CHAPTER-2

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
2.1 History of English Language

English is a Germanic Language of the Indo-European Family. It is the second most spoken language in the world.¹ This wide family includes most of the European languages spoken today. The Indo-European family includes many major branches: Latin and the modern Romance languages (French etc.); The Germanic languages (English, German, Swedish etc.); the Indo-Iranian languages (Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit etc.) “This embraces the languages of Northern Hindostan. Its great representative is the Sanskrit. In its earliest form this goes back to about two thousand years before the Christian era, and about three centuries before that epoch, it died out as a spoken tongue. It is the oldest of all the languages of the Indo-European family, and as a whole comes nearest to the primitive speech.”²; the Baltic languages of Latvian and Lithuanian; the Slavic languages (Russian, Polish, Czech etc.); the Celtic languages (Welsh, Irish Gaelic etc.); Greek.

The influence of the original Indo-European language can be seen at present, even though no written record of that exists. The word for father, for example, is pater in Latin, vater in German, and pitr in Sanskrit. These words are cognates, similar words in different languages that have the same root.

Of these branches of the Indo-European family, the Germanic and the Romance, as far as the study of the development of English is concerned, of supreme importance, (called that because the Romance languages originate from Latin, the language of ancient Rome). English language is a member of the Germanic group of languages. It is supposed that this group began as a common language in the Elbe river region about 3,000 years before. By the second century BC, this Common Germanic language had separate into three distinctive sub-groups:³

- North Germanic evolved into the modern Scandinavian languages of Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelandic.
• East Germanic was spoken by peoples who migrated back to southeastern Europe. No East Germanic language is spoken now, and the only written East Germanic language that survives is Gothic.

• West Germanic is the subdivision of the Germanic languages including English, Frisian, Dutch, and German.

### 2.1.1 Old English (500-1100 AD)

During the 5th Century AD three Germanic tribes (Saxons, Angles, and Jutes) came to the British Isles from various parts of northwest Germany as well as Denmark. They spoke a mutually understandable language, alike to modern Frisian - the language of the northeastern region of the Netherlands – called as Old English. The arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the introduction of Christianity into Saxon England brought more Latin words into the English language. Like as: *church, baptism, monk,* and *bishop.* These words came indirectly through Greek language.

Four chief dialects of Old English came into existence, Northumbrian in the north of England, West Saxon in the west and south and Mercian in the Midlands, and south and Kentish in the Southeast. These invaders pushed the original, Celtic-speaking population out England into Scotland, Cornwall, Wales, and Ireland, leaving behind some Celtic words. These Celtic languages survive now in the Gaelic languages of Scotland and Ireland and in Welsh. Cornish, unfortunately, is, in linguistic terms, now a dead language. Norse invasions and settlement, start around 850, carried many North Germanic words into the language, mainly in the north of England. For example *dream,* which had meant 'joy' until the Vikings imparted its recent meaning on it from the Scandinavian cognate *draumr,* and *skirt,* which continues to live along its native English cognate *shirt.*
Some Old English surviving words are *feet, geese, teeth, men, women, lice,* and *mice.* The greater part of words in modern English came from foreign, not Old English roots. In fact, only approx. one sixth of the known Old English words have descendants existing today. But this is deceptive; Old English is greatly important than these statistics would point out. About half of the most commonly used words in modern English have Old English roots. For example Words like, *be strong* and *water,* derive from Old English roots.


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<th>Table 2.1.1 Percentages of English word origins</th>
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Old English, whose best recognized surviving example is the poem *Beowulf,* lasted until about 1100. It is the oldest known English poem and it is notable for its length - 3,183 lines. It was written in Britain more than one thousand years ago the name of the person who wrote it is unknown.

Figure 2.1.1 ‘Part of *Beowulf,* a poem written in Old English”
2.1.2 The Norman Conquest and Middle English (1100-1500)

The Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, attacked and conquered England and the Anglo-Saxons in 1066 AD. The new overlords spoke a language of Old French known as Anglo-Norman. The Normans were too of Germanic stock and Anglo-Norman was a French dialect that had significant Germanic influences in adding up to the basic Latin roots. Former to the Norman Conquest, Latin had been only a slight influence on the English language, chiefly through vestiges of the Roman occupation and from the adaptation of Britain to Christianity in the seventh century (religious terms such as vicar, priest, and mass came into the language this manner), but now there was an extensive concoction of Romance (Anglo-Norman) words.

