

A Brief History of the English Language and the landmass we now call England

Part 4: Modern English

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This is week 4 of 4

1. The landmass we now call England, before the English Language
2. Old English: 450 to 1150 AD. A foreign Germanic language.
3. Middle English: 1150 to 1500 AD. Looks sort of like English.
4.  Modern English: 1500 to 2025 AD. The Complications of Modern English

Dates: Old, Middle and Modern English

- **Pre-Historic English: 410 – 700 CE**
 - No written records survive
 - The Germanic languages were developing into old English
- **Old English: 700 – 1150 CE (Beowulf): German Dialect**
- **Middle English: 1150 – 1500 CE (Canterbury Tales)**
 - English was the 3rd language of England after French and Latin
 - Includes the Black Death: 1348 - 1366
- **Early Modern English: 1500 – 1700 (Shakespeare)**
 - Printing Press: English Bibles, Book of Common Prayer
 - London English becomes the language standard
- **Modern English: 1700 – 2025 CE (World English)**

My goal for today!

- I want to explain Modern English to myself and you.
- We've been **educated and indoctrinated** into thinking that the English language makes sense. We've memorized and internalized the craziness of the English language.
- I'm a terrible speller. "Spellcheck" helps me look literate.
- Will also try to tie up some historical loose ends.

Review and Assumptions

1. We are all **literate** in Modern English
 - a. Some are native born, some are immigrants
 - b. We can speak and be understood; listen & understand Oral English
 - c. We can read and write Modern Written English
2. Old English used **Inflections (Word Endings)** to convey the meaning of a sentence.
 - a. Most of those Old English inflections have disappeared, replaced by Helping Verbs (Auxiliary Verbs) and prepositions.
3. Modern English uses **Word Order** in Sentences to convey meaning
 - a. SVO: Subject Verb Object.
 - b. Even Shakespeare is difficult for us to read, but anything after 1700 is easier.
4. We are so used to the craziness of Modern English that we barely are conscious of it. We've **memorized** most of the difficulties.

Spoken vs Written English

- **Recording and Playback of speech (Edison 1888)**
- **Spoken English** (Listening and Speaking): wide variety of speech in different parts of England. Everyday English.
 - You can **attend** a Shakespeare play or **hear** the Bible read in Church even if you are **illiterate**.
 - Modern Dialects: Boston, Brooklyn, Alabama, Caribbean Islands
 - Spoken language changes rapidly
- **Written English** (Reading and Writing): Tends to be standardized
 - Printing Press: English Bibles
 - Education
 - London English, not local dialects → BBC English. Fancy English.

The Entire Course on One Page

Date	Dominant Group	Language of Rulers	Language of the Pople
1000 BCE - 53 CE	Celts	Celtic	Celtic
53 - 410 CE	Romans	Latin	Celtic
410 - 700	Anglo Saxons	Germanic	Germanic
700 - 1066	Anglo Saxons	Old English	Old English
1016 - 1042	Vikings	Old Norse	Old Norse ==> Old English
1066 - 1300	Normans	Old French	Old English
1300 - 1500	The English	Middle English	Middle English
1500 - 2025	The English	Modern English	Modern English

Why English Spelling is so Difficult!

26 Letters in Our Latin / Roman Alphabet

- Welcome to 4th Grade -

- 19 Consonants: **B C D F G H J K L M N P Q R S T V X Z**
- 5 Vowels: **A E I O U**
- 1 letter **“Y”** does double-duty as a vowel or a consonant.
 - ✓ “Y” as a consonant in words like **“yes” “yard” “yellow”**
 - ✓ “Y” as a vowel in words with no other vowel: **“gym” “my”**
 - ✓ “Y” as a vowel if it is at the end of a word or syllable: **“candy” “deny” bicycle”**
- 1 letter **“W” occasionally** does double-duty as a vowel or a consonant.
 - ✓ “W” as a vowel when it teams up with <a>, <e>, or <o> to spell a single sound—as in the words like **“draw” “few” “low”**
 - ✓ “W” is usually a consonant

Cause of the Confusion

- When you hear an English word **spoken**, you can't be sure how to **spell** it. When you hear a word that sounds like "**nite**"
 - It was a dark **night**
 - The **knight** in armor charged the enemy
- When you **read** an English printed word (**minute**), you can't be sure how to **pronounce** it.
 - I'll be there in a **minute**.
 - There was a **minute** layer of snow.

