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English/French code-switching
in later medieval charters

Abstract: The spoken use of French in later medieval England cannot be recovered, except insofar as it may be inferred from surviving documents. The use in medieval Latin charters of the French definite article (FA) determining an English Noun (EN) is here taken to be a textually preserved remnant of spoken usage. Following earlier work by Ingham (2009), the FA+EN phenomenon is studied quantitatively, showing that the FA+EN construction occurs where it would accord with code-switching constraints observed in contemporary bilingual communities. Attention is paid in particular to the appearance or otherwise of the phenomenon in contexts featuring a possessive and an adjectival modifier of the Noun, where a clear structural contrast is obtained, as predicted on the assumption that spoken code-switching lay behind the establishment of the charter text. It is further shown that FA+EN is more frequent with a monosyllabic than a polysyllabic Noun, for which a prosodic explanation is proposed, in keeping with the hypothesis that the phenomenon was originally oral. This support for the existence of spoken bilingualism from the 13th century onwards in a professional environment fits the timeframe, furthermore, for the well-known expansion in the penetration of French loan words into English. Alternative explanations that have been proposed for the FA+EN phenomenon are considered but found to be inadequate.

Keywords: French article, code-switching, medieval English-French bilingualism, orality

1. Introduction

Certain kinds of documentary records written in England in the later Middle Ages display an intriguing feature: a sequence of Latin, French and English as illustrated by the sequence *juxta le brodemore* in this short example:

(1) …dimidia roda juxta le brodemore inter terram Willelmi Thurke… DEEDS 00761034 (1303)
  '…half a rood next to the broadmoor between land belonging to W.T…'[1]

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[1] A rood was a medieval English measure equivalent to a quarter of an acre.

Specifically, the combination consists of the French definite article plus an English noun, in a text mostly in Latin. We shall refer to this as the 'FA+EN' phenomenon. It is found in Latin and Anglo-Norman documents where a local topological feature is referred to, especially in administrative records of the kind used by professionals engaged with land title and land management, such as charters and accounts.

The FA+EN phenomenon was first researched in recent times by Ingham (2009), where the proposal was made that it reflected vernacular code-switching among the speech community responsible for creating the documents in which it appeared. In that publication, these were manorial accounts documents from the late 13th and 14th centuries. As was usual for the period, accounts records kept by the manorial estates of England were normally written in Latin. Until about 1300 or so, the use of vernacular items seems to have been fairly rare in these documents. By the early fourteenth century, however, English words periodically appear, denoting items in semantic fields such as places, artefacts, types of land, rural customs, and customary feudal payments.

Despite the consensus that all three languages were in use in medieval England, there has been a disinclination to see the FA+EN phenomenon as what *prima face* it appears to be - a piece of vernacular code-switching embedded in running Latin text. This reluctance seems to stem from the persistent belief, maintained by a superannuated scholarly tradition, that in England competence in French declined rapidly after the 12th century (see especially Berndt 1972, Rothwell 1976, Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Kristol 2000). This position has been increasingly challenged. Data from orally given depositions suggested to Short (2009) that in the early 14th c. about 20% of the population was able to speak French, mostly those living in towns. Rothwell (2001) and Trotter (2003) pointed out the increasing use of French in late medieval England for a variety of everyday-use text types, including accounts, private correspondence, municipal and guild records and regulations, building contracts, cookery and medical recipes, and the like. These indicate at the very least a widespread passive knowledge of French well into the later 14th c., alongside English.[2] The implication is that substantial numbers of people were bilingual in English and French. Conceivably, their French could have been limited to the written medium, but a time when, due to the high cost of writing materials, almost all language use must have been spoken, it seems counterintuitive to imagine those with competence in the language writing French but not speaking it.

Knowledge of French in later mediaeval England appears to have been maintained not only in aristocratic circles (e.g. Rothwell ed. 2009) but especially through the school system. French was the vehicle language through which the school curriculum was delivered up to the time of the Black Death, as is known

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[2] Rothwell's shift towards a more positive view of insular French became noticeable in his later publications, e.g. Rothwell (2001).

from contemporary testimony (Orme 1973).[3] An educated (male) person would, at least up to that time, have had a basic competence in the language. By the later 13th century scribes in the provinces writing conveyances for local land-owners would mostly have been born and educated in England, rather than being mother-tongue Frenchmen as may have been the case in the decades immediately following the Conquest. Their mother tongue competence in English can therefore be assumed: so when they wrote English field names, they were finding ways to spell words that for them were common in their own oral usage. Why, then, it might be asked, did the scribe not use an English definite article?

