Impact of fashion specialized discourse – a case study on the speech of French youths

Jennifer Sheridan

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

Abstract

This study determines whether fashion terms from the fashion field are being accepted and integrated into the speech of the young French adults under 25 years of age. In addition, the nature and factors for this integration, as well as the most integrated terms are discussed. Fashion terms were selected from a corpus and the favourite language of use for each concept was investigated by means of a questionnaire-based social survey. We identified a clear integration of English fashion-specialised terms in the speech of young French adults; given a list of terms, they were shown to favour the use of English alternatives in approximately half of the cases. However, time, usage and area factors could not explain the greater integration of certain terms over other ones. Data about the increase of technology development indicate a possible continuation of the integration growth in the future.

Keywords

Terminology, Young adults, Internet, Specialised discourse, Fashion field
Introduction

Nowadays, young adults under 25 years of age are increasingly concerned with their image, and this can be directly related to the arrival of Internet and the social media (Livingstone, 2008). A survey conducted in 2011 by the Institut Français d’Opinion Publique (Ifop) stated that among Facebookers, those under 25 years old are the ones most interested in fashion with 35% of them having “liked” at least one brand in Facebook compared to 23% for the population between 25 and 34, and 13% for the 35-49 years old (Ifop, 2011). Young adults are also the most prone to like many brands with 19% of them liking more than 3 brands against 6% in the other year ranges (Ifop, 2011). Livingstone (2008: 393) describes young social networks users as “a generation that, supposedly, has many friends but little sense of privacy and a narcissistic fascination with self-display”.

But globalization has also offered a global impact to fashion brands. Today, people hundreds of kilometres away have access to the same products at the same time. With the evolution of communication systems, social networks such as blogs and networking sites represent one of the easiest ways to reach businesses such as fashion brands and are a largely untapped marketing channel for products and services (Weinberg, 2011). As a result, the usage of social media by luxury brands surged (Mohr, 2013) and encourages interaction between customers and brands. These interactions raise the notoriety of the brands by increasing awareness, involvement, and engagement, and consequently stimulate brand recollection and thereby purchases (Mohr, 2013). Blogs and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest offer fashion brands means to connect with audiences. Social media is now viewed as an opportunity to improve customer relationships and to ultimately capture a larger audience. For example, the timing was right for Gucci’s multicultural social network site, “Guccieyeweb.com” for the launch of a new sunglasses collection targeting digital generation customers. Gucci also updates its Facebook site and sends Twitter tweets several times a day (Kim and Ko, 2012), thereby illustrating the importance of social media for brand-customer communication. Businesses must continually find new
ways to connect with customers, build strong relationships, and increase social engagement to drive
growth (Mohr, 2013). The emergence of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) has boosted interest in
word of mouth and viral marketing among luxury brands (Mohr, 2013). There, they publish their
promotions, their latest marketing strategies and above all, develop a set of values and a culture to which
their customers identify so as to create a true culture and obsession with fashion. According to a recent
survey by the web statistics company Alexa, Facebook is the second world's most visited website,
YouTube the 3rd, Twitter the 11th, and Instagram the 41st. (Alexa, 2015)

With the advent of social networks, youths increasingly communicate by means of pictures posted on
the social networks virtual accounts (Lívia and Matté, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). The appearance of
pictures and videos as communication media and their increasing use on social networks by young adults
under 25 has created an obsession for their appearance (Livingstone, 2008). Their virtual identity has
become as important as their real one. Recent data from a survey carried out between 2006 and 2012 by
Cortesi et al. (2013) show that in 2012:

- 91% posted a photo of themselves (2006=79%)
- 71% posted their school name (2006=49%)
- 92% posted their real name into the profile they use most often
- 84% posted their interests, such as movies, music, or books they like
- 82% posted their birth date
- 62% posted their relationship status
- 24% posted videos of themselves

