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The vocabulary of English: history

English is a west Germanic language with its origin in England; it is most closely related to German and Dutch. Historically, English is divided into four periods: Old English (450-1066), Middle English (1066-1500), Early Modern English (1500-1700) and Late Modern English (1700 to the present). Due to colonial expansion and recently, due to its status as a lingua franca, English is found in many countries across the world. In the present context, the main countries with native speaker populations are Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland) and Ireland, both of which contributed to overseas forms of English during the colonial period (1600-1900) due to deportation and emigration, both voluntary and involuntary. There are many pidgins deriving from English as a lexifier language, e.g. in the Caribbean, West Africa and the South-West Pacific. English is also found as a second language, with various degrees of proficiency, in many countries of South and South-East Asia. Due to recent immigration, especially after WWII, forms of English from South Asia and the Caribbean, established themselves in Britain and have interacted with traditional forms of English.

Although present-day English does not borrow very often from foreign languages, the vocabulary of English in the history of the language has been characterised by at times massive influence from other languages. There are three main sources for historical loans in English.

- 1) *Latin* (pre-Old English, loans after Christianisation, borrowings and new formations in the early modern period)

- 2) *Scandinavian* (late Old English)
 3) *French* (Norman and Central French, during the early and late Middle English periods respectively)

Note that Latin is the language which has continuously donated words to English from its prehistoric stage to the present-day. Often the Latin words are from Greek originally. But also there are many direct loans from Greek in particular in the spheres of science and technology. To group Latin and Greek together one speaks of classical loans in English.

CALQUES (loan translations) Before looking at loans in detail one should remark that these are not only direct borrowings but also includes what are called *calques*. These are new formations in a language which are attained by translating the elements of a word in a foreign language. For instance Greek *sympathia* comes from *syn* ‘with’ and *pathia* ‘suffering’. It was borrowed into Latin as *compassio* (from *con* ‘with’ and *passio* ‘suffering’) and then into German as *Mitleid* from *mit* ‘with’ and *Leid* ‘suffering’. Another instance of a calque would be *Vorhersehung* ‘providence’ from *providentia* and *Ausdruck* ‘expression’ from *expressio*. In English the word *gospel* is a calque as it derives originally from *good* + *spell* which is a translation of Greek *evangelion*.

Latin borrowings

Early Latin loans

Some loans from Latin were present in the Germanic dialects which were brought to England in the first place. These probably entered Germanic because of contact and trade with the Romans on the continent. In England some loans may be due to exchange with the descendants of the original Romans who remained in the country after the departure of the Roman legions in about 440 AD. The next group of Latin loans is directly connected with the Christianisation of England which began from the south at the end of the 6th century (there was already a presence in Scotland and the north of England due to Christianisation from Ireland).

Latin	OldEng	ModEng	German
<i>planta</i>	<i>plante</i>	<i>plant</i>	<i>Pflanze</i>
<i>menta</i>	<i>minte</i>	<i>mint</i>	<i>Minze</i>
<i>vinum</i>	<i>win</i>	<i>wine</i>	<i>Wein</i>
<i>coquina</i>	<i>cycene</i>	<i>kitchen</i>	<i>Küche</i>
<i>caseus</i>	<i>cese</i>	<i>cheese</i>	<i>Käse</i>
<i>moneta</i>	<i>mynet</i>	<i>mint</i>	<i>Münze</i>
<i>discus</i>	<i>disc</i>	<i>dish</i>	<i>Tisch</i>
<i>caupo</i>	<i>ceap(mann)</i> <i>chapman</i>	<i>cheap</i>	<i>Kauf(mann)</i>
<i>(via)strata</i>	<i>stræt</i>	<i>street</i>	<i>Straße</i>
<i>milia(passum) mil</i>		<i>mile</i>	<i>Meile</i>
<i>tegula</i>	<i>tigel</i>	<i>tile</i>	<i>Ziegel</i>
<i>monasterium</i>	<i>mynster</i>	<i>minster</i>	<i>Münster</i>
<i>molina</i>	<i>mill</i>	<i>mill</i>	<i>Mühle</i>
<i>pondo</i>	<i>pund</i>	<i>pound</i>	<i>Pfund</i>
<i>uncia</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>inch</i>	<i>Unze</i>

<i>angelos</i>	<i>angel</i>	<i>angel</i>	<i>Engel</i>
<i>diabolos</i>	<i>deovol</i>	<i>devil</i>	<i>Teufel</i>

It is possible to establish a relative chronology for Latin loans on the basis of word forms. For instance the word for *wine* in English is obviously an old loan from Latin (older than the ecclesiastical loans) as it goes back to trade with the Romans and is found in German in the same form as well (originally /wi:n/).

Later the word changes its vowel to /ai/ (due to later internal changes in both German and English). Now the Latin of this early period had a sound /w/ which was written *v*, i.e. the word for ‘wine’ was *winum*. This sound shifted in later Latin from an approximant to a fricative and was then pronounced as [v]. After this stage the word for the bush on which the wine grape was grown was borrowed into English, this time as *vine* with an initial /v-/. Hence the contrast in present-day English between *wine* ‘Wein’ and *vine* ‘Weinstock’ with /w-/ versus /v-/.