Context provides hints, **if you understand the context.**

Written Language: Spelling Difficulties

- orthography or spelling -

Here is the mathematics:

- 26 Letters in our Written Alphabet
- 44 **Sounds (Phonemes)** in Modern English. Each of the 44 sounds has a different symbol in the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**
- 229 Spellings for those 44_Sounds using our Alphabet of 26 Letters

Six pages of examples to follow → →

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Consonants Page 1

	IPA Symbol	Graphemes: spelling	Count	Examples
1	b	b, bb	2	bug, bubble
2	d	d, dd, ed	3	dad, add, milled
3	f	f, ff, ph, gh, lf, ft	6	fat, cliff, phone, enough, half, often
4	g	g, gg, gh, gu, gue	5	gun, egg, ghost, guest, prologue
5	h	h, wh	2	hop, who
6	dʒ	j, ge, g, dge, di, gg	6	jam, wage, giraffe, edge, soldier, exaggerate
7	k	k, c, ch, cc, lk, qu, q(u), ck, x	9	kit, cat, chris, accent, folk, bouquet, queen, rack, box
8	l	l, ll	2	live, well

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Consonants Page 2

	IPA Symbol	Graphemes: spelling	Count	Examples
9	m	m, mm, mb, mn, lm	5	man, summer, comb, column, palm
10	n	n, nn, kn, gn, pn, mn	6	net, funny, know, gnat, pneumatic, mnemonic
11	p	p, pp	2	pin, dippy
12	r	r, rr, wr, rh	4	run, carrot, wrench, rhyme
13	s	s, ss, c, sc, ps, st, ce, se	8	sit, less, circle, scene, psycho, listen, pace, course
14	t	t, tt, th, ed	4	tip, matter, thomas, ripped
15	v	v, f, ph, ve	4	vine, of, stephen, five
16	w	w, wh, u, o	4	wit, why, quick, choir

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Consonants Page 3

	IPA	Graphemes: spelling	Count	Examples
17	z	z, zz, s, ss, x, ze, se	7	zed, buzz, his, scissors, xylophone, craze
18	ʒ	s, si, z	3	treasure, division, azure
19 ch	tʃ	ch, tch, tu, te	4	chip, watch, future, righteous
20 sh	ʃ	sh, ce, s, ci, si, ch, sci, ti	8	sham, ocean, sure, special, pension,
21 th	θ	th	1	thongs
22 th	ð	th	1	leather
23 ng	ŋ	ng, n, ngue	3	ring, pink, tongue
24	j	y, i, j	3	you, onion, hallelujah

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Vowels Page 4

	IPA Symbol	Spellings	Count	Examples
25	æ	a, ai, au	3	cat, plaid, laugh
26	eɪ	a, ai, eigh, aigh, ay, er, et, ei, au, a_e, ea, ey	12	bay, maid, weigh, straight, pay, foyer, filet, eight, gauge, mate, break, they
27	ɛ	e, ea, u, ie, ai, a, eo, ei, ae	9	end, bread, bury, friend, said, many, leopard, heifer, aesthetic
28	i:	e, ee, ea, y, ey, oe, ie, i, ei, eo, ay	11	be, bee, meat, lady, key, phoenix, grief, ski, deceive, people, quay
29	ɪ	i, e, o, u, ui, y, ie	7	it, england, women, busy, guild, gym, sieve
30	aɪ	i, y, igh, ie, uy, ye, ai, is, eigh, i_e	10	spider, sky, night, pie, guy, stye, aisle, island, height, kite
31	ɒ	a, ho, au, aw, ough	5	swan, honest, maul, slaw, fought

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Vowels Page 5

	IPA Symbol	Spellings	Count	Examples
32	oʊ	o, oa, o_e, oe, ow, ough, eau, oo, ew	9	open, moat, bone, toe, sow, dough, beau, brooch, sew
33	ʊ	o, oo, u,ou	4	wolf, look, bush, would
34	ʌ	u, o, oo, ou	4	lug, monkey, blood, double
35	u:	o, oo, ew, ue, u_e, oe, ough, ui, oew, ou	10	who, loon, dew, blue, flute, shoe, through, fruit, manoeuvre, group
36	ɔɪ	oi, oy, uoy	3	join, boy, buoy
37	aʊ	ow, ou, ough	3	now, shout, bough

