

LNGT0101
Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #20
Nov 28th, 2011

Language change

2

So, do you guys speak English?

- Yes!
- And so did Shakespeare:
A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.
- Translation?
Not really!

3

So, do you guys speak English?

- Yes! And so did Chaucer:
*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droght of March hath perced to the roote.*
- Translation?
When April with its sweet showers
The drought of March has pierced to the root.

4

So, do you guys speak English?

- Yes! And so did the guy who wrote *Beowulf*:
*Wolde guman findan fone fe him on
sweofote sare geteode.*
- Translation?
*He wanted to find the man who harmed
him while he slept.*

5

Languages change over time

- So, you get the obvious point: Languages do change over time.
- There are two main questions with regard to language change:
First, how does a language change?
Second, why does a language change?
- We talk about this today.

6

Language = Lexicon + Grammar

- Remember that a language has two components: a *lexicon* (simply a list of words) and a *grammar* (a system that manipulates the lexicon in several ways).
- The grammar of a language includes rules that affect pronunciation (phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), and meaning (semantics).
- As we should expect, language change occurs in all these areas. Let's see how.

7

Lexical change

- The lexicon of a language undergoes change in either one of two ways: **“word gain”** or **“word loss”**.

8


Word gain

- New words are always added to the lexicon of every language, almost on a daily basis. We have already seen in our discussion of word-formation that there are systematic word-formation processes that create new words and add them to the dictionary of every language:
derivation, word coinage, conversion, clipping, blending, acronyms, borrowing and loan translations, compounding, back-formation, and eponyms.

9

Word loss

- So, Shakespeare used *beseem* (= to be suitable), *wot* (= to know), *fain* (= gladly).
- And technology might drive some words out of use, e.g., *buckboard*, *buggy*, *dogcart*, *hansom*, etc.




10

Two bits?



11

Iceboxes?



12

Word loss

- Euphemisms can also eventually lead to loss of words:
lavatory, bathroom, restroom, lady's room/men's room, etc.
- Hugh Rawson's *Dictionary of euphemisms and other doubletalk* includes:
'act of God' for disaster
'administrative assistant' for secretary
'associate' for co-worker of lower rank

13

Semantic change

- Language change may also take the form of changing the meanings of existing words. There are three such cases: **broadening** (*dog*), **narrowing** (*meat*), and **semantic shift**.
- There are two basic types of semantic shift: **elevation** (*knight, chivalrous*) and **degradation** (*lust, silly*).
- Keeping the system balanced: *mete, flæsc*, and *foda*.

14

Morphological change

- Languages also change morphologically over time. And morphological rules may be lost, added, or changed.

15

Loss of morphology

- Latin had case markings on nouns. Romance languages do not have any of these today.
- Old English (OE) actually did have case markings.

Se cniht geaf gief-e þæs hierd-es sun-e
the youth-NOM gave gift-ACC the shepherd-GEN son-DAT
'The youth gave a gift to the shepherd's son.'

16

Case-marking in OE

Table 7.30 Old English case affixes

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	hund 'dog'	dēor 'animal'	gief 'gift'
Accusative	hund	dēor	gief-u
Genitive	hund-es	dēor-es	gief-e
Dative	hund-e	dēor-e	gief-e
<i>Plural</i>			
Nominative	hund-as	dēor	gief-a
Accusative	hund-as	dēor	gief-a
Genitive	hund-a	dēor-a	gief-a
Dative	hund-um	dēor-um	gief-um

17

Loss of morphology in OE

Table 7.31 The loss of case affixes through sound change (in English *hound*)

	Old English	Middle English (e = [ə])	Modern English
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	hund	hund	hound
Accusative	hund	hund	hound
Genitive	hund-es	hund-(e)s	hound's
Dative	hund-e	hund-(e)	hound
<i>Plural</i>			
Nominative	hund-as	hund-(e)s	hounds
Accusative	hund-as	hund-(e)s	hounds
Genitive	hund-a	hund-(e)	hounds'
Dative	hund-um	hund-(e)	hounds

18

Loss of morphology in OE

- The loss of the case system was compensated by the use of prepositions, particularly “to” for the dative, and “of” for the genitive. It also led to restrictions on word order, as we’ll see later.

19

Loss of derivational morphemes

- A derivational rule may be lost with or without remnants. If there are many remnants, we say that the rule has become unproductive. This is what happened to the suffix *-t*, which was once used to derive nouns from verbs in English:
 - draw* → *draft*
 - drive* → *drift*
 - shove* → *shift*

20

Loss of derivational morphemes

- Old English had a suffix *-u* to make nouns from adjectives:
 - menig* “many” → *menigu* “multitude”
 - eald* “old” → *aeldu* “old age”
- This was completely lost; there are no remnant words.

