

The Importance Of The English Language

潘宏熟·作

1. History

The significant history of the English language goes back no further than the 5th century A.D., when tribes from the northwestern Continental fringe, speaking a form of Low German, invaded Romano-Celtic England. To trace the development of the English language is to trace the process by which the dialects spoken by this handful of invaders became the instrument of communication and literature now used by upward of 250 million of the world's inhabitants.

The origins of the English language lie in a social dislocation, i. e., the emigration of certain groups from the Continent to England, with the consequent breaking of communication between these groups and their Continental Kinsfolk. The next great dislocation occurred during the Norman Conquest. Between the two events extends a period which, although marred by internecine wars and the incursions of the Scandinavian invaders, shows an apparent if largely fictitious linguistic equilibrium. The English language of this period (450-1150) is called Anglo-Saxon or old English. As a spoken language the Old English was not entirely uniform; dialectal differences already developed on the Continent probably increased rather than decreased on English soil. These original differences have much to do with the complexities of Modern English dialectal speech; yet Old English writings show a quite remarkable uniformity. The eventual national ascendancy of the West-Saxon Kingdom, centered around the capital of Winchester, gave the written dialect of Wessex the importance of a written standard language; and the great bulk of literature was either written originally in West Saxon or was transcribed into it from its original Northumbrian and Mercian sources.

The next great period of the language, that of Middle English, can not be fitted as neatly between dates as the preceding period. Time was needed to absorb the great historical shock of the Norman Conquest. The adoption of the limits 1150-1475 is dependent upon the emerging of a distinctive Post-Conquest literature and upon the social effects of the invention of printing.

The Conquest did not produce a clean break in the history of English; it merely released and accelerated tendencies toward differentiation that must already have been in operation. Its most immediate result was to replace English, as an authoritative language, first by Latin and then by the Norman-French of the conquerors for well over two hundred years; in the meantime, the effects upon the English language itself were threefold:

(1) the social prestige of Norman-French and the extension in the ecclesiastical, administrative, and scholarly use of Latin brought into English an enormous number of words borrowed from these languages;

(2) the loss of the West-Saxon written standard allowed free play to the dialectal peculiarities and disturbed the linguistic equilibrium of English;

(3) the influence of French and Latin spelling did much to revise the traditional orthography of English.

The first part of the Middle English period is something like linguistic chaos. Important literary works were written in half a dozen different dialects. Early Middle English is not one but a group of dialects. The resolution of this confusion, which was the adoption of the London English as a basis for a new written standard language, came about under the pressure of many disparate factors:

(1) the breakdown of direct English authority over Normandy;

(2) the gradual establishment of nationalism;

(3) the rise in importance of the middle and laboring classes

(4) the growing centralisation of administration at the capital, accompanied by the rise of an administrative English based on the speech of London;

(5) the timely appearance of important works, all of them in London or South Eastern English. Although much fine literature continued to be produced in the rival literary dialects of the Northwest and the North, the predominance of written London English was never afterwards seriously challenged.

The third and last period of English, Extending from about 1476 to the present, actually consists of two distinct phases of the language. In the earlier phase, which ends in the full tide of the Industrial Revolution about 1780, the principal pressures exerted on the language result from the invention of printing, the vast extension of literacy, the intellectual ferment of the Renaissance, and above all, from a continuous social struggle between the rising middle classes and the dominant aristocracy. Theoretically, the wide diffusion of the printed word should have worked towards linguistic stability and uniformity. Actually, the converse is true. Its immediate result was to produce self-conscious awareness of ideas and ideologies, awareness of the implications of language, awareness of class and society. There were thus rapid accretions of foreign words, particularly of latinic abstract words, that greatly modified the English vocabulary. And, in spite of the normalizing tendencies of the printed language, in spite of the efforts of many self-conscious grammarians, this phase of English is one of extremely rapid linguistic change. At its beginning, the vowel system of English was Continental, i. e., the vowel symbols had more or less the same phonetic values as in Italian, Spanish, French or German. At its end, the vowel distribution of English had undergone so thorough a regrouping that the sounds were completely divorced from the Continental values of the symbols and consequently from the system of orthography—still the basis of modern English spelling—fixed by Caxton and his followers.

