

Sound Laws

Principle of least effort

Principle of least effort



Assimilation

imbibe

Principle of least effort



Assimilation

imbibe

ingest

Principle of least effort



Assimilation

imbibe

ingest

maðr

Principle of least effort



Assimilation

imbibe

ingest

maðr

< mann-**r**

Principle of least effort



Assimilation

imbibe

ingest

maðr

< mann-**r**

doema, doemð**i**

skipta, skipt**i**

brosa, brost**i**

eyða, ey**ddi**

Syncope

Ultimate

*hǫndu (*nom. sg. fem.*) > hǫnd

*bǫrnu (*nom./acc. pl. neut.*) > bǫrn

*dvelir (*class 1 short, 2/3sg.*) > dvelr

→ Unstressed vowels in final syllables are widely dropped

Penultimate

adj.	sg.	pl.	noun	sg.	pl.
<i>nom.</i>	auðigr	auðgir	<i>nom.</i>	himinn	himnar
<i>acc.</i>	auðgan	auðga	<i>acc.</i>	himin	himna
<i>gen.</i>	auðigs	auðigra	<i>gen.</i>	himins	himna
<i>dat.</i>	auðgum	auðgum	<i>dat.</i>	himni	himnum

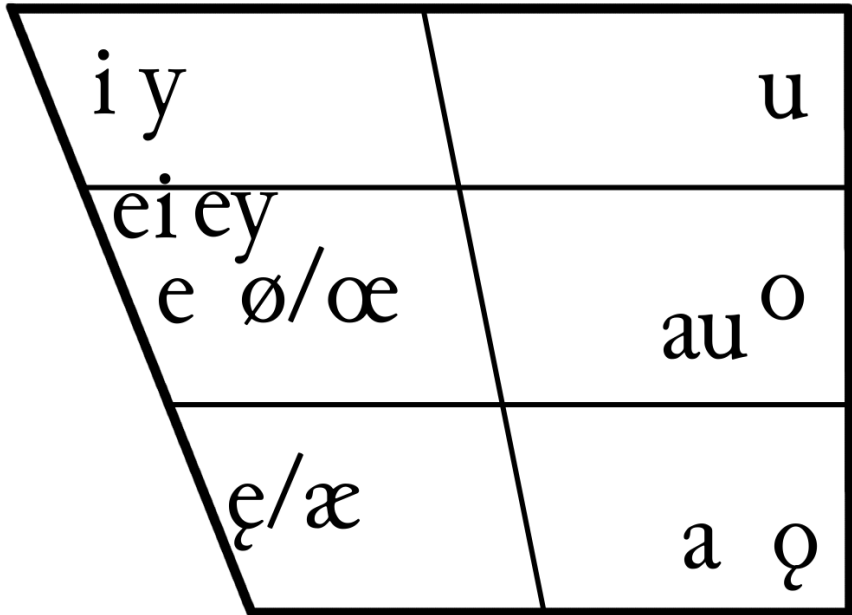
→ Short, unstressed medial vowels are dropped where followed by CV

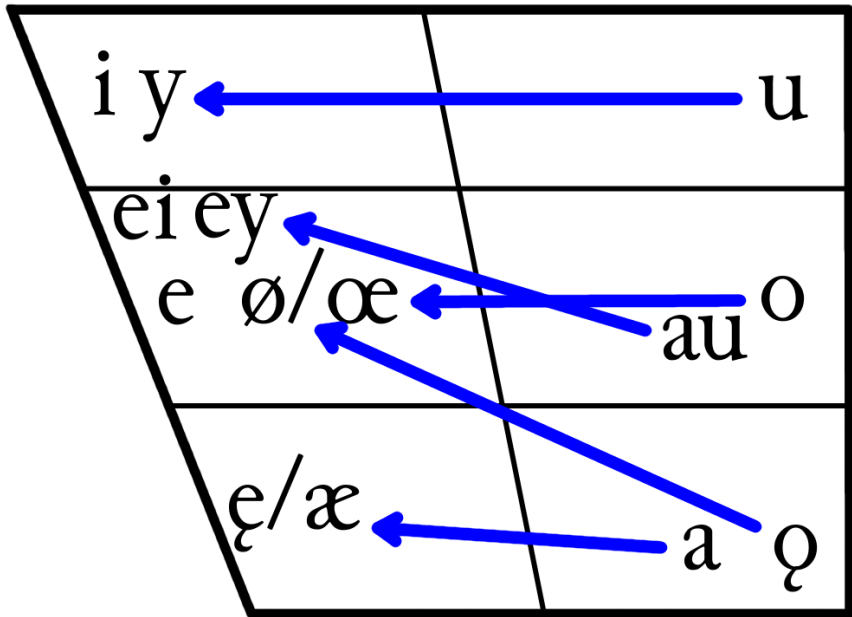
Front Mutation

ich fahre
du fährst
sie fährt

ich stoße
du stößt
sie stößt

ich laufe
du läufst
sie läuft





Front Mutation

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du fährst
sie fährt

ich stoße
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ich laufe
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Gothic *faran*

ik fara
þu faris
is fariþ

ON *fara*

ek fer
þú ferr
hon ferr

Ultimate syncope caused *i* to disappear in many such positions.

