

The Profound Impact of French on the English Language (Historical Analysis)

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The study of the influence of French on English is aimed at analyzing the historical development of the language, which is done by using the historical-comparative method. Many authors have touched upon this issue. Each of them has his own approach. We also try to present this issue but from another angle. French and English have been in close contact in all their existence, due to which the two languages have interacted with each other. Interestingly, this interaction was mainly with English, borrowing from French many expressions that were viable in English development. Probably one of the reasons is that the English use foreign words more freely than the French, as a result of which modern English has been transformed from a pure language into a merged language.

Languages of the world have evolved with the evolution of humanity, and certainly English is not an exception. Many of the alterations are the consequence of the natural process of transformation that all languages undergo, while others are the outcome of linguistic interaction. Foreign impact on English is so strong that it has evolved from an essentially pure language to the one that is fully blended. French is the language that has had the greatest profound impact on English. The Norman Conquest of 1066 has left a considerable mark on the English landscape in the form of cathedrals, churches, and castles, and had a massive impact on the English language. [9; 39-42] The conquest of the Normans brought the English people into touch with the conquerors' language, Norman French. In the following article the impact of French on various aspects of the English language is discussed and examined.

According to Durkin, many words in the Middle English period "can be shown to come directly from French, with French the main determiner of the word's form and meaning in English" [6; 236]. It has been estimated that about 10,000 French words came into English during the Middle English period [4; 46]. These words are terms used in "government, law, learning, art and fashion, food and religion" [3; 169-173]. Despite the fact that English is the most studied

and spoken language in the world today, it has not always been so. Over the years, English has considerably evolved. The one we speak now is a mash-up of elements from various languages and civilizations around the world. Some of the languages that have influenced modern English are Greek, German, and Arabic.

English is a Germanic language that has absorbed elements of Celtic, French, Latin, and other languages on its path to become the contemporary English we know and use.

English is one of the few Indo-European languages to have developed through the absorption of other languages by invading tribes. Despite the fact that English has no close relatives (like Portuguese and Spanish do), it has cognates with the languages of the nations that surround the British Isles. French is one of the languages that has left the largest imprint on the DNA of the English language. “Over the centuries, English has expanded its vocabulary by extensively borrowing lexical items from other languages. Of all sources of loanwords French is by far the most important” [7; 164] It influenced not only English vocabulary, but also grammar, pronunciation, and spelling. French greatly contributed to the formation of modern English. According to some sources approximately half of all English terms are derived from French. That's over 80,000 words blended together by war, peace, diplomacy, royal weddings, and popular culture.

The Norman dialect, which is quite similar to French, had a strong influence on the development of English. A third of English terms are thought to be derived from French. Some linguists believe that French is responsible for two-thirds of English vocabulary.

“Whether it be [...] in the development of the English legal system, administration or commerce, the semantic innovation displayed by Anglo-French right across the board is the root cause of the differences that become increasingly noticeable between the two kinds of French separated by the Channel as the thirteenth century moves towards its close” [8; 144-165].

William of Normandy conquered England and became King in the 11th century. By conquering England, the Normans imposed their own language. This is how Norman became the official language of court, administration, and culture after spreading through the English aristocracy. Several dialects, mostly derived from Scandinavian, Latin, and Germanic languages, were spoken. William Rothwell suggests that Anglo-French must have been more influential than Central French as it was already well-established in England.

The Normans coined a number of words that are still used in the English language today. In contrast to the immediate post-Conquest period, when ‘outside the highest level of the aristocracy and monasteries French made few inroads into everyday life’, French was no longer confined to the upper classes. [5; 3]

The French language had a greater influence on English in the 12th century. The most important factor in the continued use of French by the English upper class until the beginning of the thirteen century was the close connection that existed through all these years between England and the continent ... as the kings of England were likewise dukes of Normandy” [1; 111]. The fact that the crown of England had no more Norman descendants to install on the throne in 1135 explains this. Etienne de Blois, a natural French speaker, was anointed king at that time. During the Norman period the English remained court’s official language and it was swiftly impacted by French.

