

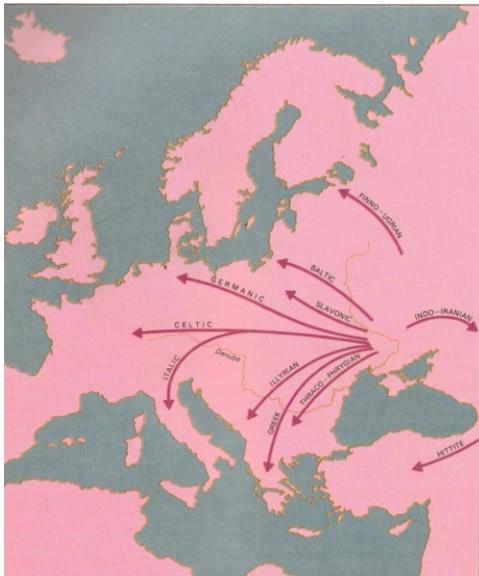
The Monks' Moment

The history of the English language does not begin in England. It begins in the vicinity of modern Russian Georgia although scholars disagree as to precisely where. In that region, after someone domesticated the horse, and someone else invented the wheel, the residents, putting the two advances together, began to move.

Why did they move? What did these people want? Stability? Good pasture? Solid opportunity to prosper? Bettered meaning in life? Apparently not empire-building. Better circumstances? So it seems. Initially, and for some time apparently, mankind had to walk to eat.

Walking and Talking

And, of course, as he walked, he talked. But he did not write. The ancestors of the English language, and their story of evolving English, influenced all of us today who speak English, not at all just those who learn English as their first language. Those ancestors never wrote at all beyond using the symbolic Runes, a set of cuneiform shapes which represent qualities and natural forces such as leadership, learning, and fate and which served on monument stones to commemorate lives or events or locations. Who were these people? We don't really know for sure. We know something of where they went; we know how they worshipped; we know a bit about what they did. These seminal English speakers went north, up and over to Scandinavia.



Sometime before AD 437, they joined forces with two Germanic tribes, the Saxons and Jutes, to sail across the North Sea in AD 450 to today's British Isles to settle the coast that the Romans had deserted with the fall of their Empire. From thenceforth, we know more. We know the names of the excursion's leaders, the poems and riddles that the Angles created, their religious sacrifices and practices, and their hopes for a clarified description of life on and after earth. We know their metaphorical bent of mind, their curiosity, their desire to read, and to gain a new religion and outlook about life and death.

Why Would You Care?

That movement by those people began the problem which still exists today – the struggle to master English as more than a language only spoken, never written. Why do we care really, about the very beginnings of English? Why? Because if you have ever struggled with the language, its logic, or seeing any logic in it at all, or have struggled with writing, or struggled to match thought to wording, or struggled to teach it, you do care. Again, why? *Because the struggle is not your fault.* The struggle is not the fault of the monks who struggled to write English down in the first place, not the fault of the

nuns and monks who struggled to teach it and match it to Latin and Greek, not the fault of concerned teachers everywhere. *Most of all, it's not your fault. And the history itself explains why.*

Why, beyond the spirit of adventure, did these people begin to move both east and west? We don't know. The scholar Colin Renfrew credits the search for grain as the cause of migratory movement. In the documentary *The Ascent of Man*, the narrator, Dr. Jacob Brownoski, says that before civilization began to settle down, two grasses had had to cross-pollinate to a hybrid making a grain which dropped to the ground for harvesting instead of flying widely with the chaff for man to have to follow for harvest. Once the grain predictably grew right where it fell, man built hearths, homes, communities, villages, and then towns.

