

Krisch Thomas  
Publikationen

2010 Etymology. In: The Continuum Companion to Historical Linguistics ed.  
Luraghi Silvia and Vit Bubenik. London, New York: Continuum, pg. 311-322

.

# 17 Etymology<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Krisch

## Chapter Overview

1. Introduction	311
2. Etymology in Past and Present	311
3. What is Etymology?	317
Notes	320

### 1. Introduction

Due to limitations in space, this chapter can only give a very short introduction to the very complex and extremely interesting field of the study of etymology. I had to choose between a very cursory theoretical survey with a listing of all the things one has to take into consideration when making an etymology and a 'practical approach,' i.e. presenting etymology by 'doing' it. I chose a way in between, but this chapter is much nearer to the 'practical' approach.

### 2. Etymology in Past and Present

This section mainly deals with Plato's dialogue *Kratylos* and tries to contrast Plato's method with today's approach. The main focus of our presentation lies on methodology.

Etymology deals with the origins of words. The English term 'etymology' is a learned loan from ancient Greek *etymología* 'etymology' and can be analyzed as Greek *étym-o-* 'the true sense of a word' + *-logía*, quasi-suffix denoting 'science'.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of words has fascinated mankind ever since. In antiquity, Plato's dialogue 'Kratylos' addresses this problem. In this dialogue, Socrates builds up some etymologies, mainly etymologies of names of gods and words which, as

he argues, stem from the barbarians. Among other examples, three etymologies are presented for the god of the sea, Poseidon, cf. (1)

(1) Pl. Cra. 402d–e:

I think now, the (name) of Poseidōn was given [by the first who applied it] because the power of the sea held him [scil. the one who gave the name to Poseidōn, TK] when he was walking and did not let him advance, but was like a bond (*desmós*) of the feet (*podōn*) for him. Now, he called the god who controls this power 'Poseidon' because he is (one) being a 'foot-bond' (*posí-desmo-*); The *e* [between *s* and *i*, TK] is inserted suitably because of appropriateness (*euprepéias héneka*). But I do not want to say this too quickly, rather, originally, one pronounced two *l*'s (*dýlo lábda* [*sic!*]) instead of the *s* (*síigma*) because the god is much (*pollá*)—knowing (*eidótos*; Gen. of *eidōs* in an absolute construction, TK). Equally possible (*ísōs*) he may be called *ho seíōn* (the Shaker) from the shaking (*apò tou seíein*), added are the '*p*' (*tò peî*) and the '*d*' (*tò delta*).

## 2.1 Three Etymologies for the Name of the Greek God Poseidon in Classical Antiquity

In his first etymology in (1) Socrates uses the following interpretations and arguments:

- He starts with semantics and interprets the name Poseidon as a compound (more exactly as a juxtaposition/case compound) *posí-desmo* meaning '(one) being a bond for the feet' [*posí* is the regular dat. pl. of the word for 'foot,' here in the function of a *dativus incommodi*], a word which was formed creatively by Plato (it is a 'hapax legomenon,' attested only here in Ancient Greek). Compounds with a dative as their first member were not unusual in Greek e.g. *nausí-pompos* '(one) being a guide for ships' (*dativus commodi*); *ikkhthysí-lēistēr* 'fish-stealer' (*dativus respectūs*) and in names (*kher-si-dámas*, lit. '(someone) conquering with the hands,' *dativus instrumenti*).
- He looks for a motive for the naming (the sea acting as a bond for the feet).
- He tries to give solutions for one of the phonological problems (insertion of *e* because of 'appropriateness'), but he does not deal with a lot of other phonological and morphological details concerning the second part of the word.

In the second etymology presented in reverse order, start for the meaning.

As in the first etymological problems posed by this etymology, the participle of the perfect is the  $\bar{o}$  (the genitive, the form to be expected for Poseidon).

In the third etymology attempt:

- (a) Socrates starts again with the phrase 'the Shaker of the earth', known as *enosí-khthō*, which has at least three synonymous expressions: *seisí-khthō* 'the earth', *seisí-khthō* 'the earth', *seisí-khthō* 'the earth'. As in his second etymology, Socrates repeats the article with the same meaning.
- (b) The phonological analysis of the word simply mentioning that the word is a compound of *seisí* 'the earth' and *khthō* 'the earth'.

## 2.2 Methodological Considerations

Let us consider what is in  
of Poseidon and an approach

- (a) One still tries to understand (cf. the not restrict oneself Socrates does,<sup>5</sup> one and data taken from
- (b) One still looks for pragmatics (cf. the fit in with Poseidon

The big difference between  
that nowadays one tries  
morphology and in sem-  
iology and culture. One

In the second etymology in (1), a similar procedure is applied, but it is presented in reverse order, starting with phonology and ending with a motivation for the meaning.

As in the first etymology, there is no solution of all the phonological problems posed by this etymology. Furthermore, the stem-formation of *eidōs*, a participle of the perfect-present verb *oīda* 'I know,' does not contain any *n* after the *ō* (the genitive, the form actually appearing in the text, is *eidōtos*), as would be expected for Poseidon.

In the third etymology in (1) the order of the procedure is similar to his first attempt:

- (a) Socrates starts again with semantics, this time taking a definite noun phrase 'the Shaker' as a starting point. In antiquity, god Poseidon was known as *enosí-khtōn* 'Shaker of the Earth'<sup>3</sup> since Homeric times. Also, at least three synonyms of this epithet were in use: *e(n)nosí-gaios* 'shaker of the earth,' *seisí-khthōn* 'shaking the earth,' *gaiē-okhos* 'mover of the earth.'<sup>4</sup> As in his second etymology, Socrates assumes a univerbation, this time of the article with the noun.
- (b) The phonological inconsistencies of this etymology are 'solved' by simply mentioning that 'p' and 'd' are added.

