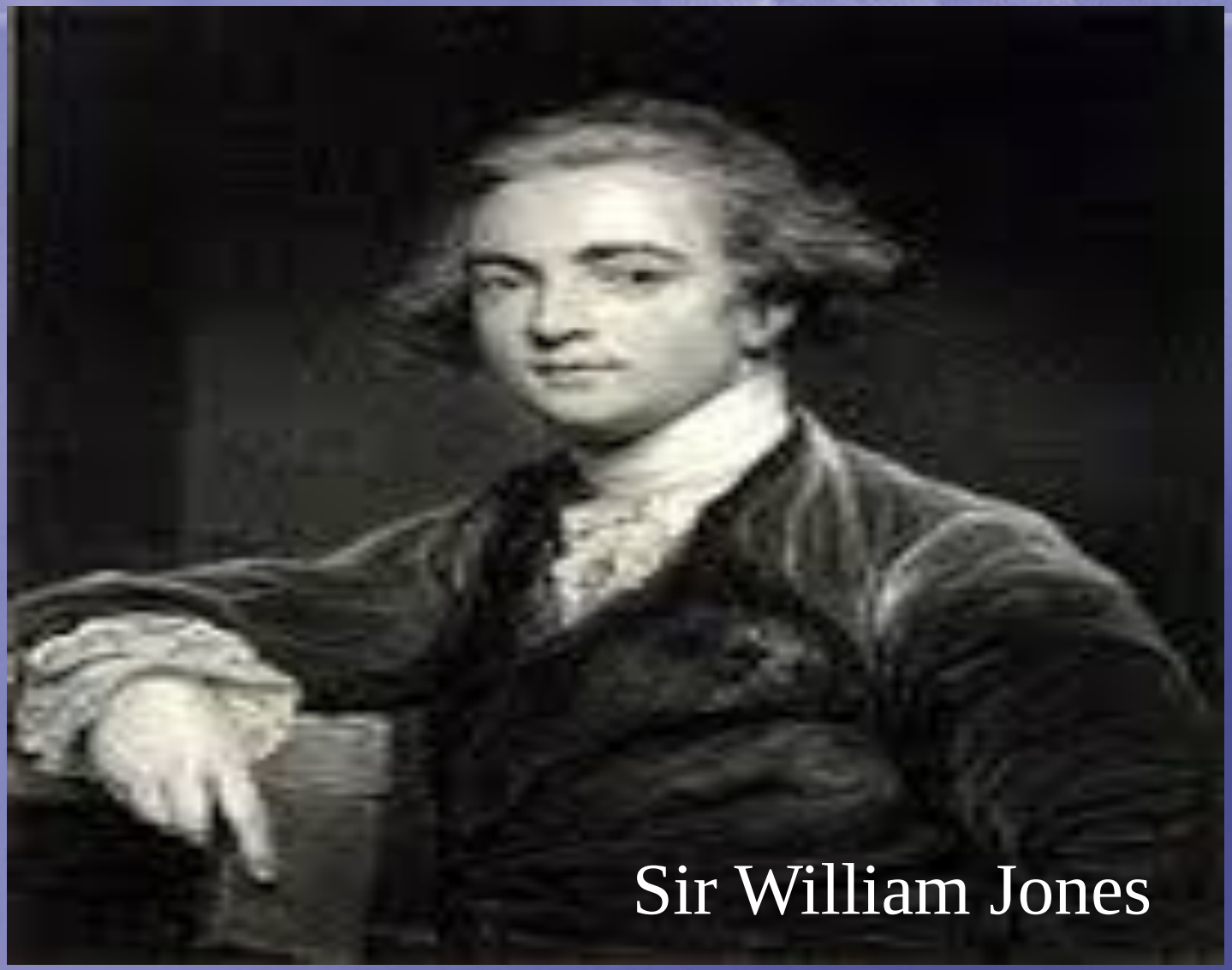
Language

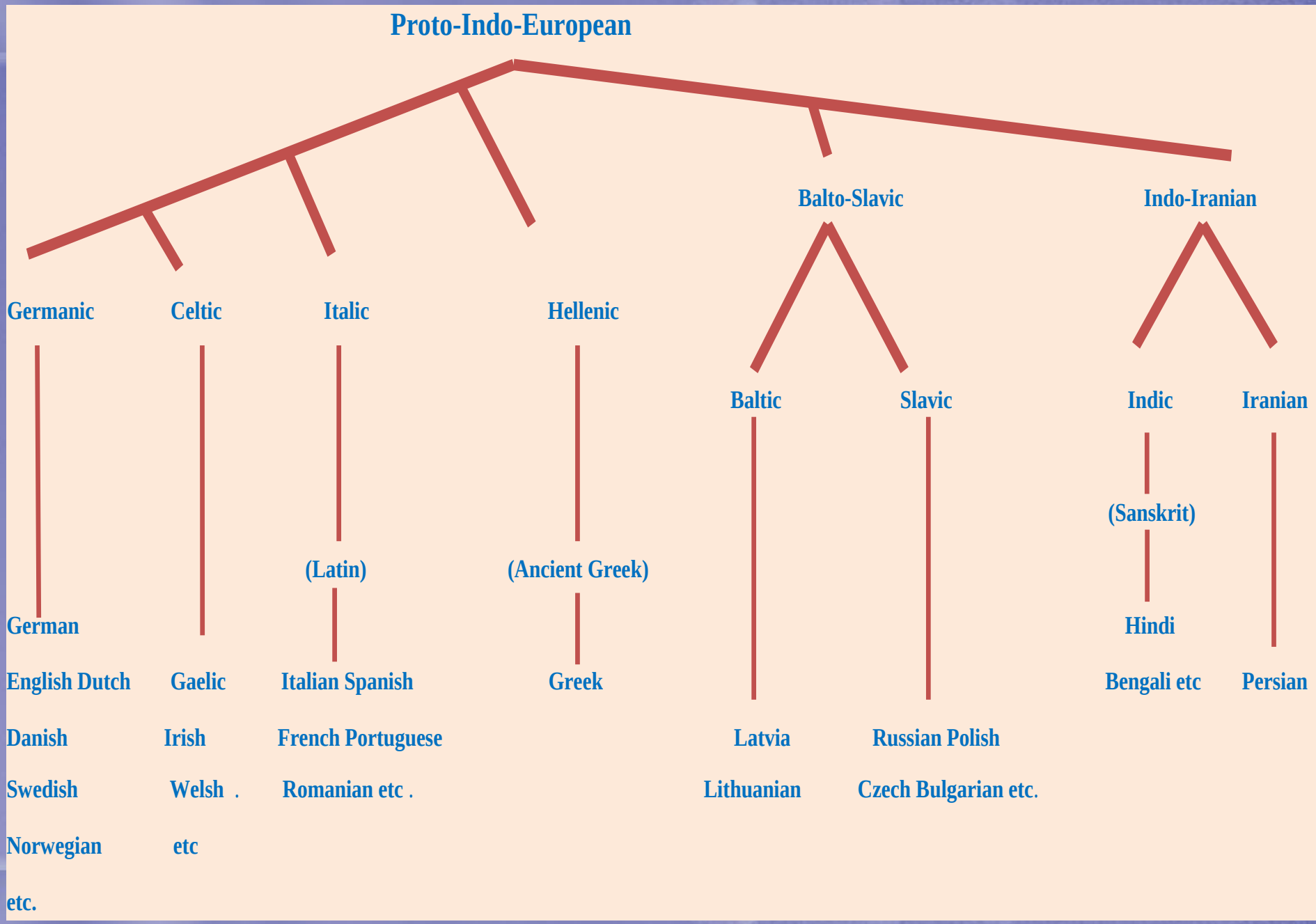
History and Change

