

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS AN
EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

by

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The educational system as it presently exists in England is based upon a standard language, English. But, English has not always been the language base for a medium of educational exchange in England. Prior to the middle of the fourteenth century all education was conducted in either Latin or French. Since the English language is used as a medium of educational instruction in English schools today, there had to have been a transitional period in which the English language was accepted into the schools. It is this transition period in English history that is the principle area of study in this paper.

Reasons for Study

The underlying theme of this study is to concentrate on the early developmental stages of the English language in Medieval England through the studies of linguistics, the education system and literature. This paper will show that English was not a practical instrument of education prior to 1350 A.D. Upon assimilation of Romanic words into the English vocabulary, there arose the opportunity for the language to acquire a depth of vocabulary sufficient to fulfill the needs of an educational institution. It is the acquisition of these Romanic loan words and the opportunity they provided education which will be presented.

In no other studies or references to the development of the English language, is credit given to the expulsion of the French by Edward I, or the Hundred Year War as possible contributing factors to the reemergence of English. There are only limited references which attribute the Black Death as a factor in the rise of English. The potential of all these factors and others will be examined in

this paper as to the possible role if any that they may have played in the reemergence of the English language in Medieval England.

Methodology of Study

This paper is to be structured in such a manner as to present a logical progression of material and information that will assist in developing the theme of this thesis. Information contributing to the body and central theme of this paper will be drawn from three areas of academics; linguistics, education and literature. As there are no previous studies relating specifically to the theme of this paper, those sources to be covered in Chapter 2's review of the literature are works which will come closest to any research available in this area of concentration.

A general historical overview is to be presented in Chapter 3 to give some idea of where the areas of linguistics and education had progressed to before the middle of the fourteenth century. This chapter will make available information which will be necessary in understanding the progressive development of education and linguistics before the transitional fourteenth century. Since these two areas are keys in the theme of this paper, there must be some background review.

Material to be dealt with in Chapter 4 will be the role that literature plays in the development of English linguistics. Major writers of the fourteenth century will be analyzed as to their contributions in the growth of the English vocabulary through the assimilation of words from the Romance languages.

Chapter 5 will attempt to bring together those areas of linguistics, education and literature, to show how their interrelationship assists in the eventual predominance of the English language over the Romance languages in English society and the schools. Also to be examined in this chapter are the contributing factors which made possible this transition in language. Political and social factors will be the key areas of concentration in developing this hypothesis.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will deal exclusively with published source material that concentrates on those areas on which this paper hopes to build. These published works are either the best known or either the latest studies available in their respective categories. This chapter is divided into three areas of study to make referencing easier. The three divisional areas are linguistic, educational and literary, as all are areas pertinent to the content and structure of this paper.

Linguistic Studies

The study of linguistics is very important to this papers development. The progress of the English language through the Middle Ages must be followed to illustrate the eventual capability of English becoming an instructional language. There will only be two works reviewed in this category.

The first published work on linguistics is one by Henry Alexander entitled The Story of Our Language, published in New York, originally in 1940 and then in a revised edition in 1962. Alexander's work is probably the foremost work available in the area of general English linguistics. Every aspect of the English language is covered in the text from origin to syntax. Alexander gives a good overview of the English language from Anglo-Saxon to Modern English, concentrating primarily on Modern English. The book is good as a general guide to the language but provides no detailed analysis on any aspect of the English language.

The next work on English linguistics is more restricted and detailed in its study. This work is Joseph Mersand's Chaucer's Romance Vocabulary, published in New York in 1939. Mersand's work is concerned with the actual assimilation of Romance words into the English vocabulary. Mersand's study limits itself to the

works of Geoffrey Chaucer and the Romance words found in Chaucer's various literary works. Mersand's book is important to this paper because it indirectly supports the view that English required a larger vocabulary before being capable of acting as an educational medium. Joseph Mersand's book is still the leading reference source for the study of Romance words in the English language, even though published in 1939.

Educational Studies

Those works dealing with education in Medieval England are those that describe the schools of England. Very few educational works deal exclusively with educational instruction, most combine schools and instruction. The two works to be covered in this section are books that deal primarily with the schools of England, but also cover course content and instruction.

First among those works that concentrate on English schools and their development is the book by A. F. Leach entitled The Schools of Medieval England, published in London in 1915. For almost sixty years Leach's book served as the leading reference on medieval schools in England. Leach's book is thorough in its approach to the medieval school. The view of medieval schools that Leach gives is fairly general in scope. Leach gives too little reference to the usage of French and English in the medieval schools to be of much use to any paper concentrating on the usage of these languages as means of instruction.

The foremost authoritative work and best reference source on medieval schools in England is that by Nicholas Orme entitled English Schools in the Middle Ages, published in London in 1973. This work by Orme was for the Doctoral dissertation in Education. Orme is without a doubt the leading authority on schools of the Middle Ages in England. His work builds upon that started by Leach and far surpasses anything done after Leach. Orme's work is extremely well documented, but is most definitely a reference source only for those interested in medieval schools. Orme makes some reference to linguistics in his book, but

is obviously concerned only with documenting the institutions and their development, administratively and scholastically. A very good work by Orme, and one well worth reading.

Literary Studies

The work in this section is primarily on medieval literature, although there is some effort to document the development of this literature. The only piece of literature to be covered in this section is a work by Basil Cottle, entitled The Triumph of English 1350-1400, published in New York in 1969. Cottle covers primarily the literary maturity of English from 1350-1400. Cottle does show the relationship between linguistics and literature but does so in a superficial manner. Cottle's primary concern is to show that English literature had come into its own in the works of Langland, Chaucer and others after being completely dominated by the French influence since the Norman Conquest.

All the works in this chapter contributed in one way or another in assisting the formulation of this paper, because they all proved there was a void that linked the three categories of linguistics, literature and education. The works reviewed in this chapter either make reference to one or two of the following categories; literature, linguistics and education, but none of the works shows a relationship between all three categories, which this paper will accomplish.

Chapter III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To better understand the relationship between linguistics, literature and education in medieval England, some general background information is necessary to understand how these subjects intertwine and eventually develop into a language that is sufficiently matured to fulfill the needs of literature and education. This chapter will establish a basis from which this paper will eventually draw conclusions on the influence that the three above mentioned topics had upon one another.

Ascendence of the Romance Languages

From the earliest conquest of the island by the Latin speaking Romans in 55 B.C., until the death of the last French speaking monarch, England was a country dominated by foreign conquerors. Therefore, it was not unusual to find Britains prior to the fourteenth century living in their native land but not understanding the language of the monarchy and ruling classes.

After the Norman invasion of England in 1066 A.D., native Britains found their island dominated and ruled by a French speaking aristocracy that could not speak English. Likewise, the vast majority of Britains were unaccustomed to the French tongue. This communication barrier between Norman and Britain would prove to be a factor that would separate British peasant and Norman ruler for almost three hundred years.

The Normans in their conquest of England did not arrive as complete strangers to the island, for Britains had been dealing with French speaking merchants for centuries prior to the invasion. So the French vernacular was not completely foreign to Britains. But after the conquest, the French

language had become more than a merchants tongue, it had become the official state language of Britain. This language shift, however, did not affect day to day living habits of the British peasantry, unless they crossed paths with the government on an official matter.

The introduction of the French language onto British society was not the first instance of a Romanic language having a dominant position in everyday British life. Over a thousand years prior to the Norman invasion, the Romans under Julius Caesar landed in ancient Britain to claim the island for the Roman Republic. Since the Roman invasion in the first century B.C., the Latin language was a familiar and acceptable medium of communication, primarily with the Roman governors and secondly with the Roman Catholic Church. So the Romanic family of languages had been well represented in England long before the arrival of the Normans. But not since the last Roman governors, had a Romanic language dominated as a state or official language.

Predominance of Norman French

With the coming of the Normans and their peculiar dialect of French, the native Britains found their English tongue reduced to a language of peasants. The dominance of the Norman French and Latin tongues would eventually parallel one another as the only acceptable languages of the elite of England. Every facet of British life was touched in one manner or another by either French or Latin.

