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## ON FRENCH BORROWINGS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

*Foreign languages are not merely academic subjects but practical tools employed by individuals for communication in real-world scenarios. The international vocabulary of any language undergoes changes driven by economic, scientific, and educational developments, among other factors, and these changes are influenced by the passage of time. Etymological linguistic analysis of Indo-European languages has revealed that the inventory of borrowed words surpasses that of native words. The aim of our research is to investigate the presence of French borrowings in contemporary English.*

**Keywords:** *categorical-conceptual apparatus, comprehensive approach, borrowings, French borrowings, linguistic concept*

### Rezumat

*Limbile străine nu sunt doar materii academice, ci și instrumente practice, folosite de indivizi pentru a comunica în scenarii din lumea reală. Vocabularul internațional al oricărei limbi suferă modificări determinate, printre alți factori, de evoluțiile economice, științifice și educaționale, iar aceste modificări sunt influențate de trecerea timpului. Analiza etimologică a limbilor indo-europene a arătat că inventarul de cuvinte împrumutate îl depășește pe cel al cuvintelor native. Scopul cercetării noastre este de a investiga prezența împrumuturilor din limba franceză în limba engleză contemporană.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *aparat categorial-conceptual, abordare comprehensivă, împrumuturi, împrumuturi din limba franceză, concept lingvistic*

### Introduction

Borrowings constitute a crucial component of vocabulary. Studying the etymology of words is a means to trace the formation of the English language, understanding the languages that have influenced it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the lexicon of the English language is enriched through borrowings from other languages, notably from French, defining the relevance of this research. The underlying hypothesis of this study is as follows: in contemporary English language, the largest number of French borrowed words is observed in the thematic field of "Art and Culture."

The object of the study is borrowing as a linguistic concept. The subject of the study: Gallicisms in the English language. The aim of the research: to examine the role of French borrowings in modern English. In line with the stated goal, the following objectives are formulated:

- to investigate the history of the origin and development of the English language;
- to elaborate on the essence of the concept of "borrowing" in modern linguistics;
- to examine various classifications of types of borrowings;
- to analyze the process of assimilation of French borrowings in the English language;
- to conduct a thematic analysis of lexical units borrowed from the French language in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The theoretical significance lies in the systematic and comprehensive description of French borrowings in the English language. In this regard, it can be stated that the research contributes to the development of linguistics, expanding and refining its categorical-conceptual apparatus in the light of internet communication. The practical significance of the study is primarily determined by the possibility of using the obtained results as an applied tool in supporting the functioning of dictionaries. The proposed comprehensive approach to the analysis of Gallicisms in the English language and the research findings can be applied in special courses, seminars dedicated to the study of the vocabulary of modern English, as well as for lexicographical purposes, particularly in compiling dictionaries. The theoretical and methodological basis of this research is derived from the works of renowned linguists in the following areas: language theory and lexicology, including A. Smirnitsky, L. Krysin, G. Babich, I. Arnold, among others. The provided list of sources allows for a systematic description of Gallicisms in the English language. In total, approximately 50 units of modern French borrowings were analyzed in this study.

### **The Concept of "Borrowing" in Modern Linguistics**

The etymology of the English language is far from homogeneous; this is due to the influence of other languages on the English language at certain historical stages, resulting from the following reasons:

- Roman invasion;
- Norman and Scandinavian conquests of the British Isles;
- Adoption of Christianity;
- Development of British colonialism and trade-cultural relations, etc.

All of these factors contributed to a significant expansion of the English language vocabulary. According to the origin, English words can be divided into two main groups: elements of one group are native words, while elements of the second group are borrowed words. According to statistics, the borrowed vocabulary is significantly larger than the native one. According to conducted research, native words of the English language constitute only 30% of the total number of all words. The Russian linguist Ivan Baudouin de Courtenay first addressed issues related to language interaction in 1875.

Later, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the German-Austrian linguist G. Shuchardt, in his works examining the fundamental causes of language development, highlighted the main one - "language mixing" (Samarin, 2010). It is necessary to note that during this period, many researchers understood "borrowing" as the penetration of individual elements or entire words from one language into another. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a synonym for this concept emerged - "mutual influence of languages".

