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**SCANDINAVIANS  
AND  
ANGLO-SAXONS:  
LEXICAL SUBSTI-  
TUTION AND  
LEXICAL CHANGE  
IN ENGLISH**

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*Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge  
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho  
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge  
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so.  
(Chaucer, Troilus, II, 22-5)*

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Though this may not be a very fortunate reivindication these days, it is clear that the study of the History of English enables us to understand present-day phenomena. History in general and the history of languages in particular are intimately related to change and cannot exist without it. This paper is concerned with lexical change in English during the Middle Ages and the role that language contact may have played in it so that some present-day aspects of the language may be better understood in the light of past events.

I will first present some basic notions related to language change and offer a revision of how today's research techniques may be applied to history. I will later on focus on the particular case of the Scandinavians in England in the Middle Ages and section four will picture the linguistic situation of England at that time. By examining the different processes by which borrowing may occur, I will try to depict how this could have affected Middle English.

## 1. SOME NOTIONS ON LANGUAGE CHANGE AND LINGUISTICS TODAY

Diachrony and change are intimately related, since change cannot exist in synchrony. Change (let us consider that lexical change is just one aspect of a wider phenomenon) is inherent to language but, of course, it is not necessarily uniform. It is generally assumed that the more general idea of language change can be divided in, at least, four different levels (Trask, 1994): grammatical change, affecting not only word-forms (as the change from *drifan* to *drive*) but also structures; sound change, which is considered to be highly regular and to proceed more rapidly than others; finally, semantic change, that is not as readily detected as lexical change can be, since the latter is easily observed in any language's colloquial and slang terms, in particular, that come and go every few years.

Besides time, language change is inevitably related to variation. In a speech community variation, that is to say, the existence of alternative forms or variants, is in turn often related to social considerations such as "marked" and "unmarked" 'good' or 'bad'. 'Good' variants are typically believed to be characterised by logical superiority or venerability, or both; 'bad' variants must then be illogical and/or recent inventions by the vulgar (Thomason, 2005).

It is in this connection that we have to talk about sociolinguistics. No doubt there must be some kind of interactions between society and language since the latter is a social fact (there is no reason for the existence of language other than communication). But besides transferring information, language is used "to send vital social messages about who we are, where we come from, and who we associate with. It is often shocking to realize how extensively we may judge a person's background, character, and intentions based simply upon the person's language, dialect, or, in some instances, even the choice of a single word (Wolfram, 2005). Sociolinguistics has become an increasingly important and popular

field of study. “The basic notion underlying sociolinguistics is quite simple: Language use symbolically represents fundamental dimensions of social behavior and human interaction. The notion is simple, but the ways in which language reflects behavior can often be complex and subtle. Furthermore, the relationship between language and society affects a wide range of encounters--from broadly based international relations to narrowly defined interpersonal relationships” (Wolfram, 2005).

In considering language as a social institution, sociolinguists often use sociological techniques involving questionnaires and statistical data, along with information from direct observation. The latter, of course, is not always possible in the case of historical periods of the language as the one at issue here.

A slightly different concern with language and society focuses more closely on the effect of particular kinds of social situations on language structure. Thus, for instance, language contact studies focus on the origin and the linguistic composition of pidgin and creole languages (Weinreich, 1953; Poussa, 1982; Danchev, 1988; Romaine, 1989; Wardaugh, 1992; Trudgill, 1995). We will deal with this later on in this paper.

Another approach to language and society focuses on the situations and uses of language as an activity in its own right. The study of language in its social context tells us quite a bit about how we organise our social relationships within a particular community and how form or sentence choice involves cultural values and norms of politeness, deference, and status.

To answer the questions related to language as social activity, sociolinguists often use ethnographic methods. That is, they attempt to gain an understanding of the values and viewpoints of a community in order to explain the behaviours and attitudes of its members.

Two trends have characterized the development of sociolinguistics over the past several decades:

- First, the rise of particular specializations within this field has coincided with the emergence of more broadly based social and political issues. Thus, the focus on themes such as language and nationalism, language and ethnicity, and language and gender has corresponded with the rise of related issues in society at large.
- Second, specialists who examine the role of language and society have become more and more interested in applying the results of their studies to the broadly based social, educational, and political problems that probably gave rise to their emergence as sociolinguistic themes to begin with. Sociolinguistics thus offers a unique opportunity to bring together theory, description, and application in the study of language.

