Peloton versus Pack & Bunch

A study of French lexical borrowing in live English cycling commentary

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Abstract
The sport of cycling is an ever expanding global phenomenon, drawing crowds in their thousands to watch the races unfold. Its community has a distinct vocabulary, with many terms borrowed from several other languages, principally French. This study investigates the presence of French loanwords in the language of English cycling commentators, and to what extent these loanwords are used in comparison to their English equivalents. It also examines extra-linguistic factors that could affect the commentator’s choice of vocabulary, mainly the location of the race. The study investigated the language of English commentators from live broadcast of 6 different races: 2 located in English speaking countries, 2 in France, and 2 countries where neither French nor English was the native language. All utterances of French loanwords and their English counterparts were noted and collected for analysis. The findings demonstrated a clear presence of French loanwords in the language of the commentators, with a varying degree of frequency. Some loanwords were preferred over their English equivalents, whilst others were not. The location did not seem to have a significant impact on the choice of vocabulary, with the exception of the only race held outside of Europe, where the commentators demonstrated a clear preference for English terminology over French loanwords. The analysis concluded that many different extra-linguistic factors may play a role in the commentator’s choice of vocabulary.

Keywords
Loanword, borrowing, lexical borrowing, cycling terminology, commentary.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The linguistic history of the English language can be considered a melting pot of many different languages that throughout its evolution have influenced and shaped the language to its current usage and appearance. These influences from other languages have at times manifested themselves as minor adaptations of the existing vocabulary and at other times as direct borrowings of vocabulary from other languages. The concept of borrowing is in linguistics described as the process of reproducing a linguistic feature of one language into another, which can be done either in its entirety or partially (Durkin, 2014). According to Durkin (2014), the French language has been one of the languages with the greatest influence on English in terms of borrowing. These borrowings, however, occur during the time that French had a greater general influence on European languages, which was during the Middle-English period.

Borrowing vocabulary from English into other languages is very common today and much research have investigated English loanwords in other languages, especially in the field of technology (Cabanillas, Martínez, Prados & Redondo, 2007). However, the act of borrowing vocabulary from other languages is more limited in modern English than it previously was, with the exception of English for some specific purposes (Budincic, 2014). One such field, which has borrowed from French, is the cycling community (Global Cycling Network, 2013; Global Cycling Network, 2015a; Glossary of cycling, 2017; Tejvan, 2014; The Inner Ring, 2011). Former cycling English national champion and cycling commentator Matthew Stephens describes cycling terminology as follows: “Cycling has its own vocabulary, a rich lexicon varying in colour and texture, borrowing from many languages” (Global Cycling Network, 2015a, 0:00:01). Much of the vocabulary used in the sport is direct borrowing from French, and French terms are often used, despite having English equivalents (Glossary of cycling, 2017; Tejvan, 2014; The Inner Ring, 2011). Given the popularity of cycling, as well as the lack of previous research conducted in this field, further investigation on the phenomenon is needed.

1.2 Terminology

- **Loanword** (or *lexical borrowing*): “a word that at some point in the history of the language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing” (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 36)
- **Borrowing**: The process of transfer or copying from one language into another (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 36)
- **Donor language**: “[t]he language from which a loanword has been borrowed” (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 37)
- **Recipient language**: “the language into which [a loanword] has been borrowed” (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 37)
- **Code-switch**: a non-conventionalized alteration between two languages, often associated with multilingualism (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 40)
1.3 Aim and scope

The present investigation will examine the use of French loanwords in English cycling commentary and aims to find out whether the use of these loanwords by commentators differs, depending on the location of the cycling race in question. The investigation aims to answer the following questions:

- To what extent are French loanwords used in by English cycling commentators to describe cycling-specific phenomena that have English equivalents?
- Are there extra-linguistic factors that affect the use of cycling vocabulary, such as the location of the race?

