

## LNGT0101 Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #20  
Nov 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## Announcements

- HW4 due today by 5pm.
- HW 5 will be posted after HW4 is submitted.
- Screening of [The Linguists](#) this evening at 7-8pm in Axinn 109. An essay question on HW5 relates to the movie.

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## Presentation and discussion on language and gender

- Myth 9: Women talk too much!

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## Language change

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## Let's listen to some English!

- [English 1](#)
- [English 2](#)
- [English 3](#)

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## Modern English

- Shakespeare:  
*A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.*

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## Middle English

- Chaucer:  
*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote  
The droght of March hath perced to the roote.*
- Translation?  
When April with its sweet showers  
The drought of March has pierced to the root.

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## Old English

- The guy who wrote *Beowulf*:  
*Wolde guman findan þone þe him on  
sweofote sare geteode.*
- Translation?  
*He wanted to find the man who harmed  
him while he slept.*

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## Languages change over time

- So, you get the obvious point: Languages do change over time.
- There are two main questions with regard to language change:
  - *First, how does a language change?*
  - *Second, why does a language change?*
- We start talking about this today.

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## Language = Lexicon + Grammar

- Remember that a language has two components: a *lexicon* (simply a list of words) and a *grammar* (a system that manipulates the lexicon in several ways).
- The grammar of a language includes rules that affect pronunciation (phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), and meaning (semantics).
- As we should expect, language change occurs in all these areas. Let's see how.

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## Lexical change

- The lexicon of a language undergoes change in either one of two ways: "**word gain**" or "**word loss**".
- What are some words you use but your grandparents don't? What are some words your grandparents use but you don't?

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## Word gain

- New words are always added to the lexicon of every language, almost on a daily basis. We have already seen in our discussion of word-formation that there are systematic word-formation processes that create new words and add them to the dictionary of every language:  
*derivation, word coinage, conversion, clipping, blending, acronyms, borrowing and loan translations, compounding, back-formation, and eponyms.*

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## Word loss

- So, Shakespeare used *beseem* (= to be suitable), *wot* (= to know), *fain* (= gladly).
- And technology might drive some words out of use, e.g., *buckboard*, *buggy*, *dogcart*, *hansom*, etc.



## Two bits?



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## Iceboxes?



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## Word loss

- **Euphemisms** can also eventually lead to loss of words:  
*lavatory*, *bathroom*, *restroom*, *lady's room*/*men's room*, etc.
- Hugh Rawson's *Dictionary of euphemisms and other doubletalk* includes:  
'act of God' for *disaster*  
'administrative assistant' for *secretary*  
'associate' for co-worker of lower rank

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## Semantic change

- Language change may also take the form of changing the meanings of existing words. There are three such cases: **broadening** (*dog*), **narrowing** (*meat*), and **semantic shift**.
- There are two basic types of semantic shift: **elevation** (*knight*, *chivalrous*) and **degradation** (*lust*, *silly*).
- Can you think of more recent examples of semantic change?

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## Next class agenda

- Read Myth 1.
- More on language change: morphological, syntactic, and phonological change. Finish reading Chapter 8, 337-349, if you haven't already.
- Reconstructing dead languages: The comparative method. Read Chapter 8, pp. 361-383.

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