
: STRUCTURE :

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-----**3.0 OBJECTIVES**

After going through this unit, you should be able to;

- brief history of English Language,
 - various influences on English Language.
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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Historians of the English language distinguish three main stages of its development. The first is the Old English (The Anglo-Saxon) Period. This period extends from about the year 600 AD to 1100 AD. This is followed by the Middle English Period from 1100 AD to 1500 AD and finally there is the period of Modern English from 1500 AD onwards. These divisions need not be water-tight for the development of a language is never sudden

but is a gradual process. However it can be seen that at times this process of change is more rapid due to a variety of reasons.

3.2 THE OLD ENGLISH

The earliest inhabitants of the British islands were the Britons and they spoke a form of Celtic language. It had all similarities with the language spoken in some districts of Northern France which is now called Britain. This language was in popular use throughout the whole of Roman occupation from 55 BC to 410 AD. After this Anglos, Saxons and Jutes, tribes from north Germany, descended with their hordes and the supremacy of Celtic language rapidly came to an end. By 600 AD they had succeeded in establishing their power fairly, firmly and implanting their language in Britain. Critics call this language Old English to stress the continuity of speech and the connection of this early form with the language which is spoken today.

3.2.1 Contribution of Old English :

The Old English language had many dialects but of all the dialects that of Wessex became the most important. This was because this region was the most civilized, had an ordered form of government and most of the literature of this period was written in this dialect, of which the work *Beowulf* still survives. However traces of other dialects still survive. It is the old English with its several dialects that has given to us doublets or two words with only a slight difference in its meaning. They were originally dialectal variants of the same word. For example, because of the normal development of the old English *a* into *o*, the old English *hal* became *whole* (in the Biblical sense of healthy or free from disease). However in a northern dialect, the change did not take place and hence we now also have the word *hale*. Anglo-Saxon had a very complicated grammar. Nouns had three or four case endings. It was also highly inflected just as modern German is today. The vocabulary of old English was chiefly Germanic though some words came from the language of *Celts*. Every word has pronounced according to its spelling and there were no silent syllables. For example the word *come* was read as /kome/. The Roman occupation too had its impact on the Anglo-Saxon tongue. For example the modern English *wall* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *weall* which in turn was derived from the Latin *vallum*.

3.3 THE MIDDLE ENGLISH

The conquest of England in 1066 by William of Normandy had a profound influence not only upon the history and political system of the country but also upon the language. English now became a much more hybrid language. In the beginning two languages were spoken side by side : Old English and Norman French. Gradually these two languages mingled to give what is known as Middle English. The Modern English descended from this mixed Anglo-French tongue. The Norman-French which was the language of the rulers enjoyed greater prestige and was used as the language

of the aristocracy, while the Old English was the language of the general public. However, the mixed language had a fewer French words. Meanwhile Latin was still used for learned works.

Literary English developed with the growth of London as a centre of commercial, political, legal and ecclesiastical life towards the end of the fourteenth century. The *East Midland* English assumed a dominant position now because it was spoken in and around London. Oxford and Cambridge also used it and hence it became the language of scholarship. The *Received Standard* English of today is said to have descend from this dialect. Chaucer and number of other prominent writers of that time used it. Hence we find Chaucer to be intelligible to the modern readers. Finally the introduction of the printing by Caxton (in 1476) brought many changes at the end of this period.

3.3.1 Contribution of Middle English :

During this period there were changes in grammar, pronunciation, spellings and there were additions to the vocabulary. For example *-es* became popular as the plural termination in place of *-en*. The only survival of *-en* is *Oxen*. This period also marks the loss of some of the inflexions. Hence it is called the period of *levelled inflexions*. Phonetic development of the Middle English period was the lengthening of short vowels when they stood in open syllables and the shortening of long ones in closed syllables. That is why we pronounce *laddy* and *lady* differently. The discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation began in this period.

