ON SOME FRENCH ELEMENTS
IN EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH WORD DERIVATION

EWA CISZEK

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

ABSTRACT

The present paper is a report on an on-going research concerning the productivity of some French suffixes in Early Middle English (1150-1350). The suffixes selected for discussion are: *-esse, -age, -erie* and *-ment.* The tools used for analysis are *MED online,* the *Helsinki Corpus* and several Early Middle English texts. The addition of the texts has been dictated by the fact that linguistic corpora are by and large inadequate for diachronic word-formation research.

The problem of the productivity of linguistic elements in the distant past has been analysed by a number of linguists and numerous criteria of productivity have been proposed. The treatment of the issue has not been free from controversies. Both Dalton-Puffer (1996) and Miller (1997) propose that French derivational suffixes became productive in Late Middle English. My investigations allow me to conclude that some suffixes must have been productive already in Early Middle English. The number of loanwords with transparent bi-morphemic structure, i.e. analysable French suffixes, seems to be sufficiently large at that time to warrant analysability.

The present paper concentrates on one of the aspects of word derivation in Early Middle English (1150-1350), i.e. the problem of the productivity of French suffixes found in early loanwords. Four suffixes have been selected for discussion, i.e. *-esse, -age, -erie* and *-ment.*

The analysed material comes from *MED online,* the *Helsinki Corpus* and the following texts: *Exodus and Genesis* (EM 1250), *Floris and Blancheflur* (EM 1300), *Havelok the Dane* (EM 1300), *King Horn* (EM 1300), *Laȝamon's Brut* (EM 1300), *Of Arthour and Merlin* (EM 1330), *Guy of Warwick* (EM 1330), *Sir Orfeo* (EM 1330), *Sawles warde* (WM 1225), *Vices and virtues* (WM 1225), *Ancrene Wisse* (WM 1230), *Kentish Sermons* (K 1275), *Ayenbit of Inwite* (K 1340) and *The poems of William of Shoreham* (K 1350). The addition of some

texts has been dictated by the fact that linguistic corpora are by and large inadequate for diachronic word-formation research (see Miller's critique of Dalton-Puffer 1996, and Ciszek 2002). In my own research on the distribution of *-lich(e)* I have discovered for example that there were substantially more occurrences of the *-li* suffix in the West Midlands in ME1 (1150-1250) than one could find in the *Helsinki Corpus* because the corpus includes in many cases only portions of texts and not complete texts. It so happened that the last three pages of *Sawles warde*, which have not been included in the corpus, contain all five occurrences of *-li* which occurred in the whole text. It is worth pointing out that the whole ME subperiod (1150-1250) contained only 10 occurrences of the suffix.

The problem of the productivity of linguistic elements in the distant past has been analysed by a number of linguists and numerous criteria of productivity have been proposed (Aronoff 1976; Burgschmidt 1977; Bybee 1985; van Marle 1985). The treatment of the issue has not been free from controversies. Because of lack of space, however, I cannot dwell upon them here. For the discussion of those issues I would like to refer the reader to Dalton-Puffer (1992, 1996: 215-25), Miller (1997: 238-48), and Cowie and Dalton-Puffer (2002). Particularly Miller (1997) and Cowie and Dalton-Puffer (2002) deserve special attention since among other things they approach productivity both as a theoretical primitive and as an operational concept in historical word-formation.

Both Dalton-Puffer and Miller propose that French derivational suffixes become productive in Late Middle English. My investigations allow me to conclude that some suffixes must have been productive already in Early Middle English. The number of loanwords with transparent bi-morphemic structure, i.e. analysable French suffixes, seems to be sufficiently large at that time to warrant analysability. (On transparency and productivity in word-formation see Zbierska-Sawala 1993. The title *Early Middle English word formation* is misleading, though, as she deals only with OE affixes in the West Midlands). Both Dalton-Puffer and Miller draw heavily on the evidence provided by Gadde (1910) who, however, concentrated basically on the 14th and 15th centuries. Besides, Gadde discussed only three suffixes, i.e. *-(e)ry*, *-age* and *-ment*, I shall add here another one, i.e. *-esse*.[1]

Analysable, i.e. transparent French loanwords with suffixes appear next to hybrid formations with an English base and the French suffix already in EME. They have been noted by Jespersen (1942 [1954]) and Marchand (1969). In what follows I shall augment their findings with a number of instances which I have found in the material analysed by me.

