Impacts of Storytelling Tradition on Language Change in Tlingit and English

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Abstract

This paper explores the effects of storytelling traditions on language evolution via two case studies analysing the oral storytelling tradition associated with Tlingit, an Indigenous Alaskan language, and written storytelling in British and American English. It suggests that Tlingit oral literature distinctly influenced both the morphology and vocabulary of the modern Tlingit language, and that changes in English storytelling style and transmission did the same throughout the history of the English language, supporting an argument that storytelling tradition has the potential to impact the evolution of associated languages. To develop its argument, the paper describes the differences between oral and written storytelling, and draws comparisons between Tlingit and other languages to demonstrate the areas in which Tlingit language structure reflects the oral format of its literary tradition. Then, it outlines Tlingit literary and cultural philosophy to demonstrate the influence of literary themes on the language's vocabulary. The second half of the paper draws comparisons between historic shifts in English storytelling and concurrent changes in the language, suggesting a cause-and-effect relationship between literary style and evolution in English vocabulary. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a linguistic correlation between storytelling and language which merits further exploration and research. Where cited authors have both Indigenous and Western names, they are listed in order of individual preference whenever possible.

Introduction

Storytelling's close ties with human culture is beyond doubt. Storytelling practice can be traced back over 40,000 years to the Paleolithic era, in narrative cave paintings predominantly decorating cave walls in Spain and France (Clottes). Some researchers go so far as to contend that storytelling traditions played a key role in human neurological evolution, asserting that "without them, we wouldn't be humans" (Chancellor and Lee 41; Leeming; Boyd). Regardless of storytelling's impact on human evolution, storytellers have universally been held in high regard in folk traditions across the world (Chancellor and Lee), and both historically and in the present day the medium plays a vital role in transmitting "the traditions and cultural heritage of societies by preserving community history and folkways that could otherwise be lost" (Chancellor and Lee 41). This paper suggests a correlation between storytelling practice and language evolution, considering two contrasting case studies in the Native Alaskan language Tlingit and in British and American English.

Indigenous North American Oral Languages

The importance of oral storytelling practice in cultural heritage is rarely more clear than in the Indigenous cultures of North America, where strong storytelling traditions remain "foundational to a way of life" (Chan 171); throughout Indigenous American cultures, storytelling Elders remain prominently "situated in communities as leaders in sustaining Indigenous cultures and pedagogies" (Iseke 561). Oral literary traditions, in fact, are often regarded as central to the culture and identity of Indigenous and First Nations communities across the continent (Bakker). The strong oral storytelling traditions associated with the Tlingit language of the North American northwest coast provide a compelling opportunity for investigation of the linguistic significance of storytelling. In the following section, elements of modern Tlingit language are mapped to influences of traditional storytelling practice.

Tlingit Language and Culture

The Tlingit people traditionally inhabit a narrow band of coastal Alaska, with inland communities in British Columbia and Yukon Territory (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 3; "Tlingit | Indigenous Alaskans"). Tlingit society is divided into two moieties, Raven/Crow and Eagle/Wolf, to regulate marital relations, each of which is further divided into matrilineal clans and family groups, the basis for all social and political organisation (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 4; Worl). The Tlingit language, isolated on a branch of the Na-Dene language family, has only tangential similarity to other Indigenous languages of the area, and is nearly absolutely unique in its vocabulary, structure, and phonetics (X'unei, *Lingít*). Considered "one of the most complicated languages in the world" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer xi), it distinguishes two tones and qualifies 24 discrete sounds not present in English; all Tlingit consonants except [n] are unvoiced. Although as of 2022 only around 225 fluent speakers of Tlingit remain (X'unei, *Lingít*), the language and culture are historically associated with a rich tradition of oral literature, and Tlingit never developed an intrinsic written system. The first writing system associated with the Tlingit language was introduced in the 19th century by Russian missionaries, who adapted Cyrillic to represent the oral language, and the current writing system, based on Roman characters, was designed by linguists Constance Naish and Gillian Story in the 1960s (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 39).

Differences Between Spoken and Written Language and Implications for Oral Language and Storytelling

Notable differences between oral and written forms of language are well documented across diverse languages. As linguist Daniel Jones notes in a 1948 paper, because "the process of listening" is so utterly "unlike that of reading," the morphology, pronunciation, and behavior of spoken versus written language often vary wildly, even between modes of the same language (Jones 2). While a spoken word may have "considerable variations in its sound" depending on the speaker and even the context in which a single speaker uses it, so that "in the course of conversation…we modify and contract the pronunciation of words in innumerable

ways…written words have as a rule to have unchangeable forms which are readily recognised" (Jones 1, 3). In written language, likewise, sentences and similar units of language are clearly demarcated by punctuation, while the same are not "objectively definable" in spoken language, even in languages which have both spoken and written forms (O'Donnell 104).

In English and other languages with both spoken and written variations, written conventions like punctuation and spacing between discrete words may influence not only writing but the overall language to which they apply; although "alphabetic writing was in its origin a kind of representation of speech" (Jones 4), as writing becomes more firmly established in its parent language and culture, it is plausible that methods of representing speech in writing would begin to occupy a more integral space in speakers' conception of their language. In western writing, for example, discrete words are visually separated on the page by defined blocks of white space; subject shifts are defined by inter-line spacing, indentation, and other similar methods; and pauses, tone, and phrasing in a body of text are dictated by punctuation (Jones 4; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 10). Speakers raised with the western principle of writing, therefore, considering written and spoken modes consistent components of the same system, naturally consider sequences of sound separated in writing as discrete words in speech, subject shifts as extended blocks of verbal "white space," or silence, and phrasal intricacies as unvoiced punctuation marks in speech as well as writing. In languages where writing does not traditionally exist, however, influence from written conventions on spoken language should not be present.

In areas like China and Ancient Greece, where writing systems evolved alongside spoken language, the primary initial functions of written language were as tools for administrative and historical recordkeeping (Zhang). In cultures like Tlingit which evolved purely orally, however, "genealogies, chronologies, laws, etc." are preserved and transmitted as integral components of oral literature (Notopoulos 469, Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer), rather than non-narrative written records. In fact, written recording often historically replaced preexisting constructs in oral storytelling that served the same purpose (Notopoulos). Tlingit's strong, continued reliance on oral rather than written storytelling, therefore, which like in most languages indigenous to North America negated the necessity for an intrinsic written language (Campbell and Bright; Notopoulos 475; Schiffman 361), should spur the language as a whole to identify more closely with the attributes of spoken language, lacking characteristics derived by association with a written equivalent. In several areas, Tlingit exhibits exactly such a tendency.

Phrase Boundary Marker Words in Tlingit

Without a writing system that included visual signifiers to indicate pause and transition between discrete blocks of information, Tlingit evolved formalized verbal cues to demarcate sentence and phrase boundaries. According to linguist Richard Dauenhauer and Tlingit language scholar and former Alaska poet laureate Nora K̲eixwnéi Marks Dauenhauer, in Tlingit,

> The general pattern marking a sentence boundary is: verb (sometimes noun or other word) at sentence end accompanied by pitch drop, followed by a

pause, followed by áwé or some other conjunction indicating transition to a new topic. (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 10)

Not only is there an explicit verbal protocol for ending phrases and sentences in Tlingit (verb, tonal shift, conjunction), which may be less definite in spoken languages historically associated with writing systems, like English, but specific words have evolved in Tlingit to mark phrase and sentence boundaries in lieu of unspoken representations of written punctuation. As the Dauenhauers state, "Some Tlingit words have two functions. Words such as áyá, áwé, áyu can be translated as 'this is,' or 'it is,' or 'that is.' But they can also function to mark the beginning or end of a phrase" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 32). *Áyú*, for example, a characteristic example of Tlingit marker words, often acts as a "phrase boundary marker, like a spoken comma or period" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 33). While it can sometimes be literally translated as "that is," in many cases, such as the line in the traditional Tlingit oral history "Basket Bay," *Dzeit áyú áa wduwaxót'* (A ladder was adzed there), *áyú* acts to verbally "set off the word 'dzeit' and mark the boundary of that part of the phrase" rather than adding meaning to the phrase itself (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 34). As a phrase boundary marker, *áyá* works similarly to *ayú*, but *áwé* functions instead as the spoken equivalent of "a capital letter in written composition" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 34), indicating the beginning of a new phrase in an explicit oral manner. These types of "boundary marker" words, ubiquitously used in Tlingit oral storytelling and throughout the language itself, are not present to the same degree in modern Western languages which evolved with accompanying written traditions.