No doubt the observation and study of language change may be done in different ways. The Neogrammarian approach, for instance, elaborated immense and very detailed lists of forms to be found in manuscripts throughout history and assigned the different features thus discovered either to different dialects (understanding dialects as geographical varieties with perfectly defined isoglosses) or to different periods. The Neogrammarians, however, never intended to understand the causes of change nor to predict its direction.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the development of Sociolinguistics when the different approaches presented in the previous paragraphs had also some consequences on the conceptions of the study of historical linguistics since it brought about some important methodological innovations. Though there may be more, two are probably the ones having a greater relevance on what has been

labelled Historical Sociolinguistics (or Socio-Historical Linguistics) (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003):

1.- Pure sociolinguistics is based on the research methods of the Social Sciences and resorts to questionnaires in order to obtain information about the particular linguistic situation of a community. Things such as the level of use of one or the other language in bilingual communities, and the relation of this use to variables such as sex, age, education, social status, etc. is also considered. Together with questionnaires, interviews are also an important tool in Sociolinguistic research (Wardaugh, 1992; Romaine, 1994).

These techniques had only been used with living speakers until in 1986 questionnaires were applied to past stages of the English language by McIntosh, Samuels and Laing when they devised the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English (LALME)*<sup>1</sup>.

2.- There is a different framework known as the “ethnographic approach”. The interaction between language and society can be approached through the study of those factors that occur language-externally, that is to say, by the analysis of social data first to obtain linguistic conclusions later. This approach is the one that has been generally applied to earlier periods in the history of the language of which, of course, we have no living speakers to interview. It has as a *sine qua non* condition the need to know as well as possible the background of the linguistic community producing the texts or the linguistic moment to be studied. (Janzén, 1972; Hansen, 1984)

It is this second approach the one we will be using here to try and describe the mechanisms by which language change, lexical change in particular, affected English in the Middle Ages. One of our premises is that language contact fosters change (Danchev, 1988; Sture Ureland & Broderick, 1991). If this is so, the type of contact between the Scandinavians and the English must have had some important consequences for the language we speak today.

### 3. THE ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN CASE

Though the contact between Scandinavians and the inhabitants of England is generally said to have taken place from the so-called Viking Age onwards, there is evidence of previous contacts of different kinds: all along the Neolithic there were movements of population from Northern Europe to the British Isles (probably not detached from the Continent yet) (Kirby, 1973).

During the centuries between the Germanic invasion of England and the Migration of the Scandinavians there, we know that commercial contacts were not unusual. But besides that, we also know that the first Scandinavians to travel to England did so before the so-called Viking Age.

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<sup>1</sup> They took as a starting point certain texts of which they knew who, when and where they had been written called “anchor texts”. Then, they proceeded to the localisation of other texts by applying questionnaires to them. (These questionnaires are lists of words showing specific forms. If the forms in the text coincide with certain forms in the questionnaire that have been identified as typical of a linguistic profile, the text may be said to have been written in that same area). This technique, known as the fit-technique, was successfully used to localise late Middle English texts and it will soon be available to be applied to earlier periods since the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* is about to come out.

The Viking Age or Vikingetiden is traditionally defined as the 250-year period beginning with the attack by Scandinavian raiders on the Monastery of Lindisfarne in (June) 793 and ending with the failure of the Norse invasion of England and the death of King Harald Hardrathi at the Battle of Stamford Bridge on September 25, 1066 just before the Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest (*Vikings*, 2005).

