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# *French in early modern Norwich*

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## ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the use of French in medieval England. However, with one or two exceptions, relatively little has been written about the language in early modern England. This article aims to provide an account of the use of French as an emigrant language in one of the leading provincial cities in early modern England, Norwich. From 1565 onwards thousands of people from the French-language area migrated to England as a result of economic necessity and religious persecution. Many of them settled in Norwich. As well as these immigrants and their descendants, there were Dutch immigrants in Norwich who spoke French as well as several well-educated individuals from the local English population such as Sir Thomas Browne. This article describes the varieties of French used in Norwich, including Picard, the emerging standard French and Law French. It then discusses how French operated in the multilingual environment of early modern Norwich under the headings of language competition, language contact, bilingualism, code switching, translation, and finally, language shift and recession. It adds not only to our understanding of French in early modern England but also to the literature on French as an emigrant language.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years much has been written about the use of French in medieval England.[1] By contrast, relatively little has been written about its use in early modern England. Furthermore, those who discuss this subject tend to focus on the use of French by an educated cultural elite in urban centres, notably London, Oxford and Cambridge. This article begins to address this situation by describing the use of French in early modern Norwich.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, as a result of economic necessity and religious persecution, thousands of people migrated from the continental French-language area, in particular the Spanish Netherlands, to England. From 1565 onwards, many of these settled in Norwich, where they established a French-language community and church, and played a leading role in reviving the local

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[1] See Kibbee (1991); Kibbee (1996); Trotter (2000); Wogan-Browne (2009); and Ailes and Putter (2014).



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textile industry. At its height the community numbered well over one thousand members. The church continued to meet into the nineteenth century, although by that time it only had a few members. In addition, Dutch immigrants and well-educated English people spoke French in early modern Norwich.

The article begins with a brief account of the use of French in medieval England and more specifically in late medieval Norfolk and Norwich. It then provides an overview of existing literature on French in early modern England before using archival material to describe the use of the language in early modern Norwich.

First, evidence is presented for the use of different varieties of French. Alongside the emerging standard French, dialectal varieties, in particular Picard, and Law French were used. Second, Norwich not only had a significant French-language community, but also a large Dutch-language community, whose members were collectively known as the Strangers. Therefore, three vernacular languages were in use: French, Dutch and English, as well as Latin. This means that French cannot only be examined in isolation, but also in interaction with other languages. So, consideration is given to the learning of French by non-native speakers, language competition, language contact, bilingualism, code switching and translation. Finally, the processes of language shift and recession are described. The article therefore adds not only to our understanding of French in early modern England but also to the literature on French as an emigrant language.[2]

## FRENCH IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

After the Norman Conquest, French was used as a native language in England until the thirteenth century (Kibbee, 1996: 17). Thereafter, it continued to function as a learnt language in late medieval England. Britnell (2009: 87) identifies six purposes for which French was used for urban administration. Amongst these are the making of ordinances and petitions and the taking of oaths. This suggests that while Latin remained the language of record in civil and legal contexts, the vernacular, French, was used as an oral language in official situations. However, by the fifteenth century French was in retreat as an administrative language in England. Kibbee (1991: 61–62) ascribes this to a rise in English nationalism and the reversal of fortunes in the Hundred Years War, which led to a dramatic reduction in English possessions in France. Thereafter, he argues, 'the language retreated to the narrow confines of its role as an aristocratic accomplishment'.

## FRENCH IN LATE MEDIEVAL NORWICH AND NORFOLK

This pattern of the use of French in England as a whole can be applied to late medieval Norwich and Norfolk. Documents relating to urban administration were written in French until the early fifteenth century. For example, a 1378 petition of 'the citizens of Norwich' (*les citiȝeins de Norwiȝ*) is written in French, as is a document listing 'The Complaints of the Major Part of the Commonalty of the

[2] In this regard, see Valdman (1978); Minervini (2010) and Aslanov (2013).



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City of Norwich' (*les greuaunces depar la greindre partie de . . . la Commonalte de la Cite de Norwicȝ*) addressed in 1414 to Sir Thomas Erpingham, and the 'Answers of the Sheriffs and Twenty-Four Prudhommes' (*les respounses de les Viscountes et xxiiij prodeshommes*) to these complaints (Hudson and Tingey, 1906: I, 65, 66, 77). In the fifteenth century regional gentry might be expected to read French. Yeager (2009: 138) places Norfolk families such as the Knevets and the Pastons in this category.

There is little direct evidence for the use of French in Norfolk in the sixteenth century prior to 1565. However, we know that there were French people living in the county. The project 'England's Immigrants 1330–1550 Resident Aliens in the Late Middle Ages' has identified 130 denizens in Norfolk between 1500 and 1550. Twenty-eight of these came from France, although most of them lived in the port town of Great Yarmouth.[3] The figures for Norwich are 18 denizens, three of whom came from France, although the origin of many denizens is not given. There were, though, Frenchmen in Norwich, who were not denizens. A convocation of aldermen on 2 September 1542 reported 17 Frenchmen who were apprenticed to freemen in Norwich (Hudson and Tingey, 1906: II, 170).[4]

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON FRENCH IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

As noted in the introduction, relatively little has been written on French in early modern England. In his account of the rise of standard French, Lodge (1993) makes brief reference to the influence of Anglo-Norman on English (p. 65), but none to the use of French by immigrants who settled in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rickard (1974: 88–89) only makes brief mention of French in sixteenth-century England. He writes 'Outside France, there was no area in which French was widely spoken, though it was zealously cultivated by a cultured minority in England . . . ' Reference to 'a cultured minority' seems to suggest that French was only used by well-educated English people in England. However, many of the immigrants who settled in England worked in the textile industry and are unlikely to have belonged to 'a cultured minority'.

