

I. The Historical Perspective

- Clear relationship between parts of the word-stock and their denotations and connotations
- Native register has a more *emotive* quality while the borrowed *classical* element (came into the language after the Renaissance) is more *referential*.
 1. Example for native register (pure Anglo Saxon): ‘Warm, rich and full of golden goodness, Fido dog food will give your furry friend health, strength and get-up-and-go.’
 2. Example for more referential vocabulary: ‘Nutritionists estimate that the body needs 30 grams of fibre each day to assist the normal working of the intestine (...).’ --- more scientific image
- No variety of the language can be completely referential nor entirely emotive
- The same word form can even be referential and emotive – depends on the person who uses it (judge, layman...).
- On the other hand, classical terms that were originally neutral and academic – such as *phenomenal* or *categorical* – can also be exploited in an emotive fashion.
- Difference between native and classical terms is also shown in their degree of comprehensibility: Native terms are rather semantically *transparent*.
- In the analyses of natural conversation (Spoken Word Counts), the native content is very high. After Jones and Wepman (1961) from the 200 most commonly used words were 83.5% Anglo Saxon, 4.5% were Old Norse, 10% were from Latin via Old French and the remaining 1.5% were from post-medieval Latin borrowings.
- Invention of *Basic English* by C.K. Ogden in 1928; Ogden showed that a great diversity of meanings could be conveyed by simply using 18 verbs (operators) combined with prepositions.
 1. *to give up* can cover the meanings of a whole range of classical terms such as *abandon, desert, cease, discontinue...*

II. Register

- Words may become archaic or regional. *Housecarle, folkmoot* und *wapentake* were central terms in the Saxon times, now they are obsolete.
- Varieties of register clearly reflect the class distinctions of their origins. Anglo-Saxon terms are used of the common people. Norman-French overlay came from the Norman overlord, and Latin and Greek terminology derived from a scholarly elite.
- Words may change register over time, especially if they change shape or spelling
- Relationship between register and class is complex in its historical development
- A.S.C. Ross, scholarly journal in Finland. Divides between U (upper class speaker) and Non-U (non upper class speaker). Examples: bog/toilet, mad/insane, rich/wealthy, false teeth/dentures...
- Interestingly the upper-class speakers often prefer plain low register
- Upper class also has a tendency to speak in baby-language: ‘Mummy is dotty about this silly old colonel: he’s a real sweetie, but he’s always losing lolly on the geegees.’

- We must distinguish between what is the natural evolution of registers within semantic fields through social conventions on the one hand, and the exploitation of particular registers for various motives.
- George Orwell has written about the exploitation of high-register Latinization for the purposes of propaganda, evasion and deceit.

Register and Specialization

- Division of register between the general and specialist terms. The base term will commonly be Saxon and the descriptive adjective will be classical: finger/digital, hand/manual, tooth/dental...
- This division can be found in legal language, the field of science and the medical field, as well.
- Registers can be exploited or transposed for humorous or facetious effects.
- Malapropism – semantic error, mistaken use of classical terms.
- Classical borrowings have their place mostly in technical and abstract semantic areas.

III. Taboos and Euphemisms

1. Definition

- **taboo**: borrowing having been brought back from Polynesia by Captain Cook in 1777; concerned sacred areas of human experience in ancient times, refers to unspeakably vile words nowadays; occurs at every level of civilization and in all kinds of environment
- **euphemism**: greek *eu* ('well') and *pheme* ('to speak'); comfortable way of referring to unpleasant topics, avoidance of a taboo by describing the situation as better than it is
- **dysphemism**: opposite of euphemism; rude violation of a taboo topic

2. Examples of Euphemisms and other Possibilities of Avoiding a Taboo

- Taboo: death; euphemism: passing away, passing on, going to one's Maker, in Abraham's bosom, joining the majority, promoted to glory; dysphemism: pushing up daisies, croak, snuff it; annotation: there are classical components in diplomatic language described by Edward Gibbon in the 18th century as supplying 'the obscurity of a learned language': *elimination, extermination, liquidation*
- Taboo: sex; euphemism: sleep with, go to bed with, make love, make out; annotation: semantic changes: *make love* meant 'to flirt' until the early part of the last century; *lover* could mean 'friend': in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) Brutus refers to Caesar as 'my best lover' with no sexual connotation; latinized, socially accepted variants for sexual activity in historical order: *rape*(1482), *consummation* (1530), *seduce*(1560), *erection* (1594), *copulation* (1632), *orgasm*(1684), *intercourse* (1798), *climax* (1918) and *ejaculation* (1927); *Farmer and Henley's 'Slang and his Analogues'* (1890-1904) shows that no less than 600 bawdy phrases have been coined over the centuries for the sexual act
- Taboo: the name of God; euphemism: *cokk*(1386), *`slid*(God's eyelid, 1598), *`snails*(God's nails, 1599), *sfoot*(God's foot, 1602), *od*(1695), *gosh*(1743), by *George*(1842), *Good grief*(1900) → astonishing variety of euphemistic terms of the name of God, continuous process since the Middle Ages, these euphemisms often become fashionable (linguistic irony)
- Cockney Rhyming Slang: curiosity of euphemism; kind of code language coming up in the 18th century; highly developed 'disguise mechanism' in ingenious coded formulas where the last word

rhymes with the intended word, e.g. *trouble and strife* alludes to *wife, brass and tacks* to *facts* and *loaf of bread* to *head*, *Richard the Third* for *turd*, *Bristol cities* for *titties*, *Berkshire Hunt* for *cunt*

