



# English Etymology

# English vocabulary

is known as exhibiting a composite nature: it consists of

**Native elements**

and

**Loan words** borrowed from different languages

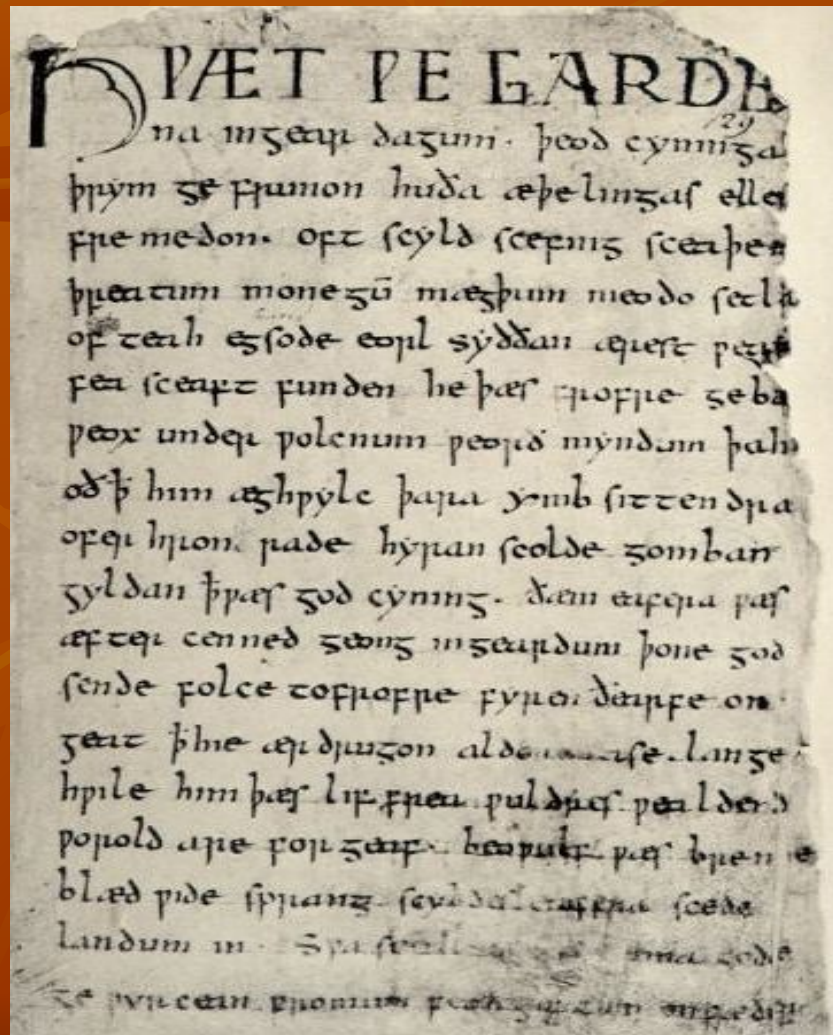
# What is a native word?

The term «**native**» is traditionally applied to words of the Anglo-Saxon origin brought to the British Isles from the continent in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by the Germanic tribes of the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes.

# Some of the medieval artifacts...



# The front page and an illustration from the «Song of Beowulf», the longest Anglo-Saxon epic poem





# What is a native word?

- Practically, the term «**native**» describes words that existed in the English word-stock of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.
- In a far broader sense, «**native**» denotes words whose origin cannot be traced to any other language.

# What is borrowing?

- The process of adopting words from other languages
- The result of this process, the language material itself