Kibbee (1991) focuses on French in medieval England. However, Chapter 6 covers the period 1470–1600. Here, Kibbee discusses the acquisition of French by the English aristocracy, and considers in particular how the study of French was affected by the advent of printing. He does mention Protestant refugees who fled to England in order to escape the French Wars of Religion, but only those who arrived in London, such as Claude Holyband, who established a school in the city in the mid-1560s (Kibbee, 1991: 130–131).

Lambley's book on French in early modern England was first published in 1920 and has since been republished several times. It is primarily a cultural history focusing on education in French and its use in high culture, paying most attention

[3] Visit https://www.englandsimmigrants.com. Accessed 21 October 2016.

[4] See also Norfolk Record Office (NRO), MC 3015, Box 28; and Williamson (2014: 97, n. 12).



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to London and other towns where French was used in high culture such as Oxford and Cambridge. Like Kibbee, Lambley has less to say about the use of French by those who were not well educated or who did not engage in high culture, and both authors make little reference to the use of French in provincial towns where immigrants established French-language communities such as Canterbury, Rye, Sandwich, Southampton and Norwich.

More recently, in his history of Dutch in early modern Britain, Joby (2015) makes frequent reference to the use of French by Dutch and French immigrants and local English people. He also discusses how French influenced the Dutch language used in early modern Britain.

Finally, a collection of essays on the history of language in Britain edited by Glanville Price (2000) discusses French in the Channel Islands and Anglo-Norman until the fourteenth century, but has nothing to say on the language in early modern England.

## SOURCES

A brief word is in order about the sources used in this article. The majority of these are primary sources. Several are held at the Norfolk Record Office (NRO), including the minute book for the French church in Norwich, probate inventories, a commercial contract, and a set of records of the meetings and decisions of the officials from the Stranger communities known as *hommes politiques* (or *politicke mannen* in Dutch). Another set of the records of the *hommes politiques* and documents written by the Norwich physician, Sir Thomas Browne, are preserved at the British Library. In a few cases, published editions of primary sources have been consulted, although where possible these have been checked against the original manuscript.

## VARIETIES OF FRENCH EARLY MODERN NORWICH

Several varieties of French were used in early modern Norwich. First, dialectal forms were in use, notably Picard. Second, standard French was used, particularly in official settings such as preaching in the French church, but also by non-native speakers from the Dutch and English-language communities. Third, Law French continued to be used. Therefore it might be better to talk of 'Frenches' in early modern Norwich rather than simply one homogenous 'French' (cf. Burke, 2005: 5).

### *Dialectal forms of French*

Despite the emergence of a standard language in the early modern period, the use of dialect persisted.[5] There are various ways of building a picture of the use

[5] In the seventeenth century Picard was still quite distinct from standard French. One piece of evidence of this came when a town councillor in Amiens harangued Louis XIV in



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of dialectal forms. One approach is to consider the provenance of native French speakers. Another approach is to examine documents written in a language that comes close to everyday speech. In this regard private letters are a useful source. However, unfortunately we only have one private letter written *to* a member of the Norwich French community. Third, we can look for dialectal forms in other types of document, such as church meeting minutes.

### *The provenance of native French speakers*

Almost all the members of the French-language community in the second half of the sixteenth century came from the far north of the Continental French-language area, so the community and its members were often referred to as Walloon. The first six 'masters' in the textile industry permitted to settle in Norwich by Queen Elizabeth I were described as Walloons. A return compiled in 1568 tells us that the Norwich Walloon congregation numbered 339. Only one head of household in this return came from France, a woolcomber, René Soneau. The other heads of household were subjects of Philip II from the Spanish Netherlands (Schickler, 1892: I, 310, 313). The three areas from which most of them came were the provinces of Artois and Flanders, and the town of Lille in Flanders. Twenty-three heads of household are simply listed as coming from Flanders, and a further four from Armentières in Flanders; twenty-three from Lille; ten from Hainaut, four of whom came from Valenciennes; and nine from Artois. Two heads of household came from the town of Namur, and two from Liège. Others came from elsewhere in the Low Countries. A schoolmaster, Adrianus Claess, came from Antwerp; and several heads of household came from Brabant.

The 1568 return gives the profession of the heads of household. Most of these are related to the textile industry, such as woolcombers and weavers. Others were artisans, such as a baker and a carpenter. Although the list includes two schoolmasters, the vast majority of the immigrants were labourers and artisans. We can draw no firm conclusions from this data but it is likely that many of them spoke in dialect.

The dominant dialect in most of the towns and regions from which the members of the French community in Norwich came was Picard. The question arises as to whether any of them might have spoken the Walloon dialect. Here, we need to distinguish between the Walloon people and region on the one hand, and the Walloon dialect on the other hand. Henry (1990: 87) observes that the extent of the Walloon region has changed over time, but has covered an arc stretching from Lorraine through modern-day southern Belgium to the North Sea. The area in which the Walloon dialect has been spoken is much smaller, covering the Principality of Liège and east towards Limburg (Henry, 1990: 76; 87). So, it is likely that the two heads of household from Liège used the Walloon dialect.

Picard. The inappropriateness and unintelligibility of his speech were both considered noteworthy (Lodge, 1993: 195).



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In the area between Hainaut and Namur, there was a gradual shift from Walloon to Picard, so there may have been elements of Walloon in the language of the Strangers from that region (Henry, 1990: 76).[6] However, the majority of the French community in Norwich, such as those from Artois, Flanders and Lille, will have spoken Picard.

