

Etymological Characteristics of the Modern English Lexicon

Lecture 5, 6
the 4th term

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PLAN

- 1 The basic stock of the English vocabulary and its peculiarities
- 2 Reasons and ways of borrowings
- 3 Types of borrowings
- 4 Assimilation of borrowings
- 5 Types of assimilated words

1 The Basic Stock of the English Vocabulary and its Peculiarities

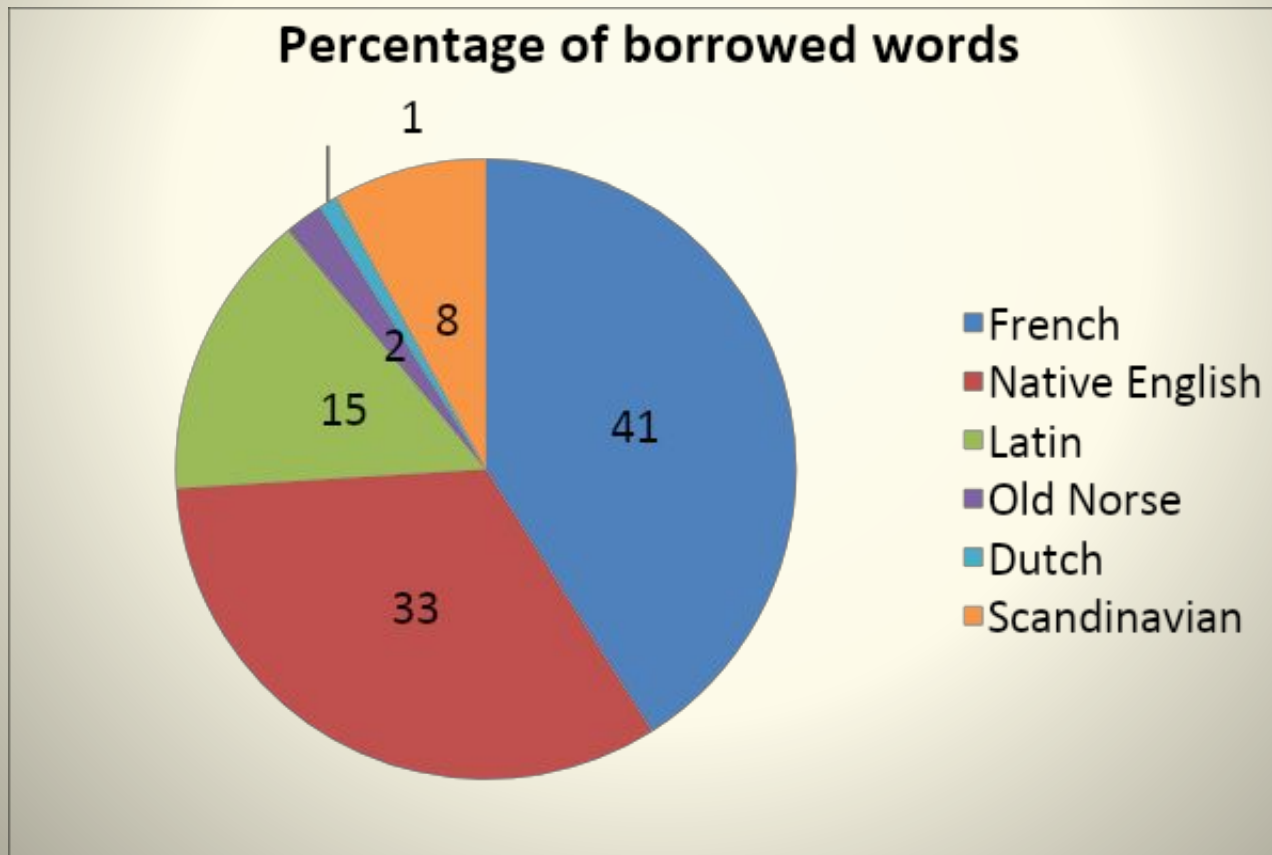
What is vocabulary?

