EOC
EUROASIAN
ONLINE
CONFERENCES

GERMANY
CONFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND
TECHNOLOGY

Google Scholar   zenodo   OpenAIRE   doi · digital object identifier

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – Gamburg, Germany, 2025 Issue 5

Languages of publication: Uzbek**,** English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish,

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference **« INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY »**. Which took place in Gamburg, 2025.

Conference proceedings are recommended for scientists and teachers in higher education establishments. They can be used in education, including the process of post - graduate teaching, preparation for obtain bachelors' and masters' degrees. The review of all articles was accomplished by experts, materials are according to authors copyright. The authors are responsible for content, researches results and errors.

THE VOCABULARY OF THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD (WITH A FOCUS ON CHAUCER)

Asadbek Halimjonov
The student of Fergana State University,
Gulyora Ismoilova
The teacher of Fergana State University

Annotation. This article delves into the transformative nature of the English lexicon during the Middle English period (c. 1150–1500), specifically examining the profound influence of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400) on the language's development. The period is characterized by the massive influx of loanwords, primarily from Anglo-Norman French and Latin, a direct consequence of the Norman Conquest and the continued status of these languages in law, administration, and scholarship. Chaucer, often hailed as the "Father of English Literature," is a pivotal figure whose works, particularly *The Canterbury Tales*, reveal a rich and eclectic vocabulary that significantly contributed to the standardization and enrichment of English. This study employs a lexical analysis and etymological examination of Chaucer's language to quantify his contributions and illustrate the linguistic heterogeneity that laid the foundation for Modern English.

Key Words: Middle English, Geoffrey Chaucer, Vocabulary, Lexicon, Loanwords, Anglo-Norman French, Latin, Etymology, Standardization, *The Canterbury Tales*.

INTRODUCTION

The Middle English period marks a crucial and dynamic phase in the evolution of the English language, bridging the gap between Old English, which was heavily inflected and largely Germanic, and the more analytic structure of Modern English. This era, spanning roughly from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the end of the fifteenth century, was defined by unprecedented linguistic change, particularly in its lexicon. The displacement of English by Anglo-Norman French as the language of the court, law, and administration for several centuries led to a massive infusion of Romance vocabulary, fundamentally altering the nature of the English word-stock. By the fourteenth century, when English began its resurgence as a literary and administrative language, the vocabulary was a rich, heterogeneous mix of Old English (Germanic) roots, Scandinavian loanwords, and a rapidly expanding layer of French and Latin terms.

Within this context of linguistic transformation, Geoffrey Chaucer emerges as the most influential literary figure. Writing in the London dialect of Middle English, which was becoming the *de facto* standard, Chaucer's

conscious decision to elevate the vernacular to the level of sophisticated artistry was revolutionary. His poetic genius, showcased most famously in *The Canterbury Tales*, provided a vast, diverse, and well-attested corpus for the emerging language. Chaucer's personal linguistic aptitude, combined with his extensive reading in French, Latin, and Italian, allowed him to harness the multilingual resources available in a way that permanently expanded the expressive capacity of English. His vocabulary is a microcosm of the linguistic history of his time, reflecting the societal, political, and cultural shifts that shaped the language. An in-depth focus on Chaucer's lexicon, therefore, is essential to understanding the development of Middle English vocabulary as a whole.

Literature Review. Scholarly consensus firmly establishes the Middle English period as one of immense lexical expansion, a change chiefly driven by **borrowing** from French and Latin. The Norman Conquest initiated the most significant wave of French loanwords, which permeated domains previously dominated by Old English terms, leading often to pairs of words (*doublets*) expressing similar concepts but occupying different stylistic registers (e.g., Old English *kingly* vs. French *royal* vs. Latin *regal*). Historical linguists such as Baugh and Cable (2002) and Cannon (1998) detail this process, estimating that thousands of French words entered the language during this time, with a significant proportion persisting into Modern English.

Regarding Chaucer, his role as a linguistic innovator and popularizer is undisputed. Simon Horobin's (2012) work on Chaucer's language highlights the poet's skill in manipulating the varied word-stock, employing different registers for different characters and narrative purposes—an early form of socio-linguistic awareness. It is often noted that Chaucer's attested vocabulary is substantial, containing an estimated 8,000 words in his entire corpus, approximately half of which are of Romance (French/Latin) origin (Reeve, 2017). Furthermore, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) credits Chaucer with introducing nearly 2,000 words into the English literary record, marking their first recorded appearance in his works. This phenomenon suggests that Chaucer was not merely an archivist of the existing language, but a deliberate agent of lexical innovation, introducing words from continental sources or bringing existing spoken terms into the written medium.

Methodology. This analysis employs a corpus-based, etymological methodology focused on the lexical data drawn from Chaucer's major works, primarily *The Canterbury Tales*.

Etymological Classification: A representative sample of Chaucerian vocabulary (drawing on established lexical studies) is classified according to its immediate etymological source: Germanic (Old English/Norse), French (Anglo-Norman/Central French), and Latin (Direct Borrowing).

Statistical Analysis: Quantitative data, specifically the proportion of Germanic versus Romance-sourced vocabulary and the documented count of *Chaucerian first attestations*, is utilized to demonstrate the extent of foreign influence and the poet's innovative role.

Lexical Field Analysis: The borrowed words are further categorized into semantic fields (e.g., law, government, religion, courtly life, abstract concepts) to illustrate where French and Latin contributions were most significant and how they enriched English's capacity for sophisticated expression.