People with accounts most visited by others have become *influencers*: people who do have an influence
on others (Lo and Phau, 2007; Mohr, 2013). Currently, Twitter measures a *twitterer*’s influence as the
number of *followers* he has. The more *followers* one has, the more impact he appears to make in the
Twitter context, because he seems more popular (He et al., 2010). Some of those influencers even have become public figures as Jay Alvarrez, an Instagram star with 3,000,000 followers on Instagram, nearly 520,000 on YouTube, and 86,800 on Vine. Our culture gives an increasing importance to image and appearance. Consequently, teenagers and young adults have become important players in the fashion industry: they are consumers, critics and the models of their own pictures. Brands and specialized magazines (Vogue, ID, etc.) are no longer the only ones talking about fashion; bloggers, influencers, and anyone with an active and popular profile on social networks can start new trends. Fashion is everywhere, mostly due to the internet. “Blogs” offer consumers an almost unlimited space for self-expression on the Internet (Belk, 2006). Unlike fashion-focused magazines and television shows, there are millions of fashion blogs worldwide that are updated regularly with new fashion trends. The effectiveness of blogs is the result of its strong individual, personal, popular, and elitist point of view (Mohr, 2013). Its engaging experience offers readers the opportunity to voice opinions and challenge fashion critics. Brands view popular bloggers as the new journalists and influencers (Lo and Phau, 2007). Once considered fashion-obsessed amateurs, style bloggers have matured into fashion trendsetters and these savvy marketers may command four- and five-figure fees from brands (Mohr, 2013).

This whole activity related to the image is the source of a growing number of texts on the same topic: fashion. It is likely that the growing importance of fashion in teens’ day-to-day has an impact on their speech. Several studies have examined the impact of communication on social networks on the general language (see AbuSa’aleek, 2015; Akkaya, 2014; Androutsopoulos, 2006; Caruso, 2012; Crystal, 2001; Denis and Tagliamonte, 2008; Montané, 2012; Nekipelova, 2015), but, to the best of our knowledge, the impact of fashion-related texts and fashion terminology on the general language remains to be evaluated. This work therefore analyses the impact of the specialised discourse of the increasingly international fashion on the acceptance and integration of terms coming from foreign languages in another language.
Since behavioural differences may exist between countries, languages, and different age groups, this paper will focus on French people under 25 years of age.

The main goal is to determine by means of a social survey, if fashion-specialized discourse has had an impact in the matter of implementation and acceptance of fashion terms from foreign languages in the language of French people under 25. The second objective is to determine and characterise the existence of a specific foreign language with an outstanding integration in the speech of French people under 25.

The third objective is to identify the level of acceptance and integration of fashion terms in the identified language and to determine the most accepted terms. The last goal is to identify the factors which resulted in the integration of fashion terms of the identified foreign language within the language of young French people under the age of 25.

We have extracted terms from a corpus made of fashion texts and conducted a social survey with the selected terms and their French equivalent in order to see the level of integration of the foreign terms by the target audience. We have analysed the results with several factors and observed the acceptation trends.

State of the art

Published work

The evolution of language due to the massive integration of technology and social networks has attracted much curiosity. Several studies have examined the language of social networks and their impact on the general language (see AbuSa’aleek, 2015; Akkaya, 2014; Androutsopoulos, 2006; Crystal, 2001; Montané, 2012; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). AbuSa’aleek (2015) talks about new types of communication that generate significant modifications in the structure of written language because of the electronic communication revolution. He worked on the creation of a concrete idea of electronic
discourse as a new variety of language. He demonstrated that only 25% of the corpus he analysed matches electronic speech, a data inconsistent with the general idea that students’ electronic speech is incomprehensible and full of shortened words. The results of this study do contrast with that of Tagliamonte & Denis (2008) who showed that the electronic discourse is a new language derived from modification in the current language, and integrates combinations of both formal and vernacular variants. Similarly, Akkaya (2014) reviewed existing work focused on computer-mediated communication (CMC). He is interested in the idea of online community and wants to show the role of the use of language and linguistic variation in building interpersonal relationships and social identities on the Internet. His work, not limited to the study of CMC speech, focuses on the sociological aspect of computer communication and the creation of an online community or community identity. But the evolution of language is not only related to new media. The social processes caused the formation of a social order (Nekipelova, 2015). It demands from language to be understandable and available to all bearers. Literary form is the result of language area globalization. Nekipelova (2015) concluded that the globalization of language is inevitable, caused by the globalization of society, and is necessary to protect viability and survivability under severe competition.

