# Chapter Two

## Historical Developments and Changes in the Orthography of English

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Chapter-Two

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGES IN THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH

2.1 Introduction

Ye knowe eek that in forme of speche is chaunge
With-inne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
That hadden prys, now wonder nyce and straunge
Us thinketh hem; and yet they spake hem so
And spede as wel in love as men now do;
Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

Troilus and Criseyde, II, 22-25

(tho: then, prys: value, nyce: foolish)

This stanza from Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde, written close to six hundred years ago, can help remind one of three facts about change in language. Firstly, though today one might find the language of Chaucer quite strange and the pronunciation and spellings odd, it was a very normal thing for people in those days. Their language was adequate to all their needs and contained all the necessary resources for adaptation to new needs. It had changed much already and was to change much more. Secondly, change was inevitable and very natural. Various factors are responsible for changes in language which have taken place in pronunciation, spellings and vocabulary. Finally, a language is much more than a written representation. Change in language is change in speech, which comes to be gradually reflected in written documents. Noah Webster, the noted American scientist has expressed his dissatisfaction at the state of orthography in the following words:

But such is the state of our language. The pronunciation of the words which are strictly English has been gradually changing for ages, and since the revival of science in Europe, the language has received a vast accession of words from other languages, many of which retain an orthography very ill suited to exhibit the true pronunciation.

Webster 1768: 393
The drastic changes in pronunciation since Chaucer's day are almost completely hidden because of the minimal changes that have occurred in spellings. So to understand something of the nature of language, which we help to shape and which in turn, helps to shape us, it is important to know the patterns and processes of linguistic change.

Over a period of years English has undergone several transformations at all levels. Various factors have been responsible for these changes which have resulted in varieties of English spoken all over the world. According to Ferdinand de Saussure the English language is constantly changing and one of the causes is the pronunciation which changes from one period to another. Sometimes there is an attempt to write a word as it is pronounced, but more often this is not the case, and hence there is a great deal of discrepancy between sound and the symbol used to represent it. Saussure observes,

Being unstable and striving always for regularity, writing may vacillate at times; the result is fluctuating orthography that stems from efforts to record sounds at different periods.

Saussure 1960:29

Within a country itself there are numerous ways in which English is spoken. Due to social and regional differences there are varieties of English, which differ linguistically, i.e. in terms of pronunciation, intonation, stress, vocabulary, syntax, semantics and even graphology. In India, English is spoken differently in different parts of the country but it has been accepted as a very important means of communication all over the country. Most countries, which were colonized by the British use English as their first language or as the approved, sometimes official variety. English is also the lingua franca, at the international level. As a result the variety of people speaking English extends over an enormous range. Braj Kachru in his ‘The sacred cows of English’ in English Today describes how English has gained a lot of importance especially in India.
According to Kachru,

Where over 650 artificial languages have failed, English has succeeded; where many other natural languages with political and economic power to back them up have failed, English has succeeded. One reason for this dominance of English is its propensity for acquiring new identities, its power of assimilation, its adaptability for 'decolonization' as a language, its manifestations in a range of varieties, and above all its suitability as a flexible medium for literary and other types of creativity across language and cultures.

Kachru 1988: 8

It would be very interesting to know the origin of this language, the reason for so much of variety in its vocabulary and the lack of concord between words and their spelling. It is very essential to know what changes have taken place over the years, why these changes have taken place and the developments and changes that have affected the orthography of the English language. These are a few issues the researcher would be attempting to discuss and analyse in this chapter beginning with the history of English.

2.2 History of English

The earliest source of the English language was a prehistoric language that modern scholars call Proto-Indo-European (PIE). The PIE language was probably spoken about 5,000 years ago by people who lived in the area north of the Black Sea, in southeastern Europe. These people migrated through the centuries and gradually developed new languages. One group migrated west and divided into groups who spoke languages that were the ancestors of the Germanic, Greek, and Latin tongues. The Germanic languages developed into English, Danish, Dutch, German, Norwegian, and Swedish. The ancient Greek language became Modern Greek, and early Latin developed into French, Italian, and Spanish.

The earliest known language in what is now Great Britain was spoken by a people called the Celts. The Romans started to conquer the Celts in AD 43 and ruled much of Britain until the early 400's, when they returned to Rome. During
the mid-400's, Germanic people who lived along the North Sea invaded Britain. The invaders belonged to three main tribes—the Angles, the Jutes, and the Saxons who spoke their own Germanic dialect, but they probably understood one another. The Angles settled in central Britain which became known as Angle-Land and, eventually, as England. The language of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes became known as English.

**Old English** - Old English was mainly a mixture of the Germanic languages of the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. Old English resembles modern German more than it does Modern English. Old English had many inflections, as does modern German, and its word order and pronunciation resembled those of modern German. The vocabulary of Old English was chiefly Germanic, though some words came from the language of the Celts. The Germanic people who had obviously learned some Latin words while living on the European continent brought some of those words to the British Isles and added them to Old English. More Latin words were added during the 500's and 600's, when Christianity spread in England. There was more phoneme-grapheme correspondence in Old English and hence the orthography was more phonetic than it is now. Gradually the pronunciation changed and so did some of the symbols in the Old English script, and the spellings were not very stable due to the frequent changes in pronunciation, as there was no established standard spelling system.

During the late 800's, Viking invaders from Denmark and Norway settled in northeast England. As a result, many words from Scandinavian languages became part of Old English. They included words beginning with sc- or sk-, such as scare, scowl, skin, and sky. The pronouns they, their, and them were also borrowed from the Scandinavians. Gradually, many inflections of Old English were dropped. People also began to put words into a more regular order and to use more prepositions to indicate relationships between words.

**Middle English** - In 1066, England was conquered by the Normans, a people from the area in France that is now called Normandy. Their leader, William the Conqueror, became king of England. The Normans took control of all English
institutions, including the government and the church. Though most of the English people continued to speak English many of the members of the upper class in England learned Norman French because of the influence and power associated with it. The use of French words eventually became fashionable in England. The English borrowed thousands of these words and made them part of their own language. When the French words were borrowed into English some of the words underwent a change in pronunciation but the orthography remained more or less the same perhaps in order to show its etymology. The French-influenced language of England during this period is now called Middle English. The Normans began to use English as the language of daily life and by the end of the 1500's the French influence had declined sharply in England. English was used again in the courts and in business affairs, where French had replaced it.

Modern English - By about 1700, English had lost most of its Old English inflections, and the orthography, pronunciation and word order was more or less fixed. The orthography had undergone changes over the years due to various influences and had become more inconsistent and various spelling reformers from 1200 AD had begun their campaign for reforms in spellings. During this period, the vocabulary of English had also expanded by borrowing words from many other languages which added to the problems in the orthography.