There is independent written evidence of business discourse at the upper levels of the English rural economy in the later medieval period being conducted in French in manorial settings. In the late 13th c., Walter of Wenlock wrote detailed letters to his estate managers, setting out how he wanted them to operate (Harvey 1965). We have various treatises on farming in insular French (Oschinsky 1971), as well as the well-known Bibbesworth poem (Rothwell, ed. 2009), which includes significant amounts of vocabulary relevant to rural occupations. What is known of the context makes it quite plausible, therefore, that some use of French featured in the spoken background to the composition of documents such as charters and accounts. They would have been dictated to a scribe by the originator of the document, at least in the non-formulaic parts (Wiles 2013, p. 122). The latter's choice of wording is likely to have been adopted in the text of the charter. Our hypothesis is therefore, with regard to cases such as example (1) above that the scribe heard the landowner speak of field names using terms like *le Broadmeadow*, giving instructions to the scribe in French. In the written version of his instructions embodied in the charter, the French definite article is reproduced in that language.

The present article seeks to identify whether in the DEEDS documents the FA+EN phenomenon obeyed constraints posited in studies of contemporary code-switching. A quantitative analysis of corpus data is undertaken, focusing on two types of syntactic context. It is shown that the distribution of the French definite article complies with what would be expected if the embedded FA+EN code-switch in Latin texts reflected oral usage in the relevant speech communities. It is found preceding an adjectival modifier, but is systematically absent preceding a possessive modifier; its presence or absence thus accords with the syntactic patterning of English. In the latter part of the article, a strong tendency in the distribution of the French article is noted to prefer its use with a single syllable English noun. This is evaluated in terms of the metrical regularity pattern characteristic of English (Liberman and Prince 1977), by which an alternation of strong and weak syllables is preferred within the metrical foot. In the spoken discourse of which charters

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[3] French would therefore have to been acquired in middle childhood at the latest, in order to make its use as a vehicle language feasible in the grammar school context, where pupils could begin as early as age 7. Ingham (2012) therefore argues that it must have been acquired semi-naturalistically at pupils' first school, known as the *schola cantūs* ('song school').

would have been a written record, the French definite article is argued to have occupied the weak (non-head) position and the English noun on the strong (head) position of a metrical foot. Since this is a phonological phenomenon, it supports the existence of spoken bilingualism in this period.

2. Contemporary code-switching

Let us first consider what contemporary bilingual speech communities offer that might further our understanding of the FA+EN phenomenon, seen as a remnant of spoken code-switching in the discourse enabling the creation of the charter. In contemporary societies, bilingual communities code-switch in everyday spoken discourse, including the use of single Noun code-switching (Poplack 1980). A vast number of studies of such speech communities is now available, providing a wealth of data on conversational code-switching between participants who share the same two languages. Code-switching functions as a way of reinforcing the group identity of the bilingual community especially when it is socially a minority group. An example of a milieu in which code switching is common is the Cypriot community in London; among whom lexical or phrasal code switching is reported by Gardner-Chloros (2009) to be common, e.g.:

(2) Bori na diavazi ke na ghrafi, ala ochi ke a hundred per cent.   (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 51)
   'She can read and write, but not actually [lit. 'and'] 100%'

In code switched discourse such as this, both participants probably know each language well enough to use it throughout, but a bilingual speaker may access an expression in one language while producing a discourse mostly in the other language, especially if it is a common lexically stored expression, as in example (2). Another trigger for a code-switch is when a speaker wishes to mention a unique referent known to the other participant(s) in the discourse (Matras 2009: 107), who gives as examples the use of particular German terms such as *Sterbeurkunde* ('death certificate') and *Bestattungsinstitut* ('funeral directors') to refer to civil society matters known to Romany speakers domiciled in Germany.

Code switching may be conversational, as in the above example, or situational as when the speakers are in a situation that conventionally inclines them to using another language from one otherwise used. As noted by Matras (2009), code-switching studies have found that the presence of a formal or special situation may trigger a switch to another language. In the case of the FA+EN phenomena studied in the present work, the participants in the spoken discourses preceding the writing of the charter or other documentary text were in a fairly formal work-related setting, one in which their higher status was engaged; in mediaeval England that higher status had a linguistic reflex, the use of Anglo-French.