## 2.2 Methodological Comparison of Classical and Modern Approaches to Etymology

Let us consider what is in common between these approaches to an etymology of Poseidon and an approach which would be taken in the twenty-first century AD:

- (a) One still tries to explain 'opaque' words from parts which are better understood (cf. the above explanations by univerbations), but one does not restrict oneself to data from the same synchronic stage and dialect as Socrates does,<sup>5</sup> one also takes into account other dialects, historical data and data taken from genetically related languages.
- (b) One still looks for solutions which are motivated from semantics and pragmatics (cf. the semantic and mythological explanations above which fit in with Poseidon as god and as part of mythology).

The big difference between Socrates' approach and a 'modern' etymology is that nowadays one tries to argue systematically in all strata, in phonology, in morphology and in semantics/pragmatics and also extra-linguistically in philology and culture. One also takes into account historical developments. If one

wants to be a productive and successful expert in etymology, one has to thoroughly study all the areas mentioned.

From today's perspective all of the phonological details of Socrates' etymologies turn out to be wrong, because they cannot be observed in a systematic way in Greek.

Research in the past 150 years has found out lots of regularities in languages and in their history (in the case of phonology there are the sound laws), and any etymology provided must 'fit' into the systematic picture drawn by linguists or one must find explanations for the things that contradict this research. Let us return to Socrates' first etymology. There is no rule in Greek which inserts an *e* (cf. the first etymology) between an *s* and a *d*. Furthermore, one would not accept a vague principle of 'appropriateness' as explanation, though this type of reasoning is still used in linguistics, but in rigid limits (e.g. concerning syllable structure). There are similar problems for the two other etymologies of Socrates. A rule which converts two *l*'s into one *s* does not exist elsewhere in the language and an addition of '*p*' and '*d*,' as proposed in the third etymology likewise is not supported elsewhere in the language.

Even in today's etymological research, one is sometimes forced to assume sporadic 'excrecence'<sup>6</sup> of a consonant, especially at the end of a word, but one is not content just stating this 'excrecence' and one tries to find an explanation for it. If one compares Modern English *axe* with its cognate Modern High German *Axt* one must explain where the '*t*' in NHG *Axt* comes from. All the older stages of the Germanic languages (including OHG) lack the *t* (e.g. OHG *ackus*, OE *æces*, Gothic *aqizi*). This sporadic insertion of a stop word-finally is explained by Hock (1991: 124): 'At the end of an utterance, the organs of speech ordinarily return to their rest position. But occasionally, especially in emphatic speech, speakers may terminate their utterance more abruptly, by a sudden closure somewhere in the vocal tract.' Another example for this phenomenon is the informal pronunciation of NE *no* as [nəʊp].

Also the left edge of the word is a candidate for 'excrecence,' especially as an outcome of a misdivision of phrases. English *nickname* 'additional name' nowadays is not a transparent word any more. The original form was *ekenname* (there are Middle English attestations cited in the OED s.v. *ekenname* dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). The first part of this word, the noun *eke*, [e:kə] 'addition,' goes back to Old English *ēaca* 'addition' by regular sound developments. By the so-called 'Great English Vowel Shift' in the fifteenth century,<sup>7</sup> the long *ē* in [e:kə] was raised to a long *ī* (this long *ī* subsequently was shortened before two consonants in the sixteenth century). The orthography /ck/ for the single consonant [k] is considered a pure writing convention.<sup>8</sup> The form *nickname* with the additional initial *n* came into being by misdividing the indefinite article in the phrase *an ickenname* into a *nickname*.<sup>9</sup>

Another way of accounting for today's research strategies is to enlarge word forms by adding the French word for 'sun,' something with Latin *sol* 'the Vulgar Latin (Italian *sole(m)*']. One of the Old French variants of Vulgar Latin *sol* which developed a homonym [lɛs]<sup>10</sup>. This Old French form with an asterisk \* in front of a word, a phonological development of a suffix (often with a hypocoristic meaning, a diminutive) which often shows a hypocoristic meaning, a diminutive *cul* (hypocoristic diminutive of 'dear lamb' (from *agnus* 'lamb' *agneau* 'lamb'.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.3 How to Distinguish Between the Word for 'God'

The methods of etymology developed to about 1800.<sup>13</sup> It was then that the method of etymology was established. There is a famous example often been cited:<sup>14</sup>

- (2) Voltaire, as is well known, vowels signify nothing (Müller ([1861–1864]).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Bopp and Rasmus Rask) the historical, phonological and lexicological output of this research was applied to cognate languages, their cognates.<sup>15</sup> This research in turn helped to simplify the sound laws and to

Wrong etymological conclusions to be left out of consideration.

