THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 172: SUCCESSION

Presented by Kevin W. Stroud

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 172: Succession. This time we're going to explore the challenges of succession. Now I'm not referring to a popular television show about a fictional media magnate. I'm actually referring to the challenges faced by the monarchs of England and France in the late 1500s. And I'm also referring to William Shakespeare who succeeded the first wave of London playwrights to become one of the most popular writers in English history. This is also the story of the pronunciation of words like ***succession***, specifically the changes that caused words ending in [-sion] and [-tion] to be pronounced as /shun/. So this time, we'll explore the concept of a successful succession, and we'll examine how these developments shaped the English language.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now this time, we going to look at the concept of a successful succession. And to do that, I want to begin by looking at the ultimate root of words like ***successful*** and ***succession***. That root takes us all the way back to the original Indo-European language, and a word in that language that meant 'to go' and sometimes meant 'to yield.' It was something like ****ked***. As we know, the ancient Indo-European language is ultimate ancestor of English and Latin and most other European languages. Well, that very old root word passed into Latin, and then in the Middle Ages, as Latin evolved into the various Romance languages, that root word continued to exist and became a part of other words. But along the way, the 'hard k' sound at the beginning of that root word ****ked*** was softened into an 's' sound – from ****ked*** to ***ced*** or ***cess***. It still meant 'to go,' and it survives in many words that English borrowed from Latin and the various Romance languages over the centuries.

It survives in its basic form in the word ***cede*** ('c-e-d-e') meaning 'to yield or give way or move aside' as when one 'cedes ground' to another. Another basic form of the word is ***cease*** meaning 'to stop moving' from that original sense of yielding or stepping aside.

Very often, Latin speakers attached a prefix to the word to convey some specific sense of movement. And English borrowed a lot of those variations over the years. For example, the prefix ***pro-*** meaning 'forward' was added to convey the sense of going forward. That gave us words like ***proceed***, ***procession*** and ***process***. The prefix ***re-*** meaning 'back' was added to convey the sense of going backward. That gave us words like ***recede***, ***recess*** and ***recession***. The prefix ***ex-*** meaning 'out' was added to convey a sense of going out or beyond. That gave us words like ***exceed***, ***excess***, and ***excessive***. Even the prefix ***ne-*** meaning 'not' was added to convey a sense of not going or not moving or not yielding. It was applied to things that were unavoidable and unyielding. And that gave us the word ***necessary*** – that old root being preserved in the 'cess' part in the middle of ***necessary***.

Latin speakers also added the prefix ***sub-*** to the front of the word. ***Sub-*** meant 'under or after,' so the addition of the prefix conveyed a sense of going after. Over time, the 'b' sound in the prefix was lost, and the result was the word ***succession***. Its verb form was ***succeed*** as when a change of leadership occurs and one leader succeeds another.

When one thing succeeds another thing, it can be part of an ongoing process or it can be the final step in a series. And during the 1500s, that led to a new sense of the word ***succeed***. It came to refer to the end of a series or the final result. A good result was 'good success.' A bad result was 'bad success.' A just or fair result was 'just success.' But by the Elizabethan period, the word ***success*** had become largely restricted to 'good success' or a 'good result.' And from there, we got our modern sense of the words ***success*** and ***succeed*** as a beneficial or fortunate conclusion to an event.

So a 'successful succession' is the intended culmination of a series of events, and the term is also redundant because both ***successful*** and ***succession*** originated with that sense of one thing going after another.

Well, the idea of a successful succession has been a persistent theme throughout the podcast series, especially when we have focused on political developments, because it was always important for a monarch to have an heir who could provide an orderly succession. Otherwise, the country might fall into chaos and civil war. And we've seen cases where that happened.

Well, in the late 1500s, both England and France were facing the prospect of a disputed succession. The queen of England and the king of France were both childless and unlikely to produce an heir and the prospect of civil war loomed in both countries.

The issue was compounded by the religious division between Catholics and Protestants in both countries because the religion of the monarch often extended to the rest of the country.

In England, Queen Elizabeth had not formally declared a successor, but a series of letters between Elizabeth and her cousin James, the king of Scotland, made it clear that she intended him to be her successor. And Elizabeth's close advisors were aware of the plan. James was a Protestant and would ensure that England would to remain a Protestant country after Elizabeth's death.

But in France, the situation was a bit more complicated. The current monarch was Henry – or 'Henri' to use a more French pronunciation. In fact, as we'll see, all of the key figures in France during this period were named 'Henri,' but I'll just use the English pronunciation as 'Henry' going forward.

Well, the French king was Henry III, and he was Catholic like most of the rest of the country. But France had a significant Protestant minority. The religious division in France had led to a series of wars and even a brutal massacre of Protestants in Paris in the 1570s. And to add to this complication, the French king's presumptive heir under the French rules of succession was a Protestant.

That heir was also named Henry – or 'Henri.' He was the king of Navarre – a region that existed between France and Spain in the region of the Pyrenees. Since he was Henry of Navarre, I'll just refer to him as 'Navarre' moving forward. I should also mention that the region of Navarre had once been an independent kingdom, but much of it had been incorporated into Spain in the early 1500s. A small portion in the north remained under French influence, but the title of 'King of Navarre' was mostly just that – a title. So Henry of Navarre was a French noble, but he wasn't just any French noble. He was a cousin of the French king, and he was descended from a separate branch of the family call the Bourbons. And the French king at the time was the last surviving male descendant of the older branches of the royal family. So, as I noted a moment ago, Henry of Navarre of the Bourbon branch was next in the line to the throne of France. But while he had the best claim to the throne, he had the disadvantage of being a Protestant in a largely Catholic country. So the succession was going to be messy.

The king himself was unpopular – seen as out-of-touch by many of his subjects and perceived as living a lifestyle of decadence and debauchery. The economy was also struggling with food shortages and high inflation. And a recent truce with Protestants had given them a broad freedom to worship as they pleased which also upset many French Catholics. In that environment, a new rival emerged as the leader of the Catholic faction in the French government. He was also named Henry – or 'Henri' – and he was the Duke of Guise, so I'll just refer to him as 'Guise' moving forward.

Well, King Henry had tried to bar Guise from Paris, but Paris was a very Catholic city. And in May of 1588, Guise arrived in the city with a retinue of men. The king then tried to send out his forces to detain Guise, but the people of Paris quickly came to Guise's aid. They blocked the streets with barrels and other objects so that the king's forces couldn't move around the city. The word ***barrel*** is actually a French word which English had borrowed in the 1300s. But French also had another version of the word with Spanish roots. That word was ***barique***. And when those ***bariques*** were used to block the streets, the obstruction was called a ***barricade***, or was we know it in English, a ***barricade*** (/bare-ih-cade/). This public uprising in the streets of Paris in 1588 became known as the 'Day of the Barricades,' and it foreshadowed some of the events that would take place a couple of centuries later during the French Revolution. And those events also helped to introduce the word ***barricade*** to English. A short time later, this word ***barricade*** popped up in English documents for the first time.

With Guise in control of the capital, the king was forced to flee, but the king soon got his revenge. Late in the year – shortly before Christmas – King Henry had Guise assassinated. But that only heightened the Catholic opposition to the king. In the following spring, the king then formed an alliance with his Protestant successor, Henry of Navarre, and their combined forces moved toward Paris. But then, the king was murdered by a monk which left Navarre with the title of king, but no real way to take possession of the throne since he was a Protestant.

Navarre did achieve some important miliary victories though, and it was enough for Queen Elizabeth to join his cause. Over the next few years, she sent several thousand English troops to France to support Navarre's war of succession. Obviously, she preferred to have a Protestant on the French throne, which would not only reduce the threat from France, but would also deprive

Spain of a Catholic ally. But Navarre's war of succession dragged on for years without a resolution.

During the late 1580s and early 1590s, there was a great deal of interest in the French conflict in England. Not only were English troops being sent across the Channel to fight in the conflict, but the outcome would inevitably have an impact on the overall balance of political and religious power in the Europe.

A couple of episodes back, I talked about the printer Richard Field. He was from Shakespeare's hometown, and he printed Shakespeare's early poems. Well, during this period, he also printed a series of pamphlets that detailed the events in France as the conflict raged on. Through these types of early news pamphlets, the people of England became aware of the major players in the conflict like Navarre's allies, the duc de Longueville and the duc de Biron, as well as Navarre's rival, the duc de Mayenne, who later reconciled with Navarre. All four of these figures would soon appear as major characters in a play by Shakespeare called Love's Labour's Lost, which I will discuss at the end of the episode. This is more evidence that Shakespeare was hanging around Field's print shop during this period, and was inspired by the works that were coming off the press in the early 1590s as Shakespeare was beginning his career as a playwright.

