

УДК 811.1/2

DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2021-7-2-0-2

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**English borrowings in the Spanish language: language policy  
of the Royal Academy of the Spanish language  
and the Fundéu BBVA regarding anglicisms**

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*Received 17 May 2021; accepted 21 June 2021; published 30 June 2021*



**Abstract.** The Italian linguist Virginia Pulcini wrote in 2002 that languages such as Italian and Dutch are considered "extroverted" languages with an open attitude toward other languages, while Spanish is considered "introverted" in its desire to limit the influence of foreign languages, especially English. Nevertheless, even "introverted" Spanish is invaded by an endless list of anglicisms. Although a lot of English words have their equivalents in Spanish, they seemed to be largely ignored by Spanish speakers. This behavior appears to be even reinforced by the media. The Internet, press, television, and radio make extensive use of English loanwords and contribute to the increasing use of English-language terms. Many countries are pursuing a fairly active language policy, which is usually a system of measures and legislation implemented by state institutions with specific social and linguistic goals in mind. Nowadays, in the age of globalization, one of such goals is a protection of the native language. Spain is not an exception. We can observe a rather purist attitude of certain Spanish institutions towards the use of anglicisms in the Spanish language. This difference in attitudes towards openness to other languages between the various countries may be explained by, among other things, the existence of linguistic institutions such as the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (La Real Academia Española) and the Foundation of Urgent Spanish (Fundéu BBVA), which, according to many researchers, follow a restrictive policy against the use of anglicisms.

**Keywords:** Spanish language; Linguistic borrowings; Anglicisms; Language policy; RAE; Royal Academy of the Spanish Language; Fundéu BBVA

**How to cite:** Deeney, I. A., Beletskaya, O. S. (2021). English borrowings in the Spanish language: language policy of the Royal Academy of the Spanish language and the Fundéu BBVA regarding anglicisms. *Research Result. Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, V.7 (2), 13-20, DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2021-7-2-0-2

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Англоязычные заимствования в испанском языке:  
деятельность Королевской академии испанского языка  
и Фонда Фундеу в борьбе с англицизмами

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*Статья поступила 17 мая 2021 г.; принята 21 июня 2021 г.; опубликована 30 июня 2021 г.*

**Аннотация.** Итальянский лингвист Вирджиния Пульчини в 2002 году написала, что такие языки, как итальянский и голландский, считаются "экстравертными" языками с открытым отношением к другим языкам, в то время как испанский язык считается «интровертным» в своём стремлении ограничить влияние иностранных языков, особенно английского. Тем не менее, даже «интровертный» испанский язык захвачен всё пополняющимся списком англицизмов. Несмотря на то, что многие английские слова имеют эквиваленты в испанском языке, они, в значительной степени, игнорируются испаноязычными людьми. Более того, средства массовой информации этому активно способствуют – интернет, пресса, телевидение и радио широко используют английские заимствования и способствуют все более широкому использованию англоязычных терминов. Многие страны проводят довольно активную языковую политику, которая обычно представляет собой систему мероприятий и законодательных актов, осуществляемых государственными учреждениями с учетом конкретных социально-языковых целей. Сегодня, в эпоху глобализации, одной из таких целей является защита родного языка. Испания не является исключением. Мы наблюдаем довольно требовательное отношение некоторых испанских официальных учреждений к использованию англицизмов. Это различие в открытости к другим языкам между различными странами может объясняться наличием определённой языковой политики уполномоченных учреждений, которыми, в частности, в Испании являются Королевская академия испанского языка (La Real Academia Española) и Фундеу (Fundéu BBVA). В статье рассматривается деятельность этих двух учреждений.

