Transcodic marks in exam discourse in French

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The present article focuses on semantic-pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors explaining the use of non-French words and constructions in the exolingual communicative context of French exams. On the basis of an oral and written exam corpus, this article looks into different types of cross-linguistic interactions to question the boundaries of codeswitching (CS) and propose a prototypical approach. Special attention is given to the correlations between the embedded languages (in this case, English or Dutch) and the type of influence these languages have on the participants' French discourse. By taking into account the distribution of cross-linguistic interactions in the discourse of different groups of participants divided according to the levels of the European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001), this study shows that, even if lower level participants resort to other languages to compensate for lexical deficiencies in French, they also choose to resort to non-French lexemes due to semantic and sociolinguistic factors, as is the case for advanced level speakers. From the perspective of language assessment, the notion of lexical error is central. Based on a typology of embedded units, this study aims at identifying the factors of acceptability of different types of transcodic marks.

Keywords: specificity, codeswitching, diastratic variation, language tests, lexical errors, terminology

1. Introduction

Studies on transfer and codeswitching (CS) focus on interactions in bilingual communities where speakers tend to speak to each other by alternating codes from one sentence to another or within the same sentence (see Treffers-Daller 2009 for an overview). In this context, the use of different codes responds to social motivations linked to identity construction (Heller 1995; Blom and Gumperz 2000) or to semantic-pragmatic objectives (Backus 2001) and is not necessarily

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due to speakers' lack of competence in the languages involved in the interactions (Poplack 1980; MacSwan 2013). Alongside sociolinguistic and semantic approaches, psycholinguistic studies describe the cognitive processes behind CS and the cognitive effects of multilingualism (Heredia and Altarriba 2001; Abutalebi and Green 2008; Peace-Hughes *et al.* 2021). From a conversational perspective, the consequences of CS on the flow of interaction are studied (Auer 1995; Li 1998; Vogh 2018).

From a similar communicative perspective, there are also studies on the use of CS as a communication strategy. In exolingual conversations, i.e., in communications between natives and non-natives in the native's language (Porquier 1994), the temporary switch to the mother tongue of the non-native speakers makes it possible to avoid or resolve possible misunderstandings and to put the interlocutors at ease by protecting their face, allowing them to use their own language if necessary, by producing translations to ensure comprehension, or by making up for a missing resource to avoid blanks (Yanaprasart 2003; Nanthalsip 2004; Lüdi *et al.* 2012).

The advantages and disadvantages of CS for foreign language acquisition-learning are also extensively considered mainly in classroom interaction, and in how one learns by interacting in the target language (Py 1989; Vasseur and Arditty 1996; de Pietro, Mathey; and Py 1988; for French as a foreign language, see Lin 2017 for an overview). Many studies about different language combinations focus on CS in teaching, and its impacts on performance with the benefits and risks of interference (Skiba 1997; Macaro 2005). From this perspective, the most recent work instead approaches the issue of multilingual education from the perspective of translanguaging, which is the strategic and planned exploitation of home languages for learning (Canagarajah 2011; Garcia, Irabarra Johnson, and Seltzer. 2017; Paquet-Gauthier and Beaulieu 2015).

This contribution aims to investigate from a semantic and sociolinguistic perspective the particular exolingual situation of written and oral assessment in French as a foreign language for Dutch speakers. A language exam is a setting for monolingual interaction (Porquier 1994, 165) in that, while the assessors generally understand the candidate's mother tongue and the origin of their 'mistakes', they at least pretend to be monolinguals. This type of situation is particularly interesting because it is a constrained exolingual communication setting where CS cannot be used as a strategy to get a message across but is instead to be avoided. According to Porquier (1994, 166), if one communicates in a language other than one's own, the communication situation has a bilingual dimension regardless of the traces or manifestations of this bilingualism in the interaction. This study goes in search of these traces.

In line with de Bot's (1992, 19) statement that cross-linguistic influences and codeswitching cannot be clearly distinguished based on theoretical nor empirical features, we have chosen to adopt a broader perspective by observing all the language interaction phenomena in our corpus and by gathering them indistinctly under *transcodic marks* (TMs, see Lüdi 1987; de Pietro 1988). Our analysis aims to answer the following research question: what factors underlie the production of TMs in an examination context? Within this framework the following four assumptions can be logically formulated:

1. Since they are Dutch-speaking Belgians, the embedded language in the participants' French discourse is Dutch.
2. In an examination context, the TMs produced compensate for a lack of lexical resources.
3. Higher level participants produce fewer TMs (of all types) than lower-level participants.
4. Certain types of TM are produced more often by participants at certain levels. In other words, there is a correlation between the type of TM and the language level of participants.

On the basis of our data, we will see if these assumptions can be confirmed. We will then discuss the place of CS within the TMs identified.

2. Corpus and method

To study transcodic marks (TMs) in the context of exolingual communication in a French exam discourse, our corpus gathers TMs data from 60 oral exams (P1 to P60) of about ten minutes each and from 13 written exams (P61 to P73), of candidates from level A2 to C1, carried out in the Federal Government Selection Office in Brussels (see details in Appendix 1). The exams focus exclusively on the professional context (tasks, skills, communication with colleagues, etc.) of the candidates, who are mostly Dutch-speaking civil servants.

