

**Beyond dance:
Inflectional marking
on terminological borrowings
in classical ballet**

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Abstract

Most classical ballet terminology comes from French. English and Slovene adopt the designations for ballet movements without any word-formational or orthographic modifications. This paper presents a study into the behaviour of such unmodified borrowings in written texts from the point of view of inflectional marking. The research involved two questions: the choice between the donor-language and recipient-language marking and the placement of the inflection in syntactically complex terms. The main point of interest was the marking of number. The research shows that only Slovene employs native inflections on the borrowed terms while English adopts the ready-made French plurals. The behaviour of the terms in Slovene texts was further examined from the points of view of gender/case marking and declension class assignment. The usual placement of the inflection is on the postmodifier closest to the headword.

Key words

classical ballet, terminology, borrowing, inflectional marking, English, Slovene

Poza tańcem: Fleksyjne znakowanie zapożyczeń w terminologii klasycznego baletu

Abstrakt

Większość klasycznej terminologii baletowej pochodzi z języka francuskiego. Angielski i słoweński przyswajają nazwy baletowe bez żadnych modyfikacji słowotwórczych lub ortograficznych. W artykule przedstawiono badanie takich niezmodyfikowanych zapożyczeń w tekstach pisanych z punktu widzenia fleksyjnego znakowania. Badania obejmowały dwie kwestie: wybór pomiędzy oznaczeniem języka źródłowego a języka odbiorcy oraz fleksja w terminach składniowo złożonych. Głównym punktem zainteresowania była kategoria liczby. Badania pokazały, że tylko Słoweńcy używają rodzimej odmiany zapożyczonych terminów, podczas gdy angielski przyjmuje gotowe francuskie formy gramatyczne liczby mnogiej. Terminy w tekstach słoweńskich zostały dodatkowo zbadane pod kątem przypisania rodzaju/przypadków i klasy deklinacyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe

balet klasyczny, terminologia, zapożyczanie, fleksja, angielski, słoweński

1. Introduction

The origins of classical ballet go back to 15th-century Renaissance Italy, but this form of dance developed most prominently in the French court under King Louis XIV. The Sun King, who was a passionate dancer himself and a great lover of art in general, founded the Royal Academy of Dance (today's Paris Opera Ballet) in 1661. This is where the designations for ballet movements were created that were then adopted by languages all around the globe in their unchanged French form, a reflection of French dominance in the spheres of art and science (cf. Jackson and Zé Amvela 2007: 46). French terms remain the

norm in ballet education and training, and dancers who have used them from a young age perceive them as the most natural part of the ballet jargon.

Terms are conventional symbols that occur in special language discourse to designate concepts pertaining to special disciplines and activities (Cabr  1998: 80-81). A term that belongs to a special subject field is not necessarily restricted to that field and may be used in other fields as well (Cabr  1998: 80-81). The lexicon of a special language also contains items of general reference, which are not specific to any discipline and should be perceived as words rather than terms (Sager 1990: 19).

From a formal point of view, terms behave very much like words and are governed by the same rules of the language system. In phrasal terms (terminological phrases), words combine according to the same rules of syntax as those in (non-terminological) complex phrases. However, phrasal terms are not free syntactic combinations but lexical structures with a terminological value (Cabr  1989: 85-86, 90-93).

From a communicative point of view, terms are clearly distinct from words. For an expert in a special subject field, a term is first and foremost the name of a concept which they want to communicate: thus a term must be clear, unambiguous, transparent and consistent (Cabr  1998: 11-12, Sager 1990: 57). The extent to which the term conforms to the rules of the language system is of secondary importance. Or, as observed by Cabr  (1998: 11-12), “[s]pecialists use terminology regardless of whether a term is appropriate within a particular language system or not”.