A leading theme in the study of code switching has been that of constraints on how elements from different languages may be combined in a code switched discourse. One which will be important in this study is known as the Equivalence Constraint: 'Code switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where a juxtaposition of [elements from each language - RI] does not violate a syntactic rule of either language'. (Poplack 1980, p. 585). When code switching occurs within a sentence, analysts speak of a matrix language frame (Myers-Scotton 1993), which contributes the structure and grammatical morphemes: content words from the other language, known as the embedded language, stand within that syntactic frame, in accordance with the Equivalence Constraint. We return to this topic in a later section.

3. Historical code-switching

Studies of historical code-switching have often concentrated on switching between Latin and a vernacular (Wenzel 1994, Pahta & Nurmi 2006, 2011, Schendl 2011, 2013, 2018, Halmari and Regetz 2011, Jefferson 2011). Studies investigating medieval code-switching between two vernaculars, specifically English and French, are rarer (Ingham 2011, 2018, Putter 2011, Wogan-Browne 2013).[4] In both cases texts presenting code switches testify to the existence of bilingual speech communities, whether it be doctors or clergy able to use Latin in addition to the vernacular, or lay readers competent in both English and French.[5] Analyses of code switching have explored various facets of the subject, e.g. whether it obeys syntactic constraints posited for contemporary languages (Halmari & Regetz 2011, Ingham 2011, Schendl 2013), whether the same is the case regarding the functions of code-switching (Schendl 2013), and how code-switching related to particular genres (Pahta & Nurmi 2011).

English language historians thus have available a substantial body of findings on the extent and characteristics of textual code-switching in the medieval language. What is inevitably missing is a body of work on spoken code-switching, where data is richly available to scholars of the contemporary language. This data gap is all the more unfortunate given that code-switching is known to be a pervasive characteristic of present-day bilingual communities. Code-switching in contemporary society tends to be conversational, i.e. spoken or found in texts that reflect speech as with social media. Most written documents that have come down to us from the medieval period are not of that type.

A way to address this difficulty is to make use of a text-type which reflects a background of spoken interaction, rather than being a monologue, such as a

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[4] The 'mixed language' analysis of Wright (2002) and elsewhere is not considered here, since its author does not interpret such discourse as switching between distinct codes.

[5] Competent in French at least as far as being able to recognise the meaning of common stock phrases in French, such as those found in Chaucer and Langland.

sermon, or a purely textual creative act such as a letter, poem or chronicle. Such cases are found where the existing text is the output of spoken interaction between two or more participants. This is the case with documents such as manorial records, tax returns and charters, where the creation of the written text would typically have been preceded by discussion between individuals so as to establish the text content, as discussed in section 1. This was posited by Ingham (2009) in the context of the English medieval manor, where French is independently attested as being in written use, as mentioned above, in the 13th and 14th centuries. A French-using community existed at least at the higher levels of land management,[6] who by hypothesis would have been able to switch between the two vernaculars at their command, in much the same way as contemporary bilinguals do. This study aims to interpret against that background further evidence of English and French co-occurring in medieval documentary records.

4. French article + English Noun combinations in medieval documents: previous research

Hulbert (1936) identified over 300 English etymons used in manorial records, combined with a French definite article and embedded in running Latin text, e.g.:

(3) … et in sarracione plancorum pro le saltehous. *Durham,* I, 540 (1340–1)[7]
 '…and for sawing planks for the salthouse'

In terms of code-switching, the last phrase of this example shows first a switch from Latin (*pro*) into French (*le*), followed by another switch from French into English (*saltehous*).[8] The Equivalence Constraint is straightforwardly satisfied in the latter case: the linear sequence (Preposition) - premodifier - Noun is permitted in French and English. Similar examples from accounts documents analysed by Ingham (2009) are:

(4)a.…in le staunkmedowe de Pityngton *Durham* II, 561 (c.1358)
 '…in the fishpond meadow of P.'
(4)b. …. [pro] lxxiii operatoribus ad fodum in la winyerd *Worcester* II, 515 (1302-3)

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 [6] By this time, at least two centuries after the Norman Conquest, monolingual French speakers are assumed to have died out.
 [7] Bibliographical references relating to data sources quoted in this section can be found in Ingham (2009).
 [8] The switches from Latin to English or French in these texts, and in particular whether they should be approached in terms of contemporary code-switching, take us into a domain where other factors apply than those considered in the present article. It is assumed that the composition of Latin texts such as charters would have been a scribal activity not necessarily reflecting properties of conversational speech, the domain in which code-switching is normally studied.

