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**The Norman Influence on the English Language**

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**Introduction**

Each of us knows about the Norman invasion in England, but not all of us know how it affected the English language. For every person interested in linguistics, it is important to know what influence the Norman conquest had on English writing. Modern English is vastly different from that spoken by the English prior to the conquest, both in vocabulary and grammar. In order to understand what happened, and why, it’s necessary to look at both English and Norman French before 1066 and then the results of its interaction.

The aim of the work is to present some historical facts that took place regarding the Norman conquest in England and discuss different linguistic influences on English which appears to lend support to the fact that the French Normans had a major effect on the English language.

**The historical backgrounds**

William was Duke of Normandy, a country on the other side of the English Channel, now a region in France. He invaded England after the death of King Edward the Confessor because he believed he had the most right to be King of England, but King Harold II had himself crowned king instead. King Harold, with his Saxon army, and Duke William fought at the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066. King Harold was killed in the battle and his army left. On December 25, 1066 William was crowned the new King of England.

The language situation in England changed after the Norman invasion. The decline of the Old English language as a language of literature, management and administration was observed. For three centuries, English dominated the English language as the official language of the Catholic Church, the Anglo-Saxon dialects, which served as the language of communication of ordinary people, and the Norman dialect of the French language, used in secular circles.

French in its Norman dialect form has become the official language of England. Nevertheless, English continued to be the language of communication between the lower classes - the peasantry, smallholders, urban artisans and merchants. French has greatly changed English. Due to the large influx of native speakers of the Norman dialect into the territory of England, a large number of French borrowings appeared in the English language.

**Borrowed lexis**

First of all, the Norman conquest was reflected in the lexical composition of the English language. We can learn lots of English words and not even know that a great part of them is of French origin.

The process of borrowing words from the French language into English was observed mainly from the middle of the XIII to the end of the XIV century. The number of words borrowed in the 15th century is relatively small.

At this time, words appeared in English related to completely different areas:

- words related to the life of the royal court (court, courtier, prince, servant); the names of the king and queen were nevertheless of English origin (king, queen);

- words on religious subjects (religion, prayer, confession, saint); related to public administration (government, parliament, duke, vassal); legal proceedings and justice (justice, sentence, judge); professions (painter, butcher, tailor). However, the names of the artisans who worked in the village retained their English origin (shoemaker, weaver, blacksmith);

- words related to military affairs (soldier, army, battle, victory).

In addition, the English language absorbed from the Romance language a significant number of not only independent, but also service parts of speech (prepositions, conjunctions), such as except, because.

It is worth noting the case when both words were preserved in the language, but their meanings were divided. The most striking example reflecting such a linguistic situation is the novel “Aivengo” by the famous Scottish writer Walter Scott, which refers to the separation of animal names and meat varieties. Animals that were grazed by peasants were called English words (sheep, ox, pig), but as soon as their meat was served to the table of the Norman feudal lords, it was indicated by French names (mutton, beef, pork, respectively). This ratio of animal and meat names has been preserved in modern English

**Borrowed morphemes**

In addition to words, some morphemes penetrated the English language from French. This process was as follows. If the English language had a certain number of words formed using the same suffix, then this suffix stood out as a special morpheme and could participate in the formation of new words of both French and English origin.

Here is a list of the main suffixes with which a significant number of English words were formed:

- ance / -ence (ignorance, innocence, arrogance)

- the suffix –ment penetrated the English language as a part of such words as government, treatment. Later, with his help, new words from English roots were formed: fulfillment, amazement, bewilderment.

- the suffix –ess, used for the formation of nouns denoting women, was reflected in words such as princess, baroness.

- some words were formed using the French diminutive suffix –et (cabinet, coronet).

- the –age suffix, known from the words courage, marriage, was also attached to the Scandinavian roots and gave birth to the words luggage, leakage, etc.

- the suffix –ard (of German origin) penetrated the English language in the French words coward, bastard. In combination with English roots, this suffix gave many words: wizard, dullard, etc.

- the suffix –al is used to form verbal nouns, and it appeared in English as part of the words funeral, refusal, proposal, etc.

- the suffix –able / -ible penetrated the English language in the words flexible, admirable, legible.

**Changes in English writing**

For several centuries after the Norman conquest, writing in England was in the hands of French scribes. Under their influence in English writing reflected some of the features of French graphics. These features have been preserved in the English language to date.

First of all, there were phonetic changes that led to a violation of the correspondence between the sound and the letter denoting it. These changes can be clearly illustrated by the following examples.

So, in the field of vowels, the influence of French graphics shows itself as following:

1) The sound [u:] from the second half of the 13th century began to be denoted by the digraph ou according to the French model, although the pronunciation of the long [u:] in the Middle English period did not change. From borrowed French words (trouble, couch), this spelling has been transferred to native English words.

hous [hu: s] (Ancient English hus) out [u: t] (Ancient English ut)

loud [lu: d] (Old English hlud)

In some cases, ow was written instead of ou:

cow [ku : ] (ancient cu), how [hu : ] (ancient hu),

down [du: n] (Old English dun)

2) The sound [u] in the Middle English period is often indicated by the letter o. This spelling is caused by graphic motifs. The letter o, denoting the sound [u], is found in such words where before and after it are the letters u, v, m, n, that is, letters consisting of vertical strokes. A series of vertical strokes could cause confusion in the writing. Replacing the letter u with o helped to avoid this ambiguity. For instance, comen [‘kumәn] (Ancient English: cuman), sone [‘ sunә] (Ancient English: sunu), loue [‘luve] (Ancient English lufu )

**Conclusion**

As we can see, the Norman Conquest of 1066 had a significant impact on the further development of the English language. Under its influence the lexical composition and writing of the English language got a number of serious changes that has survived till nowadays. It has brought some drastic changes to the structure of the English vocabulary with regard to the etymology, semantics, word-forming patterns and spelling. In spite of different views on the importance of these changes it’s obvious that not a single event in English history can be compared with the scale of these changes.