Today

- History of English
- Types of language change
  - Sound
  - Morphological
  - Semantic
- Reconstruction?

Historical Linguistics

Concerned with

- How languages are related to one another
- How languages change over time

A (Brief) History of English

- **Old English**:
  Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum
  Si þin nama gehalgod …
- **Middle English**:
  Oure fadir that art in heuenes,
  halewid be thi name …
- **Early Modern English**:
  Our father which art in heaven,
  hallowed be thy name…
- **Modern English**:
  Our father, who is in heaven,
  May your name be kept holy…

Old English (449-1066)

- Celts inhabit British Isles
- 5th c.: Angles, Saxons (~Germany) arrive
- 9th c.: Norse Vikings (Scandinavia) invade
- 1066: Norman invasion (France)
- *Beowulf* (c. 750-1000)

Beowulf

Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile

felahror feran on frean wære.

Hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,

swæse gesiþas, swa he selfa bæd,

þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga;

leof landfruma lange ahte.

Forth he fared at the fated moment,

sturdy Scyld to the shelter of God.

Then they bore him over to ocean's billow,

loving clansmen, as late he charged them,

while wielded words the winsome Scyld,

the leader beloved who long had ruled....

http://www.kami.demon.co.uk/gesithas/media/bss26-31.ram

Middle English (1066-1450)

- Heavy influence of French (and Latin) in areas of government, judicial system, church
- Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400)

Canterbury Tales, Prologue

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweet breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

http://www.vmi.edu/english/audio/GP-Opening.ram

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne

Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,

And smale foweles maken melodye,

That slepen al the nyght with open ye

(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,

(Early) Modern English (1450-1700)

- End of 15th c.: First steps of English standardization w/ William Caxton's printing press
- Works of Shakespeare (1564-1616)
- The King James Bible (1611)

Language change

- Sound change
  - Phonetic
  - Phonological
- Morphological change
- Lexical/semantic change

Sound change

- A change in pronunciation over time
  - **Unconditioned:** all instances of a sound change regardless of environment

    OldE   ModE

    lik [liːk]   >   *like* [laɪk]

    hus [huːs]   >   *house* [haʊs]

  - **Conditioned:** a sound changes only in certain environments

    OldE   ModE

    kinn [kin]   >   *chin* [tʃɪn]

    (*ku* [kuː]   >   *cow* [kaʊ])

Sound change

- **Phonetic change**: change in allophones of a phoneme (does not affect phonemic inventory)

  OldE   /p, t, k/ > [p, t, k]   *kepte* [k̲eptə]
  ModE /p, t, k/ > [p, pʰ, t, tʰ, k, kʰ]   *kept*   [k̲ʰɛpt]

- **Phonological (phonemic) change**: change in phoneme inventory

  OldE   /f/ > [f]   *wulf* [wʊlf]*, wulfas* [wʊlfaṣ]
  MidE   /f/ > [f, v]   *wulf* [wʊlf], *wulvas* [wʊl̲vaṣ]
  ModE /f/ > [f]   *safe* [seɪf]
          /v/ > [v]   *save* [seɪv]

Morphological change

☐ Change in the morphology over time

<u>MidE</u> <u>ModE</u>

clomb [klom] > *climbed* [klaɪmd]

☐ **(Proportional) Analogy:** a form changes to be more like another, usually to make a pattern more regular

time → *timed*

rhyme → *rhymed*

climb → ??

Modern day Morphological Analogy

- Plural: 'mouse' → 'mice'
            'computer mouse' → ?
            'life' → 'lives'
            'lowlife' → ?
            'leaf' → 'leaves'
            'Maple Leaf' → ?

- Past tense: 'fly' → 'flew'
            'fly out' (baseball) → 'flied out'
            'stand' → 'stood'
            'grandstand' → 'grandstanded'

Semantic change

- Changes involving the meanings of words
  - **Extensions**: meaning of a word is extended to new referents
    - OldE *docga* (breed of dog) > ModE *dog* (any dog)
  - **Reductions**: meaning of a word is narrowed to fewer referents
    - OldE *hund* (any dog) > ModE *hound* (type of dog)

Semantic change

- Changes involving the meanings of words
  - **Elevation**: connotations become positive
    - OldE *cneoht* (boy, servant) > ModE *knight*
  - **Degradation**: connotations become negative
    - MidE *silly* (happy) > ModE *silly* (foolish)
    - OHG *kneht* (servant) > Yiddish *knext* (slave)
  - **Shift**: meaning changes entirely

Semantic change

- Old words can 'die' (become obsolete), new words can be added/invented
  - Old:

    forswunk: completely worn out with work

    dwine: to pine away or waste away slowly

    smeke: to flatter somebody to their face and overdo it