Changes as violent as this are likely to have violent social causes. Insofar as any single social cause can be considered responsible, it would appear to lie in the dislocation of the community along vertical lines, the clash of phonetic system against phonemic system resulting from the clash of the aristocratic and the middle classes. As early as 1400, the powerful bourgeoisie of England's first industrial stronghold, East Anglia, had developed a kind of generalized "lingua franca", based on the local dialects of that region, through which they were enabled to carry out their business affairs. Wherever industry later extended,

this "lingua franca", no longer purely regional, seems to have followed: In the 17th century, the settlement of the New England Colonies by immigrants drawn principally from South Eastern England brought this type of English to the New World, where it formed the basis for the North-eastern Coastal American speech of today.

Yet for all its wide distribution, the middle class "lingua franca" had the phonetic system of the East Anglian dialects; and that system varies greatly from the system used by the London aristocracy. Thus during the entire period (1476-1780)- the so-called period of Early Modern English -we have the spectacle of two important class dialects existing, in the same localities, side by side, and influencing the formative years of each successive youngest generation from two directions at once. By the unconscious attempts of each youngest generation to reconcile the conflicting signaling-systems of the two class dialects, to achieve a workable synthesis between them, the Great Vowel Shift of the Early Modern English period may well have been strongly influenced.

Within the limits of the Early Modern period itself, no such synthesis was achieved. The social struggle went on. Linguistic change lost nothing of its rapidity.

The two great class dialects of English not only held their ground, but even gained; for if the middle class type became standard for the New England Colonies, the aristocratic type became standard in the Southern Colonies, where it formed the original basis of the General Southern American of today. The final phase of the English Language, the phase of Late Modern English, was not ushered in until the Industrial Revolution, by securing enormous material gains for the middle classes, had secured their social, political, and economical victory, and an authoritative predominance for their type of English. Upon that type, pruned and "regularized" by the grammarians and lexicographers between 1750 and 1850, both the cultivated British and the cultivated American of today are firmly rooted.

As spoken English, the older aristocratic type lingers in Tidewater Virginia and a few other Southern localities. From England, it has disappeared almost without a trace. Thus the history of English between 1750 and 1850 is not the history of an evolution but the history of a replacement.

Within the actual limits of the Late Modern English period, from 1780 to the present, something like linguistic equilibrium has been re-established. Apart from certain necessary phonological generalizations, change has been slight and gradual. Individual, regional, and to some extent, class divergencies still exist; but the written word, fostered by democratic social institutions, by popular education, and by the accessibility of grammars and dictionaries, has come to be of paramount importance. Even today, however, the continued diphthongization of (a) and (o) and various other developments warn us that the development of the English phonetic system is still under way?

2. Importance

In the year 1600, there were only five million English speakers in the world. This number has increased to over 400,000,000 with more than 300,000,000 speaking it as their native language. It is spoken habitually in the British Isles,

Liberia, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of the Philippines, and parts of Canada and South Africa, as well as being the medium of communication among government officials in many African and Asian countries including India and Pakistan. In addition, it is the language of commerce and the second language on many countries which formerly had French or German in that position. It is also one of the five permitted working languages in the United Nations. In most of the secondary schools throughout Europe, Asia, and South America it is a required part of the curriculum.

If one recalls the impact which the Greek language, and later, the Latin language, had in transmitting the cultures of Greece and Rome to later ages, he can readily understand the cultural transmission now taking place in our age. The English language is the vehicle of the world's most extensively spread civilization and of what is generally agreed to be the world's greatest literature. Furthermore its influence is being broadened everyday as the newer means of communications spread to all parts of the globe. The inroads that English words have made into the languages of almost every nation and people are proof of the vast extent of its influence.

One of the many reasons given for this rapid and widespread diffusion is the fact of easy grammar and standard word order. This has led some people to believe that with the passage of not too great a time, English will become the basis for a truly international common language. In the meantime no one can doubt its present day importance.

Although it is not the language used by the great number of native speakers (an honor belonging to Mandarin, the national language of China) it certainly deserves the recognition as being the most important language in the world today. In view of this, no educated person, whether scholar or businessman, can afford to be ignorant of English in our era.

3. English Compared with Other Languages

The most striking characteristic of English has been its receptivity to borrow words from other tongues, a receptivity unmatched by any other European language. These borrowed words have been assimilated into their new environment in a way that other languages have never countenanced. One example of this is the free use of native suffixes and prefixes with words of foreign origin, of conversely. Instances are defrost, captivatingly, truism, unnerved, singable. The acceptance of foreign words has not resulted, as a rule, in the disappearance of the corresponding native words, but has made available finer shades of meaning. Compare, for example, friendly and amicable, bony and osseous, or hot, torrid and thermic. A further refinement of this process occurs when a borrowed word has come into the language in different forms. The Latin word legalis appears as leal, loyal, and legal, but the senses are different. Borrowings have taken place from practically every known language, and even from the earlier stages of the language itself. This process is twofold since the words were often borrowed to express refinements of ideation, and this choice of words permitted greater clarity in the formulation and communication of ideas.

