

# OLD ENGLISH GRAMMAR. THE NOMINAL SYSTEM.

## The noun

### *List of principal questions:*

---

1. General survey of the nominal system

2. The noun

2.1. Gender

2.2. Number

2.3. Case

Vowel-Stems. Declension of a-stem nouns

Consonant stems. Declension of n-stem nouns

Declension of root-stem nouns

R-stem declension

2.4. Homonymy of forms in Old English and its influence on the further development of noun forms

- OE possessed a well-developed morphological system.

A ~~synthetic, or inflected type of language~~  
= it showed the relations between words and expressed other grammatical meanings mainly with the help of simple (synthetic) grammatical forms:

- grammatical endings, sound interchanges in the root, grammatical prefixes, and suppletive formation.
- No analytical forms in OE. Towards the end of the period some analytical verb-forms began to develop.

# The noun

---

Grammatical categories:

- gender,
- number,
- case.

# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

- The grammatical gender = the natural gender of the person
- **wifman** (*woman*) - masculine
- **stān** (*stone, masculine*)
- **bān** (*bone, neuter*)
- **cwen** (*queen, feminine*)

# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

## *Masculine*

### Male beings

fæder (*father*)

sunu (*son*)

cýning (*king*)

### Lifeless things

hlāf (*bread*)

stān (*stone*)

hrōf (*roof*)

### Abstract notions

stenc (*stench*)

fæ̅r (*fear*)

nama (*name*)

dōm (*doom*)

# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

## *Feminine*

### Female beings

mōdor (*mother*)

dohter (*daughter*)

cwēn (*queen*)

zōs (*goose*)

### Lifeless things

tunge (*tongue*)

meolc (*milk*)

### Abstract notions

trywōu (*truth*)

huntingz (*hunting*)

lufu (*love*)

# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

## *Neuter*

### Living beings

cicen (*chicken*)

hors (*horse*)

mæzden (*maiden*)

### Lifeless things

ēaze (*eye*)

scip (*ship*)

### Abstract notions

mōd (*mood*)

riht (*right*)

# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

Nouns originally formed

- with the help of the suffix **-\* an -**  
Masculine

**OE hunta 'hunter'**

- by means of the suffix **- þu -**  
Feminine
- OE **mærðu** 'glory'
- **lænȝðu** (NE length), etc.





# The OE Noun: GENDER

---

- **talū** (NE tale) – Feminine
- **sunu** (NE son) – Masculine

# Number

---

## *Nominative Singular*      *Nominative Plural*

fisc (*fish*)

fiscas

ēaze (*eye*)

ēazan

tōđ (*tooth*)

tēđ

scip (*ship*)

scipu

# Case

---

4 cases

- Nominative,
- Genetive,
- Dative
- Accusative

# Case

---

- Nominative - subject
- The rest of the case-forms, alone or preceded by prepositions, - objects, or adverbial modifiers
- The Genitive case - mostly when a noun served to modify another noun

**þæs cyninȝes brōþur** 'that king's brother'

- as an object

**he ðær bād westanwindes** 'he waited there for westen wind'.

# Case

---

- ***different stem-suffixes*** originally in Old English acquired materially ***different endings*** in the same case, for example:

## ***Nominative plural***

○ <u>a-stem</u>	<u>ō-stem</u>	<u>n-stem</u>
stan-as	car-a	nam-an

# Declensions in Old English

Declension Case and number	Vowel (strong) stems				Consonant (weak) stem			Root stems
	a	ō	u	i	n	r	s	
Nom. Sing.	stān <i>(stone)</i>	caru <i>(care)</i>	sunu <i>(son)</i>	wine <i>(wine)</i>	nama <i>(name)</i>	fæder <i>(father)</i>	lamb <i>(lamb)</i>	fōt <i>(foot)</i>
Nom. Plur.	stānas	cara	sunu	wine	naman	fæderos	lamb	fēt

# Morphological classification of Nouns in Old English

## *Division according to stem*

Vocalic stems				Consonantal stems		
Strong declension <sup>1</sup>						
<i>a</i> -stems and their <i>ja</i> -stems <i>wa</i> -stems	<i>ō</i> -stems variants <i>jō</i> -stems <i>wo</i> -stems	<i>i</i> -stems	<i>u</i> -stems	<i>n</i> -stems (weak de- clension)	Root- stems	Other minor stems: <i>r</i> -, <i>s</i> -, <i>nd</i> -

## *Division according to gender*

M N	F	M N F	M F	M N F	M F	M N F
-----	---	-------	-----	-------	-----	-------

## *Division according to length of the root-syllable*

short long	short long	short long	short long			
---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	--	--	--

<sup>1</sup> Vocalic stems are also called the “strong” declension; one of the consonantal stems — the *n*-stems — are termed the “weak” declension.

