

KYIV NATIONAL LINGUISTIC UNIVERSITY

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LECTURE 3

**OLD ENGLISH GRAMMAR.
THE NOMINAL SYSTEM.**

Plan

1. **General Characteristics of OE Grammar.**
2. **The Noun. Its Grammatical Categories**
3. **Noun Declensions.**
4. **The Adjective. Morphological categories of the Adjective.**
5. **Strong and Weak Declensions of Adjectives. Degrees of Comparison.**
6. **The Pronoun. Classes of Pronouns.**
7. **The Adverb**

Literature

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- Иванова И.П., Чахоян Л.П. История английского языка. – М.: Высшая школа, 1976. – С. 98-135.
- Студенець Г.І. Історія англійської мови в таблицях. - К.: КДЛУ, 1998. – Tables 40-46

- OE was a synthetic language, though the **synthetic grammatical forms** (built with the help of suffixes, prefixes, sound alternation and on the basis of suppletive formations) **were less numerous than in PIE.**
- **The analytical grammatical forms** (built with the help of auxiliary verbs, auxiliary words, changes of stress and on the basis of the word-order) **were practically absent.**

There were 5 declinable parts of speech in OE: the Noun, the Adjective, the Pronoun, the Numeral and the Participle.

The nominal paradigm in OE was characterized by the following grammatical categories:

	Gender	Number	Case
Noun	+	+	+
Pronoun	+	+	+
Adjective	+	+	+
Numeral	+	+	+

The paradigms of different parts of speech had the same number of grammatical categories but these parts of speech were different in the number of categorial forms composing a given grammatical category.

	Gender	Number	Case
Noun	3	2	4
Pronoun (personal /demonstrative)	3	3/2	4/5
Adjective	3	2	5
Numeral	3	2	4

- The Noun in OE. The OE noun had grammatical categories of **Gender, Number and Case.**
- **The category of gender** was based on the opposition of three genders – **masculine, feminine and neuter.**
- Gender was not a purely grammatical category. It was a lexico-grammatical category, because gender was expressed not so much by the inflections but by the forms of agreement of adjectives, numerals and pronouns which modify the noun.

- **Thus every noun with all its forms belonged to one of the genders. The grammatical gender didn't always coincide with the natural gender of the person and sometimes even contradicted it (e.g. the noun *wifman* (woman) was declined as masculine)**
- **The grammatical category of Gender in OE is already in the process of decay: some nouns could be declined in accordance with different genders usually in different texts: e. g. *ærist* (resurrection) – *m, f and n.***

- **The OE Noun had two numbers: singular and plural.**
- **The category of case was represented by four opposite members:**

N (the Nominative case);

G (the Genitive case);

D (the Dative case);

Acc. (the Accusative case).

The once existing instrumental case was no longer existing in OE. Its functions were taken by the Dative case.

- It is necessary to mark that the morphological classification of OE nouns is based on the most ancient (PIE) grouping of nouns according to the stem-suffixes. The existence of stem-building suffixes is found in other IE languages. They were mostly *-a, -ō, -u, -i.*
- But in Germanic languages stem-building suffixes practically are not observed, they have already merged with either the ending or the root. The loss was reinforced by the heavy Germanic stress on the root.

- On the basis of former stem-building suffixes most scholars distinguish strong and weak declensions of OE nouns.
- **the strong declension** includes nouns with stems (-**a**, -**ō**, -**i**, -**u**) which are often called **vocalic**;
- **the weak declension** comprises nouns with the stem originally ending in *n*-stem only. There are some **minor declensions** (*r*-stems, *s*-stem, *nd*- stems) (**consonantal**).
- There is also the **root-stem** declension in which the ending is added not to the suffix but to the root immediately.

	Vowel (strong) stems				Consonant stem	Root stems
	a	ō	u	i	n	
Nominative Singular	stān (stone)	caru (care)	sunu (son)	wine (wine)	nama (name)	fōt (foot)
Nom. Plural	stānas	cara	suna	wine	naman	fēt

- **It is necessary to speak about peculiar features of some declensions which have the so-called remnants in PDE.**
- **The OE vowel a-stem declension is the most widely spread and proved to be the most stable in the history.**

- The NE possessive inflection **-’s** goes back to the **-es** ending of the Gen. case Sg. of masculine and neuter nouns of a-stem declension. The plural **-(e)s** is the present-day survival of the OE Nom. Pl. **-as** of m. and n. nouns of a-stem declension.

