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An Overview of Contact-Induced Morphosyntactic Changes in Early English

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Abstract

This chapter gives an overview of changes in morphology and syntax during the medieval English period that are plausibly induced or catalysed by language contact. Our emphasis is on accurately characterising the contact situations involved, and evaluating the evidence, rather than exhaustively listing every possible contact-induced change, and so the discussion is structured around a few case studies involving each of the three languages that medieval English was in most intense contact with: British Celtic, Old Norse, and Old French. We compare and contrast the contact situations in terms of van Coetsem's (1988) distinction between borrowing and imposition and Trudgill's (2011) framework of sociolinguistic typology.

1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of contact-induced morphosyntactic change in English before 1500. 'Morphosyntactic' is here understood in the broadest possible sense, encompassing both morphological and syntactic change as well as change in the inventory of functional words (e.g. pronouns, copulas, auxiliaries).

The identification of morphosyntactic changes in the historical record brings with it challenges that are unlike those faced in the study of lexical borrowing. In particular, the regularity of sound change provides a relatively robust formal diagnostic for lexical transfer in many cases (see Dance et al., this volume, and Fox et al., this volume). For grammatical influence we have no such diagnostic. To be sure, in some domains the formal similarities between two languages may be so strikingly idiosyncratic and robust as to be crying out for a contact explanation. But how can we tell whether (for instance) an increase in use of Verb Object (VO) constituent order is due to contact with another language with VO order, or an independent parallel development? VO order is common, and the change from OV to VO is also attested in other languages that are outside obvious contact situations — yet this does not allow us to rule out contact influence.[1]

Historical linguists have grappled with this problem for some time (see e.g. Bowern 2008; Erschler 2009; Heine 2009). Very often, the case for a particular change being contact-induced is by necessity circumstantial. Returning to our example of OV to VO: if it can be established that contact influence from the VO language was most dominant in a particular geographical area, and texts from that area show an earlier and faster shift from OV to VO, then a plausible (though not watertight) case can be made that the change was at least partly contact-induced. In making arguments of this kind, extralinguistic evidence, such as archaeological findings or documentary evidence, often plays an important role.

In arguing for or against contact-induced grammatical change it is thus crucial to have a clear picture of who was where, when, and what they were doing — bearing in mind McIntosh's (1994: 137) dictum that 'what we mean by "languages in contact" is "users of language in contact" and to insist upon this is much more than a mere terminological quibble and has far from trivial consequences'. Moreover, contact linguistics over the last half-century has taken steps towards understanding the mechanisms and pathways of contact-induced change. Focusing in particular on transfer of material from one language to another, van Coetsem (1988, 2000) has drawn a distinction between borrowing and imposition, which will be elaborated on in Section

[1] That is, unless one subscribes to the methodological principle of always preferring 'endogenous' explanations whenever they are available (see Lass 1997). For discussion of this 'if-in-doubt-do-without' mentality, see Farrar and Jones (2002).

1.1. And with an eye to the overall consequences of contact on a language's typological profile, Trudgill (2011) has made the case that different socio- and psycholinguistic circumstances give rise to different types of change, either simplifying or complexifying the languages involved (see Section 1.2).

The rest of Section 1 of this chapter is devoted to introducing these ideas, which will then be used as a prism through which to evaluate and compare the different contact situations that English entered into during late antiquity and the medieval period. Here our focus is on three different languages (or clusters of closely-related varieties), in approximate chronological order: Celtic in Section 2, Old Norse in Section 3, and Old French in Section 4. In a single chapter we cannot hope to deal with these contact situations comprehensively or catalogue all possible contact-induced morphosyntactic changes. Rather, we zoom in on a selection of changes that help us to characterise the nature of each of these contact situations.

Over the last two centuries, attitudes to each of these contact situations have followed different paths. It has never been in serious doubt that Old Norse was a major influence on the structure of English, though the nature of that influence has been debated. There is a substantial tradition of research on Old French influence too, though for the most part such research has focused on the lexicon and on derivational morphology; in recent years, the question of syntactic influence has attracted renewed attention. By contrast, for many decades the question of Celtic influence on English languished in obscurity, only being broached by isolated voices (see van der Auwera and Genee 2002). Since the 1990s this book has been reopened, however, and today the topic of Celtic influence is the subject of lively discussion.

We leave Latin influence out of consideration in this chapter, primarily because the nature of the contact situation was substantially different: alone among the languages that have had a major influence on English, by the time of the arrival of speakers of Old English in the fifth century Latin was already a variety with no or very few native speakers, and probably less than 1% of speakers of Old English had any knowledge of Latin at all (Timofeeva 2010a).[2] This

[2] Schrijver (2002, 2014) has recently made the case that British Latin survived in lowland Britain for much longer than normally assumed, and that this contact left behind traces in early English phonology. The consequences of this theory have yet to be explored in the morphosyntactic domain, however.

is arguably not a scenario in which we would expect to find significant morphosyntactic influence (see in particular Section 1.1), and indeed such influence has not usually been argued for. To be sure, we see imitation of Latin syntactic constructions in Old English prose style, in particular with a handful of non-finite constructions. However, since this type of structure is overwhelmingly found in texts that are direct translations from Latin, the consensus is that on the whole this form of syntactic influence was not deep or long-lasting.[3]

1.1 Borrowing and imposition

In an attempt to provide a general theory of language contact, van Coetsem (1988, 2000) has proposed that cross-linguistic transfer comes in two types: borrowing and imposition. This simple dichotomy is psycholinguistic in nature and depends on the dominant language of the agent of transfer, which is typically their first language.[4] Borrowing takes place under recipient-language agentivity: the person doing the borrowing is psycholinguistically dominant in the language that they are borrowing into, not the language that they are borrowing from. A present-day example would be a British native-English-speaking manga fan who likes to sprinkle Japanese words into their English usage. Imposition, meanwhile, takes place under source-language agentivity: the agent of imposition is psycholinguistically dominant in the language from which the linguistic feature in question originates. A present-day example would be a French student who has moved to England and transfers their articulatory norms into the English they speak.

The distinction is important because the two types of transfer are likely to be associated with different types of linguistic features. Borrowing is much more likely to be agentive in the

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[3] See Fischer (2013) and Fischer et al. (2017: 56–65) for an overview, and Timofeeva (2010b) for an in-depth study.

[4] Whether dominance always correlates with order of acquisition is a matter of some debate. Van Coetsem (2000) and Winford (2003, 2005) propose that dominance can shift over time, for instance when a person moves abroad and spends the rest of their life immersed in a different language. For Lucas (2012, 2014), on the other hand, dominance is an immutable consequence of first-language status.

literal sense, i.e. above the level of consciousness and as an intentional act; it then stands to reason that borrowing is more likely to involve aspects of the source language that are accessible to conscious reflection, prototypically open-class lexical items. By contrast, imposition is likely to be a subconscious, unintentional process, to which, if anything, those aspects of language that are more stable and less mutable in the individual are more prone. Since most morphosyntactic features fall into the latter category, we are led to expect that most if not all contact-induced morphosyntactic transfer will be in situations characterised primarily by imposition rather than borrowing. However, it is important to avoid circular argumentation here; see also Lucas 2012 for a defence of syntactic borrowing as a process of change. Either way, the socio- and psycholinguistic circumstances surrounding a language contact scenario will be crucial in evaluating what sort of changes are likely to have been contact-induced. This is also a consequence of Trudgill's (2011) theory of sociolinguistic typology, to which we now turn.

