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A Contrastive Analysis of Exclamations in Selected Italian and Polish Gaming Videos on YouTube

ABSTRACT

The present paper proposes an analysis of exclamations, primarily obscene words, identified in the spoken Italian and Polish of selected gaming videos on the video hosting website YouTube. The author contrasts the exclamations collected in his previous study with new material of the same nature in Italian. The analysis reveals considerable differences in the type of exclamations employed by the Italian and the Polish vloggers. In the Polish material there are a great number of borrowed English obscene words, whereas practically no such items are found in the Italian material. The author speculates about the possible reasons as to why such a discrepancy occurs.

KEYWORDS

English borrowings, spoken language, vlogs, Polish, Italian

Introduction

Amateur videos online have enjoyed astounding success since the establishment of the video hosting website YouTube. Millions of people have been prompted either to post videos of themselves online in the form of video blogs (vlogs), and thus become vloggers, or to become regular viewers of such nonstandard programming. The rise of YouTube allowed the spoken variety of language to manifest on the Internet on an unprecedented scale. The spoken variety employed in vlogs, often unrehearsed and spontaneous, is now readily available

in most languages across the world with a single click. The linguistic material analysed in the present paper comes from gaming videos on YouTube. Gaming videos are videos in which vloggers play a popular video game and comment on what is happening as the plot of the game unfolds. Normally, most of the screen is occupied by images from the game, whereas the vlogger appears in the left- or right-hand corner. The idea behind such videos is not to create how-to-play tutorials but to present vloggers' personas and their reactions. Crucially for the present paper, the popularity of specific video games on YouTube is global in nature. It is often the case that vloggers from different countries, and thus speakers of different languages, play exactly the same games. Therefore, the global scale of the phenomenon allows for an analysis of the features of the spoken variety of Italian and Polish and the linguistic reactions of vloggers themselves in very similar contexts.

The present article is a contribution to the developing area of research on spoken language on the Internet. The main focus of the study will be the differences in the type of exclamations which appear in the analysed gaming videos in Italian and Polish. The analysis will show that the exclamations in both the Polish and the Italian videos are predominantly, though not exclusively, obscene words. This seems to be the case because the vloggers who appear in the videos play very challenging, emotional games which require making quick decisions. Furthermore, the vloggers are normally people between the ages of 15 and 30, which perhaps leads to a more relaxed approach to swearing.

Significant differences in the type of these obscene words between Italian and Polish were identified. The Polish vloggers employed a great number of obscene words borrowed from English, whereas the Italian vloggers essentially did not borrow from English at all.

The term 'borrowing' will be used throughout the article to denote the identified exclamations used by the Polish vloggers. The term 'borrowing' has been problematic especially in contrast with another term, 'code-switching.' In her multidimensional study dedicated to code-switching, Gardner-Chloros writes the following: "In the introduction to a volume on CS, Eastman wrote: 'Efforts to distinguish code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing are doomed' [...]. Little has occurred since then to lighten this pessimistic view: terminology has been endlessly discussed in the CS literature without any real commonality of practice being achieved."¹

In face of such problematic terminology, the author suggests that working definitions should be employed. This is "[...] helpful given the confusing fact that each researcher provides different definitions of the relevant terms. This matters less if we consider definitions merely as a research tool with which to describe data."²

¹ P. Gardner-Chloros, *Code-switching*, New York 2009, p. 10.

² *Ibidem*, p. 11.

Similarly, in his discussion of terms like code-switching, nonce borrowings and conventionalised borrowings, Wohlgemuth points out that “[t]he boundaries between these different language contact phenomena are at best fuzzy, and one should understand them as points on a scale rather than two separate entities,”³ and that well-established borrowings which are sometimes not even considered as such by speakers of a recipient language are at one end of the scale, and at the other end there are “[...] transfers that occurred only once or rarely, under specific circumstances, and are not commonly understood and used in the speech community of the recipient language.”⁴ Wohlgemuth continues:

As Sankoff, Poplack, and Vannirajan (1990: 71) point out: “Nonce borrowings in the speech of bilinguals differ from established loanwords in that they are not necessarily recurrent, widespread, or recognized by host language monolinguals.” The same is – of course – true for code-switches into another language. These are instantiations of transfer, but are neither understood nor shared by other speakers of the host language who do not happen to be bilinguals, too. Yet, nonce borrowings as well as borrowings differ from code-switches inasmuch as they both share the “characteristics of morphological and syntactic integration” (Sankoff, Poplack, and Vannirajan 1990: 71, 94) into the recipient language.⁵

In the present paper, the borrowings are represented by exclamations. They are the dominant category of borrowings identified in the Polish material, contrary to the findings presented in Mańczak-Wohlfeld⁶ and Zabawa⁷ which suggest that the borrowing of exclamations is marginal. This argument will be addressed later.