1.4 Literary review

One of the most elaborate and recent research projects investigating loanwords is that of the *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook* (2009), edited by Haspelmath and Tadmor. The investigation, called the *Loanword Typology Project*, is comprised of 40 case studies on lexical borrowing behavior and based on a selection of 40 languages, including both major and minor languages, as well as languages with varying degrees of lexical borrowing influence on the language. Haspelmath (2009) argues that loanwords are different from native words in the sense that a native word can be traced back to the earliest recorded period of a language. He does, however, explain that a word can never be excluded to be a loanword, despite having an unknown origin, due to the fact that it could have been borrowed at a point before the language’s recorded history.

The question of why loanwords exist, and why languages do not simply create new original words for concepts instead of borrowing, is something that the *Loanword Typology project* discusses. According to Haspelmath (2009, p. 35), there are two main factors that contribute to whether the borrowing of vocabulary will occur: firstly, social and attitudinal factors, such as prestige; and secondly, grammatical factors, such as the notion that nouns are easier to borrow than verbs, due to the requirement of grammatical adaptation of verbs.

The concept of code-switching refers to the act of alternating between different languages in the same discourse, which is often done by bilingual speakers (Haspelmath, 2009). Haspelmath (2009, p. 40) suggests that it can be difficult to distinguish a code-switch from a loanword in an utterance where only one word belongs to another language, which he calls a single-word switch. He argues that the distinguishing factor between a loanword and a code-switch is whether the term is part of a speaker’s mental lexicon or not; if it is, it is a loanword and not a code-switch. Looking into a speaker’s mental lexicon is impossible and different criteria are therefore needed in order to distinguish a single-word switch from a loanword. Haspelmath suggests that the most reliable criterion is that “a loanword is a word that can conventionally be used as part of the language. In particular, it can be used in situations where no code-switching occurs, e.g. in the speech of monolinguals” (Haspelmath, 2009, p.40). He further states that code-switches uttered by monolingual speakers are often pronounced with the accent of the language from which the code originates from.
Loanwords have two main subcategories: Cultural borrowing and core borrowing. Cultural borrowing refers to loanwords for new concepts that previously did not exist in the recipient language, whilst core borrowing refers to loanwords that duplicate meanings or replace already existing native terms (Haspelmath, 2009). Haspelmath (2009) attributes the widespread use of cultural borrowing, over creating new vocabulary, to the convenience of using an existing vocabulary in bilingual circumstances. He does however state that some languages tend to resist the adoption of foreign vocabulary, which is connected to the concept of purism. Explaining the motives for core borrowing, according to Haspelmath, is more complex. He suggests that the adoption of foreign vocabulary for already existing concepts is linked with a desire to associate oneself with the donor language and its prestige. This concept is linked with the idea that our choice of vocabulary “is not only determined by the ideas we want to get across, but also by the impression we want to convey on others, and by the kind of social identity that we want to be associated with” (Haspelmath, 2009, p.48)

As previously mentioned in the introduction, the English language has a rich history in borrowing vocabulary from many other languages. It has, however, during modern times converted from a recipient language into a donor language. In her article covering loanwords in English sports vocabulary, Budincic (2014) explains that most languages borrow vocabulary from other languages at certain times and in specific genera (e.g. English has borrowed most of its music vocabulary from Italian from the middle of the 17th century and onwards). What Budincic noticed was that sport terminology, on the other hand, differed in the sense that it had an overall dominance of English vocabulary with only occasional influences from other languages. She links the conversion from a recipient language into a donor language, as well as the dominance in sports terminology, to the spread of English as a global language in the early 20th century, a time with a great need of a lingua franca due to the formation of many important global organizations (e.g. the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization etc.). Furthermore, she explains that the development of English as a lingua franca was a major contributing factor in the case of the process of standardization of sports terminology, as it was during the same time that globalization of sports occurred, thus resulting in English being the global language of sports today.

