

FRENCH COLLOQUIAL LOAN-WORDS IN ENGLISH TEXTS PRIOR TO 1300: SEMANTIC ANALYSIS AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS

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What follows has two main concerns. The first is to concentrate on elucidating how matters of large-scale social structure are related and reflected in verbal colloquial interaction in the post-Conquest period. My second major concern is to try to infer the nature of Anglo-Norman established loan-words and unadapted code-switchings prior to 1300 from an examination of French colloquial words and idioms which made their way into English; or rather, since a description and analysis of the French loan-material as a whole is evidently a task far beyond the scope of a single paper, I shall mention some French colloquial borrowings of abuse and recrimination and seek to show their semantic and sociolinguistic implications.

Even if it were feasible to adapt systemic features of realizations of linguistic units to the study of code-switching in a language-contact situation, such an approach is ruled out in the present case by the lack of representative samples of the actual speech of the period. Most studies on this topic have considered contemporary situations, and have accordingly been based on direct observation of the utterances of the population studied. In my present endeavour this is impossible, and some other method must be used.

What prevents my founding my investigation upon text-based reconstructions of spoken Middle English? The answer is that the fundamental premise which has allowed medieval phonology to be elucidated with reasonable certainty is of dubious validity at the stylistic level. This premise is that, in the absence of formal instruction in English grammar during the Middle English period and the displacement of English from the standard level, the written word was approximately a transliteration of the contemporary spoken word prevalent in the author's dis-

tract. An immediate limitation to this postulate for stylistic studies is that it can at best apply to colloquial texts, literary works such as religious tracts obviously lying outside its domain of validity. However there are reasons for regarding it as an unreliable tenet even for «colloquial writings». On the one hand, it has widely been asserted that most «colloquial» elements in medieval texts are of a courtly nature, and are unlikely to represent the speech of the author's contemporaries in the fields or at the market place. On the other hand, examination of thirteenth-century «colloquial» texts¹ reveals what seems to have been a conscious effort by their authors to use colloquialisms of French origin. Words like *fol*, *lichur*, *trichur*, *best*, *ipocrite*, *harlot* or *glutun* and many others denoting wicked or evil behaviour or abuse, are extremely frequent in texts of this period. A moment's thought shows that this practice is quite comprehensible. English colloquialisms must have been unattractive to the writer because they would have been dialectal words familiar to the audience of the author's district but presumably unfamiliar in other parts of the country. It is not difficult to imagine the author, a learned man, trying to avoid local colloquial terms with the intention of being understood outside the limits of his parish. Accordingly, he would consciously elevate his text to the literary style, employing colloquial vocabulary which, though of foreign provenance, would undoubtedly have been very uniform throughout England, Anglo-Norman being a fixed and highly standardised code.

It has repeatedly been asserted that the alliterative style was much closer than prose to the actual speech of the author's contemporaries. The rhythms and diction of *Piers the Plowman*, for example, are considered to be colloquial. Yet *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which is also alliterative, is a courtly romance far removed from humble speech. There is thus no reason to assume that alliteration is a sure sign of faithful representation of actual speech. N. F. Blake states that

...a distinct non-colloquial element can certainly be discerned in the alliterative style, though this would not of itself mean that colloquial elements were entirely absent. The alliterative style demanded a large number of words with roughly the same meaning because if a line had *b* as its alliterative stave it would, for example, be no use introducing the word *man* in that line. It would be necessary to have a word for *man* beginning with *b*-. The solution to this problem was provided by using circumlocutions which were either compounds or phrases of a formulaic nature, or by retaining words which seemed otherwise to have passed out of regular use. Many words found in the poetry are found rarely, if at all, in prose; and the most reasonable explanation of this is that some words were archaic and had been retained by the poets to help them over the exigencies of all alliterative composition. The result is that the vocabulary in poetry was to some extent divorced from speech².

¹ Cf. *Dame Sirith, the Fox and the Wolf, Bestiary (The Fox, and the Whale), The Thrush and the Nightingale, The Proverbs of Alured, Interludium De Clerico et Puella* and some lyric poems, such as *Sin Cuckoo, When the Nightingale Sings*, etc.

² N. F. Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London and New York: Methuen, 1977), p. 156.