European languages, especially the Romantic (Italian, French, Romanian, Portuguese, and Spanish) are inflected languages. This means that the relation

of the words in a sentence is indicated mainly by the case endings. In modern English the relation of words to each other in the sentence is expressed in three ways: by inflectional endings (which are relatively few e. g. he, him etc.) by modifiers or particles which link words or groups of words, and by certain conventions of word order.

Another chief difference between English and other European languages is its phonology. Although its alphabet is Roman in origin (Irish missionaries passed it on to the Anglo-Saxons) one easily notices that English is not strictly phonetic as is Portuguese or Italian. As it was explained previously, this is due to the fact that Modern English retained the spelling of Middle English (which was for the most part strictly phonetic). As a result a non-native English speaker has great difficulty in spelling English words.

4. Characteristics of Present-Day English

The English language has a current vocabulary of about 500,000 words not including scientific terminology. The Webster's Third International Dictionary lists 100,000 new entries not found in its predecessor printed less than 30 years before. In a count of 20,000 main words in Skeat's Etymological English Dictionary the percentages by etymology were approximately:

native 18.4%, French 32.4%, Latin 14.4%, Greek 12.5%, other languages 23.3%. This, however, is a very uncertain basis from which to draw inferences, since these fractions take no account of frequency of usage. The creation of new words and senses goes on ceaselessly.

Characteristic of the sounds of present-day English is the number of diphthongs and vowels which indicate the influence of adjacent consonants. The range of consonants is extensive, but the spirants, and the glottal stop, which are particularly jarring to other ears are absent. Musical intonation as an adjunct of meaning is present to a marked degree but it varies greatly from community to community.

a. Pronunciation

To most of us, the smallest practical unit of language is the word. All who can read, however, assume that words are built up from a limited number of distinctive sounds roughly corresponding to the letters of the alphabet. We are aware that they do not correspond exactly. When pressed for a description of these "sounds", we have to amplify such vague alphabetical indications as "the long "i" of bite" or "the short "a" of bat" with further details intended to convey impressions to the ear: "the soft "g" of gin", "the hard "s" of sits", etc. Because modern spelling reflects the pronunciation of the 15th century rather than that of the 20th, such descriptions are rather of limited usefulness. A more scientific procedure is to separate our "sounds" from their surroundings and to study the details of their formation when we articulate them.

Speech sounds result when an outflowing stream of air is pumped through the vocal instrument by the action of the lungs and is impeded or modified in various ways as it passes through the resonators toward the outer air. Sounds formed with the glottis opened are known as voiceless sounds. These sounds uttered with a vibration are called voiced sounds. All English vowels and many English consonants are voiced; other consonants are voiceless; cf. Voiced "z" in the

with voiceless "s" in see, voiced "v" in vast with voiceless "F" in fast, etc. This distinction between voiced and voiceless is of primary importance in classifying sounds.

The raising or lowering of the velum gives another phonetic possibility respectively the oral sounds and the nasal sounds. (cf. oral "b" in bat with nasal "m" in mat, oral "d" in dash with nasal "n" in gnash, etc.).

Most of the audible distinctions between English sounds result from further modification of the outflowing breath caused by the action of the tongue and the lips. That way are produced the vowels, the laterals (as in "let"), the fricatives (f, v, s, z, sh, zh, etc.), the stops (p, b, t, d, k; g), the nasalized voiced stops or nasals (b and m, d and n, etc.) and the trills and flips (the variety of "t" in the Middle Western water, butter, etc.).

The capacities of the breath-stream mechanism are almost endless. However, in practice, every language has evolved its own particular system of sound-signals based not on all but on very few of the breath-stream mechanism's phonetic possibilities. These sound-signals are called phonemes. Most of the rather extensive English dictionaries have charts of the English phonemes by which is given a description of their chief characteristics (Phonetic features). It should be noted that the phonemes are influenced by their environment: one phoneme may eventually become merged with, or change to, another (sound-change). This change often starts from the weakest positional variant of a phoneme. It is no accident that the distinction between "that's tough" and "that stuff" depends chiefly upon the aspirated initial "t" in the former.