Tlingit Word Boundary as an "Orthographic Convention"

With no precedent set by written language for physical separation between words, compounding and word boundaries are more flexible in Tlingit than in many languages with integral writing systems. Where, in languages that evolved alongside a written tradition, word boundaries in the spoken form of the language are influenced by visual spacing between words in the associated system of writing, Tlingit and other oral languages evolved entirely according to sound rather than discrete written components. As a result, Tlingit has a more flexible concept of word separation than is common among Western written languages. At the time of writing *Haa Shuká*, Nora and Richard Dauenhauer's 1987 transcribed and translated Tlingit anthology, boundaries between many Tlingit words, "especially [within] personal and place names," remained unclear (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 54). As a "general pattern," the Dauenhauers "tried…to separate words having separate tones, and join words where there is only one tone over the combined form" to distinguish discrete words (54), but the ambiguity they faced in transcription illustrates the low significance Tlingit, a purely oral language, attributes to separation between words. Distinguishing between single- and multiple-word compound terms, common structures in Tlingit, is also a recently introduced concept to the language; in *Haa Shuká* the Dauenhauers attempt to differentiate between the two by the "orthographic convention" of writing compounds "as a single word in cases where the tone is 'stolen,'" or transferred, from "one of the words" to another (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 324). As such, the

compound *tlaakáak* (tlaa-káak) is "lexically," or for the purposes of writing, one word (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 324). "The distinction," as the Dauenhauers assert, however, is "not often as clear and systematic" (324); in their transcription they chose to represent words like *kaani yán* and *shatx'i yán* "as two words, although they are also probably lexically one" (324), and the distinction becomes fuzzier when distinguishing between mid-word glottal stops (the controlled obstruction of airflow, as in English uh-uh) and word breaks. In *Haa Shuká*, Nora and Richard Dauenhauer point out the ambiguity between two possibilities for representing a single compound, *goonax.áwu* and *goonax áwu*, which would be verbally indistinguishable (54).

The Daunhauers' modern struggles with defining Tlingit terms in written literature demonstrate that distinguishing between sound and word boundary, a quintessentially written concept, is not necessary in traditional spoken Tlingit. Lacking a literary tradition that required clear separation between units of language, Tlingit developed more organic concepts of pause, rhythm, and pitch rather than binary word separation, and as word separation enters the modern language it does so not as an integral part but solely as an "orthographic convention" (324).

Compound Words in Tlingit

The abundance of single-word compounds in Tlingit also suggests the influence of its traditional lack of binary word separation. As X'unei Lance Twitchell establishes in his guide to Tlingit grammar and language learning *Haa Wsineix̲ Haa Yoo X̲'atángi*, "Tlingit is a polysynthetic language, which means the language often contains long complex words that can be broken down into smaller components that have meaning" (4). In English, where an integral written language establishes physical white space separating individual words, formation of compounds is inefficient; as compounds evolve lexicographically, frequently related terms must first be separated by a space (dog house), before they can be joined by a hyphen (dog-house), and finally integrated into a single word (doghouse), more persistently maintaining the distinction between the discrete parts of the compound (Harper). Tlingit, by contrast, readily forms compound words (X'unei, *Lingít*); without inherent spacing between words other than verbal conventions of pronunciation, which vary easily within "comparatively wide limits" (Jones 2), several "smaller components" of Tlingit speech may easily hybridize into a single long word (X'unei, *Haa Wsineix̲* 4). Tlingit's tendency towards compounding is evident in words for certain body parts, where single phrases in Tlingit are translated into long, descriptive expressions in English. Tlingit *x̲'ag̲ákwshayi* means "lower jaw hanging wide open"; and *ludíx̲' shudzísk'u* translates to "bone at the base of the skull that looks like a larger owl" (X'unei, *Haa Wsineix̲* 38). Tlingit verb phrases, often considered the "heart of the Tlingit language" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 13), are also constructed as compounds, with qualifiers taking the form of prefixes and suffixes attached to a stem.

While a similar tendency towards compounding is documented in German and some other languages with intrinsic writing systems, notably Germanic European languages, it is markedly prevalent across unrelated language families indigenous to North America, which did not evolve alongside written forms. In the Algonquin language Plains Cree, for instance, "one

can easily create new, funny sounding words for events. For instance, a man who lost his excrement while running was called kâ-misi-pahtâ-t, a hilarious word in Cree, roughly translatable as 'shit-and-runner'" (Bakker 31). Spontaneous compound words like *kâ-misi-pahtâ-t* are intrinsically connected to Cree storytelling tradition, constructed intentionally in and for Cree oral storytelling to inject humor into traditional narratives (Bakker 31).

Storytelling as a Tool for Language Standardization

The linguistic impact of Tlingit's oral storytelling tradition is apparent not only in the mechanics of the language, but also in its diversity. Especially in the post-printing era, writing may act as a disseminating force within languages; because phrasing is intrinsically connected to content in printed literature, when printed content is distributed throughout a population, the phrasing and grammatical constructs used by the original storyteller are distributed along with the literary work. As a function of printed literature, therefore, phrases specific to regional variations in the oral form of the language are dispersed throughout their language's range, lessening linguistic isolation between geographically distinct communities (see "Impacts of Printed Literature on Early Modern English," below).

Written or systematically standardized oral literary traditions may, further, act as significant vehicles for standardization within their associated languages. For instance, in the Tamil language of India, Sri Lanka, and Singapore, while the associated storytelling tradition surrounding recitation of religious epic Vedas in "sutra" verse was historically orally transmitted, the oral tradition was based on "elaborate and complicated systems of memorization" which allowed Vedas to be "recited or chanted" immutably (Schiffman 361; Doniger). Similarly to written distribution, Tamil Vedas attached specific grammar and phrasing to prevalent works of literature distributed throughout the language's range, and Tamil language specialist Harold Schiffman associates memorization of Vedas with linguistic standardization in Tamil (Schiffman). As Schiffman states in a 1998 analysis of Tamil language and scholarship, "What was thought to be necessary for standardization or for invariant rule-observation to occur [in Tamil] was that it be CODIFIED, i.e. that eventually the 'grammar' should be recorded, in sutra format, and memorized" (Schiffman 362). Indeed, the idea that "a language might be codified without" literary standardization from "having been committed to memory in sutras is not a prevalent one, or perhaps even an acceptable one, in modern India" (Schiffman 362).

Dialectic Diversity in Tlingit

In contrast to Tamil Vedas, however, Tlingit and other Indigenous North American styles of oral literature transmit culturally significant content without relaying the exact phrasing of any specific text from speaker to speaker. As the Dauenhauers establish in *Haa Shuká*, even when the same Tlingit story "is told over and over," even by the same speaker, "it is never exactly the same, because the conditions are different, and the audience is different" (8). As a result of the absence of a static body of Tlingit and other oral literatures, even while individual narratives are no less well known or widely disseminated than in written literary traditions, "variation is

common in oral literature," and phrasal intricacies readily "evolve differently in different places" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 11), potentially contributing to a lower degree of the universal "standardization or invariant rule-observation" encouraged in languages by more invariable literary traditions (Schiffman 362). In other words, because Tlingit literature is tied to concept over specific structure and phrasing, linguistic isolation should be more pronounced in Tlingit than in languages with written or strictly recited storytelling traditions, possibly leading to greater dialectic diversity.

