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# Drawing a distinction between false Gallicisms and adapted French borrowings in English

Ramón Martí Solano

## 1. Introduction

False borrowings, also known as pseudo-borrowings, are not easy to classify as their definition may vary significantly from one scholar to another. Here follows the definition of false borrowing by the French lexicologist Jean Tournier: “Il arrive exceptionnellement qu’un mot perçu comme un emprunt à une langue étrangère n’existe pas dans cette langue, ou existe sous une autre forme. On a alors affaire à un faux emprunt. Exemples : *bon viveur*,<sup>1</sup> *folie de grandeur*. (Les mots français sont *bon vivant*, *folie des grandeurs*).” (Tournier 1991: 75) [Exceptionally a word that is perceived as being borrowed from another language may not actually exist in that language, or not in an identical form; such words can be considered pseudo-loanwords, e.g. *bon viveur*, *folie de grandeur* (the original French words being *bon vivant*, *folie des grandeurs*).]<sup>2</sup>

Tournier’s narrow definition of false borrowing is strictly applied to words which either do not exist in French (*bon viveur*) or have a slightly different form (*folie de grandeur*), which in the examples provided is a matter of derivational and inflectional morphology respectively. According to this definition, the classic examples of false Anglicisms in French, namely *smoking* ‘dinner jacket’, *parking* ‘car park’ or *footing* ‘jogging’, would not fit in as all these words exist in the English language with exactly the same form.<sup>3</sup> In any case, no occurrences of *bon viveur* or of *folie de grandeur* have been found in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. The former is an undisputed Briticism whereas the latter has its native counterpart in the phrase *delusions of grandeur* which is found 71 times in the *COCA*.

When investigating false borrowings one cannot skirt round the notion of the different levels of mastery of the orthographical and grammatical intricacies of a foreign language. It is obvious that the existence of the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’ forms of a French word in a dictionary entry (*bon vivant* and *bon viveur* respectively) can be interpreted as clear evidence of both groups of speakers. *The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (CALD)* registers *bon vivant* but also supplies *bon viveur* between brackets with the label *also UK*. It is my intention to distinguish the whole range of phenomena regarding adapted French loanwords in English as well as setting them against false Gallicisms.

The words analysed in this study are but a sample of French borrowings and false Gallicisms in English. Words have been searched for and selected manually in the *American Heritage Dictionary (AHD)* and in three dictionaries of foreign words and phrases (Ayto 1995; Bliss 1966; Speake 1998). I have also carried out a search by wildcards in the *British National Corpus (BNC)*, *COCA* and in the CD-ROM version of the *CALD*. In order to detect potential French borrowings, the following wildcard combinations were used: \*age, \*ante, \*eau, \*erie, \*esse, \*et, \*ette, \*eur, \*euse, \*ier, \*ière, \*our.

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<sup>1</sup> This seems to be one of the most clear-cut and classic examples of false Gallicisms. As Ayto (1991: xii) puts it: “Nor does English stop at reinterpreting the pronunciation of foreign words. Sometimes it even invents new ‘foreign’ words. The best-known is the pseudo-French *bon viveur*.”

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Dr H el ene Chuquet for the translation of this quotation.

<sup>3</sup> *Parking* and *footing* are mentioned as “pseudo-loans” by Humbley (2002: 121–122). Thogmartin (1984: 452) classifies *parking*, *footing* and *smoking* as “pseudo-borrowing ending in –ing”. Otman (1989: 121) describes *parking* and *smoking* as *productions fran aises   partir de ce suffixe [-ing]* [French products made from that suffix [-ing]].

## 2. A definition of false Gallicism

When compared with false Anglicisms, false Gallicisms seem to conform to a slightly different type of classification. The three fundamental types of false Anglicisms in Italian, namely *autonomous compounds*, *compound ellipsis* and *semantic shifts* (Furiassi 2006: 274) cannot be exactly applied to false Gallicisms. As a matter of fact, I have not found any instances of false Gallicisms that could be assigned to the first group in which are included false Anglicisms such as Fr. *tennisman* ‘tennis player’ or It. *autostop* ‘hitch-hiking’ (Furiassi 2010: 141). Conversely, I have found some instances of the second category and a plentiful supply of false Gallicisms for the third category.

As a starting point I will consider one of the classic examples of supposedly false Gallicisms in English, i.e. *rendezvous*. To the tutored eye the first minor, though noticeable, difference is typographical – the word is hyphenated in French whereas in English it is a solid compound.<sup>4</sup> So far it could be argued that the English word does not exist in French as no such fluctuation in form is allowed in this language (the word is always hyphenated as it retains the spelling of the second person plural of the imperative mood of the pronominal verb *se rendre* ‘to go to’, from which it derives). The second and much more striking feature is the conversion process of this noun in English, thus becoming a verb that once inflected produces forms such as *rendezvoused* or *rendezvousing*. Conversely, the semantic narrowing (a secret meeting place for lovers) and the metonymic shift (the word designating a place or a venue) are common both in French and in English and it is precisely these features of semantic specialization that have traditionally been put forward as the main arguments for the classification of this type of loanwords as false borrowings. It is consequently a matter of the utmost importance to verify both in authoritative lexicographic sources and in large general corpora all the possible senses of a word in the donor language (DL) so as not to act with precipitation over these issues. Hence, *rendezvous* will be classified as a genuine French loanword because no typographical or orthographical adaptations, conversion and subsequent native inflection, and semantic narrowing in the recipient language (RL) will count as valid criteria for the labelling of French borrowings as false Gallicisms.

