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Anglicizing Humor in a Spanish Satirical TV Show—Pragmatic Functions and Discourse Strategies

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Abstract

Humor is a pragmatic and interdisciplinary phenomenon whose sociocultural relevance has been increasingly recognized by the Academia. Surprisingly, although the anthropo-philosophical theory of *homo risu* emerged in the 7th century, linguists became interested in the study of the linguistic mechanisms of humor only a few years ago. One of those mechanisms is the use of Anglicisms, because of their pragmatic potential to provide some added value, a halo of prestige and modernity, which creates playful effects of complicity. This paper examines the way Anglicisms crucially contribute to the humorous discourse of the satirical news show *El Intermedio*, the longest-running program on a Spanish private TV channel. Monitoring of 300 episodes broadcast between April 2022 and December 2024 proves how, in addition to puns and irony, scriptwriters tend to resort to a number of strategies involving the creative use of Anglicisms, which perform different pragmatic functions, while showing sociolinguistic awareness. They also offer an up-to-date sample of the great vitality of Anglicisms in contemporary Spain.

Keywords: humor; Anglicisms in European Spanish; pragmatic functions; discourse strategies; sociolinguistic awareness; television



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1. Introduction

This paper examines from a pragmatic perspective the way Anglicisms crucially contribute to the humorous discourse of the Spanish satirical TV news show *El Intermedio* (henceforth, *EI*). The program airs Monday through Thursday during primetime on *La Sexta*, one of the many private TV channels in Spain. Their one-hour episodes, which premiered on 30 March 2006, have always been hosted by the same presenter, popularly known as *El Gran Wyoming* (henceforth, *EGW*), who leads a relatively stable group of collaborators, including journalists and comedians with a great ability to imitate well-known (inter)national celebrities, particularly politicians. It is the longest-running program on this TV channel, currently enjoying an average of more than 1.5 million regular viewers. This justifies the attention humor in the media deserves, “both as a discursual device and a sociolinguistic phenomenon” (Chovanec & Ermida, 2012). Using the daily news in our chaotic world to make humor can be a real challenge. Additionally, *EI* is an interesting program to study for the updated sample it provides of the great vitality of Anglicisms in current European Spanish, showing the pragmatic functions they play, and their scriptwriters’ linguistic creativity and sociolinguistic awareness.

Since Pragmatics deals with “how language users interact, communicate and interpret linguistic behavior” (Chapman & Clark, 2014), humorous effects can be easily explained from a pragmatic point of view as they must be derived by the addressee or audience. In

fact, humor is the outcome of the speaker's intentions, "based on predictions of the specific interpretive steps to be carried out by the receiver when trying to process the words of the humorous text into meaningful interpretations" (Yus, 2022). Verbal humor often consists of creatively manipulating language through wordplay, ambiguities, or errors, which makes us experience funniness (Khan, 2012). It is an interdisciplinary pragmatic phenomenon (Attardo & Raskin, 2017; Dynel, 2011; Ruiz-Gurillo, 2016, 2019; Timofeeva-Timofeev, 2021; Osisanwo et al., 2024) whose sociocultural importance is recognized academically (Attardo, 2020; Billig, 2005; Davies, 1990; Hill & Fitzgerald, 2002; Martínez-Egido, 2023; Raskin, 1985). These and many other works have contributed to establishing a pragmatic trend in humor studies (Chovanec & Ermida, 2012), a field that "in some ways pioneered the concept of interdisciplinarity" (Attardo, 2020).

Defining humor is not an easy task; rather, as an aspect of the very creative human mind, it is a complex, multifaceted characteristic of communication involving linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and psychological factors, whose combination produces different types of humor with specific characteristics (Vargas-Sierra, 2023). It implies the use of varied resources of linguistic, narrative, cultural, contextual knowledge, etc.; therefore, humor cannot be analyzed in isolation. When dealing with humor styles and symbolic boundaries, Kuipers (2009) identified six ingredients that explain how humor works. The first one is *incongruity*, a central component that provokes a break with expectations. Hickey (2000) highlights the fact that humor often involves the ability to perceive and resolve that incongruity, either in form or in textual content. The second component is *non-seriousness*, which Kuipers defines as "a pleasurable state of mind resembling playfulness," resulting from verbal and/or non-verbal cues. Obviously, *bona fide* communication rules do not apply in humor, and different languages and cultures may have different social rules and narrative conventions to mark non-seriousness. Usually, more intellectual humor tends to be ambiguous, ironic, and less explicitly framed, as Kuipers (2009) notes.

The third ingredient is *pleasure*, due to humor's connections with emotional expressions such as laughter and smiling. Fourthly, *sociability*, as humor is generally shared, functions as an invitation to decrease social distance; this justifies the need to have an audience when trying to be humorous. *Transgression* is the fifth ingredient, since humor often "touches on taboos and sensitive topics" (sex, gender, death, disease, powerful people, institutions, etc.). Finally, the last and most contested (but neither essential nor indispensable) ingredient has to do with *aggression*, *hostility*, and *degradation*. I agree with Kuipers that even though sometimes humor may hurt or downgrade people, it can be compared to "playing with aggression" because, by not taking things seriously, it resembles "mock fighting". All these ingredients can be found in *EI*, whenever *EGW* reacts to contemporary sociocultural dynamics and political issues with his critical engagement and discourses on social justice, defending comedic free speech and humor's role as a site of democratic resistance (Nicolai & Maesele, 2024).

