



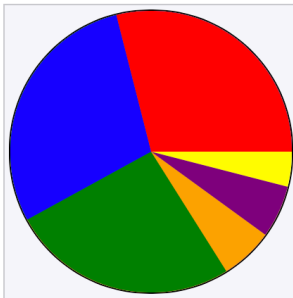


For Discussion

E.

§ 3.3.2

1. Introduce how alphabetic writing evolved by using letter A as an example.
 - Between 1100 BCE and 800 BCE, Greek borrowed from Phoenician traders who wrote in the Semitic abjad, however, vowels are more important in Greek. To increase accuracy and legibility, the Greeks added vowels to the writing system. This step led to a significant change in the nature of the writing system, turning it from abjad to alphabet. Due to the trade centers in the Mediterranean, the Greek alphabet influenced the tribes in Italy, after the Roman Empire almost conquered the whole Europe, the alphabetic system gradually spread to some neighboring tribes and kingdoms. After the localization made by the native people, each nation formed its own alphabet. As for the letter A in English, it evolved in this way:    , Letter A initially occurred in several ancient languages including Proto-Sinaitic. It later became the Phoenician letter , which evolved into the widely known Greek letter A (read as alpha). Sometime around 7th century this letter was adopted by English as a replacement of the Runic letter "ansuz", which turns into the modern A.
2. Alphabetic writing is sometimes called "phonemic writing". Discuss in what sense it is true, and in what sense it is not.
 - I consider alphabetic writing as phonemic writing only when the writing system has only one orthography (having stable and consistent letter-to-sound correspondence), such as Latin and some Romance languages. But in other cases, such as English, a mixture of several Indo-European languages (I'll explain the reason in the next question), it's hard to judge which orthography you'll have to use when you need to spell a word (e.g. many French-originated words have an "-que" at the end of the word and it's pronounced as "k" while Germany-originated words don't have such a suffix, so one might spell "click" as "clique" judging from its sound).
3. Show with one example that English writing is close to the end of opaqueness along the continuum of alphabetic writing systems and speculate one possible reason.
 - There's a very interesting meme that the word "ghoti" can be pronounced like the word "fish" if we take the gh's sound in "enough", take the o's sound in women, and take the ti's sound in "nation". The meme reminds us the pronunciation is sometimes far from its spelling in English. In my perspective, the phenomena might be related to the history in England: in the beginning, only the Celts live on the British island, and the Latin-Speaking Roman Empire conquered the Celts and set up the Province of Britain to rule the region of nowadays England. After the fall of the Roman Empire, several Germanic-speaking groups and Danish-speaking Viking pirates migrated to the British island and established several kingdoms. After the Norman conquest of England, huge quantities of French-speaking people moved into the noble estate of England. From the history, we know that modern English is a mixture of several languages from different Indo-European subdivisions (e.g. "kindergarten" is from German words "Kinder" and "Gärten", acrophobia is from Greek words "ἄκρος" and " -φοβία" and "amor" from French word "amour"), because of the reason that every language has its own orthography, the spelling of English can be often confusing and misleading.



Source languages of English vocabulary^{[6][220]}

- Latin (29%)
- (Old) French, including Anglo-French (29%)
- Germanic languages (Old/Middle English, Old Norse, Dutch) (26%)
- Greek (6%)
- Other languages/unknown (6%)
- Derived from proper names (4%)