Shakespeare's language

Prof. Jonathan Culpeper

@ShakespeareLang
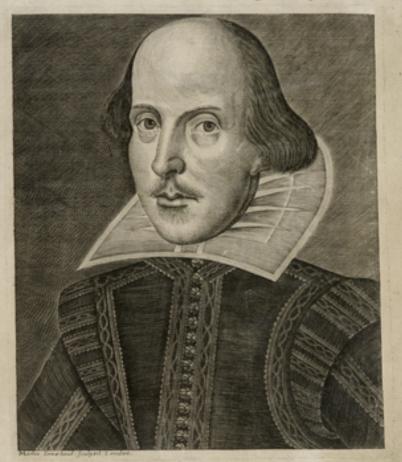
But is it "Shakespeare's Language"?

But is it "Shakespeare's Language"?

- 36 plays were put together and published in 1623 as the ""First Folio – Shakespeare had been dead for 7 years.

- 18(?) plays had been previously published individually, but some are considered "bad" (perhaps reconstructed from memory)

- An early play-text was a bundle of manuscript fragments written for performance, rather than a whole play written for publication

But is it "Shakespeare's Language"?

- Collaboration amongst playwrights is known to have been very common.

- Plagiarism is a modern notion; re-using portions of text from elsewhere could be considered complimentary.

- We have no record of Shakespeare's spoken language, only literary written language.

But is it "Shakespeare's Language"?

So ….

"Shakespeare's language" =

surviving written texts that purport to represent, for the most part, the language that Shakespeare produced for his 'literary' works

What did Shakespeare's language sound like? Jonathan's super quick guide

Some key differences (?):

- The vowel of *mud* was the one we hear in the North

- The vowel of *bath* was the one we hear in the North

- The vowel of *book, cook,* etc. was the same as in some Northern areas (note the 'oo')

- The vowel of *face* was the same as in some Northern areas

- The vowel of *right* was halfway between *reet* in some Northern accents and Southern *right* (i.e [rəɪt] "r-er-ee-t")

- The vowel of *house* was halfway between *hoos* in some Scottish and Northumbrian accents and *house* elsewhere (i.e. [həʊs] "h-er-oo-s")

What did Shakespeare's language sound like? Jonathan's super quick guide

Some key differences (?):

- <r> was pronounced after vowels, e.g. *arm*

- *Meat* rhymed with *great*

- *Swan* rhymed with *can*

- *Which* and *witch* did not sound the same (note the 'h')

- The 's' in the middle of words like *pleasure* sounded like [z] (followed by 'er')

- etc, etc.

What did Shakespeare's language sound like?

So …

it is closer to the spelling and

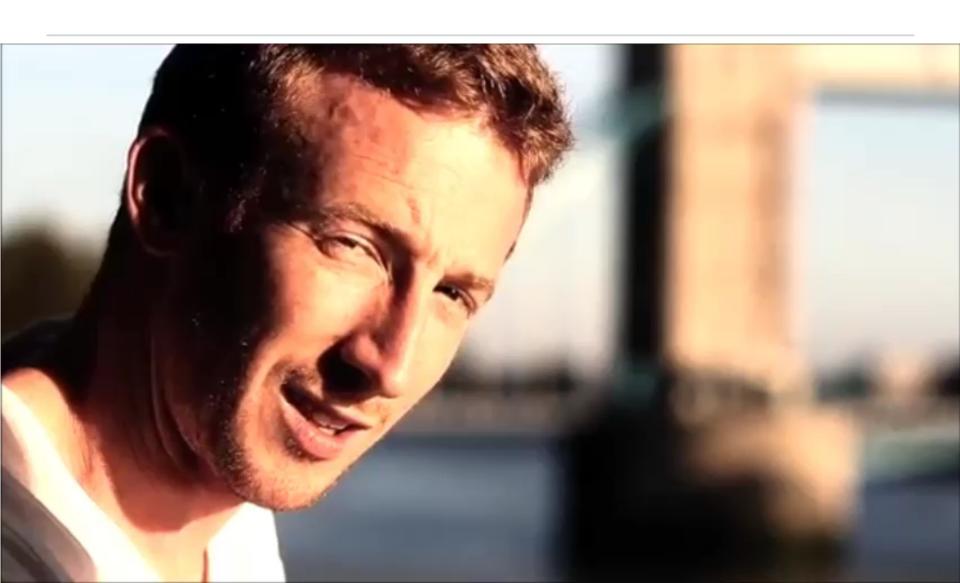it is more like accents further from London than nearer to London.