Another way of accounting for 'added' sounds in the history of languages in today's research strategies is to look for word-formation processes which enlarge word forms by adding suffixes. Thus, if one looks for an etymology of the French word for 'sun,' *soleil*, it seems clear that this word must have to do something with Latin *sol* 'sun' [cf. e.g. the Italian cognate *sole* which continues the Vulgar Latin (Italian variant) *casus generalis*, the accusative of lat *sol*, i.e. *sole(m)*]. One of the Old French forms for the 'sun' is Nom. *solelz* (the Gallo-Latin variant of Vulgar Latin still had a distinct form of the nominative ending in -s which developed a homorganic stop as a 'Gleitlaut' after a dental *l*, thence -lz [lts]<sup>10</sup>). This Old French form can be traced back to a diminutive \**soliculus* [the asterisk \* in front of a word marks it as a reconstruction] by applying regular phonological developments. The suffix -*culus*, fem. -*cula* is a Latin diminutive suffix (often with a hypocoristic meaning indicating informality and familiarity) which often shows a vowel -*i*- in front of it.<sup>11</sup> The diminutive has lost its hypocoristic meaning, a development similar to the development of Lat. *auricula* (hypocoristic diminutive of *auris* 'ear') into fr. *oreille* 'ear,' *agnellus* 'little / dear lamb' (from *agnus* 'lamb' with another Latin diminutive suffix, -*ellus*) > fr. *agneau* 'lamb.'<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 How to Distinguish between 'Wrong' and 'Right' Etymologies: The Word for 'God' in Greek and Latin

The methods of etymology were very similar to those of Plato from antiquity up to about 1800.<sup>13</sup> It was therefore not surprising that etymology had a bad reputation. There is a famous dictum by Voltaire (eighteenth century) that has very often been cited:<sup>14</sup>

- (2) Voltaire, as is well known, defined etymology as a science in which vowels signify nothing at all, and consonants very little  
(Müller ([1861–1864] 1913))

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (starting with Jacob Grimm, Franz Bopp and Rasmus Rask) the comparative method based on strict morphological, phonological and lexical comparison was developed. The most important output of this research was the discovery of sound laws which mediate between cognate languages, their respective older stages and their common predecessors.<sup>15</sup> This research in turn relies on 'good' etymologies of words that exemplify the sound laws and the regularities of word formation.

Wrong etymological cognates would point to wrong sound laws and have to be left out of consideration. Thus, it has been believed for a long time that



Greek *ἰεός* 'god' (cf. the NE loan *theology* 'science of God') and Latin *deus* 'God' (cf. the NE loan *deity*) would be etymological cognates (cf. the literature in Frisk (1973: 663)). There is no problem with the meaning here. But a Greek *ἰ* does not correspond regularly by 'sound law' to a Latin *d*. One discovered that the normal correspondence is Greek *ἰ* : Latin *f*- (cf. Gr. *ἰῦμός* 'spirit, courage, strong passion' — Lat. *fūmus* 'smoke, fumes'; Gr. *ἰέκε* '(s)he set (preterit)' — Lat. *fēcīt* (/fē:kit/) '(s)he made'; Gr. *ἰύρα* 'door' — Lat. *fores* 'doors'). If one looks at Greek *ἰεός* more closely inside Ancient Greek, one discovers the compounds *ἰέσκελος* 'wonderful'<sup>16</sup> and *ἰέσπ'ατος* 'proclaimed by a god/divine law',<sup>17</sup> where the division-line between the first and the second part of the compound lies between *ἰ*'es and the following consonant.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the compounds, the -s marks the end of the compound stem of the word for 'god.' This is a strong point for assuming that *ἰ*'es- represents a *s*-stem and not a root since compounds with pure roots in the first member are extremely rare in ancient IE languages.<sup>19</sup> The final -s in *ἰεός* marks the nominative singular ending of an -o- stem and not a stem. In Greek sometimes stems are enlarged by the -o- ('thematization') and therefore transferred into the -o-declension.<sup>20</sup> Consequently the pre-Greek<sup>21</sup> form of *ἰεός* must have been *\*ἰ'es-ó-s* (the stem *\*ἰ'es-<sup>o</sup>* can either continue PIE (=Proto-Indo-European) *\*d<sup>h</sup>es-<sup>o</sup>*<sup>22</sup> or *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-<sup>o</sup>*;<sup>23</sup> the Latin cognates and the type of the compound<sup>24</sup> point to the second form). A well-known sound-law in Greek accounts for the loss of the -s- in intervocalic position, giving *ἰεός*. The Latin cognates of the Greek word *ἰεός* are *fās* 'divine law, divine order' (< PIE Tr. *d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s*),<sup>25</sup> *fānum* 'piece of consecrated ground, temple' (< PIE Tr. *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-no-*)<sup>26</sup> and (*diēs*) *fēstus* 'festival-day, holiday' (< PIE Tr. *\*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>s-to-*).<sup>27</sup>

PIE *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-* could reflect a very old *s*-stem from the well-attested root *\*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>-* 'to set, to place' (present in English *do*, German *tun* 'do,' Latin *facere* 'to do,' Greek *tithēmi* 'I set,' Sanskrit *dadāmi* 'I set'). This *s*-stem probably denoted a nomen rei actae with a religiously specialized abstract (metaphoric) meaning 'something sacred placed/established' (i.e. the divine law). Lat. *fās* 'divine law' (an indeclinable neuter) represents the direct continuation of this word. Lat. *fānum* stems from *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-no-* with an old *\*no*-Suffix denoting 'provided with' (cf. e.g. Wackernagel and Debrunner (1954: 734)) lit. 'something provided with divine law'; (*diēs*) *fēstus* would be *\*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>s-to-* with about the same meaning (cf. e.g. Leumann (1977: 333–335) for denominal *\*-to-* in Latin) '(day) provided with divine law' (at these days the gods were venerated). And a 'god' (*ἰεός*) in ancient Greek would be 'someone characterized by divine law.'

