


Researching sex-related anglicisms in the Spanish digital press: Uses and functions

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ENG Abstract: Anglicism is one of the linguistic resources of taboo naming. Spanish people turn to English borrowings to talk about a wide range of sex-related topics, like sexual practices, homosexuality, prostitution or pornography, to name a few. As the presence of anglicised forms in discourse is not at random, it is the purpose of this article to gain an insight into the role that pure or non-adapted anglicisms perform in the Spanish digital press and, in this way, reveal their expressive and axiological values. The research methodology followed corresponds to the adoption of a “bottom-up” approach: first, linguistic data are collected; second, that data are classified, interpreted and documented in context; and third, some conclusions are reached from the analysis. The research carried out demonstrates that the pure anglicisms used to designate sex-related concepts, including the metaphorical ones, fulfil referential, textual and expressive functions: not only do they provide a concise and neutral alternative to the topic, but they also perform different X-phemistic functions, ranging from attenuation to offence, provocation or group identity.

Keywords: lexical anglicism; sexual taboo; X-phemism; digital press.

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. Key concepts: from euphemism to dysphemism. 3. Data and method. 4. Results. 5. Discussion. 5.1. Referential and textual functions. 5.2. Expressive functions. 6. Concluding remarks. References.

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1. Introduction

Sex is a major concern in most people's lives. Although a natural behaviour in humans, sex is beset with censorship and social condemnation and intrinsically linked to the forbidden, to the unmentionable, to the politically incorrect and therefore considered taboo. Sex is a multi-faceted phenomenon: it does not only apply to sexual activity or sexual organs; it is also present in illnesses (be them socially stigmatised or not) in which sex plays a part, like phimosis, syphilis or AIDS, to name a few, and is inevitably linked to certain physiological processes such as menstruation. Furthermore, the public interdiction that is associated to sex extends to non-heterosexual communities (male and female homosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, etc.), whose members are still viewed by many as “strange” members of society (Alcaide Lara, 2022), as well as to those involved in sex business (prostitution, pornographic movies, erotic video chats, etc.). Sexuality can therefore be considered a complex and far-reaching taboo that shapes human behaviour and social relations.

As can naturally be expected, the social interdiction surrounding sex is reflected on language. The power of the sexual taboo keeps language users from avoiding terms related to sex and sexuality; rather, it compels them to refer to the concepts themselves, no matter how obscene or embarrassing they may be. As Burrige (2004, p. 212) once put it, taboo “provides a fertile seedbed for words to flourish – and the more potent the taboo, the richer the growth”. Indeed, people turn to a wide variety of sex-related words and expressions that are regarded as shameful yet provoking, as sinful yet insinuating by different people in different contexts. In this sense, the sexual taboo activates different verbal strategies that allow us to refer to the forbidden concepts, either through attenuation (euphemism) or intensification (dysphemism) with the intention to preserve or violate social standards respectively.

The mechanisms used to verbalise sex-related topics belong to different language levels: phonetics, morphology, syntax, lexis and semantics (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018). At the lexical level, the use of borrowings from other languages, English in our case, in their different degrees of adaptation to the recipient language, is a rich source for sex-related vocabulary. In fact, Rodríguez González collected a total of 230

terms with an English origin in his thematic dictionaries of sex, *Diccionario gay-lésbico* (2008) and *Diccionario del sexo y el erotismo* (2011). It is also important to note that anglicised words and expressions do not appear in discourse at random; rather, as demonstrated in previous studies (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2017, 2018; Crespo-Fernández, 2021; Rodríguez González, 2008b, 2022), they respond to specific communicative intentions – mostly, although not exclusively, euphemistic and dysphemistic – in the communication surrounding sexual matters in European Spanish.

In the analysis of the relationship between anglicism and the sexual taboo, I depart from three main assumptions: first, anglicism plays a role in the vocabulary surrounding sex and sexuality in European Spanish; second, sex-related anglicised words and expressions perform a variety of pragmatic functions in the contexts in which they occur; and third, it is only by exploring the communicative context that we can have access to the intentions, beliefs and value-judgements that anglicised units transmit in real-life discourse. The objective of this study is therefore to gain an insight into the role that English borrowings that designate sexual concepts perform in Spanish digital press with a view to revealing their expressive values and communicative functions. This study seems to be justified since, to the best of my knowledge, no study so far has been specifically devoted to the use of sex-related anglicisms in the digital press. In this way, the present research adds to previous works on the topic of lexical anglicism in adult sex forums and explicitly sexual websites (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018; Crespo-Fernández, 2021) by introducing a new perspective on sexual anglicism in non-sexual publications like online newspapers. Furthermore, it complements research that has recently focused on the pragmatic functions and the effects of English borrowings in digital publications (González Cruz, 2023; Luján-García, 2021; Sánchez Fajardo, 2021, among others).

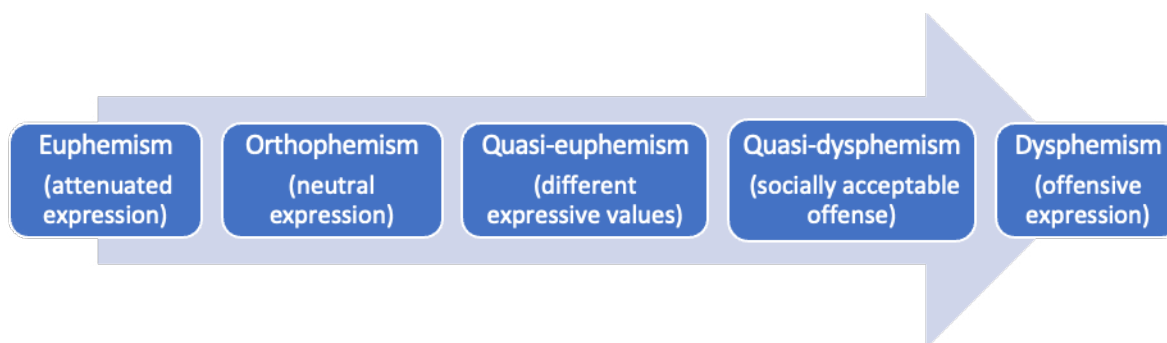
This study is structured as follows. After delimiting the key concepts in this study, the methodology and the data used in this research are described. The next two sections are devoted to the presentation and discussion of the results, which constitutes the primary focus of this research. Some final remarks on the role of sex-related anglicisms in the Spanish digital press will bring this study to an end.

