**History of the English Language**

* Language is a systemized combination of sounds, which have meanings for all persons in a given cultural community.
* Writing is the graphic representation of these combinations of sounds.
* Every language has its own system
  + English: bow-wow
  + French: gnaf-gnaf
  + German: wau-wau
  + Japanese: wung-wung
* WRITING IS NOT A LANGUAGE
* Language is **oral**; it is (usually) spoken. Writing is the symbolic representation of language sounds. Language is **learned**; one is not born with language, but only the ability to learn. Language is **human**; only man has the ability to learn a language. Animals cannot learn other animal’s sounds like man can learn other languages. Language is **social** because one needs two or more people for it; there is no purpose if one is alone. Language is **symbolic** because its sounds stand for ideas and things. Language is **arbitrary** because there is no necessary connection between a sound and its meaning. Language is **recurrent** because the same sound does have the same meaning from day to day.

**(1)**

* Language has traveled through the years, changing as people move.
* This all began with the tribe **Indo-Europeans**. This tribe divided into 8 different tribes and migrated to different areas. The most important of these tribes was the Celtics. Language has been traced back to this tribe because some of the eight branches isolated themselves, therefore their language did not change.
* The breakdown of the language is:
  + Migration + Isolation = 8 basic Indo-European tribes
  + Celtic + Latin + Angles and Saxons = Old English (700-1100)
  + Old English + French = Middle English (1100-1500)
  + Middle English + Exploration = Modern English (1500-today)

**(2)**

* In the beginning the Stonehenge people, who built a mysterious circle of huge boulders, left no written form of their language. They were driven from their land by the Celts. These Celts brought with them: cattle, metal tools, the wheel, and their language.
* The Celtics were great wanderers and conquerors who traveled to Rhine, Danube, Alps, northwestern Spain, northern Italy, France, Balkans, and Asia Minor.
* Julius Caesar came to British soil as early as 54 BC. 97 years later during the reign of Emperor Claudius, the Roman legions poured into Britain by way of Straits of Dover, taking what is today Kent.
  + *Claudius I was the emperor who added Britain to the Roman Empire.*
  + *Claudius was born on 1 August 10 BC in Gaul (now France) into the Roman imperial family. He suffered from physical disabilities, including a limp and a speech impediment and was therefore treated with disdain by his family, and not considered as a future emperor. Because of lack of other choices he was finally appointed Emperor.*
  + *Relations between Claudius and the senate were difficult, and the new emperor entrusted much of his administration to influential Greek freedmen of low social standing, which in turn alienated the senators. He also heard trials in private, rather than allowing senators to be judged by their peers.*
  + *Although he lacked a military reputation, the essential attribute of an emperor, in 43 AD Claudius undertook the conquest of Britain.*
  + *Claudius had two children by his wife Messallina - Britannicus and Octavia. In 48 AD Messallina was put to death for plotting against Claudius. Claudius then married his niece Agrippina the Younger who with her son Domitius, was the only surviving direct descendant of Augustus. Agrippina quickly appointed her own supporters to important positions and persuaded Claudius to adopt Domitius - who took the name Nero - as his son.*
  + *Claudius died on 13 October 54 AD after being poisoned, probably on the orders of Agrippina who feared Claudius would appoint Britannicus his heir over her son, Nero. Nero became Emperor.*

**(3)**

* In 43 AD the Romans conquered the Celts. 40 thousand Roman soldiers invaded Britain. The Celts were driven out, lived on hilltops, or became slaves. English words such as: Lincoln, London, Trent, Thames—Modern Celtic has words such as: shamrocks, galore, plaid, slogan, whiskey, gull, and penguin.
* The Romans brought with them Latin and Christianity.
* By the end of the 1st century, Celtic Britain was gone and Roman Britain had taken its place.
* By 78-85 AD the Romans wanted to learn Latin.
* Christianity was introduced in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
* The Romans built walled cities, villas, and road and stayed for approximately 400 years, then left in 410 AD.
* After the fall of Rome the Gauls of France and the Iberians of Spain went back to their native tongues, but the Britons did not.
* The 3rd century BC to 400 A.D. is the Roman Era. The 5th century AD is the Germanic Century. During this time, Rome fell, Gaul fell, and Britain fell to the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.
  + *The Gauls believed that the souls of brave men passed after death into new, strong bodies; and therefore they rushed into battle without any fear. When one of their chiefs fell, his body was placed on a huge funeral pyre, where it was burned with his horse, his dogs, his weapons, garments, ornaments, utensils, and booty. Sometimes some of his slaves were killed and burned with him, so that the chief should have servants to wait upon him in his new life. The Gauls fancied, too, that the souls of cowards passed after death into the bodies of vile animals. Each father, therefore, taught his sons to be fearless, so that they should be honored here on earth and be happy hereafter.*
  + *The Gauls were an extremely attractive people with long hair and blue eyes. The women were even more attractive then the men and were as brave. They were so brave that they not only encouraged their husbands, sons, and brothers to fight, but also often went into battle themselves, side by side with the men.*

