

Use of IT English terms by Spanish University students: A case study

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The present piece of research focuses on the usage of English lexical items in the sphere of Information Technology (IT from now on), a specialised area which is acquiring a growing importance in our daily lives. Current students are exposed to the use of new IT vocabulary, not only by means of their English classes (ESP and ESL/EFL) at university, but also by means of a daily exposure to more informal means such as mass media (television, press, magazines) and social media. Unsurprisingly, being English the most relevant language in this domain worldwide (Pano, 2007), the original English terms that denote new technological devices or computing programmes enter other languages at the same time as the inventions they name are imported by the societies that speak these recipient tongues (Reyes & Jubilado, 2012). This study aims to explore the presence of Anglicisms, specifically those related to the specialised field of IT, in present-day Spanish written media and everyday language. Additionally, it intends to reveal the real degree of knowledge and use of Anglicisms by a sample of Spanish-speaking university students. The method was based on the administration of an online anonymous questionnaire to a sample of 232 learners of different degrees (Industrial Design Engineering, English Studies, Nursing and Social work) in two different Spanish universities (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Universidad de Extremadura) during the months of November and December 2020. A list with 20 IT related Anglicisms was provided to the participants: app, software, online, smartphone, streaming, tablet, bluetooth, gameplay, malware, bot/bots, gadget, hardware, hacker, gaming, router, remake, smartwatch, influencer, start-up/startup and stock.

This list was built in September 2020 by extracting the most frequently used IT Anglicisms from the recently created search tool “Observatorio Lázaro”, which automatically detects non-adapted English lexical items from 8 different online Spanish newspapers: elDiario.es, El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia, El Confidencial, 20minutos and EFE. The participants had to decide whether they knew and they used the terms in their daily life. Respondents were also asked whether they considered the acceptance and usage of English terms as a way to lead to a better level of knowledge of English among Spanish speakers. After having carried out the analysis, it provided reliable data on the high level of knowledge and use of the examined sample of IT terms. These uses respond to different reasons: lack of accurate equivalent terms in Spanish for certain technological concepts, the principle of economy of language, the prestige and professionalism that English confers or simply the purpose of sounding cool and fashionable.

Keywords: Anglicisms, Information Technology (IT), use, attitudes, learners.

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