Introduction to Volume I

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The first volume of *The New Cambridge History of the English Language* is dedicated to considering the background of English in Germanic and Indo-European and examining the contact and external influences which characterise the history of English at this early stage (Hickey 2012). The volume also contains a set of chapters which deal comprehensively with various levels and linguistic areas as they manifest themselves throughout the entire history of the language – 'long-view' chapters which are intended to assist readers in grasping developments from the earliest attestations of English down to the present.

PART I: THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH

Tracing language back through time leads to prehistory, the period extending backwards from the time when textual records begin. This holds for English just as much as for any other language. But the point in time at which the history of a language starts, that is, when documents first appear, varies greatly. The earliest literary example of what is termed Old English stems from the late seventh century with *Caedmon's Hymn*, which is attested in many forms from the eighth century onwards. To examine the two and a half centuries between this text and the coming of the Germanic tribes from the continental North Sea area to England, the *Adventus Saxonum*, scholars have recourse to other sciences, above all archaeology (Scull 2023) which helps to trace the dates and patterns of early settlement.

Going back further than the fifth century leads to the European continent and to the group of languages known collectively as West Germanic. These include Old Low German (Old Saxon) and Anglo-Frisian spoken by those tribes who moved to England forming the initial Germanic input.

The dialects of West Germanic brought by these early settlers differed from each other in a variety of ways, although presumably they were mutually intelligible. Over time these differences became more marked yielding the dialects of Old English. The West Germanic input of the first settlers can be viewed in its larger Germanic context and this standpoint has been that of comparative philology since the early nineteenth century (Chapter 5). In his chapter on English in its Germanic surrounding (Chapter 2), Wayne Harbert considers the linguistic evidence which reveals the interrelatedness of the various Germanic languages in their earliest stages (Green 1998). In recent decades, this endeavour has been enriched by new methods and insights into historical linguistics and the manner in which language contact and demographic movements have shaped the members of the Germanic language group (see the contributions in Putnam and Page 2020).

Stepping back yet further, Donald Ringe, in his chapter on the Indo-European framework for English (Chapter 1), examines the evidence for Proto-Indo-European (Fox 1995; Clackson 2007), the putative earliest stage of the language family to which English belongs. He discusses the contributions of ancillary sciences, such as archaeology and genetics, to gain a clearer picture of the nature and structure of Proto-Indo-European and the earliest communities which will have spoken it. From there Ringe begins his examination of the diversification which set in to yield the first major branches, above all Germanic. This is done on the basis of lexis and pronominal morphology, which permits the linguist to trace developments from the deep past of the Indo-European language down to the present day.

After these considerations of pre-English history, the chapters move to the scrutiny of issues within the Old English period. In her chapter on language development, Julia Cuesta (Chapter 3) examines the evidence for a major influence of Old Norse on Old English (Hogg 2006; Cole 2014), first in the north and later spreading to the south. She also considers how writing practices in different parts of England led to the rise of supraregional textual forms of English.

The geography of English during the medieval period is the focus of the chapter by Merja Stenroos (Chapter 4). She offers a detailed account of localisable documents from Middle English and discusses the pitfalls in this enterprise as well as the insights into language variation which it offers by scrutinising spelling conventions found in different parts of medieval England (MELD; Riddy 1991; Stenroos 2016).

The study of the history of English is the concern of the chapter by Laura Wright and Raymond Hickey (Chapter 5) who trace how scholars throughout the centuries have engaged with the language through description and analysis. From initial commentary on language issues, an academic discipline arose which became institutionalised and taught scholars to then continue this established tradition (Momma 2015), all the time adapting it to current linguistic thinking and approaches.

PART II: CONTACT AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Little is known about precisely when and how the first Germanic settlers came to England. Importantly, there is no reliable information on the numbers of settlers and their quantitative relationship to the existing Celts in England. What can be said with certainty is that the settlers did not outnumber the population of England. It can be thus concluded that in the course of the first few centuries after initial settlement, many of the Celts living in areas occupied by the settlers shifted to the varieties of West Germanic the settlers had brought with them. The scenario of language shift is one in which structural transfer is at a premium, and it is in this light that Raymond Hickey (Chapter 6) examines the evidence for certain constructions in English having their origin in contact with the Celtic speakers of Brittonic (Filppula and Klemola 2009; Allen 2019). The chapter further reviews the relevant literature and its arguments in an attempt to reach a balanced appraisal of the Celtic hypothesis.