The presence in *EI*'s humorous discourse of English words, phrases, and sentences referring to sociocultural and political elements of the Anglosphere confirms that Spain is not an exception to the worldwide trend-setting phenomena of Anglicization and Americanization (Niño, 2012). Furiassi et al. (2012) conceive Anglicism as an umbrella term for any case of interference related to the influence of English, citing Gottlieb's all-inclusive definition: "any individual or systematic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models, used in intralingual communication in a language other than English."

Every year, the Spanish Academy of Language includes more and more Anglicisms, recognizing their spread among Spaniards (the latest being *spoiler*). Aware that they should not fight against popular usage, the Academy's attitude shows an increasing openness to

borrowings (García-Andreu, 2017), particularly Anglicisms, which are employed for different purposes or functions. The unstoppable economic, sociocultural, and technological supremacy of the Anglosphere has given English an unprecedented status as an international language (Crystal, 2003). The impact of Anglicisms on all areas of our globalized world continues to be widely studied within the field of language contact (Rodríguez-González, 2024). The literature in different European languages is extensive (Anderman & Rogers, 2005; Furiassi et al., 2012; Görlach, 2001, 2003; Rodríguez-González, 2024), and Spanish—in all its varieties—is another case in point. As Balteiro (2012) stated, English “is a favorite tool for code-switching and borrowing, mostly among young Spaniards.” In her opinion, shared by many, “for reasons having to do with power, prestige, humor, or simply because many of them are in constant contact with English-speaking sources (for instance, online gaming forums)”, their linguistic creativity is greatly enhanced via the Internet, a powerful force that provoked the emergence of the so-called Netspeak, but also with puns, blends, compounds, etc., which are rapidly adopted in ordinary speech by adults too. Recognized as an active word-formation mechanism in Spanish (Gerding et al., 2014), Anglicisms find “their way of manifestation at various levels of language representation (phonic, graphic, grammatical, lexical, textual)” (Tárnyiková, 2009).

Unquestionably, Anglicisms are unavoidable in today’s Spanish, due to their use in almost all fields—Rodríguez-González (2017) included more than 4500 entries in his *Gran diccionario de anglicismos*. Many scholars provide panoramic views of the state of the art regarding Anglicisms in Spanish-speaking areas (Núñez-Nogueroles, 2017; Rodríguez-González, 1999, 2022b), confirming their presence in an array of fields, such as those of fashion (Balteiro, 2014), economics and marketing (López-Zurita, 2005, 2018), computer science (Morín, 2006), social networks (Rodríguez-Medina, 2022), television advertising (García-Morales et al., 2016), tourism (Luján-García, 2023a), leisure (González-Cruz, 2015), gastronomy (Luján-García, 2023b), press (González-Cruz, 2023), new technologies and media (Luján-García, 2021); romantic relationships (Rull-García & Bove, 2022), sex (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018; Rodríguez-González, 2022a), sports (Rodríguez-González & Castañón-Rodríguez, 2021), gyms (Rodríguez-Medina, 2016), slang, colloquial toponymy and music, (Lillo-Buades, 2022, 2024), etc.

Most authors focus their attention on the so-called patent Anglicisms: English words taken directly, in such a way that their foreign character is obvious, although some are phonetically and/or orthographically adapted. Conversely, scholars have shown less interest in compiling semantic borrowings, as their identification poses some problems (Rodríguez-González, 1999). They involve the adoption of meanings/connotations of other languages’ forms or meaning extensions; whereas calques (lexical or syntactic) are apparently native words/expressions, though coined as the “camouflaged results of borrowing or transfer that do not stand out through formal markers of foreignness” (Rodríguez-González & Knospe, 2019). Some linguists consider calques to be a type of linguistic borrowing that lies on the borderline between lexical and semantic borrowings.

Additionally, Spanish speakers are daily exposed to the influence of literal translations and English-like expressions used in broadcasting news, newspapers, films, TV series, etc. Despite not having studied English, Spaniards adopt these forms, which enter their lexical repertoire (De-la-Cruz-Cabanillas et al., 2023). Both linguistic and extra-linguistic reasons can lead speakers to use Anglicisms, but determining them accurately is an extremely complex task, as these loanwords can perform various functions. Traditionally, formalist pragmatists took representation as the primary function of language, but its creativity is also functional (Collier, 2014). Apart from naming new realities (referential function), English borrowings tend to be employed for simplifying, economizing, stating more precisely (textual function), or stylistically varying the message, thus enriching discourse, giving

it “modernity” (Rodríguez-González, 1996). There are always reasons to use Anglicisms; Gerding et al. (2014) highlight four: lexical gaps, social prestige, linguistic economy, and style. The context and speakers’ attitude help correctly interpret the choice of Anglicisms versus native words, for necessity, irony, parody, or expressiveness.

This expressive function for humorous purposes was first detected by Rodríguez-Segura (1999); then Rodríguez-Medina (2004) compiled a corpus of Anglicisms extracted from literary works, radio and television programs, illustrating their use in Spanish discourse as a humorous resource. She recorded interesting phenomena, such as the hispanization of the spelling of Anglicisms, creating Spanish-based pseudo-Anglicisms, hispanized English suffixes (*-eibol* or *-ing*) in words such as *insoporteibol*, *acojonanting*, instead of *insoportable* (“unbearable”) and *acojonante* (“scarring”), among others. This sociolinguistic trend allows hearers to capture the subtle nuances of the distortion of English words and the mixing of languages.

