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Germanic Prosody and French Loanwords

This paper, which was first presented at a conference at the University of Pennsylvania in October 2003, discusses factors influencing the placement of the primary stress in French loanwords in English and German. Ann-Marie Svensson is a senior lecturer in English and Jürgen Hering a lector in German, both at Göteborg University, Sweden.

1. Introduction

In the following passage from the *Canterbury Tales*, written in the 1380s, Geoffrey Chaucer rhymes *mariage* (Modern English *marriage*) with *age*; *manere* (Modern English *manner*) with *cleere* and *cheere* (Modern English *clear* and *cheer*); and *journey* with *way*, which means that Chaucer pronounced the French loanwords *marriage*, *manner* and *journey* in the original French way with the stress on the last syllable and not with the stress on the first syllable as in Modern English.

Arrayed was toward hir **mariage**
 This fresshe mayde, ful of gemmes cleere;
 Hir brother, which that seven yeer was of age,
 Arrayed eek ful fressh in his **manere**.
 And thus in greet noblesse and with glad cheere,
 Toward Saluces shapyngre hir **journey**,
 Fro day to day they ryden in hir wey.
 (Chaucer: *The Clerk's Tale* 778–784 [emphasis added])

Marriage, *manner* and *journey* belong to the large group of French loans, ca 10 000 words, introduced into English in the Middle English period (ca 1100–ca 1500) as a result of the Norman Conquest and subsequent French rule. The original stress pattern of these French loans, i.e. the stress on the last heavy syllable, clashed with the Germanic and Old English root-initial stress pattern. Originally, French stress was kept in these early loans, but they were gradually adapted to the English pattern, and as early as 1570, Levins in his English - Latin dictionary, *Manipulus Vocabulorum*, gives a fairly large number of French nouns, e.g. *colour*, *courage*, with first-syllable stress.

The question we want to address is the following: Is the adaptation of French loanwords to the Germanic prosodic pattern a uniquely English phenomenon that can be ascribed to the massive introduction of loanwords in a short period of time, or can a similar stress shift be seen in other Germanic languages too?

In order to answer this question, the stressing of French loanwords in English and another Germanic language, German, will be compared, and similarities and differences as regards the stress patterns will be discussed.

2. Stress shift in English

Even if the great majority of French loans in English were introduced during the Middle English period, loanwords kept coming in after 1500 but not in such large numbers. The question whether there are differences in today's English as regards the stressing of the many early loans and those introduced after the Middle English period will also be discussed, and therefore a random selection of 800 words given as French loans in the *OED* (*Oxford English Dictionary*) will be examined. The dates of introduction are those given in the *OED*.

Introduced into English	Disyllabic nouns (in today's English)	Trisyllabic nouns (in today's English)
before 1500	200	200
1500–1700	100	100
after 1700	100	100

As for the early loans, i.e. those introduced before 1500, very few of them are stressed in the French way in today's English, which is shown in Diagrams 1 and 2 below based on the stress given in Wells's pronunciation dictionary from 2000. (In the tables and diagrams in the following discussion stress marks are placed before the stressed syllable, i.e. '– – and '– – – denote first-syllable stress as in *courage* and *chivalry*, respectively, –'– – denotes penultimate stress as in *horizon* and –'– last-syllable stress as in *degree*.)

Diagram 1

Disyllabic nouns introduced before 1500 (Wells 2000)

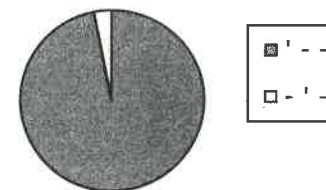
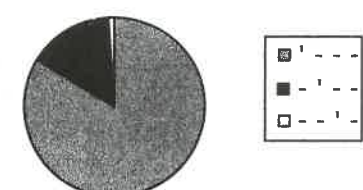


Diagram 2

Trisyllabic nouns introduced before 1500 (Wells 2000)



In fact only 6 disyllabic nouns out of the selection of 200 early loans are stressed on the final syllable in today's English, and as seen in Diagram 3 below, which shows the stressing of these early loans as given in Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) and the pronunciation dictionaries of Walker (1826), Jones (1917) and Wells (2000), there is very little change from Johnson's dictionary to present-day English.

