



Origin and development of english language during the literary eras

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Abstract

English language has a striking and composite history, spanning over 1,500 years. Its origins date back to the 5th century AD, when Germanic tribes such as the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded England, displacing the native Celtic-speaking population. This period, known as Old English (c. 450-1100 AD), saw the emergence of a distinct Germanic language, heavily influenced by Latin and Celtic. With the Norman Conquest of 1066, French became the language of the ruling class, and English underwent significant changes, resulting in Middle English during 1100-1500. The Renaissance and the introduction of the printing press in the 15th century further transformed English, leading to Early Modern English during 1500-1800. Modern English has continued to evolve, incorporating words and influences from various languages, including Latin, Greek, and numerous other languages that were introduced during the British Empire's colonial expansion. Today, English is an international language, spoken by millions of people around the world. Thus, this paper explores origin and development of English Language and how old English contributed to enrich the present English. The authors of the Elizabethan age reshaped the literary language by deriving foreign words and by inventing new expressions and figures of speech. The authors of the seventeenth century developed a literary style. Then, the writers of the eighteenth century dedicated themselves to develop a formal, polished, and correct language. Wordsworth and Coleridge planned to filter and renew the literary language and make it nearer to the everyday language of the ordinary people. Modernism tried to coherent a picture of the world using the spoken rather than the formal language.

Keywords: Language, literature, old english, middle english, renaissance, romanticism, modernism

Introduction

Any language in the world cannot be traced to its last origin, because this origin is found remote back in the primitive past of the society. Language existed earlier than written literature and it can be found in "Indo-European," which was spoken more than six thousand years ago by a group of tribesmen in Europe and in the western part of Asia. The early development of the Indo-Europeans is believed to be the pushing out of the borders of agricultural people, who over centuries introduced agriculture into the more thinly populated countries. This growth is believed to have begun in about 7000 B.C. the Indo-European speaking groups of people began to break up well before 2000 B.C. due to various reasons. They migrated to India, Greece, Italy, and northern and Western Europe and started to speak their languages in different way due to geographically division. The earliest record of Indo-European speaking groups in Europe belongs to the Greeks and later is Italic dating from around the sixth century BC onwards. And the Celtic-speaking persons first became visible in the area of the Alps. By the start of the first century, the original Indo-European Language had already given birth to the other languages like Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Germanic, etc. Latin language later developed into distinct regional varieties that finally formed the separate French and Italian languages. Germanic evolved into the group of languages that includes German, Dutch, Swedish, and English.

The history of English as a distinct language begins in the middle of the fifth century, when the Angles, (Germanic tribe that originated from the Angeln region in modern-day Germany) Saxons (a confederation of Germanic tribes that originated from the region of Saxony in modern-day Germany) and Jutes (a Germanic tribe that originated from

the Jutland Peninsula) occupied Britain. They brought with them their own language, a dialect of Germanic which soon came to be designated as "Angleish,"(English) was the ancestor of the today's English. All these invaders also brought with them their own alphabet, called "runes" (Alexander) which were used for carving inscription on wood and stone. Except of these carvings, written records were not kept; stories, legends, and poems were delivered orally from generation to generation. Most of the knowledge of Old English is based on manuscripts written late in the Anglo-Saxon period by monks who used the Latin alphabet for writing English.

Later on, other languages made important contributions to the English language during the Anglo-Saxon period. One language was Celtic the spoken by Celtic people of Britain which is divided into three groups like Gaulish, Brittonic and Gaelic. Gaulish was spoken in France and northern Italy died out during the early centuries of the Christian era. Brittonic was the division of Celtic spoken in most of Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Gaelic was the Celtic language of Ireland then spread to the Island of Man in the fourth century and to Scotland in the fifth. Celtic speaking people were skilled in metallurgy, and the Germanic words for iron and lead were maybe borrowed from them. There are few traces of Celtic influence on Old English and the numbers of Celtic words are taken into English like a number of Celtic place names and geographical terms, including Kent, York, Thames, Dover, and Avon. When, the Anglo-Saxons converted to Christianity, Old English borrowed a number of words from Latin, especially for the ideas and organizations of Christianity; they contain Old English apostol 'apostle', biscop 'bishop' (Latin episcopus), munuc 'monk' (Latin

