

# **English irregular verbs: Etymology and some approaches to learn them.**

## **Verbos irregulares ingleses: etimología y algunos enfoques para de aprenderlos.**



### **TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO**

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## **English irregular verbs: Etymology and some approaches to learn them.**

### **Abstract.**

The difficulties for students of English when learning irregular verbs is an issue that needs consideration. This work aims at providing the historical reasons that have led to the present-day situation, so that a teaching method for irregular verbs can be drawn taking into consideration the morphological similarities among the verbs. The work consists of two parts. In the first part, a list of Present-day English irregular verbs is provided, arranged and subdivided into groups according to their original class in Old English and other origins. Along with each of the groups, some etymological data on some of the verbs is also provided in this first part. In the second part, we include a teaching planning in order to help students to memorize these verbs in a more organized way, taking into consideration their common morphological features. The list of English irregular verbs has been rearranged and subdivided into new groups, regarding only Present-day English forms, in order to make it easier for learners to follow this teaching planning proposed in this second part. Along with some of the new groups, we provide some texts that have been made up for the purpose of this work, as well as some other text extracts from other sources, through which students can learn by means of rhyming words with the different verb forms. Besides these groups and texts, some exercises are proposed for students to carry out along with the texts and new groups of verbs.

Key words: Origins, rearrangement, morphological similarities, phonological differences, teaching method, rhyming words with the verbs.

## **Verbos irregulares ingleses: etimología y algunos enfoques para aprenderlos.**

### **Síntesis.**

La dificultad que encuentran los estudiantes de inglés en el aprendizaje de los verbos irregulares es un tema que necesita ser atendido. Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado pretende señalar las razones históricas que han conducido a la situación actual, para que así podamos efectuar un plan de enseñanza y aprendizaje para los verbos irregulares, considerando las similitudes morfológicas entre los verbos. El trabajo consta de dos partes: en la primera parte se proporciona una lista de verbos irregulares ingleses ordenados según su clase original en inglés antiguo o según su origen en otras lenguas. También se reporta alguna información etimológica de algunos verbos de cada grupo de esta primera parte. En la segunda parte, se incluye un plan de enseñanza para ayudar a los estudiantes a memorizar estos verbos de un modo más ordenado, considerando las características morfológicas que tienen en común. La lista de los verbos irregulares ingleses ha sido reordenada y subdividida mirando sólo las formas verbales del inglés actual, con el objetivo de hacer más fácil para los estudiantes seguir este plan de enseñanza propuesto en esta segunda parte. Con algunos de los nuevos grupos se proporcionan algunos textos inventados para el propósito de este trabajo, así como algunos otros extractos de textos tomado de otras fuentes, a través de los cuales los estudiantes pueden aprender utilizando palabras que riman con las diferentes formas verbales. Además de estos subgrupos y textos, se propone algunos ejercicios a realizar.

Palabras clave: orígenes, reestructuración, similitudes morfológicas, diferencias fonológicas, plan de enseñanza, palabras que riman con los verbos.

## Introduction.

Students of English language, whichever their mother tongue, find a great difficulty in learning irregular verbs. This task can take years in the process of learning a second language such as English in this case. This paper addresses both students working in early stages of their learning process and students in more advanced stages as a task for reviewing them. Advanced learners will be able to consolidate and extend skills already learned in the earlier years. While students acquire a good proficiency with the use of irregular verbs, they usually make many mistakes when they have to deal with the different forms and tenses these verbs show. It is typical that students tend to regularise irregular verbs at early stages of their English learning courses. Professors, Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014, pp. 143-145), point out some common mistakes learners usually make; for instance, saying, *bringed*, if they do not remember the past and participle form of, *bring*, is *brought*; or they said, *singed*, if they did not remember the past form of *sing* is *sang*, and its participle is *sung*. Another mistake learners tend to make is to confuse the past form with the participle form in the verbs showing three different forms. The way we normally use for learning irregular verbs is to learn them by heart from an alphabetical list, and then to practise them making different exercises, some of which are described at the 'review of the field' section below. This work provides some more approaches to learn them in a more sensible and sensitive way.

Although Present-day English counts with more than 200 irregular verbs, in this work we are going to analyse only those which are non-prefixed, i.e., those that do not have an added prefix to their roots such as, over-ride, over-lay, for-get, for-go, under-cut, under-take, un-freeze, un-wind, mis-cast, mis-read, up-hold or up-set among others. The present situation of English irregular verbs is quite different from that it was in Old

English and Middle English: the differentiation in Old English is made between weak verbs, whose past and participle forms are marked with a dental stop ending –just as in present day regular verbs–, and strong verbs, whose past and participle forms show different paradigms –just as in present day irregular verbs. In Present-day English, many of the Old English weak verbs have become irregular verbs and some Old English strong verbs have become regular verbs. As a result of these changes, neither all the Old English weak verbs corresponds with Present-day English regular verbs, nor all the Old English strong verbs correspond with Present-day English irregular verbs. For instance, the Old English weak verb 'werian, werede, weredon, wered' was a weak verb in Old English, and it has changed to the Present-day English irregular verb 'wear, wore, worn'. The inverse process has the verb 'climban, clamb, clumbon, clumben' undergone. It was an Old English strong verb class III, and it has become in Present-day English the regular verb 'climb, climbed, climbed (Campbell, 1959, pp. 295, 310). There are also in present day some verbs which perform their past and participle forms alternatively as regular and irregular; such as, 'burn, burned/burnt, burned/burnt'; 'learn, learned/learnt, learned/learnt'; 'dream, dreamed/dreamt, dreamed/dreamt'; 'spoil, spoiled/spoilt, spoiled/spoilt'. In our corpus analysis we only show their irregular forms.

During Middle English period (11th-14th centuries), three languages were spoken in England: Latin, French and English, which was performed in many dialects. As a result of this cohabitation, some new verbs and patterns of conjugation appeared supplanting some Old English verbs, or sharing the same space with a slight difference. Due to the large amount of dialects and conjugation patterns existing in Middle English, in this work we avoid reporting the forms and conjugations these verbs adopted at that age, since it would interfere to a large extent in the achievement of our main purpose, which is to design a teaching method for English irregular verbs. Only to remark that during

this period it occurred a great shift of strong verbs to the weak paradigm, and not all of the OE strong verbs have followed the same evolutionary paradigms within each of the different groups.

### **Objectives.**

Objectives in the first part of the include to search for an answer to the question of why there exist so many patterns of conjugations for PDE irregular verbs. With this purpose, we make a brief review on their etymology in order to see how they are organised in Old English and Middle English. Along with this review, we point out some linguistic phenomena which have contributed to the changes these verbs have undergone over history in order to acknowledge how these phenomena have influenced the verb forms and paradigms we know nowadays.