44 Phonemes (Sounds): English Language Vowels Page 6

	IPA Symbol	Spellings		Examples
38	ə	a, er, i, ar, our, ur	6	about, ladder, pencil, dollar, honour, augur
39	eə ^r	air, are, ear, ere, eir, ayer	6	chair, dare, pear, where, their, prayer
40	ɑ:	a	1	arm
41	ɜ: ^r	ir, er, ur, ear, or, our, yr	7	bird, term, burn, pearl, word, journey, myrtle
42	ɔ:	aw, a, or, oor, ore, oar, our, augh, ar, ough, au	11	paw, ball, fork, poor, fore, board, four, taught, war, bought, sauce
43	ɪə ^r	ear, eer, ere, ier	4	ear, steer, here, tier
44	ʊə ^r	ure, our	2	cure, tourist

English Language Sounds and Spellings

Consonant Sounds and Spellings:

- 21 letters in our alphabet
- 24 sounds and 24 symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet
- 102 ways to spell those 24 Consonant Sounds

Vowel Sounds and Spellings:

- 7 letters in our alphabet
- 20 sounds and 20 symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet
- 127 ways to spell those 20 Vowel Sounds

Total Sounds and Spellings:

- 26 letters in our alphabet
- 44 sounds and 44 symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet
- 229 ways to spell those 44 sounds

**Exceptions: requires memorization
and indoctrination!**

Twenty Five Simple English Language idioms

1. Pull yourself together

2. Comfort food

3. On the fence

4. Sit tight

5. Shake (it) off

6. Go the extra mile

7. A great catch

8. Go down in flames

9. Shape up

10. Old school

11. Running on fumes

12. Get out of hand

13. Crunch time

14. No-brainer

15. Face the music

16. Best of both worlds

17. Couldn't care less

18. Get (something) out of my head

19. It's a small world

20. Step your game up

21. Blow me away

22. Hit the books

23. Keep your chin up

24. Get over it

25. Blow off steam

Don't forget slang!!

Top 20 Gen Z slang terms

1. Slay (succeed/dominate)	11. Simp (someone who does too much for someone they like)
2. Lit (exciting/awesome)	12. Cap (lie/untruth)
3. Bet (sure/agreement)	13. Ghost (disappear suddenly)
4. Bop (catchy song)	14. Vibe (atmosphere/feeling)
5. Mood (current emotional state/relatable situation)	15. GOAT (Greatest of All Time)
6. Salty (bitter/mild upset)	16. Extra (excessive/over-the-top)
7. Snatched (looking flawless/amazing)	17. Stan (obsessive fan)
8. Flex (boast/show off)	18. Low-key (secretly/somewhat)
9. Tea (gossip/information)	19. High-key (openly/very)
10. Shook (deeply surprised/stunned)	20. No Cap (telling the truth/seriously)

Modern English Exceptions

Spelling Exceptions

- "I before E except after C": Common exceptions include **weird, caffeine, seize, height, their, vein, science, efficiency, foreign, either**
- Silent Letters: Some words have letters that are written but not pronounced, such as **the 'k' in "knife" and the 'w' in "wrist"**.
- Unusual Spellings and Pronunciations: Some words like **"weird" and "colonel"**

Modern English Exceptions

Grammar Exceptions:

- Irregular Plural Forms: While most nouns add "-s" or "-es" for the plural, words like **"child" (children) and "mouse" (mice)** have irregular forms.
- Some collective nouns like **"sheep"** have the same singular and plural form.
- Irregular Verb Forms: Many verbs have irregular past tense forms, such as **"go" (went) and "have" (had)**.

