BORROWINGS IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD

Mirela Copcă[*]

mireimihalache@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper reveals the great social, political and cultural factors which have influenced the English language: the English language of today reflects in its entire development, the social, political and cultural history of the English people. The history of the English language is the history of the foreign influences that have affected it. Nevertheless, in spite of the extensive foreign influences, English has always remained a Germanic language.*

I want to point the wealth of the English vocabulary, together with the sources from which the vocabulary has been enriched and is being enriched. In this field, we are struck by the similarity between a large number of English and German words (house- Haus, winter – Winter, good – Gut, have- Haben, etc.), on the one hand, and between some English and French words (cousin- cousin, table-table, village- village, change-changer, etc.), on the other hand.

Moreover, the study of the evolution of English will enable us to grasp the full beauty and significance of the important literary works of different periods, e.g. G. Chaucer in Middle English, W. Shakepeare in Early Modern English, etc.

"the aesthetic appreciation of Shakespeare and Milton is immensely quickened by an understanding of their language; the exact shades of meaning of their words and phrases become clear only through the consciousness of the semantic changes in the language". C.L. Wrenn[1]

Keywords: *language, evolution of english, words, phrases, literary works*

Sources of the English Vocabulary

Etymologically the vocabulary of the English language is heterogenous and diversified. It consists of two layers - the **native stock of words** and the **borrowed stock of words**. Numerically the borrowed stock of words is considerably larger than the native stock of words. In fact native words comprise only 30% of the total number of words in the English vocabulary but the native words form the bulk of the most frequent words actually used in speech and writing. Besides, the native words have a wider range of lexical and grammatical valency, they are highly polysemantic and productive in forming word clusters and set expressions.

Native words are divided into 3 basic groups:

1) The words which have cognates (words of the same etymological root, of common origin) in many Indo-European languages. For ex: family relations: *father* (Vater), *mother*, *daughter*, *son*; parts of human body: *foot*, *heart*, *nose*; *wolf*, *cow*, *cat*; numerous verbs: *stand*, *sit*; *the numerals* from *1* to *100*; heavenly bodies: *sun*, *moon*, *star*.

2) The words, which have cognates with words of the language of the Germanic group. Some of the main groups of Germanic words are the same as in the Indo-European group.

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[*] Lecturer, "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Bucharest

[1] Charles Leslie Wrenn (1895–1969) was a British scholar. He became Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Oxford in 1945, the successor in the chair of J.R.R. Tolkien, and held the position until 1963. Wrenn was a Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford. He was also a member of the Oxford literary discussion group known as the "Inklings", which included C. S. Lewis and Tolkien.

For ex: parts of human body: *head, hand, arm, finger*; animals: *bear, fox*; natural phenomena: *rain, frost*; human dwellings and furniture: *house, bench*; adj: *green, blue, old, good, small, high*; verbs: *see, hear, tell, say, drink, give.*

3) The English element proper. Ex.: *bird, boy, girl, woman, lord, always.*

The Anglo-Saxons, the Romans, the Danish and Norwegian invaders, the Norman French conquerors, the prestige of the ancient Latin and classical Greek have contributed a lot to the formation of the English vocabulary. An insatiable borrower, English seems to have welcomed words from over 120 languages throughout the world. Moreover, the process of borrowing is likely to continue as the English language "seems to be spreading its tentacles to reach and borrow from less and and less known languages (Jackson and Ze Amvela 2000)[2]. Among the traditional suppliers, French, Japanese and Spanish still occupy front positions, while Latin has relatively less to offer nowadays. Instead of borrowing directly from Latin, the English language often coins new Latinate words from English morphemes originally from Latin.

Borrowing is a consequence of cultural contact between two language communities. Borrowing of words can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, but often there is an asymmetry, such that more words go from one side to the other. In this case the source language community has some advantage of power, prestige and/or wealth that makes the objects and ideas it brings desirable and useful to the borrowing language community. For example, the Germanic tribes in the first few centuries (A.D.) adopted numerous loanwords from Latin as they adopted new products via trade with the Romans. Few Germanic words, on the other hand, passed into Latin.

Loanwords are words adopted by the speakers of one language from a different language (the source language). A loanword can also be called a borrowing. The abstract noun borrowing refers to the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. "Loan" and "borrowing" are of course metaphors, because there is no literal lending process. There is no transfer from one language to another, and no "returning" words to the source language. They simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the one they originated in.

Borrowing may be internal and external. The internal one is concerned with the importance of: dialectal terms, or of archaisms (words belonging to earlier stages of the respective language), as opposed to the external type, concerning loans/loanwords proper (terms coming from foreign languages).