- **Back Slang:** rare variety of slang; *yob* for *boy* is the only commonly used term
- **Substitute Terms:** *donkey* which is actually first recorded in 1785 is a substitute term for the traditional synonym *ass* which was a natural term since Celtic times, but in the 18th century people noticed an uncomfortable proximity to *arse*, so the dialect word *donkey* moved into the lexical gap; *rabbit* is a substitute term for *coney* which developed to close a relationship with *cunny* → unconscious developments within the speech communities, not deliberate interventions by individuals
- **New Areas of Taboo** are created by the Western society, such as matters of race (we say *coloured folk* for *blacks*), financial collapse (*technical correction* for *crash*), poverty (*financially underprivileged* for *poor*), or even fatness (*possessing an alternative body image* for *fat*), which are more conscious contrived and part of the agenda of political correctness

IV. Word – Formation

- creation of words with affixes (pre-, suf-, in- and circumfixes), stems and roots
- English has a hybrid vocabulary → a lot of different foreign elements are used in word – formation, e.g. *tarmacadamization* (English + Celtic + Hebrew + Greek + Latin)
- Revd Walter W. Skeat's '*Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*' came out in 1885 with five pages of prefixes, Laurence Urdang's '*Suffixes*' came out in 1982 with over 250 pages
- most pre- and suffixes come from Greek or Latin; they feature in new words like *microchip*, *superhighway*, *synergy*
- some prefixes developed their own meaning as individual words, e.g. *retro*, *physio*, *psycho*, *ex*
- native forms are fewer in number, but also highly productive like the prefix 'un' which made up about four per cent of the words in Anglo-Saxon
- back formation/ back derivation: verbal forms can be derived from relatives, e.g. *edit*, *difficult*, *enthuse*, *commute*, *televise*, *baby-sit*

V. Lexical Varieties

The great lexical variety of the English language is based on...

1. Loan words

"A **loanword** (or a **borrowing**) is a word taken in by one language from another."¹

- a) **Gastwort** (guest word): retains its original pronunciation, spelling and meaning
passé, diva, leitmotiv
- b) **Fremdwort** (foreign word): has undergone partial assimilation
garage, hotel
- c) **Lehnwort** (loan word): has become a virtual 'native' in the new language
Greek 'episcopos' è English 'bishop'
- d) **Calque:** a loan translation from another language
German 'Weltanschauung' è English 'world-view'

¹ "Loanword." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 05 May 2005, 21:43 UTC. 05 May 2005 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loan_words>

2. Neologisms and archaisms

“A **neologism** refers to a recently created (or **coined**) word, phrase or usage which can sometimes be attributed to a specific individual, publication, period or event. The term was itself coined around 1800.”²

- § fill semantic gaps (inventions, technological change, etc) - *walkman, skateboard...*
- § fulfil poetic purposes - *weird (Shakespeare: ‘the weird sisters’)*

“An **archaism** is the deliberate use of an older form that has fallen out of current use.”³

- § continue to exist in traditional phrases - *You shall be hanged*
- § are used intentionally to emphasise, attract attention, etc. - *smitten (‘to be seriously in love’)*

3. Eponyms and toponyms

“An **eponym** is a person, whether real or fictitious, whose name is thought to be, or has become, synonymous with the name of a particular object or activity.”⁴

“A **toponym** is a name derived from a place or a region.”⁵

both used for...

- § products, inventions, materials, etc - *volt, watt, sandwich; jeans, champagner, bordeaux*
 - § certain quality, characteristics, etc - *don juan, romeo, Jekyll and hyde, yahoo*
- of, from or by the respective person/region

4. Compounding

“A **compound** is a word (**lexeme**) that consists of more than one free **morpheme**.”⁶

- | | |
|---|--|
| § noun-noun - <i>handbook</i> | § noun-verb - <i>shoplift</i> |
| § adjective-adjective - <i>bitter-sweet</i> | § verb-verb - <i>hitch-hike</i> |
| § verb preposition - <i>transparent</i> | § reduplicating forms - <i>walky-talky</i> |

VI. Conclusion: Words and Power

Main reason for lexical development in the historical evolution of the English vocabulary was **demographic change** è “words are the signs and markers of cultural dominance”⁷

- § annihilation – *Celtic relicts in the English language*
- § cohabitation – *Norse and Anglo-Saxon relicts in the English language*
- § dominance – *Norman French (esp. vocabulary of the lexical field of ‘power’)*
- § prestige – *Latin and Greek*

The **status of a global language** accepting innovations and influences from all over the world allows the English language to perpetually expand its vocabulary today.

² “Neologism.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 03 May 2005, 04:34 UTC. 05 May 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neologisms>>

³ “Archaism.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 03 Apr 2005, 16:39 UTC. 05 May 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaism>>

⁴ “Eponym.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 30 Apr 2005, 04:34 UTC. 05 May 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eponym>>

⁵ “Toponym.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 29 Apr 2005, 20:39 UTC. 05 May 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toponym>>

⁶ “Compound.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 03 May 2005, 14:07 UTC. 05 May 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compound>>

⁷ Geoffrey Hughes, *A History of English Words* (Blackwell, 2000) 64.