The "To be …" Speech: Olivier

The "To be …" Speech: Ben Crystal

What did Shakespeare's language sound like?

Have a go!

Theseus, Duke of Athens:

Why, the knights must kindle

Their valor at your eye. Know, of this war

You are the treasure, and must needs be by

To give the service pay.
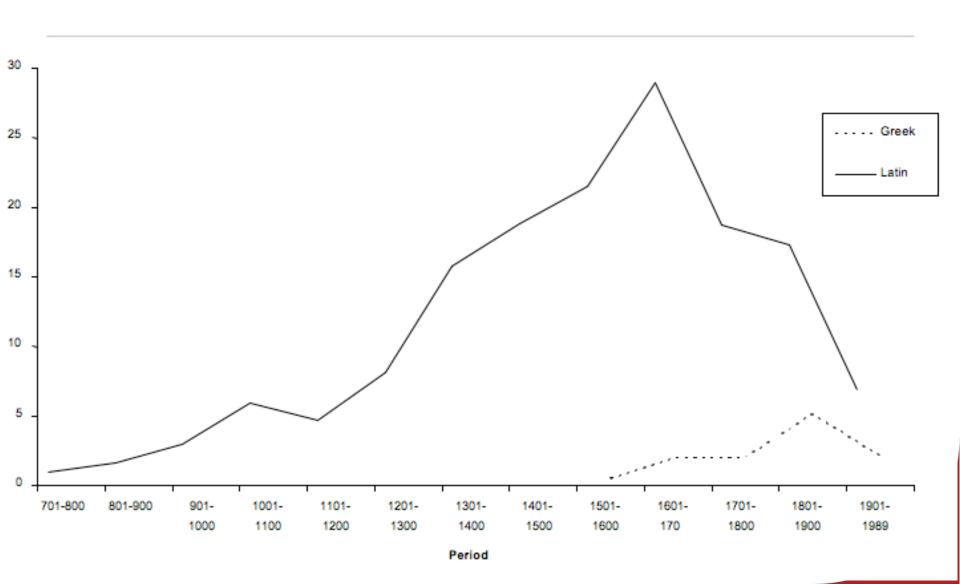
Shakespeare's words

Borrowing words

Early modern English, the English of Shakespeare's time, was having a bonanza borrowing words from other languages.

What language are these words from?

absurdity, assassinate, benefit, critic, exist, exaggerate, external, jocular, obstruction, relaxation, relevant, vacuum, virus, excursion, fact, impersonal, expectation, exact, eradicate, etc.

Latin borrowing into English

Shakespeare's words

This gave Shakespeare more ammunition:

Spot the words borrowed from Latin here:

Macbeth

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

Shakespeare's words

This gave Shakespeare more ammunition:

Macbeth

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

Shakespeare's words

This gave Shakespeare more ammunition:

Macbeth

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather

The many seas make red,

Making the green one red.

Shakespeare's words

Malapropisms: Learner errors

Gobbo: He hath a great infection, sir, as one would say, to serve. (MV 2.2)

Gobbo: He hath a great affection, sir, as one would say, to serve. (MV 2.2)

Elbow: My wife, sir, whom I detest before heaven and your honor— (MM 2.1)

Elbow: My wife, sir, whom I protest before heaven and your honor — (MM 2.1)

Shakespeare's words

- Quickly: She's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in (Windsor WIV 2.2)

- Quickly: She's as virtuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in (Windsor WIV 2.2)

- Quickly: She does so take on with her men; they mistook their erection. (WIV 3.5)

- Quickly: She does so take on with her men; they mistook their direction. (WIV 3.5)

Shakespeare's words

Making words

Compounds

heat-oppressed brain

birth-strangled babe

even-handed justice

new-born babe

bare-faced power

lily-livered boy

pale-hearted fear

Seem to peak in Act IV

Shakespeare's words

Adding bits to words

Affixes: The case of un-

unaware, unabated, unchanging, unclog, unfair, unfix, unhelpful, unintelligent, unsolicited

undeaf, unfamed, unfeed, ungained, ungrown, unpay, unpregnant, unprovoke, unsex, untalked, unthink

Shakespeare's words

Did he really invent a load of words?

What does it say on the internet?

- "Shakespeare coined more words than other writers, around 1700 words …"

- "The English language owes a great debt to Shakespeare. He invented over 1700 of our common words …"

- "Shakespeare introduced nearly 3,000 words …"

- "Shakespeare is credited by the Oxford English Dictionary with the introduction of nearly 3,000 words into the language"

- "Shakespeare invented a quarter of our language"

- "Shakespeare invented half the words in the English language"

- "Shakespeare *is* our language"

Shakespeare's words

What exactly is being counted?