An examination of most European and some Asian languages shows that they can be divided into several groups, the members of which resemble one another because they are derived from one original language (Baugh and Cable: 1978). Thus English, with German, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish etc. belong to the Germanic group of languages. All these languages were developed from a language spoken in pre-historic times by the early Germanic tribes. Similarly, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese etc., (called Romance languages, because they are derived from the speech of the Romans) are the offspring of Latin, which was one of the Italic family. Irish, Welsh, Scots, Gaelic, Manx and Breton belong to the Celtic group, while Russian, Polish, Serb-Croat, etc., belong to the Slavonic group. The members of any one of these groups of languages exhibit strong resemblance to one another and also show signs of their relationship. The
vocabulary of these languages seems to have a number of common roots. European languages even show likenesses to languages of the Indian subcontinent and Iran.

This group is marked by certain characteristics like the placing of the stress on the root syllable of the word as close to its beginning as possible, the use of two main tenses present and past, although these have been added to and made more sophisticated by the use of auxiliaries to form new ways of indicating time and the division of verbs into strong (which indicate tense by a change in the vowel in the main syllable e.g., sing, sang, sung) and the weak (which indicate tense by adding endings usually, d, ed, t etc.)

Banks and Burns 1987:15

These facts have been accounted for by assuming that there existed thousands of years ago a language, called Indo-European (Fig. 2.1), which was the common origin of the various groups described above.

The Indo-European family of languages

Figure 2.1
Nobody knows for sure how language began, or even whether it began just once or at a number of times and places. What is known is that some languages show evidence of a common origin, while others do not. English belongs to the Indo-European family which includes most of the European languages and a few Asiatic ones. Most of the languages of Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh and most of India as well as most European languages belong to the Indo-European family. Of the 11 languages with more than 100 million native speakers 7 belong to the Indo-European family yet Indo-European languages number only about 150, a small fraction of the world’s languages. As a member of the Indo-European family of languages, English is related to most of the languages of Europe and to Persian and Sanskrit. As a member of the Germanic sub-group of the Indo-European family, English is even more closely related to the modern Scandinavian languages. But its closest relatives are the still smaller group of West Germanic languages-German, especially Low German, spoken in northern Germany and Frisian, spoken in northern Holland; and Dutch.

The English language did not originate in Britain. It was carried to the island Britannia in the first half of the fifth century AD by the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, Jutes) collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons who spoke several West Germanic dialects and settled here in the fifth and sixth centuries from across the North Sea. There it was influenced by more invaders. Britannia was the Latin name for the island which had been a colony of the Roman Empire since the conquest which began in 43 AD. The inhabitants were referred to as Britons or Celts.

Cliffs 1963:11-17

When the Roman legions were withdrawn from Britannia early in the fifth century to help in the defence of the empire, the Britons were left to defend themselves against attacks from the west and north (present-day Ireland and Scotland). The Angles were invited from across the North Sea to assist the Britons and were granted lands in the eastern parts of the island. The invaders spoke dialects of a language family which scholars call West Germanic: the Britons spoke dialects of Celtic. The country became known as England (Angle
land) and the language as English. The language of this early period up to about 1100 or 1150 is called Old English. The Slavic and Celtic languages, as well as Indian, Persian, and some others are of Indo-European origin but the three branches with which English is most concerned are the Greek, Latin and Germanic, particularly the last. English as mentioned before belongs to the Germanic languages group which belongs to the western branch of the Indo-European group. Sanskrit belongs to the eastern group of the same language family.

Old Germanic split into North, West and East Germanic, West Germanic into High and Low German, and Low German split into further dialects including those of the Angles, Saxons and the Jutes. To North Germanic belong the modern Scandinavian languages while the East Germanic dialects were spoken by the tribes around the Baltic. Our point of interest is the West Germanic group to which English belongs. Several members of the three tribes the Angles, Saxons and the Jutes moved into and took over what is now called England (from Angle-land). It is at this time it is believed that the English language as such began. The following figure (Fig.2.2) shows the Germanic group of languages.

![The Germanic group of languages](image)

**Figure 2.2**
Old English (i.e. the language spoken in England before the Norman Conquest) differed greatly from Modern English in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Old English like Latin and Greek had a complicated system of inflexions; i.e., nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. had many different forms according to their grammatical relationship. English has changed greatly during the past thousand years. Many words have been added by groups of new settlers (notably Danes and Normans). Literary developments and scientific discoveries have been responsible for many borrowings from Latin and Greek and it’s difficult to establish the exact time when English began with any accuracy. A history of English must take into consideration the varieties which contributed to the formation of English as well as all the other variations like Old English which have had a major impact on its development.

2.3 The periods in the history of English

In this section, the researcher would like to touch briefly upon the linguistic context in which English first arose, and at its first and largely forgotten written system. The purpose is to show that all the changes that have taken place in the orthography can be linked to the developments, changes and the historical events that have taken place in England. Several changes have taken place in the English language at all levels and the researcher’s main interest would be in examining the spelling sound correspondences which have undergone tremendous changes over the centuries. The evolution of English in the 1,500 years of its existence in England has been an unbroken one. Within these developments, however it is possible to recognize three main periods. Like all divisions in history, the periods of the English language are matters of convenience and the dividing lines between them purely arbitrary. But within each period it is possible to recognize certain broad characteristics and certain special developments that have taken place.

The usual division of the history of the language into three major periods (Old, Middle and Modern) was first proposed by Henry Sweet in a lecture on the history of sounds to the Philological Society in 1873. They became so acceptable that they were taken over by other scholars too. Linguistically speaking, the
history of the English language could be divided into three main periods, during which it underwent several changes and was to a very large extent influenced by the invader’s language. The language of the first period, which began about 500 and ended about 1100, is called Old English. During the next period, from about 1100 to 1700, the people spoke Middle English. The language of the period from about 1700 to the present is known as Modern English. In this chapter, each period will be discussed with reference, in particular, to English orthography.

2.3.1 Old English
The period from 450 to 1100 is known as Old English. It is sometimes described as the period of full inflexions because during most of this period the endings of nouns, adjectives and verbs were preserved more or less unimpaired. When the Romans first invaded Britain in the first century, it was inhabited by various Celtic-speaking people some of whom seem to have migrated from France or Belgium. During the Roman occupation Latin was the official language of government and commerce, the language of culture, but Celtic undoubtedly remained the vernacular.

Then the Anglo-Saxon invasion took place in AD 499. When the Romans left, the settlers brought with them a variety of Germanic dialects from mainland Europe. The linguistic situation in Britain in the pre-English period established the fact that Britain was well connected with other parts of the world, and thus there was a great deal of impact on English grammar and vocabulary. Latin was the lingua franca. Identification of the languages that were in use in early Britain helps to establish which traditions of writing were current when English first appeared and therefore which ones are likely to have influenced the development of writing in English. However though there are a few traces of Celtic influence on Old English the number of Celtic words (London, Leeds, Thames, Kent etc.) taken into English is very small. After a period of relative stability and economic growth by the Roman Empire for more than three centuries, the fourth century was a critical time, as England was invaded several times, by different races and tribes. The Romans were forced to withdraw. The bilingual Roman British communities remained, but the country was threatened and finally invaded by the
Germanic-speaking people. They consisted of the most formidable races in Germany, the Saxons, Angles and the Jutes. They were collectively called the Anglo-Saxons. Obviously the different dialects would have had an impact on the language that was spoken in Britain at that time but, whatever their exact origin these groups were clearly related in language and culture and regarded themselves as one people. For example the word Engle, the Angles, came to be applied to all the Germanic settlers in Britain and the related adjective English as similarly applied to all these people and their language.

