A history of English

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A history of English

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About this book

Dear student (and dear teacher),

First of all, welcome to the history of the English language! We hope it's going to be an interesting ride for all passengers travelling with us this semester.

In this part of the book, we would like to explain what this book is about, why it is the way it is, and how it is intended to be used in the course on the history of the English language which you've most likely just started.

All books on the history of English necessarily focus on how English changes, but ours does so a bit differently. First and foremost, our book differs from most other history of the English language books by not proceeding in chronological order. This means that rather than starting with a language called Indo-European or Germanic and making our way to English as we speak it today, we instead start precisely with English as spoken and written today, with the changes it's been currently undergoing in various parts of the world. And we will be following at least some of the variation we encounter today as we plunge back in time in the course of the semester. There are several reasons why this is the approach we've decided to adopt.

- We are surrounded by variation in language all the time in our everyday lives. Where does this variation come from? More relevantly for this course, where does Present Day English variation come from? In order to answer questions of this type, we need to go back in time and uncover the history of English. We believe that standing at the (current!) end-result state and moving backwards in time to unravel the origins of the English language is in many ways, though perhaps a bit surprisingly, more logical than starting with Indo-European or Germanic.

- Many, if not most degrees focusing on English Linguistics and/or English Studies include the study of Present Day English variation. Thus, students often first experience instances of variation found in recent varieties of English even from the point of view of your formal studies. Taking a course on the history of English which starts with Present Day English variation

should therefore work better within currently offered programmes in English Studies, and help you to make the history of the English language make more sense to you. Because this is, as we hope you'll find, a course useful for anyone who's going to engage with the English language, for example as a future teacher.

- Crucially, however, the history of the English language is still being written. As long as (native or non-native) speakers of English exist, the language is bound to vary and, as a result, potentially also change. This is important to bear in mind – and it's easier to do so if we start our journey in varieties of English used today, and if we have a look at how these have been changing within our own lifespans.

- Finally, many of you will be taking classes in contemporary or modern literature, written in the English language, standard as well as non-standard. Your literary classes will likely *not* focus primarily on the literary works of Chaucer or Old English literary pieces of the *Beowulf* type. This again makes it likely that your first-hand experience with language variation and change will be found in English of the 20th and the 21st centuries, so that's where our story of English starts as well.

Another important aspect of this book is that it is aimed as an *introduction* to the history of English. In many English programmes currently offered, the history of English is limited to a one-semester course, and this is the setup this book is aimed at. It's definitely not easy to tackle all that there is to tackle within a couple of weeks (see, for example, Hayes & Burkette 2017: 4; Giancarlo 2017: 60; Hayes 2017a: 195; Hayes 2017b: 107), and it's certainly not easy to teach a course like this within the time given and the range of students taking this course, with so many different experiences and expectations.

Just consider the following. There has been a distinct language that we can call "English" for approximately fifteen centuries. The history of English is not limited to how words of the language have been changing, no – the history of the language importantly involves discussions of various linguistic levels, indeed all of the conceivable levels relevant for our study of language (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, lexicon). If that sounds like a lot, also bear in mind that to fully comprehend how the language has changed, we must look into all of these levels at *multiple points in time*!

And now think of your own English, or the English you know from films and social media, or songs. Do these represent one and the same type of English?

Most likely not. So here's another dimension to our history of English: it's found in a range of sociocultural situations, and it's always been found in a range of sociocultural situations. Today's variation is but one slice of the historical cake we could eat. If you're thinking this sounds a bit overwhelming, especially for a one-semester course, then we fully agree with you. This means that the scope necessarily has to be limited to those aspects from the history of the language that are most important. And deciding which aspects those should be is no easy task (see also Buck 2003: 47). However, because we focus on explaining the present state and making the prior states accessible to the readers of older texts, we won't be introducing some of the phenomena traditionally taught in classes on the history of English.[1] But please don't worry – we do make sure to point the student to further references if you/they would like to pursue the subject matter at hand further, on your own or in more specialized courses on the history of the English language, should you have the chance.

So this is why the timeline of the materials presented in this book moves back through time. Another important thing to know about this book is that we don't necessarily use the same texts for the different periods in the history of English as those used in traditional textbooks dealing with this subject. Why is that? Like some other teachers of this course (e.g. Buck 2003: 47), we feel that the choice of the texts should be motivated by the following factors. Do the texts demonstrate the phenomena discussed in the relevant chapter? Do the texts represent the language found in a broader range of social and stylistic contexts? Do the texts also reflect any issues that are currently topical within non-linguistic fields, such as various topics covered within gender studies or transmedia storytelling? We truly hope that considering these questions during our text selection is going to make the texts, and thus also the subject, more obviously useful as well as appealing to as many of you as possible.

And now for the slightly less interesting but still important aspects of this textbook. First and foremost, this is a stand-alone textbook. All the student is intended to need is this open-access textbook and the internet.

In each chapter you will find exercises, at least one of which presents a possible written type of exercise. There are also exercises that include the use of various online databases. And, of course, there are analytical exercises you may be familiar with from your syntax, morphology, and phonetics and phonology classes. More challenging exercises are marked with a chili pepper, like the one to the left of this paragraph. It's up to your teacher which of these exercises will be used in classes, but the exercises are there, and so is the key at the end of

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[1]Such as breaking, back umlaut, weak and strong adjectives, and Verner's Law.

the textbook (for those exercises that have right and wrong answers – not all of them do!). Each chapter is also accompanied by text samples, which can be read for their own interest, investigated for the linguistic features that are discussed in the chapter, used along with the preceding exercises, or ignored entirely – it's up to the reader and the teacher.

In the hope of making the life of students as well as teachers a bit easier, we also provide you with a fairly detailed glossary of linguistic terms, which you can find at the end of this book. So, if you need to remind yourself of what a PHONEME is, or what a CORPUS is, the glossary is one of the places you can turn to.

For the teacher

Finally, we'd like to share a couple of words aimed primarily at the teacher. All linguistic levels are covered in each chapter of this textbook. In contrast to many history of English textbooks, however, we also explicitly discuss pragmatics and do our best to include at least one example relevant to pragmatics and discourse in each chapter. We feel historical pragmatics deserves its rightful place in this textbook, considering the recent work done in the area (and see e.g. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013, Arnovick 2017). Regarding a related field, semantics, we diverge from the common history of English textbook practice. Instead of focusing on the traditional semantic categories (such as semantic narrowing), we approach semantics opportunistically and only focus on those semantic phenomena that make most sense to discuss within the individual chapters – and only if they do. For instance, in Chapter 3, where we deal with prescriptivism, amelioration and pejoration are also introduced as they work well with this overarching topic. Other than that, semantic differences are touched upon without employing much semantics-specific terminology.

We hope you find this book useful on your journey through the history of English and wish you safe travels!

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

AAE	African American English
D	determiner
DP	Determiner Phrase
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
EModE	Early Modern English (1500–1700)
ESOL	English to speakers of other languages
Gmc	Germanic
GVS	Great Vowel Shift
I	Inflection
IE	Indo-European
imp	imperative (mood)
ind	indicative (mood)
IP	Inflection Phrase
IS-V2	Information Structure verb-second
L1	first language
LModE	Late(r) Modern English (1700–1945)
LVC	Language variation and change
ME	Middle English (1150–1500)
N	noun
NCS	Northern Cities Shift
NP	Noun Phrase
OE	Old English (600–1150)
OV	Object Verb
PDE	Present Day English (1945+)
RP	Received Pronunciation
SSBE	Standard Southern British English
SVO	Subject Verb Object
V	verb
V2	verb-second
VO	Verb Object
VP	Verb Phrase

The sounds of English

For your convenience, Figure 1 provides an overview of the different IPA symbols used for vowels. It also shows the positioning of these vowels in the vowel space. You will encounter 18 of these symbols throughout this book:

i•y ——— ɨ•ʉ ——— ɯ•u
　　ɪ ʏ　　　ʊ
　　e•ø —— ɘ•ɵ —— ɤ•o
　　　　ə
　　　ɛ•œ — ɜ•ɞ — ʌ•ɔ
　　　æ　　ɐ
　　　a•ɶ ——— ɑ•ɒ
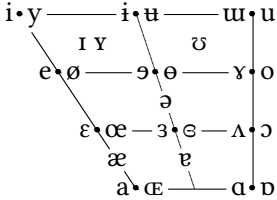
Figure 1: IPA chart of cardinal vowels (Chart by Zieben007, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Similarly, below we provide you with consonantal IPA symbols that you will encounter as you read on.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
plosives	p, b			t, d		k, g		ʔ
fricatives		f, v	θ, ð	s, z	ʃ, ʒ	x	ʁ	h
nasals	m			n		ŋ		
approximants	ʍ, w			l, ɹ		ʍ, w		
affricates				tʃ, dʒ				
trills				r			ʀ	
taps/flaps				ɾ				
retroflexes				ɻ				

The approximants /ʍ/ and /w/ are labiovelar, which is why you can find them under both "Bilabial" and "Velar" columns.

1 Introduction to language variation and change and history of the English Language

1.1 The field of Language Variation and Change

Have you ever noticed that your family members, your friends, people you speak with in the street, shops, those you encounter on your travels, or people who speak English in films or on the radio, or in fact anyone who speaks English you may have ever listened to or overheard, vary in exactly how they speak English? Have you noticed that some speakers are, for example, more likely to use words such as *dude*, or perhaps that they pronounce certain vowels differently than you'd expected? Have you ever wondered why linguistic variation exists and just how diverse it could be? Are there limits to language variation, or is literally anything possible? If questions like these intrigue you, you'll be pleased to learn that there's an entire field of linguistics which is concerned with questions of this kind. The field is known as Language Variation and Change, often abbreviated to LVC for convenience. It's a fairly young field, with the *Journal of Language Variation and Change* dating back to 1989 and the seminal work by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog dating back to 1968. Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968: 183–7 in particular) defined the following five problems (or goals) for the theory of language change, which are intertwined and which are seen as central to the researchers working within the field of LVC:

1. CONSTRAINTS PROBLEM. To begin with, what sort of linguistic variation is there in the world? What sort of language changes are possible? To give a somewhat abstract example, most of us would probably be quite happy imagining two dialects where the vowel in a word like *kit* was realized as [ɪ] in dialect A but something like [ɛ] in dialect B, i.e. the vowel would be lower in the latter dialect. (This is actually a change attested in many dialects of English; see §2.2.2.) We would most likely be quite happy with this because all that the speaker needs to do is simply lower the jaw a little

bit and produce a vowel of a somewhat lower quality. However, most of us would probably not be so keen on a hypothetical dialect C, in which the vowel was realized as the plosive [p]. Yes, this would give us [kpt] as the pronunciation of *kit*. But as far as we know, this type of variation and change is not attested. That makes sense: the series of adjustments the speakers would have to make in their vocal tracts would be fairly complex because sounds like [ɛ] and [p] require rather different movements of the bits we use to produce these different sounds (such as different parts of the tongue, etc.). The take-home message is that there *are* constraints on what types of linguistic variation (and thus also language change) are found in the languages of the world.

2. TRANSITION PROBLEM. When a speaker introduces a new linguistic feature into their language, and thus the language of their community (assuming the community has more than a single speaker!), how does this newly innovated feature spread throughout the community? Does it actually always spread? Let's imagine that one or a couple of random individuals at some point started pronouncing the vowel in words such as *kit* as [ɛ] rather than [ɪ]. Or that these speakers started glottalling their /t/s, thus pronouncing the word *otter* as [ɒʔə] rather than [ɒtə] (also see Chapter 2). What happened so that the newly innovated feature (vowel lowering or glottalling) spread at first within the few speakers' community and later possibly across broader geographic areas? And how did it spread across different generations? Was it perhaps the youngest speakers who introduced the two features? Did the subsequent generations simply keep on picking up these new innovative features? All these questions related to how linguistic innovations propagate, get transmitted from one generation to another, and generally spread within a society, fall within what's known as the transition problem.

3. EMBEDDING PROBLEM. The embedding problem deals with what factors can affect linguistic variation and is thus very similar to the constraints problem. However, the embedding problem focuses on how possible types of language change are affected by various factors. For example, the change from /t/ to a glottal stop is not limited to English, so from various languages we know that this change is possible and that we need a language to have a /t/ for this change to be possible to begin with (Constraints problem). But, more specifically back to the embedding problem, when it comes to English, are you more likely to glottal your /t/ in words such as *butter* depending on your age? Does it matter where in the word the /t/ is?

Would you, say, glottal word-medially (*butter*) rather than word-initially (*tabby*)? When it comes to a phenomenon like glottalling, what social and other factors can possibly affect whether and how a speaker or a group of speakers produce this phenomenon? Understanding the linguistic systems in which we find linguistic variation is crucial for our understanding of how certain features develop in some languages (and their varieties) but not others. This of course also needs to be said of the social aspects of the communities whose members speak the languages in question. Linguistic innovations need to be considered in their linguistic and social contexts.

4. EVALUATION PROBLEM. The evaluation problem is all about how the speakers within a community assess, or evaluate, linguistic variation. Sticking to our example of /t/-glottalling, do some members of the community perhaps frown upon those who glottal their /t/s? Or does /t/-glottalling take place happily without getting noticed by anyone, or indeed fairly happily *despite* being noticed by some? In other words, how do members of a community evaluate this linguistic phenomenon that's been spreading in some varieties of English?

5. ACTUATION PROBLEM. Finally, why did anyone start glottalling their /t/s to begin with? And why did it happen wherever and whenever it did? Why not elsewhere? Why not at another time? Why does a new linguistic feature get introduced in a language at one specific time and in one specific place rather than at some other time and in some other place(s)? This is the most frustrating problem of the field, so much so that some have deemed it unsolvable (see Stevens & Harrington 2014 and Walkden 2017 for overviews). But there's no need to despair – it's natural that scientists don't have all the answers they would love to have.

As apparent from the nature of the five problems, LVC overlaps heavily with the aims of two other fields: historical linguistics and sociolinguistics. In this book, historical linguistics involves the study of earlier stages of languages and of how languages change. Sociolinguistics focuses on how social aspects interact with language(s). Historical linguistics and sociolinguistics do often overlap in their interest. How does LVC fit in? As we define it, LVC is broader than historical linguistics and sociolinguistics: it encompasses the more traditional and older field of historical linguistics and also embraces that of sociolinguistics.

Throughout this textbook, we'll be exploring some of the five problems through the lens of the history of the English language. The most important lesson we'll learn repeatedly is that languages are variable and changing, and as

long as there are speakers who use a language, that language is bound to display variation and change. That makes sense: no two individuals are exactly the same in every single respect, though individuals who are socially closer to one another are likely to be more linguistically similar.

In the remainder of this chapter, we'll first discuss concrete examples of what exactly can vary and change when it comes to languages. Because this textbook focuses on the history of the English language (rather than the general principles of language change found in the languages of the world), we'll also introduce you briefly to just how old English is and what historical periods its history tends to be divided into. Finally, we believe it's important for you to realize what good there is in studying something like the history of the English language, and we therefore finish the chapter by giving you six possible reasons (and perhaps you'll think of even more).

1.2 What can vary and change in language?

We can delineate the following linguistic levels: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, semantics, and pragmatics. To make sure we're all on the same page throughout our journey, we will now very briefly introduce each of these and illustrate them with examples of linguistic variation. And if you haven't encountered these terms before, worry not – we explain these below in a nutshell.

1.2.1 Phonetics and phonology

Phonetics and phonology represent linguistic levels (and fields) that focus on the sounds of languages. Before we explain the difference between the two, let us get one important message across: letters are not sounds. Please remember this. Letters are not sounds. And one more time, just to make sure: **letters** are **NOT** **sounds**. How so? If you think of words such as *two* and *too*, the spelling is different (the letters used to spell the two words are not the same), but the pronunciation is *not* different. *Two* and *too* sound the same. We could easily come up with more examples of this type. Although we might think that it would be very handy to have spelling systems that perfectly represent how words are pronounced, this is in fact not what we find in languages with writing systems, for various reasons, and a completely perfect representation may in fact be impractical.[1] So, we need to bear in mind that the same letter can correspond to multiple

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[1]Even in systems with a one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes, much of the fine-grained pronunciation is not reflected in the spelling, such as glottalled /t/s or lowered *kit* vowels!

sounds, that a single sound may be represented by a range of letters, and that some letters are not pronounced in English; or they are, but only in some dialects. Let's see an example.

Some of us may be familiar with the fact that most speakers pronounce the words *whales* (large ocean-going mammals) and *Wales* (the small country next to England) as homophones, i.e. their pronunciation is the same (*two* and *too* are also homophones), contrary to what we'd expect based on the spelling. However, the spelling reflects an older stage of the phonological system of English – there used to be a time when the two words were not homophonous. There are still speakers around, in fact, who distinguish the two words, pronouncing *Wales* as e.g. [wɛɪlz] and *whales* as [ʍɛɪlz], the latter containing a voiceless labiovelar approximant (or a cluster of [h] and [w], depending on the dialect and the analysis you opt for; more on this in §5.2.3). Discussing letters is therefore NOT the same as discussing sounds.

Now that the distinction between sounds and spelling (or ORTHOGRAPHY) is clear, let's return to that between phonetics and phonology. If we wanted to be precise, phonetics and phonology would really have to be presented as two different linguistic levels, which are nevertheless closely related. Phonology is preoccupied with abstract sound systems. For example, we know that the words *tuck* and *duck* differ by whether there is a /t/ or a /d/ and nothing else (/tʌk/ and /dʌk/). Thus, because /t/ and /d/ change the LEXICAL meaning, these two sounds are PHONEMES in English and are of great interest to phonologists. But then on the other hand we find a lot of variation in how exactly different speakers of English pronounce these /t/s and /d/s. Despite this variation, they all preserve the contrast between /t/ and /d/, and again this contrast is at the heart of phonology. Phonetics, on the other hand, focuses (also) on the lexically non-contrastive variation that there is in how we pronounce things. However, there is a considerable overlap between phonetics and phonology, and most phoneticians would also identify as working on phonology.

Finally, before moving on to morphology, let's introduce one term that will come in handy and will be used in this book from now on: VARIANT. In the example above, we saw that there are two ways to pronounce *whales*: with a [w] and with a [ʍ].[2] These two ways, [w] and [ʍ], are two variants ([ˈveəɹɪənts]) of realizing what used to be a [ʍ] in earlier stages of the language (see §5.2.3 for the full discussion).

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[2]Two ways if we limit ourselves to the discussion surrounding the example given. There is a considerable amount of variation in how speakers may actually phonetically realize what we spell as <wh> (see e.g. Kolísková 2016).

1.2.2 Morphology

The field of morphology focuses on the structure of words. For example, standard English would use the -(*e*)*s* ending (a grammatical MORPHEME) in the third person singular present tense, as in e.g. *He loves bumblebees.* In some dialects, though, such as African American English (AAE)[3] and Cajun English (spoken in Louisiana, US), there is no -(*e*)*s* ending in the third person singular present tense (Dubois & Horvath 2003). As we will see in Chapters 6 and 7, this could be thought of as a continuation of a change that can be observed throughout the history of the English language, encompassing centuries, since the number of grammatical morphemes present in the English language used to be much higher than today.

The part of morphology that deals with grammatical morphemes like -(*e*)*s* is called IN-FLECTIONAL morphology. It's worth thinking at this point about what we mean when we use the word *word.* In one sense, *loves* and *loved* are different words, but in another sense they are two forms of the same word: you wouldn't look up *loves* or *loved* in a dictionary, you'd look up the verb *love.* When we need to be more precise, we'll say that multiple different WORD-FORMS can belong to the same LEXEME. The set of word-forms that belongs to a lexeme

Figure 1.1: Prata Wala, taken by Míša in Singapore in 2018

is called its PARADIGM, and when we need to refer to lexemes specifically we'll adopt the convention of representing them in *ITALIC CAPITALS*. For example, the paradigm of the verb *LOVE* consists of the forms *love*, *loves*, *loved*, and *loving*.

Variation in morphology is not limited solely to grammatical morphemes (inflection). We also find variation in WORD FORMATION, i.e. the creation of new lexemes. Indian English, for example, uses the morpheme *wallah* 'occupation, role, owner" (Kachru 1975: 69; Sailaja 2012: 362), as in *the book wallah* 'the person who deals with books", which is not found in other varieties of English. Note that, in morphology just as in phonetics and phonology, spelling can mislead! *Book wallah* may look like two words on the written page (or on a restaurant sign, as in Figure 1.1), but linguists have proposed tests to distinguish stand-alone words

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[3]AAE is also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in much of the literature, and sometimes as African American Language (AAL) in more recent work (e.g. Lanehart 2015). See Green (2002: 5–8) on the issue of naming this variety. We avoid the term "vernacular" where possible here, due to its traditionally PEJORATIVE or negative connotations (Rajendran 2019).

from affixes; for instance, Bresnan & Mchombo (1995) propose five tests of word-hood. The morpheme *wallah* fails these tests.

Word formation can involve the addition of an affix to an independent word, as in this case – a process usually called DERIVATION – or it can involve putting together two independent words, usually called COMPOUNDING. Word formation is a part of language which lives quite happily both within the morphological and the lexical levels. It is not unusual for phenomena to be of relevance to more than a single linguistic level. Thus, morphology also interacts with phonology, and when this happens, the phenomena are both morphological and phonological. If you think of the differences between words such as *sane* and *sanity*, or *serene* and *serenity*, the presence/absence of the morpheme *-ity* is not the only difference. There are also differences in the quality and the length of some of the vowels: [sɛɪn] vs. [sænɪtɪ], [sɪˈɹiːn] vs. [sɪˈɹɛnɪtɪ]. As we will see repeatedly in this book, once we start exploring historical aspects of languages, we are bound to come across interactions between different linguistic levels.

1.2.3 Syntax

Syntax refers to the level of the language that focuses on the structure of phrases, clauses and sentences, above the level of the word. Plenty of variation is found in the realm of syntactic phenomena as well. For instance, *Can meet you at 5.* is something you may be familiar with from text messages or social media. This sure looks different from **I** *can meet you at 5.*, where the subject is overtly present in the sentence. We do know who the subject is in *Can meet you at 5.* from the context – the subject is still very much lurking in the background. Another possible example comes from Welsh English, where we can find what's known as fronting or topicalization, as in Examples (1) and (2) below (taken from Paulasto 2006: 158 and 160).

(1) **Very much involved with [Women's Institute] over the years** I've been.

(2) **And hens** we had and eggs and ...

Notice that the subject is preceded by the elements of the clause emphasized in bold, one of which is actually part of the predicate/verb phrase. Fronting does happen in many varieties of English (***Pineapples*** *I really don't like.*), but has been noted to be more frequent in Welsh English and possible for a more varied set of syntactic elements (see Paulasto 2006 for more details).

There is a reason why fronting was chosen to illustrate syntactic variation: in fronting, what changes is a movement of a certain unit within a sentence to a different position. The order of words and constituents falls squarely within the

syntactic realm. But sometimes it may not be quite so obvious that the level of language we are dealing with is that of syntax. For example, in most varieties of English, there can only be a single modal within a clause, so that the following sentences would not be grammatical (taken from Bour 2015: 17–18):

(3) He'**ll might could** do it for you. (Hawick, Scotland)

(4) Sorry, we don't carry them anymore, but you know, you **may might can** get one right over there at Wicks. (North and South Carolina)

But there are nevertheless dialects of English where these multiple modals can be found (such as those in North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, the Appalachians and the Ozark territories, Southern Scotland, Northern England, and North-Eastern Ulster; Bour 2015: 14, Huang 2011).

This type of variation is not, strictly speaking, only about the word order. There is also something about the nature of the specific verbs involved which makes this type of variation of interest to those who focus on the LEXICON (for example, are all of these modal verbs really verbs, or could some of them be classified as adverbs, or even something else?), and notice that the modal *will* is also phonologically reduced in (3). Many phenomena that are syntactic in nature could thus often be seen as falling within the remit of morphology, and even phonetics and phonology, as well. Another example of this in English dialects would be related to negation. When we contrast ***Will he not*** *do it for you?* with ***Won't he*** *do it for you?*, not only is there a difference in whether the negative marker precedes or follows the subject, but the phonology and thus also the word structure of the verb *will* is also affected. Phenomena which are both morphological and syntactic can be said to fall within the area of morphosyntax.

When thinking about the syntax of different varieties of English, it's useful to think about the words of the language as being attached to an abstract structure of a sentence, as in (5). You can think of the words themselves as the skin on the bones of a skeleton (i.e. the abstract structure), or the leaves on a tree. In fact, TREE DIAGRAM is the usual term for diagrams like (5).

(5)

```
                IP
              /    \
           We       I′
                   /   \
                  I     VP
                  |    /   \
                 can  V    you
                      |
                     meet
```
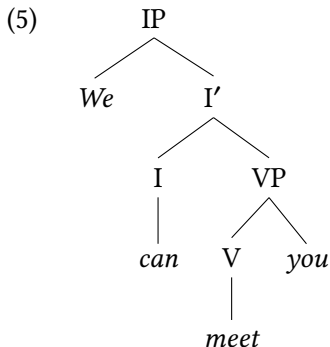
In this view of syntax, sentences are made up of hierarchically structured phrases. The tree structure here includes a Verb Phrase – VP – and an Inflection Phrase – IP. Each phrase has a HEAD: V (the verb) for the VP, and I for the IP. Phrases may also have a COMPLEMENT (the sister of the head) and a SPECIFIER. In most present-day English varieties, we can say that the subject (here, *We*) is in the specifier of IP and that the object (here, *you*) is in the complement of VP.

X-bar theory

We can talk about elements of a syntactic tree having mothers and sisters, like in a family tree: so, the verb *meet* is the sister of *you* in Example (5), and their mother is the VP element itself. If a phrase has a specifier, then the specifier's sister will be something that is neither a head nor a full phrase, but something in the middle: in Example (5), this is I′ (or "I-bar"). It's the mother of I and VP, the daughter of IP, and the sister of the subject *We*. This approach to syntax is called X-bar theory, and it's quite widely assumed. In this book we'll keep the syntactic theory to a minimum, but if you'd like to pick up some more background, Carnie (2013) is a good place to look.

Sometimes, syntactic variation will involve words appearing in different places in the tree while the abstract structure may stay the same. In spring and autumn, the leaves of trees may come and go, but the tree's trunk and branches don't change much. Sometimes, we'll argue that the tree structure itself changes; over its long life, the branches of a tree may move, and new branches may be grown. What's exciting about syntactic change is establishing the limits of variation. Which aspects of syntax are universal to human cognition, and which can vary cross-linguistically? Studying the history and varieties of English can shed light on these questions.

1.2.4 Lexicon

We have already seen an example of variation in word formation – the *wallah* example – and said that variation in word formation can also be viewed as pertaining to the level of the LEXICON (§1.2.2). Indeed, word formation is all about expanding the lexicon. But morphological word formation is not all there is to

this linguistic level. Semantics is also important, and variation can be found regarding, for example, what word X means in dialect A as opposed to dialect B, and what words are used for idea Z in which dialect. Let's see some examples to make this less abstract.

Speakers of Singapore English would use *café* to refer to a place to eat (so a bistro) rather than a place to have a coffee (and typically some sort of cake), as illustrated in Figure 1.2.[4]

Figure 1.2: A typical café in Singapore, selling mainly savoury takeaway meals (taken by Míša in 2018)

Where speakers of American English would use *pants*, most speakers of British English would use *trousers*.[5] And a small bread-like consumable can be referred to with a range of terms, such as *bap*, *barm*, *batch*, *bun*, *cob*, *muffin*, *roll*, *tea cake*, and possibly more, just within the UK.[6]

Lexical variation is by no means limited to nouns. Thus, where some speakers of English may say *You **ought to** know this*, others may say *You **should** know this*. Lexical variation is probably the first type of language variation we think of, but as we have seen by now, the other linguistic levels by no means escape variation and change.

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[4]That *café* is indeed used with a different meaning in Singapore English has been confirmed by Gerry Kwek, a local Singapore linguist (personal communication, 2018).

[5]Although see https://www.ourdialects.uk/maps/clothing/.

[6]Find out more about the linguistic wonders of small bread-like consumables here: https://www.ourdialects.uk/maps/bread/.

1.2.5 Pragmatics/discourse

Pragmatic aspects of language are those that are related to the context in which conversation takes place. This can be linguistic context, situational context, and social context (Bergmann et al. 2007). Right now and right here, we don't need to worry about the different types of contexts that there are – what matters is that pragmatics looks at units of language *in context* rather than in an abstract vacuum (like we've been doing thus far in this chapter when throwing examples at you). Some of you may have come across the term DISCOURSE as well. Usually, discourse is defined as language use and linguistic structure beyond the level of the sentence. What discourse and pragmatics are really about is how the whole communication process happens, and this requires various aspects of language to be considered. For this reason, phenomena from various other linguistic levels could easily fall within the scope of pragmatics. It's time for some examples now.

We find abundant variation at the pragmatic and discourse-related level. The Tyneside area of the UK is well known for using terms of endearment such as *pet* to address another speaker (Beal 2000: 346). It's true – Míša was once making her way to Gateshead from the airport at Newcastle, when the lady who sat right opposite her, a complete stranger, asked, "What are you down for, pet? Holidays?", and she knew she was in Tyneside. And in the Midlands of England, where George grew up, *duck* (a term normally used for an aquatic bird in most varieties of English) is used as a term of address. Addressing a stranger as *pet*, *love*, or *duck* would hardly be appropriate in all English-speaking regions of the world. Some other good examples demonstrating the importance of context would be *Oh fudge, my hair is on fire!* and *Dear me, did he kidnap the baby?* (taken from Lakoff 1973: 50). Here, we see a mismatch between the gravity of the situation (hair being on fire, a baby being kidnapped) and the exclamations that are not considered appropriate in such contexts (*oh fudge*, *dear me*).

An example of a phonetic phenomenon with a range of pragmatic functions would be voice quality. Do you, for example, change something about your voice depending on the context? Do you whisper if you want to signal secrecy? The beauty of pragmatics, and probably the frustrating thing about it (depending on your perspective), is that any aspect of language can potentially have a pragmatic function of some sort, and contribute to the structure of the whole conversation.

1.3 The field of History of the English Language

As the name suggests, the field of History of the English Language is concerned with the history of the English language. This includes any linguistic level you

could think of, which makes a subject like this somewhat more challenging and wide-ranging than those subjects which limit themselves to specific linguistic levels. Studying the history of the English language (or any other language, for that matter) is a holistic approach to understanding how languages work. And that's worth the effort.

Depending on which textbook and which article you pick, you will find different estimates as to when English was born, so to speak. Some authors give the year 449, while others mention the 7th century CE, and yet others would go back still further (see §7.1 for some discussion). If we decide to be on the safe side and say that we'll consider English to have begun in the 7th century, which is the earliest that any texts written in English have been preserved, and stop in 2022, which is when this book was published, we end up with an amazing 15 centuries. All the examples illustrating different types of variation presented in this chapter are only the tip of the iceberg of the variation we could possibly discuss when it comes to the 20th and the 21st centuries. We could very easily have several courses on the topic, limiting ourselves just to these two centuries. But you're taking a course on the history of the English language, so it's important that we bear in mind that the amount of variation and number of changes to cover is bound to be substantial, simply because of the time involved. And that's exactly why we have to be selective in which aspects from different periods of the language we present to you in the following chapters. If we thereby leave out some of your favourite linguistic phenomena, we're sorry! But we hope to also give you the tools to find out more about other changes in the history of English, using your own initiative.

The history of the English language is typically divided into the following periods:

- Old English   OE   600–1150

- Middle English   ME   1150–1500

- Early Modern English   EModE   1500–1700

- Late(r) Modern English   LModE   1700–1945

- Present Day English   PDE   1945–present

The Old English and the Middle English periods can also be further divided into Early Old English and Late Old English, and Early Middle English and Late Middle English periods. Right now, in this chapter, it's not important to discuss when

exactly each period can be said to begin and end – we'll take this on in the chapters that follow. What is nevertheless important to realize is that there are multiple ways in which we can "slice up" the history of English into these periods. For example, we could use important historical events to mark the beginning/end of the periods, such as the Norman Conquest (see Chapter 5). Or we could look at the linguistic structure of the language across different centuries and suggest that a new period starts because that's when we can see a significant linguistic difference in contrast to the previous centuries. However, neither of these approaches is without its problems. Although sociocultural changes are often reflected in the language(s) of the societies in question, this can happen in various ways, some of which are more subtle than others. Furthermore, we'll also see in various parts of this book that often linguistic change may take centuries; in other words, linguistic change takes time and is not necessarily as sudden as we may expect at first. In sum, any periodization of the history of a language is an idealization, because languages don't change overnight and resist being chopped up into discrete historical chunks.

Another important thing to remember about the history of English is just how interdisciplinary it can be. We approach the history of English from a linguistic perspective; however, it necessarily overlaps with fields other than linguistics. The most obviously overlapping field is that of history (which is in itself a fairly broad field with many different subfields), but we will see that the subject can be approached also from the perspectives of archaeology (Chapter 7), literature (all chapters), and media studies (Chapter 2), among others. This aspect of the history of English makes studying it a thrilling endeavour, though admittedly to some of us perhaps also a somewhat terrifying one. But rest assured – no one could possibly know everything that there is to know about the history of the English language, including the teachers, and we certainly don't expect you to!

1.4 Why study History of the English Language?

The most obvious reason to study the history of the English language is to understand how English has changed ever since it came into existence. However, the benefits of studying the history of the language are manifold and deeper than simply gathering facts about how English has been changing and when. We review six of those benefits in what follows.

1.4.1 Variation, variation everywhere

It is astounding just how much linguistic variation surrounds us without us even noticing, at least consciously. When we study a subject such as the history of English, we necessarily focus on how language changes. Change, however, cannot happen without there being variation first. This means that approaching the history of any language includes approaching linguistic variation. Irrespective of which language(s) we speak, studying the linguistic variation in this language or these languages enables us to discover intriguing social and interpersonal patterns that affect all of us, on a daily basis. We've seen plenty of examples relevant for English in §1.3, but more examples are coming in Chapter 2, where we discuss the main trends in how Present Day English has been changing. Where does all this variation come from? How did it come about? What functions does it have? What purpose? If you're interested in these questions, then you're also interested in the history of the English language, and Language Variation and Change more generally. Doing a course on the history of the English language will provide you with some concrete examples linked to these questions.

1.4.2 Irregularities

Those of us who are not native speakers of English will know that English is full of irregularities we are expected to tackle. For example, most verbs form their past tense by adding -(*e*)*d* to their root: *I love bumblebees. And when I was 7 I also* lov**ed** *bumblebees.* But, in standard English at least, we can't say *I sing only when I'm alone, and when I was 7 I also sing**ed** only when I was alone.*

We're also expected to learn that although the plural of *dog* is *dogs*, the plural of *sheep* is "simply" *sheep.* Or that whilst the noun *use* is pronounced as [ju:s], the verb *to use* is pronounced as [ju:z]. And there's more irregularities of this type. If you intend to teach English as a foreign language (EFL), or English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), your life will be full of facing these irregularities in one way or another. Where do they come from? This is the sort of question we can't answer unless we delve into the study of the history of the English language!

1.4.3 Interpreting older literary and other texts written in English

Some of you may be interested primarily in history, which means you may need to work with older documents, such as decrees and other legal works. If you

are interested in such legal documents, these could come down to us from different points in time (10th century, 15th century...). Here's an example from a 15th-century private charter:[7]

(6) In þe weche thyng wytnes to thys present chertar I haue put to my sele, be thes wetnessys, &c.
Literally: In the which thing witness to this present charter I have put to my seal, by these witnesses, etc.

This is probably not the easiest text to understand – in part because of the style specific to legal documents, but in part no doubt because of the differences between 15th-century English and Present Day English. You may object – surely someone must have translated all these older texts, so why bother with understanding 15th-century English? Indeed, translations do exist, but how much has been changed and lost in translation? Unless you can tackle the original texts, you will never know...

Or perhaps you are keen on literature, and/or perhaps you are interested in gender studies. If this is the case, you may be interested in the Old English elegy called *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Here's just one line:[8]

(7) willað hy hine aþecgan gif he on þreat cymeð
Literally: will they him take if he on troop comes

Hmm, that's probably even worse than the English from the 15th century. Again, translations into the English of today do exist, but unless you can engage with the original text, you won't know how much has been altered in the process of translation. For example, Faulkner's *Light in August* uses a range of dialectal features in the English original, which – to Míša's horror – were completely lost in the Czech translation she'd read. That's not something you want to discover after reading about 400 pages you intend to engage with from an analytical point of view, albeit a primarily literary one.

Taking a basic introduction to the history of the English language will enable you to engage with texts written in older forms of the language, even if your primary interests lie in areas other than linguistics. The history of the English language can therefore provide you with a useful tool even if you're not linguistically-oriented.

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[7]This extract is taken from the Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse, 2006, https://quod. lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=cme;cc=cme;view=toc;idno=AJD3529.0001.001
[8]This extract is taken from *The Exeter Book*, London, Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, 100v-101r https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/exeter-book. You can find the full text in §4.

1.4.4 The social life of language

William Labov is often considered the founding father of sociolinguistics (see Koerner 1991 for the importance of Labov's work within LVC) and yet he refused to use the term sociolinguistics for a long time (see for example Chambers 2017). This is because, for Labov, language is very much a social thing: how can we ever reach a full understanding of how language works and functions if we do not consider social factors? As long as languages are spoken and written by living human beings, there will be variation which reflects at least some of the social variation of the speakers involved. This is not to say that linguistic phenomena are always only affected by social aspects of our lives – not at all. But the social aspects of our lives do play an important role. Let's think of our *He love bumblebees* example from above.

In Cajun Vernacular English (spoken in Louisiana), age and education level affect the frequency at which 3rd-person singular -*s* applies (Dubois & Horvath 2003: 39), i.e. how frequently we actually find it where it occurs in standard Englishes. This grammatical morpheme is reported to be absent in 32% of the speakers studied by Dubois & Horvath (2003: 42) on average, whereas this absence reaches only 14% in Devon English (2003: 42). Region is therefore another factor which affects variants in more and less subtle ways. Importantly, in these cases, we're not dealing with either-or differences in the sense that one group of individuals either uses a certain variant all the time or never does. What's typical of variation around us is just how gradient it often is. Thus, variation is indeed everywhere, but it may manifest itself in fairly subtle ways. Social aspects of speakers can therefore correlate with linguistic variation.

Labov (2010: 212 and 223) presents us with an example of how ideological disagreement may possibly motivate why the vowel system of the linguistic Inland North in the USA (something we will return to in Chapter 2) has been developing differently from that of the West Midlands. He shows that the residents of the Inland North (as opposed to those from North and Midwest) were responsible for most of the votes for John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate, in 2004 – and this is considered to reflect the political differences between Americans from the Inland North and the Midwest, similarly to the linguistic variation found in their vowel systems.

William Labov

The importance of the American linguist William Labov (1927–) can't be overstated. Labov has shown that there is order in variation, i.e. that variation in language is not haphazard. He has also made a persuasive case that speakers of non-standard varieties of English do not have slower learning abilities than those of standard English (in the 20th and 21st centuries this has been particularly important for the African American community, but of course is also applicable much more widely). Labov has also proposed new methodological practices, aiming to reflect different degrees of attention the speakers pay to speech when observed. You can listen to Labov's lecture titled *A life of learning: six people I have learned from* here: https://vimeo.com/70455840

Understanding just how exactly social factors interact with linguistic phenomena is something which is of interest to those who enjoy linguistics as well as history, society, and culture. The linguistically-minded will be interested in general principles of language variation and change. The sociohistorically-minded can use certain linguistic variants and changes as a tool rather than a primary object of interest. We will see many examples of linguistic changes linked to social changes throughout the history of the English language, in each of its periods, as we move backwards in time in the remaining chapters of this book.

1.4.5 Different linguistic levels can interact

Different linguistic levels can interact! Indeed, you've seen some evidence thereof when we had a look at examples that don't straightforwardly fall within a single level of language. Interactions between different linguistic levels can be seen rather nicely through the lens of language change. But let's see an example which is really relevant for all the linguistic levels:

(8) a. I *am going* to town later today.
   b. I *am going to* go to town later today.
   c. I'*m going to* go to town later today.
   d. I'*m gonna* go to town later today.

e. I'*m going to* meditate later today.

f. I'*m gonna* meditate later today.

g. I'*ma* meditate later today.

Much could be said about which linguistic levels interact with which and how exactly here. But let's discuss only the most obvious interactions. We can imagine that as one speaks faster in for example conversation with friends rather than when reading these sentences out loud from this page, we may not pronounce every single sound of *am going to* (You can also think of *I don't know* being pronounced as [aɪdənəʊ] 'I dunno' rather than [aɪ dəʊnt nəʊ]). Many would most likely say *am gonna*, or some such. This is about sounds, but not only – what happened to the *to*? What happened to the *-ing* morpheme? And do all of these different forms mean the same? If you think about it, although we can say *I'm gonna meditate* (at some point in future), we can't say *I'm gonna town* (meaning 'I'm going to town'). This is because there are actually two *GO* verbs in English, pronounced in a very similar way. One of these verbs indicates motion, whilst the other one refers to a future event – they are semantically different, and this is also reflected in their pronunciation. Historically, the future *GO* comes from the motion *GO*, something we'll discuss in Chapter 3. This is an example of GRAMMATICALIZATION – the historical process by which lexical words (like the *GO* of motion) become grammatical, closed-class words (like the semi-modal *gonna*), and free words become bound morphemes (often through an intermediate CLITIC stage). Grammaticalization is very common in language change in general (see Hopper & Traugott 2003) and in the history of English in particular, and we'll see many examples throughout the book.

1.4.6 Language change is inevitable (and perfectly normal)

You may have come across the opinion that language change is bad – the way teenagers speak these days, and so on. However, language change is not only perfectly normal but actually inevitable. This is because social differences within communities are also inevitable, however subtle, and language changes whenever society changes. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the variety of language which gets to be established as the standard one within the relevant community has nothing to do with the linguistic properties of such varieties. What matters in such cases is the hard-to-predict result of a number of intertwined socio-historical events. We can discuss Standard British English and Standard American English today, but there were times when the notion of a (standard) variety of American English was rather novel. Today many dialects of English

are deemed "incorrect", simply because they diverge from the dialects that have happened to "make it" into the social elite of standard dialects. But it is important to realize that standard Englishes are just some of the many different dialects of English (see Trudgill 1999). A history of English is a history of all of these varieties, not just standard Englishes.

Sometimes, we're rather sad to say, discrimination and bullying can take place depending on one's native dialect (and often other characteristics). The Accentism Project (Carrie and Drummond) is full of testimonials of linguistic discrimination from a range of users of English.[9] The work of linguists doing research within the field of LVC can help communities: for instance, Labov (1966) has demonstrated that, contrary to the opinions of the time, African American English is governed by linguistic rules, just like any other variety of English (such as Standard American English), and should not be considered a sign of lower intelligence and slower learning.

All varieties of English are subject to variation and change. Which variety happens to be selected as the standard one is similarly subject to change too. This is something we will see as we look into the history of the English language in more detail across the centuries (Chapters 3–6, especially §4.1.1).

1.5 Final note

We hope you'll find that the history of the English language is an intriguing subject to study and that you'll join us on this fascinating ride. The exercises below will further help you reflect on the topics discussed in this chapter.

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[9]For more, go to the project's webpage: https://accentism.org/. For even more, Paterson (2009) is an accessible interview with the project's founders.

Suggested exercises

E.1 The Sower and the Seed

The Christian Bible is a particularly useful text for the study of language change, because it's been translated so many times into so many different languages over the centuries. Below are four versions of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13, verses 3–4), from different points in time, across a thousand years of the history of English.

- *A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.*
  (New International Version, 1973)

- *Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*
  (King James version, 1611)

- *Lo! he that sowith, yede out to sowe his seed. And while he sowith, summe seedis felden bisidis the weie, and briddis of the eir camen, and eeten hem.*
  (Wycliffe version, c. 1395)

- *Soþlice ut eode se sædere hys sæd to sawenne and þa þa he seow. sume hig feollon wiþ weg. and fuglas comun and æton þa;*
  (West Saxon Gospels, c. 990)

The fourth and oldest version will probably be difficult for you to read right now. But don't worry – we'll get there by Chapter 6! For now, try to identify differences between the texts in terms of each of the linguistic levels we've discussed in this chapter:

- Phonetics & phonology
  (hint: here you'll need to make an educated guess, based on spelling)

- Morphology (hint: look at the verbs in the Wycliffe version!)

- Syntax
  (hint: what's different about the clause "As he was scattering the

seed" in the New International Version that isn't found in any of the earlier versions?)

- Lexicon

- Pragmatics/discourse

E.2 Jabberwocky

Here are extracts from Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* (1871):

> 'Twas **brillig** and the **slithy toves**
> Did **gyre** and **gimble** in the **wabe**;
> All **mimsy** were the **borogoves**
> And the **mome raths outgrabe**.
> 'Beware the **Jabberwock** my son!
> The jaws that bite, the claws that catch
> Beware the **Jubjub** bird, and shun
> The **frumious Bandersnatch**!'
> And, as in **uffish** thought he stood,
> The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
> Came **whiffling** through the **tulgey** wood,
> And **burbled** as it came!

For each of the words in bold, answer the following questions:

1. What word class (e.g. adjective, noun, verb...) would you suggest each of the words belongs to and why?

2. Where the word has an affix (e.g. *-ed*), can you think of any other English words that also have this affix?

3. Almost half of the words in the first stanza are not English words (or weren't when Lewis Carroll wrote them). Does that mean the poem is still written in English? Explain your answer.

Tip for teachers: Question 3 can be used for a written exercise.

Tip for teachers: You could also use the following question if your students are familiar with open and closed classes: Do the words in bold belong to closed or open classes?

Acknowledgement: The questions are adopted and adapted from Johanna Wood's *Jabberwocky* exercise, passed down to us in 2017.

E.3 Practice with trees

Look at the following tree.
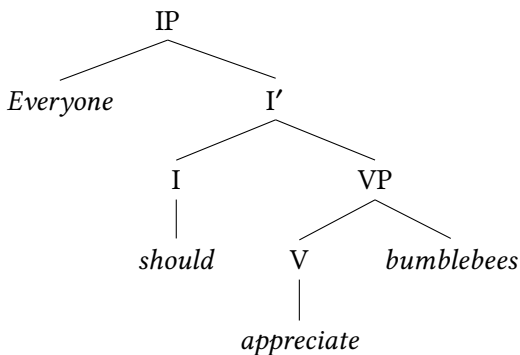
Try to answer the following questions based on the terms and notions introduced in §1.2.3.

1. What word or phrase is in the specifier of IP?

2. What word or phrase is in the complement of VP?

3. What word or phrase is in the head of IP?

4. What word or phrase is in the complement of IP?

5. What is the mother of I′?

6. What are the daughters of I'?

7. What is the sister of the object *bumblebees*?

E.4 Variation at which linguistic level?

Look at the following sentences, and provide what you think are their Standard English equivalents (where applicable). Then answer the questions that follow the examples.

A. *So from where do you come from?* [Aberystwyth, mid Wales]

B. *Yes, it has changed, but I still do come across it.* [Aberystwyth, mid Wales]

C. *I dunno, people kind of associate Newcastle wi like sort of rougher people sort of thing, you know.* [Berwick-upon-Tweed]

D. *How would I change the world? That's a simple question.* [Aberystwyth, mid Wales]

E. *In the seventies when I was in school, I was sort of you know laughed upon.* [Aberystwyth, mid Wales]

F. *I divvent know nowt else you know.* [Tyneside]

G. *They said I was too clever, they went and jumped us two classes, and I was never no good after that.* [Tyneside]

H. *So they hadn't any time for anyone getting on in years.* [Tyneside]

I. A photo Míša took at the train station in Newcastle, Tyneside, in 2016:

1. Are there any sentences which contain no non-standard features? Which ones?

2. What are the non-standard features found in the other sentences?

3. Which linguistic level (e.g. phonetics & phonology, syntax...) do these features belong to, would you say?

4. Are the non-standard features restricted by region, formality, or possibly anything else?

The sentences are taken from Beal & Corrigan (2005), Pichler & Levey (2010), and Míša's corpus of English recorded in Aberystwyth, Wales.[a]

Acknowledgement: This exercise was inspired by some of Heike Pichler's materials from her Language across Space course at Newcastle University (2014, 2016).

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[a]Now available here: https://osf.io/2vpgr/, through combined efforts with Kamil Kaźmierski.

E.5 Whence and w(h)ither variation?

Think about some examples of language variation in English that you have noticed (e.g. when watching films in English, in your classes, when reading this book or some other books, or when speaking with friends and family).

A. Why do you think this variation exists?

B. Is it possible to prevent this variation from happening? Why (not)?

Note that these are open-ended questions and many different answers are reasonable.

Tip for students: If you want to follow up on these topics beyond the seminar discussion, read Aitchison (2012: chapter 1).

Tip for teachers: This exercise can be used as a written exercise.

E.6 Claims about linguistic variation

Imagine a situation in which someone above 60 years of age complains to a friend about how the youngsters today don't know how to speak English properly. Indeed, it seems that English is going to the dogs...

Within 300 words, explain how you would establish whether this claim is or isn't correct. More specifically, introduce the claim tested, then suggest the types of evidence you would use. Be critical of the types of evidence available and their advantages and disadvantages.

Tip for teachers: Using group blog entries or wikis for this assignment as well as a reasonable deadline is a good idea – it saves time for both

the students and you, and the deadline will allow you to go through the contributions prior to the seminar.

Tip for teachers: Add a condition of the students having to use at least 1 source (or more) to back up their claims, using the reference style of your department.

Recommended further reading

Is your linguistic terminology a bit rusty? You can find some key terms in our glossary. Beyond that, David Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (2003a) is an excellent rust remover. The dictionary is also useful for more advanced terms. Remember that there's no shame in not recognizing a technical term at first sight – it's just part of the learning process. Furthermore, different readers of this textbook come from different academic backgrounds, and terms that may seem basic to some may really not be basic for others.

If you would like to read a very gentle introduction to sociolinguistics, then Peter Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* (2009) may be just the thing for you, and you can follow up on this one with Trousdale's (2010) *An Introduction to English Sociolinguistics*. If you are interested in societal aspects of language, publications within the field of sociology of language will be of interest to you. See e.g. Fishman (1972).

Trudgill's (1999) paper on standard English elaborates on why standard English is just one of many different varieties of English.

A more advanced reading on the theory of language change is the paper written by Weinreich et al. (1968), referred to in the first part of this chapter. Other books by Labov will provide you with much more detailed information.

If you wanted something more personal related to why anyone would

decide to work within LVC, you can read the short paper by Hejná (2018b), written specifically for students.

There are many introductory textbooks available on the core areas of linguistics, if you'd like to delve further into one of these areas. Here are some that we particularly recommend for beginners:

- Phonetics: Ladefoged & Johnson (2014)

- Phonology: Gussenhoven & Jacobs (2011)

- Morphology: Haspelmath & Sims (2010)

- Syntax: Carnie (2013)

- Semantics and pragmatics: Kroeger (2018)

- Conversation Analysis: Liddicoat (2007)

- Discourse Analysis: Gee (2014)

2 Change in English today

2.1 History and context

2.1.1 What is English?

In the previous chapter, we saw that variation is ubiquitous. We also noted that it's the prerequisite for language change, although we didn't elaborate. Let's elaborate a little bit now: there can't be language change without there being language variation first. Throughout its history, English has changed considerably, and it has certainly been changing in the last two centuries as well. Before we plunge into the discussion of the changes affecting English recently, we need to answer two questions. What do we mean by English *today*? And what do we mean by English?

The answers to the first question may vary depending on who you ask, but for our purposes we will define the English of today, or Present Day English (PDE), as starting in 1945 and continuing until, well, today! Why 1945 and not, say 1988, or 2000? The main reason is our decision to follow the time division proposed by Beal (2004) for Late(r) Modern English (see Chapter 3), which she defines as ending in 1945. Our decision is therefore to a large extent a conventional one. But whether we pick 1945 or 1988, from the point of view of the structure of the language in the 20th and the 21st centuries, does not make that much of a difference. But choose a starting point of some sort we must, for practical reasons, and we choose 1945, the end of the Second World War.

The other question is, however, perhaps unexpectedly, trickier – how do we define English? What is English? This can be answered in a very wide range of ways. Some of us may think of standard English – but then there is no one standard global English; instead, there are several local standards (such as Standard Southern British English, Singapore English, Scottish Standard English, General American, etc.). Furthermore, restricting ourselves to standard varieties of English would be unsatisfactory – most speakers of English (including most non-native speakers of English) don't speak a standard variety of English, and those who do arguably do not do so all the time. Does that mean they don't speak English? Of course not. They just speak a variety other than those that happened to end up being the ones officially recognized as standard. And should we only include L1 standard and non-standard varieties of English in what we mean when

we say the English language? As Míša was writing this chapter, she was writing it in (more or less) standard English, but English is not her mother tongue. Would we therefore conclude this chapter is not written in English? Of course not. There are now more non-native than native speakers of English, who use English for a variety of purposes: when travelling, in education, for entertainment, etc. (Crystal 2003b: 68). Both standard and non-standard varieties are part of English, and so are both native and non-native varieties. As a result, it's possible to find astoundingly diverse examples of English, but fairly often, we can also find a lot of homogeneity (or similarity) across the globe. Have a look for yourself:

- But here, ja, I can get a job, but there are too much challenges. It's like, I don't know maybe if it's the area I'm staying or is it around, or is — it's about South Africa.
  (Zimbabwe English; from IDEA[1])

- Yeah, I'm gonna take my horse to the old town road. I'm gonna ride 'til I can't no more. (...) I been in the valley. You ain't been up off the porch, now. Can't nobody tell me nothing. You can't tell me nothing.
  (American English, Lil Nas X, *Old Town Road*)

- I will repair tomorrow.
  (Mongolian English; Cohen 2005: 215)

- I like very much. I been out from Miami three times. I been Orlando, and, ah, I been '94 in San Francisco to a wor, a World Cup. And most of my time is spent in Miami and, and around Miami. My hobbies is, I play soccer, ah, tennis and go to the beach, listen nice music, eat good food and meet nice girls.
  (Brazilian English; from IDEA[2])

- First time, after love, in each other's arms; in the mirror chamber of our mental and physical nudity, so frail, so delicate; so reluctantly we breathe, lest we break the glass idols.
  (Pakistani English; excerpt from *First love*, Riaz[3])

- he's sitting on a chair this is him like he's drunk or something
  (Multicultural London English; Cheshire et al. 2011: 174)

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[1]https://www.dialectsarchive.com/zimbabwe-6.
[2]https://www.dialectsarchive.com/brazil-4.
[3]https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46362729.

More examples for you to consider are found in §1, and you're also welcome to go back to those in Chapter 1.

Pidgins and creoles

For some varieties, called pidgins and creoles, there is a debate regarding whether they can or should fall within what we call the English language. Pidgins are usually defined as a form of language with no native speakers, arising in language contact situations and functioning as a lingua franca (Trudgill 2003: 103). Imagine this: three monolingual speakers need to take the same taxi to get to different places and have different amounts of money to spend. The first speaker only speaks Portuguese. The second speaker can only speak Chinese. And the third speaker only speaks Dusun (an Austronesian language spoken in Borneo). Clearly, they cannot understand each other's mother tongues. On top of this, imagine these speakers have to rely on a taxi driver who only speaks one of the Mongolic languages (or several – that wouldn't really help!). The situation doesn't actually have to be as diverse as this. Do you know anyone who tried to use, say, English, on their holiday (without being able to speak it well) with someone who can't speak English very well either? Pidgins develop in contexts of this type, but the contexts have to come about on a regular basis. In history, the typical contexts in which pidgins arise have been those of trade, migration, and, sadly, slavery. According to some authors, pidgins by definition don't have any native speakers, and it is sometimes claimed that they tend to have less complex structures. However, if speakers of pidgins have children and those children acquire the pidgin as their mother tongue, they will add new and expanded structural possibilities to the former "pidgin", and then we refer to these forms of language as creoles, not pidgins. The debate is ongoing, because both sociohistorical and linguistic factors play a role in deciding whether a particular variety is a pidgin or a creole, and different linguists take different stances on how to weigh the evidence. See e.g. Velupillai (2015) for a good introduction to pidgins and creoles.

We could think of multiple reasons behind diversity found in varieties of English. At the same time, however, we could also think of reasons behind homogeneity found across varieties of the language. Some of the general differences most likely come down to the individual histories of the speakers of different varieties of English. In all cases, English became a language spoken in regions in which other languages had existed, including Britain (yes, indeed, stay tuned for what's coming in Chapter 7). These local languages have often influenced the English spoken in the area. Another general reason is that those who brought English to many areas of the world did not necessarily bring standard English with them, nor did they bring English which was necessarily uniform across all the newcomers (see Chapters 3 and 4 in particular).

It is tempting to speculate that amongst the reasons behind the similarities found across varieties of contemporary English may be the advent of a range of digital media (see the rigorous study by Stuart-Smith, Pryce, et al. 2013, but also for instance Androutsopoulos 2013, Tagliamonte 2014, and Tagliamonte & Denis 2008), generalization of compulsory education, and the increasing ease of travelling opportunities (see also Beal 2004: Chapter 1, for a similar discussion related to Late(r) Modern English). Although we could think of these as possible causes of homogeneity, they could also be thought of as causes of further diversification. But most importantly, researchers looking into this topic have found that the technological innovations either do not lead to significant language change or that such a change is difficult to establish in the first place (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2013, Stuart-Smith, Pryce, et al. 2013, Tagliamonte 2014, Trudgill 2014).

We will now focus on specific varieties of English and touch upon some of the socio-historical sources of linguistic variation and homogeneity for these varieties. The varieties include English (or Englishes) in Britain and Ireland (§2.1.2), English(es) in North America (§2.1.3), English(es) in Australia and New Zealand (§2.1.4), and English(es) in India and South Africa (§2.1.5).[4] After introducing some of these varieties, we then proceed to discuss general changes affecting English in a number of regions of the globe in the remainder of the chapter. Taking all these sections together, we will realize that there are indeed reasons for both linguistic diversity and linguistic homogeneity.

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[4]Our selection of these varieties is driven by two reasons. Firstly, it is not possible to give an overview of all of the varieties of English that exist. If you are interested in detailed overviews, see some of the sources provided in Recommended further reading. Secondly, English has been spoken the longest in Britain, which is why we focus on British English. The next candidate in terms of age is North America. Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa then represent areas with English varieties that are relatively young. Furthermore, these areas span several continents, which enables us to consider global tendencies in the changes of English of today as well as more local tendencies specific to some varieties of the language.

2.1.2 English in Britain and Ireland

The English language came into existence in Britain and has therefore had its longest history there (see Chapter 7 for just how this formation came about). English has come a long way since its birth, now being spoken as a first language on a global basis, including Africa (e.g. South Africa), Asia (e.g. Singapore), Australia, Europe (Ireland and the UK), North America (Canada and the US), and New Zealand. In addition, it is recognized as an official language in a number of countries (e.g. Belize, Guyana, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Eswatini, Tanzania, Zambia). English is also taught widely as a foreign language. Thus, since its rather modest beginnings, due to historical events such as the formation of the British Empire and the rise of the US as a superpower over the past two centuries, English is now fairly widespread across the globe.

Limiting ourselves to Britain and Ireland here, although English is about 15 centuries old (Chapter 7), it is not equally old everywhere. The first English speakers in Ireland that we know of date back to the 12th century; however, it was not until the 16th and the 17th centuries when English was introduced rather more invasively into Ireland with the Plantations[5] (Hickey 1993). Today, Irish English is the mother tongue of most inhabitants of the isle of Ireland, with very few native speakers of Irish (a Celtic language) left. In a similar way, in Scotland, English became the official written language in the 18th century, at the point at which Scotland and England had come under the rule of a single parliament and a single monarch (Wells 1982c: 394). Relatively few native speakers of Scottish Gaelic – an-

Figure 2.1: A zebra-crossing sign in Aberystwyth, Wales, UK (taken by Míša in 2014)

other Celtic language – are to be found today (e.g. Nance 2013). Finally, the anglicization of Wales took a jump in the 16th century with the Acts of Union (Williams 1990). The Welsh language has seen a decline in the number of native speakers; nonetheless, Welsh seems to be the strongest of the Celtic languages

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[5]Plantations refer to instances of confiscation of land in Ireland initiated by the English government. This is one example of colonialism.

spoken in Britain and Ireland today. It is important to mention the Celtic languages in Britain and Ireland here, because they have influenced the respective varieties of English spoken on these isles as we know them today, in different ways (see e.g. Filppula et al. 2008 and Hickey 2012 as well as §6.1.2 of this book), and the use of these languages is imbued with political significance as well. See Figure 2.1, showing Welsh and English.

However, the 20th and the 21st centuries have brought further important factors to consider regarding today's linguistic variation in Britain and Ireland. There are now numerous places in Britain and Ireland with contemporary multicultural, multiethnic, and often multilingual populations.[6] Finally, with the political consequences of Brexit playing out at the time of writing, it remains to be seen whether this may have linguistic consequences, such as (further) diversification in English spoken in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in particular.

2.1.3 English in North America

Together with Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, North America can be considered the first colonies and dominions of England, with the beginnings of American English ultimately going back to the first settlers in 1607, when Jamestown was founded. The United States of America were also the first to claim their independence in 1776, with a strong sense of national identity, which went hand in hand with linguistic national identity as well (more on this is coming in Chapter 3). The Dominion of Canada became self-governing later, in 1867.

The history of American English could certainly not be told without mention of the high degree of language contact, as well as contact between various dialects of English (Chapter 3). To begin with, North America had already been populated by the time English speakers arrived, and its inhabitants – the Indigenous peoples of the Americas – spoke a vast array of languages belonging to several language families. Furthermore, English speakers were not the only settlers, nor were they the only incomers.[7] Today, the US includes ethnic minorities such as Hispanic and Latino Americans and Asian Americans, as it has throughout its history, and of course the largest "minority" is presented by African Americans. Thus, a range of English varieties is to be found in the US (e.g. Wells 1982b, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2015), and more recently researchers have established that

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[6]See for example the Multilingual Manchester project website: http://mlm.humanities. manchester.ac.uk/.

[7]As we will see in Chapter 7, English, French, Russian, and Spanish – some of the settler-colonial languages of the modern period – all belong to just one language family. On the varieties spoken in North America, often known as HERITAGE languages, see for example the website of the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage languages here: http://www.cal.org/heritage/.

there is increasing linguistic diversity in Canadian English as well, despite the fact that Canadian English is usually considered fairly homogeneous (Cheshire & Hardwick 1986, Clarke 2010, Clarke et al. 1995).

2.1.4 English in Australia and New Zealand

The origins of Australian English and New Zealand English go back to 1788 and to 1840, respectively. Note that these two dates refer to times after the American Independence, and at this point a clearly distinct set of varieties of American English (as compared to British English) had already emerged. Australian English and New Zealand English are thus relatively "young" varieties of English. Australia became independent in 1901 and New Zealand in 1907. As with all the other varieties of English discussed so far, what would grow into Australian English and New Zealand English did not begin in a linguistic vacuum. To begin with, the first settlers had brought their own dialects, which would later give rise to what we now know as Australian English and New Zealand English (see Chapter 3 for more on this). Secondly, Australia and New Zealand were already inhabited by speakers of a range of Australian Aboriginal languages and Maori.[8]

Over the years, Australian and New Zealand English have emerged as varieties of English clearly distinguishable from other varieties, although of course similarities also exist, as we will see in the rest of this chapter. Naturally, the presence of languages other than English in both Australia and New Zealand has contributed to the linguistic diversity found in Australian English and New Zealand English (e.g. Butcher 2008, D'Arcy 2010, Eisikovits 1996, Louro 2013).

2.1.5 English in India and South Africa

One of the reasons to mention Indian English and South African English in this chapter (rather than some other varieties that are equally interesting and important) is that they represent examples of English as an official language introduced as a result of British imperialism, without being adopted as the mother tongue by the majority of the population. Thus, the speakers of the local languages have for the most part resisted the shift to English (Mesthrie 2015). Although the British Empire was dissolved, together with the examples discussed in §§2.1.2–2.1.4, both Indian English and South African English stand to show that the presence of the

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[8]There is an extensive amount of work on the emergence of New Zealand English and the mixing of English dialects brought to a single place by different groups of settlers. See for example the website of The Origins of New Zealand English Project here: https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/nzilbb/research/onze/.

Empire has nonetheless had significant effects on the sociolinguistic landscapes of the respective areas.

English was introduced into India in 1602, with the formation of the English East India Company (British East India Company). The Company's early activities involved exploitative trading practices, and these subsequently developed into military engagements and outright conquest: see Dalrymple (2019). India gained independence from the UK fairly recently, in 1947. The beginnings of South African English lie in 1795. South Africa gained its nominal independence in 1910 and full independence in 1931. The downfall of the British Empire goes hand in hand with local independence, which is reflected in the linguistic diversity that tends to be more pronounced at such times. In the case of India, we find again that a vast range of languages had been spoken in the region before the arrival of the English language, falling within a number of different language families, e.g. Austroasiatic, Dravidian, Indo-European (see Chapter 7), Munda, and others. A high degree of language contact of various types has contributed to the variation we find in Indian English (e.g. Sailaja 2012, Wells 1982b). Turning to South Africa, with a range of Bantu and other indigenous African languages as well as another Indo-European language (Afrikaans) present in the region, it is not surprising that South African English represents a variety of English sociolinguistically distinct from other English varieties and involves a range of locally relevant varieties as well (e.g. Mesthrie 2015 and the references therein).

Standard native Englishes as we know them today once emerged and were further shaped by contact with languages other than English (more in Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

Language, dialect, or variety?

How can one tell whether a certain form of language is a dialect or a language in its own right? This is no easy task to resolve. Typically, the decision is made using political rather than linguistic criteria. This would apply to languages such as Czech and Slovak: Czech and Slovak are mutually intelligible and a Czech and a Slovak can easily communicate without having to learn each other's language. Awareness that the two are separate languages has increased dramatically since the division of the 20th-century state of Czechoslovakia into two countries in 1993. On the

other hand, and perhaps more intuitively, languages can show differences in their linguistic structures. Thus, a sentence such as *Dwi'n hedfan yn yr awyr* (Welsh), *Létám ve vzduchu* (Czech), and *I'm flying in the air* (English) are sufficiently different for us to conclude that these must be different languages. However, the boundaries are not always so clear. That's because, historically, dialects may develop into distinct languages, so there is a whole cline of possibilities. You'll see more on this in Chapter 7. Because there are two sets of criteria to use, political criteria and linguistic criteria, but also because the term dialect may be associated with negative connotations in lay use, linguists often resort to the term *variety* instead. This enables us to avoid making (sometimes impossible) decisions and any negative connotations.

2.1.6 Studying variation in contemporary English

Those of us interested in studying language variation and change in Present Day English are very lucky indeed – we have linguistic evidence everywhere we turn, in a number of digitalized forms as well as on paper, the former of which encompass platforms as diverse as films, the radio, instant messaging logs, discussion forums, podcasts, etc. We can easily analyse English used in a vast array of contexts, which is a luxury we don't have when studying the older periods of the language. It is fairly easy to get very specific types of evidence since there are plenty of users of English around us – something that cannot be said of, say, English of the 13th century (that is, unless you have the powers of necromancy or time travel). This ease of access to linguistic evidence in Present Day English is very lucky for us indeed. According to the so-called Uniformitarian Principle (Labov 1994: 21–24), the linguistic processes observable today should also be assumed to apply in the past, and the other way round. The present can therefore be used to shed light on the past, and vice versa. With more data available for Present Day English and with more advanced technology to record such data, analysing Present Day English can be of great use for understanding the past.

Present Day English has seen, and continues to see, a great number of changes on all linguistic levels. Some of these changes are locally restricted, as we would expect considering the specific historical contexts of the individual regions in which English is used. However, in what follows, we mainly focus on changes that are more global in their nature, occasionally bringing attention to some more local aspects as well.

2.2 Sounds

Let's first remind ourselves of one of the messages from Chapter 1: letters are not sounds. Because of the fairly widespread standard spelling (i.e. letters!) and standardized education, looking at how speakers of a range of varieties write is not necessarily the most thrilling thing to do if we're interested in the sounds of Present Day English varieties and how they differ. For that, we'll have to look at how people speak, and that takes us to PHONEMES and their phonetic realizations. Let's remember that phonemes are units of sounds that are contrastive. This means that if we replace /t/ with /d/ in English, as in *tick* /tɪk/, we'll get a rather different word (or two words, actually: *Dick* and *dick* /dɪk/). /t/ and /d/ are two phonemes because, if we replace one with the other, this changes the meaning of the word. ALLOPHONES, on the other hand, are by definition not contrastive. In some varieties of English, /k/ (just like /t/, and also /p/) can be preglottalized (e.g. Wells 1982c), which means that there is a bit of a sound like that we know from glottalling (*butter* [bʌʔə]), except that we also get the [k] sound itself, leading to [tɪʔk]. Whether we pronounce *tick* as [tɪk] or [tɪʔk] does not lead to a change of the meaning of the word.[9] Allophonic variation is found across all varieties of English.

What's important to realize when it comes to allophones is that we can predict where we find any given allophone. Thus, we can predict that a pre-glottalized /k/ or /t/ is not found word-initially (as in ***can***) in the vast majority of English varieties. We can also predict that a pre-glottalized /k/ or /t/ is more likely to occur in the speech of some speakers than others, based on a range of different social factors (e.g. Schleef 2013, Smith & Holmes-Elliott 2017). At some point in the history of English, the plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ started being pronounced as pre-glottalized. This illustrates one of the characteristics of sound change (and most linguistic variation): it is regular. This means that any given sound change happens in a particular linguistic context, so all words that happen to contain that context are affected by this sound change.[10] If a variety of English develops preglottalization in non-initial /t/, we can fairly safely expect to find a pre-glottalized /t/ in *all* words that have a /t/ which is not in a word-initial context (so in words

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[9]Our discussion of allophony is somewhat simplified. If you want to learn more, see Chapter 8 in Davenport & Hannahs (2013) for more details. If you'd like something advanced about types of phonemic contrasts and allophony, see Hall (2009).

[10]Although we do need to note that the role of word-frequency effects on phonetic variants had been hotly debated since before the field of sociolinguistics was born (see Labov 1981 for the so-called Neogrammarian Controversy). What we mean by word-frequency effects is, for example, a scenario in which low frequency words (words we don't use particularly often) are less prone to include the new variant, even though they do contain the appropriate environment.

such as *spit*, *bitter* and *pant*, for instance, but not in words such as *Tom*, at least not in most varieties of English).

We will now look in more detail at four sound changes found in Present Day English: glottalling, the Northern Cities Shift (and briefly other similar vowel shifts), Uptalk or High Rising Terminals (HRTs), and vocal fry or creaky phonation. All of these are regular sound changes in the sense just introduced.

2.2.1 Glottalling

Glottalling has already been mentioned both in Chapter 1 and in this chapter. In the glottalling varieties of English, most frequently /t/ (rather than /p/ and /k/) would be realized as a glottal stop of some type ([ʔ]), leading to the words *cup* and *butter* being pronounced as [kʌʔ] and [bʌʔə] rather than [kʌp] and [bʌtə], for example. If you'd like to listen to some examples, use a browser to find e.g. the song P.O.W.A. by M.I.A., and listen to words such as *cut*, *not*, *better*, and *getting*. The specific rules governing when glottalling happens may differ from one variety of English to another (thus demonstrating local tendencies and heterogeneity), but in each variety of English the contexts in which we find glottalling, and the frequency at which we find it, can be predicted by social factors as well as language-internal, structural factors (see e.g. Schleef 2013, Smith & Holmes-Elliott 2017).

Glottalling is assumed to have started in Edinburgh and, independently of that, also in London, and generally affects /t/ which is not word-initial. No one quite knows when exactly glottalling was introduced into these two varieties of English; however, estimates refer to the latter half of the 19th century (Beal 2004: 208–209, and Schleef 2013 and the reference therein). It seems that the spread of glottalling in Britain took place primarily throughout the 20th century and continues taking place today. Although glottalling is a well-known property of varieties of English spoken in Britain, recent reports indicate that it is also found in varieties such as American English (Eddington & Taylor 2009) and Australian English (Cox & Palethorpe 2007: 342–3), which makes the title of Smith and Holmes-Elliott's paper (2017), "the unstoppable glottal", rather fitting![11]

2.2.2 Northern Cities Shift (and other shifts)

A complex sound change affecting the vowel system has been reported for the area known as the Inland North in the US. We will first explain what this sound change involves and then see that, although in some ways it is indeed specific

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[11]And all this despite the fact that the glottal stop has seen plenty of stigmatization during its lifespan: https://tribunemag.co.uk/2020/06/the-glottal-stop.

to the Inland North, we also find some interesting parallels in other varieties of English attested in other parts of the world. There are at least two reasons why we should be interested in sound shifts: firstly, they are present in many varieties of English (as well as other languages); secondly, they are a very nice example illustrating the constraints as well as the embedding problems, two of the five essential problems of LVC (see Chapter 1).

The Northern Cities Shift started with the vowel phoneme we find in words such as *cat*. This vowel raised, i.e. it moved upwards in the vocalic space, and started sounding more like an [ε ~ eː] rather than [æ] ("~" indicates that the quality may vary on a continuum between [ε] and [e]). This left space in the vowel system: the phonetic quality of [æ] was no longer "occupied" by any phoneme. As it turns out, this was not the case indefinitely, because the quality of the phoneme /ɒ/ (as in the word *lot*) started changing as well, and it started moving to where the original [æ] of "*cat*" words was to be found, as shown in Figure 2.2(a).[12]

(a) The initial stages of the Northern Cities Shift

(b) The Northern Cities Shift
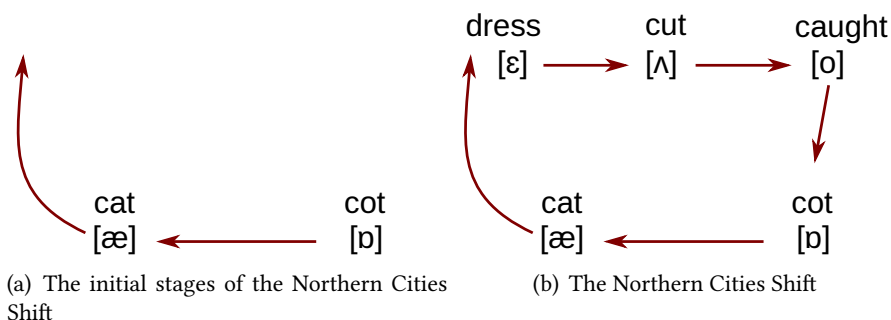
Further changes ensued. The vowel in words such as *caught* moved to the vowel space no longer occupied by the *cot* vowel (which had moved to the original *cat* region). This created an "empty" area in another part of the vocalic space, and the vowel we find in words such as *cut* /kʌt/ started moving in the direction of the original *caught* vowel. Finally, the vowel in *dress* /dɹɛs/ began moving as well, to the territory left behind by the *cut* vowel (/ʌ/). This leaves us with a situation found in Figure 2.2(b).

You can listen to examples of the post-shift phonetic quality of these phonemes on Eckert's webpage[13]; Eckert has investigated the Northern Cities Shift in great detail (e.g. Eckert 1990). We can refer to shifts like the Northern Cities Shift as a

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[12]See Nesbitt (2018) on some very recent research on "*cat*".

[13]https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/vowels.html.

CHAIN SHIFT, because one change triggers another. It is tempting to ask why a chain shift starts happening in a speech community. One potential explanation proposed for the Northern Cities Shift is that white speakers kept more distance from African American speakers following the African American Great Migration (Van Herk 2008).

The existence of a chain shift of this type is interesting, but what's even more interesting is that the Northern Cities Shift is just one of many shifts that we find across varieties of English. Labov et al. (2006), for instance, list the Southern Shift, the Pittsburg Shift, and the Back Upglide Shift amongst the main shifts currently taking place in varieties of American English, in addition to the Northern Cities Shift. Eckert[14] shows a vowel shift in California English, and reports of shifts are also found for Canadian English (Clarke et al. 1995: 212), New Zealand English (e.g. Langstrof 2006), and British English (Hickey 2018, Hejná 2015: 272–273 for Welsh English), as well as Irish English, Australian English, and South African English (Hickey 2018). Hickey (2018) presents an interesting discussion of one specific chain shift (Short Front Vowel Lowering) which is fairly widespread across the Anglophone world.[15] In the case of these shifts from the 20th and the 21st centuries, it is primarily short vowels that participate in the changes involved.

All these shifts have one thing in common. First, one vowel phoneme undergoes a sound change. Its quality changes, which means that it moves in the vocalic space. What then follows is a change, or movement, of another vowel in the vowel system. And on and on this can go, affecting the phonetic realization of a whole series of vowel phonemes. We start with one vowel changing, and we end up with this one change triggering a whole series of other changes. Hence the name chain shift. But the number of phonemes does not change – we end up with the same number of phonemes; what changes is the phonetic quality associated with these phonemes. So in the Northern Cities Shift as discussed here, we start with five distinct vowels and we end still with five distinct vowels.

We will see two other fairly famous instances of such chain shifts, one related to vowels (Chapter 4) and one related to consonants (Chapter 7), as we continue our journey through the history of the English language.

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[14]https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/vowels.html.

[15]See also Boberg (2019), who uses the term Short Front Vowel Shift for the same, or at least what seems to be closely related, phenomena.

2.2.3 Uptalk and High Rising Terminals (HRTs)

Another innovation that has been spreading throughout the English-speaking world is related to intonation.[16] Uptalk, or High Rising Terminals,[17] refers to the phenomenon in which speakers use a rising intonation (the melody we are familiar with from yes/no-questions) or intonation with a higher pitch, at the end of STATEMENTS, i.e. in declarative sentences. If you'd like to listen to some examples, visit platforms such as YouTube and search for Uptalk.

Linguists have proposed a range of functions Uptalk performs, amongst which are checking understanding, conveying uncertainty, checking approval, holding the floor, and others (McLemore 1991).

Uptalk is said to have started in California, US, or possibly in New Zealand, or Australia (Wells 2006: 37, in Mohamad & Deterding 2016). There are nowadays reports of Uptalk in a range of American English accents (McLemore 1991, Ritchart & Arvaniti 2014). Since the first reports of Uptalk, researchers have noted the phenomenon in Australian English (Fletcher et al. 2010), British English (Bradford 1997: 36, Jespersen 2018, Shobbrook & House 2003), Canadian English (Sando 2009, Shokeir 2008), Brunei English (Mohamad & Deterding 2016), New Zealand English (Britain 1992, Fletcher et al. 2010), and South African English (Bekker 2012: 146), if not more. While we may think of the rise and spread of Uptalk as a global change affecting varieties of English, the precise use and forms of Uptalk are nevertheless not the same across these different regions. For instance, in her Belfast English data, Jespersen (2018: 529) observes that Uptalk is used more frequently by Republicans than by Unionists, signalling political stance in the community. This again shows that global phenomena can be accompanied with local flavours, presenting us with both a degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity at the same time.

Unlike chain shifts introduced in the previous section (§2.2.2), Uptalk has been negatively stereotyped in the US in particular, as obvious from the title of the PhD thesis by Gorelik (2016), which focuses on perception of Uptalk in American English: *Uptalk as a Powerless Speech Style Characteristic of Job Candidates*. Interestingly, however, Gorelik (2016) did not find that the use of Uptalk would decrease the candidates' employability chances.

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[16]We're very lucky to be able to investigate intonation in Present Day English. This is not something we could really investigate for the older periods of the language.

[17]See Warren (2016: 4–7) for a discussion about the terms Uptalk and HRTs.

2.2.4 Vocal fry and creaky voice/phonation

The last sound change in progress we will mention is known as vocal fry or creaky voice/phonation. For most speakers, the vocal folds vibrate regularly during much of their speech. When creaky phonation is produced, this is in most cases due to irregular vibration of the vocal folds. The auditory percept is that of a rattling wheel to many listeners. If you would like to listen to some examples, again use platforms such as YouTube and search for vocal fry.

Researchers have been trying to establish the functions of creaky phonation in different varieties. Some of the suggestions that have been brought forward include those that creaky phonation may signal urban-oriented upwardly mobile identity of (accomplished) female speakers (Yuasa 2010), affective stance (see Esposito 2017 for an analysis of creaky phonation in Lady Gaga's interviews), and a transition of relevance in a conversation (Grivičić & Nilep 2004).

Creaky phonation has been very negatively stereotyped in American English, with creaking individuals being more likely to be associated with various negative attitudes and less likely to be employed (Anderson et al. 2014). Again, as is the case for Uptalk, creaky phonation is not limited just to American English. It has been observed e.g. in Australian English (Sicoli 2015), British English (Sicoli 2015), and Newfoundland and Labrador English (Clarke 2010: 154); yet, in these varieties of English, the phenomenon does not seem to carry the same social stigma as in American English.[18]

These aspects all fall within the realm of pragmatics. For example, whether someone creaks may indicate that they are about to finish what they say. The functions associated with such linguistic variation go well beyond the level of the sentence. And if someone uses Uptalk, this may imply they are not quite done with what they would like to say. However, as we have discussed above, these phenomena can also be used to provide further information about the speaker's intention or their interpretations of the situational context.

