

## Unit-IX – HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### 1. Origin of Language

- ❖
- ❖ Words are definitely not inborn, but the capacity to acquire and language and use it creatively seems to be inborn.
- ❖ Noam Chomsky calls this ability the LAD (Language Acquisition Device).
- ❖ Today we will ask two questions: how did this language instinct in humans originate? And how did the first language come into being?
- ❖ Concerning the origin of the first language, there are two main hypotheses, or beliefs. Neither can be proven or disproved given present knowledge.

#### 1) Belief in divine creation

- ❖ Many societies throughout history believed that language is the gift of the gods to humans.
- ❖ The most familiar is found in Genesis 2:20, which tells us that Adam gave names to all living creatures.
- ❖ This belief predicates that humans were created from the start with an innate capacity to use language.
- ❖ It can't be proven that language is as old as humans, but it is definitely true that language and human society are inseparable.
- ❖ Wherever humans exist language exists.
- ❖ Every stone age tribe ever encountered has a language equal to English, Latin, or Greek in terms of its expressive potential and grammatical complexity.
- ❖ Technologies may be complex or simple, but language is always complex.
- ❖ Charles Darwin noted this fact when he stated that as far as concerns language, "Shakespeare walks with the Macedonian swineherd, and Plato with the wild savage of Assam." I
- ❖ n fact, it sometimes seems that languages spoken by preindustrial societies are much more complex grammatically than languages such as English (example: English has about seven tense forms and three noun genders; Kivunjo, a Bantu language spoken on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, has 14 tenses and about 20 noun classes.)
- ❖ There are no primitive languages, nor are any known to have existed in the past--even among the most remote tribes of stone age hunter-gatherers.
- ❖ Nevertheless, it is impossible to prove that the first anatomically modern humans possessed creative language.
- ❖ It is also impossible to disprove the hypothesis that primitive languages might have existed at some point in the distant past of *Homo sapiens* development.

#### 2) Natural evolution hypothesis

- ❖ At some point in their evolutionary development humans acquired a more sophisticated brain which made language invention and learning possible.
- ❖ In other words, at some point in time humans evolved a **language acquisition device**, whatever this may be in real physical terms.
- ❖ The simple vocalizations and gestures inherited from our primate ancestors then quickly gave way to a creative system of language--perhaps within a single generation or two.
- ❖ Mention the hypothesis about rewiring the visual cortex of the brain into a language area.

- ❖ According to the natural evolution hypothesis, as soon as humans developed the biological, or neurological, capacity for creative language, the cultural development of some specific system of forms with meanings would have been an inevitable next step.
- ❖ This hypothesis cannot be proven either. Archeological evidence unearthed thus far, seems to indicate that modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, emerged within the last 150,000 years.
- ❖ By 30,000, BC all other species of humanoids seem to have been supplanted by *Homo sapiens*.
- ❖ Could the success of our species vis-a-vis other hominids be explained by its possession of superior communicative skills?
- ❖ Speaking people could teach, plan, organize, and convey more sophisticated information. This would have given them unparalleled advantage over hominid groups without creative language.
- ❖ Of course, no one knows whether other species of humanoids--*Homo erectus* and *Homo neanderthalis* -- used creative language.
- ❖ Perhaps they also did. In any case, *Homo sapiens*, "the wise human," should perhaps really be called *Homo loquens*, "the speaking human" because language and humans are everywhere found together, whereas wisdom among humans is much more selectively distributed.

### Invention hypotheses

- ❖ Moving on to our second question, if humans acquired the capacity for language either by divine gift or by evolution, then exactly how might humans have devised the first language?
- ❖ There are several hypotheses as to how language might have been consciously invented by humans based on a more primitive system of hominid communication.
- ❖ Each hypothesis is predicated on the idea that the invention of language and its gradual refinement served as a continuous impetus to additional human mental development.
- ❖ First, there are four imitation hypotheses that hold that language began through some sort of human mimicry of naturally occurring sounds or movements:

#### 1) The "ding-dong" hypothesis

- ❖ Language began when humans started naming objects, actions and phenomena after a recognizable sound associated with it in real life.
- ❖ This hypothesis holds that the first human words were a type of verbal **icon**, a sign whose form is an exact image of its meaning: *crash* became the word for thunder, *boom* for explosion.
- ❖ Some words in language obviously did derive from imitation of natural sounds associated with some object: Chinook Indian word for heart--*tun-tun*, Basque word for knife: *ai-ai* (literally *ouch-ouch*).
- ❖ Each of these iconic words would derive from an **index**, a sign whose form is naturally associated with its meaning in real space and time.
- ❖ The problem with this hypothesis is that **onomatopoeia** (imitation of sound, auditory iconicity) is a very limited part of the vocabulary of any language; imitative sounds differ from language to language: Russian: *ba-bakh*=bang, *bukh*= thud.

- ❖ Even if onomatopoeia provided the first dozen or so words, then where did names for the thousands of naturally noiseless concepts such as *rock, sun, sky* or *love* come from?

## 2) The "pooh-pooh" hypothesis

- ❖ The "**pooh-pooh**" hypothesis holds that the first words came from involuntary exclamations of dislike, hunger, pain, or pleasure, eventually leading to the expression of more developed ideas and emotions. In this case the first word would have been an involuntary *ha-ha-ha, wa-wa-wa*
- ❖ These began to be used to name the actions which caused these sounds.
- ❖ The problem with this hypothesis is that, once again, emotional exclamations are a very small part of any language.
- ❖ They are also highly language specific.
- ❖ For instance, to express sudden pain or discomfort: Eng. *ouch*; Russ. *oi.*; Cherokee *eee*. Thus, exclamations are more like other words in that they reflect the phonology of each separate language.
- ❖ Unlike sneezes, tears, hiccoughs or laughter, which are innate human responses to stimuli, the form of exclamations depends on language rather than precedes language.
- ❖ Also, exclamations, like most other words are symbols, showing at least a partially arbitrary relationship between sound and meaning.

