

LECTURE 2

Old English Phonetic System and Phonetic Changes



1. Old English Vowels and Consonants.

The Old English sound system, consisting of vowels and consonants, developed from the PG (Proto-Germanic) system.

Old English vowels are divided into **monophthongs** and **diphthongs**. They could be long and short.

VOWELS

- *The monophthongs are:* ***a æ e i u y o***
 ǣ ā æ ē ī ū ŷ ō
- *The diphthongs are:* ***ea eo ie io***
 ēā ēō īē īō

In OE there existed a parallelism between short and long vowels (except for **a**). In the diphthong the 2nd element was more open than the first.

CONSONANTS

The system of consonants in OE manifested the following peculiarities.

1. The consonants were divided into:

- labial (губные) sounds – p, b, m, w, f, v;
- velar (задненёбные) and palatal (нёбные) – k, h, g, ȝ, j;
- dental (зубные) – t, d, r, l, n, s, z, θ, ð.

CONSONANTS

2. The absence of affricates (аффрикаты) and sibilants (свистящие, шипящие).
3. Dependence of the quality of the consonants on the environment (окружение) in the word:
 - a) phonemes, denoted by the letters **f**, **p** (**Ѣ**), **s** could be voiced or voiceless. They were voiced in the intervocal position. This position could be made up of a vowel and a voiced consonant.

CONSONANTS

hlāf, oft [f] – *hla**f**ord, lifde* [v]

*tō**p*** [θ] – *tō**p**es* [ð]

*zō**s*** [s] – *zō**s**es* [z]

But doubled consonants were always voiced: *offrian* [f:] (предлагать), *sce**p**pan* [θ:] (вредить), *cyssan* [s:] (целовать).

CONSONANTS

b) **the letter ʒ** was pronounced in 3 ways.

- as the voiced velar plosive variant [g] at the beginning of the word, before back vowels (a, o, u) and consonants, in the middle of the word after n:

[g] – *ʒōd, ʒrētan, ʒanʒan*

- as the voiced velar fricative variant [ɣ] in the middle of the word after back vowels and consonants [r, l]:

[ɣ] – *daʒas, sloʒ, sorʒ, folʒan*

- as the voiced palatal fricative variant [j] before and after front vowels:

[j] – *ʒēār, dæʒ*

CONSONANTS

4. Double consonants were read as long: *settian* [t:], *steppan* [p:].
5. Instead of doubled з, **цз** was written: *лeцзaн* [g':] (положить)
6. The prefix ze- was read as [je] and did not influence the pronunciation of the following consonant: *zesezlian* [je 'sejlian].

2. Phonetic Changes in Old English Vowels.

The phonetic changes in the vowels system were **qualitative** (качественные) and **quantitative** (количественные).

The qualitative changes are

- *fracture (breaking) (преломление)
- *palatalization (палатализация)
- *mutation/umlaut (умлаут)

FRACTURE

OE *fracture* is diphthongization of short vowels before certain consonant clusters (кластеры, группы).

- **æ >ea** before ‘**r +consonant**’, ‘**l+consonant**’, ‘**h+consonant**’ and before final **h**:

ærm > earm ‘arm’, **æld > eald** ‘old’, **æhta > eahta** ‘eight’, **sæh > seah** ‘saw’.

FRACTURE

- **e>eo** before the clusters '**r, l, h+consonant**', and **h final**:

herte>heorte 'heart', **melcan>meocan** 'milk'(v),
selh>seolh 'seal', **feh>feoh** 'cattle', 'property'.

The essence of fracture is that the front vowels are partially assimilated to the following hard consonant by forming a glide, which combines with the vowel to form a diphthong.

PALATALIZATION

Palatalization is diphthongization after palatal consonants [j,k] and the cluster [sk].

- e>ie: 3efan>3iefan ‘give’, 3eldan>3ieldan ‘pay’
- æ>ea: 3æf>3eaf ‘gave’, cæster>ceaster ‘camp’, scæl>sceal ‘shall’
- æ>ea: 3æfon>3eafon ‘gave’ (pl.)
- a>ea: scacan>sceacan ‘shake’
- o>eo: scort>sceort ‘short’

MUTATION (UMLAUT)

Mutation is the change of one vowel to another through the influence of a vowel in the succeeding syllable (последующий слог).

It was of three types:

- 1) **i-mutation** (palatal mutation)
- 2) **back mutation**
- 3) **mutation before h**

I-MUTATION

The most important type of *mutation* is that ***caused by an i*** (j) of the following syllable. Let's study the mechanism of i-mutation, taking the change **fullian>fyllan** 'fill' as an example. The vowel **u** is articulated by raising the back of the tongue together with rounding the lips. The sound **i** requires raising the front of the tongue.

