



Semantics - English Language history and Structure.Lecture notes for M A English

English language and literature (University of Calicut)



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What words meant once is not necessarily what they mean today. The etymologic meaning often dies out and a new meaning develops. A prayer in communion service composed in Elizabethan times begins : Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings". To the Elizabethans to prevent meant to go before with the object of leading the way (From Latin pre+venire). For us it means to go before, to obstruct the way. Here there is a change of meaning amounting almost to a reversal. The methods by which words change their meaning and the reasons behind them are manifold. The study of the historical evolution of the meanings of the words is known as semantics. The following are the chief processes of semantic.

Generalisation (widening of meaning)

This is a semantic process by which a term which at one time had a specialized and restricted meaning comes to have a wider application. Consider the following examples.

- Box : Was originally the name of a tree and the wood from it. Being rare and expensive, it was used for making chests for keeping jewels and money. For a long time this practice continued. Generally the sense grew wider with the result that a box could be of any size or of any material used for any purpose.
- Pipe : Original meant an ordinary musical instrument. Later it began to be called anything similar to the pipe, namely, any cylinder-like anything.
- Journey : Originally meant a day's journey, coming from the French jour (=a day). Journal also comes from that and meant a daily record of events. In both these words the meaning has been widened.
- Companion : Originally meant one who eats bread with another (Latin Cum-panis). As people who eat together happen to be friends or companions, it acquired the new meaning.
- Comrade : also developed its modern meaning in the same manner. The original meaning of the word was one who shares a room with another.
- Rivals : Meant river or brook. People who shared the same bank of river to obtain water often quarreled among themselves for a particular stretch of the bank.

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With lapse of time the meaning of rivals became people competing for the same object.

Humour : Was a medical term meaning fluid. Many meanings developed from this term. Soil, wet soil, fancy etc, are some of them.

Volume : To the Romans volume was a scroll of parchments. Gradually the meaning changed and it began to be used for book.

Specialisation

Specialisation is the converse of Generalisation. According to this process words which once had a wide sense, in course of time, became restricted to some special meaning. Look at the following examples.

'Fowl' had the meaning bird. It could be any bird. Chaucer in his writings used this word in the general sense. Later its meaning was restricted to a particular kind of bird.

'Deer' was used in old English to mean a wild animal. Its meaning got specialized and now it is used to refer to a particular animal.

'Wade' meant go. But in Modern English the meaning has been restricted to go through water.

'Wed' was used in OE with the meaning of pledge. It could be any pledge. Later it began to be restricted in use to refer to the pledge taken in marriage.

'Doom' was originally any judgement. But now it is used to mean damnation.

'Undertaker' was a term used to refer to any one who undertook something. The meaning changed and now it means a person who conducts the funeral.

'Meat' had as its original meaning food. The meaning got restricted and now it means flesh.

'Voyage' was originally any journey. Now it is used with the meaning sea-journey.

'Accident' had a wider range of meaning. It originally meant any happening. To-day the word is used with a much narrowed down meaning, namely, an unfortunate happening.

'Cattle' is another word that changed its meaning and considerably. In an agricultural society, living animals like cow, ox, goat etc. were one of the chief forms of property. From the beginning of the 14th century the meaning of the word narrowed down and came to mean livestock or living animals that could be kept or dealt in for profit. Afterward's the word underwent another change of meaning and now it refers to animals like cow and ox only.

Extension of Meaning

This process up to a certain point is a combination of Generalisation and Specialisation. Through some kinds of association or remembrance a word is applied to an object or an idea, other than that for which it originally stood, but it does not, as a result lose its original basic meaning. Although still it is one word, it has two or more specialized meaning. The following examples will make the point clearer. Wire was originally only a piece of wire. But now it means several things including a telegram.

Board is another word of this kind. The original meaning of the word was a plank. It has acquired many meanings including a committee.

Brand was originally a burning piece of wood taken from the fire. Then it began to mean a piece of metal made red-hot in the fire. It also developed the meaning sword.

Flour was used with the meaning of flower, that is, the finest part of anything. The words flour and flower originate from the Latin flos. These words began to be distinguished in meaning from the time of Dr Johnson.

Fast Originally meant firm or fixed as in stead-fast or fasten. Restive was used with the meaning not at rest or restless. An example is restive horse.

Polarisation (Emotional Connotation or Colouring)

A very large number of words have undergone a peculiar kind of change of meaning, which consists in the addition of what has been called emotional connotation. This means that a word that originally served as a mere statement of fact comes to be used to express the speaker's feeling with regard to the fact. F. L. Wood call this process polarization or colouring. The terms enormous, extraordinary and extravagant etymologically mean something above ordinary. They mean out of norms (Latin norma = norm or rule). In modern English these words carry the connotation of something which excites our wonder, indignation or contempt. In modern English we use enormous profits, enormous creature, extra ordinary idea extravagant behaviour etc.