The influence of the Normans can be exemplified by seeing at these two words, beef and cow. Beef, usually eaten by the aristocracy, obtained from the Anglo-Norman, while the Anglo-Saxon commoners, who tended the cattle, kept the Germanic cow. Several legal languages, such as jury, indict, and verdict, have Anglo-Norman roots because the Normans were running the courts. This split, where words commonly used by the aristocracy have Romantic roots and words frequently used by the Anglo-Saxon masses have Germanic roots, can be seen in various cases.

Sometimes French words swapped old English words; uncle replaced eam and crime replaced firen. Components of French and Old English combined to form a new word, other time, as the French gentle and the Germanic man formed gentleman. There were two dissimilar words with almost the same meaning carry on into modern English. Thus we have the French judgment and the Germanic doom or desire and wish. It is helpful to compare different versions of a known text to see the differences between Old, Middle, and Modern English. For example this Old English (c. 1000) sample:

Fæderureþuþeeart on heofonum
siþinnamagehalgodtobecumeþin rice gewurþeþinwilla on eorðanswaswa on heofonum
urnegedæghamlicanhlafysyle us to dæg
and forgyf us uregyltasswaswa we forgyfaðurumgyltendum
and ne gelædþu us on costnunge ac alys us of yfelesoplice.¹²

Rendered in Middle English (Wycliffe, 1384), the same text is recognizable to the modern eye:

Ourefadirþat art in heueneshalwid be þi name;
þireume or kyangdom come to be. Be þiwille don in herþe as it is doun in heuene.
yeue to us today oureechedayes bred.
And foryeue to us ouredettisþat is ouresynnys as we foryeuen to ouredettourisþat is to men þathansynned in us.
And lede us not into temptacion but delyuere us from euyl.¹³

Finally, in Early Modern English (King James Version, 1611) the same text is completely intelligible:

Our father which art in heauen, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heauen.
Giue us this day our daily bread.
And forgiue us our debts as we forgiue our debters.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliuer us from euill. Amen.¹⁴

King John lost the province in 1204 AD, of Normandy to the King of France. This started a process where the Norman nobles of England became gradually more separated from their French cousins. England became the principal concern of the nobility, rather than estates in France, and as a result the nobility adopted modified English as their native tongue. After 150 years, the Black Death (1349-50) killed about one third of the English populace. And therefore of this the merchant and laboring and classes developed in social and economic, and with it English greater than before in importance compared to Anglo-Norman. This combination of the two languages came to be known as Middle English.
The most well-known example of Middle English is Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales.
Contrasting Old English, Middle English can be read, though with difficulty, by modern
English-speaking people. By 1362, the linguistic separation between the nobleness and
the commoners was largely over. In that year, the act of pleading was accepted, which
made English the language of the courts and it initiated to be used in Parliament. The
Middle English period moved toward to a close about 1500 AD with the rise of Modern
English.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
And what I sough he wolde never file
To reben on this cursed book al right.
Al sodeinly three leves have I plight
Out of his book right as he rebbde, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke
That in ovre fir he fil bakward abowen.
And up he sterte as dooth a wood leon.
And with his fist he smoot me on the heed
That in the floor I lay as I were dead.
And what he sough how stille that I lay,
She was agast, and wolde have fled his way,
Till atte haste out of my swough I braue:
"O hastou slayn me, false thiefe" I saide.
"And for my land thus hastou mordred me?
Er I be seeth yit wol I kisse thee."
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Figure 2.1.2 ‘An example of Middle English by Chaucer’\textsuperscript{16}

\subsection*{2.1.3 Early Modern English (1500-1800)}

English is continuously assimilating foreign words, especially Latin and Greek, causing
English to have the largest vocabulary of any language in the world. As there are many
words from different languages the risk of mispronunciation is high, but remnants of the
older forms remain in a few regional dialects, particularly in the West Country.\textsuperscript{17}