For the purpose of the present article, it was decided the term ‘borrowing’ will be used to denote a lexical item uttered by the Polish vloggers in English as opposed to anything uttered in their native language, Polish. This line of reasoning is in accord with Wohlgemuth’s approach but with lesser emphasis on morphological and syntactic integration. In addition it was decided not to call these items ‘code-switches’ in line with the understanding of code-switching which sees the phenomenon as “[...] varied combinations of two or more linguistic varieties [...] in countless bilingual societies and communities,”⁸ inasmuch it cannot be argued that the Polish vloggers in the present author’s material are part of a *bilingual society and community*.

³ J. Wohlgemuth, *A Typology of Verbal Borrowings*, Berlin, Boston 2009, p. 53.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ E. Mańczak-Wohlfeld, *Tendencje rozwojowe współczesnych zapożyczeń angielskich w języku polskim*, Kraków 1995, p. 54.

⁷ M. Zabawa, *English Lexical and Semantic Loans in Informal Spoken Polish*, Katowice 2012, pp. 84–85.

⁸ P. Gardner-Chloros, op. cit., p. 4.

First, the relevant research on the influence of English on Polish and Italian will be presented and the scarcity of publications on spoken language which would deal with the issues in question will be pointed out. Second, the analysed material will be presented. Third, the possible explanations as to why such a considerable discrepancy occurs in the type of exclamations used by the Polish vloggers and the Italian vloggers in the analysed material will be examined. As will be shown in the course of the analysis, the primary source of this discrepancy seem to be potential cultural differences between Italy and Poland.

Research on vlogging and English borrowings

Research dedicated to the phenomenon of vlogging has been gaining more and more interest over the years. Along with the now-canonical introduction by Strangelove⁹ there are a number of publications dealing with different aspects and perspectives related to vlogging, such as the perspective of technology, community and commerce,¹⁰ vlog genres and rhetorics,¹¹ and audience design in vlogs,¹² to name but a few. The present paper also deals with the phenomenon of vlogs but unlike most of the available studies, it explores the issue from an interlingual and a cross-cultural perspective.

As the lingua franca of the modern world, English continues to exert significant influence on other languages. Extensive research on the topic has been conducted for years, and a vast number of publications dealing with English borrowings are available. In the last twenty years scholars have been dedicating more and more attention to language on the Internet. Despite a growing interest in spoken language online, both in the case of Italian and Polish, research has usually focused less on this variety and has dedicated more space to the written variety. Indeed, it seems that spoken language on the Internet has only recently become a point of interest for scholars, also thanks to the rise of YouTube. The fact that there are few publications on English borrowings in spoken Polish is pointed out in Zabawa,¹³ who states that “[t]here is, to the present author’s knowledge, still a scarcity of publications dealing with lexical loans of English origin in contemporary spoken spontaneous Polish. The only systematic work of this type known

⁹ M. Strangelove, *Watching YouTube – Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2010.

¹⁰ P. Snickars, P. Vonderau, *The YouTube Reader*, Stockholm 2009.

¹¹ E. A. Werner, *Rants, Reactions, and other Rhetorics: Genres of the YouTube Vlog*, Chapel Hill 2012.

¹² M. Frobenius, “Audience design in monologues: how vloggers involve their viewers”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2014, Vol. 72.

¹³ M. Zabawa, *op. cit.*, p. 11, 48, 51, 53, 55.

to the present author is the one written by Otwinowska-Kasztelanica¹⁴ and the topic “is still far from systematically researched.”¹⁵

Those interested in publications predominantly on English written borrowings in Polish will be familiar with the works of Mańczak-Wohlfeld (to mention but a few.)¹⁶ These works have a decidedly minor focus on the spoken variety. However, some considerations are present, e.g. in *Tendencies in the Assimilation of Contemporary English Loanwords in Polish (Tendencje rozwojowe współczesnych zapożyczeń angielskich w języku polskim)*¹⁷ there is a whole chapter dedicated to the tendencies in the development of English borrowings in Polish at the phonological level. The phonological approach is also present in a later publication by the same author, in which she argues¹⁸ that, contrary to Görlach's claim¹⁹ that there is a tendency to adapt the original phonology of borrowings along with the graphical representation, Polish speakers continue to adapt English borrowings to the Polish phonological system rather than pronounce them the English way. Studies of borrowings from such perspectives may prove interesting for further research on the language of vlogs but have no major bearing on the present study.