1.2 Complexification and simplification

Trudgill (2011) is concerned with the effects of contact on linguistic complexity. Observing that sociolinguists have tended to emphasise simplification as a consequence of contact, and that typologists have tended to emphasise complexification, he proposes that both are correct, but that the outcome is situation-dependent. In situations of long-term co-territorial language contact, additive complexification (i.e. transfer of linguistic properties without replacing existing ones) is predicted, whereas short-term contact involving extensive adult second-language acquisition and use is predicted to lead to structural simplification.

Trudgill's theory has been applied to the history of English (Trudgill 2011: 50–55; Warner 2017; see also Adamczyk, this volume),[5] and provides another way to contrastively characterise the sociohistorical circumstances, and hence the likely types of changes, associated with each of our three contact situations: do we see long-term balanced bilingualism, or a short-term, more asymmetric relationship between the languages involved?

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[5] These two authors reach drastically different conclusions on the respective roles of Old Norse and Celtic, as is discussed in Section 3.1.

A note of caution is in order. Just like languages, contact situations can change: the relationship between present-day Celtic languages and English, for instance, is certainly not the same as it was in the fifth century. Contact situations can also vary locally, down to the level of the individual. As Dance (2012: 1727) puts it (in reference to Old Norse), 'one should be wary of assuming that all the (putative) effects of this contact arose from a single type of encounter […] even if historical distance has effectively turned them into one cluster of phenomena'. We believe it is of value to characterise contact situations globally according to typologies like van Coetsem's and Trudgill's, assessing what kind of circumstances were most prominent, but at the same time nuance is needed: at a granular enough level, every contact situation can probably be associated with every type of process, albeit to different extents. We have tried to balance the drive to generalise with the responsibility to be sensitive to nuance of this kind.

2 Celtic

The earliest contact influences on (Old) English are those deriving from British Celtic and (British) Latin, the two predominant languages spoken in Britain at the time of the *Adventus Saxonum* in the late fourth to mid-fifth century CE. The consensus view has been that, despite a close co-existence between speakers of British Celtic languages and English spanning for over a millennium, the influence of Celtic languages on the development of English has been practically non-existent. In recent years, however, the question of Celtic influence on English, and especially on English morphosyntax, has received increasing attention and is currently being reassessed.

This section begins with a short survey of the contact situation in early medieval England, followed by a discussion of two plausible cases of Celtic contact influence: the double paradigm of the verb 'to be' in Old English and the Middle English and Older Scots comparative *nor*.

2.1 Contact between British Celtic and English

There had been contacts between the Germanic invaders and the indigenous people of Britain, i.e. the British Celts, even before the arrival of Germanic settlers to Britain in the mid-fifth

century. These contacts had not, however, led to the kind of large-scale invasions and settlements that followed in the aftermath of those led by Hengest and Horsa in 449 (see e.g. Sims-Williams 1983). These invasions were to bring almost the whole country under Germanic rule within the next couple of centuries. As Jackson (1953: 199) states, our main source of information regarding the Germanic invasions is the historical account by the British monk Gildas, who wrote his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* sometime in the first half of the sixth century.

In addition to *De Excidio*, information about the Germanic invasions can be obtained from other important near-contemporary sources, the two Gallic Chronicles of 452 and 511 (see Higham 1992: 69). Another important, though significantly later, source is the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* from the early eighth century, authored by the Anglo-Saxon monk Beda Venerabilis (the Venerable Bede). Later still, this was followed by the famous *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* which was compiled by several authors working in different places at different times, with the earliest versions dating from the ninth century.

Despite problems of dating the different waves of invasion exactly, the overall picture emerging from the mentioned sources is fairly clear: the first hostile encounters between the native Britons and the newcomers, i.e. armies consisting of Angles, Saxons and Jutes, did not lead to permanent settlements by the latter except in some eastern parts of the country. It was not until the second half of the sixth century that the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, formed in the first half of the sixth century by the Saxon chiefs Cerdic and Cynric, managed to expand its territory as far west as the river Severn, and further south, to the borders of Wiltshire and Somerset. This meant that the Britons of Wales became separated from the Britons of the south-west of Britain (Cornwall), leading eventually to the separation and division of the (Late) British dialects into Welsh and Cornish, respectively (for further discussion, see Jackson 1953: 203–206).

In the north of Britain, the Anglo-Saxon conquest and settlements proceeded along major waterways such as the Trent and the Humber. According to Jackson (1953: 207), the northern and Midland settlements led to the establishment of two Anglian kingdoms, Lindsey and Mercia, in the seventh century. Under their king Penda (d. 655), Mercia conquered large areas both from their West Saxon cousins in the south and the Welsh in the west. Jackson refers here to the often-expressed view according to which the Mercians also managed to reach the sea in the north and thus break the land connection between the Welsh and the Britons of the North. Jackson does

not, however, find any solid evidence to substantiate this claim (Jackson 1953: 210–211). In any case, the Anglo-Saxon advances to the north proved to have significant consequences for the later development of the British Celtic languages, as it meant an areal separation of the Welsh and Cumbric dialects of Late British.[6]

The rapidly growing extent of the Anglo-Saxon settlements in the centuries following the Adventus raises the question of what exactly happened to the indigenous population of Britain. Up till fairly recently, history writing was dominated by a persistent myth about 'ethnic cleansing' of the indigenous British and Romano-British population, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country (see e.g. White 1971; Myres 1986). This 'Germanist' view is no longer upheld in current research: the evidence does not support widespread massacre of the Romano-British population in either towns or countryside; widespread intermingling of the two cultures was more likely than sharp polarisation and conflict (see e.g. Laing and Laing 1990; Tristram 2002; Schrijver 2007; Laker 2008a; Trudgill 2010). There are differing estimates of the immigrant : native ratio in the first centuries after the *Adventus Saxonum* (see e.g. Laing and Laing 1990; Higham 1992; Härke 2003) but, despite these differences, it is evident that the Germanic immigrants formed only a relatively small proportion of the population of Britain. Therefore, instead of wholesale extermination of the Romano-British population, a process of acculturation, assimilation and language shift was a more likely outcome of the contact.

