This article is a post-peer-review preprint of Olga Timofeeva, “Anglo-Latin Bilingualism before 1066: Prospects and Limitations,” in Interfaces between Language and Culture in Medieval England: A Festschrift for Matti Kilpiö, edited by Alaric Hall, Olga Timofeeva, Ágnes Kiricsi and Bethany Fox, Leiden: Brill, 1–36. The pagination of this preprint is the same as that of the final publication.

ANGLO-LATIN BILINGUALISM BEFORE 1066: PROSPECTS AND LIMITATIONS

Olga Timofeeva
University of Helsinki

Introduction

As much as we know about the beginnings of the English language and its indebtedness to medieval Latin culture, little effort has been made to summarize the available data and describe or reassess it in terms of contemporary language contact theory. This may be partly explained by the fact that, studying a language situation that goes as far back as the seventh century AD, with the concomitant lack of statistical data and absence of living native speakers, we are often restricted to hypothesizing and generalizing. However, if we approach the old data from the alternative perspective afforded by a younger discipline, we may be able to get new insights into the historical and linguistic facts of the period. This paper is an attempt to sketch an empirical picture of Anglo-Latin bilingualism before the Norman Conquest and to discuss the practical prospects and limitations of the language contact approach.

The questions that will concern us in this paper are whether the coexistence of English and Latin during the Old English period can be described in terms of language contact, and whether, indeed, it is a language contact situation. The reasons to doubt this are indeed many, for the characteristics of medieval Latinity conflict with many qualitative and quantitative criteria employed in evaluations of language contact today. The first peculiarity to mention here is the lack of oral communication between native speakers of Latin and Old English,

1) The research reported here was supported by the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence funding for the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English at the Department of English, University of Helsinki, and a grant from the Jubilee Fund, University of Helsinki, for 2007. A version of this article was read at the Sixth International Symposium on Bilingualism, Hamburg, Germany (2007). I am grateful to Alaric Hall, Susan Pintzuk, Ann Taylor, and Antony R. Warner for their comments on the draft of the paper.
which was first of all connected with the geographical remoteness of Britain, but also with the fact that even in the Romance-speaking parts of Europe, Latin was becoming an essentially written language, different from the evolving vernacular languages. Thus, we can assume that literary competence in Latin was perhaps a more widespread phenomenon in medieval England than oral competence, with Latin being used in correspondence and legal documents. The theory of language contact presented in the fundamental work in the field—that of Thomason and Kaufman and Thomason—warns us that such contact situations should be approached with caution:

In cases like these, if we were to maintain the traditional criterion, “bilingualism” would have to be defined in a way that includes literary competence without oral competence (but we do not in fact recommend such an extension of the meaning of “bilingualism”).

However, my data will hopefully show that the proximity of native speakers of each language in Anglo-Latin setting was not essential. Rather, a contact situation developed from the acquisition of the second language and its dominant position as means of literary and spiritual communication, in which oral use of Latin eventually became possible: mass, preaching, school instruction and, perhaps to a lesser extent, ordinary conversation among the clergy. It is the influence of the culturally, and hence linguistically, dominant group, with its bilingual and biliterate practises, on common Old English that my article addresses.

2) I rely here on the paradigm proposed by Wright for stage A in the development of the Romance languages: in France up to ca. 800 and in Spain up to 1080, one language was used (“Proto-Romance”), which was written in the traditional way, but spoken in different evolving ways in different places (“vernacular”). Thus, Latin was a higher-register written variety of local languages. The need to differentiate between Latin and the vernacular did not seem evident until 813, just a few years after the reform of Latin orthography undertaken by Alcuin and other Carolingian scholars, when the council of Tours coined the term rustica Romana lingua. See Roger Wright, Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France (Liverpool: Cairns, 1982), 261–262; Roger Wright, *A Sociophilological Study of Late Latin*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 9–10 and 95–103; and Tore Janson, “Language Change and Metalinguistic Change: Latin to Romance and Other Cases,” in _Latin and the Romance Languages in the Early Middle Ages_, ed. Roger Wright (London: Routledge, 1991), 19–28, at 21–22.

The study falls into three main sections. I first describe the historical background for the Anglo-Latin language contact, proceeding to a statistical evaluation of the intensity of this contact based on the evidence of the Domesday Book for the demographic frequency of Anglo-Latin bilinguals. Although analyses of this kind are very difficult, it becomes clear that Latin was more influential on Old English than Thomason and Kaufman’s work would lead us to expect from the number of its speakers alone.4

The study then proceeds to consider a range of linguistic phenomena that are normally associated with contact situations, in the order in which they are presented in the chapter on mechanisms of contact-induced language change in Thomason, and following Thomason’s definitions.5

Socio-historical background

Traditionally, three stages of Latin influence (and thus three layers of Latin borrowings) are distinguished within the Old English period: (1) the continental period, before the migration to England, ca. 100 BC to ca. AD 450, (2) the early insular period, with Latin influence via Celtic transmission, ca. 450 to ca. 600, and (3) the Christian insular period, after ca. 600/650. The loans of the first two periods were introduced via oral communication, mostly pertain to military, household, or trade milieus, and are phonologically closer to Vulgar Latin, while the loans of the third period mostly came from written Classical Latin and supplied English with many learned and ecclesiastical terms.6 The second period is the most controversial of the three, for its evaluation depends on our understanding of the linguistic situation in Britain at the time of Anglo-Saxon settlement, and particularly of the degree to which Latin was still a spoken language in England.7 Although I recognize

4) Thomason and Kaufman, Language Contact and Thomason, Language Contact.
5) Thomason, Language Contact, 129–152.
7) The most extreme claims concerning the survival of spoken Latin in early medieval England have been made by Peter Schrijver, “The Rise and Fall of British Latin: Evidence from English and Brittonic,” in The Celtic Roots of English, ed. Markku
this issue as crucially important, in this paper I shall concentrate on
language contact in the historical period.

The first recorded incidents that brought the insular Germanic peoples
(primarily the inhabitants of Kent) into contact with speakers of
Latin were probably the Roman missions of 597 and 601. Bede reports
that the mission of Augustine in 597 consisted of about forty men, who most probably came from Italy or Gaul. Many of them, such as
Laurence (d. 619), Mellitus (d. 624), Justus (d. 627–631), Honorius (d.
653), Paulinus (d. 644), and Romanus (d. in or before 627) are known
by name, for later on they headed bishoprics in Canterbury, York,
London, and Rochester, often succeeding each other. More foreigners
e.g., Birinus (died ca. 650) and Felix (died 647/8), who were to become
the bishops of the Gewisse and the East Angles, respectively) came to
England in the first half of the seventh century to support the Roman
mission. All these people were directly involved in the conversion of
the English, preaching at the courts of the kings and aristocracy, setting
up dioceses, founding monasteries, building churches, and establishing
schools. The latter circumstance must have been significant not
only for the spiritual instruction of the Anglo-Saxons, but also, and
more importantly for our purposes, for the Latin language proficiency
of the emerging local clergy. One of the major questions that has to be
left untouched here is the role of Irish missionaries in the education of
the English clergy and laymen; this omission is due both to considerations
of brevity and to my belief that this information is unlikely to
make any dramatic changes to the overall picture.