Later Latin loans

Loans from Latin continue to appear continuously throughout the history of English. In the early modern period (16th and 17th centuries) there is a particularly strong influence due to the development of technical vocabulary and the desire to enrich English to make it an equal of the classical languages Latin and Greek. This should be seen in connection with general cultural developments of the time. In the early modern period one has on the one hand a renewed interest in Classical culture, deriving from the new perspective on pre-Christian culture developed in the Renaissance, and on the other one has the necessity to devise terms for the many inventions and developments of science. This created an atmosphere in which scholars concerned themselves intensively with Latin and Greek and considered how English might be enriched by borrowing words from the classical languages. We might find this attitude strange today but at that time the older languages were regarded as more perfect, probably because they were seen as the carriers of the founding culture of later Europe.

‘Hard words’ is a term used in previous centuries for non-native words in English vocabulary, particularly where the meaning is not obvious from the form, e.g. *diligent* for *hard-working*, *myopic* for *short-sighted*. This includes many Romance words which entered English from the Middle English period onwards and borrowings from the classical languages Latin and Greek, especially in the fields of science and technology. The term would appear to have been used for the first time in the title of John Day’s glossary *A gatheryng of certayne harde wordes in the newe Testament, with their exposicion* (1551) – a translation of a French work in which the reference ‘hard words’ renders the expression *mots difficiles* contained in the title of the original work.

In the course of the 16th century many discussions were carried on in public in which scholars either approved of the policy of direct borrowing from Latin or Greek for the purpose of enriching English or they did not. The latter group felt that English provides the means itself for the creation of any terms which might be needed in the language. These disagreements among scholars are generally known as the *Inkhorn Controversy* because it was something which concerned writers and scholars more than the general populace.

To the modern reader this controversy appears to be a case of extreme prescriptivism where some authors attempted to apply notions of undue conservatism to their contemporary language by insisting that Latin and Greek were superior to English and that one should borrow wholesale from these languages. However there is one

respect in which the classical borrowings did indeed fulfil a genuine need in English.

Because of its lexical structure English had at the time many instances of nouns without corresponding adjectives. These are so-called lexical gaps. Furthermore because English formed (and still forms) semantic compounds by joining an adjective to a noun there was a real need for adjectives. Note that German forms semantic compounds by formal compounds in which two nouns are joined together (see translation below).

	before	after
noun	<i>sea</i>	
adjective	---	<i>marine</i> (E Latin <i>mare</i>)
example	<i>marine life</i>	

Now in some instances the corresponding adjective was present in the language but had a non-neutral connotation (in the examples below the word *watery* means ‘containing too much fluid’ and *horsy* means ‘in gait like a horse’); another instance would be *dermatologist* (not *skin doctor*, and most certainly not *skinny doctor*) for *Hautarzt*.

	before	after
noun	<i>water horse war</i>	
adjective	<i>watery horsy</i> ---	<i>aquatic equestrian martial</i>

The above cases fill lexical gaps. But during the early modern period many loans were made which were not strictly demanded by the language but which nonetheless have remained. There is a general observation that if two words originally have the same meaning then they survive in a language only if they are later differentiated, semantically or stylistically. This is what has happened with those loans which were not strictly speaking necessary in a functional sense but which have stayed in English all the same (many have disappeared since). Below there is a selection of such words. The contrast which has arisen is usually that between a native word and a classical loan (generally from Latin).

<i>father</i>	<i>fatherly</i>	<i>paternal</i>	
<i>man</i>	<i>manly</i>	<i>virile</i>	<i>masculine</i>
<i>woman</i>	<i>womanly</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>feminine</i>

In many instances the loans from classical languages are the only forms available in English. Some random examples of this are *hippopotamus*, *paralysis*, *nausea*, *cemetery*. Many of these, because they are opaque, have been reduced by abbreviation, e.g. *pram* from *perambulator*; *polio* from *poliomyelitis*.

The Scandinavian period

When considering the Scandinavian loanwords in English one can compare them with those from French. Immediately very obvious differences between the two cases are observed. On the one hand the varieties of Old Norse brought to England were much closer to the English of the time than was Anglo-Norman at the later period. Indeed one can safely assume that the Scandinavian invaders did not have too many difficulties in making themselves understood to their English neighbours. On the other hand the contact between the invaders and the natives was much more intense and on a wider basis than at

the later stage of French borrowing into English. This is clearly reflected in the nature of the loans which took place. Given the fact that the two languages, Old Norse and Old English were so similar, the consciousness of Old Norse words being foreign must not have been as high as it was with later French loans. Note that here the terms 'Scandinavian' and 'Old Norse' are regarded as synonymous.

Although the period in which the loanwords from Old Norse obviously came into English is that of Late Old English (from the 9th century onwards) because of the somewhat artificial standardisation of Old English in the form of the West Saxon *koiné* the particular words from Old Norse are only to be seen in the post-Old English period. For this reason a treatment of Scandinavian loanwords has been postponed until this section on Middle English.

