



A Journey through the Italian Tourism Lexicon, between Anglicisms, Neologisms, et al

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Abstract

English has always been the most important source of exogenous enrichment of modern Italian vocabulary. Since the end of World War II and particularly from the 1950s, English has been the main “donor language” for Italian, even if its influence has not always been consistent. Such influence seems to have reached its peak between the 1970s and the 1980s, then went through a period of relative “quiescence” before increasing again in the 21st century. By means of a corpus of one hundred and twenty documents selected from brochures, specialized magazines and websites for each year of the first five years of the 2020s, the present paper aims at investigating, from a qualitative perspective, the English loanwords which, along with neologisms, French words, and those of Latin origin, have been entering and enriching the Italian domain of contemporary tourism, thus contributing to its international appeal.

Keywords: Language contact, Domain-Specific Italian, Tourism, Loanwords

1. Introduction

Tourism in Italy has progressively evolved over the years. An initial phase ran from the 19th to the early 20th century and was linked to the Grand Tour and educated tourists, when Italy became a destination for cultural elites. The second half of the 20th century saw the birth of mass tourism and the professionalization of the tourism sector. In the current digital era specialized jargon mixes with everyday language, reflecting mass and customized tourism, the impact of social media, and the need for multilingual communication, transforming paper guides into dynamic and immersive web content. In line with these developments, the language of tourism in Italy has evolved – from an exclusive and formal register, linked to literature, art and history, through the emergence of technical terms and a more functional language, up to a complex, hybrid, and multimodal one, influenced by the Internet, technology and social media usage, enriched by Anglicisms and neologisms linked to the new trends, and able to convey the many ways of contemporary travelling. In so doing it has moved from an objective description to experiential evocation. We can see that the evolution of the language of Italian tourism has kept step with that of tourists themselves, who have turned from passive observers into active protagonists. The language of tourism now adapts, hybridizes, and specializes to interpret increasingly complex and specific needs.

2. Methods

The aim of this paper – which is part of a larger research project on the phenomenon of English loanwords in various specialized languages of contemporary Italian – is to present some reflections on the influence that English above all has

on the domain-specific Italian of tourism. Hence, this paper aims at investigating, from a qualitative point of view (in addition to the words of French and Latin origin that are still used) the Anglicisms and the neologisms that are considered buzzwords in the language of Italian tourism, using a *corpus* of one hundred and twenty documents selected from brochures, specialized magazines, and websites for each year from 2020 to 2025.

3. Results

The findings of the present paper highlight the massive presence of English loanwords in the language of contemporary Italian tourism, even when Italian has a word of its own which would work perfectly, as in “Soluzioni chiavi in mano per l’*hospitality*”, “Spesso sono proprio i *city break* a stancarci di più, perché cerchiamo di vedere tutto ... e finiamo per correre”, and “*Welcome gift* in camera”; or when it uses misleading cognates such as *aquapark*, *autogrill*, *baby park*, *beauty case*, *fidelity card*, *plaid*, *residence*, *toast*, and *trolley*. In addition to acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations which will be discussed in detail later, the most frequently used word-building process we have observed is blending where, unlike compounding which joins whole words, the merging of word fragments or the combination of a full word with part of another occurs. In fact, new lexical coinages such as *bleisure*, *leisure*, *microcations*, *staycations* and *workations*, have been added to universally known and used combinations such as *brunch* and *motel*. In this way, a new, compact, expressive and catchy vocabulary emerges, combining two holiday experiences which efficiently convey complex ideas and reduce the need for longer phrases. Often used in advertising and social media, blending acts as a dynamic tool for language evolution allowing for the rapid creation of new terms that are functional and memorable as well – thus being frequently used to create interesting brand names, to add a creative tone to the language, to enhance language efficiency, or to quickly label new or trendy phenomena.

4. Discussion

Tourism has grown in importance to the point that, from the 1990s onwards, it became a fully-fledged industry and developed a language of its own (Dann, 1996). Indeed, tourism and the language that expresses it have become an inseparable pair, as they pursue common objectives – i.e. promoting, attracting, informing, communicating the positive aspects of a given reality, transforming an anonymous and/or unknown place into an attractive tourist destination (Nigro, 2006).

The sector increasingly presents itself as a melting pot of contributions from the most diverse areas, such as environment, art, architecture, economics, enology, gastronomy, geography, entertainment, fashion, advertising, religion, sport, history, and so on. Each of them gives tourism a distinctive nuance and contributes to the creation of many possible “tourisms”, from food and wine tourism to astrotourism, from religious tourism to ecotourism, from atomic tourism to medical tourism – to name just a few of the sixty-three typologies that apparently exist (*Types of Tourism in the World*, 2024).