In these performances, 323 occurrences of transcodic marks were identified. These tokens are linked to 287 different types. The difference in number is explained by the fact that 25 structures and lexemes are used by several candidates (*responsable pour* for *responsable de*; *ensemble avec* for *avec*; *team* for *équipe*; *X-ray* for *rayon X*, etc.). Table 1 shows the distribution of candidates by CEFR level and the number of occurrences used at each level.

The exams of all candidates we evaluated between October 2020 and March 2021 were included in the corpus. In the performances of only two of the 73 participants (P2 who is B2+ and P19 who is C1), no TMs were identified. The total num-

Table 1. Distribution of oral (OE) and written exam (WE) participants and TM occurrences by CEFR level

	Participants		TM	
Level CEFR	**OE**	**WE**	**OE**	**WE**
A2	1		11	
B1	6		35	
B1+	9		40	
B1-B2	13	3	57	10
B2	7	3	30	12
B2+	11		51	
B2-C1	3	1	10	4
C1	4	6	10	26
C1 (native speaker)	6		27	
Total	**60**	**13**	**271**	**52**

ber of occurrences as well as the absolute numbers per category are probably not very indicative insofar as the oral TMs were spotted and noted on the fly as part of our usual note-taking as a trained evaluator during the exam performances. It is therefore possible that some occurrences escaped our attention.

The exam situation is one of exolingual communication: an allophone candidate addresses two native French-speaking evaluators, the level of French of the interlocutors is therefore unequal. In writing, the situation is slightly different in that the candidate is supposed to address their text to colleagues. The real (evaluators) and fictitious (colleagues) recipients of these written productions are native French speakers, so the communication is also exolingual. It cannot be excluded that among these candidates are individuals who are highly bilingual. The exolingual character of the communication is then more debatable, but the available data do not allow us to clearly isolate those cases. On the other hand, six of the candidates interviewed orally were clearly native French speakers with a degree in Dutch, which explains their obligation to take the exam. In this case, the communication between the candidates and the examiners can be considered endolingual. The TM data of these candidates were kept as a term of comparison with the data of the other candidates.

3. Results

The following sections provide the results of the analyses on the corpus. After identifying the types of TMs produced during the exams (3.1), the distribution of embedded languages will be examined in more detail (3.2). The socio-linguistic and semantic-pragmatic motivations that explain the presence of TMs in a type of interaction where the goal is to avoid them will then be analyzed (3.3). A closer look will be given to the notion of lexical errors (3.4) and to the impact of language levels on TMs (3.5).

3.1 Medium-specific switching

Table 2 shows the distribution of the different types of TM, with the occurrences of TM in writing shown in bold.

Table 2. Distribution of TM occurrences by type

Combinatorics and syntax	Interjections	Lexical TMs	Spelling influence	Phonological influence	Phono-lexical influence
39+7	11	183+**29**	**16**	20	18

The lexical TMs thus represent more than 65% of the identified occurrences, nearly 69% if we count the interjections in the lexicon. The other types of TMs each represent between 5% and 7% of the total. While these figures show the largely lexical nature of TMs in this context, a bias can be identified insofar as it is also the most easily identifiable category on the fly.

Under *combinatorics and syntax*, all prepositional or pronominal constructions modeled on English or Dutch are gathered. The influence of those languages can lead to preposition partners errors (Hemchua and Schmitt 2006) such as:

- addition of a preposition not necessary in French: *j'espère **d'**avoir* (P62); *souhaiter **de** discuter* (P70);
- omission of a necessary preposition or pronoun: entrer *[dans] le train* (P6); *il faut [s']entrainer* (P31); *à côté [de] notre bâtiment* (P35); *répondre les questions* for *répondre aux (= à les) questions* (P35) ;
- substitution of the expected preposition by another: *responsable **pour*** instead of *responsable **de*** (P6, P29, P51).

The occurrences gathered in this category do not only concern the combinatorics of lexemes but broader phenomena at the sentence level such as:

- constituent order: *cinq différentes directions* for *cinq directions différentes* (P6); *tiers pays* for *pays tiers* (P46); *ce que je vraiment penser* for *ce que je pense vraiment* (P60) ;
- negative structures: *pas tous nos dossiers sont concernés* for *tous nos dossiers ne sont pas concernés* (P16) ;
- phrasal or syntagmatic constructions: *un ami de moi* for *un de mes amis* (P23); *c'était trois ans passés* for *il y a trois ans* (P23); *je connais quoi je fais* for *je sais ce que je fais* (P37) ;
- choice of introductory prepositions: *chez le service* for *dans le service* (P11); *je travaille chez la police* for *à la police* or *pour la police* (P14); *en Anvers* for *à Anvers* (P23);
- use of *tu* notably in examples (*si tu fais ça*) ;
- adjective-adverb confusion: *la voiture immatriculée correcte* for *la voiture immatriculée correctement* (P26); *il faut vérifier physique* for *il faut vérifier physiquement* (P29).

This last case is at the border between syntax, morphology and lexicon. Since in Dutch there is no formal distinction between adjective and adverb, the influence of Dutch is evident here, but it is difficult to determine whether participants simply reproduce this lack of distinction in French by omitting a morpheme (*-ment*, most often) or whether they do not perceive the functional difference between adverb and adjective. To avoid multiplying subdivisions, all the phenomena of the continuum between syntax, lexical combinatorics and morphology are included in the same category. Many morphological and syntactical errors were also made by participants producing invalid structures in French, beyond the scope of TMs (incorrectly conjugated verbs or noun-adjective agreement problems, as *il faut que j'entretiens* for *il faut que j'entretienne* (P51); *elle s'a presentée* for *elle s'est présentée* (P52); *les contacts internationals* for *les contacts internationaux* (P57); *l'agence européen* for *l'agence européenne* (P60)). These cases are not part of this research.

