

Evolution of English Language

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Abstract

A language gets changing across the time. English language is steadily changing from the time of its origin. The study brings into attention the authentic picture of English language from its emergence to the present times. The evolution of English language goes through various strides, the study tries to discuss overall study of all the considerable strides. The journey of English language evolved by passing through various hedges and barricades which had modified the language and made it apocryphal or advance. The paper objects to discuss the forthcoming hindrances and sponsored factors which brought changes in the English language and also centers how these changes became root of English language. The study discloses all the prevailing principal causes that contributed in the commutating of the English language and changed into a new refined version.

Keywords- Evolution, Origin of English language, changes, modern English, social media, ESLs.

Introduction-

A language creates a system of communication with fixed rules in an organised way for any community. The language is a structured form based on signs and system that is used for verbal and non-verbal communication. A language changes with the passing of the time by multiple factors. Change in an language is the inenevitable part of the language that occurs due to old word drifts, pronunciation evolution, joining new words, mingling with other languages, and other political, social, cultures and technological factors. A language changes with the passing of the time in different contexts like Spelling changes, phonological changes, lexical changes, morphological, semantic and syntax related changes.

The study objects to dig out the essential accountable factors that occurred in the changing process of English language from its origin to the present time. The study focuses on all the strides related to changing English language. The changing process of English language goes through different strides. The paper will discuss all the strides concisely in chronological order.

Stride-1: Origin of English Language: Old English-

Old English is a West Germanic language that is originated from Anglo-Frisian languages brought to

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Britain in the mid 5th to 7th centuries AD by Anglo-Saxon migrants from what is now northwest Germany, southern Denmark and the Netherlands. The west Germanic Language is closely associated to Frisian, German and Dutch. The origin of old English is 'Anglo Frisian Language' and some dialects were also prominent in old English like 'Mercian, Northumbrian, Kentish and West Second' etc.

The Germanic settlers initially spoke a number of different dialects. The Late West Saxon dialect eventually became dominant. The final language they adopted and used is called ' Old English'. The olden English is the compound mixture of the dialects from the different settlers in Britain like Anglo-Sexton, Jutes, and Frisians. In all, dialects of Late West Saxton and North Germanic language were dominated in olden English language. The Old English period is a multi-lingual period – a period with several languages being used simultaneously. Their contact inevitably produced a rich system of communication.

Features of Old English-

- The common people spoke Celtic language while official language was Latin. Later, Celtic speakers were pushed to North and West (Wales, Scotland and Ireland) by Invaders, mainly into what is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland.
- The word order and the sentence structure were rather free.
- In Old English, the inflected forms were used to express grammatical expression.
- It is originated from continental form.
- Regional dialects were dominated in communication.
- Old English is different from the modern parts of speech. Parts of speech were not fixed and it had many inflectional ending in Old English.
- Latin alphabet were commonly used in old English.
- There was no word order and fixed diction.
- Old English is the first recorded version of modern English.
- Language of church was Latin. After conversion into Christianity, the church text were amended. Roman alphabet were also adopted in sermons and religious writings.
- Old English is an inflected and synthetic language.
- Old English was sparse in vocabulary.
- Old English was interacted with Celtic, the language of the conquered people, as the another branch of Indo European tree.
- They used prefixes and suffixes to coin new words.
- There was only present and past tense not the future tense. Present tense was used for future references.

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- Old English was influenced by Latin, Norse and Celtic.
- Old English was not a monolithic language, it had multiple variations in different regions.
- Old English phonology, the distinctive features are – the breaking of front vowels most in the cases.
- There were four main dialects, Mercian (dialect of Mercia), Kentish (dialect of Kent), West Saxon and Northumbrian (dialect of Northumbria).
- Some Latin words were commonly used in old English and such words included not only ecclesiastical terms—for example, altar, mass, priest, psalm, temple—but also many others of less specialized significance, such as cheese, wine, and street.
- Scandinavian influence was also prominent. It extended to matters of grammar and syntax as well.
- Contradiction of Latin alphabet found in old English.
- Germanic tribes adopted many Latin words for common objects, food, trade, and military practices into their vocabulary.
- The old English pronunciation was phonetic. Old English had a moderately large vowel system. In stressed syllables, both monophthongs and diphthongs had short and long versions, which were clearly distinguished in pronunciation. In unstressed syllables, vowels were reduced or elided, though not as much as in Modern English.

