

UNIT 3 CHANGES IN VOCABULARY

Structure

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In the last unit we saw how since its beginnings changes have taken place in the sounds and spelling of the English language. In this unit we shall look at the changes that have taken place in English vocabulary, in the course of time.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

English, like any other language, is subject to constant growth and decay. The change that is constantly going on in a living language can be most easily seen in its vocabulary. Old words die out, new words are added, and existing words change their meaning. Much of the vocabulary of Old English has been lost, and the development of new words to meet new conditions is one of the most familiar phenomena of the language. Changes that take place in the vocabulary of a language can be examined by means of

- (a) Borrowings from other languages
- (b) Word-formation.

Let us first look at the phenomenon of borrowing words from other languages that English has resorted to in order to enrich its vocabulary.

3.2 BORROWINGS

The English language, in its not-so-long history of 1500 years, has constantly borrowed words from different sources. Contact with other cultures through conquest, and collaborations, the socio-political circumstances, the need to explain new ideas have been the main reasons of borrowing words from various sources. For instance, external factors in the history of England like the Christianizing of Britain in 597 A.D, the Scandinavian invasions, the Norman conquest, the Hundred years' war, the rise of the middle class, the Renaissance, the expansion of British Empire, etc have all contributed immensely to the growth of English vocabulary.

It is customary (as you are now well aware), for the sake of convenience, to divide the history of English language into three main periods:

- (a) Old English Period 450 A.D. - 1150 A.D.
- (b) Middle English Period 1150 A.D. - 1500 A.D.
- (c) Modern English Period - 1500 onwards.

There is ample evidence of borrowing foreign words in all these three periods of the development of the English language.

The Old English vocabulary, despite minor borrowings, remained overwhelmingly Teutonic. The vocabulary was enlarged rather by means of combination than external borrowings. It was only through the Norman conquest that a large number of foreign words entered the English vocabulary.

Let us, then, discuss the various foreign borrowings that were instrumental in the development of the English vocabulary.

Celtic Borrowings

The conquest of the Celts by the Teutons resulted not only in the mixture of these two races, but also their languages. The result of the contact between these two languages can chiefly be found in the place-names. For instance, the Kingdom of *Kent* owes its name to the Celtic word *Canti* or *Cantion* whose meaning is unknown. Similarly *Devonshire*, *Cornwall*, *Cumberland* also have Celtic origins. Even the name *London* most likely goes back to Celtic designation.

Not only place-names, but also names of hills and rivers in England have Celtic origins. *Thames* is a Celtic river name and various other Celtic words for river and water are preserved in the names of *Avon*, *Dover*, *Wye*, etc.

Outside of place names, the influence of Celtic upon English is almost negligible. Very few words like *binn* (basket, crib), *braft* (cloak) and *brocc* (brock or badger) were introduced into English due to everyday contact of the people of both races. Some words like *ancor* (hermit), *dry* (magician), *cine* (a gathering of parchment of leaves), *Cross*, etc were introduced into English by the Irish missionaries.

Many of these words died out soon and some acquired only local currency.

Latin Borrowings

(a) Borrowings in the Old English Period

The introduction of Latin words into English vocabulary has taken place over a considerable period of time. This Latin influence on English language was heralded by England's contact with the Latin civilization. Initially, words associated with agriculture and war were heavily borrowed. Words like *camp* (battle), *segn* (banner), *pil* (pointed stick, javelin), *pytt* (pit), *mil* (mile), *millestr* (courtesan), etc are examples of borrowing in this period. Gradually, words associated with trade like *ceap* (cheap, bargain), *pund* (pound), *mydd* (bushel), *mynet* (coin), *seam* (burden, load) were introduced into the English language. Because of the enormity of wine trade, we find words like *win* (wine), *must* (new wine), *eced* (vinegar), *flase* (flask, bottle), etc. used frequently. Words related to domestic life were also borrowed: *cytel* (kettle), *mise* (table), *scamol* (bench, stool), *cycene* (kitchen), *cuppe* (cup), *disc* (disk), etc.

Besides, during this initial phase of Latin borrowings, a few Latin words entered English language through Celtic transmission. The Latin word *ceaster* which means *camp* is a typical example. This word is a common designation in Old English for a town or enclosed community. It forms a familiar element in English place names

such as *Dorchester, Manchester, Winchester* and so on. Other words borrowed through Celtic include *port* (harbor, gate, town), *munt* (mountain) and *torr* (tower, yock).

With the Christianizing of Britain in 597 A.D. begins another phase of Latin borrowings into English. Many new conceptions followed in the train of the new religion and there was a need for expressing these ideas for which the old language was inadequate. Thus, there followed a massive inflow of Latin words into English.

The words borrowed from Latin during this phase are both popular and learned. The popular words include *Church, bishop, etc* and the learned words include *alms, alter, angel, anthem, canon, minister, hymn, pope, psalm, relic, etc.*

Gradually, due to the tremendous influence of the Church over the domestic life of the people, words relating to domestic use like clothing (*cap, silk*) and food (*beet, lentil, millet, radish, oyster*) were introduced. Names of trees, plants, herbs like *pine, balsam, lily, myrrh* and the general word *plant* acquired Latin designation. Certain number of words relating to education and learning such as *school, master, verse, grammatic(al)*, etc owe their origin to Latin.