The occurrences of lexical TMs include mainly English or Dutch lexemes inserted in French sentences: *mailpunt* (P15), *targets* (P20), *vrije tijd* (P24), *chip* (P34), *gebouwen* (P37), *timeslot* (P42). Among these lexemes, there are also statalisms and proper names (names of trainings, funding programs, places, institutions, etc.) that logically appear in the original language: *Tinnitus Retraining Therapy* (P9), *Terzake* (P28), *UZ Gent* (P41). Within lexical TMs are counted seven lexemes borrowed from English but which can be considered as lexicalized borrowings commonly used in the whole French-speaking world or at least in Belgian French: *flashback* (P39), *coach de vie* (P45), *burn out* (P51), *chat* (P63), *site web* (P63 and P64), *impacter* (P69), *SMS* (P71). Besides the xenisms

inserted in the discourse, almost a third of the occurrences of lexical influence are calques: *recevoir 20 téléphones* for *coups de fil* (P15); *place* for *lieu* (P25 and 42); *balance* for *équilibre* (P28); *coutume* for *habitude* (P42); *exhibition* for *exposition* (P56). A few occurrences of TMs belong to a particular lexical category: some interjections are used in Dutch such as *ja* (P11, P16, P32, P53), *allez* (P20, P28, P42, P53), *wacht he* (P28), *also* (P51). They are used to punctuate the candidates' French speech (Vincent 1993). These occurrences are medium-specific and only appear in oral speech.

The occurrences labelled under *spelling* and *phonological influence* are also medium-specific. The phonological influence, in speech, generates:

- the pronunciation of final consonants: [ʁãg] (P37), [util] (P40 and P51);
- non nasal pronunciation of nasal vowels: [pɛnsjõ] (P37);
- pronunciation of <g> before <i> as [g] instead of [ʒ] in [legislasjõ] (P11) or [gigãtɛsk] (P16);
- unvoiced pronunciation of final voiced consonants: [etyt] instead of [etyd] (P16);
- alveolar trill like in Dutch ([prosedy:r]) (P16).

In some cases, it is not possible to determine whether the participant uses a Dutch or English word in a French sentence or whether he/she mispronounces a French lexeme under the influence of Dutch or English. These cases are listed in the table under *phono-lexical influence*: [fi:dbæk] instead of [fi:dbak] for *feedback* (Dutch and English *feedback*) (P5); [kabinɛt] instead of [kabinɛ] for *cabinet* (Dutch *kabinet*, English *cabinet*) (P3); [tabak] instead of [taba] for *tabac* (Dutch *tabak*) (P12 and P34); [tɛkni:k] instead of [tɛknik] for *technique* (Dutch *techniek*) (P15); [aspɛkt] instead of [aspɛ] for *aspect* (Dutch and English *aspect*) (P21); [kamp] instead of [kã] for *camp* (Dutch *kamp*, English *camp*) (P34); [ɪntərfeɪs] instead of [ɛ̃teʁfas] for *interface* (Dutch and English *interface*) (P47).

In the written corpus, the spelling of some words is influenced mainly by English and Dutch: *disc dur* for *disque dur* (P65); *enterprise* for *entreprise* (P66); *par example* for *par exemple* (P67); *Septembre* for *septembre* (P68); *comfortable* for *confortable* (P72); *exercises* for *exercices* (P73); *permettera* and *permetterait* (presumably influenced by *permitteren*) for *permettra* and *permettrait* (P66 and 73). Punctuation is also modeled on English and Dutch, with no non-breaking spaces before semicolons and colons (P72). As with oral language, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the participant is using an English or Dutch word in a French sentence or whether he or she is incorrectly writing a French lexeme under the influence of English or Dutch (*servers* instead of *serveurs*, P67).

One might think that, since in writing the participants have time to proofread their text before submitting it, there will be fewer TMs in the written exams than

in the oral exams. In our data, if we count only the levels B1-B2 to C1 that have been tested both ways, the average is almost identical (4,1 in oral versus 4 in written), even if we do not take into account P2 and P19 for which no TM has been identified (4,3 in oral versus 4 in written). Unfortunately, our research setting does not allow us to verify this hypothesis statistically. In order to make a valid comparison between the written and the oral exams, it would be necessary to verify that the quantity of produced words is equivalent. It would be interesting to design a more controlled methodological framework that would allow a significant comparison.

3.2 Which is the embedded language?

Insofar as transcodic marks are the result of the irruption of a language into a discourse in another language, it is interesting to question the nature of this embedded language for the participants. With the exception of one candidate of Italian origin (P13) and six native French speakers (P4, P8, P17, P50, P55, P58), the other 66 candidates are Dutch speakers. As expected, the combinatorics and syntax are mostly modelled on Dutch but surprisingly also on English. In the case of *souhaiter* ***de*** *discuter* (P70) and *fournir* ***d'****une version* (P69), it is clear that the English language had an influence, because the structure in Dutch is not the same (*I would like* ***to*** *discuss it* / *ik zou graag dit bespreken*; *I provide you* ***with*** *a version* / *Ik kan je een versie bezorgen*). In the other cases, the structures being the same in Dutch and English, it is difficult to know which of the two languages has had a dominant influence, the most likely being that the influence of the two are mutually reinforcing.