**(4)**

* When the Romans left, the Celts were left with weak forces and were attacked by the Pics and Scots. The Celts asked the Jutes for help. They did come and help the Celts defend against the Pics and Scots but then refused to leave. They took control and brought with them their Germanic language.
* The Angles and Saxons, relatives of the Jutes, soon arrived from the North Sea coast of Germany.
* This is when English really began. “Angles” gradually became “English.”
* The Angles and Saxons drove the Celts into Wales and Cornwall over a period of time from 449-600. They were called “Welsh” meaning “foreigner.” One of the Welsh leaders was King Arthur, who is associated with the Knights of the Round Table.
  + *We will study King Arthur later this semester.*

**(5)**

* By mid 6th century, the land was well settled with Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. They spoke dialects similar to Dutch and Low German. Old English is considered the Angle-Saxon language, but it was actually the language of the Saxons who settled in Wessex.
* These West Saxons were led by King Alfred the Great (871-899) who brought Latin and Greek into the language and promoted education and English culture.
  + *There were many kings, but the most famous was Alfred. He was the only king to be called “Great.”*
  + *His father was King of Wessex, but Alfred became king of all England.*
  + *He fought the Vikings, but later he made peace with them so they could all live together.*
  + *He encouraged people to learn and tried to govern well and fairly.*

**(6)**

* Again, English began as a Germanic tongue. We have many similar words, such as: water—wasser, house—haus, drink—trinken, and bring—bringen. We use Germanic words more often than any other words. They are the core of English and are used when we talk about everyday essentials of life.

**(7) (Handout)**

* Old English lasted from 700-1150. An example would be *Beowulf*—a typical German and Scandinavian epic poem about a brave warrior who slays the monster Grendel and Grendel’s mother. The sea was called “the playground of the winds” and “the roads of whales.” A woman was called “peace-weaver” and a sword was “the light of battle.” The author of *Beowulf* is unknown.

**(8)**

* The ferocious Scandinavians, better known as Vikings, tried to conquer England in 865 but King Alfred held them off. In 1014, they tried again and were successful. A Dane named Canute became the King of England.
* His people spoke the Germanic tongue, so communication was easy between the Jutes, Angles, Saxons, and Vikings and they became united.
* The Vikings gradually began speaking English and added some Dutch words such as: knife, steak, birth, dirt, fellow, guess, leg, loan, seat, sister, egg, happy, rotten, husband, get , rid, skin, wrong, want, lift, loose, low, odd, both, call, and die.
  + *"****Let all men know how empty and worthless is the power of kings. For there is none worthy of the name but God, whom heaven, earth and sea obey".***
  + *Canute was a Viking who became the King of England. He was the first king to successfully rule over a truly united realm of England, free from internal and external strife and unrest. Because he also ruled the Viking homelands, he was able to protect England against attacks, maintaining twenty years of badly-needed peace during which trade, Anglo-Scandinavian art and Christianity were able to flourish. Canute had great respect for the old English laws, to which he brought a keen sense of justice and a regard for individual rights. As part of his promotion of himself as an 'English' king, he did penance for the wrong doings of his Viking forefathers, building churches and making many generous gifts to others.*

