

Libros de **Cátedra**

A history of English

Perspectives and case studies

José María Oliver

FACULTAD DE
HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH

PERSPECTIVES AND CASE STUDIES

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This is a lesson everyone who studies language eventually learns. You cannot stop language change. You may not like it; you may regret the arrival of new forms and the passing of old ones; but there is not the slightest thing you can do about it. Language change is as natural as breathing. It is one of the linguistic facts of life. There is not the slightest thing we can do about it? Actually, there is one thing. We can learn to understand it, come to terms with it, and thus manage it.

–David Crystal, *The Fight for English: How Language Pundits Ate, Shot, and Left*

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Presentation

As the author points out in the introduction, this book provides an overview of the contents of a course for prospective teachers and specialists in English and ELT. The subtitle, *Perspectives and Case Studies*, rather than attempting an exhaustive account, zooms in on key issues. The approach to theoretical perspectives, the selection of contents and organization reveal a deep understanding of the topics relevant to future professionals, whether teachers, translators or researchers. The activities and case studies interweave theory and practice in a highly motivating and thought-provoking fashion.

The four axes: language change, language change in time, language change in space and language change in society are addressed and developed in a smooth sequence enabling students to enhance their knowledge and understanding of key historical and current processes in the development of the English language. Chapter 1, Linguistic Change and the History of English provides the basic analytical tools to address the questions raised in the following chapters. Chapter 2, Walking through Change in the History of English, deals with cases of diachronic change to heighten the potential for phonological and grammatical processes inherent to English and Germanic languages.

First and foremost, the target audience of this book is students who are advanced users of the language themselves, whose knowledge and understanding of diachronic and synchronic change will greatly improve their skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and interacting with other speakers of English as well as mediating between speakers of other languages and other cultures. To this end: chapter 3, Moving on to *Global* Englishes and chapter 4, Variation and Change: Synchrony Meets Diachrony, as the memory of the present, sailing through Barthes' "diachronic tremor and social vibration of words" in New Englishes.

The knowledge and awareness gained in the study of the processes of language change in general, and the history of specific languages in particular in the conceptual framework of this book will provide valuable insights into the complexity of dialectal and sociolinguistic variation into their own language and that of any other language they may speak.

Furthermore, I am confident the book will spark curiosity for further reading and thinking.

Adriana Boffi
Profesora consulta
FaHCE, UNLP

Introduction

This book attempts to provide an overview of the contents that make up the *History of the English Language* (Historia de la Lengua Inglesa) course taught at Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad Nacional de La Plata. The course is compulsory for three degrees at this university: Profesorado en Lengua y Literatura Inglesas and Licenciaturas en Inglés (in linguistics and in literature). The relevance of History of the English Language for these degrees lies in the very fact that it offers an understanding which we believe to be essential for future teachers and researchers. Walking through the development of English from its ancient Germanic roots into its present-day situation sheds light on the processes of linguistic change, on adaptations and innovations that have shaped the language over so many centuries. In addition, not only does such an exploration provide a view on how English has changed from its origins to its current global status, but also brings up questions related to social factors, cultural and technological advancements and historical events that have played a role in its development.

For teachers, the historical perspective of English is a valuable asset. It equips them with relevant knowledge which can be transferred to engaging and informative lessons. By understanding the shift from Old to Modern English and the several forces at work over its 1500 years, a prospective teacher gains an awareness of the many changes that took place (and how they operated) and the variation at present. Ultimately, learning about the history of English adds to our expertise and helps foster a critical attitude about language in our professional performance.

For future researchers, studying the history of English provides a valuable foundation for investigating a wide range of linguistic phenomena. This historical perspective fosters the exploration of language change mechanisms, the effects of language contact, usage patterns and their social implications, as well as the interplay between linguistic development and literary developments across different periods. The focus of the course offers a solid framework for both empirical research and theoretical inquiry.

The contents of the coursework are developed with the aim of bringing students closer to an understanding of the diachrony of the language and the processes that have led (the different varieties of) English to the current state. In practice, this is managed by approaching four axes which make up the core of our subject:

1. The notion of linguistic change
2. The English language in time
3. The English language in space
4. The English language in society

These axes help one get acquainted with the development of English as seen in instances of phonological, grammatical, lexical, semantic and pragmatic changes both diachronically and

synchronically and in connection with internal and external factors. They also promote critical attitudes towards the diversity of the English language today.

There is a vast body of literature available on the history of English. However, bibliography rarely offers a walkthrough like the one described before. This book is the first *Libro de cátedra* designed locally for the coursework of the subject, fulfilling not only a vacant area but also opening the way for prospective teaching materials and publications.

The chapters are the result of much of the work and content developed in papers and worksheets and delivered in theoretical and practical lessons during the course. The main objective of this material, therefore, is to offer a theoretical-practical review of the axes of the subject. In so doing, the chapters attempt to complement compulsory readings and provide instances for reflection. This is where the *Perspectives and Case Studies* in the subtitle comes in: the book aims to highlight different perspectives of theoretical and practical analyses and illustrate them with actual instances which can be approached as exercises while reading or for follow-up discussion.

The organization is as follows. Chapter 1: Linguistic Change and the History of English looks at the notion of change as a key research line reflected in different theories within historical linguistics which attempt to explain how and why languages change. This notion provides relevant background for any history of any language and is particularly relevant to explain the changes in English. Chapter 2: Walking through Change in the History of English further develops the diachronic part of the contents by looking at the stages of the history of English and reviewing the main shifts that surface over these periods. This links directly to the contents in chapter 3: Moving on to *Global* Englishes, which tackles the issue of English(es) around the world as a result of the spread during the modern era and the current status as a global language. It specifically deals with Modern English variation following the axis of *place*, that is, diatopic variation as seen in the different regional varieties. Finally, chapter 4: Variation and Change: Synchrony Meets Diachrony links diachrony and synchrony by relating the fields of historical linguistics, sociolinguistics and present-day variationist studies, motivated by external factors related to society and language use.

CHAPTER 1

Linguistic Change and the History of English

This chapter introduces the notion of linguistic change and explains why and how it is relevant to approach the history of English. Historical linguistics is the field which is particularly concerned with language change: what kinds of changes occur (and why), and also, what kinds of changes do not occur (and why not). Researchers working in this field attempt to determine the changes that have occurred in the history of a language and the relationship of languages historically.

Historical Linguistics and the History of English

Approaching how and why languages change over time is the object of study of the field known as “historical” or “diachronic linguistics”. The relevance of studying language change lies in the very fact that it deepens our understanding of the language structure and use, and, importantly, its development over time. Historical linguistics is not to be confused with other related disciplines, for instance, those which focus on the history of linguistics (that is, the different theories which have been put forward in several frameworks on language study), or the studies on the origin of language in the human species.¹ Within historical linguistics, furthermore, language change can be approached from different frameworks, with perspectives focusing on formal, functional or cognitive explanations under broader theories of language.

An important feature of language change is that it is a perfectly normal phenomenon which cannot be avoided. This view implies that language change is not something that must be prevented or controlled somehow. In Campbell’s words:

[...] change in language is inevitable, and this makes complaints against language change both futile and silly. All languages change all the time (except dead ones). Language change is just a fact of life; it cannot be prevented or avoided. [...] Of course, society can assign negative or positive value to things in language (be they new changing ones or old ones), and this can have an impact on how or whether these things change. This sociolinguistic conditioning of change is an important part of historical linguistics. (2020, pp. 3-4)

¹ The origin of language in humans remains a time-honored topic of debate among linguists and anthropologists. Some theories maintain that language evolved as a means of communication among early human groups, particularly the so-called “adaptationist perspective” (Pinker and Bloom, 1990), while others propose a non-adaptationist explanation for the origin of language, for instance, in a genetic mutation (Berwick and Chomsky, 2016). Other views maintain that language adapted by means of a gradual process of cultural evolution so that language has been shaped to fit the human brain, rather than vice versa (Christiansen and Chater, 2008).

Aitchison (2001) addresses the notion of language change in connection with the perceptions associated with it, particularly that of “language decay”. She highlights the natural and inevitable nature of language change, not a sign of decay but rather a reflection of language adaptability. This view debunks the idea that change implies a decline in linguistic standards, correctness or a degradation of the language over time, although these ideas can be found even in the 21st century. The social aspect of language change, which includes a number of uses and attitudes towards it, will be present throughout this book. It must be remembered that language is not in itself produced in a vacuum or isolated. In addition to being subject to change over time, Carter (2002) reminds us that it is not *neutral*.

The notion of change has been criticized too. An interesting point is raised by Andersen (1989), who argues that linguists tend to focus on diachronic correspondences (so-called “changes”), which can create a misleading perception. Instead of focusing solely on these changes, Andersen suggests that the term “innovation” should be used to describe differences over periods of a language. Furthermore, some sociohistorical linguists make a distinction between innovation and change. An innovation is seen as the act of an individual speaker introducing a new linguistic element (regardless of its adoption by the broader speech community). A change properly defined here is then an innovation that has been accepted and adopted by the community and therefore has spread. Similarly, Shapiro (1991) and Milroy (1992) distinguish between speaker innovation and linguistic change, and reserve the term “change” for innovations that have become social facts.

Finally, the view adopted in this book is that language change is not the same as language evolution, which is why we will avoid labels such as “evolution” and “evolve” to account for changes or differences seen between two periods of English. Walkden (2012) claims that the idea of language evolution has become very popular lately with a basis on a parallelism between biological evolution and language change (languages and species). A distinction must be made then between the evolution of language, i.e., the biological emergence of the language faculty, on the one hand, and the idea of language change, on the other.

Why Historical Linguistics Is Relevant to Study the History of English

Understanding linguistic change is crucial for approaching the history of English. Like all natural languages, English has developed since its “inception” in the 5th century as a result of several influences. Historical linguistics helps us describe the history of a language as it provides the tools and methodologies for studying it, while the history of the language itself offers the empirical data and context that can inform and enrich historical linguistic research. Some of the possibilities brought about by looking at the history of languages with a strong perspective on historical linguistics are provided below:

- **Explaining innovations, developments, and trends:** Historical linguistics enables researchers to trace the development of languages by identifying patterns of change in phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and patterns of use, among other areas.
- **Understanding present-day variations:** Studying diachronic changes can offer valuable insights into present-day variations as some of the explanations put forward to account for changes between different periods can also be applied to describe and explain ongoing variation (for instance, in varieties of a language spoken in different regions).
- **Reconstructing proto-languages:** Through comparative methods, historical linguists can reconstruct proto-languages, which are hypothetical languages from which known languages have developed.
- **Understanding contact phenomena:** Historical linguistics examines how languages come into contact with one another through social interactions among communities as a result of trade, migration, conquest and daily communication. This helps understand several diachronic processes, such as the borrowing of lexical items, sounds or grammatical patterns, as well as the diffusion of features in certain areas.
- **Exploring social and contextual influences:** When considering the triggers behind the changes and variations, it might become relevant to consider socio-cultural factors, such as social prestige, political events, technological advancements, and the context of language use, among others.
- **Advancing language documentation and preservation:** By looking at historical data (manuscripts, inscriptions, edited texts, corpora) one can document and analyze the changes that languages undergo over time. Many linguists are devoted to working with languages which are endangered or have not been documented.

In summary, historical linguistics offers a theoretical framework and analytical tools for studying language change, while the history of the language provides the empirical data that make this study possible. Together, they can provide an understanding of how languages develop in response to internal and external factors over time.

Periods in the History of English

One can approach the history of English by tracing the earliest human presence in the British Isles, even though English did not even exist back then. The earliest inhabitants of these territories probably lacked a language faculty but still left a mark with their tools and lifestyle. The

reoccupation of Britain took place after the Ice Age (around 10,000 years ago). According to van Gelderen (2014), the pre-Indo-European languages spoken during this time remain largely unknown. It was not until around 3,000 years ago that Celtic tribes migrated to Britain from continental Europe. The languages they spoke are of Indo-European descent and have left their mark on many Indo-European languages.

The Romans' arrival around 2,000 years ago introduced Latin to Britain, influencing the Celtic languages as well as the Germanic languages to come. While the Roman Empire's political influence waned around 410 AD, Latin persisted mostly through the Church as a written language.

The history of English itself begins around 450 AD with the arrival of Germanic tribes (sometimes summarized under the name "Anglo-Saxons" although the tribes comprised groups made up of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians), as will be expanded in chapter 2. These tribes intermingled with Celtic and Roman influences. According to Venerable Bede—an English monk whose *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (completed in 731, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) is the most important source for the early history of the islands—prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, Britain had been inhabited by speakers of Celtic languages: the Scots and Picts in the north, and various groups in the south that had united under Roman rule since the conquest of Emperor Claudius in 43 AD. In an Old English version of this text describing the linguistic landscape of Britain, Bede states that *Her synd on ðam iglande fif gepeodu, Ænglisc, Brytwylsc, Scottysc, Pihhtisc, and Boc-Læden*.² Since Anglo-Saxon times, English has developed greatly over the Medieval, the Renaissance and the Modern Ages, and was often in contact with (and at times under the influence of) other languages, including not only Latin but also Old Norse, French, Greek, and many languages around the world.

While a strict periodization in the development of a language cannot reflect reality, the history of English is typically divided into three main periods: Old English, Middle English, and Modern English (Table 1.1). In chapter 2, we will deal with more fine-grained divisions which can be made in order to describe subperiods with their own features and trends.

Table 1.1

Three broad periods in the history of English.

Period	Time span
Old English	450-1150
Middle English	1150-1500
Modern English	1500-present

The Old English period is characterized by a very Germanic character if compared to Modern English. Middle English is sometimes historically marked by the Norman Conquest of 1066 but is not fully distinguished from late Old English until the 12th century. This period saw a significant

² Here there are five languages: English, British-Gaelic, Scottish, Pictish and "book" Latin (written Latin) (my translation).

shift in vocabulary, with French influencing the English language, especially in areas related to law, government, administration, and the arts. Finally, Modern English covers the gradual shaping of the language as we know it today. It is usually divided into an early modern period and a late modern period and is characterized by key changes, such as the completion of the Great Vowel Shift, the introduction of a more analytic grammar and the rise of standardization. The modern period (particularly most recently) saw the spread of English, which expanded around the world as of the 17th century and eventually led to the emergence of English as a global language.

External and Internal Change

In what follows there is an account of external and internal change, related to the external and internal history of a language. However, the two levels often interact and a thorough explanation of an instance of diachronic change should probably consider aspects of both types of motivations, as happens when externally motivated changes trigger off further internal restructuring along the way. As described by Lightfoot (1979) in his diachronic study of syntax, external and internal changes can be related to “chance” and “necessity”, respectively; that is, there are changes provoked by extra-grammatical factors, on the one hand, and changes “necessitated by various principles of grammar or perceptual strategies”, on the other (p. 405).

External changes are set in motion by factors which are external to language itself, that is, they refer to political, geographical, and social motivations. Changes that result from external factors include the following scenarios: (i) situations of contact between speakers of different varieties of the same language or even different languages; (ii) innovations introduced by speakers and issues of political and social identity. Geographical features play an important role here, as territory can either facilitate or hinder contact. Going back to Lightfoot, external changes are thus said to be unpredictable as they are strongly related to reasons which are of an accidental nature, including migration patterns and evolving trends in culture and society. Historically, these changes are related to events that influenced speakers and, by extension, the language itself.

On the other hand, internal changes are triggered off by (multiple) aspects of the language as a system and relate to how these aspects result in changes that can surface synchronically (leading to variation, as will be seen in chapter 4) or diachronically, at different historical stages of a language. These changes crucially involve the way children analyze linguistic data during the process of acquisition, which can differ slightly from the processes of the preceding generations. As a result, the build-up of a linguistic competence on its different levels depends on cognitive processes, i.e., an analysis and interpretation of the input. A clear example of an internal change in the history of English is the shift from a heavy reliance on grammatical inflections to the use of prepositions and a more fixed word order to establish syntactic relations, which we will go back to in the following sections. One must bear in mind that this is also related to other changes, such as the phonetic reduction of morphemes, leading to less prominent affixes. In addition, van Gelderen (2014) points out that certain factors inhibit internal change, namely prescriptive rules.

How do internal and external changes interact? Frequently, changes induced by external motivations can set off, facilitate or accelerate further changes, for instance in the grammatical or phonological structure. As we will see, the influence of loanwords from French, for example, is said to have contributed to the incorporation of the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ as a distinctive phoneme in the sound system of the language. Conversely, internal change, such as the grammaticalization of the preposition *like*, might spread within certain contexts and speakers, for example, in specific age groups, becoming a shared marker of identity and thus part of a *lect*. In cases where factors like identity play a role in leading a linguistic change, we can speak of external motivations.

A Bit of History on Historical Linguistics: Neogrammarians, Structuralism and Generativism

In the development of historical linguistics there are three major models that have contributed to the discipline: the neogrammarians, the structuralist and the generativist models. The neogrammarians (in German, *Junggrammatiker*, “young grammarians”)³ were a group of young scholars, formed in the 1870s, including Karl Brugmann, Berthold Delbrück, August Leskien, Hermann Osthoff and Hermann Paul, who opposed the ideas of the time and proposed innovative approaches. They were the first to see linguistic change as an object of scientific study and to conceive of language change based on the notion of *regularity*, under the premise that change can be studied systematically. For the neogrammarians, the two basic components of linguistic change are *phonological change* and *analogy*.

Phonological change is based on the assumption of the independence of the phonological level, so that the rules or conditions linked to sound changes occur independently of other levels of the language, such as morphology, syntax or semantics. Moreover, these rules or laws have no exceptions: if any are found, the rule must be corrected to include the counterexample. Among the best-known sound laws developed by the neogrammarian is (Karl) Verner's Law, which specifies the phonological conditions necessary to account for those cases that escaped (Jakob) Grimm's Law or first consonant shift. This law accounted for changes in Proto-Indo-European consonants in the development of Proto-Germanic (see chapter 2), which makes it possible to establish a contrast between languages from the Germanic branch and languages from other branches, such as Latin, Sanskrit and Greek. However, certain cases did not fit the description of the law and such exceptions (for example, in the middle voiced fricative in Gothic *fadar* /faðar/) could be explained by means of the revision found in Verner's Law, whose most important contribution was to consider the phonic context in which the sound appears (*conditioning of the*

³ The connotation behind *jung-* had a young reformist or transgressive sense. The name *Junggrammatiker* had originally been a nickname that these young people adopted to refer to themselves.

change); in this case, explaining that the fricative is voiced when a voiceless fricative does not begin a word and the preceding vowel is not stressed.

As for analogy, this is the mechanism of change that operates at the grammatical level (morphology and syntax). Since the independence of phonology is assumed, the rules linking phonological structure and grammatical structure may require readjustments, reanalysis or redefinitions when a sound change occurs. This is illustrated by the English final unstressed syllable vowel merger, which resulted in a single unstressed vowel and acted as a model for subsequent analogical changes in the nominal system. Within the notion of analogy, in turn, Bynon (1977) distinguishes between *change by analogy* and *creation by analogy*. The former presupposes a functional identity (in terms of the semantic or grammatical category it expresses) between markers that may not be connected in form and also a morphological transparency of the model. The change consists in the replacement of a less transparent form by a new, functionally equivalent one, whose morphological structure is analogous to that of the model, e.g., in the regularization of the simple past form of *help* (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Morphological change in the verb help.

	OLD ENGLISH		MODERN ENGLISH	
<i>infinitive</i>	helpan	helpenne	help	
<i>indicative</i>	present tense	past tense	present tense	past tense
first person singular	helpe	healp	help	helped
second person singular	hilpst	hulpe		
third person singular	hilpp	healp		
plural	helpap	hulpon	helps	
<i>subjunctive</i>	present tense	past tense	present tense	past tense
singular	helpe	hulpe	help	helped
plural	helpen	hulpen		
<i>imperative</i>				
singular	help		help	
plural	helpap			
<i>participle</i>	present	past	present	past
	helpende	(ge)holpen	helping	helped

The second type, creation by analogy, is the application of new morphological or syntactic rules from a model. Bynon (1977) proposes the example of the suffix *-able* in English, which was originally part of lexical borrowings taken from French during Middle English but was later abstracted as morpho *-able*, meaning "fit, able, capable". This gave rise to new creations with the suffix by analogy, such as *washable* or *drinkable*. This is in turn in line with Kuryłowicz's third rule: "Any construction consisting of a constant plus a variable is used as pattern for an isolated entity

of the same function. In this way constructions like *wrongly* from *wrong* were used as pattern for remodeling endless adverbs such as *slow* to *slowly*" (Lehmann, 1973, p. 200).

In all, the central claim of the neogrammarians is that there are two types of diachronic processes, sound change and analogy, which reflect the independence of the phonological and grammatical levels and are related in a complementary way: a phonological change can render grammatical structures opaque, and a structure rendered opaque by phonological change can be repaired by analogical change.

The second model that has been influential in the development of historical linguistics is structuralism. While the neogrammarians focused on syntagmatic aspects (e.g., on the conditioning factors of the phonic context), structuralism focused on the paradigmatic dimension with a systemic view of change. Thus, the sounds that change are part of a *phonological system*; therefore, the change of a sound causes a change in the system to which that sound belongs, either in the *number* of phonemes in the inventory or in the *features* of the phonemes.⁴ Changes that affect the structure of the phonological system include processes such as *secondary split* (also known as "phonemicization", which increases the number of segments in the phoneme inventory), *merging* (where the number of segments is reduced) and *primary split* (an allophone is separated from one phoneme and becomes an allophone of another phoneme, without altering the number of phonemes in the inventory).

Structuralism also related certain sound changes to segmental features, thus affecting the phonological space of the system. These chain changes, where the modification of a feature in one phoneme triggers a change in the features of another, operate in series, giving rise to stages. Chain changes can occur by *pushing*, when one sound moves into the phonological space of another and causes an "overload" in a phonological space, so that the sound that originally occupied that space moves into another space in the system, existing or new. Chain changes can also occur by *pulling*, when a sound is displaced from its phonological space, leaving a gap, and thus attracts another sound to fill that space. An example is the large vowel shift of long vowels between Middle English and Modern English. For Martinet (1955), in chain changes the sounds are modified to prevent merging and thus preserve the phonemic contrasts necessary for communication. However, the idea that changes in phonological systems are related to communicative function and functional load has been disputed. King (1967), from a generative viewpoint, considers that the main obstacle to testing the relevance of functional load to phonological change is the problem of *what* to measure: phonemes or phonological rules? The author argues that functional load in this somewhat primitive sense is irrelevant: the loss of phonemic contrasts is neither impeded nor favored by functional load. Moreover, it remains unexplained why the mergers that usually give rise to homophony occur at all. For King, this does not imply that the concept of functional load is not relevant to phonological change or linguistic

⁴ The notion of *system*, key in Saussurian structuralism, assumes a set of differential relations (*values*) between elements of the components of the linguistic sign.

change in general. There is likely a limit to how much a language, or its phonological aspects, can change.⁵

Despite the fact that generativism (Chomsky, 1957 *et seq.*) has primarily focused on the synchronic study of language, it has nonetheless made significant contributions to historical linguistics. In the following paragraphs, we will briefly review the foundational insights offered by generative linguistics to diachronic studies, although more recent developments within the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995) have further enriched this line of inquiry.

The novelty of this approach is to consider the linguistic system from a language faculty located in the mind/brain, which would interact with other modules. This linguistic system (grammar) is composed of a lexicon and a computational system (syntax) that in the Principles and Parameters model derives two abstract levels of representation: deep structure and surface structure. In the formation of the surface structure, transformations occur following two basic operations: projection and movement (subsumed into *merge* in later models). The surface structure is then derived into two interface components: the phonetic form (PF), in charge of applying the phonological rules, and the logical form (LF), in charge of applying the semantic rules. The need for these two components derives from the functional dimension of language since they establish the relations of language as a faculty with other human faculties not specific to language: the physical materialization of sound (in the sensorimotor system) and the conceptualization and interpretation of meaning (in the conceptual/intentional system).

The fact that phonological rules operate in this way, on the domain of the word/grammatical unit, implies the loss of the autonomy of phonology, one of the central axes of the perspective adopted by the neogrammarians. Here, phonology depends on grammatical units listed in the lexicon with a phonological specification. How does sound change occur under the generativist view? By means of changes in the rules that apply to the surface structure in phonetic form. The central contribution of generativism in the study of sound change, then, lies in the distinction between the underlying form (mental representation) and the surface form (materialization or pronunciation of the underlying form). In other words, phonetic change is explained as the addition of a new rule in the realization or materialization of the underlying forms. This alteration in the rule constitutes a primary linguistic datum that will be relevant in the acquisition of the language by the next generation. If the rule causes allomorphy, it is maintained as a rule; if it does not cause allomorphy, it passes into the lexicon as a phonological specification, resulting in a restructuring of the underlying form. Under this view, the change happens from generation to generation, and occurs in the passage from a rule in the surface realization to the underlying representation.⁶ This is a difference with the neogrammarians, who understood sound change as an abrupt change that applies in all cases where the postulated law is valid. Both models share, however, the idea

⁵ For instance, a rule with high functional load, affecting many forms in a language, might be retained in the grammar during language acquisition. Conversely, there must be limits to how much a new rule can alter grammar output. A child learning a language might initially adopt rules that, if kept into adulthood, would result in unintelligible speech. Such potentially disruptive rules likely get filtered out during language acquisition. While this filtering process might relate to a functional load, the specifics remain unclear, including the exact questions to explore.