In England, French became a very respectable language, and was widely used in aristocratic circles. Children from aristocratic households were taught it either through tutors or by sending them to France to study. English rulers married French princesses until the 15th century. As a result of these marriages, the spread of French in England was substantially accelerated.

Today, English is more likely to affect French, but it’s worth noting that several anglicisms used in France, such as “bacon” or “fashion”, are derived from Norman.

“The French that lies behind much of Chaucer’s vocabulary penetrated Middle English in general. It was not “borrowed” piecemeal from across the Channel, but was present in England as a complete language in widespread use for centuries amongst the literate minority of the population from the time of the Conquest onwards, its merger with Middle English eventually creating the English of today” [8; 536].

“It seems much more likely that French had been the language of the royal courts from the very beginning of the system of central royal courts established by Henry II and that French was their language because in that period it was the first language of the men appointed as royal justices and of many of the litigants” [8; 534].

Beyond lexical borrowing, derivational morphology was another significant area of French impact. Words were produced in Old English through native-form affixation and compounding, yet one impact of the flood of French words into Middle English was that reliance to foreign sources became fairly

usual. As a result, the invention of affixes underwent a significant shift, with the elimination of several items productive in OE and the acceptance of many affixes, such as *-ment* for abstract nouns and *-able* for adjectives, which were derived from the existence in cognates.

Native and Romance borrowing terms both received French affixes.

“Coverage”, in contrast to the “couverture”, is an illustration of same-origin affixation, in which a French affix is applied to a French lexical item to produce a new word in English.

Another example of same-origin affixation is “trainee”. It’s made up of the French loanword “train” and the suffix *-ee*, which means “an adaptation of the *-e*” in English.

Finally, the word “refugee” derived from “réfugié” which is a modern French adaptation. Words like ‘prince’, ‘joyous’ and ‘beef’ come from French, many common terms in the military, legal, technological and political fields also come from French. For example, ‘army’, ‘parole’, ‘telephone’ and ‘regime’ are all of French origin.

French-speaking literature, music and other artistic productions have been found in the English-speaking world over the centuries. We hear words like ‘cliché’, ‘déjà vu’ and ‘faux pas’ in everyday language. These words come directly from French and have not changed by a letter. The lexicon of English shows the strongest evidence of French influence. According to the results of recent studies 45 percent of the 10,000 most often used Modern English terms are of French origin. This percentage exceeds that of Old English terms by a significant margin (31.8 percent). The large quantity of French loans resulted in a new character of English: it is incorrect to assume that English borrowed terms that it did not have. The majority of the loans, on the other hand, were synonyms for terms that already existed. The original English terms are generally more basic, popular, and fundamental, whereas the French borrowings are usually more polished, formal, abstract, and less emotive. The use of French terms was widespread. The words ‘justice’, ‘prison’, and ‘defendant’ were taken from the legal world. Similarly, large sums of money were borrowed in the areas of military (‘artillery, battle, or defend’) and church and Christian doctrine (‘abbey, prayer, baptism, or innocence’). Words like ‘parliament’, ‘governor’, and ‘empire’, entered the English language in the sphere of ruling and governmental authority.