The dominance of French and Latin together started a one sided battle of languages against the native English. Scholar Basil Cottle makes an observation that shows the strength of Latin and French and the concern of losing the English tongue:

"The decline of English started after 1066 A.D. with the substitution of Norman French for polite speech and officialdom and of Latin for all scholarship and much else, the withdrawal of patronage from the old classical English poetry, and the alien tongue used in schools as

the medium of instruction and even among the harried Jews as their vernacular; but one or two earlier commentators may be cited, as showing at least a realization that the national tongue was in danger."¹

Englishmen could not hope to gain much prominence in a structured class system dominated by the Normans unless they spoke the tongue of the ruling class. Without knowledge of the French language, barriers existed at every turn for the native Britain. So, it was only a natural course of events that the English middle and upper classes learned to speak French.

In a work written by Robert of Gloucester around 1300, the following observation is made about the French language and its influence. Normans of the nobility and other classes continued to teach their children French after the invasion as to set themselves into an elitist position in English society. Should a man not know French, he was looked down upon, and was very unlikely to advance very far in life. Gloucester makes an observation that in no other country except England did native men give up their own language and take another.² Robert of Gloucester wrote this strong statement 234 years after the conquest.

But, the English language did not altogether cease to be written and spoken after the Norman invasion. References are available indicating that as early as the twelfth century, some of the Norman nobles and churchmen were able to speak and understand English. The English language did survive because it flourished among the British lower classes. But the cultural and educational supremacy of French rendered it the likely choice for instruction in the schools and insured its retention in British society.³

¹Basil Cottle, The Triumph of English 1350-1400 (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969), p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Stuart Robertson, The Development of Modern English (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1936), pp. 53-54.

The English language was hardly a match for the more culturally based French. Up to the eleventh century English was unilingual and lacked cultural depth, because Old English was derived primarily from the Celtic and Danish languages, neither of which possessed a wide cultural base. French predominated Old English in education, commerce and government because of the depth and breadth of the Norman vocabulary. According to Stuart Robertson's comments:

"It was inevitable that French should become at once the language of law, of the church, of civil government, and of military organization. It was almost as inevitable, particularly since the Normans represented a higher social and literary culture, that their advantageous position as conquerors should mean the importation of a French vocabulary for the conventions and usages of polite society, for the things of the Church, for education, and for literature."⁴

The French language, by rooting itself into British culture, would leave influences in the English language that are even evident today. This could not have developed had the French language not found some acceptance among the native Britains. A. F. Leach notes that had a great deal of influential Britains not accepted the French tongue, it might never have endured so long after the conquest. Leach's note comes from a commentary written in 1327 by Ranulf Higden entitled Polychronicon:

"It comes today chiefly from two things, viz. that boys in school, contrary to the custom of all other nations, since the first coming of the Normans, abandoning their own native tongue are compelled to construe in French; and also that noblemen's sons from their cradles are taught the French idiom; and country men, wishing to be like them, that so they may appear more respectable, endeavor to Frenchify themselves with all their might."⁵

French was not the only Romanic language to leave a lasting impression in England during the middle ages. Latin was the language of the Church and most

⁴Stuart Robertson, The Development of Modern English (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1936), pp. 53-54.

⁵A. F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1915), p. 118.

learned individuals, whether their profession was in trade, administration or a field directly associated with the Church. Most transactions during the middle ages were recorded in Latin. What French was to the spoken word, Latin was to the written word, and both being used simultaneously exerted a tremendous amount of influence on the eventual development of the English language in the middle ages.

Diffusion of the French Influence in England

After the invasion and conquest of England, the Normans modified the English governmental system to one with which they were more familiar. So it was essential that all individuals involved in government conduct all transactions in a language familiar to most of those in positions of authority: Latin or French. Prior to the invasion all official documents were transcribed in Latin, as it was the common language familiar to all learned individuals. The Normans continued to have all official documents and records in Latin. But, French came to replace English as the spoken language in the Royal Court and all other governmental seats.

The French influence in Law and commerce had direct effects upon the average Englishman. Most trading and commerce on a wholesale level was conducted orally in French and transcribed in Latin. This usage of French was necessary so merchants could conduct business with the continent. For this reason, local English merchants did not require a command of the vernacular, only those merchants in the larger cities where a larger percentage of the populace spoke French.

Even the government courts at all levels of the judiciary were affected by the Romanic languages. Prior to the conquest the courts were conducted in Old English and recorded in Latin. After the conquest there is merely the replacement of English with French, with Latin still used to record the court minutes. French persisted in the English judicial system as late as the mid fourteenth century. Also until the mid fourteenth century, all sessions of parliament had

been recorded in Latin and conducted in French, until 1362 when a petition in parliament explained the difficulties that the French language brought.⁶ Parliament then started conducting all business in English the following year.

French became the language in the English Royal Court and of the lay aristocracy. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, French spread among native gentry, clergy and merchants. As shown earlier French was the accepted language of the law courts, and most importantly, it was the language being used at the schools and universities along with Latin.⁷

Besides Latin, French was the only other language permitted in grammar schools at the time, because it was considered more culturally adequate in expression than English. Gentry, merchants, lawyers, educators and church officials all perpetuated the usage of French. These are the individuals who should be credited with assisting the ascendancy and spread of the Romanic languages in Medieval England. But, ultimately, this Romanic influence, rather than acting as a detriment to English, has reacted as a catalyst to strengthen the language.

Middle English

Middle English is the commonly understood transitional period in English linguistics linking the Old English of the eleventh century with Modern English of the sixteenth century. Middle English was the result of French and Latin blending into the Old English vocabulary over a period of three hundred years. With the change from Old English to Middle English, there occurred a slight change in the regional dialects, most noticeably the midland regions. (See Maps 1 and 2). As is the case in most countries with varied dialects, one is more

⁶Stuart Robertson, The Development of Modern English (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1936), p. 59.

⁷Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 71.



OLD ENGLISH DIALECT REGIONS

MAP 1*

*Map taken from Henry Alexander's The Story of Our Language (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), p. 55.



MIDDLE ENGLISH DIALECT REGIONS

MAP 2*

*Taken from Henry Alexander's The Story of Our Language (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), p. 72.

likely to prevail as a representative of the major language. In English the east midland dialect would prove prevalent.

East Midland Dialect

As stated before, by far the most influential of the regional dialects was the East Midland. Two factors contributed in this dominance. First, the great seats of learning, Oxford and Cambridge, were located in this region. Also, the capital city of London, which is England's seat of government and center of trade is in this region. Midland English owes its foundation to Old Anglian from the Angles, its phonology and inflections differ from those regional dialects based on the Saxon language, such as the Southern region.

The influence of the East Midland dialect on the other regions of England by prominent writers and the business trade was somewhat restricted. The influence of East Midland was one that affected a certain social class, particularly those who could read. With the acceptance of East Midland by the educated peoples throughout England, a dialect was found that would provide the basis for a unified and standard English.

With this wide spread acceptance of East Midland as a basis for literary correspondence between writer and reader, a perfect laboratory existed for the experimental influx of foreign words into the reader's vocabulary. This was one of the most successful vehicles in spreading the influence of East Midland and at the same time enriching the vocabulary.

The East Midland dialect so permeated the written form of English in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it was inevitable that this dialect alone would dominate as the eventual predecessor of Modern English. References to the influence of writers during this period can be found in Chapter 4. Since Oxford and Cambridge were in the East Midland influence and pass it on in their writings if they were inclined to write in English. All of these factors contributed to make East Midland a dominant factor in Middle English linguistics.

