

**KYIV NATIONAL LINGUISTIC
UNIVERSITY**

Subota S.V.

LECTURE 7

**EARLY MODERN
ENGLISH PHONOLOGY.**

Plan

1. **The Great Vowel Shift.**
2. **The development of short vowels.**
3. **Rise of new long vowels.**
4. **Rise of new diphthongs and triphthongs.**
5. **Consonant changes .**

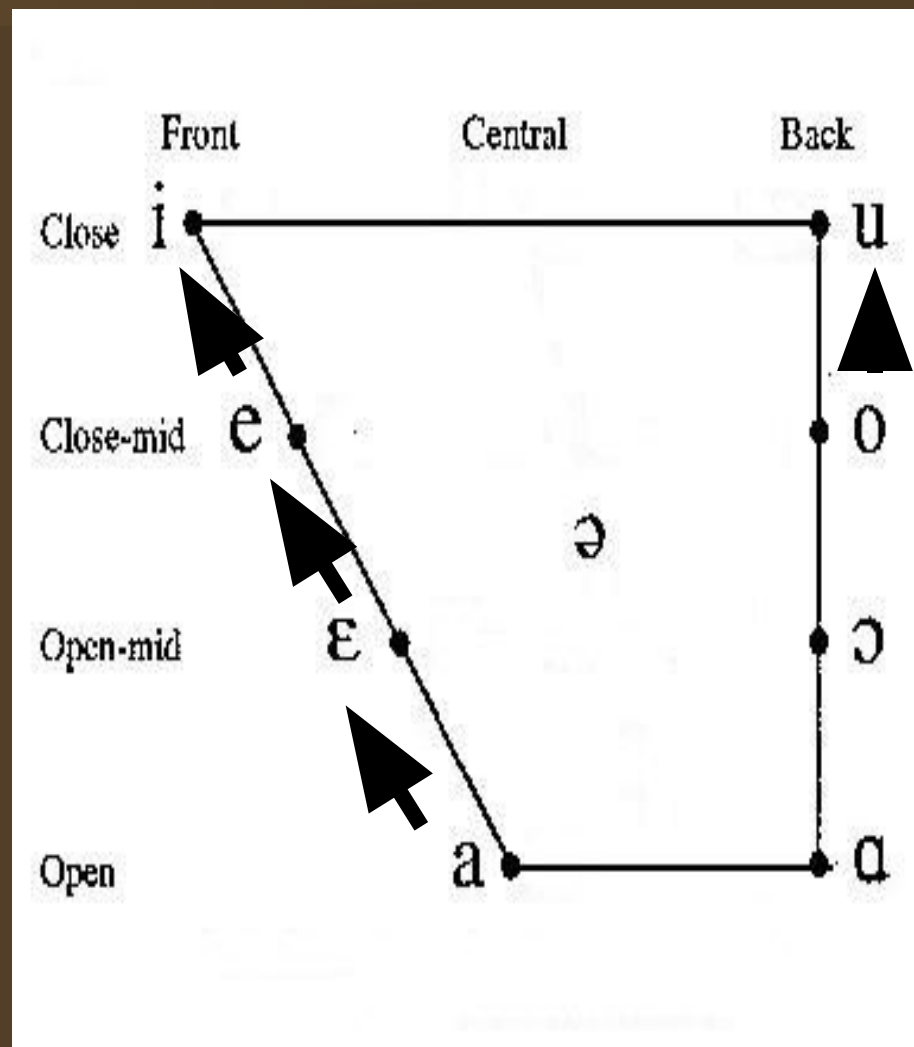
Literature

- ▶ Расторгуева Т.А. История английского языка. – М.: Астрель, 2005. – С. 200-214.
- ▶ Ильиш Б.А. История английского языка. – Л.: Просвещение, 1972. – С. 254-273.
- ▶ Иванова И.П., Чахоян Л.П. История английского языка. – М.: Высшая школа, 1976. – С.79-96.
- ▶ Студенець Г.І. Історія англійської мови в таблицях. - К.: КДЛУ, 1998. – Tables 86-96

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS)

- The most significant phonetic change of this period was **the GVS** (which involved the change of all ME vowels and some of the diphthongs) between the 14th and 18th c.