**Borrowing is everlasting...**

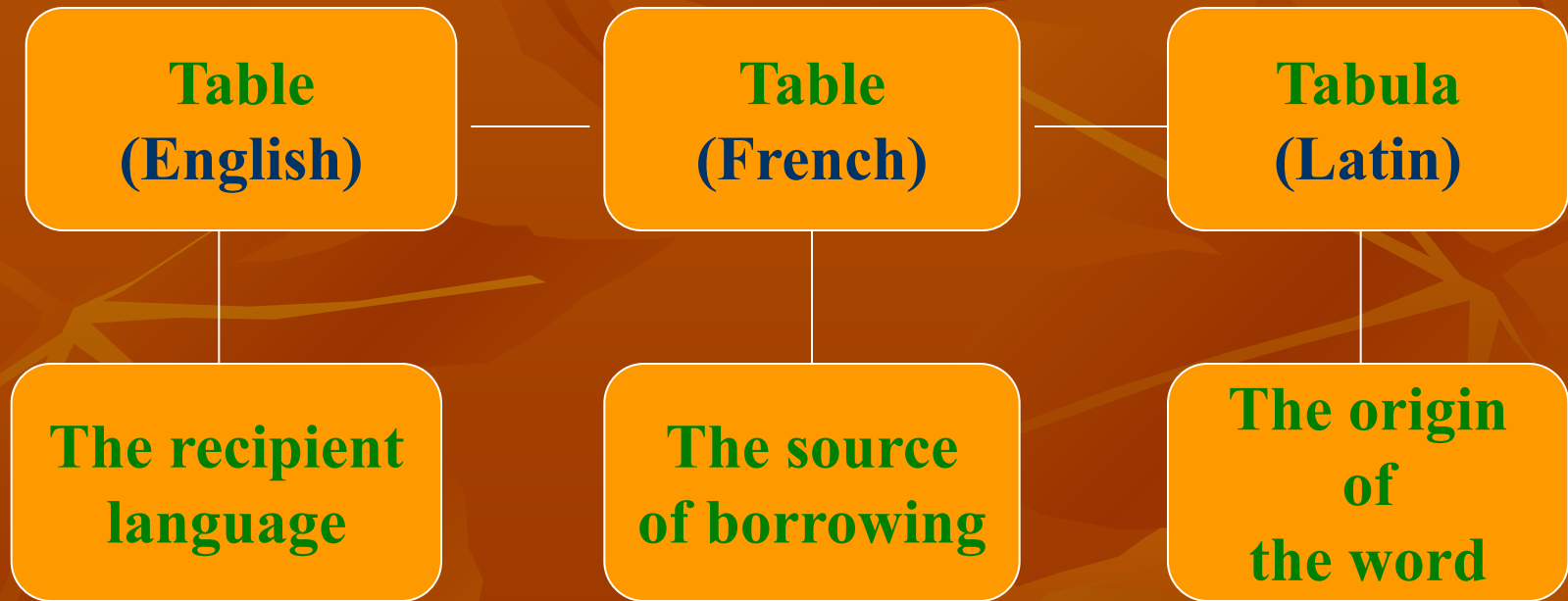




# What is the difference between the source of borrowing and the origin of the word?

- **The source of borrowing** (источник заимствования) denotes the language from which this or that particular word was taken into English.
- The term «**origin of the word**» (источник происхождения, первоисточник) is applied to the language the word may be traced to.

# What is the difference between the source of borrowing and the origin of the word?



# Source vs Origin

The immediate source of borrowing may be defined with some certainty, while the actual origin may be doubtful

# Source vs Origin

## Ink

«the black liquor with which men write» [Johnson], mid-13c., from **O.Fr. enque** «dark writing fluid», from **L.L. encaustum**, from **Gk. enkauston** «purple or red ink used by the Roman emperors to sign documents»; originally a neutral adjective form of **enkaustos** «burned in», from the stem of **enkaiein** «to burn in», from **en-** «in» + **kaiein** «to burn». The word is from a Gk. method of applying colored wax and fixing it with heat. The verb meaning «to mark or stain in ink» is from 1560s. Inky «as black as ink» is attested from 1590s.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com>)

# Source vs Origin

- The immediate source of borrowing is of greater importance as it reveals the extra-linguistic factors responsible for the act of borrowing and also because borrowed words bear the imprint of the sound and graphic form as well as the morphological and semantic structure characteristic of the language they were taken from.





# Native Words

# Native Words

- Words of the native origin consist mainly of very ancient elements: **Indo-European, Germanic and West-Germanic cognates** (родственные слова).
- The native element is estimated to make **25%** of the English vocabulary, but it is characterized by a **high word-building ability, frequency of use and semantic and stylistic value**.

