

REVIEW

Language contact and vocabulary enrichment: Scandinavian elements in Middle English. By Isabel Moskowich, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. Pp. 173.

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Isabel Moskowich's monograph, *Language contact and vocabulary enrichment: Scandinavian elements in Middle English* (published in 2012 by Peter Lang) is the 34th volume of the Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature series, launched in 2002 and edited by Jacek Fisiak. The series itself covers quite a wide variety of topics related to Old and Middle English language and literature, including, among others, contact linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, grammaticalization, syntax, poetry, postcolonialism and issues of standardization. Moskowich's book deals with a lexicological question related to language contact examined in a framework of historical linguistics and sociolinguistics.

The monograph under review focuses on the changes in the English lexicon from the perspective of contact linguistics. The historical era in which the language contact situation in question took place is the time period between the 8th and 11th centuries, which forms part of an epoch known as the Viking Age, during which raiding Norsemen conquered rather vast areas in Europe, and also ruled over the Eastern and North-Eastern parts of England, known as the territory of the Danelaw. The contacting languages that are therefore surveyed by the author are English and Old Norse, the mixture of which she terms "Anglo-Scandinavian" in the Introduction (p. 12).

The book itself consists of six chapters, the first three of which provide a historical, social and sociolinguistic background and context, chapter four describes the corpus on which the author carried out her investigations, in chapter five the results of the corpus analysis are discussed and interpreted against the background outlined in the first three chapters, and finally in the sixth chapter the author summarizes the results of her investigation and provides a final conclusion. In what follows, a chapter by chapter review will be provided of the book, concluding with an overall impression and evaluation.

The first chapter of the book (pp. 15-39) focuses on the historical background, describing the reasons of Scandinavian expansion, the waves of Scandinavian migration and also the nature of the Norse presence in England. The chapter begins with a brief, introduction-like section on preliminary considerations in which the author levels criticism against previous studies written about the Anglo-Norse contact situation for being biased and vastly overgeneralizing, and surveys some of the historical documents and early scholarly papers written on the questions of Norse migration and the language that might have been in use during the Norse presence in England. In the rest of the chapter the reader is introduced to the possible reasons behind the Scandinavian expansion, and presented with an overview of the historical events leading up to the Viking eruption. Moskowich dismisses those theories which claim that the motivation behind this eruption was solely pillaging and raiding, and proposes that the Viking expansion happened as a result of a much more complex series of historical and socioeconomic events that include the search for more arable land, which was of rather short supply in the harsh conditions of Scandinavia, the superiority of Norse seafaring and the disappearance of the Danish royal dynasty in 854. In Chapter One, the author also discusses the second wave of Viking migration that took place shortly after the first group of Norse warriors, some one thousand men, who were defeated in England, began to settle down and assimilate. This second wave of migration was of a much larger scale and also included peasants and women, and presumably it had a more pronounced linguistic influence than the first wave, as Moskowich suggests.

The second chapter of the book (pp. 41-60) is centered on addressing the questions of the social structure, social organization and economy in Viking Age England. First, the author surveys social organization in pre-Norman and pre-Scandinavian England, as well as the structure of local administration, law enforcement and territorial divisions in the England of post second wave Norse migration, chiefly under the reign of Æðelræd Unræd and Knútr. After this discussion the author moves away from the higher administrative organization and examines society at the level of farms and villages, concentrating on the status and role of the *ceorl*, the socio-economic structure of the Danelaw, the different types and sizes of tenements, and the stratification, levels of freedom and various obligations of the landholders. Finally, the importance of commercial activity and market towns is discussed, concluding that market towns were primary places of language mixing which was facilitated by the communicative needs of the commercial transactions.