All the long vowels became closer or were diphthongized



i: → **ai** time [ti:mə] → [taim]

e: → **i:** keep [ke:p] → [ki:p]

ɛ: → **e:** → **i:**

sea [sɛ:] → [se:] → [si:]

a: → **ei** name, take

ɔ: → **ou** go, boat

o: → **u:** moon, tool

u: → **au** out, noun

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS)

The process of change was gradual.
Each stage took more
than 100 years.

	<i>XV c.</i>	<i>XVI c.</i>	<i>XVII c.</i>	<i>XVIII c.</i>
a:	æ:	ɛ:	e:	ei

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS)

- These changes can be defined as “independent” as they were not caused by any phonetic conditions. GVS – is an additional source of diphthongs in NE.
- The difference between spellings lost its phonetic value **ea** [ɛ:] - **ee** [e:].
In the 17th century began to serve to distinguish between two words pronounced in the same way
(see- sea, week – weak, meat -meet)

It must be noted that some of the diphthongs which appeared during the GVS could appear from other sources. The diphthong [ou] was preserved from ME without modifications.

[ei] originates from the ME [ai/ei] which had merged into one diphthong.

The GVS (unlike other most of the earlier phonetic changes) wasn't followed by any regular spelling changes.

During the shift even the names of some English letters were changed.

The GVS didn't add any new sounds to the vowel system. In fact every vowel which developed under the GVS can be found in Late ME. However the GVS is an important event in the history of English sound system. Every long vowel as well as some diphthongs were shifted.

There was one general tendency:

[u:] house – moon

– **narrowing**

of long vowels

[au] drawen – house

– **diphthongization**

of the narrowest of them

ME	NE
Old vowels	New vowels
[ei] wey	make
[ai] sayde	time
[ou] bowe	go
[u:] house	moon
[au] drawen	house

Some interpretations of the GVS

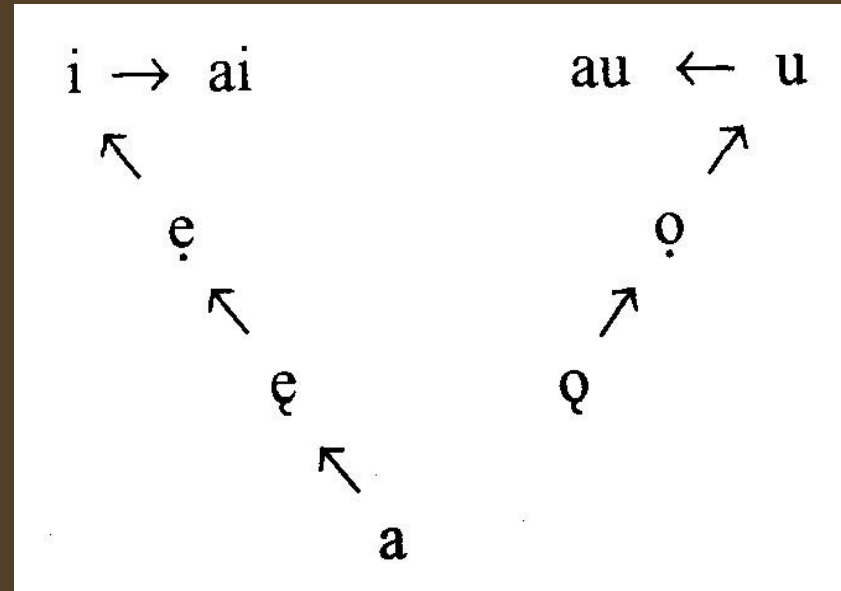
There are certainly many remarkable aspects in the shift. It left no long vowel unaltered. All vowels changed in a single direction.

How did the GVS start?

Drag-chain theory

(Jespersen) ME [i:], [u:]
diphthongized first and
the mid vowels [e:], [o:]

moved up into their vacate positions *dragging after them selves their neighbors.*



Push-chain (Luick). The changes started at open vowels every step pushed the adjoining vowel away to avoid coincidence the lower ones moved up into their slots.

