HYBRID LEXICAL USE IN FRENCH CORPORATE DISCOURSE

The paper aims to explore the nature and extent of English-based lexis, especially loanwords and calques, and other neologisms in contemporary French corporate discourse (e.g. *pitcher, forwarder, conf call, paperboard, N+1, être force de proposition*), which have been defined as managerial *newspeak* and *wording*, and to investigate the reactions this type of French provokes from members and non-members of this discourse community. The exploratory mixed-method approach used is empirically data-driven and exploits a lexicological/word-formational analysis. The first phase of the research was quantitative, involving a questionnaire sent to business school students working as 'apprentices' in French companies; this sought to identify and categorize the different types of novel lexis employed in French corporate discourse in order to create a taxonomy of the various categories of terms encountered. Lexical expressions selected from the 450 linguistic tokens in the questionnaire data, along with an email written in this style of 'French' and posted on the Internet, containing lexical items from various word-formational categories, were used as prompt documents in the qualitative phase of the research. A taxonomy of different kinds of borrowings and neologisms is proposed and reactions to a selection of the hybrid lexical terms are outlined, from members of the business community and from 'outsiders'. The relevance of this research for teachers and students of French, English and Business Communication as well as for business professionals is also considered.

Par Dr Peter DALY and Dennis DAVY *
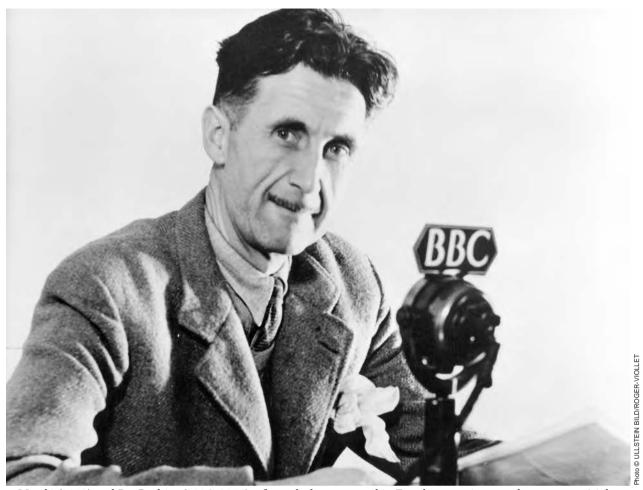
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Contemporary French corporate discourse is peppered with neologisms and lexical expressions borrowed from, or calqued on, English (e.g. *pitcher, forwarder, conf call, paperboard, être force de proposition, N+1*). Many terms have been used to describe these types of hybrid lexical usage including *wording* (Des Isnards & Zuber 2008), *managerial newspeak* (Macchi 2010; De Gaulejac 2005, 2008, 2011; Mellina 2007) and *"parler d'entreprise"* (De Vecchi 2002). Des Isnards and Zuber (2008) describe the language used in corporate France as "wording" (*verbiage* in French) and explain that the motivation for using such words includes speed and efficiency in a work situation. They justify the usage of such truncated lexis by the fear of incompetence on behalf of business people, who want to give their clients the impression that they are serious and competent in their work. Moreover, they claim that it is necessary to master this new wording if you intend to be a professional in a corporate context. While their book and the various YouTube videos (1) produced by the authors treat the subject of hybrid lexical usage with considerable humour, there is a strong ideological message regarding inclusion and exclusion in corporate France, the linguistic construction of the manager in contemporary French organizations and how post-modernity is linguistically encoded. Macchi (2010) and De Gaulejac (2005, 2011) refer to the language used in French companies as *novlangue managériale* (managerial newspeak), with a clear reference to George Orwell's novel *1984* and ideology in society (Orwell 1949). These authors carry out linguistic analysis of authentic texts (speeches and policy documents) and focus mainly on the negative effects of the use of such language, which, they claim, is 'polluting' sectors beyond the management sphere, in areas such as education, health care and other public services. Macchi (2010) refers specifically to the use of this management speak within public universities following the adoption of the LRU Law (2) of 10 August 2007, referring to the "the slow and largely held secret of the mutation of the public university into a private company" (2010: 1), whereby the university has shifted in order to "develop in each one of us a new self-representation and a new representation of one's institution, which requires the construction in each one of us of the managerial self by acting on our belief system" (Macchi 2010: 5). The easiest way to make this paradigm shift to a more managerial vision is via