The first fifty years of English ecclesiastical history produced very
few local clerics who would have been educated and influential enough

Filppula, Juhani Klemola and Heli Pitkänen, Studies in Languages 37 (Joensuu:
University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, 2002), 87–110; see also Alaric Hall’s
contribution to this volume, in which he wonders if Latin remained a mother tongue
for some people in western England even into the time of Bede.

8) “Socii eius, uiri ut ferunt ferme XL,” see Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis
Press), i.25.

Press, 2005), 34.

10) See HE ii.15 and iii.7.

11) For references and one of the most recent accounts of the influence of Irish
clergy, see Blair, The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society, 10–34, 43–49.
to compete for high positions with these foreigners. However, in 644, following the death of Paulinus, Archbishop Honorius consecrated Ithamar (died ca. 656), a man of Kentish descent, as Bishop of Rochester. Bede considered Ithamar equal to his predecessors in both holiness and education, although his tone may appear somewhat apologetic: “Honorius archiepiscopus ordinavit Ithamar, oriundum quidem de gente Cantuariorum sed uita et eruditione antecessoribus suis aequandum” (‘Archbishop Honorius consecrated Ithamar, a man of Kentish extraction but the equal of his predecessors in learning and in holiness of life’). Eleven years later, in 655, Deusdedit (d. 664), a West Saxon, became the first native archbishop.

Nevertheless, the higher clergy was still very small in number by the time of the consecration of Theodore (602–690) as Archbishop of Canterbury. The shortage of bishops was apparently partly due to the epidemic plague in 664, which devastated many monastic communities in England. The arrival of Theodore in England in 669, and the educational activity he undertook together with Abbot Hadrian (630×637–709) in the last decades of the seventh century, was the next important episode in the history of English Latinity. These two ecclesiastics were not originally from Rome: Theodore was of Greek descent and Hadrian was a Syrian who spoke Latin as his mother tongue. Both of them are described by Bede as scholars of outstanding learning, bilingual in Latin and Greek. They brought more books


13) The name Ithamar derives from the Old Testament (Ex 6:23, 28:1, Nm 3:2). The tradition of giving Hebraic names to priests was persistent among the British clergy, but was almost unknown in Anglo-Saxon sources. This led Sharpe to suggest that Ithamar was a Briton and that Bede suppressed this fact, believing that “the British had failed in their duty to bring their English neighbours to Christ” (see note 11). If Sharpe’s conclusion is correct, it pushes forward the consecration of the first English bishop by several years: Thomas of the Gyrwe became bishop of the East Angles in ca. 648, and was succeeded by Berhtgisl (Boniface) of Kent before 653 (HE iii.20). However, I am not entirely convinced that Bede’s phrasing supports this claim (see quotation below).

14) See HE iii.14, emphasis mine.


17) See HE praeefatio and iv.1.
to England and instructed the English clergy in the arts of ecclesiastical computus, music and metrics, teaching them Latin and Greek. Schools were set up in Canterbury, York, Whitby, Malmesbury, Lindisfarne, Jarrow and Wearmouth. Even after the members of the Roman mission had died out, there were scholars who could speak fluent Latin: the most renowned among the students of Theodore and Hadrian was Aldhelm (d. 709/710); among the others, Bede names Albinus, Hadrian’s successor as abbot of the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul in Canterbury (d. 732); Tobias, Bishop of Rochester (d. 726); and Oft for, Bishop of Hwicce (d. 699). Among the achievements of Theodore’s archiepiscopate were a better administrative division of the dioceses and of authority between bishops and monasteries, the strengthening of the archbishopric in Canterbury, and the foundation of the school of Canterbury, one of the most learned communities in contemporary Europe.

Eventually, the high standards of Latinity set by the Roman scholars started to decline, with several social and economic factors contributing to this process: the shifting of royal patronage and the erosion of monastic autonomy, often leading to annexation and redistribution of monastic lands; the general trend of secularization and urbanization of religious life; and the emerging threat of Viking attacks, during which in many regions, especially in the East, monasteries were destroyed, libraries burnt, and clergy massacred. The situation became lamentable by the time King Alfred succeeded to the throne of Wessex in 871. Alfred’s account of the state of learning in England at his time

18) In his preface to the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede refers to abbot Albinus as a man most learned in everything (“uir per omnia doctissimus,” *HE* praefatio), and later on in v.20, Albinus is described as a man who “was so well trained in scriptural studies that he had no small knowledge of the Greek language and that he knew Latin as well as English, his native tongue” (translation by Colgrave and Mynors). Furthermore, Bede says that Albinus was one of his sources for the *History*, and that it was through Albinus’s help and encouragement that the whole project saw the light (*HE* praefatio). Similar remarks about the trilinguality and learnedness of Tobias are found in *HE* v.8 and 23. Oft for’s travels to study at Canterbury and Rome are mentioned in *HE* iv.23.


20) These factors are discussed at length by Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 291–341.

is well known. His statement is also supported by documentary evidence: Latin charters from the second half of the ninth century display “appalling ignorance of Latin orthography and grammar.” Moreover, as Gneuss was able to show, book production in the ninth century fell dramatically: “only ten manuscripts . . . can be considered as products of Anglo-Saxon scriptoria in the ninth century before Alfred,” compared to 131 manuscripts written before the beginning of the ninth century.

To remedy this situation, King Alfred established a school for young noblemen at Winchester in the 870s and invited a number of learned foreigners to his court to advise him on his policy of spiritual education in England, a tradition continued by Alfred’s son and grandson and their successors. Several important books were translated from Latin into English as part of Alfred’s educational programme. Although the canon of Alfredian translations continues to be disputed, more important for our purposes than the actual translator of such texts as the Pastoral Care and the Consolation of Philosophy is that they were associated with the court of Alfred, and through this association maintained authority during the late Old English period. The idea that Alfred’s policies had a long-lasting effect on the development of scholarship is supported by the fact that many Alfredian translations from Latin were subsequently copied and recopied, and that the standard of common Latin documents such as charters began to improve.

