

The history of the English language and its development.

In 409 AD the last Roman legion left British shores, and in fifty years the Islands became a victim of invaders. Germanic tribes from Southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany, pushed from their densely populated homelands, looked for a new land to settle. At that time the British Isles were inhabited by the Celts and remaining Roman colonists, who failed to organize any resistance against Germanic intruders, and so had to let them settle here. This is how the Old English language was born.

Celtic tribes crossed the Channel and starting to settle in Britain already in the 7th century BC. The very word "Britain" seems to be the name given by the pre-Celtic inhabitants of the island, accepted by first Indo-Europeans. The Celts quickly spread over the island, and only in the north still existed non-Indo-European peoples which are sometimes called "Picts" (the name given by Romans). Picts lived in Scotland and on Shetland Islands and represented the most ancient population of the Isles, the origin of which is unknown. Picts do not seem to leave any features of their language to Indo-European population of Britain - the famous Irish and Welsh initial mutations of consonants can be the only sign of the substratum left by unknown nations of Britain. At the time the Celts reached Britain they spoke the common language, close to Gaulish in France. But later, when Celtic tribes occupied Ireland, Northern England, Wales, their tongues were divided according to tribal divisions. These languages will later become Welsh, Irish Gaelic, Cornish, but from that time no signs remained, because the Celts did not invent writing yet. Not much is left from Celtic languages in English. Though many place names and names for rivers are surely Celtic (like Usk - from Celtic *usce "water", or Avon - from *awin "river"), the morphology and phonetics are untouched by the Celtic influence. Some linguists state that the word down comes from Celtic *dún "down"; other examples of Celtic influence in place names are the following:

cothair (a fortress) - Carnarvon

uisge (water) - Exe, Usk, Esk

dun, dum (a hill) - Dumbarton, Dumfries, Dunedin

llan (church) - Llandaff, Llandovery, Llandudno

coil (forest) - Kilbrook, Killiemore

kil (church) - Kilbride, Kilmacolm

ceann (cape) - Keadre, Kingussie

inis (island) - Innisfail

inver (mountain) - Inverness, Inverurie

bail (house) - Ballantrae, Ballyshannon,

and, certainly, the word whiskey which means the same as Irish uisge "water". But this borrowing took place much later.

In the 1st century AD first Roman colonists begin to penetrate in Britain; Roman legions built roads, camps, founded towns and castles. But still they did not manage to assimilate the Celts, maybe because they lived apart from each other and did not mix. Tens of Latin words in Britain together with many towns, places and hills named by Romans make up the Roman heritage in the Old English. Such

cities as Dorchester, Winchester, Lancaster, words like camp, castra, many terms of the Christian religion and several words denoting armaments were borrowed at that time by Britons, and automatically were transferred into the Old English, or Anglo-Saxon language already when there was no Romans in the country.

In 449 the legendary leaders of two Germanic tribes, Hengist and Horsa, achieved British shores on their ships. The Anglo-Saxon conquest, however, lasted for several centuries, and all this period Celtic aborigines moved farther and farther to the west of the island until they manage to fortify in mountainous Wales, in Cornwall, and preserved their kingdoms in Scotland. Germanic tribes killed Celtic population, destroyed Celtic and former Roman towns and roads. In the 5th century such cities as Durovernum in Kent, Virocon, Trimontium, Camulodunum, were abandoned by the population.

Angles settled around the present-day Norwich, and in Northern England; Saxons, the most numerous of the tribes, occupied all Central England, the south of the island and settled in London (Londinium at that time). Jutes and Frises, who probably came to Britain a bit later, settled on the island of White and in what is now Kent - the word Kent derives from the name of the Celtic tribe Cantii. Soon all these tribes founded their separate kingdoms, which was united after centuries of struggle only in 878 by Alfred, king of Wessex. Before that each of the tribes spoke its language, they were similar to each other but had differences which later became the dialectal peculiarities of Old English.

Now a little bit about the foreign influence in Old English. From the 6th century Christianity started activities in Britain, the Bible is translated into Old English, and quite a lot of terms are borrowed from Latin at that time: many bishops, missionaries and Pope's officials come from Rome. The next group of foreign loanwords were taken from Scandinavian dialects, after the Vikings occupied much of the country in the 9th - 11th centuries. Scandinavian languages were close relatives with Old English, so the mutual influence was strong enough to develop also the Old English morphology, strengthening its analytic processes. Many words in the language were either changed to sound more Scandinavian, or borrowed.