Preposterous now means quite absurd. Its literal meaning originally was far backward. The sound of preposterous suggested some aversion and hence the present meaning, great and large. In OE great spider means a surprisingly big spider. So, great is a word that has some emotional meaning, but large has no such emotional meaning. Small and little have some emotional meaning, but small hasn't any such meaning.

The term gothic had a derogatory sense, synonymous with uncouth, barbarous or wanting in taste. Hence its signification, implying neither praise nor condemnation. Propaganda is one of the best examples of Polarisation. It was the first used for a committee of the Roman Catholic Church appointed for the purpose of organizing and directing mission work. Later it was extended to publicity on behalf of any cause, whether religious, political, sociological or philanthropic. Now the word has some sinister meaning. Fellow in OE mean partner, in business. In Elizabethan it mean an equal. In modern English it is a contemptuous term.

Deterioration

Quite a good number of words have gone down in repute and respectability. Some words have developed an unflattering and discreditable sense. This process by which word acquire unpleasant or unfavourable implications is known as deterioration. Knave originally meant a boy, youth or child. In ME the meaning was confined to a servant boy. It may be because these servant boys were naughty and dishonest that the word acquired its present meaning rogue. Fiend is from OE, feon meaning to hate and it meant enemy. Since the enemy of man was the devil, it got its new meaning devil.

Stench, stink the OE meaning was a good or harmless smell. In ME period these word began to be used with the meaning of offensive smell and this continues in Modern English.

Villain was originally a labourer on the manorial estate. Villains were notorious for their uncouth behaviour and were totally unrefined. So later the word began to mean coarse behaviour. But these villains were capable of wicked deeds and hence the modern meaning of it.

Harlot originally was any vagabond either male or female. Later on it was applied to whore wandering with sinister intent. Thus the modern meaning developed. Vulgar originally meant of common masses. May be because the common man's behaviour was not polished it began to develop its meaning in this direction. Notorious originally has a good meaning, but now its meaning had deteriorated.

Amelioration (Elevation of Meaning)

A number of words have risen in repute and respectability and the process by which words acquire favourable implications is known as amelioration.

'lord' and 'lady' originally meant 'bread keeper' and 'bread-kneader' respectively. Gradually these gained respectability and acquired the present meaning.

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'Steward' originally meant 'sty-keeper', that is, one who looked after the domestic animals. Later it began to be applied to the person providing for the master's table and gradually developed the present meaning. 'Fond' was the past participle of the verb *fornen* meaning 'foolish'. Later it began to mean 'foolishly fond of'. Hence the modern meaning 'tender' affectionate' etc.

'Policy'

'politics'

'politician'

These were Elizabethan words suggesting dishonesty and trickery. Later they acquired the present good meaning. 'Marshal' originally meant a horse-servant. Then its meaning developed into a title of honour. Now it means a master of servants.

'Knight' meant a servant a gradually the meaning changed into 'a loyal and chivalrous servant'. 'Nice' is another example which originally meant 'foolish'. The present meaning is anything agreeable or pleasant.

Euphemism

This is a figure of speech by which one seeks to hide the real nature of something unpleasant or repugnant by giving it a less offensive name. There are some words which have undergone a change of meaning through being frequently used in this way.

'Queer' - the ME meaning of this word was 'curious', 'strange' or 'eccentric'. The modern meaning is 'mad' or 'insane'. It had also developed the latest meaning homosexual. 'Death' is a word that causes fear in people and many euphemisms like *decease*, *passing away*, *sleeping away*, *departure* etc. are used.

'Mad' is substituted by several terms like *simple*, *lunatic*, *insane*, *deranged*, *a mental case* etc. 'Pregnant' - Expressions like 'she is in an interesting condition', 'she is carrying', 'she is expecting', 'she is in the family way' are used. *Birthday suit*, is used for 'naked', *natural son* is used for 'bastard', *go west* is used for 'to die', 'a sleeping place for cemetery' etc.

Prudery

A number of euphemistic expressions are traceable to a false sense of delicacy and refinement rather than a genuine desire to avoid giving pain or embarrassment. Examples are 'a paying guest' for 'boarder', 'a financier' for a 'money-lender', *sanitary engineer* for a 'plumber', 'meat-purveyor' for 'butcher', 'interesting event' for 'child birth', *fallen woman* for 'prostitute', 'serviette' for 'table napkin' etc.

Popular Misunderstanding

A number of words have changed their meaning as a result of popular misunderstanding or popular etymology. The following examples will tell us about this form of semantic change.

