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**The History of the English Language**

**University of Nyíregyháza**

Contents

[PART ONE: How and Why Languages Change 3](#_Toc170555118)

[1. The Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Languages 3](#_Toc170555119)

[2. Language Change 9](#_Toc170555120)

[3. The causes of language change 12](#_Toc170555121)

[4. Phonetic Changes 17](#_Toc170555122)

[5. Morphological Change 25](#_Toc170555123)

[6. Semantic Change 29](#_Toc170555124)

[PART TWO The History of the English Language 32](#_Toc170555125)

[1. The Continental Period of English (~5000BC – 400AD) 32](#_Toc170555126)

[1. Indo-European (5000-4000 BC) 32](#_Toc170555127)

[2. Proto-Germanic and aboriginal influence (4000-2000 BC) 36](#_Toc170555128)

[3. The Germanic Separation (~1000 BC): Grimm’s Law and Weak Verbs 39](#_Toc170555129)

[4. West Germanic and the first Latin influence (500 BC–400 AD) 41](#_Toc170555130)

[2. The Old English language (400-1100) 44](#_Toc170555131)

[1. Historical background 44](#_Toc170555132)

[2. Establishment of the first English tribal dialects. 45](#_Toc170555133)

[3. The culture and language of the early period of Anglo-Saxon (450-600). 45](#_Toc170555134)

[A) Phonetic changes 46](#_Toc170555135)

[B) Morphology 46](#_Toc170555136)

[C) OE Vocabulary 48](#_Toc170555137)

[4. Christianization and the second Latinate borrowing 48](#_Toc170555138)

[5. Viking invasion and settlement 49](#_Toc170555139)

[A) Phonetic changes 50](#_Toc170555140)

[B) Morphological changes 50](#_Toc170555141)

[C) Lexical changes 51](#_Toc170555142)

[D) Semantic changes 52](#_Toc170555143)

[Samples from Old English 54](#_Toc170555144)

[3. The Middle English language (1100-1485) 57](#_Toc170555145)

[Historical background 57](#_Toc170555146)

[A) Phonetic changes 59](#_Toc170555147)

[B) Morphological changes 60](#_Toc170555148)

[C) Lexical changes 61](#_Toc170555149)

[Samples from Middle English 68](#_Toc170555150)

[4. Modern English (1450-present day) 69](#_Toc170555151)

[New demands, expansion and stabilisation 69](#_Toc170555152)

[A) Phonology 69](#_Toc170555153)

[The Great Vowel Shift 70](#_Toc170555154)

[B) Spelling changes 74](#_Toc170555155)

[C) Lexical changes 75](#_Toc170555156)

[Vocabulary Expansion in the Renaissance 75](#_Toc170555157)

[The fight of “traditionals” and “progressives” 79](#_Toc170555158)

[Samples from Modern English 82](#_Toc170555159)

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# PART ONE: How and Why Languages Change

## 1. The Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Languages

The languages of the world can be studied ***synchronically***, which means that we look at their present state and try to establish types of languages.

Or, based on their history, a ***diachronic*** study may be carried out, in which we look at their historical development.

One type of the synchronic study of languages is examining their word/morpheme ratio. Based on this, four basic types can be distinguished:

1) isolating,

2) inflectional,

3) agglutinative,

4) incorporative languages.

The last three are called synthetic languages.

**(1) Isolating languages** do not use too many morphemes per word, so words do not tend to be built up of ‘roots’ and ‘affixes.’ In extreme cases, a word is one morpheme (a ‘root’) and it is only the position of the morphemes that decides their meaning. An extreme case is an ***analytic*** language, where there are no inflections at all. An example from Mandarin Chinese:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 明天 | 我 | 的 | 朋友 | 会 | 给 | 我 | 做 | 一 | 个 | 生日 | 蛋糕 |
| míngtiān | wǒ | de | péngyou | huì | gěi | wǒ | zuò | yí | ge | shēngri | dàngāo |
| tomorrow | I | genitive particle) | friend | will | give/for | I | make | one | ([classifier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_classifier)) | birthday | cake |
| "Tomorrow my friend will make a birthday cake for me." | | | | | | | | | | | |

**(2) Inflectional languages** change the form of words to express grammatical categories of tense, aspect, mood, person, etc. They either

(1) change the root (sing – sang – sung - song)

(2) use roots and affixes to signify grammatical relationships (he play+s, he play+ed) or

(3) use roots and prefixes (play – replay; honest - dishonest).

It’s important that an affix can “squeeze” together many meanings into it. Most European Indo-European languages are inflectional languages that use a more or less elaborate system of declension and conjugation.

For instance, the French word ***arriverai*** can be split up into the root *arriv* + affix *er+ai.* The morpheme “er+ai” expresses the first person singular and the future tense at the same time (‘I will arrive’). If we want to express that “you” or “she” will arrive, we have to use a different affix, “er+as” and “er+a”, respectively. German, Spanish, Russian or Polish are also inflectional languages.

**(3) Agglutinative languages** got their name from the idea that words are made up of “gluing” morphemes together. The main difference between inflectional and agglutinative languages is that in the latter, one morpheme usually expresses one grammatical idea only and the functions can be clearly separated. **Hungarian** is an agglutinative language.

For instance the verb “elkészíttettem” can be divided into morphemes like “el-kész-ít-tet-em” in which only the last one expresses two ideas, that is, first person singular and definite conjugation. Or: “el + magyar + áz + hat + atlak + ok”.

**(4) Incorporative languages** use an incredibly high number of morphemes per word. In fact, they build up “word sentences,” cramming all related morphemes into one word. For example the **Mohawk** sentence *Sahwanhotkwahse* can be broken down into the following segments:

s -a- h- wa- nho- t - kw- ahs-e

again-PAST-she/him-door-close-un-for-PERF

"she opened the door for him again”

The **Chinook** sentence (a language spoken by Native Americans in Oregon and Washington states) meaning “I have come to give her this” can be broken up like this:

i- n- i- a- l-u- d- a-m

“from” “I” “direct object” “moving towards someone” “the idea of giving” “perfectiveness”

Which class does English belong to? Theoretically, it is an **inflectional** language like French or German, but since most inflectional endings have disappeared, it is close to *analytic* languages like Chinese.

Today there is an estimated number of 6,900 languages all over the world, which can be grouped into *language families*. A language family is a group of related languages that can be traced back to a common ancestor, called the ***proto-language*** of that family. It is often only a hypothetical language, since there is no written document surviving from that proto-era. (Theoretically, there was only one “mother tongue” for all people, a common ancestor language for the whole humanity.)

The estimated number of language families is 94. All the **daughter languages** coming from the common proto-language of a language family share certain observable, similar features, and are very often represented as different branches of a family tree. By number of native speakers, the leading language family of the world is Indo-European (46%), by number of languages, however, the Niger-Congo family is the number one, containing 1,532 languages.

In Europe, most languages belong to the **Indo-European family**, including

* **Germanic** languages (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic – these are the North Germanic languages; and English, German, Dutch – the West Germanic languages; the only known East Germanic language, Gothic, is extinct)
* **Romance** languages (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Romanian),
* **Slavic** languages (Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovakian, Serbian, Bosnian, Slovene, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian)
* **Celtic** languages (Welsh, Cornish, Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic – very few people speak them)
* **Baltic** languages (Latvian, Lithuanian)
* **Albanian** and **Greek** do not belong to either group (they have no relatives).

Indo-European languages spoken outside Europe include languages spoken in mainly India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran (**Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Pashto, Kurdish, Persian**, just to mention a few).

In Europe, Hungarian, Estonian and Finnish are not Indo-European languages, they belong to the **Finno-Ugrian language group**. Maltese belongs to the Semitic group.

Below you can see a map of the geographical division of Indo-European languages in

Europe and in Asia.



The systematic **diachronic** study of languages began about two centuries ago. Since the English began to colonise India, scholars got acquainted with “ancient” languages. **Sir** **William Jones** (1746-94), among others, propagated the idea that Sanskrit bore resemblances to classical Greek and Latin, suggesting that they may also be related to Celtic, Gothic and Persian.

He supposed that these languages come from **a common root, that is, Proto-Indo-European.**

**Linguistic evidence of language relatedness**

The most spectacular way one can decide whether languages come from a common root and are related to each other is the comparison of words. Let us take the example of the word “full”:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Modern E. | German | Dutch | Danish | Swedish | Icelandic |
| full | voll | vol | fuld | full | fuller |

You can see the same initial sound [f] and the second consonant [l]. However, the [f] sound appears as [p] in other related languages. The reason for this mutation is the proximity (closeness) of [f] and [p] when pronouncing them.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Latin | Greek | Slavic | Serbian | Baltic | **Proto IEU root** |
| plenus | pleres | polniy | pun | pilnas | **\* pel-/pol-/pl-** |

*What proves that these words come from the same mother language?*

1. **Similarity of phonetic arrangement**. The Germanic languages ***consistently*** display an [f] sound whereas non-Germanic ones show a [p] sound. They have the **common root element** [l].

2. Similarity of **morphological arrangement.** Let us take the example of “mother” in IEU languages.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| English | Latin | Greek | Slavic | Sanskrit | Lithuanian |
| mother | mater | meter | maty | matar | moti |

You can see that these words mean the same, begin with the same sound, and they can be divided into two morphemes: the root “m+vowel” (obviously coming from the easiest sound a child can produce) and a morpheme meaning family relationship “tVr”. See for instance in English, where this is *–ter*: *sister*, *brother*, *father*, *daughter*.

3. The meaning is the same (**semantic identity**). This does not have to be an *exact* semantic identity, as seen from the following examples:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sanskrit | Latin | Greek | Slavic | Old High German |
| Kravis | cruor | kreas | krov | hrō |
| “raw meat” | “coagulated blood” | “meat” | “blood” | “raw” |

Let us see another example, the word “to bear” in third person plural, present tense. Let us “check” whether these word are related to each other or not.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| English | Latin | Proto-Slavic | Greek | Sanskrit |
| (they) bear | ferint | beranti | feronti | bharanti |

1. There is **phonetic** similarity in the [bh], [b] and [f] sounds. According to the plausibility principle, [bh] is more ancient, it turned into [b] and then into [f]. According to the majority principle [bh] and [b] are earlier forms. The majority principle also shows that there are more [e] vowels that [a] vowels. Thus, the hypothetical IEU root \**bher*- may be reconstructed. They have the common root element [r].

2. **Morphologically**, they show the common affix –nt, signifying the third person plural.

3. **Semantic** identity: OK, all words mean “to carry”, “bring forth”, “produce”.

It is very important to realise that accidental similarities that display no consistency are not proofs of language relatedness (false cognates, pseudoscientific language comparison). For instance, the English word **wall** and Hungarian **fal** are very similar. But that is no proof that the two languages are related. If one could prove that English [w] systematically corresponds to Hungarian [f] in all cases and these words are semantically identical or similar, that would be a ground for treating the two languages as related. But that is impossible.

**Summary The study of languages**

1. Synchronic division

a. isolating

b. inflectional

c. agglutinating

d. incorporative

2. Diachronic division

proto-languages >

language families

3. Proofs of language relatedness

a. phonetic arrangement

b. morphological arr.

c. semantic identity or similarity

## 2. Language Change

All languages change over time.  They change because there is no fixed one-to-one correspondence between sound and meaning in human language. But why do certain changes occur and not others?

This is a partly unanswerable question.  Some changes in language are clearly motivated by changes in culture or environment. Language is an expression of human activity and of the world around us, and changes in that world bring forth innovations in a language.  Also, contact with other languages may cause a language to change very quickly and radically. At any rate, the language of isolated communities seem to change least.  (Cf. Volga Germans, Russian Old Believers in Oregon, Amish in Pennsylvania, Spanish in New Mexico, Sardinian vs. French.)

English has changed *radically* over the last 1,000 years, perhaps more than any other European language.  Russian has changed less radically. Icelandic is the most conservative of the Germanic languages. And Lithuanian has changed the very least over the last 2,000 years.

Let us see some specific examples of how languages, in this case English, might change.

In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) we can read the following line said by Juliet:

(1) *“O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?”*

**(1) Vocabulary change.** For contemporary readers, the line is comprehensible, though somewhat strange. We do not use the question word “wherefore” anymore, like we won’t understand the expression “art thou” unless we know that it means “you are.” To understand the sentence, it is might be helpful to know that *wherefore* at that time meant *why*, *for what reason*. However, English still uses a related word, which has survived, and that is *therefore* (meaning *for this reason*).

(2) There are also **grammatical** **changes.** “Thou” is only used now mostly in quotations from the Bible (e.g., “Thou shalt not kill.”), contemporary English only uses the pronoun *you*. In Modern English[[1]](#footnote-1), however, several kinds of pronouns were used to express “you” depending on case and number.

* Singular nominative case was expressed with “thou” (“*Thou* *art* a student”);
* plural nominative used “ye” (“*Ye* are students”);
* singular accusative had “thee” (“I teach *thee*”);
* while plural accusative required the form “you” (“I teach *you* all”).

Note that the verb was also used different forms: *are* and *art*. The modification of words to express different grammatical categories is called **inflection[[2]](#footnote-2)**. The inflection of nouns (pronouns and adjectives) is called **declension**, that of verbs is referred to as **conjugation**.

As is clearly seen, English has lost most of its declensions and conjugations, and there are now only traces of the once complicated system: in simple present, third person singular, we use the *–(e)s* ending, we have to learn the past tenses of verbs, we decline the pronouns, but that’s all about it. Even 400 years ago, English was much more complicated.

Now let us see some other, earlier examples. A part of the Lord’s Prayer in Gothic (an extinct East Germanic language), Old English (English spoken until the 11th century) and Modern English. What changes can you see?

Example 1.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Gothic** | **Old English** | **Modern English** |
| *Atta unsar þu in himinam / weihnai namo þein /*  *qimai þiudinassus þeins /*  *wairþai wilja þeins /*  *swe in himina jah ana airþai.* | *Fæder úre, ðú ðe eart on heofonum /*  *Sí ðín nama gehálgod. /*  *Tó becume ðín rice. /*  *Gewurde ðín willa /*  *On eorþan swá swá on heofonum.* | *Our father, thou in heaven, /*  *holy be thy name. /*  *Thy kingdom come, /*  *thy will be done, /*  *as in heaven also on earth.* |

(2)

Let us see a quotation from the Bible (Matthew 21) in these three languages:

**Gothic**: *Manne sums áihta twats sunnuns.*

**Old English**: *Sum mann hæfde twegen suna.*

**Modern English**: *Some man (a certain man) had two sons.*

Where can changes occur in language?

* **Phonetic** (pronunciation): fæder, nama, willa
* **Morphological** (the form of words): heofonum, eorþan, gehalgod
* **Syntactic** (sentence patterns): Hwi forbead God ēow þaet ge ne æton?
* **Lexical** (vocabulary): ríce, soþlice

It is very important that these changes within a language are always **systematic**. That is, if a change occurs within one category, it affects all the elements of that category. Compare these Old English (OE) and Mod. E. pairs:

* hām – home ;
* lā(ᵹ) – low ;
* ᵹāt – goat ;
* bāt – boat ;
* āc – oak ;
* āþ – oath

(“ā” denotes a long “a“ sound; ᵹ” is a phonetic symbol representing the glide [j] as in “my”.)

You can see that the same change occurs within each word belonging to this category; the sound long [a:] transformed into the long diphthong [ǝʊ].

However, these changes are usually parts of *more systematic* alterations.

[ba:t] 🡪 [b ɔ:t ] 🡪 [bo:t] 🡪 [boʊt]

9/10th c. – 13/14th c. – 16th c. - now

The change that occurred in the pronunciation of “boat” affected long OE vowels and was part of the so-called Great English Vowel Shift.

So if a change occurs in language (especially in phonetics), that tends to affect all similar words. That is change tends to be systematic.

## 3. The causes of language change

*There are three basic reasons why language change occurs:*

1. Physiological reason (physical reason in connection with speech production)

2. Cognitive reason (in connection with thinking)

3. Contact with other languages

**1. Physiological basis**

People always want to *ease the pronunciation* of words. Whether we admit it or not, we do not like to waste our energy pronouncing every sound. Just pay attention to yourself when you are speaking. If you use an informal register or speak quickly, most sounds tend to “disappear” When the tongue slips from one position to another, it inevitably produces different sounds, which is the basis of assimilation.

(a) **Deletion.** For example, the original form of the OE word *sendan* (“they sent”) was *sendadan*, but since the two [d] sounds were so close to each other, over time it simplified into *sendan*.

(b) **Insertion**. The original form of the word “empty” was “aemtig”, but for the sake of easier pronunciation, the sound [p] was inserted.

(c) **Assimilation.** Assimilation is the fact of a speech sound being influenced by the sound that comes before or after it. For example, OE wifman > Mod. E. woman. Or, OE cēped was transformed to Mod. E. kept.

**2. Cognitive basis**

The human mind simply *wants to see regular patterns in language.* Therefore, speakers create similarities and extend regularities to irregular cases as well. A child (or a beginner learner), for example, uses “regular” past tenses, such as “goed”, “leaved”, “catched” or “regular” plurals, such as “foots” or “oxes”. This is called

(a) **Analogy**. Some non-educated speakers of English, use the forms of the word bring on the analogy of *“*ring, rang, rung”, “sing-sang-sung”, and so the past form and the past participle of “bring” become “brang” and “brung.” Such an analogy worked when at the end of the OE period, the different plural forms –as (*stanas*, “stones”), -en (*nama*, “names”), -u (*scipu*, “ships”), and -a (*suna*, “sons”) were replaced by “-es.”