After confirming youngsters’ tendency to employ Anglicisms for humorous purposes in colloquial contexts, González-Cruz and Rodríguez-Medina (2011) addressed the complexity of their use from a pragmatic perspective. More recently, Lillo-Buades (2022) analyzed 200 tweets employing Anglicisms and pseudo-Anglicisms as a humorous colloquial alternative to Spanish toponymy. Subsequently, he examined more than 2000 tweets, including a type of false Anglicism coined by translation from Spanish into what he calls “macaronic” English, intended to combat or counteract with humor the halo of prestige that surrounds Anglicisms in Spanish (Lillo-Buades, 2023). This chapter aims to contribute to ongoing discussion and previous works (Dickinson, 2023; Knospe, 2015; Muhonen, 2010, 2011; Stefanowitsch, 2002) on how bilingual language use can be humorous, particularly the use of English words, phrases, and entire sentences as humorous strategies in *EI*.

2. Materials and Methods

The data for this study were obtained from 300 *EI* episodes broadcast in different periods between 18 April 2022 and 18 December 2024. The show’s dynamics follow a relatively fixed pattern: after stating “You already know today’s news, now we will tell you the truth”, *EGW* starts a short monologue related to current affairs, combining seriousness and humorous effects. Then journalist Sandra Sabatés joins in and jocularly greets *EGW*, before addressing the news in a serious tone. They both share the main table in the set, with some guests coming in or connecting, while several collaborators perform their hilarious sketches, always with a critical/satirical mode.

EI is never broadcast on non-working days, following the Spanish official calendar, nor whenever there is any relevant sporting or socio-political event. During holiday periods, a selection of the best moments, reports, interviews, or sketches of the season is re-broadcast: these were not selected for our corpus, since they were repetitions that would not provide new examples and would obviously be misleading for our frequency counts. Most data were taken from the programs broadcast between 18 April 2022 and 9 May 2024, when a special gala was held to celebrate 18 years of uninterrupted broadcasting. Then the monitoring of episodes continued between 6 October and 18 December 2024 (19th season).

The utterances with anglicized expressions or references to English were recorded in a WhatsApp chat. This procedure, though not common in Academia, was very functional as this messaging app allows for direct transcription that was later transferred into an Excel file. Coding the two main cases of pragmatic functions did not involve much effort, although some mixed instances were detected, as explained in Section 3.1. The context and factors such as intonation, prosody, and even the Anglicism’s position in discourse helped determine their purpose.

Similarly, identifying the discourse strategies used in *EI* to provoke humor with Anglicisms revealed that some of them were relatively related (such as “inserting English words, phrases, and sentences” and “making references to technology, sociocultural, political issues, etc.”). Likewise, the key role of creativity and its connection with free translations became evident. Helpful criteria to determine which strategy prevailed in each case had to do with both the content (whether the Anglicism actually referred to some sociocultural, technical item, and so forth) and the context, since free translations tended to appear in specific sections of the show.

The corpus compiled is a valuable, extensive material that could be further exploited in future research. The following section illustrates the six discourse strategies through which English and Anglicisms work as mechanisms to produce humor, while playing different pragmatic functions, additionally confirming *EI* scriptwriters’ great sociolinguistic awareness.

3. Results

Although qualitative in nature, this paper provides some quantitative data to help readers gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which Anglicisms crucially contribute to humor in *EI*. As Table 1 shows, a total of 2774 contributions with at least one Anglicism (either words, phrases, or sentences) were detected, although many contain several, thus making up a total of 3325 Anglicisms, which constitute the compiled corpus. Many of them occur frequently; thus, the total number of different Anglicisms collected was 1710.

Table 1. Frequency count. Occurrences of Anglicisms in *EI*.

Number of Contributions with Anglicisms	Total Number of Anglicisms	Different Anglicisms Used
2774	3325	1710

Table 2 categorizes all the Anglicisms collected according to their grammatical constituency: single words, phrases, and whole sentences. In addition, I grouped 672 Anglicisms that were proper nouns with a high frequency of use because they had a figurative meaning or had become generic (Rodríguez-González, 2017). Although not included in Table 2, they counted towards the total number (3325) of Anglicisms collected.

Table 2. Types of Anglicisms used in *EI*, labeled as grammatical constituents.

Words	Phrases	Sentences
1681	655	322

Graph 1 (Section 3.2.3) shows that most Anglicisms refer to sociocultural, technological, political, and/or economic elements. Some are acronyms (BDSM, INCELS, IP, LGTBI, LOL, VPN, etc.). Despite some cases of overlapping, the figures in the tables and graph help us understand the crucial role Anglicisms play in this humorous show.

3.1. Pragmatic Functions

The analysis considered the two main functions that Anglicisms typically tend to play, which basically coincide with the reasons for adopting loanwords, namely, the need-feeling motive, i.e., the referential function, (any new object/concept needs to be named, and it is easier and faster to adopt its original English name), and prestige, “the driving force in social interaction and linguistic change” (Anttila, 1989), which is connected to the expressive function Anglicisms perform whenever they are used “to create alliteration, puns or to play

on words, to distort them with some purpose, or simply to mark a speaker's discourse with humorous, ironic or rhythmic features" (Rodríguez-Segura, 1999). This is what González-Cruz and Rodríguez-Medina (2011) actually called the pragmatic function of Anglicisms, noticing a growing number of "unsystematized spontaneous cases of Anglicisms related to code-switching and due to snobbery," particularly among young speakers. Aware of what Rodríguez-González (2022b) described as "youth Anglomania," González-Cruz and Rodríguez-Medina (2011) predicted that "the increasing presence of Anglicisms in Spanish will continue its tendency, as long as the United States maintains its economic, political, and cultural leadership in the world." Table 3 shows how the expressive function predominates over the referential one, but there are mixed cases among the Anglicisms used in *El*.

