

# English and Expressions Taken from Other Languages

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá historií angličtiny a obohacováním slovní zásoby jazyka. Zaměřuje se na proces přejímání se zvláštním zřetelem na slova přejatá z francouzštiny. Práce předkládá etymologický rozbor vybraných slov, která byla přejata z francouzštiny, a zkoumá také postavení francouzských výpůjček v anglické slovní zásobě, jakož i současnou situaci v procesu přejímání z francouzského jazyka.

Klíčová slova: angličtina, francouzština, etymologie, obohacování slovní zásoby, přejímání, slova přejatá

## **ABSTRACT**

The present thesis deals with the history of English, and the expansion of the English vocabulary. It focuses on the process of borrowing new words from foreign languages, especially from French. It presents the etymology of several words taken from French, and surveys the status of French loan-words in the English lexicon, as well as the current situation in the process of borrowing from French.

Keywords: English, French, etymology, vocabulary expansion, borrowing, loan-words

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## INTRODUCTION

The present thesis introduces a brief outline of the English language history, from the Proto-English language, spoken by Germanic tribes living on the European continent, to the Present-Day English. Firstly, the attention is given mainly to the process of enriching its vocabulary, especially by borrowings from foreign languages. Secondly, the study continues with a chapter dealing with different ways of the vocabulary expansion. Thirdly, it analyses the borrowing, its types, function and motivation.

In the course of its history, English has been influenced by numerous languages, especially by Scandinavian languages, Latin, and most importantly, by French. Hence, the next part treats the languages that have enriched the English lexicon the most. It shows how the borrowings from each of the languages are proportioned in the English language system. It also mentions the Czech loan-words in English; despite the fact that their contribution into English is rather scarce.

As the number of French loan-words is immense, the thesis deals with the process of borrowing from French through different time periods. It examines the kinds of words adopted into particular times in the history and the reason for their borrowing, as well as it studies the status of French words in the English lexicon. A number of examples is given in order to provide a better view of the process and its results.

The analysis part of the thesis provides an insight into the etymology of certain English words borrowed from French. Their origin may surprise many a native English speaker, for, in the majority of cases, such words are the perfectly assimilated ones denoting the concepts of everyday reality.

Finally, the thesis answers the question whether the French language still influences the English language, and it deals with the English and French language relationship, as we can see it nowadays.

It can be suggested that the thesis offers a balanced insight into the matter, with the aim to help an attentive reader to acquire solid knowledge of the English vocabulary enrichment process by expressions taken from foreign languages, with a special regard to the French contribution.



## **I. THEORY**

## 1 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HISTORY OUTLINE

English is a West Germanic language, belonging to the Indo-European language family, which originated from the Anglo-Frisian dialects spoken by people formerly living in the area of what is nowadays northwest Germany and the Northern Netherlands.

### 1.1 Proto-English

The Germanic tribes, who later gave birth to the English language, were heavily influenced by Latin-speaking Romans during the process of their expansion to the West Europe from the East. Having to co-exist, to trade, and, occasionally, to fight with the Romans, the Germanic peoples adopted many of the words used by their competitors to their own languages, even before any of them overcome the English Channel. The words that entered Proto-English during this period include these ones: *camp, cheese, cook, fork, inch, kettle, kitchen, linen, mile, noon, pound, street, and wall*.<sup>1</sup> Actually, we do not have much information about this specific period in the history of the English people and language. The main source of serious information dealing with this epoch is the Tacitus' *Germania*. The rest are rather legends and myths invented and reedited according to specific political purposes during various times.

### 1.2 Old English

During the three or four centuries after Tacitus wrote his *Germania*, the Germanic peoples were in a state of flux and movement. Although we know little of their history in this turbulent period of migration and expansion, we do know for sure that, towards the end of these centuries of the flux, the ancestors of the present-days English nation settled in England. Thanks to archaeological evidence we know that Saxons settled in England even during the period when England was still a Roman province, but the main settlements were made after the Roman legions had withdrawn from Britain in A.D. 410. The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain was not, as one might think, the arrival of a unified invading army, but it was rather the penetration of various uncoordinated bands of adventurers in different parts of the country. The process of the Anglo-Saxon penetration into the area started in the middle of the fifth century and it continued during whole the sixth century. The struggle

with the native Romano-Celtic population was long and exhausting. The position of Anglo-Saxons was not assured until the end of the sixth century, when they occupied most of England (except to Cornwall, and an area in the North-West), and a considerable part of southern Scotland. Wales remained British.<sup>2</sup>

The Anglo-Saxon conquest was not just the arrival of a ruling minority, but the settlement of a whole people. The language they spoke remained the dominant one. There are few traces of Celtic influence on Old English. Indeed, the number of Celtic words taken into English is extremely small; it includes a few names of some English towns (e.g. London and Leeds), rivers (e.g. Thames – meaning ‘dark diver’), county names (especially in the North-West), some topographical features, like *coomb* (OE *cumb* meaning ‘narrow valley’), and a number of place-name elements of English derivation (e.g. *Buckingham* meaning ‘the meadow of Bucca’s people’). The failure of Celtic to influence Old English to any great extent does not mean that the Britons were all killed or driven out. There is in fact evidence that a considerable number of Britons lived among the Anglo-Saxons, but they were a defeated people whose language had no prestige compared with that of the conquerors.<sup>3</sup> It is quite surprising that the contribution of the Celtic language to French is nearly as poor as its contribution to English. One might think that the number of the words of the Celtic origin would be great in French, for the present-days Frenchmen are the Celts’ descendants. On the contrary, we can find only about 70 words of the Celtic origin in the contemporary French, some of them being incomprehensible to young generation speakers. The majority of these words deal with the nature or agriculture.<sup>4</sup>

The piecemeal way in which the Anglo-Saxons conquered England led to an establishment of small kingdoms, and no doubt to dialect differentiation. As the invaders did not come from only one Germanic tribe, it is probable that there were dialect differences from the start; the original land of Old Saxons was in North-West Germany, the Angles came from the Danish mainland and islands, the Jutes, whose origin is obscure a bit, are supposed to be originated in the Rhineland or to have some affinities with the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Barber, *The English Language: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 178.

<sup>2</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 100.

<sup>3</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Henriette Walter, *Le Français dans tous les sens* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1988), 41.

Franks farther south. There is also evidence that, in addition to Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, the Germanic invaders included also Frisians. Whatever their exact origins, these groups were closely related in their culture and language, and they regarded themselves as one nation, using the common name of *Engle* 'the Angles'.<sup>5</sup>

Their political union came slowly, however. They formed a medley of small kingdoms, which by a process of conquest, were eventually reduced to seven, sometimes called the Heptarchy (however, some of the modern scientists have some serious doubts about the veracity of the Heptarchy's existence). Different kings managed to establish their sovereignty over the other kingdoms at various times, but these dominations were often personal and temporary. In the ninth century, the leadership over the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms passed to Wessex, of which the kings finally unified the country. In the late ninth century, Alfred, the king of Wessex, saved the country from the Danes, and his successors reconquered the North and the East. In the second half of the tenth century, King Edgar ruled not only over all England, but he was also recognized as Overlord of Wales and Scotland. From this time, the unity of England was durable, no matter the nationality of the sovereign. King Cnut was Danish, Edward the Confessor was half-English, William the Conqueror was Norman, but all of them ruled over a single country, populated by unified people.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that England was unified under the leadership of the West Saxon kings meant also the recognition of the West Saxon dialect as the literary standard. The majority of the literary works were written in this dialect by West Saxon scribes, and even the manuscripts that had been edited in another dialect were reedited and so they were put into West Saxon form. It is possible that the most important literary relic of the period – the Old English poem *Beowulf* – was written in an Anglian dialect, but the only surviving manuscript is in West Saxon. One might find interesting that, although West Saxon became the literary standard of the united England in the late Anglo-Saxon period, it is not the direct ancestor of the Modern English standard. It is proved that the Modern English forms are descended from Anglian (i.e. Mercian and Northumbrian dialects), not the West Saxon.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 102-103.

<sup>6</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 103-104.

<sup>7</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 105-106.

During this period, the Christianization of Anglo-Saxons took place. It started approximately in 600 and took a century to complete. The Christianity was spread from two directions, the Celtic church penetrating from the North-West and the Roman Church from the South-East. It is with Christianity that writing came.