2. Key concepts: from euphemism to dysphemism

Discussing sex makes many people uncomfortable. The stigma attached to sex, however, does not make forbidden topics disappear from communication; rather, the sexual taboo is an ambivalent and paradoxical phenomenon that compels language users, depending on their intention, either to attenuate or to refer to taboo concepts disparagingly, that is, to preserve or to violate the taboo through lexical alternatives with different connotative and expressive values ranging from euphemism to dysphemism, as will be explained in what follows.

The words and expressions that people use to talk about sex are the manifestations of a conceptual interdiction that makes it possible to use terms that are positively or negatively loaded from an affective point of view to refer to forbidden concepts (Casas Gómez, 2012, 2018). As the result of this conceptual interdiction is closely related to contextual factors (Casas Gómez, 2012, p. 60), euphemism and dysphemism must be considered as discursive and contextually dependent processes. In this sense, Allan and Burrige (2006, pp. 31-32), define these phenomena in terms of face effects: they consider euphemistic any word or expression intended to preserve the speaker's social image or face (as a strategy of positive self-presentation), the addressee's social image (out of concern for people's sensitivities) or that of some third party that takes part in the communicative act; by contrast, dysphemism presents connotations that lead to some kind of face affront. The complexity of taboo in communication leads to the existence of other axiological categories between these major modalities of taboo naming along an X-phemistic continuum, as defined by Allan and Burrige (2006), ranging from euphemism (attenuated expression) to dysphemism (offensive expression), that is, from the overly harsh *slut* to the socially acceptable alternative *sex worker*: orthophemism (neutral expression), quasi-euphemism (taboo-related words and expressions that are used positively to display affection, solidarity, intimacy or attract the receiver's attention) and quasi-dysphemism (words and expressions that are intentionally offensive despite their euphemistic disguise). This X-phemistic continuum is graphically represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. X-phemistic continuum: from euphemism to dysphemism



Anglicised words and expressions perform three main functions in discourse (Rodríguez González, 1996, 2022): referential (denotation), textual (economy of expression) and expressive (connotation). As González Cruz and Rodríguez Medina (2011, p. 15) argue, words with a foreign origin, especially when they are not totally

adapted to the recipient language, tend to be highly expressive and reflect the speakers' intentions particularly well. In fact, as demonstrated in my previous contributions to the topic (2018, 2021), English borrowings perform a variety of communicative functions when referring to sex-related concepts, ranging from attenuation and positive self-presentation (euphemism) to offence (dysphemism) and to provocation, sexual stimulation or group cohesion (quasi-euphemism), among others. In consequence, out of the three main functions pointed out by Rodríguez González (1996), the expressive or connotative one seems to be the most salient when using anglicisms in the language of sexuality in Spanish.

As many anglicised words and expressions have a metaphorical basis, it is necessary to look at the potential of figurative language to generate X-phemistic meanings in the discourse surrounding sexuality. To this end, Steen's (2017) *Deliberate Metaphor Theory* seems particularly useful. This is a theory about metaphor in discourse inspired by the well-known cognitive view of metaphor first proposed by Lakoff and his colleagues in the eighties and early nineties (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993) and redefined and improved by later works (Kövecses, 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Pérez Hernández, 2011). Steen's theory, inspired by his (2011) three-dimensional model of metaphor, i.e. metaphor as a matter of language; metaphor as a matter of thought; and metaphor as a matter of communication, can help explain the deliberate and intentional behaviour behind metaphor use and the rhetorical impact of metaphors. In Steen's (2017, p. 1) own words, this is a theory "which concerns the intentional use of metaphors as metaphors between sender and addressee". According to this theory, the metaphor's source domain is purposely and deliberately exploited in communication to highlight one particular image of reality over another for specific communicative intentions in particular situations of language use.

3. Data and method

Out of the six types of anglicised units in the classification proposed by Pulcini, Furiassi and Rodríguez González (2012), this study focuses on pure or unadapted native English words or phrases, that is, those that keep their original English spelling and meaning, even pronunciation, in Spanish such as *peep show* 'an erotic show in which the audience observe naked women who dance provocatively on stage' or *squirt* 'female ejaculation'. This choice is not at random: it is in non-adapted anglicisms that the impact of English on Spanish is more noticeable, not only because they are clearly recognisable as English borrowings, but also because pure anglicisms are, by far, the most frequently used in the sexual lexicon, as demonstrated in a previous study (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018, Ch. 4). Therefore, other types of anglicisms with different degrees of adaptation to Spanish like adapted anglicisms (*estriper* < stripper), false anglicisms (*edredoning*), hybrid anglicisms (*sexo online* < online sex), semantic borrowings (*contraseña* < password) and calques (*sexo seguro*, a translation from safe sex) have been excluded from the analysis.

The sample covers a time span of three years (from April 2021 to March 2024) in which 57 different non-adapted anglicised words and phrases have been encountered. In total, 4,658 occurrences of non-adapted anglicisms have been found in the digital press that makes up the sample.

As the communicative impact of sex-related anglicisms can only be explained in the contexts in which they occur, this study is not based on isolated words, but on a sample of real language data excerpted from the online versions of the Spanish general information newspapers *El Confidencial*, *El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia*. It is important to emphasise that the examples of anglicisms used for the present research do not come explicitly from sexual sources but from digital newspapers that are oriented to a general audience. These four newspapers in particular were chosen as they are all leading and well-known Spanish-language online newspapers featuring economic, cultural and sports content, with a strong focus in political information, that reach a large national readership; in fact, they are among the most widely read digital newspapers in Spain, as determined by GfK DAM, a digital audience measurement tool for the press that records monthly visitors and number of page views (see <https://www.mejorcms.com/periodismo/historico-datos-gfk/> for details). Therefore, the choice for these publications as sources of language data allows first, to minimise variables and construct a homogeneous sample; and second, to gain an insight into the role that sex-related anglicism plays in non-sexual communication. In this way, this research complements existing work on the topic of sex-related anglicism in online communication, as pointed out in the Introduction.

The methodology followed corresponds to the adoption of an inductive, "bottom-up" approach to analyse the role that sex-related anglicisms play in the digital press. This approach can be summarised as follows: first, linguistic data (i.e. non-adapted anglicisms) are selected from the online newspapers pointed out before through manual review; second, data are classified and interpreted in context (pure anglicisms are grouped by thematic category and by X-phemistic value); and third, some conclusions regarding the use and functions that data perform in digital communication are reached. Concerning figurative language expressions, the metaphorical anglicisms encountered in the press consulted have been assigned to their corresponding conceptual networks as a prerequisite to explaining the intentions underlying their use in communication.