Although we have focused on four sound changes characteristic of Present Day English, there are many more sound changes under way in a range of different accents.

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[18]Dallaston & Docherty (2020) recently show that, actually, we know very little about creaky voice in varieties of English – or even within a single variety of English.

2.3 Morphology

2.3.1 Absence of *-s*

Depending on how many and which languages other than English you speak, you may or may not have thought that English does not seem to be particularly rich regarding its INFLECTIONAL morphology. If we consider the simple present tense, nothing much happens with the verb depending on which person and number the subject refers to:

(1) I **like** bumblebees.

(2) You **like** bumblebees.

(3) So we all **like** bumblebees.

(4) They **like** bumblebees too.

(5) And, surprise surprise, she **likes** bumblebees as well.

The only difference in the verb is found if we contrast the third person singular form with all the other forms: *like* becomes *likes*. In some languages, however, we would get a different verb form in each of these sentences with different grammatical attributes of the subject (e.g. in Czech or Spanish), or at least in many more of these sentences. As we will see in the chapters to come, the verbal system of the English language has seen a number of simplifications regarding its inflectional morphology. In fact, some varieties of English show absence of *-s* today even in the 3rd person singular present tense.

The first instances of absence of *-s* date back to the English spoken prior to the colonization of North America (at least), and go back primarily to East Anglia and the south of England (Schneider 1983: 102). In Present Day English, we find this phenomenon in African American English, East Anglia (Schneider 1983), Alabama, Reading, and – only with the auxiliary verb *DO* – in Inner Sydney English (Eisikovits 1996: 236–7). However, whilst some dialects seem to have unified the verbal PARADIGM by getting rid of the *-s*, others have generalized the MORPHEME across all or more persons and numbers: for instance, Schneider (1983: 102) notes such a tendency for Northern English varieties.

Although the loss of *-s* may be approached as an instance of the simplification of the system at first, it brings in the potential for new complexities as well. For instance, Myhill & Harris (1986: 27) found that in their African American English data, the speakers could either use *-s* or leave it out; however, the use of *-s* was associated with narrative clauses whereas its absence was reserved for present-reference contexts. In addition, as we will see in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the loss of

verbal endings has been accompanied by the rise of other verbal constructions in the language. We are therefore again observing a phenomenon which presents us with a degree of both linguistic homogeneity and heterogeneity.

The Northern Subject Rule

In some English varieties, the use of *-s* is subject to more complex constraints. The best known of these is the NORTHERN SUBJECT RULE of northern British English varieties. Here, the *-s* ending is also used in the third person plural, as in *The birds sings*. This only happens when the finite verb occurs right after a subject that isn't a pronoun: so, sentences like *The birds often sing* and *They sing* are found alongside *The birds sings* (see de Haas & van Kemenade 2014). What's more, the system is subject to substantial variation, much of it probabilistic. Many varieties around the world have similar, more complex distributions of *-s*: see e.g. Clarke (1997) on Newfoundland English and Cukor-Avila (1997) on African American English. The Northern Subject Rule is today considered to be non-standard. Contrary to a common misconception, non-standard forms aren't always (or even normally) recent innovations: very often, non-standard variants are actually much older than their "standard" equivalent. This is the case for the Northern Subject Rule as well: it dates back to Early Middle English (de Haas & van Kemenade 2014) and in some form even to Old English (Cole 2017).

2.3.2 Verbal concord with collective nouns

Collective nouns are nouns such as *cast, committee, company, crowd, family, government, jury, staff, team*, and names of countries (especially when referring to competing teams). What they all have in common is that they usually involve more than a single individual, hence their name: collective nouns or collectives. In Present Day English, we find a difference in verbal CONCORD (agreement) with regard to collective nouns, primarily between British and American English. Where speakers of American English would tend to use a verb in the singular when a collective noun is the subject, speakers of British English would typically

use a verb in the plural, as shown in the examples below (taken from Butters 2001: 337):

(6)　Our team wins often.　　　　　　　　　　　　(American English)

(7)　Our team win/win**s** often.　　　　　　　　　　(British English)

Thus, American English is more likely to exhibit grammatical CONCORD, whereas British English is more likely to show notional CONCORD (based on the semantics of the subject rather than its morphological number).

  Which is older? The British English notional concord option. As Hundt (2003) discusses in her study of the phenomenon, American English of the 20th century is leading in this linguistic change. Other varieties of English tend to show a mixture of these two concord strategies which falls between the state of affairs found in American English and in British English. Some of these varieties include Australian English, New Zealand English, Philippine English, and Singapore English (see Hundt 2003 and the references therein): all varieties of English exhibit variable concord to a greater or lesser extent. As Hundt (2003: 207) further notes, there is a trend for the grammatical concord (*Our team wins*) to be gaining in numbers in varieties of English globally. The change from notional to grammatical concord thus leads to more variation found, which illustrates that standard varieties of languages are indeed like the non-standard ones in many ways: they are also subject to change.

2.4 Syntax

In this section, we will look at the rise of a new quotative (*BE like*) and the *GET* passive. The former represents a change that many of us may be aware of, whereas the latter seems to be more below our radars.

2.4.1 Quotative *BE like*

Quotatives are verbs or constructions that introduce reported speech. Let's have a look at a couple of examples:

(8)　And then he **said**: "Aren't bumblebees fluffy?"

(9)　He **sighed**, "But what about dragonflies? Don't they deserve our attention too?"

(10)　She **objected**: "You and your insects. Someone should think of kingfishers too."

(11)   Ultimately, they all **cried out**: "Long live bumblebees, dragonflies, kingfish-
        ers, and everyone else."

The verbs in bold all introduce direct speech (marked in what are aptly called
quotation marks). Several new quotatives have been recently noticed in English:
BE all, *GO*, *BE like*, *this is* X (where X stands for the subject whose speech we
quote; see Buchstaller 2001, 2013 and D'Arcy 2010 for more details). We will only
focus on *BE like* here, which we're sure you've all encountered. See for yourself:

(12)   She's sitting there and she'**s like**, 'Oh my god!'
        She'**s like**, 'That's your boyfriend?'
        (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2004: 493)

The first study of *BE like* focuses on the new quotative in American English and
dates back to 1982 (Butters 1982, but see also Buchstaller 2006). However, since
then it's been reported in an increasing number of varieties of English, at increas-
ing frequencies of occurrence, including Australian English (Louro 2013), Cana-
dian English (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2004), Jamaican English (Bogetić 2014), and
New Zealand English (D'Arcy 2010).

   The attitudes towards this new quotative vary across different varieties. Buch-
staller (2006) contrasted attitudes towards *BE like* in American and British En-
glish, and this is what she found. Firstly, the quotative is associated with young
speakers in both varieties. However, whilst Americans associate the quotative
with California and the Valley Girl, Brits don't. Instead, Brits associate the quota-
tive with speakers whose personality traits are those of giddiness, animatedness,
being cool and trendy, being less ambitious, and being less educated. In conclu-
sion, although on the one hand the quotative is spreading across the globe rela-
tively fast, the connotations associated with it and its socio-pragmatic functions
are not necessarily the same across the globe. One thing that the new quotative
does share across the relevant varieties is that, in a fairly cool way, it's ambiguous
as to whether it introduces what the speaker had actually said or just thought,
and it may introduce facial gestures as well as direct speech/thought! Thus, for
instance, the sentence *George was like "Aaaaargh!" for three hours.* does not mean
that George literally uttered "Aaaaargh!" for three solid hours without pausing
for breath. In fact, George may well not have uttered "Aaaaargh!" at all – the new
"quotative" here can introduce mental states. Perhaps this flexibility may explain
why it's been adopted so widely and so rapidly.

2.4.2 *GET* passive

The typical example of the PASSIVE voice in the English language could be something like this:

(13)   The hungry bumblebee **was taken** to the honeysuckle.

(14)   All my honey **has been eaten**!

(15)   Mistakes **were made**.[19]

The *GET*-passive is a type of the passive in which the verb *BE* is replaced with the verb *GET*, as in the example that follows, and is found more frequently in spoken than written language:[20]

(16)   If nothing else, the fans will want to go and see which resident of Springfield **gets killed** in the last few frames. Could it be Lisa's new Irish boyfriend Colin? After hearing his ghastly singsong "brogue", most domestic viewers will wish it so.
(Amador Moreno 2010: 9, in Nolan 2012: 1138)

The first instances of the *GET*-passive go back to the late 17th century (Fleisher 2006: 227), and the construction started increasing in its frequency in the latter half of the 19th century (Anderwald 2018: 3), first beginning to attract criticism from prescriptivists during the 20th century. It has kept on developing a number of more nuanced uses since its inception, throughout Present Day English (Anderwald 2018: 1–2). Anderwald offers interesting sociocultural details that elaborate on why some verbs were more likely than others to be used in this *GET*-construction when it started spreading (such as *to get run over* and *to get mugged*, which refer to activities that one did not necessarily do or arrange oneself in a certain period of time).

The *GET*-passive is a fairly widespread phenomenon, having been studied in British English, American English (Hundt 2001), Irish English (Nolan 2012), Singapore English, and Jamaican English (Bruckmaier 2016), among others.

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[19]This is a famous example used by a number of politicians, including Jeb Bush. It has its own Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mistakes_were_made. We are thankful to Sten Vikner for drawing our attention to this wiki page.

[20]If interested in the formal arguments against all *GET* constructions being suitable examples of *GET*-passives, and whether the term PASSIVE is always appropriate, see Mitkovska & Bužarovska (2012).

2.5 Lexicon

2.5.1 Global vocabulary

Due to its geographical spread, English has come into contact with a number of languages, which have introduced many lexical items or new meanings of already existing words into the language. These innovations may be restricted locally, but some may have spread across the globe. Regarding Present Day English, we have for example seen the local differences in the use of the word *café* in Singapore English and also the *wallah* suffix used in Indian English (Chapter 1). Other examples are the word *Pakeha* in New Zealand English, meaning 'stranger, not Maori' and originating in Maori (to be precise, Pākehā), where it had the same meaning; *babalaas* 'suffering from hangover' in South African English, originating in Afrikaans; *cwtsh* [kʊtʃ] 'a cuddle, cuddly hug, hug' originating in Welsh.

However, English has also become important as the language of business communication, aviation, digital technologies, and science, which has resulted in the rise of words such as *to google* (first attested in 2000 with an object according to the Oxford English Dictionary), *cursor* (in the sense of a computer mouse cursor first attested in 1967 according to the OED), *to troll* (first attested in the sense of posting hostile messages in online discussions in 1992), *Twitterati* (prolific users of the social network Twitter, first attested in 2006), *to photobomb* (to spoil a photo by appearing in it unexpectedly, first attested in 2008), and *to rickroll* (to cause someone to unintentionally watch a pop music video by Rick Astley).[21]

2.5.2 Social media, instant messaging, and new expressions

Some of the technological developments in the 20th and the 21st centuries involve various forms of instant messaging and other digitally-mediated communication platforms. Tagliamonte & Denis (2008) take up and critique the public opinion that instant messaging ruins the English language and is a form of "bastardization" (2008: 4). Such negative attitudes are, amongst other things, related to the introduction of abbreviated words, such as *lol* (< *laughing out loud*), *btw* (< *by the way*), *omg* (< *oh my god*), *wtf* (< *what the fuck*), etc. However, Tagliamonte & Denis (2008) show that these new abbreviated lexical items represent a marginal proportion of the vocabulary in their Canadian English teenage instant messaging data (e.g. 0.02% of the overall vocabulary in the case of *wtf*, or 0.41% in the case of *lol*). Thus, the authors conclude that "[t]he use of abbreviations,

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[21]This term is not yet in the OED, but see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLzxrzFCyOs for relevant discussion.

short forms, and symbolic uses in IM [Instant Messaging] is without a doubt a new vogue, but much rarer than the media have led us to believe" (Tagliamonte & Denis 2008: 12). Furthermore, the fact that we do find such abbreviated lexical items in digitalized communication platforms does not imply these will be used at the same frequency in spoken English. It's unlikely they are equally frequent in spoken language.

Tagliamonte & Denis (2008: 25) nonetheless show that "the variety of English used in the IM corpora we have studied here is neither a caricature of real language nor some kind of basilectal lowlife", but rather a new register which could be thought of as a blend of spoken and written language, from the point of view of both structural and lexical similarities and differences (see also Baron 2008 and Biber & Conrad 2019). That in itself presents a type of language change that doesn't neatly fall within a single linguistic level such as morphology or syntax – it is indeed a change related to the discourse structure of the language, which may be reflected in the lexicon but also at other levels.

The study of internet language has taken off dramatically in recent years – see McCulloch (2019) for an accessible overview.

2.6 Final note

In our day and age, there are many factors which could no doubt be thought of as leading to homogeneity on various levels of our existence. It's so much easier to travel across the globe, education is compulsory for much larger portions of the population than used to be the case, and, of course, the means to communicate across distances have been boosted by a number of technological advances (see also Beal 2010: Chapter 1). All these factors are sometimes seen as being the reasons why local varieties of English are dying out (Beal 2010: Chapter 1, pages 1, 3, and 8 in particular). And yet, we have been witnessing many linguistic innovations spreading across different parts of the world and getting utilized and localized by those who adopt them potentially for different purposes in their respective regions. But this is not where regional and other linguistic differences stop: any quick browse through an issue of journals such as *Language Variation and Change*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, and *English Language and Linguistics* will make it obvious that we're far from a homogeneous English bereft of local features in the 21st century.

And now, we encourage you to do the exercises found below. These will enable you to think more carefully about how we can establish whether two varieties of English are more different or more similar. You'll also try to establish which

linguistic features are standard and non-standard, or somewhere in between perhaps, and whether you pay equal amount of attention to a range of different types of linguistic variation that surrounds us. And if you do that, then you'll be going home with the take-home messages of this chapter safely sitting in your backpack (or a pocket).

Suggested exercises

E.1 Practice with varying features

Look at the sentences below. Which of the variable features discussed in this chapter can you identify? There's one major feature to be identified in each sentence.

1. "My milkshake brings all the boys to the yard
   And they're like, it's better than yours" (Kelis, *Milkshake*, 2003)

2. "The results will show where your team is on track as well as where problems may be brewing."[a]

3. "Ahhh The Queen photo-bombed our selfie!!"[b]

4. "I faked having Covid-19 on Facebook and got arrested"[c]

5. "Pumps and a bump, pumps and a bump
   He like the girls with the pumps and a bump
   ... one taste and he want it" (Fifth Harmony, *He Like That*, 2017)

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[a]https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-secrets-of-great-teamwork, accessed June 2020.
[b]https://twitter.com/_JaydeTaylor/status/492269017215012864, 2014, accessed June 2020.
[c]https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52397294, accessed June 2020.

E.2 Tracking words and phrases with Google N-grams

Use a web browser to visit the Google N-grams site.[a] This interface allows you to look at the changing frequency of words over time in the Google Books CORPUS (or short strings of words, called n-grams). You can choose whether to investigate English in general, or American English or British English in particular (at the time of writing, other Englishes are sadly not available).

A. Look at how frequent the word *fuck* is in the Google Books corpus over time. Go as far back in time as the corpus allows. 1. Describe the pattern you see. 2. Can you think of any explanations behind this pattern? 3. If you did think of at least one explanation, how could we go about testing whether this may indeed explain what's happening in this specific n-gram?

B. Look up *biscuit* and *cookie* and their frequencies across centuries. Go as far back in time as you can. 1. Which one is more frequent? 2. Does the answer depend on the period? 3. Does the answer depend on whether you're limiting your searches just to American or British English? 4. How can we explain the patterns indicated by your searches?

C. Think of pairs of words that might overlap in meaning in British and American English, like *biscuit* vs. *cookie* or *tap* vs. *faucet*. Search for these in the British corpus. What do you see? Can you explain your results?

D. In §2.4.1, the quotative *BE like* was introduced. Look at the historical trajectory of *BE like*, *SAY*, and *BE all*. Does *BE like* indeed increase as we approach 2020? What happens to the other quotatives? Do you get different results for the British and the American subsections of the corpus?

E. In §2.4.2, the *GET*-passive was introduced. Can you think of a way to investigate the rise of the *GET*-passive using the Google N-gram Viewer? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?

F. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Google Books corpus as a whole?

G. Can you think of using Google N-grams in any way either as a researcher or as an English teacher?

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[a]Available at https://books.google.com/ngrams.

E.3 American and British English – more different or more similar?

Are there more differences than similarities between British and American English? Each student/group (as specified by the teacher) should answer the question in a short written piece of no more than 400 words. Feel free to use the extracts in §1 as well as any other sources that may be of relevance.

Tips for students: If you don't know how to begin, you can structure your answer as follows: 1. What is the question? Introduce the question. Don't assume your reader is telepathic.; 2. What do you want to argue for/against?; 3. Show us why you argue the way you do (what's your evidence?); 4. Conclude briefly to remind us of the main argument/point.

Tip for teachers: Using group blog entries for this assignment as well as a reasonable deadline is a good idea – it saves time both for the students and you, and the deadline will allow you to go through the contributions prior to the seminar.

Tip for teachers: Add a condition of the students having to use at least one source (or more) to back up their claims, using the reference style of your department.

E.4 How does English vary?

Look at the excerpts in §1. Can you see any non-standard features? What linguistic level do they represent? Have you come across them in other varieties of English? What varieties were they? Can you think of any possible reasons why this variation exists?

Tip for teachers: Assign different excerpts to different groups of students.

E.5 Homogeneity vs. heterogeneity

In Present Day English, do factors such as the advent of digital media, generalization of compulsory education, and the increasing ease of travelling opportunities contribute to an increasing similarity, or homogeneity, increasing dissimilarity, or heterogeneity, both, or neither?

Each student/group (as specified by the teacher) should answer the question in a short written piece of no more than 300 words. Feel free to use the extracts in §1 as well as any other sources that may be of relevance.

Tip: see the tips in exercise 3.

Texts

This section contains texts from different varieties of Present Day English. In this chapter, and in the other chapters, the texts are in reverse chronological order: like the book itself, the selection of texts goes backwards in time.

T.1 Queen's Christmas Speech

Below is an extract from the Queen's Christmas Speech from 2016.[a] The Queen's speech has not escaped the scrutiny of linguists and so we also give you a snippet here.

> Throughout the Commonwealth, there were equally joyful celebrations – Grenada, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and New Zealand won more medals per head of population than any other countries. Many of this year's winners spoke of being inspired by athletes of previous generations. Inspiration fed their aspiration and, having discovered abilities they scarcely knew they had, these athletes are now inspiring others.

[a]You can listen to the entirety of it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouieLx4VryU.

T.2 Kisses don't lie

Kisses don't lie is a song by Rihanna, a singer from Barbados, in the Caribbean. The song comes from her 2006 album titled *A Girl Like Me*, and we give you a couple of lines below. Rihanna's song *Work* might be another intriguing example to look up.

> Cause when you kiss me
> I feel everything that I been missing
> I try to slow down but my heart won't listen
> And it's tearing me all up inside
> And when you touch me
> I feel a rush but I'm afraid that it might crush me
> Should I put my trust in something I don't trust in
> Cause baby kisses don't lie
> Kisses don't

No, they don't
Never don't lie.

T.3 This is her first publication

This is her first publication (2004) is a poem by Conor O'Callaghan, an Irish writer.[a]

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[a]You can access it at the Poetry Foundation at the following link: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=42229.

T.4 Excerpt from *The Wire*

The Wire is a crime drama set in Baltimore, which aired between 2002 and 2008. In this extract from the first season (2002), one of the African American characters, D'Angelo, is teaching two others – Wallace and Bodie – how to play chess.

D'ANGELO A'ight, see this? This the king, and he the man.
You get the other dude's king, you got the game.
But he trying to get your king too. So your gotta protect it. Now the king move one space in any direction he damn please. Like this, and this, and this. But he ain't got no hustle. So the rest of these motherfuckers on the team, they got his back.
And they run so deep, he ain't gotta do shit.

BODIE   Like your uncle.

D'ANGELO Yeah, like my uncle. *[picks up a queen]* You see this?
This the queen; she smart, she fierce.

> She move anyway she want as far as she want.
> And she is the go-get-shit-done piece.

WALLACE   Remind me of Stringer.

D'ANGELO   And this over here is the castle, like the stash.
It move like this, or like this.
[demonstrates]

WALLACE   Yo, stash don't move, man.

D'ANGELO   Come on, yo, think, how many times we move the stash house this week. Right? And every time we move the stash, we gotta move a little muscle with it.

BODIE   True. A'ight, what about them little bald-headed bitches?

D'ANGELO   These right here, these are the pawns. They're like the soldiers. They move one space forward, only, except when they fight, and it's like-*[demonstrates]*-or like this. They in the front lines, they be out in the field.

T.5 Tyneside English

Britain is full of interesting (and diverse) varieties of English. Tyneside English is spoken in the North East of England. Below you get an extract from the Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (speaker TLSG01, recorded in the 1960s–1970s).[a]

Speaker 1: "it's quite nice up here is it"
Speaker 2: "yes conditions is better"
Speaker 1: "yes you do you think eh do you find that people around here are fairly neighbourly you know do you know most of the people"
Speaker 2: "yes they are yes I mean if you were wanting a helping

hand they would help you you know"
Speaker 1: "yes mm-hm"

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*[a]*If you'd like to see more Tyneside English and listen to examples, we recommend the Talk of the Toon webpage: https://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte/toon/.

Recommended further reading

As in Chapter 1, Trudgill's (1999) paper on standard English and what it is and isn't provides the readers with perspectives on language varieties that happen to be considered standard.

For good detailed introductions to specific varieties of English, consult *A Handbook of Varieties of English*, edited by Kortmann and Schneider (2004). The handbook comes in two volumes, one of which focuses on phonetic and phonological aspects and one on morphology and syntax. Wells's three volumes of *Accents of English* are also a very good overview of differences in the sounds of English dialects, i.e. of accent differences: Wells (1982a,c,b). There are also two volumes on lesser-known varieties of English: see Schreier et al. (2010) and Williams et al. (2015).

If you are interested in English as a global language, you may enjoy reading David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* (2003b) and Jennifer Jenkins' *Global Englishes: A Resource Book for Students* (2015). The literature on English in a global context and World Englishes is fairly rich and you will find a lot of reading options.

Sadly, there's no book that provides an introduction to change in Present Day English. We therefore recommend that you read the individual papers cited in the relevant sections of this chapter if you are really interested in the changes discussed. In addition, Leech et al. (2009) present in-depth research studies of ongoing changes.

General introductions to sociolinguistics are provided by Mesthrie et al. (2009) and Meyerhoff (2019).

3 Late Modern English (1700–1945)

3.1 History and context

The period of Late Modern English (LModE) is characterized by notable techno-logical advancements and social changes, which are also reflected in the varia-tion we find in the language of the period. To begin with, Late Modern English saw the introduction of steamships in 1790, railways in 1825, cars in 1763 and 1886,[1] telephone in 1876, radio in 1895, sound-film in 1925, and experimental TV transmission in 1939 (Strang 1970: 75). These technological developments are im-portant for the following reasons. First, they made travelling easier and more accessible and increased dialect contact as a result.[2] Secondly, the introduction of the telephone planted the seed of what has by the 21st century become a way to communicate with a potentially large number of individuals living in regions separated by considerable distances on a daily basis. This has again led to more dialect contact. Similarly, the introduction of the radio and the TV led to the ex-posure to those varieties of English that were represented in these media at the time, and these varieties of English were – unsurprisingly – those that were con-sidered standard. Due to their representation in these media, their "standardness" only increased as they became considered the hallmarks of speaking properly in the years to come.

Communication-related consequences of technology are, however, just one part of the sociolinguistically meaningful events of Late Modern English. The industrial revolution, starting in 1760, impacted society in several ways. Perhaps most importantly, the people in power were no longer just those who had in-herited power by birth. The emergence of the nouveau riche (the new rich) had one language-related consequence: although you may have had the wealth and thus also political and social power based on this wealth, your language reflected your social background, that is, at least, unless you consciously or unconsciously

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[1] Steam-driven in 1763; petrol-driven in 1886.

[2] And of course, over time, this also led to somewhat easier immigration. In case of Britain during the Late Modern English period, this would be primarily immigration associated with former colonies of the British Empire. Many of these immigrants would not speak English natively.

changed how you spoke. This created the need to know what the "correct" way of speaking was.

In addition to this development, Late Modern English also saw increasing democratization ensuing from the Glorious Revolution (1689), urbanization, and the foundation of the Royal Society, which "[promoted] scientific and rational discourse" (Beal 2004: 3). This enlightenment resulted in a "period ... in which faith was no longer solely placed in an omnipotent God, but in humanity's capacity for rational thinking" (Beal 2004: 3). These social changes are also important and go hand in hand with the rise of prescriptivism (see §3.1.1). For instance, some structures began to be perceived as incorrect based on an appeal to "logic" or because of comparison to Latin, prime examples being NEGATIVE CONCORD (***Ain't no*** *sunshine when she's gone*), flat adverbs (***extreme*** *unwilling*, Mugglestone 2003: 11), and the use of *who* rather than *whom* in sentences such as *those* ***who*** *you love* versus the form traditionally deemed correct, *those* ***whom*** *you love.*

To focus on just one of these constructions, the supposed "logic" behind the idea that negative concord is incorrect and indeed formally illogical was the argument that if a sentence contains two negatives (*A**in't no** sunshine*, *I **don't do** **nothing***), then these two negatives cancel each other out. Thus, *I **don't do noth-ing*** does not mean, according to this argument, that the speaker is not engaging in any activity, but that it is *not* the case that the speaker is not engaging in an activity. This is indeed how negation works in Standard Present Day English, at least in theory. We find similar discussions today surrounding the so-called singular *they*. An example of a singular *they* would be *Everyone should go look for bumblebees if **they** feel like it.* Boyd (2019: 273) outlines the supposed logic behind the critique of sentences like the bumblebee one containing singular *they* above:

> *They* is plural, so it is ungrammatical to use it with a singular antecedent. The stature of the writer who violates this rule has no bearing on whether the rule is valid, since the logic of the rule is unimpeachable. Shakespeare does it? "What a shame," says the conservative prescriptivist, "I never knew Shakespeare had such bad grammar".

Importantly, arguments based on "logic" of the type mentioned above are irrelevant to natural language use. And negative concord in English is very old indeed, since it's the norm as early as the earliest Old English: see §6.4.3.

Finally, the technological advancements combined with British colonization resulted in the spread of the English language across the globe. As we saw in Chapter 2, most varieties of English as we know it today are only a couple of

centuries old, and their establishment as distinct, individual varieties took place during the Late Modern English period. For some, this process is still ongoing. In this chapter, we will focus only on two varieties of English: British English (and primarily English English) and American English. Because English came into existence in Britain, we will be discussing English used in Britain during the Late Modern English period. This perhaps somewhat obvious (and admittedly rather traditional) reason is nevertheless not the only motivation to discuss British English and English English in particular. As we will see, what was deemed socially prestigious linguistic behaviour was often related to the norms established in England. We will, however, learn more about the history of American English in this chapter as well. The speakers of American English were some of the first to explicitly and formally rebel against English linguistic norms, and American English was one of the first and the earliest to see its official recognition as an individual variety of English. In the twentieth century, as we will see particularly in §3.3, the pendulum has swung back in the other direction, and in many contexts American English is socially more prestigious than British English due to its cultural and technological influence.

In the rest of this section, we concentrate on the rise of prescriptivism, which characterizes Late Modern English, and its consequences for our understanding of language variation and change not only in Late Modern English but also Present Day English (§3.1.1). The emergence of American English is described in §3.1.2.

3.1.1 Prescriptivism

The word *prescriptivism* originates in the Latin *praescrībere*, meaning literally 'to write beforehand' and, more importantly here 'to lay down rules, to limit'. In the context of language, prescriptivism is the attempt to establish rules that govern what linguistic usage should or should not be like. Linguistic prescriptivism is something most of us are likely to come across, although not necessarily consciously so. The Accentism Project by Carrie & Drummond offers a number of examples reported primarily by English speakers,[3] whether native or non-native. For instance, Sta gives the following story on the Accentism Project website as someone who is not a native speaker of English (3rd February 2018):

> Because I sound so American, it always strikes me when people start correcting my English only after they find out I am not a native speaker and

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[3]https://accentism.org/.

actually from South Asia. Seems I speak it "like a native" but only till they figure out my passport. Then it's a giveaway.

Negative attitudes associated with non-native varieties of English fall within the ideology of so-called native-speakerism, according to which, for instance, only native speakers of English should teach English.[4]

Regarding native speakers of English, prescriptivism is typically observable with nonstandard dialects, although it is by no means limited to these. A story by Lisa (28th March 2018) contains a typical example:

> When I started at Oxford in the late 80s someone told me, "You can't possibly be studying English at Oxford with an accent like that!" This came hot on the heels of a teacher at a study week telling me "The northern accent is generally associated with being thick.".

Prescriptivism is in opposition to descriptivism. A descriptive approach to linguistic variation is one where we describe how speakers use a language, whether they are native or non-native speakers of that language, and whether or not they speak a standard or a nonstandard variety of that language. A prescriptivist approach to variation, however, is a prohibitive one: some types of language-related phenomena are seen as incorrect, and often these correlate with specific social groups. Linguistic research as carried out in academia is descriptive, not prescriptive.

Furthermore, certain properties of language and speech, such as those associated with one's sex and/or gender, can also tap into stereotypical biases (e.g. Hall 1985). It is very likely that linguistic discrimination of various sorts has been around for as long as any type of discrimination has. When speakers start criticizing the language of others *openly*, however, we are dealing with prescriptivism and proscriptivism: the way one should use language and the way one should not, respectively. We find the first more conventional traces of prescriptivism in the history of English after the language begins to undergo a process of standardization. This makes sense: after the printing press was introduced in 1476, a specific variety of English (more in Chapter 4) began to spread in written contexts across the island and, as a result, began to be seen as prestigious (Mugglestone 2003: 9; cf. §4.1.1). Just think of the "If it's printed, it must be true" line of thought (see also Strang 1970: 81).

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[4]For an interesting discussion of native-speakerism, see Jenkins (2006) and Firth & Wagner (2007).

Very indicative of this rise of prescriptivism are the numerous grammar books and dictionaries produced by a range of grammarians of the period. For instance, an anonymous manual titled *Poor letter H, its use and abuse: addressed to its little vowels, a, e, i, o, u, and the millions who use them, by the Hon. Henry H.*, published in 1859, was sold in thousands at the time (Mugglestone 2003: 4).[5] Thus, we find instruction on the "best" language-related practices. Here's an example of an entry from one such manual, the *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* by John Walker from 1823; this one outlines the desired pronunciation of the word *mercy*:

> The vulgar pronounce this word as if spelled *marcy*, many above the vulgar pronounce it as if written *murcy*; but there is a delicate shade of difference between this and the true sound of *e*, which must be carefully attended to … (Walker 1823: 387)

This flourishing of grammar books and instructive materials clearly shows that audiences of the period were interested in and indeed preoccupied with knowing how to talk properly. This is the beginning of what Crystal (2005: 249) refers to as the complaint tradition, which has persisted till this day. As Crystal writes, we are indeed dealing with complaining, i.e. focusing on the negatives: "people do not usually write, phone, or band together to commend usages they like". Less direct but still very striking evidence of the general prescriptivism of the period can be frequently found not only in grammar books and manuals, but also in fictional literature of the times, as in the following observation from *Jane Eyre* (Brontë 2006: 444):

> She is not an uneducated person, I should think, by her manner of speaking; her accent was quite pure; and the clothes she took off, though splashed and wet, were little worn and fine.

In short, there is no lack of evidence from the Late Modern English period that suggests that a concept of "pure" English was indeed very much alive.

Resonances of these prescriptive times can be found in the opinion that language change is not good and should be prevented. In the 21st century, language change is frequently seen as language decay (see also Aitchison's 2012 very accessible and absorbing read titled *Language Change: Progress or Decay?*). We do not have to do too much searching to find judgemental, prescriptive comments like this one (York 2017):

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[5]Some of the authors of these manuals were well known: John Dryden, John Hart, Robert Lowth, Lindley Murray, and Richard Mulcaster.

> Slang has been around for generations, e.g. "Swell" was a popular 1930s approval word, and dozens more descriptive words become trendy but then fade away. Today, however, slang has acquired a new and disturbing quality by ignoring the difference between sexes (guys), grossly overstating (awesome), and adding a different meaning (cool). Much of it is disgustingly vulgar. Worse, it's everywhere and used by people of all ages, backgrounds, educational and economic levels.

This perceived decay of the language was also mentioned in Chapter 1. However, systematic study of language variation and change across centuries and a range of languages has shown time and time again that language variation and change are perfectly natural and have taken place for as long as the language in question has been used. That the English language has always been undergoing changes is something we are going to see in the rest of this book.

Figure 3.1: *best**est** friends* – an example of a double superlative; photo taken by Míša in Scotland in 2011

The emergence of Received Pronunciation as a sociolect

One of the pronunciation standards used in numerous Present Day English dictionaries and textbooks, as well as related audio teaching materials, is Received Pronunciation, often abbreviated just to RP. It is sometimes used interchangeably with BBC English. Where does RP come from? It is a variety of English based on Standard Southern British (= English!) English. As Fennell (2001) explains, the term RP "entered into British common vocabulary" at the end of the 19th century "to refer to the educated accent of London and the Home Counties" (Fennell 2001: 185). It became "received" when it had become recognized by speakers as the accent to aim for in order to climb the social ladder. Daniel Jones was the first to call this spoken variety "Public School English" in 1917. Later in 1926, he termed the same variety of the language Received Pronunciation. Today, RP may have negative connotations for some – it can be perceived as too posh, and the characters of evil geniuses (or genii!) are often portrayed with an RP accent in American films (see Lippi-Green 2012). The emergence of RP is linked to the establishment of "public schools", a small set of private, originally all-male boarding schools traditionally attended by children of the British ruling classes. Public School English, to give rise to RP in time, had a certain type of prestige attached to it. Interestingly, the mastery of Public School English took on religious associations as well: 'In the church, RP was considered a necessary qualification for Anglicans, whereas "a non-standard accent in a minister of religion would, until comparatively recently, be a fairly safe indicator that he belonged to a Non-conformist denomination'" (Honey 1989: 34, in Görlach 1999: 61).

3.1.2 Emergence of American English

In this section, we target varieties of American English spoken in the United States of America. As we saw in Chapter 2, American English was certainly seen as a variety in its own right, at least by some Americans, around the years 1775–1783, when the American War of Independence took place. Thus, Noah Webster, an American lexicographer and a spelling reformer, wrote in 1828 that the style of American writers is "in purity, in elegance and in technical precision, […] equaled

only by that of the best British authors, and surpassed by that of no English compositions of a similar kind" (Webster 1828: viii). He further adds that "[i]t is not only important, but, in a degree necessary, that the people of this country, should have an American Dictionary of the English Language; for, although the body of the language is the same as in England, and it is desirable to perpetuate that sameness, yet some differences must exist" (Webster 1828: vi-vii). This is a reaction to the fact that in Britain American English was considered "a tract [i.e. trace] of corruption" (Samuel Johnson, a prominent English lexicographer, quoted in Martin 2019: 4).

Webster was a particularly noteworthy spelling reformer because some of his suggestions have actually caught on – something most spelling reformers could not boast of. It is thanks to Webster that the word *colour* is spelt as *color* in American English: "we ought to reject u from honor, favor, candor, error, and others of this class" (Webster 1806, cited in Shapiro & Lynch 2017: 435). He also proposed to unify the spelling of word-final <er> and <re> under <er> (Webster 1806, cited in Shapiro & Lynch 2017: 434–435):

> The present practice is not only contrary to the general uniformity observable in words of this class, but is inconsistent with itself; for Peter, a proper name, is always written in the English manner. Metre also retains its French spelling, while the same word in composition, as in diameter, barometer, and thermometer, is conformed to the English orthography. Such palpable inconsistencies and preposterous anomalies do no honor to English literature, but very much perplex the student, and offend the man of taste ...

American English was, however, not a monolithic entity around the time of the revolution, nor is it today, and nor was it prior to the revolution. To begin with, there have always been various ethnic communities to consider. What probably comes to our mind first are, on the one hand, the original inhabitants of North America and, on the other, the settlers and other types of immigrants. It was not just native speakers of English who came to settle the area that would later become the United States of America. Specific areas of today's US are still associated with influences of – for instance – French in New Orleans, German in Pennsylvania and New York, Spanish in Florida, and West African languages in the Lower South (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2015: chapter 4). Other important nationalities in the sociolinguistic history of English include native speakers of Italian, Norwegian, and Polish. To give one more specific example, Herold (1997) suggests that the so-called COT-CAUGHT merger, whereby the vowels in words

like *cot* and *caught* become identical, happened in specific regions of Pennsylvania due to the influx of native Polish speakers in these regions.

In addition to a large number of speakers of languages other than English, there were of course also immigrants from Britain and Ireland. Importantly, these speakers did not speak the same dialect of English, as they came from various parts of those countries. For instance, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2015: 104) mention immigrants from Southeastern England coming to Jamestown and "some two million immigrants of Scots-Irish descent", who came to America in the 18th-20th centuries. Moreover, "[i]t is estimated [...] that fully one in seven colonists was Scots-Irish [by 1776]". It is also important to realize that speakers from Southeastern England were far from speaking a uniform variety of English, and the same goes for speakers of English originating in Ireland and Scotland. Further yet, even those who came from Britain and Ireland were not necessarily native speakers of English, but may rather have been native speakers of Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh.[6] Furthermore, speakers of languages such as Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh were religious dissenters, unlikely to (aspire to) speak RP.

We couldn't possibly present a chapter on Late Modern English in North America without noting the presence of a numerous group of enslaved individuals brought to North America. Interestingly for the development of African American English, the first generation of enslaved people spoke completely different languages. American history is chequered with struggles for equality, and equality linked to one's ethnicity in particular. The histories of African Americans, the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas (who spoke yet other languages), and other groups in North America present us with ample examples of discrimination. For an example from recent films, see e.g. *The Best of Enemies* by Robin Bissell from 2019, which depicts discriminatory behaviours towards African Americans. Regarding academic research into linguistic discrimination, the seminal study by Purnell et al. (1990) showed – like other studies focusing on a range of languages and speakers – that one's accent, such as African American English or Chicano English, can negatively bias the listener. So, when one of the researchers on the team called landlords using what may be seen as a "neutral" (i.e. standard) accent in order to arrange an appointment, he was more likely to succeed than when he adopted an African American English (AAE) accent or a Chicano English accent. Today, AAE represents one of the traditionally studied varieties of English. It differs from other varieties of English in a range of differences pertaining to all

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[6]That Celtic languages are indeed fairly different from English can be illustrated by a sentence from Welsh: *Beth hoffet ti fwyta?* 'What would you like to eat?'. See also §6.1.2 of chapter 6 for more on Celtic influence in the history of English.

levels of language (see e.g. Green 2002, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2015: Chapter 7, and the chapters in Lanehart 2015).

A considerable amount of ink has been spilt over where AAE comes from exactly. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2015: §8.3) review the mainstream hypotheses about the origins of AAE and conclude that we are unlikely to reach a final answer, at least at this stage. The major hypotheses are the Anglicist, the Creolist, and the Substrate Hypotheses. According to the Anglicist Hypothesis, AAE can be traced back to older stages of English, which it ultimately originates from. According to the Creolist Hypothesis, AAE started off as a pidgin and finally became an English-based creole. Finally, the Substrate Hypothesis argues for a variety of English with an uninterrupted line of descent from other, earlier stages of English, which has nonetheless been influenced by African languages. For much more detail, we refer you to Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2015: Chapter 7) and Part 1 of Lanehart (2015).

AAE nevertheless represents one of *many* ethnolects found in North America today as well as in the past. This is a good reminder that no introductory textbook on the history of the English language can possibly cover all of the variation that exists in the language. However, we hope to pique your interest and steer you in at least some further directions here.[7]

Languages of the colonizers as languages of the most powerful?

In the previous chapter, you may have read our pidgin and creole box. If you haven't, we recommend that you do so before engaging with this box. As Smith & Kim (2019) point out, most of us will think of pidgins and creoles containing linguistic aspects of English (or some other language of the colonizers, such as Dutch and French). It is typically the language of the more powerful group that serves as the main basis for a pidgin. Because of the power dynamic between colonizers and the colonized during British colonization, we might therefore expect English to form the basis of all North American pidgin languages. However, it wasn't always

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[7]We also recommend *The hidden treasure of Black ASL: its history and structure* by McCaskill et al. (2011), which comes with a DVD, and the *Talking Black in America* documentary by Walt Wolfram, Neal Hutcheson, and Danica Cullinan (https://www.talkingblackinamerica.org/).

> the colonizers who represented the group whose language served as the main basis for a pidgin. Pidgin Delaware presents an example of a pidgin which originally developed out of contact between the indigenous people of Delaware, North America, whose mother tongue provided the base of the pidgin, and the Dutch colonizers.

Now that we have seen some of the main sociohistorical events relevant for Late Modern English and their consequences for linguistic variation, we can proceed to the specific linguistic phenomena characteristic of this thrilling period in the history of English.

3.2 Sounds

We will first discuss two canonical examples of linguistic variables indicative of the speaker's class which saw rather interesting developments in the period of Late Modern English. The first phenomenon is referred to as /h/-dropping and the second as /r/-vocalization. We will also introduce you to what is known as the FOOT-STRUT split, which originated in Late Modern English. However, as we will see and as is often the case, the traces of these developments can be found already in the periods preceding Late Modern English.

3.2.1 /h/-dropping: to drop or not to drop?

/ʜ/-ᴅʀᴏᴘᴘɪɴɢ refers to when a speaker does not pronounce an /h/ in words historically pronounced with an /h/. When /h/-dropping takes place, words such as *house*, *hill*, and *hum* are pronounced as /aʊs/, /ɪl/, and /ʌm/ rather than /haʊs/, /hɪl/, and /hʌm/. In other words, the /h/ is deleted (or, indeed, dropped). English /h/-dropping is a rather interesting phenomenon, especially if approached from a historical point of view. First, the term is typically used to cover only instances of word-initial /h/-dropping (or /h/-deletion) in lexical words and not grammatical words (*house* vs. *has*), but only if the /h/ is found in a stressed syllable.[8] This does not mean, however, that we do not come across /h/-deletion in grammatical words, such as *his*, *him*, and *her*.[9] As we will see in Chapter 5, dropping one's

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[8] And grammatical words are often unstressed.

[9] If you ever wondered where the English *'em* comes from, as in *Track 'em, find 'em, kill 'em* from the film *Expendables 2* (2012), it does not come from *them* but an older pronoun used for the third person plural: *hem* (more in §5.3.3 on *them* and *hem*). *Hem* [hɛm] changed to [ɛm] ~ [əm], which gives us the spelling variant <'em>.

/h/s in grammatical words is a fairly old phenomenon. In Present Day English all English speakers are bound to drop their /h/s in grammatical words. Grammatical words are well-known for such reductions: for example, the preposition *to* is frequently reduced to [tə] or even just [t]. /h/-deletion in grammatical words therefore shouldn't come as a surprise – it's just one of the many possible reductions relevant for grammatical words. So now we know that the phenomenon called /h/-dropping, at least in the history of English, typically refers to word-initial deletion of /h/ in the stressed syllables of lexical words.[10]

There is nevertheless a rather important difference between /h/-deletion related to lexical as opposed to grammatical words. Deleting one's /h/s in grammatical words goes pretty much unnoticed (e.g. Barber 1964: 56). On the other hand, /h/-deletion in lexical words, or in stressed grammatical words, is stigmatized. So, in an article on Tony Blair's pronunciation, a commentary raises the following questions: "But joking aside, where were the Prime Minister's T's? What happened to his H's?" (Lyall 1998).

Dropping one's /h/s was heavily stigmatized in Late Modern English. We can find instances of /h/-dropping in the earlier periods (as we shall see in §5.2.3 of Chapter 5), but it is in Late Modern English that /h/-dropping becomes one of the hallmarks of perceived pronunciation inadequacy. We have already seen that a manual existed devoted solely to the *Poor letter H: its use and abuse*, for dropping one's /h/s could be seen as social suicide (!) at the time (Mugglestone 2003: 4). Beal (2004: 159) dates the stigmatization of word-initial /h/-dropping to the latter half of the 18th century, which is in line with Strang (1970: 81).

As we go back in time, however, we need to make the discussion a little bit more nuanced. The words mentioned above, *house*, *hill*, and *hum*, are all of Germanic origin. In other words, they have been part of the English language since its emergence. As we will discuss in detail in Chapter 5, the period of Middle English (1150–1500) saw a great influx of words of French origin. Present Day French words spelt with <h>, as in *honneur* 'honour' and *hommage* 'homage', do not reflect the fact that there is no /h/ in the pronunciation – as is also the case in the English equivalents, all loans from French. Importantly, in words of French origin, it was desirable not to pronounce the /h/ as written, as this was what was done in French pronunciation, and French was socially prestigious. By the time of Late Modern English, this may have led to confusion if you did not speak French and/or if you did not use words of French origin, especially those typically associated with learned vocabulary as well. It was also – if not primarily – because of this that manuals and dictionaries for native speakers were available

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[10]However, Beal (2004: 157), for instance, uses /h/-dropping to also cover the merger of /w/ and /ʍ/, resulting in *Wales* and *whales* sounding alike. See Chapters 1 and 5 for more details.

at the time, in which users could consult whether or not a specific word should be pronounced with an /h/. Some such examples are for instance Walker's *Walker remodelled: a new critical pronouncing dictionary* and James Elphinston's *Principles of the English language digested: or, English grammar reduced to analogy. In Two Volumes.*[11]

Over time, some words that had historically no /h/ nevertheless acquired an /h/ in standard English, such as *herb*, from the Old French *erbe*.[12] Interestingly, whilst in American English the typical pronunciation is the more conservative /h/-less one, [ɜːɹb], what we find in standard British English is the more innovative version containing an /h/, [hɜːb]. Other words originally lacking an /h/ include *hospital*, *hotel*, and *humble* (Mugglestone 2003: 145, 148). In some cases, there is still variation within a single regional variety, as in the case of *historic* [hɪstɒɹɪk] ~ [ɪstɒɹɪk].

The phenomenon of /h/-dropping enables us to introduce the concept of HYPERCORRECTION. If you are someone who drops their /h/s, as in words such as *harm* [ɑːm], and you live in a society in which such /h/-dropping is stigmatized, you might start doing your best to make sure that you do not drop your /h/s as that affords you certain social benefits. However, this might pose certain challenges. In the pronunciation of a regular /h/-dropper, words such as *harm* and *arm* sound the same. If you then attempt to avoid /h/-dropping as someone who can't necessarily tell which words do or do not have a historical /h/, you might overdo it by introducing the /h/ also in words that historically do not have this phoneme, as in *arm* [hɑːm]. In hypercorrection, then, the prestigious variant is overused rather than underused. Thus, /h/-dropping-related hypercorrection manifests itself by inserting /h/s in new contexts because it's better to be safe than sorry. Hypercorrection is nevertheless by no means limited to /h/-dropping!

Even Latin speakers /h/-dropped

Latin was often viewed as the language to look up to. Interestingly, however, Minkova (2014: 106) mentions an example of /H/-DROPPING in Latin texts written by Saint Augustine, from the period 354–430. Even Latin speakers /h/-dropped! Would this make the prescriptivists turn in their graves, we wonder?

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[11]But see Feddema (2013), who disagrees with the theory that /h/-dropping may have been due to contact with French.

[12]The Present Day French form is *herbe*.

3.2.2 /r/

One of the features that distinguishes most British and American English accents is RHOTICITY [ɹəʊˈtɪsɪtɪ]. Accents can be rhotic ([ɹəʊtɪk] ~ [ɹɒtɪk]), non-rhotic, or somewhere in between. What does it mean for an accent to be rhotic or non-rhotic? If you speak with a rhotic accent, any time you see an <r> in the orthographic representation of a word, you indeed also have an /r/ of some sort in your pronunciation of that word. However, this is not the case for non-rhotic speakers. Thus, if we think of words with a postvocalic /r/, such as *car*, *cart*, *card*, *far*, and *fart*, the transcription relevant for accents such as Standard Southern British English would simply ignore the /r/s implied by the orthography, because SSBE speakers do not have these postvocalic /r/s in their accents: /kɑː/, /kɑːt/, /kɑːd/, /fɑː/, /fɑːt/.

Although Present Day American English is generally known as rhotic and British English as non-rhotic, the situation is not that straightforward. In today's British English, Scottish English is rhotic, as is the English we find in Northern Ireland. Welsh English and English English, on the other hand, are known as non-rhotic. But even this is simplistic. We do find certain regions in England associated with rhotic accents, such as some parts of Cornwall and Blackburn. Similarly, some speakers of Welsh English may pronounce postvocalic /r/s as a result their L1, since all <r>s are pronounced as such in Welsh. Finally, Scottish English has been recently reported to be losing its postvocalic /r/s in certain regions and strata of the society (Stuart-Smith, Lawson, et al. 2013).

Not surprisingly, American English also presents us with variation in terms of rhoticity. New York English has been traditionally known for being non-rhotic (see what Woody Allen does, for example, in Exercise 12), although this has been changing in the course of the 20th and the 21st centuries (Becker 2014), with rhoticity becoming more and more established. Boston is another area traditionally associated with non-rhoticity. However, similarly to NY English, rhoticity has also been making inroads in this variety and increasing in frequency (Nagy & Irwin 2010). Such changes from a primarily non-rhotic to a rhotic variety might present us with interesting cases of hypercorrection. Figure 3.2 shows a spelling of the word *souvenir* which contains an <r> (<sourvenir>), which is very suggestive of the author overusing postvocalic /r/s, and thus of hypercorrection. Finally (for the purposes of this chapter), non-rhoticity is one of the phonological features associated with AAE (e.g. Becker 2014 and Thomas 2007). The non-rhoticity of AAE is rather interesting in that we can also find the absence of /r/ intervocalically, as in [flɑəɾə] for *Florida* (Thomas 2007: 454).

Figure 3.2: *sourvenirs* in Boston, Massachusetts, US; photo taken by our colleague Kamil Kaźmierski in 2019

To sum up, rhoticity is more complex than a simple division between rhotic and non-rhotic accents. First, we find variation within specific varieties, and secondly even speakers from the same region can show variation. Even single individuals can be sometimes rhotic and sometimes non-rhotic, depending on a range of social and language-internal factors (see Becker (2014) for a nice overview of the relevant social constraints).[13]

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[13]As you may know by now from your English phonetics and phonology classes, we also find plenty of variation in how those /r/s that are pronounced by English speakers are realized phonetically. We find a plethora of variants, including a voiced approximant [ɹ], a labio-dental approximant [ʋ], a retroflex approximant [ɻ], an alveolar trill [r], and a uvular fricative [ʁ]. If

Where does all this variation come from? And why have we just spent so much space discussing Present Day English variation in rhoticity in a chapter on Late Modern English? As you may have just guessed, it is the Late Modern English period which – to an extent – holds the key to our understanding of just what has happened to English /r/ and the reasons for its current state in Present Day English. Similarly to /h/-dropping, Late Modern English speakers first started vocalizing just some of their /r/s. When American English was being established as a variety of English, English in Britain, the island of Ireland, and North America was a rhotic English. This started changing in England, where postvocalic /r/ first began to weaken to a schwa /ʃwɑː/. It could be, and ultimately was, deleted altogether in many (though not all) accents.

Certain communities in North America were looking up to Britain, and tended to adopt Britain-oriented norms. As a result, non-rhoticity was the prestigious norm in these communities, which lasted variably throughout the 20th century (Becker 2014: 142). However, some of the earliest studies that investigated the use of this variable highlighted the complexity of the situation and the extent to which standard language is an arbitrary concept. Labov (1966) showed that postvocalic /r/ in New York English, a traditionally non-rhotic variety, was associated with prestige at the time of his study. This contrasts with the prestige that non-rhoticity had in NY earlier, and it also contrasts with areas such as Charleston, where the absence of /r/ was also seen as prestigious originally.[14] In a nutshell, what we end up with is roughly this: in NY it was rhoticity that ended up being seen as prestigious, whereas it was the opposite, non-rhoticity, which had been established as the norm to aspire to in English English (Montgomery 2001: 139).

This is somewhat ironic, considering that /r/-lessness was stigmatized when it made its first appearance in England: "[m]any writers (and speakers) [...] seemed to cultivate an ostrich-like mentality, resolutely refusing to acknowledge that such a change had taken place, or that, if it had, it had done so only in the most vulgar of surroundings" (Mugglestone 2003: 99). When the weakening of /r/ was first noticed in English in the 18th century, it was commented on negatively:

> But if this letter [i.e. the letter <r>] is too forcibly pronounced in Ireland, it is often too feebly pronounced in England, and particularly in London, where it is sometimes entirely sunk. (Walker 1791: 51, in Beal 2004: 153)

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interested in Present Day English /r/s, see Wells (1982c). We will revisit this issue briefly in Chapter 6.

[14]Similarly to what Labov has shown for NY English, Baranowski (2006: Chapter 4) shows that rhoticity has won the day in Charleston as well.

It was stigmas of this sort which were used to hound Keats, whose rhymes of *thorns/fawns*, and *thoughts/sorts* contravened popular notions of correctness […], even if they did agree with the realities of linguistic usage at the time. Keats's use of aural rather than visual authority in his poetry was, however, typically to bring censure rather than praise. (Mugglestone 2003: 101–102)

Beal (2004: 154) provides contemporary evidence of manuals on 'good' pronunciation of the times that points to a continuing stigmatization of /r/-vocalization also "throughout most of the nineteenth century". As said earlier, changes of this type are often dormant in a language, and this was also the case with post-vocalic /r/.[15]

Linking and intrusive /r/

We need to at least touch upon two phenomena related to /r/, which are relevant only for non-rhotic varieties of English and whose origin is tied to that of the origin of non-rhoticity. The first is known as LINKING /R/ and the second as INTRUSIVE /R/. Linking /r/ is not stigmatized and refers to when postvocalic /r/s are pronounced despite the accent's usual non-rhoticity. These linking /r/s are pronounced when a postvocalic /r/, as in *car*, is followed by another vowel, which is part of the following word, as in *The car I like.* [ðəˈkɑːɹaɪˈlaɪk]. Intrusive /r/, on the other hand, is stigmatized (Minkova 2014: 127): in Present Day English, it is to a large extent through the knowledge of how English words are supposed to be spelt that speakers can know whether there is an underlying /r/ which can resurface as a linking /r/. However, speakers do not have historical memories that go beyond their own lifespan. This sometimes results in inserting a "linking" /r/ where this "linking" /r/ has no business to be, so to speak. The most famous instance of this intrusive /r/ can be seen in the pronunciation of *Law and Order* as [lɔːɹənɔːdə] – as we can see, the spelling does not suggest that there has ever been an /r/ in *law* historically, which is indeed the case. Intrusive /r/ is another example of hypercorrection.

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[15]See Minkova (2014) for some early examples attested already in Old English (600–1150).

So far, we've focused on two consonantal features very relevant for Late Modern English, as well as Present Day English. The last phonological feature we will focus on, the so-called FOOT-STRUT split, is related to the VOWEL system of English.

3.2.3 FOOT-STRUT split

An important phonological change that took place in Late Modern English is the FOOT-STRUT split. But first of all, what is a split? A split refers to the process whereby a language acquires a new PHONEME (phoneme B), which develops from an already existing phoneme (phoneme A). However, it is not the case that the phonetic realization of phoneme A simply changes to another realization, realization B (as in [A] > [B]). In the new situation, we get the new B, but we still get the older A, thus /A/ > /A/ as well as /B/, and /A/ and /B/ are contrastive. In standard varieties of English, the words *foot* and *strut* are pronounced with two different phonemes: e.g. /fʊt/ and /stɹʌt/. That the vowels /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ are indeed two phonemes is nevertheless more visible if we compare words such as *put* /pʊt/ and *putt* /pʌt/, *look* /lʊk/ and *luck* /lʌk/, or *book* /bʊk/ and *buck* /bʌk/. If we replace one with the other, we get a different word, not just a phonetic variant of the same word.

Before the FOOT-STRUT split happened, the words that now contain the /ʌ/ phoneme, as in *strut* (STRUT), used to have the same phoneme as words such as *foot* (FOOT). Words such as FOOT used to have an /oː/ vowel (/foːt/), which – as we will see in Chapter 4 – underwent a change to /uː/ in Early Modern English (/fuːt/). In Late Modern English, this vowel was then shortened and laxed into an /ʊ/ (/fʊt/). Words such as STRUT, until Late Modern English, did not experience quite that much vocalic excitement: the STRUT vowel remained phonologically stable and reflected an /u ~ ʊ/. Thus, by the time of Late Modern English, FOOT and STRUT came to contain the same vowel phoneme: /u ~ ʊ/. However, although this change is reflected in most varieties of English, there are still accents in which we find the pre-split situation. Northern England varieties typically show FOOT and STRUT with the same vowel phoneme category, /ʊ/ (see for instance Baranowski & Turton 2018 or Strycharczuk et al. 2019), and these two words therefore rhyme in the varieties in question (e.g. /fʊt/ and /strʊt/). This is also the case for some Irish accents, such as that spoken in Dublin (Wells 1982c: 422).

The social life of STRUT

The exact phonetic relation of STRUT is subject to variation in Present Day English varieties. For example, even in the north of England, there are speakers who do have two vowel categories for FOOT and STRUT, but they may reflect a vowel quality in STRUT somewhere in between that of FOOT (/ʊ/) and that of the Standard Southern British English (SSBE) /ʌ/ (Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 111, and also Baranowski & Turton 2018). Irish accents have been noted to have a more centralized quality of STRUT than SSBE and RP (Wells 1982c: 421). Interestingly, Irish English and Northern England English are not the only varieties of English that differ in their phonetic realization of STRUT from RP and SSBE. Welsh English tends to show a [ə] in the STRUT words (Hejná 2018a; Wells 1982c: 383). And things definitely do not end here as regards the phonetic and phonological variation of STRUT.

3.3 Morphology

Language change, especially if related to the structural properties of a language rather than for example newly coined lexical items, has been said to show "long stretches of dormancy" (Strang 1970: 96). What this means is that, very frequently, seeds of a change can be found in the language centuries before the change becomes particularly noticeable: it often takes centuries for changes to complete. That this is indeed the case is something we will see repeatedly in the remainder of this book. In this particular section, however, we focus on negative contraction and the history of what is known as the subjunctive. Both of the changes discussed have drawn hostile comments from prescriptivists over the years.

3.3.1 Negative contraction

In the sentence *You **shouldn't** do that!*, do you think that *shouldn't* is one word or two? Decide what you think before reading further. Don't base your answer just on the spelling – that's only one part of the story.

The answer you have arrived at probably depends on what you think the status of the Present Day English negative MORPHEME *-n't* is. Under one view, *-n't* is an

INFLECTIONAL suffix, part of the single word *shouldn't* – and therefore belongs to the domain of (inflectional) morphology.[16] Under the other view, *-n't* is a CLITIC, a form of the word *not* that just happens to be phonologically reduced and attached to the end of the modal *should* – and therefore we're really dealing with two separate syntactic words here, *should not*.

In this book we deal with syntax and morphology in separate sections of each chapter. However, in real life, the boundary between syntax and morphology is not always that clear. The morpheme *-n't* is one such case, and part of the fun of linguistics is to look beyond the surface in order to figure out what's really going on in cases like these. The use of *-n't* rather than *not* is usually called NEGATIVE CONTRACTION. Linguists have developed a range of tests to figure out whether elements like *-n't* are inflectional affixes or clitics. The traditional view (e.g. Zwicky 1969) is that *-n't* is a clitic. Zwicky & Pullum (1983), however, look in depth at this morpheme, apply the linguistic tests, and come to the conclusion that it is in fact an inflectional suffix.

One test pointing in this direction (among many) is the fact that the base to which *-n't* attaches displays some pretty weird behaviour. It's easy to see how you can get from *should* to *shouldn't*: a simple rule of "add *-n't*" will do the trick. But what about *will* and *won't*? Here you can't simply "add *-n't*", because that would give you the ungrammatical form **will**n't***. But there's no word **wo* meaning 'will', either. So we're forced to treat *will* and *won't* as two different inflectional forms of the same word.[17] Zwicky & Pullum's paper contains several other arguments all pointing in the same direction: Present Day English *-n't* is an affix, not a clitic.

The forms with *-n't* are found only with the auxiliaries: *have*, *be*, *do* and the modals (on which see §4.4.1). They're not possible with ordinary lexical verbs: **play**n't***, **eat**n't***, **goes**n't***, for instance, are not found. The *-n't* forms rose to prominence during the Late Modern English period, as shown in Figure 3.3. This figure is based on the CORPUS of Late Modern English Texts (Diller et al. 2011), which contains texts by British authors from between 1710 and 1920 split into three 70-year periods.[18] Initially, we can see that *don't* is far ahead of all the other contractions, but by the final period other contractions are catching up.

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[16]For the distinction between inflectional morphology and word-formation, see §1.2.2.

[17]We can make the same argument using *do* and *don't*, though this time it's not obvious from the spelling. Remember, letters are not sounds – see §1.2.1! In British English, these are pronounced [duː] and [dəʊnt] respectively (American English [duː] and [doʊnt]). This is not what you'd expect from simply sticking [duː] and [nt] together.

[18]This figure is inspired by, and replicates findings presented in, Nakamura (2012), using a different data source.
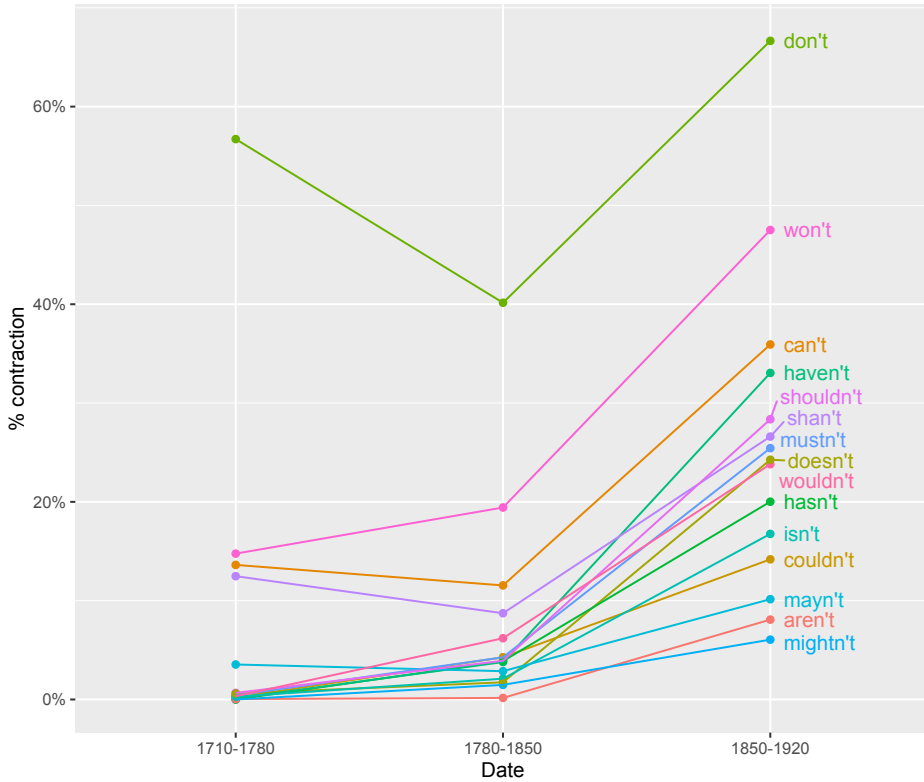
Figure 3.3: Negative contraction as a proportion of use (e.g. *should not* vs. *shouldn't*) during the Late Modern English period. Data from CL-MET 3 (Diller et al. 2011).

Of course, we have to be careful with this evidence, as STANDARDIZATION and prescriptivism probably meant that the innovative spelling *-n't* lagged far behind contraction in speech in terms of rate of use.

The data shown in Figure 3.3 suggests that *-n't* probably wasn't always an inflectional suffix. During the period 1710–1780, we see that the only contractions that occur more than five percent of the time were the ones whose stem ended in a vowel, a nasal or a liquid (*do, will, can, shall*), with other contractions virtually nonexistent. This apparent phonological conditioning suggests that in this early period we're dealing with a clitic after all, which only later became an affix. Clitics becoming affixes is a common pathway of language change cross-linguistically: it's part of a process called GRAMMATICALIZATION (see §1.4.5), and changes in which two separate words become a single word are referred to as UNIVERBATION. We'll see several more examples of this kind of change throughout the book.

> ### 🔍 Ain't
>
> The negative contraction *ain't* – as in *If it **ain't** broke, don't fix it* – remains one of the most stigmatized words in the English language as far as prescriptivists are concerned, even though it is found in almost every known variety of English (Anderwald 2012: 311–316). It's exceptionally prevalent in American English, but also found to a great extent in traditional British English dialects, and to a lesser extent in varieties of English elsewhere (e.g. New Zealand). Needless to say, there's nothing logically or aesthetically wrong with it. *Ain't* can mostly be used as a negated form of *BE* or *HAVE*. Especially in African American English, it also replaces *didn't*, as in *I **ain't** shut my eyes last night* (Howe 1997). Like other negative contractions, *ain't* really gained ground during the Late Modern English period. You can find out more about *ain't* in the papers in Donaher & Katz (2015). And if you wonder where it comes from, let's just say it belongs to the same historical stem as Present Day English *am.*

3.3.2 The "subjunctive"

Take a look at the following sentences of Present Day English:

(1) It is important that he **leave**.

(2) It is important that he **leaves**.

(3) It is important that he **should leave**.

All three sentences mean roughly the same thing, but the form of the verb is different. In example (1) there is no third person singular ending on the verb *leave*, unlike in (2). Meanwhile, in (3) there's a modal, *should*.

Sentences like (1) are sometimes said to contain a morphological SUBJUNCTIVE, but this is misleading. The term "subjunctive" has its origins in the traditional grammar of classical languages like Latin and Greek. In languages like these, verbs have special morphological forms – INFLECTIONS – that indicate the speaker's attitude to what they are saying. This is called MOOD, and moods commonly found in European languages include the indicative, the subjunctive and the imperative. Generally, in these languages the subjunctive is used to express

IRREALIS meaning: the speaker is not committing themselves to the truth of the statement. In German, for example, the usual third person singular form of the verb *sein* 'be' is *ist* 'is', but the special subjunctive form is *sei*. The form *ist* is IN-DICATIVE, which is the normal mood used most of the time without any special meaning.

Unlike Greek, Latin, French or German, English doesn't have any special morphological forms for mood, including the subjunctive. Instead, "subjunctive" sentences like (1) just contain the default form of the verb – it's always the same as the verb's infinitive form. This is made clear when we look at examples (4)–(6), containing forms of *BE*.

(4)   It is important that he **be** good.

(5)   It is important that he **is** good.

(6)   It is important that he **should be** good.

Example (4) contains the non-finite form *be*. That is, since English doesn't have any distinct morphological subjunctive inflection, it doesn't make much sense to say that English has a subjunctive under the traditional, morphological interpretation of the term.[19] Does it make sense to say that Present Day English has a subjunctive at all, then? In the *Cambridge grammar of the English language*, Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 88) make it clear that they use the term "subjunctive" for a syntactic construction, and not for a morphological mood (see also Aarts 2011). What Huddleston & Pullum (2002) call the subjunctive construction is found exclusively in finite embedded clauses.[20] Other linguists prefer to abolish the term entirely in English grammar (Palmer 1988). This option is tempting, as there are few things that annoy prescriptivists more than telling them that English doesn't have a subjunctive! In the rest of this book, though, we'll use the term SUBJUNCTIVE CONSTRUCTION, following Huddleston & Pullum (2002). This term has the advantage of capturing the historical link with subjunctive morphology while making it clear that we are dealing with a syntactic construction in today's English.

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[19]It's possible, of course, to argue that English *does* have a morphological subjunctive, and that its forms just happen to be written and pronounced in exactly the same way as the infinitive. But this is a pretty weird way of thinking, and is motivated only by the desire to shoehorn the English language into grammatical categories that were developed for Latin and Greek. Perhaps a better way of thinking about it is provided by Roberts (1985: 40–42): clauses like (1) and (4) contain a modal which is unpronounced. This accounts for the fact that such clauses behave like other finite clauses while the verb form itself appears to be non-finite.

[20]Apart from a few fixed phrases, such as *Long live the king!*. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 87) argue that "irrealis *were*", as in *If I were you*, is a different phenomenon, not part of the subjunctive construction; see their book for details.

There is variation in the use of subjunctive constructions like (1) and (4). To the authors of this book, they sound clunky, and they belong only to a high, formal register – we much prefer the alternatives (3) and (6) with *should*. Regional variation in the use of this subjunctive construction has long been recognized, and in general the subjunctive construction is usually considered to be much more characteristic of American English than of British English. Over the last forty or so years, empirical studies have shown that this is indeed the case (Johansson 1980, Algeo 1992, Övergaard 1995, Hundt 1998a,b, 2009, Leech et al. 2009). Other varieties, such as Australian English and New Zealand English, have generally been shown to behave more like American English than like British English in favouring the subjunctive construction (Hundt 1998a,b, Peters 1998, 2009). Here are some examples from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008):

(7)   When your child is tense, suggest that he **sit** down for a few minutes and take slow, deep breaths.

(8)   the fact that he's an associate with Barack Obama demands that he **be** scrutinized and questioned by the American people.

(9)   But what's important is that he **be** elected governor and Kirsten be elected Senator.

(10)   His right eye was swollen almost completely shut. I asked that he **be** given some medical attention.

What is striking is that, in both American English and British English, the frequency of the subjunctive construction (as opposed to the use of the normal finite verb or a modal such as *should*) has actually increased during the twentieth century. One recent corpus-based study, Waller (2017), looks at texts from both British and American English from four time points: 1931, 1961, 1991 and 2006. In American English the major increase in use of the subjunctive construction took place between 1931 and 1961, while in British English it took place later, between 1961 and 1991. The change in British English during this period did not go unnoticed, with one influential British usage guide (Gowers 1986: 139) stating that "[i]t is remarkable […] that under the influence of American English the use of the subjunctive is creeping back into British English". Waller (2017) also considers it plausible that American English influence was a factor in the increasing use of the subjunctive construction in British English.

It would be inappropriate to end this section without a spoiler as to what you'll see later. Though modern English doesn't have a morphological subjunctive at

all, when we go back as far as Middle and Old English, there are verb forms that we can justifiably call subjunctives. Read on and find out!

3.4 Syntax

We will discuss two syntactic phenomena: the rise of the progressive construction and the rise of a group of verbal constructions that could be called semi-modals. Just like the morphological phenomena discussed above, both of these changes have been targeted by the complaint tradition.

3.4.1 Progressive

The emergence of the progressive, and its uses in various constructions, is a syntactic change that marks the Late Modern English period. The progressive construction refers to the *BE* V+*ing* construction, as in examples (11)–(17).

(11)   The bumblebees **are searching** for some yummy flowers.

(12)   The bumblebees **were searching** for some yummy flowers yesterday, too.

(13)   The bumblebees will surely **be searching** for even more yummy flowers in the times to come (providing bumblebees don't become extinct).

(14)   The bears have **been trying** to find something for their tummy all day.

(15)   The bumblebees had **been searching** for yummies when we got to the meadow.

(16)   Míša **is obsessing** about bumblebees again.

(17)   I'**m** just **being** funny.

This construction is also referred to as the progressive TENSE/ASPECT and the continuous tense/aspect, with the exact term dependent on the particular academic source you may be using. Broadly speaking, the progressive construction is used for events that are (or were) in progress or ongoing.

You may be wondering why we are bringing your attention to the progressive, considering all the phenomena discussed so far have been somehow linked to the topic of prescriptivism. The progressive is something we don't really consciously think about that much today when it comes to any stigma possibly attached to it, perhaps with the exception of the infamous *I'm lovin' it* made widely known by McDonalds. The general absence of negative comments on the progressive in Present Day English does not represent how the construction fared throughout

its entire history, though. Progressives first start occurring at higher frequencies in subordinate clauses in the first half of the 18th century. They start proliferating in main clauses as well as subordinate clauses in the second half of the 18th century (Beal 2004: 78).

Figure 3.4: Jane Austen

It is not, however, just the frequency at which we can find the progressive in the materials from Late Modern English that signals a change. What started changing about the progressive in this period was also the range of its uses. For one thing, an increasing number of specific verbs started occurring in the progressive form. Verbs describing the scene were particularly prone to being used in this form. For example, Jane Austen was linguistically progressive when she adopted the progressive form in her works in her time, as evidenced in the following example:

(18)   a water party; and by some accident she was falling overboard (*Emma*, 1816: Chapter 8)

As Beal (2004: 79) further comments on this example, "Strang (1970) suggests that Austen used the progressive experimentally in her novels. In this example, the effect is to involve the reader in watching the action as it happens, almost as an 'action replay'. [... I]n Austen's time [this construction] flouted received views on grammar and logic".

Progressives first start appearing in the active voice: it is only later that the progressive PASSIVE starts appearing as well. Thus, "in 1700 constructions such as *The house **is being built*** were ungrammatical but by 1900 they were normal" (Beal 2004: 66). Its rise takes place gradually between the end of the 18th century and the middle of the 20th (Hundt 2004). The use of the progressive passive was still looked upon with a disapproving eye by some in the first half of the 20th century. It was considered not only "clumsy" (Beal 2004: 82) but also "barbarous", "despicable", and "in bad taste", and criticism of the progressive passive was particularly vitriolic in America (Anderwald 2014), though today it is not considered objectionable even by the crustiest of prescriptivists.

Figure 3.5: Location of the Lake District, place of residence of the Lake Poets. (Map by Nilfanion based on OS data, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Jane Austen was not the only innovative member of the literati. Pratt & Denison (2001) show that the Southey-Coleridge cirle (the Lake Poets),[21] who formed a close-knit type of group, were some of the first to use the progressive passive, with the earliest examples dating to the second half of the 18th century. Pratt & Denison (2001: 416) argue that

> In the politicised English literary world of the decades around 1800, with its aggressive reviews, often highly critical about diction, it is certainly possible that consciously or otherwise, groups of literary people might have wanted to distance themselves from other, older and more conservative groups.

So, the progressive passive may have served as a marker of a group identity, this group identity being that of the Lake Poets, young individuals, and those with political views similar to those of the Lake Poets. It is also not surprising then that this linguistic innovation was seen as "monstrous" by many, particularly those who did not belong to this group and who did not share the same worldviews.[22]

I'm lovin' it

To the disapproval of some, in 2003 McDonald's released an advertising campaign with the slogan *I'm lovin' it.*[a] Is this evidence of language change? Are we observing the same type of disapproval that the progressive passive received in Late Modern English? Freund (2016) conducted an analysis including a range of methodological approaches and found that it is specific verbs, *love* and *think*, that are being used more frequently in the progressive in Present Day English. Anderwald (2017), using CORPUS data from historical and Present Day American English, also proposes that the rise of the progressive with *love* is due to a change in the meaning of *love*, which is becoming semantically bleached to yield a meaning more like 'like' or 'enjoy'. Both Freund (2016) and Anderwald (2017) argue that it is not the whole class of STATIVE verbs that has been experiencing the rise of the progressive as such. Furthermore, the now famous *I'm lovin' it*

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[21]The members included Dorothy and William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles and Mary Lamb, and Mary and Percy Shelley.

[22]See Pratt & Denison (2001: 418–419) and van Bergen (2013) if you want to know more.

phrase associated with McEnglish[b] in fact shows patterns attested already in early 19th-century English (Aarts et al. 2010: 162–163).

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[a]See http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/lovin-it.
[b]See https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=McEnglish.

3.4.2 Semi-modals

Do you use verbal constructions such as those found in the following examples?

(19) I'm **going to/gonna** do some bumblebee spotting.

(20) Do you **want to/wanna** come?

(21) You **have to/hafta** know all about bumblebees.

(22) You've **got to/gotta** love bumblebees.

Congratulations, you're a user of semi-modal constructions! As the name implies, semi-modal verbs can behave like true modals (modal auxiliaries) in some ways, but not in others. A fuller discussion of the auxiliaries can be found in the next chapter (§4.4.1), so here we keep it brief.

The verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* are auxiliaries, and here are some examples:

(23) **Are** you looking forward to reading more about semi-modals?

(24) **Have** you ever heard that the word *corgi* originates in Welsh? (It means 'a dwarf-dog'.)

(25) **Did** you know that the word *penguin* may originate from the Welsh *pen gwyn* 'white head'?

These three verbs are used to form various types of periphrastic tense and aspect constructions, like the progressive discussed above. In addition to these three auxiliaries, there are also modal auxiliaries, such as *can*, *will*, and *must*, as in (26) below. These English modals share a number of morphological and syntactic properties, and all belong to the semantic domain of modality, which is concerned with possibility, necessity, ability, desire, and obligation. The history and current status of these "true" modals are discussed in §5.4.2.

(26) **Can** we tempt you with another example about bumblebees?

Another construction that increased in frequency in the Late Modern English period is semi-modals. Semi-modals (also known as quasi-modals or emerging modals) have modal meanings, like true modals. The core semi-modals are *have to* (or *hafta*), (*have*) *got to* (or *gotta*), *want to* (or *wanna*), and *going to* (or *gonna*). Another semi-modal found in some varieties is *fixing to* (or *finna*).

The semi-modals share some syntactic properties with the true modals: for instance, unlike most normal lexical verbs, they occur with a following non-finite verb, as in (19)–(22) above. However, they do not behave quite the same way regarding their morphosyntax as modal auxiliaries do. Perhaps the most important difference is that, while auxiliaries can be found in front of the subject as in (19)–(26) (e.g. **Can** *we …*), this is never possible with semi-modals, as (27)–(30) show.

(27)   ****Going to/Gonna** I do some bumblebee spotting?

(28)   ***Want to/Wanna** you come?

(29)   ***Have to/Hafta** you know all about bumblebees?

(30)   ***Got to/Gotta** you love bumblebees?

So the semi-modals have a liminal status: they don't behave totally like lexical verbs, but they don't fit in as auxiliaries either. Krug (2000) suggests that they form a group on their own.[23]

The history of *going to* has been abundantly researched. Like the history of negative contraction, discussed in §3.3.1, it's a typical example of GRAMMATICALIZATION. The first instance of this construction used as a marker of intention and futurity (rather than as a simple lexical verb of motion) is dated to 1482. However, it was not until the mid-17th century that its frequency as a future marker started to increase, and it was not until the end of the 18th century (i.e. Late Modern English) that it became "firmly entrenched in usage" (Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000: 318–319). In Present Day English, it is the second most frequent future marker (Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000: 319), at least in standard Englishes. The traditional textbook account of the historical trajectory of *going to* is the following:

1. First we get a verb of motion used in the present progressive (*I'm **going to town***).

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[23]Other potential members of the group include *need* (*to*) and *dare* (*to*), and *fixing to*. To keep things relatively simple, we'll focus on the five that are mentioned in the main text, but we'll come back to *fixing to* later in this section.

2. Then we start seeing a verbal construction indicating a goal/intention/de-termination (*Some day somehow I'm **gonna** make it alright but not right now*, as in Nickelback's 2003 song titled *Someday*).

3. Finally, we see a verbal construction indicating a prediction, e.g. *Am I really **gonna** go sixty years without cancer again?* (Rees 2017).

The contracted form, *gonna*, has received some negative criticism from prescriptivists, especially in writing: Lorenz (2012: 2) reports the claim that "there is no word 'gonna'". As we know, though, what makes a word a word is whether people use it as such, and the spelling *gonna* is much closer to the usual pronunciation than *going to* is. Like *gotta*, *wanna* and *hafta*, the semi-modal *gonna* is very well established in Present Day English.

Krug (2000) shows that the semi-modals – or "emerging modals", as he prefers to call them – underwent a cluster of rapid changes between 1850 and 1950, even if this is not always reflected in the word's spelling. For instance, it's basically impossible to insert anything between the body of the verb and *to*, e.g. **I'm **going** soon **to** be sick* or **I **want** quickly **to** come.* This shows that the *to* has become UNIVERBATED with the body of the verb, and that they now form a single word in most Englishes – similarly to what we saw with negative contraction in §3.3.1 above.

As with the other phenomena we introduced in this chapter, there is regional variation in use of the semi-modals as well. In general, semi-modals are used more in American English than in British English. *Wanna* in particular is sometimes thought to be an exclusively American English form – but Krug (2000: 153–155) shows that *wanna* is used a fifth of the time in the spoken part of the British National CORPUS (containing British English from the 1960s to the 1990s), and its frequency increases every year between 1990 and 1997 in the British newspaper *The Guardian.* Just like the subjunctive discussed in §3.3.2 above, then, semi-modals are a feature of both British and American Englishes, even if they're more characteristic of the latter. Lorenz (2012: 8) suggests that during the 19th and 20th centuries the semi-modals have been steadily replacing the core modals in both varieties.

