COMMENT ON THE EXPANSION OF THE SPECIFIC VOCABULARY NEEDED FOR THE TEACHING OF BUSINESS FRENCH

Boris Bervialle
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Moscow
Dijon, France
e-mail: boris.bervialle@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5225-1563

Abstract. In this article, we propose some learning paths that will enable readers to expand their vocabulary for teaching business French as a foreign language. Indeed, state-of-the-art communication techniques, digital sphere and scientific progress have led to the apparition of a whole new professional terminology used in business field consisting primarily of neologisms and anglicisms. In this study, we propose to categorize these new terms in order to decide on their integration in order of relevance and frequency of professional use in the program of teaching French as a foreign language. We will discuss some of the reasons for the adoption of this new terminology, especially anglicisms, in professional communication. In addition, we propose a preliminary study on the use of anglicisms by French-speaking businesses. Apart from quantitative results that show that anglicisms are nevertheless admitted by French-speaking professionals, which would trigger a larger study, this survey also allowed us to compile a list of neologisms and anglicisms that will serve us as a lexical basis for conducting larger-scale studies in the future. However, neologisms and anglicisms, despite their invasive character, face strong opposition of the French authorities who have implemented, at the legislative level, a whole set of devices
of protection and promotion of equivalent French terms, among them, we will quote such authorities as the French Academy and the Commission for the Enrichment of the French Language. We will argue on the possibility that anglicisms in business French are related to the phenomenon of metalanguage, due to the fact that they carry universally accepted meanings and connotations, regardless of the language of the context in which they are used. Nonetheless, despite the authorities’ attempts to oppose their employment, neologisms and anglicisms are prime targets of research in the teaching of business French in order to prepare students for the real-life business environment, because in the age of communication technologies, Internet and social networks, French business vocabulary is constantly undergoing an evolution of its lexicon in a context of globalization and marketing. The said evolution inexorably supplies the language of business professionals with the new terms, namely neologisms and anglicisms.

**Keywords:** teaching foreign languages, French as a foreign language, anglicisms, neologisms, business French

**Introduction**
Unlike the teaching of French as a foreign language (FLE), the teaching of FLE in the context of business French must meet many practical constraints and be regularly updated: the activities proposed by the trainer must be in line with the reality of the situations covered.

If the trainer in business French wants to fulfill the mission of preparing his students for the professional world as well as possible, he must inexorably conform to what one might call "business jargon". Apart from the traditional terms of a specific profession, there is a whole bunch of terms common to professional French composed of truncations, acronyms, colloquial language, borrowings from computer terminology and anglicisms which can move away from the semantic sphere of general teaching of FLE.
The trainers are then torn between the duty of the exemplary teacher of FLE which is to promote the French language stripped of its acronyms or its borrowings from across the Channel and the duty of the trainer in business French which should, above all, prepare students for professional communication in real conditions.

**Goals**
The purpose of this article is to make a first overview of the categories of terms most widely used in the reality of business French sometimes at odds with academic French, as well as to reflect upon a “border” between the teaching of the classical French language and the training of the true communicative competence of learners, future players of the business world.

**Approach**
We will go through different types of neologisms and technical terms of business French in order to classify them into categories and to be able to consider their inclusion in the teaching of FLE applied to the business world. In the case of anglicisms we organized a preliminary survey on an online platform on a limited sample (10 players of the professional business world) to define more precise axes in order to set up subsequent studies on a larger scale.

**Findings and results**
We propose to classify and present the neologisms used in business French communication in three main categories: anglicisms, truncations and acronyms.

**Anglicisms**
They are the bête noire of the French Academy, but they are unavoidable in current, as well as in professional communication. But do French speakers adopt these foreign neologisms because of simple attraction to the language of Shakespeare? First, let's look at the attitude of French people towards the English language in everyday life. We can notice that according to the world ranking of the Swedish organization Education First, France occupies a very average place in terms of the command of the English
language: 35th out of 88 countries tested (Education First, 2018) and 22nd out of 27 European countries. The use of Anglicisms would therefore not be based on a substitution ratio of the English language compared to the French language. However, no one can deny that in business jargon anglicisms are commonplace. The problem seems to come from the very nature of the business, and from its commercial component which naturally requires communication with foreign players all over the world. It should be noted that all modern nations are affected by the phenomenon of globalization which is based on the Anglo-American language and culture. Furthermore, English, which is spoken by 1.75 billion people, is used as the official language of commerce. It must be added that this language serves also as the corporate language of many multinationals such as Nokia, Samsung, Microsoft-Beijing, but also of Airbus and Renault (Neeley T., 2012).