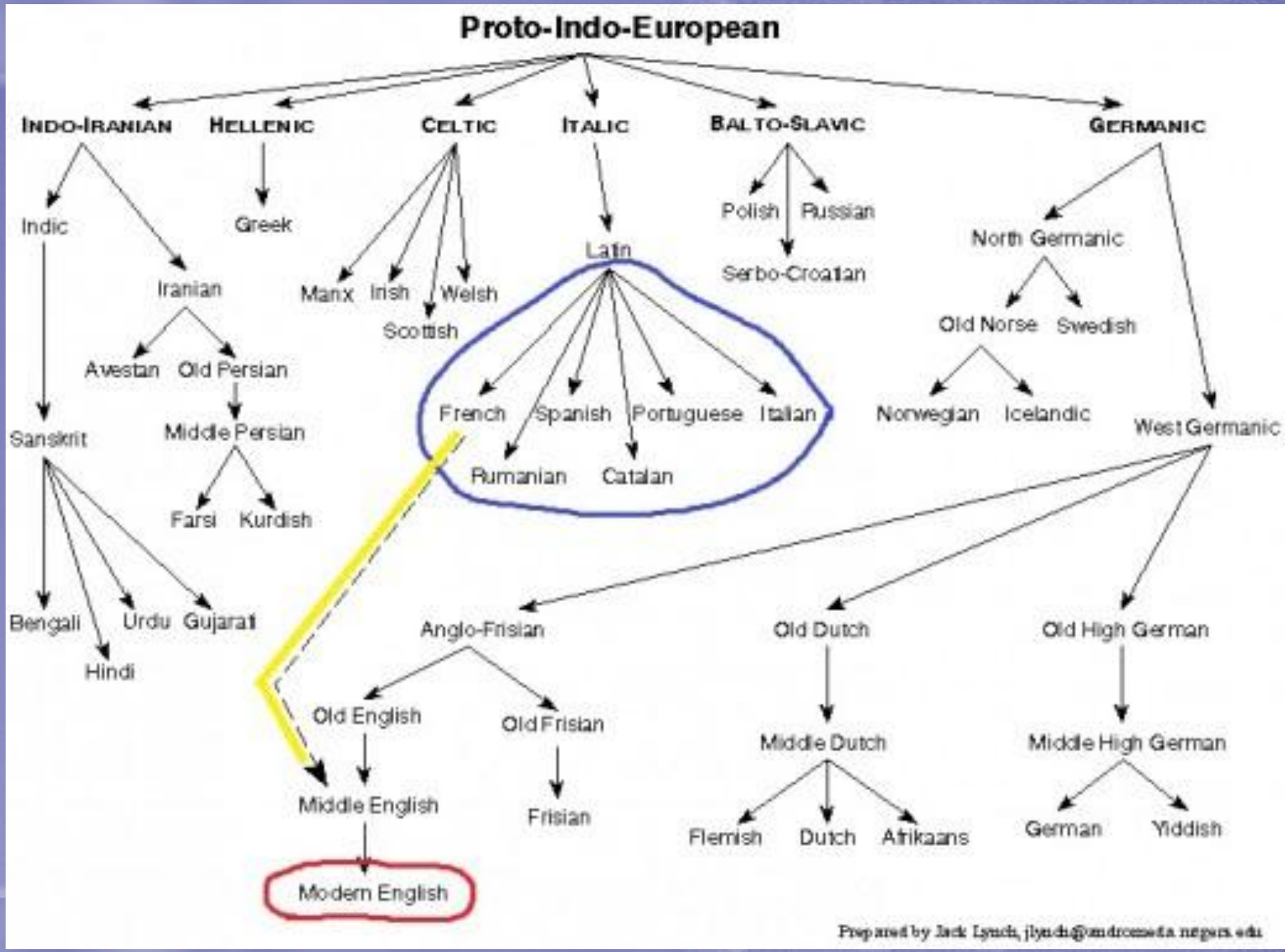
Family Trees



Sir William Jones

Sir William Jones suggested that a number of languages from very different geographical areas must have some in common.


