

Chapter 6

Old English

The Beginning of Old English (Anglo-Saxon)

Indo-European is the ancestor of Old English as well as most of the languages of western Europe. This parent language developed into a number of closely related languages. For example, Italic was one of the dialects of Indo-European; and Latin developed as one of the dialects of Italic. Five modern languages are known to have descended from Latin. These are: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian.

Teutonic or Germanic was originally one of the dialects or branches of Indo-European. Then Teutonic developed into a number of dialects from which evolved the modern Germanic languages. West Teutonic (or Germanic) divided into a number of dialects, chief of which are German, Dutch, and Old English.

The Celts are the first people in Britain about whose knowledge we have some historical information. Celtic is an Indo-European language which was spoken by the Celts, and which is still spoken by a number of people in Cornwall the southern most of Britain.

The other language that was spoken in England before English was Latin which remained the dominant language for four centuries. But Latin did not replace Celtic as the language of the people of Britain. In fact, Celtic survived the Roman and Teutonic invasions.

The history of English, then begins with the invasions of the Jutes, Saxons, and Angles about the middle of the fifth century. The Jutes came first and occupied Kent; the Saxons occupied practically all of England south of the Thames, with the exception of Cornwall which remained in the hands of the Celts. The Saxons also occupied a portion of England north of the Thames; and the Angles occupied the remaining parts, with the exception of the West Coast.

English (Englisc), was the language of the invaders; and the land they occupied came to be called after them, the land of the Angles, or Engla-land.

It is usual, in historical linguistics, to divide the history of a language into different periods. Such divisions do not accurately reflect the actual facts of linguistic change, since such a change is slow and gradual. But these divisions are based on the observations of the language historians that some linguistic features are clearly seen at a specific period and absent in another and this may be taken as enough justification for drawing a line between periods. The history of English has been divided into three periods:

Old English	450 - 1150
Middle English	1150 - 1500
Modern English	1500 - the present

There were four main dialects of Old English: Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, and West Saxon. The speech of the Jutes became the Kentish dialect of Old English, and the principal dialect of Saxon was the West Saxon. The main dialect of the

Anglians was the Mercian dialect. It was this Mercian dialect of Old English that developed into the Middle dialect of Middle English. One branch of this Middle dialect of Middle English, the East Middle dialect, is the ancestor of Modern Standard English.

The Spelling System

Old English had some letters that are no longer used in the writing system of Modern English. In printed texts, however, a modern letter may be substituted for the old one. This is the case with the letter w, which has replaced the letter (wynn) in the printed texts of Old English. The letters of Old English alphabet which are no longer in use are:

<i>O.E. Letter (s)</i>	<i>Mn. E. Letter (s)</i>	<i>Phonetic Symbol</i>
Ø (theta)	th	[Ø, ð]
d (thorn)	th	[Ø, ð]
æ (digraph)	a	[æ]

It is to be noted that the two Old English letters Ø and ð like Modern English the, were used for two distinct sounds [Ø], and [ð].

Some letters, now used in the English alphabet, were not known by the Old English writers. These are:

<i>Mn. E. Letter (s)</i>	<i>O.E. Letter (s)</i>	<i>Phonetic Symbol</i>
J	cg	[dʒ]
Q	c,k	[k]
V	f	[v]
Z	s	[z]

The letter k was used only very rarely in Old English texts, and the letter y was used as a symbol for a vowel, and not for the semivowel /y/ of Modern English. The combination sc has been interpreted by scholars of Old English to have the phonetic value [š̥] which is represented in the alphabet of Modern English by sh.

Phonology:

Consonants:

Old English is now being studied and taught from manuscripts that carry to us the speech of the people who mastered it about a thousand years ago. Thus, any effort at drawing phonemic conclusions about the language by modern linguists will only achieve the possible: drawing rough conclusions about the sound of the language, and then interpreting these conclusions in the light of modern phonemic theory. This is what Hockett has done on the basis of the findings of what scholarship has contributed to the study of Old English⁽¹⁾

The following table of consonant phonemes of Old English is based mainly on Hockett's:

	<i>Bi-labial</i>	<i>Labio-dental</i>	<i>Dental</i>	<i>Alveo-lar</i>	<i>Alveo-palatal</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Glottal</i>
Stops	p b			t d		k g	
Affricates					tš̥ dž̥		

(1) Charles. F. Hockett, A Course in Modern Linguistics, Macmillan, 1958, p. 376.

Fricatives		f	Ø	s	š	x	h
						g	
Nasals	m			n		ŋ	
Lateral				l			
Trill				r			
Semi-vowels					y	w	

Compared with Modern English consonants, the consonant phonemes of Old English presented these differences:

1. Old English / p t k b d t š d ž m l w y / were pronounced approximately as in Modern English.
2. / g / like [g] in Modern English ,
 [g] like غ in Arabic
 /f/ with two elements: [f], [v] when /f/ occurred between vowels
 /Ø/ with two elements: [Ø], [ð] when between vowels.
 /s/ having two elements: [s] and [z] between vowels.
 /x/ pronounced [x] (like Arabic خ)
 /n/ with two elements:
 [n] and [ŋ] before velars.
3. /r/ was a trill produced as the tip of the tongue makes rapid successive taps against the alveolar ridge. This is more like Arabic /r/ than the fricative / r/ of Britain or retroflex / r / of the United States.

