Conclusions

This book has offered an updated overview of lexical borrowing from English into Italian, filling a gap in the literature on English-Italian studies available to English-speaking readers. Although the focus has been exclusively on the Italian language, the phenomenon of language contact has been explored with a wider sociolinguistic perspective in mind, placing the English language at the core of an unprecedented phenomenon, that is, its spread as a lingua franca for international communication on a global scale and the continuous and pervasive outflow of Anglicisms in many world languages.

Focusing on Europe, the influence of the English language in all its varieties followed similar pathways across the Western European countries which experienced a comparable social history, often taking complex routes of transmission. France is the most conspicuous example of a country geographically close to Italy that greatly influenced Italian society culturally and linguistically until the 20th century, both for the shaping of the Italian language and for the transmission of English loanwords. An important step in the research of English-induced lexical borrowing is to continue comparing the outcomes of this influence across different languages and language families, both within and outside the European continent, taking into account the historical and sociolinguistic conditions that have made the assimilation of English more or less welcome.

A founding principle in the study of lexical borrowing is that the influence of any donor language depends on the relationship between the languages and cultures involved as well as the status and prestige of the model language in the recipient social context. The starting point of the study of language contact is the historical backdrop against which the speech communities involved established and fostered mutual exchanges. English-Italian contacts throughout the centuries were motivated by commercial reasons, political relations and interest in each other's culture, besides being favoured by geographical proximity (with Britain) and political consonance (with North America and the Western bloc). Thus, the status of English in Italy has always been that of a foreign language, taught and learned in the national school system since the mid-20th century. This means that the influence of English on Italian can be described in terms of an 'adstratum' relation, whereby a speech community transfers cultural products, primarily lexical items, onto another without any imposition and not leading to situations of bilingualism (but see below on 'bilingual elites').

A crucial question raised in various quarters of the Italian educational and academic environments is whether these social conditions will change in the new millenium. As a consequence of the importance of English in the job

market, its popularity as a foreign language in the school system and the increase of English-medium instruction in higher education, linguists and observers believe that English may gain a dominant role so that Italians may not acquire adequate competence in their own national language, especially as far as specialized and professional knowledge is concerned. A cultural debate is at work in present-day Italy, featuring, on the one hand, those who consider the use of Anglicisms in journalism, digital communication and advertising as a strategy to capture people's attention and convey a positive message of modernity, and those who are afraid that the Anglicization of the Italian language and culture will lead to a decline of the Italian national identity. It is feared that the shift of English from foreign to second language in some Nordic countries may take place in Italy too. Purist sentiments and alarmed attitudes towards the spread of English pervade popular and scholarly debates on the cultural hegemony of English. This phenomenon is still limited but is likely to increase, as the number of Italian competent speakers in English grows and new Italian-English 'bilingual elites' of professional groups, businessmen, economists and politicians emerge in Italian society.

A large part of this book has focused on the typology of lexical borrowings and the description of English-induced borrowing into Italian. Some linguists consider this area of studies less 'worthy' of attention than other phenomena that have deeper and more long-lasting consequences on the structures of a language, such as innovations in morpho-syntactic patterns, which are rarer and more resistant to integration. In fact, only a few instances of English-induced morpho-syntactic change have been identified in 'neo-standard Italian' (Berruto 2017), which signals that the influence of English has not (yet) penetrated the Italian language much beyond the lexical level. By contrast, the lexicon of a language is, by its very nature, extremely dynamic and volatile. New words or senses – about 20% of which are from English, as has been calculated (Adamo and Della Valle 2018) –are introduced in newspapers daily; yet most of them are bound to disappear once they have served their communicative goals. In short, neologisms testify to the creative vitality of a language, without affecting the structural pillars of the language.

The typology of lexical borrowings adopted in this book (Figure 3.1) is meant to apply to the analysis of borrowings in all languages, besides Italian. Reading through the list of borrowings and quoted words appended at the end of this volume, it is immediately clear that borrowings take many different varieties of formal 'disguise', the most evident of which is undoubtedly when the word has the same form as the English etymon (loanwords or Anglicisms 'proper') or remains 'recognizable English' despite some degree of orthographic, phonological or morphological integration.

The formal appearance of words greatly influences speakers' perceptions, which means that calques and semantic loans may no longer be recognized as borrowings, being made up of Italian elements and pronounced as Italian words. The degree of 'camouflage' of calques and semantic loans can be extended to derivatives from English bases with neo-classical etymology, which adds to the familiarity of the words to speakers of Latin-based languages. The neo-classical component is relevant not only to Italian but also to all European languages that were influenced by Latin and Greek in the formation of their lexicons, especially for the creation of specialist terminologies. The common classical substratum is directly responsible for the creation of internationalisms across European languages, which makes it very difficult to discern whether a word has come from English or not, a debate that has been exemplified by the Italian word *telefono*. Besides speakers' perceptions, from a linguistic point of view it is not irrelevant to tell apart borrowings from autonomous neological creations or semantic extensions of heritage words, a question with no definitive answer.

The alphabetical order of the final word list in this volume levels out two important dimensions of borrowings, namely age and currency (usage-oriented), and degree of technicality (user-oriented). The age of borrowings plays a major role, since lexical items that were borrowed before the 20th century are either fully assimilated into Italian (formally and semantically) or obsolete. We may argue that very old borrowings like *ostruzionismo* (from English *obstructionism*, 1894) have historically come from English but have become fully-fledged Italian words. Put differently, when a long-standing borrowing has been completely integrated and assimilated into the recipient language in form and meaning, it can be considered as part of Italian vocabulary and no more an Anglicism, since its remote origin is only historically relevant. The characteristic of currency is partly related to the age of the borrowing but especially to the degree of familiarity that a word has acquired for common speakers: the most current Anglicisms in Italian, and possibly in all the world's languages is *okay*. Despite this, its 'foreign-looking' form reveals its Englishness. A large number of 'core' Anglicisms have achieved a high level of currency. We may place borrowings along a continuum from very well-known to less-known items, depending on speakers' education and exposure to current facts and to the mass media. Finally, the dimension of technicality separates general Anglicisms from technical ones, which may be familiar only to specialists, although this distinction, like all the other dimensions of borrowings, is better described as a continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction.

