

External Influences in the History of English

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1. Introduction
2. Influence from Celtic
 - 2.1 Historical background
 - 2.2 Linguistic outcomes of the contacts with Celtic
 - 2.2.1 To ‘be’ in Celtic and English
 - 2.2.2 Progressive
3. Latin influences
4. Scandinavian influences
5. French influences

Summary

Few European languages have in the course of their histories undergone so radical changes as English did in the Medieval period. The earliest documented variety of the language, Old English (c. 450 to 1100 CE), was a synthetic language, typologically similar to modern German, with its three genders, relatively free word order, rich case system and verbal morphology. By the beginning of the Middle English period (c. 1100 to 1500), changes that had begun a few centuries earlier in the Old English period, had resulted in a remarkable typological shift from a synthetic language to an analytic language with fixed word order, very few inflections and a heavy reliance on function words. System-internal pressures had a role to play in these changes, but arguably they were primarily due to intensive contacts with other languages, including Celtic languages, (British) Latin, Scandinavian languages, and a little later, French. As a result, English came to diverge from its Germanic sister languages, losing

or reducing such Proto-Germanic features as grammatical gender, most inflections on nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs, verb-second syntax, and certain types of reflexive marking.

Among the external influences, long contacts with speakers of especially Brittonic Celtic languages (i.e., Welsh, Cornish, and Cumbrian) can be considered to have been of particular importance. Following the arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes from around 450 CE onwards, there began an intensive and large-scale process of language shift on the part of the indigenous Celtic and British Latin speaking population in Britain. A general wisdom in contact linguistics is that in such circumstances – when the contact is intensive and the shifting population large enough – the acquired language (in this case English) undergoes moderate to heavy re-structuring of its grammatical system, leading generally to simplification of its morphosyntax. In the history of English, this process was also greatly reinforced by the Viking invasions, which started in the late eighth century CE, and brought a large Scandinavian-speaking population to Britain. The resulting contacts between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings also contributed to the decrease of complexity of the Old English morphosyntax. In addition, the Scandinavian settlements of the Danelaw area left their permanent mark in place-names and dialect vocabulary in especially the eastern and northern parts of the country.

By contrast to syntactic influences, which are typical of conditions of language shift, contacts that are less intensive and involve extensive bilingualism generally lead to lexical borrowing. This was the situation following the Norman Conquest of Britain in 1066 CE. It led to an influx of French loanwords into English, most of which have persisted in use up to the present day. It has been estimated that almost one third of the present-day English vocabulary is of French origin. By comparison, there is far less evidence of French influence on “core” English syntax. The earliest loanwords were superimposed by the French-speaking new nobility and pertained to administration, law, military terminology, and religion. Cultural prestige was the prime motivation for the later Medieval borrowings.

Keywords

contact linguistics, historical linguistics, Old English, Middle English, Brittonic languages, British Latin, Scandinavian languages, Danelaw, Norman Conquest, French

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe the main sources of external linguistic influences on English. Our main attention will be on the medieval period and the importance of contact influences for the development of the English language. The main focus will be on contact influences in syntax and morphology rather than the other domains of language, such as phonology or lexicon, which have perhaps received the most attention in previous works on medieval contacts. Mainstream varieties of English occupy a central place in this article, although contact influences can be equally detected in dialectal varieties. A prerequisite for linguistic contacts with any kind of lasting effects is regular intercommunication between speakers of two or more different languages. In the medieval period, these contacts took place in different forms in a wide range of sociohistorical circumstances, leading to different kinds of linguistic outcome. In order to understand the nature and extent of these, a detailed description of the main potential sources of external influence is needed. The following discussion follows a roughly chronological order, starting with influences from indigenous Celtic and (British) Latin and proceeding thence to Scandinavian, French, and later medieval Latin influences. However, it has to be borne in mind that the influences deriving from one or the other of the potential sources have in most cases spread over long periods of time and in some cases have most probably been overlapping temporally.

2. Influence from Celtic

2.1 Historical background

The earliest external influences on Insular Anglo-Saxon (Old English) are those deriving from British Celtic and (British) Latin. These were the two predominant languages spoken in Britain at the time of the first arrival of the Germanic tribes (also known as the *Adventus Saxonum*) in the mid-fifth century CE. This is not to say that there had been no contacts between the Germanic invaders and the indigenous people of Britain, i.e. the British Celts, even before the *Adventus*. They 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. According to Jackson (1953: 199), 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. This dating is questioned, e.g. by Sims-Williams (1983: 3–5), who suggests a fairly broad dating in the sixth century, at a period earlier than the first reference to Gildas by Columbanus c. 600, and later than the fifth century “because of Gildas’s vagueness about the known history of the early part of that century” (Sims-Williams 1983: 5). However, a somewhat earlier date is proposed by Higham (1994: 141), who places the composition of *De Excidio* within the late fifth century, that is, only around fifty years after the *Adventus Saxonum*.

In addition to *De Excidio*, information about the Germanic invasions can be obtained from other important near-contemporary sources. Such are the two Gallic Chronicles of 452 and 511 (see Higham 1992: 69). Yet another, 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 CE), 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: 210–11). In any case, the Anglo-Saxon advances to the north proved to have significant

consequences for the later development of the Celtic languages, as it meant an areal separation of the Welsh and Cumbric dialects of Late British.

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. Baugh and Cable 1981: 72-73). This 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 2008; 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 and assimilation was a more likely outcome of the contact.