In Chapter Three (pp. 61-88), which forms the sociolinguistic theoretical framework and basis of the book, we are presented with three major sociolinguistic models which can be applied to the analysis of the state of affairs regarding language use in the surveyed time period in England, as well as with a dis-

cussion of the central notions of sociolinguistics, such as speech communities, language contact, bilingualism, diglossia, pidgins and creoles. First, Labov's variation model (1972) is presented, which postulates that

- I. language is a "heterogeneous entity formed by a set of socially structured variables" (p. 62),
- II. speech and social structures interact with each other, and
- III. language change always occurs in three phases, as the novel form gradually propagates through the social groups and acquires style stratification until it becomes regular and its competing forms are eliminated.

Next, Bailey's model of developmental linguistics (Bailey 1973, 1987) is discussed, which aims to explain the nature of language through understanding the processes that have rendered the language into its current state. Bailey's model also factors in socio-communicative and neurobiological influences on language use and language change and suggests that the development of language in individuals can be translated and extrapolated to the development of language as a whole. Finally, the social networks model proposed by Milroy & Milroy (1992) is described, for which the concept of social networks, the different ways in which relationships among people may be formed and the concepts related to the size, density and divisions of such networks are first introduced.

After examining these three models, Moskowich gives a brief description of the notion of the speech community, followed by that of language contact and quite a lengthy discussion of bilingualism and diglossia, which includes a detailed classification system for both of these concepts while bearing in mind that producing an exact definition for either is extremely difficult due to the fact that they can refer to the language use of individual speakers as well as to that of communities and can be used for describing groups of speakers with varying levels of competence. Finally, the third chapter concludes with a discussion of pidgins and creoles and an overview of the possible causes for lexical and semantic change.

In the second shortest chapter of the book, Chapter Four (pp. 89-97), the corpus is described on which the author carried out her investigations. The data for the analysis has been extracted from the *Middle English Dictionary* (Kurath et al. (eds.) 1956-2001) with "all the terms under <a>, and <c> and their corresponding entries [constituting] the records for [the] corpus" (p. 89). The samples altogether make up 100,000 words, which are categorized into 5,295 records. The database contains various pieces of information regarding the entries, including variables, among others, such as etymological background, semantic field, grammatical category and dialect. In this chapter Moskowich provides a legend for the marking conventions used for the identification of source

texts, and a list of the 35 semantic fields to which lexical elements can belong (including some lesser-researched fields such as abstractions, medicine and anatomy, time or religion), and also defines the inclusion criteria of lexical elements found in the corpus, which means that only those Scandinavian loanwords are considered for analysis that are purely of Old Norse origin, that is, not filtered through any other language.

The fifth chapter, titled *The lexical system of Scandinavian England* (pp. 99-132) focuses on describing the results of the analysis carried out on the corpus introduced in the previous chapter. This chapter is divided into a brief introductory section followed by five subchapters each of which deals with a given aspect of the Scandinavian loanwords in the English lexicon, based on the data extracted from the *Middle English Dictionary (MED)*. The five subsections are as follows: dates, dialects, semantic fields, text types and grammatical categories.

In the first subchapter after the introduction, *Dates*, the reader is presented with some figures organized into twenty-year time periods regarding the number of loanwords found in manuscripts dating from a given period. From these figures it can be seen that the first Scandinavian elements, which are place names, appear in the corpus in a text dating from 1107, and the Norse lexical items show a sharp increase in texts dating from the twenty-year period between 1181-1200 (213 tokens) and 1381-1400 (1,444 tokens). Moskowich interprets the first of these spikes with the Norman Conquest of 1066 and that the English and the Scandinavians fought a common enemy, which brought about a higher degree of cohesion of the community as well as a higher degree of interaction between the two languages, bearing in mind, of course, that it often took a very long time for a new linguistic element to be recorded in writing.

The next subchapter deals with the distribution of loanwords among dialects and begins with the assumption that due to the significant Scandinavian influence, a high number of Norse loanwords are to be found in the dialects corresponding to the area of the Danelaw. Yet the data of the corpus seems to indicate otherwise, because the highest number of neologisms is in fact found in a group the author calls "standard" or "common core" to which those texts belong which cannot be categorized under a distinctive dialectal variety. The lowest number of Scandinavian loanwords is found in the South and South-East dialects, and Moskowich argues that this is the region where the highly important and both culturally and linguistically trendsetting London-Oxford-Cambridge triangle is situated, and the reason why there are so few Norse items marked in the *MED* as typical of these two dialects is because those were considered culturally and socially significant, however there may have been a great number of Scandinavian loans used in these dialects, but they were recorded unmarked because they were in widespread use and thus not recognized as dialectal peculiarities.