## 3) The "bow-wow" hypothesis

- ❖ The "**bow-wow**" hypothesis (the most famous and therefore the most ridiculed hypothesis) holds that vocabulary developed from imitations of animal noises, such as: *Moo, bark, hiss, meow, quack-quack*.
  - ❖ In other words, the first human words were a type of index, a sign whose form is naturally connected with its meaning in time and space.
  - ❖ But, once again, **onomotopoeia** is a limited part of the vocabulary of any language.
  - ❖ The linguistic renditions of animal sounds differ considerably from language to language, although each species of animal everywhere makes essentially the same sound:
    - a) Dog: *bow-wow*; Chinese: *wu-wu*; Jap. *wan-wan* Russ *gaf-gaf, tyaff-tyaff*;
    - b) Cat-*meow*, Russ. *myaoo*, Chin--*mao*, Jap. *nya-nya* purr in French is *ron ron*.
    - c) Pig: *oink-oink*; Russ. *hryu-hryu*; Chin.--*oh-ee-oh-ee*; Jap. *bu-bu*.
    - d) Russian rooster: *kukareiku*. Japanese *kokekoko*
    - e) Russian owl: *ukh*; Cherokee *goo-ku* Spanish, Japanese-- *no special word*
- Thus, the human interpretation of animal sounds is dependent upon the individual language, and it seems unlikely than entire vocabularies derived from them.

## 4) "ta-ta" hypothesis

- ❖ A somewhat different hypothesis is the "**ta-ta**" hypothesis.
- ❖ Charles Darwin hypothesized (though he himself was sceptical about his own hypothesis) that speech may have developed as a sort of mouth pantomime: the organs of speech were used to imitate the gestures of the hand.
- ❖ In other words, language developed from gestures that began to be imitated by the organs of speech--the first words were lip icons of hand gestures.

- ❖ It is very possible that human language, which today is mostly verbal, had its origin in some system of gestures; other primates rely on gesture as an integral part of communication, so it is plausible that human communication began in the same way.
- ❖ Human gestures, however, just like onomatopoeic words, differ from culture to culture. Cf. English crossing the finger for good luck vs. Russian "fig" gesture; nodding for yes vs. for no in Turkish and Bulgarian; knocking on wood vs. spitting over the left shoulder three times.

A second set of hypotheses on language origin holds that language began as a response to some acute necessity in the community.

Here are several necessity hypotheses of the invention of language:

### 1) Warning hypothesis

- ❖ Language may have evolved from warning signals such as those used by animals. Perhaps language started with a warning to others, such as *Look out*, *Run*, or *Help* to alert members of the tribe when some lumbering beast was approaching.
- ❖ Other first words could have been hunting instructions or instructions connected with other work. In other words, the first words were **indexes** used during everyday activities and situations.

### 2) The "yo-he-ho" hypothesis

- ❖ Language developed on the basis of human cooperative efforts.
- ❖ The earliest language was chanting to simulate collective effort, whether moving great stones to block off cave entrances from roving carnivores or repeating warlike phrases to inflame the fighting spirit.
- ❖ It is fairly certain that the first poetry and song came from this aspect of beginning speech. Songs of this type are still with us: Volga boatmen, military marching chants, seven dwarfs working song.
- ❖ Plato also believed that language developed out of sheer practical necessity. And Modern English has the saying: *Necessity is the mother of invention*.
- ❖ Speech and right hand coordination are both controlled in the left hemisphere of the brain.
- ❖ Could this be a possible clue that manual dexterity and the need to communicate developed in unison?

### 3) Lying hypothesis

- ❖ A more colorful idea is the **lying hypothesis**.
- ❖ **E. H. Sturtevant** argued that, since all real intentions or emotions get involuntarily expressed by gesture, look or sound, voluntary communication must have been invented for the purpose of lying or deceiving.
- ❖ He proposed that the need to deceive and lie--to use language in contrast to reality for selfish ends-- was the social prompting that got language started.
- ❖ There are no scientific tests to evaluate between these competing hypotheses. All of them seem equally far-fetched.
- ❖ This is why in the late 19th century **the Royal Linguistic Society in London actually banned discussion and debate on the origin of language out of fear** that none of the arguments had any scientific basis at all and that time would be needlessly wasted on this fruitless enquiry.

- ❖ Attempts to explain the origin of language are usually taken no more seriously today either. Recently, comedian Lily Tomlin came up with her own language invention hypothesis: she claimed that men invented language so that they could complain.
- ❖ Each of the imitation hypotheses might explain how certain isolated words of language developed. Very few words in human language are verbal **icons**.
- ❖ Most are **symbols**, displaying an arbitrary relationship of sound and meaning. (Example: the word *tree* in several languages: Spanish árbol; French arbre; Slovak strom; Georgian he; Ket oks; Estonian puu; German Baum; Russian derevo; Latvian koks; Hawaiian lä'au)
- ❖ And each of the necessity hypotheses might explain how involuntary sounds made out of need in certain contexts might have come to be manipulated as words for an object even out of context.
- ❖ However, the extended use of natural **indexes** still leaves unexplained the development of grammar--the patterns in language which have definite structural functions but no specific meaning.
- ❖ The creative, generative aspect of human language that we call grammar is language's most unique feature. Where did grammar come from?
- ❖ There is nothing like grammar (patterns with definite functions yet no set meaning) in animal systems of communication.
- ❖ In isolated instances it can be shown that a grammatical pattern developed from chance lexical combinations:
  - ❖ suffix -hood from OE word *haeda*= *state. childhood, boyhood, puppyhood*.
  - ❖ Continuous action: form of verb to be + main verb comes from a locative phrase *I am working* > *I am at working*-- cf. the song *I'm a working on the railroad*.
  - ❖ But these are isolated instances.
  - ❖ How language developed a complex grammar remains a complete mystery.
  - ❖ This means that how language developed is equally a mystery.
  - ❖ We simply don't know how language may have actually evolved from simple animal systems of sounds and gestures.

