BASICS OF THE THEORY OF ENGLISH

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

LECTURE 3

GRAMMAR

- The common Indo-European notional word consisted of 3 elements: **the root**, expressing the lexical meaning, **the inflexion** or ending, showing the grammatical form, and the so-called **stem-firming suffix**, a normal indicator of the stem type

- Germanic languages belonged to the **syntactic type** of form-building, which means that they expressed the **grammatical meanings** by changing the forms of the word itself, **NOT** resorting to any auxiliary words

GERMANIC NOUNS

Nouns were divided into several **declension classes** based on the vowels or consonants before the case endings. Globally, there were vowel stems (*a-, ō-, i-* and *u-stems*) and consonant stems (*n-, r-* and *es-stems* and stems ending in other consonants).

Four cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative) and two number forms (singular/plural).

	Singular	Plural
Nominaitve	**dagas**	**dagoz, -os**
Genitive	**dagas, -is**	**dago**
Dative	**dagai**	**dagamiz, -mz**
Accusative	**daga**	**daganz**

Noun: **cyning** "*king*"

Singular	Nominative	cyning
	Accusative	cyning
	Genitive	cyninges
	Dative/Instrumental	cyninge
Plural	Nominative	cyningas
	Accusative	cyningas
	Genitive	cyninga
	Dative/Instrumental	cyningum

- **Category of gender**
- **_Masculine:_** _stæn, cyning, sunu, dæl, guma_
- **_Feminine:_** _fōr, hond, bēn, tunʒe, talu_
- **_Neuter:_** _scip, calic, brēād, stæþ_
- The means of form-building were the endings added to the root / stem of the noun.
- Three-element morphological structure of OE noun gradually changed into binary: root + case ending
- Small group of **root stems,** characterized by root vowel umlaut (_mann, fōt, toþ, ʒos, hnutu, mus_)

These words consist of two parts, a base and one of a set of inflectional suffixes. The inflectional morphology of Old English was very complicated. The noun **cyning** is an example of a *masculine* noun, but there were two other genders, *feminine* and *neuter*, both of which had different endings. Each of the nominal genders had different subclasses, associated with different sets of inflectional endings. There were, then, about two dozen different types of inflectional endings that could be added to nouns alone.

GERMANIC ADJECTIVES

The **Germanic adjectives** had 2 types of **declension**, conventionally called **strong or pronominal** (*jungun mannum, wise larēowas*) **and** <u>weak</u> (*þǣs lytlan bōc*)**.** Agreeing with the noun in gender, case and number, the adjective by its type of declension expressed the idea of definiteness (weak declension) or indefiniteness (strong declension)

There were **–a–** and **–o–** stems for OE adjectives, representing masculine/neuter and feminine genders respectively.

Adjective **gōd** "good" (weak declension)

		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular	**Nominative**	gōda	gōde	gōde
	Accusative	gōdan	gōdan	gōde
	Genitive	gōdan	gōdan	gōdan
	Dative/Instrumental	gōdan	gōdan	gōdan
Plural	**(Same plural endings in all genders)**			
	Nominative	gōdan		
	Accusative	gōdan		
	Genitive	gōdra		
	Dative/Instrumental	gōdum		

Adjective **hwæt** "brave" (strong declension)

		Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**
Singular	**Nominative**	hwæt	hwatu	hwæt
	Accusative	hwætne	hwate	hwæt
	Genitive	hwætes	hwætre	hwates
	Dative	hwætne	hwæt	hwæt
	Instrumental	hwatr	hwæt	hwate
Plural				
	Nominative	hwate	hwata	hwatu
	Accusative	hwate	hwata	hwatu
	Genitive	hwætra	hwætra	hwætra
	Dative	hwatum	hwatum	hwatum

DEGREES OF COMPARISON

- The Germanic adjective also had degrees of comparison, in most instances formed with the help of suffixes **–iz(a)/ōz(a)** and **-ist/-ōst** (which later on turned into **-est/-ōst**),

eald	ieldra	ieldest
ȝreat	ȝrietra, ȝrytra	ȝrytest
sceort	syrtra	scyrtest

- There were also instances of suppletivism

Gothic **leitils–minniza – minnists (little–less–least)- Old Eng   yfel – wiersa/ wyrsa – wierrest, wyrst**

GERMANIC VERB

- The Germanic verbs are divided into two principal groups: **strong and weak verbs**, depending on the way they formed their past tense forms.

- The past tense (or preterite) of strong verbs was formed with the help of Ablaut, qualitative or quantitative.

