# History of the English Language and TESOL

***A Collection of Essays***

***in Honor of***

***Dr. Edward F. Klein***

# Introduction

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Since English is taught around the globe as a second or foreign language to speakers of other languages, it is important to appreciate the roots of English sounds, grammatical structures, and words, and how they have evolved over the years. An appreciation of the English language's journey through time provides the learners not only with a glimpse into the changing nature of languages in general, but also informs them about the reasons behind the target language's present form.

Take the word *doubt*, for example. The silent *b* may puzzle learners, and they may chalk it off as just another quirky thing about the English language that they need to memorize. However, if the learner is told that *doubt* came to Middle English through Latin *dubitare* "to doubt, question, hesitate, or waver in opinion" (which is related to *dubius* "uncertain") and traces back to *duo* "two," which in turns came from the Proto-Indo-European root ***dwo-*** "two," then perhaps they can begin to see that when we *doubt* something, we are "of two minds" about it (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2017). The little silent *b*, then, is not just another weird thing about English spelling but it records this story about the word and allows us to connect with the reasoning behind the concept of doubt.

Another headache for many learners of English (native and non-native speakers alike) is the mismatch between the spelling of English words and how they are pronounced. For instance, the word *meat* has no letter "i" in it but is pronounced /miːt/ and the word *bite* has no "a" in it but is pronounced /baɪt/. This mismatch can be explained by the Great Vowel Shift that affected long vowels in the English language between the 14th and17th centuries, just after English spelling was standardized. Before the Great Vowel Shift, indeed *meat* was pronounced /mɛːt/, and *bite* was pronounced /biːt/, with a clearer matching between spelling and pronunciation. The Great Vowel Shift is not random but systematic in that low and mid long vowels raised their height (such as *meat* /mɛːt/ → /miːt/) and the already high vowels shifted to be low, diphthongized vowels (such as *bite* /biːt/ → /baɪt/). Once learners understand the effects of the Great Vowel Shift, perhaps they can be less frustrated and can find a systematic way to work out long vowels' pronunciation from the spelling and vice versa.

The upshot is, knowing the history of the target language can possibly facilitate learning and increase motivation. In a sense, learning a second language is like getting acquainted with a new person. Knowing their past, their struggles, and their triumphs will bring that person a lot closer to us than only knowing their face and actions today.

For more than 35 years, Dr. Edward Klein has passionately instilled this message in TESOL students at Hawaii Pacific University. He brought history to life and made it relevant, vibrant, and fun while at the same time alerting them to the fact that the global position now held

by English is primarily explained by the political and economic history of two countries, England and the United States, and not by some innate beauty, structure, or linguistic characteristics found in the language itself. His students developed a deeper appreciation for the English language and became inspired to share the interesting reality of its history with their future students.

The collection of essays in this volume attests to the impact that Dr. Klein has on his students. Arranged in chronological order, they describe various aspects in the history of English, beginning from the spread of the Proto-Indo-European language speakers to the sad fate of the entire East Germanic branch. In papers directed more specifically to English, we read of the history surrounding the epic poem Beowulf, the making of the first real dictionaries in the early 17th century, and the compilation of English's most notable effort in lexicography, the Oxford English Dictionary. In each piece, the author discusses the relevance of history to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages.

Thank you, Dr. Klein. Your legacy is never-ending.

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# Locating Indo-European Speakers and their Migrations: A Review of the Evidence

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**Abstract**
This paper reviews the migration history of the speakers of Proto-Indo-European and shows how they spread over Europe and Euro-Asia and developed into the modern language speakers of today. The paper ends with implications for English language teaching.

## Introduction

Interdisciplinary work from linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, and genetics have helped trace the homeland of a people who lived 6000 years ago and spoke a language that is the ancestor to many of the most widespread languages of today. By comparing languages like English, French, Russian, Greek, Iranian, and Hindi, it was proposed that all these languages used to be only one language thousands of years ago and that the speakers of that language spread to new territories and fell out of contact with each other. Each group apparently modified the language until they could no longer understand each other, and the process kept progressing to the point that there now are a multitude of related though disparate languages that are native to countries from Iceland to India. Moreover, because English has become a global language, at least one member of the class of these related languages is now found in every continent of the planet. That ancient language is called "Proto-Indo-European" (PIE), and its intermediary descendants have been reconstructed. By comparing certain words and sounds of modern and ancient languages, a proposed timeline of the spread of these languages also exists (Anthony & Ringe, 2015). Similarly, several ancestral settlements have been unearthed in the Eurasian continent and grouped together according to the pottery, artifacts, and graves found in their settlements or territories. Some enduring cultures have been identified and even traced along with the migrations of their populations to new territories. The task on which scientists from the four aforementioned disciplines are working on now is theorizing which of the described ancient cultures could plausibly have spoken each of the reconstructed proto-languages, but few things are known for certain. There are many suggestions of the location of the homeland of speakers of IE, but the hypothesis with the most support is the one of the Kurgan culture (Anthony & Ringe, 2015).

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## Overview

Extending from the contemporary countries of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine is a vast field of grasslands that, in its western zone, borders the Black and Caspian seas. This area is called the "Pontic Steppes," and here is where most of the Kurgan graves are found. These graves tend to be composed of a mound surrounded by one-meter tall stones (Anthony, 2007). The Kurgan hypothesis has gained the most support because it fits most of the vocabulary that has been reconstructed of IE, which indicates that these people were pastoralists with words for "wool," "horse," different kinds of livestock, and dairy food. The horse is especially important. The Kurgan cultures have been observed to be the first ones to domesticate horses, and this territory and its cultural artifacts contain the greatest number of referents for IE words (Anthony & Ringe, 2015). The literature proposes that IE was spoken in the Pontic Steppes beginning by the year 4500 BCE and ending by 2500 BCE (Anthony, 2007, p. 132). The division of the subfamilies happened during this period. The timeline is as follows: The Anatolian languages separated between 4200 and 3900 BCE (p. 249), Tocharian between 3700 and 3300 BCE (p. 99), Italo-Celtic between 3100 and 3000 BCE (p. 274), Germanic and Balto-Slavic between 2800 and 2600 (p. 274), and Indo-Iranian between 2200 and 2000 BCE (p. 274). No trace of Hellenic migrations have been found, but dispersion models and other clues suggest that it may have separated between 2400 and 2200 BCE (p. 51). For a visual organization of this layout, including modern languages in each group, please refer to Appendix I. The lack of evidence is not unique to the hypothesized Proto-Greek speakers, but all migrations have an incomplete record that leave gaps of several hundreds of years in which there is no evidence to confirm what these people were doing. Despite these gaps, this paper consolidates literature on migrations of the seven IE speaking peoples just mentioned from the Pontic Steppes to their corresponding contemporary areas.

## Indo-European Speakers

Archaeological findings suggest a picture of the Eurasian world for the period when Indo-European was spoken. The Kurgan people of the Pontic Steppes were bordered by non-IE speakers in all directions, but noteworthy were the Proto-Ugric (PU) speakers of the Ural Mountains, who eventually spread into Finnish, Hungarian, and Sami territories as well as some Siberian areas. Vocabulary items such as *to wash, water, to fear, merchandise*, and some pronouns are conspicuously similar to Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Ugric reconstructions, suggesting either a common ancestor or several borrowings between the two (Anthony & Ringe, 2015, p. 206-207) (Table 1).

Non-Indo-European speakers that lived in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) before 5000 BCE migrated to the Pontic steppes and introduced cattle to the Kurgan peoples, who relied heavily on horse products before then. Last, in the Danube River Valley lived the cultures that have been labeled as "Old Europe." These were farmers with records ranging from 6000 BCE to 4000 BCE. Their downfall is said to have been due to a climate change that lasted until 3760 BCE, discerned in oak rings and ice cores in Greenland. Records of burnings, floods, and massacres also add to the suggested causes of this people's disappearance (Anthony, 2007).

Table 1
*Cognates between Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Ugric*

| Modern English | Proto-Indo-European | Proto-Ugric |
|---|---|---|
| to wash | *mozg-eye/o | *moske |
| water | *wed-er/en | *wete |
| to fear | *pelh- | *pele- |
| merchandise | *wosa | *wosa |
| you | *ti | *te |
| I | *mi | *me-na |

## Anatolian Languages

The climate change is also thought to be what motivated the IE speakers to begin their migrations south to territories that could shelter them better from the elements, and Danube marshes were the closest sheltering places with forage for cattle. The archaeological evidence indicates that a culture proceeding from the Dnieper River Valley in Ukraine appeared on the Danube delta (located in modern day Romania), intermarried with the locals (as seen in skull remains), and expanded towards Transylvania and Hungary (refer to Figure 1 for a map of Eurasian rivers). These people are called the "Suvorovo," and they built Kurgan graves in their earlier settlements. The Old European culture with which the Suvorovo mixed was the Bolgrad, but some of them left those lands entirely to the Suvorovo and moved to a new location. It is believed that this was a peaceful displacement since there is some evidence of the Bolgrad taking some of their belongings with them. Much evidence suggests that the Suvorovo spoke a dialect of IE that eventually became Anatolian (now an extinct sub-family of languages); henceforth, the language is called "Pre-Anatolian." The upshot is that Anatolian is almost certainly the first language to separate from IE. Linguistic studies reveal the Anatolian language kept laryngeal sounds, which are described as archaic because they are shared with several other IE subfamilies. Additional evidence includes the Anatolian word for "wheel" being *hurki*, which diverges too much from the reconstructed IE term **hrot-o-s* and the cognates shared among the other IE languages (Welsh: *rhod,* Latin: *rota,* Old Frisian: *reth,* Lithuanian: *ratas,* Tocharian: *retke*) (Anthony & Ringe, 2015, p.202-203). Such evidence intersects with the conventional date of the invention of the wheel, between 4000-3500 BCE, and Anatolian beginning its separation in 4200 BCE (Anthony, 2007). In view of this evidence, scientists have concluded that Anatolian separated before the invention of the wheel, matching the evidence from the Suvorovo migration. Nevertheless, no trace has been found for a migration that transports the Suvorovo from Hungary and Romania (or any other location) to modern day Turkey (Anthony & Ringe, 2015).

| Language Family | Some Modern Languages | Year of Separation (BCE) |
|---|---|---|
| IE | All the ones below and more | 4500 – 2500 |
| Anatolian | N/A (Found in Turkey before extinction) | 4200 – 3900 |
| Tocharian | N/A (Found in West China before extinction) | 3700 – 3300 |
| Celtic | Bretton, Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic, Welsh | 3100 – 3000 |
| Italic | Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Romansch, Spanish | 3100 – 3000 |
| Germanic | Danish, Dutch, English, Flemish, German, Norwegian, Swedish | 2800 – 2600 |
| Baltic | Latvian, Lithuanian | 2800 – 2600 |
| Slavic | Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, | 2800– 2600 |
| Hellenic | Greek | 2400 – 2200 |
| Iranian | Kurdish, Pashto, Persian | 2200 – 2000 |
| Indo-Aryan | Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu | 2200 – 2000 |

*Figure 1*. Indo-European subfamilies, modern languages, and branching dates

## Dialects of Indo-European

Between the years 3800 BCE and 3300 BCE, five cultures can be identified in the Pontic steppes. The Mikhailovka I was situated in the westernmost part of the steppes, from the Danube Delta to the Crimean Peninsula. They were eventually replaced by the Usatovo culture by around 3300 BCE, except for the population living in the Crimean Peninsula, who became the Kemi-Oba Culture. The Post-Mariupol was a second culture, located north of the Dnieper River and between the Orel and the Samara tributaries of Ukraine. A third culture was the Sredni Stog,

which inhabited the forest-steppe zone of the Dnieper River, later migrating eastward towards the lower Don River to the east. They always remained north of the aforementioned Post-Mariupol. The last two cultures, the Repin and the Khvalynsk, were situated in the lower Don-Volga steppes, which would later develop into the Yamnaya culture around 3300 BCE (Anthony, 2007). Figure 3 shows a map of these cultures.

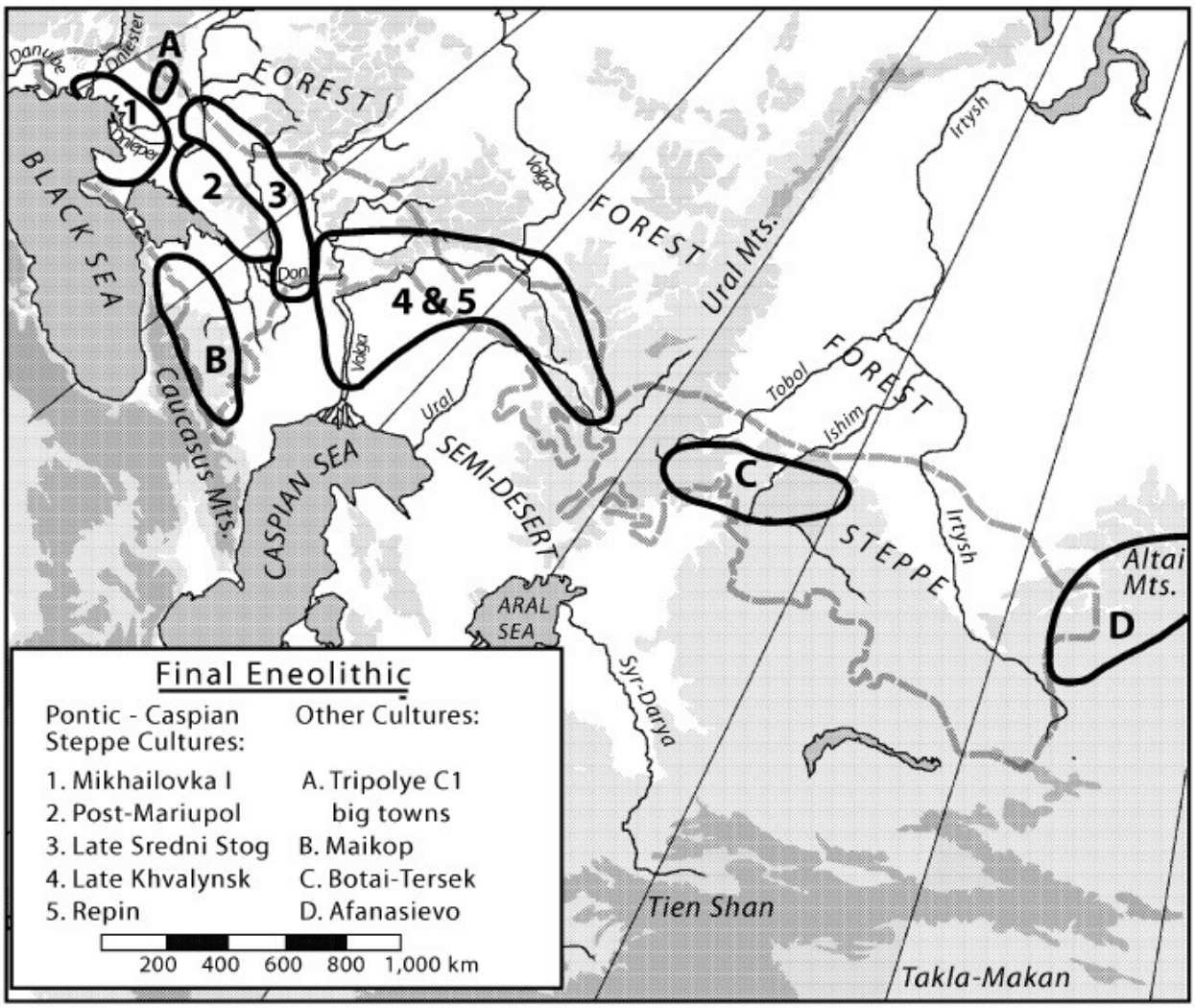


*Figure 3*. Kurgan subcultures north of the Black and Caspian Seas (Retrieved from Anthony, 2007)

**Tocharian Languages**

A population of the Yamna moved across Kazakhstan towards the Altai Mountains between 3700 and 3500 BCE, becoming the Afanasievo culture. Three Kurgan cemeteries have been found in Kazakhstan for these dates, along with several artifacts that imply a constant traffic of people between the Yamna and the Afanasievo. Archaeological evidence also suggests that these

people migrated south to the Tien Shan Mountains, and by 2000 BCE, they had made it into the Tarim Basin in modern China's Western Province now called "Xinjiang". Buddhist documents from the period between 500 and 700 CE mention inhabitants of this region of China speaking two tongues that were confused as forms of Iranian. Eventually, it was found to be distinct from Iranian yet related to the IE languages; these languages are the Tocharian languages and are both extinct now (Algeo, 2014, p. 63). Keyser et al. (2009) pointed out that Chinese historians described the inhabitants of this area as "Caucasian-looking" in appearance, whom they called the Xiongnu. Two tentative explanations have been discussed. The first was that these were descendants of the Afanasievo culture. The second was the "Bactrian Oasis Hypothesis", which stated that these people came from Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, but the genetics research of Keyser et al. (2009) reveals that a specimen from Xinjiang was related to a specimen from the Andronovo culture (which is related to the Indo-Iranians, discussed further below). Consequently, the people of the Afanasievo culture have been identified as Pre-Tocharian speakers (Anthony, 2007), who later intermixed with Andronovo people whose territory expanded to this area by 2000 BCE (Keyser et al., 2009).

