

MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Modern English is conventionally defined as the English language since about 1450 or 1500. Distinctions are commonly drawn between the Early Modern Period (roughly 1450-1800) and Late Modern English (1800 to the present). The most recent stage in the evolution of the language is commonly called Present-Day English. However, as Diane Davies notes, “Linguists argue for a further stage in the language, beginning around 1945 and called ‘World English,’ reflecting the globalization of English as an international lingua franca,” (Davies 2005). “Old English (used until the 12th century) is so different from Modern English that it has to be approached as we would a foreign language. Middle English (used until the 15th century) is very much more familiar to modern eyes and ears, but we still feel that a considerable linguistic difference separates us from those who wrote in it--Chaucer and his contemporaries. “During the 15th century, a huge amount of change affected English pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, so that Shakespeare would have found Chaucer almost as difficult to read as we do. But between Jacobethan times and today the changes have been very limited. Although we must not underestimate the problems posed by such words as buff jerkin, finical, and thou, we must not exaggerate them either. Most of early Modern English is the same as Modern English,” (David Crystal, *Think on My Words: Exploring Shakespeare’s Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2008). “The early part of the modern English period saw the establishment of the standard written language that we know today. Its standardization was due first to the need of the central government for regular procedures by which to conduct its business, to keep its records, and to communicate with the citizens of the land. Standard languages are often the by-products of bureaucracy ... rather than spontaneous developments of the populace or the artifice of writers and scholars. “John H. Fisher (1977, 197)] has argued that standard English was first the language of the Court of Chancery, founded in the 15th century to give prompt justice to English citizens and to consolidate the King’s influence in the nation. It was then taken up by the early printers, who adapted it for other purposes and spread it wherever their books were read, until finally it fell into the hands of school teachers, dictionary makers, and grammarians. ... Inflectional and syntactical developments in this early Modern English are important, if somewhat less spectacular than the phonological ones. They continue the trend established during Middle English times that changed our grammar from a synthetic to an analytic system,” (John Algeo and Carmen Acevedo Butcher,

The Origins and Development of the English Language, 7th ed. Harcourt, 2014).

“The printing press, the reading habit, and all forms of communication are favourable to the spread of ideas and stimulating to the growth of the vocabulary, while these same agencies, together with social consciousness ... work actively toward the promotion and maintenance of a standard, especially in grammar and usage”. “From its very early days, the Royal Society concerned itself with matters of language, setting up a committee in 1664 whose principal aim was to encourage the members of the Royal Society to use appropriate and correct language. This committee, however, was not to meet more than a couple of times. Subsequently, writers such as John Dryden, Daniel Defoe, and Joseph Addison, as well as Thomas Sheridan’s godfather, Jonathan Swift, were each in turn to call for an English Academy to concern itself with language—and in particular to constrain what they perceived as the irregularities of usage,” (Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, “English at the Onset of the Normative Tradition. “By 1776 the English language had already undergone most of the syntactic changes which differentiate Present-Day English (henceforth PDE) from Old English (henceforth OE) ... Older patterns of word order with the verb at the clause end or in second constituent position had long been replaced by an unmarked order framed by the sequence subject-verb-object or subject-verb-complement. A subject noun phrase was virtually obligatory in simple clauses other than imperatives.

“Great simplifications had taken place in morphology, so that the noun and adjective had already reached their present, vestigial inflectional systems, and the verb nearly so. The number and frequency of prepositions had expanded greatly, and prepositions now served to mark a variety of nominal functions. Prepositions, particles and other words frequently joined simple lexical verbs to form group verbs like ‘speak to,’ ‘make up,’ ‘take notice of.’ Such formations as the prepositional and indirect passives had become commonplace.

“The complexity of the English auxiliary system had grown to encompass a wide range of mood and aspect marking, and much of its present systemic structure was already in place, including the dummy auxiliary do. Some patterns involving finite and nonfinitely subordinate clauses had been rare or impossible in OE; by 1776 most of the present repertoire was available. However, the English of 1776 was linguistically by no means the same as that of the present day”. “As for the view of English beyond Britain, the tentative optimism of the 18th century gave way to a new view of ‘global English,’ an outlook in which confidence turned into triumphalism. A turning point in this emergent idea occurred in January 1851 when the great philologist Jacob Grimm declared to the Royal Academy in Berlin that English ‘may be called justly a language of the world: and seems, like the English nation, to be destined to reign in future with still more extensive sway over all parts of the globe.’ ...

“Dozens of comments expressed this wisdom: ‘The English tongue has become a rank polyglot, and is spreading over the earth like some hardy plant whose seed is sown by the wind,’ as Ralcy Husted Bell wrote in 1909. Such views led to a new perspective on multilingualism: those who did not know English should set promptly about learning it!” Modern English is typically defined as the English used after the Great Vowel Shift, which took place approximately between the late 15th century and 18th century (we’ll cover this more shortly). Before Modern English came Middle English, and before Middle English came, you guessed it, Old English.

