

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta filozofická

Bakalářská práce

French Loan-Words in English

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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1 Introduction

The aim of the first part of this work is explain what borrowings in linguistics are, and define other ways of expanding the vocabulary of a language. The next part deals with borrowings from French, specifically, and describes crucial historical events that changed the face of English forever. The great influx of French words happened during the Norman Conquest that took place in 1066 but its impact on English can be felt today. These borrowings affected mostly military, administration, religion, law, handicrafts, entertainment and arts. There will also be a few words dedicated to French loans in Old English. Next chapter is the Renaissance – a period from the 14th to the 17th century during which acquired English new words from not only French. Unlike the Norman Conquest, the Renaissance brings words and expressions mainly in the field of arts and philosophy.

The second part of this work examines modern articles focusing on French borrowings within them. Point of this is to determine how frequent are French loan-words in English written texts and thus showing the importance of these words for English. The first sample text, found in the magazine *History Today*, is from the field of history and is titled *So, who DID discover America*. The second text, from the field of law, examines an extract of *Treaty of Amsterdam* which is available for the public on the European Union webpage.

There are no appendixes to this work as I did not consider it vital.

2 Adding to the lexicon

“There are many ways in which the lexicon of a language can be enlarged. We will discuss four in this chapter: borrowing words from other languages; creating new words (coinage); using the names of people or places to refer to a related object; making shifts and conversions where meanings of words or their parts of speech change.”¹

The following content excludes word building processes (such as compounding, clipping etc.) as my intention is to merely offer comparisons to borrowing, which is the most important process in this work.

2.1 Borrowing

Borrowings, also called loanwords, are words adopted by the speakers of one language from another language, which is called the source language. The term borrowing refers to the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. “Loan” and “borrowing” are metaphors because there is no literal lending process. The words simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the one these words originated in.²

Borrowing is a sociolinguistic process which is not always appreciated by all members of the speech community. In some countries are tendencies to keep the language “pure” and borrowing words is prohibited. For example, France, by law, has tried to prevent using English word in French.³

“All languages borrow words from other languages. English borrowed an extremely large number of lexical items from French during the occupation period which followed the Norman Conquest in 1066. Legal occupation meant that terms for the court, law, and property would enter English from French.”⁴

The earliest loanwords into English were Norman French while the later ones come from Central French. Words from the conquerors' language entered many areas of English vocabulary: administration (e.g. government), military (e.g. captain), religion (e.g. abbey), law (e.g. crime), entertainment (e.g. cards), arts (e.g. colour) and handicrafts (e.g. butcher).⁵

2.2 Coinage

Every language has words that have not been borrowed from another language. These are called native words. When a new word is needed, there are a number of options but the obvious one is to coin a new word. For example, Derek Smith, a Louisville basketball player, is credit with creating high-five, a word first used as a celebratory gesture, a slap of right hands by players, high over their heads.

2.3 Names of people and places

The names of inventors of products or people associated with particular products have often become the word for the products themselves. Such names are called eponyms. For instance, the word boycott is based on the name of a real person, Captain Boycott, a retired British army captain who oversaw estates in Ireland and refused to give humanitarian concessions to his Irish tenants. They hated him so much that they ostracized him and boycott became a synonym for rejection and isolation.

The opposite type of relation also exists. Many family names are taken from ordinary words, in particular words for occupations, making names like Smith, Miller, Farmer, Baker, Cooper etc.

Some names might have multiple origins. For example, it is not clear whether a name such as Bower means someone who makes bows, if it

compares the person to flower bower or if it comes from the German Bauer meaning farm laborer.

2.4 Conversion

Conversion is a word formation process of creating additional lexical items out of those that already exist. Language users like a word so much that they decide to use it in new ways. So, a saw is used to saw, a bag is used to bag, a file is used to file, bottles are used for bottling, butter for buttering.

The most productive form of conversion in English is noun to verb (verbification or verbing) and verb to noun (nominalization).

2.5 Shifts

“The meanings of words themselves may shift over time. The classic examples are knave, which once meant a young lad and now means someone rather nasty; deer, which once meant wild animals in general (so bears could be considered deer); and couth, which meant known or familiar and now survives only in uncouth.”⁶

3 History

3.1 French before 1066

French Vocabulary influenced Middle English so significantly after the Norman Conquest that it is easy to ignore the fact that Old English acquired French loan words as well. It would be surprising if there had been no influence at all, given the close contacts which had grown up in the 10th and 11th centuries. English monks studied in France, where the monastic revival had started.

