

## PART 1

*Verner's Law and Common Germanic*

This exercise focuses on a major phonological regularity of early Common Germanic and its reflexes in West Germanic and Old English commonly referred to as Verner's Law, named after the 19th century Danish scholar who was keen enough to observe a regularity that went unnoticed in the formulation of Grimm's Law. The motivation behind the extension of Grimm's Law was that a number of phonological processes simply did not add up. The traditional formulation of the rule can be looked up in any handbook on Germanic linguistics. This strategy should best be avoided for at least two reasons: (i) this exercise tests your problem solving prowess and (ii) some conclusions of the ancients may be in need of revision at places.

Brief introduction: Grimm's Law predicts that IE \*t, for example, comes down in Common Germanic as the voiceless fricative \*θ. This is what the regularity principle of phonological change dictates: every \*t in the appropriate phonological environment 'suffers' the same fate, i.e. spirantisation in our case. This is, by and large, borne out in Germanic. Yet, some of the data are problematic. The cheapest 'explanation' would be to claim that such forms are exceptions. Saying that they are counterexamples should best be avoided for at least two reasons: (i) some counterexamples are just 'too' regular (i.e. they occur at a frequency which must be due to something more than mere chance, probably an exception, i.e. an overseen regularity that runs after/before another regularity; recall: exceptions only strengthen a previous rule, here Grimm's Law) and (ii) counterexamples cannot be regularised and as such fall outside the scope of phonological explanation (they may be due to analogy, borrowing, etc.).

As a convenient point to start off the investigation of Verner's Law observe the following OE strong verb *weorþan* 'become' (the problematic consonants are highlighted):

INFINITIVE	PRET 1&3 SING	PRET PLURAL	PAST PPL
weorþan	wearþ	wurdon	(ge)worden

The IE stem contained \*t as witnessed by L *vertō* 'I turn', Sanskrit *vártami*, Old Church Slavonic *vrūtěti* 'he turns'. The first two forms in OE are accounted for by Grimm's Law in a regular way. The preterite plural and past participle, however, are more difficult to explain. These forms seem to contradict Grimm's Law. The rule is turned upside down: a voiceless stop in non-Germanic languages corresponds to a voiced stop in Germanic. We can assume that they either derive from IE \*dh or \*t was voiced to Common Germanic \*d. These suppositions cannot be substantiated: (i) in IE the stem obviously contained \*t and not \*dh (as shown by the Latin/Sanskrit examples above) and (ii) there is no evidence that there ever existed an early Germanic rule that 'hardened' \*θ into a stop (\*t) and later voiced it to d. The explanation must lie somewhere else. The mystery was solved by Verner in 1875.

The remnants of the workings of this phonological regularity are best preserved in OE in the system of the strong verbs. Originally, in pre-Common Germanic and IE the regularity also worked in the nominal system but due to analogical levelling only one variant survived which was taken to be the basic form. Sometimes both variants survive and, accordingly, a new paradigm is built around them: e.g., OE *tēn* 'ten' (< \*tehan) vs. *-tig* 'a ten' /tij/ (< \*/tiγ/) (as in *fiftig* 'fifty', i.e. five tens). For starters, the showcase examples are taken from the class of strong verbs.

The following list contains the reconstructed pre-Common Germanic forms and endings in a strong verb (the forms already show Grimm's Law).

<b>Common Germanic</b> (post-Grimm, pre-Verner)	<b>post-Verner</b>	<b>post-post-Verner<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>OE</b>	
	<i>all forms are reconstructed</i>		<i>attested</i>	
<b>Present Indicative</b>				
<i>Singular</i>				
1	wérþō	wérþō	wérþō	weorþe
2	wᵣþísi	wᵣðísi	<u>wúrðisi</u>	wierþst > wierst
3	wᵣþíþi	wᵣðíþi	<u>wúrðiþi</u>	wierþþ > wierþ
		( <u>stem</u> later replaced by wérþ-)		
<i>Plural</i>				
3	wᵣþánþi	wᵣðánþi	wúrðanþi	weorþaþ
		( <u>stem</u> later replaced by wérþ-)		
<b>Preterite Indicative</b>				
<i>Singular</i>				
1	wárþa	wárþa	wárþa	wearþ
2	wᵣþís	wᵣðís	wúrðis	wurde
3	wárþa	wárþa	wárþa	wearþ
<i>Plural</i>				
3 <sup>2</sup>	wᵣþúnþ	wᵣðúnþ	wúrðunþ	wurdon
<b>Past Participle</b>				
	wᵣþanáas	wᵣðanáas	wúrðanas	(ge)worden