Unquestionably, the Tlingit language does exhibit a high level of linguistic diversity. While *Lingit Aaní*, the traditional Tlingit lands and native range of the Tlingit language, is predominantly limited to the 500 mile Alaskan Panhandle, within that area there is incredible language variation between Tlingit-speaking communities. As X'unei explains, "Within the language there are four main dialects: Tongass, Southern, Transitional, and Northern" (X'unei, *Lingít*). The Southern dialect is further composed of two distinct branches, Sanya, spoken in the Wrangell area, and Henya, spoken on Prince of Wales Island. Transitional Tlingit has distinct coastal and inland variations, and the most widespread Northern dialect "consists of Central…Gulf Coast…and Inland" variants (X'unei, *Lingít*). Tongass Tlingit, which is no longer spoken, was native to the southern Ketchikan area, near Prince of Wales Island, and was the most distinct of Tlingit dialects.

Since the recent introduction of writing to the Tlingit language, Tlingit writing has already homogenized to a higher degree than the traditional spoken dialects of the language. In *Haa Wsineix Haa Yoo X'atángi*, X'unei acknowledges that, "most [written] language materials are developed in the Central dialect, but can be adjusted to fit others" (7). As writing becomes increasingly prevalent among the small, interconnected population of modern Tlingit speakers and within second-language courses as part of the Tlingit revitalization campaign, the Central dialect may, likewise, become more "standard" and widespread in the Tlingit language. While the Chinese logographic script could be cited as a counterexample to written literature's standardizing effect on language, the impact of Chinese writing, less attached to spoken dialect than alphabetic or phonetic systems, on languages which use that script would likely be lower than that of phonemic writing systems like that associated with Tlingit.

Philosophic Impacts of Oral Storytelling

Oral storytelling practices likely impact the Tlingit language philosophically as well as structurally. As linguist Dan Jurafsky asserts, "Understanding why and how languages differ tells about the range of what is human" (Shashkevich); how languages are spoken is intrinsically connected to the "thought world" (Alexander 284), or cultural worldview, of their associated people. According to the prevalent theory of linguistic relativity, laid out by linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf in the first half of the 20th century, just as written language is not solely a "representation of speech" but an independent construct and means for voicing ideas (Jones 4), language itself "is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather…the program and guide for the individual's mental activity" (Alexander 282). Since

language evolves within the social environment created by its associated people and acts as an important mechanism to "encode…culture and provide…the means through which culture is shared and passed from one generation to the next" (Light), culture, or the intrinsic values and belief system of a people, is both "reflected in and influences its language" (Light). In the words of linguist Hubert Alexander, "each language conceals a hidden metaphysics" (Alexander 282); a people's relationship to the world defines how objects and concepts are considered within that culture, which determines how those constructs are defined in the associated language.

For example, in a 2020 interview with the University of British Columbia, Wolastoqey musician and activist Jeremy Dutcher points out that gender concepts are "a hard thing to translate" between the Algonquin Wolastoq language and Western languages (Dutcher). While "in the French language, Italian, or…even in the English language, we gender things" (Dutcher), because the Wolastoqey "thought world" doesn't "talk about things as a gender, or people" (Alexander 284; Dutcher), Wolastoq and more strictly gendered Western cultures operate both culturally and linguistically under "very different presets of what gender is" (Dutcher).

Philosophy of the Tlingit Storytelling Tradition

The Tlingit oral storytelling tradition is intrinsically important to Tlingit culture (X'unei, *Lingit*; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer), and the vocabulary of the language reflects its cultural significance. Although the clan-based organisation of traditional Tlingit society clearly plays a significant role in the preeminence of ancestry within the culture, the orally-transmitted format of Tlingit literature inflates the cultural importance of lineage and ancestry within the Tlingit worldview. Since oral narratives are traditionally preserved exclusively by verbal inheritance from proficient "elder" storytellers to younger generations (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 8), the importance of ancestral lineages in Tlingit and many other oral cultures is mechanically reinforced by an intrinsic reliance on familial "Tradition Bearers" to maintain the literary knowledge of the population (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer x). Perhaps as a result of the ancestry-based Tlingit societal structure and means of literary transmission, ancestry is also an outstanding theme throughout Tlingit literature. The concept of *at.óow*, or "an owned or purchased thing" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 25), is central to Tlingit literary tradition; as the Dauenhauers explain,

> "The…most important concept in the entire book is at.óow…The 'thing' may be land…a heavenly body (the sun, the dipper, the milky way), a spirit, a name, an artistic design, or a range of other 'things.' It can be an image from oral literature…on a tunic, hat, robe or blanket; it can be a story or song about an event in the life of an ancestor. Ancestors themselves can be at.óow." (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 25)

Even when the *at.óow* in a Tlingit story is not an ancestor itself, it was often "purchased" by the actions of an ancestor. As the Dauenhauers outline in *Haa Shukâ*, "the pattern…for all of Tlingit oral literature" is that "an event happens in the life of an ancestor or progenitor, some aspect or a combination of aspects of the event becomes…an at.óow…and the land where it

happened is important in the spiritual and social life of the people" (25-26). Ancestry and *at.óow* in traditional literature are considered "the single most important concept in Tlingit culture" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 26); *Haa Shuká*, the title of the Dauenhauers' Tlingit anthology, translates to *Our Ancestors*.

Diversity in Tlingit Kinship Terms

The cultural importance of ancestry associated with the Tlingit literary tradition likely influences Tlingit vocabulary. As Hindi Korean-language professor Pulkit Sharma points out, languages' "use of kinship terms…reflects the cultural values and customs of their respective societies" (Sharma 2). In cultures that ascribe high value to familial relations, intrinsic distinction between "slightly differing ranges of meaning" within kinship terms makes differentiating between cases more expedient in an area where differentiation is culturally necessary and common (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 28). In languages where ancestry is not as culturally significant, conversely, there is less linguistic pressure to distinguish between shades of meaning in that area, a rule that likely extends to other culturally significant subject matter. In both Korean and Hindi, for example, unrelated languages belonging to different language families, "respect for elders and the importance of family hierarchy are highly valued" within the language's associated culture (Sharma 2). Korean and Hindi kinship terms, correspondingly, have more inherent specificity than in languages like English, where "there is a greater emphasis on individualism and less emphasis on family hierarchy" (Sharma 2; Wang 33). Hindi lacks a general term for "sister," for example; the single Hindi word छोटीबहन (*chhotibehan*) always refers to a younger sister, while the stem बहन (*behan*), invariably means "older sister" (Sharma 1), rather than translating to a general term. In Korean, likewise, a single English kinship term often translates to several distinct levels of specificity; English "uncle" may be represented as 큰아버지 (*keun-abeoji*; father's older brother), 삼촌 (*samchon*; father's younger brother), 외숙 (*oesuk;* mother's brother), 고모부 (*gomobu*; husband of father's sister), or 이모부 (*imobu*; husband of mother's sister) depending on the relationship to the speaker (Wang 31).

Analogously to Hindi and Korean value systems, Tlingit kinship and ancestry are tracked both by the literary *at.óow* system and as a safety net for the preservation of the Tlingit oral literary tradition, fundamentally reinforcing familial relations within Tlingit culture. Tlingit vocabulary referring to kinship and ancestry, likewise, is much more diverse than in English. In his grammar *Haa Wsineix Haa Yoo X'atángi*, X'unei lists at least four Tlingit variants for the English word "ancestor": *Haa Shagóon*, or "Our Ancestors"; *Haa Shuká*, or "Those Who Came Before Us"; *Haa Tlagukwaanx'i Yán*, or "Our Ancient Ones"; and *Haa Nanaayí*, or "Our Deceased" (29). Tlingit also makes the distinction between maternal and paternal kinship, as well as gender of the speaker, and furthermore adds a layer of relatedness in "clan relations," where members of the same or opposite clans and moieties are distinguished using specific kinship terms (X'unei, *Haa Wsineix* 26-27). Similarly to Hindi or Korean, X'unei's *Haa Wsineix Haa Yoo X'atángi* lists three variations, *–shátx* (female's older sister)*, –kéek'* (female's younger

sister), and *–dlaak'* (male's sister), for the single English term "sister," and similar variation is common in other kinship terms not intrinsically distinguished in English (27).