A fresh set of Latin words found their way into English with the Benedictine Reform, which aimed at the general improvement of the cultural and religious ambiance of England. These words were basically learned and expressed ideas of a scientific and learned character. For example, we have, religious words like *Antichrist, apostle, canticle, creed, prophet, sabbath, Synagogue, etc.*

Literary words like *accent, brief, history, paper, pumice, etc.*

Medical words like *cancer, paralysis, plaster, etc.*

Names of trees like *cedar, cypress, fig, etc.*

Name of animals like *camel, tiger, scorpion, etc.*

Thus, as a result of the Christianization of Britain above, 450 Latin words appear in English before the close of the Old English period.

(b) Latin Borrowings in the Middle English Period

Although many of the words that were borrowed during the Middle English period came through French influence, there were certain words that were directly borrowed from Latin. During this period a considerable number of Latin words entered the English language through translations of literary texts. For instance we meet several hundreds of Latin words in Trevia's translation of the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomew Anglicus. The translation of the *Vulgates Bible* gave the English people words like *generation, persecution, and transmigration*. Other borrowed words of this period include words from law, medicine, allegory, theology, science, literature, etc such as *conspiracy, custody, frustrate, genius, infinite, intellect, limbo, pulpit, secular, scripture, testify*, and many more.

Moreover some unusual words were borrowed from Latin in the 15th century, especially by poets and writers. By employing certain Latin words like *abusion, dispone, equipolent, tenebrous*, etc. poets attempted an innovation in the language.

(c) Latin Borrowings in the Modern Period

It was the revival of classical learning in the 16th century that first swelled the numbers of English words borrowed from Latin to overwhelming proportions. Whereas the number of Middle English loans from Latin is difficult to estimate because many of them were indirectly borrowed from French, there can be no doubt

come even before the Norman conquest of 1066, and continued for a century and a half. But by that time the French of Paris had gained greater prestige, and displaced the Norman dialect as the source of new borrowings. This might have been the reason why certain French words were borrowed twice. For instance, English borrowed *cattle* and *catch* from Norman, whereas from Parisian, it borrowed *chatel* and *charr*. Though the meaning of these "doubles" have changed, their unity of origin can still be identified.

The first large group of borrowings was made up of ideas associated with religion and the church. In the eleventh century, words like *cell*, *chaplain*, *charity*, *evangelist*, *grace*, *mercy*, *miracle*, *nativity*, *paradise*, *passion*, *sacrament*, and *saint*, were imported. Whereas these words relate to the more formal and outward aspect of Catholicism, the thirteenth century borrowings like *anguish*, *comfort*, *conscience*, *devotion*, *patience*, *purity* and *salvation* testify to a more inward and personal aspect of the religion.

Other fields than religion in which borrowing from French were prominent are: law, government, military affairs and conventions of polite society. Legal terms of an early date include *suit*, *plead*, *plaintiff*, *judge*, *jury*, *bail*, *embezzle*, *lease*, *perjury*, etc. Words relating to national government are *chancellor*, *country*, *exchequer*, *govern*, *minister*, *power* and *reign*. French borrowings that stand for ideas associated with war and things military are interesting. For instance, the word *army* had to compete with three Old English words—*here*, *fierd*, and *werod*. It was only in the 15th century that the old words were completely replaced. But a great deal of French military vocabulary was introduced very early: *assault*, *company*, *enemy*, *lance*, *lieutenant*, *navy*, *sergeant*, *soldier* and *troops* are a few instances. Even much later borrowings like *captain*, and *colonel* are French in origin. Early modern English borrowings include *attack*, *barricade*, *commandant*, *corps*, *dragoon*, *march*, and *massacre*. This process of borrowing words associated with things military continued up to the 18th century. In recent times *barrage* and *camouflage* have been borrowed from French.

Another group of words relating to the usage and convention of the polite society were introduced early into English from French. Whereas *chivalry*, *honor*, *grace* expressed courtly and graceful ideas, words like *dinner*, *supper*, *table*, *fork*, *plate*, and *napkin* expressed the "polished" manners of the French. Names of different kinds of food were distinctly French. It is interesting to note that while the names of several animals in their lifetime are English (*ox*, *cow*, *calf*, etc), they appear on the table with French names (*beef*, *mutton*, *pork*, *bacon*, etc). Other words relating to food items include *sauce*, *fry*, *roast*, *pastry*, *soup* and *sausage*.

The general names for clothes are also French—*apparel*, *costume*, *dress* and *garment*—as well as most of the more specific ones like *décolleté*, *chemise*, and *lingerie*. The earliest words relating to art are French—*art* itself, and *beauty*, *color*, *design*, *ornament*, and *tapestry*. Specialized terms in architecture such as *aisle*, *arch*, *chancel*, *column*, *pillar*, *porch*, etc have also been borrowed from French.

As far as the terms for occupation is concerned, whereas some of the humbler occupations like those of the *baker*, *fisherman*, *miller*, *shepherd*, and *shoemaker* have kept their native names, many others, especially the more skilled traders have French designations: *barber*, *butcher*, *carpenter*, *mason*, *painter* and *tailor* are typical examples.