Romanic Assimilation

With French having such strong ties on the communicative interactions of the English people, adaptation of some words and phrases were solidly cemented in the daily vocabulary. Schools and churches assumed an important role in the adaptation of the more worldly language of French. With the better part of the country's populace being Christian, exposure to French was more possible than to the other religious denominations.⁸ When the Normans conquered England, some of the higher church positions were filled by French speaking clergy, who likewise filled numerous positions below them with French clergy. With time, the French influence spread to the smaller parish churches and the general rural public. Although the parsons of these small parish churches were versed in Latin, they still spoke the local dialect, if they were Englishmen trained in local seminaries rather than one of the French immigrant clergy.

Even the country's schools stressed French rather than the native English. To show that most Englishmen, schooled in French, spoke a vulgar form of the language, Geoffrey Chaucer relates the coarse speech of the Prioress in the General Prologue of his Canterbury Tales:

"And Frenssh she spak full faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford-alie-Bowe, For
Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe."⁹

The blending of French into the Englishman's vocabulary was a factor of necessity. The English still had ballads and folk tales told in their own language, and everyday speech was English. But the expansion and growth of the country's economy and social system needed stimulation, and French with its immense vocabulary and cosmopolitan veneer, met the needs of the English people.

⁸J. J. Bagley, Life in Medieval England (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1960), p. 68.

⁹A. C. Crawley, edit., Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1966), p. 4.

The absorption of French words for a lacking English vocabulary was greatest during the second half of the fourteenth century. Those greatly responsible for the enrichment of the English vocabulary were the writers of this same time period. Most of the well known English writers of this time initiated French and Latin words into their literature. Geoffrey Chaucer was perhaps the best known of these fourteenth century writers. Chaucer's works, more than any other writers, showed the immense blending of Romanic words into English literature. With the writers and scholars of the time accepting the Romanic assimilation, a larger and better adapted English vocabulary was formulating itself in everyday England. A more detailed account on the writers of this time period and their influence on the English language and its development is found in Chapter 4.

The English Educational System 1100-1400

The educational system in medieval England was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church and was operated as though it was simply another functional duty. As with all other church matters, the classes were conducted in Latin. Latin grammar was the foundation for further advanced studies in theology, law and medicine within the church-run system. Not until well after the Norman conquest did church schools start conducting some instruction in French, and this was primarily because a large number of Norman clergy occupied positions as instructors in many church-run schools. Prior to the thirteenth century it is difficult to relate any matters of medieval education without mentioning the enormous contributions made by the Church.

English as will be shown later in Chapter 5 would not become an acceptable medium of instruction until the mid-fourteenth century. The primary reason for the delay in using English was that the language was in a developing era and not quite ready to debut as a language of academics. This also will be covered more thoroughly in Chapters 4 and 5.

Education and the Church

Since the Church dominated education in England from the end of the Sixth century, various segmental branches within the Church established their own educational systems to meet their individual needs. Education by the Church in England can be divided into three branches; monastic and mendicant, secular and lastly chantry. The monastic and mendicant order schools were taught by monks and friars. Secular schools were taught by the secular clergy, or the priests, parsons and canons of the Church. Lastly, the chantries or small privately owned chapels generally employed a single priest to educate the children of the chantry owner. These three segmental branches continued to exist in one form or another until the fifteenth century when a growing populace of lay educators began to establish the system of education which exists in England today.

Religious Orders

Until the twelfth century, education in England was dominated by monastic orders, primarily the Benedictines and the Cistercians. Monasteries had been obliged to arrange for the education of prospective recruits from early childhood in order to fill their own ranks. These monastic and mendicant orders left perhaps the greatest impression on education in England prior to the thirteenth century. The monastic orders can actually be credited with establishing the foundation of education in England.

Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the Benedictine or Black monks and the Cistercian or White monks immigrated to England from the continent. With them, the monks brought the teachings and doctrine of their respective orders.¹⁰ The structured teaching doctrine the monks brought with them filled the

J. J. Bagley, Life in Medieval England (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1960), pp. 68-69.

educational void that existed in England prior to their arrival, except for the scattered teachings of a few priests.

The monks established a self perpetuating educational system meant to serve the needs of the order. This isolationism of the monasteries was detached from the scholastic and intellectual ferment on the continent in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This scholastic movement saw the rise of the universities and another devout religious order; the mendicants. A monopoly of learning had come to an end for the monks with the appearance in England of the friars.

With the arrival of the mendicants in England, the monks were no longer the only educated men, their distinctive scholastic culture became out of date, brought on by centuries of stagnated teaching doctrines. As the mendicants arrived in England, they found that their teaching methods and way of life were more acceptable to the laity.

The religious educational system changed dramatically at the beginning of the thirteenth century with the rise of the friars. These friars were zealous pursuers of learning, who developed effective curriculums by which all their members could acquire a competent degree of knowledge, and the most talented could receive the best education that the times allowed.

The major mendicant orders in England during the thirteenth century were the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Carmelites. Each order developed separate educational systems that supported the order's beliefs and perpetuated these beliefs in the individual teaching methods.¹¹ These four orders organized themselves in the first half of the thirteenth century. The Dominicans were the earliest to reach England in 1221, and the Franciscans followed in 1224. These were the two larger orders, the Dominicans having 53 houses by the fourteenth

¹¹Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 226.

century, and the Franciscans having 57. The first Carmelites arrived in about 1240 and the Augustinians in 1249, neither reaching the size of the two previous orders. In terms of numbers, the friars reached their peak of about five thousand members in the early fourteenth century, but this figure fell by as much as a half immediately after the Black Death in 1349.¹²

One of the special characteristics of the friars was their readiness to take boys into their orders after this practice had fallen out of favor with the monks. The entrance age at which the different mendicant orders admitted their novitiates also varied slightly. The Franciscans fixed the age of eighteen for their entrants, as did the Dominicans. The Augustinians set an age of fourteen. These age limitations were variable depending on the novice, although in the later middle ages the entrance ages were lowered, probably resulting from a lack of zeal towards the religious orders.

Monasteries required their entering young boys to already have had grammar studies at a grammar school, where entrance was allowed at the age of seven. These grammar schools, to be covered later in this chapter, were administered by the secular clergy, although some grammar schools were operated by the friars, especially for those boys preparing to enter the mendicant orders. Abbots and priors of the monasteries often employed secular clergy to teach those of their pupils who were not postulant for admission to the monastic order, versus the preference of the friars to instruct their own boys if given the opportunity.

The learning process for the young novitiate friars started with Latin grammar in one of the order's grammar schools, and progressed to logic and later philosophy. Theology was generally a subject left to the older friars or those who were allowed to study at the universities.¹³ All four orders of friars only

¹²Ibid., p. 227.

¹³Ibid.

sparingly extended their schools to the admittance of secular clerks and scholars, so that they might attend lectures other than those meant for mendicants alone. The schooling curriculum for the mendicant orders were fairly similar in practice, following sequential subject areas of grammar, logic, philosophy and theology. Only the degree of importance to which each order placed on any of these subjects was variable.

The importance of the monastic and mendicant schools in medieval England cannot be passed over lightly. These cloistered orders were primarily responsible for the further education of large numbers of friars, monks and canons in grammar, the arts and theology. The schools developed to a great extent from the monumental efforts put forth by the orders in the thirteenth century.

It is difficult to gauge the quality of education these religious institutions provided. Lower quality education seems evident in the smaller community schools, versus the higher level of competence shown in the larger monasteries and friaries. The recording of educational adequacy was generally noted during yearly episcopal visitations. A large number of seculars received their education in the schools of the religious orders, and though the contribution of each school was small in number of graduates, the aggregate over the whole country must have run into the many hundreds each year.

Secular Clergy

At the turn of the thirteenth century cathedral schools became the subject of legislation by the Church; it was the only occasion in the later middle ages when an attempt was made to provide a network of secular schools over the whole of western Christendom. This establishment of secular schools was the first attempt at providing uniform education to all students of the Church.

