

Prime Properties of Natural Language in Assorted Segments of English

Ruhee Bano

Research Scholar

Sri Venkateshwara University

U.P., India

Dr. Sanjana Kumari

Assistant Professor

Sri Venkateshwara University

U.P., India

Abstract

The linguistic purism of English is discussed by David Crystal in the Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. The idea dates at least to the inkhorn term controversy of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the 19th century, writers such as Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and William Barnes advocated linguistic purism and tried to introduce words like birdlore for ornithology and bendsome for flexible. A notable supporter in the 20th century was George Orwell, who had a preference for plain Saxon words over complex Latin or Greek ones, and the idea continues to have advocates today.

Keywords: Assorted Dimensions of English Language, English Language, Formal Languages

Anglo-Saxon/Germanic words are usually shorter (fewer syllables) than their French/Latinate equivalents, and as such are perceived, usually subconsciously, as more powerful than the longer words of French/Latinate origin. When Winston Churchill said that all he could offer the English people, at the outset of World War II, was "blood, sweat, and tears", the Germanic words give strength to Churchill's vision of what was to come. The names of the animals cow, pig, sheep, and deer are of Germanic origin, but the meats derived from these animals use words of French/Latinate origin, beef, pork, mutton, and venison, revealing how, in Norman England when conquerors introduced many French words to English, it was the Anglo-Saxon peasants who were caring for the animals and the French conquerors/aristocrats who were consuming them.

In legal documents, a Latinate word and its Germanic equivalent may be used together, to ensure all understand. "Last will and testament" combines a Germanic word, "will", and a Latinate word, "testament". "Law" is Germanic, but "statute" is not. Longer Latinate words such as "bureaucratic", "equivalent", "consequence", "obfuscate", "obstruction", and the like are perceived as weak, compared with short Germanic words like "clear", "strong", "right", and "true" (and also "weak" and "wrong").

At the same time, it should be kept in mind that "king", "queen", "knight", and "sword" are Germanic, as are "land", "sow", "plow", "hoe", "meat", and other words of a peasant economy. The words of our democratic institutions—"constitution", "declaration", "independence", "legislature", "congress", "representative", "government", "electoral college", "vote", "senator", even "revolution" and "democracy" themselves—are more recent, and of French/Latinate origin. In contrast with older words of Latin origin, such as "honor", "peace", and "noble", these are words created in the last few centuries by educated thinkers, whose native language was often French, and who commonly knew Latin and sometimes Greek as well (but not English).

Old English adopted a small number of Greco-Roman loan words from an early period, especially in the context of Christianity (bishop, priest). From the 9th century (Danelaw) it borrowed a much larger number of Old Norse words, many for every-day terms (skull, egg, skirt).

After the Norman conquest of 1066–71, the top level of English society was replaced by people who spoke Old Norman (a dialect of Old French). It evolved into Anglo-Norman and became the language of the state. Hence, those who wished to be involved in fields such as law and governance were required to learn it (see "Law French" for example).

It was in this Middle English period that the English language borrowed a slew of Romance loan words (via Anglo-Norman) – see "Latin influence in English". However, there were a few writers who tried to withstand the overbearing influence of Anglo-Norman. Their goal was to provide literature to the English-speaking masses in their vernacular or mother tongue. This meant not only writing in English, but also taking care not to use any words of Romance origin, which would likely not be understood by the readers. Examples of this kind of literature are the *Ormulum*, Layamon's *Brut*, *Ayenbite of Inwyte*, and the Katherine Group of manuscripts in the "AB language".

In the 16th and 17th centuries, controversy over needless foreign borrowings from Latin and Greek (known as "inkhorn terms") was rife. Critics argued that English already had words with identical meanings. However, many of the new words gained an equal footing with the native Germanic words, and often replaced them.

Writers such as Thomas Elyot flooded their writings with foreign borrowings, while writers such as John Cheke sought to keep their writings "pure". Cheke wrote:

I am of this view that our own tung should be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tungen; wherein if we take not heed by tiim, ever borowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt.

In reaction, some writers tried either to resurrect older English words, such as gleeman for musician, sickler (itself a Proto-Germanic borrowing from Latin *sēcūrus*) for certainly, inwit for conscience, and yblent for confused, or to make new words from Germanic roots, e.g. endsay for conclusion, yeartide for anniversary, foresayer for prophet. However, few of these words remain in common use.

Edmund Fairfax's satiric literary novel *Outlaws* (2017) is written in a "constructed" form of English consisting almost exclusively of words of Germanic origin, with many neologisms (e.g., kenkeen for 'curious', to enhold for 'to contain') and little-used or obsolete words transparent in meaning to the modern reader (e.g., to misfare for 'to fail', to overlive for 'to survive'), and employing alternative orthographic conventions in compounds and phrasal constructions.

In the metric system, prefixes that indicate multipliers are typically Greek in origin, such as kilogram, while those that indicate divisors are Latin, as in millimeter: the base roots resemble Greek words, but in truth are neologisms. These metric and other suffixes are added to native English roots as well, resulting in creations such as gigabyte. Words of mixed Latin and Greek lineage, or words that combine elements of the classical languages with English – so-called hybrid words – were formerly castigated as "barbarisms" by prescriptionist usage

commentators; this disapproval has mostly abated. Indeed, in scientific nomenclature, even more exotic hybrids have appeared, such as for example the dinosaur Yangchuanosaurus. Personal names appear in some scientific names such as Fuchsia.

Classical compounds are sometimes used to lend grandeur or the impression of scientific rigour to humble pursuits: the study of cosmetology will not help anyone become an astronaut. Compounds along these models are also sometimes coined for humorous effect, such as odontopodology, the science of putting your foot into your mouth. These humorous coinages sometimes take on a life of their own, such as garbology, the study of garbage.