As the time went on, Old English evolved further from the original Continental form, and regional dialects were developed. The Old English period is a multi-lingual period – a period with several languages being used simultaneously. Their contact inevitably produced a rich system of communication. Although rich in word-building possibilities. Old English was spoken until around 1100.

Strides-2: Middle English (1150-1500)-

Middle English was spoken during late 11th century to late 15th century. The Norman Conquest (1066) was the opening movement of the period. After the Norman conquest, there was a class of Anglo- Norman French. It brought a substantial impact on the lexicon and vocabulary as well. The well-developed inflectional system was established and with the course of the time the grammar of Old English had begun to break down. After the Norman Conquest, with the passing time the Scandinavian loan words happened to be recorded in writings.

Features of Middle English-

- The introduction of a large number of French words. Gradually, French words became part of vocabulary.

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- There was an inflectional endings of old English.
- The grammar of the Middle English period had become simplified.
- vocabulary became heterogeneous.
- Though the Scandinavian had entered in the spoken and written language.
- During the late Old English period yet till the Middle English period no literature had been produced.
- Middle English developed from the Wessex. Middle English gradually ended the Wessex, as the writing language and emerged as the focal language for writers and poets.
- It was mixture of old English and Norman French. Words like chaplain, charity, grace, miracle, army, navy, diplomacy, corps etc. were borrowed from French.
- All the letters were pronounced in Middle English as there were no “silents” but in middle English the final “e” became silent.
- Besides the large number of French words, a good number of Latin words were also introduced into the English language. These were mostly technical, legal terms.
- Middle English has the same sentence structure as the Modern English (Subject-verb-object).

There was decay and ultimate loss of the inflectional endings of the Old English. The language became more like Modern West Frisian, a Dutch related language than the Germanic. The middle English became more simplified. We can observe that there were variety of changes occurred in the middle age. Gradually, the old English receded and new trends ensued with the passing of the time together with political, social and economic reasons. These all new trends became linguistic traditions of the time. Norman Black opines, “Most attention paid to the register of the language in middle age. For which the elucidation of the connotation of the words in a literary context has been the driving force.”

Stride-3: Modern English-

Modern English (from 1500 AD till present day/ late 15th century to the present). Modern English was influenced by various historical occurrences like evoking of the classical renaissance period, the Romantic Movement, various grounds of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, the Great Plague and many more. The biggest considerable contributing influence on building the modern English language was the inception of renaissance on art, literature and language.

Modern English is different from Middle English and Old English in terms of the sentence structures, pronunciations, use of articles, vocabulary. The incident of the death of Chaucer at the close of the century (1400) marked the beginning of the period of transition from Middle English to the Early Modern English stage. This merging of lower class English and higher class Anglo-Norman combined to create a new Early Modern English.

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Although, Modern English words, sentences, structures, phrases are something similar to Middle English. Now, the vocabulary and pattern of Old English also had become archaic and completely forgotten. Modern English has reduced the closings of old English. There are abound of changes occurred in the modern English specially in term of phonologically, morphologically, affixation, semantically and syntactically. Here, we will recap the prominent features of modern English language.

