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**Role Of Michel Foucault's Theory Of Power Politics In The Evolution Of English
Language**

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Abstract

Michel Foucault's theory of power politics has been applied in the realm of evolution of the English Language. Progressive events that led to the development of English were largely influenced by power politics of the repressive forces as well as normalizing forces acting in the society.

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Michel Foucault, the French postmodernist, has been hugely influential in shaping understandings of power, leading away from the analysis of actors who use power as an instrument of coercion, and even away from the discreet structures in which those actors operate, toward the idea that 'power is everywhere', diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1991; Rabinow 1991).

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Before 100 BC, Britain was populated by a mixture of tribes, including the Celts, Picts, Irish and Cornish. They all spoke a variety of Celtic languages.

In the 5th century AD, settlers from west Germany crossed over to Britain. These tribes were called Saxons, Jutes and Angles, and set up kingdoms called 'East Anglia', 'West Saxon', 'East Saxon' etc. They spoke a dialect of the Germanic language and this slowly evolved into the English we speak today.

Old English (c. 400–1100 AD) The language spoken by the Germanic settlers developed differently to the forms found in what is now known as Germany. This early form of English is known as 'Old English'.

Influences during the Old English period

Viking invaders started arriving in north east England in the 8th century. Parts of their Scandinavian language (which is closely related to Germanic languages too) , including words describing family and animals, spread through northern England. These words were integrated into Old English.

Middle English (c. 1100–1450 AD) When the Normans invaded in 1066, French became the dominant language (of court, the church, and the nobility) while the rest of the country spoke versions of English. Gradually, English became more widely used by the educated upper classes and by 1425 English was used universally again in speech and writing. However, it had changed completely since the Old English period and became known as Middle English.

Features of Middle English French lexis heavily influenced by especially legal, religious and administrative terms such as justice, jury, govern and sovereign.

Grammar Middle English became much simpler, reflecting the way the two languages had to co-exist inflections disappeared (all plurals ended -en, -es or - s.Go to the ‘Ages of English’ interactive timeline atto listen to Old and Middle English texts.

Features of Middle English thousands of Latin words, found in French, replaced Old English terms Latin words no standardized system of spelling an estimated 85% of Old English words fell out of use after the Viking and Norman invasions pronunciation Middle English pronunciation was changing with vowels becoming shorter, e.g. leef became life and teem became time.known as the Great Vowel Shift

Early Modern English c.1470–1700 In 1476, William Caxton introduced the printing press to Britain. Many texts could now be mass-produced, which meant that there was a move towards standardization in how they were printed, in terms of spelling and punctuation. Many Greek and Latin texts were translated into English. Caxton chose the East Midlands (London, Oxford, Cambridge) dialect to print works in. This soon became the most prestigious form of English.

Features of Early Modern English

a huge number of Latin, French and Greek words entered the English language: words were needed for new concepts like psychology European Renaissance world exploration Early Modern English brought words from African, Asian and New World languages coined around 1700 new words, such as courtship, excitement and outbreak Shakespeare

Influences of Latin

More than half of our modern English vocabulary is Latinate (of Latin origin), e.g. colossal, dignified, emotion, and history. Most of our prefixes and suffixes come from Latin, e.g. anti-, post-, pre-, -al, -ate, -ic.

Late Modern English c. 1700 – modern day From 1700 onwards, English became more standardised and similar to the language we recognize today. In 1755, Samuel Johnson finished the first 'Dictionary of English'. Many writers had attempted this before but his version was more comprehensive than ever before. In 1762, Robert Lowth published the first English grammar book, which laid out some of the fundamental rules for 'correct' usage.

Standardization and prescriptivism During this time, many writers made attempts to define the lexicon and grammar of English (Johnson, Lowth etc). This led to a view that some non-standard varieties of English were inferior – this is called Prescriptivism. Latin was upheld as the ideal language and used a model for English grammar, even though it had a very different structure.

19th century English Rail travel, colonial expansion, the spread of literacy and mass production of the printed word extended everyone's access to a standard written form of English. The Industrial Revolution changed the way people worked and lived their lives, so new words were needed. English borrowed huge numbers of words from all over the world. American English was becoming a language in its own right, with its own rules and spelling.