Modern English Exceptions

Pronunciation Exceptions:

- “gh” Pronunciation: pronounced like “f” in words such as “**enough**”.
- “C” sounds like “S”: The letter “c” is pronounced as an “s” in words like “**cent**”, “**city**”, “**ceiling**”.
- “C” sounds like “K”: “**cat**”, “**cot**”, “**cup**”
- Homographs with Different Pronunciations: Words spelled the same but with different pronunciations and meanings, such as “**lead**” (to guide) and “**lead**” (a metal)

Modern English Exceptions

Examples of nouns acting as adjectives (attributive nouns):

- **"A football coach": (the noun "football" describes the type of coach)**
- **"A textile shop": (the noun "textile" describes the type of shop)**
- **"A painting exhibition": (the noun "painting" describes the type of exhibition)**
- **"A race car": (the noun "race" describes the type of car)**

More Confusing Things about Modern English

Silent letters aren't always silent:

- Spoken English stopped pronouncing certain p's, b's, g's, and other letters, while the written language refused to change its spelling. The result is a number of confusing words, such as **“debt,” “receipt,” and “design.”**
- related words have the same spelling, but a different pronunciation where the silent letter is no longer silent. For example, in **“crumb”** the **“b” remains silent**, but it makes itself heard in **“crumble.”**
- Consider these the French word **“cologne”** and the Greek word **“psychology”**, the **“g”** and the **“p”** are dropped in speech.

More Confusing Things about Modern English

Past participles have clear endings—except for when they don't

- Past participles are either used as an adjective or used in a verb phrase and they typically end in **-ed**—like **“the ruined coat”** or **“the cat had hissed.”**
- Although there are many exceptions to this rule, some irregular past participles follow a different pattern
 - ✓ The **broken bone** needed to be reset.
 - ✓ The boy **had given** his sandwich to his friend.

More Confusing Things about Modern English

Homophones: words can sound alike but are spelled differently

- **meat** (a food noun)
- **meet** (a verb meaning to congregate).

There, their and they're all are pronounced the same

- **There** (adverb): referencing a location
- **Their** (pronoun): possessive version of “they”
- **They're** (contraction): combination of “they” and “are”

More Confusing Things about Modern English

- Heteronyms are words that are spelled the same but have different pronunciations and meanings:
 - ✓ **Wind (noun):** moving air;
 - ✓ **Wind (verb):** means to turn or coil something, like "wind a rope around a post". The past tense and past participle of the verb "wind" is "**wound**"
- Another Example
 - ✓ **Object (noun):** a material thing one perceives with the senses
 - ✓ **Object (verb):** to firmly oppose something
- The context in which they are used hints at the correct meaning.

Language Analysis: Silent “e”

Short – Long Vowel

- sit site
- cod code
- cut cute
- tam tame

History

Kings and Queens of England: 1509 to 1660
Chaos undermined the “Devine Right of Monarchy”

- King Henry VIII: **6 wives**; became Head of Church and State. **Protestant Reformation.**
 - ✓ King Edward VI: died at 15; **no children**
 - ✓ Queen Mary I: Catholic; Henry **divorced her mother**; **no children**
 - ✓ Queen Elizabeth I: **her mother was executed**; **no children**
- James VI of **Scotland** and James I of England had children.
 - ✓ **His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was executed.**
 - ✓ James' son Charles I: **executed on 1/30/1648**
- Lord Protector (1653 – 1660): Puritan Oliver Cromwell and son: **no king**
 - ✓ This was after 700 years of kings and queens

Kings and Queens of England: 1660 to 1714

Chaos undermined the “Divine Right of Monarchy”

- Charles II: Restoration: “King for a Day”
- James VII of **Scotland** and James II of England: **Catholic**. Had children so there was fear of a Catholic line of royalty. **Overthrown in the Glorious Revolution**.
- William III of **Orange** / **Holland** and Queen Mary II (protestant daughter of James II)
 - ✓ Constitutional Monarchy: power shifting to Parliament
- Queen Anne: **no surviving children**. Scotland and England become one state.

Kings and Queens of England: 1714 to 2025

Later

- 1714 – 1837: House of Hanover: 5 kings. German. Including **George III**
 - ✓ Since 1714 the King of England was also the King of Hanover (Germany)
 - ✓ Hanover Laws didn't allow for a Queen.
 - ✓ when Queen Victoria became Queen of England, she could not be Queen of Hanover. So that started the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.
- 1837 - 2025: **House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha**: renamed **House of Windsor** during WW1: 6 or 7 Kings and Queens, including Charles III.