'Helpmate'. In the Bible we come across the phrase 'help meet for him', where 'meet' means 'suitable'. May be because of misunderstanding it was interpreted as 'helpmate' and the word began to stay on with this meaning.

'Shamefaced'. The word originally was 'shamefast' with the literal meaning 'rooted in shame'. By misunderstanding the word 'fast' was substituted by 'faced'.

'Premises' was used in legal documents to mean 'the aforesaid things'. The common people mistook it for buildings with the land attached to it.

'Transpire' is now used with the meaning of 'happen' or 'occur'. Its original meaning was 'to breathe through'.

'Demean' meant originally 'to conduct', but owing to a mistaken idea, it was connected with the adjective 'mean', the modern signification became attached to it.

'Pester' has developed in the same way through an etymological blunder which made it a derivative of pest. Actually it came from the French 'empestrer', meaning to 'entangle'.

'Undulating' is an interesting word belonging to this class of words. When the meaning of the word 'dulating' was enquired, the student was told by someone in all seriousness that it meant 'flat' or 'level'. Undulating meant 'hilly', so 'dulating' must obviously mean 'flat'. This kind of interpretation often arising out of ignorance is the basis of this kind of semantic change.

Proper Nouns Becoming other parts of Speech

Proper nouns often become other parts of speech. But, through force of association the precise signification of the proper noun is not always retained. The word 'dunce', for instance, is derived from the name of the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus. His opponents represented him as a dry-as-dust theorist, without true scholarship. Thus the word began to mean 'a pretender to learning', one who is uninspired and uninspiring. Later it began to mean 'blockhead'. In 'guy' the notorious Guy Fawkes is commemorated. Guy Fawkes was the Villain of the Gun Powder plot. The verb 'meander' owes its existence to the winding river of its name in Asia Minor. 'Bedlam' is an abbreviation of Bethlehem Hospital, the famous lunatic asylum of London. Shakespeare used it as a substitute for a 'madman'. 'Maudlin' is derived from the name of Mary Magdalene and now it means 'sentimental'. 'Mentor' was the adviser of Telemachus, son of Ulysses. Now this is used as a common noun. The verb 'to burke' came into use from the name of a murderer, who suffocated his victims.

Loss of Colouring

This is yet another semantic change. There are a limited number of words with a religious or political significance applied to minorities or to unpopular views. As controversy dies down, and as suspicion and odium are removed by the lapse of time, these words become depolarised and their distinctive colour is lost. The word 'Christian' was originally a term of derision, so were 'Methodist' and 'Methodism'. 'Mohammedanism' is no longer associated with the 'Evil one'. The word 'brave' has become synonymous with 'courageous' only in comparatively recent times. In the seventeenth century it had the meaning boastful when applied to human beings and 'gaudy' when applied to impersonal things.

Metaphorical Application

Almost any word or expression is capable of being used metaphorically, but in the majority of cases it is consciously and deliberately employed and it is figurative in force. We are here concerned with those words so familiar to us that until we pause to consider them we fail to realize that they are used in anything but a literal sense. Such words fall into two classes.

a) Those in which the literal sense is still preserved so that the metaphorical application constitutes what is virtually a new meaning of a new word.

b) Those in which the metaphorical sense has gained precedence over or even taken the place of the literal one. The words 'keen', 'dull', 'sharp', 'bright' etc belong to the first group. The original meaning of 'sad' was 'full'. In the Elizabethan times it meant 'sober' or 'serious'. 'Silly' originally meant 'happy'. Then it began to mean 'simple' or 'innocent' and now it means 'stupid'. In these words, their literal and fundamental meaning has long since been forgotten. There are also cases in which the literal meaning still remains, having become subordinate to the figurative. The word 'bias' is an example for this. 'Chest' is another of the same type. 'Outpost' 'hypocrite' (originally Greek 'a play actor') etc. are other examples.

We have discussed the various ways of words changing their meanings. There are a few words which do not fall conveniently into any of these methods. 'Father-in law' with the meaning of 'step - father' is one example. Some other examples are 'romance', 'fairy', 'bureau', 'miniature' and 'gossip'.

THE BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The Bible was one of the principal sources of seventeenth century culture. Under the Puritan regime there were many statutes requiring its study or its public reading. The richness of tradition provided language material and patterns for one of the masterpieces of English literature, the 'Pilgrim's Progress'. In fact the English Bible has served to keep alive English words and to fix their meanings, and it has provided language material and pattern in word, in phrase, in rhythm, not only to Bunyan, but to English writers and speakers of all subsequent time.

The two important translations of the Bible are Tyndale's translation in 1526 and the Authorised Version in 1611. The latter was more influential than any other single factor in fixing the English language and setting some kind of a standard. Throughout the next three centuries, it remained the people's book, which they heard read Sunday after Sunday and with which they became very familiar. But for a word here and there which has changed its meaning, we still feel that the English of the Bible is the English of today.