In what follows I will be using a much broader definition of false borrowings than that advanced by Tournier (1991: 75) in order to include not only the formal component but also the semantic one. So, partially following and adapting the definition of pseudo-Anglicisms by Sørensen (1997: 18) – but also in agreement with Furiassi’s (2003: 123) and Fischer’s (2008: 7) standpoint on false Anglicisms – false Gallicisms will be defined as words that look French, but which deviate from genuine French words either morphologically, lexically or semantically.

The approach to false Gallicisms is totally different depending on whether these are examined from a diachronic or a synchronic perspective. When looking at the English word *courier* (“a person who carries important messages or documents for someone else”) one can notice that this is both an adapted French loan (the corresponding French word is *courrier*, with a double *r*) and a semantic false Gallicism as the meaning of the English word *courier* is conveyed in contemporary French by the word *coursier*.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, and from a diachronic point of view, English adopted the French word in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup> with the regular spelling at that time, so it could be said that the English word corresponds exactly to the French one. Besides, and from a semantic perspective, the word *courrier* is also used in

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<sup>4</sup> A search in the *BNC* has yielded the following results: 262 tokens of *rendezvous* against 10 of *rendez-vous*. The *CALD* only registers the unhyphenated form.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for a list of false Gallicisms, their definition in English and translation into French.

<sup>6</sup> The first recorded example in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* of the word *courier* with the spelling *courrier* is from 1718.

French to designate a *courier*, especially in compounds such as *courrier d'ambassade* or *courrier diplomatique* whose equivalent in English is *diplomatic courier*.

Finally, a distinction should be drawn between false Gallicisms and false friends. These two concepts are occasionally mixed as false friends can sometimes become a sort of catch-all category that encompasses everything from cognates, false friends and false loanwords. For instance, Kirk-Green (1995: 193) categorises *venue* as a false friend when this loanword should be analysed as a false Gallicism since the meaning of the word in English is different from the meaning of the exact same word in French.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Formal adaptation of French borrowings

The main mechanisms of formal adaptation of French loanwords and phrases will be outlined taking into consideration all possible typographical, diacritical, orthographical, morphological, lexical and semantic changes when benchmarked against the corresponding native forms in the French language.

The English word *connoisseur* (Fr. *connaissanceur*) could exemplify the French loanword in English that has preserved an ancient spelling, currently obsolete in Modern French according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. However, the only ancient form of the word provided by the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française (DHLF)* is *connoisseur* and not *connoisseur*. One could hypothesise that the unorthodox Old and Middle French ending *-eor* was changed to a more suitable and French-looking *-eur* in English. In any case this item will not be considered as a false Gallicism as, depending on the source, the word has either preserved a former foreign spelling or has been orthographically adapted in the RL.

#### 3.1. Typographical, diacritical and orthographical adaptations

Words can be borrowed by a RL exactly as they are written in the DL but sometimes these borrowings can take a somewhat different form in the RL. These formal changes or adaptations are certainly the product of the assimilation and usage of the actual borrowing in the DL as speakers are more often than not unfamiliar with and unaware of the orthographical and grammatical rules applied to foreign loans. When the original French phrase *de luxe* is spelt as one word in English, i.e. *deluxe* (Otman 1989: 122), this simply reflects the linguistic unawareness of dealing with a combination of preposition and noun in French by English-language speakers. But most of the formal differences mainly concern the use of accents and other diacritics. A remarkable example of this lack of accentual rigour is the loan *papier mâché*. No tokens have been found in the *BNC* of the original French spelling either with one or both diacritics. However, there are 16 tokens of this compound without diacritics in the *BNC*.

As regards spelling, one should differentiate between long-established adapted spelling, as is the case of *maisonette*<sup>8</sup> (Fr. *maisonnette*) and lexicalised variants as with *sobriquet/soubriquet* (Fr. *sobriquet*) and *ambiance/ambiance* (Fr. *ambiance*). These variant forms merely reflect the maintenance in contemporary English of a former spelling of the French word as explained by Ayto (1991: 288): “Defying chronology, English actually borrowed the word’s original form *soubriquet* (now superseded in French), in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this is now if anything commoner than *sobriquet*.”. These examples are to be distinguished, in their turn, from the somewhat erratic orthography reflected in forms such as

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<sup>7</sup> The En. loan *venue* is ‘the place where a public event or meeting happens’ whereas in French this same word simply means ‘arrival or coming’.

<sup>8</sup> The *OED* adds the following commentary in the dictionary entry: “The correct spelling with *-nn-* is rarely found.”