By the late 1570s there were probably some 1400 members of the Walloon community before the plague of 1578–79 reduced their number to around 1000 (Pound, 2004: 42). By 1635 the number of communicants in the Walloon church was 396 (Hessels, 1887–97 (H 87): III, ii, 1690). This figure does not include those who attended church occasionally; those who did not attend church at all; and children. We might tentatively put an upper limit of 700–800 on the membership of the Walloon community as a whole at this time. After this we lack firm figures for both the Walloon church and community. On the one hand, numbers will have declined as the Walloons continued to integrate into the local population and as a consequence of external exigencies such as the 1673 Test Act.[7] However, the community's membership received a boost in the final decades of the seventeenth century as a result of the difficulties that Protestants experienced in Louis XIV's France culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. We see this in the register of baptisms for the Walloon church. In 1680 there were five baptisms. In 1684 the figure rose to nineteen, although it returned to low single figures after the mid-1680s (Schickler, 1892: II, 258; Cottret, 1977: 18). Rickwood (1989: I, 21) argues that the arrival of Huguenots meant that the Walloon church became more of a Huguenot church and that thereafter it was called 'the French church'.

In relation to language, the arrival of Huguenots probably had consequences for the French used in Norwich. Huguenots were spread throughout France. Two Huguenot families in Norwich about which we know a good deal are the Martineaus and Columbines. Gaston Martineau came from near Bordeaux in south-west France and the Columbines hailed originally from Dauphiny in south-east France. They are likely to have spoken their patois, varieties of *langue d'oc*, rather than the *langue d'oïl* of the Southern Netherlands from where the Walloons had come over one hundred years earlier. Furthermore, it was said that their French was full of biblical phrases, so much so that their language became known by their detractors as 'the patois of Canaan'. Moreover, they preferred to address God in standard French as opposed to their patois. Burke (1987: 4, 8) suggests that for them standard French was a 'linguistic symbol of the sacred'. This influenced not only the French they used in church but also the language they used at home, in, for example, prayers said before meals.

[6] See also Posner (1997) and Francard (2000). Authors have not always been able to make a clear distinction between these dialects. The medieval Flemish author, Jacob van Maerlant, used the term *valsch* ('unreliable') to refer to sources written in *walsch*. What he refers to as *walsch* was probably Picard (Sleiderink, 2010: 140–141).

[7] This gave preferment to members of the Anglican Church in public offices.



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### Dialectal forms in personal letters

Personal letters provide valuable evidence for written French. Furthermore, Koch and Oesterreicher (1985: 23) argue convincingly that the language of private letters can be seen as the 'language of proximity' (*Sprache der Nähe*), in contrast to that of formal letters, which bespeaks the 'language of distance' (*Sprache der Distanz*).[8] So, we can take private letters as evidence both of the fact that their authors spoke the language in which they wrote and of the nature of the language that they spoke. Unfortunately, we do not have any personal letters written by individuals in Norwich from this period. However, we do have a letter written *to* a Stranger in Norwich.[9]

The letter was written by Jacques Desrumaulx to his brother, Guillaume, in Norwich on 11 November 1569 (Verheyden, 1955: 117–118). We do not know precisely where Jacques wrote the letter, but several features in it are often found in Picard. In the phrase *nous somme en bien bon chanté* ('we are in very good health'), the [s] of the final word, *santé*, has been palatalised. The shift in Picard from the French medial 's' [z] to 'g' [ʒ] can be seen in the words *dégir* instead of *désir*, and *ongimme* instead of *onzième*. We find the forms *se mère* instead of *sa mère*, and *unne* instead of *une*. These have been identified as features of Middle Picard (Debrie, 1984: 364, 396). Finally, in Picard the atonic feminine definite article, *la*, weakens to *le* (Posner, 1997: 331). This explains the use of *le* in the phrase *Jacquemine le servante de vostre mère*.

### Dialectal forms in other documents

We find dialectal forms in probate inventories and church records written in French in Norwich. The NRO has probate inventories in French for Everard Farvaque (1609) and Elizabeth Cuvellir (1619–20).[10] In the former we find *capeau* rather than *chapeau* and *candele* instead of *chandelle*; in the latter, *candelier* rather than *chandelier*. In Picard (and Normand) words beginning with 'c' in Latin, e.g., *carbon* (Latin *carbo*), are not palatalised, while in other varieties of the *langue d'oïl* they are (viz. *charbon*) (Posner, 1997: 82). This may have influenced the spelling of *capeau* and *candelier*. In the inventory for Farvaque we find the form *ung* for the masculine singular indefinite article, which is a feature of Middle Picard (Corblet, 1851: 101; Flutre, 1970: 503).

The Walloon church kept baptismal records from 22 June 1595 to 21 June 1752 (Moens, 1888–89: II, 1–113). The title of the baptismal book reads:

[8] Koch and Oesterreicher's thesis requires some refinement. For example they refer to newspapers in general without discussing the range of registers used in different newspapers. Furthermore, we find different registers within private letters. See also Landert and Jucker (2011).

[9] The letter is in the Verheyden collection in the *Algemeen Rijksarchief*, Brussels. This collection was published in 1955 by the Belgian scholar, Alfons Verheyden.

[10] NRO, DN/INV 22/93 (Everard Farvaque); NRO, DN/INV 30/9 (Elizabeth Cuvellir).



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*Ce lijvre commenche le 22 de juyn lan de grase 1595 et pour le batem. des enfans de leglijge Wallonghe de la vijlle de Nordvijt regijdijyant en icelle vijlle et alors en ce ten la mestre Thomas Laijert en maijeur de la vijlle.*
[This book begins on 22 June in the year of grace 1595 and for the baptism of the children of the Walloon church of the city of Norwich, residing in this city in the time of master Thomas Layer Mayor of the city.]