internal communication and this is what Macchi studies in his paper. He reports on the saturation of English-based lexis in internal documents and oral presentations, which has brought about this change, providing copious examples of English-based words used, such as *gouvernance* (from corporate governance), a term first used in a university context in the aforementioned LRU law of 2007. He deplores the unquestioned use of this management speak in the public university and equates the adoption of such terms with the language of the Third Reich (Klemperer 1947/2005), the *langue de bois* ('waffling' or 'stonewalling' in English) used in the press and media in France (Hazan 2006) and Orwell's INGSOC (Orwell 1949). De Gaulejac (2005; 2011) also refers to the management speak that is used for ideological purposes. In his 2005 book he analyses a series of lexical terms that he considers as key concepts taken from business such as *quality, excellence, success, progress, performance, engagement, satisfaction of needs, responsibility* and *recognition* and how these terms are articulated in other spheres such as public services and health care with the consequent psycho-social risks. He cites the work of Noyé (1998) to explain the fact that certain terms are used interchangeably to cover the inherent complexity, conflicts and contradictions of organizations by terminology which affirms certain values that are considered as evident, universal and positivistic in nature. He claims that the use of such terms is an integral part of a changing ideology in the workplace that leads to new work pathologies, including depression, burnout, work addiction, stress and hyperactivity. In his most recent work, De Gaulejac (2011) continues to discuss these pathologies and their ideological underpinnings, such as the instrumentalization of human capital, new public management and the use of language to underscore this ideology. Finally, De Vecchi (2002) uses the term *parler d'entreprise* to describe all the terms employed within a company and which distinguishes that company from other companies. This can also be extended to an organization. He outlines why the company/organization has its own language or jargon: to transmit information economically and quickly; to transfer and manage the corporate knowledge, to adapt to the organization and corporate culture, and to belong to a speech community. So we can see that there are many reasons to explain the invasion of various kinds of neologisms (many of them English-based) in the French corporate environment such as efficiency and the wish to give the impression of a certain competence in a specific domain; or for ideological reasons with the sole intent to include or exclude, or to manage knowledge and belong to a corporate speech community or culture.

Our focus in this paper is to categorise the hybrid lexical usage in French corporate discourse and to outline the potential implications of such lexical usage.

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(1) *Le Wording du Jour : « N+1 »* (Express Magazine)
http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/economie/le-wording-du-jour-n-1_712404.html

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(2) *LRU – Loi sur les libertés et responsabilités de l'université* : Act No. 2007-1199 of 10 August 2007 regarding the freedoms and responsibilities of universities (called LRU or Pécresse law) promulgated by the then Minister of Higher Education Valérie Pécresse under the second Fillon government.

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« Macchi (2010) and De Gaulejac (2005, 2011) refer to the language used in French companies as novlangue managériale (managerial newspeak), with a clear reference to George Orwell's novel 1984 and ideology in society (Orwell 1949) », **portrait de l'écrivain britannique Georges Orwel (1903-1950).**

The prevalence of English-based terms in many languages has been extensively researched (Fischer 2005; Onysko & Winter-Froemel 2010; Winter-Froemel 2011; Furiasi, Pulcini & Rodríguez González 2012) and many glossaries, wordlists and dictionaries have been compiled to record and define these terms in various languages (Görlach 2000; Krämer 2000; Chaptal de Chanteloup 2011 among others). Compron (1998) has compiled a general glossary of Anglicisms in Canadian French, and an enormous amount of research has been carried out into linguistic borrowing (Deroy 1956), specifically from English into French, resulting in analyses and glossaries of 'franglais' and dictionaries of 'anglicismes' (Etiemble 1964, 1973; Höfler 1982; Rey-Debove & Gagnon 1984; Humbley & Boissy 1989; Voirol 2006; Walter 1988, 1997; Tournier 1991; Sergeant 2007).

