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ON LEXICAL BORROWINGS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH, WITH
SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE INKHORN CONTROVERSY: INSIGHTS FROM
A SELECTION OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH WORKS

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The work presented in this MA thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The work in this thesis has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

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Abstract

From the early beginnings, the entrance of borrowings in English has remained a constant, but their predominance in the lexicon was during much of its history comparatively low. After the Norman Conquest, however, this trend was dramatically reversed, and borrowing became the general custom. Far from decreasing, this tendency only increased in the Renaissance, with the adoption of classical words for academic writings. This soon became of great concern to some authors who raised the alarm about the worrying drift English was irreversibly taking in their view as a consequence of the alarmingly large number of borrowings flowing into the language. This linguistic awareness eventually gave rise to a nationwide debate about the nature and lexical capabilities of English known as the "inkhorn controversy", in which two antagonist positions were confronted concerning the acceptance of classical borrowings in the language. After two centuries of fierce debate, the position tolerant with borrowings eventually prevailed over the view of the so-called 'linguistic purists', who rejected any foreign influence in the language. The study of the works of some of the most important academic figures of the time has corroborated that among the historical and social factors involved in the matter, the issues of linguistic prestige and long-established social discredit on the English part were the most influential.

Key words: borrowings, debate, inkhorn controversy, classical words, English language.

1. Introduction

Borrowings in the language have remained a constant throughout the history of English. Their acceptance, however, has not always been taken for granted. During the Renaissance a heated debate took place in the academic community regarding their suitability in the language. The linguistic consequences of that debate have been deeply studied throughout history. However, the rationale behind the course of events that followed still remains somehow overlooked in my view. The cause of such lack of attention could be due to the difficulty involved in such type of study and the impossibility for linguists to establish a conclusive explanation to an issue where such amount of factors are engaged and where irrefutable argumentation is rather unlikely. With this in mind I intend to provide a detailed description of such a crucial period for the language, and thereby be able to detect the possible causes and factors involved in the matter. For this purpose, I will analyze the general discourse— both detractive and supportive— of that time. By means of an overview of the state of affairs I expect to precisely pinpoint the reasons why English became so Latinized at the end of the period and explain as well the personal involvement of some authors on the whole issue through the analysis of some specific works.

2. State of the art from the fifth to the eleventh century

The nature and the development of the English language cannot be understood without the lexical influence from other languages, which dates back to the 5th century, when a group of Germanic tribes ventured into the North Sea from what we know today as Denmark and the Netherlands. Among them were the Angles and the Saxons, whose role in creating the English society was fundamental. After the departure of Romans from the island they easily managed to defeat the scarce outposts Romans had left behind as well as the native Celtic tribes, to whom Anglo-Saxons drove away from their home places and pushed into the margin of the island. These Germanic tribes spoke different varieties of what is generally considered the earliest historical form of the English language, commonly known as Old English.

Yet it is important to bear in mind that this term is a broad generalization, since English was not a unified language at this point in time, with several linguistic variations existing across the island. As a matter of fact, each of these varieties was associated with each of the different existent kingdoms of this period, namely Mercian, Northumbrian, Kentish and West Saxon. Though West Saxon was the most influential dialect at the time in terms of literary production, it was Mercian, however, the linguistic variety from which present-day English developed most of its features. This first stage of English is usually framed within a period ranging from the fifth until the eleventh century, during which the English society came under both political and religious influences from foreign cultures. Each of these introduced new changes in the language, mainly with regard to the lexicon, with the first of these coming from Latin. This first wave has been consensually divided into three different periods of influence according to the moment and effects they had on the language: the continental, the Celtic, and religious (Baugh and Cable 79-83).

2.1. First Latin influence

The first of these took place in the fifth century, before Anglo-Saxons arrived in the island. At that time, the Angles and the Saxons still lived on the continent and as a result of their proximity with Roman communities the trading activity between the two communities was quite common during peacetime, which propitiated a frequent linguistic interchange with an estimate of about 600 words entering the English lexicon (Lounsbury 42). Though this figure might tentatively look rather unimpressive, the degree of naturalization into the language of all these words is a reliable indicator of the readiness of the English people to accept borrowings, a recurrent feature that was going to distinguish them in the future. As for the type of words, it is quite remarkable that most of them are indeed common words, with a clear semantic predominance of fields like food and silverware (e.g. *butter, cheese, cook, cup, fork, dish* and *kitchen*); a good evidence of the frequent commercial activities in which both communities were engaged during this period (Baugh and Cable 72).

2.2. Second Latin influence and the Celtic languages

The second Latin wave is undoubtedly the most irrelevant of the three as its effect on the language was virtually negligible and it mainly occurred through the Celtic languages¹ and not from Latin. Baugh and Cable (82) point at *castra* (camp) as one of the few Latin words Anglo-Saxon people took from the Celts upon their arrival on the

¹ I will consider the Celtic as the second linguistic wave, regardless of its negligibility in its bearing on the future development of the language.

island. This word, however, is only visible in names of towns, either in the form of *-caster* or *-chester*, as in *Lancaster*, *Manchester*, *Rochester*, and *Winchester*.

Though Anglo-Saxons took as well some Celtic words (e.g. *brock*, *coomb*, *crag*, *gull*, and *tor*) their number and relevance in the lexicon was fairly derisory. The impact of the Celtic influence, however, was much more noticeable in the place-names of the country, with many cities and rivers having Celtic origins (e.g. *Devon*, *Durham*, *Lincoln*, *London*, *Thames*, *Yare*, and *York*) (Willis 5).

2.3. Third Latin influence and the introduction of Christianity

The third Latin influence is arguably the most consequential of the three, since not only did it bring more borrowings to the language but it moreover introduced Christianity into England.² With the adoption of the new religion, Anglo-Saxons also took its language of transmission: Latin. Though it did not supersede Old English as the language of common usage, Latin did become predominant in religious issues. English people began to adopt Latin words³ referring to the different religious ranks as well as to new concepts and objects related to the Christian culture (e.g. *abbot*, *alms*, *altar*, *hymn*, *litany*, *mass*, *monk*, *nun*, *priest* and *psalm*) (Baugh and Cable 78). Some of these borrowings were adopted twice, with only one of the two forms eventually surviving into our days.⁴ Unlike most of the borrowings at this time, the word *church* (from Old English *ċiriċe* or *cyrċe*), did not come from Latin, but directly from the Greek word *κυριακόν* (*kuriakón*), which meant ‘The house of the Lord’.

² It was brought by St. Augustine in 597.

³ Many of these words came in turn from Greek

⁴Such is the case of *hymn* and *litany*, which were firstly adopted as *ymn* and *letania*, and later on readopted with their Latinized current form (see *OED* s.vv. *hymn*, *litany*).

Apart from borrowing, Old English adopted some of these new concepts by means of loan translations. This is the case of the modern word *gospel* (Old English *gōdspell* ‘the good news’) which was taken after the Latin word *evangelium*, itself a borrowing from the Greek term *εὐαγγέλιον*, ‘good news’. Another loan translation was the word *Threeness* (Old English *þrīnes*) which comes from the Latin word *trīnitās* (Barber 129).