Finally, support for the ‘acculturation theory’ can also be obtained from population-genetic studies. For example, Capelli et al.’s (2003) study shows, first, that no complete population replacement occurred anywhere in the British Isles; secondly, that there was considerable continental introgression in the Central-Eastern part of England; and thirdly, that the data from southern England indicate significant continuity of the indigenous population. An essentially similar picture emerged from the results of the Oxford Genetic Atlas Project (see Sykes 2006). This project collected and analysed both matrilinear mitochondrial DNA and patrilinear Y-

chromosome samples of over ten thousand subjects from all over Britain and Ireland. The results provided strong evidence for the survival of the Celtic-speaking population in Britain and Ireland. Strong corroboration for the acculturation theory is offered also by The People of the British Isles Project. The results of this project (see Leslie et al. 2015) provide compelling evidence that indicates that the proportion of presumed Anglo-Saxon ancestry in eastern, central, and southern England ranges from as low as 10 per cent to not higher than 40 per cent. This points towards the conclusion that intermarriage and acculturation rather than genocide must have occurred during the centuries following the *Adventus Saxonum*.

2.2 Linguistic outcomes of the contacts with Celtic

The question of the linguistic outcomes of the earliest contacts between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons has long been dominated by a myth which can be called ‘Anglo-Saxonism’. A major linguistic representative of this myth is the Danish Anglicist Otto Jespersen (see Jespersen 1905), who argued that apart from river-names, place-names, and some personal names, the indigenous Celtic language has had hardly any impact on Old English or subsequent English. He explained this through the social, cultural and political supremacy of the Anglo-Saxons vis-à-vis the Celts. Jespersen’s account has been repeated in textbooks on the history of English up to the present day, despite some early dissenting views. To these belong, especially, Keller (1925), Dal (1952), and Preusler (1956). After a period of relative silence over this issue for a few decades, the Anglo-Saxonist view has come to be seriously challenged in several studies from the 1990s onwards, starting with Poussa’s (1990) article on possible Celtic influence on the English ‘periphrastic *do*’ construction. The same feature is treated from a typological perspective in van der Auwera and Genee (2002) and McWhorter (2009), both of whom note the uniqueness of English among Germanic languages with respect to this feature.

Typological influence of Celtic on English syntax and morphophonology is also in the focus of Tristram (1999), who puts the attrition of Old English inflections down to contacts with British Celtic. A few years earlier, a similar account had been proposed by Hickey (1995), who argued for ‘low-level’ phonological contact influences from British Celtic, affecting the pronunciation of Old English in certain types of contexts and leading to the general erosion of OE inflections. Further typological approaches include a series of studies by Theo Vennemann (see, e.g. Vennemann 2000, 2001, 2002). He discusses, e.g. the so-called ‘internal possessor’ construction, which English shares with Welsh but not with German.

A significant step in promoting the idea of Celtic influence on English was an international colloquium on “Early Contacts between English and the Celtic Languages”, held at the University of Joensuu Research Station in Mekrijärvi, Finland, in 2001. It was multidisciplinary in approach, consisting of contributions from a general historian and linguists representing different branches of linguistic study: syntax, morphophonology, lexicology, and place-name studies. This colloquium subsequently led to the publication of a volume of articles entitled *The Celtic Roots of English*, edited by Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola and Heli Pitkänen (University of Joensuu Press, 2002). Among the contributors to this volume were the historian Nicholas Higham and such distinguished historical linguists as Anders Ahlqvist, Richard Coates, Stephen Laker, Erich Poppe, Peter Schrijver, Hildegard Tristram, and Theo Vennemann, among others. The editors of the Celtic Roots volume later went on to coauthor the first ever monograph on the topic of Celtic influence on English, entitled *English and Celtic in Contact*, published by Routledge in 2008.

Yet another recent contribution is an important article by the Celticist Anders Ahlqvist (2010), who puts forward evidence supporting Celtic contact influence on three features of English,

viz. the OE 'be', the progressive form, and the third person singular pronoun *she* and its homophonous Celtic counterpart *sí*. This last feature had already attracted the attention of the Celticists Ernst Lewy (Lewy 1948: 175–176) and Heinrich Wagner (Wagner 1958: 838–841), who shared the view that the homophony between *sí* and *she* was not accidental. Ahlqvist follows up on this and suggests that an explanation for this parallel could be found in the larger than hitherto assumed presence of Irish on the eastern side of the Irish sea in the Anglo-Saxon period. This, as Ahlqvist points out, finds support in the research by the Celticist Peter Schrijver, who finds new evidence for Irish input to Old English (Schrijver 2009). In another recent treatment of the early contact situation, Trudgill (2010) discusses the question of Celtic influence in the light of some of the works mentioned here and also against some general contact-linguistic considerations. In some well-defined areas (mainly in the north) and periods in British history, these considerations speak for such influences alongside other sources such as those coming from the Scandinavian languages (Trudgill 2010: 1–36).

Trudgill (2010) distinguishes four different stages of language contact and their main linguistic outcomes between Brittonic, Latin, Old English and Old Norse. They are in a rough chronological order as follows:

- (1) interference and additive complexification in early Old English, with eventual shift from Brittonic to Old English;
- (2) simplification of Brittonic in the Highland zone;
- (3) simplification of later Old English in the Highland zone as a result of adult language contact;
- (4) intimate contact between Old English and an adstratum of Old Norse speakers mainly in the north.

Before moving on to influences from Latin, two examples of morphosyntactic features will be discussed in greater detail. Both have been claimed to derive from Celtic influence, and for both the evidence is very persuasive.

2.2.1 To 'be' in Celtic and English

The Old English paradigm for the verb 'be' was twofold in that it distinguished between two meanings, habitual 'is always/generally is' and 'actual' or future 'will be'. The former was based on a reconstructed **es*-form, the latter on a reconstructed **bheu*-form of the verb '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 OE forms based on the reconstructed root **bheu* (so-called *b*-forms) and their meanings are closely paralleled by the corresponding Celtic and especially Cymric 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 paradigm for both roots with clearly distinct meanings. Keller 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.

