

UNIT 4 CHANGES IN GRAMMAR

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous unit, we had been primarily concerned with the word as an isolated unit. Now, we shall undertake the study of the sentence - that is **syntax**, which examines the ways in which words may be combined, and the relationships that exist between the words in combination.

Again, we wish to inform you, that you need to be aware of the broad changes; the details that we have given you are merely examples. You don't have to learn these examples.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Changes in grammar have not proceeded as dramatically as changes in sound and spelling. Though fairly extensive changes have taken place, a core system of grammatical rules and principles have remained unchanged through the centuries. It will be our attempt in this section to trace the changes in the English grammar which have happened since Old English times.

Changes in English grammar have proceeded mainly in two ways through *addition of new elements* and through *the loss of existing elements*. Since the latter is more extensive than the former we will deal with it first.

It is interesting to note the Old English was an *inflectional language*. Inflectional languages fall into two classes: *synthetic* and *analytic*. A **synthetic language** is one that indicates the relation of words in a sentence largely by means of inflections. In the case of Indo-European languages these most commonly took the form of endings on nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. The Latin sentence *Nero interficit Agrippinam* (Nero Killed Agrippina) would still mean the same if the words are arranged in any other order (*Agrippinam interficit Nero*) because here *Nero* is the form of the nominative and the *-am* ending of *Agrippinam* marks the noun as accusative no matter where it stands. In Modern English, however, we do not have distinctive forms for the subject and object, except in the possessive case and pronouns. Instead we make use of fixed word order. It makes a great deal of difference in Modern English whether we say *Nero Killed Agrippina* or *Agrippina Killed Nero*. Languages that make extensive use of prepositions and auxiliary verbs and depend upon word order to show relationship are known as **analytic languages**. Thus while Modern English is an analytic language, Old English was a synthetic language.

Based on the analytic - synthetic distinction, the major difference between Old English and Modern English is **the absence of inflections from nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs**. Their disappearance from the language will henceforth be shown chronologically.

4.2 CHANGES IN OLD ENGLISH

4.2.1 The Noun

The inflections of Old English nouns show distinctions of number and case. Old English has four cases. The endings of the cases vary with different nouns, but they fall into certain broad categories or *declensions*. There is a vowel declension and a consonant declension, also called the *strong* and *weak declension*, according to whether the stem ended (in Germanic) in a vowel or a consonant. The stems of nouns belonging to the vowel declension ended in one of the four vowels: *a, o, i* or *u*. The nature of inflections in Old English *a* can be gathered from two examples of strong declension and one of weak declension: *stān* (stone), a masculine *a*-stem; *giefu* (gift), a feminine *-o*-stem; and *hunta* (hunter), a masculine consonant-stem. Forms are given for the four cases - nominative, genitive, dative and accusative:

Singular	<i>NOM.</i>	<i>Stān</i>	<i>gief - u</i>	<i>hunt-a</i>
	<i>GEN.</i>	<i>stān-es</i>	<i>gief-e</i>	<i>hunt-an</i>
	<i>DAT.</i>	<i>stān-e</i>	<i>gief-e</i>	<i>hunt-an</i>
	<i>ACC.</i>	<i>stān</i>	<i>gief-e</i>	<i>hunt-an</i>
Plural	<i>NOM.</i>	<i>stān-as</i>	<i>gief-a</i>	<i>hunt-an</i>
	<i>GEN.</i>	<i>stān-a</i>	<i>gief-a</i>	<i>hunt-ena</i>
	<i>DAT.</i>	<i>stān-um</i>	<i>gief-um</i>	<i>hunt-um</i>
	<i>ACC.</i>	<i>stān-as</i>	<i>gief-a</i>	<i>hunt-an</i>

Number in Old English was also indicated through inflections. Case endings (like our 's for possessive) were very common. The Modern English word *earl* meaning *man* in Old English was spelled *eorl* and had the following forms.

-S Plurals

	Singular	Plural
N (subject)	<i>eorl</i>	<i>eorlas</i>
G (possessive)	<i>eorles</i>	<i>eorla</i>
D (indirect object)	<i>eorle</i>	<i>eorlum</i>
A (direct object)	<i>eorl</i>	<i>eorlas</i>

Changes in Grammar

The various vowels in the inflectional endings changed to *e* [æ] in Middle English and completely disappeared in Modern English. Thus the plural *eorlas* (two syllables) became *eorles* (two syllables) in Middle English and *earls* in Modern English. Similarly *eorles* provided the model for our *earl's*. The other endings (*e*, *a*, *um*) just disappeared.

-en plurals

The plural form *oxen* is almost the sole survivor of a large class of nouns that had the following forms in Old English.

	Singular	Plural
N	<i>oxa</i>	<i>oxan</i>
G	<i>oxan</i>	<i>oxena</i>
D	<i>oxan</i>	<i>oxum</i>
A	<i>oxan</i>	<i>oxan</i>

oxan changed to *oxen* in Middle English and has remained unchanged ever since. It has *children*, *brethren* to keep it company.