Some examples for the first category: *Scottish hoot moon!, kirk*, etc.; for the second category: *casemate, machicolation, harquebus, methinks, forsooth, by my halidom!* – in some literary works, archaisms can be used to lend a certain "historical atmosphere"; although at times they can be improperly used, being called 'ghost-words'. As for the third category, foreign words in English, here are a few examples: *spaghetti, pizza, au revoir, fortissimo, chilli con carne, kamikaze, kibbutz.*

A loan-word proper is the form which is taken over directly – nearly always with a certain degree of phonological and/or morphological adaptation. When the foreign form itself is not taken over, but only the meaning of a native form is shifted to correspond to that of a foreign word/ phrase, we have to do with the process called calque/

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[2] Jackson H. & Zé Amvela, E. *Words, Meaning and Vocabulary: An Introduction to Modern English Lexicology,* London & New York: Cassell, 2000.

decalcomania/ loan translation (some linguists simply call it loan-shift): marriage of convenience (< Fr. Marriage de convenance), that goes without saying (<Fr. Cela va sans dire), superman (< Ger. Űbermensch). When a part of a loan is reshaped in order to fit into the general patternings of the native language, we have a loan-blend (in fact, a partial calque), e.g. *restaurant* with a simulated French ending – [ˈrestərȯ] or [ˈrestəränt].

But the most comprehensive typology of loans is provided by David Crystal (in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*), were the following classes are distinguished: loan words, where both form and meaning are borrowed, or 'assimilated', loan blends, where the meaning is borrowed, but only part of the form, loan shift, where the meaning is borrowed and the form is native, e.g. *restaurant* as [restərənt], and loan translation, where the morphemes in the borrowed word are translated item by item, also known as calque.

When words migrate from one language into another, they tend to adjust themselves to their new environment and get adapted to the norms of the recipient language. The changes that they undergo often erase their foreign features, and, finally, they are assimilated. Sometimes the process of assimilation develops to the point when the foreign origin of a word is quite unrecognizable. Thus, even some "common core" words in the English language – *cup, cat, take, dinner* – are not English by origin. Other words, though well assimilated, still bear traces of their foreign background, e.g. *distance, development, sky, skin, police, regime.*

Borrowed words are adapted phonetically, grammatically and semantically. The lasting nature of phonetic adaptation may be observed in the comparison of Norman French borrowings with later ones. Thus, words such as *table, plate, courage and chivalry* bear no phonetic traces of their French origin. By contrast, words as *valise, mantinee, café, ballet* still sound suprisingly French.

Grammatical adaptation consists in a complete change of the former paradigm of the borrowed word. Nouns are likely to adopt a new system of declension, while verbs will be conjugated according to the rules of the recipient language. However, while grammatical adaptation was unsuccessful with English Renaissance borrowings – phenomenon (singular) / phenomena (plural form), criterion (singl) / citeria (pl.), datum (singl) / data (pl), earlier Latin borrowings such as *street, plum or wall* were fully adapted.

The adjustment to the system of meanings of the vocabulary is called semantic adaptation. Generally, borrowing is caused either by the necessity to fill a gap in the vocabulary or by a chance to add a synonym conveying an old concept in a new way. Nevertheless, the process of borrowing is not always purposeful, logical and efficient. Sometimes a word may be borrowed "blindly" and such accidental borrowings are generally rejected by the vocabulary. Interestingly, other borrowings manage to take root by the process of semantic adaptation. The adjective *large*, for instance, was borrowed from French in the meaning "broad, wide", although English already had the word 'wide'; moreover, the adjective *large* did not add any shades of meaning to the native 'wide'. And yet it was not rejected, entering another synonymic group with the general meaning 'big in size'. At first the word was applied to objects characterized by vast horizontal dimensions, thus retaining a trace of its former meaning, and now, although still bearing some features of that meaning, is actually competing with *big*. Used figuratively, *large* implies broadness, generosity and comprehensiveness (take the large view), *big* suggests importance and impressiveness but often in contrast to genuine worth.

Another interesting word is *gay*, which was borrowed from French, in several meaning at once: 'noble of birth', 'bright, shining', 'multi-coloured'. Rather soon it shifted its ground developing the meaning 'joyful, high-spirited' and thus it became a synonym of the native *merry*. *Gay* suggests a lightness of heart or liveliness of mood that is openly manifested, while *merry* suggests, even more than gay, convival animated enjoyment.

It is part of the cultural history of English speakers that they have always adopted loanwords from the languages of whatever cultures they have come in contact with.