Every American belongs to one speech minority or another. The fact that America do not possess any single accepted American standard pronunciation means, among other things, that different speakers use different allophones (variant forms of the phonemes) and even different phonemes in pronouncing the same words. Not that these differences seriously impede communication between the people. The United States is actually one of the few large countries in the world where one may travel from border to border without changing language or running the risk of being seriously misunderstood. A calf is still a calf whether pronounced (Kaf) of (K^haf).

In Britain, there is such a thing as a more or less standardized spoken English (Received Standard British) based upon the speech of the great boarding schools and the older universities. But in Britain, very many of the population begin their linguistic careers with one of the regional dialects as their sole speech-dialects so different from each other that they impede general communication. Because of the barriers to communication created by the diversity of the dialects, Englishmen, even Britons in general, readily accept the notion of a standard British pronunciation which goes beyond and replaces the regional dialects; and they are willing to learn it, by intensive efforts, in school and elsewhere. Thus, although probably less than 10 per cent of the British population are original speakers of Received Standard British, it is universally accepted as desirable by educational authorities, by radio performers, and by the mass of the population.

In the United States, the situation is otherwise. As previously mentioned,

the States is probably the only nation on earth in which one can travel three thousand miles without encountering serious difficulties of oral communication. Regional differences in speech undoubtedly exist there: the speech of Maine is not like that of Georgia, nor is the speech of Texas like that of Minnesota. Yet, unless people deliberately exaggerate them for social or other reasons, regional speech differences offer no great barrier to the free exchange of opinions and ideas. They consist more of flavor than of substance. Precisely for that reason, all the pressures ever exerted for the official adoption of a Received Standard American English comparable in scope with Received Standard British have proved unavailing. The practical necessity simply does not exist. In the affairs of American life, one may speak a Southern, Middle Atlantic, Chicago-Great Lakes, or Eastern New England English without any real disadvantages.

Syllables. Thus far, we have been chiefly concerned with phonemes as isolated sound-signal units. Let us now put them into the contexts of actual speech and study them in combination with the various contextual factors (Prosodic features) which influence them.

When we study a succession of phonemes in an utterance, the first thing that strikes us is a marked variation of prominence (sonority) between them. For instance, in the word "limitation", phonemes 2, 4, 6, 8, are obviously more prominent in their relative sonority than the others; in "oscillator", this same prominence occurs in phonemes 1, 3, 5, 7, . On further analysis, we find that these prominent phonemes are vowels (cavity friction sounds) bordered either by less prominent phonemes phonemes possessing mixed or local friction, or by silence. In essence, then, any speech flow consists of a series of peaks and troughs of prominence with sonorous cavity friction phonemes at the peaks and less sonorous phonemes or silence (pause) at the troughs, The phonemes at the peaks are called sonants; those at the troughs are called consonants.

English syllables can commence and end with sonants, with single consonants, and with clusters of as many as three consonants before and after the peak of the syllable: cf. strict, quarts. Any combination of these may occur between the syllables.

Stress and pitch. When we come to consider a series of syllables in an utterance, we find that certain syllables are more prominent than others. In "limitation", "oscillator", for instance, the syllables "-ta-" and "os-" obviously carry more relative prominence than any others in these two words, and, if we listen closely, we shall find that "lim-" and "-lat-", although less prominent than "-ta-" and "os-", are still more prominent than the other syllables surrounding them. We shall say that the prominent syllables are stressed, i. e., pronounced with more vigor or intensity of articulation, than the remaining unstressed syllables. It can still be distinguished between primary, or strong, stress and secondary, or light, stress.

In English, the placing of stress is phonetic, i. e., significant for the expression of meaning. All the words except monosyllabic words have a definite stress pattern or, more occasionally patterns, which play an important role in the recognition of them (cf. "insight" compared with "incite".)

In addition of stress, two other factors affect the relative prominence of cer-

tain syllables, particularly in spoken contexts. The more important of these is pitch, i. e., the relative lowness or highness of the frequency of voice hum in the enunciation of sonants and voiced consonants. The other is length, i. e., the relative duration of sonants and some consonants. Pitch changes reinforce the stress patterns of the language and help to produce the relatively eventimed rhytm which characterizes continuous utterance in spoken English. The principal domain of pitch, however, is the sentence, which that of stress is the word and the phrase.

b. Grammar

According to the definition given by Henry Sweet a grammar gives the general facts of language, while a dictionary deals with the special facts of language. But the two domains frequently overlap, so that one and the same fact finds its place in the grammar as well in the dictionary; this is because in order to state a rule correctly we must also state its limitations, i. e., the special cases in which it does not hold good. If we give the rule that English substantives form their plurals in -s, we must add that besides this regular formation we have the irregular plurals men, women, oxen, etc. And as languages are not constructed after ideal patterns, such exceptions to the rules must necessarily take up much space in all books on grammar.

