

## Etymologies of English Function words

- a, an: unstressed forms of 'one' < PIE \**oino-*. Cf. Latin *ūnus*. The reduction to 'a' before consonants began by 12thC.
- about: < OE *on-būtan* 'on the outside (of)' thus 'around'. Cf. 'on'. *būtan* < *be ūtan* 'by out(side)'. Cf. 'by' and 'out'.
- after: orig. an adjective meaning 'further away' < \**ap-tero-*. Cf. 'of' and 'off'.
- all: pan-Germanic, but origin beyond that totally obscure.
- already: = 'all ready', hence 'anticipating', thus 'ahead of time', thus 'before now'.
- also: see under 'as' for source. Sense has shifted from 'wholly so' to just 'too'.
- along: < OE *andlong* 'extending opposite' < *and* (see below) + *long* < PIE \**dhlongho-*.
- and: *probably* from old preposition \*'facing, opposite'; cf. Greek *anti-*, Latin *ante*. But not undisputed, since shift to use as conjunction not entirely clear.
- another: < 'an+other'. 'other' < PIE \**antero-*. Cf. German *ander* and Skt. *antara-*.
- any: < OE *ænig* (cf. German *einig*) < *ān* 'one' + adj. suffix seen in 'mood-y' and 'stony'.
- are: originally only dialectal OE; < PIE root \**h<sub>1</sub>er-* 'arise' seen also in '(thou) art'. Cf. 'be' and 'is'.
- as: unstressed form of 'also' < *all swā* 'all so' used relatively. No clear source beyond Germanic for 'all'; 'so' contains old PIE pronominal stem seen also in 'such'.
- at: < PIE \**ad* 'at, to'. Cf. Latin *ad* 'at, to' as in 'adjunct' etc.
- be, been: < PIE \**bhuh-* 'be(come), grow'. Cf. Greek *phusis* 'growth' whence 'physical' etc. and Latin *fūturus* 'what is to be'. Cf. 'are' and 'is'.
- ★both: ME *bothe* < Old Norse *báðar*, extended form of Gmc. \**bō*. Cf. Latin *ambō* 'both' and *ambi-dexterous*.
- but: < OE *b(e)-ūtan*, orig. 'outside', i.e. 'by out'. See 'by' and 'out'.
- by: related to Greek *amphi* and Latin *ambi-* 'around, on both sides of'.
- can: orig. 'to know (how to)' < PIE \**ǵneh<sub>3-</sub>* 'to know'. Cf. Latin (*g*)*nōscō* 'know' in English borrowings like 'reco-gnize', 'co-gnition', etc.
- could: past tense of 'can' < PIE root \**ǵneh<sub>3-</sub>* 'to know' (hence 'know how' thus 'be able'). Same root as English 'know', Latin *gnōscō* ('recognize, cognition' etc.) and Greek *gnosis* 'knowledge' ('prognosis', 'agnostic' etc.).
- down: < OE *dūne* < aphaeresized *adūne* < *of dūne* 'off the hill'. OE *dūne* is inherited word, but 'dune' is later borrowing < Dutch, and 'town' is borrowing from Celtic.
- each: mixture of OE *ālc* < Gmc. *aiwo galikaz* 'ever alike' and OE *ilca* < Gmc. \**is-līk* 'same' (no source for root \**līk* 'body, shape' beyond Germanic)
- few: < OE *fēawe* < PIE \**pau-* 'few' (cf. Latin *paucus*, whence 'paucity')
- for: variant of 'fore' (= 'before, in front'); to same PIE root as Latin *prō* 'for' and 'in front of', but precise preform of Germanic is unclear.
- from: < \**promos* 'forward', hence 'forth', hence 'away', hence 'from'. To same root as 'for'.
- has, had: forms of 'have' with irregular loss of *v* before consonant due to frequent weak stress. < PIE \**kap-* 'grasp'. Cf. Latin *capiō* 'take' as in 'capture, captive, accept' etc.
