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Abstract. Middle English, spoken approximately between 1150 and 1500, represents a transitional stage in the development of the English language between Old English and Modern English. This period was marked by significant social, political, and cultural changes, including the Norman Conquest, which introduced French and Latin influences into English. The main characteristics of Middle English include simplified grammar, expanded vocabulary through borrowing, regional variations in pronunciation, and evolving writing and spelling conventions. Literary works of this period, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, reflect the richness and diversity of the language. Studying Middle English provides valuable insights into the linguistic, cultural, and historical development of English.

Key words: Middle English, Old English, language evolution, French influence, grammar simplification, vocabulary expansion, pronunciation, orthography, literature

Introduction

Middle English, spoken approximately between 1150 and 1500, represents a transitional stage between Old English and Modern English. This period coincided with major social and political changes in England, including the Norman Conquest of 1066, which brought a strong French influence. Middle English is important because it reflects the evolution of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and writing systems in English.

Discussion

Vowels: Long and short vowels were still distinct, but pronunciation varied by region. The reduction or loss of certain final vowels began during this period.

Consonants: Some consonant clusters were simplified, and French loanwords introduced new sounds. **Regional variation:** Different areas of England pronounced words differently, leading to diverse dialects.[1] **Vocabulary** Middle English vocabulary expanded significantly due to foreign influences: **French:** The Norman Conquest led to the adoption of many French words, especially in law, government, and culture. Words like court, justice, royal, and parliament entered English. **Latin:** Latin contributed words related to religion, learning, and science. **Old English inheritance:** Native words continued to be used for daily life, agriculture, and nature. This mixture enriched the

lexicon and created stylistic variety.[2] Grammar: Middle English grammar was simpler than Old English: Nouns. The system of grammatical gender and case endings largely disappeared. Plurals mostly used the -s ending. Verbs: Verb conjugations simplified, with fewer endings to indicate tense and person. Auxiliary verbs (have, do, be) became more important. Word order: Due to reduced inflections, word order became more fixed, typically following a Subject-Verb-Object pattern. Articles: Definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles became more important in sentences. Writing and Orthography spelling in Middle English was not standardized: words could be spelled differently depending on region, scribe, or dialect. Manuscripts show significant regional variations in vowels, consonants, and word endings. The invention of the printing press in 1476 by William Caxton began the process of standardizing spelling. Literary Significance Middle English was the language of important literary works.[3]

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is the most famous example, reflecting regional dialects, French influence, and a rich vocabulary. Religious texts, legal documents, and chronicles demonstrate the practical use of Middle English in everyday and official contexts.[4]

Conclusion

Middle English marks a vital stage in the history of the English language. Its features include simplified grammar, expanded vocabulary influenced by French and Latin, regional phonetic variations, and evolving spelling conventions. The language of this period provides insight into medieval English society and serves as a foundation for the development of Modern English.

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