This triangulation of literary evidence, etymological tracing, and quantitative analysis provides a robust framework for assessing the scope and impact of Chaucer's vocabulary within the broader landscape of Middle English.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The vocabulary of Middle English, as reflected in Chaucer's work, is a clear demonstration of linguistic stratification resulting from socio-political history. The core, functional vocabulary—including conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and basic nouns—remained overwhelmingly Germanic. However, the lexicon of abstract concepts, high culture, law, and administration was saturated with French and Latin terms. Chaucer masterfully exploited this dual heritage, enabling a flexibility of register and nuance previously unavailable in English.

Lexical Source Distribution

Table 1 provides a statistical overview of the etymological composition of Chaucer's active vocabulary, based on historical linguistic research. The figures highlight the massive impact of the Romance languages.

Table 1: Estimated Etymological Breakdown of Chaucer's Vocabulary

Etymological Source	Estimated Percentage of Total Vocabulary	Primary Domains/Register	Examples of Words (Chaucerian ME)
Germanic (Old English/Norse)	$\approx 50\%$	Core concepts, daily life, function words	*hous, goon, wyf, man, good, til*
French (Anglo-Norman/Central)	$\approx 45\%$	Law, court, war, fashion, abstract concepts	*gentil, curteisye, resoun, honour, bataille*
Latin (Direct Borrowing)	$\approx 5\%$	Religion, science, scholarship, technical terms	*auditour, dissolution, parfit, contrarie*

Source: Adapted from various etymological studies of Chaucer's lexicon.

The near-equal balance between Germanic and Romance roots showcases the true hybrid nature of Middle English. The Germanic words

often retained a more earthy, direct, and familiar quality, while the French and Latin loanwords provided the necessary terminology for a complex, sophisticated, and evolving medieval society.

Chaucer's Introduction of New Lexemes

Chaucer's role as an innovator is perhaps best quantified by the substantial number of words he is credited with introducing into the written English record (first attestations). These words, often borrowed from French or Latin, significantly broadened the conceptual and stylistic range of the English language.

Table 2: Examples of Words First Attested in Chaucer's Works and their Semantic Fields

Word (Modern English Form)	Chaucerian Work	Semantic Field	Etymological Source
Acceptable	*The Canterbury Tales*	Abstract/Moral	French/Latin
Altercation	*The Canterbury Tales*	Law/Dispute	French/Latin
Annoyance	*Troilus and Criseyde*	Emotion/Feeling	French
Aspect	*The Canterbury Tales*	Astronomy/Appearance	Latin
Dissimulation	*Boece* (Translation)	Abstract/Deceit	Latin
Galaxy	*House of Fame*	Science/Cosmology	Latin/Greek via French
Moral	*The Canterbury Tales*	Abstract/Ethics	French/Latin
Prolog	*The Canterbury Tales*	Literary/Structure	French/Latin

Source: Based on data from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and Chaucerian glossaries.

These first attestations span a wide range of fields, but are particularly noticeable in the realm of abstraction (*acceptable, moral, dissimulation*) and literary form (*prolog, tragedy, satire*). By incorporating these terms, Chaucer not only expanded the vocabulary but also validated English as a language capable of handling intricate philosophical discussion and sophisticated narrative forms, moving decisively beyond the simpler verse and chronicles of earlier Middle English literature. This act of borrowing and legitimation was instrumental in the long-term process of linguistic standardization centered around the London dialect.

Conclusion. The vocabulary of the Middle English period was a tapestry woven from multiple linguistic threads, dramatically re-shaped by the cultural and political aftermath of the Norman Conquest. This transformation was characterized by a profound lexical heterogeneity, primarily the deep integration of thousands of French and Latin loanwords alongside the enduring core of the Germanic heritage.

Geoffrey Chaucer stands as the quintessential figure in this linguistic narrative. His vast poetic output, written in the burgeoning London standard, serves as the most comprehensive surviving record of this evolving lexicon. By consciously selecting English over the more prestigious French and Latin, and by enriching his chosen medium with a sophisticated array of Romance vocabulary, Chaucer established English as a language capable of immense stylistic range, from the bawdy realism of the Miller's Tale to the high philosophical discourse of the Knight's Tale. His works introduced an estimated 2,000 new words, particularly those necessary for articulating abstract, intellectual, and legal concepts, thereby immeasurably enhancing the language's capacity for nuance and formal expression. The legacy of Chaucer's vocabulary is not merely historical; it is foundational. The fundamental character of Modern English, with its layers of functional Germanic words and its vast store of polysyllabic, abstract Romance terms, is a direct inheritance from the choices and innovations of the "Father of English Literature." His work solidified the diverse and hybrid nature of the English lexicon, ensuring its power and flexibility for centuries to come.

REFERENCES

1. Baugh, Albert C., and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language.* 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002. Print. (See pages 163-188 for discussion of French influence and Middle English vocabulary).
2. Cannon, Garland. *Historical Change and English Word-Formation: Recent Vocabulary.* New York: Peter Lang, 1998. Print. (See especially Chapter 2 on borrowing and loanwords).
3. Horobin, Simon. *Chaucer's Language.* 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print. (See pages 65-90 for a detailed analysis of Chaucer's word-stock and register).
4. Macaulay, G. C. *The Works of John Gower, Vol. I.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901. Print. (General context on contemporary Middle English, see pages 15-20 for linguistic context).
5. Oxford English Dictionary Online. Oxford University Press. Web. (Used for verifying first attestations and etymologies of Chaucerian words).
6. Reeve, Jonathan. "A Macro-Etymological Analysis of *The Canterbury Tales.*" *Jonathan Reeve: Digital Humanities.* 2017. Web. (For quantitative data on etymological breakdown of Chaucer's vocabulary).
7. Skeat, Walter W. *The Student's Chaucer.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894. Print. (Early etymological work, see pages xxx-xl for glossary introduction).