “English-derived vocabulary and phraseology” (Pulcini, Furiassi, & Rodríguez González, 2012)—in Italian newspapers reporting about the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, in other words, *Brexit*. This event was particularly significant during the periods that preceded and followed the referendum, and the United Kingdom and the European Union were the focus of attention of numerous newspapers. Since most Anglicisms belong to the specialized fields of economics and politics, this analysis also deals with the repercussions on readers' comprehension of the Anglicisms used (Pulcini, 2008b; Fusari, 2012). The study is based upon a corpus drawn from three of the most widely read Italian newspapers: *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, and *Il Sole 24 Ore*. The corpus

consists of newspaper articles about economics and politics from May, June, July, August, and September 2016, that is, the period that preceded and followed the Brexit referendum. The collection of the corpus was facilitated by the fact that these Italian newspapers are available online.

## 1.1 Brexit

Brexit is a portmanteau word of the words *Britain* and *exit* used to indicate the UK exit from the European Union. The UK became a member of the European Union in 1973, joining a common project of support and international development that also facilitated trade, political cooperation, and mobility for the citizens of European countries. Over time, these advantages were often downplayed by successive UK governments and certain sections of the press and the economic measures implemented by the EU were often criticized by British politicians. Moreover, strong Eurosceptic sentiments within a part of the Conservative party led to pressure to have a referendum on continued membership of the EU. As a consequence, in 2015, David Cameron, the Prime Minister and leader of the ruling Conservative party at the time, finally capitulated and announced a referendum to put the question to the British people as to whether the UK should remain in the European Union or leave. Of all UK citizens eligible to vote 72.2%<sup>1</sup> went to the polls. The electorate was divided into two opposing factions. The vote to leave won with 51.9% on 23 June 2016, with the majority of leave votes being cast in England and Wales, while 62% of Scotland and 55.8% of Northern Ireland voted to remain. The results greatly shocked both the United Kingdom and Europe. The day after the referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron resigned, and a few days later the Conservative Leader, Theresa May, became Britain's new Prime Minister.

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1 The source is the Electoral Commission website, an independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK (<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/eu-referendum-result-visualisations>).

## 2. Newspaper Language

Newspapers often reveal emerging trends in contemporary language. Indeed, they can often be the main source of new words and loanwords. According to Beccaria (1983), newspapers are one of the main forums of exchange between written and spoken language, where different varieties coexist, for example, bureaucratic, technical, and literary language. They also utilize the language of economics, politics, literature, cinema, sport, and news. They employ specialized terminology for linguistic prestige, for technical and modern connotations, and in order to convey a sense of objectivity that ensures accurate and trust-worthy information. That is, a sports commentator does not speak like a doctor or a film critic, and different registers and genres address different types of readers. For example, the reader of the business section is different from the reader of the sports section. Genres are characterized by a set of specific communicative purposes which are easily recognized and understood by the members of different professional communities. Bhatia (2014) defines genres as “recognizable communicative events, characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which they regularly occur” (p. 26). Although genres are highly structured, and are distinctively characterised by a combination of textual, discursive, and contextual factors which determine their communicative integrity, they are dynamic and innovative and can be modified by members of professional communities for their purposes. This dynamism among genres may cause overlaps and conflicts because genre boundaries are unstable and are sometimes re-negotiated. In this respect, Bhatia (2005) speaks of “colonization” (p. 66), which is a process that involves the invasion of the integrity of one genre by another genre, often leading to the creation of a hybrid.

### 3. Linguistic Interference

Newspapers regularly report on global issues and events, and the words that define them are often of English origin. For example, one of the concepts of great significance of Brexit is framed in the Anglicism *shock*. This term is directly borrowed, rather than translated, into Italian as “*scossa*”, so as to retain its incisiveness, connotation, and context-specificity. In the past, many French words regularly became used in Italian. That trend began in the 17th century and increased in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. However, according to De Mauro (2014), in recent years Gallicisms have lost their predominance in Italian because of the growing influence of English as well as the GRADIT (*Grande dizionario italiano dell'uso*) (2007), which includes the many new Anglicisms entered the Italian core vocabulary. English has in fact become the *lingua franca* for international communication, and its use in academic and professional settings has caused a pervasive presence of Anglicisms in European languages (Marazzini & Petralli, 2015).

Anglo-American society has a significant impact on most other societies, thus generating an extensive influence on different aspects of life, such as politics, technological progress, culture, and language (Pulcini, Furiassi, & Rodríguez González, 2012). Anglicisms have thus become a symbol of the American lifestyle of dynamism and progress (Beccaria, 1983). By and large, Italian newspapers have absorbed many Anglicisms and they regularly use them for cultural, stylistic, and pragmatic purposes. Sometimes newspapers include loanwords in different ways: with italics and quotation marks to indicate that the borrowing has not been absorbed by the recipient language, or as an alternative, by having the English word sometimes accompanied by the Italian equivalent in order to make its meaning clear, even though its comprehension is frequently taken for granted (Gusmani, 1997). Cortelazzo (2015) maintains that such borrowing often becomes popular and imposes its presence on Italian due to the lack of an effective alternative. For example, laypeople, journalists, and professionals alike or other institutions will often refer to a specific notion or object with a loanword, either because they cannot find any feasible

Italian alternative, or, in the case of an existing Italian alternative, because the Italian equivalent is not as commonly used or familiar as the loanword.

