
АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ЗАГАЛЬНОГО МОВОЗНАВСТВА
[CURRENT ISSUES IN GENERAL LINGUISTIC]

УДК 81'373.2; 81'22; 811.111(043.3); 81–17

Стаття надійшла до редакції [Article received] – 11.10.2025 р.

Перевірено на плагіат [Checked for plagiarism] – 16.10.2025 р.

Оригінальність тексту [The originality of the text] – 92,6 %

Прорецензовано [Peer-reviewed] – 12.12.2025 р.

Рекомендовано до друку [Recommended for publication] – 05.01.2026 р.

<http://doi.org/10.17721/2663-6530.2026.49.7-15>

**PSEUDO-ANGLICISMS AND SEMANTIC DIVERGENCE OF ENGLISH
BORROWINGS IN MODERN FRENCH**

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The article examines the phenomenon of pseudo-Anglicisms in contemporary French, with a particular focus on their semantic divergence from corresponding English lexemes. Pseudo-Anglicisms are borrowings that retain an English form yet acquire meanings in French that differ substantially from those in the source language. Unlike false Anglicisms, which have no direct counterpart in English, pseudo-Anglicisms exist in the donor language but function with a distinct semantic value in French. The article analyzes how these lexemes undergo processes of semantic shift, morphological adaptation, polysemy formation, and cultural integration within the recipient language. The study highlights the distinction between pseudo-Anglicisms and false Anglicisms, demonstrating its theoretical significance for the classification of English borrowings and the development of a nuanced theory of lexical borrowing. Moreover, the paper examines the diachronic evolution of these borrowings, showing how semantic broadening, narrowing, and derivational

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processes shape their contemporary usage in French. By situating pseudo-Anglicisms within the broader context of language contact and globalization, this research provides valuable insights into the dynamic interactions between English and French and the productive role of English-derived lexemes in enriching modern French vocabulary.

Keywords: *pseudo-Anglicisms, semantic divergence, English borrowings, French language, lexical borrowing, language contact, polysemy, semantic change.*

ПСЕВДОАНГЛІЦИЗМИ ТА СЕМАНТИЧНІ ВІДХИЛЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКИХ ЗАПОЗИЧЕНЬ У СУЧАСНІЙ ФРАНЦУЗЬКІЙ МОВІ

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У цьому дослідженні розглядається явище псевдоангліцизмів у сучасній французькій мові, з особливим акцентом на їх семантичне відхилення від відповідних англійських лексем. Псевдоангліцизми – це запозичення, які зберігають англійську форму, але набувають у французькій мові значень, що суттєво відрізняються від значень у мові-джерелі. На відміну від несправжніх англіцизмів, для яких не існує прямого англійського відповідника, псевдоангліцизми присутні в мові-джерелі, але функціонують у французькій із відмінним семантичним значенням. У статті проаналізовано, як ці лексеми проходять процеси семантичної трансформації, морфологічної адаптації, формування полісемії та культурної інтеграції в мові-реципієнті. Дослідження підкреслює різницю між псевдоангліцизмами та несправжніми англіцизмами, демонструючи її теоретичну значущість для класифікації англійських

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запозичень та розвитку більш тонкої теорії лексичного запозичення. Крім того, розглядається діяхронна еволюція цих запозичень, показуючи, як семантичне розширення, звуження та дериваційні процеси формують їх сучасне використання у французькій мові. Розглядаючи псевдоангліцизми в ширшому контексті мовних контактів і глобалізації, дослідження надає цінні відомості про динамічну взаємодію англійської та французької мов та продуктивну роль англійських запозичень у збагаченні сучасної французької лексики.

Ключові слова: *псевдоангліцизми, семантичне відхилення, англійські запозичення, французька мова, лексичне запозичення, мовні контакти, полісемія, семантична зміна.*

The evolution of language proceeds through multiple mechanisms, among which contact with other languages occupies a central role. In the present time, when the globalization has become a defining feature of humanity's global development, the issues of language interaction and mutual influence have gained a particular relevance. That is why modern linguistics shows a growing interest in the concept of borrowed words.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries are characterized by the intensive spread of the English language throughout the world. Due to the economic, technological, military, and political power of the United States, English has become the language of international communication and, consequently, the main source of loanwords for languages, which have gradually been enriched with English words and expressions, including their American variants.