As for the early trisyllabic loans (Diagram 2), only one noun, *engineer*, is stressed on the final syllable in British English today. The great majority of them have first-syllable stress, even if a fairly large number, 30 nouns (15 per cent) out of 200, are stressed on the penultimate syllable. In this category the most noticeable change from the 18th century to the 20th (Diagram 4) is that 10 nouns, e.g. *perjury* and *remedy*, have moved their stress from the penultimate syllable to the first, which means that no less than 40 trisyllabic nouns (20 per cent) out of 200 were stressed on the penultimate syllable in Johnson's dictionary (1755).

Diagram 3
Disyllabic nouns introduced
before 1500

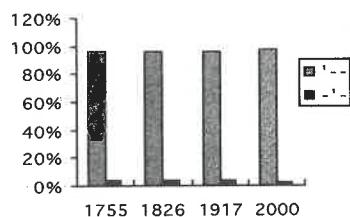
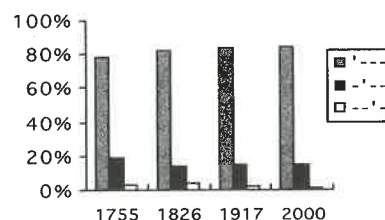


Diagram 4
Trisyllabic nouns introduced
before 1500



Most early loans had thus become integrated into the English vocabulary and adapted to the Germanic prosodic pattern already in the 18th century.

Late loans, on the other hand, especially those introduced after 1700, display more fluctuation between French and English stressing (cf Tables 1 and 2 below). Conspicuous here is a clear difference between British and American English as regards late disyllabic loans. Thus *brochure*, *café*, *chauffeur*, *cliché*, *debut* and *soufflé* are examples of late loans stressed on the first syllable in British English but on the last in American English.

Table 1 Disyllabic French nouns in present-day English (Wells 2000)

Introduced into English	British English			American English		
	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	only ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '
before 1500	94%	3%	3%	94%	3%	3%
1500-1700	73%	8%	19%	67%	8%	25%
after 1700	57%	22%	21%	28%	10%	62%

Table 2 Trisyllabic French nouns in present-day English (Wells 2000)

Introd. into English	British English				American English			
	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '	' - ' / ' - ' / ' - ' / ' - '
before 1500	83%	1%	15%	1%	83%	1%	15%	1%
1500-1700	59%	18%	11%	12%	63%	14%	13%	10%
after 1700	60%	23%	9%	8%	61%	19%	3%	17%

Envelope, introduced into English in the early 18th century, is one of the few late loans found in the dictionaries of Johnson (1755) and Walker (1826). Johnson comments: "This word is perfectly French, and, though in very general use, is not naturalised". Walker (1826) also prefers *envelope* "pronounced in the French manner", i.e. with the stress on the final syllable. Both Johnson and Walker probably regarded *envelope* as a foreign word, which should be pronounced "in the French manner". Jones (1917), on the other hand, has the stress on the first syllable. *Envelope* thus appears to have become fully integrated into the vocabulary and adapted to the English prosodic pattern in the early 20th century.

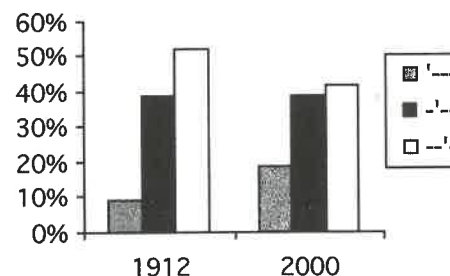
3. Stress shift in German

In German, French loanwords have also been introduced over the centuries but not so early and not in such large numbers as in English, but a stress shift in the 20th century can be seen.

In order to examine this shift, the stressing of 200 randomly chosen trisyllabic German nouns, given as French loans in the etymological Duden *Herkunftswörterbuch* has been studied. Trisyllabic loans were chosen as the stressing of trisyllables in English shows that penultimate stress is a factor that should be taken into account when examining the stress-shift in French loanwords.

Diagram 5 below shows the stressing of the examined loanwords in German as given in the pronunciation dictionaries of Viëtor (1912) and Duden (2000). No less than 19 (9.5 per cent) out of the examined 200 nouns have moved their stress from the last syllable to the first, e.g. *Kontinent*, *Champignon*, *Matinee*, *Rendezvous* and *Uniform*.