Another perspective on spoken language is presented in an article by Witalisz, who analyses “[...] the different ways in which English linguistic material is borrowed and adapted by two varieties of Polish, Standard Polish spoken in Poland and American Polish used by the Polish diaspora in the US.”²⁰ The analysis reveals both similarities and differences in the way standard Polish and American Polish borrow from English. One similarity found is the fact that “the types of lexical loans are similar in both varieties.” Whereas Witalisz's study is restricted to two different varieties of Polish, one of which is heavily influenced by American English, the present article deals with two different languages, Italian and Polish, both potentially influenced – with a different outcome, as will be demonstrated – primarily by American English.

¹⁴ A. Otwinowska-Kasztelanica, *A Study of the Lexico-Semantic and Grammatical Influence of English on the Polish of the Younger Generation of Poles (19–35 Years of Age)*, Warszawa 2000.

¹⁵ M. Zabawa, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁶ E. Mańczak-Wohlfeld, *Tendencje rozwojowe...*, op. cit.; eadem, “Starsze i nowsze zapożyczenia angielskie w mówionej oraz pisanej odmianie języka polskiego”, *Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego*, 2004, nr LX; eadem, *Angielsko-polskie kontakty językowe*, Kraków 2006.

¹⁷ Eadem, *Tendencje rozwojowe...*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Eadem, “Starsze i nowsze zapożyczenia angielskie...”, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁹ M. Görlach, *English Words Abroad*, Amsterdam 2003, p. 84.

²⁰ A. Witalisz, “English linguistic influence on Standard and American varieties of Polish. A comparative study”, *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 2013, Vol. 4 (130), p. 327.

An approach closer to the focus of the present paper can be found in the article on the influence of English on spoken Polish by Zabawa. The author finds that in his corpus of spontaneous spoken Polish, English borrowings “[...] constitute a very small percentage of the corpus, namely 0.3715%” and therefore concludes that “[...] contrary to popular belief, Polish speakers do not seem to overuse the borrowings from English,” adding that “[w]hile it may be the case that the borrowings of English origin are used excessively in the language of the mass media, particularly in commercials and press advertisements, they are not overused in spontaneous everyday conversations.”²¹ A contrasting view to Zabawa’s claim about exclamations in spontaneous spoken language will be presented later.

As remarked earlier, similarly to research on Polish, works on Italian also focus more on the written variety of language. In the field of the influence of English borrowings on Italian, an insightful overview is presented in an article by Antonelli published on the website of one of the most important Italian dictionaries, Treccani. Antonelli attempts to give answers to the question of how many English words have entered Italian in the last fifty years basing his findings on lexicographic and lexicological sources. Analysing the historical tendencies, Antonelli also reaches some conclusions that relate to spoken Italian:

It is difficult to calculate how many English borrowings have been present in our language in recent years, and it is even more difficult to establish how deeply they have penetrated [the system]. It appears that [the intensity] of the phenomenon is on a superficial increase: it is already fairly regular in mass communication, it definitely has a greater reach in everyday language compared to the past, but it is still far from affecting the core of spontaneous language and informal communication, especially the spoken variety.²²

Another historical perspective, though with the focus on the attitudes of Italians towards the spread of English into their language, can be found in Pulcini. The author highlights the switch from “hostility and xenophobia in the first half of the century” to “accommodation and acceptance after the Second World War”²³

²¹ M. Zabawa, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

²² “Se è difficile calcolare quanti anglicismi passano o sono passati negli ultimi anni per la nostra lingua, ancora più difficile è capire quanto la loro penetrazione sia giunta in profondità. La sensazione è che il fenomeno si allarghi [...] superficialmente: abbastanza sistematico, ormai, nella comunicazione di massa, sicuramente più esteso di prima anche nella lingua di tutti i giorni, ma ancora molto lontano dall’intaccare il nucleo della lingua spontanea e della comunicazione familiare, specie parlata” (G. Antonelli, *Fare i conti con gli anglicismi I – i dizionari dell’uso*, [online] http://www.treccani.it/lingua_italiana/speciali/italiano_inglese/antonelli.html [accessed: 12.11.2016], trans. from Italian R. Kurpiel).

²³ V. Pulcini, “Attitudes towards the spread of English in Italy”, *World Englishes*, 1997, No. 1 (16), p. 77.

and later comments on the level of English proficiency in Italian education. The issue of English proficiency levels will be addressed further on.