*de rigeur* instead of the correct *de rigueur*: the cluster of vowels is especially difficult to retain, which could partially explain the incorrect spelling.<sup>9</sup> *Portmanteau* (Fr. *portemanteau*) and *apartment* (Fr. *appartement*) illustrate another spelling feature of formal adaptation of French loans into English. The elision of the vowel *e* from the original French words reflects the level of phonological assimilation of the loans as well as the lexical association with such English words as *port* and *apart*.

As observed in the case of *apartment*, there seems to be a tendency of orthographical adaptation of French loans concerning double and single consonants. Some double consonants in the DL are reduced to one as in *maisonette* and *courier* whereas some single consonants in the DL are doubled in English as can be seen in such loans as *pannier* (Fr. *panier*) and *fillet*<sup>10</sup> (Fr. *filet*).

### 3.2. Morphological adaptations

However, it is in morphology, and more precisely in inflection and affixation, where the most prominent examples abound. The epitome of English false French suffixation is *arbitrageur*, a derived noun from the specialised word *arbitrage*<sup>11</sup>. The corresponding French noun is *arbitragiste* and not *arbitrageur*. The latter is an English-derived word that looks entirely French but which does not exist as a word in this language, which automatically makes of this derivative a genuine false Gallicism.

Other instances of morphology are related to the use of the French inflectional endings for the plural and the feminine gender. The lexicalised French phrase *the nouveau riche* has as its counterpart the French *les nouveaux riches* in which all three constituents take the appropriate plural ending, *-s*, *-x* and *-s* respectively. Similarly the English adjective *sauté* as used, for instance, in *sauté potatoes* is, as all adjectives in English, invariable, whereas French has four different forms: the masculine singular *sauté*, the masculine plural *sautés*, the feminine singular *sautée* and the feminine plural *sautées*. The latter would be used to translate the example of *sauté potatoes* (Fr. *pommes de terre sautées*). It is worth remembering that correct inflected forms of French adjectives and nouns can sometimes be found in English texts, but this remains exceptional as these loans tend to be registered in dictionaries – and used in examples – in their invariable form, which clearly accounts for their level of integration in the morphological system of the English language.

A special formal case is represented by the widespread use in English of the feminine ending of a number of French nouns and adjectives used both for male and female referents. The classic example is *blonde* (the feminine form of *blond* in French) used also for men (Bliss 1966: 10). Other examples include the English words *confidante*, *naïve* and *debutante* as illustrated by the following example:

- (1) Lord Falconer, who is also the lord chancellor and a close **confidante** of Tony Blair, said a move to proportional representation would mean politicians were preoccupied with establishing coalitions. (*The Guardian* 20 May 2005)

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<sup>9</sup> 5 tokens of the incorrect form against 40 of the correct form have been found in the *BNC*.

<sup>10</sup> Even though the *CALD* specifies that the form *fillet* is used in British English and the form *filet* in American English, we have found 455 tokens of *filet* and 621 tokens of *fillet* in the *COCA*, which contradicts the information supplied in the dictionary and evidences the vacillation over the spelling of French loans.

<sup>11</sup> Here is the definition of *arbitrage* included in the *CALD*: “the method on the stock exchange of buying something in one place and selling it in another place at the same time, in order to make a profit from the difference in price in the two places.”

The word in bold in (1) would be interpreted by a French speaker as having a female referent due to the inflectional ending *-e*. Endings notwithstanding, the referent in the English sentence is Lord Falconer, undoubtedly a man. Obviously the form *confidant* is generally found for a male referent, which makes of *confidant(e)* a typical example of masculine/feminine suffix fluctuation depending greatly on the grammatical competence of the speaker. Finally, the adjective *naïve* has supplanted the masculine French adjective *naïf* both in lexicographical entries and in texts. The non-correspondence between grammatical gender in French and actual forms in English does not constitute a criterion for classifying a given French loan as a false Gallicism.

As concerns pluralisation it is interesting to note the adaptation of some French loanwords to the English morphological pattern present in the lexical paradigm that includes words such as *trousers*, *shorts*, *pants*, *knickers*, *dungarees*, *leggings*, etc. This is exactly the case of the French loan *fatigue* whose origin is to be found in the French phrases *habit de fatigue* or *vêtement de fatigue* that are defined as *réserve pour les tâches pénibles* [especially worn when doing tough jobs] but which are not exclusively used in the field of soldiering, contrary to the English word *fatigues*.

- (2) Asked recently what he would do when the war ended in Croatia, Arkan said he would sell his six captured tanks, hang up his combat **fatigues** and return to his ice cream parlour business in Belgrade. (*BNC*)

The French loan in bold in (2) constitutes then a false Gallicism as the word has been semantically reanalysed in English and is translated in French by *treillis*. The case of the English word *culottes* is rather complex as it involves several mechanisms, both formal and semantic. On the one hand, the corresponding French word is *jupe-culotte*, which makes of the English word an adaptation by compound ellipsis and pluralisation. On the other hand, there is a word in French, *culottes*, whose meaning does not coincide with its English counterpart as it is used in French to designate underpants or underwear in general.