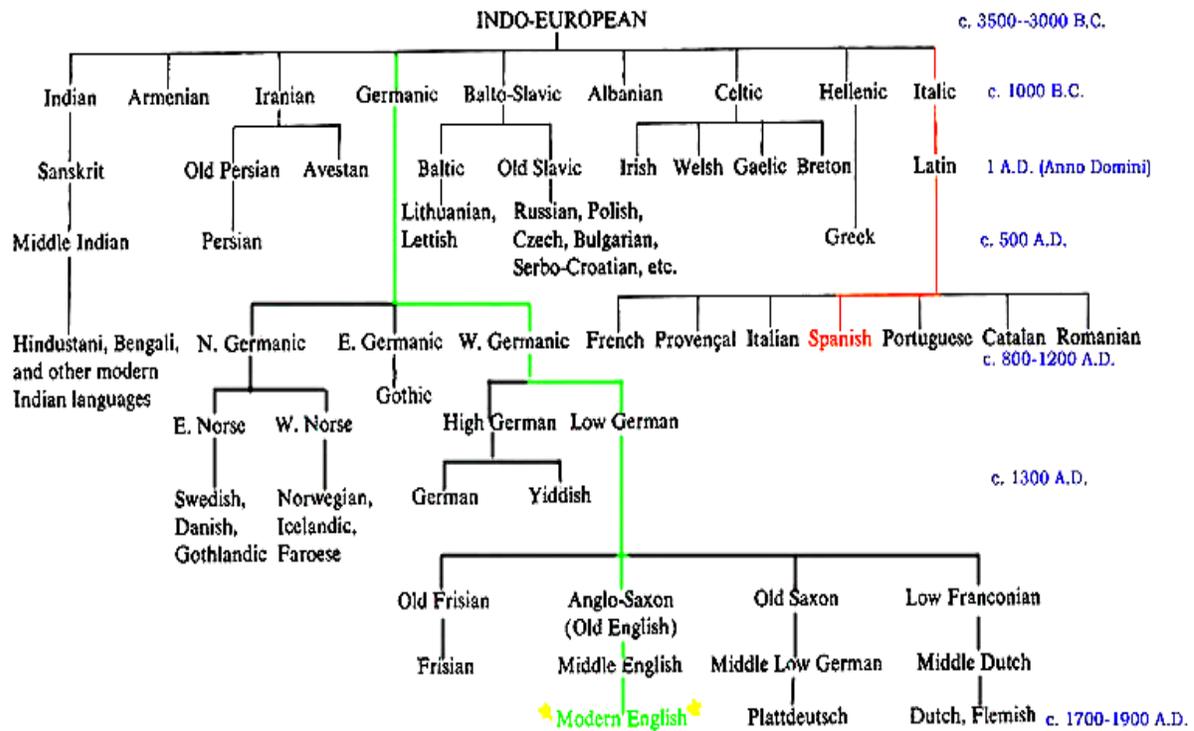
Sir William Jones, an archeologist who, in 1786, first cited proof of how closely the languages of Europe and Asia relate, dubbed those leaving the Russian Georgia region as the "Indo-Europeans." These people went in three directions which concern us:

- India, where their language (again from Sir William Jones dubbed as "Proto-Indo-European") morphed into Sanskrit;
- the Mediterranean where Italian, Portuguese, French, Spanish, and Latin, now the so-called "Romance Languages" – the languages from Rome – developed;
- Scandinavia, where perhaps following the reindeer, they settled in an angled spot in the coast, and thereby called themselves "the Angle Men, then later the Anglisc and Anglii, where meanwhile the roots of English developed.

Evidently, the early English, or Anglisc, maintained the structure of the initial, "Proto-," language because English remains very similar to Sanskrit, but, importantly, varied widely from the Romance development of creating meaning with word endings and thus with a word focus. An inflected language changes meaning by changing the endings of words. Does word focus or inflection concern us? Yes. English does not use word-focus as its primary grammatical or syntactical structure. English, as you can see below, derived a different kind of power; yet, *English grammar came from a word-focused language family. And, remember, that misfit is not your fault.* If you have sensed or struggled with an apparent illogic between thought and grammar in English, you are right.

The chart below graphs the language families which developed from these traveling "Proto" groups settling in multiple locations, with off-shoots and variations of all of them. The chart shows you very clearly the "distance," and a very important one, between the Romance languages and English. The languages are not alike. Only an accident, a logical accident, but an accident nonetheless, brought the Romance and English languages together, a dilemma which has stayed with us until today and which the Exact Word came into being to address.

THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES



The chart above was taken from: The Spanish Sampler web-site:

Hengist and Horsa

Centuries had passed since the Proto groups went in the three directions. The Celts had arrived and crossed what is now the English Channel to move from present-day France to their choice of location in the current British Isles.

In 47 BC, the Romans moved in, pushed the Celts out and up to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and then built (Emperor) "Hadrian's Wall," of turf in AD 120 (rebuilt 100 years later of stone) to keep the Celts out. Meanwhile, the Romans civilized life with tiled villas and paved streets which, however, strife at home made them abandon in AD 410. At this point, or close to it, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes arrived in the areas of Northumbria, Mercia, and Kent, later to be called England. According at least to legend, two fellows, Hengist and Horsa led the AD 450 or 499 (scholars disagree) the arrival of the Germanic, Anglo-Saxon tribes with an invitation from the Celtic King Vortigern to help him with his battles with the Picts.

Legend aside, knowing the names of these early players, the warriors, the kings who welcomed warriors, monks, and pope alike, we can feel assured that we know quite clearly what happened to form our language and its confusing model.

From Seafaring to Settled

Once the Anglii, with the Saxons and Jutes, had pushed any remaining Celts back over Hadrian's Wall, (as one historian said, "...at the point of a sword..."), the combined invaders left seafaring

and almost immediately settled into seven agricultural kingdoms with a chieftain for each. A hundred years later, the king of Kent married a Christian princess and made the Catholic pope welcome for considering ending Druid ritual, including human sacrifice.