The term "borrowing" began to be considered by scholars from two perspectives: some believed that the borrowed word or its elements come from one language to another, closely connected with social and cultural life; others understood "borrowing" not only as the process of the word's transition but also the complete adoption of the incoming word by the receiving language.

Krysin and compilers of linguistic encyclopedias and dictionaries considered "various elements" of words as units of morphological, graphical, phonological, semantic, and syntactic levels (Geranina, 2008). A. Reformatsky focused on the way a given word can appear in another language: through oral speech or written form. Additionally, he argued that in the case of oral borrowing, it is more random and more susceptible to complete or partial reinterpretation. The written method, on the other hand, allows for the preservation of the phonetics and grammar of borrowings (Reformatsky, 1996, pp. 250-251).

For a deeper understanding of the term "Borrowing," let's turn to the dictionary-reference by E. Marinova intitled "The Theory of Borrowing in Key Concepts and Terms." The author believes that this concept signifies two aspects: on the one hand, it is the process by which one linguistic system adopts and assimilates elements of another linguistic system, on the other hand, any living language is susceptible to undergoe this process. Based on this viewpoint, two meanings of the term "Borrowing" can be distinguished - substantive and procedural.

If we consider the first meaning of this term, it can be noted that the borrowed word becomes a fully-fledged lexical unit of the receiving language. In the second meaning, the universality of the nature of this process is emphasized. All living languages are subject to this process, and phonemes, morphemes, and lexical units can be borrowed (Marinova, 2017).

Thus, based on the examination of various views of prominent linguists on the formulation of the concept of "borrowing," it can be concluded that there is no single definition for this term. However, within the context of our coursework topic, we will adhere to the following definition: Borrowings are the process of incorporating foreign lexical elements into the receiving language with subsequent adaptation.

## The Role of Gallicisms in the English Language

French words in the English language began to appear in the 12<sup>th</sup> century during the Norman conquests. The enrichment of the English vocabulary occurred not only through new words coming from the French language but also due to the Normans bringing new characteristics to life in England (Ismaelova, 2020). During this period, the French language reached a state level: official documents, school teaching, and negotiations were conducted in the language of the conquerors. However, the native population did not want to recognize a foreign language and continued to speak their native language. Because of this duality, the English language underwent changes and simplifications. This was evident in the fact that representatives of the upper classes, knowing the French language, used English vocabulary when communicating with the lower strata of society, while common people had to learn French words to understand the upper class. Therefore, the majority of English speakers were bilingual, which became the main reason for the emergence of Gallicisms.

It is challenging to provide precise figures, as early evidence is limited to the relatively few surviving English manuscripts, with the practice of writing in English nearly disappearing between 1100 and 1200. The most significant surge in French loans occurred between 1200 and 1400. The initial borrowings were from Anglo-Norman, while later ones tended to be from Central French. Approximately 10,000 French words are believed to have been assimilated during the Middle English period, with 75% of them still in use in English today. The actual number is likely higher, considering that written sources serve as the sole basis for estimation, and many "words" encompass various inflections and derived forms.

Caxton's press in 1476 played a significant role in solidifying the French component within English as a lasting element. During the Renaissance (1500-1650), the scholarly translation boom led to the incorporation of numerous foreign borrowings, many of which were from French. The Age of Exploration, commencing in 1650, introduced additional French words despite the emerging colonial focus. In the eighteenth century, French remained a highly favored source of loans, especially among the English upper class. From the nineteenth century onward, French loanwords have persisted, accompanying cultural imports and providing a gloss to various aspects of English culture.

During the medieval period, French significantly enriched English with vocabulary related to government, religion, law, military affairs, sports, social life, etiquette, morals, fashion, and cuisine. Additionally, French contributed substantially to the vocabulary of art, learning, and medicine. It played a role in shaping the basic vocabulary of English, with many "simple, forceful" words having French origins, such as "beak, cry, fool, frown, fury, glory,

horror, humour, isle, pity, river, rock, ruin, stain, stuff, touch, wreck, and calm" (Geipel, 1991; Baugh & Cable, 1997; Freeborn, 1998).