Finally, it may be observed that English continues to borrow from French in any field in which the French do pioneer work. Many terms of psychology and psychoanalysis are of this kind. Contemporary borrowings like *chassis*, *chauffeur*, *coupe*, *garage* (all associated with automobiles), *aileron*, *cadre*, *empennage*,

that the great mass of borrowings in early Modern English come directly from Latin. Numerous examples can be cited: *affidavit, agenda, alibi, animal, bonus, deficit, exit, extra, fact, maximum, memorandum, omnibus, propaganda, veto*.

During the Renaissance quite a number of French words were remodeled into closer resemblance with their Latin originals. For instance, whereas Chaucer uses the word *describe*, the form *describe* makes its appearance only in the 16th century. Similarly *perfet* and *parfet* becomes *perfect* due to Latin influence.

Voices were raised against excessive Latinization of English, and in the 16th century the new words from Latin were dubbed "ink-horn terms" by their detractors, alluding to their origin from the pens of pendants.

In the present day technical and scientific English, Latin shares with Greek the honour of being the source of a host of new coinages. Words like *coaxial, fission, interstellar, neutron, mutant, penicillin, radium, spectrum, sulfa*, etc have become an integral part of the English technical vocabulary. Hybrid forms (i.e. part Latin and part Greek) such as *egomaniac, speleology, terramyein*, etc. have also entered the English lexicon in a major way.

What is conspicuous about the introduction of Latin words during the modern period is that they have entered the language mainly through the medium of writing. The Latin elements in English, except the earliest ones, have been the work of churchmen and scholars.

Greek Borrowings

As far as direct borrowings from Greek into Old and Middle English are concerned, there was virtually none. Three of the very few old loan words from Greek are *church, devil* and *angel*. But all of these were borrowed through Latin. Later medieval borrowings, also through Latin and sometimes French include *diet, geography, logic, physic, rhetoric, surgeon* and *theology*. With the Renaissance, however, Greek words began to enter the English vocabulary in great numbers, and even then, they were Latinized in spelling and termination. Much of the modern scientific vocabulary owe their origin to Greek, though they might have entered the language through French (e.g. *barometer, thermometer*, etc.).

The Greek borrowings are usually learned in nature and found in disciplines like Poetics (*comedy, tragedy, catastrophe, dialog, episode, peripety, prolog, scene*, and many more), natural sciences (*bacteriology, botany, histology, physics, zoology*, etc.), Medicine (*adenoids, osteopathy, pediatrics, psychiatry*), Electronics (*dynatron, kenatron, phanotron*), physics (*atomic, cyclotron, meson, proton, isotope* etc.).

French Borrowings

Although the Latin and Greek influences on English began much earlier than the French they remained very small until near the end of the Middle Ages. The influence of French on the other hand, though it began late, increased rapidly and by the 13th century it had interpenetrated the English language far more intimately than Latin or Greek. Today French words have become a part of the essential core of Modern English. What might have been the reason? Scholars point out that these French words were "popular words" while more of the Latin and Greek terms are "learned" in nature.

The French influence came in two waves, first from the Normans, the second (and much greater) that of the Parisian or Central French. Norman borrowings began to

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Scandinavian Borrowings

Aside from Greek, Latin, and French, only Scandinavian, the language of the people whom the Anglo-Saxons called "Danes", has made a really substantial contribution to the English vocabulary. The similarity between Old English and the language of the Scandinavian invaders makes it at times very difficult to decide whether a given word in Modern English is a native or a borrowed word. Enormous similarity is found between these two languages in nouns like *man, wife, father, folk, mother, house, life, winter, summer*; verbs like *will, can, meet, come, bring, hear see, think, smile, ride, spin*; and adjectives and adverbs like *full, wise, better, best, mine, over and under*.

Certain words were modified from old Norse: Norse *Skepta* was modified to *shift* and *bruolaup* (wedding) was modified into *brydlop* (bride).

Scandinavian influence gave a fresh lease of life to obsolete native words. For instance, the preposition *till* is found only once or twice in Old English texts belonging to the pre-Scandinavian period, but after that, it becomes common in Old English.

There exists a large number of places that bear Scandinavian names. More than 600 places in English have names ending in *-by* which is a clear evidence of Scandinavian influence. Numerous examples can be cited: *Grimsby, Whitby, Derby, Rugby*, etc. (The Danish word *-by* means 'farm' or 'town'). Names like *Althorp, Bishopsthorpe, Linthorpe* contain the Scandinavian word 'thorp' which means village. Similar is the case with the word *thwaite* which means an isolated piece of land. Thus we have names like *Applethwaite, Braithwaite, Langthwaite*. We also have a hundred places which bear names ending in *toft*, which means a piece of ground: *Brimtoft, Eastoft, Nortoft* are good examples. Thus, altogether more than 400 Scandinavian place-names have been identified in England.

In the earliest period of borrowing, the number of Scandinavian words that appear in Old English is small due to the hostile relations of the invaders with the English people. Words associated with sea-roving and violence are common: *bardu* (beaked ship), *scegp* (vessel), *lip* (fleet), *dreng* (warrior), *orrest* (battle), etc.