Not only do we know little about the Anglo-Saxons before their conversion to Christianity, but there is not far more information about them after their having been introduced to writing. As elsewhere in medieval Europe, writing was in the hands of clerics, who often had strong views about what is proper to record and what is not, so that we can learn very little about the ways of the heathen English from their own records. The English had already one form of writing, the runes, but these were used but for short inscriptions, not for texts of any considerable length. The runes can be found carved or scratched on stone, metal-work, or wood, and they were thought to have magical power. They go back ultimately to some form of the Greek alphabet, but owing to their way of use, they acquired an angular form. The alphabet that clerics introduced to England was a Celtic version of the Latin alphabet enriched with some runic symbols.<sup>8</sup>

Old English shows certain phonological developments of its own compared with the other Germanic languages. A number of combinatory sound-changes took place. The first one is called *front mutation* or *i-umlaut*, which is the mutation that caused considerable changes in the pronunciation of English. Other combinatory changes in Old English caused the diphthongization of pure vowels, often with different results in different dialects. In the grammar, Old English underwent some simplifications of the Proto-Germanic system. The number of the cases was reduced to four: nominative, accusative, genitive, and dative. The number of declensions was reduced as well. In its verbal system, a two-tense system was inherited (past and present), and we can also see the beginnings of a new tense-system using auxiliaries. Thanks to its inflectional system, Old English was freer in word-order than Modern English, but it does not mean that there were no rules or preferences about word-order.<sup>9</sup>

Old English was quite self-sufficient as far as enlarging its vocabulary is concerned. It rather depended mostly on its own resources, forming new words by prefixes and suffixes.

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<sup>8</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 106-107.

<sup>9</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 113-120.

Another way used in order to new word formation was compounding. However, Old English did borrow only a small number of words from other languages, especially for the needs and the institutions of Christianity. The majority of the words borrowed in that period are of Greek and mostly of Latin origin. They include *apostol* ‘apostle’, *biscop* ‘bishop’, *munuc* ‘monk’, *mynster* ‘monastery’, as well as the words *abbot*, *disciple*, *nun*, *pilgrim*, *pope*, and *school*. But even in this field, Old English did not lack its own resources – some of the existing native words were simply adopted to Christian use, e.g. *hell*, *holy*, *Easter* (Eastre was the goddess of the rising sun or spring, her name was probably given to the Christian festival), or *godspell* ‘good message’ which is a calque for Latin *evangelium* (originally borrowed from Greek *euangelion*) giving the Modern English *gospel*.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3 Norsemen and Normans in England

During the later part of the Old English period, two different groups of non-English speakers invaded the country. Both groups were Scandinavian in origin, but whereas the first had retained its Scandinavian speech, the second had settled in northern France and became French-speaking. Both of their languages, Old Norse and Old French, had a considerable influence on English.<sup>11</sup>

The Scandinavian Viking raids in Europe took place between about 750 and 1050. It was the last phase of the Germanic peoples’ expansion process. Its primary cause was perhaps the overpopulation of their home area, poor in natural resources for a living, but it also had a number of secondary reasons, too, e.g. political conflicts driving many noblemen to exile, the primogeniture system forcing younger sons to find their heritage elsewhere, or destroying the Frisian maritime dominance in the North-West Europe by Charlemagne which made the sea secure for naval transport. The Vikings were great traders but they were also known for their predatory activities. Their attacks varied from single ship piratical expeditions to invasions by enormous fleets and armies. The Vikings consisted of Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes. While Swedes expanded to the East, the two latter went mostly westwards and southwards, including England. The Vikings almost conquered the whole England, but they were repulsed by King Alfred. Although the Viking territory was

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<sup>10</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 120-122.

<sup>11</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 127.

step by step reconquered by Anglo-Saxons, the huge Scandinavian settlement remained in England.<sup>12</sup>

The Scandinavians left their mark on English place-names, but their influence went much farther than that. As the Scandinavian settlers did not exterminate the Englishmen from the territories they had conquered, they influenced the English language register a lot. Old English and Old Norse were still considerably similar, that is why the Scandinavians were able to understand each other without too much difficulty. Thus great “mixing” took place between the two languages. In the end, Old Norse died out in England, but not without having influenced English significantly. The final fusion of the Scandinavian and English languages and cultures took place in the twelfth century, especially after the Norman Conquest. The majority of the Scandinavian loan-words first appear in writing in the Middle English Period, which is caused by the fact that there was no literary tradition in the Danelaw. Most of the surviving texts were edited in the West Saxon dialect, scarcely influenced by the Scandinavian. Later, when the Vikings settled in England, a number of words were borrowed into English. As the Vikings had highly developed sense of law and government, the majority of these words relate to justice and administration, including the word *law* itself. The most impressive fact about the Scandinavian loan-words is that they are such ‘ordinary’ words, e.g. *sister, leg, neck, bag, cake, fellow, fog, knife, skill, skin, sky, window, flat, low, ugly, wrong, call, get, give, take, and want*. Moreover, some grammatical words are of Scandinavian origin, like *till, until, though, they, them, and their*. However, the total number of Scandinavian loans is rather small, compared with the huge amount of French or Latin borrowings.<sup>13</sup>

The influence of the Norman Conquest and Norman French upon English shall be dealt with in the chapter Four, called ‘The Contribution of French’.

## 1.4 Middle English

Old English did not disappear overnight at the Norman Conquest, but the changes which had already begun to occur in pre-Conquest Old English continued at an increased speed in the years following the Conquest. In less than one hundred years after 1066, the Old

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<sup>12</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 127-128.

<sup>13</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 128-134.

English period was over, and the Middle English began. The Conquest, in fact, made the change from Old English to Middle English look more sudden than it really was, because the new spelling conventions were brought. These new conventions made the changes in the pronunciation that had not been reflected in Old English conservative spelling.<sup>14</sup>

The process of great reduction in the inflectional system inherited from Old English took place during the period, so that Middle English is often referred to as the period of weakened inflections. This fact had two main causes. The first one was the mixing of Old English with Old Norse. Frequently, the Scandinavian and English words were sufficiently similar to be recognizable, but they had absolutely different sets of inflections; that is why speakers, in case of doubts, preferred to rely on other grammatical devices in order to avoid making mistakes, and, consequently, possible misunderstanding. The second cause was phonological. Because of the loss and the weakening of unstressed syllables at the ends of words, many endings now have become identical. This had a disastrous effect on the inflectional system. By the end of Middle English period, both the adjectives and the definite article had become indeclinable, which meant a major change in the structure of the language, for it meant also that the grammatical gender disappeared, and was replaced by the 'natural gender'. As the inflectional system decayed, some other devices were increasingly used to replace it. The word-order became more important, for the inflections were no longer able to differ the subject from the object of a sentence; this function was taken over by *S-V-O word-order*. The inflectional system decay also encouraged the use of separate words to perform the functions formerly carried out by the word-endings, e.g. 'die of hunger'. A similar tendency for the inflections, later to be replaced by more analytic devices, is also seen in the Middle English verb-system. A complicated system of tenses was built up by means of the primary auxiliaries (*be, have, do*) and the modal auxiliaries (*shall, should, will* etc.) in order to supersede the system of inflections that had been considerably reduced. The future tense with *shall* and *will* is established in this period, as well as the continuous tenses, formed with *be* and the present participle, however, the latter becoming more common during the Modern English period. The most important literary work of the period is Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 151.

<sup>15</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 157-163.