'…[for] 73 workers digging in the vineyard'
(4)c. … cum emendacione de les wodecartes   *Durham* II, 562 (1358)
   '… with mending the woodcarts'

According to Zachrisson (1924: 95): *le* or *la* in such contexts was used to 'translate the English [definite] article'. In fact, however, the vast majority of vernacular nouns in such texts appear without an article, e.g.:

(5). …pratum vocatum <u>mulnemede</u>...   *St Albans* III, 12 (1364)
   '…the meadow called the millmeadow'

Since the English definite article was very often left untranslated, therefore, one wonders why the scribe ever wanted to translate it at all. Furthermore, when it was translated, why was it put into French? More recently, Britnell (2009: 88) maintained that scribes used the French article 'before place-names and English words for which a clerk knew no Latin equivalent'. As we have seen, considering familiar landscape features as place names is not straightforward, and Britnell's claim that clerks - educated in Latin, as they were - were not able to put e.g. 'dale' (valley), 'lake', or 'north field' into acceptable Latin seems to stretch credibility. Trotter (2010) considered that the French article functioned as a textual marker of a switch from the matrix Latin of the text into a vernacular language. In the examples given above in (4), *le* would, according to this view, signal that *winyard* and *wodecartes* were English. In similar vein, Wright (2010: 136) considered that 'the definite article *le* signalled a following English noun… and it blocked a Latin suffix on that noun.' There are two problems with the notion that FA+EN was a way of flagging code-switching. It is unclear why medieval scribes should have wanted to signal that a code switch is coming: in all the detailed accounts of code-switching in contemporary bilingual communities, no such practice is known to the present author. Secondly, if the French article was simply a code-switching flag, it would be used regardless of the grammatical context in which the code-switched items stood. As shown by Ingham (2009), this was not the case. In the 14th and early 15th century data analysed there, the French article was systematically absent in a partitive context such as (modern English) 'a pound of nails', 'four ounces of meal', etc., where a definite article would not be used in English. In that context, the following noun is indefinite, both in French and English. Data from manorial accounts,[9] where phrases of this type abounded, systematically avoided the FA+EN construction up to the mid-15th century, e.g.

(6)a. Pro una celdra de barly   *Jarrow,* p. 19 (1330)
   'For a chalder [dry measure] of barley'
(6)b. … iiijMl' de lathis emptis   *Cuxham,* p. 399 (1329–30)
   'On 4,000 lathes purchased'

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[9] See Ingham (2009) for bibliographical references to the sources of manorial accounts data.

(7)a. ….in j par de trendles empto   *Framlingham*, p. 60 (1324–5)
     'On one pair of trendles purchased'[10]
(7)b…. quia deficiuntur iij strakes   *Framlingham*, p. 82 (1324–5)
     'Because 3 strakes are missing'

That is, no article use was found in these accounts documents where an article would have been grammatically excluded in the vernacular.

The distribution of the French definite article in the documents examined clearly obeyed grammatical constraints of the two vernacular languages. A switch between the French article and the English noun never occurred where a definite article would have been ungrammatical in English. In other words, the FA+EN sequence was obeying the Equivalence Constraint characteristic of contemporary code-switching. The analysis proposed by Ingham (2009) was therefore that the FA+EN combination constituted a small piece of French-to-English code-switching, which cropped up embedded in a matrix-language Latin text. The claim maintained in the present article is that it was it was not a translation, or a code-switching 'marker', but an embedding into running Latin text of a piece of conversational code-switching between French and English of the type that the participants in creating the document would have customarily used in their everyday discourse as manorial administrators. For this argument to be accepted, however, much depends on the plausibility and reliability of the distributional argument. Further work seemed to be required, especially making use of a large corpus of relevant data in order to substantiate the distributional analysis more solidly, This perceived need was addressed in the present study, as will be discussed below.

