LEVEL 1B ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS

*From Early Modern English (EModE) to Present-Day English (PDE)*

**In the lectures for this course-component, TWO linked RECORDED videos of around 20 minutes each will be posted on the Moodle site at the beginning of each week. A full script for this recorded material, plus the accompanying slides, will be posted to accompany the videos. Students are asked to watch these lectures ANYTIME over the following three days, when convenient to them.**

**There will then, at the class hour (1500 on Thursdays) be a dedicated LIVE drop-in Q&A session relating to this material, which students are strongly advised to attend. I will also include in these LIVE sessions, if time remains after Q&As are covered, some images illustrating EModE culture; please note that this material is for background interest only, and will NOT BE EXAMINED. I will post these images on the Moodle site after the LIVE event.**

*1. Timeline*

1.0 I’ll begin by reminding you of the traditional periodisation of the English and Scots languages:

* **Old English (OE) to around 1100**
* **Middle English (ME) 1100-1500**
* **Older Scots (OSc) 1300-1700**
* **Early Modern English (EModE) 1500-1700**
* **Late Modern English (LModE) 1700-**
* **Modern Scots (ModScots) 1700-**
* **Present-Day English (PDE)**
* **Present-Day Scots (PDSc)**

This timeline is open to challenge and refinement. Older Scots, for instance, is often divided into Early Scots (ESc, to around 1475) and Middle Scots (MSc, 1475-1700), and Middle English is often further divided into Early Middle English (EME, 1100-1325) and Late Middle English (1325-1500). And of course it is important to realise that the divisions are ‘fuzzy’; speakers of English didn’t go to bed on New Year’s Eve 1099 speaking OE, and wake up speaking ME.

1.1 There is of course a rough – very rough – correspondence with historical events: unsurprising, since languages are the tools of the people who use them, and people are situated in history. Here are a few dates that align intriguingly with the timeline I’ve identified. The dates align with events of very different kinds: battles, technological innovations, decisive moments in the history of Christianity, political developments.

* **1066: The Norman Conquest**
* **1314: The Battle of Bannockburn**
* **1476: William Caxton begins printing in Westminster**
* **1508: Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar begin printing in Edinburgh**
* **1558: ‘Elizabethan settlement’ establishes Reformation in England**
* **1560: Scottish Reformation Parliament**
* **1603: Union of Crowns**
* **1639-1651: War of the Three Kingdoms**
* **1707: Union of Parliaments**

1.2 Historical events are – as those of you taking courses in History will be aware -- themselves always complex, the result of many factors working together, and indeed they continue to resonate until the present-day. As the Chinese politician Zhou en Lai is supposed to have said, in the early 1970s, when asked about the effects of the French Revolution of 1789, ‘It’s too early to say’. (He actually seems to have been referring to the Parisian student riots of 1968.) But these dates are worth bearing in mind as markers for definite changes of direction in the socio-cultural contexts within which English and Scots were situated.

*2. Placing EModE in its linguistic context*

2.0 However, it is fairly clear that there are some definite differences between what may be termed ‘prototypical’ OE, ME, EModE and LModE. The traditional definitions were first formulated by the great nineteenth-century scholar Henry Sweet (1845-1912), who defined OE as the period of ‘full inflexion’, ME as of ‘reduced inflexion’ and E/LModE as of ‘no inflexion’; this description captures something of the distinction, although of course we still have inflexions in PDE (e.g. the genitive, as in Tom’s, the girl’s, wolves’ etc, or in the pronoun-system). The following versions of the Lord’s Prayer demonstrate the principal differences:

2.1 OE:

* **Þū ūre fæder, þe eart on heofonum, sīe þin nama gehālgod. Cume þīn rīce. Sīe þīn wylla on eorþan swā swā on heofonum. Syle ūs tōdæg ūrne dæghwāmlican hlāf. And forgief ūs ūre gyltas swā swā wē forgiefaþ þǣm þe wiþ ūs āgyltaþ. And ne lǣd þū nā ūs on costnunge, ac alīes ūs fram yfele (West Saxon Gospels, ninth century CE).**