## 1.5 Early Modern English

Although English triumphed over French in Britain during the late Middle Ages, it did not mean that English was without any other rival. Its most influential competitor of the period, enjoying great recognition and prestige, was Latin. Latin was the language of international learning, and under the influence of humanists, the grammar-school syllabus was centred on classical Latin, as well as it was the medium of instruction in the universities. Latin was the language of science and philosophy. The final defeat of Latin and the triumph of English had several causes. The religious disputes raging from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century were one of them. As people engaged in religious controversy wanted to be read by as large a public as possible, they used English, instead of Latin, to write their pamphlets and polemics. The prestige of English raised also by introducing it in Church services, and by translating the Bible into English. Moreover, Latin was regarded by the extreme Protestants as a 'Popish' language designed to keep ordinary people in ignorance. Another cause of defeating Latin was the development of national feeling, instead of the medieval conviction that every human being was a part of Christendom. The last but not least factor in favour of English was the rise of social and occupational groups which had little or no knowledge of Latin and were not willing to study it; such people wanted to read books in English. On the other hand, there were some social groups that fought hard for retention of Latin, for their professional monopoly depended on it (e.g. physicians). When English established its supremacy over Latin, surprisingly, it was at the same time more under its influence than at any time in its history. The Renaissance was the period of the classics rediscovery in Europe, and thus we can see the constant influence of Latin literature, Latin rhetorical theories, and the Latin language itself.<sup>16</sup>

This Latin influence on English resulted in the introduction of a great number of Latin loan-words. As we have already mentioned, the influx of French loans the Norman Conquest made English quite hospitable for words borrowed from abroad. The peak period in the process of borrowing words from Latin was between 1580 and 1660. The Latin loans tended to be learned words, i.e. words dealing with science, mathematics or law; only a small number of them belonged to the general vocabulary. Many of the loans have come into English via French, and that is why they are sometimes slightly reshaped according to

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<sup>16</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 175-177.

the French usage. The influx of Latin words also caused that the existing words of the Norman-French or of Latin origin had to be reshaped in accordance to their real or supposed etymology, e.g. the *b* was inserted into the word *dette* through the influence of Latin *debitum* resulting in the current form *debt*.<sup>17</sup>

Although Latin was the major source of loan-words in the period, it was not the only one. A number of words were borrowed from French, Italian, and Spanish. (We shall speak about the French loans in the next chapter.) The latter two included expressions dealing with commerce, warfare, clothes or the arts. Since the early exploration of America was largely carried out by the Spaniards and the Portuguese, many words for typically American things came into English via the two languages, e.g. *cannibal*, *potato*, *flamingo*, and *mosquito*. As England had had close commercial contacts with the Netherlands, a number of words dealing with seafaring and trade came into English from Dutch, e.g. *deck*, *dock*, *yacht*, or *brandy*.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the borrowing was not the only method of the vocabulary expansion during the period. Words continued to be created from existing English material by traditional methods of word-formation, especially affixation, compounding, and conversion. The words formed by these methods tend to be more ordinary words, often dealing with everyday or practical affairs, while the Latin ones, by contrast, are more formal, scientific, and literary.<sup>19</sup>

As for the grammar, the period's main change is the introduction of the widespread use of the dummy auxiliary *do*, as well as the invention of the pronoun-determiner *its*. In the pronunciation, great changes took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The biggest changes occurred in the vowel-system, the main series of them being often called the Great Vowel Shift; however, the pronunciation of some consonant was changed, too.<sup>20</sup>

The most important writers of the Early Modern English period were Shakespeare, More, Milton, and Bacon.

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<sup>17</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 177-181.

<sup>18</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 181-182.

<sup>19</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 182-183.

<sup>20</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 191-196.

## 1.6 Later Modern period, English in the scientific age

The massive introduction of printing in this period was a powerful tool to standardize the orthography. The spelling-system that was established at the end of Early Modern English period was an archaic one, not reflecting the changes in the pronunciation due to the Great Vowel Shift. That is why one can find many oddities in the present-day English spelling. In the second half of the eighteenth century we can find the most intense attempts to regulate the language, eventually by means of foundation of the *English Academy*. The idea to establish the Academy came to nothing, but this period saw the publication of the first grammars and dictionaries of English that were, regardless of the intentions of their authors, largely accepted as models of the correct usage.<sup>21</sup>

In the seventeenth century, the scientific outlook triumphed in England, and the sciences had a great influence on the language and the manner it was used in the past three centuries. The increase of scientific writing helped to establish a simple referential kind of prose, as the other styles (i.e. rhetorical or poetical) ceased to be the norm. The influence of science on the language provoked the expansion of the scientific vocabulary, for the scientists needed technical terms for an enormous number of things. The present-day technical vocabulary of the natural sciences is now estimated to comprise several millions of items. To create this enormous vocabulary, the scientists relied on various sources. Firstly, they used native every-day words to which they gave different scientific meanings, e.g. *salt*, *pollen*, *current*, or *force*. Secondly, they took over words from other languages, especially Latin and Greek, e.g. *abdomen*, *saliva*, *ion*, *iris*, or *thorax*. Thirdly, they invented new words using Greek and Latin material, sometimes mixed together; this was the most common way. The words having entered the English vocabulary in such a way include *anode*, *electron*, *zoology*, *atmosphere*, or *haemoglobin*. This expansion of the scientific vocabulary during the past three centuries has gone on at an ever-increasing pace. Although the majority of these words are known only by the scientists, some of them have also entered the language of non-specialists.<sup>22</sup>

The expansion of the vocabulary was not, however, limited only to the domain of science. Compared to the Middle English and Early Modern English periods, the number of

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<sup>21</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 201-203.

<sup>22</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 215-218.

words borrowed was not too high. Thanks to the growth of the world trade, and Britain's large part in it, English borrowed words from many distant countries, e.g. Australia, Malaysia, China, Polynesia, or India. Nearer Britain, some words were also borrowed from French, Dutch, Italian, German or Russian. The main ways of expanding the general vocabulary in the period were, however, affixation, compounding, and conversion. Moreover, there were also some other minor ways of acquiring new words, such as shortening, blending, back-formation, and borrowing from regional dialects or from the language of specialized groups (internal loans). As a result of the lexical growth, the total number of English words is enormous, running to several millions.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.7 Present-Day English

Today, the English language has become one of the major world-languages. The main causes of that fact are: the population expansion after the Industrial Revolution, the progressive penetration of English into the no-English-speaking rest of the British Isles, and especially its wide diffusion outside the United Kingdom, to all continents of the world, by trade, colonization, and conquest. It is perhaps above all the great growth of population in the United States, assisted by massive immigration in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, giving the English language its current majoring position in the world. This world-wide expansion of English means that it is now one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, with over four hundred million native speakers, and with roughly the same number of those who speak it as a second language. The way of its spread, however, also means that there are now many varieties of English. In the countries where the English-speaking settlers outnumbered the original inhabitants, dominated them politically and economically, the native languages had hardly any influence on the language of the settlers. That is why the English of the ancient 'White Commonwealth' and of the United States has remained relatively close to the standard British English. Elsewhere, the linguistic situation can be extremely different. The various forms of English when used as a second language differ in a number of ways (phonology, grammar, vocabulary) from

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<sup>23</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 219-226.

standard British or American English, often because of the influence of the speakers' first language.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 234-239.

## 2 VOCABULARY EXPANSION, THE ROLE OF BORROWING

As the community of speakers changes, there is a constant demand for new words, in order to express new concepts or new attitudes, to denote new objects or new institutions. In the recent centuries the society has become increasingly complex along with its vocabulary needs. It can be suggested that the vocabulary expansion is a never-ending process, as all aspects of human life constitute a bottomless well to the new words' creation.

### 2.1 The principal means of the vocabulary enrichment

There are several ways to enlarge the number of the existing words in order to describe a new reality: First, new words can be added. Secondly, the meaning of the already existing ones can be changed. And thirdly, new words can enter a language through the operation of word formation rules.

#### 2.1.1 Creating new words (Neologisms)

Speakers continually create new words using the processes listed below. Under the right conditions these can be adopted by a larger linguistic community and become part of the language.

*Coining words*, i.e. inventing entirely new, previously non-existent words, e.g. *geek*, and *dweeb*.

*Acronyms*, the words of which each letter spelling them is the first letter (or letters) of some other complete word, e.g. *laser*, and *radar*.

*Alphabetic abbreviations* are common mostly among American English speakers. These one-time abbreviations entirely replace longer words in everyday speech, e.g. *PC* used for *personal computer*.

*Clippings*, the words of which the spelling has been shortened without having altered their pronunciation, e.g. *fax* for *facsimile*.

*Blends*, the words formed from parts of existing ones, e.g. *motel* has been blended from *motor hotel*.

*Generified words*, i.e. specific brand names of companies used as names for the products in general, e.g. *kleenex*, *xerox*.

*Proper nouns*. Sometimes, a trait, quality, act, or some behaviour associated with a person becomes identified with that person's name, e.g. *guillotine* is an execution instrument named after its inventor Dr. Guillotin.

*Direct and indirect borrowings.* This specific way of vocabulary expansion will be treated in the chapter 2.2.