Gradually we find a number of words relating to law or social and administrative system entering the English language. The word *law* itself is of Scandinavian origin. Other words include *nioing* (criminal), *mall* (action at law), *wapentake* (an administrative district), *husting* (assembly), *stefnan* (summon), etc. These legal terms were later replaced by French after the Norman conquest.

With the proper settling down of the Scandinavians in England, Scandinavian words entered the English language in large numbers. But unlike the case of Latin, where borrowings were usually learned, the Scandinavian borrowings were in the realm of daily give-and-take transactions.

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Here is a specimen of common words in English that owe their origin to the language of the Scandinavians: *bank, birth, bull, dirt, egg, gap, kid, link, race, skirt, sister, window, low, meek, rotten, sly, tight, weak, bait, crawl, dig, gape, kindle, lift, screech, thrust, they, their, then, aloft, athwar*, and many more.

The Scandinavian influence, along with that of Latin, Greek and French, is one of the most important of the foreign influences that have contributed significantly the English language.

Other Borrowings

Apart from these major borrowings, English, due to its contact with so many languages of the world, has borrowed largely from these languages.

From Dutch: Trade names like *pack* (from the wool trade), *scum, tub* (from the brewers of the low countries) *curl, scour, spool, stripe, tuck* (from cloth-making industries).

From Low German: *Bowsprit, buoy, freight, keel, leak, lighter, marline, pump* (all related to ships and sea) *boy, girl, bounce, luck, mud* and *scoff*.

From High German: *bismuth, cobalt, gneiss, quartz, shale, zinc* (all mineral), *stein, lager beer* (associated with eating and drinking), *hinterland, kindergarten, geopolitics, leitmotif, wanderlust*, etc.

From Italian: *attitude, balcony, fiasco, isolate, motto, stanza* and *umbrella* (all borrowed during Renaissance) *piano, soprano, alto, opera* and *tempo* (associated with music) *legato, diminuendo, pizzicato, andante*, etc (technical terms) *chiaroscuro, dado, fresco, portico, replica, studio* and *torso* (all related to fine arts) *cameo, extravaganza, lava, macaroni, spaghetti*, etc.

From Spanish: *desperado, grandee, negro, renegade* (all borrowed during Renaissance) *armada, cargo, cigar, guerrilla, matador, mosquito* and *vanilla*.

From Portugese: *banana, cobra, cocoa* and *molasses*.

From Arabic: *alcohol, alchemy, alembic, algebra, alkali, cipher, elixir, sugar* and *syrup* (all related to chemistry, mathematics and medicine) *emir, fakir, gazelle, giraffe, harem, hashish, hookah, lute, minaret, mosque, myrrh, sirocco, sultan*, etc.

From Hebrew: *camel, cinnamon, sapphire* and words biblical in nature like *amen, cherub, hallelujah, Jehovah, manna, pharisee, rabbi, sabbath* and *seraph*.

From Persian: *magic, paradise, tulip, lilac, jasmin, Lapis-Lazuli, orange, azure, scarlet, baksheesh, satrap*, etc.

From India: Indian contribution to English vocabulary is no less important than the other major foreign influences. From its many languages English has very often taken over such terms like *brahmin, bandanna, bungalow, calico, chutney, curry, indigo, juggernaut, jungle, loot, pyjama, pandit, rajah, sandal, coolie, polo, verandah* and many others.

From America: The English contact with the American Indians contributed terms like *caribou, hickory, moccasin, racoon, skunk, totem, tomahawk*, etc. From other parts of America, English inherited Mexican words like *chilli, chocolate, tomato*, from Cuba and the West Indies come *barbeque, cannibal, hammock, maize, tobacco*,

from Peru comes *jerky, pampas, puma, quinine*; and from Brazil we have *buccaneer, jaguar, tapioca*, etc.

From Africa: *boorish, chimpanzee, voodoo, zebra*, etc.

We discussed how the vocabulary of English underwent changes due to various borrowings. Another way by which the vocabulary of a language gets enriched is through word formation. Let us now discuss the processes involved in the formation of new words.

3.3 WORD FORMATION

Word formation, it should be noted, does not mean absolutely new creations, words whose components have had no meaning before. A typical example of a newly created word is *gas*, which was coined by the Dutch chemist Van Helmont in the 17th century. Though it had no formal etymology, we know that the word was suggested to the inventor by the Greek word 'chaos'. Thus, the word *gas* can hardly be considered an entirely new creation. Sheer creation of words with no previous associations is a rarity today. There are exceptions like the recent word *Kodak*—originally a trade name, though it has come to mean, more generally, a camera of a certain type.

There exists a number of words in every language whose formations can be attributed to **echoism** and **sound symbolism**. The former includes '**onomatopoeic**' words -- that is, words whose sound seems to resemble closely the sound it denotes such as *whiz, hiss, fizz, sizzle, twitter*, etc. In these words we need not look up any etymology to conceive its meaning. Echoism is distinct in common words like *mama, papa, baby*, etc.