One semi-modal with a very specific regional distribution is *fixing to*. This has the meaning of '[settling] one's mind or [deciding]' (Smith 2009b: 13) and/or involves an "immediacy [...] after a period of short delay" and "preparatory activity in order for the main action to be taken" (Ching 1987: 335). Here are some examples (Smith 2009b: 13, 17):

(31)   I thought you knew they were **fixing to** run away and get married.

(32)   I'm **fixing to** go to a university and I am **fixing to** have some hard classes.

The construction has a range of forms, including *fixin' to* and *finna* /fɪnə/. It originated in the south of the US in the 18th century and, although stigmatized, it has been spreading beyond the south of the country (Smith 2009b). As Smith (2009b: 17) shows, some users of *fixing to* get prescriptive reactions in online forums such as "Go to school and get an education. Your grammar sucks. How about "fixing" to do that!". Although we present this interesting Southern American English innovation here very briefly, Ching (1987) demonstrates that it is a semantically and pragmatically complex (and fascinating) phenomenon, involving nuances to do with signalling procrastination and psyching oneself up to do an action (Ching 1987: 336). Importantly, *fixing to* cannot simply substitute *going to* or *will*, and thereby stands to show that regional variation can present us with structural and pragmatic complexities not necessarily present in standard varieties of a language.
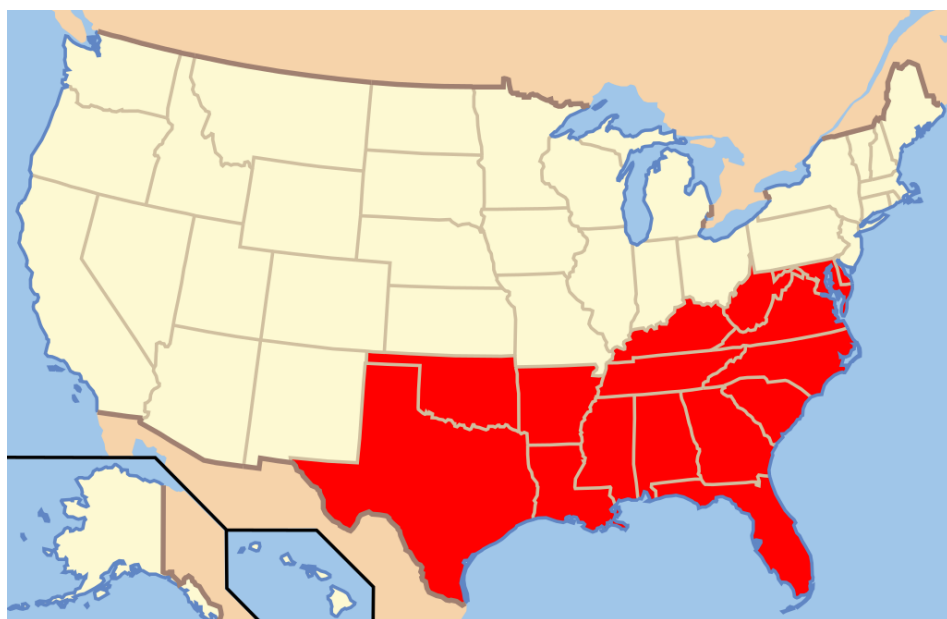

Figure 3.6: American South, shown in red. (Map by Pharexia, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Overall, the semi-modals increased substantially in use during the Late Modern English period, and it seems like they are here to stay – despite fierce opposition from prescriptivists. More research is still needed on the use of semi-modals outside British and American English.

/ng/ clusters through time

Constructions such as *fixing to* are interesting from a phonological point of view as well. First of all, they show the alteration between the standard /ɪŋ/ pronunciation of the -*ing* MORPHEME with the non-standard /ɪn/, which has been subject to plenty of sociolinguistic studies. A different phenomenon, similarly frequently investigated, is that of the so-called "velar nasal plus". In standard Englishes, any time we find <ng> in the spelling, this corresponds to the velar nasal consonant /ŋ/, apart from where this is found morpheme-internally (e.g. *anger* and *finger*) or when the morpheme following this <ng> is the comparative or the superlative *er* and *est*, respectively. In these cases, what we say is /ng/ instead, i.e. one more consonant – plus one! As the spelling suggests, /ng/ represents an older state of affairs. In some Present Day English dialects, <ng> in words such as *sing* is still pronounced as /ng/.

3.5 Lexicon

As mentioned earlier, Late Modern English is characterized by prescriptivism and by diverging developments in American and British English. We will therefore focus on two closely related aspects of the Late Modern English lexicon here. First, we will introduce you to two semantic processes strongly linked to social evaluation by language users: amelioration and pejoration. Next, we will discuss Americanisms and their reception in Britain at the times, and we'll see yet again how common negative attitudes towards linguistic innovations are – and how futile!

3.5.1 Amelioration and pejoration

Let's start with pejoration first, in the overall spirit of this chapter. The word *spinster* used to refer to 'a woman who spins' (OED, s.v. spinster, n.). Today, it has rather negative connotations: it's not desirable for a woman to be a spinster, 'an old maid'. In contrast, the word *bachelor* does not carry such negative associations. This process of obtaining negative connotations is known as PEJORATION,

or degeneration, and involves negative value judgement. Here are some other words that have undergone this process:

- *amateur* ('one who loves or is fond of' > 'one who cultivates anything as a pastime, as distinguished from one who prosecutes it professionally; dabbler, or superficial student or worker'; OED, s.v. amateur, n.)

- *silly* ('blessed, fortunate' > 'lacking in judgement or common sense'; OED, s.v. silly, adj., n., and adv.)

- *mistress* ('a woman having control or authority' > 'a woman other than his wife with whom a man has a long-lasting sexual relationship'; OED, s.v. mistress, n. and adj.)

- *villain* ('a low-born base-minded rustic' > 'an unprincipled or depraved scoundrel; a man naturally disposed to base or criminal actions, or deeply involved in the commission of disgraceful crimes'; OED, s.v. villain, n.).

You'll look at some more in Exercise 9.

On the other hand, AMELIORATION, also known as elevation, involves a positive value judgement. A word that used to have negative or neutral associations gains more positive ones. Some of these words include *dude*, originally 'a man who shows an ostentatious regard for fashion and style in regard to dress or appearance; a dandy, a fop' and now primarily 'a person (usually a man) regarded as being 'cool' or fashionable, or as embodying some other admirable or desirable quality' (OED, s.v. dude, n., adj., and int.). Some other examples include *knight* ('a boy or lad employed as an attendant or servant' > e.g. '[one] in recognition of personal merit, or as a reward for services rendered to the crown or country'; OED, s.v. knight, n.) and *pretty* ('cunning, crafty' > 'attractive and pleasing in appearance'; OED, s.v. pretty, adj., n., and int.), and again you'll see some more on your own in Exercise 9.

It may not be straightforward to decide whether a word has undergone amelioration or pejoration. Thus, Millward & Hayes (2018: 205) notably remark that "[a] possible example of amelioration during [the Middle English period] might be, depending on one's viewpoint, the word *dizzy*. In [the Old English period] it meant 'foolish', a meaning that survives marginally in such expressions as *a dizzy blonde*; but by [Middle English] its primary meaning was 'suffering from vertigo'." The semantic complexities are not limited just to one's point of view though, i.e. just to whether or not a semantic change is seen as positive or negative. Some

words may have genuinely undergone both amelioration and pejoration in different stages in their history. And this can also be subject to region-specific differences, as in the case of *homely*, which has come to mean 'cosy, comfortable' in British English, but which has come to mean 'of plain appearance, unattractive' in North America (OED, s.v. *homely*, adj.).[24]

To take a more recent example of potential pejoration, we can consider the word *clever*: "Although *clever* is typically favorable today, signs of its ultimate degeneration appear in such expressions as 'too clever by half' and 'too clever for one's own good'" (Millward & Hayes 2018: 289).[25]

We may wonder how the processes of pejoration and amelioration come about exactly, and why. These are very good questions to ask, and the answers to them are complex because we need to analyse specific words case by case, paying attention to the contexts in which these are used across decades and centuries. Let's consider one example here. Lakoff (1973), who focuses on gender asymmetries in American society of the twentieth century, points out that these asymmetries are reflected in lexical "pairs" such as *spinster* and *bachelor*, or the need to distinguish between *Miss* and *Mrs* for women while for men *Mr* seems to suffice. One could therefore suggest that the more negative connotations of *spinster* (as opposed to *bachelor*) reflect societal context and developments, and this semantic change thus has to be explored through a careful analysis of the details belonging to the fields of historical sociology and gender studies here. The more negative meaning of the word, that of '[a] woman still unmarried' and 'one beyond the usual age for marriage, an old maid' in particular (OED, s.v. spinster, n.), enters the scene during the Late Modern English period.

Taboos and euphemisms: you know who...

Certain aspects of life may be considered taboo in different communities and societies. Typically, these are related to excretion (to do with menstruation, peeing, pooing, and throwing up, for instance), sexual inter-

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[24]We're simplifying here. But why don't you check out the entry for yourself, to discover all of the meanings of this word at different stages of the history of the language, and to find out more?

[25]We took inspiration for most of these examples primarily from Campbell (2013) and Millward & Hayes (2018: 205 and 289).

course, death, and beings who are feared. When a word is considered to be too direct, another word (considered less direct, or somehow milder) is used instead – a *euphemism*. Well, at least until this euphemism becomes too directly associated with the concept and there's a need for a new euphemism yet again. Menstruation seems to be a topic giving rise to plenty of lexical variation. Some speakers may prefer to refer to the event as *lady time*, *Aunt Flo*, *the crimson wave*, *shark week*, and *the monthly visitor.*[a] From the realm of beings that are feared or should not be mentioned, we can throw in *Old Nick* (for the Devil) and *He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named* (referring to Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter*). A similar phenomenon can be observed when we avoid swearing with expressions that may be perceived as strong by some, e.g. *fucking hell*, *bloody hell*, *holy smokes*, *shit*, and *for fuck's sake*, among many others. The following would most likely be perceived as rather harmless: *fudge*, *gosh*, *shoot*, and *zoonds*. Campbell (2013) also gives the interesting examples of euphemisms coined in American English but not in British English, resulting in the following variants: *ass* vs. *donkey*, and *cock* vs. *rooster*. When it comes to the place where humans excrete, the lexical variation becomes more complex. Interestingly, one of the reviewers of this chapter noted that "[t]he section on taboo and euphemisms is somewhat embarrassing in its length and explicitness". As we can see, people do tend to feel strongly about taboos, and the stigma attached to these leads to the constant fuel of lexical innovation as discussed here.

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[a]Or so at least *The Independent* claims: https://www.independent.co.uk/lifestyle/health-and-families/menstruation-study-finds-over-5000-slang-terms-for-period-a6905021.html.

3.5.2 As American as apple pie?

Typically, when a discussion gets started about language change and dialects, the first examples that are mentioned in conversation pertain to the lexicon. One thing is called X in this region, but Y in another. Today, we might say without much hesitation that *fall*, rather than *autumn*, and *zee* for the letter Z, rather than *zed*, are typical American words – in other words, Americanisms. The term "Americanism" was introduced in 1781 (Fisher 2001: 68). But deciding whether or not a phrase is an Americanism is not as straightforward as may first meet the

eye. For example, although some words and expressions may have been coined in North America, others might predate colonization and in fact date back to what used to be – but no longer is – the preferred word or expression in other varieties of English, and British English in particular. In what follows, we rely on Cassidy & Hall (2001), who distinguish so-called SYNCHRONIC and DIACHRONIC Americanisms.

Synchronic Americanisms are those words and expressions that are used primarily in the US in Present Day English. Diachronic Americanisms are those words and expressions that were coined in North America, but which are not necessarily used solely in the US in the 21st century. Thus, as Cassidy & Hall (2001) aptly say, there is some tension in saying that something is "as American as apple pie".

Let's have a look at a couple of diachronic Americanisms. Often, when interacting with new cultures and coming across new fauna, flora, and various other aspects of life and the universe, the lexicon needs to be enriched in one way or other so that these new aspects of life can be referred to. This naturally happened also during the colonization of North America. The first wave of diachronic Americanisms can therefore be thought of as consisting precisely of words borrowed from native American languages for new concepts, as in *chipmunk* (from Ojibwe), *moccasin*, and *raccoon* (both from Powhatan). This sometimes happened via a detour through other languages of European colonizers (e.g. Spanish), as in *potato* (originally from Taíno). Another way to refer to new concepts is by making use of the already existing vocabulary, as in *Indian corn*, later shortened to *corn*.

These are not the only words that could be labelled Americanisms. As Cassidy & Hall (2001) also mention, sometimes British English experienced innovation, while the older expression continued being used in America, and ended up being perceived as American after enough time had elapsed. This is in fact what happened to *fall* (vs *autumn*) and *zee* (vs *zed*, referring to the letter <z>). So these Americanisms are synchronic ones. These examples provide us with an interesting lesson to learn: what may seem to be a synchronic oddity may once have been the norm! This is something we will see at least a couple more times in the chapters to follow.

Finally for our purposes, what may have started as an Americanism may no longer be perceived as such. Apart from the diachronic Americanisms mentioned above, consider the following words and expressions, and decide whether you'd perceive them as Americanisms: *atomic bomb*, *baseball*, *boot camp*, *boss*, *browser*, *cable car*, *cahoot*, *campus*, *chat room*, *cowboy*, *cupcake*, *department store*, *doughnut*, *email*, *floppy disk*, *genocide*, *hacker*, *hip*, *hydrant*, *iffy*, *jazz*, *jive*, *know-how*, *Kodak*, *martini*, *milk shake*, *OK*, *parking meter*, *peanut butter*, *popcorn*, *populist*

party, radiator, refrigerator,[26] *sex appeal, sky scraper, soap opera, spell check, sundae, telegram, to bury the hatchet, to commute, to download, to get even, to get the hang of* (*something*), *to lynch,* and *whodunnit.* How many of those would *you* consider American?[27]

On a different but not unrelated note, with the emerging consciousness towards the end of the 19th century that the English spoken in the US is a form of English different from that found in Great Britain, it is not surprising that lexical differences between English spoken in the US as opposed to Great Britain began to be commented on. These comments weren't always positive. Although coining new words for new concepts is "inevitable [...], British observers tended to designate [these] as barbarous 'Americanisms'" (Fisher 2001: 68). This is confirmed by Cassidy & Hall (2001: 185) as well:

> Americanisms – variances from what was considered good English usage – had to be carefully noted and judged, certainly not adopted unaware. In short, the word Americanism at first implied a certain critical caution on the part of the observer. Later it came to be used neutrally and even, with a transatlantic shift in the point of view, favorably.

Today, still, we find plenty of "juicy" and prescriptive data, as in "How Americanisms are killing the English language. A book released this year claims that Americanisms will have completely absorbed the English language by 2120".[28]

3.6 Final note

As we have seen repeatedly in this chapter, variation and change are a natural state of affairs. Furthermore, social stigma of various types can get attached to linguistic variation, just like it can be attached to any other variation. This variation is only stigmatized, however, because some part of society decides to view it as inappropriate in some way or other. There is nothing inherently wrong with linguistic variant A as opposed to linguistic variant B.

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[26]Just in case you wonder, this is where *fridge* comes from.

[27]Historically speaking, all of them are!

[28]http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170904-how-americanisms-are-killing-the-english-language.

Suggested exercises

E.1 Fighting accentism

A. Imagine the press approaches you to provide a specialist's opinion on the question of which English dialect is correct. Come up with an answer.
B. Using 5 stories from the Accentism Project launched by Carrie and Drummond, discuss how accentism (and prescriptivism more generally) may affect people's lives.[a]

Tips for teachers: This exercise can be used as a written assignment. Set up the maximum/minimum word count and a deadline. We recommend 400 words to be used for both parts in total – this makes sure the students focus on answering the question and avoid waffling.

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[a]https://accentism.org/.

E.2 Pet peeves

Ask three faculty members (or, if at all possible, other individuals who teach or want to become teachers) if they have any pet peeves related to language use. Ask them also why these are important to them. What are these pet peeves? Were you surprised by any of the examples given? Why (not)? How do the peeves reported by these individuals make them feel? How does this whole exercise relate to prescriptivism? And finally, should English teachers and university lecturers support or fight pet peeves?[a]

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[a]This exercise was inspired by Baragona (2019), who collects a database of linguistic bêtes noires of faculty members with her history of English students.

E.3 To boldly go

The Star Trek franchise has made the phrase *To boldly go where no man has gone before* famous. There have nevertheless been some who have criticized the grammar of this sentence: *to boldly go* is an example of a split infinitive, and one should allegedly never split one's infinitives (one should instead say *to go boldly*, so that the *to* and the verb are right next to each other, all snuggly). Using the internet and/or other sources, find out how old the anti-split-infinitive prescriptive rule is. Be ready to present your answer to the rest of the class, including the sources you used.
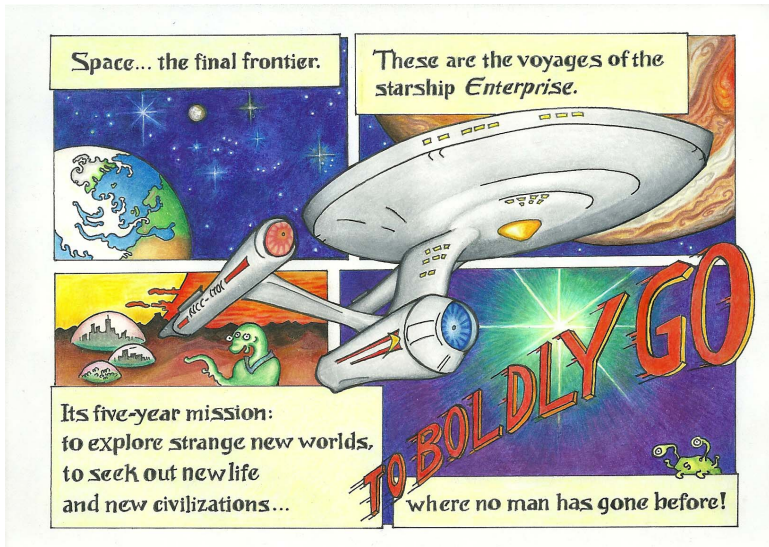

Figure 3.7: To boldly go; illustration kindly provided by Gry Faurholt, 2020

Earlier in the Star Trek franchise, the phrase that was used was *to boldly go where no man has gone before*. It was later changed to *to boldly go where no one has gone before*. Why do you think this change took place? Feel free to speculate as well as search online.

E.4 Translating into 18th-century English

§3.3 and §3.4 make it clear that quite a lot has changed in the structure of English since 1700. Can you translate the text below into 1700-era English, paying particular attention to the morphological and syntactic features discussed in this chapter and chapter 2?

> I'm loving the look of the new house, but it is still being built, so I shouldn't go in there yet, even though I wanna. I would probably get hit by falling bricks and be all "Owwww, this wasn't a good idea!" I gotta be patient.

E.5 Tracing word formation

Note: for this exercise you will need access to the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED) via your library or university.

Look up *-like* and *gate* as suffixes in the OED. They are labelled "combination forms" in the dictionary. Answer the following questions:

- When were these two suffixes first attested in the history of English? Are you surprised? Why (not)?

- Go to "entry profile" (type "ctrl+f" and then "entry profile", or "cmd+f"). In which years, approximately, were the suffixes most frequent? You will find the relevant information under "Timeline of quotation evidence".

- Now look at the entries that contain the suffixes ("Entries which link here"). Find 1–3 more examples with the suffixes.

E.6 Late Modern English: seemingly the same as Present Day English?

Have a look at the excerpts provided in §1. Can you notice any differences between these excerpts in contrast to Present Day English? Note down any differences and classify them by distinguishing the following linguistic levels:

- phonetics/phonology

- orthography (i.e. spelling)

- morphology

- syntax

- lexicon and semantics

- pragmatics

How many differences have you spotted? Are you surprised in any way? Why or why not? Would you say there are a lot of differences? How could one establish what amounts to "a lot of" differences in this context?

On a different note, can you spot any examples in the excerpts that point to prescriptivism, proscriptivism, or linguistic discrimination in any way?

E.7 Gritty details and abstractions

Look at Figure 3.3 and the claim that contraction is preferred when the stem of the verb ends in a vowel, a nasal, or a liquid. Does the data back this claim up?

E.8 Looking at Americanisms

Note: for this exercise you will need access to the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED) via your library or university.

Use the OED and work with the following words: *to antagonize*, *to belittle*, *butte*, *coca-cola*, *cookie*, *cougar*, *creek* (referring to a stream-like object), *funky*, *lengthy*, and *woodchuck*. Make sure you exploit the information available in the dictionary to its full extent – don't just look at the first couple of lines. Your tasks are the following:

Figure 3.8: On the way to Skinner Butte in Eugene, Oregon, US; photo taken by Míša in 2019

- If you aren't familiar with the words, do some web searching first of all to make sure you get a general sense of what these words might refer to.

- Which of these words are restricted to North America?

- Which of these words are restricted to specific regions in North America?

- When is the word first attested and what is its origin (etymology)? Are you surprised in any way? Why (not)?

- What does this say about the contact of American English speakers and other cultures?

- What makes an Americanism? What criteria should a word or an expression meet for it to count as an Americanism, in your opinion?

Tips for teachers: Assign different words to different students/groups, or assign only a couple of the words.

E.9 Tracing semantic change

Note: for this exercise you will need access to the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED) via your library or university.

Find the following words as nouns in the OED: *baboon*, *churl*, *gay*, *girl*, *hussy*, *mouse*, and *weed*. Check out the following adjectives as well: *artful*, *coy*, *crafty*, *cunning*, *fond*, *funky*, *jolly*, *lewd*, *nice*, *shrewd*, *silly*, and *subtle*. Focus on these words as nouns (if they can be nouns) or as adjectives (if they aren't used as nouns). Also look at the following as verbs: *to await*, *to shit*, *to smite*, and *to tease*. Answer the following questions:

- Can you trace any semantic change in the history of these words?

- If so, are there any instances of amelioration and/or pejoration?

Make sure you go through all of the meanings the dictionary entries provide. It may be a bit unusual to work with the dictionary at first, but one of the points of this exercise is to make you get to grips with how to find information in the entries related to semantics.

Tips for teachers: Assign different words to different students/groups, or assign only a couple of the words.

E.10 Everybody poops and everybody pees

Ask at least one (native or non-native) speaker of English about the words they use to refer to the object shown in Figure 3.9. Ask them if they know any other words for this object. Next, ask them if there's a reason why they use the one that they say they use.[a]

Figure 3.9: An excretion facility in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; photo taken by Míša in 2019

[a]Check out Tarō Gomi's book titled *Everyone Poops*.

E.11 Food for thought

Answer the following questions. These are taken, and very slightly adapted, from Hickey (2019: 52) and Paraskevas (2019: 289):

1. In what ways do you think the notion of standard English can be beneficial? Are there any disadvantages to concentrating on standard English(es) in education?

2. What are the pros and cons of integrating non-standard language into school programmes, such as English-language arts classes? Would this change lead to more advantages for students, or would it disadvantage them?

3. If you were to teach your own class on the history of English, would you focus on the history of standard English(es)? Why (not)?

Tips for teachers: This can be used as a writing exercise.

E.12 How do celebrities pronounce their /r/s?

Search on the web for a famous person from New York or Boston and look up an audio(visual) interview with this person online.[a]

Note down all words, and all instances of words, which can be realized with a post-vocalic /r/ (e.g. *car*, *card*). Listen to the interview as often as necessary to answer the following:

• Does your famous person always pronounce these with an /r/? If not, determine how many words do have an /r/ out of how many, e.g. 7 out of 11 words contain a post-vocalic /r/. Then calculate the percentage. Hint: if 11 is 100%, then 0.11 is 1%. 7 divided by 0.11 gives us 64%.

• Are there any cases where you couldn't quite decide if the /r/ was there?

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[a]Alternatively, you can simply use this video with Woody Allen (from New York): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpniYxRjX3o.

E.13 Morphosyntactic variation in World Englishes

Using the Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English,[a] look at the following under the "Features" tab, and be prepared to summarize how widespread these variants are, and in what types of English they occur:

- "7. Me instead of I in coordinate subjects"

- "10. No gender distinction in third person singular"

- "91. DO as habitual marker"

- "94. Progressive marker stap or stay"

- "98. After perfect"

- a feature of your own choice that particularly intrigues you

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank Melanie Röthlisberger for drawing our attention to this database and suggesting that we might add an exercise based on this wonderful resource.

[a]https://ewave-atlas.org/.

Texts

Late Modern English is full of texts one could look at linguistically. Below we give you just a very small taster.

T.1 Lawing and Jawing

The following is an extract from *Lawing and Jawing* (originally published in 1931) in *Three Plays* (2005) by Zora Neale Hurston, one of the most prominent African American authors.

JUDGE   Hear! Hear! Court is set! My honor is on de bench.
You moufy folks set up!
(He glares at the boy with the pretty girl)
All right, Mr. Whistle-britches, just keep up dat jawing
now and see how much time I'll give you!

BOY   I wasn't talking, your honor.

JUDGE   Well, quit looking so moufy.
(to CLERK) Call de first case.
And I warn each and all dat my honor is in
bad humor dis mawnin'. I'd give a
canary bird twenty years for peckin' at a elephant.
(to CLERK) Bring 'em on.

CLERK   (Reading) Cliff Mullins, charged with assault upon his
wife with a weapon and disturbing the peace.
(As CLIFF is led to the bar by the officer, the JUDGE glares
ferociously at the prisoner. His wife, all bandages, limps
up to the bar at the same time.)

JUDGE   So youse one of dese hard-boiled wife-beaters, huh? Just
a mean old woman-Jessie! If I don't lay a hearing on you,
God's a gopher! Now what *made* you cut such a caper?

T.2 North and South

North and South is a novel written by Elizabeth C. Gaskell in 1854. It presents us with characters with southern and northern English affiliations, who enter into relationships of various sorts.[a]

"As you please. As Dixon pleases. But, Margaret, don't get to use these horrid Milton words. 'Slack of work:' it is a provincialism. What will your aunt Shaw say, if she hears you use it on her return?"

"Oh, mamma! don't try and make a bugbear of aunt Shaw," said Margaret, laughing. "Edith picked up all sorts of military slang from Captain Lennox, and aunt Shaw never took any notice of it."

"But yours is factory slang."

"And if I live in a factory town, I must speak factory language when I want it. Why, mamma, I could astonish you with a great many words you never heard in your life. I don't believe you know what a knobstick is."

"Not I, child. I only know it has a very vulgar sound; and I don't want to hear you using it."

"Very well, dearest mother, I won't. Only I shall have to use a whole explanatory sentence instead."

"I don't like this Milton," said Mrs. Hale. "Edith is right enough in saying it's the smoke that has made me so ill."

Margaret started up as her mother said this. Her father had just entered the room, and she was most anxious that the faint impression she had seen on his mind that the Milton air had injured her mother's health, should not be deepened—should not receive any confirmation. She could not tell whether he had heard what Mrs. Hale had said or not; but she began speaking hurriedly of other things, unaware that Mr. Thornton was following him.

"Mamma is accusing me of having picked up a great deal of vulgarity since we came to Milton."

The "vulgarity" Margaret spoke of, referred purely to the use of local words, and the expression arose out of the conversation they had just been holding. But Mr. Thornton's brow darkened; and Margaret suddenly felt how her speech might be misunderstood by him; so, in the natural sweet desire to avoid giving unnecessary pain, she forced herself to go forwards with a little greeting, and continue what she was saying, addressing herself to him expressly.

"Now, Mr. Thornton, though "knobstick" has not a very pretty sound, is it not expressive? Could I do without it, in speaking of the thing it represents? If using local words is vulgar, I was very vulgar in the Forest,—was I not, mamma?"

It was unusual with Margaret to obtrude her own subject of conversation on others; but, in this case, she was so anxious to prevent

Mr. Thornton from feeling annoyance at the words he had accidentally overheard, that it was not until she had done speaking that she coloured all over with consciousness, more especially as Mr. Thornton seemed hardly to understand the exact gist or bearing of what she was saying, but passed her by, with a cold reserve of ceremonious movement, to speak to Mrs. Hale.

...

"Thornton's?" asked he. "Ay, I've been at Thornton's"

"And what did he say?"

"Such a chap as me is not like to see the measter. Th' o'erlooker bid me go and be d——d."

"I wish you had seen Mr. Thornton," said Mr. Hale. "He might not have given you work, but he would not have used such language."

"As to th' language, I'm welly used to it; it dunnot matter to me. I'm not nesh mysel' when I'm put out. It were th' fact that I were na wanted theer, no more nor ony other place, as I minded."

"But I wish you had seen Mr. Thornton," repeated Margaret. "Would you go again—it's a good deal to ask, I know—but would you go tomorrow and try him? I should be so glad if you would."

"I'm afraid it would be of no use," said Mr. Hale, in a low voice. "It would be better to let me speak to him." Margaret still looked at Higgins for his answer. Those grave soft eyes of hers were difficult to resist. He gave a great sigh.

"It would tax my pride above a bit; if it were for mysel', I could stand a deal o' clemming first; I'd sooner knock him down than ask a favour from him. I'd a deal sooner be flogged mysel'; but yo're not a common wench, axing yo'r pardon, nor yet have yo' common ways about yo'. I'll e'en make a wry face, and go at it to-morrow. Dunna yo' think that he'll do it. That man has it in him to be burnt at the stake afore he'll give in. I'll do it for yo'r sake, Miss Hale, and it's first time in my life as e'er I give way to a woman. Neither my wife nor Bess could e'er say that much again me."

"All the more do I thank you," said Margaret, smiling. "Though I don't believe you: I believe you have just given way to wife and daughter as much as most men."

"And as to Mr. Thornton," said Mr. Hale, "I'll give you a note to him, which, I think I may venture say, will ensure you a hearing."

"I thank yo' kindly, sir, but I'd as lief stand on my own bottom. I dunnot stomach the notion of having favour curried for me, by one as doesn't know the ins and outs of the quarrel. Meddling 'twixt master and man is liker meddling 'twixt husband and wife than aught else: it takes a deal of wisdom to do ony good. I'll stand guard at the lodge door. I'll stand there fro' six in the morning till I get speech on him. But I'd liefer sweep th' streets, if paupers had na' got hold on that work. Dunna yo' hope, miss. There'll be more chance o' getting milk out of a flint. I wish yo' a very good night, and many thanks to yo'."

"You'll find your shoes by the kitchen fire; I took them there to dry," said Margaret.

He turned round and looked at her steadily, and then he brushed his lean hand across his eyes and went his way.

"How proud that man is!" said her father, who was a little annoyed at the manner in which Higgins had declined his intercession with Mr. Thornton.

"He is," said Margaret; "but what grand makings of a man there are in him, pride and all."

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[a]The text is taken from the following Project Gutenberg webpage: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4276/4276-h/4276-h.htm.

T.3 Walden

Here we're giving you a sample of some non-fiction as well. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, first published in 1854, presents us with American English of the 19th century. Thoreau tells the readers about his life in a cabin in the woods which he built on Ralph Waldo Emerson's property (with the encouragement and the permission of the latter, of course).[a]

> I think that in the railroad car we are inclined to spend more on luxury than on safety and convenience, and it threatens without attaining these to become no better than a modern drawing room, with its divans, and ottomans, and sun-shades, and a hundred other oriental things, which we are taking west with us, invented for the ladies of the harem and the effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire, which Jonathan should be ashamed to know the names of. I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion. I would rather ride on earth in an ox cart with a free circulation, than go to heaven in the fancy car of an excursion train and breathe a malaria all the way.
>
> ...
>
> I dug my cellar in the side of a hill sloping to the south, where a woodchuck had formerly dug his burrow, down through sumach and blackberry roots, and the lowest stain of vegetation, six feet square by seven deep, to a fine sand where potatoes would not freeze in any winter. The sides were left shelving, and not stoned; but the sun having never shone on them, the sand still keeps its place. It was but two hours' work. I took particular pleasure in this breaking of ground, for in almost all latitudes men dig into the earth for an equable temperature. Under the most splendid house in the city is still to be found the cellar where they store their roots as of old, and long after the superstructure has disappeared posterity remark its dent in the earth. The house is still but a sort of porch at the entrance of a burrow.
>
> ...
>
> The next year I sometimes caught a mess of fish for my dinner, and

once I went so far as to slaughter a woodchuck which ravaged my bean-field,—effect his transmigration, as a Tartar would say,—and devour him, partly for experiment's sake; but though it afforded me a momentary enjoyment, notwithstanding a musky flavor, I saw that the longest use would not make that a good practice, however it might seem to have your woodchucks ready dressed by the village butcher.

…

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dulness. I need only suggest what kind of sermons are still listened to in the most enlightened countries. There are such words as joy and sorrow, but they are only the burden of a psalm, sung with a nasal twang, while we believe in the ordinary and mean. We think that we can change our clothes only. It is said that the British Empire is very large and respectable, and that the United States are a first-rate power. We do not believe that a tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip, if he should ever harbor it in his mind. Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust will next come out of the ground? The government of the world I live in was not framed, like that of Britain, in after-dinner conversations over the wine.

…

However, if one designs to construct a dwelling house, it behooves him to exercise a little Yankee shrewdness, lest after all he find himself in a workhouse, a labyrinth without a clue, a museum, an almshouse, a prison, or a splendid mausoleum instead.

…

Many a forenoon have I stolen away, preferring to spend thus the most valued part of the day; for I was rich, if not in money, in sunny hours and summer days, and spent them lavishly; nor do I regret that I did not waste more of them in the workshop or the teacher's desk. But since I left those shores the woodchoppers have still further laid them waste, and now for many a year there will be no more rambling through the aisles of the wood, with occasional vistas through

which you see the water. My Muse may be excused if she is silent henceforth. How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down?

---

[a]The text is taken from the following Project Gutenberg webpage: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm.

T.4 David Copperfield

Here we give you a text sample from Charles Dickens. *David Copperfield* is a novel that was first serialized and then published in 1850 as a book. The following conversation is between two male speakers.[a]

I had not walked out far enough to be quite clear of the town, upon the Ramsgate road, where there was a good path, when I was hailed, through the dust, by somebody behind me. The shambling figure, and the scanty great-coat, were not to be mistaken. I stopped, and Uriah Heep came up.

"Well?" said I.

"How fast you walk!" said he. "My legs are pretty long, but you've given 'em quite a job."

"Where are you going?" said I.

"I am going with you, Master Copperfield, if you'll allow me the pleasure of a walk with an old acquaintance." Saying this, with a jerk of his body, which might have been either propitiatory or derisive, he fell into step beside me.

"Uriah!" said I, as civilly as I could, after a silence.

"Master Copperfield!" said Uriah.

"To tell you the truth (at which you will not be offended), I came out to walk alone, because I have had so much company."

He looked at me sideways, and said with his hardest grin, "You mean mother."

"Why yes, I do," said I.

"Ah! But you know we're so very umble," he returned. "And having such a knowledge of our own umbleness, we must really take care that we're not pushed to the wall by them as isn't umble. All stratagems are fair in love, sir."

Raising his great hands until they touched his chin, he rubbed them softly, and softly chuckled; looking as like a malevolent baboon, I thought, as anything human could look.

"You see," he said, still hugging himself in that unpleasant way, and shaking his head at me, "you're quite a dangerous rival, Master Copperfield. You always was, you know."

"Do you set a watch upon Miss Wickfield, and make her home no home, because of me?" said I.

"Oh! Master Copperfield! Those are very arsh words," he replied.

"Put my meaning into any words you like," said I. "You know what it is, Uriah, as well as I do."

"Oh no! You must put it into words," he said. "Oh, really! I couldn't myself."

"Do you suppose," said I, constraining myself to be very temperate and quiet with him, on account of Agnes, "that I regard Miss Wickfield otherwise than as a very dear sister?"

"Well, Master Copperfield," he replied, "you perceive I am not bound to answer that question. You may not, you know. But then, you see, you may!"

Anything to equal the low cunning of his visage, and of his shadowless eyes without the ghost of an eyelash, I never saw.

"Come then!" said I. "For the sake of Miss Wickfield—"

"My Agnes!" he exclaimed, with a sickly, angular contortion of himself. "Would you be so good as call her Agnes, Master Copperfield!"

"For the sake of Agnes Wickfield—Heaven bless her!"

"Thank you for that blessing, Master Copperfield!" he interposed.

"I will tell you what I should, under any other circumstances, as soon have thought of telling to—Jack Ketch."

"To who, sir?" said Uriah, stretching out his neck, and shading his ear with his hand.

"To the hangman," I returned. "The most unlikely person I could think of,"—though his own face had suggested the allusion quite as a natural sequence. "I am engaged to another young lady. I hope that contents you."

"Upon your soul?" said Uriah.

I was about indignantly to give my assertion the confirmation he required, when he caught hold of my hand, and gave it a squeeze.

[a]The text is taken from the following Project Gutenberg webpage: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/766/766-h/766-h.htm#link2HCH0039.

T.5 Mary Barton

Mary Barton is another novel written by Elizabeth C. Gaskell (in 1848). It is set in Manchester, in the north of England, in the 19th century. An extract follows.[a]

Alice knew that before long she should go to that mother; and, besides, the griefs and bitter woes of youth have worn themselves out before we grow old; but she looked so sorrowful that the girls caught her sadness, and mourned for the poor woman who had been dead and gone so many years ago.

"Did you never see her again, Alice? Did you never go home while she was alive?" asked Mary.

"No, nor since. Many a time and oft have I planned to go. I plan it yet, and hope to go home again before it please God to take me. I

used to try and save money enough to go for a week when I was in service; but first one thing came, and then another. First, missis's children fell ill of the measles, just when th' week I'd ask'd for came, and I couldn't leave them, for one and all cried for me to nurse them. Then missis herself fell sick, and I could go less than ever. For, you see, they kept a little shop, and he drank, and missis and me was all there was to mind children, and shop, and all, and cook and wash besides."

Mary was glad she had not gone into service, and said so.

"Eh, lass! thou little knows the pleasure o' helping others; I was as happy there as could be; almost as happy as I was at home. Well, but next year I thought I could go at a leisure time, and missis told me I should have a fortnight then, and I used to sit up all that winter working hard at patchwork, to have a quilt of my own making to take to my mother. But master died, and missis went away fra Manchester, and I'd to look out for a place again."

"Well, but," interrupted Mary, "I should have thought that was the best time to go home."

"No, I thought not. You see it was a different thing going home for a week on a visit, may be with money in my pocket to give father a lift, to going home to be a burden to him. Besides, how could I hear o' a place there? Anyways I thought it best to stay, though perhaps it might have been better to ha' gone, for then I should ha' seen mother again;" and the poor old woman looked puzzled.

"I'm sure you did what you thought right," said Margaret, gently.

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[a]The text is taken from the following Project Gutenberg webpage: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2153/2153-h/2153-h.htm.

T.6 The Dictionary

Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* has been discussed in the main text of this chapter, and so needs no introduction! This extract is from the preface to the 1828 edition. Enjoy.[a]

The United States commenced their existence under circumstances wholly novel and unexampled in the history of nations. They commenced with civilization, with learning, with science, with constitutions of free government, and with that best gift of God to man, the christian religion. Their population is now equal to that of England; in arts and sciences, our citizens are very little behind the most enlightened people on earth; in some respects, they have no superiors; and our language, within two centuries, will be spoken by more people in this country, than any other language on earth, except the Chinese, in Asia, and even that may not be an exception.

It has been my aim in this work, now offered to my fellow citizens, to ascertain the true principles of the language, in its orthography and structure; to purify it from some palpable errors, and reduce the number of its anomalies, thus giving it more regularity and consistency in its forms, both of words and sentences; and in this manner, to furnish a standard of our vernacular tongue, which we shall not be ashamed to bequeath to three hundred millions of people, who are destined to occupy, and I hope, to adorn the vast territory within our jurisdiction.

If the language can be improved in regularity, so as to be more easily acquired by our own citizens, and by foreigners, and thus be rendered a more useful instrument for the propagation of science, arts, civilization and Christianity; if it can be rescued from the mischievous influence of sciolists and that dabbling spirit of innovation which is perpetually disturbing its settled usages and filling it with anomalies; if, in short, our vernacular language can be redeemed from corruptions, and our philology and literature from degradation; it would be a source of great satisfaction to me to be one among the

instruments of promoting these valuable objects. If this object cannot be effected, and my wishes and hopes are to be frustrated, my labor will be lost, and this work must sink into oblivion.

This Dictionary, like all others of the kind, must be left, in some degree, imperfect; for what individual is competent to trace to their source, and define in all their various applications, popular, scientific and technical, sixty or seventy thousand words! It satisfies my mind that I have done all that my health, my talents and my pecuniary means would enable me to accomplish. I present it to my fellow citizens, not with frigid indifference, but with my ardent wishes for their improvement and their happiness; and for the continued increase of the wealth, the learning, the moral and religious elevation of character, and the glory of my country.

[a]The text is taken from the American Dictionary of the English Language website: http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Preface.

T.7 The travels of Dean Mahomet

The travels of Dean Mahomet, an eighteenth-century journey Through India was published in 1794 by Dean Mahomet (1759–1851), who was an Indian writer and traveller (and the person who introduced shampoo to Europe!), and he therefore presents us with a sample of Indian English from the Late Modern English period.[a]

The streets of Surat are irregularly laid out; and the stories of the houses are carried up projecting over one another, in such a manner, that the uppermost apartments on each side, are so close, as to darken the streets below, without excluding a free circulation of air. As to provisions I cannot imagine that there is in the universe a better place. The great plenty of every article, which an unbounded influx throws into the market, renders all kinds of eatables extremely cheap: wild fowl and game can be had at an easy rate; and nothing can ex-

ceed their sallads and roots. Among the articles of luxury, which they have in common with other parts of the East, there are public hummums for bathing, cupping, rubbing and sweating, but the practice of champing, which is derived from the Chinese, appears to have been known to the ancients, from the following quotations.

...

Having returned to Madapallam at the appointed time, we continued our voyage till we came within view of the Cape of Good Hope, and met with no extraordinary occurrence on the passage. We saw several kinds of the finny inhabitants of the liquid element, a description of which I must here omit, as uninteresting to a gentleman of your information. A speck now observed in the mariner's horizon, was to him an evident sign of the impending storm, which collected with rapid increase, and bursting with resistless impetuosity over our heads, incessantly raged for three days. The howling of the tempest, the roaring of the sea, the dismal gloom of night, the lightning's forked flash, and thunder's awful roll, conspired to make this the most terrifying scene I ever experienced.

...

It is used by the people of every class, among the Hindoos and Mahometans: the lower order take it, when they enter on any arduous enterprise, to render them insensible of the danger; and the gentry, who are fond of every thing that tends to a gratification of the passions, consider it as a great luxury. Its effects, however, are various, according to the manner of preparing it. Opium in its original state, is the produce of a species of poppy, the root of which is about the thickness of a man's finger, full of a bitter juice that runs through the whole plant. The flower resembles a rose, and the stem which is commonly pliable, grows to the height of two cubits, and produces a kind of leaves (not unlike those of the lettuce) oblong, indented, curled, and of a sea-green colour. When it is full of sap, a slight incision is made on the outside, from which flow some drops of a milky nature. These drops soon congeal; and when moistened and kneaded with warm water and honey, become more consistent and viscous like pitch; after this process, the glutinous matter is made into small

cakes fit for immediate use. The good kind is that, which is soft and yielding to the touch. Patna is allowed to send the best to market: it is there purchased at a cheap rate, though extremely dear in some parts of India. It is nearly opposite qualities, stupifying, at one time, and raising exhilarating ideas at another; it occasions drowsiness, and vigilance; and taken to an excess, brings on a madness that ceases only in death.

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[a]The text is taken from the University of California Press E-Books Collection, 1982–2004, website: https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft4h4nb20n&chunk.id=ch2&toc.depth=100&toc.id=ch2&brand=eschol;query=jane#1.

T.8 Letter by Ignatius Sancho

The Late Modern English period is the earliest period for which we have a significant number of English texts written by people of colour. Ignatius Sancho was a Black writer, composer and slavery survivor living in Britain during the eighteenth century. The letter below was written in July 1776 and addressed to a Mr. Sterne.[a]

REVEREND SIR,

It would be an infult to your humanity (or perhaps look like it) to aplogize for the liberty I am taking. – I am one of thofe people whom the vulgar and illiberal call "Negurs." – The firft part of my life was rather unlucky, as I was placed in a family who judged ignorance the beft and only fecurity for obedience. – A little reading and writing I got by unwearied application. – The latter part of my life has been – through God's bleffing, truly fortunate, having fpent it in the fervice of the beft families in the kingdom. – My chief pleafure has been books. – Philanthropy I adore. – How very much, good Sir, am I (amongft millions) indebted to you for the character of your amiable uncle Toby! – I declare, I would walk ten miles in the dog-days, to fhake hands with the honeft corporal. – Your Sermons have touched

me to the heart, and I hope have amended it, which brings me to the point. – In your tenth diſcourſe, page ſeventy-eight, in the ſecond volume – is this very affecting paſſage: – "Conſider how great a part of our ſpecies – in all ages down to this – have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their diſtreſſes. – Conſider ſlavery – what it is – how bitter a draught – and how many millions are made to drink it!" – Of all my favourite authors not one has drawn a tear in favour of my miſerable black brethren – excepting yourſelf, and the humane author of Sir George Elliſon. – I think you will forgive me; – I am ſure you will applaud me for beſeeching you to give one half-hour's attention to ſlavery, as it is at this day practiſed in our Weſt Indies. – That ſubject, handled in your ſtriking manner, would eaſe the yoke (perhaps) of many; – but if only of one – Gracious God! – what a feaſt to a benevolent heart! – and, ſure I am, you are an Epicurean in acts of charity. – You, who are univerſally read, and as univerſally admired – you could not fail. – Dear Sir, think in me you behold the uplifted hands of thouſands of my brother Moors. – Grief (you pathetically obſerve) is eloquent; – figure to yourſelf their attitudes; – hear their ſupplicating addreſſes! – Alas! – you cannot refuſe. – Humanity muſt comply – in which hope I beg permiſſion to ſubſcribe myſelf,

Reverend Sir, &c.

IGN. SANCHO.

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[a]The text provided here was taken from the *Emerging Voices* corpus (Walkden 2019), and is originally from the 1784 edition available at https://archive.org/details/lettersoflateign00sanc_0/, pp. 89–91.

Recommended further reading

For a more in-depth discussion of Late Modern English, we recommend Beal (2004) as an overall read with rich sociolinguistic discussions. Mug-

glestone's (2003) *Talking proper: the rise of accent as a social symbol* is another good read we strongly recommend, especially if you are interested in the history of Received Pronunciation. On prescriptivism and its effects, take a look at *Fixing English* by Anne Curzan (2014).

For the history of American English, with a focus on the rise of some of its distinct varieties, we recommend Chapter 6 in Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2015). For the linguistic situation in America vis-à-vis the War of Independence, we refer the readers to Martin (2019), with book section titles suggesting a thrilling read indeed (Part one: Noah Webster's battles; Part two: The Merriams at war).

If you're interested in monographs focusing on other specific varieties of English (and their histories, to a variable extent), we refer you to Fritz (2005) for Australian English, Orkin (2015) for Canadian English, Fought (2003) for Chicano English, Luke & Richards (1982) and Edwards (2015) for Hong Kong English, Hickey (2007) for Irish English, Gordon et al. (2004) for New Zealand English, Leimgruber (2013) for Singapore English, Lanham & MacDonald (1985) and Lass (2002) – and other contributions in Mesthrie (2002) – for South African English, Mesthrie (1992) for South African Indian English, and Coupland & Thomas (1990) for Welsh English (Chapters 1, 2, 6, and 14 in particular). Volumes 5 and 6 of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Burchfield 1994 and Algeo 2001) offer contributions on English in Scotland, English in Wales, English in Ireland, English in Australia, English in the Caribbean, English in New Zealand, English in South Africa, English in South Asia, and English in North America. And for Scots, see Jones (1997).

(And if you are, like us, enchanted with the history of the progressive, we recommend Kranich 2010.)

4 Early Modern English (1500–1700)

4.1 History and context

If you're reading this book, you have some competence in English. At the beginning of this chapter, take a moment to think about why that is the case. What does English mean to you? Why and how did you learn it?

Those of you who consider yourselves native speakers of English probably didn't grow up in England. At least, there are around four hundred million speakers of English in the world (Crystal 2006a), and the population of England is only a small fraction of that, so statistically it's unlikely. You've probably had occasion to consider how and why the English language got to where you are.

Those of you who consider yourselves non-native speakers will, presumably, have learned that language for a reason. Some people learn languages for the sheer fun of it, but more often there's some external motivation. In the case of English, perhaps it's because it's useful for trade, or for international communication, or for science, or so that you can access English-language books, games, films, websites, or TV shows. You've probably had occasion to consider how and why the English language came to be so dominant in these domains.

The events of the Early Modern English period are crucial for answering these questions. In 1500, English was spoken almost exclusively in England and Wales (and crucially to a rather limited extent in the latter) – it was a language like any other, with no special PRESTIGE or status, and no worldwide reach. By 1700, English was well on the way to having the status it has today. In this chapter we'll see how that happened. But it's not English *per se* that enjoys tremendous worldwide prestige – rather, it's a specific, fairly narrow set of varieties of English. How these standard varieties came to gain this status – the process of STANDARDIZATION and the accompanying standard language ideology – will be the guiding theme of this chapter.

4.1.1 Standardization

Academic linguists disagree about a great many things. One thing they agree on, however, is that it's meaningless to talk about one language being better or worse

than another, at least in any objective linguistic sense. And yet among the general English-speaking public this attitude abounds. We all know someone who takes great pleasure in "correcting" the "bad" grammar of others (where by grammar they usually mean punctuation), or who delights in judging and shaming others based on their "accent". Even people who don't actively correct others believe very often that there is, when it comes down to it, a right or wrong way to use English.[1] We've talked about these prescriptive attitudes in detail in Chapter 3. The ideal, for these people, is some sort of "perfect", "accentless" English as laid down by the great authorities. But what is this variety, and who speaks it? And can any variety truly be said to be "accentless"?

People who think like this are in the grip of what Lippi-Green (2012: 67) terms STANDARD LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY:

> a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class.

In this sense a standard is more of an abstract entity than an actually spoken (or even written) linguistic variety — though individual varieties may be perceived as closer to, or further from, the abstract standard ideal. The stranglehold of standard language ideology is strong, and it's probably fair to say that none of us are completely immune to it.[2] This is not the place for a full discussion of how it's maintained today or its pernicious consequences in society (see Lippi-Green 2012 for an excellent discussion of these issues in the US context). But it's important to note that there's nothing universal about this ideology or the particular standard varieties associated with it. In fact, the Early Modern period played a crucial role in the standardization process, not only for English but for several European languages associated with emerging European world powers.

How, then, does a standard variety emerge? Norwegian sociolinguist Einar Haugen's model, though fifty years old now, is still a widely accepted theory of standardization.[3] Haugen observes that standard varieties are inextricably bound up with nations and the rise of nation-states:

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[1]And although Míša is a sociolinguist, she often asks herself when she's going to stop making certain non-native "mistakes" she catches herself making every now and then. But these "mistakes" could *also* be approached from the angle of identity features with a range of social functions. The idea of "correct" vs. "wrong" is very deeply entrenched in our minds indeed!

[2]Or *none of us **is***, as particularly incurable prescriptivists will insist.

[3]See Joseph et al. (2020) for a critical assessment of Haugen's model after fifty years of research and reflection on its enduring influence.

The invention of printing, the rise of industry, and the spread of popular education have brought into being the modern nation-state, which extends some of the loyalties of the family and the neighborhood or the clan to the whole state. Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined. Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication … but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as underdeveloped. (1966: 927)

Haugen is in agreement with many modern historians (e.g. Foucault 2007, Hobsbawm 1990) that developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were crucial in leading to the nation-state as the main unit of political organization on the world stage. Since language is a central part of identity, and it was in the nation-state's interest to foster a shared identity, "one nation, one language" policies and pressures (see Piller 2015) have historically been an important driving force of standardization. Haugen also outlines a four-step model of how the standardization process unfolds, schematized in Figure 4.1. The four steps – better thought of as overlapping subprocesses – are SELECTION, ELABORATION, CODIFICATION and ACCEPTANCE.

	form	function
society	**Selection** of norms c. 1400–1600	**Acceptance** by community c. 1500–now
language	**Codification** of forms c. 1600–1800	**Elaboration** of functions c. 1500–1800

Figure 4.1: Standardization according to Haugen (1966: 933). Dates for English are approximate, and are our interpretation.

SELECTION gets to the heart of the question: whose variety becomes the basis for the new standard? Standards, like the nation-states they belong to, are supposed to be stable and unified, so variation is ruled out, and a single "correct" form needs to emerge. William Caxton, who introduced the printing press into England in 1476, was well aware that he needed to make choices at all linguistic levels, not only spelling (see the next section, §4.2.1) and the lexicon (e.g. *egges* vs. *eyren* 'eggs'; see the text in §1), but also morphology, and syntax.[4] The choices

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[4]For more discussion of the printing press itself and the physical process of printing, see van Gelderen (2014: 159–162).

made by Caxton and other printers at the end of the Middle English period and the start of the Early Modern period were certainly influential in selecting variants that would become part of the emerging standard, because they permitted documents to be circulated on a much larger scale than ever before. At the same time, it's important not to overstate the role of printing in standardization. For one thing, it wasn't an accident that the printing presses were based in London, which even then was the political and economic centre of England. They were also just around the corner from the Chancery, the centre of royal document production, which had to a certain extent established its own norms during the fifteenth century (Fisher 1977), at least for spelling – and it is clear that these Chancery norms affected the variety adopted by the printers.

A common narrative in history of the English language textbooks is based on Samuels (1963) and Fisher (1977), and goes like this: migrating merchants from the East and Central Midlands of England brought their English with them to London, and this became the basis for the standard. This is at best an oversimplification. London was certainly a centre of immigration during the period, but from all areas of the country, in particular the southern counties surrounding the city.[5] Not all of the features that eventually make it into Standard English have their origin in the East Midlands, and not all of the spelling features found by Fisher (1977) in Chancery texts make it into Standard English either: see Wright (1996), the papers in Wright (2000), and Benskin (2004). Much still remains to be understood about the process of selection, but we can at least say with confidence that it was not a single variety that was "selected": instead, selection seems to have operated opportunistically, with individual linguistic features finding their origin in Northern, Southern and Midlands varieties, Chancery spelling norms, literary texts, the spoken and written usage of merchants, and beyond. Standard English is a mongrel, not a purebred. And research in this area continues! See Auer et al. (2016) for discussion of a recent project that aims to shed more light on this issue.

ELABORATION involves the spread of a variety to domains that had previously been dominated by other languages: for instance, law, science, medicine, politics, religion, philosophy, and the like. The "one nation, one language" ideology demands that a standard language should be usable for any purpose. But in order to function well in these new domains, new lexical items need to be created. These come from the usual sources: either lexical borrowing, or word formation via DERIVATION or COMPOUNDING. The linguistic process and consequences of elaboration are discussed in §4.5, on the Early Modern English lexicon.

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[5]These processes of migration may have been a crucial factor in determining the course of the Great Vowel Shift: see §4.2.1!

One important domain in which the English language was breaking new ground during the Early Modern English period is that of religion. In the early sixteenth century, in what is now Germany, Martin Luther was influentially propounding the view that Christianity needed to return to its roots in scripture, dispensing with many of the traditions of the Catholic church. This new perspective – Protestantism – spread like wildfire across Europe, and was adopted by the English King Henry VIII in the 1530s. Its linguistic importance lies in the fact that Luther and the other reformers were insistent that the clergy use modern European languages to communicate with the people rather than Latin. Luther himself translated the Bible into German from Hebrew and Greek. Before the Reformation, translating the Bible into English was illegal: William Tyndale produced a partial translation, but was convicted of heresy, sentenced to death by strangulation, and finally burned at the stake in 1536. Myles Coverdale and John Rogers completed the task, however, and their version became widely circulated, with an important influence on other major translations such as the famous King James Bible of 1611.

Natural philosophy (the origin of what we now call "science") also saw an increase in English-language texts, especially during the seventeenth century. Robert Boyle's *Sceptical Chymist* (published in 1661) was a seminal work in chemistry. Isaac Newton published his most famous work, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, in Latin in 1687, but his second major book *Opticks* (1704), on the nature of light, was published in English.

If the goal of elaboration can be described as "maximal variation in function", the goal of CODIFICATION is "minimal variation in form" (Haugen 1966: 931). In Chapter 3 we've already seen how codification takes shape in the history of English: §3.1.1 mentions the grammars, dictionaries, and pronunciation and usage guides that proliferate during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in particular. Nowadays we tend to take the existence of such books for granted – where else would you check how to use the "correct" form? – but the fact is that many languages that have not undergone standardization do not have grammars or dictionaries written for them, and in the history of English there were no serious attempts to write books like these before the Early Modern period. We'll see an example of the effects of codification and the prescriptivism it gives rise to in §4.4.2, on preposition stranding. It's also worth noting at this point that codification took different paths in Britain and North America: see the text by Noah Webster in §6 in the previous chapter for an early US perspective on standardization. Millar (2012: chapter 4) has a good discussion of codification in English.

> ### 🔍 An English Academy?
>
> Other countries went further than the United Kingdom and established an official institution with responsibility for the country's (standard) language. The *Accademia della Crusca* was founded in 1583 in Florence, and is the world's oldest linguistic academy. The powerful *Académie française* followed in 1635 in France. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries there were calls to set up a similar institution: in 1665 a group including John Dryden (see §4.4.2) actually met at Gray's Inn in London to plan an academy, but their efforts came to nought. The most famous such suggestion came from the political writer and satirist Jonathan Swift, in his 1712 *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue.* This proposal briefly won royal support from Queen Anne, but was nevertheless ultimately unsuccessful: Anne died in 1714, and subsequent monarchs did not return to the idea. See Millward & Hayes (2018: 236–238) for more.

Finally, "a standard language, if it is not to be dismissed as dead, must have a body of users" (Haugen 1966: 933). The gradual orientation of a speech community towards a single abstract standard is the process of ACCEPTANCE. Far from being an active, deliberate process, what Haugen describes as acceptance is driven by a mixture of carrot and stick. On the one hand, users of the standard have access to greater power and more influential positions, and a potent signifier of (national) group identity.[6] On the other hand, those who cannot use the standard, or choose not to, have reduced access to those opportunities, and will often face overt scorn and prejudice. Thus, a complex web of conscious and subconscious incentives keeps the ideal of a standard language enmeshed in people's minds. In this respect, very little has changed over the past centuries: once again, see Lippi-Green (2012) on the toxic present-day effects of standard language ideology.

Throughout this chapter we'll come back to standardization and its effects, which are felt at all linguistic levels.

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[6]Which also, of course, plays a central role in *constituting* that group identity.

4.1.2 The Empire strikes

By itself, the standardization process doesn't explain how English came to be a world language. For that, we need a little history of empire.

At the beginning of the Early Modern period, England (with Wales), Scotland, and Ireland were separate countries. The three kingdoms came to share a single ruler when James VI of Scotland acceded to the thrones of England and Ireland in 1603, though they were not formally unified as a single "United Kingdom" until 1707. On the world stage, however, England in particular was flexing its military and political muscles throughout the period. The "discovery" of the Americas by Columbus in 1492 had opened the door for an international scramble to snap up as much territory and as many resources as possible on this "new" landmass, and elsewhere too; France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain were other important European actors. The fact that the territories being snapped up were already occupied by other humans who had been there much longer didn't stop colonies from being established around the world. Jamestown, the first colony in what is now the United States of America, was established in 1607, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, the first permanent colony, in 1620. The Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded in 1629, and the well-known Harvard University emerged here in 1636.

Any good history book will tell you about the rise of the United States, and the linguistic aspects of this rise have already been discussed in §3.1.2 in the previous chapter. It's useful to know that many of the colonists who made the long journey across the Atlantic did so for religious reasons: the founders of Plymouth – the famous Pilgrim Fathers who sailed aboard the *Mayflower* – were Protestants, Puritan separatists who wanted to live apart from the Church of England, and the founders of the Massachusetts Bay colony were Puritans who wanted to reform the Church. The Jesuits – an evangelizing Catholic society heavily involved in the Counter-Reformation – also did their bit to spread English to the Americas and the rest of the world. Jesuits set up missions all over the world, with educational goals that included teaching European languages to colonized peoples. The Province of Maryland was founded in 1632 as a haven for Catholics, and the Jesuits there played an important role in establishing relations between colonizers and Native Americans – attempting to teach the latter English and convert them to Christianity, while also carrying out some of the earliest translations of religious texts into the Algonquian languages.

👥

Two queens

Figure 4.2: Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor

Throughout the Early Modern period, Britain was dominated by two rapacious dynasties, the Tudors and the Stuarts. During the second half of the sixteenth century, two powerful women ruled England and Scotland: Elizabeth Tudor (Elizabeth I of England) and Mary Stuart ("Mary, Queen of Scots"). Mary, a Catholic, was forced to abdicate, and spent eighteen years in captivity before eventually being executed: see Guy (2004) for a scholarly but lively account.

The two women are linguistically very interesting. Mary Stuart grew up in France, and was natively bilingual in French and Scots, as well as able to write in English, Italian and Latin. Her letters are a linguistic treasure trove. As for Elizabeth, she was described posthumously as having spoken nine languages, including Cornish, Irish and Welsh, at near-native level – though we probably shouldn't take this glowing testimony at face value. We know, however, that throughout her life she translated Latin and Greek works: in 2019, a manuscript of a translation of Tacitus was shown to be written by her (Philo 2020).

English colonizers also reached India, the Caribbean, and Africa during the Early Modern period. The African situation was particularly important for the ongoing developments in the United States, since this continent furnished the seaborne Europeans with an almost inexhaustible supply of people to be enslaved. As peoples, plants, products, diseases and ideas were taken from continent to continent – called the Columbian Exchange after Christopher Columbus (Crosby 1972) – the world changed irrevocably. Diseases such as smallpox (from Europe) and yellow fever (from West Africa) are estimated to have killed 80–95% of the Native American population (Newson 2001: 167 and references cited there; Nunn & Qian 2010: 165). Subsequently, the circulation of different forms of crops and livestock allowed for major population increases in all of these countries: tomatoes, potatoes and maize were all brought back to Europe from the Americas (see §4.5 for the origins of words like these!), and farm animals such as cows, horses and chickens were transported to the Americas from Europe, for instance. The most obvious linguistic impact of the Columbian Exchange was the spread of English (alongside other languages of Europe such as Spanish and Portuguese), but of course English itself was dramatically changed by these events too, through lexical innovations and the emergence of new varieties shaped by language contact around the globe.

In what follows, you'll learn about some of the main linguistic changes characteristic of this period.

4.2 Sounds

In this section, you are going to learn about what is considered one of the most important sound changes in the history of the English language: the Great Vowel Shift (sometimes abbreviated to GVS). However, the fact that we only focus on this sound change in the Early Modern English period should not leave you thinking that this is the only interesting aspect of Early Modern English phonology. Because the Great Vowel Shift is a fairly complex phenomenon (as you will soon find out for yourself), for practical reasons we will not cover all the other exciting phonological and phonetic aspects of Early Modern English, such as the loss of certain consonants (postvocalic /h/; some cases of /t/, as in *castle* /kɑːsɬ/; some cases of /l/, as in *talk* /toːk/ and *walk* /woːk/); changes related to unstressed vowels; changes in the quality of the vowels in words like TRAP and DRESS; the change from /aʊ/ to /ɔː/, as in *cause* [kauz] > [kɔːz]; and certain diphthong mergers.[7]

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[7]Check out Millward & Hayes (2018: 248–255) and Nevalainen (2006: Chapter 9) if you're hungry for more on these.

4.2.1 The Great Vowel Shift

4.2.1.1 What is the Great Vowel Shift?

Early Modern English is full of variation, and long vowels are particularly interesting. They show variation related to vowel quality, and some also show variation in whether or not this quality changes from the beginning to the end of a vowel, i.e. whether they are monophthongs or diphthongs. Such variation in long vowels is primarily due to the Great Vowel Shift. The Great Vowel Shift presents us with a rather grand vowel change, as it affected the *entire* system of long monophthongs of the language. As long as you were a long monophthong, your quality eventually changed. Some of the variants were those we are familiar with from standard Present Day English. However, other variants no longer survive in standard Present Day English – these are the historically older variants. We can see the older variants in Figure 4.3, which shows you the very early Early Modern English long monophthongs.

<div align="center">

bite   *mouth*
[i:]   [u:]

beet   *boot*
[e:]   [o:]

beat   *boat*
[ɛ:]   [ɔ:]

name
[a:]

</div>

Figure 4.3: Early Modern English long monophthongal vowel system

You will notice the following. First, the words you will recognize from Present Day English contained vowel qualities that differ from those they have in Present Day English – these are the pre-shift vowel qualities. Second, there seems to be a fairly neat correspondence between the vowel qualities implied by the IPA symbols and the graphemes (letters). Thus, the word *bite* is spelt with an <i> and pronounced with an [i] as well. You may be a bit puzzled about *mouth*, which was pronounced as /mu:θ/ and spelt with an <ou> rather than an <u>. However, as we will see in the next chapter (§5.2.2), <ou> and <u> both reflected [u] at the time. You will also notice that there are two types of e and two types of o, corresponding to [e] and [ɛ], and [o] and [ɔ], respectively. One thing not visible from

the figure is that these long monophthongs have corresponding short monoph-
thongs, i.e. corresponding in vowel quality, but differing in vowel quantity (i.e.
duration, whether the vowel is long or short).

Now that we have established what the pre-shift long monophthongal system
was like, you are probably burning to find out just what exactly happened to get
us to the vowel qualities we are used to for the words in Figure 4.3 in standard
Present Day English. As indicated in Figure 4.4, the vast majority of the vowels
have changed in quality by being raised. Thus, the vowel in *boat* [bɔːt] was raised
to [boːt], and later also became a diphthong ([boʊt], [bəʊt]), although there are
still dialects of English that preserve the monophthongal quality, as we will see
below. Similarly, the vowel in *boot* was also raised, although this time the higher
quality is that of [u], giving us [buːt]. This is a nice example of a shift: a change in
the phonetic realization of one vowel PHONEME is connected to a change in the
realization of another vowel phoneme. Importantly, the vowel phoneme in words
like *boat* did not become the same as that found in words like *boot* – speakers
today still produce and perceive these as two distinct categories.[8] You may then
wonder what happened to Early Modern English /uː/, considering this vowel has
nowhere higher to go. What happened to /uː/ is diphthongization: the vowel in
mouth [muːθ] ultimately became [maʊθ].
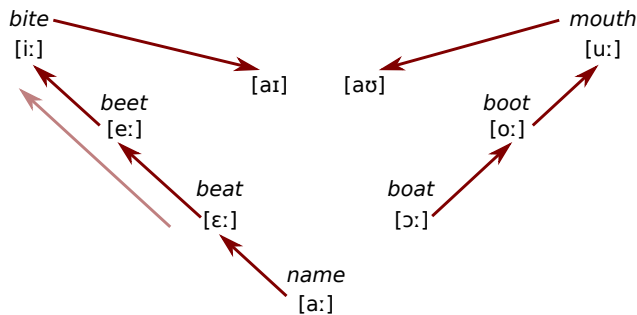
Figure 4.4: The Great Vowel Shift in a nutshell – vol. 1

The front vowels changed in a similar fashion, although they present us with
some complications in contrast to the back vowels. As you would expect by now,
the highest vowel, /iː/, diphthongized, giving us a change from *bite* [biːt] to (ul-
timately) [baɪt]. Also as you would expect, *beet* [beːt] was raised to [biːt]. So far
so good. But then we come across *beat* [bɛːt]. Again as expected, the vowel in

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[8]We saw the same process in Chapter 2 when the Northern Cities Shift was introduced.

[bɛːt] was raised to [beːt], but this is not where the raising stopped. The raising continued, so that the original /ɛː/ vowels were raised to [iː], taking a stop on this journey at [eː]. And yes, if you were reading carefully, you may have come to this realization: the vowel phonemes in words such as *beet* and *beat* merged into a single category, into a single phoneme. This is no longer a phonetic change whereby one vowel quality changes into another vowel quality. What happened here is that one vowel phoneme was lost: we have a merger of the two.

We have not mentioned what happened to the vowel phoneme found in words such as *name* yet. The vowel in *name* [naːm] got raised, just like most of the other vowels, becoming [nɛːm] and ultimately diphthongizing into [nɛɪm]. The final diphthongization change, however, did not take place in all dialects of English, and again, as we will see later on in this section, some dialects still have a monophthong in words like *name*. Figure 4.5 sums these added observations up.
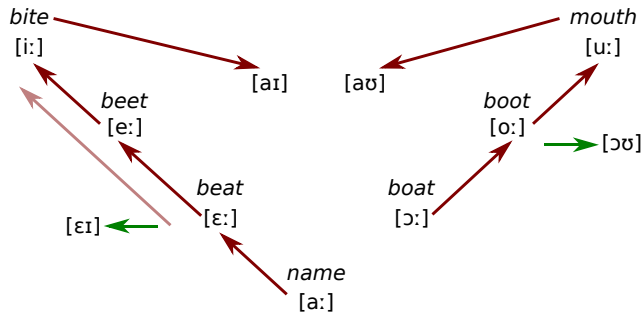
Figure 4.5: The Great Vowel Shift in a nutshell – vol. 2

Now that we have got the basics of the Great Vowel Shift off our shoulders, there is no time to relax, because things are just getting started. First of all, the raising phenomena and the diphthongization steps were presented to you in a way that really simplified what took place during the shift. A change of this magnitude takes time, and the Great Vowel Shift took centuries: some would even argue that it may have never quite reached completion, at least in some dialects of English. First of all, there are some exceptions, irregularities, to the Great Vowel Shift. The vowels in words such as *great*, *steak*, *yea*, and *break* were not raised, and their original [ɛ] therefore merged with the vowel in the *name* class, giving us homophones such as *break* and *brake*. Another unexpected outcome of the shift is the vowel qualities we get in words such as *death* and *head*, where the originally long vowel [ɛː] became a short [ɛ] (Millward & Hayes 2018: 251). This serves as a good reminder: the Great Vowel Shift only affected *long* monophthongs. If an

originally long vowel became short before the Great Vowel Shift kicked in, it was unaffected by the shift. An interaction of various vowel shortening processes and the Great Vowel Shift has resulted in the "irregular" vowel pairs in words such as *sane* /sɛɪn/ and *sanity* /sanɪti/, to the chagrin of non-native English speakers; the spelling nevertheless reflects the pre-GVS stage. A related outcome of the shift are seemingly illogical grapheme-phoneme correspondences, as in *round* /raʊnd/ but *soup* /suːp/, where <ou> corresponds to two different vowel phonemes. What happened here? What explains this inconsistency is the fact that *round* was borrowed into English in time to be affected by the shift, whereas *soup* wasn't, and hence the grapheme-phoneme discrepancy! There are more complexities, but we believe you have had quite enough of those at this point.

Hotly debated

Some of the changes described above include intermediate stages. /iː/ and /uː/ in particular have been a popular subject of discussions about the GVS. To give a more specific example, one of the mainstream proposals is that the [iː] in *night* [niːt] went through an [əɪ] stage before reaching today's standard [aɪ]. But the by far most passionate debate surrounding the shift concerns which vowel phonemes started changing first and when, and which changes therefore motivated other changes that happened. If you're particularly intrigued by any of these topics, we recommend McMahon (2006) on the famous Stockwell & Minkova vs. Lass debates. What is more, some researchers have even questioned whether all the different vowel changes involved are in fact a single event, whether the shift started already in Early Middle English, or actually even earlier, and which phenomena should or should not be subsumed under the label of the Great Vowel Shift (see e.g. Stenbrenden 2016: chapter 1 and again McMahon 2006).

4.2.1.2 Further outcomes of the Great Vowel Shift

There are two important outcomes of the Great Vowel Shift which are useful to know for anyone engaging with Present Day English phonetic variation. As already mentioned, not all dialects of English have undergone all of the stages

of the shift. Some dialects in the UK have monophthongs in words such as *face* and *name* (the FACE lexical set) in contrast to the standard diphthong, and also in words such as *goat* and *boat* (the GOAT lexical set). Similarly, in some dialects of English, the pre-shift /uː/ vowel did not diphthongize, giving us Present Day English *loud* [luːd], *cow* [kuː], and *mouth* [muːθ] (the MOUTH lexical set). Monophthongal variants of the vowels found in words such as FACE and GOAT are typical of northern English dialects, for instance. You will be asked to explore this regional variation in Exercise 1.

In this context, it is worthwhile to also mention accents such as Indian English and Welsh English in particular. These have features that at first sight look like traces of the pre-Great Vowel Shift state of affairs. Namely, one of the traditional features of Indian English is monophthongal pronunciations of the vowels we find in words such as GOAT and FACE: /goːt/ for /gəʊt/, and /feːs/ for /fɛɪs/ (Wells 1982b: 626). The same goes for traditional Welsh English accents as well (Wells 1982c: 382–385). This raises interesting questions. Could these represent an older historical stage of the phonological system of English? Regarding Welsh English, Wells (1982c: 382–383) strongly implies that the monophthongal pronunciations are due to the influence of Welsh, rather than a historical leftover of pre-GVS days. Furthermore, in *some* South Wales English accents, two groups of words are attested where one group shows monophthongal pronunciations and the other diphthongal ones: *toe* [toː] vs. *tow* [tou ~ tɔu], *nose* [noːs] vs. *knows* [nous ~ nɔus].[9] Wells (1982c: 384–385) proposes that all of these present older borrowings, whose production is most likely based on the spelling. As nonnative English speakers (who aren't necessarily widely exposed to native English), learners with near 1:1 grapheme-phoneme vowel correspondences in their L1, as is the case in Welsh, can easily think that if a word is spelt as a <nose>, the spelling surely indicates something like an o (i.e. a monophthong). Regarding Indian English, one could speculate that the presence of monophthongs could be put down to the vowel system of the native language(s) of the learners, or alternatively be a historical archaism (Wells 1982b: 626 for a tentative thought), or possibly a mixture of the two.

The second important outcome of the Great Vowel Shift is the discrepancy between the spelling system of Present Day English and the actual pronunciation supposed to be reflected by this spelling system, as evidenced for instance by the presence of webpages titled "Absolutely Ridiculous English Spelling",[10] as well as by poems composed to illustrate the ambiguity of the English spelling system,

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[9]Welsh English traditionally lacks the voiced alveolar fricative /z/.

[10]See here: http://www.say-it-in-english.com/SpellHome.html.

such as *The Chaos* by Gerard Nolst Trenité. Millward & Hayes (2018: 231) state that "[t]he sixteenth century was perhaps the last time a thoroughgoing reform of English spelling was possible. Soon thereafter, the spread of printed books was to make the vested interest in older customs too great to be overthrown [...]." Some have blamed the Great Vowel Shift for the numerous discrepancies between the spelling and the pronunciation of the English language. It doesn't take too much online searching to come across claims such as "A lot of English's "crazy" spelling can be explained by the Great Vowel Shift."[11] And here's the explanation provided: "Because spelling was pretty much already established at the time the Great Vowel Shift occurred, the pronunciation changed while the spelling did not. And that is why English has such "crazy" spelling." But is this really a good enough explanation?

Irish playwright and social commentator George Bernard Shaw was one of the individuals in support of a spelling reform during his times (1856–1950). To illustrate the need of a spelling reform, Shaw referred to one of the rather absurd examples invented to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies of the English spelling: the word *fish* might as well be spelt as <ghoti>. Why? 1. <gh> is not used just to signal /g/ (***gh**ost*) but also /f/ (*tou**gh***); 2. <o> corresponds to /ɪ/ in the word *w**o**men*; 3. and <ti> corresponds to /ʃ/ in a number of words (e.g. *pronuncia**ti**on*). As we can see from the <ghoti> example, it is certainly not just the vowels that present us with the lack of one-to-one spelling-pronunciation correspondence. This means that the "crazy" English spelling cannot really be blamed solely on the Great Vowel Shift.

There is another problem with the idea that the Great Vowel Shift alone is responsible for the craziness of Present Day English spelling. As we've just seen, there have in fact been individuals like Shaw who argued for a spelling reform. If English spelling was so intolerably insane, we might have expected reform efforts to succeed, putting an end to the craziness. So why didn't they?

The answers put forward rely on a mixture of three factors. First, different spelling standards existed before the printing press arrived; however, these standards were only standard in so far as different scriptoria (places where manuscripts were copied) had established spelling tendencies.[12] Secondly, the arrival of the printing press meant that the type-setters had to decide which spelling one should choose – and there were plenty of options to choose from, as we

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[11]http://languagenerdadventures.blogspot.com/2009/06/great-vowel-shift.html.

[12]We could think of these as the different formatting rules dictated by stylistic guidelines that different university programmes and publishing houses may adopt, such as APA, Chicago, and MLA, if we want to get a Present Day English approximation of the issue at hand.

shall see in Chapter 5. Moreover, since the printing press was brought to England from the Low Countries, it was common for type-setters to be speakers of Dutch, and so they introduced new ways to spell using Dutch conventions (e.g. <gh> for /g/, as in ***ghost***). The printing press was an important factor to consider, and yet, even during the times following immediately after its introduction to England, the presence of spelling variation was not socially frowned upon. This stigmatization of spelling variation came later when dictionaries of English were compiled, as we saw in Chapter 3. This step represents the codification stage of standardization as discussed in §4.1.1 above. Once specific spellings were used in dictionaries, they started gaining social prestige, and it has become difficult to reform the spelling system as a result. We may of course ask why the creators of dictionaries had not taken on the task to reform the spelling. Here, we may refer to Marshall (2011: 113), who states that "[h]undreds of proposals have been offered on how to reform the spelling of English", and Crystal (2005: 268), who sheds some light on the whole matter:

> The new symbols and the conventions introduced by the different reformers were unfamiliar, complex, idiosyncratic, and not entirely self-consistent.

Finally, there's also the matter of variation to consider. If a spelling reform is supposed to make the mapping between spelling and pronunciation clearer, *whose* pronunciation should the spelling most closely mirror? British English? American English? Something else? No spelling reform would please everyone, and a spelling reform adopted by only part of the English-speaking world would make things worse rather than better.

Why did the GVS happen in the first place?

The traditional sociolinguistic account of what caused the Great Vowel Shift is linked to the Black Death, which created a considerable labour shortage. As a result, speakers from various parts of England moved to the London area. It has been suggested that the inevitable dialect mixing that this led to functioned as a cause of the vowel shift (Millward & Hayes 2018: 250). Smith (1993) discusses the differences between the phonological systems of different social layers in London, including immigrants

from East Anglia. What may have happened, Smith argues, is that speakers who didn't have a higher /eː/ and a lower /ɛː/ in their phonological system may have overshot when trying (presumably hard) to produce the fairly high /eː/. In doing so, they overdid this and reached something that resembled /iː/ instead. Smith provides a more in-depth discussion of the situation. More recently, Stenbrenden (2016: chapter 9) proposes an intriguing suggestion that there may be language-internal precursors to the GVS, seeds that potentially provided the grounds for the GVS to be set in motion. In particular, she speculates that certain prosodic changes in the Germanic languages may have presented such precursors. See Chapter 7 for more on Germanic phonological innovations.

4.3 Morphology

4.3.1 Second person pronouns

All languages make a distinction between first person pronouns – referring to the speaker – and second person pronouns, which refer to the addressee. English is no exception, either today or at any point during its history. When it comes to first person pronouns, Present Day English is pretty rich: there's *I*, which is used (mostly) for singular subjects, and *we*, for plural subjects, as well as *me* (singular) and *us* (plural), which are the default pronouns in other contexts.

Most varieties of Present Day English aren't as rich when it comes to second person pronouns, though. Whether you're dealing with singular or plural, subject or non-subject, there's only one form that comes into question: *you*. This use of *you* is enshrined in the standard (Wales 1983: 177) – so much so that people who use a distinct form in the plural (e.g. *yous*(*e*) in Ireland and the southern hemisphere, or *y'all* in the US – perhaps also *you lot* and gender-neutral *you guys* for some speakers) face criticism and condemnation from prescriptivists, even though the distinction is, if anything, a useful thing to have (Hickey 2003).

It wasn't always this way. Before the Early Modern period, there were four different forms for second person pronouns, just as there are four different forms for first person pronouns. In the plural, *ye* was used for subjects, with *you* restricted to non-subjects. In the singular, we find two other forms: *thou* for subjects and *thee* for non-subjects. Here are some examples from the King James Bible (1611).