Support for the 'acculturation theory' can also be obtained from population-genetic studies. For example, Capelli et al.'s (2003) study shows that (i) no complete population replacement occurred anywhere in the British Isles; (ii) there was considerable continental introgression in the Central-Eastern part of England; and (iii) the data from southern England indicate significant continuity of the indigenous population. Further corroboration for the acculturation theory is offered by *The People of the British Isles Project* (see Leslie et al. 2015). Based on genome-wide data, the results of this project provide clear evidence of Saxon migration in the modern English data. As Leslie et al. (2015: 313) note, however, the DNA contributed by Saxon settlers in the fifth and sixth centuries ranges from as low as 10% to not higher than 40% in the data from central and southern England, thus 'clearly excluding the possibility of long-term Saxon replacement'. This points towards the conclusion that intermarriage and

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[6] For a recent assessment of the historical accounts of Anglo-Saxon settlement, see also Carver (2019).

acculturation rather than genocide must have taken place during the centuries following the *Adventus Saxonum*.

The historical evidence discussed above indicates that in many parts of Britain conditions favourable to bilingualism existed for a considerable period of time after the first arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, Jackson (1953: 245) considers it likely that, before the eventual language shift, there was a bilingual stage when the Britons were able to speak both Old English and British Celtic;[7] on the other hand, the Anglo-Saxons probably had no particular need to learn the language of those whom they had conquered. In terms of van Coetsem (1988), the primary mechanism of transfer would thus have been imposition, where British Celtic-dominant bilinguals, forming the majority of the population, imposed some of their L1 features on their L2, English. The effects of imposition can be seen primarily in morphosyntax rather than lexicon, and this is also the case with the majority of plausible cases of language transfer from British Celtic.[8]

2.2 Celtic influence on English morphosyntax

Filppula et al. (2008: 30–117) identify eleven areas of English morphosyntax that show possible influence of Celtic in their development. These include features such as the internal vs. external possessor construction, the double paradigm of the verb ‘to be’ in Old English, the Northern Subject Rule, DO-periphrasis, the progressive aspect, the cleft construction, contact relatives, -*self* reflexives and intensifiers, and comparative *nor*. In the following, we will briefly discuss two Old and Middle English constructions widely considered as plausible cases of Celtic influence on English: the Old English double paradigm of the verb ’to be’ and the Middle English and Older Scots comparative *nor*.

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[7] Cf. also Warner (2017: 364–369), who considers it likely that bilingualism, including childhood bilingualism, was widespread among first language speakers of British Celtic.

[8] Van Coetsem (1988: 3 and 26) notes that phonology and grammar are areas where transfer typically takes place in source language imposition. Phonology, however, is not discussed in this chapter.

2.2.1 Double paradigm of the verb 'to be'

The Old English paradigm for the verb 'to be' distinguished between two meanings, habitual and 'actual' or future. The former was based on a reconstructed PIE **es*-form, the latter on a reconstructed PIE **bheu*-form of the verb 'to be'. The first scholar to pay attention to the possible Celtic background of this distinction was Wolfgang Keller (see Keller 1925), who noted that the Old English forms based on the reconstructed root **bheu* (so-called *b*-forms) and their meanings are closely paralleled by the corresponding Celtic and especially Brittonic forms. He further points out that, although partially similar parallels are found in other Germanic dialects, none of these have developed a full present-tense indicative paradigm for both roots with clearly distinct meanings. Keller (1925: 60) concludes that this feature was introduced into English by the early Britons trying to acquire English: '[D]ie altenglischen Formen und Funktionen der Wurzel **bheu*, die den anderen germanischen Dialekten fremd sind, entstanden im Munde und im Denken von englisch sprechenden Briten'.[9] Table 9.1 (based on Lutz 2009: 232) summarises the parallels between the Germanic and Brittonic paradigms:

Table 9.1: The double paradigm of present indicative of the verb 'to be' in West Saxon and Brittonic and the simple paradigms in the other Germanic languages

West Saxon		Brittonic		Old Saxon	Old High German	Old Norse	Gothic
'habitual'	'actual'	'habitual'	'actual'				
bīo	*eom*	*byðaf*	*wyf*	*bium*	*bim*	*em*	*im*
bist	*eart*	*byðy*	*wyt*	*bist*	*bist*	*est*	*is*
bið	*is*	*byð*	*yw*	*is(t)*	*ist*	*es*	*ist*
bīoð	*sind(on)*	*byðwn*	*ym*	*sind(un)*	*birum*	*erom*	*sijum*
		byðwch	*ywch*		*birut*	*eroþ*	*sijuþ*
		byðant	*ynt*		*sint*	*ero*	*sind*

[9] 'Old English forms and functions of the root **bheu*, which are alien to the other Germanic dialects, arose in the mouths and minds of English-speaking Britons.'

The same parallelism was later noticed by Tolkien (1963), who considered it as one of his prime examples of linguistic contact between the two languages. He noted the distinction that both English and Welsh make between what he termed the 'actual present' and the 'consuetudinal present'/ 'future'. Each of these was expressed by a different set of forms, the latter relying on forms beginning with *b-* both in Old English and Welsh. Tolkien also pointed out the uniqueness of the Old English system among Germanic languages. Besides the similarities in the forms and functions of the Old English and Welsh 'be' verbs, he noted the difficulty of explaining the short vowel in the Old English 3sg. form *bið* as a regular development from earlier Germanic, while there would be no such problem if the corresponding Welsh form *bydd* (from earlier **bið*) was considered (Tolkien 1963: 30–32).

In more recent research, Keller's and Tolkien's accounts have been taken up with renewed interest. Lutz (2009: 234) concludes that '[t]he twofold paradigm of "to be" represents the most obvious but not the only syntactic evidence for early Celtic substratum influence due to language shift by speakers of Celtic which was addressed by Keller'. Similar ideas have also been expressed on the Celticist side. Thus, Ahlqvist (2010) quotes Tolkien's article at length and devotes a fair amount of space to a detailed comparison of the relevant verbal paradigms in Old English and early Welsh. He, too, comes to the conclusion that the parallelism between Old English and early Welsh with respect to the twofold paradigm of 'to be' must be due to an early contact situation, 'based on both languages having forms both with and without *b-* in the paradigm of the verb 'to be', and these forms, moreover, having rather similar functions' (Ahlqvist 2010: 54).[10] Finally, Ahlqvist also considers the possibility of early influences from across the Irish Sea from Old Irish, following up on a proposal in that direction by Schrijver (2007). However, he notes certain differences between Irish, on one hand, and Welsh and

[10] It is worth emphasising that some other Germanic languages also have forms beginning with *b-* in some parts of their paradigms of the verb 'to be', as Keller (1925) already noted. Thus, Schumacher (2007) argues for possible earlier continental contact between Celtic and West Germanic. While Ahlqvist considers this kind of contact quite possible (Ahlqvist 2010: 54), Lutz (2009: 237) prefers Keller's original account, which rests on the idea of early substratal influence between Celtic and Old English.

English, on the other, which make this scenario less likely than the one between Welsh and English (Ahlqvist 2010: 55–56).

The strongest arguments speaking for an early contact between the English and Welsh paradigms for the verb 'to be' rest on the existence of very close formal and functional parallels and the uniqueness of Old English amongst Germanic languages with respect to this feature. Together, they make it very likely that the Old English distinction between the PIE **es*- and PIE **bheu*-forms of the verb 'to be' was imposed on the language by British Celtic-dominant bilingual Britons.