- he, his: < OE *hē*, *his* masc. nominative and genitive singular of third person pronoun. To PIE demonstrative stem \**ke/o-* 'this'. Cf. 'it'.
- here: pan-Germanic adverb < PIE \**kei-* 'this, near speaker' (cf. 'hither' and 'he') + obscure ending *-r*. Cf. 'there' and 'where'.

- if: OE *gif*. Plenty of related forms in Germanic, but exact PIE source unclear. Root is *\*(e)i-* seen in Latin *is* ‘he’.
- in: < PIE *\*en-*. Cf. Greek *en*, Latin *in*, etc.
- is: < PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>ésti* ‘is’. Cf. Latin *est*, Greek *estí*, Sanskrit *ásti*, Hittite *ēszi*, etc.
- it: < PIE demonstrative stem *\*k<sub>i</sub>-* ‘this’. Cf. Latin *cis-* ‘on this side’. The ending *-t* is the same as in ‘that’. OE ‘hit’ with expected *h-* still survives in some dialects of English.
- many: < Germanic *\*managa-*. Further connections unclear.
- me, my: ‘me’ < PIE *\*mē-*. Cf. Latin *mē-*. ‘my’ orig. is reduced form of ‘mine’ before consonant (cf. ‘a, an’). ‘mine’ is from Gmc. possessive adj. built on *\*me-*.
- might: formal past tense to ‘may’ < PIE *\*magh-* ‘be able’. Related words in German, Lithuanian, Russian, etc. with meaning ‘can, be able’ or ‘like, be fond of’.
- more: Germanic comparative form *\*maizōn* < *\*maisōn* with *\*s* > *\*z* > *r* by “Verner’s Law”. To PIE root *\*meh<sub>1</sub>-* ‘(grow) big’. Cf. Hittite *maya-* ‘grown man’.
- most: Germanic superlative form *\*mais-to-*. For root see ‘more’.
- no, none: ‘no’ is orig. reduced form of ‘none’ before consonant (cf. ‘a, an’). ‘none’ is PIE negation *\*ne+oino-* ‘one’ taken through Gmc. sound changes.
- not: < original *\*ne aught* ‘not (any)thing’. *\*ne* is the PIE negation. *aught* is from a root meaning ‘own, possess’. Cf. German *nicht*.
- now: < PIE *\*nū-* ‘now’. Cf. Latin *nun-c* ‘now’.
- of: unstressed form of ‘off’, both meaning ‘from’. Cf. Greek *apo* ‘from’ and Latin *ab-* ‘from, away’ as in ‘absent, abstract, absolve’ etc.
- on: < PIE *\*an(a)* ‘at, on, up against’. Cf. Greek *ana-* as in ‘analogy, analyze’, etc.
- one, once: < ‘one’ < PIE *\*oino-*. Cf. Latin *ūnus*. ‘once’ is remodeled from *enes* after ‘one’. *enes* is an old instrumental case form as adverb remade with adverbial *-s* from the genitive case.
- only: orig. adjective ‘single’ < ‘one’ + suffix *-ly* of ‘manly’ (< *\*-līko* ‘-like’), etc. (cf. ‘a, an’)
- other: < OE *ōther* < PIE *\*an-tero-* ‘the farther one of two’
- our: < Gmc. *\*uns-ero-*; i.e. ‘us’ + adj. suffix. Cf. Germ. *unser*.
- out: < PIE *\*ud-*. Cf. Sanskrit *ud* ‘up’.
- over: < PIE *\*(s)uper+*. Cf. Greek *huper-* (i.e. ‘hyper-’) and Latin *super*.
- self: < Gmc. *\*selbo(n)-*. Derivative of PIE *\*s(w)e-* ‘self’. Cf. ‘sui-cide’ borr. from Latin.
- shall/should: OE *sceal/sc(e)olde* < Gmc. *\*skel-* ‘be obligated’. Root limited to Germanic and Baltic.