(Keller 1925: 60)

Keller's account went largely unnoticed amongst Anglicists for many decades, possibly because he wrote in German. A notable exception is the Anglo-Saxon scholar J.R.R. Tolkien, who apparently was not aware of Keller's ideas – at least he makes no reference to him – but

who had observed the same parallelism between the OE and the Welsh paradigms for the verb 'be'. He discussed this in his O'Donnell lecture entitled "English and Welsh" (see Tolkien 1963) and considered it as one of his prime examples of linguistic contact between the two languages. Tolkien 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 OE and Welsh. Tolkien also pointed out the uniqueness of the OE system among Germanic languages. Besides the similarities in the forms and functions of the OE and Welsh 'be' verbs, he noted the difficulty of explaining the short vowel in the OE 3 sg. 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: 30–2).

Tolkien weighed the possibility of 'accidental' similarity and the possible role of analogy as an explanatory factor, but concluded that

[i]t will still remain notable, none the less, that this preservation occurred in Britain and in a point in which the usage of the native language [i.e. Welsh] agreed. It will be a morphological parallel to the phonetic agreement, noted above, seen in the English preservation of *þ* and *w*.

In more recent research, both Keller's and Tolkien's accounts have been taken up with renewed interest. In reference to Keller's pioneering work, Angelika Lutz (see Lutz 2009) writes 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" (2009: 234). It is worth noting that similar ideas have also been

expressed on the Celticist side. Thus, Anders Ahlqvist (see 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).ⁱ 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 Peter Schrijver (see Schrijver 2007). However, he notes certain differences between Irish, on one hand, and Welsh and English, on the other, which make this scenario less likely than the one between Welsh and English (Ahlqvist 2010: 55-6).

In conclusion, 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 OE amongst Germanic languages with respect to this feature. Together, they make it more than likely that the OE distinction between the **es-* and **bheu-* forms of the verb 'be' is a result of linguistic contact between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons.

2.2.2 *Progressive*

The question of the origins of the English progressive or *-ing* form (PROG) belongs to one of the most debated topics in the history of English and has given rise to an extensive literature. Broadly speaking, there are three main positions on this issue: (1) views which explain the emergence of the PROG mainly as a language-internal (endogenous) development, although

possibly reinforced by the Latin model, (2) views which explain its rise as being due to the influence of Latin, Greek or French, and (3) views which look to the Celtic (Brittonic) languages as the principal source of the PROG.

For the representatives of the first view, the progressive represents an essentially internal or independent development. Scholars subscribing to this view include George O. Curme (see Curme 1912), Gerhard Nickel (see Nickel 1966), F. Th. Visser (see Visser 1963–73), and Bruce Mitchell (see Mitchell 1985). The biggest problem for this account is how to explain the emergence of the progressive form out of two distinct constructions in OE, one of which involved the so-called gerund or verbal noun (with the ending *-ung/-ing*) and the other the present participial construction (realised by the ending *-ande/-ende*). How exactly these two constructions evolved into the Middle English and Modern English progressives has always defied scholars' best efforts to explain in terms of internal development only. What also complicates the matter is the uniqueness of the English progressive among Germanic languages or dialects. It is true that some Germanic dialects have in the course of their histories developed periphrastic progressive constructions which resemble the English progressive, but with few exceptions (such as the Rhineland and some northern dialects of German), these have not been fully grammaticalised in them. For example, Poppe (2003) argues that English is the only Germanic language in which the periphrastic progressive is based on the merger of the formerly distinct participial and prepositional progressives (Poppe 2003: 75–76). One can also point out a formal difference between the English progressive and their putative Germanic parallels: the latter are formed with the nominalised infinitive (as in *er ist am lesen* lit. 'he is at-the read') and not with the verbal noun type structure as in English.

Fischer and van der Wurff (2006) have sought to resolve the problem of deriving the modern *-ing* form by assuming more than one cause to explain the development of the English PROG. They posit a chain of developments, starting with the loss of inflections in Old English. This

in turn contributed to the rise and eventual grammaticalisation of periphrastic constructions to replace the inflections, as well as the merger in ME between the verbal noun in *-ung/-ing* and the present participle in *-ende*, to eventually yield ME *-ing* (Fischer and van der Wurff 2006: 136-137).

The second line of thinking looks to possible external influences on the English PROG. Among these, Latin parallels have perhaps received the greatest attention. Thus, Mossé (1938) claims that, although the potential for the development of the progressive form was already present in OE itself, its rise in OE was triggered by direct influence from Latin and Greek. According to Mossé, Latin influence on OE was mainly transmitted through the practice of providing interlinear glosses or translations of Latin constructions which had no structural parallels in OE. These included, among others, the verb *ESSE* followed by the present (or the past) participle, as in *erat docens* ‘was teaching’ (Mossé 1938: 156). This was then rendered into English by the OE auxiliaries *beon/wesan* ‘be’, followed by the present participle. Another prominent advocate of the Latin influence hypothesis was Otto Jespersen (see, Jespersen 1909-1949, §§ 12.1(2)–12.1(3)).

Although the Latin hypothesis is supported by the kind of evidence cited by Mossé, it suffers from the same problem as the independent growth hypothesis when trying to explain the transition from the two available OE constructions to one in ME. Mossé favours some type of direct continuity between the OE *be* + present participle construction but assumes a complex and rather unpersuasive chain of phonetic changes to explain the transition from the suffix *-inde/-ande* to *-ing* in ME (1938: 113). The extent of Latin influence has also been questioned by, e.g. Nickel (1966). His analysis of the typical contexts in which the PROG occurred in Old English texts showed that even in those texts which were clearly affected by Latinate forms, the use of the PROG did not consistently follow the model of the corresponding Latin forms.

On these grounds, he concludes that the extent of Latin influence on the English PROG has been greatly exaggerated.

