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Macaroni English Goes Pragmatic: False Phraseological Anglicisms in Italian as Illocutionary Acts

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Abstract

Taking the notion of pragmatic borrowing as a starting point, the aim of this article is to assess the pragmatic salience – more specifically the ability to perform illocutionary acts – of the two false phraseological Anglicisms found in Italian, i.e. *fly down* and *I know my chickens*. Typical of what may be referred to as *macaroni English*, false phraseological Anglicisms are Italian-made idiomatic phrases which look and sound English, but do not exist or are used with a different meaning in the English language. Examples are extracted from Italian newspaper archives and web-based corpora; in addition, a qualitative analysis is carried out by means of lexicographic sources, combining data from monolingual dictionaries of English and Italian, Italian-English bilingual dictionaries and dictionaries of idioms and slang. This study includes the frequency of the false phraseological Anglicisms under scrutiny, the typical contexts in which they occur, suggested Italian translation equivalents, as well as the indication of the corresponding illocutionary acts performed. Despite the low quantitative impact of false phraseological Anglicisms on Italian, their attestation further demonstrates how English itself not only is undoubtedly Italians' favorite donor language, but also acts as a model which inspires English-like phrasemes, hence showing the openness of the Italian language to the pervasive presence of English in everyday usage.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the "Anglicization" (Pulcini et al., 2012: 1) or "Anglification" (Gottlieb, 2012: 175) of Italian – and many other recipient languages – is so pervasive that units larger than words or compounds, i.e. phraseological Anglicisms, are borrowed from English alongside single lexical items, namely Anglicisms. Phraseological Anglicisms (Pulcini et al., 2012: 13), more

so than Anglicisms proper, seem capable of originating pragmatic Anglicisms (Andersen, 2014: 18) as they may promulgate illocutionary acts (Searle, 1969, 1975, 1976).[1] Indeed, whereas non-phraseological Anglicisms, being mostly nouns, tend to conform to the "hierarchy of borrowability" (Muysken, 1981) more strictly, phraseological Anglicisms often contain verbs, the predominant word class capable of performing illocutionary acts, e.g. *give me/gimme five*. In other words, the fact that phraseological Anglicisms may include a verb increases their likelihood of being used as illocutionary acts.[2]

Phraseological and pragmatic aspects do not seem to have been widely discussed in the otherwise prolific literature on Anglicisms published to date (see AUTHOR, 2015: 263-277), at least not jointly in a single study. In order to bring together both analytical frameworks, and in line with Andersen's (2014: 18) view of "pragmatic borrowing", the aim of this article is to assess the "pragmatic salience" (Errington, 1985: 294; Brown, 1990: 99; Næss, 2011: 322) of false phraseological Anglicisms in Italian (AUTHOR, 2010: 34), that is, Italian-made idiomatic phrases which look and sound English but are not attested in the English language, i.e. *fly down*, It. lit. 'vola basso', En. "fly low" (*OED*), and *I know my chickens*, It. lit. 'conosco i miei polli', En. "to know one's onions" (*OED*).

Regardless of their pragmatic potential, these two false phraseological Anglicisms coined in Italian may be referred to as instances of "inglese maccheronico" (Bressan, 2006: 315), En. lit. 'macaroni English', (mis)translations of Italian phrases into English made by Italian speakers:[3] it may be argued that such speakers are either not proficient (enough) in

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[1] Core terminological issues tackled in this article are explained in detail in section 2.

[2] Although, "Searle observes, nothing rules out the possibility of there being illocutionary acts that are not named by a verb [⋯]." (Green, 2015), in fact "[i]n both Austin and Searle's approaches the recognition of intention was closely correlated with the use of illocutionary verb, a verb used in the first person, singular, present tense, indicative mode, passive voice [⋯]" (Osika, 2008: 38). See also Condoravdi and Lauer (2011: 150) for a summary of "explicit performatives", where it is stressed that "performative utterances are performances of the act named by the performative verb".

[3] The *OED* dates *macaroni* to 1764 and defines it as "[a] dandy or fop; *spec.* (in the second half of the 18th cent.) a member of a set of young men who had travelled in Europe and extravagantly imitated Continental tastes and fashions". According to McNeil (2000: 382), "[i]n performing the artificiality of language, the macaroni frequently exaggerated the artificiality of its actual production; his speech itself was considered

English or, alternatively, that highly proficient Italian speakers of English capitalize on their language skills, thus aiming at a humorous response, which presupposes the existence of a certain degree of bilingualism or at least a frequent contact – direct or indirect – between Italians and the English-speaking world.[4]

According to AUTHOR (2017: 42), who carried out a joint corpus- and dictionary-based study of phraseological Anglicisms in Italian, they may be classified into three types – A, B and C. The author identified eight (A) 'real' phraseological Anglicisms used as pragmatic Anglicisms *sensu stricto*, which are capable of performing illocutionary acts:[5] 1) *(and) the winner is ⋯*, 2) *don't try this at home*, 3) *give me/gimme five*, 4) *it's not my business*, 5) *keep calm and ⋯*, 6) *take it easy*, 7) *the show must go on* and 8) *welcome to ⋯*. He also detected six (B) 'real' phraseological Anglicisms not used as pragmatic Anglicisms *sensu stricto*, meaning that they are unable to perform illocutionary acts but are

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unusual and affected.". When referring to language, *macaroni*, now obsolete but first attested in this sense in 1884, indicates "[a] mixture of languages used in macaronic verse" (*OED*). Indeed, in Italian, the adjective *maccheronico*, from Latin *macarōnĭcu(m)* (*GDU*), refers to "[⋯] "macaronic" poetry, which was a burlesque of Latin forms, designed to be witty. [⋯] The term "macaronic" had been first used in the 1490s to describe [⋯] Italian poetry in which Latin forms were mixed with the vernacular, the latter being given correct Latin endings. [⋯] the function of macaronic verse in Middle English was in some cases to satirize the true Latin [⋯]" (McNeil, 2000: 381). In its extended Italian use, *maccheronico* frequently appears in the collocation *inglese maccheronico*, En. lit. 'macaroni English', a label coined on purpose by the author for the title of this article.

[4] The humorous response at times implied by utterers of false phraseological Anglicisms falls within the wider linguistic phenomenon of wordplay. Indeed, according to Knospe et al. (2016: 1), "[⋯] the act of playing with words becomes manifest in a range of humorous forms of language use (e.g. [⋯] ludic word creations). [⋯] that involve manipulating formal and semantic aspects of lexical units [⋯]." In addition, as shown in some of the examples included in subsections 4.1 and 4.2, "[⋯] wordplay [⋯] can also fulfill other rhetorical functions, for instance as a pragmatic device for positioning a speaker in a conversational situation or in front of an audience" (Knospe et al., 2016: 1).

