

## THE ROLE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

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### **Abstrak:**

*Tulisan ini membahas tentang pengaruh Bahasa Prancis terhadap Bahasa Inggris. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa sejarah lahirnya Bahasa Inggris tidak terlepas dari asal muasal peminjaman kosa kata dari bahasa lain, misalnya Bahasa Prancis. Sebagian dari stok kosa kata Bahasa Inggris moderen berasal dari atau meminjam vocabulary Bahasa Prancis. Kata-kata pinjaman atau loanwords tersebut berkaitan dengan berbagai bidang seperti hubungan dan kedudukan sosial masyarakat, fashion, seni dan sastra, politik, pendidikan, makanan, hukum, pemerintahan dan administrasi, dll. Pengaruh budaya Prancis tercermin dalam sebagian kosa kata yang terdapat dalam Bahasa Inggris akibat pengaruh penjajahan beberapa abad yang lalu.*

**Kata kunci:** *Role of French Language, -History of English.*

### **A. Introduction**

The development of a language in a country is irrespectively of the historical course of the country. The history of any language is affected by internal and external factors. The internal history includes a linguistic history (the nature of grammar and vocabulary). The external history includes an account of who speak the language, where, and when. Algeo noted that the history of a language is intimately related to the community of its speakers (2001: 1). Algeo added that the external history of a language is the history of its speakers as their history affects the language they use. The central questions in the external history of early English relate to where the first speaker of English came from and where they settled (Leith, 1996: 99). One of the external factors influencing English language is political factors caused by the conquest of and by others. French language. as the important factor that affects English today was the result of the conquest.

The history of French language in England began when the Norman conquered the land in 1066. This new ruling class was sufficiently predominant to continue to use their own language (Baugh and Cable, 2002: 103). Since then French played the central role in

the development English language. In that year, The Normans conquered England, replacing the native English nobility with Anglo-Normans and introducing Norman French as the language of government in England. In that year a French-speaking dynasty from the dukedom of Normandy was installed in England (Leith, 1996: 120). The Norman conquest brought England into close contact with France through the immigrations of French-speaking people. Baugh and Cable pointed out that for 200 years after the Norman Conquest, French remained the language of ordinary intercourse among the upper classes in England (p.103). Intermarriage and association with the ruling class became the factors that make French numerously spoken as a new language in England.

The Norman invasion of the eleventh century introduced a variety of French (Norman French) to Britain. Varieties of French remained an important linguistic influences on English up to modern times. Many literatures have discussed the role of French in English development. Evidences showed clear things that French was used in varied contexts. In the thirteenth century, one began to find educational treaties which provide instruction in French. French began to be learned by the aristocracy and it was also coming to be learned by members of middle classes. This opened up French to those outside the aristocracy and that it began to be used in increasingly varies contexts (Townend in Mugglestone, 2006: 67).

This paper does not specifically deal with the the history of the Norman invansion, rather it attempts to examine the influences that eventually gave roles of French language in the history of English language

## **B. Literature Influence**

How completely French was the English court at the time of the Norman invasion is clearly shown by the literature produced for royal and noble patronage (Baugg and Cable, p. 107). At that time literature played important part in the lives of the upper class who is very fond of leisure and entertainment. Poems were the famous literature works produced in England from the beginning of twelfth century. For example, a poem wtitten by Philippe de Thaun,

*Bestiary*., this poem contained the description of the nature of various animals and moral. Henry II wrote *Roman de Brut* containing a legendary history of Britain. *Roman de Rous* that was written by Wace, a Norman cleric, described a similar accounts of the dukes of Normandy. Works of devotion, edification, saints' lives, allegories, chronicles, and romances telling the heroic figure such as Havelok and Tristan are the historically invaluable works in social lives of the ruling people in the course of the twelfth century.

As mentioned above, the impact of the Norman conquest is the immigration of French speaking people. Gradually French gave cultural and literary influences. The publications of scholastic works gave great impact of French on English. French metre and stanza were introduced and French literary genres were imitated. In the twelfth century, the first romance in French composed anywhere was produced in England. It is the first historical and scientific work. The Song of Roland, a celebrated landmark in medieval French culture, is found first of all in an English manuscript (Irvin in Mugglestone, 2006: 68). Norman French was used as the language of courtly literature because French was the language of upper classes. French literacy essentially reflects the aristocratic taste of the time. King Richard I wrote poetry in Norman French (Knowles, 1997:49). These all literature works are indicative of the firm roots of the French culture had taken on English language that so important a body of literature in the French language could be written in or for England, much of it under the direct patronage of the court (Baugh and Cable, 2002: 107).