It has been stated that French loan words became fashionable, and therefore many Old English terms were discarded because the new Frenchifying sensibilities found them uncourtly, or even uncouth, and in like manner, the same traditional viewpoint, concerning French borrowing, has firmly asserted that the evidence for that overwhelming flood of Gallic terms affected mainly the fashionable literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and proved not to concern the everyday language of any period whatsoever. To my understanding the linguistic fusion which took place in the manorial daily activities after two centuries of social amalgamation made possible the incorporation of many colloquial French words and verbal phrases into English. That the peasantry was barely touched by Frenchifying tastes and habits is still under discussion, as far as surviving texts allow us to judge. But no doubt, a peasant must have recognized the meaning of the French words and idioms like *alas!*, *certes*, *par ma fai!*, *mesaunter*, *merci*, *fol*, *feire*, *marchaundise*, etc. which the *Dame Sirith*'s author, to take an example, incorporated in his English text³. Let's consider the following lines:

Dat befel on an day
 Ðe louerd wend away
 Hon his *marchaundise*⁴

 Me told me þat he was gon
 To þe *feire*⁵ of Botolfston
 In Lincolneschire

The French words *marchaundise* and *feire* cannot be considered technical or esoteric terms. It is likely that these words did have the same connotations as their native counterparts for the lower strata of society. It would be strictly narrowing to assert that the French-loan element which made its way into *Dame Sirith* carried literary connotations far removed from the practical ends and the colloquial level of the English-speaking population. I know for certain that the introduction of Anglo-Norman lexical items into the colloquial discourse of the English language prior to 1300 may, to a greater extent, be due to their extensive usage in the bilingual repertoire of the English speaking community.

In the extracts below, I intend to make plain how colloquial French borrowings were not immaterial or of a courtly nature, as has been repeatedly stated.

³ *Dame Sirith* is a fabliau. The main plot revolves around the awarding of success to a disreputable person and of discomfiture to a virtuous and innocent one. It is a poem intended to be declaimed at the market-places and for the folk's pleasure. The preponderance of dialogue over narration, transitions and explanations, together with the comic purpose, enlivened the atmosphere of the work. *Dame Sirith* has its counterpart in the O. Fr. fabliau *Richeut* (c. 1170) and *D'Auberee la vielle maquerelle*; in both works, as in the English poem, a female go-between is the central character.

⁴ *Marchaundise* (→ O. Fr. *marchandise*). J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers (eds.), *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 80. Cf. also Robert of Gloucester (Rolls), 1.2199: *ze beþ men bet iteizt to...hamer & to nelde & to mercandise al so / Ðan wiþd suerd ober hauberc eny bataile to do*. See also, *Cursor Mundi*, 1. 16471; *South. Eng. Leg.* I. 53/3 (N.E.D.).

⁵ *Feire* (→ O. Fr. *feire*). Bennett and Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

On the contrary it seems to be plausible that these Anglo-Norman loan-words had acquired the status of established borrowings, morphologically and syntactically adapted to the patterns of the English language,

We, We! oldest þou me a *fol*⁶?

.....
Swete lemmon, *merci*⁷!

Same ne *vilani*⁸

Ne bede I þe non;

.....
*Certes*⁹, *dame*, þat me forþinkeþ!

.....
*Alas, alas*¹⁰, þat euer I liue!

The fact that various authors of different areas of England record the same Anglo-Norman loan-words give us sufficient evidence to suppose that these donor-language items were used with great regularity in daily life, and therefore they cannot be considered nonce-borrowings, used once and never heard again.

In like manner, there are some sets of Anglo-Norman borrowings which occur morphologically and syntactically *unadapted* to the English language patterns. They may be defined as code-switches and usually appear as multi-word or sentence fragments. In my view, these «code-switches» provide valuable insights into the extent to which colloquial French penetrated the lower walks of English life. Let's consider the following examples:

For now is halden non *in curs*¹¹

Bot qua þat luue can *par amurs*¹²

.....
*Prey*¹³ we God so mote hit be!

*Amen, pur seint charite*¹⁴

⁶ *Fol* (→ O. Fr. *fol*). *Ibid.*, p. 84. Cf. «Do þy, þou clerç, þou art a *fol*! (*Lyrics*, VIII-L,1.9, in the ed. of Bennett & Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 125. See also, «Be stille, þou *fol*» (*ibid.*).