5. New study: FA + EN with English topological nouns

The FA+EN phenomenon can be observed not only in accounts documents such as those studied by Ingham (2009), but also quite frequently in the charters collected in the DEEDS corpus by Gervers (1975). It is found optionally especially in boundary clauses describing where in the landscape the boundaries lay of land worked by the farming community, e.g.:

(8)a. …quod stagnum dicitur blakepol   DEEDS 00040406 1220
   '…which pond is called black pool'
(8)b. …que dicitur la blakepole.   DEEDS 00040405 1220
   '…which is called the black pool'
(8)c. …in campo qui vocatur northfeld   DEEDS 00800046 1297-1298
   '…in the field called north field'
(8)d. …cultura que uocatur le northfeld   DEEDS 00190197 1276-1277
   '…field called the north field'

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[10] *Trendles* were probably either rollers or hoops (cf. Middle English Dictionary s.v. *trendel*).

These charters were often of an earlier period than the time frame considered by Zachrisson (1924). They were observed to contain many instances of the FA+EN phenomenon with landscape features. Ingham (2013) provided a brief introduction to its occurrence in the DEEDS data, but a more thorough investigation is undertaken here.

The semantic status of topological nouns must first be discussed: should they be taken as 'minor' names, i.e. proper nouns, or as common nouns denoting a locally-known landscape feature, such as would be the case in any village with 'the pond', 'the brook', 'the green' etc.? In the charter data, they vary as to whether they are found with a vernacular definite article, a fact which could be interpreted in terms of the historical trend towards a landscape feature becoming a habitative place name (Ekwall 1936). Items such as Blackpool and Northfield are, after all, in modern times found as English place names.[11] It was observed, however, that in the charters habitative place names did not take articles, English or French; after the formula *datum apud* ('given at', i.e. the place of composition, normally a settlement or habitation of some kind) a definite article was never observed to precede a habitative place name in the corpus, cf.:

(9)a … datum *apud Chuddelegh*	DEEDS 01790197 (1224)
(9)b. … datum *apud Cawode*	DEEDS 01310029 (1227)
(9)c. … datum *apud Patrinton*	DEEDS 00780049 (1230)
(9)d. … datum *apud Thorp*	DEEDS 00960032 (1230)

English non-habitative topological nouns preceded by French definite articles can be taken not to have been true names, but rather denotations of well-known landscape features. As such, they would have required a definite article in ordinary vernacular discourse in that locality. Significantly, we find that this is the case in charters of the same period whose base language is French:

(10)a.. … & de Tamyse tanque a les flodeyates del molyn de Egnesham.   *Eynsham* 1328
      'and from the Thames as far as the floodgates of Eyensham mill'
(10)b. … et sy extend' en longur de longeforde tanqe al mulnebrugge.   *Haughmond* 1344
      'and extends in length from Longford as far as the millbridge'
(10)c. … et une acre sestend taunque a les foxholes.   *Haughmon*d 1332
       'and one acre goes as far as the foxholes

In these French-language cases and others involving landscape features ('the floodgates', 'the mill bridge', 'the fox-holes') rather than settlement names, the definite article is always found. French-language municipal documents such as

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[11] The anachronistic practice of using initial capital letters for landscape features, such as those in (8)a-(8)d, by many charter editors has not been followed in the present study. It encourages their unquestioning interpretation as place-names, which we believe is as a general rule unwarranted.

the *Oak Book of Southampton* (c.1300) likewise show the presence of the French definite article preceding English topological nouns such as *strand* ('sea-shore') and *hurst* ('thicket'):

(11)a. ... de la rue de Ffuleflode, oue la straunde et Lubriestrete soient iij. aldermans. *Oak Book* 58
'From Fullflood St. with the strand and Lubrie St. let there be three aldermen'
(11)b. Et si nul de la vile achate vins ou autre marchaundise que coustume deyue entre la huyrst et Langestone.   *Oak Book* 64
'And if any townsperson buys wines or other goods owing custom duty between the hurst and Longstone…'

Place names such as *Langestone* and street names such as *Lubriestrete* did not normally take an article in these charters, on the other hand. It can be be taken, therefore, that English items such as *floodgates, mill bridge, strand* and *hurst* were not place names, but nouns that denoted places in the locality well-known to local inhabitants. Their semantics were denotational; the landscape features in the FA+EN construction in charters will be treated accordingly.

