

# LEXICOLOGY COURSE

## LECTURE 3 THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH WORDS

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# The questions under consideration


- 1. The historical circumstances which stimulate the borrowing process
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  - 3.4. The characteristic features of Scandinavian borrowings
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# The questions under consideration

- 4. Three stages of assimilation
- 5. International words
- 6. Etymological Doublets
- 7. Translation-loans
- 8. Interrelations between etymological and stylistic characteristics of English words

## 1. The historical circumstances which stimulate the borrowing process

- A **borrowing** (a loan word) is a word taken over from another language and modified in phonemic shape, spelling, paradigm or meaning according to the standards of the English language.
- The period of borrowing (more than 1,000 years. )
- Quantity (up to 80 per cent of the English vocabulary consists of borrowed words).It is due to the specific conditions of the English language development.



# Examples of the many words that have come into use during XX century

- *Atomic,*
- *cybernetics,*
- *jeans,*
- *khaki,*
- *sputnik,*
- *perestroika*



# What are the conditions which encourage the borrowing process ?

- Each time two nations come into close contact, certain borrowings are a natural consequence.

# The nature of contact may be different.

- It may be wars, invasions or conquests when foreign words are in effect imposed upon the reluctant conquered nation.  
E.g. The Norman culture of the 11th c. was certainly superior to that of the Saxons. The result was that an immense number of French words forced their way into English vocabulary.

# The nature of contact may be different.

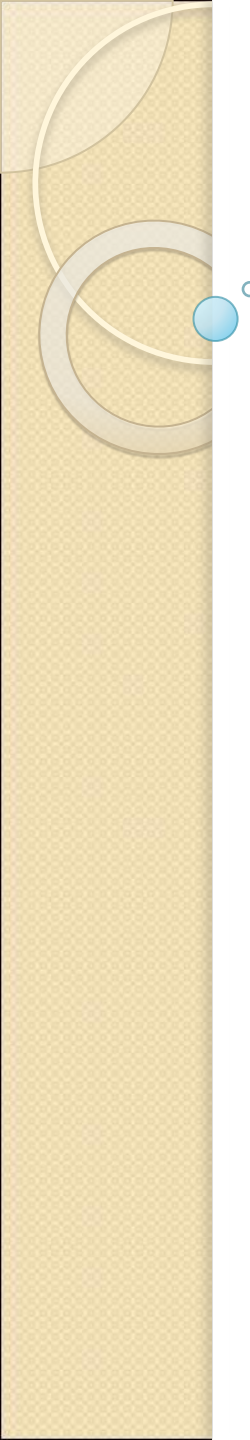
- There are also periods of peace when the process of borrowing is due to trade and international cultural relations.

These latter circumstances are certainly more favourable for stimulating the borrowing process, for during invasions and occupations the natural psychological reaction of the oppressed nation is to reject and condemn the language of the oppressor.



# Why are words borrowed?

- to fill a gap in vocabulary
- to represent the same concept in some new aspect
- to accompany cultural elements borrowed from one culture by another



## Examples (to fill a gap in vocabulary)

When the Saxons borrowed Latin words for *butter*, *plum*, *beet*, they did it because their own vocabulary lacked words for these new objects.


For the same reason the words *potato* and *tomato* were borrowed by English from Spanish when these vegetables were first brought to England by the Spaniards.

# Examples (to represent the same concept in some new aspect )

- This type of borrowing enlarges groups of synonyms and greatly provides to enrich the expressive resources of the vocabulary. That is how the Latin *cordial* was added to the native *friendly*, the French *desire* to *wish* and the French *adore* to *like* and *love*.

## Examples (to accompany cultural elements)

- In English a material culture word *rouge* was borrowed from French, a social culture word *republic* from Latin, and religious culture word *baptize* from Greek.



Borrowed words become completely absorbed into the system

- so that they are not recognized by speakers of the language as foreign. Few people realize that *tomato* is of Aztec origin.

# Borrowed words haven't changed

- Some words and phrases have retained their original spelling, pronunciation and foreign identity, for example: *rendezvous*, *coup*, *gourmet*, *detente* (French); *status quo*, *ego*, *curriculum vitae*, *bona fide* (Latin); *patio*, *macho* (Spanish); *kindergarten*, *blitz* (German,); *kowtow*, *tea* (Chinese,); *incognito*, *bravo* (Italian).

# Borrowed words have changed their meaning

- e.g. *mind* originally meant "memory", and this meaning survives in the phrases "to keep in mind", "time out of mind", etc. The word *brown* preserves its old meaning of "gloomy" in the phrase "in a brown study". There are instances when a word acquires a meaning opposite to its original one, e.g. *nice* meant "silly" some hundreds of years ago.



two main problems connected with  
the vocabulary of a language

- the origin of the words,
- their development in the language



# Etymology (definition)

- Etymology (from Greek etymon "truth" + logos "learning") is a branch of linguistics that studies the origin and history of words tracing them to their earliest determinable source.