As I mentioned, the conflict in France – and the English involvement in it – continued into the early 1590s and into the period when the London theaters were closed. They were closed from 1592 to 1594 due to an outbreak of plague. As we saw a couple of episodes back, Shakespeare published two long form poems during that period, and he probably wrote most of his sonnets during that period as well. It also appears that he worked on some of his early plays during that down time. Some of his earliest comedies and tragedies have been dated to the first few years of the 1590s. As I've noted before, it is difficult to date most of his plays with precision, but there are a few outside references to some of the plays shortly after the theaters re-opened. And that indicates that those plays were composed while the theaters were closed or prior to that.

Some of the plays also contain dialogue with references to outside events that can help to date the plays. And in fact, one of the Shakespeare's earliest comedies appears to make reference to the war of succession in France. That play is called The Comedy of Errors, and it was apparently composed during the plague years or earlier. This early date of composition is confirmed by a reference to the play being performed at the Gray's Inn in London shortly after the theaters were re-opened in 1594.

The play is about the separation of twins as infants. When the twins come back together as adults, they are repeatedly confused with each other leading to several comedic scenes based on mistaken identity. Shakespeare probably had an interest in twins because he was the father of twins. As I noted a few episodes back, his wife Anne had given birth to twins named Hamnet and Judith a few years earlier in 1585.

Comedies involving the mistaken identity of twins can be traced all the way back to the Roman playwright Plautus whose comedies served as a model for later European playwrights. And in fact, Shakespeare's play appears to be based on a play by Plautus called Menaechmi. But

Shakespeare 'one-upped' Plautus by adding an additional set of twins to his play. The Comedy of Errors involves two sets of twins, allowing for more confusion and more scenes involving mistaken identity.

To further increase the confusion – and for reasons that aren't clearly explained – each set of twins has the same name. We have two brothers named Antipholus. The other set of twins are named Dromio. The Dromios were born to a poor mother and were sold into servitude to the parents of the first twins. So we have the twin brothers both named Antipholus and their servantsboth named Dromio. I should mention that the play is set in ancient Greece, and the two sets of twins are separated as infants during an ocean voyage with one Antipholus and Dromio eventually reaching their destination in Syracuse and the other pair returning home. The play involves the Syracuse pair returning home as adults to find their respective siblings. Of course, when the Syracuse siblings arrive, they are confused with the local siblings. And at points, the master and servant even get mismatched. Of course, none of them seem to be able to figure out what is going on even though it is obvious to the audience. Instead, the confusion is attributed to witchcraft, madness and other causes.

At one point, the Syracuse Dromio meets his twin brother's wife, and he is far from impressed with her. She doesn't actually make an appearance in the play, but Dromio describes her to his master in very unflattering terms. And here, Shakespeare shows his penchant for insults. Dromio says the woman is a kitchen wench, so she works in the kitchen. And he says that she is "No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip; she is spherical, like a globe: I could find out countries in her." Dromio's comparison of the woman to a globe leads his master Antipholus to ask, "In what part of her body stands Ireland?" Dromio replies, ". . . in her buttocks: I found it out by the bogs" Antipholus then asks, "Where Scotland?" To which Dromio replies, "I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of the hand." And then Antipholus asks, "Where France?" And Dromio replies with a pun. He says, "In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir" (h-e-i-r).

Now the reason why this is a pun in because the word ***heir*** could be pronounced with a silent 'h' like today, but also with a pronounced 'h' at the beginning. So some people said ***heir*** (/air/) and some people said ***heir*** (/hair/). Sort of like ***herb*** (/erb/) and ***herb*** (/herb/) today. So the line of dialogue would have probably been rendered with the pronounced 'h.' Again, "Where France?" "In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir." In other words, in the literal sense, she has a receding hairline and her forehead is making war against her hair. And it the figurative sense, her forehead represents France because France is making war against its heir (/hair/) – or heir (/air/) – 'h-e-i-r' – depending on the pronunciation. Of course that heir was Henry of Navarre. So that little pun in this play is generally considered to be a reference to the events that were unfolding in France. And as we'll see shortly, that war in France came to an end in 1593 into 1594 around the time the plague subsided in England. So if we put those pieces of information together, it points to the composition of this play sometime prior to 1594 – probably during those years when the theaters were closed in London and perhaps a little before that.

The Comedy of Errors also has all the hallmarks of an early play. Much of it is composed in verse, so it is has a poetic structure. In fact, many of the lines are composed in iambic pentameter. That

was the alternating stress pattern that resembled five heartbeats per line – de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM. Shakespeare included many long, extended passages composed in that meter. In fact, many of his early plays have that structure, and many also contain rhyming verse as well. His later plays moved away from that formula and used a lot more prose or regular speech. So when we find a play that has this very discernible poetic structure, it's often a clue that it's an early play.

Shakespeare's use of iambic pentameter is of some value to historical linguists because it required ten syllables per line, and that specific number can be used to determine how many syllables a word had at the time. That's especially valuable for words that were pronounced with a different number of syllables in the past. By counting the syllables and beats in a given line of dialogue, we can determine how the words were pronounced in Shakespeare's time, or at least how he intended his actors to pronounce them on the stage.

This is especially valuable for words like the word at the heart of this episode – the word ***succession***. We know that it was originally pronounced like it is spelled as /suc-seh-see-un/ with four syllables. Of course, today it is pronounced as /suc-seh-shun/ with three syllables. And thanks to poets like Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we know that the pronunciation was shifting during the Elizabethan period. So let's look a little closer as what was going on linguistically.

There were actually several specific consonant sounds that were changing in similar ways during this period. They were all shifting and slurring into new consonant sounds, and specifically new sibilant sounds. These changes involved four specific consonant sounds – the 's' sound (/s/), the 'z' sound (/z/), the 't' sound (/t/), and the 'd' sound (/d/).

Now those four sounds might seem somewhat random, but they are actually closely related linguistically. As we've seen before in the podcast, the 's' and 'z' sounds are almost the exact same sound mechanically. The only difference is that the vocal cords are activated when we pronounce the 'z' sound (/z/), but they are silent when we pronounced the 's' sound (/s/). And the same distinction applies between the 'd' sound and the 't' sound. Again, mechanically they are produced the same way, except the 'd' sound is voiced with the vocal cords and the 't' sound is voiceless with the vocal cords remaining silent.

In addition to the voiced and voiceless distinction between those pairs of sounds, all four actually have something else in common with each other. They are all produced with the tongue near to or actually touching that ridge behind the upper teeth, which is technically called the alveolar ridge. So linguists have a very fancy name for these four sounds. They call them 'alveolar obstruents.' Now of course, you don't need to know that fancy term, but I just wanted you to know that linguists associate these sounds with each other because the tongue does something very similar when making them. Again, it approaches or touches that ridge behind the teeth.

Well, when those four consonant sounds were followed by a U, or by an I and another vowel, the consonant sound tended to slur into a new sound, and that new sound was a sibilant sound like /sh/ or /ch/ or /j/ or /ʒ/. Now I'll try to explain the mechanics behind those changes in a moment,

and I'll try to explain why it tended to happen before those specific vowels. But first, let's look at some examples.

English has a lot of words with Latin roots that end in [-tion]. And as that spelling indicates, that ending was originally pronounced /tee-un/. So, for example, English had words like ***exception*** (/ex-sep-tee-un/) and ***fraction*** (frac-tee-un). But during the 1500s, that /tee-un/ ending started to slur into /shun/. So from ***exception*** (/ex-cep-tee-un/) to ***exception*** (/ex-cep-shun/). And from ***fraction*** (frac-tee-un) to ***fraction*** (frac-shun). And that's how we got the modern pronunciation of those words. The 't' sound shifted to an 'sh' sound, and the two distinct syllables at the end were slurred into one.

The same thing happened with words with Latin roots that ended in [-sion] like ***confession*** (/con-fess-ee-un/). Again, the 's' sound was slurred into an 'sh' sound, thereby producing the modern pronunciation. From ***confession*** (/con-fess-ee-un/) to ***confession*** (/con-feh-shun/).

Words that had a 'z' sound experienced a similar change, except that they shifted to a new /ʒ/ sound. So ***seizure*** (/see-zyur/) became ***seizure*** (/see-ʒur/). And ***vision*** (/vi-zee-on/) became ***vision*** (/vi-ʒun/), and ***conclusion*** (/con-clu-zee-un/) became ***conclusion*** (/con-clu-ʒun/).