# Semantic Characteristics of Native Words

- **Auxiliary and modal verbs** (shall, will, must, can, may, etc.)
- **Pronouns** (I, you, he, my, his, who, etc.)
- **Prepositions** (in, out, on, under, etc.)
- **Numerals** (one – hundred)
- **Conjunctions** (and, but, till, as, etc.)

# Semantic Characteristics of Native Words

- **Notional words denoting:**
- **Parts of the body** (head, hand, arm, back, etc.)
- **Family members and close relatives** (father, mother, brother, son, wife, etc.)
- **Natural phenomena and planets** (snow, rain, wind, sun, moon, star, etc.)
- **Animals** (horse, cow, sheep, dog, etc.)
- **Qualities and properties** (old, young, cold, hot, light, dark, long, etc.)
- **Common actions** (do, make, go, come, see, hear, eat, etc.)

# Semantic Characteristics of Native Words

- **Most native words are polysemantic (possess more than 1 meaning):**
  - **Finger, n**
  - **1. any of the terminal members of the hand, especially one other than the thumb;**
  - **2. a part of a glove made to receive a finger;**
  - **3. the breadth of a finger as a unit of measurement, a digit;**
  - **4. the length of a finger: approximately 4 1 / 2 inches (11 cm);**
  - **5. *Slang*: an informer or spy;**
  - **6. something like a finger in form or use, as a projection or pointer: a finger of land leading out into the bay; the finger on the speedometer;**
  - **7. any of various projecting parts of machines.**
- (<http://dictionary.reference.com>)**



# Combining Power of Native words

- Most native words possess a wide range of lexical and grammatical valence and enter a big number of free word combinations and phraseological units:

- **Burn one's fingers** (to suffer injury or loss by meddling or by acting rashly): **поплатиться, обжечься**
- **Have a finger in the pie** (1 to have an interest or share in something, 2 to meddle in something): **быть замешанным в ч-л, приложить руку, иметь рыльце в пуху**
- **Keep one's fingers crossed** (to wish for good luck or success, as in a specific endeavor): **держат кулаки**
- **Lay / put one's finger on** (1 to indicate exactly, remember; 2 to discover, locate sth): **попасть в точку**
- **Not lift a finger** (to make not even a small attempt, do nothing): **пальцем не пошевелить**

- **Slip through one's fingers** (1 to elude one, as an opportunity not taken, escape 2 to pass or be consumed quickly): **упустить, ускользнуть, просочиться сквозь пальцы**
- **Snap one's fingers at sth** (to exhibit disdain or contempt for sth): **игнорировать, не обращать внимания**
- **Twist / wrap around one's little finger** (to exert one's influence easily or successfully upon): **обводить вокруг пальца**  
(<http://dictionary.reference.com>)

# Derivational Potential of English Words

- **Most words of native origin make up large clusters of derived and compound words:**
- **Head, n**
- Head (v), headache, headachy, headband, headboard, headcheese, headdress (=headgear), header, headforemost, heading (=headline), headland, headless, headlight, headlong, headman, headmaster, etc. (about 50 morphologically related words)

# Derivational Potential of English Words

- The formation of new words is greatly facilitated by the fact that most native words are **root words**.
- New words have been coined from the Anglo-Saxon simple word stems by means of **affixation** (head – headless), **word composition** (head – headache), **conversion** (head, n – head, v), etc.





# Borrowings

# When are words borrowed into a language?

- Words are borrowed from other languages when the native speakers of two different languages come into close contact.
- The nature of such contact may be different:
  - Wars, invasions, conquests, etc. (foreign words are imposed upon the conquered nation);
  - Trade, cultural, etc. relations (the process of borrowing is natural and peaceful)

# Why are words borrowed into a language?

- To fill a gap in the vocabulary of the recipient language: butter, plum, beef **Latin**, potato, tomato ← **Spanish**;
- To adopt a word expressing a particular notion in a new aspect: friendly (**native**) – cordial (**Latin**), wish (**native**) – desire (**French**), like / love (**native**) – admire (**Latin**) – adore (**French**).

# How do borrowings adjust themselves to the new environment?

The majority of borrowed words get adapted to the norms of the recipient language, the process being called **assimilation**.

# Assimilation

- A partial or total confirmation to the **phonetic, graphical and morphological standards** of the recipient language and its **semantic system**.
- The **degree of assimilation** depends upon the **length of the period** during which the word has been used in the language, upon its **importance for communication purpose** and its **frequency**.