In some of these sectors – mainly enology (e.g. *bouquet*, *blanc de blancs* and *blanc de noirs*, *flûte*, *grenache*, *perlage*, *sommelier*, *terroir*) (Columbini, 2023; Pregentelli, 2023), gastronomy (e.g. *bistrot*, *brioche*, *buffet*, *chef*, *croissant*, *nouvelle cuisine*, *dessert*, *entrée*, *gourmet*, *menu à la carte*, *tartare*), fashion (e.g. *bouclé*, *boutique*, *haute couture*, *jacquard*, *prêt-à-porter*, *tailleur*) (*L’eleganza parla français*, n.d.), and the language of hotel facilities and reception (e.g. *chalet*, *chauffeur*, *conciergerie*, *entourage*, *garage*, *moquette*, *pass-partout*, *suite*, *valet*) – there is no doubt that French has been and still is the co-working language of tourism. This is why several French terms and expressions are now part of the lexical fabric of both English and Italian, variously adapted to their respective phonetic systems or, more often, retaining the spelling and/or pronunciation of their original language. In such a context, we are witnessing the revival of the French term *dehors*: its very first appearance dates back to the second half of the 19th century in the newspaper *La Stampa* (Di Valvasone, 2022), and continued through the 20th century with some ups and downs until it was re-proposed in recent years, spreading from the sectoral languages of tourism and food-and-wine to everyday Italian. In fact, with the reopening of venues during and after the health emergency at the beginning of the current decade, those outdoor spaces equipped with tables and chairs in front of bars, restaurants, and hotels have been brought to the attention of a wider audience thanks to the special permits issued by municipalities and regions and the suspension of the public land use tax normally payable for the use of an outdoor space.

In the domain-specific language of contemporary Italian tourism, relevant words and expressions of French origin are intertwined with the constantly growing number of borrowings, calques and adaptations from English. We can simply browse through the brochures and leaflets available in travel agencies, the Italian websites of shipping companies or

those operating in the field of organized holidays, of public and private companies and operators dealing with air, rail and bus transport of passengers, but also of cooperatives managing taxi services in large cities to encounter the examples below, divided into the following categories:

1. unadapted loans from English such as *all-inclusive*, *badge*, *bungalow*, *jet lag*, *lounge*, *last-minute*, *low-cost*, *resort*, *rooming list*, *self-service*, *shuttle*, *steakhouse*, *voucher*, *walk-in hotel* – most of them often mispronounced by Italian native speakers;
2. hybrid expressions – i.e. made up of an Italian term plus an English one but also an English word plus one in the ever-present French, such as *bagaglio extra*, *cabine family*, *colazione gourmet*, *deluxe suite*, *destinazione luxury*, *interior suite*, *letto king-size*, *momenti di brunch*, *musica live*, *offerte family*, *pacchetto all-in-one*, *pacchetto easy*, *posti comfort*, *royal suite*, *tariffa basic*, *tariffa light*;
3. acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations such as *ETA* (meaning both *Electronic Travel Authorisation* and *Estimated Time of Arrival*), *IBAN* (*International Bank Account Number*), *OTA* (*Online Travel Agency*); and the many other universally-used abbreviations of English origin that in a written form identify passengers (e.g. *ADL*, adult; *CHD*, child; *DOB*, date of birth; *INF*, infant; *PAX*, passengers) and those employed in the tourism sector (e.g. *ASST*, assistant; *MOD*, manager on duty; *TA*, travel agent); types of travel (e.g. *ARR*, arrival; *ETD*, estimated time of departure; *LCC*, low-cost carrier; *OW*, one way; *RT*, return in British English and round trip in American English; *TRSF*, transfer); times and different time zones (e.g. *a.m.*, from midnight to noon; *p.m.*, after noon; *GMT*, Greenwich Mean Time; *hrs*, hours; *wks*, weeks); currencies (e.g. *RUB*, Russian Ruble; *THB*, Thai Bhat) and money management (e.g. *ATM*, automated teller machine; *K*, thousands; *PIN*, personal identification number; *PP*, per person; *VAT*, value added tax); countries, cities, and airports (e.g. *DXB*, both Dubai and Dubai International Airport); the services offered by a hotel (e.g. *AC*, air conditioning; *DBL*, double room; *DLX deluxe* room; *FB*, full board; *HB*, half board; *NTS* nights; *RO*, room only; *SC*, self-catering accommodation; *STD*, standard room; *TRPL*, triple room; *TWN*, twin room);
4. the very current *brunch* (a blended noun between the elements in bold of **breakfast** and **lunch**) which has its Italian counterparts in “apericena”, “aperitivo cenato” and “aperitivo pranzato”; and *spa* (an acronym from the elements in bold of **salus per aquam**) which, with the meaning of “wellness center”, “spa”, often alternates with the false Anglicism “beauty farm”.