### 3.3. Conversion of nouns or adjectives into verbs

Loanwords are subject to conversion or zero derivation as much as words from Anglo-Saxon origin. *Finesse*, *valet*, *rendezvous*, *compere*, *sabotage*, *chauffeur*, *julienne*, *massage*, *sauté*, *début* and many more other nouns and adjectives can be converted into verbs as illustrated in the following examples:

- (3) She worked with Cyril Stapleton's BBC Showband and featured on the Goon Show. For a decade from the late 1970s, she **compered** a highly successful BBC Radio 2 show. (*The Guardian* 29 May 2000)
- (4) I have recently been through a bit of a root vegetable phase [...] thinly sliced or **julienned**, dressed with a tasty little vinaigrette and tossed with dried fruit or pulses or crisp winter leaves – or all of the above. (*The Guardian* 18 January 2012)

The conjugated forms in bold in (3) and (4) are to be regarded as native adaptations of the French loans and not as false Gallicisms. The same criterion should be applied to other fairly common French loans from the semantic field of food and cookery when they are used as verbs, for instance *to fillet* or *to purée* as there is no semantic change involved in the conversion process.

### 3.4. Lexical adaptations

This section will be dealing with cases of compound ellipsis, by which one or more words in a compound or a noun phrase are elided and that is unquestionably one of the commonest mechanisms of creating pseudo-loans in many European languages (Alexieva 2002: 257; Busse & Görlach 2002: 29; Graedler 2002: 77; Humbley 2002: 121; Maximova 2002: 208; Pulcini 2002: 163; Rodríguez González 2002: 147). Sometimes the elision is possible in the DL as it happens with Fr. *tableau vivant*, or simply Fr. *tableau*, whereas in other cases the elision in English, which is optional, is not possible in French if the same meaning is to be conveyed, as with *coup d'état*<sup>12</sup> and *haute couture*. These loans can be used with exactly the same meaning in English in their abbreviated forms, *coup* and *couture* respectively, as shown in (5) and (6). It is only in their non-canonical, single-word form that these loans are considered as false Gallicisms.

- (5) At first, he accepted military rule by Mr. Musharraf, who as head of the armed forces had seized power in a **coup** in 1999. (COCA)
- (6) But if you want to understand why **couture** still matters, look inside a Valentino ballgown, a YSL Le Smoking, a Chanel suit. (COCA)

Contrary to the above examples, the loan *séance*, whose French counterpart is *séance de spiritisme*, is only found in English as a single word and as such it is attested in dictionary entries.<sup>13</sup> Otman (1989: 119) analyses *séance* as an instance of semantic narrowing in the RL and puts it on a par with French loanwords such as *ensemble* or *bouquet*. I would rather look at it as a case of compound ellipsis and therefore as a false Gallicism.

One could think that it is always the head of the compound or the noun phrase that is retained as the shortened version in English. However, this is not always the case as other procedures may come into play. The English *au pair* is a shortened version of the original French noun phrase *jeune fille au pair*, literally 'young girl on equal terms', in which the elided constituent is precisely the head of the noun phrase. As my aim is to investigate the current state of affairs concerning false Gallicisms in English, this example will be considered as such and hence will be included in the list of false Gallicisms provided in Appendix A.

Thogmartin (1984: 454) mentions four cases of French pseudo-borrowings in English, namely *brassiere*, *au gratin*, *au jus* and *à la mode*. The use of the portmanteau morph *au* – whose corresponding feminine form is *à la* – can be compared, although not in the same proportion, to the use of the *-ing* form in false Anglicisms. The morph is so characteristically French that it is made in English to precede French loans from the semantic field of food when these are masculine, as with *gratin* and *jus*. The result of this ill-assorted combination, to a French eye, becomes automatically a false Gallicism in English. For instance, the English phrase *potatoes au gratin* would be translated in French as *gratin de pommes de terre*. 5 tokens of *au gratin* have been found in the *BNC* and a total number of 53 in the *COCA*. Used mainly in combination with the word *potatoes*, the phrase can be placed both before and after the noun: *potatoes au gratin* or *au gratin potatoes*. But it can also be used as the head of a noun phrase, as in *au gratin of potatoes* and even as a single noun in itself which functions as

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<sup>12</sup> Other compounds having as head the French word *coup* attested in the *OED* are *coup de force*, *coup de foudre*, *coup de glotte*, *coup de grâce*, *coup de main*, *coup d'œil*, *coup de poing*, *coup de soleil*, *coup de théâtre* and *coup de vent*. It goes without saying that only *coup d'état* does allow the elision of the complement of the noun head.

<sup>13</sup> We have checked this entry in a monolingual dictionary, the *CALD*, as well as in a bilingual dictionary, *The Oxford-Hachette French Dictionary (OHFD)*.

the subject of the sentence as in *The au gratin* + *predicate*. This is undeniably a false Gallicism – the actual combination *au gratin* simply does not exist in French.