Some classical compounds form classical plurals, and are therefore irregular in English. Others do not, while some vacillate between classical and regular plurals.

There are hundreds of classical compounds in English and other European languages. As traditionally defined, they cannot stand alone as free words, but there are many exceptions to this rule, and in the late 20th century such forms are increasingly used independently: bio as a clipping of biography, telly as a respelt clipping of television. Most classical compounds translate readily into everyday language, especially nouns: bio- as 'life' -graphy as 'writing, description'. Because of this, the compounds of which they are part (usually classical or learned compounds) can be more or less straightforwardly paraphrased: biography as 'writing about a life', neurology as 'the study of the nervous system'. Many classical compounds are designed to take initial or final position: autobiography has the two initial or preposed forms auto-, bio-, and one postposed form -graphy. Although most occupy one position or the other, some can occupy both: -graph- as in graphology and monograph; -phil- as in philology and Anglophile. Occasionally, the same base is repeated in one word: logology the study of words, phobophobia the fear of fear.

Linguistic semantics looks not only at grammar and meaning but at language use and language acquisition as a whole. "The study of meaning can be undertaken in various ways. Linguistic semantics is an attempt to explicate the knowledge of any speaker of a language which allows that speaker to communicate facts, feelings, intentions and products of the imagination to other speakers and to understand what they communicate to him or her.

"Early in life every human acquires the essentials of a language—a vocabulary and the pronunciation, use and meaning of each item in it. The speaker's knowledge is largely implicit. The linguist attempts to construct a grammar, an explicit description of the language, the categories of the language and the rules by which they interact. Semantics is one part of grammar; phonology, syntax and morphology are other parts," (Charles W. Kreidler, *Introducing English Semantics*. Routledge, 1998).

As David Crystal explains in the following excerpt, there is a difference between semantics as linguistics describe it and semantics as the general public describes it. "The technical term for the study of meaning in language is semantics. But as soon as this term is used, a word of warning is in order. Any scientific approach to semantics has to be clearly distinguished from a pejorative sense of the term that has developed in popular use, when people talk about the way that language can be manipulated in order to mislead the public.

References

- [1] Mufwene, S. S. (2006). "Language Spread". In Brown, Keith (ed.). *Encyclopedia of language & linguistics*. Elsevier. pp. 613–616. doi:10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/01291-8. ISBN 978-0-08-044299-0. Retrieved 6 February 2015. Lay summary (6 February 2015). – via ScienceDirect (Subscription may be required or content may be available in libraries.)

- [2] Nation, I. S. P. (15 March 2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press. p. 477. ISBN 978-0-521-80498-1. Retrieved 4 February 2015. Lay summary (PDF) (4 February 2015).
- [3] National Records of Scotland (26 September 2013). "Census 2011: Release 2A". *Scotland's Census 2011*. Retrieved 25 March 2015.
- [4] Neijt, A. (2006). "Spelling Reform". In Brown, Keith (ed.). *Encyclopedia of language & linguistics*. Elsevier. pp. 68–71. doi:10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/04574-0. ISBN 978-0-08-044299-0. Retrieved 6 February 2015. Lay summary (6 February 2015). – via ScienceDirect (Subscription may be required or content may be available in libraries.)
- [5] Nevalainen, Terttu; Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, Ingrid (2006). "Chapter 5: Standardization". In Denison, David; Hogg, Richard M. (eds.). *A History of the English language*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-71799-1.
- [6] Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (11 December 2012). "Census 2011: Key Statistics for Northern Ireland December 2012" (PDF). *Statistics Bulletin*. Table KS207NI: Main Language. Archived from the original (PDF) on 24 December 2012. Retrieved 16 December 2014.
- [7] Northrup, David (20 March 2013). *How English Became the Global Language*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-137-30306-6. Retrieved 25 March 2015. Lay summary (25 March 2015).
- [8] O'Dwyer, Bernard (2006). *Modern English Structures, second edition: Form, Function, and Position*. Broadview Press.
- [9] Office for National Statistics (4 March 2013). "Language in England and Wales, 2011". *2011 Census Analysis*. Retrieved 16 December 2014.
- [10] "Oxford Learner's Dictionaries". Oxford. Retrieved 25 February 2015.
- [11] Patrick, P. L. (2006a). "Jamaica: Language Situation". In Brown, Keith (ed.). *Encyclopedia of language & linguistics*. Elsevier. pp. 88–90. doi:10.1016/B0-08-044854-

2/01760-0. ISBN 978-0-08-044299-0. Retrieved 6 February 2015. Lay summary (6 February 2015). – via ScienceDirect (Subscription may be required or content may be available in libraries.)

[12] Patrick, P. L. (2006b). "English, African-American Vernacular". In Brown, Keith (ed.). *Encyclopedia of language & linguistics*. Elsevier. pp. 159–163. doi:10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/05092-6. ISBN 978-0-08-044299-0. Retrieved 6 February 2015. Lay summary (6 February 2015). – via ScienceDirect (Subscription may be required or content may be available in libraries.)

[13] Payne, John; Huddleston, Rodney (2002). "5. Nouns and noun phrases". In Huddleston, R.; Pullum, G. K. (eds.). *The Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 323–522.

[14] Phillipson, Robert (28 April 2004). *English-Only Europe?: Challenging Language Policy*. Routledge. ISBN 978-1-134-44349-9. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

[15] Richter, Ingo (1 January 2012). "Introduction". In Richter, Dagmar; Richter, Ingo; Toivanen, Reeta; et al. (eds.). *Language Rights Revisited: The challenge of global migration and communication*. BWV Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8305-2809-8. Retrieved 2 April 2015.