Bog People and Lindow Man



“The garrotte round Lindow Man’s neck with one of the original knots still tied. The well-preserved hair can be clearly seen on the head above the garrotte.” *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, Pages 64-65.

The practice of human sacrifice tied the discovery of a body “embalmed” in a peat bog in the Manchester Plain of England to the “bog people” (executed like “Lindow Man”) found in Scandinavian bogs and displayed to this day in Scandinavian museums. “Lindow Man,” a tribal “prince” (so described because he had no battered hands of the working man or craftsman) was garrotted and

strangled in exactly the same ways as the Scandinavians



made Druid ritual sacrifices to the gods. These

victims remained so eerily preserved by the tannin in bogs that local officials in both locations first felt they had discovered recent murders. We know then again, by name and ritual practice, and the history written by the Venerable Bede, an 18-year old monk “reporter,” that our ties and connections to the Anglii account for English language roots.



“Section of Lindow Moss showing the body in its original position, just above the trowel.” *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, Pages 64-65.

The Monks

In AD 597, Pope Gregory the Great sent, according to Bede, nearly 40 monks led by Augustine, later to become the second saint of that name, to take Christianity to the Anglii. On the way, the monks implored Augustine to ask Pope Gregory to excuse

them from the danger of this journey. Pope Gregory did offer Augustine the bishopric “of All England” in exchange for facing the rigors of the unknown travel and uncertainty of the outcomes.

Augustine’s intrepid resolve changed the world and the increased the odds of English surviving beyond its unlikely beginnings. Accepted within three decades to replace Druidism in Engla-land, Christianity *also*

brought the monks to the job of giving the Anglii spoken language its only alphabet and grammar, both systems superimposed from the Latin onto the oral English.

Having no formalized structure of their spoken language, and thus without means of recording articulate histories, the Anglii were, nonetheless, a metaphorical and poetic people. They composed an oral literature of riddles (preserved as *The Exeter Book of Riddles*) and songs and poems, which the written but anonymous 8th century *Beowulf* also reflected, for bards and balladeers to entertain with from town to town. In an example Riddle, #69, from *The Exeter Book of Riddles*, the Anglii author asks, "On the journey, water became bone." What is it? Answer? Ice.

AD 597 – Old English, the First "Save"

Therefore, the first writers in English were monks. Simply by taking Christianity to a tribal but settled and willing people who had to change religion, outlook, and use of language, the Anglii's fate in turn changed everything we have inherited from them. The change had a long way to go. The "first" English looks only remotely familiar. The excerpts below from *The Ecclesiastical History of the Angles and the Saxons* and the 8th-century poem, *Beowulf*, capture English as it looked from the very first, starting in AD 597.

Even as late as 1475, Old English seemed "more like Dutch," as the first printer in England, William Caxton described it. Yet, you can see some modern words already formed in the original Old English. "Is," for example, and "for," and "in" already existed. Comparing the translation to the original is fun.

Thus, the Anglii, or Anglisc, welcomed "this new teaching" of Christianity, despite their long Druid history of human sacrifice. To civilized peoples, the Anglii were otherwise "‘...not particularly noteworthy’...[except for]... worshipping Mother Earth" as the Roman writer, Tacitus, described them (from *The Story of English*, Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil., page 57.) Nor, however, need we accept only the Roman or our modern interpretations of these early Englishmen because of the young monk, (the Venerable Bede) who wrote the first book in the fledgling English about this turn of history, a prescient moment in a real change of the order of things.

Original, First Old English Version

"þyslic mē is gesewen, þū cyning, þis andwearde lif manna on eorðan tō wiðmetenese þære tide þe us uncuð is, swyic swā þu æt swæsendum sitte mid þinum ealdormannum ond þegnum on wintertide, ond sie fyr onæied ond þin heall gewyrmed, ond hit rine, ond sniwe, ond styrme ute; cume an spearwa ond hraedlice þæt hūs þurhflēo, cume þurh oþre duru in þurh oþre ut gewite. Hwæt hē on þā tid þe hē inne bið, ne bið hrinen mid þy storme þas wintres; ac þæt bið an eagan bryhtum ond þæt læsste fæc, ac hē sōna of wintra on þone winter eft cymeð. Swā þonne þis monna lif tō medmiclum fæce ætweð; hwæt þær foregange, oððe hwæt þær æfterfyige, wē ne cunnan. For ðon gif þeos lār oðwint cūðlicre ond gerisenlicre brēnge, þas weorpe is þæt wē þære fyigen."¹