In her research, Budincic analyses the English terminology of approximately 200 sports in order to find borrowings from other languages. She found that the vast majority of the loanwords in English sports terminology originated in the Far East, in the form of martial arts terms, and adds that some foreign influence can be seen in terminology of other sports (e.g. hurling, shinty and lacrosse etc.). Budincic concludes that there are some common characteristics between the loanwords found in her study and notes that “[e]very sport (along with its terms) in some way depicts the culture of the country from which it comes” (Budincic, 2014, p. 1849) and claims that the borrowed terms evoke associations with the donor country and its culture. She also shows that “[t]he borrowed terms are mainly adapted to the English orthography and/or pronunciation.” (Budincic, 2014, p. 1848)

Reinton (1978) has studied Russian sports terminology with a focus on the relationship between English loanwords and their Russian synonyms. He claims that the study of foreign loanwords and their close synonyms in the recipient language “is a neglected
field of research, which most linguists either fail to take into account, or only comment on in very general terms” (Reinton, 1978, p. 223), which seems to be the case up to the time of the present study, since no other research was found on the subject. In his study, Reinton (1978, p. 233) found that the 68% of the borrowed English sport terminology had been assimilated into Russian without acquiring Russian synonyms, with the remaining 32% having acquired a Russian synony mic term. When analyzing the remaining 32%, Reinton found that both the English loanword and its Russian synonym coexisted side by side in the majority of the cases, with a varying degree of frequency.

2. Method

The first step of the present investigation was a preparatory review of the terminology used within the cycling community. This was done to gain a better familiarization with specific cycling terms and to identify possible French loanwords present in cycling terminology, used by the cycling community itself, that then could be searched for in the language of cycling commentators. The review gathered vocabulary from 3 types of sources:

1. **Cycling blog posts:**
   - “Lexicon of cycling terms” (The Inner Ring, 2011)
   - “French cycling terms” (Tejvan, 2014)

2. **YouTube videos:**
   - “Top 10 Common Cycling Phrases” (Global Cycling Network, 2015a)
   - “How To Speak Like A Cyclist - A Glossary Of Cycling Terms Pt. 1” (Global Cycling Network, 2013)

3. **Wikipedia entries:**
   - “Glossary of cycling” (Glossary of cycling, 2017)

22 terms where listed in at least 3 of these list, of which 20 were nouns, 1 adjective and 1 verb. More terms were listed in one or two of the list, which came as a result of how varied the list were.

The gathering of the data for analysis was done by examining recordings of live broadcasts from 6 different cycling races. The 6 races were selected based on the official language of the country in which the race was situated, to enable the examination of the possible effect of the host culture on the commentator's choice of vocabulary. The 6 recordings of races were therefore chosen on the premise that 2 races would be situated in French-speaking countries and 2 in English-speaking countries, with the remaining 2 races being categorized as "neutral" countries, where neither French nor English were the official language. The 3 categories and the chosen races are found in Table 1 below.
Table 1. Selected races.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French races (F)</th>
<th>English races (E)</th>
<th>Neutral races (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tour de France 2016 – stage 12</td>
<td>Tour Down Under 2017 – stage 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> France</td>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> Australia</td>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> Eurosport (Britain)</td>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> The Nine Network (Australia)</td>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> Eurosport (Britain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Sean Kelly and Carlton Kirby</td>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Phil Liggett, Paul Sherwen and Robbie Mcewen</td>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Sean Kelly and Carlton Kirby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Paris-Roubaix 2017</td>
<td>Tour of Britain 2014 – stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> France</td>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> Great Britain</td>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> Eurosport (Britain)</td>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> Eurosport (Britain)</td>
<td><strong>Network:</strong> Eurosport (Britain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Sean Kelly, Carlton Kirby and Declan Quigley</td>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Mathew Stephens and Magnus Bäckstedt</td>
<td><strong>Commentators:</strong> Sean Kelly and Carlton Kirby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aim was to provide each category with one stage race from the most well-known races in each category, as well as one monument (one-day race). The first and the second race in each category were selected based on them having similar routes and being broadcast from the same network. This was possible for all but the first English-situated race (E1), which was broadcast by a local network, and the second English-situated race (E2), which differed from the other categories by not having cobbled sections as well as not being a monument. This came as a result of a lack of available data and the non-existence of cobbled monuments in English-speaking countries.