The main objective of the second part of the work is to design a teaching method for PDE irregular verbs. With this work, we want to add more options and help for students to undertake this complicated task of learning PDE irregular verbs. The main purpose of this teaching approach is to look for a more sensible and ordered way of learning English irregular verbs than the one learners normally use, that is, learning them by heart in an alphabetically ordered list, where all patterns of conjugation are mixed. We separate different patterns of conjugation regarding morphological similarities of the verbs in their different tenses. We also maintain an alphabetical order for the infinitive forms within each group, but the arrangement is mainly made gathering verbs which show a similar morphology in their past and participle forms.



## **Methodology.**

The work is divided into two parts. In the first part, we provide a list of one hundred of PDE irregular verbs divided into ten groups, ordered regarding their origins and patterns of conjugation, and matched with their current homologous forms. Seven of the groups contain the seven classes of Anglo-Saxon strong verbs; one large group contains those OE weak and common verbs which have become irregular verbs in PDE; another shorter group containing irregular verbs with Scandinavian roots; and a fourth group with verbs of French origin appearing in Middle English. From each group, we have taken some samples and searched data about their etymology and linguistic phenomena which has contributed to the phonological and morphological changes these verbs have undergone over history such as the Great Vowel Shift in the modern period, which has determined the phonology of the stem vowels of the verbs we are studying.

The procedure undertaken in the second part is the following one: we have separated groups of verbs including all those verbs which show an equal form in simple past and participle, for instance, spill, spilt, spilt; flee, fled, fled; hear, heard, heard; find, found, found; and so on. Within each group, we have separated several subgroups containing verbs which share the characteristic that their past and participle forms end in the same consonantal cluster, for instance, *-ght*, in verbs such as, bring, brought, brought; buy, bought, bought; think, thought, thought. All the verbs sharing this characteristic are put together within a group considered a single unit, which is placed at the same time within the broader group of verbs with an equal morphology in past and participle forms. Another group can be constituted of verbs with three different forms such as, drink, drank, drunk; ring, rang, rung; swim, swam, swum; sing, sang, sung; and so on. Accompanying some of the subgroups in this second rank list of verbs, some texts are

provided, which include words rhyming with the different verb forms, with the intention of making students learn them more easily. With this purpose, some exercises and explanations focusing on pronunciation are also proposed, as well as some more activities concerning vocabulary and creativity.

### **Review of the field.**

In order to make it easier to teach and learn PDE irregular verbs, some studies have been conducted by several teachers, professors and authors, since it appears to be quite a difficult task. Rumelhart and McClelland (1985), in their book, *On learning the past tense of English verbs*, propose a way for teaching English verbs, taking into account the frequency each verb appears in daily speech. This method appears to involve quite a complex process for students to learn irregular verbs since it includes both regular and irregular verbs. This method might not be very suitable since it can happen that verbs which appear more frequently in a given context may not appear with the same frequency in a different one. Grabowski and Mindt (1994), also published a journal article in which they designed a new method for this purpose of teaching English irregular verbs, regarding the frequency with which the verbs appear in daily speech, and giving priority and more importance to those verbs appearing with more frequency. They proclaim that: "The order of verbs in alphabetical lists [...] does not reflect their importance in language use. This article aims at establishing a new learning list of irregular verbs, a rank list in which the verbs are ordered according to their frequency in English" (p. 6).

There are many other works designed for teaching irregular verbs nowadays. Dave Sperling has designed a website called, *Dave's ESL cafe*, where he makes an arrangement of the irregular verbs, also divided into several groups containing verbs

showing similar features among their different forms, also alphabetically ordered. No sample including instances of the different verb forms in context are provided in this work. Therefore, we consider this one is also a suitable work, but it appears to lack something we try to provide in this work.

Another work taken as a reference for this purpose of teaching irregular verbs is Parrot's (2000), *Grammar for English language teachers*. He points out that: "Elementary learners may prefer a list only of some of the most common and most useful verbs, and it is helpful to organise verbs into groups which have similar characteristics" (p. 100). Then, he shows a short list of irregular verbs grouped into groups with similar characteristics, but only showing two samples of each group; in this paper work presents a list of more than one hundred verbs arranged in this way.

Some other methods and approaches are used by authors and high schools in order to teach irregular verbs. Wiley (1992) in his, *English teacher's book of instant word games*, designs more than two hundred games and activities for teaching English language. Concerning irregular verbs, one of the activities designed consists of a set of sentences missing the verb, to which the infinitive form is given in brackets, and the students are required to complete with the correct verb form in each sentence, and then place in a puzzle the verb forms they have used in the sentences. This activity is designed for two purposes: firstly, in order to encourage students to look for the different verb forms; and secondly, in order that students practise the spelling of the different verb forms, and learn in this way the different patterns of conjugation existing in English irregular verbs (2-9). The sources cited above are mainly focused on learning and practising morphology. For learning and practising phonology, Doff (1998), in his work, *Teach English: a training course for teachers*, first points out the main

difficulties students of different nationalities have to learn an adequate pronunciation. Then, he suggests some exercises and activities for students to enhance the pronunciation of the English phonemes, based mainly on making students repeat individually the different verb forms; firstly, without any placement in context, and then practicing them placed in exemplifying sentences (pp. 111-112). What we report in the second part of our corpus analysis is something similar, but we also make the different verb forms rhyme with other words in longer texts.

### **CORPUS ANALYSIS, PART I.**

In OE, there was a different classification of the verbs from that we use nowadays. In PDE we distinguish regular verbs from irregular verbs, whereas in OE the distinction was made between weak verbs and strong verbs. There existed three classes of weak verbs in OE: class I, containing double nasal consonant or a mutated vowel in the stem syllable (*fremman* 'to perform', *dēman* 'judge', *settan* 'set'); class II, those weak verbs ending in *-ian* (*nerian* 'to save', *lōcian* 'to look', *herian* 'to hear'); and class III, a mixture of the two previous ones (*habban* 'to have', *secgan* 'to say', *libban* 'to live.' For the sake of clarity, these verbs are included in the section of common verbs in the list below, and no differentiation of classes is made.