# ***Vowel-Stems. Declension of a-stem nouns***

---

**hlāf** (*bread*)

**hwærte** (*wheat*)

**hors** (*horse*)

**fisc** (*fish*)

**scip** (*ship*)



# Vowel-Stems. Declension of a-stem nouns

Case \ Gender		Masculine	Neuter
		Singular	Nominative <i>fisc</i> ( <i>fish</i> ) Genitive <i>fiscēs</i> Dative <i>fisce</i> Accusative <i>fisc</i>
Plural	Nominative <i>fiscas</i> Genitive <i>fisca</i> Dative <i>fiscum</i> Accusative <i>fiscas</i>	Nominative <i>scipu</i> Genitive <i>scipa</i> Dative <i>scipum</i> Accusative <i>scipu</i>	

## *Vowel-Stems. Declension of a-stem nouns*

---

- The Neuter a-stems differed only in Nom. And Acc. Plural
- Short stems: **-u**
- **-u** ending disappeared after long syllables > Plural = Singular
- Eventually the nouns **house, thing, word, wife** and others acquired the regular ending **-s.**

## *Vowel-Stems. Declension of a-stem nouns*

---

long-stemmed variant:

- no inflection in Nominative and Accusative Singular
- no inflection in the Plural (Nom. and Acc.).
- The traces of of Neuter long a-stems =

irregular plural forms in ModE:

**sheep, deer, swine**

## *Consonant stems.*

### *Declension of n-stem nouns*

---

The weak **n**-declension:

many masculine and feminine nouns

e.g. **nama** (*name*) – masculine,

**tunge** (*tongue*) – feminine)

but only two nouns of the neuter  
gender:

**ēaƷe** (eye) and **ēare** (ear).

# Declension of n-stem nouns

Case \ Gender		Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
		Singular	Nominative	<b>nama</b> ( <i>name</i> )	<b>tunge</b> ( <i>tongue</i> )
Genitive	<b>naman</b>		<b>tungan</b>	<b>eazan</b>	
Dative	<b>naman</b>		<b>tungan</b>	<b>eazan</b>	
Accusative	<b>naman</b>		<b>tungan</b>	<b>eaze</b>	
Plural	Nominative		<b>naman</b>	<b>tungan</b>	<b>eazan</b>
	Genitive		<b>namena</b>	<b>tungena</b>	<b>eazena</b>
	Dative		<b>namum</b>	<b>tungum</b>	<b>eazum</b>
	Accusative		<b>naman</b>	<b>tungan</b>	<b>eazan</b>

# Declension of n-stem nouns

---

**ох-ен-а**

**Р. имена, имен,  
семеня, семян**

# Declension of root-stem nouns

Case \ Gender		Masculine	Feminine
		Singular	Nominative <i>man (man)</i> Genitive <b>mannes</b> Dative <i>man</i> Accusative <i>man</i>
Plural	Nominative <i>men</i> Genitive <b>manna</b> Dative <b>mannum</b> Accusative <i>men</i>	Nominative <b>mȳs</b> Genitive <b>mūsa</b> Dative <b>mūsum</b> Accusative <b>mȳs</b>	

# *Declension of root-stem nouns*

---

- **ō > ē** : the influence of the sound [i] in the endings of those cases (**palatal mutation**).
- The pre-written \* **fōtiz** (Nomin. Plural) and \***fōti** (Dative Singular) > \***fētiz** and \***fēti** > **fēt**
- After the loss of the endings:  
the only distinguishing feature between the forms **fōt** and **fēt** > ModE.



## *Declension of root-stem nouns*

---

OE Singular **tōþ** – Plural

**zōs** – Plural **zēs**

**mann** – Plural **menn**

**mus** – Plural **mys**

# *Declension of root-stem nouns*

---

Prof. A.I. Smirnitsy:

1. These words are used very frequently > the influence of analogy > the greatest number of irregularities (the verb to be, the personal pronouns, etc)
2. The difference between the Singular and the Plural: grammatical + lexical (an additional "collective" meaning)

Cf. человек – люди

# *R-stem declension*

---

- IE [s] > [z] (Verner's Law)
- In West Germanic [z] > [r] (Rhotacism)