The first point to be noted with Scandinavian loanwords in English is that only in those cases where a Scandinavian form is different from the corresponding English can one say that a loan has taken place. In many cases the forms in both languages were similar (due to their close genetic relationship) and so cannot be retrospectively distinguished. However there are certain characteristic features of Scandinavian as opposed to English which are reliable in identifying loans. One of the simplest is the sound sequence /sk/. In Old English this had been palatalised at an early stage to /ʃ/ (graphically *sc*); in Scandinavian this cluster had been retained in its unpalatalised form as [sk]. This means that native English words have [ʃ]: *ship, shin, shall, fish* while the Scandinavian loans have [sk]: *sky, skin, skill, scrape, scrub, bask, whisk*. The contrast is nowhere to be seen so clearly as with the word pair *shirt / skirt* where the semantic differentiation of the two words has led to their both surviving throughout the history of English. A non-palatalised pronunciation of /k/ and /g/ is to be found in other words and is probably due to Scandinavian influence as well: *kid, dike, get, give* (from Old English *giefan* with [j-]), *gild*. In some cases a special development in Scandinavian, the so-called Faroese hardening, is responsible for unexpected consonantism, cf. *egg* with final /g/ where Old English (as incidentally German) would lead one to expect a purely vocalic word; this may be a motivated borrowing as the Old English word was close to, if not homophonous with the word *æg* [æj] 'eye'.

The vowel in a word can also be an indication of borrowing from Scandinavian. Thus the Germanic diphthong /ai/ became /a:/ in Old English but was /ei/ or /e:/ in Scandinavian and can be used to explain an unexpected vocalism in some later English words such as *aye, nay, hale, reindeer, swain*. In some cases the Scandinavian loans survived into Middle English but not any further, thus one has forms such as *leith, laith* which did not continue in English, the Modern English word *loath* coming from a native form with *lath / loth*. However, with the pair *hail* and *whole* one sees two forms of the same etymon, the first deriving from Scandinavian and the second from a purely English source, hence the pronunciation with /ei/ and /qu/ respectively in Modern English. The root is also to be found in a series of other words, e.g. *heal* which comes from *h^ǰlan* and *holy* is from *h^ǰlig*.

Meaning can be used on some occasions to decide whether a word is a continuation of an English or a Scandinavian form. Thus the Modern English word *bloom* could have come from either Old English *bloma* or Scandinavian *blom*. But the former meant 'ingot of iron' and only the latter word had the meaning 'flower, bloom'. Further cases are: *gift* which in Old English meant 'price of a wife' (cf. German *Mitgift*) but 'gift, present' in Scandinavian; *plow* meant a measure of land in Old English but a farm instrument in Scandinavian.

A feature of the Scandinavian influence on the vocabulary of English is that there

are many cases of co-existence of Old Norse and Old English words, usually with some semantic differentiation. This is also true of later French loans but the latter are located on a higher stylistic level.

Old English	Old Norse	Old English	Old Norse
<i>whole</i>	<i>hale</i>	<i>ill</i>	<i>sick</i>
<i>craft</i>	<i>skill</i>	<i>to rear</i>	<i>to raise</i>
<i>shirt</i>	<i>skirt</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>fro</i> (cf. <i>to and fro</i>)
<i>church</i>	<i>kirk</i>	<i>shriek</i>	<i>scream/screech</i>
<i>to edge</i>	<i>to egg (on)</i>	<i>church</i>	<i>kirk</i>

Onomastic evidence

Onomastics is the study of names. These can be grouped into two broad classes: personal and place names. The latter are particularly interesting to the linguist with regard to Scandinavian influence on English. Indeed the extent of Scandinavian political and military influence in England can be determined by looking at the place names of Scandinavian origin in the north of England. There are, for example, more than 600 places with the ending *-by* (meaning village, cf. names like *Fleckeby*, *Schysby*, etc. in Schleswig). The ending is also found in the word *bye-law* in which it means ‘town-law’. Three other endings from Scandinavian are also evidenced in English place names 1) *thorpe* meaning ‘village’ again (cf. German *Dorf*) as in *Althorp*, *Gawthorpe*, *Linthorpe*; 2) *thwaite* meaning an isolated piece of land or clearing as in *Applethwaite*, *Braithwaite*, *Satterthwaite*; 3) *toft* meaning a piece of ground or homestead as in *Brimtoft*, *Eastoft*, *Nortoft*. Personal names of Scandinavian origin end in English in *-son* (cf. German *-sen*) as in *Stevenson*, *Johnson*. The equivalent in Old English was the ending *-ing* as in *Browning*.

The nature of Scandinavian borrowings

Due to the fact that the Scandinavian invaders in England were in day-to-day contact with the native English population, the loanwords which are to be found in English are from everyday life. There is no split of vocabulary as there is with French loans. The following loans are grouped into word classes.

- 1) Nouns *bank, birth, booth, brink, crook, dirt, egg, fellow, freckle, gap, guess, keel, kid, leg, link, race, reef, rift, scales, score, sister, skill, skin, skirt, sky, slaughter, snare, thrall* (cf. ‘enthralled’), *thrift, tidings, trust, want, window*.
- 2) Adjectives *awkward, flat, ill, loose, low, murky, odd, rugged, scant, seemly, sly, tight, weak*.
- 3) Verbs *bask, call, cast, clip, crave, crawl, die, droop, gape, gasp, get, give, kindle, lift, lug, nag, raise, rake, ransack, rid, scare, scout, scowl, screech, snub, sprint, take, thrive, thrust*.

The relationship of Scandinavian can be quite complex and go beyond the above instances of direct loans. For instance there are cases where the form of a word is Scandinavian rather than English.