Regarding strong verbs, there are seven classes of OE strong verbs on the basis of their stem vowels as shown in the principle parts: infinitive, singular simple past, plural simple past, and past participle. These stem vowel paradigms are named ablauts, and there are seven classes of OE strong verbs: class I: ī-ā-i-i / class II: ēo-ēa-u-o / class III: i-a-u-u / class IV: e-æ-æ-o / class V: e-æ-æ-e / class VI: a-ō-ō-a /; and class VII is subdivided into three subclasses: VIIa: ea-ēo-ēo-ea, VIIb: ā-ē-ē-ā, VIIc: ē-ō-ō-ē/ (Campbell, 1959: 295-320). In the following section, there have been made seven

groups containing those verbs which were strong verbs in the West-Saxon dialect—the variety of Proto-Germanic languages that became the standard OE after the Anglo-Saxon invasions—; an eighth group containing those which were weak and common verbs in OE; the ninth group contains verbs of Scandinavian roots, which later merged with the standard West-Saxon language set during the reign of "Alfred the Great" (9th-10th centuries); a tenth group containing those verbs which appeared in Middle English, after the Norman Invasion in 1066 under the reign of "William the Conqueror"; and an eleventh group containing those verbs which are considered anomalous in OE. Next, from each group of this first arrangement, some samples have been taken and their etymology is provided, paying attention to some linguistic phenomena which has contributed to the morphological and phonological changes these verbs underwent over history. Some of the phonological changes these verbs have undergone from OE to PDE are due to the linguistic phenomenon known as "The Great Vowel Shift". It covered approximately the span of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The GVS implies a global movement in the quality of the long vowels. According to Mastin (2011), this movement took place as it follows: the vocalic sounds at the upper position of the phonological table, /i(:)/ and /u(:)/, fell to central positions, and later became the diphthongs, /əɪ/ and /əʊ/, which later became, /aɪ/ and /aʊ/. Vowels placed at the lower positions rose up to higher positions. At the same time, some former diphthongs became single vowels, as well as some single vowels became diphthongs.

Below, it is shown a list of 100 irregular verbs divided into groups. There are shown the paradigms of the OE verbs in present, singular past, plural past, and past participle. In present-day English, the plural past has disappeared.

<b>Anglo-Saxon strong verbs. Ablauts:</b> <b>Class I: ī-ā-i-i</b> <b>infinitive, singular past , plural past, participle</b>	<b>Present-day English.</b> <b>infinitive, past, participle</b>
Drīfan, drāf, drifon, ge-drifen	Drive, drove, driven
Rīsan, rās, rison, ge-risen	Rise, rose, risen
Rīdan, rād, ridon, ge-riden	Ride, rode, ridden
Bīten, bāt, biton, ge-biten	Bite, bit, bitten
Slīpan, slāp, slidon, ge-sliden	Slide, slid, slid
Scīnan, scān, scinon, ge-scinen	Shine, shone, shone
Strīcan, strāc, stricon, ge-stricen	Strike, struck, struck
Strīdan, strād, stridon, -striden	Stride, strode, stridden
Snīcan, snāc, snicon, -snicen	Sneak, snuck, snuck
Smītan, smāt, smiton, -smiten	Smite, smote, smitten

The verbs this group contains have in OE a long, -ī-, in the infinitive, but a short, -i-, in the past simple and past participle forms. Let us see in these samples below how the Great Vowel shift has influenced on the changes they have undergone over history.

Drīfan, drāf, drifon, ge-drifen > drive, drove, driven.

This movement changed the pronunciation of this verb as it follows. In the 1400s, the infinitive was pronounced /dri:vən/, in the 1500s /dri:vn/, 1600s /dreivn/, and in present day /draɪv/. It can be seen how the long vowel at the upper position / i:/, diphthongised into /ei/, and later into /aɪ/.

Strīcan, strāc, stricon, -stricen > strike, struck, struck/stricken.

The meaning of this verb has completely changed from OE to PDE. It meant 'to rub, to smooth, to stroke; nowadays, it means just the opposite. The sense, 'to deal a blow, ' developed by early 14th century; and the sense, 'to hit with a missile,' developed by late 14th century. In this verb we observe diphthongization of a vowels at the highest position of the phonetic table. Hence, the long /i:/ stem vowel of the infinitive diphthongized into /aɪ /in Early Modern English. Thus, we have in OE pronunciation, /stri:kan/; and in PDE, /straɪk/.

<b>Class II: ēo-ēa-u-o</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle.</b>
Cēosan, cēas, curon, -coren	Choose, chose, chosen
Scēotan, scēat, scuton, -scoten	Shoot, shot, shot
Frēosan, frēas, frusen, -frosen	Freeze, froze, frozen
Flēon, flēah, flugon, -flogen	Flee, flet, flet
Fēohtan, fēaht, fuhton, -fohten	Fight, fought, fought

Cēosan, cēas, curon, -coren > choose, chose, chosen.

"The Old Germanic inflection was *keus-*, *kaus-*, *kuzum-*, *kuzano*; with original, *s*, changed to, *z*, as explained by Verner's law. By reason of internal consonant-mutation form /s/ to /z/ in Proto-Germanic, and from /z/ to /r/ in West Germanic; and by Old English palatalization of /c/" (Oxford English Dictionary: Etymology). It can be observed that not one of its modern forms is the normal phonetic representative of the corresponding OE form.

Flēon, flēah, flugon, flogen > flee, flet, flet.

"Middle English *flēn, flēh, flugon, flugen*. Cognate with Old Frisian *flīah*; Old Saxon *flīohan*; Middle Dutch *vlīen*, past tense *vlō*; late Middle Dutch and Modern Dutch *vlieden, vlood, vloden*" (ibid). Some of its different conjugations share some forms with the present day irregular verb *fly, flew, flow*. The evident changes in this second group of verbs is from Old English to Middle English is the monophthongization of the former diphthongs in the stem vowels of the infinitive and singular past simple. In Early Modern English, the long *-ē-* of the infinitive was mainly spelt *-ee-* and probably pronounced /i:/. The letter, *æ*, disappeared by Early Middle English, and become, *e*, remaining /æ/ as a phonetic symbol (Mastin 2011: 4).

<b>Class III: i-a-u-u</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle.</b>
Beginnan, began, begunon, -begunnen	Begin, began, begun
Bindan, band, bundon, -bunden	Bind, bound, bound
Clingan, clang, clungon, clungen	Cling, clung, clung
Drincan, dranc, druncon, -druncen	Drink, drank, drunk
Findan, fand, fundon, -funden	Find, found, found
Rinnan, rann, runnon, -runnen	Run, ran, run
Swimman, swamm, swummon, -swummen	Swim, swam, swum
Spinnan, spann, spunnon, -spunnen	Spin, spun, spun
Stincan, stanc, stuncon, -stuncen	Stink, stank, stunk
Springan, sprang, sprungon, -sprungen	Spring, sprang, sprung
Swingan, swang, swungon, -swungen	Swing, swang, swung



Scrincan, scranc, scruncan, -scruncen	Shrink, shrank, shrunk
Singan, sang, sungon, -sungen	Sing, sang, sung
Sincan, sanc, suncon, -suncen	Sink, sank, sunk
Slincan, slanc, sluncon, -sluncen	Slink, slunk, slunk
Stingan, stang, stungon, stungen	Sting, stung, stung
Wringan, wrang, wrungon, -wrunge	Wring, wrung, wrung
Winnan, wann, wunnon, -wunnen	Win, won, won

The marked peculiarity of this class of strong verbs is that, in all the forms, the stem vowel is followed by a nasal consonant. It is important to observe here that whereas some verbs in this group have maintained the same conjugation pattern in PDE, i-a-u, other verbs of the same group have adopted a different paradigm: i-u-u.

Bindan, band, bundon, bunden > bind, bound, bound.