2.2.2 Comparative nor

The use of *nor* and its variants *na*, *no*, *ne*, *nai*, *nag* instead of *than* in comparative clauses, exemplified in (1) and (2), is well attested in English and Scots from the fourteenth century onwards, and this *nor* construction is also widely used in dialects, especially in the north of England.

(1) Odere tythynges cannot I tell yow no thes for soothe but be here sey.
(?1438; *Oxford English Dictionary*, *OED*, s.v. *no*, conj.[2])

(2) Ye schall here myche more in thys pertys nor I can at Brytys.
(1479; *OED*, s.v. *nor*, conj.[2])

There have been a number of attempts to find a source for the construction. Holthausen (1913: 339–340) argues that a construction of the type 'He is older nor I' simply represents the combination of the two propositions 'he is older, and not I' through the loss of what he calls a 'syntactic pause' and consequent shift of stress, Small (1924) explains the construction by phonetic reduction and consequent reanalysis, while Joly (1967) attempts to explain it through an Middle English reanalysis of the Old English comparative particle *þonne*. These explanations, however, are untenable (for details, see Filppula et al. 2008: 99–102 and Laker 2008b:9–14), and the *OED* and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* both consider the origin of the *nor* construction to be obscure or uncertain.

Filppula et al. (2008) and Laker (2008b) argue that a plausible origin for the negative comparative particle in English can be found in (Old and Middle) Welsh, where a formally and functionally very similar particle, *na(c)/no(c)*, antedates the English comparative *nor,* as in (3) and (4) (from Evans 1976: 43).[11]

(3) Ny byd gwaeth itt (ms. in) yno noc et y Arthur yn y llys
'It will not be worse for thee there than for Arthur in the court'
(c. 1050-1100, *Kulhwch ac Olwen, WM* 456. 28-29)

(4) iawnach yw idaw dy gynnhal nogyt y mi
'more fitting is it for him to maintain thee than for me'
(twelfth century, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* 26.28)

Although comparative *nor* is first attested in fourteenth century Middle English dialects, Laker (2008b: 20–21) considers it likely that the putative transfer took place during the Old English period.[12] To support his argument, he (2008b: 21) refers to Tolkien (1963: 28): 'The records of Old English are mainly learned or aristocratic; we have no transcripts of village-talk. For any glimpse of what was going on beneath the cultivated surface we have to wait until the Old English period of letters is over'.

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[11] Laker (2008b) also considers the possibility that the Old French (OFr.) *ne explétif* construction could have played a role in the development of the English comparative *nor/*negative comparative particle (NCP). He concludes, however, that 'several formal linguistic divergences existing between the OFr. *ne explétif* construction and the NCP of Middle and Modern English dialects argue against French influence' (Laker 2008b: 25).

[12] Comparative *nor* is also attested in Irish English. Laker (2008b: 21–22) suggests that the Irish English NCP is a borrowing from colloquial British English or a loan translation of the corresponding Irish construction.

2.2.3 Complexification or simplification?

Trudgill (2011: 50–55) argues that contact between speakers of Old English and Late British was the factor that triggered the process of simplification and consequent typological change from highly fusional and inflecting Old English to the much more isolating type of morphology in Middle English. However, as Warner (2017: 364) observes, 'few of the eleven areas of development in grammar claimed to show the possible influence of Celtic on English listed in Filppula et al. (2008: 30–117) clearly involve simplification', and constructions such as the double paradigm of the verb 'to be' clearly represent complexification instead. Indeed, as Warner (2017: 367–368) argues, the contact situation between speakers of Old English and British Celtic, with both childhood and adult bilingualism over an extensive period of time, was of the type where complexification rather than simplification is the expected outcome.

3 Old Norse

One important feature sets contact with Old Norse apart from contact with French and Celtic:[13] both are Germanic languages, and hence typologically and genealogically they are very close to one another. At the very least, certain cognate words and similar structures would have been immediately recognisable to speakers of the other language. Townend (2002) has made a compelling case that the two languages would have been mutually intelligible under receptive bilingualism; see Keller (2020) for lexical evidence in support of this claim.

This section first provides an overview of the contact situation (3.1), then discusses potential transfer of functional lexical items (3.2), effects on inflectional morphology and agreement (3.3), and syntactic effects (3.4).

[13] In this chapter we use the term 'Old Norse' broadly, to refer to any and all North Germanic varieties spoken and written during the medieval period, rather than narrowly in the sense of Old West Nordic (as opposed to Old East Nordic). This latter distinction is not trivial, especially since the bulk of Scandinavian settlement in England was by speakers of Old East Nordic; however, the differences between the two varieties are unlikely to be relevant to any of the changes discussed in this section.

3.1 Contact between English and Old Norse

Chronologically, contact between English and Old Norse can be divided into four phases.[14] Pons-Sanz (2013) names (i) the 'hit-and-run' phase, from the earliest Viking incursions in the eighth century to the middle of the ninth; (ii) the 'settlement' phase, from the mid-ninth century to 1000 AD, characterised by wholesale settlement of Old Norse speakers in the British Isles;[15] and (iii) the brief 'conquest' phase, from 1000 to 1042, ending with the cessation of direct rule over Britain by Cnut and his sons. Walkden (in press) adds a 'shift' phase, lasting from 1042 until the point at which Old Norse ceased to be a living language in Britain. The date of this is unknown, and would have varied from place to place: in the northern isles of Orkney and Shetland, for instance, Old Norse continued to be spoken and transmitted until the eighteenth century (see Kinn & Walkden, this volume). However, for most of England we can assume that Old Norse ceased to be acquired by children some time during the Middle English period.

Lexical and phonological evidence has been taken to suggest a change in the dominant mechanics of the contact situation during the eleventh century, from one favouring recipient-language agentivity in transfer, i.e. borrowing, to one favouring source-language agentivity, i.e. imposition (Townend 2002: 201–210; see also Adamczyk, this volume). If so, then, following the considerations outlined in Section 1.1, we should expect to see morphosyntactic contact influence from the eleventh century onwards. The key evidence as to whether this hypothesis is borne out or not must come from the cluster of texts usually described as Late Northumbrian Old English (see Fernández Cuesta and Senra Silva 2008): the tenth-century glosses to the *Lindisfarne* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D.iv) and *Rushworth Gospels* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS D. 2. 19) and Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A.IV.19 (the so-called *Durham Ritual* or *Collectar*). This evidence is, however, difficult to interpret, and arguments

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[14] For a very similar quadripartition of phases of Old Norse contact in a different context, see Timofeeva (2016: 87).

[15] The scale of settlement has been a matter of some debate among historians, with Sawyer (1971) particularly sceptical. The current consensus is that the settlement was indeed substantial: see Hadley (1997) and Kershaw and Røyrvik (2016).

have been made both for morphosyntactic contact influence in these texts (e.g. Kroch et al. 2000; Millar 2000; Adamczyk, this volume) and against it (e.g. Cole 2018; Walkden, in press).