The Latin word for 'god,' *deus*, has widespread cognates in other IE languages (e.g. Sanskrit *devās*, OIr. *día*, lit. *diēvas*, all meaning 'G/god'), all going back to PIE *\*deiyu-o-s* 'god.' Greek continues this word only in an adjective derived from it, PIE *\*diu̯jos* > Gr. *dīos* 'heavenly'.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the commonly accepted etymology of *\*deiyu-o-s* is 'belonging to the sky,' and is derived from a PIE word for 'heaven, (day)light,' *\*d̥eyu-s* / Gen. *\*diu̯-os* (present in the name of the Greek

father of the gods, Zeus, and in Latin, *Iupiter*) by a regular process.

## 2.4 Poseidon: The 'Right' Etymology

Let us now return to the etymology of 'right etymology' of this word. An interesting book about the mystery of 'Poseidon' in the context of classical antiquity is by Janda (1999). Janda discusses the literature, with special reference to the etymology of Poseidon, *Poteidās*, interpreting it as *\*potej dah<sub>2</sub>s* 'oh lord of the water' (cf. Gr. *pōsis*, Sanskrit *pōtis* 'the original genitive singular (enlarged with an additional suffix in the dative) like Danube (< *Danuvius*) and Ithaca' (cf. Janda (1999: 10)). Janda frequently states that the final -s was re-enlarged by another suffix containing *h<sub>2</sub>*, giving the more common form *\*potej dah<sub>2</sub>s* (cf. Janda (1999: 10)). Greek *Poseidāōn*; > Attic Greek *Pōseidon*.

## 3. What is Etymology?

### 3.1 The Definition

We adopt Untermann's definition (1990: 10):

- (3) For me, etymology is defined as the process which produces the meaning to it, using given data in order to meet a requirement.

Untermann's definition accounts for the problems (see 2.3 and 2.4 above): One tries to find out which the formation of the word was and which it was formed can be reconstructed. In the examples we already saw some examples.

- (a) The name of Poseidon 'water' which came down from the sky.

and Latin *deus* 'God' in the literature in Frisk

But a Greek  $t^h$  does not. We discovered that the root  $t^h$  'spirit, courage, strength' (preterit) — Lat. *tor-* (tors'). If one looks at the compounds of  $t^h$  (divine law,<sup>17</sup> where the compound lies in the compounds, the  $-s$  is 'god'. This is a strong root since compounds in ancient IE languages.<sup>19</sup> of an  $-o-$  stem and not ('thematization') and recently the pre-Greek<sup>21</sup> in either continue PIE  $t^h$  and the type of sound-law in Greek giving  $t^heós$ . The Latin 'divine order' (< PIE Tr.  $t^h$  Tr.  $*d^heh_2s-no-$ )<sup>26</sup> and

all-attested root  $*d^heh_2-$ , Latin *facere* 'to do,' probably denoted a (metaphoric) meaning (law). Lat. *fās* 'divine' continuation of this word. 'provided with' something provided with at the same meaning (Latin) '(day) provided'. And a 'god' ( $t^heós$ ) in the law.'

in other IE languages (and'), all going back to adjective derived from only accepted etymology from a PIE word for the name of the Greek

father of the gods, Zeus, and in the first part of the name of the same God in Latin, *Iupiter*) by a regular process called 'Vrddhi'.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.4 Poseidon: The 'Right' Etymology

Let us now return to the etymology of 'Poseidon' mentioned above. What is the 'right etymology' of this word according to today's state of reasoning? In his interesting book about the mysteries of Eleusis, Janda (2000: 256–258) discusses 'Poseidon' in the context of considerations about Poseidon's wife, Demeter. Janda discusses the literature, which has brought up a number of suggestions,<sup>30</sup> and he supports the etymology starting from the Greek dialectal (Doric) variant of Poseidon, *Poteidās*, interpreting it as the fossilization of a vocative syntagm IE  $*potej dah_2s$  'oh lord of the water,' the first word of which is the regular vocative of  $*pot-i-$  'lord' (cf. Gr. *pósis*, Sanskrit *pāti-*)<sup>31</sup> and the second word can be seen as the original genitive singular (ending  $-s$ ) to a noun PIE  $*dah_2-$  'water' [continued with an additional suffix in Sanskrit *dānu-* 'river' and also in names of rivers like *Danube* (< *Danuvius*) and *Don*]. The syntagm  $*Potej dās$  appeared so frequently that the final  $-s$  was reinterpreted as a stem formant<sup>32</sup> and could be enlarged by another suffix containing  $n$  which had an individualizing function giving the more common form  $*Potejdāsōn$  (by regular development >Homeric Greek *Poseidāōn*; > Attic Greek *Poseidōn*).

## 3. What is Etymology?

### 3.1 The Definition

We adopt Untermann's definition (my translation):

- (3) For me, etymology is defined as: establishing and describing the process which produces a new sequence of phonemes and assigns a meaning to it, using given vocabulary and given grammatical means, in order to meet a requirement which emerges. (Untermann (1975: 105))

Untermann's definition accounts for the method applied in section 2 (especially 2.3 and 2.4 above): One tries to go back in time until one reaches the state in which the formation of the word is most transparent so that the process by which it was formed can be reconstructed with as much certainty as possible. In section 2 we already saw some examples for etymologies that go back far in time:

- (a) The name of Poseidon was traced back to a syntagm 'Oh lord of the water' which came down to Pre-Greek (still preserved in Doric). This is



the description of the process which produces a new sequence of phonemes (see (3)). This form was enlarged by a suffix in Homeric Greek (= use of given grammatical means in (3)). Evidently the naming of the god met a requirement: PIE was not spoken near the sea (probably it was spoken in southern Russia), and the name of a new god of the sea was needed.