⁶ For Lightfoot (1999), change in the external language (E-language) is gradual but change in grammar in the internal language of the individual (I-language) is abrupt, due to parameter resetting.

that the result of sound changes is the restructuring of the phonological representation at the lexical level.

Perspectives That Explain Language Change

As explained by Schendl (2001), theories that provide explanations for language change can be classified according to three main perspectives: functional, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic. Each perspective offers specific insights into the mechanisms and motivations behind language change, usually with the focus on different factors. Importantly, the three types of perspectives complement each other and, together, can offer a holistic understanding of the dynamics underlying change.

- **The functional perspective** focuses on linguistic systems as inherently self-regulating, with linguistic changes serving a therapeutic role by enhancing system symmetry. For instance, in English, the 18th century saw the introduction of the phoneme /ʒ/ as the voiced counterpart to /ʃ/, improving symmetry within the fricative phonemic system. Meanwhile, the asymmetry caused by the presence of the voiceless /h/ can be said to be “resolved” through its disappearance in some varieties, a process known as “h-dropping”. Chain shifts, which involve alterations in phonemes, also play a therapeutic role, helping to maintain phonemic distinctions and prevent phonemic mergers. These shifts can also prevent the development of homonyms. However, as Schendl states, functional explanations face challenges: it is unclear how speakers recognize system asymmetries and make adjustments. Furthermore, therapeutic changes in one aspect of grammar might create imbalances elsewhere, suggesting that not all systems have truly achieved balance. The concept of functional load mentioned before is also relevant in this perspective. Despite the potential role of functional factors in linguistic change, there is limited empirical evidence supporting their specific impact.
- **The psycholinguistic perspective** explores the cognitive processes underlying language change. It focuses on internal processes, particularly drawing from generativism, which proposes that humans have an innate ability for language acquisition. Children activate this innate faculty to form grammar rules based on the input they receive, primarily from adults. However, this hypothesis-building process is not always perfect, leading to differences between children's and adults' grammars. Traditionally, linguistic changes were thought to occur mainly during language acquisition, especially between different generations of speakers, and changes were attributed to alterations in formalized grammar rules, such as rule additions, losses, or reordering. Recently, there has been a shift in focus towards syntactic changes within generative theories. These changes are often attributed to the restructuring of grammars, a reanalysis of the entire grammatical system or its subsystems.

Over time, minor deviations in children's hypotheses can accumulate, leading to complex grammars that are difficult to acquire and can trigger a fundamental restructuring for reasons of economy. This view has faced criticism for its theoretical assumptions and controversies around the empirical evidence: for instance, evidence from sociolinguistic approaches suggests that linguistic changes (even in syntax) can occur in adults and not just during language acquisition.

- **The sociolinguistic perspective** focuses on the social factors influencing language change. Two significant challenges addressed in this perspective are fuzziness and variation. Fuzziness refers to the unclear boundaries in language usage, where some utterances might not strictly adhere to established rules, for example, using the progressive form with stative verbs. Variation, on the other hand, acknowledges the different linguistic choices speakers make based on factors like class, age, or communicative situation. William Labov's work revolutionized our understanding of language change by linking variation to broader societal factors. He found that linguistic variation can be socially marked and can change over time, indicating ongoing language change. Labov distinguished between *changes from above*, consciously adopted by speakers aiming for prestige, and *changes from below*, unconscious shifts away from standard or widespread norms. The sociolinguistic perspective emphasizes the interdependence of variation and language change (see chapter 4), challenging the strict division between synchronic (current state) and diachronic (historical development) linguistics.

An important contribution in the sociolinguistic field is the work by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968), who define five problems, perceived as goals, for any theory that attempts to approach and explain language change. As will be seen in chapter 4, these problems are not only related to the diachrony of the language but also help connect it with synchrony, that is, the link between variation and change.

- **The constraints problem**

What sort of linguistic variation is there in the world? What can vary?

The constraints problem is concerned with the idea of what kind of change is possible. This depends on the observation of many different actual changes perhaps from different languages. Markedness is a linguistic concept that refers to the presence of a distinguishing feature. Unmarked forms often have a broader distribution and occur more frequently; they are also more prominent in language acquisition as children tend to learn the unmarked forms before marked ones. The notion of naturalness in markedness explains why some linguistic changes occur: particular phenomena are natural if they are regularly unmarked across languages or within one language. Bauer (1994) illustrates this with the alternation between suffixed and periphrastic forms in comparatives like *common*, *commoner*, *commonest* > *common*, *more common*, *most*

common. This shift reflects a transition towards more consistent paradigms for adjectives, where they are more likely to belong to one class rather than alternating between synthetic and analytic forms.

- **The transition problem**

How does an innovation spread throughout the community? Does it actually always spread?

This problem is about the way in which languages change. A key question of this problem is whether changes are gradual or abrupt. One aspect to consider is whether change occurs through lexical diffusion or not. Evidence suggests that some changes, like vowel shifts, occur gradually with intermediate steps. However, changes in adjective comparison appear abrupt without intermediate stages, potentially involving lexical diffusion. Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog have attributed the transmission of new patterns to the “community as a whole”, rather than to “the generational gap between parent and child” (1968, pp. 187-188).

- **The embedding problem**

How are changes and innovations embedded in relation to others and within general trends of the language? How do they operate under a number of interacting factors?

This problem is concerned with the linguistic system and the social setting in which a change takes place. Changes may involve shifts from synthetic to analytic trends, as seen in the transition from Old English to Modern English. Sociolinguistic perspectives posit that linguistic changes can originate from any social level but tend to spread from less formal to more formal styles and from lower to upper classes. The role of the social group is considered crucial, while individual influence is seen as less significant.

- **The evaluation problem**

How do the speakers assess linguistic variation? Is variation noticed?

The evaluation problem deals with the effects of change and focuses on understanding the effects of such changes on the linguistic system and on communicative efficiency. While many people often perceive linguistic change as decay, this is not the view widely accepted by linguists. In other words, changes neither imply improvement nor decline but are merely modifications in language over time. However, as will be seen when we deal with standardization and sociohistorical motivations, attitudes might be relevant when it comes to the manner in which a change develops.

- **The actuation problem**

Why did the innovation happen wherever and whenever it did? Why not elsewhere? Why not at another time?

The question here is: “Why do changes in a structural feature take place in a particular language at a given time, but not in other languages with the same feature, or in the same language at other times?” (Weinreich *et al.* 1968, p. 102). Of course, this question remains largely unanswered. While we may not have definitive answers, some theories provide insights, although views might be controversial. Milroy (1992) proposes a model suggesting that speech communities consist of core members and peripheral members. Core members, who interact primarily within their community, tend to be conservative, resisting many changes. Peripheral members, on the other hand, interact more with external communities, adopting and introducing innovations to the core members. Under this view, language change occurs when core members adopt these innovations.

Types of Changes

Any layer of the language can change; here we provide an overview of types of changes, drawing mostly from Schendl (2001). The reader must refer to specific bibliography on each type for further details. One must remember that changes usually reveal an interaction between different levels; sometimes that relationship is clearer, for instance when grammaticalization involves phonetic reduction or semantic changes, or when a morphological change is triggered off by phonological changes. In all, interaction adds complexity to the study and deepens our understanding of change.

Sound Changes

In terms of phonetics and phonology, much work has been carried out since the 19th century, as we saw before. Sound change can be divided into *phonetic* and *phonemic* change. Phonetic change occurs when the parameters in vowel and consonant production change, often (though not only) influenced by neighboring sounds. Key processes include palatalization, velarization, raising and lowering of vowels, changes in lip rounding, nasalization, diphthongization, and monophthongization. Consonants can shift in both manner and place of articulation, such as spirantization and affrication. In addition, sound changes can be conditioned or unconditioned, i.e., occurring in specific contexts or not. The concept of lenition encompasses various processes of weakening: voicing, spirantization, vocalization, and sound deletion. Other sound changes involve deletion, insertion, and changes in vowel length.

Nevertheless, phonetic change alone does not account for systemic changes, which are modifications in the abstract phonemic array of a language. When this occurs, we refer to the change as *phonemic*. As regards consonants, just to mention an example, Modern English has more fricatives than stops, unlike its Indo-European ancestor which had fewer fricatives but more stops. Schendl (2001) mentions two main types of changes in phonemic changes: *merger* and

split. A merger is seen in the Middle English vowels /ɛ:/ and /e:/ eventually becoming one phoneme in Modern English as /i:/. An example of a split involves the creation of different allophones in specific environments. An example can be seen if we compare Old English and Modern English. In Old English, the consonant sounds [f] and [v] did not both have phonemic status (they were not contrastive sounds, they were not phonemes). The difference between them was that the voiceless labiodental fricative [f] only occurred word initially and finally or next to voiceless sounds, while its voiced counterpart [v] was produced between two voiced sounds, such as vowels. This can be explained by positing that in Old English there was a single phoneme /f/ which had two allophonic realizations: one voiceless [f] and one voiced [v], which was produced in certain phonic contexts. So, the noun *wulf*, meaning 'wolf' was pronounced with a final [f] while the plural form *wulfas* was pronounced with [v] due to the voiced context in which it was produced. Note that spelling with <f> tells us nothing here about the pronunciation. How do these two sounds occur today? Both [f] and [v] can occur in the same position and distinguish meaning. In other words, they are phonemes which can derive minimal pairs such as *fee/* and *vea/*. How did the change happen? Due to the influence of French following the Norman Conquest in 1066, numerous Norman French words entered the English language, introducing words such as *veal*, *venison*, and *very*. This brought about the introduction of the word-initial [v] sound in many words, which was absent in Old English. With the emergence of [v] at the beginning of words, minimal pairs eventually became evident. Additionally, English underwent further changes in its pronunciation, with the loss of final vowels in words like *save*. This introduced the voiced fricative sound at the end of words, creating a contrast between words like *safe* and *save*. Consequently, [v] and [f] developed from being allophones to becoming distinct phonemes.⁷

Grammatical Changes

As regards grammatical changes, we must distinguish between *morphological* changes and *syntactic* changes. Grammatical (i.e., inflectional) morphology is concerned with how languages make use of morphological resources, that is, morphemes in general, to convey grammatical meaning and how the use of these resources changes over time. The typological distinction of isolated, agglutinating, and inflecting languages is relevant here: languages may undergo morphological changes in cycles, transitioning from isolating to agglutinating, then to inflecting, and back to isolating trends. Such shifts have been observed in pidgin and creoles, where independent morphemes develop into prefixes and suffixes due to phonological reduction. English has also modified its structure compared to its Proto-Germanic roots, from a more inflecting language, which relies more on inflectional morphology, to a more analytic one with reduced inflections and a heavier reliance on prepositional phrases and word order.

⁷ We must remember that phonetic changes can lead to phonemic changes, but this is not always the case. Additionally, splits and mergers can interact in complex ways, sometimes resulting in chain shifts, as mentioned before. These shifts can be categorized as 'push chains' or 'drag chains' and are illustrated by cases such as Grimm's Law and the Great Vowel Shift.

Analogical change is a mechanism driving morphological change. It occurs when one form adjusts to resemble another related form. Two main types of analogy are *proportional analogy* and *analogical levelling*. The former involves extending existing patterns, for instance, applying a pattern to other cases which share certain similarities, as in the extension of the -s plural form to some originally irregular nouns. The latter, on the other hand, attempts to eliminate irregularities within a subsystem, and is seen in the change of some Old English strong verbs. We have already mentioned that this can be explained as change by analogy (Bynon, 1977) when a less transparent form is replaced by a more transparent one analogous to that of the model (*ic healp* in Old English > *I helped* in Modern English). Importantly, attempts to establish general rules for morphological analogy have yielded tendencies rather than strict rules.

As for syntactic change, it has gained attention in linguistic research over the last decades. When examining the history of English, several changes from Old English to present-day English can be observed. Two key mechanisms here are *reanalysis* and *grammaticalization*. Reanalysis usually occurs when a syntactic construction becomes ambiguous, leading speakers to favor a new interpretation over the old one. An instance from the history of English involves the loss of inflections with certain verbs and their nominal constituents, which led to ambiguity in sentence structure. Campbell (2020) explains that “reanalysis depends on the possibility of more than one analysis of a given structure” (p. 279). Grammaticalization is a more complex mechanism involving the development of grammatical words (or newer grammatical functions) from lexical ones. This process often includes semantic change, phonetic reduction, and reanalysis.⁸

The following can be considered significant changes in morphology and syntax between Old English and Modern English:

- General and gradual passage from a more synthetic language to a more analytic language.
- Tendency towards a more fixed SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) pattern.
- Changes in the negation and modal verb system.
- Introduction of auxiliary verbs.
- Significant changes in the pronoun system.
- Significant loss of inflectional affixes on nouns, verbs and adjectives.
- Development of aspectual periphrastic forms to encode aspect and voice.
- Grammaticalization of lexical categories to encode modality.
- Loss of specific morphological marking of subjunctive mood.
- Regularization of many strong (“irregular”) verbs.
- Tendency towards subordination over coordination.

⁸ The concept of reanalysis was taken from the discipline of phonology, but has had a greater scope in the field of syntax. Although the term is used in various theoretical approaches with different definitions, the basic principle is the same: the conception of reanalysis supposes a dissociation between the underlying structures and the way in which the information contained in these structures surfaces. From a broader perspective, reanalysis implies a change in the grammar acquired by a new generation, so it is sometimes used as a synonym for syntactic change and even linguistic change.

Campbell (2020) includes *extension* and *syntactic borrowing* as mechanisms of syntactic change. Extension is related to changes in the surface manifestation, but it does not imply an immediate modification of the underlying structure. This can be illustrated with the grammaticalization which gave rise to the future form *be going to*. This periphrastic future was not always productive with all verbs: not any kind of infinitive could be used with *be going to*. Following this process, a further extension occurred so that *be going to* as a future auxiliary phrase might occur with new verbs that were previously not possible, such as stative verbs. On the other hand, syntactic borrowing is related to the borrowing of grammatical patterns. For example, McWhorter (2009) studies the so-called “Celtic Hypothesis” and assumes a line of influence from Celtic to English by looking at the introduction of *do* as an auxiliary verb.

Burridge and Bergs (2017) also discuss pragmatic changes, focusing on shifts in meaning and usage within specific contexts. An illustration lies in changes in the system of address terms, particularly the oscillation between *thou* and *you* (see Crystal, 2004). During Shakespeare's time, the selection between these two hinged on social dynamics. Put simply, the use of *you* often signaled social parity, indicating an equal social standing between the speaker and the addressee. Conversely, employing *thou* towards someone suggested a form of social superiority, where the speaker wielded more power than the addressee. Hence, the choice of address term was not merely a matter of grammar but was deeply intertwined with societal hierarchies. However, as distinctions became less discernible, many speakers opted for the more deferential *you*. As a consequence, *thou* gradually fell out of favor.

Within the broader scope of pragmatic changes, the concept of pragmaticalization is important for some frameworks within historical linguistics (although one might relate this to grammaticalization). This process is akin to grammaticalization but specific to the emergence of pragmatic markers. For instance, the word *like* has undergone pragmaticalization to serve as a quotative, as in *And I was like, "you can't do that"*, or a hedge marking, as seen in *Could I like borrow your notes?*

Vocabulary Changes

Broadly speaking, lexical (i.e., vocabulary) changes involve changes in word formation and also semantic changes, although semantic changes are sometimes presented separately in the bibliography. In the study of historical word formation, Schendl (2001) distinguishes between the creation of new words and the abstract rules governing this process. Word-formation rules are specific to languages and can change over time, thus, affecting their productivity at different stages. Two primary processes in English are *compounding* and *affixation*, apart from borrowing words from other languages. Throughout the history of English, compounding of free morphemes has been a productive process: many compounds from Old English, such as *kinsman*, persist today. However, some, like *ceapman* have become obsolete, replaced by loanwords like *merchant*. Sound changes can make compounds less transparent, transforming them into simple

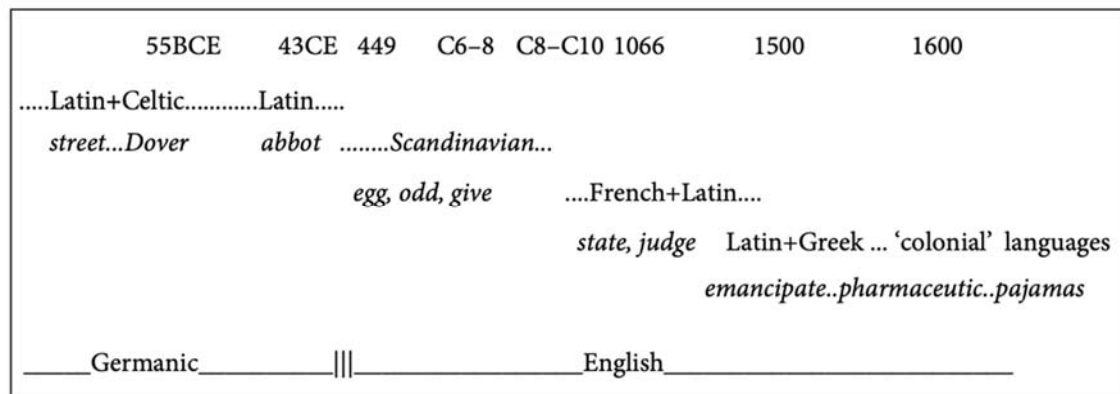
words, thus *godspell* > *gospel*, *hlaf-weard* (loaf-keeper) > *hlaford* > *lord* and *hlæfdige* (loaf-kneader) > *lady*. Affixation has also been prevalent in English. Many prefixes and suffixes remain productive; however, foreign affixes from Latin and French (such as *dis-* or *-able*) have also been introduced into English.⁹ Conversion, or zero derivation, is another significant pattern, where words change class without a formal affix, for instance, Noun > Verb (*chair* > *chair*). Overall, the history of English reveals a preference for processes of compounding and conversion over affixation. Another process related to changes in vocabulary is reanalysis (lexical or morphological, not as a syntactic change). This is seen in words like *editor* and *peddler* which were perceived as derived from non-existent verbs, resulting in the coining of *edit* and *peddle*.

Other processes have become productive more recently. Modern English increasingly derives common words from proper names or commercial trademarks. Blending (*brunch* < *breakfast* + *lunch*) and shortening words (*pub* < *public house*) have also developed greatly, and acronyms (*laser*) and initialisms (*FYI*) are also popular these days. According to Bauer (1994, p. 38), abbreviations of this kind were very rare in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They are also important features of the language of the Internet and online communication (see chapter 4).

As regards borrowing, it is connected with contact situations which are part of the external history. Figure 1.1 presents a timeline illustrating the major influences on English, with sample loanwords (in *italics*) which were borrowed from those languages.

Figure 1.1

External influences on English and loanwords.



Note. Taken from van Gelderen (2014, p. 10).

Moving on to semantic change within vocabulary, we must distinguish between changes in scope and changes in status (Stockwell and Minkova, 2001).¹⁰ Words can undergo changes in

⁹ An interesting word-formation phenomenon also related to grammar is the rise of phrasal verbs in Middle English. Possibly influenced by Scandinavian and French, many Old English verbal compounds declined in productivity and were replaced by phrasal verbs over time (see Denison, 1985; Elenbaas, 2007).

¹⁰ We will focus here on the consequences of meaning changes. As for the motivations, these include many factors, such as borrowing, communicative needs, psychological factors, emphasis and taboo avoidance, prestige, folk etymology, interference, hypercorrection. Interestingly, a lexical borrowing can lead to semantic differentiation, like *heofon* narrowing to its current meaning in *heaven* after the introduction of Scandinavian *sky*.

meaning, either by *broadening* or *narrowing* their scope. Broadening occurs when a word's meaning becomes more general, which is why it is also known as “generalization”. Burridge and Bergs (2017) choose the examples of *dog* and *hound* to illustrate this change. Nowadays, *dog* is a broad term for any type of canine, whereas *hound* specifically denotes hunting dogs. Note that during the Middle Ages, this distinction was reversed. On the other hand, narrowing occurs when the meaning becomes more specific. For instance, *fowl* once meant any bird but has narrowed its meaning to refer to a specific kind. It is important to bear in mind that there are two axes along which changes of scope might take place:

- Changes along the superordinate-hyponymic relation (for example, *dog*, *hound*, *girl*, *apple*): clearer examples of changes of scope. These are instances of broadening and narrowing.
- Changes along the lexical domain covered by an item or the semantic scope. If a word has acquired new meanings throughout time, which is the usual case by means of metaphor or metonymy, we are dealing with a type of broadening, even if some of those meanings might be specific to certain fields or registers. These are instances of extensions of meaning.

Considering semantic change, Burridge and Bergs (2017, p. 56) show that a single change can trigger changes in other semantically related items.

meat ‘all solid food’ > *meat* ‘flesh of animals’

flesh ‘animal tissue’ > *flesh* ‘tissue of humans’

foda ‘animal fodder’ > *food* ‘all forms of solid nourishment’ (and so replaces *meat*)

Crowley and Bower (2009, p. 201) also consider *semantic shifts*. This kind of change involves a word completely losing its original meaning and acquiring a new meaning without any trace of the original one. In other words, nothing of the original meaning is retained. This does not mean that the semantic shift is abrupt; smaller steps in the shift are likely to occur. However, the key in a semantic shift is that the “logical” connection between the stages is at some point lost. The authors consider the case of the adjective *silly*. Look at its entry provided by Etymonline. How has it developed?

Another phenomenon not discussed here is *bleaching*, a unique type of semantic change tied to grammaticalization. The term is usually applied to account for heavy loss of meaning (desemanticization), especially when the original meaning is not retained or cannot be inferred, and in cases where the items have been extended in use or reanalyzed.

silly (adj.)

Middle English *seli*, *seely*, from Old English *gesælig* "happy, fortuitous, prosperous" (related to *sæl* "happiness"), from Proto-Germanic **sæligas* (source also of Old Norse *sæll* "happy," Old Saxon *salig*, Middle Dutch *salich*, Old High German *salig*, German *selig* "blessed, happy, blissful," Gothic *se/s* "good, kindhearted"). [...]

The word's considerable sense development moved it by various streams from "happy" through "blessed;" "pious;" "innocent" (c. 1200), to "harmless," to "pitiable" (late 13c.), "weak" (c. 1300), to "feeble in mind, lacking in reason, foolish" (1570s).

Source: https://www.etymonline.com/word/silly#etymonline_v_23518.

The evaluation of word meanings can also change over time, shifting between neutral, positive, or negative connotations (status). In time, words can acquire both favorable connotations (*amelioration*) and pejorative connotations (*pejoration* or *deterioration*). Schendl (2001) illustrates this with terms like *knight*, which have improved in meaning, while words like *knave* have seen a decline. Many times, these changes reflect extralinguistic social realities, such as the low social status of certain groups.

A Case Study

Campbell (2020, p. 6) provides the following example to illustrate a number of linguistic changes. It is a sample from the Bible (Matthew 26:73) written at different stages of English. Read the four extracts and consider the distinctive features from each period.

Modern English (*The New English Bible*, 1961)

Shortly afterwards the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you are another of them; your accent gives you away!'

Early Modern English (*The King James Bible*, 1611)

And after a while came vnto him they that stood by, and saide to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Middle English (*The Wycliff Bible*, 14th century)

And a litil aftir, thei that stooden camen, and seiden to Petir, treuli thou art of hem; for thi speche makith thee knowun.

Old English (*The West-Saxon Gospels*, c. 1050)

þa æfter lytlum fyrste genēalæton þa ðe þær stodon, cwædon to petre. Soðlice þu eart of hym,
 þyn spræc þe gesweotolað.

[Literally: then after little first approached they that there stood, said to Peter. Truly thou art of
 them, thy speech thee makes clear.]

Which lexical, grammatical, and phonological (based on spelling) changes can you spot?

A similar proposal is provided by van Gelderen (2014, p. 13) with the following sentence, from
 Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

**Can you guess, on the basis of the gloss, which Modern English words are later loanwords,
 i.e. borrowed into English?¹¹****Old English**

Ærest me wæs fultumiend 7 lareow se arwurða abbad Albinus, se wæs wide gefaren 7 gelæred,
 7 wæs betst gelæred on Angelcynne.

Word-by-word gloss

Earliest me was assistant and teacher the honorable abbot Albinus who was widely traveled and
 learned, and was best scholar in England.

Modern English

My first assistant and teacher was the venerable abbot Albinus, a man who had traveled much
 and studied, and was the best scholar in England. (taken from Miller, 1890)

Conclusions

We opened this chapter by introducing the notion of linguistic change and its role in
 understanding the history of English. Historical or diachronic linguistics offers a lens to study the
 development of languages, providing insights into the patterns, influences, and innovations that
 shape language over time. Contrary to misconceptions, language change is not a sign of decay
 but an inevitable and ongoing process. We also referred to the challenges and criticisms faced
 by linguists in defining and studying language change from different perspectives. This chapter
 sets the scene for our exploration of the distinct periods in the development of English: Old
 English, Middle English, and Modern English, which is the main topic of the following chapter.