The next wave of development in English came with the Renaissance. The revival of
classical scholarship conveyed many classical, Greek and Latin words into the Language.
Shakespeare's character Holofernes in \textit{Loves Labor Lost} is a satire of an over enthusiastic
school master who is too having a fondness for Latinisms.\textsuperscript{18} Many students having
trouble understanding Shakespeare would be surprised to learn that he wrote in modern
English. But, as can be seen in the earlier instance of the Lord's Prayer, Elizabethan English has much more in familiar with our language nowadays than it does with the language of Chaucer. Many well-known words and idioms were first recorded by Shakespeare, a number of 2,000 words and innumerable idioms are his.19 "Flesh and blood", one fell swoop," "vanishes into thin air,” are all Shakespeare's. Words he bestowed to the language include “dwindle," "critical," "leapfrog," "pedant," and "majestic." 20

Two other main factors influenced the language and handed out to separate Middle and Modern English. Great Vowel Shift was the first. This was a change in pronunciation that started around 1400. While modern English speakers can read Chaucer with little difficulty, Chaucer's pronunciation would have been fully unintelligible to the modern era. On the other hand, Shakespeare would be accented, but understandable. Vowel sounds began to be made further to the front of the mouth and the letter "e" at the end of words turned into silent. In Middle English name was called as "nam-a," down was pronounced "doon," and five was pronounced "feef," and linguistically, the shift was rather sudden, Chaucer's Lyf (pronounced as "leef") became the modern life. Early Modern English received grammar, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Also, the "tele-" prefix meaning "far" later used to develop telephone and television was taken.21

The main changes taking place within a century. The shift is yet not over; though, vowel sounds are still shortening while the change has developed into considerably more steady. The last main feature in the growth of Modern English was the starting of the printing press. William Caxton introduced the printing press to England in 1476 and the East Midland dialect became the literary standard of English. Ten thousand words were added to English as writers created new words by using Greek and Latin affixes.22 Books become cheaper and consequently literacy became more common. Publishing for the masses became an advantageous enterprise, and works in English, as contrasting to Latin,
became more common. Finally, the printing press brought standardization to English. The dialect of London, where the majority publishing houses were situated, became the standard. Grammar and Spelling became permanent, and in 1604 the first English dictionary was published.\textsuperscript{23}

![Figure 2.1.3](image)

Figure 2.1.3 Hamlet's famous "To be, or not to be" lines, written in Early Modern English by Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{24}

\subsection*{2.1.4 Late-Modern English (1800-Present)}

Late Modern English accumulated many more words as a result of two main historical factors: the Industrial Revolution, which necessitated new words for things, and ideas that had not previously existed; and the rise of the British Empire, during which time English adopted many foreign words and made them its own.\textsuperscript{25} The main difference between early and late-modern English is vocabulary. Grammar, Pronunciation, and spelling are mostly the similar, but Late-Modern English has many more words.\textsuperscript{26} These words are the outcome of two historical reasons. The first is the Industrial Revolution and rise of the technological society and the second was the British Empire. Industrial revolution demanded new words for things and thoughts that had not before presented. Britain ruled one quarter of the world, and English adopted lots of foreign words and made them its own. The scientific and industrial revolutions created a necessity for neologisms to explain the new discoveries and creation. For this, English relied greatly on Greek and Latin. Some words like \textit{protein}, \textit{oxygen}, \textit{vaccine} and \textit{nuclear}, did not subsist in the classical languages, but they were formed from Latin and Greek ancestry.
Neologisms were not totally created from classical roots though; English roots were used for such terms as *airplane, horsepower,* and *typewriter.* The neologisms continues today, possibly most noticeable in the field of and computers and electronics. *Hard-drive, cyber, bios, microchip and Byte,* are good examples. The rise of the British Empire and the development of global trade served up not only to bring in English to the world, but to bring words into English. Hindi, and some other languages of the Indian subcontinent, offered many words, like *shampoo, pajamas, juggernaut and pundit.* Practically every language on Earth has contributed to the growth of English, from Japanese (*tycoon*) to Finnish (*sauna*) the huge contributions of French and Latin. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, which paved the way for Britain’s economic predominance in the 19th century, the English language spread quickly all across the world.\(^7\)

The British Empire was a nautical empire, and there was great influence of maritime terms on the English language. Phrases such as, *three sheets to the wind* have their origins onboard ships. Lastly, the military influence on the language at some stage in the latter half of twentieth century was major. Before the Great War, armed forces service for English-speaking people was rare; both United States and Britain kept small, volunteer militaries. There was existence of Military slang, but with the exception of nautical terms, hardly ever influenced Standard English.