It is noteworthy that borrowed lexemes become detached from the source language, no longer undergoing the semantic and structural changes experienced by the corresponding lexemes within it. Instead, they adapt to the morphological, grammatical, and phonetic systems of the borrowing language, becoming part of its own historical development. When a borrowed word diverges significantly in meaning from its counterpart in the source language, linguists often classify it as a pseudo-borrowing in order to emphasize its semantically ambiguous status. In the case of English lexemes that have entered the French language and undergone substantial semantic changes, they are referred to as pseudo-Anglicisms [8].

The category of pseudo-Anglicisms, or semantic deviations, includes English-derived forms that designate different denotative realities in French than in

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the source language. For example: *building* (in English – construction; in French – a modern multi-storey building), *palace* (m.), *baskets* (f.). Some of these borrowings, having modified their meaning, acquire the status of polysemous lexemes in the recipient language.

Very often linguists do not distinguish between the notions of false Anglicisms and pseudo-Anglicisms, using both terms to refer to one broad class of indirect English borrowings [1; 2]. Some researchers differentiate between these two types of borrowings within the same group, while others consider such a distinction unnecessary, since in both cases the word has an English form but a purely French meaning [7].

These divergent interpretations stem partly from attempts to simplify the taxonomy of Anglicisms by overlooking structural and semantic nuances, and partly from methodological preferences that exclude forms incompatible with particular theoretical frameworks. Moreover, academic literature continues to feature debates between linguists who consider such lexemes as Anglicisms and those who treat them as new formations inherent to the French language.

We argue that even those English-derived forms that diverge formally or semantically from their etymons should nonetheless be classified as Anglicisms. At the same time, a principled distinction must be maintained between false Anglicisms and pseudo-Anglicisms.

Indeed, in both cases the word form is of specifically English origin. However, in the case of pseudo-Anglicisms, such a form exists and functions in the source language (albeit with a different meaning), whereas in the case of false Anglicisms, the form as such does not exist in English; only the elements from which the given lexeme is formed are present in the language. This distinction necessitates differentiating between the two categories, as their structural and semantic properties bear directly on the development of a general theory of lexical borrowing.

P. Guiraud [5] refers to pseudo-Anglicisms as French term "suranglicismes" (literally above-Anglicism), including within this category such words as *speaker*, *smoking*, *footing*, and *shake-hand*. As we can see, P. Guiraud's interpretation arguably broadens the scope of "suranglicisme" to an extent that obscures important typological distinctions, as the cited examples may, under a narrower analytical framework, be distributed across three different categories.

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As previously mentioned, in order to describe words whose meanings have diverged significantly from the original semantics of the corresponding English word, researchers have identified a separate category of borrowings termed "pseudo-Anglicisms" [7; 10]. Pseudo-Anglicisms, or semantic deviations, include words such as *palace* (m.), *building* (m.), *baskets* (f. pl.), *footing* (m.), and others, which have long existed in English and belong to the same grammatical category as in French, but are used there with different meanings.

For example, in journalistic articles one encounters the following statements:

Au pied des Champs-Élysées se dresse l'un des hôtels les plus luxueux du monde : l'hôtel de Crillon. Ce monument vieux de 300 ans a récemment reçu la distinction de « palace », suite à une rénovation colossale. Pour y parvenir, des travaux pharaoniques ont été nécessaires ... (Le Figaro 25.10.2025 lefigaro.fr);

Depuis quelques années, les baskets trônent sur les étals des magasins, souvent au détriment des classiques chaussures en cuir (Tribune de Genève 16.02.2026 www.tdg.ch);

Aux alentours de 11 heures, Emmanuel Macron a en effet chaussé ses baskets pour un petit footing dans les rues de Mumbai (Gala 17.02.2026 gala.fr).