For each race, a total of 70 minutes of the broadcast was selected for the gathering of data. These 70 minutes were divided into 3 sections and distributed over the course of each race as follows: the start, consisting of the first 20 minutes; the middle, consisting of 20 minutes in the middle of the race, preferably a key part of the race (e.g. climb or technical section); and the finish, consisting of the last 30 minutes. This was done to ensure that as many nuances of the race as possible were present in the data, due to the fact that commentary content depends greatly on the segment of the race (i.e. the commentary content differs greatly in the preparatory/general information about the race compared to a sprint finish). The selection of the middle section was done using the map of the course to identify possible important or technical sections in the race. Each section for every race was then viewed and every French word and its English counterpart were counted when uttered. After all the races had been analyzed, they were...
viewed a second time to ensure that no utterances had been missed, as well as to add vocabulary/English counterparts to the list that had not been known at the time of the first viewing.

The commentators for each race were noted and information regarding French proficiency for each commentator was then searched for. If contact information was found for a commentator, s/he was contacted with a set of questions regarding language proficiency (see appendix A). This was done to determine whether a possible existence of a (higher) proficiency in French could have an impact on the word choice of the commentator.

3. Results

The results gathered from the 6 races indicate a clear presence of French vocabulary in the language used by English commentators. The frequency of the vocabulary varies greatly, which comes as a result of the nature of the word itself, i.e. a word describing a pack of cyclist will have a high frequency due to it being a frequently occurring phenomenon in the sport, whilst a word describing a cycling bag or a cobbled road may only occur at specific sections of a race. The results of the encountered vocabulary and its corresponding frequency can be found in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>E2</th>
<th>N2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French (F) &amp; English (E) vocabulary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peloton vs. English counterparts</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissaire vs. English counterparts</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidon vs. Bottle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directeur Sportif vs. English counterparts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavé vs. Cobbles</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soigneur vs. English counterparts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musette vs. Bag</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Encountered loanwords.
All French loanwords uttered by the commentators were found in at least 60% of the sources which reviewed the terminology used within the cycling community, thereby ensuring that the uttered loanwords were part of the terminology of the cycling community and not an individual feature of a commentator’s vocabulary. Some French vocabulary had multiple corresponding English counterparts for describing the same phenomenon; these words were therefore labelled English counterparts. The following are examples of these English counterparts uttered by the commentators:

- English counterparts for *peloton*: pack, bunch and main field
- English counterparts for *commissaire*: jury, officials and race organisers
- English counterparts for *directeur sportif*: team management and team
- English counterparts for *soigneur*: team helper

The most frequently used term overall was the French term *peloton*, for referring to the main pack or bunch. The case of *peloton* vs. its English counterparts was the only case of vocabulary in which both French and English versions were present in all races. *Peloton* was favored over the English counterparts in all races but the Australian (E1) and the Spanish one (N1), where 49% of the utterances in the Australian race used the French loanword, and 43% of the utterances in the Spanish race used the French loanword. The remaining four races had a predominant use of *peloton* over the English counterparts, and three of them used the French loanword in more than 80% of the time. The results of the case of *peloton* vs. English counterparts can be found in Figure 1 below. The data in the table were not analyzed for statistical significance, and firm conclusions can, therefore, not be drawn. They do however function as an indication of a general trend.