While the fashion industry has also been the subject of numerous studies, these primarily focused on the sociological impact of fashion on marketing strategies or on the relationship between fashion brands and internet (see Baudoin et al., 2007; Carter, 2011; Davis Burns et al., 2007; De Vries et al., 2012; Egan and Hardingham, 2014; Lueg, 2001; Martínez Caraballo, 2011). For example, Mohr (2013) wrote about the impact social networks have had to re-stimulate the luxury goods market after the crisis of 2008 and create a new marketing concept: marketing through social networks. In her article, she explains the way many luxury brands from different sectors have reinvented themselves and managed their way through the crisis partly thanks to social networks. Brands have strengthened their relationship with customers, and social networks have had an important role on word of mouth and exponential distribution offering
(Mohr, 2013). This is a key information for our study as it shows that the spread of fashion-specialized
discourse is closely related to the emergence of fashion brands in social networks and its new relationship
with consumers.

Another recent study compared the percentage of teenage boys and girls within each of the five
categories of buying psychological process established by Rogers (1983) (innovators, early adopters,
early majority, late majority, laggards) with regards to their sensitivity to brands. In addition to the
categories and percentages of boys compared to girls, this study described the sensitivity of these
categories to brands and the proportion of innovation in their clothing habits (Baudoin et al., 2007).

While the aforementioned studies addressed important aspects of the impact of social networks and
internet-based communication on speech patterns and language evolution, the relationship between
language evolution, social networks, and fashion still needs to be described and quantified. This work
therefore endeavours to elucidate whether the specialized discourse used in fashion has had an impact on
the implementation and acceptance of fashion related terms in the common language. However, because
language evolution trends may differ between geographic areas and age ranges, this study focused on a
specific category: French people under 25 years of age.

**Context data**

The level of integration of loan words from foreign languages or of creation of neologisms is directly
related to the education policy of each country and of the protection of its national language. Wanting to
focus on countries with conservative policies, we analysed the evolution of education policy in France
and Quebec.

*Education policy in France and Quebec.* France became interested in protecting the French language
very early as the first language law appeared in 1539 (Caruso, 2012). This law is at the origin of the
purist ideology and of the French linguistic norm. Across the years, the French policy created a system
of enrichment of the French language that worked on the creation of a French specialised speech able to replace foreign loan words (Caruso, 2012). In 1994, the Toubon Law changed this policy showing that the French government was aware that the French language undergoes a process of continuous evolution and that it no longer was entirely against the integration of foreign loan words depending on their usefulness to the French language. But purism and its norms have left an important trace. On the other hand, in Quebec, French was implanted and widespread in the seventeenth century. Initially, when New France was annexed by Britain, French speakers were a majority when compared to English speakers and, as a result, English was not considered a threat to their individuality. But the English policy forced the Francophones to back up for almost 2 centuries in submission, religion, agriculture and conservatism. However, the British couldn’t have foreseen the defence and identity reaction of the French-speaking Canadians, or their endeavour to conserve their language and culture (Leclerc, 2013). This reaction was materialized in 1977 with the Charter of the French Language that has restored strength, courage and energy to the French-speaking majority of Quebec. The Office Québécois de la Langue Française (OQLF) is the body responsible to ensure that the status of the French language doesn’t fall again into contempt and that it keeps a major role in language issues of the Quebec society. It is also in charge of the production and spread of the terminology and linguistic standards of Quebec. The preference of Frenchmen for linguistic loan words instead of neologisms and the fact that the official terminology only serves as a reference prove that the impact of the French Délégation Générale à la Langue Française (DGLF) recommendations about the use is different to the one of the OQLF that enjoys -in its fight against foreign terms- the support of the law and usually also of Quebeckers (Saint, 2013).

