

UNIVERSIDADE TECNOLÓGICA FEDERAL DO PARANÁ - UTFPR

DEPARTAMENTO ACADÊMICO DE LETRAS

CURSO DE LETRAS PORTUGUÊS-INGLÊS

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***OLD NORSE INFLUENCES IN THE TRANSITION FROM OLD ENGLISH INTO  
MIDDLE ENGLISH AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON MODERN ENGLISH***

TRABALHO DE CONCLUSÃO DE CURSO

PATO BRANCO – PR

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## RESUMO

Este estudo refere-se às influências escandinavas sobre a Língua Inglesa, que envolve não apenas aspectos linguísticos, mas também culturais. A história da língua Inglesa está intrinsecamente ligada aos povos que habitaram o atual território da Inglaterra e às demais culturas com as quais os povos ingleses tiveram contato. Desse modo, será feita a contextualização da época e do espaço histórico a que esse estudo se destina: a chamada Era Viking na Inglaterra. Através de uma pesquisa bibliográfica que reúne várias teorias e fenômenos relacionados com as influências do *Old Norse* (língua falada pelos povos escandinavos) sobre a língua Inglesa, o foco deste trabalho será analisar e refletir sobre a transição do *Old English* para o *Middle English* denotando o impacto causado pelo contato com o *Old Norse*. Contudo, apesar de que as influências escandinavas sobre a cultura e língua Inglesa mostrem-se claramente presentes, tal episódio histórico é ofuscado por interferências romanas e francesas que demonstraram maior impacto no que se refere à política a nível continental. Por isso, outro objetivo aqui é o de valorizar e reconhecer a importância da permanência escandinava na Inglaterra no que tange principalmente às consequências linguísticas provenientes desse período.

**Palavras chave:** Inglês Médio, Nórdico Antigo, Era Viquingue, escandinavos, linguística inglesa, história inglesa, cultura escandinava

## ABSTRACT

This study refers to the Scandinavian influences on the English language, which involve essentially linguistic aspects, but, also culture. The history of the English language is directly linked to the people who inhabited the current English territory and to the other cultures that the English peoples had contact with. In this way, it will be made the contextualization of the time and the historical space to which this study refers, namely, the Viking Age in England. Through bibliographical research that encompasses many theories and phenomena related to the Old Norse influences on the English language, the focus of this work will on analyze and reflect on the transition from Old English to Middle English, denoting the impact caused by contact with Old Norse. However, although Scandinavian presence in England and their influences on language and culture are significant, such historical episode is overshadowed by Roman and French interferences that have shown greater impact on continental politics. Therefore, another objective of this study is to value and recognize the importance of Scandinavian permanence in England in what concerns the linguistic and cultural consequences from that period.

**Key words:** *Middle English*, *Old Norse*, Viking Age, Scandinavians, English linguistics, English history, Scandinavian culture

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - The establishment of the first Anglo-Saxons in British territory .....	12
Figure 2 – Comparison between pronouns in OE, ON and ME.....	27
Figure 3 - Chart demonstrating the VO order with non-negated object throughout time .....	33
Figure 4 - Chart demonstrating the VO order with negated object throughout time ..	34
Figure 5 - The amount of borrowed words from French and from Scandinavian languages in Modern English .....	44
Figure 6 - Borrowed words among the 100 most frequent loans from Scandinavian, French and Latin in BCN .....	46
Figure 7 - England current map .....	49

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Bird species in Modern English and Old Norse forms.....	24
Table 2 - Old Norse and Old English birds species cognates.....	25
Table 3 - Modern English sentences using "more" and "most" compared with Modern Norwegian and Modern German sentences.....	28
Table 4 - Prepositions in Old Norse compared with Modern Germanic languages...	29
Table 5 - Verb To Be (Third person of plural) compared between Old English and Norse, Middle English, and Modern German and English.....	41
Table 6 – Scandinavian place names in England.....	50

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	9
<b>2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b> .....	11
<b>2.1 England before the arrival of Scandinavians</b> .....	11
<b>2.2 Scandinavian Culture</b> .....	13
<b>2.3 Brief History of the Conflicts between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxons</b> ....	14
<b>3. THE GERMANIC FAMILY TREE</b> .....	16
<b>4. LINGUISTIC INFLUENCES UNDER CONFLICT</b> .....	18
<b>5. EARLY BORROWINGS IN <i>OLD ENGLISH</i></b> .....	20
<b>6. LANGUAGE CHANGE IN <i>MIDDLE ENGLISH</i></b> .....	22
<b>6.1 Morphological Borrowing</b> .....	23
6.1.1 Nouns .....	23
6.1.2 Pronouns .....	26
6.1.3 Adjectives .....	27
6.1.4 Prepositions .....	29
<b>6.2 Syntax Change</b> .....	29
6.2.1 From Object-Verb To Verb-Object .....	30
6.2.2 From <i>Old English</i> Prefixes To <i>Middle English</i> Post-Verbal Particles .....	33
<b>6.3 Phonetic Borrowings</b> .....	38
<b>5.4 Semantic Change</b> .....	39
<b>6.5 Morphosyntatic Influences</b> .....	40
6.5.1 Inflections .....	40
6.5.2 Verb To Be .....	41
<b>7. CONTRASTS BETWEEN SCANDINAVIAN AND FRENCH/LATIN BORROWINGS</b> .....	43
<b>8. ANOTHER INFLUENCES</b> .....	47
<b>8.1 Personal Names</b> .....	47
<b>8.2 Place Names</b> .....	48
<b>9. CONCLUSION</b> .....	51
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	52

<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>54</b>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language has undergone several transformations throughout history to become *Modern English*<sup>1</sup> as it is known today. Back to *Middle English*, linguistic analysis is necessary to identify its modifications from *Old English*, especially, the ones related to the Scandinavian<sup>2</sup> influence, here taken as not fully contemplated by philology. The analysis of a language's formation process is important to realize the dynamics between the mother tongue (Germanic) and its sister languages (West and North Germanic languages). The researches on the Viking legacy in the British Isles began over the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Friðriksdóttir (2014), the linguists who were pursuing explore the surviving traces from the culture and language of Scandinavian people discovered that a large part of the English lexicon is derived from the language spoken by the Scandinavian people, in other words, *Old Norse*. The history of the English language is directly linked to the people who lived in the present day territory of England and other cultures they had been in touch with (e.g. expansion of the Roman Empire, Scandinavian invasions, French domination, etc). To elucidate its temporal and geographical linguistic configurations, and understand, not only the history of the language, but of its nations as well, it is indispensable to know the constitution of the English language from its early years up to its current form.

Although the Scandinavian influence on the English culture had a great significance on the English language development, this historical event is overshadowed by the Roman and French interferences that had a major political impact at a continental level. Regardless of a lower number of Scandinavian linguistic loans, as compared to Roman's or French's, the Norse are more significant (DURKIN, 2014). It is clear that the English language, similarly to many languages, has evolved in different ways: the popular and the erudite ways. According to Pardo (2009), the Scandinavian language became common among the plebeian people; the French, instead, was restricted to the nobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Durkin (2014), based on Oxford English Dictionary, defines the periodization of English language: Old English (up to c. 1150), Middle English (from c. 1150 to c. 1500) and Modern English (from c. 1500 onwards).

<sup>2</sup> Scandinavia is formed by Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Island and Finland. In this context, Denmark and Norway were the most representative.

Therefore, the main goal of this work is to identify the most significant aspects influenced by Old Norse that can be found in English spoken today and how this process occurred. The Scandinavian loans can still be seen nowadays through certain characteristics in the morphology, phonology and phonetics, syntax and semantics of Modern English. Furthermore, Scandinavian culture and folklore can still be found in English speaking countries, specially, in United Kingdom and Ireland. Through research and reading of a broad bibliographic material consistent with the history and structure of the English language, especially regarding Old Norse linguistic and cultural influences, relations will be made to reach concrete and specific conclusions.

The main books which this work is based upon were written by the linguists Joseph E. Emonds, Jan T. Faarlund, Albert C. Baugh, Thomas Cable, Otto Jespersen, and Philip Durkin. Additionally, we mention other researchers, as Sandra Friðriksdóttir, who reunite and comment about some of these linguists' theories. In the literature, there are works that were written from a linguistic analysis of texts from Middle English. On the other hand, there are others that focus on the loanwords that represent the linguistic evolution from Old Norse into Middle English and, finally, into Modern English. Most of the data for this research were collected by the above mentioned linguists from language *corpora* and etymological dictionaries.

Firstly, this work will summarize the historical contextualization of England in the Viking Age, and it will provide an explanation about the Germanic family tree. Only then, the analysis and observations about grammatical aspects relating English to the Old Norse language and culture will be better explored and discussed. Before the conclusion, there will be a brief reflection about the contrast of influences between Old Norse and French on English, and also about Personal Names and Place Names, which are another Scandinavian inheritance associated with language.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 England before the arrival of Scandinavians

Britain had been a colony of the Roman Empire for a long time, approximately between the years 43 to 449. Before the Roman invasions, the British lands were populated by many Celtic tribes that were distributed throughout the territory. The arrival of the Romans transformed the Celts' way of life with the imposition of their language, their beliefs, and customs, in addition to causing a mixture of people and, at the same time, differences and breakdowns between them. According to Borges:

[t]he British islands were the most distant colony of Rome, the northernmost, and had been conquered till Caledonia, current Scottish territory, where lived the Picts, a people of Celtic origin separated from the rest of Britain by Hadrian's Wall. In the South, lived the Celts converted to Christianity and the Romans. In the cities, the educated people spoke Latin; the lower classes spoke different Gaelic dialects (BORGES, 2003, p. 2) (our translation)<sup>3</sup>.

In the fifth century, the Roman legions were forced to leave the British land at the request of Honorius, the first Roman emperor of the West, who was fearing the invasion of Visigoths in Rome. This fact facilitated the entrance of Germanic people who settled initially in the coastal regions of southern Britain. The "Anglo-Saxon" designation refers to the fusion of these peoples (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) who shared customs, beliefs, and other similar characteristics despite belonging to different tribes. Drout comments about the establishment of these peoples in British territory:

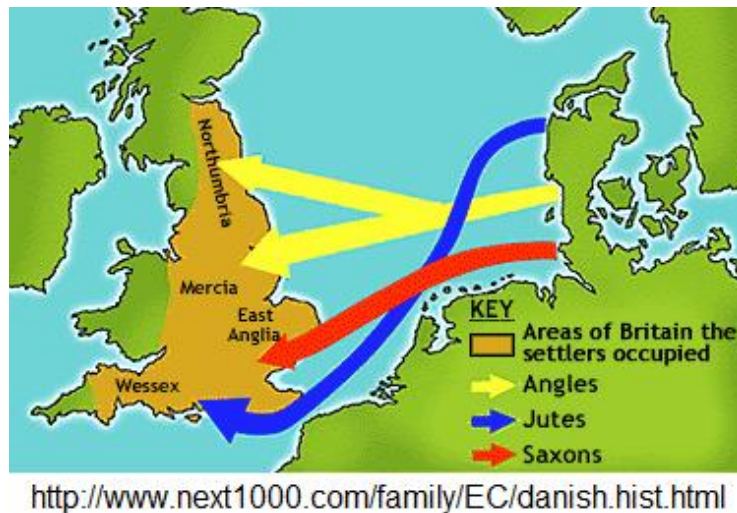
[t]he Angles settled the north of England, the Saxons settled the south, and the Jutes settled in Kent, to the east. Each of the three tribes spoke *Old English*, but of a different dialect. For several centuries, *Old English* (also called Anglo-Saxon) was the language of England. It was influenced by Latin, particularly in the adoption of words having to do with the Church, and by Celtic (surprisingly little, however), but it was essentially a West Germanic language (DROUT, 2006, p. 61).