The vocabulary of any language doesn't remain the same but changes constantly.

The vocabulary is an open system and the number of words cannot be stated with certainty.

The term Etymology (from Greek) means the study of the earliest forms of the word.

“English is characterized by **the mixed character** of its vocabulary “ [Joseph M. Williams “Origins of the English Language”]



- <http://public.oed.com/media/twominuteoed/public.html>
- Explore 1,000 years of English in two minutes

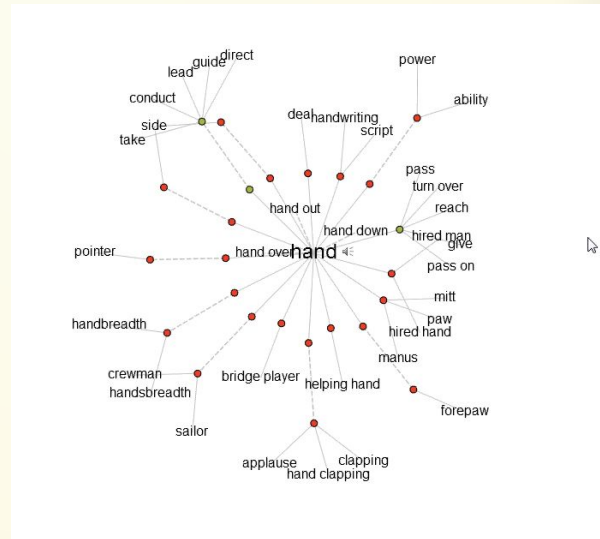
“Basic Stock” or Word Stock

The English basic stock has some peculiarities:

1 the simple morphemic structure of words and highly developed semantic structure

ex. *hand* has more than 20 meanings

[www.visualthesaurus.com]



2 its etymology

Ex. hand (n.) [www.etymonline.com]

O.E. hond, hand "hand; side; power, control, possession," from P.Gmc. *khanduz (cf. O.S., O.Fris., Du., Ger. hand, O.N. hönd, Goth. handus).

Etymologically the basic stock of the English vocabulary falls into 3 layers

- a) words of the general Indo-European origin
- b) words of the common Germanic origin
- c) words of unknown origin

Indo-European Words

1. names of kingship;
2. names of phenomena of nature;
3. names of animals and birds (cat – Katz – КОТ);
4. parts of human body (nose – НОС – nasus – Nase);
5. names of the most frequent actions (stand – stande – СТОЯТЬ);
6. adjectives naming concrete properties (red – rod – rufus – рудый);
7. most of the numerals (two – duo – два);
8. some pronouns (I – ich – ego)



The first are the oldest words in the English vocabulary. They have cognates in vocabularies of different groups of Indo-European languages.

Ex. *dēor*: "animal, beast." (OE),

Cf. *Tier* (G), *dier* (Dutch), *djur* (Swedish),

dyr (Norwegian and Danish)



Common Germanic Words

They form the bulk of the most frequent elements used in any style of speech. Their most characteristic features are: a wide range of lexical and grammatical valency, high frequency value and a developed polysemy; they are often monosyllabic, show great word-building power and enter a number of set expressions.

1. parts of the human body (**head, hand, arm, finger, bone**);
2. animals (**bear, fox, calf**);
3. plants (**oak, fir, grass**);
4. natural phenomena (**rain, frost**);
5. seasons of the year (**winter, spring, summer**);
6. landscape features (**sea, land**).



Unknown Origin

buy – *byegan* only Germanic origin, not found outside Germanic lgs;

girl - *gyrle* "child" (of either sex);

lady - from O.E. *hlæfdige* "mistress of a household, wife of a lord," lit. "one who kneads bread," from *hlaf* "bread" (see loaf) + *-dige* "maid";

horse - O.E. *hors*



2 Reasons and Ways of Borrowings

Borrowing is

- 1) resorting to the word-stock of other languages for words to express new concepts, to further differentiate the existing concepts and to name new objects, etc. (process);
- 2) a loan word, borrowed word – a word taken over from another language and modified in phonemic shape, spelling, paradigm or meaning according to the standards of the English language (result) .