¹¹ Æ and æ are Old English letters (capital and small case) which represent the short open a sound, as in *cat* [æ]. The ð letter can represent the dental fricatives (voiced or voiceless) [ð] or [θ]. Finally, 7 is known as the “Tironian sign” for *et* and used as a short form for *and*.

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CHAPTER 2

Walking through Change in the History of English

As explained in chapter 1, one of the aims of the work in the field of historical linguistics has been to provide explanations as to why (and by extension, how) language change takes place. Importantly, rigorous and scientific as these explanations might be, the intricate reasons and processes underpinning change in language are of a probabilistic nature; therefore, more often than not, multiple explanations can be provided, each focusing on a different aspect of the phenomenon under study. This chapter moves on from the theoretical perspective and focuses on the history of English itself, that is, the development of the language which provides the empirical data that can be resorted to in order to account for the changes. We will look back at the periods in the history of English and the connection between the external and the internal history.

Back to the Stages in the History of English

In chapter 1 we saw that the history of English can be roughly divided into Old, Middle and Modern English. Graddol (1997) provides a more detailed classification of seven stages, including the pre-English period.

STAGE 1. Pre-English (– c. 450 AD): While English did not exist back then, this period sets the linguistic scene on the British Isles. The indigenous languages spoken in the territory were Celtic (Indo-European, but from a branch different from the one that gave rise to English and other Germanic languages). A key point of the period is the arrival of the Romans and the subsequent establishment of Latin as a language of government and culture.

STAGE 2. Early Old English (eOE, c.450–c.850): After the withdrawal of the Romans in the 5th century, the so-called “Anglo-Saxons” arrived c. 449 AD. However, Latin remained a significant language, especially in writing and in the Church. The period witnesses the first English literary texts.

STAGE 3. Late Old English (IOE, c.850–1100): The later period was characterized by invasions and settlements of tribes coming from Scandinavia (sometimes referred to as the “Vikings”), whose influence on the Old English dialects was significant, especially in the north of Britain.¹²

¹² We agree with Hejná and Walken (2022) that the name “Viking” is inaccurate to refer to these settlers; “viking”, i.e. raiding, was an activity, and by no means captures the complex scenario at the time and cannot be a label that includes all Scandinavian immigrants. However, it must be noted that the term is present in much of the literature on the topic.

STAGE 4. Middle English (ME, c.1100–1450): The turning point between Old English and Middle English was, historically speaking, the Norman Conquest (1066), which brought about many linguistic changes. French became the official language and influenced several aspects (the lexicon, the phonology, the grammar), though Latin still played significant functions, and some educated people were fluent in French, Latin and English. In 1362, Edward III became the first king to address Parliament in English, and the Pleading in English Act 1362 made English the only language in which court proceedings could be held, though the official record remained written in Latin. By the end of the century, the royal court had switched to English. Eventually, the reemergence of English as a widespread language is reflected in the flourishing period of English literature.

STAGE 5. Early Modern English (EME or eModE, c.1450–1750): This period encompassed significant historical landmarks, such as the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era, and a boom in literature whose most prominent figure is William Shakespeare. Pivotal scientific institutions were established, and scholars started to communicate their findings in English instead of Latin. English spread to the Americas and to India. The rise of printing gave the language a lasting identity in writing.

STAGE 6. Modern English (ModE, c.1750–1950): English became a national language, which prompted numerous endeavors to standardize it through the creation of dictionaries and grammars. The industrial revolution reshaped patterns of work and leisure and helped establish English as the international language of advertising and consumerism. As the UK and the US became global powers, the teaching of English was introduced in various regions around the world.

STAGE 7. Late Modern English (IModE, c.1950–): There was an increasing recognition of varieties of English in newly independent nations. The US emerged as a global economic and cultural power, propelling American English to the forefront as a widespread variety, prompted by a global market of audiovisual products. As a result of the evolving technologies, English adapted to new electronic forms and the teaching of the language developed hugely.

Historical Facts

The classification provided by Graddol sheds light on a pervasive fact: a periodization of the history of English is closely related to the history of the speakers and territories where the language is spoken, which includes political, cultural, and social facts. It follows that approaching the diachronic development of English and of any language requires one to consider both perspectives: the historical facts and the linguistic facts. Table 2.1 includes a list of events which are related to the history of the English language. It must be noted, however, that it summarizes

only certain points to get an overview picture of the relevant highlights; there have been very many other significant events in the history of the UK and of the anglophone territories which fall beyond the scope of this chapter and might be less specific to our take on the history of the language, though certainly relevant if one is to grasp the sociopolitical history.

Table 2.1

Summary of key historical facts.

Early Occupations	1000 BCE Migrations of Celtic people to Britain
	55 BCE / 43 AD Expeditions by Caesar and invasion by Claudius
	43-47 AD South and East England brought under Roman control
	50 AD Foundation of London
	410 AD Romans withdraw
Germanic Migrations, Settlements, and Rule	c. 450 Hengest and Horsa arrive in Kent ('invited' to hold back the Picts)
	477-527 Saxons settlements and kingdoms in Sussex, Wessex, Essex and Middlesex
	550 Anglian kingdoms in Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia
	597 Augustine missionaries in Kent and conversion to Christianity starts
	731 Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
	793 Scandinavian attacks begin and subsequent conquest of Northumbria and East Anglia
	871-899 Rule of King Alfred, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle started and establishment of the Danelaw
	1016-1042 Rule of King Cnut and his heirs
From the Norman Period to the Renaissance	1042-1066 Rule of King Edward
	1066 William (of Normandy) becomes king
	1085 Domesday Book Survey
	1154 Last entry on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
	1204 King John loses Normandy to the French
	1215 Magna Carta
	1282-1283 Conquest of Wales
Renaissance and Restoration	1337-1453 The 100-year War
	1476 Introduction of the printing press by Caxton
	1489 English is used in Parliament
	1504 St John's, Newfoundland, established as the first British colony in North America
	1509-1547 Reign of Henry VIII
	1558-1603 Rule of Queen Elizabeth I
	1607 First permanent settlement in America at Jamestown
	1611 The King James Bible
	1642-1648 First and Second Civil War
	1660 Charles II 'restored'
Enlightenment, Romanticism, Colonization, and Industrial Revolution	1670s Colonization of West Africa
	1707 Act of Union, uniting England and Scotland as the UK
	1776 American Declaration of Independence
	1780s Colonies (of convicts) in Australia
	1791 British colonies in Upper and Lower Canada

From the 20th Century until Now	1834 Slavery abolished in the British Empire
	1830s Settlement of New Zealand
	1861 British colony in Nigeria
	1865 Abolition of slavery in the United States of America
	1876-1877 Telephone and phonograph invented
	1880-1902 Boer Wars and British conquest of South Africa
	1898 American control over Hawaii, Philippines, and Puerto Rico
	1901 Death of Queen Victoria
	1914–1918 First World war
	1922 BBC starts
	1937 Welsh becomes an official language in Wales
	1939–1945 Second World war
	1947-1963: Independence of several former colonies and territories (India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Nigeria, Uganda, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Kenya)
	1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall
	1990s on Technological revolution; the Internet becomes a major communication tool

Note. Adapted from van Gelderen (2014, pp. 315-320).

Note that Table 2.1 does not actually link Graddol's stages to specific dates. Rather, the key historical facts are divided in sections following sociopolitical and cultural turning points. By matching historical facts and the linguistic periodization of English one would get the rough correspondences given in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Matching historical and linguistic periods.

Early Occupations	Before OE
Germanic Migrations, Settlements, and Rule	OE
From the Norman Period to the Renaissance	Late OE and ME
Renaissance and Restoration	Early ModE
Enlightenment, Romanticism, Colonization, and Industrial Revolution	ModE
From the 20 th Century until Now	Late ModE

A historical-linguistic approach of the stages is presented in the following sections.

Problematizing the Stages

Any diachronic periodization of a natural language, albeit comprehensive, faces a number of problems. First off, one must bear in mind that change does not take place overnight, and so it is inaccurate to conceive of a day, year or even century which solely represents the boundary from one stage to the next. Rather, changes add up slowly, leading to overlaps and fragmentations,

and eventually making up a language which differs strikingly in certain features from the one spoken 200, 500 or 1000 years before, probably reaching unintelligibility if speakers from the two periods were to interact, although intelligibility alone is not the only aspect that should be considered.

Consequently, labels for stages encompass several centuries, which makes it possible to subdivide each period in further stages. This is seen, for example, in the subdivisions within Modern English. There are sufficient differences (language-internal and language-external) within the broad Modern English period to establish these divisions. The years 1450 or 1500 are often chosen as the beginnings of (early) Modern English, marked by the completion of most grammatical changes and the development of the Great Vowel Shift. An external view on the beginnings of the period would consider the introduction of printing. Dating the (late) Modern period poses further challenges: the years 1700 or 1750 are usually chosen as starting points due to political events, such as the Restoration of the British monarchy in 1660 or the Declaration of Independence in the US in 1776. During these decades there were also increasing efforts to standardize the language, the Great Vowel Shift was mostly completed and English varieties spoken around the world had started to develop regional features. While there seem to be fewer major internal changes after 1700 (at least, compared to previous periods), van Gelderen (2014) states that “the relative similarity of the language may be misleading” (p. 207). The later part of eModE and the beginnings of IModE are characterized by many developments in the “external” history, mostly as a result of migration and colonialism and the numerous varieties within each of these broad categories (e.g., in South Africa, India, and New York, among others). Besides, the closer one gets to Present-day English, the more tools there are at hand to investigate language, especially its use and connection with extralinguistic factors motivating variation and change, such as gender, age, region, and the socio-economic status of its speakers.¹³

It is important to bear in mind that labels for the modern period might differ depending on the author. Table 2.3 illustrates certain correspondences:

Table 2.3

Labels for the 1700-present period.

Graddol's labels	Other equivalent labels
Stage 6: Modern English (1750-1950)	Late Modern English
Stage 7: Late Modern English (1950-today)	Present-day English (PDE)/Modern English

¹³ Hejné and Walkden (2022) claim that OE exhibited the variation that can be seen and studied for Modern English: geographically, socially and stylistically. This is related to the uniformitarian principle (see chapter 4). However, as there is no simple way to access sources that show such variation, it is harder to approach much of the variation in older periods. The diatopic (regional) variation can still be seen, as OE is divided roughly in four main dialects: West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and Northumbrian (the last two often grouped together as Anglian).

While the Old English period does not exactly reflect the same situation, intensive contact between English and Norse led to several linguistic triggers which allow us to consider at least two subperiods in OE as well: early and late OE (eOE and IOE).

By now it seems clear that the way to establish periods and internal divisions in diachrony should be seen as a combination of external facts and turning points in the internal history of the language, that is, a mixture of the so-called “internal and external histories”. Van Gelderen explains that “except for the beginning, which is arbitrary, the division is a mixture of external and internal factors” (2014, p. 11). This mixture can be illustrated with Middle English too: historically, the Norman Conquest (1066) is presented as a pivotal event that signals the shift from Old to Middle English. However, linguistically, the onset of ME is not evident until around 1150. How so? This later date is identified as the point at which certain features undergo prominent changes. Looking back at these two stages, one of the main distinctions between Old and Middle English is the reliance on numerous inflectional endings on nouns, adjectives, and verbs in OE, while ME reveals a greater reliance on grammatical words and word order. However, the consensus of 1150, rather than 1066, as a starting point for ME does not signal an abrupt change either: the year was chosen because of some key texts, namely the latter part of the *Peterborough* version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which exhibits unmistakably “modern” traits compared to older OE texts. This work shows a significant loss of inflections, illustrating an important shift in grammar. Baugh and Cable (2002) highlight that the *Peterborough Chronicle*, written in installments spanning a period from very late Old English to early Middle English (1154), depicts the process of development from the highly synthetic stage seen in OE to the more analytic stages of late Middle and then Modern English. However, several features from OE are still retained in the text; for instance, whereas Modern English follows a canonical subject-verb (SV) word order, the last years of the *Peterborough Chronicle* reveal a combination of SV and the older patterns found in Old English, such as VS. This means that the language of the *Chronicle* is transitional. Importantly, these changes are not to be directly linked to the influence of French after the Norman Conquest. Although certain structures and patterns of use do appear in Middle English as a result of contact with Norman French, such contact only favored the conditions for the decay of the inflections and should not be considered in terms of a cause-effect relationship. In other words, the Norman Conquest made it easier for certain grammatical changes to go forward but should be seen as a contributing factor rather than a direct influence.

Cornerstones Related to Change in the History of English

This section highlights certain historical moments that are relevant to approach the history of English. Periods are divided as follows: (i) early occupations and Anglo-Saxon rule (up until 1066), (ii) the 1066-1400s period, (iii) Renaissance, the Elizabethan period and Restoration, (iv) from 1700s on. There is also a final passage on the relevance of historical facts for the study of the history of English.

Early Occupations and Anglo-Saxon Rule

Several centuries before Christ (perhaps a millennium), the first Indo-European speakers to arrive on the land mass now called Britain were the Celtic peoples. Their influence on the language would be seen as a result of the contact with the future inhabitants of the isles.

By 55 BCE, Julius Caesar had kicked off his (several) attempts to invade Britain, but the Roman occupation of present-day England started to gain momentum during Claudius's era in 43 AD. This resulted in the region, known as "Britannia", becoming an integral part of the Roman Empire. However, the northern part remained unconquered, and the boundary represented by Hadrian's wall started in 122 AD. Because of this occupation and settlement, England was gradually romanized during the first 400 years of this era. The native Celtic languages, however, persisted in the local communities and can still be traced in the language of placenames. The fall of the Roman Empire and withdrawal of legionnaires around 410 AD implied that the British Celts were now vulnerable to assaults from other tribes that lived nearby, particularly the Picts in the north and the Scots in the west.

The arrival and establishment of the early Germanic-speaking settlers (often known as "Anglo-Saxons") mark the beginnings of English on the isle. The situation with the Celtic population was complex, at times with integrating communities and at times with the Anglo-Saxons replacing the local Celts, who were slowly driven to the areas of Cumbria and Wales. However, linguistically, the tongue spoken by the Germanic tribes became dominant as they were the powerful settlers, eventually establishing the Heptarchy of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The arrival of these Anglo-Saxons is sometimes described as an "invasion", but, according to certain evidence, there was no unified invading army or military conflict that can prove said invasion. Rather, it is believed that the newcomers managed to assume a position of power over the Britons, both politically and culturally (Higham, 2013).

The religious practices among the Anglo-Saxons were rooted in Germanic paganism. In the year 597, Pope Gregory dispatched a mission led by St. Augustine, which marks a significant attempt to Christianize the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Concurrently, the northern regions of England witnessed the conversion efforts of Irish missionaries who adhered to a distinct calendar for calculating Easter. While seemingly inconsequential, these changes carried profound implications for church unity. The matter was eventually resolved at the Synod of Whitby (664 AD), where various discrepancies, including the disparate Easter calculations, were reconciled. This synod played a pivotal role in reunifying the territory with the broader Christian community, bridging the gap created by the earlier Germanic settlements. Beyond its religious impact, the event held linguistic significance for England as the adoption of the Latin alphabet became widespread, resulting in an increase in the written documentation in English.

The significance of King Alfred of Wessex in the late 9th century cannot be underestimated. The peak of OE as a written language happened during his reign and ranged over many genres. It is not surprising, then, that most texts from the OE corpus we have today are written in the dialect known as "West Saxon" (in fact, most would specifically refer to this dialect when speaking

about OE in general). While it is sometimes believed that Alfred himself wrote a huge number of Old English texts, it is more likely that he commissioned and circulated these works, though he may have written some texts. Alfred offered patronage to scholars based in Winchester in a cultural program where many Latin texts were translated, and other originally English texts were written.

The first significant Scandinavian raids into the isles took place in the late 8th century (the raid on Lindisfarne, off the north-east coast, happened in 793). However, it was not until around 866 that armies started to land in East Anglia with an objective that differed from the one the Anglo-Saxons had pursued 400 years earlier. During this time, Wessex was the most important Anglo-Saxon kingdom linguistically and politically, but the Scandinavians managed to settle and advance over the territory. Eventually, as Hejné and Walkden (2022) put it, “Alfred reached agreements with the leadership of the Scandinavian incomers through a mixture of military success, diplomacy, and bribes” (p. 242). Alfred was successful in settling peace with Guthrum, the Danish leader (who converted to Christianity in 878) and establish the Danelaw (886). However, there were sufficient settlements and contact situations with the Anglo-Saxons over these decades to influence the English language in significant ways.

The beginnings of the new millennium were marked by several changes of rule. In 1013 Sweyn of Denmark and Norway invaded and became king, followed by his son Cnut in 1016. However, the Danish rule came to an end, and power returned to Alfred’s descendants from the House of Wessex in the hands of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) after the death of Cnut’s sons Harold and Harthacnut. Upon the death of Edward, there was dispute over the throne, and three rulers had a claim: Edward’s brother-in-law, Harold Godwinson; the king of Norway, Harald Hardrada; and the duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror. It was all settled in 1066: Harald Hardrada’s forces were defeated by Godwinson’s army at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, and three weeks later, in October 1066, William of Normandy defeated Godwinson and became king.

As will be seen later on, the effect of the early occupations before the 11th century is reflected mostly in a lexicon of multiple origins (further influenced and expanded in the following centuries) and certain key grammatical and phonological changes, all strongly related to the intensive situations of contact at the time.

The 1066-1400s Period

Barber (2009) claims that the Norman Conquest of 1066 was not such a violent break as people would imagine because the influence of French was already strong before the time of the Conquest. In fact, Edward the Confessor was half Norman and his court had close relations with France. However, the cultural effects of Norman rule had profound effects on the English population and language.

The Anglo-Saxons had already achieved a refined culture and scholarship, and so Norman French must not be seen as a language culturally superior or prestigious at the time; what

happened is that French was politically superior because it was the language of the conquerors, the English native aristocracy had been largely destroyed, and lands and positions were distributed among William's followers, who became the new ruling class that dominated the church and education. French was the language of the aristocracy and the court for at least 200 years. According to Durkin (2014), there was trilingualism of English, French and Latin among the literate minority. However, English was still spoken by the majority, mostly peasants, despite having lost its place as a literary language. The result is that no form of English was recognized, which led to a lot of the regional fragmentation that characterizes the early Middle English dialects.

The Normans brought with them a feudal system, where land was granted in exchange for loyalty and military service. This reshaped the political and social structure of England, with the king at the top, followed by nobles who held land but with a majority of the population made up of peasants who worked the land. Discontent grew among these lower classes that, in time, cried out in the protest known as the "Peasants' Revolt" (1381), a social uprising against feudal oppression and high taxes.

A significant fact is the establishment of the Plantagenet dynasty which ruled much of the period since the reign of Henry II (1154). The dynasty included notable monarchs such as Richard the Lionheart, John (who signed the Magna Carta in 1215), Edward I, and Edward III. Politically, the period saw the rise of Parliament, a key institution that gradually gained influence and power in decision-making. Magna Carta and subsequent developments contributed to the establishment of parliamentary authority.

However, the period was also characterized by conflict and plight. The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), a long conflict with France, had significant military, economic, and social consequences for both countries. The war led to a loss of all continental holdings, without which the English no longer had important reasons for learning and using French. Furthermore, the Black Death (1348-1350), a devastating pandemic, led to a reduction in the population of Europe and had economic repercussions that altered the power dynamics between the nobility and the labor force.

Despite these difficulties, there were many cultural developments. Linguistically, this includes the literary works of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400). A traveler around Europe and customs official in London, he was multilingual, and his writings show him expertly navigating the space between English, French and Latin.

Overall, the period between 1066 and the 1400s witnessed significant political, social, and cultural changes that laid the groundwork for the later developments in the history of the territory and the language. The use of Middle English, though highly dialectal, was slowly becoming more widespread in both literature and official documents.

Renaissance, the Elizabethan Period, Restoration

The years between the 1400s and 1700s were marked by several significant political, social, and cultural developments. There are two key events that signal the beginning of this period. First, the introduction of the printing press in England by Caxton in 1476. Not only did it make the process of producing texts less time-consuming and expensive than ever before, but it also made it possible to reach a wider audience and tackle the problem of literacy, which was very unevenly distributed across the population. Between 1476 and 1640, 20,000 titles were printed in English (Baugh and Cable 2002, p. 201). The second turning point is the discovery of the Americas and of a sailing route from Europe between 1492 and 1501. This set the scene for the expansion of several European states.

Other relevant historical facts of the period include the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487) between the houses of Lancaster and York for control over the English throne. The dispute was followed by the establishment of the Tudor dynasty with Henry VII's victory at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. The dynasty continued with Henry VIII and Elizabeth I and played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of this period. During the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) the Church broke away from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The English Reformation led to the dissolution of monasteries and the establishment of the Church of England. As a result, the period witnessed religious conflicts and tensions between Catholics and Protestants. The Elizabethan era (1558-1603) was a time of flourishing arts, literature, and exploration, which saw the prominence of literary figures such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Edmund Spenser, and the expansion of trade and settlement. In all, the 16th century was the century of the Renaissance influence, a revival of interest in classical learning, art, and culture, and also scientific advancements, with figures like Sir Francis Bacon, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei.

The accession of James I in 1603 marked the beginning of the Stuart dynasty. This period was characterized by political conflicts, including the English Civil War (1642-1651), which resulted in the temporary establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. During this time, there were also numerous attempts to print an English version of the Bible. The Synod of Toulouse (1229) had prohibited laymen from reading the Bible. Although John Wycliff had initiated a church reform movement in the 1370s and translated a version of the Bible by 1382, it was banned in England. William Tyndale also attempted a Bible translation in 1525, but the book faced another ban. It was not until Henry VIII managed to reduce the influence of the Pope in the 1530s that English Bibles started to be widely available. Miles Coverdale's version (based on Tyndale's) appeared in 1539 in 20,000 copies; later, the King James Version of the Bible was published in 1611 and became the official one.

In summary, the period between the 1400s and 1600s in England was characterized by political turmoil, religious changes, cultural flourishing, and significant exploration and expansion, setting the stage for further transformations in the following centuries.

From 1700s on

The political and cultural situation from the 1700s until the present has been defined by profound changes, including industrialization, the expansion of the British Empire, social reforms, two World Wars, the decline of the empire, and the development of a diverse and multicultural society. Throughout the 18th century, the Georgian era witnessed the growth of parliamentary power and the emergence of the constitutional monarchy. It was also a turning point for industry and science, England becoming a leading economic power at the forefront of technological advancements, urbanization, and social changes. The reliance on reason and science that characterized the 18th century is known as the “Enlightenment” and is related to social and political changes that took place in the second half of the century: American Independence (1776), the French Revolution (1789), the abolition of slave trade by the British Parliament (1807). The following century witnessed the Victorian era, named after the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). While it furthered some changes in industry, the Romantic movement put an emphasis on nations and peoples. The century is an establishment of the modern world as it is generally known these days. There were also significant social reforms, including the Factory Acts (regulating child labor), and the expansion of the right to vote. English Imperialism was at its height during the reign of Victoria (1819–1901).

Linguistically, there was a growing feeling that English needed to be regulated. Proposals for an academy came to nothing, but the 17th century saw the publication of the first grammars and dictionaries of English, and the 18th century brought the first truly comprehensive dictionaries of English, and an enormous number of English grammars. Samuel Johnson’s dictionary published in 1755 included extensive quotations from earlier authors to illustrate meanings. These dictionaries helped to fix spellings and word meanings, and inevitably came to be treated as authorities.

However, these early advances in standardization, along with certain social changes, were accompanied by growing attitudes towards the language and the rise of prescriptivism. Certain structures or features of pronunciation began to be perceived as incorrect, based on comparison with Latin or languages and varieties of prestige. As Hejrná and Walkden state, prescriptivism functions in opposition to descriptivism:

Prescriptivism is in opposition to descriptivism. A descriptive approach to linguistic variation is one where we describe how speakers use a language, whether they are native or non-native speakers of that language, and whether or not they speak a standard or a nonstandard variety of that language. A prescriptivist approach to variation, however, is a prohibitive one: some types of language-related phenomena are seen as incorrect, and often these correlate with specific social groups. Linguistic research as carried out in academia is descriptive, not prescriptive. (Hejrná and Walkden, 2022, p. 62)

The first traces of prescriptivism began when the language started to undergo continuous processes of standardization, especially after the introduction of the printing press. The numerous grammar books and dictionaries of the period are indicative of this trend. Importantly, prescriptivism is closely related to the opinion that language change is language decay and should be prevented. However, language variation and change are natural, not something to be feared, and have taken place for as long as such a thing as language has existed.

Several technological developments of the modern period are relevant for the history of the language. The introduction of steamships in 1790, railways in 1825, cars in 1763 and 1886, telephone in 1876, radio in 1895, sound-film in 1925, and experimental TV transmission in 1939 made travelling and communication easier and more accessible, which promoted expansion and contact as a result. A salient fact is that technological advancements combined with British colonization resulted in the spread of the English language across the globe.