**(9)**

* While many Vikings settled in England, some decided to settle the northern coast of France. They named it Normandy—land of the Northmen. They learned to speak French and were known as Normans.
* In 1066, the Normans under the leadership of Duke William of Normandy decided to take the English throne. The armies met at Hastings. The English seemed to be winning, so William pretended to flee but came back and defeated them because they were caught off guard. He became known as William the Conqueror of England.
  + *The battle of Hastings took place in 1066 AD after a dispute over the succession to the English throne. The Battle of Hastings, both directly and indirectly, ushered in changes in English law, language and culture and laid the groundwork for the beginnings of the English feudal system.*
  + *William, the Duke of Normandy, was the cousin of Edward, the King of England. When Edward died without children in 1066, the throne was given to Harold Godwinson, an English earl, but William claimed that before his death, Edward had promised the throne to him. William therefore planned to assume his role as heir and take up the throne. Meanwhile Harold, a close friend of Edward the Confessor and his wife, thought himself a serious contender for the throne and had no intention of letting William's claim hold any significance. Harold based his claim on the close friendship he had with Edward and his wife.*
  + *The Battle of Hastings earned the title "the battle that changed history" because of the huge impact it had on the people and their culture, the country, and the way they were looked upon by the world. Perhaps one of the hardest for the Saxon people to swallow, was the stripping of rights and privileges. The Saxons organized several rebellions, however, they were all generally poorly coordinated and were easily stamped out. Hence, William the Conqueror enjoyed un-interrupted rule for the next 21 years.*
  + *With the entrance of William and Norman rule, came drastic change in the entire governmental system of law. In the earlier system of law, governmental officials called "Earls" often held equal importance to the king. In addition, the Saxons enjoyed certain freedoms in the years before William. However, William quickly established a principle of law that was quite different from what the people had been used to. Under William's law, the king was the principle authority figure and served as the collective executive, judicial, and legislative branches of the government. This prevented the people from having significant (if any) say in the workings of the government. Hence, William's style of governing did not earn him popularity.*
  + *The second significant change coming as a result of the battle was the new language and culture that was adopted, replacing the previous Anglo-Saxon customs of 300 years. This new rule under William threw out the Anglo Saxon culture and brought a French dialect instead.*
  + *The third significant result of the Battle of Hastings was the introduction of the feudal system to England. William had earlier developed a centralized feudal state in Normandy. In this system, the king would usually offer to his warriors a plot of land called a fief, in exchange for their loyalty. This loyalty is often what held the kingdom together. In William's case, he took the traditional Anglo-Saxon land and gave it to his Norman followers.*

**(10)**

* Since the Normans were French speaking people, French became the official language of England. The Normans took over and the English all became servants and peasants. French was used in government, law, business, and by the upper class. Latin was still the language of the church and schools. For over 200 years English could not be used for anything of importance.
* English did not die. The lower class used it every day. It survived because it was used, but it did change because it was spoken and not written.

**(11)**

* In 1204, the Normans lost their holdings in France, so they began to think of England as home and began to speak English. However, they forgot many English words, so they would substitute with French words. Soon the English language had borrowed over ten thousand French words, which made Middle English.
* Some new words were: court, servant, feast, privilege, peace, war, treasure, mercy, witness, crime, reward, praise, and pray.
* Some duplicate words were:

**English** might heal wish bough help **French** power cure desire branch aid

* Some similar words were:

**English** sheep swine cow house board **French** mutton pork beef mansion table

**(12) (Handout)**

* The best known Middle English author was Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400). He wrote The Canterbury Tales, a collection of stories told by a group of travelers going to Canterbury Cathedral.

**(13)**

* During the 1400-1500’s English grew. It was helped by Guttenberg’s invention of the movable type printing press. Before, books were rare, expensive, in Latin, and copied by hand. Words varied greatly. With the printing press there could be more books and more people could learn to read and write.
* From 1477 on, there was one written language—English.
* William Caxton had standardized the form and spelling of English. English had arrived as a full and useful language.

**(14)**

* Between 1400 and 1600 English gained thousands of new words, especially from Latin and Greek. Latin had long been the language of learning. Now, many writers and scholars used English but added Latin words when they needed to express complex or technical ideas.
* Some typical Latin based words: agile, custody, consider, celebrate, exist, fertile, genius, index, nervous, and polite.
* Greek also fascinated people. Some Greek based words are: chronology, chaos, critic, and scheme.
* We use many Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Some examples: antibiotic, aerodynamic, and digital computer.