There are different reasons for borrowing words: linguistic and extralinguistic

Extralinguistic (historic) reasons include wars and conquest and peaceful contacts as well.

Auto-machine gun **Maxim**
was named after its
creator sir Hiram
Stevens Maxim
(1840—1916)



Extralinguistic (historic) reasons

- Culture
- Fashion
- Art
- Food
- Trade
- so on

filetto (It) - filet (Fr) - **fillet** (En)

sciampagna (It) - champagne (Fr) - **champaign** (En)

frangia (It) - frange (Fr) - **fringe** (origin. on tents, now a type of haircut) (En)

Linguistic reasons

1) **a gap in vocabulary** - the words were borrowed together with the notions which they denoted.

EG: *potato, tomato* were borrowed from Spanish, when these vegetables were brought to the British island.

Balaclava - "woolen head covering," especially worn by soldiers

Evidently named for village near Sebastopol, Russia, site of a battle Oct. 25, 1854, in the Crimean War. But the term (originally Balaclava helmet) does not appear before 1881 and seems to have come into widespread use in the Boer War. The British troops seem to have suffered from the cold in the Crimean War, and the usage might be a remembrance of that conflict.

2) a different point of view on the same object.

This type of borrowing enlarges groups of synonyms.

Ex: *to adore*

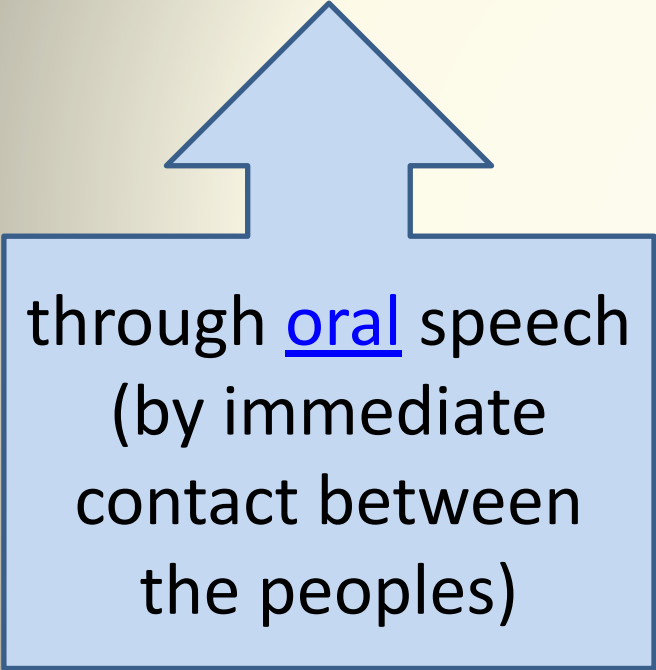
to love

to like

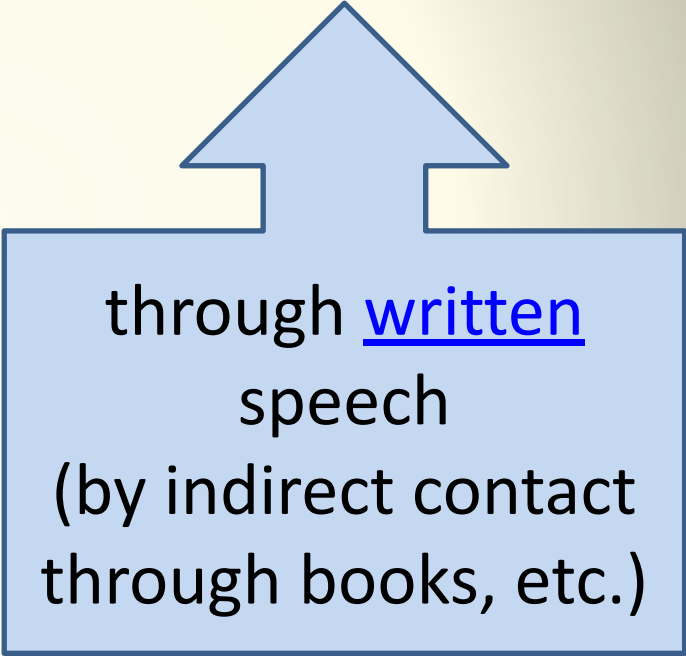
The French word “*to adore*” was added to native words “*to like*” and “*to love*” to denote the strongest degree of the process.