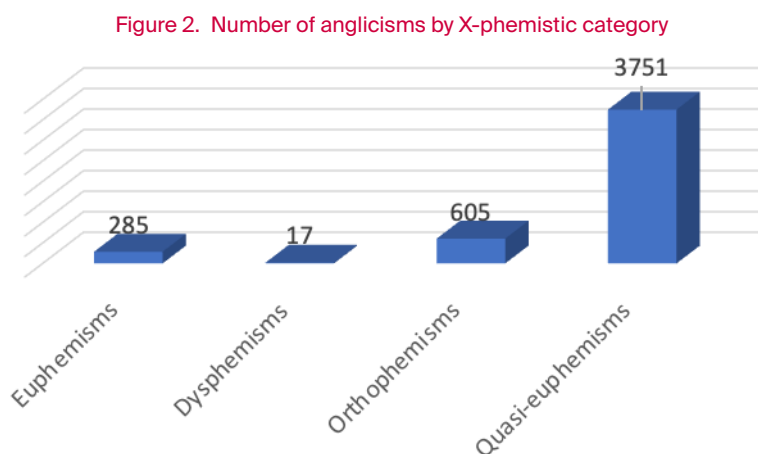
The data searching process has some restrictions. First, those English words that are not specifically related to sex in the context in which they occur have been excluded from the sample (e.g. when the word *closet* is used with its literal meaning and does not refer to homosexuality). Second, to avoid collecting anglicisms that occur occasionally and are therefore random, those which only appear once in the dataset (e.g. *cock ring*, *hard porn*, *strap on* or *trans friendly*, among others) have been left out.

Before moving on to the results, it is important to say that any analysis of real language use is subject to contextual variation and unpredictability, and this one is no exception. Indeed, the boundary between euphemism and non-euphemism is rather fuzzy in some of the quotations from the digital press consulted. In cases

like these, in order to categorise an anglicism as euphemistic, dysphemistic or quasi-euphemistic, I have relied on the specific context where the word appears, which involves considering the author's intention. In addition, the same anglicism may have different axiological values in different contexts. For instance, *queer* has been found to perform a euphemistic function in some quotations and a quasi-euphemistic function in others. In these cases, the anglicised word or phrase has been counted individually and included in the corresponding X-phemistic category. To complicate matters further, sometimes it is difficult to decide where to draw the line between thematic categories. For instance, *drag queen* might belong to the areas of sexual stereotypes and sexual shows. In cases like these, the anglicism in question has been classified in the category that more characteristically represents its use, and intention of use, in context.

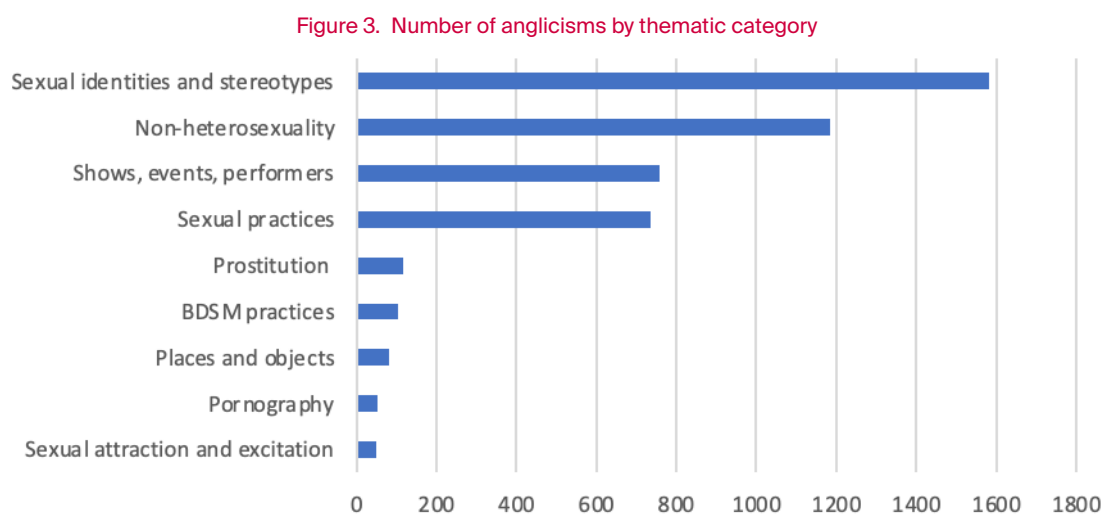
4. Results

The 4,658 occurrences of non-adapted anglicisms collected have different axiological values and perform a variety of communicative functions. Figure 2 graphically shows the number of euphemistic, dysphemistic, orthophemistic and quasi-euphemistic units encountered in the sample. No examples of quasi-dysphemistic anglicisms have been found.



As seen in Figure 2, sexuality generates different anglicised words and phrases that differ in the functions that they fulfil in discourse. The category of quasi-euphemism is, by far, the most relevant in quantitative terms: 3,751 cases of quasi-euphemistic naming have been found, which make up more than three quarters out of the total number of anglicised units collected (80.52%). Quasi-euphemism is followed, at a distance, by orthophemism ($n=605$, 12.98%) and by euphemism ($n=285$, 6.11%). Dysphemism is, by far, the least relevant category from a quantitative point of view ($n=17$, 0.36%).

The instances of anglicisms found in the sample can be classified by thematic areas within the field of sex. Figure 3 shows the quantitative distribution of the English borrowings found in the corpus by thematic category.



There are, in total, seven thematic areas in which the anglicisms collected can be classified. The most relevant, from a quantitative point of view, are those including anglicisms that refer to people with a non-normative

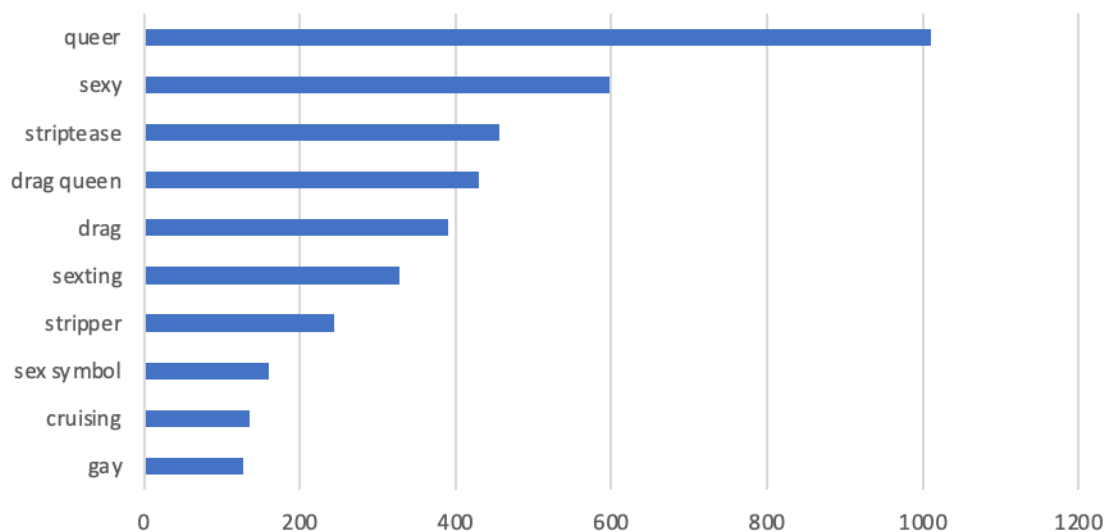
sexual orientation or gender identity (1,583, which makes up 33.77% out of the total occurrences of anglicisms collected) and non-heterosexuality, mainly, although not exclusively, homosexuality (n=1,183, 25.39%). These two areas are followed, at a certain distance, by shows of a sexual nature, including performers (n=757, 16.25%) and unconventional sexual practices (n=737, 15.73%). Prostitution (n= 116, 2.49%), BDSM practices (n=102; 2.17%), places and objects related to sex (n=80; 1.71%), pornography (n=51; 1.09%) and sexual attraction and excitation (n=49; 1.05%) have little qualitative relevance.

