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A concise history of English

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Contents

Preface

The present textbook has been compiled at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University as a study material for courses of the historical development of English. It provides a brief survey of the history of the English language from the period of Proto-Indo-European, through Proto-Germanic, Old English and Middle English to Early Modern English. The textbook draws on a variety of sources, which are listed at the end of each chapter. A lot of material has been taken over from an earlier textbook used at Masaryk University, *A Guide to Pre-Modern English* by Josef Hladký. Hladký's textbook is the main source of the surveys of the Old and Middle English grammatical systems, and of foreign influences on the development of English. Important sources of the chapters describing the development of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic, and the social and political backgrounds of different historical periods are Josef Vachek's textbook *Historický vývoj angličtiny* and the internet encyclopedia *Wikipedia*. The focus of this textbook is on grammatical and phonological change. Selected texts from different periods of development have been included as examples illustrating the gradual language change.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations and Symbols

Acc.	Accusative
AD	Anno Domini
BC	Before Christ
BCE	Before the Common Era
C	consonant
ca.	circa, around, approximately
Dat.	Dative
Fem.	Feminine
Gen.	Genitive
G.	German
Gr.	Greek
H	Proto-Indo-European laryngeal (H_1, H_2, H_3)
Lat.	Latin
LME	Late Middle English
Masc.	Masculine
ME	Middle English
ModE	Modern English
ModG	Modern German
N	nasal or liquid (resonant)
N̥	syllabic nasal or liquid
Nom.	Nominative
OE	Old English
Obl.	Oblique case (Objective case)
OSax.	Old Saxon
PG	Proto-Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
Pos.	Possessive
R.	Russian
Sans.	Sanskrit

1 Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language in the world; owing to a number of reasons, it has acquired the status of the global lingua franca. It is spoken as a first language by the majority populations of Britain, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many Caribbean countries. This makes English the third most common native language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. In addition, English is the official language of almost 60 states, the European Union, and many world organizations. It is also widely learned as a second language.

The English language of today is the result of linguistic and sociolinguistic change over several thousand years. English underwent a major phonetic, phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic transformation. The sound changes that took place during the history have left footprints in the English spelling system, which reflects earlier stages of pronunciation, neglecting the present phonetic form. The original Germanic word stock of English was significantly enriched by lexical units from other languages, especially French, Latin, and Scandinavian. English gradually lost inflection and developed from a predominantly synthetic to a predominantly analytical language. The brief survey of the most important changes of the English language presented in the subsequent chapters is divided into the traditional development periods: Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Germanic, Old English, Middle English, and Early Modern English. The development of Late Modern English (since ca. 1700) is not dealt with in the present book.

2 Proto-Indo-European

English belongs to the family of the Indo-European languages. This family includes most current languages spoken in the geographical area of Europe, the Indian Subcontinent, the Iranian plateau, and Asia Minor (Anatolia). Some of the Indo-European languages have spread to distant continents and are now spoken as a native language also in America and Australasia. The Indo-European language family consists of over four hundred languages and dialects, and it is probably the largest language family so far recognized in terms of number of native speakers (over 3 billion).

2.1 The common ancestor of Indo-European languages

Similarities between languages of the Indo-European family were noticed by several missionaries, merchants, travelers, and scholars in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries (Thomas Stephens, Filippo Sassetti, Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn, Evliya Çelebi, and Mikhail Lomonosov). These observations, however, did not become widely known.

Indo-European studies were initiated and stimulated by a British orientalist, Sir William Jones, who was stationed as judge in Calcutta in the late 18th century. He propagated the observation of the resemblance between Sanskrit, classical Greek, and Latin. In his lecture "The Sanskrit Language" delivered in 1786 and published two years later, he suggested that all three languages developed from a common source. This common source was later named Proto-Indo-European.

In the 19th century, this common source became the focus of attention of a number of studies carried out by the representatives of Indo-European comparative linguistics – Franz Bopp, August Schleicher, Karl Brugmann, Rasmus Rask, Karl Verner, Jacob Grimm, and others. The languages under investigation were referred to as *Indo-European* or *Indo-Germanic* languages.

The Proto-Indo-European language, originally spoken by the Proto-Indo-Europeans, was reconstructed from later stages of development of Indo-European languages. This common ancestor of Indo-European languages was the first proto-language proposed and accepted by diachronic linguists. Scholars investigating the origins of Indo-European languages developed techniques of historical linguistics, which were later applied in the research of other language families (for example the comparative method and the

method of internal reconstruction). The reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European and its daughter languages was the focus of the majority of linguistic studies in the 19th century.

There are several hypotheses of the origin and spread of Proto-Indo-European (see Blažek 1993). According to the most popular model, the Kurgan hypothesis, the Proto-Indo-Europeans lived in the Pontic-Caspian steppe of Eastern Europe in the 4th millennium BC. Their language, Proto-Indo-European, probably split into different languages around 3 500 BC, when the Proto-Indo-Europeans expanded from their original settlement into different parts of Europe and Asia. However, time estimates vary by hundreds of years, and some Indo-European languages may have diverged from the common ancestor before the beginning of the 4th millennium BC.

The description of Proto-Indo-European was completed in the early 20th century; however, diachronic research continued and some refinements of the earlier reconstructions and hypotheses have been accepted more recently. The most important advancement in the field of Indo-European historical linguistics in the 20th century was the discovery of Anatolian and Tocharian languages, which resulted in the re-evaluation of some linguistic features shared by Indo-European languages, and led to the acceptance of the laryngeal theory proposing the existence of Proto-Indo-European laryngeal consonants that later disappeared completely from all Indo-European languages except the Anatolian languages.

A number of recent studies propose a relationship between Proto-Indo-European and other language families, for example the Uralic and Altaic languages. The proposed relationships, however, remain controversial.

Since there are no written records of Proto-Indo-European, all descriptions of the language are based only on reconstruction methods and identify hypothetical language features.

2.2 Branches of Indo-European languages

Scholars have presented different patterns of internal division of Indo-European languages (see Blažek 2012). One of the commonly accepted classification systems is a division into ten major branches. In the survey below, these branches are arranged according to the chronological order of their emergence as presented by Anthony (2007):

1. **Anatolian** (emerged around 4200 BC, located in Asia Minor, extinct)
2. **Tocharian (**emerged around 3700 BC, located in China, extinct)
3. **Germanic** (emerged around 3300 BC, earliest runic inscriptions from around the 2nd century AD, earliest coherent texts (the translation of the Bible into Gothic by Wulfila) from the 4th century AD. Old English manuscript tradition from about the 8th century AD)

4. **Italic** (including Latin and the Romance languages, emerged around 3000 BC)
5. **Celtic (**emerged around 3000 BC)
6. **Armenian** (emerged around 2800 BC)
7. **Balto-Slavic** (emerged around 2800 BC)
8. **Hellenic** (emerged around 2500 BC)
9. **Indo-Iranian (**emerged around 2200 BC)
10. **Albanian** (attested from the 14th century AD)

In addition to the languages listed above, several other Indo-European languages have existed: Illyrian, Venetic, Liburnian, Messapian, Phrygian, Paionian, Thracian, Dacian, Ancient Macedonian, Ligurian, Sicel, Lusitanian, and Cimmerian. These languages are all extinct and current knowledge of their origin and development is rather limited.

The table below presents a more detailed division of the Indo-European language branches listed above. Different classification systems, however, differ in the division of the Indo-European language family into branches and subgroups, as well as the lists of members of the subgroups. In the survey below, some extinct languages have been omitted.

Branches of Indo-European languages

	Indo-European Branches		**Indo-European Languages**
1.	Anatolian		Hittite, Luwian, Lydian
2.	Tocharian		Tocharian
3.	Germanic	East	Gothic
		North	Eastern Group: Swedish, Danish, Norwegian Bokmål Western Group: Icelandic, Norwegian Nynorsk
		West	Anglo-Frisian Group: English, Frisian Low Germanic Group: Flemish, Dutch, Afrikaans High Germanic Group: German, Yiddish
4.	Italic (< Latin)	East	Romanian
		Central	Italian, Sardinian
		West	French, Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese
5.	Celtic	Continental	Gaulish, Lepontic, Celtiberian
		Insular	Goidelic Group: Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic, Manx Brythonic Group: Cumbrian, Welsh, Cornish, Breton
6.	Armenian		Armenian

7.	Balto-Slavic	Baltic	Latvian, Lithuanian
		Slavic	Eastern Group: Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian Southern Group: Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovene Western Group: Polish, Slovak, Czech, Upper & Lower Sorbian
8.	Hellenic		Greek
9.	Indo-Iranian	Indo-Arian	Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Panjabi
		Iranian	Avestan, Pashto, Persian, Kurdish
10.	Albanian		Albanian

All the languages above are genetically related since they are all descendants of one parent language, Proto-Indo-European. The division into the individual branches and subgroups is based on genetic principles; however, an important criterion of the subdivision are innovations shared by several languages whose common ancestor originally split off from the other parent languages descending from Proto-Indo-European. Germanic languages, for example, share phonological and grammatical features determined by innovations that seem to have developed in their common parent language, Proto-Germanic, and that distinguish them from members of other branches.

Indo-European languages are traditionally divided into centum and satem languages according to the development of the palatal plosives. The terms centum and satem correspond to the expression *hundred* in Latin *(centum* [kentum]), and in Old Iranian/Avestan (*satem* [satəm]). In centum languages, palatal plosives merged with velar plosives, therefore palatal $\acute{k}$ changed into k. In satem languages, palatal plosives changed into sibilants, therefore $\acute{k}$ changed into s. (Velar plosives in satem languages merged with labio-velar plosives.) English belongs to centum languages, together with other Germanic languages and with the Analolian, Tocharian, Italic, Celtic, and Hellenic language families; languages of the remaining Indo-European branches, i.e. Balto-Slavic, Armenian, Indo-Iranian, and Albanian, are satem languages.

The charts below illustrate Indo-European migration and the geographic distribution of Indo-European languages in different historical periods. Before the 16th century, Indo-European languages were located in Europe, and South, Central and Southwest Asia. Today, they are distributed worldwide.
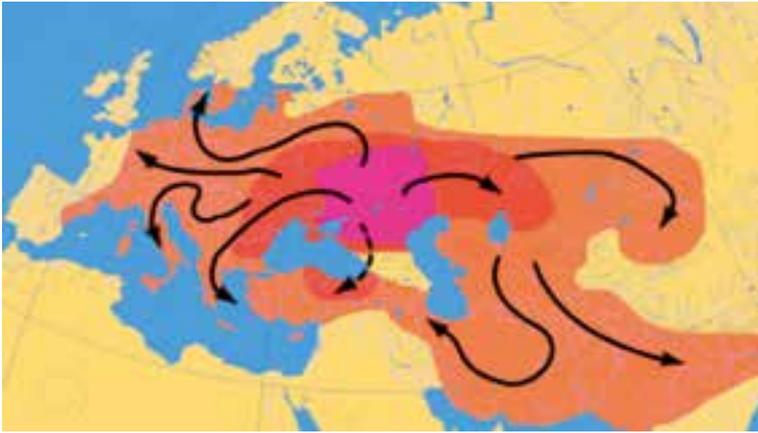
The chart above illustrates the Migration of Indo-European tribes between ca. 4000 and 1000 BC according to the Kurgan hypothesis. The assumed original homeland (Urheimat) of the Indo-Europeans is the purple area of Samara/Sredny Stog culture north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. By ca. 2500 BC, the Indo-Europeans probably spread to the area marked red; and by 1000 BC, they settled the orange area.

Source: Dbachmann. Indo-European expansion 4000–1000 BC, according to the Kurgan hypothesis. Wikimedia Commons [online] 3. 10. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE_expansion.png

Indo-European languages ca. 3500 BC

Source: Dbachmann. Indo-European languages ca. 3500 BCE. Wikimedia Commons [online] 9. 3. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE5500BP.png

Indo-European languages ca. 2500 BC

Source: Dbachmann. Indo-European languages ca. 2500 BCE. Wikimedia Commons [online] 8. 3. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE4500BP.png

Indo-European languages ca. 1500 BC

Source: Dbachmann. Indo-European languages ca. 1500 BCE. Wikimedia Commons [online] 8. 3. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE3500BP.png
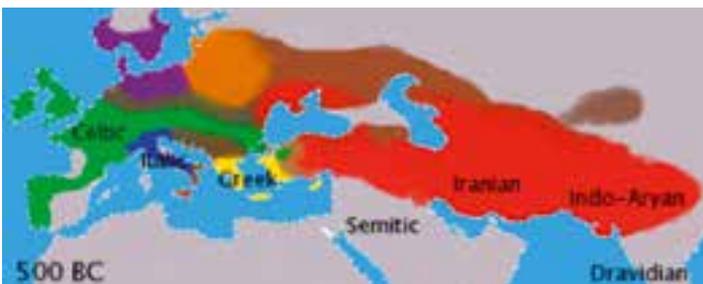
Indo-European languages ca. 500 BC

Source: Dbachmann. Indo-European languages ca. 500 BCE. Wikimedia Commons [online] 8. 3. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE2500BP.png

Indo-European languages ca. 500 AD

Source: Dbachmann – Spiridon Ion Cepleanu. Indo-European languages ca. 500 AD. Wikimedia Commons [online] 8. 12. 2013. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE1500BP.png

Present-day distribution of Indo-European languages
■ Countries with a majority of speakers of IE languages
■ Countries with an IE minority language with official status

Source: Brianski – Alphathon. Indo-European languages ca. 500 BCE. Wikimedia Commons [online] 6. 6. 2013. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IE_countries.svg

Present-day distribution of Indo-European languages in Europe

Source: Iolaafi. Indo-European languages in Europe. Wikimedia Commons [online] 9. 11. 2013. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indo-European-languages.gif

2.3 Main grammatical features of the Proto-Indo-European language

The reconstructed Proto-Indo-European language was a synthetic language with a rich inflectional morphology. Its inflectional system consisted of a large number of different inflectional paradigms. Most words consisted of three parts: root + stem suffix + ending. The root, together with the stem suffix formed the *stem*. The stem suffix is often referred to as the *theme* and the presence or absence of the theme in a word paradigm is the basis for the distinction made between *thematic* and *athematic* nouns and verbs. Athematic words seem to belong to the oldest Proto-Indo-European word stock. Some of them can be recognized in modern Indo-European languages by certain types of irregularities in their inflectional paradigms. The majority of roots of Proto-Indo-European words were probably

monosyllabic and consisted of a sequence of three sounds: consonant + vowel + consonant (and possibly another consonant). An important phenomenon of Proto-Indo-European morphophonology, which later played an important role also in Germanic languages, is the variation in the root vowels usually referred to as *ablaut* or *vowel gradation*. The term vowel gradation, however, is wider than the term ablaut; it denotes all types of changes in the root of a word including *umlaut*. While ablaut was determined by the position of accent within different grammatical forms of a word, umlaut was caused by the influence of the vowel in the next syllable.

The Proto-Indo-European inflectional system of nouns included eight or nine cases and two basic types of declension (thematic and athematic). The nominal grammatical system included three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter.

The main categories of Proto-Indo-European verbs distinguished according to their aspect were stative, imperfective, and perfective. The verbal system included several grammatical moods and voices and conjugation according to person, number and tense. By adding affixes to the base form of a verb (its root), new word could be created (especially new nouns, verbs, or adjectives). The Proto-Indo-European verbal grammatical system is probably best preserved in Ancient Greek and Vedic Sanskrit. Verbal conjugation paradigms included a variety of endings and were subject to ablaut. Ablaut is still visible in Germanic languages including English (e.g. in drive – drove – driven; ring – rang – rung).