Ways of Borrowing

Borrowings enter the language in two ways:



through oral speech
(by immediate
contact between
the peoples)



through written
speech
(by indirect contact
through books, etc.)

Oral borrowing took place chiefly in the early periods of history

Words borrowed orally are usually short, are assimilated more readily, they undergo considerable changes in the act of adoption.

e.g. *L.* **inch, mill, street**



Written borrowing happened in recent times.
Such words preserve their spelling and some peculiarities of their sound-form, their assimilation is a long and laborious process.

e.g. *Fr.* **communiqué, belles-lettres, naïveté**
(naivety (En))



Linguistic borrowings are a dilemma: are they necessary to the development of a language or do they undermine its purity? Borrowings are, of course, necessary. Probably an English language wouldn't exist without the almost 70,000 borrowed terms from French.

3 Types of borrowing

The following types of borrowings can be distinguished:

- 1) Loan words proper
- 2) Translation loans (calques)
- 3) Etymological Doublets
- 4) International words
- 5) Translator's false friends
- 6) Etymological hybrids

Loan words proper

- words borrowed from another language and assimilated to this or that extent.

Ex. Table, skirt, mill



Translation loans (calques)

- words and expressions formed from the material already existing in the English language but according to patterns taken from another language by way of literal word-for-word or morpheme-for-morpheme translation

EG: from the Russian language: ПЯТИЛЕТКА – **five-year plan**,

from German: Wunderkind – **wonder child**,

from Italian: prima ballerina – **first dancer**.



Etymological Doublets

- are words which have the same origin but they are different in phonetic shape and in meaning.



Doublets appeared in English in different ways

- 1) One of the pair may be a native word and the other is a borrowed one. EG: the word **shirt** is native. **skirt** was borrowed from Scandinavian (clothes)
- 2) Both words are borrowed, but from different languages. EG: **senior** (from Latin) **sir** (from French)
- 3) Both words are borrowed from one of the same language, but at different periods of time. EG: **cavalry** (Normandy French) – кавалерия. **Chivalry** (Parisian Language) – рыцарство (ch-показывает о более позднем происхождение). **humour and humid**.
- 4) Shortening may bring to life etymological doublets. EG: **history and story, defense and fence**.

Etymological hybrids

are derivational words that are formed by means of derivational morphemes of different origin.

Thus almost immediately after the borrowing of the word **sputnik** the words *pre-sputnik*, *sputnikist*, *sputnikked*, *to out-sputnik*.

London – (L.) Londinium (c.115), often explained as "place belonging to a man named Londinos," a supposed Celtic personal name meaning "the wild one"

Beautiful



International words

- are the words, borrowed by several languages denoting the same notion. Among international words are names of sciences, political terms, sports, name of fruits, foods.

