

History of English

LECTURE 1



1. The Subject and Aim of the Course.

In studying the *contemporary* English language the learners *are faced with* a lot of *peculiarities* which seem to be *unintelligible*.

These are found both in the **vocabulary** and in the **phonetic** and **grammatical structure** of the language. Let's turn to some of them.

VOCABULARY



VOCABULARY

We can notice a *considerable likeness* between English and German.

- E. sit – G. *sitzen*,
- E. winter – G. *Winter*,
- E. long – G. *lang*,
- E. apple – G. *Apfel*.

VOCABULARY

In many cases English has a lot in common with French:

- E. river – Fr. *rivière*,
- E. change – Fr. *changer*,
- E. courage – Fr. *courage*

The causes of such similarities belong to a more or less distant past and they can only be discovered by going into the history of the English language.

The Phonetic Structure of the Language

Any student of English faces difficulties of reading and spelling English.

Why, for instance, the sound [ʌ] is spelt **u** in *cut*, *butter* but **o** in *brother*, *love*? Only the history of the language can answer this and many other questions.

The Grammatical Structure

History of English will explain why there are so few *inflections* in English, how its “analytical” structure arose, why some nouns change the *root-vowel* in the plural and so on.

The Purpose of this Subject

So the purpose of this subject is a systematic study of the language's development from the earliest times to the present day which will help the student to acquire a deeper understanding of the language of today.

Classification of Germanic Languages

The **English** language belongs to the **Germanic** languages which in their turn enter the *vast* **Indo-European family**. Nowadays Germanic languages are spoken in many countries.

We know that at the beginning of *AD* (наше время от лат. anno domini) Germanic tribes occupied vast territories in western, central and northern Europe.

Testimonies by Greek and Roman Writers

The earliest of these was the Greek traveller and astronomer **Pytheas**, who lived in the 4th century BC. He sailed from his native town Massilia (now Marseilles) through the Gibraltar, along the west coast of Gaul (France), along the Channel and he might have reached the Baltic.

Testimonies *by Greek and Roman Writers*

Some data were given by **Julius Caesar** (100-44 BC) (in his *Commentaries on the War in Gaul*) who fought with the Germans on the Rhine. He *stated* that the Teutons lived in *tribes* and were *nomads* (кочевники) in his time.

Testimonies by Greek and Roman Writers

The greatest *value* have the works by the Roman writer **Pliny the Elder** and the Roman historian **Tacitus**.

According to Pliny, Germanic tribes in the 1st century AD consisted of 6 groups.

1. The Vindili

- Among them were the **Goths**, the **Burgundians** and the **Vandals**. They inhabited the eastern part of Germanic territory.
- *The Vandals* first lived between the Oder and Vistula. Later they reached North Africa crossing Spain where their tribe name has the reflection in the name of the province “Андалузия” (from “Вандалусия”). The word “vandalism” taken from “vandals” shows the barbaric *attitude* towards *items* of culture.

1. The Vindili

- *The **Burgundians*** came to the mainland from the island of **Bornholm** in the Baltic Sea. At that time it was called “Бургундархольмр” (остров бургундов). Later they moved to the west and settled in the south-east of France in the province which is called Burgundia even nowadays.
- *The **Goths*** lived on the territory from the Vistula to the shores of the Black Sea and formed *mighty* units of the tribes known as **Ostgoths** (остоготы) and **Westgoths** (визиготы).

2. The Ingvaeones (or Ingaevones).

They inhabited the peninsular of Jutland (the mainland part of Denmark) and the north-western part of German territory – the shores of the North Sea, including what is now the Netherlands. The **Ingaevones** gave rise to the further tribes of **Jutes**, **Frisians**, **Angles** and, probably, **Saxons**.

3. The Iscavones (or Istaevones).

They inhabited the western part of German territory on the Rhine. Among them were **the Franks**, who eventually conquered Gaul.

4. The Hermiones (or Herminones).

They lived in the center and south of Germanic territory.

5. The Peucini (певкины) (or Bastarnaë).

- They lived close to what is now Roumania and very early disappeared from history. Friderich Engels who also studied the history of Germanic tribes included this group of Pliny's into the 1st group.