And words with a 'd' sound were affected in a similar way, except they shifted to a 'j' sound (/j/). So ***soldier*** (/sol-dee-yer/) became /sol-jur/), and ***gradual*** (/grad-yu-al) became ***gradual*** (/gra-jul/).

As you can see and hear, the spelling of these words reflect their older, original pronunciation. And the pronunciations we use today reflect the specific sound changes that were occurring around the time of Shakespeare. But why did those sounds change?

Well, the answer really lies in the specific vowel sounds that followed those consonants. I mentioned that those four consonants shifted to the newer sibilant sounds when they occurred before a U – or an I and another vowel. So what was it about those vowels that caused them to trigger this change? Well, it is the fact that the sound represented by letter U – or by I and another vowel – has a slight 'y' sound at the front. And that slight 'y' sound, or what some people would call 'y' glide, was really the trigger.

So if we think about the sound of letter U in English, it's really somewhat unique. Most languages tend to pronounce the long sound of that letter as /oo/. But English speakers usually pronounce it as /yoo/. We pronounce the letter U and pronoun ***you*** ('y-o-u') the same way – /y-oo/. So compare the Spanish word ***universidad*** and its English equivalent ***university***.

The same thing happens when an I is followed by another vowel. This has actually come up several times before in the podcast. Think about names like ***Olivia*** and ***Lydia***. The [-ia] at the end was originally pronounced /ee-ah/. So /O-liv-ee-ah/ and /Lyd-ee-ah/. But of course, when we pronounce those names in normal speech, we usually insert a slight /y/ sound or 'y' glide in between. We say /O-liv-ee-yuh/ and /Lyd-ee-yuh/. And again, that little 'y' sound was apparently the trigger that caused those specific consonant sounds to slur into new sounds.

So let's consider the word ***soldier*** (/sol-jer/). It was originally pronounced like it is spelled as /sol-dee-yer/ with that slight 'y' glide between /dee/ and /er/ – /dee-yer/. Well, to make that /dee-yer/ sound we have to go from that ridge behind the teeth for the 'd' sound, then we have to constrict the vocal cavity slightly to make the 'y' sound, then we move on to the vowel in the open cavity of the mouth. Well, that shift from the ridge to the 'y' sound is a little bit awkward. So when we pronounce words very quickly, we tend to cheat a little bit. And we do that by simply substituting one of these sibilant sounds. So again, from soldier (/sol-dee-yer/) to soldier (/sol-jer/) We do the same thing when we say a sentence like "Did you go to the store?" The 'd' sound at the end of ***did*** flows into the 'y' sound at the beginning of ***you***, and then into the vowel part of ***you***. So 'Did you.' When we say it slowly, it's clear. But if we say that sentence very quickly, it can become "Did joo go to the store?" 'Di-joo' sounds like 'd-i-j-o-o.' But it's the same thing that happened when ***soldier*** (/sol-dee-yer/) became /sol-jur/, and ***gradual*** (/grad-yu-al) became ***gradual*** (/gra-jul/). It's a little cheat that we do when we pronounce those sounds together very quickly. And that also explains why this particular change tended to occur at the end of words. The final syllable tends to be unstressed in English, so we tend to pronounce it with less emphasis and less precision. So there is more a tendency to cheat a little bit with those syllables.

Again, we cheat in this way all the time without ever thinking about it. If someone sneezes and you say "Bless you," notice what happens between those two words. The 's' sound at the end of ***bless*** flows in the 'y' sound at the beginning of ***you***, and then into the /oo/ vowel sound And in that environment, many of us actually say /bleh-shoo/ with an 'sh' sound, instead of "Bless you" with a distinct 's' sound. Again, this is a naturally occurring change in English, and it is the same thing that triggered the change from ***succession*** (/suc-sess-ee-un/) to ***succession*** (/suc-sess-shun/).

By the way, this phenomenon affected a lot of words, not just the ones with the specific endings I've mentioned so far. The word ***picture*** (/pic-tyur/) with its 't' sound became ***picture*** (/pic-chur/) with its modern 'ch' sound. The same thing happened when ***nature*** (/neh-tyur) with its 't' sound became ***nature*** (/nah-chur/) with its 'ch' sound. ***Partial*** (/par-ti-al/) with its 't' sound became ***partial*** (/par-shul/) with is modern 'sh' sound. ***Usual*** (/yoo-zyul/) and ***measure*** (/meh-zyoor/) with their 'z' sounds became ***usual*** (/you-ʒul/) and ***measure*** (/meh-ʒur/) with their /ʒ/ sounds. And ***physician*** (/fih–zih-see-un/) and ***musician*** (/mu-zih-see-un/) with their 's' sounds became ***physician*** (/fih–zih-shun/) and ***musician*** (/mu-zih-shun/) with their 'sh' sounds.

By the way, these types of changes manifest themselves in some interesting ways today. Not only does it explain why many words are spelled one way and pronounced another, it also explains some interesting variations in Modern English. And that's because these types of changes are never fully settled. For example, sometimes an older form of the word survived with its original consonant sound alongside a newer form of the word. Consider the word ***creature***, which would have originally been pronounced more like /kreh-tyur/. The modern form ***creature*** obviously has a 'ch' sound in place of that original 't' sound. But we also have the colloquial word ***critter***, which is really just another form of ***creature***, but ***critter*** preserves the original 't' sound in the word. So even though we may laugh when some people refer to little ***critters***, those people are actually pronouncing the word closer to its original pronunciation – /kreh-tyur/.

Sometimes one of these consonants changed in a word, and then over time, it reverted back to the original pronunciation. That could happen in a situation where the original pronunciation never really disappeared. Or given that spellings tended to reflect the older pronunciation, sometimes people would pronounce words like they were spelled and that would cause the older pronunciation to come back around. That's what happened with the word ***Indian***. It was originally ***Indian*** (/in-dee-yan/), but then that same sound change that we've seen converted the consonant in the middle to /in-jun/. But eventually, the original pronunciation /in-dee-yan/ came back into fashion, and is now the standard pronunciation. But we can still hear the pronunciation as /in-jun/ in colloquial speech. It's a pronunciation that we tend to associate with the Old West. It's certainly fallen out of fashion today, but it still lingers in the language. And again, at one time, it was a much more common and widespread pronunciation.

Even the word ***pronunciation*** which I have used repeatedly experienced a similar reversion. Originally, it was pronounced more like /pro-nun-see-ah-tee-un/, but it had two consonants which changed through the process I described. The C in the middle and the T near the end both shifted to an 'sh' sound. So according to John Walker's well-known pronunciation guide of the late 1700s, the word was pronounced as /pro-nun-she-ay-shun/ at the time. But since then, that [c] has reverted back to its original pronunciation as, well /pro-nun-see-ay-shun/.

Words like ***controversial*** (/con-tro-ver-shul/) and ***consortium*** (/con-sor-shum/) have also started to revert back to their original pronunciations as ***controversial*** (/con-tro-ver-see-al/) and ***consortium*** (/con-sor-tee-um/). Those reversions are actually a recent development in the language, only going back to the mid-1900s, and probably influenced by those pronunciations in popular media. I will openly admit that I pronounce ***controversial*** both ways, and since that word pops up a lot in the podcast, you'll notice both pronunciations as you listen to the episodes.

The word ***negotiate*** (/neh-go-she-ate/) is also showing a similar reversion with some people pronouncing it today as /nee-go-see-ate/.

In fact, quite a few words have both pronunciations today. Some of you say ***issue*** (/ih-shoo/) with an 'sh' sound, and some of you say /is-syoo/ with an 's' sound, especially if you are in Britain. Most Americans say ***immediately*** (/ih-mee-dee-ut-lee/) by giving the letter D its /d/ sound in that word. But in the UK, you are more likely to hear some people pronounce it /ih-mee-jut-lee/ by giving the D a 'j' sound, just like how ***soldier*** (/sol-dee-yer/) became ***soldier*** (/sol-jer/).

Some of you say ***celestial*** (/seh-less-tee-ul/) and some you say ***celestial*** (/seh-less-chul/). Some of you say ***appreciate*** (/a-prih-see-ate/) and some of you say (/a-prih-she-ate/). Some of you say ***Parisian*** (/puh-ree-zee-yan/) and ***Tunisia*** (/tu-nee-zee-ya/), while others of you say ***Parisian*** (/puh-ree-ʒun/) and ***Tunisia*** (/tu-nee-ʒuh/). And some of you say ***literature*** (/lih-ter-a-tyur/) and others of you say ***literature*** (/lih-ter-a-chure/)

While some words have that variation today, most words had that same type of variation during the time of Shakespeare. The new sibilant sounds were emerging in those words at the time, especially in the speech of younger speakers. So older and more conservative speakers would

have used the traditional pronunciation, while younger speakers would have been more likely to use the newer sounds. And that type of variation was a very useful tool for poets like William Shakespeare.