As expected, pronunciation is massively influenced by the participants' native language, in this case Dutch. Insofar as Dutch, like French, borrows many words from English, it is sometimes difficult to know whether the anglicisms are the result of a switch with English, a switch with the Dutch language which has integrated these borrowings or whether they are simply borrowings integrated into French. The pronunciation gives clues to decide this question. European French usage adapts the pronunciation of borrowings from English (Côté and Remysen 2017): we can therefore consider that *flashback* pronounced [flaʃbak] by P39 is not a case of CS. In the case of *club* pronounced [klyb] by P23 as in Dutch and not [klœb], it is likely a CS from Dutch while in the case of *feedback* pronounced [fi:dbæk] by P5 instead of [fi:dbak], one can hesitate between a CS from Dutch or English. The influence of English is evident in the spelling errors, which mainly concern similar lexemes in French and English, give or take a letter. The case of *September* and *January* in the production of P68 is particularly interesting. While the names of the months are quite similar in French, Dutch and English (Fr. *sep-*

tembre, Nl. *september*, En. *September*, Fr. *janvier*, Nl. *januari*, En. *January*), the presence of the capital letter indicates a clear influence of English. This influence of English can be considered as a sign that French is the L3 of the participants, who go through their L2, English, to express themselves in French. If the linguistic competence of plurilinguals integrates the different spoken languages (Paradis 1993, cited in Wlosowicz 2016, 2–3), the subsystem of the other spoken languages must be inhibited when using one of them (Abutalebi and Green 2008). The influence of the L2 in the L3 indicates that the L2 subsystem is not completely inhibited during testing.

This same trend is visible in the lexical TMs. Only 22% are insertions and calques of Dutch. The rest are mostly undecidable cases between English and Dutch, essentially because they are English words commonly used in Dutch: *privacy* (P22 and P59); *laptop* (P37); *digital* (P67 and P68); *ICT* (P47, P58, P60, P63, P67, P69); *team* (P15, P59, P67). There are also lexical creations influenced by English and/or Dutch: *je suis partie* for *je fais partie* (English *I am part*) (P29); *invester* for *investir* (English *to invest*, Dutch *investeren*) (P23); *sélecter* for *sélectionner* (English *to select*, Dutch *selecteren*) (P59); *fleuve de données* (English *data river*, Dutch *rivier van data*).

What is remarkable is the distribution between TMs in Dutch and English. While calques and proper names are influenced by both languages, interjections are produced exclusively in Dutch. These fillers have the particularity of being able to fit anywhere in the sentence and not obey syntactic constraints (Poplack 1980). On the pragmatic level, they allow participants at intermediate levels (B1 to B2+) to avoid silences, maintain communication and release nervous tension. The lexical TMs produced to fill a gap in the participants' active vocabulary also come exclusively from Dutch. All English lexemes produced are professional terms. The integration of English into the working language of the federal administrative services in Belgium is a way to promote intercomprehension between French and Dutch speakers and to ease linguistic tensions by replacing French and Dutch with a language that occupies a "superior position in the globalized world system" (Blommaert 2011, 11).

3.3 Diastratic dimension of semantic specificity

Some of the lexical TMs present in our corpus are intended to fill a gap in the active French vocabulary of the participants. In an French examination context, the candidate's recourse to other languages is to be avoided. The participants are aware of this and when they switch to Dutch for this reason, they explicitly underline it and apologize for it ("je ne sais pas comment on dit ça en français", P15). In addition to this default usage, some switches are visibly conscious and assumed by

the participants who privilege contrast over fusion (Py 1995: 94) and justify their choice: "*transfer price*, on dit toujours comme ça" (P53). This type of justifications is interesting as an indication of a semantic-pragmatic motivation that explains which units of one language are most likely to be embedded in another. In this respect, Backus (2001) explains CS by semantic specificity:

> Codeswitching is likely for embedded language words that are high in specificity, where highly specific means both that the word has a highly specific referential meaning, and that its matrix language equivalent, if there is one, conjures up quite different connotations. (Backus 2001, 132)

Are the TMs we have identified semantically specific? Let us first take the case of proper nouns: the participants mention the names of training courses, projects, and television programs in their language of origin. This confirms the specificity hypothesis insofar as these names are specific to the highest degree, so that there is no name in the target language that is more appropriate. Less obvious is the case of the names of Belgian federal institutions, organizations or European funding programs, which exist in Dutch/English and French versions. During the exam, participants use the name in Dutch or English, sometimes accompanied by the French version: KBO-BCE (P15); *European defense fund* and not *Fonds de défense européen* (P18); *Kamer van inbeschuldigingstelling* and not *Chambre des mises en accusation* (P33); OECD and not OCDE (P53).

In the same way as these proper nouns are integrated into the exam discourse without hesitation or reformulation (Gafaranga and Torras, 2002), common nouns of English origin are used in French most often without particular precaution, sometimes justifying their terminological character ("on dit comme ça"): *un team* (P15, P 59, P67); *draft* (P39); *on boarding* (P38); *business partner RH* (P52); *template* (P66); etc. A particular case that is extremely clear in this respect is that of P17, a native French speaker, active in IT, whose entire professional lexicon is in English (14 terms identified).