### 3.1. REASONS AND PRELUDE TO THE VIKING AGE

During the Viking Age, Scandinavian men and women reached as far as Bagdad or America. But when talking about the journeys of the Scandinavians we do not usually mention the reasons causing them, simplifying the whole process to an insane wish to kill, and raid. Geipel (1971: 31) summarises the traditional view (that is much criticised these days) as follows:

Famine, pestilence, cataclysmic natural disasters in their native land, over-population as a result of the widespread practice of polygamy, the custom of driving out younger sons to fend for themselves, the cutting off by the Arabs of the old trade connections with Byzantium, an obsessive mania to destroy other people's property, a fanatical loathing of Christianity, and an insatiable appetite for high adventure -- these and many other suggestions have been put forward as likely explanations for the prodigious outboiling of people from the north that is part of the conventional concept of the 'Viking eruption'. (Geipel, 1971: 31)

Another reason mentioned is that, as farmers, they travelled to places where the soil was more fertile and life conditions in general were better. They found riches outside Scandinavia not because they were more violent than others (we read in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that the Anglo-Saxons were no better to the Celts, for instance) but because of their technical superiority on the sea and their expertise as merchants (Jesch, 2001)<sup>2</sup>.

The arrival of the Svear in the 6th century and their settlement in the Lake Mälär Area of Sweden is also behind the blooming of the Viking Age. The *Beowulf* poem, which in principle reflects the life of the Gutar and Gotland, also talks about the wars between the Gutar and Svear at the beginning of the 6th century. As Geipel (1971: 29) puts it:

It was not only in their language that the Angles and other Jutland expatriates in England retained their connection with their ancestral homeland. Their traditions - as recorded in *Beowulf*, *Widsith* and the *Finnesburh Fragment* - kept fresh for many generations the memory of their legendary heroes and their former intimate association with the Scandinavian world, an association that was eventually to be renewed by the coming of the longships to Britain.

These Svear seem to be the same people the Romans called Heruls. With them, there is evidence of intensified activity in the area. (Gannholm, 1996)

<sup>2</sup> In fact, it was their commercial activity that made them see the fertility and richness of other places and wish for them in the first place.

We will not deny here that there was raiding. In fact, the men involved in sporadic raiding gradually took on a more political aim and got together to form “armies”. In England, for instance, they began to over-winter in defended camps and control extensive areas as “Danegeld” (‘protection money’) became also characteristic of Viking activity in England (Unwin, 1982).

By the Treaty of Wedmore, Alfred had to concede the northern and eastern counties to the Scandinavians where they created new settlements and merged with the local populations thus favouring language contact.

### 3.2. THE DANELAW: POPULATION, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

The first Vikings who settled and became farmers are unlikely to have had Scandinavian wives. Women played a part in this process of settlement (Women, 1991). In regions with an established indigenous population, Viking settlers may have married local women, while some far-roving Vikings picked up female companions en route. However, there is evidence that Scandinavian women reached most parts of the Viking world, from Russia in the east to Newfoundland in the west<sup>3</sup>. There is evidence that “the Viking colonists settled down to the farming life in their new home, or established themselves as traders and became town-dwellers.” (Jesch, 2001)

Place-names and language suggest that there was considerable Scandinavian immigration into the Danelaw (Cameron, 1965, 1969, 1970). Although the nature and extent of the Scandinavian immigration is contested by scholars, evidence points at a peaceful migration of Scandinavian families to parts of the North and East of England throughout the tenth century (Lund, 1969; Loyn, 1977). Recent finds of large numbers of low-grade, Scandinavian-style female jewellery in Lincolnshire show the presence of Scandinavian women there in the tenth century. These finds are intimately related with the distribution of Scandinavian place-names in the same region. Both the archaeological and the linguistic evidence point at a significant Scandinavian presence. There was a further significant influx of Scandinavians into England during the reign of Cnut in the eleventh century. These new immigrants were higher-class and left their mark in London and the South, areas not previously subject to Scandinavian settlement. We have evidence of this in rune stones commissioned by rich people

Of course it is impossible to know how many Scandinavians settled in the Danelaw but they must have had a lot of influence and power, according to the language effects still visible today in the lexicon (we can still identify many words which were borrowed by English from Old Norse, such as *knife, take, window, egg, ill* and *die*).