One feature of old English consonants, which has disappeared in Modern English, is gemination, or tashdīd in Arabic. This may be represented by the two forms:

Winnan	"strive, fight"	[winnan]
Bedd	"bed"	[bedd]

Although gemination, or tashdīd has disappeared from Modern English, the language has still double consonants, especially in compound word: pen-knife, book-case.

Examples of some of the clusters (groups of two consonants) which occurred at the beginning of words in Old English, but which no longer occur in Modern English are;

hl	[xl]	hlaƿ	"loaf, bread" ⁽¹⁾ .
hr	[xr]	hring	"ring"
hn	[xn]	hnappian	"to nap, to sleep".
cn	[kn]	cniht	"youth" (cf. knight [najt]).
gn	[gn]	gnæt	"gnat, insect".
wr	[wr]	writan	"write, copy".
wl	[wl]	wlite	"brightness, beauty".

Vowels:

The vowel phonemes of Old English may be presented, only with approximate accuracy, in the following table:

	<i>Front</i>		<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>
	<i>Rounded</i>	<i>Unrounded</i>		
High	y	i		u
Mid.		e	ə	
Low		æ	a	

The vowels of Old English differ from the vowels of Modern English mainly in these respects;

(1) The letter h was sometimes pronounced [h] and, sometimes [x].

1- The high front rounded vowel / y / has disappeared from Modern English. In Old English it was of common occurrence:

Fyllan	/fyllan/	“to fill”
Øynne	/Øynne/	“thin”
Cynn	/kynn/	“kin, family”

2- The diphthongal quality of complex vowels in Modern English is not clear in Old English. Six of the above eight vowels had long counterparts: i : y : e : æ : a : u:. The mid central vowel / ə / had no long counterpart, and the low back vowel / ɔ / also had no long counterpart. There was, however, a long mid back vowel / o:/. The long vowel / y : / is respresented by these two Old English words:

/hy: d/	hyd	“hide, skin”
/fy:r/	fyr	“fire”

Stress and Intonation:

Stress in Old English occurred on the first vowel, unless the vowel occurred in a prefix.

As regards intonation, nothing has been preserved in records of Old English about it.

Phonetic Notation:

The following passage from the Bible (Lu 10 : 30 - 32) is given first in the Old English spelling followed by a literal translation, and then comes the Old English pronunciation in phonetic notation⁽¹⁾.

(1) Moore and M. Markwardt, *Historical Outline of English Sounds and Inflections*, Ann Arbor, 1927. pp. 20-21.

In the phonetic notation vowel length is marked by:

1- / $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}$ gebyrde hit $\text{Ø}\text{æt}$ sum $\text{S}\bar{\text{a}}\text{c}\bar{\text{e}}\text{r}\bar{\text{d}}$ $\text{f}\bar{\text{e}}\text{r}\bar{\text{d}}\text{e}/$.

(Then happened it that a certain priest went).

/ $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}$: Yeb-Yrede hit $\text{Ø}\text{æt}$ sum $\text{as: kerd fe:rde}/$.

2- /on $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}\text{m}$ ilcan wege; and $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}$ $\text{h}\bar{\text{e}}$ $\text{Ø}\text{æt}$ geseah/.

(on the same way; and when he that saw).

/ on Øa: m ilcan weye; and $\text{Øa: he: Øæt yesææx}/$.

3- / $\text{h}\bar{\text{e}}$ hine forbeah/.

(he from - him turned - a way)

/he: hine $\text{f}\bar{\text{o}}\text{rb}\bar{\text{æ}}\text{: æ x}/$

4- /And eal swā sē $\text{d}\bar{\text{i}}\text{a}\text{c}\bar{\text{o}}\text{n}$, $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}$ $\text{h}\bar{\text{e}}$ wæs wi Ø /

(And also the deacon, when was by)

/and $\text{æel swa: se: d}\bar{\text{i}}\text{a}\text{c}\bar{\text{o}}\text{n Øa : he : was wiØ}/$

5- / $\text{Ø}\bar{\text{a}}$ stōwe and $\text{Ø}\text{æt}$ geseah, $\text{h}\bar{\text{e}}$ hine $\bar{\text{e}}\text{ac}$ for **$\bar{\text{b}}\bar{\text{e}}\text{ah}/$** .

(The place and that saw, he from-him also turned-away).

/ $\text{Øa : sto : we and Øæt yesææx he: hine æ : æk f}\bar{\text{o}}\text{rb}\bar{\text{æ}}\text{: æx}/$.

Morphology and Syntax:

1. Old English Inflections;

Old English was a highly inflectional language; and the history of English is sometimes summarized as the history of how these inflections have disappeared, until they are almost completely lost to Modern English.

1. Nouns:

Old English nouns were inflected for number and case. They had two numbers: singular and plural, and four cases. These four cases were:

Nominative: indicating that the noun is subject.