Most importantly, there was close contact between the two cultures following the exile to Normandy of Edward the Confessor (between 1003 and 1005 – 1066), the son of Æthelred II (the *unræd*, or “ill-advised”) and Emma, daughter of the Duke of Normandy. Edward lived there for 25 years and returned to England in 1041 with French courtiers. Several French nobles were given high positions when he succeeded to the throne. The linguistic consequences were a handful of French loan words, among them *capon* “capon”, *servian* “serve”, *bacon* “bacon”, *arblast* “weapon”, *prison* “prison”, *castel* “castle” and *canclere* “chancellor”.⁷

3.2 The Norman Invasion

“Normans were Norsemen, i.e. the Scandinavian, mainly Danish, raiders who settled on the northern coast of France (on the Lower Seine) in ca. 900. They became Christians and adopted French as their language. In 911 the French king made the ruler of this province the Duke of Normandy.”⁸

The Norman victory at Hastings (1066) changed the face of English forever. King Harold Godwinson was the last Anglo-Saxon king for nearly three hundred years. It must have seemed like a disaster for English. The Normans seized control of their new territory with systematic rigor. Norman castles, built by English workmen, garrisoned by Norman

soldiers and used to hold down the countryside. The English royal family and Harold's court had been destroyed in battle. William purged the English church: Norman bishops and abbots gradually took over in the cathedrals and monasteries. For generations after the Conquest all crucial positions in the country were held by French-speaking Normans.

William was crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066 and this act of triumph, a ceremony that used both French and Latin, symbolized the condition of England for the next two hundred years. William himself spoke French and attempted to learn English, but failed due to lack of available study time. French was established as the smart and Latin as the professional language.

The Norman kings were often totally ignorant of English, although Henry I, who had an English wife, could speak some English. In the upper-class circles, it was the fashionable thing to speak French. To this day the use of French words in conversation is thought to show sophistication, or *savoirfaire*.

Though French had the social and cultural prestige, Latin remained the language of religion and learning. The English vernacular survived as the common speech. The mingling of these three traditions can be seen in the case of a word like *kingly*. The Anglo-Saxons had only one word to express this concept, which, with they made up from the word *king*. After the Normans, three synonyms enter the language: *royal*, *regal* and *sovereign*.

Why did English survive? First reason is that the pre-Conquest Old English vernacular, both written and spoken, was too well established and too hardy to be obliterated thanks to the fusion with the Scandinavian languages. The English speakers had a large demographic advantage.

The second reason why English survived is the fact that Normans began to intermarry with those they have conquered. There were French town alongside the English at Norwich and Nottingham. Southampton still has a French Street, one of its thoroughfares in the Middle Ages. One can

imagine the situation of a minor Norman knight living in a small manor in the English countryside surrounded by English peasants, served in the house by English maids and his children playing with English children.

Third, and perhaps the most important, in 1204, the Anglo-Normans lost control of their French territory across the Channel. Many of the Norman nobility were forced to declare allegiance either to France or to England as they held lands in both countries.

In the early years of the thirteenth century, we find English making a comeback at both the written and the spoken level. Church sermons, prayers and carols are expressed in English. More and more records were kept in English, the upper-class Englishmen were keeping up their French only for the sake of appearances. The great silence that had apparently fallen over the written language from 1066 to 1200 began to be broken, at first with a few simple messages and then with a flood of documents. English writings like *The Owl* and *The Nightingale* and the *Ancrene Riwe* are probably the tip of an iceberg of lost manuscripts.⁹

The use of French, however, was not limited. On the contrary, French came to be regarded as the sole language of government records and by 1300 it had virtually replaced Latin in most official documents. Edward III issued an act in 1362 requiring the use of English as the language of the oral proceedings in courts. The records, however, were still made in Latin and the laws were written in French.¹⁰

3.3 Middle English

3.3.1 Norman influence

As the period progressed, so the spelling changed. The Norman scribes listened to English and began to spell it in accordance with the conventions for French, such as *qu* for *cw* (queen for *cwen*). They brought in *gh* (instead of *h*) in such words as *night* and *enough*, and *ch* (instead of *c*) in such words as *church*. They also used *ou* for *u* (as in *house*) and they began to use *c* before *e* (instead of *s*) in such words as *cercle* and *cell*. *U* was replaced by *o* to make words easier to read as *v*, *n*, and *m* were written very similarly and therefore difficult to read. By the beginning of the 15th century, English spelling was a mixture of two systems, Old English and French.

3.3.2 New spelling conventions

Some of the consonants sounds began to be spelled differently, mainly because the French influence. For example, Old English *sc* /ʃ/ is replaced by *sh* or *sch* (*scip* becomes *ship*), though some dialects use *s*, *ss* or *x*. New conventions for showing long and short vowel sounds came to be marked with an extra vowel letter, as in *see* (earlier *sē*).