## **OE Nominative, Accusative Singular**

**lamb      æȝ      cealf      cild**

lamb              egg      calf              child

## **OE Nominative, Accusative Plular**

**lambru              æȝru      cealfu      cildru**

## *R-stem declension*

---

MidE **cildru – childre + n >**  
ModE **children**

# *Homonymity of forms in Old English and its influence on the further development of noun forms*

---

- **-es** — genitive singular, masculine and neuter
- **-a/ena** — genitive plural, all genders
- **-um** — dative plural, all genders
- **-as** — nominative and accusative plural, masculine

# Reference table of the principal grammatical noun suffixes in Old English

Gender Stem Case		Masculine				Feminine				Neuter		
		a	i	u	n	ō	i	u	n	a	i	n
Singular	Nominative	—	e	u/o	a	u	—	u/o	e	—	-/e	e
	Genitive	es	es	a	an	e	e	a	an	es	es	an
	Dative	e	e	a	an	e	e	a	an	e	e	an
	Accusative	—	e	a	an	e	-/e	a	an	—	e	e
Plural	Nominative	as	e/es	a	ana	e	a	a	n	u/o	u	an
	Genitive	a	a	a	ena	a	a	a	ena	a	a	ena
	Dative	um	um	um	um	um	um	um	um	um	um	um
	Accusative	as	e/as	a	an	a	e	a	an	u/o/-	u	an

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

## Classes of pronouns in Old English:

- personal
- possessive
- demonstrative
- interrogative
- relative
- indefinite



## The Pronoun

---

### Grammatical categories:

- gender
- number
- case



# *The personal pronoun*

---

## ***Gender***

Three genders:

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Neuter

***Different forms for different genders -  
only in the third person singular,  
the rest of the forms - indifferent to  
gender***

## *The personal pronoun*

---

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>
Nom. Singular	<i>hē (he)</i>	<i>hēo (she)</i>	<i>hit (it)</i>
Nom. Plural		<i>hī (they)</i>	

The diagram illustrates the relationship between singular and plural pronouns. Two lines originate from the singular forms 'hē (he)' and 'hit (it)'. One line extends from 'hē (he)' down and to the right to 'hī (they)'. Another line extends from 'hit (it)' down and to the left to 'hī (they)'. This indicates that both 'he' and 'it' are grouped together as 'they' in the plural form.

# *The personal pronoun*

---

## ***Number***

- In the first and second person - three categorial forms: singular, dual and plural, for instance:
- ***Singular Dual***                      ***Plural***
- ***ic*** (*I*) ***wit*** (*two of us*)                      ***wē*** (*we more than two*)
- ***pū*** (*you one*)    ***zīe*** (*two of you*)    ***zē*** (*you more than two*)

# *The personal pronoun*

---

## ***Case***

Personal pronouns (noun-pronouns) –  
a 4-case system:

- ***Nominative***
- ***Genitive***
- ***Dative***
- ***Accusative***

## The personal pronoun

First person				
Case	Singular		Dual	Plural
<i>Nom.</i>	ic		wit	wē
<i>Gen.</i>	mīn		uncer	ūre, ūser
<i>Dat.</i>	mē		unc	ūs
<i>Acc.</i>	mec, mē		uncit	ūsic, ūs
Second person				
<i>Nom.</i>	þū		ʒit	ʒē
<i>Gen.</i>	þīn		incer	ēower
<i>Dat.</i>	þē		inc	ēow
<i>Acc.</i>	þēc, þē		incit, inc	ēowic, ēow
Third person				
	Singular			Plural
	M	F	N	All genders
<i>Nom.</i>	hē	hēo, hīo	hit	hīe, hī, hȳ, hēo
<i>Gen.</i>	his	hire, hierē	his	hira, heora, hiera, hyra
<i>Dat.</i>	him	hire, hierē	him	him, heom
<i>Acc.</i>	hine	hīe, hī, hȳ	hit	hīe, hī, hȳ, hēo

## Declension of the personal pronoun Ic

Number Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	ic	wit	wē
Genitive	mīn	uncer	ūser, ūre
Dative	mē	unc	ūs
Accusative	mec, mē	unc	ūsic, ūs

## *The personal pronoun*

---

The Genetive case of personal pronouns: forms of the oblique cases (as objects) & an attributive function  
e.g. **his modor, sunu mīn**

The Genetive case of personal pronouns – possessive pronouns  
**mīn, pīn, hīs, hire, ūre**

## *Other pronouns*

---

Grammatical categories:

- gender (***masculine, feminine and neuter***)
- number (***singular and plural***)
- case (five categorial forms:

***Nominative***

***Accusative***

***Dative***

***Genitive***

***Instrumental***



## *Demonstrative Pronouns*

Gender, number	Masculine Singular	Feminine Singular	Neuter Singular	Plural
Case				
Nominative	<i>sē (that)</i>	<i>sēo (that)</i>	<i>þæt (that)</i>	<i>þa (those)</i>
Genitive	<i>þæs</i>	<i>þære</i>	<i>þæs</i>	<i>þāra</i>
Dative	<i>þæm</i>	<i>þære</i>	<i>þæm</i>	<i>þæm</i>
Accusative	<i>þone</i>	<i>þā</i>	<i>þæt</i>	<i>þā</i>
Instrumental	<i>þȳ, þon</i>			<i>þȳ</i>

## *Demonstrative Pronouns*

---

Modern demonstrative **“this”**,  
**“these”**, **“those”** < OE pronouns  
with full demonstrative power  
(Masculine **þes**, Feminine **þēos**,  
Neuter **þis**).

**That** < OE **þæt** Neuter for **sē**.

## OE Demonstrative Pronouns

---

OE pronouns with weakened demonstrative power - before nouns. The demonstrative meaning approached that of the definite article developed from the pronoun **sē, sēo, þæt** in Middle English

## OE Demonstrative Pronouns

---

The Instrumental case form **þȳ:**

Modern English:

**the more, the better.**

## The adjective

OE adjectives: the categories

---

- number (**singular and plural**)
- gender (**M., F., N.**)
- case (**N., G., D., A., Instr.**)
- comparison (3 degrees – **positive, comparative** and **superlative**)
- a certain category of “**definiteness**” – “**indefiniteness**” connected with the **two-fold declension** of adjectives (Definite - if the noun had another attribute – a demonstrative pronoun, and Indefinite - otherwise)

## Declension of adjectives

Declension Case	Indefinite (Strong)	Definite (Weak) -
Nominative	zōd ( <i>good</i> )	zōda
Genitive	zōdes	
Dative	zōdum	
Accusative	zōdne	zōdan
Instrumental	zōde	
Nominative	zōde	zōdan
Genitive	zōdra	zōdra
Dative	zōdum	zōdum
Accusative	zōde	zōdan

## *Degrees of comparison of Adjectives*

---

The degrees of comparison were expressed synthetically, namely:

- a) by means of ***suffixation***:

heard — heard**ra** — heard**ost** (*hard*)

- OE **-ra**, - **ost** < Germanic **\*-ozan** and **\*ōsta**

(**z** > **r** due to Verner's Law).

## *Degrees of comparison*

---

- by means of **vowel gradation plus suffixation:**

**eald – ieldra – ieldest**(*old*)

- Germanic suffixes of comparison  
**\*izan, \*ista + palatal mutation**  
(the root-vowel **ea** ← the original stem-forming suffix **-i**)



## *Degrees of comparison*

---

- by means of ***suppletive forms***  
**zōd – bettra – betst** (*good*),  
**yfel – wýrsa – wýrst** (*bad*),  
**mycel – māra – mæst** (*'great',  
much*),  
**lýtrel – læssa – læst** (*little*)

## The Adverb

---

- The adverb in OE : only comparison
- The comparative: + **-or**
- The superlative: + **-ost**

E.g. **hearde** 'severely' – **heardor**  
– **heardost.**

## The Adverb

---

The most productive adverb-forming suffix:  
**-e**

By origin it was the ending of the instrumental case, neuter of strong declension of adjectives.

The adverbialisation of this case-form → many adverbs of adjectival nature

Cf. **dēop** (deep) – **dēope** (deeply),

**lanȝ** (long) – **lanȝe**

**ночью, верхом, боком**

## The Adverb

OE adjectives:nouns + **-lic**

---

e.g. **frēondlic, cræftlic** ('skillful') +  
**-e (frēondlice, cræftlice)**


Gradually a great number of adverbs in  
**-lice > -lice** was regarded as an  
adverbial suffix which could be used  
beside or instead of **-e**.


E.g. **hearde** and **heardlice**.

Later **-lice** developed into **-ly**

## Grammatical categories of declinable parts of speech

Categories Parts of speech	Gender	Number	Case
Noun	+	+	+
Pronoun	+	+	+
Adjective	+	+	+
Numeral	+	+	+

- 
- ~~There were three kinds of declensions~~ — noun, pronoun (with two subdivisions) and adjective. They had the same grammatical categories, the main difference being in the quantity of the categorial forms of number (three number-forms in personal pronouns) and case (four case-forms - nouns, five case-forms - personal pronouns and adjectives).

- 
- 
- The subdivision within the system of each part of speech was based on the difference in the material forms (the noun - based on the original stem-suffix, the pronoun - the number of categorial forms, the adjective - strong and weak declensions with the functional difference).