Romance languages have also been mentioned as a potential external source of the English PROG. Thus, Einkenkel (1914) argues that the French gerundial-participle construction involving the suffix *-ant* provided the crucial stimulus for the English gerund and the later progressive construction. Einkenkel's account was specifically aimed at refuting Curme's (1912) position, which, as was noted at the beginning of this subsection, looked to purely native origins of the English gerund. However, the major weakness of Einkenkel's argument is, as Dal (1952: 31) points out, that it fails to explain how and why the English PROG eventually came to be based on the *-ing* form and not on the OE present participial forms ending in *-ende* or *-ande*. Either of the latter would have been the expected development in Middle English, being formally close to the French suffix *-ant*. This is not the case, however, as it is precisely in the ME period that the old participial endings were replaced by the ending *-ing*. Visser (1963-1973), who sees the PROG as a primarily endogenous development, suggests 'selective' influence from French: the French model is according to him particularly relevant for those Middle English *-ing* constructions which were preceded by the preposition *in*, calquing thus the French pattern *en chantant* 'in/while singing' (Visser 1963-1973, § 1859).

Finally, the third line of thinking looks to the possibility of Celtic influence. There are several factors that speak for Celtic contact influence on the English PROG. First of all, the Celtic languages (esp. Brittonic) have from early on had close parallels to the English PROG in the form of periphrastic constructions involving the verb 'be' followed by the so-called verbal noun. Ahlqvist (2010: 61-62) cites examples from early Welsh and Old Irish from as early as the middle of the eighth century. He argues that at about that time periphrastic constructions became functionally differentiated from non-periphrastic ones in Middle Welsh, "thereby

giving rise to the grammatical category of progressive". Similar accounts have been given by, e.g. Braaten (1967) and Mittendorf and Poppe (2000).

In fact, the periphrastic constructions in Middle Welsh are structurally closer to the English PROG than, for example, some of the Germanic constructions that have sometimes been adduced to show that the PROG is of purely Germanic vintage. As was noted above, the Germanic constructions are formed with the nominalised infinitive and not with the verbal noun type structure as in English and the Celtic languages (Vennemann 2001: 356; Filppula et al. 2008: 69). Secondly, the chronological precedence of the Celtic constructions is beyond any reasonable doubt, which is of course a prerequisite for contact effects from this direction (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000; Ahlqvist 2010). Thirdly, apart from the shared structural features there are significant similarities in the semantic and functional properties of the English PROG and their Celtic parallels, with both of them centring around the notion of imperfectivity (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000; Poppe 2002). A fourth piece of indirect but significant evidence is that the PROG is more frequent and has a wider range of uses in so-called 'Celtic Englishes' than in other present-day British Isles Englishes, esp. with stative verbs, after auxiliaries (esp. *will/'ll*, *would/'d*), and in expressing habitual meaning (Mossé 1938; Braaten 1967; Filppula 2001, 2003; Paulasto 2006). This demonstrates the susceptibility of this area of grammar to contact influences.

The foregoing discussion has made it evident that the development of the English PROG can hardly be explained by recourse to language-internal factors only. In fact, given the distinctive nature of this category of English grammar and of its development, as compared with its closest relatives, external influences can hardly be overlooked, and among them, contact influences from Celtic (Brittonic) stand out as particularly plausible ones. This does not necessarily rule out the possibility of multiple causation, including other changes, such as the loss of inflections, affecting the grammatical system of the language at about the same time. The possible role of

(partial) parallels in some continental Germanic dialects is another factor that awaits further study.

3. Latin influences

It is customary to distinguish between three sources of Latin influence on Old English: (i) continental, i.e., contacts before the Germanic tribes had left their continental homelands; (ii) influence of British Latin; (iii) influences brought about by the Christianising of Britain from the end of the 6th century onwards (see, e.g. Baugh and Cable 1981: 75; Kastovsky 2006: 220).

It has been estimated that by the end of the 4th century there were several million people of Germanic origin living within the Roman empire. As Baugh and Cable (1981: 77) state, they were found in all kinds of positions in Roman society, from the humblest to the highest, guaranteeing thus regular intercourse between the various ethnic groups. Linguistically, this led to the adoption of several hundred Latin words into one or another Germanic dialect. Of these, Baugh and Cable (1981: 78) attribute some fifty words to the ancestors of the English on the continent. Not surprisingly, most of these words relate to agriculture, war, trade, domestic life, household articles, and clothing. Miller (2012: 62-80) provides an even more detailed list of probable early continental borrowings and their datings. He has as many as fourteen different categories comprising military, legal and official words, trade and measures, coins, metals and natural elements, dress and textiles, household and useful objects, food, drink, and cooking, to name but a few of the most important ones.

Miller (2012: 62) posits two criteria for early borrowings, the first of which is presence in multiple Germanic languages; the second is the treatment of the word in Old High German. West Germanic underwent a sound change known as the Second Consonant Shift or the High German Shift, which according to Miller (2012: 62) most probably started in the fourth or fifth

century in the southern parts of Germany and later diffused to the north. This change marks even at the present day a division between High German, which in the course of time became standard German, and Low German (so-called Plattdeutsch) (see also Pyles and Algeo 1993: 92).