The tribes which conquered Old England formed seven kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Wessex. There were

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<sup>3</sup> "As ilhas britânicas eram a colônia mais distante de Roma, a mais setentrional, e tinham sido conquistadas até a Caledônia, atual território escocês, onde viviam os pictos, povo de origem celta separado do resto da Bretanha pela muralha de Adriano. Ao sul, habitavam os celtas convertidos ao cristianismo e os romanos. Nas cidades, a gente culta falava latim; as classes baixas falavam diversos dialetos gaélicos" (BORGES, 2003, p. 2).

four main dialects: West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and Northumbrian (Appendix 1). Although there were linguistic differences among them, all dialects were intelligible (TRIPS, 2002).



**Figure 1 - The establishment of the first Anglo-Saxons in British territory<sup>4</sup>**

It is worth mentioning that there was the Roman Christianizing Period before the arrival of Scandinavians. During this period, Latin monks worked to convert the peoples who lived in England and had different beliefs from Christianity, causing Roman influences on culture and language again.

It is possible to infer that the life was not peaceful among these groups of people on British lands. The disputes for land, as well as other political and cultural disagreements, had led to contact among the tribes, which shared different and similar cultural characteristics, mainly those relating to language. Therefore, and knowing that “when there is a language contact, languages change” (DROUT, 2006, p. 54), it seems that that the several dialects spoken between the Anglo-Saxon tribes formed and organized, together with Celtic and Latin influences, the Old English (or Anglo-Saxon).

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <<http://next1000.com/family/EC/danish.hist.html>> Accessed on: November, 15th, 2016.

## 2.2 Scandinavian Culture

The Scandinavian people lived in a distant land in the North of Europe and their presence in other lands was, usually, not friendly, because they used to practice piracy, which implies plundering and killing. A well-known account about the Scandinavian people that is reasonably impartial was written by Ibn Fadlan, the emissary of the Caliph of Baghdad, in 921 A.D., Russian territory in the present day. He reported to the caliphate, among other matters, about the first time he met Norse people alongside the Volga river:

[...] I have never seen more perfect physiques than theirs—they are like palm trees, are fair and reddish, [...]. The man wears a cloak with which he covers one half of his body, leaving one of his arms uncovered. Every one of them carries an axe, a sword and a dagger [...]. Each woman has, on her breast, a small disc, tied <around her neck>, made of either iron, silver, copper or gold, in relation to her husband's financial and social worth. [...] They are the filthiest of all Allāh's creatures: they do not clean themselves after excreting or urinating or wash themselves when in a state of ritual impurity (*i.e.*, after coitus) and do not <even> wash their hands after food. [...] They gather in the one house in their tens and twenties, sometimes more, sometimes less. Each of them has a couch on which he sits. They are accompanied by beautiful slave girls for trading. One man will have intercourse with his slave-girl while his companion looks on. [...] They are addicted to alcohol, which they drink night and day. Sometimes one of them dies with the cup still in his hand. [...] (MONTGOMERY, 2000, p.5-14).

Although Ibn Fadlan was quite impressed by their bodies, their clothes, weapons, and accessories they wore, he also criticized the way they behaved at table and bed, labeling them dirty, alcoholic dependants, and shameless. This account is special because it describes ordinary elements of Scandinavians' life and not an attack.

The Scandinavians were also known for their naval mastery, for their longships that could sail both open sea and rivers (Appendix 2), which enabled them to keep commercial relations with other areas of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and America (SPIEGEL-FANDIÑO, 2004), and, of course, plundering overseas.

They had attacked not only Great Britain but also Germany and Netherlands' shores. In France, they had sailed the Sena river bringing terror to the countryside and set fire in Paris (ALLAN, 1987) (Appendix 3). According to Baugh and Cable (2002), these were their first steps to get new lands:

Their activities began in plunder and ended in conquest. The Swedes established a kingdom in Russia; Norwegians colonized parts of the British Isles, the Faroes, and Iceland, and from there pushed on to Greenland and the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland; the Danes founded the dukedom of Normandy and finally conquered England (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002 p. 83).

Although they lived in one of the coldest regions of Europe, the Scandinavians overcame geographical isolation through the excellence in shipbuilding and navigation, which allowed them to reach new lands. The most significant legacy of the Danes who settled in England to the present day is, however, the influences they brought into the English language (FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014). More specifically, the considerable practicality of the language structure is perceived today through the lexicon containing words with simple morphology and easy pronunciation as well as other aspects, such as the object-verb transition to verb-object.

### **2.3 Brief History of the Conflicts between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxons**

The first violent contact between Anglo-Saxons and Vikings<sup>5</sup> happened in the morning during springtime in 793 A.D. A group of Northern people reached the Lindisfarne Island, located in North East of England, and attacked its rich monastery. Not only did they plunder its wealth, but they also killed many monks and took others to become slaves. Other plundering had happened since this event, not only in England, since the Viking Age had just begun and the Northern warriors would become the most dreadful force of all Old Europe (ALLAN, 1987).

In the period from 866 to 867 A.D., the Danish army captured York and took the power of Northumbria, a reign from the North of England. After the fall of Northumbria, in 869, king Edmund, from East Anglia had been killed. The king of Mercia, Burgred, fled into exile to Rome in 873. The last reign standing was Wessex. King Alfred of Wessex, could not defeat and banish the Danish, but secured peace – for a little time though – by signing an agreement with king Guthrum, of Denmark,

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<sup>5</sup> The ones who practiced plundering were considered Vikings. It should not be mistaken with Scandinavians, term which designates all the peoples from Scandinavia.

which became known as the Treaty of Wedmore (KU, 2009). This treaty delimited the boundaries between Wessex and Danelaw (Appendix 4).

According to Edmonds and Faarlund, “the situation for nearly 200 years was then that England consisted of two countries with a highly unstable border [...]” (2014 p. 35). Most of the Danish and Norwegian people settled in the Danelaw area, fact that can explain why this part of England has so many Scandinavian place names known until today.

The attempts to stop the Northern invaders did not cease until 1014 when king Aethelred went into exile and Cnut became the king of England, Denmark, and Norway. This conquest is considered the heyday of the Northern invasion (KU, 2009) because, in addition to the fact that these two countries were under the same king, the aim of taking new land, which took generations to be achieved, was eventually achieved. The end of the Viking Age is marked by the defeat in the Battle of Stamford Bridge and the death of King Harold Hardrada, of Norway, in 1066 (ROESDAHL, 1998 *apud* KU, 2009).

The Scandinavian domain ended up in the same way it began, in other words, in battle. When their king was killed, the Scandinavians were forced to surrender, and it was the end of an era. After several years under conflict, England was England's again and there were no more attempts from the northern warriors to get the power back.

### 3. THE GERMANIC FAMILY TREE

The Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians already had substantial cultural relations, because both descended from the same people, the Germanic tribes. Consequently, Old English (the language of the Anglo-Saxons) and Old Norse<sup>6</sup> (language spoken by the Vikings and other Scandinavian tribes) also shared lexical and grammatical connections that facilitated the communication between their speakers as mentioned below:

In addition, the language of the Vikings was a North Germanic language and possibly was understandable to the people who spoke the Anglian dialect of *Old English*—a West Germanic language. Most of the English in the Danelaw were Anglian speakers (DROUT, 2006, p. 77).

Emonds and Faarlund (2014) specified some morphosyntactic features of a Germanic language which justify and base the classification of Old English (such as Middle and Modern English) and Old Norse as Germanic languages:

- definite determiners, with initial non-labial obstruents;
- at most four distinct productive morphological cases on nouns;
- adjectival agreement with nouns in at most pre-nominal position;
- comparative and superlative inflections *-r* and *-st* on adjectives;
- a relatively differentiated system of reflexives (several forms);
- a highly productive system of noun-noun compounding with right-hand heads;
- the finite verb in second position in main clauses;
- a synthetic past tense inflection formed with a dental stop (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 19).

Therefore, the Germanic family tree is divided into subgroups, which are West Germanic, North Germanic, and East Germanic. While Old English is considered essentially a West Germanic language, Old Norse has North Germanic origin (Appendix 5). The West Germanic still has two branches: the High West Germanic, which evolved into Modern German, and Low West Germanic that generated many other languages, including the Modern Dutch. Old English, as it is believed, evolved

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<sup>6</sup> “Other Germanic speakers settled in the very north of Europe, in Denmark and Scandinavia. Their language was *Old Norse*, but this language also began to change and diversify, splitting into East Norse and West Norse. East Norse eventually evolved into Swedish and Danish, and West Norse became Norwegian and Icelandic. Old Icelandic is particularly important because so many of our most important medieval texts are preserved in this language” (DROUT, 2006, p. 60).



into Middle English and then, into Modern English. About the origin of Modern English, Emonds and Faarlund complement:

*Modern English* is unquestionably Germanic by virtue of its phonological history, its core vocabulary, and its morphosyntactic system. But nothing in what has been said implies that it is descended from the language of the Anglo-Saxons, and rightly so, since they were not the only Germanic-speaking immigrants from across the North Sea. Within the Germanic sub-family, the question of the genealogical descent of English remains open (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 22).

The authors ensure the origin of Modern English as a Germanic language. In contrast, they question the particular offspring of this language: Does Modern English really belong to the West Germanic group? They suggest that the participation of Old Norse in the evolutionary process of English was not only related to mere influences and borrowings. Hereby, this work hypothesizes: maybe, the role of Old Norse on English has been overlooked because their properties were so similar to those of Old English. As mentioned above, both languages belong to the Germanic family, but, it is important to stress, that they have a certain distance concerning their family subgroups, and that is why there is some confusion about their function in the English construction.

#### 4. LINGUISTIC INFLUENCES UNDER CONFLICT

The Viking invasion and the later rise to power in England had enabled many Scandinavian families to settle in Danelaw, where the Norse culture was more representative. Drout comments about the importance of these historical factors in England for the evolution of the English language:

Whole sections of England were under Viking rule even after King Alfred withstood the harshest Viking attacks—an area of the east and north of England was the Danelaw. During this time *Old Norse* strongly influenced *Old English*. Many, many words were borrowed, not only nouns and verbs, which were borrowed in great numbers, but also such fundamental building blocks as pronouns and such language basics as pronunciation (DROUT, 2006, p. 61).

