SOURCE PACKET I: DEALING WITH DOUBT

We will use the following sources in our lesson on how to create convincing arguments with limited factual information. As you read the following secondary sources, please jot down your impressions—anything you find striking, interesting, confusing, or otherwise worth your attention—in the margins or in a separate notebook.

Source I: Chronological Summary of the History of the English Language[1]

5c - 1c BC : England becomes Celtic through the emigration of tribes from Gaul and the Low Countries (Belgae).

55-54 BC: Julius Caesar invades Britain; thorough conquest starts about a hundred years later.

440: Romans leave England due to shrinking empire

449: First Germanic tribes arrive in England

Late 5th century onwards: England divides roughly into seven kingdoms which reflect the tribes occupying the relevant areas. Of these groupings that of the West Saxons in the central south was destined to become the strongest.

End of 6th century: The first records of English are extant from this period. Later in the 9th and 10th centuries the language of West Saxony became the accepted dialect form for written works (historical and religious). A dialect used in this function is called a koiné. The bulk of works in this dialect are those of Ælfric and the commissioned translations of King Alfred. Note that parallel to these and other works we have a large number of works in Latin such as Bede's ecclesiastical history.

End of 8th century: Invasion of north England by Vikings. This is the beginning of a series of invasions (the most important in 865) which brings the Vikings to England on a more or less permanent basis. Their language affects English and is responsible for a large number of loan-words entering the language. It is not until 1042 that the Vikings' power is entirely vanquished.

1066: The invasion of England by the Normans is an event which had vast consequences for England, not only linguistically. The influence of the Anglo-Norman language was greatest immediately after the invasion among the clergy and in the English court which was now seated not in Winchester as in Old English times but in London where it was to remain. Writing in English in the early Middle English period is marked by extreme dialectal diversity as the old West Saxon standard was infinitely too archaic and the later standard of the London area had not yet become established. After 1204 the political influence of the Normans ceased to exist

1. Raymond Hickey, "Studying the History of English," http://www.uni-due.de/SHE/HE_ExternalHistory.htm.

and after this it was Central French which provided the source for newer French loan-words. The stylistic two-tier structure of the English lexicon has its roots in this period.

1400: By the time of Chaucer the English of London had become the implicit standard for the whole country with the exception of Scotland where early forms of Scots had been established in writing and which were to exercise a strong influence in Scotland up to the present century. Note that London English combines elements from three main dialect sources: East Midland, Kentish and to a limited degree from the North.

1476: William Caxton introduces printing to England and greatly contributes, not least through his own literary efforts, to the codification of English orthography.

15th century onwards: In the fifteenth century in the light of the humanist tradition and the renewed interest in Latin and Greek the study of classical rhetoricists and grammarians lead to a series of works on English which lasted until well into the 18th century. The authors of these works are called orthoepists. All of them are of a prescriptive nature; nonetheless they contributed to various aspects of the standardisation of English, for example in the sphere of lexis (vocabulary). At the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century the dispute known as the *Inkhorn Controversy* raged: here the adherents of classical borrowing to an inordinate degree engaged in learned squabbles with those who wished to avoid an alienation of English vocabulary by wholesale borrowing from the classical languages Latin and Greek.

17th century and 18th century: Another factor in the development of the standard in English is the lexicographical work done on English. This starts at the beginning of the 17th century (1604) and culminates in the famous English dictionary by Samuel Johnson (1755) which uses English authors as authorities on usage and which itself had an unprecedented influence on subsequent generations of writers in English and was thus a factor in the standardisation of English vocabulary.

19th century to the present: More than in any other European country England is marked by an emphasis on standard pronunciation. The type of pronounciation known today as Received Pronunciation (after Daniel Jones) or under other less precise epithets such as The Queen's English, Oxford English, BBC English, etc. is a sociolect of English, that is, it is the variety of English spoken by the educated middle classes, irrespective of what part of England they may live in. In the nineteenth century and into this century as well, this accent of English was that fostered by the so-called public schools (private, fee-paying schools) which were the domain of the middle class. It is also the variety which foreigners are exposed to when they learn 'British English'.

Source II. Rome's Destruction and the History of English[2]

Lightfoot (1977) argues (i) that the rule of 'NP Preposing' entered the grammar of English in the late ME period, and (2) that it did so 'fully armed', by which he means that from its first appearance in the language the rule displayed its final form; it did not enter English in a piecemeal way, first with a more restricted application before being extended later. But the first of these claims can easily be shown to be false, and from this it follows that Lightfoot's second claim like-wise fails.

It is assumed by Lightfoot that the rule of NP Preposing is involved in the derivation of (among other things) such phrases as *Rome's destruction*, phrases containing a pre-nominal genitive noun derived from an underlying post-nominal 'object'. According to Lightfoot phrases of this type are found 'only from late ME' (2II). This is a surprising claim for Lightfoot to make, since he himself goes on in his next sentence to cite an example of the construction from Ælfric, who wrote centuries before the late ME period (though it should be noted that there are two errors in Lightfoot's quotation from Ællfric: for *Iuseiscra* and *Christes* read *Iudeiscra* and *Cristes*). I can only assume that Lightfoot discounted the example from Ællfric as an isolated exception. But it certainly is not; further instances are readily found in Ællfric, e.g. *Godes lof* 'praise of God', *Cristes liewa* 'betrayer of Christ', *se deofles biggenga* 'the worshipper of the devil' (Skeat, I890-I900: 152/135, I54/I57, I62/77; use of capitals modernized). Instances can also be found in earlier OE, e.g. *hiora eardes lufan* 'love of their country', *bces landes sceawunge* 'survey of the land', *wwlstowe gewald* 'control of the battle-field' (all from early West Saxon; Whitelock, I967: I2/27, I8/35, 30/8); and instances likewise occur in early ME, e.g. *deaJes dred* 'fear of death', *Godes luue* 'love of God', *sawle bone* 'slayer of the soul' (all from *Ancrene Wisse*; Tolkien, I962: fols 2a/24, 13a/3, 6oa/2I; use of capitals modernized). This list of instances is of course selective, not exhaustive, and could be extended without difficulty; in a single early ME text (*Ancrene Wisse*) I have noted some fifty examples of the construction, without attempting to draw up a complete list.

From this it seems clear that phrases such as *Rome's destruction* were current in OE and early ME, and therefore that (in Lightfoot's terms) the rule of NP Preposing was part of the grammar of English long before the late ME period. This in turn undermines Lightfoot's claim that NP Preposing entered English 'fully armed', for that claim depends on assuming that a group of developments in English syntax, all of which involved the rule of NP Preposing, occurred at roughly the same time in late ME. But since one of this group of constructions, exemplified by phrases such as *Rome's destruction*, existed much earlier than Lightfoot allows, the assumption that the various developments occurred at the same approximate time must be abandoned,

2. George B. Jack, "Rome's Destruction and the History of English," Journal of Linguistics I4 (I978): I29-375.

and with it the notion that NP Preposing entered English 'fully armed'. In this matter at any rate, Lightfoot does not seem to have been able to 'increase our understanding of the history of a language by discovering and accounting for the simultaneity of a set of surface changes' (2I4), simply because the changes in question were far from simultaneous.

Bibliography

Hickey, Raymond. “Studying the History of English,” http://www.unidue.de/SHE/HE_ExternalHistory.htm (Accessed August 31, 2009).

Jack, George B. “Rome’s Destruction and the History of English,” Journal of Linguistics I4 (I978): I29-375.