Much of what was in section 2.2 said about the alleged paucity of Celtic influences in Old English also applies to the second source of Latin influence, British Latin. The standard view is that since Latin had ceased to be generally spoken in Britain by the time the Roman rule there came to an end, there was hardly any direct contact between speakers of British Latin and Old English, and consequently, little opportunities for Latin elements to be transferred to Old English. For example, Baugh and Cable state that “[i]t would be hardly too much to say that not five [Latin] words outside of a few elements found in place-names can be really proved to owe their presence in English to the Roman occupation of Britain” (Baugh and Cable 1981: 80). However, this wisdom has been challenged in some of the recent research especially by Peter Schrijver (see Schrijver 2002). He has shown that, despite obvious problems in reconstructing the exact linguistic detail of British Latin, which most likely was itself heavily influenced by substratal Celtic features, there was more British Latin spoken in Lowland Britain at the time of the *Adventus* than has generally been assumed. Schrijver also argues that British Latin also acted as a kind of linguistic go-between or buffer in the British Celtic-Old English interface and in fact filtered out especially some Brittonic phonological features that could otherwise well have been carried over to Old English (Schrijver 2002: 109). Pending further research on the survival of British Latin and its linguistic legacy in Old English, one has to be content to note that there is so far no evidence of morphosyntactic influences from the direction of British Latin; for these, one needs to look to Classical and later Latin influences, which mostly come into Old and Middle English along with the later Christianisation of Britain, starting at the end of the 6th century.

Of the three sources of Latin influence on Old English, Christianising has had the greatest impact on the English language (see, e.g. Baugh and Cable 1981: 75; Kastovsky 2006: 220). As in the case of contacts with French, to be discussed in section 4 below, vocabulary was the domain of language which was the most susceptible to influences from Latin. The standard view is that the introduction of Christianity brought along numerous lexical loans that had to do with religion and various kinds of church institutions and religious services. Other central areas of life where lexical borrowing occurred were education, books and learning, but words relating to everyday life, such as articles of clothing, household goods, medical terms, animals, and foods, were also adopted (Baugh and Cable 1981: 81-91; Kastovsky 2006: 222). However, as Kastovsky (2006: 222) points out, the numbers of Latin words borrowed in the OE period remained relatively small when compared to those adopted in the following centuries up until the Early Modern English period. According to Kastovsky, this may be explained by the all-pervasiveness of other than direct borrowings, viz. semantic loans, loan translations, and loan creations (2006: 222).

In addition to lexical loans, Latin has been argued to have affected the syntax of OE, as well. The progressive, which was discussed in 2.2.2 as a possible Celtic or French-influenced feature, has according to some scholars its origin in OE texts that are translations from Latin originals (see, e.g. Mossé 1938; Jespersen 1909-1949). In addition to that, one could mention the so-called ‘accusative-plus-infinitive’ construction (as in *We believe this to be wrong*), which may well be a syntactic borrowing from Latin (see, e.g. Fischer and van der Wurff 2006: 193-194), and the loss of the so-called ‘dativus sympatheticus’ and its gradual replacement by the possessive adjective from late OE onwards (see, e.g. Ahlgren 1946: 210-211). All in all, however, the syntactic input from Latin remained small and far less important than lexical borrowing, which is what could be expected on the basis of the superstratal nature of the Latin-Old English contacts (cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988).

Lexical borrowings from Latin continued well into the Middle English period and even beyond. Baugh and Cable (1981: 184-85) mention that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were particularly important in this respect. They also note a difference between borrowings from French (cf. section 4) and Latin: the latter were generally less popular and were mostly restricted to written language. Miller (2012: 85-88) treats them under the heading of ‘Learned borrowings’, which were used in their classical Latin form rather than that of Vulgar Latin. He also notes that they were mainly associated with Alfred’s educational reforms of the ninth century and the tenth-century Benedictine monastic revival (Miller 2012: 85). The majority of Latin borrowings were terms relating to science, law, theology, and other professional or technical uses. In many cases it is difficult to separate Latin borrowings from those from French, because both languages were in active use in post-Conquest Britain. It is also possible, as Baugh and Cable (1981: 185) write, that some borrowed words owed their origin to both languages.

4. Scandinavian influences

The Viking raids and invasions leading to Scandinavian influence in Old and Middle English began late in the eighth century. The invading Vikings came from Southern and Western Scandinavia, from regions known today as Denmark and Norway. Up until the mid-ninth century, the Viking invasions were conducted by relatively small groups of raiders, but from the second half of the ninth century onwards the Scandinavian invasions gradually escalated into widespread attacks by large armies. By 870 CE most of the eastern and northern parts of England were under the control of the ‘Danes’. The defeat of the Scandinavians at the Battle of Edington in 878 CE led to the formation of the Scandinavian governed ‘Danelaw’ in the northeastern half of the country, roughly from modern Northumbria to Essex. The invasions

continued well into the eleventh century, and in 1016 the Danish prince Cnut became king of England. Cnut's rule lasted for nearly two decades; after his death in 1035 Cnut's son Harthacnut succeeded him. When Harthacnut died in 1042, the throne went to Edward the Confessor, bringing to end the reign of a Danish king in England.

The impact of the Scandinavian presence can still be discerned in the large numbers of Scandinavian place-names, especially in the Danelaw area. Although the relationships between the Scandinavian settlers and the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic population were initially very hostile, they developed over time into peaceful coexistence, intermarriages and eventual amalgamation of the two populations. This close relationship is also reflected in many ways in the forms of legal procedure and local government. The peaceful coexistence, in turn, resulted in a significant influx of Scandinavian elements into the English language; the close linguistic affinity of Old Norse and OE facilitated the transfer. Whether Old Norse and Old English were mutually intelligible languages is a much-debated issue (for a summary, see Townend 2002: 9-11). Based on a large variety of evidence, Townend's own conclusion is that Old Norse and Old English were indeed mutually intelligible to a considerable degree. Other scholars, however, have been more skeptical about the issue. Thus, for example, Milroy (1996:177) has argued that, rather than mutual comprehensibility, the prolonged contact led, over time, to the development of an Anglo-Norse koiné "used for supra-local communication within England." As in the case of British Celtic, there is little in the way of direct evidence for the length of survival of the Scandinavian language in the British Isles. Millar (2007: 125) reports that Norn, a form of Scandinavian, probably become extinct even in the historical county of Caithness in the north east of Scotland during the 16th century. In the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland Norn survived until the late 17th/early 18th century (Barnes 1984:355, 2010: 36-43). There are reports of Norn surviving in the northern isles until the first half of the 19th century, Barnes

(1984: 355) and Millar (2007: 129), however, cast some doubt on these reports, and suggest that they may refer to a heavily Scandinavianised form of Scots instead.