The paper is divided into five parts: 1) protection of the French language; 2) research method; 3) findings to include the taxonomy of hybrid lexical items and the awareness of, and subjective reactions to the hybrid lexical items studied; 4) discussion on the limitations and future research and 5) the conclusions and implication of this research.

PROTECTION OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

There has been intense discussion of whether Anglicisms represent a danger or an enrichment for the French language (e.g. Pergnier 1989) and a constant stream of attempts to stanch the flow of English-based loanwords into French, with special commissions, mainly in France and Québec, valiantly endeavouring to propose intra-lingual neologisms based on other word-formational processes than inter-lingual borrowing, using the rich lexical resources of the French language (Commissariat Général de la Langue Française, 1988).

In France, many organizations have the mission to protect the French language. The oldest and most famous is the Académie Française (3) whose members have been protecting the language against foreign terms since the body was set up by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635. For the last twenty years, the Académie has

(3) *Académie Française* website : http://www.academie-francaise.fr/

played a more active role in the work of terminology committees organised by the DGLFLF (4) and takes part in the Commission Générale de Terminologie. A new section was recently added to the Académie website "Dire, ne pas dire" (to say or not to say), which provides a blacklist of English borrowings/calques and the appropriate official French equivalent. The big question is always how many of such official coinages catch on and how many become the butt of jokes. Another association is the APFA (*Actions pour promouvoir le français des affaires* – Actions to promote Business French) (5), which has attributed the avalanche of new English terms to the "snobbery or intellectual laziness" (APFA, 2012) of their users and warns that the use of words outside their normal linguistic context can result in the loss of the nuances and connotations necessary for clear understanding and communication. The APFA also refers to the danger of exclusion of those readers/listeners who do not understand the English-based words used as they do not have the necessary etymological knowledge. Furthermore, the APFA believes that it has a role to play with the media (by offering the official terms and also proposing those that should be used), with the public (by publishing a pocket dictionary) and with young people (by raising awareness of the problems and the best practices regarding business French). Its Business French Francophone Cup (*Le Mot d'Or*) encourages students of business to employ the appropriate terminology in French as well as master English and not to confuse the two. The competition consists of five parts: coining neologisms for new concepts, finding existing words via their definitions, writing a terminological story in correct French, an etymological exercise and writing a short piece on a company project. The terminological story is particularly interesting insofar as it requires students to master the true meaning of the English words which they tend to use excessively, and sometimes wrongly, without thinking.

The defence of the French language is also enshrined in law via the Loi Toubon (6) (Law 94-665 of 4 August 1994), which requires the use of French in official government publications, advertisements, in workplaces, commercial contracts, in government-financed schools and other contexts. The law is part of the French Labour Code and aims to enable all

employees in France to use French as their language at work. French is obligatory in work contracts, for internal documents concerning health and safety and discipline issues, all other internal documents concerning employee obligations in the execution of their work, and job offers published in newspapers. Hederlé (2007) highlights the dangers of the overuse of English and how this can cause the "linguistic fracture" at work to widen. When the Toubon law was first enacted, fines of FF 10,000 (approximately €1 500) were levied on those who used English terms (Arnoux 1994). Even as recently as 2004, GE Healthcare, a French subsidiary of the US Company, was sued by its staff for providing software and other documentation in English only (Gentleman 2004). And in 2012, employees won a case against Danone to translate their internal software into French (AFP 2012).