The 20th and 21st centuries are marked by the two World Wars, the reconstruction after the war, the welfare state, revolutions in art, the expansion of literacy and education, labor rights and healthcare. The mid-20th century saw the decolonization of the British Empire with many colonies reaching independence and thus shifting the position of the UK globally.

More recently, these changes have been deepened as a result of an increasingly diverse, multicultural and post-industrial society, with immigration playing a significant role in shaping the demographic landscape and rapid technological advancements, namely computers, mobile phones and the Internet, which impacted most aspects of everyday life, from communications to industry. The service industries have become more important than the manufacturing ones. However, there are also growing debates on migration, identity (its connection with language is particularly relevant for chapters 3 and 4), inequality, and climate change, among other issues in the current agenda.

Why Are Historical Facts Relevant to Understand the History of English?

Understanding historical facts is an important part of approaching the history of the English language because language change is deeply intertwined with the cultural, social, and political contexts in which it takes place. As Carter (2002) points out, language always relates to specific texts and contexts and is also subject to change over time:

An understanding of language history is essential to an understanding of language, and an understanding of language history should not, indeed cannot, be considered separately from social and cultural change. And, third, it is difficult to see language use independently from the power of those who use it or control its use or enforce its use on others. The cliché that language is power is a cliché, but the fact that it is a cliché should not obscure its truth. (p. 12)

The cornerstones presented before are not thorough but are all relevant to contextualize language and understand change. Transfers of power, wars, migrations, and cultural exchanges have all left their imprint on the language. Culturally and politically, events often coincide with shifts that have influenced English, such as the Norman Conquest in 1066 and the impact of French, which is often related to the emergence of certain shifts in linguistic trends. Literary and intellectual movements, such as the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, stimulate literature, philosophy, and the arts. Socially, different aspects are relevant in the history of English: the feudal system, the place of English amongst the lower classes and the emergence of a middle class, among others, have certainly had an influence on language, its expansion, and the attitudes towards it.

Many historical events are related to speakers coming into contact with speakers of other languages. Language contact is a crucial factor in the history of English, which led to internal changes and also to the rise of regional varieties and variation in general. In all, by examining historical facts, linguists and historians can trace the roots of a language and establish comparisons with other languages, understand shifts in grammar and vocabulary and explore the reasons behind linguistic changes. Such a comprehensive approach helps reveal how the English language has adapted over time, reflecting the diverse and dynamic histories of the many people who speak it.

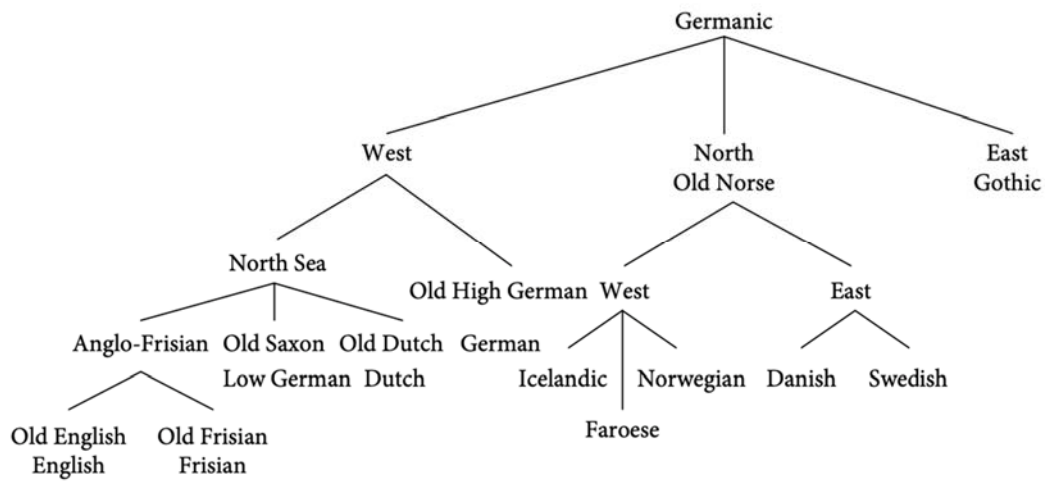
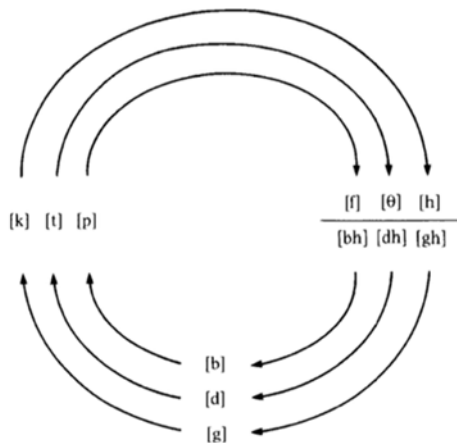
Linguistic Landmarks and Key Changes

The following sections describe relevant features of the main stages in the history of English and changes that belong in those periods or are directly related to them. Note, however, that these sections do not provide thorough explanations of all the lexical, grammatical and phonological processes involved. We refer the reader to the literature cited for further details.

Before English and during the Old English Period

Old English descended from the west branch of a (Proto) Indo-European language referred to as (Proto) Germanic (Figure 2.1).

The primary difference between Germanic and the other Indo-European languages can be seen on the basis of Grimm's law. Probably the most significant sound change that took place in the branching of Indo-European languages, Grimm's Law, also known as the "first consonant shift", accounts for systematic differences between Germanic and other Indo-European languages: in the development of Proto-Germanic, voiceless stops became fricatives, voiced stop consonants became voiceless and voiced aspirated stop consonants lost aspiration. The chain nature of the change is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.1*Old English and the other Germanic language tree.**Note.* From van Gelderen (2014, p. 42).**Figure 2.2***Grimm's Law.**Note.* From Aitchison (2001, p. 184).

A clear example of Grimm's Law is seen in Latin *ped* (no shift) and English *foot*, which illustrates $p > f$.

However, Grimm's law failed to account for certain cases. Such exceptions, like the presence of a middle voiced fricative in Gothic *faðar* /faðar/, where a voiceless is expected, could be explained by means of another law, Verner's Law, whose most important contribution was to consider the phonic context in which the sound appears (i.e., the conditioning of the change). In

this case, when a voiceless fricative is not at the beginning of the word and the preceding vowel is not stressed, the fricative is voiced.

In terms of phonology, OE differs from PDE in the quantity, quality and status of certain sounds. Important phonological processes related to the OE period include voicing of fricatives (and the later phonemicization of some segments), as seen in the change [f] > [v] with singular *wife*, *half*, *knife* and *wulf*, and their plural counterparts, moving on to contrastive distinctions which differentiate OE from ME. Palatalization is also relevant: starting in eOE, the velars consonants [sk], [k] and [g] were fronted (moved closer to the palate) to [ʃ], [tʃ] and [j]. Another process worth mentioning is the breaking of vowels, a type of assimilation which took place in OE around the 7th century, especially in West Saxon, and which applies when the vowel is followed by certain sounds (liquids or *h*). I-mutation or i-umlaut is yet another important change which actually took place before OE. A conditioned sound change, it affected vowels when the following syllable contained [i] or [j] (though this sound is almost always lost).

As for morphology, old Indo-European languages share similarities in the reliance on inflectional endings. However, there are also key differences. In comparison to Sanskrit, for example, Old English has fewer cases. Old English grammar features the properties of a synthetic language that inherited most morphological aspects from Germanic. The morphological system displays a rather elaborate paradigm for case compared to ModE. In the nominal domain, there are no real articles but demonstratives which would grammaticalize as such. In the verbal domain, conjugation marks tense, mood, person and number on verbs, which can be weak or strong depending on the formation rules for the past. Apart from the distinction between strong and weak verbs, it is worth mentioning the OE preterite-present verbs, which resemble strong verb past forms in the paradigm of the present tense and weak verbs in their past tense. They include some common verbs which are the ancestors of the modern modals, such as *can*, *may*, *must*, and *shall*.

Although there are differences between main and subordinate clauses, the Old English syntax shows a relatively free word order, with a preference for the Object-Verb order (OV) and for V2 (Verb-second, that is, the finite verb is placed as the second constituent). In addition, subject pronouns are often omitted, as are certain prepositions and articles. Coordination is frequent, and negation is marked with a negative particle (*ne*) before the verb and also by means of concord with other negative words.

The intersection between the internal history and the external history is illustrated by the influence of other languages: Celtic languages and Latin, earlier, and Norse and French, later. According to van Gelderen (2014), the Celtic languages influenced the language in three phases: (1) by means of loans into Germanic (and other languages like Latin) on continental Europe; (2) by means of loans into Old English, before and after the introduction of Christianity, especially seen in placenames or landscape terms;¹⁴ (3) after the Old English period by means of borrowing from other languages. Similarly, the influence of Latin on Old English can be divided into the influence on the continent and in Britain, the influence before the Middle English period, and the

¹⁴ McWhorter (2009) also discusses the early influence of the Celtic languages in the introduction of the *do* periphrasis (see chapter 4).

influence during the Renaissance. Van Gelderen (2014) states that around 170 words were borrowed on the continent, over 100 in Britain before the Romans left, 150 after the introduction of Christianity, and thousands in the Renaissance period. The influence is seen mostly in the introduction of nouns related to commerce, the army, religion, and culture.

Like the Celtic and Latin influence, the Scandinavian influence can be found in placenames. However, because English and Norse were more similar than English and Latin or the Celtic languages, it was possible for further influence to gain ground. According to Barber (2009), we must conceive of the later OE period as one with many bilingual situations, especially in the north of the territory, where the influence of Norse speakers was most profound. Particularly, this is noticed in the fact that most Norse loanwords are ordinary, everyday words of the core vocabulary, as well some grammatical words, such as conjunctions and pronouns. Interestingly, while Old English and Old Norse (ON) were similar, each language had undergone certain linguistic processes which made it possible for pairs to arise. An interesting case is palatalization, mentioned before: some Germanic words were present in both Norse (palatalized) and English (non-palatalized). The result is that two items might have been perceived differently by speakers and so English retained its palatalized word and also borrowed the non-palatalized counterpart (*shirt-skirt*, *ship-skipper*). Another related process is meaning change due to contact (see chapter 1), for instance in the word *dream* (OE 'joy' > ME 'vision while sleeping') and in pairs like ON *die* - OE *starve*, ON *ill* - OE *sick*. A different outcome occurs when there is a replacement of a native word with a borrowed one (OE *niman* - ON *take*).

The lexicon also underwent its own processes of change. Old English is very Germanic in this respect, with only about 3% of its vocabulary of non-Germanic origin. Compounding and affixation are the two most important processes to coin words. As for semantic changes, many PDE items reflect changes from their OE original meanings (*hound*, *mood*, *deer*, and *knight*, among many others). Note that semantic change might also be seen in grammatical changes, namely grammaticalization, where there is loss of lexical meaning.

From Old to Middle English

The transition from Old to Middle English was characterized by the development of a very innovative language which started to flourish especially over the 14th century. Being Germanic at its core, English adopted extensive Romance vocabulary, with French words taken for many semantic fields, such as government and administration, religion, science, food, the army. However, the influx of words was not sudden, but rather slow and continuous. In fact, the influence of French during the period can be divided in two moments, with the year 1250 working as a boundary. First, the influence of Anglo-Norman French from the late Old English period up to the late 12th century, with fewer than 1,000 words, most of them related to nobility and the church. Second, the influence of Central (Parisian) French until the end of the 15th century. This second period is peculiar because speakers of French were turning to the use of English and so the type

of influence changes. During the time, the upper classes carried over into English an astonishing number of common French words, especially administrative, legal and military terms, but also familiar words in the fields of fashion, food, art, learning, and medicine. According to van Gelderen (2014), 10,000 words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and some adverbs) are estimated to have been introduced.

The adoption of words from two different kinds of French is related to differences in the pronunciation of French loanwords (and phonological processes that took place in Norman or Central French) and led to pairs such as *catch-chase* and *reward-regard*.¹⁵ Note that borrowing from French also took place after the Middle English period. The earlier loanwords are less obviously French-looking, and the newest ones are more recognizable as foreign terms. Besides, certain processes that happened from Old French (OF) to Modern French (MF) made it possible for two words to be borrowed into English, for examples, OF *hostel* and also MF *hôtel* 'hotel'.

The importance of borrowing is not restricted to free morphemes. It is also relevant when it comes to derivational prefixes and suffixes. Many of these were borrowed as part of the French words and eventually led to hybrid word formation with English roots and Latinate affixes. Other than direct borrowing from French and Latin, compounding and derivation remained productive word-formation processes.

In terms of spelling and phonology, ME looks much closer to ModE and OE. However, spelling was far from being standard at the time. It still featured some of the OE runic letters, namely the letter *thorn* <þ>, replaced by <th> in ModE, and <ȝ>, used primarily for the sounds [j] and [x]. Following Strang (1970), Hejná and Walkden (2022) argue that Middle English is the period of spelling as well as phonetic variation in the history of English.

In terms of phonology, an important trend is consonant deletion and vowel shifting. Important changes of status took place too. The introduction of French words with [v] may have led to its change as a phoneme in English (no longer restricted to certain contexts). Something similar happened to [z] during the Renaissance. The velar nasal [ŋ] was exclusively used before other velar sounds. In comparison to Modern English, ME did not feature [ʒ]. Old English short vowels lengthened, except before consonant groups with three consonants. Some changes in height also took place. Non-northern long *a* became [ɔ], resulting in Modern English *no*, *most*, *home*, and *one*. Palatalization also explains developments in the South (*church* < *kirk* or *eye* < *ege*). Vowel reduction, while attested perhaps in IOE, increased during the ME period.

The phonological changes contributed to a reduction of inflectional distinctions and thereby caused changes in morphology and syntax. Note, however, that already by IOE there was certain instability in connection with the declensions, particularly in areas with extensive contact with Norse. Such instability reflects a transition that deepened in the shift from Old to Middle English. For van Gelderen (2014), there are five key changes between Old and Middle English: (a) the introduction of feminine pronoun *she*, (b) the introduction of plural *they*,¹⁶ (c) a change in the use of the second person, (d) the loss of the dative-accusative distinction, and (e) the loss of the dual.

¹⁵ The influence of French on English grammar is not generally considered as significant as it was on vocabulary. To name one, an aspect which is thought to have been influenced by French is the rise of the *wh*-relatives.

¹⁶ Singular *they* is attested since the 14th century, with debates around it as of the 19th century.

Neuter genitive *its* (originally *his* was used), created by analogy with pairs like *he/his* and possessive *'s* for nouns started to spread but consolidated in eModE. The nominative and accusative pronoun (*h*)*it* lost its initial sound through the process of *h*-dropping.

In the paradigms of demonstratives, relatives, adjectives, and nouns, there is a major reduction of forms and endings. Nouns retain a genitive singular ending *-es*; OE nominative and accusative *-as* simplified to *-es* in ME. Verbal conjugations were reduced, starting in the north. Interestingly, during the ME period some verbs could work as either strong or weak (*welk* and *walked* occur in the same text). There is a tendency towards increased regularity in the verbal paradigms. Baugh and Cable state that “[n]early a third of the strong verbs in Old English seem to have died out early in the Middle English period.[...] more than a hundred...were lost at the beginning of the Middle English period” (2002, p. 163).

In terms of syntax, Hejná and Walkden (2022) consider three main phenomena during ME: the loss of V2, the development of the modals as functional elements and the emergence of the *'s*-genitive. Certain constructions show the transition towards a more fixed SVO word order with concomitant grammaticalization processes. Particularly interesting are the impersonal constructions with accusative or dative topics without a subject, which already existed in OE but became more common in ME. These gradually developed into personal constructions with subjects in the nominative case or an overt subject. Overt subject pronouns became obligatory and so pleonastic or dummy subjects were introduced. The use of auxiliaries and embedding increased. Negative concord from OE was retained and the subjunctive mood started to be replaced by modal and infinitive constructions.

An important feature of ME is that the regional fragmentation advanced by the influence of French, and so the linguistic differences led to dialectal distinctions within the territory. Gradually, a new standard developed based around London speech, essentially an East Midlands dialect. The palatalization of velar stops was predominant in the southern regions, along with the voicing of initial fricatives and the change of height of long vowels. On the other hand, the fronting of fricative [ʃ] to [s] was a feature of the north. In all, the southern areas experienced more sound changes whilst morphological changes initiated predominantly in the north. Middle English dialects show the East Midlands aligning more with the northern features, and the West Midlands with the southern features. We reproduce the key differences in Table 2.4.

In summary, the transition to Middle English was characterized by two trends: (i) an increasing predominance of an analytic grammar with the reduction of morphological patterns and a rise of certain grammatical forms and (ii) dialect differentiation, especially as a consequence of sound changes and morphological changes operating differently in the north and the south. In terms of vocabulary, borrowing gained ground and word-formation remained a creative process, making use of a mixture of Germanic and Romance roots and affixes.

Table 2.4*Middle English dialect characteristics.*

	North	Midlands	South
Sound and spelling:			
	no change:	mixed:	change to:
palatalization of velars	[k]; [g], e.g. <i>frankis</i>	[k]; [g] or [ʧ]; [j]	[ʧ]; [j], e.g. <i>french</i>
long [a] > [ɔ]	[a], e.g. <i>ham</i>	mainly [ɔ]	[ɔ], e.g. <i>hom</i>
short <i>on-an</i>	<i>on</i> , e.g. <i>mon</i>	<i>on</i> and <i>an</i>	<i>an</i> , e.g. <i>man</i>
voicing of initial fricatives	[f]; [s]	[f]; [s]	[v]; [z], e.g. <i>vather</i>
<i>hw-/qu-</i> spelling	<i>qu-</i>	<i>hw-</i>	<i>hw-</i>
and unexpectedly:			
fronting of [ʃ] to [s]	[s], e.g. <i>sal</i>	[s] or [ʃ]	[ʃ], e.g. <i>shal</i>
Morphology and syntax:			
	change to:	mixed:	no change:
third plural pronoun	<i>they/them</i>	<i>they/hem</i>	<i>hi/hem</i>
feminine third NOM SG	<i>she</i>	<i>she/heo</i>	<i>heo</i>
verbal present tense	-(e)s	mixed	like Old English
present participle	-ande	-ende	-ing/inde
past participle	no prefix	y-/i-	y-/i-
infinitive marker	<i>to</i> and occasionally <i>at</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>
preposition <i>till</i>	yes	only later	only later

Note. From van Gelderen (2014, p. 141).

An interesting question that arises when studying the Middle English period is why English was not replaced by French. Consider the *Speculum Vitae* (*The Mirror of Life*), written late in the 14th century, and its PDE translation. **What conclusions can you draw about the social and linguistic landscape at the time it was written?**

In englysch tonge I schal you telle Yif ye so longe with me wil dwelle Ne latyn wil I speke ne waste Bot englich that men usen maste For that is youre kynde langage That ye have most here of usage That kan eche man understonde That is boren in engelonde For that langage is most schewed As wel among lered as lewed Latyn as I trowe can nane	I'll tell you in English If you'll stay with me long enough. I won't speak or waste Latin, But I'll speak English, that people use most, Since that is your native language That you have most in use here, Which each person can understand Who was born in England. For that language is most in evidence Both among the educated and the uneducated. I believe no-one knows Latin
--	--

Bot thoo that have it at scole tane Somme kan frensch and no latyn That used have court and dwelled therin And somme kan of latyn a party That kan frensch ful febelly And somme understanden englysch That kan nouthur latyn ne frensch Bot lered and lewed olde and yonge Alle understanden englysch tonge	Unless they've taken it at school. Some know French and not Latin Who have frequented the court and lived in it. And some know a bit of Latin Who know French very poorly. Some understand English Who know neither Latin nor French. But educated and uneducated, old and young, All understand the English tongue.
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Towards Modern and Present-day English

This section deals with features and changes during the Modern English period. As there are sufficient differences within the period, two different sections are presented, one for early Modern English (EME or eModE) and one for late Modern English (ModE or IModE).

Early Modern English

While some of the trends in grammar during the eModE period are further developments of the ME linguistic situation, perhaps the most significant process to take place during IME and eModE (and related to changes well into ModE too) was the Great Vowel Shift (GVS). This process bridges a gap between the language as we know it today and the language before the 1700s. As Minkova (2014) points out, the 'chain shift' implies a lock-step development of a whole system of related sounds. The GVS proceeded in stages spanning some 400 years and affected the whole system of Middle English long vowels.

The shift has been accounted for as a chain shift (see chapter 1). However, it is unclear whether it is a push chain or a drag chain. Van Gelderen (2014) claims that, since [e] and [o] change last, it is considered that the GVS must have started either with the highest vowels (therefore leading a drag chain) or the lowest ones (causing a push chain). It has also been proposed that certain vowel changes leading the shift had started as early as eME (Stenbrenden, 2016).

Hejrná and Walkden (2022) point out that there are also exceptions to the GVS (irregularities). These are seen, for instance, in words such as *great* and *break*, whose vowels were not raised, but merged with the one in *name*. There are also processes of shortening which had an impact on the words that underwent the GVS. For example, [ɛ] < [ɛ:] gave rise to our PDE pronunciation of *death* and *head*. This shows that only long monophthongs were affected. As a result, the interaction of shortenings and GVS produced irregular pronunciation pairs of derived words (e.g., *sane-sanity*).

The question of why the GVS happened in the first place remains unanswered, although there is sociolinguistic speculation that it was the result of dialect mixing (see chapter 4). The Black Death had caused many fatalities and so reduced the number of working people; there was a surge in mobility to the London area, which created a melting pot for dialect mixing and therefore the vowels started to shift (Millward and Hayes, 2018, p. 250).¹⁷

As for eModE consonants, the process of deletion advances, particularly with consonant clusters, as in the beginning of *knight*, *wrist* and *write*. As of late ME, the rhotic consonant started to disappear in certain environments and by 1770 it had disappeared after vowels in southern British English. The pronunciation of initial *h-* is lost in some dialects probably due to French influence, but at times reintroduced by means of hypercorrection.

The grammar of eModE is characterized by a further loss of inflections and an increase in the number of prepositions and auxiliaries as a result of grammaticalization. Van Gelderen claims that “[t]he loss of inflections is artificially stopped by prescriptive grammarians, editors, and schoolteachers in the centuries that follow. If that had not happened, we might have lost the third person *-s* ending and the case endings on personal (*I/me*, *she/her*, etc.) and relative pronouns (*who/whom*)” (2014, p. 170). The pronominal system of the period is particularly complex when it comes to the second person pronouns, where there is not only an issue of singular/plural marking, but also social relationships, much related to the field of historical pragmatics. Around 1600, *thou* and *you* were both used in similar situations, but *you* ended up being the choice for singular and plural (plural nominative *ye(e)* disappears). In all, *ye*, *thou*, *thee*, and the verbal ending *-est*, were lost between 1500 and 1800, though they are still present in some British dialects and areas of religious discourse (Hejné and Walkden, 2022). Other interesting innovations in the pronominal paradigm include *its* (neuter genitive) and the rise of reflexive pronouns.

As to verbal inflection, the second person singular *-st* suffix was gradually lost (as a result of the loss of *thou*). For the third person singular present tense marking *-th* was found, an affix that goes back to the OE period, and was still present at the beginning of eModE but declined dramatically up until 1700s. The shift *-th* > *-s* for third person singular present tense occurs in the course of the period, where *-s* was originally a northern form. The *-th* ending survives particularly in the forms for the verb *have* (*hath*) and *do* (*doth*). Hejné and Wlakden (2022) note that Shakespeare normally uses the *-s* variant but resorts to the *-th* variants with these two lexical verbs. Verbal agreement in eModE also features certain instability, which reflects the disappearance of many overt agreement marks.

Regarding grammar, Middle English had been innovative in the use of prepositions and determiners, which increased during this period. Early Modern English witnessed the rise of more grammatical words, primarily auxiliaries. The end of the Middle English period was also when auxiliaries started to be contracted. In questions and negative sentences, *do*-support started to become obligatory. The process was the result of a loss of syntactic movement which developed

¹⁷ Smith (1993) explores variations in the phonological systems of diverse social groups in London and claims that immigrants with slightly different phonological systems might have compensated for the production of certain vowel sounds while articulating a relatively raised /e:/.

from around 1400 to 1800 and the grammaticalization of the OE verb *dōn* meaning “make”. Several authors, including Hejná and Walkden (2022) and McWhorter (2009), claim that *do*-support in English is unique among the Germanic languages.¹⁸ The use of relatives shows variation; the main difference with PDE is that *which* could be found for a human antecedent and *who* for a non-human antecedent. In addition, *that* was used as a marker of a non-restrictive relative clause.

Although word order in Early Modern English is fairly similar to Modern English, the use of auxiliaries is not as elaborate. The expression of tense, mood, and aspect remains a significant difference between the eModE and IModE: the former showed a distinction between *be* and *have* as auxiliaries for the perfect tenses, a distinction almost totally lost after the 19th century. Besides, multiple negation became less frequent.