# Assimilation

- **Oral borrowings** due to personal contacts are assimilated more completely and more rapidly than **literary borrowings**, i.e. borrowings through written speech.

# Phonetic assimilation

- Brings about changes in the pronunciation of the word. The earlier the borrowing was made, the greater phonetic assimilation it has undergone.
- Compare:
  - Table, plate (entered English around 11-12<sup>th</sup> c., mostly oral)
  - Regime, matinee, café, ballet, etc. (entered English around 15<sup>th</sup> c., oral and literary)

# Grammatical assimilation

- Consists in a complete change of the word paradigm.
- Grammatical assimilation is a long-lasting process, so some words retain the grammatical paradigm of the source language.

# Semantic assimilation

involves the adjustment of the word's meaning to the system of meanings of the vocabulary: words borrowed blindly (for no obvious reason) are either rejected by the vocabulary or manage to take root in the language by developing a different meaning.

# Semantic assimilation

- **Survive**
- **(originally)** to continue to live or exist after the death, cessation, or occurrence of sth (= outlive /native): His wife survived him. He survived the operation;
- **(currently)** 1 to remain alive after the death of someone, the cessation of something, or the occurrence of some event; continue to live: Few survived after the holocaust; 2 to remain or continue in existence or use: Ancient farming methods still survive in the Middle East; 3 to get along or remain healthy, happy, and unaffected in spite of some occurrence: She's surviving after the divorce.

**(<http://dictionary.reference.com>)**

# Types of Borrowed Words

- Completely assimilated loan words (loans proper)
- Partially assimilated loan words
- Unassimilated loan words (barbarisms)



# Completely assimilated words

- Are found in all the layers of older borrowings (**Latin** – cheese, street, wall, wine, etc., **French** – chair, face, finish, matter, etc., **Scandinavian** – husband, fellow, gate, root, wing, call, die, take, want, happy, low, ill, wrong, odd, etc.);
- Follow all morphological, phonetic and orthographic standards;
- Are an integral part of the semantic system of the language;
- Are frequent and stylistically neutral;
- Take an active part in word-formation.

# Partially assimilated words

- **Loan words not assimilated semantically** – they denote objects and notions peculiar to the country from which they come (**xenisms**):
  - Articles of foreign clothing (sari, sombrero, etc.)
  - Foreign titles and professions (shah, rajah, toreador, etc.)
  - Food and drinks (pilav, sherbet, blini, borsch, etc.)
  - Etc.

# Partially assimilated words

- **Loan words not assimilated grammatically** – late borrowings from Latin and Greek which keep their original plural form:
- **Datum** – **data** (*not «datums»*) / *there is a tendency to use the word in the plural form only, with the meaning of singular or plural;*
- **Criterion** – **criteria** (*«criteria» is becoming more and more common*), **crisis** – **crises**, **cactus** – **cacti** (*«cactuses» is becoming quite common*), **etc.**

# Partially assimilated words

- **Loan words not completely assimilated phonetically:**

- Words with a peculiar stress pattern (usually French): **machine, cartoon, police, etc.**
- Words with a peculiar combination of sounds (particularly French): **bourgeois, camouflage, regime, memoir, mélange, etc.**
- Words with a peculiar phonetic make-up (easily recognized Italian and Spanish borrowings): **confetti, incognito, macaroni, opera, sonata, soprano, tomato, tobacco, etc.**

# Partially assimilated words

- **Loan words not completely assimilated graphically:**
  - French borrowings where the final consonant is not pronounced: **ballet, buffet, etc.**
  - French borrowings keeping a diacritic mark: **cliché, café, etc.**
  - French borrowings with specific digraphs in their spelling: **bouquet, brioche, etc.**

# Unassimilated Borrowings

- Words from other languages used by English people in conversation or writing but not assimilated in any way, and for which there are corresponding English equivalents:
- Addio (Italian) – good-bye
- Affiche (French) – bill, poster, placard
- Ad libitum (Latin) – at pleasure



# Types of Borrowings (Self-Study)

- Etymological doublets
- International words
- Calques (translation loans)
- Semantic loans
- Hybrid words (loan words formed out of borrowed morphemes)