The former stem vowels have diphthongized in this verb and the verb: find, found, found, have evolved with a different conjugation pattern from the rest of verbs in this group, class III of OE strong verbs. Scott and Ericson (1968, p. 56), report that the reason for these verbs going astray can be the common feature both these verbs share: the *-nd* ending of their infinitive in PDE. This feature gave place to a lengthening of the stem vowel and a later diphthongization.

Clingan, clang, clungon, clungen > cling, clung, clung.

This verb should have developed as other verbs coming from class III of OE strong verbs show the paradigm 'cling, clang, clung'. This variation is likely due to the

influence of different regional and dialectal variations concerning the development of these verbs along history ( Campbell, 1959).

<b>Class IV: e-æ-ǣ-o.</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle.</b>
Brecan, bræc, brǣcon, -brocen	Break, broke, broken
Stelan, stæl, stǣlon, -stolen	Steal, stole, stolen
Teran, tær, tǣron, -toren	Tear, tore, torn
Beran, bær, bǣron, -boren	Bear, bore, born / borne
Sceran, scær, scǣron, scoren	Shear, sheared, shorn

Beran, bær, bǣron, -boren > bear, bore, born / borne.

"To bring forth, produce, bear.' Cognates: German *gebären*; Gothic *bairan*, 'to carry, bear, give birth to'. Past participle distinction of 'borne' for carried and 'born' for 'given birth' is from late 18th century" (Oxford English Dictionary: Etymology).

<b>Class V: e, i-æ-ǣ-e</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle.</b>
Etan, æt, ǣton, -eten	Eat, ate, eaten
Giefan, geaf, gēafon, -giefen	Give, gave, given
Licgan, læg, lǣgon, -legen	Lie, lay, lain
Sēon, seah, sǣwon, -sewen	See, saw, seen
Sittan, sæt, sǣton, -seten	Sit, sat, sat
Sprecan, spræc, sprǣcon, -sprecen	Speak, spoke, spoken
Tredan, træd, trǣdon, treden	Tread, trod, trodden / trod

Sprecan, spræc, spræcon, -sprecen > speak, spoke, spoken.

"Proto-Indo-European root *spreg-*, on notion of speech as a scattering of words.

Cognates: Old Norse *spraki*, Old Frisian *spreka*, Middle Dutch *spreken*. The later OE *specan*, became common in the 11th century, [...]. A similar elision of the *r* appears very rarely in Middle Dutch *speken*, and Old High German *spehhan*" (Oxford English Dictionary: Etymology).

<b>Class VI: a-ō-ō-a</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle</b>
Dragan, drōg, drōgon, -dragen	Draw, drew, drawn
Slean, slōg, slōgon, slagen	Slay, slew, slain
Standan, stōd, stōdon, -standen	Stand, stood, stood
Scacan, scōc, scōcon, -scacen	Shake, shook, shaken
Tacan, tōc, tōcon, -taken	Take, took, taken
Wacan, wōc, wōcon, -wacen	Wake, woke, woken
Cuman, cwōm, cwōmon, -cumen	Come, came, come

The stem vowel, which is common for every verb of this group in OE, changes into different and various morphologies in PDE. We can see three different evolutions of past and participle forms in the column of the PDE verbs, whereas the stem vowel of the infinitive forms remain unaltered.

Wacan, wōc, wōcon, -wacen > wake, woke, woken.

"A merger between Old English *wacian* and Old Norse *vaca*. From Proto-Germanic *wacan*. Cognate with Old Saxon *wakon*, Old Frisian *waka* and German *wachen*. The PDE form is attested from 13th century" (Oxford English Dictionary: Etymology).

Cuman, cwōm, cōmon, -cumen > come, came, come.

"The substitution of Middle English *-o-* for Old English *-u-* before *-m-*, *-n-*, or *-r-* was a scribal habit before minims to avoid misreading the letters in the old style handwriting, which jammed letters. Modern past tense form *came* is Middle English, [...] it replaced Old English *cwōm*" (Oxford English Dictionary: Etymology).

<b>Class VII: ea-ēo-ēo-ea / ā-ē-ē-ā / ō-ē-ē-ō.</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle</b>
Bēatan, bēot, bēoton, -bēaten	Beat, beat, beaten
Blāwan, blēow, blēown, -blāwen	Blow, blew, blown
Cnāwan, cnēow, cnēown, -cnāwen	Know, knew, known
Feallan, fēoll, fēollon, -feallen	Fall, fell, fallen
Grōwan, grēow, grēowon, -grōwen	Grow, grew, grown
Healdan, hēold, hēoldon, -healden	Hold, held, held
Hāhan, hēng, hēngon, hāngen	Hang, hung, hung
Hleapan, hlēop, hlēopon, -hleapen	Leap, leapt, leapt
Lēatan, lēt, lēton, -lēaten	Let, let, let
Scādan, scēad, scēadon, -sceāden	Shed, shed, shed
Slæpan, slēp, slēpon, -slæpen	Sleep, slept, slept
Swāpan, swēop, swēopon, swāpen	Sweep, swept, swept
þrāwan, þrēow, þrēowon, -þrāwen	Throw, threw, thrown
Sāwan, sēow, sēowon, -sāwen	Sow, sowed, sown / sowed
Wepan, weop, weopon, -wopen	Weep, wept, wept

The infinitive vowels in this class are various and provide little guidance; the verbs are considered regarding if their stem vowels in past and past participle are *ē* or *eo*.

Cnāwan, cnēow, cnēown, cnāwen > know, knew, known.

"From Proto-Germanic *knew*-" (OED: Etymology). This verb has the peculiarity that in infinitive and past participle forms it has the stem vowel of class VIIa, but in past simple it has the stem vowel of class VIIb.

Bēatan, bēot, bēoton, -bēaten > beat, beat, bitten.

This verb has the same spelling in the infinitive and in past simple, feature that no other verb of this group performs. Although same spelling, the present is pronounced /bi:t/, whereas the past simple is pronounced /bet/. About 1400, the infinitive was pronounced /be:t/; in the 1500s, it was pronounced /be:t/; towards 1600, /bi:t/; and it remains in present day, /bi:t/.