**Figure 1. Percentage peloton vs. English counterparts.**
An utterance that occurred in all races, but not in all cases occurring with both French and English versions in the same race, was the word Commissaire and its English counterparts. Commissaire is a French loanword used to describe an official in cycling races (Union Cycliste Internationale, 2014), similar to the referee in other sports. The French term was primarily used, and in most cases only used, over the English counterparts in all races except the Australian, which only used English versions of the word. The Australian race was in fact the only race where all English terms were favored over the French loanwords, and the only French loanword present throughout the analyzed 3 sections of the race was that of peloton.
The only case of the English term being favored over the French loanword in all races they appeared in was the case of pavé vs. cobbles. These terms only occurred in 2 races (F2 and N2), which comes as a result of the 2 races being the only ones containing cobbled road surfaces. This does, however, indicate that the existence and circulation of a French loanword does not necessarily result in said loanword becoming generally favored over the already existing English vocabulary, which seems to be the case for many of the other terms analyzed in study.
No information regarding the proficiency in French of the commentators was found online, with the exception of Matthew Stephens, who shows a level of at least intermediate French proficiency in two YouTube videos (Global Cycling Network, 2015b; Global Cycling Network, 2015c). Neither have any of the contacted commentators so far answered the question-sheet sent out to them regarding their proficiency in French.

4. Discussion

4.1 Defining terms as loanwords
To determine to what extent French loanwords are used by English cycling commentators to describe cycling-specific phenomena, it is important to establish that the encountered French vocabulary is in fact loanwords and not single-word code switching. As previously mentioned, Haspelmath (2009) explained the main difficulty in distinguishing loanwords from single-word switches as being the inability to examine the mental lexicon of a speaker. In the case of the French vocabulary uttered by the commentators, it is impossible to review the mental lexicon of a commentator, but it can be assumed that the terms are part of their mental lexicon due to the fact that these same words are used by many different commentators. The fact that all uttered terms were pronounced with an English accent further indicates that the terms are loanwords and not code-switches, since code-switches often adopt the pronunciation of the language that they originate from (Haspelmath, 2009). The tendency to adopt English pronunciation for borrowings seems to be a reoccurring phenomenon in this field, based on the grounds that similar results were found in Budincic’s (2014) study on foreign loanwords in English sports terminology. Furthermore, considering that the main purpose of a sports commentator is to simplify and report on the events of a race, we can assume that s/he would not introduce a French word only known to him/her (i.e. a code-switch) without explaining it to the audience.
4.2 Comments and variables

The results of this study confirm a presence of French loanwords in the language of cycling commentators. Furthermore, the analysis of the gathered data concluded that all the French loanwords encountered were nouns. The Loanword Typology Project found similar results in its study of 40 languages and concluded that nouns dominate the borrowed vocabulary, with a ratio of two-to-one compared to verbs (Tadmor, 2009). Tadmor attributed the higher rate of borrowed nouns partly to the need for grammatical adaptation that verbs require, but also to the “fact that things and concepts are easily adopted across cultures” (Tadmor, 2009, p. 61). Interestingly, the result from the present study, however, demonstrate that no verbs at all were found in the vocabulary of cycling commentators. This, presumably, comes as a result of the cycling community not borrowing many verbs from French, judging from the initial review of terminology used by the cycling community, which only found one verb present in the list of the most common loanwords, compared with 20 nouns present in the same list. However, it cannot be concluded that there exists a tendency for the commentators not to use French verb borrowings, since the lack of occurrence may come as a result of the small scale of the investigation, with its findings of only 7 French terms.