First English loan words. In France, the first English loan words appeared in the 18th century; at the beginning of the French Revolution, everybody looked towards England, to which the future French
revolutionaries envied the parliamentary system (Saint, 2013). Very naturally, several English terms relating to politics and justice make up the French lexicon (Saint, 2013).

Anglomania. In the 19th century, England was in full industrialisation. The “anglomania” that had begun with the French Revolution became even stronger. Terms such as “rail”, “express”, “tunnel”, “wagon” show up as well as terms such as “sport”, “football”, “tennis”, “golf”, or “handicap” (Saint, 2013).

The Second World War transformed the old anglomania into an invasion of anglo-american terms. The war magnified the american supremacy in technical and economical areas inside a French country weakened by six years of war and that was forced -in order to reboost its industry- to import a massive amount of American materials (Saint, 2013). As such, the use of foreign terms in technical speech during the years after the war does not come from an anglomania but from necessity (Chansou, 2003).

In the 1960s, France tried to recover its prestige and began to create links with the rest of the French-speaking world. This is how the Haut Comité pour la défense et l’expansion de la langue française was born in 1966 to be transformed in the Haut Comité de la langue française in 1973. This committee was responsible for the determination of measures aimed at ensuring the defence and spread of the French language, the establishment of links with other necessary operators -including in matters of cultural and technical cooperation-, and to develop and encourage projects related to the defence and spread of the French language (Bogaards, 2008). In 1984, the Haut Comité de la langue française was replaced by two new bodies: the Comité consultatif and the Commissariat général. In 1989, these same agencies became the Conseil supérieur de la langue française and the Délégation générale à la langue française, both under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture et de la Francophonie. In 1996, this ministry was divided in two separate departments (Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France [DGLF], 2008). The Délégation générale à la langue française was put under the authority of the Ministère de la
Culture et de la Francophonie and was renamed Délégation générale à la française et aux langues de France (DGLF) in 2001.

**Criticism of the French policy.** The French policy has been widely criticized for its distinctive approach to the perfection of spelling and grammar, which, according to many, has slowed the development of this language, creating a fear of using new words (Saint, 2013). For many generations, the way the French language was taught ensured perfect spelling and grammar, so as to avoid any kind of error (Saint, 2013). As a result, the French constantly comment on- and correct mistakes made by one another. As errors are inevitable, speakers have grown nervous and wonder how their transgressions will be received (Saint, 2013). Only a very strong personality can feel free of making errors in French (Barlow and Nardeau, 2006). The fear of mistake leads Frenchmen to naturally reject innovations, new rules, new pronunciations and new spellings (Saint, 2013). Purists have killed, in Frenchmen, the taste for lexical creation. This fear of innovation, of error, and of being ridiculous leads bearers to resort to term loans (Chansou, 2003).

**Methodology**

In order to assess the influence of the fashion industry on the integration of related terms, we composed a corpus, selected specific terms and designed a questionnaire to evaluate the use of these terms by young French people under the age of 25.

**Why French people under 25?**

First of all, we were interested in seeing the impact of language globalisation on a country with a conservative language policy in order to see if a conservative policy would be able to block any foreign contamination. For this reason, and as we will explain hereunder, France was selected as geographical
focus of this study. Another element we considered to be important is the age range. It is very unlikely for a French teenager to react the same way as an adult to language globalisation because of lifestyle, interests, and background differences. But why teenagers under 25?

In history, teenagers have not always been active fashion players. This trend evolved over time (Ashlock Magie, 2008; Dworjan, 2015) together with increases in their growing buying power (Chong et al., 2002; Dworjan, 2015). Specialists predict the future marketplace will be dominated by young consumers (Ashlock Magie, 2008) though they already represent a very important consumers segment (Dworjan, 2015).

