

▪ **The major changes from Indo-European to Germanic**

1. **Germanic has a large number of words that have no known cognates in other Indo-European languages.** These could have existed, of course, in Indo-European and have been lost; it is also possible that they were taken from non-Indo-European languages originally spoken in the area occupied by the Germanic peoples. A few words that are apparently distinctively Germanic, given in their Modern English forms, are *broad*, *drink*, *drive*, *fowl*, *hold*, *meat*, *rain*, and *wife*.
2. **The "free" accentual system of Indo-European**, in which the accent shifted from one syllable to another in various forms of a word, gave way to another type of **accentuation in which the first syllable was regularly stressed**. Exceptions were verbs like modern *believe* and *forget*, in which the initial syllable was a prefix. None of the Germanic languages has anything comparable to the shifting accentuation of Latin 'virī 'men,' vi'rōrum 'of the men' or of 'habeō 'I have/ ha'bēmus 'we have.'
3. **All Indo-European distinctions of tense and aspect were lost in the verb save for the present and the preterit (or past) tenses.** This simplification of a more complex Indo-European verbal system (though it was not so complex as what developed in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit) is reflected in all the languages which have developed out of Germanic— in English *bind-bound*, as well as in German *binden-band*, Old Norse *binda-band*, and all the rest. There is in no Germanic language anything comparable to such forms as those of the Latin future, perfect, pluperfect, and future perfect forms (for instance, *laudābō*, *laudāvī*, *laudāveram*, *laudāverō*), which must be rendered in the Germanic languages by verb phrases (for instance, English *I shall praise*, *I have praised*, *I had praised*, *I shall have praised*).
4. **Germanic developed a preterit tense form with a dental suffix, that is, one containing *d* or *t*.** All Germanic languages thus have two types of verbs. Verbs that employ the dental suffix were called weak by Jacob Grimm because, being incapable of the type of internal change of *rise-rose* and *sing-sang* (which he called strong), they had to make do with suffixes, like *step-stepped* and *talk-talked*. Although Grimm's terminology is not very satisfactory, it has become traditional. An overwhelming majority of our verbs add the dental suffix in the preterit, so it has become the regular way of inflecting verbs. Indeed, it is the only living way of doing so in English and the other Germanic languages. For example, new verbs form their preterit so: *elbow-elbowed*, *televise-televised*, and so forth. Furthermore, many verbs that were once strong have become weak. Historically speaking, however, the vowel gradation of the strong verbs (as in *drive—drove*, *know-knew*) was quite regular, and some of the weak verbs are quite irregular. *Bring*, *think*, and *buy*, for instance, are weak verbs, as the dental suffix of *brought*, *thought*, and *bought* indicates; the vowel changes do not make them strong verbs. The suffix is the real test. No attempt at explaining the origin of this suffix has been wholly satisfactory. Many have thought that it was originally an independent word related to *do*.
5. **All the older forms of Germanic had two ways of declining their adjectives.** The weak declension was used chiefly when the adjective modified a definite noun and was preceded by the kind of word that developed into the definite article. The strong declension was used otherwise. Thus Old English had *þā geongan ceorlas* 'the young fellows (churls),' with the weak form of *geong*, but *geonge ceorlas* 'young fellows' with the strong form; the distinction is preserved in present-day German, *die jungen Kerle*, but *junge Kerle*. This particular Germanic characteristic cannot be illustrated in Modern English, inasmuch as in the course of its development English has lost all such declension of the adjective.
6. **Indo-European vowels underwent Germanic modification.** Indo-European *o* was

retained in Latin but became *a* in Germanic (compare Lat. *octo* 'eight'/ Gothic *ahtau*). Indo-European *ā* became *ō* (Lat. *māter* 'mother,' OE *mōdor*).

