

sci.lang: Re: accents

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29 Mar 2005 06:53:31 -0800: "Iain" <iain_inkster@hotmail.com>: in sci.lang:

>*Don't you think that if Standard Written English didn't exist, spoken English would have evolved further beyond recognition?*

I doubt it. Just this last week I found examples of texts 400 or 500 years old, in Dutch and Portuguese, that have changed very little, and are still comprehensible. A large proportion of those periods the majority of these language communities were illiterate. So I think the influence of the written language on the spoken language has been very limited, and it hasn't slowed change. Change is slow with or without written language.

>*Or perhaps the "recognition" in question is provided by writing.*

Possibly. Now, but not in the recent past.

>*Writing is an axiom reminder than the /t/ sound at the end of "chased" has the same semantic function as a written "-ed" -- our mental image of the "-ed" distinguishes "chased" from "chaste" in our minds.*

In the mind of those who can read, yes. Until recently, they were a small minority.

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