HEL Spring 2011

Unit 6

Old English

Orthographic:

They had had runes, but primarily for inscriptional uses

Jam OE sounds into the Latin alphabet

Adopted by Irish missionaries

“Irish changes”: for eth and “yogh”

“yogh”

Thorn and wynn

Old English Alphabet:

A B C D E F G H I L M N O P R S T U X Y

[abde](http://beowulf.engl.uky.edu/~kiernan/BT/Images/abc-long.jpg)

+ Æ æ Þ þ Đ ð ƿ 7

Phonemic writing system: each letter stands for one phoneme:

NO silent letters

Some different pronunciations of some of the consonants, but they are **allophones**

If you get it wrong, it would probably just sound weird; you would not create a new word

Voiceless stops:

p = /p/

t = /t/

cw = /kw/

c = /k/ or (palatalized) /č/

**Palatization** of **c** before front vowel and after at the end of a word (compare Modern English)

/k/:

candol (candle)

cuman (to come)

/č/:

cinn (‘chin’)

ceosan (‘choose’)

dic (ditch)

BUT, palatization is not present when the **c** originally (in prehistoric OE) came before a back vowel:

“Some knowledge of the history of the language is required to distinguish whether *c* represented a palatal or velar stop in any given word” (A. Campbell)

often modern English equivalent can be guide:

cynn ( > \*kunni, ‘kin’)

celan ( > \*koljan, ‘to cool’)

cæg ( ‘key’)

þancian (‘to thank’)

Voiced stops

b = /b/

Beowulf

beorht (‘bright’)

lamb (‘lamb’)

d = /d/

Dryhthelm

dohter (daughter’)

sendan (‘to send’)

g = /g/, /j/, /ɣ/

/g/ before back vowels, before consonants, doubled and **ng**

frogga (‘frog’)

god (‘good’)

singan /siŋgan/ (‘to sing’)

palatization to /j/ before front vowel and finally

(Compare modern English)

gear (‘year’)

geoc (‘yoke’)

fæger (‘fair’)

bodig (‘body’)

cæg (‘key’)

BUT, not always

gifu (‘gift’)

voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ after and between back vowels, and after /l/ and /r/ :

this sound later developed in Middle English into /w/

lagu (‘law’)

fugol (‘bird’, ‘fowl’)

belg (‘bag’, ‘bellows’)

wearg (‘accursed, outlaw’)

Fricatives:

Allophone pairs: voiced when intervocalic or following a voiced sound

s= /s/ or /z/ (voiced)

not voiced /s/:

stanas (‘stones’)

west (‘west’)

sæ (‘sea’)

cyssan (‘to kiss’)

hus (“house’)

voiced /z/:

wise (‘way, manner’)

nosu (‘nose’)

bosm (‘embrace, bosom’)

f= /f/ or /v/ (voiced)

not voiced /f/

fisc (‘fish’)

fæder (‘father’)

fif (‘five’)

hæft (‘handle’)

pyffan (‘to puff’)

voiced /v/

heofon (‘heaven’)

giefan (‘to give’)

seofon (‘seven’)

hræfn (‘raven’)

lifde (‘he lived’)

ofer (‘over’)

Þ þ / Đ ð : used indiscriminately for /θ/ and /ð/

not voiced /θ/

þæt (‘that’)

þegn (‘attendant, thane’)

treowþ (‘good faith’)

moþþe (‘moth’)

voiced /ð/

baþian (‘to bathe’)

fæþm (‘embrace’)

oþer (‘other’)

h:

/h/ at beginning of a word

Hroþgar

hycg (‘thought’)

helpan (‘to help’)

hwæt (‘shut the fuck up, I’m about to drop some mad alliteration in your ear’)

/x/ (unvoiced velar fric.): following a back vowel

dohter (‘daughter’)

ðurh (‘through’)

/ç/ (unvoiced **palatal** fric): following a front vowel

riht (‘right’)

niht (‘night’)

cniht (‘boy’)

Nasals and approximates

n = /n/ or /ŋ/ (before g or c)

niht

neowol (‘steep’)

nacod (‘naked’)

singan (‘to sing’

ancor (‘anchor’)

m = /m/

mæl (‘time’)

mægen (‘might, strength’)

l = /l/

lagu (‘sea, lake’)

leod (‘people, race, nation’)

r = /r/

rec (‘smoke’)

ræd (‘advice, council’)

w = /w/

wæter

wræc (‘misery, distress’)

wordhord (‘word-hoard’)