### The Nature and Origin of Language

- ❖ Man alone of all mammals is capable of reaching back into the depths of time and evoking the collective knowledge of his forebears the sum total of their wisdom and folly, aspirations and achievements, triumphs, failures and dreams.
- ❖ The talisman with which he effects this miracle of transcending time and death is language and it is language peculiar to the human family that has placed man at the apex of the evolutionary ladder.
- ❖ Language is thus unique to man and without language “man would never have become fully human” – Weston La Barre.
- ❖ What is language? How did man acquire it? The two questions are inseparable and neither admits of an easy answer.
- ❖ A classic definition of language that seemed adequate at the turn of the century stated simply, “Language is the expression of human thought by means of words.”

- ❖ The ramifications of modern science have since revealed the lacunae in this description. Psychologists asked, “What is thought?”.
- ❖ Linguists asked, “What is a word?”
- ❖ Zoologists observed that many animals and birds and even insects have systems of communication that may be regarded in a crude sense as language.
- ❖ Psychologists have pointed out that human language depends on the interplay between the highly complex vocal apparatus of a speaker and the equally intricate and remarkable auditory organs of a listener. And, in its manifold aspects, the study of language has involved Physics, Phonetics, Acoustics, Neurology, Logic, Information theory, Semantics and the branch of philosophy known as Symbolism or theory of signs.
- ❖ To complicate the matter further, the very word ‘language’ presents problems by reason of its various meanings in the English lexicon within which it must do double duty, connecting both (1) language in the abstract, as the common possession of mankind and (2) language in the specific sense of one language – English, Arabic, Urdu or any of the 4,000 discrete tongues employed by communities of men around the polyglot world.
- ❖ Since only about 5% of the languages spoken on earth today have an ancillary written form, modern linguistic scientists – or structural linguists as they are known academically – concern themselves with language as a system of vocal communication.
- ❖ Writing is of course, a relatively recent invention of man, dating only from the first flowering of Sumerian and Egyptian cultures, some 5,000 years ago.
- ❖ There is no mystery about its origin.
- ❖ Writing is our carrier-link with the past and its advent marked the beginning of civilization and the start of history. Yet, man had been a resident of this planet for more than half a million years prior to his discovery that information could be transmitted through time and space by visual symbols impressed in clay or inscribed in Papyrus scrolls.
- ❖ There is no doubt then, that Homo Sapiens had had such speech and the potential of evolving a complex system of language, though in pre-historic times, language was absolutely devoid of complexities of grammar and phonetic shadings.
- ❖ Though efforts were made to solve the question of the human language by the Linguistic Society of Paris, anthropologists and students of language, nothing worthwhile has come out so far.
- ❖ The quest of those who were interested in the subject was inspired in part by the Book of Genesis: “And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech” until at Babel “the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth.”
- ❖ Sir William Jones, who led these questers could go as far as to say (in 1786) that most of the languages of Europe, India, Persia, including ancient Greek, Latin and Sanskrit were members of a single great linguistic family that must have ramified in pre-historic times from a common ancestral tongue.
- ❖ In the total absence of any clue as to the speech patterns of pre-historic man, scholars could only speculate; and it was their fanciful speculations that irritated the Linguistic Society of Paris and provoked its ban on any discussion of the origin of language.

- ❖ Today, linguists allude to those 19<sup>th</sup> century theories somewhat derisively by names which suggest both the essence of each theory and the attitude of its later critics.
- ❖ Most notable among such efforts to penetrate the mists of the early Pleistocene were:

***Pleistocene:***

*Geological period following the Pliocene, having the greatest proportion of fossil molluscs (a large division of invertebrates – without a vertebral column, or backbone weak, formless) of living species (GK) pleistos – numerous*

1. The Bow-Wow Theory
2. The Pooh-Pooh Theory
3. The Yo-He-Ho Theory
4. The Ta-Ta Theory
5. The Ding-Dong Theory
6. The Sing-Song Theory
7. The Goo-Goo Theory

**The Bow-Bow Theory** is so named by the Anglo-German Philologist Max Muller.

- ❖ It proposed that language grew out of man's attempt to imitate natural sounds as an infant learning to talk calls a locomotive a 'choo-choo' or a cow a 'moo'.
- ❖ According to this theory, man's first words must have been Onomatopoeic or echo words, e.g., Thunder, bump, sneeze, splash, sizzle, slosh, cuckoo, moan, mumble, grumble, hiss, kiss, buzz, rustle, jingle, etc.

***Onomatopoeic:***

*The imitation of the sound of a thing or an event by the sound of an individual word – slap.*

**The Pooh-Pooh Theory** held that **speech originated from the spontaneous exclamations and interjections of the human animal**; cries of fear, surprise, anger, pain, disgust, despair or joy.

**The Yo-He-Ho Theory** suggested that **language evolved from reflex vocal utterances – grunts, gasps, glottal** – contractions evoked strenuous physical exertions such as hacking up a carcass or dragging a heavy log through undergrowth.

**The Ta-Ta Theory** to which Darwin lent some support maintained that speech developed as a kind of 'obligato' or vocal accompaniment to the system of gesture or sign language which man first communicated.

In his treatise on The Expression of Human Emotions, Darwin observed that "persons cutting anything with a pair of scissors may be seen to move their jaws simultaneously with the blades of the scissors.

Children learning to write twist about their tongue as their fingers move in a ridiculous fashion."

Citing Darwin, **Sir Richard Paget, Chief Exponent of the Ta-Ta theory**, wrote: “Originally man expressed his ideas by gesture but as he gesticulated with his hands, his tongue, lips and jaws unconsciously followed in a ridiculous fashion, ‘understudying’ the action of the hands. The consequence was that, owing to pressure of other business, the principal actors (the hands) retired from the stage....Their understudies – the tongue, lips and jaws – were already proficient in the pantomime art. Then the great discovery was made that if, while making a gesture with the tongue and lips air was blown through the oral or nasal cavities, the gesture became audible....”.

**The Ding Dong Theory** postulated a kind of mystical or a prior correspondence between sound and sense.

**Enunciated a century ago by Max Muller, the theory reiterated ideas first advanced by Pythagoras (500 B.C.)** and later sustained Heraclitus and Plato, who held that language must have arisen out of necessity from laws of nature and especially an inevitable law of harmony, which ordained that “everything has its particular ring”. Thus, when pre-historic man first met a dog, he said ‘dog’ and that is how the dog got its name.

