

LING 110 ***Chapter III: Origins***

Periods of Latinate Borrowing

- Throughout its history, English has had contact with Latin.
- Even before English existed, the Germanic tribes borrowed from Latin and English still contains some of these words.
- This pattern of borrowing has continued into the modern period.
- Coincident with the evolution of English was the evolution of Latin into the Romance languages (Figure III.1).
- One of these is French which had an important influence on English.

Periods of Latinate Borrowing con't

- English began to borrow significantly from Old French and continues to borrow from French in the present era.
- The network of these relations are illustrated in Figure III.18.
- The task of this section is to tease apart this network and illustrate each period.

The Germanic Period

- Table III. 6 words that were borrowed from Latin into the Germanic languages.
- Borrowed before the 5th century.
- Given in their Contemporary English forms.
- When they were borrowed into the Germanic languages, they resembled the Latin form.
- Thus, the contemporary English form shows the changes that have occurred since the word was borrowed.
- In some cases, and English Borrowing is also cited.
- Figure III. 19 shows the relationship.

The Germanic Period con't

- Note that in many cases the same word has entered English on 2 separate occasions.
- Two general comments:
 1. The words that they found necessary to borrow tells us something about the culture of the Germanic peoples.
 2. By comparing the words borrowed during the Germanic period with those borrowed in the modern era we can perceive sound changes that created Contemporary E.
- § Example: sk --> sh
- § Date this change relative to the Viking raids (late 8th c)

The Germanic Period con't

- This is an important notion: a rule will enter a language and, once it has worked its way through the lexicon, die out.
- The Norse borrowings show that the rule died out before the encounter with the Norse. The English words show *sk* --> *sh* but the Norse words do not.

The Old English Period

The origin of English is not tidy.

- Old English is less the daughter of a Germanic mother language than a hybrid of various Germanic dialects.
- Prior to the development of OE, the languages of what is now the island of England were Celtic.
- 55 BCE Julius Caesar invaded the island of England and named it Britannica.
- The romans occupied Britain until the early 5th century.
- During this period, the Celtic languages persisted although the language of the conquerors was Latin.

The Old English Period

The conquest of England by the Germanic tribes began in the mid 5th century.

- The Roman troops had withdrawn.
- The German invaders of England largely composed of the Saxons, Angles, Jutes and Frisians.
- The remaining Britons were exhausted from the long occupation by the Romans and wars with other Celtic tribes.
- The Briton king invited the Germanic tribes to help war against the Picts and Scots.
- After defeating the Picts and Scots they turned on the Britons.

The Old English Period con't

For the next century there was a constant migration from Continental Europe to the island of England of speakers of various Germanic dialects.

- The Britons were completely displaced: either fled or were assimilated.
- OE was established during this period.
- The Angles and Saxons coalesced.
- Still considerable dialectal variation throughout England.
- One of the seminal periods was during the northern invasion by the Vikings.
- King Alfred the Great raised an army to combat the Vikings and push them north.

The Old English Period con't

- The Vikings settled in the north.
- Alfred had a number of important words translated into AngloSaxon as a way of promoting that language.
- OE continued the practice of borrowing terms from Latin.
- Why did they borrow:
 1. The Christian Bible
 2. The language of Religion
 3. The language of Education and Scholarship.
- § There were 4 semantic domains of borrowing: religion, food, clothing, and education.

The Middle English Period

- § Begins with the invasion of England by the Norman French in 1066.
- § Ends with the reestablishment of English as the language of government in the 15th century & eventually the establishment of the London dialect as the prestige dialect.
- § Continued borrowing from Latin and the introduction of massive numbers of French words.
- § Words borrowed into ME from L have not changed much since they were borrowed into the language (contrasts with those borrowed during the Germanic and OE periods).

The Middle English Period con't

- Note: the longer a word has been in a language, the more it will diverge from its etymon and the more it will resemble words in the new language because more rules will have applied to it than to a more recent word.
- The process is called **naturalization**.
- The ME period is marked by the influence of French.
- French words penetrate almost all semantic domains.
- Words borrowed into ME from French are little changed from the original French.

Contemporary English

- § Contemporary period: still use Latin to name new objects and ideas.
- § Most scientific terminology derives from Latin.
- § These don't look like regular English words.
- § Examples: *a* or *ia* endings; *um* and *ium* endings; *eu* in *nucleus*.
- § Give hints about language origins.
- § The trend to borrow from French continues to the modern era.
- § French borrowings penetrate to every aspect of social life (fashion, cuisine, politics).

Summary

- § English has relied on Latin for parts of its vocabulary since before English existed.
- § Even after Latin died, English continues to borrow from it.
- § The French invasion established the extent of borrowing from Latin to borrowing its daughter as well.

Conclusion

- § The process of borrowing is an important mechanism by which the vocabulary of a language can be enriched.
- § Languages borrow because of: new ideas, inventions, and the opportunity to express nuances of meaning.
- § They can also be borrowed to circumvent *taboo* words, words that can no longer be used in polite discourse.
- § One of the ways that English can be divided is by language of origin.
- § What is the effect of this?

Conclusion con't

- § Spelling:
- § Example: *i* before *e* except after *c*
- § The words that obey this rule are French, the words that don't are English.
- § Greek word don't follow the rules either.
- § If we want to correctly apply a spelling rule we must start by correctly identify the language from which the word originates.
- § We can also use spelling rules to identify the language from which a word originates.

Conclusion con't

- § How can we identify words such as *amethyst*, *erythrocyte*, and *metropolis* as Greek?
- § The first two: the use of y to represent a vowel internally.
- § Normally, English spelling conventions use y only at the ends of words to represent [i].
- § Greek uses y where English never would- thus identifying it as Greek.
- § English spelling conventions will usually use an *i* internally when the same form has a y otherwise: compare *happy* and *happiness*

Conclusion con't

- § The word *metropolis* illustrates another clue to look for: unusual letter combinations.
- § English words do not end in *is*.
- § Finally, the divisions of the lexicon into Latin, Greek, French, and English units can be viewed as divisions in time.
- § We can examine the English lexicon and see different stages of parts of the IE language family.