The language at the time also underwent significant changes in relation to attitudes towards English and a growing interest in standardization. The introduction of the printing press in 1476 had led to a certain degree of spelling conformity, but the need for more regularity was still debated in eModE. In the 16th century, grammars were not highly prescriptive, considering usage and arbitrary rules based on Latin grammar, but at times the focus was on correct spelling and appropriate vocabulary. However, a shift occurred in the 17th century, with editors beginning to correct grammar, marking a change in linguistic attitudes and practices.

In terms of word formation, the shift towards fewer inflections and higher analyticity means that lexical items could eventually become polyfunctional (conversion). In eModE, certain nouns started to be used as verbs, and prepositions as adjectives. This had not been the case before. After compounding and affixation, conversion became “the third most common way of expanding the vocabulary” only in the period of 1500–1700 (Millward and Hayes, 2018, p. 283).

The lexicon is characterized by a significant increase in vocabulary especially by means of borrowing. This led to the so-called “inkhorn debate” or “controversy”. The Renaissance made it necessary for the language to borrow many words from Latin and Greek for practical or stylistic purposes (although there is borrowing from other languages too). There were more borrowings entering the English lexicon in the second half of the 17th century than any other period in history (Durkin, 2014, pp. 299-301), where Latin stands out as the most significant contributor and Greek ranking third after French. Combined, these languages represent more than half of the lexical borrowings in the language. Most of these are nouns, but there are also verbs and adjectives, as well as *per*, *plus*, and *via* from Latin. After the 1530s criticism grew over the use of these terms, labelled “inkhorn” due to their frequent use in writing. The controversy revolved around whether these words enriched English or if, on the contrary, they contaminated it and took it away from its purest roots. Similarly, as the 16th and 17th centuries saw the introduction of many new affixes,

¹⁸ Following Warner (2005), Hejná and Walkden (2022) consider that sociolinguistic and stylistic factors also play a role in the change. Up until 1575, there was an increase in *do*-support, which then stabilized. Before 1575, texts with a complex vocabulary exhibited more *do*-support, but this reversed after 1600. The rate of *do*-support increased in texts with a simpler lexicon but showed a rise and fall after 1575 in texts with a complex lexicon. Interestingly, after 1600, older individuals exhibit fewer instances of *do*-support. Warner suggests that this is due to a stylistic preference against the use of *do* in higher register texts (possibly in relation to the rise of a standard language and new attitudes towards written norms).

there was also concern about using hybrid words which included roots and affixes from different languages.

In addition to the expansion of items in the lexicon, there were also numerous changes in the meaning of words. This is why reading eModE might be sometimes misleading. Consider the following eModE meanings and try to determine how they are different from the ones in PDE: *accident* 'anything that happens', *competitor* 'partner', *conceit* 'idea', *cousin* 'relative', *tonight* 'last night'.

Late Modern English

The 'modern' ModE period shows, of course, more similarities with the language spoken today. As several features of ModE are related to differences in regional varieties, we will go back to many ModE issues in chapter 3.

While there remained certain variants in formal/informal writing over the 19th century, spelling had become more stable and the effects of GVS were mostly completed across the board. Pronunciation became an area of further debate, with a focus on regional differences. Vowels tend to be more unstable, and the systems of different varieties evidence these changes ([a] > [æ] in words like *ask* in American English or [u] in Scottish English where other varieties had undergone the GVS). Unstressed vowels tended to become [ə], especially in the latter half of the 19th century.

As for grammar, some spoken and informal styles featured further loss of case markings; even objective pronouns were found in the function of subjects due to a decreased sense of case. The second person system lost the singular/plural distinction and many speakers of regional varieties of Modern English use phrases such as *you all* (*y'all*), *you guys*, *you lot*, to compensate for the lack of plural marking. There is also loss of *-ly* especially in degree adverbs.

Present tense verbs have become more regular in many varieties. Speakers are at times in doubt about verbal agreement, for instance with far antecedents in relatives. The subjunctive has been largely replaced by modal and infinitival complements. The tense-aspect-mood system is enriched as seen in the variety of meanings conveyed by the same form and by the productivity of certain aspectual combinations. The use of *be* and *-ing* for events in progress is introduced relatively late, with simple present still possible until 1800s. According to Hejná and Walkden (2022), these progressives began to rise in subordinate clauses in the first half of the 18th century, developing further in main clauses in the second half. At first, these were all in the active voice, the passive progressive gradually gained ground between the 18th and 20th centuries. The famous *I'm loving it* slogan closer to PDE is also interesting to consider. According to Anderwald (2017), the rise of the progressive with *love* in American English is due to a change of meaning, where love starts to mean "like" or "enjoy". However, this cannot be extended to a homogenous class of stative verbs.

As for auxiliaries, *ain't* is an interesting case, common in 18th century England as a contraction of *am not* (but not *have not*, as in PDE). It developed particularly in certain varieties and some use it more extensively than others; for instance, in African American English, *ain't* might also

replace *didn't*. Modals are found with new uses and contractions such as *gonna* start to spread. Auxiliary *have* is used as the auxiliary for the perfect aspect though *be* was still found with some motion verbs even in the 19th century. The use of the perfect construction for punctual past events (present before 1800s), starts to be replaced by the past tense.

Further grammaticalizations took place, for instance with the preposition *like* becoming a complementizer. Negative *not/-n't* might be reinforced with other negatives or the meaning is replaced by adverbs like *never*. As for word order, ModE features a canonical SVO with auxiliary-fronting in questions. Subjects are obligatory, except in the phenomenon known as “topic-drop”. Relatives also undergo change and a preference of speakers for *that* over *who/whom/which*, as expected in a more analytic language.

As for the lexicon, ModE shows a further expansion of word formation and borrowing. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed numerous innovations in fields such as science and technology, which led to an increase in vocabulary. Table 2.5 shows some very productive Modern English sources of vocabulary.

Table 2.5

Sources of vocabulary in ModE.

Loans: <i>wanderlust, kindergarden, jungle, pajamas/pyjamas, polo, pasta, broccoli, zucchini.</i>
New compounds or phrases: <i>skydiving, junkfood.</i>
New affixes: <i>postmodern, prewoman, proto-Nostratic, counterrevolution, pseudo-metarule.</i>
Shortenings (clippings, mergers, and inventions based on reanalysis and analogy): <i>decaf, motel, ad(vertisement), blog, boycott, quizling, popemobile, bookmobile, camcorder, talkathon, smog, netspeak, netglish (internet English), veggie-burger, block-buster, crime-buster, chocaholic, workaholic.</i>
Phrase words: <i>hit-and-run drivers, a nobody-cares attitude, a larger-than-life problem, a so-not-cool situation, so-out-of-the-loop.</i>
Conversion: <i>to impact (N to V), to fax (N to V), a show-off (V to N), play-off (N to V). to teach-in (N to V), the Ancients (Adj to N), to empty (Adj to V).</i>
Slang: <i>rip-off, crap, grody to the max (from the 1970s), depresso city.</i>
Acronyms and initialisms: <i>laser (light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation), SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle), ATM (Automatic Teller Machine), HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), LOL (Laughing out loud), FAQ (Frequently Asked Question).</i>
Retronym: <i>acoustic guitar, paper copy, landline phone, film camera.</i>
Onomatopoeia: <i>tweet, twitter, beep.</i>

Note. Adapted from van Gelderen (2014, p. 225).

Finally, Late Modern English is also characterized by increasing concerns about correctness, an associated rise of prescriptivism and by diverging developments in American and British English as well as new trends in regional varieties.

Conclusions

This chapter has covered some of the main aspects of the history of English following *time* as a structuring dimension. From the notions of internal and external history in chapter 1 and moving on from the theoretical perspectives in historical linguistics, we have presented the main facts and linguistic features that characterize the chronology of the language. Importantly, these processes are deeply related to the underlying notion of linguistic change and should also be extended to how English moved forward in terms of *space*, a dimension that will shape the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

Moving on to *Global* Englishes

As seen in chapter 2, the Modern English period was characterized by the spread of English around the world, which led to the emergence of a number of regional varieties. While dissimilar in many respects, all these varieties (sometimes known as “dialects”)¹⁹ are considered “English”; according to van Gelderen (2014, p. 284): “[a]ll Englishes display the analytic character that English has been moving towards: an abundance of grammatical words (auxiliaries and prepositions) and reliance on word order. Much of the vocabulary of these varieties is similar as well”. This chapter goes back to the specifics of the spread of English and the debates which have arisen as a result of its expansion around the world.

The Spread of English

Like the other topics approached in this book, the spread of English can be analyzed from a viewpoint that considers both the external and the internal histories. This section deals with the historical facts that led to the dispersal of the language, namely the diasporas of English speakers from the British Isles, and then discusses several issues that revolve around the English scenario at present.

Diasporas

The spread of English can be accounted for in terms of the two diasporas described by Jenkins (2015). The first diaspora involved the migration of around 25,000 people from England, Scotland and Ireland to North America, Australia and New Zealand. Although Cabot had arrived in Newfoundland (present-day Canada) in 1497, it was not until the beginnings of the 17th century that English speakers settled permanently in Jamestown (in present-day Virginia, USA). These speakers, who established themselves in different territories around the world, carried with them their own varieties of English from the isles and slowly paved the way for the emergence of newer regional Englishes which developed their own features (new Englishes).

On the other hand, the second diaspora involved the colonization of Asia and Africa and led to the development of several varieties which Jenkins labels as ‘New Englishes’. The British East India Company, which had been established in 1600, played a key role in holding a trade monopoly with Asian territories. In the 1670s, West Africa became a hub for commerce and slave

¹⁹ We follow Hejné and Walkden (2022) in that the term dialect “may be associated with negative connotations in lay use” (p. 37), particularly as of the Modern English period, and we will resort to the term (regional) variety instead.

trading. During the following centuries, the British Empire further expanded its influence, colonizing Southeast Asia (including Burma, Malaysia, and Singapore) in the 1800s, East Africa after 1880, and South Africa by 1902. These dispersals took place at different points over the 18th and 19th centuries and are different from the first diaspora in terms of the motivations for the spread and its consequences, from a political, cultural and linguistic standpoint.

Various factors, including forced migrations due to religious persecutions, expectations about new beginnings and trade, among others, contributed to the dissemination of English. After World War II, politically speaking, decolonization took place in many regions with the independence of the Philippines (1946), India and Pakistan (1947), Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (1948), Nigeria (1960), and Kenya (1963). However, many of these newly independent countries kept English as an official or extensively used language, at times “because of the multitude of languages spoken and the unifying force of English” (van Gelderen, 2014, p. 252).

Labels for English

The spread of English has prompted several debates. One debate revolves around the different ‘names’ for the Englishes spoken, written, acquired or learned around the world. The criteria behind some of these labels are varied, but often refer to how the language is acquired or learned and how it is used in the territory, i.e., whether it plays certain official institutionalized roles or not. The following labels can be found in the literature:

- **ENL: English as a Native Language** (sometimes also referred to as English as a mother tongue), that is, English acquired as a first language during the acquisition period.
- **ESL: English as a Second Language**, mostly used to refer to the language spoken in territories which were once colonized and retain the language officially in certain domains or for communication between different groups.
- **EFL: English as a Foreign Language**, for territories where English serves little or no purpose, but whose speakers have historically used the language to communicate, especially with native speakers. EFL is a label often resorted to when English is taught and learned but not spoken natively by major groups. Being the ‘largest’ label, EFL poses challenges which are specific to each territory. Jenkins (2015) mentions countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and Norway, where the English language, though still foreign (EFL), is gradually acquiring intranational purposes and becoming the medium of instruction, particularly in higher education.

The cultural spread of English because of the rise of the United States of America as an economic power after World War II amid globalization has made it difficult to distinguish some of

these labels. Particularly, ESL and EFL pose challenges for classification. As van Gelderen (2014) points out, ESL is used when the language is official, but also when a native speaker of another language is learning it in a territory where it is spoken as a native language or has a political or historical presence.

The ENL-ESL-EFL classification faces several difficulties. Jenkins (2015), based on McArthur (1998, pp. 43-46) mentions the following:

- There is no single homogeneous ENL variety; rather, English as a mother tongue varies from one territory to another.
- Languages based on English resulting from contact (pidgins and creoles) do not fit into these categories.
- There have always been large groups of native speakers living in certain ESL territories and also large numbers of ESL speakers living in ENL settings.
- The classification does not consider that many speakers are multilingual.
- The core of the classification is between native speakers and non-native speakers of English.

According to Jenkins (2015), the labels have become fuzzy and so it is becoming ever more difficult to classify speakers as belonging to one of the three. If anything, distinctions have become harder in present-day multicultural and multilingual societies, which is why the term ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is sometimes used. Two other labels which are worth mentioning include ELF (English as a Lingua Franca), the name found for English used in intercultural communication, especially by speakers who do not share any languages, and EIL (English as an International Language). Kirkpatrick defines a *lingua franca* as a “common language used by people of different language backgrounds to communicate with each other” (2007, p. 7) either within the territory or internationally.

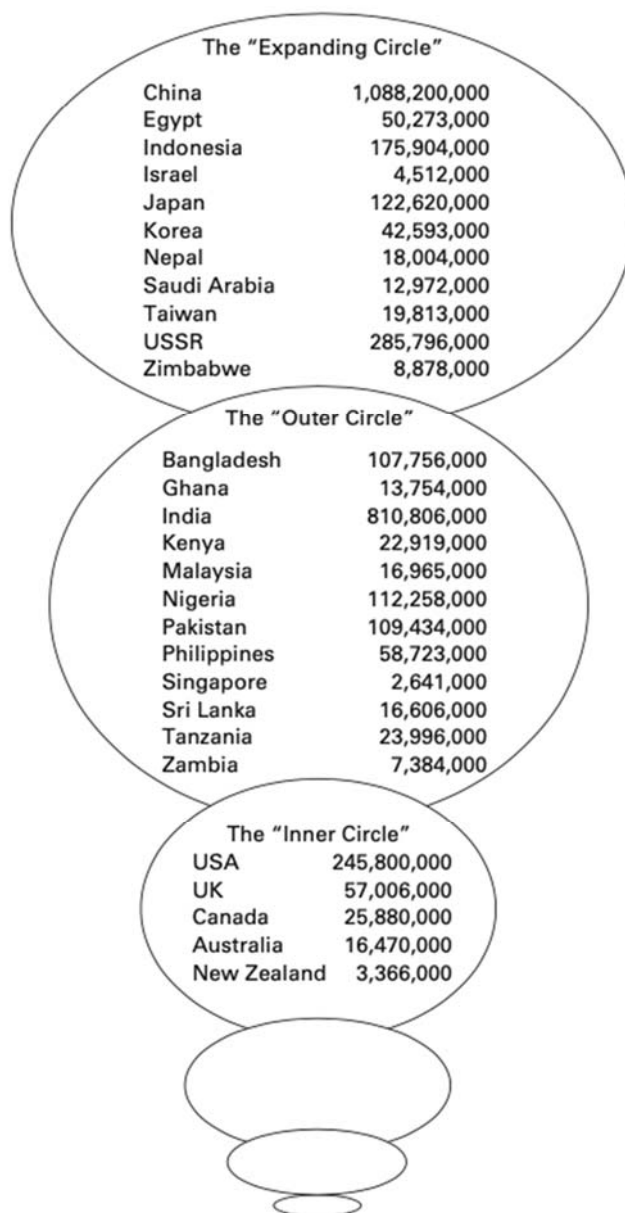
Jenkins (2015) also highlights another interesting discussion related to the ENL-ESL-EFL classification. The division is often based on the *speakers* rather than the *uses* of the language: “the focus on *users* of English and the linguistic features that identify them as members of specific nation states, whether ENL, ESL, or EFL, has resulted in a neglect of the *uses* of English” (Jenkins, 2015, p. 12). This means that speakers of world Englishes (irrespective of the more traditional classification) often employ a number of shared elements for communication. These linguistic practices among diverse English-speaking communities worldwide are the result of globalization, extended contextual usage, genre-related factors and the significance of intercultural communication.

Kachru's Model for the Spread of English

Kachru (1985) proposes a model based on a historical and geopolitical classification of territories where English is used. The model classifies territories according to three circles following these criteria: (i) the types of spread (diasporas), (ii) the patterns of acquisition (is English acquired as a native language by most of the population?), and (iii) the functional allocation of English in cultural contexts. The result of the classification is developed in Kachru (1992) and reproduced in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Kachru's three-circle model of World Englishes (from Kachru, 1992, p. 356).



The Inner circle includes regions where English is an official and native language, acquired (ENL) and used in the home (UK, Ireland, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). Leaving the UK aside, these territories were explored and settled by speakers that spread in the first diaspora. The English spoken in these territories is said to be “norm-providing”, meaning that they set the norm and conventions of what is right and expected linguistically.

The Outer circle consists of territories where English is part of the government or school system (it plays certain functional or official role in society); some speakers acquire it alongside another first language. This circle includes India, Singapore, and 50 other regions. They are the ones often related to the second diaspora and where English is ESL. These Englishes are said to be “norm-developing” as these varieties of English have become institutionalized and are developing their own standards.

The Expanding circle covers countries and regions where there is no history of colonization and English has no official status, but it is sometimes used as a foreign language (EFL) for communication with other speakers from other countries. The English spoken in these territories is “norm-dependent”, which means that these varieties are regarded as *performance* varieties which depend or are modelled on the standards set by speakers from the Inner or Outer circles.

As van Gelderen (2014) and Jenkins (2015) put it, while Kachru’s model was widely influential in the 1980s, it has received criticism, especially because it does not reflect a complex scenario. We summarize some of the arguments against his proposal below:

- The classification oversimplifies the complexity of English varieties by dividing them into three broad circles.
- The model does not address the sociolinguistic diversity within each circle as it tends to homogenize the features and usage patterns of diverse communities within the same circle, neglecting inner variations.
- It reflects power imbalance by placing native English speakers in the Inner Circle, which might reinforce linguistic hierarchies and contribute to the marginalization of other Englishes.
- The model does not fully account for the dynamics of English in today’s globalized world beyond the ENL-ESL-EFL divide. We have mentioned the case of countries such as Norway and the Netherlands, where English has taken on the role of an official language in specific areas, like business, advertising, and education.
- Kachru’s model tends to focus more thoroughly on the Inner and Outer Circles, neglecting the linguistic contributions and developments in English varieties within the Expanding Circle.
- The model does not critically consider the influence of other languages in the development of Outer and Expanding-circle varieties.

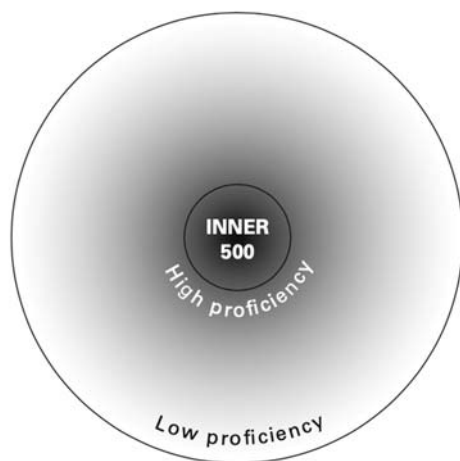
It is important to note that despite such criticism, Kachru's model remains influential in helping understand certain key patterns of the spread of English and is widely used for discussions on the topic.

Beyond the Native/non-Native Divide

The linguistic dynamics which go beyond Kachru's classification are noted by Graddol, who has proposed an alternative model (Figure 3.2), where there is an "inner" circle made up of around 500 million speakers, who can be classified as highly proficient, with speakers of lower proficiencies gradually departing from the core.

Figure 3.2

Graddol's representation of the inner circle based on speakers' proficiency.



Note. Taken from Graddol (2006, p. 110).

This new inner circle should be conceived of as a core of highly proficient speakers of English who have therefore acquired *functional nativeness*, regardless of how they have acquired, learned or generally use the language. This perspective underscores the dynamic nature of acquiring and learning a language beyond the native vs. non-native divide. In other words, "there is an increasing need to distinguish between proficiencies in English rather than a speaker's bilingual status" (Graddol, 2006, p. 110).

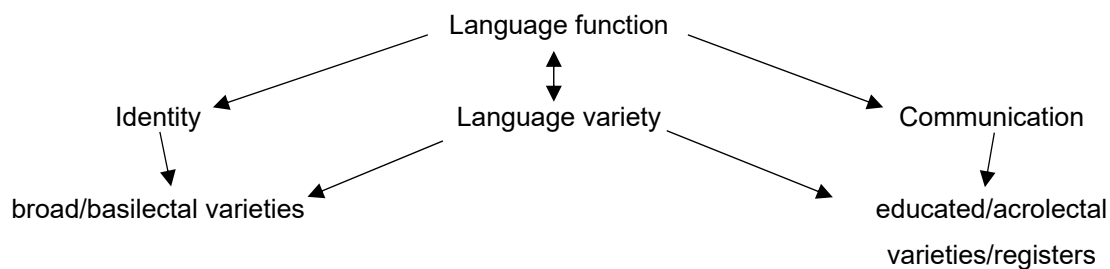
Along the same lines, Kirkpatrick (2007) discusses world Englishes from a theoretical framework which departs from the traditional distinction between native vs. nativized varieties and lingua franca Englishes. The concept of a nativized variety is often used to refer to regional varieties which developed in places where English was not originally spoken by the population, that is, speakers who experienced contact situations with native English speakers. Kirkpatrick

challenges the native/nativized distinction: as we saw in chapter 2, other languages were spoken on the British Isles before the arrival of what would become English, and the so-called “native” varieties in America and Australia arose in contact with other local languages just like some of the New Englishes discussed by Jenkins. The criteria behind the native/nativized classification are built on aspects such as time and influence, i.e., native varieties have been around for a long time, and they have influenced “newer” varieties. Behind this distinction, there are, however, other criteria based on prejudice: native varieties are often linked to specific racial and cultural groups, and they might be perceived as superior, purer or proper. Kirkpatrick therefore suggests that the difference between varieties can be accounted for if one is to classify all of them as nativized, where a nativized variety is one that “has been influenced by the local cultures and languages of the people who have developed the particular variety” (2007, p. 7).

In addition, Kirkpatrick proposes an analysis of varieties in connection with three main functions of language: communication, identity, and culture. He argues that these functions might be in conflict or competition; for instance, in certain contexts the communicative function may be accompanied by the diminishing of the identity function. This leads to his proposal of an “identity-communication continuum” (Figure 3.3), which attempts to link identity and communication in the light of the different varieties of English around the world. In this view, communication is better served by certain varieties, while others are better suited as expressions of identity. At one end of the continuum, the “communication function” is reinforced in contexts where being intelligible and getting your meaning across is key.

Figure 3.3

Kirkpatrick’s identity-communication continuum.



Note. Taken from Kirkpatrick (2007, p.12).

According to Kirkpatrick, “[m]ore standard or educated varieties are likely to be better suited for communication” (2007, p. 11). The identity end of the continuum is more evident in communicative situations, usually between fewer people, who share close social distance, such as family groups, friends or within the same community. The continuum can be helpful to understand how different varieties are used: a new English such as Australian English can be

classified further according to this continuum, with a broad variety serving identity purposes, a more educated one for communication, and a range of functions in the middle.

When dealing with the models of world Englishes, Kirkpatrick also considers the evolutionary approaches which posit cycles to account for how varieties of English arise and grow, that is, developmental stages. Schneider (2003) proposes the following five phases which aim at explaining the development of Englishes around the world: the *foundation* phase (English starts to be used in a territory), the *exonormative* stabilization (modelling on the basis of the contact language), the *nativization* (a new identity is established considering the variety spoken by the settlers and the language spoken by the locals), the *endonormative* stabilization (the new variety becomes gradually accepted and starts to be used in several domains) and the *differentiation* stage, where the new variety has fully emerged in its own right as a reflection of local identity and culture.

The development of Englishes around the world can also be addressed from the perspective developed by Widdowson (1997, 2003), who makes a distinction between the *spread* of English and the *distribution* of English, going beyond the native/non-native distinction. While the spread implies adaptation and non-conformity, distribution implies adoption and conformity. This establishes a new perspective on global varieties. Therefore, “New Englishes” result from spread and adaptation of the language within local linguistic and cultural elements. On the other hand, new Englishes have “adopted the language”, which involves the acceptance and use of English within specific frameworks. According to Widdowson (1997), the regional varieties within England can be seen as variants or actualizations of *one* language, while those around the world have appeared in different scenarios, where English has played a role for communicative needs.

Issues around the Standard(s)

Few topics in present-day debates about language are as heated and controversial as the idea of a “correct” or “standard” language. Such “standard language ideology” is defined by Lippi-Green as “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class” (2012, p. 67).

Technically speaking, a standard language is the variety of a language that is believed to be the norm, seen as the prestigious and educated one, usually spoken by minorities in positions of power, and the yardstick to measure and compare other varieties. However, “Standard English” as a variety is by no means easy to define and describe. Jenkins (2015) argues that standard English is not strongly related to an accent (although sometimes people associate it with RP, i.e., Received Pronunciation), but rather based on grammar and vocabulary promoted by the education system and often related to a certain social class. Similarly, according to Trudgill (1999), standard English is not a language, accent, style, register or a set of prescriptive rules,

but a “social” dialect which has greater prestige and does not form part of a geographical continuum.