If Alfredian times can be described as the period of emancipation of English through the translation of books that were “the most important for everyone to know,” the texts of the late Old English period show that the cultural gap between Latin and English continued to


become slightly narrower.\textsuperscript{27} This was the time when the West Saxon written standard spread eastwards to gradually include London and Canterbury and northwards up to the river Severn. The language became standardized, in that new documents were written in West Saxon and old ones copied in such a way that features from other dialects were replaced by those more common in West Saxon.\textsuperscript{28} The prose language was more regular in its grammar and syntax and stylistically more varied, with authors such as Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham (ca. 950–ca. 1010) and Archbishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023) employing Latin rhetorical devices in English as well as developing distinctive rhythmical patterns.\textsuperscript{29} The tenth century was also a time marked by the rise of the Anglo-Saxon square minuscule, a distinctive type of English insular script, and the heyday of the learned style in insular Latin literature, which Alistair Campbell and later Michael Lapidge describe as \textit{hermeneutic}.\textsuperscript{30}

Many of these new developments were associated with the monastic reform in the second half of the tenth century, initiated by Dunstan (d. 988), Archbishop of Canterbury (960–988), Oswald (d. 992), Archbishop of York (972–992), and Æthelwold (904–9–984), Bishop of Winchester (963–984). Although the improvement of education was not the immediate concern of the reformers, their attempt to revive


\textsuperscript{29} Hogg, Introduction to \textit{The Cambridge History of the English Language}, 16–17.

monastic life in England brought about important changes that facilitated better schooling and increased book production. During this period, new monasteries were founded (most notably at Ramsey ca. 970) and old ones were reformed, with secular clergy being replaced with monks and the monastic rule being restricted. Monasteries were supplied with liturgical texts, psalters, gospels-books, and the writings of the Church Fathers; a number of Latin texts were composed, most importantly the *Regularis concordia*, a consuetudinary which gave a complete account of the duties of the monastic life. For authors as Æthelwold and Ælfric, the religious instruction of the lower clergy and even the laity was also a major concern. To this end, Æthelwold translated the Benedictine rule, while Ælfric produced compilations of homilies and saints’ lives, along with translations from the Bible.31

What has been said in this historical section shows that the language contact situation during the Old English period was by no means stable. In the earlier part of the period, the rises were mostly connected with external cultural injections, while later achievements were part of the process of cultural emancipation, during which inferiority complexes were gradually abandoned and the attitudes of writers towards their vernacular became more conscious. The following sections will deal with sociological and linguistic mechanisms of language contact.

**The intensity of language contact**

When evaluating the intensity of language contact within a contact situation, we have to keep in mind the following factors: the length of contact, attitudes to language, the degree of familiarity with the second language, and the number of bilingual speakers in the community experiencing language contact.32 Among the linguistic factors related


to contact, the most important is typological relationship between the languages in question.\(^3^3\)

By the end of the Old English period, Latin and English had been in contact for about five hundred years, and some lexical loans can be dated to an even earlier period.\(^3^4\) During these centuries, the language contact situation was developing from diglossia to a state of relatively lesser inequality, in which English started to creep into spheres previously dominated by Latin (e.g., certain legal documents, religious texts addressed to laymen). Since Latin was the native language of almost nobody in England, its usage normally lacked an ethnic dimension,\(^3^5\) and therefore ethnic conflict, a potentially serious component of language contact, was not at work there. In other words, ethnic concerns did not hinder language contact. Thus, it seems that both the length and the nature of contact were favourable for the interference between Latin and English.

Typologically, the two languages belong to different branches of the Indo-European family. Their nominal paradigms have many common features, but the tendency towards morphological simplification and the development of periphrastic structures in English appeared very early: the number of discrete case endings is already low in Old English, especially in the plural.\(^3^6\) The verbal systems of the two languages differ immensely, most notably in tense paradigms and non-finite forms: Latin has twenty-five tenses (including voice and mood distinctions), compared to the Old English five, and thirteen non-finite forms, compared to the Old English three.\(^3^7\) Moreover, as a literary language, Latin is about a thousand years older than English, so that by the seventh century AD, morphological differences between the two languages were intensified by aspects of style, genre, rhetoric, and so on. Had it not been for the high status of Latin in the medieval Christian world, all these factors could have been serious obstacles to language contact. However, the prestige of Latin literacy and its

---


34) Gneuss, “*Anglica linguae interpretatio*,” 112–117.

35) But see Hall in this volume.


importance in matters of church and law meant that Old English writers borrowed eagerly from Latin, in terms of both grammatical structures and stylistic devices.

The degree of familiarity with Latin differed greatly both between and within social groups. Most of the laity had no direct contact with Latin, although passive knowledge of a few Latin words must have been quite common. There were literate people among the aristocracy, and hence some aristocrats must have had contact with Latin at least through reading.38 The most notable example of a layman who produced his own text in Latin is perhaps that of Ælfric’s patron Æthelweard, who composed an adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and addressed it to his relative, Abbess Matilda of Essen.39

The Latin proficiency of parish priests was not equal to that of the higher clergy and monks. Literacy in Latin was essential for an ecclesiastical career, and it is hardly surprising that the major Anglo-Saxon writers (both those writing only in Latin, such as Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, etc., and bilingual authors, such as Æthelwold, Ælfric, Wulfstan, etc.) held high positions within the Church, such as abbot, bishop, and archbishop. The regular clergy (i.e., monks) were involved in book production and the copying and glossing of manuscripts in both Latin and the vernacular, so for them, too, the trivium was a passport to monastic libraries and scriptoria.

However, the education of the lower secular clergy must have been less profound. The poor knowledge of Latin among priests became a topos in Anglo-Saxon writings. The information that Bede records around 734 in the Letter to Ecgberht is then repeated by Alfred in his preface to the Pastoral Care and by Ælfric in the First Old English Letter for Wulfstan in 1006.

Quod non solum de laicis, id est, in populari adhuc vita constitutis, verum etiam de clericis sive monachis qui Latinae sunt linguae experts fieri oportet. … ipse multis saepe sacerdotibus idiotis haec utraque, et symbolum videletic, et Dominical orationem in linguam Anglorum translatam obtuli

[And this should be done, not only as touching the laity, that is to say, them which are still established in the life of the world, but also as touching


39) Æthelweard, Chronicle of Æthelweard.
the clergy or monks which are ignorant of the Latin tongue. . . . I have myself too oft times given to unlearned priests both these things, to wit, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer translated into the English tongue.\footnote{Bede, \textit{Venerabilis Baedae Epistola ad Ecgberctum Antistitem}, in \textit{Baedae Opera Historica}, vol. 2, ed. and trans. J. E. King (London: Heinemann, 1930, reprinted 1963), ch. 5. The translation follows the same edition.}


\[41\] Alfred, \textit{Gregory’s Pastoral Care}, 3.


It [learning] had declined so thoroughly in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their services in English, or even translate a letter from Latin into English, and I believe that there were not many beyond the Humber.

\[41\] Alfred, \textit{Gregory’s Pastoral Care}, 3.


lation, this figure should be multiplied by an estimate of the number of people per household. Depending on this estimate, the population has been calculated to be between 1,100,000 (Russell’s estimate) and 1,375,000 people (Maitland’s estimate).\(^{44}\) However, more recent studies suggest that allowances should be made for “unrecorded sub-tenants, and landless men, and for other omissions by the commissioners,” and higher estimates should be given for the four northern counties (Cumberland, Durham, Westmoreland, and Northumberland) and two major cities (London and Winchester) which were omitted from the survey. When combined with the previous figures, this produces a range from 1,750,000 to 2,250,000 people.\(^ {45}\) The next question is how many among those were literate and/or had contact with Latin?