The terms belonging to the field of classical dance are a case in point. Languages do not invent their own designations for ballet movements but adopt the established French terms irrespective of their phonetic, orthographic and morphosyntactic “appropriateness” within the system of the recipient language. Tuleja (1998), whose dictionary includes French ballet terms (alongside Italian musical terms) as “special categories”, refers to them as “foreignisms”. However, the designation “borrowing”

will be used throughout the paper following the view that the terminological distinction between modified borrowings (loan-words) and unmodified ones (foreignisms), which is based on the German tradition (cf. *Lehnwörter* vs. *Fremdwörter*), is often superfluous and need not be observed (Fischer 2008: 9, Haspelmath 2009: 43).

Terminological borrowings pose an exciting challenge to a linguist studying the way(s) borrowings get adapted to the system of the recipient language. Sager (1990: 90) mentions the possibility of direct borrowing with the “highly specialised and relatively rare occurrence of naming internationally agreed concepts”, especially when the term can be easily integrated into the structure of the recipient language. Haspelmath (2009: 42) points out that the degree of adaptation varies because the properties of the words in the donor language often do not fit into the system of the recipient language. The findings by Schultz (2012: 498), who investigated the French contribution to English vocabulary in the 20th century, show that highly specialized technical terms are adapted to a considerably smaller degree than borrowings belonging to the core vocabulary.

The present paper is concerned with the behaviour of classical ballet terminology from the point of view of inflectional marking in the recipient language. The French terms, which are highly specialized, occur in English and Slovene¹ without any word-formational or orthographic adaptations. The study presented by the paper looks into the strategies adopted by the two languages in the marking of the inflectional categories. The research questions and the methodology are presented in section 3.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a brief insight into the structure of ballet terms. Sections 3.1–3.3 focus on the study itself, presenting the research questions, the methodology and the findings. The findings are discussed in

¹ The exceptions in this respect are the naturalized forms *arabeska* and *pirueta*. See also section 4.

more detail in section 4. The main findings are summarized in section 5, the conclusion.

2. The structure of ballet terms

Figure 1 shows a movement called *battement tendu jeté*. The dancer throws the working leg to a height of 30-45 degrees and closes it behind the supporting leg. This results in a beating movement (*battement*) of the working leg, which is outstretched (*tendu*) and thrown (*jeté*) in the air. The movement can be executed to the side, to the front and to the back.

In accordance with the view that the structure of phrasal terms is analogous to that of complex phrases (cf. Cabré 1998), *battement tendu jeté* contains a headword and two postmodifiers. The headword names the basic type of movement and the postmodifiers specify its character:

(1)	H	PostM	PostM
	battement	[tendu]	[jeté]
	‘beating’	‘outstretched’	‘thrown’
		CHARACTER	