The Old English language, which has quite a lot of literature monuments, came to the end after the Norman conquest in 1066. The new period was called Middle English.

The Old English Substantive.

The substantive in Indo-European has always three main categories which change its forms: the number, the case, the gender. It is known that the general trend of the Indo-European family is to decrease the number of numbers, cases and genders from the Proto-Indo-European stage to modern languages. Some groups are more conservative and therefore keep many forms, preserving archaic language traits; some are more progressive and lose forms or transform them very quickly. The Old English language, as well as practically all Germanic tongues, is not conservative at all: it generated quite a lot of analytic forms instead of older inflections, and lost many other of them.

Of eight Proto-Indo-European cases, Old English keeps just four which were inherited from the Common Germanic language. In fact, several of original Indo-European noun cases were weak enough to be lost practically in all branches of the family, coinciding with other, stronger cases. The ablative case often was assimilated by the genitive (in Greek, Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic), locative usually merged with dative (Italic, Celtic, Greek), and so did the instrumental case. That is how four cases appeared in Germanic and later in Old English - nominative, genitive, accusative and dative. These four were the most ancient and therefore stable in the system of the Indo-European morphology.

The problem of the Old English instrumental case is rather strange - this case arises quite all of a sudden among Germanic tongues and in some forms is used quite regularly (like in demonstrative pronouns). In Gothic the traces of instrumental and locative though can be found, but are considered as not more than relics. But the Old English must have "recalled" this archaic instrumental, which existed, however, not for too long and disappeared already in the 10th century, even before the Norman conquest and transformation of the English language into its Middle stage.

As for other cases, here is a little pattern of their usage in the Old English syntax.

1. Genitive - expresses the possessive meaning: whose? of what?

Also after the expression meaning full of, free of, worthy of, guilty of, etc.

2. Dative - expresses the object towards which the action is directed.

After the after the verbs like "say to smb", "send smb", "give to smb"; "known to smb", "necessary for smth / smb", "close to smb", "peculiar for smth".

Also in the expressions like from the enemy, against the wind, on the shore.

3. Accusative - expresses the object immediately affected by the action (what?), the direct object.

Three genders were strong enough, and only northern dialects could sometimes lose their distinction. But in fact the loss of genders in Middle English happened due to the drop of the case inflections, when words could no longer be distinguished by its endings. As for the numbers, the Old English noun completely lost the dual, which was preserved only in personal pronouns (see later).

All Old English nouns were divided into strong and weak ones, the same as verbs in Germanic. While the first had a branched declension, special endings for different numbers and cases, the weak declension was represented by nouns which were already starting to lose their declension system. The majority of noun stems in Old English should be referred to the strong type. Here are the tables for each stems with some comments - the best way of explaining the grammar.

a-stems

Singular

Nom.	<u>stán</u> (stone)	scip (ship)	bán (bone)	reced (house)	nieten (ox)
Gen.	stánes	scipes	bánes	recedes	nítenes
Dat.	stáne	scipe	báne	recede	nítene
Acc.	stán	scip	bán	reced	nieten

Plural

Nom.	stánas	scipu	bán	reced	nítenu
------	--------	-------	-----	-------	--------

Gen.	stána	scipa	bána	receda	nietena
Dat.	stánum	scipum	bánum	recedum	nietenum
Acc.	stánas	scipu	bán	reced	nietenu

This type of stems derived from masculine and neuter noun *o*-stems in Proto-Indo-European. First when I started studying Old English I was irritated all the time because I couldn't get why normal Indo-European *o*-stems are called *a*-stems in all books on Old English. I found it a silly and unforgivable mistake until I understood that in Germanic the Indo-European short *o* became *a*, and therefore the stem marker was also changed the same way. So the first word here, *stán*, is masculine, the rest are neuter. The only difference in declension is the plural nominative-accusative, where neuter words lost their endings or have *-u*, while masculine preserved *-as*.