[5] The label *sensu stricto* is used throughout this article to denote cases of English or pseudo-English phraseology that not only may be used pragmatically in the broad sense but are also endowed with the distinct ability to perform illocutionary acts in Italian. On the other hand, *sensu lato* refers to all other instances of 'real' or false phraseological Anglicisms which may display pragmatic features but that, however, are not capable of performing illocutionary acts specifically.

rich in other pragmatic functions:[6] 1) *day by day*, 2) *just in time*, 3) *ladies and gentlemen*, 4) *last (but) not least*, 5) *made in* ⋯ and 6) *on the road*. Finally, he traced three (C) false phraseological Anglicisms used as pragmatic Anglicisms *sensu stricto*: 1) *don't expand yourself*, 2) *fly down* and 3) *I know my chickens*.[7]

Whereas AUTHOR (2017) focuses on 'real' phraseological Anglicisms and only acknowledges the existence of false phraseological Anglicisms, the novelty of this article relies on the illocutionary aspects of *fly down* and *I know my chickens*, false phraseological Anglicisms detectable in contemporary Italian but yet not recorded in Italian monolingual dictionaries.[8]

Although false phraseological Anglicisms are quantitatively limited, their raw frequency is measured, the typical contexts of occurrence are presented and the "illocutionary act" (Searle, 1975: 344) performed is indicated. The aim is to look at how false phraseological Anglicisms are pragmatically situated in Italian newspaper archives and web-based corpora.

Section 2 (Terminological Issues) lists and explains the various terms used throughout the article; section 3 (Methods and Materials) describes the methodology applied and details the sources used; by relying on authentic examples, section 4 (Results and Discussion) includes some considerations on the data gathered by focusing on the illocutionary features of *fly down* and *I know my chickens*.

2. Terminological Issues

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[6] In addition to the various pragmatic functions listed in section 2.5, others include "providing emotional or positive connotations, or [⋯] highlighting an ironic, parodic or humourous [sic] aim [⋯], to achieve conciseness, emphasis and variety of expression, or even to avoid ambiguity" (González Cruz and Rodríguez Medina, 2011: 262).

[7] It seems that false phraseological Anglicisms in Italian are always used with illocutionary nuances (see section 4) whereas 'real' phraseological Anglicisms may perform illocutionary acts, e.g. *the show must go on*, classified by AUTHOR (2017: 55) as a representative (stating) and/or directive (ordering), or may not do so, e.g. *ladies and gentlemen*. In fact, for instance, if *ladies and gentlemen* is uttered by an Italian show host instead of It. *signore e signori*, this is likely to be pragmatically relevant only in so far as it grants the speaker a greater allure, a sense of modernity and a stronger appeal on the audience.

[8] Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that *don't expand yourself* may be spotted in conversations taking place between Italians, no occurrence was found in the sources investigated (see section 3). Consequently, the analysis of *don't expand yourself* is not included in this article.

The sub-sections below aim to illustrate and clarify some terminological issues by providing a definition of the following key topics dealt with in this article: *Anglicisms, false Anglicisms, phraseological Anglicisms, false phraseological Anglicisms, pragmatic Anglicisms, pragmatic salience* and *illocutionary acts*.

2.1 Anglicisms

Among the various definitions of Anglicisms, e.g. It. *computer*, the one adopted here is Görlach's (2003: 1): "[a]n anglicism is a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language." However, it is also worth mentioning Gottlieb's (2005: 163, 2012: 175) further-reaching definition, which includes communicative – and therefore also pragmatic – aspects: "[⋯] any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models, used in intralingual communication in a language other than English."

2.2 False Anglicisms

Adjusting Görlach's (2003: 1) definition of Anglicisms, a false Anglicism "[⋯] may be defined as a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language even though it does not exist or is used with a conspicuously different meaning in English" (AUTHOR, 2010: 34). False Anglicisms are English-inspired words or phrases that would not be used in any native English variety: they may be English words to which a new and different meaning is added in the recipient language, e.g. It. *box* meaning 'garage', combinations of English words that native speakers would find bizarre, e.g. It. *recordman* meaning 'record holder', or even autonomous creations modeled on English that would definitely seem and sound odd to English eyes and ears, e.g. It. *footing* meaning 'jogging'.[9]

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[9] For a comprehensive treatment of false Anglicisms, see AUTHOR (2003), AUTHOR (2010), AUTHOR (2015), Gottlieb and Furiassi (2015) and Humbley (2015).

2.3 Phraseological Anglicisms

As Mel'čuk (1995: 217) states, "[⋯] the concept of phraseme is a very general one: Any complex linguistic sign that must be stored in the dictionary is a phraseme." More precisely, "[p]hraseological units are readymade – phrase-like or sentence-like – expressions having semantic and syntactic stability, which play idiomatic, pragmatic and morphosyntactic functions in language.[10] Although there is still no agreed set of categories for phraseology, types of phrasal/phraseological patterns include collocations [⋯], idioms [⋯], catch phrases [⋯], routine formulas [⋯] and proverbs [⋯]" (Pulcini et al., 2012: 13). This latter definition, especially the fact that it includes idioms, e.g. It. *essere nella stessa barca* from En. *to be in the same boat*, catch phrases, e.g. It. and En. *Yes, we can!*, routine formulas, e.g. It. and En. *no problem*, and proverbs, e.g. It. and En. *business is business*, attests that Italians seem quite open to accepting phraseological Anglicisms – at times in the form of calques – underlining the importance of pragmatic functions in language contact, as well as the pragmatic salience of such forms.

2.4 False phraseological Anglicisms

False phraseological Anglicisms are lexical items larger than words or compounds which resemble authentic English phrases but, being coined by Italian speakers, do not actually exist, e.g. *I know my chickens*, or are used in a perceptibly distant sense in the English language, e.g. *fly down*. As some of these phrasemes are not at all attested in native speaking settings while others are, albeit with a different sense, their creation was likely prompted by the learning of English as a foreign language in Italy: their coinage presupposes the knowledge of some English lexical models and the will to mimic them. However, there is no faithful rendering of an English archetype, which is why they are

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[10] The problematic notion of phraseology, comprehensively treated by Cowie (1998), is highlighted by Nuccorini (2016: 60-61), who considers it an umbrella term including multiple combinations of language items such as "phrases of various types", "proverbs and idioms", "expressions [⋯] subject to syntactic, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic constraints", "grammatical and lexical collocative uses", and "collocations [⋯] closely time- and culture-specific", implying a "distinction between grammatical and lexical collocations".

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labeled as false phraseological Anglicisms: although their components are apparent English lexical items, e.g. *fly*, *down* and *know*, *chicken* respectively, the product, namely the phraseme itself, is an Italian innovation.

2.5 Pragmatic Anglicisms

Without specifically referring to any particular donor or recipient language, Treffers-Daller (2010: 30) defines "pragmatic borrowing" as "the borrowing of a discourse function of a particular syntactic form from another language." Andersen (2014: 18) provides a more detailed definition, stating that "[p]ragmatically borrowed items carry signals about speaker attitudes, the speech act performed, discourse structure, information state, politeness, etc." For instance, the Anglicism *spending review* tends to be consciously used in the Italian political context, instead of the native equivalent *revisione della spesa pubblica*, to mitigate – by means of a euphemistic guild-the-pill strategy – the fact that, almost certainly, it implies cutbacks on expenses, thus the actual dismissal of employees.

The categories of pragmatic borrowing in general and pragmatic Anglicisms in particular allow contact linguists to move beyond the traditional dichotomy between necessary (motivated by need) and luxury (motivated by prestige) borrowing (Onysko and Winter-Froemel, 2011); in fact, according to a more recent taxonomy devised by Winter-Froemel and Onysko (2012), borrowings are divided into catachrestic (bearing informativeness, in the absence of a native semantic equivalent) and non-catachrestic (marked lexical choices, coexisting with a native semantic equivalent). It is within this latter category that pragmatic Anglicisms are located (see Andersen et al., 2017). Indeed, as stated by Winter-Froemel and Onysko (2012: 61), "[i]t is the existence of other semantically-close equivalents in a language that inspires pragmatic markedness effects [⋯]."