It could be argued that the neutrality of the second neutral race may be flawed due to the bilingual nature of Belgium. However, the Tour of Flanders is situated in the Flemish-speaking region of Belgium and is deeply rooted in the Flemish identity, and should therefore be classified as neutral. An extract from an interview with a race director of the Tour of Flanders describes the phenomenon as: “The event is something that belongs to us [Flemish residents], it is anchored here. It became a Flemish folk festival [italics added] and sometimes we even say it is bigger than the official Flemish holiday” (Derom & VanWynsberghe, 2015, p. 118)

The results gathered from the Vuelta a España (N1) may to some extent be deceiving in the case of peloton vs. English counterparts, which comes about as a result of how the race unfolded. A split of the main group of cyclists in the early stage of the race caused a spread of many smaller groups over the course, which in turn resulted in the commentators Sean Kelly and Carlton Kirby having difficulty in describing the field of cyclists. During the race Kelly describes this unusual phenomenon as “it has caused major problems for the peloton, it is split all over the place” (Tiz, 2016b, 0:17:30). The division of the main field resulted in the following behavioral changes in the commentators:

- Many new terms to describe the previously gathered group known as the peloton were used (e.g. “Froome group”, “perusing group”, “peloton of Froome”). The majority of these terms were English terms, which thereby significantly changed the statistics in the case of peloton vs. English counterparts.
- The commentators demonstrating uncertainty in how to refer to each group. At one point Sean Kelly displays hesitation when describing the different groups and seems not to be able to put it into words “[the early split of the main field] blew the peloton into many groups, and unfortunately some were in the wrong group, and had difficulty to, eh, you know to, eh, to, to… solve that situation” (Tiz, 2016b, 2:06:15)
- Disorientation. At times, the commentators described two different groups with the same name.
Interestingly, in the case of this unusual development in the race, the commentators seem to rely on English terminology to describe an altered version of a frequently occurring phenomenon, instead of the more commonly preferred French loanword. This reliance on non-loanwords may come as a consequence of the French loanwords having a narrow, more specific sense, compared to some of its English counterparts. The senses of the English terms may be more flexible, and thereby better suited for situations involving stress or uncertainty, i.e. *group* can more easily be used in an unusual situation. The fact that loanwords rarely are absolute synonyms with the recipient language’s counterpart (Reinton, 1978) results in their being different nuances in the lexical meaning of the words, which in turn may require a different terminology to describe the altered phenomenon, since it no longer fits the established sense of the loanword. Comparing loanwords in live sports commentary with written sports commentary (WSC) would probably have resulted in a greater number of loanwords in the WSC. This is based on the less stressful nature of WSC as well as its benefit of hindsight, but also on the research of Ghadessy (in Lewandowski, 2012, p. 67) which when comparing the two found that WSC has a wider range of vocabulary, compared to oral commentary, as well as an abundance of specialist terms.

4.3 Explaining the presence of loanwords

4.3.1 General

The fact that cycling as a sport has borrowed a lot of vocabulary from other languages (French in particular), whilst modern English in general has not, may seem peculiar. However, Tadmor’s (2009) investigation on “borrowability” of terms may provide an explanation to this matter. He states that “basic (“fundamental”) vocabulary is much less susceptible to borrowing than non-basic (cultural) vocabulary” (Tadmor, 2009, p.65). Since cycling terms are part of a cultural vocabulary, and not basic vocabulary (e.g. terms for body parts), they are therefore more susceptible to borrowing and allows for terms to more easily be adopted by the recipient language.

The results differed from Reinton’s study of English loanwords in Russian sport terminology in the sense that all the French loanwords found had English counterparts that were used, although with a varying frequency amongst different terms. This indicates that English differs from Russian in the sense that English, in all cases found, already has a counterpart for the borrowed word, or creates its own synonyms for the new concept introduced by the sport. Russian, on the other hand, tends to assimilate English loanwords without creating/using a Russian counterpart in the majority of the cases.