The massive presence of these usages in English in the participants' discourse confirms Franceschini's (1998) view that there is no real switch from one system to another but that the speaker draws on their repertoire of multicodic resources as needed. In the case of our participants, the multicodic resources seem to be conventionalized indiscriminately in a professional repertoire of administrative language that corresponds to their community of practice (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999).

These resources are highly specific not because they belong to a particular semantic domain (Backus 2001), all candidates whatever their field of activity use them, but because they belong to the terminology usually used in the daily, often bilingual, work context of the participants. The specificity of these terms arises

from the context and from a form of routinization (Lamiroy 2008, about multiword expressions): these terms are not more semantically specific than the equivalents that often exist in French, but they are the ones that are used at work, those and not others, it is "how we say it". The use of these English terms in the context of a French exam is not questioned by either the candidates or the jury.

Of the 212 lexical TMs identified, at least 134 can be considered specific because they are proper nouns or terms in Dutch or English like *ombudsrail* (P6), *bottom up* (P10), *safe* (P30), *back office* (P47), *share point* (P52). 27 are produced by native speakers like *whitelist* (P4), *meeting* (P8), BOM for *bill of materials* (P17), *background* (P50), *junior account manager* (P55), ICT (P58). They represent the totality of TMs identified for these candidates. The other lexical TMs are mostly calques considered as faulty like *la ronde* for *le tour* (P20), *un complaint* pour *une plainte* (P23), *faillissement* for *faillite* (P36); and Dutch lexemes that fill a gap like *benoemd* for *nommé* (P20), *adviseur* for *conseiller/consultant* (P34), *schietstand* for *stand de tir* (P35), *gebouwen* for *bâtiments* (P37).

3.4 Lexical errors analysis

If in the most recent scientific studies CS is no longer considered as a stigma of an insufficient mastery of the language of communication, in the case of a language exam, the question of the error arises. We have so far considered the data in our corpus from the perspective of types of TMs. Let us now consider them from the perspective of error analysis, focusing on lexical errors. Granger and Monfort (1994) classify lexical errors into five types: *lexical-grammatical errors, syntagmatic errors, non-existing lexemes in L2, logical-semantic errors, stylistic errors.*

Lexical-grammatical errors include cases where the morpho-syntactic combinatorial rules of lexemes are not respected, whereas *syntagmatic errors* concern collocations. We have grouped these two types of errors in the same category because they seem to be part of the same continuum (see 3.1). We have also included more syntactic errors such as constituent order, which go somewhat beyond the lexical dimension studied by Granger and Monfort. The gender errors that Granger and Monfort put in the first category were not taken into account in our study, since the influence of another language cannot be determined with certainty.

Among the *non-existing lexemes in L2*, Granger and Monfort classify lexical borrowings and creations, as well as blends that combine the two processes (Ringbom 1987, cited in Granger and Monfort 1994), while they classify false friends among the *logical-semantic errors*, i.e. errors due to a similarity of form in the source language and the target language for words whose denotative meaning does not cover the same field or does not have the same extension. While

borrowings (*clean desk*, P72) and false friends (*coffres* 'trunks' for *valises* 'suitcases', Dutch *koffers*, P46; *lecture* 'reading' for *cours* or *conférence* 'lecture', P57) are clearly TMs, it is interesting to note that the boundary between lexical creations and blends is thin as soon as we look at the origin of lexical creations. If the creation of a lexeme is due to the influence of another language, which remains visible, there is necessarily a form of hybridity: *relaté* for *relié* (P21) or *spécificalement* for *spécifiquement* (P60), based on English *specifically* and *related to*, or the multiword expressions *mon français avec des cheveux dessus* (P33) and *la main du maître* (P46) which are modeled on Dutch *Frans met haar op* and *de hand van de meester*.

The fifth type of errors are *stylistic errors* based on register confusion. This type of error in our corpus is represented by the use of a familiar *tu* instead of *vous* when giving an example. This use can be due to the influence of Dutch or English, whereas the cross-linguistic origin of other forms of stylistic errors is more difficult to establish.

If we look at the cause of lexical errors, intralingual errors can be distinguished from interlingual errors due to the influence of other languages (Granger and Monfort 1994). Focusing exclusively on interlingual errors, we note that the underlying influence of English or Dutch can also produce errors considered intralingual notably by Carrío-Pastor and Mestre-Mestre (2014, 101): misordering of words (*cinq différentes directions* for *cinq directions différentes*, P6, Dutch *vijf verschillende directies*, English *five different directions*), misformation of words (*ennoyieux* for *ennuyeux*, P23, English *annoying*), erroneous collocations (*une fois par deux mois* for *une fois tous les deux mois*, P35, Dutch *één keer per twee maanden* ; *très essentiel* for *absolument/vraiment essentiel*, P48, Dutch *zeer essentieel*, English *very essential*). It is important to note that in the context of language exams, TMs are not considered interlingual errors if they result from the use of professional terminology.