The existence of two languages side by side gave rise to synonyms, one from the native tongue while the other was from the Norman–French. An example is found in the two words, *wed* (native) and *marry* (French). The French also established the beginnings of the modern legal system and so a number of new words were introduced into English from French. So we have a host of words like *justice, judge, jury, indict, verdict, prison, punish* and *court* itself. Same is the case with the higher offices of the church which got French words like *Chapel, Cathedral, Confession* and even the word *Religion* itself.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What was the period of the Anglo–Saxon period ?
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2. How were the words pronounced in the Old English era ?
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3. During the period of the Middle English, which were the major changes ?

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4. Which invention, established a standard language and discredited dialect ?

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3.4 THE MODERN ENGLISH

On the advent of the renaissance the full flood of the new learning reached England at about the year 1500 and this affected the English language too. The Renaissance was chiefly a Latin one and hence Latin words were introduced into English vocabulary in great numbers. The reformation was an outcome of the spirit of criticism generated by the Renaissance. The bitter religious controversies gave rise to numerous words. A very important outcome of the reformation was the various English translations of the Bible, the chief being Tyndale's in 1526, and more important was the Authorised Version in 1611. The Bible played an important role in *fixing* the English language and setting a kind of standard. Many more inflexions were lost in this period.

Printing too played an important role. The printers of Queen Elizabeth's time fixed the spelling according to the pronunciation that existed during the late Middle English and Early Modern English period. However, the pronunciation changed considerably after that but not the spelling. Hence, the pronunciation was not phonetically reflected in the orthography. Hence English spellings are largely symbolical of thoughts and are not always phonetic representation of the actual sound of the words.

Hence the invention of printing established a *standard* language and discredited dialect. It served to popularize the new coinages and newly introduced words and it tended to fix spelling about which there had been a great uncertainty before. By the middle of the seventeenth century the language had more or less attained its present form so far as grammar, spelling pronunciation are concerned.

3.5 THE LATIN INFLUENCE

English is a heterogeneous language. Its basis was Anglo-Saxon but there are also substantial elements of Scandinavian, French and Latin in it. Besides this, it has also absorbed words from most of the languages of Europe and also from some of those spoken in the other four continents.

Latin words in English can be divided into six main heads according to the time and manner in which they were introduced. They are as follows :

3.5.1 Roman Invasion :

During the Roman occupation of England from 55 BC to 410 AD, a number of Latin words must have found their way into the Celtic tongue. Words like *win* (wine) in old English evolved from Latin *vinum*. The Latin *vallum* resulted in the old English *weall* (wall), *ceaster* (camp) developed from *castra*.

3.5.2 Latin brought by Anglo-Saxon :

The invading Angles and Saxons being once a part of the Roman Empire had their own stock of Latin words which they brought to England. Therefore we have the Anglo-Saxon *deofol* (devil) from the Latin *diabolus* and *nint* (night) from Latin *nox*.

3.5.3 Role of Christian Missionaries :

Some words were introduced direct from Latin during the Anglo-Saxon period through early Christian missionaries. These, naturally, are for the most part terms connected with religion. For example Anglo-Saxon *cruc* (cross) evolved from the Latin *crux*. Other terms like *candel* (candle), *creda* (creed), *cometa* (comet), *idol* (idol) etc. too are from Latin origin.

3.5.4 Latin in the Middle English Period :

In the Middle English period (1100 AD to 1500 AD) there were other instructions from Latin mainly in the spheres of religion, law, medicine and alchemy and also a number of abstract terms. But many of these were only second-hand loans, through French.

3.5.5 The Renaissance :

The great period of the Latin influx was at the time of the Renaissance, especially during the period of 1550 to 1600. The rebirth of the classical language enriched the English language as a multitude of words were derived from the language spoken by Caesar, Virgil and Ovid. English scholars read, spoke and wrote Latin treatises of the time like More's *Utopia* were first published in Latin and not in the vernacular. Many Latin words like *genius*, *miser*, *medium*, *senior*, *junior*, *animal*, etc. were adopted unaltered, while a number of others like *secure* and *compute* were anglicized. Milton too made an elaborate use of Latin words as he was under the classical influence.