Digraphs:

sc = /š/

scip

fisc

scyldig (‘guilty’)

sculan (‘must’)

cg = /dg/

ecg (‘edge’)

secgan (‘to say’)

secg (‘man’)

Everything is pronounced:

Funky consonant clusters:

cniht (‘boy’ > knight)

cnawan (‘to know’)

gnornian (‘to lament’)

gnawan (‘to gnaw’)

hlaford (‘lord’ < ‘hlaf-weard’)

hlud (‘loud’)

hnutu (‘nut’)

hnah (‘lowly, poor’)

hreðer (‘breast, heart’)

hraþe (‘quickly’)

hwil (‘time’ > while)

hwylc (‘each’ > which)

hwyrfan (‘to turn’)

wrecca (‘exile’)

wrað (‘hostile’)

wrecan (‘force, avenge, punish’)

writan (‘cut, engrave, write’)

Vowels:

Like IPA symbols: good old common IE vowels (use your other langs.)

**Long and short vowels**: length of pronunciation

God and gōd

Every ‘y’ is a vowel = front rounded vowel (not in Mod E)

æ = cat

[Fæder Ure in OE](http://users.ipfw.edu/flemingd/PaterON_ModEchart.htm)

**Opening of** [**Beowulf**](http://users.ipfw.edu/flemingd/Beow_interlinear.htm) **(**[**manuscript**](http://www.beowulftranslations.net/beorefs/manuscript-a129r-2848.jpg)**)**

Sound Changes:

Umlaut / mutation/ i-mutation

happened in Prehistoric OE

Effects all Germanic languages except Gothic

Vowels move forward or forward and up

remember [the face](http://users.ipfw.edu/flemingd/B_A_vowels_face.JPG)

the [mutated face!](http://users.ipfw.edu/flemingd/B_A_vowels_face_mut.jpg)

u > y

o > e

a > æ

a > æ > e

Due to **regressive assimilation**, cased by the presence of an /i/ or /j/ in following syllable

Part of an affix: derivational or inflectional

Your mouth apparatus moves up and forward gets ready to make the i/j (high front sound), affect the preceding sound unintentionally

i/j pulls things into its orbit

\*rum + jan = ryman

\*full + jan = fyllan (fill)

\*gos + iz = ges

\*fot + iz =

Once the vowel is mutated, the affix becomes redundant, so the ending drops off

or it simplifies -jan > –an

Thus, you talk about i-mutation with words that no longer have an “i” in them

Most common ending that cause i-mutation:

\*-jan to form verbs

\*-iz plural marker; \*-i dative singular marker

full + jan > \*fulljan > fylljan > fyllan (fill)

fot + iz > \*fotiz > fetiz > fet

Dative: fot + i > foti > fet

Origin of many verbs

So-called irregular nouns:

mutated vowel nouns

note: this is quite different from vowel gradation in verbs

man / men

goose / geese

foot / feet

mouse / mice

Source of “irregularity” in OE **pronunciation**.

There are some words with a **c** or **g** which are not palatalized before front vowels

ges

celan

keen, PGmc \*konjo-

kin PGmc \*kunjo-

“you gotta know the etymological history of a word”

old school approach to teaching OE: make you a philologist

[i-Mutation Matters!](http://users.ipfw.edu/flemingd/iMutation_matters.htm)

**Old English Lexicon**

We can only deal with **EXTANT** vocabulary:

Number of words comparison w/ OED is really meaningless

Old English vocabulary was almost purely Germanic

Much less likely than ME and ModE to accept loan words

3% non-Gmc

cf. ModE 70%

Modern English’s Germanic core:

the most high frequency words, naturally

83% of 1000 most commonly used words in ModE are Gmc

Old English in Modern English:

Little or no change to words:

**heofan**, **word**, **sittan**

Some change in word (esp. meaning):

**doom**, **dream**, **sellan**, **steorfan**

Only survives in dialects/expressions:

**brook**, **ang**, **wer**, **willy-nilly**

**Word Formation**

Old English relied heavily on its own resources to extend its vocabulary

much more likely **to create** a new word than borrow a foreign one (unlike modern English)

Wide variety of derivational affixes, many of which survive in Modern English:

Prefixes:

after-, be-, for-, ge-, mis-, ofer-

Suffixes:

-dom, -nes, -had, -ful, -sum, -lic

-ere (cf. L -*tor*)