# Structure of the English vocabulary

- The etymological structure of the English vocabulary consists of the native element (Indo-European and Germanic) and the borrowed elements.

## 2. Native Words

- words that are not borrowed from other languages (the **Native Element**)
- the earliest recorded form of the English language (**Old English, or Anglo-Saxon**)
- words of Indo-European origin (**Indo-European Element**)
- are not to be found in other Indo-European languages but the Germanic (**Common Germanic words**)
- words appeared in the English vocabulary in the 5th century (**The English proper element**)

# The Native Element

- By the **Native Element** we understand words that are not borrowed from other languages. A native word is a word that belongs to the Old English word-stock. The Native Element is the basic element, though it constitutes only up to 20-25% of the English vocabulary.

# Examples of native words

The native element in English comprises a large number of high-frequency words like

- the articles,
- prepositions,
- pronouns,
- conjunctions,
- auxiliaries and
- words denoting everyday objects and ideas (e.g. *house, child, water, go, come, eat, good, bad, etc.*).

# Grammatical structure

- the grammatical structure is essentially Germanic having remained unaffected by foreign influence

# Old English, or Anglo-Saxon

- Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, is the earliest recorded form of the English language. It was spoken from about A.D. 600 until about A.D. 1100, and most of its words had been part of a still earlier form of the language.

# Examples of Old English words

- Many of the common words of modern English, like *home*, *stone*, and *meat* are native, or Old English, words.
- Most of the irregular verbs in English derive from Old English (*speak*, *swim*, *drive*, *ride*, *sing*),
- as do most of the English shorter numerals (*two*, *three*, *six*, *ten*) and
- most of the pronouns (*I*, *you*, *we*, *who*).



# Old English words

- Many Old English words can be traced back to **Indo-European**, a prehistoric language that was the common ancestor of Greek and Latin as well. Others came into Old English as it was becoming a separate language.

# Indo-European Element:

- since English belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European group of languages, the oldest words in English are of Indo-European origin. They form part of the basic word stock of all Indo-European languages. There are several semantic groups:

# semantic groups

- words expressing family relations: *father, mother, son, daughter, brother;*
- names of parts of the human body: *foot, eye, ear, nose, tongue, lip, heart;*
- names of trees, birds, animals: *tree, birch, cow, wolf, cat, swine, goose;*
- names expressing basic actions: *to come, to know, to sit, to work;*
- plants: *tree, birch (cp. p. берёза), corn;*
- time of day: *day, night;*

# semantic groups

- heavenly bodies (небесные тела): *sun, moon, star*;
- words expressing qualities: *new, red, quick, right, glad, sad*;
- numerals: *from one to a hundred*;
- pronouns – *personal* (except *they* which is a Scandinavian borrowing), *demonstrative*.
- numerous verbs: *be* (ср. русск. быть), *stand* (стоять), *sit* (сидеть), *eat* (есть), *know*.

# Common Germanic words

- are not to be found in other Indo-European languages but the Germanic. They constitute a very large layer of the vocabulary

# Common Germanic words

- nouns: *hand, life, sea, ship, meal, winter, ground, coal, goat;*
- adjectives: *heavy, deep, free, broad, sharp, grey, green, blue, white, small, high, old, good;*
- verbs: *to buy, to drink, to find, to forget, to go, to have, to live, to make, see, hear, speak, tell, say, answer, make;*
- pronouns: *all, each, he, self, such;*
- adverbs: *again, forward, near,*
- prepositions: *after, at, by, over, under, from, for.*

# Common Germanic words

- parts of the human body: *head, hand, arm, finger, bone.*
- animals: *bear, fox, calf.*
- plants: *oak, fir, grass.*
- natural phenomena: *rain, frost.*
- seasons of the year: *winter, spring, summer (autumn is a French borrowing).*
- landscape features: *sea, land.*
- human dwellings and furniture: *house, room, bench.*
- sea-going vessels: *boat, ship.*

# The Indo-European and Germanic

- The Indo-European and Germanic groups are so old that they cannot be dated. The tribal languages of the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, by the time of their migration, contained only words of Indo-European and Germanic roots plus a certain number of the earliest Latin borrowings.