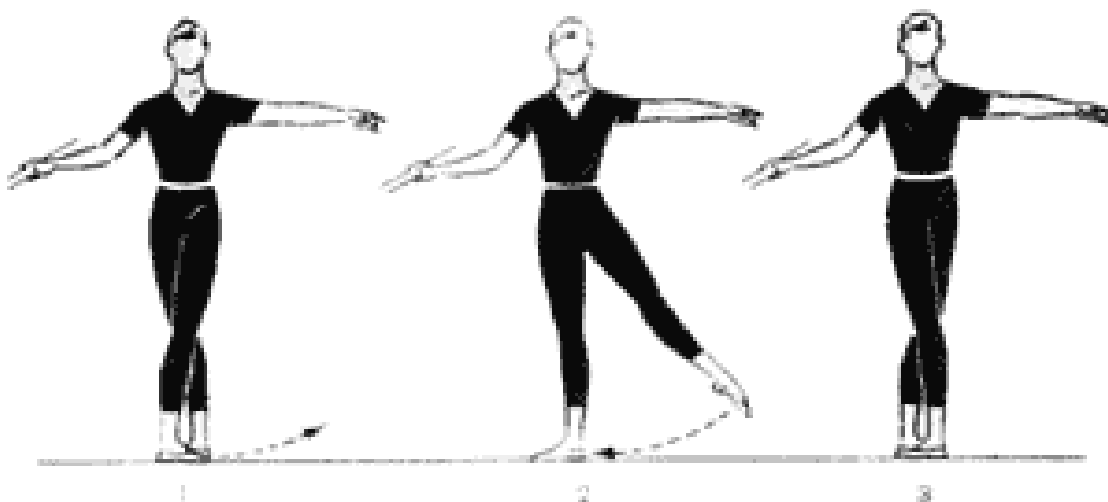


Figure 1
Battement tendu jeté

The terms may become quite complex, possibly containing premodifiers and several postmodifiers pertaining to different aspects of the designated movement. For example:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| (2) | [grand] | battement | [jeté] | [piqué] | [en croix] |
| | 'large' | 'beating' | 'thrown' | 'pricked' | 'cross-shaped' |
| | EXTENT | | CHARACTER | | PATH |
| | | | | | |
| (3) | [double] | rond | [de jambe] | [en l'air] | [en dehors] |
| | 'double' | 'circle' | 'of leg' | 'in the air' | 'outwards' |
| | QUANTITY | | BODY PART | MEDIUM | DIRECTION |

The order of postmodifiers reflects their position on a central-to-peripheral cline. *En croix* in (2) is a peripheral modifier referring to the front-side-back-side-front pattern in which the working leg moves along its path. Similarly, *en dehors* in (3) indicates movement in an outward direction (as opposed to *en dedans*). *En l'air* in (3) means that the leg moves through the air (as opposed to *par terre*). It is less peripheral than *en dehors*, but still not as central as *de jambe*.

The premodifiers express extent and measure. *Grand* in (2) indicates that the working leg is at a height of 90 degrees or more, and *double* in (3) refers to the number of circles. *Double*, however, differs in function from the numeral *two*. It has a classifying function and is used to designate a sequence of two small circles executed in the air. The difference between the classifier *double* and the determiner *two* is easiest to explain in the context of *pirouettes*: a *double pirouette* is not two *pirouettes* but a single *pirouette* involving two complete turns. It is, of course, possible to execute two *double pirouettes*, i.e. two separate *pirouettes* involving two turns each.

As to their form, the majority of postmodifiers are past participles. They refer largely to leg action and the way it defines the movement. Another well-established group of postmodifiers is prepositional phrases, which may express central as well as more peripheral properties. Some PPs headed by *de* ('of') define

the movement on the basis of comparison (e.g. *pas de chat* designates a leap resembling that of a cat). For illustration:

- (4) (a) *battement tendu* ('outstretched') / *fondu* ('melted') / *frappé* ('struck') / *soutenu* ('sustained')
- (b) *pas jeté* ('thrown') / *échappé* ('slipped') / *fermé* ('closed') / *assemblé* ('brought together')
- (c) *pas de chat* ('of cat') / *de basque* ('of tambourine') / *de bourrée* ('of hurrying')
- (d) *rond de jambe par terre* ('of leg' + 'on floor')
- (e) *tour en dedans sur le cou-de-pied* ('outwards' + 'on the ankle')

It should be noted at this point that participial postmodifiers can take over as heads and get reclassified as nouns. For example, *battement fondu* turns into *fondu*, and the lengthy *pas assemblé soutenu en dehors en tournant* becomes *assemblé soutenu en dehors en tournant*. They can be further converted into verbs (*to fondu* / *assemble* / *frappé* etc.).

3. The study

3.1. Research questions

As borrowings from French, ballet terms present a problem for inflectional marking in both languages under research (English and Slovene). For example, in order to refer to a series of movements, the given term must be used in the plural. One option is retaining the French plural, where all adjectival and participial modifiers acquire plural markers through agreement with the head (e.g. *battements tendus jetés, grands battements jetés piqués en croix, doubles ronds de jambe en l'air en dehors*). The other option is conforming to the recipient language marking. It should be noted at this point that Slovene, like French, exhibits modifier – head agreement, but that plays no role in the present study. For illustration, the Slovene plural of *grand battement* is *grand battementĭ* and not **grandĭ battementĭ* (cf. *grands battements* in French). The ad-

jective *grand* ('big') behaves like an invariable constituent of a compound and is not marked inflectionally through agreement.