OE <i>ceallian</i>	Scan <i>kalla</i>	F	<i>call</i>
OE <i>lyft</i> 'air'	Scan <i>loft</i>	F	<i>loft</i>
OE <i>sweoster</i> (cf. G <i>Schwester</i>)	Scan <i>suster</i>	F	<i>sister</i>
OE <i>seolfor</i>	Scan <i>silfr</i>	F	<i>silver</i>

In other cases one has doublets, i.e. there exists both a continuation of the original Old English forms and a loan from Scandinavian.

Inherited English	Scandinavian loan
<i>shin</i> (E OE <i>scinn</i>)	<i>skin</i> (E Sc <i>scinn</i>)
<i>shriek</i>	<i>scream</i>
<i>whole</i>	<i>hale</i>
<i>ditch</i>	<i>dike</i>

Doublets are similar in their phonetic form as can be recognised easily above. However in many cases there are loans which are different in form but quite close in meaning, e.g. *sick* and *ill* when the former tends to have the literal sense of to 'vomit'. In yet other instances the Scandinavian element has replaced the Old English one.

Scan <i>taka</i>	F	<i>take</i>	(OE <i>niman</i>)
Scan <i>kutte</i> (?)	F	<i>cut</i>	(OE <i>snipan</i> , there is also <i>ceorfan</i> 'carve' now with restricted meaning)
Scan <i>vindauga</i>	F	<i>window</i>	(OE <i>eagpyrel</i>) 'window'

Note that the element *-pyrel* is still present in the word *nostril* which contains a first element meaning 'nose'.

These borrowings normally result in a degree of semantic shift, frequently semantic restriction - but to the new word from Scandinavian. The Middle English word *degan* 'die' (probably from Scandinavian *deyja*) became the general word and restricted the meaning of Old English *steorfan* to Modern English 'die of hunger, starve'. The other Old English word for 'die', *sweltan*, was lost as an independent noun but is still found in the phrase 'sweltering heat'.

Morphological borrowings

The clearest linguistic evidence of the close contacts between the Scandinavian invaders and the native English is to be seen in the borrowings into English on the level of morphology. Typical of Scandinavian influence is the appearance of forms of pronouns with initial *th-* instead of the initial *h-* which one would expect from Old English, e.g. *they*, *their*, *them* despite Old English *hie*, *hiera*, *him*. There may be a motivation here as the singular third person forms also began with *h-* in Old English, cf. *he*, *heo* 'he, she'. Support for this view comes from the fact that the form of the feminine third person singular developed an initial [ʃ] in the course of the Middle English to distinguish it from the masculine form with which it either had become homophonous or was threatening to do so. Prepositions of Scandinavian origin are to be found in English, too: *both* and *same* and *fro* a form of *from* which survives in the expression *to and fro*.

Other grammatical words from Scandinavian are *though* from *þeah*; *hence* from

hepen; the preposition *at* when used with the infinitive as in *ado*, *athwart*. The present plural forms of the verb ‘to be’ also owe their origin to Scandinavian influence: the West Saxon form is *syndon* / *sindon* while the Northern Scandinavian form is *are* which was later adopted in the south.

Possible influence on syntax

This area of influence is that which is least tangible. All one can do is to point to significant parallels between English and Scandinavian and leave it up to the individual to decide how probable borrowing from Scandinavian is. Of these parallels the two most prominent are the omission of *that* in relative clauses (as in *The man I saw yesterday*) and the use of *shall* and *will* which is similar to Scandinavian but different from other Germanic languages such as German.

Outline of the ‘she’ problem

There are basically three views of origin for the modern form *she*. The central issue is how one got from the initial /h-/ of the Old English form *h^{eo}* to the initial /\$-/ of the modern form. Note that the first view is the most favoured. Crucially it assumes a shift from /hj-/ to /\$-/ something which is only attested in English in the switch from Old Norse *Hjaltland* to English *Shetland*. *Scho* is a typical Middle English form and is attested in the north of the country.

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|---|------|---|------|---|-----|------|------|------|------|
| 1) | he:o | F | hjo: | F | hjo: | F | ço: | F | \$o: | F | \$e: |
| 2) | he:q | F | se:q | F | sjo: | | F | \$o: | F | \$e: | |
| 3) | se:q | F | se: | F | | | | | | | \$e: |

The third of the above views assumes that the Old English demonstrative pronoun ‘this’-fem was chosen as input for the personal pronoun. The motivation here would have been the near-homophony of the Old English personal pronoun *heo* /he:q/ ‘she’ with *he* /he:/ ‘he’. There is also post-Norman Conquest evidence for e:q F e:.

Contact with French

The two periods of French influence

It is customary to divide the time in which English was in contact with French into two periods, 1) Anglo-Norman and 2) Central French. The first period lasted from the invasion of 1066 to the loss of Normandy to England under King John in 1204. After this there is little or no direct influence of French on English but the language remained fashionable and the practice of borrowing words from the continental language continued well into the 15th century. The Central French period can be taken to cease gradually with the introduction of printing at the end of the 15th century and the general resurgence in interest and status of English. Some few words pre-date the Norman conquest such as *prud* ‘proud’ and *tur* ‘tower’. The greatest influence set in the mid 13th century. The

number of borrowings runs into thousands. These are to be found in certain spheres of life like politics and administration, cuisine, the judiciary, etc.