A little peculiarity of those words who have the sound [æ] in the stem and say farewell to it in the plural:

	Masculine		Neuter	
	Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.
N	<u>dæg</u> (day)	dagas	fæt (vessel)	fatu
G	dæges	daga	fætes	fata
D	dæge	dagum	fæte	fatum
A	dæg	dagas	fæt	fatu

Examples of *a*-stems: *earm* (an arm), *eorl*, *helm* (a helmet), *hring* (a ring), *múþ* (a mouth); neuter ones - *dor* (a gate), *hof* (a courtyard), *geoc* (a yoke), *word*, *déor* (an animal), *bearn* (a child), *géar* (a year).

ja-stems

	Singular		Plural		
	Masculine	Neuter	Masculine	Neuter	Neuter
N	hrycg (back)	here (army)	ende (end)	cynn (kind)	ríce (realm)
G	hrycges	heriges	endes	cynnes	ríces
D	hrycge	herige	ende	cynne	ríce
A	hrycg	here	ende	cynn	ríce
N	hrycgeas	herigeas	endas	cynn	ríciu
G	hrycgea	herigea	enda	cynna	rícea
D	hrycgium	herigum	endum	cynnum	rícium
A	hrycgeas	herigeas	endas	cynn	ríciu

Again the descendant of Indo-European *jo*-stem type, known only in masculine and neuter. In fact it is a subbranch of *o*-stems, complicated by the *i* before the ending: like Latin *lupus* and *filius*. Examples of this type: masculine - *wecg* (a wedge), *bócere* (a scholar), *fiscere* (a fisher); neuter - *net*, *bed*, *wíte* (a punishment).

wa-stems

	Singular		Plural	
	Masc.	Neut.	Masc.	Neut.
N	bearu (wood)	bealu (evil)	bearwas	bealu (-o)
G	bearwes	bealwes	bearwa	bealwa
D	bearwe	bealwe	bearwum	bealwum
A	bearu (-o)	bealu (-o)	bearwas	bealu (-o)

Just to mention. This is one more peculiarity of good old *a*-stems with the touch of *w* in declension. Interesting that the majority of this kind of stems make abstract nouns. Examples:

masculine - *snáw* (snow), *þéaw* (a custom); neuter - *searu* (armour), *tréow* (a tree), *cnéw* (a knee)

ó-stems

	Sg.	
N swaþu (trace)	fór (journey)	tigol (brick)
G swaþe	fóre	tigole
D swaþe	fóre	tigole
A swaþe	fóre	tigole
	Pl.	
N swaþa	fóra	tigola
G swaþa	fóra	tigola
D swaþum	fórum	tigolum
A swaþa	fóra	tigola

Another major group of Old English nouns consists only of feminine nouns. Funny but in Indo-European they are called *a*-stems. But Germanic turned vowels sometimes upside down, and this long *a* became long *o*. However, practically no word of this type ends in *-o*, which was lost or transformed. The special variants of *ó*-stems are *jo*- and *wo*-stems which have practically the same declension but with the corresponding sounds between the root and the ending.

Examples of *ó*-stems: *caru* (care), *sceamu* (shame), *onswaru* (worry), *lufu* (love), *lár* (an instruction), *sorg* (sorrow), *þrág* (a season), *ides* (a woman).

Examples of *jó*-stems: *sibb* (peace), *ecg* (a blade), *secg* (a sword), *hild* (a fight), *æx* (an axe).

Examples of *wó*-stems: *beadu* (a battle), *nearu* (need), *laes* (a beam).

i-stems

	Masc.	Neut.
	Sg.	
N siges (victory)	hyll (hill)	sife (sieve)
G siges	hylles	sifes
D siges	hyll	sife
A siges	hyll	sife
	Pl.	
N siges	hyllas	sifu
G siges	hylla	sifa
D siges	hyllum	sifum
A siges	hyllas	sifu

The tribes and nations were usually of this very type, and were used always in plural: *Engle* (the Angles), *Seaxe* (the Saxons), *Mierce* (the Mercians), *Norþymbre* (the Northumbrians), *Dene* (the Danish)

N Dene
G Dena (Miercna, Seaxna)
D Denum
A Dene

	Fem.
Sg.	Pl.