As the thirteenth century progressed, interest in establishing houses of monks and friars began to diminish, and after the year 1300 it practically

ceased.¹⁴ Instead the endowment of new houses of secular clergy came into popularity. Some were university colleges, designed to maintain their members in the study of arts and theology. Other schools were in country communities and were staffed by chantry priests who sang the devine office each day and celebrated masses for the souls of the chantry founders and their relatives. Both types of schools frequently maintained boys and clerks either out of charity or to assist in the daily services. Later, out of this charity grew the first free schools which became associated with the fashion for founding colleges of secular clergy or cathedral schools.

The secular or non-monastic clergy had taken over the chief responsibility of education in England by the year 1300. The Fourth Latern Council, summoned by Pope Innocent III in 1215, confirmed that it was part of a bishops duty to appoint one of his senior canons to be chancellor, or master of the schools, and that the chancellor should teach in the cathedral school and license all other schools in the diocese.

The twelfth century enthusiasm for monasteries later tended to shift the control of schools from the bishop, who was usually responsible for education, to the abbot or prior of the local religious order.¹⁵ The English custom of combining cathedrals and monasteries complicated the educational responsibilities of the Church. In England, the 1215 Latern decrees were followed in spirit rather than to the letter. The provision of lectures in theology, according to the decrees, was only necessary at Canterbury (a monastic cathedral) and York.¹⁶

¹⁴J. J. Bagley, Life In Medieval England (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1960), p. 76.

¹⁵A. F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1915), p. 133.

¹⁶Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 174.

With regard to the provision of grammar schools however, the English cathedrals did less than the Latern decrees had intended.

In the fourteenth century, many of the new grammar schools formed parts of larger colleges of secular priests, the foundations of which continued to be popular among the clerks and laity. The purpose of these schools was still principally devotional rather than educational, more to teach priests the functions of the devine office rather than pure educational matters.

Chantry Schools

One outstanding characteristic of the later middle ages was the large number of schools which originated in asociation with a chantry. From the fourteenth century on educational opportunities for the general populace were enlarged by the increase of chantry foundations. Chantry priests gave religious instruction and the rudiments of English reading, though more often they taught Latin grammer, not necessarily as a statutory duty, but either as a work of charity or to make money out of fees. In the previous sentence, English reading is emphasized as it is the first time in any established institution that the English language is taught as a subject.

Some of these earlier mentioned chantries were primary schools, but most of them were either grammar schools originally or became grammar schools at a later date. A custom developed where wealthy men rather than donate money to a church or monastery would endow a small chantry for either private or local community use. These chantries generally maintained one priest to say masses for the founder or community residents. In most cases, the duties of a chantry priest involved the teaching of a school.¹⁷ From these chantry schools grew the grammar

¹⁷S. J. Curtis, History of Education in Great Britain (London: University Tutorial Press Ltd., 1967), p. 37.

or local community schools that later developed and became the established standard for schools throughout England.

13th & 14th Century Schools

It is not clear whether there was really a further expansion of education in the thirteenth century, or whether the appearance of new schools was simply related to the more extensive source material available from this period. But, the sources available seem to suggest that at least half the important towns of thirteenth century England, apart from the cathedral cities, can supply evidence of the existence of a school. (See Map 3).

The spreading of education into the smaller towns appears more evident during the thirteenth century than in the previous century, when schools could only be found around monastic houses. The word "school" was applied indiscriminately to every kind of institution, even those lacking structured curriculums. Therefore, it is quite possible that the schools which occurred in some small towns and villages, taught only reading and song, and were very limited in scope. Those schools in most of the cities and towns, when compared with records of later centuries, probably taught both song and grammar. (See Map 4). Higher studies if desired, were available at the secular cathedrals, and in a few other important towns.

During the thirteenth century there were three types of schools attached to the great secular cathedrals. First, there were theological schools under a chancellor, who was required to be a master in theology or a doctor of divinity. Second, there were grammar schools under a grammar schoolmaster, generally required to be an M.A., appointed by the cathedral's chancellor. Lastly, song or music schools under a song schoolmaster, appointed by the precentor, with no specific qualifications for the position.



ENGLISH SCHOOLS IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

- Schools
- Schools and places of higher studies

MAP 3*

*Map taken from Nicholas Orme's English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 171.



**ENDOWED SCHOOLS
FOUNDED IN ENGLAND 1330-1530
AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

- Reading and song schools
- Reading or song and grammar schools
- Grammar schools (some probably also teaching reading or song)
- Similar schools attached to colleges of secular clergy

MAP 4*

*Map taken from Nicholas Orme's English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 216.

Grammar-Song Schools

During the middle ages, the only schools which taught at the elementary level were the song schools. The chief purpose of the song school was to train youths who were to be engaged in the singing of the church services. These young boys were taught to sing and chant, and, out of necessity, were taught to read so they could someday teach future choristers. These song schools did not contribute toward the educational foundations required for advancement to the university level.

The most popular and widespread schools of the middle ages were termed grammar-schools. The actual term "grammar-school" was not in common use much before the fourteenth century. The grammar-school provided what may be called secondary education in medieval England.¹⁸ The grammar-school was generally attached to a secular church and if the church was extremely small, a song school might be housed under the same roof. (See Map 4). Class sizes in these schools were small, averaging seven students.

As the universities became popular and began to flourish, the function of the grammar-schools became more sharply defined. Grammar-schools were becoming feeders for the universities and provided the learning in Latin, logic and rhetoric; all necessary for a prospective university entrant. This union between the grammar-schools and the universities formed the first workable structure of education in England.

During the Black Death of 1348-49 and its recurrent outbreaks, the mortality among the clergy was exceptionally high, and there was evidence of a shortage of schoolmasters for the grammar-schools lasting well into the fifteenth century.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁹John Lawson, A Social History of Education in England (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967), p. 43.

To make up the shortage of clergy, new grammar schools came into being. But rather than being independent with their own clerical schoolmaster, the new schools were invariably connected with some ecclesiastical institution in order to ensure their permanence. This meant that schools came either under the control of a collegiate chancellor, the head of a monastery or friary, or the warden of a collegiate church. Some of the schools were endowed by trade guilds or financed by chantry bequests. One way or another, the grammar-schools remained a moving force behind the basic education of the English people in the middle ages.

Another advancement in education found its start in the grammar-schools attached to the churches; free schools. The Latin Council of 1215 ordered the keeping of free schools not only in the cathedrals but in other large churches which could bear the cost. The first free instruction to all comers was in the west of England by the Wotton-under-Edge grammar school. (See Map 4). Although a novel occurrence for its time, the free school was an example that would follow in later times. Whether or not in response to the Vatican's Lateran decree, numerous grammar-schools were associated with some of the larger collegiate churches during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and were eventually instituted as the first free schools.²⁰

Collegiate Schools

The second half of the thirteenth century saw the beginnings of the collegiate system at the universities, and a revival and development of this system among the secular clergy throughout the country in the collegiate churches. This development was unique in that it was marked by independent houses established solely for scholars.

²⁰Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 189.

Higher ecclesiastical authorities did not approve of monastic schools, perhaps because they lacked enthusiasm for recruiting new youths, and deficiencies in monastic instructional methods. Whatever the reason, the ecclesiastical hierarchy encouraged collegiate churches to open schools for local boys. Collegiate churches were the residences of secular canons, assistants to the bishop, who lived a communal lifestyle, but whose principle work was to teach and preach to the laity.²¹

The difference between the collegiate church with its schools of grammar and song attached, and the university college, with its church attached, was that the former was primarily for religious services and secondly for education, and the latter was primarily for education and secondarily for religious service. This may be over simplifying these two institutions, but it is the best way to remember them when thinking of their contributions to education.

Most of the collegiate foundations of the thirteenth century included a grammar-school to which one of the attending masters was assigned to teach. This is similar to those teacher's assistants found occupying staff positions at universities today. So, these new colleges, aside from contributing to the further advancement of the attending scholars (masters), were becoming institutions for the primary instruction of new students in the basics of education.