Accusative: when the noun is an object.

Genitive: usually for possession.

Dative: usually indicating the meaning of "to" = (object of a preposition).

Not all nouns of Old English were inflected or (declined) for these four cases in the same way. They generally fell into at least three main groups or declensions in the West Saxon dialect.

Following are three examples of noun declensions in Old English:

<i>Singular</i>		
Nom.	Stān "stone"	hunt-a "hunter"
Acc.	Stān	hunt-an
Gen.	Stān-es	hunt-an
Dat.	Stān-e	hunt-an
<i>Plural</i>		
Nom.	Stān-as	hunt-a
Acc.	Stān-as	hunt-an
Gen.	Stān-a	hunt-ena
Dat.	Stān-um	hunt-um

<i>Singular</i>	
Nom.	Fōt
Acc.	Fōt
Gen.	Fōtes
Dat.	Fēt
<i>Plural</i>	
Nom.	Fēt
Acc.	Fēt
Gen.	fōt-a
Dat.	fōt-um

It is clear from these different forms that all nouns in Old English had-um as a suffix for plural noun in the Dative case, that most nouns had-es as the suffix for the Genitive Singular, and - e for the Dative Singular.

The form fōt is of special importance, since it has only three suffixes for the eight forms of the singular and plural and because of the vowel difference between the singular and plural. This difference is a qualitative difference: instead of the vowel o in the singular we have the vowel e for the plural. It is true that these vowels were pronounced differently in Old English from their pronunciation in Modern English, but the spelling is nearly the same. The two forms foot and feet in Modern English are not different due to a difference in the suffixes that occur with each form, but only due to a difference between the two vowels.

Gender:

Old English nouns were either masculine, feminine, or neuter. This did not always conform to our usual distinctions based on

sex; and this is what is called grammatical gender. Differences of gender based largely on distinctions between male and female individuals are called natural gender. Thus, Old English nouns had what we call grammatical gender while Modern English nouns are distinguished on the basis of natural gender.

The three Old English words *stān*, *hunta*, and *fōr* were all masculine nouns, irrespective of the fact that two of them denote inanimate objects, and only one of them (*hunta*) stands for an animate being. In Modern English two of them are neuter, and one of them "hunter" is masculine. The gender signal in Modern English is, in this case, the use of the pronoun "it" as a substitute for "stone", and "foot", and "he" or "him" When we talk about "hunter".

2. Adjectives

Adjectives in Modern English have lost their inflections to a degree not yet reached by nouns. Nouns in Modern English take suffixes for the genitive (-'s) as well as for the plural; but adjectives do not. In Old English, however, both the nouns and adjectives usually had the same number of cases. In fact, the case system of the adjectives in Old English was more complex than the case system for the nouns. The accusative singular case for some adjectives, for example, was different from the nominative, whereas the two cases were identical for most nouns.

One example will seem to be enough for our purposes here:

<i>Singular</i>	
Nom.	Gōd "good"
Acc.	Gōd-ne
Gen.	Gōd-es
Dat.	Gōd-um
Instr.	Gōd-e
<i>Plural</i>	
Nom.	Gōd-e
Acc.	Gōd-e
Gen.	Gōd ra
Dat.	Gōd-um

This example further shows that a singular adjective in Old English may have a fifth case (instrumental case), which does not usually occur for Old English nouns. Another feature of the adjectives in Old English was that an adjective had three distinctive forms of the masculine, feminine, and neuter respectively. When the adjective occurred with a masculine noun it had a certain form different from that occurring with a feminine noun, or a neuter noun.

3. Personal Pronouns:

Pronouns have a complex case system in Modern English; but in Old English they were still more complex. Today pronouns have one form for the singular and another for the plural. In Old English a pronoun had three distinct forms: one for the singular, another for the plural, and a third for the dual (مثنى), as we have in Arabic.

Although the dual form has disappeared in Modern English, most of the complexities of the case system in Old English have been preserved.

Following is the declension of the first person in Old English:

<i>Singular</i>	
Nom.	Ic "I"
Acc.	Mē "me"
Gen.	Mīn "mine"
Dat.	Mē "to me"
<i>Plural</i>	
Nom.	Wit "we two"
Acc.	Unc "us two"
Gen.	Uncer "of us two"
Dat.	Ūs "to us two"
<i>Plural</i>	
Nom.	Wē "we"
Acc.	Ūs "us"
Gen.	Ūre "our"
Dat.	Ūs "to us"

The second and third persons had similar forms for all the cases mentioned above, and they had also forms for the dual.

4. The Definite Article:

The definite article had cases in Old English, and it had three different forms: one for the masculine, another for the feminine, and a third for the neuter. These three distinct forms, as well as

the four cases, have been lost to Modern English, but the syntactic uses have expanded. These are the three different forms for the masculine, feminine, and neuter that the definite article had in Old English:

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	
Nom.	Se	sēo	Øæt	Øā
Acc.	Øæs	Øære	Øæs	Øāra
Gen.	Øæm	Øære	Øæm	Øæm
Dat.	Øone	Øā	Øæt	Øā
Instr.	Øon		Øon	

The neuter form of the Definite article in Old English Øæt is similar in sound and shape to Modern English that, which is now used as a demonstrative pronoun in some cases and a relative pronoun in others.