It is perhaps because English is considered to be an easy-to-learn language that it has established itself all over the world as the language for transnational negotiations, exchanges and drafting of contracts that must be as clear as possible for both parties involved. In addition to its ergonomics, the English language benefits from the domination of Anglo-Saxon investors forcing the companies and startups looking for funds to use this language in order to familiarize themselves with contracts and avoid translation costs (Arras M,V., 2015).

The invasiveness criteria of the English language also comes from other fields: cultural, scientific, professional and the Web (Sharifian F., 2009: 70; Kashchuk S., 2017: 55-60).

One of the criteria for penetration and acceptance of the English language is the effect of American cultural pressure by several media such as film industry, series in original version or reality TV shows, to which can be added social networks. Indeed, social networks are proving to be the veritable incubators of anglicisms and neologisms appearing in forums and news feeds, which subsequently contaminate everyday language.
Example: Many terms such as "twitter" or "googler", used as a first-group verb, have become common in everyday language and have even been borrowed by the journalistic sphere. "Tu ne sais pas qui était Nikola Tesla ? Mais google-le !" "Donald Trump a encore twitté pour répondre à ses opposants."

Many anglicisms appear in the scientific field. In fact, English is one of the languages of choice for scientific publication, because even if it is possible to publish in native language, scientists seek to optimize the impact of their work, which involves publishing in English for the sake of accessibility to the greatest number of audience.

Example: Among the anglicisms used in the world of science we can cite "reboot" in the computer sphere which is used as a first group verb "rebooteur".

Similarly, many techniques, used especially in biology and medicine, have no French equivalent, such as the "western blot" technique, a protein analysis technique which is used in the expression "faire un western".

"Si l’ordinateur ne répond plus, reboote-le."
"J’ai fait un western pour isoler cette protéine."

Faced with a vocabulary in constant evolution which is becoming increasingly faster, not to say uncontrollable, propelled and amplified by new means of communication, by influencers of all the media and even by official personalities, anglicisms settle inexorably in the everyday speech of the French-speaking persons. It is then up to the trainers to integrate them into situational activities to get closer to the business reality.

**Study of the practice of anglicisms on a reduced sample**

As part of this study, we surveyed 10 business players of all ages using an online form. We asked them the following question: "Explain to us why you use anglicisms more than their French equivalents?"
The following responses emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of response</th>
<th>Number of evocations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French words are too long or not suitable</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism markers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partners and clients are not French speaking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular culture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New technologies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications in English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, we assessed their preference for English or French with regard to 3 terms chosen arbitrarily as being the terms very often encountered in the business world, for which the website of the French Academy offers French equivalents:

First choice: "Manager" or "Manageur"?

Second choice: "challenge" or "défi"?
Third choice: "je checke" or "je vérifie"?

Finally, we asked our respondents to give the 5 most recurrent anglicisms in their professional practice. Here are the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business plan</th>
<th>Start-up</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business model</td>
<td>BtoB (x2)</td>
<td>Crowd funding</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Googleiser&quot;</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Deep learning</td>
<td>Feedback (x2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backoffice</td>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td>Deadline (x2)</td>
<td>Sourcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Invoice</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Slide</td>
<td>Touchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game design</td>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>&quot;Twitter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batch</td>
<td>Briefing</td>
<td>Call</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the qualitative value of these verbatims, they may constitute for us a reserve of target terms for further, more in-depth studies. That said, it would be interesting to refine this survey by sampling more professionals and this by age group, as it is certainly possible that a generational effect could emerge therefrom.