The establishment of these first collegiate churches was indeed important, but they pale into insignificance before William Wykeham's foundation of Winchester College. Here for the first time arose an endowed school not only greater than any ever before attempted, but of a size, wealth and importance, able to stand in comparison with any other ecclesiastical foundation of the

²¹A. F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1915), p. 113.

thirteenth century, academic or devotional.²² Winchester was partly a secular college for the celebration of the divine office by a warden and ten followers, all in priestly orders. The study of grammar, instead of being merely incidental to the life of the community, became a primary concentration.

The students at Winchester College were aged between eight and twelve at their first admission, already competent in reading, song, and the Latin grammar. The boys were to stay in college until qualified to proceed to the university, but not beyond the age of eighteen.²³ Winchester was not open to the community, as only those selected by the university could attend. Though Winchester College was not a standard for all collegiate schools during this era, it was the structure upon which a future educational system could be built.

The Universities

The characteristic institution for medieval learning was the university. But the universities did not have a monopoly on teaching, because it was still cultivated in some cathedral schools, monasteries and friaries. But by 1300, universities had practically a monopoly on higher education. Their function was both ideological and professional. The universities set themselves to interpret and defend Catholic Church doctrine, and they set about to train men for the service of the Church and state in its widest sense.

The early universities did not aim to provide general academic culture for a social elite; they were centers of professional training, equipping men for careers as teachers, priests, civil and canon lawyers, officials and administrators. They did not exist to pursue knowledge for its own sake or to promote research in any sense of the word as it is presently used today.

²²Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 187.

²³Ibid.

The rise of the universities in England resulted in another progressive development in the country's educational institutions. The schools for higher studies connected with the cathedral establishments tended to disappear and become absorbed in the theological faculties of the universities, except in places where the cathedral was remote from a university. Intellectual and educational hegemony passed from the monasteries and friaries, not to the cathedral schools, which during this period tended to become mainly schools of grammar, but to Oxford University and the other smaller and less prominent university at Cambridge. Both of these universities became the leading educational institutions in the middle ages and were role models for other universities that were to follow years later.

Oxford, being the foremost school of its day, was where the scholars flocked to learn grammar and the techniques of business, quite apart from the undergraduates who came to read the arts course. The first collegiate foundation which included a number of boy scholars and provided a master to teach them was Merton College, Oxford. The college was founded by Walter Merton, Chancellor of England in 1264 A.D. Merton's College was chiefly intended as an academic community of university scholars who had taken their B.A., and wanted to continue studying for the higher degrees in art, theology and law.²⁴

Medieval universities must not be confused with modern institutions of higher learning. They had no endowments as some of the grammar-schools, no state appropriations, no administration in the modern sense of the term, and no buildings especially constructed for university use. The university curriculums were based on the teaching of the arts, theology, law, medicine and philosophy. By the thirteenth century, the pattern for university education was already well

²⁴Ibid., p. 185.

established; students wandered from one school to another to listen to famous teacher's lectures.

In the collegiate system lies a distinctive peculiarity that set English universities apart from those on the continent. In the early days of the universities, scholars lived in whatever lodgings they could find and the masters taught in hired rooms. There were originally no facilities set aside for student or teacher to accomodate their personal needs while at the university.

It is a mistake to believe the medieval colleges as being designed especially for undergraduates. The colleges were for scholars, that is, bachelors or masters students who were studying for higher degrees in law, theology and medicine. The undergraduate was not a member of the college, and if he was permitted to live there when the universities later gained facilities, he did so as a paying guest.

Until the universities became well established in the English educational system, schools were run by the schoolmaster, abbots, priors, and their words were the final say in the operation of the schools. With the coming of the universities, which were not under direct ecclesiastical influence, another way of administering the daily operation of the institution was needed. Therefore, one of the outstanding contributions during this period of university influence was, the writing of statutes for governing these institutions. University administrators were established and major course curricula were given departmental heads, plus additional positions in the faculty and staff that are found in the schools of today.

The information provided in this chapter should give a good basis for understanding those points on linguistics and education to be brought out in later chapters of this paper.

Chapter IV

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIEVAL ENGLISH WRITERS

Early in the reign of Richard the Second (1377-99), the English language began to find acceptability, and before the close of the century English had made decided advancements as a viable language that challenged the influence of the French language. This advancement was not due to any one incident, it was a reflection of national conditions, social, political and religious. This was an era of the new emerging and nationalistic Englishman. During this era the government officials and scholars had to abandon Latin and French and address the public in English, if for no other reason than to reach a sizeable listening audience.

English around the turn of the fourteenth century was still a language too underdeveloped to be useful in a scholastic environment, primarily because it lacked a depth of vocabulary necessary to cover a wide range of subjects emerging in the fast growing educational institutions of England. But certain writers of the fourteenth century assisted in the development of a new written form of English to meet the needs of a more expressive society. Some writers by their very nationalistic feelings pressed for the advancement of the English language as the only true representative language of the common man in England. Both types of writers are important when considering any advancements of English from a domestic language to a language worthy of representation in literature, government and education. English in the fourteenth century was most assuredly a language in transition.

Before the nature of the English language can be understood, its development by writers during the fourteenth century must be looked at in more detail. The following chapter will follow the English language as it developed from a

domestic form of communication found in simple lyric poems to a language suitable for academics.

English Literature Before 1300 A.D.

Prior to the turn of the fourteenth century most literature and other written documents in English are somewhat difficult for the modern English speaking student to interpret. This is because prior to 1300 there remained traces of the highly inflected Old English, so the language tends to resemble German rather than English. Middle English after 1300 became much simpler, many of the inflectional endings disappeared altogether or were modified into a final e; and even this rudimentary inflection eventually disappeared.

Several examples of literary works in the English language prior to 1300 are available to the modern scholar. Most literary works prior to 1250 are somewhat difficult to interpret, so the examples used in this chapter for literary works prior to the fourteenth century will be from approximately 1250-1300. This is not to give a false impression of the English language prior to the fourteenth century, but to make it easier to see the transitional change in the language over a hundred years period rather than two or three hundred years. The literary format of the representative material will be in the form of lyric poetry, as that was the style in favor prior to 1400.

The following verse is a good example of late thirteenth century Middle English literature, this quatrain is an excerpt from a late thirteenth century poem entitled ALISON, author unknown.

An hendy hap ich habbe ihent!
 Ichot from Hevene it is me sent.
 From alle wimmen my love is lent,
 And light on Alisoun.²⁵

²⁵R. T. Davis, ed., Medieval English Lyrics (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1964), p. 67.

Translation: Fair fortune has come my way! I know it is sent me from Heaven.
My love is taken away from all women and has settled on Alison.

Note the words in this poem of German or Saxon origin. At the same time there are English words in this verse which are spelled the same way now as they were then; love, sent, and light are a few examples. Most importantly, note that very few words in the early literary works prior to the fourteenth century contain more than two syllables. This shows some of the limitations of the English language and its lack of depth.

The second example of late thirteenth century English and literature is found in a short lyric poem also from the late thirteenth century.

I Live in Great Sorrow²⁶

Foweles in the frith,
The fisses in the flod,
And I mon waxe wod:
Mulch sorw I walke with
For beste of bon and blod.

Translation: Birds in the wood, the fish in the river, and I must go mad: I live in great sorrow because of the best creature living.

The syntax in this lyric poem is extremely simple, as is the case in a great deal of the early literature. Lyric poetry, personal diaries and treatises were the only forms of written English that existed prior to 1300, except for a few personal documents such as wills. English would have to find acceptance with either the Church, government or educational institutions before it could be accepted as a major language worthy of consideration as a substitute for French. This acceptance was doubtful unless some historical events were to alter the conditions under which English would be considered adequate as a state language. The reemergence of English as a viable language in England will be discussed later in chapter 5.

²⁶Ibid., p. 52.

English Literature After 1300 A.D.

With the reemergence of English as the recognized official language of England in the second half of the fourteenth century, a restructuring of the language was taking place. Prior to this time period, English was a language commonly spoken and rarely written; but as a state language, a need for a standard form of written English arose. Written English appears in a few works prior to the fourteenth century, but mostly in lyric poetry with a simple syntactic structure, as is demonstrated in the preceeding section of this chapter.