### 2.1.2 Changing the meaning of words

There are numerous ways how a new meaning can be associated with an existing word: the change of the grammatical category of the word, the extension of the vocabulary of one domain into a new one, the broadening and the narrowing of a word's meaning, the semantic drift, and the semantic reversal.

### 2.1.3 Derivational morphology

New vocabulary can be also added by following the word formation rules that incorporate specific derivational processes. English uses dozens of them, but the most common are compounding, backformation, and suffixation.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 Borrowing and loan-words

In the present study, we would like to concentrate more on the process of borrowing, i.e. adopting foreign words into the native vocabulary.

*Borrowings, or loan-words,* are defined as words which originated in one language or in a dialect, but which have come into use in another language, even by people who do not speak the lending language. These borrowings are very often assimilated to the phonological and the morphological structure of the new host language.<sup>26</sup>

When borrowing new words, there are several options. The first one is to borrow a word from the native language itself. It means borrowing the expression that is not currently used in everyday speech, being either the archaic one, which is no longer used, or the regional one, that is not understood in the major part of the territory. In this case, the word can be given a new meaning, or the original meaning can be preserved. The words obtained by this process are called *internal-loans*.

The second and the more common way is to borrow a word from a foreign language. According to Aitchison, the borrowing process has following features: Foreign elements do

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<sup>25</sup> Adrian Akmajian, Richard Demers, Ann Farmer, and Robert Harnish, *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mitt Press, 2001), 23-42.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Radford, Martin Atkinson, David Britain, Harald Clahsen, and Andrew Spencer, *Linguistics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 256.

not infiltrate another language haphazardly. Individual words are taken over easily and frequently, since incorporating them does not involve any structural alternation in the borrowing language, whereas adopted items tend to be changed to fit in with the structure of the borrower's language. When the elements, which are less easily detachable from the donor language, are taken over, they tend to be ones which already exist in embryo in the language in question, or which can be accepted into the language with only minimal adjustment to the existing structure. Once one feature has been brought in, it prepares the language for the next, and so on. Overall, borrowing does not suddenly disrupt the basic structure of a language. Foreign elements make use of existing tendencies, and commonly accelerate changes which are already under way.<sup>27</sup> The words resulting from this process are called *direct borrowings*, whereas we can also find *indirect borrowings*, or *calques*. The latter ones are an interesting type of borrowings that occurs when an expression in one language is translated literally into another language, e.g. *superman* from German *Übermensch*.<sup>28</sup>

There are two main reasons for borrowing new words from foreign languages. The first one, and the most obvious one, is sheer necessity, for people always need to develop words for new and unfamiliar concepts, such as new technologies, ideas and things, new plants and animals, or new social reality... Often, foreign languages are already familiar with these new concepts, having already created suitable expressions to denote them, or they can offer a linguistic basis to create names for the concepts in question. The second reason is prestige. If certain cultures are associated with particular 'prestigious' activities, it is common for the words associated with that activity to come from the language of that culture. If some culture, itself, is regarded as 'prestigious', the vocabulary of the language spoken by that culture is borrowed for the simple reason of its origin.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Aitchison, *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 142-145.

<sup>28</sup> See Akmajian, *Linguistics*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> See Radford, *Linguistics*, 255.



### 3 LANGUAGES THAT ENRICHED THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY THE MOST

It is often suggested that the lexicon of the English language is the largest in the world. However, it is practically impossible to either approve or disapprove this statement, for we encounter many obstacles when trying to count the total of English words. It is hard to decide what counts as a word, as well as to decide what counts as an 'English' word.

Regardless of all these difficulties, it seems probable that English has more words than any other comparable world languages. The reason for this is historical. English was originally a Germanic language, related to Dutch and German, and so it shares much of their grammar and basic vocabulary.

Nevertheless, after the Norman Conquest it was hugely influenced by Norman French, which became the language of the ruling class for a considerable period, and by Latin, which was the language of scholarship and of the Church. Very large numbers of French and Latin words entered the language. Consequently, English has much a larger vocabulary than any other of the Germanic languages or the members of the Romance language family.<sup>30</sup>

English is traditionally quite well-disposed to accommodate foreign words, and as it has become an international language spoken by people of many cultures and a number of mother tongues, it has absorbed vocabulary from a large quantity of other sources. Nevertheless, it is very hard to estimate, what is the exact proportion of English words borrowed from each particular language, as well as what is the exact number of the languages that have somehow contributed to the English lexicon during its long history.

More light on this question might be shed by a modern, computerized survey. The origins of roughly 80,000 English words were examined by Thomas Finkenstaedt and Dieter Wolff, who published the results of their study in *Ordered Profusion* in 1973. The proportions they reckoned are as follows:

French, including Old French and early Anglo-French: 28.3%

Latin, including both classical and modern scientific and technical Latin: 28.24%

Old and Middle English, Old Norse, and Dutch: 25%

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/faq/aboutenglish/mostwords?view=uk> (accessed May 19, 2008)

Classical Greek: 5.32%

Words with no etymology given: 4.03%

Words derived from proper names: 3.28%

All other languages: less than 1%<sup>31</sup>

The above data are for better evidence visualised in a Figure 1 you can see below.

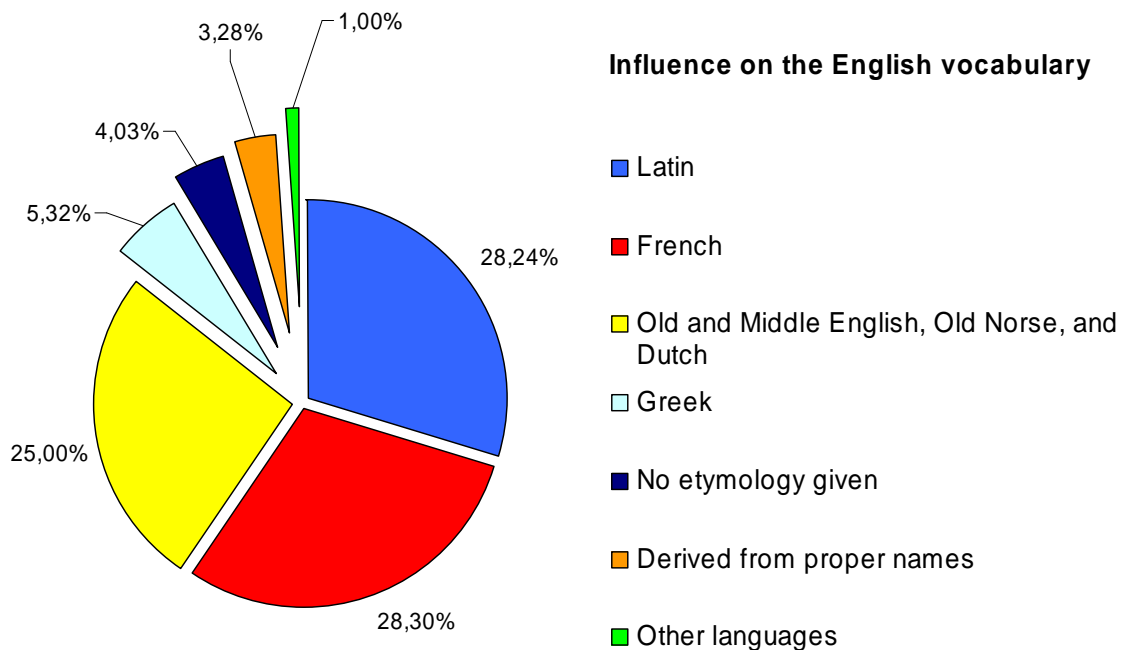


Figure 1

The Figure 2 below shows the timeline of the English language history. You can easily see what languages contributed to the English vocabulary, as well as the approximate time period when the words started to be adopted from a language.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/faq/aboutenglish/proportion?view=uk> (accessed May 19, 2008)

<sup>32</sup> Short, Daniel. *A History of the English Language*. <http://www.danshort.com/ie/timeline.htm> (accessed May 19, 2008)

