4.1. The socio-political situation in early medieval England and its linguistic consequences

4.1.1. The Norman Conquest:

1016-1042: England was ruled by King Cnut and his two sons Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut, and was part of a Scandinavian empire. Æthelred the Unready, King of Wessex (978-1013) was driven into exile in Normandy.

1016-1042: Rule of King Edward the Confessor. Son of Æthelred the Unready and Emma of Normandy. He spent part of his life in Normandy. His native language was Norman French. He introduced many Normans in high positions in both church and state (◊ introduction of some French loanwords in OE). He died without heirs.

In 1066, Harold II was King of England. In September of that year, the King of Norway, Harold Hardrada, attacked Northumbria and occupied York. He was defeated by King Harold II in the battle of Stanford Bridge. This defeat marked the end of the Viking Age. After this battle, William, Duke of Normandy, landed in Pevensy, in Sussex (Southeast of England). Harold was forced to march southwards. Harold's army marched south. The consequences were that King Harold was defeated and killed in the battle. The Anglo-Saxons are defeated by the Normans in the battle of Hastings (October 1066). William of Normandy is crowned king of England on Christmas Day 1066. Becoming King William I.

How we know about this? Because of the chronicles of the time.

We may retrieve information about the events preceding the Norman Conquest in the ***Anglo-Saxon Chronicle***, which continued to be written until 1154 at Peterborough Abbey (near Cambridge).

We also know what happened in the battle of Hastings thank to the ***Bayeux Tapestry,*** a cloth that described the events after the Norman Conquest.

***The Bayeux Tapestry***: an embroidered cloth that depicts the events leading up to the Norman Conquest, was probably commissioned in the 1070s by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror. Some historians argue that it was embroidered in Kent, England. The original tapestry is on display at Bayeux in Normandy, France.

Who were the Normans?

As a result of the conquest, from this time on, the kings of England would also be Dukes of Normandy, and both the nobility and the monarchs with have possessions on both sides of the Channel. Its also important to remember that Normans were Scandinavians in origin. In fact, the word “Norman” means already ‘man from the North’, but it adopted the French language.

Normandy was a dukedom attached to the kingdom of France. Its population was Scandinavian in origin (cf. section 3.3 in Unit 3).

Normandy had been another Danelaw, but its inhabitants had given up their native Scandinavian language and had adopted French.

The variety of French they spoke was somewhat influenced by their original Scandinavian language.

After 1066:

The conquest had consequences in the composition of the English class.

**Replacement of Anglo-Saxon nobility with Norman nobility** (a great number of the male English nobility were killed at Hastings. Those who survived were later on executed as traitors). By 1086 (evidence from the Domesday Book, a survey of landowners used for taxation) most landowners were Norman.

**Normans were introduced to important positions in the Church** (e.g. both the archbishops, Canterbury and York were French (Norman), and most of the bishops were French). However, the lower clergy was still English → SHIFT IN THE MAKE-UP OF ENGLAND'S RULING CLASS.

The **mass of the inhabitants of England** were English-speaking (between 1.5- 2 million people, bound to the land) vs. c. 20,000 French. The Normans concentrated in the towns of the South and Southeast (Gramley 2012: 69).

The Norman elite kept their possessions in Normandy → England and Normandy formed a political unit. Noblemen usually had **possessions on both sides of the English Channel**.

1100-1200:

**After William** the Conqueror's **death** (in 1087) his territories were divided: **Robert** **inherited** **Normandy** and William inherited England. **Henry I**, William’s third son, succeeds his brother **William II** and becomes king. He conquers Normandy (defeating his other brother, Robert).

**Alliance with the House of Anjou** through marriage (**Henry II + Eleanor of Aquitaine**). **Eleanor of Aquitaine** was one of the most powerful, well-educated in Western Europe.

By 1200 there was a Norman empire (**Angevin empire**), which encompassed England and large parts of France, including Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine.

This led to a constant conflict with the King of France, who wanted to have control over the **Duke of Normandy**, who was **at the same time the King of England**.

4.1.2. Linguistic consequences of the Conquest

French (**Anglo-French**, the variant of French developed in England) was the language of the conquerors, and became the **language of administration**, **law**, **government** and all activities related to the ruling classes (the language of power). In addition to aristocrats, Norman craftsmen, merchants and artisans settled in English towns mixing up with the local population.

**At first, French** was **only spoken by those of Norman origin** (ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION), but may have spread to people of English extraction (esp. those who wanted to improve their social position) **over time French** became a **mark of social distinction**.

**ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION** → **SOCIAL** **DISTRIBUTION**

Most people in England continued to use English and only English. English was the language of the **lower** **classes** (**English** by descent). **Diglossia**: **French** as a **high** **language**; English as a low language.

**DIGLOSSIA** → A situation where **two** closely related **languages** are **used** in a speech community. **One** **for** **High (H) functions** (e.g. church, government, administration, newspapers) and **one for Low (L) functions** (e.g. in the home or market). […] Now often extended to refer to any two languages (even typologically unrelated ones) that have this kind of social and functional distribution.

French was less institutionalized in the domain of **religion** (which was **dominated by Latin**). In monasteries the three languages co-existed. English texts were still produced in monasteries throughout the period of French dominance. The ***Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*** was **continued** for almost a century after the Conquest. Very probably the **lower clergy** was **English-speaking**.

**Latin** continued to be the **language of scholarship**, of the **church**, of **international communication** and was also important as the language of administration, where it gradually gave way to French.

In addition to English, French and Latin, **Norse** was still us**ed in parts of the Danelaw** (but it was a receding language; eventually **Norse speakers shifted to English**, introducing in the variety of English they used a great deal of ON everyday words, cf. Unit 3). Norse only survived in the Shetland and Orkney islands (Norn survuved until the nineteenth century); **Celtic languages** were used **in Cornwall**, **Wales** and **Scotland**.

*“...in some situation and functions Latin was the appropriate language to use, in others French, and in others English. Linguists often describe such as situation as showing di- or triglossia, i.e. the use of two or three different varieties or different languages in different social situations. The fact that different languages were involved (i.e. trilingualism), not different dialects of a single language had important implications: English gradually took on more and more functions at the expense of French and Latin, but as it did so it had to acquire whole new areas of vocabulary, in order to perform new functions. Typically this was done by borrowing from Latin and French* (Durkin 2014: 235-6)”.

4.2 The re-establishment of English (1200-1500)

During the **thirteenth and fourteenth centuries**, a number of external pressures contribute to the re-emergence of English:

- The **separation of English and French territories**, motivated by King John’s lack of Normandy in 1204. Joh was also known as John Lackland. This lost forced the Norman nobility to declare their allegiance by giving up their positions either in Normandy or in England.

- The prolonged hostility between England and France. the **Hundred Years' War** which broke out in 1337 and lasted until 1453. The English win battles like the Battle of Crecy, the Battle of Poitiers and Battle of Agincourt, which contributed to a growing nationalistic feeling. The English lost the war eventually.

- As a result of these two events, **Anglo-Norman-French was no longer the native language in the English nobility,** since they shifted to English, their mother tongue now. They learned French as a second language.

- **Shifts in** the **prestige of** dialects of **French**.

- Increase in geographic, economic, and **social mobility for speakers of English**. Growing middle class of merchants, whose power increased during this time and so did their language.

**1204:** Many French noblemen were attracted to England during the reign of King John. In 1204 **John loses Normandy** to the king of France, but the kings of England still had possessions in more southerly parts of France (Anjou).

**1244 onwards:** **Confiscation of all French territories by the king of France**. The nobility had to choose between their holdings in England or in France, but could not hold both. **Rivalry** began to develop between **England and France**.

**Many French people** (especially from the south of France) moved to England **during Henry III’s reign with Eleanor Provence and occupied high positions**, favoured by the king this caused great **resentment among the English**, who thought they were receiving second-rate treatment as opposed to the foreigners (favoritism).

An **anti-foreign sentiment** arose, the English criticized the foreigners who "cannot speak English"; **stronger sense of English identity among the nobility of England** (Normans by descent) emerged.

Henry III was forced to accept a program of reforms made known in the **Provisions of Oxford (1258)**, the **first official document** to be issued **in English** in over 200 years. The document was issued also in French and Latin. The provisions were intended to control the power of the king and to share the power with the English barons (Parliament). The king did not accept them and this led to the **Barons’ War**. This Provision of Oxford are the first official documents to be in English after the Conquest.

Under **Edward I (1272-1307) most officeholders** were **English**, and French starts to give way to English among the ruling classes. The nobility could use both languages. English was becoming a mark of (English) identity. But **French started to be learnt as a foreign language**, and how do we know this? Because from 1300, there are evidence of the first manuals to learn English. Also, some works of the period also allude to speaking in proper French. This is the case of Chaucer’s, author from the Canterbury Tales, that confessed that he spoke French (the French of Paris was unknown to him).

