

MAJOR INFLUENCES ON ENGLISH VOCABULARY

Abstract

Language is God's special gift to mankind. Language is a means of communication. Without language, man would have remained only a dumb animal. Patanjali, the linguist, says "Language is that human expression which is uttered out by speech organs". In the Encyclopedia Britannica, "Language defined as a system of conventional spoken or written symbols through which human beings, as members of a social group particulars in its culture, communicate." English is the most popular of the world languages. It has been widespread almost in all countries of the world. English language as it exists today, has great potential for becoming an international medium of communication.

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English is the most commonly spoken language in the world. It is rich and ever-being developed. It is ever growing and its doors are ever open to new words and usages. For historical, political as well as economic reasons, English language is voiced or read by the largest of people in the world.

I. LATIN INFLUENCE

It has already been accepted that English is far from being a pure language. No doubt, its basic is Anglo- Saxon, but it has borrowed words from all the possible sources. There are words from the Scandinavian, French, Latin, Greek and from other languages of Europe as well as from the languages of other continents. The most important foreign contribution has come from Latin, French and Scandinavian.

Let us discuss the element of Latin in it. According to line and manner in which Latin words were introduced in English language, they fall under the six main heads:

- Before the Angels, Saxons and Jutes invaded England, they had been in close contact with Roman Empire and consequently several Latin words were brought by them to England. They were mainly words about military, government, and trading terms. The words Street (old Eng. stract) is derived from the Latin word starta. Similarly, from the Latin words Caseus. We have the old English cese and in modern English Chese.
- The coming of Christian culture of England in a Latin form with Roman missionaries in the 7th century brought many Latin words about religion and church, of which some have words like minister (from Latin Monasterium), work (from Latin manaschus), bishop (from Latin episcopus) found their way into English vocabulary.
- Several Latin words gave English terms which have remained with us, such are Mass from Latin missa, since it was only from their Latin forms that old English adopted them. Some words about Latin learning and science which come to England in 10th century. The words from medicine and herbal recipes were introduced in English. Even today most of the words about herbal recipes are in Latin.
- Because of literary translations, many equivalents of Latin were coined in English. The Latin word Euangelium is a compound of two Greek words Eu-well and angelium - news. The old English word Godspell is the original of gospel in modern English.
- During the Middle English period, the Latin words were introduced mainly in the sphere of religion, law, medicine and also a number of abstract terms, but most of them were only second hand coming through French. So, they do not count Latin as other words do. Such words are Pauper, Proviser, Equivalent, Index, Scribe, Smile, memento, collect and soon.
- In the Renaissance period, Latin influence is seen in the English revival of classical learning and consequently brought many Latin words in English. They were specially of literature and art. The scholars used to speak and write on Latin. So, Some Latin words came in English as a result of this. It is said that word Castigate, Critic and Auspicious. Shakespeare might have been used from the conversation of scholars of Latin.

The books of grammar were written on Latin or under the direct influence of Latin standard. So many grammatical Latin terms came to English. There is the influence of Latin prosody in English verse. After Renaissance or in modern English period, following Latin words were introduced in English and most of them have come common

to English vocabulary. These are: Exist, veins, Aren, Medium, Focus, Album, Circus and So on.

II. GREEK INFLUENCE

It is hardly possible to separate Greek from Latin influence. It was always through Latin that Greek words came to English. The English language has learnt many technical terms from the Greek language. Moreover, there are so many Greek elements which have become adapted in the English language for technical terms. For example, Graph writing, Phone (Sound) etc. Thus, such words for new inventions as telephone (tele in far and phone means sound), Phonograph (Sound ring) similarly, the word Appendicitis in which the first portion is Latin followed by Greek words such as atom, character, chorus, cycle and acrobat Greek words.