Thus the English language first appeared in the fifth century AD among a confusion of people, origins and languages. Britain entered a period from which few documentary records survive. When records appeared some 200 or so years later, in the form of manuscripts and inscriptions they indicated that an identifiable language had somehow evolved, although internal dialectal variations between the north and south of England, are still very similar to other Germanic languages. This language is called Old English and the people who spoke it are usually referred to as Anglo-Saxons.

Old English script used six vowel symbols a, e, i, o, u and y, and a seventh one called ‘ah’. All these could represent both long and short vowels. They represented pure vowels not diphthongs. To represent diphthongs, the Anglo Saxons used digraphs which could be short or long. The use of double consonants was different. In Modern English we use two consonants in two-syllable words to show that the preceding vowel is short for example, the letters t and p in written /'ritn/ and copper /'kupə/ are doubled to show that the vowel preceding both the consonants (the vowel letters i and o) are short. A single consonant symbol is used if the preceding vowel is long as in meet /'mi:t/ or if the vowel is a diphthong as in writer /'raitə/. But in old English this was not so. The fact that a single consonant was used tells nothing about the length of the preceding vowel. The old English words for written and copper are writen and cuppe. There are old English spellings with doubled consonants like bucca (he-goat) and cuppe (cup). Here the double consonants indicate that the consonant
was in fact pronounced long. It is heard in Modern English in words such as mis-
spell and lamp-post.

The orthography has undergone several changes over the past few years to a
certain extent. For example, OE consonant letter c never represented the sound /s/
as in modern English-centre, city, and lace. This spelling convention was
introduced by the French after the Norman Conquest, and is unknown in Old
English. Often the OE scribes did not distinguish in spellings between /g/ as in
get /get/ and /j/ as in yet /yet/ but when /j/ occurred before a back vowel they
tend to spell it with the letters ge as in geoc for 'yoke'. The spelling cg was used
instead of a double consonant sometimes as froega instead of frogga and it also
represented the /dʒ/ phoneme (resembling the letter j in judge) as in ecg = edge,
brycg = bridge. The letter n represented the /n/ sound as it does today, but when
it occurred before the letters k or g it was pronounced /ŋ/ like -ng in sing. When
one reads OE texts, one has to remember that every letter must be pronounced:
the h in niht (night) c in cneo (knee), the e at the end of cwene (queen) and so
on. Some OE spelling symbols are ambiguous since they can stand for more than
one phoneme and in the past it has been a common practice for historians to use
letter symbols rather than phonetic symbols while discussing the phonology of
Old English and Middle English.

In the later part of the Old English period, two groups of non-English speakers
invaded the country. Both were Scandinavians in origin but the first had retained
its Scandinavian speech while the second was French speaking. The languages of
both groups, Old Norse and Old French had a considerable influence on
English. The Scandinavians Vikings consisted of the Swedes, Norwegians and
Danes. Scandinavian influence on English went a good deal farther than place
names. Old English and Old Norse were reasonably similar. Due to various
bilingual situations it is possible that a great deal of mixing would have taken
place between the two languages.

The Invasion by the Vikings took place after the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes over a
period of two hundred years had gradually occupied almost the whole of
England. After about three hundred years of settlement with the country divided into seven kingdoms the Vikings from Scandinavia began a series of raids. They spoke the dialect of a Scandinavian language known as Old Norse which was not so different from Old English that the speakers of the two languages could not communicate with each other. Both languages were Germanic. Many of their words were similar. So the source of English dialects today lies partly in the dialects of Old English and also in the blend of Old Norse dialects spoken by the Viking settlers which ultimately merged with English. These extensive Danish settlements had a strong influence on the language. Many words were borrowed by the English, such as skin, skill, get, ill, leg, thursday, and the forms of the third personal pronouns beginning with the digraph th (they, their, them). Finally Old Norse died out in England and English triumphed but not before a great deal of Scandinavian had got mixed in with it. Most of the Scandinavian loan words first appear in writing in the Middle English period but their form shows that they had been taken into English in the late OE period for they have undergone the sound changes that mark the transition from Old English to Middle English. They do not appear earlier in writing because at that time there was no literary tradition among the Scandinavian settlers.

A few loans do however occur in OE texts. What is most striking about the Scandinavian loan words, as a whole is that they are such ordinary words belonging to the central core of the vocabulary. Thus the word sister is Scandinavian (OE sweostor), names of close family relationships, parts of the body, everyday adjectives, (flat, loose, odd, low, ugly, wrong) common nouns, (bag, cake, dirt, fellow, fog, knife, skill, skin, sky) everyday words (call, drag, get, give, raise, smile) etc.

Some grammatical words namely the conjunction though and the pronouns they, them, their- (hie, him, hiera) show the strength of the Scandinavian influence. The total number of Scandinavian loan words is in fact small compared to the number of words later borrowed from French and Latin. On the other hand, many of the words are in frequent use and there is a Scandinavian enclave in the very central regions of the English vocabulary. So far as scholars can tell the
relationship of the spelling to the pronunciation was more straightforward in Old English than at any later time; there were hardly any silent consonant letters and by the end of the tenth century there was a single system, with only minor variations throughout England. In terms of simplicity this was the high point of English spelling.

The Norman Conquest of England by William Duke of Normandy took place in 1066. The Normans were of Viking stock but after settling in Northern France they adopted the French language. The dialect they spoke is known as Old Northern French. By the end of the fourteenth century in the time of the poet Chaucer hundreds of words of French origin had been taken in to the English of educated people. The writing of Old English was considerably reduced and when we look at the written evidence for the language from about 1150 to 1450 we find marked differences from Old English in spellings as well as changes in vocabulary, word forms and grammar. The Norman Invasion reduced the amount of writing in English and the stable spelling system began to fall apart. Manuscripts in English began to show signs of regional dialect and local spelling conventions and the influence of French and Latin. The spoken language was also changing.

The invasion also brought a host of Norman French words and spelling patterns and this influence was prolonged by the rise of metropolitan French as the courtly language of international diplomacy in the Middle Ages; perhaps as much as 40% of today's English vocabulary is derived from French. The words that arrived in the Middle Ages especially during the Anglo-Norman period, such as royal, gentle, chance and danger are now completely assimilated into English and have no foreign tinge at all. This is in contrast to words such as cordon, vogue, moustache, clique and salon which entered the language much later in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Even in the Middle Ages there was a difference between those words that arrived early which came from Norman French and those that arrived late from Parisian French. Occasionally the same word was borrowed twice, once from Norman French and later from Parisian French.
Many of the scribes would be bilingual and much of what they were copying was in French, so French spelling patterns could have crept in when they were writing English. Sometimes a French spelling pattern simply replaced a perfectly good old English one; the letters qu for example replaced the earlier cw in words like queen and quick. At other times a French pattern provided a solution for an English orthographical problem. For example, it had not been felt necessary in Old English to have a special letter for the sound /tf/ as in chin but by 1200 the pronunciation had changed and writers needed some way of marking it. They solved the problem by taking ch from French. The French ch was pronounced as /tf/ in chin at that time. Only later did it come to be pronounced /ʃ/ like the sh in shin, as it is today. Often however the new French spellings just caused confusion. A good example of this is the use of the initial consonant letter h. French scribes took to writing French words with h if they were obviously derived from Latin words beginning with the letter h, even though the letter h was not pronounced as in French habile, honneur, and so on. It was believed by most scholars that the French scribes favoured the initial h in writing but it was not entirely due to their fondness for Latin. The amount they got paid for a legal document depended on the number of letters in it, so superfluous letters may have been a source of income.