N	hyd (hide)	hýde, hýda
G	hýde	hýda
D	hýde	hýdum
A	hýd	hýde, hýda

This kind of stems included all three genders and derived from the same type of Indo-European stems, frequent also in other branches and languages of the family.

Examples: masculine - *mere* (a sea), *mete* (food), *dæl* (a part), *giest* (a guest), *drync* (a drink); neuter - *spere* (a spear); feminine - *cwén* (a woman), *wiht* (a thing).

<i>u</i> -stems			
	Masc.		Fem.
		Sg.	
N	sunu (son)	feld (field)	duru (door) hand (hand)
G	sunu	felda	dura handa
D	sunu	felda	dura handa
A	sunu	feld	duru hand
		Pl.	
N	sunu	felda	dura handa
G	sunu	felda	dura handa
D	sunum	feldum	durum handum
A	sunu	felda	dura handa

They can be either masculine or feminine. Here it is seen clearly how Old English lost its final *-s* in endings: Gothic had *sunus* and *handus*, while Old English has already *sunu* and *hand* respectively. Interesting that dropping final consonants is also a general trend of almost all Indo-European languages. Ancient tongues still keep them everywhere - Greek, Latin, Gothic, Old Prussian, Sanskrit, Old Irish; but later, no matter where a language is situated and what processes it undergoes, final consonants (namely *-s*, *-t*, often *-m*, *-n*) disappear, remaining nowadays only in the two Baltic languages and in New Greek.

Examples: masculine - *wudu* (wood), *medu* (honey), *weald* (forest), *sumor* (a summer); fem. - *nosu* (a nose), *flór* (a floor).

The other type of nouns according to their declension was the group of Weak nouns, derived from *n*-nouns is Common Germanic. Their declension is simple and stable, having special endings:

	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.
		Sg.	
N	nama (name)	cwene (woman)	éage (eye)
G	naman	cwenan	éagan
D	naman	cwenan	éagan
A	naman	cwenan	éage
		Pl.	
N	naman	cwenan	éagan
G	namena	cwenena	éagena
D	namum	cwenum	éagum
A	naman	cwenan	éagan

Examples: masc. - *guma* (a man), *wita* (a wizard), *steorra* (a star), *móna* (the Moon), *déma* (a judge); fem. - *eorþe* (Earth), *heorte* (a heart), *sunne* (Sun); neut. - *éare* (an ear).

And now the last one which is interesting due to its special Germanic structure. I am speaking about the root-stems which according to Germanic laws of Ablaut, change the root vowel during the declension. In Modern English such words still exist, and we all know them: *goose - geese*, *tooth - teeth*, *foot - feet*, *mouse - mice* etc. At school they were a nightmare for me, now they are an Old English grammar. Besides, in Old English time they were far more numerous in the language.

	Masc.		Fem.						
	Sg.								
N	mann	fót (foot)	tóp (tooth)		hnutu (nut)	bóc (book)	gós (goose)	mús (mouse)	burg (burg)
G	mannes	fótes	tóþes		hnute	bóce	góse	múse	burge
D	menn	fét	téþ		hnyte	béc	gés	mýs	byrig
A	mann	fót	tóp		hnutu	bók	gós	mús	burg
	Pl.								
N	menn	fét	téþ		hnyte	béc	gés	mýs	byrig
G	manna	fóta	tóþa		hnuta	bóca	gósa	músa	burga
D	mannum	fótum	tópum		hnutum	bócum	gósum	músum	burgum
A	menn	fét	téþ		hnyte	béc	gés	mýs	byrig

The general rule is the so-called *i*-mutation, which changes the vowel. The conversion table looks as follows and never fails - it is universally right both for verbs and nouns. The table of *i*-mutation changes remains above.

Examples: fem. - *wifman* (a woman), *ác* (an oak), *gát* (a goat), *bróc* (breeches), *wlólh* (seam), *dung* (a dungeon), *furh* (a furrow), *sulh* (a plough), *grut* (gruel), *lús* (a louse), *þrul* (a basket), *éa* (water), *niht* (a night), *mæ'gþ* (a girl), *scrúd* (clothes).