Translation into Modern English

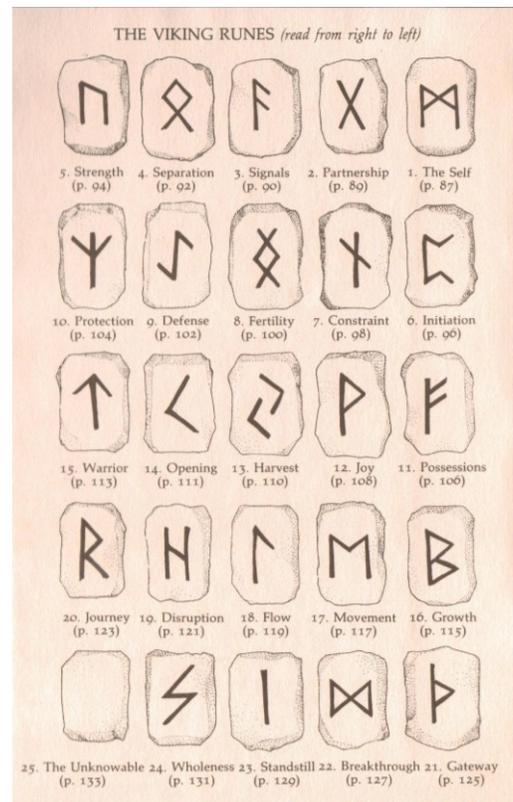
“And then one of the older men, who agreed with the king, arose and spoke, ‘It seems to me, O King, that this present life of man, in comparison with that which is unknown to us, is as if you sat at the banquet table in the wintertime, with your chiefs and your men about you, and a fire burned and the hall was warm, while outside it rained and snowed and stormed. There came a sparrow and swiftly flew through the hall. It came in through one door, and it flew out through the other. Now, so long as he is inside he is not cuffed by the winter’s storm, but that is for only a moment, the twinkling of an eye, and at once again he goes from winter back into winter. So this life of man appears but for a moment. What went before it or what comes after it, we do not know. Therefore, if this new teaching brings anything more certain or fitting, it deserves to be followed.’ “

-The
Venerable Bede
From the Anglo-Saxon version of Bede’s
Ecclesiastical History

Bede’s articulate written picture tells us, from Bede’s “up close and personal” reporting, how seriously the Anglii took life and their beliefs. Despite the inherent limits of a language without explicit structures, the Anglii’s using the cuneiform symbols on grave markers and memorials did not operate as a written language because they did not match sound to symbol, especially in daily discourse. Perhaps asking for some kind of visualization, maybe a kind of pictorial “brochure,” the Anglii certainly could not read the bible.



Augustine certainly must have written to the pope with the both good and bad news for, as Bede wrote his history, he included letters to Augustine from Pope Gregory. Certainly Augustine/And he must have wondered



Inside cover of *The Book of Runes*, by Ralph Blum. (Scholarly dispute over Blum’s accuracy does not diminish the clarity of his illustrations.)

what to do about this problem of translating the bible and Christianity to the willing but foreign speakers. Augustine and the monks also spoke no tongue the Anglii understood and thus depended on the tribal Picts and Franks as translators leaving them a formidable task indeed.

In giving English both an alphabet and grammar, the monks, as humans, had no choice: they superimposed what they knew, the Latin structure, on that which they did not know, the Anglisc. And so it has remained our structure for 1500 years, a faulty, incomplete, overlaid system both full of exceptions and inadvertently veiling how English really works.

Therefore, no one is at fault, not the monks, not the Anglii, not the schools, not the model, certainly not us. The miracle is that it worked at all.

The Human Part of the Story

The human being tends to overlay his or her point-of-view onto what s/he does not know. The monks knew Latin, Latin structures, Latin meaning. Finding myriad exceptions to the Anglisc compared to Latin, the monks had to have turned to Augustine with something like, "What do we do? The rules don't fit." We see what they decided: they looked at the Anglisc wording; they named the patterns and the structures of English by what those structures do. In other words, Augustine might have led them to, "Call them something different. Call them by what they do." You yourself can clearly see that the grammatical terminology does just that, "calls them by what they do."

And from that solution, they gave us the clue that English, not fitting the Latinate eight-parts-of-speech model, must have another solution, *a list of terms to explain the exceptions* to the Latin grammar. We know all too well the trouble that the exceptions have caused. Of course, since English words, creating meaning by their placement in sentencing order, do not make meaning with endings, much of the Anglisc didn't "fit" the Latin. The monks did the best they could: name "what does what." "Transitive," for example, "*transfers*" *verb movement to something else*. "Participle" means "part adjective and part verb." In short, they made an "invisible grammar" to explain the exceptions in English. Of course this invisible set of terms "behind" the eight parts of speech did not completely match the way English really works, more so now that English has simplified beyond its initial inflections. And still does not. (And thus, any confusion and struggle you might still feel, remember, is not your fault.) Further, most people still did not write until King Alfred's "second save" of English.