6. Analysis procedure

Further aspects of the distribution of FA+EN in Latin charters are now investigated, with a view to uncovering how far it could have reflected vernacular spoken usage. We consider whether the construction occurred in two types of grammatical contexts, possessive pre-modifiers and adjectival premodifiers. The Equivalence Constraint should have ruled out FA+EN in the possessive modifier context, since in English, mediaeval and modern alike, the Determiner position in the noun phrase has already been taken by the Genitive case noun, cf. (Modern English):

(12) Two acres in (*the) Alfred's field.

This analysis can be applied to corresponding items in the charters of the period, e.g.:

(13) … iacent in campo qui vocatur Ailwinesfeld contra portam Sagari   DEEDS 01290084 (1235)
'… lie in the field which is called Ailwin's field, opposite the S. gate'

Here, the Determiner slot of the Noun Phrase headed by the noun *feld* is occupied by the genitive case Noun *Ailwin's*. The same restriction on the appearance of the definite article operated in pre-modern English as now. Given the Equivalence Constraint, the prediction can be made that in a code-switched passage in the charters a French article would be precluded from occurring in such as context as (13).

On the other hand, the Equivalence Constraint permits FA+EN to co-occur with an adjectival modifier, since the grammar of English allows, and allowed then, for a Determiner to precede an adjective. In a code-switch, the Determiner slot could therefore be taken by the French definite article. So the possibility of a French definite article in this kind of context is expected, e.g. where an adjective such as *black* precedes the head noun *bourne* ('brook'):-

(14) …linialiter usque in blakeburn et sic descendendo usque…   DEEDS 00720201 (1256)
    '…in a straight line as far as blackburn and thus going down as far as …

In this particular example, the French definite article is not found, but it is predicted to be present some of the time in cases with the same structure.

Results of a second analysis will also be reported in this study that followed initial observation of the DEEDS corpus data. These gave the impression that the FA+EN phenomenon was more common with a monosyllabic unpremodified English noun than with a polysyllabic element, e.g. the following contrast where the definite article accompanies monosyllabic *mor* ('moor'), while bisyllabic *blakemor* ('black moor') lacks one:

(15)a. …. et in prato quod uocatur Swerham iacente iuxta le mor   DEEDS 00270040 (1297)
    ', …. and in the meadow called Swerham lying next to the moor'
(15)b. … et antiquam foveam versus blakemor infra cruces   DEEDS00980703 (1226-1227)
    '… and the old pit opposite black moor below the the gallows'

Likewise the contrast between monosyllabic *holm* ('low flat land near water') and trisyllabic *littelholm*:

(16)a. …et duos seliones super littelholm inter terras ejusdem Ricardi   DEEDS 00660297 (1251)
    '… and two furlongs above little holm between the lands of the said Richard…'
(16)b. …duabus acris in le holm sine diminucione   DEEDS 00370473 (1266)
    '… two acres in the holm without reduction…'

Analysis of the data was therefore also carried out focusing on this contrast.

For both types of analysis, data were used describing land surveys in Latin charters of the 12th to early 14th centuries in the DEEDS corpus. At this time, land tenancy rights were recorded using boundaries identified by a wide range of features of the medieval landscape. This corpus therefore lent itself admirably to our needs, thanks to the abundance of references to topological entities that it contained. The very large number of charters collected in the corpus permitted linguistic regularities and also possible linguistic variation to be noted in recurrent references to those features.

DEEDS is not a linguistically annotated corpus, so lexical search terms were needed that would identify linguistic features of interest. These were the English

nouns featuring in FA+EN combinations in data collected for Ingham (2013), i.e. (modern spellings used here for convenience):

(17) *acre, beck, bourn, brook, cliff, croft, dale, dene, ditch, feld, gate* ('way'), *hill, holm, lake, land, lane, lech (*'stream'*), mill, moor, pool, riding, street, toft, wall, way, well,*

The database, consisting of short extracts from the charter texts that featured these search terms, was analysed as indicated above.

7. Results: Possessive and Adjectival contexts, monosyllabic and polyllabic Noun contexts

Using the search terms shown in (17) above, a total of 243 contexts were obtained for a possible French definite article. Of these, a form of the article appeared in 81 (33.3%) of cases, most in the masculine form *le*, but 26 cases of feminine *la* were noted. The latter occur particularly modifying words for English 'valley': (*dene* and *dale*); whether this should be seen as reflecting the gender of the French lexical equivalent is moot, as in Old French both *val* (masculine) and *vallée* (feminine) were in use. It was therefore not considered profitable to investigate the gender marking issue further.