The problem posed by adopting the recipient language marking lies in the placement of the inflection. In noun phrases (syntactic units) the inflectional marker is placed on the headword. In noun compounds (lexical items) it is usually attached to the last element because the compound is perceived as a simple noun (Quirk et al. 1985: 313). Many compounds, however, resemble phrases in that one of their component parts can be recognized as the head. In cases where the head is not the last item in the compound, the inflection may be attached to the head rather than the last element. A case in point is the pluralization of compounds that include postmodifiers or final particles, e.g. *notary public* > *notaries public*, *man-of-war* > *men-of-war*, *passer-by* > *passers-by* (Quirk et al. 1985: 313). Some of them allow both plural forms (e.g. *court martial* > *courts martial* or *court martials*).

As "lexical structures" (Cabr e 1998: 91), ballet terms display properties of both syntactic units and lexical items, so it is reasonable to expect that the inflection will be placed either on the headword or on the last item. For illustration:

- (5) (a) Do four *battements*̄ *tendu jet e* / *battement* *tendu jet e*s to the side. ↔ [Pl.]
 (b) Naredi štiri *battement e* *tendu jet e* / *battement* *tendu jet e*je vstran. ↔ [masc. Acc. Pl.]

Sentence (5b) is the Slovene equivalent of sentence (5a). As is evident from the notation in (5b), the Slovene inflection shows not only number but also gender and case distinctions. The form of the inflection depends on the declension class that the term belongs to in Slovene. This accords with Haspelmath's (2009: 42) observation that "languages with gender and inflection classes need to assign each word to a gender and inflection class".

Taking all of this into consideration, the following research questions have been formulated:

- (i) To what extent does the given recipient language (i.e. English or Slovene) retain the donor language (i.e. French) plural forms?
- (ii) What is the usual placement of the (recipient language) inflection in complex terms?
- (iii) What are the challenges of gender and case marking in Slovene?

3.2. Methodology

In order to investigate the morphological behaviour of terminological borrowings in the field of classical ballet, a selection of literature on classical ballet technique was made in which ballet terms occurred in grammatical environments supporting the use of inflectional forms (i.e. the plural form and, specifically for Slovene, also the dual form and the case forms other than the nominative). Nine works were selected as sources for the English part of the research and six works for the Slovene. It should be noted at this point that Slovene literature in the field (be it original texts or translations) is sadly scarce. The English sources included four translations from Russian, and the Slovene sources included one translation from Russian and one translation from French. Vaganova's seminal textbook on the Russian method of classical ballet was used, in translation, in both parts of the research (3rd and 5th editions respectively). All sources are listed in the Sources section.

In accordance with Cabré (1998: 83), who points out that the written form is of primary importance for terminology because it forms the basis for standardization, the research was restricted to written use. The sources were searched for ballet terms and their inflectional forms, which were then examined with regard to the research questions. The purpose of the research was not to perform a quantitative analysis but rather to recognize the prevailing patterns and tendencies.

3.3. Findings

The research produced a rather unexpected result: the English sources contained almost exclusively French plurals (e.g. *battements tendus jetés*), suggesting that the English plural is practically non-existent in writing. The only exceptions in this respect are three instances of English marking, all coming from the same source (Fay 2003): *two slow battement tendus*; *one or two battement fondus*; *all the demi-rond de jambes*. The inflection is placed on the (only) postmodifier. The rest of the pluralized terms in the same source are French plurals.

The Slovene sources, by contrast, show a predominance of Slovene marking. In fact, French plurals are restricted to use in isolation (titles, section headings, captions, etc.). The Slovene inflection carries not only information about number, but also information about gender and case. As far as its placement is concerned, the findings are as follows:

- (i) The plural – dual distinction plays no role in the placement of the inflection.
- (ii) The inflection is normally placed on the first PostM (e.g. *grand battement tenduji jeté piqué*; *rond de jambi par terre en dedans*).
- (iii) The inflection is placed on the headword in the following cases:
 - with a less central prepositional PostM (e.g. *rondi en dehors*; *touri sur le cou-de-pied*);
 - with a nominalized participle as H (e.g. *assembléji soutenu*; *developpéji tombé*).
- (iv) The inflection is never placed on the headword in *rond de jambe* (*rond de jambi*) and in *pas+X* (e.g. *pas de bourréeji*; *pas échappéji*).