Compounding

Common in many Germanic languages

*hamstede*

*sunnebeam*

*wifmann*

*boccræft*

*rimcræft*

*stæfcræft*

*tungolcræft*

KENNING

many synonyms in OE poetry (for alliteration)

this is one particular way of creating **metaphorical** compounds/collocations

*heaven’s candle*

*battle-light*

*hron-rad* “whale’s road”

NOT *heaðo-swat* “battle sweat/blood”

*here-wæd* “battle clothes”

the term kenning gets abused; it’s borrowed from later Icelandic poetry which used kennings in a much more complex way

Mod English has a number of Amalgamated Compounds:

one (or more) of the elements no longer has independent meaning; perhaps can tell it’s a compound, but not understand it literally

*daeges eage* > daisy

*tadpole* (toad-head)

*world* (wer + ald, “age/ life of man”)

*barn* (bere-ærn, “barley-place”)

Many ways of incorporating Latin/Christian concepts into OE, in addition to simple loanwords

Hybrids (Latin loanword + OE derivational affix):

**Preost-had**

**bishop-setl**

**bishop-ric**

**Cristen-dom**

Loan translation / Loan rendition (my favorite)

Based on an etymological understanding of the foreign word

The foreign word/concept is translated bit-for-bit into OE

OE : Latin

**For-set-nyss**: preposition

**An-horn** : unicorn

**Thri-ness** : trinitas

**God-spel** : evangelium

**Reste-dæg** : sabbatam

**Leorning-cniht** : discipulus

**Haelend** : Jesus

Cf. **Crist** : Christ

Mt 1:21, “His name is Jesus, for he will save the people from their sins”

Imbue existing Old English words with new specialized Christian meanings

**Easter** < Eostre (a Germanic goddess?)

**Yule**, “Christmas time” < Geol, the winter month

**Drihten** (a military leader) used for the Lord

**Lexical Borrowings in OE:**

Loanwords: where they come from, how they change

Main sources:

**Latin** (in three phases)

**Scandinavian / Old Norse** (the language of Viking invaders)

**Latin:**

Latin borrowings occur in three distinct phases, which we can tell based on sound changes the words have undergone, as well as comparison with other Gmc languages

PHASE 1: Before “449”

Anglo-Saxons on Continent:

words borrowed by pagan Germans from Contact with Roman Empire

—show up in all Germanic languages

NOT subject to Grimm’s/Verner’s Laws

(proof that they are not just I-E cognates)

**Lots of trade/luxury items**

not so much the “law/philosophy stuff”

OE *cese* “cheese” (< L caseus)

(did not become H)

OE *belt* (< L balteus)

(did not become P)

PLUS i-mutation!

OE palatization before front vowels affects early loanwords:

/k/ > /č/ caseus > “cheese”

/sk/ > /š/ discus > “dish”

(but coquina > “kitchen”)

PHASE 2: Borrowings from Christianization:

Even this happens in phases: at two key times

King Alfred translations (cf. 900)

Benedictine Reform (cf. 1000)

*cruc*

*sanct* (does survive)

*creda*

*mæsse*

*organe* (from ORGANUM)

Later borrowing are **not** subject to OE palatization:

*relic* < L *reliqua* (not *relich*)

CELTIC LOANS:

Just about zilch!

Britons were not interested/ completely overcome

Some place names

SCANDINAVIAN / Old Norse

Very important

Many of these don’t show up until Middle English, but certain entered the language during OE period

ASE was often a Viking colony.

Their languages were very close; likely **mutually intelligible**

Intense language contact

OE and ON have many cognates which were ultimately BOTH kept in Mod English, usually with slightly different meanings

**Old Eng Old Norse**

shirt skirt

from fro

rear raise

edge “to egg”

whole hal

shatter scatter

Note Old English palatalization!

Many ON words completely replaced OE ones:

*take* vs. *niman*

Semantic loan:

an OE cognate of a ON word takes on the meaning of the Norse word (without changing its OE form)

**dream** (OE ‘joy’)

**with** (OE ‘against’)

**bread** (OE ‘bit’)

How to tell ON words?

palatalization is absent:

skill

keel

kettle

get

give

call (vs. ceallan)

**Super-intense borrowing**: bilingual or mutually intelligible:

Basic verbs (**give**, **get**)

pronouns! **they**, **them**, **their**,

even a form of the verb to be: **are**