# OLD ENGLISH PHONETICS

# Accentuation system

- dynamic stress fixed on the first root syllable:
  - *agāne (gone);*
  - *ȝesēon (see);*
  - *ȝaderian (gather)*

- Polysyllabic words and compounds - two stresses:
  - chief (on the first component)
  - secondary.

- Grammatical endings were unstressed:
  - *hlaforde – hlaford (lord);*
  - *cyninʒe - cyninʒ (king);*
  - *æþelinʒʒa – æþelinʒ (nobleman)*

- Verb prefixes were unaccented:
- *a-'risan (arise),*
- *mis-'faran (go astray).*

- In adjectives and nouns the stress shifted onto the prefix:
- *'or-eald (very old),*
- *'to-weard (towards),*
- *'mis-dæd (misdeed).*

- In words derived from the same root, word stress distinguished nouns from verbs:

- *'and-swaru (noun) – and-'swarian (verb) – answer;*
- *'onʒin (noun) - on'ʒinnan (verb) – beginning, begin.*

# OE system of consonants

- 14 consonants:
- *p, b, m, f, t, d, n, s, r, I, þ (ð), c, ʒ, h*
- some of the modern sounds were non-existent:
- [ʃ], [ʒ], [ʧ], [ʤ]

# Consonants

| | Consonants | | Labial, labiodental | Dental | Palatal | Velar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Noise | plosives | voiceless | p    p: | t    t: | k'   k': | k    k: |
| | | voiced | b    b: | d    d: | g': | g    g: |
| | fricatives | voiceless | f    f: | θ  θ:  s    s: | x'   x': | x          x: h |
| | | voiced | v | ð    z | γ' | γ |
| Sonorants | | | m    m:  w | n  n:  r  l | j | ŋ |

- All the consonants fell into
- **so**norants *(m, w, n, r, l, ŋ, j)* and
- noise consonants.
- Noise consonants were subdivided into
- voiced plosives *(b, d, g)*
- voiceless plosives *(p, t, k)*
- voiced fricatives *(v, ð, z, γ )*
- voiceless fricatives (f, θ, h, x ).
- Sometimes voicing was the only point of difference between *allophones* - variants of a phoneme depending on the phonetic surrounding and serving to distinguish between words.

- Palatalised sounds *(k', g', x', γ ' )* -- not typical of MnE.
- Short and long consonants:
  - */f, s, n/*
  - */p, g /* were doubled in spelling to indicate length -    part-time, big game.
- Difference in length was semantic (and distinguished in the intervocal position) :
  - hopian /p/ - to hope
  - hoppian /p:/ - to hop
  - cwelan /l/ – to die
  - cwellan /l:/ - to kill
  - mete /t/ - to meet
  - mette / t: / - met

# In OE consonants were subjected to the processes of:

- - voicing - devoicing;
- - doubling;
- - metathesis;
- - Grimm's law;
- - Verner's law;
- - hardening;
- - rhotacism.

# Voicing - devoicing

- *f, þ, ð, s  are **voiced** in intervocal position:*
- *hlaf [f] (bread) – hlaford [v] (breadkeeper)*
- *ʒos [s] — ʒoses [z] (goose, Nom. sing. – Gen. sing.)*
- *toð [θ] — toðes [ð] (tooth, Norn. sing. - Gen. sing.)*

# Palatal – velar articulation

The phoneme denoted by the letter *c* —

- palatal [к'] (before the vowel *i* ):
- *cild (child) ,*
- *scip (ship)*

- velar [k] (in the majority of cases):
- *can (can),*
- *climban (to climb).*

# phoneme denoted by the letter ʒ:

- voiced velar plosive [g] at the beginning of the word before back vowels or consonants or in the middle of the word after *n*:
  - *ʒod (good),*
  - *ʒretan (to greet, to address),*
  - *ʒanʒan (to go)*

- voiced velar fricative [ɣ] in the middle of the word between back vowels:
  - *daʒas (days)*
- voice palatal fricative [j] before and after front vowels:
  - dæʒ (day),
  - ʒear (year)

# Doubling

- prolonging the consonant sound (except for /r/) to indicate long vowels.

- *badi – bedd (bed);*
- *fulian –fyllan (become foul).*

# Metathesis

- a phonetic change in which two sounds exchange their places:

- *brid - bird;*
- *drit - dirt;*
- *forst -frost;*
- *grapsen — grasp;*
- *moudle - mould.*

# Grimm's law

- The voiceless plosive consonants [p], [t], [k] of non-Germanic Indo-European languages shifted in Germanic languages into the voiceless fricative consonants [f], [θ], [h]:

- пена -fama (foam)

- пять - fiv (five)

- три - θrie (three)

- ты - þu (thou)

- кров - hrof (roof)

- kardia - heorte (heart)

- octo - eahta (eight)

# Verner's law

- there are certain words in Germanic languages where instead of the expected *voiceless fricative consonants* we find *voiced plosive consonants*. These "exceptions" to the rule are a result of the further development of the fricative consonants which appeared in Germanic languages after the first consonant shift.