Table 3. Pragmatic functions performed by Anglicisms in *El*.

Expressive Function	Referential Function	Mixed Function
1515	1060	748

For instance, choosing *cash*, instead of its Spanish equivalents *efectivo* or *suelto*, provokes an effect of snobbery; similarly, using the address term *bro* creates a sense of informal complicity and humor. These examples illustrate the expressive function, whereas in (1), except for *tattoo*, which could have been replaced by Spanish *tatuaje*, the referential function is obvious in the other Anglicisms (*piercing*, *paddle*) that have no equivalents in Spain, as follows:

- (1) "...creo que la Constitución necesita, como mínimo ponerse un *piercing*, un *tattoo* y apuntarse a *paddle*." ["I believe the Constitution needs, at the very least, to get a piercing, a tattoo, and sign up for paddle."] (6/2/23)

Apparently, in (2–3) below, the Anglicisms refer, respectively, to some typical British food (*fish and chips*), a new type of entertainment that has become fashionable in some urban areas in Spain (*escape room*), and Internet-related concepts (*likes*, *streamers*).

- (2) "Creo que el menú de la cena es *fish and chips* and ¡Liz fuera de aquí!" ["I think the dinner menu is fish and chips and Liz out of here!"] (17/10/22)
- (3) "La Casa Real mete al rey emérito en un *escape room* y lo cierra con siete candados." ["The Royal House puts the king emeritus in an escape room and closes it with seven padlocks."] (11/11/24)

However, in their contexts, they acquire humorous, expressive connotations. Firstly, *fish and chips* are chosen to facilitate rhyming with the name of the ex-British Prime Minister Liz (Truss) and Spanish *aquí* ("here"). Likewise, mentioning an *escape room* where to lock up Spanish ex-king Juan-Carlos I implies some hidden criticism for the mischievous behavior of the self-expatriated monarch. They are cases of mixed functions. Admittedly, *fish*, *chips*, and *likes* could be replaced by Spanish equivalents (in contrast to *streamers* and *escape rooms*), but then they would clearly lose their original flavor.

3.2. Discourse Strategies

Language mixing has often become a site for humor. The terminology in the sociolinguistic literature varies, but code-switching and borrowing, which differ diachronically and structurally, fulfill similar discursive functions. Dickinson (2023) claims that their socio-pragmatic indexicality and synchronic function may coincide. When unexpected linguistic elements are introduced, they play the symbolic role of marking multicultural identity, making the audience rely on cultural contexts to understand bilingual jokes. Sociolinguists and researchers on humor highlight this dynamic relationship (Gumperz, 1982; Mir & Laskurain-Ibarluzea, 2022; Muhonen, 2011; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Salem et al., 2021;

Vaid, 2006), arguing that code-switching is not random, but conveys social messages—such as identity and solidarity—which comedians can exploit. The unexpectedness or markedness of a switch is the cue that something funny is happening. Likewise, humor theorists identify incongruity as central to comedy, arising from the interplay of different language systems. The speaker's shifting codes mid-utterance draw attention and invite a clever reinterpretation of the message, forcing the listener to reconcile mixed or additional meanings. Wordplay and loanwords, particularly Anglicisms in a Spanish context, are significant devices that enable a bilingual audience to coin certain puns that would be missed by monolinguals. As Knospe (2015) explains, these bilingual puns function as conceptual blends that create a sort of cognitive “aha” moment when meanings are understood.

EI resorts frequently to puns, irony, ambiguity, wordplay in several languages, and imitating different Spanish dialects and accents. The most outstanding feature of their discourse is, however, a constant complicity with English, either playfully parodying it or using it to create humor. The six specific strategies related to Anglicisms that were detected will be illustrated below.

3.2.1. English Naming

Several segments within *EI* have English titles. One example is *OK Boomer*, presented by Thais Villas, the only contributor working since 2006. She interviews talented youngsters who succeed in digital fields, thus trying to “connect those of you who are already a few years old, with the *bro*, the *crew*, the *panas*,¹ the *gang*” (11/7/22). The term *boomer* emerged in 2019 in an Internet meme to poke fun at the stereotypical attitudes attributed to the demographic group born after World War II (1946–1964), a time of increasing economic prosperity and rising birth rates (Santaella, 2023). Previously, she presented another section, *Thais Advisor*, where she asked controversial questions to passers-by, something she continues doing in other sections, interviewing children at school or politicians in Congress.

The Brown is dedicated to the humorous treatment of the Spanish royal family's problems. Its name translates into English the Spanish colloquialism *marrón* (literally ‘brown,’ but actually meaning ‘trouble’), by analogy with *The Crown*, the famous series based on Queen Elizabeth II and broadcast on streaming. Similarly, *Mad Max* exploits this title to document Madrid's socio-political conflicts.

In November 2023, *Low-Cost Planet* began, with journalist Isma Juárez visiting countries without leaving home. He offers reports on celebrations such as American Thanksgiving, or Diwali, the Hindu New Year, by foreign residents in Madrid.