What is, then, a *non-standard* variety of English? Before tackling the question, one must bear in mind that not any variety which simply “looks” or “sounds” different from those which are most well-known (such as British English or American English) can be simply labelled as non-standard. Applying the “non-standard” label underscores several linguistic, social, and geopolitical decisions and should not be done lightly. Jenkins (2015) acknowledges that it is not unusual to lump all the regional varieties of English, as well as the New Englishes of the Outer Circle, as non-standard. These Englishes, whether in their standardized or non-standardized forms, are often perceived similarly to non-standard varieties within the Inner circle just because they depart from widespread standard versions. Despite having undergone standardization processes and being codified in grammars and dictionaries, certain Outer Circle Englishes, such as Singapore English or Indian English, are still considered by many (at times, even their own speakers) as non-standard.

On the flip side of the standard language coin are the language *standards*. Standards in the plural are the properties and features which collectively make up the norm of a given regional variety. Members of a language community are encouraged to stick to these standards (especially throughout their education). Of course, given the dynamic nature of language, these standards are susceptible to change over time. However, during any ongoing change, proponents of the standard language ideology tend to view such changes as deviations (i.e., errors).

Haugen (1966) proposes a series of stages or overlapping subprocesses which a language goes through in the standardization process. These are selection, codification, elaboration and acceptance. In his view, the idea of a standard language is strongly related to historical developments and the notion of a unified nation:

The invention of printing, the rise of industry, and the spread of popular education have brought into being the modern nation-state, which extends some of the loyalties of the family and the neighborhood or the clan to the whole state. Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication ... but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as underdeveloped. (Haugen, 1966, p. 927).

In the case of the history of English (and many other languages), the period covered between the 16th and the 18th centuries witnessed the linguistic, cultural and political forces to get standardization going. Hejné and Walkden (2022) take up Haugen’s stages and propose the dates given in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4

Standardization processes with dates for English.

	form	function
society	Selection of norms c. 1400–1600	Acceptance by community c. 1500–now
language	Codification of forms c. 1600–1800	Elaboration of functions c. 1500–1800

Note. Taken from Hejná and Walkden (2022, p. 123, based on Haugen, 1966, p. 933).

Selection is related to the one variety which is chosen to become the standard; in the case of English, the selection of the variety spoken around London. The importance of printing presses cannot be underestimated: they were based in London, and the city was the political and economic center of England. The selection of the London dialect, however, did not happen consciously. As Hejná and Walkden put it, “selection seems to have operated opportunistically, with individual linguistic features finding their origin in Northern, Southern and Midlands varieties, Chancery spelling norms, literary texts, the spoken and written usage of merchants, and beyond. Standard English is a mongrel, not a purebred” (2022, p. 124).

Elaboration involves the extension of a variety to different domains and practices, especially those that had been dominated by other languages before (law, science, religion, politics, literature), reaching maximal variation in function. These new functions require new lexical items, which are to be coined by means of borrowing or word-formation processes. In the history of English, the 1600s saw a widespread use of English for functions which theretofore had been performed by Latin; the emergence of the Bible in English and the increasing number of texts from the sciences constitute groundbreaking moments for standardization.

Codification controls the level of variation elaborated upon language use. It is during the eModE period that there are increasing, deliberate efforts to develop materials aimed at describing and imposing certain usage, which includes the emergence of grammars, dictionaries, and pronunciation books. Codification is related to the rise of academies and institutions too. While this was not achieved in English, there were a few proposals. Probably the most famous one is that by Jonathan Swift, who in 1712 wrote an essay entitled *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*. Swift calls for an ascertaining or standardization of the English language, corrupted by change, and for the establishment of a linguistic academy to regulate the language, addressing issues such as spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The

proposal attests a conscious worry at the time to relate language to a growing sense of a unified nation. The following quote is part of Swift's essay, addressing the Earl of Oxford:

My lord, I do here, in the name of all the learned and Polite Persons of the Nation, complain to Your lordship as First Minister, that our language is extremely imperfect; that its daily improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions; that the Pretenders to polish and refine it have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and that in many instances it offends against every Part of Grammar. (Carter, 2002, p. 9)

Swift's proposal had at first the support from Queen Anne but was ultimately unsuccessful. Interestingly, codification might take different paths even within a single language. In the case of English, this led to differences in Britain and North America, with Noah Webster at the forefront of American lexicography and the spelling reform.

Acceptance is the last stage in the standardization process. Embracing a standard variety involves the gradual shift of a community towards such form of the language. The dynamics under the acceptance process are complex, with standard-language users gaining prestige and power, and paving the way for group identity; and those non-standard-language users being left behind sociopolitical opportunities and facing marginalization.

Based on Haugen, Milroy and Milroy (1985) highlight that the stages may overlap and expand the model to include the notion of *prescriptivism*. Note that the stage of selection was already discussed in the previous chapters, with the emergence of West Saxon as the OE dominant variety for literature and culture. However, the Norman Conquest had interrupted the elaboration of this variety, and it was not until the 1400s that a London-based variety began to acquire the prestige of a selected standard. Afterwards, elaboration largely overlapped with codification (as seen in Fig. 3.4) and, although prescriptivism intensified especially during the 18th century, acceptance and discussion on norms have been part of the debate well into the present-day scenario.

The role of prescriptivism in the standardization process cannot be underrated. However, the idea of prescription is not always easy to grasp. Of course, it is related to speakers and materials that aim to tell users how they should speak or write (around notions such as “correct” and “appropriate”, among others). However, as Curzan points out, “the issue gets fuzzier from there, in terms of exactly what form of the language is being set up as good or correct, in relation to which other uses of language can be deemed bad or incorrect. Is it standard usage? Formal usage? “Educated” usage? Older usage? Socially acceptable usage? The answer is yes. It is all of these, depending on which strand of prescriptivism is in play” (2014, p. 24). Crystal's definition of prescriptivism notes that the variety favored by those who impose it “is usually a version of the ‘standard’ written language, especially as encountered in literature, or in the formal spoken language which most closely reflects this style” (1997, p. 2). Curzan goes on to argue that there are four categories to be considered within prescriptivism:

- **Standardizing prescriptivism**, which aims to promote and enforce standardization.
- **Stylistic prescriptivism**, which aims to differentiate style practices within standard usage.
- **Restorative prescriptivism**, which aims to restore older (often obsolete) forms believed to be better.
- **Politically responsive prescriptivism**, which aims to reinforce inclusive, nondiscriminatory, politically correct usage.

As can be seen, different kinds of prescriptivism develop upon the objectives behind norms and ideologies. For instance, a pronunciation rule might focus on standardizing or stylistic distinctions, while a rule concerning lexical choices or semantics may seek the restoration of older forms. Over time the emphasis of prescriptive efforts may change too. In the history of English, standardization and the rise of prescriptivism have grown about the emergence of native-English literate cultures, with a focus largely placed on stylistic alternatives.

Linguistic Features around *Global* Englishes

Let us move on to linguistic diversity in global Englishes. It is important to bear in mind that approaching salient features in different varieties, rather than looking at each variety, can teach us a lot about patterns and trends. Several books on the history of English refer to the spread of the language and the situation worldwide, but most of these materials focus on particular case studies, that is, pick up specific varieties for illustration. In contrast, van Gelderen's (2014) take on the spread of the language provides an account of variation across Englishes organized by linguistic features rather than by region. This approach manages to draw out similarities between a diverse number of varieties and will be the core material for the following sections, which outline a few phonological, grammatical and lexical variants.²⁰ We refer the reader to her chapter for specific details and examples taken from different varieties.

Phonology

Phonological variation might take place at any level of analysis: articulation, manner, voicing, stress, length. Based on Wells (1982), Bauer (2002) analyzes pronunciation differences according to the following criteria:

²⁰ In terms of spelling, most varieties of Modern and Present-day English exhibit minor differences, though at times varying spelling forms can be found due to phonological differences. Some of the most noticeable changes within the Inner circle are related to the reform promoted by Webster in America (*color* for *colour*, or *center* for *centre*).

- **Phonetic realization**, which has to do with the actual production of sounds. For instance, different inner circle varieties display differences of quality in the pronunciation of the vowel /ɪ/.
- **Phonotactic distribution**, which helps us distinguish rhotic and non-rhotic accents. Distribution also involves certain phonetic environments in which words might be homophonous in one variety but distinguished in another (consider *Mary*, *marry* and *merry* in General American).
- **Phonemic systems**, related to the minimum number of phonemes that can be described for a variety, i.e., the set of symbols that can be used to transcribe and characterize the abstract system of sounds of the variety. The contrast between /ot/ with a middle vowel [ɒ] and /ot/ with [ɑ:] in certain varieties is the result of differences in the array of vowels.
- **Lexical distribution**, more isolated differences noticeable in certain words, as in the pronunciation of *tomato* in RP and in General American.

In terms of phonological features, vowels are more unstable than consonants and tend to vary and change more from one variety to another (and also diachronically). Some differences in vowels are restricted in terms of their lexical distribution, such as *tomato*, mentioned before, *ate*, *been* or *vase*, while others have to do with particular realizations or phonemic systems.

In terms of consonants, there are also variations, even among the ENL varieties. Bauer (2002) studies the Englishes spoken in RP, General American (GA), Canadian (CDN), Australian (Aus), New Zealand (NZ), and South Africa (SA), and lists the differences given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Consonant variants In RP, GA, CDN, Aus, NZ and SA.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Pronunciation of the marked consonant(s) in different varieties</i>					
	<i>RP</i>	<i>GA</i>	<i>CDN</i>	<i>Aus</i>	<i>NZ</i>	<i>SA</i>
<u>assume</u>	sj	s	s ~ sj	sj ~ ʃ	ʃ ~ sj ~ s	sj
<u>figure</u>	g	gʃ	gʃ ~ g	g	g	g
<u>herb</u>	h	Ø	h ~ Ø	h	h	h
<u>nephew</u>	f ~ v	f	f	f ~ v	f	f ~ v
<u>quarter</u>	kw	kw	kw ~ k	kw	k ~ kw	kw
<u>schedule</u>	ʃ	sk	sk ~ ʃ	ʃ ~ sk	sk ~ ʃ	ʃ
<u>thither</u>	ð	ð ~ θ	ð	ð	θ ~ ð	ð
<u>with</u>	ð	ð ~ θ	θ ~ ð	ð ~ θ	θ	ð

Note. Taken from Bauer (2002, p. 82).

Cross-linguistically, consonant clusters are not so common. In the history of English, the simplification of clusters is seen in the deletion of certain sounds, as at the beginning of *hlaf* (> *loaf*, meaning 'bread') and *knee*. Synchronically, varieties might also feature the simplification of consonant clusters or the epenthesis of a vowel.

In addition, one must bear in mind that some sounds might be less frequent, i.e., more marked. As van Gelderen puts it, "marked sounds in varieties of British and American English correspond to unmarked ones in other varieties and viceversa" (2014, p. 258). Certain marked consonants appear in some other regional varieties but might be unusual to speakers of British or American English, such as the velar fricative [x] found in South African, Yiddish English and Scottish English, or the rolling [r] which occurs in the English spoken in Scotland and New Zealand.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Grammatical variation in global varieties of English is frequently linked to language contact and shaped by innovation across generations, much like what occurs in other levels of linguistic analysis (e.g., phonology, semantics, pragmatics). Differences between Englishes can be found in morphology, especially in the pronominal system and in verbal agreement, and in syntax: in word order, negation, the use of functional categories, prepositions, auxiliaries, ellipsis. As van Gelderen (2014) claims, many of the differences around grammatical forms in global Englishes reveal analytic tendencies.

In terms of personal pronouns, some Englishes display a simplified number of forms, with only one for both nominative and objective. However, some also feature divergence of forms in the system of the second person: since *you* has come to express singular and plural second person, speakers of different varieties might exploit other syntactic, morphological or even historical resources to mark number (*ya'll*, *youse*, *you guys*, *thou* vs *you*). For details on the rise of *ya'll* and the factors behind it, we refer the reader to Crystal (2004).

Another paradigmatic system which illustrates reduction in different varieties is that of verbal affixes for markings of tense, aspect, mood or subject agreement. Englishes around the world might feature forms which evidence the total elimination of verbal endings for present tense, such as *-(e)s* for 3rd person singular present tense, or different combinations (such as *we goes*, *they goes*). Again, this phenomenon is also a reflection of older stages of the language when there was more variation and instability in certain systems. The patterns for auxiliaries can also follow this trend (*she don't*).

As for nouns, some grammatical differences in the Englishes around the world are related to the number feature. A well-known phenomenon has to do with collective nouns (*police*, *team*, *government*), which can be perceived as either plural or singular, and so license different verbal forms. In addition, uncountable mass nouns might be used as countable nouns in certain varieties or under certain circumstances when the reference is reanalyzed as a discrete entity.

Syntactic variation in global Englishes takes place in phenomena such as word order, for instance in lack of inversion with *wh*-questions. Another syntactic feature of some varieties is pronoun doubling (as in *The people who I talked to them are here*) and subject/object-drop (*Cannot remember now*) as described in van Gelderen (2014, p. 262). Modals can range over different values and develop several grammatical functions, a trend that started in eModE as seen in the previous chapters. Combinations to mark aspectual meanings might also vary; in most varieties, the progressive periphrasis *be -ing* is used only with activity verbs (not verbs expressing a state), but there is variation in its use; perfect *have* can be found for absolute time reference, a feature also found diachronically. Negatives might vary in the possibility of multiple negation or not, but also in the use of negative polarity items (such as *anymore*) used in affirmative polarity contexts with certain semantic changes. The scope of the negation might also show peculiarities, as in *All the letters didn't arrive*, meaning *None of the letters arrived*.

To conclude this section, a note on the lexicon. The diversity of vocabulary in different English varieties comes from various sources, including contact with indigenous languages, later contact with the language of immigrants, distinct lexical choices, and historical differences which date back to 17th-century English. As mentioned before, dictionaries played a crucial role in documenting and standardizing the lexicon, contributing to the prevention of further divergence. Indigenous languages have had an influence on different aspects, such as placenames in Australia and the United States, and names for autochthonous flora and fauna. Colonialism in the 19th century introduced numerous words, now mainstream in English. Later contact with immigrant languages and colonial interactions contributed to lexical divergence, with American English adopting words from African and European languages. In addition, van Gelderen (2014) explains that some varieties might adopt different words without apparent reasons, such as *sidewalk* and *pavement* in American and British English, respectively.

Code-switching

Another phenomenon related to grammar and vocabulary in Englishes around the world is code-switching. Although the term can be used for a number of linguistic shifts, Bullock and Toribio (2009) distinguish between *style shifting*, which is found in monolinguals who are capable of navigating registers, styles and dialects (for example, from formal to informal settings and vice versa), and *code-switching* proper, which comprises a range of contact phenomena between two languages and is usually exploited by bilinguals.

Code-switching might be exploited by means of the insertion of words and phrases or by the alternation from one language to another in larger stretches of discourse. The reasons behind switching codes are diverse. Bullock and Toribio (2009) mention the following: filling linguistic gaps, expressing ethnic identity, and achieving discursive aims. Code-switching is often observed in multilingual communities where one of the languages is a second or foreign language and speakers resort to their native languages due to cultural or identity issues. Importantly, the

process is not the random mixture of two languages and does not entail a breakdown in communication or a struggle in proficiency, but rather the skillful manipulation of two systems for communicative purposes.

Muysken (2000) analyzes code-switching patterns according to the strategies involved. He notes that code-switching is frequent when the two languages share certain surface structures (for example, English and Spanish). However, this does not mean that any pattern will become productive, attested or accepted: **sometimes yo will empezar a oración in inglés*.

The process of code-switching is frequent in certain Englishes around the world, particularly where there is contact with other languages. However, code-switching must be distinguished from other types of phenomena, namely *borrowing*, where there is integration of a lexeme into the array of lexical items of a language, *loan* translations and *calques*, which involve the introduction of foreign patterns or meanings with the retention of native-language morphemes, and *mixed languages* (such as Media Lengua, spoken in Ecuador, which features Quechua morphosyntax combined with Spanish lexical stems and is not intelligible to Quechuan and Spanish monolinguals). Code-switching should also be distinguished from *diglossia*, which describes a community of speakers where different languages or varieties have become socially and functionally differentiated. Consequently, each language is linked to a function, though the selection is not free, but rather determined by norms dependent on the context. In contrast, code-switching is understood as an individual (“idiolectal”) phenomenon.

Consequences of the Spread and Issues around Global Englishes

There are two negative consequences related to the spread of English: marginalization and the loss of linguistic diversity. One of the fundamental issues surrounding English is the marginalization of non-native English speakers and their linguistic resources. The dominance of native English speakers in setting linguistic norms often marginalizes diverse English-speaking communities which depart from the “norms” following in these ENL scenarios. Consequently, New Englishes are often stigmatized as deviations from an ideal standard. Marginalization is also related to the number of speakers that have access to English in order to reach levels of proficiency. Each territory displays inherent differences: in Nigeria and Kenya less than 10% of the population speaks English; in India around 33% of the population does. If English has indeed become a global language, the focus should be not on the native/non-native division, which perpetuates biases such as the standard language ideology mentioned earlier, but rather on proficiency and communication.

As for the loss of linguistic diversity, this is related to the power of English over other languages, sometimes spoken by minorities and often reduced to certain primary functions (for communication with friends and family, for instance). An example of this is seen in North America with native languages, largely endangered. However, the situation is also complex in countries

where the local language is not a minority language, but where English is becoming the main medium of communication for business and education, as in some European countries. This scenario might eventually lead to a state of diglossia, with a native language being used at home, and English becoming the dominant language in certain domains of public life. While there are some conscious efforts to revitalize languages which are in danger of dying out,²¹ which includes a stronger presence of some languages on the Internet and loads of linguistic work done on documentation, it is a task that must be extensive and continuous to avoid the loss of those languages.

The spread of English has also raised issues in connection with language itself. One such issue is that of *ownership of the language*. The question of ownership revolves around who gets to define the rules and norms of English. Historically, British and American influences (and to some lesser extent, those of other ENL varieties) have been perceived as the yardsticks of what “proper” English means. This creates a biased ideology which disregards the linguistic diversity within the English-speaking world as forms that depart from the ones used by the “norm-providers”. They are often relegated to lower status or not even considered as part of the anglophone world. Certainly, the role of dictionaries in the standardization process is also related to the idea that some are the proper users (“owners”) of the language. Ownership of language is linked to the notion of *correctness*. The imposition of a singular standard of correctness can exclude those who deviate from it, leading to limiting opportunities or fostering exclusionary or self-deprecating attitudes. Correctness, therefore, becomes a tool through which power dynamics might be reinforced, favoring certain standards while ignoring others.

Ultimately, these issues boil down to the notion of power. The complex relationship between language and power (explored in more detail in chapter 4) is entrenched in probably all the sociolinguistics issues around global Englishes. Power must be tackled from two fronts: the power of the language as a global dominant one, and the power of the speakers who impose certain usage. The ability to communicate in English is often linked to access to opportunities, education, and employment, creating a linguistic divide that reinforces already-existing hierarchies, with those who are proficient in the standard forms of English holding a privileged position.

Last but not least, these issues have an impact on identity and on speakers’ perceptions. For non-native English speakers, the adoption of English may be a necessity for economic and social mobility, but it can also lead to a sense of cultural dislocation. The pressure to conform to certain standard forms of English can bleach linguistic and cultural identities, creating a tension between assimilation and the need of communication, on the one hand, and preservation of identity and heritage values, on the other. Addressing these issues requires a recognition of linguistic, historical and geopolitical diversity. The following section presents three cases which illustrate how these aspects can be analyzed.

²¹ Schendl (2001) outlines two main scenarios leading to language death. On the one hand, a language dies out if its speakers also die. On the other hand, more frequently, language death can occur through intensive language contact, where speakers gradually abandon their own language. This often follows an extended period of bilingualism, during which the dying language undergoes a reduction in social functions, decreased grammatical and lexical usage.

Case studies

The features and issues around world Englishes can be studied by looking at sample texts written in different varieties and by approaching texts that discuss the status of a variety and attitudes towards it.

Listen Mr. Oxford Don

Read the following poem, “Listen Mr. Oxford Don”, by John Agard. As you read, focus on these two questions:

- What **issues** does it raise as regards language and culture, class, power or education?
- What **language features** of a regional variety of English can you identify?

Listen Mr. Oxford Don

Me not no Oxford don	is a dangerous one
me a simple immigrant	Dem accuse me of assault
from Clapham Common	on de Oxford dictionary
I didn't graduate	imagin a concise peaceful man like me/
I immigrate	dem want me to serve time
But listen Mr. Oxford don	for inciting rhyme to riot
I'm a man on de run	but I tekking it quiet
and a man on de run	down here in Clapham Common
is a dangerous one	I'm not violent man Mr. Oxford don
I ent have no gun	I only armed wit muh human breath
I ent have no knife	but human breath
but mugging de Queen's English	is a dangerous weapon
is the story of my life	So mek dem send one big word after me
I don't need no axe	I ent serving no jail sentence
to split / up yu syntax	I slashing suffix in self-defence
I don't need no hammer	I bashing future wit present tense
to mash up yu grammar	and if necessary
I warning you Mr. Oxford don	I making de Queen's English accessory/ to
I'm a wanted man	my offence
and a wanted man	

In Agard, J. (1990). *Mangoes and Bullets*. Serpent's Tail.

The poem presents a stance on English, the notion of correctness, ownership of language, education and social class. The title refers to an Oxford don and the whole poem seems to be a critical and direct message to those who are advocates of proper English. The poem delves into the historical and colonial roots of the English language, questioning the presumed authority of the Oxford English Dictionary in defining and standardizing the language, and advocating for a linguistic space that recognizes and respects diverse cultural and linguistic practices. Issues of language and identity are seen from the beginning, where there is an assertion of the lyrical I's identity, establishing a distinctive voice.

The term “Oxford” is not innocent, as Oxford English has been coined as a synonym of “proper” English. A contrast is achieved between those who graduate and those who immigrate, as if implying that education and immigration are mutually exclusive. There is a strong link between (higher) education and correct English. There is also a cultural reference to Clapham Common in London, a multicultural area where the tensions in class and education unfold. The lyrical I is presented as a “man on de run” and a “dangerous” one. This, in addition to vocabulary which evokes a certain image (*hammer, gun*), can be interpreted as a connection between “incorrect” English and criminals. However, the real power of the speaker lies not in physical force, but in *rhyme* and *human breath*, which is why they (*dem*) have accused the speaker of assault on the Oxford dictionary (a reference to the title and one of the most well-known and authoritative dictionaries on English). More specifically, that power is seen on what is presented as an attack: the “slashing of suffixes” and the “bashing of future with present tense”, which can also give rise to the power of making proper English accessory to this attack. On the whole, the poem challenges the widespread belief that someone (Oxford Don, the Queen) or some institutions (the Oxford Dictionary) are the owners of the language and the saviors of proper English. It is a vindication of the status of speakers who have long been considered assailants of the English language.

Features of Caribbean English can be seen through the use of spelling, which might be an indicator of pronunciation, as well as lexis and grammar. Regarding spelling and pronunciation, an example is the presence of the voiced alveolar plosive [d] instead of the voiced dental fricative [ð] in words like Caribbean English *de* (cf. *the*). The same applies to *wit*, probably pronounced with an alveolar [t]. Other words with particular features in spelling and pronunciation include *ent*, *yu*, *dem*, *imagin*, *tekking*, *mek*, *with*, *muh*. These instances reveal differences from the Inner Circle varieties in connection with vowels (*ent*, *tekking*, *mek*, *muh*, in all probability a pure vowel instead of a diphthong) and consonants (as in the last sound of *imagin*, probably not a velar nasal). There is no lexis specific to Caribbean English, possibly because of the topic of the poem. However, vocabulary is used purposefully to present a stance in relation to the issues described in the previous paragraph. With respect to grammar, there are instances of double negation (*ent...no*), lack of past tense affixes (*immigrate*), lack of auxiliary verbs (*I warning*, *I only armed*). There is also reanalysis of the objective pronouns *them* (*dem* in the poem) and *me* as nominatives in subject position (*me a simple immigrant*, *dem accuse me*).

Spic Spanish?

Read the following text, “Spic Spanish”? by Sandra Cisneros (from the novel *Caramelo*, 2002). As you read, focus on the same questions:

- a. What **issues** does it raise as regards language and culture, class, power or education?
- b. What **language features** of a regional variety of English can you identify?

Spic Spanish?

The old proverb was true. Spanish was the language to speak to God and English the language to talk to dogs. But father worked for the dogs, and if they barked he had to know how to bark back. Father sent away for the Inglés Sin Stress home course in English. He practiced, when speaking to his boss, –Gud morning, ser. Or meeting a woman, –Jáu du iú du? If asked how he was coming along with his English lessons, –very uel, zanc iú.

Because Uncle Fat-Face had been in the States longer, he gave Father advice. –Look, when speaking to police, always begin with, “Hello, my friend.”