As pointed out before, a total of 57 different anglicisms have been encountered in the digital press consulted. These anglicised items are classified by thematic category as follows (the number of occurrences of each anglicism is given in brackets):

- Sexual identities and stereotypes (9 different anglicisms): cougar (n=2), drag (n=390), drag queen (n=426), fucker (n=7), motherfucker (n=10), queen (4), sex positive (n=5), sex symbol (n=160), sexy (n=579).
- Non-heterosexuality (10 different anglicisms): afroqueer (n=2), app gay (n=9), closet (n=2), gay (n=127), gay friendly (n=22), gay power (n=2), gender queer (n=4), queer (n=1001), queer friendly (n=5), outing (n=9).
- Shows, events and performers (5 different anglicisms): pole dance (n=36), pole dancer (n=5), strip poker (n=12), stripper (n=248), striptease (n=456).
- Unconventional sexual practices (13 different anglicisms): blowjob (n=2), cruising (n=135), cuckolding (n=2), dogging (n=3), fisting (n=3), glory hole (n=3), grooming (n=83), petting (n=104), sexting (n=328), slow sex (n=14), squirt (n=28), swinger (n=28), swinging (n=4).
- Prostitution (8 different anglicisms): daddy (n=23), escort (n=40), love hotel (n=6), night club (n=3), sugar baby (n=16), sugar daddy (n=16), sugar mommy (2), toy boy (n=10).
- BDSM practices (2 different anglicisms): bondage (n=92), spanking (n=10).
- Places and objects (2 different anglicisms): sex shop (n=59), sex toy (n=21).
- Pornography (6 different anglicisms): deepfake (n=28), fetish (n=6), gang bang (n=2), hardcore porn (n=5), pornfake (n=3), soft porn (n=7).
- Sexual attraction and excitation (2 different anglicisms): hot (n=11), sex appeal (n=38).

Figure 4 represents the total number of occurrences of the most frequent anglicisms found in the sample.

Figure 4. Most frequent anglicisms found in the sample



The most frequent anglicisms are included in the most relevant thematic categories from a quantitative point of view, namely sexual identities and stereotypes (*sexy*, *drag queen*, *drag*, *sex symbol*), non-heterosexuality (*queer*, *gay*), sexual practices (*sexting*, *cruising*) and shows of a sexual nature (*striptease*, *stripper*). Although the frequency of particular English borrowings in certain contexts is not necessarily indicative of their degree of integration in the recipient language, the high frequency of use in the digital press of the anglicisms shown in Figure 4 shows that these English terms have become well established in standard European Spanish. After all, we should bear in mind that the non-adapted anglicisms that make up the sample have been taken from general-information digital newspapers, that is, newspapers focused on general interest topics (politics, finance, popular culture, entertainment, etc.), aimed at a broad audience and therefore written so that the average reader, not necessarily familiar with sexual slang, can understand them.

5. Discussion

In many of the anglicised words and phrases found in the sample it is difficult to know where to draw the line between the functions that they perform in discourse. Although in some borrowings there is a function that becomes more salient in the context in which the anglicism occurs, the referential, textual and expressive

functions often overlap when using sex-related anglicisms in communication, as will be discussed in this section.

5.1. Referential and textual functions

Let us see first the referential function of sex-related anglicisms. Some anglicised words and expressions are primarily used to name those realities that do not have a direct equivalent in Spanish or the Spanish existent words do not contain the nuances of the anglicised terms. This is the case of the phrases that designate erotic shows imported from the Anglo-American world like *peep show*, in which the audience (usually males) observe naked girls who dance on stage in example (1) and *pole dance*, in which a naked or semi-naked girl, a pole dancer, swings around a vertical pole fixed to the ground in (2).

- (1) Pero, para Cléo, lo que sucede en un peep show es un contrato muy claro, que establece que no te pueden tocar. (*La Vanguardia*, 30/10/2021)
'For Cléo, what happens in a peep show is a very clear contract that establishes that nobody can touch you.'
- (2) El segundo, el show: una bailarina de pole dance vestida con un body de vinilo lleno de luces. (*El País*, 16/09/2021)
'Second, the show: a pole dancer dressed in a vinyl bodysuit full of lights.'

Compound and derived words that include the lexeme *strip* such as *striptease*, *stripper* and *strip poker* also have a referential function. There are no equivalent terms in Spanish that express the sensual and provocative nuances that the English terms *striptease* and *stripper* evoke in (3) and (4) respectively.

- (3) Ver películas eróticas, hacer un striptease a la pareja, practicar sexo en silencio o hacerlo en todas las habitaciones de la casa, son algunas ideas que nos proponen. (*El País*, 19/12/2023)
'Watching erotic films, performing a striptease for your partner, having sex in silence or doing it in every room of the house are some of the ideas that they propose.'
- (4) Una anciana de 106 años celebra su aniversario con un stripper: "No llevaba ropa interior". (*El Confidencial*, 20/08/2022)
'A 106-year-old woman celebrates her anniversary with a stripper: "He wasn't wearing underclothes".'

Closely connected with public shows of a sexual nature, we find nominal anglicisms like *drag queen* (also reduced to *drag* with no change in meaning), *drag king*, and adjectival ones such as *drag*. Although the Spanish terms *travestido* or *transformista* 'transvestite' might be considered equivalent in some contexts, we should bear in mind that these words do not carry the connotations of seduction and extravagance of *drag queens* and *drag kings* in quotation (5). In fact, as Mira (2002, p. 238) argues, whereas the word *travestido* derives from homophobic views typical of a heteronormative discourse that discriminates sexual minorities, *drag queen* transmits a sense of pride in wearing extravagant female clothes while performing for an audience. This case is a good example of how the referential and expressive function overlap in certain anglicisms.