By the Viking Age (800-1050) Old English and Old Norse had developed into two distinct languages, though still similar in many ways. In the Danelaw, where the Vikings settled and merged with the English, they had to quickly develop a form of language which everyone could speak and understand, so that people could communicate with each other easily in matters of work, the home, trade and administration. Recent research argues for mutual intelligibility of the two speech communities. Texts show much contact between the two groups of speakers in which they need language to do things, to carry out negotiations. In a very simple example involving the recovery of the *Stockholm Codex Aureus*, Townend (2002: 4) wonders: “What, therefore, were the linguistic means by which Ealdorman Ælfred negotiated with the Vikings for the recovery of the gospel-book?”. In analysing three texts by way of example (“The Voyages of Ohtere and Wulfstan” in the *Orosius*, Æþelwærd’s *Latin Chronicle* and

<sup>3</sup> Most journeys from Scandinavia involved sea-crossings in bad conditions, in small, open ships with no protection from the elements. Families heading for the North Atlantic colonies took all the livestock they would need to establish a new farm in a type of ship known as *knorr* (OE *cnearr*)

Ælfric's homily *De Falsis Deis*) Townend notices that interpreters are never mentioned in encounters between Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, though they are often mentioned in other contemporary texts when other languages are involved. All this may lead us to think that these speakers developed some kind of pidgin or compromise linguistic code. Therefore, we may assume that the effect was much more powerful in the Danelaw, going beyond borrowing to the creation of new Anglo-Norse dialects which were, in many ways, more Scandinavian than English. The 'traditional' dialects, amongst others, of Yorkshire, Lancashire, The Lake District and Lincolnshire emerged from this process<sup>4</sup>.

What happened when Viking raiders became farmers as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us? There is considerable controversy even today about the nature of the relationship between the colonists and the local population in Britain and Ireland. English historical sources are clear that the relationship was hostile. However, the evidence of place names and archaeology can be interpreted in more than one way. Place names are an invaluable source of information on the extent of Scandinavian influence, and their distribution mirrors the geographical spread of colonisation known from historical and archaeological evidence.

Since History tells of events, places and important people only, the spread and distribution of Scandinavian place names not only helps us chart the extent of Scandinavian settlement but records the names of lesser people and how they reacted to the landscape around them. For example, in Shetland, Haroldswick in the island of Unst means "Harold's bay", while Lerwick or 'mud bay' refers to a useless harbour. For the details of everyday life, we depend on archaeological evidence from excavations. Pagan graves are particularly useful because the bodies were fully dressed and accompanied by personal belongings, some of which indicate important activities of the living (Ritchie, 1993) and this may provide us with some clues to understand linguistic behaviour.

We have no written records left by the ordinary people who lived in areas that were taken over by the Vikings. There is no way we can tell for certain what happened, but we can use the evidence of artefacts from excavations and linguistic traces as clues. In the Danelaw, the Danes seem to have preserved their social organisation, institutions, habits and language. According to the information provided by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the men who settled as farmers after the Treaty of Wedmore were no more than 1000. The Scandinavian influence to be found in English, however, can hardly have been produced by these soldiers alone. In the 70's some scholars (Cameron, 1969; Lund, 1969; Loyn, 1977) proposed the Second Migration theory<sup>5</sup> to explain Scandinavian England on a linguistic basis. Such Migration may have taken place from 875 onwards when Scandinavian peasants decided to become colonists in England the same as they were in Iceland, Greenland, etc.

Be it as it may, the study of place-names reveals what kind of settlements there were in this area of the country, what kind of relation there existed between Scandinavians and natives and may help us understand lexical change.

Many place-names have Old Norse suffixes such as: *-thorp* (place secondary to a *-by*), *-by* (new settlement. As a rule, they are relevant places), *-thwait(e)* (village smaller than a *-thorp*, normally in

<sup>4</sup> Not only language but also administration is still loaded with Scandinavian influx. In Yorkshire, the Viking rulers divided the county into three separate units for ease of administration. The Old Norse word for a third of something (*thrithjungr*) became modified to 'riding', giving rise to the East Riding, North Riding and West Riding of Yorkshire. These administrative Ridings existed right from the Viking age until 1974, when they were dismantled by the UK Boundary Commission. Since 1974, Yorkshire people conscious of their heritage have pressed for the restoration of the ancient Viking Ridings.