(b) **Re-analysis.** It occurs on the level of morphemes. It is an attempt to apply an existing compound /root + affix structure to a word that was not formally broken down into these segments. That is, re-analysis splits off a part from a word and puts it to another, similar word.

> The most well-known example is “hamburger.” Originally, the word referred to a type of food with meat coming from the port of Hamburg. Later, this origin faded, and the part “ham” was thought to have referred to a type of meat, not the place, and thus, other words were created, such as “cheese + burger”, “veggie burger”, “Burger King”, and so on. To carry on with the hamburger example, the brand name which was originally a family name, McDonald’s, was also re-analysed, and now we have Big Mac, McDrive, McCafé, etc.

> The Latin morpheme *min-* ‘little’ is seen in *minor* and *minus* but the words *minimum* and *miniature* led to the recognition of *mini-* as the morpheme meaning ‘small’ which has become general in English (and German) as a borrowed morpheme, cf. *minibar*, *minicomputer, miniskirt*.

Other examples from OE and ME language:

* “an adder” (“serpent”, “snake”) was originally *a* *nǣddre*, but the boundary between the article and noun shifted. The original form remained in German (*Natter*) and Welsh (*neidr*), which all go back to Latin *natrix*.
* “apron” (Old French *naperoun*, see E. *napkin*);
* “umpire” (OF *nounpere* = ‘non’+ ‘peer’, that is, a third, neutral party).
* “newt” (“tarajos gőte”), originally OE *efata*, later *an* *ewt, a newt*
* “nickname”, which was originally Old Norse *aukanafn*, English *ekename* (“also” + “name”), and became *nekename* in Middle English.
* “daffodil” originating from the 1540s, variant of Middle English *affodill* "asphodel" (c.1400), from Medieval Latin affodillus, from Latin asphodelus, from Greek asphodelos, of unknown origin. The initial d- is perhaps from merging of the article in Dutch *de affodil*, the Netherlands being a source for bulbs.
* “sport”, originally OF *desport, disport*, meaning “to divert, amuse, please, play; to seek amusement," literally "carry away" (the mind from serious matters)”, from des + port > de + sport > sport

(c) **Folk etymology.** This is a change in a word or phrase caused by the replacement of an unfamiliar form by a familiar one and its original etymology is forgotten. Examples:

* English dialectal form *sparrowgrass*, originally from Greek ἀσπάραγος ("asparagus") remade by analogy to the more familiar words *sparrow* and *grass.* Further examples:
* The pair “male” – “female.” The word “female” has nothing to do with its “male” counterpart, because it comes from Latin *femelle*, a diminutive form of *femina*. The origin of “male” is the Latin word *masculus* that changed to *masle*, *mâle*, *male* in OF and was borrowed from there.
* The word “belfry” was originally (Old Norse) “berfroi” (meaning wooden siege tower on wheels) and had nothing to do with bells.
* The word “cockroach” came from Spanish *cucaracha* and had no relation to either “cock” or “roach” (a kind of fish).
* Other examples: muskrat (*musquash*), helpmate (*help meet*), cesspool (*cessperalle*).
* (Hungarian examples: tubarózsa, kárókatona, durrdefekt, hóhányó, vérfarkas)

**3. Language contact**

Perhaps the most productive way of language change is when a language gets into contact with other languages. Every language has loan words from other languages, sometimes to a very large extent (like English), sometimes to a very little extent (like Icelandic). There are three types of language contact.

(a) **Substratum**: this is the influence of a politically inferior language on a superior one. Examples: Slavic words in Hungarian (borona, király, pap, szolga, rend, megye, mezsgye); Gaelic words in English: *whisky*, *kilt, shamrock, hooligan, bog, bard, clan, slogan, trousers*.

(b) **Adstratum**: the influence of an “equal” language on another one. For instance, Norse (Viking) settlers brought in a number of words into OE, sometimes very basic words, like *take, get, give, bake, skirt, skin, skip, and sky*.

(c) **Superstratum** contact, when a dominant language spreads words in an “inferior” one. A huge number of French-Norman words appeared in English after 1066, like *duke, duchess, baron, noble, army, court, and judge* (except for “queen”, “king” and “lord” and “lady”, all titles are of French origin in English).

A very spectacular sign of language contact is, of course, the broadening of vocabulary.

The English language contains a huge number of lexical doublets, which explains the unusual richness of English vocabulary.

*A* ***lexical doublet*** *can be defined as two words from a common source which reach a language at different times or through different intermediate languages.* What happened in the case of the English language was that very often, a Latin-origin French word was borrowed after the Norman conquest and then the word with the same root was borrowed from Latin or Italian once again in the Renaissance period.

Some examples:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ROOT** | **FIRST BORROWING** | **SECOND BORROWING** |
| PIE \*tris- | three | tri- (like in tripod, trimester) |
| Lat. potionem (“drink”) | poison (from OF poison) | potion (=a liquid with healing, magical, or poisonous properties) |
| Lat. platea (“broad street”) | place (from OF, replaced *stede*) | plaza, piazza (also “plate” – the idea of a flat metal object) |
| PIE \*win-o- | wine (from Proto-Germanic \*winam) | vine |
| Lat. moneta (“mint”) | mint | money |
| Lat. debitum (“thing owed”) | debt (from OF dete) | due |
| Lat. fragilis | frail (from OF fraile) | fragile |
| Late Latin hospitale (“guest house”) (see also host) | hospital (from OF ospital)  hostel (OF hostel) | hotel |
| Vulg. Lat. \*adiamantem (“hard, unbreakable”) | diamond (from OF diamant) | adamant |
| Lat. consuetudinem (“habit, usage, practice”) | custom (from OF costume) | costume |
| Lat. habitare (“live, dwell”) | habit (“custom”) (from OF habiter) | habit (as “dress”), see French s’habiller |
| OF atachier | attach | attack (from Italian *attaccare la bataglia* = join the battle) |
| Med. Lat. capital (“head”) | cattle (from OF chattel – which survives in the expression “means and chattels”) | capital |
| Lat. caput (“head”) | captain (from  OF capitaine) | chief  + borrowed for the THIRD time as *chef ­\** |

\* the Latin word “caput” has given English the words *cattle, capital, capitol, chapter, chief, chef, and captain*.) (Hungarian counterparts: *fej, fő, fejezet, főváros, főnök*.)

A Hungarian example: the Medieval Latin word **tragea** was borrowed as “**trágya**”. The original meaning of the word was “sweets”, “spices”, then by a semantic shift, it came to mean “dung” (the thing that “flavours” the ground). Then the word was borrowed a second time directly from French as “**drazsé**”. (Other examples: bödön – puttyony, ragya – rozsda, bodega – patika, gél – zselé.)

**Summary Causes of language change**

1. Physiological basis

a. insertion

b. deletion

c. assimilation

2. Cognitive basis

a. analogy

b. re-analyis

c. folk etymology

3. Language contact

a. substratum

b. adstratum

c. superstratum

## 4. Phonetic Changes

Sound changes usually begin as rather subtle alteration of pronunciation, in a particular phonetic environment. This is usually a kind of *simplification* of pronunciation. Changes usually affect sounds that are close to each other in the word (adjacent sounds). There are six basic kinds of change:

**(1)** **assimilation;**

**(2) dissimilation;**

**(3) epenthesis;**

**(4) metathesis;**

**(5) weakening (and deletion)**,

**(6) rhotacism.**

We always have to bear in mind that **spelling** is one thing, **pronunciation** is another. Thus, the emphasis here will be on the pronounced words and sounds, so the graphic marks, the letters do not always refer to pronounced sounds.

First let us review the English consonants to understand why we can call one “stronger” and another “weaker.”

The English consonants according to their manner of articulation:

1. Non-continuants
2. Plosives or Stops [p], [t], [k], [b], [d], [g]
3. Affricates [tʃ], [dƷ], [tr], [dr] (the combination of a stop and a fricative)
4. Continuants
5. Nasals [m], [n], [ŋ]
6. Laterals [l]
7. Fricatives / spirants / sibilants [f], [v], [Ɵ], [ð], [s], [z], [ʃ], [Ʒ]
8. Frictionless continuant [r]
9. Semi-vowels or glides [j], [w], [h]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The hierarchy of consonants according to their strength (from the strongest to the weakest) | |
| Voiceless stops | p, t, k |
| Voiced stops | b, d, g |
| Voiceless fricatives | s, ʃ, Ɵ, x, |
| Voiced fricatives | z, Ʒ, ð |
| Nasal stops | n, m |
| Liquids /glides | r, l |
| Semi-consonants | j, w, h |

I. **ASSIMILATION**: this is the process whereby one sound becomes similar to an adjacent sound, regarding the manner or the place of articulation. That is, a voiced consonant can render the adjacent voiceless consonant voiced, or vice versa. Think of a very simple example: if you put the root ‘publish’ and the marker of past tense ‘-ed’ together, the result will be [pʌbliʃt]. That is, the voiceless sound [ʃ] affects the following voiced [d] sound, and makes it a voiceless [t]. If a sound has an effect on a following sound, it is called **progressive** assimilation. If a sound alters a preceding one, it is called **regressive** assimilation. The –ed ending works on the basis of progressive assimilation, while Hungarian typically has regressive assimilation, which can lead to wrong pronunciation [\*pʌbliƷd].

Let us see the different types of **assimilation** with examples of historical linguistics.

**(1/a) Devoicing**: A voiced consonant becomes voiceless.

Voiced and voiceless “pairs”:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Voiced** | **Voiceless** |
| Stops | b | p |
| d | t |
| g | k |
| Fricatives | z | s |
| Ʒ | ʃ |
| ð | Ɵ |
| v | f |
| Affricates | d Ʒ | t ʃ |
| dr | tr |

For instance, the OE language (as Germanic languages in general) marked the past tense in certain verbs with the insertion of a dental consonant (“d” or “t”).

Hence, the past tense of *slæp* was *slæpde*. But since the sounds [p] and [d] are quite similar to each other as for the place of articulation, but they are different as to the manner of articulation, the [d] sound easily changed into [t]. (progressive assimilation). Thus, *slæpde* became 🡪 *slæpte* 🡪 *slept*. This explains the irregular past forms in present day English, such as *left*, *kept*, *crept*, *wept*, and so on.

**(1/b)** **Voicing.** A voiceless consonant becomes voiced. For example:

OE *wifman* (“wife man”). The [m] sound regressively affected the [f], so *wifman* became 🡪 *wimman* 🡪 *woman*.

**(2) Palatalization** is the effect of a front vowel [i], [e], [æ] or [y] (or a glide [j] or [w]) on a preceeding velar consonant [k], [g] or an alveolar consonant [t] or [d]. The result will be a “**softer**” [k], [g], etc. sound. Let us see some examples.

Take the word *keep*. You can notice that if that [k] sound is followed by a back vowel, such as [u], as in *cut*, you can hear two kinds of [k] sounds. The first one is softer, marked with [kʹ] and the second one is “harder.”

Palatalization is often the first step towards **affrication or sibilization**, as a result of which an affricate [dƷ] or [tʃ]; or a sibilant sound [ʃ] or [Ʒ] appears.

**(3) Sibilization** means a similar process, whereby instead of an affricate, a sibilant emerges [ʃ] or [Ʒ]. The word “fish”, for instance, comes from the Latin word *piscus* (see for instance Italian *pesce*, French *poisson* and *piscine*). Then it changed to Gothic *fiskaz*. Here the [i] sound began to have an effect on the next [sk] cluster, “softening” it. So, the form [fisk’] emerged, then in the late OE period, *fisc*, pronounced [fiʃ]. So:

Lat. piscus 🡪 Goth. fiskaz 🡪 OE [fisk’] 🡪 Late OE [fiʃ])

A similar change took place in the word *bishop*. It was borrowed by OE as *bisceop*, which later became “bishop”, following the above pattern.

Similar examples:

* skip > ship
* skirt > shirt
* scatter > shatter

**(4) Affrication**: [k] + [i/e] 🡪 [k’] 🡪[tʃ]

If we look at the word Goth. *kilþom*, meaning “womb”, we can notice that the [k] and [i] sounds start a palatalization process. Hence Early OE cīld [ki:ld], which developed into OE cīld [k’i:ld]. Later the [k’] sound got much softer, and the **affricate** [tʃ] emerged in Late OE [tʃi:ld ]. (Spelling is another matter, the form “cild” remained until the 11th century, and it is a French influence that now we spell it “child”.)

A similar change took place in words like chin (OE *cinn*), birch (OE *birce*), teach (OE *tǣcan*), speech (OE *spræc*), and chest (OE *ciest*).

**(5) Deaffrication** is the opposite of affrication. That is, when an affricate [tʃ] or [dƷ] loses the “stop” part, i.e., the [t] or [d] sound and becomes only [ʃ] or [Ʒ]. This was quite characteristic of Romance languages and is interesting for us mainly because the French-English language contacts.

In Gallo-Romance, or Vulgar Latin, the initial *ca-* stem or final *–ca* ending very quickly became pronounced like [tʃa].

For example, words like *cattus* (“cat”), *calvus* (“bald”), *carus* (“dear”), *catena* (“chain”)

or *blanca* (“white”) in Old French were pronounced with a [tʃ] sound. Later, this [tʃ] sound was *deaffricated* and became [ʃ], like in present-day French.

See for example: cattus > *chat*; calvus > *chauve*; carus > *cher*; catena > *chain*; blanca > *blanche*.

The same applied to the OF word *gent*, pronounced [dƷent] 🡪 later F. gent [Ʒɒŋ], meaning “people.” The word comes from Latin *gens* meaning “race”, “clan”, the original word coming from the Proto-IE root \**gen-* meaning “to produce” (see generation, gender, germ, genitals, gene, genuine, genius).

Now the Latin pronounced it as [gens], but it became affricated in Old French [dƷent]. This was the version they brought into England after 1066, so now English has *gentleman*, originally *gentilhomme*, meaning “a man born in a high, noble family”. Later in French the [dƷ] was deaffricated and now French has *gentille* [Ʒɒntij], but English has gentle, gentleman, gentry, and so on.

So, from the pronunciation of a French-originated word, it might be told when it came to the English language. “Chain”, “charity”, “chief”, “chancellor”, “chapter”, “chance”, “change”, “chair”, “champion”, “chant”, “chamber”, “charge”, “charm”, “chase”, “chapel” are probably **early** borrowings, because they have [tʃ] in them, which is the sign of a stage ***before* deaffrication**.

**Later** French borrowings, however, are ***all deaffricated***: *machine, chandelier, chivalry, chef, champagne, chauffeur, genre, garage.* (Sometimes one word was borrowed twice, such as *chief* and *chef*, or *garage*, which exists in two different pronunciations.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Early borrowings from French (11-12th c.) | Later borrowings from French (16-17th c.) |
| [tʃ] (chain) | [ʃ] (champagne) |
| [dƷ] (gentle) | [Ʒ] (genre) |

**(6) Umlaut, or i-mutation**: this is a very important and productive change in Germanic languages that led to many visible changes in morphology. *Umlaut is a process whereby a front vowel or glide affects the back vowel of* ***another syllable****, and makes that back vowel more similar to the front vowel.* This change is responsible for some irregular plurals in English (like foot - feet) and irregular past tenses (fall - fell).

To understand the phenomenon of i-mutation, compare the pronunciation of the words “do” and “doing” in these sentences: “How do you **do**?” and “How are you **doing**?”. In the second example, how “doing” sounds is clearly different from the first one, because it sound something like “dewin’”. The reason for this is that the [i] sound wants the [u] sound to be similar to it. Simply, the movement of the tongue from [u] to [i] results in the appearance of an [e]-like sound.

Let us take the example of ***mouse***. In Proto-Germanic, it might have sounded like \*mūs, and the plural \*mūsiz. The front vowel [i] of the second syllable began to affect the back vowel [u] in the first one, and it became more “fronted”, and was pronounced [mysi]. Later the [z] disappeared, since language does not like doing the same job twice ([y] became the sign of the past tense). Later the final [i] sound was dropped, and the word became [mys]. Then the [y] sound became “more” fronted and became [mīs]. During the so-called Great Vowel Shift, it reached its pronunciation that we have now [mais]. So:

Pr.Gmc. \*mūsiz 🡪 West Gmc. \*mūsiz 🡪 Pre-OE \*mysi 🡪 OE mys 🡪 Early Middle E. mīs 🡪 Early Mod. E. [məi:s] 🡪 Mod. E. mice [mais]

The same process in the case of “*foot*”:

Pr.Gmc. \*fōtiz 🡪 West Gmc. \*fēti 🡪 Pre-OE \*fēti 🡪 OE fēt 🡪 Early Middle E. fēt 🡪 Early Mod. E. feet [fi:t] 🡪 Mod. E. feet [fi:t]

Let us see the same in the case of “*kitchen*”:

Lat. *coquina* 🡪 Vulgar Latin *cocina* 🡪West Gmc. ­\**kokina* 🡪 Pre-OE \*kukin 🡪 Early OE \*kykin 🡪 OE cycen 🡪 Late OE cychen 🡪 ME cichen 🡪 kitchen

The case of the word “*mint*” is interesting:

Lat. monēta (‘mint’) 🡪 West Gmc. \*munita 🡪 Pre-OE \*munit 🡪 OE *mynet* 🡪 Late OE *mint.*

The i-mutation is responsible for pairs like strong-strength, deep-depth, wide-width, food-feed, blood-bleed, rose-raise, late-latter. It is also responsible of the irregular plural of **man**, because in West-Gmc. it was \**manniz*, which resulted in **men**.