Diagram 5
Trisyllabic loanwords in German



However, the shift had started before 1912 as Curme (1905:49) points out in his *Grammar of the German Language*: "Some words which are now accented as German words had foreign accent in earlier periods of the language". Curme also points to "a tendency for those accented upon the last syllable to shift it upon the first in accordance with German fashion" (p 44). He goes on to comment:

The accent here depends upon whether the word is still distinctly felt as a foreign or as a German word. Many foreign words have been thoroughly neutralized and have received German accent, many others are sometimes pronounced as foreign words, sometimes as German words.

Curme's "thoroughly neutralized" is in line with Johnson's phrasing "not naturalised" in his comment on the French stressing of *envelope* in 18th-century English. According to Curme, the time of introduction is an important factor in the process of adaptation of foreign words to the native German prosodic pattern.

4. Stress patterns

A shift of stress can thus be discerned in German as well as in English even if the German shift is less dramatic. Both German and English are stress-timed languages in contrast to French, which is a syllable-timed language whose syllables are of equal length. In the stress-timed languages, the rhythm is characterized by regular intervals between the stressed syllables. The stressing of the loanwords shows that there are two possible preferences for the adaptation of French loans to the stress-timed Germanic prosodic pattern: penultimate and root-initial stress. In her study of Middle English prosody, Minkova (1997:144) states that the only stress pattern that would have been alien to monolingual speakers of Middle English would have been that of final stress in Anglo-Norman loans such as *cardinal* or *charity*.

The fact that some early loans, e.g. *avenue*, *retinue*, *revenue*, *perjury*, *rectitude*, *remedy* shifted their stress first to the penultimate syllable and later to the first syllable supports Minkova's theory that reluctance to stress the final syllable was the triggering factor in the stress shift. *Retinue*, *perjury*, *rectitude*, *remedy* are all stressed on the penultimate syllable by Johnson (1755) but on the first by Walker (1826). As for *revenue*, Johnson comments that "its accent is uncertain", and Walker finds that "[t]his word seems as nearly balanced between the accent on the first and second syllable as possible but as it is of the same form and origin as *avenue* and *retinue*, it ought to follow the same fortune". *Reverie*, stressed on the penultimate syllable by Johnson but on the first by Walker (1826), is another trisyllabic noun that displays 18th-century stress fluctuation. Walker comments: "This word seems to have been some years floating between the first and last syllable, but to have settled at last on the former. It may still, however be reckoned among these words, which, if occasion require, admit of either."

Rhythm as an important factor in the placing of stress is discussed by Watts (1721: 77–78) in his comment on the 18th-century stressing of *avenue*:

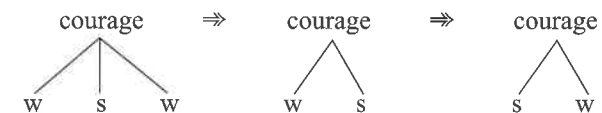
The *Metre* also is favour'd sometimes by placing the Accent on different Syllables in some Words that will admit of it; as the Word *Avenue* must have the Accent on the first Syllable in this Line,

Wide avenues for cruel Death.

But in the next Line it must be accented on the second Syllable; as,
A wide Avenue to the Grave.

Curme (1922:45) also comments on rhythm as the reason for modern German reluctance to stress the last syllable of French loanwords: "The accent upon the last syllable is, however, for rhythmical reasons *sometimes* removed to the first when the final syllable is followed by an accented syllable in the next word". In fact, it is the French loans with final stress, e.g. *Matinee*, *Postillion*, *Uniform* that move the stress in German, not those with penultimate stress, e.g. *Elite*, *Finesse*, *Kaprise*. Curme goes on to say that "[t]his rhythmical accentuation has not yet become so well established in German that it *usually* displaces the regular stress upon the last syllable". The phrase "not yet" indicates that he expects this "rhythmical accentuation" to become "the regular stress", and that is what has happened in a number of late loans, i.e. loans introduced after 1500, e.g. *Attentat*, *Champion*, *Feuilleton*, *Kanapee*, *Rendezvous*, which moved the stress from the final syllable to the first during the 20th century.