In the examples provided, the highlighted words mean:

- *palace* (m.) – a large luxury hotel;
- *footing* (m.) – walking or jogging done for pleasure or as physical exercise;
- *baskets* (f. pl.) – lace-up sports shoes made of canvas, often with a high upper and rubber sole (sneakers).

In English-language dictionaries, these words do not carry the meanings listed above. A clear example of semantic narrowing in the recipient language is the lexeme *speaker* (m.), *speakerine* (f.), which in French has retained only one of the meanings it possesses in the source language, namely that of "announcer":

Le speaker du stade a prévu de profiter des premières minutes pour transmettre un message. Il est donc occupé à faire son annonce quand l'action se déroule. On n'imagine que personne n'a été très attentif (rtbf Actus, 08.11.2024 rtbf.be).

It is also worth noting that the word *speaker* designates the Speaker of Parliament; however, in French it is used only when referring to British or American society.

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It should be noted that this category of borrowings is generally not numerous in French.

Sometimes it is very difficult to determine whether a word is a pseudo-Anglicism or a borrowing that has changed its form. In order to distinguish clearly between them, it is important to establish the etymology of the borrowed lexeme, something researchers do not always do. Thus, L. Guilbert, describing a phenomenon that we consider to be a pseudo-Anglicism, cites the word *training* as an example, which, in his view, changed its meaning from "training" to "sportswear" [3]. This interpretation, however, is open to reconsideration, since acknowledging semantic change already implies that the form has undergone post-borrowing development within the recipient language.

However, this does not fully apply to the word *training*, which has at least three different meanings in French. The word was borrowed in the nineteenth century as an equivalent of "training"; its second meaning is "sportswear", corresponding to what is termed a *jogging suit* in North America and a *training suit* in Britain, suggesting a process of lexical shortening; the third meaning, complementing the idea of clothing, is "sports shoes" (often in the plural *trainings*). The latter example also cannot be classified as the result of semantic expansion, since the lexeme *training* derives from the English expression *training shoes*; that is, the word was first borrowed and then shortened. Thus, according to our classification, the borrowing *training* in the meaning of sports footwear belongs to the group of shortened Anglicisms. English speakers also use a shortened variant of this word in the form *trainers* [7].

In general, it should be emphasized that the issue of semantic expansion of English borrowings in French is the subject of ongoing scholarly debate among researchers studying this aspect of borrowing. Some linguists, such as F. de Grand Combe [1] and C. George [2], categorically reject the very notion of the evolution of Anglicisms, although, on the other hand, when analyzing the semantics of native vocabulary, they acknowledge its semantic evolution.

In this regard, one may cite the example of the use of the French word *champagne* in English. In France, the denotative scope of this noun is quite restricted: it refers only to sparkling white wines from a specific region of the country. Thus, in French one cannot speak of Italian or American champagne; by definition, champagne is a product of the Champagne province. In English,

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however, the semantic scope of *champagne* has broadened considerably, yet this expansion does not invalidate its status as a borrowing. The lexeme remains a recognized Gallicism despite semantic extension in the recipient language. Therefore, no one would deny its status as a borrowing in English, even if the meaning of the lexeme in the recipient language is much broader than in the source language.

Sometimes it is quite difficult to trace the evolution of terms that change or broaden their meaning in the recipient language, although certain principles for their classification do exist. If an English-derived form exists in the source language with a related, though not identical, meaning, it is more appropriately classified as a case of lexical shortening or semantic shift rather than as an accidental pseudo-formation.

In this regard, it should be noted that many words whose origin raises doubts belong to relatively recent innovations (borrowed since the 1950s–1960s), and that English words with the same morphological form may differ from their North American variants. For example, the words *training shoes*, *camping-ground*, and *dancing-hall* are recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, yet are not used at all in North America. Therefore, there are solid grounds for considering the words *dancing* and *camping* as shortenings (a very common phenomenon both in English and in languages that borrow English vocabulary, especially with words ending in *-ing*) rather than as pseudo-Anglicisms. Some researchers consider such shortenings as French formations or classify them within the broad group of false borrowings.