4.3.2 Commentators

The results of this study indicate a general tendency of the commentators to use the French loanword over their English counterparts, with one major exception, the Australian race (E1). The results from the *Tour Down Under* contrast from those of all other races in the sense that the English counterpart outnumbered the French borrowings on all occasions. In fact, the only loanword that occurred was *peloton*. The two factors that differentiate the Australian race from all other analysed races are,
firstly, that the race is located outside of Europe, and secondly, that the commentators are of Australian origin, broadcasting for a local network. Cycling is a European sport at its core: the sport originated in Europe and the 3 biggest races are held there. The fact that the Tour Down Under in 2008 was the first UCI WorldTour held “outside of cycling’s traditional home of Europe” (History, n.d.) may, therefore, have an effect on the commentator’s choice of vocabulary. It could be argued that the Australian commentators want to dissociate themselves from the prototypical image of cycling as a European phenomenon, and thereby choose to express themselves using mainly English terms. Haspelmath (2009) claim that “while the amount of loan vocabulary can be readily observed and measured, the speakers’ attitudes cannot be easily observed in an objective way” (Haspelmath, 2009, p.47). The suggestion that Australian commentators could have negative cultural attitudes towards French loanwords can, therefore, not be confirmed, as a consequence of the inability to examine their attitudes. Furthermore, a contributing factor to the shortage of assimilated French loanwords in the Australian terminology may be the principle of proximity. There is a much greater likeliness of French presence in European English-speaking countries, compared to Australia, due to the close proximity to France. It is, however, difficult to draw conclusions from the data gathered from only one race, and further investigation is therefore needed to establish if Australian commentators have a tendency to disregard French vocabulary or not.

The remaining races are all broadcast from the same network and many commentators in the present data are reporting from multiple races (above all, Sean Kelly and Carlton Kirby), which facilitates an analysis, as the only varying variable is the location of the race (with the exception of E2, which had different commentators). The data obtained from the races broadcast by Eurosport (i.e. all but the Australian race) seem to indicate that the location of the race does not have a major influence on the choice of vocabulary (i.e. the races located in France do not have a strikingly higher proportion of French loanwords compared with the English and neutral races), at least not when comparing races located in Europe. The factor that most seemed to impact the choice of vocabulary was instead personal preference. In the case of pavé vs. Cobbles, all 3 commentators used the English term cobbles. However, all utterances of pavé, in both the F2 and N2 races, were made by either Carlton Kirby or Declan Quigley, whilst Sean Kelly never uttered the French term. Considering that no information of French proficiency was neither found about, nor provided by, Mr. Kelly, assumptions cannot be made regarding his overall understanding of French. However, Kelly clearly understands the French loanword (he is able to answer a question with the term in it), but in his response he refers to the road surface as cobbled. Kelly’s attitudes towards the term are unknown and the only conclusion that, therefore, can be drawn is that he prefers the English equivalent over the French term. A possible explanation for the low occurrence of pavé could be that the commentators aim to use French loanwords that they consider to be well known within the cycling community, thus better enabling the comprehension of more novice viewers. The inclusion of more novice viewers seems to be a contributing factor in the case of soigneur vs. its English counterpart, where Kirby glosses one of the concepts of a soigneur that had earlier been mentioned by Kelly: “that’s one of those helpers, one of those soigneurs, you talked about, Sean” (Tiz, 2017b, 4:46:15). This incident is, however, the only occurrence of glossing found in any of these races, which
indicates that the French loanwords used are well-established and commonly occurring terms in cycling commentary, and thus not needing an explanation.

The commentators’ choice of vocabulary can be considered an unconscious one, considering that they work under time pressure and have little to no time to actively consider, or revise, their word-choice (Lewandowski, 2012). Consequently, there exists a possibility of influence from outside sources, on the commentator’s language. One such possible influence could be the “information strip” on the bottom of the screen, present during the broadcast (see Appendix B). This is an aid visible to both viewer and commentator that during the race posts the different time-distances between cyclists, and whose function is to facilitate the understanding of distance between cyclists when they are not visible on the screen. The labelling for the main field of cyclists on the information strip is at times peloton, which could trigger the use of that term by commentator, in place of an English counterpart. However, when analyzing the races it was clear that a possible influence only occurred on one occasion, i.e. the term peloton was only uttered once in direct succession to the word appearing on the screen. In all other cases, the term is uttered before the appearance of the word, or long after the term has disappeared from the screen. Therefore, the influence that the information strip has on the word-choice of the commentators cannot be considered a determining factor.