**Truncations**

According to Le Petit Robert 2009, "truncation is a process of shortening a polysyllabic word by deleting one or more syllables. "Vélo" is the truncation of a "velocipede". In addition, there are other phenomena such as "-o" resuffixing (Fridrichová R., 2013: 2). We find this process in "taro", the truncation resuffixed in "-o" of the word "tariff". Truncations are indeed present in oral and
written communications in the professional world. So, to illustrate this point we will give some examples of truncations and their meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Truncation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>App</td>
<td>Application (computer program on smartphone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asso</td>
<td>Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copil</td>
<td>Comité de Pilotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm ou com</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prod</td>
<td>Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>Publicité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semaine pro</td>
<td>Semaine prochaine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taro</td>
<td>Tarif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Télécom</td>
<td>Télécommunications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Acronyms
Professional correspondence gives rise to the popularization of acronyms and their adoption in everyday language. Increasingly, communication on social networks generates other acronyms that end up invading the professional sphere. Let's do a brief review of acronyms often encountered in the business world. We will note, nevertheless, that many of them come from the professional English language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASAP</td>
<td>As Soon As Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRB</td>
<td>Be Right Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EoB</td>
<td>End of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMK</td>
<td>Let Me Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>Rien à signaler (nothing to report)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RH</td>
<td>Ressources humaines (human resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVP</td>
<td>S’il vous plaît (Please)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Opposition
There are several defensive devices that oppose the systematic invasion of anglicisms and neologisms aimed at defining new concepts in language, among which are:

- Legislative framework (constitution of the French Republic, the Toubon law, decrees, etc.)
- The French Academy
- The French Language Enrichment Commission.

Legislative framework
The first obstacle to the advance of anglicisms in official communication is the clause added on June 25, 1992 to the Article 2 of the Constitution, which states that "the language of the Republic is French". This article limits the use of anglicisms by parliamentarians and other public officials.

The Toubon law of August 4, 1994, relating to the use of French in social life is an egalitarian law, so that consumers may read information in a language they understand in order to guarantee their health, safety and informed consent. Informative messages, institutional communication and reception in public services must be implemented in the language of the Republic. Likewise, it allows French researchers to publish the results of their work in their language. One of the applications of this law requires that public and private industrial contracts dealing with the public domain must be drawn up or translated into French. Finally, it guarantees a French-speaking environment in public space.

The Decree No. 96-602 of July 3, 1996, amended by the Decree No. 2015-341 of March 25, 2015 revises the system for enriching the French language.

The French Academy
The French Academy is constantly trying to repel the English invader by proposing to the greatest possible extent the maximum of alternatives to all anglicisms that keep appearing. Thus, through new communication techniques the immortals of the French Academy decree the alternatives opposable to anglicisms via the
"say, do not say" section of its website (French Academy, 2019). In this way, they propose to replace “data science” by “science, étude de données” or else “low cost” by “bas prix”.

**The French Language Enrichment Commission**

The French Language Enrichment Commission is responsible for "completing the French specialized vocabulary by proposing new terms that can serve as a reference, taking into account the expressed needs, particularly in economic life, scientific work and technical and legal activities". Composed of 19 panels of experts covering all specialties, this commission examines neologisms of foreign origin and develops French equivalents accepted by the professions concerned. The adoption of these terms may be subject to standardization with AFNOR (French Association for Standardization), which is considered the national reference. Moreover, the Commission works in close collaboration with the French Academy, which issues proposals of French variants for foreign neologisms that will be submitted to the choice of professionals from the panel of experts of the Commission. The results of the panel's work are published in the Official Journal.

The commission, for example, approved the term "granulé de bois" to replace the anglicism "wood-pellet", which began to be commonly used in the form of "pellet" when this method of heating became popular. Similarly, with the growth of the "vegan" movement, the commission imposed the term "végétalien" (French Language Enrichment Commission, 2016: 35).

**Metalanguage aspects of anglicisms in Business French**

Why do Anglicisms seem essential to Business French?

