Germanic Languages

I. Proto-Germanic

A. East Germanic
   1. Gothic
   2. Crimean Gothic

B. North Germanic
   1. Runic
   2. Old Norse and Old Icelandic
   3. Old Swedish

C. West Germanic
   1. Continental
      a. Old High German
      b. Old Saxon
      c. Frankish
   2. Ingvaenic
      a. Old Frisian
      b. Old English

Numerous dialects.

West Saxon is the standard, although modern English descends principally from others
Germanic Sound Changes

1. Grimm’s Law

Perhaps the most famous of all of the ‘Laws of Indo-European’, Grimm’s Law was established by Jacob Grimm (one of the Grimm brothers), an early 19th century German philologist and collector of German folk materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIE</th>
<th>Proto-Germanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*p</td>
<td>*f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*t</td>
<td>*b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*k</td>
<td>*χ (*h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*kʷ</td>
<td>*χ w (*h w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*b &gt; *p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*d</td>
<td>*t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*g</td>
<td>*k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*gʷ</td>
<td>*k w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*bʰ</td>
<td>*β ~ *b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*dʰ</td>
<td>*ð ~ *d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*gʰ</td>
<td>*ɣ ~ g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*gʷʰ</td>
<td>*ɣ w ~ gʷ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Grimm’s Law

*bʰréh₂-ter > *brōpor ‘brother’
*pékʰu > *fexʰu ‘wealth on four legs’
*okʰtʰu > *aχtʰu ‘eight’

2. Verner’s Law

Verner’s Law is probably the second most famous IE sound law.

After Grimm’s Law was proposed, linguists noticed many cases in which the expected result was not observed for the voiceless fricatives. Sometimes instead of being voiced they emerged as voiceless instead. For some time this was assumed to be because sound changes were not entirely regular, and the idea of reconstructing a proto-language would therefore be impossible.

Verner showed, however, that the exceptional cases were due to the position of the PIE accent.

A voiceless stop or fricative [s] becomes a voiced fricative if it is immediately preceded by an unaccented vowel in PIE.

*upér ‘over, above’ > *uβer
*ph₂tër ‘father’ > *faḍēr
*kʰmṭom ‘hundred’ > *χundā
*snusós ‘daughter-in-law’ > *snuzō (OE snoru)
Old English Pronunciation and Meter

Old English was the Germanic language spoken in southern Britain from about 500–1100 CE. English was brought to Britain by West Germanic peoples, probably from around the Frisian islands along the northern coast of what is now Holland.

(1) Vowels.
OE had both short and long vowels. The long vowels are marked with a macron (horizontal line over the vowel, e.g. [ā, ē, ō])

Short vowels

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[i:]</td>
<td>lim</td>
<td>limb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>bed</td>
<td>bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>[ü]</td>
<td>byre</td>
<td>youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>hund</td>
<td>dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>folc</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>faran</td>
<td>to journey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long vowels

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ĕ</td>
<td>[i:]</td>
<td>lîf</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ē</td>
<td>[e:]</td>
<td>hē</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>[æ:]</td>
<td>sê</td>
<td>sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>[ü:]</td>
<td>hîd</td>
<td>hide n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŭ</td>
<td>[u:]</td>
<td>ût</td>
<td>out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŏ</td>
<td>[o:]</td>
<td>gôd</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>[a:]</td>
<td>stân</td>
<td>stone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Diphthongs

Whenever two vowels are adjacent in OE they combine into a single syllable nucleus creating a diphthong.

When e or ē is written as the first vowel of a diphthong they are actually pronounced as if they were æ and ō respectively:

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ea</td>
<td>[æa]</td>
<td>healp</td>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēa</td>
<td>[æːə]</td>
<td>fēa</td>
<td>few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eo</td>
<td>[ɛo]</td>
<td>eom</td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēo</td>
<td>[ɛːo]</td>
<td>bēo</td>
<td>be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ie</td>
<td>[iə]</td>
<td>hîera</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĕe</td>
<td>[iːə]</td>
<td>hîe</td>
<td>she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>io</td>
<td>[iə]</td>
<td>liornung</td>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĕo</td>
<td>[iːo]</td>
<td>lîode</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Consonants

a. \( p t b d m n l w \) are pronounced as in NE, \( x \) is pronounced as \([ks]\).