There have been few periods when borrowing became unfashionable, and there has never been a national academy in Britain, the U.S., or other English-speaking countries to attempt to restrict new loanwords, as there has been in many continental European countries.

The situation of borowing in the Middle English period (1066/1100 – 1500, i. e. the language of Chaucer)

The Norman Invasion and Conquest of 1066 was a cataclysmic event that brought new rulers and new cultural, social and linguistic influences to the British Isles. The Norman French ruling minority dominated the church, government, legal, and educational systems for three centuries. The Norman establishment used French and Latin, leaving English as the language of the illiterate and powerless majority. During this period English adopted thousands of words from Norman French (a variety of Old Northern French) and from Latin, and its grammar changed rather radically. By the end of that time, however, the aristocracy had adopted English as their language and the use and importance of French gradually faded. The period from the Conquest to the reemergence of English as a full-fledged literary language is called Middle English. Geoffrey Chaucer[3] wrote his masterpiece, The Canterbury Tales, in Middle English in the late 1300s.

❖ *FRENCH borrowings*

Heavy borrowing from French occurred in two phases:

• 1066-1250. About 900 words were borrowed during this phase, with most of them showing the effects of Anglo-Norman phonology. Examples from this source are:

Social: baron, noble, dame, servant, messenger, feast, minstrel, juggler, largess.

Literary: story, rime, lay;

Church: The largest number of words was borrowed for use in religious services since the French-speaking Normans took control of the church in England.

• 1250-1400. A great influx of French into general English use took place between these years, a rather long period "during which Anglo-Norman bilingualism gradually turned into a resurrection of English as mother tongue of all inhabitants of England. For all their Old French names, the early nationalist Simon of Montfort and Chaucer embodied the beginning and the end (respectively) of the process of re-Anglicization. English speakers were regaining both social prestige and confidence in the possibilities of their

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[3] *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century.

own language, which they also felt free to enrich, by assimilating foreign words that were coming in with new fashions and notions" (Poruciuc, 1992)[4].

Government and Administrative: govern, government, administer, crown, state, empire, royal, majesty, treaty, statute, parliament, tax, rebel, traitor, treason, exile, chancellor, treasurer, major, noble, peer, prince, princess, duke, squire, page (but not king, queen, lord, lady, earl), peasant, slave, servant, vassal.

Ecclesiastical: religion, theology, sermon, confession, clergy, clergy, cardinal, friar, crucifix, miter, censer lectern, abbey, convent, creator, savior, virgin, faith, heresy, schism, solemn, divine, devout, preach, pray, adore, confess.

Law: justice, equity, plaintiff, judge, attorney, petition, inquest, felon, evidence, sue, accuse arrest, blame, libel, slander, felony, adultery, property, estate, heir, executor.

Military, Army and Navy: (Much of the fighting during this time was done in France. Many now-obsolete words for pieces of armor, etc., were borrowed at this time.) army, navy, peace, enemy, arms, battle, spy, combat, siege, ambush, soldier, guard, mail, buckler, banner, lance, besiege, defend, array.

Clothing: habit, gown, robe, garment, attire, cape, coat, collar, petticoat, train, lace, embroidery, pleat, buckle, button, tassel, plume, satin, taffeta, fur, sable, blue, brown, vermilion, russet, tawny, jewel, ornament, broach, ivory, turquoise, topaz, garnet, ruby, pearl, diamond.

Food: feast, repast, collation, mess, appetite, tart, sole, perch, sturgeon, sardine, venison, beef, veal, mutton, port, bacon, toast, cream, sugar, salad, raisin, jelly, spice, clove, thyme.

Social: curtain, couch, lamp, wardrobe, screen, closet, leisure, dance, carol, lute, melody.

Hunting: rein, curry, trot, stable, harness, mastiff, spaniel, stallion, pheasant, quail, heron, joust, tournament, pavilion.

Art, Learning, Medicine: painting, sculpture, music, beauty, color, image, cathedral, palace, mansion, chamber, ceiling, porch, column, poet, prose, romance, paper, pen, volume, chapter, study, logic, geometry, grammar, noun, gender, physician, malady, pain, gout, plague, pulse, remedy, poison.

Common words and expressions include *nouns*--age, air, city, cheer, honor, joy; *adjectives*--chaste, courageous, coy, cruel, poor, nice, pure; *verbs*--advance, advise, carry, cry, desire; phrases--draw near, make believe, hand to hand, by heart, without fail (These are loan-translations).