The spheres of life that required literacy at various levels were the church, education, legal transactions and, to a certain extent, the court. However, all these spheres were dominated by one and the same class of people, namely the clergy. Education was only available in monastic and cathedral schools, which generally presupposed that their students would become either monks or secular priests. Even documents with secular applications, such as law codes, charters, wills, and so on, were composed and certified by the clerics, whether written in Latin or the vernacular. Therefore, the clergy was more likely to acquire literacy than any other social group. With Latin grammar being the first subject in the medieval *trivium*, literacy in this context inevitably means at least basic familiarity with Latin.\(^ {46}\)

The approximate size of the clergy in late eleventh century can also be deduced from the Domesday records. The figures for secular clergy are based on the average ratio of individuals to priests or churches, which relies on extending the data about the number of priests and churches which is available for several counties to the counties that lack similar records. These calculations yield a figure of between 3,860 and 4,300 priests. If these figures are compared to the number of


Table 1. The estimate of the number of the clergy at the time of Domesday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular clergy, monks</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular clergy, nuns</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular clergy</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secular clergy (bishops, their retinues, and cathedral clergy)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser secular clergy (deacons, subdeacons, and clerks)</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Churches consecrated before the Conquest, with the assumption that each church had a priest, we again arrive at a number close to 4,000 priests. Estimates of the number of higher and lower ranks of secular clergy are added to these figures.  

47) Russell’s estimate for the number of regular clergy gives a figure of about 1,000; his calculations are based on the following:

> We may conjecture that at the time of the Conquest about twenty four of the larger houses had about twenty monks apiece and that twenty six minor houses had an average of ten.

48) The calculation of the number of nuns is based on a similar principle. The absolute figures for the clerical population are given in Table 1.

49) It is not possible to say how many people among the laity could read or write in either English or Latin or both, although there are a number of accounts of literate laymen in the surviving literature, King Alfred obviously being the most famous example. This figure cannot have been very high, since education was limited to ecclesiastical institutions and only a few people could afford and/or appreciate teachers from the holy orders. The total number of literate people would probably not have been more than 6,000 at the time of Domesday, which amounts to between 0.27 and 0.55 percent of population, depending


50) For other names see, e.g., Ogilvy, *Books Known to Anglo-Latin Writers*, 105.
on whether we accept Russell’s estimate of the population size or the higher figure proposed by Miller and Hatcher; this is equal to one literate person per 183–375 people. However, for the eleventh-century English cultural situation, it would perhaps be more appropriate for us to make a comparison between the literate population and population of free adult males. This can be assumed to be the same as the number of tenants in the Domesday Book (275,000). The percentage of literacy among this group is then 2.18 or one literate person per 46 people, which is still within the margin of statistical error. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind that by 1086 there may already have been as many as 1,000 non-English (Norman, French and perhaps Italian) clerics in England, and that the above figures, recording the situation during the late Old English period, when England was divided into fifteen bishoprics with more or less stable numbers of clergy, would almost certainly be too high for, say, the year 886, during the reign of Alfred.

These results show how small the proportion of learned people was and how relative our knowledge of Old English is, if some 98–99.5 percent of the population left no record of their language. The general proportion of people who could leave a record might be even smaller, if we consider the fact that ability to read did not necessarily imply ability to write in this period. However, in monasteries or religious centres such as Canterbury, York, or Winchester, that facilitated concentrations of literate people and concomitantly reduced their contact with the rest of the population, levels of literacy must have been very high.

By the standards of language contact theory, 0.27–0.55 percent of the population is a negligible group of people that cannot affect the language situation to any serious degree. Low intensity of language contact results in a small number of lexical borrowings, generally nouns belonging to non-basic vocabulary. On the one hand, the Old English data seem to support this scenario, for we know that insular borrowings from Latin after ca. 600/650 only account for some 150 lexical items. On the other hand, these 0.27–0.55 percent clearly


belonged to the intellectual elite of Anglo-Saxon society, who, among other things, could exert great influence on contemporary language policies: take, for example, the Alfredian revival of the late ninth century, or the spread of the West-Saxon grapholect in the late Old English period. Furthermore, the Middle English situation shows us that the percentage of bilingual people is not always a decisive factor. According to various estimates, the number of Norman and French settlers in England after 1066 was between 11,000 and 65,000 people, i.e. 1–5.9 percent (if we accept Russell’s estimates of the total population) or 0.49–2.89 percent (if we accept Miller and Hatcher’s) of the overall population, which is too small a group to exert cultural pressure. Nevertheless, the dominant position of this minority and its eventual shift to English once again had a crucial impact on the development of the English language. It seems, then, that what may really matter in hierarchical language situations is not so much the relative number of bilingual individuals, but the social status and authority of the bilingual group.

Having established that the intensity of Anglo-Latin language contact before 1066 was very low by traditional standards, let us now consider several language phenomena that are normally associated with contact situations. The order of the following sections will be based on that presented in the chapter on mechanisms of contact-induced language change in Thomason’s Language Contact. For definitions of individual mechanisms, I shall rely on the same volume.

Mechanisms of Anglo-Latin language contact

Code-switching

Code-switching is defined by Thomason as the use of material from two languages by a single speaker in the same conversation. Many Old English texts contain examples of switches into Latin and, although

55) Blair, Church in Anglo-Saxon Society, 91.


57) The traditional opinion holds that “cultural pressure is most obviously exerted by a politically and numerically dominant group of population living within its sphere of dominance;” see Thomason and Kaufman, Language Contact, 67.

58) Thomason, Language Contact, 129–152.

59) Thomason, Language Contact, 132.
there are very few accounts of aural code-switching in the texts of the period, the written evidence gives us some idea of what this might have been like and in what situations it occurred. The late tenth-century gloss to the *Rushworth Gospels* includes a bilingual colophon at the end of Matthew:

Farman presbyter þas boc gleosedæ dimittet ei dominus omnia peccata sua si fieri potest apud deum

[Farman the priest glossed this book, *may the Lord forgive him all his sins before God if it be possible*].

This switch takes place at the boundary of two clauses and can therefore be called intersentential. The Mercian part of the colophon is not well paralleled and so seems spontaneous, whereas the Latin clause has many close parallels in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, which Farman was glossing; *si fieri potest* is a set phrase in Latin.