When these words were introduced into English the initial h was retained in the spelling though manuscripts show a lot of variation in their use of it. With some of these words the h never caught on; some of them like honour, retained the letter h in the spelling though it continued to be silent as in French and some words like hospital have had their pronunciation changes so that the letter h is not sounded. This process has continued down the years. The words humour, hospital and herb were not pronounced with the /h/ sound as recently as the early 1900s. (herb is still pronounced without the ‘aitch’ in America.)

Many people feel that it is contrary to common sense for the spelling of a word to be different from what the pronunciation would lead one to expect. Yet from medieval times people have been respelling words in a way that made spellings
more remote from the pronunciation. The silent h is an example; another is the replacement of u by o in words like come, love, monk and wonder. The letters u, m and n were written as sequences of short unligatured downstrokes known as minims. (Minims are sequences of short unligatured downstrokes for example, umn--) Present day v was written as u and w as uu as its name implies (double u). To further complicate matters the letter i was written as a single undotted minim. A run of 5 minims could represent w u n u v etc., a run of 6 could be u m m u w i and so on. To help disambiguate such runs scribes borrowed the Latin practice of writing o for u and sometimes used y or i.

2.3.1.1 The French influence
French influence is indirectly Latin influence, since the French language is derived from Latin. A very large proportion of English vocabulary is, either directly or indirectly, of Latin origin. After the Norman Conquest French, as spoken by the Normans, was the language of the ruling classes in this country, and was used largely by Englishmen. Moreover, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century a lot of French literature was translated into English. A large number of French words were thus incorporated in our language. Classified examples are:

i  words for the flesh of animals used for food, beef, mutton, veal, and pork, for ox, sheep, calf, and pig respectively which are English,

ii words connected with the household: master, dinner, banquet, servant etc.,

iii words connected with law, government and property: court, prison, custom, rent etc.,

iv names of titles: duke, marquis, viscount, baron etc.,

v military terms: battle, siege, standard, fortress etc.,

vi words for remoter relationships: uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, cousin etc.
The Norman conquerors of England spoke the French dialect of Normandy and Picardy. Some words were borrowed twice, first from one dialect and then from the other. Many French words thus passed into English, and the process has continued ever since that time.

2.3.1.2 The Latin influence
After the Norman Conquest, borrowings from Latin were enormously increased. French itself is directly descended from Latin, and it is sometimes difficult to say whether a word has originated from French or Latin which began to influence English before the Anglo-Saxons arrived in England. The Germanic tribes were in contact with the outposts of Roman civilization, and borrowed a few words, which are still to be found in the different branches of the Germanic group of languages: e.g. street (Lat. strata via); cheese (Lat. caseum); mint (Lat. moneta).

When the English tribes came to settle in England, they came in contact with a people that had been for long a part of the Roman Empire. It is believed that the educated population of the British towns spoke a form of Latin. Certainly they used a large number of Latin words and some of these words seem to have passed in to the language of the new conquerors. Latin borrowings of this period are distinguished by their form, because the Latin spoken in Britain had undergone considerable modifications. In the sixth century, Christianity was reintroduced into England by Roman missionaries. As the new religion spread, the English language adopted a large number of Latin words to express new ideas connected with the faith; e.g. pope (Lat. papa), martyr, mass, monk, etc. In later times, (especially since the revival of learning in the sixteenth century which led to wide study of Latin and Greek literature), Latin words had frequently been borrowed from the literary language. Around 1700 Latin was falling into disuse and finally English was the sole literary medium in England. But, while English had established its supremacy over Latin, it was at the same time more under its influence than at any other time in history.
The Renaissance was the period of the rediscovery of the classics in Europe. There was thus a constant influence of Latin literature and language on the English language. Some of the loans were taken over bodily in their Latin form with their Latin spellings for example, e.g. *genius*, *species*, *militia*, *radius*, *specimen*, *lens* and *antenna*. Some loans were adapted and given English forms. For example, Latin-ending *-atus* was replaced by *-ate* as in *desperate*. In some cases, the Latin inflexion was simply omitted as in *complex* (*complexus*). This reshaping is often influenced by the forms of the French words derived from Latin for example, Latin ending *-itas* sometimes became English *-ity* as in *immaturity* and Latin *-entia* and *-antia* appeared as *-ence*, *-ency*, *-ance* and *-ancy* (*transcendence*, *delinquency*, *relevancy*). The vast majority of the words are introduced through the medium of writing rather than speech. The new spellings which the Latin scholars invented were sometimes based on faulty etymology. They changed *sicoures* and *sithe* to *scissors* and *scythe* on the assumption that these words were derived from Latin *sciendere* (*to cut*). They put an *s* into *island* (medieval *yland*) by analogy with *isle* (from French) and *insula* (Latin) though the word came from Old English and had never had the letter *s*. They put a *d* in *advantage* an *l* in *emerald* and an *h* in *anchor*. Etymologically justified or not however a large number of these quirky spellings remained.

The orthography was getting fixed at this time but the process was very slow. Printing of books too took a very long time and one of the reasons it was believed was that most of the early compositors were foreigners and it took some time before the printing houses developed their house styles. According to Baugh and Cable: 1978 in order to adjust the length of the line so as to get a straight right hand margin, different compositors used different spellings and any one compositor would use different spellings of the same word in different places. A pamphlet of 1591 about *rabbits* spells *coney* (an old word for *rabbit*) as *cony*, *conny*, *conye*, *conie*, *connie*, *coni*, *cuny*, *cunny* and *cunnie*. 
2.3.2 Middle English

From 1150 to 1700, the language is known as Middle English. During this period the inflexions which had begun to break down towards the end of the Old English period became greatly reduced and it is consequently known as the period of leveled inflexions. During this period, the Normans ruled over the country. English was influenced by French, which became the official language of England. Educated English people were trilingual (French, Latin, English). It was also the Age of Chaucer. Old English did not disappear overnight at the time of the Norman Conquest, nor did it immediately stop being written. But in the years following the Norman Conquest changes continued at an increased speed. The conquest in fact made the change from Old English to Middle English look more sudden than it really was, by introducing new spelling conventions. Changes occurred in pronunciation but the scribes often went on writing the words in the traditional way. They disregarded traditional English spellings and spelt words as they heard it using many of the conventions of Norman French. Consequently many changes that had not been reflected in OE spelling or which had appeared only in occasional spellings now emerged clearly.