As well as these organizations and laws, there are also some individual initiatives to come up with alternatives to English-based lexis in the French language. An example is when in 2010, Alain Joyandet, State Secretary of Francophony, asked school children to find alternatives to works such as *buzz, tuning, chat, talk* and *newsletter* within the Concours Francomot and the results included "ramdam" for *buzz,* "infolettre" for *newsletter,* "débat" for *talk,* "bolidage" for *tuning* and "éblabla" or "tchatche" for *chat.* However, it is difficult to know if these terms will catch on. Some successes in the past include: "baladeur" for *walkman,* "*VTT*" for *mountain bike,* "logiciel" for *software,* "courriel" for *email* and, less successfully, "pourriel" for *spam* along with total failures such as 'bouteur' for *bulldozer* and 'mirodrome' for *peep show* (Sablayrolles 2013).
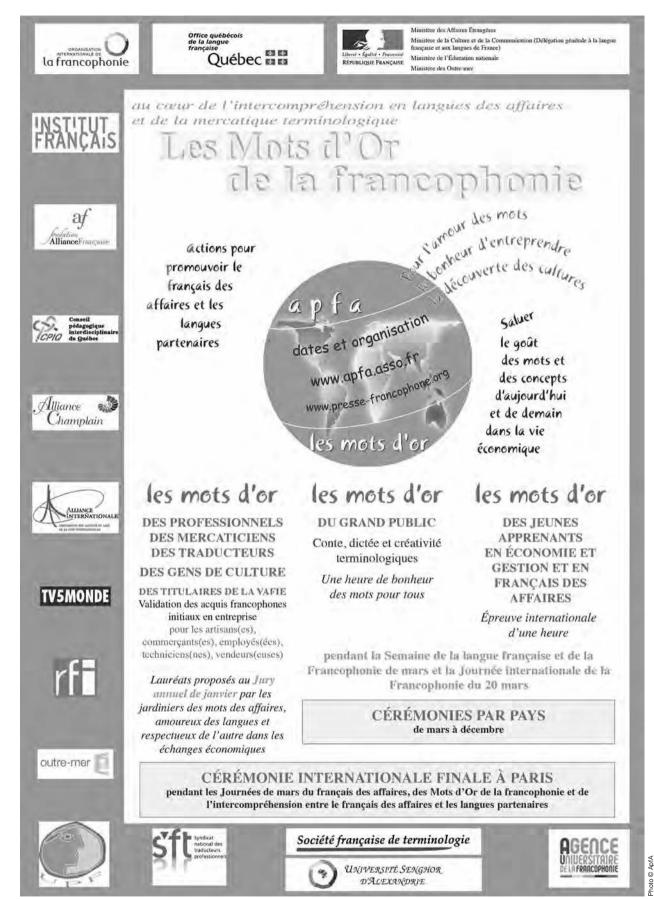
It can thus be seen that the use of hybrid lexical terms in corporate French discourse is perceived both positively and negatively; positively in the sense that it ensures that the employees feel part of a linguistic community to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge within the company quickly and efficiently; negatively in the sense that this 'managerialism' is sometimes considered as an exclusion mechanism used for ideological purposes or a threat to the French language. In the next section, we will outline the research method that was used in our study to investigate the nature and extent of Anglicisms and other neologisms currently being used in French corporate discourse.

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(4) DGLFLF = Délégation française à la langue française et aux langues de France. Website : http://www.dglf.culture.gouv.fr/

(5) APFA (Actions pour Promouvoir le Français des Affaires) – An association under the patronage of the General Delegation of the French Language and Languages in France and the International Organization of la Francophonie. Website : http://www.presse-francophone.org/apfa/sommaire.htm

(6) Toubon Law website : http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGIT-EXT000005616341&dateTexte=vig

RESEARCH METHOD

This research exploited a mixed-method (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2006) approach: 1) a quantitative approach involving a questionnaire to collect perceived examples of hybrid lexical usage in corporate

« *Its Business French Francophone Cup (Le Mot d'Or) encourages students of business to employ the appropriate terminology in French as well as master English and not to confuse the two.* »

