

Periodization of English – language-external and -internal facts

1.) Extralinguistic facts and their influence on the English language

Period	Extralinguistic fact
449 – 1100 Old English (‘Anglo-Saxon’)	c. 500 AD: Invasion of Celtic Britain by Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) > Celtic-Roman language replaced by Germanic 793 viking invasions > loanwords through language contact
1100 – 1500 Middle English	Norman Conquest 1066 > Influx of French loanwords through language contact
1500 - 1800 Early Modern English	Printing press 1476 (William Caxton) > Emergence and codification of standard English [King James Bible (1611), grammars, dictionaries (Samuel Johnson's Dictionary 1755)]

2.) Intralinguistic facts (syntax)

Period	Main Clauses	Subordinate Clauses
Old English	vs PIE: V ₂ position instead of SOV vs ME: AVS, OVE possible	= PIE vs ME: V-final
Middle English	vs OE: transition to SVO vs EMnE: impersonal constructions still possible	vs OE: transition to SVO, but vs EMnE: SOV still possible
Early Modern English	vs ME: increasing do-support / impersonal constructions > 0 / SOV with pronominal objects > 0 vs PDE: possible constructions are still: VSO in questions and after adverbials / negation of full verbs in imperatives and declaratives / 1 st person plural imperative without auxiliary	vs ME = PDE: SVO

3.) Intralinguistic facts (morphology)

	Nouns	Pronouns	Adjectives/Adverbs	Verbs		
Old English	vs PIE: a-,n-,z-stems vs ME: marking of gen., dat. sg. (-es, -e) + acc., gen., dat. pl. (-as, -a, um)	vs ME: <i>þu, þe</i> (insular script); 3 rd pers. pl.: <i>hie, hira, heom</i>	vs PIE: development of weak adj. forms -a (after determiner) vs ME: case marking of gen., dat., acc. sg., pl. adverbs -e	WEAK/STRONG vs PIE: new weak verbs (dental suffix) vs ME: many strong verbs	CONJUGATION vs PIE: less inflections vs ME: plural: -ath, -on	PARTICIPLES vs ME: progressive: -ande/ende; past part: -en/-ed in strong & weak class
Middle English	vs OE: most nouns a-stem; all endings collapse into -(e)s (gen./pl.) vs EMnE: /eS/ still pronounced	vs OE: different spelling <i>thou, thee</i> (Carolingian minuscule); 3 rd pers. pl. Scandinavian borrowings <i>they, their, them</i> = EMnE	vs. OE: all adj. declensions collapse into -e (except nom. sg. strong: \emptyset); adverbs -lic (body) vs EMnE: adjectives still declined	vs OE: less strong verbs vs EMnE: but still some	vs OE: weakening to -en in plural (pres./past) vs EMnE: 3 rd sg. always -eth	vs OE: -ande replaced by -ing from OE verbal noun end. -ung vs EMnE: still variation; past part: -en (strg) vs -ed (weak)
Early Modern English	vs ME: loss of unstressed /ə/ → allomorphy [ɪz,z,s] vs PDE: some old plural forms (<i>shoen</i>); zero/double marking of gen.	= ME vs PDE: singular + plural forms used; <i>ye</i> nominative vs <i>yow</i> objective case 2 nd pers. pronoun sg. lost (need for polite address)	vs ME: all endings lost; adverbs -ly vs PDE: more variation in synthetic/analytic comparison	vs ME: most strong verbs lost > regular = PDE	vs ME: -eth repl. by northern -s vs PDE: infl. in modals 2 nd p.; perfect + BE; neg. without DO; imp. 1 st pl. without aux.	vs ME: always -ing, frequent use = PDE [some strong past part. survive (<i>forgotten, eaten</i>)]

4.) Intralinguistic facts (phonology)

	Short Vowels	Long Vowels	Consonants
Old English	vs PIE: /o/ > /a/; /e/ > /ɪ/ vs ME: existence of /y/, /æ/	vs PIE: /a:/ > /o:/ vs ME: existence of /æa/, /eo/	vs PIE: Grimm + Verner vs ME: <cg> = /dʒ/; / <sc> = /ʃ, sk/; allophony /g/: /g, j, ɣ/ & /f, θ, s/: [v, ð, z] & /h/: /h, x, ç/; double consonant letters indicate long Cs; <hw> = /xw/
Middle English	vs OE: /y/ unrounded > /i/; /æ/ raised to /ɛ/; unstressed short V > /ə/; lengthening before homorganic C clusters /mb, nd, ld/ & in open, stressed syllables vs EMnE: <a>, <u> always pron. /a/, /u/; <o> pron. /ɔ/	vs OE: monophthongization: /æa/ > /ɛ:/ & /eo/ > /e:/; diphthongization before /x/ + loss of /x/, rounding: /a:/ > /ɔ:/; shortening before C clusters others than /mb, nd.../ & in unstressed syllables vs MnE: no GVS yet	vs OE: disambiguation: <c> pron. /k/ = <k>; <c> pron. /tʃ/ = <ch>; <g> pron. /j/ = <y>; <f> pron. /v/ = <v>; <h> pronounced /x, ç/ = <gh>; <hw> > <wh> now pron. /hw/ vs EMnE: C clusters pronounced; /ŋ/ allophone status; /r/ + /l/ always pronounced
Early Modern English	vs ME: <a> mostly pron. /æ/; /u/ mostly centralized to /ʌ/; <o> pron. /ʊ/; /ɛ/ fronted to /e/; /ə/-dropping in final unstressed syll.; centering of /i, e, u/ before /r/ vs. PDE: /æ/ not yet lengthened before /ns, nt/ or voiceless fricatives; no rounding effect of /w/ yet	vs ME: GVS vs PDE: /əɪ/ , /əʊ/ instead of /aɪ/, /aʊ/; <ea> still pronounced /e:/	vs ME: C cluster simplification /kn, hw, wr/ > /n, w, r/; /ŋ/ phoneme status; deletion of postvocalic /l/ before /k, f, m/; /zj, sj/ > /z, ʃ/; /ç/ lost after /i/ [+ lengthening]; /x/ after /u/ deleted or > /f/ vs PDE: postvocalic /r/ still pronounced