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TILI O'RGANILAYOTGAN MAMLAKAT ADABIYOTLAR TARIXI



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ТЎЛ О'РГАНЛАЙОТГАН МАМЛАКАТ
АДАБИЙОТ ТАРИХИ

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PREFACE

This volume is an attempt to outline the historical development of the English language from ancient times to the Middle English period. The book does not claim to be a regular textbook of English historical phonetics either. It is rather in the nature of a brief historical commentary on English pronunciation in its relation to spelling.

The book is designed primarily for use by teachers of English, both at secondary school and college level. But it can also be used, in addition to the existing English language history manuals, by undergraduates at English language departments of Universities and Pedagogical Institutes, as well as by any person interested in historical explanation of Modern English reading rules and the peculiar reading of some individual words, or in the origin of some phonetic features of present-day English.

It is designed to satisfy their natural curiosity about the reasons for peculiarities of present-day English spelling, the sound values of letters and letter combinations in the English language of today, and the peculiar reading of individual words, while at the same time stimulating the student's inquiring thought and arousing interest in the historical study of the language. Simplicity of presentation, with extremely sparing use of special terms, makes the book intelligible even for first-year students.

The reader may gain a general idea as to the historical evolution of the phonetic system of English. However, the purpose is not historical study for its own sake. Historical developments are considered in so far as they have a close bearing on the state of things in the English language of today, and it has been attempted throughout to make clear their relevance to the facts of present-day English.

A book of this length can, of course, make no claim to completeness. As an introduction it is only concerned with the main lines of development and even these could not be treated exhaustively. Strict limitations of space inevitably entailed a highly selective approach but every attempt has been made to avoid the

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consequent danger of arbitrariness in the choice of items to be dealt with. Considerations of space also played a part in the presentation of the data.

Coherent accounts of the state of the language in earlier historical periods, however desirable for a variety of reasons, especially for a fuller picture of the whole system of the language at a particular developmental stage, of its various sub-systems and of the interrelations between them, would not only have been impossible for reasons of space and other objective reasons but would also have gone far beyond the main purpose of this volume.

The method chosen seems to be a perfectly legitimate procedure if one's main concern is the historical foundations of present-day English rather than the 'grammatical systems' of Old English, Middle English or Early Modern English respectively. It is hoped that this procedure, although requiring additional effort on the part of the student and the careful use of the glossary, will contribute to a deeper understanding of the matter under discussion.

The author is convinced that this manual will be helpful in the would-be English teachers' vocational training inasmuch as it furnishes precisely the kind of information on the historical background of present-day English pronunciation and spelling that is of value in the practical teaching of the language. It can be used in tutorial work on History of English, English Lexicology, in teaching reading and spelling rules.

INTRODUCTION

In answering the questions posed in this book we shall have to refer more than once to various times in the history of the English language, and to some events in the history of the English people which are of especial importance for the development of the language and its spelling. It seems better to say a few words here, right at the beginning of the book, about language as a social phenomenon, about the main periods in the history of English and the historical events of which some knowledge is necessary for explaining the origins of certain peculiarities of present-day English spelling, rather than speak about the same things over and over again in answering different questions.

Language is a social phenomenon. It originates and develops in the process of social interaction between the members of a community and is, thus, "genetically and functionally connected with man's practical social activity"[2]. Language activity itself, the use of language in its various social functions, represents a particular kind of social activity. In order to fulfil its basic functions as an instrument of thought and communication and to satisfy the communicative needs of a more or less differentiated speech community, language must possess the properties of variability and systematicity, or, in other words, exhibit 'orderly differentiation' or 'orderly heterogeneity'.

Differentiated needs of communication require differentiated sets of means of expression provided by a differentiated language system. The linguistic system of communication underlying language activity in a complex community has, therefore, also been described as "an orderly heterogeneous system in which choice between linguistic alternants carries out social and stylistic functions"[3].

There is not only 'dialectal variation' and 'stylistic' (including functional) variation in the language of a non-homogeneous speech community at every stage of its existence. Language also is a very variable social phenomenon in the sense that it varies through time. For language to keep functioning as an efficient instrument of

mutual communication among the members of a continually changing society, it must constitute an 'orderly heterogeneous system' which is non-static, or dynamic, and 'open' in character (and thus distinguished from a 'closed' and static system).

Historical variation or change is a necessary characteristic of any living language and may "at least to a considerable extent", be said to be "due to an incessant adaptation of the means of expression to the ... everchanging ... ever-increasing communicative needs obtaining in the given language community"[4]. Qualitative as well as quantitative changes in the needs of communication for their part — sometimes also called 'expressive and communicative needs' — must obviously be considered as in some way or other resulting from changes in society, in the social life of the language community in question. Language history can, therefore, not be separated from social history.

It is undoubtedly true that further detailed studies are needed before a full picture of the relation between social and linguistic changes in the evolution of individual languages such as English can be given[5]. But this in no way invalidates the thesis of the existence of close and complex relations between the historical development of language and the socio-historical development of the language community.

Socio-historical conditions or changes affecting the requirements of linguistic communication to be met by the language system no doubt include (changes in) the socio-economic groupings, social stratification or social class structure of the community and the relationships between the classes as determined by (changes of) the character of the social system, the coming into existence of new social classes or groups and the passing out of existence of others in the course of the rise of special socioeconomic conditions, and the rise to power of new-classes as the outcome of social revolutions of transformations.

They also include changes in the importance of geographical factors (in comparison to socioeconomic factors) resulting from (changes in) the degree of political and economic unity of the country, such as the development of 'centralized nation States', for

example, or (changes in) the size and complexity of the ipcech community and its territorial expansion. This is clear for example in the tremendous increase of the size of the English language community from about one and a half million speakers in the late eleventh century to more than three hundred million people speaking English as a first language in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and some other parts of the former British Empire, in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Other social factors influencing the conditions of communication prevailing in a particular language community and/or producing changed communicative needs comprise changes of the importance of rural and urban communities within the society in question as a consequence of (socio-)economic (and cultural) changes. This is exemplified by the development of the productive forces which led to the Industrial Revolution and the accompanying large-scale population shifts from one part of the Country to another, the concentration of large numbers of speakers of divergent varieties of the same language in urban industrial areas.

There are also changes caused by increasing ease of travel and communication between the various parts of the country as an outcome of technical developments (such as those effected, for example, by the introduction of printing or of the modern mass media, the building of railways and motorways, aeroplanes, etc.) or cultural changes (connected with socioeconomic changes) such as the spread of literacy among the members of the speech community.

The socio-economic differentiation within society and with it the differentiation of the language community into 'communicative communities' (groups of individuals interacting both socially and linguistically) is essentially influenced also by the (ever-increasing) degree of division of labour in the course of the development of the productive forces of society. Technological progress, the rise and development of the modern natural and social sciences, the tremendous expansion in knowledge in the wake of it, the technological and scientific revolution, and the phenomena accompanying them, all greatly increase the diversity of social