

In class yesterday we talked about a number of types of linguistic changes. What kind of change is described in the following examples from English?

1. *Old English* *Modern English*
 ic lufie I love
 þu lufast you (sg.) love
 wē lufiað we love

2. English *vocabulary* comes from the French word *vocabulaire*.

3. In earlier forms of English, *disease* meant ‘any kind of unfavorable state.’

4. Originally, the English word *bird* meant ‘small fowl.’

5. *Grumble* originally meant ‘to make low, murmured sounds.’

6. *Immoral* originally meant ‘not customary.’

7. *Accident* used to mean ‘an event.’

8. Traditionally in English, a *pimp* was synonymous with a ‘panderer’ or somebody who sold prostitutes. Among some groups this is now a term of high status for men.

8. During the Great Vowel Shift, all the vowels that were pronounced [u] changed to [aw].

9. The word *engine* used to mean ‘mechanical contrivance,’ but since the Industrial Revolution, it has come to mean ‘mechanical source of power.’

10. Middle English: Wyves Tale of Bath the Duke’s hat of York
 Modern English: Wife of Bath’s tale the Duke of York’s hat

11. In Shakespeare’s time, the word *timorous* meant ‘terrifying.’ Today it means ‘apprehensive, timid.’

12. At one point, all American English speakers pronounced *cot* and *caught* different. Today, a large number of American English speakers do not distinguish between the two.

13. The Modern English word *gospel* comes from Old English *gōdspel*, from *gōd* ‘good’ + *spel* ‘tidings.’
14. The words *office*, *doctrine*, and *novice* used to be used only with a religious connotation, but today these words can be used to talk about secular things as well.
15. Old English speakers distinguished between the voiced labiovelar approximant [w] and the voiceless labiovelar approximant [ɰ], so that *witch* and *which* sounded different. In a few varieties of Modern English, this distinction is maintained, but for most American English speakers, the words *witch* and *which* are homophonous.
16. Very early in the history of English, the voiceless velar stop [k] could occur before the front vowel [i] in words like *cidan* [kīdan] ‘chide.’ Later in the Old English period the velar consonant [k] was palatalized to [č] before the front vowel [i]. We use that pronunciation for words like *chide* today, and [č] contrasts with [k] in minimal pairs like *chew* / *coup*.
17. Middle English: ne hadden nan more to gyuen
Gloss: none had no more to give
Modern English translation: “They had no more to give.”
18. The word *revolutionary* was once associated with the overthrowing of the status quo; today it’s widely used by advertisers to describe something with desirable novelty.

Sources:

Crystal, D. *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language. Language files 9.*
Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams. *An introduction to language.*