2.3.2.1 The French influence

Although French gradually died out in England, it left its mark on English. Its main effect was on the vocabulary and spellings. French words spread everywhere from London and the court. Most of the French loan words reflect the cultural and political dominance of the Normans. They had to do with wars, ecclesiastical matters, law, hunting heraldry, arts and fashion.

A few examples of French loan words are as following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles of rank</th>
<th>baron, count, duke, prince, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>chancellor, government, nation, parliament, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>accuse, attorney, court, crime, judge, justice, prison, punish, sentence, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecclesiastical life</td>
<td>abbey, clergy, prayer, religion, saint, sermon, service, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>armour, battle, castle, tower, war, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arts and Fashion  
- costume, fashion, art, beauty, colour, music, paint, poem, romance, etc.,

Abstract nouns  
- charity, courtesy, cruelty, mercy, obedience, etc.

Differences between modern French and English loanwords are due to changes in pronunciation in both languages since medieval times. When the words were first borrowed from the French they may have been given a French pronunciation especially among bilingual speakers. But very soon they were adapted to the English phonological system and given the English sounds, which to the speakers, was nearest to the French sounds. Thus the word age was borrowed from Old French. The sound /dʒ/ is retained in English /eɪdʒ/ while in French it has become /ʒ/. Modern French retains the original vowel sound /aː/ whereas in English it has developed into /ei/.

2.3.2.2 Phonological influences

There are several factors which have influenced English spelling. One of the major reasons for changes that have occurred in spellings can be attributed to changes in the pronunciation of words. The revival of interest in Latin resulted in a large amount of literature produced in Latin especially during the Renaissance period between 1400 and 1600 when several writers attempted to change the spelling of Latin based English words in order to show their origin. The word doubt was borrowed into English from the French doute. The Latin source of this word was dubitum and since the Latin word contained the letter b it was believed that the English word should too, in spite of the fact that no English speaker has ever pronounced doubt with a b sound. (The insertion of b into the spelling of doubt does serve to point out the relation between this root and words dubious and indubitable).

Similar interference with spelling also led to the insertion of the letter s which is never pronounced, in island and aisle. The word perfect was borrowed into Middle English from French parfait. But the original Latin form was perfectus and because of this the spelling parfait was changed to perfect in English. Unlike doubt in which the inserted letter b was never pronounced people began to use a spelling pronunciation for perfect and in modern English the word
contains a /k/ sound where the letter c was added /'pəfekt/. Other more recent examples of spelling pronunciations include the t in often and the l in soldier.

2.3.2.3 Effect of the Great Vowel Shift on orthography

The Great Vowel Shift was one of the most important developments in this period. Between 1400 and 1700 a gradual series of changes altered the pronunciation of all long stressed vowels so that nearly all of them were pronounced one notch higher in the mouth than they were earlier so that two of the long vowels became diphthongs. This shift known as the Great Vowel Shift is the reason why many vowels in borrowed words differ so much from the corresponding vowels in the same words in the original language for example in French or German. Briefly this change meant that front and back long vowels were raised except that /i:/ and /u:/ which could not be raised further were diphthongised and ultimately produced modern /ai/ and /au/ respectively.

The spelling changes that occurred during this period were as follows:

i Vowel length was indicated by doubling the vowels ee, oo (rarely aa) or by post consonantal e as in name, mete, rise, nose, lute- the e having being retained after such words had become monosyllabic in the 15th century. These spelling conventions such as the multiple representations of a single phoneme /e:/ written as ee, ie, and e, /i:/ written as (ea, ee, e) or the ambiguity of /u:/ and /u/ both spelt as ou continue to exist in the present orthography.

ii The orthographical differentiation of meet/meat and boot/boat, word pairs, a problem unsolved in Chaucer’s time was achieved by the 16th century, a period when the Great Vowel Shift had made the distinction appear more urgent.

iii The function of the final e in words like fine-/faɪn/ and fame-/feɪm/ became a very important topic of debate among several academicians. The loss of the final e in bi-syllabic words during this period appeared to be arbitrary and optional. However the final e came to be interpreted as functional in the
Early Modern English period. The final e was interpreted as an indication of vowel length. It indicated that the vowel in the open syllable was long as in name-/'nem/ and nose-/'nouz/. It was transferred to words such as case-/'keis/ and life-/'laif/. However ambiguity was the result in words like written-/'ritn/ which came to be spelt with tte to indicate the shortness of the preceding vowel (gladden-/'glænd/, rotten-/'rOtən/) but no double v in driven-/'drvn/).

iv The final e also came to distinguish inflectional s from word final /s/ in the word (dense) dens + e and to prevent the letters i, u/v and z from occurring at the end of the words like lie, toe, glue, love and freeze. Occasionally the final e carries two functions at once as in grace, mice, oblige, drive and haze. It produces homographs in live and use and serves different functions in similar words (love, grove, move).

v The representation of consonants was less diverse and inconsistent. Every consonant pronounced was also written and almost every written consonant was pronounced at least in 1430. Thus the letter w in wrought and the letters gh in night were pronounced. Over a period of time these letters were dropped while pronouncing the word, but were retained in the spelling of the word.

vi The ambiguity of some consonantal graphemes e.g., the consonant letter c pronounced with a /k/ sound in character and with a /s/ sound in city, the letter g pronounced with a /g/ sound as in gate but with a /dʒ/ sound as in judge and the digraph th pronounced as /θ/ as in think and as /ð/ in then favoured the retention of final e to mark the second consonantal quality as in the words prince, plunge and breathe. In many words the presence of the vowel letter e has changed the pronunciation of the word. For example, fin = /'fin/ but fine = /'fain/.
The letter b was inserted in debt and doubt though without affecting the pronunciation and the same was done with the letter c in victuals. Words which were thought to be Greek in origin had their spelling adjusted as well so that throne and theatre now gained an h. Other insertions were the letter l in fault, s in island, h in author and w before some words beginning with a h as in whole. The loss of many unstressed syllables particularly the final e and the changes associated with the Great Vowel Shift produced many homophones in English.

Graphemes began to be used to represent consonants for which there were no graphemes. The systematic distinction between u and v as allographs was made only in the 15th and the 16th centuries. Proposals in the 16th century to distinguish between them phonetically were not successful at first. But the distinction between them became common practice after 1630. The letter g remained ambiguous which in turn led to gu or gh spellings in accordance with French Dutch models. The letters s/z- /z/ stood for /z/ but it could also represent /s/. This produced homographs (house, use) or alternative spellings as in ise/ize words.

Early Modern English sound changes did not normally affect spellings though there is draught (old spelling) versus draft; light versus lit. Some semblance of an order was reached as many printers had generally settled in favour of one spelling for the individual word, usually a less complicated or shorter one. (sonne: son).