French discourse, rather than a corpus-based approach; and 2) a qualitative approach to ascertain subjective awareness of, and reactions to, instances of hybrid lexical usage. In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was designed and initially piloted on a small group of French business apprentice students aged from 22 to 30 working on in-company placements in the Greater Paris area. This questionnaire contained 8 questions in French, a mixture of open and closed items, concerning the use of neologisms and English-based lexis in French companies, in written and spoken contexts. We specifically asked the respondents to give examples of top-of-mind neologisms and English-based terms commonly used in their companies, as well as to provide examples of emails sent or received, which contained such lexical terms. Once piloted, the questionnaire was revised and sent to 200 apprentices. Out of the 200 questionnaires sent, 70 replies were received (a response rate of 35 %). Replies from this questionnaire provided sufficient data to compile a list of French neologisms and English-based words and expressions. This data set was then analysed by means of a lexicological approach using various analytical categories such as parts of speech, underlying word-formational process (affixation, blending, clipping, initialising, acronymy, compounding, conversion, etc.), and especially different types of borrowing, with or without semantic/pragmatic shifts and/or phonological and orthographic accommodation. Of the variety of classifications of word-formational processes and neologisms developed by linguists such as Adams (1973), Bauer (1983), Tournier (1985; 1991), Davy (1993) and Plag (2003) for English, and Picoche (1977), Corbin (1991), Pruvost & Sablayrolles (2003; 2012) and Dumarest & Morsel (2005) for French, a taxonomy based on Tournier's framework of 'lexicogénétique' (1985; 1991) as adapted and extended by Davy (1993; 2000; 2010), fine-tuning the sub-processes of borrowing, which was given short shrift by Tournier (1985) as a lexicogenetic process. Insights from more recent studies of linguistic borrowing, especially from the German-speaking world, were also incorporated. The questionnaire data was categorized in order to ascertain the most frequent items and categories used.

In the second stage of the research, the qualitative phase, the aim was to establish the degree of respondents' familiarity with, and understanding of, a selection of terms from contemporary French corporate discourse and their subjective reactions to them. The respondents were asked to comment (in English or French) on the items presented both in a de-contextualized list and in an extended piece of 'French' discourse and to explain and where possible provide a French equivalent for the terms used. Furthermore, they were encouraged to suggest the motivation for using such hybrid language in the corporate world.

Two distinct groups were interviewed : 1) 15 in-group respondents, namely young business professionals (5 former business students now working in companies and 10 entrepreneurs, aged between 25 and 30); and 2) 15 out-group interviewees, i.e. non-business professionals (including teachers, notaries and secretaries) with an upper intermediate level in English of (at least CEFRL (7) level B2), who had little or no link with the corporate business environment). The interviews were based on two documents :
– A list of 62 de-contextualized lexical items extracted from the questionnaire data, as a representative sample of the data set (mainly high frequency items with some lower frequency items added in) ;
– A French email with a high density of neologisms and abundant loanwords and calques from English, exemplifying the various categories under study, found on the Internet (http://www.attitudes-leblog.com/?paged=10) Within this email, we identified more than 50 items, which we believed to be typical of contemporary corporate jargon, many of which were also in the list of lexical items selected from the questionnaire.

Respondents were asked first to comment on the list of de-contextualised instances of hybrid lexical usage, and then were invited to comment on the example of an email discourse. We considered it important to have used cohesive/coherent email discourse for two reasons : 1) it contextualized the target lexical items; 2) an email is the interface of spontaneous spoken and written discourse.

FINDINGS

Axonomy of Hybrid Lexical Items

The 450 hybrid lexical items identified by the informants in the online questionnaire were first analysed in terms of parts of speech. The vast majority of words were from open-class categories – nouns and verbs : nouns of different types, such as *conf call, meeting, portfolio, bullet, CRM, template* and *data,* and verbs, including *forwarder, downloader, solutionner, optimiser,* and the single adjective *corporate*. Not surprisingly, there were no examples from closed-class categories such as determiners and prepositions.