The difficulties posed by such slippery typology of borrowings and their usage-related (currency) and user-related (technicality) characteristics must be considered and transposed into criteria of inclusion or exclusion by linguists dealing with the selection of borrowing for lexicographic purposes. In order to show differences

between various types of dictionaries, a comparative illustration of letter J entries recorded in general, medium-sized and specialized dictionaries of Anglicisms was carried out. This represents the first step of the methodology of loanword lexicography presented for the creation of GLAD (Figure 3.2), i.e., collecting candidate Anglicisms from already existing lexicographic sources and then applying the criteria of inclusion and exclusion set for this database (Table 5.1). The following step consists in checking their currency in archives of daily newspapers (e.g. *la Repubblica*), which, in our experience, is the most powerful index of inclusion. The frequency of the candidate Anglicism is subsequently looked up in corpora (CORIS and Italian Web 2020) and the Italian form and meaning is compared to the original English etymon in a general English dictionary. In this process, new Anglicisms, unrecorded by dictionaries, emerge and the analysis of candidate items starts again.

The method implemented for the compilation of the Italian component of GLAD has brought to light old and new problems that are relevant to loanword lexicography. The first regards the continuous inflow of borrowings into Italian and the need to keep collecting and evaluating candidate items to update the database. Nowadays the channel of transmission of neologisms is primarily the language of journalism, a key vehicle of linguistic innovation, through printed, audio-visual and social media sources. This makes the job of the lexicographer particularly hard and often frustrating, since a large number of collected potential Anglicisms are short-lived and bound to end up in the lexicographer's reject list. The expert eye may be able to discern Anglicisms that are likely to settle in the recipient language from potential Anglicisms related to transient fashions and events but amenable to obsolescence, and fleeting vocabulary that is used 'incidentally' for eye- and ear-catching purposes like casuals and code-switchings. On the other hand, the continuous inflow of neologisms causes a rapid ageing of a word list – a problem pointed out by Manfred Görlach for the compilation of the DEA, the closest precursor of GLAD. However, whereas the DEA was 'manually' compiled, GLAD is a dynamic database that can be updated by its compilers in real time. Digital technology has given modern lexicography the great advantage of allowing the storage and the retrieval of data with a mouse click and making data immediately available to users.

Another advantage of digital technology for modern lexicography is the open access to a great number of online resources, including dictionaries, newspaper archives and language corpora. As previously mentioned, the archives of daily newspapers that are freely querable online have proved to be extremely useful and flexible for checking spelling, currency, meaning and usage contexts of candidate Anglicisms. However, the problems posed by searches in newspaper archives are the need to look up words in all their possible orthographic forms, the difficulty to distinguish multiple meanings of polysemic words, to disambiguate English-Italian

homographs and to identify semantic loans. The same obstacle arises in the query of candidate Anglicisms in language corpora. Unless sophisticated techniques are applied to carry out corpus-driven searches (which was not done in the present study), corpora can be used for corpus-based investigations in order to check the frequency of search items. A pilot study conducted on CORIS and Italian Web 2020 on the same letter J entries looked up in the reference dictionaries proved that Anglicisms are indeed low-frequency items in Italian, as only a few Anglicisms of the letter J candidates scored a relative frequency above 1pmw. The unexpected match in the relative frequencies of Anglicisms obtained in the reference corpora, despite their great difference in size, suggests that relative frequency alone is not enough to set a benchmark for inclusion in dictionaries or even provide a convincing index of currency in the language. Our pilot study confirmed that a corpus-based study of Anglicisms, the majority of which belong to specialized domains, would yield more solid data with the use of specialized corpora (at the moment not yet available for Italian), giving priority to the most productive domains, namely ICT, economy and sport. Another dimension that appears to be unexplored so far is variation in the use of Anglicisms across different language registers. The majority of Anglicisms are characteristic of specialized communication among specific categories of speakers, such as journalists, economists, scientists and ICT experts. Therefore, we may envisage further progress in corpus compilation, which may assist linguists in the identification of the sociolinguistic and register distribution of Anglicisms.

By way of conclusion, we may try and provide a sufficiently satisfactory answer to the key question in English-induced lexical borrowing in Italian, i.e., the number of Anglicisms now present in the Italian language. Given the argumentation on typology, currency and technicality conducted at length in this volume, a partial answer may be that the number of Anglicisms in Italian ranges from 1,600 (DEA), 4,000 (*Nuovo Devoto-Oli 2022*) to 5,510 (GDU). At the moment the GLAD-Italian word list contains ca. 3,500 items. Although these figures are different, we may conclude that the overall 'impact' of English is not as high as it is normally argued, not only in the number of Anglicisms recorded in dictionaries but especially as far as the frequency of the Anglicisms circulating in Italian is concerned.

The methodology for research on lexical borrowing presented here seems to be viable, given the lexicographic and digital resources available for the Italian language. GLAD represents a strong tool for comparative research on English-induced lexical borrowing into the European and non-European languages that are already part of this project and will hopefully join in future. With the aid of digital technology and the commitment of expert lexicographers, more answers will be given to the many questions raised by research into lexical borrowing.