When did it start?

A.Martinet, B.Trnka: The GVS began in the 12th- 13th century when two short vowels [i], [u] became more open.

H. Sweet, O. Jespersen: 16-18 c.

R. Lass : 1500

Why did it start?

V. Plotkin attributes the changes in Late ME not only to phonological but also to morphological factors. The shift may be stimulated by the loss of the final [e] in the 15th c., which transformed disyllabic words into monosyllabic. The difference between such monosyllabic words was not sufficient

ME fate, fat [fa:tə] – [fa:t] > NE [fa:t] – [fa:t]

ME bite, bit [bi:tə] – [bi:t] > NE [bi:t] – [bi:t]

The GVS emphasized this difference by changing the quality of long vowels and by adding new distinctive features.

Exceptions to the GVS:

- before [d], [t], [n], [v], [θ]: **dead, head, threat, wealth, friend etc.**
- ea [ɛ:] > [e:] did not take the step to [i:], it was stopped by the preceding [r]: **break, great**
- Vowels in the words borrowed later remained unchanged: **police, machine, group**

Development of short vowels

In comparison with long vowels, other changes seem few and insignificant. Short vowels were more stable than long vowels. Only two out of five underwent certain alterations (a, u).

[a] ME man, that, was	[æ]	man, that
	[o] when it was preceded by the semivowel [w]	was, watch
	[æ] when it was followed by velar consonants [k], [g]	wax, wag
	[a] before r	park

ME	NE	
<p>[u] lost its labial character unless it was preceded by some labials</p>	<p>[ʌ]</p>	<p>NE cut, come, couple (ME comen [kumən] > NE come [kʌm])</p>
	<p>[u]</p>	<p>NE put, pull, push, bull</p>
		<p>!!! But, butler, pulse, pudding</p>
<p>ME enough [e'nu:f] > [e'nuf] > [e'nʌf]</p>		

Rise of new long vowels

[a] → [a:] before fricatives: cast, fast, last, past, craft, bath, path, father, ask, mask, grasp etc.

Shortening of vowels before single dental / velar

[ɛ:] → [e:] → [e] Bread, head, breath, dead

But remained long in the verbs – to breed, to breathe

[o:] →	[u:] →	[u]	book, look, hood, good
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	[u:] →	[u] → [ʌ]	rough, enough, couple
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- In EME **vocalization of some fricatives** led to the appearance of long monophthongs and new diphthongs.

- **[X], [Xʰ]** had been vocalized by Late ME.

ME taughte [ˈtauxtə] > [to:t] – [au]

was contracted to [o:] and [x] was lost.

ME night [niXʰt] > [nijt] > [ni:t] > [nait].

The most important instance of vocalization is the development of [r]. The sonorant [r] made the preceding vowel more open, retracted [er > ar].

The following words show different reflections of one and the same change in the written form

OE	ME	Early ME	the change -
deorc	derk	dark [dark]	- is shown in spelling
clerec	clerk	clerk [klark]	- isn't shown
heorte	herte	heart [hart]	

heart seems to show both stages or an attempt to record the transition with a help of the diagraph ea

The vocalization of **[r]** took place in the 16th/17th c.
 In Early NE **[r]** was vocalized when it stood after vowels either finally or was followed by another consonant losing its consonantal character
[r] turned into the neutral [ə], which was added to the preceding vowel as a glide forming a diphthong **[for] > [foə] > [fo:]**

	ME	NE	
After short vowels	[o + r] >	[o:]	for, thorn
	[o + r] >	[o:]	bar, dark
	[i, u, e + r] >	[ɛ:]	first, serve, fur, sir dirt, firm, burn, hurt
	[ə + r] >	[ə]	brother, mother