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3 Proto-Germanic

3.1 The common ancestor of Germanic languages

Proto-Germanic, also referred to as Primitive Germanic, Common Germanic, or Ur-Germanic, is one of the descendants of Proto-Indo-European and the common ancestor of all Germanic languages. This Germanic proto-language, which was reconstructed by the comparative method, is not attested by any surviving texts. The only written records available are the runic Vimose inscriptions from around 200 AD found in Denmark, which represent an early stage of Proto-Norse or Late Proto-Germanic. (Comrie 1987)

Proto-Germanic is assumed to have developed between about 500 BC and the beginning of the Common Era. (Ringe 2006, p. 67). It came after the First Germanic Sound Shift, which was probably contemporary with the Nordic Bronze Age. The period between the end of Proto-Indo-European (i.e. probably after 3 500 BC) and the beginning of Proto-Germanic (500 BC) is referred to as Pre-Proto-Germanic period. However, Pre-Proto-Germanic is sometimes included under the wider meaning of Proto-Germanic, and the notion of the *Germanic parent language* is used to refer to both stages.

The First Germanic Sound Shift, also known as Grimm's law or Rask's rule, is a chain shift of Proto-Indo-European stops which took place between the Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Germanic stage of development and which distinguishes Germanic languages from other Indo-European centum languages. Grimm's law, together with a related shift entitled Verner's law, is described in greater detail in Chapter 7.

3.2. Branches of Germanic languages

Germanic languages are spoken as a native language by several hundred million people in Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. Germanic languages share many features with other Indo-European languages because they have developed from the same

reconstructed parent language. They therefore represent a branch of the Indo-European phylogenetic tree. However, the internal diversification of the Germanic subfamily is considered to be non-treelike, and the position of the Germanic branch within Indo-European is somewhat ambiguous due to the fact that from an early stage the individual Germanic languages (especially members of the West Germanic group) developed in close contact with neighbouring languages, adopting many features from them, which weakened the evidence of the genetic ancestry. (Nakhleh, Ringe and Warnow 2005)

Although the history of Germanic languages has been studied by numerous scholars, many details of their earliest history are still uncertain. Archaeological research suggests that around 750 BC, Proto-Germanic speakers lived in southern Scandinavia and along the coast of the North and the Baltic Seas from the Netherlands in the west to the Vistula in the east. By 250 BC, Proto-Germanic had branched into several subgroups of Germanic languages. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* "Languages of the World: Germanic languages")

The migration of Germanic tribes and the spread of their languages are illustrated on the charts below.
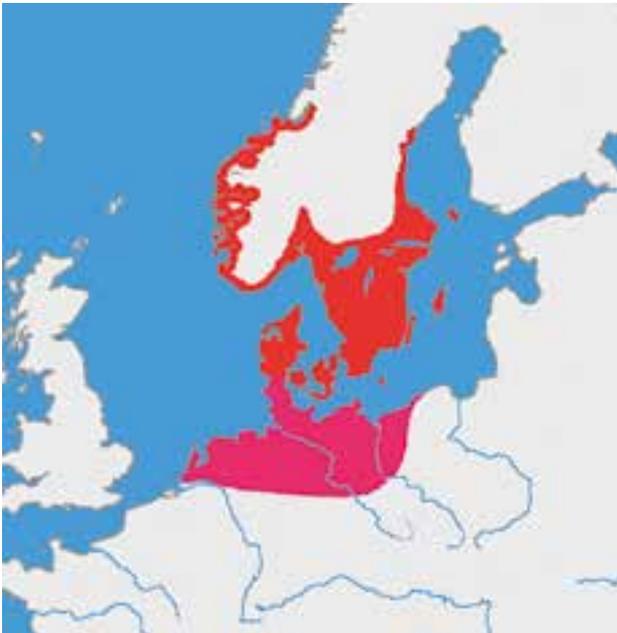
Map of the Pre-Roman Iron Age culture(s) associated with Proto-Germanic, ca. 500 BC

Source: Wiglaf. Map of the Nordic Iron Age and the Jastorf culture. Wikimedia Commons [online] 15. 8. 2005. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pre-roman_iron_age_(map).png

The expansion of the Germanic tribes 750 BC – AD 1
■ Settlements before 750 BC
■ New settlements until 500 BC
■ New settlements until 250 BC
■ New settlements until AD 1

Source: Berig. The expansion of the Germanic tribes AD 1 – AD 100 (after the Penguin Atlas of World History 1988). Wikimedia Commons [online] 17. 2. 2009. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creative-commons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Germanic_tribes_ (750BC-1AD).png

Germanic languages are traditionally divided into three branches: East Germanic, North Germanic, and West Germanic. These branches are further subdivided into groups as illustrated in the table below.

Germanic languages Parent language: **Proto-Germanic**	East Germanic	Gothic
	North Germanic	Eastern Group: Swedish, Danish
		Western Group: Icelandic, Norwegian
	West Germanic	Anglo-Frisian Group: English, Frisian
		Low Germanic Group: Flemish, Dutch, Afrikaans
		High Germanic Group: German, Yiddish

3.3 Main grammatical features of Proto-Germanic

The reconstructed Proto-Germanic grammatical system resembled the grammatical systems of Greek or Latin of about 200 AD. It included six or more different cases, three numbers, three genders, two voices, and three moods.

Within the inflectional system of nouns, the following cases were distinguished: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, and instrumental. The Proto-Indo-European ablative and locative cases merged into other cases, though traces of the two cases were probably preserved in some pronominal and adverbial forms. Pronominal declension included the same cases as nouns except the vocative. In addition to singular and plural forms, pronouns occurred in dual forms. Verbal, nominal, and adjectival dual forms disappeared before the earliest records, though verbal dual survived in Gothic.

The nominal inflectional system included paradigms distinguished according to *stems* inherited from Proto-Indo-European. (For more details see subchapters 2.3 and 4.2.1.) The most productive paradigms were probably the a-stems, ō-stems and n-stems, followed by u-stems and i-stems. Variants of the first two paradigms were ja-, wa-, jō, and wō-stems; subclasses of the n-stems were ōn-, an-, and īn-stems. In addition, there were several smaller classes of nouns: athematic nouns (root nouns), and nouns ending in -er, -z, and -nd.

Proto-Germanic verbs can be divided into a small group of *athematic* verbs and a large group of *thematic* verbs. Thematic verbs were further divided into seven classes of *strong* and five classes of *weak* verbs, according to their preterite forms. (Only four of the five classes of weak verbs survived in attested languages.) Strong verbs formed the preterite (originally Proto-Indo-European perfect) form by means of ablaut or reduplication while in weak verbs, a dental suffix was added to the root of the verb. Within the thematic verbs, there was another small group of *preterite-present* verbs, whose present tense forms correspond to the preterite forms of strong verbs and preterite forms to the preterite forms of weak verbs. (For more details on the distinction between the different classes and their later development see Chapter 4.2.2.) The tense system of Proto-Germanic consisted of only two tenses (present and preterite), while Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit had six or seven different tenses.

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4 Old English

4.1 Historical background of Old English

The history of Old English started with the arrival of Anglo-Saxon tribes in Britain in 449 AD. The Angles and the Saxons were followed by the Jutes and the Frisians, and possibly a smaller group of the Franks. Since the Angles and the Saxons were most influential in the further development of the country and the language, the term *Anglo-Saxon* is often used to refer to all the Germanic tribes who settled in Britain after 449 AD. Before their arrival in Britain, these tribes lived in the Germanic coastlands of the North Sea. Their invasion of Britain can be seen as a continuation of their movement to the West during the Migration Period referred to in German as *Völkerwanderung* [migration of peoples]. On the Continent, the Anglo-Saxon tribes had traded with the Latin-speaking peoples of the Roman Empire. Before their arrival in Britain, they had adopted a number of words from Latin (e.g. wine, cup, dish, cheese, or linen). When they arrived in Britain, the country was inhabited by Celtic peoples – the Britons, who had lived under the rule of the Roman Empire from 43 to 409 AD. At the beginning of the 5th century, the Roman Empire could no longer retain its domination of the British province and Roman officials had to leave the country. The influence of Roman culture, however, continued for at least two more centuries of what is referred to as the sub-Roman period. The Celtic inhabitants were gradually displaced from most of their original territory and Celtic languages remained in use only in Cornwall, Wales, and in some parts of Scotland.

During the 5th and the 6th centuries the Anglo-Saxons settled the entire territory of present-day England and by 600 AD, they established seven kingdoms, referred to as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia. The 7th century was marked by gradual Christianization of the country, which continued in the 8th century and resulted in the enrichment of Old English by another wave of lexical borrowings from Latin. The Scandinavian invasion started at the end of the 8th century; and during the 9th century, the Vikings (mainly Danes) conquered all the kingdoms of England except Wessex. The king of Wessex, Alfred the Great, withstood the Viking raids and ultimately managed to re-conquer and unify the south-western part of England at the end of the 9th century. The Danes retained the north-eastern area referred to as Danelaw. They managed to subjugate England again for a period of time at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th centuries but lost the territory again.

Danelaw – England, 878 AD

Source: Hel-hama. A modern version of England-878ad. Wikimedia Commons [online] 8. 7. 2012. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Under the license CC BY-SA 3.0 (see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode). Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:England_878.svg

The contacts between Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians brought about lexical enrichment and accelerated grammatical simplification of the English language. The last two Anglo-Saxon kings ruling in England before the Norman Conquest were Edward the Confessor and Harold II; the latter was killed by the Normans in 1066. The Norman Conquest foreshadowed the end of the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) period. According to traditional periodization, Old English ends in 1100. Da Rold et al. (2010) suggests a shift of the end of the Old English period to 1150 because according to recent research, manuscripts continued to be written in Old English for at least 50 years after 1100. The period between 1066 and 1150 is referred to as Updated Old English.

The term Old English does not denote one homogeneous language. Four different dialects of Old English are usually distinguished: West Saxon, Mercian, Northumbrian, and Kentish. The West Saxon dialect represented the first standardized form of written English, denoted as the *Winchester Standard*.

Geographical distribution of Old English dialects after Baugh and Cable (1993)

4.2 Old English grammar

Old English was a synthetic language with rich inflectional morphology and a relatively flexible word order. Its morphological and syntactic systems were noticeably different from those of Modern English. The Old English inflectional system retained numerous features of the reconstructed Proto-Germanic system. It most closely resembles the inflectional systems of Modern Icelandic, which is one of the most conservative Germanic languages, and of Modern German.

Subchapters 4.2.1–4.2.3 below present a brief survey of the Old English inflectional system of the most important parts of speech – nouns, verbs, and selected pronouns. These subchapters represent a modified version of passages selected from Hladký's *Guide to Pre-Modern English* (2003, pp. 39–42, 44–46, 48–52), supplemented by additional notes.

4.2.1 Old English nouns

As mentioned in Chapter 2.3, in Proto-Indo-European there were two basic types of declension, *thematic* and *athematic*. The division into these two types is based on the presence or absence of the stem suffix, denoted as the *theme*. The theme ended either in a vowel or a consonant. Nouns with a vocalic theme belonged to the vocalic or strong declension, while nouns with a consonantal theme belonged to the consonantal, or weak declension. Case endings were the same for most nouns in Indo-European but in the later development they often merged with the theme and were subject to phonological changes, especially to reduction. Thus the three-morpheme structure of Indo-European and of Early Proto-Germanic (root + theme + grammatical ending) changed into a Late Proto-Germanic two-morpheme structure (stem + grammatical ending), for example, the three-morpheme Early Proto-Germanic dative sg. **daʒ-a-i* developed into a two-morpheme Old English form *dæġ-e*. The Old English nominative singular had no ending while in Early Proto-Germanic it consisted of root, theme, and grammatical ending: *dæġ <*daʒ-a-z*. The vowels and consonants forming the theme serve as labels for the declension types even in Old English: *dæġ* is an A-stem because it developed from **daʒ-a-z* and *talu,-o* is an O-stem because the Proto-Germanic form was **tal-ō. Fōt* is an athematic noun because the ending *-s* was added directly to the root: PG **fōt-s* < PIE **pōd-s.*

The Germanic A-stems correspond to Latin and Slavonic O-stems because PIE *o* changed into PG *a* (Lat. *hostis* – G *Gast),* and Germanic O-stems correspond to Latin and Slavonic A-stems because PIE *ā* changed into PG *ō* (Lat. mater – OE *mōdor).*

OE nouns belonged to one of three grammatically determined genders – masculine, feminine and neuter – and enforced corresponding agreement on demonstratives, adjectives and pronouns, e.g. *weġ* 'way' was masculine, *sǣ* 'sea' was feminine, and *þing* 'thing' was neuter. When referring to human beings, however, pronouns were often used according to natural gender; for example, *mǣden* 'maiden' was neuter but it was often referred to by *hēō* 'she'. Forty-five percent of nouns were masculine, thirty per cent feminine, and twenty-five percent were neuter. OE nouns had two morphological categories: number and case. The category of number consisted of two forms – singular and plural. Indo-European nouns had also dual forms but the only remnants of the dual in Germanic languages are to be found with pronouns. The four cases, nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative, had a number of functions, which were expressed by a higher number of cases in other languages (e.g. seven in Latin).

Below is a survey of the most productive nominal inflectional paradigms in Old English.

Vocalic stems

A-stems

	Masculine		Neuter	
	'stone'	'day'	'word'	'vat'
Singular				
Nom.	stān	dæġ	word	fæt
Gen.	stānes	dæġes	wordes	fætes
Dat.	stāne	dæġe	worde	fæte
Acc.	stān	dæġ	word	fæt
Plural				
Nom.	stānas	daʒas	word	fatu, -o
Gen.	stāna	daʒa	worda	fata
Dat.	stānum	daʒum	wordum	fatum
Acc.	stānas	daʒas	word	fatu, -o

Ō-stems

	Feminine	
	'tale'	'honour'
Singular		
Nom.	talu, -o	ār
Gen.	tale	āre
Dat.	tale	āre
Acc.	tale	āre
Plural		
Nom.	tala, -e	āra, -e
Gen.	tala, -ena	āra, -(e)na
Dat.	talum	ārum
Acc.	tala, -e	āra, -e

U-stems

	Masculine		Feminine
	'son'	'field'	'hand'
Singular			
Nom.	sunu	feld	hand
Gen.	suna	felda	handa
Dat.	suna	felda	handa
Acc.	sunu	feld	hand
Plural			
Nom.	suna	felda	handa
Gen.	suna	felda	handa
Dat.	sunum	feldum	handum
Acc.	suna	felda	handa

Consonantal stems

N-stems

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
	'name'	'tongue'	'eye'
Singular			
Nom.	nama	tunge	ēāġe
Gen.	naman	tungan	ēāȝan
Dat.	naman	tungan	ēāȝan
Acc.	naman	tungan	ēāġe
Plural			
Nom.	naman	tungan	ēāȝan
Gen.	namena	tungena	ēāġena
Dat.	namum	tungum	ēāȝum
Acc.	naman	tungan	ēāȝan

Athematic nouns (root stems)

	Masculine	*Feminine*
	'foot'	'book'
Singular		
Nom.	fōt	bōc
Gen.	fōtes	bēc, bōce
Dat.	fēt	bēc
Acc.	fōt	bōc
Plural		
Nom.	fēt	bēc
Gen.	fōta	bōca
Dat.	fōtum	bōcum
Acc.	fēt	bēc

Other Old English athematic nouns:

Singular	–	*Plural*
mūs 'mouse'	–	*mȳs* 'mice'
lūs 'louse'	–	*lȳs* 'lice'
tōþ 'tooth'	–	*tēþ* 'teeth'
gōs 'goose'	–	*gēs* 'geese'
man(n) 'man'	–	*men(n)* 'men'
burg 'town'	–	*byriġ* 'towns'
sulh 'plough'	–	*sylh* 'ploughs'

A full survey of the Old English declension types would include over 50 paradigms. Out of these, however, only the A-stems and the O-stems were productive. About four-fifths of all masculine nouns belonged to A-stems. The productive stems attracted nouns taken over from Latin and Greek and also nouns from the other, non-productive stems, therefore the number of nouns belonging to the productive paradigms was on the increase in the OE period. The process of merger of paradigms is not limited to Germanic languages.