In other words, pragmatic Anglicisms are Anglicisms that are borrowed by a recipient language neither for reasons of prestige nor pressing need but because they are endowed with (or develop) an intrinsic pragmatic salience as they might – and often do – co-habit with native semantic equivalents. It is within this wide category that, in some cases, the linguist may detect pragmatic Anglicisms which perform one or more illocutionary acts, as devised by Searle (1975: 354-361, 1976: 10-16; see section 2.7).

2.6 Pragmatic Salience

The term "pragmatic salience" was first used by Errington (1985: 294). More precisely, "[p]ragmatic salience refers to the level of awareness of the social significance of the choice of a linguistic element" (Brown, 1990: 99), "[···] a property imposed by the speaker as a means of directing attention to particular aspects of discourse [···]", also referred to as ""speaker-determined" salience" (Næss, 2011: 322) or "pragmatic markedness" (Winter-Froemel and Onysko, 2012: 61). The choice of a certain linguistic element determined by the speaker may be revealed by the illocutionary act intended to be performed, thus imposing the speaker's will on the listener. In this article, the overarching meaning of pragmatic salience is restricted to this particular aspect.

2.7 Illocutionary Acts

After observing that, following Searle's (1975, 1976) interpretation, the terms "speech act" and "illocutionary act" are now often used interchangeably in the literature, a summary of Searle's (1975: 354-361) taxonomy of illocutionary acts is necessary in order to investigate the pragmatic function – and therefore salience – of each false phraseological Anglicism in Italian, which may be placed in one or more of the following categories:

- "representatives [···] commit the speaker [···] to the truth of the expressed proposition", e.g. suggesting, putting forward, stating, boasting, complaining, concluding, deducing;

- "directives [···] are attempts [···] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something", e.g. ordering, commanding, requesting, asking, questioning, begging, pleading, praying, entreating, inviting, permitting, advising;

- "commissives [···] commit the speaker [···] to some future course of action", e.g. promising;

- "expressives [···] express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content", e.g. thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, deploring, welcoming;

- "declarations [···] bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed", e.g. appointing, nominating, declaring, marrying, firing, resigning.

3. Methods and Materials

The methodology adopted is meant to quantify and mostly qualify false phraseological Anglicisms used pragmatically *sensu stricto*, i.e. being able to perform illocutionary acts. However, due to the fact that false phraseological Anglicisms in Italian are quantitatively limited, if not marginal – even more than 'real' phraseological Anglicisms per se (see section 1) – a qualitative approach must be favored in order to highlight their capability of performing illocutionary acts.

First, Italian monolingual dictionaries were used to confirm the absence of *fly down* and *I know my chickens* from lexicographic sources, thus highlighting their novelty. In contrast, in order to demonstrate that the false phraseological Anglicisms under analysis are in fact detectable in usage, illocutionary instances were gathered by exploring Italian press articles extracted from the archives of the three best-selling Italian newspapers, i.e. *Corriere della Sera* (*CS*), *La Repubblica* (*LR*) and *La Stampa* (*LS*), as well as material from a web-based corpus of Italian, *itTenTen*. In addition, English monolingual dictionaries, dictionaries of English idioms and slang, corpora of the English language and a web-based corpus of English, *enTenTen*, were investigated in order to establish the 'falseness' of the two phraseological Anglicisms considered. In spite of looking English, the fact that they are not recorded in lexicographic sources and corpora implies that they are neither part of the lexical inventory of English nor in usage. Finally, Italian-English bilingual dictionaries and

dictionaries of Italian idioms were considered to determine whether similar phraseological units already exist in Italian.[11]

A key notion in this study is pragmatic salience, a concept typically related to speech (see section 2.6). Indeed, both genuine phraseological Anglicisms and false phraseological Anglicisms are more likely to be uttered and/or heard – than written and/or read – in present-day Italian, which renders them phenomena pertinent to orality. Consequently, such assumptions raise the question as to why the analysis relies on newspaper archives and web-based corpora instead of spoken corpora. On the one hand, despite the fact that Italian is missing a large, well-balanced corpus of general language similar to the *BNC* or the *COCA*, instances of false phraseological Anglicisms used pragmatically are retrieved in Italian press articles because "newspapers employ a variety of text types or genres" (Jucker, 1992: 3), thus also displaying features similar to spoken language, where pragmatic features, including illocutionary acts, are apparent. On the other hand, the reliability of web-based corpora for the analysis of oral phenomena is granted by the fact that they include "[⋯] data where people write in a speech-like fashion, without the constraints of ordinary written production [⋯]. This is the case for both chat- and sms-data, and to a certain degree e-mail text" (Bick, 2010: 721). Yet, regardless of their size, it is predictable that web-based corpora are more apt than newspaper archives to investigate phenomena pertinent to orality. Thus, in the absence of a large-scale spoken corpus of Italian, newspaper and web-based corpora are acceptable substitutes.

After confirming the 'false' status of the two phraseological Anglicisms under scrutiny and showing that they are direct translations into English of genuine Italian phrases, the analysis is intended to corroborate the following hypotheses: 1) the phrases are able to perform illocutionary acts in Italian, thus being characterized by pragmatic salience; 2) they represent a rather recent phenomenon, being attested only around the turn of the millennium; 3) they have a range of acceptable 'real' English translation equivalents in addition to those recorded in dictionaries of the English language, namely *fly low* and *to know one's onions* respectively; 4) since they have semantic equivalents in

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[11] The entire reference material, including dictionaries, newspaper archives and corpora, used to carry out the analysis of false phraseological Anglicisms and attest to their pragmatic salience is listed in subsections 3.1 to 3.3.

Italian, they possess a higher degree of pragmatic salience when uttered in "pseudo-English" (Gottlieb and Furiassi, 2015: 18).

3.1 Lexicographic Sources

As far as the Italian language is concerned, the monolingual dictionaries considered for the analysis are *Vocabolario della lingua italiana* (*Devoto-Oli*), *Grande dizionario italiano* (*Gabrielli*), *Grande dizionario italiano dell'uso* (*GDU*), *Il Vocabolario Treccani* (*Treccani*) and *Vocabolario della lingua italiana* (*Zingarelli*). A dictionary of Italian idioms, Quartu (2012), was also consulted. As for English, the dictionaries consulted were *Collins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged* (*CED*), *Macmillan Dictionary Online* (*MDO*), *Webster's Third New International Dictionary Unabridged* (*Merriam-Webster*), *The Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), *Random House Dictionary* (*Random House*) and *Urban Dictionary*. Dictionaries of idioms and slang were also examined, including Ayto (2009), Barrère and Leland (1897), *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (*CIDI*), Cowie et al. (1983), Dolgopolov (2010), Gulland and Hinds-Howell (2002), Heacock (2003), Partridge (1968, 1984), Sinclair (2012) and Spears (1988). Finally, the following Italian-English bilingual dictionaries were taken into account: *Grande dizionario di inglese* (*Hazon*), *Il dizionario inglese-italiano italiano inglese* (*Oxford-Paravia*), *Grande dizionario inglese* (*Picchi*) and *Dizionario English-Italian Italiano-Inglese* (*Sansoni*).