During season 18 (2023/2024), Carmen Huidobro and Belén Hinojar presented *On fire*, which continued in a fresh, original way the climate activism they had started on Instagram. In other segments with anglicized names, EGW and Sabatés briefly review national news, such as *Chan Chan News*, *Tupper News*, and *Croquetas News*, where they bring us “the hot news” (10/6/23). Likewise, collaborator Mateo presented *Clickbait News*, “amazing news you need to know; when?” and Gallego answered “Right now. Yes, come on! Click, click, click!” (6/6/22). Occasionally, political situations, such as the blockage of the Spanish General Council of the Judiciary, inspire sections with anglicized, phonetically playful titles, such as *Juez* (“Judge”-echoing *West Side Story* (9/14/22), a musical where EGW used Rosalía's, Amy Winehouse's, and other artists' songs to analyze this problem.

It is worth noting that each program begins with a short excerpt from the previous episode, while the headline *Previously on* appears on screen. Similarly, during holiday periods, excerpts of the best reports and sketches of the season are usually aired and marked on screen with *The very best of EI*. Finally, EGW's artistic name must also be mentioned. When interviewed, he revealed his origin: “I was in one of those *tuna* [university musical] groups that tortured tourists in the Plaza Mayor. When joining the group, they

baptized you with your *nom de guerre*. Before that, they asked me to sing and, since I only knew songs by Bob Dylan and The Beatles, they called me Wyoming. In those days, I did not even know it was an American state. I added “Gran” when I started rocking out. (https://www.mediaset.es/telemania/gente-de-tele/gran-gwyoming-salda-deuda-padre-libro-memorias_18_2262225718.html) (accessed on 13 December 2022).

3.2.2. Insertion of English Words, Phrases, and Sentences

These insertions in *EI* performers’ utterances constitute a conscious practice emerging from the novelty, creativity, and unexpectedness of the switch, which produces the break with the lexical and syntagmatic level mentioned by Silvestre-Miralles (2024). They obviously assume that the audience knows English, especially when there are playful phonetic breaks, such as pronouncing a Spanish word, *imposible*, in its similar English form, *impossible* (8/11/22). Examples (4–6), respectively, illustrate word, phrase, and sentence insertions, as follows:

- (4) “. . .pero Matilde le hace *ghosting*!” [“. . .but Matilde does not reply!”] (13/5/22)
- (5) “Silvio y Vladimir son *best friends forever*.” [“. . .Silvio and Vladimir are best friends forever.”] (19/10/22)
- (6) “Respetad las fronteras; *if you cross the border, Marlaska will hit you with a ball*.” [“Respect the borders; . . .”] (10/2/24)

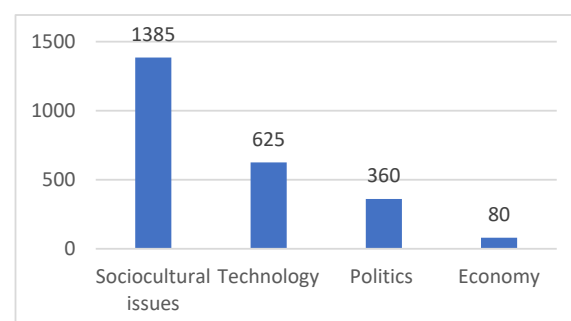
Insertions may include informal words, whose meanings are explained using other adapted Anglicisms and translation, as in (7), while both adaptations into Spanish and English expressions co-occur in (8), as follows:

- (7) “¿Sabes lo que es *besties*? Los que se mandan *Whatsapillos* y tal, ‘mejor amigo’.” [“Do you know what *besties* are? The ones who send each other WhatsApps and such, ‘best friends’.”] (24/10/24)
- (8) “¡Tus *haters* te han *baneado*, *what the fuck, lol!*” [“. . .your haters have banned you, what the fuck, lol!”] (16/5/22)

Relevant studies on humor (Holmes et al., 2003; Jonsson, 2010; Vizcaíno, 2011, among others) argue that these switches, although scripted, are hard for the audience to anticipate. Thus, rather than accidentally reflecting performers’ skills, they are significant ways of showing how discourse is orchestrated. Thus, switching for humor is meaningful because of the audience’s shared language and cultural knowledge.

3.2.3. References to English Sociocultural, Technological, Political, or Economic Elements

The news told professionally by Sabatés and commented upon in a jocular tone by *EGW*, together with the hilarious sketches of the collaborators, include constant references to sociocultural, technological, political, or economic issues associated with the Anglosphere. Graph 1 shows the number of occurrences of Anglicisms by topic, in decreasing order of frequency.



Graph 1. Occurrences of Anglicisms in *EI* regarding semantic areas.

Technological vocabulary includes widely-known names for devices (*prompter, smart-phone, smart-TV*), or terms somehow related to them (*cookies, selfies, software, likes, match, streamers, influencers, haters, unfollow, wifi*, etc.), even acronyms (HDMI, JPG, RAM, USB), proper nouns of computer programs and social networks (Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Twitch, Tinder, WhatsApp). All these terms communicate modernity and familiarity with technology, mostly playing referential functions, with some exceptions where expressiveness is also felt.