## Italic Languages

After the Afanasievo separated, the rest of the Yamna began a fast-moving migration, in about 3100 BCE, westward past the Usatovo territory and into the portion of the Danube River that flows through Hungary. Five distinct settlements can be found here. Cemeteries have been found in the Varna Bay, along the Danube portion of Bulgaria, in several locations in Romania, in the southern plains of Serbia, and in the eastern plains of Hungary, where more than 3000 Kurgan graves have been found. Such a great presence of Kurgan graves implies a rise in power and prestige. The latter culture (the one stationed in Eastern Hungary) is believed to have developed into the Urnfield and Villanovan cultures, which carried Proto-Italic to Italy (Anthony, 2007). The most well-known Italic language is Latin, which, just like IE is theorized to have diversified into the seven subfamilies described here, diversified into languages like Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish (Algeo, 2014, p. 64). A study reported in Anthony and Ringe (2015) identified about ten non-IE languages between the years 700 and 200 BCE, mostly in Italy. Some of those languages are Etruscan and Novilara in northern Italy and Raetic in the Alps. They suggested that Italic languages made it to Italy as these societies took opportunities to advance and subdue non-Indo-European speakers in their way.

## Celtic Languages

Traditionally, the La Tene and Hallstat cultures in Austria have been credited as the ones that spread the Celtic languages in about 750 BCE, but O'Donnel (2008) suggested something different. The known ancient Celtic languages are listed by 500 BCE as Lepontic in northern Italy, Celtiberian in east Spain, Gaulish in France, Goidelic in Ireland, Brittonic in England, and Galatian in Turkey, but O'Donnel (2008) proposed that Tartessian, normally a language considered to be non-Indo-European (Anthony and Ringe, 2015), should also be added to this list of Celtic languages. Herodotus of Greece wrote about two Greek voyages to Tartessos, located in south-west Spain, who met with king Arganthonios, which is a Celtic name very similar to

Gaulish "argantodannos," which meant "agent of divine silver" in reference to the wealth of that culture in terms of metals. Additionally, in the region of Tartessos, 90 inscribed stones were found (75 in modern day Portugal and 15 in Spain) dating from 825 BCE. These inscriptions are regarded as the oldest ones in Europe, which happen to have heavy influences from Greek and Phoenician. The inscriptions also present features of the Goidelic sound systems, such as interchangeable use of symbols for the voiced and voiceless stops (for example, letter *t* with *d* and *k* with *g*), but the symbol used to represent them varies depending on the accompanying vowels. The scriptures have names and words that are present in Galician, Celtiberian, Gaulish, Gaelic, and Brittonic; the Celtic connection, O'Donnel (2008) maintained, is undeniable. In turn, the researcher explained two hypotheses in light of the proposed evidence. One hypothesis proposes identifying the Proto-Celtic speakers with the Urnfield culture, extant between 1350 and 750 BCE, that is also credited for the expansion of the Italic languages. This proposal allows the Proto-Celtic speakers the necessary time to migrate to the Strait of Gibraltar. Some evidence against this proposal is that the Carpathian Basin, the homeland of the Urnfield culture in Hungary, itself has very few Celtic names, which are more common in its surroundings. The other hypothesis is that IE speakers migrated to the Tartessian territory first, developed into Celtic languages, and then expanded backwards. O'Donnel (2008) believed that this is possible, since there have been plenty of cases in which cultures backtrack to populate previously inhabited territories, and Anthony (2007) also mentioned that many migrations have a "flowback" (p. 363).

## Germanic Languages

As the Yamnaya spread across the Pontic Steppes, the Usatovo also began mobilization up the Dniester River, and in the upper section of this river, a contact zone emerged. The Usatovo people in this region were in constant economic contact with non-IE cultures. The exchange of ideas and customs is believed to have given rise to a new, hybrid culture called "Corded Ware". This is the culture that is thought to have spoken Pre-Germanic, whose migration can be traced from Ukraine to Belgium between 2900 and 2700 BCE (Anthony, 2007). After this record, there is a gap in the history of the Pre-Germanic speakers for nearly 2000 years. The next time they are mentioned in the literature is as Proto-Germanic speakers in south Scandinavia, Sweden, and Denmark in the late Bronze age by the Greek explorer Pytheas. A group must have stayed behind in the Southern part of Sweden, becoming the North Germanics (the speakers of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish), because by 1000 BCE, Germanics are known to have populated the coasts of the North Sea; by 800 BCE, they had reached the Vistula River in the East and Germany in the West; and by 500 BCE they had made it to the Rhine River (Andrew, 2000, p. 117; refer to Figure 2 for the location of the Rhine River) suggesting that the Germanics, just like the Celts, might have settled through a flowback. The separation of the East and West Germanic languages is dated at 400 BCE when they had been well established in east Holland, northern Germany, and western Poland. Here is where they began interaction with the Celts and soon after with the Romans (p. 117). The East Germanic languages have no modern survivors; some representatives are the extinct languages of Gothic, Burgundian, and Vandalic. The West Germanic languages became modern German, Yiddish, Dutch, Flemish, Afrikaans,

Frisian, and English (Algeo, 2014, p. 67). English came to England from people that lived in the Jutland Peninsula of modern day Denmark; They were the Angles, Saxon, and Jutes, and they displaced the Celtic speakers that lived in Britain beforehand (p. 85).

*Figure 2*. Rivers of Eurasia
(Retrieved from: **https://lizardpoint.com/geography/europe-rivers-lvl2-quiz.php**)
*Note*. The border between the white and grey areas is the location of the Ural Mountains.

**Balto-Slavic Languages**

Another contact zone is identified between the Dnieper and the Dniester rivers, where the Corded Ware, the Yamna, and the Globular Amphorae (a non-IE culture) influenced each other between 2800 and 2600 BCE. The Fatyanovo culture is believed to have emerged from there and

to have spread to the northeast through the entire Volga River basin, as evidenced by cemeteries with flat graves. These people are considered to be the Baltic speakers because rivers and lakes in the area have distinct Latvian and Lithuanian names (Anthony, 2007). These bodies of water are of importance because it has been noticed that many times the names of rivers and lakes are very resilient to change; a clear example is how England nowadays preserves the Celtic names of the rivers and lakes of the island (Claiborne, 1983). Meanwhile, the population that stayed in the middle Dnieper area is seen to have moved to what is modern day Kiev between 1900 and 1800 BCE, and they are considered to be the Slavic speakers (Anthony, 2007), which include language subfamilies like East Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian), West Slavic (Polish and Czech), and South Slavic (Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian) (Algeo, 2014, p. 64). Figure 4 shows a map of the Balto-Slavic, Hellenic, and Indo-Iranian migrations.

*Figure 4*. The Satem languages' spread through Russia (Retrieved from Anthony, 2007)

## Hellenic Languages

The Hellenic languages (from which modern Greek is the only survivor) have proven to be some of the most difficult to locate on the ancient map. Inscriptions written in Mycenaean Greek have been found and dated to 1450 BCE (Anthony, 2007, p. 49). Additionally, Mycenaean shaft graves have been dated to 1650 BCE, providing a date for the latest plausible arrival of Hellenic speakers in Greece (p. 50). Linguistically, Pre-Greek reconstructions share many features with Pre-Indo-Iranian languages, such as a prefix "e-" for past tenses and a sufix "-i" for passive voice. They share vocabulary for bow (*taksos), arrow (*eis-), and club (*uagros) as well as for deities like the horse goddess Erinys (Greek) and Sarana (Indo-Iranian), the guardian dog of the underworld Kerberos (Greek) and Sarvara (Indo-Iranian), and the pastoral god Pan (Greek) and Pusan (Indo-Iranian). Last, the heroic poetry between the two languages is strikingly similar with either 12 or 8 syllables in a line, something not seen in any other IE language. Nevertheless, Indo-Iranian languages have the innovations of the satem languages, namely, a change in IE *k- sounds to sibilant sounds and what is called the "ruki rule", which consists in a change of *s- to *sh- after the sounds /r/, /u/, /k/, and /i/ (p. 55-56). In view of this evidence, it is unclear whether Hellenic separated from Indo-Iranian or if they were close to each other and influenced each other. A culture identified to northeast of the Black Sea, called the "Catacomb", fits the requirement, but no archaeological traces have been found suggesting a migration of these people to Greece. It has been suggested that the migration could have happened by sea, since the Catacomb people lived by the Black Sea, and such a move would have left little to no evidence (p. 369).

## Indo-Iranian Languages

Like Hellenic, Indo-Iranian languages have records dating to older than 1000 BCE. Avestan is the oldest Iranian language, recorded in the Avesta, in the form of the Zoroastrian holy text, written by Zarathustra between 1200 and 1000 BCE (Anthony, 2007, p. 51). Similarly, Old Indic is recorded in the Sanskrit Rig Veda scriptures found in northern Pakistan and Syria and written between 1500 and 1300 BCE (p. 49). Accordingly, it is expected that Proto-Indo-Iranian was spoken no later than 2000 BCE, while Pre-Indo-Iranian was spoken around 2500 BCE (p. 51). There is a culture that matches the requirements, but the archaeological record narrates a long history of developing cultures before becoming the alleged Indo-Iranian speakers. In the Volga River Basin resided the Fatyanovo culture that is believed to have been the speakers of the Baltic languages. A subset of the Fatyanovo can be seen to have specialized in copper metallurgy and to have separated as the Balanovo culture in the eastern side of the Fatyanovo (p. 382). Subsequently, a subset from the Balanovo spread towards the Ural Basin and was called the "Abashevo", who are seen to have Kurgan graves once again after a hiatus from the Corded Ware, which is evidenced by a grave dated to 2200 BCE with 28 men, 18 of which had been decapitated (p. 382). These people are thought to have spoken Pre-Indo-Iranian and to have been influenced by Finno-Ugric speakers. The Abashevo entered in contact with a more developed remnant of the Yamna population in the Volga-Ural region, which is now called the "Poltavka" culture, living around 2100-1800 BCE (p. 386). They became the Sintashta culture. The Sintashta settlement, found between the Tobol and Ural rivers of Russia, matches several

descriptions found in the Rig Vedas about Kurgans and horse and dog sacrifices (p. 409). An eastern offshoot of the Sintashta can be seen to migrate south across Kazakhstan through a series of cemetery ruins and into the Zeravshan River Valley (in Uzbekistan) around 1900 BCE. This offshoot is called the "Petrovka" culture. It entered into contact with local populations of this valley, which spoke non-IE languages (p. 435). Such an event also matches the Rig Vedas' writings, since linguists have determined that these scriptures have 383 non-IE words (p. 455). Here is where it is believed that Old Indic and Avestan separated. On the one hand, Avestan spread with a new culture called "Andronovo", which stayed in the north in a vast territory (p. 458). (Previously in this paper they were mentioned to have mingled with the Afanasievo to become the alleged Tocharian speakers). Old Indic, on the other hand, stayed in the Zeravshan region from 1800 to 1600 BCE, until it made its way to Syria in 1500 BCE. The Old Indic speaking mercenaries worked for the Syrian kingdom and eventually took control of it, explaining how the Rig Vedas were originally found in this area (p. 454). No literature was found discussing how these two language families might have made it to modern day Iran or the Indian sub-continent.

## Discussion

The evidence aligns fairly well for many of the Indo-European languages and the Pontic-Steppe cultures, implying that the proposed model for the geographical spread of IE is plausible. One needs to be cautious still because it is to be expected that more events happened in the past than those that can be traced by artifacts. Several more cultures could have existed and migrations could have taken place, and some of those that left no trace could very well be the actual speakers of some or all of the reconstructed languages. Many more contributions are proceeding now from the field of genetics, with studies like those of Keiser et al. (2009) as an example. These genetic studies try to connect human remains from different parts of the world together. The few studies that still focus on the linguistic aspect of this issue are moving towards using software to reconstruct the ancient languages and how they divided, but these models are proving unsupportive to and disconnected from the rest of the findings, such as the one from Forster and Toth (2003) in which it is suggested that IE was spoken at about 8100 BCE (give or take 1900 years) and that Celtic arrived in Britain at around 3200 BCE (give or take 1500 years). Aside from this, the field of linguistics might have already provided all the support it could, at least until new documents or scriptures are discovered and deciphered.

## Teaching Implications

Crystal (2003) foresees that it is expected that English, in the future, may end up branching into mutually unintelligible languages, very similar to how IE and Latin did. This event has been wrongly predicted for centuries now; in two different centuries, the linguists Noah Webster and Henry Sweet expected that American, Australian, and British dialects of English would have undergone this separation in the period of 100 years. Almost three hundred years later, all three nations do have differences in syntax, phonology, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions, but speakers from each can still understand each other via circumlocution or using standard English. In the modern day, the number of people speaking English is vast, and each country has made

some changes to the language based on neighboring languages and local customs. Such changes cannot be followed by English speakers of a different country or sometimes even a different region. Some writers have taken these variations and implemented them in literary works, while others have decided to stick to a form of English that most people can understand. English teachers are faced with the same decision now. Crystal (2003) has further speculated that the branching of English will be met with standardization to ensure international understanding. Until that time comes, the decision rests with the teachers. Should many dialects of English be taught? How many dialects should students be taught? Or is it better to stick to standard English and teach students how to individually learn a regional dialect depending on their traveling plans? Perhaps it only depends on the objectives of students.

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# The Fate of the East Germanic Branch

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**Abstract**
This paper traces the history of the extinct East Germanic branch of the Proto-Germanic language and discusses factors that led to its demise. Implications for language teaching are drawn at the end of the paper.