3.2 Italian Newspaper Archives

The online Italian newspaper archives investigated are *La Stampa* (*LS*), including articles published from 1867 to 2005, *La Repubblica* (*LR*), including articles published from 1984 to the present, and *Corriere della Sera* (*CS*), including articles published from 1876 to the present. Although only raw frequencies are indicated, as false phraseological Anglicisms used as illocutionary acts are statistically negligible, it is noteworthy to mention that neither *LS* nor *CS* provide users with the total number of tokens included in each archive. However, as far as *LR* is concerned, although the number of tokens is not provided, an approximate figure can be determined: if the number of tokens in the *La Repubblica corpus*, i.e. about 380,000,000, is divided by 17 (1984-2000), i.e. the years included in the *La Repubblica*

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corpus, and then multiplied by 33 (1984-2016), i.e. the years included in the *La Repubblica archive*, the result is about 738,000,000 tokens (see AUTHOR, 2010: 127).

3.3 Web-based Corpora

The Italian and English corpora considered for the analysis are *itTenTen* and *enTenTen* respectively; both are available through *Sketch Engine*. The *itTenTen* is a tokenized and lemmatized corpus of web-crawled texts gathered in 2010, containing almost 2.6 billion words; the *enTenTen*, compiled in 2013, is a tagged corpus which includes almost 20 billion words.

4. Results and Discussion

The 'falseness' of *fly down* and *I know my chickens* is confirmed by the fact that the former is only found with a conspicuously different meaning in the English corpora analyzed, while the latter is absent: on the one hand, although there are 22 occurrences of *fly down* in the *BNC* and 192 occurrences in the *COCA*, *fly down* is always used literally in English with one of the following meanings: 'to go by plane towards a destination', 'decrease height/altitude when flying' or, somehow more figuratively, 'to move downward (the stairs, the street, etc.) very quickly'; on the other hand, *I know my chickens* displays zero hits in both the *BNC* and the *COCA* – in order not to ignore any possible hit, both the *BNC* and the *COCA* were searched by inserting all the following strings: *know my chicken/s*, *know your chicken/s*, *knows his/her/its chicken/s*, *know our chicken/s* and *know their chicken/s*.

However, it seems that the false phraseological Anglicisms *fly down* and *I know my chickens* may be even considered cases of "reborrowing of false Anglicisms," that is, lexical innovations "reborrowed by real English from pseudo-English" (AUTHOR, 2010: 70-71), since they are also found in the *Urban Dictionary* – despite its questionable academic authoritativeness. On the one hand, the *Urban Dictionary* dates *fly-down* to 2007 and defines it as: "[a] person who thinks their [sic] fly with the latest gadget/music, there would be no problem with it apart from this person is about 6 months late and the gadget he/she was showing off about is proberbly [sic] on sale by now and the music is SO last year that nobody wants to hear it." This definition corresponds exactly with the pragmatic uses of *fly*

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down in Italian (see section 4.1). On the other hand, the *Urban Dictionary* attests *I know my chickens* in 2009 and, despite signaling that it "comes from an Italian phrase," provides the following definition: "when someone knows a group of people really well like a mother knows her children."[12] It is also worth mentioning that *Cibo Matto*, a New York City-based band formed in 1994 by two Japanese women, Yuka Honda and Miho Hator, included a song entitled *Know your chicken* in their 1996 album *Viva! La Woman*.

4.1 *fly down*

Apparently, *fly down* is the direct translation into English of the Italian phrase *volare basso*, En. 'fly low';[13] in fact, the *OED*, which dates *to fly low* to 1837, defines it as "to avoid notoriety".[14] More specifically, the *Devoto-Oli* defines *volare basso* as "procedere con cautela e senza eccessive ambizioni", En. 'to proceed carefully and without excessive ambitions', and the *Gabrielli* as "essere privi di ambizioni", En. 'to have no ambition'.

In line with the lexicographic sources investigated, both phrases, *volare basso* and *fly low*, can be used idiomatically in their respective language of origin. However, it is worth noticing that, in the 10 occurrences retrieved in the *BNC* and the 47 instances found in the *COCA*, *fly low* literally means 'to fly at not-too-high an altitude', for instance referring to the

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[12] The fact that the two false phraseological Anglicisms under analysis are found in the *Urban Dictionary* – whose authoritativeness may, alas, be arguable from a purely linguistic viewpoint – signals that pseudo-English has started to permeate 'real' English due to key contemporary phenomena such as internationalization and globalization, where the English language, at times variously manipulated by non-native speakers, plays a crucial role.

[13] When coining the false phraseological Anglicism *fly down*, Italian speakers, unaware of the difference between the adverbs *down* and *low* in English, erroneously use En. *down*, It. *giù*, in its directional meaning "in basso", "verso il basso", "sotto" (*GDU*), instead of En. *low*, It. *basso*, in its locative meaning "in posizione non elevata rispetto al suolo" (*GDU*). Moreover, according to Corbolante (2017), the coinage and spread of the phrase *fly down* may be attributed to a character played by the comedian Enzo Braschi in the variety show *DRIVE IN*, broadcast on Italian television between 1983 and 1988. However, it is quite unusual that such an informal catchphrase linked to a TV show which was aired more than three decades ago is still used nowadays.

[14] Also Partridge (1968: 259, 1984: 413) records *fly low*, defining it as "[t]o be modest and retiring" and even "to hide from justice" (Partridge, 1984: 413); *fly low* is defined by Dolgopolov (2010: 123) as "seek to avoid drawing attention to oneself" and by Barrère and Leland (1897: 377) as "to evade observation, to keep quiet".

trajectory of a flying vehicle, e.g. an airplane, or an object that can be thrown, e.g. a ball. Therefore, contrary to the information retrieved in the *OED*, *fly low* is never used to mean "to avoid notoriety" in the English corpora analyzed.

Even the actual use of *fly down* in Italian newspapers (see examples 1 to 3 below) and *itTenTen*, the Italian web-based corpus examined (see examples 4 to 29 below), at times differs from the definitions of *volare basso* provided in Italian dictionaries, thus revealing that *fly down* and *volare basso* are not absolute synonyms but only near-synonyms in Italian. Indeed, in addition to the idiomatic *fly low* (*OED*), other plausible 'real' English translation equivalents may render the several semantic nuances of *fly down*: *Calm down!*, *Come back/down to earth!* (*CALD*, *MDO*), *Come off it!*, *Don't exaggerate!*, *Don't give me that!*, *Don't show off!*, *Get real!*, *Leave it out!*, *to avoid drawing attention* (Dolgopolov, 2010: 123), *to avoid notoriety* (*OED*), *to keep a low profile*, *to keep quiet* (Barrère and Leland, 1897: 377), *Who do you think you are?!* and *You must be joking!*[15]

As for Italian newspaper archives, *fly down* is used as an illocutionary act only once out of three hits in *CS* and twice out of five hits in *LR* – no occurrences of *fly down* are found in *LS*, as shown in examples 1 to 3 (bold type added), displayed according to their date of attestation. However, more precisely, examples 1 and 3, both extracted from *LR*, should not be considered proper illocutionary acts as they respectively display a metalinguistic (explicitly marked by *sta per*, En. 'means') and a citational use:[16]

(1)   **Fly down** sta per "datti una regolata" [⋯]. (*LR* October 19th 2003)
En. **Fly down** means "calm down" [⋯].

(2)   [⋯] «bello, **fly down**!» [⋯] (*CS* June 25th 2007)
En. [⋯] «man, **fly low**!» [⋯]

(3)   [⋯] un grande aereo in cartone con la scritta: "Austerity **fly down**". (*LR* October 11th 2013)
En. [⋯] a big cardboard airplane with the writing: "Austerity **fly low**".