Features of Modern-English-

- There was origin of many French words in the lexicon of English, such as chivalry and croissant.
- With the course of thousands of years, English words have been slowly simplified from the inflected variable forms found in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Russian, and German, toward invariable forms, as in Chinese and Vietnamese.
- English is the only European language to employ uninflected adjectives; e.g., the tall woman, the small man, the big man as far compared to Spanish phrases.
- In Modern English, the biggest change occurred in pronunciation. There was a great change in the sounds of numerous words which became responsible for changes in pronunciation of the age.
- Some letters are not pronounced in Modern English. For example, K in knight is silent. Vowel sounds became shorter and stubby.
- Modern English became analytic (i.e., relatively uninflected).
- Modern English possesses its unique inflectional simplicity.
- The development of new varieties of intonation to express various shades of meaning is the special characteristic of Modern English.
- We can observe the major change in the use of pronouns in modern English. Modern English exhibits, usually, one pronoun for each case of the pronoun. For example, his/her for genitive case.
- There was again a great change in the sentence structures of modern English. Modern English follows strict rules of the subject-verb-agreement.
- Modern English developed as a language of its own as a developed version of the language while old English was influenced from Latin and middle from French.
- There was also a further increase in the arrival of Latin and Greek words, which impacted on the vocabulary of the language.

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- The Great Vowel Shift saw a movement away from its old French-style pronunciation of vowels. The change in pronunciation can be seen even in the names of letters of the alphabet.
- Modern English possesses a system of orthography.
- Modern English follows the subject-verb-object sentence structure.
- There was an evolution of 'Great Vowel Shift' due to the greater social mobility which happened after 'The Great Plague'. This was because the plague wiped out a large portion of the aristocracy as well as the lower classes. In just seven months, one fifth of the population of London was dead.
- Modern English again preserves a lack of correlation between the spelling and pronunciation of the word.
- There was an illogical system of spelling and the frequent lack of correlation between the spelling of a word and its pronunciation. For example, 'birth' and 'berth' are pronounced almost without any variation in sound.
- The Early Modern period also saw the creation of the first English dictionary, published by Robert Cawdrey in 1604. This helped the push towards the standardisation of the English language.

So, it can be said that early modern English brought multiple shifts and changes that have changed the way of speaking and writing the language. Words became shorter and pronunciation became compact. The early changes can be seen in the literature of that time like Shakespeare's works.

Stride-4: Global English-

English is considered as a global language because it is the one and only language that can be spoken and understood by the majority of the population in almost every region around the entire world. Furthermore, the English language is worldwide accepted and used by almost every nation of the world. English has achieved the honour of International language and enforced for various important purposes. English is the foremost language of the entire globe. English has achieved the privilege of Lingua Franca.

English is used as an official language, first language as well as second language by the different people around the globe. English unit all the people for different ideas and aspirations. As of 2020 there are 1.27 billion English speakers around the world. English is used as a official language around 50 countries, English is used as a first language by more than 360 million people and there are large number of English second language learners than its speakers as there are more than 450 million ESLs (English Second Language Learners) across the world. The spreading popularity of English as a global language creates a higher increasing population of English speakers and learners. It also generates the tremendous opportunities for ELT (English language Teaching) programs.

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After achieving the acme of global language, English language has again received few changes and alterations according to need of its users. We can observe the various changes in the English language due to increasing its world wide popularity and globalisation. After being a global language, there are again various unavoidable reasons which have been changing English language like International marketing and trade, technology, migration of the people, researches, new inventions, discoveries, oversea education, marching of multinational companies, entertainment, domestic appliances and industrial equipment, fusion of art and culture, International policies, international stratagem and many more.

Gradually, due to all these reasons, new words are coined, different linguistic features are adopted, few words are merged, various dialects are integrated, few words became archaic, old words became anew, semantic and syntactic changes are accepted accounting to need of the time. Infact, it can be said that English is the abode that tie the entire world in single string and where all the countries live together and talk to each- other for multiple purposes.

