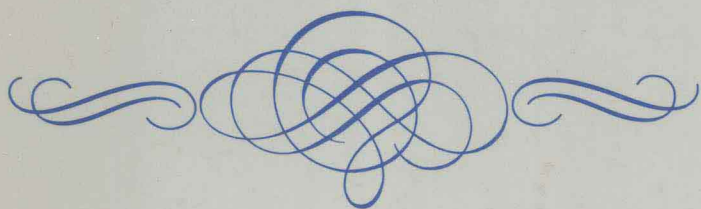


A  
History  
of the  
English  
Language

Fourth Edition



Albert C. Baugh  
Thomas Cable

# **A History of the English Language**

**Fourth Edition**



**Albert C. Baugh**

*Late of the University of Pennsylvania*

**Thomas Cable**

*University of Texas at Austin*

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## Preface

Before the present author ever became associated with Albert C. Baugh's *A History of the English Language*, several generations of teachers and students had appreciated its enduring qualities. Not least of these, and often remarked upon, was the full attention paid to the historical and cultural setting of the development of the language. This original emphasis has made it possible and indeed natural to expand discussions of varieties of English in ways that could not have been specifically foreseen in 1935. Thus, the sections on English as a world language and on Vernacular Black English that were added to the third edition have been expanded, and sections on Chicano English, Caribbean English, and English in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong make their first appearance in this fourth edition. The remarkable events of the past five years in global politics have required a full rewriting of the first chapter, and the continuing investigations of American English have been incorporated into the last chapter. New sections on Old English syntax and on Middle English syntax appear in Chapters Three and Seven.

In the first edition Baugh stated his aim as follows:

The present book, intended primarily for college students, aims to present the historical development of English in such a way as to preserve a proper balance between what may be called internal history—sounds and inflections—and external history—the political, social, and intellectual forces that have determined the course of that development at different periods. The writer is convinced that the soundest basis for an understanding of present-day English and for an enlightened attitude towards questions affecting the language today is a knowledge of the path which it has pursued in becoming what it is. For this reason equal attention has been paid to its earlier and its later stages.

As in previous editions, the original plan and purpose have not been altered.

The various developments of linguistic inquiry and theory during the half century after the *History's* original publication have made parts of its exposition seem to some readers overly traditional. However, a history presented through the lens of a single theory is narrow when the theory is current, and dated when the theory is superseded. Numerous other histories of English have made intelligent use of a particular theory of phonemics, or of a specific version of syntactic deep and surface structure, or of variable rules, or of other ideas that have come and gone. There is nothing hostile to an overall linguistic theory or to new discoveries in Baugh's original work, but its format allows the easy adjustment of separable parts. A clear example of this quality is the present author's revision of the map of American dialects for the third edition in 1978. What was then changed to reflect the three-layered picture of Southern, Midland, and Northern as given by dialectologists of the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* is now returned to something closer to the earlier version, showing revisions in views of American dialects as prompted by information from the *Dictionary of American Regional English* and other sources.

For extensive comments and suggestions, some of which have been incorporated verbatim, I am indebted to Mary Blockley, Ian J. Kirby, and David F. Marshall. The readings that Prentice Hall requested from Stanley Hauer, Rochelle Lieber, and Donka Minkova have been extremely helpful; and in various other ways the fourth edition has profited from the attention of Daisuke Nagashima, Tsuneshi Miura, Robert D. King, Sara E. Kimball, J. Philip Miller, Kim Gueterman, and the students of A. T. E. Matonis. It is a source of satisfaction that the Baugh tradition is sustained through help from his son, Daniel A. Baugh, Professor of History at Cornell University, who contributed several new paragraphs on English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; through this link with historical studies, the fourth edition has also gained from the advice of Barbara J. Shapiro, Peter Dear, and William Sheasgreen. Special thanks go to Carole Cable for the map of American dialects.

T. C.

**A History  
of the  
English Language**

## PHONETIC SYMBOLS

[ɑ] in <b>father</b>	[ə] in <b>about</b>
[a] in <i>French</i> <b>la</b>	[y] in <i>German</i> <b>für</b>
[ɒ] in <b>not</b> in England (a sound between [ɑ] and [ɔ])	[eɪ] in <b>play</b>
[æ] in <b>mat</b>	[oʊ] in <b>so</b>
[ɛ] in <b>met</b>	[aɪ] in <b>line</b>
[e] in <b>mate</b>	[aʊ] in <b>house</b>
[ɪ] in <b>sit</b>	[ɔɪ] in <b>boy</b>
[i] in <b>meat</b>	[ɪŋ] in <b>sing</b>
[ɔ] in <b>law</b>	[θ] in <b>thin</b>
[o] in <b>note</b>	[ð] in <b>then</b>
[ʊ] in <b>book</b>	[ʃ] in <b>shoe</b>
[u] in <b>boot</b>	[ʒ] in <b>azure</b>
[ʌ] in <b>but</b>	[j] in <b>you</b>

[ ] enclose phonetic symbols and transcriptions.

: after a symbol indicates that the sound is long.

' before a syllable indicates primary stress: [ə'baʌv] *above*.

In other than phonetic transcriptions *e* and *o* indicate open vowels, *e* and *o* indicate close vowels.

\* denotes a hypothetical form.

> denotes 'develops into'; < 'is derived from'.