3.3.3 New pronunciations

French loan words also introduced new diphthongs, in the form of /oɪ/ and /ʊɪ/ - unusual sounds for English, and the ancestors of modern /ɔɪ/ in *joy*, *point*, etc. The letter [h] has undergone some interesting changes as well. This sound appeared on the beginning of many Old English words, such as *hring* “ring” and *hnecca* “neck”. It was lost early on in the Middle English period and was the first sign of “aitch-dropping”.

3.3.4 The French factor

French influence became increasingly apparent in English manuscripts of the thirteenth century. It is estimated that some 10,000 French words entered English at the time. These words were largely found in the fields of law, administration, but also in medicine, art and fashion. Over 70 per cent of the words were nouns, a large number of which were abstract terms, constructed using such new French affixes as *con-*, *trans-*, *pre-*, *-ance*, *-tion*, and *-ment*. Circa 75 per cent of these words are still in the modern language.

As the new words entered English, there were many cases where they duplicated words that had already existed in Anglo-Saxon times. In such cases, there were two possible outcomes. Either one word would replace the other; or both would co-exist, but develop slightly different meanings. For example, *beautiful* replaced *wlitig*, *place* instead of *stow*. Some cases of both words surviving: house (Old English) and mansion (French), or hearty (Old English) and cordial (French).¹¹

3.3.5 List of French loans in Middle English

“Administration

Authority, bailiff, chamberlain, chancellor, constable, coroner, council, court, crown, duke, empire, exchequer, government, liberty, majesty, manor, mayor, messenger, minister, noble, palace, parliament, peasant, prince, realm, reign, revenue, royal, servant, sir, sovereign, squire, statute, tax, traitor, treason, treaty, tyrant, vassal, warden.

Law

Accuse, adultery, advocate, arrest, arson, assault, assize, attorney, bail, bar, blame, chattels, convict, crime, decree, depose, estate, evidence, executor, felon, fine, fraud, heir, indictment, inquest, jail, judge, jury,

justice, larceny, lagedy, libel, pardon, perjury, plaintiff, plea, prison, punishment, sue, summons, trespass, verdict, warrant.

Religion

Abbey, anoint, baptism, cardinal, cathedral, chant, chaplain, charity, clergy, communion, confess, convent, creator, crucifix, divine, faith, friar, heresy, homily, immortality, incense, mercy, miracle, novice, ordain, parson, penance, prayer, prelate, priory, religion, repent, sacrament, sacrilege, saint, salvation, savior, schism, sermon, solemn, temptation, theology, trinity, vicar, virgin, virtue.

Military

Ambush, archer, army, barbican, battle, besiege, captain, combat, defend, enemy, garrison, guard, hauberk, lance, lieutenant, moat, navy, peace, portcullis, retreat, sergeant, siege, soldier, spy, vanquish.

Food and drink

Appetite, bacon, beef, biscuit, clove, confection, cream, cruet, date, dinner, feast, fig, fruit, fry, grape, gravy, gruel, herb, jelly, lemon, lettuce, mackerel, mince, mustard, mutton, olive, orange, oyster, pigeon, plate, pork, poultry, raisin, repast, roast, salad, salmon, sardine, saucer, sausage, sole, spice, stew, sturgeon, sugar, supper, tart, taste, toast, treacle, tripe, veal, venison, vinegar.

Fashion

Apparel, attire, boots, brooch, buckle, button, cape, chemise, cloak, collar, diamond, dress, embroidery, emerald, ermine, fashion, frock, fur, garment, garter, gown, jewel, lace, mitten, ornament, pearl, petticoat, pleat, robe, satin, taffeta, tassel, train, veil, wardrobe.

Leisure and the arts

Art, beauty, carol, chess, colour, conversation, courser, dalliance, dance, falcon, fool, harness, image, jollity, joust, juggler, kennel, lay, leisure, literature, lute, melody, minstrel, music, noun, painting, palfrey, paper, parchment, park, partridge, pavilion, pen, pheasant, poet, preface, prose, recreation, rein, retrieve, revel, rhyme, romance, sculpture, spaniel, stable, stallion, story, tabor, terrier, title, tournament, tragedy, trot, vellum, volume.

Science and learning

Alkali, anatomy, arsenic, calendar, clause, copy, gender, geometry, gout, grammar, jaundice, leper, logic, medicine, metal, noun, ointment, pain, physician, plague, pleurisy, poison, pulse, sphere, square, stomach, study, sulphur, surgeon, treatise.

The home

Basin, blanket, bucket, ceiling, cellar, chair, chamber, chandelier, chimney, closet, couch, counterpane, curtain, cushion, garret, joist, kennel, lamp, lantern, latch, lattice, pantry, parlour, pillar, porch, quilt, scullery, towel, tower, turret.

