

The sources of English vocabulary

English language belongs to West Germanic family of languages which belongs to Indo European family.

Geographical and social divisions of mankind led to divisions in language. In the history of language some languages came into existence and some of them disappeared.

Majority of English words today are from Germanic origin.

The period of history from 450/550 to 1150 is Old English (OE) period. During this period Celtic, Latin and Old Norse languages had an influence on English.

England was inhabited by non-English speaking Britons whose language was of Celtic origin. The Romans departed from there in 410 and West Germanic tribes invaded the island and assimilated with the Celtic speaking population. Numerous place names are of Celtic origin.

The Roman left the influence of Latin on English. After Christianization the influence became stronger.

In the eighth century the Norsemen or Vikings began raiding England. Eventually the Danes gained the throne in the eleventh century. During this period Old Norse language had an influence on English.

The period between 1100 and 1500 is called Middle English Period. During this period a lot of changes took place. A large number of

French words were added to English vocabulary.

English was also influenced by languages of neighboring countries such as Dutch and Scots.

Some personal pronouns like they, theirs, them, were from Old Norse origin.

During the Middle English (ME) period English language underwent some changes in case system and personal pronouns.

The period from 1500 up to present is Modern English (ModE) period. The changes in vocabulary are due to the Renaissance, discoveries, Imperialism, colonialism and movement of people.

The borrowing from Latin and Greek took place after the Renaissance. English is rich in

synonyms due to the mingling of Latin, French and native elements.

The richness of English in its vocabulary has increased the possibility of expression on the one hand and made certain stylistic registers more inaccessible to the masses.

During the British colonization, many words were borrowed from the colonized countries.

Immigration to Britain from various parts of the world brought new words to talk about new things.

Languages affect each other in various ways. The foreign words are easily noticed if the sending language is noticeably different.

The relationship between word form and its meaning is arbitrary. There are a few exceptions to the principle of arbitrariness. Some words have iconic meaning: some feature of the word

resembles its meaning, for example
onomatopoeia and sound symbolism.