An interesting, up-to-date contribution to the study of English borrowings in written and spoken language is presented in the article “English in television commercials in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain” by Raedts, Dupré, Hendrickx and Debrauwere. Importantly for the present paper, Italian commercials are analysed, though, unfortunately, Polish commercials are not included in the study. It was found that in Italy, the percentage of commercials which contain English is 54.3% by the broad definition of ‘English word’ and 47.3% by the strict definition (excluding songs in both.)²⁴ The final conclusion of the study is that “English is widespread in Western and South European prime time television commercials and that English is mostly used in advertising messages for culture-free products.”²⁵

English borrowings in Italian are also discussed by Grochowska. The analysis conducted in the study²⁶ shows that when given a choice between a specific pair of words of the same meaning, one Italian and one English, the interviewees often tended to prefer the English word. The author concludes by stating that “almost unaware [of the process], Italians have become users of the English vocabulary which is being integrated into the language with extreme tolerance [...]”²⁷ The issues raised will be addressed in the latter part of the present article.

The analysis of Italian and Polish gaming videos

For the purpose of the present paper, twenty gaming videos were analysed: ten videos in Italian and ten videos in Polish. Five Italian-speaking and five Polish-speaking vloggers out of those with the highest number of subscribers in Italy and in Poland, respectively, were selected. The lists of most popular vloggers were taken from the website *socialblade.com* which presents YouTube-related ranks according to country and to video type. The Italian and Polish vloggers were then paired up for analysis based on the videogame they played and roughly based on their age. The duration of the videos was approximately that of 15 minutes. The shortest video was approximately 8 minutes long, and the longest – approximately 19. If a given Polish video was shorter or longer, then the Italian video in the pair had a more or less corresponding duration. A total of over 4 hours of video material was analysed for the purpose of the present paper. No claims of statistical validity are proposed – the aim of the present paper is to demonstrate

²⁴ M. Raedts, N. Dupré, J. Hendrickx, S. Debrauwere, “English in television commercials in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain”, *World Englishes*, 2015, No. 4 (34), p. 12.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

²⁶ A. Grochowska, “La pastasciutta non è più trendy? Anglicismi di lusso nell’italiano contemporaneo”, *Annales UMCS Sectio FF (Philologiae)*, 2010, No. 2 (28), p. 54.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

a preliminary, tentative analysis of an issue that has not yet been addressed in literature. Further research including a much greater number of videos to obtain statistically valid claims is required. A wider perspective would be needed in order to formulate general statements about the use of such linguistic items in both Italian and Polish in contexts other than gaming videos.

The exclamations appeared in varied distribution in different videos. However, in the majority of cases one exclamation followed another within much less than 1 minute. Some exclamations were uttered as part of a longer stretch and some in isolation.

The author of the present article used some of the Polish gaming videos analysed in his other study dedicated exclusively to English borrowings in Polish gaming videos²⁸ and paired them up with their new Italian counterparts. Moreover, new sets of Polish-Italian pairs of gaming videos were selected for the purpose of the present paper. In the present author's previous study, other English borrowings such as nouns and non-exclamatory expressions occurred as well. They, however, go beyond the scope of the present paper and are thus not cited. Additionally, no such English borrowings were identified in the Italian videos analysed.

The videogames the gamers played were either exactly the same or shared a very similar theme. Additionally, games with intense action were selected. All of this was done to obtain the most similar context possible, in expectation of a similar mood in a given game and similar emotional responses in vloggers.

The following tables present the occurrence of exclamations in both Italian and Polish videos. If a given exclamation appears several times in a row in one specific utterance, it is counted as one.

Tab. 1. Exclamations identified in the Italian videos (10 videos)

Exclamation	Word count	Percentage (out of 261)
(Che) cazzo/sti cazzo	80	30.7
Madonna/Mado'/Madonnina	24	9.20
Figlio di bastarda/bastardo	22	8.40
Merda!	22	8.40
Vaffanculo/affanculo/fanculo	21	8.00
Porca (troia, trota, vacca, puttana)	16	6.10
(Che) cacchio/cagare	10	3.80

²⁸ R. Kurpiel, "Zagrajmerzy, suby i live'y, czyli anglicyzmy w polskich wideoblogach", [in:] *Język a media. Zjawiska językowe we współczesnych mediach*, red. B. Skowronek, E. Horyń, A. Walecka-Rynduch, Kraków 2016.

(O) Dio!	10	3.80
(Non) fregare	9	3.45
Minchia!	8	3.10
Stronzo	7	2.70
(Che) palle!	6	2.30
Incazzarsi	5	1.90
Mamma (mia)!	5	1.90
Rompere ca.../i coglioni/il culo	4	1.50
Mortacci (de, tua)!	3	1.15
Managgia!	2	0.80
Bitch!	1	0.40
Cazzata	1	0.40
Fregatura	1	0.40
Maledizione	1	0.40
Sfottere	1	0.40
Stare sul culo	1	0.40
Yeah!	1	0.40

Source: Italian gaming video material analyzed for the purpose of the present paper.

