History of English

Lecture 1. Introduction

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The Aim of Studying the History of the Language

The purpose of studying the history of the English language is to account for the present-day stage of the language to understand and know the complicated **system** we use, i.e. its **grammatical structures**, **phonetics** and **vocabulary**.

The Inner and the Outer History of the Language

- ***The outer history*** of the language is the events in the life of the people speaking this language and the history of literature affecting the language, i.e. the history of the people reflected in their language.
- ***The inner history*** of the language is the description of the changes in the language itself, its grammar, phonetics, vocabulary and spelling

The Periods in the History of English

- **Old English** (OE) is the period between the 6th and the 11th centuries (other linguists consider it to have lasted from 450 to 1150). This is the period of the English nationality taking shape. There are some written records left, from which we know that the language of that period had some distinctive features. This period is also described as the period of full inflections, since during most of that period the endings of the noun, the adjective, and the verb are preserved more or less unimpaired;

- **Middle English** (ME) is the period between the end of the 11th and the end of the 15th century (or from 1150 to 1500). This is the period of the English nationality gradually becoming a nation. During this period the inflections, which had begun to break down towards the end of the OE period, became greatly reduced, and it is consequently known as the period of levelled inflections;

- **New English** (NE) or Modern English is the period lasting from the end of the 15th century up to now. By the time we reach this stage in the development a large part of the original inflectional system has disappeared entirely and we therefore speak of it as the period of lost inflections. This period is subdivided into two subperiods:

  Early New English (ENE) – from the end of the 15th to the end of the 18th century. It is the period of the language standards and norms formation;

  Late New English (LNE) – from the end of the 18th century up to now. This is the period of all the norms having taken their shape.

The Indo-European Family of Languages

- In 1583 Thomas Stephens, an English Jesuit missionary in Goa, noted similarities between Indian languages, specifically Konkani, and Greek and Latin.
- The first account to mention Sanskrit came from Filippo Sassetti (born in Florence, Italy in 1540 AD), a Florentine merchant who traveled to the Indian subcontinent and was among the first European observers to study the ancient Indian language, Sanskrit.
- In 1647 the Dutch linguist and scholar Marcu Zuerius van Boxhorn noted the similarity among Indo-European languages, and supposed the existence of a primitive common language which he called "*Scythian*".
- The hypothesis re-appeared in 1786 when Sir William Jones first lectured on similarities between four of the oldest languages known in his time: Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Persian.

Classification

Anatolian languages
Greek language
Indo-Iranian languages

- *Indo-Aryan languages*
- *Iranian languages*

Italic (Romance) languages
Celtic languages
Armenian language
Tocharian language
Baltic languages
Slavic languages
Albanian language
Germanic languages

Germanic Languages

- **East Germanic** dialects were spoken by people who migrated to southeastern Europe. The principal dialects were Gothic, Vandalic and Burgundian. No East Germanic language is spoken today, and the only written East Germanic language that survives is Gothic.
- **North Germanic** evolved into the modern Scandinavian languages of Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic (but not Finnish, which is related to Estonian and is not an Indo-European language). The ancient North Germanic dialects were Old Norwegian, Old Danish, Old Swedish and Old Icelandic.

- **West Germanic** is the ancestor of modern German, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, English and others. The West Germanic group of dialects consisted of the dialects of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians and others, originally spoken in Western Europe. To this group belong: Old High German, Old Low Franconian which is basis of modern Dutch in Holland and Flemish in modern Belgium; Old Saxon or Old Low German and Old Frisian and Old English (or Anglo-Saxon), two closely related languages, Frisian survives now in the Dutch province of Frisland, in a small part in Schleswig.

7 FEATURES OF THE GERMANIC LANGUAGES

1. The Germanic verbal system was simplified. Indo-European distinctions of tense and aspect (indicates whether an action or state is viewed with regard to beginning, duration, incompletion, etc.) were lost except for the present and preterite (past) tenses. These two tenses are still the only ones indicated by inflection in Modern English.

2. Germanic developed a preterite tense (called weak or regular) with a dental suffix, -d or -t (e.g. *fish, fished,* etc.). Germanic languages thus have two types of verbs, weak (regular) and strong (irregular). Strong verbs indicate tense by an internal vowel change (e.g. *swim, swam, swum*). The weak form is the living method of inflection, and many originally strong verbs have become weak.

3. Germanic developed weak and strong adjectives. The weak declension was used when the modified noun was preceded by another word which indicated case, number, and gender. The strong declension was used in other situations. These declensions are no longer found in modern English, but compare these examples from Old English: *þa geongan ceorlas* 'the young fellows' and *geonge ceorlas* 'young fellows.' (The weak adjective ends in -*an* while the strong adjective ends in -*e*.)

4. The Indo-European free accentual system allowed any syllable to be stressed. In Germanic the accent (or stress) is mainly on the root of the word, usually the first syllable.

5. Several Indo-European vowels were modified in the Germanic languages. For example, Indo-European /a:/ became /o:/. Compare Latin *mater* and Old English *modor*.

Qualitative Ablaut

The qualitative Ablaut is the alteration of different vowels, mainly the vowels [e]/[a] or [e]/[o].

- Old Icelandic b**e**ra (to give birth) – b**a**rn (baby)
- Old High German st**e**lan (to steal) – st**a**l (stole)
- CF.: Russian бр**е**ду (I stroll, I wade) – бр**о**д (ford, wade)
- Latin t**e**go (to cover, to cloth) – t**o**ga (clothes)
- German finden - fand

Quantitative Ablaut

- Quantitative Ablaut means the change in length of qualitatively one and the same vowel: normal, lengthened and reduced.