During the **13th century** the **French of Paris** (Central French) became an **international language of culture** in Europe, the language of courtly literature. **Anglo-French** was not considered to be good French, it was regarded as **old fashioned and provincial**:

There were attempts to stop the decline of French in England: e.g. novices at Canterbury and Westminster were forbidden to use English; students at the University of Oxford had to know both French and English. **Methods to learn French (as a foreign language)** start to appear.

**1337-1453:**

The **rivalry** between **England and France** continued and culminated in the **Hundred Years’ War**, sparked by Edward III’s claim to the throne and invasion of France.

Growing **anti-French feeling**: **French** becomes the **language of the enemy** and the use of English reinforces the national identity.

The Hundred Years' war ended with the **French victory** and the **loss of all English holdings in France**.

**SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION       →        NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION**

**Peasants and the middle-classes** gained more power due to:

**1315-1317: the Great Famine** (millions of peasants died across Europe)

**1348-1350: The Black Death** (in the case of England). As a result, 40% of the population (wprkers) died on those years.

The development of a **new middle class** **(English-speaking)** → the plague resulted in a shortage of labour and, therefore, in an increasing importance of this new class (and their language).

The growing importance of **merchants and artisans**, who lived in the cities.

**London** attracted **immigration** from East Anglia, the East Midlands and later on the Central Midlands and the North.

**Reemergence of English in high functions →2nd half of 14th century.**

**1362:** **English** is used **in** the **Parliament** **and** in the **law courts (high functions).**

**1380s:** **Peasants' Revolt** (1381, against the taxes levied  for the Hundred Years' War) **→** the position of peasants and the middle classes became stronger.

- **Guilds** began to use **English** for their records (sometimes mixed with Latin and French, 'maccaronic' English).

- **Wills** are written in English.

**1382: English** challenges Latin as the **language of religion** → translation of the **Bible** into English by **John Wycliff,** who is consider one of the predecessors of the English Protestantism. John and his followers, the **Lollards,** promote the use of English rather than Latin for religion, so that the scriptures and the rites of the Church would be accessible to people without knowledge of Latin.

**1385 English** becomes the language of instruction **in grammar schools**.

1399 **Henry IV** becomes king (English as L1)

**14th century** English was used for **literature** (Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate). The same authors would also write in Latin and French.

**→ Expansion** of English to further domains (**nobility, administration**, education, literature, **religion**).

**→ 15th c.:** English would be normal in both public and private dealings (although French was still the language of the Court and the upper classes. By the end of the century **parliamentary documents** were only issued in English.

4.3. French and Latin influence on Middle English

4.3.1. French influence

**Vocabulary: loanwords and derivational affixes*.****Three stages of borrowing:*

As we already know, the Norman Conquest had a huge impact on the English lexical, since then, English took a lot of borrowings from French.

* French loanwords introduced **before the Norman Conquest**(during the reign of Edward the Confessor): OE *castel* ‘castle’, *tur* ‘tower’, *prisun* ‘prison’, *capun* ‘capon’, *bacun* ‘bacon’, *tumbere* ‘dancer’, *prud* ‘proud, valiant’.
* Loanwords from **Anglo-French (11th and 12th centuries)**. Some of them are **related to Norman institutions** (e.g. *tresor* ‘treasury’, *Canceler* ‘Chancellor’, *tenserie*, a type of tax exacted for military protection, already recorded in the *Peterborough Chronicle*for 1154), but most are **ordinary, everyday words,** mostly adopted through the spoken mode: *garden, hour, people, carpenter*(and many other terms for professions). These loanwords are likely to show Norman features in their phonology (see below).
* Loanwords from **Central French (13th-15th centuries)**. Reflect the cultural status of this variety. Introduced by people accustomed to speaking French who were shifting to English. Some of them were introduced through the written medium, especially courtly literature.

**Vocabulary:** **loanwords**from Norman French (Anglo-Norman) show some **phonological differences** with Central French (the source of Modern French) borrowings.

Earlier scholarship used these phonological characteristics to distinguish between Continental French (CF) and Anglo-French (AF). Durkin (2014: 270), however, is cautious here:

one thing that recent research has made clear is that Anglo-French was dialectally mixed, and extreme caution is needed before one starts inferring from these sorts of philological generalizations that certain words must be borrowings form Anglo-French and others conversely can only be form continental French.

MORE EXPLANATION ON THE PAPER.