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[15] Translations without a source quoted are to be intended as suggested by the author.

[16] Non-illocutionary uses of *fly down* in both Italian newspaper archives and the web-based corpus considered, *itTenTen*, include, among others, its attestation as part of proper nouns, e.g. *Fly Down Merlin*, the name of an (unknown) Italian rock band.

In the Italian web-based corpus investigated, i.e. *itTenTen*, *fly down* was used as an illocutionary act 26 times out of 43 hits, as shown in examples 4 to 29 (bold type added) – examples are listed in chronological order, mirroring the *Sketch Engine* query output. In fact, it is worth mentioning that examples 10 and 18 imply speaker attribution (explicitly marked by *come si dice*, En. 'as they say', and *come diceva*, En. 'as he used to say', respectively), whereas example 12 entails a metalinguistic use (explicitly marked by *direi*, En. 'I would say'):

(4)   a lotito **fly down**!!! l'aquila ha appena preso il volo per cadere poi in basso […].
        En. to lotito [Italian football personality] **fly low**!!! the eagle has just taken off only to fall down […].

(5)   Ora le cose son cambiate per fortuna, e speriamo continuino sulla stessa strada, però ragazzi per ora, **fly down** !!
        En. Now things have changed, fortunately, and we hope they'll continue the same way, but now guys, **fly low** !!

(6)   Molto sarà anche farina del tuo sacco, del tuo impegno, della tua professionalità, ma non sentirti Gesù Cristo··· Piedi per terra, **fly down**, un po di umiltà ti farebbe bene···
        En. Much of this may be your own idea, commitment, professionality, but don't think you're Jesus Christ··· Keep your feet on the ground, **fly low**, a pinch of modesty would do you good···

(7)   mi sa ke quello ke vuol esser il dottor house della situazione 6 te, quindi **fly down** e rispetta ke io rispetto···
        En. i think that the 1 who wants to be the Dr. House of the situation is u, so **fly low** and show respect and I will show it to u···

(8)   a me piace la ventura ma··· **fly down**! e cioè tiratela meno che ultimamente stai esagerando!
        En. I like ventura [Italian TV personality] but··· **fly low**! and don't show off so much because this has been going too far lately!

(9)   Ma il sentimento, in questo caso, è il mio, mica del giudice··· ··· te stai a confonne··· **fly down**···
        En. But the feeling, in this case, is mine not the judge's··· ··· you're getting it wrong··· **fly low**···

(10)   ma il messaggio non era il boicottaggio ma "**fly down**", come si dice a roma.
        En. but the message was not to boycott but "**fly low**", as they say in rome.

(11) Rileggiteli più volte, e impara, caro sig. 2 lauree e mezzo che vanta la sua cultura e epiteta gli altri di saccenza. **Fly down**, please!

En. Read them again and again, and learn, dear mr. 2 and a half degrees who shows off his culture and calls others presumptuous. **Fly low**, please!

(12) L'insegnante di canto non la trovo cosi eccezionale come lei pensa di essere, ed io come persona che vive di musica e per la musica gli direi prima di tutto **Fly down**, ossia umilta perche una persona cosi vorrei sapere cosa possa insegnare se non l'arroganza [⋯].

En. I don't believe that the vocal coach is as exceptional as she thinks she is, and being myself someone who lives on music and for music I'd tell her first of all **Fly low**, that is be humble as I wonder what a person of this kind could teach if not arrogance [⋯].

(13) Ma chi crede di essere? **Fly down**!!!!!

En. But who does he think he is? **Fly low**!!!!!

(14) **Fly down** castigatore L'unica cosa su cui puoi avere ragione è il sondaggio per il nome sulla prossima MiTo, però credo che nessuno si sia suicidato perchè avrebbe preferito chiamarla Furiosa!!!

En. **Fly low** punisher The only thing you may be right about is the survey on the name of the next MiTo, but I don't think anybody ever killed themselves because they'd rather call it Furiosa!!!

(15) Non lodarti tanto, **fly down**!

En. Don't show off, **fly low**!

(16) QUINDI RINGRAZIAMI PER AVERTI DATO LA VITA!!! **fly down** ciccio!!!!!!

En. SO THANK ME FOR GIVING YOU LIFE!!! **fly low** man!!!!!!

(17) [⋯] nn ho la presunzione ke hai tu nel dire le cose⋯ **fly down**⋯

En. [⋯] I'm not as arrogant as u are when u say certain things⋯ **fly low**⋯

(18) Come diceva sempre il mio capo di qualche anno fa, "**fly down**".

En. As my former boss used to say, "**fly low**".

(19) Io qui scrivo quello che voglio specie se non offendo nessuno. quindi **fly down**⋯

En. I write whatever I want here especially if I'm not offending anybody. so **fly low**⋯

(20) Torna normale. **Fly down**… Piedi per terra. Non tre metri sopra il cielo… Più si sale in alto… e più ci si fa male quando si cade!

En. pull yourself together. **Fly low**… Keep your feet on the ground. Not three meters above the sky⋯ the higher you climb⋯ and the harder you fall!

(21) oh ma chi vi credete di essere?? **fly down**!

En. hey who do you think you are?? **fly low**!

(22) Mi raccomando Gohan··· fai cancellare anche me ora··· **fly down**!

En. Please Gohan··· have me banned as well now··· **fly low**!

(23) Vorrei sapere anche chi sei a questo punto, non ci siamo mai scritti, ci conosciamo almeno alla lontana? Ma per favore. **FLY DOWN**, SHUT UP & FUCK OFF!

En. I wish I knew who you were by now, we've never written, do we know each other at all? Please. **FLY LOW**, SHUT UP & FUCK OFF!

(24) Poi scriverò le mie emozioni··· per così poco··· ebbene si!!!! STAY WELL, STAY **FLY DOWN**

En. Then I will write down my emotions··· for so little··· well, yes!!!! STAY WELL, STAY **FLY LOW**

(25) Va bene che è Ecclestone, ma non è che la gente deve baciargli i piedi e scostarsi quando lui arriva. **Fly down** Bernie!!!!!

En. Alright, he's Ecclestone [Formula One personality], but people can't kiss his feet all the time and move out of the way when he arrives. **Fly low** Bernie!!!!!

(26) **Fly down** Baby!!! Io c'ho io c'ho··· via ora vai da mamma a mangiare il panino con la marmellata che è l'ora della merenda su···

En. **Fly low** Baby!!! I've got this, I've got that··· go to your mommy now and have a jelly sandwich as it's snack time···

(27) Cantù: grandi credenziali, sintassi (o prosopopea?) cestistica, partita orribile. **Fly down**, volare bassi.

En. Cantù [Italian basketball team]: great credentials, basketball syntax (or pomposity?), awful game. **Fly low**, don't show off.

(28) Ma poi il ritmo "incalza", ma lei è troppo "teatrale"··· **fly down** baby··· ma, a sorpresa, meno soporifera di altre.

En. But then the rhythm "is more and more pressing", but she's too "dramatic"··· **fly low** baby··· but, surprisingly, less boring than others.

(29) '**Fly down**, bello, non ti seguo più!'

En. '**Fly low**, handsome, I'm not following you anymore!'