3.5.6 Academic Use :

Some Latin words have been borrowed unaltered for academic or technical purposes. Such words are *radius*, *dictum*, *quantum*, *vacuum*, *apex* etc. Latin words have been taken to make patent names, especially for medicines and foods. Words derived from Latin's are used to name scientific inventions for example, *locomotive*, *tractor*, *motor* etc.

English has borrowed a large number of prefixes and suffixes from Latin. They are attached to words of native or foreign origin to create new words. Examples of such affixes are *ate* (as in educate), *ic* (as in elastic) etc.

Therefore the contribution of the classical Latin to the enrichment of the English language has been immense and fundamental.

3.6 THE GREEK INFLUENCE

The Greek language also contributed a lot to the enhancement of the English tongue. However many of the Greek words have not come to England directly. A very large proportion of the Greek words in English have been adopted from Latin. The direct borrowings do not become very numerous until the 19th century when the Greek words were used to name scientific discoveries.

During the Anglo-Saxon period there were a few words of Greek derivation which were mainly religious in nature. For example, *Engel* (Angel) which came from the Greek *Aggelos*. *Preost* (Priest) from the Greek *Prebsty* and even the word *Ciricce* (Church) too has a Greek origin. However, these words too reached English through Latin or German. The Latin influence affected the pronunciation of many words. The Greek *k* became *e* and *u* became *y*. Then after the Roman period *c* lost the sound *k* before the vowels like *u*, *i* and *e*. Hence the Greek word *Kukklos* became the modern *cycle*.

In the Middle English period words now so well known and common as *Bible*, *theatre*, *surgeon*, *logic*, *ecstasy*, *idiot* etc. came into English. These words, though of a Greek origin, came into English via French.

The Renaissance opened the floodgates to classical learning. As the importance of Greek classics grew the language too shot into prominence. It became an important subject at the university level. The use of Greek words began to be considered as a mark of scholarship. Hence English writers started borrowing Greek terms. There by a large number of Greek terms directly became a part of the English language, without being influenced either by French or Latin. Words like *alphabet*, *chorus*, *psychology*, *pandemonium*, *pathos*, *character* etc. became an inextricable part of the English vocabulary.

The nineteenth and the twentieth century saw a spurt of scientific inventions. To name these new wonders of science, Greek words were borrowed. Hence we have *oxygen*, *hydrogen*, *logic*, *biology*, *geography*, *astrology*, *astronomy*, *photograph*, *phonograph*, *telephone*, *telegram*, *telegraph*, *telescope*, *microscope*, etc. we also have medical terms like *psychology*, *neurology* (nevro=nerve) and *phlebotomy* (phlebo=vein and tome=cutting) etc.

Greek prefixes and suffixes have been attached to many words of English or foreign origin. For example, we have hyper-sensitive, amoral, anti-British etc. the Greek suffix *ology* when added to the Latin word *socius* gave birth to the modern *sociology*.

Therefore the Greek language has contributed immensely to the flowering of the English language, especially in naming scientific and technological inventions. Its contribution is exemplary.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

Sr.	Statement	T / F
1.	English is a homogeneous language.	
2.	The great period of the Latin influx was at the time of the Renaissance, especially during the period of 1550 to 1600.	
3.	English has borrowed a large number of prefixes and suffixes from Latin.	
4.	More's <i>Utopia</i> was first published in the vernacular and not in Latin.	
5.	The ignorance of Greek words began to be considered as a mark of scholarship.	

3.7 THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

The conquest of England in 1066 by William of Normandy had a profound influence not only upon the history and the political system of Britain, but also upon the language. Up to this time English had been more or less a pure tongue with a sprinkling of Latin, Celtic and Danish words, but henceforth it became much more definitely a hybrid language. However the French influence had actually started trickling in from 1002 when the English king Ethelred married a French princess. However, William the Conqueror hastened and completed the process which had already begun.