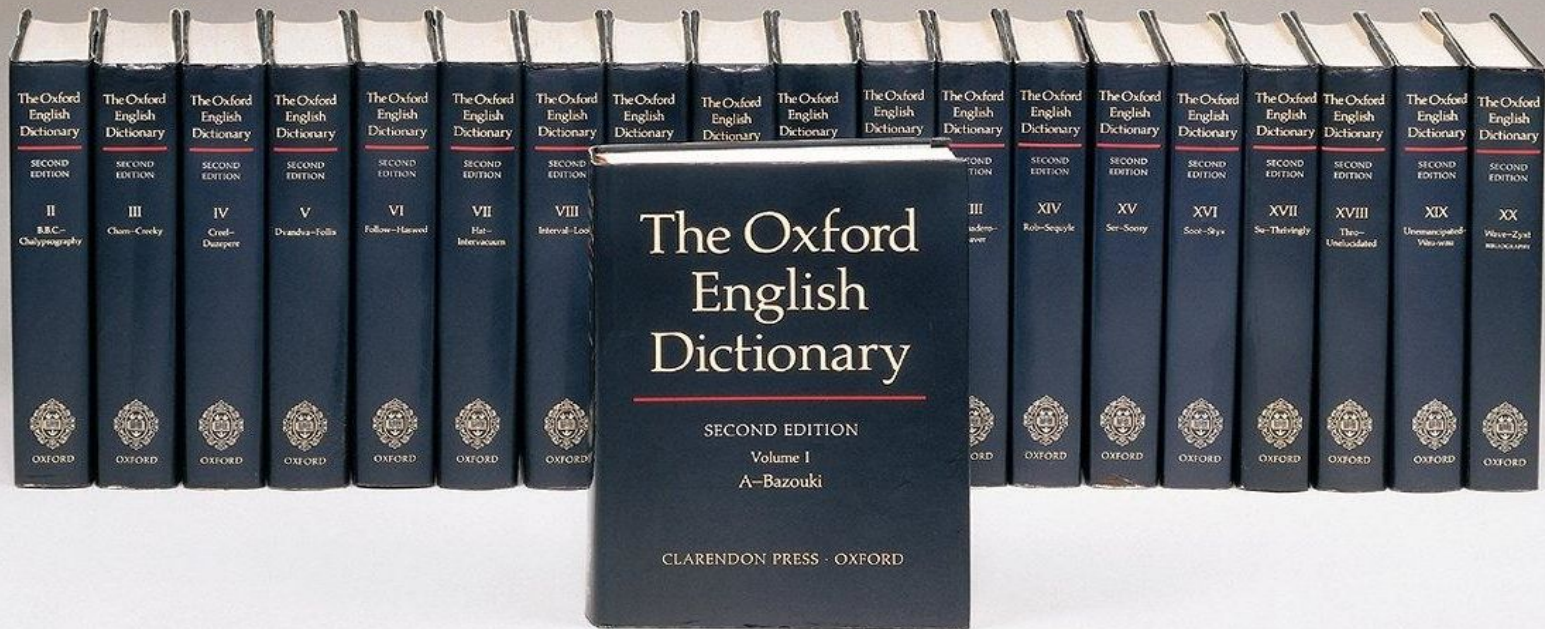
# Where do you find references on the word's etymology?

- Diachronic dictionary
  - Etymological
  - Historical (on historical principles)

# Etymological Dictionaries of English

- *Skeat W. W.* Etymological dictionary of the English language. Oxford, 1953. New ed. 1963. (переиздания)
- *Klein E.* A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the English language. I-II. Amsterdam, 1966-1967. 1776 p.
- The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology / Ed. by C. T. Onions. Oxford, 1966.
- The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology / Ed. by T.F. Hoad. Oxford : Clarendon press, 1986 - XIV, 552 c.
- *Partridge E.* Origins: An etymological dictionary of Modern English. Routledge. 992 p.
- *Lieberman A.* A Bibliography of English Etymology: Sources and Word List. University of Minnesota Press. 2009. 974 p.

# Dictionary on Historical Principles: Oxford English Dictionary (OED)





**Thank you for your  
attention!**