# Verner's law

- The Germanic voiceless fricative consonants [f], [θ], [h] which appeared due to Grimm's law later *became voiced* if they were found after unstressed vowels:

IE         Early PG        Late PG        OE

pa`*t*er > fa`*θ*ar > fa`*ð*ar > > `faðar > >> `fadar

- t → θ in accordance with Grimm's law, but as the stress in the word " fa`ðar " was on the 2$^{nd}$ syllable, the voiceless fricative consonant [θ] became voiced [ð]; later the voiced fricative consonant [ð] underwent **"hardening"** and became [d].

# Hardening

- the transition of IE  */ð, v, ɣ /* into */d, b, g/* initially and after nasals, turning fricatives into plosives.

IE              Early PG              Late PG              OE
pa`*t*er > fa`*θ*ar > fa`*ð*ar > >`faðar > >> `fadar


- I.E. [t]  >  Com. Germ. [θ]  >  [ð]  > OE [d]
- Grimm's law  -  Verner's law  -  hardening

# Rhotacism

- Verner's law also affected a 4$^{th}$ consonant — [s]. [s] > [z] after unstressed vowels — later [z] became [r] — the change [z] > [r] is called **rhotacism**.

- Verner's law explains the appearance of "consonant gradation" in strong verbs:

- cwe**ð**an    cw**æð**   cw**æd**on    cwe**d**en  (say)
ceo**s**an    cea**s**    cu**r**on    co**r**en     (choose)

# OE system of vowels

- a) The quantity and the quality of the vowel depended upon its position in the word. Under stress any vowel could be found, but in unstressed position there were no diphthongs or long monophthongs, but only short vowels.

- b) The length of the stressed vowels (monophthongs and diphthongs) was phonemic :
- metan (to measure) — mētan (to meet)
- pin (pin) — pīn (pain)
- god (god) — gōd (good)

- c)   There was an exact parallelism of long and short vowels:
- Short: monophthongs - a o e u i æ y; diphthongs - ea eo
- Long: monophthongs - **ā** ō ē  ū ī æ ÿ; diphthongs - ēa ēo

- The macron ( ¯ ) above a vowel indicates that the vowel is long: ē = [e:] þēs [θe:s]

-  Within an OE diphthong the first element makes the nucleus and is pronounced with more force and clarity than the second element: hēah [h*ea*:χ]

- **y** stands for a front vowel [y], like in the French   word  "rue": cyninʒ [kyniŋg]

- Monophthongs in OE developed from PG sounds in **the process of fronting**. So Germanic [a] and [a:] split into several vowels:

- a – **æ,** o, a
- ā: - **æ:,** o:

- diphthongs were produced as the result of **"fracture", or "breaking"**. It is diphthongisation of the short vowels [a] and [e] before certain consonant clusters:
- -*a* turned into *ea* before
- **h + cons.** *æhta –eahta (eight),*
- **l + cons.** *æld – eald (old),*
- **r + cons.** *arm — earm (arm),*
- **final h** *sah – seah (saw).*
- - *e* turned into *eo* before
- **lc,** *melcan —meolcan (to milk),*
- **lh,** *selh — seolh (seal),*
- **h,** *feh – feoh (cattle).*
- **r + cons**.: *herte – heorte (heart)*

■ Diphthongs also appeared as the result of **diphthongisation.** A back vowel (a, o, u) in the suffix turned the stressed root vowel into a diphthong:

- *sifun – siofon (seven),*
- *swestar – sweostar (sister),*
- *hefon – heofon (heaven).*

- **i-umlaut, or "palatal mutation"** is fronting of a vowel in the root under the influence of *i, j* in the succeeding syllable. Sometimes it also involved doubling of the root consonant:

- *badi — bedd,*
- *fulian — fyllan.*

- Certain vowels could be lengthened as the result of the loss of consonant:
- *funf – fif (five).*

- In such cases **the law of compensation** was applied. If one consonant was lost in a word, the previous vowel had to be lengthened or the consonant doubled.

  This law was essential because the loss of sounds could disturb the accentuation pattern – the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables in an utterance.

pp. 73-76 -  Accentuation system and its development; OE system of consonants

pp. 80-82 - OE system of vowels. Development of long vowels and diphthongs

To revise Lecture "General characteristics of OE" – Phonetics: vowels and consonants