The number of form-words (prepositions, conjunctions) is extremely scarce because these rarely change or are borrowed into a different language; examples such as the archaic sans or the phrase due to are in short supply, anyway. Yet, all the above words which are frequently used in English stand proof for the diversity and richness of the borrowings from French. Moreover, one can cite a great number of French affixes borrowed by English, e.g. *–ment, -ess, dis-, des-, en-,* etc.

In certain cases, the French term was preferred to the native word as more refined, more learned, or more technical. Moreover, a whole system of synonym pairs has

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[4] A. Poruciuc, *A Concise History of the English Language,* Iaşi, Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2004, 129 pages.

A. Poruciuc, *Istorie scrisă în engleza veche,* Iaşi, Editura Moldova, 1995, 144 pages.

developed ever since ('etymological synonyms'), e.g. ask – demand, deep – profound, feed – nourish, forgive – pardon, friendship – amity, hearty – cordial, begin – commence, help – aid, hide – conceal, hinder – prevent, likeness – similitude, lonely – solitary, win – conquer, wish – desire, etc.

Many of the above words differ from Modern French in form and pronunciation because of phonological changes such as the following:

• French /s/ was lost before other consonants in the 12th century, so OF *feste* became MF *fête* (MnE feast). Cf. *forest--forêt, hostel--hôtel, beast--bête.*

• In the 13th century the French `j' came to be pronounced `zh', and `ch' became `sh'. Early borrowings (i.e., before the 13th century) thus have the `ch' and `j' pronunciations: *charge, change, chamber, chase, chair, chimney; just, jewel, journey, majesty, gentle.* Later borrowings (i.e., after the 13th century) have the `zh' and `sh' pronunciations: *chamois, chaperon, chiffon, chevron, jabot* (last trim on the front of a dress), *rouge.*

• The Anglo-Norman (abbrev.AN) dialect was also different from the dialect of Paris, which was Central French (abbrev. CF): AN retained the initial *ca-*, which became *cha-, chie-* in CF, e.g.: MnE *caitiff*, not CF *chaitif.* English contains words borrowed from both dialects at different times, e.g.:

cattle < AN catel catch < AN cachier

chattel < CF chatel chase < CF chacier (MF chasser)

• Central French also showed an early dislike of w-, but the northern dialects did not, e.g.: warden from AN and guardian from CF. CF also dropped the /w/ in qu- (i.e., AN /kw/, CF /k/), so Modern English has quarter, quality, question, etc., pronounced /kw-/. (French - qualité, etc.)

• Vowels also show some differences. For example, Anglo-Norman retained the /ei/ diphthong, but in the 12th century it became/oi/in CF, so:

MnE leal < AN leial   MnE loyal < CF

MnE real < AN reial   MnE royal < CF

Some 10,000 French words were borrowed into Middle English, and about 75% (7500) of these words are still in use.

This heavy borrowing from French had several effects on English:

• Native words were replaced:

OE	aeðel	F.noble
OE	aeðeling	F.nobleman
OE	here	F.army
OE	campa	F.warrior
OE	sibb	F. peace

• English and French words were retained with a differentiation in meaning:

hearty - cordial

ox – beef

sheep – mutton

swine – pork

calf – veal

house – mansion

- The Old English word-forming powers were reduced, with less use of prefixes and suffixes and fewer compounds.

❖ *LATIN borrowings*

In a sense the French words were Latin borrowings since French developed from Vulgar Latin - as did all the Romance languages. The borrowings that came directly from Latin tended to be more learned in character--e.g., allegory, index, magnify, mechanical, private, secular, zenith, conspiracy, contempt, gesture, immune, infinite, minor, necessity, popular, precinct, private, script, secular, solar, subjugate, temperature, testimony, vulgar, etc.

Many such words introduced into English a substantial number of affixes:
- suffixes: -able, -ible, -ent, -al, -ive
-prefixes: ab-, ad-, am-, ante-, con-, dis-, im-, in-, pro-, re-, sub-,

It is estimated that in contemporary English about one in four words is of Latin origin. A number of Latin words and phrases preserved their Latin spelling (and, to a certain extent, pronunciation): *agendum, antenna, bonafide* "real, genuine" (*a bonafide manuscript/ agreement* 'something undertaken in good faith'), *erratum* (*pl. errata*), *innuendo* "1. an indirect or subtle reference, especially one made maliciously or indicatng criticism or disapproval, insinuation; 2. legal term used in an action or libel/ declamation, used as an explanation in the construction put upon the words alleged to be defamatory where this meaning is not apparent", *factotum, habeas corpus, in flagrante delicto, per diem, viva voce, etc.*

Latin also lent a number of abbreviations to English:

a.m. – ante meridian   i.e. – id est 'that is'

p.m. – post-meridian

e.g. – exempli gratia

l.s.d. – Lat. libra, solidi, denarii 'pounds, shillings, pennies'

cf. – confer < Lat. Conferro, -erre 'to compare'

viz. – Lat. Videlicet 'namely, that is to say'

The official style (used for instance in the courts of law), as well as scientific and technical English are characterised by an abundance of Latin borrowings, e.g. *in flagrante delicto, Habeas corpus, jus canonicum, jus divinum, to recidivate, recidivism*, etc.