#### 4. ESP and Pedagogical Applications

Specialised corpora offer abundant evidence of the languages used in professional domains, contributing considerably to language description. While there are numerous resources available for general English, it is more difficult to develop ESP materials and keep up with constant changes in terminology in specific domains. Corpus linguistics can reveal how specialized language is used, and teachers and learners can therefore use corpora to discover patterns at different levels of analysis, from vocabulary to collocations to discourse (Boulton, 2012). These authentic materials can in turn be employed in ESP classes to expose learners to real-life specialized communication. They can be used to confront students with real language in use and thereby serve as a stimulus for further reflection and analysis (Koester, 2007; Phillips & Shetlesworth, 1978). Keywords and word frequencies reveal, in fact, some of the key features of business and political discourse, and how they are used by newspapers.

In particular, given that technical Anglicisms often convey an obscure meaning for L2 students, teachers could use corpus extracts from Italian newspapers in which these terms are currently used in order to help students better understand them across professional fields. This way learners can grasp the meaning of technical Anglicisms as mediated through the L1. Teachers can supply English newspaper extracts containing such Anglicisms or ask the students to type the Anglicisms into British or American newspaper search engines on the Internet and compare the results with Italian extracts in order to compare their use in the target language.

Moreover, there are instances where some technical Anglicisms have become stable and standardized in the Italian terminology of politics, economics, and finance. Such words may support the learners in developing the crucial skill

of identifying the meaning of new L2 words from context and may facilitate the top-down processing of L2 linguistic features. Thus, the learner's L1, in this case Italian, becomes the medium for better understanding the use of an L2 term and learning how to use it correctly. For example, on the basis of the economy principle in language, the vocabulary of any language is limited; as a consequence "some items may have to do double duty, so that words may be pressed into service as terms in particular special languages" (Sager, 1990, p. 19). In particular, the general reference of the word *benchmark* is *point of reference* or *standard*, but in the special language of economics it refers to "an impartial point of reference whose purpose is to compare a portfolio's performances with market trends".<sup>2</sup> Namely, it is a general language word that has taken on new meaning in the English of economics, where it has lost certain semantic features and has taken on a more restricted meaning. This process may be highlighted by the teacher in order to expose how the semantic features of this word are distributed. Likewise, in the domain of politics, the term *establishment* has undergone the same process. In fact, its general language definition is "setting up, formation, business organization", while its special definition is "the system, the regime." Such revelations may aid students in their comprehension of specialized language, and it was also with this application in mind that the present study was undertaken.

## 5. Research Method

As previously mentioned, this study aims to investigate how Anglicisms in the field of economics and politics are used by Italian newspapers and what the repercussions on reader's comprehension are. For this purpose, a research method that combines both a quantitative and a qualitative investigation of Anglicisms in the Italian press during the period surrounding the Brexit

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2 Here is an Italian definition of *benchmark*: "parametro oggettivo di riferimento per confrontare le performance di portafoglio rispetto all'andamento del mercato" ([www.borsaitaliana.it](http://www.borsaitaliana.it), 13 April 2007).

Referendum was carried out. A mixed methods research design was thus adopted to analyze the Anglicisms present in the corpus (Brown, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007). Mixed methods aim at achieving a complex and broad understanding of a complex phenomenon, by perceiving it from different points of view. This method combines qualitative and quantitative analyses so that the strengths of the two methods might overcome their individual weaknesses. The main purpose of this design is to provide a general description of the data before determining how different findings support and confirm one another. In this case, the data consisted of Italian newspaper texts. Following Johnson et al. (2007, p. 123) this study can be categorized as *qualitative mixed*, that is, the research follows both approaches, qualitative and quantitative, but is predominantly qualitative. The preliminary quantitative stage maps the corpus in order to structure the semantic fields and to capture a complete picture of how the Brexit discourse is shaped. Quantitative research can then provide a broader perspective about the trends in the words used to describe this historical event, for example, the Anglicisms used and their relative frequencies. A second qualitative phase allows for a detailed linguistic observation and investigation of the individual Anglicisms, for example the contexts in which they are used, their behaviours in Italian and the strategies adopted by the journalists who use them in the articles. These two approaches are used separately, but during the interpretation phase, the results are compared and evaluated. Data are thus triangulated through the use of multiple conceptual standpoints (Brown, 2014, p. 20). More specifically, the investigation of Anglicisms combines cluster analysis, linguistic interference analysis, and discourse analysis so that each method may corroborate the findings of the others in the overall interpretation of data. As a result, the qualitative analysis directs the quantitative investigation of corpus data, thereby creating a virtuous circle whereby the two methods enhance the understanding of the use of Anglicisms in Italian newspaper coverage of Brexit.