The fourth subchapter is focused on analyzing the variable of semantic fields in order to verify or falsify the assumption that Scandinavian loans belong to the domain of everyday life. It emerges that the semantic field containing the highest number of Norse elements is that of “terms relating to physical action” with words such as *call*, *grip*, *cast*, etc., which is followed by states of mind (2nd) and mental actions (3rd). In this subchapter the author gives an account of the most frequently occurring semantic fields, accompanied by a wealth of examples, and based on these loanwords and the highly divergent nature of the semantic fields they belong to, she dismisses the claim that the Norse loan elements were restricted to the domain of everyday life.

The next variable the author considers is that of text types. She shows that texts of a didactic nature, including religious and moralizing texts, are the ones with the highest occurrence of Scandinavian elements. The author interprets this result as another counterargument against the theory discussed in the previous section, adding that loanwords in these didactic texts must have been widespread and widely understood, otherwise their very purpose of being didactic would have been undermined. The results discussed in the final subchapter, *Grammatical categories*, show the dominance of verbs (40.9%) and nouns (34.78%) over other parts of speech, which tend to show a rather irregular pattern of distribution.

Finally, in the last, brief, sixth chapter (pp. 133-139) the author recapitulates the methods, starting points and results of her investigation and calls for an approach of research that also takes into consideration the sociolinguistic background of speakers and is not preoccupied with describing the hypothetical language use of an ideal speaker.

The topic and various issues of the Anglo-Scandinavian language contact situation have been analyzed quite thoroughly by many scholars, covering a vast array of subdisciplines, yet there are still many areas to be explored, and Moskowich’s book offers a new perspective by bringing in the element of an empirical, corpus-based investigation as well as the integrated treatment of history, society and language. Throughout the monograph, but especially in the chapters which introduce the framework and describe the historical and social background, the author regularly calls attention to and debunks the misunderstandings, misinterpretations and fallacies that can be found in previously published scholarly material on the issue currently in focus. Furthermore, yet still related to the previous idea, she also calls for the application of a wider historical, cultural and sociological foundation on which to base our understanding of language, language contact and language change.

The book itself is structured logically, the chapters provide a clear and concise presentation of the author’s arguments, ideas and the points she intends to make. The corpus analysis is also quite thorough, and Moskowich substantiates

all of her claims by presenting a wide variety of actual examples from the sampled texts. The presentation of the research findings is complemented by a large number of graphs and figures which help visualize and summarize the outcomes of the investigation. The chapters of the book are structured in such a way that each (individual) subchapter builds on the preceding one, thereby creating an interwoven and highly interrelated set of chapters. The theoretical framework starts out with a broad historical context which is gradually narrowed down to discussing sociolinguistic issues. The research methodology employed by the author is sound and is described adequately and the corpus investigation is thorough. However, there is one comment to be added. In the description of the corpus, the author does not seem to give indication as to why only “terms under <a>, and <c>” (p. 89) were selected from the *MED* for analysis, neither is the exact method of data analysis described, which would pose an obstacle if one wished to recreate the findings. Moskowich’s theoretical background and research findings seem to falsify a number of prevalent preconceptions regarding the nature of the Anglo-Scandinavian linguistic and cultural contact situation. Such preconceptions include the theory that the sole purpose of the Viking presence in England was to pillage and that the Scandinavian loanwords are confined to the domains of everyday experience, seafaring and law. The monograph comes to a close in the final chapter, where the author discusses her results in the light of the theoretical framework she has adopted. All in all, this is a well structured and well researched book that provides a new perspective on the issue of Anglo-Scandinavian contact.

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