The above tendencies have been observed also with case marking on singular terms (e.g. *kot pri² battement tenduju jeté piqué* [masc. Loc. Sg.]). Nevertheless, singular terms seem to allow

² *Kot pri* corresponds to ‘as in’. The preposition *pri* (literally ‘at’) governs the locative case.

case marking on less central PostMs more readily than plural ones (e.g. *kot pri rond en dehorsu* [masc. Loc. Sg.] vs. *kot pri rondih en dehors* [masc. Loc. Pl.]).

Zero case marking occurs with the feminine terms belonging to declension class III (e.g. *kot pri arabesque/pirouette /attitudeØ/preparationØ* [fem. Loc. Sg.]). The research has shown that it is also common (yet optional) with nominalized PPs functioning as complements to prepositions (e.g. *kot pri en dedansØ/par terreØ/sur le cou-de-piedØ*).

Gender class assignment follows the gender in French. Accordingly, most ballet terms are treated as masculine and belong to masculine declension class I. The terms *arabesque*, *attitude*, *pirouette* and *préparation* are treated as feminine and belong to the feminine declension class III. Nevertheless, the research has shown that an occasional gender shift occurs with *attitude* and *préparation*, which can be reclassified as masculine (e.g. *kot pri attitudu/préparationu* [masc. Loc. Sg.]).

4. Discussion

The findings point to two diametrically opposite strategies of expressing the grammatical number of terminological borrowings in the recipient language. Slovene takes a foreign term and equips it with a native inflection, whereas English employs the foreign plural. However, the strategy in English is not adopting the singular term and applying the French marking to it but rather adopting the ready-made plural form and inserting it into the text. As to the English marking, only three instances have been found, all of them marked for the plural on the (only) postmodifier. Needless to say, they are hardly of any relevance to the study since they are too few in number to allow any generalizations or conclusions.

In Slovene, the overall tendency is to place the inflection on the central postmodifier closest to the head, which supports the view that the two together are treated as a unit. This further manifests itself in the postmodifier occasionally taking over the role of the head (e.g. *pas assembléji soutenu* > as-

sembléji soutenu [masc. Nom. Pl.]). Conversely, PPs as post-modifiers do not follow this pattern (e.g. ?*tour en dedansi sur le cou-de-pied* > **en dedansi sur le cou-de-pied*; correct: *tourj en dedans sur le cou-de-pied* [masc. Nom. Pl.]) although they can be found in nominal function as complements to prepositions (e.g. *kot pri en dedansu/sur le cou-de-piedu* [masc. Loc. Sg.]; zero case marking is also an option - see below). *Rond de jambe* and *pas de bourrée* are obviously perceived as compounds, with the inflection invariably placed on the last element.

As to the gender and case marking, nominalized PPs seem to allow overt as well as zero marking (e.g. *kot pri en dedansu* /*kot pri en dedansØ* [masc. Loc. Sg.]). Nonetheless, the absence of overt marking on PPs following prepositions can also be due to ellipsis (*tako pri touru en dehors kot pri ~~touru~~ en dedans* ‘in *tour en dehors* as well as *en dedans*’).

Zero marking is used with the feminine terms *arabesque*, *pirouette*, *attitude* and *preparation*. *Attitude* and *preparation* are occasionally reclassified as masculine (e.g. *kot pri attitudu* [masc. Loc. Sg.]). As pointed out by the Slovene translators of Vaganova’s textbook in the foreword, this shift in gender is in fact very common among dancers and is found with all four terms (Vaganova 1999: 9-10). *Arabesque* and *pirouette* resist reclassification in writing. Both have naturalized Slovene counterparts (*arabeska* and *pirueta* respectively), which are avoided in a strictly technical written use. The Slovene nouns belong to the feminine declension class I and obtain overt inflections (e.g. *kot pri arabeski/pirueti* [fem. Loc. Sg.]).