Another source of lexical enrichment was the assignation of religious meanings to existing terms. Take the case of the word *blēdsian* ‘to bless’, for instance, which originally referred to the action of marking with blood on the face as a sign of social recognition and respect, and which acquired a more transcendental sense with the Christianization. The same thing happened to the word *holy*, which at first only had the sense of healthy (Halliday, Cermáková, Teubert and Yallop 64).⁵

2.4. Old Norse influence and the Viking invasion

The third linguistic wave of lexical influence began in the ninth century, when the Vikings arrived at the northeast of England. By that name we refer to the Scandinavian tribes, which included the Danes, the Swedes and the Norwegians who ruthlessly raided and plundered all Europe during the next two centuries. England was no exception, with English people suffering the Viking onslaughts. Though at first the harassments were only sporadic raids on coastal cities, over time they began to make farther inroads advancing inland and pushing the English armies southwards. Such was the havoc that Vikings wreaked over the island and their inhabitants that the

⁵ The word *holy* and *health* are in fact quite close in etymological terms, both coming from Proto-Germanic **hailaz*. (See *OED*. s. vv. *holy* and *health*)

English language was in some measure on the verge of disappearance. In fact, English would have succumbed to the Scandinavian invasion had it not been for the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred (849–899), who managed to repel the Viking attacks, defeating them in 878 in a crucial battle after which a period of relative peace between the two communities followed. This allowed for the redrawing of the borders, with the consequent allowance that the Vikings had to establish in the area which was known as the *Danelaw* and which stretched from the north to the southeast of England (Barber 138).

The cultural and linguistic similarities between Vikings and Anglo-Saxons propitiated the mixture of both communities, which inevitably gave rise to linguistic exchanges. Since their coexistence took place on an equal footing, the words that English people borrowed were mainly common everyday words, with some of them representing the very core of the lexicon, like *sister*, *husband* and *fellow*. Apart from these words, English also took words related to the body (e.g. *freckle*, *leg*, *skin*, *skull* and *wing*) as well as to the food and clothes (e.g. *cake*, *egg*, *rag*, *root* and *skirt*). Moreover, words belonging to many diverse fields were taken: *anger*, *birth*, *blight*, *gear*, *gift*, *girth*, *knife*, *law*, *score*, *seat*, *skill*, *sky*, *thrall*, and *window*, as well as adjectives: *awkward*, *clumsy*, *hale*, *low*, *sly*, *ugly* and *wrong*, and verbs: *call*, *doze*, *get*, *give*, *kindle*, *raise*, *take* and *want*, many of which with a clear warlike connotation: *die*, *hit*, *kick*, *kill*, *scathe*, *slaughter* and *thrust* (Barber 143). The close relationship between the two languages propitiated some linguistic confluences like in the case of the verb *to drag*, which is partly from Old English *dragan* and Old Norse *draga*. In other cases, however, the linguistic outcome resulting from that similarity fell on the side of the Scandinavian word, with the native word being eventually replaced. Examples of this are the word *awe* (from Old Norse *agi*, which displaced the

English cognate *ege*⁶) and the word *egg* (from Old Norse *egg*, which superseded the native word *ey*⁷) (Barber 91-92).

2.5. French influence and the Norman invasion

The fourth linguistic wave was undeniably the most influential source of linguistic borrowings of this period, with 1066 being its starting point. In that year, the childless Anglo-Saxon King Edward the Confessor died, and as a result of that lack of direct successor, several disagreements arose over who should be the rightful successor of the English throne. At that time there were three contenders, with William I (1028–1087), King of Normandy claiming to be the only legitimate successor. He raised a huge army with which he landed on the southern coast of England and managed to defeat the Anglo-Saxons in the crucial Battle of Hastings, after which the Crown, as well as all the ecclesiastical power and peerages passed to Norman hands.⁸ William of Malmesbury (c. 1095–c. 1143) referred to this event as “that fatal day for England, the sad destruction of our dear country” (qtd. in Glatchy 24). Though English people were not completely wiped out, they were deprived of all their privileges and nobles titles, being relegated to the lowest social classes:

England has become the habitation of outsiders and the dominion of foreigners. Today, no Englishman is earl, bishop, or abbot, and newcomers gnaw away at the riches and very innards of England; nor is there any hope for an end of this misery. (Malmesbury qtd. in Thomas 56)

⁶ It continued to be used until the Middle Ages with the form *ey*.

⁷ It survived until the 16th century, when it eventually disappeared.

⁸ The newcomers spoke a series of French dialects, among which we find Old Norman, the most influential of all and which developed into a particular variety called Anglo-Norman.

From that moment onwards, English and Norman people coexisted during several centuries. However, unlike the case of Old Norse, at this time there was a clear linguistic diglossia⁹ in which French was the language of prestige used by the nobility and English was the language of farmers and the lowest social classes. Chronicler Robert of Gloucester (c. 1260–c. 1300) wrote in that regard:

[T]he Norman could not speak anything then except their own speech, and they spoke French as they had done at home, and . . . unless a man knows French, he is thought little of. But humble men keep to English and their own speech still. I reckon there are no countries in the whole world that do not keep to their own speech, except England only. (qtd. in Cottle 16)

Though the survival of English was not in danger as such, its social recognition did suffer great discredit, with the language rapidly losing the great literary reputation it had enjoyed in previous centuries (Barber 144-145). Consequently, the language fell into a long-term decline which ultimately led future writers and scholars to disparage the language and undervalue its nature and capabilities. However, such disrepute is completely unjustified for Barber (145), who affirms that "French became the language of the upper classes . . . simply because it was the language of the conquerors, not because any cultural superiority on their part." Despite this undeniable reality, ever since the Norman Conquest, the English community was severely marginalized, both politically and literarily. Thus, the English language was excluded from the state issues and its presence in literary manifestations decreased to the extent (Shea ch. XI) that it was not until 150 years after the conquest when the first book in English was written (Kemmer). This gives us an idea of the degree of

⁹ It refers to the unequal footing in which more than one language is spoken in one place, with one of them being more socially prestigious than the others.

disuse English underwent and under those circumstances, it is no wonder that many English speakers opted to learn the new language of power or that they simply wanted to emulate it into their mother tongue.