The noun *club* – which occurs in numerous combinations, such as *beach club*, *family golf club*, *junior club*, *mini club*, *nightclub*, *sporting club*, *teens club*, *tennis club*, *yacht club* – deserves special attention. So does advertising applied to tourism, where one or more English elements are often present (our Italics): “Al via il *countdown* per XXX XXX”; “XXX *holiday breaks*”; “Sei lunghe *overnights* in città iconiche come Los Angeles, Sydney e Tokyo”; “Pacchetti escursioni *passpartout*” (where a highly interesting home-made blending between the elements in bold of French **passpartout** and the English **tour** is present); “*HARD e All Inclusive* (soft drink e alcolici tutto il giorno)”; “Viaggia *low-cost* con le nostre valigie e *trolley*”; “Un territorio ricco di tradizioni gastronomiche e borghi antichi, da vivere ad un ritmo *slow*”.

As far as false Anglicisms are concerned, it is interesting to note their massive presence even in the domain-specific lexicon under consideration. The well-known tendency of Italian to be influenced by foreign words in general and by Anglicisms in particular, combined with a remarkable inventive ability for misinterpreting pre-existing English elements or reusing them for new lexical creations (Fanfani, 2010), has given rise – in addition to common items such as *autostop* → *hitchhiking*; *pile* → *fleece*; *pullman* → *bus*, *coach* – to the following, just to mention those with greatest incidence (Furiassi, 2010): *aquapark* → *waterpark*; *autogrill* → *motorway restaurant*, *motorway service station*; *camping* → *camping site*; *check-in* → *check-in desk*; *coast-to-coast* → *coast-to-coast tour/trip*; *duty free* → *duty-free shop/store*; *fully optional* → *fully accessorized/equipped*; *info point* → *information centre/desk/bureau*; *internet bar/point* → *cybercafé*, *internet café*; *plaid* → *blanket*; *residence* → *apartment hotel*, *self-catered apartment/flat*; *toast* → *toasted sandwich* or *toasty*; *trolley* → *hand luggage*, *carry-on baggage*, *carry-on*.

A very brief mention also needs to be made of the so-called “returning Latinisms” – i.e. words such as *bonus*, *focus*, *junior*, *media*, *premium*, *senior*, *sponsor*, *plus*. The same “triangulation” (Gambassi, 2015), already detected between French, English and Italian, can also be observed between Latin, English and Italian, whereby Latin words or words of Latin origin re-enter Italian thanks to English – thus appearing in various, often hybrid combinations with a new English pronunciation, with meanings often readapted to contemporary communicative needs or enriched with new meanings. Such a phenomenon exemplifies “that great process that has been called *translatio culturae*, a true path of transfer of mankind’s cultural heritage, which from the most remote ancient times continues to recur up to the present day” (Gambassi, 2015; our translation).

In addition, what can be said about the neologisms – always of English origin and hardly, if at all, adapted – that

enrich the lexicon of a constantly developing sector like tourism? There has been much talk about that phenomenon known under the name *overtourism* throughout the first two decades of the 21st century, for which the Italian equivalent “*iperturismo*” has been created. It entered Italian in 2017 and has recently been contrasted with *slow travel*, or *slow tourism*. In contrast to *mass tourism* and *overcrowding*, which are concentrated in cities and famous sites at certain times of the year and can cause damage to monuments and inconvenience to residents, *slow travel* presents itself as a new travel philosophy allowing travelers to slow down and take their own time, savoring the essence of the experience and favouring lesser-known places and the countryside, strengthening connections with nature, other people, culture, food, and tradition.

Since we have just referred to the close bond between tourism and nature, we should mention the *bubble hotels* – i.e. hotels whose rooms (*bubble rooms*) are located inside a bubble, allowing the sky and the surrounding environment to be observed through the transparent ceiling. Browsing through specialized Italian online ads, we find that a translation into “*bolla*” or “*cupola*” is rarely proposed. This new type of hotel is an evolution of luxury camping – the so-called *glamping* (a blended noun between the elements in bold from **glamour** + **camping**) which is spreading all over the world and attracting many nature-loving tourists. When different generations want to share travel experiences, the new coinage is *gramping* (a combination between the elements in bold from **grandparents** and **camping**), which involves trips taken by grandparents and grandchildren without the presence of their parents. Among the new trends in contemporary tourism, we can mention the newborn frontier of *bleisure* – the so-called *lisness*, which involves planning a longer pleasure trip to carve out time for work. The difference is that, while *bleisure* allows for a few extra days of rest at the end of a business trip, *lisness* represents a reversal of this idea and favours more mindful travel experiences. Both these nouns are blended forms between the elements in bold from **business** and **leisure**, and from **leisure** and **business** respectively.