The so-called colophon of Aldred on f. 259r at the end of John in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* contains several switches between Latin and Old English, one of them being:

γ [ic] Aldred presbyter indignus γ misserrimus? miō godes fvlvmmę γ sancti cuþberhtes hit oferglóesade ón englise

[and I] Aldred, *unworthy and most miserable* priest, with the help of God and St. Cuthbert glossed this above [the lines] in English.

---

60) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS D.2.19.

61) This colophon and the second one by a scribe called Owun, a monolingual colophon in the Northumbrian dialect, are discussed in no. 292 of Neil R. Ker’s *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). In Skeat’s edition, the Farman colophon is printed on page 245 of *The Holy Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1871–1887). Here and later in the text, I use italics for switches into Latin and bold face for the occasional switches into Greek.


This time, the switch into Latin is intrasentential, yet the phrase itself sounds like a quotation from a prayer. Although I was unable to discover its immediate source, searches in the Dictionary of Old English revealed that similar humility formulae are repeatedly used in prayers: *ego miser et fragilis* (ArPrGl 1.38.10 and 38.22), *ego indignus et peccator* (ArPrGl 1.44.1), *me indignum et miserum* (ArPrGl 1.1.6), and *ego miser et peccator* (Charm 7.7).

Numerous examples of code-switching can be found in Old English charters, that is, legal documents recording a grant or lease of land or privileges to individuals or institutions. In English charters, switches into Latin display the same formulaic character as in the colophons just cited, while switches into Old English in Latin charters predominantly occur with place-names, landmarks, and boundaries. These places were known locally, and hence their identification was much easier if they were written in the native language.

In the text of Ælfric’s *Grammar*, code-switching is constantly used for pedagogical explanatory purposes. As Joyce Hill has argued, Ælfric’s *Grammar* rests on pedagogical traditions established by his teacher Æthelwold. It can therefore to an extent be used to show how the vernacular could have been employed alongside Latin in a medieval classroom. Compare the following passage from the *Vita Æthelwoldi*:

Dulce namque erat ei adolescentes et iuuenes semper docere, et Latinos libros Anglice eis soluere, et regulas grammaticae artis ac metrice rationis tradere, et iocundis alloquiis ad meliora hortari

[It was always agreeable to him [Æthelwold] to teach young men and the more mature students, translating Latin texts into English for them, passing on the rules of grammar and metric, and encouraging them to do better by cheerful words].

---

65) I am grateful to Anthony Warner for drawing my attention to the formulaic aspect of the Latin sections in these two colophons.


And here Ælfric employs a similar method to explain the gender of Latin participles:

Des participivm is ðreora cynna: híc amans uir þes lufienda wer; haec amans femina þís lufiende wif; hoc amans mancipium þes lufienda þeowa man; et cetera[70]

[the participle has three genders: híc amans uir, this loving man; haec amans femina, this loving woman; hoc amans mancipium, this loving slave; et cetera].

The switches into Latin in Ælfric’s Grammar are mostly grammatical terms and examples of particular language rules,[71] but occasionally also discourse markers, such as et cetera, above. Although Ælfric glosses the term participium as dæl nimend, “the part-taking,” when he introduces it earlier on in the same chapter, explaining that [h]e nymð anne dæl of naman and oðerne of worde (it takes one part from the noun and the other from the verb), he later abandons the gloss in favour of the Latin term, which perhaps sounded more accurate to him.

Finally, code-switching was used as a deliberate artistic device in poetry. This genre is traditionally called macaronic.[72] In two Old English poems—A Summons to Prayer[73] and the final eleven lines of the Phoenix[74]—the switches into Latin are used regularly to separate the second half-line from the first one.

---


[71] It might be difficult to classify Ælfric’s Latin examples as code-switching, but so long as we adhere to a rather broad definition of code-switching given in the beginning of this section, it should not be a problem.

[72] The poetic texts discussed in this section have enjoyed the continuous attention of scholars. I hope to contribute to this discussion by concentrating on the linguistic aspects of their bilinguality.

[73] On the basis of text and manuscript evidence, Fred C. Robinson has argued that A Summons to Prayer is not an independent poem, but a coda to An Exhortation to Christian Living, which immediately precedes it in the single extant manuscript, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 201; see “‘The Rewards of Piety’: ‘Two’ Old English Poems in Their Manuscript Context,” The Editing of Old English (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 180–195, at 180–187. He edited the two texts together under the title “The Rewards of Piety,” the text of A Summons starting at line 82 (pp. 188–195).

[74] The Phoenix, ed. N. F. Blake (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 63, ll. 667–677. If Robinson’s conclusion is correct (see note 73), the two poems follow the same pattern—a poem in the vernacular concluded with a flamboyant macaronic coda.
May grant you in life the giver of grace
with joys of peace, the salvation of the world,
the eminent lord of great virtue,
and the righteous son of the highest
may take [you] into [his] protection the maker of the universe . . .

The switches of this poem are intrasentential, yet again the Latin phrases
are not created from scratch, but are attested in prayer and hymn texts
of the period. Moreover, many of them can be removed from the text
without seriously affecting its general content. This means that they are
not fully integrated into the syntax of the Old English poem, and their
function in the text is mainly decorative. The pattern of code-switching
in the *Phoenix* is very similar. Another poetic device employed
here is, of course, alliteration, on which more below.

Even more elaborate are the switches in the so-called *Aldhelm*
poem, a kind of metrical preface to Aldhelm’s prose work *De virginitate,*
written in tenth-century Canterbury.

---


76) E.g., *auctor pacis* is attested in several versions of the Missals of insular origin; see

77) For a short discussion of the coda of this poem, see Lapidge, “Aldhelm’s Latin
Poetry,” 219.

a bishop in Britain. Now I, the book, labour and authority, with full sense, with lamentation of the troubled youth right now must tell truly . . .]

In this poem, the switches are not bound to the second half-lines, nor to nominal parts of speech. In addition, there are eight switches into Greek. The text is notorious for its ambiguity, and certainly fits well into the tradition of hermeneutic writings of the tenth century. However, the Greek switches are all nouns, mostly inflected incorrectly, and may go back to a glossary which the anonymous poet consulted when he needed an alliterating word. Although the poet’s Latin makes more sense grammatically, appositive phrases, like those in A Summons to Prayer, are decorative rather than functional; only a few Latin verb-switches fully become part of the English syntactic structure. As in the previous poem, many Latin phrases and almost all Greek ones can be omitted from the text without serious damage to its overall meaning. Following Dobbie’s description, this poem can probably be regarded “simply as an exercise in metrical and linguistic ingenuity,” for which mastery of Greek was hardly necessary, while the necessary level of Latin proficiency could amount to knowing many liturgical texts by heart, without necessarily being able to produce any utterances anew.