⁷ *Merci* (→ O. fr. *mercie*) *Ibid.* Cf. «And oriez hwere *merci* al weping...», *Floris and Blaunche flour*, 1.263 in Bennett & Smithers' ed., *op. cit.*, p. 50. See also, *ibid.*, p. 190 (*Cursor Mundi*), p. 242 (*Anorene Wise*).

⁸ *Vilani* (→ O. Fr. *vilanie, vile(t)nie*), *ibid.*, p. 84 Cf. «Hii þozte in time amendi, suich *vileinie*», *ibid.*, p. 159 (Robert of Gloucester' *Chronicle*). See also, *ibid.*, p. 88 (*Dame Sirith*).

⁹ *Certes* (→ O. Fr. *certes*) *Ibid.*, p. 85. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 26 (*The Owl and the Nightingale*); p. 198 (*Interludium de Clerico et Puella*).

¹⁰ *Alas* (→ O. Fr. (*h*)*allas*) *Ibid.*, p. 91. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 98 (*Saint Kenelm*); p. 37 (*Kyng Alisaunder*); p. 63 (*Havelock*).

¹¹ Bennett & Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 187 (O. Fr. *curs*).

¹² *Ibid.* (O. Fr. *amo(u)r*).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 190. (O. Fr. *preie*).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (O. Fr. *Charité*).

Nelde, *par ma fai*¹⁵!

.....
Do þe table was ydrawe

De wayte gan *A choger!*¹⁶ blawe.

Contrary to the traditional viewpoint these «MULTIWORD L₂ sentence fragments which remain morphologically and syntactically *unadapted* to recipient-language patterns»¹⁷ seem to be widely known in the English speech community, as they appear in very colloquial discourses.

We can take for granted that England was completely subdued by the Normans, a French-speaking race, and their French allies; and that French was spoken in the parish church, in local courts, at the lord's table, at market-places, even in the fields, as most of the land had been so thoroughly divided among the conquerors of every rank that there was but a few native English tenants who retained their message. French was alive in the small rural village and French speakers enlivened their dialogue there with coarse words, but with words that might not necessarily be described as low (cf. *certes, feire, marchaundise, crie, traueil*, etc.). Though it is often assumed that colloquial language is equivalent, for the most part, if not exclusively, to the usage of a «vocabulary of coarse, potentially slang-type character»¹⁸. To my understanding, the parameters of colloquialism are defined by spontaneity and the usage of words of everyday character.

In assessing the relevance of the «colloquial» French element in the English texts prior 1300, we shall bear in mind the following variants: the geographical area in which the text was written, its date, the social status of the author, and particularly, the audience to which the work was addressed. For example, two texts from the same area, but of different dates, will register a varied range of French words. Thus *Ormulum* (North-East Midlands), written circa 1200, introduces a scanty figure of French elements, whereas *Cursor Mundi* written pre-1300 in the North, where the Norman presence was less relevant, contains slightly over six per cent French words. My survey of some of the most significant texts prior to 1300 yielded these results: a fair number of Middle English works, like *Cursor Mundi*, written «for the sake of the English people and to be understood by the illiterate»¹⁹ incorporated a high proportion of French words and verbal phrases of every character and application like *sote, foul, traueil, flour, frutte, cri*, etc.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95. (O. Fr. *fei*).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39. An Anglo-Norman adaptation of the O. Fr. *a coucher*.

¹⁷ Sh. Poplack, D. Sankoff and Ch. Miller, «The Social Correlates and Linguistic Processes of Lexical Borrowing and Assimilation», *Linguistics* 26 (1988) 53.

¹⁸ N. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹⁹ Dis ilke boke es translate
Vnto engliss tung to rede
For þe luue of englijs lede,
Englis lede of meri ingeland

For þe comen to vnþerstand (Gottingen MS. Theol. 10).

Ed. R. Morris, *Cursor Mundi*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, E.E.T.S., Orig. Series, n. 57, 1874, repr. 1961), 11. 232-236.