The Bible has been a strong formative influence on the style of many an eminent writer and so has played a definite part in shaping literary language. It has also provided new words which, unlike many of those which originated with the classical scholars, were early adopted into the spoken tongue and have remained in it ever since. It was Tyndal who gave the word 'congregation' in its modern sense, preferring it to the more orthodox 'church' as a translation of the Greek 'ecclesia'. Tyndal wrote under a strong Protestant tradition, and fought shy of anything which might be construed to suggest the Roman Church or to justify its claims. For the same reason, probably he preferred 'elder' to 'priest'. From Coverdale we get 'loving-kindness'. The Authorized Version performed an inestimable service by preserving and perpetuating older words like 'firmament', 'raiment', 'apparel', 'lust (desire)', which might otherwise have died out. The translators adopted a vocabulary which was predominantly native in character. They used a style, which was for the most part straightforward and simple. All these influenced the subsequent development of the English language.

The translators faced a severe problem as there was really very little choice of words to make the renderings of the Hebrew or the Greek or the Latin words or phrases. Moreover the virtue of the passage is very often in the image itself. It is when we consider this fact that we understand the real merits of the translations. St. Paul's notable image-'sounding brass or a tinkling symbol' in the opening of 1 Corinthians, chapt. 13, shows wonderful skill. Tyndale's 'Babble not much' is yet another beautiful expression, which perhaps is better than the Authorized version's use not vain repetitions'. But it is the latter rendering which has remained in the literary language. In the Lord's prayer, the Authorized version has 'Forgive us our debts'. But the Anglican prayer book, taking its rendering from Tyndale's New Testament, completed by extension in 1534, has 'Forgive us our trespasses'. ('Trespass' was originally a pure legal term). The word 'scape-goat' is Tyndale's coinage. The phrases 'Prodigal son' and 'mess of pottage' came into English not through any rendering of the scripture, but through chapter-headings in Pre-Authorized Version Bibles. The well-known phrase 'sweat of thy brow' and its imitations cannot be found in any of the translations of the Book of Genesis, where all seem to agree on 'sweat of thy face'. This expression must have survived from one of these Lollard versions of the Bible, which existed and disappeared during the fifteenth century. Tyndale had a genius for the telling phrase and the idiomatic yet beautiful rendering; and a great deal of his phraseology has remained part of the language as the King James' translators also took them over unchanged. A few words and phrases have come, the apparent inventions of the Biblical translator's 'scapegoat' already mentioned,

Cloverdale's 'tender hearted' and 'loving-kindness', the Calvinists' Geneva version in the matter of the 'mess of pottage' mentioned above, or the phrase 'the iron hath entered my soul' from the Donald Rheims Bible of the Jesuits.

The language of sacred truths is likely to be a little archaic and a little suggestive of mystery and should use a good deal of symbolizing imagery. King James' translators chose to make their English a little archaic for the time and to replace some of Tyndale's more colloquial usages by a more dignified expression. It is particularly in the Old Testament that Tyndale's gift for phrasing has passed by way of the 1611 Bible into the language. The now familiar phrases from the Authorized Version: 'the burden and heat of the day', 'drink and make merry', 'the powers that be', and 'the fatted calf', are all the work of Tyndale. He gave to the language the phrase 'glad tidings' which has remained valuable and familiar.

The habit of listening to portions of the Bible every Sunday, had its direct influence on English prose rhythm and phrasing. Even the spoken language was highly influenced by this. The man who says, "I wash my hands off the whole business", is unconsciously echoing an image, which came into the language from Pilate's action of washing his hands in public.

In the matter of Biblical English phraseology it is significant to note that in the following two versions (Chapter 11, 11 and 12) of the song of Solomon in the Authorized Version, two phrases occur which are familiar as a part of the literary language.

"For lo, the winter is past,

The rain is over and gone,

The flowers appear on the earth;

The time singing of birds is come,

And the voice of the turtles is heard in our land:

The phrase 'the rain is over and gone' occurs in Wordsworth's 'Lines written in March', and 'the voice of the turtle's is used as the title of a recent American play. Few people think these are phrases from 'The Song of Solomon'.

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTRIBUTION

Shakespeare's contribution to the English language is as great as that of the Bible translations. As a maker of English he is second to none. The most striking feature of his vocabulary is its *the greatest of all, that a wave, especially a sound or radio wave* amplitude. His vocabulary contained about 23000 words, more than three times the number used by Milton and it is supposed to be the richest vocabulary ever employed by a single individual. He wrote about a variety of subjects and touched upon so many human facts and relations that he needed such an extensive vocabulary.