Here, we see examples of the tendency in Picard to render a medial 's' [z] as 'g' [ʒ]: *leglijge* (Fr. *l'église*) and *regijdijyant* (Fr. *résidant*), and the palatalisation of the word *commence* (*commenche*).[11] A copy of the Discipline of the French churches in England compiled in French in 1588 was signed by ministers and elders of the Norwich Walloon church on 5 April 1589. On 29 April 1589 and thereafter the discipline was signed by the ministers, elders and deacons of the church. Before 1600 several elders indicated their position by using palatalised forms of the word *ancien*, viz. *anchiens*, *anchin* and *enchyen* (Moens, 1888–9: II, 301–305). Marriages and banns were recorded in French between 1599 and 1691. Piere Tesse (1603) is described as a *natif dennechin*. *Dennechin* is a palatalised form of the English 'denizen' (derived from Anglo-Norman). The minute book of the Walloon church consistory is kept at the NRO.[12] The first entry is dated 25 March 1628. Any sign of dialectal variety is limited. However, in the entry for 16 March 1647 we find the form *dimance* (Fr. *dimanche*), and find it again in several entries between 1653 and 1669. The form *anchiens* appears in entries between 1653 and 1664.

Finally, while each piece of evidence on its own does not allow us to draw any firm conclusions, taken altogether the evidence strongly suggest that French dialectal forms were used in early modern Norwich. Most of the evidence provided comes from written documents. We therefore need to exercise caution in making statements about the use of dialectal forms in spoken French. However, given the provenance of a majority of the immigrants, the fact that most of them were labourers or artisans, and the examples of dialectal forms presented, it is likely that at least some dialectal forms, notably those associated with Picard, could be heard in early modern Norwich. From the evidence available, the use of dialectal forms persisted for some considerable time after 1565, but we have no evidence for their use after 1669.

## *Standard French*

'Standard' forms in any language emerge from varieties that gain social prestige and dominance. The variety that formed the basis of standard French emerged from King's French. This was initially used in the Île-de-France, but spread out between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries as the language of government and

[11] The rendering of 'Norwich' as *Nordvijt* is probably a result of the lack of a final [tʃ] in French. Another rendering, *Norwyts* (NRO, MC 189/1 fol. 13v. and 19 r.), is probably for the same reason.
[12] NRO, FC 29/17.



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administration as the French kings expanded their power. The work of codifying this variety began in the first half of the sixteenth century with the production of the first French grammars and lexicons (Lusignan, 2012: 146 ff.; Lodge, 1993: 118–120; 161–163).

In the English towns where French language communities were established, teachers from these communities taught standard French both to the children of immigrants and those whose first language was not French. In London, Claude Holyband, mentioned above, taught French and published several aids to learning the language such as the 'French Schoolemaister' (1573) (Lambley, 2013: 77). Holyband taught pupils the main characteristics of various French dialects, chiefly Picard and Walloon, so that they would avoid using them.

In Norwich, the 1568 return lists two heads of household as schoolmasters, Adrianus Claess, mentioned above, and Petrus du Rieu from Lille (Rye, 1887: 224–225). Like Holyband, they most probably taught standard French and it may be that over time the work of these and other schoolmasters helped to reduce dialectal variants in the French spoken in Norwich.

We have seen that some documents written in French included dialectal features. However, others were written completely or almost completely in standard French. In September 1576 Guy de Leuwaulle, a Walloon, drew up an agreement to serve the city in the manufacture of bays for one year.[13] There are almost no dialectal features in this document, which may be a function of its official nature. One exception is *ung* (*tour*), a form of the indefinite article, which, as already noted, is a feature of Picard.

The *hommes politiques* were officials chosen each year to keep order in the immigrant communities and to act as intermediaries between their communities and the local English authorities. We have two sets of records of their activities and decisions: one for April 1583 to July 1590, and the other for 1605–15.[14] They are written in several languages including French. The author of the first set of records, and entries to July 1612 in the second set of records, was the secretary Pieter Weynoet. He was a Cambridge-educated Dutch Stranger and probably learnt French as a non-native speaker. This may explain the lack of dialectal features in his French, as illustrated by the following extracts:

*Jan . . . dict d'avoir loue une maison de luy . . . le defendeur confesse davoir faict une accord mais avec condicion qu'il pouvoit quiter* (fol. 44r.):
[Jan . . . says that he rented a house from him . . . the defendant confesses that he did make an agreement but on condition that he could leave.]
*Les hommes ayant ouy la cause . . . ont ordonne que Jan le Cerf suyuant l'article payera la debte et ses despens* (fol. 105r.):
[The (political) men, having heard the case ... have ordered that Jan le Cerf, in accordance with the article, shall pay the debt and his costs.][15]

[13] NRO, NCR 10b/5.
[14] NRO, MC 189/1, 634X3(a); British Library (BL), Add. MS. 43862.
[15] There is no palatalisation of unvoiced sibilants, and the medial 's' [z] of *maison* is not rendered as 'g' [ʒ], both features of Picard.



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The few letters that we have from leaders of the Walloon church date from the mid-seventeenth century and are written in standard French (e.g., H 87: III, ii, 2051). As for the spoken language, the ministers probably preached and performed the liturgy in something closer to standard French, while, at least in the early days of the church's existence, members of the congregation exchanged words in dialect. If so, we could talk of diglossia within the Walloon church (cf. McColl Millar, 2012: 46).[16]

## *Law French*

Although during the fifteenth century French was gradually replaced by English in public administration, it continued to be used in the law. Kibbee (1996: 14) suggests that one reason for this was that it allowed for the defining and fixing of terms that can occur when the technical language is divorced from everyday language. As for the relationship between Law French and other varieties of French, opinions differ. A Frenchman living in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth observed, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly, 'it seemeth that almost there is no language more far from the true French'.[17] On the other hand Baker (1990: 3–4) writes 'to the linguist, law French is a corrupt dialect by definition', but also describes it as a 'professional dialect'.