## Introduction

Out of all the subdivisions of the Germanic languages, East Germanic is the only branch that has become extinct. The East Germanic branch includes three known languages: Gothic, Burgundian, and Vandalic, and each language has a rich history behind it. This paper will try to explain what happened to these three languages, who spoke them, and the most important events that happened to the respective speakers. Even though the East Germanic branch has become extinct, it is still important to learn about its history in order to draw relevant lessons for today's society.

## The Vandalic Language

The Vandalic language was a Germanic language closely related to Gothic and was spoken by the Vandals, also known as the Hasdingi and Silingi tribal confederations. The Vandals were "a 'barbarian' Germanic people who sacked Rome, battled the Huns and the Goths, and founded a kingdom in North Africa that flourished for about a century until it succumbed to an invasion force from the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 534" (Jarus, 2014). These barbaric people may have originated from southern Scandinavia as the name Vandal "appears in central Sweden in the parish of Vendel, old Swedish Vaendil" (Jarus, 2014). In more recent history, the term "Vandal" has a negative connotation, as Romans and other non-Vandals wrote most of the written texts about the Vandals. However, according to the historian Torsten Cumberland Jacobsen, the Vandals were more orderly and had conducted themselves better during the sack of Rome than many other invading barbarians. As previously mentioned, little is known about the Vandalic language, but the external history of the language helps to explain how Vandalic eventually died out.

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The decline of Vandalic and the Vandals began after the death of the Vandal king Genseric. Under his reign, the Vandals were able to take over North Africa and engage in the first of six Sacks of Rome. The first Sack of Rome is said to have signaled the Collapse of the Roman Empire. In August C.E. 455, the Sack of Rome was triggered due to the assassination of the Roman Emperor Valentinian III, who "had previously pledged his daughter Eudocia to the son of the Vandal King Genseric as part of a peace treaty" (Andrews 3, year). Because of the Emperor's death, the deal between the Romans and the Vandals was invalidated, which fueled King Genseric's rage. As Genseric's forced invaded Italy and marching into Rome the Romans were powerless to stop them. According to one theory, "the Romans did not even bother to send out an army but instead sent Pope Leo I out to reason with Genseric" (Jarus, 2014). Pope Leo I was successful in persuading Genseric not to burn the city or murder Rome's inhabitants, but, in exchange, the Vandals were able to pass through the gates of Rome without a fight. The Sack of Rome of 455 is said to be the most successful of the three Sacks of Rome because Genseric and his Vandals were able to "slowly and leisurely plunder the city of its wealth" for fourteen days whereas the first Sack of Rome by the Visigoths involved only a three day invasion (Jarus, 2014). In C.E. 428, Genseric was finally able to ascend to the throne until his death in Carthage on 25, January 477. After his death, many of his successors faced economic problems, quarrels over succession, and conflict with the Byzantine Empire, which led to the eventual collapse of the Vandals and their language.

**The Burgundian Language**

Burgundian is another language that falls under the East Germanic branch. It is not to be confused with the Burgundian language that is spoken by the French, Bourguignon-morvandiau. Little is known about East Germanic Burgundian, but what has been discovered is that the Burgundians were also a tribe of Vandals who "lived in the area of modern Poland in the time of the Roman Empire" (Revolvy, 2017). There are other theories that the Burgundians originated from Scandinavia, where they settled "east of the river Rhine" until their homeland was destroyed by the Huns (Cawley, 2014). With either theory, we can say that the Burgundians were somehow related to the Vandal tribes, and we can come conclude that they were also considered to be barbarian. This has corroborated, as at around A.D. 451, during the Battle of Chalons, the Burgundians served as close allies to the Romans. The Burgundians "fought on the side of Aetius, a Roman war hero, the Visigoths, and other Germanic peoples against Attila and the Huns" so mercifully and faithfully that their Roman allies gave the Burgundian kings the title of Master of the Soldiers (Koeller, 2016). It was because of their involvement in so many wars that the Burgundians marked their place in history through military alliances.

However, the Burgundians were involved in two battles that eventually led to the ultimate demise of many Burgundian speakers. The first attack was the Battle of Chalons, where, with the aide of Aetius, they were able to escape destruction and flee to Lake Geneva in Switzerland. From there, the Burgundians established the Burgundian Kingdom, which later became Provence. Later, in A.D. 554, the Burgundians were attacked by the Franks, their former allies. The attack by the Franks led to the fall of the Burgundians. First, the king of the Franks, Clovis, married the Burgundian princess Clotilda and then proceeded in later years to invade their

kingdom. The Burgundian Kingdom was eventually lost during the Battle of Vezeronce and was made part of the Merovingian kingdoms. There, "the Burgundians themselves were by and large absorbed as well" (Revolvy, 2017). The only things we know about the Burgundian language is that there are proper names of Burgundians recorded, such as Conrad, Rudolf, and Charles. The names that we know of come from the names of the Burgundian kings. However, the other words we know of are more often too difficult to distinguish from other Germanic words.

**The Gothic Language**

The only one of the three East Germanic languages that we have extensive research on is the Gothic language. Gothic is the last language that falls under the East Germanic branch and was spoken by the Goths in parts of Crimea until the 17th century. The Goths were divided into two main tribes: "the *Ostrogothi* or *Greutungi* (dune-dwellers) and the *Visigothi* or *Tervingi* (steppe-dwellers)" (Ager par. 3, 2017). The precise origin of the Goths is difficult to determine for two reasons. First, "the Goths left no clear written or archaeological records which may be used to pinpoint their location" and second "they seem not to have remained in one region for any lengthy period of time, being driven to migration by stimuli both internal and external" (Krause and Slocum sec. 1, 2017). The most common consensus of the earliest known location of the Goths is somewhere near northern or northeastern Europe, which may include parts of Scandinavia and the northern reaches of modern-day Poland. Subsequently, the Goths also appear to have migrated to regions bordering the Black Sea to the north and to the east of the Danube River, which formed part of the Roman Empire. From this region, the Goths "ventured out in the mid-3rd century A.D. on a series of raids which marked the beginning of a centuries' long struggle between the Gothic peoples and the Roman [E]mpire" (Krause and Slocum sec. 1, 2017). Because of the many raids the Goths were part of, they were never really became a unified people. For this reason the two main groups of the Goths, the Ostrogothi and Visigothi, are identified with the places where each tribe was supposedly located. "Vesi" for *Visigoth* relates to the word "West" and its counterpart "Ostro" connotes "East." The Goth's many migrations and settlements have left linguistic remnants throughout Europe.

Originally, Gothic was written using a runic alphabet, which we know little about, but one theory about the origin of the Runes is that the Goths invented them. However, this is impossible to prove, as very few inscriptions in Gothic runic writing survive today. The Gothic alphabet is based on the Greek alphabet with extra letters added from the Latin and Runic alphabets. The alphabet consists of twenty-seven letters, with "19 or 20 derived from Greek uncial script (having only majuscules), 5 or 6 from Latin, and 2 were either borrowed from the runic script or invented independently" (Gutman and Avanzati sec. 7, 2013). Created by Bishop Wufila (A.D. 311—383), the religious leader of the Visigoths, the Gothic alphabet was aimed to "provide his people with a written language and a means of reading his translation of the Bible" (Ager par. 2, 2017). Bishop Wufila translated the Bible in the 4th century using the Gothic alphabet, although most of his translation did not survive. The Gothic biblical translation is apparently based on the "Antiochene-Byzantine recension of Lucian the Martyr (c. 312), which was a Greek text dominant in the diocese of Constantinople" (Krause and Slocum sec. 3, 2017). During the 5th and 6th century, fragments of Wufila's work were reproduced, with the most impressive of his

works being the Codex Argenteus or Silver Codex. The name Codex Argenteus comes from the binding of the book, which is made from silver. The Codex now contains "187 leaves out of a presumed original 336" (Krause and Slocum sec. 3, 2017). The pages are purple parchment with letters written in silver and gold—"The beginnings of gospels, the first lines of sections and the Lord's Prayer, and the gospel symbols at the bottom of the pages are all in gold letters; the rest is written in silver" (Krause and Slocum sec. 3, 2017). The Silver Codex was first discovered in Werden Abbey in the 16th century but can now be found in the library of the University of Uppsala. Other Gothic biblical translations that have survived include the Codex Gissensis, the Codex Carolinus, and the Codices Ambrosiani. These surviving works only contain fewer than ten leaves per codex, so, unfortunately, it cannot be explained in detail as the Codex Argenteus was. On one hand, we can tell a little about the phonology and morphology of the Gothic language from these Gothic biblical translations. On the other hand, we cannot tell much about Gothic syntax because Bishop Wufila's Bible is a literal translation from the Greek version of the Bible and does not accurately reflect Gothic syntax.

The following chart describing Gothic phonology would normally imply that there are words with different meanings whose only audible difference is between these vowels. Gothic has "five short [vowels] and seven long vowels plus three diphthongs [iu], [au], [ai]" (Gutman & Avanzati, sec. 6, 2013). Figure 1 shows the range of vowels that a Gothic speaker is able to produce. However, it has been discovered that for the vowels [i] and [ai] and also [u] and [au] are believed to be in complementary distribution—a phonetic context in which one member of either pair may appear while the other cannot. The vowels [ai] and [au] typically appear before consonants /h/ and /r/, whereas [i] and [u] almost never appear in that context. Some examples include words such as: [filu] "much", [skip] "ship", [bairan] "bear", [raihtis] "you see", [sunus] "son", [dauhtar] "daughter" (Robinson, 2003). Because of this distribution rule in Gothic, numerous words show more varied forms in Gothic compared to other Germanic languages. An example of this compares Gothic to Old High German: Gothic [niman] versus OHG [neman], meaning "to take", Gothic [faihu] versus OHG [fihu], meaning "money, livestock", and Gothic [baurgs] versus OHG [burgs], meaning "city" (Robinson, 2003).

| | Front | Central | Back |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High** | i iː | | u uː |
| **High-mid** | eː | | oː |
| **Low-mid** | ɛ ɛː | | ɔ ɔː |
| **Low** | | a aː | |

*Figure 1.* Vowels Chart (reproduced from Gutman & Avanzati, sec. 6, 2013)

"The consonant system of Gothic includes 8 stops, 10 fricatives, 3 nasals, 2 liquids (a lateral and a flap), and 2 glides" (Gutman and Avanzati sec. 6, 2013). The retention of Proto-Indo European labiovelar sounds, such as [gʷ], is only found after nasals and in the combination /ggw/. The fact that Gothic was inevitably affected by phonological changes is illustrated in Grimm's Law. Figure 2 shows the consonant sounds used in Gothic.

| | | Labial | Dental | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Labio-Velar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Stop** | *Voiceless* | p | | t | | k | kʷ | |
| | *Voiced* | b | | d | | g | gʷ | |
| **Fricative** | *Voiceless* | f | θ | s | | x | | h |
| | *Voiced* | β | ð | z | | ɣ | ʍ | |
| **Nasal** | | m | | n | | ŋ | | |
| **Liquid** | | | | l r | | | | |
| **Glide** | | | | | j | | w | |

*Figure 2*. Consonant Chart (Gutman & Avanzati, sec. 6, 2013)

As for the morphology of Gothic, it was mostly an inflected language. Nouns, pronouns, and adjectives are inflected for case (nominative, vocative, accusative, dative, genitive), gender (masculine, feminine, neuter), and number (singular and plural). For the types of cases of Gothic, "Indo-European locative and instrumental were absorbed by the dative while the ablative was lost" (Gutman & Avanzati, sec. 8, 2013). Gothic verbs were later classified like other Germanic verbs: strong or weak depending on how the verb is formed for the preterit and past participle. "Strong verbs are distinguished by a participle in *an* and by vowel gradation and/or root reduplication in the preterit [while] weak verbs use a dental suffix (t/d) in their preterit and past participle" (Gutman & Avanzati, sec. 8, 2013). Something else that is interesting about Gothic verbs is that the Goths did not have a future tense. Instead of having a future tense, the future was expressed by the present tense, an archaic feature.

The Gothic language died out among the Ostrogoths after the fall of their Kingdom in the 6th century. The beginning of the end of their language was sparked by the death of Queen Amalasvintha's son, Athalaric, and eventually her assassination by her cousin Theodahad, who claimed to be the throne's rightful heir. Along with the Queen's death came the wrath of Justinian I, Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, who thought Theodahad to be a usurper. Sending his famous general Flavius Belisarius, Justinian I hoped to "bring the region back into line with the empire" (Mark, 2011). "Belisarius took Sicily in C.E. 535 and Naples, then Rome, in C.E. 536", while the Goths took out Theodahad as their king and chose another, Witigis (Mark, 2011). However, Witigis was just as bad a king as Theodahad. Belisarius took Ravenna and captured Witigis in C.E. 539, and "Justinian then offered the defeated Ostrogoths his terms, through Belisarius, that they could keep an independent kingdom in Italy and only give him half of their treasury rather than all of it" (Mark, 2011). There were many uprisings after Justinian I placed an official Byzantine rule over the Goths, but all attempts failed. By C.E. 562 the name Ostrogoth had disappeared, and the people of the kingdom migrated into the populace of Italy, France and Germany. With a relatively small population of the Ostrogoths still in Italy, the Lombards, another Germanic tribe "easily conquered northern Italy shortly after the end of the Gothic Wars and maintained the Lombard Kingdom for the next two hundred years" (Mark, 2011).

## Conclusion

The death of the East Germanic branch was unfortunate. Vandalic, Burgundian, and Gothic have all faced several battles in which they did not survive, and most of the people who spoke these languages were assimilated into another group. Even though it is an extinct branch, East Germanic is still important to learn about because these languages, especially Gothic, are considered to be very close to the Proto-Germanic language, and thus can give insights into the earlier forms of modern Germanic languages. Further, their fate reminds us about the political forces that can affect the life and death of a language. A language may thrive when there are favorable political conditions for its people to live in peace, and a language may disappear when external forces eradicate its people in power struggles. As English language teachers, we need to be mindful of the vitality of our students' native languages. The learning and teaching of English should promote the preservation and appreciation of other languages.

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# Beowulf and Old English

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**Abstract**
The epic poem of *Beowulf* is an important part of the history of the English language, especially since there are very few books from its era currently in existence and still fewer that have found their way into schools. This paper aims to disprove the idea that *Beowulf* has become irrelevant in today's society by detailing a few of the many unanswered questions and unproven theories that still puzzle archaeologists, linguists, and historians. The study of *Beowulf* requires that teachers give students context, background, and a bit of information on Old English and the debates surrounding the epic. This in turn gives students a taste of linguistics, which opens the doorway to a career path and passion that some of them may not otherwise have discovered.

## Introduction

Beowulf is a marvelous story that features monsters, heroes, death, and treasure. It is also one of the earliest and longest poems written in English, and some have called it a masterpiece. Although the tale has many digressions, the main thread of the story describes the praiseworthy acts of a man named *Beowulf*. Amid all the heroics, the poem gives a glimpse into the artifacts, lives, and values of the people living during the Dark Ages. Beowulf is valuable not only for the insights it gives linguists into the Old English language, but also for the creative themes that have inspired others to create great works in modern times, such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, as well as several video games, one of the most popular being *Skyrim*.[1]

*Beowulf* has enriched society for more than a millennium, and yet there are historians, archaeologists, philosophers, and linguists who would remove *Beowulf* from classrooms in Britain and the United States and put it solely into the hands of experts (Tolkien 1936, p. 1). This paper aims to detail the history of the *Beowulf* manuscript and some of the debates surrounding it in an effort to show that even after a millennia, it still offers value in schools and in life.