The contact between Old Norse and Old English speakers caused, in a first moment, loans to occur because both cultures had different elements. Therefore, oral communication was very significant to linguistic exchanges and to contribute to the formation of the English language. According to Moneva:

These assumptions maybe can be applied to the linguistic situation between the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians in the sense that the oral language tends to reflect the linguistic changes because it is produced in a much more spontaneous way, and this causes the minimisation of the processing efforts. It may be said that in the oral form, the inferential axis of communication predominates the code axis. On the contrary, when it comes to writing, the processing efforts are usually increased, because the expression tends to be more accurate (MONEVA, 1997, p. 186).

Norse speakers needed to acquire vocabulary in typically Anglo-Saxon areas, especially because Britain had been a part of the Roman Empire, including words related to Christianity, “road-building, town layouts, channeling water, and building construction” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 40). Even words related to crops and food, because of the better climate of the land, had to be adopted. In addition, “Old England had a written culture, and presumably a wider use of documents and practices based on them (inheritance, property, schools) than did Scandinavia” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 40). The addition of this new vocabulary formed the Anglicized Norse.

The fusion of the languages only happened about 1300, much later than the Norman Conquest, and formed the Middle English (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014). However, there are controversies among linguists about which language Middle English has developed from:

a. *Middle English* developed from *Old English* (a commonly accepted view). *Old English* underwent many fundamental grammatical changes, incorporated much *Norse* vocabulary (over two centuries), and became *Middle English*.

b. *Middle English* developed from *Norse* [...]. *Norse* underwent essentially no grammatical changes other than those initiated on the Mainland, incorporated somewhat more *Old English* vocabulary (over four centuries), and became *Middle English* (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 44).

The traditional linguistics affirms that Middle English developed from the Old English, with some Old Norse influence. On the other hand, for the linguists Emonds and Faarlund (2014), Old English died out and Norse originated the Middle English which received many influences from Old English during its development stage on British islands (*Anglicized Norse*). Other authors, like Patricia Poussa (1982), defend the idea of Creolization, or, in other words, the mixture between Old English and Old Norse. Despite the divergence of the theories, it is undeniable the Scandinavian contribution to the English language and that their family linguistic relation was a great support for the interaction among diverse tribes who shared the same land.

## 5. EARLY BORROWINGS IN OLD ENGLISH

The language change occurs when there is an interaction among peoples who speak different languages leading to the process of borrowing (DROUT, 2006). Durkin (2009 *apud* FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014) explains that the lexical borrowing is dictated by need when a thing is unknown in a language but has a term for it in the language in contact, or prestige when a word corresponds to a greater social status or honor for the speakers.

On that account, the contact between Anglo-Saxons and Norse people had left a significant linguistic heritage. Moneva (1997) affirms both peoples needed to learn from each other:

[...] the amount and quality of Scandinavian loans appearing in English shows that a certain degree of bilingualism must have existed, and that the transference of words from Scandinavian into English may have been favoured by Scandinavians adopting English. On the other hand, being English the submitted or conquered people, they may have found themselves somehow compelled to learn the language. Another factor is commercial interchanges, which would have shown the convenience of learning the foreign language. Inter-marriage would also have favoured the contact between these two languages (MONEVA, 1997, p. 187).

Jespersen (1905) considers that the first proof of a borrowing word from Old Norse is present in a poem written after 993, when the battle of Maldon occurred. This evidence is the verb *call* (*kalla* in *Old Norse*). According to this regard, it can be affirmed that the Scandinavian influences in the English language began very early (FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014). In addition, Kaiser (2012) points out that legal and military aspects were primordial during this new historical period in England. Anglo-Saxon England was impacted and influenced by the Danish presence so strongly that “it began to adapt pieces of the Viking culture, including laws and military tactics” (KAISER, 2012, p. 5).

The first Scandinavian borrowed words in Old English, although it is a low number, reveals what the Vikings mainly impressed the Anglo-Saxons with. These are some examples related to naval activities and plundering:

[...] *barda* (beaked ship), *cnearr* (small warship), *scegb* (vessel), *lip* (fleet), *scegbmann* (pirate), *dreng* (warrior), *hā* (oarlock) [...], *bātswegen* (boatman, source of *Modern English* boatswain), *hofding* (chief, ringleader), *orrest*

(battle), *rān* (robbery, rapine), and *fylcian* (to collect or marshal a force) [...]. (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 89)

Furthermore, it can be not forgotten the trivial fact that the studies of language history suggest the contribution from Old Norse to many words related to violence, including, the verbs “to die,” “to ransack,” “to rive,” “to scare,” and “to thrust” and the nouns “slaughter” and “scab” (DROUT, 2006, p. 78). Therefore, it is notable that “grace and elegance are rare in the Scandinavian borrowings” (GEIPEL, 1971 *apud* FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 16).

These borrowings, in special, demonstrate not only the hostility of the Northern invaders with the Anglo-Saxon people but the cultural traces of a distinct people. Scandinavians were well known for their shipbuilding and fighting skills, hence the conquered people could not ignore these words used to describe those activities and ideas. With the conquest and establishment of Danelaw, several words related to law (which is a Scandinavian word) were added to the vocabulary, such as “[...] *māl* (action at law), *hold* (freeholder), *wapentake* (an administrative district), *hūsting* (assembly), and *riding* (originally *thriding*, one of the former divisions of Yorkshire) [...]” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 89). However, England went through a new change after the Norman Conquest, which already had its legal terminology and imposed it (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002). Time after time, the conquerors needed to impose their laws upon England, annulling the older ones. The fact that the word “law” survived through the Norman Conquest demonstrates how deeply the Scandinavian customs have entered into the Old English culture, especially in the area called Danelaw, and needed to be adopted by the Normans too.

## 6. LANGUAGE CHANGE IN *MIDDLE ENGLISH*

Many factors determine if a word has been borrowed from Norse, such as its form and meaning. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to analyze both versions of it back to Old English and Old Norse. If a term has no original in Old English it does not mean it did not exist, but maybe it has been lost. On the other hand, according to Baugh and Cable (2002), if a word has a satisfying original version in Old Norse, if it occurs mainly in writings from the Danelaw area, or if it survived in regional dialects until current times, it has got a great chance of being a borrowed word:

If further evidence were needed of the intimate relation that existed between the two languages, it would be found in the fact that the Scandinavian words that made their way into English were not confined to nouns and adjectives and verbs but extended to pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, and even a part of the verb to be. Such parts of speech are not often transferred from one language to another (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 92).

According to Emonds and Faarlund (2014), the languages of Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians had remained as much as divided until 1066. Before the Norman Conquest, the Old English dialects were spoken throughout the British territory, including Danelaw. In contrast, the Old Norse was the language mostly spoken by Scandinavian colonists in East Midlands and North of England:

In the early decades of their settlement, York, in the North, became a Scandinavian city, and preceding the Norman Conquest, Scandinavian culture and economic predominance expanded and strongly established itself in the East Midlands area. Like many other colonists, Norse speakers found little reason to change to the native tongue of those whose lands they were settling (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 37).

At that time, the Scandinavian culture and influence in the North and East caused an impact on Old English, but not so significantly. On the other hand, at the beginning of Norman Conquest, there were two languages spoken in Danelaw and Northern England: “a version of Norse and a version of Old English” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 39), and:

It is further probable that of these, Norse was predominant. Not only was Norse the language of the country’s rulers and new settlers, but also one contemporary observer, a writer of Icelandic sagas, wrote that in the 11th century “there was at that time the same tongue in England as in Norway

and Denmark” (cited in Freeborn 1998, 46–47) (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 39).

It is in the aforementioned context that the process of Anglicized Norse takes place. With the Norman Conquest in 1066, the different tribes realized that union and peaceful relations were necessary. Emonds and Faarlund (2014) observed that many families in Danelaw were formed by Norse-speaking men/women and Old English-speaking men/women, transmitting the new vocabulary to their children.

A piece of evidence that two words have been used at the time can be found in *Ormulum*<sup>7</sup> (c. 1200). The Old Norse word “awe” and the Old English “eye.” In the early Middle English the second form was common, but it changed in 1300 and the Scandinavian began to become more and more popular until replacing the Old English one. “The two forms must have been current in the everyday speech of the northeast for several centuries, until finally the pronunciation *awe* prevailed” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 91). The authors also say the same happened between the Old English word “ey” and the Norse “egg” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 91).

In this perspective, it is possible to analyze and observe the Norse influences on Modern English existing in many grammatical fields and to reflect on the process of evolution that occurred in Middle English. The Scandinavian influence over England was widespread in terms of linguistic structures encompassing not only vocabulary but also syntax and other grammatical changes, which is something unusual to happen between languages.

## 6.1 Morphological Borrowing

### 6.1.1 Nouns

According to Friðriksdóttir (2014), borrowings from Old Scandinavian language can be found in English in all parts of speech, but the nouns received the most

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<sup>7</sup> “[...] *Ormulum* [...] [is] a text written in the twelfth century in Lincolnshire by Orm, an author of Danish origins. The text is attributed to poetry because it is written in regular long lines which are divided into two half-lines by caesura. Although it has a fixed metrical, the text is written in unrhymed verse and seems to be a witness of spoken language rather than an artifact which has nothing to do with naturally produced language” (TRIPS, 2002, p. 3).

noticeable influences. In addition to the naval influences and some “negative” borrowings that have been mentioned previously, it is important to highlight fauna terms in this borrowing process from Old Norse to English:

There are numerous ON fauna terms in Mod.E, although their meaning might have shifted, e.g. *bitch*, *filly*, *lemming*, *narwhal*, *reindeer* and *elk*. *Bitch*, ON *bikkja* literally (lit.) ‘female dog’. *Bikkju-sonr*, can also be found in ON, same as *son of a bitch*. *Elk*, ON *elgr*; *filly*, ON *fylja* lit. ‘female horse’; *lemming*, ON *lomundr* lit. ‘small rodent’; *narwhal*, ON *náhvalr* lit. ‘corpse-whale’ and *reindeer*, ON *hreindýr* (HARPER, 2013 *apud* FRIÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 11).

The bird terms have a special meaning in the fauna context. Friðriksdóttir (2014) explains it could be because the birds had great importance in Norse Mythology: *Huginn* and *Muninn* were Odin’s ravens, and *Veðrfölnir* was the hawk that lived in Yggdrasil. Consequently, many bird words in Modern English have their origin in Old Norse. However, the author remembers that a few bird terms in Old Norse have a cognate in Old English. It can be realized with the next examples retrieved by Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 11) from Harper (2013) and Thorson (1936):

<b>Old Norse Borrowings</b>	
<b>Modern English</b>	<b>Old Norse</b>
Auk	Álka
Garefowl	Geirfugl
Loon	Lómr
Skua	Skúfr
Snipe	Snípa
Tern	<i>perna</i>
Eider	<i>Æpar</i> <sup>8</sup>

**Table 1 - Bird species in Modern English and Old Norse forms**

<sup>8</sup> Genitive of *æpr*.