- (5) Son los (...) drag queens y drag kings que, con su carácter explosivo, han reivindicado la diversidad y la alegría del colectivo. (*El País*, 30/06/2021)
'The drag queens and drag kings, with their explosive character, have vindicated the diversity and joy of the collectivity.'

Other English loanwords answer the need to name new or non-existent sexual practices in the recipient language and culture such as *grooming* 'conducting acts of sexual abuse against children' and *sexting* 'sexual relationship consisting of sending and receiving sexual messages, photos or videos through mobile phones, e-mails or webcams', a lexical blend between *sex* and *texting*. These terms usually provide a neutral way to refer to the concept in the digital press consulted, as happens in (6). However, in (7) *sexting* is used to attract the reader's interest on this sexual practice; therefore, in this case it cannot be considered an orthophemism but a provocative quasi-euphemism:

- (6) Tanto el grooming como el sexting son las prácticas más denunciadas en este tipo de agresión. (*La Vanguardia*, 24/11/2023)
'Both grooming and sexting are the most reported practices in this form of aggression.'
- (7) En busca del mejor sexting: 4 claves para disfrutar de conversaciones subidas de tono. (*El Confidencial*, 05/03/2023)
'In search of the best sexting: 4 keys to enjoy hot conversations.'

Anglicisms designate sexual fetishes and non-conventional, even deviant, sexual practices that first appeared in the Anglo-American world such as *dogging* and *cruising*. *Dogging*, a term which has its origin in the act of taking the dog for a walk, is a practice that combines exhibitionism, voyeurism and partner sharing. The term specifically refers to the act of having sex in a public place like a car park or a toilet while people are watching. Another unconventional practice is known as *cruising* 'the act of walking about the streets in search of a casual sexual partner'. This word, which belongs to homosexual slang, is one of the materialisations of the conceptual metaphor *SEX IS A JOURNEY* whereby the voyage corresponds to the act of looking for a sexual partner and the travellers are the sexual partners (see Crespo-Fernández, 2015, pp. 96-102). In the quotation that follows, *cruising* is used in a text about sexual practices within the homosexual community. In this sense,

it can be considered as an in-group word for gay males and thus as an instance of cohesive X-phemism. Again, in this case, the referential and expressive functions conflate.

- (8) Después de tratar temas como el cruising o los cuartos oscuros, el dúo artístico habló sobre su identidad. (*El Confidencial*, 26/10/2022)
'After dealing with topics like cruising or dark rooms, the artistic duo spoke about their identity.'

Pornography is also a source of anglicisms that designate non-conventional sexual practices imported from the North American porn industry, much more advanced than the Spanish or the European ones, for which there are no equivalents in Spanish, like *squirt* 'female ejaculation'. Although in the slang of pornography *squirt* is used with a quasi-euphemistic value, more specifically as a provocative X-phemism, in (9) it provides a neutral reference to the concept.

- (9) En torno al squirt se ha creado una fantasía sexual que el porno ha puesto de moda en los últimos años. (*El País*, 02/11/2023)
'In recent years, porn has created a sexual fantasy around squirting.'

English loanwords are also used to refer to different genres of pornographic cinema designed for heterosexual male consumption. This is the case of anglicised compounds containing the lexeme *porn* as head such as *hardcore porn* and *soft porn* that designate, respectively, the pornography that features sexual activity and sexual organs explicitly and the erotic pornography but not sexually graphic. Other compound nouns in which *porn* acts as head have nothing to do with pornographic movies. This is the case of the axiologically neutral *pornfake* and *deepfake*, newly coined terms that designate the making and sharing of altered pornographic videos and photographs by applying AI technology to the faces of the actors and actresses; simply put, this type of fake pornography involves putting a familiar face onto a porn star's body.

- (10) Críticas a OT por mostrar el pornfake de uno de sus concursantes en el programa (*La Vanguardia*, 14/12/2023)
'Critics to OT for showing a pornfake photo of one of the contestants in the program.'

The English borrowings seen so far do not only perform a referential function, but also a textual function: they help to maintain economy of expression, in other words, to be concise and avoid wordiness. If loanwords such as *stripper* in (4) or *cruising* in (8), for example, had not been used, the journalist would have had to resort to periphrastic expressions like "naked or semi-naked boy or girl who works in erotic shows" and "walking about the streets in search of a casual sexual partner" respectively. These phrases, realised by multi-word elements, lack the illocutionary force that is intended to be expressed. The same applies to other loanwords such as *grooming* and *sexting*, used for brevity and precision in the context of (6), and to many of the non-adapted anglicisms used with expressive and connotative values that will be discussed in 5.2. In this sense, the use of the anglicism makes communication more precise and reliable and, at the same time, facilitates the transmission of the nuances that the words have in English.

5.2. Expressive functions

The referential and textual functions that anglicisms fulfil in communication cannot explain, by themselves, the reasons why a speaker chooses English words and phrases to refer to sexual topics. Anglicisms perform, above all, expressive functions in the designation of concepts in the field of sex and are therefore a potent source for X-phemistic naming, as will be seen in what follows.

First of all, anglicisms perform a euphemistic function in the designation of concepts related to prostitution such as transactional sex and brothels. Take, for instance, the English borrowing *night club*, which is based on the euphemistic property of semantic indeterminacy to refer to a brothel, or the more insinuating *love hotel* with the same meaning. These anglicisms are cases of euphemistic underspecification, i.e. the use of a general term which needs to be specified in its context of use to refer to the taboo concept. The sexual connotations are somehow suspended thanks to the ambiguity of the English phrase that serves as a kind of semantic camouflage in a strategy of "de-concretization" (Sornig, 1989, p. 106) with an effective euphemistic purpose. This is what happens in (11):

- (11) Los arqueólogos tienen de momento registrados 80 prostíbulos en su base de datos (...), que abarca carreteras de Galicia y El Bierzo, incluidas varias vías famosas por su proliferación de night clubs. (*El País*, 29/06/2023)
'Archeologists have so far recorded 80 brothels in their database (...) that contains roads in Galicia and El Bierzo, including several ones known for the proliferation of night clubs.'

