

Different Impact Patterns of Norman and Mongol Conquests on English and Chinese

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Abstract

Norman Conquest and Mongol conquest are two monumental events in the history of England and China respectively. The impacts of these two events on English and Chinese languages are far-reaching and merit thorough study. This paper will first review the linguistic changes of English after Norman Conquest in three aspects: lexical, orthographic and grammatical. Then the focus will be shifted to how the Chinese language change by analyzing authentic texts collected before, during and after the Mongol conquest. Based on the comparison of the two events and their consequences on languages, tentative patterns of language assimilation in the ambiance of alien conquests will be generated.

Keywords: Norman Conquest, Mongol Conquest, English, Chinese, patterns

1. Introduction

English is spoken by over 400 million people as their first language and 430 million as their second language all over the world in the early 2000s (Crystal, 2003, p. 67). It is the second largest mother tongue and mostly used second language. English deserves the title of a bona fide international language. Meanwhile, another language of equal importance but with more speakers is Chinese, which possesses over 1.4 billion native speakers all around the world. As the first and second largest mother tongues in the world, both Chinese and English go through similar developmental patterns from their infancy to maturity. And in their developmental phases, there must be some social paroxysms that will later catalyze linguistic changes and thus promote Chinese and English from their inceptive phase to a mellow stage.

In the history of English, there is a cataclysmic impact on the language itself. And that cataclysm has not only changed England and its subjects, but also brought Old English out of the old world to a middle age. In 1066, the English king Edward died without an heir, and his cousin, William, Duke of Normandy, grabbed the English throne. He then rallied his army and invaded England. After William's overwhelming triumph in the Battle of Hastings, he had seized predominant control over the whole England. Being the potentate, William the Conqueror, an epithet given by the English people, made his mother tongue Norman French the official language among the higher stratum of the English society. Resultantly, English became the tongue of the lowborn people. And, it is then the time for the English language to be prepared to confront flooding influence from French.

The Chinese language's collision with its conqueror's language happened two hundred years later after the Norman Conquest. It was the year that the Mongols sprang up and swept the whole Asia and Europe without a matching foe. In 1260, Kublai, grandson of the great Ghinggis Khan, the fourth son of Tolui, acceded to the Khan of Mongol Empire. He then united all Mongol warlords and defeated his brother usurper. 11 years later after his coronation, he changed the empire's name to a Chinese word, "Dayuan (大元)", literally the Great Origin. And his capital, the Khanbalik, was moved and resettled in present-day Beijing. The change and resettlement were the adumbration of Kublai's ambitious plan of conquering China. The Mongol troops launched a full-scale invasion on Southern Song in 1268.

In 1279, the Han Chinese witnessed the total annihilation of Southern Song by the Mongol troops, and henceforth met the first-time-ever complete conquest by northern nomadic people. The Mongols, besides their belligerency and battle skills, had surprisingly contributed to the development of Chinese language in the long run. Norman and Mongol conquests are two monumental events in the developmental phases of the English and the Chinese languages respectively. Their influences are far-reaching and beyond anticipation. The two events do not happen synchronously, however the resemblances in outcomes cannot be gainsaid. By comparing these two events and their consequences on languages, it is of great possibility to unfold affinities and varieties of how an autochthonous language is impacted by an alien language brought by the conquerors.

2. The impacts of Norman Conquest on the English language

By 1071, William the Conqueror had seized ultimate control over the whole British Isles and then began the feudalism in England. When Normans became the ruling class of England, they made Norman French the official language and hence French was used by the upper class all over the English society. Through the communication between the upper stratum and the lowborn people, there appeared fusion between the English language and the Norman French. With the help of political preference to French, English was driven on a path to three major changes: lexical and orthographic changes as well as changes from non-linguistic factors.

2.1 Lexical impact

When the French language tigerishly flooded into the English language, English words became its first prey. The resourcefulness of French vocabulary successfully filled the gap which was resulted by the lexical inadequacy of English. Bloomfield (1933, p. 469) opined that the competition between English and French did not affect the grammar, but the lexical influence was enormous. The lexical reservoir of English was enriched by French via two observable ways: quantitative and qualitative.