Plurals with zero endings

Another group of nouns in Modern English add nothing at all in the plural:

<i>one deer</i>	<i>two deer</i>
<i>one sheep</i>	<i>two sheep</i>

The plural *deer* and *sheep* came directly from Old English:

	Singular	Plural
N	<i>dēor</i>	<i>dēor</i>
G	<i>dēores</i>	<i>dēora</i>
D	<i>dēore</i>	<i>dēorum</i>
A	<i>dēor</i>	<i>dēor</i>

Plural with Vowel Change

Another group of nouns in Modern English includes those with a changed vowel within the word, rather than an inflectional ending:

<i>tooth-teeth</i>	<i>mouse-mice</i>
<i>goose-geese</i>	<i>man-men</i>
<i>foot-feet</i>	<i>louse-lice</i>

In Old English such words followed this pattern

	Singular	Plural
N	<i>fōt</i>	<i>fēt</i>
G	<i>fōtes</i>	<i>fōta</i>

D *fēt*
 A *fōt*

fōtum
fēt

Plurals ending in-ves

The change of *f* to *v* in words like *wolf* - *wolves*/ *wulf*-*wulvz* goes back to Old English. In Old English writing the letter *v* was not used but the sound [v] existed. In Old English [ff] remained [ff] at the beginning or end of a word - (*flod*-*flood*, *wulf*-*wolf*). But when it came inside a word and there were voiced sounds on both sides of it like [l] and [a] as in *wulfas*, it became voiced to [v]. The letter *v* came into use only in the Middle English period. Words like *knife*, *thief*, *loaf* function like *wolf*, *wife*, *leaf*, *half*, *shelf* and had both the [v] and [ff] sounds but they picked up the - *es* [z] ending later.

4.2.2 Adjective in Old English

An important feature of Old English is a two-fold declension of the adjective: one a strong declension (used with nouns when not accompanied by a definite article or similar word such as a demonstrative or possessive pronoun) and a weak declension, used when the noun is preceded by such a word. Thus we have in Old English *gōd mann* (good man) but *se gōda mann* (the good man). The forms given below are those of the nominative singular in the strong and weak declension:

Singular

	Strong Declension			Weak Declension		
	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.	Mac.	Fem.	Neut.
N	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd-a</i>	<i>gōd-e</i>	<i>gōd-e</i>
G	<i>gōd-es</i>	<i>gōd-re</i>	<i>gōd-es</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-e</i>
D	<i>gōd-um</i>	<i>gōd-re</i>	<i>gōd-um</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>
A	<i>gōd-ne</i>	<i>gōd-e</i>	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>	<i>gōd-e</i>
I	<i>gōd-e</i>		<i>gōd-e</i>			

Plural

N	<i>gōd-e</i>	<i>gōd-a</i>	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>
G	<i>gōd-ra</i>	<i>gōd-ra</i>	<i>gōd-ra</i>	<i>gōd-ena/gōd-ra</i>
D	<i>gōd-um</i>	<i>gōd-um</i>	<i>gōd-um</i>	<i>gōd-um</i>
A	<i>gōd-e</i>	<i>gōd-a</i>	<i>gōd</i>	<i>gōd-an</i>

This elaborated pattern of inflexions in Old English adjectives is strikingly absent from Modern English and its elimination has served to make the English language more simplified and accessible.

The comparatives of adjectives was formed by suffixing *-ra* as in *hearara* (harder) and the superlatives by suffixing *-ost* as in *heardost* (hardest). A few adjectives had a modified *-ira*, *-ist* in the comparative and *-est* in the superlative-e.g. *ald* (old), *eldra* (elder), *yldest* (eldest). A few others had comparatives and superlatives from a different root from that of the positive- *god* (good) *betra* (better) *betst* (best).

4.2.3 The Verb

Old English distinguished only two simple tenses by inflection- a present and a past tense . It recognised the indicative, subjunctive and imperative modes and had the usual two numbers and three persons.

A peculiar feature of the Germanic languages was the division of the verb in two classes - the *weak* and the *strong*- also known in Modern English as *regular* and

irregular verbs. The strong verbs are those which like *sing-sang-sung* indicate a change of tense by a modification of their root vowel. In weak verbs such as *walk-walked-walked* the change is affected by the addition of an extra (dental) syllable.

Like Germanic, Old English has seven classes of strong verbs. Within these classes however a perfectly regular sequence can be observed in the changes of the root vowel. Old English strong verbs have four forms: the infinitive, the preterite singular (first and third person), the preterite plural and the past participle. The variations with each class may be illustrated thus:

I	<i>drīfan</i>	drive	<i>drāf</i>	<i>drifon</i>	(ge) <i>drifen</i>
II	<i>cēosan</i>	choose	<i>cēas</i>	<i>curon</i>	<i>coren</i>
III	<i>helpan</i>	help	<i>healp</i>	<i>hulpon</i>	<i>holpen</i>
IV	<i>beran</i>	bear	<i>bær</i>	<i>bæron</i>	<i>boren</i>
V	<i>sprecan</i>	speak	<i>spræc</i>	<i>spræcon</i>	<i>sprecen</i>
VI	<i>faran</i>	fare, go	<i>fōr</i>	<i>fōron</i>	<i>faren</i>
VII	<i>feallan</i>	fall	<i>fēoll</i>	<i>fēollan</i>	<i>feallen</i>