After the Norman Conquest for some years two languages were spoken side by side : English and Norman–French. The later naturally enjoyed greater prestige and higher social status. It was the language of court, of the nobility of the law courts and of the learned professionals. However ninety percentage of the population still spoke English or Anglo–Saxon. Gradually these two languages mingled and the modern English is a result of this mixed Anglo–French tongue. Hence the role of French language in shaping the English tongue is immense.

The existence of two languages side by side gave rise to synonyms in English. If one word came from the native Anglo–Saxon tongue, the other came from Norman–French. Hence we now have *wed*, belonging to the native tongue and the Norman–French *marry*. Class difference in the society is reflected in the use of French words. For example, while living in the fields, tended by the native shepherds it was called by the native word – *sheep*. However when the French cooks cooked it and French nobility ate it was called by the French *mutton*. Similarly we have *pig* and *pork*, *cow*/*bullock* and *beef*, *calf* and *veal*.

The Normans established the beginnings of the modern English legal system and hence a number of related words were introduced. So we have *justice*, *jury*, *judge*, *verdict*, *prison*, *prisoner*, *punish* and *court* itself. Most of the high offices of the church too were held by the Normans hence we have words like *chapel*, *cathedral*, *convent*, *clergy*, *conscience*, *confession*,

penance, prayer and even the word *religion* itself. Words like *war, battle* and *chivalry* too are derived from French. It was due to the French influence that the native *full* was displaced by the French *verrai* meaning true and which has now become the very used very.

The 18th century supplied many words indicating fashionable life style and *polite* pastimes. Hence we have words like, *connoisseur, suit, saloon, cuisine, etiquette, debut, and souvenir* etc. The influence of the French Revolution gave words like, *regime, guillotine* etc. France also gave English language words like, *blouse, attaché, fiancé, debutant* etc. Phrases like, *coup d'etat* and *bête noire* were also borrowed from French.

3.8 THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE

Of all the recent influences on the English language, that from the United States is the most wide spread. American English is not a foreign language in the same sense that German, French, Italian and Spanish are, it is merely another variety of English. The American English language has become influential on account of the economic superiority of US and also because of its monopoly over the electronic mediums like radio, television, multimedia, technology and internet. Films too have played an important role.

Over the last three hundred years, American English has developed independently. Hence we find that American speech and written language have several new elements in vocabulary, phrasing, structure and pronunciation. On the side of grammar, Americans make past participles like *gotten* and *proven* for verbs like to *get* and to *prove*. Due to the American influence there is an increasing tendency to use *mail* for *post* and *letters*.

The main difference between British and American English is the rhythm and intonation of speech. The Englishmen speak with clipped syllables, while American English speaker lays stress on nasal tone. The shade of meaning of the same word differs in America and England. For example, the word *Politician* has negative sense in America while it is not so on in England. Unlike in the British the word *solicitor* in American English stands for a beggar while the word *Clerk* stands for a shop assistant. The different history of America coupled with its vastly different culture and lifestyle has prompted the American English to pronunciations and meaning of the words from the British English.

Many American words have become an inextricable part of the English vocabulary. The word *cut* in the sense of *reduction* and the word sense of *feel* were originally American. Expressions in British English like to *fix* and *party machine* are American in origin.

The most obvious American influence on the English language is the incorporation of the American slang in the language. Words like *dumb* for *stupid*, *blue* for *depressed*, *pass out* for *faint*, *O.K.* for *all right* and *frame up* for *trumped up charge* are commonly used.

Signs of the American influence on pronunciation are seen in the tendency to produce *deity* as *day-ity* to say *lew* instead of *lef* for the first

syllable of *lieutenant* to pronounce the sound *sk* at the beginning of *schedule* instead of *sh*.

Thus the following of America into a superpower has had a great effect on the English language. The language has gained immensely with the addition of several new words.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

Sr.	Statement	T / F
1.	The existence of two languages side by side gave rise to synonyms in English.	
2.	American English language has become influential because of its monopoly over the electronic mediums like radio, television, multimedia, technology and internet.	
3.	The French influence had actually ended trickling in from 1002 when the English king Ethelred married a French princess.	
4.	The Normans established the beginnings of the modern English legal.	
5.	The main similarity between British and American English is the rhythm and intonation of speech.	

