

THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH WORDS AND THEIR ETYMOLOGY

Kamiljan Fayzullaev

The 2nd year Master's degree student

Department of English Linguistics

The National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

komilfayzullayev1993@gmail.com

Scientific advisor: PhD, M.A. Abdullayeva

Abstract: *This thesis introduces the origin of English words, different categories of etymology, as well as the methods and guiding principles followed by linguists in analyzing the etymology of English vocabulary. Furthermore, it explores potential examples to illustrate these concepts.*

Key words: *English words, etymology, adopted words, word roots, origins.*

The exploration of word etymology involves delving into the origins, evolution, and semantic shifts of words over time. The term “etymology” itself stems from Greek roots: “etymon,” meaning truth or the fundamental essence of a word, and “logos,” signifying study or teaching. Etymology constitutes a branch of linguistics, the discipline concerned with unraveling the birth and interconnections of words. Investigating the etymology of English vocabulary proves both captivating and practical, revealing how many words derive from ancient tongues like Latin and Greek, while others emerge through the addition of prefixes and suffixes. [1; 7-17]. This pursuit furnishes insights into borrowed words and their etymological underpinnings, enriching our understanding of language evolution.

Etymological research focuses on understanding words as cohesive units encompassing sound structure and specific lexical meanings. The aim of studying etymology is to uncover the time, language, context, and form in which a word originated, along with its associated meanings. Exploring word origins also integrates insights from disciplines like history, archaeology, and

ethnography, as words are intertwined with the history of peoples and societies. As language is inherently tied to human culture, the study of etymology has evolved, leading to distinctions between various approaches, including false etymology, folk etymology, and scientific etymology.

Folk etymology refers to a linguistic occurrence where a word's motivation is reinterpreted based on its resemblance to another word, leading to a misunderstanding of its actual history. This misinterpretation can result in changes to the word's sound, spelling, and even morphological structure. [2; 108].

The modified form of the word becomes part of the language's vocabulary until an etymological analysis restores its original motivation. This phenomenon typically occurs with foreign words that, due to their sound similarity to familiar native language words, undergo alterations. For instance, the contemporary English term “cutlet” derives from the French “cotelette,” with the initial segment “cote” being associated with the English verb ‘to cut’ and subsequently modified accordingly. The word standard is usually incorrectly associated with the verb to stand, but it comes from the Old French word “standard”. The ancient Romans called such etymological comparisons “cow” etymology. [3; 84].

Scientific etymology, a concept initially introduced by the ancient Greek Stoics, attained its true scientific significance with the advent of the comparative historical method. This method, involving specific techniques and procedures, transformed the study of etymology into a rigorous discipline. August Friedrich Pott (1802-1887) is credited as the pioneer of scientific etymology, having laid down its foundational principles in his extensive two-volume work titled "Etymological Research in Indo-European Languages, with a Focus on Sound Shifts in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, and Gothic (1833-1836). Pott emphasized the necessity of establishing precise sound correspondences among related languages and their components. He argued that without such

correspondences, etymological investigations would amount to mere intellectual exercises lacking in substantive evidence. [4; 67-71].

Etymological analysis entails following three fundamental rules: phonetic validity, word-formation motivation, and semantic probability. Phonetic validity involves establishing genetic similarity between compared words, recognizing natural correspondences, and explaining phonetic changes using factual evidence and analogies. Word-formation motivation requires tracing a word's origin to a real-life series of word-formation processes and determining their sequence. Semantic probability involves acknowledging the potential convergence of word meanings governed by semantic development laws and belonging to the same semantic category. These rules serve not only as guidelines during etymological investigation but also as criteria for evaluating the accuracy of a given etymology and the direction of the etymologization process. [5; 818].

To summarize, considering the wealth of information provided regarding etymology, it's evident that uncovering the origins of words is a meticulous endeavor, relying on diverse laws and techniques developed by linguistic scholars over an extensive period.

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