2.2 ME:

* **Oure fadir, þat art in heuenys, halewid be þi name. Thi kyngdom come to. Be þi wile don ase in heuene and in erþe. Ȝiue to vs þis day oure breed ouer oþer substaunse. And forʒiue to vs oure dettes, as and we forʒiuen to oure dettouris. And leede vs not into temptaciouns, but delyuere vs from yuel (Wycliffite Bible, c.1380).**

2.3 EModE:

* **Our Father, which art in heauen, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heauen. Giue vs this day oure daily bread. And forgiue vs our trespasses, As we forgiue them that trespass against vs. And lead vs not into temptation; But deliuer vs from euil (KJV, 1611).**

2.4 LModE:

* **Our Father in heaven, thy name be hallowed; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us the wrong we have done, as we have forgiven those who have wronged us. And do not bring us to the test, but save us from the evil one (NEB, 1961).**

*3. What marks EModE off from ME?*

3.0 Bearing all these caveats about the shift from ME to EModE – like other period-changes – being ‘gradual’ or ‘emergent’, what then are the features that distinguish EModE from its predecessor? I think they can be divided into two sets, which we might term *extra-* and *intralinguistic* respectively (some scholars refer to the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ history of a language). Crudely put, extralinguistic features relate to sociocultural *functions*, while intralinguistic features relate to lexical, grammatical, accentual and written *forms*.

3.1 Here are relevant extralinguistic developments during the transition from ME to EModE:

* **Rise in the status of English, and the consequent emergence of prestigious forms of the language to sustain social distinctions. Witnessed by:**
* **Translations into English (by William Caxton and many others)**
* **The appearance of spelling reformers, known as ‘orthoepists’ (e.g. John Cheke, John Hart, William Bullokar)**
* **The first ‘sociolinguistic’ writings (e.g. Alexander Gil)**
* **The rise of lexicography (e.g. Robert Cawdrey)**
* **Statements by contemporaries about ‘correct’ English**

3.2 One of the best-known of the last category is ascribed to George Puttenham (1529-1590):

* **.. ye shall therefore take the vsuall speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles, and not much aboue (*The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589)**

Such comments show an interesting advance on earlier views of English as somehow ‘lacking’, as in this quotation from one of William Caxton’s prologues:

* **And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse for to haue sayled ouer the see into Zelande / and for lacke of wynde thei taryed atte forlond. and wente to lande for to refreshe them And one of theym named sheffelde a mercer cam in to an hows and axed for mete. and specyally he axyd after eggys And the good wyf answerde. That she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry. for he also coude speke no frenshe. but wold haue hadde egges/ and she vnderstode hym not/ And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren/ then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel/ Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte. egges or eyren/ certaynly it is harde to playse euery man/ by cause of dyuersite & chaunge of langage (Preface to the *Eneydos*, 1490).**

You will note that all such ‘witnesses’ can be correlated with the rise in the status of the English language, i.e. its socio-cultural function. In ME, no one usage of the vernacular has really achieved ‘standard’ status (Latin and French had much greater cultural cachet). By the time of Puttenham, however, it is possible to be ‘dignified’ in English to mark social status.

3.3 Here are the intralinguistic developments traditionally cited as distinguishing ME and EModE:

* **Writing-system: gradual standardisation of spelling**
* **Sound-system: major change in the distribution of ‘long vowels’ (the Great Vowel Shift; cf. the pairs *doubt/soup*, *guile/terrine*)**
* **Lexicon: expansion of vocabulary, reflecting the impact of humanism and contact between western Europe and the rest of the world (incipient colonialism)**
* **Grammar: emergence of ModE system, especially in the verb phrase and in the pronominal system**

3.4 Of course intra- and extralinguistic developments are intimately connected. There is a plausible, evidence-backed argument that the Great Vowel Shift – in England at least -- is the result of sociolinguistically-driven interaction in late medieval and Tudor London (in Scotland and northern England matters took a different direction, as indicated by the Scots pronunciation of *doubt*).