monachus), mynster 'monastery, church' (Latin monastĕrium), etc. A number of words related to education and learning, such as school, verse, papers, and title, were also taken over from Latin during this period. Scandinavian's language Old Norse had a considerable influence on English. The Danes also contributed every day terms like anger, to cast, to die and ill to English. Primitive Indo-European and primitive Germanic had high inflection on languages particularly in their grammar. Old English inherited tense system from Primitive Germanic.

During eleventh to the fifteenth century, the official language of the court in London was French. The period began and ended with the unwelcomed arrival of two victors: Normans in 1066, and the printing press in 1476. English literature continued the first conquest with difficulty. When the first printed English book appeared, the phase of Middle English was virtually over: the language had assumed its modern form except in spelling. A characteristic stylistic feature of the era was a swift growth in the number of words which entered the language from Latin and mostly from French. Middle English vocabulary thus often has sets of words each with a diverse origin and each conveying the same meaning but with different patterns of use.

The Old English-derived lexical items are generally more frequent in English and more colloquial, more central and core to the language. French words also entered into the law and administration, the arts, fashion and areas of cultural and political dominance. They tended to spread from London and the court as well as locally from the lord's castle. Many of these words came down from a developed social and cultural level and had no equal in English. By contrast, English and Scandinavian-derived words are more homely and much more part of a daily life.

After the Norman Downfall, the language of the Norman ruling class was Northern French. The language of the English court in the century was Parisian French, which carried more prestige than Anglo-Norman or other varieties. French culture was the culture of English nobility, while English was the everyday language of commoners. Chaucer, the father of English literature, is the only medieval English poet who has been read continuously from his time down to ours. He made extensive use of every day colloquial speech which contains more Old English-derived words. The range and variety of Chaucer's English did much to establish English as a national language throughout the country.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the English language changed very swiftly in keeping with rapid social, economic and political changes. At the same time, an era of growing exploration and trade across the world declared new words. During the period of 1500 to 1650 around 12,000 new words were introduced into English. Words came into English from over fifty different languages, although by far the majority was derived from Latin. The Bible has been one of the major shaping influences in the development of the English language. However, the history of the relationship between the Bible and the English languages has been a long because many people believed that English was not a language worthy of conveying the profound moral sentiments of the Bible. Over one hundred and fifty years later, William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English from the original Greek, so that people should be

able to read the Bible in their own language. Shakespeare's language and modern English have enough in common so that language historians consider that they both belong to the same stage in the history of English. The changes between Chaucer's and Shakespeare's days were so extensive that Middle English and Modern English sound like two different languages. The most important changes involved the pronunciation of vowel sounds. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the pronunciation of all the long vowel sounds gradually shifted. By Shakespeare's time most of the long vowels had acquired the values that they still have today.

Another considerable change was the disappearance of the final e sound at the end of words. In Chaucer's verse the final e was often pronounced in words like space, strange (strange), and ende (end). English spelling was not much affected by these great changes in pronunciation. A standard written form of English came into use during the fifteenth century due to the introduction of the printing press into England. Then, a great many Middle English spelling became permanently fixed in the language. This is why long a, e, i, o, and u usually stand for different sounds in Modern English than they do in all other languages that use the Latin alphabet. English spelling was already largely fixed before the shift in English vowel sounds took place. The same reason accounts for the present of so many 'silent letters' in English words. The language of inland Europe also continued to supply new words. Englishmen who voyaged abroad brought back news of customs and manners. From Italy they brought back many words relating to architecture and music, like piazza, sonata, and violin. From Spaniards they acquired words connecting to the exploration of the world such as alligator, armadillo, and cocoa. Spanish sailors and traders passed on some terms from American Indian language, too, including canoe, cannibal, hurricane, and tobacco.