The origin of the dental suffixes by which weak verbs form their past tense and past participle is strongly debated. However it is sufficient to note that a large number of verbs formed their past tense by adding *-ede -ode* or *-de* to the present stem and their past participle by adding *-ed, -od* or *-d*:

	Preterite	Past Participle
<i>fremman (to perform)</i>	<i>fremede</i>	<i>gefremed</i>
<i>lufian (to love)</i>	<i>lufode</i>	<i>gelufod</i>
<i>libban (to live)</i>	<i>lifde</i>	<i>gelifd</i>

It is to be noted, however, that the weak conjugation has become the dominant one in Modern English. Many strong verbs have passed over to this conjugation and practically all new verbs added to the language are inflected in accordance with it.

The Verb *Be*

The English verb most obviously in a class by itself is *be*. It alone has a uniquely distinctive form for the subject *I*-that is, *I am*. It alone has present-tense forms- *am, are, is*- that are totally unlike the simple form-*be*. It alone has two past-tense forms- *was* and *were*-that are distributed in accordance with the person and number of the subject. Yet this complexity is simplicity itself compared to the multiplicity of forms in Old English:

Infinitive

be:beon, wesan

Indicative

<i>I am :</i>	}	<i>ic eom, bēo</i>
<i>thou art:</i>		<i>pū eart, bist</i>
<i>he is:</i>		<i>hē is, bip</i>

<i>we</i>	}	<i>are:</i>	}	<i>wē</i>	<i>sindon, sind, sint; bēop; wesap</i>	
<i>you</i>						<i>gē</i>
<i>they</i>						<i>hiē</i>

<i>was:</i>	<i>was</i>
<i>were:</i>	<i>wāre, wāron</i>

The Verbs *Do* and *Go*

The verb *do* (*I do*) has the irregular past-tense form *did* and past participle *done*. The comparable forms in Old English were *dōn* (*ic dō*), *dyde, dōn*.

The indefinite articles *a* and *an* developed from Old English *ān* [a:n]. In an unstressed position [a:n] *ān* becomes [ʌn] and before consonants [a]- for example *an abbot, a knight*. The purely phonetic arrangement by which *an* occurs before vowels and *a* before consonants continues into Modern English.

The word *this* is the direct development of Old English *þis* or *ðis*. In a very strange reversal of meaning *þas* the plural of *þis* developed into Modern English *those*, the plural of *that*. A new form *these* developed as the plural of *þis*.

4.2.6 Interrogatives

The present day interrogatives *who, whose, whom, what* and *why* stem from various Old English interrogative pronouns:

	Masculine	Neuter
N	hwā (>who)	hwæt (>what)
G	hwæs (>whose)	hwæs
D	hwām, hwā(m) (whom)	hwām, hwā(m)
A	hwone	hwæt
I	hwī, hwī (>why)	hwī, hwī

Thus *why* originally meant 'by means of what'. The interrogative *which* developed from Old English *hwlic* and *whether* from *hwæper* meaning 'which' or 'who of two'?

4.2.7 The Indefinites - Pronouns

The wide ranging Old English interrogatives pronouns -*hwā, hwæt, hwlic, hwæper* were also used as indefinite pronouns, most frequently with prefixes or combining forms. These indefinites have now disappeared. Compounds were made in Old English with *thing* (*anything, everything, something, nothing*) initially spelled as two words; indefinites were also based on *hwā, hwæt, hwilc* compounds with *body* and *one* developed in Middle or late Modern English-- *anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody*.

We had mentioned that changes in language proceed through loss of existing elements and addition of new items. Having discussed the losses in the language, we can now proceed to change through addition. New elements in the grammatical system were introduced in the Old English period and came from Scandinavian and Danish. Borrowings from Scandinavian were not limited to only nouns, adjectives and verbs; elements such as pronouns, adverbs, prepositions and even a part of the verb *to be* which are not usually transferred from one language to another, came into Old English from Scandinavian.

Pronouns

The present-day first person pronoun has the following eight forms:

Singular	Plural
<i>I</i>	<i>We</i>
<i>My, Mine</i>	<i>Our, Ours</i>
<i>Me</i>	<i>Us</i>

Old English clearly indicates where these forms came from:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
N	<i>ic</i>	<i>wit</i>	<i>wē</i>
G	<i>mīn</i>	<i>uncer</i>	<i>ūser, ūre</i>
D	<i>mē</i>	<i>unc</i>	<i>us</i>
A	<i>mec, mē</i>	<i>uncit, unc</i>	<i>usic, us</i>

The verb *go* (*I go*) has the irregular past-tense form *went* and past participle *gone*. The comparable forms in Old English were *gan* (*ic gā*), *ēode*, *gān*. Modern English *went* did not develop from *ēode*; it is the past tense of *wend*. About five hundred years ago it replaced *yede* and *yode*, the Middle English development of Old English *ēode*.

The Modal Auxiliaries

The words which we now call modal auxiliaries- *can-could*, *shall-should*, *will-would*, *may-might*, *must*, as well as the closely related *ought-were* once full-fledged verbs. As late as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, for example, we find sentences like these

Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.
 (woodcraft) (could = knew)
 He wolde the see were kept for any thyng.
 (would = wished) (sea) (protected).

