
Do speakers of German use Romance loans as an avoidance strategy for anglicisms?

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The second half of the 20th century has seen a rise in the use of English loanwords in the German language (Coats 2019; Onysko 2007). However, the rise of English borrowings has also garnered criticism from language purists (Spitzmüller 2005) and is associated with negative stereotypes, such as seeming half-educated or mindlessly following trends (Pfalzgraf 2006). Thus, it stands to reason that there are social incentives to avoid anglicisms in German to distinguish themselves from these negative stereotypes (Tajfel et al. 1971).

The present study posits that one avoidance strategy is to use Romance equivalents in German, instead of anglicisms (e.g., *prokrastinieren* instead of *procrastinate*, which corresponds to German ‘aufschieben’). It can indeed be observed that certain Romance loanwords have markedly increased in frequency in German in recent years (e.g., the rise of *prokrastinieren* post 2000, cf. DWDS *Zeitungskorpus*).

The present study proposes that this increase in use is due to speakers of German replacing anglicisms with their (already nativized) Romance equivalents. Furthermore, we posit that this replacement is a linguistic marker of social identity (e.g. Gumperz 1982) and simultaneously avoidance is a clear distancing strategy from other social identities. To investigate this hypothesis, the two studies will be conducted. The first study comprises a corpus study that investigates increased frequency of luxury, i.e. superfluous, loans. The second study conducts a perception experiment in which we test how speakers perceived gender, age, and socioeconomic status as markers of social identity that are associated with the use of a) Romance loanwords, b) Anglicisms, c) German equivalent.

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