In Old English the definite article had only one form for the plural (which was declined to the different cases), and this form was Øa, which is again similar to Modern English the.

5. verbs:

Old English verbs have been traditionally divided into two main groups: Strong verbs, and Weak verbs. This terminology is sometimes applied to Modern English. The strong (irregular) verbs indicate change of tense by a change of the vowel in the middle of the verb. Thus a verb like drink, drank, drunk may sometimes be called a strong verb. Other verbs that have -d, -t, or -ed as suffixes to past forms are called weak (regular): e.g. walk, walked, walked.

In all Periods of English, the group of weak verbs has been larger than the other group. Strong verbs were about three hundred in the Old English period, and now they are only about one fifth of their number a thousand years ago.

Old English strong verbs are usually divided into seven classes, and each verb has four main parts: present, past or preterit (which has one form for the singular and another form for the plural), and past participle.

The four "parts" of some strong verbs in Old English may be represented by the following examples. With the Old English forms are given the corresponding forms of Modern English.

	<i>Present</i>	<i>Past (Singular)</i>	<i>Past (Plural)</i>	<i>Past (Plural)</i>
1	Writān	wrāt	writon	writen
2	Flēōgan	flēōg	flugon	flogen
3	Helpan	healp	hulpon	holpen
4	Beran	bær	bæron	boren
5	Cuman	cōm	cōmon	cumen
6	Scacan	scōc	scōcon	scacen
7	Healdan	hēold	hēoldon	heolden

Modern English

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
Write	Wrote	written
fly	flew	flown
help	helped	helped
bear	bore	born

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
come	came	come
shake	shook	shaken
hold	held	held

In spite of the many differences in pronunciation between Old English and Modern English, the relationships between Old and Modern forms are readily recognizable from the above examples. All seven verbs have three parts in Modern English instead of the four parts of Old English. This is because Modern English has one form for the singular and plural past tense, not two. The Old English verb "helpan" is no longer a "strong" verb as it was in Old English, and is now a "weak" or "regular" verb, having the past and past participle with the suffix ed[-t] like talked and similar verbs. The verb "healdan" has now two parts and not three, with one form for both the past and past participle.

In Old English weak verbs had the past with the suffix -d or -te [-de] or [-te], and the past participle with -d or -t. In Modern English "weak" end, in both the past and past participle, in -d, ed, or -t [-d], [-id], or [-t].

Old English weak verbs may be represented by the following examples:

Old English

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
hīeran	hīerde	hīered
Iufian	Iufode	Iufod
habban	hæfde	hæfd

Modern English

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
hear	heard	heard
love	loved	loved
have	had	had

Beside strong verbs (which usually had four different forms) and weak verbs (which usually had three different forms), Old English had other types of verbs, most important of which is *beon*. *Beon* is the ancestor of the Modern English verb "be". In Old English this verb was actually a combination of parts from three distinct verbs; the infinitives of these verbs being *beon*, *is*, and *wesan*. In Modern English the verb "to be" has three different forms for the present indicative; *am*, *is*, and *are*, and two forms for the past indicative: *was*, and *were*. This is why the verb "to be", together with other similar verbs, have been called anomalous or composite verbs.

II. Derivation in Old English:

Old English presents a more complex system of affixation and compounding than Modern English; but a great number of the Old English affixes are still now in use, although Modern English has lost most of the compound words that were characteristic of Old English.

These are some of the affixes and compounds that were common to Old English:

1. Nouns

With nouns, suffixes were much more common than prefixes:

-dōm	as in cýningdōm	“kingdom”
-ere	as in fiscere	“fisher, fisherman”
-hād	as in cildhād	“childhood”
-ung	as in dagung	“dawn”
-scipe	as in freōndscipe	“friendship”
-nes	as in mōdignes	“generosity”
-un	as in unmōd	“despair”

Eārhring	“earring”
Ealohūs	“ale house”
Hwalweg	“whaleway, sea”
Dægred	“day + red = dawn”
Ofermod	“pride”

2. Adjectives:

-ig	as in	mōdig	“bold”
-lic	as in	mōdiglic	“generous”
-full	as in	mōdfull	“proud”
-leas	as in	mōdleas	“spiritless”
-isc	as in	folcisc	“popular”

swīðmod "strong + heart, courage = resolute"

gūbmōd "war + heart, courage = warlike"

mōdleōf "heart, courage + beloved = dear"

3. Verbs:

There was a great number of prefixes that occurred with Old English verbs, the commonest of these prefixes being:

<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
a-	a-settan	"to place"
	settan	"to set"
be-	be-gān	"to practise"
	gān	"to go"
for-	for-dōn	"to destroy"
	dōn	"to do"
fore-	fore-witan	"to foreknow"
	witan	"to know"
ge-	ge-settan	"to people, garrison"
	settan	"to set"
mis-	mis-faran	"go astray"
	faran	"to go"
of-	of-settan	"to afflict"
	settan	"to set"
ofer-	ofer-cuman	"to overcome"
	cuman	"to come"
on-	on-cnāwan	"to acknowledge"
	cnāwan	"to know"
to-	tō-faran	"to separate"
	faran	"to go"
under-	under-sceōtan	"to support"
	sceōtan	"to shoot"
wiϕ	wiϕ-standan	"to withstand, resist"
	standan	"to stand"