English was already accepted by the general populace in the spoken form of the East Midland dialect. Therefore, the grammatical style of the East Midland dialect became the standard form of written English. The eventual acceptance of the written form of East Midland can be traced to the contemporary English writers of this time period using the East Midland form in their works, an abundance of which actually overshadowed the written form of other writers of different dialectal regions.

Below is an example of a late fourteenth century lyric poem that can be compared grammatically with those of the late thirteenth century found in the preceeding section of this chapter. The greatest difference between the two is that the entire poem does not require a translation. This quatrain is only a portion of a larger poem by Richard of Caistre.

A hymn to Jesus²⁷

Jesu, Lorde, that madest me,
And with thy blessed blode hast bought,
Foryeve that I have greved thee
In worde, werke, will and thought.

²⁷Ibid., p. 146.

This poem is an example of the transitional orthographical development that the English language went through from the close of the thirteenth century to the late fourteenth century. This progressive development in the grammar brought English to the late Middle Ages just preceeding Modern English of the sixteenth century. English writers from 1300 to 1400 probably had more to do with establishing an acceptable written form of English than anyone else.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer is perhaps the best known of all writers during the Middle English era. No single man contributed more to literature during this time period, or left more of an accurate record of the grammatical structure of Middle English than did Chaucer. Being a popular writer whose literary works were extensively read, Chaucer had a great deal of influence on his readers.

Besides being a relative of the royal family, Chaucer held numerous important positions in the English government. Chaucer was as well known as his literature in the late fourteenth century. Being a man exposed to the French speaking aristocracy, Chaucer's knowledge of the French language was extensive. Chaucer was also a student of the Latin and Italian languages, having visited Italy on official business early in his life. With this knowledge of the French, Italian and Latin languages, it is logical that Chaucer used all three in his literary works.²⁸

Chaucer's total vocabulary is estimated to be about 8,430 words, with nearly half being of Romanic origin.²⁹ This alone indicates the importance the Romance languages played in Chaucer's own speech. The extensive usage of French and

²⁸A. C. Crawley, ed., Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1966), p. VII.

²⁹Joseph Mersand, Chaucer's Romance Vocabulary (New York: Comet Press, 1939), p. 53.

Latin in his works played an important part in the acceptability of these foreign influences. With over half of the words in Chaucer's literature being foreign, a good knowledge of French aided the reading public. This last point proved to be of no hinderance to Chaucer's readers, since most educated people of the mid and late fourteenth century had some knowledge of French or Latin. Chaucer is credited to have had almost twenty percent of his Romanic vocabulary pass into the English language during his lifetime. Chaucer can thus be accredited with assisting to build an extensive vocabulary for the English people during that era.

The subjects of Chaucer's literature dictated the specific type of word usage found in his works. With the need to describe his character's exploits in more detail, Chaucer looked to the Romance languages, as the English tongue was not always adept in handling the need for specifics. With the French and Latin influences in England, Chaucer found no difficulty with introducing new words of Romanic origin into the English language of his literature.

The necessity for specifics controlled what parts of speech from which Chaucer borrowed his words. Nouns are understandably the larger category of borrowed words, because of the broad perspective of subject matter needed in the descriptive literature written by Chaucer. Words of description to help modify the newly introduced nouns were the next largest category. The adjectives of French and Latin origin with their great diversity of descriptiveness, fulfilled the need for Chaucer that the English language lacked. Nouns and adjectives proved to be the parts of speech that would leave the greatest impact on the English language.³⁰

Below is a table that shows the breakdown for Chaucer's words of Romanic origin. These parts of speech include the new Romanic words that Chaucer first introduced into the English language.

³⁰Ibid., p. 56.

Table 1

Chaucer's Parts of Speech³¹

<u>P/S</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Nouns	635	53.81
Verbs	208	17.62
Adjectives	279	23.64
Adverbs	47	3.98
Interjections	4	.33
Conjunctions	1	.08
Names	<u>6</u>	.50
	1,180	

Geoffrey Chaucer's literature indicates that he was a master in the usage of language, proven by his extensive literary works and variation of form. Being a writer skilled in semantics, Chaucer was in fact responsible for a large percentage of the Romanic words incorporated into the English vocabulary during the late Middle Ages. The New English Dictionary gives Chaucer credit with introducing some 1,180 words into the English language, as illustrated in table 1 above.³² Chaucer's contemporaries and their works which are available for study today indicate that none of them came anywhere near Chaucer in their usage of borrowed Romanic vocabulary. Chaucer indeed stands out as a monumental contributor to the growth of the English vocabulary.

John Gower

Chaucer, though monumental in his contributions to English, was far from being the sole motivating factor in the enlargement of the English vocabulary.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 53.

Many of Chaucer's contemporaries were as well versed in the Romance languages as he, but the single important element separating Chaucer and his contemporaries was the quantity of literature written. With Chaucer being such a stand out in the area of Middle English literature, other writers are not often given the attention for their literary contributions.

The Romanic blending with English is not something that can be attributed to any one individual. Writers of Middle English merely reflected in their writings a great deal of the language as it was used by their countrymen. These writers assisted in the reemergence of the English language while it was undergoing the nationalistic favorability during the mid-fourteenth century.

John Gower was one of the better known writers of the fourteenth century behind Chaucer. Gower's works were as widely read during this era, but his writing contributions in the English language were not as numerous as Chaucer's. Comparing their individual vocabularies, conclusions can be drawn as to perhaps why Gower's contributions were not as large as Chaucer's. Gower's total vocabulary was only slightly more than half of Chaucer's total. This factor alone limits Gower and his subject matter's diversity. Gower's Romance vocabulary was also approximately half that of Chaucer's, which limited Gower's influence on the injection of Romanic words into the English vocabulary. The following figures in table 2 are interesting in the comparison of the vocabularies of Gower and Chaucer.

Table 2

Vocabulary of John Gower³³

Romance words in common with Chaucer	1,708
Non-Romance words in common	1,746
Gower's Romance words not used by Chaucer	563
Gower's Total Romance vocabulary	2,271
Gower's Total vocabulary	4,502
Romanic words introduced into English by Gower	241

³³Ibid., p. 45.

Gower's Romanic words had less permanency in the English Language than did Chaucer's. Interestingly, Gower is associated with having written more in the tradition of the French than Chaucer.³⁴ Gower's words had more of a French quality, lending themselves less adaptable to the English vocabulary. All in all, when comparing the two writers Gower was less oriented to writing in English than Chaucer, therefore his contributions were lessened.

The English were more in need of an independency in literature, which Gower did not provide. Chaucer though, was able to inject that part of the Romanic languages, which were universal in meaning, without overtly emphasizing the source of the blending words. Chaucer, unlike Gower, kept his literature as English as possible, thus assuring himself of a continued English reading public.

Sir John Maundeville

Sir John Maundeville, a fictitious name used by a French writer, was one of the more popular authors of the fourteenth century alongside Chaucer. Maundeville's book of "Travels" proved to be one of the most popular volumes of English prose prior to 1360. The sentences used by Maundeville were simple and direct, and they described events vividly, so even the unlearned of that age could understand them. Through this popularity Maundeville was also able to bring a number of French words into familiar use, though not as many as Gower and Chaucer. Table 3 compares the vocabulary contributions of Maundeville alongside Chaucer's.

Table 3

John Maundeville's Vocabulary³⁵

Romance words in common with Chaucer	1,096
Non-Romance words shared with Chaucer	1,152
Romance words not used by Chaucer	294
Total Romance vocabulary	1,390
Total vocabulary	2,707

³⁴Ibid., p. 46.

³⁵Ibid., p. 48.