Front Mutation in Strong Verbs

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
1sg	ek fer	1pl	vér fõrum	1sg	ek fara	1pl	vér farim
2sg	þú ferr	2pl	þér farið	2sg	þú farir	2pl	þér farið
3sg	hon ferr	3pl	þau fara	3sg	hon fari	3pl	þau fari
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
1sg	ek fór	1pl	vér fórum	1sg	ek fœra	1pl	vér fœrim
2sg	þú fórt	2pl	þér fóruð	2sg	þú fœrir	2pl	þér fœrið
3sg	hon fór	3pl	þau fóru	3sg	hon fœri	3pl	þau fœri
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				fõru			
<i>past participle</i>	f.	farin	m.	farinn	n.	farit	
<i>imperative</i>	2sg	far	1pl	fõrum	2pl	farið	

Figure: *fara* VI “go, travel”

- ▶ Front mutation in all singular present indicative forms
- ▶ Front mutation in the preterite subjunctive (this goes for all verbs except class 2 weak)

Stem Length

Short A monosyllabic stem ending in VC or \bar{V} (i.e. a long vowel)

Long Any other combination

NB Thematic vowels and stem augments *j/v* are not counted towards stem length, while geminate *gg* counts as a single consonant. Diphthongs count as long vowels.

Short *kveðja*, *hyggja*, *leggja*, *selja*, *spyrja*, *telja*, *verja*, *þekja*, *æja*

Long *blœða*, *brenna*, *dreyma*, *elda*, *fylgja*, *hlífa*, *kyssa*, *sigla*, *þykkja*

NB *byggja* (older form *byggva*) is a long stem;
byggja (from **bugja*) counts as short!

Front Mutation in Short Stems of Class 1 Weak

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
1sg	ek ber	1pl	vér berjum	1sg	ek berja	1pl	vér berim
2sg	þú berr	2pl	þér berið	2sg	þú berir	2pl	þér berið
3sg	hon berr	3pl	þau berja	3sg	hon beri	3pl	þau beri
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
1sg	ek barða	1pl	vér bǫrðum	1sg	ek berða	1pl	vér berðim
2sg	þú barðir	2pl	þér bǫrðuð	2sg	þú berðir	2pl	þér berðið
3sg	hon barði	3pl	þau bǫrðu	3sg	hon berði	3pl	þau berði
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				bǫrðu			
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	bǫr(i)ð	<i>m.</i>	bar(i)ðr	<i>n.</i>	bar(i)t	
<i>imperative</i>	2sg	ber	1pl	berjum	2pl	berið	

Figure: *berja* 1 short “strike, beat”

- ▶ This class had a thematic *i/j*, yielding mutated forms everywhere except in the preterite indicative and past participle

Front Mutation in Long Stems of Class 1 Weak

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek brenni	<i>1pl</i>	vér brennum	<i>1sg</i>	ek brenna	<i>1pl</i>	vér brennim
<i>2sg</i>	þú brennir	<i>2pl</i>	þér brennið	<i>2sg</i>	þú brennir	<i>2pl</i>	þér brennið
<i>3sg</i>	hon brennir	<i>3pl</i>	þau brenna	<i>3sg</i>	hon brenni	<i>3pl</i>	þau brenni
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek brennda	<i>1pl</i>	vér brenndum	<i>1sg</i>	ek brennda	<i>1pl</i>	vér brenndim
<i>2sg</i>	þú brenndir	<i>2pl</i>	þér brennduð	<i>2sg</i>	þú brenndir	<i>2pl</i>	þér brenndið
<i>3sg</i>	hon brenndi	<i>3pl</i>	þau brenndu	<i>3sg</i>	hon brenndi	<i>3pl</i>	þau brenndi
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				brenndu			
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	brennd	<i>m.</i>	brenndr	<i>n.</i>	brennt	
<i>imperative</i>	<i>2sg</i>	brenn	<i>1pl</i>	brennum	<i>2pl</i>	brennið	

Figure: *brenna* 1 long “burn” (transitive)