And let us not forget about the word “English”, whose original form was *Anglisc*.

Anglisc > Englisc > English (siblilzation!)

**II. DISSIMILATION.** The above examples referred to assimilation, that is, when sound became more similar (or the same) as an adjacent sound. Dissimilation is the opposite process, whereby sound become *less similar* than they used to be.

O. Bav. kramar 🡪 OHung. karmar 🡪 Hung. kalmár

Lat. arbor (‘forest’)🡪 Sp. arbol; Lat. anima (‘soul’)🡪 O. Sp. anma 🡪 Sp. alma

In English, the words *marble* and *turtle* may be cited as examples. “Turtle” has two meanings (“gerle”; “teknősbéka”).

The name of the bird comes from Latin *turtur* (which probably imitated the bird’s call). The two [r] sound close to each other resulted in a form *turtle* in Old English.

The name of the reptile comes from French *tortue*, whose origin is unknown, and probably because of the similarity with the bird’s name, it developed into *turtle* in English.

The word “marble” comes from Latin *marmor*, and it was directly borrowed by Old English as *marma*. However, it was borrowed for a second time, from Old French, where the form was *marbre*. The proximity of the two [r] sound resulted in dissimilation into *marble*.

**III. EPENTHESIS** (**INSERTION**). Epenthesis is an insertion of a sound to make pronunciation easier. This happened in words like *gander*, *empty*, and *thunder*. (Hungarian used epenthesis also quite often since it does not tolerate too many consonants after each other.)

Examples:

Early OE ganra 🡪 OE gandra 🡪 Mod. E. *gan****d****er*

Early OE æmtiᵹ 🡪 OE æmptiᵹ 🡪 Mod. E. *em****p****ty*

Proto-Gmc. thunraz 🡪 OE Þunor 🡪 Mod. E. *thun****d****er*

Slavic sluga 🡪 OHung. szuluga 🡪 Mod. H. sz**o**lga

Lat. hominem 🡪 Vulg. Lat. homnem 🡪 O. Sp. homre 🡪 Mod. Sp. *hom****b****re*

**IV. METATHESIS** (**SOUND REARRANGEMENT**). When sounds or syllables change places within a word. Examples:

OE *wæps* 🡪 Late OE wæsp 🡪 ME wasp

Early OE *þridda* 🡪 Late OE þirda 🡪 *third* (cf. German dritte)

Early OE *brennan* 🡪 Late OE bernan 🡪 *burn* (cf. German brennen)

OE beorht 🡪 Late OE brycht 🡪 *bright*

The case of *Þyrl* (‘hole’) is an interesting one. As a result of metathesis, the form *Þryl* emerged, hence *Þrylian*, ‘to pierce’, later ‘to thrill.’ On the other hand, the compound *nosÞryl* became Mod. E. *nostril*. (The OE word *eagÞyrl* ‘eye-hole’ was replaced by the Norse word *vindauga*, ‘the eye for the wind’, hence: *window*.)

**V. ELISION (WEAKENING OR DELETION)** played a very important role in the development of English, as a result of which the language became a lot simpler, although the traditional spellings remained, which no longer reflected the spoken word. We can speak about ***apocope and syncope*** and/ or deletion.

***V.a. Apocope*** *is* the loss of a word-final vowel. In a broader sense, it can refer to the loss of any final sound (including consonants) from a word.

Let us take the example of *fast* in OE. The adverbial form of the adjective was *faste*. But since the final “e” was unstressed at the end of the word, it got weaker and disappeared, so now we apply the same word for expressing quality and manner (he was fast, he ran fast). Apart from that, most verbal and nominal suffixes have been lost due to apocope.

***V.b. Syncope*** is a loss of one or more sounds from the interior of a word, especially in unstressed syllables.

When certain consonants come close to each other, whose pronunciation is difficult, one or several consonants tend to be deleted. So, pronunciation – as in all cases – is simplified.

OE *hlafweard*  (‘the one who guards the bread’)🡪 *hlaford* 🡪 ME *loverd* 🡪 *lord*

OF autum**p**ne > automne > E. autumn

**VI. RHOTACISM**. In linguistics, this usually refers to the transformation of a [z] sound into [r]. For instance, when certain dialects pronounce “ladder”, “matter”, “got a” with an [r] sound, that’s also rhoticism.

Rhotacism can be best seen in the emergence of rhotic verbs like *were* in English and *war* in German. In Gothic, this rhotacism did not take place.

Proto-Gmc. \*was (1st and 3rd person singular) 🡪 OE wæs 🡪 Mod. E. *was*

Proto-Gmc. \*wēzum (1st person plural) 🡪 (Gothic *wēsum* ) 🡪 OE wǣron 🡪 Mod. E. *were*

Goth. *maiza* 🡪 E. *mo****r****e* ; Ger. meh**r** ; Sw. me**r**a

Goth. *diuzan* 🡪 E. *dee****r*** ; Ger. Tie**r** ; Sw. dju**r**

Goth. *huzdian* 🡪 E. *hoa****r****d* ; Ger. Ho**r**t

**Sound changes summary:**

I. Assimilation

1. 1. Voicing / Devoicing

1. 2. Palatalization Affrication, Sibilization

1. 3. Deaffrication

1. 4. Umlaut or i-mutation

II. Dissimilation

III. Instertion (Epenthesis)

IV. Sound Rearrangement (Metathesis)

V. Weakening or deletion (Elision)

5. 1. Apocope

5. 2. Syncope

VI. Rhotacism

## 5. Morphological Change

Changes do not only occur in the pronunciation and spelling of words but in the *forms* also. There are five forms of morphological change:

1) fusion of words,

2) borrowing (or loss) of affixes,

3) loss of inflectional endings,

4) analogy,

5) re-analysis.

Roots may remain the same but new affixes, suffixes, prefixes, inflectional endings may occur or may be dropped.

Affixes may occur by fusion or borrowing.

**(1) Fusion**: if two words (‘roots’) are used side by side for a long time, their relation may turn into a root + affix relationship.

In Old English, the word ***hād*** meant something like ‘state’, or ‘condition’. Thus, if they wanted to express that someone was in the condition of being a child, they said *cīld hād*, which is present-day *childhood* (similarly: brotherhood, neighbourhood, motherhood, parenthood – this affix refers mostly to people being in a certain condition).

In German, this ending is –*heit*, as in Freiheit, Einheit, Wahrheit.

Another such root that turned into an affix was ***dōm*,** meaning ‘power’, ‘condition’, coming from the old IEu root \**do*-(‘do’). Hence *cyning dōm*, present-day *kingdom*. Similarly: freedom, boredom, martyrdom, serfdom, wisdom.

In German, the same ending may be seen in *–tum*, as in Altertum, Kaisertum.

A third important word that developed into an affix was ***scīpe***, meaning, ‘state, ‘condition, ‘shape’. See for instance *frēond scīpe*, that is, *friendship*. Similarly: relationship, hardship, citizenship, worship.

This is cognate with German *–schaft*, like Mannschaft, Gemainschaft, Wirtschaft.

Most affixes, however, come from **(2) borrowing** in English. Examples: -tion, -shion, -ude, -ous, -ty, al, -able, -ible, -ability, -ence, -cy, -ist, -ment (these are suffixes) and prefixes like –dis-, in-, mis-, sub-, so on are all of French – ultimately of Latin – origin. Thus, when you see words like ques**tion**, fa**shion**, similit**ude**, gener**ous**, pover**ty**, soci**able**, leg**ible**, count**ability**, intellig**ence**, differ**ence**, bankrupt**cy**, dent**ist**, docu**ment**, **dis**appoint, **in**different, **mis**chief, they are all of French origin. (The prefix mis- also existed in Germanic languages, hence *mistake*, *misdeed*.)

Very often, these suffixes and prefixes replaced OE equivalents after 1066. For example, the native German suffix –*bǣre* was replaced by –*able*, and thus we don’t have words like *ātorbǣre* (‘poisonous’), but the suffix remained in German –*bar*, like in essbar (‘edible’), undenkbar (‘unthinkable’), waschbar (‘washable’), wählbar (‘elective’), wunderbar (‘wonderful’).

As you can see, English could freely mix native German roots and French suffixes, such as in ‘thinkable’, where ‘think’ is of German and ‘able’ is of French origin.

The gradual **(3)** **loss of inflectional endings** (noun and verb endings) is responsible for much of the simplicity – and difficulty – of present-day English. (See **apocope** above.) Old English was highly inflectional, which means that certain cases of nouns and the function of verbs were marked with different endings. Consequently, word order was much more flexible. Let us take an example:

Sē cniht ᵹ**ea**f ᵹief**e** Þæ**s** hierd**es** sun**e**.

*Nominative Past tense Accusative Genitive Dative*

“The knight” “gave” “gift” “to the shepherd’s” “son.”

In this example, you can see that the idea of “gift” being the object of action is expressed by the ending –e; the fact that it was given to someone is marked by the –e ending (*sun-e*), and the notion that the son was the shepherd’s son, is recognisable in the –es ending.

Today, English only has the irregular past tense (give-gave), the possessive (shepherd’s), but not the accusative or dative case. Since the inflection marker for the dative case disappeared, it can only be expressed with **prepositions** (“**to** the shepherd”). The fact that the accusative also disappeared is responsible for the fixed word order: you can’t say \**The knight gift gave to the shepherd’s son*, while in OE the word order “Sē cniht Þæs hierdes sune ᵹiefe ᵹeaf” was possible. The remnants of the inflections, however, are still visible in the pronouns: him, her, its, my, them, their, etc.

The OE language worked with a very elaborate declension (noun forms) and conjugation (verb forms) system, with different classes of inflection. For example, the “declension table” of the noun *hund* (“hound dog”) went as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Singular* | *Plural* |
| Nominative | hund | hund**as** |
| Accusative | hund | hund**as** |
| Genitive | hund**es** | hund**a** |
| Dative | hund**e** | hund**um** |

By the 15th century, all inflectional endings disappeared, except for Singular Genitive –es and Nominative Plural –as: hound**es** and hound**as**. As a result of apocope, the forms *hound’s* and *hounds* appeared and remained. (The apostrophe came to be used only in the 18th century to distinguish between the two forms!)

**(4) Analogy** also played a significant part in the development of morphology. (Don’t forget, the human mind tends to simplify everything and see – or make – regular patterns where there are none.)

Let us see the example of *handa*, “hands” in OE. If the regular process of apocope had taken place, today, the plural of *hand* would also be *hand* (see examples like *fish, sheep, deer, offspring*). But the process was **stopped** **by analogy**, since *hand* and *hund* were very similar, so if the plural of *hund* was *hundas*, then the plural of *hand* became *handas*.

Not all nouns got the –es ending, however. We still have “irregular” plurals like *oxen*, *children*, *brethren*. This is the relic of the so-called *weak* *declension* of nouns, where the plural was marked by the ending *–en*.

The different markers for plural sometimes led to funny situations as it happened it the case of the word “egg.” “Egg” comes from Old Norse – as it is seen from the “hard” [g] sound – and so it was used mainly in the **northern** areas of England. The forms *eye*, *eai*, which came from OE *æg* through **palatalization**, were widespread in the **south**. Thus, William Caxton, the first English printer in the 15th century, noted the following incident:

*For we Englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste but ever waverynge, wexynge one season and waneth and dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn Englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another, in so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a ship in Tamyse for to have sayled over the see into Zelande, and, for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte Forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in to an hows and axed for mete and specyally he axyd after eggys, and the goode wyf answerde that she could speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde have hadde* ***egges****; and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste another sayd that he wolde have* ***eyren****. Then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges, or eyren? Certaynly it is hard to playse every man, by-cause of dyversite and chaunge of langage.* (1490)

Finally, there were certain cases where affixes lost their original meaning and were confused with each other, that is, they were **(5) re-analysed**.

Good examples here are the adjectival suffix *–ly* (OE līc) and the adverbial suffix *–e*. In OE, *līc* originally meant ‘appearance’, ‘form’, ‘body’, thus later gained the meaning ‘having the form of’, ‘having the qualities of’, ‘resembling’, ‘like’ (in fact, *like* and *–ly* come from the same root).

This ending was used to make adjectives from nouns. For example: dæg + līc 🡪 *daily* (something done/get every day, e.g., “daily bread”). The adverbial suffix was *–e*, to express the manner in which it was done, hence *dæglīce* (“naponta”). By the Middle English times, this final –e was lost and thus the –ly ending came to mean **both** **an adjectival and an adverbial suffix**. Thus, *dǣglīc* was used both to describe a noun and a verb (“napi” and “naponta”).

In the case of words like *dēop* (‘deep’), *fast*, *hlūt* (‘loud’), there was no *–līc* ending (wouldn’t have made sense), only the adverbial ending *–e* , to express the manner of action (*dēope*, “mélyen”, *faste*, “gyorsan”, *hlūte*, “hangosan”). This –e ending, by the late OE period, of course, disappeared, and the **–ly ending, which had been an adjectival ending, came back as an *adverbial* ending** in the case of *deep* (deeply) and *loud* (loudly), but not in the case of *fast*, whose adverbial form now is also *fast*.

**Summary Morphological change**

1. Fusion

2. Borrowing

3. Loss

4. Analogy

5. Re-analysis

## 6. Semantic Change

Naturally, not only the pronunciation, the spelling, the form of words and their position in sentences can change but also their***meaning***. This is called semantic change. We can talk about seven kinds of semantic change:

1. Broadening
2. Narrowing
3. Amelioration
4. Pejoration
5. Weakening
6. Strengthening
7. Semantic shift

**1. Broadening**. Some words tend to acquire a broader meaning over time than their original meaning.

For example, the word meaning “the father’s sister” was borrowed from French in the 14th century as *aunte*, which is, of course, present-day aunt. Over time, it gained the meaning “either the father’s or the mother’s sister.” The word comes from Latin *amita* (“little mother”), whereas the maternal aunt was called *matertera*. In OE: faðu and modrige.

**2. Narrowing.** Some words show a tendency to narrow their meaning.

For instance, Proto-Gmc. \**foglaz* evolved into OE *fugel* that meant “bird” (any kind of bird). (The word “fly” also comes from this root.) From the 1570s on, the word underwent narrowing, and now only “domestic hen or rooster” are called *fowl*. *Bird* is of OE origin, and originally it meant “young bird, nestling.”

A similar example: OE *mete*, Mod. E. *meat*, which originally meant any type of solid food.

**3. Amelioration**. Sometimes words acquire a more positive meaning than their original form.

For example, OE *cwene* originally meant an ordinary woman, wife. Now it is *queen*, which is the woman of the highest rank. (Interestingly, another word from the same root, *quean*, came to mean ‘hussy’, ‘female serf’, ‘prostitute’ or a ‘male homosexual’ over times, so this word underwent *pejoration*.)

Another example for amelioration is the OE word *prættig*, whose meaning was ‘cunning’, ‘skilful’, ‘sly’, ‘tricky’. Then this meaning shifted to ‘skilfully made’, ‘attractive’, and then from about 1400, ‘manly’, ‘gallant’. Today we use it in the meaning ‘beautiful’, ‘attractive’, although it also has the meaning ‘moderately’, see ‘pretty big confusion.’

**4. Pejoration.** The opposite of amelioration is pejoration, that is, when a word gains a more negative meaning compared to its original one.

For instance, the OE word *gesælig* originally meant ‘happy’ (cf. German *selig*, meaning ‘happy’, ‘blissful’). Then the meaning underwent changes through ‘blessed’, ‘pious’, ‘innocent’, ‘pitiable’, ‘weak’, ‘lacking in reason’, ‘foolish’, and the present day word is *silly*.

**5. Weakening**. Meaning may also weaken, that is, a word gains a meaning that expresses something less than the original one.

For instance the Proto-Gmc. word \**kwaljanan* was the original form of OE *cwellan*, which meant ‘to kill, murder’. This meaning got weaker to signify ‘suppress, extinguish, ‘pacify’, hence present-day *to* *quell*. (You can quell a riot, disturbances, pain, fears, grief, etc.) The word is cognate with OE *cwealm*, ‘death, disaster, plague’, from whence present-day *qualm*, ‘a sudden feeling of sickness’, or ‘sudden disturbing feeling’.

**6. Strengthening.** Interestingly, the word “kill”, which only appeared around 1200, originally had the meaning ‘to strike’, ‘to beat’, ‘to hit’, ‘to knock’, a fairly mild meaning, thus this word underwent *strengthening*.

**7. Semantic shift**. Sometimes words no not change their meaning in any positive or negative direction, but as a result of *connection* with other concepts and practices of life, they take on a new meaning.

For instance, it is easy to see where the modern meaning of *mouse* (the computer device) comes from. Or the word *horn* means both the horn of an animal and a musical instrument, it is not difficult to see why. Sometimes concrete terms gained abstract meanings.

Consider the evolution of the word *toilet*.