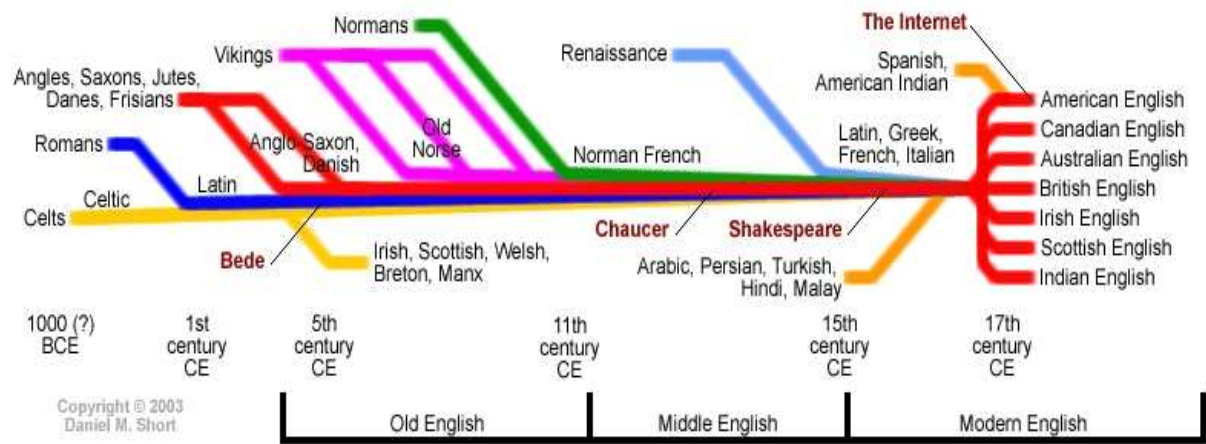


Figure 2

## 4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF FRENCH

There is no doubt that French had considerable influence on the English vocabulary. English borrowed from French more expressions than from any other existing classical or modern language. The following section deals with the contribution of French in particular historical periods.

### 4.1 Norman French

During the period when French language started the process of its relatinisation, Vikings, a nation of raiders, came from the Scandinavia to the northern part of France. They carried out their raids mainly in the area of La Manche and, progressively, to the upcountry, even to the Paris region. These raids were not stopped but by the king Charles the Simple in 911, when the land occupied by Vikings became the Norman County. Since the time, the Normans, i.e. ‘people from the North’, cease to plunder and they settle on their territory gained. Marrying French-speaking women, they abandoned step by step their own language and started to use the one of the local native people. There is no written record that any kind of Norman language existed after 940 on the territory. The full integration of Normans was achieved after their third generation and it is mainly thanks to them that the French language traversed the English Channel. William the Conqueror, or Guillaume le Normand, conquered England, he divided the land, distributed it to his barons, and the French language became the means of communication of the aristocracy, the royal court, courts of justice and the church.<sup>33</sup>

However, the Norman Conquest of 1066 was not such a violent break in English history as people sometimes imagine. There was already strong French influence in England before the Conquest, at any rate at the higher levels of society: Edward the Confessor was half Norman, and his court had close relations with France. It is certainly true, however, that the Conquest had a profound influence on the English language. For some centuries, English ceased to be the language of the governing classes, and there was no such thing as standard literary English; and when English did once again become the

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<sup>33</sup> See Walter, *Le Français dans tous les sens*, 80.

language of the whole country it had changed a good deal under the influence of the conquerors.<sup>34</sup>

The Norman Conquest is very often seen as the coming of a higher civilization to the backward and barbaric Anglo-Saxons. This, however, is a misapprehension. The Anglo-Saxons, in six centuries following after their invasion of Britain, had developed a sophisticated civilization. Although French used more efficient military techniques, were able to build unassailable castles and some fine churches and cathedrals, one cannot say that Normans were culturally superior to the people they conquered. The Anglo-Saxons had an elevated literature, long tradition of scholarship dating back to the seventh century; they were also handy craftsmen and fine artists. These people did not need William of Normandy and his adventurers to bring them civilization. French became the language of the upper classes in England simply because it was the language of the conquerors.<sup>35</sup>

As the French was the language of aristocracy and the court, and it remained so for more than one century, anybody whose native language was English, and who wanted to get on in the world, had to learn French. The following comment made in the late thirteenth century known as the Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester testifies:

“Thus came, lo, England into Normandy’s hand: and the Normans then knew how to speak only their own language, and spoke French as they did at home, and also had their children taught (it), so that noblemen of this land, that come of their stock, all keep to the same speech that they received from them; for unless a man knows French, people make little account of him. But low men keep to English and to their own language still. I think that in the whole world there are no countries that do not keep to their own language, except England alone. But people know well that it is good to master both, because the more a man knows the more honoured he is.”<sup>36</sup>

There is a mistaken view that in early times (before the Conquest) the spelling of English reflected the capricious whims of individual scribes. In fact, spelling in Old English manuscripts was based largely on practice in Latin, with modifications required to accommodate the different sound systems of English. The Norman invasion led to the

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<sup>34</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 134.

<sup>35</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 135.

<sup>36</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 135-136.

collapse of this standard, and to increasing regionalism of spelling. Northern parts of the country continued to be influenced by Scandinavian languages while parts of the south were affected by intimate contact with French.<sup>37</sup> For three centuries there was no single form of English recognized as a norm, and people wrote in the language of their own region.<sup>38</sup>

That is why the Norman Conquest is sometimes viewed as the wrecking of a relatively sophisticated 'native' Anglo-Saxon culture by a 'foreign' and tyrannical French one, so that the continuity of English culture was ruptured and the continued existence of the English language threatened. On the other hand, for the scholars who regard the history of English as one of unbroken progress, the conquest is a milestone on the road to 'civilization', playing a key role in the development of modern English.<sup>39</sup>

While English was thus left without a standard literary dialect, the prestige languages were Latin and French. Latin was the language of the church, of scholarship, of international communication, and it was very important in administration, but here it gradually gave way to French. The Norman invaders of 1066 spoke Norman dialect of French, and in England this developed characteristics of its own, and is then called *Anglo-Norman*. In the thirteenth century, however, when the Central French dialect of Paris had begun to have strong influence on the rest of France, the Anglo-Norman dialect lost some of its prestige in England. In that period, this dialect was regarded as rather old-fashioned and rustic, and the courtly language was Central French.<sup>40</sup>

In the thirteenth century, French language was still spoken at the English court, and literature was being written in French for the English nobility; but this century sees the gradual loss of importance of French in favour of English. Regardless of the prestige French enjoyed during several centuries in England, it was never the mother-tongue of the majority of the population. A considerable number of Normans settled in England after the conquest, but they never outnumbered the English, and ultimately French died out in England. An event which contributed to the triumph of English was King John's loss of

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<sup>37</sup> David Graddol, Dick Leith, Joan and Swann, *English history, diversity and change* (London: Routledge, 1996), 72.

<sup>38</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 136.

<sup>39</sup> See Graddol, *English history, diversity and change*, 120.

<sup>40</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 140-141.

Normandy to the French crown in the opening years of the thirteenth century. Since the time, the noblemen who had their estates in Normandy as well as in England had to decide which of the two they belonged to. Thus the ties with Normandy were severed, and the ex-Norman nobility gradually became English. Although the English crown continued to hold the lands in France, and went on importing Frenchmen to the court, the national feeling was beginning to arise in England, and this must have raised the prestige of the English language.<sup>41</sup>

The fourteenth century sees the definitive triumph of English. French was now rapidly ceasing to be the mother-tongue even of the nobility, and those who wanted to speak French had to learn it. Literature, including even the most courtly one, was written more and more in English, and in the second half of the century there was a great literary upsurge, with Chaucer as its major figure. English was also used more and more in administration. In 1362, an act was passed making English the official language of the law-courts instead of French. During this period, there was the switch from French to English as the medium of grammar-school education. Although French still enjoyed the high prestige at the beginning of the fourteenth century, in its second half French was completely replaced by English in the domain of education, and even the noblemen gave up teaching their children French. The greatest stronghold of French in England was perhaps the king's court. England did not acquire a king whose mother-tongue was English but in 1399 when Henry IV seized the throne.<sup>42</sup>

In the fifteenth century the retreat of French became a rout. It was no longer a native language in England, and there were even some members of the nobility who were not able to speak French at all. Henceforth, a fluent command of French was to be regarded as an accomplishment.<sup>43</sup>

With the re-establishment of English as the language of administration and culture came the re-establishment of an English literary language, a standard form of the language which could be regarded as a norm. The establishment of a standard language did not take place overnight. During the fourteenth century there were still many dialects used in the

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<sup>41</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 141.

<sup>42</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 142-143.