To the ordinary man, grammar means a set of more or less arbitrary rules which he has to observe if he wants to speak or write correctly. This is especially the case if he is engaged in the study of a foreign language, but he is often led to the same point of view by the grammar of his own native language, as taught in schools. Grammar treated in this way may be called normative or prescriptive grammar.

But to the scientific grammarian the subject has a different aspect: to him the rules are not what he has to observe but what he observes (in a different sense) when he examines the way in which speakers and writers belonging to a particular community or nation actually use their mother tongue. His attitude toward linguistic phenomena is therefore much more that of a naturalist observing the facts of nature; he stands more objectively outside the language he is studying, and perhaps never has to form one single sentence in it for himself. This we term descriptive grammar.

The grammatical observer, like the observer in other fields, seeks, wherever possible, to go beyond the mere facts in order to find their explanation. This is the function of comparative historical grammar, a creation of the 19th century. Many things which seem strange from the point of view of merely descriptive grammar find their natural explanation when viewed in the light of earlier periods of the same language or of related languages. Take such an abnormal plural as feet from foot: the historian finds that its long vowel goes back through a regular phonetic development to an earlier $\bar{o} \bar{e}$ which, wherever it was found, was treated in the same way (thus in feed, green, sweet) and like other $\bar{o} \bar{e}$ s was a mutated form of a still earlier \bar{o} —the vowel that is better preserved in the singular foot, where, however, it has now been shortened and raised. The mutation was here, as elsewhere, because of the existence of an earlier i in the final syllable, which was dropped in all analogous cases. Now we know that the ending in the plural in the earliest Germanic was very often -iz, which corresponds to a still earlier -es preserved in Latin and Greek; the form feet, which

from the one-sided Modern English point of view was an isolated fact, is thus seen to correspond to the Greek; and to be connected with that form through a long series of perfectly normal historical changes, which do not only affect such plural forms but find parallels in other words as well. The historical and comparative method of explaining grammatical facts has been carried to a rare degree of perfection, but it is clear that it can only be employed to the full where we have early linguistic documents of the same language or of nearly related languages to refer to. The great majority of languages are only known to us in quite recent stages; here, however, a similar method of explanation may be used if there are other now existing languages that are akin to that which we are examining, and the comparative method then sometimes allows us within certain limits to reconstruct a common basis from which the several languages have started, as with the numerous African languages known as Bantu.

Grammatical reconstructions should always be made with great caution, for the ways in which languages develop are not always easy to calculate. We may take the Romantic languages (Italian, French, Spanish) as a test case; all these languages have been known to us for several centuries; now in some cases it would be possible from existing forms in them to infer what the common basis must have been, and the forms thus reconstructed would agree pretty closely with the forms of what we know to have been the basis, namely Latin; but the method fails utterly, as has been well remarked, with regard to many other forms no one would be able, for instance, to conclude from the forms of Romanic substantives that Latin had ever had an accusative in -m, for the only remnant is French rien from Latin rem "a thing" which now means "nothing" and can no longer be called an accusative.

The method of comparative grammar was especially developed in the study of the Aryan or Indo-European family, and at a certain stage of its development scholars were naturally tempted to dwell on, and to a certain extent exaggerate, those features that were common to these languages, and to take less account of features which were peculiar to one or a few of them. There was always a tendency to think that these were survivals of primitive common phenomena which were lost in the other languages of the group. This may be true in some cases, but more often we see that something in one language only is a recent development that has really nothing to do with the rest of the family and may constitute a new grammatical type or phenomenon. Comparative grammar should, therefore, always be supplemented by separate grammar which does full justice to what is peculiar to each language and treats each on its own merits.

Languages differ very considerably in their grammatical structure; subtle nuances which in one language are considered absolutely necessary, are utterly disregarded in others. Things which we should naturally look upon as belonging necessarily to the grammar of any language, are in other languages either not expressed at all or expressed by means that are utterly different from ours. We have separate forms for the superlative, but French simply uses the comparative form with a defining word; *mon meilleur ami*, "my best friend," *la chose la plus nécessaire*, "the most necessary thing." Semitic verbs originally had no indications of the three time distinctions, past, present and future, but possessed two forms that showed whether an action was completed or not, no matter whether it was in the past, present or future time-distinctions which were later partly utilized to show time relations as well. Chinese substantives have no se-

parate forms for singular and plural, and their verbs none for different tenses.