Some of these prefixes are still to be found in Modern English: for, fore-, mis-, over-, and under- are still used with varying degrees of frequency,

Old English Syntax:

In Old English inflections had a very important function: a word in Old English could be recognized as a noun from its form, and not from the context it occurred in. The word *water* was always a neuter noun, and its inflections were the same as for the other neuter nouns; but the same word "water" may shift from one class to another as can be seen from the following examples:

1. I drink water.
2. The gardener watered the plants yesterday.
3. Water flowers look pretty.

Thus with the loss of inflections there has developed in English the syntactic feature of word order. Accordingly, a word in Modern English usually fills a certain spot, and the moment the word occurs in another spot, is it fulfilling another function and belongs to another class of words.

A typical passage of Old English prose follows. It is part of Alfred's preface to his translation of the Pastoral Care. In this selection the King expresses his anxiety over the fact that so much of the learning of previous times had been destroyed as a result of the Danish invasions. He thinks that the scholars of earlier times did not take an interest in translation, because they felt that learning would increase with the study of languages.

1. *øā ic øā ðis eall gemunde, øa wundrade ic*

When I then this all remembered, then wondered I.

2. swīðe swīðe Øāra gōdena wioðona øe giu wāron.

exceedingly of the good wise men who formerly were.

3. giond Angelcynn, ond øā bēc ealla be fullan.

throughout English. and the books all completely.

4. geliornod hæfdon, øæt hiē hiora øā nænne.

learned had, that they of them then no.

5. dāel noldon on hiora āgen geðiode wendan.

part did not their own languages to turn.

1. The first line starts with øā, which sometimes means "when" and sometimes "then" in Modern English. The subject ic comes before the verb gemunde; "remembered", as well as before the object ðis eall; and this is the usual position of the noun as subject in the syntax of Modern English. However, we find ic coming after verb wundrade "wondered" in the following clause on the same line.

The construction ðis eall is characteristic of Old English, and can be rendered into Modern with the use of one of the function words (usually called a preposition): "all of this". The constant use of function words like of, to, from, etc. is one of the main differences between the syntax of Old English and the syntax of Modern English.

2. Swīðe swīðe is a reduplication of the same adverb swīðe, which means "very" The whole phrase øara godena wioðona is in the genitive case after the verb wundrian "to wonder". It was characteristic of verbs in Old English that they would "govern"

the nouns and adjectives coming after them, together with the article or pronoun. Sometimes the verb must be followed by these in the dative case; and sometimes in the genitive (as in the present construction).

øāra is the definite article "the" in the plural genitive case, which is now replaced by the phrase "of the", "of" being the function word indicating the genitive in Modern English. Gōdena is an adjective in the genitive case, and plural number. In Modern English adjectives are no longer inflected for case or number: good is used both as singular and plural.

Wiotona is derived from the verb witan "to know", and is here a noun inflected for number and case; it is a genitive plural.

The verb wāeron is similar in form to the verb "were" in Modern English: but the verb "were" has lost the inflectional suffix -on, which occurred with some plural English verbs in the past indicative.

3. In the third line the word bēc was a plural form meaning "books" It is to be noticed that this plural form bēc has not survived in Modern English as has the form fet in Old English, which has changed into Modern English to feet/fiyt/.

Again "all" in Modern English would come before "books" instead of after it, as we see in Old English construction bēc ealla.

4. The verb hæfdon is the past plural form of the Old English verb habban "to have". It is to be observed here that this very common English verb "have" has lost the plural inflection of the

past-on, but it still preserves two different forms for the present indicative: has and have.

The inflected form of the pronoun: hiora is now no longer used, and instead we have the pronoun them preceded by the function word of. Although this has meant the loss of the inflection for the genitive here, it is still a characteristic feature of Modern English that the pronouns have preserved most of the inflectional forms that they had centuries ago.

5. The form noldon was a past plural form (in Old English) of the verb nyllan = ne willan. The verb willan in Old English meant "to wish", although sometimes it had the meaning of "to be about to". Its use as an "auxiliary" to indicate the use of the function word "did" is again characteristic only of Modern English.

To sum up, the syntactic differences between Old English and Modern English may be stated briefly as follows:

1. Features which do not occur in Modern English:

- a) The dual number in pronouns.
- b) Distinctions between "strong" and "weak" classes in adjectives.
- c) Loss of inflections for number (singular and plural), Gender, (masculine, feminine, and neuter), and case in adjectives and articles.

2. Features still found in Modern English:

- a) The genitive case in nouns; e.g. the boy's book. Nouns also have singular and plural forms.

b) The 3rd person present indicative of verbs: e.g. the boy reads the book.

