

LING 110 Chapter III: Origins

Etymology:

Webster's New World College Dictionary (Third Edition) on PowerCD

This is the entry for *feather*:

[ME *fether* < OE; akin to Ger *feder* < IE base **pet-*, to fall, fly > Gr *pteron*, wing, *piptein*, L *petere*, to fall, Sans *patati*, (he) flies]

Etymology

How to read the entry:

- “<” and “>” indicate the direction of the development.
 - “X < Y” means that X developed from Y
 - “X > Y” means that Y developed from X
- ME= Middle English, OE= Old English, Ger= German, Gr= Greek, IE= IndoEuropean, L= Latin, Sans= Sanskrit.
- akin to=related to (often cognate)

Etymology con't

- The central idea:
- *Feather* is directly descended from the IndoEuropean root *pet*.
- Greek *pteron*, L *petere*, and Sans *patati*, have also descended from the IE root *pet*.
- Let us take a look at the entry for *pen*:

[ME *penne* < OFr, a pen, feather < L *pinna*, var. of *penna*, a feather < **petna* < IE base **pet-*, to fly: see feather]

Etymology con't

The entry for *pen*:

- Developed from ME *penne* which in turn comes from OFr which in turn comes from L.
- Question: Is this a native word or a borrowing?
- It can not be a native English word because English is not a daughter language of Old French.
- It must therefore have been borrowed into English.
- Is it a native French word?
- French developed from Latin and so the word was native to French.

Etymology con't

The IE form from which the word ultimately descends is **pet*.

§ This is proof that *feather* and *pen* are cognates: they descend from the same word in the parent language.

Finally, a note about the Greek *helicopter*:

[F *helicoptere*, fr. Gk *heliko-* + *pteron* wing- more at FEATHER]

Etymology con't

§ The entry for *legal*:

[MFr *legal* < L *legalis* < *lex* (gen. *legis*), law, prob. IE base **leg-*, to collect > L *legere*, Gr *legein*, to collect]

§ How did this word enter the English Lexicon?

§ Initially it may look like it came from French, because it was borrowed from Middle French.

§ However, if we follow its history we note that the word entered Middle French from Latin.

§ It did not develop from Latin to Old French to Middle French.

§ This would be the natural development.

Etymology con't

Instead, *legal* skipped Old French and was borrowed into Middle French from Latin.

§ In this case, we will say that *legal* is a Latin word, despite its brief period in French.

Why make this distinction?

§ When a word develops natively in a language it is subject to the rules of that language.

§ When it is borrowed it is usually exempt from the majority of the rules of the new language.

§ For at least the period following its introduction into the new language, it continues to behave as though it was in the original language not in the new language.

Etymology con't

Going back to *legal*:

- § The native development of Latin *legal* into French is *loyal*.
- § Here we see a couple of common French rules in action:
- § The change of *g* to *y* and the change of *ey* to *oy*.
- § Compare also Latin *regal* and French *royal*.
- § Although *legal* appeared in MFr, the fact that it was borrowed and did not develop natively explains why it does not have the true French *oy*.

Etymology con't

In conclusion:

- § Latin *legal*, developed natively in French but it was also borrowed from Latin into Middle French, which accounts for its two different forms.
- § We don't want to consider it as a French word, but as a Latin word.

Etymology: Summary

- § It a word has developed natively from language X to language Y and is then borrowed into English, we will say it is a word of language Y.
- § Why? Because it is subject to the rules of language Y.
- § If a word is borrowed from language X to a language Y and then is borrowed into English, we will say it is a word of language X.
- § Why? Because it is subject to the rules of language X.

Practice

- § The word lasagna:
- § [It (pl. *lasagne*) < VL **lasaniana*, a kind of noodle < L *lasanum*, a pot < Gr *lasanon*, pot with feet, trivet]
- § What is the Origin of this word?

Practice: Answer

- § It was borrowed from Greek into Latin.
- § However, the development from Latin to Vulgar Latin (VL) to Italian is a native development.
- § So, the word has undergone specifically Italian changes.
- § Consequently, we will say that the word is Italian, not Greek, although it originated in Greek.
- § As an Italian word we expect it to follow the rules of Italian, not Greek.
- § For example, the characters *gn* are used in Italian to represent a sound that did not exist in Greek.

Practice

§ Try the following words:

§ *foot*:

[ME *fot*, fr. OE *fot*; akin to OHG *fuot* foot, L *ped-*, *pes*, Gk *pod-*, *pous*] (bef. 12c)

§ *zero*:

[F or It; F *zero*, fr. It *zero*, fr. ML *zephirum*, fr. Ar *sifr*] (1604)

§ *tepee*:

[Dakota *t^hipi*, fr *t^hi-* to dwell](1743)

Etymology: Summary con't

- § Need to have a firm understanding of the difference between a native development and borrowings.
- § We will be using borrowings in English to help illustrate Grimm's law.
- § Can use the borrowings from Latin and Greek and compare them with their true English cognates.
- § Should start trying to learn to distinguish native English words from borrowings.

Grimm's Law

- § In the next section we will be taking the classical languages Latin and Greek as representative of the original sound that we are investigating.
- § Many of the sounds, either Latin or Greek or both, were unaffected and we can use them to represent the original.
- § This will work until we come to the last section on Grimm's Law where none of these languages retained the original sound.

Voiceless Stops

§ Already examined the behaviour of the voiceless stops: [p], [t], [k].

§ The rule:

Voiceless stops became corresponding voiceless fricatives.

Voiced Stops

§ Voiced stops: they also underwent a shift together.

§ The rule:

Voiced stops became voiceless stops.

§ The voiced stops [b], [d], [g].

§ Each of these became its corresponding voiceless counterpart.