(1) And he saith unto them, Why are **ye** fearful, O **ye** of little faith?
(plural subject; Matthew 8:26)

(2)   And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of **you** one question
       (plural non-subject; Mark 11:29)

(3)   And he said unto him, Lord, **thou** know**est** all things.
       (singular subject; John 21:17)

(4)   And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before **thee**!
       (singular non-subject; Genesis 17:18)

Note that the subject pronoun *thou* comes with its own special verbal ending,
which is *-est* (with most verbs), as in example (3). Just as verbs in Present Day
English end in *-s* in the third person singular, verbs with second person singular
thou end in *-est*. There'll be more on verbal endings in the next chapter (§5.3.1).

The pronouns *ye*, *thou* and *thee*, and the verbal ending *-est*, were lost between
1500 and 1800 in most varieties – though they survive in some British dialects,
and in some areas of religious discourse (Wales 2004; Beal 2008: 377–378). By the
time the King James Bible translation was composed in 1611, the use of *thou* must
already have been seen as archaic. What's really interesting about these forms
in Early Modern English, though, is that "singular" and "plural" isn't actually the
whole story. Instead, the use of *thou* (and *thee*) versus *you* (and *ye*) is a fascinating
reflection of social relations between speakers, and justifies a brief foray into the
domain of HISTORICAL PRAGMATICS.

Many languages have two different second person singular pronouns reflect-
ing different status relations. Latin had *tu* and *vos*, modern French has *tu* and
vous, German has *du* and *Sie*, Czech has *ty* and *Vy*, and Mandarin Chinese has
nǐ and *nín*. We can call these systems "T-V" systems, following Brown & Gilman
(1960). In each of these languages there's a FAMILIAR pronoun (T) and a POLITE
pronoun (V), though exactly what determines the use of the two pronouns varies.
Brown & Gilman (1960) described two types of system: the "power semantic", in
which a powerful person uses the familiar pronoun to address others and expects
to be addressed with the polite pronoun in return, and the "solidarity semantic",
in which everyone uses the familiar pronoun with those who they perceive to
be social equals, but the polite pronoun to mark distance. They suggest that in
most languages of Europe the power semantic system has given way to the sol-
idarity semantic system, and that this language change reflects broader societal
changes.

Brown & Gilman's model, and the power semantic explanation, is a useful
starting point for Early Modern English: *thou* is the T pronoun, and *you* is the
V pronoun. However, Wales (1983) argues that the power-or-solidarity model is
too simplistic to account for what we find in the Early Modern English period,

especially because "there was always considerable fluctuation between T and V forms" of a kind not found in, say, present-day German or French (Wales 1983: 114). In Early Modern English, the choice between *thou* and *you* seems often to be determined by emotional or expressive factors, and to vary from context to context. By the late sixteenth century, she argues, *thou* was already a relatively rare and unusual form, and shifts to using the T-form were often motivated by particular expressive considerations.

An example from Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* (1601–2) illustrates this point. In Act III, scene 2, Sir Toby Belch is persuading Sir Andrew Aguecheek to write a letter of challenge to a rival (the play's protagonist). Belch comments that "if thou **thou**'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss". The suggestion is not that Aguecheek and his rival stand in a particular power relation to one another. Instead, Aguecheek uses the T-form rather than the V-form (*you*) because it serves a particular expressive function, in this case most likely displaying contempt and dismissiveness (Brown & Gilman 1960; Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013: 83).

The study of second person pronouns, terms of address, and historical pragmatics more broadly is flourishing at the time of writing! If you'd like to find out more, check out Jucker & Taavitsainen (2013), particularly chapter 5.

Pronoun iconoclasts: the Quakers

Not everyone was happy with the pronoun situation and the power relations they historically encoded. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers – a Christian group focused on individual enlightenment and social equality – was a strong advocate for using *thou* with everyone, describing the use of *you* as an "evill custome". As he put it in his journal,

> When the Lord sent me into the world, he forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low: and I was required to "**thee**" and "**thou**" all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small.

Since people expected traditional social hierarchies to be respected, this did not make the Quakers popular: Fox pointed out that priests and professors were likely to become particularly enraged. Sometimes violence was used to enforce the system. Thomas Ellwood, a Quaker, noted ruefully in 1683 that when talking to his father,

> I durst not say "**You**" to him; but "**Thou**", or "**Thee**", as the occasion
> required, and then would he be sure to fall on me with his fists.

The Quakers did not succeed in convincing everyone to use universal
thou: Leith (1997: 107) even suggests that the general disreputability of
the Quakers might instead have encouraged people to move away from
it! However, in Present Day English we mostly use universal *you*, and in
that respect George Fox's wish for social hierarchies not to be represented
in language has come true.

4.3.2 Other morphology to look out for

The discussion in this subsection is brief, and is intended to mention only those
aspects that might trip you up when reading Early Modern English texts.

In §2.3.1 we discussed how there is variation in Present Day English as to
whether there is an *-s* at the end of third person singular verbs (e.g. standard *she
likes* vs. *she like*). In Early Modern English, another variant can be found: the *-th*
ending, as in *she liketh*. This ending is in fact very old, going all the way back to
Old English. At the beginning of the Early Modern English period, in 1500, it is
the most common form in the third person singular, but it declines dramatically
during the period, and by 1700 it is rarely found. Originally, *-s* was a regional
form used much more in the north of England than in the south, but during the
Early Modern period it becomes the norm almost everywhere (see Nevalainen &
Raumolin-Brunberg 2016: 67–68, 177–179). The *-th* ending survives longest with
the very common verbs *HAVE* (*hath*) and *DO* (*doth*). Shakespeare, for example,
normally uses the *-s* variant, but uses the forms *hath* and *doth* as exceptions for
these specific lexical items.

In Early Modern English you are also likely to see more irregular forms. This
is true both of verbs (e.g. *holpen* as the past participle of *HELP* rather than the
Present Day form *helped*) and of nouns (e.g. *kine* as the plural of *COW* rather
than *cows*). The verbs, and the notions of regular and irregular, are covered in
more detail in the next chapter, in §5.3.2. To find out how noun plurals worked
in earlier English you'll have to wait longer, but we will cover this in §6.3.3. In
the meantime, don't hesitate to look up unfamiliar forms in a dictionary if you
can't figure out what they mean.

> ### 🔍 Frequency effects
>
> Why are some morphological forms regular and other forms irregular? For instance, in Present Day English, why is the plural of *SHOE shoes* while the plural of *CHILD* is *children*? Why is the past participle of *PLAY played* while the past participle of *EAT* is *eaten* and the past participle of *DRINK* is *drunk*? One explanation that has gained prominence in recent years involves frequency effects. Simply put, words that are used more often – lexical items which have a high TOKEN FREQUENCY – are more resistant to regularization over time. So, all else being equal, it's more likely (for instance) for a very common noun to have an irregular plural than it is for a rare noun. This type of approach doesn't explain everything: why, for example, is the plural of *OX oxen*, when this isn't a high-frequency word at all? Still, the token-frequency approach provides a good rule of thumb for understanding patterns of regularity and irregularity. See Bybee (2015: chapter 5) for a textbook explanation of frequency effects in morphological change.

4.4 Syntax

4.4.1 Verbs and *DO*-support

Present Day English has a class of auxiliaries consisting of *HAVE*, *BE*, *DO* and the modals (mainly *CAN*, *MUST*, *SHOULD*, *WILL*). These auxiliaries are set apart from normal verbs by the NICE properties (see Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 92–93):

- NEGATION. An auxiliary can be negated by a following *not* (or present-day *n't*; see §3.3.1). For instance, *She must not* or *She is not* are fine, but *She plays not or *She eats not are impossible.

- INVERSION. In questions, auxiliaries can precede the subject. *Must she?* or *Is she?* are fine, but **Plays she?* or **Eats she?* are impossible.

- CODE. This criterion is also referred to as ELLIPSIS. In a sentence like *Taylor hasn't had breakfast but **Sam has***, the understood meaning of the bolded

part is "Sam has had breakfast", and this meaning can be recovered from the linguistic context. This property of allowing meaning to arise seemingly out of thin air is unique to the auxiliaries, and normal verbs don't allow it: *Taylor likes eating breakfast but Sam doesn't like*, for instance – with ellipsis of what follows *LIKE* – is ungrammatical, whereas *Taylor likes eating breakfast but Sam doesn't* – with ellipsis of what follows the auxiliary *DO* – is fine.

- EMPHASIS. When an auxiliary is heavily stressed, as in *I DO play basketball!* or *I HAVE been to Japan!*, what is emphasized is the truth or falsity of the whole clause. In this case, one's presence in Japan (at some point in the past) is being emphasized – perhaps to counter the implication that it isn't true. You can stress normal verbs too, e.g. *I EAT snails!*, but this has a different effect on meaning: it serves to contrast different types of action or state (e.g. eating snails rather than racing them or selling them, in this example).

The NICE properties can be NICEly accounted for by assuming that auxiliaries are elements of category I, occupying the head of the IP in a syntactic tree, whereas normal verbs (henceforth LEXICAL VERBS) are of category V, occupying the head of the VP (see Los 2015: §4.3).[13]

The strategy of assuming a difference between I elements and V elements won't work for Early Modern English, though. Examples like *Plays she?* and *She plays not* are in fact grammatical and well attested here, as the following examples illustrate.

(5) **Looks it** not like the king?
(Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, c. 1600)

(6) **Came this** out of Cobham's Quiver?
(Proceedings of the trial of Walter Raleigh, 1600)

(7) I **know not** by what power I am made bold
(Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595–6)

(8) But I **rendered not** to him according to the benefit received
(Anne Bradstreet, *To my dear children*, c. 1656)

In the Early Modern English period and before, then, lexical verbs – just like auxiliaries – occupied the I position, rather than the V position. This can be described as involving MOVEMENT of the verbs from V to I, and onward to C in the case of inversion, since the subject is in the specifier of IP. Some trees illustrating this are given in (9) and (10).

---

[13]If you don't recall what terms like "I", "V" and "head" mean, take another look at §1.2.3.

(9)

```
        IP
       /  \
      I    I′
          /  \
         I    VP
         |   /  \
       know not  VP
         ↑        |
         |        V
         |        |
         +------ know
```

(10)

```
            CP
           /  \
          C    IP
          |   /  \
        Know you  I′
          ↑      /  \
          |     I    VP
          |     |   /  \
          +--- know (not) VP
                  ↑        |
                  |        V
                  |        |
                  +------ know?
```
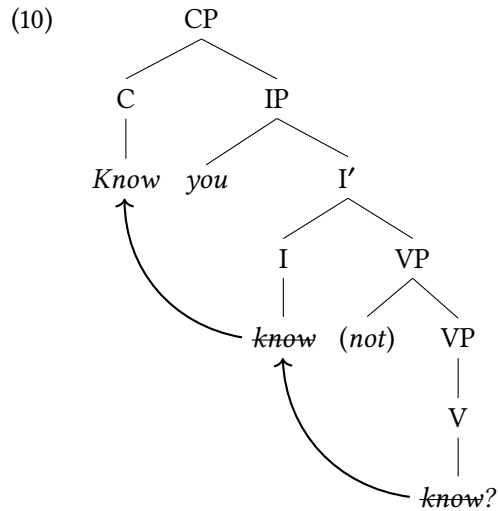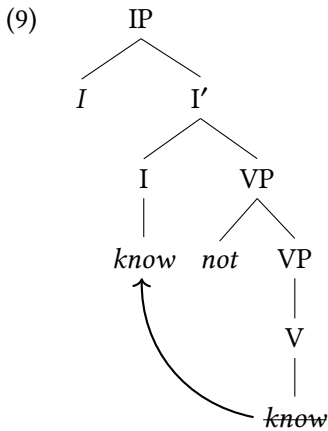
The loss of this V-to-I movement is a long process, stretching from 1400 to 1800, and involving substantial variation both within and between individuals (see e.g. Haeberli & Ihsane (2016) for details). At the same time as this fundamental change in the positioning of lexical verbs occurred, new auxiliaries were emerging. One of these is the emergence of what's called *DO*-support.[14] The *DO* of *DO*-support, like the other auxiliaries, is an I element, and bears its name because it's semantically empty: it simply has to be inserted in order to form a negative statement or a question, as in the Present Day English trees (11) and (12). Because this *DO* is an I element, it exhibits the four NICE properties discussed above.

(11)

```
        IP
       /  \
      I    I′
          /  \
         I    VP
         |   /  \
        do  not  VP
                  |
                  V
                  |
                know
```

(12)

```
            CP
           /  \
          C    IP
          |   /  \
         Do  you  I′
          ↑      /  \
          |     I    VP
          |     |   /  \
          +---- do (not) VP
                          |
                          V
                          |
                        know?
```

---
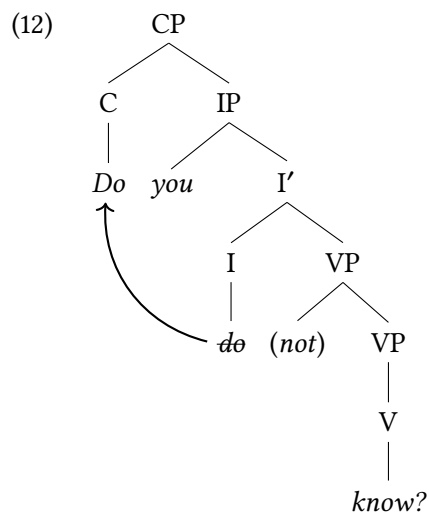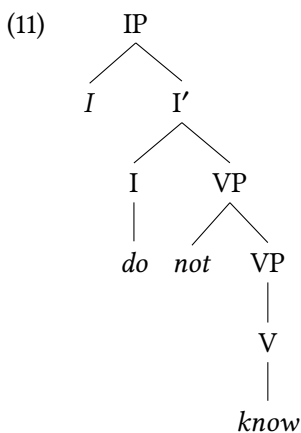
[14]Also known in the literature as PERIPHRASTIC or DUMMY *DO*.

Among the Germanic languages, *DO*-support is completely unique. In Old and Middle English, *DO* was simply a lexical verb with the semantic content of 'make' or 'achieve' (as in e.g. *I am doing my homework*). But what's striking when you compare the trees in (9) (Early Modern English) and (11) (Present Day English) for negation, or in (10) (Early Modern English) and (12) (Present Day English) for questions, is that *DO* seems to play the same role as V-to-I movement: it fills the I "slot". If that's true, the rise of *DO*-support should take place at the same time as the fall in V-to-I movement – and this seems to be correct (Roberts 1985, 1993, Kroch 1989).[15]
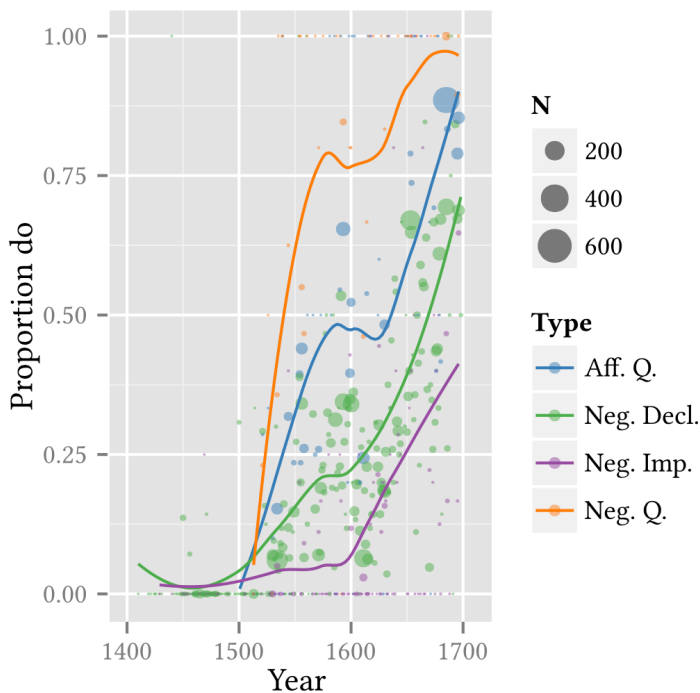
Figure 4.6: The rise of *DO*-support in a variety of linguistic contexts. The dip after 1575 is clearly visible. From Ecay (2015: 54), used with author's permission; data are taken from the Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English, replicating Ellegård (1953).

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[15]Why *DO*, of all verbs, becomes an auxiliary with no semantic content is another question. One prominent suggestion is that influence from the Celtic languages of Britain (see §6.1.2) may have played a role. Present Day Welsh offers us sentences such as *Dwi'n hedfan hefo alarchod* 'I fly/I'm flying with swans', where the auxiliary verb *BE* is the *dwi* component in this case ('am', literally). The Welsh *dwi* is phonologically quite close to the Present Day English *DO*. See van der Auwera & Genee (2002) for references and an evaluation.

Sociolinguistic and stylistic factors also play a role in the change. In negative declarative clauses like (9) and (11), the use of *DO*-support increases up until 1575, then levels out for a while (see Figure 4.6). Warner (2005) shows that, before 1575, texts that contain a more complex vocabulary also contain more *DO*-support, but after 1600 the picture is reversed: texts with a more complex lexicon use less *DO*-support. The rate of *DO*-support increases steadily in texts with a less complex lexicon, but rises and then falls after 1575 in texts with a more complex lexicon. After 1600, older people also use *DO* less. How to explain this? Warner (2005) suggests that after 1600 a strong stylistic dispreference for *DO*-support in higher register texts emerged. It's plausible to think that this is linked to the rise of a standard language ideology (§4.1.1) and of an increasingly judgemental behaviour around written norms during the same period: perhaps what was perceived as more formal/standard at the later stage reflected a "pre-*DO*" stage.

The modals

The core modals – *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, and *would* – have properties in Present Day English that are odd even by auxiliary standards: for instance, they can't have non-finite forms (e.g. *I want to can). See §5.4.2 of this book for discussion of the morphosyntactic properties of the modals, and also §3.4.2 on the more recently emerging "semi-modals".

For more detail on the changes discussed in this subsection, and fuller versions of the arguments developed here, see Los (2015: Chapter 4, especially §4.6).

4.4.2 Preposition stranding

Is a preposition something you'd end a sentence with? If not, what are you afraid of? Preposition stranding – i.e. the placement of a preposition apart from, usually after, the noun phrase it belongs to – is one of the grammatical features of English that prescriptivists most love to complain about (Crystal 2006b: 107–115). Nevertheless, it has been part of the English language since before the earliest texts were written.[16] All three of the opening sentences of this paragraph con-

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[16]Though not in exactly the same contexts in which it appears in Present Day English. See Fischer et al. (2000: 64–67) for a discussion of preposition stranding in Old English, and a syntactic analysis.

tain preposition stranding. Here are some more examples from Early Modern English:

(13) Sulphur like unto the common one, and more combustible than perhaps you will at first take notice **of**
(Robert Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist*, 1661)

(14) Oroonoko was first seized **on**, and sold to our overseer
(Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, 1688)

(15) The mawes, and dens of beasts could not receiue
The bodies, that those soules were frighted **from**
(Ben Jonson, *Catiline his Conspiracy*, 1611)

(16) What were you talking **of** when I came?
(Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609)

The more standard option for preposition placement is called PIED-PIPING, and has the preposition next to its complement, e.g. *Of what were you talking?*

Where did the proscription against stranded prepositions come from, then, and how did it enter into the standard language? The first person to explicitly condemn stranding seems to have been John Dryden, an English literary critic and poet. In an essay of 1672 criticizing the "errors" of earlier writers, Dryden seizes upon example (15),[17] describing it as "[t]he preposition in the end of the sentence; a common fault with him [Jonson], and which I have but lately observed in my own writings." When revising his own work after 1668, Dryden attempted to "correct" stranded prepositions (Bately 1964; Yáñez-Bouza 2015: 157–158, 188–194). Dryden also rewrote Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, a play which he described as a "heap of Rubbish", in 1679, and corrected *talking of* in example (16) to *a talking*.

Dryden clearly saw himself as someone trying to improve the English language. However, why Dryden disliked stranded prepositions so much, and considered them a "fault", is not entirely clear. Bately (1964: 275) suggests that he is trying to "force the mother tongue into a Latin mould": Latin does not allow separation of a preposition from the noun phrase that follows it.[18] Many writings on English grammar from the same period were heavily influenced by the

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[17]Ironically, Dryden actually makes an error in his citation of Jonson, writing *waves* rather than the original *mawes*.

[18]Note that this is not a *prescriptive* rule of Latin. Rather, Latin native speakers (and writers) simply didn't strand prepositions, just as modern French or German or Czech native speakers don't today. In these languages, we're talking about a part of the mental grammar that is largely below the level of consciousness, not a taught prescriptive rule. See Freidin (2019: 75–83) for discussion of the difference.

regularities of Latin. But the fallacy in this way of thinking is patently obvious: English simply isn't Latin.

The proscription against preposition stranding may originate with Dryden, but makes its way into the standard as part of the process of codification (see §4.1.1) during the eighteenth century. Robert Lowth, who is known to have read Dryden, discusses stranding in his extremely influential 1762 *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, and says the following (Lowth 1762: 127–128):

> [Stranding] is an Idiom, which our language is strongly inclined to; it prevails in common conversation, and suits very well with the familiar style in writing; but the placing of a Preposition before the Relative is more graceful, as well as more perspicuous; and agrees much better with the solemn and elevated Style.

"Bishop Lowth" has been demonized as the arch-prescriptivist, but more recent research has shown that this is not really fair (Beal 2004: 111; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010). In this quote we see Lowth making a distinction between speech and writing, and between "familiar" and "solemn" styles (Yáñez-Bouza 2015: 214–218).

Lowth also uses stranding himself here ("strongly inclined **to**"). Still, Lowth gives no reason for considering stranding to be less graceful or perspicuous. And all of the nuance in Lowth's careful statement is stripped out by later grammarians, who adopt much of Lowth's work almost verbatim (norms around authorship, attribution, and plagiarism were not the same in the eighteenth century as they are today). Yáñez-Bouza (2015: 218) is able to trace Lowth's influence in twenty different texts by fifteen different authors of the period. Lindley Murray's (1795) *English Grammar* is one notable example, reproducing Lowth's text almost exactly but changing the text to get rid of the stranding ("an idiom **to which** our language is strongly inclined"). Traces of Lowth's passage can

Figure 4.7: Robert Lowth

also be found in the works of the female grammarians of the period, such as Ellin Devis.

Dryden's and Lowth's remarks and the codification of stranding as outside the standard had a real effect on usage. Yáñez-Bouza (2015: chapter 4) and Sairio

(2009) show that the frequency of preposition stranding in written texts sinks dramatically during the second half of the eighteenth century, even in the usage of individuals over their lifespan. Still, preposition stranding is alive and well in Present Day English, even if still frowned upon by some prescriptive authorities, suggesting that even the strongest prescriptive condemnation is unlikely to extirpate a syntactic feature entirely.

4.5 Lexicon

Three phenomena are particularly noteworthy when it comes to the lexicon of Early Modern English. Two are related to borrowings: as we saw in §4.1, Early Modern English is marked by English becoming standardized and by colonization. The former, as we shall see here, is closely tied to lexical borrowings from Latin, French, and Greek, and caused quite a stir-up at the time (the so-called inkhorn controversy). The latter meant that English speakers came into contact with speakers of many other languages, on an unprecedented scale at the time. Finally, when contrasted with the older periods, Early Modern English saw a rise in a DERIVATIONAL process called conversion. Let's have a look at these one by one in what follows.

4.5.1 Conversion

We have seen a process known as conversion already in Chapters 1 and 2. It is also known as zero shift, functional shift, or zero derivation (or a DERIVATION by a zero MORPHEME, to add one more term to the menagerie). Conversion involves a process whereby a word of a specific word class is used as a word of another word class without its structure being changed in any way. For instance, the word *bottle* would come to our mind most likely as a noun by default, as in *There's a **bottle** on the table.* However, if we put this word in a different syntactic context, it becomes a verb, as in *Let's **bottle** some wine!* and *She had been **bottl**ing wine for as long as she could remember, introduced to the art by her father.*[19]

We can find some remarkable cases of conversion already in Early Modern English, e.g. in Shakespeare's ***Grace** me no grace, nor **uncle** me no uncle* from *Richard II*, where the nouns *grace* and *uncle* are unconventionally used also as verbs. In Present Day English, we can occasionally find even entire clauses used as verbs or modifiers, as in *"Don't "I told you so" me," Martin snapped.* (Clark-Platts 2016).

This has nevertheless not always been the case throughout the earlier history of the English language. This word-formation strategy became "the third most

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[19]OED, s.v. bottle, v.1.

common way of expanding the vocabulary" only in the period of 1500–1700 (Millward & Hayes 2018: 283), following affixing and COMPOUNDING.

I'd be bumblebeed

Some internet searching gives us cases of conversions such as the following:[a]

- *however we were now short of a header tank for the heating/stove and as its 40 miles to town I was* **bumblebeed** *if I was going to buy one* [...]

The word *bumblebee*, historically and by default used as a noun, can apparently also be used as a verb, albeit extremely marginally so. Well, I'd sure be bumblebeed...

[a]https://www.navitron.org.uk/forum/index.php?topic=7443.15.

4.5.2 Colonial borrowings

Figure 4.8: Wombat: a marsupial native to Australia (photo by Stygiangloom, licensed under CC-BY 2.0)

Encounters with new cultures and new fauna and flora typically require new labels for new concepts. These concepts are typically nouns (e.g. a wombat, a rather cute marsupial native to Australia; see Figure 4.8), which makes sense considering new labels are typically needed for fairly specific objects, unknown to the explorers.

If we use the advanced search option in the Oxford English Dictionary and limit our search to loans from Australian Aboriginal languages between the years of 1500–1700, we find no results. Considering what we said about the history of Australian English (in the box in §2.1.3), this makes sense: Anglophone presence in Australia dates back to 1788. It therefore

also makes sense that extending the period to 1800 produces 11 loanwords, such as *dingo* and *wombat* (from Dharug) and *kangaroo* (from Guugu Yimidhirr). Ten of these are nouns and ten refer to the fauna and flora of Australia, and Australian culture. This trend is confirmed by searches restricted to other groups of non-European languages: loanwords are often nouns necessary to label newly encountered objects and entities.

Searching within 1500–1700, we get 46 loans from Austronesian languages of the Asia-Pacific region and Oceania, all of which are nouns (three of these are nouns as well as another word class). One Austronesian loan is *babirusa*, 'a long-legged wild pig', from Malay. Considering the longer colonial history in North America (in contrast to Australia), it is not surprising that Native American languages give us 106 results. Of these, all can function as nouns, and some as other word classes as well. Some of these loans include *maize* and *potato* (both from Taíno via Spanish), *tomato* (from Nahuatl via Spanish), *jaguar*, *moccasin*, *moose*, *raccoon*, *squash*, and *terrapin*. Limiting the search to contact with languages of the Indian subcontinent, 239 results are provided. This high number also makes sense: the Indian subcontinent was heavily exploited by the colonizers. Again, all but three of these loans can function as nouns. Some of these include *Buddha* (from Pali), *dungaree*, *ghee*, *guru*, *pukka*, *pundit*, and *yogi* (from Hindi/Urdu), and *mongoose* (from Telugu via Portuguese). Central and Eastern Asian languages result in 131 entries, including for instance *baklava*, *harem*, and *yoghurt* (from Turkish), *cha* (related to Present Day English *chai* and *tea*; from Chinese), *Islam* (from Arabic), *jackal* (from Persian and Turkish), *ketchup*, *litchi* and *kumquat* (from Chinese), *lama* (from Tibetan), *soy* (from Japanese), and *tulip* (multiple languages). Middle Eastern and Afro-Asiatic languages lead to 357 entries and African languages give us 15 loans (such as *okra*, a type of edible plant, from a Niger-Congo language, probably Igbo).

These trends are by no means limited to Early Modern English. If we did similar searches for the languages relevant for Late Modern English or Present Day English, we would also find plenty of borrowings necessary for unknown objects, perfectly known in the newly explored locales. Typically, as we shall see in the chapters to follow, the type of linguistic materials borrowed from a language depends on the nature of the cultural contact and very much on the situational power relationships. Studying where which words come from can thus provide interesting evidence related to the relationships of different cultures through times.

4.5.3 Latin and Greek borrowings: the inkhorn controversy

By the start of the Early Modern period in 1500, the Renaissance was in full flow in Europe. A philosophical movement originating in what is now Italy, the intellectual roots of the Renaissance were in Classical Latin and Greek thought, particularly the Greek philosophers, who had been "rediscovered" in Europe shortly before. Its effect upon the intelligentsia of early modern Europe was profound: from 1450 onwards, universities began to spring up in great numbers all around Europe.

Comparison with Latin and Greek no doubt played an important role in the emerging standardization of the modern languages of Europe. In the lexicon of English, this is particularly evident in the borrowing of many new words from Latin and Greek during the Early Modern period. According to the data from the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary in Durkin (2014: 23–28), Latin is by far the most prolific donor language in the history of English to date, responsible for over thirteen thousand borrowings into English.[20] English has always borrowed words from Latin, but the peak of these borrowings is just after 1600.[21] Greek, meanwhile, is in third place after French (on which see §5.5.1 in the next chapter), responsible for well over two thousand borrowings, almost all dating to after 1500. Together, Latin and Greek account for over half of all lexical borrowings in the history of English. Admittedly, the vast majority of these Latin and Greek borrowings are highly learned and/or technical terms which only appear very rarely and in specific registers. Nevertheless, the impact of these classical languages on the lexicon of English during the Early Modern period was clearly immense. The second half of the seventeenth century saw more borrowings enter English than any other period in history (Durkin 2014: 299–301). Perhaps even more strikingly, these new Latin and Greek words were ready input to further word-formation processes, which continued robustly in English during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in the scientific domain (Durkin 2014: 340–347).

As we've seen in the section on standardization (§4.1.1), one of the processes involved is ELABORATION: the new standard language is used in new domains, or used increasingly in domains where other languages were dominant, and this brings with it a need for new words. These words can be formed using the language's own word-formation strategies, such as conversion (§4.5.1 above), or they can simply be borrowed. Since the discourse in many of these new domains

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[20]The total number of headwords in the OED3 is 92,500.
[21]If you have access, you can check this for yourself at http://www.oed.com/timelines.

Table 4.1: Some borrowings from Latin in Early Modern English (Durkin 2014: chapter 14)

celebrate	communicate	contemplate
describe	fact	frivolous
national	pulsate	reconciliatory
resonate	subsidiary	supervise

was previously dominated in usage by Latin in particular, borrowing words from Latin was the most obvious fix.

This influx of borrowings from classical languages did not sit well with everyone. The incipiently standardizing English language was becoming a source of pride: headmaster Richard Mulcaster commented in 1582 that "I take this present period of our English tung to be the verie height thereof". Mulcaster also commented on the number of words being borrowed into the language, "either of pure necessitie in new matters, or of mere brauerie, to garnish it self withall". Here *brauerie* means 'showiness' or 'ostentatiousness', implying that some of these borrowings were for reasons of fashion, not because they were needed. The prestige of classical languages meant that using Latin and Greek words in English could be taken as a mark of education, or of (perceived) social superiority. In turn, people could be mocked for this. The teacher Holofernes in Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost* peppers his language liberally with Latin and Latinisms (e.g. when reading a letter, he says "I will **overglance** the **superscript**"), and is intended as a figure of ridicule. Thomas Wilson's influential *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) puts it like this:

> Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee neuer affect any straunge ynkhorne termes, but to speak as is commonly received … Some seeke so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language.

Wilson writes of "inkhorn terms", which became a catchphrase for Latin and Latinate words that were perceived to be unnecessary or affected. This influenced the first generation of dictionaries in the seventeenth century, such as Thomas Blount's (1656) *Glossographia*: these works were lists of explanations of words thought to be difficult, not dictionaries in the sense we're more familiar with today. Although it's easy to laugh at the supposed pretentiousness of the Early Modern writers criticized, the darker side of the inkhorn controversy is linguistic PURISM (Thomas 1991, Langer & Nesse 2012), the desire to preserve languages

from foreign elements, and the view that inherited words are better than borrowed ones. Linguistic purism goes hand in hand with standard language ideology and with ethnonationalism, and so it is not surprising to see it on show in the Early Modern period.

The critics of inkhorn terms were not, on the whole, successful in suppressing Latin words. All of the words in Table 4.1 are still found in English today, with no particular negative connotations. Still, in some quarters the sentiment behind the inkhorn critics persists. As recently as 1946, George Orwell's essay *Politics and the English Language* complains that "unnecessary words like *expedite, ameliorate, predict, extraneous, deracinated, clandestine, subaqueous,* and hundreds of others constantly gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers". Needless to say, Orwell provides no evidence for this claim, nor any argument for the superiority of their inherited Germanic "opposite numbers".[22]

4.6 Final note

It's the Early Modern period more than any other that explains how and why the English language got to where it is today – both in terms of its geographical distribution and its social status. We've seen that the process of standardization – closely linked to the rise of nationalism – really took off during this period, as did the spread of English worldwide via colonialism and imperialism. Some of the linguistic changes we see during this period are also connected to this emerging sense of British self-importance: the rise of borrowings from the prestige languages Greek and Latin (and the pushback against these borrowings) is a case in point. But, just like in every other period, we also see structural changes that bear no obvious relation to social or cultural developments, such as the rise of *DO*-support and the Great Vowel Shift. These are good indications that standardization – for all its centrality to the way we think about language today – can never prevent a language from developing in new and unexpected ways.

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[22]For more on the inkhorn controversy, see https://shakespeareandbeyond.folger.edu/2019/04/05/inkhorn-controversy-latin-greek-english-words/ and Barber (1997: Chapter 2) – also make sure to have a go at Exercise 7!

Suggested exercises

E.1 Reflexes of the Great Vowel Shift

You will be using a dataset created as part of the project called "Seeing Speech" (Lawson et al. 2015).[a]

A.
Listen to the production of FACE, GOAT, MOUTH of the speakers from the following places:

1. Greater Manchester

2. Kent

3. London

4. Newcastle

5. North Yorkshire

6. Co. Tipperary

7. Orkney

8. Perthshire

Note whether the vowel is a monophthong, a diphthong, or somewhere in between. Is it always easy to decide?

B.
Which of these speakers show more conservative vowel features? In other words, which speakers' accents reflect older stages of the language?

Tip for the teachers: This can be assigned as a written exercise practising summarizing skills. Give the students a maximum word count and a deadline for the written exercise.

Tip for the students: If you're asked to submit your answers as a written assignment, your answer should be structured as follows: 1. What's the question/problem? (setting up the context); 2. Show us how you answer this question/tackle the problem. (argumentation); 3. What's your answer/conclusion? (sum up clearly)

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[a]The dataset is available here: https://www.dynamicdialects.ac.uk/accent-chart/.

E.2 For I thou thee, thou traitor!

Look at the 2nd person pronouns in the two passages below. The pronouns are highlighted for you. The first passage comes from the *Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight, for High Treason, by a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer, at Winchester, 17th November, 1603. 2 James I* (Jardine 1832: 408–410). The second bunch of excerpts is taken from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. We give you a snippet of a conversation between Hamlet and the Queen, his mother, and also a conversation between Hamlet and the Ghost, who turns out to be his dead (murdered) father. Your tasks are presented following the excerpts.[a]

A.

> **Sir Walter Raleigh**. All this while **you** tell me news, Mr. Attorney.
>
> **Attorney General**. Sir Walter, I cannot blame **you**, though **you** be moved.
>
> **Sir Walter Raleigh**. Nay, **you** fall out with **yourself**; I have said nothing to **you**; I am in no case to be angry.
>
> [...]
>
> **Attorney General**. After Raleigh understood that he was accused by my Lord Cobham, it was contrived that the Lord Cobham should retract his accusation, and that he might make his retraction known and believed, the course was this: [...]. Came this contrivance, think

you, out of Cobham's quiver? No, but out of Raleigh's devilish and Machiavelian policy. **You** shall hear that it was after Cobham had had intelligence with this viper in the Tower, that he devised this false artifice. But Sir Thomas Fane would be no party in such a business, and sent the letter to the Council.

Sir Walter Raleigh. What is that to me? I do not hear yet that **you** have spoken one word against me; here is no treason of mine done; if my Lord Cobham be a traitor, what is that to me?

Attorney General. All that he did was by **thy** instigation, **thou** viper, for I **thou thee**, **thou** traitor! I will prove **thee** the rankest traitor in all England.

Sir Walter Raleigh. No, no, Mr. Attorney, I am no traitor. Whether I live or die, I shall stand as true a subject as any the King hath; **you** may call me traitor at your pleasure; yet it becomes not a man of quality and virtue to do so; but I take comfort in it, it is all that **you** can do, for I do not yet hear that **you** charge me with any treason.

Lord Chief Justice. Sir Walter Raleigh, Mr. Attorney speaks out of the zeal of his duty for the service of the King; and **you** for your life; be patient on both sides.

B.

QUEEN. Let not **thy** mother lose her prayers, Hamlet. I pray **thee** stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET. I shall in all my best obey **you**, madam.

[…]

HAMLET. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Be **thou** a spirit of health or goblin damn'd, Bring with **thee** airs from heaven or blasts from hell, be **thy** intents wicked or charitable, **thou** com'st in such a questionable shape that I will speak to **thee**. […] What may this mean, that **thou**, dead corse, again in complete steel, […] say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?

HORATIO. It beckons **you** to go away with it, as if it some impartment did desire to **you** alone.

[...]

HAMLET. Whither wilt **thou** lead me? Speak, I'll go no further.

GHOST. Mark me.

HAMLET. I will.

GHOST. My hour is almost come, when I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames must render up myself.

HAMLET. Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST. Pity me not, but lend **thy** serious hearing to what I shall unfold.

HAMLET. Speak, I am bound to hear.

GHOST. So art **thou** to revenge, when **thou** shalt hear. [...] I am **thy** father's spirit, doom'd for a certain term to walk the night, [t]ill the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purg'd away. [...] List, list, O, list! If **thou** didst ever **thy** dear father love—

HAMLET. O God!

GHOST. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET. Murder! [The Ghost/Father tells him how he was murdered by Hamlet's uncle, the Ghost's/former King's brother.] O my prophetic soul! Mine uncle!

GHOST. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, with witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,— o wicked wit, and gifts, that have the power so to seduce!—won to his shameful lust the will of my most seeming-virtuous queen. [...] Adieu, adieu, adieu. Hamlet, remember me.

HAMLET. O all **you** host of heaven! O earth! What else? And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, my heart; And **you**, my sinews, grow not instant old. But bear me stiffly up. Remember **thee**? Ay, **thou** poor

ghost, while memory holds a seat in this distracted globe. Remember **thee**?

And here are your tasks:

1. Identify instances where the same speaker switches from *you* (or *yourself*) to *thou* (or *thyself* or *thee*), and the other way round. Why do you think these switches take place?

2. Looking beyond pronouns, how do the speakers address each other? Give specific noun phrases (e.g. *lovely bumblebee*) or determiner phrases (e.g. *my precious jewel*). Are these forms of address negative, positive, or neutral? Can this help to shed any light on the pronominal switches you've identified?

3. The Chief Lord of Justice makes a mention of the emotional state of the Attorney General. How does this relate to the pronominal switches, if at all?

4. This time you were given fairly long passages to look at. Why weren't you given just those sentences that contain 2nd person pronouns?

---

*a*These passages are taken from the following Project Gutenberg webpage, accessed in February 2020: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1524/1524-h/1524-h.htm.

E.3 Shakespearean syntax

Examine the Shakespearean quotations below and describe how they differ from Present Day English morphologically and syntactically. Pay particular attention to what the finite verb is doing.

1. *What says he of our marriage? What of that?* (Romeo and Juliet 2.5)

2. *Put up your swords; you know not what you do.* (Romeo and Juliet

1.1)

3. *A crutch, a crutch! why call you for a sword?* (Romeo and Juliet 1.1)

4. *O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day?* (Romeo and Juliet 1.1)

5. *Fear me not.* (Romeo and Juliet 1.1)

E.4 Preposition stranding in your own daily life?

1. Find 3 examples of preposition stranding
   - on the social media you engage with
   - in spoken interactions you have with others

2. Was it difficult to find these 3 examples for each context?

3. Now rewrite these examples so that they don't contain any preposition stranding.

4. Finally, try this exercise in reverse! Find three examples of pied-piping – perhaps in academic articles or textbooks. Now rewrite them so that they contain preposition stranding!

Acknowledgement: this exercise was suggested to us by Nicole Tamer.

E.5 Whence synonymity?

The following 20 words represent 10 pairs of synonyms. You need to identify these 10 pairs:

> *bless, break, chew, cogitate, consecrate, depart, disintegrate, drink, emancipate, flood, free, go, imbibe, inundate, job, lie, masticate, position, prevaricate, think*

One word in each pair is Latin- or French-derived and one is Germanic. Sort the individual words into two categories: one with all the Germanic words and one with all the Romance words.

1. What differences (e.g. number of syllables, semantics, etc.) do you notice between the two sets?

2. Discuss the language styles in which the use of one or the other is more appropriate.

Acknowledgement: this exercise was taken and slightly adapted from Johanna Wood's 2016 teaching materials.

E.6 Irregular plurals in Present Day English

Sometimes borrowed words keep their foreign plurals. This often happens with Latin and Greek words used in specialized areas by educated people. Among such loan words are the following:

> *analysis, cherub, index, matrix, medium, nucleus, species, stigma,* and *stratum*

For each, give the foreign plural and the language from which it derives. (You will need a good dictionary, such as the online OED.)

Sometimes two different plural forms may be used with different functions. Are you aware of any of these words above using both a regular and irregular plural with different meanings?

E.7 Inkhorn controversy

Note: for this exercise you will need access to the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED) via your library or university.

In 1557, Sir John Cheke wrote the following:

> I am of this opinion that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tunges, wherin if we take not heed by tiim, ever borowing and never payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tung naturallie and praisablie utter her meaning, when she bouroweth no counterfeitness of other tunges to attire her self withall, but useth plainlie her own, … and if she want at ani tiim (as being unperfight she must) yet let her borow with suche bashfulness, that it mai appear, that if either the mould of our own tung could serve us to fascion a woord of our own, or if the old denisoned wordes could content and ease this neede, we wold not boldly venture of unknowen wordes. (in Wells 1973: 31)

Look up the etymology of the following words in the OED: *opinion*, *clean*, *pure*, *unmixed*, *unmangled*, *borrow*, *tongue*, *never*, *paying*, *fine*, *keep*, *house*, *bankrupt.*

Having looked up the etymology, what would you say to Sir John Cheke as a trained linguist?

E.8 Food for thought

- If the English spelling was reformed so that the grapheme-phoneme correspondence was a 1:1 correspondence, what immediate pros and cons would we have to deal with and why?

- Which English accent should a spelling reform be based on and why?

- Are chain shifts such as the Northern Cities Shift or the Short Front Vowel Lowering to blame for the inconsistencies in Present Day English spelling?

- Find a speaker of a language with T and V pronouns (widely-spoken languages with a T-V distinction include Bengali, Chinese, French, Hindi/Urdu, Russian, Spanish, and some varieties of Arabic). Try to understand how their T-V distinction works. Is the distinction a useful one? Why (or why not)?

E.9 Investigating *y'all*, *youse*, *you guys*, and *you lot*

As mentioned in the chapter, new second person plural forms have recently emerged, such as *y'all*, *youse*, *you guys*, and *you lot*. How would you design a project whose aim would be answering one of the following questions?

- How old is the 2nd person pronoun construction?

- Is it used in a specific region?

- Is it used by a specific generation?

- Is it sex and/or gender sensitive?

- Is the pronoun stigmatized in any way, or is it viewed positively?

When thinking about your project design, consider the type of language you'd analyse (e.g. spoken, written, formal, informal), and whether you'd have to collect your own data (and how you would do that) or whether you could use already existing materials (corpora, evidence online, etc.). Don't be afraid of the power of imagination!

T.1 A narrative of the captivity and removes of Mrs Mary Rowlandson

Captivity narratives were a popular genre of literature in colonial North America. Here, Mary Rowlandson (c. 1637–1711) describes her capture by Native Americans (she was later ransomed and released). Texts like these are useful as sources on Native Americans and their encounters with the colonists at the time, though they are far from neutral, and tell us as much if not more about the Puritan morality of the writers.[a]

ON the 10th of *February*, 1675, came the Indians with great numbers upon *Lancaſter*: their firſt coming was about ſun-riſing; hearing the noiſe of ſome guns, we looked out: ſeveral houſes were burning and the ſmoke aſcending to heaven. There were five perſons taken in one houſe, the father and mother, and a fucking child they knocked on the head, the other two they took and carried away alive. There were two others, who being out of their garriſon upon occaſion, were ſet upon; one was knocked on the head, the other eſcaped: Another there was who running along was ſhot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his life, promiſing them money (as they told me) but they would not hearken to him, but knocked him on the head, ſtript

begged them to let him live

hearken: listen; stripped

him naked, and ſplit open his bowels. Another ſee-
ing many of the *Indians* about his barn, ventur'd
and went out, but was quickly ſhot down. There
were three others belonging to the ſame garriſon
who were killed; the *Indians* getting up upon the
roof of the barn, had advantage to ſhoor down upon
them over their fortification. Thus theſe murther-
ous wretches went on burning & deſtroying all be-
fore them.

ſhoor: shower
murderous

...

Then I took my children (and one of my ſiſters her's)
to go forth and leave the houſe: but as ſoon as we
came to the door, and appear'd, the *Indians* ſhot ſo
thick, that the bullets rattled againſt the houſe, as if
one had taken a handful of ſtones and threw them,
ſo that we were forced to give back. We had ſix ſtout
dogs belonging to our garriſon, but none of them
would ſtir though at another time, if an *Indian* had
come to the door, they were ready to fly upon him
and tear him down. The Lord hereby would make us
the more to acknowledge his hand, and to ſee that
our help is always in him. But out we muſt go, the
fire increaſing, and coming along behind us roaring,
and the *Indians* gaping before us with their guns,
ſpears, and hatchets to devour us.

ſtir: move

...

My eldeſt ſiſter being yet in the houſe and ſeeing
thoſe woeful ſights, the infidels halling mothers one
way and children another, and ſome wallowing in
their blood: And her eldeſt ſon telling her that her
ſon *William* was dead, and myſelf was wounded, ſhe
ſaid, and *Lord let me die with them*: which was no
ſooner ſaid. but ſhe was ſtruck with a bullet, and fell
down dead over the threſhold. I hope ſhe is reaping
the fruit of her good labours, being faithful to the
ſervice of God in her place. In her younger years

woeful: awful; *halling*:
hauling

ſhe lay under much trouble upon ſpiritual accounts, till it pleaſed God to make that precious ſcripture take hold of her heart, *3 Cor. 12. 9. And he ſaid unto me, My grace is ſufficient for thee.* More than twenty years after, I have heard her tell how ſweet and comfortable that place was to her. But to return; The *Indians* laid hold of us, pulling me one way, and the children another, and ſaid, *Come, go along with us*: I told them they would kill me; they anſwered, *If I were willing to go along with them, they would not hurt me.*

[a]The text is taken from the *Emerging Voices* CORPUS (Walkden 2019), and is originally from the 1791 edition available at https://archive.org/details/narrativeofcapti00inrowl/, pp. 3–5.

T.2 Anne Bradstreet, *A Dialogue between Old England and New*

Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672) has the distinction of being the first published writer of the English colonies in North America. Born in England to a well-off family, she emigrated to America in 1630, where she remained for the rest of her life, becoming a poet widely read on both sides of the Atlantic.

This poem, written in 1642 and taken from her collection *The tenth muse lately sprung up in America*, has as its subject matter the unease that was to lead to the English Civil War. An extract is presented here.[a]

New England.
ALas, deare Mother, fairest Queen, and best,
With honour, wealth, and peace, happy and blest,   blessed
What ayles thee hang thy head, and crosse thine   ails
armes?

And sit i'th dust, to sigh these sad alarms? *in the*

What deluge of new woes thus over-whelme *troubles*

The glories of thy ever famous Realme?

What meanes this wailing tone, this mourning guise?

Ah, tell thy Daughter, she may simpathize.

Old England.

Art ignorant indeed, of these my woes?

Or must my forc•d tongue these grief•s disclose?

...

Well, to the matter then, there's grown of late,

'Twixt King and Peeres a question of state, *between*

Which is the chief, the law, or else the King,

One saith its he, the other no such thing. *says it is him*

My better part in Court of Parliament,

To ease my groaning land shew their intent, *show*

To crush the proud, and right to each man deal.

To help the Church, and stay the Common-Weal, *shared good*

So many obstacles comes in their way,

As puts me to a stand what I should say,

Old customes, new Prerogatives stood on,

Had they not held law fast, all had been gone,

Which by their prudence stood them in such stead,

They took high *Strafford* lower by the head, *Earl Strafford and Archbishop Laud, two prominent Royalists*

And to their *Laud* be't spoke, they held i'th' Tower,

All *Englands* Metropolitane that houre,

This done, an Act they would have passed fain, *fain: gladly*

No prelate should his Bishoprick retain; *prelate: bishop*

Here tugg'd they hard indeed, for all men saw,

This must be done by Gospel, not by law.

Next the *Militia* they urged sore,

This was deny'd, I need not say wherefore. *wherefore: why*

The King displeas'd, at *York* himself absents,

They humbly beg return, shew their intents, *show*

The writing, printing, posting to and fro,

Shews all was done, I'll therefore let it go.

But now *I* come to speak of my disaster,
Contention's grown 'twixt Subjects and their Mas-
ter:
They worded it so long, they fell to blows,
That thousands lay on heaps, here bleeds my woes.

---

[a]From https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A77237.0001.001/1:11?rgn=div1;view=
fulltext, pp186–187, accessed May 2020.

T.3 King James Bible

The King James Bible translation was commissioned by James I of England and translated between 1604 and 1611. Despite the availability of newer, more readable translations, the King James version has not lost its relevance: in 2011, to mark its 400th anniversary, British Education Secretary Michael Gove sent a copy to every school in the country, a gesture that met with mixed responses. The section presented here is from the Book of Obadiah.[a]

THe viſion of Obadiah: Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, concerning Edom; Wee haue heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambaſſador is ſent among the heathen: Ariſe yee, and let vs. riſe against her in battell.

[2] Behold, I haue made thee ſmall among the heathen: thou art greatly deſpiſed.

[3] ¶ The pride of thine heart hath deceiued thee: thou that dwelleth in the clefts of the rocke, whoſe habitation is high, that ſaith in his heart; Who shall bring me downe to the ground?

[4] Though thou exalt thy ſelfe as the eagle, and though ſet thy neſt among the ſtarres, thence will I bring the downe, ſaith the Lord.

[5] If theeues came to thee, if robbers by night (how art thou cut off?) would they not have ſtollen til they had enough? if the grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leaue some grapes?

⁶ How are the things of Eſau ſearched out? how are his hid things ſought up?

⁷ All the men of thy confederacie haue brought thee euen to the border: the men that were at peace with thee, haue deceiued thee, and preuailed againſt thee: they that eate thy bread haue laide a wound vnder thee: there is none vnderſtanding in him.

⁸ Shal I not in that day, ſaith the LORD, euen deſtroy the wiſe men out of Edom, and vnderſtanding out of the mount of Eſau?

⁹ And thy mightie men, O Teman, ſhall be diſmayed, to the end that euery one of the mount of Eſau may be cut off by ſlaughter.

T.4 Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The Bard of Avon is famous enough that we don't need to dwell on him here. *A Midſommer nights Dreame* was written in 1595–1596. Pay attention to the use of the second person pronouns in this text.*a*

HERMIA   What's this to my *Lyſander*? where is he?
             Ah good *Demetrius*, wilt thou giue him me?

DEMETRIUS I'de rather giue his carkaſſe to my hounds.

HERMIA   Out dog, out cur, thou driu'ſt me paſt the bounds
             Of maidens patience. Haſt thou ſlaine him then?
             Henceforth be neuer numbred among men.
             Oh, once tell true, euen for my ſake,
             Durſt thou a lookt vpon him, being awake?
             And haſt thou kill'd him ſleeping? O braue tutch,
             Could not a worme, an Adder do ſo much?
             An Adder did it: for with doubler tongue
             Then thine (thou ſerpent) neuer Adder ſtung.

DEMETRIUS You ſpend your paſſion on a miſpris'd mood,
           I am not guiltie of Lyſanders blood:
           Nor is he dead for ought that I can tell.

HERMIA   I pray thee tell me then that he is well.

DEMETRIUS And if I could, what ſhould I get therefore?

HERMIA   A priuiledge, neuer to see me more;
           And from thy hated preſence part I: ſee me no more
           Whether he be dead or no.   *Exit.*

DEMETRIUS There is no following her in this fierce vaine,
           Here therefore for a while I will remaine.
           So ſorrowes heauineſſe doth heauier grow;
           For debt that bankroute ſlip doth ſorrow owe,
           Which now in ſome ſlight meaſure it will pay,
           If for his tender here I make ſome ſtay.   *Lie downe.*

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[a]The text above was transcribed from the First Folio (1623) edition at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:First_Folio, pp. 151–152. For a translation into Present Day English see https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/msnd/page_88/.

T.5 texts

Letter from Bess of Hardwick to Elizabeth I

Elizabeth Cavendish (c. 1527–1608), better known as Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury, was one of the most powerful individuals in Tudor England – a successful businesswoman who rose through the ranks of the nobility through a series of judicious marriages. This letter of 1577 is from her to Queen Elizabeth I.

Letters are a great source for historical linguists, as they give us insight into a less "policed" register than that which we find in printed and literary texts – and, if investigated appropriately, can even give us insight into the spoken language. For an in-depth investigation of Elizabeth Cavendish's letters from this perspective see Marcus (2018).[a]

To the quenes moust excelente magystye

16. March 1577 The Countes of Shrewsbury to the Quenes majestie

may yt plese your moust exelente magystye I am outterly onhabyll to expresse the monyfolde causus I haue to yelde your magystye my moust humbyll thankes and presently yn that I vnderstand by my vary good lorde of lescester that yt hath plesed your magystye of your moust especyall and gracyous goodnes to grante vnto my poure dowter lenex the costody of har chylde nott withstandynge that ther were dyuers meanes yoused to your heghnes for the conterary someche the more am I bounden to rest your faythefoull and thanfoull saruante for the same / and I do beseche your magystye that I may commette wolly vnto your moust Gracyous Consederacyon my sayde poure dowteres case of whoyes only goodnes I repouse my wolle troust / besechinge your magystye also to haue yn remembrance the forder sutte of my lord and me one theyes two owre chylderyne behalfe, and so as we are moust bowden we wyll neuer seasse to prey to the almyghte god longe to prosper your magystye yn all joy perfytt healthe and selycyte with longe and happy reyne ouer vs. at shefelde the xvij of marche

your magystyes moust bouden subgett and saruant

EShrouesbury

moust: most; *magystye*: majesty

utterly unable; *monyfolde*: many; *yelde*: yield, give; humble

special

poor daughter Lennox

diverse; used

contrary; so much

faithful; thankful

beseech, ask; commit wholly

repose, leave; whole trust

further suit

on behalf of these two, our children

perfect; happiness; Sheffield

bound, obligated; subject; servant

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[a]The text is taken from the *Emerging Voices* corpus (Walkden 2019), and is originally from the online edition of Bess of Hardwick's letters available at https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=120.

T.6 Anne Askew, *Examinations*

Anne Askew (1521–1546) was tortured and burned at the stake for "heresy" (she was a Protestant). Unusually, Askew provided a first-person account of her experiences, and the following is an excerpt from this account.

Askew's narrative belongs to the broad category of EGODOCUMENTS – "those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an "I" [...] as the writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text" (Presser 1958) – whose value as source is increasingly recognized in both history and historical sociolinguistics (van der Wal & Rutten 2013, Mascuch et al. 2016).[a]

Then would they nedes know of me, what I saide to the sacrament. I answeared, þt I already had said that I could say, Then after diuers wordes, they bad me go by, Then came my Lord Lisle, my Lord of Essex, and the Bishop of Winchester, requiringe me earnestlye that I should confesse the sacrament to be flesh bloud and bone, Then said I to my lord Parr and my Lorde Lisle, that it was great shame for them to councell contrarye to theyr knowledge, Whervnto in few words they did saye, that they would gladly all thinges were well, Then the bishop said, he wold speake with me familierly, I sayde, so did Iudas whan he vnfrendly betrayed Christ, Then desyred the byshop to speake with me alone, But that I refused, He asked me why? I said: that in þe mouthe of two or thre witnesses, euery matter shoulde stand, after Christes and Paules doctrine, Mathew xviii. ii. Corinth. xiii. Then my Lord Chauncelor began to examine me again of the Sacrament, Then I asked him how longe he would hault on bothe sides? Then woulde he neades know where I found that, I said in the scripture, iii. Regum, xviii. Then he went hys way, Then the

nedes: necessarily

þt: that

diuers: diverse; *bad*: told, ordered

councell: advise

Whervnto: to which

desyred: desired, wanted

Regum: Kings

Bishop said I should be brent: I answered that I had searched all the scryptures, yet coulde I neuer finde, that eyther Christe or his Apostles putte anye creature to death, Well well said I, God will laugh your threatninges to skorne, Psalme, ii. Then was I commaunded to stande aside, Then came to me Doctor Cox, and Doctor Robinson, In conclusion we coulde not agree, Then they made me a bil of the sacrament: willing me to set my hand thervnto but I would not, Then on the sonday I was sore sicke, thinkinge no les then to die, Therfore I desired to speake with Latimer, it wold not be, Then was I sent to Newgate in my extremity of sicknes, For in al my life afore was I neuer in such pain, Thus the lord strēgthen you in þe truth, pray, pray, pray.

brent: burnt

thervnto: to it

afore: before

þe: the

[a]The text is taken from the *Emerging Voices* corpus (Walkden 2019), and is originally from the 1563 edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* available at https://www.johnfoxe.org.

📖 Recommended further reading

Barber (1997) and Nevalainen (2006) are textbook introductions to Early Modern English specifically, providing more detail on most topics than this chapter does. The study of Early Modern English, particularly from a sociolinguistic perspective, has flourished over the past twenty years: see Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2016) for a range of sociolinguistic investigations focusing on England during this period.

On standardization in the history of English, Millar (2012: Chapter 3) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2017) provide overviews, and for more detailed discussion see the papers in Wright (2000). Haugen (1966), which laid the groundwork for discussion of standardization cross-linguistically, is still worth a read.

If you wanted to read more about the complexities of the Great Vowel Shift, including the debates on which individual changes are or are not part of this change and whether the Great Vowel Shift is indeed a single overarching change, we strongly recommend McMahon (2006) to start with. McMahon (2006) also presents a very clear summary of the debates related to the relative chronology of the individual changes subsumed under the Great Vowel Shift. If you are hungry for even more, we recommend reading the references in McMahon (2006) and also Stenbrenden (2016), an entire monograph devoted to a range of hotly debated issues surrounding the Great Vowel Shift.

Any textbook on Early Modern English will give an overview of the morphological changes the language underwent. The historical-pragmatic approach taken in the section on second person pronouns is engagingly presented in Jucker & Taavitsainen (2013), which deals with a range of pragmatic issues, many with reference to the Early Modern period.

When it comes to syntax, Los (2015: Chapter 4) is excellent on the changes to the verbal system and constituent order discussed in this chapter. Fischer et al. (2017) take a thematic approach to syntactic changes in the history of English, with lots of critical discussion. On the relation between syntax, rhetoric, and standardization during the period, the book by Yáñez-Bouza (2015) on preposition stranding will not leave you hungry.

Durkin (2014: Chapter 14) is about the Latin and French lexical impact on English after 1500; Barber (1997) has a good discussion of the inkhorn controversy. Finally, Nevalainen (1999) provides a detailed overview of additions to the lexicon and semantic change during the period.

5 Middle English (1150–1500)

5.1 History and context

Conveniently, the Middle English period maps quite neatly onto what is called the (High and Late) Middle Ages in European history. This is popularly known as the age of knights, castles and chivalry. More prosaically, it's also a period of growing populations, booming trade, and (during the Late Middle Ages) terrible catastrophes such as the Black Death. As we will see in this chapter, Middle English is also a period typically seen as a transition during which the English language underwent some of its most major changes. While the earliest Middle English texts can seem incomprehensible without training, texts from the end of the period look a lot more familiar to most readers.

5.1.1 Dividing lines

The dividing line between Middle English and Early Modern English is the year 1500. Like all dividing lines, it's arbitrary: people didn't wake up on New Year's Day 1500 speaking a completely different language. Still, 1500 is a relatively good dividing line because of two major events.

The first is Caxton's introduction of the printing press to England in 1476. The consequences of this were discussed in the previous chapter, §4.1.1, but it's worth reflecting on the situation before printing as well. Without the ability to quickly and automatically reproduce texts, it wasn't at all easy to reach a wide audience, since every single copy had to be made by hand. This was time-consuming and expensive, and it's not surprising that the literacy rate was extremely low during the Middle English period:

Figure 5.1: An illuminated folio from British Library Additional manuscript 37049, f. 32v

even as late as 1451–1500, Buringh & Van Zanden (2009) estimate that only 5%

of the population was able to read or write. This literacy was also very unevenly distributed across the population, with most of those able to write being part of the (Christian) clergy, especially in the first half of the period. The physical nature and cultural context of our written records from the Middle English period and before is thus very different. We are dealing with handwritten manuscripts, which were extremely rare and valuable objects in their own right, increasingly so the further we go back in time. The introduction of the printing press towards the end of the Middle English period therefore represents a fairly important event in the history of the language, for several reasons, but also for the historical linguist!

The second convenient turning point is Christopher Columbus's discovery of a reliable sailing route from Europe to the Americas and his voyages there between 1492 and 1501. Columbus himself wasn't English: he was born in Genoa (now part of Italy), and his travels were funded by the Spanish monarchy. He also wasn't the first European to travel to the Americas, but his experiences were instrumental in setting the scene for the colonial expansion of various European states during the Early Modern and Modern periods (see §4.1.2). Before 1500, although some English speakers travelled widely, there were no substantial, stable communities of English-speaking people outside Britain and Ireland. When we talk about the English of the Middle English period and earlier, we are talking about the English spoken and written in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland: English had simply not reached the rest of the world during this period.

Scots

The West Germanic variety spoken at present in Scotland, today known as Scots, has its origins in Northumbrian Old English. It's sometimes treated as an English dialect and sometimes as a language in its own right. As you know by now, there are no systematic and accepted linguistic criteria for distinguishing between "dialects" and "languages": the question is a sociopolitical one. Between 1150 and 1500, the variety was known by its users as *Inglis* (English), just like the English of England; the term *Scottis* (Scottish/Scots) is first recorded in 1494. We can't do justice to the fascinating history of Scots in this book, but see Jones (1997), Smith (2012), and Millar (2012: Chapter 3) if you're interested in finding out more.

What about the dividing line at the start of the Middle English period, 1150? Here the key event is one that's probably the most famous date in British history: 1066 and the Norman Conquest.

5.1.2 The Norman Conquest and French influence

Any history of Britain will give an account of the events of 1066. In brief, upon the death of King Edward the Confessor, three rulers scrambled to assert dominance over England: Edward's brother-in-law Harold Godwinson; the king of Norway, Harald Hardrada; and the duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror. As his name suggests, William the Conqueror was victorious: his army defeated Harold Godwinson's at the Battle of Hastings in October 1066. (Harald Hardrada's forces had been defeated three weeks earlier by Godwinson's at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.)

Figure 5.2: Norman knights and archers at Hastings, from the famous Bayeux Tapestry

It's easy to overplay and essentialize the differences between these three men: Harold the "Saxon", Harald the "Norseman", and William the "Norman". In reality, they had plenty in common. Godwinson's mother was the Scandinavian Gytha Thorkelsdóttir, a noblewoman from Denmark. William was descended from Rollo (or Hrólf), a Scandinavian Viking leader of the ninth and tenth centuries who eventually settled and established Normandy as a political entity: the terms *Norman* and *Normandy* originated in reference to the northern origins of these settlers. Even Edward the Confessor was half-Norman through his mother Emma.

Nevertheless, the linguistic impact of William's conquest was dramatic. William was brought up in Normandy, now part of France, where the dominant

language was the Norman dialect of Old French. As part of the conquest, on becoming king, he appointed several of his French-speaking allies to positions of power within England. William himself died in 1087, but his successors for the next four hundred years were monarchs whose ties to France were at least as strong as their ties to England. In particular, the House of Plantagenet held the throne of England from 1154 until the death of Richard III in 1485. This quite naturally led to French – first Norman French, then Parisian French – becoming the language with the most overt PRESTIGE in England, and being used for a wide range of political, literary and other functions. Among the literate minority, in particular, there was widespread English-French-Latin trilingualism (Durkin 2014: §11.2). Throughout this chapter we'll see evidence of French influence on Middle English, especially as regards the lexicon. This situation certainly had important effects on the vocabulary of the language, but also on some of its structural properties.

Anglo-Norman

The variety of Norman French spoken in Britain during the Middle English period is known as Anglo-Norman, and rapidly developed its own linguistic features, distinct from those found in Normandy itself. Introduced as the language of a relatively small elite, Anglo-Norman was never ubiquitous among the population of England. The dominant view until recently was that Anglo-Norman died out in England fairly rapidly from about 1160 onwards, but Ingham (2012), following Rothwell (2001), makes a powerful case that the language was still being transmitted and learned by children until at least the beginning of the fifteenth century, and that Middle English and Anglo-Norman continued to influence each other as living languages throughout.

5.1.3 Middle English texts

The Middle English period has been described as having "by far the greatest diversity in written language of any period before or since" (Milroy 1992: 156). Just take a look at the text samples at the end of this chapter! Certainly the limited

Old English records that have survived to us, and the more-or-less standard-
ized written language of the period 1500–1900, are more homogeneous. Only the
present day, with its superdiversity of Englishes around the world, might be said
to have a better claim to this title.

Nevertheless, the Middle English textual records are skewed and limited in
certain important ways. For a start, as we've seen, Middle English is exclusively
a language of Britain and Ireland. The majority of texts that have come down
to us are also written by men rather than women. On the other hand, the first
named female authors to enjoy a wide reception also date from this period: the
mystics Julian of Norwich, whose *Revelations of Divine Love* was written in the
14th century, and Margery Kempe, who wrote her semi-autobiographical *Book
of Margery Kempe* in the early 15th century. We also have letters written by the
Paston family of Norfolk, both men and women, from the 15th century – though
we can't be sure to what extent these documents reflect women's language, as the
scribes who were employed to write the letters were all male.[1] This highlights
another important limitation: basically all Middle English writers were part of
the church, the nobility, or both.

The early and late parts of the Middle English period also differ in terms of
what texts have come down to us. Traditional scholarship has often stated (or
at least implied) that English as a written language died out entirely after the
Norman Conquest, later rising phoenix-like from the flames during the 13th and
14th centuries. Under this view, the transition from Old to Middle English is very
abrupt. However, Treharne (2012: Chapter 5) shows convincingly that this inter-
pretation is not justified: hundreds of texts were produced in English during this
early period, and these are catalogued online in Da Rold et al. (2010). The disre-
gard shown to these texts by scholarship until relatively recently may be due to
the fact that these were generally not brand-new literary texts, instead building
on and reworking earlier Old English material. This also means that it is difficult
to know to what extent these texts reflect the spoken language of the period. In
the 12th century, however, a few texts like the Peterborough Chronicle, a his-
torical record kept by monks in the east of England, and the *Ormulum*, another
East Midlands text dealing with the interpretation of the Bible (and written in a
unique phonetically-inspired orthography), give us an indication of some of the
changes that the language had undergone.

The texts aren't evenly distributed geographically, especially during the early
part of the period. For the 12th century, most of our localizable texts are from

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[1]See Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy (2004) and Bergs (2011) for studies investigating
the Paston letters from a sociolinguistic perspective.

the East Midlands. In the 13th century this shifts, with a proliferation of West Midlands texts attested, such as Layamon's *Brut*, a poem about the history of Britain. The 14th and 15th centuries are better attested, and our first texts from north of the Humber estuary date from this later part of the period. This is also when the texts emerge that have been most intensively studied as works of literature: Arthurian romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and poetry by such writers as William Langland, John Gower, and Geoffrey Chaucer. Figure 5.3 gives an overview of some important texts and writers and where they were from (or where they wrote).
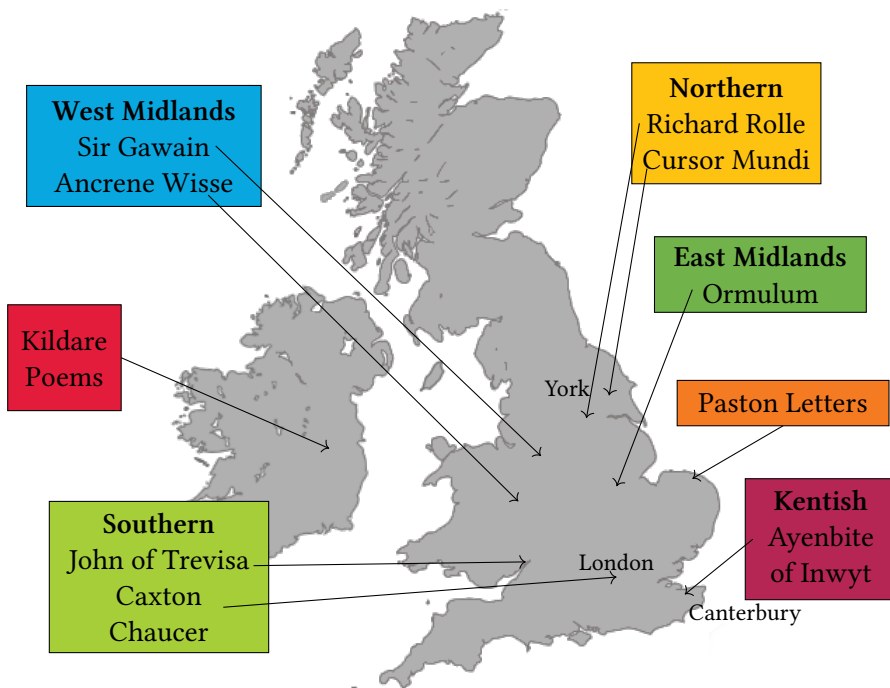
Figure 5.3: Some key texts and authors during the Middle English period

> **Chaucer**
>
> Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400) is one of the most famous English-language writers of all time. Born into a family of merchants, he travelled Europe as a young adult, and later spent twelve years working as a high-ranking customs official in London. Best known for his literary output, especially the *Canterbury Tales*, he also produced philosophical and astronomical texts. Like other key figures of the period (e.g. Gower, Caxton), Chaucer was multilingual, and his writings show him expertly navigating the space between English, French and Latin (Davidson 2010, Hsy 2013). An introduction to Chaucer's life and works can be found in Minnis (2014), and the recent biography by Turner (2019) foregrounds his European travels.

For many readers, Middle English is the period when the texts really start to feel like they're written in a different language. On the other hand, it's not quite as alien-looking as Old English is, as we will see in Chapter 6. Early Middle English texts in particular are difficult to understand if you're not aware of the peculiarities of morphology and syntax in this language stage, closer to Old English in its appearance. Don't worry, though: in this and the following chapter we'll be including details that will help you to make sense of what you see.

To keep things relatively simple, in this introductory chapter we'll present you with what could be seen as Chaucer's English, since that's the type of Middle English you'll most likely encounter in your literature classes. This is not to imply, however, that Chaucer's English is either the only type of Middle English or a variety of Middle English more prestigious than other Middle English varieties – neither is the case. We have evidence of Middle English varieties used from the far north to the far south of England, from the west coast to the east coast, and spanning a period of four hundred years – though not all areas or centuries are equally well represented. If you want to get your hands dirty and dive into Middle English in all its glorious diversity, we recommend the Linguistic Atlases of Late Middle English (LALME) and Early Middle English (LAEME), both available online for anyone to use.[2]

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[2]LALME: http://www.amc.lel.ed.ac.uk/amc-projects-hub/project/elalme/. LAEME: http://www.amc.lel.ed.ac.uk/amc-projects-hub/project/laeme/.
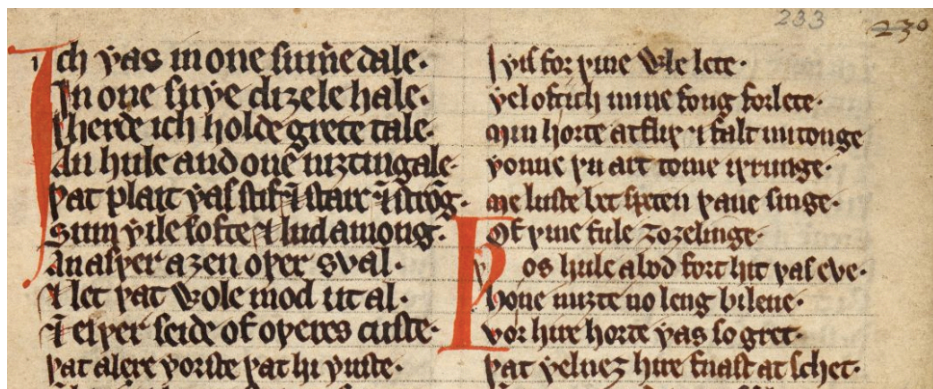
Figure 5.4: An illuminated folio from the British Library from Cotton MS Caligula A IX, ff. 322 r., showing the beginning of *The Owl and the Nightingale*

5.2 Sounds

In this section, we'll first provide a general overview of the phonological system of Middle English. We will also introduce you to some graphical features of Middle English to be aware of when approaching texts. Finally, we will take you through the main sound changes of this period as well. As we will see, Middle English is full of variation on every corner, and this variation stands out already at the first glance at most texts written in the language of the time, for Middle English can indeed be considered the period associated with the least standardized spelling in the entire history of the English language as used in Britain. This is not surprising considering the sociocultural changes happening during this period. Read on to discover more!

5.2.1 General properties of Middle English phonology

Looking at the phonological system of Middle English, we'll notice several differences in contrast to the phonological system of standard Present Day English varieties:

- there is no PHONEME /ŋ/; the sound [ŋ] does exist, but only as an ALLOPHONE of /n/

- there is no phoneme /ʒ/

- there is an additional phoneme, the velar fricative /x/ (still found in Scottish English in Present Day English)

iː *wif* 'wife', *min* 'my'   uː *nu, now* 'now'

ɪ *lyuien* 'to live'   ʊ *cutte* 'cut' (past participle)

eː *meten* 'to meet'   oː *mood* 'mood'

ɛ, ɛː *heed* 'head', *mete* 'mete'   ɔ, ɔː *hoot* 'hot', *boot* 'boat'

a, aː *ram* 'ram', *name* 'name'

Figure 5.5: Chaucerian Middle English monophthongs, based on Horobin & Smith (2002: 48)

- the vowels look rather different from those found in Present Day English as well as Early Modern English

    – we distinguish short and long vowels in stressed syllables

    – unstressed syllables carried important morphosyntactic functions

    – we find diphthongs not necessarily like those in Present Day English

Middle English monophthongs are shown in Figure 5.5. In addition to these twelve monophthongs, there were also five diphthongs: /aɪ/ *day*, /ɔɪ/ *joye*, /aʊ/ *saugh* 'saw', /ɔʊ/ *knowe* 'to know', and /ɪʊ/ *newe* 'new'. But this is not where the differences end, as we shall see in what follows in this section. However, we need to learn a little bit about some of the aspects of Middle English spelling first.

5.2.2 Graphical features to look out for

When dealing with texts written in Middle English, it's important to be aware of some graphical differences between Middle English and Present Day English which may startle you at first. To begin with, Middle English is typically seen as *the* period of spelling and phonetic variation (Strang 1970: 224) in the history of the English language. For instance, Horobin & Smith (2002: 33) mention that the Present Day English word *though* is attested in more than 500 spelling variants between the years 1350 and 1450. We find a considerable degree of variation across different regions, but we also find variation across individual scribes – irrespective of the region. In addition, even a single scribe frequently shows variation: not just across different manuscripts but also within a single one. To illustrate the point, let's have a look at how the word *when* is spelt in the Cotton Caligula manuscript version of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. In line 620, we find <wan>, alongside variants such as <wane> (line 420), <wone> (line 687),

<wanne> (line 1446), <won> (line 324), <wonne> (line 38); and in line 1566 we find <hwon>, and yet other variants can be seen in the same manuscript: <hwanne> in line 1244; <hwan> in line 1537, <hwon> in line 1566.

Books were expensive

If you're reading this book, it's rather likely you come from or have found yourself in a society where a range of individuals from different social groups can produce texts of various types online or offline via digital software. Chances then also are that it's not a problem to grab a piece of paper and scribble down whatever your heart desires. This was far from being the case in the Middle English period. Paper was to arrive in Britain only in the 15th century (Horobin & Smith 2002: 9). Prior to this, parchment was used for writing: scribes used animal skin to pass down what was considered worth the effort and the materials. The costs associated with obtaining enough parchment formed just one rather small part associated with the book making process (Overty 2008).

Considering how much spelling variation there is in Middle English texts, we can't discuss all the spelling variation that awaits anyone who intends to read texts in Middle English. However, here are at least some general, more obvious graphical differences between Present Day English and Middle English. First, in Middle English we still find a letter called THORN, which looks like this: <þ>.[3] This letter was ultimately replaced by the Present Day English <th>, but we find it frequently both in Middle English and Old English texts (see Chapter 7, §7.2.2, for more details). Just like the Present Day English <th>, thorn could be used to represent either the voiced dental fricative /ð/ or the voiceless dental fricative /θ/. We also encounter a letter known as YOGH /jɒx/, which is written this way: <ȝ>. This letter was used primarily for the sounds /j/ and /x/ (the latter being a voiceless velar fricative).

We should also comment on how, under the influence of the Norman scribal traditions, the sound /u/ came to be spelt with <ou>. If you speak or learn French, this will make a lot of sense to you, as French textbooks often tell the learner that

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[3]You may have seen this unfamiliar letter already in the previous chapter if you read the text sample from Anne Askew's *Examinations*.

<ou> is to be pronounced as /u/. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (§4.2.1), in some Present Day English dialects in the north of Britain words such as *mouth* can be pronounced with a vowel resembling /u/, which is the vowel we also find in these words in Middle English (and Old English). This is reflected by the <ou> spelling in such words, coexisting with an older simple <u>, as in <mouth> and <muð> for *mouth* /mu:θ/, and <hous> and <hus> for *house* /hu:s/.

Ye Olde Shop

Where does the phrase *ye olde shop* come from? The strangely looking letter <y> in phrases of this type has descended from the letter ᴛʜᴏʀɴ, <þ>. Thorn could be hand-written in a number of ways. Think for instance of how you write a word such as *the*: is it always shaped in exactly the same way and does your handwriting match that of others? Once we start looking at manuscripts more closely, we find a range of shapes that thorn came in. One of the shapes found could be interpreted as the letter <y> instead. This ambiguity opened the window to reinterpreting one letter (thorn) with another (<y>). So, the standard Present Day English version of the definite article, <the>, represents a substitution of thorn with the digraph <th>, whereas the version spelt as <ye> represents a substitution of thorn with the letter <y>. See Figure 5.6 if intrigued.

5.2.3 /h/-clusters and /h/-dropping

Remember instances of words such as *house* being pronounced variably either as /haʊs/ or /aʊs/ from Chapter 3? Indeed, we've already seen the phenomenon of /ʜ/-ᴅʀᴏᴘᴘɪɴɢ and the social stigma attached to it in LModE and Present Day English in §3.2.1. This phenomenon is attested already in Old English, but crucially primarily in pronouns and unstressed words. /h/-dropping in unstressed syllables is common for all varieties of English today, standard and non-standard, and is not stigmatized (Minkova 2014: 104). On the other hand, omission of <h> in words such as *house*, i.e. words that contain at least one syllable with primary stress, is sporadic in Old English: it is only in Middle English when initial /h/ in stressed syllables is attested more frequently. In this context, it's interesting that French loans which in writing started with an initial <h> did not contain an /h/
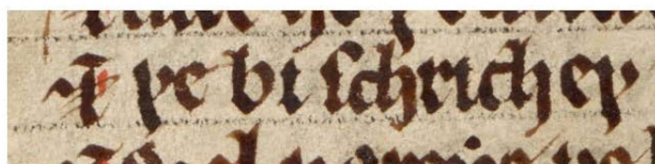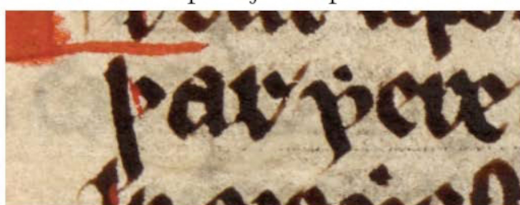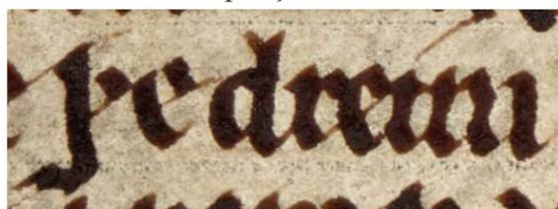
Figure 5.6: An illuminated folio from the British Library from Cotton MS Caligula A IX, ff. 322 r., showing three close-ups

in pronunciation in the source language – this may have only contributed to an overall confusion as to whether one should or should not pronounce an /h/ in words such as *honour* (of Romance origin) or *house* (of Germanic origin).