OE <i>fisc</i> , m., -a (fish)		
Sing.	N.	<i>fisc</i>
	G.	<i>fisces</i>
	D.	<i>fisce</i>
	Acc.	<i>fisc</i>
Plur.	N.	<i>fiscas</i>
	G.	<i>fisca</i>
	D.	<i>fiscum</i>
	Acc.	<i>fiscas</i>

- Another ModE survival of a-stem is the zero ending of plurals of such nouns as **scēap**, **swin** etc.

Neuter nouns with a long root-vowel had in the plural **the zero ending** (N. and Acc. Sg.: **scēap**; N. and Acc Pl.: **scēap**). The forms were of high frequency, and therefore the zero ending in both singular and plural have been preserved up to nowadays.

OE scēap, n., -a (sheep)		
Sing.	N.	scēap
	G.	scēapes
	D.	scēape
	Acc.	scēap
Plur.	N.	scēap
	G.	scēapa
	D.	scēapum
	Acc.	scēap

A-stem nouns (1/3 of all OE nouns) may be either of masculine (m.) or neuter (n.) gender.

The difference in 2 genders is only seen in the Nom., Acc. Pl.

The m. nouns had **-as**, in the n. nouns the ending depends on the quantity of the root syllable: the short-vowel n. nouns had in plural the ending **-u** (N., Acc. Sg. *scip*; N., Acc. Pl. *scipu*); the long-vowel n. nouns – **zero ending**.

N.	stān (m.) (stone)	Scip (n.) (ship)	bān (n.) (bone)
G.	stānes	scipes	bānes
D.	stāne	scipe	bāne
Acc.	stān	scip	bān
N.	stān as	scip u	bān
G.	stāna	scipa	bāna
D.	stānum	scipum	bānum
Acc.	stān as	scip u	bān

- The **a-stem** declension has its variants: **ja-stems** and **wa-stems**.

	here (m./-ja) – army	bearu (m./-wa) – wood
Nom.	here	bearu
Gen.	heri₃es	bear_wes
Dat.	heri₃e	bear_we
Acc.	here	bearu

- There are also PDE remnants of the **-n-** (weak) stem. The nouns of this declension had the ending **-an** in five of eight possible forms (hence the name of the declension - weak).

Nom.	nama (m.) - name	cwene (f.) - woman
Gen.	nama n	cwene n
Dat.	nama n	cwene n
Acc.	nama n	cwene n
Nom.	nama n	cwene n
Gen.	namena	cwenena
Dat.	namum	cwenum
Acc.	nama n	cwene n

- The element **-n-** was a direct descendant of old stem-suffix. In ME **-an** reduced to **-en** and was preserved for a period of time in such nouns as *oxen, coven, herten, eyen, eren, shoen* etc. Nowadays it is preserved in *oxen*. In *children* it began to be used later by analogy.

- The **root stem** declension stands apart from the rest: the inflections were joined not to the suffix but to the root.
- The characteristic feature of this type of nouns was the original existence of the *i*-element in the forms of the **D. Sg.** (e.g. **manni** and also in the **N.** and **Acc. Pl. manniz**).

- It is not visible in OE because the endings were lost earlier. Due to /-i/ the root vowel underwent **i-Umlaut** and these forms became *men*. Other nouns of this class are: *tōð* (tooth), *fōt* (foot), *bōc* (book), *āc* (oak) etc.

Nom.	mann (m.) - man	fōt (m.) - foot
Gen.	mannes	fōtes
Dat.	menn	fēt
Acc.	mann	fōt
Nom.	menn	fēt
Gen.	manna	fōta
Dat.	mannum	fōtum
Acc.	menn	fēt

- This group was not numerous, but the words belonging to it were characterized by **high frequency of use**: they were often used in everyday speech, therefore less subjected to changes.
- This specific feature explains the vowel interchange within the roots of such nouns as **foot, goose, tooth, mouse** etc. in the Plural form. In NE they constitute the group of exceptions as regards the formation of plural.

- **The Adjective in OE.** The OE adjective was a fully declinable part of speech. It had the same categories as nouns (number, gender and case): **2 numbers, 3 genders and 5 cases.**
- The categories of adjectives differ from the same categories of nouns: the categories of nouns are independent **while the categories of adjectives are dependable upon the nouns.** OE adjectives usually agree with the nouns they refer to in gender, number and case: this feature characterizes PIE and Modern Slavonic languages.