Code alternation

Whereas code-switching occurs within a conversation, code alternation is the use of two languages by the same speaker but not within the same conversation. Oral code alternation must have been a regular practise for the clergy, who said mass in Latin but were supposed to preach in English and certainly used English for daily communication both among themselves and with the laymen. Code alternation in church can be illustrated using the following passage from Ælfric’s


82) Thomason, Language Contact, 136.
letter to Wulfsige (d. 1002), Bishop of Sherborne, in which he urges priests to preach to the parish in English after the mass:

Se mæssepreost sceal secgan sunnandagum and mæssedagum þæs godspelles angyt on englisc þam folce. And be þam pater nostre and be þam credan eac, swa he oftost mage, þam mannun to onbryrdnysse, þat hi cunnun geleafan and heora cristendom gehealdan. Warnige se lareow wið þæt, þe se witega cwæð: Canes muti non possunt latrare. Þa dumban hundas ne magon beorcan. We sceolon beorcan and bodigan þam læwedum, þe læs hy for laryste losian sceoldan 83

[On Sundays and mass-days the priest should relate the meaning of the Gospel to the people in English, and also concerning the Paternoster and the Creed, as oft en as he can, to inspire the people to know their faith and hold their Christianity. Let the teacher beware of what the prophet said: Canes muti non possunt latrare; 84 dumb dogs cannot bark. We ought to bark and preach to the unlearned, lest they be lost for lack of learning].

Thus, in a way, good pastors were expected to alternate between languages to provide better instruction on faith to the laity. The letter itself is also a good example of code alternation. It starts with a Latin preface addressed to Bishop Wulfsige, to whose diocese Ælfric’s monastery of Cerne belonged, but the body of the letter, dedicated to the responsibilities of the priests and thus also intended to be read by the priests, is written in English. This once again suggests that the level of Latin competence was very different among the higher and lower clergy, while code alternation, to an extent, reflected aspects of the church hierarchy and/or etiquette.

We can also say that, in general, alternation between English and Latin in this setting was very oft en alternation between higher and lower style, although a few pieces of the vernacular poetry clearly belonged to the higher style, as can be seen in the following passage from Cuthbert’s (fl. ca. 770) Epistola de obitu Bedae, which includes the famous Bede’s Death Song: 85

83) Ælfric, Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics, 14.

84) Isaiah 56:10.

85) Edited and translated in Colgrave and Mynors’s edition of the Ecclesiastical History, 580–587, at 580–582. Translation follows the same edition. Diglossia during the Anglo-Saxon period can be best illustrated using the quantitative relation between two of the most famous texts of the period: while Beowulf has miraculously survived in just one manuscript (R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds., Klaeber’s Beowulf, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xxv), Bede’s Ecclesiastical History has come down to us in about 170 copies (Colgrave and Mynors,
Canebat autem sententiam sancti Pauli apostoli dicentis “Horrendum est incidere in manus Dei uiuentis,” et multa alia de sancta scriptura, in quibus nos a sommo animae exurgere praecogitando ultimam horam admonebat. In nostra quoque lingua, ut erat doctus in nostris carminibus, dicens de terribili exitu animarum e corpore:

Fore ðæm nedfere nænig wiorðe
dónc snottora ón him ðearf siæ
to ymbhyçgenne ær his hinonge
hwæt his gastæ godes oððe yfles
æfter deað dæge doemed wiorðe.86

[And he used to repeat that sentence from St. Paul, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” and many other verses of Scripture, urging us thereby to awake from the slumber of the soul by thinking in good time of our last hour. And in our own language—for he was familiar with English poetry—speaking of the soul’s dread departure from the body, he would repeat:

Facing that enforced journey, no man can be
More prudent than he has good call to be,
If he consider, before his going hence,
What for his spirit of good hap and of evil
After his day of death shall be determined].

A monastic person such as Bede was so fully immersed in Latin Christian culture that even on his death bed the words of prayer and consolation came to him in Latin rather than in his native Northumbrian, even though one would imagine that in ordinary situations and perhaps during the few days described he would have been using his own language too. Cuthbert, who was Bede’s pupil, goes on to enumerate several occasions within the few days during which his teacher was fading away when Bede recalled words from the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul, and St. Ambrose. The only time when he used his native language in a similar situation was indeed his recitation of the poem given above. However, in this instance, too, he was quoting rather than improvising.87

xxxix–lxxvi). Although this example may in many ways seem simplistic, it clearly shows a tendency to define the vernacular as the language of less importance.

86) For the text of Bede’s Death Song, see also Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, 107–108.

87) Although the poem is traditionally called Bede’s Death Song, and is attributed to Bede in a small group of the later manuscripts of the HE, there is no compelling evidence that Bede composed it, nor is it implied in Cuthbert’s text (see George Hardin Brown, Bede the Venerable (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 76–77; Bede, Ecclesiastical History, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 580–581 n. 4).
Written code alternation, an example of which I discussed above, is well attested in the writings of men such as Ælfric, who used English to address his lay patron Æthelweard (d. 998?), but Latin for his correspondence with other ecclesiastics, such as Sigeric (d. 994), Archbishop of Canterbury, or Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. Wulfstan was a fully biliterate writer himself, and both he and Ælfric are well known as compilers of sermons and homilies in the vernacular as well as Latin works. The data on code-switching and code alternation seem to be in line with the conclusions concerning Latin proficiency and intensity of contact made earlier on: the higher and regular clergy, as opposed to the lower secular clergy, were most probably bilingual and/or biliterate, with high Latin proficiency and, more importantly, means of language “legislation” and language control.

Passive familiarity

Contact-induced change through passive familiarity occurs when a speaker acquires a feature from a language that s/he understands (at least to some extent) but has never spoken actively at all. This is a common mechanism of language contact when the majority of the population is not bilingual but nevertheless uses a number of foreign terms that come to the language via the bilingual group. Such terms, as a rule, belong to particular spheres of life or professions (religion, the army, trade, etc.), and are borrowed into a language together with the cultural realia that they signify. It can be argued that this mechanism was mostly characteristic of the secular clergy, who, as we have seen

88) For an edition of some of Ælfric’s letters, see Ælfric, Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics; and Ælfric, Ælfric’s Prefaces, ed. Jonathan Wilcox (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994).


90) Thomason, Language Contact, 139.
above, were only potentially bilingual, but in fact had rather low Latin proficiency.