As regards the sociolinguistic typology of Norse contact, Trudgill (2011: 53) concludes categorically that "Contact between Old Norse and Old English was not of the sociolinguistic type that makes for simplification". His main piece of evidence for this conclusion is the putative transfer of the third person plural pronouns from Norse into English, since (he argues) pronominal transfer only occurs under conditions of long-term co-territorial contact and proficient bilingualism. However, the case of the pronouns has been called into question (see discussion in Section 3.2), and so has Trudgill's broader analysis of the contact situation. Warner (2017) broadly accepts the framework of sociolinguistic typology but argues in detail that contact with Old Norse did in fact lead to simplification. His conclusion is that koineization (Siegel 1985) — a process that leads to mixing of mutually intelligible varieties in the context of increased interaction and integration among speakers of those varieties — is the primary process characterising structural changes in English induced by contact with Old Norse. Crucially, koineization can lead to simplification, but via levelling and accommodation rather than as the consequence of adult second-language acquisition. This is good, since given the mutual intelligibility of Old Norse and Old English as well as the historical circumstances in which the contact arose, it is unlikely that adult second-language acquisition of Old English by speakers of Old Norse was ever a significant phenomenon, except perhaps during the shift phase to a limited extent.

As will be seen below, if one major result of contact with Old Norse was a koineization process, this fits well with recent research on individual phenomena arguing that the outcome of the contact situation in English was not transfer in the literal sense but rather reinforcement of competing West Germanic variants that were formally and functionally more similar to what was found in Old Norse (Versloot, this volume; Cole and Pons-Sanz, this volume).

3.2 Transfer of functional lexical items

The poster children for Scandinavian influence on medieval English have long been the third person plural pronouns *they*/*their*/*them*. Ever since Kluge (1899) and Björkman (1900), these pronouns have featured in textbook treatments of contact influence, and have also played an important role in assessments of the scale and level of contact influence. For Thomason and Kaufman, for instance, the transfer of pronouns suggests 'an intense contact situation' (1988: 281), either level 3 or level 4 on their scale. For Trudgill (2011), this putative borrowing is at the heart of his argument that Old Norse contact on the whole involved complexification, not simplification. The basic argument for transfer is that the *th*-forms cannot be the descendants of Old English *hīe*/*hira*/*him* simply because of the initial consonant; by contrast, Old Norse has the forms *þeir*/*þeira*/*þeim*, providing a plausible source. Added to this is the fact that the spread of the *th*-forms seems to proceed from the north and east, providing a circumstantial argument for contact influence. The nature of the transfer has been debated: Buccini (1992) makes the case that imposition, not borrowing, was the key process. Morse-Gagné (2003) presents a detailed empirical study.

Until recently, there was a near-consensus that these forms were transferred from Old Norse. Cole (2018) challenges this conventional wisdom, however, reviving the view that the *th*-forms instead derive directly from Old English demonstratives. In support of this, she notes that the grammaticalisation pathway from distal demonstratives to third person pronouns is well-trodden, and that a purely anaphoric function for the 'demonstrative' forms is already well attested in Old English, especially in Old Northumbrian. The main objection to deriving the *th*-forms from demonstratives has been that it cannot account for the [eː] and diphthongal vocalism in the Middle English forms; Cole shows, however, that there is far more variation here than traditionally assumed, and that these vocalisms are not problematic when that is taken into account.

Cole's argument is not intended to rule out contact influence; rather, she aims to show that an explanation in terms of transfer is not *necessary*. She does allow (2018: 187) for the possibility of 'interlingual identification' (Weinreich 1968 [1953]), in which the functional and formal similarity of the emerging Old English anaphoric *th*-forms with the Old Norse third person plural pronouns led to convergent development and mutual reinforcement. This sits well

with a scenario of koineization as proposed by Warner (2017), with imposition also potentially playing a role during the Middle English period. A fine-grained examination of the situation suggests both West and North Germanic input in different language users at different times, i.e. polygenesis; see Pons-Sanz and Cole (this volume), who reach this conclusion based on an examination of pronoun use in seven manuscripts of the early Middle English *La estorie del evangelie* from different regions.

3.3 Inflectional morphology and agreement

Contact with Old Norse has long been implicated in the massive reduction in inflectional forms that English underwent during the medieval period (see Bradley 1904: 32). Poussa (1982) goes so far as to propose that this reduction is a symptom of creolization, with Old Norse contact as the trigger. Potentially relevant developments include the spread of plural -*s* and genitive -*s* from a tiny corner of the Old English inflectional system to become system-wide defaults, the rise of third-person singular verbal -*s*, the loss of most of the case system (especially on nouns), and the complete evaporation of the system of grammatical gender.

In works such as Allen (1997), Trudgill (2011), Warner (2017) and Adamczyk (this volume), the question of morphological influence has been the subject of renewed attention from a modern contact-linguistic perspective. As with the function words discussed above, the core issue is that a scenario of direct transfer is difficult to motivate, as precise formal isomorphisms that have real diagnostic value are not found (compare, for instance, the striking overlaps seen in the discussion of the twofold paradigm of the verb 'to be' discussed in Section 2.2.1). Furthermore, many of these developments — especially the general loss of inflectional endings — are of a kind that is seen in language after language. Early Old English, for instance, already exhibits a complete loss of person distinctions in plural verb forms; this is a development common to all North Sea Germanic languages (see Ringe and Taylor 2014: 158–160), and hence cannot be attributed to influence from Scandinavian settlement in the British Isles. Facts like these are behind Thomason and Kaufman's (1998: 303) succinct statement that 'Norse did not stimulate simplification in English'. Nevertheless, the geographical distribution and the nature of the contact situation make for strong circumstantial arguments that some of these changes were at least contact-accelerated.

As regards nominal inflection, Allen (1997) investigates the simplification and loss of case-marking morphology and categories in detail. In Old Northumbrian, in particular, sound changes such as the merger of unstressed vowels and the loss of final -*n* are already underway, and would necessarily have reduced the number of formal distinctions available in the system, opening the door also to further analogical restructurings.[16] Still, 'it is probably no coincidence that case-marking reduction proceeded fastest in the area with the most contact with a closely related language' (Allen 1997: 73), and she goes on to outline a scenario of dialect levelling and koineization (though she does not use the term). A particularly striking reduction is the loss of genitive inflection in English dialects (e.g. *my father boots* 'my father's boots', the geographical distribution of which maps well onto the areas of Scandinavian influence in England (Klemola 1997), and which can also be found in substantial numbers in the Old English gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (Rodríguez Ledesma 2016) and in the Northern Middle English *Cursor Mundi* (Allen 1998).

Adamczyk (this volume) carries out a detailed study of nominal inflection that directly compares Old Northumbrian, West Saxon and Old Norse, and concludes that at this stage we see no direct transfer, though structural parallels can be observed — one of these is the 'superstable' plural exponent -*Vr*, which Adamczyk suggests is parallel to the emerging default plural -(*e*)*s* in medieval English.[17] In northern Middle English, we also see plurals marked by *i*-mutation, e.g. *hend* 'hands' and *breþer* 'brothers', which Adamczyk suggests may be favoured by the fact that Norse exhibits a similar morphologisation of *i*-mutation; some of these plural forms, such as *hend*, could in principle even be instances of direct lexical transfer. Such a development is hard to characterise as simplification, as she notes — though it is consistent with a scenario of imposition.