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[1] The suffix *-esse*, though briefly, is treated by Miller (1997: 242), who lists 18 Late Middle English hybrids from before 1400.

-esse is employed to form feminine nouns from other nouns. The suffix appears in a fairly large number of loans dating from 1160 onwards (*MED*). The first attested borrowings are *countesse* 'the wife of a count or an earl' and *emperice* 'the consort of an emperor' from the *Peterborough Chronicle*. Later loans are, e.g., *clergesse* 'a learned woman' (*Seinte Katerine* 1225 and *Ancrene Wisse* 1230), *grateresse* 'a female grater' (*A cartulary of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist* 1233-4), *Jeuesse* 'a Jewish woman' (*Court Rolls of Ramsey* 1299) or *hostesse* 'hostess' (*South English Legendary* 1300) and *couperesse* 'a female cooper' (*Court Rolls of the Borough of Colchester*, vol.1, 1311 and *Lay Subsidy Rolls, Somerset* 1327) to mention but a few. According to Jespersen (1942) and Marchand (1969) *-esse* was a prolific formative occurring on English bases in the 14th c., or even the latter part of this century judging by the examples they quote. The suffix did appear, however, in hybrids already in the early 13th c. and in a variety of instances in the late 13th and the first half of the 14th c. *MED* records it in *sinneresse* 'prostitute' (*Hundred Rolls of Henry III and Edward I*, part 2, 1255), *bolleresse* 'a woman who makes bowls' (*Close Rolls, Henry III* 1270), *disheresse* 'a woman who makes or sells dishes' (1273; found in the *Dictionary of ... surnames*, see Bardsley 1901 [1980]), *clerkesse* 'a learned woman' (*Court Rolls of London* 1298), *breueresse* 'a female brewer' and *shepherdesse* 'female keeper of sheep; also, the wife of a shepherd' (*Court Rolls of the Borough of Colchester*, vol.1, 1311), *gloveres* 'female glove maker' (*Lay Subsidy Roll, Staffordshire* 1327), *prioresse* 'prioress' (*South English Legendary* 1300) and *maistresse* 'a governess' (*Sir Tristrem* 1330). I would also like to add *abbodesse* 'abbess' (*Winteney version of the Benedictine Rule* 1225), where *abbod* can be treated as coming from Old English (an OF borrowing *abbess* (*South English Legendary* 1300) could be found next to *abbodesse*). Moreover, *porteresse* 'a female doorkeeper or gatekeeper' (*Calendars and inventories of the Treasury of the Exchequer*, vol. 1, 1303) seems to be formed on English grounds from OF *porter* since *porteresse* 'female porter or carrier' (OF *porterresse*) is borrowed only in 1475 (John Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*). The *Helsinki Corpus* does not include any of those forms and hence they were not analyzed by Dalton-Puffer (1996).

-age is employed to form nouns denoting state or rank from other nouns or to convert verbs into nouns of various meaning. The French loanwords with *-age* are also numerous and started to appear at the beginning of the ME period. The first borrowing according to *MED* is *pilgrimage* 'a pilgrimage' originally found in *Kentish Sermons* (1275) and later in the *South English Legendary* (1300), *Guy of Warwick* (1330), *The Southern Passion* (1325) and *Poems of William of Shoreham* (1350). Other analyzable early borrowings with the date of their first occurrence are *hermitage* 'a hermitage' (*The place-names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York* 1280, see Smith 1937), *pelrinage* 'a pilgrimage', *servage*

'servitude, bondage, slavery' and *taillage* 'a royal land tax' (*South English Legendary* 1300), *barnage* 'the nobility' (*Floris and Blauncheflur, Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, all 1300) and *passage* 'the act of crossing or passing from one place to another' (*South English Legendary, King Horn* and *Eleven Pains of Hell* (2), all 1300). As for the hybrid formations, both Jespersen (1942) and Marchand (1969), after Gadde (1910), postulate the 15th c. when *-age* becomes productive. However, *MED* provides much earlier occurrences of the suffix, e.g., *faldage* 'rent paid for a fold or pen' was found in *Inquisitions Post Mortem Sive Escaetarum* already in 1268. An early 14th c. *tollage* 'a toll' (*Statutes of the Realm in English* 1325) is another hybrid. In addition, I have also found *lod-manage* 'the cost of pilotage' (1325) and *ferriage* 'a charge for transporting persons or goods by boat, passage money' (1330) in Anglo-French texts. And again, all those formatives are absent from the *HC* and thus not investigated by Dalton-Puffer.