It was often difficult to distinguish between nouns and verbs, namely with words ending in *-er (trader, pricer, sizer, screener, spli(t)ter, manager, scratcher, networker, pitcher, benchmarker,* among others). We also found the occasional interjection (*Hello*) and some

full phrases (*I'm on it*) and abbreviated phrases (*asap/ASAP* for *as soon as possible*).

Much more interestingly, however, word-formational analysis revealed that the most productive process was borrowing/calquing : these loanwords were both inter-lingual (individual lexical items both nouns and adjectives, compounds and borrowings plus clipping) and also intra-lingual borrowings of different kinds, for example when a specialized French term from a particular discipline 'migrates' to another domain, e.g. *acter* and *être charette*. Also represented were affixations and different types of abbreviations (clippings, acronyms, initialisms and blends). This categorization is shown below with examples from the data set.

Awareness of, and Subjective Reactions to, Hybrid Language Usage

In this section, we will report on the awareness of, and subjective reactions to, the 62 items extracted from the questionnaire and the email which contextualized more than 56 target lexical terms.

The in-group seemed to take for granted more than 50 % of the terms on the list and in the email, either not commenting on them at all or describing them as totally natural : words such as *downloader, impacté, débriefing, capitaliser sur, pitché, workshop, B2B, faisait sens, checker, corporate, je suis revenue vers toi, acter, forwarder, process, externaliser, FYI, conf call, cashflow, team, framework, device, dashboard, roadmap, leviers, backup, être off, benchmark, split,* among others. When questioned on some of the above terms, respondents replied that this language was part of their everyday wordstock, that it did not "shock" them in any way, that these terms were very frequently used and some said that there was no other French equivalent for the concept (e.g. *le cloud*). The gender of nouns was also discussed (e.g. *un/e JV –joint venture, un/e team, un/une target, un/e timesheet*). Respondents had very strong feelings as to whether it was *un* or *une team*. In cases where the English-based term was in competition with an existing French term (*downloader* and *télécharger, cible* and *target, cashflow* and *trésorerie, roadmap* and *feuille de route, deal* and *affaire, deadline* and *délai, forecast* and *prévision, follow-up* and *suivi, team* and *équipe, to check* and *vérifier, boss* and *chef, brainstorming* and *remue-méninges*), they responded that they either did not know the French term, e.g. *feuille de route* and *remue-méninges* or when they knew both terms, they felt that the English term was more up-to-date and precise, quicker and easier to use, more time-saving and concise. It was also noted in some apparently equivalent pairs that the English-based terms had acquired particular connotations and undergone semantic narrowing, e.g. *team/équipe*, where two respondents mentioned that, for them, the terms are not exactly equivalent. One said that *team* is "stronger and more sporty, as in a team, which moves

something forward" and the other felt that *team* "was limited to marketing" while *équipe* was more general. The terms that respondents were unfamiliar with were generally initialisms and acronyms, which often came from distinct disciplines beyond their experience, such as *MBOX* (IT), *EBIDTA* (finance/accountancy), *JV* (Finance) *BLM* (Organizational Behaviour), and many of the *-ing* words such as *clustering, sizing, versioning, screening (8).*

However, there were strong affective reactions to the usage of particular terms by certain interviewees. For example, one respondent said that she was ashamed to admit that she actually did use *je suis revenue vers quelqu'un.* The acronym *asap/ASAP* sparked off strong reactions such as "it annoys me as people are so busy that they can't write it out in full and it puts huge pressure on people". In addition to the taken-for-grantedness/unawareness of many of the terms used, some respondents reported that they felt ill at ease and uncomfortable with particular items (using the verbs *gêner, choquer,* and *énerver*). One respondent pointed out that this type of language is useful when there is no equivalent in French but that overuse of these neologisms and borrowings can sometimes lead to a bastardized form of French mixed with English. Many people also claimed that these terms were mainly used orally though they conceded they were also frequent in emails, which contain many features of spoken language.