## 5.1 The Brexit Corpus

The corpus was collected from three Italian newspapers: *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, and *Il Sole 24 Ore*. *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica* are the most widespread and authoritative Italian daily newspapers, while *Il Sole 24 Ore* is a daily business newspaper. They were selected because they exemplify political and economic jargon. They also address an extensive readership and offer the possibility to access their online archives with a free subscription. They all dealt with the Brexit issue thoroughly. The corpus was compiled by downloading and storing all the articles about Brexit published in the online versions of these newspapers from June to September 2016. The articles were identified and retrieved by typing the word Brexit into the digital archive search engine of the newspapers' websites.

The selected articles provide a brief, but detailed overview of Brexit, even if they are not representative of the Italian press as a whole. However, the corpus contains a substantial number of Anglicisms as currently used in Italian newspapers. The corpus includes 90 articles (30 articles per newspaper) and 51,340 tokens,<sup>3</sup> 16,639 of which come from the *Corriere della Sera*, 15,829 from *La Repubblica*, and 18,872 from *Il Sole 24 Ore*, the last of which has a greater number of longer articles compared to the other two newspapers. As far as Anglicisms are concerned, they were identified both manually from the corpus wordlist and automatically through Taltac2, a text mining and analysis software first developed by Sergio Bolasco at the University of Rome La Sapienza (Bolasco, 1999).

## 5.2 Research Instruments

Data was analysed using Taltac2. This software automatically analyses texts for two types of data: linguistic and statistical. The corpus was also analysed with Iramuteq, a software based on the Alceste method (Analyse des Lexèmes

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3 Tokens are the number of times a particular word is used, Bolasco (2013, p. 53) defines it as "Il numero totale delle occorrenze."



Cooccurents dans un Ensemble de Segments de Texte) developed by Max Reinert in 1986 (Reinert, 1986a).<sup>4</sup> The Iramuteq software was used to study the Brexit corpus by way of a multidimensional analysis that can capture the complexity of a phenomenon by taking into account many different relationships, each of which represents a structural dimension of the phenomenon (Bolasco, 1999).

### 5.3 A Brief Quantitative Analysis

The first application of the quantitative methods in the study was the subdivision of data into semantic fields, which was carried out by way of cluster analysis. The aim of this analysis is to reorganise a heterogeneous sample of words into internally homogeneous subdivisions. That is, cluster analysis produces a descending hierarchical classification (Reinert's method) by dividing the lexical data into clusters of different lexical content, thus forming various semantic fields. In order to identify the semantic fields of this particular corpus, cluster analysis is very useful because it groups lexical items in terms of similarity. One of the possible representations of data obtained from the cluster analysis is the dendrogram in Figure 1, which is a graph depicting the level of similarity within and across the clusters in the Brexit corpus. In particular, it displays the similarity of all words as grouped into two semantic fields: politics and business/economics.

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4 Reinert was a student of J. P. Benzécri, a famous French statistician who in 1987 developed correspondence analysis, a statistical technique for analyzing large matrixes of data in order to establish a hierarchy and easily visualize its rows and/or columns, in this case texts and words, respectively (Benzecri, 1973).

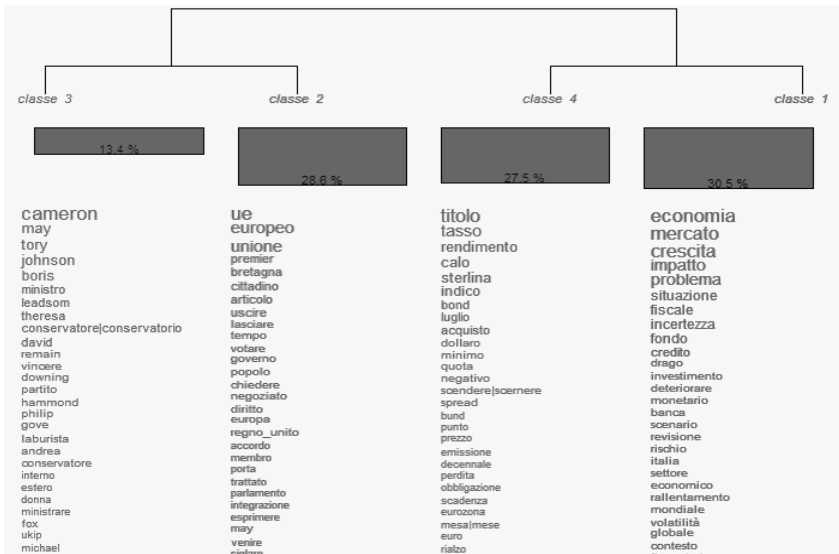


Figure 1 – Dendrogram showing the level of similarity within and across the clusters in the Brexit corpus

In representing the semantic fields of Brexit-related vocabulary this graph also represents the main subject areas characterizing this historical event. According to the cluster analysis, the following are some of the most frequent words in the corpus:

- politics: “European Union,” “premier,” “ministro,” “negoziato,” “cittadino, governo,” “conservatore”;
- business/economics: “titolo,” “tasso,” “rendimento,” “economia,” “mercato,” “bond,” “sterlina,” “fiscale.”