The difference between Anglo-Norman and Central French loans in English is to be seen in famous pairs of words like *catch* and *chase*, both of which go back originally to Latin *captiare*, which itself furnished English with the later loan 'capture'. The main differences between Anglo-Norman and Central French are outline in the tables below.

Anglo-Norman	Central French
/k/ versus /tʃ/	
<i>cattle</i> /k-/	<i>chattels</i> /tʃ/
<i>pocket</i> /-k-/	<i>poach</i> /tʃ/
/tʃ/ versus /s/	
<i>catch</i> /-tʃ/	<i>chase</i> /-s/
<i>launch</i> /-ntʃ/	<i>lance</i> /-ns/
<i>pinch</i> /-ntʃ/	<i>pincers</i> /-ns-/

This type of contrast between two forms of the same etymon is also seen with French and Latin forms as in *royal* and *regal*.

GERMANIC LOANWORDS IN FRENCH French contains a number of words which are early borrowings from Germanic. In Central French these show /g-/ (from an earlier /gw/) and in Anglo-Norman /w/. The word for *war* is the best example; the Germanic root **war-* is to found in Modern English *aware* and *beware*.

Anglo-Norman	Central French
/w/ versus /g/	
<i>warranty, war</i> /w-/	<i>guarantee</i> (Mod. Fr. <i>guerre</i>) /g/
<i>warden</i>	/w-/ <i>guardian</i> /g-/
<i>reward</i>	/-w-/ <i>regard</i> /-g/
<i>waste</i>	/w-/ Mod. Fr. <i>gâter</i> 'spoil'

Anglo-Norman /ei/ derives from Vulgar Latin /e/ in a stressed open syllable corresponds to /oi/ in Central French. This fact explains the vowels in the following word pairs.

Anglo-Norman /ei/	Central French /oi/
<i>convey</i>	<i>convoy</i>
<i>display</i>	<i>deploy</i>

The borrowing of words in the Middle English period is related to changes with French itself. For instance an /s/ before /t/ was lost in French but many loans in English were made before this took place, hence one has *estate* but *état*, *forest* but *forêt* in Modern French. In the case of *hostel* and *hotel*, the /s/ in the first word shows that it is an older borrowing from the same root, cf. Modern French *hôtel* (the accented vowel in the French examples here indicates that previously an /s/ followed the vowel).

In the course of time the difference between the two strands of French - Norman and Central - became more and more diffuse. Certainly there is no question nowadays of

speakers being able intuitively to distinguish between the two.

SPLIT IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY As a generalisation one can say that the French loans are to be found on higher stylistic levels in English. With the later Central French borrowings this is obvious given the sectors of society where the loans occurred (see next section). The general split is between colloquial native words and more formal Romance terms and can be seen clearly in word pairs like *forgive* and *pardon*. Other examples are *begin* : *commence*; *hearty* : *cordial*; *happiness* : *felicity*; *help* : *aid*; *hide* : *conceal*; *meal* : *repast* (only literary nowadays).

But for later English the etymological source of words is irrelevant and any two words can form a pair distinguished on a colloquial - formal axis as one can see in *notice* : *perceive*, both of Romance origin or even in the pair *present* : *gift* where in fact the Romance term is by far and away the more common in spoken English.

Semantic differentiation has frequently developed which may have neutralised any previous distinction in register: *wedding* : *marriage*, *ask* : *demand*.

Affected areas of the lexicon

The areas of the English lexicon in which the influence of French was to be felt reflect the spheres of life in which the French predominated in the early Middle English period. The following lists are intended to give a brief impression of the richness of the this Romance influence on the Germanic stock of English vocabulary.

Geography: *country*; *coast*; *river*; *valley*; *lake*; *mountain*; *frontier*; *border*; *city*; *hamlet*; *village*; *estate*

Noble titles: *emperor*; *duke*; *duchess*; *duchy*; *prince*; *count*; *countess*; *baron*; *squire*; *noble*(man/woman); *gentle*(man/woman); *dame*; *damsel*

Terms referring to sections of the community: *peasantry*; *people*; *subjects*; *burgesses*; *nobility*; *gentry*; *knighthood*; *chivalry*;

Terms for administration and administrators: *sovereign*; *crown*; *sceptre*; *ruler*; *power*; *policy*; *government*; *administration*; *court*; *office*; *chancery*; *treasury*; *parliament*; *counsel*; *administrator*; *governor*; *ambassador*; *warden*; *mayor*; *charter*; *seal*; *accord*; *agreement*; *covenant*; *treaty*; *alliance*; *curfew*; *duty*; *reign*; *civil*; *empire*; *nation*; *tyrant*; *oppression*

Legal terms: *justice*; *privilege*; *statute*; *ordinance*; *judge*; *chief*; *crime*; *fraud*; *trespass*; *transgression*; *accusation*; *coroner*; *plaintiff*; *defendant*; *client*; *claimant*; *executor*; *notary*; *process*; *appeal*; *bail*; *evidence*; *decree*; *divorce*; *exile*; *heir*; *heritage*; *prison*; *jail*; *dungeon*; *arrest*; *plead*; *punish*; *banish*; *treason*; *release*