-erie is a suffix forming nouns which denote professions or crafts, as well as the collectivity of their members or products or a quality of behaviour; sometimes also rank or condition. The suffix may be added to nouns, verbs and adjectives. The French loanwords containing the suffix are abundant and the first is *druerie* 'love between God and man or affection' (*Ancrene Wisse* 1230 and *The wooing of Our Lord* 1250). Other early occurrences may be exemplified by *glutenerie* 'gluttony' (*Lambeth Homilies* 1225), *hermitorie* 'a hermitage' (*Vices and virtues* 1225), *Jeuerie* (*Ancrene Wisse* 1230) or *gentilrie* (*The proverbs of Alfred* 1275), *baptisterie* (*South English Legendary* 1300) and *nonnerie* 'nonnery' (*Layamon's Brut, South English Legendary*, both 1300). The earliest occurrence of the suffix with an English base can be found according to Marchand in *husbondrie* (*South English Legendary* 1290 Marchand (*OED*), 1300 *MED*). I have found the following additional instances of hybrids from before 1350: *sigaldrie* 'conjuration' (*Ancrene Wisse* 1225, Cleo C.6), *daierie* 'a pantry', (*South English Legendary* 1300), *reverye* 'robbery' (*Gloucester Chronicle* 1325), *aldermanrie* 'the office of an *ealdorman*, i.e. a civil, military, or religious leader' (*Will proved in the Court of Hustings, London* 1344) and *port-manrie* 'the rank of portman, or free citizen' (*Little Red Book of Bristol* 1346-7).

-ment forms mostly nouns of action, result, state or condition from verbs. The first loanwords from French were found in *Ancrene Wisse* (Corpus Christi College 402, 1230); e.g., *amendement* 'improvement' and *chastiement* 'admonition'. Additionally, I found the following analyzable types: *jugement* 'discernment' (*Ancrene Wisse*, Cotton Nero A.14, 1250), *amonestement* 'temptation' and *commencement* 'beginning' (*Kentish Sermons* 1275), *corounement* 'the reign of a sovereign', *enchauntement* 'magic power' and *amendement* 'improvement' (*South English Legendary* 1300), *acoupement* 'accusation' and

chauntement 'magic power' (*Floris and Blauncheflur* 1300), *comberment* 'trouble, distress', *prechement* 'preaching; an exhortation' and *savement* 'safety' (*Guy of Warwick* 1330), *avauncement* 'promotion', *confermement* 'an endorsement or confirmation' and *maundement* 'a command' (*Gloucester Chronicle* 1325) and *concelement* 'concealment', *tenement* 'tenure' and *verifiement* 'formal verification' (*Statutes of the Realm in English* 1325). Many more examples appear later in *Bevis of Hampton, Arthur and Merlin, Guy of Warwick* (1), *The Seven Sages* (1), all from 1330, in *Ayenbit of Inwit* (1340) and the *Midland Prose Psalter* (1350).

According to Jespersen "the ending [*-ment*] did not come to be considered as an E formative till the latter part of the 13th c." (Jespersen 1942: 375). It is found in *chastisement* 'admonition' in *Ayenbit of Inwit*. The coinage could have originated in Anglo-French especially due to the fact that the related verb *chastisen* appears in Middle English writing only in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales: Monk's Tale* (1375).

Dalton-Puffer in her analysis observes only one loanword, i.e. *sacrament*, in the first subperiod of ME (1150-1250). Our sources contain several other formations in *Ancrene Wisse*, e.g., *amendement, chastiement, continuelement, privement* and *sulement*. *Sacrament* itself, which is unanalyzable, appears also in *Lambeth Homilies* (1225) and *A lovesong of Our Lady* (1250). Dalton-Puffer claims that the suffix *-ment* is unusual in the sense that it shows an abrupt growth in productivity already in the subperiod of ME from 1250 to 1350. However, her statistics (16 types and 130 tokens) are not so much convincing. Our corpus has more than 50 analyzable types present in hundreds of tokens. Nevertheless, there are no instances of hybrids in EME. However, taking into account the number of transparent loanwords, it seems that the early formation of hybrids must have been blocked for some semantic reasons. This will be a subject of my future investigations.