Again, sound symbolism is more frequently present in the creation of words than people commonly realize. The close vowel [ɪ] is used again and again to stand for small size or slowness; *little, kid, slim, thin, imp, slip, pigmy*, etc. Sometimes the higher and tenser sound [i] is used to suggest a further degree of smallness. Thus, *teeny* is a child's word for *tiny* (*teeny-weeny* means something still more minute). Similarly the use of the breath with some force is suggested by *bl* (*blow, blast, blab*). Many such examples of sound symbolism in the creation of words can be cited.

Echoism and symbolism, hence, account for a surprisingly large number of words. However, a still more common way of adding to the vocabulary is by making some new use of words or word-elements already existing in the language.

Let us discuss the different ways by which new words are formed and added to the vocabulary.

(a) **Compounding**: This process involves combining two or more existing words in order to form a new word. This process has flourished at every period of the English language. Almost any combination of the parts of speech may be employed in this process of compounding, though some combinations are far more common than others, some are unusual, and some have not been favoured equally in every period. Among the most common are:

- (i) that of noun with noun: Old English *hwoelweg* (whaleway, sea) *breostcearu* (breast-care, anxiety), *soecliff* (sea-cliff). In modern English we have *rail-road*, *house-top*, *week-end*, *wood-shed*, etc.
- (ii) that of noun with adjective: Old English *isceald* (ice-cold), *heortseoc* (heart-sick), and more recently *coal-black*, *air-tight*, *foot-sore* and so on.
- (iii) Adjective with noun: *black-berry*, *hot-house*, *sweet-meat*, *big-shot*, etc.
- (iv) Adverb with noun: *up-shot*, *over-head*, *down-fall*, *after-thought*, *under-dog*, etc.
- (v) Verb with adverb: *dug-out*, *walk-over*, *tie-up*, *kick-off*, etc.
- (vi) Noun with verb: *Keel-haul*; *hand-pick*, *side-swipe*, etc.
- (vii) Verb with noun: *cry-baby*, *play-boy*, *starboard* (from Old English words meaning "Steering-side").
- (viii) Adjective with verb: *short-cut*, *high-flown*, etc.
- (ix) Adverb with verb: *over-throw*, *under-staff*, *off-set*, *by-pass*, etc.
- (x) Noun with adverb: *hands-off*, *head-on*, *hindsight-to*, etc.
- (xi) Adverb with adjective: *over-due*, *ever-green*, *under-ripe*, etc.

The new word formed may be different from that of either of its components in terms of parts of speech. For instance the adjective *ship-shape*, is made up of noun and noun and the noun *upset* of adverb and verb. It is also not uncommon to find in English three words forming a compound, as in *nevertheless*, *notwithstanding*, *hand-to-mouth*, *out-and-out*, *father-in-law*.

It should be noted that many early English compounds have died out or have been replaced by French or Latin borrowings that are not compounds. For instance, *treasure* replaced *gold-hand* and *medicine* replaced *leach-craft*.

Compounding, even today, is the most potent means of adding to the vocabulary.

(b) **Derivation:** In this process, a new entity is derived not from independent words (as in compounding) but from a single full word plus a prefix or suffix. Suffixes and prefixes, known collectively as affixes, may not stand alone as words; they occur only in combination with a word. In the Old English vocabulary generous use is made of prefixes and suffixes like *-ig*, *-full*, *-leas*, *-lice*, *-nes* and *-ung* to form new words. Thus in Old English we have words like *modig* (Old English *mod*, meaning *mood*). Hence the new word means spirited, bold, arrogant, etc. By means of further endings we get *modiglic* (magnanimous), *modignes* (magnanimity), etc. Other Old English suffixes include *-sum*, *-wis*, *-dom*, *-had*, *-scipe*, etc. Accordingly we have words like *wynsum*, *rihtwis*, *cyningdom*, *cildhad* and *freondscipe*. Similar is the case with prefixes. About a dozen prefixes are identified in Old English: *a-*, *be-*, *for-*, *fore-*, *ge-*, *mis-*, *of-*, *ofer-*, *on-*, *to-*, *un-*, *under-* and *wip-*. With the help of these, Old English could make out of a single verb like *settan* (to set), new verbs like *asettan* (place), *be-settan* (appoint), etc.

Whereas Old English enlarged its vocabulary chiefly by a liberal use of prefixes and suffixes, in the centuries following the Norman conquest there is a decline in this method of word formation. Many of the Old English prefixes lost their vitality, their ability to enter into new combinations. For instance the important Old English prefix *for-* is used in a limited way during the Middle English period in words like *forhang* (put to death by hanging), *forcleave* (cut to pieces), and *forshake* (shake off). It gradually lost its vitality and occurs in Modern English words like *forbear*, *forbid*, *fordo*, *forgot*, *forgive* and so on. Similarly the prefix *to-* has disappeared even more completely. *With-* (meaning 'against') gave a few new words in Middle English such as *withdraw*, *withgo*, *withsake*, etc. Some of these like *withdraw*, survive while others like *withstay* and *withset* have been replaced by terms like *renounce* and *resist*, respectively. Some prefixes which are still productive today like *over-* and *under-*, fell into comparative disuse for a time after the Norman conquest. Thus, generally speaking, Old English prefixes fell into disuse in the Middle English period.

