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McFetridge, Ch .13 to p. 283-298; Ch.14

French word formation processes, continued ...

We ended last week by showing that velar sounds could undergo lenition. But we also noted the the situation with these sounds was more complex than that.

> Indeed not only can velars lenite, they can become more vowel-like. This process is called **vocalization**.

Thus we have the Latin borrowing "legal" and the French borrowing "loyal". Ditto with "regal" / "royal". Less often heard is the Latin borrowing "decanal" (relating to a dean) and "doyen" (a respected or prominent person in a particular field).

Vocalization applied to the important root √fac meaning "make".

The French version "-fy" is a productive suffix in CE. When added to a root it has a **causative** meaning, e.g., "to make X", e.g., signify, amplify, prettify, petrify …

Table XIII.10 gives a huge number of words with this "-fy" suffix.

What happened to √fac and its Vc ending also happened to other roots like √plic meaning "fold", which became "ply" in French.

Velars vocalized before a consonant, too, giving us forms like conduct > conduit; fructose > fruit. See more in Table XIII.11.

— note that in this case we find "i" instead of "y", but we've seen the historical and phonological relationship between these two before.

— We employ the rule $[\{k, g\}C \rightarrow yC]_{French}$

Phonological rules sometimes are just one-shot deals. For example, morphology might throw together a prefix ending in a vowel and a root beginning with a vowel. One of these vowels would delete and that would be that.

But on many other occasions, we've seen that one phonological rule provides the environment for another to apply. Think of our complex derivations for "vision", "dimension", and "educate". So consider the following:

Latin borrowing	Latin	French borrowing
sanctify	sanctus	saint
punctual	punctum	point
junction	junctus	joint
stringent	√strig + n	strain
unction	unguimentum	ointment

Two problems arise from the preceding:

1. Where is the velar?

2. Why the diphthong?

According to earlier examples, the velar should vocalize. So, if we consider the origin of "sanctify" to be "sanct" + "fac", we're left with explaining how the first part of that word becomes "saint".

— we'd expect "sanyt" if this were a case of simple vocalization.

— but if we revisit our old friend metathesis, an explanation presents itself. If "y" metathesizes, we've got "saynt". There's no problem getting "i" out of "y" given the virtual interchangeability of these two segments. Thus: saint!

Problem: Is metathesis justified in French? We need to demonstrate that it exists elsewhere in the language. Consider the following:

Latin borrowing	Latin word	French borrowing
cuneal (wedge)	cuneus	coin
potion	potionis	poison
memory	memoria	memoir
foliage	folia	foil
solitary	solitarius	solitaire

English borrowings drop Latin inflectional endings. But those endings affect the French borrowings:

[i] and [e] convert to [y] when followed by another vowel:

$$[\{i, e\}\ V \rightarrow y\ V]_{French}$$

So we can "normalize" the data to give us the following forms:

derived forms	French
cuny	coin
potyon	poison
foly	foil
memory	memoir
ady	aid
solitary	solitaire

"Foil" and "memory" arise when metathesis applied to reverse the order of C [y] and create a diphthong with the preceding vowel:

[C y → y C] French

Other words like "saint" can now be explained by velar vocalization to [y] before a consonant followed by metathesis.

The derivations look like this:

sanct	punct	memory	
sanyt	punyt	"	Vocalization
saynt	puynt	memoyr	Metathesis
saint	point	memoir	[y] = i

So we need vocalization and metathesis in French independently of one another. The interesting part comes when they interact and give us words whose underlying structure would otherwise seem opaque.

Syncope

We know from earlier in the course that unstressed vowels are subject to deletion, e.g., "portable". In Romance languages we find that medial unstressed vowels are lost by the process of syncope.

Latin borrowing	Latin word	French borrowing
debit	debitus	debt
capital	capitaneus	captain
circulate	circulus	circle
general	generis	genre
fabulous	fabula	fable

Your text cites an unwieldy looking rule to account for the foregoing:

$[V_1C^nV_2 \circ C^nV_3 \rightarrow V_1CCV_3]_{French}$

Again, what's interesting is how the application of syncope provides the phonological environment for other rules to kick in, such as …

Epenthesis

Latin borrowing	Latin word	French borrowing
camera	camera	chamber
numeral	numerus	number
general	generis	gender
tenuous	tener	tender
similar	similis	resemble

You'll see from the previous table and other examples in the text (Table XIII.17) that the loss of the middle vowel brings a nasal and either "r" or "l" into juxtaposition.

— epenthesis then inserts a stop that is "**homorganic**" to the place of articulation of the nasal, e.g., [mr → m<u>b</u>r]$_{\text{French}}$

Cluster simplification

Consider the following alternations:

Latin	Old French	French
hospital	hostel	hotel
masculine		male
blaspheme (<Gk)		blame
muscular	muscle	

We can see in "hospital" the loss of "i" through syncope and then a cluster simplification rule that reduces "spt" to "st":

$[C_1C_2C_3 \rightarrow C_1C_3]$ Old French

The word "hotel" sees the loss of "s" suggesting that the Latin rule [zC → C] has now become [sC → C] Modern French.

Prothesis

Common in Romance languages, this is the addition of a vowel before a word beginning with "s" plus a consonant:

Latin	Old French	French
scale	escalator	echelon
special	especial	
stable	establish	
spatula		epaulet

Assibilation

We've seen this before in alternations like "important" and "importance". It can occur in roots, too, like the change from the Latin root √viti meaning "fault" to the French form "vice".