The existence of productive and non-productive paradigms is also reflected in OE case markers. There were many homonymous and polyfunctional markers in OE paradigms. Some endings were the same in all declensions (e.g. genitive pl. ending -*a* and dative plural ending –*um*), and many cases acquired analogical endings under the influence of the productive stems.

The traditional classification of nominal inflection according to stems presented above has been replaced in some handbooks of OE grammar by alternative classification systems. Instead of using the labels A-stems, O-stems, etc., some authors speak about 'general masculine declension' or 'strong nouns', etc. Below is an example of a method of classifying OE nouns from a non-historical point of view. Six classes of nouns are distinguished by Peters (1968) according to their plural form:

	Plural marker	Singular form	Plural form
1.	-s	stān	stānas
2.	-0	word	word
3.	-a	sunu	suna
4.	-n	nama	naman
5.	-e-	mann	menn
6.	-0 or -u	ċild	ċild, ċildru

4.2.2 Old English verbs

Thematic and athematic verbs

The distinction between thematic and athematic verbs has the same basis as that mentioned for the nouns. In thematic verbs, the ending is added to the stem suffix – the theme (as in the Czech verb *ber-e-me),* while in athematic verbs, it is added directly to the root (as in the Czech verb *js-me).* Although athematic verbs and nouns are historically older than thematic verbs and nouns, they are very limited as to number. There were only four athematic verbs in Old English: *bēōn/wesan* 'be', *dōn* 'do', *gān* 'go', and *willan* 'will'.

Strong and weak verbs

The Germanic thematic verbs fall into two groups: weak verbs and strong verbs. The weak verbs are a specific Germanic innovation. Weak verbs (divided into classes 1–3) are also denoted as regular or consonantal verbs. They contain a dental suffix (-d or -t) in the preterite (e.g. *dēman* 'to decide' – *dēm-de*), while the strong verbs (divided into classes I–VII), also denoted as irregular or vocalic verbs, form the preterite by means of changes in the root vowel (e.g. *bītan* 'to bite' – *bāt*). Strong verbs were primary verbs because they were formed from roots whose meaning was verbal, while weak verbs were secondary verbs, i.e. later formations derived from nouns and adjectives (denominative verbs) and even from strong verbs (deverbative verbs); for example, *tellan* 'to tell' was derived from *talu* 'tale', or *fyllan* 'to fill' from the adjective *full*.

Weak verbs were the most productive conjugation type in Old English: nearly all verbs which were formed or adopted in the Old English period were conjugated weak. Weak verbs were by far the most numerous group in Old English: about three quarters of verbs were weak. About one quarter of verbs belonged to the strong verbs and only one-fiftieth of all verbs were athematic and preterite-present verbs (predecessors of most present-day modal verbs). In spite of the differences in total numbers of verbs within the different groups, the frequencies of occurrence were roughly the same for all three groups.

Old English strong verbs were divided into seven classes. This division is based on a complex pattern of vowel gradation, termed by Grimm *ablaut*, which has its origin in Proto-Indo-European. Ablaut was the result of shifts of word stress within Proto-Indo-European verbal paradigms. Ablaut is the main feature of the conjugation of Old English classes I–VI. Class VII is based on a different principle, the principle of reduplication. The variation within classes I to V is based on the Proto-Indo-European qualitative ablaut (*e/o* gradation), while class VI is based on quantitative ablaut (long/short vowel gradation). On the way to Proto-Germanic and Old English, the original Proto-Indo-European vowel gradation patterns underwent numerous modifications.

The origin of the weak preterite is rather obscure. In Gothic, the preterite of *dōmjan* 'to decide' (OE *dēman*) had the following forms:

	Singular	*Plural*
1st Person	domida	domidedum
2nd Person	domides	domideduþ
3rd Person	domida	domidedun

The second halves of the plural forms may be reduplicated forms of the preterite (originally perfect) of a verb corresponding to OE *dōn* 'to do': 'decide (we) did' etc. (However, there are no independent forms of the verb 'to do' in Gothic.) The singular forms may be of the same origin and may have lost the reduplicating syllable through haplology or they may be based on the PIE root *$d^h\bar{e}$-, which was used in the formation of aorist in Greek. Another explanation by Wright (1910) is that the dental in the preterite stands in close relationship to the dental in the past participle. The weak preterite is one of the most disputed forms in Germanic morphology.

Preterite-present verbs

The preterite-present verbs combine the forms of the strong and the weak preterites. The forms of the present tense are in fact strong preterites (PIE perfects), for example *wāt – witon* 'I know – they know' is the same form as *bāt – biton* 'I bit – they bit'; to express the past, new weak preterites were formed, for example *wiste* 'I knew'.

Survey of conjugational paradigms

Strong Verbs

The forms of the verb *beran* 'bear', 'carry', 'bring' below illustrate the conjugation pattern of strong verbs in Old English.

Present	*Indicative*		*Subjunctive*		*Imperative*	
	Singular	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
Person						
1st	bere	beraþ	bere	beren		
2nd	bir(e)st	beraþ	bere	beren	ber	beraþ
3rd	bir(e)þ	beraþ	bere	beren		

Preterite				
1st	bær	bǣron	bǣre	bǣren
2nd	bǣre	bǣron	bǣre	bǣren
3rd	bær	bǣron	bǣre	bǣren

Participles	
Present	berende
Past	(ġe)boren

The chart below presents the ablaut variation and reduplication within the seven classes of the Old English strong verbs. *N* denotes nasals and liquids, i.e. the resonants m, n, l, r; *N̥* denotes a syllabic resonant.

		Present	*Preterite Singular*	*Preterite Plural*	*Past Participle*
I	*PIE*	ei	oi	i	i
	PG	ī	ai	i	i
bītan 'bite'	*OE*	bītan	bāt	biton	(ġe)biten
II	*PIE*	eu	ou	u	u
	PG	eu/iu	au	u	u
ċēōsan 'choose'	*OE*	ċēōsan	ċēās	curon	(ġe)coren

III	PIE	eN+C	oN	Ņ	Ņ
	PG	eNC	aN	uN	uN
bindan 'bind'	OE	bindan	band	bundon	(ġe)bunden
helpan 'help'		helpan	healp	hulpon	(ġe)hulpen

IV	PIE	eN+V	oN	ēN	Ņ
	PG	eN	aN	ē₁N	uN
beran 'bear'	OE	beran	bær	bǣron	(ġe)boren
niman 'take'		niman	nōm	nōmon	(ġe)numen

V	PIE	e (+other C)	o	ē	e
	PG	e	a	ē₁	e
metan 'measure'	OE	metan	mæt	mǣton	(ġe)meten

VI	PIE	a,o,ə₁	ā,ō	ā,ō	a,o,ə₁
	PG	a	ō	ō	a
faran 'go, fare'	OE	faran	fōr	fōron	(ġe)faren

VII	PIE	various vowels	-	-	various vowels
	PG	various vowels	redupl. + ē₂	redupl. + ē₂	various vowels
hātan 'call'	OE	hātan	hēt	hēton	(ġe)hāten
bēātan 'beat'		bēātan	bēōt	bēōton	(ġe)bēāten

Weak Verbs

The forms of the verb *dēman* 'decide' below illustrate the system of conjugation of weak verbs in Old English.

Present	*Indicative*		*Subjunctive*		*Imperative*	
	Singular	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*	*Singular*	*Plural*
1st	dēme	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen		
2nd	dēm(e)st	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen	dēm	dēmaþ
3rd	dēm(e)þ	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen		
Preterite						
1st	dēmde	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		
2nd	dēmdes(t)	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		
3rd	dēmde	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		

Participles
Present   dēmende
Past   (ġe)dēmed

The verb *dēman* is a representative of class 1 of the weak verbs. The chart below illustrates the division of class 1 into three subclasses. Class 2 included derived verbs ending in -ian except those ending in -rian; class 3 included the verbs *habban* 'have', *libban* 'live' *seċġan* 'say', and *hyċġan* 'think, study'.

	Infinitive	*Present*	*Preterite*	*Participle*
1a – short vowel in the stem	fremman 'do, perform'	fremme	fremede	(ġe)fremed
	nerian 'protect, save'	nerie	nerede	(ġe)nered
1b – long vowel in the stem	dēman 'decide'	dēme	dēmde	(ġe)dēmed
1c – different vowels in present and preterite	þenċan 'think'	þenċe	þōhte	(ġe)þōht
	sellan 'give'	selle	sealde	(ġe)seald

Preterite-Present verbs

The chart below presents the conjugation of the Preterite-Present verbs. Most of these OE verbs, as well as their later descendents, lack some of the grammatical forms, therefore they are sometimes referred to as 'defective'.

	Infinitive	*Person*	*Present Singular*	*Present Plural*	*Past Participle*	*Present Subj.*	*Preterite*
I	*witan* 'know'	*1st*	wāt	witon	(ġe)witen	wite	wiste, wisse
		2nd	wāst	witon			
		3rd	wāt	witon			
III	*cunnan* 'know (how to)' > 'can'	*1st*	cann	cunnon	(ġe)cunnen	cunne	cūþe
		2nd	canst	cunnon			
		3rd	cann	cunnon			
	----- *'dare'*	*1st*	dearr	durron	-----	durre, dyrre	dorste
		2nd	dearst	durron			
		3rd	dearr	durron			

IV	*sċulan* 'be obliged to' > 'shall'	*1st* *2nd* *3rd*	sċeal sċealt sċeal	sċulon sċulon sċulon	-----	sċule, sċyle	sċeolde
V	*maȝan* 'be able to' > 'may'	*1st* *2nd* *3rd*	mæġ meaht mæġ	maȝon maȝon maȝon	-----	mæġe	meahte, mihte
VI	----- 'be allowed to' > 'must'	*1st* *2nd* *3rd*	mōt mōst mōt	mōton mōton mōton	-----	mōte	mōste

Athematic verbs

The chart below presents the conjugation of the Old English athematic verbs *bēōn/wesan* 'to be', *dōn* 'to do', *gān* 'to go', *and willan* 'will'.

		bēōn/wesan	dōn	gān	willan
Infinitive		bēōn/wesan	dōn	gān	willan
Present Indicative	*1st Sing.* *2nd Sing.* *3rd Sing.*	eom eart is	bēō bist biþ	dō dēst dēþ	gā gǣst gǣþ	wille wilt wille
	Plural	sind, sint, sindon, earon	bēōþ	dōþ	gāþ	willaþ
Present Subjunctive	*Singular* *Plural*	sīē/sȳ sīēn	bēō bēōn	dō dōn	gā gān	wille willen
Imperative	*Singular* *Plural*		bēō bēōþ	dō dōþ	gā gāþ	
Preterite Indicative	*1st Sing.* *2nd Sing.* *3rd Sing.*	wæs wǣre wæs	dyde dydes(t) dyde	ēōde ēōdes(t) ēōde	wolde woldes(t) wolde
	Plural	wǣron	dydon	ēōdon	woldon
Preterite Subjunctive	*Singular* *Plural*	wǣre wǣren	dyde dyden	ēōde ēōden	wolde wolden

| *Present* | wesende | dōnde | gānde | willende |
| *Participle* | bēōnde | | | |

| *Past Participle* | (ġe)wesen | (ġe)dōn | (ġe)gān |

The different forms of the Modern English verb *to be* (OE *bēōn* and *wesan*) can be traced back to four Proto-Indo-European roots, *bheu-*, *es-*, *ues-*, and *or-*. These roots have also been preserved in other Indo-European languages:

PIE Root	*English*	*German*	*Czech*
bheu-	be, been	bin, bist	být, byl
es-	is	ist, sind	jsem, jsi,...
ues-	was, were	war, gewesen	
or-	are		

4.2.3 Old English pronouns

Below is a survey of Old English personal, possessive, demonstrative, indefinite, and interrogative pronouns.

Personal pronouns

	1st Person	*2nd Person*		*3rd Person*	
Singular			*Masculine*	*Feminine*	*Neuter*
Nom.	iċ	þū	hē	hiō/hēō	hit
Gen.	mīn	þīn	his	hire	his
Dat.	mē	þē	him	hire	him
Acc.	mec, mē	þec, þē	hine	hīē	hit

Plural					
Nom.	wē	ġē		hīē, hī, hēō	
Gen.	ūser, ūre	ēōwer, īōwer		hira, hiora, heora	
Dat.	ūs	ēōw, īōw		him, heom	
Acc.	ūsic, ūs	ēōwic, īōw		hīē, hī, hēō	

The plural form *hīē* and its variants *hī, hēō* were used for all three genders. In addition to the pronouns above, two dual pronominal forms were used in West-Saxon and in poetry: *wit* 'we two' and *ġit* 'you two'.

Possessive pronouns

The forms of possessive pronouns are identical with the genitive forms of personal pronouns: *mīn* 'my', *þīn* 'thy', *his* 'his', *hire* 'her', *his* 'its', *ūre* 'our', *ēōwer* 'your', *hira* 'their'. A general 3rd person form *sīn* 'his, her, its, their' was mostly used in poetry.

Demonstrative pronouns

Specifying demonstrative pronouns (*that, the*)

	Singular			*Plural*
	Masculine	*Feminine*	*Neuter*	
Nom.	sē	sēō/sīō	þæt	þā
Gen.	þæs	þǣre	þæs	þāra, þǣra
Dat.	þǣm, þām	þǣre	þǣm, þām	þǣm, þām
Acc.	þone	þā	þæt	þā
Instr.	þȳ, þon		þȳ, þon	

Deictic demonstrative pronouns (*this*)

	Singular			*Plural*
	Masculine	*Feminine*	*Neuter*	
Nom.	þēs	þēōs	þis	þās
Gen.	þisses	þisse	þisses	þissa
Dat.	þissum	þisse	þissum	þissum
Acc.	þisne	þās	þis	þās

Relative pronouns/relative particle

Old English had no relative pronouns, only the relative particle *þe*.

Indefinite pronouns

Below are some of the most common Old English indefinite pronouns:

ǣlċ	'each, every'
ǣniġ	'any'
nǣniġ	'no one'
ān	'one, a certain`'
nān	'no, none'
nāwiht	'nothing'
sum	'a, some, a certain'
swylċ, swilċ, swelċ	'such'
man	'one'

Interrogative pronouns

	Masculine/Feminine	*Neuter*
Nom.	hwā	hwæt
Gen.	hwæs	hwæs
Dat.	hwām, hwǣm	hwām, hwǣm
Acc.	whone	hwæt
Instr.	hwī, hwȳ	hwī, hwȳ

4.3 Old English texts

Bēōwulf
(Original text with standard typographical modifications and a Modern English glosses)

Hwæt, wē ʒārDena in ʒēārdaʒum
Indeed, we of-Spear-Danes in former-times

þēōdcyninʒa þrym ʒefrūnon,
of-kings-of-a-people glory [acc.] have-heard

hū ðā æþelinʒas ellen fremedon.
how the princes courageous-deeds performed!