## The *Beowulf* Codex

The poem of *Beowulf* survives in a manuscript that is called the *Beowulf Codex* or the *Nowell Codex* (Figure 1), although the British Museum refers to it as the Manuscript Cotton Vitellius A. XV, because, while in Robert Cotton's library, it was on the shelf under the bust of the Roman emperor Vitellius (Chickering 1977, p. 245). The manuscript contains five works in total. The stories, in the order they appear in the manuscript, are *The Passion of St. Christopher*, *The Wonders of*

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*the East*, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, *Beowulf*, and *Judith*. No one knows for certain why the scribes decided to put these stories together, but it has been hypothesized that they are simply a collection of monster stories (Chickering 1977, p. 246), since monsters are present in each story.

*Figure 1.* The *Beowulf Codex*, also called the *Nowell Codex* or *Cotton Vitellius A. XV*, measures only five inches in width by eight inches in height; smaller than most books of the time. (Retrieved from https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/styles/720p/public/images/u58/2015/beowulf-01.jpg?itok=VJhLoQNr)

There is a tentative consensus that the manuscript of *Beowulf* was copied by two scribes, generally called *Scribe A* and *Scribe B* or *Scribe One* and *Scribe Two*. Yet a very small portion of scholars argue that there was a third scribe who supposedly wrote a very small middle section of the poem. Since there is no record of exactly who wrote *Beowulf,* scholars cannot altogether discard this theory. However, most find that the manuscript shows definite evidence of only two scribes (Chickering 1977, p. 245; Clark 2009, p. 677).

Over time, each of the stories has been damaged, and, with each ruined page of text, those who have roots in England lose a bit of their cultural history. One author says that we are "extremely lucky" that the entirety of *Beowulf* survived, since "The beginning of *St. Christopher* and the bulk of *Judith* were already lost in 1563" (Chickering 1997, p. 245), which is the year a scholar named *Lawrence Nowell* found and preserved the manuscript. This manuscript had more than likely been displaced and tossed about after King Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries a couple of decades earlier (Chickering 1997, p.245). Along with being able to take an educated guess about when the *Beowulf* manuscript fell into disrepair, scholars have also been

able to learn a bit about the people who read the manuscript. It is evident, for example, that the fight scene between the dragon and Beowulf was the most-read section of the manuscript because it exhibits the most wear from being read (Chickering 1977, p. 246). If the manuscript had fallen into the hands of those who did not value Anglo-Saxon history, it is quite possible that *Beowulf* could have been lost forever, which would have been a great tragedy. Thus, Nowell did the world a great service by saving the manuscript from those who had plundered the monasteries.

All scholars probably wish that they could say some Nowell-like figure had saved the books housed in the Cottonian library. Unfortunately, in 1731, there was a fire that engulfed the library of Sir Robert Cotton, where the *Beowulf* manuscript had been since Elizabethan times (Chickering 1977, p. 245). Thankfully, the Vitellius manuscript was not shelved in the section of the library that was most damaged by the flames (Figure 2), so *Beowulf* only shows smoke damage and charring at the edges (Chickering 1977, p. 246). After the fire, *Beowulf* was one of the manuscripts that was donated from the Cottonian library to the British Museum at its founding in 1753, and it remains there to this day (Beowulf Manuscript).

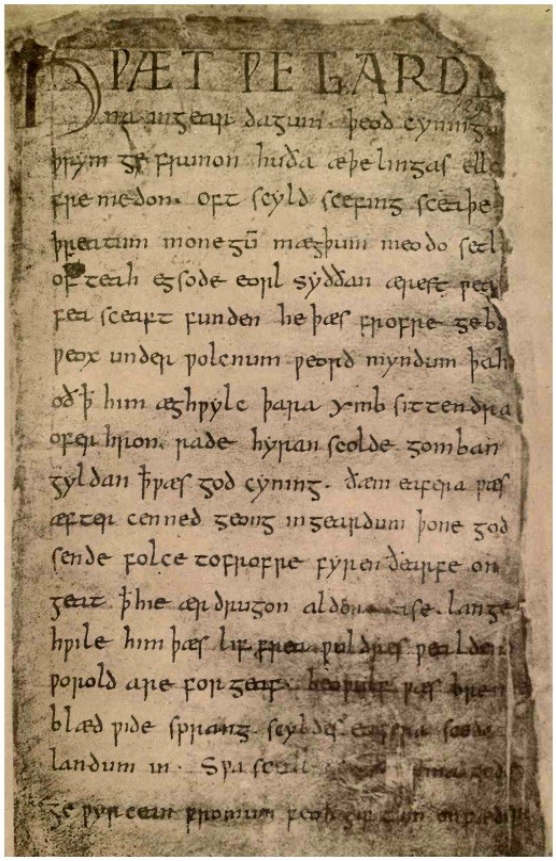

*Figure 2.* The first page of *Beowulf* from the *Beowulf Codex,*
showing the charred edges and illegible bits of the page
(retrieved from http://www.old-engli.sh/trivia%20images/BeowulfPage1-VitelliusAxv-132.jpg)

## Copies of *Beowulf*

Surprisingly, it is not thanks to the British Museum that so much of *Beowulf* is still in existence. History owes its thanks to Icelander Grimur Jonsson Thorkelin, who copied *Beowulf* with the intent of printing the poem. By the time the British Museum started work to preserve the manuscript of *Beowulf*, almost two thousand words that had been legible when Thorkelin did his work had crumbled away or were illegible (Chickering 1977, p. 246; Beowulf Manuscript).

The manuscript itself is very small, only measuring five inches in width by eight inches in height (Chickering 1977, p. 246). The scribes who wrote the manuscript around A.D. 1000 exhibit poor penmanship and illustrations in comparison to the other three manuscripts that have survived from this period in history, which are the *Junius Manuscript*, the *Exeter Book*, and the *Vercelli Book* (Chickerig 1997, p. 246). Chickering noteed that the work is filled with mistakes, especially spelling errors, but another philologer argueed that what Chickering interpreted as spelling mistakes were actually due to the scribes being unfamiliar with the original handwriting, which could be evidence that could help pinpoint the date of the original *Beowulf* manuscript (Clark 2009, p. 677-685).

Clark's theory is based on the idea that the scribes who copied Beowulf must have been unfamiliar with the cursive style used in the manuscript they were copying, and that these "later copyist[s] did not recognize letterforms in a given earlier script or did not understand conventions accepted in that script (as in writing *d* for both a plosive and a fricative)" (Clark 2009, p. 677). As with all things, if one does not understand basic conventions, they are apt to make mistakes. In the case of the *Beowulf* manuscript, there was a mix-up of some letters that in the earlier version of *Beowulf* would have been written as the same letter. The manuscript shows that this happened for many letter pairs, such as *a* and *u* (Clark 2009, p. 677). Clark's theory, however, hangs on the letters *d* and *ð*, where this "frequent 'literal confusion" suggests that the Beowulf archetype predates the mid-eighth-century scribal consensus that the fricative *ð* should be distinguished from the stop *d*" (Clark 2009, p. 679). So, Clark is claiming that there is evidence that the manuscript of *Beowulf* that the scribes copied was from the 8th century A.D. There are those who are skeptical and would like to claim that the scribes simply made mistakes. Chickering (1977) stateed that the scribes who copied *Beowulf* were certainly not professionals (p. 245), and so this could lead to the conclusion that they were apt to make mistakes. One skeptic said that everybody makes writing mistakes, and that it is common to forget to dot an *i*, or accidentally cross an *l*, thus making it look like a *t* (qtd.in Clark 2009, p. 681). However, Clark dismissed this by saying that the mistakes follow a definite pattern and that his hypothesis "can explain something like 65 percent of literal confusions in *Beowulf*" (Clark 2009, p. 680). It does seem highly unlikely that these are just spelling mistakes, then, since muscle memory probably would not allow a person to miswrite a letter this often, especially in a day and age when handwriting was very prized for its neatness and correctness. The hypothesis of miswritten words becomes even more improbable when the letters themselves are analyzed. Clark's sources found that at least one scribe formed his *d* and *ð* in quite different ways, since the top line of his *d* was always distinctly bent to one side. Moreover, "scribes A and B confuse these letterforms in copying Beowulf but not in copying the other texts in the Nowell codex" (Clark 2009, p. 680). Since it is not only highly improbable but also laughable that Scribe B, who wrote the last half of *Beowulf* and all of *Judith* (Chickering

1977, p. 245), would suddenly remember how to write his letters correctly after finishing *Beowulf* and before starting to write *Judith*, we can assume that Clark's argument has merit.

Even more merit is added to Clark's argument when he points out that the two scribes both proofread their work, making changes when necessary. They each erased one *ð* and changed it to a *d*, so we can assume that they would have fixed more of their mistakes if they had seen anything wrong with what they had originally written. They did not find any more mistakes, however, because they were not familiar with the writing conventions at work during the time the original manuscript was written.

## ***Beowulf*'s Origins**

As to the debate surrounding the location of where the *Beowulf* author wrote, there are too many theories to cover in detail here. Some reference the extremely detailed descriptions of weapons and buildings that match artifacts and ruins uncovered by archaeologists, for example those found at Uppsala, Sweden and Lejre, Denmark (Wentersdorf 2007, p. 411). Others note the various kings who may have been likely to commission the work (Chickering 1977, p. 247). Scholars may debate where Heorot stood, but they all generally agree that the hall's description matches that of a mead hall built in the Germanic style (Wentersdorf 2007, p. 411). Germanic halls, such as King Hrothgar's hall, Heorot, could be found all across the region where the Germanic languages are spoken: Denmark, Sweden, England, Finland and other nearby countries, since all these languages came from one original people and culture. What really and truly pinpoints the location that the author was trying to describe when talking about King Hrothgar's land is a combination of archeological, linguistic, and geographical factors, and it all comes down to Romans and maps.

The Romans are known for their great empire that spanned continents in its prime, and also for their unique architecture that can still be seen across regions of Europe they once controlled. When most people think of Roman architecture, they may think of bath houses and aqueducts. In relation to Beowulf, linguists are not concerned with these as much as they are with the Roman roads and floors. In the poem, Beowulf reaches Heorot by way of a *straet*, which is an Old English word that specifically means a paved Roman road (Hall 1998, p. 4). Additionally, the phrase *fagne flor* is used to describe the floor of Heorot, and this phrase is used when the floor is elaborately crafted in the Roman style, which is more complex than the Anglo-Saxon style (Hall 1998, p. 4). As further proof that Heorot was in a place within the Roman Empire, King Hrothgar's wife, Wealtheow, gives linguists some insight. In Old English, *wealth* was a word for someone who served either in a household or as the wife in a marriage of alliance, and *theow* was a word referring to those who had both Roman and British blood (Hall 1998, p.4). From this it can be assumed that Hrothgar and Wealtheow were married in order to form an alliance of some sort. Since Wealtheow had both Roman and British ancestors, we can assume that she came from a region within the Roman Empire.

So why does all this Roman history matter? Well, it is an established fact that the Roman Empire was never expanded to include Denmark or Sweden (Hall 1998, p. 4; Wentersdorf 2007, p. 411). So, in order to pinpoint the location of King Hrothgar's kingdom, scholars need to find a place where Germanic and Roman ruins have both been found, which excludes Sweden and

Denmark but not England. The land around Heorot must also be sufficiently marshy to have earned the descriptive word *schrawynghop*, which means "a piece of land surrounded by marsh haunted by one or several supernatural malignant beings" (qtd. in Hall 1998, p. 4). We can, of course, assume that these "supernatural malignant beings" referred to are Grendel and his mother. Scholars have theorized that there was a rise in sea levels in the fifth century which would have caused Harty (the northern tip of the island of Sheppey) to be surrounded by marsh (Hall 1998, p.4). The island of Harty also can be tied back to the word *Heorot*. Linguists say that this land was first called *Heorot*, although the name changed to *Hart Londe*, which has morphed to the area's current name, *Harty* (Hall 1998, p. 4). So, England is a much better fit than Denmark or Sweden for the environment where the story of *Beowulf* was played out, even though some argue that the poem is written in the Old Norse tradition (Chickering 1977, p. 253).

If Old English semantics and maps are not enough evidence, the poem gives geographical details about the trip and region Beowulf passes on his way to Heorot that offer further evidence that Heorot was in England. First of all, Plutarch, a well known Greek scholar, estimated that the trip from the mouth of the Rhine in Frisia to Britain would take about thirty-six hours, and indeed, the author of *Beowulf* says that Beowulf sighted land on the morning of the second day (Hall 1998, p. 4), which coincides with Plutarch's estimation of the time of that trip. Also, old maps of England are marked with names similar or identical to the names mentioned in the epic. For example, the author writes that Beowulf makes landfall at a place called *Land's End*, which in old maps is the name of a sea inlet on the island of Sheppey, England (Hall 1998, p. 4). To add to this, Beowulf is met by the Warden, which is the name of the sea cliffs that are above Land's End (Hall 1998, p. 4). There are many more words and phrases that can point to the author using England as the backdrop for his tale, as well as many more debates that discuss the exact meaning and intent behind some words in the poem.

Because of Hall's statement that Harty would have been a marsh because of the rise in sea levels that took place in the fifth century combined with Clark's theory dating the consensus of writing *d* and *ð* to the mid eighth century, *Beowulf* was most likely written somewhere between the fifth and seventh centuries, which fits with other time frames offered based on the external history of England at that time. It has been theorized that the story must have happened after England was Christianized, since there are many references to God and Christian motifs, even if there are not any direct references to biblical sacraments or biblical figures. One interesting Christian motif is the idea that Grendel and his mother were descendants of Cain, who the Bible states was cursed for killing his brother Abel (Chickering 1977, p. 254). It is also said that no Anglo-Saxon would have written a story that puts the Danes in a positive light after the Viking invasions of the seventh century (Chickering 1977, p. 247), which narrows the time frame.

## Conclusion and Teaching Implications

Overall, then, the great work *Beowulf* comes to us in a humble form, from debatable origin, full of mistakes and double meanings, and yet perhaps this is part of the allure that will keep it intact on classroom reading lists. Some may argue that these debates about an Old English poem hardly matter in today's world of moral dilemmas. However, I would argue that knowing the motivation and environment around which *Beowulf* was written matters a great deal to our

understanding of human history and cultural evolution. Being able to correctly settle some of the debates surrounding *Beowulf* could also have a huge impact on archeological studies of England, Sweden, and Denmark, which all have artifacts similar to those described in the poem.

At the same time, being able to correctly interpret all or parts of *Beowulf* using the context of the time it was written could have a great impact into the way the story is interpreted. In addition to learning about the past and being inspired by the values in the story, reading *Beowulf* and considering its history also give students opportunities to practice analytical reading and critical thinking. Students can learn to evaluate the different interpretations of the story in the context of its history and by looking at semantics and writing conventions. *Beowulf* is history, creativity, and heroism all in one. It is valuable not only for the story's ability to intrigue students, but also for the scholarly discourse and history that surrounded it. There are so few Old English poems in existence today that it is vital for young generations to engage with such a rich text as *Beowulf*.