The following words entered the language at various stages of the Old English period: *minster* (post-classical Latin *monasterium* > vulgar Latin *monisterium* > OE *mynster*), *monk* (post-classical Latin *monachus* > OE *munuc*), *mill* (post-classical Latin *molina* > OE *mylen*), *kitchen* (vulgar Latin *cucina* > OE *ycene*), *tile* (Latin *tegula* > OE *tigule/tigele*), *inch* (Latin *uncia* > OE *ynce*), *cheese* (Latin *caseus* > OE *cyse/cese*). Overcoming the boundaries of their social strata, they have survived to the present day. There is perhaps no way to prove that these words were indeed used by common people of the period, but the very fact they are still in the language, having long ago lost their learned and other professional connotations, seems to support this hypothesis; truly professional terms tend to stick to their social stratum or even disappear from the language. Moreover, words belonging to the spheres of passive familiarity follow Old English declension patterns and can be used as parts of compound words and in derivatives (*mylenhweol*, ‘mill-wheel,’ *mylenstan*, ‘grindstone;’ *munuclic*, ‘monastic,’ *munuchad*, ‘monastic orders’). More learned words, on the other hand, often retain their Latin forms or do not spread outside professional context. For instance, the word *pallium*, ‘pallium,’ is used repeatedly in the *Chronicle* to convey the idea of an archbishop’s consecration by the Pope, but the annalists never employ any form other than *pallium*, even if oblique cases are meant. The word *declinung*, “declension” (Latin *declinatio*), is more integrated into Old English in terms of morphology (in that the Latin root is followed by the Old English suffix -ung), but of the sixty instances of *declinung* recorded by the *Dictionary of Old English*, only one is found outside Ælfric’s *Grammar*; accordingly, this term did not survive into Middle English, but was later re-borrowed in a more Romanised form.


92) There was a distinction between *pallium* and the more secular word *pell*, “cloth; robe, cloak,” (modern *pall*), which goes back to the same Latin form. See the OED, s.v. “pallium” 1, 2a and “pell” n1.

93) It is used in the same sense of “grammatical declension” by Byrhtferth of Ramsey (fl. ca. 986–ca. 1016) in his *Enchiridion*, an introductory manual on ecclesiastical computus, written just about a decade after Ælfric’s *Grammar* in ca. 1011; see Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. and trans. by Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, Early English Text Society s.s. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
declination, which was then superseded in this grammatical sense by declension (according to the Middle English Dictionary, both forms are attested by around the middle of the fifteenth century).

Negotiation

The negotiation mechanism is at work when speakers change their native language to approximate what they believe to be the patterns of another language, often when trying to make sense out of sometimes confusing second-language structures. This mechanism allows different levels of second-language proficiency and can affect morphology, syntax, and word order of the native language. Most frequently, negotiation occurs in translations from a foreign language into a native one. The results of this mechanism can be seen in glosses and literal translations. The following example is taken from the interlinear glosses to the Regularis concordia.

\[ \text{gedonum nocternum cweþon twegen sealmas} \]
\[ \text{Peractis nocturnis dicant duos psalmos}^{97} \]

[when the nocturn services are completed, let them say two psalms]

Two features can be pointed out in this example in connection with negotiation: first, the main verb dicant is glossed in Old English as cweþon. While it is typical for Latin finite forms to be used without personal pronouns, in Old English this is rarely the case. In this particular example, the use of the pronoun hi, “they,” would be particularly important, as it is the only way to indicate person in the plural (where personal endings are the same for all three persons). Nevertheless, the glossator chooses not to insert the pronoun, perhaps simply because it is not in the Latin. It is, of course, questionable whether this approach easily allows the reader “to make sense” out of the Latin text. Another feature that the example exhibits is the Latin construction known as the ablative absolute (Peractis nocturnis) and its Old English imitation,


95) See the OED, s.v. “declination” †10 and “declension” II, and the MED, s.v. “declinacioun” 3 and “declinson;” cf. also the verbal noun “declining” 6 in the OED.

96) Thomason, Language Contact, 142, 146.

the dative absolute (*gedonum nocternum*). This gloss shows how a foreign abbreviated clause is calqued and formally explained using a similar combination of parts of speech (a past participle and a noun agreeing in the dative case). We often find the same technique applied in Old English translations from Latin. The next example is from Wærferth’s version of Gregory’s *Dialogues*.

*Peractis igitur missarum sollemniis*[^99]
γ ἡ gedonum symbelnessum þæra messan[^100]

[and so, after the solemnities of the mass were completed]

The context of this absolute construction (*Peractis sollemniis—gedonum symbelnessum*) is almost identical with that in the previous quotation. A negotiation mechanism is again involved here: the translator gives a calque rendering of the ablative absolute instead of a more idiomatic rendering using, e.g., a temporal clause. Even though his word order is more flexible than that of the gloss, he keeps the Latinate construction, as if he were afraid that its meaning would be changed together with its form.

As Matti Rissanen has argued, discourse markers, such as *is to witenne*, “it is to be known,” entered Old English under the influence of Latin expressions such as *sciendum est* and *notandum est*.[^101] The mechanism behind *is to witenne* must also be that of negotiation: to understand a foreign collocation you first have to gloss and explain it by means of your native grammar (thus, the Latin gerundive is rendered by the Old English inflected infinitive, both of which have modal and future connotations). Many more calques must have evolved in

[^98]: The origin of the dative absolute in Old English has been repeatedly debated in literature, with one group of scholars describing it as a development of the common Indo-European pattern, and the other believing that the absolute construction was a syntactic calque, modelled on Latin and Greek structures and borrowed into Germanic languages. For further discussion and references, see my monograph *Latinskie sintaksicheskie zaimstvovania* and forthcoming article “Translating Texts Where *et verborum ordo mysterium est*: Late Old English Idiom vs. *ablativus absolutus*,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 18 (2008): 217–229.


Old English in a similar way, which is hardly surprising, as glosses and gloss-translations were often used as textbooks or reference books by people with little experience in Latin. Because these people constantly saw, say, *sciendum est* rendered by *is to witenne*, they gradually became accustomed to the idea that this was in fact the way to express a similar notion in English.

*Second-language acquisition and related mechanisms*  

Negotiation is also part of second-language acquisition strategies. When using a foreign language, we tend to fill the gaps in our speech or writing with material from our native language. This is best seen in lexis (especially in phraseology), but may also affect structural elements such as word order. Such gap-filling can be illustrated using examples from Latin writings by Æthelweard (*Chronicle*) and Asser (*Life of King Alfred*). These two authors produce peculiar Latin phrases based on the Old English idiom *wælstowe geweald ahton*, “they held the battlefield/they won,” well attested in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was used by both writers as a source for their Latin compositions. To express the same idea, Æthelweard employs *obtinent uictoriæ locum*, “they held the site of the victory,” 103 which is not exactly word-for-word, but preserves the semantics of the phrase rather faithfully. Asser renders this idiom in a more literal way: *loco funeris dominati sunt* (ch. 5, 18, 33, 35, 36, 40, 42), with *loco funeris* being an almost gloss-like rendering of *wælstowe*, whose etymology goes back to “the field/site of corpses,” hence “battlefield.” It is remarkable that Asser uses this coinage several times in passages that do not depend on a corresponding Old English phrase in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. 104 It is still more remarkable that Asser was a native speaker of Welsh, so the interference here actually involves two foreign languages. Another expression coined by Æthelweard is *fulciunt arma*, 105 which Campbell translated as “they strengthened their armaments.”