/h/-dropping is not the only feature that's of relevance to the changes linked to this consonant in Middle English. What we variably find in Middle English is also the presence of /h/ in clusters that no longer survive in Present Day English: /hl/, /hr/, and /hn/; and also one cluster which has survived in some Present Day English dialects: /hw/ or /ʍ/. Similarly to /h/-dropping, we also start seeing the loss of /h/ in these clusters in Middle English. We'll see that Old English had these four clusters by default. Although traces of this cluster reduction do show up in Old English, the process properly kicks in only in Middle English. This cluster reduction change had swooshed through these clusters by the end of Middle English, simplifying them to /l/, /r/, and /n/ and giving us *lofe* for the older *hlaf* 'loaf', *raven* for the older *hræfn* 'raven', and *nut* for the older *hnut* 'nut'. This cluster simplification process has never really reached completion in the case of /w/ and /ʍ/. And just like in Present Day English, where we find

variation between /w/ and /ʍ/, as in /wɛɪlz/ vs. /ʍɛɪlz/ *whales* (see Chapter 1), in Middle English we also find variable forms reflected in the spelling, even within a single manuscript. These cluster simplifications lead to a language which is phonologically closer to Present Day English.

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gnats **/gnats/ and** *knives* **/kniːvəs/**

In Middle English, the word-initial <gn> and <kn> were pronounced as consonantal clusters: /gn/ and /kn/, respectively! This is still preserved in the Present Day English spelling, although these clusters were simplified to /n/ over the course of time.

5.2.4 Reduction of vowels in unstressed syllables

Some of the spelling and phonological variation typical of the Middle English period is related to the vowels found in unstressed syllables. Look at the following spelling variants of the same words (OED; s.v. 'book, n.', 'feel, v.', and 'see, v.'):

(1) 'to see': <sien>, <sie>, <sy>

(2) 'books': <bowkes>, <buckys>

(3) 'felt': <felede>, <felide>, <feled>, <felid>, <feld>

These are just a couple of representative examples taken from the OED. However, these variants do not merely reflect orthographic variation. Rather, this variation is representative of phonological variation as well. Thus, a form such as <sien> indicates that the nasal consonant /n/ was part of the infinitive form of the verb, but a form such as <sie> indicates a lack of this consonant. Next, if we contrast <sie> and <sy>, we could suggest that the former may contain a schwa, i.e. be pronounced as /siːə/ rather than /siː/.

These instances of vowel reduction are attested in some dialects of Old English already, but the process takes up speed as we transition into and throughout the Middle English period. As we'll see in §5.3.2 and §6.3.3, this vowel reduction process was to have massive consequences for the morphological system of the language.

> ## Middle English poetry: to schwa or not to schwa?
>
> Words ending in <e> in Middle English manuscripts feature in many hot debates over whether these <e>s were realized as schwas or nothing at all. This seemingly innocent issue has implications for our understanding of the metrical system of the poetic works at hand, since the numbers of syllables are at stake. If you'd like to know more, we refer you to Duffell (2000) as a sample case study.

5.2.5 A note on vowel lengthening and shortening

Have you ever wondered how come the word pairs below show the irregularities they do? At least two consonants in each pair indicate that the two words on each line are related: *keep* and *kept* both contain the letters <k> and <p>, corresponding to the sounds /k/ and /p/. And the spelling representing the vowel in each pair is not too dissimilar either: e.g. <ee> vs. <e>. In Present Day English, these pairs contain different vowel phonemes, and that's what makes them irregular. So how did these vowel differences come about?

- *keep ~kept*
- *leave ~left*
- *lead ~led*
- *speed ~sped*
- *breed ~bred*

- *breathe ~breath*
- *steal ~stealth*
- *divine ~divinity*
- *child ~children*

In Chapter 4, we've seen the effects of the Great Vowel Shift on the long vowels of the language (§4.2.1), which were thereby qualitatively transformed (e.g. Middle English /eː/ became Early Modern English /iː/). Sticking to the *keep ~kept* pair, in Present Day English *keep* contains an /iː/, whereas *kept* contains an /ɛ/. What happened here is that the vowel in *keep* is long, and was long also in Middle English; so as a long vowel, it underwent the Great Vowel Shift: /keːp/ > /kiːp/. But the vowel in *kept* was short and thus remained unaffected. This vowel length

difference, combined with the effect of the Great Vowel Shift, explains why *keep* shows /iː/ whereas *kept* shows /ɛ/, i.e. a different vowel quality as well as quantity.

In Middle English, before the Great Vowel Shift kicked in, most pairs such as *keep* and *kept* didn't differ in vowel quality, but all of these pairs did differ in vowel quantity, i.e. whether the vowel was long or short. It's really crucial to remember that only long vowels underwent the Great Vowel Shift.[4]

As shown in Figure 5.5 above, vowel length presented a dimension of vowel contrasts that could have implications for the lexical meaning of a word so that if for example the word *name* /naːm(ə)/ 'name' was pronounced with a short vowel, this would result in a different word, *nam* /nam/ 'took' (past tense, singular). Several processes related to vowel length took place in Middle English, known under the rather complex names of lengthening before voiced homorganic consonant groups, shortening before non-homorganic consonant groups, open syllable lengthening, and trisyllabic shortening. Don't worry, we've given you enough Middle English phonology at this stage and won't discuss these processes individually (though much ink has been spilt debating these four fascinating and intricate processes; see Millward & Hayes 2018: 156–159 and Minkova 2014: §7.5).

It is useful, however, to know that there were a number of shortening and lengthening processes operating in Middle English, which resulted in the irregular pairs given above. Sound change and phonological variation can therefore have clear connections with – and implications for – the morphological system of a language. And Middle English morphology is the topic of the next section.

5.3 Morphology

5.3.1 Verbal endings

As we saw in §2.3.1, Present Day English varieties don't have much variation in the form of verbs. In most varieties there's an extra *-s* in the third person singular, e.g. *she play**s*** and *she love**s*** as opposed to *I/you/they play/love*. We've also seen in Chapter 4 that Early Modern English has an extra second person singular ending *-(e)st*, which goes with the second person singular pronoun *thou*, as in *thou play**est*** and *thou lov**est*** (see §4.3.1). In Middle English, the verbal endings become even more complicated. Table 5.1 gives an overview. The terms weak and strong verbs are explained in the next section (§5.3.2) – be patient.

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[4]And if you wonder about the difference between the Present Day English [ɛ] and the Middle English [e], this is a phonetic one. [e] has been lowering in many varieties. See our discussion of vowel shifts taking place in Present Day English in §2.2.2.

Table 5.1: Finite verb endings in Middle English: *to love* (weak) and *to bind* (strong)

Person and number	Present tense	Past (weak)	Past (strong)
First singular	*loue, binde*	*louede*	*bounde*
Second singular	*louest, bindest*	*louede*	*bounde*
Third singular	*loueth, bindeth*	*louede*	*bounde*
Plural (all persons)	*loue(n), binde(n)*	*louede(n)*	*bounde(n)*

Table 5.1 is an example of a PARADIGM, which is simply a table listing all the possible forms of a given word. For verbs, we also need the non-finite forms: infinitives such as *loue(n)* and *binde(n)*, present participles such as *louyng(e)* and *bindyng(e)*, and past participles such as *(y)loued(e)* and *(y)bound(e)*. These are given in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Non-finite verb endings in Middle English: *to love* (weak) and *to bind* (strong)

Form	Weak	Strong
Infinitive	*loue(n)*	*binde(n)*
Present participle	*louyng(e)*	*bindyng(e)*
Past participle	*(y)loued(e)*	*(y)bound(e)*

You'll notice that both weak and strong verbs have the same endings for person and number in Middle English. The only difference, at this stage, is how they form their past tense and past participle forms: with *-ed* after the stem (weak verbs) or with a vowel change (strong verbs). There are only a few exceptions to the paradigms in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, though they mostly involve very high-frequency verbs like *be* and the modals.

Subjunctive and imperative

Table 5.1 only gives indicative forms (see §6.3.1 for the difference between indicative and subjunctive MOOD). There are not many distinct subjunctive forms in Middle English. In all persons of the singular, the subjunctive form is always the same as the first person singular indicative, i.e. *loue, binde* in the present and *louede, bounde* in the past. Again, *be* and the modals are exceptions. The imperative is the bare stem in the singular (*bind!*), sometimes with an *-e* added (*loue!*), and ends in *-eth* in the plural (*loueth, bindeth*).

Table 5.1 is valid for a roughly "Chaucerian" Middle English (following Horobin & Smith 2002: 115–116), but there is substantial variation.[5] For instance, the third person singular form ending in *-s* (e.g. *loues, bindes*) is present in Northern Middle English texts, and competes with *-th*, without replacing it entirely until well into the Modern English period (see §4.3.2). In the Early Middle English period, an even greater variety of forms is found, anticipating what we'll see for Old English in Chapter 6. The Northern Subject Rule (as discussed in the box in §2.3.1) can also be found in Middle English texts, and affects the distribution of verb endings (de Haas & van Kemenade 2014).

Past participles deserve special mention as well. In Present Day English, past participles are not distinct from finite past tense forms of weak verbs (e.g. *I have played* vs. *I played*. In Middle English, on the other hand, a prefix *y-* is often found on past participles. Chaucer, for instance, has *he was **ypreved*** ('he was proved'; from the *General Prologue*, line 485. There's variation here too, though: Chaucer doesn't always use *y-*. For example, in line 2 of the *General Prologue* Chaucer writes *hath perced* ('has pierced'), not ***yperced*. Older texts have more use of *y-*.

The general trend is that the further we go back in time, the more complex morphology we observe. Middle English, then, is somewhere in between Old English and Present Day English in terms of the complexity of its morphological system.

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[5]See Mossé (1952) if you're interested in the gory details of morphological variation in Middle English.

5.3.2 Strong verbs vs. irregular verbs

The terms WEAK, STRONG, REGULAR and IRREGULAR are important when discussing the history of English verbs. This section will give you an overview of what they mean and how to use them.

REGULAR verbs are verbs whose INFLECTED forms are completely predictable using the paradigms. An example of a regular verb in Present Day English is *play*, which has the third person singular form *plays*, the past tense form *play**ed***, etc. By contrast, IRREGULAR verbs are verbs whose inflected forms are not predictable using the paradigms. Modern verbs like *sing* and *keep* are irregular (with past tense forms ***sang*** and ***kept*** respectively), and so are all of the auxiliaries and modals discussed in the previous chapter (§4.4.1).

WEAK and STRONG are historical terms that describe how a verb forms its past tense. Weak verbs historically formed their past tense solely by adding a suffix containing a coronal consonant (normally /d/), as in *play* vs. *play**ed***. Strong verbs historically formed their past tense by changing the vowel in the stem, as in *sing* vs. *sang*. For more on the origins of weak and strong verbs, see §7.3.1 and §7.3.2 respectively. The terms strong and weak, which are not very helpful, were coined by the linguist Jacob Grimm in the 19th century. However, you are bound to come across these two terms in any account of the history of English verbs. As such, it is important that you know what these mean.

Often, people use the terms STRONG and IRREGULAR synonymously when talking about verbs. Especially when discussing the history of the language, though, the two terms need to be kept apart because not all irregular verbs are strong, and (at least in the early history of the language) not all strong verbs are irregular. Similarly, not all weak verbs are regular, and (at least in the early history of the language) not all regular verbs are weak.

The tricky part is that not all verbs that have a vowel change in the past tense are strong. For *keep* and *kept*, for instance, Present Day English has the vowels /iː/ and /ɛ/, but this is due to a shortening process of the type mentioned in §5.2.5 above. Originally, in Middle English, these words would have been pronounced /keːp/ and /keːptə/, with the same long vowel, but a shortening process affected vowels followed by consonant clusters, so /keːptə/ became /keptə/. The two different vowels now underwent different processes. For instance, the long /eː/ in /keːp/ was subject to the Great Vowel Shift, like other long vowels, and was raised to [iː], while the short /e/ in /kepte/ was not. In this way, a historically weak verb acquired a vowel alternation in the past tense and became irregular. It can still be identified as a weak verb, though, because of the coronal consonant /t/ in the past tense.

The take-home message here is that strong and irregular do not mean the same thing! Whether a verb is regular or irregular depends on whether it fits the usual verb paradigms of English or not. Whether a verb is weak or strong, on the other hand, is a historical question, and is best resolved by looking in a good dictionary such as the OED. Some verbs that were regular and weak at the beginning of the Middle English period ended up irregular and weak due to the Great Vowel Shift and other changes.

5.3.3 Pronouns

For a long time these little words languished in obscurity. At the time of writing, however, the usage of personal pronouns in Present Day English is a hot topic. Middle English also possessed a flourishing ecosystem of pronouns, with various uses and origins. We'll start with the first and second person pronouns. The full paradigms for these are given in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: First and second person pronouns in Middle English

Person and number	Nominative	Accusative	Genitive
First singular	*I, ich*	*me*	*myn(e)*
First plural	*we*	*us*	*our*
Second singular	*thou*	*the(e)*	*thy(n)(e)*
Second plural	*ye*	*you*	*your(e)(s)*

A notion we need to explain in order to understand Table 5.3 is CASE. Case is a category for morphological forms, and is related to a word's function – or, more precisely, to the function of the phrase to which the word belongs. Many of the world's languages, including Indo-European languages like German, Latin, Russian and Sanskrit, make use of morphological case in order to signal meaning distinctions (more on this in Chapter 6, §6.3.3). In Chaucer's Middle English, case is really only important for pronouns. There are three cases here: the nominative, which is used for subjects; the accusative, which is used for (all) objects; and the genitive, which is used for possessors. On the genitive, see §5.4.3 below. We'll encounter more cases, and more distinct case forms, in Chapter 6, as we travel deeper into the history of the language.

Just like in Early Modern English (§4.3.1), the distinction between the forms marked as "second singular" and those marked as "second plural" is more than

just number. Use of the different forms is good evidence for social status and relationships, and was also heavily dependent on the pragmatic context.[6] If you're a literature fan, try reading a Chaucerian work like the *Knight's Tale* while keeping an eye out for second-person pronouns. You may be surprised about how much it can tell you about the characters and how they relate to one another! See Reiff (2010) and Jucker (2010) for more on this.

As for the third person pronouns, the forms for these are given in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Third person pronouns in Middle English

Number and gender	Nominative	Accusative	Genitive
Masculine singular	*he*	*hym*	*his*
Feminine singular	*s(c)he*	*hir(e)*	*hir(e)(s)*
Neuter singular	*(h)it*	*(h)it*	*his*
Plural (all genders)	*they*	*hem*	*hir(e)(s)*

Again, this quite uniform table, representing Chaucerian usage, actually masks substantial variation. Several ongoing changes affected the third person pronoun system during the Middle English period, in ways that – unsurprisingly perhaps – make the language more similar to Present Day English. The three most important of these are:

1. Feminine nominative *s(c)he* 'she'. This form spread from the northeast of England, displacing the older form *heo*, which by regular sound change in southern Middle English had become *he*. As a side point, interestingly, some traditional English dialects have *hoo* (from *heo*) instead of *she*, even today! An example is *hoo's in there* 'she's in there' (Belper, Derbyshire, recorded 2004–5; Braber & Robinson 2018).

2. Neuter genitive *its*. The original form was *his*, just as in the masculine. The new form *its* was probably created by analogy with pairs like *he/his*, *her/hers*, and nouns forming the possessive with *s*. It spreads and replaces neuter *his* during the late Middle and Early Modern periods. Meanwhile, the nominative and accusative form *(h)it* loses its initial /h/ through the process of /H/-DROPPING discussed in §5.2.3 and §3.2.1.

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[6]In the terms of Brown & Gilman (1960), Middle English was closer to a "power semantic" than Early Modern English was. As Jucker & Taavitsainen (2013: Chapter 5) point out, however, even in Middle English there is contextual variation in whether the T or the V pronoun is used.

🔍

Why *she*?

Different explanations have been given for the emergence of the pronoun *s(c)he*. Samuels (1965) argues that the replacement of *he(o)* by *s(c)he* was caused by the fact that the masculine and feminine pronouns had become homophonous and there was consequently a communicative need to distinguish them. However, in all varieties of modern spoken Chinese, spoken by over a billion people, the masculine and feminine pronouns are homophonous (e.g. Mandarin *tā* for both), and communication is (of course) not a problem. This suggests that Samuels's explanation is unlikely to be correct, or at least it cannot be the whole story. Some argue that *s(c)he* is derived from a (perhaps Scandinavianized) pronunciation of *he(o)* in the north and east of England, with /hj/ becoming /ʃ/; others argue that *s(c)he* is derived from the earlier demonstrative pronoun *seo* or related demonstrative forms. See Jüngling (2001) for extensive discussion: you can weigh up the evidence and make up your own mind!

3. Plural *they*, *them*, *their(s)*. These forms beginning in *th-* also originate in the north and east, and replaced the older forms *hie*, *hem*, *hir(e)(s)*. As you can see in Table 5.4, Chaucer's usage had a new *th*-form in the nominative, but the older *h*-forms in all other cases. Eventually, the *th*-forms won out completely in formal written usage, but many varieties of spoken English still have the object form *'em*, as in *give 'em a chance*, which is descended from *hem* via loss of *h-* (see §5.2.3 on /h/-dropping). For many years the textbook wisdom was that these new *th*-forms were borrowed directly from Norse, but Cole (2018) has recently made a powerful case that they could just as well have originated as demonstratives in late Northumbrian Old English: demonstratives becoming personal pronouns is a common pathway of GRAMMATICALIZATION cross-linguistically.

Singular *THEY*

The pronoun *THEY* is widely used in singular contexts in Present Day English, as in *Someone lost their bag*, where it's used with a single unknown or unspecified antecedent. Prescriptivists and style guides often discourage the use of singular *THEY*, and it's treated as a recent error. In fact, it's well attested as early as the 14th century: an example is *Eche on in þer craft ys wijs* 'Each one in their craft is wise', from Wycliffe's Bible. The proscription against singular *THEY*, on the other hand, is much younger, dating to the 19th century. Today, singular *THEY* can also be used to refer to a single, known individual who identifies as nonbinary. Conrod (2019: Chapter 3) shows that this use is accepted more readily by younger speakers, suggesting that its emergence is a change in progress.

5.3.4 Other morphology to look out for

The discussion in this subsection is brief, and is intended to mention only those aspects that might trip you up when reading Middle English texts.

NOUNS and ADJECTIVES in Middle English behave in roughly the same way as they do in Present Day English, at least by Chaucer's time. Often you'll see an extra *-e* on the end of the word, but this doesn't usually affect the readability of the text all that much. One thing to look out for is that there are a lot more irregular plurals in Middle English than in Present Day English: for example, the plural of *berye* 'berry' was *berie**n*** rather than *berie**s*** (but compare *berien* to the present-day *oxen*).

The present-day DEFINITE ARTICLE *the*, which always has the same form regardless of number, case, etc., is a GRAMMATICALIZED form of a demonstrative. However, in Middle English the difference between DEMONSTRATIVES (e.g. Present Day English *that, those, this, these*) and the definite article is not fully clear, and there is variation. As well as *the* (or *þe*), we find forms like accusative *þane* and genitive *þas*, especially in the early period – for instance, in the Caligula manuscript of the early poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*. By the end of the period, Middle English has fully transitioned to the invariant definite article that we know and love in today's language (see van Gelderen 2011: Chapter 6).

5.4 Syntax

Three examples of syntactic change are discussed in this section: the loss of verb-second (§5.4.1), the development of the modals as dedicated functional elements (§5.4.2), and the emergence of the modern *s*-genitive (§5.4.3). All three of these changes involve Middle English losing features that are still found today in many other Germanic languages, and striking out in its own direction. In this respect, again Middle English appears as the transitional period in which major changes in the structure of English are afoot.

5.4.1 The verb-second rule

The word order of Middle English differs substantially from that of the present day. In particular, many Middle English texts are governed by something called the VERB-SECOND rule (V2 for short). The verb-second rule simply states that one, and only one, syntactic constituent must precede the finite verb. Sometimes this is the subject, just like in present-day *Mary loves John* or *John doesn't like dogs*. When a constituent other than the subject is in first position, however, we see SUBJECT-VERB INVERSION, with the subject following the finite verb. Here's an example from the *Prose Rule of St. Benet*:

(4) Þis   sais sain benet.
     this says Saint Benet
     'Saint Benet says this'

(5) In þis sentence mustirs sain benet us hu   we sal   lede ure lif.
     in this sentence shows   Saint Benet us how we should lead our life
     'In this sentence Saint Benet shows us how we should lead our life'

In Example (4), the subject *sain benet* follows the finite verb *sais*, because the object *Þis* is in first position. Example (5) is similar, except that a prepositional phrase is in first position. This verb-second rule is really not too different from what we see in *wh*-questions in Present Day English such as *Which book did you read?* or *What will you say?* – the main difference is that Middle English texts have V2 not just in *wh*-interrogative clauses, but also in normal declarative main clauses. Middle English also makes much more use of the first position for constituents other than the subject.

There's a simple way to capture V2 in a syntactic tree: see (6) and (7). Whatever constituent is in the first position is in the specifier of CP, the finite verb is in the C head position, and the subject is in the specifier of IP.

(6)

```
                    CP
               ╱         ╲
            DP              C′
            △          ╱        ╲
          Þis        C            IP
                     │        ╱      ╲
                   sais     DP        I′
                          △  ╲       △
                       sain benet   ...
```

(7)

```
                         CP
                   ╱            ╲
               PP                  C′
            ╱      ╲          ╱        ╲
        In þis sentence     C            IP
                            │        ╱      ╲
                         mustirs   DP        I′
                                  △  ╲      △
                               sain benet  us ...
```
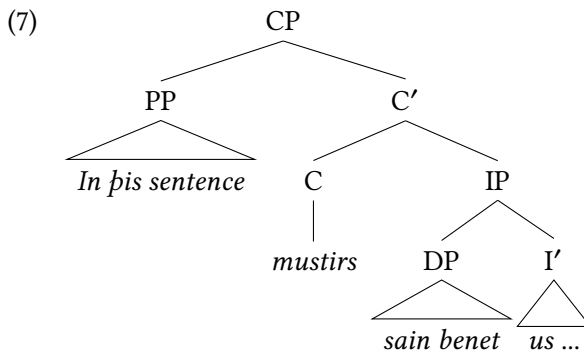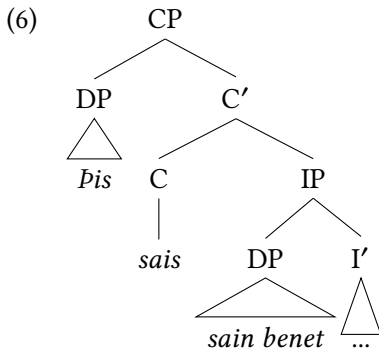
This syntactic analysis of V2 goes back to den Besten (1989), who applied it to German and Dutch. Indeed, all the Present Day Germanic standard languages other than English exhibit the verb-second rule, making (Present Day) English quite exceptional in this regard.

This sort of sᴛʀɪᴄᴛ V2 is very widespread in Middle English. However, another system seems to be at work in the south and west, which we can call ɪɴғᴏʀᴍᴀᴛɪᴏɴ-sᴛʀᴜᴄᴛᴜʀᴇ V2 (IS-V2). In this variety, whether we find the verb in second position or not (in clauses with an initial non-subject) depends on the discourse status of the subject. If the subject is ɢɪᴠᴇɴ ɪɴғᴏʀᴍᴀᴛɪᴏɴ, i.e. refers to something that was mentioned in the previous discourse, it may precede the finite verb, giving rise to a V3 word order, as in Example (8). If it is ɴᴇᴡ ɪɴғᴏʀᴍᴀᴛɪᴏɴ, it must follow the finite verb, giving rise to a V2 word order, as in (9) and (10).

(8) With þe girdill þei   girt his nek
     with the girdle they girt his neck
     'They dressed his neck with the girdle'   (Capgrave, *Life of Saint Gilbert*)

(9) This did his seruauntis
     this did his servants
     'This his servants did'   (Capgrave, *Life of Saint Gilbert*)

(10) Thus is an avaricious Man, that loveth his tresor   biforn god
      thus is an avaricious man who loves   his treasure before God
      'Thus is an avaricious man who loves his treasure before God...'
                                                    (Chaucer, *Parson's Tale*)

Personal pronouns, like *þei* 'they' in (8), are always given information, and thus
always occur in V3 structures.[7]

The subject position

Present Day English is a language that firmly requires a subject in the
specifier of IP – even when the subject doesn't refer to anything, as in ***It
is raining***, ***It seems that she left***, or ***There is a problem***. You can find dis-
cussion of these facts in any generative syntax textbook, e.g. Carnie (2013:
Chapter 8). This requirement developed by the end of the Middle English
period: Old and Middle English weren't as rigid, and in many cases the
subject could be left out entirely. As in many other things, Middle English
was a crucial transitional period – though this change was already well
underway during the Old English period. See §7.4.1 for more on subject
expression.

The existence of three different types of grammatical system among the popu-
lation – the strict V2 type, the IS-V2 type, and the newer Early Modern English
SVO type with the verb in I – was, of course, accompanied by sociolinguistic
variation. Strict V2 was most common in the north and east, IS-V2 in the south,
and towards the end of the period both systems decrease in frequency in favour
of strict SVO. Individual writers often had command of more than one system,
though, just as today. For example, Eitler & Westergaard (2014) show that the
15th-century historian John Capgrave used a different syntax depending on who

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[7]We don't discuss how to represent IS-V2 and V3 in a tree here, as this is more complicated. See
Los (2015: Chapter 7) for discussion, if you're interested.

he was writing for. For his local East Anglian audience, he used exclusively strict V2, but when writing for a wider audience – as in Examples (8) and (9) above, from the *Life of Saint Gilbert* – he uses much more IS-V2. This may indicate that southern variants were more strongly associated with supralocal PRESTIGE.

5.4.2 The English modals

The modals in modern English (*can/could*, *may/might*, *must*, *shall/should*, *will/-would*) are often described as "modal verbs", but in reality they are not at all like other verbs. For a start, they display all of the NICE properties discussed in §4.4.1 in the previous chapter. They also have a number of other special properties that set them apart from lexical verbs:

- They *don't have non-finite forms.* It's not possible to say, for instance, **I expect him to can speak English* – despite the fact that it's obvious what such a sentence would mean.

- You *can't have more than one* of them in the same clause (at least in most varieties, including the standard varieties). A sentence like *I must can do it or **I might should do it* is not possible – again, despite it being obvious what they should mean.

- They always take *verb phrase complements.* Sentences like **I must my home-work* or *I can English are not grammatical.

- They don't show AGREEMENT with the subject, even in the third person singular. **He must**s*** or **Jan may**s*** are not possible.

> ### Multiple modals
>
> Some modern varieties in southern Scotland, Northern Ireland, Northern England, and the southern United States allow multiple modals to a limited extent. A handful of examples are given in §1.2.3; see Huang (2011) for more discussion and references.

These properties show that the modals are not like other verbs at all. Rather, they're elements of category I, occupying the head of IP, and behave completely differently to verbs of category V.

This wasn't always the case, though. First of all, the difference between I elements and lexical verbs was not so clear in Early Modern and Middle English: lexical verbs could also occupy I, as discussed in §4.4.1. More importantly, we can find Middle English examples without some of the special properties listed above. In (11) we see an example of a non-finite form of *can*, and in (12) we see more than one modal in the same clause.[8]

(11)   but it sufficeþ too hem to **kunne** her   Pater Noster
       but it suffices to   them to can   their Pater Noster
       'but it is enough for them to know their Lord's Prayer' (*Lollard Sermons*, c. 1425)

(12)   Who this booke **shall wylle** lerne
       who this book   shall will   learn
       'whoever wishes to master this book'   (Caxton's *Dialogues*, c. 1483)

There are also examples of modals taking nominal objects. All these properties are typical of other present-day Germanic languages, such as German: in fact, the only thing that's special about the modals in German (as in Old and Middle English) in general is that they are part of a class of verbs with weird morphology, known as the PRETERITE-PRESENTS. The special properties of the modern modals emerge, on the whole, some time around the transition between Middle and Early Modern English, circa 1500.

The historical development of the English modals has been heavily debated, and used as a battleground for competing theories of syntactic change: "When it comes to great controversies in the field of English historical linguistics, the development of the modals is hard to beat" (Fischer et al. 2017: 111). Lightfoot (1979) influentially claimed that all of the modals suddenly changed at the same time, around 1600, as part of the innovation of the category I. Subsequent research has established that individual modals did behave differently: there are no non-finite forms attested for the forerunners of *must* and *shall* in Old or Middle English, for instance (Warner 1993). This has been taken as support for the idea that the change proceeded one lexical item at a time, rather than affecting all of the modals at once. This is not the place to enter into the debate: see Fischer et al. (2017: 111–113) for a brief discussion, Fischer (2007: 159–209) for a more

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[8]Examples are taken from Denison (1993: 310).

extensive (and critical) overview, and Lightfoot (2006: §5.2) for a revisiting of his original position. All agree, however, that the emergence of a new class of modals in the Early Modern English period was a dramatic and important change, and it is striking that all the modals GRAMMATICALIZE in a similar direction, even if their trajectories are not exactly parallel.

For more on this development, and further references, see Los (2015: Chapter 4, especially §4.5 and §4.8), and Fischer et al. (2017: §6.2.2).

5.4.3 Possessives: *of* and *'s*

There are two main ways of expressing possession in Present Day English: with the preposition *of*, as in *The car **of** the assistant lecturer*, or with the PHRASAL AFFIX or PHRASAL CLITIC *'s*, as in *The assistant lecturer**'s** car*. There has been a lot of research into variation and change in this GENITIVE ALTERNATION in recent years, and various factors have been shown to influence the choice between the two. According to one overview (Rosenbach 2014) these include:

- ANIMACY (e.g. human vs. thing): more animate possessors favour *'s*

- DEFINITENESS/topicality of the possessor: more definite/topical possessors favour *'s*

- SEMANTIC RELATION (concrete possession, e.g. *my hat*, vs. more abstract relation, e.g. *my loyalty*): more concrete possessors favour *'s*

- SYNTACTIC WEIGHT (length of possessor): shorter possessors favour *'s*

- VARIETY (e.g. British vs. American English): American English favours *'s*

- MODALITY (e.g. spoken vs. written): spoken language favours *'s*

The term "genitive" itself comes from the classical grammatical tradition for talking about different cases (see §5.3.3 above and also §6.3.3), along with nominative (e.g. *I*, *she*), accusative (e.g. *me*, *her*), and dative. These terms traditionally refer to word forms that differ by their function in a sentence: for instance, we know that *I* must be a subject because it never has this form in any other function in standard Englishes (*I* is the nominative case form) and that *my* marks possession because this is the general function of this specific form (the genitive case). However, the term genitive isn't really an appropriate one for Present Day English, since neither the *of*-construction nor the *'s*-construction involves a morphological case: morphological case endings are attached to a noun and can't stand on

their own. While the *of*-construction clearly involves a prepositional phrase, the *'s*-construction at first sight looks like a morphological ending. Things are not so simple, though: the *'s* always attaches to the end of the possessor, regardless of the part of speech of that word, as shown by the examples in (13)–(16).

(13)   The man**'s** car

(14)   The man I met**'s** car

(15)   The man I met yesterday**'s** car

(16)   The man I talked to**'s** car

In these examples, the *'s* attaches to a noun (13), a verb (14), an adverb (15), and a preposition (16).[9] This behaviour is completely unexpected for a case ending, as these normally only attach to nominal categories such as nouns and adjectives. In addition, case endings are normally found on *every* nominal word in a possessor phrase, not just at the end of the phrase. These facts strongly suggest that *'s* is not a case ending but something else entirely, and this "something else" has been referred to as a PHRASAL CLITIC or PHRASAL AFFIX which attaches to the right edge of the possessor phrase (see Anderson 2013, Börjars, Denison, Krajewski, et al. 2013 and other papers in Börjars, Denison & Scott 2013 for discussion). In other words, English possessive *'s* belongs to the syntax of the language, not its morphology.

In early Middle English (and Old English), on the other hand, the genitive behaves like a completely normal morphological case, as shown in Example (17).

(17)   þa**s**   castle**s**   ȝæte
        the.GEN castle-GEN gate
        'the castle's gate'   (Layamon, *Brut*)

In this example, the *-s* ending is found on both the demonstrative/definite article *þas* and the noun *castles*. Also, in early Middle English the *-s* ending is only found on nominal words, and never (for example) on a verb as in (14) or an adverb as in (15). This development, which took place mainly during the Middle English period, has attracted particular attention from historical linguists because it seems to fly in the face of the commonly observed tendency of GRAMMATICALIZATION (see §1.4.5), in which more independent items (like free words and CLITICS) tend to develop into less independent items (like bound MORPHEMES), not vice versa.

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[9]Not all of the examples in (13)–(16) are equally favoured by speakers (see e.g. Börjars, Denison, Krajewski, et al. 2013), but they are all unquestionably grammatical possibilities.

If the Present Day English *'s* really is a phrasal clitic, then the direction of the development has been from affix to clitic, which is at the very least unusual (and some theories predict that this sort of DEGRAMMATICALIZATION should not happen at all: see e.g. Lehmann 2015: 22). Opinions vary on whether this is a real example of degrammaticalization, and if so what the implications of this are. We won't be able to resolve the question in this textbook, but see Allen (2008), Norde (2009), Szmrecsányi (2013) and Rosenbach (2014) for some perspectives.

The apostrophe

The correct use of the apostrophe in Present Day English can stir up strong reactions:[a]

> The Apostrophe Protection Society was started in 2001 by John Richards with the specific aim of "preserving the correct use of this currently much abused punctuation mark" in all forms of text written in the English Language. However John has recently decided, for the reasons he gives below, to close the APS. His announcement in November 2019 brought an enormous amount of interest both from the media and other folk worldwide, most of whom were shocked by his decision. Indeed this resulted in a massive 600-fold increase in demand on this website which caused the bandwidth of our Server to be exceeded, with us temporarily having to withdraw the site. We apologise for any inconvenience or disappointment caused.

The apostrophe is nevertheless a relatively recent orthographic development in the history of English, getting established only in the latter half of the 17th century (Nevalainen 2006: 74).

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[a]http://www.apostrophe.org.uk/; accessed April 2020.

5.5 Lexicon

5.5.1 Lexical borrowing: French

Since the Middle English period was kickstarted by the Norman Conquest (§5.1.2), it's not surprising that French was a major source for borrowed words during this period.[10] In fact, among the headwords listed in the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, French ranks second after Latin in terms of number of words borrowed (over 6,000 of a total of 92,500; Durkin 2014: 25). Many Latin borrowings are very rare, and if we look only at more frequent words French often emerges as the number one donor language overall. Also, it's often hard to distinguish French borrowings from Latin borrowings, as the two languages are closely related. Of the 1,000 most frequent words in the British National Corpus, Durkin (2014: 37) finds that just over half (529) are borrowings, and 487 of these are from either Latin or French or both.

Durkin emphasizes that these figures need to be approached with caution, since it's never clear whose English (or which English) is involved, and estimates from different sources can vary dramatically (cf. Scheler 1977, Dekeyser 1986). Still, it's clear that the lexical impact of French was massive. Very many of these words were borrowed during the Middle English period, with 1300–1350 the high point. Throughout the period, French was by far the largest source of new words, except in the 15th century when Latin emerged as a serious contender (Durkin 2014: 35). Uncontroversial borrowings from French include words like *choice*, *government*, *company*, *age*, *very*, *peace*, *chance*, and *city*. Other words like *action*, *colour* and *person* may be borrowings from either French or Latin, and are likely to have developed through long-term influence from both languages. All these borrowings occur across a very wide range of semantic domains.

French was a high-status language during the Middle English period, and so it's not surprising that PRESTIGE motivated many borrowings. One commonly-mentioned case study involves words for animals (e.g. *pig*/*swine*, *cow*, *sheep*) and the corresponding meat (*pork*, *beef*, *mutton*). In each of these cases, the word for the animal is inherited from Old English, and the word for the meat is a borrowing from French (*porc*, *boeuf*, *mouton*). This case was made famous by the first chapter of Walter Scott's 1819 historical novel *Ivanhoe*, set in the 12th century, in which two "Saxon" workers Gurth and Wamba resentfully discuss these word-pairs and their service to their "foreign masters".

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[10]There are some borrowings from Norse in this period, too, including some extremely common words. However, we'll defer discussion of those until Chapter 6, where that contact situation is dealt with in more detail.

Scott's view of the 12th century, and of Saxons and Normans as distinct races, is shaped more by 19th-century nationalism than by historical fact. In any case, nothing like the episode with Gurth, Wamba and the word-pairs could possibly have happened, because Middle English *porc* 'pork', *beof* 'beef' and *motoun* 'mutton' are recorded as borrowings for the first time around 1300. Even more importantly, during the Middle English period these words didn't just refer to the meat, but could also refer to the animals themselves – as could the inherited words for pig, cow and sheep. It's only much later, after 1500, that the sharp distinction between inherited animal-words and French meat-words was established (see Őrsi 2015). Still, the fact that this distinction was established at all is a testament to the enduring prestige of the French language in England, many centuries after the Norman Conquest.

Guard your wardrobe

Contact situations can result in rather wonderful lexical doublets. The Present Day English words *garderobe*, *wardrobe*, *guarantee*, and *warranty* are indeed used as four different words in the language. However, *wardrobe* and *warranty* were borrowed from the Norman dialect of French, which shows /w/ where other French dialects show /g/, whereas *garderobe* and *guarantee* were borrowed from another dialect of French. Curiously, these doublets don't mean the same, so we're observing some interesting semantic differentiation here! More on this in Exercise 7.

5.5.2 Word formation

The French lexical influence on English wasn't limited to words borrowed as a whole. Derivational suffixes are also borrowed into Middle English. Some of these suffixes are among the most productive in Present Day English: *-ation*, *-ment*, *-age*, *-ity* – and those are just the suffixes that form nouns. The French-origin suffixes competed (and still compete) with inherited suffixes of similar meaning such as *-dom*, *-hood* and *-ship*. These morphological new arrivals bring Middle English strikingly closer to what we're used to in the present day.

These derivational suffixes don't seem to have been borrowed from French as isolated chunks. Instead, words containing these suffixes were borrowed as

Table 5.5: Some derivational suffixes in Middle English

Type	French suffixes	Inherited suffixes
Abstract nominal	*-(a)cioun, -ment, -age, -ite*	*-dom, -hede, -ship*
Agent nominal	*-ant, -ard, -our*	*-er(e), -end, -ling*
Adjectival	*-able, -al, -ive, -ous*	*-fold, -ful, -ward, -wise*
Verbal	*-ify, -ize*	*-nen, -sian*

unanalysed wholes, and the suffixes became productive only later, when they were recognized as such. Crucial evidence for this comes from work by Dalton-Puffer (1996), who looked for "hybrid" words containing an inherited base and a French suffix. If the French suffixes were truly productive, they should have been able to occur with any base, not just French ones. However, such hybrid words constitute a minuscule proportion of the total number of derived words in her data: for abstract nouns, it's less than 0.5%.[11] She therefore concludes (1996: 220) that "it is impossible to believe that the Romance suffixes were productive in Middle English without unduly stretching the notion of productivity". Another more recent study with a focus on suffix semantics, Lloyd (2011), broadly agrees, but suggests that a few suffixes – particularly *-age* and *-ment* – were in fact productively used in the 14th century (see also Trips & Stein (2008) on *-able*).

The main sources for new words in the Middle English period, then, were (i) direct borrowing from French and Latin, (ii) COMPOUNDING, and (iii) derivation using existing inherited suffixes. As regards derivation, it's worth noting that some of these inherited suffixes have fallen out of use today. For instance, adverbs could be formed from adjectives with the suffix *-e*, as in *brighte* 'brightly' or *hearde* 'severely/bravely'. The *-ly* ending, which is the most common adverb-deriver today, is also found in Chaucerian Middle English, but had yet become dominant at that time.

5.5.3 Meaning change: the case of *indeed*

Middle English, just like the other periods, offers many examples of nuanced interaction between semantics and pragmatics in meaning change. One such example from the Middle English period is the development of the word *indeed*. The discussion here is based on Traugott & Dasher (2002: 159–165).

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[11]An example of such a rare hybrid word is *knowable*, with the inherited verb stem *know-* and the French adjective-forming suffix *-able* (Dalton-Puffer 1996: 183).

An early example of the phrase *in dede* is (18), from the Middle English fable *The Fox and the Wolf*, where it means 'by (one's) actions'.

(18) "Vuolf," quod þe vox him   þo,   "Al þat þou hauest her   bifore I-do,
Wolf   said   the fox 3sg-DAT then All that you have   here before done
In þohut,   in speche, and **in dede**, ... Ich þe   forȝeue."
in thought in speech and in action   I   you forgive
'"Wolf," said Fox to him then, "All that you have done before this, in
thought, in speech, and in action ... I forgive you for it."' (*Fox and Wolf*, c.
1300)

Here, and in many other examples from the same period, the phrase *in dede* is used to contrast actions (on the one hand) with thoughts and words (on the other). Traugott & Dasher (2002) point out that, in context, it was possible for the hearer to infer that the event or action to which *in dede* was attached was actually observable. The phrase could then be used as a sort of EVIDENTIAL marker, to mean 'in actuality', as in (19).

(19) ofte   in storial   mateer scripture rehersith the comune opynyoun of
often in historical matters scripture repeats   the common opinion   of
men, and affirmeth not, that it was so **in dede**.
men and affirms   not that it was so in actuality
'often where matters of history are concerned, scripture repeats men's
common opinion, but does not affirm that it was so in actuality [rather
than opinion].'   (Purvey, *Wycliffe Bible* prologue 56; 1388)

Another potential inference here is that it is the whole statement that is true "in actuality", and not just the event being described. The intended interpretation is then 'in truth'. By the mid-14th century, clear uses of *in deed* that can only mean 'in truth' can be found, such as (20).

(20) The men of þe town had suspecion to hem, þat   her   tydyngis were
the men of the town had suspicion to them that their tidings   were
lyes (as it was **in dede**), risen.
lies as it was in truth   rose
'The men of the town, being suspicious that their reports were lies (as
was certainly true), rose.'   (Capgrave, *Chronicle* p216; 1452)

Here we can see originally pragmatic elements of meaning becoming an inextricable part of the semantics of the lexical item. From the 16th century onwards

(Early Modern English), we also see *indeed* used as an adverb in clause-initial position. At the same time it also starts to pick up another usage, as a DISCOURSE MARKER with a meaning of roughly 'in addition' or 'what's more'. This is what we see in Example (21).

(21) For he that has been used to have his will in every thing as long as he has been in coats, why should we thinke it strange that he should desire and contend for it still when he is in breetches. **Indeed** as he grows more towards a man, it shows his faults the more, soe that there be few parents then soe blinde as not to see them, soe insensible as not to feele the ill effects of their owne indulgence.   (Locke 1693: p. 51)

These last two meanings are how the word is generally used in English today.

For Traugott & Dasher (2002), this is just one of many examples of a general trend in semantic change, whereby nonsubjective meanings give rise to subjective meanings. If Traugott & Dasher (2002) and much subsequent research is on the right lines, then semantic change is not completely random and unpredictable, nor is it totally dependent on quirks of individual cultures: rather, there are general tendencies of meaning change that hold across all human languages. If you're interested in following this up, we recommend taking a look at Traugott & Dasher (2002).

Of course, *indeed* isn't the only word that changed its meaning during the Middle English period. See Sylvester (2017) for a broad overview of semantic change and other lexical topics. The word *crafty*, for instance, goes from meaning 'strong, powerful, mighty' to 'skilful, dextrous, clever' to the PEJORATIVE 'cunning, wily, deceitful' during the same period – an example of SUBJECTIFICATION, as the speaker's subjective evaluation of the person or thing described as *crafty* becomes increasingly central to the word's meaning, as we saw in §3.5.1 of Chapter 3 as well.

Birds, birds everywhere!

The Middle English period is full of prominent literary works featuring birds. At least two of these have been known under titles which even contain birds: Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*, and *The Owl and the Nightin-*

gale by an anonymous author. The words *bird* and *fowl* are celebrities in the world of historical semantics. *Bird* used to refer to a young bird, e.g. a chick, whereas in Present Day English it refers to a winged creature in general, irrespective of age. *Fowl*, on the other hand, used to refer to a winged animal generally (so today's *bird*), but today we use it to refer to domestic types of birds, such as hens. Find out more about birds in Middle English literature in our sample texts at the end of this chapter.

5.5.4 Other words to look out for

Several other Middle English words are worthy of mention here – in particular, words that occur very frequently in texts and straddle the borderline between lexical and functional words.

Middle English, unlike Present Day standard English, had a three-way system of spatial DEIXIS (/daɪksɪs/ or /deɪksɪs/). Alongside the PROXIMAL form *this*, for things near the speaker/writer, and the MEDIAL form *that*, for things near the addressee, we also find a DISTAL form *ȝon*, for things far away from both. The spatial adverbs *here*, *there* and *ȝonder* reflect the same system. In modern English, the distinction between proximal and distal has mostly been lost, though this semantic nuance is retained in a number of varieties along with the forms *yon* and *yonder* themselves.

The most common Middle English word for 'same' was *ilk*, as in Chaucer's *This ilke worthy knyght* 'This same worthy knight'. When *ilk* and the definite article *þe*/*the* are used together, they are often UNIVERBATED into a single word *þilk*. Usage of these forms declines dramatically after the Middle English period.

Finally, a word on ORDINAL numerals. In Middle English (and Old English), the word for 'second' was *oþer*/*other*. The form *seconde* was borrowed via French, and derives from a Latin verb, *sequor* 'to follow'. The word *other* was not lost, but became restricted to its present-day meaning 'alternate, alternative'.

5.6 Final note

We've tried to highlight throughout this chapter that Middle English is a language in transition: as Geoffrey Chaucer puts it, *in forme of speche is chaunge*![12] This is true for every language, of course, but the diversity of Middle English

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[12]This line is found in book II of his epic poem *Troilus and Criseyde*.

texts available to us makes these transitions particularly apparent. You'll see this when you engage with the text samples, if you haven't already.

You will likely find that some Middle English texts, particularly the early ones, are still challenging to read. But fear not! In the next chapter, we will introduce those features that have survived from Old into Early Middle English and that make these texts particularly tricky for the modern reader. Steel yourself as we plunge deeper into the history of the language! But right now, it's time for you to do some of the exercises below and check out the sample texts that follow.

Suggested exercises

E.1 North vs. South in Present Day English landscape

In this chapter, we mentioned a couple of times that Middle English is a period famous for the abundance of spelling variation. Much of this (and other) variation could be predicted by region: are we dealing with a text from the south or the north of England? This north-south divide is very much relevant even when approaching Present Day English variation. In this exercise, you will be using the website created for a project titled "Our dialects: mapping variation in English in the UK".[a] The focus is on Present Day English regional variation. In Exercise 2 we do something similar with a focus on Middle English.

Questions to answer:

1. Is there a clear north-south divide for any/all of the lexical variables explored in the project? [Those are 'bread', 'evening meal', 'footwear', etc., which open up once you click on the "Lexical Variation" button.]

2. Is there a clear north-south divide for any/all of the phonological variables explored in the project?

3. Is there a clear north-south divide for any/all of the syntactic variables explored in the project?

4. Once you have answered questions 1–3, you can answer the following question: based on the linguistic evidence provided on the website, is the north-south divide visible in just any linguistic variable and uniformly across different linguistic levels?

If it's difficult to decide, say why.

If you're interested in north-south variation in Middle English, you could look at the LALME and LAEME atlases mentioned in §5.1.3 and try to find linguistic variants that show a similar regional distribution.

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[a]Available here: http://ourdialects.uk/.

E.2 North vs. South in the Reeve's Tale

As mentioned in the previous exercise (which you may or may not have looked at), in this chapter, we mentioned a couple of times that Middle English is a period famous for the abundance of spelling variation. Much of this (and other) variation could be predicted by region: are we dealing with a text from the south or the north of England? This north-south divide is very much relevant even when approaching Present Day English variation. In the previous exercise, you focused on Present Day English regional variation. In this exercise, we look into the linguistic correlates of the north-south divide in Middle English.

Here's an overview of typically southern vs. northern Middle English features:

- the verb *shall*: with a <sh> or <sch> /ʃ/ in the south, but <s> /s/ in the north

- *such* and *which*: with a <ch> /tʃ/ in the south, but <k> /k/ in the north

- <o> /ɔ/ in the south, but <a> /a/ in the north

- 3rd person singular present tense verbal ending: *-th* in the south, but *-s* in the north

- 3rd person plural pronouns: *hi*, *hem*, and *hir* in the south, but *they*, *them*, and *their* in the north

- prepositions: *to* and *from* in the south, but *til* and *fra* in the north

Now look at the extract from *The Reeve's Tale* presented later in this chapter – focus on the words in italics.[a] And tackle the following questions:

1. Do the characters labelled as southern use southern features?

2. Do the characters labelled as northern use northern features?

3. How much consistency is there in features being associated either with the north or the south in *The Reeve's Tale*?

4. What does Chaucer's use of southern vs. northern features suggest about dialect awareness in the Middle English period? (You can consider this question in the context of the previous exercise on the north-south divide in Present Day English if you did this exercise as well.)

Acknowledgement: this exercise is heavily inspired by Johanna Wood's 2016 teaching materials.

---

[a]If you want an intro to the tale, you can watch this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zux6z2d9CKo.

E.3 Middle English manuscripts
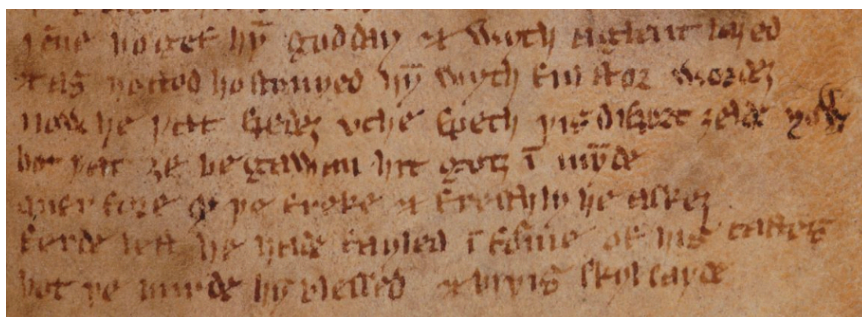
Figure 5.7: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Although the text samples in this chapter may have seemed a bit alien-looking, the truth is that once we inspect the manuscripts, this effect grows much stronger. In Figure 5.7, we show you some of the final lines of one of the sheets of the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* manuscript (folio 112 recto, or f. 112r).

> 1290 þenne ho gef hym godday ⁊ wyth aglent laȝed
> 1291 ⁊ as hostod ho stonyed hym wyth ful stor wordez
> 1292 now he þatt spedez vche spech þis disport ȝelde you
> 1293 bot þatt ȝe be Gawan hit gotz in mynd
> 1294 querfore quoþ þe freke ⁊ freschly[a] he askez
> 1295 ferde lest he hade fayled in forme[b] of his castes
> 1296 bot þe burde hym blessed ⁊ biþis skyl sayde

Here are your tasks:

1. Can you match any of the words we typed ourselves here to anything in the manuscript? (If so, which ones?)

2. Try to formulate the reasons why you may be struggling reading the manuscript itself. Be as precise as possible.

3. Try to transliterate one of the lines above using the letter shapes available to you through your regular keyboard. Put yourself in George and Míša's shoes – we had to make certain decisions when presenting the Middle English text samples to you. How would you go about picking one way to transliterate your line – what decisions would you make and why?

---

[a]This word is particularly difficult to read.
[b]Modern editors often interpret this as <fourme>, e.g. Tolkien & Gordon (1967).

E.4 Middle English look-ups

Let's take a closer look at one of the most famous sentences written in Middle English:

(22) sumer   is icumen in
      summer is come   in
      'summer has arrived'

Your task will be very practical here: it's useful to know that Middle English dictionaries exist, and it's useful to try using them. You'll be working with the *Middle English Look-Ups.*[a]

1. First, search for "sumer". Does the dictionary give you any entries? (Sometimes it doesn't!) If so, the next step is checking if the entry suggested by the dictionary makes sense for your Middle English text. If there are more entries, you simply have to go through them to see which could be the most optimal. (We do make your task much easier by providing you with a translation above.)[b]

2. Now do the same for "icumen". This time, click on the entry which you deem appropriate. Does it provide you with any useful information? Why and/or why not?

3. Can you imagine using this dictionary? Give reasons why and/or why not.

---

[a]Available here: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary.
[b]You may be wondering why the dictionary doesn't always give you any entries when looking some words up. There's a fairly good reason for this. Remember that there is a lot of spelling variation in Middle English, and searching for words in this period therefore comes, sometimes, with the headache of trying out different spelling variants to get an entry that matches your sentence in terms of its meaning. The webpage provides you with more details if you decide to delve into Middle English beyond this book.

E.5 Which pronoun?

We've seen that there was substantial variation in pronoun use during the Middle English period. In this exercise, try to put yourself in the shoes of people from around medieval England and decide which pronoun would be most appropriate!

1. A 15th-century woman from the north of England talking about another woman

2. A 14th-century man addressing his lord directly

3. A 13th-century man from the south of England talking about a group of people

4. A 14th-century lord addressing one of his subjects directly

5. A 14th-century man from the Midlands talking about a group of people

6. A 14th-century lady addressing a group of her subjects directly

7. A 13th-century owl[a] talking about itself

8. A 15th-century woman talking about an unknown or unspecific antecedent

9. A 14th-century man from the south talking about a woman

In all examples, the nominative case form is what we're looking for.

---

[a]Talking birds were not uncommon in Middle English literature; see the sample texts in §6 and §7.

E.6 Chaucer and V2 and V3

Look at the following clauses from texts by Geoffrey Chaucer. The *Treatise on the Astrolabe* was written for his son, Lewis. The *Parson's Tale* is one of the Canterbury Tales.

(23)   ther-for have I geven thee a suffisaunt Astrolabe (*Astrolabe*)

(24)   Thus seyn some auctours (*Astrolabe*; "some authors" = new information)

(25)   Alwey he maketh a "but" atte laste ende (*Parson's Tale*)

(26)   the amiable tonge is the tree of lyf (*Parson's Tale*)

(27)   in helle hir sighte shal be ful of derknesse (*Parson's Tale; "her sight" = given information*)

(28)   by the azimut in which he stondeth, maystou[a] seen in which partie of the firmament he is (*Astrolabe*)

Here are your tasks:

1. For each clause, state whether it shows a) strict V2 or b) information-structure V2 (IS-V2) word order, or whether c) it's impossible to tell.

2. Is there a generalization about where you find strict V2 and IS-V2?

3. If so, why do you think this generalization holds?

---

[a]mayst thou

E.7 Guard your wardrobe

Look up the Present Day English meaning of the following doublets. What is the key semantic difference, if any? Is this result in any way surprising?

- *guardian* vs. *warden*

- *garderobe* vs. *wardrobe*

Additional doublets/triplets if you'd like more:

- *guard* vs. *ward* (as nouns)

- *guaranty* vs. *warranty* vs. *warrant*

E.8 Contrasting Present Day English with Middle English: *The Owl and the Nightingale*

This exercise involves an extract from *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Early Middle English). Look at the nine expressions in bold and explain how they differ from their Present Day English equivalents. Pay attention to as many differences as possible.

The Owl and the Nightingale (ll. 101–142), adopted and adapted from Cartlidge (2001):

Middle English	Present Day English
And Þat oþer ȝer a faukun bredde	And some years ago, a falcon was breeding;
his nest (1) noȝt wel he ne bihedde:	and she didn't take good care of **her nest: (1)**
Þo hit bicom þat he haȝte,	When it turned out that the falcon had hatched her eggs,

& *of his eyre (2) briddes wraȝte (3)*;	and *from her eggs (2) birds were produced (3)*;
ho broȝte his *brides (4) mete (5)*,	she brought her *chicks (4) some food (5)*,
hit was idon (6) ov a loþ[e] [cu]ste.	*It was done (6)* by a horrible farting.
& *nom (7)* þat fule brid amidde,	she *dragged (7)* that nasty chick from their midst,
& warp hit of *þan wilde bowe (8)*,	and tossed him out off *that wild branch (8)*,
Herbi men segget a bispel,	This illustrates a fable that people tell
þeȝ hit ne bo *fuliche (9)* spel;	though it's not *entirely (9)* a fable;

E.9 Contrasting Present Day English with Middle English: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Look at the expressions in bold in the text below and explain how they differ from their Present Day English equivalents. You are expected to comment only on phenomena covered as part of the course.

ME	Present Day English
And *þe assaut (1)* watz sesed at Troye	and *the assault (1)* was ceased at Troy
Þe tulk þat þe trammes *of tresoun (2)*	the man that the plots *of treason (2)*
Þe trewest on erþe (3)	*the truest on earth (3)*
And *his highe (4) kynde (5)*	and *his high (4) kin (5)*
Þat *burȝe he biges (6)* vpon fyrst	that *he builds a castle (6)* first

E.10 Improve these statements

What's unfortunate about these statements?

- "The Old English <hw> spellings changed to <wh> by the time of Present Day English, resulting in a sound change."

- "In Middle English, we see the adoption of the pronoun *them*, which has a definite initial dental sound."

- "*Perspire* is a completely different word than *sweat* and it is therefore a lexical word."

Texts

T.1 Caxton, Preface to *Eneydos*

William Caxton, who introduced the printing press to Britain, was acutely conscious of language variation and change. In this text, the 1490 preface to his translation of the *Eneydos* (Virgil's *Aeneid*), he reflects on the diversity of English, using the two plural forms of the word for 'egg' – the older *eyren* and the newer *egges* – as an example.[a]

And certaynly our langage now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken whan I was borne: for we Englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, which is never stedfaste but ever waverynge, wexynge one season and waneth & dyscreaseth another season, and that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother.

In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn

are

domination; moon

waxing

common

shire

marchauntes were in a ship in tamyse for to have sayled over the see into zelande and for lacke of wynde they taryed atte forlonde, and went to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde a mercer cam in to an hows and axed for mete, and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde that she coude speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges, and she understode hym not.

And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel. Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren? Certaynly it is harde to playse every man by cause of dyversite & chaunge of langage.

<div style="float:right; color:gray">

Thames

Zeeland

foreland (the coast)

textile merchant. Note that at this period the word *meat* referred to food in general, not just meat

</div>

---

^aTranscribed from the manuscript image at https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126611.html; accessed April 2020; modern punctuation and paragraph breaks added.

T.2 Paston Letters
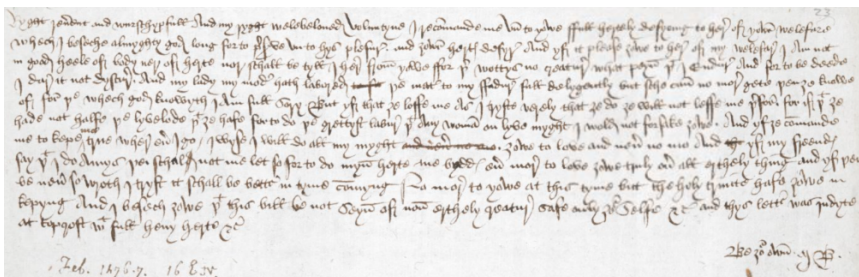
Figure 5.8: A Paston letter

The Pastons were a noble family in Norfolk, and we are lucky enough to have many surviving letters to and from members of the family. This letter was written in February 1477 by Margery Paston (née Brews) to her husband John Paston III.[a]

Ryght reverent and wurschypfull and my ryght wellbeloved Valentyne, I recomande me unto yowe, ffull hertely desyring to here of yowr wellfare, which I beseche Almyghty God long for to preserve unto his plasyre and yowr hertes desyre.

And yf it please yow to here of my wellfare I am not in good heele of body nor of herte, nor schall be tyll I here from yowe, ffor there wottys no creature what payn that I endure, and for to be deede I dar it not dyscure. And my lady my moder hath labored the mater to my ffadur full delygently, but sche can no more gete than ye knowe of, for the which God knowyth I am full sory.

> health
> knows
> dead; discover

But yf that ye loffe me, as I tryste verely that ye do, ye will not leffe me therefor. For if that ye hade not halfe the lyvelode that ye hafe, for to do the grettyst labure that any woman on lyve myght, I wold not forsake yowe. And yf ye comande me to kepe me true wherever I go, I wyse I will do all my myght yowe to love and never no mo. And yf my freendys say that I do amyse, thei schal not me let so for to do.

> verily, i.e. truly
>
> livelihood
>
> i.e. no one else
> do amiss, i.e. to make a mistake/go astray

Myne herte me byddys ever more to love yowe truly over all erthely thyng. And yf thei be never so wroth I tryst it schall be better in tyme comyng. No more to yowe at this tyme, but the Holy Trinite hafe yow in kepyng. And I besech yowe that thys bill be not seyne of none erthely creature safe only yorselfe &c.

> letter

And thys letter was indyte at Topcroft with full hevy herte &c.

> *indyte*: written

Be your own MB.

by

T.3 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a chivalric romance from the 14th century. It employs alliteration, like Old English poetry, and represents the North West Midland dialect of the Middle English period. The following excerpt is a scene in which Lady Bertilak approaches Sir Gawain's bed with romantic intentions in mind. We follow the line numbering of Tolkien & Gordon (1967).[a]

þenne ho gef hym godday ꝛ wyth aglent laȝed	glance; *laȝed*: smiled
ꝛ as hostod ho stonyed hym wyth ful stor wordez	surprised; *stor*: big
now he þatt spedez vche spech þis disport ȝelde you	*disport*: entertainment
bot þatt ȝe be Gawan hit gotz in mynd	
querfore quoþ þe freke ꝛ freschly[b] he askez	said; *freke*: knight
ferde lest he hade fayled in forme[c] of his castes	afraid; *castes*: speech
bot þe burde hym blessed ꝛ biþis skyl sayde	damsel; *skyl*: reason
So god as gawayn gaynly is halden	*gaynly*: appropriately
ꝛ cortaysye is closed so clene in hym seluen	
couth not lyȝtly haf lenged so long wyth alady	*lenged*: stayed
bot he had craued acusse bihis cõrtaysye	*cusse*: kiss; *bihis*: because of his
bisum towch of summe tryfle at sum talez ende	
þen quoþ wowen iwysse worþe as yow lykez	*wowen*: Gawain; *iwysse*: indeed
Ischal kysse at your comaundement as a knyȝt fallez	
ꝛ fire lest hedisplese yow fo plede hit no more	*fire*: further
ho comes nerre with þat ꝛ cachez hym in armez	
loutez luflych adoun ꝛ þe leude kyssez	bends; *leude*: knight

þay comly bykennen to kryst ayþer oþer

bykennen: commend

ho dos hirforth at þe ore with outen dyn more

dyn: noise

⁊ he ryches hym to ryse ⁊ rapes hym sone

rapes: hastens

clepes to his chamberlayn choses his wede

calls; *wede*: clothes

boȝez forth quen he watz boun blyþely to masse

turns; *boun*: ready

⁊ þenne he meued to his mete þat menskly hym keped

mete: food; *menskly*: generously

⁊ made myry al day til þe mone rysed

with game[d]

watz neuer[e] freke fayrer fonge

fonge: received

bitwene two so dyngne dame

dyngne: worthy

þe alder ⁊ þe ȝonge

much solace set þay same

solace: joy

---

[a]Transcribed from the Cotton Manuscript Nero A X/2 from http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Nero_A_X/2&index=4, ff. 112r-112v; accessed May 2020; original punctuation is kept.

[b]This word is very difficult to read in the manuscript.

[c]Modern editors often interpret this as <fourme>, e.g. Tolkien & Gordon (1967).

[d]Although this line is usually presented as such in modern editions, it is written as an addition to the previous line in the manuscript itself.

[e]These two words are difficult to make out from the manuscript, and we adapt the transcription of Tolkien & Gordon (1967) here.

T.4 The Reeve's Tale

Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* is one of the tales in his *Canterbury Tales*. Below is an extract containing speech between the main protagonists as well as the narrator. They come from different parts of England, which we indicate below.[a]

Aleyn/John (Northern)

Aleyn *spak* first, "al hayl, Symond, y-fayth;
How *fares* thy faire doghter and thy wyf?"

Miller (Southern)

"Aleyn! welcome," quod Simkin, "by my lyf,
And Iohn also, how now, what do ye heer?"

Aleyn/John (Northern)

"Symond," quod Iohn, "by god, nede *has* na peer;
Him *boës* serve him-selve that has *na* swayn,
Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sayn.
Oure manciple, I hope he wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed.
And forthy is I come, and eek Alayn,
To grinde our corn and carie it *ham* agayn;
I pray yow spede us hethen that ye may."

Miller (Southern)

"It *shal* be doon," quod Simkin, "by my fay;
What wol ye doon whyl that it is in hande?"

Aleyn/John (Northern)

"By god, right by the hoper wil I stande,"
Quod Iohn, "and se how that the corn *gas* in;
Yet saugh I never, by my fader kin,
How that the hoper *wagges til and fra*."

Aleyn answerde, "Iohn, and wiltow *swa*?
Than wil I be bynethe, by my croun,
And se how that the mele *falles* doun
In-to the trough; that *sal* be my disport."

...

Narrator (Southern)

Whan that he saugh his tyme, softely;
He *loketh* up and doun til he *hath* founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood y-bounde
Bihinde the mille, under a levesel;
And *to* the hors he *gooth* him faire and wel;
He *strepeth* of the brydel right anon.
And whan the hors was loos, he *ginneth* gon
Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,

quod: said

What are you doing here?

Need has no peer.

to him has to serve himself that has no servant

aches; always; teeth

forthy: that's why; *eek*: also

hethen: hence

fay: faith

hoper: hopper

disport: amusement

y-bounde: tied

levesel: arbour

ginneth: begins
fen: marsh

And forth with wehee, thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne.
This miller *gooth* agayn, *no* word he seyde,
But *dooth* his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
Til that *hir* corn was faire and well y-grounde. And
whan the mele is sakked and y-bounde,
This Iohn *goth* out and fynt his hors away,
And gan to crye "harrow" and "weylaway"!   exclamations of grief

Aleyn/John (Northern)
"Oure hors is lorn! Alayn, for goddes *banes*,   *lorn*: lost, e.g. forlorn
Step on thy feet, com out, man, al at anes!
Allas, our wardeyn has his palfrey lorn."   *palfrey*: saddle horse

Narrator (Southern)
This Aleyn al forgat, bothe mele and corn,
Al was out of his mynde his housbondrye.

Aleyn/John (Northern)
"What, *whilk* way is he geen?" he gan to crye.

...

Aleyn/John (Northern)
By goddes herte he *sal nat* scape us *bathe*.

...

Narrator (Southern)
And whan the miller saugh that *they* were gon,
He half a busshel of *hir* flour *hath* take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.

Miller (Southern)
He seyde, "I trowe the clerkes were aferd;   *trowe*: believe
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berd   *berd*: beard
For al his art; now lat *hem* goon *hir* weye.
Lo where *they* goon, ye, lat the children pleye;
They gete him *nat so* lightly, by my croun!"   *gete*: win

---

*a*Taken from https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Canterbury_Tales_(ed._Skeat)/Reeve, accessed May 2020; modern punctuation added. For the full version of the Middle English text accompanied with Present Day English interlinear translation, see https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/rvt-par.htm.

T.5 The Land of Cockaygne

The Land of Cockaygne is a poem written in Irish English of the 14th century. It is one of the so-called *Kildare Poems* (there are sixteen in total). These poems represent our earliest examples of Irish English![a] As the following extract illustrates, *The Land of Cockaygne* is a piece criticizing the morals of the clergy of the period.[b]

Fur in see bi west spayngne .	*Fur*: far; Spain
is a lond ihote cokaygne ·	*ihote*: called
þer nís lond under heuen riche	
of wel of godnís hit iliche.	*iliche*: alike
þoʒ paradis be míri a'bríʒt.	
cokaygn isof fairír siʒt .	
what is þer in paradis.	
bot grasse a'flure a'grene ris·	*ris*: branches
þoʒ þer be ioi a'gret dute.	*ioi*: joy; *dute*: delight
þer nís met bote frute·	*met*: food
þer nís halle bure no benche·	*bure*: bower
bot watír man is þursto qenche·	
beþ þer no men but two.	
hely a'enok al so·	Elijah and Enoch
clínglich maihi go·	dry; may they
whar þer woníþ men nomo·	*woníþ* lives; *men*: indef. "one"
In cokaigne is met A'drínk.	
wiþ vte care·how a'swínk.	*swínk*: toil
þemet is tie·þedrínk isclere.	*tie*: excellent
to nóne· russín a' sopper ·	*russín*: snack
i sigge for soþ boute were·	
þer nís lond on erthe is pere.	*pere*: peer
under heuen nís lond iwisse .	
of so mochil ioi a'blisse·	
þer is maní swete síʒte·	
Al is daí nís þer no níʒte·	
þer nís baret noþer strif ·	*baret*: conflict

nís þer no deþ ac euer lif ·
þer nís lac of met no cloþ .
þer nís man no wōman wroþ ·
þer nís serpent wolf no fox .
Hors | no capil | kowe· no ox.
þer nís schepe· no swíne no gote.
no non horwȝ la godit wote·
noþer harate nother stode.
þe lond is ful of oþer gode·
nís þer fleí· fle | no lowse·
in cloþ| in toune· bed no house ·
þer nís dunnír sléte no hawle·
no non vile worme no snawile ·
no non storme| reín, no wínde·
Þernís man no wōman blínde .
ok al is game Ioií a'gle.
wel is him þat þer mai be ·
Þer beþ ríuers gret a' fíne ·
of oile| melk | honí a' wíne ·
watir seruíþ þer to no þíng .
bot to siȝt a'to wa'ussíng
þer is maner frute ·
Al is solas a' dedute·

ac: always

wroþ: angry, wroth

capil: horse, possibly hen

horwȝ: dirt; oh god knows it

fly; flee; louse

thunder; sleet; hail

ok: and

washing

pleasure; delight

---

[a]Not to be confused with Irish, i.e. Irish Gaelic, one of the Celtic languages.
[b]Transcribed from the Harley 913 Manuscript http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.
aspx?ref=harley_ms_913_fs001r, ff. 3r-3v; accessed May 2020; punctuation kept as in
the original. For the full Middle English version, go here: https://celt.ucc.ie//published/
E300000-001/. For a translation into Present Day English, see e.g. http://wpwt.soton.
ac.uk/trans/cockaygn/coctrans.htm.

T.6 The Parliament of Fowls

Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* (or *Parlement of Foules*) is one of the numerous Middle English works based on ornithology of the times. As the box "Birds, birds everywhere" in this chapter (§5.5.3) suggested, there are birds in this piece... and they are all over the place![a]

The were huntere slepyng[e] in his bed,	*were*: weary
To wode a gayne his mynde goþ a none	
The juge dremith · how his plees ben spedd,	
The cartere dremith how his cartis gone	
The riche of gold · þe knyȝt fyȝt with his fone	*fone*: foe
The seke met, he drynkth of þe tonne	*seke*: sick; *met*: dreams
The louere met he hathe his lady wonne,	
...	
A gardyn saþ I ful of blosmy bowes	*saþ*: saw; boughs
Upon a ryver in a grene mede	*mede*: meadow
Þere as swetnesse ever y nowy is	
With[b] floures white blewe yalow ⁊ rede	
And colde welle stremes ⁊ no thing ded,	
Þat swōm̄yn̄ ful of smale fisshes lyhte	
W[t] fynnes rede and skales syluer brygte	with
On every bowhe þe bryddes harde I synge	bough; birds
W[t] voyce of aungel in hu· harmonye	*hu*: their
Some be syde hem her byrdes forth to brynge	
The litle conyes to hir pley goŋ hye	*conyes*: conies, rabbits
And ferþer al aboute I gaŋ aspie	
Þe dredeful roo · þe bukke þe hart ⁊ hynde	timid roe; buck; hart; hind
Squerellis · ⁊ bestes smalle[c] of gentil kynde	
...	
I sawe bewte · with · oute any A tyre	beauty; attire
And yought ful of game ⁊ jolyte	
ffoule hardines flatery ⁊ desire	
Messagery and mede ⁊ othir three	message-sending; *mede*: bribery
Her names shalle not here, be tolde for me	

Ańd upōn pilers grete of jaspe longe
I Saw A temple of brasse i founded stronge

...

ffor this was on Saint Valantínís daye
When every foule comith to chese his mate,
Of every kynde · that meŋ thynk may
And that so huge · A noyse gaŋ theí make
Þᵗ Erth ⁊ ere and tree ⁊ every lake
So full was ·þᵗ unneth was þer space
ffor me to stonde so full was all þe place,

...

That is to sey the foules of ravine
were hiest sett ⁊ þanne the foules smale
Þat etyn as þᵗ nature wold enclyne
As wormes or þingꝰ of which I tel no tale
But water foule satt lowest in the dale
And foule þᵗ liuyth be seed sat on the grene
And that so fele · þat wondir was to sene
Ther myȝt men þe royal Egle fynde
That wᵗ his sharpe loke path þe sūŋ
And oþere Eglis of a lower kynde
Of whiche þᵗ clerkes welle devise coñū
Þer was the tirant wᵗ his fetheris doñ
⁊ grey I mene þe goshauke that dothe pyne
To bryddis for his outragious ravine
The gentil faucoñ that wᵗ his fete distraynith
The kyngs honde the hardr sperhauke eke
The quaylis foo ·þe Emerlioñ that paynith
Hym selfe ful ofte the larke for to seke
Ther was the douve wᵗ hir eyne meke
Þe jelous swāñ A yens his dethþaᵗ syngith
The Oule eke that of dethe the bode bryngth
The crane the geant with his trompes sonne
The thef the chouwhe · and eke the jangelyng pye
The scornyng jay the Eles fo the heroūñ

foule: bird; *chese*: choose

gaŋ: began

ere: air

unneth: hardly

birds of prey

dale: dale, valley

live by seed

fele: many

path: pierces

clerkes: scholars

doṅ: dun

goshauke: goshawk

ravine: greed

foe; merlin

eyne: eyes

A yens: against

bode: message

geant: giant; sound

chough; magpie

Eles fo: eel's foe

The fals lapwyng ful of trecherie
The stare that the counsel can be wrye — starling; betray
The tame ruddok ⁊ the coward kyte — *ruddok*: robin
The cok that Orlage is of the thropis lyte — *Orlage*: clock; *thropis*: village's

...

The hote cormeraunt of gloteny — *hote*: hot
The ravinwís ⁊ the crowes with hir vois of care
The throstell olde þe froste feldefare — *throstell*: thrush; *feldefare*: fieldfare
What shulde I seyne Of foules every kynde
Þat in this world han fetheris ⁊ stature
Men myȝt in that place assemble fynde
Be fore noble goddes nature
And Iche of hem did his besy cure — each of them worked diligently
Be nyngly to chese or for to take
Be hir acord his formel or his male — *formel*: female

---

[a]Transcribed from the Harley 7333 Manuscript http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_7333_fs001r, ff. 130r–131v; accessed May 2020. For a translation into Present Day English, see e.g. https://medievalit.com/home/echaucer/modern-translations/the-parliament-of-fowls-translation/.

[b]This word was difficult to decipher and we rely on Benson (1991: 386–390) here.

[c]The manuscript seems to indicate <findlo · ⁊ bethe>, so here we follow Benson (1991: 388) with <· ⁊ bestes smalle>.

T.7 The Owl and the Nightingale

The Owl and the Nightingale is a rare piece, both from a linguistic and a literary point of view. Linguistically, this is a rare sample of early Middle English (13th century). From a literary perspective, the poem presents an altercation type of poetry: the nightingale starts a debate with the owl, arguing about which of the two is the better singer. And if you want to know the answer, you'll have to find the full work and read it![a]

Ich þas ín one sumere dale· — *dale*: valley
In one suþe diȝele hale· — *suþe*: truly; *diȝele*: secret; *hale*: corner

Iherde ich holde grete tale·
An hule and one niȝtingale·
Þat plait þas stif⁊ starc ⁊strong·
Sum þile softe ⁊ lud among.
An aiþer aȝen oþer sval·
⁊ let þat vole mod ut al·
⁊ eiþer seide of oþeres custe·
Þat alere þorste þat hi þuste·
⁊ hure ⁊hure of oþeresonge
Hi holde plaiding suþe stronge·

Þe niȝtingale bigon þe speche·
In one hurne of one breche·
⁊ sat upone vaire boȝe·
þar þere abute blosme ínoȝe·
In ore þaste þicke hegge·
Imeínd mid spire⁊grene segge·
Ho þas þe gladur uor þe rise·
⁊ song auele cunne þíse·
Bet þuȝte þe dreím þat he þere·
Of harpe ⁊ pipe þan he nere·
Bet þuȝte þat he þere is hote·
Of harpe ⁊ pipe þan of þrote·

Þo stod on old stoc þarbiside·
Þar þo vle song hire tide·
⁊ þas mid íuí al bigroþe·
Hit þas þare hule eardingstoþe·
Þe niȝtingale hi iseȝ·
⁊ hi bihold ⁊ ouerseȝ·
⁊ þuȝte þel wl of þare hule·
For me hi halt lodlich ⁊ fule·
Vn þiȝt ho sede a þei þu flo·
Me is þe wrs þat ich þe so·
I þis for þine wle lete·
Þel oftich mine song forlete·
Min horte atfliþ ⁊falt mitonge·
Þonne þu art tome iþrunge·

plait: dispute; strong

þile: while

sval: swelled

vole mod: foul temper

custe: character

þorste: worst; knew

hure: especially

plaiding: pleading

hurne: corner

vaire: fair; *boȝe*: bough

ore: a; *þaste*: fast

spire: reed

þas: was; *rise* branch in various ways

þere: were

nere: wasn't

is hote: shot

stoc: stump

tide: canonical hours

bigroþe: grown over

eardingstoþe: abode

wl: foul

lodlich: loathsome

Vn þiȝt: monster

foul demeanour

forlete: give up

atfliþ: flees

iþrunge: thrusted

Me luste bet speten þane singe·
Of þine fule ȝeȝlínge·

ȝeȝlínge: howling

---

[a]Transcribed from the Cotton Caligula A. ix Manuscript http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Caligula_A_IX, f. 233r; accessed May 2020; punctuation kept as in the original. For the full Middle English version, with a rich commentary, we recommend Cartlidge (2001).

T.8 *Ancrene Wisse*

The following text is an extract from a guide to so-called anchorites or anchoresses. Anchoresses are female hermits – women who have decided to withdraw from secular society and live in solitude. The text dates back to the 13th century and was written in the West Midlands dialect, possibly not too far from Wales.[a] But what does *Ancrene Wisse* mean, exactly? Literally, "anchorites' guide".[b]

Lucifer þurh þ he seh
7 biheold on him seolf his ahne feiernesse leop in to prude
7 bicom of angel eatelich deouel.
Of eue ure alde moder is iyriten
on alre earst
in hine sunne
inȝong of hire ehsihðe.

...
þis Eue biheold o þe forboden eappel
7 seh hine feier
7 feng
to delitin iþe bihaldunge
7 toc hire lust þer toyard
7 nom 7 et þrof
7 ȝef hire laud

þ: that

eetelich: hideous
iyriten: written
earst: earliest
sin
inȝong: went in

þis: that is
feier: fair, adj.
feng: took
bihaldunge: sight

þrof: thereof
laud: lord

loy hu hali yrit spekeð

⁊ hu ínyardliche hit teleð hu sunne bigon

þus eode sunne^c biuoren

⁊ makede yei to uuel lust

⁊ com þe dede þrefter

þ al moncun

ifeleð

þes eappel leoue suster

bitacneð

alle þe ya^d

þ lust falleð to

⁊ delit of sunne

Hyen þu bihaldest te mon,

þu art in eue poínt.

þu lokest oþe eappel.

hya se hefde iseid to eue

þa ha yeorp

earst hire ehe þron:

A Eue yent te ayei

þu yarpest ehe oþi deað.

Hyet hefde ha iondsyeret?

Me leoue sire þu hauest yoh.

hyerof chalengest tu me?

þe eappel þ ich loki on

is forbode me to eotene

⁊ nayt to bihalden

þus yaldewould Eue inohreaðe habben iondsyeret.

O míne leoue sustren

as eue haueð monie dehtren þe folhið hare moder

þe ondsyerieð o þisse yise:

Me yenest tu

seið sum

þ ich yulle leapen on him

þah ich loki on him?