- (b) The Greek word for 'god,' *ἰεὺς*, was traced back to *\*ἰεσος* by internal reconstruction. The etymology of Pre-Greek *\*thesos* was shown to be the thematization with an *-o-* of an inherited word *ἰεσ-* 'divine law' (part of compounds in Greek) and loss of the *s* in intervocalic position. This is the description of the process which produces a new sequence of phonemes with given grammatical means, cf. (3). The meaning at the time the word for 'god,' *ἰεὺς*, was formed in Greek was: 'someone characterized by divine law.' It is hard to speculate about the motive why the Greek gave up the PIE word for 'god,' *\*deiyos* and which requirement was met by the new word, banning the old word to *ἰεὺς* 'heavenly,' a derivative in adjectival function. Probably an original typical 'epithet' (i.e. an adjective/appositive noun that is used to express the characteristic of a person/thing etc.) of the word for 'god,' meaning 'characterized by divine law,' came to be the main meaning. A comparable process created the German word *Illustrierte* which now denotes a journal with illustrations. This word was originally an adjective in the phrase *illustrierte Zeitung* 'illustrated journal.'<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2 Examples for Etymologies: Podcasting, Penthouse, Bear, Wine, Street, Creed

Of course, etymology is not restricted to 'old' formations. Every word has its etymology, also recent formations. Take the English word *podcasting* (attested since 2004) which means 'the making available of a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar item on the internet for downloading to a personal audio player or a computer.'<sup>34</sup> In this newly created word the first member of the compound, *pod-* (normal NE meaning 'receptacle, a place to keep things') is shortened from the brand name *iPod* (*i* stands for 'internet') for a portable media player which can store songs taken from computers/from the internet, issued in 2001 by Apple Inc.<sup>35</sup> The second member, *-casting* (normal NE meaning 'throw') is taken from the metaphoric meaning 'throwing (sound) waves widely'<sup>36</sup> it has in NE *broadcasting*. In fact, the whole formation is an example for the word formation process of 'blending,' the fusion of words. (*iPod* and *broadcasting* were fused into one word). This type of process is especially popular in English, cf.

e.g. *brunch* (*br[eakfast] X [lunch]*) a word denoting the concept of being and needed to be named.

Sometimes the motive for striving for transparency. This transparency of the linguistic sign is if a word is read into an existent word, which is etymologically similar to the original word from other languages. This is the case with *house*. Its earliest attested form is *pendiz*, and others (coming as a result of a process ultimately coming from Vulgar Latin *partis*). The OED (s.v. *penthouse*) defines a secondary structure attached to the main building, a porch, a shed, an outhouse. Many examples starting with *pent-* were on the first syllable, the *en-* is an unstressed variant of *-house* and *penthouse* appeared in the sixteenth century, the folk etymology of *penthouse* '(luxurious) flat on top of a tall building' is a process of semantic change, cf. also *penthouse* (this volume).

Sometimes, the motive for transparency is to keep away dangerous words, e.g. wild animals like *medved* (Germanic ancestors of English *medved*), in modern times *medved*. Thus, in obituaries and death notices *illness* are used to avoid the term *death*.

As we have just seen with *podcasting*, it always has to bear in mind that a word is borrowing from one language into another, a cultural one: The word *pod* entered English from Germanic languages, among others from Latin *ancora* 'anchor'. The Germanic people used stone anchors from Latin *vinum* (before the Romans who were great players of wine) and the construction principle

e.g. *brunch* (*br[eakfast]* X *[l]unch*), *smog* (*sm[o]ke* X *[f]og*) etc.<sup>37</sup> The need for finding a word denoting the concept of *podcasting* is evident since the 'thing' came into being and needed to be named.

Sometimes the motive for creating a new word out of old material is the striving for transparency. This is called 'folk etymology'<sup>38</sup> whereby the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign is ignored by the speakers and a more transparent word is read into an existent word, most of the time with material that is phonologically similar to the original word. This happens very often with borrowings from other languages. Thus, English *penthouse* has no original connection with *house*. Its earliest attested forms in Middle English (Me.) are *pentiz*, *pentyze*, *pendiz*, and others (coming as a loan from Old French *apentis* 'attached building',<sup>39</sup> ultimately coming from Vulgar Latin/Middle Latin *appendicium* 'additional part'). The OED (s.v. *penthouse*) defines its middle English meaning as 'a subsidiary structure attached to the wall of a main building and serving as a shelter, a porch, a shed, an outhouse, etc. . . . having a sloping roof' and gives many examples starting with the early fourteenth century. Since the stress was on the first syllable, the end of the word could be pronounced similar to the unstressed variant of *-house* as second member of compounds. Already in the sixteenth century, the folk etymology *penthouse* emerged. Today's meaning '(luxurious) flat on top of a tall block' (Ayto (2005: 373)) is a meliorization process of semantic change, cf. also section 2.3. of Chapter 16 on semantic change (this volume).

Sometimes, the motive for a new usage of a word is driven by taboo. One wants to keep away dangerous things and uses code names for it. In ancient times, e.g. wild animals like bears were named 'the brown one' (as in the Germanic ancestors of English *bear*, German *Bär*) or 'honey-eater' (as in Russian *medved*'), in modern times dangerous diseases are coined with euphemisms. Thus, in obituaries and death notices, expressions like *died after a prolonged illness* are used to avoid the taboo word *cancer*.<sup>40</sup>

As we have just seen with *penthouse*, a very important aspect which one always has to bear in mind when looking for an etymology of a specific word is borrowing from one language into another. Here the motivation is mainly a cultural one: The word enters a language together with the thing denoted or the abstract concept introduced by speakers of the other language. The Germanic languages, among them English and German, borrowed the word *anchor* from Latin *ancora* 'anchor'<sup>41</sup> together with the thing (before that the Germanic people used stones for that purpose). The word *wine* was taken from Latin *vīnum* (before that the Germanic tribes mainly drank beer). The Romans who were great planners of infrastructure also introduced the word and the construction principle of *street* into the Germanic area (< Lat. (via) *strāta*

'paved (way)'). The concept of *creed* is a loan from Christian Latin *crēdō* 'I believe.'