The dendrogram shows the association of all the words included in the Brexit corpus according to their similarity. The cluster analysis thus groups the words into two homogeneous sub-corpora: the first concerning politics and the second related to economics and finance. The two sub-corpora are further divided into four clusters: clusters 2 and 3 are part of the politics sub-corpus, whereas clusters 4 and 1 are part of the economics and finance sub-corpus. As to the politics sub-corpus, cluster 3 groups the words that regard British politics, while cluster 2 includes the words concerning European politics. In the

economics sub-corpus, cluster 4 includes specialized financial terms and cluster 1 contains general economics terms. The percentage of words included in each cluster is as follows: 27.5% in cluster 4 (finance), 30.5% in cluster 1 (general economics), 13.4% in cluster 3 (British politics), and 28.6% in cluster 2 (European politics). The dendrogram also includes proper nouns and thus reveals the main actors in this event: the European Union, David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and Andrea Leadsom.

## 6. Preliminary Results

The preliminary quantitative analysis carried out by way of both Iramuteq and TalTAc2 showed that the corpus includes 231 Anglicisms (types) for a total of 1,045 occurrences (tokens). These numbers also contain Anglicisms adapted to Italian like *robotica*<sup>5</sup>. The percentage of tokens in the corpus is 2%, and the percentage of types is slightly higher at 2.6%. Moreover, the sum of types also includes a lot of hapax<sup>6</sup>, 139 to be exact (approximately 62% of all types). The percentage of Anglicisms conforms to the most recent studies on Anglicisms in Italian by Cortelazzo (2015), Giovanardi (2015), Scarpa (2015), and Serianni (2015). On the whole, non-adapted Anglicisms in Italian represent a growing trend which is affecting different layers of the Italian lexicon, including the core vocabulary (Marazzini & Petralli, 2015).

Figure 2 shows the ten most frequent Anglicisms in the Brexit corpus.

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5 Robotica is a branch of technology that designs and constructs robots.

6 A hapax, or hapax legomenon, is a word that appears only once in a corpus.

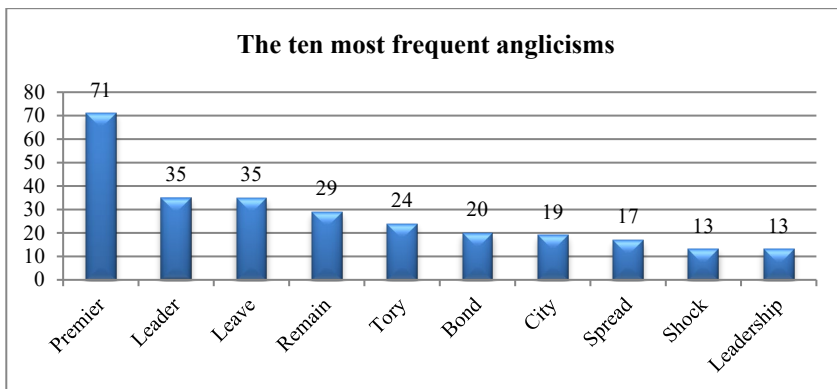


Figure 2 – The ten most frequent Anglicisms in the Brexit corpus

It is interesting to point out that most of these words are also common in general English: *leader, leave, remain, bond, city, spread, shock, leadership*. But when they are applied very specifically to the Brexit crisis these general English words take on exclusively British English connotations. Adjusting for the fact that the field of politics includes the word Brexit, with 349 tokens, politics still represents the largest semantic field (287 tokens) (Figure 3).

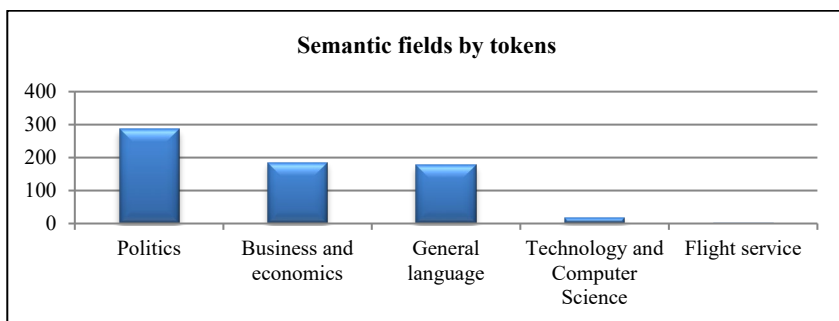


Figure 3 – Distribution of Anglicisms into semantic fields

This quantitative analysis served as a basis for the qualitative analysis, during which some of the most significant and frequent Anglicisms were studied in detail in relation to the specialized field to which they belong. In particular,

the qualitative analysis focused on translation couplets,<sup>7</sup> on the use of non-adapted Anglicisms from the fields of business and politics, on the use of acronyms within the field of economics, and on the presence or absence of glosses that explain the meaning of the foreign word versus new Anglicisms that are left without a definition.

## 7. Data Analysis

This section reports on the analysis of some the most frequent and important Anglicisms in the Brexit corpus. The most interesting occurrences concern terms from specialized fields like economics and politics, but the corpus also includes some general language Anglicisms that are not commonly used in Italian. These terms are not easily understandable to readers who either do not know English or have very limited English proficiency. Moreover, the corpus includes many Anglicisms with just one occurrence which were analysed either because of their significance or because of their particular function within the articles.