AF/**k**/ + /a/ vs. CF /**t∫**/ Latin words that contain a

k remained a K in Anglo Norman               AF/**∫**/ vs. CF /**s**/

*carpenter*(< AF) vs. *charity*(< CF)                       *punish* (< AF) vs. *rejoice* (< CF)

AF/**w**/ vs. CF /**g**/ in loanwords from Gmc  AF/**g**/ vs. CF/**ʤ**/

*warden*(< AF) vs. *guardian*(< CF)                      *garden* (< AF) vs. *joy* (< CF)

AF/**t∫**/ vs. CF /**s**/

*chisel*(< AF) vs. *city* (< CF)

***Vocabulary:******loanwords.****Relevant semantic fields:*

RANKS AND TITLES *baron, count, duke, marquis, peer, prince, sovereign*

FEUDAL SOCIETY *feudalism, homage, fief, courage, honour*

MILITARY *army, war, peace, battle, armour, mail, banner, assault, lieutenant, sergeant, soldier, troops, siege, etc.*

LAW *justice, judge, jury, court, attorney, traitor, damage, crime, penalty, felony, fraud, bail, bill, attorney, bailiff, jail, prison, attorney general, court martial...*

RELIGION *abbey, clergy, parish, prayer, religion, saint, sermon, virgin, cardinal, parson*. Abstract concepts: *charity, chastity, mercy, faith, grace*(replacing earlier loan-translations from Latin).

ARTS *art, beauty, chant, music, paint*

LITERATURE *poem, romance, rhyme, ballad, lay*

ARCHITECTURE *cathedral, buttress, chapel, cloister, choir, castle, dungeon, fortress, tower, arch, ceiling, cellar, chamber, chimney*

FASHION *costume, dress, fashion, coat, gown, cloak, robe, lace, satin, taffeta, jewels, brooch, jewel, diamond, ruby, pearl, emerald*

EDUCATION *degree, gender, grammar, lesson, noun, study, university, ink, paper...*

BODILY PARTS face, voice

COOKING *dinner, supper, boil, fry, mince, almonds, cherries, lettuce, salad, onion, banquet, feast, oyster, sausage, cream, biscuit, gravy, sugar, toast, fig, lemon, orange, clove, mustard...*

FAMILY *aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, cousin, parents*

HOUSEHOLD *furniture, blanket, carpet, chair, curtain, cushion, table*

TRADES AND CRAFTS *butcher, barber, carpenter, grocer, mason, merchant*

It has been estimated that around **10,000 French words** were adopted in the Middle English period, and that **75%** are **still in current use**.

***Vocabulary:******derivational affixes***

Massive lexical borrowing from French facilitated the adoption of **French derivational affixes:**

e.g. *-acy, -age, -al, -cioun/-ation, -(e)rie, -ity, -ence, -able, -ive, -ou*s

Originally, they were found only in French words, later on, they started to combine with native elements in **hybrids**.

**Hybrids**:

* French root + English affix (e.g. *beautiful*) → integration of French words
* English root + French affix (e.g. *lovable*) → increase in the number of derivational patterns

***Vocabulary: Competition between French loanwords and native words***

* The introduction of French borrowings, brought apart the actual disappearance of some native words. Competition leads to **loss of one of the items**: e.g. OE *æþeling* was replaced by French *prince*.
* **Differences in meaning**: Sometimes, the native form coexisted with the borrowed French terms. English *cow*/*ox* (animals. Laboring classes) vs. French *beef (*only accessible to the nobility, or the relative wealth of people*)*.
* **Differences in stylistic meaning** (i.e. informal vs. formal) between native and French words: *ask* vs. d*emand house* vs. *mansion*  *help* vs. *aid* The French term always being the most formal.

**THE LONGER A WORD IS, THE MORE LIKELY IS TO SUFFER CHANGES.**

Example: móral vs. morále. The first one is the oldest one one because of the stress, as in French was pronounce like that.

Bête: retains the French accent. Because is newer, so its kept.

“Ye” is a polite form for the second person plural pronoun that may have been copied from French.

In Middle English there was a great simplification of noun and verb morphology. Because of this, it was necessary to recur to analytic constructions, so the word order becomes fixed (S – O) (Preposition – noun).

One of the most important differences is that “mansion” is a borrowing from French that was introduced in Middle English. While “house” is a word inherit from Germanic.

As many words were adopted from French, there was a competition between them and the native words. So, both words had to be differentiated, and in this case the difference is in stylistic meaning. One of the words is used in a formal register (mansion) and the other in the informal one (house). The French is usually for the formal one.

About meaning, both are used to refer to a building for human habitation. As a difference the mansion makes reference to the size, as it is believed to be bigger. Also, in astrology they are synonyms to refer to ‘each of twelve parts of the ecliptic or the zodiac having some particular significance in human affairs’.