



# Anglo-Saxons and Vikings

## Language Contact and Grammatical Change

a workshop by

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room P001 (nám. Jana Palacha 2)

Mon 10.2. 15:50-19:10

Tue 11.2. 9:10-12:30

Wed 12.2. 9:10-12:30

Thu 13.2. 9:10-12:30

Fri 14.2. 9:10-12:30

**5 ECTS credits, students need to pre-register by Mon 27.1. at: [ondrej.tichy@ff.cuni.cz](mailto:ondrej.tichy@ff.cuni.cz)**

### Contents:

In terms of grammar, English is an untypical Germanic language. This is largely because of many grammatical changes that can be observed by comparing documents from the Old English period to ones from the Middle English period. Generally speaking, a language changes essentially due to developments in one or more of these three dimensions:

- aspects of language-as-a-system (language form, 'langue'), describable in terms of e.g. phonology, morphology, or syntax,
- aspects of language-as-a-process (language use, 'parole'), describable in terms of e.g. cognition, categorisation, language processing, semantics, or pragmatics, and
- aspects of interaction between different languages, i.e. language contact.

On the basis of chronicle material dating from ca 900 till ca 1160 CE we will retrace one aspect of grammatical change – the development of gender – from the elaborate system found in Old English to the very simple he/she/it-alternation in use from (late) Middle English onwards until today: Where, when, how, and why did this change occur?

In addition to language-formal and semantico-cognitive factors, we will also look into the role of language contact in this development, in particular the contact between Anglo-Saxons (who spoke Old English) and Vikings (who spoke Old Norse). Numerous lines of interdisciplinary evidence indicate a strong Viking presence in England from the late ninth till the late twelfth century, but did this Viking presence leave a mark on English grammar?

Further, we will investigate the relation between language variation at a point in time and language change over time: if the two are related and work on similar principles, then models describing variation should be able to predict change and vice versa. This we will test by applying models of synchronic variation to this development.