The corpus shows that, while all three newspapers in the study use similar Anglicisms, they employ different strategies to ensure comprehension. Anglicisms may either be accompanied by their Italian equivalent, followed by explanatory sentences or simply presented with no explanation is given, presumably because comprehension is assumed. The first two strategies both clearly and overtly help readers in their understanding of Brexit. An explanatory sentence is used more frequently than a translation with an Italian equivalent. However, most Anglicisms are left unexplained: only 25 out of 89 Anglicisms from the field of economics and 9 out of 52 Anglicisms from the field of politics are explained by translation or by explanatory sentences.

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7 A translation couplet is an Anglicism coexisting with its Italian equivalent.

As far as explanatory glosses are concerned, the two most representative Anglicisms of Brexit, *remain* and *leave*, are written with capital letters and have been defined in the three newspapers in the following ways:

1. ... chi avrebbe voluto restare nell'Unione Europea (Remain) contro chi ha deciso di lasciarla (Leave)... (*Corriere della Sera* – 22 July 2016)

... those who would stay in the European Union (Remain) in opposition to those who decided to leave it (Leave)...

2. ... primi opinion poll di YouGov davano il “No” all’uscita (Remain), al 52%, mentre i “Sì,” cioè i voti a favore dell’uscita dalla UE (Leave), al 48 per cento. (*La Repubblica* – 24 June 2016)

... the first YouGov opinion polls indicated that remain voters (Remain) said No (52%), while voters who chose to leave the European Union (Leave) said Yes (48%).

3. ... Barack Obama, che nei mesi di campagna referendaria aveva sostenuto in prima persona le ragioni del “Remain” (la permanenza di Londra nella Ue)... (*Corriere della Sera* – 30 June 2016)

... Barack Obama, who personally supported the “Remain” reasons (London staying in the EU) during the referendum campaign...

The second extract also displays the presence of another Anglicism, *opinion poll*, which occurs only once in the corpus, and which, as can be seen in the example, is not clarified in any way. The word *opinion poll* is composed of the words *opinion* and *poll*, where the first has a similar equivalent in Italian (*opinione*) and the word *poll* has become recognizable in Italian. But the journalist also fails to explain what the word YouGov means. YouGov is a British internet-based market research and data analytics firm. The company obtains responses from an invited group of internet users, and then weights these responses in line with demographic information. It then publishes the findings and summary statistics.

The word *political divide* is also similar to its Italian equivalent and probably does not require a dictionary to understand its meaning. This concept is not clearly explained by the newspaper, but the journalist uses a sort of metaphor to depict the idea of a polarization in political parties with the word *chasm*:

1. Ha mostrato la copertina dell' Economist in cui appare una voragine (Political divide) non più tra la destra e la sinistra, ma tra chi è aperto a concorrenza, meritocrazia... (Corriere della Sera – 9 September 2016)

The Economist cover displayed a chasm (Political divide), no longer between left and right, but between those who are open to competition, meritocracy...

In the same newspaper article, the word *political divide* is repeated three times and a variation, *divide*, whose meaning is taken for granted, can be observed:

1. ... la chiave sta nel convincere quelli che stanno "dall'altra parte del divide"... (Corriere della Sera – 9 September 2016 )

... the key is to persuade those who find themselves "on the other side of the divide"...

Another Anglicism that frames the referendum comes from the field of British politics. *Project Fear* is an expression that was used by the *leave* supporters against the *remain* campaign that was dominated by warnings of the devastating consequences of the Brexit vote. In the following passage this Anglicism goes along with a sentence explaining its meaning:

1. Dopo aver passato un decennio a distruggere, interdire e disprezzare tutto quanto sapeva di Europa... Cameron... si è ridotto al "Project Fear," cercare di impaurire i suoi stessi elettori con le conseguenze economiche della secessione europea... (Corriere della Sera – 25 June 2016)

After having destroyed, forbidden and scorned everything that smelt of Europe... Cameron... reduced himself to the "Project Fear," namely trying to scare his own voters about the economic consequences of the European secession...

In business and economics, there are numerous Anglicisms that need to be explained. In fact, many of them are clearly explained for the non-specialist, while many others are used without any definition. Even the most difficult ones, often those associated with the stock market and central banks, for example, *futures*, *supply chain*, *stress test*, *credit crunch*, *blue chips*, and acronyms like *PSPP* (Public Sector Purchase Programme) are not clarified. The Anglicism *quantitative easing* (4 tokens) and its acronym *Qe* (13 tokens) has also come to be used in Italian when Mario Draghi, the head of the European Central Bank, used this term a few years ago during the prolonged period of low inflation. Quantitative easing is a policy used by central banks to stimulate the economy in order to promote lending and liquidity. This concept is often used in the corpus, but most of the time it is not explained. Its abbreviation is either *Qe* or *QE*.

1. Quando la Bce ha annunciato e avviato il suo QE in linea con quello della Federal Reserve... lo spread si è stretto. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 23 June 2016)

When the ECB announced and began its QE in line with that of the Federal Reserve... the spread narrowed.