Despite some suggestions to remove *Beowulf* from the curriculum (Tolkien 1936), I would argue that stories such as *Beowulf* need to stay in schools and even be taught to a broader range of students because, even though the text may be old, the ideas and the story are still very relatable to students today. The fact that this epic poem still has aspects that are debated is proof in and of itself that the story needs to be taught in schools because of the unique historical insights it brings into the lives of students. By introducing students to the fact that dragon, monster, and hero stories were told even centuries ago, teachers have an opportunity to connect their students to a broader and longer discourse about these topics. Students could gain new perspectives as they learn that people living a long time ago had the same problems, emotions, and interests as people today.

*Beowulf* is a gateway from literature to linguistics. Anyone who reads *Beowulf* must by necessity learn a little bit about Old English and those who spoke it in order to understand the setting of the epic. Knowing about the history of the English language can help us find the answers to modern problems that plague learners, such as why the English spelling system is so inconsistent, and what may be lost if English spelling is reformed to match pronunciation. In connecting with the past, through *Beowulf,* one can understand the present and project into the future.

## Note

[1] Tolkien took so much of an interest in *Beowulf* that he did much more than take motifs to use in his novels. He is known for writing a very respectable essay on *Beowulf*, in which he reprimanded anyone who would dare use the historical work done on *Beowulf* as a piece of criticism. His essay mainly deals with the monsters of the story, Grendel and the Dragon (Tolkien, 1936).

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# A Critical Juncture for Monolingual English Dictionaries: In Search of Norms for Seventeenth Century Lexicography and its Implications for Dictionary Use in TESOL

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**Abstract**
Most studies into early monolingual English lexicography hold the orthodox view that language traditionalism was the catalyst for its inception. However, with few exceptions, researchers have understated the extent to which the norms and purposes of early monolingual English lexicography were in flux. The aim of this paper is to compare the sources, stylistic aspects, purposes, and target audience of four early and influential lexicographers. The analysis suggests that the set of norms guiding early English lexicography were in flux, historically flowing in the direction of religious to general or secular audiences and purposes. I then argue that the same considerations applied to the historical analysis can be fruitfully applied to the needs of ESL/EFL students and teachers to gain insights into the nature and intricacies of the dictionaries that they use, providing a guidepost for dictionary selection.

## Introduction

People consider dictionaries to be arbiters of semantic content, spelling, word usage, part of speech, and so on. While we typically take the neutrality of dictionaries for granted, early English language lexicography consisted of individuals compiling lemmata according to their own, sometimes surprising, sets of interests. In the following paper, I reflect on the beginnings of English language dictionaries, starting with Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall*. I compare Cawdrey's work with his successors Thomas Blount, Elisha Coles, and Nathan Bailey. I first compare these works' sources and stylistic aspects. Second, I compare the purposes and target audiences of each work. I have two interrelated claims. My first claim is that early English language monolingual lexicographers had not yet established the sets of norms which now govern the gathering and defining of word lists. My second claim is that the target audience was also not yet set, transforming from religious devotees to a more general, even comparatively secular audience. I then go to briefly apply some of the insights gleaned from the historical analysis to the needs of ESL/EFL learners and teachers. As we will see, the major categories which I use to support the claims regarding a comparative flux in the norms of early seventeenth century dictionary writers relative to modern lexicographical practices include purpose, intended

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audience, and descriptivist or prescriptivist stances, and these can be fruitfully applied to the modern day question of how ESL/EFL learners and teachers understand the nature and intricacies of the dictionaries that they use.

## Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall*

In 1604, Robert Cawdrey published the first edition of *A Table Alphabeticall*. De Witt and Noyes (1991) identified two main sources from which Cawdrey drew. First, he drew from the vocabulary, exceptional for its time, in Edmund Coote's *The English School Master* (1596). According to De Witt and Noyes (1991), *The English School Master* "approximates, in fact, a brief dictionary" (p. 12). A comparison of the instructions of Coote and Cawdrey shows that many of the expressions found in Cawdrey's work were echoes of Coote's phraseology. Comparing the lemmata and definitions of the works, Cawdrey takes on 87 percent of Coote's word list, amounting to 40 percent of Cawdrey's total word list. The second major source for Cawdrey was *Thomas Thomas's Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* which comprises 40 percent of Cawdrey's lemmata and definitions. Of the definitions drawn from Coote, Cawdrey supplements 50 percent with definitions from Thomas. While Coote and Thomas comprise the main sources for *A Table Alphabeticall*, other, lesser known sources have emerged as unwitting contributors.

Schafer (1970) adduces that Cawdrey also drew from A.M.'s the *Book of Physicke*. Of the 83 words which overlap in the *Book of Physicke* and *A Table Alphabeticall*, only eight are also in Thomas or Coote. Riddell (1974) identifies four further sources. The first is Peter Bales's *The Writing Schoolemaster*. The second is "An exposition of certein words" appended to Neil Hemmingsen's *A Postbill, or Exposition of the Gospels*. These make up many of the longest definitions in Cawdrey's work. The third is "The Explication of Certaine Wordes" appended to the *New Testament* by the English College at Rhemes (Rheims) along with William Fulke's reprinting and attached commentary and refutations. The fourth is John Rastell's *An Exposition of certaine difficult and obscure words, and Terms of the Lawes of this Realme*. Riddell (1983) later identified William Fulke's *A goodly Gallery with a most pleasaunt Prospect, into the garden of natural contemplation, to beholde the nature of all causes of a kind of Meteors* as a further source for Cawdrey. This melange of previous works upon which Cawdrey relied displays his serious efforts in compiling his dictionary by drawing from other sources to directly fill its pages. However, this same practice highlights a weakness in Cawdrey's approach. That is, the very works from which he drew were informed by the subjective intuitions of individuals with likely diverse and unsystematic lexicographic methods. Besides Cawdrey's sources, it is also important to note the stylistic features of his work.

Siemens (1994) explained that lemmata are generally given in their uninflected form, the exception being nouns, many of which are given in their plural form, while word class is not explicitly indicated. Stein (2010) described Cawdrey's work as generally incorporating only one spelling of a word, although this practice was abandoned in some cases where Cawdrey includes multiple spellings coupled with a brace. Cawdrey indicated etymological origin by preceding words borrowed from French with a "§" and indicating borrowed words from Greek by a bracketed "g" or "gr." Many definitions were brief with "(k)" indicating "kind of" as in "(k) bird" for "barnacle" (De Witt and Noyes, 1991, p. 19). *The Table Alphabeticall* followed the Latin-English and English-Latin dictionaries in alphabetizing its entries even though other organizational

options in practice at the time were available. The strongest competing option was a thematic approach in which word lists were organized by topic rather than alphabetical order. Such competing options serve as an early corroboration of the claim that norms of early monolingual English dictionaries were not yet set. Since early monolingual English lexicography drew from such varied sources, it is easy to imagine an alternative evolutionary path for early monolingual English lexicography in which a thematic approach was preferred over alphabetized entries. With these considerations of sources and style in mind for Cawdrey, let us now move on to Blount's *Glossographia*.

## Thomas Blount's *Glossographia*

In 1656, Thomas Blount published the *Glossographia*, which contains about 7,000 lemmata and definitions. Although Blount acknowledged his indebtedness to Scapula, Minsheu, Cotgrave, Rider, Florio, Thomasius, Davies, Cowell, and others, De Witt and Noyes (1991) claimed that this was Blount's means "of concealing his chief obligations" (p. 39). Those obligations are to Thomas' *Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* and to Fracis Holyoke's *Dictionarium Etymologicum*. Blount followed both of these texts closely, sometimes combining the two in the creation of composite definitions. Limiting their analysis to the letter A, De Witt and Noyes (1991) found that about 58 percent are derived either in whole or in part from Thomas or Holyoke. Ridell (1974) introduces Henry Cockram's *English Dictionarie* as an additional major source, and Starnes (1937) added John Rider, John Bullokar's *An English Expositor*, and Rastell's *Terms of the Law* to the list. De Witt and Noyes (1991) offer two plausible suggestions for Blount's creative process. He may have first exploited Thomas or Holyoke for a word and then, finding that it was used by one of the various authors which he cited, used the citation to fend off anticipated criticisms. Alternatively, the many authors which he claimed to draw from may have used Thomas and Holyoke as sources themselves. Insofar as Blount drew from varied sources which collectively made up the bulk of his word list, his lexicographical approach is similar to that of Cawdrey. As we will see, however, Blount's lexicographic method diverged from Cawdrey in that Blount delved into the project of providing etymological explanation.

Blount was the first lexicographer of an English dictionary to attempt to provide a fleshed out etymology. Unlike Cawdrey, who merely signified the foreign language to which a loanword was owed, Blount produced historical observations. For example, De Witt and Noyes (1991) employed the example of Blount's defining of "Arthur" as "a British word composed of Arth, which signifies a Bear, and grw, which signifyes a man (Vir). So Arthur, quasi a man that for his strength and terror may be called a Bear" (p. 46). Thus, Blount's etymology far outstripped that provided by Cawdrey. Blount's work was more ambitious than his predecessors in the sense that it included a large number of borrowed and foreign words, both ancient and modern, along with etymological interpretations. According to Starnes (1937), though Blount included many foreign words, he did so at the expense of "Old Saxon Words," for which he directs the reader's attention to a future volume to be published by another lexicographer. Blount's major contribution, then, is an early emphasis on etymological explanation. The next early lexicographer to consider is Elisha Coles.

### Elisha Coles's *An English Dictionary*

De Witt and Noyes (1991) named Philips' *A New World* as Coles's main source. They draw on two pieces of evidence. First, a cross-referenced analysis of commonly defined words shows that Coles's definitions are similar to those of Philips. The second piece of evidence involves a page by page comparison of the two works. De Witt and Noyes (1991) noted that the first page of Coles's work contains 93 words, while Phillips's work contains 50. Of these 93 words, 56 are taken on board by Coles. Such definitions are always shortened versions of Phillip's definitions.

Coles diverges from traditional lexicography of the time by including canting or heraldry terms along with dialect words, although. like Cawdrey, he merely indicated the origin of words with abbreviations. Coles also included a number of words from famed literature, such as Chaucer, in his work, ostensibly to make these accessible to his readers. He also extended the definiens of technical terms and more systematically presented groups of words by choosing reasonably representative words for word groupings, diverging from earlier lexicographers who apparently chose these more or less at random. In total, his dictionary contains approximately 25,000 words. However, De Witt and Noyes (1991) noted that Coles needed to construct extremely terse definitions in order to accommodate so many words, which led to definitions such as the following: Glimmer, a fire; Lesion; a hurting; and Regular, orderly (p. 61-62). Incorporating heraldry, dialect, and representative words in addition to words from literature into bona fide dictionaries was one of Coles's innovations. Let us now move on briefly to Bailey before turning to an overview of these lexicographers to uncover and compare their motivations in constructing their dictionaries.

### Nathan Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*

In 1721 Nathan Bailey produced his *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, which De Witt and Noyes (1991) claimed was the "most popular of all dictionaries antedating Johnson" (p. 98). This is borne out in the fact that in 1802 his work reached its thirtieth edition. Bailey was a professional lexicographer, having published a number of other dictionaries besides *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, including a spelling book, a grammar, and Latin exercises for young students. Although Bailey borrowed widely, he is most indebted to Kersey. He exploits Kersey for his main word list, with nearly identical definitions for many words with added etymological exposition. De Witt and Noyes (1991) estimated that definitions from Kersey's *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* make up two-thirds of those of Bailey. Phillips's *World of Words* also served as another source. A significant amount of the Anglo-Saxon words were taken from Skinner's *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae*. Further sources include Coles's *English Dictionary* and John Ray's *Collection of English Words Not Generally Used*. Occasionally, Bailey takes directly from Blount's *Glossographia*. As far as lexicographical characteristics, Bailey includes a number of obsolete expressions in his work. He also includes ninety proverbs, most of which were borrowed from Oswald Dyke's *English Proverbs with Moral Reflections*.

In the introduction of his main work, Bailey offers a brief history of the English language, and he goes on to define some 40,000 words in his first edition by conservative estimates. By the final edition, this total would reach to 50,000 lemmata. Like Coles, he included a number of proper names, especially notable places in English, and dialect words in his main work. He also

included an array of proverbs along with their explication. Importantly, added to these was an emphasis on the etymology of the lemmata in his work. While Bailey acknowledged Blount's attempt to include some etymological aspects in his work, Bailey, in both purpose and in fact, goes far beyond Blount in including etymological explanations of the lemmata in his work. In contrast, it is worth reflecting that Cawdrey and Coles included only a brief indication of the language from which many of the words in his work were either borrowed or derived. Blount offered a more detailed exegesis, but this was limited to highly speculative, often dubious conjecture Further, Blount offered only the root word, sometimes supplemented by additional details. Many times, like Cawdrey and Coles, Blount merely indicated the language of origin. By offering both the immediate source of borrowing and the ultimate source, Bailey's dictionary far outstripped earlier dictionaries in terms of precision. Indeed, De Witt and Noyes (1991) claimed that Bailey's effort was "far in advance of any predecessor" (p. 102).

## Norms in Flux

Having reviewed these early lexicographers, I will return my first claim that the norms of lexicography were far from set at this time. These lexicographers each engaged in vast borrowing, sometimes with the attempt to dissemble readers from recognizing this fact. This whole-cloth borrowing diverges sharply from current lexicographical norms. Although comparing monolingual dictionaries today will no doubt reveal many similar definitions, there is no longer a drawing on individual sources to the point of what we might now consider plagiarism. Indeed, the picture we arrive at with respect to early lexicographers is a fairly haphazard one. After considering their methods, Riddell (1974) commented that "There is no evidence that anyone in the first half of the seventeenth century was concerned with the manner in which lexicographers compiled their works, except the lexicographers themselves."

These dictionaries also show that the types of words and information which are germane to a dictionary which is not targeted to a specific use, e.g., a heraldry vocabulary, were not yet set. Cawdrey, Coles, and Bailey offered some etymological information along with their definitions, while Blount's and Bailey's works outstrip the others in this respect. Bailey and Coles introduced proverbs into their works, and Bailey integrated obsolete words into his dictionary. Coles, introduced canting or heraldry terms, dialect words, and words from famed literature. Thus, a newer dictionary did not necessarily integrate all of the kinds of words defined in previous dictionaries, and a new dictionary might integrate words normally reserved for special-use vocabularies of the time, further buttressing the claim that the norms of early English language monolingual lexicography were far from set. Having examined the sources and stylistic particulars of each lexicographer, I now want to move on to the motivations of Cawdrey and his successors.

It is first fitting to note the standard analysis of early lexicographers' intentions. The historical analysis can be tied to the repeated use of the phrase "hard words" found in early English language lexicography. Cawdrey (1604) stated that in his undertaking "I haue set downe a Table conteining and teaching the true writing and vnderstanding of any hard English word, borrowed from the Greeke, Latine, or French, and how to know the one from the other, with the interpretation thereof by a plaine English word" (as cited in Stein, 2010). According to Stein,

"hard word" in Cawdrey's time generally meant difficult but also had an association with Latin and obsolete words written by medieval writers. As we will see, the purists, with whom Cawdrey and his early successors would be associated under the standard analysis, were prescriptivist in that they took as their charge restraining the language from unstandardized borrowings and inkhornisms, i.e., hard words under the traditional analysis.