An important difference between English and German as regards rhythm and reluctance to stress the final syllable in the stress-timed Germanic prosody is the Middle English loss of pronounced <-e> in final position in words like *courage*, *dressage*, *garage*, *marriage*, *orange*, a development which did not take place in German. The loss of schwa in English thus made words like Chaucer's *manere* in the quotation above disyllabic instead of trisyllabic, and the loss of schwa together with weakening of unstressed syllables made the originally quadrisyllabic loanword *mariage* disyllabic. The stress thus fell on a heavy last syllable instead of a heavy penultimate syllable followed by a weak unstressed last syllable, and reluctance to stress a strong final syllable triggered the shift (w = weak; s = strong):



Loanwords ending in <-e> in German, on the other hand, e.g. *Barriere*, *Courage*, *Garage*, *Menage*, *Migräne*, *Orange*, where the final weak vowel is pronounced, can thus keep a more French pronunciation and at the same time avoid stressing the last syllable.

5. Final remarks

The adaptation of French loanwords to the root-initial stress-timed Germanic prosodic pattern has led to stress fluctuation and shift in both English and German. Once the loanwords have become fully integrated into the vocabulary there is a tendency in both languages to shift the stress so that the words are fitted into the stress-timed Germanic prosodic pattern. That non-finality, i.e. reluctance to stress the last syllable (Minkova 1997), is an

important factor in this process is clearly seen in German where the loans like *Barriere* or *Courage* with pronounced schwa as the final syllable do not shift their stress. As long as the <-e> was pronounced in English the French stressing did not come in conflict with Germanic prosody but when it was lost in pronunciation in words like *courage* and *marriage*, the stress moved from the last syllable.

Thus, even if the original Germanic stress was root-initial, and even if there is mainly stress shifting from the last syllable to the first in both English and German, reluctance to stress the final syllable appears to be a prominent factor in the stress-timed Germanic prosodic pattern.

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GEORGE SNEDEKER

The Late Interviews of Jean-Paul Sartre

When Jean-Paul Sartre was three years old, he lost the vision in his right eye as a result of a childhood illness. In 1973, when he was 67, he suffered a stroke, which was followed by a retinal hemorrhage in his left eye. Though he retained some peripheral vision, he was no longer able to read or write in the way in which he had long been accustomed.

For Sartre producing literary texts had meant sitting at a table with pen in hand over paper. It had meant careful rereading of what he had written, and making line-by-line corrections and additions. His philosophical works were less extensively revised, but they also required close rereading. Facing blindness, he felt that his life as a writer might be over.

Simone de Beauvoir suggested that he could convey his ideas with the help of a tape recorder. He tried this but found that while he could speak into the machine and play back what he had said, there was no practical way of editing, as he was accustomed to doing with his literary texts. The same proved true with his effort to write philosophy with a tape recorder.

Before losing his vision, Sartre had completed the first three volumes of *The Family Idiot*, his study of Flaubert, and done the research for the fourth and final volume, which was to deal with the analysis of *Madame Bovary*. Facing his new situation, he tried to write volume four with the use of the tape recorder, and when that failed, with the assistance of his secretary, Benny Levy. The lack of success was frustrating – he had worked on the project for fifteen years – but his disappointment was tempered by the fact that he regarded volume four as the least interesting of the series. He was ready to move on to new work and to try new methods of writing.

His blindness had created new circumstances for him as a writer, leading him to perceive the interview format as the only way he could convey his thoughts to his audience. And over time he made increasing use of the interview framework. It allowed him to continue his life as a writer, though of course it made him more dependent upon others for assistance in his writing projects

In 1974, Simone de Beauvoir proposed that she conduct and record a series of conversations with Sartre, with a view to using the transcribed conversations as a basis for a book they would write together. The original intent was to edit and reformulate the material around themes like literature, philosophy and politics. When they were finally published, in 1981, they were minimally edited, and were presented as a lengthy appendix to the French edition of de Beauvoir's *Adieux*.¹ Unfortunately, they do not evidence any new ideas on Sartre's part.

But Sartre lost interest in the conversations he had recorded with