As we've seen, when the newer pronunciation emerged, the two-syllable suffixes were often reduced to a single syllable – from [-tion] (/tee-un/) and [-sion] (/see-un/) to /shun/. So words with those suffixes had an extra syllable if pronounced in the older way, and they lacked that extra syllable if they were pronounced in the newer way. And that flexibility came in very handy when trying to craft ten syllables to a line.

In fact, returning to The Comedy of Errors, we have a passage where Shakespeare used four of these words over the course of five lines. If we assume that each line was intended to have ten syllables in accordance with the requirements of iambic pentameter, then the first two words were pronounced in the newer way with a single syllable at the end. Those words were ***estimation*** and ***intrusion***. But the second two words – ***succession*** and ***possession*** – were pronounced in the older way with two-syllables at the end as /suc-sess-ee-un/ and /po-sess-ee-un/.

The passage comes from a scene where the Antipholus from Syracuse is having dinner with his twin brother's wife at the brother's home. Of course, she doesn't realize that she is having dinner with her husband's twin. The doors are locked, and when her actual husband arrives, he in unable to get inside. He considers breaking down the door, but a local merchant named Balthazar is standing nearby and advises him not to do it. He says that it would create suspicion that his wife is doing something untoward, and would also reflect poorly on both he and his wife, and would also affect the reputation of his children as well. I'll read the final words of this passage with an emphasis on the meter. He says:

aGAINST your YET unGALLED esTImaTION,
That MAY with FOUL inTRUsion ENter IN,
And DWELL upON your GRAVE when YOU are DEAD;
For SLANder LIVES upON sucCESS-i-ON,
For E'ER hous'd WHERE it GETS posSES-si-ON.

So again, if we assume that that is the intended rhythm – and admittedly the stress in the first line is a little odd – we end up with ***estimation*** and ***intrusion*** pronounced in the modern way and ***succession*** and ***possession*** pronounced in the older way.

Also, note the sentiment expressed in that fourth line, "For slander lives upon succession.' In other words, a bad reputation often survives you, and lives with your children and successors as well. And that takes us back to the theme of this episode – the theme of 'succession' – or 'suc-sess-ee-un' as it was probably intended here.

The sentiment that a bad reputation continues long after a person dies and taints the person's reputation for many generations is clearly explored in another play that Shakespeare apparently composed around this same time in the early 1590s. That play was a history play called Richard

III. And in fact, part of the reason why this play is thought to date from this early period is due to the general order of succession of Shakespeare's history plays.

The first reference we have to the Richard III play comes in 1597 – three years after the theaters re-opened. In that year, a version of the play was printed. Before it could be printed, it had to be entered in the Stationer's Register, which was the register of the guild that oversaw the publication of materials in London. And a play called Richard III was entered in that register in 1597. But most scholars agree that the play had been around for several years before it was published. And that's largely because Richard III completed the story that had been presented in the earlier plays about Henry VI. We established in prior episodes that the three Henry VI plays are some of the earliest Shakespeare plays mentioned in the historical record. And Richard III picks up right where Henry VI, Part III left off. It actually continues and completes the story of the Wars of the Roses. And for that reason, it is generally believed that Shakespeare composed Richard III shortly after he completed the Henry VI series.

Now again, Richard III is a history play, and I talked about the real-life Richard III in an earlier episode of the podcast, specifically Episode 144. I called that episode 'A Murder of Crows and Princes' in part because Richard is widely thought to have murdered his young nephews in the Tower of London so that he could seize the throne for himself. And that sinister reputation continues to this day, though a movement has emerged in recent years to challenge many of the assumptions about Richard. The members of the movement claim that the allegations against Richard are unproven, and that his bad reputation is largely due to Shakespeare himself. They argue that Shakespeare wrote his plays for a Tudor audience in the late 1500s. The Tudors were ultimately a branch of the Lancastrian line that had fought against the Yorkists like Richard III. In fact, Richard was ultimately defeated by the first Tudor king Henry VII. So the argument goes that Shakespeare wanted to present Richard as a sinister and evil monarch in order to discredit the Yorkist line, and to praise the succession by the Tudor line all the way down to Queen Elizabeth. But to be fair, Richard had a bad reputation even before Shakespeare came along. Other historical accounts had attributed the murders to Richard, and Shakespeare almost certainly based some of his depictions of Richard on those earlier accounts.

Now again, the dynastic struggle between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians is known today as the Wars of the Roses. And Shakespeare's Richard III concludes that story arc with rise and fall of the Yorkist line. The Yorkists came to power when Henry VI was defeated by Richard's elder brother Edward and Edward became the first Yorkist king. And that's where Shakespeare's play begins. And it begins with a very well-known line, "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this sun of York." In other words, the cold Lancastrian winter has come to an end with the ascendancy of the Yorkist summer. These words are delivered by Richard himself. He is the youngest sibling with little chance of inheriting the throne since his brother Edward has two young sons who are next in line to succeed their father. Richard also has an older brother George who is also ahead of him in the line of succession. So in that sense, this play is about succession and Richard's efforts to change the line of succession so that he can succeed his brother as king.

Richard says that he is deformed and has a hunched back, and is therefor unfit for love. Instead, he says, "I am determined to prove a villain." And Richard proves to be one of Shakespeare's greatest dramatic villains.

He begins by sowing discontent between his two brothers – Edward the king and the middle brother George. Richard spreads a rumor that George is trying to overthrow Edward, and George is soon arrested and sent to the Tower of London. A short time later, Richard hires a couple of men to murder George in the Tower. The two men come to Richard to get the warrant that will allow them to enter the Tower. Richard addresses them by saying, "Are you now going to dispatch this thing?" In other words, 'are you now going to carry out the murder?' Now, that line may not seem all that unusual today, but it was at the time. In fact, this is one of the first times that an English writer expressed the future tense with the phrase "am going to" as in "I am going to go to the store." So let me explain what I mean by that.

As I noted in earlier episodes of the podcast, English doesn't have a specific verb ending to indicate future tense. We have the [-ed] ending to reflect past tense like when we say 'I jumped the fence." But we don't have an ending that we can put on the word ***jump*** to indicate that we are going to do that in the future. The original Indo-European language did have specific verb endings that did that, and many modern Indo-European languages have similar endings. But those endings were lost in the early Germanic period, so the Germanic languages don't have them. That meant that English speakers had to come up with other ways to indicate that something will take place in the future.

One way to do that was to use the present tense alongside a specific word or term that indicates the time frame in which the action will take place, like "I jump the fence tomorrow." That type of construction was common in Old English. Then in early Middle English, speakers started using the words ***will*** and ***shall*** to indicate a future action. So they started to say things like "I shall jump the fence" or "He will jump the fence." I discussed that development back in Episode 109.

Then, in the 1500s, a new type of grammatical development emerged which allowed speakers to express future tense with the phrase "going to." "I am going to jump the fence." There is some evidence of it in the late 1400s and 1500s, but it is actually very rare prior to the 1600s. So when Shakespeare used it here in the line "Are you now going to dispatch this thing," he was using a phrase that was still very rare. It would have probably been considered a type of informal slang at the time. So why did he use it? Well, again, the answer may have to do with the meter of the play. Using that 'going to' phrase gave the line the ten syllables that it needed for iambic pentameter. "Are YOU now GOing TO disPATCH this THING." So maybe that's why he pulled that phrase out of his bag of tricks. But whatever the reason, it was still a very early use of a type of future tense construction that would soon became standard in the language.

Well, in the play, the murderers get the required warrant, and they go and kill Richard's brother George. So that removes one of the potential heirs that stands in Richard's way.

A short time later, King Edward – the eldest brother – dies of natural causes. Now only his two young sons stand in Richard's way. Richard soon directs the two young princes to be placed in

the Tower. And when Richard learns that one of nobles named Hastings is reluctant to go along with the plan, he declares Hastings to be a traitor and orders him to be executed. The deed is to be carried out quickly. The executioner says to Hastings, "Make a short shrift; he longs to see your head." Now I mentioned this passage in that earlier episode about the real-life Richard III because the passage contains the first known use of the phrase 'short shrift.' But here, the phrase was used in the original sense of the word ***shrift***, which was a confession to a priest. So Hastings is told to give a 'short shrift' – or a short confession – before being executed. Over time, the phrase has evolved to refer to anything that we address quickly and with little attention.