English Language **Literacy** in England

Educated Wild Guesses

Literacy means reading and writing

Everyone could speak and understand English

Year	% Men Literate	% Women Literate
1500	18%	1%
1600	30%	10%
Shakespeare and King James Bible **		
1754	60%	30%
1800	60%	35%
1840	66%	50%
1870	80%	75%
2000	99%	99%

Most people could **not** read the Bible in Latin or English. But they could listen and understand it.

In 1600, the English language was spoken only in England and in some parts of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Exported:

- 1607: Jamestown
- 1610: Newfoundland
- 1620: Pilgrims
- 1788: Australia
- 1840: New Zealand

Political and Economic Power

Expansion of England → Great Britain → United Kingdom

- Cornwall part of England: 1066
- Ireland ruled by England: 1169 to 1922 (partitioned)
- Wales conquered by England: 1284
- Scotland: Act of Union in 1707. United Kingdom.

Economic and Political Power of English-speaking nations

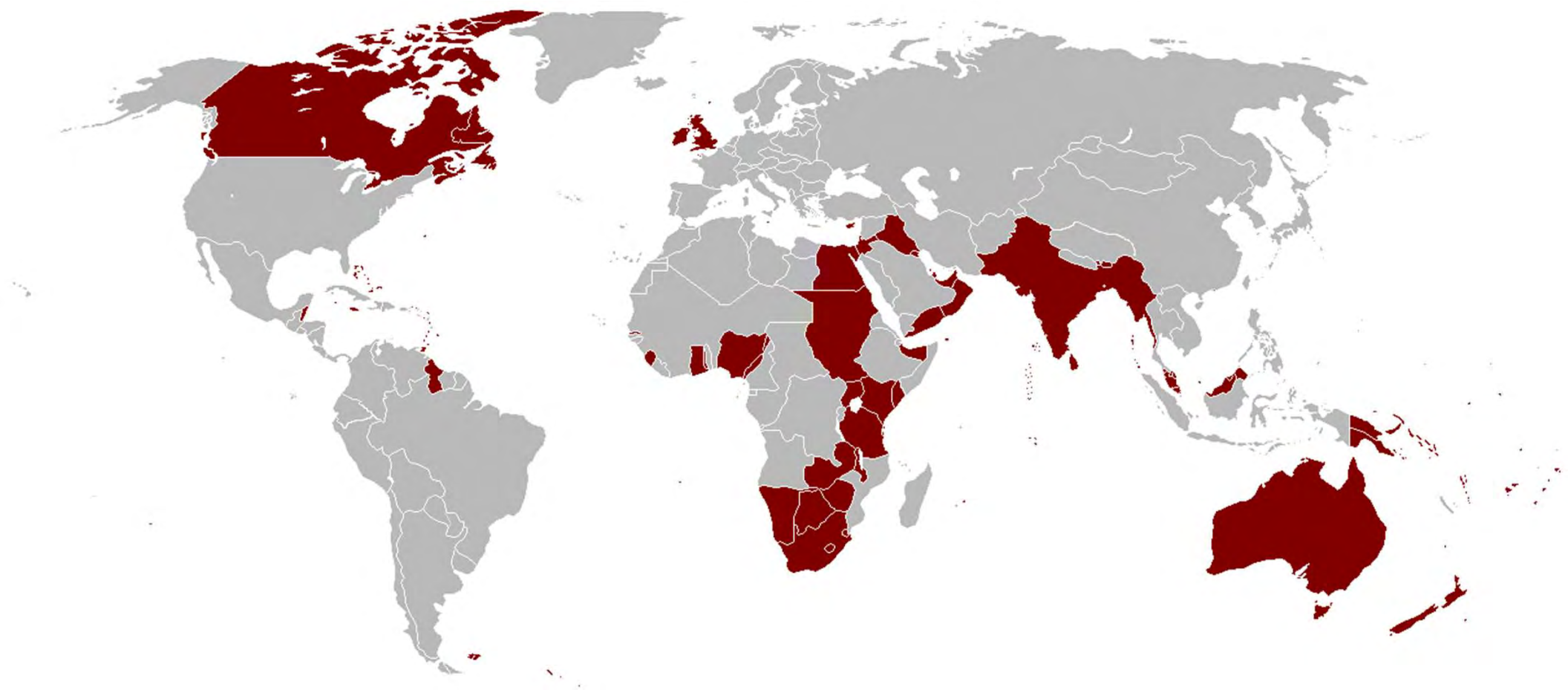
- British Empire after 1700
- USA after WW2