As a result of this linguistic suppression English people eventually began to use more and more French words, to the extent of naturalizing them into the English lexicon. Among them, many were from the field of government and law (e.g. *crime, govern, judge, justice, peace, prison* and *rule*) as well as the ecclesiastical life (e.g. *abbey, friar, prayer* and *religion*) and the arts: *poem, music, colour* and the very word *art*. This particular predominance is not coincidental, since they represent the fields in which the English language was superseded by French. Though the main source of borrowings during this period was Old French and Norman,¹⁰ words from Latin continued to be adopted, though in a much less proportion (e.g. *client, conviction, discuss, essence, folio, imaginary, instant, library, medicine, and quadrant*) (Algeo 251). In some particular cases, however, due to the close linguistic relation between the two languages and the simultaneous adoption of Latin words on the part of both English and French people, there is no real way of knowing if a word comes from Latin or French, with both possibilities being perfectly plausible (Horobin 90). Some of these cases are verbs like *consist* or *explore*, which could perfectly come either from the Latin *consistere* and *explorare* or the French *consister* and *explorer* (Baugh and Cable 211). In some other cases, however, the origin can be easily distinguished because of the form of the word, as in *fact*, which reflects Latin *factum* and not French *fait*, which passed into English as *feat* instead. On other occasions, it is the ending

¹⁰ This twofold source of medieval borrowings resulted in many doublets, one from Norman and the other from Old French, such as *warranty* and *guarantee*, *warden* and *guardian*, *wage* and *gage*, or *catch* and *chase*.

form of the verb that can help us distinguish the origin of a word. Thus in the case of the ending *-ate*, as in *confiscate* or *indicate*, it shows a clear Latin origin, being the reflection of the Latinate participle, whereas verbs like *destroy*, *employ* or *supply* come from French, reflecting the ending of the infinitive verbs in French (Baugh and Cable 211).

The naturalization of French words into the English language had another effect: as a consequence of this foreign predominance countless English words were going to be eventually superseded by their French counterparts, mostly in the domains in which English people were excluded: government, justice and art. Accordingly, the percentage of foreign words in the language experienced a dramatic increase in the following centuries, with estimations suggesting that, as a result of the foreign influx of this period, nearly 29% of the modern English vocabulary comes from either Old French or Norman (Gottlieb 210).

It is important to remember that borrowings did not become a reality right from the very beginning. As a matter of fact, during the first 150 years after the conquest, there was scarce contact between English and Normans, not being until the beginning of the thirteenth century when the massive flow of borrowings really took place. Though at first the pace of borrowing was not very intense, this tendency increased from the second half of the thirteenth century and remained steady until the end of the fourteenth century. Such was the increase of borrowing that almost half of all the French borrowings are thought to have entered English during that short period of time. It is quite surprising indeed that this sharp rise in the number of French borrowings coincided with an upward mobility on the part of the English classes and the increasing use of English in official writings (Baugh and Cable 165). While the causes of such promotion of the language have been attributed to different factors,

both political and economic, it is certainly a moot point about which there is still no general consensus. In any case, the truth is that the more relevance the language acquired over time, the more borrowings English took from French. One possible reason for this surprising evolution of events is arguably the prestige the language had always enjoyed among the upper classes and which the new English nobility wanted to emulate. Under those circumstances, even when English managed to regain its status as the language of the government and the English people reclaimed their social privileges, French was still highly admired for its literary value and consequently, though French was no longer as "physically" present as before in terms of use, its influence on English did not completely disappear, quite the opposite. In this regard Ranulph Hygden (1280–1364) writes in *Polychronicon*:

Also gentil men children beep i-tauzt to speke Frensche from þe tyme þat þey beep i-rokked in here cradel, and kunneþ speke and playe wiþ a childes broche; and uplondissche men wil lykne him self to gentil men, and fondeþ wiþ greet besynesse for to speke Frensce, for to be i-tolde of. (Morris 338-339)¹¹

Furthermore, the widely held view at the time regarded the English language as a patchwork of different languages rather than a whole language on its own. With these words Hygden referred to this issue:

by commyxstion and mellynge, firste wiþ Danes and afterward wiþ Normans, in meny þe contray longage is apayred, and som vseþ straunge wlafferynge, chiterynge, harynge, and garrynge graisbaytyng. (Morris 338)

¹¹ The original work was written in Latin; this is the translation of John Trevisa (1342–1402) published in 1387 (Morris 333).

This image of a mixed language is also depicted by lexicographer John Florio (1553–1625), who goes even further in that regard:

It is a language confused, bepeesed with many tongues: it taketh many words of the latine, and mo from the French, and mo from the Italian, and many mo from the Duitch, some also from the Greeke, and from the Britaine, so that if every language had his owne wordes againe, there woulde but a fewe remaine for English men, and yet every day they adde. (qtd. in Yates 32-33)

3. The beginning of the Renaissance

With the turn of the century a new cultural period began in England—the Renaissance—during which the interest for the classical culture reemerged as a result of the restoration made by academicians of long-forgotten classical texts, with some branches of knowledge, like theology and medicine, being rediscovered (Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* 60). This period was characterized, above all, by the predominant position that scholarship managed to regain in society, with far-reaching effects being visible in every cultural and intellectual manifestation of it. The language was not an exception, with the study of rhetoric becoming a highly valuable discipline within the academic community with all learned men being swayed by the prestigious nature surrounding the classical languages. In this sense, Roger Ascham (1515–1568) wrote in *The Schoolmaster*: “Yet all men couet to haue their children speake Latin: and so do I verie earnestlie too” (Book I). This profound admiration for the classical languages was going to have enormous consequences for the English language in the future. For the time being, this reverential attitude about classical languages provoked that many authors felt rather self-conscious about their own language, under the belief that their mother tongue could not stand comparison with

the sophistication and eloquence of Latin or Greek. Consequently, many authors opted to use Latin or Greek in their academic works, rather than English, which they did not consider appropriate enough to discuss about formal or academic issues. Therefore, the general view of English, as an academic language suffered henceforth a great decline, with many authors showing their disparaging view about the use of English in the translations. In this sense, we find a translator of Seneca, who similarly affirmed that he had done his best "out of so meane a stoare" and that "beeing so sweete in Greeke, conuerted into English it looseth a great parte of his grace" (Pérez Fernández and Wilson-Lee 71). Another example is found in a translator of Tacitus' history, who expressed himself likewise, affirming that it had been translated "with much losse of their lustre, as being transported from their natural light of Latin by an vnskillfull hande, into a strange language, perchance not so fit to set out a peece drawne with so cureious a pensill" (qtd. in Foster 25). These examples reflect the general perception that the English language was not as suitable as the classical languages, and that its use in formal works, therefore, could be rather detrimental for the final value of the work in question. Moreover, English did not bear comparison with the rest of the European languages either as shown by this fragment:

‘What thinke you of this English, tel me I pray you.’ ‘It is a language that wyl do you good in England but passe Dover, it is woorth nothing.’ ‘Is it not used then in other countreyes?’ ‘No sir, with whom wyl you that they speake?’ ‘With English marchants’ ‘English marchantes, when they are out of England, it liketh hem not, and they doo not speake it.’ (Florio, *The First Fruits*, qtd. in Yates 29)

3.1. The advent of the Printing Press

The view towards English, however, was going to experience several rises and falls during the next centuries, and the first of these changes took place in 1467, when William Caxton introduced the printing press in England, bringing with it the knowledge he had acquired during his stay in Bruges, Belgium. Seen the success it had had on the continent, Caxton decided to set up the first printing business in the Abbey of Westminster. The introduction of the printing press was a major breakthrough in the literary business as well as a turning point in the development of the English language, being indeed one of the most determinant factors in the future of the language (Timbs 4). Until then, the production of literary works had been quite small due to the time and effort needed. With the arrival of the printing press, however, the whole process became much easier and faster, which allowed for a new "departure in the dissemination of the written word" (Weiner). This increase in the literary production resulted in a considerable rise in the number of readers, mainly among the common people, who were enthused by the great availability of books and their new affordable costs. However, the printing press was a business, and, as such, its success hinged largely upon the profits publishers were able to make. Accordingly, in order to meet the demands of the majority of the readers, thereby gaining a foothold in the business, publishers in England began to opt more and more for the use of English, simply because it was much more profitable than publishing in Latin or Greek (Wight). Though there were still some authors who felt reluctant to publish in English for its possible self-detrimental effect, there were indeed some writers who were aware of the benefits that publishing in English could bring them.