- ▶ With long stems, this class underwent front mutation throughout the paradigm

No Front Mutation in Class 2 Weak

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>			<i>present subjunctive</i>				
<i>1sg</i>	ek tala	<i>1pl</i>	vér tɔlum	<i>1sg</i>	ek tala	<i>1pl</i>	vér talim
<i>2sg</i>	þú talar	<i>2pl</i>	þér talið	<i>2sg</i>	þú talir	<i>2pl</i>	þér talið
<i>3sg</i>	hon talar	<i>3pl</i>	þau tala	<i>3sg</i>	hon tali	<i>3pl</i>	þau tali
<i>preterite indicative</i>			<i>preterite subjunctive</i>				
<i>1sg</i>	ek talaða	<i>1pl</i>	vér tɔluðum	<i>1sg</i>	ek talaða	<i>1pl</i>	vér talaðim
<i>2sg</i>	þú talaðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér tɔluðuð	<i>2sg</i>	þú talaðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér talaðið
<i>3sg</i>	hon talaði	<i>3pl</i>	þau tɔluðu	<i>3sg</i>	hon talaði	<i>3pl</i>	þau talaði
<i>preterite infinitive</i>			tɔluðu				
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	tɔluð	<i>m.</i>	talaðr	<i>n.</i>	talat	
<i>imperative</i>	<i>2sg</i>	tala	<i>1pl</i>	tɔlum	<i>2pl</i>	talið	

Figure: *tala* 2 “speak”

- ▶ No front mutation anywhere in the paradigm
- ▶ Not even in the preterite subjunctive or pres. ind. singular

Front Mutation in Class 3 Weak

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek trúi	<i>1pl</i>	vér trúum	<i>1sg</i>	ek trúa	<i>1pl</i>	vér trúim
<i>2sg</i>	þú trúir	<i>2pl</i>	þér trúið	<i>2sg</i>	þú trúir	<i>2pl</i>	þér trúið
<i>3sg</i>	hon trúir	<i>3pl</i>	þau trúa	<i>3sg</i>	hon trúi	<i>3pl</i>	þau trúi
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek trúða	<i>1pl</i>	vér trúðum	<i>1sg</i>	ek trýða	<i>1pl</i>	vér trýðim
<i>2sg</i>	þú trúðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér trúðuð	<i>2sg</i>	þú trýðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér trýðið
<i>3sg</i>	hon trúði	<i>3pl</i>	þau trúðu	<i>3sg</i>	hon trýði	<i>3pl</i>	þau trýði
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				trúðu			
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	trúuð	<i>m.</i>	trúaðr	<i>n.</i>	trúat	
<i>imperative</i>	<i>2sg</i>	trúi	<i>1pl</i>	trúum	<i>2pl</i>	trúið	

Figure: *trua* 3 “believe”

- ▶ Only the preterite subjunctive shows *i*-mutation
- ▶ The thematic vowel was historically *e*

Labial Mutation

*handu (*nom. sg.*) > *hɔndu > hɔnd “hand”

*barnu (*nom./acc. pl.*) > *bɔrnu > bɔrn “children”

*vallur (*nom. sg.*) > *vɔllur > vɔllr “plain”

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A *u* is still visible in nearly all dative plural forms and in masculine/neuter dative singular adjectives.

<i>Nom. sg.</i>	langr harmr	<i>Nom. pl.</i>	langir harmar
<i>Acc. sg.</i>	langan harm	<i>Acc. pl.</i>	langa harma
<i>Gen. sg.</i>	langs harms	<i>Gen. pl.</i>	langra harma
<i>Dat. sg.</i>	lɔng <u>u</u> m harmi	<i>Dat. pl.</i>	lɔng <u>u</u> m hɔrm <u>u</u> m

Labial Mutation in Unstressed Syllables

The vowel system in unstressed syllables was reduced to *i, a, u*.

o surfaces as *u*:

▶ hann elskaði, þeir elskuðu

▶ *elskaðu > *elskøðu > elskuðu

▶ hon kallaði, þær kølluðu

▶ *kallaðu > *kalløðu > *kalluðu > kølluðu

Final Devoicing and Regressive Assimilation

Old Norse	West Germanic
fekk	fing
gekk	ging
sprakk	sprang
stakk	stung
batt	bound
vatt	wound

Loss of *w*

- ▶ PN **w* was lost before a non-open rounded back vowel or its fronted counterpart
- ▶ PN **w* was lost in initial position if followed by *r*

Old Norse	West Germanic
úlfr	wolf, Wolf
ormr	worm, Wurm
Óðinn	Wodan, Wotan
óx	wuchs
ríða	writhe

- ▶ *vaxa* VI “grow” : *óx*, *æxi*
- ▶ *þvá* VI “wash” : *þó*, *þægi*
- ▶ *valda* (mixed) “wield” : *olli*, *ylli*
- ▶ *svelga* III “swallow” : *sólginn*
- ▶ *svella* III “swell” : *sollinn*
- ▶ *vella* III “boil” : *ollinn*

Sharpening

▶ V^{stressed}ww → V^{stressed}ggv

▶ V^{stressed}ww → V^{stressed}ggj

Old Norse

byggja, byggva

hryggva, hryggja

hoggva

tyggva, tyggja

West Germanic

bauen

rue, reuen

hew, hauen

chew, kauen