2. Difficile quindi ipotizzare che il Qe venga sospeso a marzo (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 8 September 2016)

It is thus difficult to hypothesize that the Qe will be suspended in March

The following examples can all be found in the same article: in the first example the acronym *Qe* is used in the headline of the article without any definition, while the compound *quantitative easing* is used in the body of the text, followed by an explanatory sentence. The same article also includes the Italian equivalent of quantitative easing, *allentamento quantitativo* (example 3), without any reference to the English word:

1. [headline] Londra, bazooka anti-crisi. La BoE taglia i tassi allo 0,25% e rilancia il QE. Cade la sterlina (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 4 August 2016 )



London, anti-crisis bazooka. The BoE cuts rates to the 0.25% and relaunches QE. The pound falls.

2. ... rilancio del quantitative easing, misure ulteriori per garantire che la strategia di politica monetaria varata dalla Bank of England “filtri” dal sistema bancario a imprese e famiglie. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 4 August 2016)

... relaunch of quantitative easing, further measures to guarantee that the monetary policy strategy passed by the Bank of England “trickles down” from the banking system to firms and families.

3. Al di là dei tassi infatti il programma di allentamento quantitativo è stato innalzato di 60 miliardi con l’acquisto di bond del Tesoro... (*Il Sole 24 Ore* - 4 August 2016)

Apart from rates, the programme of quantitative easing has been increased by 60 thousand million euros by way of the purchase of the treasury bonds....

The compound and its acronym are only used by the newspapers *Il Sole 24 Ore* and *La Repubblica*, even though *Il Sole 24 Ore* contains more instances. In the following examples, these two words are described and explained in the same way by two different newspapers, *acquisti di titoli*:

1. ...l’attenzione si concentra sull’estensione degli acquisti di titoli, il quantitative easing (Qe), che procede al ritmo di 80 miliardi al mese. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 8 September 2016)

...attention focuses on the increase in bond purchases, quantitative easing (Qe), which advances towards a rhythm of 80 billions per month.

2. ...il Quantitative easing è stato confermato a 80 miliardi al mese... (*La Repubblica* – 21 July 2016)

...Quantitative easing has been confirmed at 80 billion per month...

On the whole, this concept is mainly expressed by using the Anglicism *quantitative easing* and its acronym in the corpus. Moreover, the Anglicism is chiefly used by *Il Sole 24 Ore*, a daily economics newspaper, which often uses economics and financial terms without any explanation. This is presumably due to its target reader, who can be portrayed as a highly educated person in a managerial position. Therefore, the journalists of *Il Sole 24 Ore* take most Anglicisms for granted, since they are confident in their readers' ability to comprehend such terms. *La Repubblica* also uses this economics term, but there are a fewer number of occurrences than those in *Il Sole 24 Ore*. Journalists prefer using the Anglicism because it conveys a certain degree of objectivity and specificity in the text. *Corriere della Sera* does not use this term, presumably because its readership is more diverse than that of *Il Sole 24 Ore*, that is, readers of the latter are not primarily interested in the economy or business issues.

An Anglicism connected to the field of investment is *corporate*, a word whose meaning is modified according to its collocates. The corpus contains two such collocations: a *corporate tax* and a *corporate bond*. The first one refers to a tax on the income or capital of corporations, while the second one is a bond that is produced and sold by a company, which is typically funded with money earned from future operations. The following examples show the word *corporate* together with these collocates as well as the word used with its primary meaning, that is *a firm* or a company.

1. Un taglio nel Regno Unito alla corporate tax, l'imposta sulle società, dal 20 al 15 per cento.... (*Corriere della Sera* – 4 July 2016)

The UK cuts the corporate tax, a company levy, from 20 to 15 per cent...

2. ... abbassare il costo del finanziamento per le imprese, sostenendo così l'economia e ravvivare il moribondo mercato dei corporate bond britannici. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 6 August 2016)

... lowering the cost of financing companies, sustaining the economy and reviving the moribund market of the British corporate bond.

3. ... un effettivo rallentamento economico post Brexit, è destinato ad avere ancora effetti sui mercati. A cominciare dal corporate... (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 6 August 2016)

... an actual economic slowdown post Brexit, destined to produce effects on markets, starting from corporate....

The first extract shows a different way of describing the meaning of the Anglicism by using the Italian equivalent of the Anglicism *corporate tax*, which is *imposta sulle società*. The third extract shows the use of the Anglicism *corporate* as a noun preceded by the preposition in combination with the singular definite article. It is interesting that this English word is mainly used as an adjective, but in the above-mentioned extract the Anglicism is used as a noun to refer to *corporate banking*. As a consequence, this extract illustrates an example of overextension of the borrowed word. The journalist uses this abbreviation probably under the assumption that the average reader of *Il Sole 24 Ore* would easily understand it.

The corpus also includes some obscure financial acronyms. Most of them are clarified with the terms expressed in full, but one of them is not explained at all, *PSPP*. These acronyms belong to the semantic field of economics and finance. The following examples refer to the acronym *TTIP*, Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, whose Italian translation is *Trattato transatlantico sul commercio e gli investimenti*. This acronym is always explained with the full term. Example 2 seems to show the use of *TTIP* without any reference to its meaning, but the Anglicism is later explained in the body of the text (example 3). Example 2 also shows a second Anglicism, *round*, whose meaning is connected to the domain of sport and to the field of negotiations and consensus-seeking in Italian.