One of these authors was Caxton himself, whose production, unlike most authors of his time, was mainly in English. Although his reasons for the use of

English were fundamentally economic, his publications in English contributed anyhow to the popularity of the language among the common readers. Though he failed in his attempts to establish a spelling norm, he did manage to consolidate, however, the English of London as the standard variety of the language. This gave rise to a great promotion of English among scholars, and consequently, it provoked an increase in the number of academic publications written in the vernacular language and consequently, the number of English translations experienced a considerable increase (Wight).

3.2. Lexical complications in the translations of the classical texts

Despite this newly-acquired predominance in the publishing business, English had to confront a contentious issue regarding the lexical problems arising from the translations of classical texts and the lexical difficulties English writers encountered as a result of a lexical shortage on the English part. Thus, many writers began to question the capability of English as a language for the transmission of knowledge. The translations of classical texts, therefore, evinced the obvious shortcomings of the English lexicon, which showed a worrying deficit of specific vocabulary needed to talk about certain topics and domains. Accordingly, writers were forced to look for foreign sources to compensate for that lack of lexical equivalence stemming from a wanting vocabulary (Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* 60).

Apart from this clear shortage of equivalence of the terminology needed, during this period there was a general belief that English was in real need of a "sufficiently elevated vocabulary" since the native lexicon was not as sophisticated and appropriate as their classical counterparts (Horobin 91). This negative view towards the English language became the predominant theme during most of the

Renaissance, and, as vague as this concept may seem, it was indeed one of the fundamental causes for the countless wanton words borrowed in the future. Horobin further adds that such readiness for borrowing was also due to the fact that the only possible way of contact with classical languages was through the translations, and that therefore, it seemed much easier to simply borrow than to try to find a lexical equivalent in your language (91).

Moreover, we must remember that borrowings from classical languages had been present in English from the early beginnings of the language, with the entrance of Latin and Greek words remaining reasonably stable throughout the centuries.¹² For these reasons, the rapid increase of classical borrowings during the Renaissance was regarded as a continuation of the linguistic tendency English had been following to a greater or lesser degree throughout its history. Furthermore, given the misgivings about their own mother tongue and the general admiration for Latin and Greek the preferential use of classical borrowings over the native lexicon was considered as the most suitable option in academic works. For this reason, it is not surprising that since the fifteenth century—though especially during the next two centuries—the indiscriminate borrowing from classical sources became a usual practice among translators (Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* 60). The use of these words was not going to be only confined to the field of translation and soon became a common element in English works in general.

Apart from borrowing, some authors in particular decided, moreover, to exploit the linguistic resources of the classical languages to create new words. Some of these were purposeful words coined for necessity of the author, but others were mere bizarre experiments of creative authors (Denning et al. 33). One notorious

¹² In most cases Greek borrowings entered via Latin.

example is William Shakespeare, who was one of the most prolific writers in this regard, contributing to the English lexicon with at least 1700 new words (Shipley, qtd. in Adamson et. al. 237). For such a prolific production he mostly drew upon the linguistic procedures of *affixation*, *compounding* and *conversion*, being indeed a forerunner with regard to the unprecedented use he made of classical and existing native resources (Nevalainen, "Lexis and Semantics" 340). Among these we find: *besmirch*, *bloodstained*, *swagger*, *countless*, *dauntless*, *assassination*, *cold-blooded*, *coldhearted* and *laughable*.¹³ However, not all his coinages were equally successful. . Take the case of *incarnadie*, *tanling*, *slugabed*, *kicky-wicky* and *congreeing* (Webb), which, either because of their outlandish appearance or simply because they were unnecessary, did not manage to gain full currency in the language.

Thus, under those circumstances at least 20,000 new words entered the English vocabulary between 1500 and 1650, according to Bryan Garner and Paula Blank (qtd. in Jacobson 29-53). This incredible increase was achieved thanks to the endeavor and determination of some authors like William Caxton, Stephen Hawes and Sir Thomas Elyot, who popularized many borrowings through their works (Vos 376). Elyot was arguably the greatest exponent of the use of classical words in English; he was known as "the most conscientious neologizer" (Croft, qtd. in Vos 376), who "set out, perhaps more deliberately than any other man, to enrich the vocabulary by foreign borrowing" (McKnight, "Modern English in the Making" 102, qtd. in Sledd 49), carrying out the "the necessary augmentation of our language" (Thomas Elyot, qtd. in Vos 376). He is credited with having expanded the use of many of these new classical words; as in the case of maturity, whose use he justifies in *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531) in this manner:

¹³ See *OED*. s. vv.

Yet of these two [sc. celeritie and slownesse] springeth an excellent vertue, whervnto we lacke a name in englishe. Wherefore I am constrained to vsurpe a latine worde, callyng it Maturitie. (qtd. in Weiner)

In this regard, we must refer to George Pettie (1548–1589), who extolled the new nature the language had acquired thanks to the entrance of so many foreign words, especially classical words:

Wherefore I marueile how our english tongue hath crackt it credite, that it may not borrow of the Latine as well as other tongues: and if it haue broken, it is but if late, for it is not vnknownen to all men how many woordes we haue fetcht from thence within these fewe veeres, which if they should be all counted inkpot termes, I know not how we should speake anything without blacking our mouthes with inke: for what word can be more plaine then this word plaine, and yet what can come more neere to the Latine? (Preface to *The Ciuile Conuersation of M. Steeuen Guazzo*)

With a certain dose of sarcasm, Pettie scathingly depicts the ironic situation of those critics who, as a result of the particular development of the language, had no other choice than to use the same words they depreciated in order to write their critical essays.

Though it is true that classical borrowings promoted a considerable increase in the lexical possibilities of the language, such rise of foreign presence in the English vocabulary eventually caused a considerable linguistic self-consciousness among many writers, whose rejection to the overwhelming predominance of the classical words in the vocabulary had to do with their concern about the possible self-detrimental effect on the integrity of the language that such dependence on foreign sources could cause. It must be said that this linguistic concern was not new, since,

before the Renaissance, by the mid fourteenth century there had been already some critical writers on this matter, like the work *The Azenbite of Inwyt* (c. 1340), a translation of a French treatise¹⁴ written by Dan Michel of Northgate.¹⁵ This work stands out from its contemporary works for its remarkable use of the language, in particular, with regard to the choice of native words in preference to foreign words.¹⁶ Its deliberate use of the language is arguably one of the earliest attempts to avoid the use of foreign words in an English work, and therefore it is a notable and illustrative example of the linguistic self-consciousness that the massive presence of borrowings might provoke. However, cases like this were not very common during the Middle Ages, or at least not as much as in the Renaissance.