Shakespeare was immensely interested, like Chaucer, Milton, Wordsworth and many more poets, in the English language. The language of Shakespeare reflects the tendencies current in his time. He constantly criticizes or satirizes linguistic and stylistic fashions among his contemporaries. He himself experimented with all kinds of innovations, dialectal adaptations and archaisms. The Elizabethans disregarded many of the grammatical relationships, they looked upon parts of speech as interchangeable. They used nouns for verbs, adjectives for adverbs, and scattered prepositions indiscriminately as their fancy chose and Shakespeare's plays abound in such expressions. In 'Antony and Cleopatra' Shakespeare used 'window', 'beggar', 'word', and 'lip' as verbs. In 'The Tempest' he used the adverb 'backward' as a noun. In 'King Lear' we have 'childed' and 'fathered'. In 'Julius Caesar' he has used 'fathered' and 'husbanded'.

In Shakespeare's language one finds not only different prepositions used to express the same relations. In modern English there is uncertainty of usage "between adverse to

'and occasionally, 'different than. In Shakespeare this kind of confusion is worse confounded. Corresponding to the present day 'repent of' in Shakespeare may be found 'repent at', 'repent for', repent in, 'repent over' repent of'. In present day English we 'say', 'speak', 'against' or 'with regard to' a person or thing. But Shakespeare uses 'by' with the verbs mentioned above. "How say you by the French lord"? 'by him and by (against) this women here what know you?', "In anything that I do know by her".

Double comparatives and double negatives are very frequent in Shakespeare. No objection was felt to expressions like 'nor hath not', 'more braver', 'worsen', 'more hotter', 'more larger', nor to expressions like 'most unkindest' and 'most heaviest'. Words already superlative in meaning were given added intensity by redundant comparative and superlative endings as in 'chiefest', 'extremist', 'perfecter', 'perfeetest', etc. Similarly, he did not always use the words where they should be according to the rules of grammar, as in "we sent to know that willing ransom he will give" for "what ransom he will willingly give", "the whole ear of Denmark" 'Lovers absent loves' for loves when lovers' for loves' when "lovers are absent".

There are a number of words which were perhaps derived from Shakespeare's Warwickshire dialect. To this class belong 'ballow' (= cudgel), 'bum = baily' (Sheriff's Officer), 'chop' (thrust with force), 'elder-gun' (popgun), 'father' (relative that gives a way bride), 'gallow' (frighten), etc. The influence of local dialect, however, is not a conspicuous feature in Shakespeare's language. His language in general, is provided by his London environment. The different levels of style, the grand, the low, and the mean appear in his writings. The dignity of the grand style is achieved by the use of the words 'Circummured', 'perdurable', 'vasticity', 'prolixious', 'cold obstruction and 'multitudinous seas incardine'. The classical and native elements are joined to produce the euphony of such a line as:

O Polished perturbation! Golden care!

From the level of the grand style, Shakespeare sinks with ease to the low style exhibited in the phrases of Doll Tear sheet or in the alehouse language of Flagstaff. He used words such as 'bullypooke', 'shuffle', 'hudge', 'lurch' and 'cog', which have the quality of modern slang. He also uses similar colloquial words such as 'bodded', 'pash', 'buss', 'frush', 'fills' and 'chinks'.

Many words appear in Shakespeare's writings for the first time. We may regard them as his original contribution. 'Bump', 'dwindle', 'ardent', 'illumine', 'orb', inauspicious, 'baseless', 'multitudinous', 'cerements', 'courtship', 'dickens', 'lonely'.

The Prefix 'en-' which was actively alive in his time was abundantly employed by Shakespeare in a number of words. 'ennesh', 'enscheduled', 'enscar', 'ensteeped', 'entame', 'entresured, etc. are only some examples. Independent words are combined into compounds such 'eye-beam', 'eye-drop', 'eye-wing', 'fire-eyes', 'after eye', 'fire-new', 'fire-robed', 'fire-work', 'dog-weary' and 'arm gaunt'.

Some words are used by Shakespeare with the original meaning they had in Latin. The word 'communicate' was used by him with the meaning of 'share'. When Lorenzo in 'Merchant of Venice' says 'Let us in and expect them coming,' he is using expect with the meaning of 'await', Enlargement' in Shakespeare meant 'freedom from confinement' and 'extravagant and crying spirit', simply 'meant wandering spirit'. It was Shakespeare who demonstrated that both the longer borrowed Latin words and the shorter native words have their own kind of usefulness and effectiveness. A clear illustration of this can be seen in the familiar passage in Macbeth:

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand! No, this my hand will
The multitudinous seas incarnadine

Making the green one red"

In the last two lines the Latin and the Anglo Saxon, diction seem deliberately set off in opposition to each other. Strength and eloquence of the monosyllabic type of English diction in King Lear's dying utterance which Bradley describes as the most pathetic speech ever written is an illustration of this:

"Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all?
Do you see this? Look on her, Look her lipz,
Look there!"