1. Dopo le dichiarazioni degli ultimi giorni sul presunto fallimento del trattato di libero scambio transatlantico TTIP, il Governo britannico spera di rinnovare la "special partnership" con Washington.... (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 1 September 2016)

After the announcements about the supposed failure of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP, the British Government hopes to establish a “special partnership” with Washington again....

2. [headline] Brexit, elezioni Usa e prodotti doc. Le ragioni dello stop al TTIP (*Corriere della Sera* – 28 July 2016)

Brexit, USA elections and doc products. The reasons for the halt to the TTIP

3. Dopo tre anni di trattative e 14 round di negoziati il Trattato transatlantico sul commercio e gli investimenti sembra essere arrivato ad un binario morto. (*Corriere della Sera* – 28 July 2016)

After three years of consultations and 14 negotiations, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership seems to have arrived at a dead-end track

4. ... una delle prime vittime della Brexit è il Trattato Transatlantico sul Commercio e gli Investimenti (TTIP)... (*La Repubblica* – 6 August 2016)

... one of the victims of Brexit is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)....

The acronym *NPL*, *Non performing Loans*, is translated in the Brexit corpus as *crediti deteriorati* (13 tokens) and *prestiti problematici* (1 token). The glossary of the Borsa Italiana translates the English word with the calque *prestiti non performanti*, which is not present in the corpus, while the Banca d'Italia denotes the concept *crediti deteriorati*. The English acronym in the corpus is not often mentioned, usually being substituted with the Italian equivalent *crediti deteriorati*, as seen in example 1, while example 2 displays the journalist's free translation of the Anglicism, *prestiti problematici*, a translation that is not used by the official financial sources:

1. ... il problema è stato accentuato da “un elevato livello di crediti deteriorati ereditato dalla recessione.” (*Corriere della Sera* – 15 July 2016)

... the problem has been accentuated by “a high level of non performing loans inherited from recession.”

2. ... i livelli, ancora molto elevati in alcune parti del sistema bancario dell’area dell’euro, dei prestiti problematici,” gli Npl, “che continuano a pesare sui bilanci bancari.” (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 19 August 2016)

... in some areas of the European bank system, the very large number of problematic loans, the Npl, continue to weigh on bank balances.

Among the Anglicisms found in the corpus, there is the interesting case of the hyphenated word *dote-spending*, composed of two words, that is, the Italian word *dote* and the English word *spending*. In this case the journalist coined a new mixed word to refer to a grant that should be used for the budgetary manoeuvre within the spending review, namely procedures and policies to enhance the management and the planning of the government budget. This neologism was specifically coined for the purpose of this article because it does not appear in any other sources; therefore it had a restricted circulation without becoming stable in the general vocabulary or in the economics terminology. The Anglicism is presented in the title of the article and the journalist who coined it does not make it clear that the term is his own invention. He merely explains the concept in the article referring to it as *dote* or *dote di scorta*.

1. [headline] Con lo scenario più difficile, la dote-spending alla crescita (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 28 July 2016)

The more difficult the situation gets, the more the dote-spending grows

2. ... non fornisce ancora cifre... su quella che dovrà essere la dote da garantire per la prossima manovra di bilancio autunnal .... Anche se per il 2017 il Governo potrebbe utilizzare, come dote di scorta, il maggiore risparmio ricavabile.... (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 28 July 2016)

...the government hasn't still released figures... on the guaranteed endowment for the next manoeuvre of annual balance.... Even if the government might use the higher saving obtainable as reserve endowment in 2017...

It is worth making a final observation about the general-language Anglicisms retrieved in the corpus. The wordlist includes many of the Anglicisms that are widely used and known in Italian, such as *shock, card, staff, fan, team, stop, film, pay-tv, mix, stress, test*, and many others. However, there are also some Anglicisms and typical English expressions that may be unfamiliar to the Italian reader with limited English proficiency.

In the first extract below, it is interesting to observe the use of three synonyms for the same concept: the Anglicism *ferry-boat*, the Gallicism *navire transbordeur*, and the Italian word *traghetti*. The journalist does not explain the two foreign words and at the end of the article uses the Italian word without any connection to the previous foreign words.

The second example contains the Anglicism *cherry-pick*, an English expression defined by the Collins dictionary as “to choose or take the best or most profitable of (a number of things), especially for one's own benefit or gain.” In this case the Anglicism is followed by an explanation.