Noyes (1943) and De Witt and Notes (1991) claimed that the interest in lexicography was an outgrowth of a controversy concerning the influx of borrowed words and "inkhornisms," which were words coined by authors to suit their own purposes. The purists argued that these words were debasing the English language, while the liberal-minded language authorities argued that the free coinage and borrowed words brought new vigor to the English language. The increase in hard words led to many early monolingual vocabularies and glossaries which were the natural forebears of the first monolingual dictionaries. Thus, according to this account, when Cawdrey and others mention "hard words," they are referring to newly borrowed words, inkhornisms, and obsolete words which readers needed to understand to enjoy literature.

Starnes (1937) adds three further reasons underlying the boom in English lexicography in the seventeenth century. First, an efflorescence of national spirit during the reign of the Tudor dynasty led to an emerging interest in English language literature. Second, interest in English was promulgated by the extensive use of English-Latin and Latin-English dictionaries. English began to take a prominent role in these dictionaries with the inclusion of many English idioms and phrases and the placement of English before Latin equivalents. Third, the method of compiling hard words in English-Latin dictionaries had already been established, and porting this method to a monolingual English dictionary was a natural and profitable extension. There are, no doubt, many kernels of truth in the standard analysis, especially as it concerns lexicographers proceeding Cawdrey. However, I believe that an alternative analysis of Cawdrey's motivations sheds a deeper light on the earliest English language monolingual lexicographer.

In order to better grasp the motivations of Cawdrey, whose life is the most widely documented among the lexicographers considered here, it is important first to briefly examine a few germane parts of his career. Peters (1968) notes Cawdrey was an ordained deacon in 1565, ordained priest in 1570, and ordained rector of South Luffenham in 1571. A number of ecclesiastical charges were brought against Cawdrey, including, among others, not reading homilies, not reading the injunctions of the church, conducting a wedding during Lent without the permission of the bishop, and preaching against the Book of Common Prayer. After a prolonged battle with church authorities, he was eventually dismissed from his church positions.[1] By the time he wrote *A Table Alphabeticall* in 1604, he had been scraping by in other pursuits, likely private tutoring, for more than a decade. These facts are important to keep in mind because they may have laid the groundwork for Cawdrey's ultimate turn to Puritanism.

Brown (2001) agrees with Flemming (1994) in not taking early monolingual English lexicographers at their word in terms of their interests and motivations in creating their works, especially with respect to the explicit reference to women readership. Flemming assigns to early English language lexicographers the motivation of standardizing English while dissembling the fact that linguistic authorities had theretofore failed to reach a consensus about the conventions and rules that would dictate proper English usage. According to Flemming, early English

monolingual dictionaries had a double audience, both to lexicographers' political peers vested in standardizing the language and to women, who were cast as needy and ignorant.

Brown (2001) shifts the focus from the standardization of English as a project of early English lexicographers to impute to Cawdrey a religious motivation. In formulating her thesis, Brown claimed that "Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* … can be understood as both a product of Puritan culture and one of its constituent texts ... its ostensible female readership is one of the strongest reasons for reading the first English dictionary as a Puritan text" (p. 135). This is a reading of Cawdrey which places his work in the tradition of the Reformation rather than the Renaissance. Cawdrey's work should be read alongside his evangelical tracts, catechism, and book of household government to get a whole picture of his intentions. Indications of both a religious motivation and a female readership can be seen most immediately in Cawdrey's (1604) introduction, in which he noted that it has been "gathered for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other unskillful persons. Whereby they may the more easilie and better understand many hard English words, which they shall heare or read in Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also be made able to use the same aptly themselves" (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 134). Cawdrey's imagined readers might have understood the subtext that his work was meant to be empowering to his readers in the sense that it would allow them to take religious responsibility and authority away from the church as an institution and place it squarely in the hands of the laity.

As further evidence for the Puritan motivations behind Cawdrey's work, Brown (2001) noted the following factors. First, Cawdrey listed Hebrew as an addition to the borrowed words which he would define in the introduction to the reader, which would draw those particularly interested in the *Old Testament*. Second, Cawdrey's writings on the purist side of the debate between language traditionalists and liberals associated linguistic liberalism with the Roman Catholic tradition. Third, Cawdrey's writings on women as exemplars of goodliness and wholesomeness draws on the Puritan tradition of proselytizing women. The notion was that if the woman of the house, charged with educating the young, should be the primary target because her conversion could trigger the conversion of the rest of the household. At the same time, plainspokenness was associated with these same women, who were meant to be on the receptive rather than productive end of language. Thus, creating a tool for these women in the form of a dictionary was a natural outgrowth of these religious motivations. Fourth, while it is beyond the scope of this essay to give full-scale samples from Cawdrey, Brown (2001) offers as evidence Cawdrey's further writings, which associated the tenets of Puritanism with his mission of writing a dictionary.

It is my contention that succeeding early lexicographers rejected this Puritan motivation and instead saw their readership as encompassing a more general audience. The words chosen as lemmata, also began to take on a more secular character. For example, Blount (1656) stated that he meant to include in his dictionary "Terms of Divinity, Law, Physick, Mathmaticks, Heraldry, Anatomy, War, Musick, Architecture; and several other Arts and Sciences . . . useful for all such as to desire to understand what they read" (as cited in De Witt and Noyes, 1991). This is a departure from the scriptures and sermons mentioned in Cawdrey, as the list includes several secular fields. Similarly, Coles (1676) included in his list of fields "Divinity, Husbandry, Physick,

Phylosophy, Law, Navigation, Mathematicks, and other Arts and Sciences" (as cited in De Witt and Noyes, 1991). Again, compared to Cawdrey, this list would appear to intersect with a classical liberal arts education. Bailey, whose work leaned toward the most general, included "Anatomy, Botony, Physick, Pharmacy, Surgery, Chrymistry, Philosophy, Divinity, Mathematicks, Grammar, Logick, Rehtorick, Musick, Heraldry, Maritime Affairs, Military Discipline, Horsemanship, Hunting, Hawking, Fowling, Fishing, Gardening, Husbandry, Handicrafts, Confectionary, Carving, Cookery, &c." (as cited in De Witt and Noyes, 1991).

The picture I wish to describe is one in which lexicographer's interests differed at a critical juncture in the genesis of monolingual English dictionaries. The term "hard words" underwent a change. Traditional analyses of the term may coincide with later lexicography, but the earliest gloss should have included those terms which would interfere with the production and reception of plain speech by the main targets of proselytizing, namely mothers in the household. There was a period, then, of negotiation about just what the purpose of dictionaries was and their cultural significance. As we know them now, they are used by a general audience. Landau's (1984) claim that the purpose of a dictionary is "to explain, in words likely to be understood by native speakers, what other words mean" may be the common sense view of dictionaries succeeding this critical juncture. During its inception in the early seventeenth century, however, English lexicography had not yet determined that this would be its objective. Perhaps monetary reasons or a disinterest in the goals of the Reformation guided later lexicographers to reject this motivation and to broaden their appeal to the secular. In any case, the dictionary which we now take for granted as descriptivist and a source of linguistic authority had origins which are not well known and which were positioned quite clearly within the Puritan tradition.

Modern lexicography has largely abandoned the purist or prescriptivist tendencies of early English monolingual lexicography mentioned earlier in this paper. Either the traditional analysis or the analysis preferred here casts its methods clearly into the prescriptivist camp. The traditional analysis holds that monolingual English dictionaries were part of the reaction to the rapidly expanding lexis of English during a period of uninhibited borrowing and word-coining on the part of authors. According to this analysis, the borrowings and newly coined words of the time were viewed with derision by early lexicographers, who were less interested in presenting how the lexis is actually used and more interested in indirectly chastising such authors and reining in the effects of their unbridled language innovations by adding order and standardization to the language. Further, the very evidence offered in favor of the claim that the audience of early monolingual English dictionaries became increasingly general and secularized also gives weight to the claim that they were prescriptivists. The categories of words deemed suitable for a dictionary and chosen to be included were established *a priori*. These categories, then, were inscribed in the early pages as a guide to what was to be contained therein. The process of evaluative selection for what should be included in a dictionary is evident in types of words included in each succeeding dictionary, as more numerous and varied secular disciplines were included. However, these words were not taken because of their apparent and descriptive presence in the lexis. Rather, they were included as a forethought to types of words dictionaries should encompass.

According to the analysis favored herein, Cawdrey's interests were primarily aligned with the Reformation and the practice of proselytizing women. In this case, early lexicography is also cast as purist and prescriptivist because plain, unadorned speech was preferred by Cawdrey, and he could be expected to believe that he could discern which words would lead to the proper attitudes, behaviors, and practices that would make for good Puritan women. Further differences between early and modern lexicography involved abandoning the whole-cloth borrowing from other sources, preferring instead largely to rely on usage as derived from examples found in actual writings, the apogee of which is the Oxford English Dictionary, which catalogs earliest usage from actual texts. However, some features from early lexicography have persisted. These include, albeit now more precise, etymological explanations. They also include the parallel between modern lexicography's general and secularized intended audience of the general purpose English dictionary and post-Cawdrey early lexicography's progressively more general and secularized intended audience.

Now that I have contrasted the norms followed by modern monolingual lexicographers with the lack thereof of their progenitors, I will now transition the discussion to the use or encouraged use of monolingual dictionaries, especially in EFL and ESL contexts. In particular, I want to focus on the pedagogical applications of dictionary use.

## Dictionaries and Their Relevance to TESOL

In this section, I will briefly discuss the following question: Why do ESL/EFL teachers and learners need to understand the nature and intricacies of the dictionaries that they use? The answer to this central question will help illuminate a further topic, namely the value of understanding the intended audiences and purposes of lexicographers for English language learners (ELL)s and ESL/EFL instructors. The discussion intersects with the discussion of seventeenth and eighteenth century dictionaries in that, as we will see, paying attention to intended audience, the intentions of the authors, and the divide between prescriptive and descriptive approaches will prove to be of paramount importance. We found in the historical analysis that it is crucial to persist in our questions of audience and intent. Applying the same principles to a contemporary problem can also yield valuable insights. Before moving onto this central question, a brief caveat is in order. It is not possible to answer these questions in descriptive terms, i.e., in terms related to how students and teachers in practice understand the nature of the dictionaries they use without pursuing an empirical research project. However, there are many resources available which have examined how dictionaries should be understood in the sense of grasping how dictionaries can be best used as tools for language learning. Thus, the question of why students and teachers need to understand the nature of the dictionaries that they use is best read as a question regarding normative claims of how ELLs and teachers should utilize dictionaries in order to most benefit from them.

Students need to understand the nature of the dictionaries that they use for two reasons. First, dictionaries can be valuable resources for ELLs, and understanding the purposes and merits of competing dictionaries can help ELLs maximize the benefits they gain from them. The apparent riches which ELLs can plumb are described by Mackwardt (1973), who reasoned that because dictionaries supply information about grammar, inflections, usage, derivative suffixes,

spelling, synonym discrimination, and attitudes toward the acceptability of words not typically found in textbooks, dictionaries are indispensable learning and teaching tools for ELLs and EFL or ESL instructors. After all, dictionaries are obliged to give, for example, the inflections of each verb that it contains, while textbooks typically only offer generalizations with some important examples of irregular conjugations. In fact, Mackwardt went as far as to claim that non-native speakers might begin to develop intuitions about the acceptability of derivative suffixes, e.g., *brutality* versus *brutalness* by repeatedly consulting monolingual English dictionaries.

The second reason that ELLs should understand the nature of the dictionaries they use is that doing so will provide useful information which is often overlooked by learners. Bejoint (1981) found that monolingual dictionaries, while useful for ELLs, are used in such a way that some of their most advantageous aspects are not engaged, namely their introductions and coding systems for syntactic patterns. Considering these difficulties, Nation (2001) advocated taking the time to teach learners strategies for dictionary use so that they may acquire the optimal learning benefits which might be accrued from their use. Along the same lines, Baxter (1980) claimed that repeated exposure to definitions in a monolingual English dictionary, especially learner dictionaries, will give ELLs the means to engage in vocabulary behavior which corresponds more closely to that of competent speakers, namely the circumlocution of words which are not readily accessible during paradigmatically brisk-paced conversation. Baxter attributes speech halted for the sake of searching vocabulary to the overuse of bilingual dictionaries.

Notice that the use of monolingual dictionaries is being advocated by these authors. This ties into the earlier discussion about the audience that lexicographers have in mind when they are gathering lemmata and composing definitions. Bilingual dictionaries often do not represent the full plentitude and depth of the senses of each lemma, often preferring instead to offer all too brief definitions which, at best, might be understood as scaffolding until learners are equipped to consult monolingual English dictionaries and, at worst, can encourage the type of halting speech that Baxter attributes to ELLs who rely too much on bilingual dictionaries. In general, then, there are two types of target lexicographic audiences which ELLs and ESL/EFL instructors should consider before selecting a dictionary. The bilingual dictionary clearly has in mind ELLs, and as we saw, ironically, the fluency of the very audience which these are intended for is often undermined by the overuse of bilingual dictionaries. Monolingual learner dictionaries, also have in mind ELLs as their target audience, while contemporary monolingual English language dictionaries are targeted toward a general audience of competent English language users. Taking these two audiences and the relative merits of each dictionary into consideration, Stein (1990) claimed that the limitations of bilingual dictionaries should lead EFL and ESL teachers to encourage a progression from bilingual dictionaries to monolingual learner dictionaries to monolingual dictionaries. Stein proposed a program of vocabulary acquisition according to the vocabulary needed to read most definitions in learner dictionaries.

After considering the merits of using monolingual English dictionaries and the arguments against using bilingual dictionaries, the general idea preferred here is to build a bridge from the bilingual dictionary to the monolingual dictionary, as advocated by Stein. The bilingual dictionary should be used only until the limited number of high-frequency words which make up the bulk of monolingual English learner dictionaries are learned. We can add to this that not all

learner's dictionaries are targeted towards ELLs of the same level. Rather, there are beginner, intermediate, and advanced learner dictionaries, each of which will fall somewhere along the two axes we are considering, namely ease of use for ELLs and descriptive comprehensiveness. Thus, ELLs and ESL/EFL instructors should take care in considering the audience of a dictionary when selecting one, progressively preferring those crafted for more advanced and eventually competent speakers as the interlanguage of ELLs develop.

It is further important to briefly note where these dictionaries stand in terms of descriptive versus prescriptive lexicographical approaches. As I argued earlier, modern dictionaries have largely deserted the earlier prescriptivist approach in favor of a descriptivist approach, which takes as its target the elucidation of how words are actually used in language encounters. While it is unclear the extent to which bilingual English dictionaries are generally meant to be prescriptive or descriptive, a fairly straightforward argument is available to establish a dilemma for them. We can argue by cases. Either bilingual dictionaries are descriptive or prescriptive. If they are prescriptive, then they fall prey to the first horn of the dilemma. In this case, the ways words are used in linguistic encounters are not represented in learner dictionaries, and thus the very merits mentioned earlier, such as developing intuitions in line with competent speakers and learning vocabulary behavior like that of competent speakers, are likely lost. If they are descriptive in intent, then they are likely not to have definitions which are descriptive enough to be comparable to the comprehensiveness of standard monolingual English dictionaries, and again they would miss their mark in terms of merits mentioned for monolingual English dictionaries. In either case, here is an additional argument in favor of rapidly progressing to learner and then general purpose monolingual English dictionaries. Further, learner dictionaries are also in danger of falling prey to the same dilemma just to the extent that they do not offer comprehensive descriptive content.