Shakespeare used many words with new meanings, taking Elizabethan science. They include 'capable' (having ability, gifted) 'censure' (adverse judgment), 'cheap' (costing little effort, accounted of little value), 'cloud' (v) (overspread with gloom), 'common' (Vulgar tongue), 'condolement' (tangible expression of sympathy), 'conveyance' (vehicle), 'dateless' (endless) 'directly' (at once), 'discharge' (emission, payment, performance) 'distemper' (illness, intoxication) 'drown' (to make completely drunk) and 'dull' (tedious).

Some of the words coined by Shakespeare later fell out of use. The following are some of them: 'congree' (agree), 'congreet' (to agree mutually), 'congrue' (to agree) 'defilement' (description), 'dislike' (disguise), 'disproperty' (to alienate a possession).

Shakespeare also introduced many phrases of his own. "public haunt of men", 'fortune's fool', 'custom stale her infinite variety', 'moated grange', and 'pomp and circumstance' are only some of them. A multitude of other phrases is found in his writings, which have entered into the texture of the diction of literary as well as daily conversation. A number of such expressions come from "Hamlet". Hoist with his own petard', 'mind's eye', 'the undiscovered country', 'the observed of all observers', 'sweets to the sweet', 'to be or not to be', 'have one's pound of flesh', 'a Shylock', 'an itching palm', 'Falstaffian dimensions', 'full of sound and fury', 'a Daniel come to judgment', 'beggar description'. 'Braze new world', 'sterner stuff a "foregone conclusion" etc. are familiar expressions which have been regarded as the idioms of the English language. The Shakespearean phrase 'to out Herod Herod' has become a model after which a number of similar expressions have been created (to out – Bentley Bentley, to out Milton Milton, out Darwin Darwin, to out Macaulay Macaulay etc.)

Shakespeare's attitude towards English grammar seems to be rather indifferent. His contribution consisted more in phrasal enrichment than to grammatical correctness. We can find an irregularity and a freedom in his use of grammar as in his use of words. We can also observe the irregular use of the final 'e' in one case. Even more striking in the use of the letters 'u' and 'v', 'i' and 'j'. Besides these, we also find many constructions which are archaic in character and, here and there, a construction which is ungrammatical. Shakespeare's language is not 'good enough' for present day use.

What has been discussed is only short account of the contribution of Shakespeare to the enrichment of the English language. Mario Pei says thus: it was he more than any of his contemporaries with the possible exceptions of the compilers of the King James' Bible, who gave the world a full realization of the boundless potentialities of the English Language.

CHAUCE AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Chaucer must be thought of as a very considerable influence in the formation of poetic diction. He was a keen critic of poetic method and usage. He was also a most interested student of language. In his 'Reeve's Tale' he portrays their native dialect when alone together. This is probably the first time that an English author showed a conscious interest in dialect as opposed to educated speech which was to become the received standard, and saw the possibilities of provincialism in speech as a source for humour and vividness. Chaucer also

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devoted a short humorous poem to the chastising of his scribe for his haste and negligence in copying his poems, and at the end of his greatest poem, 'Troilus and Criseyde', inserted a prayer for its correct copying and the avoidance of error of meter or language.

It is often wrongly supposed that Chaucer had a dominant influence on the development of the English language. But as has been seen, no writer, especially before the rise of printing, could have much effect on the language as a whole; and it was inevitable that the educated London speech which Chaucer happened to be born into should become the basis of the modern received standard. (It was from the east Midland Dialect that modern English developed, and it was also Chaucer's dialect). Chaucer did much for the tradition of the language of English poetry. It is interesting to notice that in asking his contemporary Gower at the end of his 'Troilus and Criseyde' to 'correct' his work, Chaucer was using the verb to correct as a literary term three centuries before Dryden first introduced the corresponding adjective 'correct' into the language of literary criticism.

Chaucer was a court poet and his usage may reflect the speech of the court and to a certain extent literary tradition. His influence must be thought of as lending support in a general way to the dialect of the region to which he belonged.