Ex. phonetics, physics, dynamite, kangaroo,
sauna, fauna

<http://www.answers.com/library/International+Word+Origins>



Translator's false friends

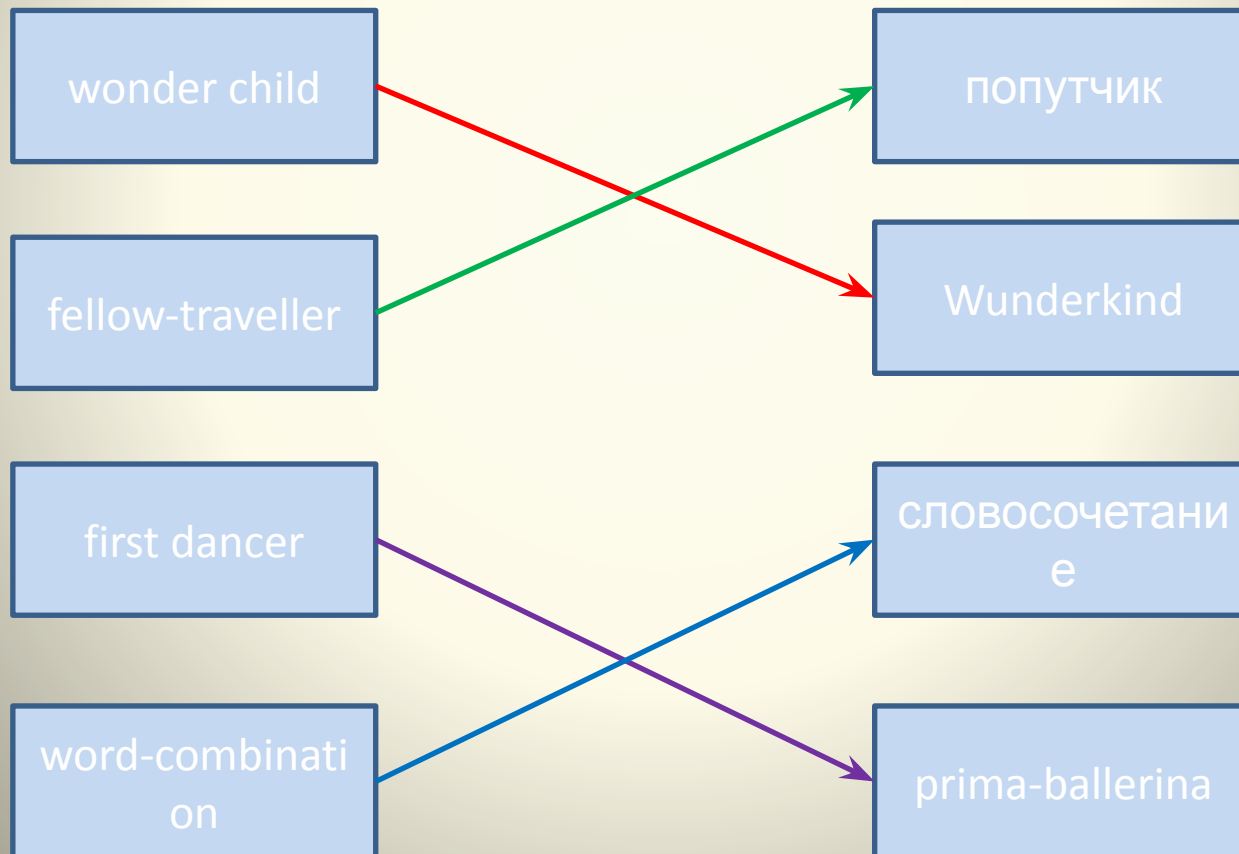
are the words from different languages which are similar in their form but different in their meaning or the meanings of the two do not completely coincide



- 1) English-Russian and Russian-English dictionary of “the false friends of a translator” by Aculenco V.V.
- 2) German-Russian and Russian-German dictionary of “the false friends of a translator” by Gotlib K.G.

Test

Match the translation borrowings on the left with the original phrases / words on the right.



4 Assimilation of Borrowed Words

Assimilation is the result or adaptation of borrowed words.

The phenomenon by which two languages are put in contact and borrow words one from the other is known as **interference**.

A lexical borrowing occurs when a group of speakers is put in contact with a foreign word and adopts it in their language. Usually, there are substantial changes in its morphology, in the pronunciation and even in the meaning.



Borrowed words get assimilated in 3 main fields: **phonetic, grammatical and semantic.**

Phonetic assimilation comprises changes in **sound-form and stress.** It is most obvious.