The jurist Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634) was educated in Norwich. Coke, who knew Law French, worked as the recorder from 1586 until 1592, and regularly attended the city's summer assizes, possibly until 1613 (Boyer, 2003: 41; 215).[18] In 1628 he observed that Law French was 'very rarely spoken' although he argued that it could not be abolished as it was woven into the fabric of the law (Boyer, 2003: 150; Baker, 1990: 4–5). Oliver Cromwell dealt a heavy blow to its use by passing an Act in November 1650, which required all reports, resolutions and other law books to be printed in English (Winfield, 1925: 10–11). However, after the Restoration there was a reaction in favour of Law French. It continued to be used for the 'recitation of formal pleadings and certain other procedural forms' as late as the eighteenth century (Baker, 1990: 3).

Documents in Law French at the NRO include a set of notes written in the seventeenth century in Aylsham near Norwich and a petition dating from c.1702 endorsed 'Kenninghalle Manor' in South Norfolk.[19] Private individuals owned books in Law French. One is listed in the probate inventory of Robert Raby (d.1593), made in Norwich.[20] Sir Thomas Knyvett of Ashwellthorpe (c.1539–1618) owned about a dozen books in Law French, including Sir Edward Coke's *Rapports*, which are primarily in Law French (McKitterick, 1978: 149–152). Coke's *Rapports*,

[16] For a recent discussion both of the term 'diglossia' and its application to the use of French in early modern Europe, see Burke (2014).

[17] See also Kibbee (1991: 94–95).

[18] Pound (2004: 60) gives the dates 1587 to 1592.

[19] NRO, AYL 830; NAS 1/1/11/151.

[20] http://plre.folger.edu/books.php. Accessed 21 October 2016.



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and several other books in Law French, were in Norwich City Library, the oldest provincial public library in England, founded in 1608 (Wilkins-Jones, 2008: 29).

## FRENCH AND OTHER LANGUAGES

So far, this article has focused on French in isolation. In what follows it considers French in relation to other languages in early modern Norwich. It begins by discussing the learning of French by non-native speakers. It then considers French as an emigrant language under the headings of language competition, language contact, bilingualism, code switching, translation and language shift and recession.

### *The learning of French by non-native speakers*

In a letter from 1577, the Flemish Stranger Jan Ruytinck wrote that he taught French to local English children and boarders from Flanders (H 87: II, 593). Burke (2014: 34) writes 'what most concerns a social historian is the use of language to mark differences in social statuses or social situations'. One way in which wealthy families in Norwich, as elsewhere in England, marked their social status was by learning French. Kibbee (1991: 185) observes that 'the study of French in England was not so much a practical requirement as a social requirement in the 16$^{th}$ century'. This was the case for young men, but also for girls, who were almost completely denied the opportunity of learning Latin. In the early seventeenth century Elizabeth Knyvett wrote to her mother-in-law concerning Mr. 'Lewe' who was teaching French to her daughter Muriel.[21] Later in the century Robert Paston, Viscount Yarmouth, employed a Frenchman, Gideon Bonnivert, to teach French and Latin to his children (Agnew, 2012: 223).

Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82) was born in London and studied at Oxford, Padua, Montpellier and Leiden. In 1637 he moved to Norwich, where he practised as a physician and published works on a range of subjects. He spoke French and it is likely that he employed a French tutor for his children. He encouraged his son, Thomas, to practise his French (Browne, 1964: IV, 8). His daughter, Elizabeth, also knew French and even composed verse in the language (Burke, 2003: 322). In the second half of the eighteenth century, the minister of the Dutch church, John Bruckner, a bilingual from Zeeland, taught French to Amelia Opie (1769–1853), who later became a poet of note.

### *Language competition*

Given that four languages were used in early modern Norwich, there would necessarily be language competition.[22] Burke (2004: 70) describes this in rather

[21] NRO, KNY 637, 372X5.

[22] A fifth language, Greek, was taught at Norwich free grammar school. This was unusual for early modern England.



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dramatic terms as 'the struggle for the centre [involving] attempts to marginalize rivals'. Eventually, English would triumph over its competitors in Norwich. However, the other languages competed with it throughout the early modern period. Schendl (2012: 522) observes 'an important factor influencing language choice in multilingual contexts is the relative status of the different languages'. In this regard, Latin continued to be an H-language, perhaps best exemplified by its extensive use on Guild Day, the most important date in Norwich's civic calendar when the election of the new Mayor was celebrated. As for French, the fact that wealthy English parents employed tutors to teach it to their children suggests that the standard variety was seen as an H-language. During the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century members of the Walloon community gradually shifted from French to English. However, French continued to be used in the Walloon/French church and possibly in the home. The church finally closed its doors in 1832 (Moens, 1888–9: I, 110).