Sociocultural issues refer to sports (*burpees, coach, personal trainer*), clothing (*dress-code, fashion, slimfit, skinny, superskinny*), or relationships (*cool, crush, cruising, frame*), whereas in politics, criticism is often made of cases of *lawfare*, another increasingly popular Anglicism. Interestingly, some nouns with referential function can exceptionally work as adjectives (9–10), as follows:

- (9) “. . .un gobierno *mindfulness*!” [“. . .a mindfulness government!”] (3/5/22)
- (10) “¿Tenemos al primer presidente *influencer*? [“. . .Do we have the first influencer president?”] (17/1/24)

3.2.4. Metacomments on English

Aware of the invasion of Anglicisms, EGW comments with astonishment on the non-sense lyrics in Rosalía’s songs, plagued with Anglicisms, mentions the weird names of some sports (*curling, bobsleigh, slalom, skeleton*), highlighting the largely anglicized vocabulary used by Spanish youth or the need to learn English to simply go shopping (11–12), as follows:

- (11) “. . .los jóvenes se están alejando de la tele tradicional para concentrarse en sus *stories y tiktoks*. Yo estoy tranquilo, porque para atraer a los jóvenes solo hay que hablarles en su idioma: ¿qué pasa, *bros*? Sé que estáis ahí en plan *chill*. No quiero cortaros el *hype*, pero aquí tenéis a un pana en plan pro, así que no me *baneéis*.” [“. . .young people are moving away from traditional TV to concentrate on their stories and TikToks. I keep calm, because to attract youngsters you just have to talk to them in their language: what’s up, *bros*, I know you are there in *chill*. I do not want to cut your *hype*, but here you have your buddy in a pro way, so do not ban me.”] (7/5/24)
- (12) Estar a la moda es cada día más difícil; un día se lleva el *slim-fit*, otro se lleva el *oversize*, al día siguiente el *tight-diet*, otro el *crop-top*. ¡Maldita sea! ¡Para poder ir al Zara hay que sacarse el *First*!” [“Being fashionable is becoming more and more difficult every day; one day you wear *slim-fit*, another day you wear *oversize*, the next day *tight-diet*, another day *crop-top*. Damn it! To be able to go shopping at Zara, you have to get your *First Certificate* in English!”] (3/12/24)

Jokes about Spanish politicians’ difficulties with English abound, with occasional praise to President Sánchez for his excellent English (19/1/23). Feijóo, the current leader of the opposition to Spain’s progressive coalition government, is often mocked after admitting his difficulties to learn English. His many pronunciation mistakes in public speeches, for instance, when referring to Bruce *Springster, instead of Springsteen, have worked as useful material for sarcastic humor. Thus, after suggesting that Feijóo “has improved a lot in his electoral expectations and even in his English level,” EGW plays a video where this politician promised that his party would propose solutions for Spaniards without supporting the government. EGW wonders how he was going to do that (13) using colloquial anglicized expressions: “montar *beef*” (originated in rap music and meaning “to provoke conflict”) and “estar *living*” (“to feel excited, happy”).

- (13) “¿Va a dar ayudas a los *centennials* para que estén *living* y no monten *beef*? Bueno, yo estoy seguro de que sí, en cuanto aprenda qué significan *centennials, living* y *beef*.”

[“Is he going to give special grants to centennials so that they are happy and do not provoke any conflicts? Well, I am sure he will, as soon as he learns what *centennials*, *living*, and *beef* mean.”] (8/1/24)

Similarly, after playing a video where Casado, the former leader of the Spanish opposition party, made a statement plagued with Anglicisms, collaborator Mateo ironically notes the following:

- (14) “Menudo léxico: *Silicon Valley*, *silver economy*, *stock options*, pero sin duda mi favorita es *fast-track*. ¿Cómo, no sabéis lo que es el *fast-track*? Pues muy fácil, *track* es pista y *fast* es ¡lo que ha sido la carrera política de Casado!” [“What a lexicon! *Silicon Valley*, *silver economy*, *stock options*, but undoubtedly my favorite is *fast-track*. What? Do you not know what *fast-track* is? Well, it is very easy, *track* is track and *fast* is what Casado’s political career has been!”] (7/6/22)

3.2.5. Lexical Creativity

As one of the most hilarious resources in *El*, creativity includes inventing pseudo-Anglicisms, playful English suffixation, metaphorical uses with Anglicisms, and wordplay. The former are voices that have some morphological feature of English origin, but are not technically Anglicisms, since they are not used in any variety of English—except with a different meaning (Rodríguez-González, 2013). These false Anglicisms have spread widely, enjoying great popularity in many European languages (Campos-Pardillos, 2015). Some emerge from adding the English suffix *-ing* to Spanish nouns, as in *acosing* (16/4/24) and *broming* (14/12/22), resulting, respectively, from *acoso* (“harassment”) and *de broma* (“kidding”). Other frequent pseudo-Anglicisms are *balconing* (4/16/24), the crazy habit of some foreign tourists in Majorca of jumping directly into the swimming pool from the balcony of their hotel rooms, and *edredoning* (11/2/22), which arose from some scenes in the TV program *Big Brother*, where some contestants had sex under the cover of their bed comforter (*edredón*).

Examples of anglicized playful suffixation abound. One is *Ayuser* (“followers of politician Ayuso”), used as a noun (“Oohh, a demonstration of *ayusers*!”—5/19/22), or as an adjective (“Is there anything more *ayuser* than waiting for Ayuso at the bar?”—1/9/23). A special case in point is that of the innovative forms *-liver/liber*, added as a suffix to any celebrity name, meaning “fan of” as in *Charleslivers* (4/5/23) or *Pedroliver* (30/4/24), referring to British King Charles’s and Spanish President Sánchez’s fans, respectively.

Interestingly, although the RAE Spanish dictionary includes the word *juancarlista*, meaning “those who love King Juan-Carlos I”, the funnier form *Juancarliber* is often preferred (23/4/23) and spelled this way in *El*’s Facebook (25/2/21) and other social networks. There are no fixed spelling rules for this playful suffix, which originated in *Beliebers* (blending the surname of singer Justin *Bieber* and *believer*).