Teenagers and young adults also represent the segment most familiar with technology as their a generation grew with the Internet and high use of computer technologies (Ashlock Magie, 2008; Lueg, 2001). In 2011, 98% of the French young people between 15 and 24 years of age were connected to the Internet and 83% of them had a Facebook account (Ifop, 2011). Unsurprisingly, it is the age segment that has integrated online shopping habits the most, presumably as online shopping was available for most their lifetime, in comparison to older age segments that integrated this shopping modality later in their lives (Lueg, 2001). Finally, as outlined earlier, this segment also has the particularity to have developed a more image- and fashion-oriented communication through the social networks than older segments (Cortesi et al., 2013).

For these reasons, we believe teenagers and young adults under 25 years old are the segment most likely to be subjected to fashion terminology contamination and to integrate foreign fashion terms in its language.

Corpus creation

As a brand, a constant interaction with authentic messaging on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Four Square, and other platforms is the only way to engage with the youth from a social media perspective. In
addition to such social networks, other channels that teens may turn to for trends, particularly fashion
trends, are magazines, their friends, and blogs (Carter, 2011). Therefore, the sources most likely to have
an impact on the language of French youths are the major fashion magazines and fashion blogs, as well
as the fashion brands targeting this audience and most active on the social networks and the Internet. The
contents likely to have an impact on the language of French youths are closely related to the marketing
strategies of brands and the background of this audience. This corpus was created following an adaptation
of the methods described in Quirion (2003). Quirion’s terminometric protocol is similar to a survey in
the way it is subject to the same sampling rules (Saint, 2013).

In order to form a representative corpus on the fashion-specialized discourse, we have decided to select
texts from the sources most likely to reach youths: websites of the most geographically widespread
fashion brands (e.g. Zara, Adidas, Nike, Levi’s), the main brands targeting the youths under 25 customer
segment (e.g. Pull&Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius), fashion magazines with major impact (e.g. Vogue,
Elle), and some of the most important French fashion blogs with written content (e.g. Marie luv pink, le
blog de Betty, et pourquoi pas Coline, comme un camion, nizza girl) (Desneiges, 2008; Feutry, 2014).
We have created a corpus of 170 texts with 86,888 words from 25 sources (see Table 1). The texts that
include articles, product description, and press releases were extracted from websites, social network
accounts, blogs, and texts given by the brands.
### Table 1 Corpus data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Text typology</th>
<th>Words qty</th>
<th># Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Adidas</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bershka</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>1494</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commeuncamion</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>5313</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>4595</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etpourquoiapasoline</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>2446</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gstar</td>
<td>Web content</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inditex</td>
<td>Press release</td>
<td>4184</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeans Denim</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>3015</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le blog de Betty</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>2504</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lefties</td>
<td>Press release</td>
<td>1651</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levi’s</td>
<td>Product description</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie luv pink</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massimo Dutti</td>
<td>Press release</td>
<td>2192</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>Product description</td>
<td>21100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nizza girl</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oysho</td>
<td>Web content</td>
<td>2305</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull&amp;Bear</td>
<td>Web content</td>
<td>5823</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stradivarius</td>
<td>Web content</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic</td>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>3607</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempe</td>
<td>Web content</td>
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<td>Tendencias</td>
<td>Blog</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Press release</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>86888</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Extraction and selection of the terms

The fashion terms extracted from this corpus were divided into 6 categories: generic clothing names, fitting, colour/effect, materials, models/styles, and other. A total of 135 terms were identified, and French terms (n=64) were separated from foreign loan words (mainly English; n=71). Because this study focuses...
on the integration of loan words coming from the fashion industry by French youths, French terms were
ignored. Next, all 71 foreign terms were mapped against the FranceTerme (FranceTerme, 2015),
Larousse (Larousse, 2015) and the Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique de Quebec (GDT) (Office
québécois de la langue française, 2015) databases. The percentage of words found in each database was
calculated and used to determine the level of acceptance of foreign fashion terms applied by each
database.