So far we have concentrated on types as indicators of productivity. The more types, the more evidence there is for productivity. However, I would like to argue, contrary to Cowie and Dalton-Puffer (2002), that one should not forget that analyzability is caused by the frequency of occurrences and hence the number of tokens representing a given type is also a crucial factor. The analysis of whole texts has indicated that transparent borrowings were used repetitively, which means that their use was not onetime and accidental, but their high frequency must have been motivated by a conscious and established presence of those loanwords in the spoken language, e.g., *-esse* as in a hybrid *abbodesse* appears 49 times in the *Winteney version of the Benedictine Rule* (1225). The OF loan *abbesse* as well as *Aumperesse* occur 6 times each and *hostesse* 5 times in *The South English Legendary* (S). The *Gloucester Chronicle* (1325) includes 5 examples of *contesse*. *Ayenbit of Inwit* (K) records the presence of *charmeresse*

and two occurrences of *maystresse*. Furthermore, the suffix *-age* is more abundant. We obtain 5 instances of *marriage* in *Ayenbit of Inwit* and 3 in the *Gloucester Chronicle* as well as 5 examples of *truage* in *Laʒamon's Brut* (EM). The *South English Legendary* includes 4 occurrences of *pilgrimage*, 3 occurrences of *tailage*, 3 of *avauntage* and 2 of *passage*. *Arthour and Merlin* contains *usage* (3). Moreover, we find *ermitage* (6), *barnage* (3) and *pelgrimage* (3) in *Guy of Warwick*. *-erie* as in *avouerie* 'acknowledgement', *losengerie* 'deceitful flattery' and *reneirie* 'apostasy' appears 2 times each in *Ayenbit of Inwit*. There are 5 instances of *priorie*, 4 of *nonnerie* and 3 of *croiserie* in the *South English Legendary*. *Ancrene Wisse* has 2 examples of *druerie*. Moreover, there are also 2 occurrences of a hybrid, i.e. *deiʒerie*. *-ment* is the most abundant. It appears in *juggement* (12), *amendement* (9) and *enchantement* (5) in the *South English Legendary* (1300). There are 8 examples of *amendement* in the *Gloucester Chronicle*. We obtain *enchauntement* (6), *encombrement* 'temptation' (4), *corounment* (3) and *concentement* 'acquiescence' (2) in *Arthour and Merlin*. *Ayenbit of Inwit* includes *amendement* (4), as well as *chastisement*, *consentement* and *martirement* 2 times each. The early manuscript of *Ancrene Wisse* already contains 3 instances of *chastiement* and two instances of *sulement*. Moreover, there are 5 occurrences of *jugement* and 2 of *comberment* in *Guy of Warwick* and the *Poems of William of Shoreham* also include *jugement* 5 times and *coniurement* 3 times. *Floris and Blancheflur* registers 5 instances of *jugement* as well.

It is hoped that it has been demonstrated in this short presentation that some French suffixes began to be productive in the 13th c. They appear in hybrids earlier than it has been generally accepted (e.g., in the 14th-15th c.). The first analyzable French loanwords appear already in the *Peterborough Chronicle* (1160). A high frequency of transparent loanwords decisively contributes to the growing productivity of French suffixes. Moreover, it seems plausible that since written texts are quite resistant to any novelties which appear in speech and yet we still obtain a high percentage of borrowings in literature, there must have been many more loans commonly used in the spoken language. Moreover, as French was also easily available due to the co-habitance of speakers of French, English and bilinguals, there must have also been an infiltration of words and concepts in two directions.[2] This in turn, created a favourable situation for the creation of hybrids. The addition of a foreign suffix to native bases is indeed quite a sophisticated procedure from a linguistic point of view. However, it could have been the case that the hybrids were created in Anglo-French, by people for whom French was their native language. Many of the early hybrids are attested in French texts, especially court records, in the form of surnames. Later, they could have been borrowed by the speakers of English. However, even if not (as some coinages are originally found in English manuscripts) French offered a ready pattern for the formation of hybrids and thus a stronger infiltration of French elements into the English language.

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[2] Miller (1997) claims that hybrid formations originated in the colloquial language of monolinguals who could not recognize French elements from native ones.

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