**The Sing-Song Theory** contended that **human speech arose out of primitive, rhythmic chants**. Darwin also laid the basis for this theory in his *Descent of Man*, where he wrote” “Primeval man or some progenitor of man, probably first used his voice in producing true musical cadences, that is, in singing as do some of the gibbon apes at the present day, and we may conclude from a widespread analogy that this power which would have been exerted, especially during the courtship of the sexes as music is the food of love, would have expressed various emotions such as love, jealousy, triumph, and would have served as a challenge to rivals”.

**The Sing-Song theory found another formidable exponent in the distinguished Danish Linguist, Otto Jespersen**, who in 1922 wrote: “Language was born in the courting days of mankind; the first utterance of speech, I fancy to myself, was like something between the nightly love-lyrics or puss upon the tiles and melodious love songs of the nightingale.”

**The Goo-Goo Theory** incorporated elements of all the others in a single eclectic package by stating in the words of **Harvard’s prominent English Professor, George Lyman Kittredge**: “All that is requisite for the beginning of language proper is that any sound comes to be purposefully uttered, however vaguely and actually understood, and we have the premise and potentiality of the most cultivated human speech”.

The same concept had been expressed more graphically by Darwin, whose infinitely conscientious and non-partisan intellect led him always to examine every consideration: “May not some unusually wise ape-like animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been the first step in the formation of language.”

Standing alone, each of these theories reveals flaws which are implicit in the baby-talk names by which they are contemptuously known.

Each has been thoroughly mooted, criticized, rebutted, tarred-and-feathered and driven out of the pale of modern linguistic science.

**The Bow-Wow theory**, which was among the first and certainly the most familiar of those hypotheses was born when man started to invent descriptive names or imitative ones for things he saw around him.

There exists considerable doubt, however, that language began with nouns and a great mass of evidence indicates that onomatopoeic or echoic words represent but a small element in the vocabulary of any language.

Many onomatopoeic words were evolved in relatively recent times, from roots originally devoid of sound symbolism.

Thus the **English word ‘sneeze’ derives from the Anglo-saxon ‘Freosan’** which stemmed in turn, from the GK ‘Pnein’ (breath) which exhibits no symptom of hay-fever at all.

Even avowedly and admittedly echoic words vary from language to language.

Thus an English rooster greets the dawn with ‘cock-a-doodle-doo’ whereas his foreign cousins cry ‘cocorico’ in France, ‘quiquiriqui’ in Spain, ‘chicherichchi’ in Italy, ‘kikkeriki’ in Germany, ‘kykeliky’ in Denmark and ‘kokke koko’ in Japan.

Much more formidable objections impugn (*express doubt about*) the Ding Dong theory which pre-supposes a natural, built-in-fitness of words to designate their meaning. To accept such a metaphysical premise would raise the question of why, when pre-historic man first met pre-historic dog, he exclaimed ‘dog’ rather than ‘canis’, ‘chien’, ‘perro’ or ‘hund’.

**Aristotle, father of grammar** in the occidental (*the countries of the West, Europe and America*) world, **perceived the fallacies in the Pythagorean-Platonic Theory**, and advanced the opposing view that language is altogether arbitrary and functions in any society by convention and the common consent of its speakers. No linguist disputes Aristotle’s theory today.

The chance that pre-historic man may have employed sign language before he talked, as proposed by Paget and other exponents of the Ta-Ta theory has received support from the branch of linguistic science known as ‘Kinesics’. Studies in the field have shown that the lexicon (*dictionary of an ancient language*) of human gestures includes more than 700,000 distinct and expressive movements of the hands, arms, fingers and face by which information can be transferred without speech. The most highly developed gestural systems are those by deaf-mutes, that is, lip reading and finger talk. Others include the formal sign language of the North American Indian; the highly stylized hand imagery of Hawaiian ‘hula’ and the dance of Cambodian, Bali and other Asisan (and Polynesian) lands; the Japanese flirt language of the fan; the coded arm movements of the football and hockey referees, baseball umpires and other sports officials; the signaling patterns of Semaphores; and the varied and largely impromptu (*without*

*preparation, rehearsal or thought in advance*) gestures used by traders in market places the world over since travel and commerce began.

**Semaphores:**

*System of sending signals by holding the arms or the flags in certain positions to indicate letters of the alphabet, e.g., railway signalling.*

It is obvious that the more sophisticated systems of pantomime (*expressive movements of the face and body used to tell a story*), such as the discourse of deaf-mutes, depend on a prior knowledge of language, and they were, indeed, devised as a substitute for speech. But it is equally evident, from studies of animal behavior, which many species communicate successfully among themselves by a variety of non-vocal methods.

Baboons (*large African or Arabian monkey with a doglike face*), for example, rebuke their young ones and often reduce them to howls of terror simply by fixing them with an unwavering glare.

The prevalence throughout the animal world of visual, gestural, and non-vocal communication suggests, therefore, that it must have anti-dated speech in the development of human society. But the gulf between sign language and the language of modern articulate man is a profound one and the route by which Homo sapiens (*Latin – modern human beings regarded as a species*) crossed that gulf is by no means adequately defined by the Ta-Ta Theory. Similar shortcomings discount or depreciate each of the early hypotheses of linguistic origin for each one is narrow in scope, vague in substance and founded on flimsy knowledge of the physical and social evolution of early man; yet, scattered here and there among them lie fragmentary but sometimes suggestive clues.

To have reservations about the first valiant efforts to trace the stream of human language back to its source in the dark oubliette (*secret dungeon or underground prison with an entrance only by a trapdoor in the roof*) of unrecorded time is not to say that these wellsprings are, forever, undiscoverable nor that a reasonably valid theory of linguistic evolution cannot be formulated today.

Current developments in many domains of science, especially paleontology (*study of fossils – remains of an animal or a plant which have hardened into rock – as a guide to the history of life on earth*), zoology, and both physical and cultural anthropology (*study of mankind, especially of its origins, developments, customs and beliefs*), have cast new light upon processes of communication in all orders of the animal world. An understanding of some of these processes is necessary to an understanding of the nature and uniqueness of the human language.