During the mid-20th century, though, many American and British served in the military. And therefore military slang came into the language like never before. *Nose dive, blockbuster, camouflage, roadblock, radar, landing strip* and *spearhead,* are all military language that made their way into Standard English. British colonialism in the 19th century and American capitalism and technological progress in the 20th century were undoubtedly the main causes for the spread of English throughout the world.\(^8\)
2.1.5 American English and other varieties

Around 1600 AD also significant beginning was the English colonization of North America and the consequent formation of American English. In certain value, some ranges of American English are closer to the Shakespeare’s English than modern Standard English. The American English language is characterized by archaisms (words that changed meaning in Britain, but remained in the colonies) and innovations in vocabulary (borrowing from the French and Spanish who were also settling in North America).

Noah Webster was the most vocal about the need for an American national individuality with regards to the American English. He wrote a spelling book (American), *The Blueback Speller*, in 1788 and changed many spellings from British English (colour became color, theatre became theater, etc.) In 1828, he published his famous *American Dictionary of the English Language*.29

The American language also served as the way of introduction for lots of Native American words into the English language. Most frequently, these were place names like *Roanoke, Iowa* and *Mississippi*. Names of Indian-sounding like *Idaho* were sometimes created that had no native-American roots. But, names for other things were also common. *Tomato, Raccoon, barbecue, canoe, hickory and savanna*, have Native American roots, though in various cases the original Indian words were jumbled almost away from recognition.

American English has also been greatly influenced by Spanish. examples of Spanish words, those made their way into English are, *Canyon, Mustang, ranch, vigilante* and *stampede*, A smaller number of words have entered American English from French and West African languages. Similarly dialects of English have developed in several former
colonies of the British Empire. There are different forms of the English language spoken in New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, India and various parts of the world.

2.2 Origin of English in India

About six centuries back, during the Age of Chaucer, English was spoken by just two and a half million people on one, relatively small island, and the language consisted of dialects spoken by people who spoke only one language. Today there are more non-native speakers than native users of English, and English has become the linguistic key used for opening borders: it is a global medium with local identities and messages. English has become a world language, spoken by at least 750 million people. It is more widely spoken and written than any other language, even Latin, has ever been. It can, indeed, be said to be the first truly global language. English is nowadays the dominant or official language in over 60 countries.

The English language has in the course of these centuries penetrated deeply in the Indian society, which has, in its turn, resulted in several varieties of English in India. The development of those new varieties is connected with historical and social factors. The new ‘English’ have all their own contexts of function and usage, and they have also, in their turn, affected the native varieties of English.

In India English is not the native language of any community or people at large. It is a minority language, but yet a language of national affairs and its status is often termed into question, as Bailey puts it, “not only by foreigners with their ideas of proper English, but also by Indians who remain ambivalent about its distinctive features and uncertain about its future.” In fact, many of transplanted kinds of Englishes have so attuned to the idea of a foreign standard of propriety that their independence remains partial.
Vasco da Gama came ashore at India’s eastern coast at Calicut, and restored a link between Europe and the East. India was ‘a land of spices and of marvels’ to ordinary European people. Portugal’s control of the Indian Ocean lasted throughout the 16th century. The turning point came in the 1580s: in 1580, Portugal was annexed to Spain. Spain was not too interested in former interests of Portugal, and gradually the control of the East fell through their hands. The route to the East was opened to the Dutch and English. The Dutch were first ones to arrive in 1595. The Dutch objective was plain and simply the trade. They were not interested in proselytizing people, or trying to expand their empire; they were monopolists rather than imperialists.

The document establishing the British contact with the Indian subcontinent was the Charter of December 31, 1600, granted by Queen Elizabeth I. It granted a monopoly on trade with India and the East to some merchants of London - the East India Company was formed. The company’s objective was actually the spices of Indonesia, but because of Dutch opposition (for example, the massacre of Amboina in 1623, they decided to change plans and come to India instead. The English won victory of some Portuguese in India as well, and the Mughal court, which resented the Portuguese, granted the English the right to trade and to establish factories in return for becoming the virtual naval auxiliaries of the empire.

The English trade became more profitable than that of the Dutch, and the region gradually fell under British contact and domination. In 1818, the British Empire became the British Empire of India, instead of the British Empire in India. The diplomatic settlement remained in force until 1947 when India gained independence from the British rule.

