



The Evolution of the English Language Throughout History

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the general evolution of the English language throughout history, periodization of the English language according to its development and analyzes their specific peculiarities of language development with the help of examples and images.

Keywords:

periodization, linguistic feature, linguistic evolution, traditional classification, Germanic tribes, Roman alphabet, Roman invasion cultural shift, Common Brittonic, dialects

Introduction. Language has been evolving for as long as humans have been communicating. The earliest forms of communication were likely grunts and gestures, which eventually evolved into language. The first written language was developed by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia around 3200 BCE. Since then, language has continued to evolve and transform with each passing generation.

One of the most significant examples of linguistic evolution is the shift from Old English to Modern English. The English language like many other elements in the history has gone through much transformation for nothing permanent in this entire world. The English language today is not the same as it was in the past. Modern-day English represents many centuries of development; it has gradually with the passage of time. The political and social events in the course of history also affect the language. It is very important for us to know that old English was very different from today's English. It is surprising how language changes its form with development. Like other languages, English has also gone through various changes. The changes in a language are very important because when

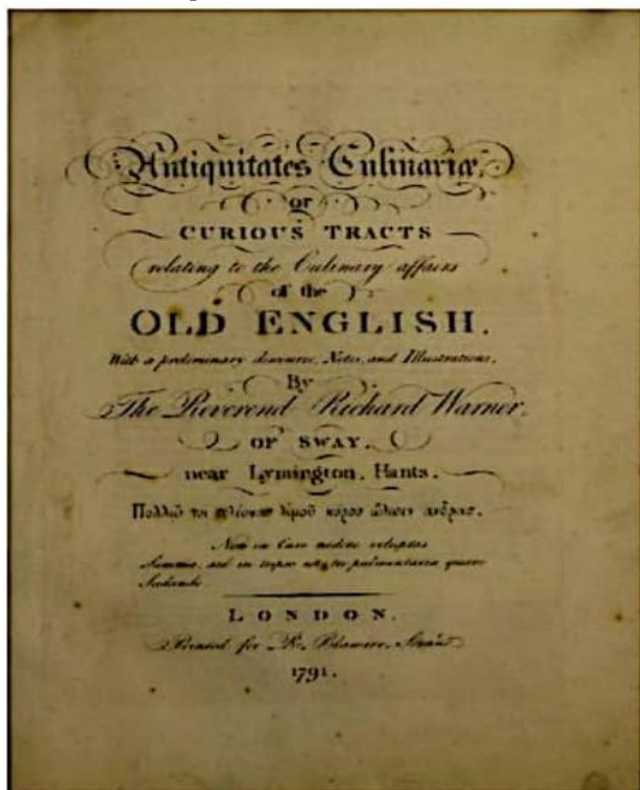
a language ceases to change we call it a dead language. Old English, also known as Anglo-Saxon, was spoken in England from the 5th century until the Norman Conquest in 1066. This form of English is virtually unrecognizable to modern speakers, with its complex grammar, inflectional endings, and archaic vocabulary.

Main part. Old English developed from a set of Anglo-Frisian or Ingvaemonic dialects originally spoken by Germanic tribes traditionally known as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. As the Germanic settlers became dominant in England, their language replaced the languages of Roman Britain: Common Brittonic, a Celtic language; and Latin, brought to Britain by the Roman invasion.

Old English had four main dialects, associated with particular Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: Mercian, Northumbrian, Kentish and West Saxon. It was West Saxon that formed the basis for the literary standard of the later Old English period, although the dominant forms of Middle and Modern English would develop mainly from Mercian, and Scots from Northumbrian. The speech of eastern and northern parts of England was subject to

strong Old Norse influence due to Scandinavian rule and settlement beginning in the 9th century.

Old English is one of the West Germanic languages, and its closest relatives are Old Frisian and Old Saxon. Like other old Germanic languages, it is very different from Modern English and Modern Scots; and largely incomprehensible for Modern English or Modern Scots speakers without study. Within Old English grammar nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs have many inflectional endings and forms, and word order is much freer. The oldest Old English inscriptions were written using a runic system, but from about the 8th century this was replaced by a version of the Latin alphabet.



Over the centuries, English has undergone a series of transformations, including the Great Vowel Shift in the 14th century, which resulted in a change in the pronunciation of many vowels. The rise of print culture in the 16th century also had a significant impact on the English language, as spelling became standardized and new words were introduced. In terms of image based communication, a similar transformation come in Europe from the fifteenth century on with

the introduction of the old master print and slightly later, popular prints, both of which were actually much quicker in reaching the mass of the population than printed text. Print culture is the conglomeration of effects on human society that is created by making printed forms of communication. Print culture encompasses many stages as it has evolved in response to technological advances. Print culture can first be studied from the period of time involving the gradual movement from oration to script as it is the basis for print culture. As the printing became commonplace, script became insufficient and printed documents were mass-produced. The era of physical print has had a lasting effect on human culture.