**Ключевые слова:** Испанский язык; Лингвистические заимствования; Англицизмы; Языковая политика; Королевская академия испанского языка; Фундеу

**Информация для цитирования:** Дини (Куприева) И.А., Белецкая О.С. Королевской академии испанского языка и Фонда Фундеу в борьбе с

англицизмами // Научный результат. Вопросы теоретической и прикладной лингвистики. 2021. Т.7, №2. С. 13-20. DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2021-7-2-0-2

A language policy is a policy that a government implements in an official way by legislation and court rulings or its institutions in order to determine how language is used, to foster language skills that are required to satisfy national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or organizations to use and maintain the official language.

Two Spanish institutions – the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (La Real Academia Española, RAE) and the Foundation of Urgent Spanish (La Fundación del Español Urgente, Fundéu BBVA) – are the subjects of this article.

Spanish linguists note that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the use of non-adapted and "unnecessary" anglicisms in Spanish newspapers, and also in other media. They point out that all this is happening despite the existence of The RAE, and its *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* (Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Doubts) which proposes Spanish alternatives to non-adapted anglicisms, and the fact that almost every major Spanish newspaper has published a style book containing a list of anglicisms that should be avoided, accompanied by Spanish equivalents that should be used in place of the anglicism.

The adoption of words from other languages into Spanish, and especially the influence of English on the Spanish lexicon, has always been resisted by linguists and lexicographers as well as by social and political institutions. From the Civil War until the 1950s, during the first phase of Franco's dictatorship, Spain experienced a period of linguistic nationalism and political isolation.

Today, the attitudes of institutions towards the use of anglicisms in Spain seem to be more purist than in, for example, Italy, and the Netherlands according to the researcher Pulcini (2002), who mentioned that languages such as Italian and Dutch are considered as "extraverted" languages that

have a more open attitude towards other languages, while Spanish and French are considered by her as "introverted" languages, which want to restrict the influence of foreign languages. This difference between various countries may be explained, among other things, by the existence of linguistic institutions such as the RAE and The Fundéu, which, according to many researchers, follow a restrictive policy against the use of anglicisms.

In his interview, the Director of RAE Darío Villanueva says that borrowing between languages has always existed. The problem, he says, is that nowadays anglicisms are used without any qualms, as if the mere fact of putting the term into English makes it more valuable. "We say Fashion Week and not *Semana de la moda*, we talk about deadlines instead of *fechas límite*, we use a tablet and not *la tableta*. The reason for this is not due to any inherent reason, but to a *social behaviour* that I find inappropriate and reprehensible," he continues (*Moda: extranjerismos con equivalente en español*, 2021:14).

Google Trends allows us to track the popularity of words in the search engine, which offers us data on a scale of one to one hundred, as the company's absolute figures are absolutely opaque to an average person. Thus, we see that in the last twelve months the word *tablet* has 55 popularity points compared to the 4 that "*tableta*" has. It is an abysmal difference which is repeated with smartphone and *teléfono inteligente*, with online and *en línea*, with link and *enlace*, with community manager and *gestor de redes sociales*. In the last 15 to 20 years, marked by great technological progress, there has been a growing tendency to use anglicisms, many of which are unnecessary, according to Javier Lascurain, general coordinator of the Fundéu BBVA. It makes sense, he explains, that when a new invention is born there is a tendency to use a neologism

(for example, “smartphone”), but “running” is not something new, it existed before and was called “*correr*”. It is the same with “*cosas baratas*” (=cheap things), which are now called *low cost*.” (Porto B. P., 2018: 16).

This tendency to rename concepts, to insert anglicisms into common speech, reflects not only the cultural and technological power of the English-speaking world, which is spreading its language, but also a certain snobbery. “In this preference for using foreign words, there is also a disdain for our own and a lack of knowledge of our language,” he laments (Porto B. P., 2018: 16).