* Middle French *toilette* "a cloth; a bag for clothes," diminutive of toile "cloth, net" (see *toiles* in French means cloth, coming from Latin *tela*, related to textile.)
* 1530s in English: "cover or bag for clothes,"
* by 18c.: "a fine cloth cover on the dressing table for the articles spread upon it;"
* "the articles, collectively, used in dressing" (mirror, bottles, brushes, combs, etc.)
* "act or process of dressing," especially the dressing and powdering of the hair (1680s);
* 1819: "a dressing room" especially one with a lavatory attached;
* 1895: "lavatory or porcelain plumbing fixture" (1895), an American euphemistic use

Other examples to consider: cabinet (in politics), bug (in IT), patch (in IT), shoulder (traffic)

* *Now try to match the present-day words with their original meaning.*

beam, boy, nice, deer, giddy, harvest, lady, lord, naughty, slogan, artificial, travel

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Original meaning | Present-day meaning | Type of semantic change |
| kneader of bread |  |  |
| possessed (by God) |  |  |
| poor |  |  |
| foolish, ignorant |  |  |
| made by human skill |  |  |
| tree |  |  |
| difficult work, labour |  |  |
| animal |  |  |
| battle cry |  |  |
| autumn |  |  |
| guardian of bread |  |  |
| male servant, slave, fellow, knave |  |  |

**Homework**: Determine the original meaning and the type of semantic change.

1. soon
2. awful
3. gay
4. villain
5. peasant
6. boy
7. girl
8. left
9. prestige

**Summary Semantic Change**

1. Broadening
2. Narrowing
3. Amelioration
4. Pejoration
5. Weakening
6. Strengthening
7. Semantic shift
8. sergeant
9. stomach
10. womb
11. quick
12. business
13. accident
14. gentle
15. sophisticated
16. fast
17. film
18. bridegroom

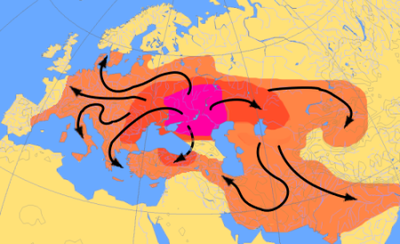
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# PART TWO The History of the English Language

## 1. The Continental Period of English (~5000BC – 400AD)

### 1. Indo-European (5000-4000 BC)

      According to mainstream theories, there was a group of loosely related peoples, living north of the Black Sea in the late Neolithic Age around 5000 BC, that are now called Indo-Europeans. They spread across Europe and Asia in the subsequent centuries. Linguists place the period of IE unity as lasting until about 4000 BC.



The Indo-Europeans knew stockbreeding and had domesticated animals. They knew agriculture, grew cereals with ploughs, they used carts. They also kept cattle and sheep and had horses. All these words can be seen in daughter languages too (\* always means hypothetical forms):

**1. Kinship terms**

\*mé(h)ter, \*p(h)tér, \*bhré(h)ter, \*swésor, \*dhug(h)tér, \*sunú, ...

**2. People**

\*dhghemon- (OE guma, “person, man”, Latin homo)

\* wi(h)ro- (OE wer “man”, Latin vir)

\*gwén-e- (OE cwēn “woman”, now “queen”, Latin qēns “woman”)

**3. Pronouns**

\*eg(h) )(OE ic “I”, Lat. ego)

\*tu (OE þu, thou, “you”, Lat. tu)

\* wei (we)

\*yū (you)...

\*kwid, kwod (“what”, Lat. quid, quod)

\*kwis, kwos (“who”, Lat. quis, qui)

**4. Numbers**

\*ói-nos, ói-wos, \*dwó, \*tréyes, \*kwetóres, \*pénkwe, \*swéks, \*septm, \*(h)okto(u), \*néwn, \*dékmt, \*kmtóm (100)

**5. Body parts**

\*dng(h)u (OE tunge, “tongue”, Lat. dingua > lingua)

\*génu, gnéus (OE cnēo “knee”, Lat. genu)

\*dont- (OE tōþ “tooth”, Lat. dens)

\*(h)okw- (OE eage “eye”, Lat. oculus)

\*kerd- (OE heorte “heart”, Lat. cor, cordis)

\*pods, \*ped (OE fot “foot, Lat. pes, pedis)

**6. Animals**

\*ekwos (OE eoh “horse”, Lat. equus)

\*gwóus (OE cū “cow”)

\*(h)ówi- (OE ēowu “ewe”, Lat. ovis)

\*kwon- (OE hund “hound”, “dog”, Lat. canis)

\*mu(h)s (OE mūs “mouse”, Lat. mūs)

\*su(h)s (OE sū “sow”, “pig”, Lat. sus)

\*wlkwos (OE wulf “wolf”, Lat. lupus)

**7. Agriculture**

\*gr(h)-no- (OE corn “corn”, “grain”, Lat. granum)

\*(h)égros (OE aecer “acre”, “field”, Lat. ager, agri)

\*(h)er(h)- (OE erian “plow”, Lat. arare)

\*(h)melg- (OE meolc, mioluc “milk”)

\*mel(h)- (OE melu “meal”, “grind”, Lat. molere)

+

* bodily functions and states (breathe, sleep, sweat, eat, drink, give birth, grow, die)
* mental functions and states (hear, see, find, know, think, say, ask)
* natural features (star, sky, day, sun, month, earth, water, wood, tree, snow)
* basic adjectives (big, heavy, light, red, new, young, old)
* constructions, fabrications (door, house, wheel, work)

*Some interesting roots and correlations:*

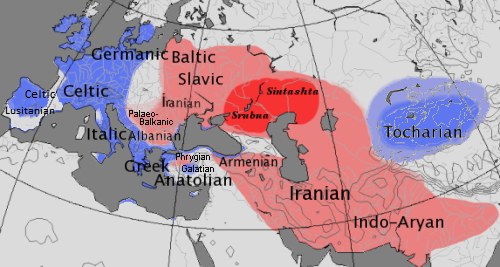
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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hypothetical root** | **Meaning** | **In Old English and Latin** | **In present-day English** |
| \*gwi(h)wo- | “alive” | OE cwicu, quick,  Lat. vivus “alive”, vita “life” | quick, vivid, vital |
| \*mer- | “to die” | OE morþor “murder”,  Lat. morior “to die”, mortalis “mortal” | murder, mortal |
| \*kleu(s)- | “to hear” | OE hlystan “listen”, hlūd “loud” | listen, loud |
| \*gén(h)- | “to know” | OE cann “can”, OE cwānan “know”,  Lat. (g)noscere | know, can, recognise, conscious |
| \*men- | “to think” | OE gemynd “memory”  Lat. memini “I remember”, mens, mentis | mind, memory, mental, remember |
| \*werg- | “to work” | Lat. urgeo, urgere “to push, drive” | work, urge, urgent |
| \*kei- | “to lie (down)”, bed, cozy, dear, familiar | OE hām “village, home”,  Lat. civis “city dweller, citizen  Greek koimeterion “sleeping place” | home,  city, civilian, civilisation, citizen, cemetery |
| \*kap- | “to grab” | OE habban “have”,  Lat. capere “to take”,  Old Greek kapto “I snatch, I swallow” | have, catch, capture, captivate, captive, |
| \*ghabh- | “to seize” “to take” | OE gievan “give”,  Lat. habere, habeo, “to have” | give, grab, grasp |
| \*dyēus, déiwos | “sky, day, god” | Lat. dies “day”, deus “god”, Lat. Diupiter “sky father”, Iuppiter, Jupiter) > Di(w)ós, Zdeús, Zeus | day, deity |
| \*g(wh)erm- | “warm” | Ancient Greek: thermos | warm, thermometer |
| \*meg- | “big” | OE mycel “much”,  Lat. magnus | magnificent, magnanimous, mega-, etc. |
| \*domo-, \*domu- | “house” | Lat. domus, “house”,  OE timber | domestic  timber |
| \*kwekwlo- | “wheel” | Ancient Greek kúklos “circle”, “wheels” | wheel, cycle, cyclical, Cyclops |

**The kentum/satem split**

By 3000 BC, when the migrations began, the Indo-European language had broken up into a number of dialects. The first sign of the break is the so-called **kentum/satem split**, where

* the palatovelar [k] and [g] changed into [h, k, g] in the **western** dialects (Germanic, Latin, Celtic, Greek)
* and [s, tʃ, ʃ, z, Ʒ] in the **east** (Slavic, Baltic), Persian, Armenian, Indo-Aryan.

These two groups of dialects are named after the reflexes of the IE word for 100, \**kentm* (*kentum, hundred* vs. *satem*). Later, a kentum dialect was found in western China, the Tocharian language, which died out by 600AD.



Some other contrastive examples:

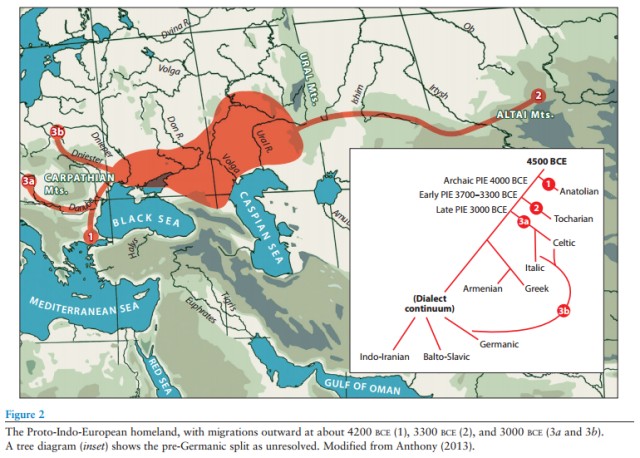
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Proto IEU** | **Kentum dialect** | **Satem dialect** |
| \*kwetores (four) | Lat. quattuor  It. quattro  E. four  Germ. vier | Russian *chetyre*  Sanskrit *chatur*  Hinid *chaar*  Armenia *chor’s* |
| \*kwis, kwos (what) | Lat. quod  E. what | Russian *shto*,  Albanian *çfarë* |
| \*kwekwlo (wheel) | Greek kúklos  (cycle) | Punjabi *chakara*,  Sanskrit *chakra* |
| \*gwi(h)wo (alive) | Lat. vivus  E. quick | Russian *zhivoy*  Hindi *jeevit* |
| \*gen(h)- (know) | Lat. (g)noscere | Russian *znat’* |
| \*gwén-e (woman) | Lat. qens, E. queen | Russian *zhenshchina* |
| \*kuntos (dog) | Lat. canis, E. hound | Russian *sobaka* |

There are no written evidences of this hypothetical Proto-Indo-European language, reconstruction is based on comparison of derived languages.

*The common Germanic period had begun by 2000 BC*, when Germanic is thought to have diverged significantly from the other kentum dialects of IE, and when the Proto-Germans moved the southern Scandinavia.

### 2. Proto-Germanic and aboriginal influence (4000-2000 BC)

      Let's first look at the **Germanic period**, the pre-English period before the Germanic tribes migrated to the British Isles. The Germanic tribes were but one offshoot of the Indo-Europeans, thought to have originated somewhere in Eastern Europe or in present day Turkey.  Perhaps as early as 4000 BC, the various tribes who were to become the Germanic peoples began slowly to spread out over northern Europe.  (3. b. in the figure)



The Germanic peoples were not the first to colonize this area. Other tribes – aborigines who did not survive to the present day – had been living in the rest of northern Europe for thousands of years before the Germanic invasion.  The Germanic tribes seem to have conquered and gradually absorbed these people, who appear to have spoken a language unrelated to any modern language.  **These mysterious northern European aborigines** were not Celtic, for the Celts lived further to the south at that time; nor were they Finns, for the Finns lived further to the east.  Though the Germanic substrate theory is contested by many, a likely candidate for this mysterious culture is the **Funnel(neck)beaker Culture** (~4300-2800 BC). They got their name for their characteristic ceramics.



***Lexical changes: The aboriginal substrate in Germanic***

At any rate, the Germanic **borrowed** a considerable number of words from these earlier people.  These borrowings are all that remains of the original languages of ancient northern Europe.  These aboriginal elements, **found only in Germanic languages** and not in any other Indo-European tongue, tend to fall into several semantic groups.

a) **Toponyms (place names)**:

* *Sverige* (Sweden),
* *Scandi* (Scandinavia),
* *Finn* (the native Finnish name for themselves is *Suomi*).

b) **Words for the natural environment**:

* *saiwa* (sea) (replaced IE *mare*)
* *landja* (land)*,*
* *strandaz* (strand)*,*
* *maigwis* (mew)*,*
* *ethi* (eider)*,*
* *alka* (auk)*,*
* *selkhaz* (seal)*,*
* *sturjon* (sturgeon),
* *herringgaz* (herring).

c) **Words for technologies** connected with sea travel:

* *skipa* (ship)*,*
* *gwele* (keel)*,*
* *seglom* (sail)*,*
* *airo* (oar).

d) **Changes in religious motifs**:

* haljö *(hell)*, *ragnarök*.

e) **Words for new social practices**:

* *wifa* (wife)(replaces IE *kwén-e*)
* *bruthiz* (bride)*,*
* *grom* (replaces IE *wihro*)
* *fulkaz* (folk) (replaces IE *manni*)

f ) **Words connected with farming or animal husbandry**:

* *hafur* (oats)
* *marhijo* (mare = female horse)
* *ram,*
* *lambaz* (lamb)*,*
* *skaepan* (sheep)*,*
* *ON bikkja* (bitch)*,*
* *dungo* (dung).
* *husan* (house)(replaces IE *domo*.)

g) **Other borrowings** include:

* *risan* (rise),
* *hlaupan* (leap),
* *lagjiz* (leg),
* *handuz* (hand) (replaces IE *manus*)
* *skuldar* (shoulder),
* *bainam* (bone),
* *seukaz* (sick),
* *hairsaz* (hoarse),
* *newhiz* (near),
* *lik* (like),
* *ibnaz* (even),
* *kok* (a round object, hence *cake* and *cook)*.

### 3. The Germanic Separation (~1000 BC): Grimm’s Law and Weak Verbs

**a) Phonetic changes.**

**Jacob Grimm** (1785-1863) revealed basic correspondences between the IEU and the Germanic phonological system. This law came to be named after him as Grimm’s Law, or the First Germanic Consonant Shift. The main rules are the following:

1. *Indo-European aspirated voiced stops (bh, dh, gh) lose their aspiration (b, d, g)*

* PIE \***bh**rus 🡪 Sans. bhru 🡪 OE *bru* or OIcl. brun (“brow”)
* PIE \***bh**rathar 🡪 Sans. bhratar 🡪 OE *broþor* (“brother”)
* PIE \* me**dh**us 🡪 Sans. madhu 🡪 OE *medu* (“mead”)
* PIE \***dh**wer 🡪 Sans. dvára 🡪 OE dor (“door”)
* PIE \***gh**or-to 🡪 OE geard (“yard”, “garden”)
* PIE \* **gh**ostis 🡪 PGmc. gastis 🡪 OE *gaest* (“guest”)

🡪 Lat. hostis 🡪 hostile, hostage

1. *IEu unaspirated voiced stops (b, d, g) undergo devoicing (p, t, k)*
   * IEu \* **b**ol (swamp) West-Gmc. \*pol-🡪 OE *pōl* (“pool”)
   * IEu \***d**uwo 🡪 Lat. duo 🡪OE *twā* 🡪 E. two
   * IEu \* a**g**ros 🡪 OE *aecer* 🡪 Mod. E. acre
   * IEu \* **g**wuen- 🡪 Lat. genus, Goth. gens (“woman”)🡪 OE *cwene* 🡪 E. queen
2. *IEu voiceless stops (p, t, k) develop into Gmc voiceless fricatives (f, Ɵ, x)*
   * IEu \***p**eter 🡪 Sans. pitar 🡪 Greek/Latin pater --PGmc. \*fader 🡪 OE *fæder*
   * IEu \***p**r- 🡪 (Lat. per) 🡪 OE for
   * IEu \***p**enkwe 🡪 (Greek pente) 🡪 OE fif
   * IEu \* **t**u 🡪 Lat. tu 🡪 PGmc \* Ɵu 🡪 OE *þū* 🡪 thou (“you”)
   * IEu \* o**k**t- 🡪 Lat. octo --> PGmc \* acht 🡪 OE eahta 🡪 Mod. E. eight

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Deaspiration | Devoicing | Frication |
| Labial | bh > b | b > p | p > f |
| Dental | dh > d | d > t | t > th |
| Velar | gh > g | g > k | k > x |

Other examples may also be seen clearly in the following chart:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proto-IE** | Latin | French | **Proto-Gmc.** | English | German |
| **\*bhratr** | frater | frère | \*broÞar | brother | Bruder |
| **\*dent** | dens | dent | \*tenth | tooth | Zahn |
| **\*dekm** | decem | dix | \*tekhan | ten | Zehn |
| **\*gel-** | gelū | froid | \*kaldaz | cold | kalt |
| **\*peisk** | piscis | poisson | \*fiskaz | fish | Fisch |
| **\*ped-** | pes, pedis | pied | \*fot | foot | Fuss |
| **\*qwod** | quod | que | \*khwat | what | was |

(As for why the [t] in *oct*- and *pater* did not change into [Ɵ], see **Verner’s Law** [1877] which also took *stress* into consideration. In fact, rhotacism can be seen as a sub-case of Verner’s Law.)

***b) Morphological change: “Weak” verbs***

There are two ways in which aspect can be expressed in Germanic languages.

(1) A very important mark of Germanic languages is the extensive use of **vowel gradation** or **Ablaut** (not to be confused with Umlaut or i-mutation). The term was also coined by Jacob Grimm. *Gradation is the change of a sound within the word*. *This change carries grammatical information*. Ablaut or vowel gradation in this case refers to **verbs** only. These are the so-called “strong verbs”.

For instance, the irregular plural “foot-feet” is a case of gradation, because in this case, we do not modify the word with an affix (\*foots), but change a sound within the word. (Also: s**i**ng-s**a**ng-s**u**ng-s**o**ng, / r**i**se-r**ai**se-r**o**se).

