

3. Examine the lexis in the opening of T S Eliot's poem 'The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock'.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
Let us go and make our visit.

(a) Go through the lexis in the poem, and with the help of a dictionary that contains etymological information (such as the *OED online*), categorise the lexis according to the *immediate* (not *ultimate*) source of the words – OE (Anglo-Saxon), Norse (Scandinavian), French, Latin, Greek, etc. (Bear in mind that the sources of some words might be disputed, so that the answer that you get might depend on the dictionary that you consult. Make sure also that you know how to read etymological entries and check up on the abbreviations used.)

(b) Discuss the 'feel' or 'texture' of the words in each category. Try to account for this by referring to the history of loan-words in English.

(c) Try to relate the categories to the notion of core vocabulary.

(d) Can you account for Eliot's use of core or non-core vocabulary and native lexical items and non-native lexical items in the poem?

EL221 I Historical Variation in English (Sem 2, 2008/09) Tutorial No. 3

1. How do you understand the term **lexicon**? How is this different from the words in a dictionary? Examine the following entry from the OED, and answer the questions that follow.

||**debris, débris**

(debri, 'deibriz, 'debriz) [F. *débris*. vbl. n. from obs. *débriser* (Cotgr.), OF. *debrisier*: see [DEBRUISE](#) v.]

1. The remains of anything broken down or destroyed; ruins, wreck: **a.** orig. (in Eng.) *fig.*; **b.** in *Geol.* applied to any accumulation of loose material arising from the waste of rocks; also to drifted accumulation of vegetable or animal matter (Page); thence, **c.** any similar rubbish formed by destructive operations.

1708 [COLLIER](#) *Eccl. Hist.* I. A.D. 685 To retire with the *debris* of the army. **1735** [SWIFT](#) *Lett. to Dk. of Dorset*, Your Grace is now disposing of the *debris* of two bishoprics. **1778** [H. WALPOLE](#) *Lett. to W. Mason* 18 July, The best they can hope for, is to sit down with the *débris* of an empire. **1802** [PLAYFAIR](#) *Illustr. Hutton. Th.* 363 A temporary receptacle for the *debris* of the Alps. **1849** [MURCHISON](#) *Siluria* xiv. 356 The *débris* of the ancient rocks. **1851** [D. WILSON](#) *Preh. Ann.* (1863) II. III. iii. 105 Accumulated rubbish and debris. **1858** [GEIKIE](#) *Hist. Boulder* ix. 176 The sandstone cliffs..are battered down and their debris carried out to sea. **1885** *Act 48-9 Vict.* c. 39 §5 The sanitary authority shall remove the same and all foundations, *débris*, and other materials.

d. = [SLIME](#) *n.* 4, [TAILING](#) *vbl. n.*¹ 2b.

1871 *Cape Monthly Mag.* June 358 In the paucity of materials in the *débris* of pans worked for diamonds, I would have less difficulty in finding traces of these rocks. **1882** H. G. HANKS *Sec. Rep. State Min. Calif.* 283 *Debris*,...the silt, sand and gravel that flow from the hydraulic mines; called in miner's parlance, tailings, slums, and sometimes by the outlandish name of 'slickens'. **1902** D. WARD *Digest Criminal Cases Superior Courts Colony C.G.H.* 5/2 The accused, an employé, *not of De Beers*, but of a *débris* washer. **1967** *Gloss. Mining Terms (B.S.I.)* VIII. 12 *Dirt, (debris)*,...any material, such as rock or clay, etc., associated with the mineral and extracted during mining operations.

2. *attrib.*, as **debris-cone**, a cone formed by the accumulation of volcanic ejecta, debris, etc.

1890 J. D. DANA *Char. Volcanoes* 113 The cone was found to be literally a debris-cone, not a lava-cone or cinder-cone in any part. *Ibid.* 171 Between 1880 and 1882 another debris cone began in the basin of Halema'uma'u. **1895** — *Man. Geol.* (ed. 4) III. v. 285 The basin contained a debris-cone made of the fallen blocks, and not at all of ejected material.

- (a) Is the word a native English word or is it a loan-word? How do you know?
- (b) Has the word undergone any kind of nativisation or assimilation?
- (c) Do you think it is a common word? In what kind of contexts would you find this word?
- (d) Is this a core lexical item?

2. Here are abbreviated entries for *luscious* and *summit* from the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. (Bear in mind that E = early; M = mid; L = late; ME = Middle English; 16, 17, etc. = 16th, 17th, etc. centuries; *alt.* = alteration; *colloq.* = colloquial; *ellipt.* = elliptical; *esp.* = especially; *f.* = from; *fig.* = figurative; *perh.* = perhaps; *spec.* = specifically.)

luscious /'lʌʃəs/ *a. & n.* LME. [*Perh. alt. of shortened form of DELICIOUS. Cf. also LUSH a.*] **1** Richly sweet in taste or smell; *colloq.* delicious. LME. **2** Excessively sweet, cloying, sickly; (*esp. of language or literary style*) overrich in sound, imagery, or voluptuous suggestion. M16. **3** *Orig.*, appealing to a lascivious taste, salacious, voluptuous. Later, voluptuously attractive, sexually desirable. E17.

summit /'sʌmɪt/ *n. & v.* LME. [*OFr. som(m)ete, also somet, sumet (mod. sommet), f. som, sum f. L summum neut. sing. of summus*] **A n.** **1** The top or head of something; the vertex, the apex. Now *esp.* the highest point or ridge of a mountain; a peak. LME. **2 fig. a** The highest point of power, success, etc.; the acme, the peak. E18. **b** The highest level, *spec.* with ref. to politics and international relations; *ellipt.* a summit conference, meeting, etc. M20.

- (a) Discuss the range of senses for each word. Which are the original senses? Which are still available today?
- (b) How has meaning changed for these two words?
- (c) Are these core lexical items?