"Saving" English

Why "saving?" Because, in fact, something very interesting happened to English or about English. Even long ago, something about English appealed. Very much appealed, and still does. Why? The simplicity of the language, perhaps. The ability to speak and write with unfettered but overlapped and nested complexities. Or perhaps the natural, intuitive ordering of subject-verb-object (think Doer, Doing, Done To) which Jared Diamond and Derick Bickerton describe in creoles not influenced by English. Ideas have a freedom unfettered by one-word = one-meaning as other languages have, or as inflected meaning requires.

Still subject to invasive influences, in iterations of, oddly, three hundred years, English continued to simplify. By 1300, English had moved past the transition from oral to a structured, organized language with both an alphabet and a grammar, if still a faulty one. English had begun by then to take form recognizable today. By then, the groups of words, and the relationships among them, had crystallized into what we would recognize as English despite the wide variations in spelling.

That the monks' "moment" occurred at all was because the open-minded Anglii welcomed a new point-of-view and all the accompanying religious and language systems which their openness brought to them.

8th- 11th Centuries – A Norse-Old English Blend –

The Second "Save"

Even after the first "save," by the monks, English wasn't always spoken in England. Of course the Celts, arriving first, spoke the roots of Gaelic, not English. No matter why or how, English prevailed with every save.

Three hundred years later, after the first "save" by the monks, King Alfred of Wessex anticipated English assimilating into Norse. Once the Anglii had settled down with less war-like ways, Norse Vikings too took a long look at the vast coastline, rich pasture, and the Anglii treasures. Starting their attacks in AD 793, the Vikings figured to take what attracted them. But instead, they too settled down side-by-side with their adversaries.

Still, the Norse of the invading Danes and Norwegians threatened again to overtake the still largely oral English. Why? Of course, languages side-by-side start to slide together. One word from here, another from there slip into speaking. An ending drops; a pronunciation changes. The pidginization begins. At least some of early English inflected meaning, from both a trait of Indo-European and an inevitable outcome of the monks' overlay of their inflected languages on ours. For example: the word, "that," meant one, singular. But it had a plural, "tha" for two. Page 70, *The Story of English*. The slight difference in pronunciation being hard to hear, the sound and therefore the use and existence of the inflected plural fell away. And so did inflection altogether as English simplified.



Despite the natural processes of language blending, King Alfred really saved English from assimilating into Norse by making English both the national language and by education. Wanting to strengthen his southern Saxon territories against the Norse settling in the north, Alfred turned to English as a tool to protect his people, kingdom, and heritage against dilution. He educated the sons of free men in both English and Latin; he commissioned translating Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and other significant books from Latin to English so that his countrymen would know their history in their own tongue. He created schools, saying, "To give money to a school is to

give to God.” (*A History of England and the British Empire*, by Walter Phelps Hall, Robert Greenhalgh Albion, and collaborator Jennie Barnes Pope, page 36.) A singular king, uniquely called “great” in English history, Alfred’s promoting learning and articulate language also fostered an environment for the creation of *Beowulf*, a blend of Saxon and Danish languages in a manuscript, beyond the bards’ simply retelling orally.

Old English

Sample text in Old English (Prologue from *Beowulf*)

hwæt! þe Gardena in geardagum,
 þeodcýninga, þrym gefrunon,
 hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
 Oft Scýld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,

monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
 egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest weard
 feaſceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,
 weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,
 oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra

ofer hronrade hyran ſcolde,
 gomban gýldan.

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,
 þeodcýninga, þrym gefrunon,
 hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
 Oft Scýld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,

monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
 egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest weard
 feaſceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,
 weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,
 oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra

ofer hronrade hyran ſcolde,
 gomban gýldan.

Modern English Version

Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped, we have heard, and what honor the athelings won! Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes, from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore, awing the earls. Since erst he lay friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him: for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve, till before him the folk, both far and near, who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate, gave him gifts: a good king he!

www.omniglot.com/writing/oldenglish.htm

The Third “Save” ~ After 1066

After William the Conqueror took England as a French possession in 1066, French became the language of both the royal and legal courts in England for another three hundred years. Written but not set in either spelling or form, English nonetheless persisted because the common people

refused to speak the French of their hated conquerors. This last “save,” then, came essentially from the people themselves.

By 1300, Chaucer, in his *Canterbury Tales* and England’s first printer, William Caxton, began the real capture of the spoken English in a literate, urban, way. Nonetheless, again 300 years would pass before the first dictionary in English, Samuel Johnson’s in 1755.

Middle English developed as the language of a literate people, written, artistic, and commercial by 1300. Colin Renfrew, in *Archaeology & Language*, page 20, notes that historically “...the practice of writing...is something which is seen only in complex societies, which are also urban societies....Writing, in other words, is a feature of civilizations.”

Thus, the following excerpts sketch the look of English after the monks’ moment, then King Alfred, and finally the English people themselves contributed to saving English.

Chaucer’s General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, 1387

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.