In case of poem, this literature work contributed remarkable vocabulary or words to English language today. According to Petre (cited in Momma and Matto (2008: 186), the vocabulary of poem is remarkable. English words originated from French poetic words are still embedded and identified in the English language. For examples, the heroic vocabulary such as *knight*., *man*, *people*, *court*, *horse*, *noble*. In short, Brinton and Arnovick (2006: 247) divided Middle English literature that involves French language and literature into several periods:

1. Between 1100 and 1250, as a period of religious literature,
2. Between 1250 and 1350, as a period of secular and religious literature,

3. between 1350 and 1400, as a period of poetic literature, and
4. Between 1400 and 150, as a periode of the literature of mystery and legend.

### **C. French Influence on English Vocabulary**

Contact between languages is a common phenomenon. In the contact of two languages, elements from one language come to be transfered into another language, whether those elements are words, sounds, or even syntactical construction. One way of transferring elements in the language contact is borrowing words. McIntyre pointed out that the other way in which French affected English was by English borrowing words from French (2009: 12). This was the source of a lot of new vocabulary in English. As we know that, many words (or loanwords) in English are borrowed from French. Blake noted that French vocabulary and also French syntax also influenced English vocabulary (1992: 16). It is also supported by Leith who stated that the most obvious effect of French on English is at the level of vocabulary (in Graddol et. al, 1996: 122). French influences also occured in the English sound, pronunciation, morphological derivative, stress, and syntax (grammar), but these influences are not as much as on vocabulary. Kastovsky stated that about 70 percent of present- day English vocabulary consist of loans, with loans from French and/or Latin (2006: 2002). The length and nature of the contact between English and French resulted in the large-scale borrowing into English of French words and expressions, and even in grammar. Early English loans reflect the contact between French as the language of the ruler and English as the language of the ruled. For example, animals with English names *ox*, *pig*, *sheep* took on French names (from *beef*, *pork*, *mutton*) as the words closely related to the lord's meat. Words were borrowed from a wide range of different areas: government, law, hunting, sport, social relationships, etiquette, morals, fashion, cuisine, etc. A number of collocations and expressions were borrowed from French, for examples, *par cause de* (because of), *avant la main* (beforehand), *condomner a mort* (condemn to death) (Prins in Knowles, 1997: 57).

Gelderen (2006: 99) divided words borrowed from French into Old and Middle English. It occurs in two phases: 1066-1250 and 1250-1500. In the first phase, fewer than 1,000 words are borrowed. Davis also noted that there are at least 1,000 loanwords from French into Middle English (2010: 25). In the second phase, According to Gelderen, during this period, the influence of French on Middle English is strongest because the French speakers are adding French words to the English they acquiring (p. 99). It is estimated that 10,000 were borrowed and are 75 percent still in current use. The words borrowed in this time are nouns (*action, adventures, age, damage, scandal, tavern, and vision*); verbs (*advise, aim, allow, apply, arrive, enjoy, enter, form, join, marry, move, praise, prefer, refuse, save, serve, wait*); adjectives (*able, abundant, active, certain, firm, frank, proper, safe*); and a few verbs. The following table shows the French loanwords in English borrowed from or via French between 1066 and 1500 (Gelderen, 2006: 99). The French loanwords in Middle English are associated with institutional power and high culture. Many English words from French are associated with various fields such as social relationship and ranks, household and furnishing, fashion, art, etc. as shown in the following table.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Some examples</b>
Politics	<i>war, peace, justice</i>
Religion	<i>miracle, mass, cleric, baptisme, solemn, charity</i>
relationship and rank	<i>parentage, cousin, duke, abbot, prince, baron</i>
household and furnishing	<i>chair, table, mirror, towel, blanket; food, lamp,</i>
food and eating	<i>fry, plate, salad, fruit. dinner, supper, beef, mackerel</i>
sport and entertainment	<i>dance, chess, tennis, recreation, prize</i>
Arts	<i>painting, colour, music, stor, sculpture</i>
Education	<i>study, science, university, grammar, test</i>
Medicine	<i>surgeon, desease, cure, poison</i>
government and administration	<i>city, village, rule, citizen, office, administer, governor</i>
non-nuclear family	<i>niece, nephew, uncle, aunt</i>
Law	<i>judge, jury, appeal, punish, prison crime, attorney</i>

