

Preface

The present short outline of the historical development of the English language is chiefly intended as a textbook for the students of the Departments of English in Polish universities who are required to take a course of the History of English. Also, other students and non-professional readers interested in English may find it a useful source of information.

The main objective of the book is to offer in a form as concise as possible a presentation of the major aspects of the history of English, both external and internal. Thus, apart from the essential data concerning the key developments in English history which more or less directly influenced the evolution of the language, the textbook presents sample quotations, brief as a rule, from various documents, and short passages from literary texts.

The internal history of English includes the description of the evolution of phonology, morphology, lexicon, dialects and varieties of English. For shortage of space, the author had to concentrate on those aspects of linguistic change which directly contributed to the current shape of the English language. Therefore, the users of the book are encouraged to refer to other standard textbooks of the history of English or historical grammars listed in the Bibliography where they will find answers to questions which may arise after reading the present textbook. In order to facilitate the understanding of the short texts interpolated throughout the book, the readers are supplied with a list of translations of more difficult words whose sense they may find obscure. Such information placed immediately after the text quoted will allow the student, it is hoped, to translate and interpret the passage adduced. The additional texts offered in the Appendix are designed for those students who may be interested in translating them without the teacher's help, using an Old or Middle English dictionary.

It is obvious that the present book owes much to the research of other linguists, chiefly authors of the most important handbooks of the history of English and historical grammars. The original version of the book has been used by the students in their classes of the History of English and their critical remarks were taken into consideration in preparing the present textbook. For its shortcomings, the responsibility is solely mine.

Warszawa, October 1992

J.W.

Preface to the second edition

The present second edition of the 'Outline' incorporates alterations to correct factual inaccuracies of the original text. Chapter Three also contains a new brief paragraph discussing the linguistic literature on the history of English. The bibliography has been considerably expanded and brought up-to-date.

Warszawa, November 1995

J.W.