---


103) Æthelweard, *Chronicle of Æthelweard*, 31. Æthelweard’s coinage may also be a result of contamination of two Old English expressions: *wælstowe geweald ahton* and a more literal phrase *namon/haefdon/ahton sige* ‘they took/possessed victory.’


In eodem anno aduectæ sunt classes tyranni Iguuares ab aquilone in terram Anglorum, hiemauerunt inter Orientales Anglos, illicque fulciunt arma, equos ascendunt, cum accolis pacem confirmant

[In the same year, the fleets of the tyrant Inwar arrived in the land of the English from the north, and they wintered among the East Angles. And there they strengthened their armaments, mounted their horses, and concluded peace with the natives]

This phrase has no parallel in the annal for 866 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, from which the Latin text originates.

and þy ilcan geare cuom micel here on Angel cynnes lond, and winter-setl namon on East Englum, and þær gehorsude wurdon, and hie him friþ wiþ namon

[and in the same year, there came a great army to the land of the English, and they took their winter lodgings among the East Angles, and there they were supplied with horses and made peace with them (the East Angles)]

However, it may derive from an Old English phrase with similar meaning, such as wæpna wealdan, ‘to wield weapons,’ which is attested in texts written both before the Chronicle of Æthelweard—Beowulf (1509 and 2038) and the Old English Orosius (iv.10.103.24)—and shortly after—the Battle of Maldon (83, 168, and 272). This idiom clearly belongs to poetic diction, and may have been inserted by Æthelweard into his text to add more life and colour to the warlike episode.

A mechanism similar to negotiation is active in Anglo-Latin poetry that employs alliteration. It must rest on the assumption (whether conscious or unconscious) that this poetic device can be used in Latin.

106) Campbell suggests that for the fourth book (quoted here), Æthelweard was using a manuscript of the Chronicle that up to the annal for 891 was very close to the Parker manuscript; see Æthelweard, Chronicle of Æthelweard, xvii–xviii.


108) In theory, Æthelweard might have used a copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that did contain a similar Old English expression unknown in the surviving copies. For Æthelweard’s sources and other peculiarities of his Latin, see Campbell’s introduction to his edition of the Chronicle of Æthelweard. It should be mentioned that all six instances of wæpna wealdan have the infinitive as their second element, rather than a preterite form as in *wæpna weoldon (hi).
verse in the same way as in English, thus ignoring the obvious differences of stress, rhythmical and metrical patterns between the two languages. Aldhelm’s *Carmen de virginitate* opens with the following alliterating lines:

```
Omnipotens genitor mundum dicione gubernans,
Lucida stelligeri qui condis culmina caeli,
Necnon telluris formans fundamina verbo,
Pallida purpureo pingis qui flore virecta . . .
```

[Almighty Progenitor, guiding the world by Your rule,
Who are the Creator of the shining heights of the star-filled heaven, (Who) also formed the foundations of the earth by Your word;
You Who paint the pale greensward with purple blossom . . .]

It may even be argued that in line three, *formans fundamina* alliterates with *verbo*, for Old English did not distinguish between voiceless and voiced labiodental fricatives in the initial position. The alliteration of the initial consonants could suggest two things: either the Anglo-Saxons stressed alliterating words on the first syllable (as in Old English this was the main stress pattern), which was unlikely to happen in hexameter simply because it would ruin the metre, or such alliterating patterns were actually blunders on the part of Anglo-Latin poets, as due to the differences between Latin and Old English stress and metre, alliteration here could not work in the way the poets expected it to work.

The *Carmen ad Deum* uses different metre (trochaic dimetre), with short, mostly two-syllable words, and stress on the first syllable of the foot, and its alliteration pattern is therefore more convincing than the one employed by Aldhelm and his students:


112) Cf. Abram, “Aldhelm and the Two Cultures,” 1362–1364. For a discussion of Anglo-Latin hexameter, see Seppo Heikkinen’s contribution to this volume. Poetic dissimilarities between authors who were native Germanic-speakers vs. those who were native Romance-speakers are summarized by Wright in *A Sociophilological Study*, 110–123.
Slightly less than half of the lines in Carmen ad Deum can be seen as complying with the rules of alliteration in Old English verse. The violations of these rules may be due at least partly to the fact that here again we see two conflicting verse systems interfering with one another: the Latin regular trochee with rhyme between and within the lines vs. the traditionally unrhymed Old English alliterative verse.

The analysis of the language contact phenomena in Latin and Old English shows that most of the mechanisms associated with contact-induced change were present in this contact situation. Many of them were only characteristic of the literary milieu (above all macaronic poetry and alliterating Latin poetry), and nearly all of them (perhaps excluding passive familiarity) were taking place within the bilingual group. To evaluate similar contact situations, it might be necessary to distinguish between relative and absolute intensity of contact. In the Anglo-Saxon setting, the former is a useful concept for describing the bilingual ecclesiastical community, with the intensity of contact varying from casual (ordinary secular clergy) to more intense (higher secular clergy and regular clergy). The latter concept is more useful for describing the overall population, whose contact with Latin must have been almost non-existent.


114) Summarized by Geoffrey Russom in Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 64–82, esp. 73. These rules are the following: (a) the strongest two metrical positions within the line must contain alliterating syllables; (b) a weak constituent of a weak constituent may not contain an alliterating syllable; (c) no alliterating syllable may occupy an x position; and (d) otherwise, alliteration is optional.
Conclusions

Contact between speakers of Latin and Old English was mostly limited throughout the pre-Conquest period. It would be safer to envisage a situation where language contact was possible through schooling, reading, writing, speaking within the ecclesiastical community to an extent, and translation; thus, literary competence in Latin indeed prevailed over oral competence.\textsuperscript{115} The contact situation can be approached from two perspectives: the Latin perspective and the Old English perspective. The former can be described in terms of second-language acquisition. Thus, we can assume that there developed a variety of Latin in England characterised by a local accent\textsuperscript{116} and other structural interference, as well as a number of lexical peculiarities (similar to \textit{loco funeris dominati sunt}). The Old English perspective can be analysed in terms of second-language interference, marked by the dominant position of Latin as a language of literacy and prestige, and resulting in lexical borrowing, stylistic imitations, and syntactic calquing.

I suggest that in the foreground of this contact situation, a variety of Old English emerged which, possessing lexical and syntactic complexity unknown to common Old English, was heading towards a social dialect. Although these language processes were taking place within a small bilingual community, their influence was essential for the development of English throughout the period. However, precisely because this language influence was bound to the small cultural elite, its era came to an end together with the shift of elites which took place soon after the Norman Conquest.

\textsuperscript{115} Cf. Wright’s account of Boniface in \textit{A Sociophilological Study}, 95–103.

\textsuperscript{116} Wright suggests that Anglo-Latin pronunciation as well as morphology were “antiquated” by Continental standards; see \textit{A Sociophilological Study}, 7–8, 12–13, and 101–102.
Works Cited

Primary sources


**Secondary sources**