(2) The other way the different aspects could be expressed in Germanic languages is the addition of the dental consonant [t] or [d]. These are the “regular” – or as Grimm called them – **“weak” verbs**. So weak verbs do not change a root vowel, but leave it unchanged and add a dental suffix.

*This was a truly Germanic innovation*. The dental suffix ultimately goes back to the IEU root **\**do***-, which had a general meaning pertaining to everyday human activity, expressing “do”, “take”, “get”, “give”, “make”, “put”, etc. Only Germanic languages used this verb (and later affix) for this purpose.

In Old English, one can see this difference between “strong” and “weak” verbs in the following chart on the verbs “keep” and “help.”

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | “Weak verbs” > DENTAL SUFFIX | | “Strong verbs” > VOWEL GRADATION | |
|  | Present | Past | Present | Past |
| ic | cēpe | cēp**te** | helpe | h**ea**lp |
| Þū | cēpest | cēp**test** | hilpst | h**u**lpe |
| hē, hēo, hit | cēpeÞ | cēp**te** | hilpÞ | h**ea**lp |
| wē | cēpaÞ | cēp**ton** | helpaÞ | h**u**lpon |
| ᵹē | cēpaÞ | cēp**ton** | helpaÞ | h**u**lpon |
| hī | cēpaÞ | cēp**ton** | helpaÞ | h**u**lpon |

### 4. West Germanic and the first Latin influence (500 BC–400 AD)

       After the aboriginal contact, the Germanic tribes speaking one language spread out across northern and Central Europe.



By 500BC three major dialectal divisions had appeared in Germanic:  **East** (the Goths), **North** (the Scandinavians), and **West** (ancestors of the English, Germans and Dutch).  T

      Due to the influence of the *Roman Empire* the Western dialect of Germanic which later gave rise to English, Dutch, and German borrowed a large number of Latin words in the first few centuries AD.  This was the **first phase of Latin borrowings**.  These borrowings tended to fall into certain semantic categories.

a) Words for many **Mediterranean foodstuff:**

* *oleum* (oil) *,*
* *butirum* (butter)*,*
* *olive* (olive)*,*
* *caseus* (cheese),
* *piper* (pepper)*,*
* *kaula* (cabbage; cf. cauliflower, kohlrabi, coleslaw),
* *petrosileum* (parsley),
* *popæg* (poppy),
* *cires* (cherry),
* *ynne* (onion),
* *minte* (mint).

b) Words related **to domestic life**:

* *coquina* (kitchen),
* *panna* (pan),
* *cuppa* (cup, same as Hungarian “kupa”),
* *discas* (dish, disc, same as Hungarian “deszka”),
* *cytel* (kettle),
* *mēse* (table, from Lat. mensa),
* *tigele* (tile, same as Hungarian “tégla”).

c) Words connected to **trade**:

* *cēap* (cheap, bargain, purchase, from Lat. caupo, a petty tradesman, cf. German kaufen, ‘to buy’),
* *mangian* (to trade, from Lat. mango, ‘dealer’, ‘trader’ > see *monger*, an obsolete word for trader),
* *mangunghūs* (shop),
* *mynet* (coin, money, from Lat. moneta),
* *wīn* (from Lat. vinum, wine),
* *flasce* (from Lat. flasco, flask, bottle),
* *eced* (vinegar, from Lat. acetum, that also gives the Hungarian word “ecet”),
* *inch* (from Lat. uncia).

d) **Military words**:

* *camp* (meaning battle, cf. campaign),
* *weall* (from Latin vallum),
* *pytt* (pit; from Lat. puteus),
* *strǣt* (street, from Lat. via strata, “paved road”),
* *mīl* (mile, from Lat. mila, thousand, that is, a thousand metres).

e) **Timekeeping words**:  Originally, the Germanic peoples had no names for the days of week, so Roman names were translated into Germanic to produce the following **calques**, or **loan translations**:

* Sol > Sun-day,
* Luna > Moon-day,
* Mars > Tiwaz-day,
* Mercury > Odins-day or Wotans-day,
* Zeus > Thors-day,
* Venus > Frigas-day,
* Saturnus > Saturns-day (no German equivalent to the God Saturn).

Some original Germanic time words were retained:  *sumur* (‘summer’)*, wentruz* (‘winter). ‘Autumn’ is a much later, French borrowing, the original English term was *harvest* (German Herbst) and ‘spring’ was only used from the 1540s, replacing *Lent (langatinaz,* Lat. langa dies = böjt).

**Summary The Continental Period**

1) The common IE language broke into kentum/satem dialects. Germanic languages belong the Western, kentum dialect. A lot of basic words go back to this period.

2) Movement of the Proto-Germans north out of eastern central Europe after 4000BC, leading to mixing with aborigines of the Baltic and North Sea coast. A great deal of aboriginal influence affected Germanic at this time.

3) A strong mark of separation from other IE languages is proved by Grimm’s Laws.

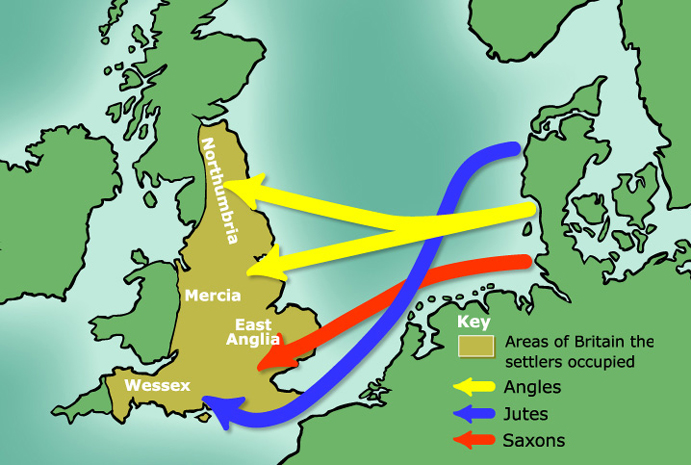
4) The Germanic tribes spread out all through north-western Europe. By 500BC, common Germanic breaks up into three main dialects; English later derived from the West Germanic dialect.

5) A great deal of contact between West Germanic tribes and the Roman Empire led to many borrowings from Latin.

## 2. The Old English language (400-1100)

### 1. Historical background

By 410 AD the Roman Empire was in such a difficult situation that it had to withdraw its troops from the British Isles to defend its other frontiers. The weakening of the Roman Empire in the 5th century AD led to German expansion south and west into territories formerly garrisoned by Roman troops.  Following the invasion of the Huns and the subsequent fall of the Western Roman Empire, the **Angles** (named for an angle-shaped part of the Danish coast), **Saxons**, and **Jutes** (Danish Jutland) migrated westward in great numbers.  Gaul (France)and Brittany (Bretagne) were also conquered by Germanic tribes after the fall of Rome.  After 430, Germanic tribes migrated to the British Isles, as well (traditionally, the start of the invasion is regarded to be 449 AD).



      When the Roman Empire fell, the British Isles were inhabited by Romanized Celts. **Ironically, the first Germanic tribes were invited to Britain by a Celtic king to *defend* the Romanized part of the island from the non-Romanized tribes of the periphery**, primarily the Picts, half Celtic and half aborigine tribe.  Soon, however, the Germanic tribes turned on the Celts and began taking their best lands.  Caught between the new Germanic invaders and their old enemies in the hills, the Romanized Celts gradually lost power.  This is the timeframe of the stories about *King Arthur and the Round Table*, the last attempt to keep the English at bay.  The initial Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain took nearly 100 years.

### 2. Establishment of the first English tribal dialects.

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Saxons arrived in 477 and settled down in what they called Sussex (“the land of South-Saxons”). In 495, further tribes came and established themselves in Wessex (West-Saxons), and later in Essex and Middlesex. The Angles in 547 occupied the territory north of the river Humber and established Northumbria. By the end of the fifth century they began to settle in East Anglia and Mercia. The Jutes had already occupied Kent. These seven kingdoms (Wessex, Essex, Sussex, East Anglia, Northumbria, Mercia and Kent) was known as the **Heptarchy**, or “seven kingdoms.”

**Four main dialects** of OE emerged:

1) the Northumbrian,

2) the Mercian (between the rivers Humber and Thames),

3) West Saxon and

4) the Kentish (London area).

There was also a continuously shifting supremacy between the seven kingdoms.

### 3. The culture and language of the early period of Anglo-Saxon (450-600).

      The isolation of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes from mainland Germanic tribes ushered in the Anglo-Saxon period, as the three original Germanic tribes formed one culture and one language which began to diverge from languages of the mainland.

The Anglo-Saxons did not have much reverence for Roman culture. Most of the Roman towns were burnt and abandoned. These people were not typically town-dwellers, they found their occupation in hunting and agriculture. This was a strictly hierarchical, patriarchal society, with a sharp distinction between *eorlas* (the aristocracy), *ceorlas* (freemen) and *wealas* (“the Welsh”, slaves).

Before the conversion of Christianity, Anglo-Saxons used a system of writing called the **runic alphabet** (see the Horn of Gallehus above). After Christianization, the Roman alphabet was adopted, but some runic signs were retained up to the Middle English period, namely, two: the ‘thorn’ (Þ) that could signify both the [Ɵ] and [ð] sounds, and the ‘wynn’ (Ƿ) that stood for the [w] sound. (The OE language did not have a “v” letter, for the sound [v], “f” was used.)

### A) Phonetic changes

**Palatalization.** During the 6th century AD, the Anglo-Saxon consonant cluster [sk] changed to [sh] through palatalization:

* *scield 🡪 shield*
* *scip 🡪 ship*
* *discas 🡪 dish*
* *sceort 🡪 shirt*
* *skin 🡪 shin*
* *cildru 🡪 child*

This occurred in all words present in the language at that time, including recent borrowings from Latin:  *disc > dish*, and ancient aboriginal borrowings:  *skip > ship*.  All modern English words which exhibit the cluster [sk] came into the language *after* the 6th century when the sound change had ceased to operate.

Palatalization also affected then sound [g], especially at the beginning of words, such as in PreOE \**ᵹefan*, which mutated into OE *ᵹiefan*. The [g] sound by the late OE and early ME period already turned into a [j] sound, so in Chaucer’s time, “to give” must have sounded something like [ievan].

This palatalization also affected the past participle forms of “weak” verbs, for instance as in *gehæfd* (had), *gelifd* (lived), *gesægd* (said), even *gegān* (gone) (see present-day German: Ich bin **ge**gangen, Er hat **ge**sagt, etc.). This ge- affix started to disappear by the late OE times, evolving into **ye-** and later **i-** (or **y**) in Middle English times. For instance in Chaucer:

* ybrought (Ger. gebracht),
* ydronke (Ger. getrunken),
* yknowe (Ger. gewissen),
* yborn (Ger. geboren),
* yclept (‘to be named’),
* yclad (‘to be dressed’).

The remnants of this Germanic ge- prefix can be seen in present-day words like ***a****like*, ***a****ware* and *hand****i****work* (OE hand + geweorc).

### B) Morphology

Here we will not go into the very complicated grammatical system of OE. Suffice it to say that OE was a highly inflected and synthetic language.

**Nouns**

Nouns were divided into three genders (masculine, feminine and neuter, like German today), but grammatical gender did not reflect biological sex: for instance, OE *wīfmann* (woman) was masculine gender (because of “mann”), and *wīf* was neuter gender, *strengÞu* was feminine. Stress was usually on the first syllable (like now in Icelandic, where every word is stressed on the first syllable), which contributed greatly to the reduction of final vowels. Nouns were *declined* according to four cases and according to their stems (8 classes)

Example: **a-stem declension** (only masculine and neuter nouns):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | masculine | “light” neuter | “heavy” neuter |
| Sing. nom. | hund | scip | dēor |
| S. acc. | hund | scip | dēor |
| S. gen. | hundes | scipes | dēores |
| S. dat. | hunde | scipe | dēore |
| Plural nom. | hund**as** | scip**u** | dēor |
| P. acc. | hundas | scipu | dēor |
| P. gen. | hunda | scipa | dēora |
| P. dat. | hundum | scipum | dēorum |

This is interesting for us because it explains why we say now (two) hounds and (two) deer. The OE word *dēor* belonged to the neuter **a-stem** declension. (Similarly: fish, sheep.)

The other group of **irregular plurals** can be traced back to the n-stem and r-stem classes. Examples: ox-*oxen*, child-*children* (OE oxa-oxa**n**; cīld-cīld**ru**). The –n ending for plurals was common before Modern English (see: “eyren” in Caxton’s story). The –n plural for “child” was an analogy on “oxen”, so, in fact, *children* is doubly inflected for plural.

**Verbs**

As for **verbs**, there were two main groups, “strong” and “weak” verbs. Strong verbs had seven classes while weak ones could be grouped into three classes.

**Pronouns**

were similar to present-day ones, except for *hēo* (she, which is of unknown origin). “It” was OE “hit”, the [h] sound was lost by lack of stress. Pronouns also had **dual forms** besides singular and plural to signify exactly two things or persons. For instance: dual *unc* (“we two in accusative”, cf. German *uns*) and *ūs* (“we all in accusative”), or *uncer* (possessive dual, “belonging to us both”, cf. German *unser*) and *ūre* (possessive plural, *our*).

### C) OE Vocabulary

Finally, it shall be remarked that Old English was great at creating so-called **self-explaining compounds**. These are compounds of two or more native words that “explain themselves” either in a way that they are self-evident or through association and usage. For instance “lamp” in OE was *leohtfæt*, compounded from *leoht* ‘light’ and *fæt* ‘vessel. container’.

What do you think these compounds meant in Old English? Match the equivalents:

***epilepsy, geometry, pupil or student, dawn, purple, rheumatism, earring, science***

* *dægred* (day + red),
* *ēarhring* (ear + ring),
* *eorÞcraft* (earth + craft),
* *fiscdēag* (fish + dye [colour]),
* *fōtadl* (foot + disease),
* *fiellesēocnes* (falling + sickness),
* *bōccreaft* (book + craft),
* *leaornungcīld* (learning + child)

Present-day German still uses the practice of making such compounds: see *Fernseher* (“far-seer” – television), *Handschuh* (“hand-shoe” - glove), *Fingerhut* (“finger-hat” - thimble), *Feuerversicherungsgesellschaft* (“fire insurance company”) or *Landwirtschaftsausstellung* (“agricultural exhibition”).

### 4. Christianization and the second Latinate borrowing

           The evolution of Old English during the Anglo-Saxon period was influenced profoundly by two historical and cultural events.

The first of these events was the **conversion of Britain to Christianity**.  In 597AD the Roman missionary Augustine converts the natives.  This had far reaching cultural implications and brought about the ***second phase of Latin borrowing*** and led to considerable enlargement of the Anglo-Saxon lexicon.  Some of the new religious terms were borrowed directly from Latin or Old French:

a) lexical items related to church and its services

* *cirice* (church)
* *preost* (priest)*,*
* *biscup* (bishop)*,*
* *none* (nun)*,*
* *monoc* (monk)*,*
* *scribe* (scholar, copier),
* *diafol* (devil)*,*
* *engel* (angel)*.*

b) Religion and learning were closely connected, thus in this period such words arrived in OE as

* *scōl* (school),
* *mægester* (master),
* *paper* (paper)
* *calend* (month)
* *staer* (story, history)

Other religious words imported from Latin in this period include: abbot, alms, altar, angel, anthem, ark (Noah’s Ark and the Ark of the Covenant), candle, canon, chalice, cleric, deacon, disciple, hymn, martyr, mass, nun, offer, organ, palm, pope, priest, psalm, shrine, stole (long robe worn by clergymen), synod, temple.

Other new religious terms were **calques**, or loan translations:  *par-don > for-give*.

The conversion to Christianity had enormous cultural influence. Britain was seen as part of the “civilised” world, and probably it was the only chance to survive as a country and a people in early medieval Europe. Several monasteries were founded as places of learning and culture.

### 5. Viking invasion and settlement

      The second major vehicle of linguistic change during the Anglo-Saxon period came about as a result of Viking incursions into the British Isles. **Norse (Dane) Invasions**, primarily from Denmark began in the late 700's.  At first, King Alfred repulsed the Danes from the southern half of the country.  Finally, the Danes capitulated in 878 after the battle of Edington.

Many Danes and Norwegians settled in England after peace was established and quickly *blended with the Anglo Saxons*.  The conquering Norse did not look down on the Anglo-Saxons, but rather treated them as brothers and sisters.  Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse were both spoken widely side-by-side between 700 and 900.  As a result Anglo-Saxon underwent considerable assimilation and change as it was mixed with old Norse. The mixing of Norse and Anglo-Saxon, which produced the language known to us as **Old English**, is a good example of the phenomenon of *dialect mixing.*

The incursions of the Danes resulted in the destruction of the flourishing Anglo-Saxon religious culture. Lisdisfarne was burnt in 793 and Jarrow was plundered the following year. After 800, most of the churches and monasteries lay in ruins. In religious houses, discipline became lax, services were neglected, and monasteries were occupied by secular priests. Learning also declined. Aelfric, an abbot remarked that in these times no English priest could write or read in Latin.

Finally, king **Alfred the Great** (871-899) was the one who started reconstruction. He restored churches, established new monasteries and strove to spread learning throughout the country. As a result, a great number of Latin words appeared one again in fields of religion, science, literature, medicine and botany.

The prolonged contact and mixing with Old Norse had several important effects on the language of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain.