We next consider whether a topological noun appeared with an article, in two contexts: those where a personal name featured as a genitive modifier of the landscape feature noun, and in those where the modifier was an adjective, e.g. examples (13) and (14) above. It will be recalled that the Equivalence Constraint makes the prediction that a definite article should have been strongly disfavoured in the first but not in the second context.

Analysis produced a very clear distinction between the two contexts as to whether they permitted FA+ EN:-

Table 1: Use of the French article preceding adjectival and possessive modification of an English noun

	Def. art	no def. art.	TOTAL
Possessive pre-modifier	0 (10.4%)	52 (100%)	52
Adjectival premodifier	25 (37.9%)	41 (62.1 %)	66

No occurrence at all was found of the French article determining an English head noun, and co-occurring with a possessive premodifying noun, as in the following contexts:

(18)a. cum prato quod uocatur Ailrikesmor   DEEDS 00270048 (1151-1152)
     'with the meadow called Aelric's moor'

(18)b. …et inde vsque ad Godefrayesbourn et inde vsque ad… DEEDS 00480357 (1300)
    '… and thence as far as Godfrey's brook, and thence as far as…
(18)c. …inter Ormes lecche et Smaleburne et Thysterleyburne DEEDS 01550015 (1229)
    'between Orm's stream and S. and T. exx.(19a)-(19c).

    On the other hand, the FA+EN construction co-occurred nearly 40% of the time with an adjectival pre-modifier, e.g.:

(19)a. …et dimidiam rodam super le redhevedeland inter eosdem… DEEDS 00660561 (1252-1253)
    '… and half a rood above the red headland between the same…
(19)b.…de Asteley usque le blakelake versus Wideforde et sic…   DEEDS 00710032 (1257)
    '…. From A. as far as the black lake opposite W. and thus…
(19)c. … supra le holewey iuxta terram Roberti Baudewyn   DEEDS 01050138 (1284 - 1285)
    '…. above the hollow way next to the land of R.B.… '

    It is again found that FA+ EN behaved as it would have done if reflecting code-switching constraints.
    Next, monosyllabic and polysyllabic topological nouns were compared for the frequency of occurrence of FA+EN. Variation was found in both contexts, both monosyllabic, e.g. *dene*, and polysyllabic e.g. *portwey*:-

(20)a. …heredibus suis inperpetuum scilicet in dene ij acras terre et dimidiam DEEDS 01770406 (1202)
    '…to his heirs in perpetuity the following: two acres and a half in (the) dene'
(20)b. …. et versus la dene unam rodam terre iuxta terram predicti Walteri   DEEDS 00110024 (1230)
    '… and going towards the dene a rood of land next to the land of the said W.'
(21)a. ... et subtus le portwey iacet vna roda quem   DEEDS 01050138 (1284-1285)
    '... and below the portway lies a rood (of land) which...'
(21)b. .... de dimidia acra uersus portwei   DEEDS 00040135 (1228)
    '... of half an acre towards the portway'

    However, a quantitative analysis of the data produced a result showing a much stronger tendency to use the French definite article before a monosyllabic noun (Table 2).
    As can be seen, FA+EN was overwhelmingly more frequent with monosyllabic than with polysyllabic nouns (66.7% of the time versus 19.3%). Why this should have been so is not immediately obvious, but the very sharp difference in the results obtained in the two different contexts calls for an explanation.

Table 2: Frequencies with and without a definite article in DEEDS corpus, English monosyllabic and polysyllabic nouns attested with and without modification

	Def. art	no def. art.	TOTAL
Polysyllabic	33 (19.3%)	138 (80.7%)	171
Monosyllabic	48 (66.7%)	24 (33.3%)	72
Overall	81 (33.3%)	162 (66.7%)	243

