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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH

If you came across the words *si thin nama a gehadgod*, you probably would not recognize them as English. Actually the phrase is a fragment of Anglo-Saxon (Old English) corresponding to *hallowed be thy name*.

How could English have changed so much in a mere one thousand years? Part of the answer is that language reflects culture, and twentieth-century America* bears little resemblance to Anglo-Saxon England. Cultural change and linguistic change are equally inevitable. Historical events, inventions, discoveries, ideas, and individuals all have an impact on culture that is mirrored in language.

Even though old words sometimes die and new ones are constantly being added in a process of revision that parallels cultural change, the past lives on in our language. The most ancient words still commonly used in English reflect unchanging needs and values—family relationships, food, work, play, and God.

In this LIFEPAC® you will see how English has changed as its speakers encountered new cultural forces, from the Norman Invasion to the Industrial Revolution and beyond. You will learn about specific processes of linguistic change. You will understand why English is spoken differently in the United States than it is in Great Britain, and learn how different dialects developed within the United States. You will learn that the slang you speak among friends is one of many instruments of linguistic change, and you will glimpse the future of the English language.

*Editor’s note: In our unified (elementary and secondary) curriculum, ALPHA OMEGA PUBLICATIONS writers and editors endeavor to use the terms *America* and *American* to include all the countries and people of our hemisphere. We recognize respectfully that all people of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America are Americans. In this LIFEPAC however, the terms *America*, *American*, and *Americanisms* are used to refer to the people and language of the thirteen original colonies and of the United States.

**OBJECTIVES**

Read these objectives. The objectives will tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC.

When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. List the major types and processes of linguistic change.
2. Explain how the culture of a people affects their language.
3. Trace the etymology of any English word.
4. Identify the parent language of certain “loan” words cited in the LIFEPACs.
5. Tell how affixes are used to form new words.
6. Explain why scientific terms are formed from classical languages.
7. Name the four major periods in the development of English, giving corresponding dates.
8. Tell who the Normans were and how they affected the development of English.
10. Name the major United States regional dialects.
11. Distinguish between American and British usage.
12. Identify and be able to choose the correct variety of English to use in the appropriate situation.
13. Demonstrate an understanding of the specialized terms used to describe language.
I. CHANGES IN LANGUAGE

Living languages, like the cultures of which they are a part, are constantly evolving. Old words are dropped and new ones are added. Words change their meanings and rise or fall in respectability. Over long periods of time, massive changes may occur in the structure of a language. Pronunciation and spelling also change.

Linguistic or language change can be deliberate or accidental, systematic or arbitrary. Contact with cultures whose customs, concepts, and artifacts are unfamiliar speeds linguistic change. Historical crises and social reforms also have an impact. Every new thing, every new idea encountered requires a new word if it is to be communicated or discussed.

In this section you will learn about the processes of linguistic change and how they affect a language.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. List the major types and processes of linguistic change.
2. Explain how the culture of a people affects their language.
3. Trace the etymology of any English word.
4. Identify the parent language of certain “loan” words cited in this section.
5. Tell how affixes are used to form new words.
6. Explain why scientific terms are formed from classical languages.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

- amelioration
- analytic language
- Anglicize
- archaic word
- conjugation
- connotations
- declension
- dialect
- etymology
- generalization
- Germanic Consonant Shift
- grammatical meaning
- guttural
- imperative mood
- indicative mood
- inflection
- loan word
- morpheme
- morphology
- orthography
- pejoration
- phonetic
- rhetorical punctuation
- runic symbols
- semantic meaning
- specialization
- structural punctuation
- subjunctive mood
- syntax
- synthetic language
- verbal
CHANGES IN VOCABULARY

The most obvious aspect of any language is its vocabulary. All languages are made up of consonant and vowel combinations with meanings agreed upon by their users. These meaningful sound clusters (words) symbolize things, actions, concepts, and relationships.

You might think that the words in any given language differ from the words in any other language only in sound, not sense. The English word *man*, the Spanish word *hombre*, and the ancient Greek word *anthropos*, for example, all mean *adult male human being*. Tribes have been discovered, however, that have names for individual men, but no word that denotes man in general. Such languages may have words for particular species of trees or animals, but no word linking *elm* and *palm* or *deer* and *rabbit* into one concept. On the other hand, a language like Navajo may have twenty words for *black*.

Most modern languages, of course, have one word for *man*, for *tree*, and for *black*. They also have words for such abstract concepts as *justice* and *democracy*, which have no equivalents in the languages of people whose primary concern is survival. Only with the development of such institutions as law and government does a need for such terms develop. Every culture, whether primitive or advanced, has some form of religion. Every language has names for its deities or a word for *God*.

Read Genesis 2:19-20 and answer these questions.

1.1 What did God ask Adam to do? ______________________________________________________________

1.2 Though Adam could not outrun a gazelle or fly like a hawk, he was superior to the animals God had made. What set him apart from them? ______________________________________________________________

Read Exodus 16:14-15 and answer these questions.

1.3 What did the Israelites find? __________________________________________________________________
1.4 What name did they give it? __________________________

1.5 What is the literal meaning of the word manna? (If you do not know, ask your teacher or look up the word in a dictionary.) __________________________

1.6 What does the answer to Question 1.5 tell you about people and language? ______________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

Vocabulary additions. When we encounter a new thing, we immediately want to know its name; if it does not have a name, we feel called upon to supply one. We may choose to borrow a word from another language or we may invent a new word.

Borrowed words. To borrow a word from another culture is easier than to invent a new one. This method of vocabulary addition is used frequently by peoples moving into an area already occupied by members of another tribe or ethnic group. Similarly, when one nation or tribe conquers another, words and customs are often borrowed on both sides. A more sophisticated type of borrowing occurs when a reader encounters a new idea in a foreign literature and borrows the term or phrase. Loan words may be borrowed intact or changed to fit the language of the borrower. Just as the ancient Romans Latinized the Greek words that they borrowed, we Anglicize our loan words by eliminating sounds or combinations of sounds that do not occur in English. The word chthonian, borrowed from Greek, looks unpronounceable to us. We solve the problem by retaining the Greek spelling but pronouncing it tho’ ne un. For some words the spelling is also changed: chocolatl became chocolate and humanus was Anglicized by lopping off the non-English ending. Hula, however, was borrowed whole.

Examining the etymology of words can be a useful and interesting activity. Most dictionaries give in brackets the name of the language or languages from which the word has come.

book [Old English boc]
ducat [<Middle French<Italian ducato, ultimately< Latin ducem leader (because it bore the title of the ruler issuing it)]

Note: (< ) means derived from or taken from.

Look up etymology in your dictionary.

1.7 What is the etymology of etymology? (If the symbols you find are unfamiliar to you, ask your teacher to explain them.)
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

1.8 What is the relationship of etymology to borrowed words?
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

Poll your friends.

1.9 Names, like other words, have etymologies. Most English names have been borrowed from other languages. Take a poll of your classmates to see whether they know what their first names mean and what languages they came from.