Verbs as a whole, are inflected for the past, past participle, and present participle.

c) The inflected personal pronouns. These are inflected for:

1. Case: subject, object, genitive, possessive.

We us our ours

2. Number: We have different forms for the singular and plural, with the exception of the 2nd person which has only one form for both: you.

3. Gender: this is found only in the 3rd person personal pronouns (singular): he, she, and it. Gender here is "natural" rather than "grammatical".

d) Adjectives are still inflected for the comparative and superlative forms: better, and best.

3. Features developed in Modern English:

a) Frequent use of passive voice, and impersonal constructions: i.e. beginning with it, and there.

d) The use of auxiliaries for the future, perfect, progressive (or continuous) tenses.

c) The appearance of "function" words:

He did not come yesterday.

d) The fixed word order replacing inflections as an important syntactic feature.

Vocabulary:

During its early period, the English language came in contact with three other languages, the languages of the Celts, the Romans and the Scandinavians. Each of these languages had an influence on the vocabulary of Old English.

1. The Celtic Influence:

The Celtic language has left very little influence on Old English. This may be seen chiefly in place names. The words Kent and Cornwall were originally Celtic words. The first element in each of the following place names is taken from Celtic: Devonshire, Winchester, Salisbury, and Exeter. The Thames is a Celtic river name, and the following words originally meant in Celtic "river", or "water" Avon, Exe, and Dover.

The number of Celtic words that entered Old English, besides these place names, was very small. Such words like binn (basket, bin), cumb (valley) and cross came into English through Celtic.

The number of Celtic words that entered Old English must have been greater than the very few items mentioned above, but such borrowings must have disappeared in the course of time through lack of intercultural communication. The Celts were a conquered people, and did not possess, in the eyes of the Germanic tribes, a superior culture. This may explain the fact that even in the Old English period Latin had a more pronounced influence on the language. The Romans conquered England and brought with them a decidedly higher culture than that attained

by the native population. Thus the Celtic language may be considered as the language with the least influence on Old English.

2. The Latin Influence:

The second great influence exerted on Old English was that of Latin. It began long before the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons came to England, and continued for many centuries after their conquest of England. While these tribes were still on the continent, they had various contacts with the Romans, from whose civilization they learned much and from whose language they borrowed a number of Latin words. When they settled in England, these tribes took many words from Latin through Celtic. Later on, with the growth of the Christian influence on the island, there was extensive borrowing from Latin into English.

Thus we may speak of three distinct occasions for loan words from Latin into English during the Old English period:

1. The first (continental) period.
2. The second period (through Celtic).
3. The third period (with the spread of Christianity).

It is not always possible to assign a word to a given period, but such a process is necessary if our study of the history of language is to achieve some degree of precision and accuracy. There are various criteria by which a word or a group of words is known to belong to a particular period of the history of a language. One of the most important criteria for deciding the

particular date of a word or a group of words is the Phonetic criterion. Through the study of the phonetic form of a word or a group of words in a family of related languages, it is possible to assign the word or group of words to the period in which it has been borrowed, the changes which take place in the sounds of a language can often be dated with relative definiteness, and the presence or absence of these changes in a borrowed word is an important test of age.

In the study of borrowings into Old English, some of the phonetic criteria used are:

1. Mutation.
2. Diphthongization.

By mutation is meant the alteration or change which occurs to some stressed vowels and diphthongs, Diphthongization is the change of a stressed vowel into a diphthong.

1. Mutation:

In Old English, as in most Teutonic languages, there occurred a change known as i-umlaut (= alteration of sound). This change affected some stressed vowels and diphthongs, like æ, a, o, u, eo, and io, when they were followed in the next syllable by an i or j.

Under such circumstances the following changes took place:

a] → became e
 Æ] →

U → became y

Ea] → became ie
 Eo] →

So, the change from early Old English to the Old English we study (the seventh century and after) may be represented by the following two words:

Early O. E.	O.E.	Modern.E.
* bankiz	benc	bench
* musiz	mȳs	mice

Because this change took place in English during the seventh century, we may conclude that a word borrowed from Latin after the seventh century would not show this mutation or vowel change. But if it is borrowed before the seventh century, it must have undergone that mutation or vowel change.

So the word:

Early O.E.	O.E.
* munit	mynet

which has this vowel change must have been borrowed from Latin moneta "money" into Old English during or before the seventh century. In Old English mynet meant "coin", and the word mint "the place where coins are made" in Modern English comes down from it.

2. Diphthongization:

Another change which helps us in dating borrowed words into Old English from Latin is diphthongization.

According to this type of linguistic change, some stressed vowels in Old English were preceded by some palatal consonants, like \check{c} [tʃ] or \check{s} [ʃ]:

(*) Is a mark that the word is not found in the historical records, and is only reconstructed by historians of language. (see p.g 120).

æ	Became	ea
e	Became	ie

So the change from early Old English to the language that we find in the historical records (the seventh century and later) may be represented by these forms:

Early O.E.	O.E.	Modern.E.
* cæster	ceaster	city
* sceld	sciold	shield

Then a word borrowed into Old English from Latin after this change had taken place does not show diphthongization. But words borrowed before this change must have undergone diphthongization.