It is worth considering the role that prosody may have played in favouring the outcome shown in Table 2, where e.g. *la dene* was more common than *dene,* but *portway* was more common than *le portway*. The distinction concerns whether an initial weak syllable in a metrical foot is present or absent. English has throughout its known history been stress-timed, systematically distinguishing strong from weak syllables. Metrical regularity, by which strong syllables occur at regular intervals, is strongly favoured (Liberman and Prince 1977); a pattern in which two strong syllables coincide constitutes a stress clash. Although stress clashes are common in running speech, there is evidence from speech perception and processing that English speakers have what Kimball and Cole (2014) call a regularity bias – they tend to perceive stress in terms of a regular alternating pattern of strong and weak syllables. Their research indicates that for a monosyllabic English noun, pronounced as a strong syllable, to lack a preceding weak syllable in running speech would be disfavoured by the regularity bias. That does not mean that stress clashes would never happen, only that a weak-strong sequence would tend to be be preferred as a speech rhythm default. This would very likely have been the case in earlier periods of English, since its character as stress-timed language has remained unchanged. The regularity bias in speech rhythm would have favoured the appearance of a weak syllable, represented by the French article, in a context preceding the monosyllabic English noun. The FA+EN sequence is likelier to have been frequent, therefore, when the English item was monosyllabic, the result observed in the data as represented in Table 2. This explanation, be it noted, situates the FA+EN sequence firmly in the domain of spoken language, which is of course where code-switching most commonly happens nowadays.

The fact that the charters were drawn up in Latin, where singular common nouns such as as those denoting a topological feature did not require a determiner, must surely have exercised a strong influence on the form of the text we have. That is why so many of the contexts studied, including those with monosyllabic English nouns, had no French definite article. However, its occurrence does not seem to be random: the results obtained here show clear disparities between different context types which can be handled by postulating the influence of spoken discourse. Though now irretrievable, it has left an imprint, as it were, on the code-switched syntax of the charters.

8. Summary and conclusions

The FA+EN sequences in our data, it is claimed, are a remnant of the spoken interaction between participants involved in the creation of a charter: the scribe and his informant, most likely a senior land manager or legal officer acting on behalf of the usually aristocratic or ecclesiastical tenant. In such discourse, most

likely conducted in a vernacular, a definite article would normally have preceded a topological noun. We have argued that, very often at least, that vernacular discourse was in French, frequently mixed with English so as to identify landscape features as required. When transferred to the matrix language Latin environment of the written charter, the French article was most often dropped, as shown by the overall totals in Table 2. This was probably because of the Latin context, which may have served to favour the omission of articles.[12]

Earlier treatments of FA+EN did not consider its syntactic distribution. Not using frequency data from a corpus, they did not observe its above-average predominance in monosyllabic contexts, nor its complete absence where disallowed by the Equivalence Constraint. The present study has sought to fill this gap. The French article is shown to have occurred specifically where it would be found in a matrix French sentence, preceding a switch to an English noun. There is no basis for taking the French article to have been some form of metalinguistic textual marker, and certainly not as a translation feature

When the results of the present investigation are combined with the earlier findings of Ingham (2009), it can be said that the distributional patterns of the FA+EN combination map reflect vernacular grammars in the following respects:
— absence of an article where the vernacular would not have used one (indefinite contexts, possessive contexts, habitative place names)
— presence of the article where vernacular grammars would have used one (definite context, unmodified noun)

Its linguistic distribution was thus clearly rule-governed, and when prosody is taken into consideration the strong tendency to prefer its use with a monosyllabic noun, as compared with a polysyllabic one, points to a spoken origin of the phenomenon. The creation of the charter text was preceded, it is postulated here, by spoken interaction between speech participants featuring the construction in question. That spoken interaction included code-switching between the two vernaculars, specifically from French into English when a speaker wished to refer to a topographical feature of the area under discussion.

In conclusion, the analysis presented here of code-switching in medieval charters indicates that the extensive contact influence of French on Middle English took place in the context of spoken, not merely written, competence in the language on the part of bilingual speakers. The acceptance into English of thousands of French lexemes would have been greatly facilitated by the practice of code-switching among bilinguals, of which the FA+EN phenomenon offers us a small but informative surviving trace.

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[12] Note that the Equivalence Constraint as described above would then not have operated between Latin and English, perhaps because a written text in Latin did not follow the conventions of spoken code switching. For discussion of Latin and English code-switching, see Keller (2020), while noting that the primary sources she analyses (sermons) were originally delivered orally.

Primary source

‘DEEDS’: https://deeds.library.utoronto.ca

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