When we consider the reactions from the out-group, it is surprising how many of the English-based terms were totally unknown (e.g. *asap, conf call, framework, dashboard, business plan, benchmark, débriefer, workshop, initialiser, N+1, pitché, cascade, leviers, implémenter,* among others) even if their level of English was upper-intermediate (B2). While they were unfamiliar with almost all of the acronyms and initialisms, they knew and accepted *briefer, le planning, le boss, deadline, feedback, le net,* and *peanuts,* which are now part of the general French lexicon and have been accepted into dictionaries.

In some cases out-group respondents tried to analyze the word but their commentary or analysis was sometimes wrong (e.g. that *meeting* was just used in politics; *device* they thought meant motto or currency [*devise*]; *deal* was drug trafficking; *a waiver* used in connection with a wave; *check,* they thought was a bank cheque).

There was a strong affective reaction to the *–ing* words such as *screening, clustering* and so forth. The out-group also tended to reformulate neologistic "French" terms such as noun-to-verb conversions like *impacter* to *avoir un impact sur.* They reacted to some terms with comments such as "ugly", "pretentious", "difficult to pronounce", "*n'importe quoi*", and "it is a

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(8) Cf. Kortas (2009), pp. 548

Borrowing (Inter-lingual)	
1) Individual lexical items	***Nouns:*** *meeting; team; check; cloud; deal; win; pitch; target; forecast* ***Adjective:*** *corporate* ***Nouns with suffix –ing –and varying degrees of semantic shift*** *planning; casting; reporting; screening; clustering; versioning; brainstorming; pricing; timing; mapping; datamining; sizing; merchandising; phasing; booking; closing*
2) Borrowing of compound nouns (written as one word, two words or with a hyphen) and adjective + noun phrases	***One word:*** *inbox; dashboard; timesheet; cashflow; roadmap; deadline; benchmark; background; flagship; toolbox; snapshot; flipbook; factsheet; newsletter; datamap* ***Two words:*** *supply chain; balance sheet; cash flow; business leader; management fees; midyear entretien; knowledge management; business unit; task force; customer centricity; business plan; business model; wealth management; data manager; market maker* ***Hyphenated:*** *follow-up* ***Adjective + noun phrases:*** *direct hit; near miss; quick win*
3) Borrowing and clip	***From English:*** *conf call (< conference call); bullet (< bullet point); dans le pipe (< pipeline), NB pronounced /pa p/*
4) Calquing	*Je reviens vers toi/je te reviens(sic) (I'll get back to you); faire sens; se rendre visible en interne; les plans de recovery; prendre le lead; closer le gap; être off; projet en standby; merci pour ton retour; mettre le focus sur*
Borrowing (Intra-lingual)	***One word:*** *acter (from legal French)* ***Multi-word expressions:*** *être cha(r)rette (architecture); monter en puissance (sport)*
Blending	*French : clavardage (< clavier +bavarder = to chat on line)* *English : advertorial (< advertisement + editorial); propale (< propostion commerciale); MBOX (<mailbox); synergy (<synchronised energy)*
Affixation	débriefer; booster; networker; back-tester; forwarder; downloader; brainstormer; timer; scratcher; briefer; impacter; implémenter; brander; reconsidérer; ré-enginieurer; targeter; performer; capitaliser (sur); optimiser; externaliser (A French verbal or nominal suffix is added to an English noun borrowing) Suffixation with a classical combining form –age: chronophage = time-consuming
Abbreviations Initialisms	**French Abbreviations** Single words: Cdt/Cdlt <cordialement); Chgt (< changement) **English Abbreviations** **Single words:** Whsl (= wholesale)l; PPT (< PowerPoint); Rgds; Thnx **French Iniatialisms** **Phrases:** stp; svp; RAS (rien à signaler); à tte (à toute suite) **English Initialisms** **Compounds:** ROI (return on investment); KPI (key performance indicators); JV (joint venture); BU (business unit - rarely used in English); P&L (profit and loss); BLM (business line manager); EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization); IT (information technology); CRM (customer relationship management); ETA (estimated time of arrival); YTD (year-to-date); POS (point of sale); LBO (leveraged buy-out) **Phrases:** TBD (to be done/determined/decided); FYI (for your information); TBC (to be confirmed) **Combinations involving numbers and other signs:** N+1; F2F (face to face); N-1; Q2 (second quarter); 100 K; B2B; C2C
Acronyms	Asap/ASAP
Root formation	No examples in data set
Compounding	No examples in data set

