

Shannon Walsh

11170574

Essay 2

EN402: History of the English Language

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Sean Sullivan

The English language is unique and detailed in a number of ways. When we speak it daily, we don't recognize the many different aspects that help communicate certain moods, questions, answers or emphasis. Although we may think that the English language is simple, being that we speak it without having to think about it, in reality there is so much more to what makes our language the way it is. There are certain terms that define and explain the many aspects of our language including phoneme, allomorph, morpheme, diphthong and intonation.

By definition, a phoneme is a group of related and non-contrasting sounds. The English language has forty-five phonemes but it depends on how you use them with diphthongs. A diphthong, or a gliding vowel, is when there are two vowels next to each other and make two sounds. Even though it makes two sounds though, it remains within the same syllable. In the English language, there can be many phonemes in a single word. For example, the word tough has three phonemes; "t" is the initial consonant, "ou" is the vowel consonant and "gh" is the final consonant sounding like "f". When it comes to diphthongs, an example would be using "ie", "ou", "ae", "oi", "ei" or "au" plus more. Diphthongs occur in words like mine, hide, mike, weight, or motion. The purpose for it is to make the word flow or "glide". When you say certain diphthong vowels slowly they turn out sounding like different spellings. For instance, if you say the letter "I" slowly, it actually sounds like, "ah ee". A morpheme is another part of linguistics that represents the "smallest meaningful element in a language". There are bound and free morphemes. Examples of this are "re-", "full", "ly", "un", etc. The ones that are words on their own, such as full, are free whereas the ones that need the other part of a word to make sense are bound, like "re-". An allomorph is the sound of making words plural, past tense, etc or when the word varies in sound but not in meaning. For instance, examples could be cats, boxes or buzzed. Here the sound changes but the meaning of the word does not. Finally, Intonation is an

aspect of language that is especially unique. This is when the sound of our voices goes up or down depending on the mood or tone we are speaking. This can also be used when putting emphasis on certain words to prove a point or focus the subject on a certain word. An example would be, “Are *you* going to the party?” or “Are you going to the *party*?” Both sentences say the same thing but are implying two different things. The first one emphasizes the “you” and the second, the “party”.

Phonemes, allomorphs, morphemes, diphthongs, and intonations are all important to study and understand when speaking the English language. These different parts of the English language show that its history is complex and meaningful. If we did not have these, then it would be hard to communicate certain feelings and emphasis on certain words to communicate a thought or point of view. Language requires our voice, tones, spelling and meaning to make it complete. The English language requires all of these things to function as a successful working language.