A letter or letters bounded by spaces

orthographic word = 'a string of uninterrupted non-punctuation characters with white space or punctuation at each end' (Leech et al. 2001: 13-14)

Shakespeare's words

Counting word-forms and lexemes?

- Dictionary headword (lexeme): *do*

- Modern word-forms: *do, does, doing, did, done*

- Early modern word-forms: *do, does, do(e)st, doth, doing, did, didst, done*

Shakespeare's words

Counting word-forms and lexemes?

Dictionary headword (lexeme): *do* **= 1**

Modern word-forms: *do, does, doing, did, done* **= 5**

Early modern word-forms: *do, does, do(e)st, doth, doing, did, didst, done* **= 8**

Shakespeare's words

So how many words (lexemes) did Shakespeare create? (neologisms)

- 1,502 words recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as first citations in Shakespeare

- We are checking these in *Early English Books Online* (EEBO-TCP): 125,000 titles of printed material, 1473-1700. About 1.2 billion words.

Preliminary findings:

- If the current pattern continues, less than a quarter of those 1,502 words can reasonably be attributed to Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's words

Issues

- How do we know that Shakespeare coined it as opposed to recorded it? Cf. *down staires* vs. *incarna[r]dine* (v.)

- Is it actually just a 'nonce word' rather than neologism? Cf. *dropsied* vs. *domineering*

Shakespeare's meanings

<u>False friends</u>

Naughty

Now = badly behaved, improper, indecent (related to sex), etc.

Then = wicked evil

e.g. 'So shines a good deed in a <u>naughty</u> world (MV 5.1)

Dear

Now = loved, cherished, friendly form of address, etc.

Then = positive meanings, but also negative, e.g. harsh

e.g. Romeo: 'Is she a Capulet? O <u>dear</u> account!' (RJ 1.5)

Shakespeare's meanings

Fact

Now = something that is known or proved true by evidence

Then = something done

e.g. '[…] how monstrous is was for Malcolm and Donalbain To kill their gracious father? Damned <u>fact</u>! (Mac 3.4)

What about the word *wench* here?

[Othello looking at the dead Desdemona]

'O ill-starred wench! Pale as your smock'

Shakespeare's meanings: *good*

good adj. (good, better, best):

1. A polite address: '(my) good Lord/friend/Sir/Master/Lady/Madam/ etc.'. Typically used when meeting or parting, thanking or making suggestions. *But (good my Lord) do it so cunningly* TGV, III. 1.

2. Honest, truthful, principled; of high moral standards. (This sense also shapes the discourse markers '(in) good faith/sooth/troth', which mean truly or honestly). *a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, & estimation* LLL, I. 1.

3. Positive rather than negative. Typically, contrasted with 'bad'. *Is thy news good or bad?* ROM, II. 5.

4. In one's favour, especially favourable wishes or blessings. *The Gods be good to us* COR, V. 4.

5. A welcoming, cheerful manner. *Therefore for Gods sake entertain good comfort, And cheer his Grace with quick and merry eyes* R3, I. 3.

Shakespeare's grammar

More options; more ammunition

Third-person present singular endings: -eth vs. –s

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

It dropp**eth** as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;

It bless**eth** him that give**s** and him that take**s**' (MV)

Shakespeare's grammar

More options; more ammunition

To add 'do' or not to add 'do': Negative sentences and questions

Lady M. 'Consider it not so deeply' (Mac 2.2)

      '**Do** not consider it so deeply'

Lady M. 'Out damned spot [….] what need we fear?' (5.1)

             what **do** we need to fear?

Shakespeare's grammar

<u>Multiple negation</u>

Most famous modern example: Pink Floyd 'Another brick in the wall'

We do**n't** need **no** education

Shakespeare's grammar

Multiple negation in Shakespeare

I am **not** valiant **neither** (*Oth*)

