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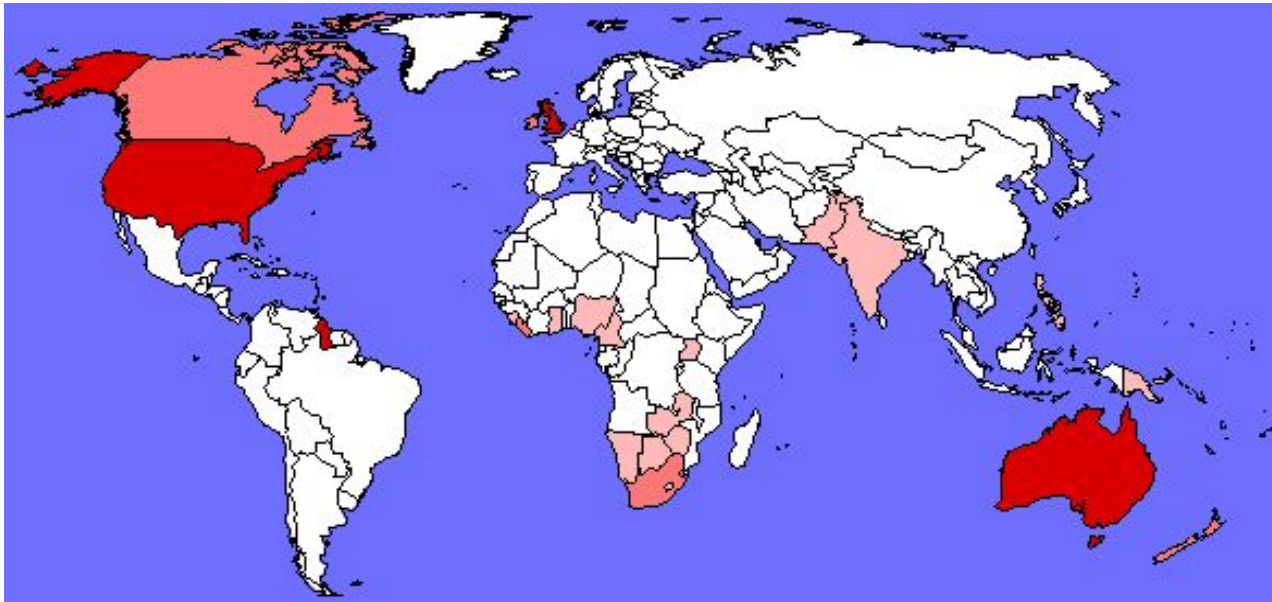
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INTRODUCTION

English is the third most widely spoken native language with an estimated 400 million native speakers and the most spoken official language in the world. It is the primary language used in international affairs, trade and commerce. The English language has official status even in nations where it is not the primary spoken language.



The history of the English language has traditionally been divided into three main periods

Old English
(450-1100 AD)

Middle English
(1100-circa 1500 AD)

Modern English
(since 1500)

The period known as 'Old English' dates from 450 - 1100 AD. This English is difficult for modern English speakers to understand. The language is a mix of the Germanic languages brought to Britain by the 3 tribes

The 'Middle English' period dates from 1100 - 1500. During this time England was conquered by France and French became the language of the nobility in Britain. By the 14th century many French words had been adopted or adapted into the 'Old English' language. This English is still a far cry from what a native English speaker uses today

Modern English (ModE) can be regarded externally as starting with the introduction of printing. Caxton's selection of an East Midlands/London variety of English for the first printed books at the end of the 15th century contributed to the development of a standardised variety of the language, with fixed spelling and punctuation conventions and accepted vocabulary and grammatical forms.

The goal of the research – to study general characteristics of **Modern English** language.

The object of the research – the history of the English Language.

The subject of the research –

Achievement of the aim of the study requires a number of **tasks**:

To study **Modern** English language;

To investigate the historical background of **Modern** English language;

To analyze Literary developments in **Modern** English.