Since the meaning of pseudo-Anglicisms often differs substantially from the original sense of the English word on which they are based, some linguists deny them the status of borrowings [1]. However, when it comes to criticizing the excessive use of vocabulary of English origin in French, pseudo-Anglicisms are invariably categorized as Anglicisms.

Pseudo-Anglicisms are sometimes referred to as "false friends" (*faux amis*) or "pseudo-friends", since the considerable difference in meanings may cause misunderstandings when speakers belonging to different linguistic communities interpret the lexeme differently. Such units often create difficulties for translators.

This phenomenon has long been observed in intercultural contacts between English and French and is most often the result of semantic change in earlier borrowings: a language borrows a word to fill a specific lexical gap. This occurred,

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for example, in the case of the differentiation of the word *baskets*, which evolved in French from a monosemous to a polysemous lexeme. In English, *basket* denotes "a hoop into which the ball is thrown" and to play basketball one wears *basketball shoes* (more commonly known today as *high-tops*). Thus, in English there are three different words designating three distinct objects. French, having borrowed the word *basketball*, shortened it to *basket*, which serves to designate the sport. The lexeme *le basket* (the basket), referring to the hoop into which players aim the ball, was borrowed directly from English. The same word in the plural (*baskets*) in contemporary French linguistic and cultural space denotes a type of sports footwear for playing basketball. By referring to distinct denotative realities (the sport, the hoop, and the footwear), the lexeme has developed stable polysemy within the French lexical system.

Naturally, these changes affecting the borrowed lexeme *basket* did not occur immediately. In *Le Petit Robert*, the term *basket* in the meaning "sport" is dated to 1898, whereas the meaning referring to sports footwear appears only in 1933. Shortly after the emergence of the latter meaning, such expressions appeared as *être à l'aise dans ses baskets*, *lâche-moi les baskets*, and *faire baskets*. It should be noted, however, that the lexeme *basket* (m.) in the meaning "hoop" did not become firmly established in English and is no longer recorded in French dictionaries either. The other two meanings are frequently encountered in journalistic articles:

Avec 91 milliards d'euros de ventes dans le monde en 2021, la basket est devenue un phénomène de société, à la fois objet de convoitise et marqueur identitaire (Le Monde, 25.09.2022 lemonde.fr);

La sanction de l'ailier des Philadelphia 76ers est à effet immédiat, a fait savoir la ligue nord-américaine de basket, qui n'a pas précisé la substance prise par le joueur (Le Monde, 31.01.2026 lemonde.fr).

Some linguists, including L. Guilbert [4], believe that when a foreign word becomes polysemous, it is perceived as an integral part of the recipient language. The example of *basket* also illustrates the classical process of pure borrowing (*basket* – hoop), borrowing resulting from shortening (*basket/ball*), and derivation (*basketball shoes* – *des baskets*). The derivational nature of the footwear meaning is supported by the fact that English predominantly employs *high-tops* rather than *basketball shoes*, indicating that the French development does not directly mirror current English usage.

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Thus, although the lexeme underwent borrowing, shortening, and morphological adaptation in accordance with French word-formation patterns, it continues to be classified by most lexicographers as an Anglicism, since the etymological link to the source language remains structurally and historically transparent.

In conclusion, pseudo-Anglicisms should be regarded as a distinct and theoretically significant category of English borrowings in French. While their meanings often diverge from the source language, these forms remain etymologically English and provide valuable insights into the mechanisms of semantic change, shortening, derivation, and polysemy formation.

Distinguishing pseudo-Anglicisms from false Anglicisms is crucial for a coherent theory of lexical borrowing. The examined cases – *palace*, *footing*, *speaker*, *training*, and *basket* – demonstrate how semantic divergence and morphological adaptation contribute to the integration of borrowings into the recipient language.

Ultimately, pseudo-Anglicisms are evidence of the dynamic interaction between languages. Their study refines the classification of Anglicisms, clarifies patterns of semantic evolution, and advances a more nuanced theory of lexical borrowing that accounts for formal, semantic, and diachronic dimensions.

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