[e:]	[e]	[--]
pat**ē**r	pat**ĕ**r	patros
(nominative case, lenghtened stage)	(vocative case, normal stage)	(genitive case, reduced stage

- *Quantitative ablaut*

Gothic q**i**man (to come) – q**u**ms (the arrival)

- *Qualitative ablaut*

Old High German st**e**lan (to steal) – st**a**l (stole)

- *Quantitative +qualitative ablaut*

Old English f**i**ndan (to find) – f**a**nd (found, past tense) – f**u**ndan (founf, past participle)

6. Two consonant shifts occurred in Germanic. In the First Sound Shift (commonly known as Grimm's Law) the Indo-European stops *bh, dh, gh, p, b, t, d, k,* and *g* underwent a series of shifts. The Second Sound Shift (also known as the High German Sound Shift) affected the high but not the low Germanic languages, so English was not affected.

Grimm's Law

Change	Germanic (shifted) examples	Non-Germanic (unshifted) cognates
***p→f**	English: *foot*,, Dutch: *voet*, German: *Fuß*, Gothic: *fōtus*, Icelandic, Faroese: *fótur*, Danish: *fod*, Norwegian, Swedish: *fot*	Ancient Greek: πούς (*pūs*), Latin: *pēs, pedis*, Sanskrit: *pāda*, Russian: под (*pod*), Lithuanian: *pėda*, Latvian *pēda*
***t→þ [θ]**	English: *third*, Old High German: *thritto*, Gothic: *þridja*, Icelandic: *þriðji*	Ancient Greek: τρίτος (*tritos*), Latin: *tertius*, Gaelic *treas*, Irish: *trí*, Sanskrit: *treta*, Russian: третий (*tretij*), Lithuanian: *trečias*, Latvian *trīs*
***k→h [x]**	English: *hound*, Dutch: *hond*, German: *Hund*, Gothic: *hunds*, Icelandic, Faroese: *hundur*, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish: *hund*	Ancient Greek: κύων (*kýōn*), Latin: *canis*, Gaelic, Irish: *cú*, Welsh *ci*
***kʷ→hw [xw]**	English: *what*, Gothic: *hva ("hwa")*, Danish *hvad*, Icelandic: *hvað*, Faroese *hvat*, Norwegian: *hva*	Latin: *quod*, Gaelic: *ciod*, Irish: *cad*, Sanskrit: *ka-, kiṃ*, Russian: ко- (*ko-*), Lithuanian: *kąˈ*, *Latvian* kas
***b→p**	English: *warp*; Swedish: *värpa*; Dutch: *werpen*; Icelandic, Faroese: *varpa*, Gothic *wairpan*	Latin: *verber*
***d→t**	English: *ten*, Dutch: *tien*, Gothic: *taíhun*, Icelandic: *tíu*, Faroese: *tíggju*, Danish, Norwegian: *ti*, Swedish: *tio*	Latin: *decem*, Greek: δέκα (*déka*), Gaelic, Irish: *deich*, Sanskrit: *daśan*, Russian: десять (*desyat'*), Lithuanian: *dešimt*, Welsh *deg*, Latvian *desmit*
***g→k**	English: *cold*, Dutch: *koud*, German: *kalt*, Icelandic, Faroese: *kaldur*, Danish: *kold*, Norwegian: *kald*, Swedish: *kall*,	Latin: *gelū*
***gʷ→kw**	English: *quick*, Frisian: *quick, queck*, Dutch: *kwiek*, Gothic: *qius*, Old Norse: *kvikr*, Danish: *kvik*, Icelandic, Faroese: *kvikur*, Swedish: *kvick*, Norwegian *kvikk*	Lithuanian: *gyvas*, Latvian *dzīvs*
***bʰ→b**	English: *brother*, Dutch: *broeder*, German: *Bruder*, Gothic: *broþar*, Icelandic, Faroese: *bróðir*, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian: *broder*	Sanskrit: *bhrātṛ*, Russian: брат (*brat*), Lithuanian: *brolis*, Old Church Slavonic: братръ (*bratru*), Latvian *brālis*
***dʰ→d**	English: *door*, Frisian: *doar*, Dutch: *deur*, Gothic: *daúr*, Icelandic, Faroese: *dyr*, Danish, Norwegian: *dør*, Swedish: *dörr*	Irish: *doras*, Sanskrit: *dwār*, Russian: дверь (*dver'*), Lithuanian: *durys*, Latvian *durvis*
***gʰ→g**	English: *goose*, Frisian: *goes*, Dutch: *gans*, German: *Gans*, Icelandic: *gæs*, Faroese: *gás*, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish: *gås*	Russian: гусь (*gus'*)
***gʷʰ→gw→w**	English: *wife*, Proto-Germanic: *wiban* (from former *gwiban*), Old Saxon, Old Frisian: *wif*, Dutch: *wijf*, Old High German: *wib*, German: *Weib*, Old Norse: *vif*, Icelandic: *víf*, Faroese: *vív*, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian: *viv*	Tocharian A: *kip*, B: *kwípe* (vulva)

Verner's Law

PIE	*p		*t		*k		*kʷ		*s	
Grimm	*f		*θ		*x		*xʷ			
Verner	*f	*v	*θ	*ð	*x	*ɣ	*xʷ	*ɣʷ	*s	*z

7. Germanic has a number of unique vocabulary items, words which have no known cognates in other Indo-European languages. These words may have been lost in the other Indo-European languages, borrowed from non-Indo-European languages, or perhaps coined in Germanic. Among these words are Modern English *rain, drink, drive, broad, hold, wife, meat, fowl*.