SPENSER AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Spenser devoted his first considerable poem 'The Shepheard's Calendar' to linguistic experiment in great part. He was a keen but romantic student of Chaucer. For finding the appropriate language for his 'Faerie Queen' he tried out various kinds of archaism in style, accident and vocabulary. He also experimented with dialect words found in earlier authors, with rustic provincial terms heard among the contemporaries, and even coined an occasional word. Nothing permanent came of all this, though his pastoral had its influence on English poetry for a time. But his 'Faerie Queen' provided the language of poetry with 'derring do' and 'faerie' itself and the language of prose and ordinary speech with 'blatant'. Though this was the only word that fully passed into the language as a whole, Spenser's 'braggadocio', is still in literary use. But in the making of romantic English poetry the 'Faerie Queen' has had a considerable part. The Old French word 'faerie' (= enchantment or the place of enchantment) first appears in Middle English in a mixed and classical and Celtic romance called 'Sir Orfeo'. Spenser took over this phrase 'land of faerie' for his own poem, embellishing the word 'faerie' with all kinds of romantic connotations so that it has become through his influence a specially productive word in later English poetry. Spenser was a working critic of the language whose labours were productive in diction for succeeding poetry.

Among poets who made use of old words to enlarge poetical vocabulary, the most important was Spenser. His coinage include 'bellibone' (a fair maid), 'chirru', 'cosset' (lamb), 'delive' (pit, den), 'dit' (song), 'seruz', 'squall' (to cry) and 'whizzled' (wrinkled). Some words were simply adaptations and derivatives of old words, such as 'baneful', 'briny', 'changeful', 'drear', 'hapless', 'oaten', 'sunshiny', or 'wolfish'. Sidney criticized Spenser for the 'framing of his stile to an old rustic language'. Ben Jonson went so far as to say that 'Spenser in affecting the ancients writ no language'. But the poet also had his defenders. They pointed out the fact that the same method of enriching the language was being used in France. The words English acquired in this way are not so numerous as those obtained from outside. But to Spenser and others who shared his view we owe a great number of words. 'Belt', 'bevy', 'craggy', 'dapper', 'forthright', 'glen', 'glee', 'glance', 'surly', 'blandishments', 'birthright', 'changeling', 'elfin', 'endear', 'disrobe', 'don', 'enshire', 'drizzling', 'fleecey', 'grovel', 'gaudy', 'gloomy', 'merriment', 'rancorous', 'shady', 'verdant', 'wakeful', 'wary' and 'witless'.

In the writings of Spenser and Shakespeare, and their contemporaries generally, we are aware of the existence of a standard literary language free from the variations of local dialect. They wrote a common English without dialect idiosyncrasies.

Apart from the outstanding position of Milton as a model and exemplar of English poetic diction, he is of interest in at least three ways to the student of the English language. He had ideas on spelling, with which he experimented, he was a student of language and a supreme practitioner in it, and he has added a number of words and phrases to the literary vocabulary, if not to the spoken.

Though he was not a spelling reformer, he was keenly concerned about spelling in his later life for aesthetic reasons (The manuscript of the first Book of "Paradise Lost" prepared under his dictation and the moles of errors made by the first printer in sometimes failing to carry out Milton's instructions in the matter of orthography are evidences). He tried to indicate a distinction in spelling, for instance, between the stressed and the unstressed forms of the personal pronouns 'mee', 'hee', 'shee', and their, for the emphatic forms, and me, he, she, and their for the weaker ones. He took measures to ensure that the reader alone should know by the spelling whether the ending of weak past participles in-d-was to be pronounced as a separate syllable '-ed' or not: and he also insisted on ending such words with a t-rather than '-d' when ever a natural pronunciation suggested it. Milton preferred the form nearest to the actual sound. He used 'Sovran' for 'sovereign' and 'artic' for 'arctic', and 'inland' for 'island'. Milton had no influence on English spelling. His printers did not carry out his ideas, and these ideas were not consistently or thoroughly worked out.

In a learned age when Latin was still the language of philosophy and science, Milton voiced his preoccupation with the possibilities of the native language and proclaimed his faith in English having potentially all the qualities needed for the highest poetry. Milton proved himself a critic of the linguistic usages of some of his contemporary poets. 'Anarch', 'archangelic', 'Satanic' etc. are Milton's creations. The word 'Pandemonium' was coined by Milton to describe the palace built in hell by the devils, but now this word is used to refer to a place of noise and tumult. 'Precious bane' (gold), 'from noon to dewy eve', the gorgeous east', 'a heaven on earth', 'confusion worse confounded', 'the human face divine', 'barbaric' pearl and gold', writ large', 'fresh woods and pastures new', fallen on evil days', etc. are some of the Miltonic expressions. While 'boyhood', and 'girlhood' belong to the 18th century, 'hardihood' is supposed to have been coined by Milton. He also popularized words like 'argument', 'complicated', 'devote', 'obnoxious', 'sagacious', 'officious', sublime etc.

Milton's English has often been objected to as extremely Latinate. But he was only trying to convey the effective meaning of the Latin words to his 'fit audience', 'though' few. It is true that Milton's syntax is not fully intelligible to anyone not conversant with Latin constructions which are reproduced in English. But what puzzles or strikes as unnatural to modern readers would have seemed most natural and appropriate to his contemporaries.