The use of ballet terms in speech is beyond the scope of the present study, but it can be assumed that textbooks and technical manuals do not give the real picture of what is actually said in class. In connection with the gender shift, for example, another phenomenon can be observed in speech: a feminine term is reclassified as masculine, but receives no overt marking (see (6c) below). Compare:

- (6) (a) S tvojo *preparation*Ø nisem zadovoljna. ↔ [fem. Instr. Sg.]
 (b) S tvojim *preparationom* nisem zadovoljna. ↔ [masc. Instr. Sg.]
 (c) S tvojim *preparation*Ø nisem zadovoljna. ↔ [masc. Instr. Sg.]
 (teacher to dancer) 'I'm not satisfied with your *preparation*.'

In (6b) and (6c), the possessive pronoun *tvoj* ('your') obtains its masculine form through agreement with the head, which means that *preparation* must be masculine in both sentences. The feminine *preparation* has been reclassified as a masculine noun that can be declined according to declension class I (6b) or declension class III (6c). This variation in declension class is in fact recognized by the Slovene grammar: masculine nouns belonging to declension class III may be declined also according to declension class I, especially when the gender is not clear due to the absence of a modifier or predicator showing agreement (Toporišič 2004: 289, Toporišič et al. 2001: 88, 93).

Discrepancies between written and spoken usage are also observed in the placement of the inflection. With a view towards finding implications for further research, a short experiment was conducted. Nine ballet teachers, all native speakers, were asked to insert the term *grand battement jeté piqué* in the sentence *Naredi dva X* ('Do two X').³ The sentence was meant as an instruction to be uttered in class. The results were as follows. Eight teachers placed the inflection on the last item ($X = \textit{grand battement jeté piquéja}$), and one used no overt marking ($X = \textit{grand battement jeté piqué}$). Crucially, not one of the teachers placed the inflection on the first postmodifier ($X = \textit{grand battement jetéja piqué}$), a result that does not accord with the findings pertaining to written texts.

³ The author of the paper hereby thanks the Conservatory of Music and Ballet Ljubljana (*Konservatorij za glasbo in balet Ljubljana*) and *Pirueti*, a private ballet school in Ljubljana, for their kind assistance. Special thanks go to the Conservatory for granting free access to the library.

As to the treatment of French terms in English, the research has shown that almost exclusively French plurals occur in writing. Nonetheless, the number distinction is easily lost in speech because the French plural marker *-s* is not pronounced unless the next word begins with a vowel. It can therefore be assumed that English marking is preferred in speech for the sake of clarity.

All these observations call for a complementary study focusing on the behaviour of ballet terms in speech, that is, in oral communication between dance professionals. This, however, raises some methodological issues that require careful consideration. A major challenge lies in creating a reliable database. Ballet class recordings, for instance, cannot ensure an adequate number of phrasal terms needed for the analysis. *Two jetés to the front, two to the side, two to the back* – this is what is usually heard in class; it is rather unlikely that a basic movement like *battement tendu jeté* will be referred to by its full name. Gapfill tasks and acceptability judgement tasks look more promising in this respect, for they can, in principle, include all existing terms. Nonetheless, a possible drawback of such methods could be the informants' preoccupation with the rules and failing to produce the most natural solutions.

5. Conclusion

English and Slovene employ opposite strategies in expressing the grammatical number of French terminological borrowings in the field of classical ballet. The terms retain the French marking in English texts but acquire the Slovene marking in Slovene texts. The Slovene inflection shows not only number, but also gender and case distinctions, and is normally placed on the postmodifier closest to the head. A few terms display a shift in gender (from feminine to masculine) and/or declension class (from 1st declension with overt marking to 3rd declension with zero marking).

The findings of the study pertain to written use, so any generalizations are open to challenge since the grammatical forms

occurring in writing do not necessarily correspond to those used in oral communication. Informal discussions with ballet teachers, as well as the author's own experience in the field, point towards discrepancies between writing and speech in this respect and offer implications for further research.

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