Other word-relation processes can be observed, as for instance paronymy, which is certainly responsible for the existence of the English compound *double entendre*, a typical example of pseudo-Gallicism. There is a similar phrase in French *à double entente*, which means exactly the same although the sexual innuendo of the English phrase is not necessarily present in the French one. The two French words, *entendre* and *entente*, are etymologically related and phonologically close, which makes them paronymous. According to Renouf (2004: 533) “[t]he modern French semantic equivalent of *double entendre* is *mot à double sens* or *mot en sous-entendu*”.

#### 4. Semantic false Gallicisms

Different types of semantic mechanisms are underway in the lexical borrowing process in languages in contact and especially between French and English. These are extremely varied and can go from semantic extension or reduction and metonymic, metaphoric or meronymic shifts to connotational changes such as amelioration or pejoration. Two common examples are the English words *chandelier* and *crayon* which refer to slightly different objects than their French counterparts *chandelier* ‘candlestick’ and *crayon* ‘pencil’. As Winford (2010: 175) points out, “many borrowings do not represent complete adoption of a foreign item with both its form and meaning” and this is especially true of semantic false Gallicisms.

There may even be non-native word creations such as *papier mâché* and *nom de plume*.<sup>14</sup> The *OED* clearly specifies in a special note in the entry of *papier mâché* that “[a]lthough composed of French words, the name *papier mâché* appears not to be of French origin. It is not recognised in the French Dictionaries of the Académie, Littré or Hatz-Darm, except in its literal sense of ‘chewed paper’.” I do not concur with the above statement since both nouns are attested in the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé (TLFi)*. Moreover, the French general corpus *Frantext* registers its first appearance in 1736 (there are 111 tokens in *Frantext* where the noun is used to complement the head noun *figure*, *visage* or *mine*, the three of them meaning ‘face’) and its use as “pieces of paper mixed with glue or with flour and water and used to make decorative objects or models” (*CALD*) is clearly apparent in several examples such as the one in (7), from 1938:

- (7) Laforgue ne retrouvait que des cheveux familiers, comme ces cheveux naturels plantés sur les masques chinois de **papier mâché**. (*Frantext*)

According to Ayto (1991: 211) *nom de plume* “gives every indication of being a French expression, but in fact it is quite uncommon in French, and it could well be that it was coined in English as a pseudo-Frenchism, perhaps modelled on the long-established *nom de guerre* (it is first recorded in the 1820s, in the works of Thomas de Quincey).” As regards *papier mâché* Ayto (1991: 225) adds that “[p]apier ‘paper’ and *mâché* ‘chewed’ are of course French words, but the term *papier mâché* appears to have been concocted in English in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century: the usual French expression for what we call *papier mâché* is *carton-pâte*.” If the synchronic criterion should be applied here, *nom de plume* and *papier mâché* are not to be considered as false Gallicisms as they are used in French in exactly the same sense as in English, irrespective of the fact that they were created in English.

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<sup>14</sup> Only *nom de plume* is included in Görlach (2003: 146) and is described as pseudo-French.



It should be noted as well that some words can be at the same time a genuine Gallicism and a false Gallicism: the word *charade*, when used in the plural, describes a sort of team game both in French and in English. However, the semantic extension that the word has developed in English is unknown in French. Example (8) shows the use of the English word *charade* for which the French translation would be *comédie*.

- (8) The wounds Giles had inflicted were only just beginning to heal. Had she ever really meant anything to him? Or had all his compliments and charm, so convincing at the time, been just a **charade** to get him what he wanted? (BNC)

The same situation applies to the English word *fracas* as used in (9). In English the word is synonymous with ‘brawl’ or ‘fight’, whereas in French the word is associated with strong, unpleasant noise and could be translated as ‘crash’, ‘din’ or even ‘roar’.

- (9) In Tascosa he had encountered a brother of the dead Natchez gambler accompanied by two of the irate companions. He had killed two of his enemies and wounded the other, coming out of the **fracas** with a bullet in his leg. (COCA)

A special use of the French prepositional phrase *en suite* – also spelt as a solid or as a hyphenated compound – has been developed in English to designate “a bathroom which is directly connected to a bedroom or a bedroom which is connected to a bathroom” (CALD). Although the phrase is mainly used as an adjective, *an en suite bathroom*, it can also be found as a noun. The loan is much more common and widespread in British English than in American English where it is primarily used to describe a type of compact bathroom in the specialized context of motor boating and yachting.

*Neglige* is sometimes given as an example of an English word creation (Ayto 1991: 206). However, the French word *négligé* designates, as well as *déshabillé*, “a woman’s decorative dressing gown made of light material” (CALD). At times the search in the Oxford-Hachette French Dictionary (OHFD) can bring about the most puzzling and indiscernible situation since Fr. *négligé* is translated as En. *neglige* whereas En. *neglige* is translated as Fr. *déshabillé*. Moreover, the existence of the English word *dishabille* (with a variant form *deshabille*<sup>15</sup>) turns the whole issue into a sort of lexical *mélange*. Consequently, this loan will not be classified as a false Gallicism for the same reasons as *papier mâché* or *nom de plume*, namely that the word is used in contemporary French with exactly the same meaning – although not the same form – as the English loan.