b. \( r \) might have been trilled, but this is not known for sure.

c. \( sc \) is pronounced \([ʃ]\); \( scip \) \([ʃɪp\) ship

d. \( cg \) is pronounced \([ʤ]\); \( brycg \) \([brüʤ\) bridge

e. \( c \) was pronounced as either \([k]\) or \([ʧ]\), depending on the context. To aid in pronunciation a dot is sometimes written over the letter \( c^\) to indicate that it represents \([ʧ]\) and not \([k]\).

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{[k]} & \text{[ʧ]} \\
\text{caru} & \text{[karʊ]} & \text{care} & \text{ič} & \text{[ɪʧ]} & \text{I} \\
\text{tacan} & \text{[takan]} & \text{take} & \text{čild} & \text{[ʧɪld]} & \text{child} \\
\text{cyning} & \text{[kʊnɪŋ]} & \text{king} & \text{čeaster} & \text{[ʧɪæstər]} & \text{town} \\
\text{höc} & \text{[hoːk]} & \text{hook} & \text{swelč} & \text{[swɛlʧ]} & \text{such} \\
\end{array}
\]

f. Similarly, \( g \) was pronounced either as \([g]\) or as \([j]\). The \([j]\) pronunciation is sometimes indicated with an overdot: \( ġ \)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{[k]} & \text{[ʧ]} \\
\text{gän} & \text{[gaːn]} & \text{gone} & ġiет & \text{[jiːt]} & \text{yet} \\
\text{slög} & \text{[sloːɡ]} & \text{struck} & ġ & \text{[dæj]} & \text{day} \\
\end{array}
\]

g. \( h \) was \([h]\) at the beginning of a word. Otherwise it was pronounced like German \( ch \) (a \([x]\) sound after back vowels, \([ʒ]\) after back vowels).

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{[k]} & \text{[ʧ]} \\
\text{hand} & \text{[hand]} & \text{hand} & \text{niht} & \text{[nɪt]} & \text{night} \\
\text{hūs} & \text{[huːs]} & \text{house} & \text{feoh} & \text{[feɔx]} & \text{money, property} \\
\end{array}
\]

h. The letter \( þ \) is called \textit{thorn} and the letter \( ð \) is called \textit{eth}. They are used interchangeably in Old English spelling.

The letters \( f þ ð s \) are pronounced as \([f θ ð s]\) \textit{except} when they fall between \([+\text{voice}]\) segments, when they are also \([+\text{voice}]: \[v ð ð ź]\)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{[k]} & \text{[ʧ]} \\
\text{ofər} & \text{[oːvər]} & \text{over} & \text{efne} & \text{[ɛvnə]} & \text{even} \\
\text{hærfest} & \text{[hærˈvɛst]} & \text{harvest} \\
\text{wīse} & \text{[wɪzə]} & \text{wise} & \text{hūsles} & \text{[huːzlɛs]} & \text{of the Eucharist} \\
\text{ōber} & \text{[oːðər]} & \text{other} & \text{eordē} & \text{[ɛəðə]} & \text{earth} \\
\text{hoðma} & \text{[hoðma]} & \text{darkness} \\
\end{array}
\]
Stress

a. The primary stress of a word is always on the first syllable:

\[
\text{f\textae} \text{der} \quad \text{father} \quad \text{cw\textae}\text{ende} \quad \text{saying}
\]

except in two cases:

(i) the word begins with one of the prefixes \text{be}-, \text{ge}-, \text{for}-
(ii) the word is a verb with a prefix

In these cases the stress falls on the first syllable after the prefix:

\[
\text{be-b\textod} \quad \text{\textae-beorg} \quad \text{for-heard}
\]

commandment protection very hard

\[
\text{wi\textod-st\textae}\text{ndan} \quad \text{ofe\textae-c\textum} \quad \text{a-r\textum}\text{san}
\]
to withstand to overcome to arise

b. Secondary stress falls on the first syllable of the second half of a compound word.

\[
\text{g\textod-smi\textod} \quad \text{B\textae\textum-w\textum\textae} \quad \text{h\textuum-po-r\textum}\text{fe}
\]
goldsmith Beowulf battle-brave

(5) Heavy and light syllables. A \textit{light} syllable has a syllable rhyme consisting of a short vowel or short diphthong and nothing else (i.e. no coda consonant)

All other syllables count as \textit{heavy}.