## Notes

- Thanks to Christina Katsikadeli, Thomas Lindner, Stefan Niederreiter and Ioannis Fykyas for useful comments on the text. There exist a number of books which present the subject more systematically than this chapter. In particular, the author can recommend Seebold (1981) and Liberman (2005). Useful books include Ross (1969) and Birkhan (1985). The article by Hoffmann and Tichy (1980) (reprinted in 1992), which was translated into English by de Vaan (2006), offers a comprehensive checklist which helps to establish and to evaluate etymological proposals. A very useful survey of folk etymology can be found in Panagl (2005). When a new etymology is proposed, this can have consequences for a number of further etymologies. This is shown in Kirsch (1990). Several English etymologies are discussed in detail in Lindner (1995).
- Actually, Greek *-logia* in Gr. *etymologia* is an abstract noun formed to an agent noun *-lógos* 'scientist.' This agent noun appears as second part of compounds and denotes 'someone who deals with the science named in the first part of the compound.' *Etymologia* 'etymology' thus denotes what the etymologist, the *etymológos* is dealing with, originally everything concerning the true sense of words.
- He was the god of the earthquakes, cf. e.g. the Orphic prayer Orph. H. 17, 9 *hédra na gēs sózois* 'you may keep intact the dwellings of the earth.' The meaning of the first part of the compound is 'to set into movement,' cf. Janda (2000: 257).
- The Mycenaean Greek form *e-no-si-da-o-ne* (dative) contains as first element the verbal element *e-no-si-* 'moving' and as second element a word either meaning 'earth' or 'water,' see below in the text.
- In Cratylus, the borrowing of foreign words is also taken into consideration, cf. Pl. Crat. 409 d, e: 'I think that the Greeks took many words from the barbarians, especially those dwelling under (the rule of) the barbarians.'
- Cf. Hock (1991: 124).
- Cf. the good overview of the processes of vowel shift in Hock and Joseph (1996: 137–138).
- Cf. e.g. Pinsker (1974: 92). This book is especially useful as a quick reference book for sound changes in the history of English.
- One can find more examples for such misdivisions e.g. in Liberman (2005: 99–100).
- Cf. Riefelder (1976: 241).
- E.g. *ēnsi-culus* 'small sword' formed on *ēnsis*, Gen. *ēnsis* 'sword,' Lat. *anaticula* 'duckling' from *anas*, Gen. *anatis* 'duck,' *articulus* 'little limb, joint' from *artus* Gen. *artūs* 'limb'; *versiculus* 'little line' from *versus*, Gen. *versūs* 'line'; likewise a *\*soliculus* from *sol*, Gen. *solis*, though unattested in Latin, is a potential diminutive form.
- This type of emotional 'loading' of a form with subsequent semantic bleaching is a well-known process in language history and appears very frequently with diminutives. In some languages the subsequent application of this process (emotional 'loading'—semantic bleaching—emotional 'reloading') leads to a culmination of diminutive suffixes in one word; Senn (1966: 332) lists a number of examples for this in Lithuanian, e.g. the word for 'father,' lith. *tėvas* 'father': *tėvelėlis* (*-ėlis* + *-ėlis*), *tėvelaitis* (*-ėlis* + *-aitis*); *tėvaitukas* (*-aitis* + *-ukas*) etc. Paul (1975: 163) mentions German examples for this phenomenon, e.g. *Ring-el-chen* 'little ring' with two diminutive suffixes added to *Ring* 'ring.'
- Cf. e.g. Petersen (1992: 13). up to 1800 can be found in the thirteenth and twentieth century.
- The exact original source of the word is not known. Cf. the added note (date of origin) in the entry for *creed* (Noordegraaf (1997)) accessed 1871/12712/1/VVVOLTAIR.
- For example between the etc., their historically attested etc., etc. (reconstruction of Norse and their (reconstruction of Tongan, Samoan, Rarotongan, Proto-Polynesian etc. etc.
- Lit. 'driven by a god/divine force' 'drive, urge.'
- From *theos* 'god, divine law.'
- Cf. the preceding footnote.
- Compounds of this rare type are the compound rendering *pelluviae* 'water in which the ship is' (< *\*aig-pólos*) 'goatherd,' cf. Janda (2000: 257).
- Cf. Risch (1974: 13). Unfortunately, the word was transferred into an -o- stem.
- This form, as we have shown, is called 'internal' because the method is called 'internal'.
- The sign ° indicates that the word is either because the continuation of the word or because there are problems with the reconstruction is not possible to reconstruct the word with a thematic (-o-) suffix earlier.
- The sign \*h<sub>1</sub> stands for a laryngeal. In Greek, the continuation of the word is our reconstruction cf. also Janda (2000: 257).
- This type is formed with the root and in the suffix) in the word. The type is the name of the god (lord), (who is) putting (the word) (Hoffmann and Forssman 1992: 100). Gr. *ménos* 'mind' with the suffix *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-*. The second part, *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-*.
- The abbreviation Tr. stands for 'reconstructed form reached by the root where without being a root based on directly attested forms. The vowel *a* between consonants is lengthened, a regular process (Senn and Meillet (1967: 217)).
- There is compensatory lengthening of the *i* in *Ring* (Leumann (1977: 206)).
- When appearing in the compound *Ring-el-chen*.
- The lengthening of the *i* in *Ring* of 'y' (cf. e.g. Lejeune (1974: 100)).