The English word *cortege* designates “a slowly moving line of people, or cars at a funeral” (CALD). This is a case of semantic restriction and of formal truncation from the original French *cortège funèbre*. The French *cortège* is not only used for various types of ceremonies, but also for demonstrations or to refer to groups of students or workers. Once more, the bilingual dictionary supplies contradictory information: the translation of Fr. *cortège funèbre* is En. *cortege* whereas the translation of En. *cortege* is Fr. *cortège*. Regarded fundamentally as a case of compound ellipsis, this loan will be categorised as a false Gallicism.

Finally, the English words *exposé* and *dossier* have been borrowed from French and have both undergone a semantic pejoration process. The corresponding French words are connotatively neutral whereas their English counterparts are usually associated with criminals or criminal acts and contexts. Connotational processes such as pejoration or amelioration will

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<sup>15</sup> This information is taken from the *AHD* that defines *dishabille* as “the state of being partially or very casually dressed; a state of undress” and as “casual or lounging attire”.

not be regarded as valid semantic mechanisms to label French loans as false Gallicisms as they represent a special type of semantic narrowing – in the cases above there are no morphological, lexical or semantic differences and both words are translated into French by their homonyms.

## 5. False Gallicisms and English language varieties

Some false Gallicisms are not of general use in English but are restricted to a certain geographical area. In what follows in particular several instances of false Gallicisms that are either Briticisms or Americanisms will be examined. Furthermore, some false Gallicisms can be classified according not to regional varieties but to different types of technical or specialised languages.

### 5.1. Briticisms

Words or phrases that are especially used in Great Britain are known as Briticisms. Well-known Briticisms are *flat* (*apartment*), *bloke* (*guy*) or *central reservation* (*median strip*), to mention just a few. The English Gallicism *cagoule* is labelled UK in the *CALD* and means “a light jacket with a hood which protects the wearer against wet and windy weather”<sup>16</sup> as illustrated in (10):

- (10) If you can imagine being on a steep, snow-covered slope, below which there is a 1000 m (3,500 ft) sheer drop, would you prefer to be wearing a shiny nylon **cagoule** or a rough old woollen jumper? (*BNC*)

The French word *cagoule* has historically been used to designate a cowl, i.e. “a large loose covering for the head and sometimes shoulders, but not the face, which is worn especially by monks” (*CALD*). In modern times the word has taken on a second sense in French and corresponds to the English word *balaclava*.

The word *bonnet* can either mean a type of hat or, exclusively in British English, “the metal cover over the part of the car where the engine is” (*CALD*). It is in this sense that the word *bonnet* is to be considered as a false Anglicism – the corresponding French word is *capot* – and as a Briticism since the equivalent word in American English is *hood*.

*Courier* in English has the general meaning of “a person who carries important messages or documents for someone else” (*CALD*) and is quasi-synonymous with *messenger*. However, this loanword has taken on a specialised meaning in British English in the field of tourism as “a person who looks after a group of people on holiday especially by giving them advice on what to do, what to see, etc” (*CALD*).

### 5.2. Americanisms

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<sup>16</sup> Something which corroborates the fact that *cagoule* is a Briticism is that no entry of this word has been found in the lexicon of the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary (WTNID)*. However, the derivative *cagoulard* (“a member of a secret reactionary revolutionary French organization suppressed in 1937-38”) is included as this refers to a historically relevant figure in French history, which is obviously beyond any varietal distinction.

Words or phrases that are associated with the variety of the English language spoken in the United States are known as Americanisms. Well-known Americanisms include *cookie (biscuit)*, *rooster (cock)* or *scallion (spring onion)* among many others.

*Valet* is a clearly identifiable French loan which is phonologically marked as the final *t* is silent, thus imitating the original French pronunciation. This word which is currently used to designate “someone in a hotel who cleans clothes” (*CALD*) has taken on a special meaning in American English and is applied to refer to “someone at a hotel or restaurant that puts your car in a parking space for you” (*CALD*) as shown in (11):

- (11) The paparazzi were busy snapping photos of the solo Olsen twin as she waited for the **valet** to fetch her car. (*COCA*)

It is well established that a great number of French words and phrases related to food and wine have made their way into English and many other languages worldwide. However, some of these loans have taken on a special sense in British or American English, as is the case with *hors d'oeuvres*.<sup>17</sup> Another rather conspicuous false Gallicism in American English is *entrée* which in this language variety means *main course* as illustrated in (12).

- (12) The cooks are given offbeat ingredients and just 20-30 minutes to make an appetizer, **entree** and dessert, resulting in such offerings as sea urchin French toast. (*COCA*)

A very well-known example of semantic shift is represented by the French loan *bureau* and the sense that the word has taken on in American English. A *bureau* in Great Britain is a writing desk whereas in the United States the word is used to refer to a chest of drawers,<sup>18</sup> as shown in (13).