Some loan words in entering the language retained their original form. Others underwent change. Words like climax, appendix, epitome, exterior, delirium, and axis still have their Latin form. The adaptation of others to English was effected by the simple process of cutting off the Latin ending. Examples are:

- conjectival from Latin conjecturalis
- consult from Latin consultare
- exclusion from Latin exclusionem
exotic from Latin exoticus

But more often a further change was necessary to bring the word into accord with
the usual English forms. Thus, the Latin ending _us in adjectives was changed to
-ous (L. conspic-us = conspic-uous) or it was replaced by _al as in external
(L. externus = externaal). Latin nouns ending with _tas were changed in
English to _ty (brevitas = brevity) because English had so many words of this
kind borrowed from French. For the same reason nouns ending in _antia, _entia,
appear in English with the ending _ance, _ence or _ancy, _ency. Adjectives
ending in _bils take the usual English (or French) ending _ble. Examples:
consonance, concurrence, constancy, frequency, considerable and
susceptible. Many English verbs borrowed from Latin at this time end in _ate
(create, consolidate, eradicate). These verbs were formed on the basis of the
Latin past participle (e.g. enterminatus) The English practice arose from the fact
that the Latin past participle was often equivalent to an adjective and it was a
common thing in English to make verbs out of adjectives (busy, dry, darken).

2.3.2.4 New spelling conventions

The new orthography gave English writing a new look. A number of new
consonant symbols were introduced. A new symbol _g was introduced for the
stops represented by OE. Where Old English had used _f to represent both /f/ and
/v/. ME scribes used _u or _v for the voiced sound /v/. Similarly _z was introduced
besides /s/ though not consistently. The digraph _th gradually represented /ð/ and
/θ/. In ME there were separate phonemes /f/ and /v/, /s/ and /z/ and /ð/ and /θ/, where in OE there were pairs of allophones. In the spelling however this fact was
only fully realized for /f/ and /v/ and this still remains the case today. One oddity
of ME spelling was the result of a change in the script. In place of the insular
script of OE, the Norman scribes introduced the continental style of handwriting.
In this style it was difficult to tell how many strokes had been made when letters
like _m, n, v, w, and _u occurred together. Groups like _wu, un, uv and _um were
difficult to distinguish from one another. For this reason scribes took to writing _o
instead of _u when it occurred in groups of the same kind. Gradually there were
changes in the letters i.e., in the way they were written and this could be one of
the reasons for changes in spelling.
### The Evolution of letter-forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Egyptian hieroglyphs</td>
<td>3,100 BC – AD 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Phoenician</td>
<td>1200–200 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1000 BC – the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Old Roman system</td>
<td>30 BC – AD 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roman Square Capitals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Roman Rustic Capitals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Old Roman Cursive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>New Roman system</td>
<td>AD 300–600 (300–850 for 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Uncial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Roman Cursive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Half-uncial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Merovingian Chancery Script</td>
<td>AD 600–800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Caroline Miniscule</td>
<td>AD 800–1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Gothic Book Script (textualis)</td>
<td>AD 1200–1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>English Cursive</td>
<td>AD 1175–1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>French Cursive (secretary)</td>
<td>AD 1300–1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bastard Secretary</td>
<td>AD 1400–1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Humanistic Cursive</td>
<td>AD 1400–1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Humanistic Book Script</td>
<td>AD 1400–1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Roman Typeface</td>
<td>1475–the present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evolution of letter-forms in the West, from Egyptian hieroglyphs to Renaissance typefaces. Some of the letters are quite similar to the phonemic symbol e.g., s (no 16), g (no 8) and d (nos. 10, 12 and 15).

Figure 2.3
2.3.2.5 Orthographical differences between Old English and Middle English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>OE spelling</th>
<th>ME spelling</th>
<th>Examples in ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/kw/</td>
<td>cw</td>
<td>qu</td>
<td>queen, quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>sc</td>
<td>ss, sch, sh</td>
<td>fish, fisch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/dz/</td>
<td>cg</td>
<td>i, j, g</td>
<td>juge, judge, edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k, c</td>
<td>kinn, cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tf/</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>chinn, chin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s, c</td>
<td>sindir, cinder centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i:/</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i, y</td>
<td>king, kynge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e:/</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e, ee</td>
<td>quen, queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u:/</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>ou, ow</td>
<td>hour, hows, house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.4

A number of changes in pronunciation that took place in the transition of OE to ME resulted in several changes in spellings, over a period of time. When the pronunciation of a word changed gradually it also affected the spellings. Vowels have undergone tremendous changes when English was influenced by French. For example OE gæt became goat and OE gūs became goose. In ME the two phonemes were not distinguished in spellings until early modern times. The letter y was no longer used to represent a front rounded vowel, but was simply used as an alternative to the vowel letter i so that ME fir and fyre were written as fire. The ME dialects preserved the front rounded vowels /i/ and /i:/ from OE /h/ and usually spelt them u or ui. OE cynn became kunn and OE fyr (fire) became fur or fur. OE /dz/ never occurred in word-initial position, only medially and finally, but ME loan words from French like judge have /dz/ in the initial position. The digraph ou was not a very satisfactory substitute for /u:/ because it was also used to represent two different ME diphthongs.

A change which took place in late OE period but which did not become apparent until the ME period was the lengthening of short vowels before certain consonant groups. It had far-reaching effects on both pronunciation and spellings. The ME lengthening of vowels in open syllables (a syllable which ends with a vowel e.g. the first syllable of ba/con) of disyllabic words has affected our spelling...
conventions. Early ME words like *bake* had two syllables. After the first vowel had been lengthened the final *e* was lost and such words became monosyllabic. But the final *e* was retained in the spelling and so we tend in Modern English to regard a final *e* as a mark of a preceding long vowel or a diphthong provided there with only one consonant symbol in between. Thus we use spellings like *home* and *stone* where the final *e* has no etymological justification but is simply inserted to show that it represents a long vowel or a diphthong. Due to the lengthening in open syllables, two consonant symbols are often inserted in the spelling to show that the vowel is short. We write *ripper* and *supper* as distinct from *riper* and *super*. During the Middle Ages, especially during the age of Chaucer, word-final unstressed *e* was dead or dying, but it continued to be used in poetry. In many words with initial *h*, the *h* was not pronounced so that in fact the word began with a vowel sound. This applied to many French loan words such as *heritage, harbor, host* and *humble*. These had already lost their initial */h/ sound before they were borrowed by the English, and the modern pronunciations are due to the spelling and the influence of Latin. There were a considerable number of words where the final *e* in the spelling was purely orthographical and was never pronounced. For example, the vowel letter *e* in: *hise* (his), *oure* (our), and *youre* (your). In the script of ME, the doubling of letters was used to indicate a long vowel e.g., *maad*. In some words, the vowel has since then been shortened e.g., *deed* - *dead*.

The orthography was considerably affected as a result of the vowel change. OE *ǣ* used in the northern regions of England changed to the vowel letter *a* used in all in the southern regions. In ME the vowel letter *ū* developed to */ū/* as in */hūum/* (home) while */aː/* developed into the vowel letter *e* as in serve. OE long *y* became ME *ɪ* or *ē* or remained *y*. Modern English is descended from a dialect where OE *y* normally developed into Modern English */ai/*. A characteristic of the dialects of western and the southern parts of England is the development of OE short *æ* in the above mentioned parts it appears as *e*, but elsewhere it appears as */aː/*. The OE short *a* before nasal consonants is also different. The West has *mon* for *man* where the other dialects have *man*. A characteristic of the Southern
dialects is the voicing of word-initial /f/, /θ/ and /s/ which became /v/, /θ/ and /z/. This is not always shown in the spellings.