Vocabulary Connected to Oral Storytelling Traditions

Tlingit vocabulary also reflects its storytelling tradition through words which function specifically to reinforce oral storytelling, often lacking any direct equivalent in Modern English or other languages primarily associated with written traditions. Unlike "boundary marker" words like *áwé* and *áyu*, which represent unvoiced punctuation in the Tlingit language at large in the absence of a written literary tradition, Tlingit transition phrases like *tle, aagaa, ku.aa*, and *wáa nanéi sáwé* adopted auxiliary usages within oral literature itself to drive the framework of traditional narratives (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35). "Transitions," as Nora and Richard Dauenhauer note in *Haa Shuká*, "are extremely difficult to translate smoothly into English" in the context of Tlingit oral literature (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35). The Dauenhauers cite phrases *aagaa* and *wáa nanéi sáwé* in particular as "difficult" to find a consistent English equivalent for; while they are invariably used to transition between topics or settings in oral literature, their exact meaning may shift based on the context of the phrase. In Tlingit storytelling, for example, *aagaa* could most accurately represent "a variety of possible translations including: then, at that time, at one point, this is when, this was when, that's when, that was when," or even "a 'when…then' construction" depending on context (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35), and it is often paired with the boundary marker *áwé* as "a classic line and phrase turning in Tlingit narrative discourse" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 344). Similarly, *wáa nanéi sáwé* could be equally represented "as 'after a while,' 'a while after this,' or 'at what point was it?'" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35).

Other transition words have more consistent meanings, but more purely structural uses. The Dauenhauers were consistently able to translate *tle* as "then," for example, but as a transition "it is used much more frequently in Tlingit than in English," and the Dauenhauers often "omitted it in translation" in contexts where the translatable definition of the word was less significant to the context of the phrase than its transitory function (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35). *Ku.aa*, likewise, "often easily equates to English 'but,' 'therefore,' or 'however,'" but within Tlingit storytelling fulfills an auxiliary use, "sometimes [signalling] new information or the introduction of a new topic or character, without implying any contrast" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 35). Within the context of Tlingit storytelling, *tle*, *ku.aa, aagaa*, and *wáa nanéi sáwé* adopt auxiliary definitions to serve a structural function within traditional narratives, explicitly denoting a transition or introduction within the stylistic framework of Tlingit storytelling rather than adding lexical meaning to a Tlingit phrase.

History of Written Storytelling in British and American English

Unlike historically oral Tlingit, English culture's associated history of writing predates the language itself, providing a compelling context to investigate the linguistic impact of written storytelling. The Roman Empire introduced the Roman alphabet to celtic-speaking Britain in 43

CE (Schmandt-Besserat 11), and under Roman rule between 43 CE and the early 5th century the government, British upper classes, and "even artisans wrote Latin" (Barr). The English language, by contrast, was not conceived until the late 5th century, following the invasions of the Germanic Jutes, Angles, and Saxons subsequent to the decline of Roman occupation (Hudson, Potter); Old English writing in the Roman script, preceded by runic inscriptions, is documentable from the "beginning of the seventh century" (Hudson; "Early Medieval"; Catto 25). This section traces the evolution of written literature in England and the United States between the 7th and 19th centuries, exploring the impacts of changes in its format and medium on the English language.

"Hwæt": A Mechanical Oral Storytelling Word in Old English

While transition words in Tlingit storytelling are "difficult" to translate into Modern English (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer x), the English language has historically had words similar to Tlingit *ku.aa* or *aagaa* with auxiliary definitions dedicated to mechanical storytelling conventions. The definition outside of storytelling of the Old English word *hwæt*, for example, is "familiar from Modern English, as the neuter singular of the interrogative pronoun *hwā* 'what'" (Walkden 465). In Old English prose and poetry, however, *hwæt* was often used not for its intrinsic meaning but as an interjection "to introduce or call attention to a statement," commonly situated at the beginning of phrases or larger narrative works (Walkden 466, Garley et al. 218-219). Well known as the first word of the originally orally-transmitted epic *Beowulf*, *hwæt* is variably translated into Modern English as "Lo!," "Hear me!", "Yes," "Attend!", "Indeed," "So," and "Listen!" (Walkden 466), and functioned to set off the beginning of a story from other speech, where the intrinsic delineation is not as clear as between speech and written literature (Walkden 468). As Garley et al. lay out in their 2010 paper addressing Old English orally-derived storytelling practices, that even in narratives that were subsequently written down, the auxiliary use case of *hwæt* is associated with oral storytelling; as the opening word to an Old English poem or to dialogue within a longer work, "*Hwæt* serves a different function: it signals to the audience that the poet is about to *speak* (rather than, say, *write*)" (Garley et al. 219). In *Beowulf*, furthermore, *hwæt* appears at the beginning of dialogue within the poem in addition to introducing the poem itself, suggesting that the auxiliary use of *hwæt* existed in Old English speech outside of formal literature; Beowulf uses it in its introductory capacity four times throughout the poem, at lines 530, 942, 1652, and 2248, to "introduce or call attention to" the beginning of a significant statement or a conversation.

The introductory usage of *hwæt* predominantly survives in Old English written literature where either an older story was written down after oral composition, or where it remains as a relic of a traditional oral style (Garley et al.). Following a growing influence of written literature in the ninth and tenth centuries, *hwæt's* second definition disappeared between Old and Middle English, when English language and storytelling practices changed dramatically in response to 11th century Norman French occupation (Stevick; Baugh and Cable; Pratt 305-306).

Impact of Religious Storytelling on Old English Vocabulary

Despite the prevalence of literacy during the Roman Occupation, Roman script was likely introduced to English via Christian religious storytelling established in England in the 6th and 7th centuries ("Early Medieval"). Early Catholic missionaries established contact between the early English-speaking population and the ecclesiastical Latin writing associated with the Christian narrative tradition, founding English monasteries like Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Monastery, and Whitby Abbey in the beginning of the 7th century. Interaction between early English speakers and Christian Latin writing likely spurred adoption of the Roman script in Old English; as historian Robinson Thornton contends, while early English speakers may have retained "some knowledge of writing" from Latin and Celtic-speaking Roman Britain, "the existing MSS. [manuscripts] of Anglo-Saxon exhibit…a neat imitation of the character used by the Roman monastics" (Thornton 202).

In addition to introducing Roman writing to Old English, Christian religious storytelling directly impacted Old English vocabulary. Subsequent to the 6th century, Catholicism became entrenched in pre-Norman England, pervading Old English culture across classes (Chaney); English kings converted to Christianity by the early 600s, Christian and Norse religions coexisted during the 8th-11th century Norse occupation of England, and in *Beowulf*, transcribed circa 1000 from an oral poem "composed sometime between the middle of the seventh and the end of the tenth century" (*Beowulf* ix), poets discuss "how the Almighty had made the earth," and the monster Grendel is descended from "Cain's clan" (*Beowulf* 9). The rise of Christian storytelling in pre-Norman England brought significant cultural and linguistic influences to the English people, including Latin as a high-prestige religious language, Latin-speaking religious authorities, and the introduction of a Christian "metaphysics" to English society (Alexander 282), bringing Latin and English into close contact and introducing foreign concepts to the Old English "thought world" (Chaney 198, Alexander 284). Accordingly, Old English borrowed considerable vocabulary from Medieval Latin; according to the University of Michigan's *Middle English Compendium*, up to 359 words with origins in both Old English and Latin persisted into Middle English (Lewis). Old English words modeled on Medieval Latin include both explicitly religious terms like *ercebiscop* (archbishop, from *archiepiscopus*) and *ān-kenned* (only-begotten, modeled on *ūni-genitus*) as well as secular words such as *ǣn-līc* (noble, from *ūn-icus*), *candel* (candle, from *candēla*), and *cealc* (chalk, from *calcem*) (Lewis).