All light:

\[
\text{gu.ma} \quad \text{fe.le} \quad \text{\textae.fu} \quad \text{ma.ni.\textum}
\]

All heavy:

\[
\text{sw\texta} \quad \text{\textae.t} \quad \text{fram} \quad \text{wyrm}
\]

\[
\text{w\textae\textum\textae} \quad \text{dru.n.con}
\]

Heavy-light: \text{hun.ta} \quad \text{s\textod.\textae} \quad \text{heal.le}

Light-heavy: \text{fa.ran} \quad \text{gu.man} \quad \text{sci.pum} \quad \text{cy.ning}
Old English verse

a. Every line consists of two *half-lines*. The end of a half-line always coincides with the end of a word, and *usually* the end of a phrase.

*bát under béorge.*  *Béornas géarwe*

boat under sea-cliffs  warriors eagerly

b. For the purposes of meter the following basic elements are required:

- **P** = heavy syllable with primary word stress
- **p** = light syllable with primary word stress
- **S** = heavy syllable with secondary word stress
- **s** = light syllable with secondary word stress
- **x** = stressless syllable
- **x*** = one or more stressless syllables

b. Resolution:

- In all cases 
  
  \[ px \text{ can substitute for } P \]
  Here I’ll write \[ p-x \]
  \[ sx \text{ can substitute for } S \]
  Here I’ll write \[ s-x \]

- At the end of a half-line
  
  \[ px \text{ can substitute for } P \ x \]
  Here I’ll write \[ p! \ x \]
  \[ sx \text{ can substitute for } S \ x \]
  Here I’ll write \[ s! \ x \]

(7) Types of (half-) lines

**A-line**

\[ P \ x^* \ P \ x \]

**Acephalous A-line**

\[ x^* \ P \ x \]

**B-line**

\[ x^* \ P \ x \ x \ P \]

**C-line**

\[ x^* \ P \ P \ x \]

**D-line type 1a**

\[ P \ P \ S \ x \]

**D-line type 1b**

\[ P \ x \ P \ S \ x \]

**D-line type 2a**

\[ P \ P \ x^* \ S \]

**D-line type 2b**

\[ P \ x \ P \ x \ S \]

**E-line**

\[ P \ S \ x \ (x) \ P \]
féasceafh fúnden
hē þæs frófre ġébád
P x P x x x P x x P
A/B
‘A foundling to start with he would flourish later on’

gómban ġýldan:
þat was gód cýning!
P x P x x P p! x
A/C
‘and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king!’

léof lánd-frúma
láinge āhte
P P s! x P x P x
D1a/A
‘and the chief they revered who had long ruled them’

Wæs se grímma gæst
Gréndel háten
x x P x x P P x x P
B/A
mærre méarc-stàpa
sě þe móras héold
P x P s! x x x P x P
D1b/B
fén ond fæsten;
ffif[e]l-cýnnes éard
P x P x P S x P
A/E

wón-sěli wér
wéardode hwíle
P S x P P x x P x x P
E/A

‘Grendel was the name of this grim demon
haunting the marches, marauding round the heath
and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time
in misery among the banished monsters’

(8) Promotion and Demotion.
Under certain special circumstances secondary stresses count as primary,
and primary stresses as secondary:

a. Promotion:
The first P in every half-line must be a primary word-stress.
S (or s x) may substitute for the second P in each half-line.