Words like “delight”, “passion” or “envy,” and were also used to describe emotional or mental states. Other areas of borrowing included medieval

science, philosophy, and the arts ('philosophy, anatomy or poet'), trade ('value, or measure, carpenter'), clothes and ornamentation ('coat, jewel, robe, brooch'), food and cuisine ('appetite fry, gravy'), and others. Hundreds of additional words, such as 'cattle', 'damage', 'departure', 'labour', 'pencil', 'clear', 'cruel', 'blame', 'cease', etc., belong to different groups or are difficult to categorize but are part of the common vocabulary of English. Thanks to King William, in English we 'beef' (French: boeuf) from cows, 'pork' (French: porc) from pigs. This played a significant role in Norman-English cuisine. Because English-speaking butchers, who were of a lower socioeconomic level, they used to kill the cattle for the French-speaking upper class, the English had a difference between animals and their meat in English. English accepted the word beef but not the word cow. William's function of introducing French into the English vocabulary has since been taken up by popular culture. While discussing the latest 'coup d'état' or 'laissez-faire' economics, we may order a 'croissant', 'frappé' (literally from the word 'frapper', meaning to hit), or 'crêpes' from the new 'café' downtown.

French also had influence on several aspects of English syntax. Where we would typically anticipate the adjective to appear before the noun, several adjectives acquired from French retain a post-adjectival position today. The most widely spread post position adjective is General. For instance, *attorney general*: Chief law officer; in U.S.A., the Head of the Department of Justice and member of the President's Cabinet, *states-general* (from the French états généraux; 1) The legislative body in France before 1789, with representatives of the clergy, nobility and the third state; 2) The legislative: assembly of the Netherlands. *consul general*: Consul stationed in a principal commercial city, who supervises other consuls within his district, *surgeon general*: 1) The chief general officer or admiral in charge of the medical department of the U.S. Army, Air Force or Navy, 2) The chief medical officer in the U.S. Public Health service. *Inspector general*, *solicitor general*: An officer of high rank in the armed forces.

Here are some other examples. *Laureate*: worthy of honour, distinguished, pre-eminent, *poet laureate*: 1) the court poet of England, appointed for life by the monarch to write poems celebrating national events, etc. 2) the most respected poet of any nation or region, *prince royal* – *princess royal*: the eldest son and eldest daughter of the sovereign, *time immemorial*: time so long past as to be vague, *joy unrestrained*, *princess royal*, *church militant*, *crystal clear*, *blood royal*, *body corporate*, *diplomat extraordinaire*, *successor-designate*,

ambassador plenipotentiary, sum total, matters aesthetic, things feminine, time being...

We can notice a variation in the use of the definite article in the French and English newspaper articles. While the definite article is used in French for specific occupations and titles like 'le Prince William' there is none in English 'Prince William'. It is surprising to notice that we still use expressions in English today which bear the mark of French grammar. The presence of French grammar is notably noticeable within the notes and titles. Titles like 'consul general' and 'agent general' have kept the French word order: the name is followed by the adjective. The pronunciation rules for French are very different from those for English, that goes without saying. However, most of the people are unaware that some English rules are borrowed from French. Some sounds given to English by French include the "g" for 'mirage', the "v" for 'vacation', and therefore the "z" for 'zigzag'. French is agreeable to the ear and its sound influences now contribute to the sweetness of English language.

French spelling has also helped to transform Old English into the fashionable English we speak today. As Simon Ager notes in "The Influence of French on English Language", words like 'queen' and 'ship' were once spelled "cwen" and "scip". The English language doesn't normally use the acute (é), grave (è) and circumflex accent (â), but some words borrowed directly from French retain these accents when utilized in English. For instance, 'fiancé'.

French and English are now languages transmitted everywhere on earth. Both have played an important role within the history of societies and cultures round the world. In English, we qualify before naming something, such as Chinese food, where food represents the core notion and Chinese is the category. "Nourriture chinoise" would be the equivalent in French. As a result, the core idea is conveyed first, followed by the quality. It's natural to feel as if you have to "read backwards" when reviewing a translation.

Prepositions are usually used in French more often than in English. In most circumstances, a preposition is required to connect two nouns. Thus, 'ball gown' will not be translated by "bal robe" but by "robe de bal"; 'management report' will become "rapport de gestion", 'knitting needles' will be rendered by "des aiguilles à tricoter".