Whereas in examples 2 to 5, 7, 9 to 11, 13 to 19 and 21 to 29 the speaker/writer takes for granted that the listener/reader is acquainted with the meaning of *fly down*, in examples 1, 6, 8, 12 and 20 *fly down* is glossed in order to provide an explanation to Italians who are not familiar with this phrase, thus demonstrating that *fly down* in Italian, like *fly*

low in English, belongs to "specific slang", namely "language that speakers use to show their belonging to a group and establish solidarity or intimacy with the other group members" (Mattiello, 2005: 15). It is also interesting to notice that, in example 23, *fly down* is followed by two authentically English illocutionary acts, namely *shut up* and *fuck off* – a fact that possibly attests the speaker's higher proficiency in English – and that, in example 24, a morphosyntactic change occurs, as *stay* precedes *fly down*, used in this context with an (unusual) adverbial function.

English corpus data extracted from the *enTenTen* returned 4,555 hits for the phrase *fly down* with lowercase <f> and 147 hits with uppercase <F>, totaling 4,702 occurrences. Since it would be time consuming to manually check all such occurrences, speculating on the fact that *fly down* would be usually placed at the beginning of an utterance when representing a command, the manual check was restricted to the 147 instances of *fly down* with uppercase <F>. Although this method, based on just a sample, may seem quite impressionistic – albeit sufficiently random to show the various functions of the phraseme in English, in none of these cases does *fly down* appear to be used in the idiomatic way in which Italian speakers would employ it, thus confirming that it is indeed a false phraseological Anglicism characterized by semantic distance from its counterpart in the English-speaking world. Some self-explanatory non-idiomatic uses of *fly down* extracted from the *enTenTen* are shown in examples 30 to 32 (bold type added):

(30) **Fly down** to Santo Domingo one day; fly home the next, or enjoy the beautiful vacation spot.

(31) **Fly down** and take a tour and if you make a decision to buy the vacation is on us.

(32) **Fly down** the highway, we're doin' it our way.

Consequently, as shown by most of the occurrences displayed – excluding citations, speaker attributions, metalinguistic uses and when it appears as or part of a proper noun (see footnote 16), the false phraseological Anglicism *fly down*, which is only employed with idiomatic shades in Italian newspaper archives and the web-based corpus *itTenTen*, is used pragmatically *sensu stricto*, as an instance of a "directive" illocutionary act, namely "commanding" (Searle, 1975: 355).

4.2 *I know my chickens*

The Italian false phraseological Anglicism *I know my chickens* is the literal English translation of the genuine Italian saying *conosco i miei polli*. Indeed, the *GDU*, which marks *conoscere i propri polli*, En. 'to know one's chickens', as typical of common usage, defines it as "sapere con chi si ha a che fare", En. 'to know who someone is dealing with' – exactly the same definition provided in the *Zingarelli*; Quartu (2012) also includes the colloquial phrase *conoscere i propri polli* and provides the following definition: "[c]onoscere bene il carattere di una persona, gli aspetti di una situazione, e perciò riuscire a prevederne il comportamento, le azioni o lo sviluppo", En. 'to know well the nature of a person, the aspects of a situation, and therefore be able to predict the person's behavior and actions, or how a situation develops'.[17]

In addition, the Italian-English bilingual dictionary *Picchi* indicates *to know one's onions* as the English translation equivalent of the Italian saying "conoscere i propri polli" in its idiomatic sense. With the notable exception of the *Merriam-Webster*, most English dictionaries indeed attest this phrase: Ayto (2009) includes *know your onions* as the lemma, marks it as informal and defines it as "be fully knowledgeable about something"; the *CED* recognizes that *know one's onions* is typical of British English slang, meaning "to be fully acquainted with a subject"; Cowie et al. (1983) record *know one's onions/stuff*, indicate that it is as informal idiom and explain it as "understand the nature of one's work, activities or studies and be competent in the performance of them"; Gulland and Hinds-Howell (2002) record *to know one's onions* with the meaning of "to know one's job, to be extremely capable"; the *OED* dates *to know one's onions* to 1908 and, despite acknowledging its unknown origin, defines it as "to be experienced in or knowledgeable about something"; the *Random House* marks *to know one's onions* as slang and defines it as "to know one's subject or business thoroughly; be capable or proficient." All in all, there appears to be a

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[17] In order to describe the etymology of *conoscere i propri polli*, Quartu (2012) adds that "[u]n tempo i polli venivano lasciati razzolare anche per le strade. Ogni proprietario si premurava per questo di contraddistinguere i suoi legando loro a una zampa una strisciolina di stoffa colorata. Tanto che il detto intero è "conoscere i propri polli alla calzetta." En. '[i]n the past chickens were left to scratch about also in the streets. For this reason, every owner made sure they could recognize their own by tying a little colored strip made of fabric to the chicken's foot, to the point that the full saying is "to know one's chicken by the sock."

difference between *conoscere i propri polli*, which can be used to refer to both persons and (abstract or concrete) objects in Italian, and *to know one's onions*, which usually refers to abstract objects in English.

According to the definitions provided in the dictionaries consulted, both the Italian and the English phrases, *conosco i miei polli* and *I know my onions*, are used idiomatically in their respective language of origin. However, it is worth mentioning that among the six occurrences retrieved in the *BNC*, examples 33 to 38, and the one instance found in the *COCA*, example 39, *to know one's onions* means "to be experienced in or knowledgeable about something" (*OED*) only in three cases, namely example 35 (*BNC*), 37 (*BNC*) and 39 (*COCA*). In all the other occurrences, examples 33, 34, 36 and 38, *to know one's onions*, although undoubtedly implying a certain ironic nuance based on the literal meaning of *onions*, is found in contexts in which the main topic is in fact onions. In particular, example 38 is a case of ludic use that can be classified as wordplay (Knospe et al., 2016: 1).

In order not to exclude any possible hit, both the *BNC* and the *COCA* were searched by inserting all the following strings: *know my onion/s*, *know your onion/s*, *knows his/her/its onion/s*, *know our onion/s* and *know their onion/s*. The English phrase at issue was indeed found in the *BNC* and the *COCA* in the following forms: as *know your onions*, twice in the *BNC* (example 33 and 34), as *knows his onions*, twice in the *BNC* (examples 35 and 36) and once in the *COCA* (example 39), and as *knows her onions*, twice in the *BNC* (examples 37 and 38). All in all, except for example 34, in none of the other occurrences is the phraseme used as an illocutionary act.

(33)   When you **know your onions** you can avoid the gap between the last of the main crop and the new harvest. (*BNC*)

(34)   **KNOW YOUR ONIONS**. The old catalogues are full of testimonials from growers. (*BNC*)

(35)   "He **knows his onions**, Stephen? Your dad, eh?" (*BNC*)

(36)   Meet a man who **knows his onions**. […] Earlier this year he took third prize for his leeks in the British Championship […]. (*BNC*)

(37)   There's little doubt that where public relations is concerned this Lady […] surely **knows her onions** […]. (*BNC*)

(38)   French student […] **knows her onions** after spending a week on work experience at Asda's superstore in Wallasey. (*BNC*)

(39) There are so many teaching methods and the teacher that **knows his onions** should be able to device [sic] appropriate teaching method [sic] to carry along his students. (*COCA*)

As for Italian newspaper archives, *I know my chickens*, also searched as *I know my chicken*, It. 'conosco il mio pollo', without the plural -*s*, is used as an illocutionary act four times out of seven hits, two in *CS* and two in *LR* – no occurrences of *I know my chickens* are found in *LS* – as shown in examples 40, 41, 43 and 44 (bold type added), displayed in chronological order. Examples 42 and 46 are in fact cases of speaker attribution, while example 45 is a citation. In addition, it is interesting to notice that in four occurrences (examples 40 to 43) *I know my chicken/s* appears next to the Italian phrase *conosco il mio pollo/conosco i miei polli*, possibly as an explanatory device:[18]

(40) «**I know my chicken**», conosco il mio pollo [⋯]. (*CS* August 3rd 1984)
En. «**I know my chicken**», conosco il mio pollo [⋯].