Further examples of this process are seen in the addition to the past participle of a nominalizing suffix which itself arose from assibilation of the present participle:

pirate	piracy
delicate	delicacy
private	privacy
accurate	accuracy
literate	literacy

Assibilation of velars

This is a very regular process: [k {i, e} → s {i, e}] Old French

[k]	[s]
cook	cease
carnival	cinema
cup	ceiling
corner	recipient

This kind of thing happens in other Romance languages, too. But it went one step further in French where [k] also assibilated before [a] yielding [ʧa] as in the following table…

[ka → ʧa]Old French

Latin [k]	Old French [ʧa]
card	chart
mercantile	merchant
capital	chapter
car	chariot
canal	channel

Even more interestingly, change continued with [ʧ] becoming [ʃ] so that if a word were borrowed a second time it would reflect the new rule [ʧ → ʃ]$_{\text{Modern French}}$.

Latin	Old French [ʧ]	Modern French [ʃ]
campus	champion	Champagne
candle	chandler	chandelier
case	chase	chassis
castle		chateau
cape	chapel	chapeau
canto	chant	chanteuse

The velar [g] assibilated before [i] and [e]:

Latin (original [g])	Old French [dʒ]	Modern French [ʒ]
genus	gender	genre
gens	gentle	gendarme

Keep in mind that there are plenty of words beginning with "g" before [i] or [e] where the pronunciation remains [g], e.g., "geese", "gill", "gear", etc. But these are English words and assibilation does not apply.

Assibilation of labials

Assibilation of labials is triggered by [y]. [i] and [e] both convert to [y] before another vowel. This [y] triggers assibilation.

Thus a Latin root like √sapie meaning "wise" undergoes one rule and becomes "sapye" and then assibilation applies to yield "sa**g**e" [ʤ].

> With the root √rubea meaning "red", however, after the intermediate form "rubya", the assibilation process gives us "rouge" where the "g" is pronounced [ʒ].
>
> This is because "rouge" is a more recent form.

Assibilation of nasals

This will happen under the right conditions, e.g., where the nasal is followed by [y]:

Latin borrowing	Latin	French borrowing
extraneous	extraneare	estrange
granular	granica	grange
calumny	calumnia	challenge

Finally, **contraction**.

The Latin diphthong "au" contracted to "o" in French. Thus we find pause → poise, clause → close, and nausea → noise. That last one is especially neat because there is also metathesis of [i] to form a new diphthong.

The English Partition - Ch. 14

We've spent the whole semester looking at affixation. That's a strongly rule-governed process of word formation.

> — but there are plenty of other word formation processes that are a bit looser.

Consider shortening processes that result in **acronyms** and **abbreviations**.

Acronyms use the first letter of a string of words to create a new word, e.g., "radio detection and ranging" = "radar".

Abbreviation (which is really a type of acronymy) is the pronunciation of the first letter of a string of words, e.g., DVD.

— sometimes this is shortened even further as in IEEE: ("I triple E") Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers

Backformation

Another type of shortening, i.e., a word with a recognizable structure is stripped of an affix. This process highlights the fact that we must have some sense of morphology underpinning our grammatical intuitions.

— to use the linguistic buzzwords, morphological structure has "**psychological reality**".

— thus while a verb like "swindle" looks like it would be the source of the noun "swindler", in fact it's the other way around! But how could we create "swindle" unless we knew there was an agentive suffix "-er"?

Clipping gets rid of superfluous material in a word while remaining true to the phonology of the language. Thus "prof" < "professor". Many other examples in Table XIV.4.

Note that stuff which gets clipped is not morphemic. In a word like "blog" from "web log", the deleted "we" is not a morpheme.

Blends fit phonological rules but are not constrained by morphology or syntax. The overused "smog" < "smoke" + "fog" is a good example.

The much more recent "frappucino" from "frozen" + "cappucino" is a nice example of this productive process.

Your text highlights the use of "-gate" to indicate any kind of scandal. From the original "Watergate" - which was the name of the complex wherein the US Democratic National Committee headquarters was burgled - we've seen "-gate" attached to a range of other names, e.g., "Pedalgate" ...

… in reference to Toyota's troubles with sticking gas pedals.

Zero derivation

Stress shift can create nouns from verbs and vice-versa without any additional morphological matter, e.g., **im**port [noun] vs im**port** [verb].

> Of course, there are many "linguistic strings" that can't be categorized until the whole sentence in which they're used is parsed, e.g., "love". Noun or verb? Who can say out of context? (Although formally we consider this to be a case of two distinct lexemes.)

Brand names

So widely used do some brand names become that they are one with the product or process the name designates. "Kleenex" is a good example, although the makers of "Kleenex" retain control of the trademark. But "spandex" and "zipper" are now generized.

The makers of the "Rollerblade" line fought hard to keep control of that brand name and succeeded to the point that other manufacturers of similar products had to use the term "inline skates".

> "Google" of course is a company name and the name of a search engine, but so ubiquitous is it that the noun has become a verb.
>
> Your text notes how the prefix "Mc-" has come to mean "thrifty and consistent" (as its source, McDonald's restaurants, is claimed to be). McDonalds has successfully defended against the commercial use of this prefix by others.
>
> > — when the Campbell government in BC made all colleges in the province into universities a couple of years ago at the stroke of a pen, these schools were dubbed "McUniversities" by critics of the government (and academics at the "real" universities).

Fusion

You've studied the formation of words from, among other things, Latin roots and suffixes. You know that a word ending like "**-ation**" has structure:

thematic vowel + past participle + nominalizing suffix

But who knows or even cares about this anymore? No one! "-ation" is viewed as a single unit that can make nouns out of verbs, e.g., "delegation". The suffix has been re-analyzed.

As we saw in Latin, suffixes can attract other suffixes. So just like "-ic" attracts "-al" as in "classical", so "-ize" attracts "-ation" as in "rationalization".

— "-ize" is Greek and "-ation" is Latin, but the two come together in an English word formation process.

… and so it goes …