Inversely, where have only one "third person," American Indian languages very carefully distinguish between the first and second "third person" mentioned; the English sentence "John told Robert's son that he must help him" is capable of six different meaning which in Chippeway would be carefully distinguished by different forms of the pronouns for "he" and "him". Many languages have separate reflexive pronouns, like Latin "se", himself, herself, themselves, "suus", his, her, their (own); these indicate identity with the subject of the sentence, but their sphere of application varies very considerably from one language to another; sometimes they refer to all three persons, sometimes only to the third, sometimes only to the singular, not to the plural, etc. In the oldest English we find *sin* as a reflexive possessive pronoun, but afterwards this solitary survival of the reflexive pronouns beginning with "s" disappeared from English, while such forms are still found in German, Scandinavian, etc.

New grammatical categories may develop; examples are the English "expanded" or "prograssive" tenses: he is running, was running, has been running, etc., as distinct from he runs, ran, has run. The distinction between "absolute" (primary) and "conjoint" (adjunctive) possessive pronouns, e. g., mine, yours as distinct from my, your, is another case in point. There is in some languages a tendency in regard to personal pronouns to merge the distinction of nominative and objective in that of conjoint and absolute, the old nominative being used only when it stands in immediate connection with a verb as subject, and the old objective in all other positions.

A modern philologist always looks upon the spoken language as the essential thing to study; in languages with a traditional spelling he must constantly be on his guard against misconceptions arising from that source. To the uniform English plural ending in the written words kings, dukes, princes correspond three different forms in the spoken language; on the other hand the French forms (je) donne, (tu) dommes, (ils) domment, though differently spelt, are the same in sound, and thus in numerous cases. Many things of great grammatical importance, like intonation, stress, etc., are not shown in our traditional spellings. Grammars of spoken as distinct from written English have been written by Henry Sweet and Harold Palmer. Dialect grammars and grammars of the languages of the languages of uncivilized races deal of necessity only with spoken words.

Most grammars, at any rate, most of those dealing with Indo-European family of speech, are built up in the traditional way with the following main division:—

I, Phonology. This treats of the general theory of the sounds and sound-combinations of the language concerned, and expounds the orthography, where there is occasion

II, Accidence or Morphology, the theory of forms. This generally treats of the traditional "parts of speech" in their usual order, substantives, adjectives, etc. The main subject is the changes words undergo inflexion, paradigms, being given which show all the forms of one and the same typical word; but the point of view is not pursued consistently, for under "numerals" we generally find an enumeration of all these words in their natural order, though most of them are subject to no formal changes.

III. Word-formation, dealing with prefixes, suffixes and other means of forming one word from another.

IV. Syntax, generally in its first part taking the parts of speech separately, as in II, and stating the rules for the use of each case, tense, mood, etc. A second part then deals with word-order, etc.

A comprehensive system of all the notions that find expression in language would be impractical on account of the infinite complexity of mental and physical phenomena. But we are here concerned with those notions only that have found grammatical expression, and this makes our task somewhat less difficult, though far from easy. The following necessarily very brief survey does not claim to be either complete or final.

(1) Parts of speech. It is usual to divide words grammatically into the following classes and to define them somewhat as is here indicated:

- (a) Substantives—denoting "persons" and "things".
- (b) Adjectives— showing qualities.
- (c) Pronouns— used instead of nouns "to designate a person or thing already mentioned or known or forming the subject of inquiry.
- (d) Verbs— denoting actions, states or happenings.
- (e) Adverbs— serving to modify adjectives or verbs.
- (f) Prepositions— marking relations between words.
- (g) Conjunctions— used to connect clauses or to coordinate words in the same clause.
- (h) Interjections— ejaculations, standing outside ordinary sentences.

(2) In the treatment of each particular language we meet with units which are units neither from the purely formal nor from the purely notional point of view, but which, nevertheless, must be taken together as what might be called functional units. Take the English preterite: it is not a formal unit, because it is formed in different ways; ended from end, sent from send, thought from think, put from put, saw from see, was from be, etc. Neither is it a notional unit for sometimes it indicates the past time pure and simple, sometimes unreality, or modesty or even future times, and it has even more spheres of application. Yet all these formal and notional things go together and form one separate unit in English grammar, which is different from such units in any foreign grammar which in some ways correspond to it. But all the units, which we arrive at through our analysis of grammatical phenomena, are at best symbols or shadowings of the innermost notional categories.