Proto-Indo-European
Germanic
Celtic
Italic
Hellenic
Balto-Slavic
Indo-Iranian
Baltic
Slavic
Indic
Iranian
(Latin)
(Ancient Greek)
(Sanskrit)
German
English Dutch
Danish
Swedish
Norwegian
etc.
Gaelic
Irish
Welsh .
etc
Italian Spanish
French Portuguese
Romanian etc .
Greek
Latvia
Lithuanian
Russian Polish
Czech Bulgarian etc.
Hindi
Bengali etc
Persian


Proto-Indo-European
INDO-IRANIAN
HELLENIC
CELTIC
ITALIC
BALTO-SLAVIC
GERMANIC
Indic
Iranian
Greek
Manx
Irish
Welsh
Scottish
Latin
Polish
Russian
Serbo-Croatian
North Germanic
Old Norse
Swedish
Norwegian
Icelandic
Avestan
Old Persian
Middle Persian
Farsi
Kurdish
Sanskrit
Bengali
Urdu
Gujarati
Hindi
French
Spanish
Portuguese
Italian
Rumanian
Catalan
West Germanic
Anglo-Frisian
Old English
Old Frisian
Middle English
Frisian
Modern English
Old Dutch
Middle Dutch
Flemish
Dutch
Afrikaans
Old High German
Middle High German
German
Yiddish
Prepared by Jack Lynch, jlynch@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Indo-European
ITALIC
GERMANIC
SLAVONIC
Latin
French
Spanish
Italian
Portug.
Rumanian
Gothic
AHD
MHD
Deutsch
OE
ME
English
Polish
Czech
Slovak
Sorbian
Russian

Family Connections

Sanskirt	Latin	Greek	
pitar	pater	pater	(father)
bhratar	frater	phrater	(brother)

Cognates

A cognate of a word in one language is a

in another language that has similar word form and is or was used with a similar meaning, as

father , mother , friend, brother (English)

vater , mutter, freund , bruder (German)

Comparative Reconstruction

It is a procedure that is used to reconstruct the original (proto) form in the common language. There are two ancestral principles :

- **majority principle**
- **most natural development principle**

Sound Reconstruction

Italian	Spanish	French	
cantare	cantar	chanter	(sing)
catena	cadena	chaine	(chain)
cavallo	caballo	cheval	(horse)

Word Reconstruction

mube	mupe	mup	---------- (stream)
abadi	abati	apat	---------- (rock)
agana	akana	akan	---------- (knife)
enugu	enuku	enuk	--------- (diamond)

Language Change

It is variation over time in

a language's phonetic, morphological,

semantic, syntactic , and other features.

Causes of language change

- Economy
- Analogy
- Language contact
- The medium of communication
- Cultural environment
- Migration / Movement
- Invasion / colonialism

Old English (Anglo-Saxon)

English language comes from the Germanic languages spoken by three tribes from northern Europe in the fifth century ; **Angles** , **Saxons** and **Jutes**.

In eighth to tenth centuries , the language (Old Norse) of **Viking** who settled in the coastal regions of Britain was the fourth source for English.

Anglo-Saxon refers to the period of the history of the part of Great Britain that became known as England. **Anglo-Saxon** is a general term referring to the Germanic peoples who came to Britain during the 5th and 6th centuries, including **Angles**, **Saxons**, **Frisii and Jutes**. The term also refers to the language spoken at the time in England, which is now called **Old English**.

Northumbria
Mercia
East Anglia
Wessex
Key
Areas of Britain the settlers occupied
Angles
Jutes
Saxons

Anglo – Saxon Migration
5th century
Based on Jones & Mattingly's Atlas of Roman Britain, Haywood's Dark Age Naval Power, Lebecq's The Northern Seas (Fifth to Eighth Centuries), Wood's The Channel from the 4th to the 7th centuries AD, and Davies' Annals and the Origin of Mercia
0 km 500
0 mi 250
Jutland
Anglia
After 500?
Britons
Saxon coast
Frisii
Britons
Frankish coast
c. 450?

