



Multilingual practices in medieval Britain

Reflections on the scholarship of the last twenty years

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This chapter considers research published over the last two decades on the linguistics of medieval multilingualism as evidenced in all sorts of text types, including work published by our honorand and her collaborators. As historical multilingualism has now become such a burgeoning field, Pahta's contribution to the use of corpus-building and searching for evidence of historical multilingualism can be seen as pioneering. The research considered in this chapter reveals the ubiquity of multilingual practices, the discourse-organizing functions of code-switching, the functional properties of switches, the relevance of abbreviations and their frequency, and the major contribution of Romance borrowings to nuancing the English lexicon. Code-switching, in particular, played an important role in vernacularisation processes, accompanying the shift from French to English in the fifteenth century, and as an intermediate stage in the shift from Latin to English in civic records. Further, work has been carried out on multilingual practices involving Middle Dutch, Old Norse,

and Celtic languages. The field of historical multilingualism in Britain has advanced considerably in recent years, not least as a result of Pahta’s inspirational work on the topic.

Keywords: code-switching, historical multilingualism, multilingual practices, vernacularisation

1. Introduction

In 2001 Schendl provided a resumé of scholarship on code-switching in medieval British texts, observing that “the study of code-switching in the history of English [is] a still largely neglected field of historical linguistics” (Schendl 2001: 305, 308–310). Although medieval writing in Britain was usually multilingual, it was the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century norm to deprecate code-switching as due to a faulty grasp of Medieval Latin or Anglo-Norman (Wright 1997). Our chapter aims to continue Schendl’s initiative from 2001 to the present, as today historical code-switching in the history of English, and historical multilingualism more widely, can no longer be said to be neglected – due not least to Päivi Pahta’s work on medieval multilingual practices.

Pahta’s initial training was in Middle English manuscript studies, resulting in her PhD thesis, an edition of the Middle English text *De spermate*, ff 28r–36v, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.14.52 (Pahta 1998). *De spermate* is a translation from Medieval Latin, and it had previously been suggested that the translator was not a native speaker of English. Pahta proposed the alternative view that *De spermate*’s awkward English could have been the work of “an extremely literal translator” using “translation practices which are heavily conditioned by the Latin source copy” (1998: 122), a suggestion which Barron and Wright (2021: 36), analysing another work copied by the same scribe, were later to agree with.¹ Pahta was to develop her investigation into the

1 “We interpret the Hammond scribe’s wording not as a bad translation of Anglo-Norman but as a legal, administrative one. The originator of the text invented an English-language register of governance whereby the original Anglo-Norman wording can be reverse-engineered. It was a matter of proceeding, as lawyers do, conservatively and with caution: the first step in establishing English as a medium for written legal record was to translate the morphology (the smallest units of

relationship between Latin and English in *De spermate* into a career-long body of work on the integration of languages in medieval, early modern and late modern texts by analysing multilingual practices in the *Corpus of Middle English Medical Texts* (Pahta 2004), the *Helsinki Corpus* (Pahta & Nurmi 2006), and other text types (Pahta 2011; 2012; Pahta & Nurmi 2009; 2011; Nurmi & Pahta 2010; 2013). In 2012, Pahta won funding from the Research Council of Finland for her project *Multilingual Practices in the History of Written English* (resulting in Pahta, Skaffari, & Wright 2017) and she authored the entry for “Code-switching in English of the Middle Ages” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of English* (Pahta 2012). All this, plus participation from the outset in corpus-building and corpus-analysis, enabled her, and subsequently other scholars also, to see what other builders of English corpora had largely overlooked: namely that all corpora of English from all periods, and of any text type or purpose contain multilingual discourse (Nurmi, Rütten, & Pahta 2018).