### A) Phonetic changes

Most words beginning with [sk] in modern English are of 7th or 8th century Norse origin:  ***sc****ull*, cf. skoll, also ***sk****y* (*heaven* assumed mainly religious connotations.)  The presence of the [sk] cluster in Norse indicates that palatalization had not taken place in Norse yet.

Because of Dane doublets, *Anglo-Saxon regained words with* **[sk]**: the Anglo-Saxon word contains [sh], while the new words of Norse origin contain [sk]:

***sk****in-shin,* ***sk****irt-shirt,* ***sc****atter-shatter,* ***sk****ipper-ship.*

Another sign of the Scandinavian settlement is the retention of the hard pronunciation of **[k]** and **[g]** in words like *kid, link, take, leg, call, get, give, egg*, *brink, score, gap, guess*.

### B) Morphological changes

Mixing with Norse sped up the process of the loss of inflectional morphemes in English.  Anglo-Saxon, like modern German or Classical Latin, originally had many endings and inflections.  Norse had an already **simplified system of endings**;  its influence seems to have hastened the process of loss in Anglo-Saxon.  By the end of the Old English period (1066AD) the inflectional system of English had changed considerably, becoming much like it is today.

* Many Old English plurals were lost and regularized as [es]: *stan/stanas, nama/namen, scip/scipu,  sunu/suna.* Only a few remain in modern English: *ox/oxen; foot/feet*.

Many **strong verbs dropped out or were regularized** (help/help-ed  not holp). Even after the Norse influence, the vocabulary and morphology of Old English remained mostly Germanic.  Foreign elements were either fellow Germanic (from Norse), or were rather few and fell into specific lexical categories:  the pre-Christian cultural borrowings from Latin;  Christian religious borrowing from Latin; and a smaller number of ancient borrowings from unknown aboriginal languages.

### C) Lexical changes

The vocabulary was increased and semantically enriched by the creation of many synonyms, as in the case of the following Anglo-Saxon/Old Norse **doublets** (the first is OE, the second one is Norse):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **OE** | **Norse** |
| child | kid |
| sick | ill |
| rear | raise |
| carve | cut |
| craft | skill |
| hide (n.) | skin |
| from | fro |
| no | nay |
| ditch | dike |
| heaven | sky |
| starve | die |
| church | kirk |
| shell | skull |
| shank / foot | leg |

**a) lexical items denoting places (toponyms)**

* -by (= village, settlement, town) > Denby, Darby, Grimsby, Rugby
* -thorpe (=hamlet, related to German ‘Dorf’) > Bishopsthorpe
* -thwaite (=clearing in the woods) > Braithwaite

**b) lexical items denoting phenomena of everyday life**

* *OE croc* (crook, hook, bend)
* *OE aeƷ* (egg)
* *OE cnif* (knife)
* *OE windohe* (‘eye for the wind’, window), replacing OE *eahethyrel*
* *OE steik* (steak)

**c) lexical items denoting terms of kinship**

* *OE husband* (‘the one dwelling in the house’, husband)
* *OE felawe* (‘laying together of the property, ‘fe’ meaning cattle) > partner
* *OE systir*, replacing the common OE *sweostor or sweoster*

**d) lexical items denoting parts of the body**

* *OE leƷ* (replacing OE fot)
* *OE skin* (replacing OE hide)

**e) lexical items denoting animals**

* *OE kid* (young goat)
* *OE stagga* (stag, male deer)

Not only words were borrowed but such **basic parts of speech** as pronouns, prepositions, adverbs and partly, even the verb ***to be***.

The Scandinavian forms ***they*, *them* and *their*** pushed out the OE forms *hīe*, *him* and *hiera*.

Words like *baðir* (**both**), ***same*** and *Þo* (**though**) appeared. Even the verb *to be* was modified: the West Saxon expression *wē syndon* (cf. German wir sind) was pushed out by Norse ***we are***.

### D) Semantic changes

Sometimes words that existed in both languages, **changed their meanings**. The OE word *plog* is present-day *plough* obviously, but it meant an area of land that an ox could plough one day. In Scandinavian, it meant the actual instrument with which the land was ploughed.

“*Gift*” in Norse meant “a present, a gift, “that which is given”, while in OE the “the price of a wife”, while in German it gained the meaning “poison”. The word *till* also assumed the spatial meaning “*to*” (and was not used only referring to time).

**Summary Old English**

1. OE tribal dialects emerging after the settlement in the British Isles.

2. Main phonetic change: palatalisation

3. Highly complicated grammatical system

4. Vocabulary changes: second Latin borrowing (religion) + Norse words bringing back forms before palatalisation (skirt – shirt) > doublets emerging

5. Towards the 9-10th century: morphology system simplyfing

## Samples from Old English

1. **The Golden Horns of Gallehus** (5th century) – the earliest surviving full Germanic sentence.



ᛖᚲᚺᛚᛖᚹᚨᚷᚨᛊᛏᛁᛉ᛬ᚺᛟᛚᛏᛁᛃᚨᛉ᛬ᚺᛟᚱᚾᚨ᛬ᛏᚨᚹᛁᛞᛟ᛬ (Runic Unicode)

**ek hlewagastiz holtijaz horna tawido**  (transliteration)

I, Hlewagastiz Holtijaz, made this horn.

**2.** The earliest surviving Old English text is **Caedmon’s Hymn**, composed between 658 and 680.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Old English  Nū scylun hergan     hefaenrīcaes Uard,  metudæs maecti     end his mōdgidanc,  uerc Uuldurfadur,     suē hē uundra gihwaes,  ēci dryctin     ōr āstelidæ  hē ǣrist scōp     aelda barnum  heben til hrōfe,     hāleg scepen.  Thā middungeard     moncynnæs Uard,  eci Dryctin,     æfter tīadæ  firum foldu,     Frēa allmectig. | Modern English translation  Now [we] must honour the guardian of heaven,  the might of the architect, and his purpose,  the work of the father of glory  as he, the eternal lord, established the beginning of wonders;  he first created for the children of men  heaven as a roof, the holy creator  Then the guardian of mankind,  the eternal lord, afterwards appointed the middle earth,  the lands for men, the Lord almighty. |

**3. The Ruthwell Cross (8th century)**

ᛣᚱᛁᛋᛏ ᚹᚫᛋ ᚩᚾ ᚱᚩᛞᛁ ᚻᚹᛖᚦᚱᚨ / ᚦᛖᚱ ᚠᚢᛋᚨ ᚠᛠᚱᚱᚪᚾ ᛣᚹᚩᛗᚢ / ᚨᚦᚦᛁᛚᚨ ᛏᛁᛚ ᚪᚾᚢᛗ

*Krist wæs on rodi. Hweþræ'/ þer fusæ fearran kwomu / æþþilæ til anum.*

Literally: “Christ was on the rod. Yet there eager from far came noblemen to the only one.”

West-Saxon version: *Crist wæs on rode, Hwæðere Þær fuse feorran cwoman to Þæem æÞelinge*.

"Christ was on the cross. Yet / the brave came there from afar / to their lord."

**4. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (late 9th century), Peterborough Manuscript:**

*Introduction:*

(The symbol “7” means “and”.)

*Brittene igland is ehta hund mila lang. 7 twa hund brad.*

The island of Britain is eight hundred miles long and two hundred broad.

*7 her sind on þis iglande fif geþeode. englisc. 7 brittisc. 7 wilsc. 7 scyttisc. 7 pyhtisc. 7 boc leden.*

And there are on this island five languages: English, British, Welsh, Scottish, Pictish, and book Latin.

*Erest weron bugend þises landes brittes.*

The first dwellers of this island were the Brits.

AD 435: *Her wæs to brocen Romana burh fram Gotum ymb xi hund wintra and x wintra.*

This year the Goths sacked the city of Rome, about eleven hundred and ten winters

*þæs þe heo ge timbred wæs. Siððan ofer ne rixodan leng Romana cinigas on Brytene.*

after it was built. and never since have the Romans reigned in Britain.

*Ealles hi ðær rixodan iiii hund wintra. and hund seofenti wintra.*

They reigned altogether in Britain four hundred and seventy winters

*siððtan Gaius Iulius land erost ge sohte.*

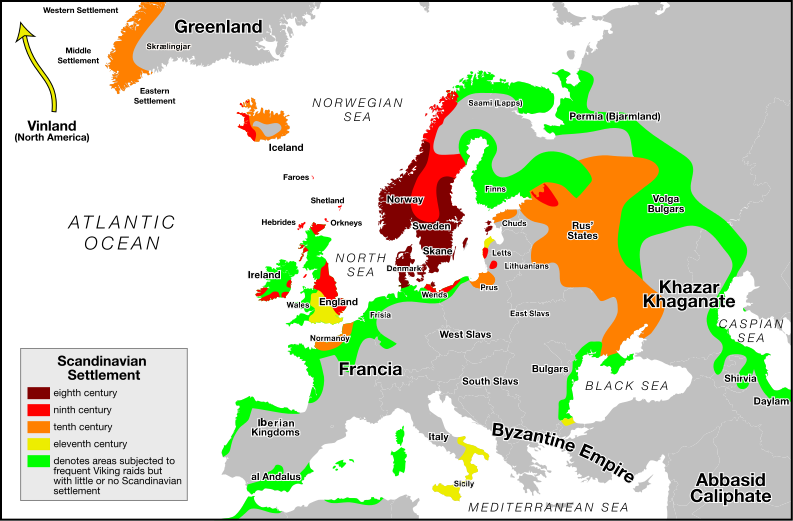
since Gaius Julius first sought that land.

## 3. The Middle English language (1100-1485)

### Historical background

The end of the Anglo-Saxon period was ushered in abruptly with the **Norman French invasion** under William the Conqueror in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings.  This event signalled a radical change in English and marks the transition from Old English to **Middle English (1100-1485).**  Middle English is the long period of accommodation between the Germanic language of the Anglo-Saxons (Old English) and the Latin-based language of the Norman French.

      It is interesting to mention here just who these Norman French were.  In fact, they were the **descendants of the Scandinavians** who raided England in the 8th and 9th centuries. The original Franks were a Germanic tribe who drove out the Celts and Romans from France; they were small in number and adopted a Latin-based tongue within a few generations of their conquest of France (Gaul). In the 10th century, the Normans, another Germanic tribe from the north (their name is a corruption of *Nortmen*) conquered what was left of Charlemagne's Empire and adopted the Latinate language of the Franks.



      The Norman French in 1066 differed more strikingly linguistically as well as culturally from the Anglo Saxons than did the Danish conquerors of a few centuries earlier.  Unlike the situation with the Norse invasions, **the Normans looked upon the conquered Anglo-Saxons as social inferiors.**  French became the language of the upper class; Anglo-Saxon of the lower class, as illustrated by these extracts from different poems:

**Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle, cca 1300**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Þus com lo engelond in to normandies hond.  & þe normans ne couþe speke þo bote hor owe speche  & speke french as hii dude atom, & hor childre dud also teche,  So þat heimen of þis lond þat of hor blod com  Holdeþ alle þulke speche þat hii of hom nome.  Vor bote a man conne frenss me telþ of him lute.  Ac lowe men holdeþ to engliss & to hor owe speche gute.  Ich wene þer ne beþ in al þe worls contreyes none  þat ne holdeþ to hor own speche bote engelond one | Thus came, lo! England into Normandy’s hand.  And the Normans did not know then how to speak, except for their own speech  And spoke French as they did at home, and their children also teach,  So that high men of this land and those who of that blood came,  Hold all the same speech as they took from them.  For but a man know French men count of him little.  But low men hold to English and to their own speech yet.  I think that there are in the world no countries  That do not hold to their own speech but England alone. |

***Cursor Mundi*, cca 1300**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| þis ilk bok es translate  into Inglis tong to rede  For þe lov of Inglis lede  Inglis lede of Ingland  For þe commun at understand.  Frankis rimes here I redd  Comunlik in ilka stedd.  Mast es it wrought for Frankis man,  Quat is for him na Frankis cann?  …To laud and Inglis man I spell  þat understandes þat I tell. | This book is translated  into English language to read  For the love of the English people,  the English people of England,  For the common people to understand.  I read French rhymes here,  commonly in each place.  Most of it is written for Frenchmen,  What is it for him that cannot speak French?  …To the ignorant and the English I write  who understand what I tell. |

### A) Phonetic changes

Norman French influence on phonology of English was relatively minor.

* Initial [v] and [z] were adopted into the language:  *very* is a Norman word (originally meaning “true”, “genuine”).  Initial [z] is still considered marginal in English (*zeal*, *zest*).

By the late 1300's when Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, more than **half** **of the English vocabulary consisted of Norman French words.**  Curiously enough, Norman French borrowings into English had not changed in pronunciation for 800 years, whereas the French pronunciation had.

*Old Norman French* borrowings have [tʃ] and [dʒ] *remaining from the phase* ***before deaffrication***. *Charles, choice, check; chase, chance, choose, chess, George, forge, giant, justice, joy.*

More recent French borrowings have [ʃ] and [ʒ]: *moustache, champagne, machine, Michelle, Charlotte, chef, parachute, brochure, garage, regime, genre, massage*. Thus, when new words were borrowed into English from French over the past few hundred years, still more lexical doublets were created:  *chief/chef.*

Compare:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **English – words borrowed before deaffrication** [tʃ] and [dʒ] | **present-day French – deaffricated forms** [ʃ] and [ʒ] |
| *Charles* | *Charles* |
| *choice* | *choix* |
| *Richard* | *Richard* |
| *chess* | *échecs* |
| *chase* | *chasse* |
| *jealousy/jealous* | *jalousie/jaloux* |
| *justice* | *justice* |
| *judge* | *juge* |
| *joy* | *joie* |
| *advantage* | *avantage* |
| *majority* | *majorité* |

It is also important to mention that these borrowings reflected **Norman French**, which was substantially **different from Paris French**. In fact, when the borrowing of French words reached its height between 1250 and 1400, the Paris French established itself as a standard in France. This led to the familiar phenomenon of a high number of lexical **doublets** in English (recall the Scandinavian-English pairs).

The most visible sign of the Norman French dialect was the **[w]** sound instead of **[g]** at the beginning of words.

Examples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Norman word** | **French word in standard dialect** |
| *war* | guerre |
| *warrant* | guarantee |
| *ward* | guard |
| *wardrobe* | garderobe |
| *reward* | regard |

Sometimes the second word of these pairs were borrowed later (that is, the same word was borrowed from French *twice* in different forms). Other examples: *car – chariot*, ***hostel – hotel*** (the latter is clearly a later form, showing the dropout of the [s] sound), *grammar* – *glamour* (!).

### B) Morphological changes

The Norman French influence was so extensive that even the **grammar** of English was affected.  Inflectional endings tended to disappear (already in the late OE period), and thus the word order became more fixed.

New verbs became invariably “weak verbs” and old ones (such as *burn, help, step, walk*) also lost their “strength” (i.e., became regular verbs), or, the two forms (stope vs. stepped, clomb vs. climbed) lived side by side, sometimes till the time of Shakespeare.

The changes were mainly confined to the borrowing of **derivational affixes**.  All native prefixes dropped out or became unproductive during this time;  the few that survive today are non-productive: *be*- in *besmirch*, or *for*- in *forgive*, *forestall*;  they were replaced by Latin:  *ex-, pre-, pro-, dis-, re-, anti-, inter-*.  Many Norman French suffixes were borrowed: -*or* vs. *-er;  -tion,  -ment, -ee,  -able* as a suffix.

An interesting change that began in the early ME period, essentially a process of analogy, concerned **the present perfect tense**. In most Indo-European languages, notably in French and German, the perfective tense was formed in two ways, either with the auxiliary BE or with HAVE.

1) The “HAVE” auxiliary probably goes back to the notion that if someone has finished doing something, that *person symbolically “possesses” that thing*. E.g., “I have built a house” = I have a house that I built. “He has written a letter” = He is in possession of the letter that he has written. Of course, it is a more complicated problem if I say “I have spoken to Peter” or “I have told her something” but still, there is an implied subject in these sentences: I have something that I told Peter, etc. This usage refers to transitive verbs.

German and French still retains this construction, although without the perfective implication, simply to express the past: “**Ich habe** etwas gesehen” = I have seen something; “**J’ai** vu quelque chose” = I have seen something.”

2) The “BE” auxiliary is also logical in cases when the emphasis is not on the process but *on the state that emerges as a result*. For instance, in the sentence “He is gone.”, we basically express that he has left, and, as a result, he is in the state of being gone. Notably, the BE auxiliary is used with verbs of motion and transition (that is, intransitive verbs) in present-day French and German: “**Er ist** gekommen” / “**Il est** arrivé” = He has arrived. This kind of perfect was also used in Old English with intransitive verbs.

It can be noted that here the past participle functions as a quasi-adjective (just as in the case of present continuous and the passive voice). After all, there is not much difference between the semantic value of “gone”, “leaving” and “old” in the following sentences:

* PERFECT (PASSIVE?) - He is gone. (He is in the state of having gone.)
* PROGRESSIVE - He is leaving. (He is in the state of leaving right now.)
* ADJECTIVE - He is old. (He is in the state of being old.)

Until the early ME times, and well into Modern English times, this distinction was there. Some examples:

“Sumer **is icumen** in” – first line of a medieval song.