My main endeavour in this paper is to prove that there are many reasons to believe that the English language in its colloquial form underwent a romanization of its vocabulary and colloquial idioms, English native colloquialisms being considered rather unattractive to the writer because they were dialectal forms familiar to the audience of the author's parish but supposedly unfamiliar in other districts of the country. Otherwise it would be quite difficult to explain the very many colloquial English words and idioms which were calques of French forms. The main point to be discerned here is whether these colloquial words and idioms were part of the colloquial English speech or whether they were only used for literary purposes. N. F. Blake has put it:

It is quite possible that many words like (the French word) *gloton* which have the appearance of belonging to a slang or colloquial level were never part of colloquial English. They may have been literary terms of abuse copied from French works in which the words were so used and thus they gradually became part of Middle English literary abuse²⁰.

This scholar continues,

In general much of the «colloquial» vocabulary in Middle English was based on French rather than being drawn direct from life, a concept which was in itself quite alien to medieval writers²¹.

I disagree with Blake's assertions because there is at least suggestive evidence that French colloquialisms which made their way into English sprang from the speech of England and were the natural outcome of the close contact and code-switching of English/Anglo-Norman by a large sector of the population. The arguments here are of a more detailed socio-historical nature than those postulated by Blake. I do not believe in that oversimplified picture which draws the French influence upon English as follows: «a French family settled in England, and edited the English language». In response to this broad statement Sykes asserts,

It would be a truer figure to say that the homely English family went to school to French masters, assimilated the modes of thought and forms of expression of a new civilization, and then, and by reason of that assimilated culture, made good its right, even as an English family, to enter into the literary and social life of the new times²².

It is my belief that I must go a step further. The basic relation of English/Anglo-Norman was not confined to schooled inference, but to an everyday contact in the fields, at the market place, at the law courts, in the church yards, etc. Therefore, French was not only the enlightened element, but also the language of rude and uncultivated masters. So a coarse French vocabulary, potentially slang spoken by a large mass of illiterate petty overlords and used with practical ends

²⁰ N. F. Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² F. H. Sykes, *French Elements in Middle English* (Oxford: 1899), p. 7.

in governing the manorial activities. Every Norman lord, or of Norman descent, provided himself with a Frenchified staff of ruling officers —the steward, the bailiff, the reeve, and other minor officers— who controlled the activities of the manor.

Hence it seems a great inaccuracy to assume that low words were put in the mouths of wicked or evil characters, usually belonging to the lower classes, to form a contrast with the refined speech of the upper classes and good characters. It seems to us that the most likely explanation of this incorporation of French colloquial terms of abuse and recrimination in early Middle English texts is to be found in the English speakers' familiarity with such colloquial French linguistic sequences. No doubt, «nativi»²³ were used to hearing reviling, injurious speech in the daily process of submitting, —occasionally suffering disciplinary punishment—, to their French-speaking masters' lawful authority. So offensive terms were put, for the most part, though not exclusively, in the mouths of these petty overlords who authoritatively directed the native mass of people in the fields, in the market place or in home affairs.

This would explain why the great bulk of low words that appear in early Middle English texts, denoting either abuse or recrimination, were mainly French; and not for literary reasons, but for being quite familiar to English-speaking race. Let's consider some examples prior to 1300: The basic idea behind this French slang-type term (my italics) is to dub the person addressed as a «villain».

Sarra...sceud abraham: you *bastard*²⁴,
 Do him a-awai
 Dat he ne has partd
 Wit mi sun of my heritage!

 Hwet medschipe madeð þe,
 Du bittre balefule *beast*²⁵!

²³ After the Norman Conquest English people were subjugated by Normans and the great majority of them were reduced to the condition of villains and cotters. This lower stratum of the English society was usually dubbed as «nativi» or naives.

²⁴ *Cursor Mundi*, 1.3027, in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Kurath *et al.*, University of Michigan. (← O. Fr. *bastard*). In the earliest usage it was applied to any illegitimate son or daughter. But it was also used as an epithet of abuse and recrimination; that is, a *villain*.