## 7. Grimm's Law (discovered by Rasmus Rask !!)

- The IE voiced aspirates /bh, dh, gh, g<sup>w</sup>h/ were shifted to the corresponding voiced fricatives /β ð γ γ<sup>w</sup>/ in every position. Soon afterwards (after the operation of Verner's Law) in certain positions (initially except for γ, after nasals, and in gemination) they developed stop allophones /b, d, g, gw/.
- The IE voiceless stops /p, t, k, k<sup>w</sup> /, **if not preceded by /s/**, shifted to the corresponding voiceless fricatives /f, θ, x, xw/.
- **Verner's Law** The IE voiceless stops /p t k k<sup>w</sup>/ which by the preceding rule were shifted to the corresponding fricatives became voiced and merged with the voiced fricatives from Grimm's Law (i.e. those from IE bh, dh, gh, g<sup>w</sup>h/) **if they were not originally (i.e. in IE and before the stress shift) preceded by a stressed vowel**.
- The IE voiced stops /b d g g<sup>w</sup>/ were shifted to the corresponding voiceless stops /p t k k<sup>w</sup>/

<u>Indo-European</u>		accent shift	<u>Proto-Germanic</u>
/bh, dh, gh, g <sup>w</sup> h/	→ /β, ð, γ, γ <sup>w</sup> /	→	/b, d, g, gw/
	(z) → (r) (Rhotacism)		
	↑ <b>VL</b>		
	(s)		
/p, t, k, k <sup>w</sup> /	→ /f, θ, x, xw/	→	/f, θ, x, xw/
/b, d, g, g <sup>w</sup> /	→ /p, t, k, kw/	→	/p, t, k, kw/

### ▪ Examples

#### 1. INDO-EUROPEAN bh/ (LATIN f-, GREEK ph) GERMANIC b

bhrāter / frāter / brother  
 bhībhrū- / fiber / beaver ← OE beofor  
 bhreg- / fra(n)go / break  
 bhudh- / fundus (*for* \*fudnus) / bottom  
 ghrobh (Pol. grób) – OE græf

#### 2. INDO-EUROPEAN dh (LATIN f-, GREEK th) GERMANIC d

dheigh- / fi(n)gere 'to mold' / dough  
 dhwer- / foris / door  
 dhē- / (Gr.) thē- 'to place' / do  
 dhug(h)ætēr / (Gr.) thugatēr / daughter

#### 3. INDO-EUROPEAN gh (LATIN h-, GREEK ch) GERMANIC g

ghordho- / hortus / OE geard 'yard'  
 ghosti- / hostis / guest  
 ghomon- / homo / gome (obsolete)  
 ghol- / (Gr.) chole (*whence* cholera) / gall 'žólć'  
 ghed- / (pre)he(n)dere 'to take' / get  
 ghaido- / haedus 'kid' / goat

#### 4. INDO-EUROPEAN p / GERMANIC f

pätēr / pater / father  
 pisk- / piscis / fish  
 prtū- / portus / ford

#### 5. INDO-EUROPEAN t / GERMANIC θ

treyes/trēs/three  
 tū/tū/OE þū 'thou'

#### 6. INDO-EUROPEAN k / GERMANIC x

karn-/cornū/horn  
 kerd-/cord-/heart  
 kwod/quod/what (OE hwæt)

#### 7. INDO-EUROPEAN b / GERMANIC p

abel-/(Russ.) jabloko/apple

#### 8. INDO-EUROPEAN d / GERMANIC t

dwō/ duo/two  
 dent-/dents/tooth

#### 9. INDO-EUROPEAN g / GERMANIC k

genu/ genu/knee  
 agro-/ ager 'field'/ acre

- Old High German differs from the general Germanic situation as a result of the **Second or OHG sound shift** — which occurred comparatively recently as linguistic history goes. It was nearing its completion by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century of our era. This shift began in the southern, mountainous part of Germany and spread northward, stopping short of the low-lying northern section of the country. The *high* in High German (*Hochdeutsch*) and the *low* in Low German (*Plattdeutsch*) refer only to relative distances above sea level. High German became in time standard German relegating Low German to the status of a peasant patois in Germany.
- The Continental home of the English was north of the area in which the High German shift occurred. But even if this had not been so, the English language would have been unaffected by changes that had not begun to occur at the time of the Anglo-Saxon migrations to Britain, beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Consequently English has the earlier consonantal characteristics of

Germanic, which among the West Germanic languages it shares with Low German, Dutch, Flemish, and Frisian. We may illustrate the High German shift in part by contrasting English and High German forms.

Proto-Germanic *p* appears in High German as *pf* or, after vowels, as *ff* (*pepper-Pfeffer*).

Proto-Germanic *t* appears as *ts* (spelled *z*) or, after vowels, as *ss* (*tongue-Zunge*; *water-Wasser*).

Proto-Germanic *k* appears after vowels as *ch* (*break-brechen*).

Proto-Germanic *d* appears as *t* (*dance-tanzen*).