

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.*