4. The inkhorn controversy

In the Renaissance, such a linguistic situation reached a turning point, which led many authors to dialectically confront the so-called "inkhorn terms", a name they deliberately chose to show their discrepancy regarding the unnatural and contrived origin of all those foreign words. It is true that at first the introduction of some terms might have been done out of "pure necessitie in new matters" (Mulcaster, qtd. in Barber, et. al. 189), however, this way of proceeding soon became an indiscriminate and thoughtless lexical plunder, with many classical new words being frequently taken regardless of the real necessity, under the groundless assumption that they were

¹⁴ Its title is *La Somme des Vices et des Vertus*, written by Laurentius Gallus in 1279.

¹⁵ Little is known about his biography, only the information he reflected in his works. He most probably lived around 1340.

¹⁶ A clear example of this is the title itself, which literally means the Remorse (*azenbite* 'againbite') of Conscience (*inwyt* 'inwit'), with both words being literal translations of the Latin equivalents.

more appropriate and formal than the existing native words because of their classical origin. This tendency was seen as a "mere brauerie" (Mulcaster, qtd. in Barber, et. al. 189) with classical words being used only "to garnish it self withall" (Mulcaster, qtd. in Barber, et. al. 189). It was this "sheer ostentation" (Barber, et. al. 189), therefore, the principal element of disturbance among writers, some of whom found the degree of lexical corruption in English to be an urgent aspect to correct. These differences within the academic sphere eventually caused a fierce dialectical debate among neologizers, in favour of borrowing, and purists, against the acceptance of foreign words under the "belief that words of foreign origin [were] a kind of contamination, sullyng the purity of a language" (Trask 254). This debate rapidly spread across the nation, being henceforth known as the "inkhorn controversy", whose concern was whether English had to borrow classical words. In addition, the whole issue implicitly questioned the adequacy of the English language as a medium of expression in certain fields, in particular with regard to the nature of the native lexicon (Vos 376; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 7; Barber, et. al. 56-70).

In this debate, critics argued that borrowed words were not the result of the normal development of the language, but rather the bizarre and whimsical linguistic attempts of pretentious authors to look more intellectual and sophisticated to their readers. Critics of "inkhorn terms" were, therefore, strong advocates of the use of native words, and, as such, rejected the general assumption that the native words were less prestigious than their classical equivalents. Together with this, they especially lamented the consequences the classical borrowings were having on the native stock, with much of it disappearing because it was barely used. These effects notwithstanding, most writers continued availing themselves unreservedly of countless borrowings in their works. They shared the view that classical words

contributed to general improvement of their works, however, critics considered that they were used for the sole purpose of embellishing their content, affectedly disguising their message with shallow and ostentatious wording under the belief that in doing so the work would look more intellectual and consequently receive more recognition by the public (Weiner).

Under such circumstances some authors decided to step up and pronounce on the issue, vehemently speaking out against the excessive use of borrowings in academic works. They considered that the recognition these works received was unfair and ungrounded, for it was only due to the classical lexicon used therein. They regarded that pretentious use of the language as a linguistic corruption which eventually would ruin the language. However, though all of them defended the same cause of the defence of the integrity of the language, there was not a unified approach as to the best way to address the issue (Vos 376).

Thus, some authors did not altogether oppose to borrow in those cases for which English had no equivalents, accepting them as necessary and really useful for the enrichment of the language. One clear example of this mild opposition towards classical words is visible in George Puttenham (1529–1590). His attitude towards the issue of borrowing is rather equivocal and indecisive: while he considers borrowings a "peeuish affection of clerks and scholars" (qtd. Freeborn 287), he does not seem to reject them in case of lexical need. In addition, Puttenham seems to outright overlook the etymological element when he proposes lexical alternatives to some "inkhorn terms". Examples of this are *fecundity* for 'abundance', *egregious* for 'notable', *implete* for 'replenished', *attemptant* for 'attempt' or *compatible* for 'agreeable' which, though perhaps more easily understood in his view, are clearly nonnative (qtd. in C. Davis

and Flinke 230). Finally, while he admits that many of these words are indispensable, he warns about the risks of their overuse.

Other authors like Georgie Pettie (1548–1589), criticized that English writers received much less recognition than their European homologues for their works, simply because of the language, regardless of the quality of the content. In *The Civil Conversation* (1581) he affirms:

There are some others yet who wyll set lyght by my labours, because I write in Englysh: and those are some nice Trauaylours, who return home with such quæsie stomackes, that nothyng wyll downe with them but Frenche, Italian, or Spanishe, and though a woorke be but meanelly written in one of those tongues, and finely translated into our Language, yet they wyll not sticke farre to preferre the Originall before the Translation. (qtd. in Barber, et. al. 66)

There were some authors, meantime, who took a much more uncompromising stance on the issue, opposing to any kind of classical influence on their language, regardless of the case and consequently, they had to conceive possible substitutions for all those classical terms. For that purpose, some authors tried to resort to Old English, with the intention to revive some long-forgotten words. However, Old English differed so much from the English of that time that authors could hardly recognize it as their own tongue. The reintroduction of these words in the language was virtually unfeasible, since their appearance would look even more outlandish and unrelated than the classical words.¹⁷ In this sense, William Caxton illustratively refers to the nature of the language in the prologue to a translation of the *Æneid* (1490). He tries to justify

¹⁷ As a result of the words from French present in the English language, many of the classical words bore some relation with a part of the lexicon, which significantly facilitated their integration in the language.

therein the borrowing of foreign words, apologetically arguing that Old English was as foreign as another language and that the use of some old words would be totally unintelligible:

And whan I had aduysed me in this sayd boke. I delybered and concluded to translate it in to englysshe . . . And whan I sawe the fayr and straunge termes therin I doubted that it sholde not please some gentylnen whiche late blamed me sayeng yt in my translacyons I had ouer curyous termes whiche coude not be vnderstande of commyn peple and desired me to vse olde and homely termes in my translacyons. And fayn wolde I satysfye euery man and so to doo toke an olde boke and redde therin and certaynly the englysshe was so rude and brood that I coude not wele vnderstande it . . . And certaynly it was wreton in suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche than englysshe I coude not reduce ne bryng it to be vnderstonen. (qtd. in Small 301)

Given the impossibility to draw upon the past of the language, other authors sought instead to retrieve outdated English words—mostly dialectal. This is the case of Edmund Spenser (1552/1553–1599), who is credited with the reintroduction of some dialectal words like *sicker* for 'certainly', *inwit* for 'conscience',¹⁸ and *yblent* for 'confused' (Crystal 60). Those words were known as "Chaucherisms" since they were already considered archaic. On other occasions, however, they opted for the creation of new words from Germanic roots, drawing upon the linguistic tools available in the language, mainly *suffixation*, *prefixation*, *compounding*, and *semantic conversion* (Langer and Davies 103-104). Despite their efforts, very few of these lexical inventions survived long in the language, rarely appearing in other works (Crystal 60).

¹⁸ That word had been already used in *The Agenbyte of Inwyt*.

