



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE. GREAT VOWEL SHIFT INFLUENCE.

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Abstract

This article examines the historical part of English language with explanation of Great Vowel Shift and shows up the importance of it in formation of modern English language.

Key words

Great Vowel Shift, accents and dialects in English, Otto Jespersen's scientific observation, ancient formation of English language dialects.

Introduction

In the first place, learning a new language is one of the most necessary aspects of human development. New language is a new door from which people look outside the world. It is a new point of view and the beginning of new life.

While learning the system of a new language, its grammatical structure, four main linguistic skills it is very crucial to learn its correct usage. On the other hand learning not only the current system of it, but also learning the history of that language means a lot.

When it comes to English language – this is the other huge topic which cannot be explained and learned in two words. Because, English is the Language of International Communication and English is not the most spoken language in the world, it is the official language in 53 countries and is spoken as a first language by around 400 million people worldwide. But that is not all, it is also the most common second language in the world. This power of English language is obvious for everyone so that its history is also not an exception.

As Derek Alton Walcott, a Saint Lucian poet and playwright who received the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature, wrote : “ The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the Imagination: it is the property of the language itself.” These words explain that English language is a language full of imagination and without barriers. That is why the history of this powerful and beautiful English language is an imprescriptible part of learning.

The Great Vowel Shift takes an impressive place in the history of English language.

Main part





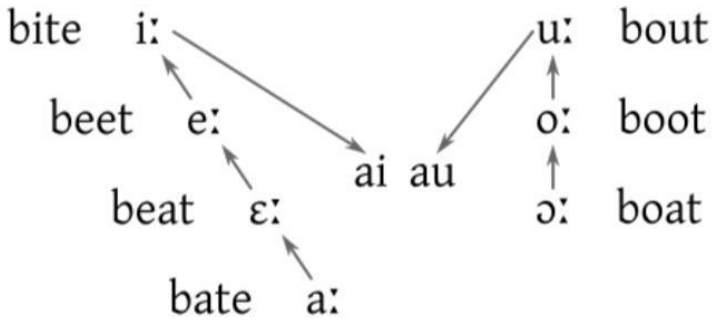
Mainly the Great Vowel Shift was a process of changing long sounds of the language into short ones. This change was primarily between 1400 and 1700, beginning in southern England and today having influenced effectively all dialects of English. So why this change was very important to study?? Because it influenced all the dialects of English language that we know today.

The first scientist who studied the Great Vowel Shift was Otto Jespersen – Danish linguist who specialized in the grammar of the English language. Steven Mithen described him as “one of the greatest language scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”

Jespersen was an important figure in the international language movement. He also worked with the International Auxiliary Language Association. He was most widely recognized for some of his books. Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin (1922) is considered by many to be his masterpiece. A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles (1909–1949), concentrated on morphology and syntax, and Growth and Structure of the English Language (1905) is a comprehensive view of English by someone with another native language, and still in print, over 70 years after his death and more than 100 years after publication

Jespersen became a member of the International Phonetic Association, then called The Phonetic Teachers’ Association. In fact the idea of creating a phonetic alphabet that could be used by every language was first put forward by Jespersen. The phonetic alphabet was very useful to be aware of different types of pronunciation and accents, that is why Otto Jespersen studied the shift of sounds.

This is the main form of sound change:



A striking example of the Great Vowel Shift can be:
MEET was pronounced like MATE





HOUSE was pronounced like HOOS

WIFE was pronounced like WEEF

TO was pronounced like TOE

Sound [i:] changed into [aɪ]

Sound [e:] changed into [i:] and etc.

Moreover, this sound change influenced the dialects. What is a dialect? According to Oxford Languages Dictionary, dialect is a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group. Great example are American and British vocabulary.

For instance :

In American English "CANDY"; in British "SWEETS"

In American English "STOVE"; in British "COOKER"

In American English "JELLY" ; in British "JAM"

In American English "DESSERT" ; in British "PUDDING"

In American English "COOKIE" ; in British "BISCUIT".

Conclusion

According to Lyle Richard Campbell, an American scholar and linguist known for his studies of indigenous American languages, especially those of Central America, and on historical linguistics in general, sound change is something very necessary and important. He wrote: "An understanding of sound change is truly important for historical linguistics in general, and this needs to be stressed—it plays an extremely important role in the comparative method and hence also in linguistic reconstruction, in internal reconstruction, in detecting loanwords, and in determining whether languages are related to one another."

The Great Vowel Shift was an impressive part of History of English language. Because of the fact that it was primarily developed in 14th century this is so historic and main period of it. The impact of The Great Vowel Shift not only on pronunciation, but also on the dialects of English language shows its importance and this change, undoubtedly, made English language very colourful and flexible with its different accents and various dialects.

Why it is important to study the history of English language, or Old English? It is useful to learn about Old English because the language had a defining impact on history. Some of the most impactful texts in the English language were also written in Old English, such as the epic poem Beowulf and "The Seafarer."

Learning a new language can be sometimes very boring or not as easy as one imagined, but only thing which is required is desire. Desire to learn new side of life by learning history and modern form of any new language.





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