Pahta’s work has had a significant impact on historical linguistic scholarship in the last twenty years, as this chapter illustrates. Our aim is not to provide a complete list of publications on multilingual practices in medieval Britain but to give scholars interested in this field an overview of more recent relevant publications. On a terminological note, studies of historical multilingualism have traditionally employed the term ‘code-switching’ to refer to various types of multiple-language use in a single communication act, such as a text (see Kopaczyk 2013; Pahta 2004; Schendl 2000; Schendl & Wright 2011). More recently, Pahta *et al.* (2017: 11–12) have suggested that ‘multilingual practices’ is a more appropriate umbrella term for a wide palette of linguistic phenomena where several languages are involved. This includes, for example, ‘code selection’, understood as the initial choice of a certain language for a certain text (Schipor 2018: 43), whereby individual monolingual texts may form a multilingual text collection. However, in many text types, for instance late medieval business accounts and inventories, the selected code itself is created by mixing linguistic input from Latin, English and Anglo-Norman (Wright 2000; 2013). While the language mixing in such texts is systematic, with identifiable patterns, it is not always possible to identify switching points between the different languages involved (see Wright 2000; 2011). While our

grammar, the word-endings, prepositions, negators) but to keep the rest of the text – the wordstock – as faithful as possible to the Anglo-Norman exemplar.” (Barron & Wright 2021: 36)

chapter is divided into sections that concentrate on different phenomena of multilingual practices, based on terms used in the publications discussed, it is important to note that these practices are interconnected and not strictly separable. We start with a focus on historical code-switching (Section 2) before discussing research on vernacularisation (Section 3). Section 4 features research on languages beyond what Putter (2016: 126) calls “the Big Three (English, French [or Anglo-Norman], and Latin)”. Section 5 offers concluding remarks.

2. Research on historical code-switching

In the medieval period, writing was characterised by multilingualism (Schendl 2000: 77). Latin, French, and English were written discretely in separate sections (be it paragraphs, sentences, or clauses) in the same text, but also fused together (that is, switching from word to word). Consequently, code-switching was a common phenomenon in a variety of text types.

Research on historical code-switching initially mirrored code-switching theory based on synchronic speech and focussed on switchpoints. During this initial stage, linguistic characteristics and pragmatic functions of code-switching were typically analysed in association with text type. As the field expanded, scholars continued to investigate multilingual phenomena by including syntactic and visual aspects of code-switching, and the complex relationship between code-switching and borrowing.

The discourse functions of code-switching in scientific and medical texts were analysed by Pahta (2004) by surveying texts dated from c. 1375 to 1500, ranging from recipes to specialised treatises. In her investigation, Pahta focussed mainly on “where and why vernacular writers switched to Latin” (2004: 74). Her findings indicated that Latin was used for three main categories of switches: 1) specialised medical terminology representing professional discourse in texts from all medical traditions, 2) religious discourse, such as prayers, quotations, blessings, and charms, especially in remedy books, and 3) textual-organising devices, such as titles, headings, and efficacy phrases in the form of metatextual comments at the end of recipes. Further, Pahta placed her findings in a larger context of multilingual practices in the scientific and medical genre. First, she noted that many switches had multiple functions at the same time, so that, for example, the Latin name of a prayer would also

have a text-organising function, namely signalling the end of a text. Second, she explained that, although the discourse community of vernacular medicine seemed to be multilingual, the functions of the three languages involved were not mutually exclusive. The vernaculars (English or French) were also used in some of the contexts where Latin had been attested, and certain texts, such as vernacular translations of learned special treatises, contained no switches to Latin. Notably, Pahta's work allowed her to infer that the medical discourse community operating in the vernacular possessed multilingual literacy skills, which enabled them to interact with specialised texts in a variety of complex ways (2004: 97).