**(15) (Handout)**

* In the 16th century William Shakespeare showed the world the beauty of Modern English. He enriched the English vocabulary by coining words himself and borrowing others from foreign and classical sources. He helped to make English a versatile, exact, and important language.
  + *Just as important to Shakespeare’s success as the suppleness of the English language was the rapid expansion of the language. New words were being coined and borrowed at an unprecedented rate in Shakespeare’s time. Shakespeare himself had an unusually large vocabulary: about 23,000 different words appear in his plays and poetry, many of these words first appearing in print through his usage. During the Renaissance many new words enriched the English language, borrowed from Latin and from other European languages, and Shakespeare made full use of the new resources available to English. He also took advantage of the possibilities of his native tongue, especially the crispness and energy of the sounds of English that derives in large measure from the language’s rich store of monosyllabic (one-syllable) words.*
  + *Some of the many, words invented by Shakespeare include: Accused, Addiction, Advertising, Amazement, Arouse, Assassination, Bandit, Bedroom, Beached, Blanket, Bump, Cater, Champion, Countless, Epileptic, Fixture, Flawed, Generous, Hint, Lonely, Mimic, Negotiate, Obscene, Premeditated, Rant, Summit, Torture, Varied, Worthless, and Zany*

**(16) (Handout)**

* The Bible has been written in Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. The King James or Authorized Version was published in 1611. The Bible proved the richness and power of Modern English with majestic simplicity.

**(17)**

* Today’s English has nearly the same style, sound, and sentence structure of Shakespeare and the Bible. The major change has been vocabulary.
* From the 17th century on, English began to expand into other parts of the world. New words were and still are continually added to meet new needs.

**(18) (Handout)**

* As people from many lands settled in America, they learned English and added words from their native tongues.
* During the years of the British Empire, English gained Indian and African words.
* Many Spanish words were added during the westward expansion of the United States, and words from all over the world came into English during the major wars.
* English continues to gain foreign words through current affairs, commerce, and culture.
* American settlers devised the words: clearing, underbrush, sidewalk, and groundhog. Opossum, raccoon, woodchuck, skunks, moccasin, squash, toboggan, cactus, and chipmunk were words added from North American Indian tongues.
* Words such as: canoe, tomato, petunia, hurricane, potato, tobacco, and chili came from South American tongues.
* Boomerang, koala, and kangaroo came from Australian tongues.

**(19)**

* Not all words come from foreign sources. Some are coined and others are made from existing words.
* Some are acronyms, blends, names of inventors, or brand names.

**(20)**

* English has the world’s largest vocabulary. It is made up of:
  + 1/5 Germanic words
  + 3/5 Latin, Greek, and French words
  + 1/5 words from other sources and languages
* Approximately 914 million people speak English.
* Of the 914 million, approximately 450 million speak it as a native language.
* Only Chinese has more native speakers, but it has less influence.
* English has replaced German in the field of science and French in the field of diplomacy.
* English is also the leading language in modern fields such as: international business, medicine, aviation, advertising, electronics, space technology, radio, television, and film.
* English is the most exact and versatile of the languages.
* English is just one of many languages in the world. There are approximately 7,000 languages in the world, and there are 30 languages spoken by 10 million or more people.
* The size of the English language in terms of vocabulary:
  + One dictionary, the Oxford English Dictionary, gathered English words from the past and present in 13 volumes, weighing a total of 80 pounds. It took the editor, James Murray, 50 years to reach the letter T, and the editors who continued after his death, another 13 years to reach the letter Z.
* Top 10 World Languages
  + According to Internet research**:**
    - **Mandarin Chinese** (935 million)
    - **Spanish** (390 million)
    - **English** (365 million)
    - **Hindi** (295 million)
    - **Arabic** (280 million)
    - **Bengali** (200 million)
    - **Portuguese** (205 million)
    - **Russian** (160 million)
    - **Japanese** (125 million)
    - **German** (92 million)
  + According to **George Weber’s** article [“Top Languages: The World’s 10 Most Influential Languages”](http://www.andaman.org/BOOK/reprints/weber/rep-weber.htm) in ***Language Today*** (Vol. 2, Dec 1997)
    - **Mandarin Chinese** (1.1 billion)
    - **English** (330 million)
    - **Spanish** (300 million)
    - **Hindi/Urdu** (250 million)
    - **Arabic** (200 million)
    - **Bengali** (185 million)
    - **Portuguese** (160 million)
    - **Russian** (160 million)
    - **Japanese** (125 million)
    - **German** (100 million)
  + As of Sept. 2012
    - **Mandarin Chinese** (1,213,000,000)
    - **Spanish** (329,000,000)
    - **English** (328,000,000)
    - **Arabic** (221,000,000)
    - **Hindi** (182,000,000)
    - **Bengali** (181,000,000)
    - **Portuguese** (178,000,000)
    - **Russian** (144,000,000)
    - **Japanese** (122,000,000)
    - **German** (90,000,000)