A word is in order about the relationship between French and the other principal emigrant language in Norwich, Dutch. In the Dutch Republic, French was an H-language, used at court, by diplomats and in learned correspondence (Joby, 2014a: 38). In London, the leaders of the French and Dutch churches typically communicated with each other in French rather than Dutch. This may be a function of the languages' relative status, but also of the fact, not unrelated, that more Dutch Strangers knew French than vice versa. In Norwich, a Dutch Stranger, the merchant Adrien Walewein, wrote in 1568 that he was learning both English and French, possibly for commercial purposes (Janssen, 1857: 252–255). Native speakers of Dutch who knew French would often sprinkle their Dutch with French words to differentiate themselves socially from monolinguals. Such a practice could seem affected and was the object of derision. The Dutch poet Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687) mocked the young people in The Hague who peppered their Dutch with French (Joby, 2014a: 265). We find something similar in the epigrams published in 1655 of the Norwich Dutch Stranger, Jan Cruso (1592–*fl.* 1655), whose parents came from Hondschoote in Flanders. In Epigram 84 a courtier responds to the questions of a peasant, who is clearly less well educated than the courtier:

*Monsieur*, myn Heer is nu *Ge-occupeert*
*Mafoy* 'k en durf hem niet *Importuneren*!
Komt Mergen weer, en (so 't hem dan *Vaceert*)
'K sal myn *Devoir* doen u te *Depescheren*.
[*Monsieur*, my Lord is now *occupé*
By my *foi*, I dare not importune him!
Come back tomorrow, and (if he is not occupied then)
I shall do my *devoir* to dispatch you to him.]

The words in italics are either French words (*Monsieur, Mafoy, devoir*) or Dutch verbs derived from French verbs (*occuperen*, *importuneren*, *vaceren*, *depescheren*). Clearly



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one had to be well educated to understand all these words from French, a point that leads to the punchline:

Ke (sey den Boer) wat moet ick nu betaalen.
Van 't geen ghy secht in Duysch te doen vertaalen?
[Well, (said the peasant), what do I have to pay
To get what you say translated into Dutch?]

### *Language contact*

Another consequence of the use of four languages in early modern Norwich was language contact. This occurs when two or more languages interact at the individual or societal level and often leads to the languages influencing each other on a structural or lexical level (Austin et al., 2015: 3).

I have found no evidence to suggest that the French used in Norwich was affected on a structural level by language contact with English. Trudgill (2010: 36–60) argues that a feature of Norfolk English, zero-marking in the third-person singular present indicative (e.g., 'he go' rather than 'he goes'), is a result of language contact between the Walloon and Dutch Strangers and local English people. Joby (2014b (and 2016)) provides evidence that there was zero-marking in Norfolk English before the Strangers arrived in Norwich. However, he does leave open the possibility that the Strangers helped to spread zero-marking by adopting it as they shifted to English.

As for the lexical impact of its alloglottic surroundings on French in Norwich, we find the occasional English word in French texts, which are discussed in the section on code switching. However, given the relatively small amount of source material available, it is difficult to establish whether any of these English words became embedded in the French used in Norwich. One French word that passed into the lexical stock of Norfolk English is 'lucam', a window in an attic or upper room of a house. It derives from *lucarne*, possibly introduced by the French weavers working upstairs by window-light (Wright, 1898–1905: III, 682).

### *Individual bilingualism*

The question of whether the term individual 'bilingualism' can only refer to the knowledge of two languages or more than two languages has been discussed at length in academic literature. This article follows Austin et al. (2015: 3): 'following common practice, we use the term *bilingualism* in this text as a general term for knowing two, three, or more languages; in using it we are also referring to cases of *multilingualism*'. It is important to recognise that bilingualism does not need to be complete; a bilingual may speak one language as a native speaker, but another only partially (McColl Millar, 2012: 51–56). We know of several bilinguals in Norwich, one of whose languages was French.

Pieter Weynoet, the secretary to the *hommes politiques*, knew Dutch, French, English and Latin and probably some Greek, having studied at Cambridge. Jan



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Ruytinck, who taught French, was a native speaker of Dutch. He probably knew English and certainly Latin, having worked as a notary in Ghent. Jan Cruso was a translingual author.[23] He wrote Dutch and English verse, translated French prose to English, code switched into French and Latin and possibly read Greek.

Ministers of the Stranger churches in Norwich were often bilingual. The first minister of the Walloon church, Jean Helmichius, had previously preached at Utrecht. In 1696 Petrus des Reaux was appointed minister of the Dutch church, and in 1712 as minister of the French church.

Local English people were bilinguals. The most notable examples are Sir Thomas Browne and his children. The auction catalogue of the library of Sir Thomas and his son, Edward, made in 1711 includes 326 French titles (Finch, 1986: 17; 55–58). It also lists several bilingual dictionaries, in which one of the languages is French.

Finally, in the early years after 1565 some of the Walloon community probably remained monolingual. In Canterbury, Elizabeth le Blan, who died in about 1598, did not learn to speak English. Her nuncupative will was 'by her uttered and declared . . . in the Walloon tongue or speech' (Oakley, 1987: 67). There are likely to have been Strangers like Elizabeth in Norwich.

## *Code switching*

A frequent contact phenomenon in bilingual societies, such as early modern Norwich, is code switching (Schendl, 2012: 523). Although it is likely that code switching occurred in speech, we only have written evidence for it.

Schendl notes that historically administrative texts have often included code switching. The 1568 return for the Walloon congregation is almost entirely in Latin. However, occupations are sometimes given in French. One entry begins *Mattheus Qubinus* drappier *Flander venit superiori aestate* ('Mattheus Qubinus clothmaker**,** Fleming, came last summer'). The reason for code switching into French to give the occupation (*drappier*) is not clear. One possibility is that Latin terms did not exist in all cases, although the compiler of the corresponding list of Dutch Strangers did not use the vernacular to describe similar occupations. Another possibility is that the person compiling the list for the Walloon Strangers simply did not know the necessary Latin terms. Alternatively, the author may take his lead from ancient Latin authors who sometimes switched to Greek for a subject's professional identity (Adams, 2003: 358–360).