Analyses of the functions and types of code-switching in Middle English letters, poetry, and macaronic sermons were carried out by Schendl (2001; 2002; 2012; 2013a). Schendl's work (2004; 2017) also confirmed the presence of multilingual practices in the Old English period, when at least two text types (charters and mixed poems) contained switching between Old English and Latin. Unsurprisingly, multilingual practices in the Middle English period were more diversified in terms of languages, functions, and text types (Schendl 2004). One of the main conclusions of his work is that code-switching plays an important role both at local and global textual levels, where the local dimension may be represented by textual and pragmatic functions of individual switches, such as indicating changes of footing, while the global level may indicate the cumulative significance of multiple switches in a certain text type, social context, or community of practice. In addition, Schendl (2013b) explored the relevance of code-switching in the development of the English lexicon by analysing a range of late medieval mixed-language text samples (a poem, a sermon, a letter, wills, and accounts). He concludes that these texts "provide important insights into the way in which code-switching must have acted as a mechanism of contact-induced lexical change in the history of English" (Schendl 2013b: 56).

The frequency and functions of code-switching in women's English correspondence from 1400–1800 were investigated by Nurmi and Pahta (2012). Their study combined quantitative and qualitative methods and was based on data from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*. Nurmi and Pahta's findings indicate that 49 out of 292 female writers used mainly French, Latin, and Italian alongside English, for various textual functions. Unsurprisingly, switching to French increased progressively throughout the period, and

French was also used in a more creative manner than Latin and Italian (Nurmi & Pahta 2012: 52). By contrast, switching to Latin was less consistent chronologically, and switching to Italian was limited to the eighteenth century. Multilingual practices in women's letters were motivated by various factors: the topic of correspondence, women's identities and social status, their access to foreign language education, and the linguistic skills and preferences of their addressees (Nurmi & Pahta 2012). This study showed that women used their multilingual repertoires in complex ways, to achieve a wide range of communication goals and pragmatic functions, in accordance with genre conventions. Schendl and Wright (2011) also analysed functions of switchpoints and explained that the use of code-mixing served the multilingual identity of both authors and users of multilingual texts (Schendl & Wright 2011: 20). Schendl and Wright (2011) took the part-of-speech of words functioning as switchpoints into account. More specifically, they explained that code-mixing found in inventories and accounts was rule-governed, meaning that closed-class words were typically provided in the matrix language, namely Latin, while open-class words were generally in the vernacular, English or French. The use of English gradually increased in certain positions, such as noun and verb-root positions, and later as modifiers in noun phrases (Schendl & Wright 2011: 34). Further, Wright showed how prepositions in the matrix language, Latin, could be followed by gerunds in either Latin or the vernacular (Wright 2011: 205). Similarly, the positions of adjectives in noun phrases followed both Germanic and Romance rules in the code-mixing system (Wright 2011: 204). In other words, business writing was characterised by mixing three linguistic systems rather than by switching between them (Wright 2011: 204).

Ingham (2009; 2011; 2013; 2018) analysed syntactic properties, and ter Horst and Stam (2017), working with Medieval Latin and Irish, found visual diamorphs (correlating with the concept of homophonous diamorphs in speech (Stam 2017; Wright 2011)) to be of significance at switchpoints. Honkaponja and Liira (2020: 310) note that “[a]bbreviations could function as visual diamorphs, that is, language independent elements which can potentially be expanded in several languages”. Their quantitative analysis traced the disappearance of the abbreviation and suspension system in the *Polychronicon* from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. It revealed that the reduction of this system was gradual but not linear and that it happened earlier in English than in Latin copies of the text, although parts of the system

(such as the ampersand) continued to be used. Honkapohja and Liira thus showed how frequencies of abbreviation and suspension symbols differed according to whether a text was realised in Medieval Latin or in English translation; that is, the visual look of how medieval scripts were presented shifted along with switches in language.

Taking the visual look and visual cues (e.g. line breaks or changes in scribal hands) into account has been found to be important when investigating multilingual practices “as a wholesale multimodal communicative event” (Kopaczyk 2017: 291). Kopaczyk’s (2017) analytical framework, which considers the interaction between visual cues and code-switching on different linguistic levels on the page, offers a systematic way to conceptualise historical code-switching.² As Kopaczyk (2017: 292–293) says, “[i]f a scribe chooses to underline, capitalize, abbreviate or otherwise indicate the difference in codes within a single lexical unit, we encounter a different communicative situation than when the same information is not conveyed by any visual cues”.