France continued to serve as a model of civilization for England and English writers until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, influencing philosophy and manners. Even today, France maintains an image of style and sophistication in the English imagination, reflected in ongoing French loan vocabulary and its application in various stylistic contexts.

There are three main methods of borrowing:

- In the first method, French words completely replace their English counterparts. For example, the Old English word "here" (army) was entirely replaced by the French word "army"; the Old English word "earm" (poor) was replaced by the French word "poor," and the French word "montagne" (mountain) replaced the word "beorz".
- The second method involves English words overcoming French ones that existed in the English lexicon for only a short period. For instance, the word "amity" (friendship) was supplanted by the English word "friendship".
- The third method involves preserving both the English and French variants of a word. It's worth noting that in this case, there is a division and replacement of meanings, often of a semantic or stylistic nature. For example, the meaning of the Old English word "hærfest" (autumn) was completely replaced by the word "autumn" (from the French "automne"), while "harvest" in the sense of "crop" remained in English (Горина/ Gorina, 2019). Many French borrowings were associated with the life and customs of the Norman nobility and related to the material, socio-useful, and cultural life of the population.

Different periods witnessed varying amounts of French words being borrowed. The majority of gallicisms that entered the English language date back to the 12<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries and are related to:

- feelings and emotions: (Fr.) *fatigué* (tired), *misérable* (unhappy), *tendre* (tenderness)/(Eng.) *fatigued*, *miserable*, *tender*;
- military: (Fr.) *général*, *lieutenant*, *verra/guerre* (war)/(Eng.) *general*, *lieutenant*, *war*;
- education: (Fr.) *lesson*, *library*, *pupil*, *pen*, *pencil*;
- domestic life: (Fr.): *table*, *dinner*, *supper*, *plate*;
- industrial sphere: (Fr.) *machine*, *engine*;
- trade: (Fr.) *fair*, *market*, *money*;
- political life: (Fr.) *gouvernement* (government), *parlement* (parliament).

The listed French words have become so firmly integrated into English speech that they are not perceived today as "borrowed." Many of these gallicisms have undergone phonetic changes. For example, the stress, which originally fell on the last syllable as is typical for French words, shifted to the first syllable, consistent with English pronunciation.

Therefore, it can be concluded that a significant number of French borrowings, related to various spheres of human activity, coincide with the

Norman conquests. These gallicisms play a significant role in the development of the English language, as the majority of these words have firmly established themselves in the speech of the English and are still in use today.

Gallicisms are utilized in English in a manner that aligns with their customary use in French, or in other words, conventionally. The provided contexts below offer illustrations of such conventional usage:

### ***Contextualised Gallicisms***

- *a propos* of nothing in particular;
- it is a major social *gaffe*;
- *chacun à son goût*, of course;
- he was *hors de combat* for weeks.

### **The Assimilation of French Borrowings into the English Language**

The assimilation of French borrowings into the English language involves the integration of these words into the lexical and phonetic systems of English. As a result of assimilation, French borrowings adapt to the pronunciation rules and structure of the English language. The process of assimilation may include changes in sound form, stress, as well as morphological and syntactic aspects.

Examples of assimilation include the transformation of the French word "government" into the English form "governance," where changes occurred in the suffix and pronunciation. Such changes help these words better fit into the English system.

The process of assimilation is a natural phenomenon in language evolution, allowing borrowings to become more harmonized with the characteristics of the receiving language.

Grammatical assimilation in the context of the assimilation of French words into English primarily involves their integration into the grammatical structure. This process, evolving over time, contributes to language change, encompassing aspects such as vocabulary. French words that have undergone assimilation into English have become part of active grammatical categories, adhering to English grammar rules since their incorporation into the language. These words adopt inflectional forms characteristic of their respective parts of speech in English and conform to the local word patterns. Throughout assimilation, morphological elements like the French articles "le", "la" et "les" are removed when used before nouns to indicate gender and number. There is a noticeable gradual disappearance of the grammatical gender category in assimilated words, aligning with the broader trend of English losing grammatical gender distinctions. Additionally, assimilated words follow the same system for derived forms as English words, forming genitive singular and plural forms like "hostages," "toures," "crunes," and so forth.