Norwegian Sea
VIKING HOMELAND
K
J
I
H
A
C
B
G
D
L
Atlantic Ocean
EUROPE
E
NORTH AMERICA
F
Black Sea
AFRICA
Mediterranean Sea
VIKING JOURNEYS: 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

Greenland
Iceland
Norway
Sweden
Russia
Britain
Denmark
Newfoundland
Germany
France

Norway
Sweden
Scotland
Denmark
Ireland
Wales
England
Key
Viking homelands
Viking settlements

Middle English

The event that marks the end of the **Old English** period and the beginning of the **Middle English** period is the arrival of the Norman French in England and their victory at Hastings under William the Conqueror in 1066.

Political Map of Europe

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ENGLAND
Rouen
NORMANDY
Paris
Chartres
FRANCE

ENGLAND
London
ENGLISH CHANNEL
NORMANDY
Paris

GREAT BRITAIN
Dover
Calais
Exeter
Portland
Dartmouth
English Channel
Cherbourg
Le Havre
FRANCE
Allied area
Axis-occupied area

French became the language of nobility , the government, the law and civilized life in England.

The language of peasants remained English .

The peasants worked on the land and reared sheep, cows and swine.

Sound Changes

Some changes occurred from Middle to Modern English. Some sounds disappeared resulting in the ‘silent letters’ .

Word initial velar stop / K / and / g / are not pronounced before / n / .

Metathesis

reversal in position of two sounds in a word ,

frist → first hros → horse

Epenthesis

addition of a sound to the middle of a word,

spinel → spindle timr → timber

Prothesis

addition of a sound to the beginning of a word,

schola → escuela

Syntactic Changes

Changes that involve differences between the structure of sentences in Old and Modern English.

- The subject may follow the verb or the object could be placed before the verb in Old English .
- Double negation was possible in Old English.
- Loss of a large number of inflectional affixes from many parts of speech.

Semantic Changes

- Borrowing

Arts (e.g. concerto, allegro, tempo, aria, opera, soprano) are borrowed from Italian and 'ballet' from French.

Business - English exports English terms to other languages in business and technology (examples *le meeting* to French).

Philosophy - derive from Greek dominance in philosophy, mathematics, linguistics, economic theory. Examples include democracy, theory and so on.

Religion - religions may carry with them a large number of technical terms from the language of the originating culture.

For example: Arabic (Islam) - Arabic words like hijab

Greek (Christianity) - Likewise Greek words like baptisma have entered many languages as *baptism* or similar.

Hebrew (Judaism) - Some terms in the Hebrew Bible have been carried into other languages due to being borrowed rather than translated in Bible translations. For example Hebrew *shabbat* ("day of rest" שַׁבָּת) has been borrowed into most languages in the world: in Greek the word is Σάββατο; Latin sabbato; Spanish sábado; and in English Sabbath.

Latin (Catholicism) - Latin words like *missa* and *communio* have entered English as *mass* and *communion*.

Sanskrit (Hinduism) - words like *guru* (*teacher*)

Science (Latin) - medicine (itself a Latin loanword) uses a large vocabulary of Latin terms (sternum, appendix), as a result of medieval advances in medical science being conducted in Latin - even if some of the earliest Latin medical texts were translations from Greek and Arabic.

Broadening

The process by which the meaning of a word becomes broader or more inclusive than its earlier meaning. Also known as *generalization* or *extension*.

‘holy day’ is nowadays used to refer to ‘holiday’ or any general break from work.

narrowing takes place when a word comes to refer to only part of the original meaning. The history of the word *hound* in English neatly illustrates this process. It was the generic word for any kind of dog at all. In German, where the word *Hund* simply means 'dog.' Over the centuries, however, the meaning of *hund* in English has become restricted to just those dogs used to chase .

Example - wife’ could be used to refer to any woman .