Except for two words in bold (*bitch* and *yeah*) which appeared in the analysed videos only once each, there were no other English borrowings identified. Pulcini states that “[i]n spite of the supposed ‘invasion’ of English words in Italian, about which people often complain, their actual frequency in the spoken language appears to be statistically insignificant (0.2 percent).”²⁹ Although the publication is now dated and comes from a time when the Internet was not the all-encompassing social phenomenon it is today, the findings presented in the table seem to sustain the validity of Pulcini’s claim. In a more recent study, which takes into consideration the influence of technology, Malinowska makes a distinction between occasional neologisms and borrowings which regularly appear in various written contexts, but much less so in spoken contexts.³⁰ In support of this view the author also quotes Fanfani.³¹ It has to be borne in mind,

²⁹ V. Pulcini, op. cit., p. 79.

³⁰ M. Malinowska, “Anglicismi giornalistici in italiano all’epoca della globalizzazione”, [in:] *En quête de sens. W poszukiwaniu znaczeń. Études dédiées à Marcela Świątkowska. Studia dedykowane Marceli Świątkowskiej*, red. J. Górnikiewicz, H. Grzmil-Tylutki, I. Piechnik, Kraków 2010, p. 297.

³¹ M. Fanfani, “Per un repertorio di anglicismi in italiano”, [in:] *Italiano e inglese a confronto*, a cura di A. V. Sullam Calimani, Venezia 2003, p. 151.

however, that unfortunately, the publications quoted above are not essentially occupied with borrowed exclamations, which are specifically of interest to the present study. In Giovanardi, in an excerpt dedicated to critical remarks about De Mauro's "Storia linguistica dell'Italia repubblicana" two exclamations, *ok* and *wow*, appear.³² No remarks as to the different character of these borrowings are offered. Similarly, Grochowska in her study showing Italian speakers' preference for English borrowings when presented with a list of such items along with their Italian equivalents,³³ lists exclusively nouns and adjectives, and no exclamations are present. Additionally, the material studied by Grochowska does not feature spontaneous speech.

The 5 identified exclamations in the Italian material with the highest number of occurrences were the following: *che cazzo*, *cazzo* or *sti cazzo* (*fuck*, *dick*) with as many as 80 occurrences, then *Madonna* (*Oh my [God]*) and its alternative versions with 24 occurrences, followed by *figlio di bastarda* or *bastardo* (*son of a bitch* or *bastard*) and *merda* (*shit*) with 22 occurrences, and *vaffanculo* (*fuck you/fuck off*) with 21. Other identified exclamations were less frequent. The English equivalents in parentheses are approximate functional translations and serve the purpose of giving an idea of the intensity or vulgarity of a given exclamation. As can be seen, whereas *Madonna* is a milder exclamation, the other four ones are relatively 'strong' obscene words, with *cazzo* being the most vulgar.

The types of exclamations and their distribution in the Polish table are considerably different from the ones in the Italian table. As pointed out earlier, an extended table with other English borrowings identified in the material can be found in the present author's other study.³⁴

Table 2. Exclamations identified in the Polish videos (10 videos)

Exclamation	Word count	Percentage (out of 120)
Fuck / what the fuck / no fucking way / fuck off / motherfucker	47	39.2
Zapierdalać / odpierdalać / wypierdalać / wpierdolić / napierdalać / pierdolić	10	8.30
Kurwa!	9	7.50

³² C. Giovanardi, "Un bilancio delle proposte di traduzione degli anglicismi dieci anni dopo", [in:] *La lingua italiana e le lingue romanze di fronte agli anglicismi*, a cura di C. Marazzini, A. Petralli, Firenze 2015, p. 39.

³³ A. Grochowska, op. cit., pp. 53–54.

³⁴ R. Kurpiel, op. cit.

Pierdzielić / opierdzielać (się)	6	5.00
What?	6	5.00
(Oh) (fuck) yeah!	6	5.00
Shit!	5	4.20
What the (f)...?	4	3.30
Oh God!	3	2.50
Kurde!	3	2.50
Nice!	3	2.50
Kurw...	3	2.50
Gówniany / srać	2	1.70
Chuj	2	1.70
Nevermind	2	1.70
Nope	2	1.70
Come on!	1	0.80
O co kaman?	1	0.80
Seriously?	1	0.80
Wait!	1	0.80
Wow!	1	0.80
Yay!	1	0.80
Zjechać	1	0.80

Source: Polish gaming video material partially quoted from R. Kurpiel, "Zagrajmerzy, suby i live'y, czyli anglicyzmy w polskich wideoblogach", [in:] *Język a media. Zjawiska językowe we współczesnych mediach*, red. B. Skowronek, E. Horyń, A. Walecka-Rynduch, Kraków 2016, with appropriate modifications and additions to suit the purpose of the present paper.