Oft Scyld Scēfinʒ sceaþena þrēātum,
Often Scyld Scefing [to] enemy's troops [dat.],

moneʒum mǣʒþum meodosetla oftēāh,
[to] many tribes [dat.] mead-benches [acc.] took-away,

eʒsode eorlas, syððan ǣrest wearð
terrified warriors after first was

fēāsceaft funden; hē þæs frōfre ʒebād,
helpless found; he for-that consolation received,

wēōx under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þāh,
thrived under sky, in-honours prospered

oð þæt him ǣʒhwylc þāra ymbsittendra
until to-him each-one [of] the around-sitting [gen.]

ofer hronrāde hȳran scolde,
across whale-road obey had-to,

ʒomban ʒyldan; þæt wæs ʒōd cyninʒ!
tribute [acc.] to-pay; that was great king!

Đǣm eafera wæs æfter cenned
To-him son was later brought-forth

ʒeonʒ in ʒeardum, þone ʒod sende
young in dwelling, whom God sent

folce tō frōfre; fyrenðearfe onʒeat,
to-people as comfort; great-distress [acc.] he-perceived,

þe hīē ǣr druʒon aldorlēāse
which [acc.] they earlier suffered lord-less

lanʒe hwīle; him þæs Līffrēā,
long time; to-him because-of-that Lord-of-life,

wuldres Wealdend, woroldāre forʒeaf,
glory's Ruler, worldly-honour gave,

Bēōwulf wæs brēme – blǣd wīde spranʒ –
Beowulf was renowned – glory widely spread –

Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.
Scyld's son [in] Danish-lands [dat.pl.] in.

Source:
Hladký, Josef (2003). *A Guide to Pre-Modern English*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, p. 103.

Beowulf
(Prose translation by David Wright)

Hear! We know of the bygone glory of the Danish kings, and the heroic exploits of those princes. Scyld Scefing, in the face of hostile armies, used often to bring nations into subjugation, and strike terror in the hearts of their leaders. In the beginning he had been picked up as a castaway; but he afterwards found consolation for his misfortune. For his power and fame increased until each of his overseas neighbours was forced to submit and pay him tribute. He was an excellent king.

Later a son was born to him in his stronghold, a young prince whom God, seeing the misery which the Danes had so long endured when they were kingless, sent to be their comfort. The Almighty granted him renown. Beowulf, son of Scyld, became famous in Denmark, and his fame spread everywhere.

Source:
Wright, David (1964). *Beowulf (A prose translation).* Penguin Books, p. 27.

Béowulf
(Czech translation by Jan Čermák)

Hoj! Slyšme zpěv   o slávě Dánů,
věhlasu vládců   dávných věků,
kdy urození muži   udatně si vedli.
Scyld, syn Scéfův,   porážel šiky,
dvorany dobýval   jednu po druhé,
národy děsil,   byť nalezenec
nejdřív byl ubohý.   Tak útěchy došel:
sílil pod nebesy,   v slávě prospíval,
až mu každý   z kmenů v okolí
velrybí cestou   poslušnost vzkázal,
daně odváděl.   Dobrý byl král!
V pozdějších dobách   dostal dědice,
syna mu seslal,   lidem ke spáse,
Stvořitel, věda,   jak krutá strast
po drahný čas   druhdy krušila
lid bez krále.   Kníže zázraků,
Pán všeho živého,   Béowulfu žehnal:
slovo o slávě   syna Scyldova
spěšně se šířilo   v zemi Skåne.

Source:
Čermák, Jan (2003). *Béowulf.* Praha: Torst, pp. 61–62.
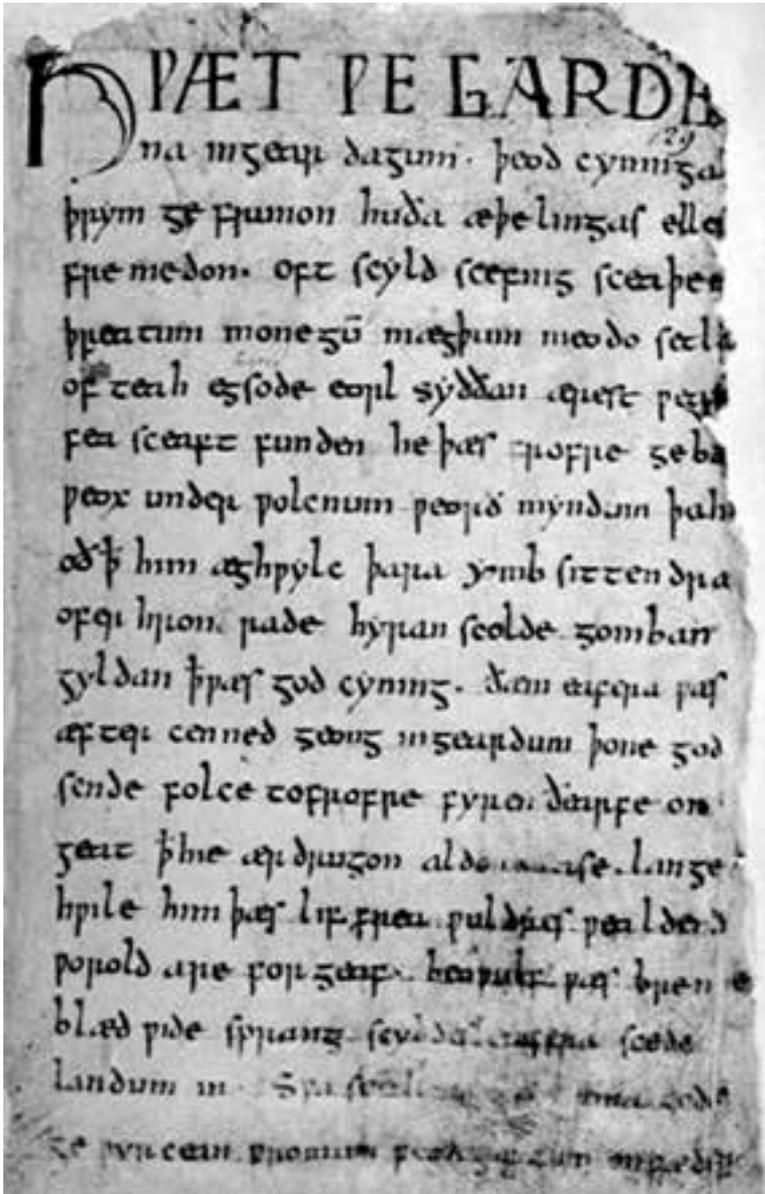
The first page of Beowulf (Nowell Codex)

Source: EugeneZelenko. *First page of Beowulf*. Wikimedia Commons [online] 25. 11. 2004. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beowulf.firstpage.jpeg

The Lord's Prayer

Below is the text of the Lord's Prayer in the standardized West Saxon literary dialect (end of 10th century) and its Modern English equivalent from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer* (1928). The doxology "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever", which concludes the Lord's Prayer in the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, has been omitted. The Old English text contains standard typographical modifications.

Fæder ūre þū þe eart on heofonum,	Our Father who art in heaven,
Sī þīn nama ġehālgod.	hallowed be thy name.
Tōbecume þīn rīċe,	Thy kingdom come.
ġewurþe ðīn willa,	Thy will be done
on eorðan swā swā on heofonum.	on earth as it is in heaven.
Ūrne ġedæġhwāmlīcan hlāf syle ūs tō dæġ,	Give us this day our daily bread,
and forġyf ūs ūre gyltas,	and forgive us our trespasses,
swā swā wē forġyfað ūrum gyltendum.	as we forgive those who trespass against us,
And ne ġelæd þū ūs on costnunge,	and lead us not into temptation,
ac ālȳs ūs of yfele.	but deliver us from evil.
Sōþlīċe.	Amen.

Sources:
Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1928)
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The Lord's Prayer – Vocabulary:

fæder	*Father*	dæġhwāmliċ	*Daily*
ūre	*Our*	hlāf	*bread* (Masc. A-stem)
þū	*Thou*	sellan	*to give* (class 1c)
þe	relative particle	ūs	Us
eart	*are* (2nd Person Sg. of *be*)	tōdæġ	*today*
on	*on, in*	and	*and*
heofon	*heaven* (Masc. A-stem)	forġiefan	*to forgive* (class V)
sī	*be* (Present Subj.)	gylt	*guilt* (Masc. I-stem)
þīn	*Thine*	gyltend	*offender, debtor* Masc. A-stem)
nama	*name* (Masc. N-stem)	ne	*not*
hālgian	*to hallow* (class 2)	lǣdan	*to lead* (class 1b)
becuman	*to come* (class IV)	costnung	*temptation* (Fem. Ō-stem)
rīċe	*kingdom* (N. Ja-stem)	ac	*but*
weorðan	*to become* (class III)	ālȳsan	*to deliver from* (class 1b)
willa	*will* (Masc. N-stem)	of	*from*
eorDe	*earth* (Fem. N-stem)	yfel	*evil* (Neuter A-stem)
swā swā	*so as*	Sōþlīċe	*truly, amen*
ūrne	*our* (Acc. Sg. Masc.)		

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5 Middle English

5.1 Historical background of Middle English

The development of the English language was strongly influenced by political changes following the Norman Conquest. In 1066, the Norman army led by William the Conqueror (Duke of Normandy) defeated the Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Hastings and killed the last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold II. This event foreshadowed the end of the Old English and the beginning of the Middle English period. The linguistic effects of the arrival of the Normans became apparent with considerable delay, therefore the beginning of the Middle English period has been set by scholars to the end of the 11th century or even a later date. The traditional periodization distinguishes three subperiods of Middle English: Early Middle English (1100–1250), Ordinary Middle English (1250–1400), and Late Middle English (1400–1500). However, recent research suggests that Old English was not only spoken but also written for almost one hundred years after the Norman Conquest. Da Rold et al. (2010) suggest the following modification of the traditional periodization:

Updated Old English (1066–1150)
Early Middle English (1150–1325)
Late Middle English (1325–1500)

When William the Conqueror became King William I of England, the Normans (Norsemen who had previously conquered Northern France) seized political, economic, military, and religious power. They became the lords of the Anglo-Saxon population, which, however, continued to speak English. The Normans spoke Norman French and at the beginning of their rule, most of them did not learn English and could not communicate with the Anglo-Saxon population. Due to various social and political factors, the situation changed gradually. At the beginning of the 13th century, the descendant of William the Conqueror, King John, lost the province of Normandy and by the end of the 14th century, the Anglo-Normans lost all their properties in France. The loss of ties with France resulted in the adoption of English as an official language by Anglo-Normans. The influence of the French language on English became noticeable only at the end of the 13th

century. Most loanwords adopted by the middle of the 13th century are of Norman French origin, while most words adopted later come from Central French (see Chapter 8).

In the Old English period, there was a rich tradition of literature written in English, especially in the West-Saxon dialect. In the Early Middle English period, written English became scarce. Most documents were written in Latin and French. Latin was the language of religious and learned texts; French became the language of law, administration, and literature. The authors of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Peterborough Chronicle), who continued to write in English after the Norman Conquest, had to abandon their work in 1154.

Due to the political changes after 1066, the West Saxon dialect lost its dominant position and the literary tradition of the first standardized form of written English (Winchester Standard) was interrupted. The political and cultural centre moved from Winchester to London, where a new standard (Chancery Standard) started taking shape after 1400. The London and the East Midland dialects became the basis for the development of Standard English; important figures in this process were, among others, Geoffrey Chaucer, the author o The Canterbury Tales and William Caxton, the first English printer, who published Chaucer's works.

Midland dialects were a continuation of Mercian dialects, which developed in close contact with Scandinavian dialects during the Old English period. Scandinavian influence continued to play an important role also during the Middle English period. Most scholars distinguish the following Middle English dialects: East Midland, West Midland, Southern, Northern, and Kentish. Their geographical distribution is presented on the map below.

Geographical distribution of Middle English dialects after Mossé (1945, 1949)

5.2 Middle English grammar

During the Middle English period, the English language underwent a number of phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic changes. Due to the reduction of unstressed syllables, the rich inflectional system of Old English was strongly simplified and word order became less flexible. English gradually moved from a synthetic language to an analytical language using prepositions and relatively fixed word order patterns to indicate the meaning of the lost inflectional endings. Middle English is closer to Modern English than Old English and resembles modern West Frisian, one of the closest relatives of English.

Subchapters 5.2.1–5.2.3 below outlining the Middle English inflectional system of nouns, verbs and selected pronouns represent a modified version of passages selected from Hladký's *Guide to Pre-Modern English* (2003, pp. 176–181).

5.2.1 Middle English nouns

The complex system of Old English inflection of nouns was reduced during the Middle English period to only two distinct ending patterns, the vocalic declension and the consonantal N–declension. These two patterns represent a merger of a number of different nominal paradigms. Since non-productive nouns adopted the endings of productive paradigms, the number of different endings was reduced. Differences in inflection between nouns of different gender disappeared. The category of gender underwent a radical transformation during the Middle English period: grammatical gender was gradually replaced by natural gender. The simplification of nominal inflection from Old English to Middle English is presented below.

Vocalic declension

	Masculine 'stone'		*Neuter* 'word'		*Feminine* 'tale'	
	OE	*ME*	*OE*	*ME*	*OE*	*ME*
Singular						
Nom.	stān	stǭn	word	word	talu,-o	tāle
Gen.	stānes	stǭnes	wordes	wordes	tale	tāle(s)
Dat.	stāne	stǭn(e)	worde	word(e)	tale	tāle
Acc.	stān	stǭn	word	word	tale	tāle
Plural						
Nom.	stānas	stǭnes	word	wordes	tala,-e	tāles
Gen.	stāna	stǭnes	worda	wordes	tala,-ena	tāles
Dat.	stānum	stǭnes	wordum	wordes	talum	tāles
Acc.	stānas	stǭnes	word	wordes	tala,-e	tāles

N – declension

	OE 'name'	*ME*
Singular		
Nom.	nama	nāme
Gen.	naman	nāmes
Dat.	naman	nāme
Acc.	naman	nāme

Plural

Nom.	naman	nāmen
Gen.	namena	nāmene
Dat.	namum	nāmen
Acc.	naman	nāmen

The *-(e)s* ending was gradually adopted as a general plural ending by the majority of Middle English nouns. However, in the Southern and Kentish dialects the plural *-en* remained much longer than in the Midland and Northern dialects. It was even extended to nouns which were strong in Old English and to Anglo-Norman words *(children* – OE *ċildru; eyren* 'eggs' – OE *ǣġru; housen* – OE *husas; sunen* 'sons' – OE *suna; worden* – OE *word).* The *-en* plural was replaced by the *-(e)s* plural in the Northern and the North Midland dialects.

Some Middle English nouns had no ending in the plural, e.g. *folk, hors, pound, sheepe, swyn, yeer.* These were monosyllabic neutral nouns with a long vowel or with a short vowel before a consonant cluster, which did had a zero plural ending already in Old English. Another type of the zero plural is the umlaut plural in nouns originally belonging to the athematic declension, e.g. *foot – feet*, *man – men*, *goose – geese*.

The change from synthesis to analysis is well demonstrated on the percentages of the inflectional genitive and the periphrasis with *of:* at the end of the 10th century, the ratio was 99 to 1 per cent, in the 12th century it was 93.7 to 6.3, and in the 14th century 15.6 to 84.4 per cent. In the final stage, however, the inflectional genitive recovered some of its lost ground and acquired some new functions.