Likewise, in their feminist section, Sabatés and Gallego creatively advertise imaginary products with anglicized names and rhyming slogans to avoid male-chauvinism, such as SHUT-UP 2000, to “silence all those stupid and inappropriate macho man comments” (10/17/23), or the MOVE-YOUR-ASS CHAIR, “an avant-garde device that will finally get the men at the table to move their asses and collaborate!” (12/18/23).

Many Anglicisms show adaptation to Spanish derivation, such as *retuiteaba* (from *retweet*), *hitazo* (from “big hit”), *estalker* (from “stalking”), *brexitero* (from “Brexit fanatic”), *instagrammeable*, or *esprintando* (from “sprint”). Hybrid forms, such as *siesta-holic* (4/30/24) (by analogy with “alcoholic”), and many metaphorical uses of Anglicisms can often be heard, as in “the big screen... *El*’s Times Square” (19/10/22), “...the Google Translate of the 2nd century BC” (29/11/23), or “the Badman of feminism!” (8/2/24).

Funny creative wordplays resort to similarities between English and Spanish phonetics, as examples (15–16) illustrate. The former plays with the similarity in pronunciation between *Duty* and Spanish verbal form *date* in the expression ¡*Date prisa!* (“Hurry up!”); while in (16) *Nottingham* playfully echoes the first two words in Spanish “*No tengan prisa*” (“Do not rush”).

- (15) “Damos las noticias tan rápido que no da tiempo ni de ir al *Duty Free*, así que ¡*duty prisa*, Sandra!” [“We give the news so fast that you do not even have time to visit the *Duty Free*, so hurry up, Sandra!”] (22/2/24)
- (16) “...abandona su equipo de futbito de toda la vida: el *Nottingham prisa*” [“...he is leaving his lifelong soccer team: *Nottingham rush*”] (26/2/24)

Other satirical cases of wordplay occur when EGW regrets that the British opted for Brexit instead of *Borisxit*, in allusion to British ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson (14/6/22), or when replacing *omnipotent* with *omnipodcaster* in (17), as follows:

- (17) “Dios lo ve todo, incluso las tertulias de YouTube. ¡Es *omnipodcaster!*” [“God can see everything, even YouTube chats. He is *omnipodcaster!*”] (29/2/24)

3.2.6. Free Translations

Used occasionally in some sketches, this creative strategy is constant in *Dora la conservadora* (“the conservative”), one section that ironically counters the protagonist of the American show *Dora the Explorer*. Whereas the latter deals with a fictional bilingual communicator who tries to teach children how to share, count, read, and be accepting of others, *EI*’s *Dora* is politically far-right, likes “to travel, make friends, and shoot rubber bullets at migrants in Gibraltar Strait!” (8/10/23). Free translations always occur at the end of *EI*, when EGW announces the next programs on *La Sexta* and *Antena 3*, partner channels. Most translations are completely absurd and often include invented words imitating English, which undeniably has jocular effects. For instance, when announcing a program called *Pesadilla en la cocina* (“Nightmare in the kitchen”), he translates it into English as *Eating shit!* (2/3/23). Similarly, the film *Beyond Love* is translated as *Nothing* (28/2/24), and a Spanish TV series called *Hermanos* (“Brothers”) is always wrongly renamed on purpose as *Sisters* or other kinship English terms.

3.3. Sociolinguistic Awareness

Due to the commonalities, overlaps, and potential for further intersections of Pragmatics with other adjacent fields of linguistics (Ilie & Norrick, 2018), this section briefly shows *EI* scriptwriters’ awareness of the humorous effects that using Spanish dialects, foreign languages, or specific registers may have. Because of the emotional element of language, these strategies create linguistic/dialectal humor, provoking stereotypes, ridicule, or stigma (Brook, 1978; Attardo, 2014). This happens in sketches with international politicians, such as Trump speaking Spanish, Putin speaking English, or Biden with Spanish comedian Gila’s voice.

Sociolinguistic awareness is also shown when, after saying something in Catalan, EGW asks Sabatés (born in Catalonia), “Sandra, did you like my accent?” (29/9/22). Occasionally he also uses French expressions, exaggerating his pronunciation, for instance whenever he mentions President Macron’s name; or creates puns in German: “This year in Germany there is no *Oktoberfest*; they have preferred to go for the *deportafest*” (26/10/23), thus criticizing the deportation of emigrants; or when translating: “No. *Nein.*” (5/6/23). EGW also makes fun of Feijóo, the conservative party’s leader, germanizing his name, saying “...boss of nothing, Feijousen, Feijoisier” (29/11/23). Likewise, during the demonstrations against the new age regulations for retirement in France, EGW pronounces a new version of the historical slogan with a strong French accent, as follows:

- (18) “*Liberté, égalité, et à 64 que se jubile tu padre!*” (“Make your fucking father retire at 64” (29/3/23); [then, Mateo exclaims] “*Oh là là! Qu’est-ce que c’est?*” (6/3/23).

