Changing English in a changing world

Unit 13
The historical development of English 1

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Change

CHANGE PRESUPPOSES VARIATION

VARIANT A – OUTGOING / CONSERVATIVE
VARIANT B – INCOMING / INNOVATIVE

REPLACEMENT PROCESS: GRADUAL DIFFUSION
- IN TIME
- IN LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENTS
- IN SPACE
- IN SOCIETY
Variation and change

Diffusion of linguistic innovations:

S-curve as a model of language change:

- Horizontal axis: time;
- Vertical axis: percentage of speakers or linguistic forms affected;

(for the S-curve, see Bailey, 1973)
Diffusion and change

Diffusion of innovations against types of adopters:

• Innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards;
• Gaussian distribution of population in terms of adoption type;
• S-curve trajectory of innovation (innovative linguistic variant) can be superimposed onto the Gaussian curve.

See curves in Rogers (1962) and Bailey (1973)
Motivations for change

External motivations:
(Fennell, 2001)

- Geographical separation vs. language contact
- Contact with new vs. old phenomena
- Imperfect learning
- Substratum effect
- Social prestige factors
Motivations for change

Internal motivations:
(Fennell, 2001)

• Ease of articulation
• Analogy
• Homeostasis
Phonological change

All types and examples adapted from Kniezsa (1976)

1  i-Umlaut / i-Mutation
OE back vowels became front when /i/ or /j/ in following syllable
u:>y:
pren-OE mus ‘mouse’ + -iz (Pl.)= /mu:siz/ > OE mys /my:s/ 'mice’

2  _______________
OE lifian > ME live ‘to live’
Phonological change

3  ___________ = deletion of unstressed V in middle syllable
   OE nemnede        >   ME nemde

4  apocope = silencing word-final V in an unstressed syllable
   OE butere        >   ME butter

5  aphaeresis / aphesis = loss of initial V
   OE gedon        >   ME idon        >   PDE done
Phonological change

6 = omitting an identical sound sequence
OE Englaland  > PDE England
OE cyning  > PDE king

7
OE acsian > PDE ask  OE brid > PDE bird

8 unrounding
y: > i: EME /myːs/ > LME /miːs/  (>PDE /maɪsi/ 'mice')
Morphological change

Analogue extension

Analogue levelling

Sporadic analogy
  - contamination
  - back formation
  - folk etymology

(McMahon, 1994)
Morphological change

(all examples and types from McMahon (1994))

• for native speakers, (loan)words can seem opaque, resulting in reinterpreting and sometimes shifting the morpheme boundaries: **FOLK ETYMOLOGY**

• change levelling out allomorphy within a paradigm so that the stem morpheme becomes invariant: **ANALOGICAL LEVELLING**

• reversing of a morphological process: **BACK FORMATION**

• generalisation of a morpheme which already exists in the language into new forms/across paradigms: **ANALOGICAL EXTENSION**

• adjacent words in lists can assimilate to each other in sound shape: **CONTAMINATION**
Morphological change

(all types and examples adapted from McMahon (1994))

A

...,4, 5,...

IE reflex of /k/ in Italian: quattro /katro/ 'four'
PDE '4' should be kour

but! PDE: four, reason: five

B

standard PDE asparagus → dialect English: sparrowgrass

Infanta of Castile → Elephant and Castle

'Infant of Castile' = ‘crown princess of Castile’
# Morphological change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>OE</th>
<th>PDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>ceozan</td>
<td>choose /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Sg.</td>
<td>ceas (/s/)</td>
<td>chose /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Pl.</td>
<td>curon</td>
<td>chose /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Part.</td>
<td>gecoren</td>
<td>chosen /z/</td>
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<tr>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scare :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smell :</td>
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<tr>
<td>x : lazy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Morphological change

E

Late OE Nom. Pl.:

sun+nan 'suns' – scip+u 'ships' – stan+es 'stones'

a. ME stan: stanes = sunne: x x → sunnes
b. ME stan: stanes = scip: x x → scips
Syntactic change

(types and examples adapted from McMahon (1994))

Development of auxiliary verbs:

OE *will ’want’ > PDE *’ll

Development of the progressive form:

OE *He is on hunting(e) ‘at hunting’ > ModE *he is a-hunting
    > PDE *he is hunting

Development of future auxiliary:

ModE *going to (= ‘walking to’) > PDE *going to (future) > PDE *gonna
Syntactic change

Grammaticalisation

• lexical words adopt a grammatical function,
• semantic bleaching = word loses its characteristic meaning,
• phonetic and morphological reduction,
• Finished with the reanalysis of the original form.

(McMahon, 1994)
References