Furthermore, the author points out that a few bird terms in Old Norse have a cognate in Old English. The next examples retrieved by Friðriksdóttir (2014, p. 11) from Harper (2013) and Thorson (1936) illustrate that:

<b>Old Norse and Old English Cognates</b>		
<b>Modern English</b>	<b>Old Norse</b>	<b>Old English</b>
Swallow	Svala	Swealwe
Hawk	Haukr	Hafoc
Thrust	Þröstr,	Þyrsce
Sparrow	Spörr	Spearwa
Starling	Stari	Stærlinc
Rook	Hrókr	Hroc
Stag	Steggr	Stagga

**Table 2 - Old Norse and Old English birds species cognates**

In addition, in Orkney, a Scottish island, there are many bird species whose names have a Scandinavian origin. It is important to mention that this island receives a great number of migrating birds. Some examples are “cattie-ogle” ON *ugla* (short-eared owl), “craa” ON *kráka* (crow), “hrafn” ON *hrafn* (raven), “erne” ON *örn* (white-tailed eagle), “gauk” ON *gaukr* (cuckoo), “smyril” ON *smyrill* (merlin) (FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p.12).

Other pieces of evidence of the Scandinavian presence in the English language refer to topographical terms. In Modern English, there are many cases such as “brink” ON *brekka* (slope, Hill), “floe” ON *flói* (bay) and “maelstrom” ON *malstraumr* (whirlpool) (FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p.13).

It is important to highlight that current Norse mythology was once their religion. That is why the Scandinavians had a special relationship with the natural elements and ended up lending both religious and natural items to the English language.

### 6.1.2 Pronouns

Along with the contact between Old Norse and Old English languages, many words occurred in parallel, including the third person plural pronouns (in Modern English form: they, their, and them) and in the end, the Scandinavian loan has survived in Middle English (KU, 2009). According to Hope Dawson:

Perhaps the most significant and lasting area of Norse influence on English is seen in the personal pronoun system, in the third person pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their*. These forms clearly demonstrate the influence of the Norse. In particular, the initial [ð] of the Modern English forms can be traced to Norse; compare *they* with the ON *þei-r* and OE *hīe*, *hēo*, and ME *theim* 'them' and *theire* 'their' with the ON *þei-m* and *þei-ra* and the Northumbrian OE *him* and *hira* or Mercian OE *heom* and *heora* (DAWSON, 2003, p. 45).

Pronouns are a rare case of borrowing in the sense that most languages adopted only vocabulary and not grammatical changes in their structures. This is an unusual case that could be happened because the Old English third person singular and plural were very similar and probably caused confusion, while the Old Norse plural was clearly distinct (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002). Emonds and Faarlund (2014) offer a chart to explain the comparison between pronouns in Old English (OE), Old Norse (ON) and Middle English (ME), which is reproduced in the figure below:

(108) **Potential ancestors of Middle English pronouns and demonstratives**

	OE nom/acc/dat	Norse nom/acc/dat	ME nom/acc
1st sing.	<i>ic me/mec me</i>	<i>ek mik mér</i>	<i>i(k) me</i>
2nd sing.	<i>þu þe/þec þe</i>	<i>þú þik þér</i>	<i>þu þe</i>
3rd sing. masc. 3rd sing. fem. 3rd sing. neuter	<i>he hine him heo hie hire hit, hit, him</i>	<i>hann hann honum hon hana henni þat þat því</i>	<i>he him she her (h)it</i>
1st plural	<i>we us us</i>	<i>vér oss oss</i>	<i>we us</i>
2nd plural	<i>ge eow eow</i>	<i>ér yðr yðr</i>	<i>ye yu</i>
3rd plural	<i>hie hie him</i>	<i>þeir þá þeim</i>	<i>þey þem</i>
Distal sing. neuter nom.	<i>þæt</i>	<i>þat</i>	<i>þat</i>
Distal plural neuter nom.	<i>þā</i>	<i>þau</i>	<i>þā</i>
Proximate sing. neuter nom.	<i>þis</i>	<i>þetta</i>	<i>þis</i>
Proximate plural neuter nom.	<i>þās</i>	<i>þessi</i>	<i>þise</i>

**Figure 2 – Comparison between pronouns in OE, ON and ME.**  
**SOURCE: Emonds and Faarlund (2014, p. 142)**

In the table, there are also “the forms of the demonstratives, distal “that” and proximal “this” in the neuter nominative/accusative” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 141). The authors concluded that these demonstrative pronouns derived both from Old English and Old Norse. In addition, some quantifiers came from both languages including “*all, some, many, few, much, little, one*, and the other basic numerals” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 142), probably because they were cognates. On the other hand, “*several, any, each, every, and no* come only from Old English, while “both” and “same” derive only from Norse” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 142).

### 6.1.3 Adjectives

According to common knowledge, the Scandinavian people, mainly the Vikings, were identified as brutes and by their vandalism acts. Consequently, many negative terms were incorporated in English by the Scandinavians. Friðriksdóttir

(2014, p. 16) mentions some examples of negative adjectives that are Old Norse borrowings: “angry” ON *angr* (grief, sorrow); “awkward” ON *öfugr* (backwards); “clumsy” ON *klumsa* (dumbfounded); “dirty” ON *drit* (excrement); “ill” ON *illr* (bad); “rotten” ON *rotinn* (foul); “ugly” ON *uggligr* (dreadful); “weak” ON *veikr* (ill); “wrong”, ON *rangr*.

Another characteristic connected with adjectives is shared between English and Modern Scandinavian<sup>9</sup> and refers to the use of morphemes to grade the longer adjectives. According to Emonds and Faarlund (2014), the only Germanic language, besides English, in which the free words meaning *more* and *most* are the principal auxiliaries for grading longer and rare adjectives<sup>10</sup> is the Modern Scandinavian, as it can be seen by the following examples retrieved from Emonds and Faarlund (2014, p. 122):

Modern English	Modern Norwegian	Modern German
She is <u>more</u> interesting than her husband.	Ho er <u>meir</u> interessant enn mannen sin.	Sie ist interessanter als ihr Mann.
This was our <u>most</u> difficult task.	Dette var den <u>mest</u> utfordrande oppgåva.	Das war unsere schwierigste Aufgabe.

**Table 3 - Modern English sentences using "more" and "most" compared with Modern Norwegian and Modern German sentences**

The chart above is comparing two examples with their respective translation in each language. It is demonstrating that Modern German uses the old syntactic form of gradation in adjectives.

<sup>9</sup> Refers to the languages which directly evolved from Old Norse: Icelandic, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish.

<sup>10</sup> “More” and “most” are used in comparative and superlative sentences.

### 6.1.4 Prepositions

The majority of prepositions from Middle English have cognates both in *Old English* and *Old Norse*. Therefore, it can be perceived “(...) how the Middle English grammatical lexicon was truly a combination of Norse and Old English sources” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 143). However, there are some words of this category that have their origin uniquely from North Germanic.

Baugh and Cable (2002, p. 92) mention that *to*, which was *til* in Old Norse, and *from*, which was *fro*, are both Scandinavian words that were incorporated in English. Comparing these two terms with their equivalent translations in Modern Norwegian, German and English, it can be admitted that the affirmation from Baugh and Cable is genuine:

Old Norse	Modern German	Modern Norwegian	Modern English
til	nach zu	till	to
fro	von aus	fra	from

**Table 4 - Prepositions in Old Norse compared with Modern Germanic languages**

There is, in fact, a great similarity between the aesthetic and phonetic of the two words in Modern English and Modern Norwegian, while there is nothing even approached in Modern German.

### 6.2 Syntax Change

The syntax, which studies the words and their relations inside of a statement, does not change by the influence of a language upon another unless there is

familiarity and intimacy between the peoples that keep their different idioms in contact. Relative pronouns and conjunctions have proven to be more Danishlike than Old English:

It is quite likely that the English spoken in the districts where there were large numbers of Danes acquired certain Danish habits of expression. A modern Dane like Jespersen notes that the omission of the relative pronoun in relative clauses (rare in *Old English*) and the retention or omission of the conjunction that are in conformity with Danish usage; that the rules for the use of shall and will in *Middle English* are much the same as in Scandinavian; and that some apparently illogical uses of these auxiliaries in Shakespeare (e.g., “besides it should appear” in the Merchant of Venice, III, ii, 289) do not seem strange to a Dane, who would employ the same verb. (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 94)

Baugh and Cable (2002), in their extensive study, mention many syntactic aspects present in Modern English which have suffered influences from the Danes. Therefore, it can be assumed that “Modern English clearly exhibits the North Germanic patterns, showing that English syntax is uniformly North Germanic” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 133).

To prove that Modern English was especially influenced by Old Norse, rather than Old English, Emonds and Faarlund compared in their work *English: the language of the Vikings* (2014) many aspects in English syntax that they believe were affected by Old Norse language. Subsequently, we will present some of the syntax factors discussed by the linguists.

### 6.2.1 From Object-Verb To Verb-Object

Modern German and Dutch are object-verb (OV) languages. However, Scandinavian and English are verb-object (VO) languages. The Old English writings confirm it had been once an OV pattern, just like other West Germanic languages (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014). These are examples of Norse phrases which order is: subject-verb-object [The cases shown below are: .acc: accusative (direct object), .dat: dative (indirect object), .nom: nominative (subject), .gen: genitive (possession)]. The first phrase is written in Norse, the second is its literal translation in English keeping the Norse structure, the last, its translation into English:

a. Hon skyldi bera l vkingum. (Hkr I.68.3)

She should carry ale.acc vikings.dat

“She was to bring ale to the Vikings.”

b. Hon hefir mint mik eira hluta. (Hkr I.102.17)

She has reminded me.acc those things.gen

“She has reminded me of those things.”

c. Srit mundi hafa grandat honum. (Band 74.6)

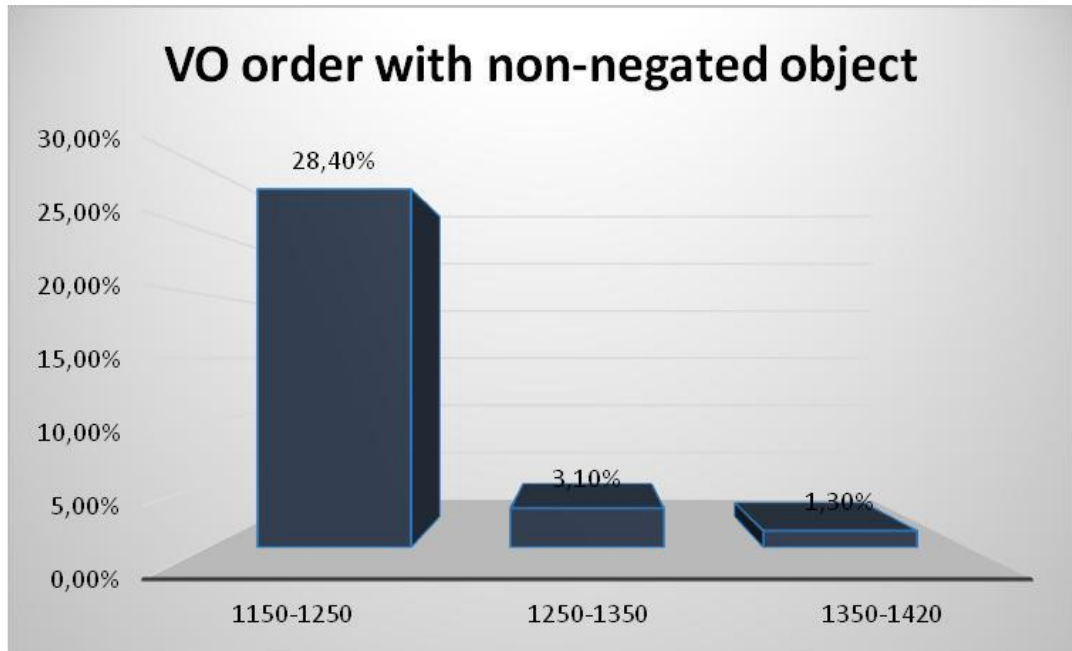
wound.nom-t he might have harmed him.dat

“The wound might have done him harm.”

