



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 gesipas, swa he
selfa bæd,
penden 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....



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 [li:k]

>

like [laɪk]

hus [hu:s]

>

house [haʊs]

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

OldE

ModE

kinn [kin]

>

chin [tʃɪn]

(*ku* [ku:])

>

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* [kɛptə]

ModE /p, t, k/ > [p, p^h, t, t^h, k, k^h] *kept* [k^hɛpt]

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

OldE /f/ > [f] *wulf* [wulf], *wulfas* [wulfas]

MidE /f/ > [f, v] *wulf* [wulf], *wulvas* [wulvas]

ModE /f/ > [f] *safe* [seif]

 /v/ > [v] *save* [seiv]

Morphological change

- Change in the morphology over time

MidE

ModE

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) → ‘fled 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