§ Example:

b --> p

d --> t

g --> k

Voiced Aspirates

- § IE contained another series of stops.
- § The voiced aspirates [bh], [dh], [gh].
- § Like the voiced stops but accompanied by a puff of air, represented by the [h].
- § This series had a regular development in Germanic.
- § Varied developments in Latin and Greek.
- § Consequences: when we use Latin and Greek as our comparison set, we must first be prepared to “undo” the changes that affected them.

Voiced Aspirates con't

§ The changes affecting Greek are quite easy to state:

Voiced aspirates became voiceless aspirates.

§ The following subrules applied in Greek:

bh --> ph

dh --> th

gh --> kh

Voiced Aspirates con't

§ The changes affecting Latin are more varied and will be identified for each sound.

§ The shift of the aspirates in Germanic is as coherent as the non-aspirates:

Voiced aspirates became voiced non-aspirates.

§ The aspirates lost their aspiration in Germanic.

bh --> b

dh --> d

gh --> g

Voiced Aspirates con't

- § Typically, the labial aspirate in Latin became [f].
- § Thus, a Latin *f* or Greek *ph* represent an IndoEuropean [bh].
- § The development of [dh] is a bit more complicated in Latin.
- § When it occurred at the beginning of a word it, like [bh], shifted to [f].
- § Both English [d] and [b] can correspond to a Latin *f*.
- § However, internal to the word [dh] would shift to [b] if it was preceded by [r] or [u].
- § The Latin and Greek forms do not directly represent the IE form.

Voiced Aspirates con't

- § Finally, in Latin the velar aspirate [gh] lost the stop and became simply [h].
- § In the development of English, the [g] that developed from [gh] would often further develop to [y].
- § Note: this latter change [g] --> [y] is a change in English, it is not part of the Germanic Consonant Shift.

Grimm's Law: Summary

- § Germanic Consonant Shift: Coherency. A chain of related events.
- § 1. The individual rules cluster into more general rules.
- § 2. The shift itself seems to be organized as a chain.
- § Each of the rules that comprise the GCS is connected with the others: the output of one is the input to another.
- § This suggests that there might be a single rule responsible for all the changes.
- § **The discovery of the GCS was one of the first descriptions of language change as a coherent rule-governed phenomenon and helped establish linguistics as a science in Europe.**

Patterns of Borrowing

- § English borrows from virtually any language with which it comes in contact.
- § The history of Europe and England has created definite conduits through which words flow into English.
- § It is through these conduits that the bulk of English vocabulary is constructed.
- § Let us review.

Greek

- § Ancient Greece: an important source of ideas in Western civilization.
- § This culture created philosophy.
- § Much of modern science is rooted in Greek thought.
- § Western medicine begins with Greek investigations.
- § The Christian religion was first proselytized in Greece.
- § Many of the books of the Christian Bible were first written in Greek.
- § Corresponding to this explosion of ideas was a similar explosion of new Greek words to name these ideas.

Greek con't

- Eventually, these words were imported into the languages of Europe as those cultures absorbed these new ideas.
- English is no exception.
- English has been using Greek vocabulary in scientific, religious, medical and philosophical discourse.
- English is not the only language that borrows from Greek.
- The Romans also borrowed from the Greeks.
- When English borrows from Latin, it does not distinguish whether the words it borrows are native Latin words or Greek borrowings.
- Consequently, Greek words enter English from Latin as well.

Greek con't

- In the Renaissance period, the influence of Greek continued.
- Consequently, Greek words appear in languages throughout Europe.
- One of these languages is French.
- Norman Invasion: English has borrowed large amounts of French vocabulary.
- Along with the French words, English accepted the Greek words that French borrowed.
- Note: in most such cases the words have not changed much and still closely resemble the Greek form of the word.

Latin

- Latin was similarly influential, perhaps more so.
- The Romans militarily conquered Europe, and Latin either became the working language of the local area (as in those that eventually became France, Spain, Portugal, etc.) or
- It was so influential in education, religion, law, etc. that a culture like that in England absorbed the words along with the concepts that it needed.
- English borrows directly from Latin.
- As Latin developed into French, English continued to borrow and so inherited French words.
- The period in which Old French had contact with English was a particularly prolific period of borrowing of French words into English.

Latin con't

- § Latin words appear throughout the languages of Europe.
- § French is no exception- it to borrowed extensively from Latin.
- § Consequently, not only does English borrow words from French that have developed natively from Latin,
- § It also borrows words from French that French borrowed from Latin.
- § There is a conduit from Latin to French to English that is a simple chain of borrowings.
- § A word that has been borrowed from Latin into French and then borrowed into English, is a Latin word.

Summary

- § There are 3 languages from which English has borrowed extensively: Greek, Latin, French.
- § Words from Greek and Latin have not always been borrowed directly into English.
- § Nonetheless, we will think of them as Greek and Latin words although they have made brief stops elsewhere.
- § Note typically troublesome because a word that originates in Greek, is borrowed into Latin and then into English is recognizably Greek and the origin can be verified by comparing the IE language family tree.
- § Greek and Latin are sisters and so the conduit from Greek to Latin is borrowing and not the evolution of a Greek word into a Latin word.

Summary con't

- § It is a little more difficult with Latin and French because French is a daughter of Latin and so it is possible for a word to evolve from a Latin word into a French word or to be borrowed without change from Latin.
- § As a rule of thumb: if a word can be shown to have developed from Latin into Old French then it will be considered to have evolved into a French word.
- § On the other hand: if it appears in French without having developed into Old French from Latin, then it will not be considered as a French word.
- § We will say that it was borrowed from Latin into French and is a Latin word.

Summary con't

- § It is the same as with English: when it can be determined that a word developed into OE, to ME and from there into Contemporary English, then we consider it an English word.