- The **Adjective** had **two types of declensions: strong and weak**. **Strong** adjectives had **more endings opposed to each other**, so these adjectives had a stronger distinctive power. **Weak declension** of adjectives was characterized **by the ending *-an***, which was used in most of the forms, so a lot of weak forms were homonymous and had a weak distinctive power.

Nominative	zōd (m.) – good Str.	zōda (m.) W.
Genitive	zōdes	zōd an
Dative	zōdum	zōd an
Accusative	zōdne	zōd an
Instrumental	zōde	zōd an

- The difference between the strong and the weak declension of adjectives wasn't only formal but also semantic (strong declension was used to add the meaning of indefiniteness).
- Most adjectives could be declined according to both declensions. The choice of declension was determined by a number of factors: the syntactical function of the adjective and the presence of determiners.
- If there was a demonstrative or a possessive pronoun referring to the noun, these pronouns determined the meaning of the phrase and the adjective was weak, if there was no pronoun, the adjective was used in the strong form:
- e.g.: *se micla here* (this big army) but *micel here* (a big army).

- Some adjectives also changed their forms in accordance with the category of **Degrees of comparison**.
- The regular suffix of the comparative degree was **-ra**, the superlative degree had mostly suffix **-ost**: *earm – earmra – earmost*.
- Some adjectives had **changes affected by i-Umlaut** in the comparative and superlative degrees: *eald – ieldra- ieldest; heah – hierra – hiehst*.
- There was a group of adjectives which had **suppletive forms of the degrees of comparison**: *3od – betera – betst*

- **The Pronoun in OE.** In OE there existed several groups of pronouns: **Personal, Demonstrative, Definite, Indefinite, Negative and Relative.** It can be easily seen that there was **no separate group of Possessive pronouns in OE.** They will be separated from the group of personal pronouns only in ME.
- Personal pronouns can replace nouns; therefore they are called noun-pronouns. The paradigm of personal pronouns is **extremely suppletive**: it consists of many individual forms.

1 person	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	ic	wit	wē
Genitive	mīn	uncer	ūre, user
Dative	mē	unc	ūs
Accusative	mec, mē	unc	ūsic, ūs

- Personal pronouns had the following grammatical categories: **the category of Person** (three persons: the first, the second and the third); **the category of Number** (three numbers: singular, dual and plural); **the category of Case** (four cases: **Nominative, Genitive, Dative, Accusative**). The third person singular had the category of gender with **masculine, feminine, neuter** forms. **In plural there was no gender differences:** one form could be referred to different genders.

- **Demonstrative pronouns.**

If personal pronouns are often called noun-pronouns the demonstrative pronouns are called adjective-pronouns because they fulfill identical with adjectives functions and their grammatical categories are very much alike. Practically speaking there existed two demonstrative pronouns – *sē* (that) and *ðes* (this). These pronouns had many paradigmatic forms reflecting grammatical categories of gender, case, number and also the deictic (near-far) category. That is why these pronouns make up two groups based on the deictic opposition.

- They had the category of Gender (3 genders), 2 numbers, 5 cases and agreed with the nouns in number, gender and case. Demonstrative pronouns had one more grammatical category: Far-Near, pointing to objects which are near as opposed to those which are far.
- Demonstrative pronouns played an important functional role in the grammatical system of OE, helping to differentiate homonymous forms of nouns.

	m.	n.	f.
Nominative	se	þæt	seo
Genitive	þæs	þæs	þære
Dative	þæm, þam	þæm, þam	þære
Accusative	þone	þæt	þa
Instrumental	þy, þon	þy, þon	þære

The Adverb in OE.

- OE adverbs denoted specific kinds of actions expressed by the verb. Structurally, they could be **primary and secondary (or derived)**. The latter **could be derived** from simple (primary) adjectives with the help of suffixes **-e** and **-lice** : *heard – hearde, heardlic – heardlice*. The suffix **-lice** of adverbs in ME will be reduced to **-lic** and thus will coincide in form with **-lic** of adjectives. That is why in ModE we have homophonic forms: adjectives and adverbs having suffix **-ly**.

- Some adverbs were derived from case-forms of nouns: *wundrum* – *wundrum*, *dæ3* – *dæ3es*; from prepositional phrases: *dune* – of *dune* (down), *wæ3* – of *wæ3* (away). OE adjectives could form degrees of comparison with the help of suffixes **-or** and **-ost**: *fæst* – *fæstor* – *fæstost*. Some adjectives had i-Umlaut in the comparative and superlative degrees: *lon3* – *len3or* – *len3ost*. There were also suppletive degrees of comparison: *wel* – *betre* – *best* and others.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**