In the records of the *hommes politiques*, Pieter Weynoet often engages in code switching. In 1612 an entry in French has the Latin title *Spiritus Sancti nobis adsit gratia* ('The Grace of the Holy Spirit be present with us') (fol. 122r.). A Latin title enhanced the official status of a text in the vernacular (Joby, 2014a: 224). In November 1584 Weynoet concludes an entry in French with the Latin words: *Actum die, mense, et anno ut supra* ('Made on the day, month and year given above')

[23] Kellman (2003: ix) defines translingual authors as 'those who write in more than one language, or in a language other than their primary one'.



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(fol. 18v.). This mirrors a common practice in antiquity of dating official Greek texts in Latin (Adams, 2003: 399–400). He occasionally adds a Latin coda to his entries. In 1585 under one entry in French he wrote *teste me politicorum virorum scriba iurato* ('as witnessed by me, the sworn clerk to the *hommes politiques*').[24] As with titles, a Latin coda enhanced the official status of a vernacular text.

In an entry in July 1590 Weynoet switches from French to English: *pour les quels derniers sont devenu* pledge of respondant *Jan Bagnelare Guillaume Ploijart et Gille Cambieu* (fol. 48v.). In antiquity and the Middle Ages, code switching was common in legal contexts and this is probably the motivation here (Adams, 2003: 384–388). Weynoet inserts the French word *contre* ('against') into English and Dutch entries concerning civil law (e.g., Mr. A *contre* Mrs. B). In 1613 Weynoet's successor, Jan Cockelius, inserted the French word *defendeur* (sic.) ('defendant') into an entry otherwise in Dutch. Neither *contre* nor *defendeur* are in the authoritative Dutch lexicon *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* and their insertion in Dutch texts can be seen as code switching.

English terms are inserted into the minutes of the Walloon church consistory meetings. French lexicons from this period give the form *sterlin* for the English currency.[25] In the entry for 29 May 1633 we find the forms *livres sterlins*, but also *livres sterling*.[26] In some dates, English forms are used for the names of months. *March*, *aprill*, *september*, *october* and *december* occur frequently in the minutes.[27] In the entry for 22 June 1671 we find '*a cause de l'*agreement *precedent*', where 'agreement' is an English word.[28]

Above, I discussed a Dutch epigram in which Jan Cruso switches into French to mock those who insert French into their speech to distinguish themselves socially. In several other Dutch epigrams Cruso refers to a stock character, *Monsieur*. He may be a Dutchman, who tries to puff himself up by appearing French, or possibly a Frenchman whom Cruso likes to ridicule. Epigram 10 begins:

So dickwils als *Monsieur* aan Tafel dronck,
Ick sach men hem alleen syn glaasken schonck.
[As often as *Monsieur* drank at the table,
I saw them fill only his little glass.]

Similarly, Epigram 73 is entitled *Aan Monsieur* ('To *Monsieur*'), and begins '*Monsieur* de wijl ghy selden spreeckt een woort' ('*Monsieur*, while you seldom say a word'). *Monsieur* appears again in Epigram 180, while we find *Maistress* ('lover') in Epigram 198. In Epigram 179, Cruso mocks a Dutchman, Roemer, who has

[24] NRO, MC 189/1 fol. 25r.
[25] *Sterlin* is listed in Cotgrave's 1611 French-English lexicon and in Huguet (1925).
[26] The form *sterling* is used in the minutes of the *hommes politiques*, e.g. NRO, MC 189/1 fol. 13v.
[27] NRO, FC 29/17. We find 'November' in NRO, MC 189/1 fol. 19v. None of these forms is listed in Huguet (1925).
[28] 'Agreement' is not listed in Huguet (1925).



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served as a soldier in France and now speaks French, *en draagt sich A la Mod'* ('and carries himself *à la mode*').

An English author who frequently code switched was Sir Thomas Browne. He usually did so from English to Latin or Greek, although he occasionally switched to French. In Tract VIII 'Of Languages: And Particularly of the Saxon Tongue' he switches into both *langue d'oc* and *langue d'oïl* (Browne, 1964: III, 70–83).[29] He switches from English to *langue d'oc* and back to English, arguing that one cannot fully understand Rabelais' works without a knowledge of *langue d'oc*. A little later Browne inserts several paragraphs in *langue d'oïl* before reverting to English. Given that the treatise is on languages, Browne may see this as a good excuse to mark his bilingualism. He concludes by signing the treatise with a French version of his name, *Thomas Broune,* an example of *Spielerei*.[30]

Schendl (2012: 525) observes that code switching in personal correspondence was considered socially acceptable in early modern correspondence and again this is something we see in Browne's letters. In 1660/1 he wrote letters in English to his son, Thomas Jr., who was then in France. He concludes two of them with the words *Votre Tres Chere Pere* (Browne, 1964: IV, 4; 7). There may be several motivations for this. It may be *Spielerei* once more, or switching for the purpose of evoking France. In antiquity, Latin writers such as Cicero would use Greek terms in order to evoke the Greek world (cf. Joby, 2014a: 243).

## *Translation*

A consequence of bilingualism was that translations could be made into and out of French. In 1569, the Brabant Stranger Antoni de Solempne printed a French translation of a Latin work, *De opera Dei* ('On the work of God'), by the Spanish theologian, Antonio Corro, who had taken refuge in London. The French translation was entitled *Tableau de l'oeuvre de Dieu* ('Table of the work of God'). Solempne showed the proofs to the minister of the Norwich Walloon church for the correction of the French. The minister was unhappy with the *Tableau* as he claimed it attacked orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, Solempne went ahead with printing one hundred copies of the *Tableau* as a broadsheet (Woods, 1993: 31–32).