In English grammar, the relation of words to each other in the sentence is expressed in three ways: by inflectional endings, by modifiers or particles which link words or groups of words, and by certain conventions of word order. The only current living ending for nouns is -s which represents the possessive singular on the plural (all cases). There is no grammatical gender. The personal pronouns have nominative, possessive, and oblique forms, though even here her and it are ambiguous. The verb has an invariable present tense except for an ending -(e)s in the third person singular; the second person singular which ends in -(e)st is all but obsolete, its place being taken by the pronoun and verbal form of the plural. For the rest, number and person are indicated by the pronoun or other subject. In the simple past tense, the second person singular ending in -(e)st survives as an archism only. The verb possesses two methods of tense

formation, by adding an inflection to the stem or by a vowel change in the stem, or sometimes by both. The weak verbs may be recognized by the -(e)d or -t which makes the past tense and the past participle, for example, push, pushed, have pushed. The strong verbs usually show the past tense and past participle by vowel variation, and generally add -en for the past participle, for example, break broke, have broken. The only simple tenses are the present and preterite. The future, the perfect, and the continuous tenses are formed by auxiliaries, such as shall, will, have and be and the stem, the past participle, or the present participle: for example, I will go, I have gone, I was going, I have been sent, I shall have been sent. The subjunctive mood survives, but is employed in very few constructions.

As a result of these three factors of inflectional survivals, conventions of word order, and governing words, we can say "the body's needs" or "the needs of the body". We can say "The president greeted the senator," but never say the order to "The senator greeted the president" changes the sense. The particles or modifiers generally govern succeeding words; for example, "We saw him only yesterday" where only modifies yesterday and not him.

It is this absence of long declensions and elaborate verbal paradigms that has led some persons to declare that "English has no grammar." In fact, English has substituted an involved system of word order, Prepositions, and other modifiers which is beyond the capacity of all but the most gifted to master unless it be his mother tongue.

5. English Instruction

Adults residing in a foreign country have often observed with amazement that children seem to learn the new language with great ease, while they themselves stammer and hesitate everytime they try to communicate. Because a child's habits are not so firmly fixed as an adult's children find it easy to learn new patterns of speech. But when an adult sets out to learn a new language, it is difficult for him to change the speech habits that he learned so thoroughly, through countless hours of practice, during the first years of his life. It would seem that any method of teaching a foreign language, including English to non-native speakers, should take into account this important fact.

Modern language-teaching methodology pays careful attention to the obstacles that the student's native-language habits put in the way of his success in learning a new language. Experience has shown that without proper guidance, the student often fails even to hear important distinctions in the new language, especially when his native language lacks the sounds involved or organizes them in a new way. Thus the first step in language teaching is to train the student to listen and to understand.

Since it is almost impossible to separate the various skills in language learning, the student learns to speak as he trains his ear and acquires skill in making the new sounds. He carefully repeats selected utterances over and over, until he can say them automatically without searching his memory for the words. The student should learn each utterance completely, along with a context in which it can be used. In other words he should understand each utterance and reproduce it accurately.

One may ask how the student is to learn grammar. Noting that a child does not study grammar, yet can learn to speak a foreign language much faster than adults who do, we might best use the method that the child uses. The child first hears, then speaks, then reads, and last of all writes. Ideally grammar is learned by induction, through experience.

Unfortunately, some English instructors fail to realize that English is a language—a means of communication of ideas between men — and not a system of grammatical rules. As a result many instructors emphasize the learning of grammar instead of a living language. The results of such instruction are a loss of interest upon the part of the students and what is worse, a waste of time, money and effort on the part of teacher and student. Dr. Lin Yu-tang referred to such a situation existing in Taiwan when he wrote an essay in the Chinese language newspapers of Taiwan last July. He suggested that many bar girls in Taipei know English much better than the university students who have spent 6 years or more of Middle School studying English. The reason he gave for the bar girls knowing English and learning it quickly is that they learn English as a living language and not as a dead book of rules and pronunciation listing.