An additional, and more unnoticed, effect of transcodic influence is hypercorrection. In contrast to studies on L1-internal hypercorrection (see e.g. Hubers *et al.* 2020), we are dealing here with cross-linguistic hypercorrection (Odlin 2003) resulting from the attempt to avoid the influence of another language on the language of the test. This hypercorrection manifests itself in our data by phonological peculiarities: [lo.tœʁ] (P6) that corresponds to *l'auteur* 'the author' instead of *la hauteur* 'the height' to avoid pronouncing the [h], which is a phoneme in Dutch, and only stops the liaison process in French; [pʁosesy] (P11) for *processus*, without the final [s] as the final consonants of French are often silent contrary to Dutch; *input* and *paddle* pronounced according to the rules of French phonology [ɛ̃put] by P3, [padɛl] by P23, whereas the usual pronunciation of these words in French is [input] and [padəl].

3.5 Proficiency-related factors

This raises the question of the link between CEFR proficiency level and TMs. Table 3 shows the distribution of different types of TMs across levels.

Table 3. Distribution of TM occurrences by type and CEFR level (see Appendix 1 for details by participant)

Level (amount of participants)	Combinatorics and syntax	Interjections	Lexical TMs	Spelling influence	Phonological influence	Phono-lexical influence	Total
A2 (1)	1		6		3	1	11
B1 (6)	8	1	23		1	2	35
B1+ (9)	7		23		4	6	40
B1-B2 (13+3)	6	5	42+7	3		4	67
B2 (7+3)	6+5	1	21+2	5	1	1	42
B2+ (11)	9	4	24		11	3	51
B2-C1 (3+1)			10+4				14
C1 (4+6)	2+2		7+16	8		1	36
C1 native (6)			27				27
Total for 73 participants	**39+7**	**11**	**183+29**	**16**	**20**	**18**	**323**

It is remarkable that lexical TMs are relatively evenly distributed among the levels. The visible predominance in absolute numbers for B1-B2 and B2+ is due to the larger number of participants. If we consider TMs in an exam context as a mistake to be avoided, it would seem logical that there is an inverse correlation between CEFR levels and the number of TMs: as participants' level increases, they use less TMs. If we consider TMs as an expression strategy for bilinguals, the correlation should be positive: as participants' level increases, they use more TMs. However, only a very weak correlation can be established between the CEFR level (coded from 1 for A2 to 9 for C1 native) and the number of TMs per participant: for all levels the coefficient of correlation is –0,1595. Without the native speakers,

it goes up to −0,21143. This is the highest value we can get and it's still below the baseline value of −0,5. The fact that the coefficient is negative is nevertheless more in line with the first option.

To find out whether participants produce more TMs of each type than expected across levels, the observed data must be compared with expected data, taking into account the very weak correlation that was identified. With a $\chi 2$ test, the frequencies of TMs of one type were compared with the frequencies of TMs in general, with a distinction between oral and written since some types of TMs are specific to oral and others to written exams (see 3.1). Tables 4 and 5 and Tables 6 and 7 show the results without the native speakers' data, because it is not exactly the same kind of proficiency level as the others. Note however that incorporating these data does not fundamentally change the results.

In oral exams, the only type of TMs that appears to be level-dependent is phonological influence with a significant rate of TMs at level B2+, regardless of the number of participants. The independence hypothesis is thus rejected only for this type of TM.

Table 4. Observed values and expected values for oral exams

Oral – Observed values								
Level	**Participants**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
A2	1	1	0	6	0	3	1	11
B1	6	8	1	23	0	1	2	35
B1+	9	7	0	23	0	4	6	40
B1-B2	13	6	5	42	0	0	4	57
B2	7	6	1	21	0	1	1	30
B2+	11	9	4	24	0	11	3	51
B2-C1	3	0	0	10	0	0	0	10
C1	4	2	0	7	0	0	1	10
Total	**54**	**39**	**11**	**156**	**0**	**20**	**18**	**244**
Oral – Expected values								
Level	**Participants**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
A2	1	0.72	0.20	2.89	0.00	0.37	0.33	11
B1	6	4.33	1.22	17.33	0.00	2.22	2.00	35
B1+	9	6.50	1.83	26.00	0.00	3.33	3.00	40
B1-B2	13	9.39	2.65	37.56	0.00	4.81	4.33	57

Table 4. *(continued)*

Oral – Expected values								
Level	**Participants**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
B2	7	5.06	1.43	20.22	0.00	2.59	2.33	30
B2+	11	7.94	2.24	31.78	0.00	4.07	3.67	51
B2-C1	3	2.17	0.61	8.67	0.00	1.11	1.00	10
C1	4	2.89	0.81	11.56	0.00	1.48	1.33	10
Total	**54**	**39**	**11**	**156**	**0**	**20**	**18**	**244**

Table 5. $\chi 2$ test for oral exams

Oral	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**
Khi^2	0.405541	0.418488	0.18802162	#DIV/0!	1.478E-06	0.50230608
Limit						
0.05	accepted	accepted	accepted	null	rejected	accepted
0.01	accepted	accepted	accepted	null	rejected	accepted

In written exams, only combinatorics and syntax seem to be level-dependent, but only with a 5% risk of error. The independence hypothesis cannot be rejected with a 1% risk of error. An abnormal frequency is identified at level B2. To validate these statistical data a larger sample study on a more controlled data set should be conducted.