English Language Formalized

Language Formalized

- The English Language Bible: King James Bible (1611)
- Dictionaries & Encyclopedia (Britannica) in English
- Noah Webster (USA):
 - ✓ Blue Backed Speller (1790),
 - ✓ An American Dictionary of the English Language →
Merriam-Webster Dictionary

British Empire: 1921



Global Expansion

- **English as a world language - Many English dialects now exist**
 - ✓ **American English,**
 - ✓ **British English,**
 - ✓ **Australian English,**
 - ✓ **New Zealand English,**
 - ✓ **Indian English,**
 - ✓ **Jamaican English,**
 - ✓ **Philippine English,**
 - ✓ **Singapore English.**

Technology: **Key**

Technology and Global Expansion of English Language

- **Printing Press (1476)**
- **Voice Recording & Playback (1877, Edison).**
 - ✓ No one knows what anyone sounded like before 1877
- **Home-Radio (1920s),**
- **Talking-Movies (1927),**
- **Practical TV (1928, my first TV 1954)**
- **Practical Personal Computers: (1990)**
- **Practical Internet: AOL (1993 - 2000)**
- **Practical Cell Phones (1995 – 2005)**

UK vs. USA Vocabulary

UK vs. USA: word meaning

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| • Lorry | - Truck | • chips | - French fries/fries |
| • Boot | - Trunk | • crisps | - potato chips |
| • Layby | - Rest Area | • jelly | - jello |
| • Jumper | - Sweater | • rubbish | - garbage |
| • Aubergine | - Eggplant | • biscuit | - cookie |
| • Flat | - Apartment | • car park | - parking lot |
| • Queue | - Line | • trousers | - pants |

UK vs. USA: word meaning

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| • Lift | - Elevator | • pants / knickers | - underwear |
| • Loo | - Restroom | • dual carriageway | – divided highway |
| • Bathroom | - Place for a bath | • flyover | - overpass |
| • Cash Point | - ATM | • off-license | - liquor store |
| • Petrol | - gasoline | • spanner | - wrench |
| • Chemist | - drug store | • turf accountant | – book-maker |
| • Waistcoat | - vest | | |

UK vs. USA: pronunciation

zebra

- American: [zee-bruh]
- British: [zeb-ruh]

schedule

- American: [skej-ool or skej-oo-uhl]
- British: [shed-yool or shej-ool]

lieutenant

- American: [loo-ten-uhnt]
- British: [lef-ten-uhnt]

Funny Real-Life Language Mishaps

- **Dublin: I needed to use a “bathroom”. I was sent to a swimming pool.**
- **Glasgow: Where is the number 44 bus? Queue up over there. Huh?**
- **London: My friend Randy introduced himself to a young lady in a pub:
“Hello, I’m Randy!” He got his face slapped.**

Most of the Old English word endings (inflections) are replaced by **auxiliary verbs and **prepositions****

Back to the Language for a minute.

Conjugation of the **Regular Verb “to Live”**

Simple Present

live

Present Continuous

am living

Present Perfect

have lived

Present Perfect Continuous

have been living

Simple Past

Lived

Past Continuous

was living

Past Perfect

had lived

Past Perfect Continuous

had been living

Simple Future

will live

Future Continuous

will be living

Future Perfect

will have lived

Future Perfect Continuous

will have been living

Conjugation of the **Irregular** Verb “to Drink”

Simple Present

drink

Simple Past

drank

Simple Future

will drink

Present Continuous

am drinking

Past Continuous

was drinking

Future Continuous

will be drinking

Present Perfect

have drunk

Past Perfect

had drunk

Future Perfect

will have drunk

Present Perfect Continuous

have been drinking

Past Perfect Continuous

had been drinking

Future Perfect Continuous

**will have been
drinking**

Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs: replaced many word endings