<sup>43</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 143-144.

literature, but gradually the prestige of the London language grew, and in the fifteenth century it was increased by the introduction of printing. The literary language had been largely standardised by the end of the fifteenth century, and in the Modern English period one cannot tell what part of the country people come from by examining their writings.<sup>44</sup>

Although French died out in England, it left its mark on English. Its main effect was on the vocabulary, and an enormous number of French loan-words came into the language during the Middle-English period. It may be surprising that the majority of the French loan-words entered the English language during the period when French was dying out in England. In the eleventh and the twelfth century when French was the unchallenged language of the upper classes, the number of words borrowed by English was not too great. But since the beginning of the thirteenth century there was a flood of loan-words. The fact can be explained very easily: when bilingual speakers were changing over to English for such purposes as government and literature, they felt the need for the specialised terms that they were accustomed to in those fields, and brought them over from French. It needs to be said that English was not deficient in such vocabulary, in almost every case an English word describing the concept already existed, but it was displaced by the French word because of the speakers' preferences.<sup>45</sup>

The influx of French words differed in several ways from the one of Scandinavian words. The French words spread from London and the court, and locally from the lord's castle. Moreover, the French words were not such homely ones as the Scandinavian words. The Normans formed a separate caste that imposed much of their culture on their subordinates. Many of the French loan-words reflect this cultural and political dominance: they are often words to do with war, ecclesiastical matters, the law, hunting, heraldry, the arts, and fashion. French words, by contrast to the loan-words of the Scandinavian origin having been very similar to the native English words, were entirely new ones, with no obvious resemblance to anything in English.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 144-145.

<sup>45</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 145-146.

<sup>46</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 146.



#### 4.1.1 Norman-French loan-words

Here, let be mentioned some examples of the words borrowed by English from the French language mainly during the period of thirteenth and fourteenth century.

As one may expect, titles of rank tended to be taken from French. These include (in their modern spelling): *baron*, *count*, *duke*, *marquess*, *peer*, *prince*, and *sovereign*. Nevertheless, the English words like *king*, *earl*, *knight*, *lady*, *lord*, and *queen* were retained. Words to do with administration include *chancellor*, *council*, *country*, *crown*, *government*, *nation*, *parliament*, *people*, and *state*. As the law-courts were for very long conducted in French, there are many words borrowed from French; e.g. *accuse*, *attorney*, *court*, *crime*, *judge*, *justice*, *prison*, *punish*, *sentence*, and *verdict*. French dominance of ecclesiastical life is reflected in such loans as *abbey*, *clergy*, *friar*, *pardon*, *parish*, *prayer*, *relic*, *religion*, *saint*, *saviour*, *sermon*, *service*, and *virgin*. Many of the military terms borrowed are no more used, because they became obsolete, but there are also *armour*, *battle*, *castle*, *tower*, and *war*. Words reflecting French dominance in the arts and fashion include *apparel*, *costume*, *dress*, *fashion*, *art*, *beauty*, *chant*, *colour*, *column*, *music*, *paint*, *poem*, and *romance*. Also borrowed were many abstract nouns, especially the names of mental and moral qualities, such as *charity*, *courtesy*, *cruelty*, *mercy*, and *obedience*.<sup>47</sup>

We can find many indications of the aristocratic stamp of medieval French loan-words. Things connected with ordinary people tend to retain their English names, whereas upper-class objects often have French names. That is why there is English *home* and *house* but French *manor* and *palace*; English *child*, *daughter*, *son*, but French *heir* and *nurse*; English *calf*, *ox*, *sheep*, *swine*, but French *veal*, *beef*, *mutton*, and *pork*.

Those who know Modern French can be puzzled by the difference between an English word and the corresponding French word. These differences are due to changes that have taken place in pronunciation of both languages since medieval times. Another cause of these differences is dialectal variation in Old French. Standard Modern French is descended from a Central French dialect of Old French, but the Normans spoke a Northern French dialect, which was different in many ways. In general, however, only the early French loan-words were taken from Norman. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the majority of French words were borrowed, it was Central French that was

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<sup>47</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 146-147.

fashionable, and it was from this dialect that words were taken. The borrowings from Norman are very thoroughly assimilated into English, and include more ordinary everyday words than the later borrowings from Central French; for example: *garden, hour, market, people, and wage*. In some cases, a word was borrowed from Norman and later borrowed again in its Central French form; hence both of them coexist in Modern English, usually with different meaning. Such doublets include *catch – chase, cattle – chattel, warden – guardian, wage – gage*.<sup>48</sup>

The early French loan-words were so well assimilated into English that they were soon felt as not in any way foreign. This made it easier for the language to accept later Romance and Latin loans. Another result of the influx of French loans was to make English more hospitable to foreign words and less prone to use its own resources for word-creation.<sup>49</sup>

The dominance of French for so many centuries naturally had a great influence too in English literary traditions. The traditions of Old English literature had been more or less lost and they were replaced by the French ones. Here, as in so many fields, the centuries of French linguistic domination made a deep impression on English culture.<sup>50</sup>

## 4.2 French loan-words of the Middle-English period

Although Latin was indisputably the main source of loan-words during this period, we can find some words that were borrowed from other languages, including French, as well. The French loans include military terms (such as *bayonet, feint*), words dealing with life-sciences (such as *anatomy, muscle*), but also many words from the general vocabulary, e.g. *docility, entrance, invite*. French was also a transition point for a number of words from Latin and Greek that passed into English through it. They include technical terms of literary criticism, rhetoric, theology, or the natural sciences.<sup>51</sup>

## 4.3 French loan-words of Early Modern English

French influence on the English lexicon was heaviest during Middle-English period, however, the flow of loans continued throughout Early Modern English period and,

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<sup>48</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 148.

<sup>49</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 149.

<sup>50</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 150.

<sup>51</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 181.

eventually, into Present-Day English. Although the pace of borrowing words from French decreased, French loans outnumbered those from any other contemporary language. French, in fact, continued to be the language of some kinds of legal documents into the seventeenth century, and many in the upper classes spoke and read French. Direct contact with French speakers came with the large numbers of Protestant emigrants to England after the Edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis XIV.

The majority of French loans of this period are specialized words, such as *admire*, *barbarian*, *compute*, *density*, *formidable*, *gratitude*, *hospitable*, *identity*, *liaison*, *manipulation*, *optic*, *parade*, and *sociable*.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4.4 French loan-words of the scientific age

Relatively few words were borrowed from French during this period, compared to the deluge of French vocabulary adopted in the Middle English stage. The loans of this period deal with the arts (*connoisseur*, *critique*, *pointillism*), clothes and fashion (*couture*, *rouge*, *suede*), social life (*élite*, *etiquette*, *parvenu*), and more recently with motoring and aviation (*chauffeur*, *fuselage*, *garage*, *hangar*, *nacelle*). A major part in the foundation of modern chemistry was played by French scientists, and this is reflected in the fact that such words as *hydrogen*, *molecule*, *nitrogen*, and *oxygen* entered the English vocabulary.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4.5 French loan-words of Present-Day English

Although loans are no longer a major source of new words, the process of borrowing has not terminated. French continues to influence the English vocabulary more heavily than any other living language, and it has contributed hundreds of loan-words to Present-Day English. France's supremacy in fashion explains such words as *beige*, *beret*, *blouse*, *crepe*, *lingerie*, *negligee*, and *trousseau*. Among the many terms borrowed from famous French cuisine are *au gratin*, *chef*, *éclair*, *gourmet*, *margarine*, *menu*, *restaurant*, and *sauté*. Other items include *au pair*, *camouflage*, *coupon*, *discotheque*, *existentialism*, *genre*, *Gaullism*, and *semantics*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> C. M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language* (Boston: Wadsworth, 1996), 285.

<sup>53</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 218-219.

<sup>54</sup> See Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, 328.

In the northern part of North America, there was contact right from the beginning with French, and a number of words were borrowed from them, especially in the eighteenth century. These words include *prairie*, *rapids*, *pumpkin* and *gopher*.<sup>55</sup> More recently, American French has given a few new words, such as *bayou*, *shanty*, and *toboggan*.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 253.

<sup>56</sup> See Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, 328.