Military terms: *peace*; *war*; *armour*; *artillery*; *fortress*; *host*; *army*; *warrior*; *archer*; *soldier*; *chief*; *captain*; *admiral*; *enemy*; *conqueror*; *victor*; *robber*; *expedition*; *resistance*; *banner*; *battle*; *besiege*; *destroy*

Ecclesiastical terms: *charity*; *chastity*; *chaplain*; *abbot*; *abbess*; *dean*; *friar*; *confessor*; *person/parson*; *preacher*; *evangelist*; *saint*; *fraternity*; *chapel*; *cloister*; *abbey*; *faith*; *bible*; *chapter*; *commandment*; *divine*; *service*; *prayer*; *sermon*; *absolution*; *procession*;

parish; baptise; praise; glorify

Terms for emotional states: *ease; disease; joy; delight; felicity; grief; despair; distress; courage; folly; passion; desire; jealousy; ambition; arrogance; despise; disdain; malice; envy; avarice; certainty; doubt; enjoy; despise; furious*

Trades and crafts: *barber; butcher; carpenter; carrier; draper; forester; fruiterer; grocer; mason; mercer; merchant; spacer; painter; tailor; victualler; apprentice; surgeon; physician; bargain; fair; merchandise; price; money; coin; dozen; double; measure; gallon; bushel; purchase; profit; pay; usury; debt; prosperity; barrel; bottle; basket; vessel*

Clothing and ornamentation: *blouse; chemise; cloak; coat; frock; garment; gown; robe; veil; cotton; fur; boot; ornament; brooch; jewel; pearl; button; scissors; brush; mirror; towel; carpet; curtain; blanket; couch; cushion; table; chair; fashion*

Food and cooking: *boil; fry; roast; mince; dine; dinner; supper; appetite; flour; grease; sugar; spice; vinegar; bacon; victuals; lard; pork; beef; mutton; veal; venison; sausage; sauce; gravy; jelly; salad; juice; cabbage; cream; biscuit; fritter; cider; cucumber; onion*

Assorted loanwords: *age; aid; affair; action; air; baggage; beauty; branch; cage; cable; cattle; chance; change; choice; company; consent; coward; couple; cry; cure; damage; danger; delay; demand; departure; difference; difficulty; error; example; exception; exercise; experience; face; fate; favour; fence; fool; force; foreign; fountain; guide; honour; labour; leisure; marriage; piece; pencil; possession; question; language; wages able; ancient; brief; certain; clear; considerable; cruel; different; difficult; easy; familiar; famous; favourable; feeble; faint; fine; general; gentle; glorious; poor; safe; sure achieve; arrive; appear; approve; approach; assemble; assist; attend; advertise; affirm; await; blame; catch; cancel; carry; cease; chase; cry; change; consent; consider; count; cover; demand; deny; depart; deserve; discover; disturb; finish; employ; encourage; enjoy; enter; excuse; escape; increase; examine; force; fail; form; grieve; marry; refuse; perish; suffer; paint; perform; propose; save; touch; travel; tremble*

Loans and native words

The fact that for many of the above words Germanic equivalents already existed in English and continued to exist led to a stylistic splitting of the vocabulary of English. Thus a word like *work* is a Germanic word and the normal everyday word whereas *labour* is a Romance loanword which is regarded as being on a higher level, cf. 'I have some work to do now', 'The value of labour in our society'. In other cases the Romance loanword has come to have a slightly different meaning to the Germanic base word, cf. *ask* and *demand* where the latter (Romance) word has the implication of insisting on something.

Among the various types of changes which took place in the period in which Middle English borrowed from French through direct contact, are those which led to a mixing of Germanic and Romance elements. Thus one has cases of assimilation in which

an English word was created on the basis of a similar sounding French word. Here one has an instance of the French form complementing the English one. For example, the English verb *choose* obtained a noun *choice* on the basis of a borrowing of French *choix*.

In some cases one can no longer decide whether the Germanic or the Romance form of a word has survived into Modern English. Thus in the case of the adjective *rich* one cannot tell whether it is a continuation of the Old English *rice* or the later French borrowing *riche*. However, one can in many cases see a contamination of the morphology of words due to French borrowing. With the previous adjective one can see the Romance suffix in the noun formed from it: *richness* as opposed to Old English *richdom* with the Romance ending *-ess*.

The form of a word may have been changed without its meaning having been affected. With the Old English word *ieglan* / *iland* (cf. German *Eiland*) one arrives at the later spelling *island* under the influence of French *isle*. Note that the *s* here is unetymological, i.e. was never pronounced in English. Some French loanwords were influenced by changes later than Middle English. This is for example the case with Old French *viage* which was borrowed into Middle English but where the later French form *voyage* was borrowed into English and adapted in its pronunciation. The same is true of the Middle English noun *flaute* which was changed under the influence of later French *flute*.

Relative chronology of borrowings

The form of many French loanwords can be used to date borrowing. As mentioned above there are two strands of French influence, an early Anglo-Norman one and a later Central French one. These can be identified phonologically as can be seen in the word pairs *catch* and *chase* or *cattle* and *chattels* (from *captiare* and *capitale* in Latin respectively). In the first word one sees Middle English *cacchen* which was borrowed from North French *cachier* as the retention of the /k/ before /a/ was a feature of Norman French.