Attenuation combines with expressive enhancement in the case of *escort*. As a result of a process of semantic specification, the primary meaning of this term ('companion') has come to designate the person who offers sexual services. *Escort* does not only provide a socially acceptable way to refer to a prostitute, but it also aims at upgrading this occupation; in fact, *escort* suggests high-class prostitution, far from the dark side of street prostitution. From this point of view, *escort* is an example of the so-called uplifting euphemism, i.e. that which attempts to enhance socially stigmatised activities, transactional sex in this case. This type of euphemisms, which Casas Gómez (2012: 71) refers to as 'megalomania euphemisms', are characteristic of expressions that are intended to uplift the social status of certain professions and jobs, for example corrections officer and administrative assistant instead of warden and secretary respectively. Therefore, the use of

the pure anglicism *escort* in (12) avoids offensive words in Spanish such as *puta* or *fulana* for female prostitute and *chapero* for male prostitute (we should not forget that *escort* refers both to female and male prostitution):

- (12) Para Paula no es algo nuevo: “Gran parte de mis compañeras eran escorts, la mayoría gestionadas por los jefes de imagen”. (*El País*, 26/11/2022)
 ‘For Paula, this is nothing new: “A good part of my partners were escorts, most of them controlled by image managers”.’

In the slang of prostitution, we also find nominal anglicisms such as *daddy*, *sugar daddy*, *sugar mommy* and *sugar baby*. A sugar baby is usually a young female or (less commonly) a male who is provided with money, clothes or other benefits by an older man (daddy or sugar daddy) or woman (sugar mommy) in exchange for sexual favours. It is worth noting that here *sugar* has important implications at a cognitive level: it carries connotations of sweetness, in accordance with the conceptual metaphor WOMEN ARE DESSERTS in which the metaphors PEOPLE ARE OBJECTS, ACHIEVING A DESIRE OBJECT IS GETTING SOMETHING TO EAT and THE OBJECT OF LUST IS HUNGER conflate (Lakoff, 1987; López Rodríguez, 2008).

- (13) Los hombres con los que contacta le regalan teléfonos, ropa o le dan dinero a cambio de fotos sensuales, compañía y sexo premium. Tiene registrada toda su actividad como sugar baby en un documento excel en el que recoge el nombre de cada sugar daddy con el que ha estado. (*El Mundo*, 14/02/2023)
 ‘The men she contacts offer her phones, clothes or money in exchange for sexy pics, company or premium sex. She has registered all her activity as a sugar baby in an Excel document in which she lists the name of each sugar daddy she has been with.’

The notion of sweetness, which is connected with sexual promiscuity and availability, is a way to represent the sexual encounters between an old man and a younger woman more acceptable than they really are; hence its quasi-euphemistic value. In the following quotation the word *prostitute* is replaced with an apparently innocent, good-sounding phrase like *sugar baby* that serves as a semantic disguise:

- (14) *Ser prostituta suena mal, pero ser sugar baby puede sonar a algo guay.* (*El País*, 13/10/2020)
 ‘To be a prostitute sounds bad, but to be a sugar baby may sound cool.’

Although the WOMEN-AS-DESSERT metaphor is not commonly used with an offensive purpose, as happens in (13) and (14), we should be aware of its dysphemistic implications. By virtue of this metaphor, manifested in linguistic expressions in English such as *cookie*, *cheesecake*, *pie* or *tart*, women are reduced to the status of objects that can be bought, sold and eaten, which implies, as Hines (2000, p. 146) points out, “powerlessness, inanimacy and procurability (...). Women here are not just objects, but sweet (that is, compliant, smiling), and not just desserts, but pieces or slices”.

Another example of euphemistic anglicism is *petting*, a term used in Spanish exclusively with a sexual meaning to refer to kisses and fondling. By using the English word, the speaker avoids using the coarse and vulgar expression in Spanish “meter mano”. Quotation (15) illustrates the euphemistic force of this loanword in its context of use:

- (15) La intérprete estuvo pensando durante un buen rato: “A veces es mejor quedarse en el petting”. (*El Mundo*, 20/06/2023)
 The interpreter was thinking for a while: “Sometimes it’s better not go beyond petting.”

The same euphemistic quality is to be found in *blowjob* ‘fellatio’, an English term used instead of its Spanish vulgar equivalent *mamada* (Rodríguez González, 2022, p. 325). In this case, the use of the sexual anglicism involves a shift in the axiological value of the word in the recipient language if compared with the source language: while *blowjob* in Spanish may function as a protective euphemism or quasi-euphemism, depending on the context, it is felt to be dysphemistic in English.

English also contributes to replacing explicit references to unconventional sexual practices. This is the case of *fisting* ‘inserting a hand into the vagina or rectum’, a practice that would sound too harsh in Spanish. In (16) *fisting* acquires a euphemistic meaning, as it allows to avoid a direct reference to this shocking and dangerous sexual practice and, by doing so, preserves the journalist’s face and that of the newspaper (s)he works for. At the same time, the English word clearly performs a textual function: it provides a concise reference to a concept that has no direct equivalent in the recipient language.

- (16) Antes y después de las relaciones sexuales, usar guantes de látex para hacer fisting o no compartir juguetes sexuales. (*El País*, 25/03/2022)
 ‘Before and after sexual encounters, use latex gloves when fisting or do not share sex toys at all.’

In line with this, euphemistic attenuation also plays a role in the language of sadomasochism found in the sample. The component of violence associated with sadomasochist practices, also present in *fisting*, is disguised through English terms which tend to soften the degradation that comes with *bondage* ‘tying parts of a person’s body’ and *spanking* ‘flogging someone’s bottom’. In these euphemistic anglicisms the humiliation of being tied or flogged is somehow suspended in a strategy of displacement, which acts as a kind of camouflage and allows to reduce the potential discomfort associated with certain bizarre practices that evoke negative affect (McGlone et al., 2006). Consider how *spanking* is used in context:

- (17) El spanking es un acto sexual en sí mismo, sin necesidad de que intervengan los órganos genitales. (*La Vanguardia*, 21/02/2022)
 'Spanking is a sexual act in itself without the intervention of the genital organs.'