The following pattern Triggers indicate how English operated in the year 1300 with the exact Triggers and patterns of meaning which we use today.

Whan	that	with
Of	to	
And	in	
Of	which	
whan	with	
in	and	
in		
and		
that	with	

so in
thane to on

William Caxton, 1475

By early 1400 the English King Henry V wrote in English and English merchants began to use written English in commerce. The use of written English as well as the English king's turning the tables to fight the French in France signaled the final jump from its only-oral beginnings. Scholars see these events as the permanent abandonment of any but the mother tongue as the prevailing language of England. One of these merchants himself, William Caxton, imported the first printing press to England. But, by then, English was "saved" in every way. Notice in this excerpt how Caxton captures the English folks' hatred of the French alongside the "jigs" of spelling back and forth from one shire to the next – people spelled what they said, or tried to. Caxton found both the resistance to speaking French and the halting standards for spelling humorous enough to capture while he simultaneously clarified the problems facing standardizing of English.

"...Caxton himself describes some of the difficulties he encountered when he came to print English for the first time. He was sitting in his study, he says, and without any new work to hand, picked up a book that had recently been translated from Latin into French, a paraphrase of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Then, says Caxton, he 'concluded to translate it into English, and forthwith took a pen and ink, and wrote a page or two.' But when he came to read through what he had done, he found he had used so many "strange terms" he was afraid that he would be accused of translating in a way that "could not be understood by common people.' Then he describes how he consulted an 'old book' to improve his translation but found 'the English so rude and broad that I could not well understand it.' He compared this with some Old English, which he found 'more like to Dutch than English.' Next there were the problems of regional variation: 'Common English that is spoken in one shire varies from another.' He tells a story, expressed here with all the wonderful idiosyncrasy of Middle English spelling and syntax:

In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchuntes were in a shippe in tamyse, for to have sayled over the see into zelande, and for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte forlond and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and specyally he axyed after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he woulde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understood hym wel. Loo, what shoulde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren? Certaynly it is harde to playse every man by cause of dyversite & change of langage. For in these days every man that is in ony reputacyon in his countre, wyll utter his commynycacyon and maters

in suche maners & termes that fewe men shall understonde theym. And som honest and grete clerkes have ben wyth me, and desired me to wryte the moste curyous terms that I coude fynde. And thus bytwene playn, rude, & curyous, I stande abasshed. But in my judgemente the comyn terms that be dayli used ben lyghter to be understonde that the olde and auntyent englysshe. And for as moche as the present booke is not for a rude uplondysssh man to laboure therin, ne rede it, but onely for a clerke & a noble gentylman that feleth and understandeth in faytes of armes, in love, & in noble chyvalrye, thefor in a meane bytwene bothe I have reduced & translated this sayd booke in to our englyssshe, not ouer rude ne curyous, but in suche termes as shall be understanden, by goddys grace, accordynge to my cople.

When Caxton settled for the idiosyncrasies of the English he heard in the streets of London – ‘right’ for instance reflects the fifteenth-century pronunciation ‘richt’ (ch pronounced as in loch) – he (and printers like him) helped to fix the language on the page before its writers and teachers had reached a consensus. It is to this that English owes some of its chaotic and exasperating spelling conventions.”

The Story of English, McCran, Krum, McNeil, page 86

Not only was English saved from extinction and no longer only oral, but its primary trait of “fixed-word” order had replaced inflection, making English more free and open to fluid movement in its combinations. English needs a model, or definition, of how English really works, what the grammarians and linguists call a “descriptive” or “distributive” system of this fixed-word order.

Fixed-Word Order

English has only two word endings: *-s and -ed for single verbs*. Period. Suffixes don’t count, like “-tion” in “procrastination” or “-ate” in “habituate .” But its *model*, the Romance languages, *do create meaning by actively changing word endings, for all nouns, verbs and adjectives, like :*

amo	I love	amanus	we love
amas	You, singular, love	amantis	you, plural, love
amat	s/he, it loves	amant	they love

How do you know which person loves? The word ending: *-o; -as; -at; -anus; -antis; -ant*. How do you know who loves in English? The separate “Doer” word, plus a verb’s Movement: *I/you/he loves/we/they love*. Together, they make a very small word group, but word group nonetheless. Further, these groups of words *always* combine by attaching to each other in one of two ways. Importantly, English has only two word endings: *-s and -ed for single verbs*. Period.

Again, Why Do You Care?

Again, not understanding the importance of this difference is not your fault. Further, at any age you can understand and use English uniqueness to your advantage, to clarify, to find the true English logic, to write and think and speak really well. Introducing *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, Dr. Harold Whitehall explained:

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary

“Of two or three thousand languages that are spoken or have been spoken on earth, relatively few possess or have possessed a primary grammatical device of fixed-word order comparable to that in Modern English.