1 Modern English language.

Early Modern English

1.1 Great Vowel Shift

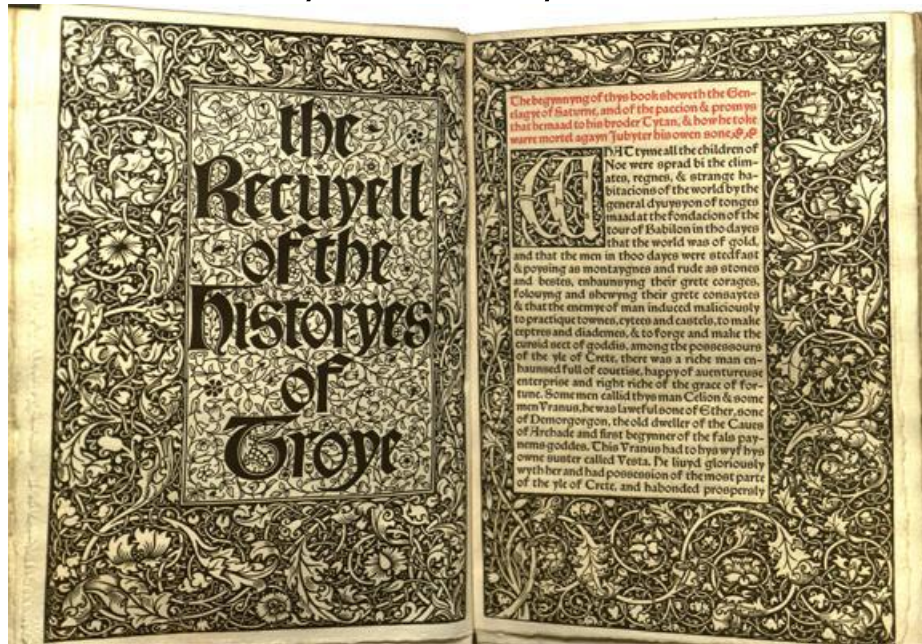
A major factor separating Middle English from Modern English is known as the Great Vowel Shift, a radical change in pronunciation during the 15th, 16th and 17th Century, as a result of which long vowel sounds began to be made higher and further forward in the mouth (short vowel sounds were largely unchanged). In fact, the shift probably started very gradually some centuries before 1400, and continued long after 1700

Great Vowel Shift

(1300)	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	present
<i>driven</i>	/i:/	/ii/	/ei/	/ɛi/	/Δi/	/ai/
<i>house</i>	/u:/	/uu/	/ou/	/ɔu/	/Δu/	/au/
<i>feet</i>	/e:/		/i:/			
<i>fool</i>	/o:/		/u:/			
<i>beat</i>	/ɛ:/			/e:/	/i:/	
<i>foal</i>	/ɔ:/			/o:/		/əu/
<i>take</i>	/a:/	/æ:/	/ɛ:/	/e:/	/ei/	
<i>sail</i>	/ai/	/æi/	/ɛi/	/e:/	/ei/	
<i>law</i>	/au/	/ɔu/	/ɒ:/			/ɔ:/

1.2 Printing Press and Standardization

The final major factor in the development of Modern English was the advent of the printing press, one of the world's great technological innovations, introduced into England by William Caxton in 1476. The first book printed in the English language was Caxton's own translation, "The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye"



Actually printed in Bruges in 1473 or early 1474. Up to 20,000 books were printed in the following 150 years, ranging from mythic tales and popular stories to poems, phrasebooks, devotional pieces and grammars, and Caxton himself became quite rich from his printing business. As mass-produced books became cheaper and more commonly available, literacy mushroomed, and soon works in English became even more popular than books in Latin.



Grammar changes: The grammatical structure of English has changed comparatively little since the 17th century. There have been a few minor changes in grammar, as anyone who reads Shakespeare or the King James Version of the Bible can notice. These include:

some irregular verbs have become regularized: *spake*>*spoke*

3rd singular present tense verb forms change: *he doest/doth/does*.

the old 2nd singular pronoun forms, *thou*, *thee*, *thy/thine*, have been replaced by: *you*, *your*.