After 1250 the influence of Central French was predominant in England. In this variety of French the original /k/ retained in Norman French was shifted to /t\$/ which is reflected in the writing where *c* was changed to *ch*. Thus we have the Central French verb *chacier* being borrowed into Middle English as *chacen*, Modern English *chase*. Note that the later borrowing did not replace the earlier one in keeping with the principle that if two variant forms come to be distinguished semantically their continuing existence in the language is as good as guaranteed. Not so with a number of other Norman French borrowings which were replaced by the later Central French ones: *calice*, *carite*, *cancel*; *chalice*, *charite*, *chancel*.

The Central French /t\$/ underwent the further change to /\$/ in the course of the post-Middle English period and later loans reflect this. Thus we have *change* and *chief* as Middle English loans from Central French with /t\$/ but words like *chef* and *champagne* with /\$/ are of a later origin.

Similar differences in pronunciation can be used to date other loanwords from French. For example the relationship of /dg/ and /g/ shows the relative chronology of borrowing. The older loans such as *siege*, *judge*, *age* show the affricate /dg/ whereas newer loans from the Early Modern English period have the simple fricative typical of Modern French as in *rouge* /ru:g/; with the word *garage* there still exist two alternative pronunciations //gæridg/ and /gq/r<:g/.

One can also recognise later borrowings by the vowel quality when the stress is found on the final syllable: *memoir* (cf. the earlier loan *memory*), *liqueur* (cf. the earlier form *liquor*).

FRENCH LOANS AND THE GREAT VOWEL SHIFT Recall that the Great Vowel Shift is a phenomenon which took place in English after most of the loans from French had entered the language. Thus original French pronunciations inasmuch as they involved long vowels were also subject to the shift. This can be seen in the change of /i:/ to /ai/ as in *fine*, *price*, *lion*, for example, or in the shift of /u:/ to /au/ as in *spouse*, *tower*, *proud*. This does not apply to later loans such as *machine* /mɑːʃiːn/, i.e. this is not pronounced /mɑːʃain/. Similar argumentation applies to words like *cuisine* and *prestige* which are even later loans, the latter with /i:/ and with /g/ rather than /dg/.

Original final stress with French words was replaced in time with the more normal initial stress typical of native words. Thus words like *galloun* with /u:/ or *purhace* with /a:/ shortened their final syllables to ones with just schwa /ɚ/. Below you find a tabular summary of loanword phonology in the Middle English period and later.

Borrowings before and after the Great Vowel Shift

- 1) /ei/ versus /æ/
blazer /bleizɹ/ : *blasé* /blæ/zei/
- 2) /ai/ versus /i:/
divine /di/vain/ : *ravine* /rɑːvi:n/
- 3) /au/ versus /u:/
rout /raut/ : *route* /ru:t/
tower /tauɹ/ : *tour* /tuɹ/
- 4) /oi/ versus /wa/
choice /tʃois/ : *memoir* /me/mwɔː/
- 5) /kw/ versus /k/
quality /kw-/ : *bouquet* /-k-/

French orthography and Middle English

The orthography of Modern English reflects in a fairly exact manner the pronunciation of Late Middle English. In some respects it can be seen to have adopted practices of French spelling which, while justified in the latter language, were superfluous in English. A case in point is the orthographic treatment of Middle English /u:/. In Old English this vowel was represented simply as *u* as in OE *hus* ‘house’. In the course of the Middle English period it came to be written as ‘house’. This spelling is based on the use of the digraph *ou* to represent the vowel /u/ in French. In the latter language the simple *u* grapheme stood for a phonetic /y/, cf. Modern French *vu* /vy/ ‘seen’ and *fou* /fu/ ‘mad’. In English, however, the digraph *ou* was not necessary because /y/ had been unrounded in the Early

Middle English period (with the exception of the West Midlands area), cf. OE *pymel* (ME *thimble*) ‘thimble’. It was nonetheless used so that by Late Middle English the /u:/ of Old English had come to be written with *ou* (OE /y/ being written simply as *i*), cf. *out*, *now* (the latter with the variant *ow* at the end of a word). Later loanwords in English do not have the spelling *ou* for the /u:/ vowel, irrespective of their origin. Thus one has, for example, *chute* from later French and *acute* from Latin, both with *u* for /u:/.

Other instances of French influence on English spelling are: *h* F *gh*, *p*, *3* F *th*, *@* F *a*, *cw* F *qu*, *i* F *j* (partly), *u* F *v* at the beginning, *u* in the middle of a word, *sc* F *sh* [ʃ], *c* F *ch* [tʃ], *cg*, *gg* F *dg* [dg].

French scribal practice is behind the spelling *-ough* which in Middle English indicated the pronunciation /-u:x/ or /-oux/. Because of later phonetic developments this spelling came to be one of the most notorious cases of incongruence between pronunciation and orthography in Modern English as it can represent at least seven different sound sequences as seen from the following random set: *plough* /-au/, *cough* /->f/, *although* /-qu/, *hiccough* /-vp/, *thorough* /-q/ (unstressed), *through* /-u:/, *rough* /-vf/.