Thus the word:

Early O.E.	O.E.	Modern.E.
* cæsi	ceasi	cheese

which has diphthongization must have been borrowed from Latin *caseus* into Old English earlier than the seventh century.

Actually, diphthongization took place in early Old English before mutation. So, as expected, we find that the word ceasi becomes ciese, which is the form the word had in Old English after mutation. So, the Old English word *ciese* "cheese" is an example of the two types of linguistic change that occurred in early Old English; first, diphthongization, and then mutation. In fact, the word *ciese* was among the first borrowings from Latin, and came into Teutonic (or Germanic) or early Old English during the first or continental period.

a) The First Period:

The words borrowed into English during this period came when the Teutonic tribes (Angles, Saxon and Jutes) were still in Europe before invading Britain. At least fifty words from Latin are known with fair certainty to have entered English in this period.

Such words belong to this continental period:

weal	"wall"	stræt	"street"
mīl	"mile"	cirice	"church"
biscop	"bishop"	wīn	"wine"
cīese	"cheese"	pipor	"pepper"
cealc	"chalk"	mūl	"mule"

Here also belong such words: *cēap*, which meant "a bargain" in old English, and which is still found in Modern English in the word *cheap*, and in the first part of the word *chapman*.

b) The Second Period:

The number of the Latin words that entered Old English through Celtic was very small, not more than fifteen words in all. It is probable that Latin as a spoken language did not survive the end of the Roman rule in Britain. There was thus little likelihood for a direct contact between Latin and Old English in England. Such Latin words as could have come into Old English must have been borrowed through Celtic. In fact, the Celts had borrowed many words from Latin, the number of such words being thought as over six hundred. However, these words did not find their way into English, and this is understandable in the

light of the fact that very few words entered Old English from the Celtic language itself.

The word ceaster is one of the words that came into Old English from Latin through Celtic, although it did not exist in Celtic itself. This word is derived from the Latin castra "camp"; but in Old English it meant a town or an enclosure. It is the second element in such words: Manchester, Winchester, and Lancaster.

Other words that came from Latin into Old English through Celtic are:

O.E.	Latin
wīc "village"	vicus
munt "mountain"	mons
port "harbour, gate, town"	portus

c) The Third Period:

The Latin influence on Old English is most clearly seen when Britain became a Christian country. St. Augustine landed in Kent; and, within seven years of his arrival all the people of Kent had become Christian. The spread of the new religion to other parts of England was a gradual process during the following hundred years.

With the introduction of Christianity many churches were built, and many schools were attached to the majority of these churches. Latin was the language of learning in these schools, and church services were also conducted in Latin.

The majority of Old English words dealing with the church services were adopted during this period:

alter	candle	disciple	martyr	mass
minster	noon	nun	offer	organ
pope	priest	psalm	shrine	temple

Some of the words that were adopted in the domestic life of the people are;

cap	sock	silk	purple	chest
mat	ceases "shirt"	pear	radish	cook
pine	balsam	lily	plant	
school	master	verse	meter	
anchor	fever	place	sponge	elephant
circle	legion	giant	consul	talent

All of these words entered Old English when there was religious zeal and the church was flourishing. But when religion and learning showed signs of decline the number of Latin words in Old English became extremely small. King Alfred tried for twenty years to restore learning, and he built many churches. But it was in the second half of the tenth century that a religious reformation actually took place under King Edgar.

The Latin words borrowed in this case were of a less popular character and usually expressed ideas of a scientific nature. Most of these words also dealt with religious matters.

idol	cell	creed	collect	demon
apostle	prophet			
history	paper	title		

cucumber ginger camel scorpion tiger
cancer paralysis plaster

As a result of the spread of Christianity in England about 450 Latin words appeared in English writings before the end of the Old English period. A great number of these were incorporated in the language and occurred with inflected forms or in derived new forms.

The word *planta* came into English from Latin with the meaning "plant"; but it soon gave rise to the inflectional form, the infinitive *plantian* "to plant" with the inflectional suffix for the infinitive - *ian*. We also find the word *martyr* which came into the language from Latin occurring with Old English suffixes derivation:

martyrdom martyrhard martyrung

all of which are "abstract" nouns.

Old English words were also used to express new ideas that came with Christianity. *Prophet* was sometimes called *witega* (wise one), and *martyr* sometimes expressed as *halga* (holy one). The Latin word *baptizare* was not borrowed into Old English, and the native words *fullian* (originally meaning "to consecrate") was used instead. This derivative form entered into numerous compounds:

fulluht-tid	"baptismal vow"
fulluht-nama	"Christian name"
fulluht-had	"baptism time"

3. Scandinavian Borrowings:

Between 787 and 1014, England was invaded by the Scandinavian tribes, whose king became king of England in 1014 and went on ruling there for 25 years. With these invasions, came the settlement of Scandinavians in Britain, and many Scandinavian words entered the English language at the end of the old English period.

The influence of the Scandinavian languages on English was very great. Up until the Norman Conquest the Scandinavian languages in England were constantly re-inforced by the steady stream of trade and conquest. This may account for the fact that 14000 places in England bear Scandinavian names and the fact that about a 1000 words from Scandinavian origin are still to be found in Modern Standard English.