Finally, it is important to notice one further way that dictionaries can be used by ELLs. Krashen (1989) links extensive reading to vocabulary building. One might conjecture that if a dictionary aids in the process of reading and reading leads to broaden vocabulary, then dictionaries indirectly aid English language acquisition. Haynes (1995) promoted such an approach in following the claim that vocabulary is best learned in context. She claimed that in cases wherein surrounding text is not be comprehensible to learners, the unknown word appears repeatedly, or comprehension of a longer stretch of text is required learners are less likely to be able to guess the meaning of a word from context. In such cases, she contended, dictionaries should be used. Irrespective of whether we follow the strong claims of Mackwardt or the weaker claim of Haynes, we find support for the claim that dictionaries are an irreplaceable part of the learning repertoire of ELLs.

## Conclusion

I have examined the sources and lexicographical style of early English dictionaries and found that its massive borrowings were an exercise in anything but originality. I also contrasted the lexicographical styles of early dictionary writers. I found that the norms of lexicography were not yet established for English monolingual dictionaries in the seventeenth century. I further noted a pivotal moment in which early lexicographers negotiated the purpose of their works, the

direction historically flowing from the religious to the secular. In the historical analysis, I focused broadly on the purposes, intended audience, and prescriptive or descriptive stance of seventeenth and eighteenth century dictionaries. I then moved on to consider these same three issues as they relate to ELLs and ESL/EFL instructors, focusing on the central question of why ELLs and ESL/EFL teachers need to understand the nature and intricacies of the dictionaries that they use. The answer is that while the benefits of monolingual English dictionary use have been established, it has also been established that ELLs frequently do not make the most of the dictionaries that they consult. As we have seen by a comparison of bilingual, monolingual learners', and monolingual general purpose dictionaries, the concern of target audiences once again takes center stage, and we have seen that it is vital that learners understand them. Those written for the competent speaker are to be preferred, but until learners are proficient enough to use them, a progression has been suggested here from bilingual dictionaries to monolingual learners' dictionaries, to monolingual general use dictionaries. We see, then, that we can fruitfully apply the lessons drawn from a historical analysis to a present day problem, probing the questions of audience and intent in relation to materials used in the classroom in order to realize a fuller understanding of how to arrive at best teaching practices in the field of TESOL.

**Note**.

[1] I owe it to Dr. Edward Klein for pointing out that this was a difficult time in English history when England was separating from the Church of Rome. Puritanism was more extremely anti-Catholic than the "Church of England" left by Henry VIII. So Cawdrey's troubles seem to be that he was more "protestant" (or radical) than even the Church of England/Anglican and did not satisfy his superiors in the newly-established Anglican church. In other words, Cawdrey was more Protestant than the (Protestant) Church of England wanted him to be by not doing the things that the Anglican bishops wanted him to do.

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# The Making of the Oxford English Dictionary: A Never-Ending Story

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**Abstract**
This paper reviews the social contexts surrounding the making of the Oxford English Dictionary in order to gain insights about this influential document in the English language and to draw relevant lessons for English language teaching.

## Introduction

With its imposing twenty-volume second edition, compiled over the course of more than 150 years and still growing today, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is considered the definite authority on the English language (Figure 1). Innovative and modern, the OED changed the approach to cataloging the lexicon and broadened the concept of what would constitute appropriate materials for defining the words in a language. It did this by introducing new procedures for collecting data, in which opportunities were provided for the participation of a wider audience, but it was the contribution of dedicated intellectuals as well as ordinary people that fostered the creation of a dictionary that stands apart from any other for its breadth and depth. The making of the OED had a distinctive historical and socio-cultural context, and this paper aims to describe the history of the OED, from its slow beginning with multiple revisions of the plan and time consuming procedures to the present product we know today.

## Predecessors to the OED

In the 1800s, the concept of a dictionary was still a novelty; however, there were already several publications that fell under that genre. For example, the *Table Alphabeticall*, by Robert Cawdrey (1604), is considered to be one of the first word listings with associated meanings. The success of the *Table* was followed by numerous other attempts at compiling dictionaries, usually based on specific topics of interest (Winchester, 1998, p. 250). Gradually, as explained by Levinson (2011), these publications addressed additional aspects of the language. For example, *The New English Dictionary* (1702), edited by John Kersey, recorded ordinary words such as *about, and, any*. In 1721, *An Unusual Etymological Dictionary* by Nathan Bailey, which covered about 40,000 terms, started

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emphasizing the etymology and use of the words (p. 462). In 1757, Samuel Johnson compiled a dictionary attempting to cover the English language in its entirety; and, for about a century, it was the only 'real' dictionary available. However, it was criticized for being extremely subjective in its definitions and for limiting the entries to only about 40,000 words. The *New Dictionary of the English Language*, written by Charles Richardson (1836-37), included some history of the words and example sentences that showed changes in how words were used.

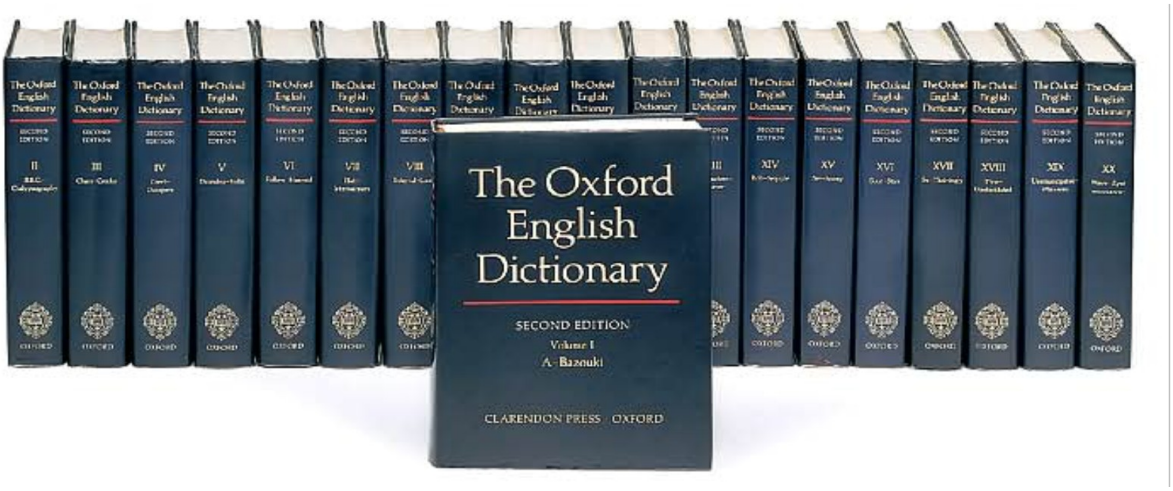


*Figure 1*. The OED, 2nd Edition
(retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasguest/4099819327)

Before the OED was created, the *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, published by Noah Webster in 1828, was the most exhaustive in terms of coverage of the language, with about 70,000 words. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the London Philosophical Society, it lacked substantial contextualized examples of use (Levinson, 2011, p. 462-463). The word listings that were available lacked consistency, included subjective interpretations, and were extremely limited in their scope (Levinson, 2011, p. 464). All these attempts barely addressed important aspects of the language, such as etymology, history of the word, or current use; nevertheless, despite their gaps, they did inspire the makers of the OED, and some of their characteristics were retained by the new dictionary.

## The Start of the OED

The creation of the OED started as a project initiated by the Philological Society of London in 1857. According to the Society's website,

> The Philological Society is the oldest learned society in Great Britain devoted to the scholarly study of language and languages…. established in its present form in 1842....the Philological Society has a particular interest in historical and comparative linguistics, and

> maintains its traditional interest in the structure, development, and varieties of Modern English.

Awareness of the flaws of the few publications that were available prompted the Society to propose a comprehensive revision and a deeper analysis of the language; however, despite the perceived urgency, it took about 20 years for the project to start progressing steadily and seventy more to be completed ("History of the OED" n.d., p. 1-2). Moreover, as soon as the final product was distributed in 1928, an update was deemed necessary, and thus the work started all over again. The creation of the OED as a new and exhaustive dictionary was not the original plan of the Philological Society. In the beginning, the Society had created a special committee, the "Unregistered Words Committee," with the goal of revising and improving the content of the dictionaries that were already in circulation (Gilliver, 2012, p. 1). In 1857, a member of the Society, a high ranking cleric named *Trench*, published a very effective paper, "*On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries,*" which later became the "statement of objectives" for the OED (McKusick, 1992 p. 15). Trench planned on getting the members of the Philological Society involved. Through their help as readers, he thought it would be possible to review and broaden the content of the dictionaries that were already available (Levinson, 2011, p. 464). Soon after Trench gave his speech, the Committee started planning how to execute the project. However, within six months, it was apparent that the amount of work was going to be on a greater scale than anticipated. Thus, in 1858, the Committee decided to create a completely new dictionary (Gilliver, 2012, p.1). The OED is the result of Trench's "vision of a new English dictionary that would systematically capture the history and the character of a people" (Willinsky, 1994, p. 14).

The new plan described a publication of four volumes, listing every word and its use from the 12th century. Because of its size, the estimated 6,400-page dictionary would take 10 years to make. For the time, it was a project of quite significant dimensions; yet, after 45 years of work, the final product consisted of 10 volumes (more than double what had been originally planned) and included 400,000 words and phrases. This outstanding project, which has become famous worldwide as the OED, was originally called *A New Dictionary on Historical Principles* ("History of the OED" n.d., p. 1-2).

According to McKusick (1992), the historical and socio-cultural context provided the perfect conditions for this ambitious goal to be reached. In addition to increased communication and mobility, there was also a growing interest in knowledge and ideas. Thanks to improved communication, academics could compare and share thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, following the publication of the new theories about a common Indo-European family tree, there was a great interest in the study of languages. British philologists were influenced by research conducted by German and Danish academics such as Franz Bopp, Jacob Grimm, and Rasmus Rask. Similarly, better printing techniques made it possible to produce printed material that was more precise, accurate, and no longer limited to the Latin alphabet (p. 2-3).

## James Murray and The Undertaking of the OED

A feature that makes the history of the OED extremely engaging and different from any other has to do with the personal backgrounds of its editors and contributors. In addition to being extremely learned and knowledgeable, they showed an unparalleled dedication and, sometimes,

had unexpected life circumstances. The start of this grand plan was marked by unexpected difficulties as Herbert Coleridge, the first editor, died less than two years later; moreover, the new editor that replaced him, Frederick Furnivall, was not fully dedicated to the project because of his involvement in several other dealings.

As a result, it was only with the schoolmaster James Murray (Figure 2) in 1879 that the process of reading, reviewing, and collecting quotations truly got underway (Levinson, 2011, p. 464). In 1879, James Murray became the editor, and the Oxford University Press formally became the publisher; thus, even if the plan for a new dictionary had been devised about 20 years earlier, it is only at this point in time that the project truly took form (Gilliver, 2012, p. 2). The choice of Murray was a perfect match and the true beginning of a great adventure. The compilation of this book was possible thanks to the participation of many; however, James Murray is the editor associated with the making of the OED.

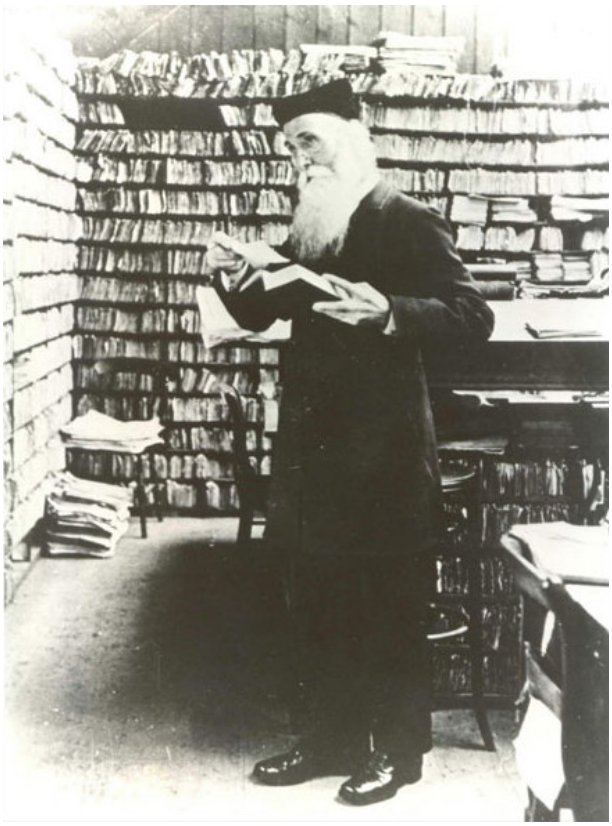

*Figure 2*. James Murray
(retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James-Murray.jpg)

Winchester describes Murray as a "polymath in the making" since a very young age. Originally from Scotland, Murray came from a low social status background; however, he was a very dedicated scholar and a man of outstanding knowledge. Despite having left school at the

age of 14, he was able to master multiple subjects and to become fluent in several languages, both modern and ancient (Winchester, 2003, p. 256). He devoted his life to the dictionary and was deeply involved in every aspect of its creation. Developing the OED required establishing the parameters that the structure would follow; for example, the editor decided that the year 1150 AD would be the limit for the history of the words. Additionally, he chose what to include and what to exclude. Some words with risqué connotation, for example, were left out because of the influence of the strict Victorian mores. Murray had to make decisions about spelling, pronunciation, and about how to phonetically transcribe each sound. Furthermore, he had to choose how to classify compound words. All these decisions established the characteristics of the OED that are still in place today, including the choice of font and layout (Levinson, 2011, p. 465). Even though he died 13 years before the actual publication of the OED, the Philological Society always acknowledged how significant Murray's influence had been. His contribution is considered to be the most relevant in enabling this exceptional goal to be reached ("History of the OED" n.d., p. 2).

Murray was extremely dedicated to his work, and because of his micromanagement of all the quotations from the volunteer readers, he developed a personal correspondence with the more assiduous ones. Among those, a character of great interest is that of William Minor, who, because of his peculiar circumstances, has become the main subject of much research and even the protagonist of books. He was very different from Murray, and yet the solid collaboration between these two individuals continued for over twenty years. Son of an American missionary originally from New England and stationed in Asia, William Minor belonged to a well-to-do family. He was born in Ceylon (now Sri-Lanka). He later attended medical school at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut and became a surgeon (Winchester, 1998, p. 43-50). Winchester further explained how the trauma of working on the frontline during the American Civil War made Minor very unstable mentally. He was committed to an institution for a long time; however, his influential family was able to have him discharged, and then he was sent to live in London, where, prompted by his obsessive paranoias, he killed a man. After the trial for the murder, he was found insane and ordered to an asylum. He dedicated his life to reading for the OED as a form of atonement. It is incredible that Murray never knew the extraordinary circumstances that surrounded this relentless reader, who, between 1878 and 1902 "contributed a quarter of the words in the dictionary" (Winchester, 2003, p. 257-261). Minor is believed to be the most prolific contributor, having provided thousands of words (up to 12,000 a year) that were actually included in the dictionary. In fact, he was mentioned in the Preface of the first volume (Murray, 1977, p. 305).