<sup>5</sup> This Secondary Migration was accompanied also by some military campaigns as the one recorded in *The Battle of Maldon* (991) where we are told how Olaf Tryggvasson defeated the English Byrthnoth with the help of some 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Scandinavians. Other "waves" of Scandinavians arrived around 1100 to protect their English relatives from the French in order to preserve their status of "freemen".

a clearing), *-toft* (settlement smaller than a *-thwait(e)*) and Grimston-hybrids (settlements that contain a Scandinavian person-name used before the eleventh century followed by the OE suffix *-ton*).

Professor Cameron affirms that these suffixes provide not only information about the size of settlements but also about their date in relation to other existing ones. Thus, he concludes that “Grimston-hybrids” are early settlements (prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> c.) that are already inhabited by Anglo-Saxons when the Scandinavians settle. This means that the two speech communities intermingle. *-by* settlements are the result of a conscious colonisation, places with similar topographic characteristics but the abundance of Grimston-hybrids implies that the Scandinavians did not need to found many new settlements because they were welcome in native places.

Though the contact between the two speech communities took place mainly in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (OE), the effects will not be clearly seen until the ME period, probably due to the slow transmission of any change favoured by the lesser contact with other parts of the country (certainly not to be compared with today’s influence of mass-media) and to the fact that people who could write normally did so in Latin. Besides, it is likely that the colonists were more united when they had to face the common enemy (the Normans, who represented a threat for their way of life) than before, when arriving in successive waves.

#### 4. POSSIBLE LINGUISTIC SITUATIONS IN THE DANELAW

The relationship between both languages is so intimate that not only lexical items, but also certain grammatical structures, word endings and the so-called structural words were taken from Old Norse. Lexical aspects, however, have deserved much attention from scholars.

Historians of the English language have studied Scandinavian loans from the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. In general, their studies focused more on the quantity than on the quality of such loans without looking into the social and historical events linked to linguistic phenomena (and, therefore, disregarding the ethnographic approach). These authors (Bjorkman, 1900-02) limited to the elaboration of lists of words with Scandinavian origin. From this moment onwards, the more traditional linguists devoted to the study of Scandinavian loans in English centered in the number of Scandinavian place-names and vocabulary items and hardly went beyond that. Some years later, Mary Serjeantson (1935), suggested that these loans were not equally present in all lexical fields, but still no real socio-historical background is to be found in her work. Though they opened a new line of investigation, the methodological shortcomings of these works implied that the conclusions thus reached may have been false both from a linguistic and from a historical point of view, since history and linguistics here support each other and data were not always exact.

Later works, mainly from the sixties onwards, have a different methodological approach. It is, therefore, logical that a study of lexical change in the context of language contact requires some knowledge of the type of speaker we may have had, which was his/her mother tongue, their economic situation, social level, activity, etc. In our particular case, the average speaker to be found in the Danelaw is an ex-soldier from the “micel here” that has settled now as a farmer. It is probable that his chief gave him a hide of land where he could establish a farm. We know from historical and literary sources that he might bring his family with him from Scandinavia in a *knorr* in one of those common colonisation journeys or he may take a native Anglo-Saxon wife. In either case, the use of two languages in the house seems to be quite unavoidable since in either case it is likely that the Danish colonist may need to have some kind of intercourse with his Anglo-Saxon neighbours to buy tools and some domestic animals.



If we think of a massive colonisation like the one I think took place once the Great Army had broken up, we should also think that language contact must have been massive as well, at least in the Danelaw area. As already seen, the place-name evidence points that the Scandinavians founded new settlements (*-by*) but that they also lived in places already inhabited by the Anglo-Saxons (hybrids) where contact was probably more intense. An important issue to consider in this linguistic intercourse is the fact that both languages are of Germanic descent and have not been developing separately too long, less than 300 years (Townend, 2002). The degree of intelligibility may have been really high also favoured by the interest of both groups of speakers to understand each other (one wants to sell and the other wants to buy something). When communication is vital, the speaker tends to get rid of anything that may interfere. In the case of ON and OE word-endings conveying grammatical information were really awkward whereas roots were very similar<sup>6</sup>. The speaker has a holistic idea of words and word-forms and interprets phonological and lexical information so that lexical substitution plays a part in intelligibility. In other cases, however, it was not the adaptation of existing lexical items, but the acquisition of new ones that may have been involved.