21

Adding rules: Borrowing of derivational affixes

- Latin *-bilis* was borrowed into English via French words (e.g., *change* → *changeable*). But it was afterwards applied also to native words, such as *wash* → *washable*.

22

Grammaticalization

- Grammaticalization** is a process whereby a lexical item acquires a grammatical function in the language:
 - lexical morpheme → grammatical morpheme

Old English word	Modern English Suffix
<i>hād</i>	'state, condition, rank' → -hood (childhood)
<i>dōm</i>	'condition, power' → -dom (freedom)
<i>(ge-)līc</i>	'similar, equal, like' → -ly (fatherly)

23

Grammaticalization

- The possessive morpheme *bita:ʕ* in Egyptian Arabic is probably a metathesized form from the verb *taba ʕ* (=follow) via grammaticalization:
 - ʔil-kitaab bita:ʕ Ahmad
 - the-book Possessive Ahmad
 - “Ahmad’s book”

24

New affixes from compounding

- A common source for new affixes lies in compounding. A [N+N] compound with a certain N in a certain position may become the model for a new suffixation rule because the second N is *reanalyzed* as a suffix.
- A new affix may thus arise from compounding, as in the case of Dutch *boer*, which originally means “farmer,” but was then extended to mean “supplier/seller of”:

<i>groenteboer</i>	“one who sells vegetables”
<i>visboer</i>	“one who sells fish”
<i>kolenboer</i>	“one who sells coals”
<i>patatboer</i>	“one who sells French fries”

25

New affixes from “false” analysis

- New affixes may also arise from a *false* analysis of words that have a morphological structure. The process is also called **folk etymology**:
alcoholic → *workaholic*, *chocaholic*, *shopaholic*
hamburger → *cheeseburger*, *fishburger*, *chickenburger*

26

New affixes out of “nowhere”

- In some cases, there’s no morphological structure at all, or at least not one that falls within the realm of English morphology:
watergate leads to *Irangate*, *contragate*

27

Extending affixes to new categories

- Sometimes, morphological change takes place when an affix is used with categories that it normally does not apply to, thereby deriving new words:
-*able* in *objectionable*
-*ese* in *motherese* and *journalese*

28

Syntactic change

29

Syntactic change: Word Order

- Word order in a language could change over time. For example, Old English (OE) had more variable word order than Modern English (ModE) does.
- So, we do find SVO order in simple transitive clauses:
Hē geseah þone mann
He saw the man

30

Syntactic change: Word Order

- When the clause began with an element such as *þa* (=“then”), the verb would follow that element, therefore preceding the subject:

þa sende sē cyning þone disc
 then sent the king the dish
 “Then the king sent the dish.”

31

Syntactic change: Word Order

- When the object was a pronoun, the order in OE was typically SOV:

Hēo hine lærde
 She him saved
 “She saved him.”

32

Syntactic change: Word Order

- The same SOV word order also prevailed in embedded clauses, even when the object was not a pronoun:

þa hē þone cyning sōhte, hē bēotode
 when he the king visited, he boasted
 “When he visited the king, he boasted.”

33

Syntactic change: Word Order

- As we noted earlier, case markings were lost during the Middle English (MidE) period, and, as you should expect, SVO order became the unmarked word order in the language.
- The following table shows the change in word order frequency that took place around 1300 and 1400:

34

Syntactic change: Word Order

Year	1000	1200	1300	1400	1500
OV %	53	53	40	14	2
VO %	47	47	60	86	98

35

Syntactic change: Negation

- Negation in OE was done by placing the negation marker *ne* before a verbal element:

þæt he na siþþan geboren ne wurde
 that he never after born not would-be
 “that he should never be born after that”

- Notice word order and the use of double negatives.

36

Syntactic change: Negation

- Proto-Indo-European is believed to have had a negation marker *ne*.
- In old Latin, a new form arose from combining *ne* with the word for "one" (*ūnum*). This led to the form *non*.
- Hence, Old French ended up with both *non* and *ne*.

37

Syntactic change: Negation

- Both forms developed a division of labor, where *ne* became the used form when the negation word is placed before verbs, and *non* for other cases of negation:

Il ne dorme pas
he not sleeps (not)
Vous venez ou non?
you come or not

- Interestingly, many French speakers today are dropping the *ne*:

J'ai pas dit ça
I've not said this

38

Double comparatives and superlatives

- Examples:
more gladder, more lower, moost royallest, moost shamefullest
- These were all ok in Middle English.