		Past tense		Participles	
Basic Form	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Present	Past
will	won't	would	wouldn't		
may		might	mightn't		
can	can't, cannot	could	couldn't		
shall	shan't	should	shouldn't		
must	mustn't				
ought	oughtn't				
need	needn't				
be	ain't, isn't, aren't	was, were	wasn't, weren't	being	been
do	doesn't, don't	did	didn't		
have	hasn't, haven't	had	hadn't	having	

Prepositions: have replaced many inflections

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Spatial</u> <u>Relationships</u>	<u>Time</u>
to	above	after
in	by	at
into	against	before
on	along	during
onto	around	for
along	at	in
from	behind	on
over	below	since
through	beside	until
toward	under	
	between	

Summary

Language is Oral

- Speaking and Listening -

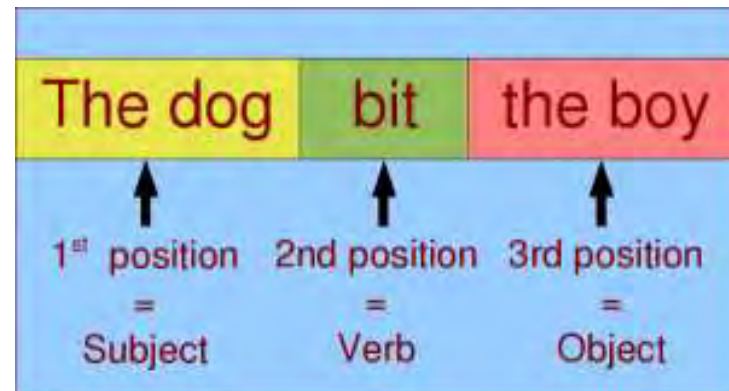
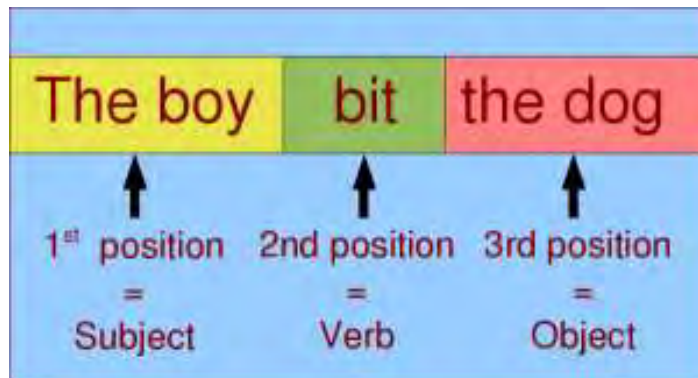
- **Until 1500 few people could read and write.**
 - ✓ **Written material was scarce and expensive**
- **You can enjoy a poem, a Bible story or a stage play even if you cannot read or write**
 - ✓ **Or listen to the radio or watch TV / Movie**
- **People have been speaking some sort of English for 1500 years, but few people could read and write English**
- **The English language, as we know it, has been spoken since 1450.**

Reading and Writing

- Very Unnatural Acts -

- **Writing: a code developed and agreed upon to capture a specific spoken language.**
 - ✓ **Alphabet: a tool for writing**
 - ✓ **Grammar: the rules for writing the language**
- **Scribes: people trained to write the language for religious or governmental purposes.**
- **Reading and Writing were almost **supernatural powers** that the proletariat, peasants and slaves would marvel at.**

Language Analysis



Word Order in a Modern Sentence
SVO: Subject, Verb, Object

Inflections: word endings (usually) that add meaning

Inflections (Word Endings)

- cat, cats
- girl, girl's, girls'
- buy, buys
- walk, walked
- big, bigger, biggest

Changes to the internal structure of the word

- sing, sang, sung
- goose, geese

Radical Changes

- I, me, you, we, us, he, she it, they, them

Inflections: Word Endings that change meaning. Changes to the root word that changes meaning.

- I write a story.
- He write**S** a story.
- He wr**O**te a story
- He created**d** a work of art.
- She is creat**ing** a new art form.
- The earth is part of creat**ion**
- Big, bigg**er**, bigg**est**

The End

Comments

Tanks a lot!