**RAE:** In Spain there are several institutions dealing with language rules. The most important is the official Spanish organization the Royal Academy of The Spanish Language (Spanish: La Real Academia Española, RAE) which is a scientific institution founded in Spain in 1713 with the aim of studying the Spanish language and literature, as well as acting as a regulator of the linguistic and literary norms of modern Spanish. As mentioned in the Statutes of The RAE, it has a specific task of “ensuring that the changes that the Spanish language undergoes when accommodating to the needs of its speakers do not break the essential unity that it maintains throughout the Spanish-speaking world” (Statutes of the Real Academia Española, 1993: 11). Following the example of France and Italy, the RAE was a group comprising scientists, politicians, religious and aristocrats. At that time, the Castilian language was considered to be the language of prestige in Spain, and so the RAE considered the protection of the language and guarding its purity to be its main objectives. Many researchers claim that the RAE follows a rather prescriptive approach and publishes both grammar and spelling rules, as well as lexicographical rules. In addition, the Academy follows a restrictive policy towards the use of words in Spanish that come from other languages. Darren Paffey in his article “Policing the Spanish language debate: verbal hygiene and the Spanish language academy” (2007) points out that the RAE seems to attach more im-

portance to linguistic unity and language purity than to the function of a language to meet the diverse communicative needs of its users through a natural linguistic change (D.Paffey, 2007: 6).

Some linguists claim that an overabundance of anglicisms is a linguistic catastrophe. Others, on the other hand, view it without concern, as a natural evolution of the language, and believe that Spanish can absorb anglicisms by thousands without major problems, provided, of course, that the syntactic structures of their language are kept intact. The position of The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language is a constant fight for purity from foreign-language borrowing in Spanish.

Since its inception, the RAE has shown special interest in the study and consideration of those new words that speakers periodically incorporate into the language they use on a daily basis to communicate in different contexts. Some of these novelties fall into oblivion after a while, that is why we evidence the traditional academic caution before incorporating them. In such cases as technical terms, the Internet, telecom and economic terms, there are terms that appear to describe advances and discoveries that do not always find reasonable equivalents in the lexicon used before their appearance.

According to the latest *Ortografía de la lengua Española* (Spanish Language Orthography), published by the RAE in 2010, “neologisms are usually foreign words that designate realities outside the scope of the language itself or new referents for which there are no terms of their own. They are therefore incorporated into use with the name they have in the language in which they have emerged” (*Ortografía de la lengua Española*, 2010: 17). But with the passage of time, many of these non-adapted foreign words either on the initiative of the speakers themselves or thanks to the impulse and guidance of the institutions of linguistic standardization, end up being replaced by their own words or by adaptations of the original name to the graphic-phonological

patterns of the language itself. This does not, however, prevent other foreign words, and among them many technical terms, from remaining resistant to adaptation.

The fundamental task that the founding academics of the RAE set themselves 300 years ago was to compile a dictionary of Spanish words, purifying everything that did not conform to its rules or came from the outside. It continues to be a priority task to preserve the Spanish language from unnecessary loanwords in the 21st century as well. But in the century of telecommunications, the Internet and social networks, languages are no longer as isolated from each other as they were a few decades ago, and borrowing from one language into another occurs more rapidly and more fluidly. However, the RAE has not given up its efforts and continues to propose alternatives that often, in the end, take root.

The role of language authority assumed by the RAE may be explained by the fact that the Academy is the institution that shows concern for the written and academic language and produces the official inventory of acceptable words, appropriate meanings, rules for spelling and pronunciation. Although the RAE is an institution with a long-standing tradition and branches in countries where Spanish is spoken, its main problem is that it does not always seem to keep abreast with the language changes occurring in Spanish. For example, members of the Academy see anglicisms, as a language problem, and have been trying to regulate the large number of foreign words included in the Spanish vocabulary. In his essay about the influence of English in modern Spanish, Bernal-Labrada, corresponding member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, mentioned some of the attempts which were made to deal with the "problem of anglicisms" (Bernal-Labrada, 1989: 1). For example, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of Spanish language academies held in 1969, academy members agreed on forming special groups (Comisiones de Vocabulario Técnico) that were to analyze the foreign words, adopt

or reject them, look for an equivalent in Spanish or create new words to substitute them.