After this scene, Richard spreads rumors that his young nephews are illegitimate. The rumors take hold among the general population. And with much of the opposition out of the way, Richard's allies propose him as the new king and Richard accepts. And a short time later, his young nephews are murdered in the Tower at his direction. Richard has 'succeeded' to the throne through murder and lies. But his 'success' is only temporary because opposition has already started to gather around the exiled Henry Tudor – the Lancastrian claimant to the throne through the Tudor branch of the family. He returns from France and this leads to a decisive battle between Richard and Henry Tudor at Bosworth Field. During the battle, Richard's horse is killed, forcing him to fight on foot. And this is where we find his well-known refrain, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (Perfect iambic pentameter by the way.)

Richard is soon slain, which brings an end to the battle. Henry Tudor then becomes the new king – the first of the Tudor kings. And of course, the Tudor dynasty was still in place when the play was written in the 1590s. By all accounts, Richard III was a blockbuster – one of Shakespeare's most successful early plays. And it continues to fascinate audiences to this day.

Now so far, we've looked at two of Shakespeare's early plays in this episode – The Comedy of Errors and Richard III. It appears from the surviving evidence that both were composed during the two years when the theaters were closed in London or perhaps even before then. But scholars don't think those were the only ones composed during that period. They are confident that a few others were in place by the time the theaters re-opened.

One of those other plays was a controversial (or /con-tro-ver-see-ul/) play called Titus Andronicus. It was popular at the time, but it was also extremely bloody and gory. And it fell out of favor in the 1600s after Shakespeare died. The theme of succession is also strong in Titus Andronicus. It is set in ancient Rome and begins with the death of the Roman emperor, and the disputed succession between his two sons. At almost the exact same time, a Roman general named Titus Andronicus arrives in Rome having defeated the Goths. He is hailed as a conquering hero, and when he throws his support to one or the emperor's sons, it allows the son to emerge as the new emperor. But that sets in a motion a series of series murders, rapes, gory disfigurements, and even a bit of unintended cannibalism when two of the characters are killed, chopped up and baked in a pie and fed to their mother.

In another disturbing scene, Titus's daughter in raped, and then her arms and tongue are cut off so she can't reveal the identity of her attackers. It's a gruesome play, and for that reason, Victorian audiences wanted nothing to do with it.

The poet T.S. Eliot called it "one of the stupidest and most uninspiring plays ever written." And when it was finally brought back to the stage in the 1950s, many audience members couldn't handle the gory scenes, and quite a few were literally sickened by the violence. [*SOURCE: William Shakespeare: A Biography, A.L. Rowse, p. 105.*] But the play has found a new audience in the twentieth century, and quite a few people today actually cite it as one of their favorite Shakespeare plays. And again, audiences during Shakespeare's time apparently loved it – for the same reason people today love slasher films and gangster movies – because there is non-stop action and the murder and mayhem keeps audiences on the edge of their seats.

I should note that many scholars think that Shakespeare composed the play with another writer named George Peele. Peele had written another bloody play called 'The Battle of Alcazar,' and it is believed that he wrote some of the scenes. [*SOURCE: Death By Shakespeare, Kathryn Harkup, p. 27*]

Because the play has been rarely performed over the years, it hasn't had much of an impact on the English language, except perhaps for one word. Appropriately enough, the word ***bloodstained*** is recorded for the first time in the play.

The play almost certainly dates to this same period in the early 1590s because there are several references to it during that time. Even though the theaters were mostly closed from 1592 to 1594, there was brief period in the winter of 1593 into 1594 when they were re-opened. They was closed again a few weeks later due to the plague, but we have a surviving reference to Titus Andronicus being performed at the Rose theater during those few weeks when the theaters were re-opened. The reference comes from the diary maintained by Philip Henslowe – the owner of the Rose. I've mentioned his detailed records before because that are helpful in dating some of these early plays. Also around the same time that the theaters briefly re-opened, a pirated version of the play was published, and a copy of that publication actually survives. So we have solid evidence that Titus Andronicus is an early play.

As I noted, the play is really a play about revenge, but it begins as a play about royal succession. And speaking of royal succession, that takes us back to France where the War of French Succession was still on-going in the summer of 1593. But in July of that year, there was a very important development that changed the trajectory of the war. As we saw earlier in the episode, Henry of Navarre was the rightful heir to the throne, but he was a Protestant in a mostly Catholic country. And even with significant English support, Henry couldn't overcome that hurdle. So in the summer of 1593, he announced that he was making a religious conversion. He abandoned his Protestant roots and declared himself to be a Catholic. Supposedly, he proclaimed, "Paris is worth a mass." Meanwhile, much of the Catholic opposition was eager to bring an end to the fighting, so Henry's conversion was welcome news.

Over the next few months, opposition to Henry eroded as one Catholic noble after another recognized him as king. He was formally crowned as king in February of the following year - 1594, and he was welcomed into Paris a few months later in July. He thereupon became Henry (or Henri) the IV, the first Bourbon king of France. And of course, the Boubon line would continue all the way through the French Revolution a couple of centuries later.

Of course, the later Bourbon kings – Henry's descendants – played a crucial role in helping the British colonies in North America to secure their independence in the late 1700s. For that reason, quite a few places in the early United States were named after the Bourbons like Bourbon County in what would eventually become the state of Kentucy – a place that loaned its name to the type of corn whiskey that we call ***bourbon*** today. At least that is considered to be the most likely source of the name. And of course, the city of New Orleans began as a French city, and one of its initial streets was named for the French royal family, and that's how the city's well-know Bourbon Street got its name. (And yes, the street is named for the French dynasty, not the type of alcohol – even though a lot of bourbon is consumed on Bourbon Street.)

By the way, the new French king may also be partially responsible for a common proverb in English. According to some historical sources, one of his common maxims was "Men catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with twenty tons of vinegar. " Of course, that phrase would have been rendered in French. ["On prend plus de mouches avec une cuillerée de miel qu'avec vingt tonneaux de vinaigre"][*SOURCE: Words to Live By, Charles Panati, p. 182.*] The phrase was later found in a collection of Italian proverbs and eventually made its way into English as the proverb "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar," meaning that you get better results by treating people nicely than treating them with contempt. The ultimate source of the proverb is uncertain, but Henry of Navarre may have contributed to its popularity.

That proverb may help to explain Henry's success, and he is considered to have been a successful French king. But many people in England were bitterly disappointed by the turn of events. Queen Elizabeth had sent money and troops to help Henry secure the throne, and people in England had watched closely as events unfolded in France. But that was only because England hoped that a Protestant would take the throne. When Henry converted to Catholicism, it was seen as a political and religious defeat by Protestants in England

Now I am telling you about this part of French history because it may help us to date another one of Shakespeare's early plays. And that's because this other play is actually set in Navarre, and Henry of Navarre's court is generally considered to be the inspiration for the play. The play is called Love's Labour's Lost, and the king of Navarre is the main character of the play. The king's close companions in the play are also named for prominent French nobles at the time. He has companions named Longaville and Biron who are almost certainly based on the Duke of Longueville and the Duke of Biron, both of whom were close allies of Henry. A third companion is named Dumaine, and most scholars agree that he is based on the 'duc de Mayenne,' though he was actually an opponent of Henry's during the war. He did later reconcile with Henry though.

Now to be fair, even though Shakespeare's main character is the king of Navarre and clearly intended to represent Henry, Shakespeare didn't call him Henry. He actually gave him the name Ferdinand in the play. We don't really know for certain why he changed the name, but it was probably because he considered it wise to put a little bit of distance between his character and the real-life figure in France given the perilous political and religious conflicts of the time. But there is little doubt that Henry was the inspiration for Shakespeare's king of Navarre, especially given the names of those companions in the play.

I said that events in France may also help to date the play because Shakespeare presents his Navarre as an intelligent and likeable king. He is painted in a very favorable light. So it seems likely that the play was composed while Henry was still in the good graces of England prior to his conversion to Catholicism in the summer of 1593. If that assumption is correct, it means the play was likely composed during the first year or so after the theaters were closed in London. In fact, the play is so heavy on word play and fancy Latinate language that is appears to be have been written for a very educated audience, perhaps even for readers rather than viewers.