²⁵ *Leg. Kath.*, 1.2067, in *N.E.D. Best/beast*. (← O. Fr. *beste*). In earlier usage, it was applied to a human being, connoting foolish and stupid behaviour (cf. Fr. *bête*), and very often used to express disgust or merely aversion. Afterwards this word was used, as French did at home, to convey the meaning of a «brutal, savage man; a man acting in any manner unworthy of a reasonable creature», a *villain*. In like manner it very often «applied to the devil (the «old serpent» or «dragon») and evil spirits: It seems to appear for the first time in *Sr. Marher.* 11, about 1220: 'Hu ha...þæt bittre *best* made to bersten». *Cursor Mundi*'s author (1.12954, cf. N.E.D.) also uses this word with this meaning: «Bot herdili he (þe warlau) yode him nerr, Qua herd euer *best* sua bald».

Be stille, *boinard*²⁶!

.....
Pes! quopð Candace, þou *congeoun*²⁷!

.....
 Hit is vileynye
 To be of bold word atte mete & *coward*²⁸ in þe velde

.....
 No wil Y lufe na cleric *fayllard*²⁹

.....
 Do wey, þou cleric, þou art a *fol*³⁰...»
 «Be stille, þou *fol*!...»

.....
 Treitour! now is þe lif itint;
 Ðus men schel teche file *glotouns*³¹,
 Ðat wile misaie gode barouns!

.....
 «Fitz a puteyne!», he seide, «*lecchoure*³²!»
 Dou shalt sterue so a tretoure»

.....
Auoy, dameisele! quap Blanche flour,
 To *scorne*³³ me is litel *honur*

.....
 How he for here becom a *sote*³⁴

²⁶ Bennett & Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 90 (*Dame Sirith*). *Boinard*. (← O. Fr. *bui(s)nard*). A fool, simpleton; a rascal, rouge, scoundrel. See J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38 (*King Alisaunder*)-*Congeoun* (← O. Fr. *changon*, A.N. *cangium*) Fool, imbecile.

²⁸ *Dictionary of Middle English*, ed. H. Kurath, *et al.* (Ann Arbor: Univ. Michigan Press). Cf. *Coward* adj. Also *cuard*. *couherde* (← O. Fr. *co(u)arde*, inflected form of *co(u)art*). Lacking in courage, cowardly, timid. *Coward* is also used substantively as an epithet. (also, *couart*, *couherde*. Pl. *couardes*, *couars*). In one of its earliest uses it applied to a despicable person or a base villain. Basically, in the post-Conquest period a «nativus» or villain was also epithetically considered a coward. About 1300 in *S Leg. Chris.* (Hrl), 141, we read. He alle ne þerste come him nez.../ «What, ze cowards», quap þe kyng» (*Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Kurath *et al.*, University of Michigan, 1953----).

²⁹ Bennett and Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 198 (*Interludium de Clerico et Puella*). *Faillard* (← O. Fr. *fail(l)e + ard*). One who has faults or failings. A delinquent, *villain*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125 (in Bennett & Smithers' ed., *Lyrics*, L. 1. 9). *-Fol* (← O. Fr. *fol*). Fool. Simpleton, rascal, rouge. (*s. supra*).

³¹ *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. H. Kurath *et al.* University of Michigan. *Gloton* (← O. Fr. *gloton*). a) A person with an intemperate or special appetite for food or drink. b) A *villain*, wretch; worthless fellow, parasite. Let's consider these examples: *Nou ne sitten none but wicke men. Glotuns, reu(e)res, or wicke þeues!* (In *Havelok* 2104, *s. Middle English Dictionary*, ed. H. Kurath, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1953...).

³² *Ibid.* *Lechur* (variants) (← O. Fr. *lecheor*, *-our*, *-er*, *licheur*, from Gmc.). A lascivious person, fornicator, adulterer; also a lover or mistress, a pimp or bawd; also, one who sins sexually against nature; a self-indulgent person; especially a glutton; Luxuria as one of the Seven Deadly Sins; a scoundrel, *villain*.

³³ Bennett and Smithers, *op. cit.*, p. 49. *-Scorne*. (← A.N. *scarn*). Mock, deride.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 186. *-Sote* (← O. Fr. *sot*, cfr. O. E. *sott*). Fool, stupid.

Swete lemmon, merci
Same ne *vilani*³⁵

.....
Askebert he was he was icleoped (a strong
*trichour*³⁶, *alas!*)

For noman ne may to oþur sonere *tricherie* do...)