If this happens, I’ll write S+ or s+ to indicate a promoted S or s.

b. Demotion:
i. When a verb is the first primary stress of a half-line, its stress is
frequently ignored for the meter. In such cases I’ll write (P).

māg Ælf-hères;
ġeséah his món-dryhten
P P S! x x (P) x P S+ x
= P P S x x x P P x
D/C

‘kinsmen of Ælfhere; he beheld his liege-lord’
ii. When a verb is the last primary stress in a D-type half-line it normally counts as a secondary, not a primary stress. In such cases I’ll write P-.

wórn ģe-múnde          wórd őðer fánd          870
P  x  P  x                P  P  x  P-           
= P  x  P  x                P  P  x  S          A/D2a

’remembered in abundance derived a new speech’

e. Alliteration:

a. One or more Ps -- and almost always the first P -- of the first half-line must alliterate with the first P of the second half-line (called the ‘key’)

b. The first and second P of the second half-line are not allowed to alliterate.

bát under béorge.       Béornas ģéarwe        211
P  x  x  P  x                P  x  P  x          A/A

māg Ӕlf-èeres;          ǧeseah his món-dryhten    2604
P  P  S  x                x  x  x  P  S+  x

c. i. Vowel-initial words alliterate with each other.

_Éormenrìčes           ǧečēas _',čne rãd         1201
P  x  P  x                x  x  P  x  P          A/B
‘of Eormenric he chose eternal gain’

ii. g/ġg and c/cמעלה alliterate with each other even though they are pronounced differently

iii. sp, st, sc each alliterate only with themselves

gúma ǧílp-hlåden           ǧidda ģe-mýndig          868
p-x  P  s!  x                P  x  x  P  x            D1a/A
‘a man glory-laden mindful of solemn words’
Some formulas in Beowulf (introducing speeches):

Bêowulf maþelode,  bearn Ecgþêowes  Beowulf son of E. spoke
Bêowulf maþelode-- on him byrne scân  B. spoke -- the mail-shirt
on him gleamed
Hrôþgâr maþelode,  helm Scyldinga  H. protection of the
Scyldings spoke
Wîglâf maþelode  Wêohstânes sunu  W. son of W. spoke
Wulfgâr maþelode  þæt was Wendla lêod  W. spoke -- he was a
tribesman of the Vandals
weard maþelode  þær on wicge sæt  the watchman spoke where
he sat on his steed
Beowulf 864–882

Hwîlum hēapo-rôfe

Sometimes the battle–brave

on–gé–flît fáran

go in rivalry,

ôër him fóld–wègas

where to them the earthways
cýstum cûде.

known for excellence.

gúma ġilp–hlâden,
a man glory–laden,

sē ðe _éal–féla

he who very many

wórn ğe–múnde,

remembered in abundance,

sōðe ğe–bûnden:

truthfully composed:

sîð Bêo–wûlfes

the adventure of Beowulf

ond on spéð wrécan

and with success to pursue

hléapan léton

let run,

féalwe mèaras

fallow horses,

fágere þûhton,

seemed fair

Hwîlum cýninges þégn

Sometimes a king’s retainer

gídda ğe–mýndîg

mindful of solemn words,

_>éald–ğe–sègêna

ancient traditions

wórd ðôer fând

designed a new speech

sécg éft on–gân

the man again began

snýttrum stýrian

skilfully to recite,

spél ğe–ráde

the tale readily
wórdum wríxlan
*to vary the words;*

wél-hwylc ɢɛ-cwáð
*he told each thing*

þat hē fram Síɡe-múndes
*that he heard tell*

sécgan hýrde
*about Sigemund’s*

éllendādum
*glorious deeds,*

úncũþes féla
*many a thing unknown,*

Wál-singes ɢewín
*the strife of Wl’s son,*

wîðe sîðas
*expeditions afar,*

þāra þe gúmena béarn
*of which the sons of men*

ţgearwe ne wîston,
*knew not at all,*

fěhōe ond fýrena --
*battles and murders--*

bûton Fítela mid hîne,
*only Fitela with him,*

þonne hē swûlčes hwât
*whenever he wished to say*

sécgan wóldè
*anything about such a matter,*

é.âm his néfan --
*uncle to his nephew--*

swâ hîe á wârôn
*so they always were*

æt nîða ɢɛ-hwâm
*in each of the battles*

nýd-ɢɛ-stèallan
*comrades in crisis*