Glosses:

loy: lo

inwardly

way; evil

mankind

feels

bitacneð: represents

ya: misery

delight

position

oþe: on the

whosoever

yeorp: cast

þron: thereon

Ah!; turn

eye; on thy

answered

yoh: wrong

nayt: not

enough-readily

in this way

yenest: believe

will, want to

þah: though

godd yat leoue suster   *yat*: knows
mare yunder ilomp.   wonder; happened
Eue þi moder leop efter hire ehnen.   *ehnen*: eyes
from þe ehe to þe eappel.
from þe eappel iparais.   in paradise
dun to þer eorðe   down
from þe eorðe to helle
þer ha lei   *ha*: she
i psun foyr þusent ȝer ⁊ mare.   *psun*: prison
heo ⁊ hire yere ba   *yere*: man; both
⁊ demde al hire ofsprung   *demde*: judged
to leapen al efter hire to deað
yið uten ende.   *yið uten*: without

Biginnunge ⁊ rote of al   root
þis ilke reoyðe.   same sorrow
yes aliht sihðe   a light
þus often as me seið.   *me*: one
of lutel. muchel yaxeð.   *yaxeð*: grows
Habbe þenne muche dred euch feble yummon   woman
hyen[e] þeo þe yes riht ta   she who was right there; wrought, made;
iyraht yið godes honden.   *bisyiken*: deceived
Yes þurh a sihðe bisyiken
⁊ ibroht in to brad sunne,
þet al þe yorld ouerspreadde.

---

[a]Read more about anchorites and this fascinating Middle English work here: https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hasenfratz-ancrene-wisse-introduction.

[b]The following extract is based on the Corpus Christi College MS 402: https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/zh635rv2202, f. 13v, our selection corresponds to lines 46–69 in this source https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hasenfrantz-ancrene-wisse-part-two, but for practical reasons, we use our own line numbering and breaks. Accessed December 2021.

[c]The well-known edited version by Robert Hasenfratz provides as the interpretation of this word *sihthe* instead (https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hasenfrantz-ancrene-wisse-part-two).

[d]Hasenfratz translates this as *all the things*.

[e]Both *hyen* and *hyil* are present in the manuscript as two options.

T.9 *Ormulum*

The *Ormulum* was composed in the East Midlands of England in the twelfth century by a man named Orm – a Norse word meaning "serpent", cognate with English *worm*, that was a common Scandinavian name. The text is in verse and uses a unique spelling system: basically, double consonants after a vowel show that the preceding vowel is short. Scholars have argued that the text shows Norse influence not only in the lexicon but also in its syntax (Trips 2002). Norse contact influence is discussed in more detail in §6.1.1, so you may wish to revisit this text once you've read the next chapter. These lines are taken from the edition by White (1878).

Adam wass wurrþenn deofless peoww	*peoww/þeoww*: slave, servant
Þurrh þatt he dide hiss wille,	
7 all þatt streonedd wass þurrh himm	*streonedd*: created, born
Wass streonedd to þatt illke,	
To ben unnderr deofless þeowwdom,	*ben*: be
To farenn all till helle.	*faren*: go, travel
7 tatt wass rihht tatt mannkinn wass	
Unnderr þe deofless walde,	*walde*: power/rule
All swa summ Adam wurrþenn wass,	as Adam had become
Þatt haffde hemm alle streonedd,	
all se iss her bitwenenn þe	
7 tin eorþlike laferrd;	earthly lord
Forr all swa summ þu þeowwtesst himm,	
Swa shall þin sune himm þeowwtenn,	
Butt iff he wurrþe lesedd ut	*lesedd*: released
Off hiss þeowwdomess bandess.	
Nu mihht tu sen þatt tatt wass rihht	*sen*: see
Þatt mannkinn for till helle,	*for*: went
All affterr þatt tatt Adam for,	
Þatt haffde hemm alle streonedd;	
alle forenn all forrþi	*forrþi*: therefore
Till helless þeossterrnesse,	*þeossterrnesse*: darkness
ȝa þa þatt wærenn gode menn,	*ȝa þa ... ȝa þa*: both those ... and those
ȝa þa þatt waerenn ille.	

Recommended further reading

A short book-length introduction to the Middle English period in general is Horobin & Smith (2002), and this book also has excellent chapters on the morphology and the lexicon of Middle English. For more on phonology, check out Minkova (2014), §5.1.3, §5.4, and Chapter 7 in particular. For more on syntax, see Los (2015: Chapter 4) and Fischer et al. (2017). Excepting Minkova (2014), all these works are written with the student reader in mind.

There are many more diving-off points for specific topics discussed in this chapter. If you're interested in medieval multilingualism, Davidson (2010), Hsy (2013) and the papers in Jefferson & Putter (2013) are good starting points. For pronouns and politeness you should try Burnley (2003). Sylvester (2017) is excellent on the lexicon and semantic change.

6 Old English (600–1150)

Moððe word fræt. Me þæt þuhte
wrætlicu wyrd, þa ic þæt wundor gefrægn,
þæt se wyrm forswealg wera gied sumes,
þeof in þystro, þrymfæstne cwide
ond þæs strangan staþol. Stælgiest ne wæs
wihte þy gleawra, þe he þam wordum swealg.

A moth ate words. That seemed to me
a curious happening, when I heard about that wonder,
that the worm, a thief in the darkness, swallowed
a certain man's song, a glory-fast speech
and its strong foundation. The stealing guest was not
at all the wiser for that, for those words which he swallowed.
(Old English Riddle 47; Cavell 2015)

Welcome to the Old English period! Stretching from the earliest texts in the Latin alphabet in the seventh century to the aftermath of the Norman Conquest in the early twelfth century, this period probably presents more challenges to present-day readers than any other. The Old English riddle that opens this chapter is a good illustration of the alien appearance of the language at first sight.[1]

The good news, though, is that by working through this book so far you've already learned about most of the grammatical features that you'll need to know about in order to understand Old English texts. For the sounds and sound system of the language, the relevant changes that get us to Old English include:

- /h/-clusters and /ʜ/-ᴅʀᴏᴘᴘɪɴɢ (§3.2.1 and §5.2.3)

- The Great Vowel Shift (§4.2.1)

- Vowel length and lengthening phenomena (§5.2.5)

For the morphology and syntax of the language, you'll need to know about:

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[1]Can you solve it? See Cavell (2015) online for possible answers.

- Different pronoun forms (§4.3.1 and 5.3.3)

- Paradigms and verbal endings (§5.3.1)

- Strong and weak verbs (§5.3.2)

- Case (§5.3.3)

- Verb-second (§5.4.1)

It's wise to check that you understand these notions before proceeding with this chapter. And have no fear! We'll introduce everything else you need to know as we go along. First, though, as usual, we'll talk about some of the historical events that shaped how the language was used and developed.

6.1 History and context

Old English was never the only language used in Britain during this period. Everyone who was writing in Old English also knew some Latin, as writing was largely the domain of the church, and Latin was the primary language of the church. Alongside documents written in Old English, we have many written in Latin – and quite a few that are written in a mixture of English and Latin, such as glosses and glossaries (see Figure 6.1). Outside of religious contexts, however, it is not clear how widely *spoken* Latin was in Britain at this time.[2]

We can be sure that several other languages were spoken in Britain during the period, though. One of these was Norse – the language of settlers from Scandinavia. In addition, Celtic languages were widely spoken throughout the Isles, and large numbers of people must have been bilingual in Brythonic Celtic and Old English. These languages have left their mark on English over the centuries, and as early as Old English we can see their influence in texts. The following two subsections discuss the Norse and Celtic contact situations, and we will be returning to the theme of language contact and coexistence throughout the chapter.

6.1.1 Scandinavian settlement and rule

According to the *Old English Chronicle*, three ships of *norðmanna* 'men of the North' arrived in England in the year 789. They met the reeve, a local official,

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[2]The consensus view is that it was hardly spoken at all. However, Schrijver (2013) has argued that British Latin survived as a spoken language at least into the early part of the Old English period.
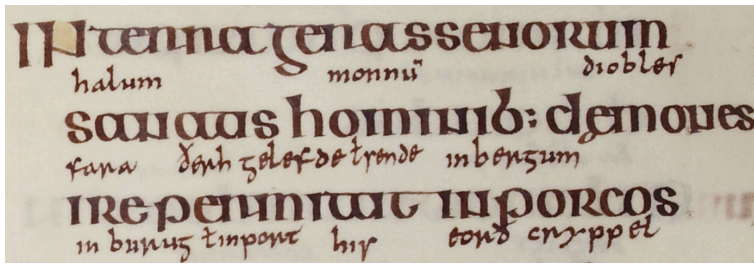
Figure 6.1: Part of the Lindisfarne Gospels. The larger, blockier text is in Latin and dates from around the year 700. Above it, in a smaller hand, a GLOSS (word-by-word translation) in Northumbrian Old English has been added. This dates from the tenth century. Image from http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx? ref=Cotton_MS_nero_d_iv, f. 20v; accessed May 2020.

who tried to make them come quietly to see the king, *þy he nyste hwæt hi wæron* 'because he did not know what they were'. This did not end well for the reeve, who was killed. Shortly afterward, in June of 793, the island monastery of Lindisfarne off the north-east coast of England was attacked and looted by "heathen men" – what we now call Vikings. For all intents and purposes, this was the start of the brief but dramatic period of the history of English during which it was shaped by contact with the Norse language.[3]

In history books, much is made of the early years of Viking raids on the coasts of Britain. For linguistic purposes, what's really interesting is what happened next: the Chronicle for 876 states that the Scandinavians settled in England, and "proceeded to plough and support themselves". This migration continued for at least the next hundred years, and from this point onwards the Scandinavian incomers were a central part of the ethnic and linguistic makeup of Britain itself. Although there is debate about exactly how many settlers from Scandinavia there were (see Sawyer 1971 for a sceptical view), the consensus today among historians and archaeologists is that the scale of settlement was large (Hadley 1997, 2009, Kershaw & Røyrvik 2016), especially in the east and north-east of England. Most of these settlers came from what is now Denmark, though the tenth century also saw settlers from Norway in the north-west of the country.[4]

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[3]Two recent TV series – *Vikings* (2013–) and *The Last Kingdom* (2015–) – cover the events of early contact between Norse-speakers and English-speakers. Both aim for entertainment rather than faithfulness, but are a good way to get the gist of the historical events of this period.

[4]Sometimes these later settlers are also referred to as "Vikings", but this is misleading: "viking", i.e. raiding, was an activity, and it makes little sense to lump all Scandinavian immigrants to Britain together.

Boundaries between political entities were fluid during the Old English period. Pre-Viking England was a patchworth of small, shifting kingdoms, including Northumbria in the north-east, Mercia in the centre of England, Kent in the south-east, and Wessex in the south. Linguistically and politically, Wessex was the most important of these in the late ninth century, and at this time its ruler Alfred reached agreements with the leadership of the Scandinavian incomers through a mixture of military success, diplomacy, and bribes. The Scandinavian king, Guthrum, converted to Christianity in 878.

The language of the Scandinavian settlers, which we've labelled Norse, was a Germanic language closely related to Old English (see Chapter 7 for more on the Germanic family). It's even likely that, with a bit of effort and a sympathetic ear, Norse and Old English were mutually intelligible (Townend 2002). This would have come in handy, as the fate of the settlers and their descendants was inextricably intertwined with that of the Old English speakers: they not only fought but also traded, farmed, ruled, worshipped, and in many cases lived together, depending on the area. The situation was far more nuanced than simply two rival groups: for instance, Alfred's court was visited by a friendly Norwegian, Ohthere of Hålogaland, who gave him an account of his travels in the far north which still survives in the Old English text *Orosius*. Politically, the landscape shifted in the tenth century, and by 1016 the Danish prince Cnut was able to claim rule of all of England (advised by a writer and speaker of Old English, the powerful Archbishop Wulfstan of York) – though power returned to Alfred's descendants in the House of Wessex in 1042 after the death of Cnut's sons Harold and Harthacnut. After this, and particularly after the Norman Conquest, Norse as a spoken language died out in England, though we don't know exactly when.[5]

Other than a handful of inscriptions, we have virtually no evidence for the Norse actually spoken in Great Britain during this period, as it never became a language of writing. However, we can infer a lot about its spoken form from the Old Norse writings of Scandinavia, and from these it becomes very clear that Norse had a huge impact on English, from morphology to syntax to lexicon. We'll look at some examples as we go through.[6]

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[5]In the Orkney and Shetland Isles off the north coast of Scotland, Norse (known as Norn) survived as late as the eighteenth century (Barnes 1998).

[6]For more detail and evaluations of the Norse-English contact situation overall, see Dance (2012), Lutz (2012), and Warner (2017).

King Alfred

Alfred (*Ælfrēd*), King of Wessex from 871 un-
til his death in 899 and later known as "the
Great", is an important figure for the history
of English not just because of his dealings
with the Scandinavians. He also played an im-
portant role in the establishment of (Old) En-
glish as a language of writing, where previ-
ously Latin had been dominant. The preface
to the Old English translation of Pope Gre-
gory's *Pastoral Care*, traditionally attributed
to Alfred, writes of Alfred's desire to see more
works of learning translated into English, and
claims that the standard of learning in Eng-

Figure 6.2: Fourteenth-
century manuscript
miniature of King Alfred

land has declined (some things never change). Most of our Old English
texts come from Wessex and date to Alfred's reign or later. At one point,
Alfred was thought to be personally responsible for writing a wide range
of Old English texts, but some scholars nowadays are sceptical about this,
suggesting instead that he commissioned and circulated some of these
works, and that others had nothing to do with him at all until after his
death (see Godden 2007 vs. Bately 2009). In one recent linguistically-
informed account (Timofeeva 2018: 143),

> Alfred's role is seen primarily as that of the social leader whose pa-
> tronage of a network of Winchester-based scholars gave them the
> means and stimulus to embark upon a cultural programme that in-
> cluded several extended translations (no matter how many and by
> whom) and a number of vernacular texts.

A readable account of King Alfred and Britain during his lifetime can be
found in Adams (2017), and for more detail see the chapters in Discenza &
Szarmach (2015), which contains a bibliography on the authorship issue.

6.1.2 Old English and Celtic

Long before the Scandinavian settlement, Old English in Great Britain coexisted with Celtic languages.

Today's Celtic languages are spoken only on the western side of Great Britain and in Brittany in France. The more northerly Celtic languages – Irish in Ireland, Scottish Gaelic in Scotland, and Manx on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea – are known as the Goidelic languages, and the more southerly – Welsh in Wales, Cornish in Cornwall, and Breton in Brittany – are known as Brythonic (or Brittonic).[7] As can be seen in Figure 6.3, these languages are not widespread. Almost all the speakers of Celtic languages today are fluent in at least one other language: normally modern English, or modern French in the case of Breton. For all six languages, active revitalization efforts are ongoing. Cornish and Manx were even considered extinct for a time in the twentieth century.

It wasn't always like this. During the Old English period, in particular, the Celtic languages were much more widely spoken than they are today. Ireland, Scotland and Wales never came under the rule of Old English native speakers, and the same can be said for large parts of what is now England. Devon, in the south-west, was only conquered by Wessex in the early eighth century, and Cornwall not until the very end of the period, in 1086 (Wakelin 1975). Cumbria, in the north-west, was also never firmly under the control of Old English rulers during this period. People in all these areas would have been predominantly Celtic-speaking. And the nature of political control and identity in kingdoms such as Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex was such that we know there must have been a large number of Celtic speakers in these areas too.

Figure 6.3: Areas where Celtic languages are spoken today. Dark and light green areas indicate majority and minority usage respectively. (Map by Fobos92, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Texts and archaeological evidence from the early Old English period are fairly sparse and difficult to interpret, so we don't know as much as we'd like about the relationships between Celtic and Old English speakers, and it must have varied

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[7]Like Norse and Old English, the Celtic languages are Indo-European languages (see Chapter 7). However, the Celtic languages are much more distant relatives, and certainly would not have been mutually intelligible with Old English.

from place to place. However, evidence from the Old English lexicon gives us a hint as to the status of Brythonic Celtic speakers in kingdoms like Wessex. The word *wealh*, in particular, could mean 'foreigner', 'person of Celtic-speaking origin', or 'enslaved person' (Pelteret 1995, Lutz 2009); the last of these senses seems to have been limited to the south of England. The word *wīln*, which comes from *wealh-in* (with a feminine suffix), only ever means 'enslaved female'. This lexical evidence suggests that people of Celtic-speaking origin were very often enslaved in the Old-English-speaking kingdoms. There's also legal evidence in the form of the laws of King Ine of Wessex, drawn up at the end of the seventh century (Grimmer 2007, Woolf 2007). In these documents, the *wergild*[8] for a *wilisc mon* (presumably a Celtic speaker) is mentioned explicitly, and contrasted with that of an *englisc mon* (presumably an Old English speaker): a *wilisc mon*[9] is worth much less, though there were some *wilisc* landowners. What we can infer from all this evidence is that there were Celtic speakers in the kingdom of Wessex, and probably quite a lot of them, with generally lower social status than speakers of Old English. Higham (1992) suggests that the Old English speakers were in fact only a small, aristocratic minority, with speakers of Celtic making up the majority.

Despite this clear historical evidence for societal multilingualism, the question of Celtic linguistic influence on English has been much more controversial than the question of Norse influence. This is partly due to the fact that the historical picture of Celtic-English contact outlined above has only become clear since the 1990s (see §7.1.2 for more on this), and the details are still a matter of debate. It's partly also due to the relative rarity of the most obvious kind of language contact influence – lexical borrowings (see §6.5.2 later in this chapter). Many instances of potential Celtic influence on English throughout its history have been contested: an example is *DO*-support, as discussed in §4.4.1 (see van der Auwera & Genee 2002). There are some clear cases, however, even in the Old English period. The best example is probably the uses of the forms of the verb *BE* in Old English, which we'll introduce in §6.3.2. For overviews of Celtic influence on English see Filppula et al. (2008) and Hickey (2012).

6.1.3 Old English texts

Nearly a millennium has passed since the Old English period, and the ravages of time have meant that we don't have as many Old English texts as we'd like. We can actually be very specific about this: the Dictionary of Old English Corpus,

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[8]Money to be paid in compensation for a crime – in this case, someone's killing.
[9]Directly cognate with Present Day English *Welsh man.*

which contains at least one copy of every known Old English text, comes to just over three million words of Old English.[10] For comparison, the seven books of the *Harry Potter* series are made up of just over one million words.

The corpus of Old English texts isn't just very limited – it's also very skewed. Because literacy was part and parcel of the Church, all the texts we have were produced in a religious context, and most of them have overtly religious themes. Outside religious orders, only a few aristocratic Old English speakers would ever have had access to writing. We don't know who wrote the vast majority of the Old English texts that have come down to us; there are only handful of exceptions, such as the prolific Abbot Ælfriċ of Eynsham and the influential Archbishop Wulfstan of York, both of whom were active around the year 1000.

It's certain that, like any living language, Old English as actually spoken exhibited huge amounts of variation geographically, socially and stylistically. But we simply don't have access to most of this variation. Starting with dialects, we can roughly divide Old English texts into four groups: West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and Northumbrian (the last two are often grouped together as ANGLIAN). However, the emergence of Old English as a written language was linked to the activities of King Alfred of Wessex, and so it's not a surprise that almost all of our Old English texts are written in the West Saxon dialect.[11] And, when we can localize the texts at all, we find that they come from a small number of scribal centres (see Figure 6.4 for some of the most important).

We have enough Old English material to see it changing over time, though. Texts from the early part of the period – before Alfred's reign in the late ninth century – are few and far between, but some have survived, like the seventh-century *Cædmon's Hymn* and the seventh-eighth-century Épinal and Erfurt glossaries. Texts from before 900, including those from Alfred's reign, are known as EARLY OLD ENGLISH texts: these include many translations from Latin, including Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Old English from between 900 and 1150 is labelled CLASSICAL and is dominated by the works of Wulfstan and especially Ælfriċ. From this period we have many sermons and stories of the lives of saints, but also scientific texts such as Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion* ('manual') and medical handbooks like the *Herbarium*. And from across the whole Old English period we have legal documents, as well as the famous *Old English Chronicle*, a year-by-year retelling of historical events that survives in several manuscripts.

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[10] See https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/.

[11] Or at least the versions that have come down to us are in West Saxon. For some texts, like *Beowulf*, there is evidence to suggest that they were originally composed in a different dialect and only translated later into West Saxon.
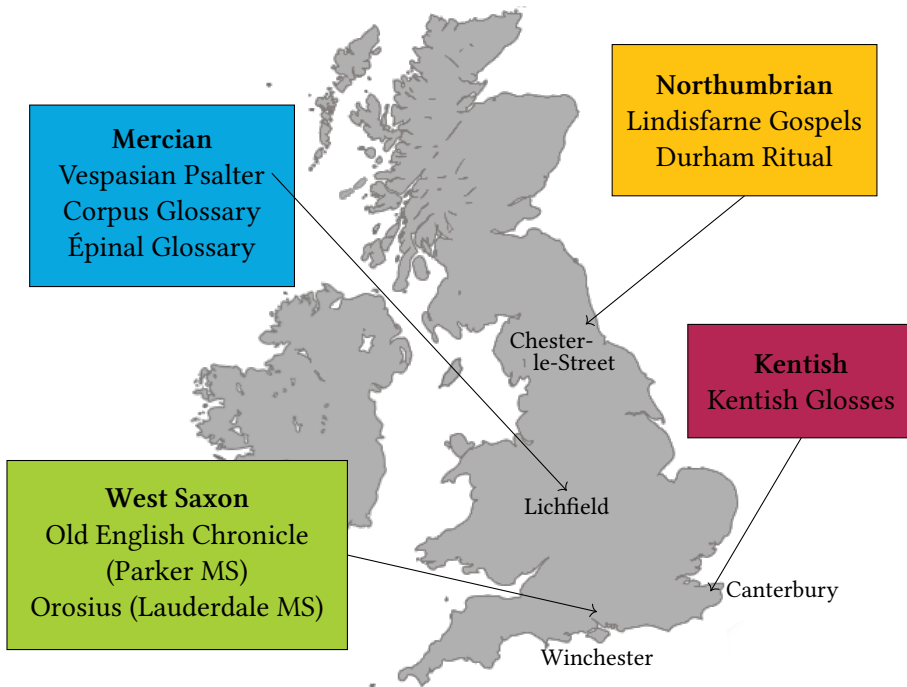
Figure 6.4: Some key scribal centres during the Old English period

The nature of the texts that survive is heavily determined by who wielded (political and religious) power. The majority of our texts are West Saxon and date from the late ninth century onwards, due to the preeminence of the kingdom of Wessex during this period. By contrast, the earlier texts have a strong Northumbrian or Mercian flavour, since the kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia had their heydays in the seventh and eighth century respectively.[12] We'll return to some of the main differences between early and late Old English in §6.3 and §6.4.

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[12]If you're interested in the thorny issues of disentangling dialectal and scribal from diachronic variation in Old English texts, we recommend you take a look at Hogg (1988), "On the impossibility of Old English dialectology".

👥

Women writers in early England

Figure 6.5: Hild of Whitby on a church banner. Note the runic letters! (Photo by Jonund, licensed under CC-BY-SA 2.0)

All of the named writers of Old English that we know of are men. This makes it rather difficult for us to know how human gender may or may not have been expressed through language at the time. The earliest named women writers whose work has been passed down to us are only from the Middle English period (see §5.1.3). That doesn't mean, however, that women weren't active as writers and patrons of writing during the Old English period. Religious houses in medieval England could be male-only, female-only and mixed, and abbesses like Hild of Whitby (614–680; patron of the poet Cædmon) and Æthelthryth of Ely (c. 636–679) wielded a great deal of spiritual, political and economic power. The texts known to have been written by women from this period are in Latin rather than Old English, but some Old English texts such as *Wulf & Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* are female-voiced. Watt (2019: 58–68) suggests that the Old English fragments of the *Life of St Mildrith* were written by a woman, especially given the text's focus on female authority, power, and heritage.[a]

[a]For more on women and writing in early medieval England see Lees & Overing (2001), Watt (2019), and https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2018/12/women-and-books-in-anglo-saxon-kingdoms.html.

Finally, no section on Old English texts would be complete without mentioning the period's poetry, often seen as the best reason to learn to read Old English from a literary perspective. Most surviving Old English poetry is contained within just four manuscripts: the Junius manuscript, the Exeter Book, the Vercelli Book, and the Nowell Codex. In the poetry we can find a mix of Christian and pre-Christian influences. Old English poetry is alliterative rather than rhyming (see §7.2.4 in the

next chapter), and deals with a variety of themes. The most famous is *Beowulf*, an epic poem dealing with the eponymous hero's journey from wandering warrior to king and the monsters and challenges he faces along the way.

6.2 Sounds

We've come a long way from Modern English, so at this point we should stop and give an overview of the whole sound system of Old English and how it relates to spelling. Table 6.1 presents the vowels of Old English, and Table 6.2 presents the consonants.

Table 6.1: Old English vowel phonemes and corresponding graphemes

	Front unrounded	Front rounded	Back
high	/i, i:/ ↔ <i>	/y, y:/ ↔ <y>	/u, u:/ ↔ <u>
mid	/e, e:/ ↔ <e>	/ø, ø:/ ↔ <oe>	/o, o:/ ↔ <o>
low	/æ, æ:/ ↔ <æ>		/ɑ, ɑ:/ ↔ <a>

So far, so straightforward. Old English, like Middle English (see §5.2.5), had both long and short vowel phonemes. This distinction wasn't represented in writing, though. Sometimes, in modern editions of Old English texts, the editors mark length using a *macron* above the vowel, as in *Ælfrēd*, with <ē>, for the name of the king. It's important to note that this macron was never found in manuscripts – it's a modern addition intended to make life easier for readers.[13]

We find one grapheme used to represent a sound in the Old English vowel system that we don't see at any other stage of the language: the grapheme <æ>, called *ash*. This is known as a LIGATURE /ˈlɪɡətʃə/ or LIGATED DIGRAPH /ˈlaɪɡeɪtɪd ˈdaɪɡrɑːf/, and, in simpler words, consists of two characters squished together – in this case <a> and <e>. It has its own phonemic value, though, which is always /æ/ or /æ:/.

Old English also has diphthongs. Originally, there were eight of these, four long, four short:

- /iu, i:u/ ↔ <io>

- /iy, i:y/ ↔ <ie>

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[13]We do find the macron in Old English manuscripts, but not to distinguish vowel length.

- /eo, eːo/ ↔ <eo>

- /æɑ, æːɑ/ ↔ <ea>

As can be expected for any period of the language, there is some variation in the vowel system over time in Old English as well. The mid front rounded phonemes /ø/ and /øː/, written as <oe>, are only found in early Old English texts. Later on, they become unrounded and merge with /e/ and /eː/. Similarly, half of the diphthongs are lost during the period. By the time of Classical West Saxon, /iu/ and /iːu/ have merged with /eo/ and /eːo/ respectively, and /iy/ and /iːy/ have merged with /y/ and /yː/. In later Old English texts we also find a very narrow range of vowels in unstressed syllables. We'll come back to this in §6.3.4, because it's relevant to morphological changes in the language as well.

Table 6.2: Old English consonant phonemes and graphemes

	labial	coronal	palatal	velar
voiceless stops	/p, pː/ ↔ <p, pp>	/t, tː/ ↔ <t, tt>		/k, kː/ ↔ <k, kk>
voiced stops	/b, bː/ ↔ <b, bb>	/d, dː/ ↔ <d, dd>		/g, gː/ ↔ <g, gg>
fricatives	/f, fː/ ↔ <f, ff>	/θ, θː/ ↔ <þ/ð, þþ/ðð> /s, sː/ ↔ <s, ss>	/ʃ, ʃː/ ↔ <sc>	/x, xː/ ↔ <h, hh>
voiceless affricates			/tʃ, tʃː/ ↔ <c, cc>	
voiced affricates			/dʒ, dʒː/ ↔ <cg or gg>	
nasals	/m, mː/ ↔ <m, mm>	/n, nː/ ↔ <n, nn>		
liquids		/l, lː/ ↔ <l, ll> /r, rː/ ↔ <r, rr>		
glides	/w, wː/ ↔ <uu or ƿ, ƿƿ>[a]		/j, jː/ ↔<g/i, gi/ii>	

[a]The grapheme <w> is found in almost all modern editions of Old English texts, but not in the manuscripts. Old English scribes either used <uu>, i.e. a literal "double u", or the character <ƿ> ("wynn"), originally from the runic alphabet (see §7.2.2).

Like the vowels, Old English consonants come in both long and short versions, and the length distinction is phonemic. Long consonants – also known as GEMI-NATES – are usually represented in the manuscripts by doubling: /b:/, for example, is written as <bb>. These length distinctions could be rather important. Compare for instance *cwelan* /kwelɑn/ 'to die' and *cwellan* /kwel:ɑn/ 'to kill' (or to cause someone to die).

One thing worth noting about Old English, in contrast to Middle English and all subsequent stages, is that there is no PHONEMIC voicing contrast in fricatives. Instead, fricatives had both voiced and voiceless ALLOPHONES. The voiced allophone (e.g. [v] for the phoneme /f/) was found when the fricative is between two voiced sounds, for instance between vowels.[14] Otherwise, the voiceless allophone was found. Thus, Old English *wulf* would be pronounced as [wulf], but the plural *wulfas* as [wulvas]. As we can see, this allophonic difference isn't represented in the spelling, though. The development of a *phonemic* voicing contrast in Middle English and beyond is probably due to contact influence from languages which did possess this contrast. Laker (2009) argues that contact with Brythonic Celtic is responsible, and in response Minkova (2011) defends the more conventional view that the change is due to the large number of lexical borrowings from French. Once the voiced allophones had become phonemes, however, they were often represented as such in the spelling as well.[15] This gives us the following Present Day English phonological irregularities, which are also represented as irregular in the spelling in case of /f/ and /v/: *calf ~ calves, dwarf ~ dwarves, hoof ~ hooves, knife ~ knives, leaf ~ leaves, life ~ lives, wife ~ wives, house ~ houses*,[16] *oath ~ oaths, path ~ paths*; *breath ~ to breathe, grief ~ to grieve, teeth ~ to teethe*, and *wreath ~ to wreathe*.

Thorn and eth

We met the letter THORN <þ> in §5.2.2. In Old English, as in Middle English, it's used for both the voiced dental fricative [ð] and the voiceless

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[14]But also nasals (/m/, /n/) liquids (/r/, /l/), approximants (/w/, /j/), and voiced plosives (e.g. /b/).

[15]With the exception of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, which – as we have seen – were spelt with either <þ> or <ð> irrespective of the phonetic or phonological status of the phone, and in Present Day English are both spelt with <th>

[16]Though the latter tends to be pronounced with a voiceless fricative in American English.

dental fricative [θ]. As we've noted, these were ALLOPHONES of a single fricative PHONEME, since fricative voicing was not distinctive in Old English. Another grapheme used for the same phoneme was <ð>, ETH. There isn't any consistent difference between <þ> and <ð>: they're used variably to represent the same phoneme (remember, Old English wasn't STANDARDIZED like today's English).[a] Historically, thorn comes from the runic alphabet (see §7.2.2), while eth is simply what it looks like: a Latin <d> with a bar through it. Drout & Chauvet (2015) suggest that subtle quantitative differences in the use of <þ> and <ð> can be used to investigate the history and authorship of Old English texts.

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[a]It has been proposed in the literature that West Saxon was standardized to some extent; for a sceptical evaluation see Hogg (2006).

With this background in mind, we can now turn to two phonological processes that characterize Old English: palatalization (§6.2.1) and *i*-umlaut (§6.2.2).

6.2.1 Palatalization

Palatalization is a process which lies behind Present Day English alternations like these:

- *batch ~ to bake, bench ~ bank*[17], *to beseech ~ to seek, birch ~ birk, chary ~ care, -chester ~ -caster, to chill ~ cold, church ~ kirk, ditch ~ dyke, drench ~ to drink, match*[18] *~ to make, milch ~ milk, stench ~ to stink, stitch ~ stick, watch ~ wake*, and *-wich ~ -wick* (as in the place names *Norwich* vs. *Warwick*)

- *yard ~ garden, yarn*[19] *~ garn*[20]*, yellow ~ golden*, and *to yearn ~ to green*[21], and *to yell ~ nightingale* (the *gale* part)

- *dish ~ disk, fish ~ piscatorial, mesh ~ mask, shatter ~ scatter, shave ~ scab, shell ~ scale, ship ~ skipper, shrift ~ script, shirt ~ skirt*, and *shuffle ~ scuffle*

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[17]In the meaning of 'a long, high mound with steeply sloping sides' (OED; 2020, s.v. bank, n.1.).

[18]As in 'a couple' or 'a pair', not the short pieces of wood used to light a fire.

[19]A spun fibre.

[20]A variant of *yarn* attested in the north of Britain (OED; 2020, s.v. garn, n.).

[21]This word has nothing to do with the colour here: it's a Scottish word meaning 'to yearn, desire' (OED; 2020, s.v. green, v.2).

It is a process whereby a consonant with a non-palatal place of articulation becomes palatal. Thus, what used to be /k/ (a velar consonant) became /tʃ/ (a palatal one), /g/ became /j/, and /sk/ became /ʃ/, prior to the time from which we have the earliest written records of Old English. But hmmmm, hang on, if that was the case, how come we've still got the pairs such as those mentioned above in Present Day English? There are two reasons for this.

First, in case of /k/ > /tʃ/ and /g/ > /j/, palatalization only happened when a certain group of vowels combined with /k/ and /g/. Thus, Present Day English *chill* /tʃɪl/ comes from Old English *ċele* and Present Day English *cold* /kəʊɫd/ comes from Old English *cald*; the surrounding vowels are different, and only some vowels conditioned palatalization. It is not unreasonable to assume that the palatalization of /sk/ to /ʃ/ was initially also limited to certain vowel contexts.[22] However, by the end of Old English, /sk/ had palatalized to /ʃ/ irrespective of which vowel preceded or followed. So it is only the /k/ ~ /tʃ/ alternations that can be explained by the vocalic environment of the words involved.

The second explanation is related to chronology. At some point, /sk/ started changing into /ʃ/. This took a while, but, eventually, this process stopped being active. There were no more /sk/s left to be affected by palatalization. That is, until speakers of English came into contact with other languages, and languages which had not undergone the same process of palatalization and therefore had /sk/ and/or /k/ in various vowel contexts. Contact with languages such as Norse, Latin, and French can therefore also explain the alternations we see above: words with /sk/ and /k/ that were borrowed into English after palatalization stopped being an active process, i.e. during or after the period of attested Old English, retained their non-palatalized consonants. Is it a coincidence that *kirk*, related to *church* (from Old English *ċirice*), is typically used in Scotland, considering that the presence of Scandinavian speakers was skewed towards the north and east of the island?

The word pairs provided in the bullet points above are therefore due to a combination of these two reasons. For instance, *fish* and *shatter* show Old English palatalization, while the non-palatalized counterparts, *piscatorial* and *scatter*, are loans from Latin and Old Norse, which had not undergone palatalization. On the other hand, *to yell* underwent palatalization due to the following non-low front

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[22]Palatalization is likely to start in the context of front vowels, such as /i/ and /e/, and has occurred in the history of many languages. The reason for this probably lies in coarticulatory effects and systematic patterns of misperception by listeners (see Ohala 1989). In pre-Old English specifically, consonants underwent palatalization when immediately followed by a front unrounded vowel or by a palatal glide, or when word-final after a front unrounded vowel.

vowel, while *nightingale* did not because the following vowel was too low and back for palatalization to happen.

The lack of seemingly expected palatalization, as in e.g. *disk* and *skirt*, may however not be only due to language contact and within-dialectal vowel environment. An outcome of this type may also have to do with regional differences present in Old English which affected the types of vowels that preceded and/or followed /g/, /k/, or /sk/. What this means is that where one dialect may have had a /g/, /k/, and /sk/ followed by an /e/, /ɪ/ or /j/, another dialect may have had the same consonant followed by an /ɑ/, which means that that the words in the dialect of the latter group wouldn't have undergone the process of palatalization. Because settlement of Old Norse speakers geographically heavily overlaps with these dialects, it can be quite tricky to be sure whether a non-palatalized consonant (e.g. *dike* vs *ditch*) is due to regional variation, language contact with Old Norse, or indeed a mixture of the two. Linguists have been arguing about such matters quite passionately, and gathering and assessing the evidence can be a fairly tricky business. A case in point is indeed for instance the word *dike* (see Ramisch 1997, who argues these variants are more likely due to dialectal variation rather than language contact with Old Norse).

Palatalization has an awkward effect on how a speaker of Present Day English should make sense of some of the Old English spellings, as palatal phonemes do not usually have their own corresponding grapheme in Old English manuscripts. The letter <c> can thus represent either /tʃ/ or /k/, and similarly the letter <g> can represent either /j/ or /g/. If you know the conditions under which palatalization took place in pre-Old English, you can figure out which phoneme to pronounce when you read <c> or <g>. But this is hard work requiring knowledge reaching far beyond even that of Old English, and to make it easier for the modern reader, many editors of Old English texts have adopted the convention of OVERDOTTING, representing the palatal sounds /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, and /j/ as <sċ>, <ċ>, <ċġ>, and <ġ> respectively. For example, the Old English word for *yellow* is written with an overdotted g: *ġeolu*. This makes life easier for the reader, but it's important to remember that overdotting, like the macron that editors use for long vowels, was not present in Old English manuscripts.[23]

If palatalization seems a little bit alien to you, know that palatalization is happening (yes, again!) in Present Day English as well, right under our noses. Think for instance of pronunciations such as *wantcha* and *gotcha*, or even *wouldja*, for *want you*, *got you*, and *would you*, whereby the following palatal sound, /j/, affects the preceding consonant, /t/ and /d/ in our cases, making them into /tʃ/ and

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[23]At least not for this purpose.

/dʒ/, respectively. (So in other words, /t/ and /d/ have palatal versions today in some contexts as well!)

How were /r/s pronounced in Old English?

You might be wondering, as many people studying Old English do, just how exactly the <r> was pronounced. Was it a trill ([r]), was it an alveolar approximant ([ɹ]), or even a retroflex approximant ([ɻ]), or, yes, even a uvular voiced fricative ([ʁ])? Most Present Day English dialects have an alveolar approximant ([ɹ]) or a retroflex approximant ([ɻ]). So perhaps one could assume that this must have been the realization in Old English too? Good thinking, but Present Day English has more to offer than just these two variants: a stereotypical feature of Scottish English is the trilled [r] and a now moribund feature of Northumbrian English is the so-called Northumbrian burr, which refers to a uvular fricative [ʁ] (Wells 1982c: 368–370). We can't rule out that these lesser-represented Present Day English variants used to be more widespread in the past stages of the language. As the next step, we could also look to other Germanic languages spoken today, but once we start looking closely enough, we will find a wonderfully rich well of variation as well. If we take Dutch, for instance, Sebregts (2014: 29) mentions 16 variants of /r/, and that's still not quite the full picture. To cut a long story short, then, it's very likely that regionally conditioned variation existed in Old English /r/, and the take-home message for you is not to worry too much about how you pronounce /r/s when reciting Old English poetry (or prose!), as long as you do pronounce an /r/ consonant of some sort.

6.2.2 *i*-umlaut

In Present Day English, we find words which look like they must be related in one way or other, and which show vowel differences, as in

- *brother ~ brethren, foot ~ feet, goose ~ geese, tooth ~ teeth, man ~ men, woman ~ women, louse ~ lice*, and *mouse ~ mice*

- *blood ~ to bleed, food ~ to feed, sale ~ to sell, tale ~ to tell*, and *tooth ~ to teethe*

- *broad ~ breadth, foul ~ filth, long ~ length*, and *strong ~ strength*

- *old ~ elder* (and *eldest*)

- *to bring ~ brought, to buy ~ bought, to seek ~ sought, to sell ~ sold, to teach ~ taught, to tell ~ told, to think ~ thought*, and *to work ~ wrought*[24]

- *full ~ to fill*

- *fox ~ vixen, cat* and *kitten*, and *theft ~ thief*

In these examples, we see primarily the following spelling alternations:

- <o> ~ <e>, <oo> ~ <ee>, <oa> ~ <ea>

- <a> ~ <e>

- <u>, <ou> ~ <i>

As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, these letters reflect the pre-Great Vowel Shift pronunciations:

- <goose> /goːs/ ~ <geese> /geːs/

- <man> /mɑn/ ~ <men> /men/

- <mouse> /muːs/ ~ <mice> /miːs/

So this corresponds to the pairing of the following sounds for most of the examples given above:[25]

- /o/, /oː/ ~ /e/, /eː/

- /ɑ/ ~ /e/

- /uː/ ~ /iː/

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[24]The form *wrought*, rather than *worked*, is now archaic and/or used in fairly specific contexts.
[25]We ignore the effects of umlaut on diphthongs for simplicity's sake.

These vowel alternations serve the following functions in the Present Day English pairs mentioned above: plural formation (*mouse ~ mice*), deadjectival noun formation (*strong ~ strength*), deadjectival verb formation (*full ~ to fill*), the comparative (and the superlative; e.g. *old ~ elder ~ eldest*), verb-verb word-formation processes (*to fall ~ to fell*), and ultimately derivational processes related to noun-noun pairs (*fox ~ vixen*). In Old English, these alternations served these functions too, but we find two important differences. First of all, these vowel patterns were not limited to just a handful of words, as in Present Day English, where non-native speakers have to rather painfully memorize these. Secondly, these various functions were not the only functions these vowel alternations had. And we should also add one more difference: this process was not limited to the vowel pairs provided above.

But what is this vowel alternation process that we've been discussing, and how did it come about? The process involved in this mystery is the so-called UMLAUT, also known as *i*-umlaut, mutation, and *i*-mutation. It is a type of vowel assimilation, whereby one vowel becomes more like another.

More specifically, umlaut is a phonological process that happened prior to Old English (see more in Chapter 7). If a word had, for instance, two syllables, and the second one contained either /i/ or /j/, the vowel in the first syllable became more like this /i/ or /j/. In other words, it assimilated. It is useful here to remind ourselves of the vowel space, as shown in Figure 6.6. When looking at the figure first, ignore the red parts. Different vowels have different positions in the vowel space – they differ in terms of height and backness/frontness.

i, iː *hilpθ* 'helps' y: *lyːsiz* u, uː: *luːsiz* 'lice'

e, eː *helpan* 'to help', *menː* 'people' ø: *føːtiz* o, oː: *foːtiz* 'feet'

æ, æː: *mænː* ɑ, ɑː: *manniz* 'people'
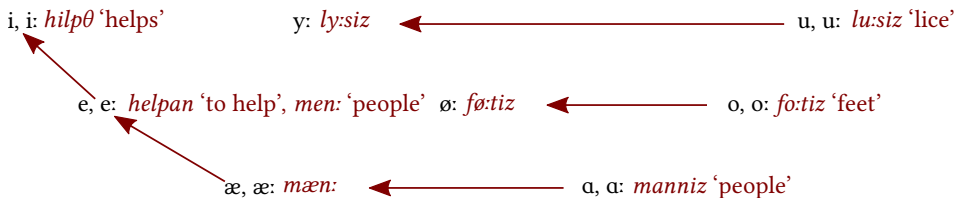
Figure 6.6: Vowel-specific changes under the process of *i*-umlaut

When umlaut happened, imagine each of these vowels moving closer to an /i/ (or a /j/, which we can think of as a very short, consonantal version of /i/).[26]

Thus, the following Old English vowels changed as follows under the influence of umlaut:

- /u/, /uː/ > [y], [yː]; they fronted, remaining round; as in *mus* 'mouse' ~ *mys* 'mice', ultimately *mis*

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[26]Try saying /j/ and holding the consonant for a while. What happens when you do so?

- /o/, /oː/ > /ø/, /øː/; they fronted, remaining round; as in *dom* 'doom' ~ *doe-man*, ultimately *deman* 'to deem, judge'

- /e/, /eː/ > /i/, /iː/; they were raised and just a little bit fronted; as in *helpan* 'to help' ~ *hilpð* 'he/she/it helps'

- /ɑ/, /ɑː/ > /æ/, /æː/; as in *mann* 'man' ~ *mænn* 'men', and ultimately *menn*[27]

[øː] is a front rounded vowel, which unrounded fairly early on to [eː], so we often find it spelt in a way suggestive of [eː] (e.g. <e>) rather than [øː] (e.g. <oe>) in Old English texts. Towards the end of the Old English period, the same started happening to [yː], which ultimately unrounded to [iː]. These sounds are phonemic in Old English, but were allophonic prior to Old English. Most of the forms created by *i*-umlaut eventually died out – the plural of *cow* is no longer *kine*, for example, and the plural of *book* is no longer *beech* – but some frequent ones, including those listed above, have survived and any teacher has to deal with them.

As mentioned, umlaut is what's known as a CONDITIONED sound change: it only affected vowels when the following syllable contained an /i/ or a /j/. What's tricky about umlaut is that this /i/ or /j/ in the subsequent syllable was mostly lost, like many of the vowels in unstressed syllables – after umlaut had taken place, but before the Old English texts that have come down to us. Thus there's nothing in the word *men*, for instance, to indicate that there used to be an extra syllable on the end containing an /i/. In many cases, umlaut itself is the only evidence that this /i/ was ever there in the first place.

And if you're wondering about whether these alternations are also due to umlaut:

- *sing ~ sang ~ sung*

- *ride ~ road*

then let's just say right now that these can be explained through a different process, which you can read more about in §7.3.2 in the next chapter.

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[27]Long /ɑː/ and /eː/ apparently did not always undergo umlaut, and the development of /ɑː/ differed in different dialects (Minkova 2014: 159–160).

The case of *bury*

As we have just seen, the Old English /y/, spelt as <y>, started unrounding at the end of the period. In West Saxon Old English, /y/ unrounded to [i] ~ [ɪ]. Towards the end of Old English and throughout Middle English, we can see this sound change reflected in the spelling, with new spelling variants such as <i> and <u>. Today's *bury* comes from the Old English *byrgan.* As such, the Present Day English spelling shows exactly what we might expect: a change from the letter <y> to <u>. But what about the pronunciation? What we find in standard Present Day English varieties is [bɛɹi], not [bɪɹi]. What happened there? What happened was that the Old English /y/ was not unrounded to [i] ~ [ɪ] in *all* dialects. In Kentish dialects, it was unrounded to [e] ~ [ɛ] instead. Present Day English *bury* is fascinating in that the spelling reflects the developments in one dialect, but the pronunciation reflects those in another!

6.3 Morphology

The INFLECTIONAL morphology of Old English is probably the biggest difference vis-à-vis the present-day language. Simply put, Old English has a lot more endings than modern English does. We've already seen a fair few of these in Middle English, but there are more – both in the verbal domain (§6.3.1) and in the nominal domain (§6.3.3). Getting a grip on what these endings are and how they work is crucial to reading Old English texts and to getting inside the grammar of the language.

A useful one-stop shop for Old English morphology is Peter Baker's "magic sheet", which contains all the morphology we discuss in this section, and is colour-coded to help you spot generalizations.[28] On the magic sheet, and in this chapter, the forms given in the PARADIGMS are taken from the West Saxon dialect – other varieties show variant forms that are beyond the scope of an introductory chapter such as this one.

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[28]Available at http://www.oldenglishaerobics.net/resources/magic_letter.pdf.

6.3.1 Verbs and verb endings

The good news about Old English verbs is that the features that determine what they look like are basically the same ones we see throughout the history of the language – there are just more distinct endings. These crucial features are:

- Whether the verb is weak or strong (see §5.3.2)

- Whether the verb is finite or non-finite. If it's finite, we also need to consider:

    - Person: first, second, or third

    - Number: singular or plural

    - Tense: past or present

    - Mood: indicative, subjunctive or imperative

All these features except mood should be familiar from Present Day English. We discussed mood in Chapter 3, where it was concluded that Present Day English doesn't have morphological marking for mood (§3.3.2). Old English, however, very much does, and the three relevant categories are the following:

- The INDICATIVE is the default, bread-and-butter verb form of Old English. It's by far the most common verb form, and Old English speakers used it everywhere they didn't use a subjunctive or an imperative.

- The SUBJUNCTIVE is usually used to express IRREALIS meaning: the speaker is not committing themselves to the truth of the statement. If the statement describes something hypothetical, or a wish or desire, for instance, rather than the actual world, the verb will usually be in the subjunctive.[29]

- The IMPERATIVE is used for giving orders or instructions. As such, it only has forms in the second person, and in Old English it only has a distinct form in the singular.[30]

Let's start with the weak verbs, which, in Old English as in Present Day English, are the most common type of verb. The possible endings are given in Table 6.3. Here, "Pres" = present, "ind" = indicative, "sbjv" = subjunctive, "Imp" = imperative.

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[29]There are also a few fixed syntactic contexts where the subjunctive is used. The complementizer *þēah* 'though', for instance, always co-occurs with a verb in the subjunctive, even when the statement is clearly true and the writer knows it. In Ælfriċ's *Life of St Eugenia*, the protagonist gets her hands on a copy of St Paul's teachings and becomes very excited, *þēah ðe hēo þā ġyt hǣðen wǣre* 'though she was still a heathen' (with the verb *wǣre* in the subjunctive).

[30]The verb *BE* is an exception to this rule, as to so many others; see §6.3.2.

Table 6.3: Finite verb endings in Old English: *lufian* 'to love' (weak)

Person and number	Pres ind	Pres sbjv	Past ind	Past sbjv	Imp
First singular	*lufie*	*lufie*	*lufode*	*lufode*	
Second singular	*lufast*	*lufie*	*lufodest*	*lufode*	*lufa*
Third singular	*lufaþ*	*lufie*	*lufode*	*lufode*	
Plural (all persons)	*lufiað*	*lufien*	*lufoden*	*lufoden*	*lufiað*

The corresponding table for the strong verbs is Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Finite verb endings in Old English: *singan* 'to sing' (strong)

Person and number	Pres ind	Pres sbjv	Past ind	Past sbjv	Imp
First singular	*singe*	*singe*	*sang*	*sunge*	
Second singular	*singst*	*singe*	*sunge*	*sunge*	*sing*
Third singular	*singþ*	*singe*	*sang*	*sunge*	
Plural (all persons)	*singað*	*singen*	*sungon*	*sungen*	*singað*

If you compare the endings for the weak verbs (in boldface) in Table 6.3 with those for the strong verbs in Table 6.4, you'll see that in the present tense they're exactly the same. The only differences are in the past tense, where the weak verbs have a /d/ and different person forms in the ending, and the strong verbs change the vowel.[31] As for the non-finite forms in Table 6.5, only the past participle is formed differently in weak and in strong verbs.

Table 6.5: Non-finite verb endings in Old English: *lufian* (weak) and *singan* (strong)

Form	Weak	Strong
Infinitive	*lufian*	*singan*
Present participle	*lufiende*	*singende*
Past participle	*(ġe)lufod*	*(ġe)sungen*

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[31]If you're interested in where this /d/ comes from, see §7.3.1 in the next chapter!

If you pause at this point to compare the verbal endings in Old English with the ones presented for Middle English in the last chapter (§5.3.2), you'll see that on the whole there's not a huge amount of difference: the big changes in verbal morphology in English take place between the Middle and Modern periods. This is different for nominal morphology, which (as you'll soon see) is considerably more complex in Old English than in Middle English. This kind of fluctuation in rates of change is not unusual! It's not the case that all aspects of a language have to change at the same speed or at the same time, and on the whole historical linguists are a lot better at describing exactly how change happens than they are at predicting exactly why and when.

There's one major thing missing from Tables 6.4 and 6.5, though: how do we know which vowel you get in the past tense? For *singan* 'to sing', the vowel in the second person singular indicative in the past tense is an /u/: *sunge*. But for *drīfan* 'to drive', the corresponding vowel is a short /i/: *drife*. And for *beran* 'to bear' it's a long /ǣ/: *bǣre*. What's up with that?

It turns out that the vowels we find in strong verbs in Old English are actually predictable to a great extent. More specifically, all strong verbs belong to a class, traditionally labelled classes I to VII. We won't go into the full range here, but Table 6.6 illustrates the vowel choices for classes I to V. '1st past' is the vowel used in the first and third person singular indicative of the past tense; '2nd past' is the vowel used in all other finite past tense forms.

Table 6.6: Some strong verb classes in Old English

Class	Sample verb	Present	1st past	2nd past	Past participle
I	*drīfan* 'to drive'	/ī/	/ā/	/i/	/i/
II	*crēopan* 'to creep'	/ēo/	/ēa/	/u/	/o/
III	*helpan* 'to help'	/e/	/ēa/	/u/	/o/
IV	*beran* 'to bear'	/e/	/æ/	/ǣ/	/o/
V	*spreċan* 'to speak'	/e/	/æ/	/ǣ/	/e/

This system of vowels has an interesting history, which you can read about in §7.3.2. For the purposes of reading Old English, though, you can use the vowels in Table 6.6 to figure out the infinitive of a verb form you're not sure about, which you can then look up in a dictionary if need be.[32]

Finally, there's one class of verbs we haven't discussed yet, which strictly speaking are neither weak nor strong. These are the PRETERITE-PRESENTS, verbs

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[32]For instance, the online Bosworth-Toller Dictionary: https://bosworthtoller.com/.

which have a strong *past* form as their *present* tense and a weak past form (often slightly irregular) as their past tense. There aren't many of these verbs, but some of them are extremely frequent: these include *cunnan* 'to know/to be able to', *magan* 'to be able to', *mōtan* 'to be allowed to/to have to', and *sċulan* 'to owe/to have to' – the ancestors of the modern modals *can*, *may*, *must*, and *shall* (see §5.4.2). They're quite a disparate group, but Table 6.7 gives an idea of what their forms look like.

Table 6.7: Finite verb endings in Old English: *mōtan* and *sċulan* (preterite-presents)

Person/number	Pres ind	Pres sbjv	Past ind	Past sbjv
First singular	*mōt, sċeal*	*mōte,sċyle*	*mōste, sċolde*	*mōste,sċolde*
Second singular	*mōst, sċealt*	*mōte,sċyle*	*mōstest, sċoldest*	*mōste,sċolde*
Third singular	*mōt, sċeal*	*mōte,sċyle*	*mōste, sċolde*	*mōste,sċolde*
Plural (all persons)	*mōton, sċulon*	*mōten, sċylen*	*mōston, sċoldon*	*mōsten, sċolden*

Note that preterite-present verbs don't often occur in the imperative or in non-finite forms – a foreshadowing of their later fate as modals occupying the I position.[33]

6.3.2 Futurity and the dual paradigm of *BE*

The most common verb of all is the verb *BE*, which is completely irregular. Table 6.8 gives its forms. The present participle forms are **bēonde** and *wesende*, and the past participle form is (*ġe*)**bēon.**

What's really special about the forms of the verb *BE* in Old English is that in the present tense there are two different sets of forms: one starting in /b/, one without. Furthermore, these two sets are semantically distinct. The forms starting in /b/ very often have an implication of futurity (Kilpiö 1993, Wischer 2010, Bolze 2013). Among Old English verbs this is highly unusual, as futurity is not normally morphologically or syntactically marked in Old English – instead, futurity is left for the reader to infer, sometimes using adverbials of time (e.g. *tomorrow*).

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[33]Past and present tense seem to shift around in the history of the preterite-present verbs. Present Day English *should* and *could* are historically the past tense forms of *shall* and *can*, but they don't have this function any more: *You should go to the shops* is definitely not a suggestion relating to the past, for instance.

Table 6.8: Finite verb endings in Old English: *bēon/wesan* 'to be'

Person and number	Pres ind	Pres sbjv	Past ind	Past sbjv	Imp
1st singular	*eom*, **b***ēo*	*sīe*, **b***ēo*	*wæs*	*wǣre*	
2nd singular	*eart*, **b***ist*	*sīe*, **b***ēo*	*wǣre*	*wǣre*	*wes*, **b***ēo*
3rd singular	*is*, **b***iþ*	*sīe*, **b***ēo*	*wæs*	*wǣre*	
Plural (all persons)	*sind(on)*, **b***ēoþ*	*sīen*, **b***ēon*	*wǣron*	*wǣren*	*wesaþ*, **b***ēoþ*

This twofold ᴘᴀʀᴀᴅɪɢᴍ for the verb *BE*, with two different sets of morphological forms with different meanings, is also not found in any other Germanic language. Where could it have come from?

Lutz (2009) argues, following Keller (1925), that this twofold paradigm reflects Celtic influence on Old English. Brythonic Celtic also had a twofold paradigm for its verb 'to be' in the present tense. One of the sets of forms began with /b/ – and this was precisely the form that could be used for marking the future![34] Given what we said in §6.1.2 about the contact situation between Celtic-speaking and Old-English-speaking people, this kind of grammatical transfer makes total sense. And the parallels between the two languages are so precise that it's hard to imagine them being due to chance. Here, then, we see an extremely likely case of Celtic influence on Old English morphology and syntax.

6.3.3 Nouns and the case system

The differences between Old English and Chaucerian Middle English in verbal morphology may be slight, but in nominal morphology they're dramatic. In Old English, it wasn't just pronouns that had different morphological forms: nouns, adjectives, and determiners could also vary in form depending on context.

The contextual features that determine what form you find are number and case. Number works the same way as it does in Present Day English: a noun can be singular or plural, and all other words in the nominal phrase will ᴀɢʀᴇᴇ with it. (Think of Present Day English *this house* vs. *th**ese** houses*: the demonstrative determiner appears in the plural when the noun is plural.) As for ᴄᴀsᴇ, we've

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[34]We have no records of the Brythonic Celtic ancestor language itself. However, we do have records of its daughter languages, such as Old Welsh, and these display the same twofold paradigm. So we can reliably reconstruct the ancestor language as having this same distinction. On reconstruction, see §7.1.1.

already met it in §5.3.3. In Old English we see a new case that we haven't met before, though: the dative. Whereas in Middle English the accusative is used for all objects, in Old English it's only used for direct objects, with the dative used for indirect objects instead. Here's an overview:

- NOMINATIVE case: used for subjects and subject complements

- ACCUSATIVE case: used for direct objects

- DATIVE case: used for indirect objects

- GENITIVE case: used for possessors

You can see the full system in action in the system of pronouns in Table 6.9.[35] The Old English pronoun system is in a state of flux, like it is at every other time in the language's history: the accusative forms *meċ*, *þeċ* and *ūsiċ*, for instance, are lost very early on, before the time of King Alfred, and their role is taken over by the originally dative pronouns.

Table 6.9: Personal pronouns in Old English

Person and number	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
First singular	*iċ*	(*meċ*)	*me*	*mīn*
First plural	*wē*	(*ūsiċ*)	*ūser*	*ūre*
Second singular	*þū*	(*þeċ*)	*þē*	*þīn*
Second plural	*ġe*	*ēow*	*ēow*	*ēower*
Third masculine singular	*hē*	*hine*	*him*	*his*
Third feminine singular	*hēo*	*hīe*	*hire*	*hire*
Third neuter singular	*hit*	*hit*	*him*	*his*
Third plural	*hīe*	*hīe*	*him*	*hira*

Nouns, however, have two important additional features: grammatical gender and noun class. Unlike case and number, these features don't come from the context, but rather are inherent properties of the noun itself.

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[35]Compare this to the Middle English pronouns in 5.3 and 5.4. What differences can you spot? Other than minor spelling differences, there aren't many...

When there's two of us – not more, not less

Old English, unlike Present Day English, didn't have only the singular and the plural – it also had the so-called DUAL. This is a special type of number category which is used for two referents – not less and not more. Old English only has a dual in the pronouns. If we referred to *you* as, say, ten readers, we would use the nominative form *ġe* 'you 3+', but if only two people were reading this book, then we'd address these two people with *ġit* 'you 2'. We also find the dual in Old English with the first person: *iċ* refers to 'one of me', *wē* refers to 'several of us, but more than two', and *wit* refers to 'two and only two of us' in the nominative form. The dual is not found in the third person at all, and it is gradually lost during the Old English period.

Grammatical gender is a property of many languages of Europe and beyond. In Old English the gender of a noun can be masculine, feminine or neuter, and this has no relation to human gender (a sociocultural phenomenon) or to sex.[36] For instance, the Old English noun *stān* 'stone' is masculine, *talu* 'tale, story' is feminine, and *sċip* 'ship' is neuter. The same holds for words for humans: two Old English words for 'woman' are *wīf* (neuter) and *wīfman* (masculine).

Wīfman into *woman*

How did Old English *wīfman* /wiːfman/ become Present Day English *woman* /wʊmən/? Several sound changes took place. The /f/ assimilated to the consonant that immediately followed it: /wiːfman/ ↔/wiːmman/. At some point, the vowel shortened too: /wimman/ ~ /wɪmman/. By now you also know that gemination was eventually lost as well – hence /wɪ-

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[36]Many languages, like Chinese and Present Day English, have no grammatical gender distinctions at all. Others, like some of the Bantu languages of Africa, have more than twenty – though some linguists are reluctant to use the word "gender" for these. For cross-linguistic perspectives on gender see Corbett (1991) and Aikhenvald (2016).

man/; and you also know that vowels in unstressed positions turned into a schwa or got deleted: /wɪmən/. Regarding the stressed vowel, sometimes /w/ has interesting assimilatory effects on the sounds around it, and so the /ɪ/ got assimilated to an /ʊ/, giving us today's singular /wʊmən/! Check the OED for more details.

Like verbs, nouns in Old English can belong to one of two classes: strong or weak. In this context 'strong' and 'weak' don't actually mean anything – they're just two different types of nouns. We could equally well call them green nouns and purple nouns, or happy nouns and sad nouns. But 'strong' and 'weak' are the traditional terms, so we'll stick with those in this book.

The inflection of a noun and of the other words in a nominal phrase (such as determiner and adjectives) depends on the gender and class of the noun. For the noun itself, Table 6.10 gives the forms for strong masculine nouns, Table 6.11 for strong feminine nouns, and Table 6.12 for strong neuter nouns. Table 6.13 gives the forms for weak nouns, which don't differ much by gender.[37]

Table 6.10: Strong masculine nouns in Old English: *stān* 'stone'

	Nominative	**Accusative**	**Dative**	**Genitive**
Singular	*stān*		*stāne*	*stānes*
Plural	*stānas*		*stānum*	*stāna*

Table 6.11: Strong feminine nouns in Old English: *talu* 'story, tale'

	Nominative	**Accusative**	**Dative**	**Genitive**
Singular	*talu*	*tale*		
Plural	*tala*		*talum*	*tala*

There's a lot of similarity between Tables 6.10–6.13. For example, the dative plural always ends in -*um*, and the genitive plural always ends in -*a*. Within the PARADIGMS, too, there's a lot of SYNCRETISM: the ending in strong feminine singular nouns is always -*e* except in the nominative, for instance. And among the

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[37]It's actually more complicated than this, unfortunately. The paradigms in Tables 6.10–6.13 are for some of the most common noun classes, but there are several more classes. Even worse, sound changes like *i*-umlaut often mess with the morphology, so that the forms we see are not the ones we expect from the paradigms. You can find the nitty-gritty details in books dedicated to learning Old English, such as Hogg & Alcorn (2012), or a reference grammar like Hogg & Fulk (2011) or Wright & Wright (1908).

Table 6.12: Strong neuter nouns in Old English: *sċip* 'ship'

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	*sċip*		*sċipe*	*sċipes*
Plural	*sċipu*[a]		*sċipum*	*sċipa*

[a]For nouns in this paradigm with a long stem, e.g. *word* 'word', the *-u* is lost and the plural form is the same as the singular form.

Table 6.13: Weak nouns in Old English: masculine *nama* 'name', feminine *tunge* 'tongue', neuter *ēare* 'ear'

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Masculine singular	*nama*	*naman*		
Feminine singular	*tunge*	*tungan*		
Neuter singular	*ēare*		*ēaran*	
Plural	*naman*		*namum*	*namena*

weak nouns the ending is very often *-an*. (This is where the other term for this class of weak nouns comes from: *n*-stem nouns.) So if you're trying to figure out what the case and gender of an Old English noun are, the form of the noun itself often isn't much help.

Enter the definite article. This has a lot of distinct forms, which you can admire in all their glory in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14: The definite article in Old English

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Masculine singular	*se*	*þone*	*þǣm*	*þæs*
Feminine singular	*sēo*	*þā*	*þǣre*	
Neuter singular	*þæt*		*þǣm*	*þæs*
Plural (all genders)	*þā*		*þǣm*	*þāra*

The trick is this: whenever a noun co-occurs with an article, the article AGREES with it in gender. So 'the ship' is *þæt sċip*, 'the tale' is *sēo talu*, and 'the stone' is *se stān*. Even when the noun doesn't give away many clues as to its gender, the definite article often does!

The Old English morphological system for nominal phrases is a lot more complex than the one found in Middle English, so we'd advise that you now try Exercises 4 and 5, in order to familiarize yourself with how it works.

> ### Was there a definite article in Old English?
>
> Cross-linguistically, it's common for demonstratives to GRAMMATICALIZE into definite articles. There is debate among scholars of Old English grammar around whether it really had a definite article, or whether what we've called the definite article is better called a demonstrative at this stage. We've chosen to follow Wood (2007), Sommerer (2018) and Allen (2019), who argue that Old English has a definite article, at least in later texts and in prose, and therefore the nominal phrases in our trees are labelled DP (for "determiner phrase") and not NP. Others maintain that we can't speak of a definite article until Middle English, though. If you're interested in finding out more about this debate, see Sommerer (2018) and the references cited there.

6.3.4 What happened to all the nominal morphology?

Between early Old English and late Middle English, most of this complex nominal morphology simply disappeared. Case and grammatical gender, in particular, vanish almost without a trace outside the personal pronouns. And the number of distinct forms shrinks dramatically. Table 6.14 contains nine distinct forms for the definite article in Old English. By the end of the Middle English period, there's just one: *the*.

The change is not a sudden one: texts like the tenth-century Lindisfarne Gospels and the early twelfth-century *Peterborough Chronicle* give us snapshots of change in progress. Millar (2000), for example, shows how the Lindisfarne Gospels contain innovative forms of the definite article. And there are other changes during the early part of the Old English period, for instance within the pronoun system, as we've seen. Still, overall these shifts make English quite unlike most of the other Germanic languages, and it's fair to ask why and how they happened.

Sound change can have a knock-on effect on morphology. In particular, vowels in unstressed syllables – which were quite varied in early Old English – were reduced to schwa (/ə/) during the course of the period. Also, /n/ was lost word-finally in INFLECTIONAL endings. These changes affected the number of contrasts in inflectional endings, and so could have contributed to the loss of the case system (Blake 2001: 176–180). For instance, the loss of /n/ word-finally caused

all the singular forms of weak masculine nouns like *nama* to merge (*naman* > *nama* in all cases). However, similar sound changes occurred in other Germanic languages without such drastic consequences (Barðdal 2009), so this can only be part of the story.

According to Milroy (1992: 203), "it seems clear that such a sweeping change is at least to some extent associated with *language contact*". If so, contact with whom, and when? On the face of it, both contact with Brythonic Celtic (§6.1.2) and contact with Norse (§6.1.1) are plausible candidates. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Trudgill (2011) argues that the loss of inflectional morphology is a normal outcome of historical situations in which adult language learners are present in large numbers among the speakers of a language, and that this is simply because adult learners (unlike young children) find inflectional morphology especially difficult to learn.[38]

Trudgill (2011: Chapter 2) makes the case that it was Celtic-speaking adult learners of Old English who were responsible for the morphological simplification that we see. In this he follows Tristram (2004), who argues that written Old English was generally conservative and preserved richer inflectional morphology than the spoken language of the time. So, for instance, a non-native learner of Old English may have said *stānas* as the dative or genitive plural of 'stone' if they didn't know or couldn't remember the rarer forms *stanum* or *stana*, but classically educated scribes would still have known and used these forms.[39] The fact that the morphological loss only really becomes apparent during the Middle English period is, according to Tristram (2004) and Trudgill (2011), because this was when the Old English scribal tradition broke down, not because the change was happening at this time.

An alternative theory holds that it was speakers of Norse, not Celtic, who were largely responsible for morphological simplification in English. In support of this idea is the fact that the chronology is a better fit for Norse contact rather than Celtic, and the fact that Middle English texts from the north and east (the areas of Scandinavian settlement) tend to show a simpler case system than those from the south and west (Allen 1995: 212, Allen 1997; Warner 2017).[40] Trudgill (2011),

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[38]In this section we'll focus mostly on the case system. See McWhorter (2002: 228–231) for the argument that the loss of grammatical gender was due to contact with Norse, and Curzan (2003) for a comprehensive discussion of grammatical gender and its loss in English.

[39]Of course, it's impossible to know what spoken Old English was actually like, pending the invention of a time machine. The fact that we see quite a lot of variation within written Old English itself might speak against Tristram's thesis that this written language was artificially homogeneous, though; see Warner (2017: 352–361).

[40]More specifically, Allen (1997) argues that contact with Norse only sped up the changes that were already occurring, and did not initiate them.

however, takes the view that the contact between Old English and Norse was of the wrong type: there weren't enough adult language learners involved. It could be that both theories are right to some extent – it's rare that a single factor can be pinpointed as the sole cause of the spread of a linguistic change through a population. Or maybe neither is right. In any event, the debate is ongoing – the story of morphological simplification in the history of English is definitely not a closed book.

6.4 Syntax

You've already encountered some syntactic topics, such as the functions of the CASE system and AGREEMENT within nominal phrases, in the morphology section of this chapter. This section introduces four more important features of Old English syntax and how they change: clause structure (§6.4.1), the structure of the verb phrase (§6.4.2), negation (§6.4.3), and relative and correlative clauses (§6.4.4).

Sometimes you'll see it written that Old English had free word order. This is nonsense. There were more word order possibilities in Old English than in Modern English, but there are also important constraints. One of these is that word order in nominal phrases is almost exactly the same as it is in Present Day English, as illustrated in (1), with very little variation.

(1)   Demonstrative/article > numeral > adjective > noun
       (e.g. *se āna ælmihtiga God* 'the one almighty God')

Clausal word order too was constrained, as we'll see in the next subsections.

6.4.1 Old English clause structure

The most important feature of Old English clause structure has already been introduced in connection with Middle English: the VERB-SECOND (V2) rule, which applies to main (non-embedded) clauses. West Saxon Old English was characterized not by strict verb-second, but by what we called "information-structure V2" (IS-V2) in section 5.4.1. To recap: in varieties governed by IS-V2, whether we find the verb in second position or not (in clauses with an initial constituent that isn't the subject) depends on the discourse status of the subject. If the subject is GIVEN INFORMATION, i.e. refers to something that was mentioned in the previous discourse, it may precede the finite verb, giving rise to a V3 word order. On the other hand, if the subject is NEW INFORMATION, i.e. it refers to something newly

introduced into the discourse, it must follow the finite verb. Example (2) shows a given subject with V3, and (3) shows a new subject with V2.[41]

(2) Nū *se rīċa mann* ne   mæġ hēr   habban
now the rich man   NEG can   here have
'Now the rich man cannot here have ...'   (Ælfriċ, *Ash Wednesday*)

(3) On þes   ilca Offa   dæi wæs *ān ealdorman*
on ART.GEN same Offa.GEN day was an alderman
'In the same Offa's day (there) was an alderman ...'
(*Old English Chronicle*, E manuscript)

There's a complication regarding the position of the finite verb, though. In Present Day English, as we saw all the way back in §1.2.3, the specifier always comes before the head, and the head always comes before the complement. Example (4), repeated from Chapter 1, is an illustration.

(4)
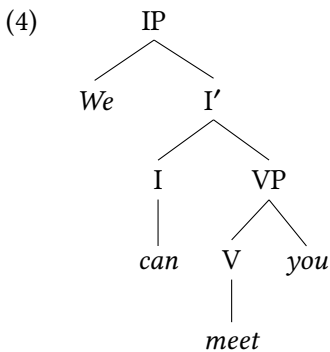
In Example (4), the specifier of IP is the subject, and comes before the head of IP, which is the modal *can*. This in turn comes before the complement of IP, which is the VP (the phrase *meet you*). So we have specifier-head-complement order.

In Old English this wasn't the case. The head of IP can come either before or after its complement. Example (5), like all the examples we've seen so far, is an example of a "head-initial" IP, where the head I (the finite verb – here *ahæfde* "raised") precedes its complement VP.

(5)   and Aaron ahæfde his hand upp on ġebēdum
and Aaron raised   his hand up in prayer
'and Aaron raised his hand up in prayer'   (Ælfriċ, *Prayer of Moses*)

---

[41]The negative particle *ne* in example (2) isn't a constituent. Editors usually write it as a separate word, but that doesn't reflect what we see in the actual manuscripts, and it's better to think of *ne* as a prefix, i.e. as part of the verb.

In most Old English subordinate clauses, though, it's the other way round: the complement VP comes first and the head I follows it, as in example (6), given as a tree in (7).

(6) ðā   āscade iċ hine hwȳ hē swā dyde
     then asked I him why he so   did
     'Then I asked him why he did so'   (*Letter to King Edward*)

(7)
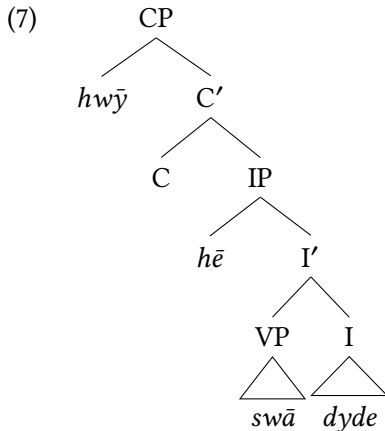
There is variation between head-final and head-initial IPs in Old English: in earlier texts and poetic texts we seem to find more head-final IPs. See Ringe & Taylor (2014: §8.2.3) for the detail. Since the finite verb is the head of IP, the crucial diagnostic for head-final vs. head-initial IPs is the position of the finite verb.

6.4.2 Old English verb phrase structure

What about the verb phrase? So far we've been assuming that the verb phrase is head-initial throughout the history of English, too – i.e. that the head of the verb phrase comes before its complement. But is it true? How can we investigate this?

Finite verbs don't tell us anything, since these occupy the I position in Old English, as we've seen. But to figure out whether the VP is head-final or head-initial, we can use non-finite forms (infinitives and participles) of transitive verbs (verbs which need an object, such as *to eat*, *eaten*, and *eating*). These non-finite forms remain in the V position, and don't move to I. If the object comes directly before the verb ("OV"), as in *We have honey eaten*, the VP looks head-final; if the verb comes before the object ("VO"), as in *We have eaten honey*, the VP looks head-initial.

What we find is that there seems to be evidence for both head-final and head-initial VPs in Old English, just as there is for IPs. Example (8) is OV with a head-final VP, as shown in (10), and example (9) is VO with a head-initial VP, as shown in (11).

(8) on twām þingum hæfde god þæs   mannes sāule *ġegōdod*
     in two   things had   God ART.GEN man.GEN soul endowed
     'God had endowed man's soul with two things' (Ælfriċ, *Catholic Homilies*)

(9) Þū   hafast *ġecoren* þone   wēr
     you have   chosen   ART.ACC man
     'You have chosen the man'   (*Apollonius of Tyre*)

(10)
```
            V′
          /    \
        DP      V
       / \      |
  þæs mannes sāule  ġegōdod
```

(11)
```
            V′
          /    \
        V       DP
        |       / \
    ġecoren   þone wēr
```
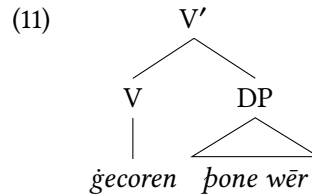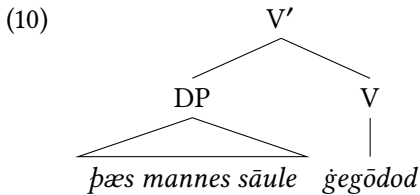
Whether the VP is head-initial or head-final – that is, whether it is VO or OV – doesn't depend on the clause type, but it does vary and change over time. Pintzuk & Taylor (2006) give the figures in Table 6.15 for the Old and Middle English periods.

Table 6.15: OV and VO in Old and Middle English

Period	Percentage of VPs that are OV
pre-950 (early Old English)	56.7%
950–1150 (late Old English)	50.4%
1150–1250 (early Middle English)	28.4%
1250–1350	3.1%
1350–1420	1.3%
1420–1500 (late Middle English)	0.7%

Language contact may have played a role here too: Trips (2002) argues that Norse-speaking second-language learners of English were central in the OV–VO transition, imposing the VO word order of their native language onto the English that they learned. Since 50–60% of Old English VPs were already head-final (OV), it's very unlikely that Norse speakers were the first to introduce VO

into English.[42] However, they may still have played a role in pushing the change towards completion in the late Old English and early Middle English period. You can find detailed discussion of the change from OV to VO in early English, including different theoretical perspectives, in Fischer et al. (2000: Chapter 5), Roberts (2007: 175–198 and 391–399), Los (2015: §6.5), and Fischer et al. (2017: 194–197).

Head-initial and head-final: not anything goes!

The possibility for both IP and VP to be either head-initial or head-final means that, as mentioned, Old English word order is more flexible than that of Present Day English. However, it's not the case that anything goes. In particular, there's a strong constraint that requires the VP also to be head-final when the IP is head-final: so Old English sentences along the lines of *If he can see bumblebees* (head-initial IP and VP), *If he can bumblebees see* (head-initial IP, head-final VP), or *If he bumblebees see can* (head-final IP and VP) are all fine, but *If he see bumblebees can* (head-final IP, head-initial VP) is impossible. The word order that would result from a head-initial VP dominated by a head-final IP – a non-finite verb (head of VP), followed by an object, followed by a finite verb (head of IP) – is simply not found in Old or Middle English texts. What's more, this specific constraint, sometimes called the Final-over-Final Condition, may in fact hold universally for all languages, not just for Old English! Detailed discussion can be found in Sheehan et al. (2017).

6.4.3 Negation

All languages have a way of negating a statement. The Old English strategy was dead simple: insert the prefix or CLITIC *ne* directly before the finite verb. An example is (2), repeated here as (12). We'll call this Stage 1.

(12) Nū se rīċa mann ***ne*** mæġ hēr habban
      now the rich man NEG can   here have
      'Now the rich man cannot here have ...'   (Ælfriċ, *Ash Wednesday*)

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[42]A further complication is that we don't know whether Norse as spoken in Great Britain at the time of the Scandinavian settlement was in fact a VO language. See Bech & Walkden (2016: 71–73) for discussion.

Present Day English uses the word *not*, which behaves like an adverb: it comes after elements in I, but before the lexical verb in V, e.g. *He does* not *know*.[43] How did we get from *ne* to *not*?

In late Old English, we occasionally see *ne* joined by another element, the word *nāwiht/noht/naht*, which originally meant 'nothing' or 'not a thing'. An example is given in (13).

(13) þæt ðū þās dyntas ***naht*** **ne** ġefretst
      that you those blows nothing NEG feel
      'that you do not feel those blows at all'
      (Ælfriċ, *Julian and Basilissa*, from Willis 2016: 486)

Here the use of *naht* seems to be emphatic, giving a meaning of 'not at all' (compare this e.g. to Present Day English *The bumblebee didn't give a **hoot** about all the blossoms.*). In late Old English and early Middle English, however, *naht* gets more and more common alongside *ne* – so much so that in texts from between 1250 and 1350 this is the most common way of negating a statement, and doesn't seem to be emphatic at all. We'll call this *ne … naht* pattern Stage 2.[44] Finally, towards the end of the Middle English period, the original negator *ne* is lost, and only *noht* (or *not*) remains (Stage 3).

Like the other syntactic changes discussed in this book, this one didn't happen overnight. Table 6.16 gives figures for the different stages in different periods of Middle English, from Wallage (2008).

Table 6.16: Changes in negation in Middle English (Wallage 2008: 645)

Period	% *ne* (Stage 1)	% *ne … not* (Stage 2)	% *not* (Stage 3)
1150–1250	60.5%	38.5%	1.0%
1250–1350	22.9%	67.7%	9.4%
1350–1420	1.9%	10.5%	87.5%
1420–1500	0.8%	1.0%	98.2%

Walkden & Morrison (2017) look at the regional distribution of the variants using the Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English (Laing 2013). They argue that the disappearance of *ne* may be in part due to Norse influence, since Stage 3

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[43]The word *not* can be contracted, as discussed in §3.3.1 – but that's not important here.