5.2.2 Middle English verbs

The conjugation of verbs underwent simplifying changes similar to those within the inflection of nouns. The simplification of the synthetic forms of verbs was accompanied by the development of new analytical forms and new grammatical categories; the ultimate result of these changes is the present system of tenses and aspects. The simplification of the synthetic forms and the grammaticalization of new analytical forms was a long process, which ended only in the Early Modern English period. One of the results of the simplification of verbal endings was the loss of the distinction between the indicative and the subjunctive forms.

Although Middle English conjugation was simplified, verbal forms had numerous variants in various Middle English dialects. For example, the plural ending of the present tense was *-eth (we telleth)* in the Kentish, Southern and West Midland dialects, *-en (than longen folk to goon* – Chaucer, Prologue to the Canterbury tales in East Midland dialects, and *-es* in Northern dialects.

The present tense singular endings were *-e* in the first person (*ich here* – 'I hear'), *-(e)st* in the second person (*thou speakest*), and *-eth/es* in the third person (he *cometh/comes*; spelled also as *comeþ*).

Dialectal differences existed also in the form of the present participle. The OE ending *-ende* changed into *-inde/-ende* in the Southern and Midland dialects, and into *-ande* in Northern and in North Midland dialects (very likely under the influence of the ON ending *-andi*). In the 13th century, the ending was replaced by *-ing(e)* in the southern and central parts of the country. Occasionally the two forms appeared side by side (*ne goinde ne rīdinge*).

The system of strong and weak verbs was completely rearranged and broken up in the Middle English period. Old English possessed a total of about 300 strong verbs. About one hundred of these verbs were lost in the transition period between Old English and Middle English, and about eighty became weak and 'regular' (e.g. *bow* (II), *help* (III), *climb* (III), and *wash* (VI)). The reverse process, a weak verb becoming strong and 'irregular', was much less frequent (e.g. *wear, hide, ring,* or *dig*). Borrowed and newly-formed verbs were weak (i.e. 'regular').

5.2.3 Middle English pronouns

Personal pronouns

Singular	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person Masculine	3rd Person Feminine	Neuter (Impersonal)
Nom.	ich, i, ī ik (northern)	þou, þu ye (from the 14th century)	he	schē, sche	hit, it
Pos.	my, myne, myn	þy, þyne, þyn	his	hire, hir	his
Obl.	mē, me	þē, þe	him	hire, hir	hit, it

Plural					
Nom.	wē, we	ye		thei, they	
Pos.	our, ours	your, yours		their, her	
Obl.	ūs, us	you		hem, them,	

In Chaucer's time, gender was already a lexical category because the weakened and levelled endings of nouns and adjectives ceased to indicate gender. Therefore *he* and *sche* referred to human beings and *hit/it* to inanimate objects and animals. The OE pronoun of the 3rd person plural *hīe, hī, hēō* was replaced by the Scandinavian loan *they*. For some time the two forms occurred side by side: *That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke* (Chaucer, Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*). *Them/theim* began to appear in the 15th century and *them* was fully established in the 16th century. Modern English *'em* is the weak form of OE *hem* but now it is felt as a clipped form of *them*. The convergence of cases began in Old English when the West Saxon datives of *ic* (*me*) and *þu* (*þe*) replaced the accusatives (*mec, þec*). This convergence of cases within the system of pronouns continued in Middle English. The original OE functions of the genitive forms of personal pronouns were taken over by possessive pronouns and the analytical forms with *of*.

Possessive pronouns

The ME system of possessive pronouns was very similar to the modern English system: *my/myn(e); þy/thy/þyn(e)/thyn(e); your/your; his, her, his; our/ours; your/yours; her(e)/ their(e)*. A new possessive pronoun *its* was first recorded in 1598 but was still rare in Shakespeare's time. The form *her(e)* and *their(e)* co-existed till the 15th century. The former comes from the OE pronominal forms *hira*, *hiora*, *heora*, while the form *their(e)* is (like *they* and *them*) a Scandinavian loan.

Demonstrative pronouns and articles

In Middle English, demonstrative pronouns ceased to express gender and to distinguish cases. A new pattern based on the OE neuter forms *þæt* and *þis* developed. The plural form *those* is a descendant of the OE *þās* (plural of *þēs*, *þēōs*, *þis*) and *these* developed from the OE singular forms *þis/þes* to which the plural *-e* was added. In this way a pronoun of weaker deixis *þæt* (a specifying pronoun) changed its function to stronger deixis, while *þis* developed in the opposite direction, from stronger to weaker deixis, or from a real deictic pronoun to a specifying pronoun. The late OE masculine form *þe* developed into the definite article; the indefinite article developed from the OE numeral *ān*. The pronoun *sum*, whose meaning was similar to that of *ān* in Old English, lost its article function during the Middle English period.

Relative pronouns

The OE relative particle *þe* disappeared completely by 1250 and the OE demonstrative *þæt* began to be used in its place. Other relative pronouns developed from the OE interrogatives *whā* and *whilċ*.

Reflexive pronouns

In Old English, *self* was used mainly to emphasize personal pronouns. In the Middle English period, *self* became to be regarded as a noun and had to be preceded by a possessive pronoun, especially in 1st and 2nd person. Its main function was emphasis up to the end of the 15th century, while the reflexive function was still performed by the personal pronouns, e.g. *I shal strengþen me þērto.*

Indefinite pronouns

The most important change within the indefinite pronouns during the ME period was the disappearance of the pronoun *man.*

5.3 Middle English texts

Below is a sample of an Early Middle English text from about 1200, which still preserves features of Old English. The spelling indicates pronunciation: short vowels are followed by double consonant letters. The text is supplemented by a Modern English translation illustrating the syntactic structure of the original text. The Early Middle English text is followed by a sample of a Late Middle English text.

Ormulum – Dedication
(Original text with a Modern English translation by Chamonikolasová)

Nu, broþerr Wallterr, broþerr min,
Now, Brother Walter, brother mine,

Affter þe flæshess kinde;
My flesh and blood;

Annd broþerr min i Crisstenndom
And brother mine in Christendom

þurrh fulluhht and þurrh trowwþe
Through baptism and through faith

Annd broþerr min i Godess hus,
And brother mine in God's house,

ȝet o þe þridde wise,
Yet in the third way,

þurrh þatt witt hafenn takenn ba
Through that we have both taken

An reȝhellboc to follȝhenn,
To obey one book of canons,

Unnderr kanunnkess had annd lif,
Under canon conditions and life,

Swa summ Sannt Awwsten sette;
Just as St Augustine established it;

Icc hafe don swa summ þu badd
I have done just as you bade (demanded)

Annd forþedd te þin wille,
And acted according to your will,

Icc haf wennd inntill Ennglissh
I have translated into English

Goddspelless hallȝe lare,
The Gospel's holy lore,

Affterr þatt little witt þatt me
With the small wit that to me

Min Drihhtin hafeþþ lenedd.
my Lord has lent.

Source:
Ormulum. Bodleian Library MS, Junius 1.

Below is the text of the initial part of the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. The Middle English text is supplemented by a Modern English translation, a phonetic transcription, and a translation into Czech. The Canterbury Tales were first published in 1476 by William Caxton.

Geoffrey Chaucer – The Canterbury Tales

General Prologue
(Original text with a Modern English translation after Hieatt et al. 1976)

1   Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
     When April with his sweet showers

2   The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
     has pierced the drought of March to the root,

3   And bathed every veyne in swich licour
     and bathed every vein in such moisture

4   Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
     as has power to bring forth the flower;

5   Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
     when, also, Zephyrus with his sweet breath

6   Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
     has breathed spirit [(7) into the tender new shoots]

7   The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
      [(6) in every wood and meadow], and the young sun

8   Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
      has run half his course in the sign of the Ram,

9   And smale foweles maken melodye,
      and small birds sing melodies

10   That slepen al the nyght with open ye
      and sleep with their eyes open all the night

11   (So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
      (so Nature pricks them in their hearts):

12   Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
      then people long to go on pilgrimages,

13   And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes,
      and palmers long to seek strange shores

14   To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
      and far-off shrines known in various lands,

15   And specially from every shires ende
      and, especially, from the ends of every shire

16   Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
      in England they come to Canterbury,

17   The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
      to seek the holy, blissful martyr

18   That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
      who helped them when they were sick.

Source:
Hieatt, A. Kent and Hieatt, Constance (eds.) (1976). *Chaucer. Canterbury Tales / Tales of Caunterbury.* Bantam Books.

General Prologue
(Phonetic transcription by Rolf Berndt)

1   Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
     'wan ðat 'aːpril wið (h)is 'ʃuːrəs 'soːtə

2   The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
     ðə 'druxt ǫv 'martʃ haθ 'pęːrsəd 'toː ðə 'rǫːtə

3   And bathed every veyne in swich licour
     and 'baːðed 'ęvri 'vain in 'switʃ li'kuːr

4   Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
     ǫv 'witʃ ver'tiu en'dʒendrəd 'iz ðə 'fluːr

5   Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
     wan 'zefi'rus ęːk 'wið (h)is 'swęːte 'bręːθ

6   Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
     in'spiːrəd 'haðəð in 'ęvri 'hǫlt and   'hęːθ

7   The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
     ðe 'tendrə 'krǫppəz 'and ðə 'juŋgə 'sunnə

8   Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
     haðəð 'in ðə 'ram (h)iz 'halvə 'kuːrs i'runnə

9   And smale foweles maken melodye,
     and 'smaːlə 'fuːləz 'maːkən 'melǫ'diːə

10   That slepen al the nyght with open ye
     ðat 'slęːpən 'al ðə 'niçt wið 'ǫːpən 'iːə

11   (So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
     sǫː 'priːkəð '(h)em na'tiur in 'hir ku'raːdʒəz

12   Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
     ðan 'lǫŋgən 'fǫlk to 'gǫːn on 'pilgri'maːdʒəz

13   And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes,
        and ˈpalmərz ˈfɔr tə ˈsẹːkən ˈstraundʒə ˈstrɔndəz

14   To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
        to ˈfernə ˈhalwəs ˈkuːθ in ˈsundri ˈlɔndəz

15   And specially from every shires ende
        and ˈspesialˈli from ˈẹvri ˈʃiːrəz ˈendə

16   Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
        ɔv ˈeŋgəˈlɔnd to ˈkɑuntərˈbri ðai ˈwendə

17   The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
        ðə ˈhọˈːli ˈblisful ˈmartir ˈfɔr to ˈsẹːkə

18   That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
        ðat ˈ(h)em ha ̌ð ˈhɔlpən ˈwan ðat ˈðai wẹːr ˈsẹːkə

Sources:
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Kökeritz, Helge (1963). *A Guide to Chaucer's Pronunciation.* Stockholm.

General Prologue
(Czech translation by František Vrba)

1   Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
        Když duben vniká v šumných přeprškách

2   The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
        až do kořání pod březnový prach

3   And bathed every veyne in swich licour
        a vlahou lázní v každém vláknu vznítí

4   Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
        plodivou sílu, z které pučí kvítí,

5   Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
     a když i Zefyr [(6) v lesíku a v stráni]

6   Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
     [(5) líbezným dechem] k růstu popohání

7   The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
     výhonky něžné a když jaré slunce

8   Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
     na dráze Skopcem dorazilo k půlce,

9   And smale foweles maken melodye,
     když drobné ptáčky [(11) příroda tak vzbouří],

10   That slepen al the nyght with open ye
     že ani v spánku oka nezamhouří

11   (So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
     [(9) a na své šalmaje si vyhrávají],

12   Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
     zatouží lidé po dalekém kraji

13   And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes,
     a dálném břehu; každý světa kout

14   To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
     má svého, svatého a má svou pout.

15   And specially from every shires ende
     A [(16) v Anglii se táhnou] všemi směry

16   Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
     [(15) z každého hrabství] k městu Canterbury,

17   The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
za mučedníkem blahoslaveným,

18   That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
jenž v nemoci a strázni pomoh jim.

Sources:
Hieatt, A. Kent and Hieatt, Constance (eds.) (1976). *Chaucer. Canterbury Tales / Tales of Caunterbury.* Bantam Books.
Chaucer, Geoffrey (1970). Canterburské povídky, translation by František Vrba. Praha: Odeon.

The first page of the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Hengwrt manuscript)

Source: *Opening folio of the Hengwrt manuscript.* Wikimedia Commons [online] 15. 2. 2007. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HengwrtChaucerOpening.jpg

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General Prologue. Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia [online] 23. 9. 2014. [accessed 2014-09-23]. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Prologue

6 Early Modern English

6.1 Historical background of Early Modern English

Early Modern English is the stage of development of the English language from the late 15th century to the late 17th century. The period from 1700 (in some sources from 1800) to the present day is denoted as Modern English. The Early Modern English period coincides roughly with the reign of the House of Tudor (1485–1603) and the House of Stuart (1603–1714). The establishment of the Tudor dynasty under Henry VII in 1485 after the battle of Bosworth, which ended the Wars of the Roses, resulted in a greater centralization of government in England.

The 16th century was a century of the Reformation initiated in the 1530s under the reign of Henry VIII by a series of Parliament acts, which weakened England's religious and political bonds with Catholic Europe. Though Roman Catholicism was restored during the reign of Henry VIII's daughter Mary I (Bloody Mary), who persecuted Protestants, Reformation gradually spread throughout the country and the Church of England strengthened its position.

The 17th century, in which England was governed by the House of Stuart, was a century of learning and discovery. The spread of the new science was promoted by the works of Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and by the Royal Society of London, a scientific society chartered in 1662 by King Charles II. The English colonial empire founded in the late 16th century expanded significantly during the 17th century. The colonization of North America, which started in the early seventeenth century, gave rise to American English.

The Early Modern English period was concluded by the religious and political settlement of the Glorious Revolution (in 1688), the rise of Augustan literature during the reign of Queen Anne (1702–14), and the adoption of the Act of Union between England and Scotland (1707), which established a political unity within the British Isles.

The Early Modern English period was marked by a rapid growth of the printing industry. The art of printing was introduced into England by William Caxton, who set up the first printing press at Westminster in 1476. Printing made books cheaper, facilitated dissemination of texts written in English, and supported literacy among the population of England. It was one of the most important factors in the process of the standardization

of the English language. Most publishing houses in the 16th and 17th centuries were located in London, therefore Standard English developed from the London dialect. The major grammatical changes that started during the Middle English period were completed during the 16th century, and in 1604, Robert Cawdery published the first dictionary of the English language entitled *A Table Alphabetical*. By the late 16th or early 17th century, when William Shakespeare wrote his works, the language had acquired most of its Modern English features.

During the Late Middle English and Early Modern English periods, English pronunciation changed quite dramatically owing to extensive sound changes, especially the Great Vowel Shift. However, spelling was mostly standardized before the completion of the Great Vowel Shift (see Chapter 7). Since no major orthographic reform has been successfully implemented, the present day English spelling reflects pronunciation patterns that were in use 500 years ago.

Below are two examples of Early Modern English texts.

6.2 Early Modern English texts

A Letter of John Dee to Elizabeth I (1588)

Most Gratious Soueraine Lady, The God of heaven and earth, (Who hath mightilie, and evidently, given vnto your most excellent Royall Maiestie, this wunderfull Triumphant Victorie, against your mortall enemies) be allwaies, thanked, praysed, and glorified; And the same God Almightie, euermore direct and defend your most Royall Highnes from all evill and encumbrance: and finish and confirme in your most excellent Maiestie Royall, the blessings, long since, both decreed and offred: yea, euen into your most gratious Royall bosom, and Lap. Happy are they, that can perceyue, and so obey the pleasant call, of the mightie Ladie, OPPORTUNITIE. And, Therfore, finding our dueties concurrent with a most secret beck, of the said Gratious Princess. Ladie OPPORTUNITIE, NOW to embrace, and enioye, your most excellent Royall Maiesties high favor, and gratious great Clemencie, of CALLING me, Mr. Kelley, and our families, hoame, into your Brytish Earthly Paradise, and Monarchie incomparable: (and, that, abowt an yere since: by Master Customer Yong, his letters,) I, and myne, (by God his fauor and help, and after the most convenient manner, we can, will, from hencefurth, endeuour our selues, faithfully, loyally, carefully, warily, and diligently, to ryd and vntangle our selues from hence: And so, very devowtly, and Sowndlie, at your Sacred Maiesties feet, to offer our selues, and all, wherein, we are, or may be hable, to serve God, and your most Excellent Royall Maiestie.