The final [d] or [t] in *could*, *should would*, *might*, *must*, *ought* is an authentic past-tense suffix. It has, however, lost most of its relation to past time. We say, "I could/should/must study tomorrow". Second, since the meanings involved in these words are highly subjective, it is just about impossible to keep these meanings stable. We say, "We must see that movie". Here *must* means: "We want to see that movie".

4.2.4 Grammatical Gender

One major difference between Old and Modern English is the fact that Old English nouns were differentiated on grounds of gender. But gender of Old English nouns was not dependent upon considerations of sex. Nouns designating males are often masculine and those indicating females are often feminine but those indicating neuter objects are not necessarily neuter. *Stān* (stone) is masculine, *mōna* (moon) is masculine but *sunne* (sun) is feminine as in German. Often gender in Old English is quite illogical. Words like *m gden* (girl), *wif* (wife), *bearn* (child, son) which we would expect to be masculine or feminine are in fact neuter, while *wifemann* (woman) is masculine because the second element of the compound is masculine. The gradual loss of grammatical gender and the resulting simplicity has become one of the assets of the modern version of the language.

4.2.5 Articles and Demonstratives

Old English possessed a fully inflected definite article which can be seen from the following forms.

	Singular			Plural
	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.	All Genders
N	sē	sēo	ðæt	ðā
G	ðæs	ðære	ðæs	ðāra
D	ðæm	ðære	ðæm	ðæm
A	ðoone	ðā	ðæt	ðā
I	ðy, ðon		ðy, ðon	

While the regular meaning of *sē*, *sēo*, *ðæt* is 'the', the word in Old English actually is a demonstrative pronoun and survives in the Modern English demonstrative *that*. Its pronominal character is also apparent from its frequent use in Middle English as a relative pronoun (*who*, *which*, *that*) and as a personal pronoun (*he*, *she*, *it*).

Old English shows distinctive forms for not only all genders, singular and cases, but also in preserving in addition to the ordinary numbers, singular and plural, a set of forms for two people or two things. This *dual number* was disappearing from the pronoun even in Old English. *Mine* developed from *mīn*; *my* developed after *mīn* lost its final [n] in Middle English. At first *my* was used only before consonants and *mīn* before vowels much like *a* and *an* are used today. In Modern English this purely phonetic distribution was lost.

The present day second-person pronoun has the following forms

Singular	Plural
You	you
your, yours	your, yours
you	you

In addition the following are also used, thanks mainly to poetry

<i>thou</i>	<i>ye</i>
<i>thy, thine</i>	
<i>thee</i>	

The current forms originate from Old English

	Singular	Dual	Plural
N	þū	git [yit]	gē [ye:]
G	þīn	incer	ēower
D	þē	inc	ēow
A	þec, þē	incit, inc	ēowic, ēow

The dual forms disappeared as did the accusatives *þec* and *ēowic*, while the history of the rest of the forms parallels that of the first person, including the division of the genitive *þīn* into *thy* and *thine* on the lines of *my* and *mine*. *You* originally was only plural and only on object form. It was not used for one person nor as a subject as it is used today. With appropriate sound changes the early Modern English forms were:

Singular	Plural
<i>thou</i>	<i>ye</i>
<i>thy, thine</i>	<i>your, yours</i>
<i>thee</i>	<i>you</i>

The third person forms in Modern English are :

	Singular		Plural
<i>he</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>they</i>
<i>his,</i>	<i>her/hers</i>	<i>its</i>	<i>their, theirs</i>
<i>him</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>them</i>

There are some differences between these forms and their Old English counterparts:

	Singular Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural All Genders
N	<i>hē (he)</i>	<i>hēo, hīe (she)</i>	<i>hit (it)</i>	<i>hīe, hī, hēo</i>
G	<i>his</i>	<i>hiere, hire,</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>hiera, heora</i>
D	<i>him</i>	<i>hiere, hire</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>him, heom</i>
A	<i>hine</i>	<i>hīe, hī</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>hīe, hī, hēo</i>

The indefinite articles *a* and *an* developed from Old English *ān* [a:n]. In an unstressed position [a:n] *ān* becomes [ʌn] and before consonants [a]- for example *an abbot, a knight*. The purely phonetic arrangement by which *an* occurs before vowels and *a* before consonants continues into Modern English.

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D	<i>mē</i>	<i>unc</i>	<i>us</i>
A	<i>mec, mē</i>	<i>uncit, unc</i>	<i>usic, us</i>

The masculine singular forms have survived almost intact with the loss of the accusative form *hine*. Had the plural forms of Old English survived we would now say *he* or *high* instead of their and *him* or *him* instead of *them*. The *th*- forms are a contribution of the Scandinavians who invaded England in Old English times.