Old English weak & common verbs.	
Bendan, bende, bendon, -bend	Bend, bent, bent
Bringan, brōhte, brōhton, -brōht	Bring, brought, brought
Berstan, bærst, burston, borsten	Burst, burst, burst
Bycgan, bohte, bohton, -boht	Buy, bought, bought
Byldan, bylde, byldon, gebyld	Build, built, built
Cēpan, cēpte, cēpton -cēpt	Keep, kept, kept
þencan, þōhte, þōhton, -þōht	Think, thought, thought
Dremen, dremde, dremdon, -dremd	Dream, dreamt, dreamt
Fēlan, fēlede, fēledon, -fēled	Feel, felt, felt

Habban, hæfde, hæfdon, -hæfd	Have, had, had
Hīeran, hīerde, hīedon, -hīered	Hear, heard, heard
Hleōnian, hleōnode, hleōnodon, -hleōnod	Lean, leant, leant
Hyttan, hytte, hytton, -hytted	Hit, hit, hit
Hȳdan, hȳdede, hȳdedon, -hȳded	Hide, hid, hidden
Hringan, hringde, hringdon, -hringed	Ring, rang, rung
Læfan, læfde, læfdon, -læfd	Leave, left, left
Lædan, læde, lædon, -leded	Lead, led, led
Lænan, lænede, lænedon, -læned	Lend, lent, lent
Lecgan, legdede, legdedon, -legd	Lay, laid, laid
Lihtan, lihtde, lihtdon, -lihted	Light, lit, lit
Losian, losode, losodon, -losod	Lose, lost, lost
Macian, macode, macodon, -macod	Make, made, made
Mænan, mende, mendon, -mænd	Mean, meant, meant
Pytan, pyte, pyton, -pyted	Put, put, put
Radan, radede, radedon, -raded	Read, read, read
Sæcgan, sægdede, sægdedon, -sægd	Say, said, said
Sēcan, sōhte, sōhton, -sōht	Seek, sought, sought
Sellan, sealde, sealdon, -seald	Sell, sold, sold
Settan, settede, settedon, -setted	Set, set, set
Sprædan, sprædde, spræddon, -spræded	Spread, spread, spread
Scēadan, scēad, scēadon, -scēaden	Shed, shed, shed

Scōgan, scogde, scogdon, -scoged	Shoe, shod, shod
Siwian, siwiede, siwiedon, -siwied	Sew, sewed, sewn/sewed
Scyttan, scyttede, scyttedon, -scytted	Shut, shut, shut
Stician, sticode, sticodon, -sticod	Stick, stuck, stuck
Swerian, swerede, sweredon, -swered	Swear, swore, sworn
Tellan, tealde, tealdon, -teald	Tell, told, told
Tācan, tæhte, tæhton, -tæht	Teach, taught, taught
Werian, werede, weredon, -wered	Wear, wore, worn
Wætan, wætte, wætton, wæted	Wet, wet, wet

Tācan, tæhte, tæhton, -tæht > teach, taught, taught.

"Middle English *teachen, tachen, tæchenn*. Circa 15th century, ending inflections are lost and long vowels become shorter giving forms such as *teiche, teach, teche, teich*, or *tech*" (OED: Etymology). Notice that former stop sound, -c-, is palatalized in Middle English by French influence, whereas the cluster, fricative aspirate plus glottal sounds, is not pronounced in PDE.

Sæcgan, sægde, sægdon, -sæged > say, said, said.

In OE, the same verb had various meanings which we differentiate nowadays: 'to utter, inform, speak, tell, relate. "From Proto-Germanic *sagjanan*. Cognates: Old Saxon *seggian*, Old Norse *segja*, Danish *sige*, Old Frisian *sedsa*, Middle Dutch *segghen*, Dutch *zeggen* German *sagen*" (ibid). The diagraph, -ay- is pronounced /ei/ in the infinitive due to the pitch rise, but in past and participle forms, the diagraph, -ai-, is pronounced, /e/, by a process of monophthongization and pitch rise which developed as it follows:

diphthong /ai/ lowered to single vowel /a/ > /æ/ > /ɛ/ > /e/. As a result, <said> is pronounced /sed/. The same process underwent verbs such as, spread > /spred/, heard > /hɜ:d/, dreamt > /dremt/; or, built > /bɪlt/ among others (Campbell 1959: 85-87).

<b>Old English anomalous verbs</b>	<b>Infinitive, past, participle</b>
Bēon, wæs, wæron, -bēon	Be, was, were, been
Dōn, dyde, dydon, -dōn	Do, did, done
Gān, ēode, ēodon, -gangen	Go, went, gone
Willan, wolde, woldon, -willen	Want, wanted, wanted

<b>Scandinavian origin</b>	
Flengja, flengjum, flyngnn	Fling, flung, flung
Geta, gat, gātum, getenn	Get, got, gotten
Kasta, kaste, Kasted	Cast, cast, cast
Ryðja, ruddi, rudrr	Rid, rid, rid
Rífa, rief, rifum, rifinn	Rive, rived, riven
Slyngva, slungu, slungenn	Sling, slung, slung
Þrýsta, þruste, þruste	Thrust, thrust, thrust

Some former Anglo-Saxon verbs were replaced by verbs of Scandinavian roots after the Viking invasions since 9th century, as well as some of them coexisted at the same time within a merging population. French influence on English language came after the Norman Invasion in 1066 with king "William the Conqueror." Some OE verbs were



replaced with new verbs of French origin, and some new verbs appeared in Middle English. Other French verbs also coexisted with English verbs and were alternatively used, or regarding the context in which there should be used one form or the other.

<b>French origin. Middle English.</b>	
Hurten, hurte, hurt	Hurt, hurt, hurt
Paien, paiede, paied	Pay, paid, paid
Cacchen, caughte, caught	Catch, caught, caught
Cutten, cutte, cutted	Cut, cut, cut
Slitten, slitte, slitted	Slit, slit, slit
Strīven, strōve, strovon, striven	Strive, strove, striven
Fitten, fitte, fitted	Fit, fit, fit
Diggen, diggede, digged	Dig, dug, dug

Diggen, diggede, digged > Dig, dug, dug:

"From early 14th century *diggen*. Origin, Middle English; maybe from the Old English noun *dīc* 'ditch.' Past tense *dug* appeared in 16th century but it is not etymologically related" (OED: etymology).

Some of these verbs had in OE different forms with the same meaning which were replaced with these verb of French origin, or coexisted at the same time in the same country. The next shift these verbs underwent was in Early Modern English and some of them have followed developing until Present-day English. In the second part of this paper, only PDE irregular verbs are analysed.

## **CORPUS ANALYSIS PAR II.**

### **New arrangement of Present-day English irregular verbs.**

#### **First group: Verbs with three equal forms.**

After having seen how some irregular verbs have changed from their original paradigms and patterns of conjugation in OE to other different ones in PDE, it has been made a new rearrangement of the English irregular verbs we use nowadays, but regarding similarities only in their present day morphologies and phonologies, and regrouping them according to common features and patterns of conjugation shared by the verbs included within each of the groups and subgroups separated below. The main purpose of this new rearrangement is to make it easier for students to learn at the same time how current English irregular verbs are spelled and pronounced. This second part of the work also aims to enhance pronunciation. Doff (1998, p.114), in his work, *Teaching English: a training course for teachers*, points out some difficulties students of different nationalities find to acquire an suitable pronunciation of some English phonemes: "-Difficulty in pronouncing sounds which do not exist in the student's language, e.g. for many students, the vowel /ɜ:/ (in 'bird'). [...] -Confusion of similar sounds such as /i:/ and /ɪ/." In order that students acquire a good pronunciation, Doff suggests them making some activities such as: explaining how to produce the sound, pronouncing the sound alone, making students to produce the correct sound in words containing it, to contrast it with other similar sounds (ibid, pp. 115-116). Some of the exercises proposed along this second part of the work are based on similar observations and approaches to those Doff reports and proposes in his work. First group of this new arrangement contains those PDE irregular verbs which perform three equal forms.