Impacts on English Storytelling from the Norman Conquest

While Old English borrowed vocabulary from ecclesiastical Latin prior to the 11th century, the majority of Modern English's Latinate vocabulary was introduced after the Norman invasion of England in 1066. The Norman Conquest had an undeniable impact on the English language; the newly introduced French-speaking ruling class integrated an "enormous" body of Romance vocabulary into Germanic Old English (Baugh and Cable 98), and political impacts on the island heavily influenced English language and storytelling, breaking the continuity of written traditions and transforming Old English into mutually unintelligible Middle English.

In early Norman England, "the distinction between those who spoke French and those who spoke English was…largely social" (Baugh and Cable 104); from 1066 through the early 1200s, "French remained the language of ordinary intercourse among the upper classes in England" (Baugh and Cable 103), and English became "a 'patois'" (J. Fisher), the "language of the [predominantly illiterate] masses" (Baugh and Cable 104). Indeed, "from the Conquest to 1200 we have no [written] English poetry or prose" (Thornton 213). When written English storytelling reappeared in the later half of the period, furthermore, it differed substantially from Old English storytelling, integrating Norman poetic styles. Prior to the Conquest, English poetry was regulated by alliteration rather than rhyme, and line length was determined by stress rather than syllables; Norman rule introduced rhyme and syllable count to Middle English poetry, and eradicated the stylistic cæsura, or mid-line break, that defined Old English poetry. Where the first two lines of *Beowulf* read "*Hwæt wē gardena in geār-dagum / þēod cyninga þrym gefrūnon*" (*Beowulf* 2), the first two lines of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, composed around 1400, read "*Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote*" (Chaucer 23), a stark stylistic contrast.

Disappearance of Native English Letters

While most of the changes the Norman Conquest brought to Middle English came from political and cultural shifts, its impact on English literature had definite effects on the language. Prior to the Conquest, written English followed Germanic spelling conventions, and "featured the emergence of home-grown Anglo-Saxon graphic symbols such as the thorn (þ), eth (ð) and ash (æ)" (Baddeley and Voeste 3), as well as wyn (ƿ) and yogh (ȝ), adapted from Medieval Latin and the Old English runic system (Lewis). By "the late 9th to the 10th century," furthermore, as Finnish socio-linguist Terttu Nevalainen demonstrates, the southern dialect "West Saxon provided a dominant model in many areas of writing," establishing a "focused" and "standard" written English which consistently used English's "home-grown" letters (Nevalainen 130, Baddeley and Voeste 3). Subsequent to the Norman Conquest, however, which lowered the status of English-language literature, eliminating written English storytelling for two centuries and reinstating it in an environment dominated by French-language prestige and scribes with primarily "Anglo-Norman…written competence" (Liang 259), English's native letters "were gradually replaced with Latin equivalents" such as "th," "gh," "y," and "w" (Nevalainen 132); by the 1400s, only þ remained contemporary to English literature (Nevlainen 138, Waldron 794), and Old English graphemes like "cw" and "u" (ū) were also replaced by French constructs like "qu" and "ou" in Middle English (Nevalainen 133).

"Traditional Referentiality" in Oral-Formulaic Idioms

The Norman Conquest contributed to a retention of oral-derived storytelling practices in Middle English. Despite postdating the introduction of Roman writing to English, the surviving record of Old English literature maintains a strong tie to oral formulae, universal, "'ready-made' phrases established within [a] poetic tradition" as a whole and applied to individual works

(Garley et al. 215), a common technique across oral storytelling traditions (Foley). Widely considered a fundamental component of European and Asian oral composition (Foley 2), established formulae are widely used in oral literature in order "to compensate for the limitations of memory, e.g. as processing short-cuts, time-buying devices, or mnemonics, and to function as identity-marking devices in social contexts" (Garley et al. 214).

Like the introductory usage of *hwæt*, oral formulae likely played a linguistic role in Old English outside of oral literature. In his 1991 book *Immanent Art*, John Miles Foley asserts that in oral cultures, oral formulae develop traditional meanings through repeated use in set poetic contexts, a practice he calls "traditional referentiality" (193, 6). "Stored (and learned) like lexical items" (Garley et al. 216), traditional formulae have been shown to have "deeper (connotative) meanings accessible simply through…speaking the language" and sharing a "common culture" in Old English and other languages (Garley et al. 216), similar to modern English idioms. As Garley et al. establish, Old English "formulae were salient even for non-poets" (Garley et al. 215); when copying English poetry "Anglo-Saxon scribes commonly substituted one formula for another…grammatically and semantically equivalent" (Garley et al. 215), demonstrating that even among the literate Old English population, the culturally significant definitions of formulae remained a notable part of the language (Foley 193).

Retention of Oral-Formulaic Idioms in Middle English

The return to strictly oral English-language literature between 1066 and 1200 likely prompted a retention of oral formula-derived phrases in Middle English. Continued use of oral formulae in written Old English is unsurprising; non-runic English writing dates to the late 500s, and in the "seventh and eighth centuries…there is only limited evidence for the wider acquisition of literate skills by Anglo-Saxon laymen" in Latin or English (Pratt 302). Although official documents like land charters or law codes were often written in Latin in the early Old English era, "in general" they were made through "ecclesiastical intermediaries," and written documents were likely intended to be "translated orally for a wider lay audience" (Pratt 303, 304).

The ninth century, however, was an "important period of change" in English literacy (Pratt 305). With an increase in written legal documents, "associated forms of document written in the vernacular" became common, and a stronger ruling class led to a "rise in 'literate' court culture" (Pratt 306). In the late ninth century, King Alfred the Great "promoted…a new emphasis on the ability of the lay aristocracy to read English" and incentivized "prose translations of learned Latin texts" (Pratt 307), and by the tenth century, writing was solidified in the English nobility and spreading into the lower classes. "By the 980s…talented laymen…were writing Latin books" (Niles 19), and a mid-tenth century English translation of the Rule of St. Benedict was addressed to "unlearned laymen" (Pratt 321). As medievalist and Middle English expert Ronald A. Waldron asserts, regardless of idiomatic meaning, "an oral-formulaic tradition [should] quickly fall into disuse…once its purpose of making oral composition possible had been lost" (Waldron 794). As written literary styles succeed oral cultures, in other words, formulae should lose currency in traditional literature, gradually losing their "inherent and conferred

meaning" in the associated language as well (Foley 194). Oral-style formulae remain common in Middle English written texts, and presumably as idioms in Middle English, however, four centuries after vernacular literacy took hold in pre-Norman England (Waldron 794-795, Parks).

Following written English literature's reappearance in the early 13th century, "there is strong evidence" that poets through Geoffrey Chaucer in the late 14th century "were working with conventions which were not far removed from those of an oral tradition" (Waldron 796). In a 1957 study of oral-formulaic phrases in Middle English, linguist Ronald A. Waldron found extensive use of alliterative oral-formulae in written literature, including:

To be war of þat wegh, & wait on hir-seluyn	Destr. Troy 12722
Noght warre of the weghes, þat waited his harme	Destr. Troy 13012
& watȝ war of þat wyȝe þat þe water soȝte	Patience 9249
þe wylde watȝ war of þe wyȝe with weppen in honde	Gawain 1586
Than was he warre of a wye wondyre wele armyd	Morte Arth. 2515 (794)

The persistence of oral formulae as lexical items in Middle English writing can likely be attributed to the "death-blow" inflicted on written English literature by the Norman Conquest (Thornton 213), which allowed the language to preserve the "continuity" of "traditional referentiality" in oral storytelling through 1200, and in oral-derived formulaic phrases through the early 1400s (Waldron 793, Foley 6).