I noted a couple of episodes back that many scholars think Shakespeare spent part of the down time when the theaters were closed at the residence of the Earl of Southampton. In fact, they think Southampton is the young man referenced in many of the sonnets. Well, an extension of that theory is that this play – Love's Labour's Lost – was composed at the same time for the same educated audience that would have gathered around Southampton. And if that's the case, it is possible that Shakespeare never really intended this play to be performed on the stages of London. Again, that's a lot of speculation, but the play is a bit of a challenge if we think of it as a normal play. And that probably explains why it has tended to be one of his lesser performed plays.

But, while the play's language can be challenging for theater audiences, it's also what makes it such a favorite among historians of the language. It is one of the few plays where Shakespeare specifically talks about the English language. And in fact, it has been described as essentially 'a play about language.'

Now I should mention that the play first appeared in the public record a few years later in 1598 when an edition of the play was published for the first time. It was published as a small book called a ***quarto***. ***Quarto*** comes from the Latin word for 'four,' and it referred to a book made from a sheet of paper that was folded twice to make four pages per sheet. So each page of the book was one-fourth the size of the normal paper that was used by printers. Many plays were published as quartos, and the quarto of Love's Labour's Lost is considered to be a very good edition, apparently made from one of Shakespeare's original manuscripts. [*SOURCE: Shakespeare: The Evidence, Ian Wilson, p. 160*] However, as we'll see in a moment, some of the spellings were different in that early quarto edition, and those spellings provide some interesting insight into the way words were pronounced at the time.

I should also note that the vast majority of the play is composed in poetry – or verse. Now as we've seen, that wasn't unusual in these early plays, but what makes this play stand out is that it is not only composed in iambic pentameter, but much of it also rhymes. So as you read the play, it's often like reading a poem. In fact, characters often exchange lines of rhyming dialogue with one character saying a line and then another character saying a line that rhymes with it. In fact, of the iambic pentameter lines in the play, two-thirds of them used rhyming verse. The only Shakespeare play with a higher percentage is A Midsummer Night's Dream which we'll look at in a future episode. So this particular play really does blur the line between poetry and drama. [*SOURCE: Shakespeare's Language, Frank Kermode, p. 48.*] And that is more evidence that it was written around the same time that Shakespeare was writing his long narrative poems and his sonnets.

The play begins with Navarre proposing that he and his three noble companions retire from public life for three years to study so that they can turn the court into a center of learning and make Navarre the envy of the world. But during that time, they are to focus only on study and learning, and they are to avoid any relationships with women. Now this is an interesting premise if, in fact, Shakespeare wrote the play during a period of lock down during an outbreak of the plague. The idea of retreating from the world to study and write would have a real-world relevance at the time. And again, that is the initial premise of Love's Labour's Lost.

Two of the three companions agree, but one of the nobles named Biron expresses his reservations about refraining from love. He notes that the French princess – the French king's daughter – is coming to visit the Navarre court, and she will be accompanied by her female attendants. So right from the start, we have the conflict between isolated study and the pursuit of love. After a back and forth with Navarre, Biron relents and agrees to go along with the plan. Most of the dialogue in this opening scene is composed in rhyming verse. In fact, one of Biron's passages is actually structured as a sonnet with the 14 lines and specific rhyme scheme of a sonnet. It's the type of structure that would be largely lost on an audience listening to the dialogue, but it is much more apparent when reading it and seeing it laid out in the page. It's also further evidence that the play may have been composed primarily as literature, and not necessarily for performance on the stage.

The scene is then interrupted by a constable named Dull, who has detained a country-bumpkin named Costard. Costard has been caught making love to young woman in violation of local laws and had been arrested. Both characters are fodder for Shakespeare's humor. As his name implies, constable Dull is, well, a bit dull. And Costard is a bumpkin and a clown. Shakespeare introduces them by having each of them use malapropisms.

A malapropism is a misuse of words. It's really a confusion of one word for another word. It typically happens when the speaker isn't really familiar with the intended word, and mispronounces it or confuses it with a different word. So if someone means to say that a culprit was 'apprehended,' but by mistake, they say that he was 'comprehended,' that's a malapropism.

Now the word ***malapropism*** is a relatively modern term. And interestingly, the term actually comes from a play, but not one of Shakespeare's play. It comes from a play written in the late 1700s called 'The Rivals.' It featured a character called Mrs. Malaprop who routinely made these types of linguistic mistakes. And the play was so popular that the character's name gave us the term for these types of mistakes.

But the use of malaproprisms in English can be traced all the way back to Geoffrey Chaucer. They became more common in English literature in the Middle English period when lots of new words were flowing in from French, and people sometimes became confused by the new unfamiliar words. That is often the context in which malaproprisms occur, and that's how Shakespeare uses them in Love's Labour's Lost as well. It's a play with a lot of fancy Latinate words that were relatively new to the language at the time, so it isn't surprising that less educated characters sometimes confuse those words with other words when they speak.

So the constable named Dull introduces himself by asking to see the local duke. Biron says that he is the local official and asks what Dull wants. Dull replies by trying to say that he also 'represents' the duke in his capacity as constable, but instead, he says "I myself reprehend his own person." So he 'reprehends' the duke instead of 'representing' him. ***Represent*** and ***reprehend*** are both loanwords from Latin and French, and Dull confuses them here with comedic effect.

Dull has the country bumpkin named Costard in his custody and also a letter that explains the offense. Costard speaks up to say that the 'contents' of the letter are about him, but instead, he says "Sir, the contempts thereof are touching me." So he confuses the words ***contents*** and ***contempt***. Again, both are loanwords from Latin and French.

These types of mistakes are intended to show that these characters are less educated than Navarre and his nobles. They also point to the confusion that many commoners experienced in the 1500s with so many Latinate words flowing into English.

When Costard is questioned about his relationship with the woman, he says "Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh." That's the way it appears in the First Folio produced after Shakespeare's death, but in the original quarto of the play, the line appears as "Such is the sinplicity of man to hearken after the flesh." That appears to be another malapropism that was mistakenly changed in the later Folio edition. When talking about the sins of the flesh, he refers to the 'sinplicity' of man's urges, rather that the 'simplicity.'

After Costard receives his punishment, he accepts it and says he welcomes "the sour cup of prosperity," which is another apparent malapropism. It appears that he intended to welcome 'the sour cup of adversity' rather than 'prosperity.' Again, the clownish character continues to confuse those Latinate loanwords.

A short time later, the French princess arrives as Navarre's court accompanied by three female attendants and a male assistant and advisor named Boyet. During a conversation between Boyet and the Princess, he talks about their diplomatic mission and comments on her beauty. She dismisses the flattery and acknowledges the subjective nature of the comment by saying "Beauty is brought by judgement of the eye." Now many scholars consider that to be the earliest known English version of the modern saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." The modern phrase appeared in later centuries, but the same sentiment is expressed here with similar wording.

Conveniently, the Princess has three female attendants and Navarre has three male companions. So naturally, Navarre and each of his companions pair up with the Princess and her attending ladies in violation of the original agreement they made with each other.

Shakespeare then incorporates a scene where the identities of certain characters get confused – similar to the mistaken identity premise found in The Comedy of Errors. One of Navarre's companions writes a love letter to one of the Princess's ladies, and he gives the letter to the country bumpkin Costard to be delivered. Meanwhile, a Spanish character named Armardo writes a love letter to a peasant girl that he loves, and he also gives his letter Costard to be delivered. Of

course, being a bit dim-witted, Costard mixes up the two letters and delivers each one to the wrong recipient.

The letter written by Nararre's companion concludes with the following line expressing his love, he writes, "I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan." In this context, the word ***sue*** means 'to pursue' or 'follow after' like when someone 'sues' for peace in a time of war. It comes from the same root that we find in the word ***suitor*** (s-u-i-t-o-r) as in 'a person who dates or pursues a love interest.' But what's so interesting about this particular word in the play is that it was spelled 's-h-u-e' in the original quarto of the play published in the 1590s. The spelling was changed to 's-u-e' in the First Folio published after Shakespeare's death. But that original spelling implies that the word ***sue*** was sometimes pronounced /shue/. And I'll come back to that pronunciation in a moment.

So Costard goes out to deliver the letter to the Princess's attendant, and he finds the Princess and Boyet in a park hunting for deer. The Princess shoots and kills a deer with her bow. When Costard arrives with the letter, the Princess intervenes and intercepts the letter intended for her attendant named Rosaline. But when she reads the letter, the Princess immediately realizes there has been a mix-up and the letter was actually intended for someone else. The Princess then leaves and hands the bow to Rosaline. Boyet stays behind and begins to pick on Rosaline and needle her about the letter. He asks "Who is the suitor?" The word ***suitor*** is spelled like today in the First Folio (s-u-i-t-o-r). But in that original quarto, it is spelled like ***shooter*** (s-h-o-o-t-e-r). And in fact, the subsequent conversation between Boyet and Rosaline contains a series of puns involved the words ***suitor*** and ***shooter*** with Rosaline as both the shooter of the arrow (like Cupid) and the suitor of her male companion. But the pun only works if both words were pronounced as 'shooter.' And as I noted, that's how the word ***suitor*** was spelled in the original quarto.