### What is Old English

Old English is the earliest historical form of the English language, which was spoken in England and some parts of Scotland during the early Middle Ages. It was brought to England by the Anglo-Saxon settlers during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It was used in Britain from 400s through the 1100s. Old English has four main dialectal forms: Northumbrian, Kentish, Mercian, and West Saxon. Its closest relatives are Old Saxon and Old Frisian. The grammar of Old English is somewhat similar to modern German. The word order is much freer, but nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs have many inflectional forms and endings. Like any other old language, it is very different from its modern version; therefore, speakers of Modern English find it very difficult to understand it without study. Old English vocabulary mostly contained Germanic words; most of these words do not exist in the Modern English vocabulary as these words were later replaced by Latin and French words. Words with Latin origins such as cleric, abbot, nun, hymn, temple, silk, purple, beet, lentil, pear, radish, doe, oyster, cannon, ark, alter, and alms entered into the English vocabulary during the later Old English period. The earliest Old English inscriptions used a runic system, but this was replaced by a version of the Latin alphabet from about the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest written work in Old English dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

### What is Middle English

Middle English refers to a collection of the varieties of English that replaced Old English after the Norman quest (1066). Middle English developed out of late Old English, but there are drastic changes in grammar, pronunciation, and spelling between these two versions. Many Old English grammatical features were simplified; for examples, noun, verb, and adjective inflections were simplified in Modern English so as the reduction of many grammatical cases. The dative and instrumental cases of Old English were replaced by with prepositional constructions in Early Middle English.

Everyday vocabulary mostly remained Germanic, but areas such as law, politics, religion and arts saw an adoption of Norman French vocabulary. Although the writing customs varied widely during this period, a standard based on the London dialect became established aided by the invention of the printing press. This standard is the foundation of Modern English spelling. Therefore, Modern English speakers can understand Middle English better than Old English. Wycliffe and Geoffrey Chaucer are notable writers who wrote in Middle English.

### Difference Between Old and Middle English

#### History

**Old English** is the earliest historical form of the English language.

**Middle English** developed out of Old English after the Norman Conquest in 1066.

#### Period

**Old English** was used from 400s to 1100s.

**Middle English** was used from the 1100s to 1400s.

#### Syntax

**Old English** did not have a fixed word order.

**Middle English** began to have a fixed word order.

## Grammar – Inflections

**Old English** nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs have many inflectional forms and endings.

**Middle English** simplified many inflectional forms of nouns, adjectives and verbs.

## Grammar – Case

**Old English** had dative and instrumental cases.

**Middle English** moved to prepositional constructions.

## Relation to Modern English

**Old English** is very different from Modern English. A modern English speaker cannot understand it without study.

**Middle English** is somewhat similar to Modern English than Old English.

## Vocabulary

**Old English** vocabulary was influenced by Latin and Germanic languages.

**Middle English** everyday vocabulary mostly remained Germanic, but specific fields such as law and religion were influenced by Old French.

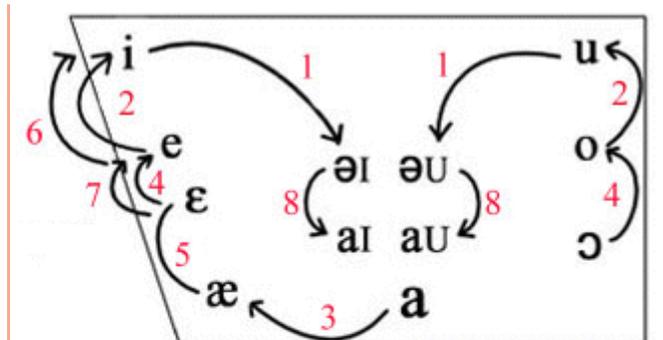
## Writing

**Old English** inscriptions originally used a runic system, but this was replaced by a version of the Latin alphabet in the later part.

**Middle English** developed a standard towards the end of the period, with the invention of the printing press.

## 4. The rise and growth of Modern English

## EARLY MODERN ENGLISH (c. 1500 - c. 1800)



- Step 1: i and u drop and become e and o  
 Step 2: e and o move up, becoming i and u  
 Step 3: a moves forward to æ  
 Step 4: ε becomes e, ɔ becomes o  
 Step 5: æ moves up to ε  
 Step 6: e moves up to i  
 A new e was created in Step 4; now that e moves up to i.  
 Step 7: ε moves up to e  
 The new ε created in Step 5 now moves up.  
 Step 8: əi and əu drop to ai and au

## Vowel Shift

## Great Vowel Shift

A major factor separating Middle English from Modern English is known as the Great Vowel Shift, a radical change in pronunciation during the 15th, 16th and 17th Century, as a result of

which long vowel sounds began to be made higher and further forward in the mouth (short vowel sounds were largely unchanged). In fact, the shift probably started very gradually some centuries before 1400, and continued long after 1700 (some subtle changes arguably continue even to this day). Many languages have undergone vowel shifts, but the major changes of the English vowel shift occurred within the relatively short space of a century or two, quite a sudden and dramatic shift in linguistic terms. It was largely during this short period of time that English lost the purer vowel sounds of most European languages, as well as the phonetic pairing between long and short vowel sounds.

The causes of the shift are still highly debated, although an important factor may have been the very fact of the large intake of loanwords from the Romance languages of Europe during this time, which required a different kind of pronunciation. It was, however, a peculiarly English phenomenon, and contemporary and neighbouring languages like French, German and Spanish were entirely unaffected. It affected words of both native ancestry as well as borrowings from French and Latin.

In Middle English (for instance in the time of Chaucer), the long vowels were generally pronounced very much like the Latin-derived Romance languages of Europe (e.g. *sheep* would have been pronounced more like “shape”; *me* as “may”; *mine* as “meen”; *shire* as “sheer”; *mate* as “maat”; *out* as “oot”; *house* as “hoose”; *flour* as “floor”; *boot* as “boat”; *mode* as “mood”; etc). William the Conqueror’s “*Domesday Book*”, for example, would have been pronounced “doomsday”, as indeed it is often erroneously spelled today. After the Great Vowel Shift, the pronunciations of these and similar words would have been much more like they are spoken today. The Shift comprises a series of connected changes, with changes in one vowel pushing another to change in order to “keep its distance”, although there is some dispute as to the order of these movements. The changes also proceeded at different times and speeds in different parts of the country.