Dialectic Diversity in Middle English

The English language's reversion to oral literature from 1060-1200 likely also affected its linguistic diversity. Contrary to the late Old English period, during which kings distributed written literature, primarily translated in Wessex and Winchester, to monasteries across the island and encouraged English literacy in the secular nobility (Pratt, Potter and Crystal), Middle English was "overwhelmingly a medium of the spoken word (Catto 27). Similarly to Tlingit, therefore, regional phrasing and grammar were likely disseminated to a lower degree within Middle English literary works than in Old English literature, encouraging higher dialectic diversity between populations of Middle English speakers. Like modern Tlingit, moreover, Middle English language was comparatively diverse; where in Old English "there were…four dialects: Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish" (Potter and Crystal), and "English was already distinctive among western vernacular languages in having…a carefully standardized written form by the late tenth century" (Catto 25), Middle English "communication…was essentially local," and "as a result, there was no shared national Middle English dialect, but rather great regional diversity in both speech and writing" (Healey). Early Middle English had five primary dialects, each of which "went their own ways and developed their own characteristics" as Norman French vocabulary integrated into English communities at varying rates and in varying subject matter (Potter and Crystal), and the language didn't reassimilate until after 1400 (J. Fisher), as English reentered the upper classes and "the grand prose of Wiclif (d. 1384) and the still grander verse of Geoffrey Chaucer (d. 1400)" elevated written English

storytelling (Thornton 213, Nevalainen 130). Despite the later reassimilation, however, Middle English's initial diversity likely impacted the ultimate standard form of Early Modern English.

Impacts of Printed Literature on Early Modern English

The advent of the European printing press in the late 15th century substantively shifted English storytelling practice. Invented in the 1450s in Mainz, Germany, the printing press was "one of the most revolutionary inventions in [European] history" (Dittmar 1133); it "transformed the ways ideas were disseminated" throughout European society (Dittmar 1134), revolutionizing western literary transmission. Where prior to the printing press, literature was manufactured by hand in single editions and "individual scribes…felt at liberty to use words and forms of words personally preferred," leading to "great want of uniformity even among the different manuscripts of the same work" (McKnight 71), moveable type printing produced larger, more uniform editions, allowing books "identical in content and format" to be distributed en masse throughout a language's range (Marker 267). Indeed, continental European printers "seem regularly to have printed 275 copies of their books between 1465 and 1471," and by the late 1400s some "impressions of over 3,000 are recorded" (Barker, "Invention" 71). Printed literature also lowered the cost of books "by two-thirds" (Dittmar 1133), leading to "dramatic increases in literacy" in addition to a wider geographical reach (Rubin 272, Dittmar 1139), expanding written storytelling's impact to broader populations of language speakers across Europe.

The first English printing press was established by prolific printer and translator William Caxton in Westminster in 1476 (Duff 34). Interestingly, where early continental printers largely printed "theology or law" or "the classical writers of antiquity" (Duff 14, 15), Caxton began an English tradition of printing "popular literature…English poetry" (Duff 14-15), which catered to a general rather than a learned audience. Caxton's works, including Chaucer, Aesop's Fables, and a translation of the Aeneid, as well as other early English printers like Wynkyn de Worde and John Lettou, were widely spread throughout England as popular literature (Duff 42-52; Blake).

As linguist G. H. McKnight asserts, "the importance of the printing press in molding a language is obvious" (McKnight 58); similarly to the modern impact of writing on Tlingit and other Indigenous North American languages, the "incalculably wider circulation" of English literature "identical" in wording and grammar achieved through the printing press increased linguistic contact between geographically distinct English-speaking regions (McKnight 58, Marker 267), influencing the vocabulary and grammar exposed to previously isolated English populations.

The Disappearance of the Thorn

Most predictably, printed storytelling likely impacted the appearance of English's written language. While the letters ð, æ, ȝ, and ƿ fell out of common use after the Norman Conquest in 1066, þ persisted inconsistently through the mid-15th century; where Chaucer used "th" throughout his c. 1400 *Canterbury Tales* (Chaucer), a summons to arms recorded on behalf of

King Henry VI in 1436, less than forty years before William Caxton introduced the printing press to England, reads:

> By þe kynge Trusty and welbelouyd ffor asmoche as he þat calleth him Duc of Bourgoigne…oþer is come ouer þe water of Grauelyng…þe marches þere willyng…and alle oure strengthes in þe marches þere þe whiche if so were þat god defende. (qtd. in Nevalainen 138)

Caxton's types, however, were cut in Belgium by German punchcutter Johann Veldener, and early sets were intended for a printing press in Bruges, Belgium founded in collaboration with Flemish printer Colard Mansion (Barker, "St Albans" 262; Duff 28). Mimicking German and French types, therefore, neither of which historically use þ, Caxton's fonts use "th" to represent [θ]. Immensely influential in Early Modern England, Caxton's work would have had broad exposure across English-speaking populations, and native English punchcutters, at least in St Albans, emulated Caxton's type in their own production (Barker, "St Albans" 3), reinforcing "th" over þ at a pivotal period in its usage, and likely contributing to its disappearance early in Early Modern English (Harper).

Spelling Standardization in Early Modern English

The printing press' impact on English spelling may extend farther than the disappearance of the thorn. Despite historically inconsistent spelling, where "on the same page…the same word may be spelled in several different ways," between the 1490s and the "middle of the seventeenth century, English spelling evolved from near anarchy to almost complete predictability" (Brengelman 334), achieving a "modern standard spelling" by the end of the 1600s (Howard-Hill 16). While linguist F. H. Brengelman and others attribute English's sudden increase in orthographic uniformity to conscious spelling reform movements in the 16th and 17th centuries (Brengelman), scholars including McKnight and linguist and book historian T. H. Howard-Hill contend that economic practices associated with the printing press may have played a significant role in spelling standardization (Brengelman 336, Howard-Hill). As Howard-Hill establishes, "It is crucial to understand that early modern printers…did not follow the spellings of their copies"; even texts written by 16th and 17th century spelling reformers for the purpose of standardizing English spelling often include "unreformed spellings" introduced by printers, directly contrary to the subject of the text (Howard-Hill 16). Modern spelling, Howard-Hill suggests, resulted from "economy" in Early Modern printing houses (Howard-Hill 19). Many modern spellings, like "had" (compare hadd, hadde) or "grief" (compare griefe, greefe), are shorter variations of Early Modern spelling (Howard-Hill 18); in the printing industry, shortening spelling could save material resources like ink and paper in addition to increasing composition (laying out type) and distribution (sorting and returning type to type cases) speed (Howard-Hill 18, 22-24), avoiding "unnecessary and unproductive effort" and maximizing printed outputs (Howard-Hill 18). Spelling standardization without contraction could also increase distribution speed in the early printing industry. As Howard-Hill asserts, "Fast reading requires rapid recognition of word shapes as a whole," rather than individual letter forms, and letter recognition for type sorting

"would become most efficient when spellings were uniform, when the words the compositor read were in *his* spelling" (Howard-Hill 23, 24).

While Brengelman contends that the lack of communication between compositors and printing houses would have limited the industry's power to standardize (Brengelman 333), Howard-Hill suggests that journeyman compositors, often "obliged to move from printing house to printing house," and who often trained apprentices, could easily have circulated industry standard spellings over time (Howard-Hill 28). Because commercial printing produced the vast majority of Early Modern English literature, accordingly, standard spellings within the industry would have pervaded the primary exposure to written language in most English-speaking communities, likely impacting the sense of "correct" orthography across the English population.

