Introduction: THROUGH

Present-day English: *through* (*thru*) [θuː]

Why is this word spelt so oddly? (How else could it be spelled?)

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th, this, Thomas   -   r   -   ou   -   gh
fine, this, Thomas  -   door, law and order  -   sour, pour  -   trough, gherkin
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(etc.)

PDE spelling highly conventional (standardization), but …

Middle English THROUGH

(Old English: ca 450–1066, Middle English: ca 1066–1476, Early Modern English: ca 1476–1700)

*Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English (LALME)*

Spellings of THROUGH?

e.g. …

Middle English: the ‘age of dialect’

Attestation of Middle English: manuscripts and scribes in time and space

Basic terminology: vernacular, dialect, standard (cf. Hudson 1996)

vernacular (G. ‘Volkssprache’)

dialect: ‘dialect 1’ vs ‘dialect 2’

(other kinds of lect: sociolect, regiolect, idiolect)
What are the typical characteristics of a standard variety of a language? (Cf. Milroy 2000 on the ideology of the standard.)

Typically: maximal variation in function and minimal variation in form (Haugen 1966); cf. Middle English …

The changing language ecology of Middle English from early ME (to c.1340) to late ME (after c.1340)

Multilingualism (English/French/Latin): functional distribution in a multilingual communicative space (Schaefer 2006; cf. Koch & Oesterreicher 1985)

Di-/Triglossia (Ferguson 1959; cf. Hudson 1996) ‘High’ vs. ‘Low’ variety

English excluded from powerful domains (cf. Machan 2003)

The English language in 1385: Trevisa’s translation of Higden’s Polychronicon (1st half of the 14th c.)

This maner was moche y-used tofore the furste moreyn, and is siththe somdel y-chaunged. For John Cornwal, a maister of gramere, chandez the lore in gramer-scole and construccion of Freynsch into Englysch; and Richard Pencrych lurned that maner of teching of him, and other men of Pencrych, so that now, the year of oure Lord a thousand three hundred foure score and five, of the secund Kyng Richard after the Conquest nine, in the gramer-scoles of Engelond children leveth Frensch and construeth and lurneth an Englisch, and habbith therby avauntage in on side and desavauntage in another. Here avauntage is that a lurneth here gramere in lasse time than children wer y-wonded to do. Disavauntage is that now childern of gramer-scole conneth no more Frensch than can here left heele, and that is harm for ham and a scholle passe the se and travaile in strange londes, and in many caas also. Also gentil men habbeth nowe moche y-left for to teche here children Frensch. … Al the longage of the North-humbres, and specialich at York, is so scharp, slytting, and froryng and unschapethat we Southeron men may that longage unnethe understand. Y trowe that that is bicause that a beth nigh to strange men and aliens, that speketh straungelich, and also because that the kinges of Engelond woneth alwey fer from that contray.

(from Mossé 1969)
D  Some dialectal features of Middle English

(1)  Phonology

Map 1: The isogloss f/-v- (from Mossé 1969)
Map 2: The isogloss [ɑː]/[ɔː]
Map 3: The isogloss i/u [y]/e

Def.:  *An isogloss is a “line drawn on a map to mark the boundary of an area in which a particular linguistic feature is used”* (Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 3rd ed., London: 1991, s.v. ‘isogloss’).

(2)  Morphology

(2a)  Personal pronouns, 3rd person

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<tr>
<td>Rectus</td>
<td>he, he, ha, a</td>
<td>hit, it, a</td>
<td>1. heo, hoo, ho, he, ha, hi</td>
<td>2. boy, cho, cho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obliqueus</td>
<td>Akk. hine, hin</td>
<td>hit, it</td>
<td>{3. sche, she}</td>
<td>hire, hir, hure</td>
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<tr>
<th>Norden</th>
<th>Mittelland</th>
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<td>Skandinavisch</td>
<td>Einheimisch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rectus</td>
<td>hie, ha, hie, haim, haim,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliqueus</td>
<td>bei, he, he, he, he, he,</td>
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Map 4: ME ‘she’