Table 1 - Taxonomy of Hybrid Lexical Items in French Corporate Discourse.

joke ", " bizarre ", "strange", franglais ", " snobbish"and "over-the-top. The respondents were often able to produce French equivalents, which were more long-winded (e.g. *performer – être plus performant/efficace que; implémenter – mettre en œuvre; pitch – speech/baratin de vendeur; capitaliser – tirer parti de quelque chose*).

For the out-group, the reasons given for the usage of such terms included to intimidate people who do not belong to their group and that the users of these terms were trying to show off and be trendy and maybe to exclude non-members of their discourse community.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study has produced a useful corpus of English-based expressions and other kinds of neologisms used in French corporate environments at the end of 2012, there are certain limitations and directions for future research, which will be discussed below.

Firstly, our sample in-group population was young (aged 22 to 30) and at the lower echelons of the company hierarchy. The implication of this is that the sample is not totally representative and may contain samples of more general 'young speech'. Further research with older populations (40 to 65) and at different managerial levels within the company hierarchy will be required to remedy this potential bias.

Secondly, the expressions identified by the respondents only represent a selection of the borrowings and neologisms actually in use, as respondents were probably unaware of many other neologisms and loanwords used in corporate discourse and listed in the literature such as *back-office, coach, leadership, turnover* (Chaptal de Canteloup 2011) since these terms appear to have totally blended into the French corporate linguistic landscape. Therefore, further research should also add items from recent glossaries of management speak to the data generated by the questionnaire.

A minor limitation was that when respondents to the questionnaire produced their word lists, it was sometimes difficult for us to discern whether the suffixed loanwords ending in -er were nouns or verbs, e.g. *trader* – is it *un trader* or the verb *trader*? This did not, however, pose a problem in the email extracts which respondents uploaded. Therefore, an up-to-date corpus of authentic corporate emails should be developed in order to facilitate a more accurate and complete analysis and to enable co-textual and contextual factors to be taken into account. Besides, a corpus of oral corporate language (from meetings, telephone calls, presentations and more general small talk) would be highly desirable but we are well aware of the practical, logistical, legal and other issues regarding confidentiality that this implies.

Another methodological issue concerns the interview protocol, which involved a qualitative approach by means of asking respondents to comment on certain lexis. The interviews were conducted informally, and while this achieved the purpose of eliciting subjective reactions, the data collected could have been enhanced by a follow-up quantitative written phase to investigate the degree of recognition, awareness and use of the target lexis by way of a checklist.

Further research will develop the word-formational categorization presented in this study, in particular fine-tuning the sub-categories of linguistic borrowing. The corpus will be enlarged to include input from various age-groups, industry sectors and different corporate positions. We also intend to exploit different approaches to further investigate borrowings and neologisms in French corporate settings, such as ideological (Foucault 1971; Fairclough 1989; 1992) or linguistic analysis (Halliday 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) or a combination of both.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has established a data set of lexical items used in French corporate settings and categorized them according to part of speech and the underlying word-formational processes as well as analyzed reactions to said terms from business and non-business professionals. We believe that the findings of this research will be useful for teachers and students of English, French and Business Communication to raise awareness of the nature and extent of loanwords and neologism usage in the contemporary French corporate lexicon, by integrating them into a range of practical pedagogical activities. Business professionals in France could also benefit from this study as it touches on issues such as corporate language policy, in-house linguistic style, internal and external corporate communication, and the potential need for an internal glossary with definitions and, where appropriate, guidelines for recommended usage. ∎

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