As mentioned above, the large numbers of Scandinavian place names especially in the eastern and northern parts of England and Scotland are living testimony to the extent of Scandinavian linguistic influences on English. In fact, our knowledge of the extent of Scandinavian settlements and influence is, to a considerable degree, based on the evidence provided by the place-names (cf. Durkin 2014: 174). Place-name elements such as *-by*, *-thorpe*, *-thwaite*, *-toft*, etc., “are uniquely North Germanic, and occur most frequently in the Danelaw” (Lass 1987: 54); it has been estimated that the number of Scandinavian place names is around 1,400 in all (see, e.g. Baugh & Cable 1981: 97).

The influence of the Scandinavian languages can be detected especially in the lexicon. The introduction of Scandinavian loanwords into English took place over several centuries. It has been estimated that up to c. 1100 only about 150 borrowings can be attested (Kastovsky (1992: 321), and the majority of English loanwords from Scandinavian languages are first attested during the Middle English period. Durkin (2014: 187) reports that the electronic Middle English Dictionary lists 1,436 entries that mention Old Norse in the etymology. As Durkin points out, however, not all these words are necessarily borrowings.

Identifying borrowings in the case of genetically closely related languages, such as Norse and English, can be difficult. Thus, a number of formal comparative tests for Scandinavian provenance have been devised. A comprehensive list of such comparative tests was compiled by Björkman (1900-02: 30–185), and practically all subsequent discussions are based on

Björkman (cf. Dance 2012: 1729). Amongst these diagnostic phonological correspondences, the following (from Dance 2012: 1729) can be mentioned here:

- PGrmc /sk/ > ON /sk/ vs. OE /ʃ/. E.g. ON *fiskr* with /sk/ vs. OE *fisc* with /ʃ/
- PGrmc /ð/ > ON /ð/ (medially or finally) vs. OE /d/. E.g. OIcel *beiða* vs. OE *bædan*, ME *baithen* ‘inquire, grant’
- PGrmc /g/, /k/ > ON /g/, /k/ vs. OE /j/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/ in palatalization environments. E.g. OIcel *eggja* vs. OE *ecgan* ‘to harrow’ with /dʒ/
- PrGrmc */ai/ > ON /ei/ vs. OE /a:/. E.g. OIcel *nei* vs. OE *nā*, ME *nai* ‘no’

As Dance (2012: 1730) points out, these criteria provide the most secure basis for identifying words as borrowings from Old Norse. When formal comparative tests cannot be applied, etymologists must resort to “whatever other evidence is to hand, and (more or less cautiously) [...] weigh its value in each individual instance” (Dance 2012: 1730).

Although the number of Scandinavian loanwords is much smaller than the numbers of Latin and French borrowings in English, Scandinavian influence on English lexis is generally considered to be very significant, and the impact of the Scandinavian contacts can be clearly seen in the everyday core vocabulary of present-day English. Durkin (2014: 213) presents a list of Scandinavian loanwords belonging to everyday vocabulary of modern English, including nouns such as *anger, awe, bleak, cake, dirt, egg, fellow, gasp, gift, guest, husband, ill, kettle, law, leg, loan, root, seat, sister, skill, skin, sky, Thursday, ugly, window, wing*. The fact that common verbs such as *die, get, give, hit, seem, take*, and *want*, and function words such as *both, though*, and *till* are Scandinavian loanwords, is indicative of a very close and intensive contact between Norse and English speakers.

It is worth pointing out that the Scandinavian influence in the lexicon is more widespread in the dialects than in the Standard language. Thus, for example, Wakelin (1977: 131-3) notes that for many cognate pairs, the borrowed Scandinavian form only survives in the dialect, while the Standard preserves a reflex of the Old English form. Wakelin's examples include pairs such as *church* (< OE *cirice*) – *kirk* (< ON *kirkja*), *bridge* (< OE *brycg*) – *brig* (< ON *bryggja*) and *yard* (< OE *geard*) – *garth* (< ON *garðr*).

In the realm of morphology, the 3rd person plural pronouns *they*, *their*, *them* are generally considered to be a reasonably secure case of Scandinavian influence in English (cf. Miller 2012: 128-130). However, Cole (2018) has recently contested this commonly held view and argued for a native origin of *they*, *their*, *them*. In a closely argued study, she proposes that early northern English evidence points towards the Old English demonstratives *þā*, *þāra*, *þām*, and a northern Middle English reanalysis from demonstrative to personal pronoun, as the origin of the present-day English 3rd person plural pronouns. The jury is still out on Cole's account of a native origin for the 3rd person plural pronouns, but her study serves as a good reminder that further research on the role of Scandinavian influence on the development of English is still needed.

Possible syntactic correspondences between English and the Scandinavian languages have also been suggested in the literature (see esp. Einkenkel 1906, Jespersen 1938, Lindblad 1953, Kirch 1959, McWhorter 2002, and Miller 2004, 2012). Thus, preposition stranding in relative clauses (as in *The train he was in*) and passives (*They were spoken with*), omission of the relative pronoun in relative clauses (so-called contact relatives or relative ellipsis), omission of the conjunction *that* (zero-complementizers), and the phrasal or group genitive have been singled

out as probable examples of Scandinavian influence. Several other changes, resulting in a general “decrease in overspecification and complexity” of the grammatical system of English (McWhorter 2002: 254) have also been suggested to have taken place as a consequence of Scandinavian contacts. McWhorter (2002) lists the loss of inflectional morphology, including marking of grammatical gender on the definite article and loss of “inherent reflexive marking” common in other Germanic languages (as in German *sich rasieren* ‘to shave’, *sich beeilen* ‘to hurry’) as possibly contact-induced changes, and Miller (2012: 144-5) discusses the role of Scandinavian in two changes in word order, strict V2 in the Northern Middle English, and the shift from SOV to SVO. However, Miller points out that “any conclusion that attributes SVO to Scandinavian directly is too strong.” He observes that a general shift towards SVO can be attested in Germanic, and that the change towards SVO word order is more likely to be a case of shared innovation in Germanic languages (Miller 2012:145).