Vocabulary Standardization in Early Modern English

In addition to standardizing English spelling, the printing press may have consolidated vocabulary in both written and spoken English. Despite the movement towards standardization in late Middle English, prior to the printing press both "comyn englysshe" speech and formal writing "in one shyre varyeth from a nother" (Caxton, *Eleydos* 2); as linguist N.F. Blake establishes, "In the fourteenth century literature was written in many dialects…each …considered a suitable vehicle for literature" (Blake 147). By the sixteenth century, however, written English had developed "a standardized literary language based on the London dialect," while "other dialects…gradually became simply spoken and not literary languages" (Blake 148). Early Modern European printers generally congregated around "large population centers, where demand for printed books was greatest" (Rubin 275); in England, likewise, early influential printers like Caxton, de Worde, and Richard Pynson settled in the London area (Duff; "Richard Pynson"), printing predominantly in the London English dialect. Caxton "could reproduce" Chaucer's 14th century London English "with little change" in his printed editions (McKnight 64), but he considered contemporaneous writing from Gloucester "rude and old englyssh…neither vsyd ne vnderstandyn" (qtd. in McKnight 65), altering it to conform to London conventions in his edition of Trevisa's *Polychronicon* (McKnight 64). Due to its prevalence in Caxton and other early printed literature, London English would have disproportionately influenced English communities' exposure to written language throughout the language's range, likely contributing to the Early Modern consolidation of literary language. Indeed, in his 1589 book *The Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham writes that "in euery shyre of England there be gentlemen and others that speake but specially write as good Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do…we are already ruled by bookes written by learned men" (Puttenham).

Printed literature in Early Modern England impacted spoken vocabulary as well as literary English. Where Middle English was marked by diverse dialects, "the linguistic character of the fifteenth century can be considered…the development of a standard" (Blake 149), and by the late 1500s, high status vocabulary, like written dialect, was centered around London English (Blake 150); as George Puttenham instructs 16th century English poets, "Ye shall therfore take

the vsuall speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles, and not much aboue" (Puttenham). Because early printed literature originated largely from a limited population of printers in a single region of England but had a wide audience throughout the island, vocabulary choices made by early printers likely influenced the vocabulary which survived from Middle English dialects into the more unified Early Modern English. For example, in his 1490 translation of the *Aeneid*, Caxton observes that in the late 1400s the modern word "eggs" could variably be expressed "egges" or "eyren" depending on the region of England (Caxton, *Eneydos* 2-3), complaining that "Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren? certaynly it is harde to playse euery man by cause of dyuersite & chaunge of langage" (Caxton, *Eneydos* 3). Caxton preferred "egges" throughout his printed work (Caxton, *Aesop* 166, 190; Caxton, *Reynart*), and "eggs" is the variation that survived into Modern English. In his 1482 edition of Trevisa's *Polychronicon*, Caxton also amended c. 1380 Gloucester vocabulary like *nesche* to "soft," *wone* to "dwell," and *ich* to "I" as well as *eyren* to "egges" (McKnight 65), while leaving Chaucer's contemporaneous London vocabulary substantively unchanged. Despite the original dialect of Trevisa's work, Caxton's amended edition was distributed to a much greater extent than the original translation, skewing the English population's experience of common vocabulary towards Chaucer's, rather than Trevisa's, English by exposure as well as an association with learned literary work.

Neologisms in Early Modern English Literature

The dramatic increase in literary circulation spurred by the printing press may have facilitated adoption as well as standardization of English vocabulary. As Early Modern English solidified over French and Latin as a high status literary language in the 15th-17th centuries, English-language literature contributed to a radical diversification in English vocabulary. "In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," fiction writers including John Donne, John Milton, and William Shakespeare introduced "between 10,000 and 25,000 new words" to the English language, and in the Early Modern inkhorn controversy, writers including Ben Jonson and Sir Thomas Elyot deliberately introduced Latin-derived words to English in order to expand English vocabulary from "ineloquent" to "weighty, subtle, discriminating, pithy, profound, moving…all those qualities for which Latin was admired" (Hall 268). Early Modern English literature introduced a considerable amount of vocabulary still common in Modern English; Shakespeare is well known for words like "'laughable,' 'eventful,' 'accommodation,' and 'lack-lustre'" (Schliep), and inkhornisms include "scurrilous," "petulance," and "compatible" (Hall 270, 289).

In addition to their literary origins, moreover, adoption of Early Modern neologisms may have been facilitated by the distributive power of the printing press; although English literature regained a high status in the 14th century (Thornton 213), the expansion of its vocabulary occurred in the 16th century, after the printing press was established in England. Where in handwritten literature, scribes often changed the wording of their source texts, inhibiting transmission of literary coinages, in printed literature identical copies of an author's words could be spread over a wide area, exposing words coined in the 15th-17th centuries to a much broader

audience than the "local patronage" to which they would have been limited prior to the printing press (Blake 147), amplifying their ability to persist in the language as a whole.

Mass Media, the "Modern Novel," and English Vocabulary

The rise of the novel as an English literary genre in the 18th and 19th centuries created an equal opportunity for literature to introduce neologisms to English vocabulary. From the 18th century onward, content of modern popular literature expanded from Middle and Early Modern English romances to include the realism and adventure genres characteristic of the "modern novel" (Siskin 26; Moretti 4), and as historian Franco Moretti demonstrates in a 2010 paper, "from the first to the last decade" of the 18th century, novel production "increased fourteen [times] in Britain" and factors including popularization of lending libraries, book share groups, and magazine publication "increased the circulation of novels between two and three times" in Great Britain (Moretti 7). The English industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries also multiplied book production, cheaply distributing serialized contemporary literature in newspapers and magazines and accelerating printing via technology like machine-made paper and the steam-powered printing press (Stephens 547-548; Rodensky 586), and "the expansion of literacy into the working classes, the reinvigoration of the serial, the lowering of prices for periodicals, [and] increasing numbers of newspapers and periodicals" shifted English literary transmission, expanding the audience of popular literature include the working class in addition to the wealthy readers who historically dominated the reading public (Rodensky 584), a process which transformed literature from a limited industry to a mass media force in English society.

Neologisms Derived from Modern English Literature

The advent of the novel in England magnified creative opportunities for authors to invent and redefine descriptive terms within fictional works, as well as multiplying neologisms derived by association with character and place names in literature. 19th century literary coinages, more evocatively descriptive than the intentionally educated coinages of the 16th and 17th centuries, include Charles Dickens' "butterfingers," "whizz-bang," "the creeps," and the noun form of "rampage," Lewis Carroll's "chortle," "galumph," "burble," and "portmanteau," and Sir Walter Scott's "freelance" (*Merriam-Webster*). While words like "pander" (from Pandere, in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*), "pandemonium" (from Milton's capital of Hell in *Paradise Lost*), and "blatant" (from a monster in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*) predate the popularization of the English novel, after the "quantitative rise" in novels in 18th century England, which introduced a higher density of distinctive characters and situations to the popular literature (Siskin 27), the relative frequency of neologisms derived from proper names in literature increased. Between 1700 and 1900, neologisms derived by association with contemporary fiction include Jonothan Swift's "brobdingnagian," "lilliputian," and "yahoo" (from *Gulliver's Travels*), Voltaire's "panglossian" (from *Candide*), Dickens' "micawber," "pecksniffian," "pickwickian," and "scrooge," and Carroll's "snark" and "boojum" (from *The Hunting of the Snark*), nearly

double the volume introduced in the previous three centuries (*Merriam-Webster*). While pander, pandemonium, gargantuan, syphilis, blatant, puckish, and quixotic are the only commonly cited English words derived from literature written prior to 1700, there are at least twelve English words adopted from contemporary novels between 1700-1900 (*Merriam-Webster*). Further, while *Don Quixote* was written in 1605, it is commonly considered the first modern European novel, and "quixotic" first appears in English in 1791 (Harper). In addition to the increased opportunity for literary neologisms derived from modern literary styles, moreover, the wide audience of contemporary novels in the 18th and 19th centuries facilitated assimilation of vocabulary from popular literature into common speech.