Pierre de Laune, a minister of the Walloon church, produced a French translation of the English Book of Common Prayer. The translation was originally commissioned by King James I in order to promote a marriage between his son, the Prince of Wales, and a French princess. This was a major work of translation, running to over 500 pages. The first edition was published in London by John Bill in 1616. De Laune and Sir Thomas Browne both contributed copies of the translation to Norwich City Library. These were surprisingly rare examples of books in French in the library's collection prior to 1700 (Wilkins-Jones, 2008: 194).

[29] BL, Sloane MS. 1827, fols. 27-39.

[30] In manuscript Sir Thomas writes 'Browne', but scores this out adding *Broune* next to it. BL, Sloane MS. 1827, fol. 39r.



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Among his various activities Jan Cruso was a captain in the Norwich Dutch militia. This helps to explain why he translated two military works from French to English. In 1639 his translation of a military work by the Lord of Praissac, *Les Discours Militaires*, was printed as 'The Art of Warre' by Roger Daniel in Cambridge. In 1640 Daniel printed 'The Complete Captain, or An Abbridgement of Cesars warres with observations upon them'. This was Cruso's translation of *Le parfaict Capitaine* by the Duke of Rohan, itself an abridgement of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* ('Gallic War').

Administrative documents were translated into and out of French. Beneath the will of Giles Tettart (1588) are the words 'Translated out of ffrenche into Englishe per me Godfridum Burman'.[31] On 16 February 1593 Pieter Weynoet wrote a document in Dutch concerning a case of adultery. He then produced a French translation and sent both documents with a covering letter in Dutch to the coetus of the three Stranger churches in London (Dutch, French and Italian).

## *Language maintenance, shift and recession*

After c. 1650 the only direct evidence we have for the maintenance of French comes from the Walloon/French Church. This may either be because evidence from other social domains is lost, or because the language simply ceased to be used in these other domains. French persisted in the church in part because its continued existence was predicated on using the language, but also because communities of language continue to use their inherited language in religious contexts long after they have ceased to use it for other activities (McColl Millar, 2012: 56). However, the processes of language shift and recession were already underway, eventually leading to the decline of French as a first language in Norwich.

Nettle and Romaine (2000: 90) analyse language shift on the basis of two types of motivation: forced and unforced. In some cases of forced language shift, economic exigencies are decisive. In Norwich some members of the Walloon church moved to the local parish church for financial reasons, as they had to pay both parish church dues and watch money to support the Walloon church.[32]

The minister from 1657 to 1664, Jacques le Franc, preached afternoon sermons in Anglican churches, some of which he published (*The Touchstone of Truth*. Cambridge 1662) (Schickler, 1892: II, 257). In 1659 a member of the Walloon congregation complained to the consistory that Le Franc did not always preach in French; and so, he argued, preached bad doctrine. In 1664 Le Franc was obliged to resign from the Walloon church and was eventually appointed as an Anglican priest at St. Clement's in Norwich. In the 1680s Pierre Chauvin, from Toulouse, preached briefly at the Walloon church before likewise leaving for the Anglican Church (Moens, 1888–9: II, 235, 138–139).

[31] NRO, NCC will register Homes 334 – Giles Tettart MF 67 (and NRS 21) 1588.
[32] An example of an unforced motivation is the marriage of French Strangers to local English people.



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We see language shift in written records, although almost none before 1700. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the baptismal records were kept entirely in French. It is not until the eighteenth century that any hint of English appears. With one exception, an entry for 1671 in English, only French was used in the consistory minute book before 1700. Thereafter the use of English became more frequent here as in other church records.

In the nineteenth century five of the six entries in the consistory minute book are in English. The final entry is dated 24 November 1828, four years before the church closed. However, long before this French had probably become essentially a liturgical language in Norwich. As a footnote, it was just at this time that the free grammar school first added French to its curriculum, opening a new chapter in the long history of French in Norwich.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to illustrate how French functioned as an emigrant language in early modern Norwich. Law French, a dialect with its origins in an earlier wave of migration, continued to be used in the legal domain into the eighteenth century. The arrival of migrants from the Continental French-language area from 1565 onwards introduced into Norwich new varieties of French, notably Picard and the emerging standard French. Over time, the elements of Picard diminished and in some cases were entirely absent. There is little evidence for the use of other French dialects in Norwich. It is perhaps a moot point as to whether we can talk of a Norwich French *koine*, but it may be more useful to think of a linguistic spectrum, in which users employed elements of Picard and standard French to varying degrees in the hundred years after 1565.[33] On the Continent, although standard French gradually gained ground, dialects such as Picard persisted into the nineteenth and even the twentieth century (Lodge, 1993: 200–203). We have insufficient evidence to draw firm conclusions about why dialectal elements disappeared earlier in Norwich, but possible reasons are the teaching of standard French, a shift from French being a native language to being a taught language, and the centrality to the Stranger community of the Walloon church, where preaching is likely to have been in standard French.

We have found no evidence for the structural impact of the alloglottic surroundings on French in Norwich, although there is limited evidence for a lexical impact.[34] This may simply be due to the quantity of evidence available or the relatively short period of language contact.

Finally, this article is the first attempt to build a picture of the use of French in early modern England as something other than a language of high culture. It will be useful to study the history of French in other towns in early modern

[33] An example of a French *koine* is given by Aslanov (2013: 218). He observes that during the Crusades a *koine* arose in the Levant based on a range of French dialects that otherwise would not have come into contact.

[34] A contrast can be drawn with the reception of Arabic lexemes in Crusaders' Old French in the Levant (Aslanov, 2013: 215).



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England such as Canterbury, Rye, Southampton, and in the immigrant community in London. Not only would this further increase our understanding of French as an emigrant language, but also our knowledge of the linguistic diversity of early modern England.

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