2.2.1 Quantitative influence on English vocabulary

French, by relying on its linguistic hegemony, had largely enriched the English vocabulary. Many new words flooded into the lexical depository of English, and as a result, English simply discarded its function of self-creation and turned toward borrowing. But English did not absorb all the French words, only words in certain spheres, like the following.

law	government	religion	war	art & science
judge	govern	miracle	battle	beauty
jury	state	service	arms	art
justice	parliament	angel	officer	chapter
court	authority	soul	navy	poet
attorney	power	sermon	soldier	prose
accuse	crown	baptism	conquer	medicine
charge	nation	miracle	victory	surgeon

It is quite obvious from the form above that French borrowings in English were mostly concentrated in the fields like law, bureaucracy, religion, military, art and science etc. These fields are highly exclusive and are only concerned with Norman gentry and aristocracy. Many French words flooded into the English language after the Norman Conquest. At that time, an estimated 10,000 French words were introduced into English (Zhang & Sun, 2014, p. 244). Thus the English vocabularies were largely enhanced and enlarged. Even today, there are 50% of words in Modern English that are from French (Wang, 2010, p. 143).

2.1.2 Qualitative influence on English vocabulary

French not only quantitatively enriched the English language, but also fortified and extended English words to a brand-new level:

Meaning	Anglo-Saxon	French
服装	clothes	costume
幽灵	ghost	spirit
愿望	wish	desire
回答	answer	reply
房间	room	chamber

每年的	yearly	annual
看	look	search
人民	folk	people
帮助	help	aid

The above form demonstrates that after Norman French, there may be two different words for a same meaning, one was created by the Anglo-Saxons, the other borrowed from French. This dichotomy of words illuminates that English vocabulary had already possessed a preliminary function of style. After the Norman Conquest, French was made the prerogative language among the highborn and higher stratum in England. As for English, it was degraded and became a vulgar tongue of the commons and lowborn. Therefore, language, specifically diction, became the easiest way to distinguish one’s social status, educational background and other social elements. Also, selection of French-borrowed words served as a sign of one’s aesthetic taste, linguistic predilection and stylistic exoticness.

Anglo-Saxon	cow	calf	sheep	pig
French	beef	veal	mutton	pork

This above form further elucidates that people who were at the low stratum of the society were the keepers of those domestic animals; only those who were from court or upper classes could afford to the meat. Ergo, it is conspicuous that the Norman Conquest had spurred the nature of class and nationality in the English language (Sun & Ma, 1998, p. 86). Also, the stylistic feature of English was inspired.

2.2 Orthographic impacts: impacts on spellings

The writing system of Old English was directly derived from an antediluvian writing system used by the Norse--Futhorc. Before the Norman Conquest, English spelling system greatly resembled Futhorc. In 731, Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History* wrote: “Ďawæsæftermanigumdagumþætsēcyningcōmtōþæmēalande” (Baugh& Cable, 2003, p. 125). This cannot be clearly comprehended unless professionally trained. After the Norman Conquest, in *Robert of Gloucester* the author wrote: “þus com lo engeland in to normandieshond” (Baugh & Cable, 2003, p. 179). Comparatively, this is much easier to recognize, and it evidences that via the intervention of French, English had abandoned its unintelligible writing system. The following form is an example of letters before and after Norman Conquest:

Old English Letters	þ	hw	cw	sc	none
Letters after Norman Conquest	th	wh	qu	sh,sch	v

Not only letters were changed, the vacancies were also padded with the introduction of new letters, like “v”. So English can then spell words like “veal” or “victory”. Norman French helped to ameliorate the standardization of English spelling. The English orthography had been improved. Once the writing system is settled and fixed, the external structure of the language is stable. The stability of language secures its vigorousness and livability. The unified and standardized spelling enhanced the propagation of the English language. People from different sections of England may not acoustically understand each other, but a unified writing system can ensure their communication smooth and fluent. In a sense, orthographic contribution made by French to English is of equal importance to the First Emperor of China’s unification of Chinese character.

2.3 Impacts resulted from non-linguistic factors--grammatical changes

Long before the Norman Conquest, Romans had already conquered England and made it a province of the Roman Empire. Latin was the official language of the English people under *PaxRomana*. Notwithstanding Romans’ retreat, Latin still played a pivotal role in the English language. The grammars of Old English are mostly derived from labyrinthine Latin grammars. However, things had greatly changed after the Norman Conquest. The most significant feature of Middle English, the English after the Norman Conquest, is discard and simplification of inflectional endings as well as loss of many labyrinthine grammatical cases and genders etc.