Other authors, meanwhile, based their arguments on jingoistic grounds, opposing to this classical influence "out of a patriotic commitment to native resources" (Vos 376). An example of this stand is George Gascoine (1535–1577), who showed a staunch defence of the linguistic identity and the condemnation of any foreign element in the language:

Here by the way I thinke it not amisse to forewarne you that you thrust as few wordes of many sillables into your verse as may be: and hereunto I might alledge many reasons: first that the most auncient English wordes are of one sillable, so that the more monosyllables that you use, the truer Englishman you shall seeme, and the lesse you shall smell of the Inkehorne (qtd. in Foster 115)

Others took a more academic approach, basing their rejection upon purely rhetorical grounds. They argued that such terms were shallow and pretentious, and that they were only used for aesthetic purposes. An example of this type of defence is visible in *The Arte of Rhetoric* (1553), by Thomas Wilson (1524–1581), where he discusses the issue of the rhetoric and how borrowings affected the nature of English in that regard. In order to criticize the ridiculously excessive use of the classical borrowings done by some authors, he writes a letter supposedly "devised by a Lincolneshire man, for a voyde benefice, to a gentleman that then waited vpon the Lorde Chauncellour":¹⁹

¹⁹ It is not clear whether that person really existed, or if it was just an invention of the author, to give the issue more credibility.

Pondering, expending, and reuoluting with my selfe, your ingent affabilitie, and ingenious capacity for mundaine affaires: I cannot but celebrate, & extol your magnificent dexteritie aboue all other. (vol. III, ch.II)²⁰

This is clearly an exceptional case, given the unusual number of borrowings in such a short fragment. This text serves Wilson to ridicule the pedantic writing style commonly used in academic works, by showing the extent to which the overuse of borrowings could reach (Simon 93). By means of this linguistic example Wilson intended to outspokenly criticize the unceremonious treatment their language was receiving. With this in mind, he writes at the beginning of his work:

Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee never affect any straunge ynkehorne termes, but to speake as it is commonly received: neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living overcarelesse, using our speche as most men doe, and ordering our wittes as the fewest have done (qtd. in Hadfield 114)

Other authors, meanwhile, argued that classical words were obscure and that their opaque meaning was a great difficulty for their understanding, especially for the general readers, who were mostly unlearned in the classical languages. Such is the case of Ralph Lever (1530–1584) and his work *The Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft* (1573), where he discusses the issue of rhetoric as he provides several English equivalents for some of the terms used in this field. Though some of his coinages were sporadically used by other authors of the time, none of his lexical creations managed to gain full currency among writers. We should not, however, disregard his work and coinages merely because of the lack of success among the

²⁰ The letter in question is too long to show it here in its whole entirety; these three lines will serve to prove the point.

academic field. As a matter of fact, it is a very interesting work that provides some illustrative examples of the type of lexical creations needed in such fields in the hypothetical case in which foreign terms could not be used.

Like the rest of the critics, Ralph Lever strongly disagreed with the prevailing idea that English was not appropriate enough for certain fields, arguing that the concepts of reasoning and rhetoric could be perfectly expressed in the English language without having to resort to classical resources. Although he admits that English lacked many of the needed terminology, he did not consider it to be a real excuse for the overuse of borrowings. In his view, English had "a speciall grace" regarding the "deusing of newe termes, and compounding of wordes". Indeed, because the large number of monosyllabic words, such lexical creations were a linguistic procedure English lent itself to. Lever, thus, questions the real benefit of the borrowings:

Nowe the question lyeth, whether it were better to borrowe termes of some other tounge, in whiche this sayde Arte hath bene written: and by a litle change of pronouncing, to seeke to make them Englishe wordes, whiche are none in déede: or else of simple vsual wordes, to make compounded termes, whose seuerall partes considered alone, are familiar and knowne to all english men? (qtd. in Crane 34)

He answers this question by giving a perfect example in which he hypothesizes about the different reactions a lay English man would have when hearing two new words, one clearly native and the other clearly foreign, daring to guess in advance which of the words would be more easily understood:

The like shall fall forth when comparison is made, betwixt any of our new termes compounded of true english words, and the inkhorne termes deriued of

straunge and forain languages: For he that is an englishman born, and vnderstandeth no tounge but his owne, shal at the first, eyther conceiue the meaning of oure words by himself, or else soon learne them vpon an other mā's instruction and teaching: but for these inkhorne termes, it is certaine, that he shall neither vnderstande them by himselfe: nor keepe them in remembraunce when he is taught theyr signification of others, bicause the worde can make him no helpe. (qtd. in Jone 127)

As seen, Lever firmly advocated for the preferential use of native lexicon on practical grounds, arguing that they were "transparent" enough so as everyone could understand them without the need of constant consultation. Moreover, not only did Lever limit to discuss the matter but he also naturally introduced his own coinages throughout the work with the correspondent *saywhat* (explanation) thereof (Shea ch. XI). Thus, apart from the very word *witcraft*, which he deliberately uses in the title to refer to logic and reason, he will use *lykesounding*, *lykemeaning* and *playnmeaning* to refer respectively to homophone, synonyms and univocal. Moreover, instead of instead of the expected preface or prologue, he opted for the word *forespeach* (from OE *forespræc*).²¹

Finally, he put into question the detrimental effect that some authors believed the English translations of academic works would have on society, stating that it could only be beneficial for the general English culture, by providing the common people with well-founded arguments. As can be seen, like many other authors, Lever sought, above all, to prove the perfect capacity English had as a language to talk about academic issues, which in this specific case was rhetoric.

²¹ See *OED* s. vv.

The lexical capacity of the English language is likewise extolled in *The Defense of Poetry* (1595), by Philip Sidney (1554–1586). In his work Sidney defends the mixed nature of the English language for being a beneficial element for the language in general: "I know some will say [English] is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other?" (qtd. in Eliot 52) He then favourably compares English with the classical languages, arguing that:

for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceit of the mind.it [is] equally with any other tongue in the world; and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together, near the Greek, far beyond the Latin: which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language. (qtd. in Eliot 52)

Another crucial literary figure on the issue was John Cheke (1514–1557). He firmly believed that "a language . . . partially understood by the lower order of people would fail of profiting them" (qtd. in James Goodwin 12), having, therefore, no usefulness for the common people, for whom Latin and Greek words were completely unintelligible. He also criticized the obscurity of classical words, and advocated for the practical element of the language, which meant that the lexicon should be easily understood by everyone, regardless of their classical knowledge. To counteract the communicative deficiency resulting from the excessive use of a Latinate language, Cheke emphatically draws upon native sources, providing us with excellent insights into such lexical productivity. In order to do so, Cheke was obliged to create some words which, though fanciful in appearance, were certainly much more recognizable from the point of view of a lay English speaker. In his preface to Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione's *Courtier*, he is even more straightforward in this regard, justifying his attitude with this judgmental statement:

I am of this opinion that our own tung should be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tunges; wherein if we take not heed by tiim, ever borowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. (qtd. in Siemenes and Maroon 2)

The case of Cheke is quite curious, since despite being professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Cambridge he firmly confronts the use of classical terms in English, which suggests that his criticism was not aimed at the use of Latin as such, but rather at the particular use of the language some did and that he considered "Latinated English".