The euphemistic nature of the anglicised units commented so far is not enough to explain the role that English loanwords like *bondage* or *escort*, for instance, play in discourse. From the point of view of the relationship between these anglicisms and the taboo they designate, rather than 'pure' euphemisms, in some contexts these terms can be considered as quasi-euphemisms, as their function is not merely to attenuate the forbidden concept, but to capture people's interest towards the sexual referent in question (see Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018, Ch. 1). Therefore, these anglicisms are cases of provocative X-phemisms, relatively common in sadomasochism (*bondage*, *spanking*) and, above all, in prostitution (*escort*, *sugar baby*) and pornography (*fisting*, *gang bang*, *squirt*). In the slang of prostitution and pornography, this type of anglicisms is specifically intended to attract the interest of potential consumers, stimulate their curiosity and ultimately make them buy the service or product. A good example is the metaphorical term *gang bang* 'several men having sex with a woman in succession'. In this compound noun the lexeme *bang*, as a metaphorical reference to the act of having sexual intercourse, carries connotation of hostility and violence by virtue of the metaphor *SEX IS VIOLENCE*; in fact, this word echoes the image of hitting your partner's genitals (Crespo-Fernández, 2015, p. 164). In this sense, we should bear in mind that the view of sex as a violent and hostile activity, which dates back to Elizabethan literature (see Chamizo Domínguez & Sánchez Benedito, 2000, pp. 105-111), is a potent source of X-phemistic words and expressions in English, especially common in heteronormative discourse, that refer to copulation (*screw*, *stab*, *strike*), ejaculation (*shoot*, *shoot one's load*) or masturbation (*beat one's meat*).

- (18) La gente rellena un perfil y puede seleccionar sus fantasías: dominación, tríos, gang bang (varios hombres manteniendo sexo con una mujer), intercambio de parejas (*El Mundo*, 17/04/2023).
 'People fill in a questionnaire and choose their fantasies: domination, threesomes, gang bang (several men having sex with a woman), swinging'

In some anglicised words and phrases, provocative X-phemism coexists with cohesive X-phemism, that which displays in-group cohesion and solidarity; indeed, loanwords such as *bondage* or *spanking* are used in the sadomasochist community as identity group markers. This also happens with pure anglicisms that refer to non-conventional sexual practices such as *cruising*, *cuckolding* or *swinger*, among others. In (19), the use of *swinger* reflects that the writer is someone with experience, or, at least, initiated, in an unconventional sexual practice like couple swinging.

- (19) Puedes acudir a locales liberales de tu ciudad o a una fiesta *swinger* en un chalet organizada a través de redes sociales. (*El Mundo*, 03/03/2023)
 'You can go to liberal clubs in your town or to a swinger party in a cottage organised by social networks.'

A deviant, even bizarre sexual practice that is common (although not exclusive) of homosexual sex known as *glory hole* which consists in inserting one's penis in a slot in a wall, often in men's restrooms, for sexual stimulation. The phrase *glory hole* clearly carries positive connotations, as it focuses, through a metonymy with hyperbolic overtones, on the effect of the sexual experience as a way to reach the glory. It can therefore be considered another case of provocative X-phemism that highlights sexual pleasure while hiding the potential risks of getting involved in a clandestine and anonymous sexual encounter. This is part of the strategy of euphemistic displacement, which, as commented before in the case of BDSM practices, allows to reduce the potential discomfort associated with sexual practices that evoke negative emotions. In the following quotation *glory hole* is strategically used with an advertising purpose:

- (20) Tenemos una feria del porno, para empezar, con glory holes y sexo en vivo, y también clubs de alterne. (*El Confidencial*, 26/06/2023)
 'We have a porn fair, to begin with, with glory holes and live sex and men's clubs too.'

The same type of provocative advertising appears in (21), in which the anglicised compound *slow sex* is used to attract readers' attention on a clitoral stimulator and ultimately make them buy the product. In this case, the English borrowing also provides connotations of modernity, which contributes to the persuasive function of the text (cf. González Cruz, 2023, pp. 117-119).

- (21) Este estimulador de clitoris, basado en el concepto *slow sex*, te ayudará a mejorar tu vida sexual. Con SILA vivirás nuevas fantasías. (*El Confidencial*, 30/06/2021)
 'This clitoral stimulator, based on the concept of *slow sex*, will help you improve your sex life. With SILA you will live new fantasies.'

A double use of sex-related anglicisms as a way to attract attention (i.e. as a provocative X-phemism) and as a sign of group identity (i.e. as a cohesive X-phemism) is commonly found in the language used by non-heterosexual communities. This twofold function may be observed in compound words with the lexeme *gay* like *gay friendly* and *gay power*. *Gay* is a term that deserves special attention, not only because of its high occurrence in European Spanish, but also because of the different connotations it carries in discourse. *Gay* is not always used as an in-group word by the male homosexual community, as happens in the aforementioned compounds (*gay friendly*, *gay power*), as well as in anglicised blends (*gayby*, *gaydar*) and derivatives (*gayería*,

gayismo) that have their origin in *gay* (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2017, p. 83). This word is also used in Spanish with an orthophemistic value, that is, as a generic term to refer to the homosexual man and, in some cases, with a euphemistic intention, too. This is why Rodríguez González (2008b, pp. 251-252) argued that *gay* is not always accepted as a positive or, at least, a neutral term in standard Spanish: "In general language, especially in heterosexual circles (...) *homosexual* is taken as a generic term, which gives it a certain neutral air, and *gay* is still coloured by a degree of social stigma". Note the difference between the neutral reference of *gay*, which functions as a near synonym for homosexual in (22) and the positive connotations that it carries in the compound *gay friendly*, which is intended to attract the attention of homosexual readers about a night club in Barcelona in (23).

- (22) Un familiar gay – en verdad era su primo – que murió joven por complicaciones del VIH y que tuvo una gran influencia en Beyoncé cuando era joven. (*El Mundo*, 23/01/2023)
'A gay relative – actually, he was her cousin – who died young after VIH and who had a great influence on Beyoncé when she was young.'
- (23) Ambiente gay friendly, relajado, grandes hits musicales y unos gin-tonics de aúpa hacen olvidar que al día siguiente es lunes. (*El Confidencial*, 16/10/2023)
'Gay friendly and relaxed atmosphere, great music hits and fantastic gin and tonics make you forget that the following day is Monday.'

Queer is another anglicised term which does not admit a single interpretation. It is used both as a socially acceptable, hence euphemistic, way to refer to non-heterosexual people and as a sign of collective identity, which best reflects in some of the compounds that *queer* has generated such as *queer friendly*, *afroqueer* or *gender queer*. In fact, as Rodríguez González (2008b, p. 254) points out, *queer* defines a LGBT identity, particularly proud and non-conformist. Note the different functions that *queer* performs in the two quotations that follow: from euphemism in (24) to cohesive quasi-euphemism in (25):

- (24) Para la mayoría de las personas queer es difícil encontrar un terapeuta que simplemente los entienda. (*El País*, 06/03/2021)
'For most queer people it is difficult to find a therapist who can just understand them.'
- (25) Me encanta ser queer. Y cuanto más me abrazo y abrazo plenamente quien soy, más sueño, más crece mi corazón y más prospero. (*La Vanguardia*, 27/01/2021)
'I love being queer. And the more I hold myself close and fully embrace who I am, the more I dream, the more my heart grows and the more I thrive.'