It is legitimate to wonder whether, due to global spread of anglicisms, the language of business, irrespective of any particular language, could be regarded as a metalanguage or if only universal anglicisms belong to the sphere of metalanguage (Saugera V., 2017: 59-79). It is necessary to ask the question of the status of anglicisms as a metalanguage. Indeed, these words carry meaning, connotations (professionalism, modernism among others ...) and intrinsic functions (a simple technical word is able to consolidate
a whole sequence of precise and orderly actions), which cannot be translated or substituted by a French word. In addition, a metalanguage is a linguistic system that allows us to explain concepts such as grammar (Rey-Debove J., 1978: 26-27), mathematics, physics or programming in all languages.

**What is a metalanguage?**

Let us consider the example of grammar: in order to explain different grammatical mechanisms of the native language L1, we are forced to describe these notions in this same language, and these explanations induce the appearance of a metalanguage ML1. However, it is possible to describe the same grammatical notions of another language L2 thanks to the metalanguage ML1.

For example, we can define the word "petit" as an adjective in French, but we can also define the words "little" in English, "piccolo" in Italian as adjectives. The whole terminology of grammar, including the words like "adjective", "adverb", "verb", etc ... is a metalanguage that allows us to describe grammatical rules of any language.

Because of this dimension of metalanguage, English terminology in the business world carries more meaning than a literal translation.

For example, "benchmarking" is a speaking term for all business people around the world. However this term doesn’t have an equally speaking equivalent in French, the bilingual dictionary proposes "évaluation" or "étalonnage", but these terms do not convey the main idea of "study and analysis of management techniques, modes of organization of other companies in order to draw inspiration therefrom and to get the best out of it".

Such examples illustrate that certain globally accepted anglicisms could be considered as a metalanguage and that it is therefore not possible to perfectly substitute them with a simple equivalent.

**Teaching perspectives**

Some reflection on the role of the teacher in business French would seem appropriate.
As a matter of fact, most of the teaching methods existing in the market propose an acquisition of formal skills, such as writing official letters, telephone conversations, business plan analysis, filling out forms, placing orders, human resources, etc. We may note a predominance of external communication (business to business, human resources, canvassing with prospects) to the detriment of internal communication, more informal but used daily within the company. We may criticize the fact that these methods are starting to become dated; some of them that are still used today date from a time when the new means of communication were not yet in vogue.

The teacher in business French, aside from the requirements for FLE skills, should favor activities in real-life situations, such as correspondence with native professionals in real conditions, analysis of emails from professionals that will be anonymized and reedited to present only the material of interest. The analysis of authentic meeting reports and of voice records, for example, is necessary to work on listening skills and to become familiar with the actual language of the business world. Lastly, real-life activities on social networks and more particularly in groups of professionals could immerse learners into the reality of communication.

Finally, the ever more rapid and abundant development of the communication sphere (let us understand by this term communication, information techniques, organizations’ communication, journalism, advertising, etc.) will therefore oblige the trainers in FLE, specialty Business French, to be extremely adaptable and to demonstrate a constant updating of terminology, knowing that even if anglicisms are massively flooding into everyday communication, they won’t make their place forever. It must be said that for many people these terms have a more or less long lifespan and follow the fashion trends as current events.

Conclusion
The use of neologisms and anglicisms is of primary importance in the teaching of FLE applied to the professional world, and particularly to the business environment. Their transnational
character and commercial semantics techniques, closely linked to contemporary communication sphere, themselves dependent on marketing and digital notoriety, force teachers to comply with what the traditional FLE would qualify as “language abuse”. We hypothesize that it would be an aspect of metalanguage that would oblige the trainer in business French to teach these new terms as technical vocabulary, as they carry meaning and qualitative connotations understood and accepted by all members of the business world, regardless of which language they speak. In conclusion, trainers in FLE, specialty Business French, will therefore have to implement the most relevant neologisms that are used daily by the professionals. This requires in-depth studies by surveying substantial samples of players in the business world, by analyzing the language of professionals on the Web, in particular forums and discussion groups, as well as their commercial statements, and if possible by analyzing internal and external correspondence of the companies.

References
French Academy [Dire, ne pas dire]. www.academie-francaise.fr/dire-ne-pas-dire. [Accessible on September 27, 2019].
Fridrichová, R., 2013. Some observations on truncated words in contemporary French, 2 pp.