Much has been argued about the extent of bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England, though I prefer the less ambiguous term «conflictual diglossic bilingualism». Indeed, a perfect social bilingualism³⁷ in which both languages are used indiscriminately for every function, if it ever exists, is extremely fragile, since as Mackey says:

«...the bilingual community can only be regarded as a dependent collection of individuals who have reasons for being bilingual. A self-sufficient bilingual community in which everyone is fluent in two languages could get along just as well with one language»³⁸.

In the case of Norman England, the polarity generating bilingualism was maintained by the enduring social superiority of the Anglo-Norman speakers and things Anglo-Norman. In other words, the bilingualism of the community was part and parcel of its continued and bi-cultural nature. To quote Mackey again,

«languages are seldom learned *in vacuo*; they are learned along with other cultural structures and constantly intertwined with these; for this reason bilingualism is a type of acculturation, and any interference is a case of cultural diffusion («acculturation» being defined as the «learning of social behaviour from another culture than one's own»)»³⁹.

The great bulk of Anglo-Norman loan-words which made their way into English proves this «acculturation», though the «slang-type character» of many of the Gallic borrowings means that speakers of L₁ (the language of the territory English) and the speakers of L₂ (the upstart language Anglo-Norman) mostly coincided in familiar contexts. So the bilingual competence of these two linguistic communities might principally occur in their low or colloquial varieties (A-level). In fact, in the absence of formal instruction in English and Anglo-Norman grammar, the cultural variety (B-level) of both languages was usually unattainable for the majority of the bilingual population. So, it is my view that the bilingual competence

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 186. -*Sote*. (← O. Fr. *sot*, cfr. O. E. *sott*). Fool, stupid.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 98. -*Trichour*. (← A. N. *trichour*). Cheat, deceiver.

³⁷ Von Raffler-Engel uses the term of *equilingualism* when a bilingual community may be functionally equal in each of the languages. (Cf. «An investigation of Italo-American Bilinguals», in *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung*, 14 (1961), pp. 127-130). Also, P. Hornby considers that an equal over-all competence in two languages is a *balanced bilingualism*. (Cf. *Bilingualism: Psychological, Social and Educational Implications* (New York: 1977), p. 3.

³⁸ W. F. Mackey, «The Description of Bilingualism», *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, 7 (1962), 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

of many speakers in England in the second half of the twelfth century and into much of the thirteenth, may be functionally referred to as *semi-bilingualism*⁴⁰ or *pseudo-bilingualism*⁴¹ (L₁. A + L₂. A) since perfect equality (equal competence of English/Anglo-Norman at colloquial and cultural levels), that is, L₁. AB + L₂. AB was not a question of the English/Anglo-Norman community, but of some individuals.

In keeping with these notions, the diglossia of late medieval England did not wax into perfect social bilingualism. It was instead resolved by the recovery by English of domains of formal discourse hitherto reserved for Anglo-Norman, and hence by the emergence of a monolingual English-speaking society for which French was a foreign language, spoken and understood only by a few gifted bilingual individuals. At this stage, interference between the two languages was again minimal because they once more functioned as totally independent codes.

In conclusion, following an assessment of the relevance of the colloquial Gallic imprint in Middle English texts prior to 1300, I consider it a tenuous line to continue on considering the lower-«middle» class as unscathed by any cultural revolution in Anglo-Norman England, and it is worth mentioning Robert of Gloucester's words: *Bote a man conne Frenss, me telþ of him lute* («unless a man knows French, people think little of him»). Furthermore, I suspect on the basis of the abundance of French «colloquial» established borrowings, which are morphologically and syntactically adapted to the patterns of the English language, that the Norman-French and English uncultivated communities coincided in everyday speech events, evolving towards a type of «semi-bilingualism» (L₁. A + L₂. A). However, that daily contact was socially hierarchied, and, hence the importance of French loan-words of abuse and recrimination: for this bilingual competence was also socially functional, that is, diglossic.

Our findings made it clear that both intralinguistic and extralinguistic components acted together at the spontaneous linguistic changes and language development of Middle English. Therefore, Gallic interference was the outcome of the hierarchical/Anglo-Norman contact in everyday activities.

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