Greek, having been the European language has fully and actively developed the expressions of philosophic ideas. Most of the philosophical terms have come into English in Latin dress have been founded upon classical Greek origin. For example, the word Phenomenal, an adjective made with Latin *al* suffix from Latin Phenomenon (that which appears). the phenomenal world meaning "The world as it appears physically but this word has become synonym for extraordinary, so that we sometimes hear the expression Phenomenal Weather. Before the close of Middle Ages, English acquired many words from Greek. For Example, Bible from Greek word *Biblos* (which means a book), diphthong, harmony Comedy, Ecstasy tragedy, elegy, dilemma, melodrama, Pathos, alphabet, drama irony, theory, epic, prologue, dialogue and climax.

The 17th century gave Orchestra, Pandemonium Museum, Dogma and clinic. The 18th century provided Philander and the next century gave the words like acrobat and agnostic.

We also make many new words with the help of Greek prefixes such as anti, hyper, post, ultra etc. For example: anti British, hyper-sensitive, ultra-red, ultra-modern etc. For example, the words psychology (from *psycho*-mind) and neurology (from the Greek *neuro* mens nerve) are recent examples.

The rediscovery of ancient classical Greek brought new way of looking at life in England. It brought with it a wealth of new thoughts and new expressions. Thus, the Greek language like Latin and French has greatly enriched English vocabulary. It was very humorously said, "Greek dissent and beer came to England in one year."

III. FRENCH INFLUENCE

French along with Latin is regarded as one of the great formative influences on the English vocabulary. Many words have come from French during the Middle English period. They form a substantial part of English language as it exists today.

In the Middle English period, when several words were introduced, the tendency was to preserve the foreign pronunciation and distribution of accent. Social and political and religious intercourse had started between French and England even before the Norman Conquest. The Saxon King Ethelred had married Norman princess and eventually his son led to the introduction of French words in England. The word *Castel* came into English from French.

After Norman Conquest, the influence of French naturally grew and soon we have words like *Foreste* (Forest), *Tur* (tower), *Market*, *rent*, *justise* (justice). The French was now the language of government on very soon the Church, the law courts and trade etc. acquired several French terms. In a chronicle of this period, we find French words like *bataille* (battle), *Curt* (Court), *Counterse* (Counters), *pais* (peace) etc.

In the 13th century, legal words like *plaintiff*, *defendant*, *privilege* find a place in English language because French was used in law courts. In this century, due to the prestigious position enjoyed by the university of Paris. French exercised considerable influence in method of culture and literature. Several cultural terms from French were incorporated in English.

Many terms of religious significance were also added to English around this time. We have words like *cardinal*, *prior*, *grace* and so on. We also find domestic words like *basin*, *furnis* (furnace), *lamp*, *beast* etc.

The 14th century saw a great increase in the number of French words in English, the words which were previously familiar in the classes only become integral part of English language in this century. In his prologue, Chaucer used dozens of them. We have words like *April*, *March*, *Licour* etc. Middle English period contact with French continued and it resulted in the addition of many new words. e.g., *Amateur*, *Chef*, *Valet*, *garage* etc.

In the 16th century, we find French words about social and trading terms. We find words like *Pilot*, *Partism*, *Coche*, *Volley*, *machine* and so on. This period was not outstanding for French influence. The 17th century is very important as far as influence of French vocabulary English is concerned. The return of Charles II from France to throne of England in 1660, brought much culture influence to England. In Restoration comedies and in works of Dryden, French influence is clearly seen. In this period, we have such words added to English as *burlesque*, *Muslim*, *group*, *quart* and so on.

The 18th century borrowed more words from French. specially the diplomatic and military terms. The words like *guillotine*, *Regime*, *Corps*, *Depot*, *Salon*, *Canteen*, *Picnic*, *burlesque* and so on were added to English.

The 19th century was perhaps the richest period in French loans. Such words were incorporated in English as *Chiffonier*, *Renaissance*, *restaurant*, *shade*, *menu* and so on.

Lastly, even in the 20th century, the process of borrowing words has continued added. Even the language of journalism has carried the fashions of using French expressions. it gives one furiously to think a French expression. Though such phrases are good for suitable readers only but the fact remains that the French has remained one of the great fundamental influences on the English vocabulary.

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