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Modern developments English is now a world language of communication

Electronic media like mobile phones and the internet have radically changed the way we communicate with each other. A more colloquial and casual style of language reflects major social changes. Estuary English (a south-eastern dialect) has become widespread in UK. American English increasingly influences British English and English worldwide.

Old English (450-1100 AD)	Middle English (1100-1500)	Middle English (1100-1500)	Late Modern English (1800- Present)
<p>The invading Germanic tribes spoke similar languages, which in Britain developed into what we now call Old English. Old English did not sound or look like English today. Native English speakers now would have great difficulty understanding Old English. Nevertheless, about half of the most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots. The words <i>be</i>, <i>strong</i> and <i>water</i>, for example, derive from Old English. Old English was spoken until around 1100.</p>	<p>In 1066 William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy (part of modern France), invaded and conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the Royal Court, and the ruling and business classes. For a period there was a kind of linguistic class division, where the lower classes spoke English and the upper classes spoke French. In the 14th century English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added. This language is called Middle English.</p>	<p>Towards the end of Middle English, a sudden and distinct change in pronunciation (the Great Vowel Shift) started, with vowels being pronounced shorter and shorter. This, and the Renaissance of Classical learning, meant that many new words and phrases entered the language. The invention of printing also meant that there was now a common language in print. Books became cheaper and more people learned to read. Printing also brought standardization to English. In 1604 the first English dictionary was published.</p>	<p>The main difference between Early Modern English and Late Modern English is vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from two principal factors: firstly, the Industrial Revolution and technology created a need for new words; secondly, the British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the earth's surface, and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries.</p>

FUNCTIONS OF POWER: Regulation of Societal Activities

Foucault also noted an effort by the power to patrol the body and spread them in space. This is to avoid what it costs the least disorder in society. So everyone should be in place according to his rank, function, strengths, etc.. Whether in the factory, at school, at the barracks, power must control the activity, reaching the interior of the same behavior, playing at the act in its materiality most intimate and must also combine bodies in order to extract maximum utility. This is what we may call the combination of forces. This leads Foucault to study the various techniques very careful pedagogy initiated by the government, and its rules very meticulous training of individuals in the various strata of society.

This is to standardize the conduct of the body in the workshops, schools, barracks, everywhere, disciplinary techniques that will ensure that standards are at work what can be called a “micro-penalty”.

Chastise the rebellious body, the body unruly. Deter him from again. In addition, this micropénalité should not be confused with the great state judicial mechanisms, as if there was only one power, state power and political power. Besides a great power, there is pervasive in our society a lot of micro-powers, which allows Foucault to distinguish and to oppose the law and the norm. The law is what applies to individuals from outside, mainly in connection with an offense, the standard is applicable to the individuals inside, as it is for her to reach their interiority even requiring a curve determined their conduct.

REPRESSIVE AND NORMALISING POWER

Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of ‘episodic’ or ‘sovereign’ acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. ‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998: 63). Instead it is a kind of ‘metapower’ or ‘regime of truth’ that pervades society, and which is in constant flux and negotiation. Foucault uses the term ‘power/knowledge’ to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and

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‘truth’: ‘Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true’ (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991).

These ‘general politics’ and ‘regimes of truth’ are the result of scientific discourse and institutions, and are reinforced (and redefined) constantly through the education system, the media, and the flux of political and economic ideologies. In this sense, the ‘battle for truth’ is not for some absolute truth that can be discovered and accepted, but is a battle about ‘the rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power are attached to the true’... a battle about ‘the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays’(Foucault, in Rabinow 1991). This is the inspiration for Hayward’s focus on power as boundaries that enable and constrain possibilities for action, and on people’s relative capacities to know and shape these boundaries (Hayward 1998).

Foucault is one of the few writers on power who recognise that power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society (Gaventa 2003: 2):

‘We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production’ (Foucault 1991: 194).

CONCLUSION

The position adopted by Foucault, that knowledge is not independent of power, is articulated in several studies which outline the precise relations of power within which particular human sciences have emerged, and the contribution made by the human sciences to the development of technologies of power. Foucault studied the forms of discursive practices through which knowledge has been articulated and the relationship strategies and rational techniques through which power has been exercised. He proceeded to a direct address of the forms and methods by which the individual is formed and recognised him as both object of power and subject of knowledge.

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