The self pronouns include

<i>myself</i>	<i>ourselves</i>
<i>yourself</i>	<i>yourselves</i>
<i>himself</i>	
<i>herself</i>	<i>themselves</i>
<i>itself</i>	

These pronouns and their present day use were pretty well established by Chaucer's time. *Myself*, *yourself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves* are formed with a possessive pronoun plus what appears to be a noun- as in "my very own self" or "our very own selves". *Himself* and *themselves* are formed with an object pronoun and a modification of *self* or *selves*. This reflects the Old English situation in which a noun or pronoun could be followed by *self*, which took appropriate adjective endings. For example:

Ic me selfum andwyrde
(I answered myself).

4.2.8 The Adverb

Adverbs are another item borrowed from the Scandinavians. The commonest suffix in Old English that turned an adjective into an adverb was *e-* for example *wrað* (angry), *wraðe* (angrily). The final *e* was however lost by the fourteenth century in the transition from Middle to Modern English. The adjective and adverb thus became identical as in *hard*.

A bat is *hard*

He swung *hard* at the ball.

The commonest present day suffix distinguishing an adverb from an adjective is *-ly*:

deep - *deeply* *wide* - *widely*

loud - *loudly* *clear* - *clearly*

-ly however originated from the Old English suffix *lic*

lic *luf* + *lic* = *luflic* (lovely)

frēond + *lic* = *frēondlic* (friendly)

To such an adjective, the adverbial *e* could be added:

frēondlic + *e* = *frēondlice* (in a friendly manner):

In time the double suffix *lice* was freely attached to adjective:

slāw + *lice* = *slawlice* (slowly)

eornost + *lice* = *eornostlice* (earnestly).

With the loss of the final *e*, *lic* and *lice* became identical and developed into Modern English adjectival form *-ly* and adverbial *-ly*.

lovely, *friendly*, *homely*

slowly, *keenly*, *bravely*.

4.3 GRAMMATICAL CHANGES IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

This extensive survey of the grammatical structures of Old English prepares the way for further discussions on the grammar in Middle English. The Middle English period (1150-1500) was marked by momentous changes in the English language,

Old English shows distinctive forms for not only all genders, pronouns and cases, but also in preserving in addition to the ordinary numbers, singular and plural, a set of forms for two people or two things. This *dual number* was disappearing from the pronoun even in Old English. *Mine* developed from *mīn*; *my* developed after *mīn* lost its final [n] in Middle English. At first *my* was used only before consonants and *mīn* before vowels much like *a* and *an* are used today. In Modern English this purely phonetic distribution was lost.

The present day **second-person pronoun** has the following forms

Singular	Plural
You	you
your, yours	your, yours
you	you

In addition the following are also used, thanks mainly to poetry

<i>thou</i>	<i>ye</i>
<i>thy, thine</i>	
<i>thee</i>	

The current forms originate from Old English

	Singular	Dual	Plural
N	þū	git [yit]	gē [ye:]
G	þīn	incer	ēower
D	þē	inc	ēow
A	þec, þē	incit, inc	ēowic, ēow

The dual forms disappeared as did the accusatives *þec* and *ēowic*, while the history of the rest of the forms parallels that of the first person, including the division of the genitive *þīn* into *thy* and *thine* on the lines of *my* and *mine*. *You* originally was only plural and only on object form. It was not used for one person nor as a subject as it is used today. With appropriate sound changes the early Modern English forms were:

Singular	Plural
<i>thou</i>	<i>ye</i>
<i>thy, thine</i>	<i>your, yours</i>
<i>thee</i>	<i>you</i>

The third person forms in Modern English are :

	Singular		Plural
<i>he</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>they</i>
<i>his</i>	<i>her/hers</i>	<i>its</i>	<i>their, theirs</i>
<i>him</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>them</i>

There are some differences between these forms and their Old English counterparts:

	Singular			Plural
	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	All Genders
N	<i>hē (he)</i>	<i>hēo, hīe (she)</i>	<i>hit (it)</i>	<i>hīe, hī, hēo</i>
G	<i>his</i>	<i>hiere, hire,</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>hiera, heora</i>
D	<i>him</i>	<i>hiere, hire</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>him, heom</i>
A	<i>hine</i>	<i>hīe, hī</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>hīe, hī, hēo</i>

The masculine singular forms have survived almost intact with the loss of the accusative form *hine*. Had the plural forms of Old English survived we would now say *he* or *high* instead of *their* and *him* or *him* instead of *them*. The *th-* forms are a contribution of the Scandinavians who invaded England in Old English times.

The self pronouns include

<i>myself</i>	<i>ourselves</i>
<i>yourself</i>	<i>yourselves</i>
<i>himself</i>	
<i>herself</i>	<i>themselves</i>
<i>itself</i>	

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This extensive survey of the grammatical structures of Old English prepares the way for further discussions on the grammar in Middle English. The Middle English period (1150-1500) was marked by momentous changes in the English language,

changes more extensive and fundamental than had taken place at any time before or since. Some were the result of the Norman Conquest while others were a continuation and logical culmination of tendencies that had begun in the Old English period. The changes of this period affected both the vocabulary and the grammar of the English language. The changes in vocabulary have already been discussed. The changes in grammar reduced English from a highly inflected language to an analytic one. At the beginning of this period English was a language which had to be learned like a foreign tongue; at the end of this period English has stepped into modernity. Changes in this period progressed mainly through the loss of such elements which had been an intrinsic part of the language in the Old English period.