<b>1°a: stem phoneme /ɛ/</b>	<b>1°b: stem phoneme /ɪ/</b>	<b>1°c: stem phonemes /ʌ/, /ɜ:/, /ʊ/</b>
<b>Pres., past. p.p.</b>	<b>Pres., past. p.p.</b>	<b>Pres., past. p.p.</b>
Let, let, let	Bid, bid, bid	Cut, cut, cut
Set, set, set	Fit, fit, fit	Hurt, hurt, hurt
Shed, shed, shed	Hit, hit, hit	Shut, shut, shut
Wet, wet, wet	Slit, slit, slit	Burst, burst, burst
Spread, spread, spread	Cast, cast, cast	Thrust, thrust, thrust
Sweat, sweat, sweat		Put, put, put

In the following texts, the verb forms are underlined and highlighted, and the words rhyming with them are only underlined. In addition to learn irregular verbs, one of the purposes of this activity is to show learners how different morphemes may produce the same phoneme, and how a single morpheme may produce different phonemes. In the text below, three different pronunciations of the vowel -u- appear: /ʌ/ in the verbs *cut*, *shut* and *thrust*; /ɜ:/ in *hurt* and *burst* (this pronunciation occurs always when the vowel -u- is followed by an -r-); and /ʊ/ in the verb *put* (only in this verb). See also below that the verb *cast* contains the phoneme /ɑ:/ as in *path* /pɑ:θ/, and not /æ/ as in *land* /lænd/. In the subgroup 1°a, the verbs *spread* and *sweat* share the same pronunciation of the stem vowel as the rest of the verbs in this subgroup. As an activity to differentiate three pronunciations of the same morpheme, read the following text paying attention to the three different pronunciations of the vowel -u-, and the lengthening of the vowel -a- in *cast* /kɑ:st/. After having read the text, make up a new text containing the verbs in the subgroup 1°a which have not been used in the text below.

### 1°. A new landscape.

Every tree in this area has been cut and every path shut.

The farmer wants to cast cereal in this land leaving it with no path.

My heart would hurt if I contemplated birds and could not hear as I used to hear them.

This land has all been put in such a new form as the farmer have could.

On this land has been set several changes for a new time to come yet.

When the trees were slit, their resin as blood was spilt.

And as their long stems the soil hit with resonant hits.

Birds would bid mercy for their kin.

Let them build their nests, and sing within them at every sunset.

Let their eggs thrust, and expect a new bird offspring to come.

In a month, they will shed their down hair, and be dressed with colourful feathers.

Two months after the eggshells burst, new birds will fulfil with melodies the air.

### Second group: Past simple and past participle equal forms.

The following group contains those verbs with same form in past and participle. This second is subdivided into six subgroups, regarding similarities in their spelling and pronunciation. Some of the subgroups, as 2c, contain some verbs which differ from their common conjugation patterns because otherwise they would form a very short group or keep as individual verbs, since they would not fit within any of the groups.

2°a: -ght /-ot/ endings	2°b: -ed endings	2°c: various -d endings
Catch, caught, caught	Bleed, bled, bled	Find, found, found
Teach, taught, taught	Breed, bred, bred	Bind, bound, bound
Buy, bought, bought	Flee, fled, fled	Stand, stood, stood
Bring, brought, brought	Lead, led, led	Sell, sold, sold

Think, thought, thought	Hold, held, held	Tell, told, told
Shoot, shot, shot	Hear, heard, heard	Say, said, said
Lose, lost, lost	Have, had, had	Pay, paid, paid
	Read, read, read	Lay, laid, laid
<b>2°d: -i-+-t endings</b>	<b>2°e: -e-+-t endings</b>	<b>2°f: u-u in past &amp; p.p.</b>
Build, built, built	Bend, bent, bent	Cling, clung, clung
Light, lit, lit	Dream, dreamt, dreamt	Dig, dug, dug
Slide, slid, slid*	Deal, dealt, dealt	Hang, hung, hung
Spill, spilt, spilt	Feel, felt, felt	Spin, spun, spun
Spoil, spoilt, spoilt	Keep, kept, kept	Swing, swung, swung
Spit, spat, spat	Leap, leapt, leapt	String, strung, strung
Sit, sat, sat	Lean, leant, leant	Strike, struck, struck
Burn, burnt, burnt	Leave, left, left	Sling, slung, slung
	Lend, lent, lent	Slink, slunk, slunk
	Mean, meant, meant	Sneak, snuck, snuck
	Spell, spelt, spelt	Stick, stuck, stuck
	Sweep, swept, swept	Sting, stung, stung
	Sleep, slept, slept	Wring, wrung, wrung
	Weep, wept, wept	Win, won, won
		Make, made, made

The following texts contains, besides the present form, either the past or past participle forms alternatively of each verb, since the two forms are the same, and it would be a

very long task making up texts containing the three forms. Learners could get bored and pay attention away because of repeating the same phonemes so many times. Poetry is one more approach to help learners to learn the current forms of irregular verbs. Let us see some texts I have made up to illustrate this second group, and some poetry extracts taken from the *British National Corpus*, in order to make some exercises with them.

### **2°a. Do not catch mother rabbits.**

Hunters like to **catch** rabbits very much. Yesterday they **caught** with force.

They should **teach** to hunt only what we need, as they were **taught** before.

You must **think** mother rabbit has got kin. She **thought** her offspring must go fore

You cannot **shoot** mother rabbits by the wood. Once **shot**, it would be a painful loss.

If bunnies **lose** their mum, they will die too. Inside den, sobs will lament a mummy **lost**.

Main phonological points to consider in this text are the monophthongization of the diphthongs *-ou-* and *-au-* into the phoneme /ɔ:/, and the consonantal cluster *-gh-* is not pronounced in any of the verb forms in this subgroup, 2°a; but it lengthens the stem vowel of the past and participle forms. Given this, we find that the forms, *caught*, *taught* and *though*, share same pronunciation: /-ɔ:t/; whereas the forms, *shot* and *lost*, have a short /ɒ/ as stem vowel.

### **2°b & 2°e Extracts from the British National Corpus (BYU-BNC).**

The following extracts have been taken from the *British National Corpus*. They do not perform so a constant rhyme as the texts given above and below. The purpose of this selections is to encourage students to make up some stories from the chosen fragments, either in verse or/and in prose, including the different verb forms these two subgroups contain. Check and make sure that the words rhyming or matching with the verbs are exactly of the same pronunciation as the verb forms in their stem vowel. Different

morphologies may be used but producing the same phoneme. Take also into account that one morpheme may produce different phonemes as it happens in this first extract below: in *hear*, the diphthong *-ea-* is pronounced /ɪə/, whereas in *heard*, it is pronounced /ɜ:/, and it rhymes with the word *bird*, being this of so a quite different morphology. In the infinitive of the verb *read*, the same morpheme *-ea-* is pronounced /i:/, and in the past forms of the same verb it is pronounced /e/, showing the same morphology in the three forms.

