

**English phrases, French verbs:
Causes and consequences of accommodation biases**

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Loan words accommodate to the grammatical structure of their recipient language (Poplack, Sankoff & Miller 1988; Muysken 2000). Although it is generally assumed that loans can be used like native words (Wohlgemuth 2009; Poplack et al. 2020), this PhD project shows that loan words are actually biased in usage towards specific grammatical structures. The project (i) documents these biases, (ii) investigates their causes, and (iii) assesses their potential historical consequences.

We conducted corpus research on the distributional behaviour of English loans in Present-day Dutch and French¹ loans in Middle English, drawing data from *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (Nederlandse Taalunie 2004) and the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (Kroch & Taylor 2000). For both contact settings, our research reveals ‘loan word accommodation biases’. Specifically, loan words are disproportionately favoured in usage categories with lower functional loads (see also De Smet 2014): loan verbs are preferred in non-finite and uninflected structures, and loan adjectives are preferred in predicative and uninflected structures. The phenomenon is illustrated in (1), where French-origin *obedient* (1a) is predicative and uninflected, while English-origin *great* (1b) is attributive and inflected.

- (1) a. *And þei are not **obedyent** to the chirche of Rome* (PPCME2)

‘And they are not obedient to the Church of Rome.’

- b. *And þere maken men **grete** festes* (PPCME2)

‘And there [i.e. in Stagira] men make great feasts.’

We suggest that accommodation biases arise as an aid in lowering the processing costs typically associated with loan items. Such costs can be due to ‘dual-language activation’, i.e. loans activating bilingual speakers’ source language. As a consequence, biases can occur as long as the loan items are predominantly used by bilingual speakers. The fact that the source language is activated in speakers’ minds suggests that French loan items in Middle English were closer to code-switches than traditionally believed (De Smet & Shaw subm.).

A question arising from this is whether and how accommodation biases have impacted the history of the English language, which has been in long-term contact with French between roughly 1100 and 1500 (cf. Finkenstaedt & Wolff 1973; Thomason & Kaufman 1991). For instance, shortly after the French loan rates surged (1350-1420), English saw a rise of novel constructions where lexical verbs could be innovatively relegated to non-finite slots, such as *do*-support (e.g. *I do see you*). To answer this question, we conducted corpus research on *do*-support in Early Modern English, when the impact of the borrowing peak had become observable. *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* data (Kroch, Santorini & Delfs 2004) revealed that French-origin verbs (2a) were substantially more frequent with *do*-support than English-origin verbs (2b).

- (2) a. *such wines as these do **trouble** the head least* . (PPCEME)

‘Wines as these trouble the head least.’

¹ ‘French’ is used as an umbrella term for Anglo French, Continental French and Norman French.

b. *So I ryse up , caste my cloke about me , and **knellyd** downe* (PPCEME)
 ‘So I got up, cast my cloak around me, and knelt down.’

Although it is unlikely that French influx caused the rise of *do*-support, the non-finite bias in French loans may have accelerated it, and the same may hold for other periphrastic constructions (e.g. progressives).

This PhD project has provided evidence for the existence of accommodation biases in Dutch and Middle English, which arise as a result of lexical transfer. Effects of lexical transfer can thus transcend the lexical level and extend to the syntactic level.

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