

LING 110 Chapter III: Origins

Change

- Languages change over time in response to social conditions and language contact.

Borrowing

- Languages in contact borrow from one another
- Borrowing has consequences for the English lexicon
- The fact of borrowing is a tool that will be used to illustrate change.

The phonetic properties of English consonants.

Introduction

Sir William Jones

- Latin, Ancient Greek, and Sanskrit
- Found common words and patterns among these languages
- Conclusion: there is a strong resemblance among these three.

IndoEuropean

- Latin, Ancient Greek, and Sanskrit descended from a common ancestor.
- This common ancestor is called **Proto-IndoEuropean**
- No written records.
- Many of its properties can be reconstructed by comparing its daughter languages.

IndoEuropean

- Most of the languages of Europe as well as those of Northern India, and Iran are related- same family tree.
- The IndoEuropean language family.
- Can be divided into subfamilies.
- See Figure III.1.
- The parent language: Proto-Indo European

Origins of IndoEuropean

Hypotheses about the origin of IndoEuropean:

1. The original people coming from the Russian Steppes about 5000 years ago.
 - § Domestication of the horse.
 - § Explanation rests primarily on linguistic evidence: common words in most IndoEuropean languages for snow, plants and animals point to an origin in the temperate area of Europe.
2. The area that is now Turkey.
 - § The development of agriculture provided a technology that permitted & forced people to spread to new areas.

Dialects of Proto-IndoEuropean

Proto-IndoEuropean (PIE):

- § Gradually changed.
- § In north of Europe: The Germanic language family developed.
- § The first millennium CE: Germanic speaking people invaded the island now know as England.
- § Various dialects spoken became Old English.

Descriptive Terms

1. **Cognate:** words that were born together.
2. **Etymon:** the true form, the form before any changes have occurred.
3. **Reflex:** A reflex is an image, a reflection, of the etymon.

Summary: words in different languages that are descended from the same word in the parent language are called *cognates*. The original word is called an *etymon*, the words that evolved from the etymon are its *reflexes*.

English

Is English related to Greek, Sanskrit, and Latin?

§ There should be cognates.

Regular changes have occurred in English:

§ Phonological Rule: $t \rightarrow \theta$

§ Phonological Rule: $p \rightarrow f$

§ Phonological Rule: $k \rightarrow h$

These correspondences make it easier to spot the cognates.

Germanic Consonant Shift

There is a general rule:

voiceless stop --> voiceless fricative (except after [s])

Germanic Consonant Shift:

It distinguishes the Germanic languages from the others in the IndoEuropean family.

Proposed by Jacob Grimm (19th century).

Therefore also know as Grimm's law.

Established that there are underlying principles governing language change.

Borrowing

- § Mechanism for adding new words to a language's lexicon in the face of cultural and technological change.
- § Incorporating words from another language into our own lexicon.
- § Examples of borrowing abound in languages.
- § English borrows from the languages of the cultures with which it has come in contact.
- § Borrowing saves the trouble of making up words.
- § English borrowed heavily from Latin and Greek beginning with the Germanic Tribes.

Borrowing con't

- § The tradition continued with the influence of the Christian Church on European culture.
- § Latin and Greek were the principle languages in which the Christian religion was conducted until the 16th Century when the Bible was translated into local languages.
- § Formal Education was conducted in Latin and Greek in Europe thus its use was extend to science and medicine as these disciplines matured.
- § Consequently: whenever a term is required by science, religion, technology, or medicine, it is natural to look to Latin or Greek because there is already a history of coining words from those languages for concepts in these disciplines.

Borrowing con't

- § We are not always aware of borrowed words.
- § Naturalization: over time, a word changes so that it aligns itself with the ways other words in the language are pronounced.
- § Each language has strict rules on allowable sequences of sounds.
- § If a word is borrowed with a sound sequence that is not permitted, that sequence will eventually be changed.
- § Example: *psychiatrist* & *pneumonia*.
- § The spelling of these words represent how the words are pronounced in Greek.

Borrowing con't

- § However, English does not tolerate the sequences *ps* and *pn* at the beginnings of words so the pronunciation, though not the spelling has become naturalized.
- § Subtler form of naturalization: Words that have been borrowed from French more than once although at different times.
- § **This is important:** words can and are borrowed more than once at different times.
- § The Germanic languages are distinguished by word initial stress.
- § What does this mean?

Borrowing con't

- § Word initial stress in the Germanic Languages:
 - Under most circumstances, the first syllable in the word received the main stress.
 - Since English is Germanic, native English words will show word initial stress.
- § French stress:
 - Prefers word final stress.
- § Borrowed French words:
 - English borrows the stress pattern as well.
 - When a French word is first borrowed it will show French stress.
 - However.....

Borrowing con't

- § However, if it is naturalized it will come to show the English word initial stress.
- § Table III.4 compares words that have been borrowed into English from French twice.
- § The naturalized forms have been in English longer and show stress on the first syllable.
- § Forms that are not naturalized show stress over the last syllable.
- § What is the importance of borrowing to us?

Borrowing con't

- § The fact that English has borrowed so heavily provides us with a mechanism for illustrating Grimm's law without leaving the English language.
- § We will compare English words with their cognates from the classical languages that have been borrowed into English.
- § Let's take a look at what this means. Figures III.5-III.7.
- § These illustrate the rule $p \rightarrow f$ using the words *helicopter*, *pen*, and *feather*.
- § Note the semantic relationship between these three words: *helicopter* and *feather* refer to aspects of flight. *Pen* may not be as obvious but the original pens were quills made from feathers.

Borrowing con't

- § It is useful to have a notation to illustrate the relationships among cognates in English to distinguish those that are native to English from those that were borrowed.
- § It is also useful to be able to chart the various histories of these words.
- § How does one discover this information?
- § A good dictionary will provide etymological (origin of words) information about words.