[BREAK: END of VIDEO 1]

*4. From ME to EModE: textual afterlives*

4.0 In the first video I set out in broad terms the ways in which texts in EModE differ from those in ME. Obviously, folk living in the sixteenth century cannot have been aware that they were using something called ‘EModE’, any more than those living in the fourteenth were aware they were talking ‘ME’. However, they were aware that something had changed, and to that end we might compare two versions of a very famous text.

4.1 The text I have chosen to look at is the opening of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, a cycle of stories that was unfinished at the poet’s death in 1400. Almost all modern editions of the poem are based on **a copy that was produced, at around that date, by a scribe who seems to have been very close to the poet: the Ellesmere manuscript (now San Marino, Huntington Library, MS EL 26.C.9**). Here is a transcript:

**Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (Ellesmere MS, c.1400)**

* **Whan that Aprill with hise shoures soote**
* **The droghte of March hath perced to the roote**
* **And bathed euery veyne in swich licour**
* **Of which v*er*tu/ engendred is the flour**
* **Whan zephirus eek/ wt his swete breeth**
* **Inspired hath in euery holt and heeth**
* **The tendre croppes/ and the yonge sonne**
* **Hath in the Ram/ his half cours yronne**
* **And smale foweles maken melodye**
* **That slepen al the nyght with open eye**
* **So priketh hem nature/ in hir corages**

4.2 Unlike much medieval English literature, Chaucer’s poem has never been forgotten. It was one of the first texts to be printed by William Caxton, and numerous editions followed. Here is **Thomas Speght’s, printed in London in 1602**. Speght – or more properly his printer -- is clearly aware that the work is ‘old’, since he flags its antiquity through an ‘archaic’ blackletter typeface. But he has still ‘modernised’ the text, as demonstrated in this transcript of the opening lines of the *Tales*:

**Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (Speght, 1602)**

* **When that Aprill with his shours sote**
* **The drought of March had pierced to the rote,**
* **And bathed euery vaine in suche licour,**
* **Of which vertue engendred is the flour:**
* **When *Zephirus* eke with his sote breath,**
* **Espired hath in euery holt and heath**
* **The tender croppes, and that the yong sonne**
* **Hath in the Ram halfe his course yronne,**
* **And small foules maken melodie,**
* **That slepen all night with open eie:**
* **So pricketh hem nature in her courage,**

Comparison with the Ellesmere transcript is very illuminating. There are numerous ‘modernisations’ here, not least in the punctuation (which is nevertheless still ‘rhetorical’ rather than ‘grammatical’), but we might note – just as an example -- how the inflected adjectives characteristic of Ellesmere (*the yonge sonne*, *smale foules*), and proven to be Chaucerian because of their metrical implications, have disappeared in Speght’s 1602 edition (*the yong sonne*, *small foules*).

*5. Early Modern English in action: inkhorns and purists*

**[Portrait of William Shakespeare]**

5.0 For my second set of examples, I’m going to start with perhaps the most culturally salient writer in EModE, viz. William Shakespeare (1564-1616). And here is a passage from one of his most famous plays:

**Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (First Folio, 1623)**

* ***Macb.* Whence is that knocking?**
* **How is't with me, when euery noyse appalls me?**
* **What Hands are here? hah: they pluck out mine Eyes.**
* **Will all great *Neptunes* Ocean wash this blood**
* **Cleane from my Hand? no: this my Hand will rather**
* **The multitudinous Seas incarnardine,**
* **Making the Greene one, Red.**

5.1 Splendid stuff: but let me pause on *multitudinous Seas incarnardine*, which is obviously tricky even to EModE audiences, since the dramatist, deploying a traditional rhetorical trick, has to offer a gloss (*Making the Greene one, Red*). If you get a moment, look the word *incarnadine* up in OED: Shakespeare’s is the first recorded use.