Military	<i>enemy, battle, force, attack, army, navy</i>
Trades	<i>grocer, tailor, mason</i>
Architecture	<i>cathedral, ceiling, porch</i>
Literature	<i>volume, prose, poet</i>
Culinary	<i>feast, roast, toast, confection, sauce, sugar</i>

In everyday life, we find many general words in English such as *face, flower, chance, close, enter, fresh, hello, hurt, large, letter, move, pay, people, please, poor, save, search, sign, touch, try, turn, use, conversation, recreation*. According to Davis, cited in Kirpatrick, one essential factor from which French words were borrowed by English is because French vocabulary has prestige and identity associated with those domain of life (p. 25). The role of French in terms of prefix and suffix are found in English as in the following words: *majority, inferiority, envious, glorious, advantageous, hideous, dangerous, labour, rigour, honour, martyrdom, apprenticeship, useless, quarrelsome, rudely, oddity*.

Indeed, the effect of French on the native vocabulary during the Middle English was immense. According to Brinton and Arnovick (2006), 42.7 per cent of the loan words entered the language between 1250 and 1400, a period that probably saw the greatest bilingualisme, with French speakers gradually becoming English speakers and importing items from their first language.

#### **D. Analysis of the Role of French Language on English Language**

The historical description in varied books of English history seems to provide us with an understanding on the position of French as one of the origins of the language for English language today. Although French language was never the mother tongue of the majority of the population in England, it was a prestigious language in England in the time of Middle English and it lefts its mark on the English language today. Its main effect was on the vocabulary. An enormous number of French-loan words came into English during the Middle-English period, especially in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. This phenomenon can be unsurprisingly understood because bilingual speakers at that time

changing over to English for such purposes as government and literature, they felt the need for the specialized terms that they were accustomed to in those fields, and brought them over from French. These words named a wide variety of everyday objects and concepts, as well as more specialized items. Words from French showed that they have been mostly cultural borrowings, used by English speakers learning to or exposed to French and relating to semantic such as religion or nobility in which French were culturally dominant.

From the examples in table above, it can be seen that French loanwords in English language appear in a wider variety of domains of life. The invasion of the Norman Conquioror politically affected the English language use in court. The social contact between the rulers and the lower class brought the language contact to social custom. As the ruling people, they transfered French words and these words were adopted and spoken by the common people. The transference of words occured when those who know French and have been accustomed to use it try to express themselves in English. So, we can see that the adoption of French words into the English language assumes large proportions. This proportions have been embedded in wider varieties of social life of people such in trades, family, education, sport, arts, religion, etc. as we can read and use in our English speaking nowadays.

It can be assumed that in the centuries of the Norman conquest, adults people wished to learn French. This is because they wanted to be able to communicate with their neighbours and gentlement and women willingly wrote to each other in French. According to Baugh and Cable (2002: 140), these people felt that French language was the language of culture and fashion. This feeling was strengthened in the eighteenth century and it is present in the minds of many people today.

In terms of literature, French took an important part in English literature works today. If we go back to the period of Midlle English, French was the language best understood by the upper-classes. Baugh and Cable pointed out that the books they read or listened to were in French (p. 143). English in this period was considered as the language used by people from the middle and lower class. Started from 1250, translations and adaptations from French begin to be made and included in English romances and they became quite large in

number. The process of translating and adapting gave great impact on the spread of English among the upper class that is manifest in the next hundred years of English literature. Baugh and Cable furthermore stressed that the general adoptions of English by all cases, which had taken place by the latter half of the fourteenth century, gave rise to a body of literature that represents the high point in English literary achievement in the Middle Ages (p. 144). Therefore, we can infer that the literary works written widely in English today, more or less, use and adopt French words and literary styles.

### **E. Conclusion**

This article has examined the number of French words adopted by and poured into English traced from hundred years ago, and manifest today in many domains of life, in both spoken and written forms, were unbelievably great. There is nothing comparable to it in the previous or subsequent history of the language. Political and social consequences of the Norman conquest factor leave a strong feeling in the minds of English people and always appear and are represented in their spoken and written activities in all domains of life nowadays..

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