As regards verbal inflection, a major candidate for Norse influence is the emergence of third person singular verbal -*s*, which replaces the -*þ* inherited from Old English. Samuels (1985: 276) points out that in Old Norse the second and third person singular were identical, and suggests that this would have provided a structural template for the extension of the Old English

[16] For further discussion of simplification of nominal morphology in Old Northumbrian texts, see Millar (2016) and Fernández Cuesta and Rodríguez Ledesma (2020).

[17] See also Hotta (2009) and Warner (2017: 328–332, 345–348).

second person singular -*s* to the third person singular.[18] Kroch et al. (2000: §5.1) pursue an alternative hypothesis of contact influence, in which the crucial factor is misperception of the voiceless fricative allophone [θ] in unstressed verbal endings as the similar but less marked [s] by native speakers of Old Norse. Both types of hypothesis fail to explain, however, why the -*s* and -*þ* endings in the Lindisfarne glosses show grammatical conditioning by subject type and adjacency, in the manner of the Northern Subject Rule (Cole 2014; see also Miller 2002 for arguments against contact influence). Moreover, second-language acquisition by native speakers of Old Norse is arguably not the right way to think about the contact situation that gave rise to the Lindisfarne glosses, given the time period, geographical location, and mutual intelligibility of the varieties involved (Walkden in press). As in the nominal domain, however, the case can be made that the earlier and faster simplification of verbal morphology in the north and east during the Middle English period is a consequence of koineisation; by contrast, the West Midlands Middle English texts of the Katherine Group are relatively conservative in their verbal morphology. This trend towards simplification consists of the loss of not only inflectional endings but also of the derivational -*i*(*j*)- formative of class 2 weak verbs (Warner 2017) and of the Old English prefix *ġe*-, which Old Norse had already lost entirely (along with other verbal prefixes) before the textually attested period.

3.4 Syntax: Constituent order

Emonds and Faarlund (2014) catalogue a number of syntactic properties which, they argue, have their origins in Old Norse. From these they conclude that modern English is descended from (anglicised) Old Norse, and is thus genealogically a North Germanic rather than West Germanic language. While there are reasons to doubt their conclusion (see Bech and Walkden 2016; Crisma and Pintzuk 2019), the syntactic similarities they demonstrate between Present-Day English and the Scandinavian languages are numerous and striking, and that contact with Old

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[18] Samuels claims that the Old Norse ending, later -*r*, would still have been pronounced -*z* at the time of Scandinavian settlement in the British Isles, but this is not the consensus view: see Cole (2014: 32–33) for discussion.

Norse is implicated in the historical development of some of these phenomena is hard to dispute. This subsection zooms in on a constituent order feature, verb-second (V2).

V2, in which only one constituent can precede the finite verb, is widespread among Germanic languages. Yet, as is well known, Old English was not a strict V2 language. Instead it exhibited an information-structurally driven alternation: when the subject is given information, and especially when it is a pronoun, as in (5), verb-third order can be found, without subject-verb inversion. Walkden (in press) dubs this 'information-structural V2' as opposed to the more familiar strict V2 characteristic of e.g. modern German. Kroch and Taylor (1997) show that there are strict V2 texts in the history of English, however. One such is the *Northern Prose Rule of St Benet*, in which subject-verb inversion is obligatory, as in (6).

(5)	æfter	his	gebede	**he**	ahof	þæt	cild	up
	after	his	prayer	he	lifted	the	child	up

'After his prayer he lifted the child up.'
(Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*)

(6)	Lauerd,	of me haue I	noht,	bot þu	sende	it	me
	lord	of me have I	nothing	but you	send	it	me

'Lord, by myself I have nothing unless you send it to me.'
(*Northern Prose Rule of St. Benet*)

Middle English texts in particular show variation between these two systems. Texts with more strict V2 tend to be those from the north and east, including the *Ormulum*, where Old Norse influence is well established (Trips 2002). Old Norse exhibits strict V2 from its earliest textual records, and so Kroch and Taylor posit that Old Norse influence led to strict V2 (see also Miller 2012).[19] Walkden (in press) questions some aspects of this scenario: in particular, strict V2 can be found, albeit to a lesser extent, in Old Northumbrian texts, which otherwise do not reflect a

[19] Kroch and Taylor's causal story is more nuanced than this, involving a mediating role for the loss of verbal agreement, as discussed in the previous subsection. See Walkden (in press) for detailed discussion.

contact situation of the kind likely to lead to direct syntactic transfer. Moreover, strict V2 can be found in some contexts in the earliest Germanic texts (Eythórsson 1995). Transfer of strict V2 constituent order cannot be the whole story, then. It is very plausible, however, that koineization led to a substantial increase in use of strict V2, including beyond the contexts in which it was typical in Old English.

4 French

French was brought to England as the language of the conquering Normans in 1066 and at least some speakers retained active knowledge of insular French, i.e. Anglo-French,[20] until around the end of the fourteenth century (see section 4.1). Contact thus directly precedes the emergence of Middle English in the mid twelfth century and the wide-ranging morphological and syntactic changes that this entailed. Nevertheless, while lexical borrowing from French, or Latin via French, into Middle English is significant (see Dance et al., this volume), whether or not French had any significant influence on English morphosyntax is subject to lively debate. In Section 4.2, we discuss possible effects on word order, showing that while some contact influence from Old French can be demonstrated, it does not trigger fundamental syntactic change in Middle English. However, in Section 4.3 we review recent research on change in argument structure and suggest that contact with French has more substantial effects on Middle English syntax than previously supposed.

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[20] Some scholars (e.g. Ingham 2012) prefer the term 'Anglo-Norman', since the variety of French spoken in England was closely related to the Norman dialect. Others (e.g. Blake 1992 in the *Oxford History of the English Language*) associate 'Anglo-Norman' with the earliest phase of French in England, and 'Anglo-French' with the language in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, 'which was essentially an administrative language which had to be acquired as a foreign language by the English' (1992: 5). We do not share Blake's view that the situation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was fundamentally different to the earlier phase, as we discuss below, and for clarity adopt the term 'Anglo-French' to refer to the variety of French spoken in England throughout its history.

4.1 Contact between English and French

Following the Norman conquest of 1066, Anglo-French was the native spoken and, to some extent, written language of the new feudal elite and those who came over from Normandy with them. However, as this situation did not last more than a few generations, there has been considerable debate as to what kind of contact situation took its place during the crucial period in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when textual records of Middle English emerge. To take two diametrically opposed positions, while the Anglo-French scholar Legge writes that 'by this time [1170] most people, down to the very poorest, were bilingual' (1963: 4), Thomason and Kaufman reject any possibility of major morphosyntactic contact influence, asserting that '[t]here is no reason to suppose that any large proportion of native English learned French between 1066 and 1250' (1988: 308; see also discussion in Trotter 2012: 1787). However, subsequent research, in particular that of Rothwell (1976, 1978, 1998, 2001), Trotter (2006, 2012) and Ingham (2009, 2012), has led to the emergence of something of a consensus around an intermediate position, which acknowledges that bilingualism in English (L1) and French (L2) was the norm for educated, literate speakers well into the fourteenth century (Trotter 2012: 1785).