This study is interested analyzing of the current state of the French language. For this reason, we decided
to work exclusively with the most recent terms, mainly those that appeared in French texts over the last
2 decades, even though they may not be indexed in official terminological databases. With this goal in
mind, four of the six previously defined categories of terms were selected: “fitting”, “colour/effect”,
“model/style” and “others”. The other categories were discarded as they essentially contained terms
already implemented in the common language and integrated in the official databases. After this initial
filtering step, only 47 terms remained. Next, were excluded all terms repeated several times in equivalent
ways (e.g. waist and mid waist) and those already implemented in the French language for years such as
“jogging” (1964), “jeans” (1954) or “short” (since 1910) (Rey, 2011). This helped to narrow the selection
down to 32 foreign fashion terms mainly not yet included in official databases but already appearing in
French texts (see Table 2).

Finally, French equivalents of the selected terms were searched in the three reference databases
(FranceTerme, Larousse, GDT), as well as in the IATE (IATE, 2015). These terms and their equivalents
were then used to design a questionnaire that was sent to the target audience (see Appendix 1).
### Table 2 List of foreign fashion terms as well as their French equivalents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign term</th>
<th>French term</th>
<th>Foreign term</th>
<th>French term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colour / effect</td>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allover print</td>
<td>imprimé sur l'ensemble</td>
<td>shooting</td>
<td>séance photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coated</td>
<td>recouvert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark</td>
<td>foncé</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destroy</td>
<td>détruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stonewashed</td>
<td>délavé à la pierre</td>
<td>boho</td>
<td>bohémien romantique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>model / style</td>
<td>customiser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>street</td>
<td>style urbain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailoring</td>
<td>façon tailleur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>seventies</td>
<td>années 70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crewneck</td>
<td>col ras du cou</td>
<td>streetwear</td>
<td>vêtements urbains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoodie</td>
<td>pull à capuche</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legging</td>
<td>collant sans pieds</td>
<td>zip</td>
<td>fermeture éclair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pantacollant</td>
<td></td>
<td>fermeture à glissière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>caleçon</td>
<td>high waist</td>
<td>taille haute</td>
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<tr>
<td>jeggings</td>
<td>pantalon ultra-moulant</td>
<td>skinny</td>
<td>moulant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>legging en jean</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>droit</td>
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<td>collant sans pieds en denim</td>
<td>slim</td>
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<td>basket</td>
<td>boyfriend</td>
<td>large</td>
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<td></td>
<td>chaussure de sport</td>
<td>bootcut</td>
<td>jambe semi évasee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clutch</td>
<td>pochette</td>
<td>flare</td>
<td>jambe très évasee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Design and creation of the questionnaire

Given the importance of the place that the internet has in the habits of youths, the questionnaire was prepared and through the online survey platform SurveyMonkey. Given the extensive use of social networks, emails and other web-based communication channels by our target group (French youths under 25), the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was circulated through the use of social networks and email after having initiated the spread of the questionnaire through French universities, schools, as well as various youth groups (political, sport clubs, educative, …). As such, a total of 105 questionnaires were filled in.
a less than two weeks. The questionnaire contained two sets of questions; initial questions identified the origin, mother tongue, age and sex of the respondents, thereby ascertaining that they belonged to our target group (French youths under 25 years of age) and providing metadata allowing for data categorisation. In second part of the questionnaire, respondents were given a series of terms from our final selection and choices to make between either the original English term or its French equivalent. This allowed the determination of preferences of this social group for either loan words borrowed from English or their French equivalent. Together these data would allow for an estimation of the level of integration of the new terms coming from the fashion industry in the language of French youths.

No information was requested on the geographical area of residence or the social level of the respondents as this study focuses on the analysis of the integration of the English fashion terms rather than an extensive evaluation of sociological factors involved in such integration.