Thus, inspite of being one of the grandmasters of English poetry and being the owner of the 'grand style', Milton has left some notable marks on the English language.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

British English and American English are one language but in the more than three centuries that have passed since the first ^{which colonies established by pilgrim fathers.} settlements, each has developed in divergent ways- both in its generally accepted 'standard' forms and in dialects. American English-both speech and written language have developed new elements in vocabulary, phraseology, structure and pronunciation. But many olden usages of British English have been preserved in America which have disappeared from Britain.

The differences between these two major varieties of English are not very great. Most British and American speakers can understand each other quite easily, though pronunciation might cause a few problems. The written language is very similar in the two countries. The

main differences between these two varieties of English may be grouped under four headings: Grammar, Vocabulary, spelling and Pronunciation Grammar.

(a) Where British people use a present perfect tense in some cases the Americans use a simple past tense.

e.g. British: He ^{has} just gone out. ^{present perfect}

American: He just went out. ^{past}

(b) In British English, the auxiliary 'do' is not used with the verb 'have'. But in American English it is used.

British: Have you got a problem?

American: Do you have problem?

(c) The American past participle of 'get' is 'gotten', it is 'got' in British English.

British: I have never really got to know him.

American: I have never really gotten to know him.

(d) The subjunctive is more common in American English compared to British English.

British: It is essential that he ^{should} be informed. ^{subjunctive mood}

American: It is essential that he be informed.

(e) Americans sometimes use 'his' where the British say 'one's'

British: One should love one's country

American: One should love his country

(f) British speakers often say 'I have done', 'I can do', 'I might do' etc. in cases where Americans would just say 'I have', 'I can', 'I might' etc.

(g) There are some differences in the use of prepositions and adverb particles, some examples are given below:

British	American
Check something	check something out
Do something again	do something over
Fill in a form	fill in/out a form
Meet somebody	meet with somebody
Protest against something	protest something
Stay at home	stay home
Visit somebody	visit with somebody
Monday to Friday	Monday through Friday

Vocabulary

Some different words are used for the same idea, or the same words have different meanings.

British	American
Flat	→ Apartment
(motor) car	automobile
pub	bar
taxi	cab
tin	can

sweets	→	candy
cupboard		closet
mad		crazy
sweet		dessert
chemist's		drugstore
lift		elevator
ground floor		first floor
petrol		gas
dynamo		generator
main road		highway
Interval		intermission
angry		mad
post		mail
postman		mail carrier
engine		motor
film		movie
trousers		pants
constable		patrolman
nursing home		private hospital
rail way		rail road
public toilet		rest room
timetable		schedule
underpants		shorts
ill		sick
shop		store
cooker		stove
rubbish		trash
van, lorry		truck
holiday(s)		vacation

Spelling

(a) In American English, Final 't' is not usually doubled in an unstressed syllable.

British - traveller, levelling

Amer. - traveler, leveling

(b) Some words end in - 'ter' in American English, and in - 'tre' in British English.

British - theatre, metre, centre

Amer. - theater, meter, center

(c) Some words end in - 'our' in British English, but in - 'or' in American English.

British - labour, honour, colour

Amer. - Labor, honor, color

(d) Some words end in - 'our' in British English, but in - 'or' in American English.

British - catalogue, dialogue, analogue

American : catalog, dialog, analog

(e) Many verbs in American English end in '-ize', but in British English they end either, '-ise' or in '-ize'.

British : realize or realise

American : realize

(f) The spellings are different in some individual words

British	American
Aluminium	aluminum
Analyse	analyze
Cheque (blank)	check
Defence	defense
Install	install
Jewellery	jewelry
Offence	offense
Pyjamas	pajamas
Plough	plow
Pretence	pretense
Programme	program
Tyre	tire.

Pronunciation

Only a few important changes in the 'standard' American and 'standard' British speech are given below:

(a) vowels are often nasalized in American English. But vowels are not has a analyze in British pronunciation.

(b) Most vowels are pronounced a little differently in British and American English.

(i) The vowel /au/ as in 'home' is pronounced with a monophthong in American English.

(ii) The vowel /au/ as in 'post' is pronounced in American words without lip-rounding and sounds like the vowel /a/ as in 'palm'.

(iii) The vowel /a:/ as in 'father' is pronounced as /æ/ in American English.

(c) In standard British English, 'r' is only pronounced before a vowel. IN American English 'r' is pronounced in all position in a word, and it changes the quality of a vowel that comes before it

(d) Words ending - 'tle' are pronounced with /tail/ in British English and /-tl/ in American English.



(e) 'Borough' and 'thorough' are pronounced differently in British and American English

/bʌrɪd/ - /bʌrdu/

/θʌrɪd/ - /θʌrdu/