[44]Readers who've studied some formal French might find this reminiscent of the French *ne … pas* negation.
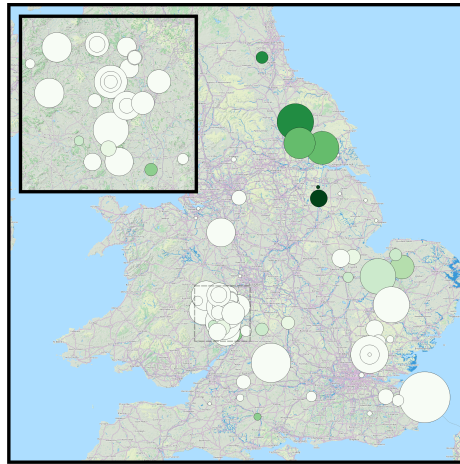
Figure 6.7: Negation in Middle English 1150–1350 (Walkden & Morrison 2017: 182). Darker green points indicate more use of Stage 3.

seems to emerge first in the north and east (Figure 6.7) – or at least that contact with Norse may have accelerated the change.[45]

What's really interesting about this change, though, is that it is something that has happened independently in dozens of languages, including Berber, Breton, Burmese, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fɔn, German, Moroccan Arabic, Palestinian Arabic, Norse, and Welsh.[46] The full pathway of change from Stage 1 to Stage 3 is known as Jespersen's Cycle, after the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen, who described the change as follows (Jespersen 1917: 4):

> The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word.

Jespersen's Cycle is one of the strongest indicators we have that language change in general is *not* completely random but rather follows pathways that are in principle predictable. Obviously, predicting change is still very difficult in practice! But we have no reason to think that it should be impossible, in the long run.

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[45]Following ideas first proposed in Iyeiri (1992, 2001) and Ingham (2008).
[46]See Willis et al. (2013) for general discussion.

For a full overview of the history of negation in English, see Ingham (2013). There is also discussion in Fischer et al. (2000: 305–318), including how negation should be captured in a syntactic tree.

Negative concord in Old English

NEGATIVE CONCORD, the use of multiple negative-marked words in a single clause to express only one semantic negation – e.g. *I didn't do nothing to no one* rather than standard *I didn't do anything to anyone* – is frowned upon by prescriptivists in Present Day English. It's associated with varieties that have historically had low overt PRESTIGE and been discriminated against, such as African American English and Alabama English.[a] Those pedants who think that this is an uncouth, illogical innovation may be interested to learn that Old English was a negative concord language, as examples like (14) show.

(14)   *Ne*   mæg *nān* man twām hlāfordum þēowian
       NEG may no   man two   masters   serve
       'No man may serve two masters.'
       (*West Saxon Gospels*, Matthew 6:24; Ingham 2013: 141)

In fact, the vast majority of the world's languages exhibit negative concord (Haspelmath 2013).

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[a]See Matyiku (2011) at https://ygdp.yale.edu/phenomena/negative-concord for more on negative concord in present-day varieties of English.

6.4.4 Relative and correlative clauses

In Present Day English, relative clauses can be introduced in a variety of ways:

(15)   The book ***that*** I read   (*that*)

(16)   The book ***which*** I read   (*which*)

(17)   The book *Ø* I read   (zero marking)

Similarly, in Old English, relative clauses can be introduced in several different ways. First, they can be introduced by a definite article/demonstrative, which

then takes the case that the gap in the relative clause would take. If it's a direct object, it appears in the accusative, if it's a subject, it appears in the nominative, and so on.

(18) þā twēġen fēt ***þā***   þēo sāwul habban sċeal
      the two   feet DEM.ACC.PL the soul   have   shall
      'the two feet that the soul shall have'   (*Adrian and Ritheus*)

Secondly, they can be introduced by the particle *þe*. This is like modern English *that*: it's completely morphologically invariant.

(19) tō his āgenum ǣþele ***þe***   he on ġeboren wæs
      to his own   country PARTICLE he in born   was
      'to his own country which he was born in'   (Ælfriċ, *Life of St. Basil*)

Thirdly, they can be introduced by both an inflected definite article and the particle *þe* together.

(20) Se weig ***se***   ***þe***   lǣt tō hēofonrīċe
      the way DEM.NOM.SG PARTICLE leads to heaven
      'the way which leads to heaven'   (Ælfriċ, *Catholic Homilies*)

Relative clauses crop up quite a lot in Old English texts, so it's useful to see what they look like and how they work. As for their history, the use of the inflected demonstrative died out during the early Middle English period at the same time as the inflected demonstrative itself. The modern type of relative clause introduced by *which*, *who*(*m*) and *whose* was introduced later in the Middle English period.

Another related construction is the correlative construction, which you can see in example (21).

(21) ***Ðā***   iċ ðā   ðis eall ġemunde,   ***ðā*** wundrade iċ swīðe ðāra
      when I then this all remembered then marvelled I much the.GEN.PL
      gōdena   wiotena
      good.GEN.PL wise-men.GEN.PL
      '*When* I remembered all of this, *then* I marvelled at the good wise men exceedingly'
      (*Preface* to the translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*)

Correlative constructions start with a subordinate clause, followed by a full main clause introduced by a RESUMPTIVE pronoun or adverb. Typically, the resumptive is the same as the element that introduces the subordinate clause. In example (21), the subordinate clause is introduced by *þā* 'when', and the main clause is also introduced by *þā*, in this case meaning 'then'.

Correlative constructions are not really found in Present Day English, but they are very common in other Indo-European languages such as Hindi and Urdu to this day. A similar construction is found with a very heavy nominal phrase at the start, followed by a full main clause introduced by a resumptive pronoun, as in example (22). Here, *se* (the nominative form of the definite article/demonstrative) introduces the heavy nominal phrase, and also introduces the main clause (in the meaning 'he' or 'that one').

(22) **Se** God þe   mē forġēaf þis gōde ġeþanc, **se** wyle þē   ġehȳran
      the God who me gave   this good thought   he will   you hear
      '*The* God who gave me this good thought, *he* is willing to hear you'
      (Ælfriċ, *Life of St. Basil*)

See if you can spot correlative constructions in Old English texts. Again, there are quite a lot of them!

6.5 Lexicon

6.5.1 Word formation: derivation and compounding

Old English made productive use of a variety of word-formation strategies in order to form new lexical items. Both DERIVATION (the addition of an affix to a free form) and COMPOUNDING (putting two free forms together) were widely used during this period.

In the verbal domain, prefixes were common. Thus, verbs like *onsacan* 'to refute, to deny' were derived from simple verbs like *sacan* 'to attack'. The prefix *be-* made intransitive verbs transitive: so *murnan* 'to mourn', as in 'they were mourning', gave rise to *bemurnan*, as in 'they mourned his death'. However, the function of individual prefixes is often difficult to discern, and sometimes they are used interchangeably in different versions of the same text (Ogura 1995). Verbal prefixes were also an exception to the general rule that all Old English words were stressed on the lexical MORPHEME, which was often the first syllable (see §7.2.4) – this probably reflects the fact that these prefixes are GRAMMATICALIZED versions of what once were independent words. The system of verbal prefixes

was already becoming less productive in late Old English, and disappeared almost entirely in Middle English (Hiltunen 1983, Lutz 1997, Elenbaas 2007, Thim 2012).

The prefix *ġe-*

The prefix *ġe-* is found on both nouns and verbs, though has a different meaning with each. On nouns, *ġe-* often adds a notion of collectivity or grouping, e.g. *ġefēra* 'comrade'. This nominal *ġe-* is stressed. On verbs, the function of *ġe-* is hard to pin down, but it seems to be associated with perfectivity or resultativity (McFadden 2015). This verbal *ġe-* is unstressed. It's often found with past participles, but not only with past participles, and can occur with all kinds of verb forms.

The borderline between derivation and compounding is blurred with Old English nominal word-formations, since it's often difficult to tell whether a given element is a suffix or a free form. Cross-linguistically, it's very common for suffixes to originate as GRAMMATICALIZED free forms, but it's hard to know where to draw the line. *-liċ*, for instance, is cognate with the noun *līċ* 'body', and is used to form adjectives from nouns, e.g. *heofonliċ* 'heavenly' from *heofon* 'heaven', and *dēofolliċ* 'devilish' from *dēofol* 'devil'.[47] *-dom* is cognate with the noun *dōm* 'judgement', and creates abstract nouns, e.g. *þēowdom* 'slavery' from *þēow* 'slave'. These endings, and others such as *-ful*, *-lēas* and *-sċip* (the ancestors of modern *-ful*, *-less* and *-ship*) are sometimes referred to by Old English scholars as "suffixoids" to indicate that we can't be sure whether they are suffixes or free forms. There are, however, also some unambiguous derivational suffixes in Old English, like *-iġ*, which creates adjectives (giving us the Present Day English *-y* suffix, as in *fishy*, *stormy*, and *windy*), and *-ung* and *-nes(s)*, which create abstract feminine nouns.

Old English is particularly fond of COMPOUNDING, and this is nowhere more true than in the poetic texts (see Godden 1992). Some compound elements, such as *heaþo-*, *beadu-* and *hilde-* (all relating to 'war'), are only found in the poetry, e.g. *heaþohelm* 'war-helm' and *hildebil* 'battle-blade, sword'. Davis-Secord (2016) is a recent and in-depth study of compounding in Old English literature.

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[47]This is where the adjectival use of *-ly* comes from in Present Day English *friendly* and *manly*.

> ### Kennings
>
> Kennings are a special type of compound or set phrase, used figuratively, and made up of of two parts: a base word and a determinant. The determinant shares its semantic area with the thing that the kenning refers to overall. Kennings include such compound words as *hronrād* 'sea' (literally 'whale-road') and *merehengest* 'ship' (literally 'sea-stallion'). Both Old English and Old Norse poetry make liberal use of kennings.

6.5.2 Lexical borrowing

The majority of the Old English vocabulary was either inherited from Proto-Germanic or built up using the sort of word-formation strategies discussed in the previous section. That doesn't mean that Old English was free of borrowings, however – far from it! Brythonic Celtic, Latin, and Norse all contributed to the lexicon of Old English to varying degrees.

The number of accepted lexical borrowings from Brythonic Celtic into Old English is small. Old English *brocc* 'badger' is one clear case, and there are several elements that are often found in place-names, such as *cumb* 'valley', *luh* 'lake', *torr* 'rock, hill'. We can also identify a few words from Old Irish: *drȳ* 'magician', also found in the derived form *drȳcræft* 'sorcery, witchcraft'. Some scholars (e.g. Coates 2017) have taken the relative paucity of accepted borrowings as an indication that the contact situation was not nearly as intense as we suggested in §6.1.2. This isn't a necessary conclusion, though. Given the low status of Brythonic Celtic and Celtic-speakers, it makes sense to imagine that words of Celtic origin would have been consciously suppressed by speakers of Old English: they just weren't prestigious enough. The real impact of Celtic on Old English would then have been on areas of the language that are less subject to conscious scrutiny, such as morphosyntax and perhaps phonology – which fits well with the evidence (recall §6.3.2 on the twofold paradigm of *BE*). We shouldn't expect all language contact situations to have the same outcome.[48] Also, recently it has

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[48]For more detail on different outcomes of language contact, see Winford (2005) on 'borrowing' vs. 'imposition', and Trudgill (2011) on short-term vs. long-term contact situations.

been suggested that more words were borrowed into Old English from Celtic than previously thought (Breeze 2002), though time will tell whether these etymologies become accepted by the scholarly community.

Direct Latin borrowings in Old English are numerous: probably around 600 in total (Durkin 2014: 100). We can often use linguistic evidence, such as the presence or absence of certain sound changes, to determine when exactly a word was borrowed: see §7.5.3 in the next chapter for discussion of this and of very early borrowings. Borrowings into Old English itself, after the year 600, mostly had to do with religion and learning, for instance *dēmōn* 'demon', *pāpa* 'pope', *circul* 'circle', and *þēater* 'theatre'.

There are also very many words which are not direct borrowings but either contain Latin elements or are modelled directly on Latin morphological structures. In *grammatic-cræft* 'grammar', the first element is from Latin, but the second element -*cræft* is inherited, and is a productive way of forming abstract nouns in Old English. The word *ælmihtiġ* 'almighty' is almost certainly a loan translation from Latin *omnipotens*: in both words the first part (*æl-*, *omni-*) means 'all', and the second part (-*mihtiġ*, -*potens*) means 'powerful' (Durkin 2014: 164). It's hard to know how many of these borrowings which we find in texts were 'real' in the sense of being widely used in speech, rather than opportunistic coinages of the moment. Remember that the texts are heavily biased towards the domains of religion and learning anyway (§6.1.3). But it isn't doubted that Latin had a major lexical impact on Old English. See Durkin (2014: part III) for extensive discussion.

Norse borrowings into English are also very numerous. They start to appear only in late Old English (see §6.1.1), and at this point are mostly restricted to specific domains: seafaring (e.g. *barþ* and *cnear*, types of ship), law (e.g. *lagu* 'law' itself!), warfare (e.g. *grið* 'peace'). Pons-Sanz (2013) lists 185 accepted Norse borrowings in Old English, and many more that are disputed. During the Middle English period, more Norse borrowings flow into the language, including many that are still used today: *die*, *egg*, *meek*, *though*. Townend (2002) points out that the borrowings from Norse into Old English tend to show signs of adaptation to Old English phonology, whereas the later borrowings first attested in Middle English do not. This could indicate a general change in the nature of the contact situation, away from PRESTIGE-driven borrowing and towards substitution of everyday words – perhaps by native speakers of Norse, as the language slowly died out in England during the Middle English period.

At present, Pons-Sanz (2013) is the definitive overview of Norse borrowings into Old English. Durkin (2014: part IV) discusses Scandinavian lexical influence in general, and the Gersum Project website allows you to look up potential borrowings and how likely it is that they truly have Norse origins.[49]

6.6 Final note

Old English is a challenge for the reader, especially if – as will be the case for most students using this book – this is the first time you're encountering it. But don't worry: no one is expecting you to become fluent! Instead, just give your curiosity free rein and explore this weird and wonderful period of the English language with an open mind.

We've focused in this chapter on the multilingual nature of early Britain. English was just one language among many during this period, and it would have been impossible to predict with any confidence in 600, 1000 or 1150 that it would eventually become the most widely spoken language in Britain (still less the world). Old English coexisted with Brythonic Celtic, Norse, Latin, and later French. It wasn't just Britain as a whole that was multilingual; individuals of all social classes very often spoke more than one language, and the development of English from 600 onwards reflects this coexistence of languages.

Suggested exercises

E.1 Letters vs. sounds

What are the Present Day English equivalents of the following Old English words? Don't use a dictionary – simply guess. The Old English words below all happen to be very similar to their Present Day English equivalents, so don't expect any treacheries here: if *ofer* looks like the Present Day English *over* to you, assume that this is indeed what it is.

Comment on the spelling and the pronunciation differences.

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[49]Available at https://www.gersum.org.

1. æsc
2. bedd
3. cynn
4. dæg
5. fisc
6. hyll
7. mann

8. miht
9. ofer
10. scip
11. ðorn
12. þorn
13. þynn

This exercise is adopted and adapted from Hogg & Alcorn (2012).

E.2 Pronouncing Old English

How about trying to transcribe the first line of *Beowulf* in the International Phonetic Alphabet?

Hwæt wē gārdena in ġēardagum

6.6.1 Using the Bosworth-Toller Dictionary

The Bosworth-Toller Dictionary by Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller is available online for you to use.[a] It's a fantastic source to use when you need to look up an Old English word. However, it may take a while to orientate oneself when first using it. This should become a bit easier by following these tasks:

1. Look these words up: *cearu*, *lic* (the very first entry), *loða*, *scitan* (the second entry), *werewulf*, and *wifmann*.

2. What information does the dictionary provide you with when it comes to these words? Is it useful?

3. Now try something like *durste*. The search will give you useful information, but you'll have to do a bit more hunting in this case to get to know what *durste* means exactly. Can you figure out how?

Hint: the rather mysterious abbreviations such as *an* and *es* provide you with the ending representing the genitive singular. The *f.*, *m.*, and *n.* abbreviations give you information on the morphological gender of the noun in question.

Tip for teachers: Go through the less obvious parts of the dictionary with the students, such as the links to the paragraphs of the Wrights' *Old English Grammar* with the *lic* entry.

[a]Available at https://bosworthtoller.com/. Digitalized by Sean Crist and Ondřej Tichý, maintained by Ondřej Tichý.

E.3 Fricative allophony

Old English did not have voiced and voiceless fricatives as contrasting PHONEMES. [f] and [v], [s] and [z], and [θ] and [ð] did exist, but as conditioned ALLOPHONES. Sort the following words into two categories, deciding whether the letter in bold represents a voiceless or a voiced fricative in the pronunciation.

s**æ**	'sea'	bro**ð**or	'brother'
wi**f**	'wife, woman'	hræ**f**n	'raven'
flota	'ship'	cea**s**ter	'city'
weor**þ**e	'worthy'	o**f**er	'over'
ri**s**an	'to rise'	æ**þ**ele	'noble'
ly**f**t	'air'	yrh**ð**o	'slackness'
of**f**rian	'to offer'	bo**s**om	'bosom'
oð**ð**e	'or'	wæ**s**	'was'
þegn	'thane'	e**f**ne	'even'

no**s**u	'nose'		bli**þ**e	'joyous, blithe'
heo**f**on	'heaven'		hæ**s**len	'of hazel' (adj)
be-**s**ecgan	'to announce'			

Note: voiced sounds include vowels, liquids, nasals, and all voiced stops.

Note: all the spellings with two graphemes e.g. <ff> count as two separate "sounds"/sound events/segments.

Note: the allophonic voicing rule didn't operate across morphemes, i.e. it was blind to the vowels and consonants that were not part of the morpheme in which we find the relevant fricative.

Acknowledgement: this exercise is adapted from Johanna Wood's 2016 teaching materials.

E.4 Identifying nominal features

For each of the following phrases, identify the case, number, gender, and class of the noun. If there is more than one possibility for case or gender, list all the possibilities. Try not to use a dictionary.

1. *þone bāt* (noun: 'boat')

2. *þā dōru* (noun: 'door')

3. *sēo faru* (noun: 'journey')

4. *þæs flēogan* (noun: 'fly')

5. *þāra ēagena* (noun: 'eye')

6. *þone docgan* (noun: 'dog')

7. *þā huniġcambe* (noun: 'honeycomb')

8. *þ**ǣ**m dorum* (noun: 'bee')

E.5 Murder mystery

In this exercise, you'll be learning about Old English morphology using the following nouns as our practice material:

PDE	OE nominative	OE genitive	OE accusative
'chief'	fruma	fruman	fruman
'friend'	freond	freondes	freond
'lady (of the house)'	hlæfdige	hlæfdigan	hlæfdigan

Now here's the murder mystery (more or less in Present Day English). The main protagonists are presented to you in Old English and you can't rely on the word order to know who did what to whom. You have to rely on the morphology. Below are three questions you need to answer.

> Once a *fruma* was a guest in a *freondes* hall. His *freond* went out to hunt. The *fruma* the *hlæfdigan* regarded (looked at). The *fruman* the *hlæfdige* regarded. Followed the *hlæfdigan* the *fruma*. The *hlæfdige* the *fruman* feared. Desired the *hlæfdigan* the *fruma*. The *fruman* fled the *hlæfdige*. Embraced the *hlæfdigan* the *fruma*. The *fruman* the *hlæfdige* insulted. Twisted the *hlæfdigan* arm the *fruma*. Kicked the *fruman* the *hlæfdige* where it hurts real bad. Hit the *fruma* the *hlæfdigan*. The *fruman* the *hlæfdige* slew.

Answer these questions:

1. Who is lying dead on the floor?

2. Who did it?

3. Why?

Acknowledgement: we inherited this exercise from Johanna Wood and Ocke-Schwen Bohn; however, we have not been able to trace the author of this wonderful activity.

E.6 Irregular plurals

A.

There are various strategies to form the plural in Present Day English. The regular strategy is to add the *-(e)s* morpheme to the singular form, as in *bumblebee > bumblebees*. Was this the case in Old English?

B.

The singular/plural pairs below use a different strategy and have to be learnt as exceptions to the regular plural rule in Present Day English. Using the Magic Sheet, say which Old English morphological classes the following Present Day English irregular plurals derive from:

1. *sheep ~ sheep*

2. *man ~ men*

3. *deer ~ deer*

4. *fish ~ fish*

5. *knife ~ knives*

6. *ox ~ oxen*

7. *wolf ~ wolves*

C.

Identify the origin of the irregularity for each of the following pairs.

1. *tooth ~ teeth*

2. *louse ~ lice*

3. *child ~ children*[a]

Note: the whole point is for you to be able to identify the historical source of these Present Day English irregularities. We don't expect you to remember what the different classes should/can be labelled exactly, but we do expect you to know where to look in the Magic Sheet.

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[a]*Children* are difficult. You probably won't be able to explain the entire plural form, but give it a go.

E.7 Contrasting Present Day English with Old English

Below are extracts from *The Wanderer*. You are provided with the corresponding Present Day English translations. Your task is to explain how the expressions in bold differ from their Present Day English equivalents in terms of their syntax and verbal morphology.

Using the digital version of the Bosworth-Toller Dictionary will be helpful if you work with Old English.[a]

The Wanderer:[b]

Old English	Present Day English
Oft ***him (1) anhaga (2) are gebideð (3)***,	Often ***the solitary one (2) finds grace (3)*** for ***himself (1)***,
metudes miltse (4),	***the mercy of the Lord (4)***,
þeah þe he modcearig geond lagulade	Although he, sorry-hearted, through sea ways
longe ***sceolde hreran (5) mid hondum (6)***	long ***should row (5) with hands (6)***
hrimcealde ***sæ (7)***,	the ice-cold ***sea (7)***,
wadan wræclastas.	tread the paths of exile.
Wyrd bið ful aræd!	Fate is fully determined!
Swa cwæð eardstapa (8),	***The wanderer spoke so (8)***,
Earfeþa gemyndig (9),	***mindful of hardships (9)***,
wraþra wælsleahta,	of fierce slaughters,
winemæga hryre	and the downfall of kinsmen.

*a*https://bosworthtoller.com/.

*b*Adapted from Miller (http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet/?do=get&type=text&id=
Wdr).

E.8 Verb phrases

Translate the following clauses into Present Day English. Use a dictionary
where you need to. For each of them, say whether the verb phrase in
Old English is head-initial or head-final. Remember: the non-finite verb
is crucial!

1. Ac hē sċeal þā sacfullan ġesibbian

2. þæt hē ne mæġe nān gōd dōn

3. se wolde ofslēan þone cyning Dauid

4. ġif hēo þæt bysmor forbēran wolde

5. ðæt hē wolde ġenealæcan his hulce

E.9 Emphasizing negation

When you read about Jespersen's Cycle in this chapter, you learnt about
not having evolved out of what used to be added on top of the negative *ne*
for emphatic reasons, as in the Present Day English *The bumblebee did**n't**
give a **hoot** about all the blossoms*. There are plenty of words of the *hoot*
type that we use today to emphasize negation. One more example would
be *The bumblebee did**n't** give a **fig** about all the blossoms*.

Using your own knowledge of English, asking other speakers, and/or searching online, how many other such *hoot* type words can you come up with? Aim for as many as possible. Do these have the same meaning, would you say?

E.10 Change across Old English

Look at the two excerpts from the *Peterborough Chronicle* in §6 below. The first presents an older stage of Old English, the latter presents a newer stage of Old English (in fact, very early Middle English according to where we've drawn the line). Which linguistic differences suggest that the former is older and the latter is younger?

E.11 Translating *Beowulf*

A. Comment on the following remark Heaney has made on his translation of *Beowulf* regarding his use of Irishisms (Heaney 2000: xxxiv):

> [...] I have in several instances used the word 'bawn' to refer to Hrothgar's hall. In Elizabethan English, bawn (from the *bó-dhún*, a fort for cattle) referred specifically to the fortified dwellings which the English planters built in Ireland to keep the dispossessed natives at bay [...]. Putting a bawn into *Beowulf* seems one way for an Irish poet to come to terms with that complex history of conquest and colony, absorption and resistance, integrity and antagonism, a history which has to be clearly acknowledged [...].

What are the pros and cons of this approach to translating *Beowulf*?

B. Old English poetry employed certain linguistic structures in ways in which these are no longer used in present-day English. One of these differences is the very frequent use of COMPOUNDING in Old English poetry. On this, Heaney (2000: xxxiii) says the following:

> Old English abounds in vigorous and evocative and specifically poetic words for these things [i.e. a sword or a spear or a battle or any bloody encounter with foes], but I have tended to follow modern usage and in the main have called a sword a sword.

Would you support Heaney's decision to "call a sword a sword", so to speak, in a Present Day English rendition of the poem? Why (not)?

C. Here we present you with two passages from the poem: one in Old English (OE), one being a philological translation serving as a maximally detailed type of glossary (PT), and the translation by Seamus Heaney (SH).

Encounter with Grendel's mother:

OE: Ongeat þa se goda grund-wyrgenne
OE: mere-wif mihtig; mægen-ræs forgeaf
OE: hilde-bille, hond sweng ne ofteah,
OE: þæt hire on hafelan hring-mæl agol
OE: grædig guð-leoð.
(Heaney 2000: 104)

PT: Perceived [he] then the good ground-throttler
PT: mare-wife [= woman] mighty; might-rush [he] gave
PT: slope-edged, hand blow not spared [i.e. he didn't spare],
PT: it [i.e. the sword] her on head ring-ornamented sang
PT: greedy battle-poem/song.

SH: The hero observed that swamp thing from hell,
SH: the tarn-hag in all her terrible strength,
SH: then heaved his war-sword and swung his arm:
SH: the decorated blade came down ringing
SH: and singing on her head.
(Heaney 2000: 105)

Having killed the dragon:

> OE: Nalles æfter lyfte lacende hwearf
> OE: middel-nihtum, maðm-æhta wlonc
> OE: ansyn ywde; ac he eorðan gefeoll
> OE: for ðæs hild-fruman hond-geweorce.
> (Heaney 2000: 190)

> PT: Not-at-all after in the air playing [he] turned
> PT: [at] midnight, of costly-possesions proud
> PT: face showed; and he to earth fell
> PT: for [= by] that war-ruler hand-work

> SH: Never again would he glitter and glide
> SH: and show himself off in midnight air,
> SH: exulting in his riches: he fell to earth
> SH: through the battle-strength in Beowulf's arm.
> (Heaney 2000: 191)

And here are your tasks:

- How much does Seamus Heaney diverge from the original?

- When he diverges, what consequences does this have for the reader of the literary work?

- Why not try a translation of your own?

D. Look at the two passages above. Compare the Old English version with the Present Day English version from a purely linguistic point of view. How has the language changed since the times of *Beowulf*? Why is Old English challenging for a Present Day English speaker?

E. If you have access to the following review of Heaney's *Beowulf*,

> Čermák, Jan. 2012. Heaney's Beowulf: gleaning the unsaid off the palpable. In Jana K. Schulman & Paul E. Szarmach (eds.), *Beowulf at Kalamazoo: essays on translation and performance*, 301–304. Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications.

Focus on the following:

- What differences between the two versions of the poem does Čermák list?

- Are these important differences? Why (not)?

Tips for teachers: give the students a word limit and a deadline to submit a summary if a written type of exercise is seen as helpful.

E.12 Ezra Pound's translation of *Seafarer*

Below are the first seven lines of the *Seafarer*. We provide you with the Old English transliteration ("OE"),[a] a philological translation serving as a maximally detailed type of glossary (PT), and a translation by Ezra Pound (EP).[b]

OE: maeg ic be me sylfum
OE: soðgied wrecan
OE: siþas secgan
OE: hu ic geswincdagum
OE: earfoðhwile
OE: oft þrowade
OE: bitre breostceare

PT: may I by me [= my] self
PT: a true tale work [= make]
PT: travels say
PT: how I at days of labour
PT: a time of hardship
PT: oft suffered
PT: bitter breastcare [= sorrow, anxiety]

EP: May I for my own self
EP: song's truth reckon

EP: Journey's jargon,
EP: how I in harsh days
EP: hardship
EP: endured oft
EP: Bitter breast-cares have I abided

And here are your tasks:

- How much does Ezra Pound diverge from the original?

- When he diverges, what consequences does this have for the reader of the literary work?

- Why not try a translation of your own?

[a]Page 306 here: https://archive.org/details/codexexoniensisc00sociuoft/page/306.
[b]https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44917/the-seafarer.

E.13 Food for thought

Engage with the following statements. Argue for and/or against:

- Contrasting Old English and Present Day English spelling reveals some important sound changes that have happened in the history of English.

- Old English morphology was so different from Present Day English morphology that one could argue Old English and Present Day English are two different languages.

- Old English had a free word order.

- We cannot approach Old English from a sociolinguistic point of view.

- The Middle English words <veal>, <vertú>, and <Zephirus> are very likely to be inherited from Old English.

Tip for teachers: Assign one of these questions as a written exercise, giving the students a word count limit and a deadline.

E.14 Improve these statements

Could you improve the following claims in any way?

- "Nouns in Old English were gendered."

- "The Present Day English *hardly* gained the derivational suffix *-ly*, which now shows its grammatical case as an adverb."

- "English was influenced by Germanic."

- "The tense of *cuman* is the plural form of *cuma*."

- "Throughout its history, English has lost a lot of casing."

- "The Old English prefix *ge-* was inherited from earlier forms of German and Dutch."

- "V2 refers to the free word order we find in Old English, where the verb occurs at the end of a sentence."

- "The Old English case can also determine the mood of the verb."

- "The Old English verb *biddeþ* has the thorn as a suffix."

Text samples

Below we have prepared a choice selection of Old English texts for you. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* presents a late Old English text, as does the poem

Judith. *Wulf and Eadwacer* is a female-voiced poem, and the *Voyage of Ohthere* sheds light on relations between Scandinavians and Old English speakers. The two excerpts from the *Chronicle* provide a window onto narrative history-telling of the period, centuries apart. As usual, the texts are in reverse chronological order, but you might like to start with the excerpt of the Life of St Basil in §3, for which we've provided full glossing and translation.

In the next chapter you'll find a couple more early Old English texts, including *The Law of Æþelberht*.

T.1 Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*

Wulfstan was an important ecclesiastical figure of the British world of the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th centuries. His *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* translates into 'Wolf's Sermon to the English' and is an early 11th-century homily, in which Wulfstan blames the Scandinavian incursions on the moral decline of the English. Below we give you an excerpt of this best-known of Wulfstan's works.[a]

> Ne ǣniġ wið ōþerne ġetrȳplīċe · swā rihte swā hē scolde · ac mǣst ǣlċ swicode · ⁊ōþrum derede · wordes ⁊dǣde· ⁊hūru unrihtlīċe mǣst ǣlċ ōþerne æftan hēaþeþ. mid sceandlican onscytan · dōmāre ġif hē mæġe · forþām hēr syn onlande unġetrȳpþa miċle · forȝode ⁊for worolde·⁊ eac hērsyn on earde on mistliċe wīsan · hlāford swican maneġe; ⁊ealra mǣst hlāfordswice sebið onworolde· þæt man his hlā-fordes sāule bespīċe; ⁊ful miċel hlāford swice ēac bið onworolde · þæt man his hlāford· of līfe for rǣde; Oððonoflande lifiendne drīfe; ⁊æġþer is ġeworden · on þysan earde;Ēad weard man for rǣdde · ⁊syððan ācwealde· ⁊æfter þām forbærnde;

T.2 *Judith*

Judith is a late 10th – early 11th-century Old English poem, which depicts a female character as one of the main protagonists and certainly as a heroine figure. Below we provide you with the excerpt describing how Judith beheaded the Assyrian general Holofernes in his drunken sleep.[a]

hī ðā se hēhsta dēma
ǣdre mid elne onbryrde sƿā hē dēð ānra ȝehƿylċne
hērbūendra þe hyne him tō helpe sēċeð
mid rǣde ond mid rihte ȝelēafan Þā ƿearð hyre rūme on mōde
hāliȝre hyht ȝenīƿod ȝenam ðā þone hǣðenan mannan
fæste be feaxe sīnum tēah hyne folmum ƿið hyre ƿeard
bysmerlīċe ⁊ þone bealofullan
listum ālēde lāðne mannan
sƿā hēo ðæs unlǣdan ēaðost mihte
ƿel ȝeƿealdan slōh ðā ƿundenlocc
þone fēondsceaðan fāȝum mēċe
heteþoncolne þæt hēo healfne forċearf
þone sƿēoran him þæt hē on sƿīman læȝ
druncen · ⁊ dolhƿund næs ðā dēad þā ȝȳt
ealles orsāƿle slōh ðā eornoste
ides ellenrōf ōðre sīðe
þone hǣðenan hund þæt him þæt hēafod ƿand
forð on ðā flōre læȝ se fūla lēap
ȝēsne beæftan ȝǣst ellor hƿearf
under neoƿelne næs ⁊ ðǣr ȝenyðerad ƿæs
sūsle ȝesǣled syððan ǣfre
ƿyrmum beƿunden ƿītum ȝebunden
hearde ȝehæfted in helle bryne
æfter hinsīðe ne ðearf hē hopian nō
þȳstrum forðylmed þæt hē ðonan mōte
of ðām ƿyrmsele ac ðǣr ƿunian sceal
āƿa tō aldre būtan ende forð
in ðām[b] heolstran hām hyhtƿynna lēas·

T.3 *Lives of Saints*

Ælfriċ's *Lives of Saints* were written in the 990s. They're usually classed
as prose texts, but are regularly rhythmical and alliterative, showing that
the boundary between poetry and prose is not a hard-and-fast one. For
texts at the height of piety, some scurrilous and shocking activities are
described! We've added glossing and translation to this extract from the
Life of St Basil to make your entry into Old English text-reading a bit
easier at least here.[a]

Sum ārþurþe   þeġn hæfde āne   dohter   · þā   hē þolde
an   honourable thane had   a-ACC daughter when he wanted
ġebringan · binnan sumum mynstre   · ⁊   criste   be-tæcan ·
bring-INF   within a   monastery and Christ-DAT show-INF
to his clænan þēoþdome · þā   þearð an his cnapena   · to
to his pure   servitude   then became one his boy-GEN.PL tō
cūð   þām   mædene   · ⁊   þurh   dēofles   tihtinge   ·
known the.DAT maiden-DAT and through devil-GEN persuasion
hī   dīgolliċe lufode · ac hē ne   dorste āmeldian   his
her.ACC secretly   loved   but he NEG dared make.known-INF his
unġemetegodan lufe · Ēode þā   to anum drymen
unmoderated   love   went then to a-DAT sorcerer-man.DAT
þe   deofles   cræft cūðe · ⁊   behēt   him sceattes   ·
PARTICLE dēvil-GEN power knew   and promised him treasure-GEN
ġif hē mid his scȳn-cræfte   him þæt mæden mihte
if   he with his illusion-power-DAT him the maiden might

ġe-macian to þīfe · Þa   ge-brohte se   dry-man   ·
make-INF to wife   Then brought   the.NOM sorcerer-man.NOM

þone   cnapan · tō his dēofle   · ⁊   se   dēofol   befrān ·
the.ACC boy-ACC   to his devil-DAT   and the.NOM devil.NOM asked

þone   dƿeligendan cnapan · ġif hē ƿolde   on hine gelȳfan   ·
the.ACC straying   boy-ACC if he wanted in him believe-INF

⁊   his hælende ƿiðsacen · ƿið   þā   þe   hē
and his saviour deny-INF against DEM.ACC PARTICLE he

ġefremode his fūlan gālnysse ·
achieved   his foul lustiness

'An honourable man had a daughter. When he wanted to bring her
to a monastery and commit her to the pure service of Christ, one of
his boys became too close to the girl, and through the devil's
persuasion he secretly loved her, but he did not dare to make
known his excessive love. He then went to a sorcerer who knew
the power of the devil, and promised him treasures if he could use
his magic to make the girl his wife. Then the sorcerer brought the
boy to his devil, and the devil asked the erring boy if he would
believe in him and deny his Saviour [i.e. Christ] in exchange for
satisfying his foul lust.'

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[a]From Skeat's edition at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ælfric%27s_Lives_of_Saints;
accessed May 2020; glossing, overdotting and length marking added.

T.4 *Wulf and Eadwacer*

Below is one of the famous Old English elegies, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, in its
entirety. This is a very interesting piece for a range of reasons, one being
that the narrator is a woman.[a]

leodum is minum sƿylce him mon lac ȝife
ƿillað hy hine aþecȝan ȝif he on þreat cymeð
unȝelic is us ·

ꝥulf is on ieȝe ic on oþerre
fæst is þæt eȝlond fenne biꝥorpen
sindon ꝥæl reoꝥe ꝥeras þær on iȝe
ꝥillað hy hine aþecȝan ȝif he on þreat cymeð
unȝelice is us
ꝥulfes ic mines ꝥid lastum ꝥenum doȝode
þonne hit ꝥæs renig ꝥeder ⁊ ic reo tuȝu sæt ·
þonne mec se beadu cafa boȝum bileȝde
ꝥæs me ꝥyn to þon ꝥæs me hꝥæþre eac lað .
ꝥulf min ꝥulf ꝥena me þine
seoce ȝedydon þine seld cymas
murnende mod nales mete liste
ȝehyrest þu ead ꝥacer uncerne earne hꝥelp
bireð ꝥulf to ꝥuda
þæt mon eaþe tosliteð þætte næfre ȝesomnad ꝥæs
uncer ȝiedd ȝeador. :⁊

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[a]From the Exeter Book, Exeter Dean and Chapter 3501 manuscript at https://notendur. hi.is/peturk/KENNSLA/OE/TEXTS/wulf.htm; ff. 100v–101r; accessed May 2020; original punctuation preserved, abbreviations silently expanded. We follow the line numbering typically encountered in modern editions of the work.

T.5 The Voyage of Ohthere

Ohthere's story is preserved in a text usually called the Old English *Orosius*, but which Godden (2016) refers to as the *Old English History of the World*. The majority of this text is a translation from Latin of Orosius's *Historiae adversus paganos* ('history against the pagans', written circa 400), but Ohthere's story itself is not found in this Latin original: instead it's set nearly 500 years later, in King Alfred's court. It's a good illustration of how relations between speakers of Norse and English weren't always hostile.[a]

Ōhthere sǣde his hlāforde Ælfrēde cyninge þæt hē ealra norð monna norþ mēst būde · Hē cƿæð þæt hē būde on þǣm lande norþƿeardum ƿiþ þā Ƿestsǣ · Hē sǣde þēah þæt land sīe sƿīþe lang norþ þonan · ac hit is eal ƿēste buton on fēaƿum stōƿum styċċe mǣlum ƿīciað Finnas on huntoðe on ƿintra and on sumera on fiscaþe be þǣre sǣ He sǣde þæt hē æt sumum ċirre ƿolde fandian hū longe þæt land norþryhte lǣġe oþþe hƿæðer æniġ mon be norðan þǣm ƿēstenne būde Þā fōr hē norþ ryhte be þǣm lande Lēt him ealne ƿeġ þæt ƿēste land on ðæt stēorbord ꝥ þā ƿīd sǣ on ðæt bæcbord þrīe dagas Þā wæs hē sƿā feor norþ sƿā þā hƿælhuntan firrest faraþ · Þā fōr hē þāġiet norþ ryhte sƿā feor sƿā hē meahte on þǣm oþrum þrīm dagum ġesiġlan "Ohthere said to his lord, King Alfred, that he lived the furthest north of all northmen. He said that he lived in the land north of the West Sea [=North Sea]. He said that although the land extended far to the north from there, it was all wasteland apart from a few places here and there where Finns camp, hunting in the winter and fishing in the sea in the summer. He said that at one point he wanted to find out how long the land extended to the north, or if anyone lived north of the wastes. Then he went northwards by the land. He kept the wasteland on his right and the wide sea on his left for three days. Then he was as far north as the furthest the whale-hunters go. Then he travelled even further northwards, as far as he could within three days' sailing."

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[a]From the manuscript at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_47967, ff. 8r–8v; accessed May 2020; capitalization, overdotting and length marking added, abbreviations silently expanded.

T.6 *The Chronicle*

The Old English Chronicle is probably the most famous non-fiction text of the Old English period. Supposedly a historical record, it is very selective in the events it chooses to include and leave out: for long periods it is

obsessed with the movements of the Scandinavian raiders and settlers. Here are two records of two different years, from the Laud manuscript or *Peterborough Chronicle.*[a]

> *865:* Hēr sæt se hǣðene here on Tenet ⁊ ġenam frið ƿið Cantƿarum · ⁊ Cantware heom feoh behēton ƿið ðām friðe · ⁊ on þām feoh behāte se here hine on niht up bestæl ⁊ oferherġode ealle Cent ēastewarde ·

> "This year the heathen [=Scandinavian] army remained in Thanet and made peace with the Kentish people. And the Kentish people promised them a fee for the peace. And under cover of this promise the army sneaked up at night and overran all of Kent to the east."

> *1132:* Ðis ġear com Henri king to þis land · þā com Henri abbot ⁊ uureide þe muneces of Burch tō þe king forþī ðæt hē uuolde ðæt mynster to Clunie · sua ðæt te king ƿas ƿel neh bepaht · ⁊ sende eft þe muneces ·

> "This year King Henry[b] came to this land. Then Abbot Henry came and betrayed the monks of Peterborough to the king because he wanted that cathedral to belong to Cluny[c], so that the king was well nigh [=almost] tricked, and sent after the monks."

[a]From the manuscript at https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_7423, f. 30r and f. 88v; accessed May 2020; capitalization, overdotting and length marking added, abbreviations silently expanded.
[b]Henry I of England, fourth son of William the Conqueror.
[c]An important abbey in what is now central France.

Recommended further reading

There are many good textbooks on Old English that go into more depth on most of the aspects we've covered: our favourites are Hogg & Alcorn (2012), Smith (2009a), and Baker (2012).

Contact between Old English and other languages is not something that is in general well covered in textbooks, so other sources are needed.

For contact with Celtic, Tristram (2004), Woolf (2007), Lutz (2009), and Hickey (2012) present different perspectives. For Norse, Townend (2002) is a book-length study, and briefer overviews can be found in Townend (2006) (which also covers Latin and French), Lutz (2012), and Dance (2012).

For Old English phonology, we can recommend *Old English Phonology* by Lass & Anderson (1975) to start with. Wright & Wright (1908) contains a lot of useful information, especially from a more general perspective of historical phonology of Germanic languages, and other languages spoken in Europe; however, be prepared for a tougher read in most places. Finally, for a more advanced but fairly accessible read on specific Old English phonological phenomena, we recommend Minkova (2014: Chapters 4 and 6). Old English morphology is dealt with in detail in any textbook, but if that doesn't satisfy you, Hogg & Fulk (2011) is the place to go.

There is a good overview treatment of Old English syntax in Fischer et al. (2000: Chapter 2), and that book also goes into detail on issues of clause structure and how they change. Los (2015) and Fischer et al. (2017) also contain student-friendly discussion of syntactic change in early English. The Old English lexicon is discussed in Smith (2009a: 59–73), and in more detail in Kastovsky (1992). Kastovsky (2006) provides an overview of word-formation patterns from Old English through to the present day.

If interested in Old English dialectology, we recommend Hogg & Alcorn (2012: Chapter 9) for a basic introduction and Hogg (1988) for something a little bit more advanced.

Finally, we also recommend the Old English Aerobics webpage, with all sorts of Old English goodies, created by Peter S. Baker.[a]

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[a]Available here: http://www.oldenglishaerobics.net/.

7 The prehistory of English

7.1 History and context

7.1.1 Linguistic detective work

As we near the end of our journey through the history of English, we start to face some unique challenges. The most important challenge facing us when we study English pre-600 is that we have almost no written texts from this period. This is not an accident: as we've seen, the real explosion of texts written in Old English dates from the reign of King Alfred. Even more significantly, literacy in the Old English period was always strongly associated with the Christian church. The speakers of Old English weren't always Christians, however: their wholesale conversion to Christianity mostly happened during the 7th century, thanks to a group of missionaries sent from Rome by Pope Gregory the Great in 596–597 CE. Before the Christianization of what is now England, there was no tradition of writing in English beyond a limited number of inscriptions. This is why we term this period "the prehistory of English".

Christianity in Britain

Christianity in Britain is much older than Pope Gregory's mission. It was brought there in the context of the Roman Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries, and took root among the Celtic-speaking locals especially during the 4th and 5th. Later, there was some tension between the local Christian traditions and the new ones brought in by Gregory's missionaries: for instance, the different traditions didn't agree on the correct date for the festival of Easter.
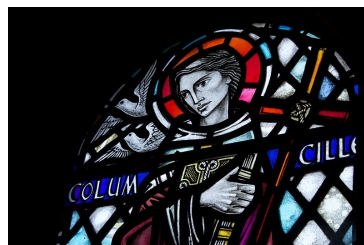
Figure 7.1: St Colm Cille (Columba), 6th-century Irish missionary in Britain, on a stained-glass window at Iona Abbey (Photo by Brian Gratwicke, licensed under CC-BY 2.0)

The problems of studying the prehistory of English go beyond this, however. It's a commonplace to all historical disciplines that the further you go back in time, the harder it gets (all else being equal). It's not just the language we're a little hazy on: the history of Britain and Europe during this period is also less well understood, and the written sources are highly unreliable. That's why we'll find ourselves relying more on different types of evidence in this chapter. On the historical side, we'll give less weight to people's written accounts of the period, and more weight to the evidence unearthed by archaeologists, which over the last thirty years has revolutionized our understanding of the period (see Fleming 2010, Gerrard 2013, Higham 2013, and Oosthuizen 2019). On the linguistic side, our main methodology is LINGUISTIC RECONSTRUCTION: working backwards from our attested records to infer the most likely properties of unattested linguistic stages and varieties.

Linguistic reconstruction has been described as "basically the darkest of the dark arts, the only means to conjure up the ghosts of vanished centuries" (Cola Minis 1952, cited in Campbell 2013: 107). The main technique we use for linguistic reconstruction is the COMPARATIVE METHOD, which involves comparing attested languages thought to be related in order to extrapolate back to their common ancestor. This is also the technique we use to establish which languages are related to each other, and how closely: see Campbell (2013) for a clear introduction. Regular sound change, as introduced in §2.2, plays a crucial role here, and the hypothetical ancestor language reconstructed by means of the Comparative Method is called a protolanguage. The consensus is that English is a member of the Germanic family, whose common ancestor is called Proto-Germanic. These languages in turn are part of a larger family, Indo-European, whose ancestor is Proto-Indo-European. The convention is to mark reconstructed forms with an asterisk: so, *dōn-* is the stem of a Proto-Germanic verb meaning 'to do', for example.

We'll look only at a tiny selection of Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European features in the following sections. If you're hungry for more, Ringe (2017) should be able to satisfy you.

7.1.2 The *aduentus Saxonum*

Pretty much everyone knows that English as spoken in the United States was (and is) a language of immigrants – though they're usually termed "settlers" or "colonists" (see Chapters 3 and 4). It's less well known that English wasn't always spoken in England either. The first speakers of Old English arrived in Britain

during the 5th and 6th centuries.[1] Before that time, the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland would almost all have been speakers of Celtic varieties (potentially with some British Latin thrown in as well; see Schrijver 2013 and Halsall 2013), as mentioned in Chapter 2. Between the first and the fifth centuries CE, most of Britain was part of the Roman Empire.

The arrival of speakers of Germanic languages in Britain is often referred to as the *aduentus Saxonum*. Sometimes this process is described as an "invasion", but the term isn't a very apt one. It implies a large, unified invading army, and a large amount of military conflict. The archaeological evidence shows that this wasn't what happened, however. Battles leave material traces – mass graves, for instance – and there is very little such evidence. More importantly, the consensus at present is that the arrival of Germanic speakers did not involve the death or displacement of the majority of the indigenous population. Instead, though the scale of migration of Germanic-speaking peoples was relatively small, they were probably able to assume a position of power both politically and culturally (Higham 2013: 103–105). This ELITE DOMINANCE view of the *aduentus Saxonum* is the most widely accepted narrative, but by no means the only one (see Fleming 2010 and Oosthuizen 2019). The relationship between the newcomers and the indigenous speakers of Brythonic Celtic has been described in terms of slavery (Pelteret 1995), but also apartheid (Woolf 2007), and its linguistic implications have been discussed briefly in §6.1.2 above. Emerging approaches to the past, such as palaeobotany, population genetics, and studies of ancient DNA, have the potential to shed light on this picture. Like other historical witnesses, though, this evidence yields results that can be interpreted in more than one way, and each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses.

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[1]The term "Anglo-Saxon" is often used to describe these speakers, but in this book we'll avoid it, except when referring to other sources. In the modern era it is a term that is more often associated with white supremacists, and has recently been problematized for that reason (Rambaran-Olm 2018, Wilton 2020). It's not a term that writers of Old English used to describe themselves: for this they preferred *englisc*, when they used a term at all. Grouping the Germanic speakers in Britain together as "Anglo-Saxons" also implies a static, overarching ethnopolitical unity for which there is no evidence in the historical record (Reynolds 1985), as we'll see in this section.

Evidence from written sources

There are few written sources describing the *aduentus Saxonum*, and none of the British sources are contemporary. The most famous sources are the writings of Bede and the Old English Chronicle, but as Christian monks associated with centres of political power the writers of these texts have a clear motive to exaggerate the prowess of the Germanic-speaking military leaders and to play up the dramatic discontinuity of the *aduentus*. Even more problematically, these texts are not really contemporary: they were written hundreds of years after the events that they describe, and are based on sources that are themselves problematic, such as Gildas's *Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, from the sixth century. Gildas, who wrote in Latin, regarded the incomers as a curse sent by God to punish the indigenous peoples for their deviant ways. Gildas's text is an extended argument (really more of a rant), judging the behaviour of all of Britain's inhabitants according to Roman social norms and trenchantly criticizing them for their – in his view illegitimate – military activities (Harland 2017). It is not a narrative history, and neither Gildas nor Bede can be taken at face value. As a thought experiment, you might like to imagine a future historian's view of the early 21st century if they had to rely solely on Donald Trump's Twitter feed, or on the manifesto of your least favourite political party.

The extent to which the *aduentus Saxonum* involved military engagement is still disputed. The standard story, dating back to Victorian historians and through them to written sources such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, is that the first Germanic speakers in Britain were mercenaries, invited over from the Continent to help out in turf wars between Celtic-speaking peoples and against raiders from the north and west of the Isles. According to Gildas, the thin end of the wedge involved three ships which arrived in Kent in 449 CE. These events were made possible by the weakening of Roman imperial power and the withdrawal of the legions, as well as the subsequent loss of trade connections with continental Europe, in the second half of the fourth century. In an archaeologically-informed revisiting of this narrative, Higham (2013: 104) comes to the conclusion that it is broadly plausible, but that there was no mass migration involved. Fleming (2010) takes a different view, arguing that the early Germanic-speaking settlers "seemed uninterested in and incapable of conquering anybody or anything. They

wanted land to farm, and they must have hoped for woods where their swine could forage" (2010: 40). According to Fleming, migration from Europe was more of a fluctuating stream over centuries than a targeted military strike in a single year, and involved women and children as well as (military and non-military) men. The overall story was one of settlement, acculturation and accommodation. Oosthuizen (2019) suggests that the end of Roman rule in the fifth century involved more continuity than change, with Romano-British administrative structures and rights of property remaining intact. Exactly how much continuity and how much change there was in the period leading up to 600 CE is likely to remain a topic of much debate over the coming years.

What evidence about the *aduentus* can we glean from the archaeological record? Here it is important to bear in mind that correlations between languages, material culture and genetic evidence are always fuzzy and full of exceptions: objects, languages, and genes may – and often do – diffuse independently of one another. Burial practices are one potential source of evidence. The fourth-century inhabitants of Britain buried their dead intact, but in the fifth century we start to see the rise of cremation, with the ashes of the deceased placed in a pottery urn. This rise has been linked with the arrival of Germanic-speaking newcomers (see Gerrard 2013: 195–207). We can also look at what people buried alongside their dead. Different styles of brooches are found in different areas, for instance. Cruciform (cross-shaped) brooches, square-headed brooches, and saucer brooches are found in the south and east of England in the fifth and sixth centuries (Fleming 2010: 45–54; Higham 2013: 78–87; Martin 2015). This archaeological evidence maps fairly well onto evidence from place names of Germanic rather than Brythonic Celtic or Latin origin. Broadly speaking, this evidence also lines up with findings from recent genetic studies of the present-day British population (e.g. Leslie et al. 2015). All these types of evidence show signatures of fifth- and sixth-century influence from the Continent in the south and particularly the east of England.[2]

Still, it's important to remember that these practices and features were stunningly diverse. Bede famously divided the immigrants into three tribes: Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Research has provided no support for any such clear division. Cemeteries differed substantially from place to place. The expression of gender identity and gendered norms could differ, for instance. Conventionally, men were associated with weaponry and women with jewelry during this period, but

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[2]We see the reverse influence too: coins and other items that were undoubtedly produced in Britain are found at sites in northern Germany dating from the fourth to sixth centuries (Grünewald 2019, Rau 2019), showing that the North Sea was by no means a one-way street at this time.

Figure 7.2: The Kingston Brooch, a 7th-century composite brooch found at Kingston Down in Kent (Photo by Rept0n1x, licensed under CC-BY 3.0)

in some cemeteries (e.g. West Heslerton in North Yorkshire), men are buried with jewelry, while in others (e.g. Buckland, Dover) women are buried with weapons. Some cemeteries included graves where the deceased was accompanied by tiny pots containing the ashes of pets such as dogs and horses. In others, tree branches were placed in the grave. Saucer-shaped brooches are found more in the south and west of what is now England, while cruciform brooches are more common in the north, but these areas overlapped substantially. There must have been an equal level of linguistic diversity, too, with individuals exploring new ways of constructing their identities in this new and promising environment, just as we see in the present day when different varieties of English and other languages come into contact (as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3 in particular). Unfortunately, the lack of texts means that we'll never know for sure.

All in all, the evidence does not point to any clear "tribal" or ethnic groupings for the period before 600: "distinctive ethnic identities had probably not yet coalesced" (Fleming 2010: 49). Modern archaeological and historical research recognizes that ethnicity is a situational construct: it's not objective or genetic, but rather is constructed by groups according to their needs in any given situation. These constructed identities, insofar as they existed during this period, must have been complex and multifaceted (Hills 2015, Martin 2015). One strand of recent research has made the case that the explanatory value of ethnicity for this period is limited to nonexistent (Harland 2017, 2019, Oosthuizen 2019).

7.1.3 The Germanic family

The peoples who were to become the speakers of Old English migrated from continental Europe. Both the texts and the archaeological evidence point us at what is now northern Germany and southern Denmark as their point of origin. As such it's probably not surprising that *Beowulf*, the most famous Old English literary text, is explicitly about the Danes.

We know a few things about the Germanic-speaking peoples of this area and others, but much is lost to the mists of time. Like the pre-Christianization Old English speakers, and like many societies of the world until very recently, the Continental Germanic-speaking peoples of Europe pre-600 didn't do much writing. The main contemporary text dealing with these peoples is by Tacitus, a Roman administrator and politician, and was written around 98 CE. It describes a range of "tribes", the *Germani*, who lived in a large area of central and northern Europe, between the northern borders of the Roman Empire and the North Sea and Baltic coasts. We must treat Tacitus's text with caution, as we know that he himself had never travelled to this area, and all of his information is second- or third-hand. When Tacitus praises the monogamy of the *Germani*, for instance, he's as likely to be making a political point (by contrasting them with what he saw as the immoral practices of his Roman compatriots) as he is to be faithfully reporting the real situation. It's also debatable whether all the groups Tacitus described as *Germani* were really speakers of Germanic languages.

As usual, the archaeological evidence is more tangible, even if it remains silent on many of the most intriguing social details. The peoples living in these areas were skilled wood- and metalworkers, and the organization of their settlements was more complex and sophisticated than the written records imply (Todd 2005), including fortified settlements. Excavations of the settlement at Feddersen Wierde, on the coast of north-western Germany, for instance, show that at its peak as many as fifty families – each with a separate longhouse – may have called it their home. Animal husbandry, especially of cattle, played a central economic role. When they fought, these peoples mostly fought on foot, as infantry. Tacitus and other sources mention a wide range of tribal names – Alamanni, Franks, Goths, Vandals, and more – but recent research has shown that it is a mistake to view them as fixed political, geographic or ethnic groupings with firm pedigrees. Rather, as far as we can tell, these groupings emerged opportunistically and organically, under individual leaders and in response to the circumstances of the times (see e.g. Drinkwater 2007 on the Alamanni). Some of the names mentioned by Tacitus, like *Germani* itself, were never used by the peoples themselves as far as we know, but rather were imposed on them by the Roman world.
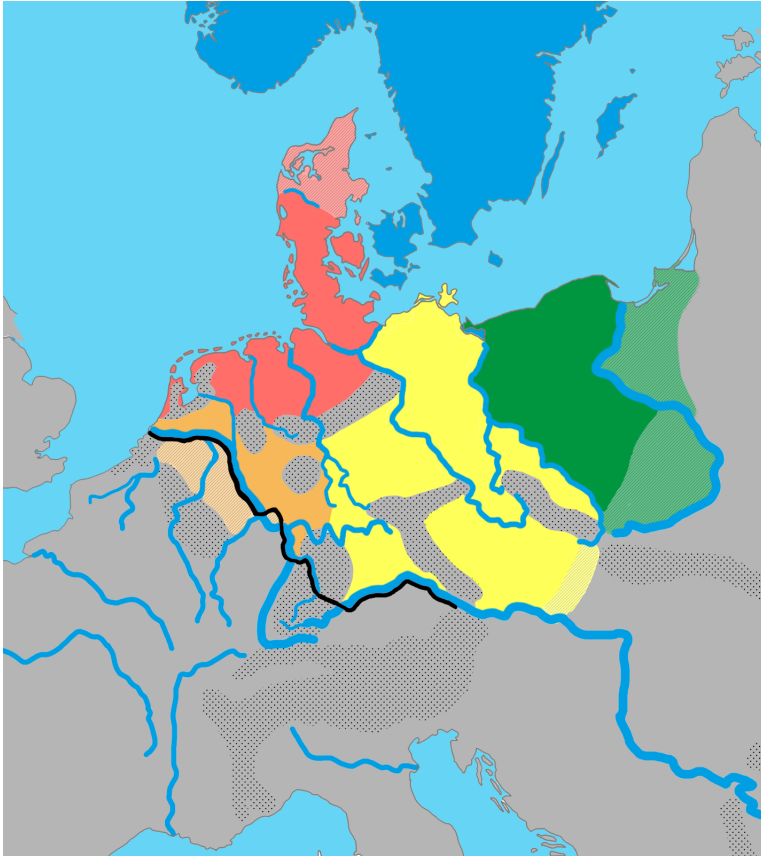
Figure 7.3: Germanic peoples around 1 CE, following Tacitus. The black line is the contemporary Roman border. Different colours represent approximate locations of different groups of Germanic speakers. (Map by AKAKIOS, licensed under CC-BY-SA 2.5)

We can divide the Germanic languages – both present and past – into three groups: East Germanic, North Germanic, and West Germanic. The East Germanic languages are now extinct, and the only language of this group that we know much about is Gothic, which is preserved mainly in a 4th-century translation of parts of the Bible. This translation consists mostly of books of the New Testament, and was supervised by a Gothic bishop with the adorable name of Wulfila ('little wolf'): see the text samples at the end of this chapter. The Goths were major players in the politics of Europe in the first millennium, especially during the twilight of the Roman Empire (see Heather 1996). Because of the age of its attestation, Gothic is the closest of the well-attested early Germanic languages to

Proto-Germanic. Still, Gothic displays several linguistic features that set it apart from all other Germanic languages, and the other two branches – North and West Germanic – are probably more closely related (Kuhn 1955).
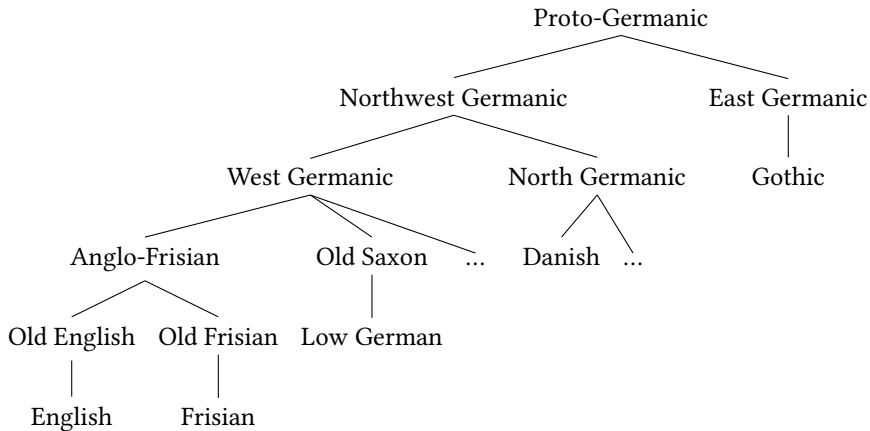
Figure 7.4: Partial Germanic family tree

The North Germanic languages survive robustly to this day, mostly in Scandinavia: varieties of Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish all belong to this group, as did the Norse spoken by the Scandinavians who settled in Britain during the 9th to 11th centuries (see §6.1.1). The West Germanic branch includes Afrikaans, Dutch, Frisian, German, Yiddish, and English. The internal structure of the West Germanic branch is still debated (see Stiles 2013 for a recent overview), though is not too important for our purposes. Within West Germanic, English's closest relative is Frisian, a collection of related varieties currently spoken along the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, and endangered to some extent.

English as a cuckoo in the nest

The majority view is that English is a West Germanic language, but not everyone shares this view. Recently it has been proposed that modern English is a North Germanic language: see Bech & Walkden (2016) for a sceptical evaluation. Another view is that, due to its extensive history of

language contact, English is now a language without any relatives whatsoever, a creole – which arose through contact with either Norman French (Bailey & Maroldt 1977) or Norse (Poussa 1982). Görlach (1986) presents arguments against both claims. No one disputes that Old English was a West Germanic language, however.

There are no texts longer than a few sentences from either North or West Germanic from pre-600: all we have are brief inscriptions (see §7.2). The closest language to Old English that is attested in the first millennium CE is Old Saxon, a West Germanic language probably spoken between the rivers Elbe and Weser. We have Old Saxon texts from the 9th century onwards, and there's a text sample at the end of this chapter. Modern-day dialects of northern Germany are the living descendants of Old Saxon. Robinson (1992) provides more information on the other early Germanic languages, Old English's closest relatives.

7.1.4 Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans

The Germanic languages descend from Proto-Germanic, which in turn is part of a larger family, Indo-European. The establishment of this family was one of the major achievements of nineteenth-century comparative linguistics (see Clackson 2007 for an accessible overview), and a family tree can be found in Figure 7.5.
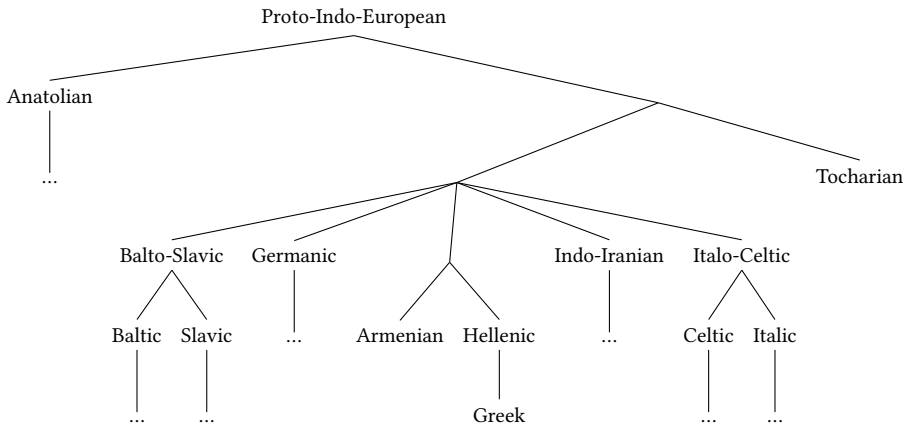
Figure 7.5: Partial Indo-European family tree (loosely based on Ringe et al. 2002: 90, their Figure 8)

Almost all the languages of Europe are demonstrably part of this family. (Basque, Estonian, Finnish, and Hungarian are notable exceptions.) This includes all the

languages that had a major influence on English before the colonial period: Latin (part of the Italic branch), French (ultimately descended from Latin), the Celtic languages (which form their own branch), Greek, and of course Norse, as we saw in Chapters 4–6. The family also has several members which are further afield, and perhaps more surprising: Armenian, for instance, and the Indo-Iranian languages spoken in central and southern Asia, including the ancient language Sanskrit.

All Indo-European languages ultimately descend from a single ancestor, Proto-Indo-European. The speakers of Proto-Indo-European are even more of a mystery than the speakers of Proto-Germanic. No texts go back that far, so we are entirely dependent on reconstruction and on the archaeological record to tell us about the people who spoke the language (though evidence from ancient genetic material is starting to play a role as well – see Haak et al. 2015). The usual story (starting with Gimbutas 1970) is that Proto-Indo-European was spoken between 4,000 and roughly 2,000 BCE, and originated in the Pontic-Caspian steppes, in present-day Ukraine and southern Russia: this is labelled the "Kurgan hypothesis" or "steppe hypothesis". Synthesizing the linguistic and archaeological evidence, Anthony (2007) makes the case that the domestication of the horse and the invention of the wheel, along with new modes of social and political organization, contributed to the spread of the Indo-Europeans and their language across Europe and beyond.[3] As these newcomers and their culture fanned out across Europe, the language diversified into varieties that were mutually unintelligible, through exactly the processes of linguistic change that we've been exploring throughout this book (see e.g. Chapter 2 on homogeneity and heterogeneity).

Before Proto-Indo-European?

Proto-Indo-European cannot have been spoken before the 7th millennium BCE at the very earliest. However, research on the evolution of the human capacity for language (see Fitch 2010) has demonstrated that this capacity has been around in its modern form since the 50th millennium BCE at the very latest. This book therefore only covers at most 10% of the history of English and its predecessors, and if we disregard the present chapter it's

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[3]For a recent overview that also takes ancient DNA evidence into account, see Anthony (2019).

more like 1–2%. Can we go any further back? The short answer is "not really". Some linguists have proposed more distant relationships between Indo-European and other language families such as Afro-Asiatic (including Arabic and Hebrew), Uralic (including Finnish and Hungarian), and Kartvelian (including languages of the Caucasus such as Georgian). However, the consensus in linguistics is that the time depth is too great, and the evidence too weak, to be anything other than suggestive: the usual tools such as the Comparative Method yield inconclusive results (Campbell & Poser 2008). Thus, with Proto-Indo-European we reach the earliest portion of the history of English that is accessible by normal means, and the clouded realm of linguistic prehistory looms before us.

7.2 Sounds

7.2.1 Old English and Frisian vowels

One major feature setting Old English (and also Old Frisian) apart from the other Germanic languages was a series of changes to their vowels, which have the picturesque name of "Anglo-Frisian Brightening". West Germanic long [ɑː] became [æː], and a little later short [a] became [æ] as well. This gives us words like Old English *dæġ* 'day', *mæġ* 'may' and *strǣt* 'street', compared to (for instance) Old Saxon *dag* 'day', *mag* 'may' and *strāt-* 'street', which did not undergo the change.

Nasalized [ɑ̃], and [ɑ] followed by /n/ or /m/, were unaffected by Anglo-Frisian Brightening, however. These sounds later raised to [õ] and [o] in both Old English and Old Frisian, giving us words like Old English and Old Frisian *mon* 'man' whereas the Old Saxon cognate *man* remained unchanged. The same happened to the long vowels [ɑ̃ː] and [ɑː], yielding for instance Old English *mōn-* 'moon' rather than Old Saxon *mān-* 'moon'. It is actually not uncommon for nasal consonants, such as /n/ and /m/, to raise the preceding vowel at various points in time in the history of the English language. Thus, we can observe e.g. the so-called *pin-pen* merger in some dialects of American English, but there are more raising processes taking place before nasals in Present Day English.

Old Frisian later raised [æ] to [ɛ] and [æː] to [ɛː], giving us (for instance) *dei* 'day' and *strēt-* 'street'. Thus, the presence of the letter <æ> is a sure-fire way to tell that you're dealing with an Old English text! However, there is variation between and within dialects with regard to the sound changes discussed in this

section (Ringe & Taylor 2014: 167–170). This variation probably reflects the fact that these sound changes were still in progress at the time of the arrival of Germanic speakers in Britain (Toon 1992), as this sort of variability is exactly what we see in present-day changes in progress (see Chapter 2).

7.2.2 Runes and runic inscriptions

Before 600 CE, we don't find Germanic languages written in the Latin alphabet. Rather, the few surviving Germanic writings from this period (with the exception of some texts in Gothic) use a different writing system: the runic alphabet.
We have runic inscriptions from all across the Germanic world, from the 2nd century CE onwards. You'll notice that, unlike the Latin alphabet, the runic characters consist entirely of straight lines. This is because they were designed to be carved into hard surfaces, not scribed with ink: in fact, the English verb *to write* is descended directly from a Proto-Germanic verb meaning 'to carve'.

Futhark or Futhorc?

The original twenty-four-character runic alphabet is known as the FUTHARK, after its first six characters – much like the QWERTY keyboard, the usual layout for keyboards in the Latin alphabet. It is sometimes known as the Older Futhark to distinguish it from its descendant the Younger Futhark, which developed in Scandinavia from the 7th century onwards. In Britain, at around the same time, the FUTHORC, a slightly expanded set of runes, came into use. The futhorc better reflected the new vowel system of Old English (see §7.2.1 above): the rune <ᚨ> came to represent [æ], and the new runes <ᚪ> for [ɑ], <ᚩ> for [ã] (later [õ]), and <ᚣ> for [œ] are found for the first time.

The runic alphabet in fact tells us a few interesting things about the phonological system of the early Germanic languages. For instance, the rune <ᚦ>, called THORN, represents the PHONEME /θ/. The Latin alphabet had no convenient way to represent this sound – unsurprisingly, as the Latin language itself didn't have the sound. The thorn rune was so useful that scribes of Old English kept using it even when they were otherwise writing in the Latin alphabet, and that's where the Old English letter <þ> comes from. Thorn was lost in Middle English,

Table 7.1: The runic alphabet (Older Futhark), from Findell (2014: 18)

Rune	Transliteration	Sound value
ᚠ	f	[f]
ᚢ	u	[u]
ᚦ	þ	[θ]
ᚨ	a	[a]
ᚱ	r	[r]
ᚲ	k	[k]
ᚷ	g	[g]
ᚹ	w	[w]
ᚺ	h	[h]
ᚾ	n	[n]
ᛁ	i	[i]
ᛃ	j	[j]
ᛈ	p	[p]
ᛇ	ï	[i] (?)
ᛉ	z	[z]
ᛊ	s	[s]
ᛏ	t	[t]
ᛒ	b	[b]
ᛖ	e	[e]
ᛗ	m	[m]
ᛚ	l	[l]
ᛜ	ŋ	[ŋ], [ŋg], [iŋg]
ᛞ	d	[d]
ᛟ	o	[o]

and nowadays we write this sound as <th>, but that's a poor substitute (try pronouncing [t] and [h] together and you'll see that it's nothing like [θ]).
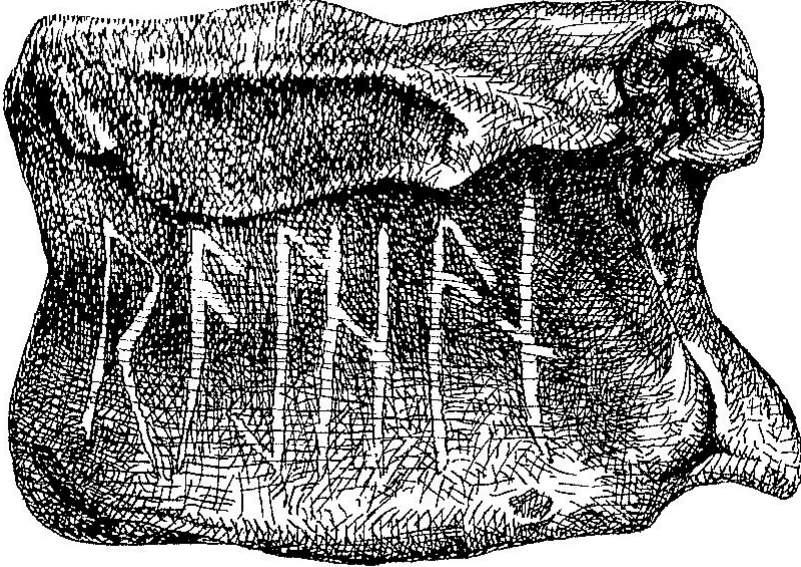
Figure 7.6: The anklebone of a roe deer, found in Caistor-by-Norwich and dated to the 5th century. This is the earliest runic inscription yet found in England. The word written here means 'roe'. Try transliterating it yourself!

Bluetooth

The logo of the wireless technology standard Bluetooth (Figure 7.7) is a rune! In fact, it's two runes used together: <ᚼ> and <ᛒ>, which in the Younger Futhark stand for /h/ and /b/ respectively. These are the initials of Harald Bluetooth, the tenth-century Danish king who the technology is named after. When two runes are written together like this, the result is called a BIND RUNE.

Figure 7.7: The Bluetooth logo

7.2.3 The First Sound Shift

We've just seen that the early Germanic languages had the PHONEME /θ/, but that Latin – another Indo-European language – didn't. What happened here? Does Latin better reflect the inherited Proto-Indo-European situation, or does Germanic?

Using the Comparative Method it's possible to establish that it's Germanic that's the innovator. In fact, the change that Proto-Germanic underwent, some time after 500 BCE, is probably the single most important feature setting the Germanic languages apart from all the other Indo-European languages. This makes it important evidence that the Germanic languages belong together as a group. The change is known as the First Sound Shift, or as Grimm's Law, because it is associated with the 19th-century linguist and mythologist Jacob Grimm (part of the famous German "Brothers Grimm" duo, along with his brother Wilhelm). In fact, the much less famous Danish linguist Rasmus Rask had got there first, in the year 1818. In any case, the First Sound Shift is the second of the two famous sound changes mentioned in Chapter 2 (the other being the Great Vowel Shift discussed in §4.2.1).

What Rask and Grimm noticed was that there were systematic correspondences between certain consonants in the Germanic languages and their counterparts in the other Indo-European languages. For example, where we find a /p/ in other Indo-European languages, we often find a /f/ in Germanic languages, as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Indo-European /p/ & Germanic /f/ (based on Ringe 2017: 114)

Meaning	Latin	Greek	Sanskrit	Gothic	Old English	Old Saxon
'foot'	**p**ed-	**p**od-	**p**ád-	**f**ōt-	**f**ōt	**f**ōt
'fish'	**p**isc-			**f**isk-	**f**isċ	**f**isk
'five'		**p**énte	**p**áñca	**f**imf	**f**īf	**f**īf

The full set of changes that make up the First Sound Shift is given in Table 7.3. Similar corresponding sets of examples can be found for each of these changes. For instance, Sanskrit *bhrátṛ* 'brother', which starts with a voiced aspirated /bʰ/ and contains a voiceless /t/, corresponds to Gothic *brōþar* and Old English *brōþor*, which start with a voiced unaspirated /b/ and contain a voiceless fricative /θ/. The First Sound Shift is a regular sound change with far-reaching consequences, and is one of the most striking and characteristic features of the Germanic lan-

Table 7.3: The First Sound Shift (after Campbell 2013: 42)

	Labial	**Coronal**	**Velar**
voiceless stops > fricatives	p > f	t > θ	k > x
voiced stops > voiceless stops	b > p	d > t	g > k
voiced aspirated stops > plain voiced stops	b^h > b	d^h > d	g^h > g

guages.[4] You may like to think about whether the First Sound Shift is also a chain shift, in the sense that was discussed in §2.2.2 for the Northern Cities Shift and in §4.2.1 for the Great Vowel Shift.

Making linguistic history: Rask, Grimm, and Verner

The version of the First Sound Shift given in Table 7.3 is almost exceptionless, but not quite: for instance, Sanskrit *pitŕ* 'father' contains a /t/ that seems to correspond to a /d/ in Gothic *fadar* and Old English *fæder*, rather than the expected /θ/. Rask and Grimm were working in an era before the regularity of sound change was postulated, and were aware of some exceptions to their generalization. It wasn't until 1875 that another Danish linguist, Karl Verner, was able to show that these exceptions were themselves governed by a robust rule. In fact, Verner's discovery played an important role in the establishment of the regularity of sound change as a guiding principle in historical linguistics during the 19th century. See Campbell (2013: 140–142) for the details of "Verner's Law", and Lass (1997: 132–135) for a critical assessment of Verner and regular sound change. (Search for Verner's Law and the Studies in Germanic Philology on YouTube if you'd like to watch a highly amusing film on these linguistic discoveries.)

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[4]For more detail on the First Sound Shift, see Ringe (2017: §3.2.4) and Fulk (2018: §6.4–§6.7).

7.2.4 The Germanic stress shift

Another change that divides the Germanic languages from many of their more distant Indo-European family members has to do with the positioning of lexical stress within a word. We can reconstruct earlier Indo-European, before Germanic branched off, as having a stress system that was lexically variable (similarly to Present Day English: compare *photo*, *photography*, and *photographic*, with the stress on the first, second, and third syllables respectively). This system was present in Vedic Sanskrit, for instance. Different words have their primary stress on different syllables: for example, *bhrā́tṛ* 'brother' is stressed on the first syllable, while *pitṛ́* 'father' is stressed on the second (a syllabic /r/). In Proto-Germanic, by contrast, the stress became fixed on the first lexical MORPHEME of the word, which usually corresponded to the first syllable of the word. Thus, in the early Germanic languages, all words have initial stress, with the exception of some unstressed verbal prefixes such as Old English *ġe-*.[5]

Fixing the stress on the first syllable of the word had various consequences. For one thing, a tradition of ALLITERATIVE POETRY developed in Germanic, and some of these poems are preserved in many of the early Germanic languages – including Old English, Old Saxon, Old High German and Old Norse. The most famous example of Old English alliterative verse is *Beowulf*, but there is much more.

Alliterative verse differs from rhyming verse in that what's important is not the end of the syllable (as in rhyming verse, e.g. *pill* vs. *fill*) but rather the first consonant of the first syllable of the word. This sort of verse survives into Middle English, and the first line of William Langland's poem *Piers Plowman* is an accessible example: *In a somer seson, whan soft was the sonne* 'In summer, when the sun was soft'. Here the alliteration is on the phoneme /s/. Clearly, word-initial stress and alliterative verse are a match made in heaven, and linguistically it's no surprise that in Present Day English, with its more complex stress system, alliterative verse is not the dominant tradition any more. If you want to learn more about Old English alliterative poetry, McCully & Hilles (2005: unit 5) is a great introduction.

The fixation of stress on the initial syllable also may have had consequences for the morphology of the Germanic languages. Proto-Germanic had a variety of vowels in unstressed syllables, similar to (early) Old English (Chapter 6), and these can still be seen in the Gothic Bible and the earliest runic inscriptions,

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[5]Similar stress-fixation changes affected other branches of the Indo-European language families at different stages of their historical paths.

as well as to some extent in Old English and Old Saxon texts. A common tendency across all the Germanic languages was to lose these vowels entirely, or for them to lose their distinctiveness and merge together as schwa /ə/. These unstressed syllables, however, often carried important morphological distinctions, especially when word-final: different cases, for instance, or different person and number forms of the verb. The only difference between the Old English past tense plural forms of the verb 'to help', *hulpon* (indicative MOOD) and *hulpen* (subjunctive mood), for example, is the vowel in the unstressed syllable: /o/ in the indicative and /e/ in the subjunctive. When the distinctive vowel quality was lost, the morphological distinction it conveyed was often also lost. Thus, a change that dates back to the birth of the Germanic family was still making itself felt many centuries later. Note, though, that the fixation of stress can't by itself explain why some Germanic languages (like English and Afrikaans) ended up losing almost all their morphological endings while others (like Icelandic and German) were much more conservative.[6] For that, a different story is needed: see §6.3.4.

Yet another consequence of fixing the stress was related to the fate of ablaut. More on this in §7.3.2.

7.3 Morphology

7.3.1 The Germanic weak past tense

Alongside the First Sound Shift and Germanic stress shift, a third major change characterizing the Germanic languages but not other Indo-European relatives was the development of a new type of past tense for weak verbs.
In all of these present-day Germanic languages, and in all the early Germanic languages as well, the regular past tense is formed using a suffix containing some sort of coronal consonant – usually /d/.[7] But this type of past tense formation is not found elsewhere in the Indo-European family.[8] How did it arise?

As usual with changes that predate the textual record, there are different theories, and we have to decide which is the most plausible. Here we'll briefly illustrate the dominant contender (as summarized in Ringe 2017: 191–192), which is

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[6]There are also other languages where the stress is fixed on the first syllable, such as Finnish, which show no signs of vowel reductions in unstressed syllables, again suggesting that the fixation of stress isn't the whole story.

[7]See §5.3.2 if you need a reminder of what weak, strong, regular, and irregular mean.

[8]This is a bit of a simplification. Some Iranian languages – also belonging to Indo-European – have undergone a very similar development independently. See Kümmel (2020).

