

LECTURE 3

OLD ENGLISH PERIOD

Main phonetic changes

- West Germanic invaders from Jutland and southern Denmark: the **Angles, Saxons** and **Jutes** began to settle in the British Isles in the **5th century AD**.



- 4 major dialects of OE emerged: **Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon** and **Kentish** in the Southeast

- These invaders pushed the original **Celtic**-speaking inhabitants into Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Ireland.
- These Celtic languages survive today in Gaelic languages of Scotland and Ireland and in Welsh.

Old English (*Ænglisc, Anglisc, Englisc*) or **Anglo-Saxon** is an early form of the English language that was spoken and written by the Anglo-Saxons and their descendants in parts of what are now England and southeastern Scotland between the **mid-5th** century and the **mid-12th** century.

1. Vowels **e**, **o** in Germanic languages were long.
2. Digraph **ei** is read like /i:/
3. **a** and **u** can be long and short; **i** – only short
4. digraph **ai** could be:
 - (1) diphthong /aɪ/;
 - (2) short, open /e/ in front of **r**, **h** (with the exception of *air*, *haihs*);
 - (3) long, open /æ/ in front of vowels;
 - (4) separately if belonging to different syllables;
5. digraph **au**:
 - (1) diphthong /aʊ/;
 - (2) short, open /ɔ/ in front of **r**, **h** (with the exception of *hauhs*, *gaurs*, *tauhs*)
 - (3) long, open /ɔ:/ in front of vowels;
 - (4) separately if belonging to different syllables;
6. **b**, **d**
 - (1) at the beginning of the word and after consonants are voiced stops;
 - (2) after vowels are voiced fricative, labio-dental /v/, interdental /ð/
7. **f** in intervocal position /v/;
8. **gg**, **gk** – back palatal nasal /ŋg/, /ŋk/;
9. cluster **ggw** - /ŋgw/;
10. **q** – labiovelar voiceless stop /kw/;
11. ligature **hw** – labiovelar voiceless fricative /xw/;

Fæder ūre,

þū þe eart on heofonum,

sī þīn nama gehālgod.

Tō becume þīn rīce.

Gewurþe ðīn willa on eorðan swā swā on
heofonum.

Ūrne gedæghwāmlican hlāf syle ūs tō
dæg.

And forgyf ūs ūre gyltas, swā swā wē
forgyfað ūrum gyltendum.

And ne gelæd þū ūs on costnunge,
ac āl̄ys ūs of yfele.

3. Development of Vowels

- Nearly all OE phonetic changes appear to be due to one common principle, that of *assimilation*.
- Assimilation can be *progressive*, when the preceding sound causes the change, or *regressive*, if the following sound causes the change.

(A) OE i-Umlaut

*WHY ??? In modern English **MAN** (sg) but **MEN** (pl) ?????*

1. in ancient Germanic, the plural had the same vowel, but also a plural suffix *-iz*.
2. the suffix caused fronting of the vowel
3. the suffix disappeared
4. the mutated vowel remained as the only plural marker: *men*.

	Germanic	Old English	Modern English
Sg	*mūs	mūs	/maʊs/ 'mouse'
Pl	*mūsi	mȳs > mīs	/maɪs/ 'mice'
Sg	*fōt	fōt	/fʊt/ 'foot'
Pl	*fōti	fēt	/fi:t/ 'feet'

Monophthongs:

ā, ō, ū before **i, j** > **æ, œ, y**

Eg. Lat **a**nglus – OE **e**ngle, Fin **ku**ningas – OE **c**yninȝ, Gth **l**aisjan – OE **l**æran

Diphthongs:

- **ea** > **ie, y** **e**ald – **i**eldra – **i**eldest
- **eo** > **ie, y** ȝ**e**onȝ – ȝ**i**enȝra – ȝ**i**enȝest
- **eā** > **iē, y** h**e**āh – h**y**rra – h**y**hst
- **eō** > **iē, y** tre**o**wiðu – fr**y**wiðu

(B) Breaking (Fracture)

Breaking – is diphthongization

æ > ea e > eo i > io ā > ēā

when followed by /h/ or by /r/ /l/ + consonant.

- /werpan/ weorpan "to throw"
- /wærp/ wearp [wæarp] "threw (sg)"
- /feh/ feoh [feox] "money"
- /fæht/ feaht [fæɑxt] "fought (sg)"
- /ferr/ feorr [feorr] "far"
- /fællan/ feallan [fæallan] "to fall"
- /elh/ eolh [eoɫx] "elk"
- /hælp/ hea**lp** [hæaɫp] "helped (sg)"

NB! /e/ → /eo/ does not happen before /l/ plus consonant unless the cluster is /lh/

(C) Palatal Mutation before x'

- **eo, ea > ie, i** before 'ht'

Eg: *cneht* > *cneoht* > *cniht*;
naht > *neaht* > *nieht*

(D) Diphthongization due to Initial Palatal Consonant

ie/īe and *ea/ēa* occur in OE after *ċ, ġ, sċ* where the vowels *e/ē* and *æ/ǣ* would be expected.

Eg:

- *sċieran* "to cut", *sċear* "cut (past sg)", *sċēaron* "cut (past pl.)", which belongs to the same conjugation class (IV) as *beran* "to carry", *bær* "carried (sing.)", *bæron* "carried (pl.)"
- *ġiefan* "to give", *ġeaf* "gave (sing.)", *ġēafon* "gave (pl.)", *ġiefen* "given", which belongs to the same conjugation class (V) as *tredan* "to tread", *træd* "trod (sing.)", *trædon* "trod (pl.)", *treden* "trodden"

(E) Back Mutation (Back Umlaut)

e > eo i > io

in the position before back vowels **u, o, a**

Eg: hefon > he**eo**fon

silufr > si**io**lufr

(F) Contraction

e (æ) + h + vowel > ea

eo + h + vowel > eo

(G) Lengthening of vowels

- OE vowels were lengthened:
- Before fricatives **f, ð, s** due to rejection of nasals;
- Due to the loss of /x/ after a vowel in the immediate proximity of **l, r** or **n**;
- In the final position when stressed;
- Before **-ld, -nd, -mb** (IX century)

4. Development of Consonants

- Palatalization:

k, g, ʒ changed into palatal after or before a front vowel

- Assibilation:

palatal consonants became affricates and sibilants

g' > dʒ, k > tʃ, sc' > ʃ

eg. bryʒʒe > bridge, cild > child, scirt > shirt

- Metathesis:

r + vowel > vowel + r

eg. hros > hors

- Change of consonant groups /xs/ > /ks/

Eg. Gt wahsjan > weaxan

- Shortening of long consonants in the final position

Eg. mann > man