This pre-Common Germanic paradigm is reconstructed on the basis of attested Germanic and non-Germanic languages. Just for completeness' sake, compare the following data to the ones given above. The paradigm is the present indicative active one for the verb 'bear, carry' (IE \**bher-*; recall: IE **bh** > L **f**). Hyphenation shows the division of the grammatical words into *stem - thematic vowel - inflectional* suffix (e.g., *fer-i-s*).

	<b>Latin</b>	<b>Gothic</b>	<b>OE</b>	<b>Old Icelandic</b>
sg	1. fer-ō	baír-a <aí> = e	ber-e	ber
	2. fer-i-s	baír-i-s	bir-e-s	ber-r
	3. fer-i-t	baír-i-þ	bir-e-þ	ber-r
pl	1. fer-i-mus	baír-am		ber-um
	2. fer-i-tis	baír-i-þ	ber-aþ	ber-e-þ
	3. fer-u-nt	baír-a-nd		ber-a

<sup>1</sup> Some of the changes affecting Common Germanic (e.g. the breaking up of the syllabic sonorant into an **u** + sonorant sequence vis-à-vis the voicing of fricatives, for example) are difficult to align temporarily with respect to each other because they seem to be unordered (i.e. none feeds or bleeds another rule). Assume that the above forms represent a logically possible snapshot of this reconstructed language.

<sup>2</sup> This ending was generalised to 1-2 persons plural in Ingvaemonic (i.e. Old Saxon, Old Frisian and Old English).

To make matters simpler, compare the various Common Germanic and OE forms below and see how they fit into this general pattern (only relevant portions are shown). All these examples show strong verbs of various classes (there were altogether 7 such classes in Germanic).

**Data A**

	INF	PRET SG	PRET PL	PAST PPL
‘turn; become’				
<b>pre-Verner</b>	wérþan-	wárþa	wrþúnþ	wrþanás
<b>post-Verner</b>	wérþan-	wárþa	wrðúnþ	wrðanás
<b>post-post-Verner</b>	wérþan-	wárþa	wúrðunþ	wúrðanas
<b>OE</b>	weorþan	wearþ	wurdon	(ge)worden
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>weorðan</b>	<b>wæarθ</b>	<b>wurdon</b>	<b>wordæn</b>
‘choose’	kéusan-	káusa	kusúnþ	kusanás
	kéusan-	káusa	kuzúnþ	kuzanás
	kéusan-	káusa	kúzunþ	kúzanás
	čēosan	čēas	curon	(ge)coren
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>tʃe:ozan</b>	<b>tʃæ:as</b>	<b>kuron</b>	<b>koræn</b>
‘drive’	drí:van- <sup>3</sup>	dráiva	drivúnþ	drivanás
	drí:van-	draiva	drivúnþ	drivanás
	drí:van-	dráiva	drívunþ	drívanás
	drīfan	drāf	drifon	(ge)drifen
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>dri:van</b>	<b>dra:f</b>	<b>drivon</b>	<b>drivæn</b>
‘cut’	sní:þan	snáiþa	snipúnþ	snipánás
	sní:þan	snáiþa	sniðúnþ	sniðanás
	sní:þan	snáiþa	sniðunþ	sniðanas
	snīþan	snāþ	snidon	sniden
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>sni:ðan</b>	<b>sna:θ</b>	<b>snidon</b>	<b>snidæn</b>
‘draw’	téuxan-	táuxa	tuxúnþ	tuxanás
	téuxan-	táuxa	tuyúnþ	tuyanás
	téuxan-	táuxa	túyunþ	túyanás
	tēon	tēah	tugon	(ge)togen
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>te:on</b>	<b>tæ:ax</b>	<b>tuyon</b>	<b>toγæn</b>
‘see’	séxan-	sáxa	sæxúnþ	sewanás
	séxan-	sáxa	sæyúnþ	sewanás
	séxan-	saxa	sáýunþ	séwanás
	sēon	seah	sægon	(ge)sewen
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>se:on</b>	<b>sæax</b>	<b>sæ:γon</b>	<b>toγæn</b>

(the IE stem is \*sekw-, OE also has *sāwon* for *sægon/sēgon*, and *segen* for *sewen*).