So within these back-to-back scenes, we have clear indications that ***sue*** was sometimes pronounced as /shue/ and ***suitor*** was sometimes pronounced as /shooter/. Now modern linguists actually know that was case from other sources as well. Other documents show similar spellings of words beginning with [su], and some writers in the late 1500s and 1600s even commented about that type of pronunciation. Most of the comments were negative though, suggesting that the pronunciation was ridiculed by more educated speakers. But apparently it was common enough that Shakespeare could use that type of pronunciation as a pun. So why am I telling you this?

Well, when speakers in the late 1500s pronounced ***sue*** as /shue/ and ***suitor*** as /shooter/, they were doing essentially the same thing that we saw earlier at the end of words – when ***confession*** (/con-feh-see-un/) became ***confession*** (/con-feh-shun/), and ***pressure*** (/preh-see-yur/) became ***pressure*** (/preh-shur/). But in those examples, I noted that the change occurred in the middle and at the end of the words in unstressed syllables where we tend to slur the pronunciation a bit. But here, in words like ***sue*** and ***suitor***, we find the same basic sound change occurring at the front of the words in stressed syllables. So that's an indication of just how widespread this consonant change was. But, while the change in those unstressed syllables at the end of words was almost universal

and permanent, these changes in the stressed syllables at the beginning of words was more limited, and in most cases, they never became permanent.

Now having said that, it does appear that this consonant change at the beginning of words became more widespread over the course of the 1600s. Again, that's when some English writers started to comment on it and criticize it. And in a few words, that alternate pronunciation actually stuck. That's why the word ***sugar*** (spelled 's-u-g-a-r') is pronounced with an initial /sh/ sound today. And that's also why the word ***sure*** ('s-u-r-e') is pronounced in a similar manner with a /sh/ sound at the front. Initially, they would have been pronounced as /syoo-gar/ and /syoor/. Also think about the word ***surety*** ('s-u-r-e-t-y') in the sense of someone who ensures that a debt or obligation will be paid. That pronunciation may have been influenced by the related words ***insure*** and ***assure*** which are based on the same root word and have the same /sh/ sound in the second syllable.

But earlier, I mentioned that this type of consonant change affected several different sounds, including the 't' and 'd' sounds. Specifically, the 't' sound tended to become a 'ch' sound (/ch/) in those syllables. For example, from ***nature*** (/neh-tyur/) to ***nature*** (/nay-chur/), and ***picture*** (/pic-tyur/) to ***picture*** (/pic-chur/). So did the same happen with the 't' and 'd' sounds at the beginning of words? Well, there is very limited evidence that those sounds were affected at the beginning of words. It appears that it was mostly the 's' sound that changed. But we do have examples of pronunciations in Modern English where an initial 't' sound is affected in this way. Today, you will hear many people pronounce the word ***Tuesday*** as /choose-day/ and ***tune*** and /choon/. But those haven't quite reached the level of 'standard' pronunciations.

Again, Love's Labour's Lost shows us that the consonant changes we have been exploring in this episode were very widespread in Shakespeare's day. They mostly occurred in unstressed syllables near the end of words, but they sometimes extended to stressed syllables at the beginning of words. And some of that change lingers to this day.

Now, going back to the play, the scene returns to the park where a priest and a schoolmaster have been observing the Princess and her attendants while hunting. And this is where Shakespeare introduces one of this most intriguing characters – the schoolmaster named Holofernes. In the play, he is a pedant. ***Pedant*** was a brand new word in English in the late 1590s, having been borrowed from the Romance languages. At the time, it technically meant a teacher or schoolmaster, which is what Holofernes is. But the word was already acquiring the sense that it has today as someone who is obsessed with the technical rules of language and constantly corrects the speech of others. And Holofernes fits that description as well. He is quick to correct any perceived linguistic mistake. And when he speaks, he uses so many fancy Latinate words that it's difficult for other people to understand what he's talking about. And he is ridiculously pompous.

It is clear that Shakespeare intended to mock that type of pretentious use of language which was becoming increasingly common in Elizabethan society. It may seem ironic that Shakespeare was mocking someone else's elaborate use of language given the way we view his language today, but he is clearing doing that with Holofernes.

As the scene opens, Holofernes and the priest are joined by the constable Dull who we encountered earlier in the play. Holofernes comments that the deer killed by the Princess is a fine specimen. The priest disagrees and says that it was merely a young buck. Holofernes responds, "haud credo," which is Latin for "I don't believe it." Now, the constable Dull doesn't know what "haud credo" means, but since it ends in 'do,' he assumes that Holofernes is referring to a doe – a female deer. So he tries to correct the schoolmaster by informing him that it was indeed a young buck, not a doe. As soon as he utters the remark, Holofernes lets him have it. He refers to Dull as 'unpolished,' 'uneducated,' 'unpruned,' 'untrained' and 'unlettered.' Shakespeare loved to use the 'un-' prefix in new and interesting ways, and here he gives us a string of them. In fact, this is the first known use of the word ***uneducated*** in an English document. And I should also note that in an earlier scene, he gave us the first known use of the term ***well-educated*** as well.

Holofernes then says that he will improvise an epitaph for the deer, and he will use alliteration to show the constable a skillful use of language. By the way, he uses the word ***pricket*** in this passage, which is a word for a young buck, and he also uses the word ***sore***, which is a term for a four year old deer. Holofernes says, "The preyful princess pierced and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket some say a sore; but not a sore, till now made sore with shooting." Of course that's a pun on the word ***sore*** as a young deer and ***sore*** in the sense of a wound. He continues on in the same manner until the priest finally acknowledges the schoolmaster's skill.

Now remember that the play involved two love letters that were switched. A letter from the Spaniard Amrado to a beautiful peasant girl was mistakenly delivered to the Princess and her attendants. And the letter from one of Navarre's companions to one of the Princess's ladies was mistakenly delivered to the peasant girl. Well, the peasant girl can't make any sense of the letter she received. It contains elevated language written as a sonnet, so she decides to take the letter to the schoolmaster Holofernes so he can read it and interpret it for her.

When she arrives, she explains the situation and gives the letter to the priest who is with Holofernes. He reads it out loud, and Holofernes immediately comments on the poetic verse, finding it not quite up to schoolmaster's level. He says to the priest, "You find not the apostraphas, and so miss the accent." In other words, "You didn't see the apostrophes, so you missed the accent of the sonnet." That is actually the first recorded use of the word ***apostrophe*** in the English language. Now I talked about the apostrophe in an earlier episode. The actual punctuation mark is recorded for the first time in English about three decades earlier, but the word itself isn't found in an English document until this point. As I noted in that earlier episode, the apostrophe was originally used to indicate that certain letters or sounds had been omitted from a word – the way we use it today when we have a contraction like ***can't*** for 'cannot' and ***I'm*** for 'I am.' The apostrophe wasn't used to show possession yet. So when Holofernes says that the priest missed the accent because he didn't note the apostrophes, he apparently means that the priest didn't pronounce the contractions properly.

When the peasant girl says that the letter came from one of the king's lords, Holofernes takes the letter to see who it was addressed to. But rather than saying, "let me see who this is written to,' he uses the pompous Latinate line, "I will overglance the superscript." Here the word ***superscript***

literally means ‘something written above,’ specifically, the heading of the letter which contains the recipient’s address. This is actually the first recorded use of the word ***superscript*** in English.

Holofernes reads it and realizes that it was intended for one of the ladies in the Princess’s court, so there must have been a mix-up. Since the letter has been delivered to the wrong person, he tells the peasant girl to take the letter to Navarre so that it can be returned to the noble who wrote it. Of course, when the letter is returned, it soon becomes apparent that Navarre and his three companions have all broken their agreement with each other, and each of them is pursuing one of the ladies in the Princess’s court. They ultimately agree that pursuant of love is just as important as the pursuit of knowledge, so they agree to put their agreement aside and continue with their pursuit of the young ladies.