“Language is as pig-headed and stubborn about its grammatical relationships and classifications as the human minds that evolved it – and as illogical....Attempts to make any one language conform to the details of another lead either to failure or to a “grammar” which, like the Procrustean bed, encourages the lopping off of that which it cannot contain....Yet of any language we can say what Louis Chevrolet reputedly said when he invented the automobile clutch. ‘It’s brutal! But it works!’

“Now the grammar of an inflectional language will no more mix with that of a word-order language than oil with water; yet in the past, descriptions of English grammar have been modeled after those of the grammars of Latin and Greek – the two languages whose structure Western civilization first came to know. This fact may account for the difficulty which modern students frequently have with ‘English grammar,’ for, although nowadays the normal English speaker has had no Latin at all or has only a superficial acquaintance with Latin, he has been compelled to look at his own language through forms of another language of a radically different structure.

“In modeling descriptions of English grammar after those of Latin and Greek, many important features have naturally been neglected. At this we need not be surprised – the surprise is that the transfer of grammatical form and terminology ever worked at all. It did work, and, in the absence of a real descriptive grammar (i.e., a grammar undertaking to describe the structure of English as such), worked beneficially. It was able to do so for....rather accidental reasons.”

From *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*

Dr. Harold Whitehall

Language

No one knows why man has language at all.

“Nor have we lacked investigations. Anthropologists have combed the backward corners of the earth for a people speaking a primitive language. They have found none....In short, we know nothing

about how language started, and we have not even the materials from which we might hope to find out....when we study language we are, to a remarkable degree, studying human nature.” Pages 18, 9

“Who sees things grow from their origin,” Aristotle says, “will have the most advantageous view of them.” Page 35

The Miracle of Language

Charlton Laird

“As you are reading these words, you are taking part in one of the wonders of the natural world. For you and I belong to a species with a remarkable ability; we can shape events in each other’s brains with exquisite precision.... That ability is language.”

The Language Instinct, Preface page 7

Stephen Pinker

“English as a world language is sustained by another elusive quality – its own peculiar genius.... Its genius was, and still is, essentially, democratic.”

The Story of English, Pages 48-9

Robert McCrum, William Cran, Robert MacNeil

“Language is the most remarkable and the most characteristic of all human creations. It may be that our species did not become fully human until the abilities of reasoning, as well as speaking, which accompany the use of language, were fully developed.”

Archaeology & Language, The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins, Preface, Page 2

By Colin Renfrew

“Efficient communication of scientific thought or technical information, whether conveyed by a technical writer, a scientist, an engineer, or a specialist, does not just happen. Effective technical writing is a craft, never an accident. The poet, playwright, and novelist must master their art before they can give form and meaning to what they have to say. So must the conveyers of technical information. If they are to reach the minds of other people, they must use language with precision, clarity, and grace.”

Herman M. Weisman

Office of Research

Federal Emergency Agency

“Meaning is always a matter of relation.... We might say is the ‘stuff’ of consciousness; What are the parts of meaning is the profoundest of questions and its answer the most meaningful of answers.... A unit of meaning.... is made of a thing and the relation which connects it to an other thing.... Thought is the continuous flow of sensation and emotion punctuated into moments of consciousness by logical acts of relation.”

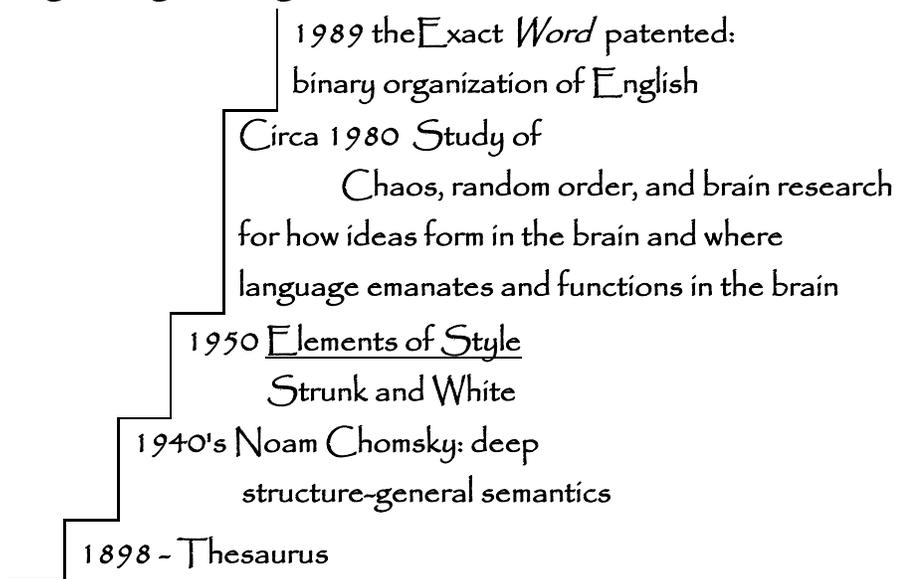
“A basic structural design underlies every kind of writing. The writer will in part follow this design, in part deviate from it, according to his skill, his needs, and the unexpected events that accompany the act of composition. Writing, to be effective, must follow closely the thoughts of the writer, but not necessarily in the order in which those thoughts occur. This calls for a scheme of procedure....The more clearly he perceives the shape, the better are his chances of success.”