Ingham (2012), focusing primarily on the linguistic development of Anglo-French, shows that a significant number of fluent English-French bilinguals remained until the latter half of the fourteenth century. He argues that the transmission of Anglo-French after the Conquest was punctuated by two ruptures. The first rupture occurs in the first half of the thirteenth century and is marked by increased phonological influence from Middle English (2012: 53-71), a development likely related to the loss of English royal domains in France in 1204 and a corresponding lack of input from monolingual French speakers to children in English aristocratic households (2012: 161). However, Ingham convincingly argues that, even after this first rupture, Anglo-French continued to be acquired in early childhood as a spoken second language, permitting native-like transmission of morphology and syntax. Although there is little evidence about the context in which such transmission took place — perhaps in elementary *schola cantus* 'song school' run by the Church (2012: 33) — it is clear that French remained the primary language of instruction in grammar schools (see also Reed, this volume). Moreover, Anglo-

French does not show undue morphological or syntactic influence from English at this time, continuing to develop in much the same way as L1 varieties of French spoken in France, for example with regard to the decline of verb-second after adjuncts from the second half of the thirteenth century (2012: 116) or in the increased frequency of postposed adjectives (2012: 135). The second rupture, marking the end of spoken bilingualism in England, came with the Black Death in the mid fourteenth century, which took a heavy toll on the clergy who were the primary agents of the transmission of Anglo-French (2012: 35).

The contact situation is very different to the Celtic and Scandinavian cases described above. First, the primary mechanism of transfer is borrowing in van Coetsem's (1988) terms, and consequently lexis is affected to a far greater extent than morphosyntax, as many scholars have observed (e.g. Miller 2012; Fischer 2013). Second, French was a prestige language spoken initially by the ruling class and later only by literate, educated bilinguals. Third, although not standardised, Old French was a written language and was extensively used in literature and administration in both England and France. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether it is justified to call this 'fairly similar' to contact between English and Latin (Fischer 2013: 23), as the fact that Latin itself was taught through the medium of French (Ingham 2012: 34-35) indicates far more widespread spoken competence in the latter than the former.

4.2 Word order

If borrowing is the core mechanism of transfer, contact influence on an area of core syntax largely independent of the lexicon such as word order is perhaps unlikely. This is borne out by recent reviews of the literature: Miller (2012: 185) concludes that 'French influence on English syntax is very limited', while Fischer (2013: 40) opines that 'the arguments are usually not fully persuasive' where studies attempt to demonstrate syntactic influence. In this section, we briefly consider possible French influence on two developments in Middle English word order: verb-subject inversion and the use of postposed adjectives.

Both Old English and Old French show verb-subject inversion in declaratives as part of their verb-second grammar, and in both languages this is lost by the end of the medieval period, although the development in French occurs slightly later than in Middle English. Haeberli (2010) examines a number of possible areas in which French may have influenced specific aspects of

the moribund Middle English verb-second system. Due to 'information-structural V2' (see Section 3.4), verb-subject pronoun inversion was uncommon in many varieties of Old English, yet it is found in some Middle English texts, as in (7):

(7) And many mervayles **shall he** do
and many miracles shall he do
'and he will do many miracles'
(fifteenth century, Middle English, *Malory*, 47.79; Haeberli 2010: 148)

Contrary to Old English, pronominal subjects were regularly inverted in Old French (Vance 1997), e.g.:

(8) Voirement **sont ce** des aventures del saint Graal
truly are this some adventures of.the holy Grail
'truly these are adventures of the Holy Grail'
(thirteenth century, continental Old French, *La Queste del Saint Graal* 52; Ingham 2012: 102)

Haeberli (2010) studies the frequency of verb-subject pronoun inversion in V2 contexts in the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (*PPCME2*) (Kroch and Taylor 2000) and shows that it is more frequent in all periods of Middle English than in Old English. However, there are a number of caveats. First, there is no text in which the frequency of verb-subject pronoun is ever as systematic as it is in thirteenth-century Old French (Vance 1997: 350) or Anglo-French (Ingham 2012: 109-114), where it occurs in 90-100% of contexts. Second, there are vast differences between the Middle English texts: while Chaucer's works show a relatively high rate of verb-subject pronoun inversion (50%), other texts from the same period, such as the Middle English translation of the Old Testament by John Wycliffe and his followers, show no inversion at all. While Haeberli (2010: 156–159) shows that texts translated from French or written by authors such as Chaucer who were known to be proficient in French tend to have higher rates of verb-subject pronoun inversion, a clear link to French cannot be established for all such texts. Finally, as we discussed in Section 3.4, contact with Old Norse is at least equally plausible as a

source for strict V2, in particular given that it is more frequently found in northern and eastern dialects of English. Overall, Haeberli cautiously concludes that ‘French influence seems as likely a hypothesis as others that have been proposed’ (2010: 161) to account for the attested changes.

A second aspect of Middle English word order for which French influence has been argued to play a role is the use of postnominal adjectives. Modern English shows noun-adjective (N-A) order in a number of idiomatic noun phrases (NPs) where both elements were borrowed from French, such as *heir apparent* or *proof positive* (Trips 2014: 74). In Middle English, while adjectives predominantly occur before the noun (A-N), N-A order is also attested, and more widely than in modern English. However, opinions are divided as to whether this reflects French influence on Middle English syntax or not, in particular since, in contrast to modern French, N-A order was clearly less frequent than A-N order in Old French (cf. Buridant 2000; Trips 2014: 78). On the side of the ‘French-minimisers’, Fischer claims that cases of N-A order involving French lexemes in Middle English are, like modern English *heir apparent*, ‘fixed [and] used by English authors [...] as a unit’ (2006: 271), i.e. French influence is limited to word order in lexical borrowings and has no effect on Middle English syntax. While other cases of N-A order in Middle English do exist, these are considered an internal development, since Old English also (rarely) allowed the postposition of strongly rhematic adjectives, even in definite NPs (9). This strongly rhematic reading continues to characterise Middle English N-A orders, for example where two adjectives are contrasted (10):

(9) Þone ilcan ceaddan **iungne**
the same Chad young.STR
‘the same Chad, when young’ (*The Life of St Chad* 1.184; Fischer 2006: 258)

(10) to þe lyf **bodilyche** and to þe lyf **gostliche**
to the life bodily and to the life spiritual
‘to the bodily and the spiritual life’ (*The Mirror of St Edmund*; Fischer 2006: 272)

Trips (2014), on the other hand, highlights several aspects of the Middle English data which are difficult to account for if contact influence is excluded. First, she argues that N-A order with borrowed adjectives does not just occur in ‘fixed phrases’ but also in NPs with a non-French

head noun. This is even true of the rare cases where French plural concord of the adjective is also copied into English, e.g. *lordes Arabiens* 'Arabian lords' from Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (Trips 2014: 84). Second, she shows that Old French also favours N-A order with rhematic adjectives and is thus a possible source for the Middle English pattern. Third, like Haeberli (2010), she shows that texts which can be linked to French — such as Chaucer's works and the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, a translation of the Old French *La somme le roi* — show a higher percentage of N-A order. Moreover, French influence in these texts is also confirmed by the occasional presence of plural concord. She therefore concludes that 'grammatical replication cannot be excluded' as a source of Middle English N-A order (2014: 91).