## 5 THE STATUS OF FRENCH BORROWINGS IN ENGLISH

As the French loan-words reflect the cultural and the political dominance of the French-speaking class in England that endured for about three centuries, they are often words to do with war, ecclesiastical matters, the law, hunting, heraldry, the arts, and fashion. Many of the words dealing with cuisine were adopted into English, for France was, and occasionally still is, regarded as the centre of the world gastronomy.<sup>57</sup>

A considerable part of the English scientific vocabulary comes from French, too, for French scientists played an important role in the domains as chemistry (Lavoisier, Pasteur) and physics (Pascal, Coulomb). For France is considered to be one of the pioneering countries in the field of automobile industry and aviation, the French language has given English words like *automobile*, *chauffeur*, *garage*, and *aeroplane*.

Generally, the French loan-words tend to be more abstract, dealing with scientific or philosophical matters, often considered to be formal and elevated. By contrast, the English words of Germanic origin denote rather the concepts related to the everyday reality. In the present-day English, there are many French and Germanic words surviving side-by-side with similar meanings. In such cases the Germanic word is found rather popular, and perhaps more emotionally charged, while the French one is often refined, formal, and official. Thus we can find such pairs as *doom* – *judgement*, *folk* – *nation*, *hearty* – *cordial*, *holy man* – *saint*, *stench* – *odour*, *thrift* – *economy*, *selfishness* – *egotism*, *to fight* – *to combat*, *to hide* – *to conceal*, *to end* – *to finish*, *to win* – *to gain*, *to die* – *to perish*, *to spit* – *to expectorate*.<sup>58</sup>

However, French has also given English hundreds of common ‘little’ words that seem to be perfectly native today. These words include especially the ones borrowed from Norman-French. The reason why their foreign origin is no longer felt by native speakers is that they have had enough time to become fully integrated into the host language. As an example we can mention words as *age*, *chance*, *face*, *hello*, *move*, *please*, *poor*, *roll*, and *use*.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 146.

<sup>58</sup> See Barber, *The English Language*, 147.

<sup>59</sup> See Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, 200.

The relationship between the English language speakers and the French borrowings was various during different periods. The words of French origin enjoyed great appreciation and prestige, as well as they saw public critique, categorical rejection, and, occasionally, ridiculisation too.<sup>60</sup>

Although the scope of the French influence on English vocabulary is enormous, we can discover that some aspects of English life remained relatively untouched by French loan-words. One of these areas is shipping and seafaring, as well as farming and agriculture in general. Apparently, the Norman-French-speaking masters left their English servants to work the fields by themselves. Likewise, French did not contribute to the creation of place-names, for the French-speaking ruling class did not found any solely French settlements. The last but not least domain that was not marked by French is the English grammar. There are no French pronouns or numerals, for example. Only a few prepositions and conjunctions of the ultimately French origin can be found.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Graddol, *English history, diversity and change*, 122.

<sup>61</sup> See Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, 200.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

## 6 THE ETYMOLOGY OF SOME ENGLISH WORDS BORROWED FROM FRENCH

### 6.1 A brief etymologic survey

In the list below, you can find the etymology of some French words that entered the English lexicon. In the majority of cases, they are every-day ‘little’ words which are well assimilated and no longer regarded as foreign ones by native speakers. That is why we might be rather more surprised to discover their French origin. The etymology suggested is taken from The Penguin Dictionary.<sup>62</sup> For the explanation of abbreviations used in the list, please, consult the List of Abbreviations presented at the end of the current thesis.

**Age:** ME *age* from OF, ultimately from L *aevum* ‘lifetime’

**Blame:** via OF *blamer*, from late L *blasphemare* ‘to blaspheme’, ultimately from Greek *blasphemein*

**Catch:** ME *cacchen* from early French *cachier* ‘to hunt’, ultimately from L *captare* ‘to chase’, from *capere* ‘to take’

**Chance:** ME via OF from L *cadent-*, *cadens* which is present participle from *cadere* ‘to fall’

**Chancellor:** ME *chanceler* via OF *chancelier* from late L *cancelarius* ‘doorkeeper, secretary’, from *cancellus* ‘lattice’; the term originally denoted a court official at the latticework partition between the judge and the people

**Change:** ME *changen* via OF from L *cambiare* ‘to exchange’, ultimately of Celtic origin

**Close:** ME *closen* via OF from L *claudere* ‘to shut’

**Cry:** ME *crien* via OF from L *quiritare* ‘to cry out for help from a citizen’ or ‘to scream’, ultimately from *Quirit*, *Quiris* ‘Roman citizen’

**Cuckold:** ME *cokewold*, probably from OF *cucuault*, from *cucu* meaning ‘cuckoo bird’; it originates in the idea of invading somebody else’s nest

**Cul-de-sac:** from French *cul-de-sac* literally meaning ‘bottom of the bag’

**Dally:** from ME *dalyen*, from Anglo-French *dalier* ‘to chat’

**Enter:** ME *entren* via OF *entrer* from L *intrare*, ultimately from *intra* ‘within’

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Allen, *The Penguin Dictionary* (Praha: Knižní klub, 2005).



**Etiquette:** from *étiquette*, literally ‘ticket’, from early French *estiquet*; the term originates from the fact that the rules for behaviour on the French king’s court in Versailles were written on cards to make the courtiers familiar with them

**Face:** ME via French *face* from L *facies* ‘make, form’ or ‘face’, ultimately from *facere* ‘to make’ or ‘to do’

**Fail:** ME *failen* via OF from L *fallire*, which is an alternation of *fallere* ‘to deceive, to disappoint’

**False:** ME *fals* via OF from L *falsus*, which is past participle of *fallere* ‘to deceive’

**Feasible:** ME *faisible* from French *faire* ‘to do’, ultimately from L *facere*

**Fine:** ME *fin* from OF, ultimately from L *finire* ‘to finish’; the underlying sense is ‘finished, complete, perfected’, hence very good of its kind

**Flour and Flower:** ME *flour* ‘flower’ or ‘best of anything’ via OF *flor, flour* from L *flor-, flos*; original meaning of the word was ‘best part’, that is, the finest grade of ground wheat, the spellings *flour* and *flower* remained undifferentiated till the 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Gentle:** ME *gentil* via OF *gentil* from L *gentilis* meaning ‘of a clan, of the same clan’, from *gens* ‘clan, nation’

**Hello:** alternation of *hollo* or *holloa*, which was an archaic cry used to attract attention, or as a call of encouragement; originally from *holla* that comes from French *holà*, from *ho!* and *là* ‘there’

**Hurt:** ME *hurten* ‘to strike, injure’ from OF *hurter* ‘to collide with’, ultimately of Germanic origin

**Job:** perhaps from ME *jobbe* ‘lump’ and especially its later meaning of ‘cartload’, which is possibly an alternation of *gobbe* ‘gob, lump’ from early French *gobe* ‘large piece of food, mouthful’, from *gober* ‘to swallow’, ultimately of Celtic origin

**Kerchief:** ME *courchef* from OF *cuevrenchief*, from *covrir* ‘to cover’ and *chief* ‘head’

**Letter:** ME via OF from L *littera* ‘letter of the alphabet’ or plural *litterae* ‘epistle, literature’

**Line:** ME expression taken partly from OF *ligne* and partly from OE *line*, both ultimately from L *linea (fibra)* ‘flax (fibre)’, from *linum* ‘flax’

**Manoeuvre:** from French *manoeuvre* via OF and late L from L *manu operate* ‘to work by hand’

**Move:** ME *moven* from early French *mouvoir* from L *movere*

**Pay:** ME *payen* via French from L *pacare* ‘to pacify’, from *pax* ‘peace’

**People:** ME *peple* via AF from *poeples* from L *populus*

**Petty:** ME *pety* ‘small, minor’, alternation of *petit* ‘small’

**Piece:** ME from OF, ultimately of Gaulish origin

**Place:** ME via OF from L *platea* ‘open space’, ultimately from Greek *plateia hodos* ‘broad way’

**Pleasure:** ME *plesen* via French *plaisir* ‘pleasure’ from L *placere*

**Poor:** ME *poure* via OF from L *pauper*, from *paucus* ‘little’ and *parare* ‘to acquire’

**Puppy:** ME *popi* via early French *poupée* ‘doll, toy’, from L *pupa* ‘girl, doll, puppet’

**Rock:** ME *rokke* via OF *rocque* from medieval L *rocca*

**Roll:** ME from OF *roller*, ultimately from L *rotula*, which is a diminutive of *rota* ‘wheel’

**Savage:** ME *sauvage* via French from L *salvaticus*, alternation of L *silvaticus* ‘of the woods, wild’ from *silva* ‘a wood’