In order to advance in society, Father thought it wise to memorize several passages from the “Polite Phrases” chapter. I congratulate you. Pass on, sir. Pardon my English. I have no answer to give you. It gives me the greatest pleasure. And: I am of the same opinion.

But his English was odd to American Ears. He worked at his pronunciation and tried his best to enunciate correctly. –Sir, kindly direct me to the water closet. –Please, what do you say? –May I trouble you to ask what time is? –Do me the kindness to tell me how is. When all else failed and Father couldn’t make himself understood, he could resort to, –Spic Spanish?

Qué strange was English. Rude and to the point. No one preceded a request with a –Will you not be so kind as to do me the favor of..., as one ought. They just asked! Nor did they add –If God wills it to their plans, as if they were in audacious control of their own destiny. It was a barbarous language! Curt as the commands of a dog trainer. –Sit. –Speak up. And why did no one say, –You are welcome. Instead, they grunted, –Uh-huh, without looking him in the eye, and without so much as a –You are very kind, mister, and may things go well for you.

Sandra Cisneros’s “Spic Spanish?” presents a reflection on the intersection of language and identity, emphasizing how language acts as a barrier and a tool in navigating cultural and social hierarchies. Like Agard’s “Listen Mr. Oxford Don”, Cisneros’s piece critiques the idea of *linguistic correctness*, not through rebellion, but through observation, irony, and the emotional labor of assimilation. The father, like Agard’s voice in the poem, is trying to survive in a society where English is not just a language but a gatekeeper of legitimacy. The use of “Spic Spanish?”, a slur

repurposed ironically, signals how the Spanish-speaking immigrant is both linguistically and socially marginalized. The American society, represented metaphorically by "dogs," wields power, and to succeed, one must "bark back." Language is also seen as a class marker: the father's effort to master formal, even outdated English (e.g., *Will you not be so kind..., I congratulate you*) illustrates an immigrant's misunderstanding of *styles* of English. His phrases contrast with the casual, direct, and even rude tone of native English speakers, revealing the cultural capital associated with fluency. Besides, the father believes Spanish is suited for reverence (*the language to speak to God*), while English is more utilitarian and profane. His struggle and reverence for English show how deeply hierarchies of language have been internalized. Unlike Agard's speaker, who defies these norms, the father in "Spic Spanish?" attempts to conform and yet fails to be accepted. There is also an issue of language and education: learning via "Inglés Sin Stress", memorizing phrases without understanding context, speaks to the mechanical nature of language education for immigrants, driven by necessity.

While "Listen Mr. Oxford Don" features Caribbean English, "Spic Spanish?" reflects features of Chicano English, Spanglish, and phonetic spelling to convey cultural hybridity and struggle. Key features include phonetic spelling to represent accent (*Gud morning, ser*), code-switching (*Qué strange was English*), and literal transfer situations related to style and register.

A Case for Chinglish?

One of the most important issues around the spread of English is related to attitudes towards its influence and use around the world.

Read the following newspaper article and consider the attitudes expressed towards standards and varieties. Is Chinglish a variety of English?

Chinglish has life, please don't trample on it



Oliver Radtke believes Chinglish mistranslations may be fun, but are not to be made fun of. More than that, they have become serious business for the German Sinologist, who believes the portmanteau adds spice to the alphabet soup that is English today.

"My message on Chinglish is: It should be conserved.

"It shouldn't be treated as a cheap joke for foreign tourists to laugh at but as a cultural treasure," said the 32-year-old multimedia designer, who frequently visited China for almost a decade before moving to Beijing in 2007.

"I'm trying to challenge the notion that there is only one type of standard English - the English that's spoken in America or in the British Isles - which is shortsighted, because Chinglish is already being used by millions of people to communicate with one another."

So, since 2005, the scholar has collected more than 5,000 specimens of "the wonderful results of an English dictionary meeting Chinese grammar" on his website www.chinglish.de and has published two books on the subject.

The website receives about 10,000 visitors a week, he said, and his first book, *Chinglish: Found in Translation*, has sold nearly 50,000 copies since it was published in September 2007 by Gibbs Smith Publishers. His new book, *More Chinglish: Speaking in Tongues*, hit the shelves this month and is available in Beijing at the Wangfujing Bookstore and The Bookworm.

"The two books are unique in that they go beyond the fun book you pick up at the airport in that they talk about this approach of conservation, the academic value of Chinglish, the creative combination of English and Chinese, and why we should keep it," Radtke said.

Patricia Schetelig, who works for the German Embassy in Beijing and regularly contributes to www.chinglish.de, said she appreciates Radtke's approach to Chinglish.

"What's important to me is that he's not making fun of the way things are translated," she said.

"There are other websites doing similar things, but they're making fun of Chinglish or saying it shouldn't be done this way."

Some of Radtke's favorite phrases include: "Welcome To Presence", "Wash after relief", "Little grass has life, please watch your step" and his first specimen, which sparked his interest in Chinglish in 2000 - "Don't forget to carry your thing".

Another darling is "STELIOT" - the mirror image of "toilets". Radtke said he loves this example because it came from the sign-maker's presumption that since Chinese characters were once written from right to left, English letters could be, too.

Part of his mission, Radtke said, is to preserve rapidly disappearing Chinglish specimens.

He was anguished while watching the government replace Chinglish signs with standard English ones in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics.

"That was a sad day for me and a sad day for Chinglish," Radtke said.

But American David Tool, who has been closely involved in cleaning up Chinglish in Beijing since 2001, disagreed.

"(Chinglish) takes away from the aesthetic, educational and cultural value we want these signs to provide," the advisor to the Beijing Speaks Foreign Languages Committee said.

"We get distracted when we're trying to explain something. It's not dealing with the issues with respect."

Radtke said that while Chinglish is swiftly vanishing from the public sector, it's still thriving in the private sector.

"Restaurants, private institutions, little shops - Chinglish will never die there. There's a massive amount of Chinglish being produced every day, and I'm happy about that."

He said he has contacted local governments, sign-makers and park managers to suggest they change their signage "back to something more creative and more local" but has received little response.

Radtke believes the fact that both English and Chinese are second languages to him is a boon, rather than a bane, to his understanding of Chinglish.

"Because I have this outside perspective, I'm far away from finger-pointing."

He added that he asks native English speakers to assess the Chinglish he collects.

Radtke said many Chinese web users were furious when he first started his blog and he often received hate mail.

"But that's all changed, because more people understand my point, which is that Chinglish is a window to the Chinese mind for non-Chinese speakers and a cultural bridge between the West and China.

"It should be regarded with pride."

Source: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-04/15/content_7677398.htm.

Now consider the following view on Chinglish.

Could it be the end of Chinglish?

Authorities in China have launched another campaign to wipe out amusingly misspelt English. Will it work?

Adam Gabbatt

Upsetting news for English-speaking residents in China: "Chinglish" is apparently being wiped out. Chinglish is the name given to the grammatically incorrect or misspelt English found predominantly on signs in parts of China. The language style has attracted a cult following, with a Facebook group, Flickr pages and even a book dedicated to the subject.

But there are fears that Chinglish could be killed off before really having a chance to flourish. Reports suggest that authorities, wary of the embarrassment some examples of Chinglish could cause prudish visitors to next year's World Expo, are launching a drive to correct the quirky mistranslations.

Before we officially declare Chinglish to be a dead language, we should note that this isn't the first such drive to wipe it out. On the website of the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle (bear with me), in an interview with the Chinglish enthusiast Oliver Radtke in May, it was pointed out that "in recent years, China has kicked off campaigns to root out poor English grammar and misused vocabulary in official usage", including one before the Olympic games in Beijing last year. Judging

from the examples that continue to flood into internet groups, the success of these campaigns seems to have been limited.

Radtke is a staunch supporter of what he describes as the "wonderful results of an English dictionary meeting Chinese grammar". He insists that his interest in Chinglish is about "passion not mockery", and most online groups seem to echo this, looking upon Chinglish with affection rather than scorn. The "Save Chinglish" Facebook group has attracted more than 8,000 members and more than 2,500 Chinglish examples, while members of the Flickr group The Chinglish Pool have contributed more than 3,000 photographs.

So what is it about Chinglish that has attracted such affection? Examples on the sites above range from amusing misspellings in menus – "Three testes ice cream", anyone? – to simple grammatical errors – a sign by a lake imploring visitors to "refuse to feed" the (presumably persistent) birds.

The best ones, as Radtke says, are where English words are used with Chinese grammar, often with incorrect spelling thrown in for good measure. These can range from the strangely poetic – "the rust embroidered shoes approve the zero concurrent y camp" – to the genuinely mystifying – "pood taken late at night breakfast".

Will the latest push succeed in wiping Chinglish out completely? It seems unlikely, but perhaps visitors to China will have to look that little bit harder to be warned to "be careful about a landslip" in a bathroom or "take notice of safe: The slippery are very crafty" on a hillside.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2009/aug/25/end-of-chinglish-china>.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we focused first on the geographical spread of English starting in the eModE period, relating the dimensions of time and space. By taking into account the several debates that arose as a result of the diasporas and the emergence of different Englishes around the world, we looked at classifications for regional varieties, the standardization process, the features which evidence present-day variation and help differentiate these varieties and the issues rooted in diversity, all of which are raised by the spread of English. Proficiency, communication, and identity are at the core of the present-day discussion, with a focus placed on the use of English rather than on its speakers. This approach will become even more relevant as we move on to the following chapter, which takes up the axis of language and society.

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CHAPTER 4

Variation and Change: Synchrony Meets Diachrony

Previous chapters have so far covered the main areas of study in the history of English: the notion of linguistic change, the connection between language and time, reflected in the periodization of the stages throughout its history, and the axis of place, when the spread of English as of the modern period led to the rise of regional varieties and to the current debates on the status of English around the world. This final chapter attempts to draw back on a number of issues presented before as it interweaves them by tracking the related notions of language and society and the link between synchrony and diachrony, variation and change. The study of synchronic variation rounds off the path taken in the book and particularly makes our introduction on diachronic change come full circle. This last chapter serves as a lens through which we can observe the dynamics between language and society, where variation is not seen as chaotic but rather something that can be studied methodically. We will deal with phenomena where extralinguistic factors play a key role in the manner language varies, especially due to social and pragmatic aspects of use.

Synchrony and Diachrony

As claimed by Aitchison (2012), the once held dichotomy between diachrony and synchrony has become increasingly blurred in the light of linguistic work carried out in the 20th century, especially as of the pioneering work of William Labov on changes in progress (see also chapter 1). Diachrony and synchrony thus intersect, and much of the work done in historical linguistics can provide useful tools to shed light on the studies of synchronic instances of recent or contemporary change (i.e., variation), irrespective of their motivations and the linguistic level where variation takes place. This is currently a widely accepted view. Meyerhoff and Strycharz state that “if we can understand what patterns and principles are associated with the inception and the subsequent transmission of variation among speakers today, we will have a better idea of how similar patterns and principles might have operated on changes in the past” (2012, p. 291). This approach is developed in the field of studies in language variation and change.

The Field of Variation and Change

The field of studies in language variation and change (LVC) is relatively young and can be traced back to the seminal work by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968), who define five problems, perceived as goals, for a theory that attempts to approach and explain language change:

- **The constraints problem**
What sort of linguistic variation is there in the world? What can vary?
- **The transition problem**
How does an innovation spread throughout the community? Does it actually always spread?
- **The embedding problem**
How are changes and innovations embedded in relation to others and within general trends of the language? How do they operate under a number of interacting factors?
- **The evaluation problem**
How do the speakers assess linguistic variation? Is variation noticed?
- **The actuation problem**
Why did the innovation happen wherever and whenever it did? Why not elsewhere? Why not at another time?

Weinreich, Labov and Herzog were also pioneering in considering variation as a phenomenon deserving of study within its “orderly heterogeneity” (1968, p. 100), rather than a random and inexplicable chaos. Under this view, variation develops within certain boundaries often controlled by extralinguistic factors such as geographical region, sex, age, social class and ethnic group, context of use, and the relationship between speakers, among others (McMahon, 1994, p. 226).

Hejné and Walken point out that the field of LVC which took off in the 1960s “overlaps heavily with the aims of two other fields: historical linguistics and sociolinguistics” (2022, p. 3). However, LVC is broader than these two and the domain which specifically reveals an overlap between the two fields is the study of synchrony and diachrony. LVC can be related to all the levels of linguistic inquiry: the lexicon, grammar and phonology can all undergo variation and also change over time. We are mostly interested here in social and pragmatic aspects (i.e., language use) which arise in a particular context, linguistic, situational or social.

It must be remembered that it is easier to study language variation and change in Present-day English (PDE), compared to approaching it in previous stages of the language, mostly due to contemporary access to written materials, recordings, and more observable instances of ongoing use. However, according to the Uniformitarian Principle (UP), also known as “uniformitarianism”,

“the languages of the past—at least, those we can reconstruct or find records of—are not different in nature from those of the present” (Croft, 2003, p. 233). Uniformitarianism implies that unless definitive evidence suggests otherwise, the basic features of today’s language remain consistent with those of the past. Additionally, it suggests that the processes of language change observable in recorded history are consistent with those that must have occurred in periods lacking linguistic documentation. From a sociolinguistic view (Labov, 1994, pp. 21-24), this means that the linguistic processes observable today should also be assumed to have applied in the past.²² The principle summarizes the connection between synchrony and diachrony and how they are related to use in a community. Within this view it is assumed that linguistic change occurs gradually and that there is regularity and predictability of change over time.

Does Variation Always Lead to Change?

While most diachronic changes ultimately go back to instances of synchronic variation, not all variation leads to linguistic change. Burridge and Bergs (2017) illustrate this with the pronunciation of the word *dancing*. In rapid speech, locally, or informally, the standard velar nasal ending [ŋ] is replaced with an alveolar nasal [n], which might also be reflected in spelling as *dancin’*. However, such innovation has been around for centuries and is not the result of PDE speakers’ clumsiness or style. For instance, in “Phyllis”, Jonathan Swift rhymes “bliss in” with “missing”, indicative of variation in the pronunciation of the *-ing*.

See then what mortals place their bliss in!

Next morn betimes the bride was missing

(“Phyllis”, 1716, ll. 25–26).

A century later, Dickens makes use of both *-ing* and *-in* spellings, at times to distinguish the speech of different social classes, as in the following extract from *A Tale of Two Cities*.

and let that father go into the line of the reg'lar diggin', ..., if it wos so-by diggin' of 'em in with a will, and with convictions respectin' the futur' keepin' of 'em safe.

In other words, the [ŋ]-[n] alternation in *-ing* endings has been around for a while and does not seem to settle soon: neither form is truly expected to disappear completely soon or win out over the other, despite the efforts to establish the velar nasal as the correct or standard variant for the ending in *-ing*. Bauer (1994) argues that laziness or slovenliness cannot be considered a motivating factor in these changes:

²² Uniformitarianism can be traced back to 19th-century geology and philology: “knowledge of processes that operated in the past can be inferred by observing ongoing processes in the present” (Christy, 1983, p. ix). Importantly, the UP was opposed to catastrophism, which held that the origins of the earth and life depended on sudden events in the past.

The use of *huntin'* for *hunting* was, earlier this century, seen as characteristic of an upper-class British accent as well as a lower-class one; the variation goes back to two different forms in Old English. There are many changes, including some which start in the lowest social classes, where the innovative form takes at least as much effort to say as the conservative form. (p. 18)

Another clear illustration of the fact that variation does not always lead to change is in the lexicon. New trends in vocabulary appear all the time, but they do not always survive. Many of them die out eventually or end up restricted to certain chronolects or jargons. This becomes evident if one is to look up vocabulary from older stages, but recent innovations might have a short-lived existence as well, especially in fields of ongoing transformation, such as technology. In a recent entry on the online Merriam Webster dictionary site ([merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com)), reproduced partially below, there is a list of 10 words (chosen by the readers of the dictionary) which have fallen out of use. Interestingly, words like *floppy disk* were of everyday usage some 15-20 years ago.

10 Words You Don't Seem to Hear as Much These Days

As chosen by you, the social media scroller!

Last Updated: 19 Dec 2023

Introduction

We asked our Facebook and Twitter followers to recall words from their childhood that people just don't seem to use anymore. Here are a few of our favorites.

Floppy Disk

Definition:

noun: A thin plastic disk coated with magnetic material on which data for a computer can be stored.

About the Word:

The first known use of the word *floppy disk* was in 1972, and while the last known use isn't marked it's certainly a term, and tool, that has fallen out of use. We're pretty sure our kids have no idea what a floppy disk is. For those whippersnappers who have yet to find our stash of them in the desk drawer with all the loose rubber bands, old keys, and binder clips, floppy disks were often—as their name suggests—floppy, but sturdier varieties existed as well.

Ironically, the icon that often means “save” on software and apps today is in fact an image of a floppy disk.

Recent Example:

When Mark Necaise got down to his last four floppy disks at a rodeo in Mississippi in February, he started to worry. Necaise travels to horse shows around the state, offering custom embroidery on jackets and vests: “All of the winners would get a jacket and we’d put the name of the farm or the name of the horse or whatever on it,” he says. Five years ago, he paid \$18,000 for a second-hand machine, manufactured in 2004 by the Japanese embroidery equipment specialist Tajima. The only way to transfer the designs from his computer to the machine was via floppy disk.

— Jacopo Prisco, *Wired*, 6 Mar. 2023

Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/words-we-dont-hear-anymore>.

Defining the Terms: *Variation*, *Variety* and Their Next of Kin

A methodological starting point to approach variation is to distinguish a series of related terms which are often found in studies dealing with present-day variation. We are looking at the key word *variation* in relation to its relatives *variety* (both as an uncountable and as a countable noun), *variable*, and *variant*. Definitions for these are provided below, though one must bear in mind that different frameworks might assign different meanings to these labels and also resort to other terminology to account for the same phenomena.

Regarding *variety*, Hudson (1996) states that:

If one thinks of 'language' as a phenomenon including all the languages of the world, the term VARIETY OF LANGUAGE (or just VARIETY for short) can be used to refer to different manifestations of it, in just the same way as one might take 'music' as a general phenomenon and then distinguish different 'varieties of music'. What makes one variety of language different from another is the linguistic items that it includes, so we may define a variety of language as a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution. This definition allows us to call any of the following 'varieties of language': English, French, London English, the English of football commentaries, the languages used by the members of a particular long-house in the north-west Amazon, the language or languages used by a particular person.

It will be seen from this list that the very general notion 'variety' includes examples of what would normally be called languages, dialects and registers [...]. The advantage of having a general term to cover all these concepts is that it allows us to ask what basis there is for the distinctions among them - for instance, why do we call some varieties different languages and others different dialects of the same language? (Hudson, 1996, pp. 22-23)

Variety can be associated with the notion of *variability*: languages and language use are subject to a certain degree of variability. In other words, *variety* can be used to describe any occurrence of variation which is not classified further. According to Crystal (2008, p. 509):

A ‘variety’ is a system of linguistic expression whose use is governed by situational variables. In some cases, the situational distinctiveness of the language may be easily stated, as in many regional and occupational varieties (e.g. London English, religious English); in other cases, as in studies of social class, the varieties are more difficult to define, involving the intersection of several variables (e.g. sex, age, occupation). Several classifications of language varieties have been proposed, involving such terms as *dialect*, *register*, *medium* and *field*.

Along the lines of the variable of *place*, the term “variety” refers to the regional varieties of a language. If the variables at stake are *society* or *context*, varieties usually refer to the specific aspects of language use which feature variation in a community: *accent*, *dialect*, *style*, *register*, *jargon*, and *sociolects*, among others.

Following Arndt *et al.* (2001), varieties can be further classified. Those varieties which revolve around the *user* refer to cases of variation which are defined by personal, inherent or idiosyncratic characteristics of speakers. On the other hand, varieties according to *use* refer to instances of variation on the basis of communicative situation and context. A summary is given in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Some varieties according to user and use.

VARIETIES ACCORDING TO USER	VARIETIES ACCORDING TO USE
accent – dialect – idiolect	style – register
sociolect – chronolect	jargon – genre

VARIETIES ACCORDING TO USER: INHERENT TO SPEAKERS

- **Regional varieties (sometimes defined as “dialects”)**: They are based on geographical regions, where the relevant variable is *place*.
- **Lects (sociolects, chronolects, ethnolects, idiolect)**: They are associated with different social groups. Sociolects are based on factors such as socioeconomic status and education level. When the relevant variable is *age*, the focus is on how the language of speakers of different age groups varies (chronolect). When looking at ethnic groups, the focus is on features that are distinctive of that particular group (e.g., African American English) (ethnolects). An *idiolect* is the unique linguistic variety of an individual speaker. It encompasses the personal vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse patterns that characterize an individual’s use of language.

VARIETIES ACCORDING TO USE: DEPENDENT ON PERFORMANCE

- **Styles and degrees of formality:** Language can vary depending on the formality of the situation. Formal varieties are typically used in formal settings such as academic writing, business communication, or public speeches. Informal varieties, on the other hand, are used in casual conversations and relaxed social settings.
- **Registers:** They are instances of variation determined by the context or subject matter of communication, usually associated with occupations. Different registers may be used in specific domains such as legal, medical, technical, or religious discourse. Each register has its own vocabulary, grammar, and stylistic features appropriate for its context.
- **Specific jargons for occupational varieties:** Many professions and industries develop specialized terminology, known as “jargon”. This occupational variety of language is used by professionals within a specific field to communicate efficiently and accurately about technical concepts, procedures, or equipment.

Note that users are flexible in their use of language. At times, they might be unaware of variation of use, as they rather naturally adapt linguistically to different communicative situations and contexts where they engage with other interlocutors. Bullock and Toribio (2009) call this *style shifting*: speakers are capable of navigating registers and styles. Sometimes, speakers find it more difficult to adapt *user* variation as it involves features which are more subjectively ingrained within a speaker or a community. In other words, a speaker might find it difficult to adapt their own sociolectal, idiolectal, dialectal features, or at least to do so unawares. However, users can of course vary their accent, dialect or idiolect usually consciously and purposefully.

Let us now look at the other key terms.

- **Variable:** It is a linguistic aspect revealing variation and usually related to an extralinguistic factor.

The term [variable] has been introduced into sociolinguistics by the American linguist William Labov (b. 1927) to refer to the units in a language which are most subject to social or stylistic variation, and thus most susceptible to change in the long term. Sets of phonological, grammatical and lexical variables are described quantitatively with reference to such factors as social class, age and sex, and the results of this co-variation are stated in the form of variable rules. Variable rules are generative rules which have been modified so as to specify the socio-regional conditions under which they apply. The notion has been developed primarily in relation to hypotheses concerning the relationship between social variation and linguistic evolution. (Crystal, 2008, p. 508)

Linguistic variables refer to the features *within* the language system that can vary among speakers or contexts. They include properties related to all levels of analysis: phonology, morphology, syntax, the lexicon, semantics. Linguistic variables are usually related to certain phenomena, such as voicing or deletion (phonology), word order (syntax), choice of items and meanings (lexicon and semantics). On the other hand, extralinguistic variables are factors *outside* the language system that influence how language is used or changes over time. They include social variables (class, age, gender, ethnicity), geographical factors (region or dialect area), cultural influences (such as norms, taboos), situational or contextual elements (degree of formality, types of audience).

- **Variant:** It is the actual realizational alternative or option which is the exponent of variation. These might be lexical items, but grammatical, phonological and pragmatic features should also be considered.

A term used in linguistics to refer to a linguistic form which is one of a set of alternatives in a given context; it contrasts with invariant. The concept is fundamental to the notion of allo- (-phone, -morph, etc.), as illustrated by the variant forms of the past-tense morpheme (/t/, /d/, /əd/, etc.). The choice of variants may be subject to contextual constraints (conditioned variants), or there may be no stateable conditions – the cases of free variants. (Crystal, 2008, p. 508).

For the linguistic variable of verbal agreement in the third-person singular present tense, the variants in English are -s (as in *she runs*) and zero-marking (as in *she run*). As is known, the latter can be found in certain regional varieties, revealing the connection between the linguistic variable, the exponent (or variant), and the extralinguistic variable (social factor), in this case, region.

Studying Change in Progress

Apparent-time vs. Real-time Studies

Apparent-time and real-time studies are methodologies used to examine language change and variation within a speech community over time. In apparent-time studies, researchers collect data from individuals of different age groups at a single point in time under the assumption that the language used by younger speakers might reflect ongoing language changes. In other words, innovations observed in younger generations might be telling of incipient linguistic change which might take hold in the future. Therefore, by comparing the speech of different age groups within the same community, apparent-time studies provide insights into linguistic changes that are occurring across generations. These studies are often implemented to try to predict language trends. As Burridge and Bergs (2017) point out, while this method is generally well accepted, it is

faced with the problem known as “age grading”: certain linguistic uses belong as trends in certain age groups (i.e., they are chronolectal) and might not be indications of actual change in progress.

On the other hand, real-time studies involve the collection of data from the same individuals or community at multiple points in time, often different generations and perhaps at different stages of a language altogether. These studies allow for more detailed analyses of the progression of language change over time. A famous study in the history of English which will be taken up again later on is that of the development of *do* carried out by Alvar Ellegård in 1953. The study focused on four sentence types which displayed the use of the so-called “periphrastic *do*” between 1400 and 1700.