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# 1



## English Present and Future

**1. *The History of the English Language a Cultural Subject.*** It was observed by that remarkable twelfth-century chronicler Henry of Huntington that an interest in the past was one of the distinguishing characteristics of humans as compared with the other animals. The medium by which speakers of a language communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, the tool with which they conduct their business or the government of millions of people, the vehicle by which has been transmitted the science, the philosophy, the poetry of the culture is surely worthy of study. It is not to be expected that everyone should be a philologist or should master the technicalities of linguistic science. But it is reasonable to assume that a liberally educated person should know something of the structure of his or her language, its position in the world and its relation to other tongues, the wealth of its vocabulary together with the sources from which that vocabulary has been and is being enriched, and the complex relationships among the many different varieties of speech that are gathered under the single name of the English language. The diversity of cultures that find expression in it is a reminder that the history of English is a story of cultures in contact during the past 1,500 years. It understates matters to say that political, social, and cultural forces influence a language. These forces shape the language in every aspect, most obviously in the number and spread of its speakers, and in what is called "the sociology of language," but also in the meanings of words, in the accents of the spoken language, and even in the structures of the grammar. The history of a language is intimately bound up with the history of the peoples who speak it. The purpose of this book, then, is to treat the history of English not only as being of interest to the specialized student but also as a cultural subject within the view of all

educated people, while including enough references to technical matters to make clear the scientific principles involved in linguistic evolution.

**2. Influences at Work on Language.** The English language of today reflects many centuries of development. The political and social events that have in the course of English history so profoundly affected the English people in their national life have generally had a recognizable effect on their language. The Roman Christianizing of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilization and made significant additions to our vocabulary. The Scandinavian invasions resulted in a considerable mixture of the two peoples and their languages. The Norman Conquest made English for two centuries the language mainly of the lower classes while the nobles and those associated with them used French on almost all occasions. And when English once more regained supremacy as the language of all elements of the population, it was an English greatly changed in both form and vocabulary from what it had been in 1066. In a similar way the Hundred Years' War, the rise of an important middle class, the Renaissance, the development of England as a maritime power, the expansion of the British Empire, and the growth of commerce and industry, of science and literature, have, each in their way, contributed to the development of the language. References in scholarly and popular works to "Indian English," "Caribbean English," "West African English," and other regional varieties point to the fact that the political, social, and cultural history of the English language is not simply the history of the British Isles and of North America but a truly international history of quite divergent societies, which have caused the language to change and become enriched as it responds to their own special needs.

**3. Growth and Decay.** Moreover, English, like all other languages, is subject to that constant growth and decay that characterize all forms of life. It is a convenient figure of speech to speak of languages as living and as dead. Although we rarely think of language as something that possesses life apart from the people who speak it, as we can think of plants or of animals, we can observe in speech something like the process of change that characterizes the life of living things. When a language ceases to change, we call it a dead language. Classical Latin is a dead language because it has not changed for nearly 2,000 years. The change that is constantly going on in a living language can be most easily seen in the vocabulary. Old words die out, new words are added, and existing words change their meaning. Much of the vocabulary of Old English has been lost, and the development of new words to meet new conditions is one of the most familiar phenomena of our language. Change of meaning can be illustrated from any page of Shakespeare. *Nice* in Shakespeare's day meant *foolish*; *rheumatism* signified a cold in the head. Less



familiar but no less real is the change of pronunciation. A slow but steady alteration, especially in the vowel sounds, has characterized English throughout its history. Old English *stān* has become our *stone*; *cū* has become *cow*. Most of these changes are so regular as to be capable of classification under what are called "sound laws." Changes likewise occur in the grammatical forms of a language. These may be the result of gradual phonetic modification, or they may result from the desire for uniformity commonly felt where similarity of function or use is involved. The person who says *I knowed* is only trying to form the past tense of this verb after the pattern of the past tense of so many verbs in English. This process is known as the operation of analogy, and it may affect the sound and meaning as well as the form of words. Thus it will be part of our task to trace the influences that are constantly at work, tending to alter a language from age to age as spoken and written, and that have brought about such an extensive alteration in English as to make the English language of 1000 quite unintelligible to English speakers of 2000.

**4. The Importance of a Language.** It is natural for people to view their own first language as having intrinsic advantages over languages that are foreign to them. However, a scientific approach to linguistic study combined with a consideration of history reminds us that no language acquires importance because of what are assumed to be purely internal advantages. Languages become important because of events that shape the balance of power among nations. These political, economic, technological, and military events may or may not reflect favorably, in a moral sense, on the peoples and states that are the participants; and certainly different parties to the events will have different interpretations of what is admirable or not. It is clear, however, that the language of a powerful nation will acquire importance as a direct reflection of political, economic, technological, and military strength; so also will the arts and sciences expressed in that language have advantages, including the opportunities for propagation. The spread of arts and sciences through the medium of a particular language in turn reinforces the prestige of that language. Internal deficits such as an inadequate vocabulary for the requirements at hand need not restrict the spread of a language. It is normal for a language to acquire through various means, including borrowing from other languages, the words that it needs. Thus, any language among the 4,000 languages of the world could have attained the position of importance that the half-dozen or so most widely spoken languages have attained if the external conditions had been right. English, French, German, and Spanish are important languages because of the history and influence of their populations in modern times; for this reason they are widely studied outside the country of their use. Sometimes the cultural importance of a nation has at some former time been so great that