6. Hilleviones

- *They inhabited Scandinavia.*
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Three Groups of Dialects

- **1. East Germanic** – mainly spoken in central Europe (Gothic, Burgundian, Vandalic)
- **2. North Germanic** – Old Norwegian, Old Danish, O. Swedish, O. Icelandic
- **3. West Germanic** – the dialects of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians.

The First Consonant Shift

The Common Germanic or The First Germanic Consonant Shift was formulated in the 19th century by the Danish scholar **Rasmus Rask**.

Later it was itemized by the great German linguist **Jacob Grimm** (1822). It was described in the second edition of his work “German Grammar”. So the First Consonant Shift is often called **Grimm’s Law**.

The First Consonant Shift

This shift approximately happened between **the 5th and the 2nd centuries BC**

This law reflects regular correspondences (соответствия) between the **consonants of the Germanic** and those of other **I-E languages**.

Three Groups of Correspondences

| | I-E | | Germanic | |
|------|-----|-----------------------|----------|-------------|
| • 1. | p | R. папа | f | E. father |
| • | t | R. три | þ [θ] | E. three |
| • | k | Lat. noctem | h | Germ. Nacht |
| • 2. | b | R. болото | p | E. pool |
| • | d | R. два | t | E. two |
| • | g | R. иго | k | E. yoke |
| • 3. | bh | San. bhratar | b | E. brother |
| • | dh | San. madhu | d | E. medu |
| • | gh | Lat. hostis+ R. гость | g | E. guest |

The Causes of the Shift

- Some scholars explained it by physiological peculiarities of the Teutons, mainly the shape of their *glottis* (голосовая щель).
- Others believed that it was caused by a more energetic articulation of sounds due to specifically Germanic *force* (сильный) word stress.

The Causes of the Shift

- Another explanation is based on the *notion* (понятие, представление) that every subsystem in a language tends to preserve a balanced, symmetrical *arrangement* : if the balance is broken it will soon be restored by means of new changes. After the replacement of [p,t, k] by [f, p, h] the positions of the *voiceless* (глухой) [p,t, k] were left vacant. To fill the vacuums [b, d, g] were *devoiced* (оглушены) into [p,t, k]. In their turn the vacant positions of [b, d, g] were filled again when [bh, dh, gh] lost their aspirated character.

Verner's Law

- The correspondences marked by Grimm were regular only if the non-fixed IE stress fell on the vowel *preceding* (предшествующий) the consonant or if the consonant stood at the beginning of the word e.g. Gr. *deka* (десять) – Goth. *taihun*.
- If the preceding vowel was not stressed IE **p, t, k** in the Germanic languages *appeared* as voiced (звонкий) *plosives* (взрывные) rather than *voiceless fricatives* (глухие щелевые) **b, d, g**. e.g. Gr. *de'kas* (десяток) – Goth. *tigus*
- These exceptions to Grimm's law were explained by the Danish scholar **Karl Verner** in 1877.

Verner's Law

- It is read as follows : **if any IE consonant was preceded by an unstressed vowel the voiceless fricative which developed from it in accordance with Grimm's law became voiced and later it became a voiced plosive.**
- So the **essence of the law is voicing of voiceless plosives.**
- **p>f>v>b e.g. L. septem – OE seofon – NE seven– Germ. Sieben**
- **t> þ> ð>d**

Rhotacism

Similar modifications took place in the fricative **s**, which was first voiced into **z** and then in Western and Northern Germanic languages modified into **r**: **s**>**z**>**r**.

This change is called ***rhotacism*** .

Verner's law accounts for the consonant change in the modern forms of **was** and **were**.

- OE wæs – wæson; ME was – weren; NE was – were.

Grammatical Alteration

Alterations of voiceless and voiced consonants due to Verner's law can be found within the verbal system. They are called **grammatical**.

- *E.g. OE ceosan – ceas – curon – curen*

The Second Consonant Shift

It occurred between the **5th** and **7th** centuries **AD** in **High German dialects** (that is dialects of Southern Germany).

The Second Consonant Shift

It can be illustrated by the following examples:

Common Germanic

- OE **bedd**
- OE **dōn**
- OE **hopian**
- OE **macian**
- OE **etan**
- Goth. **broþar**

High German

Bett
tun
hoffen
machen
essen
Bruder