5.2 There is literary justification for Shakespeare’s usage here; Macbeth and his wife like to use obscure or archaic words to disguise the horror of what they have done (elsewhere Lady Macbeth refers to *our great quell* ‘our great killing’; *quell*, related to the by-then extinct Old English verb *cwellan*, is suitably archaic). But contemporaries had a term for words like *incarnadine*: they were ‘inkhorn terms’, learned expressions that came out of an inkwell (then typically made out of animal horn).

5.3 Inkhorn terms were often considered exaggerated and affected by contemporaries, and Shakespeare elsewhere made fun of them. Here is a famous passage from a rather less well-known play, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*:

**Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (First Folio, 1623)**

* ***Ped.Noui hominum tanquam te*, His humour is lofty, his   
  discourse peremptorie: his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gate maiesticall, and his generall behauiour vaine, ridiculous, and thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odde, as it were, too peregrinat, as I may call it.**
* ***Cur*.A most singular and choise Epithat,**
* ***Draw out his Table-booke*,**
* ***Ped.*He draweth out the thred of his verbositie, finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such phanaticall phantasims, such insociable and poynt deuise companions, such rackers of ortagriphie, as to speake dout fine, when he should say doubt; det, when he shold pronounce debt; d e b t, not det: he clepeth a Calf, Caufe: halfe, hawfe; neighbour *vocatur* nebour; neigh abreuiated ne: this is abhominable, which he would call abhominable: it insinuateth me of infamie: *ne* *inteligis domine*, to make franticke, lunaticke?**

5.4 Unsurprisingly, Shakespeare’s longest word appears in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*:

* ***honorificabilitudinitatibus***
* **contains alternating vowels and consonants**
* **dative/ablative plural of *honōrificābilitūdinitās* (medieval Latin), ‘the state of being able to achieve honours’**
* **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9aIGS\_Ty8o**

5.5 Such terminology derived from the tendency in the sixteenth century of transferring words from the ‘higher’ languages such as Latin and French into English, with a view to making it more ‘copious’, i.e. elaborated. But there was always a group of people who reacted against it, especially the more militant Protestants, and such writers – now called ‘purists’ – liked to use the resources of English to increase their vocabulary. Edmund Spenser, author of the *Faerie Queene* (1590-6), was one such, and another was **Sir John Cheke (1514-1557)**, whose manuscript translation of part of the New Testament is illustrated on the cover of the Reader for this course-component. Cheke undertook the work for the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. Here is a passage from the translation, where instead of ‘centurion’ Cheke provides the ‘purist’ word *hunderder*.

* **As Jesus cam into Capernaum, yeer cam an hunderder vnto him and sued vnto him on this sort. Sir mi servant lieth sick in mi house of ye palsej, grevousli tormented. And Jesus said vnto him. I wil co*m*me and heel him. And ye hunderder answerd him with yees wordes. Sir J am not á fit man whoos house ye schold enter. Sai ye onli ye word and mi servant schal be heeled. For J am a man vnder ye power of oyer, and have soldiers vnderneth me, and J sai to ys soldier go and he goeth, and to an other co*m*m and he co*m*meth, and to mi servant do ys and he doth it. Jesus heering ys marvelled and said to yem yt folowed him. Truli J sai vnto yow, J have no found so greet faith no not in Jsr*ae*l.**

5.6 Cheke’s translation didn’t appear in print until the nineteenth century; Cranmer was burned at the stake in 1555, by which time Cheke had fled abroad. He was unlucky enough, though, to be kidnapped and taken to the Tower of London, where he was ‘shown the instruments’, which caused him to recant publicly his Protestantism. He died a year later, apparently a broken man. But in that final year of his life he wrote this famous letter, which was later printed:

* **I am of this opinion that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borowing of other tunges, wherin if we take not heed bi tijm, euer borowing and neuer payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tung naturallie and praisablie vtter her meaning, whan she bouroweth no counterfeitness of other tunges to attire her self withall, but vseth plainlie her own, with such shift, as nature, craft, experiens and folowing of other excellent doth lead her vnto, and if she want at ani tijm (as being vnperfigt she must) yet let her borow with suche bashfulnes, that it mai appeer, that if either the mould of our own tung could serue vs to fascion a woord of our own, or if the old denisoned wordes could content and ease this neede, we wold not boldly venture of vnknowen wordes ...**

5.7 It’s an assertion of purism, a Protestant discourse! Cheke was offering a coded message of defiance!

*6. Everyday English: the voices of two women*

6.0 For my final examples I’d like to go to a rather fine ‘stately home’ in Norfolk: **Oxnead Hall, Norfolk**. Oxnead is as you can see still there, and indeed it advertises itself now as a ‘stunning wedding venue’. But in the fifteenth and sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was the home of the Paston family, a group of ambitious individuals who eventually became magnates, as Earls of Yarmouth. The Pastons are now famous because of the large amount of correspondence that survives, including letters by women. We will be encountering other EModE women’s voices next week.

6.1 My first example of a Paston letter is from Margaret Paston (1448). Margaret dictated her letters to a scribe, but her voice comes through well in this rather unpleasant little narrative, describing a brawl between her servants and those of Paston enemy, John Wyndham. She is writing to her husband, confusingly also called John:

* **Ryght worshipfull husbond, I recomaund me to yow, and prey yow to wete yat on Friday last passed be-fore noon, ye parson of Oxened beyng at messe in our parossh chirche, euyn atte leuacion of ye sakeryng, Jamys Gloys hadde ben in ye tovne & come homward by Wymondams gate. And Wymondam stod in his gate & John Norwode his man stod by hym, & Thomas Hawys his othir man stod in ye strete by ye canell side. And Jamys Gloys come with his hatte on his hede betwen bothe his men, as he was wont of custome to do. And whanne Gloys was ayenst Wymonham he seid yus, ‘Couere thy heed!’ And Gloys seid ageyn, ‘So I shall for the.’ And whanne Gloys was forther passed by ye space of iij or iiij strede, Wymondham drew owt his dagger & seid, ‘Shalt yow so, knave?’**

6.2 Paston ladies didn’t stop writing, and here is my final example. **By this time the Pastons had become very grand, as shown by this tomb: Lady Katherine Paston (1578-1629).**

6.3 Here is a letter from Katherine Paston (1625), addressed to her son William, who is away at university in Cambridge.

* **My good chilld the Lord blesse the ever:/ I was glad to heer by Phillup of thy good healthe and allso by mr Roberts letter to vnderstand of thy wellfare every way: the hope of the continuanc of which, dothe still cheer me every way:/ thy father haue bine very ill. wt his owld truble in his Legge so that he haue kepte his bede wt it this 5: or 6: days, but now god be thanked it is on the mendinge hand but yett he can not indure to sitt vp:/ your brother and all good frindes heer are well, I hope thow doest keep good fiers. this cowld wether. for it is bothe comfortable and howlsum: heer haue bine much Losse heerabout wt thesse great windes and ill wether; diuers botts wt wheat wch was to be deliuered for the kinges provision at Yarmouth are sunke in the riuer, which is the owners Losse and not the kings:/ I was sory to heer of tom harstons beinge ill, but hope well of his recouery: I did wright to the last satterday when I had very littell time to say any thinge for hast:**

Lots of good advice here; but notice that spelling hasn’t yet settled down. Nor has punctuation!

6.4 I hope you have enjoyed these videos! As a follow-up, look through the slides, and then the Introduction (section 1) in *A Modern English Reader*.

[LIVE EVENT IMAGES, if time:

***A testimonie of antiquitie***

***A godly sermon***

**Richard Topcliffe: torturer and book-annotator**]

[END of VIDEO 2]