The scene then returns to Holofernes and the priest who are discussing the Spaniard Armado, who actually wrote the letter that was intended for the peasant girl. Armado is well-known in and around the court of Navarre as someone who speaks an elevated form of English. Now even though the play is set in Navarre, and presumably everyone there would have spoken a Romance language, this is a Shakespeare play, so everyone speaks English, and Holofernes comments on Armado’s speech, which means he is specifically commenting on his use of English. And for historical linguists, this is one of the most interesting scenes in all of Shakespeare’s plays because it is one of the rare occasions where Shakespeare actually writes about the nature of English at the time.

The priest begins by mentioning that he had recently spoken with Armado. Holofernes responds with a Latin phrase, “Novi hominem tanquam te,” which means ‘I know the man as well as I know you.’ This is a notable response because the phrase comes straight from William Lily’s Grammar book, which all English students used to learn Latin. So it tends to confirm that Shakespeare was familiar with that book, and almost certainly knew the phrase from studying Latin in grammar school in Stratford.

Again, Holofernes throws out a lot big Latinate words when describing Armado. He says that the Spaniard has polished speech, but his behavior is “vain, ridiculous and thrasonical,” which meant ‘laughable or boastful.’ He also describes Armado as “too peregrinate” meaning ‘too foreign.’ The word comes from the same root as the word ***pilgrim***, but Shakespeare’s use of the word in this passage is one of the few times it ever appeared in English.

Holofernes then takes aim at Armado’s extravagant style of speech. He says, “I abhor such fanatical phantasimes” – so fanatical people who aren’t what they appears to be. And he says that he abhors “such rackers of orthography, as to speak dout, fine, when he should say doubt; det, when he should pronounced debt – d-e-b-t, not d-e-t.” So here, Holofernes is saying that the ‘b’ sound be pronounced in words like ***doubt*** and ***debt***. Now as we saw in an earlier episode, the ‘b’ was added to those words by English scholars in the 1500s to indicate that they each has a ‘b’ sound in Latin. But neither of those words were ever pronounced with a ‘b’ sound in English. So the ‘b’ in the spelling of those words is strictly etymological to reflect the sound of the original root word. But Holofernes doesn’t care about that history. He is such a pedant that he thinks words should be pronounced like they are spelled, even if that spelling is merely historical. This is

interesting because it shows the extent to which the spelling of words like that had started to become fixed by the late 1500s, so much so that schoolmasters like Holofernes expected people to alter their pronunciations to bring them in line with those spellings.

Of course, he criticizes Armado's speech for using the typical English pronunciation, not what Holofernes considers to be the 'correct' one. He then continues his criticism of Armado by saying that he pronounces the word ***calf*** as /caf/ when it should be pronounced as /calf/, and he pronounces the word ***half*** as /haf/ when it should be pronounced as /half/. So again, Holofernes thinks all of the letters in a word should be pronounced, even the silent 'l' in ***calf*** and ***half***. Again, the 'l' in those words reflects a much older pronunciation where the 'l' was once voiced, but the 'l' was no longer pronounced in the those words in Early Modern English. I discussed that development back in Episode 160.

Holofernes continues his criticism of Armado by saying that he pronounces the word ***abominable*** like that – like we do today – rather than the way it should be pronounced, which he says is ***abhominable***. In the play, his supposedly 'correct' version of the word includes an H in the middle. It is rendered as 'a-b-H-o-m-i-n-a-b-l-e.' And since he thinks every letter should be pronounced, he thinks the word should be pronounced that way as /ab-HOM-inable/. Now this is actually a complete mistake, and it isn't clear if Shakespeare knew the history of the word to make Holofernes look like a fool here, or if this was a simple oversight. But at the time, it was quite common for the word ***abominable*** to be spelled with an 'h.' There was some variation. Sometimes the 'h' was included, and sometimes it wasn't. But many educated people thought it should have an 'h' to reflect what they thought was an older pronunciation. Since there were a lot of silent H's in words borrowed from French, it was quite common for a word to have an H that wasn't pronounced, like ***honor*** and ***honest*** and ***heir*** as we saw earlier in the episode. So they thought that people had just stopped pronouncing the H in ***abominable***, and that the proper pronunciation should include the 'h' sound. But all of those assumptions about the H in ***abominable*** were wrong. The word had never actually had an H, even in its original Latin version.

The mistake stemmed form the fact that many scholars at the time – like the fictional Holofernes – thought that ***abominable*** was derived from the Latin prefix ***ab-*** meaning 'away from' combined with the Latin word ***homine*** with an H meaning 'man.' So 'ab-homine' meant 'away from man,' and therefore referred to things that were beastly or uncivilized. And they thought that gave us the word ***abhominable***. But again, none of that is actually true. The word ***abominable*** actually comes from that same prefix ***ab-*** meaning 'away from' and the root word ***omin*** meaning 'foreboding.' It's actually the root of our modern word ***omen***. So it meant 'the repulsive nature of something that is foreboding,' like an evil omen. Thus, the words ***abominable*** and ***abomination***. So there was never an H in the word. But based in his mistaken etymology, Holofernes thinks there should be an H, and it should be pronounced. This also points the growing concern among some pedants and language critics at the time that too many people were dropping the 'h' sound in their words – pronouncing words like ***hello*** as 'allo' and ***house*** and 'ouse.' As we'll see, that concern will become an even larger topic of criticism over the next couple of centuries.

Holofernes concludes his criticisms of Armado's speech by saying that Armado's incorrect pronunciations drive him mad, or as it actually put it, "it insinuateth me of insani," In other words, 'it sounds to me like insanity.'

Holofernes and the priest carry on a conversation in the same elaborate manner until Armado himself arrives, accompanied by his page and the country-bumpkin Costard who we saw earlier. As the page overhears the conversation, he says, "They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps." Armado joins the conversation, and he also carries on in the same Latinate style, using fancy words and ornate speech. He invites Holofernes and the priest to Navarre's court for a reception for the Princess that afternoon. He says, "Sir, it is the king's most sweet pleasure and affection to congratulate the princess at her pavilion in the posteriors of this day, which the rude multitude call the afternoon." Holofernes likes Armado's description of the afternoon as the 'posteriors of the day.' In response, he says, "The posterior of the day, most generous sir, is liable, congruent and measurable for the afternoon: the word is well culled, chose, sweet and apt, I do assure you, sir, I do assure."

The conversation continues a bit longer, and Holofernes notices the constable Dull sitting silently nearby. The schoolmaster turns to the constable and says, "Via, goodman Dull! Thou hast spoken no word all this while." And Dull replies, "Nor understood none neither, sir." This type of witty reply highlights the different registers of speech featured in the play. And again, it is somewhat ironic that Shakespeare pokes fun of that elevated register in this play given that people today view his language in much the same way. But even he recognized that this type of elevated language could be pushed to excess, and at some point, become almost like a foreign language in itself.

The play concludes with the reception for the princess, at which there is more misdirection. Navarre's companions dress up like Russians to seem exotic, and the Princess's ladies switch their attire to confuse the men. Of course, it's all part of the playful game of courtship in which the characters are fully engaged at this point. But then a messenger arrives and informs the Princess that her father the king has died. That brings an end to the game of courtly love because the Princess has to return to Paris immediately. A king's death meant that the family had to attend to the matter of succession – and love games had to come to an end.

Navarre expresses his love for the Princess, and his companions do the same for each lady. The Princess tells Navarre that even though the game of courtship has come to end, if the men can prove their love by returning to their original agreement and isolating themselves to study for one year without female company, then the game may resume and the women will return their love.

With that, the play comes to an end with all of love's labour now lost – at least for a year. So the play ends on a bit of a down note. And of course, we don't know if the men actually studied for a year and reconvened with their newfound loves. But a couple of episodes back, I mentioned a book by a man named Francis Meres that listed all of Shakespeare's plays up to the time of the book in 1598 – a few years after this play was written. And that book not only mentions this play – Love's Labour's Lost – but it also mentions another play called Love's Labour's Won. To date, no one has found a copy of a play with that name, so we don't know what it was about. So could

it have been the successor to this play? Were love's labours eventually won? Did this play has a successful successor? We don't know.

But we do know that this surviving play contains some of Shakespeare's most insightful comments about language, and specifically the different registers of English at the time. As I noted, many consider it to be a play about language.

But of course, Shakespeare didn't just observe and write about language, he also influenced it. And in the next episode, we'll turn our attention to the events that took place in second of the half of the 1590s after the plague lifted in London. It was during those first few years after the theaters re-opened that Shakespeare's acting company performed a series of plays that were set in Italy. They included The Taming of the Shrew, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merchant of Venice, and a tragedy about young lovers caught between their feuding families called Romeo and Juliet. Next time, we'll look at those developments, and we'll explore the Italian influence on Shakespeare and English in the early modern era.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.