4.3.1 Decay of Inflectional Endings

The major change in English grammar was a general reduction of inflectional endings on nouns, adjectives and verbs. Endings on nouns, verbs, and adjectives marking distinctions of number and case and often gender were so altered in pronunciation as to lose their distinctive form and hence their usefulness. An important and early change was the change of final *-m* to *-n* i.e. in the dative plural of nouns and adjectives. Thus *godum* became *godun*. Later this *-n* along with other *-n* inflectional endings were dropped. At the same time vowels *a*, *o*, *u*, *e* in inflectional endings were all obscured to *-e*. As a result a number of originally distinct endings such as *a*, *u*, *e*, *an*, *um* were reduced to a uniform *-e*, and such grammatical distinctions as they formerly expressed were no longer conveyed.

A few examples of common nouns declension in Old English will show how extensively inflectional endings were disturbed. For example, the eight forms of *stan* (stone) in Chaucer's English were reduced to three *-stan*, *-stanes* and *stan*. The only distinctive termination was the *-s* of the possessive singular and nominative and accusative plural. Because these two cases of the plural were those most frequently used, the *-s* came to be thought of as a sign of the plural and was extended to all plural forms. In early Middle English only two methods of indicating the plural remained fairly distinctive: the *-s* and *-es* from the strong declension and the *-en* (as in *oxen*) from the weak declension. Though the *-en* form remained popular in the south until the thirteenth century, by the fourteenth century *-s* was accepted all over England as the universal plural marker.

With regard to the adjective, the decay of inflections had an even greater effect. The form of the nominative singular was extended to all cases of the singular and that of the nominative plural to all cases of the plural, both in the strong and weak declension. Thus the five singular and plural forms of the Old English weak adjective declension (*a*, *e*, *an*, *ena* and *um*) were reduced to a single form ending *-e* with gender and number distinctions completely obliterated.

In the general levelling to *-e* of unstressed vowels the Old English comparative endings *-ra* became *-re* and later *-er*; the superlative suffixes *-ost* and *-est* fell together as *-est*. If the root vowel of a word was long (*swete*) it was shortened before these endings- *swetter*, *swettest*, though the analogy of the positive form as in the example cited above, frequently caused the original length to be restored in the comparative and superlative forms.

Among verbs apart from the decay of inflections and weakening of endings in accordance with the general tendency, the principle change in the Middle English period was a steady depletion in the number of strong verbs and a corresponding increase in the number of weak verbs. Nearly one third of Old English strong verbs died out in the Middle English period. About ninety have no written record after 1150 and about thirty became obsolete during the Middle English period. Today

more than half of the Old English strong verbs have disappeared completely from standard language.

Some strong verbs became weak through the principle of *analogy*. At a time when English was largely a language of the lower classes it was natural that many speakers would apply the pattern of weak verbs to some which were historically strong. In the thirteenth century this trend becomes clear in verbs like *bow, brew, burn, climb, flee, flow, help, mourn, row, step, walk, weep* which were then undergoing change. By the fourteenth century no less than thirty two verbs apart from the ones mentioned above show weak forms. By the fifteenth century this impulse had been checked. But in some cases weak forms of strong verbs did not survive in standard speech (*blowed* for *blew, knowed* for *knew, teared* for *tore*) while in the other cases both continued in use (*cleft-clove, crowed-crew, heaved-hove, sheared-shore*).

But for some reason the past participle of strong verbs seems to have been more tenacious than the past tense. In the verb *beat, beaten* has remained the standard form while in a number of other verbs (*cloven, hewn, laden, molten, mown, sodden, swollen*) the strong participle is still used, especially as adjective.

When we subtract the verbs that have been lost completely and the eighty that have become weak, there remain just sixty-eight of the Old English strong verbs in the English language today. To these may be added the thirteen verbs (like *strive, drive, thrive, wear, spat*) that are conjugated both ways or have kept one strong form. Beside this considerable loss the number of new strong formations have been negligible.

4.3.2 The Pronoun

The decay of inflectional endings and the simplification of the noun and adjective made it less necessary to depend upon formal indications of gender, case and number and to rely more upon juxtaposition, word order and preposition to make clear the relation of words in a sentence. Among pronouns the loss was the greatest in the demonstratives. Of the numerous forms *se, seo þæt the* and *that* survived through Middle to Modern English. All the other forms indicative of different gender, number and case disappeared early in the Middle English period. The same was true of the demonstrative *þes, þeos, þis* (this). Everywhere (except the south) the neuter form *þis* came to be used in early Middle English for all gender and cases of the singular, while the forms of the nominative plural were similarly extended to all cases of the plural appearing in Modern English as *those* and *these*.

In the personal pronoun the losses were not so great. Here there was greater need for separate forms for different cases and genders and accordingly most of the distinctions that existed in Old English were retained. However the dative and accusative cases were combined under the dative (*him, her (t)hem*). In the neuter the form of the accusative (*h)it* became the general symbol.

One other general simplification is to be noted-- the loss of the dual number - *wit, git*.

