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The Great Vowel Shift

a). The linguistics phenomenon I am modeling after is the Great vowel Shift. There is a great difference between Middle English and modern English today. During the 15th to the 17th century, there is a shift up from all of the long vowels, the sound of vowels are further forward and higher up in the mouth. For example, the middle English of a word known today as “sheep” sounds more like “shape”, the word ”house” would sound more like “hoose” in middle English. In terms of specific vowel changes, the “a” sound in Middle English would be “ae” sound in Modern English, the “i” sound in Middle English would sound like “ai” in Modern English.

b). The reason why I choose this topic is because of two reasons, the first is that English is the most widely spoken language in the world today, it is used everyday conversationally, in written words, it is the language people In American think in. It is good to know how the English today came to be and in what way it has shaped the American culture and if more interestingly, vice versa. Had the Middle English stay the same as it was 400 years ago, English today would be totally different, not just in phonology but also in syntax and semantics as well. The second reason is that there is huge amount of English literature, art and etc, that is either written in the format of Middle English or it is better understood through Middle English, the greatest example of that is all of the Shakespeare plays, the rhythmic verse of Hamlet or Richard II would be a lot better understood if it is played with a Middle English Phonology.

c). The class material that is the most similar to this is the interfixation.pl the phonology chapter of the book, the IPA chart, and the vowel chart is definitely the most influential factor contributing to this project, I was able to learn how exactly the phonology of works and how to define the natural classes of each phone through the IPA chart. There was not anything in the book or in a lecture that had discussed this certain topic besides a brief mentioning of the concept in the begging of the phonology.

d). To query, you have to type “english(X).” it spits out the phonological spelling of both Modern English and the Middle English of the same word.

e).the most challenging part of this entire project is to put the idea in terms of Prolog, since I have no prior coding experience what so ever, getting the structure that would not only set up for both English but also spit out answers is quite hard for me to do. The syntax of the Prolog language is especially hard for me to grasp, such things like lists, indexes, elements, subjects that are more related to computer science I had a hard time programming, and there are certain technical difficulties as to adding the new vowels into the word along with the existing one. If everything works the way they are intended for the program should work properly, though there might be certain times where the natural classes for a consonant or a vowel might be overly described or under described. The only problem I had is the lexical item error I keep on running into, which is resolved now.

f). The project is principled in such a way that it incorporates both in-class material and outside framework, in retrospect, the code itself might not be the most technical one in the sense of computer science but it combines what I had learned throughout the class and was able to use it on an outside-of- the-class theme.