Thus, Chaucer’s word *lyf* (pronounced “leef”) became the modern word *life*, and the word *five* (originally pronounced “feef”) gradually acquired its modern pronunciation. Some of the changes occurred in stages: although *lyf* was spelled *life* by the time of Shakespeare in the late 16th Century, it would have been pronounced more like “lafe” at that time, and only later did it acquire its modern pronunciation. It should be noted, though, that the tendency of upper-classes of southern England to pronounce a broad “a” in words like *dance*, *bath* and *castle* (to sound like “dahnce”, “bahth” and “cahstle”) was merely an 18th Century fashionable affectation which happened to stick, and nothing to do with a general shifting in vowel pronunciation. The Great Vowel Shift gave rise to many of the oddities of English pronunciation, and now obscures the relationships between many English words and their foreign counterparts. The spellings of some words changed to reflect the change in pronunciation (e.g. *stone* from *stan*, *rope* from *rap*, *dark* from *derk*, *barn* from *bern*, *heart* from *herte*, etc), but most did not. In some cases, two separate forms with different meaning continued (e.g. *parson*, which is the old pronunciation of *person*). The effects of the vowel shift generally occurred earlier, and were more pronounced, in the south, and some northern words like *uncouth* and *dour* still retain their pre-vowel shift pronunciation (“uncooth” and “door” rather than “uncowth” and “dowr”). *Busy* has kept its old West Midlands spelling, but an East

Midlands/London pronunciation; *bury* has a West Midlands spelling but a Kentish pronunciation. It is also due to irregularities and regional variations in the vowel shift that we have ended up with inconsistencies in pronunciation such as *food* (as compared to *good, stood, blood, etc*) and *roof* (which still has variable pronunciation), and the different pronunciations of the “o” in *shove, move, hove, etc.*

Other changes in spelling and pronunciation also occurred during this period. The Old English consonant X - technically a “voiceless velar fricative”, pronounced as in the “ch” of *loch* or *Bach* - disappeared from English, and the Old English word *burX* (place), for example, was replaced with “-burgh”, “-borough”, “-brough” or “-bury” in many place names. In some cases, voiceless fricatives began to be pronounced like an “f” (e.g. *laugh, cough*). Many other consonants ceased to be pronounced at all (e.g. the final “b” in words like *dumb* and *comb*; the “l” between some vowels and consonants such as *half, walk, talk* and *folk*; the initial “k” or “g” in words like *knee, knight, gnaw* and *gnat*; etc). As late as the 18th Century, the “r” after a vowel gradually lost its force, although the “r” before a vowel remained unchanged (e.g. *render, terror, etc*), unlike in American usage where the “r” is fully pronounced.

So, while modern English speakers can read Chaucer’s Middle English (with some difficulty admittedly), Chaucer’s pronunciation would have been almost completely unintelligible to the modern ear. The English of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the late 16th and early 17th Century, on the other hand, would be accented, but quite understandable, and it has much more in common with our language today than it does with the language of Chaucer. Even in Shakespeare’s time, though, and probably for quite some time afterwards, short vowels were almost interchangeable (e.g. *not* was often pronounced, and even written, as *nat, when* as *whan, etc*), and the pronunciation of words like *boiled* as “byled”, *join* as “jine”, *poison* as “pison”, *merchant* as “marchant”, *certain* as “sartin”, *person* as “parson”, *heard* as “hard”, *speak* as “spake”, *work* as “wark”, etc, continued well into the 19th Century. We retain even today the old pronunciations of a few words like *derby* and *clerk* (as “darby” and “clark”), and place names like *Berkeley* and *Berkshire* (as “Barkley” and “Barkshire”), except in America where more phonetic pronunciations were adopted.

## Rhetoric

- ❖ Rhetoric refers to the study and uses of written, spoken and visual language.
- ❖ It investigates how language is used to organize and maintain social groups, construct meanings and identities, coordinate behavior, mediate power, produce change, and create knowledge.
- ❖ Rhetoricians often assume that language is constitutive (we shape and are shaped by language), dialogic (it exists in the shared territory between self and other), closely connected to thought (mental activity as "inner speech") and integrated with social, cultural and economic practices. Rhetorical study and written literacy are understood to be essential to civic, professional and academic life.

- ❖ Rhetoric began 2500 years ago as the study of the forms of communication and argument essential to public, political and legal life in Ancient Greece. It has since evolved a rich and diverse body of research, texts, and pedagogies.

### Definitions of Rhetoric

**Plato:** Socrates asks,

Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words, not only in courts of law and other public gatherings, but in private places also? And must it not be the same art that is concerned with great issues and small, its right employment commanding no more respect when dealing with important matters than with unimportant? *Phaedrus*, 261a-261b.

**Isocrates (353 BCE):**

But since we have the ability to persuade one another and to make dear to ourselves what we want, not only do we avoid living like animals, but we have come together, built cities, made laws, and invented arts. Speech is responsible for nearly all our inventions. It legislated in matters of justice and injustice and beauty and baseness, and without these laws, we could not live with one another. By it we refute the bad and praise the good; through it, we educate the ignorant and recognize the intelligent. We regard speaking well to be the clearest sign of a good mind, which it requires, and truthful, lawful, and just speech we consider the image of a good and faithful soul. With speech we fight over contentious matters, and we investigate the unknown. We use the same arguments by which we persuade others in our own deliberations; we call those able to speak in a crowd "rhetorical"; we regard as sound advisers those who debate with themselves most skillfully about public affairs. If one must summarize the power of discourse, we will discover that nothing done prudently occurs without speech, that speech is the leader of all thoughts and actions, and that the most intelligent people use it most of all.

**Aristotle (ca. 350 BCE):**

Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion. This is the function of no other art; for each of the others is instructive and persuasive about its own subject: for example, medicine about health and disease and geometry about the properties of magnitudes and arithmetic about numbers and similarly in the case of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric seems to be able to observe the persuasive about "the given," so to speak. That, too, is why we say it does not include technical knowledge of any particular, defined genus [of subjects].