The second major language involved in contact with Old English is Latin, which received considerable impetus after the Christianisation of England in the late sixth and seventh centuries. In her chapter on Latin in the early history of English (Chapter 7), Olga Timofeeva considers the education system in this period, which was in the hands of religious orders (Timofeeva 2022). She also examines how Latin in England continued beyond the Old English period and considers its coexistence with Anglo-Norman during the Middle English period (Ashdowne and White 2017).

The third contact setting in chronological terms is that between Old English in the north of England and Old Norse (Dance and Pons-Sanz, Chapter 8), the language of the Viking invaders and later settlers who first

came to Britain (Scotland and England, north and north-east) in the late eighth century and moved southwards, only being halted during the ninth century by resistance from the Germanic tribes in more southerly areas of England. The most profound influence of Old Norse is to be found in the lexicon of Old English dialects, chiefly in the north, but later throughout England (Dance, Pons-Sanz and Schorn 2023). Dance and Pons-Sanz show that the borrowings reveal the day-to-day contact of Vikings with the local populations, a sociolinguistic scenario which favoured the entry of everyday words into the vocabulary of English.

The Middle English period is defined by contact with French, which resulted from the conquest of England by the Normans in the mid eleventh century (Ingham 2010; Fenster and Collette 2017). The nature of this contact was complex and the influence on English vocabulary nuanced and detailed, something which is shown by de Wilde (Chapter 9) in his study of how insular French influence on British culture was pervasive and long-lasting. This he does by discussing the data and structure of the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, which provides a record of French borrowings in English.

In recent years increasing attention has been paid to code-switching and language mixing, especially in the medieval period. Herbert Schendl shows in his study (Chapter 10) that this issue was multi-faceted (Trotter 2000; Schendl and Wright 2011), more so than was previously reported. The interrelationship of Latin, French and English and the often arduous task of deciphering medieval texts and determining what writing represents what language forms the focus of the chapter, which concludes that not only were the texts multilingual but so too were the writers of the texts. Schendl furthermore considers how modern electronic corpora of medieval materials can assist scholars in the analysis and understanding of texts from these times.

With the progression of Middle English, the language showed increasing regularisation in various fields, for example administrative writings, especially with the advent of printing in the late fifteenth century, though the latter fact should not be accorded too much weight. In her chapter on early standardisation, Louise Sylvester (Chapter 11) carefully considers what evidence there is for emerging standard language in the fifteenth century, drawing in particular on the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* and discussing the views of M. L. Samuels. Sylvester then discusses the recent re-evaluation of the narrative of standardisation for early English (Wright, 2000) while focusing on multilingualism and rejecting the notion of a single ancestor of Standard English (see Wright 2020, for instance).

The influence of Latin and Greek (the latter to a lesser extent) on the lexis of English in the early modern period is the subject of the study by Letizia Vezzosi and Luca Baratta (Chapter 12). They examine the sources of new words and coinages which flooded English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Barber 1997 [1976]; Durkin 2014). These were, in the main, introduced by scholars to supply English with an appropriate terminology for fields traditionally dominated by Latin, but also to provide the richness of vocabulary (*copia verborum*) considered to be the hallmark of both a literary language and Renaissance rhetoric as well as a sign of education and social superiority. Vezzosi and Baratta discuss the intense debate about the 'artificiality' and 'abstruseness' of many loans which rendered necessary the production of dictionaries to explain words that were often being attested for the first time. Their study also includes an examination of early modern street literature texts (pamphlets, broadsheets and ballads) to help in documenting the appearance of classical borrowings and elucidating the mechanisms of their diffusion.

Part II concludes with a consideration of long-term changes in the syntax of English, labelled 'typological reorientation', by Marion Elenbaas. In her study (Chapter 13), she takes a long-term view showing how Old English differs structurally from modern English and discusses the demise of the originally rich inflectional morphology, which has largely disappeared (Allen 2016; Kastovsky 2006). The consequences of this for the syntax of the language is then highlighted, especially the shift from Object-Verb (OV) to Verb-Object (VO) word order and the development towards a fixed position of the lexical verb, which marked a noted divergence from the continental West Germanic languages to which English is related.