love **no** man in good earnest, **nor no** further in sport **neyther** (*AYL*)
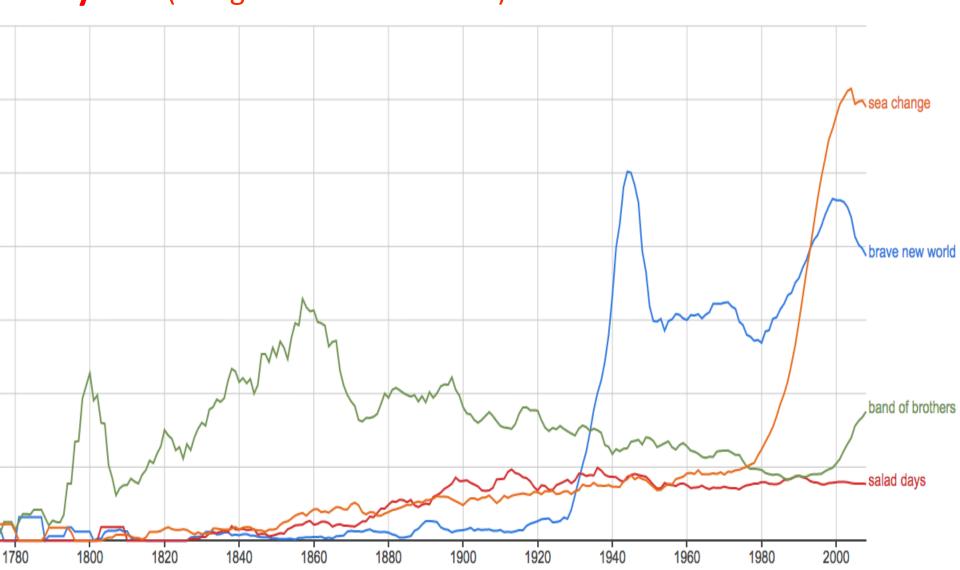
What happened to Shakespeare's language?

Do Shakespeare's coinages survive into today's English?

- A glimpse of phrases first recorded in Shakespeare and their more recent life.

Four phrases first recorded in Shakespeare and their use in printed material over the last 200 years (Google's N-Gram Viewer)

Lancaster University

Concluding thoughts

- Shakespeare's language should be seen in the context of the language of his time.

- He didn't have supernatural powers (e.g. creating all the words of the English language), but he was highly creative.

- I've only been scratching the surface – there is much we don't yet know about Shakespeare's language.

Linguistics

The study of language systems, functions and uses, often contrasting languages, e.g:
Sound systems
Morphological and syntactic systems
Semantics and pragmatics
Language acquisition and loss
Language change
Bilingualism and multilingualism

English Language

Focus on English, application of theories to real world issues & the study of texts, e.g:

The grammar and sounds of English

The history of English

The sociolinguistics of English

English in literature

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Using computers to study English

RANKED 19TH IN THE WORLD

QS World University Rankings 2017

RANKED 3rd IN THE UK

Times Good University Guide 2018

RATED 23/24 FOR TEACHING QUALITY

Teaching Quality Assessment

Entry requirements

- **AAB** at A Level is our typical offer

- Unconditional offers are made subject to interview

- In August we *try* to accept applicants who have put us down as first choice - even if their actual grades are a *little* lower than expected

- (But the number of places for 'near misses' varies from year to year and we cannot make any guarantees!)

Our main degree schemes

LINGUISTICS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE MEDIA

Our main degree schemes

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CREATVE WRITING

COMBINED DEGREES WITH MODERN LANGUAGES

LINGUISTICS AND PSYCHOLOGY

STUDY ABROAD DEGREES

Single Hons Linguistics or English Language

LINGUISTICS

———

OR

———

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

MINOR OPTION 1

MINOR OPTION 2

Many students choose to **consolidate** their interests in language and linguistics by taking another subject in our department

No choices made until intro week in the autumn

Lots of advice provided from academics and taster sessions

MAJOR 1

e.g. LINGUISTICS

MAJOR 2

e.g. GERMAN

MINOR OPTION

Joint Hons Degree Programmes

e.g. Linguistics and German

Many students choose to **consolidate** their interests in language and linguistics by taking another subject in our department

No choices made until intro week in the autumn

Lots of advice provided from academics and taster sessions

Module options

LANGUAGE AND COGNITION

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND EDUCATION

LANGUAGE VARIATION AND CHANGE

- Child Language Acquisition
- Psycholinguistics
- Language, Culture and Thought

- Literacy and Education
- Language and Pedagogic Practice
- Schools Volunteering Module

- Language Change in English and Beyond
- Language Origins and Evolution
- Language and Identities

Plus Independent Study & Dissertation

Lancaster University

RANKED 5TH IN
THE UK FOR
EMPLOYABILITY

Complete
University Guide
2018

> 70% OF STUDENTS IN
GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT
WITHIN 6 MONTHS

Destination of
Leavers of Higher
Education 2016

OPPORTUNITIES
WITHIN THE
DEPARTMENT

Paid research
internships

Vocational modules
e.g. Schools
Volunteering

Who to contact

www.lancaster.ac.uk/linguistics

01524 593045

linguistics@lancaster.ac.uk

Thank you!