I-MUTATION

When the speaker begins to articulate the **u**, he at the same time anticipates (предвидеть) the articulation needed for **i** and raises the front of the tongue instead of its back. The lip-rounding is preserved. The result is the vowel **y**.

BACK MUTATION

- Another type of mutation was caused by a back vowel (**a, o, u**) of the following syllable. **The essence** of it is the following. The articulation of the back vowel is anticipated in the preceding front vowel, which accordingly develops into a diphthong.

BACK MUTATION

These are the examples of ***back-mutation***:

- ***i>io hira>hiora (heora)‘their’, sifon>siofon ‘seven’***
 - ***e>eo herot>heorot ‘heart’***
 - ***a>ea saru>searu ‘armour’***
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MUTATION BEFORE h

There's no satisfactory explanation for the essence of this type of mutation. This is an example of such a change.

naht>neaht, nieht, niht, nyht 'night'

It may be due to a palatal quality of the **h** or due to an **i** which was probably a case ending (падежное окончание) in the original type of declension (склонение) to which the word belonged.

Quantitative Changes in OE Vowels

Quantitative changes in OE vowels are represented by *lengthening*.

Lengthening took place in certain positions in the 9th century.

1. Vowels are lengthened before the clusters **ld, nd, mb**:

- cild > cīld ‘child’
- bindan > bīndan ‘bind’
- climban > clīmban ‘climb’

But if the cluster was followed by another consonant, lengthening did not take place, as in cildru ‘children’.

LENGTHENING

2. It took place if some consonants were lost.

a) The vowels were lengthened when **ɜ** was lost before **d, n**.

sæɜde > sǣde ‘said’

mæɜden > mǣden ‘maiden’

b) The vowels were lengthened when **m, n** were lost before **f, s, þ, h**.

bronhte > brōhte ‘brought’, finf > fīf ‘five’, uns > ūs ‘us’,
onþer > ōþer ‘other’.

LENGTHENING

3. Lengthening took place in case of **contraction** (стяжение). If, after a consonant had dropped, two vowels met inside a word, they usually contracted into one long vowel.

- ah+vowel>eah+vowel>ea

slahan>sleahan>slēāh 'slay' (бить, избивать)

- eh, ih+vowel>eoh+vowel>eo

sehan>seohan>sēōn 'see'

- oh+vowel>o fohan>fōn 'catch'

3. Phonetic Changes in OE Consonants

Qualitative changes:

****voicing and devoicing of fricatives***

****palatalization***

****assimilation.***

Voicing and Devoicing of Fricatives

In OE the fricatives **f**, **s**, **þ** were subjected (подверглись) to a process of voicing and devoicing. They became voiced intervocally – between vowels, sonorants and voiced consonants. In other positions they remained voiceless.

weorþan – (становиться) [ð],

wearþ (стал) - [θ]

Palatalization

The velar consonants [k, g, g:, x] were palatalized before a front vowel and approached (приближаться) affricates in Late OE.

k>k'>tʃ

cild 'child'

sk>sk'>ʃ

scip 'ship'

g(g:)>g'(g:)>dʒ

senʒean 'sing'

brycʒ 'bridge'

Assimilation

Assimilation is a process when two adjacent consonants within a word influence each other in such a way that the articulation of one sound becomes similar to or identical with the articulation of the other one.

For example,

fm>mm

fn>mn

wifman>wimman ‘woman’;

efn>emn ‘even’

Quantitative Changes of OE Consonants

These include

*** *loss of consonants:***

a) syncopation (синкопа)

b) simplification (упрощение)

****metathesis (метатеза)***

****gemination (геминация, удвоение)***

Syncopation

Syncopation is shortening of a word through the loss of a sound in the middle of the word e.g.:

friznan>frinan ‘ask’

sehan>seahan>seon ‘see’

Simplification

Simplification is shortening at the beginning of a word. **H** is lost in **hl**, **hr**:

hlaford >loverd 'lord'

hring>ring 'ring'

Metathesis

Metathesis is a phonetic change which consists in two sounds exchanging their places. It mainly affected the consonant **r** and the succeeding vowel e.g.

Þridda > **Þirda** 'третий',

rinnan > **irnan**, **iernan** 'бежать'.

Occasionally metathesis affected other sounds:

sk > **ks** **wascan** > **waxan** 'wash'

ps > **sp** **aps** > **asp** 1. осина 2. гадюка, змея (разг.)

Gemination

Gemination is doubling of consonants. This process accompanied i-mutation. It takes place only if the preceding sound is short (before **j**, **i**), e.g.

sætjan>settan ‘put, place’

But ***dōmian>dēman*** ‘judge’

This change didn’t affect the sonorant **r**:

werian=werian





