More good examples happened during the Spanish 2023 regional presidential campaign, when contributor Mateo spoke as a sort of DJ of the Electoral Top, a ranking with the candidates’ most shocking proposals. His speeches (19) were plagued with Anglicisms and expressions typical of this style, as follows:

- (19) “¡Ey, qué pasa, *bros!* ¿Cómo lleváis esa campaña guapa? Aquí está vuestro pana Dani Disco y sus cuarenta electorales para traeros las promesas más *top* a ver si hacéis *crush* con alguno de los candidatos. Vamos ya con las últimas incorporaciones a nuestra lista. En el número tres, *three, three, three*, entran con fuerza en esta campaña los árboles. Sí, porque el *shippeo* entre políticos y naturaleza lo está petando muy fuerte. Es un auténtico *challenge* de ver quién planta más árboles. Ahora Almeida promete plantar medio millón de árboles. *Oh yeah, all right*. Eso sí, con lo *hater* que es de las zonas verdes no me extrañaría que esto sea postureo. [...] Y hasta aquí nuestra lista de promesas electorales con más *flow* de la campaña. ¡Qué ganas de que llegue el 28 M! Sobre todo, porque así podré dejar de fingir y volver a hablar como lo que realmente soy, un *boomer* de 43 años.” [“Hey, what’s up, *bros!* How are you doing with that cute campaign? Here is your *buddy* Dani Disco and his electoral Top forty to bring you the top promises to see if you make a crush with any of the candidates. Let’s go with the latest additions to our list. At number three, three, three, three, trees enter with force in this campaign. Yes, because politicians and nature are shipping really hot. It is a real challenge to see who can plant the most trees. Now Almeida promises to plant half a million! Oh yeah, all right. Of course, as a hater of green areas, I would not be surprised if this is just flexing. [...] And so much for our list of electoral promises with the most flow of the campaign. I cannot wait for May 28th! Above all, because then I will be able to stop pretending and go back to talking like what I really am, a 43-year-old boomer.”] (15–16/5/23)

4. Discussion

The data and examples provided and commented upon in the sections above clearly prove the relevance of Anglicisms in *EI*’s humorous discourse, but also describe the specific mechanisms that make English contribute to their satirical criticism of the political situation worldwide. Particularly noteworthy is the role played by strategies such as code-switching, phonetic parody, applying English suffixation to Spanish words—as in *re-sakeishon* (10/12/24), for Spanish *resaca* (“hangover”)—or the creation of blends, by mixing English with Spanish elements, as in *brosidentes* (28/1/24), which results from combining English *bro* and Spanish *presidentes*. All these techniques are discursively marked and immediately provide the audience with a cue that a humorous stance is being taken. In sum, *EI*’s bilingual (Spanish–English) humor comes mainly from playing with language and using cultural knowledge. As already stated, switching between languages or borrowing words provokes funny surprises, making humor and jokes more interesting, due to their drawing on cultural frames that resonate with the audience, thus rewarding those who are fluent in English. Scholars agree that this connection with cultural references that the audience is expected to understand is important. As Gumperz (1982) and Myers-Scotton (1993) explained, changing languages reveals identity and/or group belonging, which *EI* comedians use in their jokes, and this often plays a dual role as both entertainment and ideological criticism. By navigating both languages (Spanish and English), they behave like a chameleon, switching identities for effect.

Additionally, we cannot but agree with Kortum (2013), who, after examining the interplay between semantics and pragmatics in the context of humor, suggests that certain

words possess intrinsic humorous qualities that contribute to their meaning. In my opinion, this happens with many Anglicisms that carry subjective significance and may simply sound like funny words. This is the case with *ghosting* (example 4) or *burpees* in (20).

- (20) “Si queréis que os torturen que no sea el Estado sino vuestro *personal trainer*, ¡imponiéndoo una tabla de *burpees*!” [“If you want to be tortured, it should not be the State but your personal trainer, imposing a burpees table on you!”] (6/12/24)

Besides, despite their pragmatic functions and sociolinguistic nature, we underline here the fact that the examples illustrating the strategies detected in *EI* humorous discourse are also connected to other levels of linguistic analysis, such as morphology, phonetics, and vocabulary. This means that by using Anglicisms, *EI* enhances humor in both structure and meaning.

5. Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated the great creativity, pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness of the scriptwriters of *EI*, a program that manages to entertain while reporting on the turbulent (inter)national current affairs. It proves how humor can be used to criticize and comment on political and social reality in an effective and funny way. The program includes sketches and parodies that ridicule politicians and public figures, using comedy, irony, and sarcasm to highlight their mistakes and contradictions. It analyzes political and social current affairs, using humor to explain complex issues in an accessible and entertaining way. Most importantly, in *EI*'s humorous discourse, English plays a fundamental role through the strategies illustrated above: English naming; insertion of English sentences, phrases, and words related to sociocultural and technological issues, politics, and economy; lexical creativity with pseudo-Anglicisms, playful suffixation, puns, and metaphorical uses; free translations, and metacomments on English usage in Spain. *EI* confirms the crucial role of Anglicisms for humor and their great vitality in current European Spanish, due to the attractiveness of a language that continues to represent political-economic power, progress, and prestige.

The healing power of humor is undeniable (Capelotti, 2024). By its nature, humor is “anti-fanatical and democratic; when we laugh, we laugh together. It is a way of uniting us” (15/5/24), as Salman Rushdie suggested. We also agree with Spanish filmmaker Fernando Trueba, who, at *EI*'s 18th birthday gala, highlighted how this show “helps us to endure reality” (9/5/24). Its humorous discourse attempts to respond to contemporary socio-political problems and to analyze sociocultural dynamics, with the critical commitment to social justice and freedom of expression that comedians should have, as Nicolaï and Maesele (2024) claim.

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Note

¹ Spanish *pana(s)*, literally “corduroy”, is used in many Latin American varieties, meaning “buddy, mate,” etc.

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