English language in the course of the seventeenth century reached in stable form. Authors of the earlier century had often felt that they were completely reforming their native language. They had borrowed words from foreign languages: they had developed elaborate prose styles. In the seventeenth century, this Elizabethan attitude gradually gave way to a concern for polishing and refining the language. John Milton was one of the last writers to make a deliberate practice of borrowing words from Latin. He was also one of the last to deliberately pattern his style after classical models, using long, weighty sentences and Latinate constructions. In Milton there is nothing ornamental; every word earns its keep.

The rapid rise of interest in scientific subjects gave a new attitude toward language. The modern "Age of Science" was beginning, and the educated public was fascinated by the experiments and discoveries that were taking place in different fields like medicine, astronomy, physics, and other related areas. Writers on these subjects realized, of course, that clarity and accuracy were essential for their purposes. But, they sometimes complained that English was not suited for expressing exact ideas, though it had proved to be an excellent means for poetry and drama. For this reason, a few of the leading thinkers of the time continued the old practice of writing in Latin, feeling that it was easier to present ideas accurately in that language. Isaac Newton, for instance, used

Latin to write his famous work on mathematics. However, English was the usual language for scientific discussions in England.

In the eighteenth century began with a revival of interest in the idea of establishing an English Academy to set up official standards for the language, as the French Academy was attempting to do for the French language. The members of the Royal Society had taken it for granted that language changed, but they had not wanted to halt this process. On the contrary, they wanted to encourage further development. Englishmen no longer felt that their own language was inferior to other languages particularly to Latin for purposes of serious writing.

The schools began to use an important influence on the language. Prior to 1700, most schools had concentrated on the teaching of Latin and had paid little attention to English. During the course of the eighteenth century, however, the teaching of English gradually became the basis of most elementary schooling. Many of the rules of spelling, grammar, and usage that were first set forth in eighteenth-century schoolbooks became a traditional part of the school curriculum and have continued to be taught to the present day. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) made the first theoretical argument in the history of English poetry for a radical review by a language of poetry. His argument was that conventional poetry should be replaced by a language closer to the everyday speech of ordinary people and both, Wordsworth and Coleridge wanted to purify and renew the language of poetry. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, written English has become progressively less formal and closer to the spoken language. Meanwhile, other events were taking place in the early nineteenth century which made it quite clear that the language was still changing and growing.

Englishmen who saw service in outlying parts of the British Empire returned home with a new vocabulary of exotic terms, some of which quickly made their way into the standard vocabulary of the language. Meanwhile, in England itself, the vocabulary of modern science and technology was taking shape. The arrival of the steam engine was marked by the appearance of new terms such as piston valve, drive shaft, steamship, and steamroller. During the last half of the century, many words associated with electrical power put in their first appearance: dynamo, ampere, ohm, volt and watt. Perhaps the greatest single product of nineteenth century language scholarship was the Oxford English Dictionary, a dictionary that traces the origin of thousands of English words, giving the date when each was first found in English writing and showing the development of new meanings by giving definitions and carefully dated quotations. The preparation of this dictionary was an immense task. Work on it was begun in 1857, and by the time the first volume appeared in 1884, approximately a thousand readers and editors had given their time to the project. The complete twelve volume dictionary took more than seventy years to finish.

Conclusion

Thus, English language has a complex history, spanning over 1,500 years. Its origins date back to the 5th century AD, when Germanic tribes such as the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded England, displacing the native Celtic-speaking

population. This period, known as Old English (c. 450-1100 AD), saw the emergence of a distinct Germanic language, heavily influenced by Latin and Celtic. With the Norman Conquest of 1066, French became the language of the ruling class, and English underwent significant changes, resulting in Middle English during 1100-1500. The Renaissance and the introduction of the printing press in the 15th century further transformed English, leading to Early Modern English during 1500-1800. Modern English has continued to evolve, incorporating words and influences from various languages, including Latin, Greek, and numerous other languages that were introduced during the British Empire's colonial expansion. Today, English is an international language, spoken by millions of people around the world.

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