Table 6. Observed values and expected values for written exams

Written – Observed values								
Level	**Participants**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
B1-B2	3	0	0	7	3	0	0	10
B2	3	5	0	2	5	0	0	12
B2-C1	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
C1	6	2	0	16	8	0	0	26
Total	**13**	**7**	**0**	**29**	**16**	**0**	**0**	**52**
Written – Expected values								
Level	**Participants**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
B1-B2	3	1.6	0	6.7	3.7	0	0	10
B2	3	1.6	0	6.7	3.7	0	0	12
B2-C1	1	0.5	0	2.2	1.2	0	0	4
C1	6	3.2	0	13.4	7.4	0	0	26
Total	**13**	**7**	**0**	**29**	**16**	**0**	**0**	**52**

Table 7. $\chi 2$ test for written exams

Written	CaS	IN	LTMs	SI	PI	PLI
Khi²	0.021158	#DIV/0!	0.15648641	0.598752	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Limit						
0.05	rejected	null	accepted	accepted	null	null
0.01	accepted	null	accepted	accepted	null	null

Nevertheless, two generalisations can be made. First, native speakers only produced specific lexical TMs, which provides guidance in determining which TMs result from a conscious choice and which are the unintentional product of a lack of knowledge. Second, for the remaining participants, calques, CS to fill a gap, and insertion of professional terms in English or Dutch are identifiable at all levels.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Our study of a paradoxical situation of exolingual communication where the usually useful multilingual communication strategies cannot be used shows that the TMs produced do not only compensate for a lack of lexical resources but can also be specific terms, mostly in English. Our first two assumptions are not confirmed. If Backus' (2001) hypothesis of semantic specificity is supported by our results, the diastratic component of this specificity could be further explored. In this respect, the parameters of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic context play a particularly important role. What explains the use of Dutch or English lexemes in French is the identity of the speakers who are all professionals working for Belgian federal administrations and parastatals. What will allow these uses is the integration of these lexemes into a professional terminology. The specificity then results from the habit, sometimes explicitly mentioned by the candidates, of using in their daily professional context mostly English terms, including with French speakers, to facilitate intercomprehension. These uses are routinized and French equivalents would seem inappropriate. In this particular context, the identity and objectives of the examiner must also be taken into account. His/her knowledge and experience allow him/her to determine whether the candidate is indeed using 'administrative language' or 'IT language' and whether he/she will be understood by French speakers in the same field. If this is the case, the TMs identified are admitted if they are legitimized by the diastratic conditions of use. Future work could usefully exploit these reflections to question the role and limits of social

conventions concerning the conditions of emergence and acceptability of TMs in general, and codeswitching in particular.

The identified lexical TMs, whether specific or not, are distributed fairly evenly across the skill levels, with a weak inverse correlation between level and the global number of TMs, but without a clear preference of certain TMs for certain levels being established with sufficient certainty, as our research setting is more suitable for a qualitative analysis. Our assumptions 3 and 4 are therefore only partially confirmed.

To see how our results regarding TMs in general question the boundaries of codeswitching, let's take a closer look at the calques in our data. Calques are at the heart of the question of the limits of codeswitching in that they are at the crossroads between switching and borrowing.

Linguistic studies generally try to distinguish clearly between CS and borrowing, according to three main types of criteria that come together: conventional borrowing vs. original creation (Muysken 2000), long-lasting borrowing vs. punctual or momentary CS (Auer 1995), completed change vs. ongoing speech behavior:

> While borrowing constitutes a completed contact-induced change, switching from one language to another constitutes a "contact-induced speech behavior" (Haspelmath 2009, 40) that occurs extensively in the talk of bilinguals.
>
> (Alvanoudi 2018: 5)

These criteria are based on a chronological distinction between switching in synchronicity and diachronic integration of the loanword. If the loanword is integrated in the language of interaction, there is no switch from one language to the other, the use of the word is conventional in the target language. But how can we know if this convention is really known and shared by all speakers, or at least those who participate in the interaction? And how can we determine the boundary between two languages? Since the distinction between languages such as English, Dutch and French is only theoretically simple, as stated by Kemp, it is even more difficult to apply it to distinguish between CS and integrated borrowings:

> People, including researchers, abstract this social construct, reify it, and understand a language as existing in fact, not just as utterances. The 'fact' is much easier to understand and refer to than the complexity of the reality. (Kemp 2009: 16)

To account for the complexity of reality, several sources, all imperfect, can be combined: reference dictionaries, which do not contain all the units of the language; the perception of the speakers, which is necessarily subjective and partial; and the integration/adaptation of lexemes to the host language, which is partly

random and present both in case of lexicalised borrowings and of codeswitching (Myers-Scotton 1995).

In lexicology, calques are classified as a particular type of structural borrowing (Haspelmath 2009). In this case, only lexicalized calques are considered, such as French *presqu'île*, copying the construction of Latin *paen-insula*, literally 'almost-island', for example (Haspelmath 2009, 39). In the case of punctual, non-lexicalized calques, the question of the distinction with the CS arises in the same way as one seeks to distinguish the complete lexicalized borrowing from the creative use of embedded words in another language. This distinction between cross-linguistic influences, like calque, and codeswitching is still unclear (Treffers-Daller 2009). In our data, one particular case of calque drew our attention: the one that shows static rather than dynamic interferences:

> For Grosjean (2001:7) dynamic interferences are —ephemeral deviations due to the influence of the [ ] deactivated language.|| Static interferences are those that have become part of the implicit grammar of an individual.
>
> (Treffers-Daller 2009, 61)