The phonology Criterion:

The most reliable criterion for deciding whether a word was borrowed from any of the Scandinavian languages into Old English is the phonetic shape of the words compared. One of the tests applied is the distinction between the consonant cluster sk [sk] or the consonant sh [ʃ].

In Old English the consonant cluster [sk] was simplified to one palatal consonant [ʃ], written sc in Old English texts. Thus words like ship, shall, and fish are native to English and words like sky, skin and skill are borrowings from the Scandinavian languages into Old English. This also shows us how the two words shirt and skirt have come to be differentiated in meaning in Modern English, while they had the same meaning in the past

in the two languages; Old English, and Old Norse (Old Scandinavian).

Old English: scyrte [ʃ] "shirt" Old Norse: skyrtá [sk] "shirt".

The g and k consonants (phonetically [g] and [k] respectively in such present - day English words as ; kid [kid], get [get], and give [giv]) may indicate a Scandinavian influence on the phonology of Old English. In Old English these words had the first consonant in [tʃ] instead of [k] and in [y] instead of [g].

Another phonological test by which we differentiate words of Old English origin from words of Old Scandinavian origin is the distinction between ay [ey] and o [ow] in words which have similar or identical meanings in Modern English. This is due to the fact in the pre-historic times, Old English and Old Scandinavian had the same vowel ai in these words; but this vowel developed differently in each language. In Old English, it became ā while it became e in Old Scandinavian. In Modern English ā has become [ow]. This may be illustrated by the following words:

<i>from Old Scandinavian</i>		<i>from Old English</i>	
nay	[ney]	no	[now]
hale	[hey]	whole	[how]

In some cases an Old English word took over the meaning of the Scandinavian word, and its original meaning has been lost. This is what happened to these two words; gift, and plough.

The first word gift, meant in Old English "the money paid to a wife before marriage", but in Old Scandinavian it meant "a gift, present"; and this meaning in Scandinavian has been dropped.

Similarly, the word plough (ploh in Old English) meant a "measure of land": but it has come to assume its modern meaning "an agricultural implement" from the Old Scandinavian word plogr "plough", whereas this implement meant in Old English sulh.

In other cases the Old English word has been completely lost and the Old Scandinavian word has survived. This is what happened in the case of the two words: sister, and take. The word sister in Modern English is the modern form of the Old Scandinavian form syster and not of the Old English word sweostor.

The word take in present-day English is of Scandinavian origin, and the Old English word meaning "take" (niman) has been lost.

Types of Scandinavian Borrowings:

1. Early Borrowing:

In the early period, Scandinavian loan words in English were few. Some of the early borrowings were connected with the sea, as is seen from the word batswegan "boatswain, or boatman". An important early borrowing is the word law, which came into Old English from Old Scandinavian.

2. place names:

The largest number of place names that came into Old English from Old Scandinavian are found in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. All place names with the suffixes - by (which originally meant

“a piece of land” in Old Scandinavian), and - toft (with the Scandinavian meaning a piece of ground”) show the influence of Scandinavian settlement. Thus we have these place names:

Rugby	Derby	Whitby
Linthorpe	Bishopsthorpe	Althorp
Langthwaite	Cowperthwaite	Applethwaite
Nortoft	Langtoft	Eastoft

3. Later Borrowing:

The majority of these loan words were simple, as they were commonly to be used in every - day conversation. Some of the nouns that came into the language are:

band	bank	birth	bull
gap	guess	keel	kid
root	score	seat	sister
trust	want	window	
dirt	dress	egg	fellow
leg	link	loan	race
skill	skin	skirt	sky

Following are some of the adjectives:

awkward	flat	ill	loose
tight	weak		
low	odd	rugged	sly

Among the verbs are these:

bask	call	cast	crawl
rid	take		
die	lift	hit	raise

It is to be noted that the two verbs give, and get were not taken from Scandinavian; but under Scandinavian influence, they changed in form and meaning from their forms and meanings in Old English.

4. Near Synonyms:

Borrowings from Scandinavian have given such meaning differentiations as exist between these pairs of words:

<i>From Old English</i>	<i>From Old Scandinavian</i>
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no	nay
whole	hale
rear	raise
sick	ill
hide	skin
craft	skill
from	fro

5. Grammatical Features:

The grammar of a language is usually very little influenced by foreign borrowings. So, we do not expect to find old English to show drastic changes in its grammatical structure in spite of the many borrowings in the vocabulary. What grammatical features Old English owes to Old Scandinavian is actually the borrowing of these three pronouns; they, them, and their. Although these are not grammatical features as such, they usually form a part of the basic vocabulary of every language which is rarely transferred from one language to the other.

Old Scandinavian settlers may have helped indirectly in the spread of the two grammatical features: the form are of the verb “to be”; the suffix-s of the third person singular present verb.

Here the Scandinavian influence does not mean a transfer of a grammatical feature, but actually an accelerating factor among the many factors behind linguistic change. These two grammatical features were characteristic of the northern dialects of Old English, and were later extended to the Midland dialects.