The Middle English plural was formerly /es/ in all cases. The vowel dropped out except after sibilants.

the -th of some verb forms became -s (*loveth*, *love*; *hath*, *has*). auxiliary verbs also changed (*he is risen*, *he has risen*).

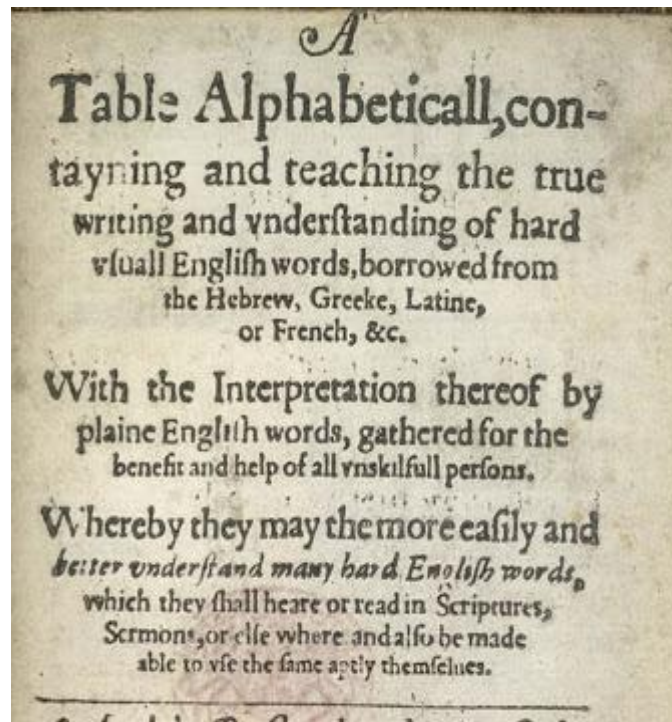
Phonological changes: These seemed to be spontaneous and internal rather than caused by any external influence.

Great Vowel Shift:

The velar
fricative dropped
out:

1.3 Dictionaries and Grammars

The first English dictionary, “**A Table Alphabetical**”, was published by English schoolteacher **Robert Cawdrey** in 1604.



The first attempt to list ALL the words in the English language was “**An Universall Etymological English Dictionary**”, compiled by **Nathaniel Bailey** in 1721 (the 1736 edition contained about 60,000 entries).



2 Characteristics of Late Modern English

2.1 The Industrial and Scientific Revolution

The dates may be rather arbitrary, but the main distinction between Early Modern and Late Modern English (or just Modern English as it is sometimes referred to) lies in its vocabulary - pronunciation, grammar and spelling remained largely unchanged. 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. No single one of the socio-cultural developments of the 19th Century could have established English as a world language, but together they did just that.

2.2 The New World

It was largely during the Late Modern period that the United States, newly independent from Britain as of 1783, established its pervasive influence on the world. The English colonization of North America had begun as early as 1600. Jamestown, Virginia was founded in 1607, and the Pilgrim Fathers settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. The first settlers were, then, contemporaries of Shakespeare (1564-1616), Bacon (1561-1626) and Donne (1572-1631), and would have spoken a similar dialect. The new land was described by one settler as “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men”, and half of the settlers were dead within weeks of their arrival, unaccustomed to the harsh winter. In fact, the colony would probably have gone the way of the earlier ill-fated Roanoke Island settlement attempt of 1584 were it not for the help of an American native called Squanto, who had learned English from English sailors.

CONCLUSION

Modern English (sometimes New English or NE as opposed to Middle English and Old English) is the form of the English language spoken since the Great Vowel Shift in England, which began in the late 14th century and was completed in roughly 1550.

With some differences in vocabulary, texts from the early 17th century, such as the works of William Shakespeare and the King James Bible, are considered to be in Modern English, or more specifically, are referred to as using Early Modern English or Elizabethan English. English was adopted in regions around the world, such as North America, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Australia and New Zealand through colonisation by the British Empire.

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