Changes in spellings are mainly orthographic and do not necessarily indicate a change in pronunciation. Thus, the long u-/u:/ through the influence of the practices adopted by French scribes began to be written as ou as early as the mid 14th century yet for some while after this it retained the old pronunciation. Thus hus (whose) was written as hous but it was some years before the word ceased to rhyme (approximately) with modern goose and became diphthongal. Increasingly too the long o was represented by the vowel letters oo as in hoom (home), foo (foe) and coomen (to come). The transition was gradual and long drawn. To pass from vowels to consonants, the hard c of Anglo Saxons and early Middle English gave way to the letter k before the front vowels e, i, y, but was retained before the back vowels a, u and o. Thus the Anglo Saxons cepan became keep. Obviously the result of the Norman French influence. Borrowing has also created cases in which English spelling fails to reflect phonemic representations. Not only has English borrowed words, morphemes, and phonological features, but it has also borrowed spellings from other languages. In the Middle English period for example, many literate people knew French as well as English. French was considered more prestigious than English for a time and it was not surprising that some of the characteristics of French writing were extended to English. For example, in Old English the words choose, chew, cheese were spelled ceosan, ceowan and cese, respectively (the letter e had a bar above it).

The spelling change from c to ch was due to the fact that words like chase in which the initial sound was the same as that as choose, chew, and cheese were borrowed from French. Since the first sound of chase was pronounced ch in French and since the spelling was borrowed along with the word, it was not surprising that the prestigious ch spelling should have been extended to native English words too.
2.3.2.6  Standardization of English spellings

Though diversity was the main feature of English spellings in the Middle Ages, a standard form eventually emerged. Power shifted to London from the eleventh century and in time documents from London formed the basis of a new standard. These writings issued from the Chancery were legal documents not literary or religious ones and for many years they had been in Latin or French but from about 1430 they began to be written in English. They were important documents circulated around the country and the spelling which was used in these documents was used as a model by professional writers. The spelling naturally reflected the speech of the London area, which had been influenced by the dialect of the East Midlands since many of London's inhabitants had come from there but it was not a phonetic system. The Chancery scribes did not invent a new system. They settled on a restricted set of the spellings that were current at that time. Most of them are what we have today.

With the re-establishment of English as the language of administration and culture came the re-establishment of an English literary language, a standard form of the language, which could be regarded as a norm. London was the seat of government and the cultural centre of England. The London dialect was in fact a rather mixed one but in the 14th century it was influenced by neighbouring dialects. Gradually the prestige of the London dialect grew and in the 15th century its influence was increased by the introduction of printing. Thus the literary language had been standardized by the end of the 15th century.

It was at this time that dictionaries began to develop. Glossaries of words giving their Latin and English equivalents were published and the dictionaries also defined the words taken into English from foreign languages. Thesauruses and Etymologies were also published. One of the most important books in English appeared at this time: Dr. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language (1755). It rapidly became the standard book for English spelling and the spelling system was standardized to quite a large extent after the publication of the dictionary.
2.3.3 Modern English

The English language since 1700 is called Modern English. By this time a large part of the original inflexions had disappeared entirely and thus this period is sometimes referred to as the period of lost inflexions. The language from 1950 is referred to as Late Modern English. During this time Britain retreated from the Empire. New standardized versions of English emerged in newly independent countries and English became the international language of communication technology. American English gained a lot of prominence and became quite dominant in some parts of the world. The late Middle Ages had seen the triumph of the English language over French in England and the establishment once more of a standard form of written English. However Latin still had great prestige as the language of international learning and it was quite some time before English replaced it in all the fields.

2.3.3.1 Spelling pronunciation

In the second half of the 18th century the stabilization of spelling was quite prominent. The first of the many grammars and dictionaries of English were published for the first time in the 17th century. These dictionaries helped to stabilize spellings and word meanings. Several changes had occurred in the orthography and many of the spellings had gradually deviated from the almost phonetic script it had been before. There were changes in the pronunciation as well as the spelling of a word. This was due to the fact that English was undergoing a tremendous amount of developmental changes over the past few decades.

One result of the inconsistencies in the orthography is the prevalence of spelling pronunciations which arise when a word is given a new pronunciation through the influence of its spelling. Thus the word schedule originally began with s and was commonly spelt sedule or csedul. The spelling with sch- dates from the mid 17th century and had led to the present day pronunciations /s/ in Britain and /sk/ in the United States. This is likely to happen when universal education and the wide dissemination of books and newspapers introduce people to words which they have never heard pronounced in their home environment in the printed form.
Today there are many differences between spellings in America and England. Most of the differences are due to the fact that American spell many words according to its pronunciation. These changes have been accepted in many parts of the world. To a very large extent, spellings are influenced by pronunciation. Most of the spellings of words today are written as they were pronounced during the times of early Modern English. Gradually the pronunciation underwent changes, however the spellings remained the same. This could possibly be the answer to queries like why the word knee has a k when k is not articulated. As pronunciation underwent changes consonants were lost in some positions. Until about 1600 initial k was pronounced in knee, knight initial g in gnat and initial w in write but today these consonants are silent.

Formerly in the Middle English period the final e in a word would have been pronounced. It was all that was left of most of the Old English inflectional endings. By the time of the 1611 Bible translation the final e was no longer pronounced but it survived in spelling in a fairly random way because spelling had not been standardized yet. Sometimes printers would add an e to a word to fill up a line of type. The rules for the use of i, y and j were not yet fixed as in modern spellings. The letters i and j had been interchangeable for a long time to represent the vowel sound /u/. The letter j was at first an alternative form of the letter i used as the final letter when writing numbers, for example, ij and iiij. Certain distinctions between sounds like /u/ and /v/ were not represented in the spelling. The letters u and v like i and j were alternative forms of the same letter. The form of the letter was determined by its place in the written word. If either sound began a word (word initial) then letter v was used. e.g. vp (up), vnto (unto), verily, victuals, etc. If either sound was in the middle (word-medial) or at the end (word-final) of a word then the letter u was used. e.g. ouer-over, fiue-few, thou, multitude. The digraph ou was sometimes written as ow.

The word schism has an unhistorical spelling. The traditional pronunciation is sizm but in recent years the spelling and pronunciation skism has appeared. Under the Latin influence the initial h was introduced into the spelling of many words where no h was pronounced- such words as habit, harmony, hemisphere,
herb, heritage, host, humble and humour. The spelling-pronunciation with h was not common until the 19th century. The researcher believes that if such a reform movement in spellings could take place in such a positive way in America then why not in India where English is used as the chief means of communication at various levels of administration, education and governance.