It is commonly known that English does not utilize grammatical gender, unlike French. This can cause a lot of problems when learning the language, as

well as when translating from English to French. Because the masculine predominates in French, the translator may choose to shift the word order or use a synonym to facilitate agreement on an adjective or participle.

Thus, we can surely claim that the French language had a significant impact on English, more specifically on its lexis and derivational morphology. The ongoing use of French as a source language for especially some loanwords and affixes, such as – ee, appears to have greatly influenced the lexicon of English. Large number of French terms have penetrated into the English language. Old English had a varied spelling system. New French phonemes were introduced into English. Most Old English affixes were substituted for a significant number of French affixes. The profound analyses have obviously show that the imprint of French on today's globally spread English is huge in all the spheres of its usage. This blended language has proven the fact that by enriching its vocabulary, undergoing great amount of changes in its grammar and spelling the language can become more flexible, extensively used in all aspects of human interaction.

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**Ֆրանսերենի համակարգային ազդեցությունը անգլերեն լեզվի վրա
(պատմական վերլուծություն)**

Մարգարյան Էլլա

Ամփոփում

Հանգուցային բառեր. *ածանցյալ տերմիններ, բառային փոխառություն, ածանցյալ ձևաբանություն, լեզվական փոխազդեցության արդյունք, հին և միջին անգլերեն, հիմնական հասկացություն, համարժեք*

Անգլերենում ֆրանսերենի փոխառությունների ուսումնասիրությունն ունի լեզվի կենսաձևի պատմական զարգացման վերլուծության նպատակ, որը կատարել ենք պատմահամեմատական մեթոդի օգնությամբ: Ֆրանսերենը և անգլերենը իրենց գոյության բոլոր իրավիճակներում սերտ հարաբերության մեջ են եղել, որի շնորհիվ երկու լեզուները կրել են միմյանց փոխազդեցությունը: Հետաքրքիր է, որ այդ փոխազդեցության ենթարկվել է հիմնականում անգլերենը՝ ֆրանսերենից փոխառելով բազմաթիվ արտահայտչամիջոցներ, որոնք կենսունակ են եղել անգլերենի զարգացման շրջաններում: Սրա պատճառներից մեկն այն է, որ անգլիացիներն ավելի ազատ են օտար բառեր կիրառելում, քան ֆրանսիացիները, որի արդյունքում ժամանակակից անգլերենը մաքուր լեզվից վերածվել է միաձուլված լեզվի: Համեմատելով անգլերենի գոյության երեք շրջանների՝ հին, միջին և ժամանակակից, բառապաշարը՝ պարզ է դառնում, որ անգլիացիները միշտ են փոխառություններ կատարել ֆրանսերենից լեզվական տարբեր ոճերում, քանի որ ֆրանսերեն արտահայտչամիջոցները ենթադասակարգվում են ինչպես իմաստային, այնպես էլ ձևային տարբեր ենթախմբերով:

Системное влияние французского языка на английский (исторический анализ)

Саргсян Элла

Резюме

Ключевые слова: производные термины, лексическое заимствование, словообразовательная морфология, французское влияние, результат языкового взаимодействия, древнеанглийский язык, среднеанглийский язык, основная концепция, эквивалент, заимствование

Изучение французских заимствований в английском языке направлено на анализ исторического развития языка, что мы и сделали с помощью историко-сравнительного метода. Французский и английский языки за все время своего существования находились в тесном контакте, благодаря чему два языка взаимодействовали друг с другом. Интересно, что заимствований намного больше в английском языке. Многие слова и выражения, заимствованные из французского языка, закрепились в английском языке до сих пор. По всей вероятности, это связано со спецификой английского менталитета. В результате этого современный английский язык превратился из чистого языка в смешанный язык. Сравнивая лексику трех периодов существования английского языка, древнего, среднего и современного, становится ясно, что английский язык на всем протяжении истории развития заимствовал из французского языковые единицы различных тематических групп и стилистической маркированности.

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