Calques such as *je suis responsable pour* (P6, P29, P51), *je travaille ensemble avec x personnes* (P12, P21, P51, P52, P60), *chez le service, chez la police* (P11, P14) are fossilized constructions characteristic of the sociolect of Dutch speakers of French. In this case, the calque is not a type of lexicalized borrowing in common French, but a characteristic expression of a diastratic variety of French. The influence that native French speakers can still perceive of an underlying code that transparently imprints the French of non-native speakers reveals a form of switch, insofar as the L1 is only partially inhibited (Abutalebi and Green 2008). While examiners immediately spot what they consider to be an error, it is likely that the generalisation of this error is explained by the fact that no one, neither French-speaking colleagues nor a fortiori other Dutch-speakers, correct, point out or even pick up this error. The perception of native speakers, linguistic analysis and reference discourse (dictionary, grammar) do not coincide. If native speakers seem to accept the structure, dictionaries do not yet integrate it, but linguistic analysis can show that usage is changing, not only in French-speaking Belgium, but also in the rest of the French-speaking world, under the influence of English: see, e.g.,"Je suis responsable pour le marketing" (https://pulse.microsoft.com/fr-ch/author/jared-spataro/); "OM-Rennes : "Je suis responsable pour les résultats actuels qui sont un désastre", déclare Villas-Boas" (*La Provence* 29/01/2021).

The theoretical and empirical problems of distinction between intralingual and interlingual error types (see 3.4) as well as the production of such calques, conventionalized in Dutch speakers' French as evidenced by their discursive integration without hesitation or justification (Gafaranga and Torras 2002), seem to

argue for a prototypical approach postulating both a continuum between languages and between types of cross-linguistic interactions, with fairly clearly identifiable poles (typically Dutch or French structures) and undecidable cases in between.

The perspective of the present study, which did not distinguish between the phenomena of CS and interference or transfer and took into account all words or expressions for which the influence of another language is perceptible, is particularly suitable to highlight this grey area between French and other languages.

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Appendix 1. Ranking of the data in the order of the participants

CaS = combinatorics and syntax; IN = interjections; LTMs = lexical TMs; SI = spelling influence; PI = phonological influence; PLI = phono-lexical influence.

			TM distribution						
Participant	**Level**	**Exam**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
P1	B2+	oral			2				2
P2	B2+	oral							0
P3	B2+	oral			1		1	1	3
P4	C1 (native)	oral			4				4
P5	C1	oral	1		4			1	6
P6	B2+	oral	4		5		2		11
P7	B2	oral			1				1
P8	C1 (native)	oral			1				1
P9	B2	oral			2				2
P10	B2-C1	oral			3				3
P11	B2+	oral	1	1	2		3		7
P12	B1-B2	oral	1		2			1	4
P13	B2+	oral	1		3		2	1	7
P14	C1	oral	1						1
P15	B2	oral	1		5			1	7
P16	B2+	oral	2	1	2		3		8
P17	C1 (native)	oral			14				14
P18	B2+	oral			4			1	5
P19	C1	oral							0
P20	B1-B2	oral	1	1	8			1	11
P21	B1+	oral	1		3			1	5
P22	B1+	oral			2				2
P23	B1+	oral	4		5		1	1	11
P24	B1-B2	oral			3				3
P25	B1-B2	oral			2			1	3
P26	B1+	oral	1		1			1	3
P27	B1-B2	oral			1				1
P28	B1-B2	oral	1	3	2				6
P29	B1-B2	oral	2		2				4
P30	B1	oral			1				1
P31	B1	oral	1		3			1	5
P32	B1	oral	1	1	3		1		6
P33	B1	oral			5			1	6
P34	B1+	oral			2		1	2	5
P35	B1	oral	5		4				9

			TM distribution						
Participant	**Level**	**Exam**	**CaS**	**IN**	**LTMs**	**SI**	**PI**	**PLI**	**Total**
P36	B1+	oral			1				1
P37	A2	oral	1		6		3	1	11
P38	B1-B2	oral			4				4
P39	B1+	oral			6		1	1	8
P40	B1+	oral					1		1
P41	B1-B2	oral			1				1
P42	B1-B2	oral		1	5				6
P43	B2	oral			1				1
P44	C1	oral			3				3
P45	B2-C1	oral			4				4
P46	B1-B2	oral	1		4				5
P47	B1-B2	oral			7			1	8
P48	B2+	oral	1						1
P49	B2-C1	oral			3				3
P50	C1 (native)	oral			1				1
P51	B2	oral	2	1	1		1		5
P52	B1	oral	1		7				8
P53	B2+	oral		2	3				5
P54	B1-B2	oral			1				1
P55	C1 (native)	oral			4				4
P56	B2+	oral			2				2
P57	B2	oral			3				3
P58	C1 (native)	oral			3				3
P59	B1+	oral	1		3				4
P60	B2	oral	3		8				11
P61	C1	written				1			1
P62	B2	written	3			1			4
P63	B2-C1	written			4				4
P64	C1	written			1				1
P65	B1-B2	written			1	1			2
P66	C1	written			3	2			5
P67	B1-B2	written			3	2			5
P68	C1	written			4	2			6
P69	C1	written	2		4				6
P70	B2	written	2						2
P71	B1-B2	written			3				3
P72	C1	written			4	3			7
P73	B2	written			2	4			6
Total			**39+7**	**11**	**183+29**	**16**	**20**	**18**	**323**

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