(41) Però conosco i miei polli, **I know my chicken** [⋯]. (*LR* September 8th 2000)
En. But conosco i miei polli, **I know my chicken** [⋯].

(42) Conosco i miei polli, dirà Renzo Tramaglino. **I know my chickens**, tradurrà l'anglofono. (*LR* January 31st 2004)
En. Conosco i miei polli, Renzo Tramaglino [Italian literary character] would say. **I know my chickens**, the Anglophone would translate.

(43) Come si dice? *I know my chicken*, conosco i miei polli. (*CS* May 10th 2007)
En. How do you say it? *I know my chicken*, conosco i miei polli.

(44) Questo clima di fair play non durerà, **I know my chicken**, ma io non reagirò. (*LR* February 29th 2008)
En. This fair-play situation won't last, **I know my chicken**, but I won't react.

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[18] The positioning of this pseudo-English phraseme in translational contexts might be explained by the fact that newspapers tend to conform to their popularizing function and therefore explicit the meaning of certain phrases that are considered to be obscure for the majority of readers – a matter that does not seem pressing in the web-based corpus analyzed, where the phraseme is glossed only once between parentheses (see example 49). Probably, the material included in the *itTenTen* is conceived by/for more dynamic, cosmopolitan users, who assume that their audience understands pseudo-English phraseology without further explanations or glosses.

(45) Veltroni ha replicato: «**I know my chicken**… quante volte ha detto una cosa e poi non ha fatto niente». (*CS* April 9th 2008)

En. Veltroni [Italian politician] replied: «**I know my chicken**… how often has he said something and then never done anything»

(46) ***I know my chicken***, avrebbe detto quel tale. (*CS* August 3rd 2010)

En. ***I know my chicken***, someone would say.

In the Italian corpus investigated, *itTenTen*, *I know my chickens* was searched both with uppercase <I> and lowercase <i>, thus leading to the retrieval of five instances (bold type added) – two with uppercase <I> (examples 47 and 48) and three with lowercase <i> (examples 49 to 51). In four occurrences (examples 47 to 49 and 51) the phrase is used as an illocutionary act; in one occurrence (example 50) a metalinguistic use of *I know my chickens* is apparent:

(47) Con la cognata ci puoi anche parlare. Con il seguente risultato (**I know my chickens**): siccome la tua autorità comunque non la riconosce, evidentemente non ci arriva, comincerà a chiederti l'autorizzazione per qualunque minuzia solo per farti incazzare e farti sentire una cretina.

En. A sister-in-law is someone you could talk to. With the following result (**I know my chickens**): as your authority does not recognize hers anyway, apparently she doesn't get it, she'll start asking your permission for any trivial thing just to drive you mad and make you feel stupid.

(48) E il più ingenuo e indaffarato dei Supereroi verrà (cosa piuttosto prevedibile, **I know my chickens**, ormai) scagionato dalle accuse.

En. And the most naïve and busiest of Superheroes (rather predictable by now, **I know my chickens**) will be acquitted.

(49) […] siccome **i know my chickens** (conosco i miei polli), so che di solito Raiuno "sfora" sugli orari e ho lasciato la cassetta libera di andare anche dopo la fine del film […].

En. […] since **i know my chickens** (conosco i miei polli), I know that Raiuno [Italian state TV channel] usually overruns the allotted time so I left the tape running even after the end of the movie […].

(50) […] è vero che ci sono proverbi italiani che sono in uso anche nell'idioma inglese … "as **i know my chickens**"?

En. [⋯] is it true that there are Italian sayings that are also used in English ⋯ "as **i know my chickens**"?

(51) Quanto vorrei pagartela, quella cena, ma **i know my chickens**, e in particolare QUEL chicken, e non ha nessuna intenzione di abbandonare il ricco pollaio che si è creato.
En. How I would like to buy you dinner but **i know my chickens**, and THAT chicken in particular, and he has no intention of leaving that luxurious henhouse that he built.

Moreover, *I know my chicken* was also searched in the *itTenTen* without the plural *-s*, displaying 11 occurrences with uppercase <I> – no instances of lower case <i> were retrieved, as shown in examples 52 to 62 (bold type added). In eight cases (examples 53 to 55 and 58 to 62) the phraseme is used as an illocutionary act; in two cases (examples 52 and 57) metalinguistic uses are evident; one occurrence (example 56) may be considered an instance of speaker attribution or even staged code-switching (Moore, 2002: 289):

(52) Anche gli i[n]glesi hanno i loro proverbi ma purtroppo: "**I know my chicken**" non esiste, ho provato ad usarlo in ufficio e dopo ho dovuto spiegare il significato.
En. The English have their sayings too but unfortunately: "**I know my chicken**" doesn't exist, I tried using it at the office and then I had to explain the meaning.

(53) Poi, io il furto e l'incendio le ho sempre fatte, e ho avuto un paio d'anni dove si sono ripagate abbondantemente... **I know my chicken** :-)
En. Then, I've always bought the fire and theft policy, and in a couple of years it paid back well⋯ **I know my chicken** :-)

(54) Come dire: "**I know my chicken**". Ovvero smettiamola con 'sti complessi di inferiorità.
En. How can I say it: "**I know my chicken**". In other words let's give up this inferiority complex.

(55) Domanda: accetterete di dire questa volta abbiamo sbagliato? Non penso proprio, perchè sono realista e "**I know my chicken**".
En. Question: shall we admit we were wrong this time? I really don't think so, because I'm being realistic and "**I know my chicken**".

(56) Poiché, come diceva quello che sapeva l'inglese, "**I know my chicken**" e le loro abitudini di lettura, io lo riporto qui nelle parti essenziali, sperando che l'autore non se ne adombri.

En. Since, as an English speaker used to say, "**I know my chicken**" and their reading habits, I'm reporting here the essential extracts, hoping that the author won't feel offended.

(57) Poi so anche **I know my chicken** ma credo lo puoi sapere solo te, Franca cosa significhi.

En. Then I also know **I know my chicken** but I believe that only you, Franca, can understand what it means.

(58) [⋯] "rinunciare alle nostre paghette?" «⋯ non pretendo» proseguì la docente ("**I know my chicken**") «che ale⋯ ali⋯ » (intendeva usare il termine forbito: "alieniate"; purtroppo, allappa la lingua) «cacciate i vostri soldi.

En. [⋯] "giving up our pocket money?" «⋯ I don't demand» the teacher went on ("**I know my chicken**") «that you ale⋯ ali⋯ » (she meant to use the formal term: "alienate"; unfortunately, it set her teeth on edge) «get your money out.

(59) Il fascismo di Gasparri (**I know my chicken**), oltre che nel suo passato e in certe sue idee del presente, qui sta tutto nel MODO insinuante, sleale e becero, oltre che idiota, di criticare Obama non accettandone l'elezione: [⋯].

En. Gasparri's [Italian politician] fascism (**I know my chicken**), besides being apparent in his past and in some of his present ideas, here lies in the insinuating, unfair, boorish, not to mention idiotic WAY of criticizing Obama and not accepting his election: [⋯].