13. Cf. e.g. Petersen (1992: 13). A more comprehensive survey of the history of etymology up to 1800 can be found in Willer (2003). For the history of etymology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cf. Malkiel (1993).
14. The exact original source for this famous utterance of Voltaire is difficult to find. Cf. the added note (dated 2008) by Noordegraaf to an older publication of his (Noordegraaf (1997)) accessible through the internet: (<http://dare.uvu.vu.nl/bitstream/1871/12712/1/VVVOLTAIRE.pdf>, accessed on 6 May 2009).
15. For example between the Germanic languages such as English, German, Swedish etc., their historically attested precursors Old English, Old High German and Old Norse and their (reconstructed) predecessor Proto-Germanic; between the languages Tongan, Samoan, Rarotongan, Hawaiian and their reconstructed predecessor Proto-Polynesian etc. etc.
16. Lit. 'driven by a god/divine law' from *\*h<sub>2</sub>es-* 'god, divine law' + a derivative of *kélomai* 'drive, urge.'
17. From *\*h<sub>2</sub>es-* 'god, divine law' + a derivative of *\*h<sub>2</sub>emi* 'say.'
18. Cf. the preceding footnotes.
19. Compounds of this rare type often show assimilation between the members of the compound rendering the interpretation of the first member opaque, cf. e.g. Lat. *pelluviae* 'water in which the feet are washed' < *\*ped-luviae*, cf. *ped-* 'foot'; Greek: *aipólos* (< *\*aig-pólos*) 'goatherd,' cf. *aig-* 'goat.'
20. Cf. Risch (1974: 13). Unfortunately I could not find a further example for an *s*-stem transferred into an *-o-* stem.
21. This form, as we have shown, is reached by comparing synchronic Greek data. This method is called 'internal reconstruction.'
22. The sign ° indicates that the researcher does not want to continue the reconstruction either because the continuation of the form is unnecessary for the point in question or because there are problems which (s)he does not want to talk about. In this case it is not possible to reconstruct the whole word for PIE because Greek is the only language with a thematic (*-o-*) formation. Greek *\*h<sub>2</sub>* continues PIE *\*d<sup>h</sup>* as we have seen earlier.
23. The sign *\*h<sub>1</sub>* stands for a laryngeal sound with the tongue formed to pronounce an *e*. In Greek, the continuation of *\*h<sub>1</sub>* between consonants is 'e,' cf. e.g. Rix (1976: 71). For our reconstruction cf. also Mallory and Adams (1997: 231).
24. This type is formed with the weakest ablaut grade (absence of the vowel *e/o* in the root and in the suffix) in the first member of the compound. Another example for this type is the name of the god of the Zoroastrians in the Avesta, *Mazdā-* (*Ahura*), lit. 'the (lord), (who is) putting (everything) into (his) mind'; *mazdā-* < *\*m<sub>1</sub>ps-d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>-* (cf. e.g. Hoffmann and Forssman (2004: 124)), the first part of which is an *s*-stem *\*m<sub>1</sub>p-s-* (cf. Gr. *ménos-* 'mind' with full ablaut grades *e* in the root and *o* in the suffix) like our *\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s-*. The second part, *\*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>-* is the PIE verbal root for 'to put.'
25. The abbreviation Tr. stands for 'transponatum' (transposed form). This term means a reconstructed form reached at by regular historical developments observed elsewhere without being a reconstruction in the strict sense (a true reconstruction is based on directly attested cognates of a particular word). Latin develops *\*h<sub>1</sub>* into the vowel *a* between consonants (*\*d<sup>h</sup>h<sub>1</sub>s* > Lat. *fas*), cf. Schrijver (1991: 90–94). Subsequently, the *a* is lengthened, a regular development in Latin monosyllabic words; cf. Ernout and Meillet (1967: 217).
26. There is compensatory lengthening of a vowel before the group *sn* in Latin (cf. e.g. Leumann (1977: 206)).
27. When appearing in the coda of a syllable, *\*h<sub>1</sub>* lengthens a vowel which precedes it.
28. The lengthening of the *i* in Greek is a compensatory lengthening effected by the loss of 'y' (cf. e.g. Lejeune (1982: 171)).