In Taiwan many students make the mistake of studying English as if it were Chinese and emphasize memorizing an enormous vocabulary. With more than 500,000 words to be learned, one wonders how native speakers can read newspapers and periodicals which often cite new words not found in the latest dictionary. A student who only memorizes words — and doesn't know how to recognize the stems — has no chance of becoming proficient in English. As was noted earlier a great number of words came into the English language from French and Latin. A native speaker normally deciphers a new word by looking at its stem. If the native speaker has studied Latin or French he can be greatly helped in coming to the meaning of the words. This is also true of spelling. A native speaker does not memorize the spelling of every English word, but memorizes the rules of phonetic spelling and the exceptions. Those words — which are not too many — having inconsistencies in spelling may be memorized.

Another factor in learning English which is not stressed enough is that when a non-native speaker studies English he automatically comes into contact with a culture different from his own. As such the mere translation of the words, and not the shades of meaning or the differences of interpretation, will not bring out the meaning as understood by the native English speaker. The term OK is not translatable. In the same way the term pu hao yisz cannot be translated into English without giving all of its Chinese meaning. Therefore a study of the culture, including its literature, is necessary for anyone who wants to claim to be proficient in English.

6. Conclusion

English, although not used by the greatest number of native speakers, is the most widespread language used in the world to-day. Characterized by an extremely mixed nature of its vocabulary, by a simplicity of inflection, which has led to the development of a relatively fixed word-order, by the extension of its system of intonation, it has become the medium of diplomats and businessmen throughout the world. To have come to such a position we must conclude that the English language is adequate as a means of expression between men of differing

cultures and is elastic enough to take on the new dimensions of literature and culture which the non-native speakers will undoubtedly offer to it. In our age no educated person can afford to neglect the study of English.

In learning English a student should emphasize the learning of a living language, thus speaking the language is essential. This should come before the study of writing and grammar. The aim or purpose of the study of English, should encompass the understanding not only of the ideas of the native English speaker, but also of his culture and background which helped form his ideas.

In this paper on the importance of English, we have mainly concentrated on the Language itself and developed its importance from a linguistic viewpoint. This was to show that in the internal structure of English one discovers a highly developed and nuanced means of communication, which for this reason is important. But it goes without saying that in a living historical context one is confronted not primarily with a language but with users of a language. And the position most popularly advanced is that the importance of the former, in fact, derives from the latter. One might, for instance, speak of the importance of the atom; but at the same time the importance attaches to the one who discovers the properties of the atom and employs what he learns, and in this way a person can read articles about "Atoms for Peace" or "The Threat of Atomic War." But even much less than the atom is a language something in itself.

So we can see that in discussing the importance of English the real question descends to the level of the users of English; and which it does look to those who have used English in the past, it primarily looks to those using English here and now, and who will be using it in the future. Historical investigation of the past and present and historically rooted prognostication of the future is the key issue in discerning the importance of a language.

And so while the English people were the main reason for the importance of English in the past, it might be advanced that the American people are the main reason for its importance today, and perhaps, it will be the Philippine or Australian people who in future years will be the main reason for the importance of English, if it remains to be important at all.

Language is just a means to communicate meaning, just as an airplane is a means of getting somewhere. And as the ordinary passenger is primarily interested not in the plane but in going somewhere; so, too, the ordinary language user is primarily interested in communicating his meaning and grasping what it is the other person wants to communicate, and not in the means of communication.

Because the present day American people are a group which, for better or for worse, other national groups cannot afford to ignore without some harm to their own self interest, English is important. To what degree this is true and how long it will be true depends on the people involved. The importance of English for Russians lies in the area of national defense; while for an Indian it lies in the area of science and technology, and for others still it lies in literature, business or economy, or various combinations of these. The importance of English lies in the necessity for communication and exchange in these areas. As such the importance of English is, within our present historical conditions, essen-

tially a practical matter. And when these practical exigencies pass away, so will the importance of English as an international language. That this may well come to pass is verified by the history of language itself which records the birth and death (or continued evolution) of many languages.

To sum up this paper we may say that it attempted to deal with two main points. The first is the importance of English because of those who use English. We showed from past history that it has been important and that in present times it continues to be important (perhaps more so than ever before), and that there is reason to believe that in the years to come it will continue, for some time at least, to be an important international language. The second point was the importance of English because it is demonstrably a fine tool of communication which is exact and nuanced without being unnecessarily complex or difficult to learn. The conclusion from this investigation of English, then, is simply that it is an important international language, which will open up to the one who learns it many doors of opportunities which otherwise might remain closed to him forever.

the end



1. 封底：	3,000 元	4. 封面裡對頁：	1,400 元
2. 封面裡：	2,200 元	5. 全頁：	1,200 元
3. 封底裡：	2,000 元	6. 半頁：	600 元
		7. ¼ 頁：	300 元