Data analysis

A variety of factors were considered in an attempt to understand why English was more used than French for specific terms. Firstly, we divided the terms in three categories based on time factor: terms used for >10 years, <10 years and <2 years in the language of French youths under 25. These categories were created in order to verify if the level of acceptance of foreign words in French is related to their time of use in French. Secondly, we considered the factor of usage of the terms. We divided the terms in five term usage categories: generic fashion (basic wardrobe clothing), adult fashion (characteristic elements of older generations styles), recent fashion (new clothes that appeared in the last five years), textile industry (terms related to the textile industry that are not pieces of clothing), and technology (terms related to the fashion industry technology). Thirdly, we tried to check if English terms related to “jeans” -products that have taken an important place in the wardrobe of youths during these last few years- were favoured over French alternatives. And finally, we analysed
the initial categories created during the extraction of terms (fitting, colour/effect, models/styles, and other).

Results and analysis

First of all, in the mapping of the 71 identified terms against the FranceTerme (FranceTerme, 2015), Larousse (Larousse, 2015) and the Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique de Quebec (Office québécois de la langue française, 2015) databases, it appeared FranceTerme only contains 2 of the selected terms (2.8%) in its database, Larousse has 29 terms (41%) and the GDT 20 terms (28%), plus 10 terms recognized only in English but with French equivalents. Larousse is the database that includes most foreign fashion terms, and the GDT the most complete as it presents French equivalents to English terms as well as recommendations on the use of certain terms over others. Likewise, following its policy of protection of the French language, the GDT tends to prefer original French terms or French translations of foreign terms instead of suggesting the implementation of foreign loan words.

With regards to the target audience, a total of 105 respondents took part in the survey, 34.09% of which were male, and the rest 65.91% female, all French and under 25 years of age. This difference may reflect varying levels of interest for the fashion industry, but exploring this further is out of the scope of the present study. All of the 33 terms put forward in the questionnaire were English and received at least one preference for the English term, indicating that the questionnaire included terms highly relevant to this study. Interestingly, the survey revealed that English terms were favoured over their French alternatives in nearly half of the answers (45.58%). These data compared to the proportion of foreign versus French terms indicate that 23.97% of fashion terms used by our target audience are in English. Given that French is the mother tongue of all respondents, this number is remarkable.
When considering differences in language use preferences between the four term classification categories selected for the survey, it is interesting to see that, for every category except “Colour/effect”, the number of respondents favouring the use of French is indistinguishable from that of respondents favouring the use of English (Figure 1). This may be due to a higher technical nature of the terms included in that category and to a scarcer use of them. Overall, the proportion of respondents favouring the use of English terms over French equivalents is remarkably high considering that the audience is exclusively French and has been educated in a schooling system highly protective of the use of the French Language. In addition, while older age classes may have been significantly exposed to English in a professional context, this is likely not the case for youths under 25.

The most accepted English terms were baskets (96.97%), blogger (96.77%), legging (93.55%), shooting (83.87%), and slim fit (87.69%). A variety of factors were considered in an attempt to understand why English was more used than French for specific terms. Firstly, though it could be expected that foreign words that have been in use for a longer time may
be more accepted, no difference could be observed in the level of integration of English words in use for
>10 years, <10 years and <2 years in the language of French youths under 25.

Secondly, when considering different term usage categories (generic fashion, adult fashion, recent
fashion, textile industry, and technology), only terms used in the textile industry showed a marked
trend of preferred use of French terms (70% of choices) over English versions. This could be due to a
reduced knowledge of the terms of this category by the target audience, no matter the language of the
terms. Finally, we tried to check if English terms related to “jeans”-products that have taken an
important place in the wardrobe of youths during these last few years- were favoured over French
alternatives. While this could have been expected as most of the terminology related to this sector, even
in French documents, tends to make use of English terms, this was not the case.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify whether the fashion industry and the specific foreign vocabulary that it
uses has been integrated into the language of French youths under 25 years of age. This social category
was particularly selected for this work because France is known to have a highly conservative view
with regards to the integration and use of foreign words in French and youths under 25 years old are the
generation most connected to Internet and in contact with international contents. In the terms selection,
it appeared that most foreign fashion terms used in French are English. By means of a questionnaire-
based survey we showed that overall, English has been largely integrated into the day-to-day language
of French youths under 25. A categorisation approach, classifying the terms evaluated into categories
related to the context of use of these terms in the fashion industry, showed that the amount of use of
French terms was generally not distinguishable from that of English terms. The only exception to this
trend was for terms pertaining to the theme of “colour/effect”, which may be due to a higher technical
nature of the terms included in that category and to a scarcer use of them (e.g. coated). In addition, a
variety of factors (time, usage, jeans) were examined in an attempt to explain why certain English
words were better integrated than others by French youths under 25, however it appears English terms
were well accepted in all categories by the textile industry. This may be due to a reduced knowledge of
the terms of this category by the target audience. It is possible that new English terms such as blogger
or legging are more easily accepted by French youths because using a French equivalent would mean
creating a new term of using a long and unpractical paraphrase.