In Old English, an English noun may have several kinds of plural forms due to the complicated inflectional endings. But in Middle English, plural form endings had been largely reduced and restricted to “-s” or “-es”, along with some irregulars; Latin grammar provided four cases in Old English: nominative, genitive, dative and objective (Wang, 2010, p. 145), but there was only one grammatical case, genitive case, left in Middle English; other grammatical terms like numbers and genders were thoroughly cleansed; Old English, like Latin, was an

inflectional language, which means it relied on inflectional endings to represent the order of meaning, however Middle English was different as prepositions were functioning in inflexions' stead. From the above-mentioned three changes, it is self-evident that English grammar became simpler and word order began to affect the meaning of English sentences after the Norman Conquest. Therefore, English became an analytical language rather than synthetic language, although the core of English was not altered, and it is still a Germanic language.

English, after the Norman Conquest, became simpler, clearer, and much more intelligible not because it was influenced by French, but because the *laissez-faire* policy made by the Normans over English. The French language was announced as official language in England while the English the tongue of common folks. Those uneducated folks were the impetus for the simplification of English grammar. The Norman government did not care how common folks used English, they only cared the status of French. As for the common folks, their poorly-educated backgrounds determined that Old English grammars would not be taken seriously. Thus the English language changed not because it was linguistically influenced by French, but due to the non-linguistic factors: social milieu of England and language status of English.

3. The impacts of Mongol conquest on the Chinese language

The Mongol conquest is a significant event in China's history. In 1279, the Southern Song, a Han Chinese dynasty, was completely crushed by Mongol riders, and thus opened up a new dynastic time--the Yuan dynasty. This is the first time that the whole China was ruled by northern nomadic people. The Mongols, though economically, politically and culturally inferior to Han Chinese, surprisingly bring changes to the Chinese language via their sovran potency. Changes can be observed by perusing some formal manuscripts from three respective periods: before Mongol conquering, during Mongol conquering and after the Mongol conquest.

In 960, Zhao Kuangyin, a.k.a. Emperor Taizu of Song dynasty, acceded to the throne, and promulgated his imperial edict of accedence:

门下。五运推移。上帝于焉眷命。三灵改卜。王者所以膺图。朕起自侧微。备尝艰险。当周邦草昧。从二帝以徂征。泊虞舜陟方。翊嗣君而纂位。但罄一心而事上。敢期百姓之与能。属以北敌侵疆。边民罹苦。朕长驱禁旅。往殄烽尘。旗鼓才出于国门。将校共推于天命。迫回京阙。欣戴眇躬。幼主以历数有归。寻行禅让。兆庶不可以无主。万几不可以旷时。勉徇群心。已登大宝。昔汤武革命。发大号以顺人。汉唐开基。因始封而建国。宜国号大宋。改周显德七年为建隆元年。乘时抚运。既协于讴谣。及物推恩。宜周于华夏。可大赦天下。云云于戏。革故鼎新。皇祚初膺于景命。变家为国。鸿恩宜被于寰区。更赖将相王公。同心协力。共裨寡昧。以致升平。凡百军民。深体朕意。(Toqto'a&Alutu, 1985, p. 145) (The original text is written in traditional Chinese and without punctuation. The cited text is simplified and punctuated by the author.)

This is an imperial edict written in the year of 960, which is long before the Mongol conquest, and it clearly demonstrates the typical features of ancient Chinese: simple and strict style without subjects; diction of formal and official words; no vernacular particles or modal particles considerably used in present-day Chinese. However, Chinese changed much after the Mongol conquest. In 1323, Yesün-Temür, also known as Emperor Taiding, the sixth emperor of Yuan dynasty, publicized his imperial edict of accedence:

薛禅皇帝可怜见嫡孙、裕宗皇帝长子、我仁慈甘麻刺爷爷根底，封授晋王，统领成吉思皇帝四个大斡耳朵，及军马、达达国土都付来。依着薛禅皇帝圣旨，小心谨慎，但凡军马人民的不拣甚么勾当里，遵守正道行来的上头，数年之间，百姓得安业。在后，完泽笃皇帝教我继承位次，大斡耳朵里委付了来。已委付了的大营盘看守着，扶立了两个哥哥曲律皇帝、普颜笃皇帝，侄硕德八剌皇帝。我累朝皇帝根底，不谋异心，不图位次，依本分与国家出气力行来；诸王哥哥兄弟每，众百姓每，也都理会的也者。今我的侄皇帝生天了也么道，迤南诸王大臣、军士的诸王驸马臣僚、达达百姓每，众人商量着：大位次不宜久虚，惟我是薛禅皇帝嫡派，裕宗皇帝长孙，大位次里合坐地的体例有，其余争立的哥哥兄弟也无有；这般，晏驾其间，比及整治以来，人心难测，宜安抚百姓，使天下人心得宁，早就这里即位提说上头。从着众人的心，九月初四日，于成吉思皇帝的大斡耳朵里，大位次里坐了也。交众百姓每心安的上头，赦书行有。(Song, 1976, p. 256)

From this imperial edict, three observable changes can be ascertained. First, there are many modal particles in this edict, which is quite unusual for such a formal text;

Modal particles	Times of appearance
了	5
着	5
的	8
每	3
里	2

There are altogether 23 commonly-used particles in Emperor Taiding’s imperial edict, and comparatively, there is none in Emperor Taizu of Song’s edict. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a brisk emergence of particles in Chinese after the Mongol conquest (Sun, 1991, p. 66). Not only grammatical words enhanced, grammars are also changed. In Emperor Taiding’s imperial edict, there emerges a syntactic pattern which is never seen in Chinese texts before Mongol’s rule:

- (1)统领(Predicate)成吉思皇帝四个大斡耳朵(Object 1), 及军马、达达国土(Object 2)都付来(Predicate)
- (2) 已委付了的大营盘(Object)看守着(Predicate),
- (3), 大位次里合坐地的体例(Object)有(Predicate), 其余争立的哥哥兄弟(Object)也(Adverb)无有(Predicate) ;
- (4)大位次里(Object)坐(Predicate)了也(Particles)。

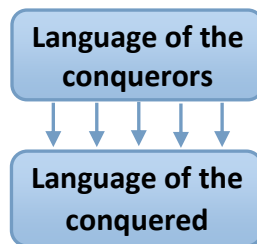
The first sentence shows mergence between Chinese and Mongolian, which pertains to Sino-Tibetan and Altaic families respectively. The most conspicuous feature of Altaic languages like Mongol is that it possesses a syntactic structure of SOV, in which verbs are always in the last position. Meanwhile, Chinese adopts the syntactic pattern of SVO. But in Sentence (1), there appears a grammatical structure of VO+OV, which is the combination of SVO+SOV with subject omitted. The regular omission of subjects is also a prominent cachet of Altaic languages. That is to say, Sentence (1) is the outcome of the merging of Chinese and Mongolian. The rest three sentences all utilize the syntactic pattern of SOV with subjects omitted. It is then certain that Chinese after Mongol’s reign was Altaicized and largely adopted Mongolian grammar. Beyond grammar, the writing style of Chinese is also impacted. By meticulously comparing the aforementioned two edicts, there is a traceable difference between their writing style. Emperor Taizu of Song’s edict is much more formal and official where Emperor Taiding’s edict seems to be written by a less educated nomad. The nomadic style of Mongols must have penetrated into Chinese language and make it more vulgar, colloquial and vernacular. The influence of Mongols is extensive and far-reaching, even after Mongols’ retreat from China. In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang successfully defeated the Mongol army and drove the Mongol ruler out of China to Mongolian Plateau. China finally returned to the hand of Han Chinese. However, the Chinese language can never return to what it used to be. In 1375, the eighth year of Hongwu, Emperor Taizu of Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang, wrote an imperial edict, and it put:

皇帝圣旨：中书省官我根前题奏，西安行都卫文书里呈来说，乌思藏哈尔麻刺麻卒尔普寺在那里住坐修行，我想修行是好的勾当，教他稳便在那里住坐，诸色人等休教骚扰，说与那地面里官人每知道者。(Deng, 1994, p. 85) (The original text is written in traditional Chinese and without punctuation. The cited text is simplified and punctuated by the author.)