The question of contact-induced lexical change in the form of borrowings and its relation to code-switching has been discussed in several publications. Durkin (2020: 348) reported a “huge spike” of Romance vocabulary entering English from the late fourteenth century. He analysed the thousand most frequent words in the *British National Corpus*, finding that just under 50% are borrowings from French or Latin or both, most being first attested in the Middle English period. Anglo-Norman was not a mother-tongue by that point, so these high-frequency words could not have entered through common parlance, but code-switching was just becoming the dominant professional business mode. In a series of papers Trotter (2003; 2006; 2011a; 2011b) made the point that ‘code-switching’ was not the apposite term for these international lexemes, namely words for commodities which entered numerous European languages and which simply changed morphological shape and orthography to match the language of written record in which they were embedded. Sylvester (2016; 2018a; 2018b; 2020) developed the concept of the lexical technolact, where calques from different languages for the same thing developed technical meanings. This is an important concept because unlike the forces of standardisation where variation reduced, in terms of lexis, the addition of Romance vocabulary in such high numbers (more than 50% of

2 See Kopaczyk (2023) for a discussion on challenges in applying this model.

the English lexicon, according to the Anglo-Norman Hub) enabled nuance of meaning to develop.³ Her insight was to be further developed by Sylvester, Tiddeman, and Ingham (2020; 2022; 2023), Tiddeman (2018; 2020), and Sylvester and Tiddeman (2023).

3. Research on vernacularisation

Code-switching in medieval Britain formed part of the larger process of shift from Medieval Latin to vernaculars in the languages of written record. Pahta and Taavitsainen (2004) use the term ‘vernacularisation’ to refer to this process, which Voigts (1996: 813) had defined as “the movement of vernacular languages into domains of written language that were formerly the exclusive preserve of Latin”. In the introduction to their edited volume on medical and scientific writing in Late Medieval English, Pahta and Taavitsainen (2004: 2) explain that the increased use of vernaculars was due to various factors, including practical ones (accessibility to information) and attitudinal or ideological ones (ideas about vernaculars and nationalism). In particular, they note that the expansion of English “gathered momentum in the fifteenth century with the nationalistic strivings of the Lancastrian monarchs” (Pahta & Taavitsainen 2004: 10). However, English had already gained traction in professional writing, such as legal texts and instructions, from the late fourteenth century (Pahta & Taavitsainen 2004: 10). Whether the use of vernaculars was instigated by conscious language policies (i.e. ‘from above’), e.g. from the Lancastrian monarchs, or whether it was initiated by scribes’ language practices (i.e. ‘from below’) has become a question of recent debate. While some scholars have brought forward arguments for conscious policies (see, in particular, Fisher 1992), more recent work, for example by Dodd (2011) and Schipor (2018), has questioned the idea that the shift to English was driven by language policies from above. Schipor (2018; 2022) found that English was increasingly more commonly used in documentary texts written in the first person, such as testamentary texts, petitions, abjurations, and statements. This indicates that selecting the vernacular rather than Latin was a development

3 Anglo-Norman Hub. 2017. Anglo-Norman Dictionary secures £800,00. <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2017/02/title-197356-en.html#:~:text=A%20form%20of%20French%20brought,are%20derived%20from%20Anglo%20Norman> [accessed 15.11.2023].

‘from below’, motivated primarily by pragmatic purposes. Beyond the English context, too, it seems that the replacement of Latin happened gradually and was initiated ‘from below’ rather than ‘from above’. Havinga (2023) traced vernacularisation processes in documentary legal texts from Aberdeen (1398–1511) and Lübeck (1430–1451). Based on her comparative analysis, she concludes that language practices of the scribes rather than top-down language policies drove the vernacularisation processes in these sources.