- so: < OE *swā* < PIE *\*swo* ‘so, such’.
- some: to PIE root *\*se/om* ‘one, together’. For indefinite sense cf. impersonal use of ‘one’ in ‘One never knows’. English ‘same’ is to different form of same root!
- that: neuter nom.-acc. singular of OE demonstrative. Use as subordinating conjunction (“complementizer”) already OE! < PIE demonstrative stem *\*to-*. Cf. Latin *is-tud*.
- the: unstressed form of OE demonstrative *sē, sēo, þæt*. Already reduced to invariant *þe* by late MiddEng. Voicing of fricative in unstressed word in early ModEng.
- there: pan-Germanic adverb < demons. stem *\*to-* ‘that’ + obscure ending *-r*. Cf. ‘here’ and ‘where’. But vowel of ‘there’ is very problematic.
- ★their, they: borrowed from OldNorse; ultimately to PIE demonstrative stem *\*to-* seen also in demonstrative ‘that’ and article ‘the’.

- this: = Germanic demonstrative formed by adding element *-si* to demonstrative stem seen in ‘the’ and ‘that’. The original OE plural *þās* got reassigned to be the plural ‘those’ of ‘that’, and ‘these’ was created in MiddEng as the plural of ‘this’.
- through: OE *þurh*. Unstressed form of ‘thorough’ that underwent metathesis. PIE root *\*terH-* ‘cross over’ + *\*-k<sup>w</sup>e* ‘also, and’ seen in Latin *-que*.
- to: OE *tō*; cf. German *zu*. < PIE *\*dō-*. Cf. Latin *dō-nec* ‘until’.
- two: < \*PIE *dwō* ‘two’.
- up: < older *upp*; despite formal problems related to Greek *hupo* ‘under’, Latin *sub* ‘under’, as well as Hittite *ūpp-* ‘rise’ (of the sun). Original sense ‘up from below’.
- was/were: < PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>wes-* ‘to exist, live’. Cf. Hittite *ḫueš-* ‘live’. In Gmc. *\*wós+* > OE *wæs*, but *\*wēs-* > *\*wēz-* > OE *wær-* (“Verner’s Law”).
- we: < Gmc. *\*wīz* < PIE *\*weyes*, prob. also in Hittite *wēš*.
- when: < OE *hwenne* < PIE interrogative *\*k<sup>w</sup>e/o-* (but ending less than clear).
- which: < OE *hwelc* < Gmc. *\*hwalīk* \*‘what sort (of)’ < PIE *\*k<sup>w</sup>o-* ‘who’ + Gmc. *\*līke* ‘shape, form, body’ (cf. Eng. ‘like’ = ‘resembling’ & Germ. *Leiche* ‘corpse’). Source of Gmc. *\*līke* is uncertain.
- who/what: < PIE *\*k<sup>w</sup>o-*, interrogative and relative stem seen also in Latin *quo-* (e.g. *quod erat demonstrandum* = *QED* ‘what was to be demonstrated’).
- will/would: < PIE *\*wel-* ‘wish, want’. Cf. Latin *uolō* ‘want’ in ‘volition, voluntary’ etc.
- with: orig. sense ‘next to’ but also ‘against’ (cf. ‘with-stand’ and Germ. *wider*). Reduced from *wither* < *\*wi-tero-* ‘apart’.
- yes, yea, yeah: ‘yeah’ is American (1st citation 1905!) casual pronunciation of ‘yes’. ‘yes’ is uniquely English reinforced form of ‘yea’, which is pan-Germanic. Source unknown.
- you, your: ‘you’ is orig. dat.-acc. of 2pl pronoun (‘ye’ was subject form). Related forms in Gmc. Use for sg. from 13-14th centuries. Orig. non-subject stem for 2pl pronoun in PIE. ‘your’ is Gmc. adj. form (cf. German *euer* ‘your (pl.)’).