



Week 1. Introduction

History of the English Language (G5061322)

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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?

Our three challenges...

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

rayar(se)/rallar(se)

- semantic change (*rayar* 'scratch', *rallar* 'grate' > 'become angry')
- syntactic change (change in the argument structure, now the verb can be used reflexively).
- <https://www.fundeu.es/consulta/rallar-o-rayar-2/> comments on this.

Lloro
porque me ralla que
me rallen,
porque me usan
para rallar sin hacer rayas
y yo quiero rayar,
porque rallo, rallo y rallo,
y no quiero rayarme más.

rallar: -usar el rallador
-molestar con pesadez
rayar: hacer líneas, tachar
rayarse: volverse loco, comerse el
coco



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Our three challenges...

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

en plan/rollo... as discourse markers. Lola Pons deals with this in https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2018/04/01/articulo/1522599285_066782.html

new vocabulary connected with **new technologies** (*LOL, ratón, twitear...*). *LOL* in English is an example of word-formation (acronym). In Spanish, it is a borrowing from English. In both languages it is now used ironically.

COVID-19 words (<https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/>). The OED connects social change and linguistic change (external history!!!))

Our three challenges...

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

new pronouns to cater for the increasing visibility of different gender identities (more recently https://www.eldiario.es/tecnologia/herher-hehim-themthey-reivindicacion-pronombres_1_1246693.html)

sólo o solo? <https://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/solo-sin-tilde-193/>

pavo/pava...new? See <https://dle.rae.es/pavo> the second sense is 'persona sosa o incauta', but nowadays it's used instead of *tío/tía*, *tronco* (80s) etc.

croqueta/ cocreta: the second form considered vulgar. It shows a sound change called metathesis, where sounds 'swap places'. This is very common: in OE the words for *bird* and *grass* were *brid* and *gars* respectively.

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

More and more Spanish speakers are dropping the initial question and exclamation marks. This is associated with computer-/phone-mediated communication.

In English *sick* is now used (in addition to its other meanings) to refer to something that is *good* (e.g. I like that song. It's sick). This change of meaning, from something bad > sth good is common in emotional words. These words were probably first used to catch the attention of the hearer: wonderful, originally 'full of wonder, awe'; terrific, originally 'terrifying'; awesome 'causing terror or awe'; wicked 'evil', nowadays also 'very good', are cases similar to this.

Intervocalic sounds are usually weakened and sometimes lost: *helado* [elaðo] > [helao]. Dropping your /d/ in this position is considered to be very informal and even vulgar.

Our three challenges...

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

Note that the evaluation of a particular change in the speech community may change over time, and that something that is considered vulgar nowadays may become neutral in the future. For the eighteenth century lexicographer Dr Johnson *job* and *clever* were vulgar words!

Whisky is a borrowing from Gaelic into English and from English into the other languages. In Spanish it admits two different spellings: <whisky> and <güisqui>. The spelling of borrowings is usually adapted to the conventions of the donor language if the loanword is well integrated: e.g. English *football* > Spanish *fútbol*.

Our three challenges...

- **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)

Shakespeare could form questions by inverting the order of subject and verb; there was no need for an auxiliary, even though auxiliaries (e.g. *do*) were already part of his linguistic system. Moreover, he uses the present simple to indicate something happening at the moment of speaking. Nowadays the present continuous would be our choice.

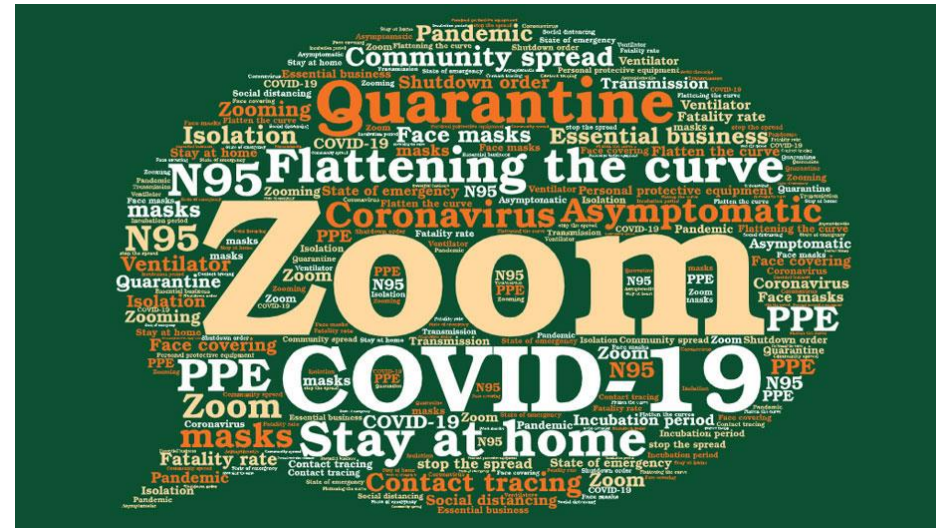
The King's statue is making by the Mercers Company (Pepys, *Diary*, 1660)

This construction BE + *-ing* with passive meaning is called the PASSIVAL. It was replaced by the progressive passive. Nowadays there are some relics of it in (e.g. *dinner is cooking*)

Our three challenges...

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

Changes in the vocabulary of a language (both new words and new meanings) are more obvious to speakers. What happens in the speech community is reflected in the vocabulary. E.g. all those COVID-19 words, which did not exist, or were far less common before March 2020.



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 mice). This new sense is the result of technological advances.

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.

External. Introduced in England by Caxton, it allowed the rapid production of identical copies of books. Since books had to sell everywhere in the country, there was a need to use a variety of English that everybody could understand.

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.

(b) With the introduction of the phoneme /z/ as the voiced counterpart of /s/ the phonological system of English became more symmetrical.

Internal. There was a gap in the system of fricatives which was filled by /z/, which originates in the assimilation of /zj/ in words such as pleasure (earlier pronunciation /'plezjər/)

Voiceless fricatives	Voiced fricatives
f	v
s	z
θ	ð
ʃ	

External vs internal

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(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).

External. The triggering force is here overt prestige, the imitation of the linguistic habits of the cultural elite.

External vs internal

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(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 mice). This new sense is the result of technological advances.

Both external (technology, change in the world) and internal (the workings of metaphor).

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.

a. OE <īs> /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!

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a. OE <īs> /i:s/ > ME <ice> /i:s/

spelling change <c> for /s/ due to French influence. This was originally a French spelling convention.

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)

phonological, spelling and semantic change

c. ME *life* /li:f/ > PDE *life* /laɪf/

phonological change

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d. OE *word* 'words' vs. PDE *words*

Morphological change. This noun had a zero plural in OE, whereas nowadays it has a plural inflection -s.

e. I was at Mr Barrons when Mr Paynter, which is my Master, Came ther...(Elizabeth Clift's Letters; late 18th century)

The apostrophe was not commonly used then, and 'important' words could be capitalized (orthographic change). The relative pronoun which could be used with human antecedents (syntactic change).

f. 1801 M. EDGEWORTH *Forester* in *Moral Tales* I. 74 Pray, let me pass!

This is old-fashioned. Nowadays the courtesy marker that indicates that what follows is a request is please (pragmatic change).

Our 'secret code'

<graphemes>

/phonemes/

[allophones]

words/morphemes, by hand

words/morphemes, when you are using your computer

LEXEMES

'meanings'