Tracing vernacularisation processes has been a valuable endeavour for understanding the dynamic nature of historical multilingualism. As part of the Middle English Local Documents (MELD) project, Schipor (2018) and Stenroos (2020) explored administrative texts produced outside central government offices, such as “records of cities, churches, manors, local courts and private transactions” (Stenroos 2020: 39), to reveal when and to what extent English replaced French and Latin.⁴ Unlike other text types, medieval administrative and legal documents are largely datable and locatable, and unlike other corpora, text was entered directly from manuscript transcription rather than via scholarly editions. The Stavanger team also paid attention to visual and discourse pragmatics around what Schipor termed ‘multilingual events’ (Schipor 2013; 2018; Stenroos and Schipor 2020), because situation on the folio, size of script, type of script, rubrication, and other visual delineators conditioned language choice (see also Machan 2011). The MELD project found that stretches of English first appeared in bureaucratic documents written in the North (i.e. innovation occurred furthest away from the centres of administration in London, which acted as a strong-tie force for conservatism) and in components that the client needed to understand rather than lawyer-to-lawyer communication. The team also found that Latin remained dominant from 1399 to 1525 and that English replaced the Anglo-Norman component rather than the Latin one, so that the fifteenth century can be characterised as the century when Anglo-Norman became abandoned, rather than when Latin was lost (Schipor 2018; Stenroos 2020). Similarly, Dodd (2019), who analysed administrative texts from central government, notes that Latin was the

4 *A corpus of Middle English Local Documents (MELD)*. <https://www.uis.no/en/corpus-middle-english-local-documents-meld>, compiled by Merja Stenroos, Kjetil Vikhamar Thengs and Geir Bergstrøm with the assistance of Anastasia Khanukaeva, Delia Schipor and Kenneth Solberg-Harestad. University of Stavanger.

“foremost language of the legal written record [...] throughout the Middle Ages” (Dodd 2019: 17) and that English began to replace French (rather than Latin) in the fourteenth century.

Other scholars have focussed on different text types. Carroll (2004), for example, found that recipes from England were vernacularised in the fourteenth century. Alcolado Carnicero (2013) analysed the accounts of the London Mercers’ Livery Company (1390–1464) to trace vernacularisation processes. Taking a social networks approach, he observed changes in language use from generations who used Medieval Latin, to generations who used code-switching only, to generations who used monolingual English (that is, an English which had absorbed a great deal of Anglo-Norman vocabulary), via master-apprentice relationships. He was to build on this perception over subsequent publications (Alcolado Carnicero 2015; 2017; 2018; 2020; 2021a; 2021b).

Putting all this work together, it became apparent that rather than a wholesale shift from French to English, with Medieval Latin gradually shifting to Neo Latin and becoming restricted in register before dropping out of use altogether, the Anglo-Norman component reduced from [lexis + grammatical matrix] to content words only, which became absorbed into an English grammatical component, with commensurate code-switching over the century of shift. As Anglo-Norman became absorbed into English over the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, code-switching became default in text types which required itemisation of goods such as customs declarations, business accounts, the testimonial inventories of wills, and personal daybooks such as those kept by Gilbert Maghfeld and William of Worcester (Schendl 2020; Wright 2015; 2018). Anglo-Norman vocabulary entered not only legal registers but also the domain of land-management and stewardship, where it remains in dialectal use (Wright in press).