In the Polish videos, the number of borrowed English obscene words was relatively high, especially in the case of expressions with the component *fuck*. Interestingly, in the present author's research on English borrowings in Polish gaming videos English exclamations are the predominant category of borrowings, contrary to findings presented in Mańczak-Wohlfeld and Zabawa. In her publication Mańczak-Wohlfeld identifies only three exclamations borrowed from English into Polish.³⁵ Zabawa, based on the research carried out in his study, states that "English interjections and exclamations do not appear to be widely used by native speakers of Polish."³⁶ One can speculate that the possible reason

³⁵ E. Mańczak-Wohlfeld, *Tendencje rozwojowe...*, op. cit., p. 54.

³⁶ M. Zabawa, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

for the discrepancy was a different contextual setting of utterances. In the present author's study, the utterances were monologues produced by one person in an online gaming context. Zabawa, on the other hand, recorded conversations and not monologues. Furthermore, the conversations analysed by him were recorded "during such events as a birthday party, a meeting with friends [...], during walks, often with a dog, e.g. in a park or the woods, along the lake shore, through a housing estate etc., or during informal meetings with friends and/or family members, e.g. in a garden" as well as "in a place of work, namely in a staffroom in a junior high school during long breaks."³⁷ Arguably, these contexts do not trigger such strong associations with the Anglo-Saxon world as the games in the material analysed by the present author. The situational context analysed by Zabawa differs in terms of emotional intensity, levels of spontaneity, medium of communication (the Internet vs. *real life* situations) and possible cultural associations. These contextual factors appear to have a bearing on the use of spontaneous exclamations borrowed from English. The question of context and other related issues will be addressed in the course of the analysis further on.

It has to be pointed out that in the Polish table, all of the occurrences of the word *kurwa* and the obscene words with the *-pierdo-* component (as in *pierdolić*, and with the exclusion of milder versions, such as *pierdzielić*) were uttered by only one person. Although this occurrence seems anomalous in the light of the occurrences of other words in the table, it was decided that the material from this person's two videos should be included for the sake of consistency, i.e. in accordance with the initial premise that the choice within the group of vloggers with the highest number of subscribers should be random. Additionally, the exceptional case of the vlogger in question demonstrates that extraordinary cases may appear and that idiolects may vary greatly.

Apart from the exception described above, the data showed remarkable discrepancies in the use of exclamations in Italian and Polish gaming videos. These discrepancies appear to stem from potential cultural differences between the two nations. First of all, it seems that in the selected videos, Italians were much keener on using exclamations in general (261 occurrences in contrast to 120 occurrences in the Polish videos). The emotional load that accompanied the gameplay was therefore clearly more intense for the Italian vloggers in comparison to the Polish vloggers.

As mentioned before, the most popular exclamation in the Italian material is the obscene word *cazzo*, a functional equivalent of which could be, in this context, the English *fuck*. It constituted over 30% of all the exclamations in the videos and appeared in many utterances. The top exclamation in Polish was also an obscene word – however, it was the actual English word *fuck* (with all the different variations), and not its Polish equivalent. The word constituted almost 40% of the exclamations

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 61–62.

and if the anomalous *kurwa* and *-pierdo-* components were to be removed from the table, the percentage would rise to around 46.5% of all the exclamations.

In the present author's article about exclamations in Polish which was mentioned earlier,³⁸ three possible reasons for the high occurrence of English obscene words in Polish videos were identified.

First, the Polish speakers who appear in the videos may not be able to fully grasp the intensity of English obscene words because they are not native speakers of English. Thus, the vloggers still use these obscene words to relieve tension and frustration about the game but they appear to perceive them as less vulgar and more acceptable. The reason for this may also be the fact that the risk of being told off by their elders is smaller because parents or grandparents may not be familiar with English enough to perceive such words as inappropriate. The additional contributing factor to the potential perception of English obscene words as milder could come from English-language TV shows and films with a Polish speaker reading out the translated parts, in which strong English obscene words, such as *fuck*, which, one feels, should often be appropriately translated as *kurwa*, are replaced by definitely less vulgar Polish equivalents, such as *cholera (damn)*.