Slang and Popular Literature in 19th Century English

The popularization of novels and expansion of the audience of popular literature to include lower income brackets in 19th century English society likely led to a democratization of the vocabulary of popular English literature. 19th century contemporary English novels, catering to a reading public heavily influenced by the working class, "reproduce[d] the language of the lower classes" to a greater extent than historic styles of popular literature (Rodensky 584; Sorensen 3, 14); throughout Dickens' career, critics remarked on "his use of the speech and stories of London's lower classes" (Rodensky 593), citing the "unadulterated vernacular idioms of the lower classes of London" that pervaded his work (qtd. in Rodensky 593). Other popular 19th century novelists leaned on "the people's language" as well; as linguist Lisa Rodensky asserts in an analysis of 19th century mass media, "In an 1840…notice of Ainsworth…and Frances Trollope…entitled 'Popular Literature of the Day,' the reviewer loses no time in attacking the novelists' use of slang and representations of low life" (Rodensky 594). Although it is unclear to what extent lower class vocabulary assimilated into the vocabulary of the upper class reading public due to influence from popular literature, 19th century novels undoubtedly exposed English upper classes to working class "vernacular idioms" at an unprecedented scale (qtd. in Rodensky 593), and "Dickens' slang" almost certainly had some influence on contemporary upper class speech (Rodensky 594). As Janet Sorensen establishes in her book *Strange Vernaculars*, "Criminal cant…slowly transmuted into something akin to our idea of slang in the course of the eighteenth century" (Sorensen 3), and in 1839, reviewer Richard Ford "explicitly worries over the effect of [literary] slang on proper English (as others do after him)" (Rodensky 594). In her 1874 fictionalized moral treatise *Eight Cousins,* American author and social reformer Louisa May Alcott criticizes higher-class readers for deriving slang from working class and technical vocabulary in contemporary literature:

> 'These popular stories intend to do good…but…I find a great deal to condemn in them'…
>
> 'Now, Mum, that's too bad! I like 'em tip-top. This one is a regular screamer,' cried Will.
>
> 'They're bully books, and I'd like to know where's the harm,' added Geordie.

> ‘You have just shown us one of the chief evils, and that is slang,’ answered their mother quickly…
>
> ‘A boot-black mustn't use good grammar, and a newsboy must swear a little, or he wouldn't be natural,’ explained Geordie…
>
> ‘But my sons are neither boot-blacks nor newsboys, and I object to hearing them use such words as “screamer,” “bully,” and “buster.”’ …
>
> ‘I do wish the boys wouldn't talk to me as if I was a ship,’ said Rose, bringing forward a private grievance. ‘Coming home from church, this morning, the wind blew me about, and Will called out, right in the street, “Brail up the foresail, and take in the flying-jib, that will ease her.”’…Will vainly endeavored to explain that he only meant to tell her to wrap her cloak closer, and tie a veil over the tempest-tossed feathers in her hat. (Alcott 198-202)

Most 19th century literary slang likely didn’t survive into Modern English, but Sorensen contends that “today’s sense of slang—a lingo trafficked in by inventive, streetwise strangers…emerges in this period” (Sorensen 3), and some 19th century sailing terminology, also popular in English novels of the period (Sorensen 4), does persist as modern idiom. Analogously to Alcott, the “cut of one’s jib,” referencing physical appearance or personality, first appeared in English in 1821 survived into the 21st century (OED), alongside contemporary nautical expressions including “keel over” (from 1833), “pipe up” (from 1856), and “taken aback” (from 1792) (OED).

Audio Media and the 21st Century

The influence of mass media on the English language may continue into the 20th century in the advent of audio media. Analogously to the printing press’ standardizing effect on the English people’s relationship to the written word, mass-produced audio storytelling including phonographs, radios and later television exposes English speakers to audio not limited by geographical region (Levine 1378-1379), diversifying the public relationship to aural in addition to written language. While exposure to audio media does not outweigh the impact of immediate “speech community” on perception of language, so that “broadcast speech has [no] strong effect on people’s daily conversational accents” (Milroy 30), audio storytelling may still impact a population’s relationship to pronunciation. As linguist Lee Pederson establishes in a 1977 study of American pronunciation, dictionary guides to pronunciation are “central to…the interpretation of standards of correctness” for 20th century English speakers (Perderson 293). In the second edition of Webster’s dictionary, published in 1934, pronunciation was derived from written surveys of public speakers, while the 1961 third edition derived “correct” pronunciation from radio and television recordings, shifting the established standard to acknowledge a greater variety of American accents (Pederson 294). Since audio media also directly exposes the English-speaking population to a greater variety of accents, speakers learning new words from audio media may have an increased likelihood to adopt pronunciations not local to their geographical area. The increase in geographical and social mobility in 20th century English

society that coincided with the rise of audio storytelling, however, complicates the possible impact on language of audio media alone.

Preservation of Diverse Kinship Terms in Southern American English

Despite the increasing influence of mass media on English literature beginning in the 19th century, some English-speaking populations did retain strong hereditary storytelling traditions. Rural areas of the South-eastern United States, for example, notably isolated communities in the Appalachian Mountains, preserved "a resilient oral culture" well into the 20th century (Gold and Revill 59). Oral storytelling is entrenched in Appalachian culture; in his paper Folk Culture or Folk Tale: Prevailing Assumptions About the Appalachian Personality, Stephen L. Fisher identifies storytelling as integral to Southern Appalachian society, saying:

> The Appalachian individual, rather than striving for excellence in corporate relationships, might turn his drive for excellence into being a good…story teller. The mountaineer's sense of beauty is expressed in good craftsmanship, the preservation of the great ballads and tales of English literature, and the use of the simile and metaphor in song, story, and speech. (18)

Likewise, in a 2017 paper on "tradition-bearing" in a North Carolina community, storytelling scholar Joseph Sobol discusses the "fundamental orality of storytelling discourse…braided with generations of familial voices" prominent in traditional Southern storytelling (Sobol 206). Analogously to Tlingit, the cultural heritage of traditional storytelling in the rural South may have reinforced the significance of familial relations and filial piety that marks Southern culture (S. Fisher 14; Vance 426), contributing to greater diversity in kinship terms in Southern American English relative to other American regions. For example, the Southern usage of the word "Momma" or "Mama" reflects the importance of heritage in Southern culture; as sociologist John Shelton Reed lays out in a 1997 study, "when we're referring to a southern mother, the word that comes to mind is 'Momma' (or 'Mama')…no label for one's maternal parent is more southern" (Reed 96). While other maternal labels, like "Mother" or "Mom," are also common in the South (Reed 96), "Momma" has more specific connotations in Southern speech; contemporary blogs note that the term "reflects nostalgia and informal family bonds" (Parrot), and "is associated with…family traditions" (Dawson). Semantically different from other Southern maternal labels, "momma adds a more intimate, nostalgic tone and connects to regional and family dynamics" (Dawson), reflecting the importance of familial tradition in traditional Southern culture. In addition to "Momma," moreover, Southern American English retains the word "kin" in common usage to a higher degree than other American regions. Smoky Mountain Voices, a 1993 dictionary of rural Southern speech in "the first third of the twentieth century," lists "kinfolks" as a Southern idiosyncrasy meaning "relatives" (Farwell and Nicholas 1, 98). Modernly, Southern "kin" makes a semantic distinction between "relatives" and "a family unit/group"; it "is akin to clan and means people who are descended from a common ancestry or otherwise related" (Clayton). "Kin to," a common rural Southern phrase, indicates relatedness to a family group, clan, or sometimes person, often implying an entire lineage rather than an

immediate family, like terms like “related to” reference (Clayton, Fleming). Like in Tlingit, “kin” introduces culturally significant differentiation into Southern English kinship terms, emphasizing the importance of kinship, reinforced by the “familial” focus of traditional Southern storytelling (Sobol 206), in Southern society.

Conclusion

In Tlingit, historic fidelity to oral storytelling led the language to adhere more closely to spoken language, deemphasizing word boundary and verbally denoting phrase boundary. The transmission model of Tlingit literary tradition also encouraged dialectic diversity, and cultural values associated with storytelling may have contributed to increased specificity in related vocabulary. Changes in English storytelling often affected English vocabulary, preserving oral idioms in Middle English and standardizing and introducing vocabulary through cultural influence and expanding literary transmission. Taken together, the effects of the contrasting Tlingit and English storytelling traditions on the historical and modern appearance of their respective languages suggest that storytelling practice may distinctly impact the evolution of an associated language.

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