All the French loanwords encountered have English counterparts that existed before the introduction of the French term, thus falling under the category of core borrowings, which as previously mentioned in the literary review, Haspelmath (2009) connects to the prestige of a language. The fact that all the encountered terms are core borrowings suggests that their introduction into the English cycling terminology is connected with a desire for the speakers in the English cycling community to associate themselves with the French cycling community. Trudgill (2000) claims that language is a social phenomenon and is, therefore, closely linked with the value system of a society and the creation of identity. He explains that certain forms of a language are more prestigious than others and are often considered to be more ‘correct’ or ‘beautiful’ than the less prestigious variant, which might be considered to be ‘wrong’ or ‘ugly’. This can result in the use of overt prestige, which refers to the use of a more prestigious variant of the language in order to gain social status or recognition within a community. The prestigious nature of French within the English cycling community, and thereby the desire of the community’s members to adopt its terminology, may have come about as a result of the cycling sport of today having its origin in France (Dauncey, 2012), as well as strong existing link between the French identity and cycling. Dauncey (2012) describes the phenomenon as: “[i]n terms of identities and communities, cycling over time in France has seemed to be durably attached to notions of national identity and prestige” (Dauncey, 2012, p. 251). Furthermore, cycling in France has had a much higher level of media publicity from the early days of the sport, praising it and covering the majority of races, whereas Britain has had little to no coverage existing until recent years (late 20th – 21st century) (Dauncey, 2012, p. 248-250). The high status of cycling in France, which was lacking in Britain, could have resulted in an admiration of the country, thus bringing about a desire in the English cycling community to associate themselves with France, by adopting its terminology.
5. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the previously, to a great extent, neglected topic of French loanwords in cycling terminology by examining the language of live broadcast race commentary from 6 different races. The aim of the study was to determine the extent of use of French loanwords in live cycling commentary, as well as to examine possible extra-linguistic factors, such as the location of the race.

The results demonstrated an evident presence of French loanwords in the language of cycling commentators, with some French terms having a general tendency of being preferred over their English counterparts, namely *peloton*, *commissaire* and *directeur sportif*. The location of the race does not seem to have impacted the choice of vocabulary by the commentators, with the exception of the race located in Australia, which favored all English terms over the French loanwords. It is uncertain whether this comes as a result of the race being the only one held outside of Europe, or as a consequence of the Australian race being broadcast by a local network, which was not the case in all other races. The results also indicate that the personal preferences of commentators seem to have an impact on whether a loanword, or its English counterpart, is used. In addition, French loanwords seem to have a narrower, more specific sense, which can result in the commentators falling back on the more flexible sense of English equivalents in times of uncertainty or stress.

A suggestion for future research on this subject is to advance the investigation on the variable of location, i.e. European vs. non-European races, and the impact of different television-networks to establish a better understanding of what the main contributing factor for the choice of vocabulary is.

6. References

6.1 Primary sources


### 6.2 Secondary sources


Appendix A – Proficiency questions

Dear Mr. [surname]

My name is Sebastian Almlöf Fernandez and I am currently writing my bachelor's thesis on French loanwords in live cycling commentary, at Stockholm University. You are commentating on [X amount] of the races that I am analyzing and I was therefore wondering if you could possibly answer some questions about your French proficiency?

What I would like to know is:
1) Whether you have had any formal education in French?
2) What you would consider your proficiency level at? (E.g. fluent, intermediate, novice, only a few words/terms, or none at all) You may put this in your own words.
3) Do you consider/adapt your choice of cycling terms when commentating on live TV for a "broader audience" or is it your natural way of speaking?

If you have the time to answer I would very much appreciate it.
Have a great day.

Regards, Sebastian Almlöf Fernandez
Appendix B – Picture of broadcast with information strip