From the very beginning, the members of the Society became aware that they had significantly underestimated the amount of time that such a grand project would require. The original intent was to write about 700 words a day; however, they soon realized that it was not possible to sustain that pace (Murray, 1977, p. 260). The publishers repeatedly tried to pressure Murray into increasing the number of entries completed weekly to a specific number; however, because of the high standards that he wanted to maintain, Murray never agreed to quantify the number of words (Murray, 1977, p. 239). Levi described how the first published fascicle (a section of the dictionary), that appeared after five years of intense work and great collaboration from the

public, was only *A-Ant*. At this point, it was indisputable that the financial and temporal investment needed to be re-evaluated (Levinson, 2011, p. 465). In fact, it would be only after another forty years that the OED was finally published in its completed form ("History of the OED," n.d., p. 1) (Figure 3). Nevertheless, four decades had not been enough to fully satisfy the aspirations of the Society; as Mugglestone (2005) pointed out, at the very beginning, the OED had been introduced as exhaustive; however, the preface to the dictionary changed its opening statement from "every English word whatsoever" to "an adequate account...of English words", which indicates how the Society acknowledged that some line needed to be drawn about completeness (Mugglestone, 2005, p. 71).

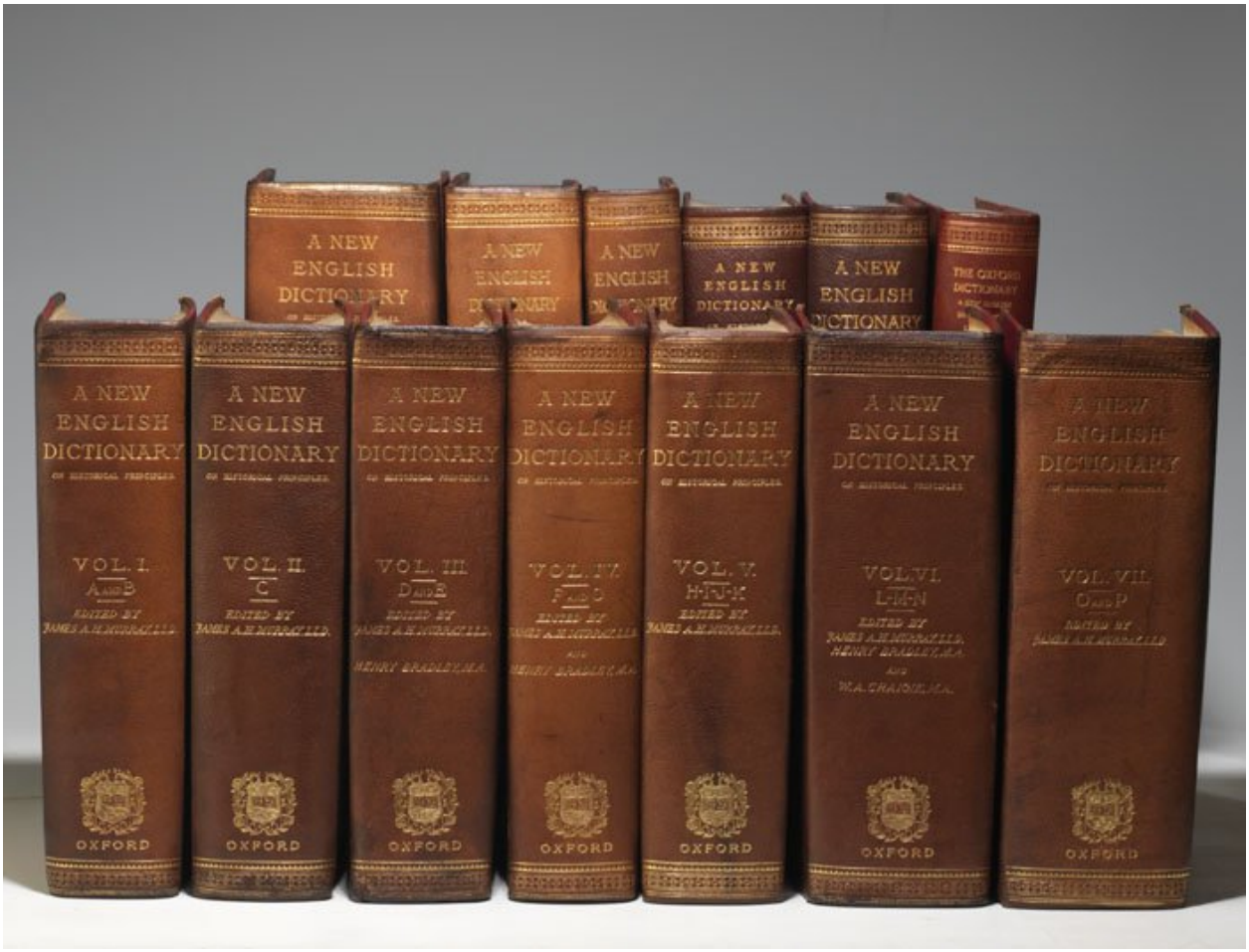


*Figure 3*. OED 1st Edition
(Retrieved from https://www.baumanrarebooks.com/rare-books/murray-james-cragie-william/oxford-english-dictionary/106143.aspx)

**Innovative Features of the OED**

One of the essential factors that contributed to making the OED so different from any other dictionary published before and that eventually generated a significantly broader publication, is how it approached the English language. Most of the dictionaries that were being compiled and published in Europe aimed at setting the rules for the language; for example, the *Académie française* in France and the *Accademia della Crusca* in Italy wanted to regulate how the language should be used. Instead, the innovative perspective for the OED proposed by Trench was to record how the language was used. He believed, "A dictionary is a historical monument, the history of a nation contemplated from one point of view, and the wrong ways into which a language has wandered... may be nearly as instructive as the right ones ..." (Cited in Levinson, 2011, p. 464). Winchesters (2003) argued that Trench's most significant contribution was to perceive English as a fluid language, whose words continuously changed. Furthermore, using quotations to describe the current and past use of a word was just a part (albeit a very significant part) of the entry; the ambitious goal that he proposed was to provide for each word: meaning, different spellings, language derivations, and etymologies (p. 253).

Thus, the new dictionary would be based on the use of the language and on how words had changed over time. As stated by Trench, the new dictionary would present the language as it was, without putting forward recommendations that could interfere with its natural evolution (Willinsky, 1994, p. 17). However, this goal could only be achieved through the commitment of chief editor Murray; he had to fight a lot of battles in order to materialize this vision because there was a strong push for using the dictionary to set the perfect standard for the English language. Since there was awareness that the English language had developed changes and modifications, many academics perceived the OED as an opportunity to revise such misuses of the language (Mugglestone, 2005, p. 143).

Another characteristic that sets apart the OED is the use of quotations to give examples of the use of the words. Using quotations from published material provided authentic examples of how the language was used and enabled a deeper understanding of the nuances in meaning (Winchester, 1998, p. 26). Furthermore, as explained by McKusick (1992), the comparison of quotations from different centuries gave a detailed insight on how the use of the word had changed. This innovative method grows from a new and more scientific approach to the language, as a word was perceived as something that goes through a continuous development and transformation (p. 2).

The goal of creating "…a biography of every word to show how its meanings had changed over the centuries since it had first existed in English…" (Winchester, 2003, p. 253) brings up another unique trait of the OED: the involvement of the general public as volunteer readers. Providing quotations that spanned several centuries of literature was a time-consuming process, and it required an extensive amount of reading. The Society soon realized that it was not a task that could be accomplished by a team of editors alone; consequently, the decision was made to ask the aid of the general public. The Society published an official request addressed to the 'English-Speaking and English-Reading Public', not just of England, but from all over the world. Over time, there were going to be literally thousands of volunteers that responded to these appeals to the public (Gilliver, 2012, p. 2). This idea was extremely innovative, even if it was probably inspired by the successful creation of the *Deutches Wortebuch* compiled by the Grimm

brothers (1852), who had used volunteers to do the extensive reading necessary. The editor asked readers to write on note cards where they had found the word, the year of publication, then to copy down the full quotation, and to mail it to Oxford. It was an extremely successful proposal. Thousands of volunteer readers responded, some of whom became regular contributors for several decades, each providing a remarkable number of quotations (Winchester, 2003, p. 257). As mentioned earlier, the socio-historical context plays a role in generating such a significant response. McKusick (1992) pointed out how, following the industrial revolution and easier access to higher educational institutions, there was a significant growth of a well-to-do and educated social class. Their education and financial security supported the great investment of time and dedication that compiling the new dictionary entailed (p. 4).

As explained by Gilliver (2012), however, there were some problems associated with delegating research to the general public. Volunteers would decide which meanings and quotations they wanted to record, and, as a result, some of the words lacked context, as they were not substantiated by an adequate number of quotations. Since Murray always aimed at obtaining the most accurate information about the actual use of a word, in addition to the ongoing appeals for contributors, the editors published lists of specific "wanted" words for which more information was needed. This list of words was called *desiderata*. Once again, the response of the public was enthusiastic and quotations kept coming in from all over the English speaking world (p. 2).

The system for gathering information that was organized for the compiling of the OED was extremely helpful in reducing the amount of time that the team of editors needed for skimming all the existing literature and publications. However, there was still a long and complex process before a notecard would be accepted and used for an entry. Winchester (1998) gave a very vivid description of the whole process. Murray worked out of a study, built just for this purpose, which was known as the *scriptorium*. The room contained 1029 pigeon holes to file the notecards that were coming in daily. Every day, there would be about a thousand note cards, and each one had to be read and edited through four steps: the first step was to check if the information on the card was complete, the second was to divide notecards by alphabetical order, the third was to group the cards by part of speech, and the fourth was to check if the chronological order was correct. This then triggered the more academic work in which a subeditor would attempt to draft "the definition." Furthermore, there were a lot of pre-requisites for writing the definition of a word; most noticeably, using words that were less difficult than the object of the definition and being able to accurately list the meaning (or the multiple meanings) by only using words that could be found in the dictionary. It was at this point, when all the previous steps had been completed, that Murray reviewed the results, made corrections, added etymology and pronunciation, and chose the quotations (150-152).

This elaborate procedure conveys the amount of dedication and time investment that the OED required. As Murray (1977) explained, further delays were caused by the inability to anticipate how long it would take to complete all the entries for a single letter. Eventually, Murray decided to divide the letters among the subeditors in order to increase the pace of work. This idea enabled a more efficient use of time. As a consequence, the letters were no longer published in alphabetical order (p. 281). Mugglestone provided interesting data about how specific letters

required more time than predicted. For example, "P" was extremely hard. The word *pass* alone took up 150 hours. The section for "P" ended up containing 23,000 main words (Mugglestone, 2005, p. 187).

In addition to the approach to the language and to the innovative methodology for collecting quotes, one of the characteristics of the OED that really makes it stand out is that it is deemed to be a "democratic" dictionary. Many scholars have used this term to define the OED. At first it might seem incongruous to think of such a monumental, elaborate, and highly scholarly dictionary as something democratic; however, a close analysis of the several innovations that the dictionary brought about reveals that it did have democratic attributes. For example, instead of prescribing the rules of the language, the dictionary reflected the use of the language; consequently, it incorporated quotations from any kind of written publications, not academic works alone. At a time when working class magazines and newspapers were starting to appear, the significance of such inclusions was that the dictionary also incorporated the language of the people (Willinsky, 1994, p. 18). In fact, a topic that created friction and disagreement was how to define what constituted appropriate reading material. The increase of "common" publications and the option of using scientific texts, in addition to the more traditional literature, were always a source of tension between Murray (who had more of a liberal attitude) and the Society, which was quite conservative (Mugglestone, 2005, p. 125). Last but not least, the innovative idea of enrolling the help of volunteer readers broadened the opportunity for participation. So now, instead of just a small intellectual elite, the general public could have a part in the making of a great artifact, which also enabled a significant female participation (McKusick, 1992, p. 4).

## The Publication of the OED

The OED was published as individual sections (fascicles) between 1884 and 1928; the completed work consisted of 125 fascicles (McKusick, 1992, p. 1). With 15,487 pages, about 1.8 million citations (selected from a pool of about 6,000,000 that were available), 240,000 headwords, and 400,000 entries (Levinson, 2011, p. 465), the dictionary had gargantuan proportions that could rival that of an encyclopedia. Despite its enormous size, the OED had not been able to fully keep track of all the additional changes. Since language continues to evolve, after just five years the editors added a single volume revision. Thus, 1933 saw a new edition of the dictionary under the name of OED. The publication consisted of a total of 12 volumes (now 3 times as many as the original plan) ("History of the OED" n.d., p. 2). Compiling the entry for the supplement followed the same pattern that had proved so successful in the past. By 1986, another three supplement volumes appeared. Finally, in 1989, the second edition was published (Gilliver, 2012, p. 3). The story of the OED is never-ending: "The Oxford English Dictionary is a living document that has been growing and changing for 140 years" (History of the OED, n.d., p. 4).

The growing interest in explaining the language and the "shortcomings" of the existing dictionaries are the reasons why the Philological Society of London decided to start this endeavor. Thanks to the forward looking ideas of first editor, Coleridge, and to the dedicated editorship of James Murray, the dictionary achieved the distinctive characteristics that make it stand considerably above any of the publications of this kind. With the financial support of the Oxford University Press and the participation of thousands of volunteer readers, the OED was

able to grow into a monumental literary work that stayed true to the original statement of purpose. The interest in the use of the language, the inclusion of the general public, the use of quotations, and the detailed analysis of changes of meaning over time are all noteworthy elements. These are all innovative approaches that make the OED stand ahead of other publications and ahead of its time.

## Conclusion

The relevance of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as a resource for lexicology is widely acknowledged; however, this is not the only contribution that the OED brings to the field of applied linguistics or to teaching ESL. Reading about the history of the making of the OED offers various opportunities for teaching and learning. For example, it provides a deeper understanding of the connection between language and culture; it advocates a descriptive approach to language; it represents an example of admirable work ethics and efficiency.

The ESL class is not just about teaching the language for the purpose of communication; it is also about fostering interest and understanding of the associated culture. The history of how the OED was created shows that the evolution of the English language takes place along with an overall change in the socio-cultural context surrounding its speakers. These two equally important elements are intrinsically part of this monumental work. To a large extent, changes in the English language and changes that have occurred in the English speaking world are the reason for the making of the OED. Additionally, with its wealth of unconventional characters, unexpected events and curiosities, the history of the making of the OED is also a captivating tale that might reshape the perception of the OED from an intimidating academic work to a more current and accessible tool for learning.

Furthermore, the dictionary is the evidence (and the results) of the emergence of modern ideas about the language and its use; in fact, it reflects the change from a traditional prescriptive approach to an innovative descriptive approach to language use. Somewhat echoing the prevailing pattern among other linguistic academies in Europe, the original plan of the London Philological Society had been to create a reference book based on a prescriptive analysis of the English language. The work started with the goal of restricting the language to the use that was deemed appropriate by academics. Its aim was to establish rules and parameters that would define what was "correct" and what was not. However, despite being originally planned as prescriptive, the OED evolved into being descriptive by developing into a listing of how the language was actually used by the wider population. Because of this new approach to the English language, the dictionary is a testimony to a descriptive approach to language changes within society.

Well known as undisputed testimony to the origins and to the perpetual development of the English language, the history of the OED is also an example of an admirable work ethic. With its depth, relevance, and accuracy, the OED is proof of the value of perseverance and dedication; it emphasizes the importance of group work and organization. The OED carries a strong message of encouragement and motivation; the analysis of its history shows how a result can be successfully achieved despite difficulties and setbacks.

In addition to gaining knowledge about "theoretical" lexicology, the analysis of the planning and execution of the OED provides the ESL context with multiple points of reflection that are pertinent and beneficial to teaching and learning alike. Thus, the incredible history of the making of the OED can become an effective topic of discussion and an inspiration for both teachers and learners.

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