In the spirit of the *bubble hotels*, the *X-box hotels* are removable en-suite modules made with natural materials according to green building criteria, powered by renewable energy and designed to offer a simple, quiet hospitality experience deeply connected with nature. They also have large glass windows/walls which maximize appreciation of the surrounding natural environment.

Particularly popular among millennials, gen Z and professionals with limited holiday time, a *microcation* (the result of a combination between the elements in bold from **micro** and **vacations**) is a short leisure trip lasting one to four nights that requires minimal planning, reduces travel burnout, is budget-friendly, and allows for multiple, smaller trips throughout the year. *Staycations* and *workations* use the same word-building process of blending. They are the result of a combination between the elements in bold from **stay** and **vacations**, and from **work** and **vacations**. They are new tourism trends that involve a holiday spent in one's own home country rather than abroad, or one spent at home and involving day trips to local attractions; and the practice of working remotely from a leisure destination or non-traditional location, respectively. The former avoids some of the stress associated with travel, such as jet-lag, packing, long drives or waits at stations or airports, and is less expensive than a holiday involving distant travelling, while the latter allows employees to carry out their professional duties and experience a new environment, such as a beach or a mountain setting, rather than working from home.

Another trend in contemporary tourism is *set-jetting* (Barry, 2024). Born many years ago in the wake of the success achieved by *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Da Vinci Code*, the *Star Wars* saga and the *Indiana Jones* movies, such a phenomenon has recently regained momentum and takes inspiration from successful films (*Game of Thrones*, the James Bond movies) and TV series (*Bridgerton*, *Downton Abbey*, *Emily in Paris*) in choosing a holiday destination.

As far as the growing demand for holidays in the African continent is concerned, the combination between the elements in bold from **spa** and **safari** has given rise to *spafari* – a type of holiday which combines adventure and relaxation. The noun *painmoon* has been active in English since 2019 and refers to holidays that help overcome periods of difficulty, anger, stress, and negativity. A *minimoon* is a quick trip, often a weekend, that couples take in the days or weeks immediately following their wedding, while they save up for the real honeymoon.

According to the research carried out by *Ticket to Travel 2026*, and if the international and geopolitical crises permit, people will travel even more in the year that has just begun: as a result the buzzwords of Italian tourism are *lux-scaping* – i.e. the desire to enjoy a break in a luxury facility at the beginning or end of your holiday; *country hopping* – i.e. visiting multiple countries in a single trip; and *passion pursuits* – i.e. shifting the focus from simply visiting landmarks to immersing in activities such as participating in silent retreats, yoga or spa therapies; cooking classes, live sports, cultural events, music festivals, or immersive trips to discover and explore cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

English-based terms and expressions used in the tourism sector, along with the French and Latin influences we have discussed in this paper, are generally preferred to the Italian equivalents which often exist, due to their conciseness and immediate communicative impact. In advertising in particular, they represent a unique strategic tool for any Italian company operating in the tourism sector because they form part of the international language of tourism and a universal code of communication between professionals in the tourist sector at large.

If all this is undoubtedly true, on the other hand, another issue arises in terms of national language policies. In fact, the massive use of Anglicisms and foreign words in contemporary Italian has significant implications for language policy. There is an ongoing debate between those who consider the phenomenon as a natural enrichment and those who perceive it as a threat to the stability of the national language. The current situation – described by some linguists as “anglophilia” (Graf, 1911), by others as “morbus anglicus” (Castellani, 1987), “fatal attraction” (Dunlop, 1989), “inglesorum” (Gambassi, 2015) and more recently a “tsunami anglicus” (Zoppetti, 2023) – contrasts with the systematic filtering of foreign terms and expressions, which happens in other Romance languages such as French or Spanish. While German seems to have the same problems as Italian, the appearance of Anglicisms into Spanish continues to be much more limited. In Spain, in fact, “when an Anglicism spreads, not only does it not kill the native word, but it is often used in a minor form and with a lower frequency” (Zoppetti, 2017; our translation). The same happens in France where, despite the many Anglicisms, French enjoys very strong state protection, promoted as early as the 1960s by the then President Charles De Gaulle, to the point that translated alternatives exist and circulate.

