



The Origins and Development of the English Language

John Algeo, Thomas Pyles

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Updated to reflect current research and rewritten to further enhance the clarity of presentation, the fifth edition of this best-seller continues to take a linguistic-analysis approach as well and focus on the facts of language rather than theoretical approaches.

The Origins and Development of the English Language Details

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From Reader Review The Origins and Development of the English Language for online ebook

Sky says

Only read assigned readings/chapters in the book. Class was a little drawing, but it was interesting to learn about the English language's deep and rich history. Helped me able to find the right history setting for one of my own books that I plan to work on soon, as well as assured me I am using the proper languages for it's regions and time setting. Good text.

Kathleen McGloin says

Even though this is a textbook I will keep it in my library forever. It has some incredibly interesting information on the etymology of Modern English words, as well as a detailed history of English and the other Germanic languages and the differences between Germanic and other Indo-European languages.

Lindsay says

I used this as a textbook for Historical Linguistics, and usually I never think of textbooks as books. However, after returning it for the umpteenth time, I realized how much I cherish it as a reference as well as to satiate any clamoring for phonetics, Chaucer, and linguistic trends, so it's earned a spot here on the ol' 'Reads list.

Maja (The Rambling Readerista) says

diachronical view of the English language. sometimes hard to follow the writing style, kind of boring.

Ladygwen says

Algeo tried hard to make a short comprehensive guide to an intensely broad subject matter- the history of the English language. It had some very dry and complicated sections on grammar in various periods of English, but also some amusing attitude towards the end. Overall it was really helpful.

Jim Bilbro says

Overall, a truly excellent overview of the subject. His diatribe on "vogue words" in the chapter on semantics, however, is eminently skipable.

Lizzie Jones says

This is by far the most interesting textbook I ever read during my undergrad. I loved it so much that I kept it and pull it off the shelf every so often to read though a chapter or two. If you're interested in linguistics, you should absolutely own this book.

Jeb says

Pyles' book is crusty, to be sure, but there is one refreshing thing about it: Whenever a linguistic rule is outmoded, Pyles spends some time discussing the history and logic of it, but he grants permission to the rest of us not to have to follow it merely by virtue of the fact that we don't. (e.g. After describing the differences between "shall" and "will," he sums up the crusade for "shall" with the observation that "most Americans...get along very well...without it.")

But this book is great if you're interested in learning bizarre-sounding Old English prepositions like "on butan," meaning "on the outside of."

Emily says

It was like reading a text book, yes it had some interesting parts to it but it was still like reading a textbook.

secondwomn says

read for my history & structure of the english language class. somewhat technical and highly informative. not a book to pick up casually. but if you want to teach yourself about the english language, it's great stuff.

Jerry says

There is an occasional meme going around about how so many things we refer to have lost all mooring from any possible meaning. Who today knows how black pitch is, or has personally heard a broken record?

But this is simply the story of language. If you write with a pen you are figuratively writing with a feather only because our ancestors once did so literally: The word comes from the Latin *penna*, that is, a feather.

If you are interested specifically in how words are extended or refined to cover new concepts, you could start with the later chapter, *Words and Meanings*, but don't miss out on the fascinating history of not just the English language but of attempts to define it back into the beginnings of writing, which, Heisenberg-style, also change the language. The authors do not hide their disdain for those who try to define the indefinable or freeze the unfreezeable.

The authors make the book, which is dense with information, a fun read. It is written with a very subtle

humor hidden among the masses of cultural changes that made English what it is today. There's even a surprise finish, which I'll not spoil here.

If you have read Stanislaw Lem's *The Futurological Congress* and wondered at his magical science of predicting the future from likely word changes, this is how it could be done. If you have some new thing and you want to build a name for it that will last, those last few chapters are invaluable.

"It is a great pity that language cannot be the exact, finely attuned instrument that deep thinkers wish it to be... But it is probably quite safe to predict that the members of the human race, homines sapientes more or less, will go on making absurd noises with their mouths at one another in what idealists among them will go on considering a deplorably sloppy and inadequate manner, and yet manage to understand one another well enough for their own purposes."

Gofita says

Some of the parts of this textbook were a bit heady, but overall it was pretty straightforward and very interesting. We even had to solve language problems, which I actually found fun and intriguing.

Robert says

Excellent for its presentation, like most good textbooks...of clear examples. And let me tell you, this textbook has all of the relevant examples you'll need to keep you interested in my view.

As a reference book, it also has quick, helpful tools/tables/glossary... In addition, I think its reasoned explanation of how language changes from a linguistic standpoint can provide one, very clear constructive side of the story that can be a leaping off point for discussions about the more chaotic and undocumented/undocumentable mysteries of the origins and development of English.

Maria says

This is a thorough (as in for those very interested in delving into great detail) history of the English language (starting from the beginning! I wouldn't recommend this book to the average person who just wants to know a little bit about the history of the English language (there are easier, less academically dense texts for that). It provides detailed explanations of how language evolved and influences that shaped the language. Perfect for my Linguistics students.

Jeremy says

This class was the History of the English Language. Classmates used to tell each other, see you in HEL.