Map 5: ME ‘them’
(2b) Verbal endings

Map 6: ME present 3 sg
Map 7: ME present pl
Map 8: ME present participle

(3) CHURCH

Map 9: Crystal (2004), ME CHURCH
Main dialect areas

Map 10: the main dialect areas of ME (from Crystal 2004)

Two parallel texts

The Lay Folks’ Catechism (translated from the Latin, York, 1357, and John Wyclif’s version, West Midlands, c.1360)

This er the sex things that I have spoken of, That the lawe of halilikirk lies mast in That ye er halde to knowe and to kun If ye sal knawe god almighty and cum un to his blisse: And for to gif yhou better will for to kun tham, Our Fadir the ercebissop graunta of his grace Fourti daies of pardon til at kunnes tham, Or dos their gode diligence for to kun tham ... For if ye kunnandy know this ilk sex things Thorgh thain sal ye kun knawe god alnighten, Wham, als saint John saies in his godspel, Comandy for to kunne swilk als he is, It is endles life and lastand bliss, To whilk blisse he bring us that bought us. amen.

These be þe sexe thyngeþ þat y haue spokyn of Þat þe law of holy cîrch þis mast yn. Þat þey be holde to knowe and to kunne; Yf þey schal knowe god almytþþ and come to þe blysse of heuyn. And for to yeue þow þe better wyl for to cunne ham, Our Fadyr þe archiepiscop grauntaþ of hys grace, forty daies of Pardon to alle þat cunne hem and rehercys hem ... For yf þe kunnyngly knowe þese sexe thyngys; þorw þem þe schull knowe god almytþþ. And as seynt Ion seyþ in his godspel. Kunnyngly to knowe god almyþþ y þe endles lyþ, and lastyng blysse. He bryngge vs þerto, þat bowyt vs With hys herte blod on þe cros Crist Iesu. Amen.

(texts from Freeborn 1992: 79f.)
The beginnings of standard English in late medieval English

(1) Changes in the communicative space

Communicative pressures: English from parochial literacy to national functions (Benskin 1992)

(2) Standardization processes according to Haugen (1966)

- selection
- elaboration
- codification
- acceptance

(3) London

Map 11: locative surnames of Londoners 1147–1350 (from Nielsen 2005)
Administration and power: the Signet Office, the Chancery and the ‘Chancery Standard’
(Samuels 1972)

Chancery English: a petition from 1455

To the right wise and discreet Comons in this present parlement assembled

Bese(cheth) humbly Thomas yong that where as he late beyng oon of the knyghtes for the shire and towne of Bristowe in dyaers parlementes holden afore this demened him in his saiyng in the same as wele faithfully and with alle such trewe diligent labour as his symplenesse couthe or might for the wele of the kyngoure souerain lorde and this his noble Realme and notwithstanding that by the olde liberte and fredom of the Comyns of this londe had enjoyed and prescribed fro the tyme that no mynde is all suche persones as for the tyme been assembled / in eny parlement for the same Comyns ought to haue theire fredom to speke and sey in the hous of there assemble as to theym (is) thought conuenyent or resonable ...

(text from Nielsen 2005: 141)

1476: William Caxton sets up the printing press in Westminster

“By the sixteenth century, in England at least, the public written mode of the vernacular had become standardised – focused – in a way which points forward to the fixed and educationally enforced standard of PD [viz. present-day] written English. The use of printing for reproducing English texts from the end of the fifteenth century provided prescriptive norms for contemporary manuscript-usage” (Horobin & Smith 2002: 34)

Conclusion

George Puttenham (The Arte of English Poesie, 1589)

ye shall therfore take the usuall speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles, and not much aboue. I say not this but that in every shyre of England there be gentlemen and others that speake but specially write as good Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of every shire ...
References