The Lord of Hoasts, be our help, and gwyde, therein: and graunt vnto your most excellent Royall Maiestie, the Incomparablest Triumphant Raigne, and Monarchie, that euer was, since mans creation. Amen.

<div align="right">

Trebon in the kingdome of Boemia,
the 10th of Nouebre: A.Dm: 1588

Your Sacred and most excellent Royall Maiesties
most humble and dutifull Subject, and Servant,
John Dee

</div>

Source:
Hladký, Josef (2003). *A Guide to Pre-Modern English*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, pp. 301–302.

William Shakespeare – Sonnet 18
(Original text with standard typographical modifications and a phonetic transcription after Hladký 2003)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
ˈʃæl əɪ kəmˈpeːɹ ðiː ˈtʊ ə ˈsʌməɹz ˈdɛː

Thou are more lovely and more temperate:
ðəʊ ˈaːɹt moːɹ ˈlʌvlɪ ˈən(d) moːɹ ˈtɛmpəˈrɛ(ː)t

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
ˈrʌf ˈwɪn(d)z du ˈʃɛːk ðə ˈdaːɹlən ˈbʌdz əv ˈmɛː

And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
ən(d) ˈsʌməɹz ˈlɛːs əθ ˈoːl tuː ˈʃoːɹt ə ˈdɛːt

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
sʌmˈtəɪm tuː ˈhɔt ðɪ ˈəɪ əv ˈhɛ(ː)vn ˈʃəɪnz

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
ən(d) ˈoːfn ˈɪz ɪz ˈgoːld kəmˈplɛkʃn ˈdɪmd

And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
ən(d) ˈɛvrɪ ˈfeːɹ frəm ˈfeːɹ sʌmˈtəɪm dɪˈkləɪnz

By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
bɪ 'ʧæ:ns əɹ 'nɛ:ʧəɹz 'ʧɛ:n(d)ʒɪŋ 'ko:ɹs ʌn'trɪmd

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
bət 'ðəɪ ɪ'ta:ɹnəl 'sʌməɹ 'ʃæl nɔt 'fɛ:d

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
no:ɹ 'lu:z pə'zɛʃn 'ɔv ðæt 'fe:ɹ ðəʊ 'o:st

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
'no:ɹ ʃæl 'dɛ(:)θ 'bræg ðəʊ 'wandəɹst ɪn ɪz 'ʃɛ(:)d

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
'hwɛn ɪn ɪ'ta:ɹnəl 'ləɪnz tə 'təɪm ðəʊ 'gro:st

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
so: 'loŋ əz 'mɛn kən 'brɛ:ð əɹ 'əɪz kən 'si:

So long lives this; and this gives life to thee.
so: 'loŋ lɪvz 'ðɪs ən(d) 'ðɪs gɪvz 'ləɪf tʊ 'ði:

Source:
Hladký, Josef (2003). *A Guide to Pre-Modern English*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, pp. 291–292.

Sonnet 18
(Czech translation by Erik A. Saudek)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	Mám říci o tobě, žes letní den?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	Je v tobě míry víc a hlubší něha:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	blaženství léta trvá krátko jen
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;	a často vichr kvítí máje šlehá.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,	Přespříliš sálá někdy oko dne
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;	a někdy chřadnouc jeho zlať se kalí
And every fair from fair sometime declines,	a všechno krásné z krásy opadne,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;	když náhlý mráz či staroba to spálí.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,	Tvé léto je však věčné, nezemdlí
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;	a nevadnoucí podrží tvou krásu,
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	smrt o ní neřekne: „V mém stínu dlí!"
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:	leč růst ji spatří do plnosti času:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,	duch dokud dýchat bude, oko zřít,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.	žít bude toto, ty v tom budeš žít!

Source:
Shakespeare, W. (1976). *Sonnets | Sonety*. Praha: Československý spisovatel, p. 23.

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7 Sound changes from Proto-Indo-European to Early Modern English

The survey of sound changes from Proto-Indo-European to Early Modern English presented in this chapter is based on a selection of the most important changes described in the sources listed in the Bibliography. It outlines the main tendencies in the development of the English sound system, however, it is not an exhaustive list of all changes that have shaped Modern English phonology.

7.1 Sound changes from Proto-Indo-European to Old English

7.1.1 Proto-Indo-European system of consonants

		voiceless stops	voiced stops		
			non-aspirated	aspirated	
labials		p	b	b^h	
dentals		t	d	d^h	
palatals	*s <*	ḱ	ǵ	$ǵ^h$	} *centum*
velars		k	g	g^h	
labio-velars	*satem {*	k^w	g^w	g^{wh}	

In addition to the stops listed above, PIE contained the following consonants:

voiceless spirant	s
liquids	1, r
nasals	m, n
semivowels	j, w

According to further developments of the PIE stops, *centum* and *satem* languages are distinguished. The expressions centum and satem correspond to the reconstructed PIE numeral hundred: *kṃtóm*. In centum languages, palatal plosives merged with velar plosives (*k̑ > k*). In satem languages, velar plosives merged with labio-velar plosives; and palatal plosives changed into sibilants (*k̑ > s/ś/š*).

PIE *kṃtóm* > Latin *centum* [kentum]
PIE *kṃtóm* > Slavic *sʊto*

7.1.2 Consonant changes from Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic

Grimm's Law (First Germanic Sound Shift)

1	2	3	>	1	2	3
p	b	bʰ		f [f]	p	ƀ [v]
t	d	dʰ		þ [θ]	t	đ [ð]
k̑	g̑	g̑ʰ	}	χ [x]	k	ʒ [ɣ]
k	g	gʰ				
kʷ	gʷ	gʷʰ		χʷ[xʷ]	kʷ	ʒʷ[ɣʷ]

Stages of Grimm's law:

1 PIE voiceless stops changed into voiceless spirants (fricatives). This shift did not take place in a position after *s*.
2 PIE unaspirated voiced stops changed into unaspirated voiceless stops.
3 PIE aspirated voiced stops changed into unaspirated voiced spirants.

Examples:

1

p	>	f	Lat. *piscis*/OE *fisc* (ModE *fish*)
t	>	þ	Lat. *trēs*/OE *þrī* (ModE *three*)
ḱ	>	χ	Gr. *kládos*/OE *holt* (ModE dial. *holt*)
k	>	χ	Gr. kardia/OE heorte (ModE *heart*)
k^w	>	$χ^w$	Lat. *quod*/OE *hwæt* (ModE what)

2

b	>	p	Lat. *labium*/OE *lippa* (ModE *lip*)
d	>	t	Lat. *duo*/OE *twā* (ModE *two*)
ǵ	>	k	Lat. *ager*/OE *æcer* (ModE acre)
g	>	k	Lat. *iugum*/OE *ġeok* (ModE yoke)
g^w	>	k^w	PIE.*$g^w\bar{\imath}wos$*/Lat. *vīvus*/OE *cwicu* (ModE *quick*)

3

b^h	>	ƀ	(initially and after nasals: ƀ > *b*)	Sans. *bhrātar*/OE *brōþor (*ModE *brother*)
d^h	>	đ	(initially and after nasals: *đ > d*)	PIE *bhendh-*/OE *bindan* (ModE *bind*)
ǵʰ	>	ʒ		Sans. *hárita- (*ModE *gold*/R. *zóloto*)
g^h	>	ʒ		PIE *steigh-*/OE *stīʒan* (ModG steigen)
g^{wh}	>	$ʒ^w$		PIE *sneig^{wh}-*/Gr. *níp^ha*/OE *snāw* (ModE *snow*)

Verner's Law

Proto-Germanic voiceless spirants in medial and final positions underwent another shift when the preceding syllable did not carry the main stress. Through this shift, referred to as Verner's law, the voiceless spirants *f, þ, χ, χ^w*, and s changed into voiced spirants *ƀ, đ, ʒ, ʒ^w*, and *z*.

Proto-Indo-European and Early Proto-Germanic word stress (denoted in examples by an accent, e.g. *we-wórt-e*) was not fixed to one particular position; it occurred on different syllables within the paradigm of a particular word. Shifts of word stress together with Verner's law explain for example the alternation of PG and OE voiceless and voiced spirants within some verb paradigms, e.g.

PIE *we-wórt-e* 'he has turned' > Sans. *vavárta*, PG *wárþi, OE *wearþ*
PIE *we-wr̥t-i-mé* 'we have turned' > Sans. *vavr̥timá*, PG *wurđumí*, OE *wurdon*, infinitive *weorđan*.

7.1.3 Consonant changes from Proto-Germanic to Old English

ʒ^w > ʒ before *u*
ʒ^w > w

ʒ > ʒ in a velar surrounding
ʒ > ġ [j] in a palatal surrounding
ʒ > g in initial positions; after *n*; in gemination
ʒ > χ in final positions (spelled as ʒ, *h*, and later *gh*)

ƀ > b in initial positions
ƀ > b in a voiced surrounding
ƀ > f in a voiceless surrounding

đ > d

χ > h the consonant *h* disappears between vowels
χ > χ in final positions and before a voicless consonants (spelled as *gh*)

z > r in medial positions
z disappears in final positions

c > ċ in a palatal surrounding
sc > sċ in all positions

7.1.4 Proto-Indo-European system of vowels

The PIE system of vowels according to the Neogrammarians (also referred to as Young Grammarians) included two mixed vowels, denoted as *schwa primum* (ə1) and *schwa secundum* (ə$_2$). (The latter was discovered later than the latter, hence the use of the names primum and secundum.) In Hebrew grammar, the term *schwa* denotes a vowel reduced due to lack of stress. According to the Neogrammarians, schwa primum developed from unstressed long vowels *ē¹*, *ā*, and *ō*; and schwa secundum from unstressed short vowels e, and o. Modern approaches based on the laryngeal theory have eliminated schwa secundum and reinterpreted schwa primum as a laryngeal, which was vocalized in a position between two consonants.

Neogrammarian system (Brugmann 1897)

Short vowels

i		ϑ_2		u
	e	ϑ_1	o	
		a		

Long vowels

ī			ū
	ē $(=\bar{e}_1)$	ō	
	ā		

Laryngealistic system (Beekes 1995)
H_1, H_2, and H_3 are PIE laryngeals that affected the neighbouring sounds in different ways.

Short vowels

i   u

e- < H_1e-   o- < H_3e- /$H_{1/2/3}$o-
-e-   -o-

H̥ = ə̥ > G., Gr., Lat. **a**

Long vowels

$$\bar{\imath} < iH_{1/2/3} \qquad\qquad\qquad \bar{u} < uH_{1/2/3}$$

$$\bar{e} < eH_1 \qquad\qquad \bar{o} < eH_3/oH_{1/2/3}$$

$$\bar{a} = eH_2$$

Diphthongs (Brugmannian system)

ei, ai, oi, eu, au, ou
ēī, āī, ōī, ēū, āū, ōū

7.1.5 Vowel changes from Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic

Short vowels

i		u
e		o
	a	
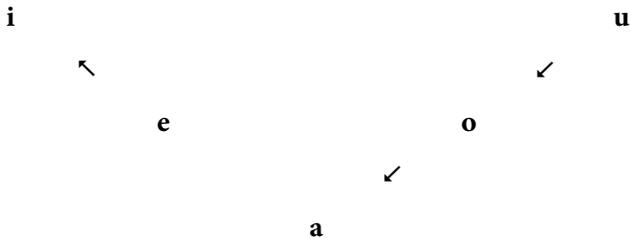
i > i   (PIE *piskos*, PG *fiskaz, OE *fisc* 'fish')

e > e   (PIE *edonom*, PG *etanan, OE *etan* 'eat')

a > a   (PIE *agros*, PG *akraz, OE *æcer* 'acre')

u > u   (PIE *sunus*, PG *sunuz, OE *sunu* 'son')

o > a   (Lat. *quod*, PG *χwat)

u > o   except before a nasal followed by another consonant (e.g. OE *ġebunden*); this new *o* replaced the original *o*, which had changed into *a*.

e > i   before a nasal followed by another consonant (Lat. *ventus*, PG *windaz*) and before *i, ī,* and *j* in the next syllable (Lat. *est*, OE *is*)

Long vowels

$\bar{\imath}$ $\bar{u}$

(ĕi >) $\bar{e}_2$ $\bar{o}$

$\bar{e}_1$ ↗
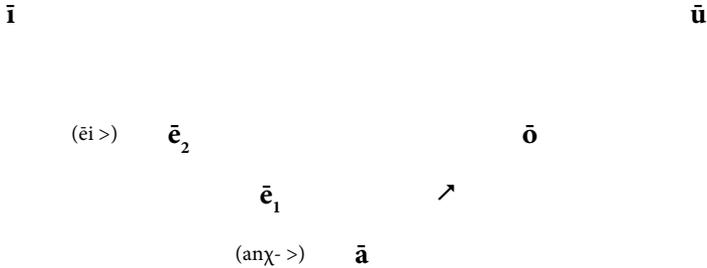
(anχ- >) $\bar{a}$

|	
ī > ī	(Lat. *sīmus,* OE *sīen* 'let us be')
ē > ē (= ē₁)	(Lat. *sēmen*, OE *sǣd* 'seed')
ō > ō	(Greek. *pōs*, OE *fōt* 'foot')
ū > ū	(Lat. *mūs*, OE *mūs* 'mouse')
ā > ō	(Lat. *māter*, OE *mōdor* 'mother')
*anχ- > ā	(PG *þanχtō > Gothic *þāχta*); *anχ- developed from *aχ-; this new *ā* replaced the original *ā*, which had changed into *ō*.
ĕi > ē₂	(Greek *e-keĭ-nos*, OE *hēr* 'here')

Diphthongs

Proto-Indo-European long diphthongs merged with short diphthongs; the further development of diphthongs resembles the development of short monophthongs, except the change ei > ī.

ai > ai	(Lat. *aes*, PG *aiz*, OE *ār* 'metal')
oi > ai	(Old Latin *oinos*, Goth. *ains*, OE *ān* 'one')
au > au	(Lat. *auris*, Goth. *ausō*, OE *ēāre* 'ear')
ou > au	(PIE *roudʰos*, PG *rauðas*, OE *rēād* 'red')
ei > ī	(PIE *steigʰ-*, OE *stīȝan* 'to ascend')
eu > eu	(PIE *bʰeudʰ-*, PG *beudan*, OE *bēōdan* 'to offer')
eu > iu	before *i, ī,* and *j* in the next syllable (PIE *leuk-*, PG *leuχ*, *Goth. *liuhtjan* 'give light', OE *lēōht*)