2.3.3.2 The Greek influence
The Greek element in English is chiefly of modern origin, and is used mainly to express scientific ideas. New words from this source are constantly being introduced because it is very easy to coin words from Greek roots. A few examples are: telegraphy, philology, geology, gramophone, cybernetics etc. The effect of the mixed nature of the English vocabulary has been quite profound. As an instrument of expression, English has been enormously improved by its borrowings from other languages. It has a greater wealth of synonymous words than most other languages, and is thus more capable of drawing precise and subtle distinctions. Very often we have a choice between a native English word and a synonym of Latin or French origin. Examples are: almighty-omnipotent; blessing-benediction; bloom-flower; calling-vocation; manly-virile.

2.3.3.3 Loan words from other languages
As mentioned earlier English has borrowed many words from other foreign languages and changes were made to some of the spellings of words to make them sound more English and fit them within the parameters of English orthography. Most of the foreign words that were borrowed were from the Latin language. The next largest source for loan words after Latin was French. Military words (bayonet) and words from Life Sciences (muscles) and from the general vocabulary (entrance, invite etc.) were included in the English language. A few words from classical Greek: words which referred to technical terms, literary criticism, rhetoric, theology and natural sciences, Italian (fuse, squadron, cupola, fresco, opera madrigal), Spanish (armada, cargo, sherry cannibal, cockroach, potato), Portuguese (flamingo, molasses, mosquito) became a part of the English lexicon. In late Middle English or early Modern English, the letter
/w/ was lost before some back rounded vowels (sword, who) and at the beginning of unstressed syllables (answer, conquer). The letter x - (written as gh) was still pronounced in the 16th century in words like though, drought, daughter and rough but was lost around 1600. The letter x became f and some of these forms entered the standard language in the early 17th century leading to the present day pronunciation of words like draught and rough.

The vocabulary of English is of a mixed character as more than half of its words are borrowed from several languages from almost every country in the world. Thus English seems to present a somewhat familiar appearance to anyone who speaks the above mentioned languages. Many of the words have been assimilated into the English language and thus one doesn't feel there is anything foreign about words like balcony, granite, opera, umbrella, mosquito, vanilla, anthology, shawl, divan, caravan, turban, chess, etc, English has also borrowed from Hebrew and Arabic, Hungarian, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Malay, Chinese, Australia, W. African etc. So cosmopolitan a vocabulary is an undoubted asset to any language that seeks to attain International use.

2.4 English in the Indian context

An Indian learns English as a second language for communication with the Indians and will hear it used in the speech community as a matter of course. He will most often learn a local variety of the language, taught by an Indian who speaks that variety. The various forms of English when used as a second language differ in a number of ways from British English or American English often because of the influence of the speaker's first language.

Amendments in the orthography of English would be very beneficial to the learners of the language in the Indian sub-continent. Most of the countries in this region use English as a means of communication and various competitive examinations, business deals at a higher level, etc, are conducted in English. Many Indian writers use English to communicate their ideas, the country's culture and try to convey the various nuances of a regional language or their mother tongue in a foreign language. Sometimes an Indian word is used and
obviously it would be impossible to convey the correct pronunciation of that word using the current orthography because there are various sounds in the Indian languages for which there is no symbol in the current orthography. There are many varieties of English and any mutually intelligible form of educated English is universally intelligible. Indian English exists and it is worthy of acceptance as any other brand of English and the time has come for its establishment as a Regional Standard. The orthography can be amended so that words which are ‘Indian’ in use are spelled in such a manner that it allows a person who does not know that tongue to guage the correct pronunciation of the word as accurately as possible.

Indians are over-faithful to the written form of English and indulge in spelling pronunciation because Indian scripts are for the most part phonetic. Thus spelling pronunciation can be held responsible for such deviations as geminate consonant pronunciation in words like upper, rubber etc., pronouncing tensemarkers s/ed and pronunciation of silent letters in words like bomb, lamb etc. The orthography of English can be amended so that these sort of anomalies and irregularities can be removed from the existing orthography. When so many changes are taking place at different levels of the language, reforming the orthography of English should also be considered and priority should be given to this difficult yet necessary task.

2.5 English in the global context
What is obvious is that English is in a permanent state of change, adding and adapting to the needs of inhabitants of the contemporary world. And so, the person who wishes to write competent and flexible English has to grasp the essential structure and movement of the language. Attempting to understand the flux in which any living language exists helps to adapt to future linguistic developments and develop the necessary skills in spoken and written English. This is all the more important considering the fact that due to globalization, the world is becoming a smaller place and people all over the world are interacting more and more with each other. In such a scenario it is very necessary to have a
common medium of communication, a language which would be universally understood and accepted.

Today English has gained popularity and prestige at the international level and it is considered to be the window to the world. There are various reasons as to why English is one of the major world languages. The world-wide expansion of English has resulted in it becoming the most widely spoken language in the world. The method of its spreading has resulted in several varieties of English where the differences are in pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, orthography, phonology and grammar. A serious criticism of English by many foreign learners of the language and by those attempting to master it is the large number of idiomatic expressions, the chaotic character of its spelling and the frequent lack of co-relation between spelling and pronunciation. An ideal system of the alphabet would be one in which the same sound was regularly represented by the same character and a given character.

In English the vowel sound /i/ in believe, receive, leave, machine, be and see is in each case represented by a different spelling. Conversely the vowel letter a in father, hate, hat and many other words has many values. The situation is even more confusing in the treatment of the consonants. We have a dozen spellings for the sound of sh: shoe, sugar, issue, nation, suspicion, ocean, nausea-ous, conscious, chaperone, schist, fuchsia and pshaw. It serves to show how far we are at times from approaching the idea of simplicity and consistency. One cannot tell how to spell an English word -- by its pronunciation or by its by its spelling.

In countries where English is used as a second language, there has been a trend during the past half century for local standards to be established and for the language to develop independently of British or American English. If this trend continues these local varieties may ultimately diverge widely from standard world English. There is no doubt about the fact that English is undergoing many changes at all the levels of linguistic analysis. The vocabulary is expanding at a tremendously fast rate. The grammar and syntax is becoming increasingly informal. The pronunciation differs from country to country and within a country.
from region to region. The spelling system has also undergone tremendous changes. Many of the changes have been accepted at an International level. A large amount of credit goes to America, which has made several changes in spellings and has been able to popularize it through science, specifically the computer and Information Technology. The changes that have been made are to make the spelling system simpler and more phonetic. The changes have been welcomed and are being used worldwide. However, these changes are very negligible and there are many words which are still spelt in a complicated manner. These spellings are very difficult to master and inhibit most learners of English. The researcher believes that if the orthography of the English language is simplified further, it will be of great help to all the learners of the language. This will especially benefit learners of the English language in the Asian and African countries where there are so many regional languages which interfere with the learning of English. The process of change is going on. However conservatism and certain attitudes and lack of scientific detachment and a hesitation to implement innovations and changes result in the changes taking place at a very slow pace. If the proper authorities realize the importance of reforms in the spelling system of the language, things can speed up and developments can take place at a much faster rate.

A study of the history of the English language has given us an understanding of how much the language has changed over the past few centuries. It is still changing but changes should also be made in the orthography of English to make the spelling system have an improved phoneme-grapheme correspondence as far as possible. This would go a long way in not only making the orthography easier to understand, learn and use but it would also improve the overall proficiency of the learner of the language.