A similar decline can be observed in the case of certain suffixes also. But the loss here is perhaps less distinctly felt because some important endings have remained in full force. For example, the noun suffix *-ness* and the adjective endings *-ful*, *-less*, *-some* and *-ish*. But others equally important were either lost or greatly diminished in vitality. The suffix *-lock* survives only in *wedlock*, *-red* only in *hatred* and *kindred*. The ending *-dom* was used in Old English to form abstract nouns from other nouns (*kingdom*, *earldom*, *martyrdom*) and from adjectives (*freedom*, *wisdom*). In Middle English there are some new formations such as *dukedom* and *thralldom*, but most of the formations from adjectives like *falsedom*, *richdom* did not prove permanent. When used today it is for the most part employed in half-serious coinages such as *stardom*. The endings *-hood*, and *-ship* have had a similar history. The suffix *-hood* entered into new formations in Middle English in words like *manhood*, *womanhood*, *likelihood*. But gradually its power diminished. Many of the Old English abstracts in *-ship* were lost. *Friendship* has been retained but not *fiendship* and of those formed from adjectives in Old English the only one still in use is *worship*. But the ending *-ness* was retained.

Thus, during the Middle English period we see a gradual change in English habits of word formation due to the available supply of French words which took care of the needs of the English people in expressing new ideas.

In the 19th and 20th century we see several of Latin prefixes lending themselves readily to new combinations. Thus formation like *transoceanic*, *transcontinental*, *trans-Siberian*, *transliterate*, *transformer* and several more or less technical terms are common. We speak of *post-impressionism* in art, *postprandial oratory*, the *post-modern* age and *postwar* events. In the same way we use *pre-* in such words as *prenatal*, *preschool*, *prehistoric*, *pre-Raphaelite*, etc. Similarly we use words with prefix *sub-* like *submerge*, *subtitle*, and *subinspection*. So is the case with suffixes. Recent popular creations on old patterns are *gangster*, *dopester*, *profiteer*, *racketeer* and so on. Endings like *-some*, *-ful*, *-less*, can be freely added in accordance with long-standing habits in the language.

This tendency of derivation through affixes has in the recent years, been responsible for the birth of new words. For instance, from *cafeteria*, we detach *-teria* and make words like *serveteria* and *gasateria*. In the same way it has been observed that *-omat* is detached from *automat* to form *laundromat*. Several such instances are to be seen in present-day English.

(c) **Back-Formation:** By means of compounding and derivation longer words are added to the vocabulary. But there are several processes which form new words by shortening. One of these is 'back-formation'. This process involves the removal of affixes. Thus the new verb *edit* has been produced by back-formation from the noun *editor*. The probable etymology of *beggar* is that it comes from the French *Beghard*, the name of a mendicant order. Thus the word *beg* is a back-formation, and a very early one. In the same way *peddle* is a back-formation from *pedlar*, and *burgle* from *burglar*. Other examples are *diagnose* from *diagnosis*, *rove* from *rover* and *grovel* from *groveling*. There are many jocular, slangy and colloquial words that are actually products of back-formation: *jell*, (from *jelly*), *orate* (from *oration*), *peeve* (from *peevish*), etc.

Shortening: The most common form of word-formation by shortening is that of simple abbreviation. This process is also known as 'clipping'. In this process a word may be lopped at either end: what remains over is the new word; and both the old and the new may then subsist at different levels of the language, or they may compete against each other for sole acceptance. Examples include *fridge* for *refrigerator*, *pram* for *perambulator*, *curio* for *curiosity*, *fad* for *fadaise*, etc. *Photo* for *photograph*, *gym* for *gymnasium* and *trig* for *trigonometry*. Examples of such words where the shortening is done by lopping the earlier part of the word are *wig* (from *periwig*), *drawing-room* (from *withdrawing-room*), *still* (from *distillery*), *sport* (from *disport*), *spite* (from *despite*) and *fence* (from *defence*). As is evident, this process has sometimes enriched the vocabulary by adding a shorter word which neither supersedes the longer one nor is synonymous with it. For instance there is a useful differentiation in meaning or use between *tend* and *attend*, *mend* and *amend*, and *lone* and *alone*.

(d) **Conversion:** Another process by which the vocabulary is increased is by 'conversion' of one part of speech into another — also known as 'functional shift'. Here, the form of the word remains unchanged but it is used in a different grammatical functions, which, in effect, makes it a new word. This process, though it existed at all stages of the language, has flourished most in Modern English. To take an example, the word *feature* may be used alone as a noun; it may be used in the modifying position, in *feature picture*; or it may be used as a verb, in the phrase 'to *feature* (a certain player)'. This kind of thing could hardly have been done in Old English because as it is seen to form a verb from a noun a suffix was added or a change was made in its form. Thus from the noun *dom* (judgment) was formed *deman* (to judge). But when the modern user of the language wants to do the same thing today they merely take the noun *doom* and convert it without further addition to the verb *doom*.

This interchange of function is a marked characteristic of Modern English, Elizabethan as well as contemporary. **The most common conversion is that of a noun into a verb.** *Bell*, *bridge*, *color*, *ditch*, *ink*, *paper*, and *stone* are a few random examples of the numerous nouns that may be used as verbs.