The question of the extent of Scandinavian influence on English structure has attracted a wide range of differing perspectives in recent decades. Thomason & Kaufman (1988) argued that significant Scandinavian influence was essentially restricted to the lexicon; in their view the close typological similarity of Old English and Old Norse meant that Scandinavian had no significant structural impact on English. McWhorter (2002), Miller (2004, 2012), and Trudgill (2010, 2011), on the other hand, have argued that Middle English contacts with Scandinavian resulted in major structural changes in English, both simplifications and complexifications. At the other extreme, Emonds and Faarlund (2014) and Faarlund and Emonds (2016) have claimed, mostly on the basis of syntactic evidence, that from the Middle English period onwards English became a North Germanic language, which descends from the Norse speaking Scandinavian population in the East and North of England, rather than the West Germanic Old English. The far-reaching claims of Emonds and Faarlund have sparked

a lively debate, for a detailed refutation of their thesis, see especially Bech and Walkden (2016).

5. French Influences

The Norman Conquest of 1066 and its aftermath caused a radical change in the linguistic landscape in England. Norman French or ‘Anglo-French’, as Miller (2012) prefers to call it, was introduced as the predominant language of the nobility and administration in England for some three hundred years. The most profound influences affected English vocabulary but left their traces in English phonology, spelling, and to some extent, morphology and even syntax as well.

The greatest influx of French words into English occurred in the late ME period, from around 1200 onwards, when the speakers of Norman French started to shift to English in large numbers. Miller (2012: 161) writes that, in the period 1175 to 1225, the proportion of French loanwords in English vocabulary increased from 6.7% to 14.8%. The peak of 30.2% was reached in 1300; after this date French loans gradually gave way to increased borrowings from Medieval Latin and Latin-French (Miller 2012: 161). Standard textbooks such as Baugh and Cable (1981: 168-174) provide long lists of lexical loans from French and their cultural spheres, including governmental and administrative words, ecclesiastical words, words relating to law, army and navy, fashion, meals and social life, art, learning and medicine. Baugh and Cable (1981: 168) distinguish two stages in the borrowings from French, with the year 1250 as an approximate dividing line. Some 900 words came into the language before 1250; they were mostly ecclesiastical terms or words relating to contacts with the new ruling class. After 1250, thousands of more words were borrowed, leading eventually to a total of slightly over ten thousand French loanwords adopted in the Middle English period (Baugh and Cable 1981:

178). An influential factor behind increased borrowings was the change in the external conditions. As Baugh and Cable put it, in that period “all classes were speaking or learning to speak English”; in other words, language shift from French to English was under way also among people who had earlier been “accustomed to speak French” (Baugh and Cable 1981: 168).

Miller (2012: 167) points out that even though the numbers of French loanwords in English are impressive, a more significant result of the influx of loanwords was the social stratification of the English lexicon. French terms came to enjoy a privileged social status as compared with the corresponding English ones, the prime example being words for animals “in the barnyard vs terms for them in the table”, e.g. *swine* vs *pork*, *calf* vs *veal* (Miller 2012: 167).

Given the great numbers of lexical loans adopted in the centuries following the Conquest, it is not surprising that French influence also left its trace on English spelling and even phonology. As regards spelling, one has to bear in mind that Norman or Anglo-French was not a uniform dialect and had no uniform system of spelling, as Miller (2012: 152) writes. A further complicating factor was the difference between Norman/Anglo-French and Central (Parisian) French, which also exercised a certain influence on the forms of borrowed words. Perhaps the best-known examples are English doublets, i.e. spellings (and pronunciations) with either Norman or non-Norman initial consonant. Miller (2012: 156) provides a list of doublets in *c-* and *ch-*, including words such as *catch* vs *chase*, *cattle* vs *chattle*, *cant* vs *chant*, and *car* vs *chariot* (see also Baugh and Cable 1981: 174-177 for similar examples). In phonology, Pyles and Algeo (1993) note that two Middle English diphthongs entered the language through loanwords from French: [ɔi] and [uɪ]. The former was spelled *oi* or *oy*, as in *joie* ‘joy’ and *cloister* ‘cloister’; the latter was also spelled *oi* or *oy*, exemplified by *boilen* ‘to boil’, *poisen* ‘to poison’, and *joinen* ‘to join’ (Pyles and Algeo 1993: 148).

The French input to Middle English morphology is most manifest in several derivational affixes, most of which are still used in Modern English. Miller's (2012: 176-184) examples are *-ite* (ModE *-ity*), deverbal *-ciun* or *-acioun* (ModE *-ation*), the suffix *-ment*, deverbal *-able*, and deverbal *-ee*. A further feature of the borrowing process was the emergence of hybrid words consisting of a native English base plus French suffix. According to Miller (2012: 183), some 150 hybrid derivatives antedate the year 1500, while a hundred years earlier their number was c. 90. The most productive domain for hybrids was literary texts, such as those authored by Chaucer and Wyclif. Prestige also played a role. Thus, Miller (2012: 183) notes that both Chaucer and Wyclif used non-prestige French affixes with native English words, but avoided using more prestigious abstract suffixes on native words representing lower register. His examples of the latter type include *egg(e)ment* 'instigation', *murderment*, and *cursement*, which however occurred in Middle English texts in sufficient numbers to show that the derivational process was already available in the colloquial language in that period (Miller 2012: 183).