As it is known, the periodization of the English language always dependent on the various factor in language studies and therefore, majority scholars classify the English language mainly according to linguistic and traditional factors of language development. The historical development of a language is a continuously uninterrupted process without sudden brakes or rapid transformations. The commonly accepted traditional periodization divides English history into 3 periods:

Old English – 5th-11th century

Middle English – 11th – 15th century

New / modern English – 15th century – till now.

The 1st pre-written period, which is called Early Old English, lasts from the Germanic invasion on Britain till the

beginning of writing form (5th-7th century). It is a stage of tribal dialects.

During the 5th century AD, Britain was invaded by three Germanic tribes: the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. At the time, most British inhabitants spoke a common Celtic language, but the tribes overpowered them and forced Celtic speakers to move to Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles spoke 'Englisc' which then evolved into English. This became the primary language for those living in so-called



The 2nd period (Anglo-Saxon period) extends from the 5th till 11th century and it is called Old English. It is written Old English. The tribal dialects gradually changed into local or regional dialects.

The 3rd period is known as Early-Middle English starts in the 11th century till 14th century. It was the stage of **great dialectal divergence** caused by feudal system and by foreign influences – Scandinavian and French. William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy invaded Britain in 1066 in a battle known as the Norman Conquest. This led to spread of the Anglo-Norman dialect, which along with Latin and Anglo-Saxon became one of the most popular languages of its time. However, the ruling elite were French speakers and so English soon became the secondary language at the time. Many French terms and phrases that we use today were introduced into English language during this period. English absorbed two layers of lexical borrowings: Scandinavian and French. Scandinavian borrowings were intensive: fewer nouns were used. But French one was extensive, more numeral. French language was spoken at

'England'. The introduction of Christianity in the late 6th and early 7th centuries was great cultural importance. It led to the introduction of written texts in the Roman alphabet on parchment. Previously text had been transcribed onto wood, bone and stone. Later on in the year 850, Britain was invaded by Vikings. This yet again, created a cultural shift. The Vikings brought many words to the English language that we still use today.

royal court, in school, and was used by nobility. In the middle period grammatical changes were so great by the end of the period. They had transformed English from synthetic into analytical one.



In 1204, King John was defeated by King Philip II of France and lost the province of Normandy. This led to a further evolution of the English language. This new version of the language, known as Middle English grew in

popularity and overtook the old Anglo-Norman dialect. It became so prevalent that in 1362 members of Parliament starting using the Middle English dialect.

The 14th century saw a surge in the use of Middle English as it was used for a great number of technical and official functions.

The 4th period from 14th till 15th century is called Classical Middle English. It was the age of restoration of English to the position of state and literary language. And also it was time of literary flourishing when the Jeffery Chaucer created the first English book "Canterbury tales".

The 5th period. Early New/Modern English. 1476-1660. In this period the first printed book appeared. It was published by William Caxton. It was period of transition of the age of Chaucer to the age of Shakespeare. It was also a time of grate political and economic events. The progress of culture, education and literature favored linguistic unity. English became a language of a stable linguistic standard. This period was also a time of vocabulary growth.

The 6th period. Middle 17th century till 18th. Neoclassical English. It is period of normalization and correctness. The norms were fixed as rules in the numerous dictionaries and grammar books. Extension to north America. Fixing of pronunciation. The improvement of the grammar was perfected.

The 7th period. Late 18th century. Period of expansion of the language. It became the official language of Canada and New Zeland. The vocabulary was highly and reaches because of the progress in technology and culture. Late Modern English developed between 1800 and 2000. From 1800 English vocabulary quickly broadened what spelling and grammar remained unchanged.

Thanks to the rise of the British Empire, advances in technology and the industrial Revolution between 1760 and 1840, new words began to emerge. The industrial Revolution created new means of transportation like steamships and trains. This meant people were able to travel much further than before and experience different cultures and dialects. Almost half of the

scientific and technological outputs between 1750 and 1900 were written in English, exposing more people than ever before to the language.

The increase I globe trade due to the rise of the British Empire meant that traders came across many new words. The popularity of films and later computers led more people to want to learn to read and speak the English language.

Conclusion. The English language we use today is constantly adapting and evolving to suit our fast-paced lives. Approximately, 375 million people across the globe speak English and more than 50 countries have English either as their official or primary language. 51 % of Europeans speak English in addition to their mother tongue. Over one billion people are learning to speak English, making it one of the most dominant languages in the world.

The English language has changed during all this time. Today Old English is an early form of English that was common in what is now England and southern Scotland from the middle of the 5th century to the middle of the 12th century. Old English was a West Germanic language and therefore closely related to Old Frisian and Old Saxon. And also the fact that print culture embodies all forms of printed text and other printed forms of visual communication. The development in the English language is still different. Linguists are still busy in reforming this language. The English which we are using today may be; it will be different in 100 years or so.

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