Another striking aspect of the shift is the tendency to make technical or occupational verbs out of nouns that are often awkwardly lengthy. There are commercial verbs, *to requisition* and *to recondition*, the librarians' verb *to accession*, the publishers' verb *to remainder* and the electricians' verb *to contact*. These are commonly used terms in day-to-day English.

Other words that can be used both as noun and verbs are contemporary borrowings from French, *sabotage* and *camouflage*.

Even verbs can be used as nouns. But nouns made directly from verbs have rather a somewhat colloquial or slangy character: *a show, a sell, a hit, a catch, a spin, a kick, a share, a smoke* and many more. But this is not a rule. There are numerous other verbs, especially associated with motion, that are commonly used as nouns — *walk, run, leap, jump, stumble, stroll* and so forth.

It is not that only conversion can take place between nouns and verbs. In fact, almost any interchange is possible, but they are very limited. One such example can be cited: *pretty good*, where adjective becomes adverb.

(e) **Blending:** This process of word-manufacture is much in vogue today giving rise to what is termed 'portmanteau' word. In this process the beginning of one word is added to the end of another, and subtracting what's between. By this process the vocabulary of English has immensely increased in the last hundred years or so. To take some examples, *flaunt* is a blend of *flout* and *vaunt*, *slide* of *slip* and *guide* and *swirl* of *twist* and *whirl*. Even words like *flush* is an amalgamation of *flash* and *blush* and *squash* of *squeeze* and *crash*. One writer who is particularly associated with the deliberate creation of portmanteau words is Lewis Carroll (who, incidentally, invented the word 'portmanteau'). Among his many such creations, the words *chortle* (*chuck* and *snort*) and *galumphing* (*gallop* and *triumphing*) have been very popular. Contemporary journalistic writings are full of such words. Words like *airmada* (*airplane* + *armada*), *motorcade* (*Motor-car* + *cavalcade*), *motel* (*motorist* + *hotel*) *smog* (*smoke* + *fog*) are familiar words today. Usually, in today's English, trade names make use of this process to form new words: *Polishine, Fastored, Floorite* and many more.

(f) **Author's Contribution:** Apart from the above processes by which words are formed leading to the enrichment of the vocabulary, certain individuals, in their own right, have immensely contributed to the growth of the English word-stock. The etymological meaning of poet is "maker", and in a very literal sense some of the great English poets may be said to be the makers of the English language. The first great poet of England, Geoffrey Chaucer was instrumental in introducing many important words which are still in use today: *attention, duration, fraction, position* and so on.

Two translators of the early 16th century, Tyndale and Coverdale, often created new English equivalents of original Greek and Hebrew, while translating the Bible. To Coverdale the English language is indebted for familiar terms like *loving kindness, morning-star, kind hearted* and so on and the first literary use of *beautiful*. Spenser may be called the first English writer who, apart from the necessities of translation, self-consciously created words. For instance, some of his words like *drowsy head, elfin* and *derailment* are still in use and some have perished. Spenser's unique contribution lies in preserving expressions that had become archaic or obsolete in his time. Shakespeare's supremacy in word-making is as unquestionable as his supremacy in other aspects of the use of language. As a scholar has put it very succinctly, Shakespeare was apparently the first to speak of *cudgeling one's brain, breathing one's last, backing a horse* and *catching a cold*. He was the first to call the world *dull*, and answer *abrupt*, speeches *flowery*, and plain faces *homely*. It is beyond the scope of this unit to cite even a small portion of Shakespeare's innovativeness. A portion of one of his plays (for example Act III of *Hamlet*) would give a host of new expressions.

We can attribute the presence of such words like *emblazoning, dimensionless, ensanguined, irradiance* and *infinitude* to Milton. Words like *pandemonium* by which Milton meant the hall of the fallen angels, and *Pantheon* are Milton's

contribution to English language. Milton even coined the term *sensuous* to replace *sensual* after that word had taken on *baser* associations.

One later poet who remotely approaches Shakespeare as far as his contribution to English vocabulary is concerned is John Keats. Keats, in his creation of compounds, recalls Shakespeare. Some of these compounds are *full-throated ease*, *deep-damasked wings*, etc. He even coined certain words like *aurorean*, and *beamily*. Certain phrases, like "*alien corn*", "*magic casements*", "*perilous seas*" and "*fairy lands forlorn*" have become a permanent part of the language.

In the Victorian period, we have Tennyson who can be associated with the creation of compounds like "*evil-starred*" and "*moonlit*" and Browning whose creations such as *crumblement*, *feblicity* and *garnishry* have a characteristic grotesqueness. He can be credited with the invention of the useful word *artistry*.

Coming to prose writers, Wyclife, Malory and Caxton are important names in the field of word-creation before the Modern English period. In the 16th century, Sir Thomas More, John Lyly, and Robert Greene contributed to the English word-stock immensely. But the contribution of Sir Thomas Browne, in the 17th century is unparalleled. Words such as *improperations*, *areopagy*, *appellation*, *asperous favaginous* (honey-combed), *paralogical* (fallacious), *digladiation* (fighting with swords) etc have not found another user. But words that have found permanent place in English are *hallucination*, *precarious*, *incontrovertible* and *retrogression*. Even the word *electricity*, *literary* and *medical* are Browne's innovations.

