

Lecture 9 The Middle English Period. The Noun.

In OE there were 9 declensions which depended on the type of stem. During the Middle English Period the E noun lost its types of declensions so that towards the end of the Middle English Period (by the 14th century). They didn't distinguish declensions. 4 case system turned into 2 case system: N. Fissh - fisshes (goes back to the -a-stem declension) G. Fisshes fisshes (goes back to the -a-stem declension) The plural and the genitive of the unified paradigm goes back to the old «-as reduction» of the -a-stem declension. As to the irregular nouns, they have always been irregular (non-standard). Together with the loss of endings the E noun lost its category of grammatical gender. The weak -n-stems declension resisted analogy longer than all the other stems. The development of the noun declension lasted for about 3 centuries and the -n-stems resisted unification longer than other stems. Now: ox - oxen (настоящее только это), brother - brethren, child - children and in some dialects: horse - horsen.

The Middle English Period. The Adjective.

The adjective began to lose its markers even earlier than the noun. The process began at the end of The OLD ENGLISH PERIOD. The development went along the same lines: that is - the reduction of the endings led to dropping and simplification. The adjective lost the distinction between the strong and the weak declension. The adjective markers of agreement with the noun. Towards the end of the Middle English Period we find only some relics of the old system of declension: in Chaucer's works - -e goode - the plural of the strong declension, but it was already occasional. As to the degrees of comparison alongside the old system with the suffixes er, est there developed a new way - the analytical way with «more, most». The development was to some extent influenced by the French language. So towards the end of the Middle English Period we had two parallel ways of the formation of degrees of comparison. However even at the beginning of the NEP there wasn't a fixed rule as to which of the two forms to use. (Shakespeare - most beautifullest).

The Middle English Period. The Pronoun

.In OE the groups of pronouns were fewer in number. The system of the personal pronouns had changed greatly. In the place of the old 4-case system we find a 2-case system in ME. The old nominative case has remained up to now except for «you» («зев») in which the old N. R. Form was replaced by the objective case form. (старая форма «це» - is used in dialects and in spoken language) as to u>thou (библия + возвышенный стиль) The modern objective case developed from the oblique cases (the D. And the A.); with some of them (I) the D. Case became the unified form, with some (it) the unified form was the A. Case. As to the G. Case it left the case system and gave rise to a new group of possessive pronouns. As to the Dem. 67

Pronouns like all the other declinable parts of speech they lost their case forms, their forms of the gender: they have preserved only the pl./sg. Forms: this - these / that-those. There was the group of interrogative pronouns. They only changed their

pronunciation. Generally they have always be the same. The other groups developed during the Middle English Period. Some of them developed as compound words.

The Middle English Period. The Verb.

NON - FINITE FORMS. The development of the non-finite forms: the infinitive and the participles may well be described as gradual verbalization. The OE Infinitive was a verbal noun. During the Middle English Period the Infinitive lost all its noun features except for some of his syntactic functions. It's suffix -an was reduced and dropped -an>-en>-e>zero. As to the particle «to» it was a preposition. With the meaning of purpose (у мод. (после них) глаголов нет «to»б т.к. Они не выражают значение цели). The same is true of the participle. The EP lost its nominal morphological characteristic (and the category of agreement with the noun). Alongside this loss the Infinitive and the P. Began to develop verbal features and categories. The Gerund is a much later development. FINITE FORMS. The classes (4 classes in OE) of verbs were in the main preserved. The speakers still distinguished the classes. But there were certain very important developments. The number of strong verbs was reduced from 300 in OE to 200 in ME. At the same time some strong verbs became weak, they lost their vowel gradation and took on the dental suffix: to help, to climb, to walk and some others. At the same time there was a mixture of classes: strong verbs remained strong, but they changed their class, their gradation (4th <>5th - more often): to speak (5 в 4). As to the weak verbs the 3rd class stop existing: two classes. The suffixes were -du and -ed. The most regular was the second weak class - it later gave us the standard suffix -ed for standard or regular verbs. The Middle English Period witnessed the development of weak verbs which then turned into regular verbs. A great number of verbs joined the class of regular verbs. The new formations which joined the group of regular verbs were French (and some other languages). As to the preterit-present verbs they preserved their modal meaning, but their paradime had changed greatly. Towards the end of the Middle English Period they lost their infinitive and participles and turned into defective verbs. Some of their old forms were dropped or gave rise to other words: cunning < can (cunnan); own (owe) < ought (azan). As to the suppletives they have always been the same: to be, to go. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANALUTICAL FORMS. In OE there were only 4 grammatical categories. They are the Tense (Present & Preterit), the Mood, Person and Number. All of them were synthetic. But during the Middle English Period some other categories which were mainly analytical appeared. One of the first to develop was the category of time correlation. In OE there were many constructions with the verb «to have» in its main meaning +an object +an attribute, which referred to the object (to have something done). Later this construction developed into the Perfect Form. We see it when Participle II lost its agreement with the object and when later the object took the position after the Participle.

This process was going in the middle of the Middle English Period => «to have done something». The Continuous forms developed in the same way. From a free form combination to a morphological form. In the beginning it was a compound nominal predicate with the verb «to be» as a link-verb and Participle I as a predicative. And

originally it didn't express a process, it meant only permanent characteristic as a Present indefinite now. The Continuous form acquired its modern meaning much later in the 16th century, even after Shakespeare. The process which took place was the same as with the Perfect form: originally the Participle agreed with the subject, but then it lost its category of agreement and became a part of the Continuous form. The same process took place with the Passive which developed from a free word combination to a fixed morphological form. Originally it was a compound nominal predicate with the verb «to be» + Participle II as a predicative. Gradually the Participle lost its agreement with the subject of the sentence. As we know the Future Tense Form was not represented in the OE and developed only during the Middle English Period.

It developed from a combination which was a compound verbal modal predicate with the verb «shall» and «will». But even in the time of Shakespeare this combination could be still to either as a modal predicate or as a Future form. The Perfect Continuous Form was one of last to appear. It appeared at the beginning of the NEP. And the last to appear was the Continuous form of the Passive which began developing only in the 19th century. In OE we may find passive infinitive, though no passive forms far finite forms may be found. Other analytical non-finite forms developed during the Middle English Period, but only after corresponding analytical forms of finite forms had developed. The gerund was also one of the last to appear. There are several theories concerning the development of the Gerund and the most current of them is that it developed as a mixture of Participle I and the verbal noun with the preposition «on» in the function of the predicative (He was on hunting. OE).

Questions to Lecture 9

1. What are the major differences of MidEng parts of speech?
2. What are the main peculiarities of the Lowland Scottish Dialect?
3. What are the chief features of the Welsh and the Irish accents?
4. How many dialects exist in the USA?
5. What are their major peculiarities?
6. Are there any significant characteristic features of Canadian English? 3. What are the most common modern variations of American English?