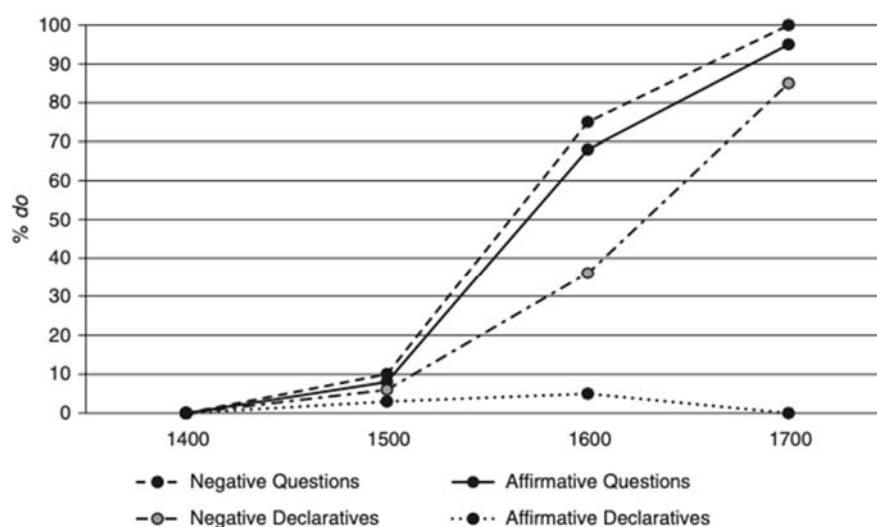
Affirmative declaratives:	<i>I like football</i>	vs.	<i>I do like football.</i>
Negative declaratives:	<i>I like not football</i>	vs.	<i>I don't like football.</i>
Affirmative questions:	<i>Like you football?</i>	vs.	<i>Do you like football?</i>
Negative questions:	<i>Like you not football?</i>	vs.	<i>Don't you like football?</i>

Results are summarized in Figure 4.1, taken from Burridge and Bergs (2017). The increasing use of periphrastic *do* is evident, as well as the different rates depending on the sentence type. What matters is that it shows language use at different intervals, which are then contrasted to reveal change happening over a 300-year period.

Importantly, both apparent-time and real-time studies complement each other, with apparent-time studies providing a snapshot of current linguistic trends and real-time studies offering a dynamic view of language change as it occurs.

Figure 4.1

Percentage of do forms in different sentence types for the period 1400-1700.



Note. From Burridge and Bergs (2017, p. 20, based on Ellegård, 1953).

The Foundational Study on Martha's Vineyard

This study has shown that very subtle linguistic features may be intertwined with larger and more obvious social facts such as occupation and attitudes. Martha's Vineyard is a small island off the coast of Massachusetts which Labov visited in 1961. The island had back then a population of about 6,000, which became greater in summer when vacationists moved there to spend the summer holidays. Most of the permanent inhabitants lived in the eastern part of the island (Down-Island), while the Up-Island region remained more rural and had fewer permanent residents. Labov chose to investigate the pronunciation of two sounds in the speech of the permanent residents on the island: the diphthong in *price* and *side* [aɪ], on the one hand, and the one in *mound* or *mouth* [aʊ], on the other. The character of the diphthong was changed by linguistic variables or factors—in this case the properties of the following consonant—and might become more centralized, i.e. [aɪ] > [əɪ] and [aʊ] > [əʊ]. However, Labov also found a relationship between the choice of the variant (more or less centralized) and a number of social factors, which included age, ethnicity, place of residence on the island and occupation. In addition, he identified that a relevant factor was the speakers' attitudes towards living on Martha's Vineyard:

- People with positive attitudes were *more* likely to use the centralized variants [əɪ] and [əʊ].
- People with negative feelings were *less* likely to use the centralized variants [əɪ] and [əʊ].

Labov showed that along with other factors, age trends suggest a rise in affiliation with the island: individuals aged 31-45 frequently opted to stay on the island or had returned to it after residing for some time on the mainland, potentially explaining their positive attitudes and heightened levels of centralization of the diphthong variants. Conversely, many younger speakers, exhibiting lower levels of centralization and more negative attitudes towards Martha's Vineyard, did not plan to stay on the island.

When Language Is Put to Use

Euphemism, Dysphemism, and Orthophemism

A *euphemism* is used as an alternative to a dispreferred and less “pleasing” expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own face or that of the audience or of some third party (Allan and Burridge, 1991). A speaker might use a euphemism to escape disapproval and to avoid offending the interlocutor or even someone nearby, such as an eavesdropper or bystander. Euphemisms are often employed to soften the impact of sensitive or taboo topics, but also to show respect and to avoid causing offense. They can be found in various contexts, including everyday conversation, formal writing, and public discourse. Euphemism is also a linguistic strategy found in areas like government, business and advertising where the aim is to

highlight and exaggerate the positive aspects of a product or service and conceal any negative sides to it.

In contrast to euphemisms, a *dysphemism* is a word or phrase with connotations that are considered offensive. Dysphemistic expressions cover a range of blunt ways used intentionally to convey negative or disrespectful attitudes, such as curses, name-calling and “any sort of derogatory comment directed toward others to insult or wound them” (Burridge, 2006, p. 457).

In between the concepts of *euphemism* and *dysphemism* one can place those terms which are “neither sweet-sounding, evasive, overly polite (euphemistic) nor harsh, blunt, offensive (dysphemistic)” (Burridge, 2006, p. 457). These are known as “orthophemisms”, from the Greek word *ortho*, meaning ‘proper, straight, normal’. As they are also alternatives to dysphemisms, orthophemisms are generally preferred or considered appropriate. An example of the three choices would be in the following verbs: *to pass away* (euphemism), *to croak* (dysphemism), and *to die* (orthophemism).

While euphemisms, dysphemisms and orthophemisms are often evident in lexical items and idiomatic expressions, it must be noted that an array of resources are at work in the making of these choices, as described by Burridge (2006). It is not just a matter of choosing a word: processes such as metaphor, hyperbole, shortenings, circumlocutions and borrowing might operate together behind their creation.

Gender-related Issues: History and Variation

Languages can encode gender in two main ways: by means of grammatical assignment (morphological gender: masculine, feminine, neuter) or by means of a lexical-semantic association (sometimes called “natural” gender, related to biological sex or associations to it). Historically, English has shifted from a morphological gender assignment system to a semantic one. The shifts in gender assignment are difficult to account for, and there have been many attempts to explain them, which Curzan (2003) summarizes as the “morphological explanations” and the “sociolinguistic explanations”. In the case of the history of English, the shift from grammatical gender to natural gender was part of the transition from Old English to Middle English.

McWhorter (2002) discusses a number of changes that happened to English between the Old and Middle English period, including the “gender shift”. While English was not unique in losing grammatical gender on nouns (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988), the loss of the nominal inflections was accompanied by the loss of the initial three-gender distinction in the demonstrative-article forms of Old English (*se* for masculine, *seo* for feminine and *þæt* for neuter, all in the nominative case here), all of which eventually collapsed into *the*. McWhorter considers that the explanation of the gender shift is not explanatory enough and cannot account for the fact that all of the other Germanic languages maintained a grammatical gender distinction in the articles despite the possible erosion on nominals. He considers the possibility that Old Norse influence might have

played a role when English speakers intermingled with the Scandinavian settlers. As the definite Old Norse articles had an initial dental fricative, English speakers might have replaced the initial consonant of masculine *se* and feminine *seo* with [θ], which would have resulted in a common gender item pronounced as [θe] for both masculine and feminine, while they might have also preserved the neuter *þæt* > *that*. However, “contact *qua se* gives us no reason to assume that the immediate result would have been a single gender-neutral item *the*” (McWhorter, 2002, p. 230). Languages like Danish retained the two-gender distinction. If English had retained such distinction, one collapsed masculine-feminine and one for neuter, it is not clear how phonetic reduction would have operated further on to merge all these into ModE *the*. In addition, the uniqueness of English is that it is the only language where the tendency of retaining a distinction between a neuter / non neuter system was “overridden in favor of eliminating grammatical gender entirely” (McWhorter, 2002, p. 230).

Moving on to present-day debates, issues about gender revolve around two axes (Arndt *et al.*, 2000). On the one hand, there is the use of language by men and women (known as “gender-based discourse”), where the focus is on sociolinguistic research which attempts to describe male and female patterns of talk and ways of interacting in speech, where the notion of power operates as an umbrella notion which can shed light on turn taking, keeping face and assuming control of the conversation. On the other hand, much research has been carried out on lexicogrammatical alternatives related to the use of “gender-neutral” language, most evident in choices for professions such as *police officer* for *policeman* or the use of singular *they* to avoid the *he/she* binarism. Sexism in language, however, goes beyond the specific choice of linguistic form. There are also ingrained semantic associations even with genderless nouns for some occupations, for instance in *nurse*, *teacher*, *lawyer*, *doctor*. Do people tend to think of men or women behind these professions?

The Language of the Internet

The rise of the Internet and 21st century communications in the digital age have had a profound impact on language use. Nowadays, much of our everyday communication is mediated by chats, emails, audio recordings, short videos, posts on social media, and so on. Crystal (2011) explores the impact of the Internet on language and highlights how the brevity and immediacy of online communication have led to the development of new conventions and stylistic features, such as the widespread use of abbreviations, which have become pervasive in online discourse. Common examples include LOL (laugh out loud), BRB (be right back), and OMG (oh my god). Emoticons and emojis have become visual cues to convey a range of emotions, tone, and facial expressions in written communication.

Orthographic variation also characterizes online language. This includes intentional misspellings, phonetic representations, and unconventional use of punctuation to convey meaning or add emphasis. E-communication reveals the new significance of punctuation marks,

which have been largely lost due to quick typing and instant messaging and are therefore experiencing a meaning change in their comeback. This is seen with the “newer” presence of stops or periods, “[w]hen people choose to use a full stop now, there’s more to it than just ending the sentence. These writers are being emphatic in some way – usually indicating a displeasure or frustration about a situation” (Burridge and Bergs, 2017, p. 268).

Another area of language use in the digital era is related to the access to information and communication. The multimodal nature of the Internet has created a way of connecting with information which integrates texts with images, videos, audios and hyperlinks.

Language Play

Playfulness in language use is by no means to be underestimated. Burridge and Bergs (2017) recall—from other fields of study—that human beings can be described as *homo ludens* for whom play is a powerful strategy not only to have fun but also to sort through different situations, survive and thrive. Linguistically, play is related to the creation of new and fancy words, the use of puns and the creation of jokes, as well as some uses of swearing, cursing and hyperbole. The ameliorated uses of words like *wicked* illustrate such playfulness, which of course has a basis on semantic change.

Wicked

c. 1200, *wikked*, ‘evil in principle or practice, morally perverse, addicted to vice,’ extended form of earlier *wick* ‘bad, *wicked*, false’ (12 c.), which apparently is an adjectival use of Old English *wicca* ‘wizard’. It is formed as if a past participle, but there is no corresponding verb.

The slang ironic sense of “wonderful” is attested by 1920, in F. Scott Fitzgerald. As an adverb from early 15 c. As a noun, “*wicked* persons,” by mid-14 c.

Source: <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=wicked>.

Language play can take various forms, including puns, wordplay, rhymes, jokes, riddles, tongue twisters, and creative metaphors. Burridge and Bergs (2017) refer to how people use language playfully to get attention, following Keller’s (1994) take on language change, who considers it an evolutionary process. In this view, speakers follow maxims of linguistic action (both static and dynamic) which include “Talk in such a way that the other understands you”, among many others. Importantly, speakers do not choose linguistic means according to one maxim alone. Specifically in relation to how language can be used for play, we might consider the following maxims (Keller, 1994, p. 97):

- Talk in such a way that you are noticed.
- Talk in such a way that you are not recognizable as a member of the group.
- Talk in an amusing, funny, etc., way.

- Talk in an especially polite, flattering, charming, etc. way.

Language play involves the creative use or manipulation of an array of linguistic pieces, not only words, but also sounds, grammar, meaning, and their embedding in context. It serves several social and cultural functions: it can be used for entertainment, bonding, and building rapport, but it can also serve as a form of social commentary, satire, or political criticism.

Some Studies in English Historical Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics

Relevance Theory in Grammatical Changes

Padilla Cruz (2002) follows Jacobs and Jucker (1995, p. 13), who distinguish between *pragmaphilology*, which attempts to describe the contextual aspects of historical texts (authors and audience, the purpose of the texts, the conditions under which it was produced, etc.) and *diachronic pragmatics*, which focuses on language items and their use at different points. Within diachronic pragmatics, some studies focus on linguistic forms that might reveal something about change in discourse contexts, such as discourse markers, relative pronouns or some lexical choices. Other studies focus on how the language is used and on phenomena like courtesy and turn taking.

Drawing on Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986), Padilla Cruz looks at some changes in the history of English. According to this pragmatic theory, communication is an inferential process where there is no predetermined correspondence between the semantic representation of an utterance and the interpretation of it, since the latter is supported by elements of the context based on two communicative mechanisms: the encoding/decoding of linguistic meaning and the ostension/inference of what is communicated. What is communicated in all is a set of assumptions obtained from both the explicit and the implicit and it is assumed that human cognition seeks optimal relevance in communication and that the stimulus is sufficiently relevant to justify the processing effort. In other words, the hearer receives a logical form which is enriched contextually and turned into a fully propositional form (*explicature*). An important contribution of the theory is that linguistic expressions can encode conceptual meaning but also procedural meaning.

For Padilla Cruz, changes such as the loss of verbal inflection and the introduction of Old Norse pronouns during the shift from Old to Middle English can be explained not only on the basis of phonetic and grammatical factors. The proposal is that these changes are related to strategies on how to derive the explicature, that is, the logical form which results from the assignments of references, contextual enrichment, and disambiguation. For instance, the weakening of the phonetic form of the verbal ending entails a loss of *conceptual* and *procedural* meanings, which

prevents limiting the *explicatures* of utterances. When this loss occurs, these meanings are maintained only in the personal pronouns, except in cases where these undergo a weakening of their form. Therefore, once this occurs, the syntactic order in which the subject precedes the verb is more fixed and must appear, in most cases, obligatorily.

Sociolinguistic Forces in the GVS

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) describes a series of changes affecting long vowels over the late ME period and the beginning of the modern period. According to McColl Millar (2012), the 1400s scenario before the GVS reveals an almost symmetrical arrangement of vowels, with little asymmetry due to the open vowel [a:]. The beginnings of the GVS with the likely diphthongization of the upper vowels and later raising of the mid-open ones led to a more asymmetrical scenario (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

The system after GVS stage 1.

been	[i:]			[u:]	tool
ride	[əi]			[əu]	house
bean/ break/well	[ɛ:]			[ɔ:]	road
made	[a:]	maid	[ai]	[au]	bowl

Note. From McColl Millar (2012, p. 34).

Moving into the period around 1600s, the vowel system underwent changes which rendered the configuration more symmetrical. These involved a series of mergers which gave rise to stage 2a (Figure 4.3) but did not resemble the PDE system found in mainstream varieties of standard English. This is evidenced in variations in the pronunciation of specific words, such as *bean*, *break*, and *well*.

Figure 4.3

The system after GVS stage 2a.

been	[i:]			[u:]	tool
bean/ break/well made, maid	[ɛ:]			[o:]	road, bowl
ride	[ai]			[au]	house

Note. From McColl Millar (2012, p. 34).

Variation appears to have been influenced by regional differences and social stratification: upper-class and lower-class Londoners adopted different sets of pronunciations. The system in stage 2a was likely adopted by the upper classes of London. For McColl Millar, the correlation between language and social status underscores the link between linguistic change and broader social and cultural shifts. Ongoing shifts implied that stage 2a became stage 2b (Figure 4.4), which might have been prevalent among the lower classes and in regions adjacent to London in the east and north.

Figure 4.4

The system after GVS stage 2b.

been, bean/ [i:]	[u:] tool
break/well	
made, maid [e:]	[o:] road/bowl
ride [ai]	[au] house

Note. From McColl Millar (2012, p. 35).

As can be seen, the key lies in the social significance that was attributed to the distribution of the digraph <ea> and it is likely that some speakers of system in stage 2a “flirted’ with the higher pronunciation of <ea>” (McColl Millar, 2012, p. 36). It is noteworthy that political and religious affiliations could be reflected in linguistic choices. Figures like the poet Alexander Pope, who belonged to the Catholic and Tory minority in a predominantly Protestant and Whig society, continued to use the pattern in stage 2a, associated with earlier systems, highlighting the social and cultural significance in the adoption of the vowel system. In all, McColl Millar (2012) considers that the PDE “vowel pattern of Standard English [...] was caused by changes in the social structure of England during the early modern period” (p. 37).

Microsociolinguistic Change and the Spread of *Do*

As mentioned before, the rise and spread of the *do* periphrasis was approached by Ellegård, (1953) in a real-time study. Here we look at the emergence and development of *do* by looking at social variables at play. The use of *do* began to spread possibly influenced by western varieties of English and under the influence of the Celtic languages (McWhorter, 2009).

The spread was observed primarily in the social networks of south-eastern England during the early modern period, particularly in London. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) proposed four models to analyze the society of the time, aiming to understand the dynamics that influenced change. They ultimately chose model 3, which classifies society in four categories: upper ranks,

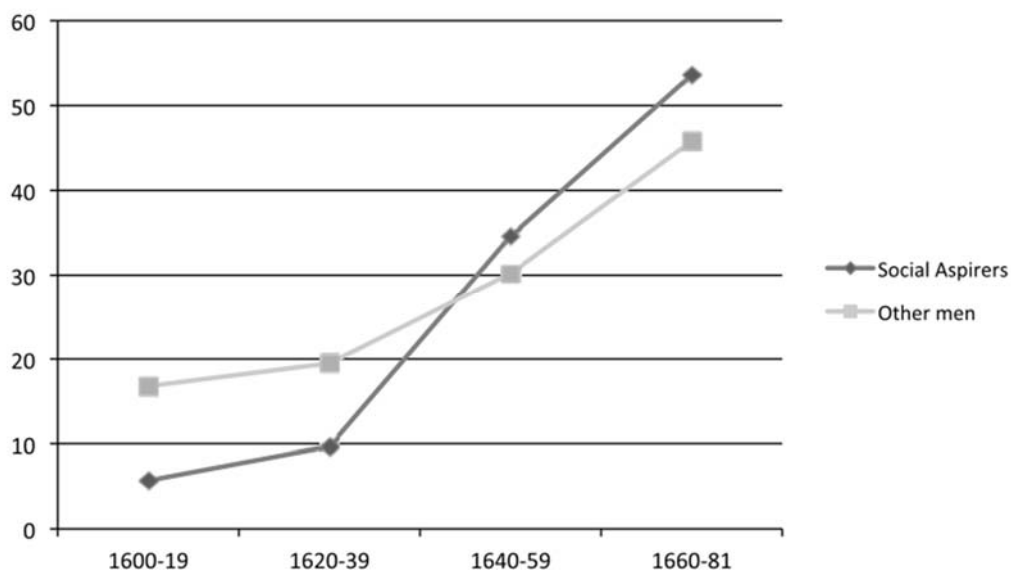
social aspirers, middle ranks and lower ranks. Important for this study is the category of the social aspirers or “New Men”, which covers a group of speakers with unique linguistic behaviors and complex social status.

The analysis reveals gender differences in language use. In affirmative statements, men initially used the construction more frequently than women. However, by the mid-17th century, there was a significant increase in female usage, especially among the East Anglian gentry, suggesting a shift in linguistic norms and practices. In negative constructions, women appear to have played a leading role in the adoption of the innovative uses of *do*.

Nurmi (1999) further explored the change and observed that the category of the social aspirers initially lagged in adopting the new linguistic forms, probably due to social insecurity in the use of the innovative structure. However, they later became leaders in spreading *do* (Figure 4.5), possibly for prestige or the perception that these linguistic innovations were fashionable.

Figure 4.5

Percentage usage of do between social aspirers and other men.



Note. Taken from McColl Millar, (2012, p. 41, based on Nurmi, 1999).

In summary, the spread of *do* reveals an interplay of social, regional, and gender factors during the early Modern English period.

Variation in the Use of Relatives

Romaine (1982) studies strategies for introducing the relative clauses in Middle Scots, spoken in Scotland around the 16th century. The study shows systematic variability in the use of the different markers that introduce the clause:

- *The thing that he saw* *that* introduces the clause
- *The thing which he saw* a *wh*-relativizer introduces the clause
- *The thing he saw* zero relativizer

Such variation was influenced by both internal and external factors related to language use. When considering internal linguistic factors, it was observed that, much like in Modern English, *that* was the preferred choice in restrictive relative clauses. In contrast, in non-restrictive clauses, which provide additional information about the antecedent, there was a preference for *wh*-relativizers and even for zero relative pronouns. An intriguing difference from Modern English was that the zero relative pronoun was also acceptable in subject relativizers, as in *I saw a man stole the money*, sometimes also present in eModE instances.

Moving on to external linguistic factors, Romaine focuses on variations in register and style across the texts. Her findings indicate that the use of *that* was more prevalent in informal texts and those representing spoken language. In contrast, *wh*-relativizers were more common in formal texts. Consequently, *wh*-relativizers were likely introduced through literate and scholarly styles. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that *wh*-relativizers initially appeared in more complex syntactic structures. Overall, Romaine's findings highlight the interdisciplinary nature of historical sociolinguistics, which seeks to integrate methodologies and insights from both historical linguistics and modern sociolinguistics.

Variation around the Genitives

The domain of possessive constructions in Modern English displays an alternation between the traditional *s-genitive* (e.g., *the car's window*), sometimes known as the "Saxon genitive", and the analytic prepositional *of-genitive* (e.g., *the window of the car*). By the 14th century, during the Middle English period, the *of-genitive* was the predominant form which, although native to English, might have been reinforced by French influence because of the corresponding *de* construction. Despite the historical dominance of this construction, the *s-genitive* experienced a rise as from the 16th century (Rosenbach, 2007, p. 154), contrary to the typological trend toward analyticity in English, where the genitive modifier is expected to follow the head by means of a prepositional phrase, resulting in a pattern of possessee-possessor (the cat of the girl). The development of *s-genitives* continued well into PDE and established itself in different varieties of English. According to Romaine (2017), this shift in the revival of the *s-genitive* was influenced by various factors

including semantic-pragmatic, syntactic, phonological, and sociolinguistic ones. Notably, animacy and referentiality seem to play crucial roles, with the *s-genitive* being favored for animate possessors and the *of-genitive* for inanimate ones. Additionally, heavy possessors tend to favor the use of the prepositional phrase.

Present-day variation around the use of these two ways is observed across contemporary varieties of English, with American English showing a higher frequency of *s-genitives*, especially with inanimate nouns, compared to British English speakers. This discrepancy might be attributed to factors such as the evolving nature of journalism, which demands greater information density and economy of expression.²³

Conclusions

The relationship between diachrony and synchrony in linguistic studies suggests that describing and attempting to explain variation can offer valuable insights into historical linguistic changes, thus emphasizing the link between the two dimensions. Notably, not all instances of linguistic variation lead to change: while many may persist over time without resulting in diachronic shifts, some may become obsolete or remain restricted. In addition, it is necessary to define and differentiate terms such as “variation”, “variety”, “variable”, and “variant”, which helps us reach a more thorough understanding of the different areas of language variability. Different areas where language is put to use have been briefly reviewed: the use of euphemism, gender-related issues, usage in the online era, language play. We have also mentioned some studies in English historical pragmatics and sociolinguistics. In all, we believe this chapter takes us back to our opening quote from chapter 1:

The most important point is that language is not a neutral entity. Those who say that language is neutral are those who have most to lose. Language always relates to specific texts and contexts and usually to a context determined by social and sociocultural factors. Second, language is also subject to change over time. An understanding of language history is essential to an understanding of language, and an understanding of language history should not, indeed cannot, be considered separately from social and cultural change. And, third, it is difficult to see language use independently from the power of those who use it or control its use or enforce its use on others. The cliché that language is power is a cliché, but the fact that it is a cliché should not obscure its truth. (Carter, 2002, p. 12)

²³ While the *s-genitive* is more prevalent in spoken English and newspaper writing, its frequency in these contexts is influenced by several factors, such as animacy and possessee length, which have varying impacts on speech and writing.

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Autor

Oliver, José María

Profesor en Lengua y Literatura Inglesas y Licenciado en Inglés con Orientación en Lingüística por la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (FaHCE) de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), egresado distinguido de ambas carreras. Especialista en Docencia Universitaria por la Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Es Doctor en Lingüística por la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Se desempeña como docente en la asignatura Historia de la Lengua Inglesa en FaHCE-UNLP. Ha participado en reuniones científicas en el ámbito local e internacional y cuenta con publicaciones en *RASAL Lingüística*, *Quintú Quimün*, *Lengua y Sociedad*, *Saga*, *Semas*, *Revista de Investigación Lingüística*, *Temas Medievales*. Sus líneas de trabajo giran principalmente en torno a fenómenos de gramática histórica del inglés y del español.

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