

PAPER 7 (HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS)

Explain how the French language has influenced the English?

A. L. P. Smith has pointed out in his book "The English Language" that "the main additions to the English language, additions so great as to change its character in a fundamental way, were from French, first of all from the Northern French of Norman conquerors and then from the literary and learned speech of Paris." Even before the Norman conquest, the English had become acquainted with the Norman culture and the way of its life, because of the social, political and Ecclesiastical intercourse between the two nations. During the reign of Edward, the confessor, several Norman nobles were placed in important positions in England and the fortified buildings in which they stayed were known as 'castels' (castles), 'capun' (capon) and 'bacun' (bacon) are two other words introduced at the time and they serve to suggest the greater luxury of French cooking which was new to the English.

After the conquest, we find a stream of French words entering the English vocabulary and they suggest the influence of an occupying power over a conquered people. 'Prison' (prison), 'tur' (tower), 'market', 'rent', 'justice', etc., have been thus introduced into the English language. After the Norman conquest, we find the 'church', the 'courts of law', the 'arts of war', trade with the 'continent' and the 'pastimes' of the aristocracy becoming Norman-French intermingling. Words like 'battle', 'court', 'countess', 'treasure', 'charity', etc., were derived from French.

In the thirteenth century the contact with France was much weakened. Meanwhile the English and the Normans had become merged into one people and in another hundred years English had become accepted as the National language of the country in place of Norman-French. Frenchified terminology became restricted to the court of law. Among the French legal terms which were retained and are still in use are 'plaintiff', 'defendant', 'privilege', etc. The dialect of French that was becoming culturally important was Central or Parisian French. A series of central words like 'chancellor', 'charity', 'chattel', were introduced into English though their Norman French equivalent 'cancelar', 'carited' and 'cattle' were already known to English. Among the French loans from 1100 to 1300 the following words may be taken as representative of different objects- 'prison', 'chapel', 'grace', 'service', 'miracle', 'religion', 'bataille', 'basin', 'lamp', 'beast', etc.

The 14th century witnessed a great increase in the number of French loans. These were no longer limited in use to the educated or upper class but became integral parts of the language. During this period we find that there is a very high proportion of French loan words relating to hunting, cooking and the art of war to English vocabulary. For instance 'colonel', 'lieutenant', 'major', 'captain', etc. have been derived.

While French influence on the English language was general and wide spreading during the Middle English period, it was no longer so after the beginning of the 16th century. Though like Latin, French continued to be the source of new words; the French loans after the 15th century were confined to particular classes of technical words restricted in use to the better educated people. The 16th century borrowings, for instance, were mostly technical terms and the common man had little to do with them.

The 17th century is significant in the history of the French loans as it was a period of very close contact between the English and the French in matters of literature and

social intercourse. One of the subjects which engaged the attention of the satirists and playwrights of Restoration was the indiscriminate imitation of all things French by 'smart set' in London. Words like 'dragoon', 'stockade', 'ballet', 'burlesque', 'tableau', 'chagrin', 'champagne', 'native', 'forte', 'soup', etc. are the representative of the 17th century borrowings from French.

While the 18th century was also rich in the French entrants into English vocabulary, the 19th century was also the richest of all in those. Along with the usual borrowings of the military terms, we find those relating to diplomacy and those called forth by the French Revolution. The loan words of the 18th century are 'guillotine', 'regime', 'bureau', 'canteen', 'picnic', 'police', 'coup', etc. The 19th century witnessed a rich harvest of French loans. These include along with the usual military terms those relating to art and letters, textiles and furniture. 'Barrage', 'communiqué', 'renaissance', 'restaurant', 'matinee', 'motif', 'menu', 'chauffeur', 'elite', etc. are the examples of the 19th century borrowings.

The kind of objects and ideas devoted by the French loans made during the two centuries following the Norman conquest till their own story of the conquering Normans and their authority over the conquered English. Waniba the jester in Scott's "Ivanhoe" points out how the living animals like ox, sheep, calf, swine and deer have continued to bear their English names even after the conquest while the flesh of these animals used as food has been referred to by French words like 'beef', 'mutton', 'pork', 'bacon', etc.

Terms relating to war were naturally adopted from the language of the conquerors. War itself is a French word. So are 'battle', 'assault', 'banner', 'armour', etc. The terms relating to family relationships have also been borrowed from the French. Thus 'uncle', 'nephew', 'niece', 'cousin' have all come from French. The use of the French prefix was extended to 'grandson' and 'granddaughter' in Elizabethan times. 'Mother-in-law' and 'father-in-law', though compounded of English words, are literal translation of Old French designations.

count
food age- specific area
dress
army

S. Potter our language
A. C. BAUGH