" Bird-wing, sun-glited, exhaled. / Let us hear those sounds we have heard, / in that silence when we have put / a handkerchief to our eyes" (1-B1C / W\_fict\_poetry).

"Through school this hand assisted me. / Thought me to read and spell. / At times clasped tightly in prayer" (8-CAV / W\_fict\_poetry).

"There was a scrap of token text which I suppose I must have read. I saved up these back pages until I had a complete set..." (20-CBO / W\_fict\_poetry).

"Your legs are bent in two, / like shafts of broken light" (1W\_fict\_poetry).

"That night I dreamt of the white marble grate. / The two Staffordshire horsemen stood guard" (5 W\_fict\_poetry).

"Their children have left instead. It felt an ordinary place, ..." (10 W\_fict\_poetry).

Groups 2°c and 2°d include verbs of different conjugation patterns. As an exercise for learners to improve vocabulary and creativity, you can make up new texts and loose sentences from your own imagination with the verbs these groups contain, looking up in a dictionary both the meaning of the verbs and the pronunciation of the different verb forms. Below, a poem containing the verbs in the group 2°f is provided; made up from my own imagination, and looking up verbs and words' meaning and pronunciation.

## **2ºf. Lightning.**

Lightning never **strikes** twice in the same place, one **struck** on the church last month.  
But, the next morning, ornaments **swung**. Today, the wind **swings** a weather-vane.  
The weather-vane **spins** as the wind blows it. But it was a tornado that **spun** last month.  
In front of the church, a swing **hangs** from a tree branch you can touch with your hand.  
Yesterday, clothes **hung** from a line in a yard of a close house illuminated by the Sun.  
The Sun with its rays **sticks** and **digs** towards the heart of the Earth.  
Lightning **stuck** and **dug** in the heart of the church, but it went up.  
When a lightning **slings** its force on a tree, flames come up, branches are **slung**.  
On the ground, flames can **sneak** out the burning branches of that tree,  
Just as they **snuck** into that church last month.  
It would be a hard battle against fire we would have to **win**,  
As we **won** the flames force last month when a lightning **struck** on our church.

With this poem we are going to work making a sort of play. As it contains many and long lines, a constructive exercise would be to divide each line into two, write each half on cut-out pieces of paper, mix them, and then, students organised in short groups could try to rebuild individual lines in the first place, and then the entire text, after having read it several times paying attention on both morphology and pronunciation of the different verb forms, trying to memorize so many of them as possible.

### **Third group: Verbs showing three different forms.**

The first subgroup below, 3ºa, mainly contains verbs coming from Old English strong verbs class III. This subgroup 3a can be one of the most complicated for students to learn since some of the verbs show morphologies in their infinitive forms quite similar to some of the verbs contained in the group 2f above.



3°a: OE class 3s.v.: i-a-u.	3°b: ear-ore-orn endings.	3°c:-ow-ew-own endings.
Begin, began, begun	Bear, bore, born	Blow, blew, blown
Drink, drank, drunk	Bear, bore, borne	Grow, grew, grown
Swim, swam, swum	Tear, tore, torn	Know, knew, known
Sing, sang, sung	Swear, swore, sworn	Throw, threw, thrown
Sink, sank, sunk	Wear, wore, worn	
Shrink, shrank, shunk		
Stink, stank, stunk		
Spring, sprang, sprung		
Ring, rang, rung		
Run, ran, run		

### 3° a. In a horse race.

I want to **begin** with a grin. The teams **began** shaking hands. When the shot rang, horses had already **begun** to run. As they **ran**, the referee commanded to go back. Some horses had **run** before hearing the shot from the gun.

"I want to go to **swim** after this." She said that after she saw how the swans **swam**.

"I have never **swum** and learning is what I must."

Listening to **sing** is a magnificent thing. Nightingales **sang** on the top of that branch.

At noon they had **sung** after the rising of a flaring sun.

Flowers seem to **ring** as the wind shakes them up.

A bell **rang** for jockeys to start preparing horses for restart after the signal had rung.

Horses **drink** while their jockeys think. They **drank** while jockeys looked at the rank.

The following morning, winners had **drunk** so much that they could not stand up.

One of the pronunciation difficulties Doff (1998) observes that foreign students face with the English pronunciation is: "-Confusion of similar sounds, e.g. /i:/ and /ɪ/, [...]" (p.114). The main point of confusion with the verb forms in this subgroup 3<sup>a</sup> is to pronounce past forms in the same way as participle forms. The English distinguish them without any problem, but for a foreign ear, the stem vowel of the past, -a-, and the stem vowel of the participle, -u-, can sound quite similar if they are not used to hear them in their mother tongue. In order to work with this verbs, students should practice individually the two sounds out of the words, and then, reading the text, repeat the sounds within the words until they are perfectly pronounced and differentiated.

The subgroup 3<sup>b</sup> contains verb from different origins. With this subgroup we are going to focus our attention on the correct pronunciation of the diphthongs these verb forms contain. This exercise approaches Doff's (1998) second point of his list of difficulties foreign students find with English pronunciation: "-Use of simple vowels instead of diphthongs, e.g. / i:/ instead of /ɪə/" (p.114). Other times, the opposite occurs: some diphthongs are pronounced as single vowels. The assonant rhyme of the words rhyming with the verbs is a quite useful help since they have been chosen because they produce exactly the same assonant rhyme; even though showing different morphologies. For instance, in the text below, *draw* /drɔ:/ rhymes with *door* /dɔ:/, and *drawn* /drɔ:/ rhymes with *morn* /mɔ:n/; whereas *drew* /dru:/ rhymes with *moon* /mu:n/. The grapheme -ow-, is always pronounced /əʊ/ in the verb forms this subgroup 3<sup>b</sup> contains. Most lines in these two poems below are instances of some grapheme which produces different sounds, according to the word in which it is; and some different graphemes which produce the same sound showing different morphologies. This evidence can be seen with the rhyming words in the two texts below.

### 3° b. A picture.

She usually **draws** landscapes she see from her door.

Yesterday she **drew** a few flowers white as the full moon.

Flowers have been **drawn** in this beautiful morn.

Winds **blow** drawing everything low; yesterday it **blew** more forceful.

as far as I Know, winds have always **blown**. Winds can **throw** ships abroad.

A cyclone **threw** all ships through the sea; they were **thrown** over the sea foam.

The child **grows** like a colt. Last Spring his colt **grew** under his view.

Flowers have **grown** on their own as the child and the colt have done here around.

Do you **know**? This landscape looks like a show. I **knew** it would be a great view.