We have already mentioned that an important part of the population was involved in this language contact situation, not only because they were many but also because they are low-rank people and, therefore, they intermingle with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

We suppose that the members of both speech communities spoke only their own language though in the course of time they would need to learn some of the other. We assume that L1 is the mother tongue linked to a particular geographical area due to historical reasons whereas L2 is an upstart language that is used in the same geographical area as L1 due to some structural imposition on the native society. Consequently, the kind of linguistic situation found may respond to the following scheme (Moskowich, 1995a, 1995b):

- a) L1A: this could have been found in the Anglo-Saxon area of England inhabited by peasants, servants, etc. who mostly talk to their equals in the fields.
- b) L1AB: people who can read and write (mostly priests).
- c) L1AB+L2A: medium-high level Anglo-Saxons in the Danelaw able to communicate both with Danes and English in the marketplace (for instance), village priests could fall into this category which is, however, not likely to have been very common.
- d) L1A+L2A: common situation in the Danelaw, to be found in children of an Anglo-Norse family or the *gerefa* talking to his lord in one language and to the peasants in another.

In the case of an average Danish farmer his L1 is ON and, as a soldier and farmer, he may have used the low register (A) all the time. But he may be also competent to some extent in L2A. That is to say, he may be familiar with the colloquial register of English, at least for his basic communicative needs. This competence in OE has been acquired later in life due to historical and social reasons (L2).

This may have been the typical linguistic behaviour to be found in the Danelaw in the Middle Ages, and this is why some scholars (like Poussa, 1982) consider ME as a creole language descending from this Anglo-Norse pidgin though some others do not accept this hypothesis (Domingue, 1977). This linguistic convergence is typical of situations related to survival, trade and agriculture and is con-

<sup>6</sup> I would like to mention an example given by Prof. Tom Shippey in *The Story Of English*. In this example he presents a Danish farmer who wants to buy a horse from his English neighbour (mutual intelligibility) if all that is different is eliminated by simplifying the grammar (pidginisation).

The Dane refers to the animal as *hrossit* whereas the Anglo-Saxon uses *þæt hors*. Again we have a grammatical and a phonological problem but both may understand what they are talking about.

gruent with the idea of mutual intelligibility. As shown in the scheme above, this collective linguistic behaviour, however, may not have been reflected in all individual speakers in England.

## 5. LEXICAL CHANGE PROCESSES

Lexical change in Middle English is highly determined by the type of speech communities to be found and though some grammatical influences may be introduced, this change is to a great extent characterised by borrowing. This takes place most commonly when both languages are in contact though nowadays this premise is not always true.

Phonological adaptations often affect loans in the first place, but they may occur almost simultaneously to enhance intelligibility. Adaptation is, however, a question of use. The more common a term is, the more it will be adapted to the phonological and morphological patterns of the target language (Moskowich & Seoane, 1995, 1996).

Trudgill (1990) points at lexical variation (including substitution) as a phenomenon commonly found in the dialect of Yorkshire today, probably a consequence of former waves of European invaders in the area.

Though borrowing was not a favourite device for enlarging the lexicon in OE the first Scandinavian loan in English appear precisely in the Treaty of Wedmore between Alfred and Guthrum as illustrated in (1) and (2) below:

- (1) OE *liesing* “freed man”
- (2) OE *healf meark* “half mark”

Contrary to what might be generally assumed, in OE most ON loans refer to ideas, people or things but they appear in late texts, for instance in the *Chronicle* after 1100. When other types of loans referred to social realities appear, for instance, they have been normally adapted to native sound patterns (Moskowich, 1995a) as is the case of:

- (3) ON *vapnaták* > OE *wæpentæc*

Other early Scandinavian loans (4)-(10) belong to different lexical fields:

- (4) ON *løg* > OE *lagu* “ley”
- (5) ON *lið* > OE *lið* “flota”
- (6) ON *víkingr* > OE *wicing* “pirata”
- (7) ON *Knørr* > OE *cnearr* “barco”
- (8) ON *níðing* > OE *níðing* “hombre malo”
- (9) ON *þræll* > OE *þræl* “thrall, trol”
- (10) ON *útlagi* > OE *utlaga* “fuera de la ley”

In the transitional period between late IOE and eME we more often find place names and proper names. Notwithstanding this, we must infer that the fact that a form is not recorded until, for instance, 1107, does not mean it has entered the language that very same year. Moreover, many other forms may have existed in speech and may have been never written down, so we have no trace of their existence. This could be the case of elements that only survive now as suffixes as *bergh* in

(11) *Wardberg*.

