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Subject : Functional English
: Summer:

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Assignment No: 01

Date : 22/9/2020

History of Spelling:

The way in which letters are arranged in sequence to produce the pronunciation of a word is referred to as spelling or orthography. In some languages, such as Spanish, the correspondence between the letter and the sound is fairly straightforward as each letter or letter combination almost always represents a certain sound. For example, compare the Spanish maleta with its English equivalent suitcase. The pronunciation of the vowels a and e in the former remains relatively constant across words, whereas that of u, i, o and e in the latter is far from being stable across the English vocabulary, the largest and richest of all languages.

During the rather complex history of English, the language has been subjected to numerous influences that resulted in it actually becoming a mixture of other languages, benefiting from abundant contributions to its vocabulary, but also blending different spelling systems. These contribute to the irregular and sometimes incredibly inconsistent and confusing spelling of the written language, which in turn interacts with a varied and sometimes unpredictable pronunciation. One needs to learn a great many spelling rules and be aware of the numerous possible

Letter Combinations

One of the most notorious inconsistencies among letter-sound correspondences is represented in the various sounds of the letter combination ough.

Robert A. Heinlein in his novel *The Door into Summer* came up with the following sentence to demonstrate this: "Though the tough cough and hiccough plough him through". Though is pronounced as stop, tough as huff, and cough rhymes with off.

Hiccough is pronounced as cup, plough as how, and through rhymes with you. Such spelling inconsistencies were ridiculed by playwright George Bernard Shaw, who suggested that the word fish should be spelled ghoti, as gh would stand for f (laugh), o for i (woman in the plural as pronounced /wimin/) and ti would replace sh (as in nation).

However, still, despite the bad reputation English spelling suffers from, hundreds of millions of English learners all over the world have managed to overcome it as they strive to improve their knowledge of the disputed international language, used daily on one million of internet sites, all in English.

A perfect tool to help you in the process of mastering English spelling is the WhiteSmoke online grammar and English Writing Software, which relies on cutting edge artificial intelligence algorithms that provide contextual proofreading any text you write in any application.

When the Anglo-Saxons started arriving at the British Isles around 5th Century AD, the Germanic roots of their language gradually created the core of Old English vocabulary, similar to modern German words, such as father, mother, daughter, son, under, hand, house, and cow. These were originally spelled and pronounced differently, but were transformed due to later linguistic changes.

Additional contact with the language of the indigenous Celts and ongoing word borrowing from Latin speaking merchants, Roman conquerors and Christian monks have resulted in more words that integrated different spelling systems (street, plant, altar, kitchen, butter, wine).

The Viking invasions of the

of the 9th century brought an influx of spelling conventions from Old Norse, which in addition to contributing words such as want, take, and sky also caused the old English word schirt to be written as both shirt and shirt, with the meaning of the two later diverging to denote two different pieces of clothing. Middle English saw a dramatic influence on English spelling with a torrent of Norman-French words coming into use starting from the 11th century. It is estimated that about 40% of currently used English words are derived from French, which has obviously brought with it yet additional spelling conventions, and word roots and suffixes that formed longer English words than before (parliament, justice, ornament, pleasure, establishment, foundation etc.)

Printing was in its early stages and there was still no set spelling standard, which would only later be canonized in dictionaries and language manuals.

From 15th century onwards, the phonological phenomenon known as the Great Vowel Shift caused

numerous vowel pronunciations to change into those more familiar to us today and thus marked the transition into Early Modern English.

The spelling, however, remained as it was and still represented the Middle English pronunciation,

adding another dimension to the bewildering English spelling saga.

Instead of initiating a full realignment of English spelling according to commonly accepted conventions, the expansion of printing has actually fossilized both old and new irregularities with

remnants from all the language sources, which by then had been contributing to the ever-growing

English vocabulary. The additional "silent" e, common to

many words in English, followed these developments, in addition to theough conundrum, illustrated above.

The English Renaissance of the 16th century boosted a renewed interest in classical Greek and

Latin, bringing in a new wave of borrowed words, either with their original spelling or anglicized along the lines of new spelling practices.