I would not have **known** about it on my own if it had not been **shown**.

She **showed** everybody it yesterday; she hopped it to be great.

### 3°c. The Moon and the Sun.

The Moon now **wears** a silken dress white fair.

Yesterday at the door, the Sun **wore** shiny clothes and a torch made from rag **worn**.

They both **bear** invisible stairs to go there.

Moon **bore** summer frocks; and one star was **born** in the morn.

The night **tears** the sky with stars, as if it was a fair with fireworks.

Sunlight **tore** the morn and spread lines of colors showing a rainbow.

### Group fourth: Verbs which participle forms end by *-en*.

The following group, 4°, also contains verbs showing three different forms. All the verbs in this group have their participle forms ending by *-en*. The group has been divided into three subgroups: 4a, 4b and 4c; arranged regarding the precedent consonant to the ending grapheme *-en*, which suffers an apocope, or the vowel *-e-* is subtly pronounced.

4°a: partiple in <i>-ken</i>	4°b: participle <i>-ten, -den</i>	4°c: partic. <i>-sen, -len, -ven</i>
Break, broke, broken	Beat, beat, beaten	Rise, rose, risen
Speak, spoke, spoken	Eat, ate, eaten	Choose, chose, chosen
Wake, woke, woken	Bite, bit, bitten	Freeze, froze, frozen
Shake, shook, shaken	Get, got, gotten	Fall, fell, fallen
Take, took, taken	Smite, smote, smitten	Steal, stole, stolen
	Ride, rode, ridden	Drive, drove, driven
	Hide, hid, hidden	Give, gave, given
	Stride, strode, stridden	Strive, strove, striven
	Tread, trod, trodden	See, saw, seen

#### 4°b. Alongside the river.

Alongside the river the knights **ride**. Three days ago they **rode** fast and bold. Before, they had **ridden** on a even prairie. Now they **hide** behind mountains beyond the other riverside. Yesterday they **hid** into this ditch. The enemy had been **hidden** by the other side of the river. Horses have no grass to **bite** in this site. Last week they **bit** something. All the grass have been eaten and all the fruits **bitten**.

Soldiers **get** a threat. They **got** orders a lot from the lord. They had **gotten** some fruits rotten. Now the horses **eat** in peace where others **ate** yesterday and all the fruits ripen had been **eaten**.

Horses **beat** a bit with their mitts now amidst trees.

Soldiers **beat** on the battlefield last week.

The grass has been eaten and the soils **beaten**.

Another way to divide this fourth group would be regarding similarities in the stem vowel of the past. Then, we have a large subgroup performing the sound /əʊ/ -o- as stem phoneme: 4<sup>o</sup>d: *broke, chose, drove, froze, rode, rose, smote, spoke, stole, strode, strove, trod, and woke*. Another subgroup would contain the rest of the verbs which are of varied patterns: 4e: verbs with /u:/ -oo- as the stem vowel of the past form: *shook, took*; verbs with /ɪ/ -i- as stem of the past: *bit, hid*; and other patterns we have also seen in previous groups: /eɪ/ *ate, gave*; /i:/ *beat*; /ɔ:/ *saw*; and /ɒ/ *got*. The exercise proposed for this whole fourth group is to rearrange the verbs into two groups taking the structure described above, and the past verb forms contained within each of the two proposed subgroups, and then, without looking at the table, try to remember the present and participle forms of each of the verbs and fill in the table.

#### **Fifth group: Anomalous verbs.**

The fifth, and last group of verbs, consists of eight verbs considered anomalous because they do not fit in any of the conjugation patterns of the groups above. This group below contains three verb forms: *come, gone* and *done*, which stem vowel is -o-, followed by a nasal consonant. None of them is pronounced /əʊ/, as it happens in *showed, smote, or froze*. In the verb *gone*, the nasal consonant lengthens the stem vowel -o-, and it is pronounced /ɔ:/; nevertheless, in the verbs, *come* and *done*, the stem vowel is pronounced /ʌ/. This sound can be difficult for some foreign learners to produce since it can be mistaken with phonemes such as /ɔ/, /ə/, /a/, /ɜ/ or even /ɒ/. The sound /ʌ/ comes to be a syncope of the sound /ɔa/; i.e., to produce this sound you put your mouth as if you were to pronounce /a/, but you modulate /ɒ/ with your vocal cords. The result is the sound /ʌ/.

Come, came, come	Lie, lay, lain
Do, did, done	Slay, slew, slain
Draw, drew, drawn	Show, showed, shown
Go, went, gone	Sow, sowed, sowed / sown

### 5°. Rabbits on the prairie.

Rabbits lie on the prairie nearby.

Yesterday they also lay.

They have lain on the plain.

Usually hunters come rabbits run.

Yesterday when wolves came they ran the same.

They have come on the spot to which they had run.

Hunters bestow rabbits to go out of there below.

Hunters relent rabbits time to spend on the spot they went.

Vowels have not gone to that hidden spot the prairie upon. (González, 2017)

"Ah sunflower! weary of time,

Who countest the steps of the Sun,

Seeking after that sweet golden clime

Where the traveller's journey is done;

[...]" (Blake, 1783).

Check in the texts above three different pronunciations of the stem vowel -o-: /əʊ/, /ɔ:/ and /ʌ/ in the verb forms, *go*, *gone* and *come*, respectively.

## **Conclusion.**

This methodological approach suggested for learning PDE irregular verbs does not intend to substitute the conventional way of learning them from the alphabetically ordered list which is normally used, but it aims at being an additional device to reinforce the learning of these verbs, since it has been proved that this is a task requiring all the help it can be provided. In the first part of this paper, a brief review on how these verbs have developed from OE to PDE has been undertaken. The aim of this review was to present the historical reason for the present patterns of English irregular verbs. An overview of verbs coming from different origins has been presented and their etymologies have been traced back with the aid of specialized dictionaries. Their shifts from their ancient paradigms to present-day ones has been included together with an explanation for some of the changes from the Middle Ages until today. Since many of the present day irregular verbs have moved away from the paradigms they belonged to in OE and ME, a learning rearrangement of these verbs have been suggested. In the second part of this paper the aim is to design a teaching method for PDE irregular verbs. The verbs listed in the first part are rearranged since many of the present-day irregular verbs have moved away from the paradigms they belonged to in OE and ME and the grouping is done attending to their morphological similarities in PDE. This list is divided into five groups and some subgroups. As a final step, with each new rearranged group, some texts have been composed for the purpose of this work. With the use of rhyming words together with the verbs in their three principal parts, and also with some other examples taken from the *British National Corpus* online (BYU-BNC) a proposed teaching plan for these verbs has been outlined. The proposed teaching method includes some exercises for students to become familiarized with the verbs, as well as some exercises and explanations focusing on pronunciation. These exercises have the

purpose of encouraging learners to make up further compositions of texts, looking up rhyming words with the different verb forms so as to enhance creativity.



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