

History of the English Language 1

Week 1

Our three challenges...

Challenge 1. Can you think of examples of recent changes in your own language? in English.

Challenge 2. Do you find anything weird (from the point of view of PDE) in these two sentences?

Why look you so upon me? (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 3.5.69, c. 1600)

The King's statue is making by the Mercers Company (Pepys, *Diary*, 1660)

Challenge 3. In which of the different levels of analysis is change most conspicuous? Why do you think that is the case?

External vs. internal

Define internal and external history of a language. Classify the following cases of language change as internal or external. Support your answer.

- (a) The introduction of the printing press had a deep impact on the standardization process of English.
- (b) With the introduction of the phoneme /z/ as the voiced counterpart of /ʃ/ the phonological system of English became more symmetrical.
- (c) The progressive passive was heavily stigmatized at first, but its social evaluation changed when it came to be widely used by a group of prestigious authors (Coleridge, Shelley, Keats).
- (d) The new meaning of the word *mouse* as 'computer device' can be accounted for as a case of metaphor (resemblance between the animal and the first computer *mouses*). This new sense is the result of technological advances.

Spot the change!

Identify and describe the examples of change. Tip: for b, e, and f, think how you would 'translate' the sentence into Present-day English.

Example:

- a. OE <ī> /i:s/ > ME <ice> /i:s/
- b. *a*1325 (►c1250) [*Gen. & Exod.*](#) (1968) l. 4025 Allso leun is migtful **der**.
'also the lion is a powerful *deer*' (pay attention only to the word in bold type)
- c. ME *life* /li:f/ > PDE *life* /laɪf/
- d. OE *word* 'words' vs. PDE *words*
- e. I was at Mr Barrons when Mr Paynter, which is my Master, Came ther...(Elizabeth Clift's Letters; late 18th century)
- f. 1801 M. EDGEWORTH *Forester* in [*Moral Tales*](#) l. 74 Pray, let me pass!