Through mapping the 71 identified terms against the FranceTerme (FranceTerme, 2015), Larousse
(Larousse, 2015) and the GDT (Office québécois de la langue française, 2015) databases, it resulted
that FranceTerme has clear lack of fashion terms with only 4 fashion terms identified in the entire
database. Larousse presented a much more comprehensive fashion database, as did the GDT which was
also the most complete database out of the three -although it only contained 28% of the selected terms-as it recognised up to 42% of them because of its bilingual nature, suggesting one or more French
equivalents to the terms identified exclusively in English. Historically, France has maintained a more
relaxed policy of implementation of foreign terms than Quebec, but recently the organisations in charge
of the protection of the French language returned to a more conservative policy. For this reason, the
Académie Française adapted its policy based on that of Quebec and now equally promotes the use
French terms over foreign terms in the common language (Alliance Champlain (Afrav) et al., 2009).
This could explain the lack of English terms in FranceTerme.

Overall, this study showed a direct impact of the fashion-specialized discourse on the language of
French youths under 25. In addition, the percentage of use of English and French terms being generally
equivalent, this study clearly demonstrates a level of acceptance and implementation of English terms
by French youths. The development of globalisation and Internet as well as the use of social networks
by young people suggest that this integration may follow a growing curve. Given that in 2011, 98% of
French youths aged between 14 to 24 were already connected to the Internet, which is much more than
the other age ranges (Ifop, 2011), increased internet usage by this social category will likely contribute to increased exposure to English terms, and therefore potentially result in further integration of foreign fashion terms by this target group. Another important factor that may influence further integration of English fashion terms in French, is that, despite the growing emergence of major international brands websites in French (e.g. Nike, Adidas, GAP), many of them keep product descriptions in English. Furthermore, as recently shown, around 88% of potential consumers can now be considered as “Full Web” customers, meaning that they both research articles and purchase them online (BVA, 2013). Considering that French youths between 14 to 24 years of age are the most active category on internet (Ifop, 2011), there is no doubt that this new trend to research and buy online can be the source of further integration of English terms in French. While the general trends in the fashion market all suggest future increases in the use of English fashion-related terms in French, it was not possible to link the preferred use of some terms over others to any specific trend. For future works, it would be interesting to analyse the impact of the fashion-specialised discourse on older generations in order to see if they have a similar level of integration of foreign words and to analyse the impact of internet on the use of the English language by youths under 25 years of age.

References


November 2015).


Appendix

Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Questionnaire</th>
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<tr>
<td>Étes-vous français(e) ou francophone ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oui / Non</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quel est votre sexe ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homme / Femme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avez-vous moins de 25 ans ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oui / Non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veuillez choisir le terme que vous utilisez le plus parmi les options suivantes :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low-high waist / taille basse-haute (jeans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>skinny / moulant (jeans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>straight / droit (jeans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>slim fit / étroit (jeans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boyfriend / large (jeans)</td>
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<td>bootcut / jambe semi évasée (jeans)</td>
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<td>flare / jambe très évasée (jeans)</td>
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<td>----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>hoodie / pull à capuche</td>
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<td>legging / collant sans pieds / pantacollant / caleçon</td>
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<td>tregging / pantalon ultra-moulant</td>
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