In accordance with this basic order, a non-finite auxiliary normally precedes the main verb, as shown in <c> (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 62).

It is clear that the English language order became the same as the Norse (verb-object), in contrast to the West Germanic pattern (object-verb). The change from OV to VO was due to Norse order, and it can be dated to ca. 1200-1250, when it predominated in Middle English from the 12th century onwards, and there is no other evidence that other language could have done the same (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014).

Pintzuk and Taylor (2006 *apud* EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 63) demonstrate how verb-final structure with non-negated object has disappeared over time:



**Figure 3 - Chart demonstrating the VO order with non-negated object throughout time**

In addition, the situation of Middle English was different with negated objects. These are examples of Old Norwegian phrases from the late 15th century:

a. skal oc alrigh then ij nordgardhenom syther jnga tiltalo thil den haghan hafua (DN XII, 204)

shall also never that in Northfarm sits no demand to that pasture have

“the one who owns the Northfarm shall also never have any demand on that pasture”

b. fornemdh landhskyldjh skal inkthe t quitte (DN XI, 203)

above-mentioned land-rent shall nothing redeem

“the above-mentioned land rent shall redeem nothing”

c. the skula ingen hinder giøra Oslo æder Oslo borgare (DN I, 102)

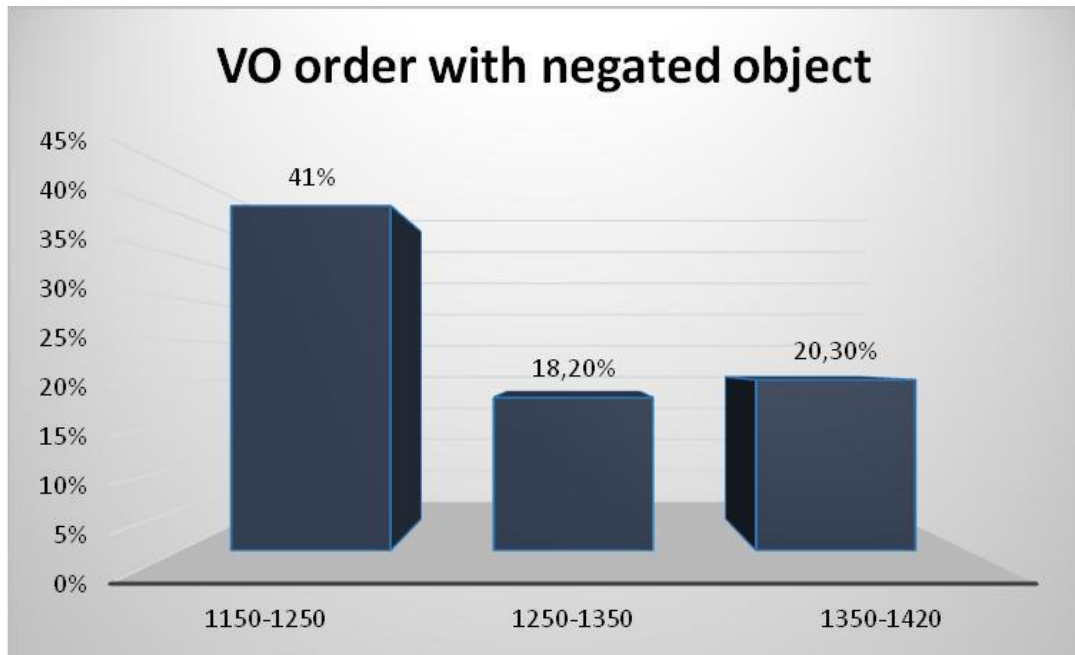
they shall no obstruction make Oslo or Oslo citizens

“they shall make no obstructions for Oslo or for the citizens of Oslo”

(MØRCK, 2011 *apud* EMONDS, FAARLUND 2014, p. 64).



The chart below demonstrates the frequency of verb-object order with negated object and its change along time, according to the information retrieved from Pintzuk and Taylor (2006 *apud* EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 64):



**Figure 4 - Chart demonstrating the VO order with negated object throughout time**

According to the examples of phrases above, the Scandinavian languages had an object-order with negated object, so did the Old English. The change into the verb-object order occurred slowly in both languages.

#### 6.2.2 From *Old English* Prefixes To *Middle English* Post-Verbal Particles

Old English language had a system of verbal prefixes, in which “[...] a part of the flexibility of the Old English vocabulary comes from the generous use made of prefixes [...] to form new words from old words or to modify or extend the root idea” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 60). They also were used in other West Germanic languages, and, in Modern German as well. Quirk and Wrenn (1957 *apud* EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014) lists thirty-four prefixes used in Old English (like *a-*, *be-*, *for-*, *to*,

*ge-*, and *ymb-*), but the frequency of use was declining in early Middle English period (about 1250) until vanishing completely. The West Germanic system of prefixes was replaced by a system of post-verbal particles in Middle English, *i.e.* *forbrecean* became “to break up” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 69). The only verb forms with a prefix present in Modern English is “withstand”, in Middle English “withdraw” and “withhold” were formed on the same base (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 60). These phrases (a-b) show how the perfective prefixes *ge-* and *be-* were employed in Old English. The last one (c) is a comparison of the prefixes and the Modern German:

- a. Ða wæs Romana rice gewunnen (The Goths and Boethius b17)  
 then was Romans' reign won  
 “Then the empire of the Romans was conquered”
- b. ond hine þær berad (Cynewulf and Cyneheard 10)  
 and him.acc there overtook  
 “and overtook him there”
- c. Ich habe den Brief beantwortet/geschrieben.  
 I have the letter answered/written  
 “I replied to/wrote the letter”  
 (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 67).

Traditional linguistics noticed the grammatical difference between Old and Middle English, especially the rapid loss of prefixes, “[o]ne cannot avoid the impression of the prefixes having been swept away almost overnight. The suddenness of the change is remarkable in view of the longish and stable OE period” (HILTUNEN, 1983, p. 92 *apud* EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 68).

In the Middle English period, prefixes were not used anymore, and a new feature has replaced it: the post-verbal particles. The phrases below from *Peterborough Chronicle*<sup>11</sup> are written in Middle English and followed by its form in Modern English:

<sup>11</sup> “The continuations of the *Peterborough Chronicle* are claimed to be the earliest surviving Middle English texts because they give the first directly evidence of the changes in the English language which had taken place by 1150” (TRIPS, 2002 p. 8).

a. *te eorl stæl ut [and] ferde efter Rodbert eorl of gloucestre* (Peterborough Chronicle for 1140);

the earl stole out and went after Robert, earl of Gloucester

b. *he reuede þe landes [and] læide micele geldes on* (Peterborough Chronicle for 1140);

he robbed the lands and laid great taxes on (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 69).

Several linguists affirm this change was due to Old Norse because it already “had a fairly robust incidence of phrasal verbs” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 69). Therefore, Middle English became more word-order based than Old English was. The following examples from Norse show how the aspectual particle *upp* (up) can be used: “*koma upp* (appear), *lúka upp* (open up), *brenna upp* (burn up/down), *hefja upp* (rise up, start, begin)” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 69):

In the same way, combinations of verbs and post-verbal particles (underlined> are found in 13th-century Danish:

a. *Thæt samæ ær logh of garth delæs vp so sum hws deles vp* (JL 44.12).

the same is law if fence demolish.pass so as house demolish.pass

“The law is the same if a fence is demolished as when a house is demolished.”

b. *Udæn off alt korn commær fyrræ yn* (JL 154.19).

except if all corn comes before in

“Unless all the corn comes in earlier” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 70-71).

The similarities between Middle English and Old Norse are obvious, and can still be seen in both Modern English and Norwegian phrasal verbs (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014):

a. *Ho kasta ut boka.*

she threw out the book

b. Ho kasta den ut.

she threw it out

c. Han drakk opp ølet.

he drank up the beer

d. Han drakk det opp.

he drank it up (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 72).

After analyzing all the data above it is evident that Middle English broke up with West Germanic languages system of verb prefixes, and started using post-verbal participles, just like the Scandinavians did. The results of such change reflect on Modern English phrasal verbs.

### 6.2.3 Subject-To-Subject Raising

Emonds and Faarlund observed another syntactic aspect of Modern English which is the Subject-to-subject Raising, “whereby the subject of a subordinate clause may occur on the surface as the subject of the matrix clause” (2014, p. 72). The examples below will help to understand this structure:

A) *It seems that Smith is a great painter.*

B) *Smith seems to be a great painter.*

Both phrases above have the same meaning and it can be observed that B) is the raising version of A).

In Modern German, it is possible to find a similar characteristic, but it only occurs with the German verb that corresponds to “seem”. Furthermore, it must be considered that Subject-to-subject Raising did not exist in Old English in a specific and uniform way. There are some rare findings, which are restricted to the verb

“seem”. Emonds and Faarlund quote Denison (1993) who affirms that there is only one finding in Old English, but that is a translation from Latin. Differently, in Old Norse such construction happens so naturally that it may even be unnoticed:

a.  
*ok þótti hann vera inn ágæzti maðr. (Finnb 51.5)*

and seemed he.**nom** be the noblest man.**nom**

“and he seemed to be the most noble man.”

b.

*þa er hon tæcr at vitia austrsættar mæð varmum oc biartum geislum (Kgs 7)*

then when it takes to visit east-horizon with warm and bright rays

“when it begins to visit the horizon in the East with warm and bright rays”

(EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 74).

In the examples<sup>12</sup> above, the first line is an Old Norse phrase, the second is a literal translation and the third corresponds to the Modern English meaning of the phrase. The underlined word in Old Norse is the subject of the statement that is raising<sup>13</sup> in the main clause. In addition, there are registries of Middle English, dated before the influences of Geoffrey Chaucer, which show the presence of Subject Raising with normality and consistency, as it can be seen in the next examples where the raising predicates are outlined:

a.  
*Hire bleo bigon to blakien.*  
her countenance began to grow-pale  
(Denison 1993, 234; *St Marg.* (1) 22.4, ca. 1200 or 1225)

b.  
*I sai it nocht for-qui þat yee ne ern lickli lel men to be*  
I say it not for-the-reason that you not are likely loyal men to be  
“I do not say it because you are not likely to be loyal men.”  
(Denison 1993, 229; *Cursor* 4877, ca. 1325; transl. JE and JTF)

(EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 75)

<sup>12</sup> Emonds and Faarlund (2014) retrieved the example a. from Old Icelandic sagas, which are original texts, not translations and the example b. from an original Old Norwegian text.