Sir John Maundeville was not a monumental contributor to the English vocabulary, and it must be remembered that he was a French writer who wrote in English. Besides not being an English writer, Maundeville's works were published prior to 1360 when a great deal of the readers and literature were still French oriented. This factor alone is a significant reason why Maundeville was not as great an influence on the English vocabulary as Chaucer. All that remains of Maundeville's Romanic influence is 52 words. Maundeville did have many Romance words in common with Chaucer, as did Gower, which indicates that the three writers did help support a proportional share of each others Romance words.³⁶

John Wycliffe

Historically, John Wycliffe was known as the first great figure in the English Reformation. But in literature he is best known for the first complete translation of the Bible into English. Because of this achievement, Wycliffe is considered the most important English prose writer of the fourteenth century. Wycliffe, through his translation of the Bible, did more to raise the English language to the dignity of a national language than any other writer of this era.

John Wycliffe embodied the very spirit of the nationalistic fervor which was rocking the foundations of the old established Norman influence in the mid fourteenth century. Few men in this era of history have been as defiant and radical in their approach for change as was Wycliffe. Wycliffe was an educator by profession. Like others of his profession, he wrote and conversed in Latin, the acceptable medium of communication for the educated. Wycliffe was a man of independence, always examining the basis of authority and often questioning that authority. His opposition to the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church are milestones in the history of the western religious movement.

³⁶Ibid., p. 49.

John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible made the book more accessible to the common man, and had done so in a way to make it a popular favorite over the Latin version of the text. Wycliffe's contribution to the advancement of the English language as a dignified medium of communication is enormous, and through his nationalistic pride and revolutionary spirit, helped to propel the common man of England out of the so called "Dark Ages" and into the beginnings of a social and religious reformation.

To total the Romance words of the lessor authors that were not familiar to Chaucer, one fifth of Chaucer's total Romance vocabulary is about equaled. Though Chaucer was the greater influence of the period, he was not the only author assisting to enlarge the Englishman's working vocabulary. The building and growth of a language is not a thing so quickly accomplished, and certainly not by any one individual. But, for sake of argument, statistics show Chaucer as one writer who did more to shape permanently Middle English through his extensive knowledge of the Romance languages.

Chapter V

REEMERGENCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The word reemergence is appropriate here because the English language was not dead, but merely dormant during the years when Norman French was the official language of England. The eventual dominance of the English was not so much the decline of French and the emergence of English as it was a mutual blending of the two. It is extremely difficult if not impossible to indicate precisely where French influence ceased at a certain point and English took over.

The entire fourteenth century is actually a language transition period in England, in which French is losing its influence and English is finding acceptance. The decay of French as the predominant language of the ruling classes in England was hastened by one important factor: the breaking of close ties with France. The severing of close ties with France started slowly in the early thirteenth century.

Normandy, along with other French possessions geographically close to England were lost by England, therefore, breaking the links with the continent. Although French was for a time thereafter, still cultivated among the upper classes, it no longer was a necessity in an England no longer bound to France.

During the reign of Henry III (1216-72), many Frenchmen arrived from the continent and were awarded prestigious positions and numerous land grants. This influx of foreigners had the effect of forging a stronger spirit of nationalism among the English, against the French. This antipathy toward the French united all classes of the native English, and resulted at the end of the thirteenth century during a conflict with France, under Edward I, in the dismissal from England in the 1280's of these Frenchmen. Most were expelled because they had

duel loyalties with England and France. All this resulted from King Edward's strained relationship with King Philip of France. Under Edward I, England was once more governed by Englishmen, for the first time since the Norman invasion. During this time period the ability to speak English became the sign of a patriotic Englishman.

However, at the beginning of the fourteenth century French was still being utilized in the schools, the law courts, parliament, and in the literature intended for the upper classes. All this is noted by Ranulf Higden, the fourteenth century monk and historian. Higden in the 1320's relates that the only vernacular language permitted in schools was French. But sixty years later such a statement was far from fact, because during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, English had progressed to such a stage as to rival French as a literary, commercial, religious and conversational language.³⁷

Factors Contributing to the Reemergence of English

During the fourteenth century there were numerous factors, social and political, contributing to the reemergence of the English language as the official language in England. The political factors influencing the rise of English were perhaps the most important reasons. The social factors influencing the rise of English actually assisted in ensuring the eventual predominance of the English language over French, but should be looked upon as secondary behind the political influences.

Expulsion of the French in the 1280's

Political alignments between nations when eventually strained often lead to the alienation, or severing of ties affecting many facets of a nation, including

³⁷Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 73.

commerce, trade and social welfare. When Edward I expelled the French from England in the late thirteenth century, a political strain was placed on English-French relations. The effects of this action by Edward I were slight in the areas of commerce and trade between the two countries, but it strengthened the influence of the native born Englishmen in all levels of the English social structure, primarily the aristocracy and the Church. The action taken by Edward I against the French was only the beginning of a schism between the two nations that would lead to more serious confrontations.

The Hundred Years War

One of the greatest contributing factors to the decline of French and the reemergence of the English language was the Hundred Years War initiated in 1338 by Edward III against France. The war started for many reasons. Edward III laid claim to the French throne in 1328 when Charles IV of France died, but the French denied the claim and matters were dropped. But when the new king of France, Philip VI, started assisting the Scottish in their battles with the English and also confiscating English possessions on the continent, this prompted Edward III to declare war with France. But the premise for declaring war was Edward's claim to the French throne. This action had definite and severe consequences on the trade and commerce agreements between the two nations. The war with France also brought negative reactions against those French speaking individuals in England, placing doubt on the French speaker's loyalties.

The war with France raised to the surface in England a new nationalism, where the speaking of English signified an individual's support of his country. French was obviously looked upon as the language of the enemy and would therefore be frowned upon if used.

Socially, the native Englishman took over in his reactions against the French where the King and parliament left off. Most of the native Englishman's efforts to stem the influence was limited primarily to the most significant trace

of French presence: the French language. Actions against the French speaking clergy were one area which showed that the English were tired of the French presence. A great deal of the clergy were forced to flee England.

Movement of the Papacy Residence

The fourteenth century was one era in history that signaled the shift in religious values of western Europe also. A schism occurred in the Roman Catholic Church which caused the movement of the Popes from Rome to Avignon, France by Pope Clement V in 1305. The action brought no response prior to the war with France, but afterwards a great deal of anticlericalism against the Papacy was evident in England. The English were torn between Church and State. The English during the time of the war were avid nationalist, and the choice between native England and a clergy that was largely influenced by a Pope on French soil was actually no choice.

The Black Death

During the middle of the fourteenth century England was stricken with perhaps the greatest social disaster in her history; the Black Death or Bubonic Plague, only eleven years after the war with France was started. The Black Death struck England in 1349 followed by another called the Secunda Pestis in 1361 and still other attacks of the plague in 1367 and 1375. The plague had a very damaging affect on the monastic orders and upon universities and schools, so much so, that there were no schools founded in England between 1348 and 1379. This created a serious shortage of masters, and schools were often being taught by those that were non-masters candidates.³⁸ This incident of the plague over a twenty year time span reduced a number of educated French and Latin speaking populace.

³⁸A. F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1915), p. 201.

Though the peasant class was the most severely affected, their numbers were so great in relationship to the educated that the plague reduced considerably the educated French speaking populace.

Many factors contributed in making English the predominant language in England, no one factor more than another. The expulsion of the French by Edward I started the movement toward the predominance of English by affectively reducing the number of French speaking individuals in positions of authority. This factor alone did not stop the usage of French in the schools and government, because the language was still deeply rooted in these institutions. The Hundred Years War with France in 1338 did however set the climate of disenchantment for anything French, to include the language. The Black Death of 1349 and later years assisted in eliminating so many people, even French speaking, as to almost wipe the slate clean of any Norman influence so that English could assert itself. But when Parliament in 1363 abandoned French and began to conduct proceedings in the English language, English had become the official and recognized language of England.

All the factors in the preceeding paragraph came together within a span of less than one hundred years and combined to form a climate that was nationalistically oriented and most definitely anti-French. The use of French in England by the end of the fourteenth century was limited primarily to university scholars and some religious establishments. Over three hundred years of French influence and dominance had finally come to an end in England.