- (13) Helen walked to a **bureau** and searched the drawers, one filled with scarves and nylons, the next with panties neatly folded and separated by color. (*COCA*)

*Foyer* is another case of a false Gallicism exclusively in the sense that this word has developed in American English as “the room in a house or apartment leading from the front door to other rooms, where things like coats and hats are kept” (*CALD*). The loan is synonymous with *hall* or *hallway* as illustrated in (14):

- (14) The main entrance leads to a small **foyer**, beyond which is a spacious living room with original hardwood floors, a wood-burning stove and glass doors that open to a back patio and bathe the space in natural light. (*COCA*)

So far I have dealt with words that are common to both language varieties but which have developed a special and distinct sense in American English. This is simply part of a larger linguistic phenomenon which is common and well-attested in the different varieties of the four main European languages spoken in the American continent, i.e. English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. On the contrary, there are French loans that are only found in

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<sup>17</sup> *Hors d'oeuvres* means “a small savoury dish eaten at the start of a meal” in British English whereas in American English it means “small pieces of food eaten at a party” (*CALD*).

<sup>18</sup> Not only in American English does this French loan acquire a new sense. The Swedish formally-adapted French loan *byrå* (Fr. bureau) has exactly the same meaning as its American counterpart, which automatically makes of it a false Gallicism in Swedish.

American English, and that is precisely the case of *pompadour* (15), a word that designates a type of hairdo that the British call *quiff* and the French call *banane*.

- (15) The other was younger, maybe a couple years older than I was. He was brown-haired; he had a big **pompadour** and he combed his hair back into a duck's ass, a popular style at the time. (*COCA*)

*Au jus* seems to be in use only in American English as 16 tokens of the phrase have been found in the *COCA* and none in the *BNC*. The phrase has an entry in the *WTNID* and is defined as “served in the meat juice obtained from roasting (roast beef au jus)”. In order to express the same idea French would need a more complex structure to translate the example provided at the end of the definition, but in any case the combination of the portmanteau morph *au* and the noun *jus* does not make any sense in French.

Finally, the phrase *à la mode* represents another instance of an American false Gallicism since it is used to designate a scoop of vanilla ice-cream accompanying a dessert as shown in (16):

- (16) I've long been amused by diners who choose a dessert like apple pie **a la mode**, at about 600 calories a serving, and sprinkle artificial sweetener in their coffee or tea to replace the 16 calories in a teaspoon of sugar. (*COCA*)

### 5.3. Technical or specialised languages

The very few examples of false Gallicisms in this section are representative of a certain type of borrowings that have made their way into terminology or are restricted to a specialised area or technical field. It is a well-known fact that English has borrowed an important number of French words and phrases along centuries of mutual lexical contact and that cookery, fashion, law and the military have been particularly receptive to French lexis. As a general rule, the large majority of French loans in these and other specialised areas have retained their original sense in English although some particular terms related to traditional trades or artisan professional activities could be catalogued in the list of false Gallicisms.

In the specialised field of the leather industry I have found the French-looking word, *surcingle*. The *AHD* defines it as “[a] girth that binds a saddle, pack, or blanket to the body of a horse”. The word as such does not exist in French which uses the terms *surfaix* or *sous-ventrière* to refer to the same object. The English word is etymologically and semantically related to contemporary French *sangle*, which has exactly the same meaning but which is non-specialised and therefore makes part of the French core vocabulary, contrary to the word *surcingle* in English, completely unknown to the non-specialists.

In the technical language of sewing or needlework, mention should be made of the English term *appliqué*, whose French translation is *application*. The word *appliqué* means “[a] decoration or ornament, as in needlework, made by cutting pieces of one material and applying them to the surface of another” (*AHD*), and clearly constitutes a case of technical false Gallicism as the French word *appliqué* ‘applied’ is the past participle of the verb *appliquer* ‘to apply’ and is used exclusively as an adjective in combinations such as *linguistique appliquée* ‘applied linguistics’ or *mathématiques appliqués* ‘applied mathematics’.

Lastly, I would like to point out the use of the French loan *rosette* in architecture to designate “a circular ornament, carved, painted or moulded resembling a formalised rose” (*GDT*). The equivalent specialised term in French is *rosace*.

## 6. Conclusion

It is essential to subscribe to a synchronic or to a diachronic perspective in the analysis of false borrowings in general, and of false Gallicisms in English in particular: borrowings such as *nom de plume* and *papier mâché* have exactly the same meaning in contemporary French and in contemporary English, regardless of the fact that, according to highly reputable sources, they were not coined in France. A sharp distinction should also be drawn between genuine Gallicisms that have been adapted orthographically and remain formally stable in contemporary English (*maisonette*) or that fluctuate as far as gender and plural agreement is concerned (*confidant/e*, *the nouveau/x riche/s*) and false Gallicisms which either do not exist as such in French (*arbitrageur*) or have been truncated or clipped (*couture*) or if they do, they have a completely different semantic referent (*chandelier*). As with native Anglo-Saxon words, some French loanwords do not necessarily mean the same thing on both shores of the Atlantic (*bureau*) and some others may have acquired a specific meaning in a certain technical or specialised language (*appliqué*).