Nevertheless, the language policy as determined by the RAE is not always adopted by users of Spanish: E. Lorenzo in his work indicates that the lexical modernization task carried out by the RAE seems to be slow and not dynamic enough to keep up with the speed of new terminology in need to be labeled in Spanish (Lorenzo, E. 1996:3). Language regulations as proposed in the official dictionary of the RAE take about 8 or 10 years to be published, leaving time and space for the users to incorporate English words in their vocabulary and to use them widely (Statutes of the Real Academia Española, 1993: 11).

Language policies, however, have some questions to answer before being implemented. For example, J. Millán in his work argues that when trying to standardize the use of Spanish in the net, there is a concern for the kind of variety to use so that speakers feel the language proposed is familiar to them (Millán, 1997: 4). This problem demands solutions that involve the creation of neutral Spanish. He claims that it seems that so far language policies have only been focused on what words to use, and have not been effective when dealing with the 'problem' of anglicisms (Millán, 1997: 4). We should also notice that there are language policies, but users do not see the use of foreign words as a problem, so their view on how the language should be employed for communication does not fit purist ideas of Spanish usage. In spite of this mismatch between use and the language policy, nowadays, Spanish speakers have more sources of language to turn to when in doubt on how to use foreign words.

One of the main sources of language policy is the Dictionary published by the RAE. This dictionary is the official reference material for words and meanings considered appropriate by the main institution generating language policies in Spanish.

The RAE is not alone in this work – it collaborates with other specialized institutions of Spain: for example, the RAE and the National Academy of Medicine work together to improve the corresponding definitions in the Dictionary of the Spanish Language in light of the Dictionary of Medical Terms, published in September 2011. Previously, the Spanish Institute of Engineering provided a list of technical terms for incorporation into the Dictionary by the RAE, and the Institute of Biomedical Research of Barcelona, part of the Spanish National Research Council, carried out a review of all the units of physical notions recorded in the Dictionary. The RAE is also collaborating with the Spanish Association of Automotive Professionals (ASEPA), the Spanish Society of Soil Science (SECS) and some others.

All these institutions are concerned with defending the presence of Spanish in their respective subjects, preventing foreign terms from taking over certain fields of knowledge because their influence has not been promptly and opportunely counteracted by bringing into play the most appropriate tools to propose foreign words belonging to specific fields of technical language.

**Fundéu BBVA:** Another institution that makes recommendations regarding the use of the Spanish language is the Foundation of Urgent Spanish (La Fundación del Español Urgente, Fundéu BBVA), which was born as a department of the EFE agency in 1980. It became a foundation in 2005, under direction of the new head, Álex Grijelmo. Its main sponsors are the bank BBVA and the agency itself. The initial objective of the Fundéu BBVA is to align with the proper use of the Spanish language, especially in the media, whose influence on the development of Spanish is growing. However, it is also expanding into other fields. It collaborates with companies to issue a certificate of linguistic quality for the documents and publications they produce. Red Eléctrica Española, El Corte Inglés, Gómez Acebo & Pombo, Accenture and Iberia are some of

them. For Accenture, for example, it reviews a quarterly magazine the Outlook.

If we visit the web <https://www.fundeu.es/>, we can see how the Fundéu works with the anglicisms: by offering a Spanish word that, according to the Fundéu, is preferred to the English equivalent. We can find the most popular words in the following list:

- app – apli (aplicación);
- big data – macrodatos;
- back-up – copia de seguridad;
- bullying – acoso;
- bestseller – superventas;
- downsizing – reducción;
- engagement – enganchamiento;
- empowerment – empoderamiento;
- fact-checking – verificación de datos;
- feedback – reacciones,
- comentarios, opinions;
- kit – juego, conjunto;
- key word – palabra clave;
- start-up – empresa emergente;
- lead – entradilla o primer párrafo;
- mainstream – corriente, tendencia mayoritaria/dominante, de masas, popular;
- storytelling – narración de historias.