<sup>13</sup> “**Subject-raising**: noun. 1. (transformational grammar) a rule that moves the subject of a complement clause into the clause in which it is embedded, as in the derivation of He is likely to be late from It is likely that he will be late (Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition”. Available at: <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/subject-raising>> Accessed on: November, 15th, 2016

These Middle English statements suggest that “Middle English raising to subject, with language-particular variations in which predicates are subject to it, is thus fairly certain to be an uninterrupted continuation of Norse syntax” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 75).

Moreover, in Modern English the Subject Raising is allowed with many verbs, as “happen, continue, cease, prove, tend, be likely, be apt, be liable” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 73). Therefore, it is probable that this is one more influence from Old Norse on English syntax.

### 6.3 Phonetic Borrowings

Even though Old English and Old Norse had many similar or identical words, there are many sound shifts that are different in pronunciation. One of the Scandinavian borrowings is the hard /sk/ sound and it can still be recognized in Modern English:

In *Old English* this was early palatalized to sh (written sc), except possibly in the combination scr, [...]. Consequently, while native words like ship, shall, fish have sh in *Modern English*, words borrowed from the Scandinavians are generally still pronounced with sk: sky, skin, skill, scrape, scrub, bask, whisk. The OE scyrte has become shirt, while the corresponding ON form skyrta gives us skirt (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 87)

For that reason, if a word in English has a /sk/ sound in its structure it can be attributed to its Scandinavian origin. Scandinavians have also brought different pronunciations, such as the hard pronunciation of /k/ and /g/ *i.e.* “kid, dike [...], get, give, gild, and egg” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 87). The Germanic diphthong /ai/ has changed into /a/ in Old English, whereas in Old Norse it has become /ei/ or /e/. Consequently, Modern English words like “*aye, nay, hale* and *swaine* are borrowed words” from Old Norse (TRIPS, 2002, p. 12). In this way, it can be considered that Old Norse was characterized with strong sounds while Old English had a softer phonetic.

## 5.4 Semantic Change

It is already clear that Old English and Old Norse had a level of familiarity, and so, they had a relationship in their vocabulary and structure. There is a semantic explanation about their differences and how they influenced the evolutionary process of the English language. There were many synonyms between Old English and Old Norse, such as many identical words in form, but that have different meanings, in other words, homographs. Thereby, one of the linguistic heritage from Old Norse is related to the semantics:

For example, Mod.E words *bread*, [...] *dream*, *dwel*, *gift* [...] were OE terms and signified a fragment, [...] joy, to make a mistake, a dowry, [...] respectively. Their present meanings are those of ON (GEIPEL, 1971, p. 65 *apud* FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 9).

Therefore, in addition to new words and sounds, Scandinavians brought different meanings too, such as in “bloom,” the modern form of “flower”. In Old English, *blōma* meant “ingot of iron”, whereas the Norse word *blōm* meant “flower”. The [...] “Old English word has survived as a term in metallurgy, but it is the Old Norse word that has come down in ordinary use” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 88).

The word “gift”, because of its hard “g” pronunciation can easily be recognized as a borrowing, and its meaning can confirm it. Its Old English cognate meant “the price of a wife”, while the Old Norse word meant “present” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 88). In this way, the word “plow” had different meanings: in Old English, it meant a measure of land, whereas in Old Norse, agriculture implement; and this meaning prevailed in Modern English (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002).

There are cases in which none of the forms has prevailed over the other, but both were kept with “[...] a difference of meaning or use, as in the following pairs (the English word is given first): no—nay, whole—hale, rear—raise, from—fro, craft—skill, hide—skin, sick—ill” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 91-92). Thereby, it can be seen that there were divergences and similarities in form and meaning of the words that came from both Old English and Old Norse, and so, there was certain confusion in the interaction between their speakers, which caused changes in both Old languages

that also affected Modern English.

## 6.5 Morphosyntactic Influences

### 6.5.1 Inflections

Old Norse is characterized by their inflection system differently from Modern English. For example, in the sentence “Olav saw the old woman” (BAMES, 2008, p. 3 *apud* FRIÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 9), the place and order of words are crucial for the comprehension of the formulation. In Old Norse, the phrases “*Ólafr sá konu þá ina gömlu*” and “*Konu þá ina gömlu sá Ólafr*” (BAMES, 2009, p. 3 *apud* FRIÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 10) have the exact meaning, which corresponds to the English sentence mentioned in this paragraph. It can be seen that in Old Norse is not the order of words in an enunciation that implies in its signification, but the alteration in the form of the words.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the Scandinavian influence regarding the inflections on the English language did not happen in a significant way. However, there is some evidence. Drout (2006) states that the –s in the ending of third person singular in the present tense of verbs has a Scandinavian origin, as well as Baugh and Cable (2002), who also mention some North Germanic impacts on the inflection of words:

A certain number of inflectional elements peculiar to the Northumbrian dialect have been attributed to Scandinavian influence; (...) the participial ending -and (bindand), corresponding to end and -ind in the Midlands and South, and now replaced by -ing. The words scant, want, athwart preserve in the final t the neuter adjective ending of *Old Norse* (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 93).

The use of –s in the ending of third person singular replaced the –(e)th used in Old English. This change became popular in Middle English and has been kept until today. Indications of this use began in Middle English and can be found in Chaucer’s texts, as Friðriksdóttir (2014) observes:

In the Reeve’s Tale, Chaucer uses it as one of the markers of his northern



clerks: they say *ga-s*, *fall-es*, *wagg-es*, *far-es*, while the narrator and the non-northern characters say *goo-th*, *mak-eth*, etc (p.141). The earliest examples of the *-s* verb ending is in *The Book of the Duchess* (c. 1370) and *The House of Fame* (c. 1375) where it is used rhymes with noun plurals in *-s* and words like *elles* 'else' (Lass, 1992, p. 138) (FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 18).

However, it is important to recognize that in many words in which the form is so similar between Middle English and Old Norse, only the inflection is different in both idioms. Baugh and Cable (2002) also explain that the ending inflections were causing so much confusion among the varied tribes which lived in Danelaw, and that led to the decline of this feature.

### 6.5.2 Verb To Be

According to Friðriksdóttir (2014), many irregular verbs were modified by Old Norse influence in the transition from Old English to Middle English. The principal change occurred with the verb “to be” and one of the most impressive adoptions is the present plural “are”. The table below is comparing the present plural “are” in the Old different languages and then in two Modern languages:

Old English	Old Norse	Middle English	Modern German	Modern English
syndon	erum	earun	sind	are
beoð	eruð	aron		
	eru	earan		

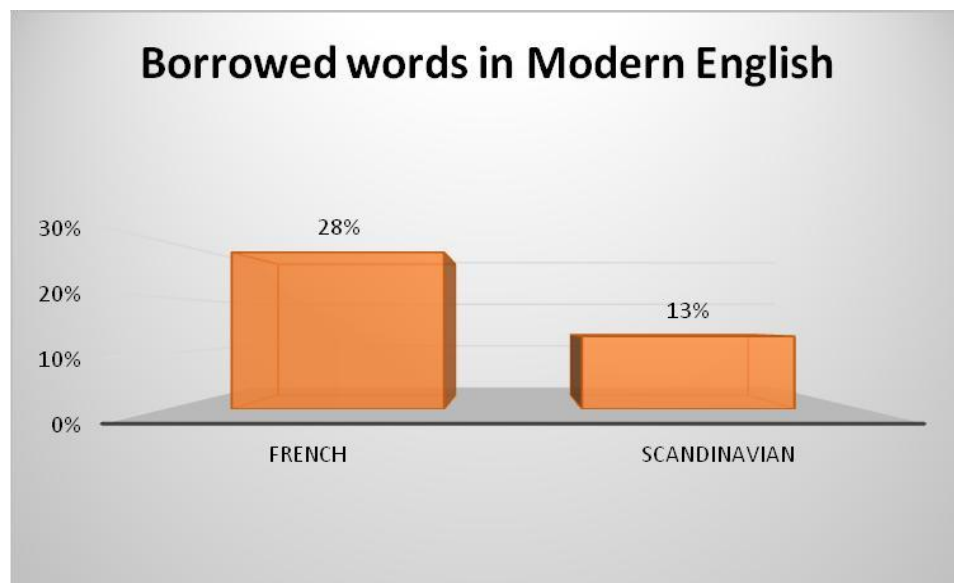
**Table 5 - Verb To Be (Third person of plural) compared between Old English and Norse, Middle English, and Modern German and English**

“When we remember that in the expression ‘they are’ both the pronoun and the verb are Scandinavian, we realize once more how intimately the language of the invaders has entered into English” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 92). This fact reaffirms

that the Scandinavian language has entered into essential elements of the English language and made clearer a widely used verb and its loans are still evident in Modern English.

## 7. CONTRASTS BETWEEN SCANDINAVIAN AND FRENCH/LATIN BORROWINGS

According to Pardo (2009), based on Finkenstaed and Wolff (1973), French has a wider influence on Modern English than Norse, as it is shown in the chart below:



**Figure 5 - The amount of borrowed words from French and from Scandinavian languages in Modern English**

It is true that Scandinavian people arrived much before the French and set their own land in the English territory. However, their borrowings are smaller than the French ones (PARDO, 2009). Pardo explains the difference in the diffusion of the Old Norse and French languages:

[...] Scandinavian languages and French infiltrated English at different social stratum: Scandinavian more consistently gained access to ordinary people via settlers (given that Canute's rule of England was short lived), whereas French became a language associated with the highest tiers of society (PARDO, 2009, p. 237).

The Scandinavian settlements were not only home for warriors, but for farmers' families as well. Therefore, the common people from both sides had been in touch, borrowing ordinary words, so the linguistic exchanges occurred in "[...] the

give-and-take of everyday life” (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 90). On the other hand, the Norman Conquest reached most “[...] royalty, courtiers and the upper class, who had the authority to adopt such French lexical items in the English setting” (PARDO, 2009, p. 237). The French rulers imposed their language on England, especially in aristocratic and legal fields. Nevertheless, it does not mean all the Scandinavian law items had been replaced. The word “lawe” (law, in Modern English form) itself has a Scandinavian origin. The Danish became so powerful that some of their words needed to be adopted all over the country (PARDO, 2009).

In addition, neither Scandinavia nor Danelaw had a wide written tradition (just as Wessex did), so their words were spread orally, generation after generation. “Even today, the proportion of Norse words is much higher in dialect speech than in the standard written language” (BURNLEY, 1992, p. 146 *apud* PARDO, 2009, p. 238). On the other hand, French made its way into the English language through texts, especially the political and religious ones.