4.3.3 Participles

The endings of the present participle varied from dialect to dialect- *and(e)* in the North, *ende, ing(e)* in the Midlands, *inde, ing(e)* in the South. The *-ing* ending which has prevailed in Modern English is from the Old English noun ending *-ung* as in *leornung* (learning), *bodung* (preaching). Past participle might or might not have

the initial inflection *i-* [*y*] from Old English *ge-*. Though found in Chaucer, it was later lost in many parts of England including the East Midlands.

4.3.4 The Loss of Grammatical Gender

One of the consequences of the decay of inflections was the elimination of the troublesome grammatical gender. The gender of Old English nouns was not always determined by meaning. Sometimes it was in direct contradiction with meaning, e.g. *woman* was masculine while *wife* was neuter. But during the Middle English period when all but a handful of nouns acquired the masculine nominative accusative plural ending *-es* (*-as* in Old English) coupled with the supplanting of *se*, *þæt* and *seo* by *the*, the support for grammatical gender was removed. Henceforth, the idea of sex became the only factor determining the gender of English nouns.

4.4 WORD-ORDER

The "fixing" of word-order is one of the most crucial developments in the History of English Language. In Old English, inflection dominated word-order, but today it might be said without hesitation that word-order dominates inflection.

Of course, Old English had word order too. But because inflection still clearly showed syntactic relationships, Old English word order was able to be fairly free and, like Latin, words could be moved about for rhetorical purposes. This is not impossible today, but very difficult because what has always been the common order of words has now become regular and there is little room left for variation.

In Old English, one could well have said *se mann bohte pone hlaf*, *se mann pone hlaf bohte* or any such combination, the only difference lying in the emphasis conferred on particular words by their being put in the front position. In Modern English we say only what corresponds to the first of these sentences: *The man bought the loaf*, because the subject must come before the verb, and object after it, in declarative sentences. And if we wish to emphasize any particular word, we usually have to depend on stress of voice. Thus in Old English the syntactic relationships of subject and object were expressed by inflection, and changes in the word order did not affect them; today subject and object are no longer shown by inflection in nouns, and even in pronouns though they have different forms for subject and object.

4.4 GRAMMATICAL CHANGES IN MODERN ENGLISH

Grammatical changes in the Modern English period though important are less spectacular than changes in the sound system. English grammar during the early Modern period is marked more by the survival of certain forms and usages, which have since then disappeared, than by any fundamental developments. The most important of these changes we may review briefly.

4.5.1 The Noun

The only inflectional endings retained in the noun are those marking the plural and the possessive singular. The *-s* plural has become so common that except for a few nouns like *sheep* and *fish* or a few others like *mice* and *feet*, with mutated vowels, we are scarcely conscious of any other form.

4.5.2 Adjectives and Adverbs

Because the adjective had already lost all its endings, the chief interest of this part of speech in the Modern Period is in the forms of the comparative and superlative degrees. The two methods commonly used to form the comparative and superlative are the endings *-er* and *-est* along with the adverbs *more* and *most*. Double comparative or superlative remained fairly common till early Modern English- *more fairer, most unkindest*. The trend affecting the adjective in modern times has been the gradual settling down of usage so that words with one syllable take *-er* and *-est*, while most adjectives of two or more syllables take *more* and *most*- *frugal, learned, careful, famous*.

4.5.3 The Pronoun

The sixteenth century saw the establishment of the personal pronoun in the form that it has had since. In the attaining this form three changes were involved (a) the disuse of *thou, thy, thee*. In the thirteenth century *thou, thy, thee* were used with familiar or inferiors, while the plural forms *ye, your, you* were used as a mark of respect. By the sixteenth century the singular forms had all but disappeared and *ye, you, your* became the usual pronoun of direct address irrespective of rank or intimacy. (b) the substitution of *you* for *ye* as a nominative case. Originally a clear distinction was maintained between the nominative *ye* and accusative *you*. But because both forms were so frequently unstressed they were often pronounced [je]. A tendency to confuse the two appeared fairly early and from the fourteenth century onwards the two forms were used quite indiscriminately until *ye* finally disappeared (c) the introduction of *its* as the possessive *it*. The formation of the new possessive neuter *its* was in some ways the most interesting development in the pronoun. The neuter pronoun in Old English was *hit, his, him, hit* which became *hit, his, hit* in Middle English. In unstressed position *hit* weakened to *it* at the beginning of the Modern period. It was the usual form for the subject and object. By the seventeenth century *its* had become the usual form displacing *his* and *it* as a neuter possessive.

Finally mention has to be made of one more noteworthy development - the relative and interrogative pronouns. Old English had no proper relative pronouns. It made use of the definite articles (*se, seo, þæt*) which however had more demonstrative force than relative. At the end of the Old English period the particle *þe* had become the most usual relative pronoun, but in the early Middle English period its place was taken by *þæt* (that). In the fifteenth century *which* begins to alternate with *that*. It was not until the sixteenth century that the pronoun *who* as a relative came into use and remained in widespread use till the present day.