In this imperial edict, Zhu Yuanzhang’s writing style proves to be too vernacular for an official document. In this edict, phrases like “我根前”, “我想”, “好的勾当”, “教他” and “说与那地面里” etc. are quite vulgar and colloquial. His style is just like that of Emperor Taiding. It is reasonable to trace Zhu’s style to the penetration of Mongolian into Chinese. It may be argued that Zhu’s vernacular style was caused by his illiteracy and uneducatedness. However, it must be recognized that the majority stratum in Yuan dynasty China was the uneducated lowborn. Zhu Yuanzhang’s linguistic style properly reflected the main stream of Chinese in that period: the majority Chinese had accepted Mongolian’s influence in their mother tongue. In a synopsis, the Mongols, along with their 98-year reign over China, had impacted Chinese language in three noticeable ways. First, there is no observable lexical enhancement. The Mongols did not add new content words to the lexical storage of Chinese, however they did add some significant grammatical words, like particles, to Chinese grammatical system. Further, the Altaic-peculiar SOV pattern penetrated into and became settled in Chinese. Finally, Chinese, whether written or spoken, became vulgar and vernacular after the Mongol conquest.

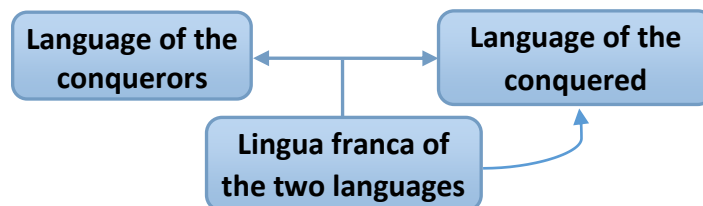
4. Conclusion

By comparing these two monumental events and their effects on language, three dissimilarities are revealed. Starting from lexical level, it is conspicuous that lexical enhancement is noticeable in English but dearth in Chinese. The continental Normans were linguistically much more improved than the Anglo-Saxons, thus Anglo-Saxons had the urge to borrow from French in order to fill their own lexical blankness. Stories are different for Han Chinese because they were linguistically more prominent than the nomadic Mongols, therefore they did not feel the need to borrow from Mongolian. What's more, Norman French influenced the English via lexical and orthographic aspects, but scarcely the grammar. However, the grammar of Chinese becomes much more vulgar and vernacular since the Mongol conquest. Grammar, in any languages, possesses the utmost exclusivity (Li, 2005, p. 77). The exceptional reception of Mongol grammar into Chinese is due to the Mongol rulers who made this Mongolian pidgin Chinese official. However, the changes of English were because of the laissez-faire of the English rulers and uneducatedness of the common people. Viewing from a cultural backdrop, Han Chinese and their culture tended to be all-embracing, they showed willingness when confronting foreign elements, even brought by the invaders. As for English, being scions of the Teutonic people, they were unbowed, unbent and unbroken whether they were faced with physical invasions or linguistic assimilation. Besides the differences, two patterns can be constructed by the comparison. From English, it is concluded that when the indigenous language was comparatively underdeveloped when compared with the invading language, it then followed a unidirectional, suppressing and top-down pattern:



When invaders spoke a well-developed language, the impacts between two languages were unidirectional; only the language of the conquerors can exert impacts on the language of their subjects. The conquerors' despotic power could secure this assimilation process. The conquered and their language were suppressed to accept the linguistic invasion launched by the conqueror from the upper class to a lower stratum. This linguistic pattern is also a depiction of social edifice after the conquest. The ruling class of the conquerors was on the top to exert their influence on the lower level of the conquered.

Still, the case of Chinese and Mongol conquest provides another model. When the indigenous language, along with economical activities and social life, was more developed than the invaders', then the two language did not affect each other directly. They drew support from a certain lingua franca.



In this multi-directional, intermediary modal, the language of the conquerors, due to its under-development, cannot directly influence the language of the conquered. Therefore, it takes a detour via the help of a lingua franca. The conquerors used their ruling power to force linguistic communication with the conquered. And through the communication, there formed a lingua franca. It is then the lingua franca that served as a strong impetus for the changes in the language of the conquered. In the case of Chinese and Mongol conquest, Mongolian Pidgin Chinese is the lingua franca which impacted Chinese backwards.

These two models are based on Norman and Mongol conquests, and it is preliminary and tentative explanations for English and Chinese after these two events. The future research should conclude languages beyond English and Chinese, and see what the similar situation brings about. At that time these models can be amplified and generalized.

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