Second, perhaps the speakers avoid using too many Polish obscene words because despite many voices decrying the debasement of language on TV and in other public contexts, Polish culture still does not tolerate 'inappropriate language' and it is therefore relatively rarely present in the media. Lexical items deemed unsuitable for television are 'beeped out' and parents normally disapprove of their children using 'bad words' in their presence, be it kids or teenagers. Since many of the YouTubers in the analysed vlogs are young people, the argument seems to hold – perhaps in order to avoid sanctions from their elders, the vloggers tend to avoid swearing. An additional argument could be that Polish speakers feel they are in the public eye, as if they were on television. Thus, they may not employ vulgar language because they may not associate swearing with the aesthetics of Polish television.

Third, the vloggers may identify the situational context of recording/playing a game on YouTube, and also the game itself, as being part of the Anglo-Saxon world: many ideas for videos and many gameplays come predominantly from the United States. Vloggers who speak languages other than English watch such videos and adapt them to their own needs in their native languages as recontextualisations.³⁹ This may trigger strong Anglo-Saxon associations in such vloggers while they are playing the same games and consequently, it may lead them, consciously or subconsciously, to use more English borrowings, especially emotional reactions, i.e. exclamations.

³⁸ R. Kurpiel, op. cit.

³⁹ Cf. B. Rymes, "Recontextualizing YouTube: From Macro-Micro to Mass-Mediated Communicative Repertoires", *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 2012, No. 2 (43).

While the above observations seem to be valid for the Polish vloggers, surprisingly, they do not seem to apply to the Italian vloggers at all. The exclamations identified in the Polish vlogs were predominantly English borrowings, whereas in the analysed Italian gaming videos there were practically no English borrowings whatsoever. It appears that there may be at least three possible reasons for the discrepancy in the analysed material. The first two reasons can be motivated culturally.

First, it seems that the level of command of English in both countries could potentially be a contributing factor. The idea that Italians are relatively poor at foreign languages can be found in Pulcini⁴⁰ as well as deduced from the EF English Proficiency Index⁴¹ testing adult English proficiency around the world. According to the Index, as of November 2016, Poland is in 10th place globally with 'high proficiency,' whereas Italy is in 28th place with 'moderate proficiency.' Although adults over the age of 18 were tested in the index study, the youngest vlogger in the present study does not seem to be younger than 15. This index is of course merely an indication of English proficiency levels in given countries, but it could at least partially explain the results of the analysis in the present paper. The Polish vloggers used more English borrowings because, perhaps, they demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency than their Italian counterparts. This may allow the Polish vloggers to draw from the repertoire of English exclamations and insert them into their Polish more freely and confidently, whereas the potentially lower command of English by the Italian vloggers may perhaps inhibit any natural and spontaneous responses in that language when the vloggers speak Italian.

The cultural differences in the domain of television and dubbing could also account for the identified discrepancy. As mentioned before, in Polish TV shows and films the voice-over technique is used, in which one person reads out all the uttered dialogues. TV shows and films are hardly ever dubbed, the exception being cartoons and films for children or teenagers. Even in cinemas, regular films for older teenagers and adults are never dubbed; instead, subtitles are used. This is not the case in Italy, where almost every TV show or film is dubbed.⁴² Occasionally, cinemas in Italy offer films in the original language, normally English, but this is not a common practice. One can basically never hear the original English audio track in TV programmes, whereas in Poland it is almost always either clearly audible or strongly present as a background sound. This may also be one of the reasons for the use of borrowed English exclamations in Polish videos, especially because in both TV programmes and video blogs, the main medium is the spoken variety of language: Polish audiences may be more used to hearing

⁴⁰ V. Pulcini, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁴¹ EF English Proficiency Index, [online] <http://www.ef.edu/epi/> [accessed: 12.11.2016].

⁴² V. Pulcini, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

the original language and different linguistic reactions, and consequently be more exposed to English exclamations, among other linguistic items. Because Italians do not get the chance to have this kind of exposure to spoken English, they may be potentially less familiar with such expressions. This appears to be the case despite the fact that there are films and TV series available in English on online video streaming websites worldwide. The above considerations do not stand in contrast with findings about the tendency of a given language or community to borrow English words and expressions in the written form, as opposed to the oral form discussed here, because the processes taking place in these two modes of language differ considerably.