4.5.4 Verbs

Through Middle English the regular ending of the third person singular was *-eth*. Chaucer for instance has *telleth, giveth, saith, doth*. In the fifteenth century, however, forms with *-s* appear and by the end of the century forms like *tells, says, gives* predominate, though in some words the old usage remains *doth, hath*. The *-s* ending also appears in the third person plural by the end of the sixteenth century in expressions like Shakespeare's "*troubled minds that wakes*" (*Lucrece*) or "*Whose own hard dealing teaches them suspect the deed of others*" in *Merchant of Venice*.

Many of the Middle English strong verbs were lost while many became weak. Those that remained were subject to considerable alteration in the past tense and past participle. Verbs like *bids, crow, flay, dread, sprout, wade* developed weak forms. Conspicuous by their absence in early Modern English were progressive forms and

compound participle. The latter arose in the sixteenth century-- *having spoken thus, having decided to make the attempt*. An increase in the use of the progressive verb forms is an important development of the eighteenth century. The forms *to be* and the present participle are generally called progressive forms because their function is to indicate an action as being in progress at the time implied by the auxiliary- *I sing, I do sing, I am singing*. **The wide extension in the use of the progressive forms is one of the most important development of the English verb in the Modern period.** The expanded passive form, the so-called progressive passive was an even later development, belonging to the very end of the eighteenth century- *the house is being built, the man is being killed*.

The *do*-forms had important uses in interrogative (*do you sing*) and negative sentences (*I don't sing*). Most of the current contracted negative forms *n't* appear in the seventeenth century. *Won't* came from *wol(l) not*, *don't* from *do or does not*, *an't* from *am (are, is) not*. Contractions of auxiliary verbs occur somewhat earlier- *it's* appears in the seventeenth century. *Would* becomes *'ld* later becoming *'d* which in the eighteenth century came to be used for *had* also. *Have* was contracted to *'ve*.

Impersonal uses of the verb were common in early Modern English. Shakespearean expressions like *it dislikes (displeases) me; it yearns (grieves) me not* illustrate the point.

4.5.5 The Importance of Prepositions

With the loss of all distinctive inflectional endings in the Middle English period prepositions acquired an importance greater than they ever had in Old or Middle English. They were needed to indicate precisely the grammatical relations which had been served by inflections in earlier times.

4.5.6 Shall and Will

In Old and Middle English *will* and *shall* expressed simple futurity though as a rule they implied respectively obligation and volition. The present use of the words stems from the rules of John Wallis who stated that simple futurity is expressed by *shall* in the first person and by *will* in the second and third. Despite a century of vigorous discussions the rules of distinction are not yet very clear. Charles Carpenter Frills has pointed out that there has been no change in the use of *shall* and *will* in the first person from the Middle of the sixteenth century onwards, with *will* greatly predominating; with the second person the sixteenth century predominance of *shall* has been reversed; similarly with the third person *will* has come to predominate over *shall*.

4.6 MAJOR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GRAMMARIANS

A Survey of English grammar through the centuries will remain incomplete without the mention of the grammarians of the eighteenth century. The desire to "refine", "fix", "ascertain" the language had marked scholarly efforts from the sixteenth century onwards. Treatises on English grammar had appeared as early as the sixteenth century and drew attention from authors such as Ben Johnson and John Milton. The eighteenth century grammarians set before themselves three tasks (a) to codify the principles of the language and reduce it to rules (b) to settle disputed points and decide cases of divided usage (c) to point out common errors and thus improve the language. The considerations by which these questions were settled were also three in number—reason, etymology and the example of Latin and Greek.

Reason was commonly taken to mean consistency or as it was called *analogy*. The third criterion--examples from classical languages--were not so commonly cited to settle disputed points, because a feeling grew up during the eighteenth century that there are more disadvantages than advantages in trying to fit English into the patterns of Latin or Greek grammar.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

The introduction of new elements and the decay of existing ones in grammar, sound and spelling as late as the eighteenth century shows that English is a living and growing language. The overall movement is towards reducing items and also standardizing them. For example, as one descends to modern English, inflection loses syntactic scope and is reduced quantitatively. The language will continue to change in the future, as it has in the past, albeit more slowly.

4.8 KEY WORDS

diphthongs	a speech sound which is usually considered as one distinctive vowel of a particular language but really involves two vowels, with one gliding to the other e.g. my /mai/
dialect	a variety of a language spoken in one part of a country (regional dialect), or by people belonging to a particular social class (social dialect), which is different in some words, grammar and pronunciation from other forms of the same language.
Inflecting language	a language in which the form of a word changes to show a change in meaning or grammatical function. Often there is no clear distinction between the basic part of the word and the part which shows a grammatical function such as tense.
Analytic language	a language in which word forms do not change, and in which grammatical function are shown by word order and the use of function words.
Synthetic language	a language in which various affixes may be added to the stem of a word to add to its meaning or to show its grammatical function.
Declension	a list of the case forms of a noun phrase in a particular language.
Case forms	<p>Nominative - that particular case form which is used to mark the subject of a sentence.</p> <p>Genitive - the case which marks the possessor, such as Jon's mother.</p> <p>Dative - the case used to mark an indirect object</p> <p>Accusative - the case used to mark the direct object.</p>

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. Define Inflectional language and Synthetic language.
2. Write a summary of the unit in 200 words. Use one syntactic category as an example to show the change from Old English onto Middle English and then Modern English.