IS MODERN ENGLISH SIMILAR TO OLD ONE?

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ABSTRACT

This article gives some brief information about the history of English literature and reveals some differences between old and modern English.

Key words: Old English, dialect modern English, Anglo-Saxon, linguistics historical principles, orthography.

INTRODUCTION

For the first eleven hundred years, the island Britain experiences a series of invasions. The mild climate and rich soil of the country attracted outsiders and as a result of invasions culture of that country enriched. Various invaders like Celts, Britons, Angles, Saxons and jutes contributed to the society in terms of culture and architecture along with the language. However anglo-saxon tribes influenced more to the language of the island.

Old English literature

Old English language, also called Anglo-Saxon, language spoken and written in England before 1100; it is the ancestor of Middle English and Modern English. Scholars place Old English in the Anglo-Frisian group of West Germanic languages.

Four dialects of the Old English language are known: Northumbrian in northern England and southeastern Scotland; Mercian in central England; Kentish in southeastern England; and West Saxon in southern and southwestern England. Mercian and Northumbrian are often classed together as the Anglian dialects. Most extant Old English writings are in the West Saxon dialect; the first great period of literary activity occurred during the reign of King Alfred the Great in the 9th century.

In contrast to Modern English, Old English had three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter) in the noun and adjective, and nouns, pronouns, and adjectives were inflected for case. Noun and adjective paradigms contained four cases—nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative—while pronouns also had forms for the instrumental case. Old English had a greater proportion of strong verbs (sometimes called irregular verbs in contemporary grammars) than does Modern English. Many verbs that were strong in Old English are weak (regular) verbs in Modern English (e.g., Old English helpan, present infinitive of the verb help; healp, past singular; hulpon, past plural; holpen, past participle versus Modern English help, helped, helped, helped, respectively).

Popular example of old English

Beowulf is the oldest surviving Germanic epic and the longest Old English poem; it was likely composed between 700 and 750. Other great works of Old English poetry include The Wanderer, The Seafarer, The Battle of Maldon, and The Dream of the Rood. This poetry is alliterative; one of its features is the kenning, a metaphorical phrase used in place of a common noun (e.g., "swan road" for "sea"). Two known poets from this period are Caedmon, considered the first Old English Christian poet, and Cynewulf. Old English poetry has survived almost entirely in four

manuscripts: the Exeter Book, the Junius Manuscript, the Vercelli Book, and the Beowulf manuscript.

Modern Eglish

Francis Andrew March, (born Oct. 25, 1825, Millbury, Mass., U.S.—died Sept. 9, 1911, Easton, Pa.), American language scholar and lexicographer who was a principal founder of modern comparative Anglo-Saxon (Old English) linguistics.

In 1857 March became professor of English language and comparative philology at Lafayette College, Easton, north of Philadelphia. He occupied this post, the first chair of its kind, until 1907.March's monumental work was A Comparative Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Language (1870; reprinted, 1977), based on 10 years of intensive research. He examined the relationship of Anglo-Saxon to Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and five Germanic languages. It was immediately recognized in Europe and the United States as a front-ranking achievement, laying the cornerstone for subsequent historical studies of English. For a number of years he directed U.S. efforts contributing to the New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford English Dictionary). The Spelling Reform (1881) was his chief contribution to the reform of English orthography. With his son Francis Andrew March (1863–1928), he edited A Thesaurus Dictionary of the English Language (1903; 2nd ed., 1980).

Differences between old and modern English

Old English, Middle English, and Modern English are the classification of English language, and they exhibit some differences between them. English is being termed as the world's third most widely spoken native language following Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. There is one significant fact that would be known to many of us. This fact is that English has become the official language of so many other countries where it is not considered as the native language. This is the popularity of this language that sets it apart from many other languages that are spoken all around the globe. In addition to all this, English is also termed as a global language which is being used in all the sects of life. But, with this, comes another interesting fact that modern English, which gets to be spoken in this modern era, tends to be completely different from that which was spoken in the olden times. Now, the modern speakers of this language cannot recognize the older version of this language. This is due to the fact that this language has a history of around 1700 years where it can be classified into three categories, the Old English, the Middle English, and the Modern English.

English language has been bifurcated into three most important periods ranging from Old English to Middle English, and then to lastly, the Modern English. English started its journey when it was first brought to the Britain by the Germanic invaders. These three periods of English language can be classified in the years as following.

Old English (450 AD- 1100 AD/ Mid 5th century to Mid 11th century)

Middle English (1100 AD-1500 AD/ late 11th century to late 15th century)

Modern English (from 1500 AD till present day/ late 15th century to the present)

CONCLUSION

Thus, English has become the native and official language in most countries of the world. In the Anglo-Saxon language, words had declensions to inflectional endings that depicted their person in a sentence. The word order in the Anglo-Saxon sentence was not so important as to

establish what was meant in the sentence, as it is now. In Middle English, some of these endings were excluded, and the role of the word represented in the sentence was determined by the order of words, as it happens today. Naturally, there are differences, but in general, the structure of a phrase in English is similar to a phrase in modern English.

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