39

Genitives

The Wife's Tale of Bath (MidE)
The Wife of Bath's Tale (ModE)

The man's hat from Boston (MidE)
The man from Boston's hat (ModE)

40

Phonological change

- Perhaps the most noticeable change in the grammar of a language happens in pronunciation.
- Even though change can affect all areas of phonology (e.g., tone, stress, and syllable structure), we will focus here primarily on change involving individual sounds as they occur in sequence. This is called **sequential change**.

41

Assimilation in place or manner

Old Spanish [semda] → Modern Spanish [senda] "path"
Early Latin [inpossiblis] → Late Latin [impossiblis]
Early OE [stefn] → Later OE [stemn] "stem"
Latin [octo] (c = k) → Italian [otto] "eight"

42

Assimilation: Affrication

- Affrication is a form of assimilation in which palatalized stops become affricates, either [tʃ] or [tʃ̥] if the original stop was voiceless, or [dʒ] or [dʒ̥] if the original stop was voiced, e.g.,

Latin *centum* [k] → Old French *cent* [ts] “one hundred”
 Latin *medius* [d] → Italian *mezzo* [dz] “half”

43

Assimilation: Nasalization

- Vowels may get nasalized before nasal consonants, followed by deletion of that nasal consonant (typically when it is final). This is how nasal vowels were created in French and Portuguese, e.g.,

Latin	Portuguese	French
bon-	bom [bõ]	bon [bõ] “good”

44

Dissimilation

Late Latin [amna] → Spanish [alma] “soul”
 Latin [arbor] → Spanish [arbol] “tree”
 Italian [albero]
 (but cf. French *arbre*).

45

Epenthesis

Earlier OE [ganra] → Late OE [gandra] “gander”
 Latin [schola] → Spanish [escuela] “school”

46

Metathesis

- Earlier OE *waps* → Late OE *wasp* “wasp”
 Earlier OE *fīrdda* → Late OE *fīrdda* “third”
- Also at a distance:
 Latin *mīrāculum* → Spanish *milagro*

47

Vowel deletion

- A vowel may be deleted from a word, resulting in **apocope** (if the vowel is final) or **syncope** (if the vowel is medial):
- Apocope:
 Latin [ōrmāre] → French [orner] “decorate”
- Syncope:
 Latin [pērdere] → French [perdre] “lose”

48

Vowel reduction

- Vowel deletion is frequently preceded by vowel reduction, where a vowel is reduced to schwa, followed by syncope or apocope, e.g.,

OE	MidE	Early ModE
stān <u>a</u> s [a]	ston <u>e</u> s [ə]	ston <u>e</u> s [ø]
nam <u>a</u> [a]	nam <u>e</u> [ə]	nam <u>e</u> [ø]

49

Consonant deletion

- Consonants may also delete from a word giving rise to another instance of pronunciation change, e.g., Old and Middle English had [kn] and [gn], but the initial consonant underwent deletion.
- And of course French provides a great example of loss of word-final consonant deletion:
 - gras* [gro] "large"
 - chaud* [ʃo] "warm"

50

Substitution

- Substitution involves the replacement of one segment with another similar-sounding segment:
 - MidE [x] → ModE [f] in "laugh"
 - Standard English [θ] → Cockney [f] in "thin"

51

Phonological Shift

- A phonological shift is a change in which a series of sounds is systematically modified so that their organization with respect to each other is altered.
- A well known example of this phonological change is the so-called **Great Vowel Shift** (GVS) in the history of English, where the seven long vowels underwent a series of modifications between 1400-1600, as shown in the following table:

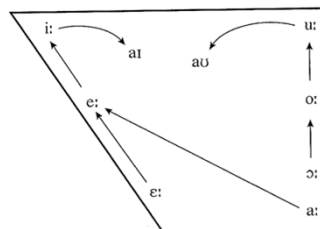
52

The Great Vowel Shift

Shift		Example		
Middle English	Modern English	Middle English	Modern English	
[i:]	→ [aɪ]	[mi:s]	→ [maɪs]	mice
[u:]	→ [aʊ]	[mu:s]	→ [maʊs]	mouse
[e:]	→ [i:]	[ge:s]	→ [gi:s]	geese
[o:]	→ [u:]	[go:s]	→ [gu:s]	goose
[e:]	→ [e:]	[bre:kən]	→ [bre:k]	break
[ɔ:]	→ [o:]	[brɔ:kən]	→ [brɔ:k]	broke
[ɑ:]	→ [e:]	[nɑ:mə]	→ [ne:m]	name

53

The Great Vowel Shift



54

A pronunciation puzzle

please-pleasant
serene-serenity
sane-sanity
crime-criminal

55

Next class agenda

- Reconstructing dead languages: The comparative method. Read Chapter 11, pp. 509-518.
- And, hopefully, Pidgins and Creoles, Chapter 10, pp. 453-460.

56