According to English conventions, adjectives do not adhere to all grammatical rules, except for those governing degrees of comparison. English verbs are

conjugated based on individuals and form simple and compound tenses following the English model. Many learned French verbs exhibit characteristics such as forming preterit and adjective II in a manner similar to weak English verbs (e.g., *to turn*, *to evoke*, *to control*, *to revenge*). French verbs ending in a vowel are grouped with weak verbs of the first type, as seen in examples like *cryien* - *to shout*, *assayin* - *to try*, *obeie* (n) - *to obey*. Verbs ending in a consonant, initially conjugated in the south of England according to the pattern of weak verbs of type 2 (present *i* and preterite), eventually adopted preterite forms common to all weak verbs after the disappearance of special forms in both the north and south of England, following vowel syncopation before *d*, e.g., *servi* (n) - *served*.

Many French adjectives in English retain their plural form, frequently used in post-positive terms like letters patents, place delitables, lords spirituels. Over time, linguistics developments led to the abolition of the plural form -s, but postpositive adjective use persisted in certain stable compounds, such as court martial, heir apparent, knight errant.

Self-words and complex words within a language often aren't associated with proper words. In the case of derivatively assimilated foreign words, simplification occurs when these words aren't linked to the lexical material of the assimilated language. The primary reason for word simplification in the native language is the passage of time, leading to the gradual simplification of words. This phenomenon is observed in the French language as well.

French borrowings in English, such as *hors-d'œuvre* (pronounced in English [ɔ:r'dʒ:rv]), meaning "extra dish set out before a meal", undergo phonetic changes and are treated as simplified and straightforward words. The difference between simplification in native and foreign words lies in the slow pace of the process in native language words, while assimilated words experience it immediately upon entering the language.

Consequently, the morphological structure of assimilated words is acknowledged by the English-speaking community, with the core morphemes holding genuine meaning and the capacity to create subsequent words. English, influenced by French, adopted several suffixes and prefixes such as -ment, -al, -ess, -ance and others, to facilitate the formation of new words.

The majority of French words incorporate the suffixes -ance and -ence, evident in words like *ignorance*, *arrogance*, *entrance*, *repentance*, *innocence*, and others. For English speakers, the meaning of these suffixes is clear, as they are employed to form abstract nouns from adjectives and verbs. This allows for the creation of words like *hindrance*, where the French suffix is added to the root of the English verb *hinder*.

Likewise, the English suffix -ment, present in words like *government*, *treatment*, *agreement*, has also been recognized by English speakers. With its help, new words have been formed using the English core, such as *fulfillment*, *bereavement*, *amazement*, *bewilderment*.

### French Borrowed Words in the Thematic Field of "Art and Culture"

The development of links between England and France in the fields of culture and the arts also contributed to the entry of new words into the English lexicon:

English	French	Year of borrowing	Meaning
<i>art nouveau</i>	<i>l'art nouveau, literally « new art »</i>	1900	new art
<i>avant-garde</i>	<i>avant-garde</i>	1910	people or works, that are experimental, radical or unorthodox in relation to art, culture or society
<i>cubism</i>	<i>cubisme</i>	1911	a style of art that emphasizes abstract structure at the expense of other pictorial elements, especially at the expense of simultaneous display multiple aspects of the same object and fragmentation of form of the depicted objects
<i>fauvism</i>	<i>fauvisme</i>	1915	a group of contemporary artists of the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century, whose work emphasized the painterly qualities and strong colouring compared to representational or realistic values, preserved by impressionism
<i>dadaism</i>	<i>dadaïsme</i>	1916	artistic european avant-garde movement in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century with early centres in Zurich, Switzerland, in the cabaret Voltaire
<i>collage</i>	<i>collage</i>	1919	artistic composition, made of various materials (such as paper, fabric or wood) glued on the surface
<i>ambiance</i>	<i>ambiance</i>	1923	atmospheric effect locations
<i>decor</i>	<i>décor</i>	1926	decorations and furnishings of the room, building, etc.
<i>surrealism</i>	<i>surréalisme</i>	1927	principles, ideals or practice of creating inappropriate images in art, literature, film or theatre by means of unnatural or irrational juxtapositions and combinations



