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Creativity from the familiar to the foreign: learning business English with the help of Anglicisms

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Abstract

Languages are like living organisms: they are born, they develop, grow old and eventually die. In the process, they inevitably change. Sometimes influences from other languages and cultures spreading beyond national boundaries – like English – help a language to become stronger and to keep pace with new communicative needs and dynamics. When this is the case, the receiving language imports lexical items as well as – although less frequently – syntactical structures, absorbing and appropriating them in a neverending creative process. Words like *business*, *business angels*, *stock exchange*, *marketing*, *joint ventures*, are all terms by now commonly used by Italian speakers in the business world – terms that meet very specific communicative needs. Usually specialists perfectly know how to use them in their work environment. However, they may be unaware of the actual, original meaning of these foreign lexical items. The most obvious example is possibly 'business' – by now part and parcel of the lexis – but whose meaning is not exactly the same as in English. There are other examples too, like 'joint venture': as a specialist I may know what a joint venture is, but what does 'joint' mean, and what is a 'venture', and according to what grammatical principle can the two be combined together? Adult learners of English, especially university students or in-service workers, may derive benefit from approaching both lexis and grammar starting from the foreign words and expressions they are already familiar with and using this as a basis to further develop their language knowledge and boost their linguistic skills. This paper gives some examples of Anglicisms in the business world and shows how these can be relevant to a learning strategy.

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