1. Dover, la Manica, Calais: non sono solo indicazioni geografiche. Sono i simboli di secoli di inimicizia, decenni di sospetti e una lunga tradizione di reciproco sarcasmo. Perfino il nome *ferry-boat* suscitava diffidenza, sulla sponda meridionale della Manica. I francesi, illusi, pensavano di poter imporre *navire transbordeur*. Solo recentemente—con l'ingresso del Regno Unito nella Comunità Europea (1973), il Mercato Unico (1992), l'apertura del Channel Tunnel (1994), la festosa invasione di Londra da parte di mezzo milione di giovani francesi—le cose sono cambiate. Ora si rischia di tornare indietro: alle code, alle attese, ai confini, ai *traghetti* sulla Manica. (*Corriere della Sera* – 22 July 2016)

Dover, the English Channel, Calais: they are not just geographical areas. They are symbols of centuries of enmity, decades of suspicion and a long tradition of mutual sarcasm. On the southern bank of the English Channel, even the word *ferry-boat*

arouses suspicion. The gullible French people sought to impose the word *navire transbordeur*. Only recently, after the UK entered the European Union (1973), the Single Market (1992), the opening of the English Channel (1994), the joyful invasion of London by a half million young French, have things changed. Now the risk is to going back to queues, stand by, boundaries, English Channel ferries.

2. ... i negoziati per lasciare l'Ue "saranno molto difficili" e Londra non deve sperare nella formula "cherry pick" cioè poter scegliere dell'Europa solo il meglio che ha da offrire. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* – 27 August 2016)

... negotiations to leave the European Union "will be very hard" and London must not hope for the "cherry pick" formula, namely choose only the best that the Europe could offer.

## 8. The Use of the Brexit Corpus in the ESP Classroom

As already mentioned in Section 4, technical Anglicisms are not always properly understood by L2 learners. Teachers can therefore take advantage of corpus extracts to help students interpret the meanings of such words. To some extent, learners can use their L1 to grasp the obscure meaning of technical terms in the L2. The corpus thus represents a medium between L1 and L2 for L2 students to learn specialized terminology from the fields of economics and politics.

In this section, a hypothetical lesson using the Italian Brexit corpus is briefly presented in order to better illustrate such application. The activities adopt a learner-centred and inductive approach with limited teacher intervention. Language learners thus engage in a hands-on activity to investigate authentic examples of language for themselves. As Johns (1991) points out,

the task of the learner is to 'discover' the foreign language, and ... the task of the language teacher is to provide a context in which the learner can develop strategies for discovery - strategies through which he or she can 'learn how to learn. (p. 1)

While the various stages of the lesson might be tailored to suit different learners' needs, in all renditions students must have access to a concordancer. The concordancer proposed here is part of SketchEngine, an online platform that allows users to upload and analyse their own corpus, in this case, the Italian Brexit corpus, but also to consult other larger corpora like the British National Corpus. The first step would be to get students to investigate the Brexit corpus using the keywords and the frequency list tools in order to identify Anglicisms and extract specialized terminology. Next, the analysis of their concordances could be carried out to observe their use in context and to fully understand their meaning. In order to consolidate the student's knowledge of these technical English words in the fields of politics and economics, the teacher could also make use of more comprehensive English corpora included in SketchEngine, such as The British National Corpus or the English Web Corpus 2015 (EnTenTen 2015), thereby facilitating the top-down processing of L2 linguistic features and allowing students to learn how to use English technical terms correctly. In this final phase, the teacher might also decide to integrate the information extracted from the corpus with information included in English monolingual dictionaries so that students could confirm and improve their understanding of English terms.

By using such corpora in the classroom, each student becomes a language detective who discovers facts about the language from authentic materials. Bernardini (2016, p. 17) uses the metaphor of the *learner as a traveller* "focusing on the learning experience, the voyage, rather than its destination", thus favouring inductive learning and student autonomy.

## 9. Conclusion

This study has provided a short overview of the Anglicisms in the discourse of Brexit and a general outline of their use in major Italian newspapers. The quantitative analysis of the corpus identified two main semantic fields in the vocabulary of Brexit through a multidimensional analysis: political terms and financial/economic terms (see Figure 1). The Anglicisms in the corpus display



the same semantic division (see Figure 3). The investigation highlighted that even if Anglicisms are often used by newspapers, they represent only about 2% of the corpus. Moreover, most of the English words belong to the specialized fields of economics and politics, together with a group of Anglicisms associated with general language (e.g., *stop*, *team*, *cash*, *boom*). Economics Anglicisms are mostly used without any explanation and are taken for granted by the daily newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, which seems confident in its readership's ability to comprehend the terms. *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* use numerous Anglicisms as well, but tend to aid comprehension with a brief description or an Italian equivalent, which may be due to their diverse readership; in fact, they define themselves as "generalist daily newspapers." During a conference organized by the Accademia della Crusca<sup>8</sup> about loanwords and neologisms in Italian, in relation to non-adapted Anglicisms and to their impact on both laymen and experts, Serianni (2015, p. 124) stated that several non-adapted Anglicisms have permanently entered Italian vocabulary and some of them like *marketing* and *partner* have become more frequent in usage than other common Italian words like *anima*, *meraviglia*, or *gettare*.

Nevertheless, Tullio De Mauro (2016), commenting on the weekly magazine *Internazionale*, maintains that, at the moment, the "tsunami anglicizzante" (anglicizing tsunami) is a growing phenomenon. This study therefore intended to reveal the extent of this phenomenon in the recent discourse on Brexit in the print media. It might be interesting to collect further data on this contemporary event in order to instantiate the Brexit process from a cross-linguistic perspective and to explore specific applications in the ESP classroom.

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8 The Accademia della Crusca is among the leading institutions in the field of research on the Italian language.

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