3.9 THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare, who was eulogized by Ben Johnson as *Soul of our age ! Applause ! The delight ! Wonder of our stage !* contributed not just in the field of drama, but also played a great role in enriching the English language. In fact, Shakespeare's influence as one of the makers of English language can be compared to the bible translations. He has been the source of reference for innumerable dramatists, poets, prose writers and journalists. He criticized and satirized linguistic and stylistic fashion of his contemporaries and he himself experimented with innovations and archaisms. His *Love's Labour Lost* provides an example where he voices his angst against the misuse of Latin language. In this play the pedantic Latinizing school master Holofernes is satirized. His *Henry IV* contains an elaborated satire of the style of some popular tragedies of his time. How minutely he was aware of the finer qualities of the language that existed in his age can be seen in his pun in Hamlet on the words *trap* and *tropically*. This pun was based on the current pronunciation of the *o* of *tropically* as *a*. So it is easy connected in the mind with *trap* when heard. He makes fun of the tendency to use archaic words, for example, in *As You Like It* he uses the archaic word *eyne* for *eyes*.

His use of the existing dialects for dramatic purpose too is remarkable. For example, in *The Taming of the Shrew* he gives a local colour by using same provincialisms like *phreeze* which means to *drive away*. In *Henry IV* he uses the dialect of Scots, Irish and Welsh soldiers.

A unique contribution of Shakespeare is in his invention of compound words. With the French prefix *en* he made words like *enmesh*, *enkindle*, *enrooted* etc. He also used prefixes like *un* and *in* to make words like *unavoided*, *unvalued*, *inevitable* etc. The real greatness of Shakespeare lies in his phrases which have become immortalized in the language. For example the phrase *what the dickens* which he uses in his play *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is now commonly used. Same is the case with phrases like *patience on a monument*, *a foregone conclusion* and of course that haunting phrase from *Hamlet*, *to be or not to be*.

Shakespeare at times sacrifices grammar to achieve intensity of feeling. Hence we have an ungrammatical phrase in *Julius Caesar* like *the most unkindest cut of all*. However, this way Shakespeare has enriched the language because he has left for posterity an effective way of conveying their emotions and language is all about conveying human sentiments and feelings. Hence Shakespeare's contribution to the enrichment of the English language is immense.

3.10 THE INFLUENCE OF RADIO

Language is primarily something that is spoken. Printing and writing are only substitute for speech. Therefore the standardising of the spoken tongue is important. The radio has played an important role in establishing the standard spoken English. In fact, it has played a central role in popularizing English as a world language. However, the search for a perfect or standard tongue is not free from dangers. If one standard language is spoken throughout the country then the existing dialects would be wiped out. This is what happened with the several dialects being spoken in the different parts of the British islands.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which was set up in 1922 took upon itself to spread what is known as *Good English*. They made efforts in the development of standard pronunciation of English by giving some programmes by trained people. Thus, it tried to establish uniformity in spoken English and check the disintegration of the language. However, even the pronunciation of the experts coming on the BBC was questioned. Moreover, some of the announcers found difficulties in pronouncing the names of the places of foreign countries in correct manner. To get rid of these difficulties, BBC set up an advisory committee on spoken English. This committee advised announcers whenever it was necessary. They also broadcast lessons for beginners to whom printed literature were sent in advance. All these show how serious the BBC is to spread uniformity of spoken English. That is why the BBC announcer is respected and is considered the voice of authority in the matter of pronunciation, intonation, pitch and emphasis. One of the secrets of their success lies in their willingness to improve. And for this purpose the BBC authorities invite suggestions from external agencies and individuals and make changes wherever it merits.

The efforts in the development of spoken English skills made by BBC influenced and encouraged other institutions to work for the development

of the language. For example, many institutes in India have set up language laboratories that help propagate good English. They do so by making people listen to audio cassettes. This constant hearing of a conventionalized form of the language helps in spreading uniform pronunciation in foreign lands.