(60) Persone rispettabilissime, se non fosse per quel piccolo "vizietto". So … **I know my chicken**!

En. Highly respectable people, if it wasn't for that tiny "habit". So … **I know my chicken**!

(61) Quando si era in tempi di guerra fredda e di democrazia cristiana, io andavo ad una scuola di sinistra, avevo una famiglia di sinistra, frequentavo gente di sinistra: **I know my chicken**.

En. During the cold war and the rule of the democrazia cristiana [Italian political party], I used to go to a left-wing school, I had a left-wing family, I hung out with left-wing people: **I know my chicken**.

(62) Benedetto XVI si rivolge con stile personale ai giovani che aspirano a diventare sacerdoti, in una lettera inviata nell'ambito della conclusione dell'Anno Sacerdotale e resa pubblica… **I know my chicken** se no…

En. In a letter published towards the end of the Year for Priests, Pope Benedict XVI turns in a personal fashion to young people who aim at becoming priests… **I know my chicken** otherwise…

Curiously, as anticipated, examples 50, 52 and 57 are in fact metalinguistic uses of *I know my chicken* in which the writer/speaker wonders whether this false phraseological Anglicism actually exists in English: the initial point made in this article, namely that *I know my chickens* is a false phraseological Anglicism in Italian, is indeed particularly well-rendered in example 52. Besides, in five cases – four in newspaper archives (examples 40 to 43) and one in the web-based corpus (example 49) – the authentic Italian phrases *conosco i miei polli* or *conosco il mio pollo* are provided immediately after *I know my chickens* or *I know my chicken* in order to explain their meaning to readers who are not familiar with it (see footnote 18). Precisely with regard to the meaning of *I know my chickens*, it is certainly a polysemous phrase in Italian: in addition to *to know one's onions* (*Garzanti*, *Hazon*, *OED*, *Oxford-Paravia*, *Picchi*), it may also be rendered with other plausible 'real' English translation equivalents: *I know the way they think*, *I know what I'm up against*, *I know what they can get up to* (*Hazon*), *I know what they're capable of*, *I know what they're like* (*Hazon*), *I know what they're up to*, *I know who I'm dealing with* (*Oxford-Paravia*) and *to know one's customers* (*Hazon*).[19]

Finally, English corpus data extracted from the *enTenTen* reveal that *I know my chickens* is used idiomatically, as an illocutionary act, only once out of six hits, as shown in example 63 (bold type added), a marked case which could be described as a humorous allusion to and "remotivation" (Nerlich and Clarke, 1988: 78) of the genuine English phraseme *I know my onions*, where a compositional interpretation is favored to the disadvantage of the conventional phraseological interpretation:

(63)   Well, **I know my chickens** – I always call my young players chickens […].

As demonstrated by the occurrences of *I know my chickens* in Italian newspaper archives and corpora, this false phraseological Anglicism is mostly used pragmatically as an instance of a "representative" illocutionary act, namely "stating" (Searle, 1975: 354).

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[19] Translations without a source quoted are to be intended as suggested by the author.

5. Conclusions

This section addresses the initial hypotheses, which seek to determine that false phraseological Anglicisms *sensu stricto* are a fairly recent phenomenon in Italian, that they are able to perform specific illocutionary acts, and that their degree of pragmatic salience is higher if compared to their Italian semantic equivalents. It also delves further into the linguistic and extra-linguistic motivations behind their coinage and spread in the Italian language.

Despite their reduced number and low quantitative impact, false phraseological Anglicisms used as pragmatic Anglicisms *sensu stricto* are indisputable evidence of present-day English influence on the Italian language. The analysis of the two items considered shows that their pragmatic salience is a phenomenon which has only recently affected the Italian language: *fly down* was first attested in Italian newspapers in 2003 (see section 4.1) and *I know my chicken/s*, with the exception of its first attestation in 1984, appears more often in the first decade of the 21st century (see section 4.2).

All in all, within the dynamics of language contact, the pragmatic Anglicization of Italian encompasses even pseudo-English phraseology: its idiomatic application seems to be a decisive factor in enhancing the likelihood of rendering pragmatic salience by representing illocutionary acts. If, in Sharp's (2007: 236) words, "English makes a message come across loud and clear", this is also true for pseudo-English phrasemes, which are able to adapt to the changing social, spatial and temporal dimensions of the Italian language.

Although these illocutionary idioms already exist in Italian, i.e. *vola basso* and *conosco i miei polli*, the increasingly frequent use of *fly down* and *I know my chickens* attested by the data gathered – obviously not excluding their present concurrence – marks a diachronic shift which seems to prove that they are more effective and more pragmatically salient when uttered in pseudo-English – the same effectiveness and pragmatic markedness characterize some 'real' pragmatic Anglicisms *sensu lato* in Dutch (Zenner and Van De Mieroop, 2017), Finnish (Peterson, 2017), German (Fiedler, 2017), Norwegian (Andersen, 2017) and Serbian (Mišić Ilić, 2017). Indeed, false phraseological Anglicisms do indicate that anything with American or British characteristics is perceived as prestigious; to a certain extent, they may be considered a byproduct of the massive influence that

American and British culture, which is regarded as modern, efficient and positively connoted, has had and continues to have on Italian via 'real' English, namely genuine Anglicisms, both phraseological and non-phraseological.

The reasons for the illocutionary use of false phraseological Anglicisms in Italian can be explained both linguistically and extra-linguistically, i.e. socially and psychologically. The structural reasons mainly converge upon the phonic effect that English-sounding words and phrases have, i.e. their pronunciation, although undeniably Italianized, catches the listener's attention, and their handiness, i.e. they are easy to use and mix within Italian sentences due to the lower degree of morphological and syntactic complexity of the English language if compared to Italian. Confirming that the nativization process undergone by English elements can be extremely creative, Burchfield (2001: vii-viii) affirms that "[⋯] elements of the English language are being adopted in a spectacular fashion [⋯]." In addition, false phraseological Anglicisms are straightforward and effective as they emphasize concepts through semantically rich formulas.

As far as non-structural reasons are concerned, a social explanation is provided by Wilkinson (1991: 52), who suggests that "[⋯] Europeans [⋯] will continue to acquire more English through their contacts with other Europeans than through contact with those for whom it is the mother-tongue." This is confirmed by Modiano (2007: 533), who states that "[⋯] mainland Europeans are claiming English, and in doing so are molding it into something new." Certainly, *fly down* and *I know my chickens* are not likely to be picked up by native speakers of English; however, they could be used by Italians or even Europeans with no problem whatsoever, just like non-native English speakers from Europe or elsewhere, for example, perfectly confidently use *ice bears* to refer to *polar bears* and still manage to be communicatively effective.

Another social explanation builds on the fact that false phraseological Anglicisms are created by Italian 'inventors' – with varying levels of proficiency in English (see section 1) – whose final aim is not accuracy but the impact they want to make on the audience: it may be speculated that the taste for the exotic, the charm of the foreign and the glamorous quirk of being creative and playing with language are the core motivations for the birth of false phraseological Anglicisms, which then become socially acceptable. In fact, Italian speakers – though possibly unconsciously – seem inclined to using false phraseological

Anglicisms in Italian as a way to feel closer to the contemporary international milieu in which they live.

Psychologically, the use of false phraseological Anglicisms seems to provide xenophilic Italians with the status, the authority and the allure they crave. Inevitably, such illusory assets turn into sheer liabilities once the audience becomes aware that they are in fact unpretentious *macaroni English*.

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