The concept of supralocalisation was important for the perception of the integration of Anglo-Norman into English. Supralocalisation refers to the process of a feature spreading from its initial centre of usage (both in region and text type) which nevertheless did not then go on to standardise. For example, Thengs (2013) showed that, as Anglo-Norman became abandoned as a monolingual language of written record in the first decades of the fifteenth century, the Anglo-Norman custom of using the letter-graph <x> as a plural marker on words ending in /l/ entered English writing and became widespread in the later fifteenth-century writing, even if the word in question were

of English rather than French etymology, such as *shamelx* ‘shambles’ from Old English *sceamel* ‘stall’ (Thengs 2013: 308 (Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire); Stenroos 2020: 63–65 (also Yorkshire); Wright 2020: 526 (also London)). Similarly, the Anglo-Norman *-aun-* trigraph entered words of English origin, such as the place name *Caunterbury* (Trotter 2013: 167; Wright 2020: 525). This is particularly significant as Trotter identified *-aun-* as likely to “be the only exclusively Anglo-Norman graphy that exists”, meaning that *-aun-* sequences, so prevalent in fifteenth-century writing, could only have been ported over from Anglo-Norman. Conde-Silvestre (2020) reported that spelling focussed (reduced variation) in words of Anglo-Norman origin first in an Oxfordshire community of practice of coffeoffees and civil servants writing in English in the mid-fifteenth century. These administrators wrote about matters of law and estate-stewardship and thus used the Latinate vocabulary pertaining to those domains and ported their habit of spelling this Latinate vocabulary (i.e. without much spelling variation) along with the lexemes. This is supralocalisation in action, because although the net effect was to reduce spelling variation, spelling standardisation was still to come. Supralocalisation was thus an important stage on the road to eventual standardisation.

4. Research beyond the “Big Three”

Publications such as *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain* edited by Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter (2013) and *Medieval English in a Multilingual Context* edited by Sara Pons-Sanz and Louise Sylvester (2023) illustrate how fruitful the engagement with multilingual practices has been. Both of these volumes go beyond the focus on English vis-à-vis Latin and French by including discussions on Dutch, Old Norse, and Welsh, amongst other languages. Research on these languages within the context of multilingual Britain has made headway in the last twenty years, as the following examples of recent publications show.

Putter (2021) took inspiration from Christopher Joby’s (2015) book on *The Dutch language in Britain (1550–1702)* to present evidence of the use of Dutch in medieval Britain through three case studies: the writings of Gerald of Wales, the copy of a Dutch letter in the Aberdeen Council Registers, and the Book of Privileges. He highlighted that medieval sources offer a rich basis for studies on the Dutch language in Britain, listing further texts that are worth

examining (see also Alban 2014). Alexander Fleming and Roger Mason's (2019) edited volume focussed on the Flemish people in Scotland and included a chapter on the impact of Flemish on the Scots language (Fleming *et al.* 2019). Building on the work by Murison (1971), who provided a list of Dutch elements in the vocabulary of Scots, they found that the "Flemish influence on the Scots language is felt particularly in fields where there were significant areas of contact" (Fleming *et al.* 2019: 134), such as trade and agriculture. Murison's list was also used by Havinga (2020), who assessed the intensity of language contact between Middle Dutch and Scots in late-medieval Aberdeen. Based on an evaluation of trade connections between Aberdeen and the Low Countries, migration from the Low Countries to Scotland, and the use of Middle Dutch in the Aberdeen Council Registers (1398–1511), Havinga (2020: 275) concluded that "the contact between Middle Dutch and Scots in Aberdeen can be classified somewhere between 'casual contact' and 'slightly more intense contact' based on Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) borrowing scale" (see Fox, Grant, and Wright 2023 for a discussion of contact theory and the history of English). Havinga's (2021) more general analysis of multilingual practices and vernacularisation processes in the Aberdeen Council Registers showed the gradual replacement of Latin by Scots in the first eight volumes of the registers, which did not, however, result in a complete loss of Latin. Formulaic entries, in particular, continued to be written in Latin in the sixteenth century. Havinga also investigated the function of codeswitches in one of the volumes and found that such switches were more common at the beginning of the registers' vernacularisation process. Generally, the registers constitute what Kopaczyk (2021) called 'a complex multilingual code' – a term that can be applied to many medieval sources.⁵