Sounds that were unfamiliar to the English language were fitted into its scheme of sounds.

Ex. 1) the long [e] and [ɛ] are rendered with the help of [ei] (as in **café**).

2) In words from French or Latin the accent was gradually transferred to the first syllable (**honour, reason**)

- 3) the consonant combinations [pn], [ps], [pt] in the words ***pneumatics, psychology, Ptolemy*** were simplified into [n], [s], [t], since the consonant combinations [ps], [pt], [pn], were never used in the initial position.
- 4) For the same reason the initial [ks] was changed into [z] (as in Gr. ***xylophone***).

Grammatical assimilation

- consists in a complete change of the paradigm of the borrowed word.

EG: delicious – more delicious – the most delicious, cup-cups.

Some of the borrowed words are still in the process of grammatical assimilation.

EG: formula (-as – colloq),(-ae – scient.) plural

semantic assimilation

The adjustment of the word to the system of meanings of the English vocabulary.

EG: the word “**large**” was borrowed from French in the meaning “broad”. But in the Eng. vocabulary there already was an adjective with the same meaning (“wide”). The word “large” entered a group of words meaning “big” in size. At first the word “large” was used when speaking about objects which were horizontally “large”. But then it changed its meaning and now it can be used when speaking about any object and it is close in meaning to the adjective “big”.

Some Rules of Adoption

1) Polysemantic words are usually adopted only in one or two of their meanings.

The words **cargo** and **cask**, highly polysemantic in Spanish, were adopted only in one of their meanings — ‘the goods carried in a ship’, ‘a barrel for holding liquids’ respectively.

2) The semantic structure of borrowings changes in other ways as well. Some meanings become more general, others more specialised, etc.

Ex. the verb **move** in Modern English has developed the meanings of ‘propose’, ‘change one’s flat’, ‘mix with people’ and others that the French **mouvoir** does not possess.

5 Types of Assimilated Words

1. Fully assimilated (street, mill, minister, cup)
2. Partially assimilated (phenomenon – phenomena, garage)
3. Non-assimilated (barbarisms) – belles-lettres, touché



Test

State the etymology of the given words. Circle them according to the colour of the column:

completely
assimilated
borrowings

partially assimilated
borrowings

unassimilated
borrowings or
barbarisms

torchere

corps

want

tzatziki

sabotage

ad libitum

stimulus

Soyuz

gate

parquet

criterion

Summary

- 1) A pure language actually is a utopia; every language (unless it is a dead language, like Latin) can't avoid interference with other countries and other cultures. Language is an open system and every language is a member of a global linguistic community.
- 2) Anyway, the prime mover in linguistic borrowings is the individual speaker who, after being put in contact with a written or a spoken foreign word, forms an acoustic image in his mind, which, after a so called processing period, becomes a borrowed term.
- 3) During the processing period, the speaker adapts the foreign word to the morphology and the phonetics of its own language, trying to transform all the morphological or /and phonetic features which don't exist in the language he speaks.



GLOSSARY

- 1 **Etymology** - comes from Greek and it means the study of the earliest forms of the word. Now it studies both: the form and the meaning of borrowed and native words.
- 2 **Vocabulary** – comes from Greek and it means the study of the earliest forms of the word.
- 3 **Native elements** – words which were not borrowed from other languages
- 4 **Basic stock or word stock** – a certain stable layer in the vocabulary. It changes very slowly and throughout the centuries has been fundamentally the same without great change. At the same time this layer makes the basis for the future growth of the vocabulary.
- 5 **Words of unknown origin** – not found outside Germanic languages
- 6 **Borrowing** – 1) (process) resorting to the word-stock of other languages for words to express new concepts, to further differentiate the existing concepts and to name new objects, etc.; 2) (result) a loan word, borrowed word – a word taken over from another language and modified in phonemic shape, spelling, paradigm or meaning according to the standards of the English language.
- 7 **Etymological Doublets** are words which have the same origin but they are different in phonetic shape and in meaning.



Literature

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