Overall, while contact with French is a plausible source for changes in word order, it is important to note that both verb-subject pronoun inversion and N-A order are transitory developments in Middle English which did not lead to language change. In the case of N-A order in particular, it is uncertain to what extent it was ever a phenomenon of the spoken language as opposed to a stylistic feature used in writing.

4.3 Argument structure

The development of argument structure in Middle English is an exciting and dynamic current research area (Trips and Stein 2019; Ingham 2020; Trips 2020; García García and Ingham, this volume), and being situated at the interface between syntax and the lexicon, it is also an area where extensive lexical borrowing can plausibly have triggered further syntactic change. Trips and Stein identify two core research questions, which can in our view be taken as the starting point in evaluating all studies of this type:

> i) to what extent did the English system retain and integrate the argument structure of verbs copied from French? ii) did the argument structure of these verbs influence the argument structure of native verbs, and if so to what extent [...]? (Trips and Stein 2019: 234)

We consider these questions in turn looking at two case studies: the use of *to* + NP to mark a formerly dative argument (Trips and Stein 2019), and the spread of EXPERIENCER subjects in

verbs of psychological state (Trips 2020; García García and Ingham, this volume; Trips and Rainsford submitted).

The evidence that verbs borrowed from French retain their argument structure in Middle English, at least initially, is strong. Trips and Stein (2019) develop Allen's (1995: 330) observations on the borrowing of Old French *plaire* 'please' into Middle English, focusing in particular on the use of *to* + NP to mark the EXPERIENCER (11), a structure unattested in Old English but obligatory in Old French with non-pronominal arguments (12):

(11)

For	God	wasted	þe	bones	of hem	þat	**plesen**	**to**	**men**
for	God	rejected	the	bones	of them	that	please.3PL	to	men

'because God rejected the requests of those who please men'
(*Earliest Complete English Prose Psalter*; Trips and Stein 2019: 251)

(12)

[...]	pour	**plere**	mauvesement	**au**	**monde**
	for	please.INF	wickedly	to.the	world

'[...] to wickedly please the world'
(thirteenth century, continental Old French, *La Somme le Roi*;
Trips and Stein 2019: 250)

A corpus study of the *PPCME2* confirms that the first occurrences of *plesen* (M2, 1250–1350) are found with the French pattern of *to* + NP, as in (9). The native pattern with a non-prepositional NP EXPERIENCER, on the other hand, is not attested until period M3 (1350–1420) (13):

(13)

men	axed	hym	how	that men	sholde	**plese**	**the**	**peple**
men	asked	him	how	that men	should	please	the	people

'people asked him how men should please the people'
(Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*; Trips and Stein 2019: 251)

A further example in which verbs borrowed from French clearly retain their argument structure in English is the case of labile change-of-state and change-of-location verbs (Ingham 2020). [21] Lability is common in continental French and Anglo-French verbs of this type (Ingham 2020: 457) and this is reflected in borrowings into Middle English, where twenty-five of the thirty verbs of change-of-state and change-of-location of French origin are labile (Ingham 2020: 459).

Trips and Stein's second research question, however, is both more central and more challenging to evaluate. One possible conduit for contact influence affecting the argument structure of native verbs is direct translation. Trips and Stein (2019: 254–256) show that in the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, OFr. *plaire* is translated with the native verbs ME *liken* and *quemen*, or the earlier French borrowing ME *paiien*. With ME *liken* and *quemen*, but not ME *paiien*, the Old French *à* + NP construction (14a) can be translated into English by a *to* + NP construction (14b):

(14) a. par quoi l'ame plet **a Dieu**
by which the=soul pleases to God
(*La Somme le Roi*; Trips and Stein 2019: 255)

b. [...] hueruore þe zaule **to god like**
wherefore the soul to God like
'because of which the soul pleases God'
(*Ayenbite of Inwyt*; Trips and Stein 2019: 255)

While contact influence seems clear in this case, it does not ultimately change the argument structure of ME *liken* and *plesen*, which do not retain *to* + NP EXPERIENCERS in modern English. A second possibility is therefore to show that a successful change in the argument structure of a native verb is initially or predominantly attested in French-based Middle English texts. A number of such cases are found in the literature. Trips and Stein (2019: 259–260), for example, show that the emergence of *to* + NP GOAL arguments with the native verb *give* are significantly more frequent in French-based texts in the M2 and the M3 periods of the *PPCME2* (1250–1420). This

[21] Labile verbs are defined as those whose direct object argument in a transitive construction may be realised as the subject in an intransitive construction without any change in the verb form, e.g. PDE *you broke* ***it*** */* ***it*** *broke* (Ingham 2020: 447).

is taken as evidence that French ‘served as a model language’ for the introduction of this construction, while at the same time its occurrence in other Middle English texts proves that it is not simply a translation effect (2019: 261). A further possibility is to compare the frequency of a particular argument structure configuration in sets of French-based vs. native ME verbs. Ingham (2020), and García García and Ingham (this volume) adopt this approach with different classes of labile verbs. In the case of change-of-state or change-of-location verbs, a very limited number of labile verbs in Old English (16%) contrast with a high proportion of labile verbs borrowed from French in Middle English (83%). Crucially, lability is also shown to have spread among Middle English verbs of native origin (67%), which Ingham (2020: 462) interprets as an expansion of lability in English under the influence of French. Yet caution is required: *destroy*-verbs and psych verbs show a similar, if temporary, increase in lability in Middle English, but here the same approach does not show higher rates of lability among French-based verbs. García García and Ingham (this volume) therefore reject a contact explanation of change in these verb classes.

5 Conclusion

The three language contact situations surveyed in this chapter have all left their mark on the morphology and syntax of medieval English, but have done so in different ways. Widespread intermingling between speakers of British Celtic and Old English led to acculturation, bilingualism, and eventually language shift, with the effects best characterised as instances of imposition. In the case of Norse, the close relationship between the two Germanic languages paved the way for koineization, favouring those structures that were similar or identical in Old Norse and medieval English; at a later stage, imposition through shift probably also played a role. Finally, contact with French, while by no means a purely elite phenomenon as argued in earlier literature, was of a type conducive to borrowing rather than imposition, and therefore the morphological and syntactic changes that can be observed are less fundamental and are in part mediated by lexical transfer. Our overview highlights both the ubiquity of contact in shaping the grammar of medieval English and the diversity of outcomes and processes involved.

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