Stride-5: Social Media Uprising Shift-

Social media brought a revolution in anybody's way of life and way of working as well. It has shackled everything up and strained everyone to connect with different social networking sites. It is a avant-garde movement that has entered in every important aspect of our life. In modern times, social media drastically affected all unavoidable spikes of everyone. It also brought enormous changes in English language through making popular a distinct vocabulary in both speaking and writing. The meanings of words also have changed in an online context. First, these words are used on social media and then people spills over into verbal communication. Stephen Gramley states, "When language communities in which mutually unintelligible language are spoken come into contact with each other, communication is most often ensured by learning the language of the other group."

The emergence of the Internet and the consequential array of social media networks have, undoubtedly resulted in an exponential increase in new types of written language, symbols, blogs, tweets, pictures and so on. Social networking sites not only made this type of informal language popular but they also substituted the authentic vocabulary to some extent. First of all, these sites captured the youth of the entire world and swap their minds with the encounter of this informal language and gradually many of these words obtained the authenticity. So, it can be said that social media restored and arrested the conventional ways, traditional methods, verified vocabulary and authenticity of grammatical rules.

Today, the Internet and social media become one of the most influencing facet of the English language and it had triggered the plethora of new words, images and phrases. Gradually, these words and phrases became part of our conversation. For example, 'array', 'blog', 'troll', 'selfie', 'tweet', 'buzzy', 'clickbait', 'gaslighting', '#meeto' and many more. Nobody could even think about these words before.

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Hundreds of new slang words are added to the English language every year. At the same time, older words fall to the wayside. However, It is the circle of linguistic life of a language. The study also discusses some important features of the English language used on social media.

Features of the Social Media Language-

- On social media, slang words are using excessively. **Slang-Word** means nonstandard words or phrases which tend to originate in prevailing art and subculture within a society.
- On social media, there are abundant use of **acronyms** (an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a single word) are commonly used as a single word or whole sentences; LOL (laugh out loud), OMG (Oh my God), TTYL (talk to you later).
- **Emoticons** are quite popular on social media. Emoticons means a facial expression such as a smile or frown, formed by various combinations of keyboard characters. People use emoticons instead of writing words and characters. Sometimes, wrong/half spelling is used with different emoticons.
- Use of **'Word-Adjunct'** also can be seen in the English language of social media. Here, words are joined to show association and mingling sense.
- Noodles of words also can be seen on social media. It is an informal way of conversation but people eagerly use crush of correct words.
- Acronyms are very engrossively used on social media.
- On social media, people are very fond of using **abbreviations** instead of full forms and full words.
- **Neologisms** are also very popular on social media.
- **Paradigms** are also excessively used on social media.
- **Pictogram** along with words are used on social media.
- On social media, people are engaged in using **unnecessary punctuation** marks to increase the impact of the meaning/concept. Despite it people also break grammatical rules on social media.
- **Breaks of words** are also quite popular on social media. People break the words, joins the words, shake the world instead of using correct authentic vocabulary.

Conclusion-

The concept of changing language is a gradual and inevitable process. A language changes in all their aspects as in their pronunciation, word forms, syntax, and word meanings. A language changes according to changing cultures, need of its users, different experiences, inventions, technologies and

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explosive forces with the course of the time. Finally, we can conclude by saying that English language affected by various political, social, cultural, economical factors. All these factors worked together to make a single functioning ordnance which can fulfill presumption of all these spheres.

The study tries to bring out all the major changes occurred in English language from its origin to present time. The study presents a honest gallery of all five strides in English language. Every year new words gets authenticity and get a secure place in dictionary. English is continuously changing since its origin. All the strides played important roles in building a new and refine language. In all strides, it has become more congenial and refine. Gradually, with the changing course of the time English language has changed and became more refine.

However, social media generated a wrong vocabulary and incorrect way of structuring sentences. In this post modern times, there are multiple factors which promoted incorrect way of communication. Although It is not certain where the English language is moving forth, it is sludge or finer place. It can be said that all these changes are demand of preset time and need of users. The study concludes on the outcome that we should welcome the prevailing changes occurred in English language. We need to accept new vocabulary, gripping semantic features, changing linguistic concepts.

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