Another feature of French spelling which affected Old English words was the use of final *-e*. This was added to English words to show that the vowel of the previous syllable was long, as in *ice* (from OE *is*). This ‘discontinuous sequence’ is used very much in Modern English to keep original short and long vowels apart graphically, e.g. *pan* and *pane*, *ban* and *bane*. Note that due to the Great Vowel Shift (which only affected long vowels) the difference is nowadays one of vowel quality and not just quantity.

Stress with French loanwords

In the course of time the borrowed forms from French changed their stress from a final stress (which later developed into an equal stress for all syllables in Modern French) to the more common initial stress typical of all Germanic words in English. Thus words like *punish*, *manner* which had original stress on the second syllable came to be stressed on the first syllable and retained this into Modern English. Note that initial stress in English refers to the first syllable of a word stem. This has meant that words like *conversion*, *depletion* which are French loans with original final stress came to be pronounced with stress on the second syllable as this was regarded as the stem syllable. With disyllabic words the stress may thus remain on the final syllable for the reason just outlined, cf. *revert*, *review*, *conduct*, *precede*. Later on an independent development in English is to be noted whereby verbs and nouns of French origin are distinguished when they are segmentally similar by virtue of different stress. Here initial stress is characteristic of nouns while final stress is used for verbs, cf. *convert*, *convert*; *conduct*, *conduct*. The principle outlined here are not watertight, however, that is one finds initial stress on apparent prefixes in words like *precedence* and no difference in stress between disyllabic nouns and verbs in pairs like *review*, *review*; *address*, *address*.

Note that there is a certain liberty with stress in English; this applies only to Romance loanwords which all developed a complex of stress alternation. Very often the variants in stress are coterminous with the difference between British and American English, cf. *alddress*, *laddress*; *adlvertisement*, *adverltisement*; *lharass*, *halrass*; *inlquiry*, *linquiry*. The variants in stress may involve changes in vowel quality (as do the undisputed stress variants in Modern English).

French loans and considerations of grammar

Quite a few changes in grammar are to be noted with the borrowings from French into Middle English. On the one hand there are cases where not the infinitive is the model for the loan into English but the plural present form of the verb (somewhat unexpectedly). Thus we have words like *resolve* which comes from the plural *resolvons* and not from the infinitive *resoudre* (in which the /u/ indicates that the former /l/ had already vocalised in French). The infinitive which usually forms the point of departure may be borrowed in its entirety (i.e. with the infinitive ending) in words like *render* from French *rendre*. In other cases the borrowed infinitive with its ending became a noun, cf. *diner* which turned into *dinner*, the corresponding verb being *dine*. A further case is *user* which became *user* (noun) with the verb *use*. In some cases there may be no verb as a result of the change in word class, cf. *souper* which turned into *supper*, the verbal paraphrase being ‘to have supper’.

Hybridisation

Evidence for the strong influence of French on Middle English is nowhere as forthcoming as in the area of *hybridisation* by which is meant that a word consists of two elements, one of Germanic and the other of Romance origin. Consider the following:

- 1) The formation of verbal nouns from a French stem and the Germanic ending {ing}: *preaching, serving*.
- 2) The formation of nouns by the addition of Germanic suffixes: {ness}: *faintness, secretiveness*; {dom}: *martyrdom*; {ship}: *companionship, relationship*.
- 3) The addition of the ending {ly} (E OE *-lich*) to French loanwords: {ly}: *courtly, princely*. The same applies to the following endings {ful}: *beautiful, powerful*; {less}: *colourless, pitiless, noiseless*. The reverse can also be the case, i.e. the ending of a word is French in origin and the stem is Germanic.

Consider the following:

- 1) The formation of nouns by the addition of suffixes: {age}: *mileage, shortage, leakage*; {ment}: *endearment, enlightenment, bewilderment*.
- 2) The formation of adjectives by the use of endings: {able}: *likeable, loveable, provable, drinkable, bearable*.

In the case of the last examples one can see that many of the French suffixes became productive in English. Indeed the productivity can exceed that of the donor language. This can be seen in the case of the word *mutiner* ‘to mutiny’ which in English has led to no less than six forms: *mutine, mutinous, mutinously, mutinousness, mutiny, mutineer*. The number of word forms may also have developed differently in the course of time, thus English has *entry, entrance* while Modern French only has *entrée*, and of course English has the latter as a recent loan meaning ‘something small before starting a full meal’.

The height of productivity is reached, however, by the French adjective *veri* which originally meant ‘true, real, genuine’ (as is seen nowadays in expressions like *You’re the very man I’m looking for*) and which came to be used in Late Middle English

as an intensifying adverb and which has retained and expanded this function since. Originally the English adverb *full* was used as an intensifier and is still found in fixed phrases like *You know full well*.

Semantic changes and borrowing from French

In order to understand this sphere of borrowings from French one must bear in mind that the first loans were to be found in the upper classes who spoke Anglo-Norman. This fact led to French loans being automatically placed on a level above the normal everyday English vocabulary. Up to the present-day this characteristic of French words in English has remained. While it is true that some of the common French borrowings have become part of the basic stock of English vocabulary (cf. *air, age, cry, change, large, manner, mountain, place, point, village, voice*) a large quantity of words has remained on a stylistically higher level alongside the lower English terms. This results in such word pairs as the following which are distinguished more by register than by basic meaning: *dress : clothe; amity : friendship; commence : begin; conceal : hide; nourish : feed; liberty : freedom*.