<sup>3</sup> The labial fricative *v* in traditional books is sometimes shown as *β*. This has no particular relevance for this problem.

'help'	xélpān-	xálpā	xǫpúnþ	xǫpānás
	xélpān-	xálpā	xǫpúnþ	xǫpānás
	xélpān-	xálpā	xúlþunþ	xúlþanas
	healpān	healp/halp	hulþon	(ge)holþen
OE pronunciation	<b>helpan</b>	<b>hæalp</b>	<b>hulþon</b>	<b>holþæn</b>
'touch'	xrí:nān-	xráina	xrinúnþ	xrinanás
	xrí:nān-	xráina	xrinúnþ	xrinanás
	xrí:nān-	xráina	xrínunþ	xrínanas
	hrīnan	hrān	hrinon	(ge)hrinen
OE pronunciation	<b>hri:nān</b>	<b>hra:n</b>	<b>hrinon</b>	<b>hrinæn</b>
'write'	wréitan-	wráita	writúnþ	writanás
	wréitan-	wráita	writúnþ	writanás
	wréitan-	wráita	writunþ	writanas
	writān	wrāt	writon	(ge)writen
OE pronunciation	<b>wri:tan</b>	<b>wra:t</b>	<b>writon</b>	<b>writæn</b>

There are a number of verbs in the strong class whose infinitive suffix has a different history than the one observed above. In their case, the suffix was *\*-jān* (taken from the weak verbal class, originally a causative suffix):

'lift; cause to rise' (L <i>cipio</i> 'I get' < IE <i>*kap-</i> ; cf. MoG <i>heben</i> )	<b>INF</b>	<b>PRET SG</b>	<b>PRET PL</b>	<b>PAST PL</b>
<b>pre-Verner</b>	xəfjān-	xófa	xəfúnþ	xəfanás
<b>post-Verner</b>	xəvjān-	xófa	xəvúnþ	xəvanás
<b>post-post-Verner</b>	xávjan-	xófa	xávun-	xávanas
<b>OE</b>	hebban	hóf	hafen	(ge)hæfen
<b>OE pronunciation</b>	<b>hevvan</b>	<b>ho:f</b>	<b>havæn</b>	<b>hævæn</b>

### Questions on data:

1. After you have looked at the data above and not considering the data below, what is your conclusion on the phonological motivation of Verner's Law (disregard the OE data!): does it depend on segmental (quality/quantity of the neighbouring vowels) or suprasegmental features (light vs. heavy syllables, syllable structure, etc.)? Which consonants were affected (enumerate the members individually and then give the barest phonological minimum/natural class) and what happened to them?

2. Formulate Verner's Law in view of what you have found out. (This formulation may not coincide with what you can find in handbooks, but this is not the end of the story)
3. After this change had occurred, another change happened that disguised its operation: which change is this?
4. After Verner's Law and the subsequent phonological change described in Q3 had occurred, a profound distributional reorganisation took place in the phonological inventory of Common Germanic: some consonants became phonemes. Which consonants are we talking about and how was it possible for them to become phonemes?
5. Observe the following data too (the words in Common Germanic come from stem-stressed forms).

IE \**wegh-* > CGerm \**wéγaz* 'way',

IE \**rudhro-* > CGerm \**rúðraz* 'red' (as in *ruddy cheeks*)

IE \**aŋghu-* > CGerm \**áγγuz* 'narrow' (MoG *eng*).

Would you like to modify your statement in Q4? Is this properly speaking a merger and if so what merged with what? In view of this will you have to modify your statement made in Q4 in connection with the phonemisation of certain consonants in post-Verner Common Germanic?