Or personal names as:

(12) Normannus le Bonde “Man from the north + *bonde* (referred to his social status as a *bonder* (farmer))”

(13) Turstanus Clober (ON *Thorsteinn* and “club-maker”.)

Little by little, as time goes by, Scandinavian words are not only more numerous but also more diverse. That is to say, they are more often used and in more spheres of life and this is, precisely, due to the social importance of Viking/Scandinavian influence and to the intelligibility factor that favours borrowing. The two groups of population are so intermingled that in some cases it is the ON form that survives in English and not the OE one in an example of lexical substitution. In this line, only a very close relation can explain things such as the substitution of forms in the verb *to be* so that the ON form replaces the native one:

(14) ON *várum* (Pl.) > PE *were*

(15) ON *ert* (2 p. sg.) > *are* vs. OE *bist*

Also striking is the case of the verb PE *take* (Rynell, 1948). It is a very common verb and, therefore, we might suppose that it must have been deeply rooted in the lexicon of any kind of speaker. Nevertheless, it is well-known that our PE *take* comes from a form ON *táka*. (The corresponding English native form *niman*, was abandoned in ME). Such is the linguistic importance of the Danes.

The same can be said of

(16) OE *eagthyrl* vs ON *vindauga*

that illustrates a clear case of lexical substitution. In some cases, lexical substitution could have been triggered by phonological adaptation which is, in turn, a logical consequence of intelligibility. This is illustrated by our PE *sister*, whose vowel is not descended from the one in OE but from the one in ON.

We mentioned before that some forms never came down to us because they were not recorded in writing. On other occasions we come across terms that are not found in Standard English but survive in certain varieties such as

(17) Yorkshire *to adle* “to earn”

or

(18) *brass* “money”.

The easy introduction of Scand. terms is due to the similarity between the two languages. This same similarity, however, makes it sometimes impossible to tell whether a word is of English or Scandinavian origin. Sometimes, we can see semantic (contamination in the meanings of related words) rather than lexical change.

(19) OE *dream* “joy” vs. ON *draumr* “vision in sleep”

(20) OE *hlaf* “bread” vs. ON *bread* “fragment”

(21) OE *eorl* “warrior” vs. ON *jarl* “governor”

Some ON loans were conformed to the English sound and inflectional system (Pyles and Algeo, 1982: 299) but some others are still recognisable by their pronunciation. Thus, words starting with /sk/ are Scandinavian because in OE they were /ʃ/ (*skirt* vs. *shirt* by a process of palatalisation in English). The same can be said when /g/ and /k/ are found before front vowels as in *gear*, *geld*, *gill*, *kick*, *kilt*, *kindle*.

In general, we can affirm that Scandinavian lexical innovations can be better observed in verbs and nouns. Some linguists hold that this is due to the fact that ON was not used with an ornamental aim but for survival purposes. That very basic items such as *they*, *their*, *them*, *both*; or *till*, *though* and *although*, *slaughter*, *sky* come from Old Norse (Morse-Gagne, 1988) has been traditionally related to the low extraction of the Scandinavian invaders rather than to the intimate relation between the Anglo-Saxon natives and the colonisers. The question of mutual intelligibility and linguistic convergence has been dismissed until very recently when an ethnographic and more general sociolinguistic approach has been used to contemplate what really happened in the British Isles from the eighth century onwards.

I can conclude with Townend (2002: 195) that “Viking Age England was a bilingual society, but not a society comprised by bilingual individuals”. This may account for the linguistic impact to be observed in the language even centuries after the contact. In English we cannot eat an *egg*, be *ill* or even *die* without a Scandinavian lying in wait behind our words.

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