**Rhetorica ad Herennium (ca. 80 BCE):**

The task of the public speaker is to discuss capably those matters which law and custom have fixed for the uses of citizenship, and to secure as far as possible the agreement of his hearers.

**Cicero (ca. 90 BCE):**

There is a scientific system of politics which includes many important departments. One of these departments—a large and important one—is eloquence based on the rules of art, which they call rhetoric. For I do not agree with those who think that political science has no need for eloquence, and I violently disagree with those who think that it is wholly comprehended in the power and skill of the rhetorician. Therefore we will classify oratorical ability as a part of political science.

The function of eloquence seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade an audience, the end is to persuade by speech.

**Friedrich Nietzsche (1872-73):**

What is called "rhetorical," as a means of conscious art, had been active as a means of unconscious art in language and its development, indeed, that the rhetorical is a further development, guided by the clear light of the understanding, of the artistic means which are already found in language. There is obviously no unrhetorical "naturalness" of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts. The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric, is, at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things. Friedrich Nietzsche on *Rhetoric and Language*, p 21.

**Steven Mailloux (1989):**

[Rhetoric is] the political effectivity of trope and argument in culture. Such a working definition includes the two traditional meanings of rhetoric—figurative language and persuasive action—and permits me to emphasize either or both senses, differently in different discourse at different historical moments, in order to specify more exactly how texts affect their audiences in terms of particular power relations. *Rhetorical Power*.

**Charles Bazerman (1988):**

The study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities [. . .] ultimately a practical study offering people great control over their symbolic activity. *Shaping Written Knowledge*, p. 6.

**Michel Foucault (1973):**

[The problem is bringing] rhetoric, the orator, the struggle of discourse within the field of analysis; not to do, as linguists do, a systematic analysis of rhetorical procedures, but to study discourse, even the discourse of truth, as rhetorical procedures, as ways of conquering, of producing events, of producing decisions, of producing battles, of producing victories. In order to "rhetoricize" philosophy.

**Kevin DeLuca:**

Rhetoric is the mobilization of signs for the articulation of identities, ideologies, consciousnesses, communities, publics, and cultures.

**Krista Ratcliffe:**

But as Kenneth Burke has taught us, rhetoric may be defined very broadly (e.g., I tell the students in my undergraduate rhetorical theory class that the study of rhetoric is the study of how we use language and how language uses us).

**Christine Farris:**

What rhetoric has always addressed: not the mastery and regulation of language so much as the ways in which language shapes, reflects, and changes practices among members of particular communities.

**Michael Holzman:**

In antiquity rhetoric was education, the leading out of the child from the private world of the family (and the family's responsibility for suitable training) to the social and political worlds.

Learning to write well, which meant, on the one hand, a complicated technique, and, on the other hand, a discrete (primarily literary) body of knowledge, was the necessary preparation for what was seen as the only truly human existence: that of a participant in the social life of the community and the political life of the state.

**Knoblauch:**

[Rhetoric] deals with "questions surrounding any study of language: the relation between language and the world, the relation between discourse and knowledge, the heuristic and communicative functions of verbal expression, the roles of situation and audience in shaping utterance, the social and ethical aspects of discourse. . . .

**Cherwitz and Hikins:**

Rhetoric is the art of describing reality through language. Under this definition, the study of rhetoric becomes an effort to understand how humans, in various capacities and in a variety of situations, describe reality through language. To act rhetorically is to use language in asserting or seeming to assert claims about reality. At the heart of this definition is the assumption that what renders discourse potentially persuasive is that a rhetor (e.g. a speaker or writer) implicitly or explicitly sets forth claims that either differ from or cohere with views of reality held by audiences (e.g. a specific scholarly community, a reader of fiction, or an assembly of persons attending a political rally). *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology*. 62.

**James Boyd White:**

Law is most usefully seen not, as it usually is seen by academics and philosophers, as a system of rules, but as a branch of rhetoric, and . . . the kind of rhetoric of which law is a species is most usefully seen not, as rhetoric usually is either as failed science or as the ignoble art of persuasion, but as the central art by which community and culture are established, maintained, and transformed. So regarded, rhetoric is continuous with law, and like it, has justice as its ultimate aim. *Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life*, 52.

**Terry Eagleton (1983):**

Rhetoric, which was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the 18th century, examined the way discourse are constructed in order to achieve certain effects. It was not worried about whether its objects of inquiry were speaking or writing, poetry or philosophy, fiction or historiography: its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance. This is not to say that it ignored the truth-value of the discourse in question, since this could often be crucially relevant to the kinds of effect they produced in their readers and listeners. Rhetoric in its major phase was neither a language, nor a "formalism," preoccupied simply with analyzing linguistic devices. It looked at such devices in terms of concrete performance—they were means of pleading, persuading, inciting and so on—and at people's responses to discourse in terms of linguistic structures and the material situations in which they functioned. It saw speaking and writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely unintelligible outside the social purposes and conditions in which they were embedded.

**Roland Barthes (1964-1965):**

The rhetoric under discussion here is that metalanguage (whose language-object was "discourse") prevalent in the West from the fifth century BC to the nineteenth century AD. We shall not deal with more remote efforts (India, Islam), and with regard to the West itself, we shall limit ourselves to Athens, Rome, and France. This metalanguage (discourse on discourse) has involved several practices, simultaneously or successively present, according to periods, within "Rhetoric ":