Other studies of false Gallicisms (and of false borrowings in general) would be necessary so as to contrast items, analyses and results that will eventually pave the way for the publication of a dictionary of false borrowings in English.

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## Appendix A

The following table lists in the first column the words analysed as false Gallicisms and in the second column, their definition as found in the *CALD*. Finally, the third column provides the translation into French given by the *OHFD*. It should be noted that when a given item does not have an entry in either of the two dictionaries mentioned above, other monolingual lexicographic sources have been consulted, namely *The American Heritage Dictionary (AHD)*, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique (GDT)* and the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary (WTNID)*. False Gallicisms specific to the American variety are labelled *US* and those mainly used in the British Isles are labelled *UK*.

False	Definition	Translation into
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<b>Galicism</b>	<b>(CALD)</b>	<b>French (OHFD)</b>
à la mode (US)	Served with ice cream.	<i>avec une glace à la vanille</i>
appliqué	Decorative work in which one piece of cloth is sewn or fixed onto another, or the activity of decorating cloth in this way.	<i>application</i>
au gratin	Cooked with a covering of cheese or small pieces of bread mixed with butter.	<i>gratin</i>
au jus (US)	Served in the meat juice obtained from roasting. (WTNID)	<i>servi dans le jus de cuisson</i>
au pair	A foreign person, usually a young woman, who lives with a family in order to learn their language and who looks after the children or cleans the house in return for meals, a room and a small payment.	<i>jeune fille au pair</i>
arbitrageur	A person who makes money from arbitrage.	<i>arbitragiste</i>
bonnet (UK)	The metal cover over the part of a car where the engine is.	<i>capot</i>
bon viveur (UK)	A person who enjoys good food and wines and likes going to restaurants and parties.	<i>bon vivant</i>
brassiere	A piece of women's underwear that supports the breasts.	<i>soutien-gorge</i>
bureau (US)	A piece of furniture with drawers in which you keep things such as clothes.	<i>commode</i>
cagoule (UK)	A light jacket with a hood which protects the wearer against wet and windy weather.	<i>anorak, K-Way®</i>
chandelier	A decorative light which hangs from the ceiling and has several parts like branches for holding bulbs or, especially in the past, candles.	<i>lustre</i>
charade	An act or event which is clearly false.	<i>comédie</i>
cortege	A slowly moving line of people, or cars at a funeral.	<i>cortège funèbre</i>
coup (d'état)	Sudden illegal, often violent, taking of government power, especially by (part of) an army.	<i>coup d'État</i>
courier	A person who carries important messages or documents for someone else.	<i>coursier</i>
courier (UK)	Person who looks after a group of people on holiday especially by giving them advice on what to do, what to see, etc.	<i>guide</i>
crayon	A small stick of coloured wax used for drawing or writing.	<i>craie grasse</i>
culottes	Women's short trousers which look like a skirt.	<i>jupe-culotte</i>
double entendre	A word or phrase that might be understood in two ways, one of which is usually sexual.	<i>sous-entendu (grivois)</i>
en suite, en-suite, ensuite	Describes a bathroom which is directly connected to a bedroom or a bedroom which is connected to a bathroom.	<i>salle de bain attenante</i>

entrée (US)	The main dish of a meal.	<i>plat principal</i>
fatigues	A loose brownish green uniform worn by soldiers.	<i>treillis</i>
folie de grandeur <sup>19</sup>	Delusions of grandeur	<i>folie des grandeurs</i>
foyer (US)	The room in a house or apartment leading from the front door to other rooms, where things like coats and hats are kept.	<i>entrée</i>
fracas	A noisy argument or fight.	<i>altercation, accrochage</i>
(haute) couture	The designing, making and selling of expensive fashionable clothing, or the clothes themselves.	<i>haute couture</i>
pannier	A bag or similar container, especially one of a pair that hangs on either side of a bicycle, motorcycle, or animal such as a horse or donkey.	<i>sacoché</i>
pompadour (US)	A hairstyle, worn usually by men, in which the hair at the front of the head is brushed up.	<i>banane</i>
résumé (US)	A short written description of your education, qualifications, previous jobs and sometimes also your personal interests, which you send to an employer when you are trying to get a job.	<i>CV, curriculum (vitae)</i>
rosette	A circular ornament, carved, painted or moulded resembling a formalised rose; also a rose-shaped patera. (GDT)	<i>rosace (GDT)</i>
surcingle	A girth that binds a saddle, pack, or blanket to the body of a horse. (AHD)	<i>surfaix, sous-ventrière (GDT)</i>
valet (US)	Someone at a hotel or restaurant who puts your car in a parking space for you.	<i>voiturier</i>
venue	The place where a public event or meeting happens.	<i>lieu</i>

<sup>19</sup> No definitions or translations have been found in the *CALD* and in the *OHFD*. However, the phrase is attested in Ayto's *Dictionaries of Foreign Words and Phrases*.