Fiddlededee and *irascibility* are attributed to Dr. Samuel Johnson, *etiquette*, *friseur* and *persiflage* to Lord Chesterfield, *bored* and *blase* to Byron, and *propriety* and *idealism* to Shelley and Miss Burney respectively. Edmund Burke is credited with *colonization*, *diplomacy*, *electioneering*, *federalism* and *municipality* and Jeremy Bentham with *minimize*, *detachable*, *meliorability*, *cross-examination* and *exhaustive*.

In the 19th century, English words were created in great numbers and two Scotsmen Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle have been the major contributors. In Scott's case most of his innovations are revivals of old words or importation of dialect terms rather than 'creations'. Scott was responsible for the revival of words like *fitful*, *borderer*, *thews* and *arm-gaunt* and phrases such as "*towering passion*", "*Yeo-man's service*", etc. which were out-of-use after Shakespeare.

To Scott can be attributed the transfer of certain words from the dialect of his native land: *raid*, *gruesome*, *uncanny* and *glamour*. His pure innovations include *free-lance*, *red-handed*, *passage-of-arms* and *Norseman*.

Like Scott, Carlyle too levied upon the language of Scots his new words: *feckless*, *lilt*, (cadence), and *outcome*. But his fantastic audacity in word-creation can be gauged from his outlandish coinages like *Bedlamism*, *dandiacal*, *grumbly* and *gigmanity*. Among his novel compounds, *mischief-joy*, and *swansong* are more famous. Other miscellaneous words that Carlyle coined were *decadent*, *environment*, and *self-help*. Those phrases which are still in use are "*the unspeakable Turk*" and "*the dismal science*" (economics).

In the 20th century, there has been perhaps no single word-creator whose coinages have added any considerable number of words to the vocabulary. Among the prolific ones are James Joyce, e.e. cummings and Gertrude Stein whose coinages, however, have failed to percolate the vocabulary of the ordinary public.

3.4 CHANGES IN THE MEANING OF WORDS

One certain thing about words is that words frequently have several meanings and meanings change in time, just like the other elements in language. Thus, in Old English *tartness* could be attributed to winter and could encompass such possibilities as freezing to death. Today the meaning has changed considerably.

Shakespeare referred to "mice and rats and such small deer". But one should remember that *deer* formerly meant "animal". In the 1611 King James Bible, Matthew 4:4, "... the same John had his raiment of camel's hair... and his *meat* was locusts and wild honey". The word *meat* meant any food, even wild honey and locusts, during the Renaissance, and not necessarily the flesh of animals. Samuel Johnson in his dictionary defines a *humanist* as "a philologist, a grammarian", and *to huddle* as "to perform in a hurry". We now know these meanings have changed considerably. In Frank Norris's *Octopus* (1901), a "... typewriter rose and withdrew, thrusting her pencil into the coil of her hair", in the 1990s *typists* rather than typewriters engage in such activities. In brief, meanings change.

Meaning of words change on account of both physical likenesses and nonphysical likenesses. For instance, because of its physical appearance, *cloud* has shifted from its Middle English meaning of "a mass of rock" or "a hill" to its present meaning. Similarly *Head*, retaining its original meaning as the top item on a human body, is also, because of physical resemblances, used for *cabbage*. *Galaxy*, originally referring to "milk" has shifted to its present meaning because of associations with colour.

Non-physical likensses account equally for shifts in meaning. *Craft*, once meaning 'strength' has taken on the meaning of a related virtue, *skill*. The word *priest* once meant 'elder'; the authority of age has come to be associated with the office, and young priests are now possible.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we saw how the English language has undergone changes in its vocabulary and meaning of words. We saw how the English vocabulary was enriched by massive borrowing from other languages especially Latin, Greek and French and also by forming new words by various processes. We also saw how the meanings of particular words changed with the passage of time.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Borrowing	a word or phrase which has been taken from one language and used in another language.
Word-formation	the creation of new words.
Onomatopoeic words	imitation of natural sounds by means of words or groups of words

Compounding

the process which involves combining two or more existing words in order to form a new word.

Derivation

the formation of new words by adding affixes to other words.

Back-formation

when a new word is made by the removal of an affix from an existing word.

Conversion

a term used in the study of word formation to refer to the derivational process whereby an item comes to belong to a new word class without the addition of an affix, eg. words like elbow, walk, test, etc. can be used as nouns or verbs.

Inflectional

the process of adding an affix to a word or changing it in some other way according to the rules of the grammar of a language.

3.7 READING LIST

Baugh, A.C and Cable, T. 1994 (4th ed) **A History of the English Language**. London: Routledge

Matthews, P.H. 1991 (2nd ed). **Morphology**. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

McCrum, R. etal. 1986. **The Story of English**. BBC Publications.

3.8 QUESTIONS

1. Look through your poetry course. Pull out twenty words which mean differently today. Write their earlier meaning as well as the present meaning.
2. Write about notes on
Conversion
Blending
Back-formation
Give your own examples from English and your mother tongue.