Let us continue with homosexual language. The English expression *come out of the closet* ('reveal one's homosexual orientation') is the source of some anglicisms that serve as a sign of group identity in Spanish for members of the homosexual community. This expression has a metaphorical basis: it belongs to a conceptualisation that we can postulate AS TO REVEAL ONE'S HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION IS TO COME OUT OF THE CLOSET. According to this metaphor, conventional society is represented as a closed and bound space, and the act of revealing one's homosexual identity implies, from a figurative point of view, to get out to the exterior and, by doing so, get sexually liberated. The quasi-euphemistic value of group cohesion that characterises the CLOSET metaphor becomes evident in some of its lexical materialisations, used by members of the gay community or by people who feel close to it, like the abbreviated forms *coming out*, *closet* and *outing*. In fact, according to Rodríguez González (2008b, p. 261), these anglicised forms commonly appear in bulletins of gay and lesbian organisations. As seen in (26), the use of *coming out* reflects a shared sense of belonging to a group or, at least, certain affinity for gays:

- (26) Su coming out en la revista Rolling Stone en 1976 declarando su bisexualidad refrenda su lado transgresor, aunque su público femenino sigue deseándolo como a un hijo o hermano díscolo que hay que proteger. (*La Vanguardia*, 14/05/2023)
'His coming out in the Rolling Stone magazine in 1976, when he revealed his bisexuality, reveals his transgressive side although his female fans still love him as a son or unruly brother who must be protected.'

Finally, we will briefly look at the dysphemistic function of anglicisms. The English loanwords that are used offensively are not very frequent in the digital publications consulted. The compound *toyboy*, a materialisation of the metaphor SEX IS A GAME used in the world of prostitution, reduces a sexual partner to an object intended to entertain and please her owner, which ultimately suggests that the male body serves the only purpose of satisfying the sexual appetite of women:

- (27) Su adaptación de 'Orlando furioso' de Ariosto es profundamente feminista, con el héroe reducido a un toy boy que se disputan las dos magas. (*La Vanguardia*, 19/06/2023)
'His adaptation of 'Orlando furioso' by Ariosto is profoundly feminist, as the hero is reduced to a toy boy that both magicians fight for.'

The word *fucker* is also used in some of the publications consulted as an insulting term. Although most often used figuratively in English, meaning a stupid person, in (28) it retains its original meaning to refer disparagingly to a man with an active sexual life.

- (28) Cuatro frases de fuckerseudorromántico soltadas en París no lo hacen menos asqueroso. (*El Mundo*, 08/01/2024)
'Four phrases of pseudo-romantic fucker released in Paris do not make him less disgusting.'

In spite of the fact that *fucker*, when used as an anglicism, is not as offensive as it is in English – which seems to confirm a tendency of anglicism to soften the pejorative load of coarse words in English – the fact remains that *fucker* is still a pejorative term in Spanish and, as such, used with an offensive purpose. The case of *motherfucker* is different, however. Consider the quotation below:

- (29) Hoy hay más mujeres que hombres aquí, así que mis felicitaciones a los chicos. Sois muy listos, motherfuckers. (*El Mundo*, 08/12/2023)
 ‘There are more women than men here, my congrats to you, guys. You’re very smart, you, motherfuckers.’

The compound *motherfucker* is commonly a vulgar and pejorative term used to refer to a despicable and mean person, and hence dysphemistic, in English. In the context of quotation (29), however, this compound is not used as a pejorative term of abuse; rather, it is used positively, as a term of admiration and praise, as a way to display affection. What we have here is a shift in the axiological value of *motherfucker*: a term which is commonly dysphemistic changes into a quasi-euphemism because of the speaker’s intention to be funny in a relaxed communicative situation between friends. After all, as Allan and Burrige (2006, p. 99) claim, “[I]ike euphemism, dysphemism is not necessarily a property of the word, itself, but of the way it is used”; indeed, the X-phemistic value of language expressions is always dependent on, and determined by, the context in which they occur.

6. Concluding remarks

The present study offers significant results regarding the communicative potential of anglicism to talk about sex in the digital Spanish press and demonstrates that anglicism is at the journalist’s disposal to address the sexual taboo in one way or another, depending on his or her purpose and the effect that (s)he wants to create.

In general, the findings obtained in this contribution seem to confirm those reported in previous work regarding the role of sex-related anglicism in sexuality forums (Crespo-Fernández & Luján-García, 2018; Crespo-Fernández, 2021). Indeed, both in online postings and in the digital press, anglicisms are not only used to name concepts that do not exist in the recipient culture (referential function) or to avoid redundancy, as part of the tendency towards simplification and economy of expression (textual function); they also perform pragmatic and expressive functions associated with euphemism (attenuating or upgrading a forbidden concept) and quasi-euphemism (attracting people’s attention and displaying affection and in-group cohesion). However, some of the results of previous studies on sex-related anglicisms in online communication differ from my findings here: first, there is a shift in the axiological value of some anglicised words and phrases: whereas they are mostly used as provocative and cohesive X-phemisms in online sexual forms, they tend to provide a neutral reference to the topic in the digital press; and second, in the online newspapers the majority of English borrowings are used to speak about sexual identities and stereotypes whereas in sexual forms most of the anglicisms refer to sexual practices.

It is also important to note that many of the English loanwords seen in this study jointly fulfil referential, textual and expressive functions. Furthermore, in the use of sex-related anglicisms in communication different axiological values coexist, which leads to the existence of different types of X-phemistic anglicisms that take their names from the functions they perform in discourse, namely protective, provocative, uplifting and cohesive. This should not come as a surprise, because anglicism is a phenomenon of language in use and, as such, cannot be analysed from a single perspective.

The analysis also confirms that some non-adapted anglicisms, such as *drag queen*, *gay*, *sex shop* or *strip-tease*, among others, are well established in European Spanish, as indicated by their high occurrence in the data. Others, however, have not (at least yet) reached common usage in standard Spanish and are still felt to belong to specific groups of language users with particular preferences like non-conventional sexual practices (*cruising*, *squirt*, *swinging*) or BDSM (*fisting*, *spanking*).

It remains to be said that this study does not exhaust the topic of sex-related anglicism in Spanish. Future research could explore, from a more general perspective, the functions and underlying motivations of anglicisms in the sexual vocabulary of different languages. In addition, it would be interesting to look at how anglicism, in its different forms and degrees of adaptation to the recipient language, is used to talk about sex in different discourse types with data from a large collection of sources, both print and digital, sexual and non-sexual in nature, in the tradition of corpus linguistics. Such research would allow to draw valid conclusions in quantitative terms regarding the role and frequency of occurrence of X-phemistic anglicisms in public communication surrounding sexuality.

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