Both languages indeed had a great impact on the English language but in very different ways. The Scandinavian borrowings entered the English language after the Danish conquest, through popular use, spread orally and reached the plebs, whereas French after the Norman Conquest, through the erudite via, in written form, from the upper class down. To illustrate these distinctions, Emonds and Faarlund grouped some examples of “daily life”:

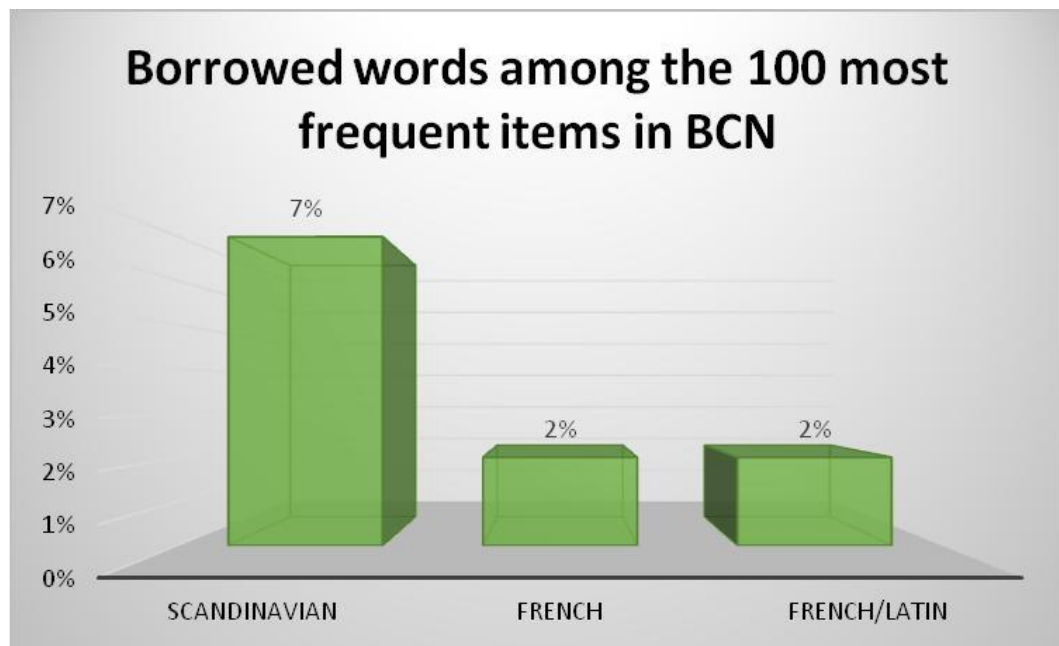
A) bait, band, birth, bloom (not meaning flower as in German), brink, call, cow, crook (as in crooked), die, dike, dregs, egg, flat, flit, freckle, girth, hale (in good health), keel, kindle, link, low, nag, odd, race, ransack, root, sack, scant, scare, score, scrape, screech, sister, skirt, sky, snare, tattered, thrift, and whisk;

B) add, approve, argue, arrange, ball, boil, bottle, button, chair (with a back), cider, cup, domain, equal, flower, fork, fry, garden, grand, ink, juice, lamp, letter, lettuce, marriage, master, mason, napkin, offer, orange, park, pea, peach, pear, plate, porch, promise, question, roast, scarf, servant, table, vase, and vest (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 50-51).

In A) the words have Scandinavian origin while in B) there are loans from French. Emonds and Faarlund argue that probably the speakers of Middle English started to use these Scandinavian words not because they are culturally new terms, but because of the linguistic legacy passed from Scandinavian parents to their children. In contrast, the French words are from a cultural and noble environment,

since the French people were mostly “[...] well fed, well housed, well clothed, and by no means poor” (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 51).

Although the total number of Scandinavian borrowings is lower than French, the Scandinavian are more representative in terms of frequency of use. Durkin (2014) listed the borrowings that can be found among the 100 most frequent items of the British National Corpus (BCN)<sup>14</sup>:



**Figure 6 - Borrowed words among the 100 most frequent loans from Scandinavian, French and Latin in BCN**

Among the 100 most frequent items in BCN there are seven Scandinavian borrowings: *they*, *their*, *to get*, *to take*, *to give*, *like*, and *to want*. Two French: *people* and *very*. And two more that can be Latin or French: *just* and *to use* (DURKIN, 2014, p. 40).

As the data in the discussion above shows, the Scandinavian borrowings are outnumbered by the French ones. However, the Scandinavian borrowings are among the most used terms, exceeding both Latin and French because of their “simplicity”, and their general and wide use in everyday speech. In sum, “word borrowing from

<sup>14</sup> The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent British English from the later part of the 20th century (ASTON, BURNARD, 2009).

Scandinavian languages is not limited, as was Latin, to a few semantic fields” (DROUT, 2006, p. 77).

## 8. OTHER INFLUENCES

### 8.1 Personal Names

Many English personal names used today have their origin from Old Norse, influenced by the Scandinavian lexicon and/or culture. “For example, *Ronald*, ON *Rögnvaldr*, *Osmond*, ON *Ásmundr* and *Carl*, ON *Karl*” (GEIPEL, 1971, p. 197-210 *apud* FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 26). Moreover, there are several personal names that are popularizing in English speaking countries, certifying that the North Germanic culture and lexicon is enduring until today:

For example, *Halle*, a male and female name (alternate spellings *Halley*, *Haliegh*, *Hallie* and *Hallee*) from ON *Hallr* ‘rock’, *Finn*, a male name from ON *Finnr* ‘man from Finland’, *Espen*, a male name from ON *Ásbjörn*, *ás* meaning *god* and *björn* *bear*, *Corey*, a female and male name (alternate spellings *Cori*, *Koree*, *Korey*, *Corrie* and *Corie*) from ON *Kóri/Kári* ‘has curly hair’ (FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 26).

The names mentioned above are the consequence of a lexical description or references about someone. In contrast, there are some names, which were more influenced by North Germanic culture and history, as in *Erika/Erik* and *Dustin*. The Old Norse masculine name “*Eirikir*”, means “forever ruler,” and it was much popular in the Viking Age, mainly because several kings carried this name, and it gave origin to both names *Erik* or *Erika*. Also, *Dustin* came from the Old Norse name “*Þórsteinn*” which means “Thor’s stone”, proving the popularity of Norse mythology in England during the Middle English (FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014).

The personal names have been widely spread; however, the most significant influences are the surnames. Although the patronymic system<sup>15</sup> is not popular as it was once, such surnames are still there. In Middle Ages records several patronymic Norse names were found, which slowly replaced the Old English ones. “Names ending in *-son*, like *Stevenson* or *Johnson*, conform to a characteristic Scandinavian custom, the equivalent of Old English patronymic being *-ing*, as in *Browning*”

<sup>15</sup> According to Ruth Ellen Maness, “The patronymic naming system was used in all of Scandinavia. That means a Scandinavian’s surname (family name) was formed by taking the first name of the natural father, and adding “- sen/son/sson” or “-datter/dotter/dottir” to it. Lars Olasen was literally “Lars, the son of Ola.” Birthe Johansdatter was literally, “Birthe, the daughter of Johan.” That means there could be many people living in the same record keeping jurisdiction at the same time, with the same surname, who are totally unrelated.” Available at: <https://familyhistoryexpos.com/wordpress/2013/07/09/scandinavian-naming-patterns-and-lifestyles/>. Accessed on: November, 15th, 2016.

(BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 89). Such fact confirms the Scandinavian predominance in the mixture of these two peoples (EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014).

Those peoples shared not only the land, lexicon, and cultural traces, but also personal relations, such as intermarriages, which allowed both Norse and Anglo-Saxon descendants to carry a patronymic name and it has been kept generation after generation until nowadays.

## **8.2 Place Names**

Several geographical (natural and topographical) terms were incorporated into English, and most of them became elements to produce British place names. “When the Vikings settled in England they used their own language to give names to settlements and to topographical features” (TOWNEND, 2002 *apud* FRÍÐRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 26).

The following map shows some current place names in England:





<http://www.itraveluk.co.uk/maps/england.html>

Figure 7 - England current map<sup>16</sup>

It is worth mentioning the origin of the place name “York”. It is known that York was the main place of the Scandinavian establishment during the Viking Age. Before the arrival of the Vikings, York was called *Eoforwic* by the Anglo-Saxons. According to historical references presented in the literary work *The Last Kingdom (Saxon Stories #1)* by Bernard Cornwell (2005), the Scandinavians had difficulty pronouncing the name *Eoforwic*, and so, they called the place *Jórvík*.

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <<http://itraveluk.co.uk/maps/england.html>> Accessed on: November, 15th, 2016

Furthermore, looking at the current map of England (Figure 7), one can notice many place names of Scandinavian origin. The evidences that confirms their origin are the end in *-by* (which means farm, town), *thorp* (village), *thwaite* (isolated area), *toft* (a piece of ground), and other particular characteristics (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002). Also, Geipel (1971, p. 133-135 *apud* FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014, p. 13) mentions “Garth”, ON *garðr* ‘garden’, as in Applegarth, and “Berg”, ON *berg*, as in Wiberg corresponding to Viborg in Denmark. The table below shows some other examples retrieved from Baugh and Cable (2002) and Geipel (1971 *apud* FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR, 2014):

<b>-by</b>	<b>-thorp</b>	<b>-thwaite</b>	<b>-toft</b>	<b>-garth</b>	<b>-berg</b>
Grimsby	Althorp	Applethwaite	Brimtoft	Applegarth	Wiberg
Whitby	Bishopsthorpe	Braithwaite	Eastoft		
Derby	Gawthorpe	Cowperthwaite	Langtoft		
Rugby	Linthorpe	Langthwaite	Lowestoft		
Thoresby		Satterwaite	Nortoft		

**Table 6 - Scandinavian place names in England**

It is important to remark that the place names are not restricted to the ones shown above, there are more than 600 places ending in *-by*, 300 ending in *-thorp* and *-thwaite*, and about 100 in *-toft* (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002, p. 88-89). In total, there are about 1400 Scandinavian place names throughout England. The Norse settlers used to live in Danelaw, especially in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (BAUGH, CABLE, 2002). These data reveal where the Danish influence was stronger and that the Scandinavian people could settle with their families and found villages and towns.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was mainly to propose new questions and reflections about the history of the English language in order to identify and value the influence that the Scandinavian people had and still have on the English language, as well as on the speakers of this language, who are scattered all over the world.

The Viking Age left more than a trail of blood in the history of Europe, for they were not just savages, but an ancient people who mastered the art of war and shipbuilding and navigation, which allowed them to travel to distant lands to trade, plunder, colonize and even conquer. It is remarkable that in 1014, Cnut, a Danish man, became king of England, Denmark, and Norway. It is considered the heyday of the Scandinavian invasions.