1. A technique, i.e., an "art," in the classical sense of the word; the art of persuasion, a body of rules and recipes whose implementation makes it possible to convince the hearer of the discourse (and later the reader of the work), even if what he is to be convinced of is " false."
2. A teaching: the art of rhetoric, initially transmitted by personal means (a rhetor and his disciples, his clients), was soon introduced into institutions of learning; in schools, it formed the essential matter of what would today be called higher education; it was transformed into material for examination (exercises, lessons, tests).
3. A science, or in any case a proto-science, i.e. a. a field of autonomous observation delimiting certain homogeneous phenomena, to wit the "effects" of language; b. a classification of these phenomena (whose best-known trace is the list of rhetorical "figures"; c. an "operation" in Hjelmslevian sense, i.e. a meta-language, a body of rhetorical treatises whose substance—or signified—is a language-object (argumentative language and "figured" language).
4. An ethic: as a system of "rules," rhetoric is imbued with the ambiguity of that word: it is at once a manual of recipes, inspired by a practical goal, and a Code, a body of ethical prescriptions whose role is to supervise (i.e. to permit and to limit) the "deviations" of emotive language.
5. A social practice: Rhetoric is that privileged technique (since one must pay in order to acquire it) which permits the ruling classes gain ownership of speech. Language being a power, selective rules of access to this power have been decreed, constituting it as a pseudo-science, closed to "those who do not know how to speak" and requiring an expensive initiation: born 2500 years ago in legal cases concerning property, rhetoric was exhausted and died in the "rhetoric " class, the initiatory ratification of bourgeois culture.
6. A ludic practice: since all these practices constituted a formidable ("repressive," we now say) institutional system, it was only natural that a mockery of rhetoric should develop, a "black" rhetoric (suspicions, contempt, ironies): games, parodies, erotic or obscene allusions, classroom jokes, a whole schoolboy practice (which still remains to be explored, moreover, and to be constituted as a cultural code)."The Old Rhetoric: An aide-mémoire." *The Semiotic Challenge*, 12-14.

**Wayne Booth (1974):**

What happens, then, if we choose to begin with our knowledge that we are essentially creatures made in symbolic exchange, created in the process of sharing intentions, values, meanings, in fact more like each other than different, more valuable in our commonality than in our idiosyncrasies: not, in fact, anything at all when considered separately from our relations? What

happens if we think of ourselves as essentially participants in a field or process or mode of being persons together? If man is essentially a rhetorical animal, in the sense that his nature is discovered and lived only in symbolic process, then the whole world shifts: even the usage of words like I, my, mine, self, must be reconsidered, because the borderlines between the self and the other have either disappeared or shifted sharply . . . All we need do is honour what we know about who we are and how we come to be, in language. Once we give up the limiting notions of language and knowledge willed to us by scientism, we can no longer consider adequate any notion of "language as a means of communication" . . . It is, in recent models, the medium in which selves grow, the social invention through which we make each other and the structures that are our world, the shared product of our efforts to cope with experience.

**Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (2001):**

Rhetoric has a number of overlapping meanings: the practice of oratory; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the use of language, written or spoken, to inform or persuade; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; the classification and use of tropes and figures; and, of course, the use of empty promises and half-truths as a form of propaganda. Nor does this list exhaust the definitions that might be given. Rhetoric is a complex discipline with a long history: It is less helpful to try to define it once and for all than to look at the many definitions it has accumulated over the years and to attempt to understand how each arose and how each still inhabits and shapes the field. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, "General Introduction." *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. p 1.

- ❖ **Sophist:** One of a class of teachers of rhetoric, philosophy, and politics in ancient Greece, especially one who used fallacious but plausible reasoning.
- ❖ **Orator:** A skilled and eloquent public speaker.
- ❖ **Rhetoric:** The art of using language, especially public speaking, as a means to persuade.
  
- ❖ The first known book about public speaking was written about 2,400 B.C.E by an Egyptian official named **Ptahhotep**.
- ❖ He was vizier (minister) to **Pharaoh Djedkare Isesi** of the fifth dynasty.
- ❖ Aspasia of Miletus (469 BCE), the “mother of rhetoric,” is believed to have taught rhetoric to Socrates.
- ❖ During this period Pericles, the Athenian ruler and Aspasia’s partner, treated Aspasia as an equal and allowed her the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the important and educated men of society.
- ❖ **Socrates (469-399 BCE)** greatly influenced the direction of the Classical Period. Most of what we know about Socrates comes from the writings of his student Plato.
- ❖ **Plato (429-347 BCE)** wrote about rhetoric in the form of dialogues with Socrates as the main character. Plato defined the scope of rhetoric according to his negative opinions of the art. He criticized the Sophists for using rhetoric as a means of deceit instead of discovering truth.

- ❖ **Aristotle (384-322 BCE)** is the most famous Greek Scholar. Aristotle studied in Plato's Academy where he later taught public speaking until Plato's death in 347 BCE. During this time, he opened his own school of politics, science, philosophy, and rhetoric.
  - Aristotle defined rhetoric as the "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."
  - Aristotle divided the "means of persuasion" into three parts, or three artistic proofs, necessary to persuade others:
    - logical reason (logos)
    - human character (ethos), and
    - emotional appeal (pathos).
- ❖ Citizens learned public speaking from early teachers known as **Sophists**.
- ❖ Sophists were self-appointed professors of how to succeed in the civic life of the Greek states.
  
- ❖ The formal study of public speaking began approximately 2,500 years ago in Greece and Rome to train citizens to participate in society.
- ❖ **Aristotle (384-322 BCE)**, the most famous Greek Scholar, defined rhetoric as the "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."
- ❖ He divided the "means of persuasion" into three parts—logical reason (logos), human character (ethos), and emotional.
  
- ❖ After the fall of Greece, Rome came to the scene as a military and political world power.
- ❖ The Romans never discarded the public speaking culture left by the Greeks.
- ❖ They rather adopted and modified them.
- ❖ A strong influence on the Roman style of public speaking was **Marcus Tullius Cicero**.
- ❖ Born in 106 B.C.E, Cicero grew up to become a profound orator, lawyer, philosopher and statesman.
- ❖ According to him, the five rules of public speaking are:
  - **Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery.**
- ❖ These are generally referred to as the **Five Canons of Rhetoric and are** still used in modern-day oratory.
- ❖ **Quintilian (c. 35-95 CE)** extended this line of thinking and argued that public speaking was inherently moral.
- ❖ He stated that the ideal orator is "a good man speaking well."
  
- ❖ **St. Augustine (354 CE-430 CE)**, a Christian clergyman and renowned rhetorician, argued for the continued development of ideas that had originated during the Classical Period.
- ❖ He thought that the study of persuasion, in particular, was a worthwhile pursuit for the church.