29. If you put it in a simplified way (and applied to this example), a *vrddhi*-formation takes the 'weak' stem-form of the genitive *\*diu-*, adds an *e* in front of the *i* (and thus creates a new full grade of the ablaut, cf. also notes 25, 32) and adds a thematic vowel *-o-* as stem forming element at the end of the word. Cf. also Darms (1978: 377–380). The semantics of *vrddhi* is 'belonging to.'
30. Cf. e.g. Ruijgh (1991) for a discussion. Ruijgh was the first to take the Mycenaean adjectival derivative of Poseidon, *po-si-da-i-jo*, into consideration.
31. The vocative singular in PIE uses the 'full grade' of the ablaut (presence of an *e*) in the stem-characterizing suffix *-i-*, which is *-ej* and a zero ending, thus giving *\*potej*.
32. Also the writing of a hiatus between the *a* and the *ō* in the Mycenaean texts of the theonym of Poseidon, *po-se-da-o*, to be read as */posejdāhōn/* points to an original *s* in between (which developed to *h* in Mycenaean and then to zero between vowels in Greek); cf. e.g. Bartoněk (2003: 419).
33. Another example for this phenomenon is the English nominalization of the adjective *equal* in phrases like *she is his equal* with the omitted noun *rank*. Until 2002 when the Euro was introduced, the currency of the Netherlands was the *gulden* 'guilder,' originally an adjective meaning 'golden' with an omitted noun meaning 'coin.' Cf. also Latin (*via*) *strata* 'paved (way)' discussed below.
34. Cf. Ayto (2007: 241).
35. Vinnie Chieco, who branded the name, is said to have thought about the phrase 'Open the pod bay door, Hal!' in the science fiction film '2001: A Space Odyssey.' This refers to the white EVA (extra vehicular activity) Pods of the 'Discovery One' spaceship (cf. the URL [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1Pod#cite\\_note-straight-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1Pod#cite_note-straight-4), accessed 6 May 2009). These pods are small, you can do investigations with them outside the big mother- spaceship but you have to return to the spaceship as soon as you need fuel or food. ('Hal' is the name of a computer; if you add a letter in the alphabet to each of the letters of 'Hal' you get the name of the computer company 'IBM').
36. The original meaning of this word before the radio came up in the 1920s was 'throwing seeds widely.'
37. Cf. Liberman (2005: 102–105) for more examples. Of course also examples from other languages exist, cf. e.g. the very informative chapter 8 'Kontamination' in Paul (1975).
38. The English term is a loan translation from the German term 'Volksetymologie.' An alternative English term is 'popular etymology.'
39. The loss of anlauting *a-* in English already in the earliest attestations of the word could be explained as seeing the indefinite article in it (misdivision).
40. Cf. Allan and Burridge (2006: 220).
41. Latin, in turn, took the word from Ancient Greek *ánkŷra*.

EXPL  
LANG



# **Continuum Companion to Historical Linguistics**

Edited by

Silvia Luraghi

and

Vit Bubenik



# Contents

## **Continuum International Publishing Group**

The Tower Building  
11 York Road  
London SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane  
Suite 704  
New York, NY 10038

[www.continuumbooks.com](http://www.continuumbooks.com)

© Silvia Luraghi, Vit Bubenik and Contributors 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

## **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-4411-4465-2 (hardcover)

## **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Newgen Imaging Systems Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

List of Illustrations  
List of Contributors  
Editors' Introduction

1 Historical Linguistics: F  
*Silvia Luraghi and Vit Bu*

2 Sound Change and the  
The Science of Historica  
*John Hewson*

3 Internal Reconstruction  
*Brian D. Joseph*

4 Typology and Universa  
*Hans Henrich Hock*

5 Internal Language Clas  
*Søren Wichmann*

6 Segmental Phonologica  
*Joseph Salmons*

7 Suprasegmental and P  
*Hans Henrich Hock*

## **Part III: Mo**

8 From Morphologizatio  
*Henning Andersen*

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
List of Contributors	ix
Editors' Introduction	xiii
1 Historical Linguistics: History, Sources and Resources <i>Silvia Luraghi and Vit Bubenik</i>	1
 <b>Part I: Methodology</b>	
2 Sound Change and the Comparative Method: The Science of Historical Reconstruction <i>John Hewson</i>	39
3 Internal Reconstruction <i>Brian D. Joseph</i>	52
4 Typology and Universals <i>Hans Henrich Hock</i>	59
5 Internal Language Classification <i>Søren Wichmann</i>	70
 <b>Part II: Phonological Change</b>	
6 Segmental Phonological Change <i>Joseph Salmons</i>	89
7 Suprasegmental and Prosodic Historical Phonology <i>Hans Henrich Hock</i>	106
 <b>Part III: Morphological and Grammatical Change</b>	
8 From Morphologization to Demorphologization <i>Henning Andersen</i>	117

9 Analogical Change <i>Livio Gaeta</i>	147
10 Change in Grammatical Categories <i>Vit Bubenik</i>	161
<b>Part IV: Syntactic Change</b>	
11 Word Order <i>Jan Terje Faarlund</i>	201
12 The Rise (and Possible Downfall) of Configurationality <i>Silvia Luraghi</i>	212
13 Subordination <i>Dorothy Disterheft and Carlotta Viti</i>	230
14 Alignment <i>Geoffrey Haig</i>	250
<b>Part V: Semantico-Pragmatic Change</b>	
15 Grammaticalization <i>Elizabeth Closs Traugott</i>	271
16 Semantic Change <i>Eugenio R. Luján</i>	286
17 Etymology <i>Thomas Krisch</i>	311
<b>Part VI: Explanations of Language Change</b>	
18 Language Contact <i>Bridget Drinka</i>	325
19 Regional and Social Dialectology <i>J. K. Chambers</i>	346
20 Causes of Language Change <i>Silvia Luraghi</i>	358
A-Z Historical Linguistics	371
References	385
Index of Subjects	431
Index of Authors	441
Index of Languages	449

## List of Illustrations

### Figures

Figure 5.1	A starshape
Figure 5.2	An unrooted
Figure 5.3	A network
Figure 5.4	Another net
Figure 5.5	A network i
Figure 5.6a-b	Two version
Figure 5.7	A frequency Uto-Aztec
Figure 5.8	A rank-by-d
Figure 10.1	Systemic va 'Event Time
Figure 16.1	Developmen
Figure 16.2	Extension of
Figure 16.3	Abstraction
Figure 16.4	Semantic M
Figure 19.1	The bundle in France be in the south and Trudgil
Figure 19.2	(aw)-Fronti age-groups made in 19% (Chambers