According to Kachru, there have been three phases in the introduction of bilingualism in English in India. The first one of them, the missionary phase, was initiated around 1614
by the European Christian missionaries. The second phase, the demand from the South Asian public (in the eighteenth century) was considered to come about through local demand, as some scholars were of the opinion that the spread of English was the result of the demand and willingness of local people to learn the language. There were prominent spokesmen for English. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) and Rajunath Hari Navalkar (fl.1770) among others, were persuading the officials of the East India Company to provide instruction in English, rather than in the local language or Sanskrit or Arabic. They thought that English would open the way for people to find out about scientific developments of the West. Knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, or of Indian vernaculars would not contribute to this goal.

A letter of Raja Ram Mohan Roy addressed to Lord Amherst (1773-1857) from the year 1823 is often presented as evidence of local demand for English. Roy embraced European learning, and in his considered opinion, only English provided Indians with “the key to all knowledge - all the really useful knowledge which the world contains.” In the letter Roy expresses his opinion that the available funds should be used for employing “European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.”

Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s letter has been claimed to be responsible for starting the heated Oriental-Anglicist controversy, the controversy over which educational policy would be proper and suitable in Indian conditions. The third phase, the Government policy, began in 1765, when the East India Company’s authority was consolidated and stabilized. English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration. The English language became popular, because it opened paths to employment and influence. English of the various provinces of India became gradually a widespread means of communication.
During the governor generalship Lord William Bentinck (1774-1839) in the early nineteenth century, India saw many social reforms. He came to India in 1827 and went back in 1835. During his tenure, English became the language of record of government and higher courts, and extensive government support was given to the cultivation of Western learning and sciences through the medium of English. In this measure he was ably supported by Lord Macaulay.

Lord Macaulay was a central figure in the language debate over which language(s) should be used as the medium of education in India. The Orient lists were in favor of the use of the classical languages such as Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, which were not spoken as native languages. The Anglicists, on the other hand, supported English. Neither of these groups wanted to suppress the local vernaculars, mother tongues of the people. Both the groups agreed that education would be conducted in the vernacular during the first years of education. The Anglicist group included Charles Grant (1746-1823), Lord Moira (1754-1826) and T.B. Macaulay (1800-59); H.T. Prinsep (1792-1878) acted as the spokesman for the Orient lists.

The Anglicist group’s views were expressed in the Minute of Macaulay, which is said to mark “the real beginnings of bilingualism in India.” According to the document, which had been prepared for the governor general William Bentinck, after listening to the argument of the two sides, a class should be formed in India, a group of people who would act as interpreters between the British and Indians, “a class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.” Macaulay’s proposal was a success; and the following year Lord Bentinck expressed his full support for the minute, declaring that the funds “administered on Public Instruction should be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language.” According to Bailey, in Macaulay’s thinking Indian languages would be enriched by English, so that they could become vehicles for European scientific, historical and literary expression.
English gradually became the language of government, education, and advancement, “a symbol of imperial rule and of self-improvement.”

Macaulay justified the imposition of British power on the country by simply arguing that although this policy in India might seem controversial and strange sometimes, it can be so, for “the Empire is itself the strongest of all political anomalies...that we should govern a territory ten thousand miles from us, a territory larger and more populous than France, Spain, Italy and Germany put together...a territory inhabited by men differing from us in race, color, language, manners, morals, religion; these are prodigies to which the world has seen nothing similar. Reason is confounded...General rules are useless where the whole is one vast exception. The Company is anomaly, but it is part of a system where everything is anomaly. It is strongest of all governments; but it is designed for the strongest of all Empires.”

In the following years, English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration by the British Raj (1765-1947). Indian education was ever greater Anglicized as the English language became rooted in an alien linguistic, cultural, administrative and educational setting. The first universities were established in India in 1857 (in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras). English became accepted as the language of the élite, of the administration, and of the pan-Indian press. English newspapers had an influential reading public. Indian literature in English was also developing in all the genres. The introduction of English in the realm of education in the country resulted in Indians attempting to write and express themselves in the English language.

In a way English became "the veritable Suez Canal for intellectual intercourse between the West and the East." English became an integral part of the thinking and psyche of Indian intellectuals. Many Indians began to express their ideas in English. Raja Ram Mohan Roy pioneered this movement, Soon novels also began to be written. The earliest
efforts in this field were tales rather than novel. India is the third largest English book producing country after the US and the UK, and the largest numbers of books are published in English.

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