That Old Norse also formed part of this multilingual code has been shown by the Gersum Project, led by Richard Dance, Sara Pons-Sanz, and Brittany Schorn (2019). This project examined the Scandinavian influence on English vocabulary, creating an open-access database of 967 lexemes from a corpus of Middle English poems that categorises the likelihood of an Old Norse origin for

5 For an overview of languages used in medieval Scotland, see chapter 3 in Millar (2020). For multilingualism in Scottish poetry, see Machan (2010), who analysed three long poems by Robert Henryson to illustrate the "ordinariness of multilingualism" (2010: 54) in the Middle Ages.

each lexeme.⁶ For further scholarship on the Scandinavian influence on English see Barnes (1993), Townend (2002), and Pons-Sanz (2013).

In addition to Scandinavian and Dutch contact impacting the development of English, Celtic languages have also been considered. Klemola (2013) argued that the influence of Celtic language contact can be seen in terms of syntax and phonology rather than lexis. The fact that there are only a few Celtic loanwords in English should not, therefore, be taken as proof that the influence of Celtic languages on English was negligible (Klemola 2013). The multilingual situation in medieval Wales has perhaps attracted the most scholarly attention, even if evidence for multilingualism in medieval Wales is “patchy and scattered” (Russell 2019: 7). Russell (2017) explored the co-existence of and interactions between Welsh and Latin from the Roman period onwards, illustrating “how in some contexts Medieval Welsh became distinctly Latinate and how in certain respects the Latin of medieval Wales arguably became Cambricised” (Russell 2017: 215). While Russell focussed on the relationship between Welsh and Latin, Fulton (2011) discussed uses of the vernacular in Medieval Wales, noting that “vernacular writing in Welsh had a continuous history from the age of the Saxon settlements” (Fulton 2011: 222), even if the “earliest manuscript books containing Welsh texts survive only from the middle of the thirteenth century” (Fulton 2011: 200). Fulton also explained that, alongside Latin, writing in Anglo-Norman was preferred over English, which was partly due to “a certain amount of ‘anti-Saxon’ attitude” (Fulton 2011: 222) at that time. Fulton (2012) elaborated on the cultural and political power connected to languages used in medieval Wales (including mentions of Flemish and Irish). Despite advances in studying the multilingual situation in medieval Wales, discussions on Welsh in volumes that deal with multilingualism in Britain are still underrepresented (Russell 2019: 10); see, however, Smith (2000), Putter (2011), and Fulton (2023).

6 Richard Dance, Sara Pons-Sanz, and Brittany Schorn, *The Gersum Project: The Scandinavian Influence on English Vocabulary* (Cambridge, Cardiff and Sheffield, 2019). <https://www.gersum.org/> [accessed 09.11.2023]. The database can be accessed here: <https://www.gersum.org/database>.

5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, since Schendl branded historical code-switching a neglected topic, researchers have applied methodologies from dialectology and sociolinguistics (such as social networks, weak and strong ties, text types and communities of practice, as well as the traditional concept of geographical region) to study all sorts of medieval multilingual practices. However, there is still plenty of work to do. Substantial corpora that allow electronic searching for medieval code-switching or vernacularisation processes are still lacking. Ideally, such corpora would include texts from all parts of medieval Britain, which would also facilitate research beyond the “Big Three” languages (Anglo-Norman, English, Latin). Moreover, Honkaphoja and Wright (2023) have recently noted that abbreviations and suspensions still do not receive the attention they deserve. That this is a field to be investigated further needs to be kept in mind when building corpora for the study of multilingual practices. Silent expansions are, unfortunately, far too common in transcriptions of historical manuscripts. Much remains to be done, but the 2023 conference of the *Historical Sociolinguistics Network* received more abstracts for papers in the category of historical multilingualism than in any other, so we conclude with the observation that Pahta’s work on this topic has been influential and continues to inspire.

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