Direct borrowings from Latin (aureate terms) were a stylistic affectation of the 15th century Scottish Chaucerians such as James I, Henryson, and Dunbar. Some of these words have been dropped from English (or never really made it in) while others have survived, e.g., *diurnal* (daily or daytime), *tenebrous* (dark), *laureate, mediation, oriental, prolixity.*

It has been pointed out that as a result of Middle English borrowings from French and Latin, Modern English has synonyms on three levels: popular (English), literary (French), and learned (Latin), as in *rise – mount – ascend ; ask – question – interrogate ; fire – flame – conflagration ; holy – sacred – consecrated, time – age – epoch, fire – flame – conflagration*, etc.

❖ *Borrowings from GREEK*

Since the English has never been in direct contact with the Greek, its influence upon the English language is generally characterized as *indirect.* However, it was the English humanists (who wanted their language to be able to sustain the most refine thoughts) that took a serious interest in a geographical remote classical language.

Almost all Greek words were introduced into English by means of Latin at first and later through French. Some of the earliest Greek borrowings are:

Devil < OE *deofol* < Late Lat. *Diabolus* < Greek *diábolos* (meaning initially '*a slanderer'*, then '*an enemy'*);

Church < OE *cirice* < West Germanic *kirika* < Mediaeval Greek *kurkon* < Greek *kurikon* (doma) 'the Lord's house';

Dropsy (in the sense of "a pathological condition characterised bu an accumulation of watery fluid in the subcutaneous tissues or in a body cavity"), which entered English through Latin and Old French: OF< Lat. *Hydropis*(*is*) < Greek *hydrops* 'dropsy, hydrops' < *hydropi* - < (ultimate stem) *hudor* 'water' ;

Academy< French *académie* or Latin *academia* < Gk. *Akademia* (the enclosed piece of ground, or 'grove' in Athens where Plato taught, named after the Attic legendary mithological hero Akademos/ Hekademus) ;

Atom < Gk. *Atomos* 'that can not be divided';

Diphtong < Lat. *Diphtongus* < Gk. *Diphtongos* (*di* + *phthóngos* 'two + sound, voice');

Ecstasy < Old French *extasie* < Late Lat. *Extasis* < Gk. *Ékstasis* 'driving out od one's mind' < *existánai* 'displace, drive out of one's mind';

Harmony < Old French *harmonie* < Lat. *Harmonia* < Gk. *Harmonia* 'means of putting togheter/ joining', hence 'agreement, concord' < Gk. *Harmos* 'joint';

Nymph < Gk. *Númphe* (originally 'bride' – Lat. *Nubere* 'to take a husband');

Theatre < Old French *theatre* < Lat. *Theatrum* < Gk. *Théatron* 'place of viewing' < *theasthai* 'to watch, to look at, to view';

When two different languages have contact over a certain period of time they will surely influence each other. Words might be taken over from one language and are adopted to the other. This process is called borrowing. Throughout its long history English had contact with many different languages such as Old Norse, French, and Latin, but also with many colonial laguages.

The reasons for a language such as English to borrow words from other languages are manifold. Francis Katamba remarks in this context that there is no purely linguistic reason for borrowing. According to him no limit exists to the number of words that can be generated in any language. But still, whenever the need for a new term arises, due to the contact between people from different cultures, the formation of a neologism, composed f the elements of the own language, is only rarely done. One reason for borrowing a suitable word from another language is the need to find a term for an unfamiliar thing, animal, or cultural device. Then borrowing seems to be the easiest solution to this problem.

The enrichment of the lexical stock of the language has also been done, in addition to introducing new words, by appealing to the native sources; such is the case of the terms created during the Renaissance, when some men of letters were so strongly opposed to the borrowing of Latin and Greek words in translating the Bible, that they created English equivalents made up of native roots.

The English language still continues its process of amplification (it is alleged that it annually receives around 800 neologisms); half of the new items come from combinations of the old ones, but the direct borrowing is still heavy.

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