General nouns

Action, adventure, affection, age, air, city, coast, comfort, country, courage, courtesy, cruelty, debt, deceit, dozen, envy, error, face, fault, flower, forest, grief, honour, hour, joy, labour, manner, marriage, mischief, mountain, noise, number, ocean, opinion, order, pair, people, person, piece, point, poverty, power, quality, rage, reason, river, scandal, season, sign, sound, spirit, substance, task, tavern, unity, vision.

General adjectives

Active, amorous, blue, brown, calm, certain, clear, common, cruel, curious, eager, easy, final, foreign, gay, gentle, honest, horrible, large, mean, natural, nice, original, perfect, poor, precious, probable, real, rude, safe, scarce, scarlet, second, simple, single, solid, special, strange, sudden, sure, usual.

General verbs

Advise, allow, arrange, carry, change, close, continue, cry, deceive, delay, enjoy, enter, form, grant, inform, join, marry, move, obey, pass, pay, please, prefer, prove, push, quit, receive, refuse, remember, reply, satisfy, save, serve, suppose, travel, trip, wait, waste.

Turns or phrase

By heart, come to a head, do homage, do justice to, have mercy on, hold one's peace, make complaint, on the point of, take leave, take pity on."¹²

"How can we evaluate the influence of French on English?

In lexicology, this question is very difficult to answer. This language is fundamentally connected with Norman and Latin, and therefore determining whether a loan word is purely French is not an easy task. Norman French, as one of the old French dialects, has pervaded Anglo-Saxon in the second half of the 13th century, but the influx of Romance words deteriorates significantly after 1400."¹³

3.4 English during Renaissance

4 Abstract

The topic of this bachelor's thesis is a description of the historical events that led to enriching the English language with a vast number of French loan words and contains an analysis of modern articles.

In the beginning of this work, borrowing and few other types of word formation are defined and illustrated by examples.

Historically significant was the Norman Conquest that took place in 1066, when William the Conqueror and his soldiers landed on the shores of Britain. This work offers an explanation who the Normans actually were and why they spoke French. After this, events until 1362, when the English king attempted to renew the usage of English at court, are described.

The next chapter deals with Middle English, the predecessor of Modern English. The work describes a few phonetic and pronunciation changes in the Middle English. A list of French loanwords can be found at the end of this chapter.

The next chapter is called English during the Renaissance.

5 Resumé

Tématem této bakalářské práce je jednak popis historických událostí, vedoucích k velkému množství francouzských výpůjček v anglickém jazyce a jednak analýza anglicky psaných textů.

Na začátku této práce je definice výpůjček a několika dalších typů vzniku nových slov a to vše je doplněno příklady.

Z historického hlediska se jedná o období ovládnutí Anglie Normany, k němuž došlo v roce 1066, kdy se Vilém Dobyvatel se svými vojáky vylodil v Anglii. V práci je vysvětleno, kdo vlastně byli Normané a proč

hovoří francouzsky. Dále následuje vyprávění do roku 1362, kdy byly snahy o znovuzavedení angličtiny do soudních síní.

Další kapitola se zabývá Middle English (střední angličtina), což je předchůdce moderní angličtiny. V práci je uvedeno několik příkladů fonetických změn jazyka i změn v psaném projevu. Na konci této kapitoly se nachází seznam francouzských výpůjček, které střední angličtina převzala.

Další kapitolou je angličtina v období renesance.

6 Endnotes

¹ Hatch, E.: *Vocabulary, semantics, and language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 170. ISBN 0-521-47942-8.

² Kemmer, S.: Words in English public website. In: Rice University.com [online]. 2012. [2015-04-20]. Dostupné z: <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/loanwords.html>

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⁵ Peprník, J.: *English Lexicology*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2006. S. 84, 85, ISBN 80-244-1530-5.

⁶ Hatch, E.: *Vocabulary, semantics, and language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 175, 176, 177, 179, 181. ISBN 0-521-47942-8

⁷ Crystal, D.: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 27. ISBN 0-521-40179-8.

⁸ Peprník, J.: *English Lexicology*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2006. S. 84, 85, ISBN 80-244-1530-5.

⁹ McCrum, R.: *The story of English*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2002, 3rd edition, p.72, 73, 74, 75, 76. ISBN 0-571-21077-5

¹⁰ Hladký, J.: *A guide to pre-modern English*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2003, p. 324, ISBN 80-210-3219-7

¹¹ Crystal, D.: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 41, 42, 46. ISBN 0-521-40179-8

¹² Crystal, D.: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 47. ISBN 0-521-40179-8

¹³ Vorel, R.: *Lexikologie angličtiny v 77 otázkách a odpovědích*. Plzeň: Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, 2006, p. 31. ISBN 80-86898-67-9 [text přeložil Martin Petrák]

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