7.1.6 Vowel changes from Proto-Germanic to Old English

Short vowels

i (**y**) **u**

e **o**

æ ← **a**
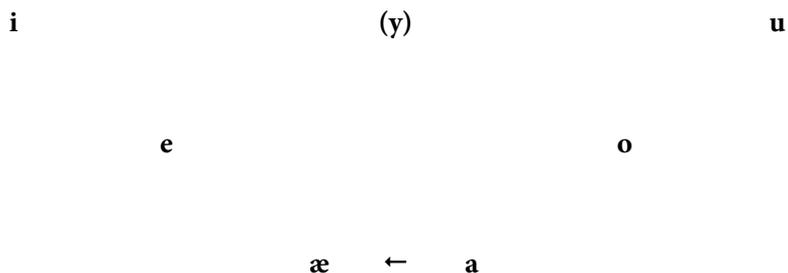
PG a > OE æ   (PG *daȝaz, OE *dæġ*)
PG a > OE a   before velar vowels (a, o, u) in the following syllable and before *n*
(PG *manwuaz, OE *mann*)

Long vowels

ī **ū**

($\bar{e}_2$>) **ē** **ō**

↗

($\bar{e}_1$>) **ǣ** **ā** (<ai)
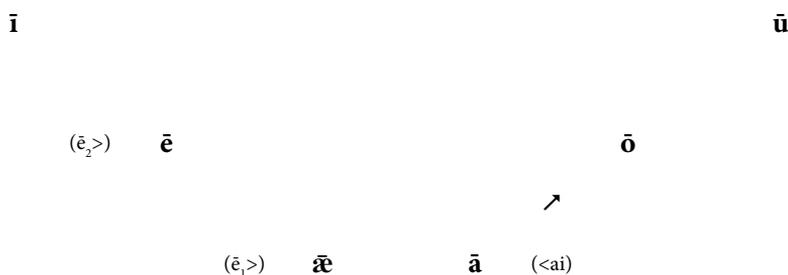
PG ā > OE ō (Goth. *þāχta*, OE *þōhte*)

Diphthongs

ai > ā   (Goth. *ains* – OE *ān*, Goth. *stains* – OE *stān*)
au > ēā   (PG * *auzon*, Goth. *ausō*, OE *ēāre*)
eu, iu > ēō   (PIE **bheudh-*, PG **beudan,* OE *bēōdan* 'to offer')

7.2 Sound changes from Old English to Early Modern English

7.2.1 Vowel changes in Old English

During the Old English period, several complex changes within the system of vowels took place. The most influential of the changes affecting stressed vowels was the palatal umlaut, which is responsible for various alternations within different forms of Modern English nouns, verbs, and adjectives, for example *mouse – mice, foot – feet, tooth – teeth, brother – brethren, strong – strength, food – feed, old – elder.*

Palatal umlaut

Palatal umlaut, also referred to as (i-mutation), is the palatalization of stressed vowels caused by the occurrence of *i* or *j* in the following syllable. Through palatal umlaut, back vowels were fronted and the low vowel *a* was fronted and raised.

a > e	(OE Sg. *mann*, Pl. *menn*, PG **manniz*)
æ > e	(OE *betra*, Goth. *batiza*)
o > e	(OE Nom. *dohtor*, Dat. *dehter*)
u > y	(OE *fyllan*, PG **fuljan*)
ā > ǣ	(OE *lǣran*, PG **laizjan*)
ō > ē	(OE Sg. *fōt*, Pl. *fēt*, PG **fōtiz*)
ū > ȳ	(OE Sg. *mūs*, Pl. *mȳs*, PG **mūsiz*)
ea > ie	(OE *eald*, comp. *ieldra*)
eo, io > ie	(OE *ic weorþe*, *þū wierst*)

Other complex changes that took place during the Old English period were the velar umlaut, breaking, and changes dew to the influence of nasals.

Velar umlaut

Velar umlaut, also referred to as u-mutation or back mutation, is the diphthongization of *e* and *i* before *v*, *l*, and *r*, followed by velar vowels.

e > eo   (Old Sax. *heban,* OE *heofon)*
i > io   (Early OE *hira,* OE *hiora/heora)*

Breaking

Breaking took place before the following groups of consonsnats:
r + consonant
1 + consonant
h [x] + consonant

i > io   (OSax. *irri,* Angel. *iorre)*
e > eo   (G. *Herz,* OE *heorte)*
æ, a > ea   (G. *alt,* OE *eald,* G. *wachsen,* OE *weaxan* 'grow')
ī > īō > ēō   (OE *līōht > lēōht,* Goth. *līhts)*

Influence of nasals

Nasals prevented the fronting of PG *a* into *æ* (e.g. OE *cann)* and nasalized and rounded the preceding *a,* which explains the variation in spelling in such words as *manig – monig, cann – conn, swamm – swomm.*

## 7.2.2 Vowel changes from Late Old English to Middle English

Short vowels

i	←	**(ü)**	**y**	**u**
	e		**o**	
	æ	→	**a**	

OE *fyrsta* > ME *furst,* *first*
OE *þæt* > ME *that*

Long vowels

ī   ←   **ȳ**   **ū**

e: < **ē**   ō > **o:**
   (ẹ:)   (ọ:)

ɛ: < **ǣ**   ā > **ɔ:**
   (ę:)   (ọ:)
                ā
                ↕
         (lengthening)

OE *stān* > ME *stone* [stɔ:n] (in Northern dialects ā > ɛ: (written *ai*) *stān* > *stain* [stɛ:n])

Diphthongs

ea > æ > a   (OE *eall, heard* > ME *all, hard*)
eo > ö > e   (OE *heorte* 'heart', *seofon* > ME *herte, seven*)
ie > i   (OE *ċiele* 'chill' > ME *chile*)

Lengthening and shortening of stressed vowels

In Late Old English and Early Middle English, short stressed vowels were lengthened and long stressed vowels were shortened in certain positions. Lengthening took place especially in open syllables and in closed syllables before lengthening consonant clusters (e.g. *ld, rd, nd, mb*). Other than lengthening clusters (e.g. *st, ft*) caused shortening. Unstressed vowels underwent reduction into a mixed vowel and in final positions disappeared completely.

OE *bacan* > ME *bāken*
OE *nama* > ME *nāme*
OE *ċild* > ME *ċīld* 'child'
OE *grund* > ME *grūnd* 'ground'
OE *dūst* > ME *dust*
OE *sōfte* > ME *soft*

The final letter -e, which indicated a reduced vowel (*nama > nāme*), became a signal of the long pronunciation of the preceding stressed syllable and was therefore added to OE words consisting of one long syllable (*hām > home, mūs > mouse, līf > life*).

Other combinatory changes

e before tautosyllabic *r* > a	(OE *steorra* > ME *sterre* > LME *star*)
e before [ŋk], [ŋg], [ndʒ], [ntʃ] > i	(OE *þenċean* > ME *thinken*)
ri > ir	(OE *þridde* > ME *third*)

Formation of new diphthongs

The monophthongization of OE diphthongs (see above) was accompanied by the development of new diphthongs in the Middle English period. After the reduction of endings, new diphthongs developed from vowels followed by *ġ* [j], *w* [w] and *ʒ* [ɣ], which changed into corresponding vowels. Another type of diphthongs developed from vowels followed by *h* (later spelled gh).

Examples:

æ + ġ > ai	(OE *dæġ* > ME *dai*, ModE *day*)
ō + w > ou	(OE *grōwan* > ME *growen*, ModE *grow*)
ī + w > iu	(OE *Tīwesdæġ* > ME *Tiwsdai*, ModE *Tuesday*)
a + ʒ > aw > au	(OE *draʒan* > ME *drawe(n)*, ModE *draw*)
u + ʒ > uw > uu	(OE *fuʒol* > ME *fowel*, ModE *fowl*)
eh > eigh	(OE *ehta* > ME *eight*)

Reduction of unsressed vowels

From earliest stages of development, Old English displayed a strong tendency towards a reduction of unstressed syllables. As a result of quantitative reduction, Old English unstressed syllables contain only short vowels, although in Proto-Germanic, both short and long vowels could occur in unstressed positions. The process of reduction of vowels in unstressed syllables continued in Middle and Modern English periods, e.g.

OE *lufu,* ME *luve* [luvə] > [luv], ModE *love*
OE *nama,* ME *name* [nɑːmə] >[nɑːm], ModE *name*

7.2.3 Vowel changes from Late Middle English to Early Modern English

Short Vowels

|	
[a] > [æ]	(*glad, cap*)
[a] > [ɔː]	when followed by *l* (*call, also*)
[a] > [æ] > [æː] > [ɑː]	when followed by a voiceless fricative or *r* (*ask, bath, art*); Modern American and some ModE dialects have kept the [æː] stage.
[u] > [ʌ]	(*cup*, hundred); the change did not take place after initial *p-, b-, f-, w-,* before final *-l, -sh* (*pull, bull, full, wolf, push*), and in northern dialects.

Long vowels

The system of Middle English long vowels underwent a complex of changes denoted as the Great Vowel Shift. These changes shaped the pronunciation of Modern English and are responsible for the discrepancy between Modern English pronunciation and spelling. The sound shifts started probably before 1400 and continued for several centuries. One of the first scholars, who studied this complex change was Otto Jespersen, who coined the term the Great Vowel Shift (Labow 1994, p. 145).

Below is a chart illustrating the Middle English systems of short and long vowels before the Great Vowel Shift. There were five short and seven long vowels. The long vowels *i:* and *u:* did not have a counterpart within the system of short vowels. Through the Great Vowel Shift the balance between the two systems was restored. The tendency to achieve systemic balance was considered to be the cause of the Great Vowel Shift by Trnka (1959). Other hypotheses are the *pull* or *drag-chain* theory (the higher vowels started leaving their positions and pulled/dragged the lower vowels) and the *push-chain* theory (the lower vowels were raised first and pushed the higher vowels out of their positions).

The system of Middle English short and long vowels before the Great Vowel Shift

i: u:

i   u   e: o:
                                          (=ẹ:)   (=ọ:)

e   o   ɛ: ɔ:
                                          (ę:)   (ǫ:)

a   ɑ:

The Great Vowel Shift

ai   ←   i: u: →   ɑu

              ↖   ↗

                   e: o: →   →   əu

         ↖   ↗

                   ɛ: ɔ:

ei   ←   ←   ←   ɛ: < æ: < ɑ:
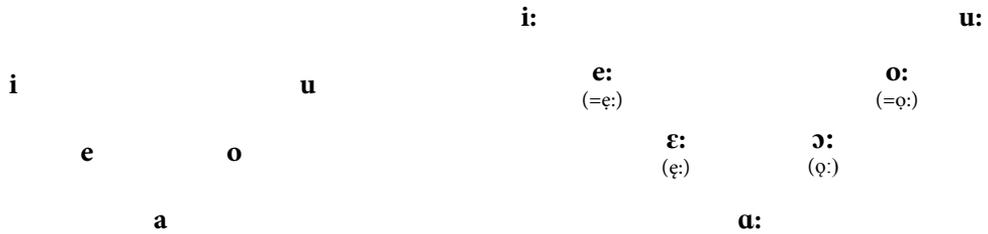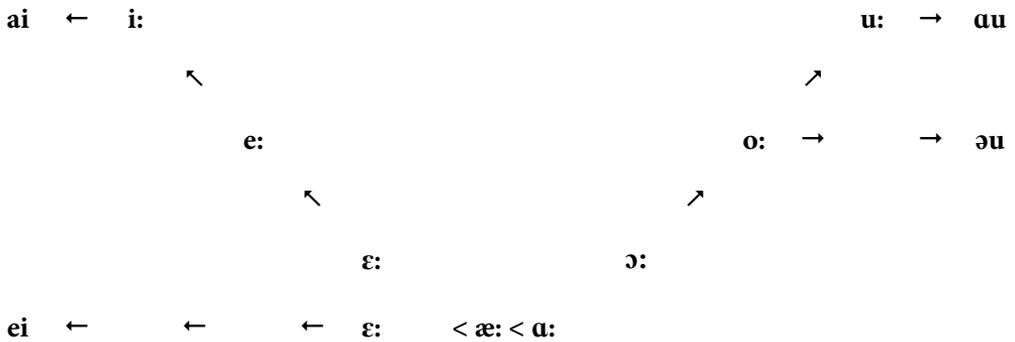
Stages of the Great Vowel Shift

[i:] > [ii] > [ei] > [əi] > [ai]   (ca. 1400 – 1750)   (*time, sky*)
[u:] > [uu] > [eu] > [əu] > [ɑu]   (ca. 1400 – 1750)   (*house, now*)
[e:] > [i:]   (ca. 1400 – 1500)   (*see, degree*)
[o:] > [u:]   (ca. 1400 – 1500)   (*do, goose*)
[ɛ:] > [e:] > [i:]   (ca. 1500 – 1700)   (*sea, lead*)
[ɔ:] > [o:] > [ou] > [əu]   (ca. 1650 – 1950)   (*stone, home*)
[ɑ:] > [æ:] > [ɛ:] > [e:] > [ei]   (ca. 1400 – 1800)   (*name, make*)

Diphthongs

[ai] > [ei]	(*may, they, train*)
[ɑu] > [ɔ:]	(*law, autumn*)
[iu], [eu], [ɛu] > [ju:]	(*Tuesday, knew, few*)
[ɔu] > [ou]	(*blow, dough*)
[ɔɪ], [ui] > [ɔɪ]	(*choice, poison*)

7.2.4 Consonant changes from Old English to Middle English

Below is a survey of the most important changes that took place in Late Old English and during the Middle English period.

ċ [ḱ]	> [tʃ]	(OE *ċild* > ME *child*)
sċ [sḱ]	> [ʃ]	(OE *fisċ* > ME *fish*)
ġ [j]	> [j]	(OE *ēāġe* > ME *eie*, ModE *eye*)
g [ɣ]	> w [w]	(OE *fugol* [fuɣol] > ME *fuwel*, ModE *fowl*)
hl-	> l-	(OE *hlāford* > ME *lǫrd*, ModE *lord*)
hr-	> r-	(OE *hræfn* > ME *raven*)
hn-	> n-	(OE *hnutu* > ME *nute*, ModE *nut*)
hw- [xw]	> wh- [hw]	(OE *hwæt* > ME *what*)

7.2.5 Consonant changes from Middle English to Early Modern English

The survey below presents only the most important consonant changes. A number of other minor changes took place during the Middle and Early Modern English periods.

Voicing of [f], [θ], [s], and [tʃ]

[f], [θ], [s], [tʃ] became voiced in unstressed positions. This change, sometimes referred to as the New English Verner's Law, occurred for example in the following cases:

- final *-s* in plural and possessive nominal forms (e.g. *tables*, *pictures*) and in 3rd person singular verbal forms (e.g. he calls, he knows). The voicing started in the second half of the 14th century before the unstressed *-e-* was dropped. When the *-e-* disappeared, the final *-z* was unvoiced when preceded by a voiceless consonant (books, he speaks).

- the definite article and the initial *th-* in personal and demonstrative pronouns (*th-* is the ME spelling of OE *þ-* and *ð-*)

Disappearance of [x]

The sound [x] changed into [f] or disappeared in final positions and before final *t*.

  [-x] > [-f]   (*cough, enough, laugh, rough; draught, laughter*)
  [-x] > [-0]   (*dough, through, borough, thorough; caught, taught, fought, nought, ought*)

Disappearance of [b] from [-mb]

The final [b] disappeared in pronunciation after [m] in Early New English but was preserved in spelling e.g. *climb, comb, dumb, lamb, womb*. In some cases the letter *b* was added in spelling to words, in which its presence is not etymologically justified, e.g. *crumb* (OE *crūma*), *limb* (OE *lim*), *thumb* (OE *þūma*).