It is more difficult to demonstrate morpho-syntactic influences from French, which is in fact something to be expected in light of the superstratal nature of the contact situation in the post-Conquest centuries (cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988). Nonetheless, some features have been suggested in the literature to have their source in French. Mustanoja (1960) mentions as examples some uses of prepositions. Thus *at*, *by*, and *in* acquired some new meanings due to the influence of Old French. *At* "greatly increased its phrasal power under the influence of OF *a*, L[atin] *ad*, and obviously also ON *at*" (Mustanoja 1960: 349). The uses of *by*, in turn, were influenced by the French preposition *par*, while *in* came to be used instead of *on* in contexts like *in a book* (cf. OE *on bec*), probably due to influence from OF *en un livre* and Latin *in libro* (Mustanoja 1960: 349). Mustanoja adds to these some completely new prepositions based on (more or less) similar French usages, e.g. *according to*, *considering*, *during*, *excepting*, *saving*,

touching. The new prepositions ending in *-ing* are, according to Miller (2012: 185), the result of reanalysis of participles as prepositions. As such, Miller continues, they represent a lexical rather than morpho-syntactic feature, but one that has syntactic consequences.

Just like prepositions, the meanings of some adverbs can be argued to have been modified under the influence of French. As examples Mustanoja (1960) mentions the adverbs *albeit*, *as*, and *very*., *Albeit* is first recorded from the writings of Chaucer and Gower, and “is perhaps a calque on OF *tout soit il*” (Mustanoja 1960: 317). *As* occurs in certain types of temporal and other expressions, possibly in imitation of the uses of OF *si* ‘thus, so, as’. Mustanoja’s examples are *he hadde ... born hym weel as of so litel space* and OF *et povre sont si garniment Come de si gentil baron* (Mustanoja 1960: 333). *Very* is based on the OF adjective *verrai* ‘true, real’ and has been used in English as an adjective since the 13th century. Frequent occurrence in syntactic positions before an attributive adjective (e.g. *that is a verray gentil man*) gradually led to the development of *very* into an intensifying adverb of degree, and by the second half of the 16th century it had supplanted the other popular adjective and adverb intensifiers such as *full*, *right*, and *much* (Mustanoja 1960: 326-327).

In syntax, Miller (2012: 185), considers French influence to have been “very limited”, which also accords well with what is known about contact influences in the type of circumstances that prevailed in Britain in the period at issue (cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988). The most obvious example according to Miller is the use of *for* with infinitives, as in *I want for to go*. *For* was first used as a purposive marker, then as an infinitival adjunct, and ended up as a case-assigner before falling out of use (Miller 2012: 185).

There is less evidence of French influence upon other ‘core’ syntactic features, but the progressive form, discussed in section 2.2.2 above, is one such candidate. However, there are strong grounds for preferring a Celtic rather than French origin for this feature. Another

syntactic feature that has close French parallels is the so-called *it*-cleft construction, as in *It is tomorrow he comes*. Here, too, Celtic influence suggests itself as a more likely source than French. Filppula (2009) argues that major factors supporting this conclusion are very close parallels in the Celtic (both Brittonic and Goidelic) languages and the earlier attestation of cleft constructions as compared with the corresponding English constructions. He continues that clefting in Celtic languages had a robust presence in even the earliest recorded stages and most probably extends back to Continental Celtic (i.e. Gaulish). The prominent status of clefting in French may well be due to Gaulish influence, as has been suggested by Lambert (2003). Another indirect piece of evidence supporting Celtic influence is the frequent use of cleft constructions in present-day and earlier Celtic-influenced varieties of English and in Breton French (see Filppula 2009: 287).

Further Reading

Contact-linguistic approaches to languages are one of the most rapidly expanding areas of modern linguistics and the historical study of English is no exception. Many of the ‘old wisdoms’ in the field are challenged by the emergence of new theories pertaining to contact-induced language change. Intriguing new discoveries are made, based on the availability of databases that are significantly larger than before and amenable to computer-assisted data retrieval techniques.

In the field of English historical linguistics, a particularly useful source is Miller (2012). It provides perhaps the hitherto most comprehensive account of the linguistic effects of contacts between English and its neighbouring Western European languages over a period of one

thousand years. Contacts with the classical languages Latin and Greek are also covered.

Durkin (2014) provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the impact of loanwords on the lexicon of English.

Contacts of English with the Insular Celtic languages belongs to the most widely debated topics in the history of English. The 'standard' view is that outside of a number of place-names and river-names there is hardly any trace of Celtic influence on English. This view has in the last thirty years or so been challenged, and a whole new literature now exists on this question. Among these works, a useful introduction to the history of research on the English-Celtic interface and critical discussion on the recent findings is Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008). Another important source dealing with current research on the English-Celtic contacts is the Special Issue on Re-evaluating the Celtic hypothesis, *English Language and Linguistics* 13:2 (2009). It has contributions from eight historical linguists approaching the topic from several different points of view.

For Scandinavian influences on English, Townend (2002) offers a thorough overview of the linguistic and historical relationship between Old English and Old Norse; Dance (2012) is a concise treatment of English in contact with Norse, focusing especially on the lexicon.

Finally, one could mention two handbooks not listed in the References. These are *The Handbook of the History of English*, edited by Ans van Kemenade and Bettelou Los (Blackwell, 2006) and *The Handbook of Language Contact*, edited by Raymond Hickey (Blackwell, 2010). Both contain several articles relevant to contact-linguistic issues in the history of English.

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Notes

¹ At this point it is worth noting that some other Germanic languages also have forms beginning with *b-* in some parts of their paradigms of the verb ‘to be’. 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.