Though critics may believe that the spoken word must continue to change and that the radio is doing more harm than good by *fixing* the language, its contribution cannot be underestimated. As Jonathan Swift had emphasized *the use of proper word in proper place* is what makes good language. Radio has played an important role in this area and therefore its influence on the English language is immense.

3.11 THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE

The Reformation had a great impact not just on the social and political atmosphere of England but also on the English language. The chief influence of the Reformation is seen in the number of English translations of the Bible. The first important translation was that of Tyndale in 1526. But the more influential was the Authorized Version in 1611. These translations contributed to the *fixing* of the English language and setting some kind of standard. For the next four centuries the Bible remained the people's book which they read Sunday to Sunday and with which they became familiar as with no other. It is a fact that the English of the Bible is English of today, save for a word here and there which has changed in the meaning.

Tyndale had a gift of using suggestive phrases and idiomatic expressions. His influence is especially seen in the Old Testament. Phrases like *eat, drink and be merry, the burden and the heat of the day, glad tidings* are all his. Words like scapegoat and babble are from Tyndale's translation. However the word babble has now sunk to colloquial use.

The Authorized Version of the Bible has lots of archaic words. These words were deliberately used in order to create an atmosphere of strangeness and mystery. Moreover, divine revelations are better said in a dignified language than a colloquial one. That is why we have words like, *damsel, raiment, firmament, apparel* etc. King James' translators have managed to strike a fine balance between the literary and colloquial styles. The gifted to the English language words like, *prose rhythm, syntax and style*.

Other than the Authorized Version and Tyndale's translations, the Anglican Prayer book has contributed to the language the sentence like forgive our trespasses. Coverdale's translations gave phrases like, *loving-kindness, tender-hearted, the iron that has entered my soul* etc.

Biblical phrases have now become a part of the common usage. For example, when we say *I wash my hands of the whole business* we are echoing Pilate's action of washing his hands in public. Other phrases like, *kill the fatted calf, to cast pearl swine, cared for none of those things* are the gifts of the Bible. Therefore, the translations of the Bible are responsible for the introduction of a considerable number of words. For last many centuries it has been the book of the people and even the illiterate were familiar with it through hearing it read in the church Sunday by Sunday. Thus its influence has been profound.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

Sr.	Statement	T / F
1	The real greatness of Shakespeare lies in his acting which has become immortalized in the language.	
2	Shakespeare's influence as one of the makers of English language can be compared to the bible translations.	
3	Shakespeare's use of the existing dialects for dramatic purpose too is remarkable.	
4	Shakespeare at times sacrifices feeling to achieve intensity of grammar.	
5	BBC made efforts in the development of standard pronunciation of English.	
6	The Reformation had a great impact on the English language.	

3.12 LET US SUM UP

We have, in this unit, discussed brief history of English Language which included the Old English, the Middle English and the Modern English along with their contributions. We also discussed the Latin influence, the Greek influence, the influence of the French Language, the American influence on the English Language, the influence of Shakespeare, the influence of Radio and the Bible.

3.13 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- A History of the English Language by Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable
 - An Outline History Of The English Language by WOOD
 - Objective Approach to English Literature for NET, JRF, SLET and Pre-Ph.D. Registration Test by Pandey Om Prakash, Rahmat Jahan Ivan K. Masih K.K. Narayan & Neeraj Kumar
 - English A : Literature (Pearson International Baccalaureate Diploma) for Grade 11& 12 by Jan Adkins & Conrad Hughes
 - A history of English. A sociolinguistic approach by Fennell Barbara
- ANSWERS**

Check your progress 1

1. The Anglo-Saxon period was from the year 600 AD to 1100 AD.
2. The words were pronounced according to its spelling and there were no silent syllables.
3. During the Middle English period, there were changes in grammar, pronunciation, spellings and there were additions to the vocabulary.

4. The invention of printing established a standard language and discredited dialect.

Check your progress 2

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. False

Check your progress 3

1. True 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. False

Check your progress 4

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. True
6. True

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**Brief History of English
Language and Various
Influences on English
Language**