# The English proper element

- Firstly, it can be approximately dated. The words of this group appeared in the English vocabulary in the 5th century or later, that is after the Germanic tribes migrated to the British Isles. Secondly, these words have another distinctive feature: they are specifically English having no cognates in other languages

# What are cognates?

- Cognates are words of the same etymological root, of common origin. For Indo-European and Germanic words such cognates can always be found, as, for instance, for the following words of the Indo-European group.
- *Star*: Germ. *Stern*, Lat. *Stella*, Gr. *aster*.
- *Sad*: Germ, *satt*, Lat. *satis*, R. *сыт*, Snsr. *sā-*.
- *Stand*: Germ, *stehen*, Lat. *stare*, R. *стоять*, Snsr. *stha-*.

## examples of English proper words

- These words stand quite alone in the vocabulary system of Indo-European languages. They are not numerous but unique: *bird, boy, girl, lord, lady, woman, daisy, always.*

# the English proper element

- words which were made after the 5th century according to English word-building patterns both from **native and borrowed** morphemes. For instance, the adjective *beautiful* built from the French borrowed root and the native suffix belongs to the English proper element. It is natural, that the quantity of such words is immense.

### **3. Borrowings (What does the word borrowing mean?)**

- the process by which a borrowed word came into the vocabulary of one language from another
- the result of this process, that is a borrowed word itself



What is the percentage of borrowed words in the English vocabulary?

- Many scholars estimate the percentage of borrowed words in the English vocabulary at 65 - 70 per cent.

## 3.1. The earliest group of English borrowings (WHY?)

- Europe is occupied by the Roman Empire.
- Among the inhabitants of the continent are Germanic tribes. (a rather primitive stage of development )

# What did Germanic tribes borrow?

- Latin words to name foodstuffs (*butter* and *cheese*)
- Latin names of fruits and vegetables enter their vocabularies: *cherry, pear, plum, pea, beet, pepper*
- The word *plant* is also a Latin borrowing of this period



## 3.2. Celtic borrowings. The fifth century A.D. (Why?)

- Several of the Germanic tribes (the most numerous being the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes) migrated to the British Isles.
- Through their numerous contacts with the defeated Celts, the conquerors got to know and assimilated a number of Celtic words

# Celtic borrowings

- (Modern English *bald*, *down*, *glen* (лощина), *druid* (кельтский жрец), *bard*, *cradle* (колыбель).
- *place names, names of rivers, hills*
- the name of the English capital *London* originates from Celtic

## **3.3.The period of Cristianization. The seventh century A.D.**

- This century was significant for the christianization of England. Latin was the official language of the Christian church.
- Latin borrowings came from church Latin. They mostly indicated persons, objects and ideas associated with church and religious rituals.

# Borrowings from church Latin

- *priest* (священник), *bishop* (епископ), *monk* (монах), *nun* (монахиня), *candle* (свеча), *dean*, *cross*, *alter*, *abbot*.
- *educational terms* (the first schools in England were *church schools*, the first teachers – *priests* and *monks*)

## 4. Three stages of assimilation

- Most of the borrowed words adjust themselves to their new environment. They are **assimilated**. The foreign origin of a word is quite unrecognizable.
- It is difficult to believe that such words as *dinner, cat, take, cup, travel, sport, street* are not English by origin.

# Bear traces of their foreign background

- *Distance* and *development*, for instance, are identified as borrowings by their French suffixes,
- *skin* and *sky* by the Scandinavian initial *sk*,
- *police* and *regime* by the French stress on the last syllable.

# Assimilation

- Partially assimilated words are *taiga*, *phenomena*, *police*
- Unassimilated words are *coup d'etat*, *tete-a-tete*, *ennui*, *eclat*.

# the three main areas of adaptation

- **the phonetic**
- **the grammatical**
- **the semantic**



# the phonetic adaptation

- fully adapted to the phonetic system of the English language
- bear no phonetic traces of their French origin

*table, plate, courage*

# the phonetic adaptation

- phonetic adaptation is not completed.
- borrowings still sound surprisingly French

*regime,*

*valise* (саквояж, чемодан),

*matinee,*

*cafe,*

*ballet.*

# The grammatical adaptation

- is a complete change of the former paradigm of the borrowed word
- Renaissance borrowings *cup, plum, street, wall* were fully adapted to the grammatical system of the language
- but *datum* (pl. *data*), *phenomenon* (pl. *phenomena*), *пальто* hasn't changed
- (a lasting process)

# The semantic adaptation

- is an adjustment to the system of meanings of the vocabulary.
- *E.g.* semantic adjustment
- *gay* was borrowed from French in several meanings at once: *noble of birth, bright, shining, multi-coloured*.
- Rather soon it developed the meaning *joyful, high-spirited* in which sense it became a synonym of the native *merry*.

# The semantic adaptation

- there was no place in the vocabulary for the former meanings of *gay*, but the group with the general meaning of *high spirits* obviously lacked certain shades which were supplied by *gay*.