A third reason which could potentially account for the discrepancy is related to the field of phonetics. In Italian, a vast majority of native words end in a vowel, whereas in Polish it can be either a vowel or a consonant. The majority of English obscene words, and all of the ones listed in Table 2, end in a consonant. One could speculate that Polish speakers may find it easier to pronounce and use English borrowings more spontaneously in highly emotional settings (thus, when exclamations come naturally), whereas using English obscene words and other exclamations could potentially disrupt the speed and the flow of the Italian language to a greater extent in Italian vloggers. This should not be extended to other contexts, e.g. in calmer situations or when a person makes more conscious choices as to the words they utter. In such contexts the potential difficulty with the pronunciation of English words would not necessarily occur for Italians more than for Poles. The highly spontaneous and quick linguistic reaction is a necessary condition to advance the claim that the phonetic aspect influences the use of borrowings. Additionally, this argument could be advanced only in circumstances in which a given exclamation is imbedded in a longer stretch of speech, and thus directly preceded and/or followed by items exhibiting the typical phonetic features of the *recipient* language, e.g. in this case, Italian.

One further possible cultural difference appears to be worth discussing, namely the fact that the Polish vloggers in the analysed material seem to feel the need to compensate for the Polish obscene words potentially deemed unfitting for the context by employing borrowed English obscene words that they may find less offensive or weaker, as previously mentioned. On the contrary, the Italians do not seem to be concerned about the excessive amount of 'inappropriate words' in their videos. This is also shown by the number of obscene words cited at the beginning of the analysis section. Not only did the Italian speakers employ such lexical items approximately 2.2 times more frequently in comparison with the Polish speakers (there were about 120% more occurrences), but the latter also hardly ever used native Polish obscene words (or they did not use them at all). Thus, for the Italian vloggers in the analysed material the emotional load seems to be comparably higher and, in contrast to the Polish vloggers, it appears to be preferably expressed by native linguistic means, i.e. Italian obscene words.

This contrast is especially striking because it appears that obscene words are equally frowned upon in Italian TV shows and in films as they are on Polish television. It would then seem that perhaps the Polish vloggers who appear in the analysed material associate gaming videos with the practices of television more than their Italian counterparts. A revealing confirmation of this supposition could be obtained by conducting a survey among the gamers who would provide answers to questions about their attitudes towards swearing and English borrowings.

Conclusions

Major differences, primarily of cultural character, were identified in the way the Italian vloggers and the Polish vloggers employed exclamations in the analysed material. The Italians drew more willingly from their native language resources and had no inclination towards the use of borrowed English exclamations. On the contrary, the Poles made scarce use of native Polish exclamations or obscene words and readily borrowed from the English-language repertoire of obscene words. Additionally, many more occurrences of exclamations in general were identified in the Italian material as opposed to the Polish material.

Italian has been regarded as more open and tolerant of borrowings as opposed to “*introvert languages* such as German, French and Spanish”⁴³ but this view concerns first and foremost the written variety, whereas the spoken variety seems to remain under much smaller influence of English. Malinowska points out that Italian is particularly receptive when it comes to borrowing from English⁴⁴ but, again, the material on which she bases her judgement – newspaper articles – is exclusively in the written form. She also suggests⁴⁵ that such considerable receptiveness is not characteristic of the spoken variety of Italian as much as it is of the written variety. The findings in the present paper, although clearly restricted to the analysed material, seem to confirm this view, especially when the Italian material is contrasted with the Polish material, in which a tendency to use an elevated number of borrowings in the spoken language was identified. This, in turn, stands in contrast with claims that Polish does not generally borrow exclamations.⁴⁶ Overall, a relative scarcity of research on the influence of English on spoken Polish or Italian in comparison to the research dedicated to the written variety, with even less or no research on the spoken varieties of these languages in online contexts, poses a difficulty for the type of study presented

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ M. Malinowska, op. cit., p. 304.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 297.

⁴⁶ Cf. M. Zabawa, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

in this paper. Hopefully, more and more scholars will dedicate their research to this issue in the future in order to compare, contrast and verify the preliminary work that has been presented in this paper. It should be borne in mind that the present study is limited to the context of gaming videos and is a preliminary case study of the phenomenon. Further research in the field would have to take into consideration other types of videos in order to compare and contrast them with the videos used in the present study and to describe more general tendencies in using spontaneous borrowings from English, especially exclamations, in spoken Italian and Polish. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the present study revealed a number of potential cultural differences between Italy and Poland which ought to be explored further.

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YOUTUBE CHANNELS USED IN THE ANALYSIS

1. Polish videos: reZigiusz, Vertez, ROJOV13, Blowek, Mandzio
2. Italian videos: FavijTV™, CiccioGamer89, GaBBoDSQ, St3pNy, ilvostrocarioDexter

TITLES OF GAMES WHICH APPEARED IN THE ANALYSED VIDEOS

Minecraft, Outlast, Far Cry, Assassin's Creed, Assassin's Creed 3, Darksidiers, Darksidiers II, Minecraft Herobrine, GTA V, Five Nights at Freddy's, Amnesia 2, Labyrinth, Call of Duty, H1Z1