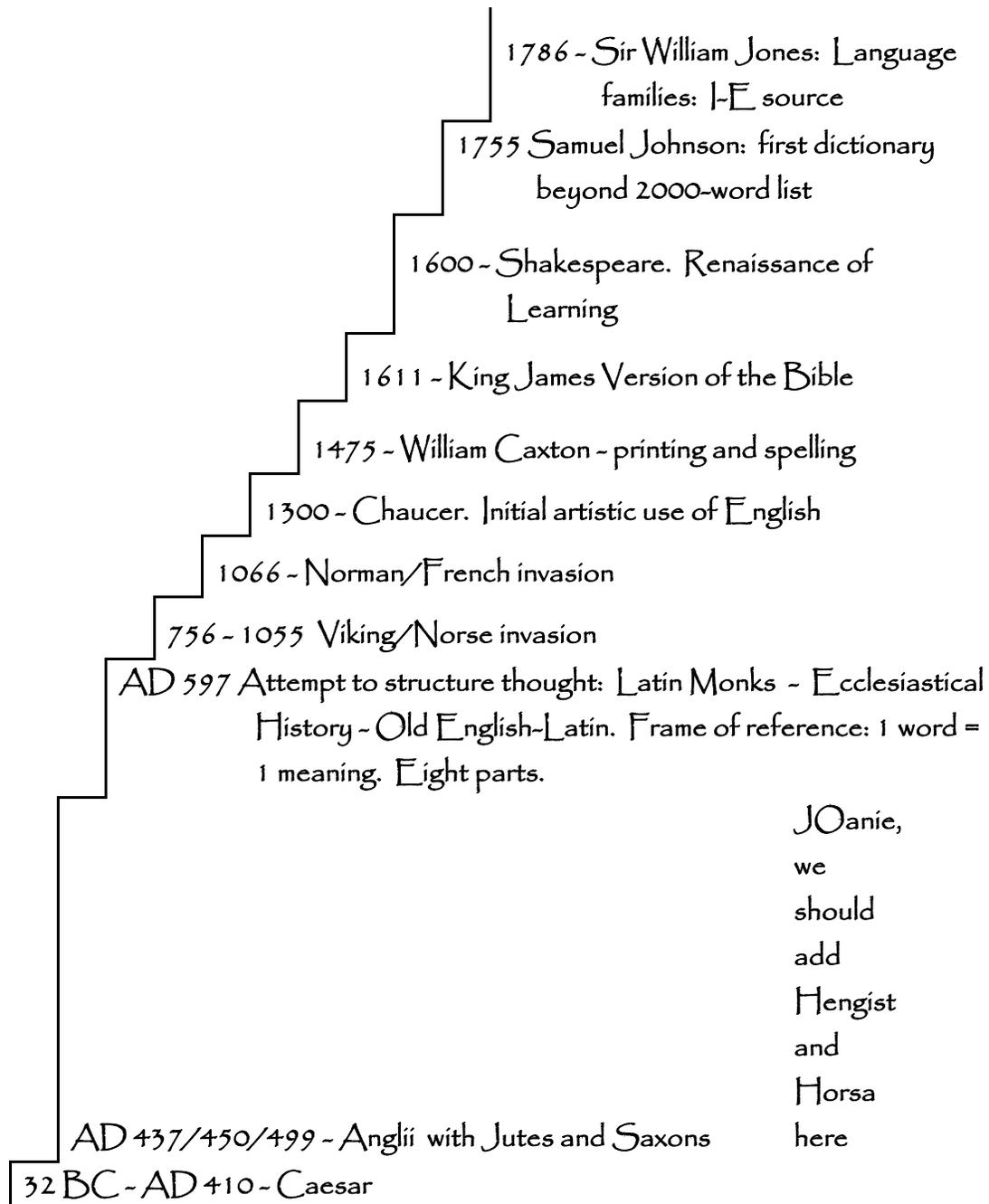
Elements of Style, Page 10
Dr. William Strunk

the *Exact Word's* commitment to the seminal elements of English celebrates its history, origins, and the longevity of those elements in the thoughts of every English speaker.

The chart below captures how one historical moment led to the next as English evolved to become a global common denominator as a bridge among our world's cultures, mores, language contexts, and minds.

The Burgeoning of English





JOanie,
 we
 should
 add
 Hengist
 and
 Horsa
 here