

Seminar 5. Sound change

1. **Sound change.** Describe the sound changes affecting the following words:

OE *camb* /kamb/ > ME *comb* /kɔ:mb/ > PDE *comb* /kəʊm/

Quantitative (lengthening) and qualitative changes in the vowel (it has been raised, backed and has acquired liprounding). In PDE we can observe a diphthong.

Simplification of the consonant cluster.

ME *waps* /waps/ > PDE *wasp* /wɒsp/

Qualitative change in the vowel (+high, +back, +liprounding). This is due to the influence of the preceding sound, which involves the lips (assimilation).

The consonants in the consonant cluster have swapped places (metathesis).

OE *hnutu* /'hnutu/ > ME *nute* /'nutə/ > PDE /nʌt/

The OE form shows a consonant cluster /hn/ which is simplified to /n/ in ME. The unstressed vowel has weakened to schwa (+central).

This final schwa is lost. In PDE we can observe a qualitative change in the vowel (+low, -liprounding).

ME *good* /go:d/ > /gu:d/ > PDE *good* /gʊd/

The vowel has changed in quality (+high); in PDE the vowel has become short.

ME *kinred* > PDE *kindred*

A segment /d/ is added to ease pronunciation.

OE *writan* /'wri:tan/ > ME *writen* /'wri:tən/ > *write* /'wri:tə/ > ModE *write* /rait/

The unstressed vowel becomes schwa in ME.

The final nasal is lost.

The consonant cluster /wr/ is simplified to /r/, but it leaves a trace in spelling <wr>

The long vowel has become a diphthong.

2. Ascribe the following labels to the examples below. Note that several labels may be relevant for one and the same example.

Assimilation, diphthongization, fortition, lengthening, lenition, loss, lowering, metathesis, monophthongization, raising, rounding, shortening, simplification of consonant cluster, syncope, unrounding.

Br *often* /'ɒftən/ > /'ɒfn/ simplification of consonant cluster; syncope

OF *confort* > ME *comfort* assimilation

OE *stān* /sta:n/ > ME *stone* /stɔ:n/ raising; rounding

ME *stone* /stɔ:n/ < PDE *stone* /stəʊn/ diphthongization

OE *byrht* /byrht/ > ME *bright* /briht/ unrounding (/y/ > /i/); metathesis

OE *cild* /tʃild/ > ME *child* /tʃi:ld/ > PDE *child* /tʃaɪld/ lengthening; diphthongization

OE *gōdspell* /'go:dspeɪl/ > PDE *gospel* /'gɒspl/ shortening; simplification of consonant cluster; syncope

OE *mōdor* /'mo:doɹ/ > PDE *mother* /'mʌðə/ shortening; unrounding; lenition (plosive /d/ > fricative /ð/; weakening /o/ > /ə/), and loss.

ON *þar* 'there' /θar/ > Swedish *där* fortition (fricative /θ/ > plosive /d/)

Latin *cupa* > Spanish *cuba* lenition (voiceless /p/ > voiced /b/)

OE *godsib* > PDE *gossip* assimilation (/ds/ > /ss/) fortition (voiced /b/ > voiceless /p/ in final position).

ME *meat* /mɛ:t/ > /me:t/ > PDE *meat* /mi:t/ raising