The Scandinavian legacy is evident in culture and language, including place names, personal names and surnames. It is clear that the connection and interaction between people are the most significant ways to constant language changes. The history of England shows that Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons had had contact for a long time. In this way, certainly, many aspects of the Modern English vocabulary, morphology, semantics, phonology, and syntax are due to the Old Norse influences. Such borrowings have been not only imposed politically by the new rulers. In the daily life, these two peoples who shared the same land, namely, through language use, and that is why they have borrowed very important items which are present in the everyday speech.

The fact that the influences from Old Norse and Scandinavian culture on the English language have been underestimated is clearly visible today. The Scandinavian people not only incorporated aspects of their language, but they were also very important and meaningful during the transformation process of the English language. The linguistic researches summarized in this work have shown that the contact between Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons has left an important linguistic heritage, which leads to the fact that the Old Norse had a great intervention in the evolution from Old to Middle English.

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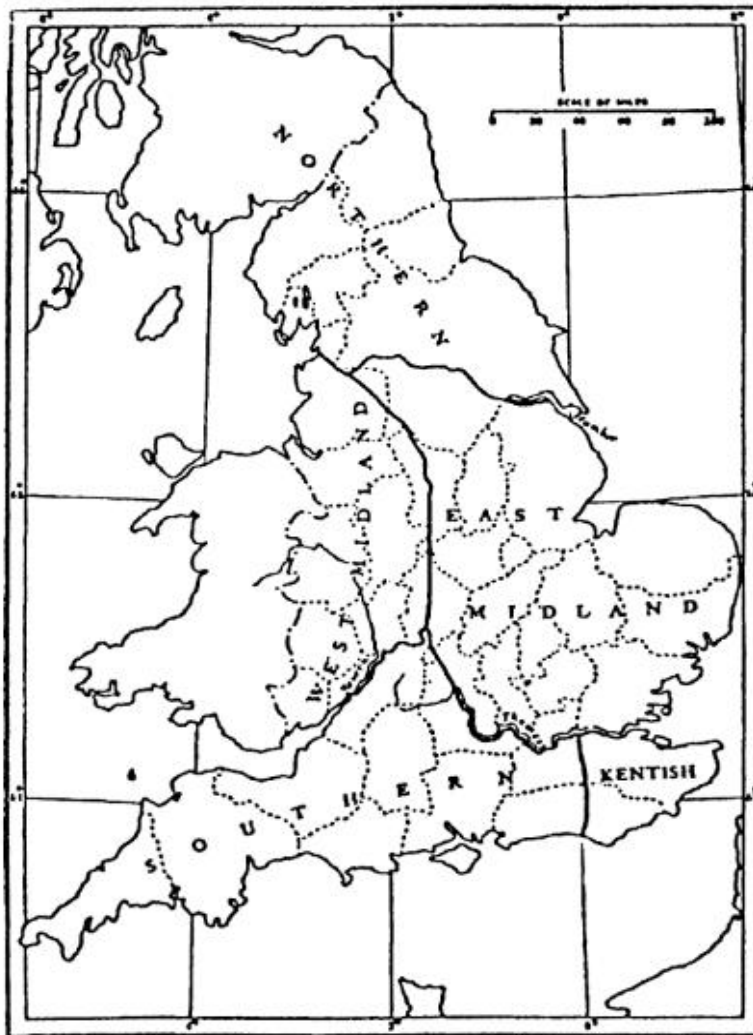
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 - Old England main dialects.



(TRIPS, 2002, p. 15)

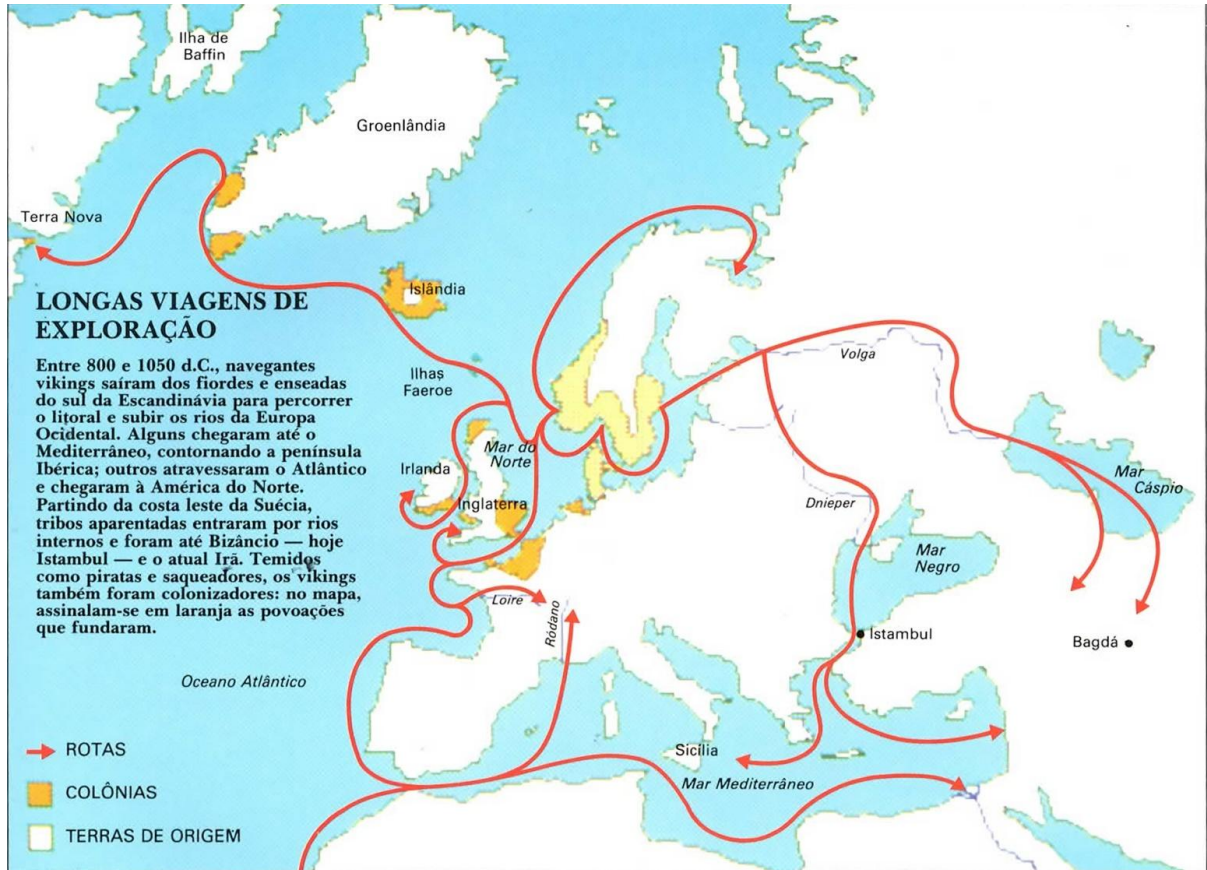


## Appendix 2 – Oseberg ship



The Viking Ship Museum, Oslo, Norway.  
Isabelle Maria Soares' personal collection.

## Appendix 3 – Routes taken by the Vikings



(ALLAN, 1987, p.53)

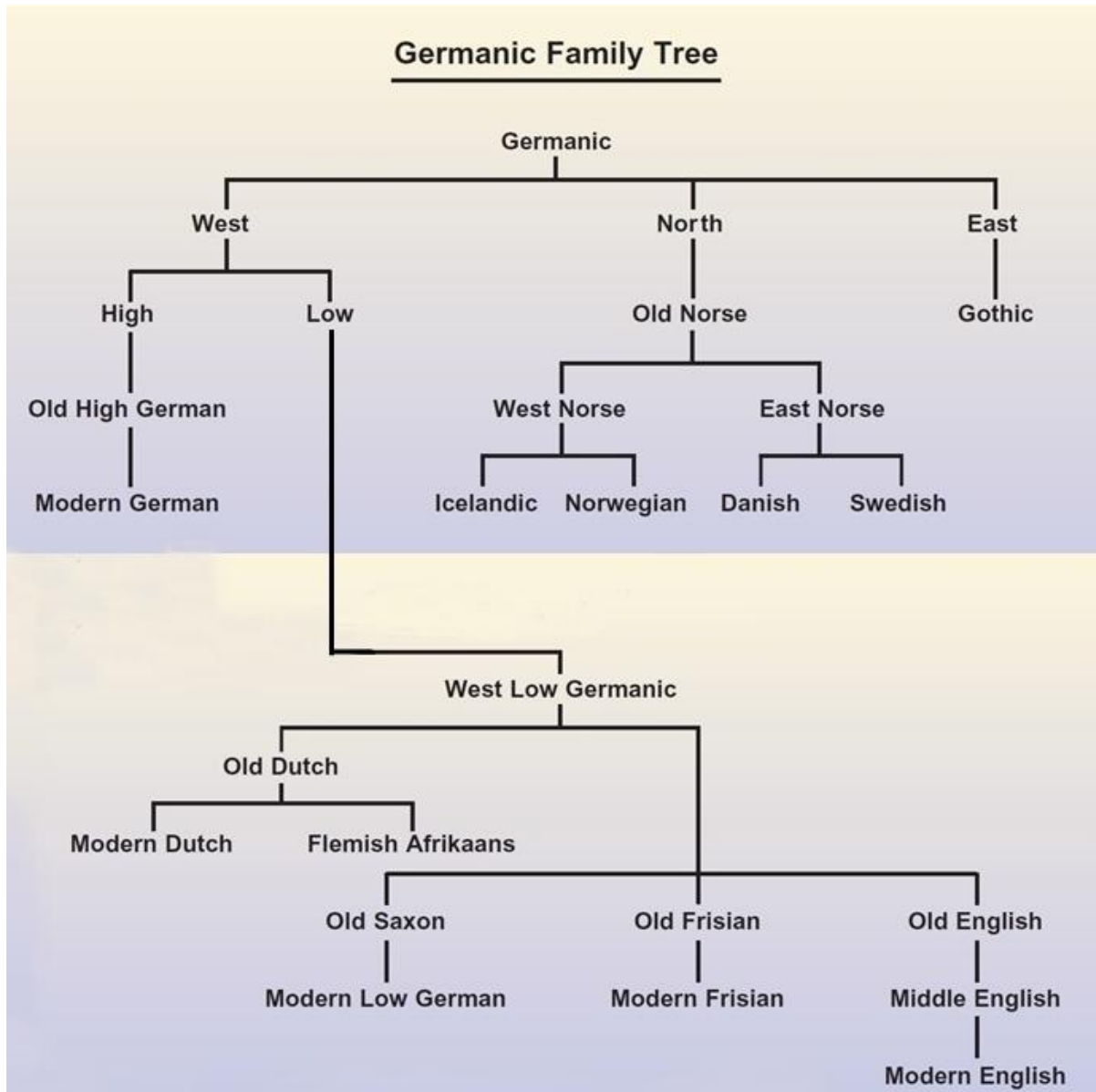


## Appendix 4 – Danelaw map



(EMONDS, FAARLUND, 2014, p. 33)

## Appendix 5 – Germanic family tree



(DROUT, 2006, p. 60-61)