Since the phenomenon of language contact is inevitable and unstoppable, despite the attempts of purists to fight it, we believe that government policies and laws should be in place to protect the Italian language as a resource and heritage. However, since the *Accademia della Crusca* does not have the same weight and functions as the *Académie Française* in France and the *Real Academia Española* in Spain, it becomes the task of linguists to critically and scientifically observe this phenomenon, analyze it, and propose feasible solutions, such as the following:

- 1) avoiding foreign words and Anglicisms wherever possible – that is, where Italian has a valid alternative or, at least, ensure that the two forms coexist and alternate, both in writing and in speech (e.g. *all-inclusive/tutto compreso*; *last-minute/dell'ultimo momento*; *location/luogo*; *low-cost/a basso prezzo*; *trend/tendenza*, *voucher/buono* or *tagliando*, *weekend/fine settimana*);
- 2) where this is not possible because the corresponding Italian for each Anglicism and/or foreign word is sometimes too long to be used as an alternative, it is still necessary to be aware of it, and therefore it should be referred to avoid incorrect or inappropriate use of the loan or the calque (e.g. *overbooking* whose translation into Italian, “eccesso di prenotazioni rispetto ai posti disponibili nei voli o negli alberghi”, is exhaustive but definitely too long) (Zoppetti, 2024);
- 3) avoiding any foreign words in general and Anglicisms in particular that are needlessly superfluous both in everyday and specialized languages (maybe *ça va sans dire* sounds more stylish than “è evidente [che]” or “va da se [che]”, and it is much more catchy in the original French according to the user), as well as those that may be incomprehensible to non-experts or those created ad hoc (e.g. *dressing*, used in Italian as clothing and not to refer to a condiment in English, or *golf* used to refer to a jumper and not a sport) which sometimes do not even exist in any variety of English with that particular meaning, but are used simply to show off supposed language skills and to give a patina of pseudo-elegance to one’s speech;
- 4) as we believe it is quite inevitable that English is and will be the dominant language, and since “there are some things that can be said only in English” (Adiga, 2018), such as *chat*, *marketing*, and *wanderlust* (a noun of German origin indicating a strong desire to travel), we should avoid Italian translations of such unavoidable Anglicisms, which would be forced, and sometimes even odd (e.g. *bungalow* → *bùngalo*; *cocktail* → *coctello*; *roast beef* → *rosbiffe*; *street food* → *cibo stradale*) (Valle, 2016), and would not have the semantic breadth or the immediacy of the original word and/or expression.

We are not sure whether we should consider English an unwelcome intruder into our language, even though it is true that the presence and use of Anglicisms has had a huge impact in recent years. On the contrary, we believe that, for many reasons – not least the fact that it would be inappropriate for us to remain anchored to a language in splendid isolation – it would be more appropriate to view English as a true donor language and its loanwords, more or less adapted, as “guest words” (Castorina, 2001). While it is true that in specialized languages they take root, stabilize, and integrate more easily thanks to the market forces we have discussed elsewhere (Rosati, 2004; Rosati, Vaccarelli, 2016), in everyday Italian they can depend on more volatile external factors such as fashion, music, advertising, sport, Anglo-

American culture in general, and consequently are less stable.

Furthermore, given that the more or less official surveys measuring European citizens' English proficiency consistently place Italians at the bottom of the list, these Anglicisms – if adequately used and correctly pronounced – could be useful tools for understanding and mastering, in the right contexts, what the world now considers a “lingua franca”. This should begin with those who regularly use English terms and expressions in advertisements or news reports that, even when used appropriately, are often mispronounced. This happens with *all-inclusive*, *bungalow*, *catering*, *continental* and *reception*, to name just a few of the most common examples from the tourism sector.

In conclusion, we cannot claim that the influence of English in the various fields of our daily lives poses a risk to the Italian language or its cultural and literary heritage. It is in the nature of a language to renew itself internally and, when internal resources are inadequate to express a new concept, also externally. This is particularly true since the spread of English – considered as a fast, convenient, and cosmopolitan language is only one aspect of a much broader problem involving the internationalization of society and exchanges, both economic and cultural. This is a path from which Italy and the Italian language cannot and must not be excluded. It is therefore useful to reemphasize the fundamental distinction between “languages of identification” and “languages of communication” (Hüllen, 1992; House, 2003): the L1 of a community, Italian in our case, must serve as an instrument of national linguistic identity, while English as an L2 fulfills the more pragmatic function of enabling communication with speakers of other languages. Since these two language typologies each serve a different function, they should not be in competition or in conflict, with the risk that one obliterates the other when, in fact, they can coexist side by side without invading each other's domains.

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