“For he **was late ycome** from his viage.” (Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales)

“And didst thou not, **when she was gone downstairs**, desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people?” (Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II, II, i, 96)

“I **am come** in my Father's name, and ye receive me not” (*John 5:43*, The Bible)

“My dear master,” I answered, “I am Jane Eyre: I have found you out—**I am come back** to you.” (*Jane Eyre*, 1847)

What was happening from the early ME times was that the BE auxiliary used for intransitive verbs was pushed out by HAVE on the basis of analogy. Thus, today there are very strict rules in English for forming the passive, exclusively by HAVE. There are some constructions with the BE + past participle that suggest perfectivity (and also some kind of passive voice):

* Those days are gone;
* I hope you are done with writing that paper;
* Once we are finished with this project, we’ll need to update the database.

### C) Lexical changes

 The Norman invasion initiated a vast borrowing of Latin-based words into English.  Entire vocabularies were borrowed from Norman French:

**1) governmental**:

* *count,*
* *heraldry,*
* *noble,*
* *parliament*
* *prince, duke, baron, count*.
* *to fine,*

**2) military**:

* *admiral,*
* *aid,*
* *alliance,*
* *ally,*
* *battle,*
* *captain,*
* *enemy,*
* *ensign,*
* *escape,*
* *gallant,*
* *lieutenant,*
* *march,*
* *navy,*
* *peace,*
* *sergeant,*
* *soldier,*
* *war*

**3) judicial system**:

* *attorney,*
* *court,*
* *crime,*
* *defendant,*
* *felony,*
* *heir*
* *judge,*
* *jury,*
* *justice,*
* *legal,*
* *marriage*,
* *murder,*
* *petty/petit,*
* *plaintiff,*
* *suit*

**4) occupations:**

* *carpenter,*
* *chandler,*
* *chamberlain,*
* *clerk,*
* *spencer,*
* *tailor,*
* *butcher,*
* *mason,*
* *painter,*
* *joiner*

(Many have become surnames!)

**5) cuisine**:

* *beef*
* *boil,*
* *filet,*
* *fry,*
* *pastry,*
* *pork,*
* *roast,*
* *sauce,*
* *soup,*
* *toast,*
* *venison,*

**6) new personal names:**

* (Biblical Hebrew and Greek names): *John*, *Mary, Daniel, Jacob, Judith*
* (Norman French names): *Charles*, *Richard, Edward, Kate, Norah, William*

As a result, after the Norman invasion, many Anglo Saxon words narrowed in meaning to describe only the cruder, dirtier aspects of life.  Concepts associated with culture, fine living and abstract learning tended to be described by new Norman words.  Thus, many new doublets appeared in English that were stylistically marked:

* *OE cow/ NF beef,*
* *OE calf/ NF veal,*
* *OE swine/ NF pork,*
* *OE sheep/ NF mutton,*
* *OE deer/ NF venison*

**Doublet phrases.** As Anglo-Saxon and the Norman French gradually merged throughout the later Middle Ages and the Normans and Anglo-Saxons became one society, the speakers of English tried to effect some ***linguistic reconciliation*** between the older Anglo-Saxon words and the newer Norman French words.  Many modern English phrases and sayings still include a word from Norman French alongside a synonymous Anglo-Saxon. These are mostly legal phrases. These doublet phrases capture this attempt to please everybody who might need to be pleased.

**Can you finish these doublet phrases?**

(Choose from these: true, means, goods, consider, order, master, will, part, free, entering)

* *law and ­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* *lord and ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* *breaking and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* *ways and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* *deem and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* *­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and clear*
* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and parcel*
* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and correct*
* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and chattels*
* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and testament*

Some phrases in English now still retain the **French order of noun + adjective**. In French, in most of the cases, the adjective follows the noun (the adjective is postpositive). Such phrases include:

* *accounts payable,*
* *accounts receivable,*
* *fee simple,*
* *attorney general*,
* *notary public,*
* *court martial*,
* *brigadier-general*,
* *poet laureate*,
* *princess royal*,
* *heir apparent,*
* *heir presumptive*,
* *president-elect,*
* *the body politic*,
* *(since) time immemorial*;
* *Shellfish do not belong to the fishes proper*.

Sometimes the order of noun and adjective helps to differentiate meaning. What do you think the difference between “the members present” and “the present members” or “the people concerned” and “the concerned people” is?

The immensely **rich vocabulary of English** can be traced back to these multiple borrowings. You can, for instance, express the same idea with *to begin, to start* and *to commence, to initiate*. (The first two are OE, the second two are French.) You can also say *to end, to stop, to finish, to conclude*, - or – *answer* (OE word) – *respond, reply, return, retort*, etc.

Can you fill in the following chart?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Anglo-Saxon Word** | **Norman French Word** |
| answer |  |
| ask |  |
| belief |  |
| deem |  |
| dove |  |
| fair (haired) |  |
| foe |  |
| folk |  |
| forgive |  |
| freedom |  |
| harbour / haven |  |
| hue |  |
| hunt |  |
| learn |  |
| smell |  |
| uphold |  |
| wedding |  |
| weep |  |
| weird |  |
| wish |  |
| worthy |  |

**However, the effect of Norman-French was not so strong in England that it could replace English. On the contrary.** **From about 1300 on, English began to re-emerge as a national language.** There were several reasons for this revival. First, the French lost Normandy, their “home country” in 1204, thus they were more closely identified with England. The Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453) against France strengthened the national feeling. Finally, the gradual emergence of the middle class contributed to the (relative) decline of French. In literature, the most obvious sign of this re-emergence is the so-called *alliterative revival* (OE style poems being written). Some historical events:

1349: English begins to be used in schools

1362: the Parliament decides that future lawsuits should be in English

1362: the Parliament is opened in English for the first time

1383: the first known will in English

1395: the first complete translation of the Bible into English by John Wycliffe

1399: Henry IV comes to the throne, the first king to speak English as a mother tongue

1399: Henry IV’s coronation speech in English

1422: London brewers start to use English

by 1489 all petitions to the Parliament are written in English

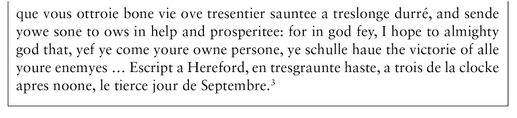
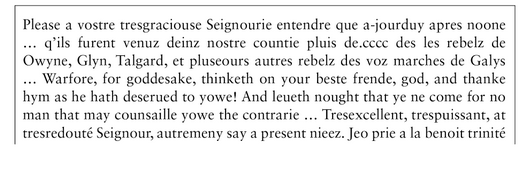
*The beginning of the Bible in Wycliffe’s translation (1382-95). Make a transcript into Modern English.*

In the bigynnyng God made of nouyt heuene and erthe. Forsothe the erthe was idel and voide, and derknessis weren on the face of depthe; and the Spiryt of the Lord was borun on the watris. And God seide, Liyt be maad, and liyt was maad. And God seiy the liyt, that it was good, and he departide the liyt fro derknessis; and he clepide the liyt,

dai, and the derknessis, nyyt. And the euentid and morwetid was maad, o daie. And God seide, The firmament be maad in the myddis of watris, and departe watris fro watris. And God made the firmament, and departide the watris that weren vndur the firmament fro these watris that weren on the firmament; and it was don so. And God clepide the firmament, heuene. And the euentid and morwetid was maad, the secounde dai.

The linguistic situation was a rich field of **code-switching** as well, a phenomenon when a speaker switches from one language to the other, sometimes even in the middle of the sentence. This is very frequent in multicultural and multilingual communities.

Consider this example. This is a letter written by Richard Kyngston, the Dean of Windsor, in 1403 to the king, when a group of Welsh rebels tried to take the county of Hereford. What language was it written in?



The period of Middle English came to a close by about 1450-85, by the time the two languages of **Norman and Anglo-Saxon had merged into a single linguistic form**.  Actually, what happened was that the more numerous Anglo-Saxon speakers triumphed over the Norman French, who came to adopt English in place of French.  But the English of 1500 contained a tremendous number of Norman French words.

The Norman French influx of words into English was on an unprecedented scale.  No other European language has a vocabulary as mixed as English. It has been estimated that only 15% of modern English vocabulary date back to the time of Old English.  A Brown University team ran 1 million words from modern English texts on all sorts of topics through a computer.  These texts contained 50,000 different words and **over half** **were borrowed from Norman French**.  Listed in order of frequency, however, every one of the 100 most commonly used words was Anglo-Saxon.  Thus, the **core** of the English vocabulary remained **Germanic**.  That is why strong statements usually make exclusive use of words dating back to Anglo-Saxon:

* *The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.*
* *With this ring I thee wed, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse. . . in sickness and in health. . .*
* *Thank God.*
* *Drop dead!*
* *Go to hell!*
* *Up yours!*
* *Give me a break!*
* *I love you.*

Only the Anglo-Saxon words possess the strength and depth to best convey such messages.

Worth watching: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUL29y0vJ8Q>

**Summary Middle English**

1. Phonetics: borrowing words before they deaffricated in Modern French (ch, j) > chief vs. chef, gender vs. genre

2. Morphology: further simplification, regular verbs + the use of “have” in all perfective forms begins

3. Vast vocabulary extension due to Norman French loanwords

4. But French did not replace English

## Samples from Middle English

**1. Peterborough Chronicle, the entry for 1140 [the earliest surviving ME text]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mc. xl. On þis ȝǣr wolde þe king Stephne taken Rodbert erl of Glowecestre þe kinges sune Henrīes; ak hē ne mihte for hē warþ it war. Þǣrafter in þe lencten þēstrede þe sunne & þe daȝ abūten nōntīd daȝes, þā men ǣten, þat me lihtede candles tō eten bī; & þat was xiii kalend Aprilis: wǣren men swīþe ofwundred. Þǣrafter forþfērde Willelm arcebiscop of Cantwarbiriȝ; & þe king makede Tedbald arcebiscop, þe was abbot in þe Bek. Þǣrafter wēx swīþe micel werre betwix þe king & Randolf erl of Cestre noht forþī þat hē ne ȝaf him al þat hē cūþe asken him, alse hē dide alle ōþre; ak ǣfre þe māre hē ȝaf hem, þe werse hī wǣren him. | **A.D. 1140**. In this year the King Stephen wished to take Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the son of King Henry; but he could not, for he was aware of it. After this, in the Lent, the sun and the day darkened about the noon-tide of the day, when men were eating; and they lighted candles to eat by. That was the thirteenth day of April. Men were very much struck with wonder. Thereafter died William, Archbishop of Canterbury; and the king made Theobald archbishop, who was Abbot of Bec. After this waxed a very great war betwixt the king and Randolph, Earl of Chester; not because he did not give him all that he could ask him, as he did to all others; but ever the more he gave them, the worse they were to him. |

**2. The Fox and the Woolf (13th century)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A vox gon out of the wode go  Afingret so Þat him wes wo  He nes neuere in none wise  Afingret erour half so swiÞe.  He ne hoeld nouÞer wey ne strete  For him wes loÞ men to mete.  Him were leuere meten one hen  Þen half an oundred wimmen.  He strok swiÞe oueral  So Þat he ofsei ane wal.  WiÞinne Þe walle wes on hous.  The wox wes Þider swiÞe wous  For he Þohute his hounger aquenche  OÞer mid mete oÞer mid mete drynche. … | A fox went out of the woods,  so hungry that he was woeful.  He had never in any way  been before [erour] half so hungry.  He held to neither road nor street,  as he was loath to meet men;  he would rather have met one hen  than half a hundred women.  He strode swiftly over all,  until he saw a wall.  There was a house within the wall.  Towards which the fox went readily,  for he thought to quench his hunger  either with food or with drink. … |

## 4. Modern English (1450-present day)

### New demands, expansion and stabilisation

The period of modern English is said to have begun after the merger of Anglo-Saxon and Norman French into a single language. **Early** **Modern English (1485-1600)** in the time of the immensely varied and rich Renaissance period, had to face different challenges:

**1. Science**: How to replace Latin as the language of scholarly writing. Let us not forget that this is the time of the Tudors, the great English conquests, patriotism and colonisation. The English wanted to create a language that could match up with the languages of educated Europe.

**2. Arts**: Consequently, how to develop English stylistically to support great literary expression in Renaissance poetry and drama. Great classical authors were translated and the English could read Aristotle or Ovid in their own language.

**3. Trade, business**: How to enable English vocabulary to meet the demands of the strongly developing commercial power.

So, on the one hand, there was a desire to **expand** and **renew** English vocabulary.

On the other hand, there was an equally great desire to **stabilize** orthography (the written language). The main reason for this was the invention of **printing** in the late 15th century. **William Caxton** set up the first printing press in England in 1476, and from that moment on, there was a need for creating general rules of spelling. There was a tension between conservative grammar and expanding vocabulary.

### A) Phonology

The first set of changes was **phonological**.  It seemed to be spontaneous and internal rather than caused by any external influence.

a)   There were a few minor changes in the consonantal system:  the velar fricative [gh] dropped out:  *night, light, though, sorrow*  *know, gnat, knee, gnome* (Compare modern German words, where this sound did not disappear: *Nacht, Licht, sorge*.)  These changes, alas, are not reflected in modern English spelling which reflects pronunciation during the time of Henry VIII (early 1500's).

b) The greatest phonological change affected vowels.  The seven long, tense vowels changed their pronunciation. This is called the **Great Vowel Shift.**  Modern English spelling, despite the efforts of every generation of schoolchildren since Shakespeare, still reflects the pronunciation in early modern English, BEFORE the great vowel shift.

### The Great Vowel Shift

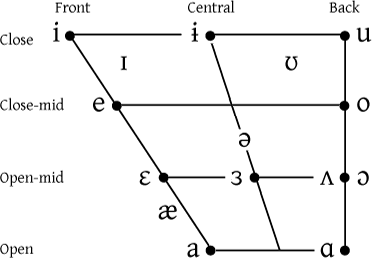
The term “Great Vowel Shift” was coined by the linguist Otto Jespersen (1860-1943), a Danish linguist.



*Otto Jespersen*

**The Great Vowel Shift** **was a massive sound change affecting** [**the long vowels**](http://facweb.furman.edu/~mmenzer/gvs/terms.htm#long) **of English from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries.** Basically, the long vowels shifted **upwards**; that is, a vowel that used to be pronounced in one place in the mouth would be pronounced in a different place, higher up in the mouth. The Great Vowel Shift has had long-term implications for, among other things, orthography, the teaching of reading, and the understanding of any English-language text written before or during the Shift.

The process might have begun with the diphtongization of the “high” unstable long vowels: the front vowel [i:] and the back vowel [u:]. When they became [ei], [ai] and [oʊ] and [aʊ], they left room for the vowel “below” to take their positions. Generally, all long vowels moved upwards. When we talk about “movement”, we refer to the position of the tongue in the oral cavity. The positions of different vowels is summarized in the following scheme:



What happened was essentially this:

[i:] 🡪 [ei:] 🡪 [ai:] [aʊ:]🡨 [oʊ:]🡨 [u:]

[e:] [o:]

[ɛ:] [ɔ:]

[ɑ:]

**1. Long back vowels**

(1) MAKE, TAKE, BAKE, NAME

**[a]** 🡪 [a:] 🡪 [æ:] 🡪 [ɛ:] 🡪 [e:] 🡪 [ei]

macian 🡪 ma:kən 🡪 mæ:kən 🡪 mɛ:kən 🡪 me:k 🡪 meik MAKE

9th c. 11th c. 12th c. 14th c. 15th c. 18th c.

(2) STONE, HOME

**[a:]** 🡪 [ɔ:] 🡪 [o:] 🡪 [ou] 🡪 [əu]

sta:n 🡪 st ɔ:n 🡪 sto:n 🡪 stoʊn 🡪 stəʊn STONE

ha:m hɔ:m ho:m hoʊm həʊm HOME

9th c. 10th c. 15th c. 16th c. 18th c.

(3) FOOT, MOON

**[o:]** 🡪 [u:]

fo:t 🡪 fo:t 🡪 fu:t FOOT

mo:na 🡪 mo:n 🡪 mu:n MOON

9th c. 15th c. 16th c.

(4) HOUSE, MOUSE

**[u:]** 🡪 [oʊ] 🡪 [aʊ]

hu:s 🡪 hoʊs 🡪 haʊs HOUSE

mu:s 🡪 moʊs 🡪 maʊs MOUSE

9th c. 16th c. 18th c.

**2. Long front vowels**

(1) DEAL, CLEAN, SEA

**[æ:]** 🡪 [ɛ:] 🡪 [e:] 🡪 [i:]

dæl 🡪 dɛl 🡪 de:l 🡪 di:l DEAL, CLEAN, SEA

9th c. 11th c. 15th c. 18th c.

(2) FIELD, FEET

**[e:]** 🡪 [i:]

fe:ld 🡪 fi:ld FIELD, FEET

12th c. 16th c.

(3) FIVE, TIME, TIDE, CHILD, BIND

**[i:]** 🡪 [əi] 🡪 [ai]

fi:f 🡪 fəiv 🡪 faiv FIVE, TIME, TIDE, CHILD, BIND

9th c. 16th c. 18th c.

**3. Summary**

[a:] ----- [ ɔ:] ------ [o:] ------- [ou] ------- [əu] HOME

[o:] -------- [u:] FOOT

[u:] ------ [ou] ------- [au] HOUSE

[a] ------ [a:] ------ [æ] ------ [ɛ:] ------- [e:] ------ [ei] MAKE

[æ] ------ [ɛ:] ------- [e:] ------ [i:] CLEAN

[e:] ------ [i:] FIELD

[i:] ----- [əi] ----- [ai] CHILD

What we have to understand is that the GWS fundamentally separated English pronunciation from spelling. While pronunciation gradually changed, spelling did not always follow this. In very simple terms, if we pronounced English words they way they are written down, we would get Chaucer’s language (before the GWS began) – much like present-day German does.