The Fundéu BBVA also takes part in a number of projects with the same aim – the reduction of English loan words in the areas where their use is abundant. For example, the Fundéu BBVA has created a page for the correct use of language aimed at employees of the consultancy firm Accenture. This consultancy firm contacted the Fundéu to express its concern about the incorrect use of the language by its employees. Technological concepts and barbarisms imported from English are two constant sources of misused words in the company, as well as strange translations such as *textear* or *agendar*, according to Accenture's Human Resources Director. Hence, they decided to contact the Fundéu BBVA. "We reviewed a report and found an impressive number of anglicisms," acknowledges Jaime Garcimartín, head of Expansion and Sponsorship at the institution (Fundéu BBVA, 2020: 13). This action helped him to create a corporate glossary on the website for the em-

ployees. The page created exclusively for Accenture is based on the foundation's vademecum, available to any Internet user. There is a section for queries answered by five specialists in applied linguistics. There are also recommendations for use and a section on Anglicisms, which provides the meaning in Spanish of internal terminology normally used in English.

On the occasion of the new edition of the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Madrid in April 2021, the Fundéu published a list of Spanish equivalents for common foreign words in the world of fashion:

**backstage:** bambalinas, bastidores;

**casual:** (estilo) informal;

**catwalk:** pasarela;

**celebrities:** famosos;

**clutch:** bolso de mano, bolso de fiesta, cartera;

**coolhunter:** cazatendencias o buscatendencias;

**denim:** tejido vaquero, mezclilla;

**dress code:** etiqueta, código de vestimenta, reglas de vestimenta;

**fashion o trendy:** de última moda, de moda, lo último, tendencia;

**fitting:** prueba de vestuario;

**front row:** primera fila;

**glitter:** brillante;

**it-girl:** chica de moda, chica icono;

**jumpsuit:** mono;

**look:** imagen, estilo, aire;

**lookazo:** modelazo, estilazo, imagen espectacular o buen aspecto;

**lookbook:** catálogo, porfolio o libreta de tendencias;

**make up:** maquillaje;

**monochrome:** monocromático, monocromo, monocolor;

**monogram:** monograma;

**mule:** babuchas, sandalias tipo babucha;

**must o must have:** (prendas, accesorios...) imprescindibles o infaltables;

**new face:** (para modelos) cara nueva;

**outfit:** conjunto;

**oversize:** holgado;

**paillette:** lentejuela;

**print:** estampado;

**shooting:** sesión fotográfica;

**shopping:** ir de compras;

**showroom:** salón de exposición;

**sneakers:** (zapatillas) deportivas;

**sport wear:** ropa deportiva;

**stretch:** elástico;

**top model:** supermodelo;

**tricot:** punto.

One of the latest projects by the Fundéu BBVA is a free application for Android and IOS devices containing 300 tips for writing about economic and financial topics. Its aim is to help people who work in the sector and professional journalists to use the correct language and convey information clearly and accurately.

Language institutions are not the only ones that set rules for the use of Spanish that may affect the language of the speakers of the language. We cannot but mention the importance of the media, and specifically the press, in the use of Anglicisms. The use of Anglicisms by the press and other media influences Spanish speakers who also use them because the press is a reflection of the society and the language of the people who are part of it. As the media (especially printed media) has a direct contact with the society, newspapers can serve as "observatories of the language in use".

In addition, newspapers have a style guide which is a set of rules that journalists must follow with regard to style. The 2014 style guide of the newspaper El País advises against the use of foreign words for which there are equivalents in Spanish, with the exception of non-Spanish words that are widely used, those that do not have an exact translation, and those that would lose part of the connotation when translated.

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**Конфликты интересов: у авторов нет конфликта интересов для декларации.**

**Conflicts of Interest: the authors have no conflict of interest to declare.**

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