<i>montage</i>	<i>montage</i>	1929	rapid sequence images in film to illustrate association of ideas
<i>faux-naïf</i>	<i>faux-naïf</i>	1941	fake, naive, childish (literary, artistic style)
<i>antiroman</i>	<i>antiroman</i>	1950	contradicting or rejecting romantic aesthetics or sensibilities
<i>tachisme</i>	<i>tachisme</i> 'tache' – a stain or splash (e. g. of paint)	1951	french style of abstract paintings
<i>son et lumière</i>	<i>son et lumière</i>	1952	outdoor show in at a historic site, consisting of recorded narration with light and sound effects
<i>film noir</i>	<i>film noir</i>	1958	a crime, a film with an intricate plot, dark stage lighting
<i>discotheque</i>	<i>discothèque</i>	1960	discotheque
<i>cinematheque</i>	<i>cinémathèque</i>	1965	a small cinema, specializing on avant-garde films
<i>netiquette</i>	<i>net + etiquette</i>	1993	a proper style and manners of communication on the internet online

Among the fully assimilated words, the following French borrowings can be highlighted: *cubism* (spelling changed, stress shifted to the first syllable), *fauvism* (the French definite article "le" of the singular masculine gender disappeared, the ending "e" vanished, stress shifted to the first syllable), *da-daism* (the diacritic mark over the letter "i" and the ending "e" were omitted, stress shifted to the first syllable), *ambiance* (stress shifted to the first syllable, conforms to English language norms), *decor* (the French accent, was removed, pronunciation changed – stress falls on the first syllable), *surrealism* (the French accent and the ending "e" were removed, the word is now pronounced as [sə'rɪəlɪzm]), *montage* (stress shifted to the first syllable, the word has firmly entered the English lexicon, does not seem foreign, has an analogy with the borrowed word "garage"). All the listed words are frequently used in the English language.

Partially assimilated words include *collage* (retained spelling and partially retained phonetics, as the letter "g" in this word produces the sound [ʒ], instead of the English [dʒ]), *film noir* (often used in speech, lost the French definite article "le" of the singular masculine gender but retained the French form), *discotheque* (removed the French accent, pronunciation changed – stress shifted to the first syllable, but retained the graphic spelling), *cinematheque* (lost French accents - accent, pronunciation changed – stress

shifted to the first syllable, but retained the graphic spelling), *netiquette* (stress shifted to the first syllable, but retained the graphic spelling).

The non-assimilated words include the following: *art nouveau*, *avant-garde*, *tachisme*, *antiroman*, *faux-naïf*, *son et lumière*. These words have retained typical French features, such as diacritical marks, endings, letter combinations, the conjunction "et," and also pronunciation. In the thematic group "Culture and Art," there are words related to three types of assimilation: fully assimilated, partially assimilated, and non-assimilated, with the first category being much more numerous than the others. This group includes quite a few foreign words, as new movements, trends, styles, and genres emerged in these spheres.

### Conclusion

The greatest number of gallicisms appears during the Norman conquest period. Penetrating into English speech, French words become popular and are even capable of replacing English equivalents. Modern French borrowings are more closely associated with scientific and technological progress, as well as the development of economic and cultural spheres of human activity. Many gallicisms, both from the Norman period and modern times, have had a significant impact on the development of the English language and have firmly established themselves in English speech. Assimilation of borrowed words is a complex process in which lexical units, undergoing assimilation and transformation, acquire the characteristics of the receiving language (English). During assimilation, borrowed words significantly enrich the vocabulary of the recipient language.

The greatest number of borrowed lexical units falls under the category of "Art and Culture". This is because this field is quite extensive, and it is during this period (XX-XXI centuries) that there is a rapid development of new trends in France. It can be noted that the results of the conducted research provide an opportunity to use them as an applied tool in ensuring the comprehensiveness of dictionaries. The proposed comprehensive approach to the analysis of gallicisms in the English language can be utilized for further in-depth studies of borrowed words in other languages.

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