Assibilation of [tj], [dj], [sj], and [zj]

[tj] > [tʃ]   (*question*)
[dj] > [dʒ]   (*soldier*)
[sj] > [ʃ]   (*nation*)
[zj] > [ʒ]   (*vision*)

Changes of the final [-ŋg]

The final [-ŋg] underwent a transformation into ME [-ŋ] and Early ModE [n]; in the 19th century, [-ŋ] was restored.
[-ŋg] > [-ŋ] > [-n] > [-ŋ]   (*coming* [kumɪŋg] > [kʌmɪŋ] > [kʌmɪn] > [kʌmɪŋ])

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8 The role of foreign languages in the development of English

From the earliest stages, English came into contact with a number of different foreign languages. The interaction of speakers of English with foreigners inevitably influenced the structure of the English language. The most noticeable influence of contact languages was on the vocabulary, though other levels of the language system were affected as well. The focus of this chapter is on the lexical influence of Latin, Scandinavian, and Norman and French, i.e. languages that left most distinct footprints in the shape of the English language. The Celtic influence is mentioned only very briefly because its extent was rather limited. The passages below have been taken over from Hladký's *Guide to Pre-Modern English* (2003, pp. 318–325) with minor modifications.

The situation at the beginning of the development of English

The full extent of the Old English vocabulary is not known because many words were not recorded in Old English texts. The lowest estimate of the size of the Old English vocabulary is about thirty thousand words, which corresponds to the number of words used by modern educated speakers.

The Old English vocabulary was almost purely Germanic and the number of borrowings was very low. The oldest layer of the Old English vocabulary is formed by words which are common to all or nearly all Indo-European languages: terms of kinship (*brōðor, sweostor, mōdor, dohtor, sunu*), parts of human body (*næġl, beard*), names of natural phenomena and of plants and animals (*sunne, mōna, mere* 'sea', *snāw, trēōw, wulf, ottor, eolh* 'elk'), verbs referring to the basic activities of man (*dōn, bēōn*), adjectives denoting the most essential qualities (*long, nīwe*), personal and demonstrative pronouns and numerals (*iċ, þū, mīn, twā, þrī*).

The common Germanic layer contains words connected with nature (*eorþe, land, sand, sea, sċēāp* 'sheep', *fox*) and with human life and activities (*arm, findan, macian, steorfan, singan*).

The Old English vocabulary contained a small group of words which are not found in other Germanic dialects. There are very few etymologically independent words, e.g. *brid* 'bird' and *clipian* 'to call'. Most words in this category are compounds or derivations based on Germanic roots, e.g. *wīfman, hlāford* (*hlāf* 'bread', ModE *loaf*, + *weard* 'keeper'; *hlāford* was ultimately shortened to *lord*), *hlǣfdiġe* (*hlāf* + **diġ-* 'knead'; ultimately shortened to *lady*), *sċīrġerēfa* (*sċīr* 'shire, county' + *ġerēfa* 'chief', ultimately shortened to *sheriff*).

The number of borrowings into Old English is very low, the estimate being about 3 %. Most of them came from Latin.

8.1 Celtic influence

Although Anglo-Saxons were in contact with Celtic tribes both on the Continent and after their arrival in Britain, the lexical influence of Celtic languages on English is limited to place names (e.g. *Avon, Devon, Dover, Thames, York*) and a small number of common nouns. An important word that entered English via the Celtic Old Irish language (Old Gaelic) is the word *cross* (of Latin origin).

8.2 Latin influence

Old English was influenced by Latin in three stages. In the first stage Latin words were taken over when the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians were still on the continent, i.e. before the beginning of the development of Old English. The second and the third stages occurred on English soil and connected with the arrival of Christianity and with the Benedictine reform. The borrowings were all motivated by the need for the denotation of new concepts. The Old English Latin borrowings thus differ from Latin borrowings in the Middle English and Early Modern English periods (during the revival of learning), in which Latin words were often taken over although adequate native words were available.

8.2.1 Continental borrowings

The continental borrowings, shared by other Germanic languages, resulted from direct contacts with the Romans. The Germanic population living within the Roman Empire in the fourth century AD is estimated at several million. They worked as slaves in the fields, they served in the army not only as ordinary soldiers but also as commanders. A very important city of Augusta Treverorum in Gaul (the present city of Trier in Germany), an intersection of eight military roads, was very close to the border. In the third and fourth centuries Treves was the most flourishing city in Gaul with several Christian churches. Roman merchants travelled into all parts of the Germanic territory, including Scandinavia. The new words which some of the Germanic tribes learned from the Romans then spread to other Germanic dialects. Although the number is not very high, about 150 words, they are all very important words. The following selection, divided into several semantic fields, shows that contacts with the Romans brought about changes in the everyday life of the Germanic peoples.

Continental borrowings:

Military actions:
OE *camp* 'battle', OE *weall* 'wall', OE *strēt* 'road'

Measure and distance:
OE *mīl* 'mile', OE *pund* 'pound', OE *ynċe* 'inch'

Trade:
OE *ċēāp* 'bargain, price, market' (ModE *cheap, Cheapside, Chapman*), OE *ċist* 'chest', OE *mangere* 'monger', OE *mynet* 'mint, coin of money', OE *sacc* 'sack', OE *toll* 'payment, toll'

Food and drink:
OE *butere* 'butter', OE *ċēse* 'cheese', OE *wīn* 'wine',

Cooking:
OE *cyċene* 'kitchen', OE *ċetel* 'kettle', OE *disċ* 'dish', OE *mylen* 'mill'

Plants:
OE *bēte* 'beet', OE *ċiris* 'cherry', OE *cāwel, cāul* 'cole', OE *lilie* 'lily', OE *minte* 'mint', OE *palm, palma, palme* 'palm', OE *persoc* 'peach', OE *pere, peru* 'pear', OE *piper, pipor* 'pepper', OE *plūme* 'plum', OE *popæġ, papæġ > popiġ* 'poppy'

Animals:
OE *draca* 'drake, dragon', OE *mūl* 'mule', OE *pāwa, pēa* 'peacock'

Building arts:
OE *ċealc* 'chalk', OE *copor* 'copper', OE *piċ* 'pitch', OE *pytt* 'pit', OE *tiġele* 'tile'

Education: OE *scōl, scolu* 'school'

Church and religion:
 OE *ærc* 'ark', OE *bisċeop* 'bishop', OE *cāsere* 'emperor', OE *ċiriċe* 'church', OE *dēōfol* 'devil', OE *engel* 'angel', OE *Sætern(es)dæġ, Sæterdæġ*, translation of *Sāturnī diēs*

8.2.2 Insular borrowings

When the Germanic tribes settled in England, they learned a few Latin words from the Romanized people of the towns, e.g. OE *ċeaster* 'Roman fortified town' from L *castra*, and *port* 'harbour', from L *portus*. The word *ceaster* survives in place-names: *Chester, Winchester, Doncaster, Leicester, Exeter*. The word *port* was probably forgotten later and the modern word entered English from Old French. Another Latin word probably borrowed from the Celts was *wīc* 'village', from Latin *vīcus*. It survives as a dialectal word and in placenames, e.g. *Harwich, Berwick*.

The second stage of Latin influence is connected with the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in the six and seventh centuries. In 596 Pope Gregory the Great sent Abbot Augustine to England. Augustine converted the king of Kent and founded the monastery at Canterbury. Irish missionaries founded Lindisfarne in Northumbria about 640.

The Anglo-Saxons knew about some phenomena of Christianity centuries before they were converted, which is proved by a few words from the Christian terminology they learned before coming to England (*bisċeop, ċiriċe, dēōfol, engel* mentioned above).

Insular borrowings:

Religion and the Church:
abbot, apostle, balsam, creed, disciple, font, martyr, mass, minster, monk, nun, offer, organ, pall, pope, priest, provost, psalm, Sabath, temple

Household and clothing:
candle, cap, cowl, silk, sponge

Plants, herbs and trees:
box (buxus), cedar, lily, pine,

Food:
fennel, ginger, lobster, mussel,

Other words:
circle, coulter, crisp, fan, lever, talent, title, zephyr

The meaning of some of these words changed during the centuries, e.g. *offer* was limited in OE to 'present as an act of worship', the modern meaning coming from OF *offrir*.

Old English words which translated Latin words and their modern equivalents (i.e. the original Latin words which were taken over later, during the Middle English period):

witega – prophet
heah fæder – patriarch
fullian – baptize
ġewritu – Scriptures

8.2.3 The revival of learning

Thousands of words were taken over from Latin and Greek during the revival of learning in the 15th and 16th centuries, for example:

Latin:
apparatus, area, axis, bacillus, curriculum, genius, maximum, series, veto

Greek:
acrobat, athlete, atom, catastrophe, crisis, cycle, diagnosis, encyclopaedia, panic, symbiosis

8.3 Scandinavian influence

The Scandinavians did not on the whole differ from the Anglo-Saxon as far as the stage of civilization was concerned. The Scandinavians were probably better at shipbuilding and in the arts of war but on the other hand they were still heathen. A rough estimate of loans from Scandinavian is 700–900 words, aside from archaic or regional items. Most of the Scandinavian words were adopted during the Middle English period, when central and northern dialects of English, which had been in close contact with the Scandinavian language since the 9th century, became more prominent than southern dialects. During the Old English period, probably only about 100 words were borrowed from Scandinavian.

An important element of the Scandinavian influence is the introduction of non-palatalized pronunciations in words like *skirt, kettle, dike, give, or egg.* In Old English, the original Proto-Germanic consonants k [k], sc [sk], and ʒ [ɣ], were palatalized in the neighbourhood of palatal vowels into [tʃ], [ʃ], and [j]. Palatalization, however, did not take place in Scandinavian dialects. Most ModE words with [k], [sk], and [g] (from [ɣ]) in the neighbourhood of palatal vowels (in the case of [sk] even in the neighbourhood of velar vowels) are therefore of Scandinavian origin, for example *scale, skill, skin, score, skulk, sky, get, give, egg.* The

Old English words had palatal pronunciation, for example *ġietan* 'get', *ġiefan* 'give', *æġ* 'egg'. In some cases, both forms have survived – the palatalized Old English and the non-palatalized Scandinavian form, for example *shirt* and *ditch* (of Anglo-Saxon origin) and *skirt* and *dike* (of Scandinavian origin). Some words beginning with [sk] are of Graeco-Latin origin, for example *scheme, school, or skeleton.*

The following lists contain selections of words whose Scandinavian origin has been proved:

Nouns:
anger, bank (of a river), *bark* (of a tree), *booth, brink, bull, cake, calf* (of a leg), *crook, dike, dirt, down* ('fethers'), *egg, fellow, gap, gate, gift, husband, kettle, kid, knife* (it replaced the OE *seax*), *law* (it replaced the OE *dōm*), *leg* (it replaced the OE *sċeanca* > ModE *shank*), *link, loan, loft, race, reindeer, root* (it replaced the OE *wyrt*), *scale* ('weighing instrument'), *score, scrap, seat, sister* (it replaced the OE *sweostor*), *skill, skin* (this enables specialization between *skin* and *hide* < OE *hīd*), *skirt, sky, slaughter, stack, steak, thrift, Thursday, want, whisk, window, wing* (it replaced the OE *feþer*)

Pronouns:
same (it replaced the OE *ilca* and *self*), *they*.

The most interesting case of a Scandinavian loan is the pronoun *they*, which during the Middle English period replaced the Old English pronoun *hīē/hī*. This loan is especially noteworthy: it happens very rarely that a personal pronoun is taken over from some other language. As a rule, personal pronouns belong to the most stable component parts of the grammatical system. However, some of the forms of the Old English 3rd person plural pronoun were similar to or even identical with some of the 3rd person singular forms (see Section 4.2.3), which may have been one of the causes of the replacement. The takeover of the Scandinavian *they* supplies convincing evidence of the degree of domestication of the Scandinavian nationality in the English ethnical environment. (Vachek 1991)

Adjectives:
awkward, flat, happy, ill, loose, low, odd, rotten, seemly, tight, ugly, weak, wrong

Verbs:
call, cast (it replaced the OE *weorpan*), *clip, drown, gasp, get, give, glitter, hit, kindle, lift, raise, scare, scrape, seem, take* (it replaced the OE *niman*), *thrust, want*

Adverbs:
nay, though

Prepositions:
fro (in dialects, now an adverb in *to and fro*), *till*

Place names ending in:
 -by (Scandinavian 'village'), *-thorp/torp, -beck, -dale, -thwaite*

8.4 Norman and French influence

During the Middle English period, the English language was strongly influenced by Norman French (in the initial stage) and Central French (from ca. 1250). After the arrival of the Normans (a Germanic tribe speaking a variety of French) in 1066, the roles of English, Norman French, and Latin were given by the official policy of the court. The king's court, religious communities and aristocratic estates were sources of French influence. The kings and the feudal lords were all speakers of French; they spent time on their continental estates and they married other French speakers. Legal documents were prepared in French. Monastic life was dominated by French speakers, although the language of the liturgy and of written documents was Latin. Chronicles were mostly written in Latin. Learned works in history and theology were also written in Latin. Only about two per cent of the population spoke French but they occupied the powerful positions at the court, in the church, and in urban centres. The great mass of population spoke English and English was the language of ordinary trade and agriculture.

The top leaders could afford to ignore English because they were surrounded by French speakers. When needed, they could hire translators. The local lords and tradesmen, however, had to communicate with English-speaking labourers and they became bilingual.

The balance between English, French and Latin was upset in 1204 when King John lost Normandy to Philip II of France, isolating the Normans from their continental lands and thus encouraging the use of English by the aristocracy. The use of French, however, was not limited. On the contrary, French came to be regarded as the sole language of government records and by 1300 it had virtually replaced Latin in most official documents. Edward III issued an act in 1362 requiring the use of English as the language of the oral proceedings in courts. Records of the proceedings, however, were still made in Latin and laws were written in French. A law prohibiting the use of French and Latin in legal records was passed in 1733.

The differences between the two phases of French influence can be shown in the following pairs of words (the first word is Norman French, the second is Central French):
   capital – chapter, catch – chase, cattle – chattel, launch – lance

In the Modern English pairs *ward – guard, warranty – guarantee, war – guerilla*, the words with the initial *w-* were have been taken over from Norman French, while the words with the initial *g-* come from Central French. Both forms are in fact of Germanic origin; however, in Central French the initial consonant of the Germanic loan word changed into *g-*.

Below are examples of English words of French origin:

Government:
crown, govern, nation, state (but *king, queen, lord, and lady* are of Anglo-Saxon origin)

Army:
admiral, army, artillery, battle, captain, cavalry, colonel, general, peace, soldier

Church:
cloister, friar, religion., saint, service

Law:
case, court, crime, heir, justice, judge, jury, marriage, prison, summon

Cuisine:
beef, boil, custard, dinner, fry, marmalade, mayonnaise, mustard, mutton, pastry, pork, sauce, soup, supper, veal

Dressing:
costume, dress, garment

Art:
art, collage, colour, column, paint, palace, vault

Moral ideas:
charity, conscience, duty, mercy, pity

Phonemic aspect of the French influence

In Old English, the voiceless spirants [f], [s], [θ] and the voiced spirants [v], [z], [ð] were variants (allophones) of the phonemes f/v, s/z, θ/ð. In Middle English, borrowings from French introduced words like *vēle* 'veal' and *zēle* 'zeal', with voiced pronunciations in initial positions, contrasting with Anglo-Saxon words *fēlen* 'feel' and *sēl* 'seal'. As a result, the allophones f/v and s/z split into separate phonemes: f and v; and s, and z.

During the Middle English period, two new diphthongs of French origin were added to those already existing in English: *oi*, and *ui*. These diphthongs are reflected in the ModE words like *choice, cloister, employ, noise, or rejoice* (originally [oi]); and *boil, point, joint* (originally [ui]).

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