Abstract

As a whole, English has a great number of foreign words as well as morphemes in Present-day English (PE). The negative prefixes, *dis*, *in*-, and *non*- are some of them, and all of them came into English in the Middle English period (ME). Their linguistic behaviors stabilized in English without their becoming obsolete. In spite of the influx of the vast number of Latinate or French words, *un*- words interestingly survive in PE. It seems apparent that *un*- keeps on prefixing to English words to derive new coinages. This reflects the fact that *un*- is one of the most productive prefixes in PE, as linguists such as Siegel (1974), Allen (1978) and Selkirk (1985) point out. The purpose of the paper is to explore the linguistic behaviors of *in*- and *un*- as they can be discerned in *Piers Plowman* in ME, especially focusing on the following points: (1) the features of the two prefixes; (2) a description of their syntactic categories; and (3) the relation between *in*- and *un*- and alliteration.