	ME	NE	
After W	[o + r] >	[ɛ:]	worm, word, worse
After long vowels	[i: + r] >	[aiə]	shire
	[e: + r] >	[iə]	beer
	[ɛ: + r] >	[ɛə]	eare, there, bear
	[a: + r] >	[ɛə]	hare
	[ɔ: + r] >	[ɔ:]	floor
	[o: + r] >	[uə]	moor
	[u: + r] >	[auə]	flower, flour
	<p>In the 17th c. [ei], [e:] merged into [ei], the vowel was shortened to [e] (says [sez], said [sed]). This was due to the unstressed position of these forms</p>		

Loss of unstressed [ə]

- The loss of [ə] started in the Northern dialects. By the 14th c. it was completed.
- **It was final (love [luv])**
- **When it was followed by a consonant (tables, hats, books, lived, stopped)**
- The sound [ə] is still pronounced in the endings where its falling off could cause difficulties of articulation and understanding. Later [ə] > [ɪ] (horses, bushes)

Voicing of voiceless fricatives

In OE the pairs of fricative consonants [f]-[v], [θ]-[ð], [s]-[z] were treated as positional variants. Sonority depended on the phonetic conditions. Phonologization of voiced and voiceless fricatives was a slow process which lasted several hundred years. [f]-[v] were the first to turn into phonemes (ME veyne [ˈveinə] – feign [ˈfeinə]). In the 16th c. the fricatives were voiced under certain conditions:

 **when they were preceded by an unstressed vowel;**

 **followed by a stressed vowel.**

One phonetic condition – an unstressed preceding vowel was sufficient to transform a voiceless into a voiced one.

Voiced and voiceless fricatives began to appear in similar phonetic conditions and could be used for phonological purposes (to distinguish different morphemes).

ice [ais] – eyes [aiz]

rice [rais] – to rise [raiz]

teeth [ti:θ] – to teeth [ti:ð]

- In OE there were no affricates, sibilants (except s, z)

In Late ME palatal **[kʰ], [gʰ], [skʰ]** developed in **[tʃ], [dʒ], [ʃ]** (ME *child, each, ship, shinen* + French borrowings, e.g. *charme* [tʃarmə]).

The opposition of velar and palatal consonants disappeared, instead plosives were contrasted to new affricates ([tʃ] - [dʒ], [ʃ] - ?).

New affricates, sibilants appeared in Early NE as a result of the phonetic assimilation of lexical borrowings.

In many French borrowings the stress fell on the last syllable (ME *nacioun* [naʰsju:n], *plesure* [pleʰzju:r]).

- **The stress moved closer to the beginning of the word. The final syllables became unstressed or weakly stressed.** The sounds making up the syllable became less distinct. As a result some clusters fused into a single consonant and merged with the phonemes already existing.

[zj] > [ʒ]	ME pleasure [ple 'zju:r] > NE ['pleʒə]
[sj] > [ʃ]	ME condicioun [kondi 'sju:n]
[tj] > [tʃ]	ME nature [na 'tju:r]
[dj] > [dʒ]	ME soldier [soul 'djer]

Three of these sounds **[ʃ]**, **[tʃ]**, **[dʒ]** merged with the phonemes already existing in the language, while the 4th **[ʒ]** made a new phoneme. Now the 4 sounds formed a well-balanced system of two correlated pairs: **[ʃ]**, **[ʒ]** - **[tʃ]**, **[dʒ]**

Simplification of consonant clusters

In many cases when a word ended in 2 consonants the final one was lost (simplified)

[mb]	[m]	lamb, climb, comb, bomb
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[mn]	[m]	damn, hymn, column, autumn
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[ln]	[l]	ME myln – NE mill
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In some words was introduced by analogy

OE cruma – NE crumb [krʌm], limb, thumb, numb

[stl]	[sl]	castle, whistle, rustle
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[stn]	[sn]	glisten, listen, fasten, moisten
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[ftn]	[fn]	often, soften
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[stm]	[sm]	Christmas, postman
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[ktl]	[kl]	exactly, directly
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On the other hand, words having one final consonant sometimes got another

[n]	[nd]	soun > sound, poun > pound
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		boun > bound, lene > lend
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[n]	[nt]	French paysan > peasant
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k, g before n	know, knit, knee, gnaw, gnat
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w before r	write, wrong
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ŋg > ŋ	bring
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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**