PART III: THE LONG VIEW BY LEVELS AND AREAS

The organisation of *The New Cambridge History of the English Language* is essentially thematic with individual chapters examining issues and concerns in the scholarship of the history of English. Nonetheless, overviews of language throughout the entire historical span, from Old English to the present-day, are offered. Seven chapters have been included which cover the entire history of

specific linguistic areas. They combine concise data overviews with a focus on current opinions and debates.[1]

The history of the sound system of English is the subject of Chapter 14 by Donka Minkova, who presents the inventories of the historical stages of English. This she links to changes in the scholarly research on historical phonology. The balance between system-internal triggers and external forces is highlighted, and Minkova offers timely updates of views on sound change, especially those of nineteenth-century linguists in the Neogrammarian tradition and early twentieth-century views linked to structuralism (Hickey 2023). This she complements with generative views of sound change from the mid twentieth century onwards. By examining certain major changes in the history of English, such as the Long Vowel Shift, Minkova provides nuanced and differentiated interpretations of such key developments which form the staple of much historical English phonology (Stenbrenden 2016).

The morphology of English experienced considerable change in the early stages, generally resulting in a demise of inflections as the language gradually change its type (see Elenbaas, Chapter 13). The underlying mechanisms of the long-term transformation of verbal and nominal morphology are scrutinised in detail by Elżbieta Adamczyk (Chapter 15). She also addresses questions of contact with Celtic, Old Norse and Norman French, which may have had a catalytic effect on certain changes. The reinterpretation of what remains of inflection morphology in different varieties of English is also addressed (Anderwald 2009).

Following on from Adamczyk's chapter is that of Bettelou Los (Chapter 16) which provides a detailed examination of various syntactic changes across the entire history of English. A particular focus is the manner in which these changes are related amongst themselves and to those which occurred in morphology. A central focus of Los's chapter is the typological drift which led to English moving from a syntactic to an analytic type over the centuries (Los 2015; Elenbaas, Chapter 13). These changes involved the loss of OV word order in early Middle English, and the loss of verb-second/verb-third (V2/V3) word order in the fifteenth century, leading to a strict Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order in which information-structural status was mapped onto syntactic function, with subjects as the only unmarked way to express 'given' information and objects as the only unmarked indicator of 'new' information. The

[1] See also the following monographs: Minkova (2014) for historical phonology, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2016) for historical sociolinguistics and Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013) for historical pragmatics.

shifts in syntax resulted in reduced options in some cases, and Los examines the manner in which these were compensated for in English grammar, for example by means of phrasal verbs, of certain kinds of passive and by clefting to highlight informationally relevant parts of sentences.

The complexities of semantic change are addressed in detail in the chapter by Kathryn Allan on historical semantics (Chapter 17). She traces the development of key notions and words across larger time spans and identifies a number of different tendencies in semantic change and the manner in which these are motivated. There are sections in her chapter devoted to semantic change within the conventional period divisions of the history of English (Kay and Allan 2015). Allan also discusses the sources which provide relevant data: historical and contemporary dictionaries, corpora and text collections.

An area of historical study which has become the object of increased scholarly research in recent decades is historical pragmatics, examined in detail by Andreas Jucker (Chapter 18). He scrutinises patterns of language use over all periods of English, beginning with very different pragmatics, for instance, in the area of politeness. Jucker furthermore highlights the development of pragmatic markers and speech acts to show how the use of language has changed over the centuries (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013).

A further overarching area of research is historical sociolinguistics which has been investigated by many scholars from many perspectives in the past four decades. Terttu Nevalainen and Tanja Säily provide an overview in Chapter 19, first considering the development of English from a 'small' language in the initial period into a global one in the following millennium (Schreier, Hundt and Schneider 2020). This great increase in range and variety has had a profound effect on the sociolinguistics of English. Nevalainen and Säily trace the external factors and forces which came to bear on the language over the centuries and were instrumental in shaping it.

The last of the long-view chapters is Richard Coates's study of historical onomastics (Chapter 20), which opens with a discussion of the nature of names and naming in general (Coates 1998). He traces the history of personal names, surnames and place-names from the arrival of the first Germanic settlers to the present day. Coates also examines what linguistic evidence names provide for population movements, language contact and demographic developments in general (Coates and Breeze 2000).

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