5. The religious reformation and the language

Cheke's rejection is framed within the issue of religion, and more specifically with the Reformation. It was a fierce dialectical dispute about the true path Catholicism should follow, which also spread to English, with the main contentious point being the type of language that should be used for religious purposes. As a matter of fact, one of the main causes of disagreement was the translation of the Bible into English, and the type of terminology used therein.

That was then how the issue of the "inkhorn terms" eventually affected the field of religion, with Protestants, among which John Cheke was, firmly rejecting the degree of obscurity of the terms that Catholic usually used when translating. In the Catholics' view, such a way of translating was partly due to their firm belief that the Bible should be translated as faithfully as possible to the original, which implied the borrowing of many terms into English, mostly from Latin and Greek. Moreover, Catholics argued that their preference for classical words resulted from the inadequacy of the English language:

Again, for necessitie, English not hauing a name, or sufficient terme, we either kepe the word, as we find it, or only turne it to our Enblish termination, because it would otherwise require manie wordes in English, to signifie one word of an other tongue. (Preface of the translation of the New Testament, qtd. in Foster 113)

For Protestants, however, all those classical words obstructed the comprehension of the religious texts, obscuring their meaning and so making them almost unattainable for the common reader (Foster 114). In the Protestants' view, they were used with the sole purpose of keeping people unaware of the reality, which would allow the high offices of the Church to maintain their excessive power (Barber, et. al. 186). In the words of George Wither, ["Catholics] have hunted for words of purpose, which the people do not understand", avoiding thus linguistic plainness with the intention of making people mistakenly believe that the Scriptures were more obscure and dark than they really were (qtd. in Foster 113). Protestants, therefore, considered this Latinate English a reminiscence of the subjugation of the English Church to the Pope which Catholics wanted to preserve. Language, indirectly, became a powerful and useful tool to break away from the Roman Pope (Killeen, et. al. 96).

Though this issue was not unique to the religious texts, given the importance of transmitting the religious teachings to the population it was indeed in this field where the clarity of meaning was more needed, and the lack of eloquence more criticized (Foster 109). This discontent toward such pretentious use of the language for religious purposes goaded John Cheke to rewrite the translation that previous authors like Wyclif (1380) and Tyndale (1534) had done of the Bible (Richards 70). Thus, in 1550 he undertook to translate the *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, trying to use many more native words than his predecessors. In Cheke's view, those versions

had an excessive number of classical words, which were a real handicap for those readers without a knowledge of classical languages. Thus, among those "diction choices" Chekes makes, we find words like *crossed* for 'crucified' and *gainraising* instead of 'resurrection'. Curiously enough, Cheke makes use of two words for 'resurrection', using the word *uprising* as well, though this word means nowadays 'insurrection'. Likewise, Cheke uses the word *mooned* for 'lunatic' and *biwordes* for 'parables' or 'similitudes' (Richards 70). James Goodwin, furthermore, includes in his introduction an illustrative chart in which we can compare the differences in the lexicon among Cheke's version and Wyclif's, Tyndale's and the authorized version of 1611. Thus, for the concept of 'migration' and 'departure' Cheke opts for the word *outpeopling* and for the adjective 'founded', he uses *groundwrought*.

Despite these illustrative examples, Cheke's endeavours to offset against the excessive presence of Latinate words were ultimately quite ineffective, failing to affect the general linguistic nature of the work, since for the most part it abounded in classical words as other previous versions. In all likelihood, Cheke failure was due to the impossibility to find adequate native equivalents for all the classical terms and the degree of unintelligibility that such language might have caused among readers. Therefore, though classical words were equally difficult to understand, native words were not much better, and given that in both cases the comprehension would have been hindered, the issue of prestige eventually tipped the scale in favour of the classical words, being thus the deciding factor on the matter.

6. The beginnings of dictionaries

As seen, the use of classical terms was common in all fields of knowledge and the debate about their use spread among all the scholarly community. As a consequence,

authors were obliged to draft makeshift wordlists with the necessary explanations of the difficult terms readers would find in their works. As a result of their opaque meaning, these words earned the nickname of "hard words" and, over time, their number increased to such an extent that the need for making glossaries became quite evident, not only specifically for the works in question, but for general consultation to avoid the imprecise use of Latin borrowings, whose correct use became almost as relevant as the possession of knowledge as such (Görlach 162). In response to this necessity, many authors set out to compile dictionaries and glossaries (Starnes 9). At first these "dictionaries" were mainly bilingual, conceived more for the purpose of translating than anything else. Thus, during the 15th century we find indeed several cases, like the *Dictionary of Syr Thomas Eliot Knyght* (1538), a Latin-English dictionary, Claudius Hollyband's *Dictionarie French and English* (1593), and John Florio's Italian-English *World of Wordes* (1598), among many others.

Among them, *Elementarie* (1582) by Richard Mulcaster (1531–1611) stands out for being one of the first real attempts to compile a monolingual dictionary. He also stood in favour of the use of native words, defending the use of plain everyday language, while advocating for the value and worthiness of the English language. In his work, Mulcaster straightforwardly rejects those attitudes that dispraised the use of English in academic writings:

But why not all in English, a tung of it self both depe in conceit, & frank in deliuerie? I do not think that anie language, be it whatsoeuer, is better able to vtter all argumets, either with more pith, or greater planesse, then our English tung is, if the English vtterer be as skilfull in the matter, which he is to vtter, as the foren vtterer is. (qtd. in Starnes 10)

In addition, he defends his decision to write in English, arguing that the degree of eloquence depends not on the language used but on the skills as a wordsmith of the author in question. In "The Peroration", one of the sections of *The Elementarie*, he begins by setting forth the general view at the time:

For som be of opinion, that we should neither write of anie philosophicall argument, nor philosophicallie of anie slight argument in our English tung, bycause the vnlearned vnderstand it not, the learned esteme it not, as a thing of difficultie to the one, and no delite to the other. (qtd. in Wiener 66)

Next he exposes his view on the matter, refuting the negative conception towards English: "No one tung is more fine then other naturallie, but by industrie of the speaker. . . [who] endeuoreth himself to garnish it with eloquence, & to enrich it with learning" (qtd. in Nicholson 42). He defended the idea that all languages are equally suitable; rejecting therefore the conception that regarded that some languages deserved more admiration and recognition than others. Moreover, he did not want to accept that the understanding of English words was subjugated to the learning of classical languages:

For is it not in dede a meruellous bondage, to becom seruants to one tung for learning sake, the most of our time, with losse of most time, whereas we maie haue the verie same treasur in our own tung, with the gain of most time? our own bearing the ioyfull title of our libertie and fredom, the Latin tung remembring vs, of our thraldom & bondage? I loue Rome, but London better, I fauor Italie, but England more, I honor the Latin, but I worship the English. (Black, et. al. 453)

Much of Mulcaster's work served as guidance for some of the definitions Robert Cawdrey (1538–1604) would use years later on in *A Table Alphabetical*, which was

published in 1604 and is generally considered the first monolingual dictionary with detailed information on each word, either by means of synonyms or paraphrases. In the introduction to the dictionary, Cawdrey ironically depicts the curious situation in which the English language was at the time, and that made it be not easily recognizable:

Some men seek so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language, so that if some of their mothers were aliue, they were not able to tell, or vnderstand what they say, and yet these fine English Clearks, will say they speak in their mother tongue; but one might well charge them, for counterfeyting the Kings English. (qtd. in Shapiro 9)

It is at least curious that, even though he had compiled that dictionary for the comprehension of hard words, he was actually not very in favour of their use, arguing that language should be a tool for communication and that given such opaque meanings, classical words did not help in that regard. He eloquently refers to this in the introduction to the work:

Doth any wise man think, that wit resteth in strange words, or els standeth it not in wholesome matter, and apt declaring of a mans mind? Do we not speak, because we would haue other to vnderstand vs? or is not the tongue giuen for this end, that one might know what another meaneth? Therefore, either wee must make a difference of English, & say, some is learned English, & other-some is rude English, or the one is Court talke, the other is Country-speech, or els we must of necessitie banish all affected Rhetorique, and vse altogether one manner of language. Those therefore that will auoyde this follie, and acquaint themselues with the plainest & best kind of speech, must seeke from

time to time such words as are commonlie receiued, and such as properly may
expresse in plaine manner, the whole conceit of their mind. (Cawdrey 1)

Thus, despite his critical stand on the issue, his work nevertheless served to consolidate the use of those very "hard words". Cawdrey's endeavors reflected the efforts of many lexicographers to facilitate the consolidation of an unsteady language whose erratic nature changed with each new lexical addition. Therefore, the coming into being of English cannot be understood without recognizing the importance that particular individuals had in the making of the language (Sledd 49). Thus, together with the particular contributions in the academic field, lexicographers arguably played the most important role, given their crucial task of compiling and recording the language from a totally descriptive perspective, not pretending to influence on the language at all. Indeed, as George H. McKnight highlights lexicographers "aided in the use of the learned words and helped to fix their meaning", thereby taking part in "the sifting of words, the abandonment of archaic words and the condemnation of new words"(qtd. in Sledd 49). This rapid record of borrowings among lexicographers was moreover promoted by the lack of official lexicographic associations in England which regulated the prescriptive use of the language, and consequently, the entrance of borrowings in the language. This situation was diametrically opposed in Germany, where lexicographic associations like the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft, the Aufrichtige and the Teutschgesinnte Genossenschaft were founded during the seventeenth century with the intention of preserving the purism of the German language (Waterhouse 16). Ultimately, this was a great disadvantage for English purists since this institutional support might have caused their lexical proposals to meet more easily with general acceptance.

7. Resolution of the "inkhorn controversy"

In addition to this lack of regulation in the English language concerning the entrance of borrowings, the general view of the time considered the purist linguistic undertaking too extravagant and infeasible given the degree of external influence English should get rid of and the implications of such lexical overhaul. That impossibility is visible in the work of Richard Verstegan (1550–1640) *The Restitution of Decayed Intelligence: In Antiquities. Concerning the Most Noble, and Renowned English Nation*, first published in 1605. Verstegan speaks herein about the foreign influence English had received through history, affirming that though English cannot forgo those words anymore, or else, speakers could hardly talk and construct comprehensible sentences, it has been all for better:

Since the time of Chaucer, more Latin and French hath beene mingled out with our tongue then left out of it, but of late wee have falne [sic] to such borrowing of words from Latin, French and other Tongues, that it has bin beyond all stay, and limit, which albeit some of us do like well, and thinke our tongue thereby much bettered, yet do strangers therefore carry the far less opinion thereof, some saying that it is of it selfe no language at all, but the scum of many languages, others that is most barren, and that wee are daily faine to borrow words for it (as though it yet lacked making) out of other languages to patch it up withall, and that if wee were put to repay our borrowed speech backe againe, to the languages that may lay claim unto it; we shall little better than dumbe, or scarcely able to speake any thing that should be sencible. (Verstegan 204)

By the end of the sixteenth century the issue of the inkhorn terms eventually had almost completely waned and "inkhorn terms" had managed to gain virtually full

acceptance. English purists had for the most part failed to find consensus concerning the best approach to tackle the issue of borrowings and the construction of lexical equivalents, and consequently, the English purist venture did not succeed, with very few lexical coinages achieving full currency in the language. Given this lack of unity and agreement purist writers, therefore, were not able to vie with the overwhelming influence and great popularity the classical languages enjoyed, and consequently, they eventually succumbed to the unstoppable invasion of foreign terms. It was only with the resolution of the issue of "inkhorn terms" that borrowings from classical languages eventually became an unquestionable element of English. At last, the language had achieved the same eloquence and lexical expressiveness as the classical languages. In this regard, Mulcaster concludes in *The Elementarie* that "the English tung cannot proue fairer, then it is at this daie" (qtd. in Holland 197). Likewise, William Camden (1551–1623) categorically affirms that English has managed to become a "copious language, pithy and signiticative, as any other in Europe" (qtd. in Limbird 133), though he admits that it had achieved such status through the "artful" compilation of many foreign words. In this same vein, Peter Heylin (1599–1662) remarks:

That whereas English Tongue is a compound if Latin French, Dutch& c. it rather adds to its Perfection, than detracts any thing from its Worth; since out of every language we have culled the most significant Words, and equally participate of what is excellent in them, their Imperfections being rejected: For it is neither so boisterous as the Dutch, nor so effeminate as the French; yet as significant as the Latin and, in the happy Conjunction of two or more Words in one, little inferior to the Greek. (qtd. in Limbird 133)

The reputation of English was not going to be questioned again in the future, and the presence of classical borrowings was going to be consequently accepted as an inherent aspect of the language and especially in the field of knowledge, where their use was going to loom large, being almost a compulsory element of the academic works.

8. Conclusion

From this analysis it follows that borrowings have always been a linguistic constant in the language and that, therefore, they constitute an intrinsic part of it. However, not all the borrowings were the same nor they resulted from the same causes. Thus, among those which were taken out of necessity, the borrowings of the Renaissance are the ones which were more questioned in the first place. As seen, this first linguistic debate about the path the language should follow arose from the rejection of some authors like Thomas Wilson and John Cheke to what they considered a real threat for the integrity of the language. Their position on the matter was not only limited to a preferential use for native words, but they also sought to convince their coetaneous about the perils of that continuing wanton borrowing.

Unfortunately for them, neologizers had the upper hand on the whole matter. Given the historical tradition of borrowing in the language, as well as the enormous prestige classical languages had always enjoyed in the scholarly community, the *latinization* of the language— which had really begun during the Middle Ages—was inevitable. Furthermore, together with the lack of institutional support for the purism of the language, the laborious task carried out by lexicographers—who painstakingly recorded thousands of new classic words— provoked that it was a matter of time before purist enterprises failed, and after this convulsive period, English definitively established itself as the language of knowledge and literature. Behind this success, however, there is the undeniable reality that English lost much of its idiosyncrasy in the process. Whether it would have been better for the language to remain more Germanic is pure speculation, and likewise, there is no way of knowing if the language would have reached that status in such case.

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