English- An Acceptable Language for Education

As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, Latin and French dominated the field of education in England from grammar school to university throughout most of the middle ages. There are many reasons why English was not used as an educational medium in England during the middle ages. Foremost is that the Church assumed most duties of education in England and Latin was the language of the Church.

With the coming of the Normans to England a great deal of those educated by the Church were Norman French, so French also found acceptance in education.

Latin and French are two languages from the common family of Romance languages, so there are numerous similarities making the Church's acceptance of the French language in the schools understandable. These two languages besides being similar in origin also had something during the middle ages that English lacked; a large vocabulary that allowed for a depth of expression necessary in an educational environment.

The English language is of Germanic origin, so it lacked a great deal of the rich cultural history that the Romance languages inherited from the Roman and Carolingian Empires. Because English was more hearth oriented or domestic, it lacked the depth of vocabulary that would have made it suitable medium for education in England prior to 1300 A.D.

Were it not for factors outside the field of education indirectly acting upon Latin and French to hasten their demise, as was covered in the previous section, English might not have found acceptance and usage in the schools as early as the mid-fourteenth century. It was through the previously covered political and social factors that English was given the opportunity to assume a role in the schools of England.

After the Norman conquest, the French language replaced Old English or Anglo-Saxon as the vernacular in the schools. This arrangement of French as the vernacular language used in schools persisted until the 1340's when English came to displace French. During the 1340's English became a medium of instruction in schools, but its use was restricted primarily to the elementary grammar schools. Though English was used in the schools, Latin grammar was still a necessity for advancement to the colleges or universities, the only significant difference in the field of education was the elimination of French.³⁹

³⁹Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 101.

Far from approving the decline of French which accompanied the English revival, many contemporary educators viewed the process with concern and made some attempts to halt the process. Such an attempt was evident in the statutes of three Oxford colleges founded in the first half of the fourteenth century- Exeter (1325), Oriel (1326), and Queen's (1341), all prescribed that only the use of Latin or French were to be used in the community.⁴⁰ Such attempts would prove futile in trying to save French.

John Cornwall, a master at Oxford between 1344 and 1349, is generally credited with being the first master to substitute English for French in the instruction of classes. This is evident in Cornwall's Speculum Grammaticale, written in 1346, and was the earliest known treatise on grammar to have explanations in English. This treatise was used as an example for numerous other masters after Cornwall, and like him, they used English in place of French.⁴¹

John Trevisa, a writer that documented Cornwall's work in 1385, points out that since the year 1349, English had come to replace French as the vernacular language in schools, and that in his era it was practically unknown to school-children.⁴²

Much of the work of the English grammarians like Cornwall during the last middle ages was related to the growing importance of English as a linguistic and literary medium. With the expansion of English in linguistics and literature, its use in the schools as a medium of instruction could not be overlooked.

Robert of Gloucester in one of his last works during the mid-fourteenth century ascribes the change of language partly to the events of the Black Death

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 73.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 95.

⁴²Ibid., p. 73.

of 1349, but mainly to the teaching methods of John Cornwall.⁴³ Robert of Gloucester and John Trevisa both give John Cornwall substantial credit for almost singularly affecting the change of language in the schools from French to English. Such complete credit to John Cornwall is unrealistic, since many events, political and social, were evolving at the same time and probably assisted to a great extent the eventual transition from French to English. John Cornwall did, however, take advantage of the French languages unpopularity to change the language of instruction, even though it violated the statutes of Oxford university colleges.

The maturation of the English language had finally come to a period during the mid-fourteenth century where it could stand alone and serve as a state language. During three centuries of assimilating French and Latin words into the English language there was eventually built a speaking vocabulary of a size capable of serving as an educational medium. This process of vocabulary transference can be seen in some of the writers of the fourteenth century. But only through the fate of political and social interventions was English finally given the opportunity to become a language of the English government and the educational institutions. English had finally won acceptance as a major language in its own country.

To demonstrate the correlation between political and social events in medieval England and the reactions they eventually affected in English linguistics for the purpose of education is the primary function of this chapter. To a lesser extent, it is also necessary to bring together the three areas of literature, linguistics and education to demonstrate the interdependency these areas had upon one another insofar as they influenced the eventual predominance and usage of the English language in the schools.

⁴³Basil Cottle, The Triumph of English 1350-1400 (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1969), p. 21.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Writers and scholars of the English Middle Ages frequently fail to mention the English language in the context of philological development and its relationship to education. Rarely is the English language credited with being an educational medium in the schools prior to the Elizabethan era. Literature, Education and Linguistics are treated by scholars singularly and not in relationship to one another. This paper was initiated to fill this void that often exists between the interrelationship of literature, linguistics and education as treated by other scholars.

This paper established that the literary and linguistic popularity of the English language in the late fourteenth century, combined with sufficient maturation, provided a basis for certain teachers to start utilizing the language as an instructional medium in the middle ages. Foremost, it was essential to show that the potential usage of English as an instructional medium did not exist throughout the whole of the middle ages; primarily because of the strangulating dominance of Latin and French, and secondly because the English language was simply too immature linguistically.

Study Review

The structure of this paper was designed in such a manner as to provide information essential to understanding the subject and the problem the paper was undertaking. This information began with Chapter Three and an outline of the historical backgrounds for English linguistics and education. Chapter Three traced the ascendance of the Romance languages in England in the first section. Section two of Chapter Three covered Middle English from the predominance of the

East Midland dialect along with the Romanic assimilation of loan words into the English vocabulary. Chapter Three ended with the English educational system and its growth from the eleventh century to the fourteenth century.

Chapter Four dealt primarily with medieval English writers after 1300 and the influence these writers had upon the growth and structure of Middle English. Important writers such as Chaucer, Gower, Maundeville and Wycliffe were covered in relationship to their contributions to the growth of the English language through the assimilation of Romance words into their literature.

Chapter Five dealt primarily with the reemergence of the English language as a major state language representative of the native Englishman. Social and political factors contributing to the rise of English were two key issues covered in the first section. The last part of Chapter Five covered the prospects of English as an acceptable language of education in schools, concentrating primarily on contributing influences.

Overall Hypothesis

This paper documented the fact that prior to the 1340's the use of the English language as an educational medium was not feasible. The infeasibility of English as an educational medium was due greatly to a lack of maturation in vocabulary, also hindered and stifled by the complete dominance of the French and Latin languages. Only through linguistic and literary development combined with the fate of political and social influences was English finally accepted as a language capable of use in the schools.

This paper brought together the three areas of literature, linguistics and education, to show their importance as mutual supporting elements in the eventual predominance and usage of the English language as an educational medium.

Ideas for Future Study

There are numerous directions for further study on topics relating to this paper. The Middle Ages was an era that has found renewed scholastic interest within the past ten years, so areas of research potential are indeed more likely in this favorable atmosphere. Research in the area of English linguistic development in English schools from 1340 to 1500 is unknown. Another area relating to this paper in which no research has been done is the orthographical development in English words from 1300 to 1400. Perhaps the most difficult and interesting direction would be that of concentrating primarily on the education of women in medieval times outside of that provided by the convents.

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS AN
EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

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This paper documents the fact that prior to the 1340's the use of the English language as an educational medium was not feasible in England. The infeasibility of English as an educational medium was due greatly to a lack of maturation in vocabulary and the strangulating dominance of the French and Latin languages that permeated medieval English society.

The establishment of literary and linguistic development throughout the middle ages was one means of indicating whether the English language was sufficiently developed to be used in English schools. Other factors, political and social, which contributed in expediting the usage of English in the schools are also considered, among these: Expulsion of the French from England in the 1280's, the Hundred Years War, the Avignon Papacy and lastly, the Black Death.

The three areas of literature, linguistics and education were brought together in this paper to show their importance as mutual supporting elements in the eventual predominance and usage of the English language as an educational medium. In order to unite these three areas into a common goal, adequate historical material is covered to provide sufficient background information so that the problem the paper relates to can be better understood.