Table 7.4: Forms of the past tense of 'play' in present-day Germanic languages

Language	Infinitive	Past (3rd Singular)
English	play	play**d**
Danish	lege	lege**d**e
Dutch	spelen	speel**d**e
Faroese	spæla	spæl**d**i
German	spielen	spiel**t**e
Norwegian	leke	lek**t**e

that the Germanic weak past in /d/ arose when a sequence consisting of a non-finite verb form and a past tense form of the verb **dōną* 'to do' was reinterpreted as a single word. Basically, two originally independent words got stuck together. Thus, in essence, a form like *played* originated as something like *play did*. This sort of happening is well known in the literature on GRAMMATICALIZATION (Hopper & Traugott 2003), where it's usually known as UNIVERBATION. See also the discussion of the Modern English semi-modals in §3.4.2.

This theory receives direct support from a set of plural forms in Gothic. In this language, the past tense of weak verbs in the plural ends in *-dēdun*, e.g. *nasidēdun* 'they saved/healed', *sōkidēdun* 'they sought, looked for'. This reflects exactly the reconstructed Proto-Germanic past tense of the verb **dōną*, which is **dēdun* in the third person plural.[9] These forms are the only place in Germanic where the assumed historical development is reflected so precisely, and indicate that the verb **dōną* has to be at least part of the story.

We can't be sure that this is what happened in the prehistory of Germanic. But it does fit with what we know about common pathways of grammatical change, without needing to wave a magic wand and propose a historical development that has no parallel elsewhere. See Ringe (2017: 191–192) for a much more detailed version of the story. This sort of evidence might not stand up in a court of law, but it's good linguistic detective work nonetheless.

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[9]Note that the /d/ at the end of the form **dēdun* is part of the stem, not part of the ending. If it were part of the ending, the theory would be circular, as it would require there to have already been a weak past in /d/ in Proto-Germanic, and so its origin would remain unexplained.

7.3.2 The Germanic strong verbs

Alongside the weak verbs, the strong verbs constituted the other big group of verbs in early Germanic. As we've seen in §6.3,[10] the endings on strong verbs in Old English were very similar to those of weak verbs, but they differed in how they formed their past tense: where the weak verbs added an ending containing a /d/, the strong verbs changed the vowel in the stem.

For Present Day English, and to a certain extent for Middle and Old English, the dominant approach to the vowel alternations in the strong verbs is simply to treat them as irregular and lexically listed. In other words, for each strong verb, the language user simply has to memorize the relevant past tense forms in their entirety (Pinker 1999). However, things weren't always like this. The further we go back in time, the more we find that the strong verbs follow a neat, orderly system that actually makes sense.

Table 7.5 gives some illustrative forms for the first three classes of strong verbs in Old English (there are seven in total; we'll leave aside classes IV–VII). The column "1st past" gives the vowel used in the first and third persons singular of the past tense; "2nd past" gives the vowel used elsewhere in the past tense.

Table 7.5: Strong verb classes in Old English

Class	Sample verb	1st past	2nd past
I	*drīfan* 'to drive'	*drāf*	*drifon*
II	*crēopan* 'to creep'	*crēap*	*crupon*
III	*helpan* 'to help'	*healp*	*hulpon*

Reducing this to its essentials gives us the vowel system in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Vowels in strong verbs in Old English

Class	Present	1st past	2nd past
I	*ī*	*ā*	*i*
II	*ēo*	*ēa*	*u*
III	*e*	*ea*	*u*

Things are even more transparent if we consider the Proto-Germanic ancestors of these vowels: see Table 7.7.

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[10]And also in Chapter 5 for Middle English: §5.3.2.

Table 7.7: Stems in strong verbs in Proto-Germanic

Class	Present	1st past	2nd past
I	*ei > ī*	*ai*	*i*
II	*eu*	*au*	*u*
III	*e*	*a*	*u*

And we can go back even further in time and reconstruct how the precursors of this system must have worked in Proto-Indo-European: see Table 7.8. In this table, Ø stands for no vowel at all, S stands for a sonorant consonant (/r/, /l/, or a nasal), and C stands for any consonant.

Table 7.8: Stems of Germanic strong verbs in Proto-Indo-European

Class	Present	1st perfect	2nd perfect
I	*ei*	*oi*	*Øi*
II	*eu*	*ou*	*Øu*
III	*e*SC	*o*SC	ØSC

Here we see that the vowels used in the different tense forms (these are traditionally termed ABLAUT GRADES) are exactly the same across classes: the "*e*-grade" in the present, the "*o*-grade" in the 1st past, and the "zero grade" in the 2nd past. What differs is the structure of the verb stem only. What then happened in the transition from Proto-Indo-European to Old English via Proto-Germanic is that a series of regular sound changes destroyed the neatness of this morphological system by creating more differences between classes. The diphthong /ei/, for example, becomes long /iː/, as reflected in the present tense form of Class I.

It is likely that sound changes like these made the new forms extremely intransparent to learners, and hence over time caused the strong verbs to stop being productive and instead become completely irregular. Certainly almost all verbs introduced from Old English onwards (for instance, via borrowing) are INFLECTED as weak rather than strong.

> ### Sturtevant's paradox
>
> Regular sound change operates "with blind necessity" – meaning without regard for semantics, morphological structure, etc. As a consequence, just as in the case of the Germanic strong verbs, regular sound changes can wreak havoc on an otherwise well-behaved morphological system – paradoxically, disrupting their "regularity". This is known as Sturtevant's paradox: sound change is regular, but creates irregularity. Morphological analogy, on the other hand, is irregular (in the sense that it affects only specific words, usually not whole classes of words), but creates regularity.

7.4 Syntax

7.4.1 Expressing the subject

A lot of the phonology, morphology and lexicon of Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European can be confidently reconstructed using the Comparative Method. Things haven't gone as smoothly with reconstructing the syntax of these languages. Still, progress has been made in syntactic reconstruction, especially in recent years. This section will present just one tiny case study: the expression of subjects.

Present Day English is a language that loves to express its subjects. So much so, in fact, that a sentence without a subject is simply not possible or grammatical in most normal contexts: *speaks English, or *is here.[11] This even extends to sentences like *It is raining* or *It seems that* ..., in which the *It* doesn't refer to anything at all. We can thus say that both non-referential and referential subjects must be overtly expressed in English. One way to analyse this is to say that Present Day English has a requirement that the specifier of IP in the tree (recall our tree structure introduced in §1.2.3) must be present and filled by some overt element.

Not all languages are like this, though. In Italian and Chinese, for example, there's no such requirement to express the subject. An Italian sentence like *Parlo*

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[11]Leaving out subjects in Present Day English is only possible in very restricted contexts, as mentioned briefly in §1.2.3, and more in writing than in speech.

italiano 'Speak.1sg Italian', meaning 'I speak Italian', with no subject pronoun, is perfectly grammatical, as long as the context allows us to infer who or what the subject is. In earlier stages of English, too, the expression of the subject was optional: Rusten (2019) has carried out a detailed investigation. Middle English, on the whole, was a language in which referential subjects (like *I*, *he*, *she* ...) had to be expressed, but non-referential subjects (like the *It* of *It seems that* ...) could be left out. For the most part, Old English is like this too, but in the very earliest Old English texts, and especially the poetry, we also find that referential subjects could be left out, particularly in the third person. Here's an example from *Beowulf*, in which the understood subject is a wealthy man:

(1) þonne bið on hreþre   under helm   drepen biteran   strǣle
     then is   in heart.DAT under helm.ACC hit   bitter.DAT dart.DAT
     'Then **he** is hit in the heart, under his helmet, by the bitter dart' (*Beowulf*
     lines 1745–1746)

This kind of subject omission is found in all the other early Germanic languages too, especially Gothic. Walkden (2014: Chapter 5) argues that on this basis we can reconstruct subject omission as a property of Proto-Germanic, affecting both referential and non-referential subjects. Looking across at other early Indo-European languages such as Sanskrit, Latin and Greek, all of which can omit subjects very freely, it seems likely that subject omission was also a property of Proto-Indo-European.

7.4.2 Analytic and synthetic languages

You've probably noticed a trend: the further back in time we go, the more morphology we see. While Present Day English varieties are very morphologically impoverished, Old English has a relatively rich INFLECTIONAL morphology for both nouns and verbs, and Proto-Germanic – as far as we can tell – must have been even richer.

In §6.3, for instance, we discussed the Old English case system for nouns. There we were able to identify four cases: nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive. In fact, there are also traces of a fifth case in Old English, the instrumental, which is used for the instrument or means by which an action is achieved. Here's an example:

(2) hē wǣre   ġetogen mid **þon**   īsnan hōce on þǣre   piċenan
     he was.SBJV pulled   with the.INST iron hook into the.DAT pitchlike

ēa

water

'He was dragged with the iron hook into the murky water'
(Blickling Homilies, The Third Sunday in Lent)

The instrumental is already dying out gradually during the Old English period, and we find variation (see Freeman 2018), with the instrumental being replaced by the dative. In Old English, distinctive instrumental endings are only really found on pronouns and occasionally adjectives. (In the example above, the adjective *īsnan* 'iron' and the noun *hōce* 'hook' have ambiguous endings.)

Why?

The word *why* is the only surviving trace of the instrumental in Present Day standard Englishes. It originated as the instrumental form of the pronoun *hwæt*, meaning 'what'.

The instrumental is found in the other early Germanic languages too, and if we look at Gothic, we find traces of a sixth case, the vocative, used for people (or things) being directly addressed. This means that Proto-Germanic is usually reconstructed with all six of these cases. Proto-Indo-European, meanwhile, is usually reconstructed with two additional cases, the ablative and the locative (Clackson 2007: 90–100). The further we go back, it seems, the more cases and the more case morphology we find. The same is true for verbal tenses and MOODS, and verbal morphology in general.

Languages that rely heavily on inflections to code grammatical information are known as SYNTHETIC, and languages that use function words and strict word order to code the same information are known as ANALYTIC ([ˌanəˈlɪtɪk]). To take the case study discussed in the previous subsection, the strict use of subject pronouns (a type of function word) in most Present Day Englishes can be said to be an analytic feature, as opposed to the possibility of subject omission in earlier English, more characteristic of synthetic languages. Analytic and synthetic are not strict classes of language, but rather there's a continuum between synthetic and analytic languages: a language can be more or less synthetic.

Sometimes it's said that the history of English involves a transition from synthetic (Old English) to analytic (Present Day English), but that's only partially

true: Old English had a relatively rigid word order, only two morphological tenses, and a lot of syncretism in person and case endings (as we saw in Chapter 6). Also, by some measures, English has actually become *more synthetic* since the Early Modern period: see Szmrecsányi (2012). In general it's a good idea to be wary of any story that says that the history of English involves a straightforward progression from one thing to another thing. When it comes to language history, to quote Algernon in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, "The truth is rarely pure and never simple."

7.4.3 Tense, aspect and the verbal system

The Germanic languages inherited a two-way opposition between present (or nonpast) and past tense from Proto-Germanic, and morphologically this is the only tense distinction to be found in any Germanic language. However, several early Germanic languages, including Old English, can be seen to develop new ways of expressing different nuances of temporal, aspectual and modal meaning. Usually these are analytic in the sense of the previous subsection: they are constructed by means of a non-finite form and an auxiliary verb. One of these is a new PERFECT construction, which involves a past participle and a form of *have* or *be*. Here's an example from Old English:

(3) Þā   hīe ... þǣr   tō ġewīcod   hæfdon . þā   onġēt   se   here ...
     when they there to encamped had   then realized the host
     'When they had made camp for this, then the army realized ...'
                                                        (Old English Chronicle, year 896)

Because all the early Germanic languages develop a new perfect construction in the same way, it has been argued that this should be reconstructed for Proto-Germanic too (Brinton 1988). However, Drinka (2017: Chapter 9) argues that it is a later development, and is introduced into the Northwest Germanic languages through contact with Latin, after Proto-Germanic had already diverged into distinct languages.

7.5 Lexicon

7.5.1 Sources of the lexicon

Just as a large proportion of the vocabulary of Old English was inherited from Proto-Germanic, so a large proportion of the vocabulary of Proto-Germanic was

inherited straight from Proto-Indo-European. At one point, it was thought that around a third of Proto-Germanic lexical items had a non-Indo-European origin (Feist 1924: 88), and that massive contact influence was needed to explain the Proto-Germanic lexicon. However, more recent research has cast doubt on this (see Roberge 2010: 407–409). There must certainly have been a population speaking non-Indo-European languages in contact with Germanic during its early development, and we've seen throughout this book that language contact is almost ubiquitous in language history. However, on the whole the Germanic lexicon is not more innovative than that of other branches of Indo-European, and so there's no need for special pleading.

7.5.2 Word formation

Like Old English, Proto-Germanic was fond of COMPOUNDING as a source of new words. This is the origin of the Present Day English days of the week, for instance: see Table 7.9. Tiw, Odin, Thor and Frigg are part of the pre-Christian pantheon of gods attested in Germanic sources (best known from Norse mythology; see Gaiman 2017), and Monday and Sunday are named for the moon and the sun respectively. Saturn is a Roman god, and in fact betrays the origin of the whole system: Tiw, Odin, Thor and Frigg correspond to Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus from the Roman pantheon, and the days of the week in many Germanic languages are simply translations of these.

Table 7.9: The days of the week in Present Day English and in Proto-Germanic

English	Proto-Germanic	Meaning
Monday	*mēniniz dagaz	'Moon's day'
Tuesday	*tīwasa dagaz	'Tiw (god of war)'s day'
Wednesday	*wōdanasa dagaz	'Odin's day'
Thursday	*þunarasa dagaz	'Thor's day'
Friday	*frijjōz dagaz	'Frigg's day'
Saturday	*saturnasa dagaz	'Saturn's day'
Sunday	*sunnōniz dagaz	'Sun's day'

Ablaut (discussed in connection with strong verbs in §7.3.2 above) could also be used for word-formation in Proto-Germanic and early Germanic. This gives rise to whole families of related words. For instance, the Old English strong verb

beran 'to bear, to carry' reflects the *e*-grade in Proto-Indo-European. Some DE-RIVED nouns, like *bearm* 'lap, bosom' and *bearwe* 'barrow, basket', reflect the Proto-Indo-European *o*-grade. Other derived nouns, such as *bora* 'bearer, carrier' and *byrele* 'cup-bearer', reflect the zero-grade (see Lass 1994: 191). These different ablaut variants are still found in Present Day English, e.g. *to ride* vs. *a road*, *to sing* vs. *a song*. So Proto-Germanic had a variety of language-internal ways of coining new words.

7.5.3 Borrowing

Speakers of Proto-Germanic were also perfectly happy to borrow words from speakers of other languages, either consciously or subconsciously. At an early stage these speakers were in contact with speakers of Proto-Finnic, the ancestor language of modern Finnish and Estonian (Koivulehto 1980). Old English *healf* 'half', for instance, goes back to Proto-Germanic *halbaz, and may originate in Proto-Finnic *halpa* meaning 'reduced' (Hyllested 2014: 103–105). It's even more certain that there were borrowings the other way round, too: Finnish and Estonian *kuningas* 'king' directly reflect the Proto-Finnic form, which must have been borrowed from Proto-Germanic *kuningaz. What's neat about this borrowing is that it reflects the nominative singular *-az* ending, which is reconstructed for Proto-Germanic using the Comparative Method but which isn't directly attested in any Germanic language. The word must have been borrowed into Proto-Finnic straight from Proto-Germanic, before it split up into its daughters and the ending was lost.

In what's traditionally known as the "migration period" (200–600 CE), the language that played the most important role for the lexicon of pre-Old English was Latin. Many Latin words must have been borrowed in continental Europe, before the speakers of what was to be Old English arrived in Britain. We can spot these very early borrowings because they have undergone the same sound changes as Old English words themselves, and because they are found in the other Northwest Germanic languages. For instance, Old English *sæcc* 'sackcloth', from Latin *saccus*, has cognates in Old Frisian, Old Saxon, Old Norse, etc., and the presence of the /æ/ is an unmistakable sign that it's undergone Anglo-Frisian Brightening (§7.2.1) – which means that it must have already been in the language by the time this sound change happened. By contrast, later Latin loanwords in Old English, such as those associated with Christianization from the 7th century onwards, do not show the effects of these early sound changes.

7.6 Final note

Here you are at the end – or is it the beginning? More than any other period, this prehistoric era shows us just how difficult the work of the practising historian really is, regardless of whether they are investigating language, society, biology, material culture, or something else entirely. When it comes to language, we can reconstruct prehistoric language stages using relatively reliable methods, but even these shed less and less light on the situation the further we go back in time. Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European, the ancestors of English, are within our grasp. Beyond that, we can only speculate.

Suggested exercises

E.1 The dark arts

In this exercise, try to use your knowledge of the sound changes that the West Germanic languages have undergone in order to reconstruct proto-forms for Proto-West-Germanic words. You'll need to take into account the sound changes that we've discussed in this chapter and in §6.2 of Chapter 6. Here are two additional changes that will help you with your reconstructions:

- In Old Frisian, word-final nasal consonants were lost in infinitives.

- In Old High German, /p/ became /f/ in some phonetic environments.

Here are the sets of cognates for you to work with:

1. Old English *slǣpan*, Old Frisian *slēpa*, Old High German *slāfan* 'to sleep'

2. Old English *sċip*, Old Frisian *skip*, Old High German *skif* 'ship'

3. Old English *mȳs*, Old Saxon *mūsi*, Old High German *mūsi* 'mice'

4. Old Frisian *skēp*, Old Saxon *skāp*, Old High German *skāf* 'sheep'

5. Old English *hond*, Old Frisian *hond*, Old Saxon *hand* 'hand'

6. Old English *sċīnan*, Old Frisian *skīna*, Old High German *skīnan* 'to shine'

E.2 Completely futharked

Decode, by transliterating, the messages below written in Present Day English using the Older Futhark alphabet.

1. ᛉᛏᛗ᛬ᚠᚱᛁᚻᛁᚠᛟ᛬ᛁᚻ᛬ᚠᚢᛟ

2. ᛁ᛬ᚻᛗᛗ᛬ᛈᛗᚠᛈ᛬ᚲᛗᛉᚲᛏᛗ

3. ᚦᛗ᛬ᛏᚱᚢᚦ᛬ᛁᚻ᛬ᛉᚢᛏ᛬ᚦᛗᚱᛗ

4. ᛉᛞᛗ᛬ᚻᛗᚠᛏᛏ᛬ᚻᛏᛗᚲ᛬ᚠᛉᚱ᛬ᛗᚠᛞ

E.3 Sound change does come to an end...

As we saw in this chapter, Grimm's Law took centuries to complete. This is not unusual. Nevertheless, the change did come to an end. Here are some words that underwent Grimm's Law: *corn, cool, eat, foot, fish, hearty, horn, kin, knee, teach, tooth, three*.

Below is a table with Latin words and existing English words borrowed from Latin after Grimm's Law came to an end, sometimes via French or other Romance languages. This means that the consonantal changes are nowhere to be seen in these loanwords. Use the third column to match the words above with those that were borrowed from Latin later.

Latin word	Borrowed from Latin	PDE Germanic word
ped-	*pedal* [p]	
genu	*genuflect* [g]	
dens	*dental* [d]	
cor	*cordial* [k]	
piscis	*Pisces* [f]	
granum	*granular* [g]	
glaces	*glacial* [g]	
dicere	*dictate* [d]	
cornu	*cornet* [k]	
tres	*trio* [t]	
genus	*genus* [g]	
edo	*edible* [d]	

E.4 Umlaut

The following Old English words and their reconstructed Germanic sources illustrate some mutations:

Proto-West-Germanic	Old English	Present Day English
*gōs-i (plural noun)	> *gēs*	'geese'
*fōd-jan (verb from noun)	> *fēdan*	'to feed'
*stel-idi (3sɢ verb form)	> *stilþ*	'steals'

1. Describe how the vowels changed between Proto-West-Germanic and Old English in each of these three words.

2. What were the conditions that caused the mutations?

3. Why is the cause of mutation not clear in written Old English?

Acknowledgement: This exercise is based on Johanna Wood's 2016 teaching materials.

E.5 How do we decide what's regular and what's irregular?

Recall that regular is not the same as weak, and irregular is not the same as strong. In this chapter we've talked about the origins of weak verbs and their distinctive feature (§7.3.1). Your task in this exercise is to look at the sets of Old English verb forms given and decide whether each verb is a) weak or strong and b) regular or irregular.

1. *dropian* 'to drop': *dropast* (2sg.pres), *dropode* (3sg.past)

2. *metan* 'to measure': *mitst* (2sg.pres), *mæt* (3sg.past)

3. *stincan* 'to smell bad': *stincst* (2sg.pres), *stanc* (3sg.past)

4. *bringan* 'to bring': *bringest* (2sg.pres), *brōhte* (3sg.past)

E.6 Essay topics

Write a short essay in which you critically discuss one of the following claims.

- "Bede's story of the *aduentus Saxonum* is oversimplified, but basically correct."

- "Old English is a typical Germanic language."

- "Whereas Present Day English is a typical analytic language, Old English is a prime example of a synthetic language."

- "The Germanic weak past tense arose through univerbation."

- "Sound changes obscure the underlying systematicity of ablaut."

- "Old English poetry is subject to both literary and linguistic constraints."

Texts

The text samples for this chapter are a mixed bag, due to the fact that there simply aren't any substantial English texts from the period up to 600 CE. The first two texts are actually from later than 600, the third is from circa 600, and only the first and third can reasonably be said to be in English! Still, all of them should help to shed some light on the development of English from Proto-Indo-European via Proto-Germanic. Glosses and translations are provided for all texts in this chapter.

T.1 Franks Casket

This text is in Old English of the early 8th century. It's featured in this chapter rather than the previous chapter because it's written in the runic (futhorc) alphabet. Note that the material aspect of this object is important: Figure 7.8 shows just one side of a small whalebone casket, probably of Northumbrian origin, that can now be seen in the British Museum. Starting at the top left and working its way round clockwise, the text on this panel is a riddle, relating to the material the casket is made of. Can you see how the transcription (below) relates to the runes in the image?

Figure 7.8: The Franks casket

fisc . flodu .   ahof on ferg | enberig | warþ   ga:sric   grorn
fish flood.NOM lifted on mountain   became rage-beast sad
þær   he on greut giswom | hronæs   ban
where he on grit   swam   whale.GEN bone

'The flood lifted a fish onto the cliffs. The angry beast became sad where he swam in the sand. Whalebone.'

T.2 Old Saxon worm charm: *Contra vermes* 'Against worms'

This text is also later, written in the 10th century. It's in Old Saxon, the closest first-millennium relative of Old English. See if you can spot alliteration! You may also notice the absence of Anglo-Frisian Brightening.

Gang út   nesso. mid nigun. nessiklinon.
go   out worm with nine   worm-small-DAT.PL
út fana themo. margę. | an that.   ben.
out from the.DAT marrow.DAT to the.ACC bone.ACC
fan   themo. bene.   an that.   flesg
from the.DAT bone.DAT to the.ACC flesh.ACC
ut   fan themo. | flesgke. an thia   hud.
out from the.DAT flesh   to the.ACC skin.ACC
ut fan thera. hud.   an thesa   strala.
out from the.DAT skin.DAT to this.ACC arrow.ACC
drohtin uuerthe   so.
lord   become.SBJV so

'Get out, worm, with nine little worms! Out from the marrow to the
bone, from the bone to the flesh, out from the flesh to the skin, out
from the skin to this arrow. Lord, may it be so!'

T.3 The Law of Æþelberht

King Æþelberht of Kent (/ˈæðelberxt/) lived between 550–616. One of the
things he is known for is being one of the very first Old English kings who
converted to Christianity. Another thing he's known for, more relevant
here, is his famous law code, which provides a lot of detail on what sort of
fines applied under what circumstances at the time. This code is actually
the earliest such work attested in any Germanic language. We give you
a few lines below. If you'd like to know what the punishment was for
making someone lose their tooth or the ability to speak, read on![a]

31 Gif fri man þið fries   mannes ƿif ʒeliʒeþ · his ƿerʒelde
   if free man with free.GEN man.GEN wife lies   his wergild
abicʒe.   ⁊ oðer ƿif his aʒenum scætte   beʒete · ⁊
pay-off.SBJV and other wife his own.DAT money.DAT get.SBJV and

ðæm   oðrum   æt þam   ȝebrenȝe·
the.DAT other.DAT at that.DAT bring.SBJV

'If a free man sleeps with another free man's wife, he should pay his wergild and pay for another wife with his own money and bring her to the other man at home.'

32 Gif man rihthamscyld þurh   stinð. mid ƿeorðe   forȝelde·
   if   man rihthamscyld through pierces with worth.DAT pay.SBJV

'If someone pierces the *rihthamscyld*,[b] let him pay with its worth.'

33 Gif feaxfanȝ ȝeweorð. l. sceatta to bote·
   if   hair-grip happens 50 sceattas to restitution

'If there is seizing of hair, 50 sceattas should be paid as restitution.'

34 Gif banes   blice   ƿeorðeþ. iii. scillinȝum ȝebete·
   if   bone.GEN exposure happens 3   shillings   pay.SBJV

'If a bone is exposed, 3 shillings should be paid.'

35 Gif banes   bite ƿeorð.   IIII. scillinȝum ȝebete·
   if   bone.GEN bite happens 4   shillings   pay.SBJV

'If a bone is cut, 4 shillings should be paid.'

36 Gif sio uterre hion ȝebrocen ƿeorðeþ. x. scillinȝum ȝebete·
   if   the outer hion broken   becomes 10 shillings   pay.SBJV

'If the outer bone of the head is broken, 10 shillings should be paid.'

36.1 Gif butu sien.   xx. scillinȝum ȝebete·
     if   both be.SBJV 20 shillings   pay.SBJV

'If both are (broken), 20 shillings should be paid.'

37 Gif eaxle   ȝelæmed ƿeorþeð. xxx. scill   ȝebete·
   if   shoulder lamed   becomes 30   shillings pay.SBJV

'If a shoulder is lamed, 30 shillings should be paid.'

38 Gif oþer   eare naƿiht ȝehereð. xxv· scill   ȝebete·
   if   either ear nothing hears   25   shillings pay.SBJV

'If either ear loses hearing, 25 shillings should be paid.'

39 Gif eare of ƿeorð   aslaʒen. xii. scill   ʒebete·
    if   ear off becomes cut   12   shillings pay.SBJV

'If an ear is cut off, 12 shillings should be paid.'

40 Gif eare þirel   ƿeorðeþ· iii· scill   ʒebete·
    if   ear pierced becomes 3   shillings pay.SBJV

'If an ear is pierced, 3 shillings should be paid.'

41 Gif eare sceard ƿeorðeþ· vi· scill   ʒebete·
    if   ear gashed becomes 6   shillings pay.SBJV

'If an ear is gashed, 6 shillings should be paid.'

42 Gif eaʒe of ƿeorð.   l· scillinʒum ʒebete·
    if   eye off becomes 50 shillings   pay.SBJV

'If an eye is cut out, 50 shillings should be paid.'

43 Gif muð   oþþe eaʒe ƿoh   ƿeorðeþ· xii· scill   ʒebete.
    if   mouth or   eye damaged becomes 12   shillings pay.SBJV

'If the mouth or eye is damaged, 12 shillings should be paid.'

44 Gif nasu ðyrel   ƿeorð·   viiii· scillinʒum ʒebete·
    if   nose pierced becomes 9   shillings   pay.SBJV

'If the nose is pierced, 9 shillings should be paid.'

44.1 Gif hit sio   an hleore   iii· scill   ʒebete.
     if   it   be.SBJV on cheek.DAT 3   shillings pay.SBJV

'If it (the piercing) is on the cheek, 3 shillings should be paid.'

44.2 Gif butu ðyrele   sien.   vi. scill   ʒebete·
     if   both pierced be.SBJV 6   shillings pay.SBJV

'If both are pierced, 6 shillings should be paid.'

45 Gif nasu ælcor   sceard ƿeorð   ʒehwylc· vi· scill
    if   nose otherwise gashed becomes each   6   shillings
ʒebete·
pay.SBJV

'If the nose otherwise becomes gashed, 6 shillings should be paid for each.'

46 Gif ðirel ƿeorþ· vi· scill ʒebete·
   if pierced becomes 6 shillings pay.SBJV

'If it becomes pierced, 6 shillings should be paid.'

47 Se þe cinban forslæhð mid· xx· scillinʒum forʒelde.
   he who chin-bone breaks with 20 shillings pay.SBJV

'He who breaks the jawbone should pay 20 shillings.'

48 Æt þam feoƿer toðum fyrestum æt ʒehƿylcum· vi·
   at the.DAT four teeth.DAT first.DAT at each 6
scillinʒas.
shillings

'The four front teeth are worth 6 shillings each.'

48.1 Se toþ se þanne bi standeþ· iiii· sci·
     the tooth that then by stands 4 shillings

'The tooth next to them is worth 4 shillings.'

48.2 Se þe ðonne bi ðam standeþ. iii· scill.
     that which then by that.DAT stands 3 shillings

'The one next to that one is worth 3 shillings.'

48.3 And þõn siþþan ʒehƿylc scillinʒ·
     and then after each shilling

'And one shilling for each one (tooth) after.'

49 Gif spræc aƿyrd ƿeorþ. xii· scillinʒas.
   if speech damaged becomes 12 shillings

'If speech becomes damaged, 12 shillings should be paid.'

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start and begin at different points of the individual lines, marked by a red capital letter in the manuscript.

[b]The word *hamscyld* is extremely difficult to translate, and scholars have been speculating as to what this might mean exactly. See e.g. Ammon (2002) for some ideas.

T.4 The Gothic Bible

This text is from the 4th-century Gothic Bible translation. It's an excerpt of the parable of the Sower and the Seed (Mark 4, verses 3–4), like the one we saw in Exercise 1 of Chapter 1. Gothic is an East Germanic language, and is often thought to be the closest Germanic language to Proto-Germanic because of its early attestation and complex morphology.

hauseiþ!   Sai, urrann sa saiands   du saian fraiwa
hear.2PL.IMP see out.ran the sower.NOM to sow seed.DAT
seinamma.
his.DAT
Jah warþ,   miþþanei saiso, sum raihtis gadraus faur wig,
and became while   sowed some though fell   to   way
jah qemun   fuglos   jah fretun þata.
and came.3PL bird.NOM.PL and ate   that.ACC

'Listen! The sower went out to sow his seed. And it happened that, while he sowed, some fell onto the road, and birds came and ate it.'

T.5 The Golden Horn of Gallehus

Another runic inscription, this time in something close to Proto-Norse, the ancestor language of the North Germanic branch. This one was found

on a drinking horn made of sheet gold, one of a pair, in Gallehus, Denmark. It dates to the early 5th century CE. Discovered in 1734, the horn was stolen and melted down in 1802. Fortunately, detailed drawings had been made, so that a replica could be constructed, and the ancient inscription itself was not lost.

Figure 7.9: The Golden Horn of Gallehus replica (Photo by Bloodofox, licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0)

The inscription is in the Older Futhark, and consists of a single clause. The verb in this clause is a characteristically Germanic weak past tense form!

ᛖᚲᚺᛚᛖᚹᚨᚷᚨᛊᛏᛁᛉ:ᚺᛟᛚᛏᛁᛃᚨᛉ:ᚺᛟᚱᚾᚨ:ᛏᚨᚹᛁᛞᛟ:
ek hlewagastiz: holtijaz: horna: tawido:
I   Hlewagastiz Holtijaz horn   made

'I, Hlewagastiz Holtijaz, made this horn.'

📖

Recommended further reading

If you're interested in the history and archaeology of Britain, Fleming (2010) is a recent and masterful overview, starting before the *aduentus Saxonum* and covering the whole period up to 1070 CE. For Indo-European history and archaeology, Anthony (2007) should be the first place to look.

Robinson (1992) is a great introduction to the early Germanic languages,

and Clackson (2007) introduces comparative Indo-European linguistics. On the general methodology of historical linguistics and linguistic reconstruction, there are many good textbooks available: we'd recommend Campbell (2013).

Findell (2014) is a handy guide to the world of Germanic and Old English runes. There is a substantial literature on Germanic and Old English alliterative verse, but from a linguistic perspective the clearest overview is to be found in McCully & Hilles (2005). Finally, if you'd like to find out more about the specific phonological, morphological and syntactic changes that characterized the prehistory of English, the first two volumes of Ringe's *Linguistic History of English* (Ringe 2017; Ringe & Taylor 2014) are treasure troves of information, as is Fulk (2018) – though be warned that they are not exactly light bedtime reading.

8 Wrapping up

Congratulations! You've reached the end of the journey. But as T. S. Eliot reminds us,

> In my beginning is my end.
> ...
> In my end is my beginning.
> (Eliot 1977: 177, 183)

Indeed, here we are, at the end of this book, but the journey has only just begun. Before you go on to your further adventures, though, it's important to make sure that you have sufficiently processed your experiences from all the recent travels. In this final chapter, we first remind you of the reasons why studying the history of English can be useful and exciting, we then present you with an overview of the main themes we covered, and finally – as always – exercises await which should help you to consolidate all that knowledge you picked up along the way.

8.1 Main observations

We hit the road in Chapter 1, where we discussed six main observations that our voyage was to make us aware of. The remaining chapters then took us to different temporal destinations, in which specific examples relevant for the specific periods were covered.

8.1.1 Variation, variation everywhere

First of all, we saw that variation is indeed omnipresent. All natural languages vary, and variation is found in all areas of the English language. We saw this plenty of times, but let's have a look at some examples. We find examples of orthographic (or spelling) variation:

- Present Day English <you> vs. <u> for *you*

- Middle English <whanne> vs. <quanne> for *when* (§5.2.2 and §5.2.3)

Phonetic and phonological variation:

- Present Day English rising intonation in statements (2.2.3)

- Old English *hlaf* /hla:f/ becoming Middle English /la:f/ (§5.2.3)

Morphological variation:

- Present Day English *The government want to support bumblebee sprees* vs. *The government wants to support bumblebee sprees* (§2.3.2)

- Middle English pronouns *they*, *them* replacing earlier *hie*, *hem* (§5.3.3)

Syntactic variation:

- Present Day English *My hedgehog got stolen* vs. *My hedgehog was stolen* (§2.4.2)

- Early Modern English *What do you read?* vs. earlier *What read you?* (§4.4.1)

Lexical variation:

- Present Day English *trousers* vs. *pants* (§1.2.4)

- *café* referring to a place serving different things in different communities of English (§1.2.4)

- Old and Middle English *meat* referring to what today's *food* refers to

And pragmatic variation:

- Present Day English dialectal terms of address like *love* and *pet* (§1.2.5)

- Middle and Early Modern English second person pronoun variation between *thou*/*thee* and *ye*/*you* (§4.3.1)

As these examples also demonstrate, we find variation in *all* linguistic levels in all stages of the history of English: Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, Late Modern English, and Present Day English. And even in the prehistory of the language (Chapter 7), we can be sure that there was variation, even if not all of it is recoverable by means of linguistic reconstruction.

In addition, we saw that there's another dimension to variation which seeps through language – the social aspects of language variation. You will, for instance, remember the example of progressive passives (e.g. *The bumblebees are being watched*) being (a) heavily stigmatized in Late Modern English; and (b) associated with the group of the Lake Poets. As speakers of Present Day English, we know that progressive passives are (a) no longer stigmatized, and (b) no longer associated with the Lake Poets. Linguistic variation can serve a wide range of functions, and the social meaning of variation is also subject to change.

8.1.2 The social life of language

In every period of the language, it therefore also became apparent that linguistic variation more often than not comes with a certain social function, or social meaning. In other words, although many instances of linguistic variation do not change the lexical content of a sentence, they can reveal various social affiliations of the speakers. We discussed this most in the chapter on Present Day English, where it's easiest to tap into such social meanings of linguistic variation, but there's no doubt that cases of variation in the older periods also went hand in hand with variably complex social implications.

To refresh our memory a little bit here, remember the stigma associated with /h/-DROPPING discussed in Chapter 3, related to one's social class and therefore status in the power dynamics of the social hierarchy. We also touched upon the case of AAE (African American English), whose linguistic features typically signal one's ethnicity. But even something as innocuous as spelling can signal social meaning; can you imagine your grandparents writing *C u l8er!* to you, or some such? To combine a range of linguistic phenomena clearly imbued with social meaning, imagine your grandparents writing *S'up, bro?* when communicating with you.

8.1.3 Irregularities

Within standard (and most non-standard) varieties of English, in Chapters 4–7 we read about changes and alternations that have resulted in the following irregularities:

- irregular plural formation: *child ~ children*; *man ~ men*; *ox ~ oxen*; *sheep ~ sheep*; *wolf ~ wolves*

- irregular verbal inflection: *drink ~ drank ~ drunk*; *keep ~ kept ~ kept*

- irregular comparatives and superlatives: *old ~ elder ~ eldest*[1]

- not numerous but frequent noun-adjective correspondences: *length ~ long*; *sanity ~ sane*

- not numerous but frequent noun-verb correspondences: *song ~ sing*; *tooth ~ teethe*

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[1]These coexist in most varieties of English with the regular (and more frequently used) forms *older* and *oldest.*

Many more examples were provided in the relevant chapters, and now you're less in the dark as to where they come from. And if you're still as much in the dark as before starting reading this book, we recommend revisiting the chapters, especially if it's been some time between your last classes and your exam preparation. And remember there's always the table of contents to consult in order to remind yourself where we discuss what.

8.1.4 Interpreting older literary and other texts

In Chapter 4, it started becoming apparent that we need to know at least something about the language of the period to be able to engage with the literary (and other) works of Early Modern English. More specifically, we saw that the 2nd person pronoun variation went with a complex web of social meanings (remember our *you*, *thou*, and *thee* examples and the Hamlet exercise, 2), which are likely lost on the reader of the 21st century without sufficient knowledge of the history of English.

Further down the path, the language started to look somewhat alien as we approached Middle English and even more so by the time we reached Old English. Without a dictionary and a basic knowledge of the structural properties of the language, we would all find it extremely challenging, if not impossible, to even read texts written in Middle and Old English, let alone engage with them further beyond basic comprehension.

8.1.5 Different linguistic levels can interact

We also saw that the different linguistic levels or domains (morphology, syntax, phonology, lexicon, pragmatics) not infrequently interact with each other. To take a Present Day English example, in Exercise 4 in Chapter 1 we saw a sentence containing *I dunno*. As the non-standard spelling implies, this is not pronounced as [aɪ dəʊnt nəʊ] (which is what the standard spelling, <I don't know>, would suggest), but rather something like [ɐdənə]. So here we see something very much related to sounds and phonology. However, all these reductions also affect the morphology of the phrase: how many words are there in something like *I dunno*? If we decided to treat *dunno* as a single word, this also means that there is a new lexical item in one's vocabulary, and so we would have to also consider this of relevance for the lexical component of English. This makes this example also relevant for syntax: depending on how many words we say *dunno* represents, and the structure that underlies it, we'd have to conceptualize these different possibilities with different syntactic analyses and trees. And finally, pragmatics also

gets to share in the interest surrounding *I dunno*. For instance, Pichler & Levey (2010) show that the reduced form, *dunno*, is associated with different pragmatic functions than the unreduced form, *I don't know*: in their data, in doctor-patient conversations the reduced form was associated with reluctance to talk as opposed to genuine lack of knowledge.

In the previous chapters, you were presented with more examples which would be of interest to a range of linguists interested in various levels, such as semi-modals discussed in Chapter 3 on Late Modern English (*gonna*, *finna*, etc.), the Great Vowel Shift discussed in Chapter 4 on Early Modern English, and the reduction of morphological endings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 on Middle and Old English. And those are just some of the many examples we could recall here.

If, at this stage, you are worried about not being able to tell whether a certain phenomenon belongs to the domain of syntax or morphology or phonology, etc., we recommend calming down with a cup of good tea (or cake, or both), consulting the list of contents of this book (which gives you a list of phenomena under the linguistic domains), and realizing that more often than not a specific case of language change is of relevance to multiple domains of language structure. Interaction between various linguistic levels happens all the time, and there is no hiding from this fact.

8.1.6 Language change is inevitable (and perfectly normal)

And by this point, you might be thinking that we've been hammering this message home a wee bit too much, but here it comes again, because it *is* important: language change is inevitable – and perfectly normal. We saw this in every stage of the history of the English language. This fact enables us to make interesting observations.

First, what we learn about the mechanisms of language change in Present Day English should also hold for how change can operate in earlier stages of the language. This also works the other way round. In other words, if we think that a certain change is impossible or unlikely in Present Day English, it should also be impossible or unlikely in all previous stages, and vice versa. To use T. S. Eliot's insights again,

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past.
> (Eliot 1977: 171)

It is sometimes the case that efforts at standardization and codification, of the kind discussed in Chapter 4, may explicitly aim to halt – or even reverse – language change. However, they are basically never successful in doing so – although deliberate efforts at prescriptivism may have other, unintended effects (Curzan 2014).

The second observation we can make is that it seems very usual for human beings to comment on language, and to be anxious and self-conscious about our own language use. We mainly looked at this in Chapter 3 and to some extent in Chapter 2. If you're interested in a critical approach to these topics, we recommend Cameron (2003), and for a perspective from the history of English see Machan (2009).

So here we are, having reminded ourselves of the major observations about how one could benefit from studying the history of a language, and in our case that of English. And who knows, perhaps you can think of even more reasons!

8.2 Themes

We've seen that there are good reasons why one would want to study the history of English. As we navigated through the different periods (moving from the comforts of Present Day English to the rougher seas of Germanic), we also encountered several themes which are important for our understanding of how the language has developed. §8.1 touched upon some of these, but let's remind ourselves of all of the major themes now.

As already mentioned, variation is omnipresent. It appears on all linguistic levels and in all historical periods of the language (and languages other than English are no exception, of course barring languages that are dead). This leads us to the first theme: homogeneity vs. heterogeneity. In Chapter 2, we mentioned how dialects of English are often seen as dying out due to the effects of media and technology. We saw plenty of examples of changes which happen in a (more) global scale in English as well; however, these typically (if not always) develop local "flavours". While older varieties of English may be changing, that does not necessarily mean they are dying out. And even in cases where some traditional dialects could be considered extinct or significantly changed in terms of their perceived salience, new dialects do develop. Homogeneity and heterogeneity are therefore relative. And if we remember Chapter 3, where the emergence of American English was introduced, we find a very good example thereof.

In a similar vein, while the technological developments we've experienced across the past decades and centuries have changed how we communicate, the

research available thus far suggests that exposure to TV and social media do not lead to language change as much as is frequently assumed by the general public (see Chapter 2).

Chapters 1 and 2 also introduced the sentiment expressed by a wide range of speakers: language change is seen as bad. This theme also appeared in Chapter 3. Indeed, the idea that change is bad is a fairly widespread belief, and one which is by no means limited to language.[2] However, throughout the book we were again and again exposed to different waves of changes, and one thing that does remain constant as we travel through the historical stages of English is the fact that all the linguistic levels will and do undergo changes of some sort. Change is inevitable, whatever we may think of it as speakers.

This leads us to a very closely related topic, that of prescriptivism. Prescriptivism was the overarching theme of Chapter 3. Although the phenomenon is not limited to Late Modern English, it is very much felt in this period in particular, in contrast to the older periods. In Chapter 4, we were predominantly occupied with the theme of standardization, which turned out to be very important for the rise of institutionalized prescriptivism in the history of English, and in Late Modern English in particular.

Chapter 5 was very much about transitions. The Middle English period, before standardization got into full swing, is hugely diverse in terms of the linguistic varieties attested, and drastic changes can be observed on all linguistic levels in the four hundred years of Middle English. /h/s were lost left, right and centre, a smorgasbord of new pronouns made their way into the language from different sources, and verb-second word order gave way to the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order of the present-day language. Some of these transitions are predictable as part of larger patterns: for instance, the meaning change of *indeed*, where originally pragmatic meaning becomes semantically encoded, a common tendency in language change. Others, like vowel lengthening and shortening processes, can seem arbitrary and idiosyncratic. The history of any language is filled with both kinds of transition.

In Chapter 6, we focused on language contact and multilingualism. When approaching Old English, and the change from Old English to Middle English, it is important for us to consider the role of contact with Brythonic Celtic, Norse, and Latin (at least). Although we emphasized language contact in our discussion of Old English, we also saw that language contact played an important role

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[2]George and Míša, for instance, both refused to buy a smartphone for a long time (although they would grudgingly admit the advantages of owning one of the machines). George finally surrendered to the smartphone technology in summer 2021, while Míša is still holding on.

in Middle English (Latin and French being the most frequently highlighted languages of interest). Starting with colonization in Early Modern English, language contact with a wide range of cultures and speakers of different languages has introduced a good range of new concepts, words and structures into the language. The English language has never stood "alone", and it has never been the province of only monolinguals, despite what nationalistic "one nation, one language" rhetoric would have us believe.

Finally, Chapter 7 dealt with linguistic prehistory. The issues raised there about our access to knowledge are crucial for any reflection on history: how do we find out about the past? And how can we find out whether we're right? Regardless of whether we have preserved texts from a particular period or not, do we ever really have direct access to the truth of what happened? Our stance – the stance of all serious historians – is that the story we tell is constructed. The title of the book is "*A* history of English", with an indefinite article, not "*The* history of English", with a definite article. Our history, like all other possible histories, is a narrative, one that we've put together in good faith and with the aim of coming as close to the truth as possible. But, like all other possible histories, our history is subjective, coloured by who we are as writers, and what you take away from your journey will also be subjective, coloured by who you are as a reader. There exist mountains of scholarship in English historical linguistics, and we have had to be selective in what we include. It's also important to remember that the history of English is not a closed book: new evidence is still coming to light, and new interpretations of old evidence are frequently proposed. Just like the English language itself, the received wisdom as to the history of the language is variable, and constantly in flux.

Having reached the final destination and packed with knowledge, you're presented with a little snack to help you consolidate all this knowledge (and possibly get ready for your exam, if you're taking a course on the history of English).

Suggested exercises

E.1 Variation everywhere?

List two examples of variation found in Present Day English regarding:

1. orthography/spelling

2. phonetics and phonology

3. morphology

4. syntax

5. lexicon

6. pragmatics/discourse

Don't be surprised if some of your examples seem to bridge more than one linguistic level (e.g. both morphology and syntax, or both morphology and phonology).

E.2 The Sower and the Seed revisited

Below are four versions of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed from the New Testament (Matthew 13, verses 3–4), from different points in time, across a thousand years of the history of English. This exercise is repeated from Chapter 1 (§1). If you did it then, it's worth revisiting now in order to reflect on how much you've learned. If you didn't do it then, well, it's still a good exercise!

- *A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.*
(New International Version, 1973)

- *Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*
  (King James version, 1611)

- *Lo! he that sowith, yede out to sowe his seed. And while he sowith, summe seedis felden bisidis the weie, and briddis of the eir camen, and eeten hem.*
  (Wycliffe version, c. 1395)

- *Soþlice ut eode se sædere hys sæd to sawenne and þa þa he seow. sume hig feollon wiþ weg. and fuglas comun and æton þa;*
  (West Saxon Gospels, c. 990)

Try to identify differences between the texts in terms of each of the linguistic levels we've discussed in the book:

- Phonetics & phonology
  (of course, here you'll need to make an educated guess, based on spelling)

- Morphology

- Syntax

- Lexicon

- Pragmatics/discourse

Tips for teachers: If you'd like to make this exercise a bit more novel, replace these specific extracts with other ones, or add some more.

E.3 Timeline

Below is a blank timeline covering the years 400 to the present. Print it out or photocopy it, and try to fill in the timeline with important events and changes in the history of English. If you find it useful, you can distin-

guish between historical changes that are relevant for the history of the language (like the Norman Conquest) and changes in the language itself (like the Great Vowel Shift) by putting historical events above the line and language changes below the line.

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├──────────┼──────────┼──────────┼──────────┤
400        800        1200       1600       2000
```
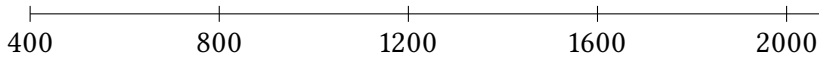
Tip for students: This works well as a revision exercise.

Tip for teachers: In class, this exercise can be carried out in small groups. Give the students 20–30 minutes to put the timeline together, then compare the results in plenary.

Tip for teachers: Different groups will have different timelines, and not all of the differences will be straightforwardly errors. You can use this to start a discussion about the subjective nature of history-telling, if appropriate.

Tip for teachers: If students have included historical figures (Shakespeare, Alfred, Columbus…) on their timelines, you can also use this to start a discussion about gender representation in history-telling and the reasons behind this.

E.4 Irregularities

Think of three to five irregularities in Present Day English. Can you say anything about where these irregularities come from?

E.5 Food for thought

"Consider one aspect of the history of English for which we don't have completely sufficient evidence and, on the basis of this example, discuss the challenges of trying to learn about a language from the past. How have scholars tried to meet these challenges regarding this aspect of the history of English, and how successful have been their attempts?" (Liu 2019: 104)

Fare well, and may the bumblebees be with you!
Míša and George

Answers to exercises

Chapter 1

E.1
Here we only mention a few salient features, including those suggested in the hints.

- Phonetics and phonology: <seed> vs. <seedis> vs. <sæd> suggests differences in the first vowel, but also the difference of one as opposed to two syllables in one case

- Morphology: endings such as *-ith* (third person singular) and *-en* (third person plural) in the Wycliffe version, which are no longer found today. There are also archaic word forms like *yede* (Wycliffe) and *eode* (West Saxon Gospels), an old past tense form of the verb *GO*.

- Syntax: the New International version has *was scattering*, using the progressive (see §3.4.1 for details), which the earlier versions do not have.

- Lexicon: there are some different word choices in the earlier versions, such as *DEVOUR* (a verb of French origin) rather than *EAT* in the King James version. The King James version and the West Saxon Gospels both use a form of *FOWL* rather than *BIRD* – in Present Day English, *FOWL* is very restricted in usage to a particular type of bird, and only used in technical contexts.

- Pragmatics/discourse: the earlier versions have discourse markers like *Behold* and *Lo!* that are not used in Present Day English (or at least not unless specifically trying to evoke an archaic tone). In speech, the modern words *Hey* and *So* have a roughly similar function at the beginning of a statement, though they don't tend to be used in writing in this way.

E.2

1. - *brillig, mome*: noun or adjective

- *slithy, mimsy, fruminous, uffish, tulgey*: adjectives
- *toves, borogoves, wabe, raths*: nouns
- *gyre, gimble, outgrabe, whiffing, burbled*: verbs
- *Jabberwock, Jubjub, Bandersnatch*: proper nouns

2. - *-y*: e.g. *lucky, happy*
   - *-ous*: e.g. *obvious, luminous*
   - *-ish*: e.g. *ticklish, Spanish*
   - *-(e)s*: most plural nouns (e.g. *houses, doors*)
   - *-ing*: present participles (e.g. *sleeping, running*)
   - *-ed*: most past tense verbs (e.g. *waited, opened*)

E.3

1. *Everyone*

2. *bumblebees*

3. *should*

4. *appreciate bumblebees* (the whole VP)

5. IP

6. *should* (the head I) and *appreciate bumblebees* (the whole VP)

7. *appreciate* (the head V)

E.4
Below we provide suggested answers to the first of the four questions:
Q1:

1. B, D, H

2. depending on who you ask also E: even standards are subject to change

Q2:

1. A: double *from*

2. C: *dunno, wi*; these are seen as non-standard when spelt, but in spoken language most of us actually pronounce these in a reduced way without even noticing!

3. C and E: some people would also say that *kind of, sort of, you know*, and *sort of thing* are not standard; they are definitely more informal and colloquial

4. E: the preposition in *laughed upon* would be considered archaic and occasionally even non-standard by some

5. F: *divvent*, negative concord *nt + nowt*

6. G: *us* used with a singular referent; negative concord *never + no*

7. H: lexical *hadn't* (rather than *didn't have*) is archaic and would be considered non-standard by some

8. I: *fur-sty* (this is known as TH-fronting)

Chapter 2

E.1

1. Quotative *BE like*

2. Singular verb agreement with collective noun (*team is*)

3. New words associated with social media: *photobomb* and *selfie* (the original tweet also contains two emoji)

4. *GET*-passive (*got arrested*)

5. Absence of third-person singular *-s* (on *like* and *want*)

E.2

A. 1. The word *fuck* is found with fluctuating frequency before 1820, then disappears until the 1950s, when it starts to rapidly increase in frequency.

2. Texts from before 1820 are often printed with the long s, <ſ>, in some contexts rather than <s> – including word-initially. Optical character recognition (OCR) software struggles to distinguish <ſ> from <f>. Therefore, these early apparent instances of *fuck* may in fact be instances of *suck*. See for instance the text in §1, where a *fucking child* is mentioned.

3. Another possibility to consider is a potential semantic change in *fuck*: if a word has different meanings, or even connotations, in different periods, it wouldn't be surprising to see different frequencies at which it's used.

B. 1. It depends on the period.

2. In the corpus "English (2012)", the word *biscuit* is more frequent until about 1977.

3. In the corpus "American English (2012)", *biscuit* is overtaken by *cookie* earlier, around 1973. In the corpus "British English (2012)", *biscuit* remains more frequent, though *cookie* increases in frequency throughout the 20th century.

4. The word *cookie* is an innovative Americanism.

C. Use your own initiative here.

D. It's difficult to tell whether *BE like* and *BE all* increase over time, though it seems as if they do increase from about 1965 onwards. In British English, the increase seems to start somewhat later, in the 1970s. One problem with this search is that *BE like* and *BE all* are hard to search for: you need to search for all word forms in the PARADIGM of *BE*. Both forms remain vanishingly rare compared to *SAY* according to this data.

E. The problem with searching for the *GET*-passive is that it is a syntactic construction, and the N-gram Viewer is set up to search for words, not for constructions. You can try to search for common combinations (e.g. *get paid*, *got fired*), but there are many possible combinations of a form of *GET* and a participle, and it would take forever to search for all of them.

F. Google Books is a corpus of books. Books represent literary language, not (on the whole) spoken language. (This is indeed most likely why we're getting surprising results for *BE like* in E.) We also don't know what sort of authors are represented in the corpus, and whether this is stably balanced over time. (For instance, there are probably many more women authors from the 20th century than from the 17th.)

G. Again, this one is up to you and your imagination!

Chapter 3

E.3
At least two reasons suggest themselves:

- *No man* is less inclusive than *no one* in terms of gender.

- *No man* is also less inclusive in terms of species. Star Trek is full of a range of beings!

E.4

> *I love* the look of the new house, but it is still *building*, so I *should not* go in there yet, even though I *want to.* I would probably *be* hit by falling bricks and *cry out* "Owwww[3], this *was not* a good idea!" I *must* be patient.

E.8
Words restricted to North America: *butte, cougar, woodchuck.* Comparing the information in the OED and your own familiarity with how these are used may give you different results. Words restricted to specific regions in North America: *butte, woodchuck.* First attestation and etymology:

- *to antagonise*, 1634 (OED, 2020, s.v. antagonize, v.), from Greek (criticised by Brits as an Americanism in the past)

- *to belittle*, 1785 (OED, 2020, s.v. belittle, v.), coined by Thomas Jefferson (criticised by Brits as an Americanism in the past)

- *butte*, 1805 (OED, 2020, s.v. butte, n.), from French

- *coca-cola*, 1887 (OED, 2020, s.v. Coca-Cola, n.), information provided for the individual words, not the compound as such

- *cookie*, 1754 (OED, 2020, s.v. cookie, n.), from Dutch

- *cougar*, 1774 (OED, 2020, s.v. cougar, n.), from French, possibly ultimately from Guarani

- *creek*, 1300 (OED, 2020, s.v. creek, n.1), from French but also Dutch

- *funky*, 1680 (OED, 2020, s.v. funky, adj.1), origin of *funk* is uncertain, but *funky* first occurs in the context of Buddy Bolden's Blues in the US

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[3]Or *Good Lord!*

- *lengthy*, 1759 (OED, 2020, s.v. lengthy, adj.), Americanism

- *woodchuck*, 1670 (OED, 2020, s.v. woodchuck, n.), from Algonquian, probably Ojibwe

E.9

Here we only mention which cases could be analysed as cases of amelioration and/or pejoration. These are simplistic answers, and you'll have to engage with the OED to reach more detailed and more critical interpretations.

- *baboon*: may be a case of pejoration, but we don't see a clear time-line progression whereby the more negative meanings would be attested in later stages (2020, s.v. baboon, n.)

- *churl*: pejoration (2020, s.v. churl, n.)

- *gay*: pejoration (2020, s.v. gay, adj., adv., and n.); but also amelioration, in the context of the reclamation of the term by the gay community

- *girl*: some instances of pejoration are attested after the word changed from its original meaning, 'a child of either sex', to refer to 'a female human' (2020, s.v. girl, n.)

- *hussy*: pejoration (2020, s.v. hussy | huzzy, n.)

- *mouse*: amelioration and pejoration depending on the meaning (2020, s.v. mouse, n.)

- *weed*: pejoration (2020, s.v. weed, n.1)

- *artful*: pejoration (2020, s.v. artful, adj. (and n.))

- *coy*: pejoration (2020, s.v. coy, adj.)

- *crafty*: pejoration (2020, s.v. crafty, adj.)

- *cunning*: pejoration (2020, s.v. cunning, adj.)

- *fond*: amelioration (2020, s.v. fond, adj. and n.)

- *funky*: amelioration (2020, s.v. funky, adj.1)

- *jolly*: pejoration (2020, s.v. jolly, adj. and adv.)

- *lewd*: pejoration (2020, s.v. lewd, adj.)

- *nice*: amelioration (2020, s.v. nice, adj. and adv.)

- *shrewd*: amelioration (2020, s.v. shrewd, adj.)

- *silly*: pejoration (2020, s.v. silly, adj., n., and adv.)

- *subtle*: complicated (2020, s.v. subtle, adj. and n.)

- *to await*: amelioration (2020, s.v. await, v.)

- *to shit*: pejoration (2020, s.v. shit, v.)

- *to smite*: complicated (2020, s.v. smite, v.)

- *to tease*: complicated, but limiting ourselves to OED only pejoration, otherwise also amelioration (2020, s.v. tease, v.1)

Chapter 4

E.1
Simplistic answers are provided here, and you may well disagree with them for a range of reasons:

A.

- diphthongal: Greater Manchester, Kent, London, North Yorkshire, Co. Tipperary

- monophthongal: Newcastle, Orkney, Perthshire

B.
Monophthongal realizations are more conservative.

E.2
1.

- A. Attorney General switches from the respectful *you* form (V form) to the less respectful *thou* forms (T forms).

- B. Hamlet addresses the Ghost with *thou* forms until he realizes the Ghost is his father – he momentarily switches to the more respectful *you.*

2. They are in line with the use of the pronouns. For instance, Attorney General addresses Raleigh as *thou traitor* in the passage in which he switches to the less respectful forms.

3., 4. Use your own imagination here.

E.3
See §4.4.1 if you need to check the notions covered in these answers.

1. *What saies he*: This shows movement of the lexical verb from V to I to C in an interrogative, since the finite verb *saies* precedes the subject *he*. In Present Day English, we would insert *DO* here: *What does he say?* (or, with the progressive, *What is he saying?*).

2. *you know not*: *you do not know*, with *DO*-support in a negative declarative.

3. *why call you*: *why do you call*, as in the first example.

4. *saw you him*: *did you see him*, with *DO*-support in an interrogative.

5. *Fear me not*: Present Day English *Do not fear me* (or *Don't fear me*). This is an imperative, which we didn't discuss in the chapter, but the principle is the same as for the other types of clause we've discussed: lexical verbs can't move from V to I to C any more, and instead *DO* must be inserted.

E.5
In the below, the originally Germanic word is given on the left, and the rough Latin or Romance equivalent on the right.

- *bless*: *consecrate*
- *break*: *disintegrate*
- *chew*: *masticate*
- *drink*: *imbibe*
- *flood*: *inundate*

- *free*: *emancipate*
- *go*: *depart*
- *job*: *position*
- *lie*: *prevaricate*
- *think*: *cogitate*

All the Germanic words given here are monosyllabic, and all the Latin/Romance words are polysyllabic. In some cases, the Latin/Romance words are semantically narrower: for instance, to *disintegrate* something is to *break* it in a very specific

way, into tiny pieces. In general, the words on the right are found more often in formal registers.

E.6

- *analysis*: *analyses* (Greek, via Latin)

- *cherub*: *cherubim* (Hebrew, via Greek and Latin)

- *index*: *indices* (Latin)

- *matrix*: *matrices* (Latin/French)

- *medium*: *media* (Latin)

- *nucleus*: *nuclei* (Latin)

- *species*: *species* (Latin)

- *stigma*: *stigmata* (Greek, via Latin)

- *stratum*: *strata* (Latin)

E.7
The following words are of Germanic origin: *clean*, *borrow*, *tongue*, *never*, *keep*, *house*; as are the following affixes: *-ed*, *-ing*, *un-*. So Cheke himself uses plenty of borrowings.

Chapter 5

E.1
The take-home message is this:

- We don't have uniform results in any of the levels (not within lexical variables, not within phonological variables, not within syntactic variables). It follows that variation found in one level doesn't have to be reflected in the other levels of (a/the) language.

- The important thing to realize here is that the data can be very messy and whilst some variables may be very or fairly clear indicators of a divide of some sort (such as the North-South divide), others may indicate divides in a more subtle way, and yet others may not really indicate anything in terms of regional differences. Variation is messy more often than not.

E.2

On the whole, Chaucer is indeed consistent in assigning features typical of southern ME to the Miller and the Narrator, and those typical of northern ME to Aleyn and John. But see lines 4066, 4072, and 4073 for the southern character using the third person plural pronoun *they*.

We can only speculate what happened here:

- Perhaps *they* had creapt into the south by this stage, at least to some extent?

- Maybe this comes from a manuscript copied by a speaker natively speaking a more northern variety of Middle English than Chaucer did?

In any case, Chaucer is suspiciously consistent here. As is obvious from the previous exercise, variation tends to be more on the messier side.

E.5

1. *s(c)he*
2. *ye*
3. *hie*
4. *thou*
5. *thei*

6. *ye*
7. *I* or *ich*
8. *thei*
9. *he(o)*

E.6

1.
   - (23): strict V2
   - (24): either strict V2 or IS-V2
   - (25): IS-V2
   - (26): either strict V2 or IS-V2
   - (27): IS-V2
   - (28): strict V2

2. All the examples from *Astrolabe* are strict V2 or compatible with a strict V2 syntax. All the examples from the *Parson's Tale* are IS-V2 or compatible with IS-V2 syntax.

3. Eitler (2006) argues that variation in Chaucer's syntax can be explained by the audience he is writing for. Chaucer himself was mainly a user of a strict V2 variety, and uses this when writing for himself and those close to him (as in *Astrolabe*, for his son), but when writing for a wider audience – as in the *Canterbury Tales* – he uses much more IS-V2.

E.7

- *guardian*: someone who guards (and often has legal responsibility, as in *parent or guardian*)
  warden: a watchman or official

- *garderobe*: a storeroom or toilet
  wardrobe: a cupboard for storing clothes

- *guard* (noun): someone who protects/watches over
  ward (noun): someone or something protected

- *guarantee*: an assurance
  warranty: security, a legal assurance
  warrant: authorization, permission

E.8

1. *his* vs. *her*; *his* is not feminine, but *her* is. The former relies on grammatical gender, the latter on biological sex.

2. *his* vs. *her* – see above; *eyre* vs. *eggs*: here we see different plural strategies (*-re* vs. *-s*).

3. Present Day English uses a loan from Latin.

4. semantic change: Middle English *brides* refers to young birds, whereas Present Day English *birds* refers to winged creatures generally (hence *chicks*).

5. semantic change: Middle English *mete* refers to food generally, rather than edible flesh, as is the case in Present Day English (hence *meat*).

6. /h/-dropping (*hit* vs. *it*); Middle English shows a prefix (*i-*), unlike Present Day English.

7. two different verbs are used: the Middle English one is strong, the Present Day English one is weak.

8. Middle English thorn vs. Present Day English <th>; *wilde* shows an ending, *wild* doesn't; *bowe* shows an ending, *branch* doesn't; *bowe* and *branch* are two different words.

9. different words: Present Day English shows a loan from French.

E.9

1. Middle English shows thorn, which is gone today; we see spelling differences in *ceased* – today's version shows the effects of the Great Vowel Shift, not visible in the spelling

2. the Middle English spelling suggests that the second syllable contains an /u/ and carries stress, unlike the situation in Present Day English

3. Middle English shows thorn, which is gone today; Present Day English *earth* does not have an inflectional suffix, but the Middle English version does

4. inflectional suffix present in Middle English

5. inflectional suffix present in Middle English

6. inflectional suffix present in the Middle English noun; the verbal suffix must have contained an unstressed vowel in Middle English

E.10

- cause and effect problem: sound change happened first here and this became reflected in the spelling

- it's true the first sound is a dental fricative, but it makes no sense to call it "definite" (or "indefinite"!)

- bad logic: both are lexical words; they are not related

Chapter 6

E.1

1. ash
2. bed
3. kin
4. day
5. fish
6. hill
7. man
8. might
9. over
10. ship
11. thorn
12. thorn
13. thin

E.2

[ʍæt weː gaːrdena in jæːɑrdaɣum]

Don't worry if you put [g] instead of [ɣ] in the final word – we didn't cover this in the book. See Hogg (1992: 91) for details of this voiced velar fricative.

E.3

- Voiceless: **s**æ, wi**f**, **f**lota, cea**s**ter, ly**f**t, yrh**ð**o, o**ff**rian, oð**ð**e, wæ**s**, **þ**egn, be-**s**ecgan

- Voiced: bro**ð**or, hræ**f**n, weor**þ**e, o**f**er, ri**s**an, æ**þ**ele, bo**s**om, e**f**ne, no**s**u, bli**þ**e, heo**f**on, hæ**s**len

E.4

1. Accusative, singular, masculine, strong

2. Nominative or accusative, plural, neuter, strong

3. Nominative, singular, feminine, strong

4. Genitive, singular, masculine or neuter (in fact it's masculine – but you can only know this by looking at a dictionary or at other forms), weak

5. Genitive, plural, any gender (in fact it's neuter – but you can only know this by looking at a dictionary or at other forms), weak

6. Accusative, singular, masculine, weak

7. Accusative, singular, feminine, strong

8. Dative, plural, any gender (in fact it's masculine – but you can only know this by looking at a dictionary or at other forms), weak or strong (in fact it's strong – but you can only know this by looking at a dictionary or at other forms)

E.5

1. The *fruma* (chief).

2. The *hlæfdige* (lady).

3. The *fruma* was making unwanted advances, including using violence.

E.6
A. No – the morpheme -*as* was just one of many ways of forming the plural in Old English, and was restricted to the strong masculine nouns. See §6.3.3.

B.

1. *sheep ~ sheep*: strong neuter long

2. *man ~ men*: athematic

3. *deer ~ deer*: strong neuter long

4. *fish ~ fish*: strong neuter long (actually, in Old English *fish* was a strong masculine noun, but ran over to another paradigm camp later on)

5. *knife ~ knives*: strong masculine

6. *ox ~ oxen*: weak

7. *wolf ~ wolves*: strong masculine

C.

1. *tooth ~ teeth*: *i*-umlaut (see §6.2.2)

2. *louse ~ lice*: *i*-umlaut

3. *child ~ children*: this is a trickier one (sorry!); *-en* indicates a weak noun, but there is actually also a plural *-r* affix, representing a marginal class not shown in the magic sheet; today's *children* have historically two plural suffixes!

E.7

Only the main differences are commented on here:

1. Old English lacks a reflexive pronoun (*him* vs. *himself*)

2. Old English shows no article; *solitary* is a loan from French; Old English shows an ending (*-a*)

3. Object Verb in Old English, Verb Object in Present Day English; Old English has a different verbal ending than Present Day English; Old English again has a suffix on the noun (*-e*)

4. Old English shows no articles; Old English shows the genitive suffix *-es* where Present Day English uses the preposition *of*

5. Old English shows verbal endings (*-e*, *-an*) where Present Day English has none; <sc> corresponds to <sh>; /hr/ is gone in Present Day English

6. Old English has a dative plural suffix (*-um*) where Present Day English has a suffix marking only number (*-s*)

7. Old English uses a ligature which is no longer present in today's English (also, notice the effects of the Great Vowel Shift)

8. V2 in Old English; Old English shows no article; the eth grapheme is not used in Present Day English; the noun has an ending in Old English (*-a*)

9. what is expressed through the preposition *of* in Present Day English is expressed through an ending in Old English (*-a*)

E.8

1. "But he must reconcile the quarrelsome" (head-final)

2. "that he can do no good" (head-final)

3. "he wanted to kill King David" or "who wanted to kill that king David" (head-initial)

4. "if she would tolerate that disgrace" (head-final)

5. "that he wanted to reach his hut" (head-initial)

E.14

1. "gendered" means something different than "having grammatical gender"

2. adverbs don't have cases

3. English has descended from Germanic, as have various other languages (such as Swedish)

4. a verb in the infinitive can't have tense; a verbal ending cannot function as a plural marker of nouns

5. "casing" means something different than "morphologically marked cases"

6. it was inherited from Germanic

7. Old English did not have a free word order; V2 does not mean that the finite verb is going to show up at the end of a sentence

8. verbal mood morphology is not determined by nouns

9. thorn is a letter and has nothing to do with morphemes (or phonemes, for that matter)

Chapter 7

E.1

1. *slāpan
2. *skip

3. *mūsi
4. *skāp

5. *hand
6. *skīnan

E.2

1. Old Frisian is fun
2. I see dead people

3. The truth is out there
4. One small step for man

E.3

1. *pedal*: foot	5. *piscis*: fish	9. *cornu*: heart
2. *genu*: knee	6. *granum*: corn	10. *tres*: three
3. *dens*: tooth	7. *glaces*: cool	11. *genus*: kin
4. *cor*: heartily	8. *dicere*: teach	12. *edo*: eat

E.4

1. *gōs-i (plural noun) > *gēs*: /oː/ becomes /øː/ by *i*-umlaut. Subsequently the final /i/ in the unstressed syllable is lost. The /øː/ later unrounds to /eː/.

2. *fōd-jan > *fēdan*: /oː/ becomes /øː/ by *i*-umlaut. Subsequently the /j/ in the unstressed syllable is lost. The /øː/ later unrounds to /eː/.

3. *stel-idi > *stilþ*: /e/ becomes /i/ by *i*-umlaut. Subsequently the vowels in the unstressed syllables are lost. (Don't worry about the details of the changes in the unstressed syllables here.)

E.5

1. Weak; regular

2. Strong; irregular. It's a class V strong verb. The stem vowel alternation in the 2SG.PRES form is caused by *i*-umlaut.

3. Strong; regular

4. Weak; irregular. The giveaway is the coronal /t/ consonant in the past tense ending, and the fact that the stem vowel /oː/ in this form does not correspond to any of the strong verb classes. The sound changes that lead to this irregularity are complex and we won't discuss them here. Interestingly, forms like *bringst* (2SG.PRES) and *brang* (3SG.PAST) are also attested, suggesting that some speakers had reanalysed the verb as a class III strong verb.

Chapter 8

E.2
See the answers to the Chapter 1 version of this exercise.

Glossary of linguistic terms

<table>
<tr><td>AGREEMENT (CONCORD)</td><td>A syntactic configuration in which a morphosyntactic feature on one word systematically covaries with the same feature on another. For instance, in many varieties of English, the subject agrees with the verb for person and number (-*s* for third person singular; no ending elsewhere).</td></tr>
<tr><td>ALLOPHONE</td><td>A variant realization of a phoneme which is not contrastive. For example, in most varieties of Present Day English *limb* has an initial [l] produced primarily with the movement of the front part of the tongue. On the other hand, at the end of syllables, the /l/ phoneme typically has a dark or a darker allophone, [ɫ], as in *mill*, which includes the raising of the back part of the tongue in addition to the raising of its front part. But the distinction is never important for lexical meaning, i.e. in English we don't find pairs of words where the darkness, or velarization, of /l/ leads to two different words in *mill*: [mɪɫ] and [mɪl] would still refer to a 'place where grains are ground'. There are many more examples you can think of, e.g. /t/ being pronounced as a glottal stop, as in *water* [woːtə] vs. [woːʔə], or even as a tap [wɔːɾə].</td></tr>
<tr><td>CASE</td><td>A morphological category for nominals that is related to the grammatical function played by the nominal constituent (subject, direct object, etc.). In Old English, the four major cases we find are nominative, accusative, dative and genitive.</td></tr>
</table>

CLITIC   A morpheme that behaves syntactically like a free word but is phonologically dependent on another word or phrase. A Present Day English example is possessive *'s*.

COMPOUNDING   A type of morphology alongside INFLECTION and DERIVATION. Compounding is the process of forming a new word by putting two independent words together, e.g. *green + house = greenhouse*. Compounding can sometimes create unpredictable meanings; a greenhouse is not the same as a green house!

CORPUS   A collection of linguistic material (e.g. texts) suitable for use as a data source in linguistic research. An example is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008), which contains more than a billion words of text from 1990 onwards (25+ million words per year). A corpus (plural *corpora*) is usually intended to be REPRESENTATIVE of a particular variety (e.g. American English), and BALANCED in its selection of material (e.g. with respect to the gender of the author).

DEIXIS   The use of words for a specific time, place, person or direction whose reference is dependent on the context. For instance, *tomorrow* refers to different days, and *you* refers to different people, depending on when the word is used. Pronounced /daɪksɪs/ or /dɛɪksɪs/.

DERIVATION   A type of morphology alongside INFLECTION and COMPOUNDING. Derivation is the process of forming a new word by adding an affix (e.g. *punch > punchability*) or altering the root (e.g. *sing > song*). Unlike inflection, derivation can change the category of the word: in the two examples given here, a noun is formed from a verb.

DIACHRONIC   Across time. A study of how English verbs change between Old English and Present Day English, for example, would be a diachronic study. The opposite of SYNCHRONIC.

DIACRITIC | A distinguishing mark added to a grapheme, such as a dot (e.g. <ċ>) or a macron (e.g. <ū>). Usually used to indicate differences in pronunciation compared to the unmarked grapheme (e.g. <c> or <u>).

GEMINATE | Long consonant, as in Old English *cwellan* /kwɛlːan/ 'to kill'. Geminates are phonemic in Old English, i.e. they distinguish lexical meaning; compare *cwellan* with *cwelan* /kwɛlan/ 'to die'.

GIVEN INFORMATION | Information that has already been mentioned in the discourse, e.g. *the woman* in reference to someone who has previously been mentioned. The opposite of NEW information.

GRAMMATICAL- IZATION | Historical process by which lexical material becomes grammatical, open-class words (like nouns and verbs) become closed-class words (like pronouns and complementizers), and free words become bound morphemes (often through an intermediate CLITIC stage). Very common in language change (see Hopper & Traugott 2003). *See also* UNI- VERBATION.

/H/-DROPPING | The non-pronunciation of /h/ in words that historically had an /h/ (and which often still do in standard spelling). See §3.2.1 and §5.2.3.

INDICATIVE | A type of MOOD found in all stages of English. The indicative is the default mood and does not convey any particular stance towards the meaning of the clause.

INFLECTION | A type of morphology alongside DERIVATION and COMPOUNDING. Inflection is the process of forming a word-form within a PARADIGM, e.g. adding the grammatical morpheme -*s* to the verb *love* to get the third-person singular form *loves*. Unlike derivation, inflection cannot change the category of the word.

LEXICON | Quite simply, the words of a language (as opposed to its phonetics, syntax, etc.). The corresponding adjective is LEXICAL.

MOOD
A morphological category applying to verbs, allowing speakers to express their attitude towards an event or statement. All stages of English have an INDICATIVE and an imperative mood; Middle and Old English also have a SUBJUNCTIVE mood.

MORPHEME
The smallest meaningful morphological unit that cannot be further divided. The word *played* consists of two morphemes: the root *play* and the INFLECTIONAL morpheme *-ed*. The word *replayable* consists of three morphemes: the DERIVATIONAL prefix *re-*, the root *play*, and the derivational suffix *-able*.

NEGATIVE CONCORD
The use of multiple negative-marked words in a single clause to express only one semantic negation, e.g. *I didn't do nothing to no one* rather than the "standard" *I didn't do anything to anyone*. A type of AGREEMENT.

NEW INFORMATION
Information that is newly introduced into the discourse, e.g. *a woman* who has not been mentioned before in the discourse. The opposite of GIVEN information.

ORTHOGRAPHY
How a language is written: primarily, spelling and punctuation.

OVERDOTTING
The practice of adding a DIACRITIC dot over certain graphemes in editions of Old English texts, representing the palatal consonants /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, and /j/ in Old English as <sċ>, <ċ>, <ċġ>, and <ġ> respectively. Overdotting is purely editorial and is not found in the original Old English manuscripts used in this way.

PARADIGM
The set of word-forms that belong to a particular lexical word. For the verb *LOVE*, for instance, the possible forms are *love*, *loves*, *loved*, and *loving*. Paradigms are often displayed as tables. Determining the members of a paradigm is the job of INFLECTIONAL morphology.

PASSIVE   A syntactic construction in which the grammatical subject expresses the theme or patient of the lexical verb. Often passive sentences have a corresponding active sentence: *the building was destroyed (by him)* is passive, and *he destroyed the building* is active. A major difference between passive and active constructions is that the passive construction is not required to express the agent: in the previous example, *by him* is optional.

PEJORATION   Semantic process whereby a word or a phrase acquires negative value judgement connotations.

PHONEME   A perceptually distinct unit of sound that distinguishes lexical meaning. The classic test for phoneme status is the presence of minimal pairs: since the words *pat* and *bat* differ only in their initial consonant, we can be sure that /p/ and /b/ are distinct phonemes and not just ALLOPHONES because their substitution with one another changes the lexical meaning.

PHRASAL CLITIC (PHRASAL AFFIX)   A CLITIC that attaches to a whole syntactic phrase, rather than to a single word. A Present Day English example is possessive *'s*.

PRESTIGE   The level of regard or value that a feature, variety, or language is associated with, i.e. whether it is viewed positively or negatively. Typically, the term is used for OVERT prestige associated with standard varieties. However, other varieties can also be associated with COVERT prestige within particular groups, associated with group identity.

PRETERITE-PRESENT   Class of verb whose present tense form derives historically from a past tense form. All of the survivors from this class in Present Day English are modals: *can*, *shall*, etc.

PURISM   The belief that a language should only contain elements that are not borrowed from other languages.

RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP)	The pronunciation characteristic of the Present Day British English standard variety. Traditionally associated with the south of England, RP is now found all over the world, though it has few if any native speakers.
STANDARDIZATION	The historical process by which a standard variety of a language emerges, involving selection, elaboration, codification, and acceptance. See §4.1.1.
SYNCHRONIC	At a specific moment in time. A study of English verbs in the present day, for example, or a study of the vocabulary used in one of Shakespeare's plays, would be a synchronic study. The opposite of DIACHRONIC.
STATIVE	A class of verbs that convey a condition or state rather than an activity or event. The verbs *LOVE* and *KNOW* are typical stative verbs.
SUBJUNCTIVE	a) The "subjunctive construction" in Modern English is a type of embedded clause without a finite verb form, e.g. ... *that he be good*; see §3.3.2. b) The subjunctive in Middle and Old English is a type of MOOD, a category of verb forms; see §6.3.1. Both the modern subjunctive construction and the older subjunctive mood are used to express IRREALIS meaning: they're typically used to describe a situation or event that is not known to the speaker to have happened at the time of utterance, i.e. not a known fact.
S.V.	Stands for Latin *sub voce* 'under the expression' or *sub verbo* 'under the word'. It means that what follows s.v. is what you should look up in a dictionary. For instance, "OED, s.v. bumblebee" is an invitation to look up the word *bumblebee* in the Oxford English Dictionary.
SYNCRETISM	When the same morphological form is used to express multiple different combinations of features within a paradigm. The form *cut*, for instance, is the infinitive and finite present tense form of the verb in Present Day English, but also the finite past form (*Yesterday I cut my finger*) and the past participle (*I have cut my finger*).

THORN   Name of the grapheme <þ>, found in Old English and early Middle English texts, and originating from the runic alphabet. Represents a dental fricative phoneme. Alternates with <ð> "eth" in Old English.

UNIVERBATION   Historical process by which two independent words become a single word, as in *police + man > policeman*, where the independent word /man/ becomes the bound -/mən/ suffix. *See also* GRAMMATICALIZATION.

VERB-SECOND (V2)   Syntactic rule according to which the finite verb must occupy the second position in the clause, with only one constituent preceding it. An example is modern English *wh*-questions: *Which book **should** I read?*, not **Which book I should read?*. Old and early Middle English were characterized by a variety of V2.

YOGH   Name of the character <ȝ>, found in Old English and early Middle English texts. Pronounced /jɒx/. In Old English, yogh is the normal way of writing the <g> of the Latin alphabet, and so editions of Old English texts usually normalize it to <g>. In Middle English, yogh is a grapheme in its own right, distinct from <g>.

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