One of the ways to understand the GWS is to look at old poems and check how the writer used rhymes in a given century. If we suppose the poet used full rhymes, then the difference between what we would expect today and the rhymes that are written down can be explained only with the fact that the GWS was in progress in that period.

Let us look at John Donne’s poem ‘The Good Morrow’ from 1633. (‘Strange’ rhymes are indicated in bold):

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and **I**

Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?

But sucked on country pleasures, **childishly**?

Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers’ den?

’Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.

If ever any beauty I did see,

Which I desired, and got, ’twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,

Which watch not one another out of **fear**;

For love, all love of other sights controls,

And makes one little room an **everywhere**.

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have **gone**,

Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have **shown**,

Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is **one**.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,

And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;

Where can we find two better hemispheres,

Without sharp north, without declining west?

Whatever dies, was not mixed **equally**;

If our two loves be one, or, thou and **I**

Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can **die**.

### B) Spelling changes

On the one hand, the conservatives won, because we still write down the final mute –e sounds, even though we don’t pronounce them (*make, educate, challenge,* etc.), and silent consonant clusters also appear in writing (*know, knee, knob, knife, bought*, etc.).

On the other hand, Early Modern English could solve the problem of short and long vowels well:

* either they were represented with double consonants (sweet, meet, please, foot)
* or with a vowel-consonant-vowel combination (fate, make, game, while),
* distinguishing it from a double consonant, before which a short vowel was pronounced (made - madden).

It was **Richard Mulcaster** (1530-1611) who laid down the foundations of orthographic stabilisation. His principles were:

1. Get rid of unnecessary letters, such as in *putt* or *ledd*.

2. Use the final “e” only to indicate a preceding long vowel (that is, in *made* and *mate* but not, say, in *mad* and *met or mat*).

3. Use analogy. Write words which are pronounced the same way the same (*hear, dear, fear*, - or – *light, might, sight, night*).

The 16-17th century penchant for classical language also **influenced the spelling of words**. Scholars began to insert letters in words that they supposed should be there based on the “classical” form of the word, which was the Latin original.

That’s why we have essentially “useless” letters in some words:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Middle English word** | **Latin original** | **New word** |
| dette | de**b**itum | de**b**t |
| doute | du**b**itare | dou**b**t |
| faute | fa**ll**ita, falsus | fau**l**t |
| peuple | populous | pe**o**ple |
| saume | **p**salmos (Greek) | **p**salm |
| scol | sc**h**ola | sc**h**ool |
| siðe | **sc**idere | s**c**ythe |
| sisoures | e**xc**idere (“to cut out”) | s**c**issors |
| vitaylle | vi**ct**ualia | vi**c**tuals |
| yland | i**ns**ula | i**s**land |

### C) Lexical changes

The third set of changes occurred yet again in **vocabulary** and were brought on by cultural influences stemming from Continental Europe.  The Renaissance and subsequent interest in science ushered in a period of wholesale borrowing of Greek and Latin terms.  Unlike earlier instances of borrowing, these words were borrowed from **moribund** languages rather than live ones, and were borrowed through the activity of intellectuals rather than through the mixing of peoples. **This was the third phase of Latin borrowings**, and it continues through the present day.

      Latin eventually lost out as the medium of intellectual communication. The rise of nationalism led to increased use of native spoken languages rather than Latin.  The appearance of the **King James Bible** in the early 17th century did much to popularize the use of English over Latin and Greek in writing.  *By 1700 English had virtually replaced Latin as the accepted means of written communication*.

The major change in English during the later period of **Modern English**, has been the continued **expansion of the vocabulary** from every convenient available source. English has never had such an aversion, although some purists have tried to replace borrowed English words with words made from native roots.

### Vocabulary Expansion in the Renaissance

Words from **Latin or Greek** (often via French) were imported wholesale during this period, either intact, e.g.

* *antenna*,
* *apparatus*,
* *criterion*,
* *focus*,
* *genius*,
* *lens*,
* *militia*,
* *nausea*, *paralysis*,
* *radius*,
* *species*,
* *specimen*,
* *squalor*,
* *tedium*,

or, more commonly, slightly altered, e.g.

* *absurdity*,
* *adapt*,
* *agile*,
* *anatomy*,
* *anonymous*,
* *anthology*,
* *area*,
* *atmosphere*,
* *biography*,
* *capsule*,
* *catastrophe*,
* *chaos*,
* *climax*,
* *comedy*,
* *complex*,
* *concept*,
* *crisis*,
* *dislocate*,
* *enthusiasm*,
* *excavate*,
* *expensive*,
* *explain*,
* *fact*,
* *fictitious*,
* *frugal*,
* *gradual*,
* *habitual*,
* *horrid*,
* *illicit*,
* *insane*,
* *invention*,
* *lexicon*,
* *manuscript*,
* *meditate*,
* *mythology*,
* *notorious*,
* *orbit*,
* *paradox*,
* *parasite*,
* *pathetic*,
* *physician*,
* *premium*,
* *pungent*,
* *sarcasm*,
* *skeleton*,
* *system*,
* *technique*,
* *temperature*,
* *tragedy*,
* *ultimate*

A whole category of words ending with the Greek-based suffixes “-ize” and “-ism” were also introduced around this time.

Sometimes, **Latin-based words** were introduced to plug "lexical gaps" where no adjective was available for an existing Germanic noun. Many Latin words and English synonyms now exist side by side:

a. with same meaning : fire - conflagration, ask - interrogate, truth - veracity.

b. slightly different connotations and are used in different contexts : same – identical; youthful – juvenile; readable – legible; manly – masculine; greatness - magnitude.

Practically all common words tend to have a French, Latin or Greek counterpart which belong to a **more sophisticated register**. Can you supply the original words?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Old English word** | **French /Latin / Greek origin word** |
| eat | consume |
|  | purchase |
|  | decease/perish/terminate |
|  | velocity |
|  | rapid |
|  | count /calculate |
|  | recount/relate |
|  | circle |
|  | linear |
|  | person/ individual |
|  | deity |
|  | famine |
|  | joy/felicity |
|  | foliage |
|  | fume |
|  | malady |
|  | vacuous |
|  | collect/assemble |
|  | disadvantage |
|  | loyal |
|  | suicide |

Some native nouns have English and/or Latin **adjectives**. Can you provide the missing adjectives?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *knowledge* | *familiar* |
| death | terminal/lethal/fatal |
| king |  |
| folk/people |  |
| mouth |  |
| nose |  |
| eye |  |
| ear |  |
| tooth |  |
| throat |  |
| belly |  |
| foot |  |
| horse |  |
| dog |  |
| cat |  |
| mind |  |
| heavenly |  |
| sky/air |  |
| star |  |
| moon |  |
| sun |  |
| water |  |
| earth |  |
| sea |  |
| child |  |
| mother |  |
| father |  |
| brother |  |
| sister |  |
| home |  |
| two |  |
| three |  |
| ten |  |
| wild |  |
| wedlock |  |
| ship |  |
| day |  |
| time |  |

### The fight of “traditionals” and “progressives”

Some scholars adopted Latin terms so excessively and awkwardly at this time that the derogatory term “**inkhorn**” **was coined to describe pedantic writers who borrowed the classics to create obscure terms, many of which have not survived.** The so-called Inkhorn Controversy was the first of several such ongoing arguments over language use which began to erupt in the salons of England (and, later, America).

Among those strongly in favour of the use of such "foreign" terms in English were Thomas Elyot and George Pettie; just as strongly opposed were Thomas Wilson and John Cheke.

Examples of inkhorn terms include *revoluting*, *ingent*, *devulgate*, *attemptate*, *obtestate*, *fatigate*, *deruncinate*, *subsecive*, *nidulate*, *abstergify*, *arreption*, *suppeditate*, *eximious*, *illecebrous*, *cohibit*, *dispraise* and other such inventions.

It is also sobering to realize that some of the greatest writers in the language have suffered from the same vagaries of fashion and fate. Not all of Shakespeare’s many creations have stood the test of time, including *barky*, *brisky*, *conflux*, *exsufflicate*, *ungenitured*, *unhair*, *questrist*, *cadent*, *perisive*, *abruption*, *appertainments*, *implausive*, *vastidity* and *tortive*. Likewise, Ben Jonson’s *ventositous* and *obstufact* died a premature death, and John Milton’s impressive *inquisiturient* has likewise not lasted.

However, it is interesting to note that some **words initially branded as inkhorn terms have stayed in the language** and now remain in common use (e.g. *dismiss*, *disagree*, *celebrate*, *encyclopaedia*, *commit*, *industrial*, *affability*, *dexterity*, *superiority*, *external*, *exaggerate*, *extol*, *necessitate*, *expectation*, *mundane*, *capacity* and *ingenious*).

An indication of the arbitrariness of this process is that *impede* survived while its opposite, *expede*, did not; *commit* and *transmit* were allowed to continue, while *demit* was not; and *disabuse* and *disagree* survived, while *disaccustom* and *disacquaint*, which were coined around the same time, did not.

There was a self-conscious **reaction to this perceived foreign incursion** into the English language, and some writers tried to deliberately **resurrect older English words.** Most of these were also short-lived. **John Cheke,** the main advocate of **linguistic purism**, even made a valiant attempt to translate the entire *"New Testament"* – but managed to translate the Gospel of Matthew and the beginning of Mark – using only native English words, such as “foresayer” for prophet, “crossed” for crucified, “byword” for parable”, “hundreder” for centurion, “frosent” for apostle.

“... and there fell a great shower, and the rivers came down, and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not for it was groundwrought on a rock” (Matt. 7:25)

Do you have any idea what these short-lived, resurrected or coined older English words meant? Try to match them.

*anniversary*, *astronomy*, *certainly*, *conclusion*, *confused*, *conscience*, *grammar*, *ignorant*, *muscles*, *musician*, *prophet*, *prudence*, *resurrection*, *stupid*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| gleeman |  |
| sicker |  |
| inwit |  |
| yblent |  |
| endsay |  |
| yeartide |  |
| foresayer |  |
| forewitr |  |
| loreless |  |
| gainrising |  |
| starlore |  |
| fleshstrings |  |
| grosswitted |  |
| speechcraft |  |

Whichever side of the debate one favours, however, it is fair to say that, by the end of the 16th century, English had finally become widely accepted as a language of learning, equal if not superior to the classical languages. Vernacular language, once scorned as suitable for popular literature and little else - and still criticized throughout much of Europe as crude, limited and immature - had become recognized for its inherent qualities.

**Attitudes to English in the Renaissance**

For we Englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste but ever waverynge, wexynge one season and waneth and dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn Englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another... Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges, or eyren? Certaynly it is hard to playse every man, by-cause of dyversite and chaunge of langage.

― William Caxton, 1490

Yet of these two [sc. celeritie and slownesse] springeth an excellent vertue, whervnto we lacke a name in englishe. Wherfore I am constrained to vsurpe a latine worde, callyng it Maturitie.

― Sir Thomas Elyot, The Boke Named the Gouernour (1531)

This should first be learned, that we neuer affect any straunge ynkehorne termes, but so speake as is commonly receiued.

― Sir Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (1553).

Our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borowing of other tunges.

― Sir John Cheke, in his letter to Thomas Hoby, printed at the end of Hoby’s translation of Castiglione’s Courtier (1561).

‘What thinke you of this English, tel me I pray you.’

‘It is a language that wyl do you good in England but passe Dover, it is woorth nothing.’

‘Is it not used then in other countreyes?’

‘No sir, with whom wyl you that they speake?’

‘With English marchants.’

‘English marchantes, when they are out of England, it liketh hem not, and they doo not speake it.’

― John Florio, Florio his firste fruites (1578), ch. 27.

It is a language confused, bepeesed with many tongues: it taketh many words of the latine, and mo from the French, and mo from the Italian, and many mo from the Duitch, some also from the Greeke, and from the Britaine, so that if every language had his owne wordes againe, there woulde but a fewe remaine for English men, and yet every day they adde.

― Florio, Florio his firste fruites, ch. 27.

The English tung cannot proue fairer, then it is at this daie.

― Richard Mulcaster, The First Part of the Elementarie (1582).

**Summary Modern English**

1. Two opposing drives: expansion and stabilization

2. Third Latin (and Greek) influence: scientific, artistic, business terms

3. The Great Vowel Shift – separation of spelling and pronunciation

4. Printing – standardization

5. The fight of traditionals (purists) and progressives – the Inkhorn Controversy

## Samples from Modern English

**1. Thomas Malory: Morte d’Arthur (1485)**

HIt befel in the dayes of Vther pendragon when he was kynge of all Englond and so regned that there was a myȝty duke in Cornewaill that helde warre ageynst hym long tyme. And the duke was called the duke of Tyntagil and so by meanes kynge Vther send for this duk chargyng hym to brynge his wyf with hym for she was called a fair lady and a passynge wyse and her name was called Igrayne. So whan the duke and his wyf were comyn vnto the kynge by the meanes of grete lordes they were accorded bothe the kynge lyked and loued this lady wel and he made them grete chere out of mesure and desyred to haue lyen by her. But she was a passyng good woman and wold not assente vnto the kynge. And thenne she told the duke her husband and said I suppose that we were sente for that I shold be dishonoured.

**2. Edmund Spenser’s Sonnet 7. (16th century)**

FAYRE eyes, the myrrour of my mazed hart,  
  what wondrous vertue is contaynd in you  
  the which both lyfe and death forth from you dart  
  into the obiect of your mighty view?  
For, when ye mildly looke with louely hew,  
  then is my soule with life and loue inspired:  
  but when ye lowre, or looke on me askew  
  then doe I die, as one with lightning fyred.  
But since that lyfe is more then death desyred,  
  looke euer louely, as becomes you best,  
  that your bright beams of my weak eies admyred,  
  may kindle liuing fire within my brest.  
Such life should be the honor of your light,  
  such death the sad ensample of your might.

**3. King James’s Bible (1611) – the Parable of the Prodigal Son**

11 And hee said, A certain man had two sonnes:  
12 And the yonger of them said to his father, Father, giue me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his liuing.  
13 And not many days after, the yonger sonne gathered altogether, and tooke his journey into a farre country, and there wasted his substance with riotous liuing.  
14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he beganne to be in want.  
15 And he went and ioyned himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him unto his fields to feed swine.  
16 And he would faine have filled his belly with the huskes that the swine did eate & no man gaue unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired seruants of my fathers haue bread inough and to spare, and I perish with hunger:  
18 I will arise and goe to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I haue sinned against heauen and before thee.  
19 And am no more worthy to called thy sonne; make me as one of thy hired seruants.  
20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and came, and fell on his necke, and kissed him.  
21 And the sonne said unto him, Father, I haue sinned against heauen, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy sonne.

**Tasks**

Collect the words of French / Latin / Greek origin from the following samples and find the suitable native English terms for them.

*There dwelt in* Athens *a young gentleman of great patrimonie, & of so comely a personage, that it was doubted whether he were more bound to Nature for the liniaments of his person, or to fortune for the encrease of his possessions. But Nature impatient of comparisons, and as it were disdaining a companion, or copartner in hir working, added to this comlinesse of his body suche a sharpe capacitie of minde, that not onely shée proued Fortune counterfaite, but was halfe of that opinion that she hir selfe was onely currant. This younge gallant, of more wit then wealth, and yet of more wealth then wisdome, séeing himselfe inferiour to none in pleasant conceits, thought himselfe superiour to al in honest conditions, insomuch yt he déemed himselfe so apt to all things, that he gaue himselfe almost to nothing, but practising of those things commonly which are incident to these sharp wits, fine phrases, smoth quipping, merry taunting, vsing iesting without meane, & abusing mirth without measure.*

(John Lyly, *Euphues or the Anatomy of Wit*, 1578)

*The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how this misfortune had happened, and above all, the tremendous phenomenon before him, took away the Prince’s speech.  Yet his silence lasted longer than even grief could occasion.  He fixed his eyes on what he wished in vain to believe a vision; and seemed less attentive to his loss, than buried in meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it.  He touched, he examined the fatal casque; nor could even the bleeding mangled remains of the young Prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him.*

*All who had known his partial fondness for young Conrad, were as much surprised at their Prince’s insensibility, as thunderstruck themselves at the miracle of the helmet.  They conveyed the disfigured corpse into the hall, without receiving the least direction from Manfred.  As little was he attentive to the ladies who remained in the chapel.  On the contrary, without mentioning the unhappy princesses, his wife and daughter, the first sounds that dropped from Manfred’s lips were, “Take care of the Lady Isabella.”*

*The domestics, without observing the singularity of this direction, were guided by their affection to their mistress, to consider it as peculiarly addressed to her situation, and flew to her assistance.  They conveyed her to her chamber more dead than alive, and indifferent to all the strange circumstances she heard, except the death of her son.*

(Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, mid-18th century)

*HAD Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had, very early in their marriage, put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. But Mr. Bennet was not of a disposition to seek comfort, for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on, in any of those pleasures which too often console the unfortunate for their folly or their vice. He was fond of the country and of books; and from these tastes had arisen his principal enjoyments. To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given.*

*Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. But she had never felt so strongly as now the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife.*

(Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Chapter 42. – early 19th century)

1. In historical linguistics, “Modern English” refers to English after about 1450. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The word “inflection” contains the stem flect- which means “bending” (as in flexible). That is, you “bend” or modify the word to express different grammatical categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)