Modern English and Old English are so different you wouldn’t even know they were the same language, and if you picked up an original copy of Beowulf, it’s unlikely you’d understand it. The emergence of Modern English coincided with the invention of the printing press, which saw the mass production of books and newspapers and required a standardized

language (i.e., an agreed-upon set of spelling, grammar, etc.), and with the spread and adoption of English worldwide due to British colonization. Today there are thousands of dialects of Modern English spoken all over the world, such as American English, British English, Australian English, Indian English, and more. The chief differences between RP, as defined above, and a variety of American English, such as Inland Northern (the speech form of western New England and its derivatives, often popularly referred to as General American), are in the pronunciation of certain individual vowels and diphthongs. Inland Northern American vowels sometimes have semiconsonantal final glides (i.e., sounds resembling initial w, for example, or initial y). Aside from the final glides, that American accent shows four divergences from British English: (1) the words *cod*, *box*, *dock*, *hot*, and *not* are pronounced with a short (or half-long) low front sound as in British *bard* shortened (the terms *front*, *back*, *low*, and *high* refer to the position of the tongue); (2) words such as *bud*, *but*, *cut*, and *rung* are pronounced with a central vowel as in the unstressed final syllable of *sofa*; (3) before the fricative sounds s, f, and θ (the last of these is the *th* sound in *thin*) the long low back vowel a, as in British *bath*, is pronounced as a short front vowel a, as in British *bad*; (4) high back vowels following the alveolar sounds t and d and the nasal sound n in words such as *tulips*, *dew*, and *news* are pronounced without a glide as in British English; indeed, the words sound like the British *two lips*, *do*, and *nooze* in *snooze*. (In several American accents, however, these glides do occur.)

The 24 consonant sounds comprise six stops (plosives): p, b, t, d, k, g; the fricatives f, v, θ (as in *thin*), ð [eth] (as in *then*), s, z, ʃ [esh] (as in *ship*), ʒ (as in *pleasure*), and h; two affricatives: tʃ (as in *church*) and dʒ (as the j in *jam*); the nasals m, n, ŋ (the sound that occurs at the end of words such as *young*); the lateral l; the postalveolar or retroflex r; and the semivowels j (often spelled y) and w. These remain fairly stable, but Inland Northern American differs from RP in two respects: (1) r following vowels is preserved in words such as *door*, *flower*, and *harmony*, whereas it is lost in RP; (2) t between vowels is voiced, so that *metal* and *matter* sound very much like British *medal* and *madder*, although the pronunciation of this t is softer and less aspirated, or breathy, than the d of British English. Pitch, or musical tone, determined chiefly by the rate of vibration of the vocal cords, may be level, falling, rising, or falling-rising. In counting one, two, three, four, one naturally gives level pitch to each of these cardinal numerals. But if people say I want two, not one, they naturally give two a falling tone and one a falling-rising tone. In the question *One?* rising pitch is used. Word tone is called *accent*, and sentence tone is referred to as *intonation*. The end-of-sentence cadence is important for expressing differences in meaning. Several end-of-sentence intonations are possible, but three are especially common: falling, rising, and falling-rising. Falling intonation is used in completed statements, direct commands, and sometimes in general questions unanswerable by yes or no (e.g., I have nothing to add; keep to the right; who told you that?). Rising intonation is frequently used in open-ended statements made with some reservation, in polite requests, and in particular questions answerable by yes or no (e.g., I have nothing more to say at the moment; let me know how you get on; are you sure?). The third type of end-of-sentence intonation, first falling and then rising pitch, is used in sentences that imply concessions or contrasts (e.g., some people do like them [but others do not]; don't say I didn't warn you [because that is just what I'm now doing]). Intonation is on the whole less singsong in American than in British English, and there is a narrower range of pitch. Everywhere English is spoken, regional accents display distinctive patterns of intonation.

გამოყენებული ლიტერატურა:

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RESUME

The English language spoken and written in the 16th and 17th centuries has many names: it is variously known as Renaissance English, as the language of Tudor and Stuart England, and as Shakespeare's English. These labels reflect the various criteria used to identify the period. This bibliography follows the common practice of referring to it as Early Modern English (1500–1700), in distinction to Middle English (c. 1150–1500) and Late Modern English (1700–1900). The Middle English period is often characterized as an era of dialects because the textual evidence that has come down to us shows extensive regional variation. In the early modern period, the language of many forms of writing converged to the extent that it could no longer be localized. Cultural historians associate this development with "modernity," which is also reflected in regional mobility, urban as opposed to rural residence, and contact with mass media, notably through the rise of printing. More people were able to read than those who could also write at the time, but full literacy increased as the period advanced.