

LSA.139: Syntactic Change

Lecture 1. Change and Acquisition

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Present tense paradigm in Old English

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	bind-e 'bind'	bind-aþ
2nd	bind-est	bind-aþ
3rd	bind-eþ	bind-aþ

Persistent native interference in a second language (Prince and Pintzuk 1984)

- (1) a. (pronoun) It was MAYN [my] daughter's house.
- b. (complementizer) ...there wasn't an item VOS [that] we didn't have.
- c. (preposition) ...we go MIT [with] the bus ...
- d. (article) ...DER [the] operation came out wonderful.

The dating of the Northern V2 pattern

- (2)
- a. LATIN: dominum deum tuum adorabis
 - b. LINDISFARNE: drihten god ðin **worða** ðu
 - c. RUSHWORTH: drihten god ðinne **wearða** ðu
 - d. WEST SAXON: drihten þinne god ðu **geead-metst.**

‘You will worship the Lord your God.’ (Luke 4.8)

- (3) a. LATIN: oculos habentes non uidetis
- b. LINDISFARNE: ego **habbað** *gie* . . . hæbbende ne geseað *gie*
- c. RUSHWORTH: ego **habbas** *ge* ne gi-seas *ge*
- d. WEST SAXON: Eagan *ge* **habbað** & ne ge-seoð.

‘Having eyes, do you not see?’ (Mark 8.18)

- (4) a. LATIN: et aures habentes non auditis nec recordamini
- b. LINDISFARNE: & earo *gie* **habbað** ne geherað gie ne eft ðohto gie
- c. RUSHWORTH: earu **habbas** ge ne gi-heras ne eft ðohtun ge
- d. WEST SAXON: & earan. & ne gehyrað. ne ge ne þencaþ

‘and having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?’
(Mark 8.18)

Pronoun subject inversions in the Northumbrian glosses and West Saxon gospels

	Topic in both N and WS	Topic in N only
Inversions in Northumbrian	5 out of 58	14 out of 82
Inversions in West Saxon	0 out of 58	–

The evolution of past tense doublets in late Middle English (Taylor 1994)

- (5) a. dived – dove
b. sneaked – snuck
c. welk – walked
d. awoke – awaked
- (6) a. The tailor fitted the suit to my frame.
b. When I was young, this suit fit me.
- (7) a. The batter flied out to center field.
b. The pigeon flew out to center field.
- (8) a. clear – ?clearness
b. bad – ?badness
c. The badness of the example amazed them.

Table 2: Originally strong verbs that show variation in Chaucer

verb	strong pasts	weak pasts	percent weak	verb	strong pasts	weak pasts	percent weak
stick	2	10	83	weave	7	1	13
walk	3	10	77	stretch	7	1	13
creep	5	6	55	grow	8	1	11
sleep	18	14	44	laugh	19	2	10
weep	28	20	42	quake	12	1	8
awake	7	4	36	drench	23	2	8
wake	9	4	31	shine	31	2	6
pluck	5	1	17	smite	35	1	3
shriek	6	1	14				

Table 3: Originally strong verbs that show variation in the Paston letters

verb	strong pasts	weak pasts	percent weak
write	399	1	.25
take	167	2	.01
know	89	1	.01

Table 4: Place of first appearance of new weak verbs in English

century	North	EMid	WMid	South	Kent	London
13		5	19 (14 in LB)			
14	5	21 (all Wycl)	3	6	1	2

Table 5: Time course of the appearance of new weak verbs in English

century	Class A	Class B
11	3 (.5)	4 (.06)
12	0	1 (.01)
13	8 (.12)	13 (.20)
14	16 (.28)	30 (.47)
15	13 (.24)	9 (.14)
16	9 (.16)	5 (.08)
17	5 (.11)	1 (.01)
18	1 (.01)	0
19	0	0

Table 6: Time course of the appearance of Scandinavian loan words in English

century	nouns	verbs	adj	total	percent
pre-10	4	0	0	4	1
10	22	8	8	38	8
11	13	0	0	13	3
12	40	24	13	77	12
13	74	37	17	128	28
14	70	30	10	110	24
15	35	21	1	57	13
16	28	18	9	55	12
17	30	5	2	37	8
18	18	1	1	20	4
19	14	1	0	15	3
TOTAL	248	145	61	454	