- **Strong verbs** display vowel gradation or ablaut, and may also be redubplicating. These are the direct descendants of the verb in PIE, and are paralleled in other IE languages such as Greek

- **fallan – feoll – feollon – (ge)fallen**

- **hātan – hēt – hēton – (ge)hāten**

GERMANIC VERB

- Category of **PERSON**, **NUMBER** (singular and plural, and in Gothic also dual), **TENSE** (past and present, the latter also used for expressing future actions), **MOOD** (indicative, imperative and optative) and **VOICE** (only in Gothic – active and mediopassive). The categorical forms employed synthetic means of form-building.

GERMANIC AND OE VERBS

- weak verbs (3 classes): e.g. *hīere, hīerde 'hear, heard'*

- strong verbs (7 classes): , e.g. *binde, band 'bind, bound'*

- 6 classes of preterite-present verbs, based on strong verb classes in the present tense

- weak verb is characterized by three forms: infinitive, past tense and second participle

Infinitive	Past	Second participle
Regular verbs		
nerian 'save'	nerede	nered
cnyssan 'push'	cnysede	cnysed
macian	macode	macod
habban	hæfde	hæfd
dēman 'judge'	dēmde	dēmed
Irregular verbs		
cwellan 'kill'	cwealde	cweald
sēcean 'seek'	sōhte	sōht

Verb: infinitive dēman "*judge*"
(compare Modern English *deem, doom*)

Present Tense	Singular	1	dēme
		2	dēmst, dēmest
		3	dēmp, dēmep
	Plural	1, 2, 3	dēmap
Past Tense	Singular	1	dēmde
		2	dēmdest
		3	dēmde
	Plural	1, 2, 3	dēmdon

THE NEGATIVE PARTICLE -NE IS USED WITH VERBS SEPARATELY

ne habban > nabban,
ne hæfde > næfde;
witan 'know': ne witon > nyton,
ne wiste > nyste.

Basic vocabulary

1. the; 2. of; 3. and; 4. a; 5. to; 6. in; 7. is; 8. you; 9. that; 10. it; 11. he; 12. was; 13. for; 14. on; 15. are; 16. as; 17. with; 18. his; 19. they; 20. I; 21. at; 22. be; 23. this; 24. have; 25. from; 26. or; 27. one; 28. had; 29. by; 30. word; 31. but; 32. not;33.what;34.all; 35. were; 36. we; 37. when; 38. your; 39. can; 40. said;41.there;42.use; 43. an; 44. each; 45. which; 46. she; 47. do; 48. how; 49. their; 50. if; 51. will; 52. up; 53. other; 54. about; 55. out; 56; many; 57. then; 58. them; 59. these; 60. so; 61. some; 62. her; 63. would; 64. make; 65. like; 66. him; 67. into; 68. time; 69. has; 70. look; 71. two; 72. more; 73. write; 74. go; 75. see; 76. number; 77. no; 78. way; 79. could; 80. people; 81. my; 82. than; 83. first; 84. water; 85. been; 86. call; 87. who; 88. oil; 89. its; 90. now; 91. find; 92. long; 93. down; 94. day; 95. did; 96. get; 97. come; 98. made; 99. may; 100. part.

This common origin of English and German is illustrated by the following basic vocabulary lists:

ENGLISH	GERMAN
FATHER	VATER
MOTHER	MUTTER
BROTHER	BRÜDER
SISTER	SCHWESTER
HAND	HAND
HOUSE	HAUS
MOUSE	MAUS
WATER	WASSE
SUN	SONNE
MOON	MOND
FIRE	FEUER

The first manuscripts were in the Roman alphabet brought to Northumbria by Aidan and other Irish missionaries.

(Lindisfarne Gospels).

An alphabet most likely sown by anonymous clerics grew out of the Latin and remarkably early, by the seventh century, Old English had achieved its own alphabet. It was like discovering intellectual fire.

A, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, þ, ð, u, uu (to become w much later), **y**

винн (Ρ), *йох* (Ʒ), (**Ð, eth**).

- The major dialects were West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and Northumbrian, the West Saxon dialect eventually becoming the most important
- Toponymy had traces of Celtic influence
- The "- **ing**", "the people of" and "-ing" is all about us — Ealing, Dorking, Worthing, Reading, Hastings;
- "**-ton**" means enclosure or village, as in my own home town of Wigton, and as in Wilton, Taunton, Bridlington, Ashton, Burton, Crediton, Luton;
- "**ham**" means farm — Birmingham, Chippenham, Grantham, Fulham, Tottenham, Nottingham.

SCANDINAVIAN INVASION

From the end of the 8th c. to the middle of the 11th century England underwent several Scandinavian invasions.

The Scandinavians subdued Northumbria and East Anglia, ravaged the eastern part of Mercia, and advanced on Wessex, which inevitably left their trace on English vocabulary.