**Save:** ME *saven* via early French *salver* from L *salvare*, from *salvus* ‘safe’

**Search:** ME *cerchen* from early French *cerchier* ‘to go about, to survey, to search’ from late L *circare* ‘to go about’ from L *circum* ‘round about’

**Sign:** ME *signe* via early French *signe* from L *signum* ‘mark, token, sign, image, seal’

**Strange:** ME via OF *estrange* from L *extraneus* ‘foreign, external’, from *extra* ‘outside’, feminine of *exter*

**Stuff:** ME from OF *estoffe*, from *estoffer* ‘to to equip, to stock’, probably ultimately from Old Germanic

**Toast:** the meaning of ‘the act or an instance of drinking in honour of somebody or something’ comes from the use of pieces of spiced, sliced, and browned bread to flavour drinks; the meaning of the ‘a browned slice of bread’ comes from ME *tosten* ‘to burn, to parch’ via OF from L *tostus*, which is past participle of *torrere* ‘to dry or parch’

**Toilet:** from French *les toilettes* ‘the dressing room, wardrobe’, the use of the word in the meaning of ‘lavatory’ comes from the fact it was absolutely unacceptable to excuse one’s withdrawing by announcing the real purpose, that is why the upper-class preferred to claim to leave by reason of adjusting one’s wear in the ‘dressing room’, this custom consequently spread in the entire society; the word originally comes from early French *toilette* ‘cloth to put over the shoulders while dressing the hair or shaving’, which is a diminutive of *toile* ‘cloth, net’ ultimately from L *tela* ‘web’, from *texere* ‘to weave or construct’

**Touch:** from ME *touchen* via OF *tochier* from vulgar L *toccare* ‘to knock, to strike a bell, touch’, originally of imitative origin

**Try:** ME from early French *trier* ‘to sift, to sort’

**Use:** ME *us* via OF from L *usus*, past participle of *uti* ‘to use’

As we may see, in the majority of cases, French is not the words’ ‘ultimate’ language of origin. Their roots go down to Latin, Greek, Germanic or Celtic. Nevertheless, they may be considered as the French loan-words, for English borrowed them from the French language in specific historical periods, regardless of their primary etymological origin.

## 6.2 More detailed etymology of the words chosen

In the following part, we would like to concentrate on the etymology of three words chosen from the list above, in order to present the history of their usage in more details.

**Gentle:** this is a good example of the words denoting occupation or social rank which developed their meanings into the ones referring to the moral qualities, real or supposed, of people in that station. The present word had been borrowed from French in the thirteenth century, and it was used primarily to refer to social rank, having meant ‘well-born, of good family’. The meanings ‘courteous, generous, gracious’ (first recorded around 1280), and later ‘mild, tender, merciful’ (first recorded 1552), arose because these were the qualities conventionally attributed to people of that class. Of course, not all gentlemen were gentle, but the idealised picture that a ruling class had of itself might have been more influential than the actual facts. The former meanings are now obsolete; however, the meaning of ‘well-born’ is conserved in the word *gentleman*. The expression *gentleman’s agreement* is first attested in 1929.

**Manoeuvre:** the word originates in the medieval French *manoeuvre* meaning ‘manipulation’, but ultimately it comes from Late Latin *manuoperare* ‘work with the hands’, via Old French *manuevre* with the same meaning. The word had been borrowed in the fifteenth century (first recorded 1479) in the meaning of ‘hand-labour’, which is obsolete nowadays. Later, the sense of the word narrowed into the military one of ‘planned movement of troops or warship’, which is attested from 1758. In the eighteenth century, a new meaning developed by the generalisation of the former one. The meaning ‘artful plan, adroit movement’ dates from 1774, whereas the verb is first attested 1777.

**Pay:** given the unpeaceful feelings one often has in paying bills or income taxes, it is difficult to believe that the word *pay* ultimately derives from the Latin word *pax* ‘peace’. However, it is not the peace of the one who pays that is involved in its development of

meaning. The Latin word *pacare* ‘to impose a settlement on peoples or territories’ was derived from *pax* ‘peace, a settlement of hostilities’. In Late Latin *pacare* had been extended to have the specific application ‘to pacify or satisfy (a creditor), to give what is due for goods or services’, the sense that came into Old French *paiier* (attested in the 12<sup>th</sup> century). The Middle English word *paien* ‘to appease, pacify, satisfy’, the ancestor of the present-day word *to pay*, was first recorded around 1225, whereas the general meaning ‘to please, pacify’ died out in English by 1500. Sense of ‘suffer, endure (a punishment, etc.)’ is first recorded 1387. The usage of the word as a noun dates from around 1330; its derivation *payement* (from Old French *paiement*) is first attested around 1375.

## **7 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE PROCESS OF BORROWING WORDS FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH**

As it has been already mentioned, borrowing is no longer a major source of new English vocabulary; however, the process of adopting foreign words into the native lexicon continues. Small as the number of French loan-words could seem nowadays, especially when compared to the enormous quantity of borrowings entering the English vocabulary in the past, French still remains one of the most influential languages in what concerns enriching English lexicon by loan-words. Some examples of the French words, that recently entered the English lexicon, were mentioned in the chapter 4.5.

Nevertheless, we can notice that the relationship between English and French has considerably changed, notably during the last century. English is not in the position of solely acceptor language anymore, and, on the other hand, French is no longer the dominant language of upper-classes, from which other languages borrow new words in order to enrich their lexicon.

English has become an omnipresent world language. The reasons of this fact can be traced up to the Great Industrial Revolution, which started in Britain, and to the foundation of British colonial supremacy in a major part of the world. English-speaking countries have even strengthened their position after WWI and WWII, especially thanks to the industrial boom in the USA and their commercial success. All those achievements have rendered the role of English in the international communication accordingly important. By contrast, France has lost its position of a leading power in the world, as it has not managed to recover from having lost its colonial dominion, and, consequently, French has ceased to be the international language number one. Today's arts and the science see the dominance of English-speaking countries – a great number of films are shot in English, the majority of songs have English lyrics (even if English is not the author's native language), the far biggest portion of scientific texts is published in English.

As we may expect, playing such an important role, English influences almost all existing languages, including French. Strong as the impact of English dominance is, French has some means how to deal with it. L'Académie française, or French Academy, is one of these means. It is the body deciding which words are acceptable and which are not so. It offers advice concerning what expressions are appropriate in any communication situation. One of its main tasks is to decelerate the pace of English loan-words 'intruding' the native

vocabulary and to suggest expressions that should be used instead of them. However, especially young generation do not regard them as binding ones.

Regardless of the dominance English enjoys in the present-day world, French still retains its position in such domains as haute-couture, gastronomy and food-industry, ballet, philosophy, and diplomacy. French is the communication language of organisations including, for example, the International Olympic Committee, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Arab States, the office of the Pope, and it is also the main language of post service.

## CONCLUSION

English is a Germanic language. However, far the most important contribution into its lexicon has been made by the Romance languages, such as Latin, and French. Furthermore, it cannot be omitted that a considerable part of the English vocabulary owes its creation to Celtic, Greek, as well as to the Scandinavian and the Slavonic languages.

The numbers of loan-words from both Latin and French are comparable. The percentage of borrowings from each of the two languages is about 28%, whereas the number of French expressions borrowed by English is slightly higher. It means that loan-words coming from French and Latin form together more than a half the total of the English expressions, which is a quite striking discovery.

Although some words had been borrowed from French even before A.D. 1066, the borrowing process of French words *en masse* broke out after the Norman Conquest. Immense as the number of French loan-words entering the native lexicon after the Conquest was, the peak of the process had not occurred before during the period when the French commenced to die out in England. Adopting French expressions has continued, though at a decreasing pace, till nowadays.

Although borrowing is no longer the principal means of the current English vocabulary expansion, foreign words are still adopted by English, including the French ones. Regardless of the fact that French has lost its primary position in the international communication, it remains one of the most influential languages. French, by means of providing loan-words dealing with various domains of human life, still contributes to the enrichment of the English lexicon far the most, in comparison to other languages.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AF	Anglo-French
L	Latin
ME	Middle English
MoE	Modern English
OE	Old English
OF	Old French
PDE	Present-Day English
PE	Proto-English

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