Examples of early Scandinavian borrowings:
call, *v.*, **take**, *v.*, **cast**, *v.*, **die**, *v.*, **law** , *n.*, **husband** (< Sc. hūs + bōndi, i.e. "*inhabitant of the house*"), **fellow** < cκ. feolaзa, **law** < laзu; **wrong** < **wrang**;
window, *n*. (< Sc. vindauga, i.e. "*the eye of the wind*"), **ill**, *adj.*, **loose**, *adj.*, **low**, *adj.*, **weak**, *adj*

Easily recognizable Scandinavian borrowings with the initial **sk-** combination. E.g. **sky**, **skill**, **skin**, **ski**, **skirt**.

Old English words containing this sequence underwent a rule that changed an **sk** sequence into a **sh** /ʃ/ sound. Sound changes being very regular, Modern English **sk-** initial words cannot be descendants of Old English **sk-**initial words. It turns out that **sk** sequence found in words such as **sky** and **skirt** is the result of borrowings from the Scandinavian languages.

An interesting pair of words is **ship** and **skiff**. The word **ship**, which has come down to us from Old English, would have originally begun with a **sk** sequence that later underwent the change to **sh** (/ ʃ /). The word **skiff**, which refers to a *small boat*, retains the initial **sk** sequence, signaling that it is a borrowing from Scandinavian.

Certain English words changed their meanings under the influence of Scandinavian words of the same root.

the O.E. **brēad** which meant *piece* acquired its modern meaning by association with the Scandinavian **braud**. The O.E. **drēam** which meant "*joy*" assimilated the meaning of the Scandinavian **draumer** (cf. with the Germ. Traum "*dream*" and the R. дрёма).

- In the north-east areas of England remained Scandinavian toponyms, usually a complex composition with 2 element of Scandinavian origin

- **~ by – ск. byr 'селение' – Whitby, Appleby; ~ beck – ск. bekkr 'ручей'; ~ fell – ск. fjall 'гора'.**

Doublets or etymological twins:

English   Scandinavian

shirt   skirt

shriek   screech

from   fro

whole   hale

Old English **wer** "*man*".

Latin word **vir**, also meaning "*man*", forms of which (e.g. *virile*) were borrowed into English.

The form **wer**, even though lost as an independent word, still exists in **werewolf**, which originally meant "*man-wolf*" or "*wolfman*".

The Old English word **rice** "*realm, kingdom*".

This word, which was originally borrowed from a Celtic language, has been lost in the modern language. The only relic of this word in Modern English is the compound word **bishopric**, which originally meant "*bishop's realm*".

Semantic narrowing that occurred between Old English and New English.

hound (Old English **hund**) once referred to any kind of **dog**, whereas in New English the meaning has been narrowed to a particular breed.

dog (Old English **docga**), on the other hand, referred in Old English to the *mastiff breed*; its meaning now has been broadened to include any dog. The meaning of **dog** has also been extended metaphorically in modern casual speech (slang) to refer to *a person thought to be particularly unattractive*.

In Old English the rule was phonological: it applied whenever fricatives occurred between voiced sounds.

The alternation between voiced and voiceless fricatives in Modern English is not phonological but **morphological**: the voicing rule applies only to certain words and not to others.

Thus, a particular (and now exceptional) class of nouns must undergo voicing of the final voiceless fricative when used in the plural (e.g., **wife/wives**, **knife/knives**, **hoof/hooves**). However, other nouns ending with the same sound do not undergo this process (e.g., **proof/proofs**). The fricative voicing rule of Old English has changed from a phonological rule to a morphological rule in Modern English.

MORPHOLOGICAL CHANGE

Causative Verb Formation (CVF) rule of Old English.

In Old English, causative verbs could be formed by adding the suffix **-yan** to adjectives:

modern verb **redden** meaning *to cause to be* or *make red* is a carryover from the time when the CVF rule was present in English, in that the final **-en** of **redden** is a reflex of the earlier **-yan** causative suffix. However, the rule adding a suffix such as **-en** to adjectives to form new verbs has been lost, and thus we can no longer form new causative verbs such as **green-en** *to make green* or **blue-en** *to make blue*.

New nouns could be formed in Old English by adding **-ing** not only to verbs, as in Modern English (**sing + ing = singing**), but also to a large class of nouns. **Viking** was formed by adding **-ing** to the noun **wic** "*bay*".

the **-ing** suffix can still be added to a highly restricted class of nouns, carrying the meaning "*material used for*", as in **roofing**, **carpeting**, and **flooring**.

Thus, the rule for creating new nouns with the **-ing** suffix has changed by becoming more restricted in its application, so that a much smaller class of nouns can still have **-ing** attached.

SYNTACTIC CHANGE

Changes in syntax were influenced by changes in morphology, and these in turn by changes in the phonology of the language.

A sentence such as

sē   man   pone   kyning   sloh
The   man   the *(accusative)*   king   slew *(nominative)* was understood to mean "*the man slew the king*" because of the case markings. There would have been no confusion on the listeners' part as to who did what to whom.