There are still some other types of declension, but not too important for understanding the general image. For example, *r*-stems denoted the family relatives (*dohtor* 'a daughter', *módor* 'a mother' and several others), *es*-stems usually meant children and cubs (*cild* 'a child', *cealf* 'a calf'). The most intriguing question that arises from the picture of the Old English declension is "How to define which words is which kind of stems?". I am sure you are always thinking of this question, the same as I thought myself when first studying Old English. The answer is "I don't know"; because of the loss of many endings all genders, all stems and therefore all nouns mixed in the language, and one has just to learn how to decline this or that word. This mixture was the decisive step of the following transfer of English to the analytic language - when endings are not used, people forget genders and cases. In any solid dictionary you will be given a noun with its gender and kind of stem. But in general, the declension is similar for all stems. One of the most stable differences of masculine and feminine is the *-es* (masc.) or *-e* in genitive singular of the Strong declension.

Now I am giving another table, the general declension system of Old English nouns. Here ' ' means a zero ending.

Strong declension (*a, ja, wa, y, jy, wy, i* -stems).

	Masculine		Neutral		Feminine	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	-	-as	-	-u (-)	-	-a
Genitive	-es	-a	-es	-a	-e	-a
Dative	-e	-um	-e	-um	-e	-um
Accustive	-	-as	-	-u (-)	-e	-a

	Weak declension		<i>u</i> -stems	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	-	-an	-	-a
Genitive	-an	-ena	-a	-a
Dative	-an	-um	-a	-um
Accustive	-an	-an	-	-a

The Old English Adjective.

In all historical Indo-European languages adjectives possess practically the same morphological features as the nouns, the the sequence of these two parts of speech is an ordinary thing in Indo-European. However, the Nostratic theory (the one which unites Altaic, Uralic, Semitic, Dravidian and Indo-European language families into one Nostratic super-family, once speaking a common Proto-Nostratic language) represented by Illych-Svitych and many other famous linguists, states that adjectives in this Proto-Nostratic tongue were morphologically closer to the verbs than to the nouns.

This theory is quite interesting, because even in Proto-Indo-European, a language which was spoken much later than Proto-Nostratic, there are some proofs of the former predicative function of the adjectives. In other families of the super-family this function is even more clear. In Altaic languages, and also in Korean and Japanese, which are originally Altaic, the adjective plays the part of the predicate, and in Korean, for example, the majority of adjectives are predicative. It means that though they always denote the quality of the noun, they act the same way as verbs which denote action. Adjective "red" is actually translated from Japanese as "to be red", and the sentence *Bara-wa utsukusii* will mean "the rose is beautiful", while *bara* is "a rose", *-wa* is the nominative marker, and *utsukusii* is "to be beautiful". So no verb here, and the adjective is a predicate. This structure is typical for many Altaic languages, and probably was normal for Proto-Nostratic as well.

The Proto-Indo-European language gives us some stems which are hard to denote whether they used to mean an adjective or a verb. Some later branches reflect such stems as verbs, but other made them adjectives. So it was the Proto-Indo-European epoch where adjectives as the part of speech began to transform from a verbal one to a nominal one. And all Indo-European branches already show the close similarity of the structure of adjectives and nouns in the language. So does the Old English language, where adjective is one of the nominal parts of speech.

As well as the noun, the adjective can be declined in case, gender and number. Moreover, the instrumental case which was discussed before was preserved in adjectives much stronger than in nouns. Adjectives must follow sequence with nouns which they define - that is why the same adjective can be masculine, neuter and feminine and therefore be declined in two different types: one for masculine and neuter, the other for feminine nouns. The declension is more or less simple, it looks much like the nominal system of declension, though there are several important differences. Interesting to know that one-syllable adjectives ("monosyllabic") have different declension than two-syllable ones ("disyllabic"). See for yourselves:

Strong Declension

a, ó-stems

Monosyllabic

Sg.

	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.
N	blæc (black)	blæc	blacu
G	blaces	blaces	blæcre
D	blacum	blacum	blæcre
A	blæcne	blæc	blace
I	blace	blace	-

Pl.

N	blace	blacu	blaca
G	blacra	blacra	blacra
D	blacum	blacum	blacum
A	blace	blacu	blaca

Here "I" means that very instrumental case, answering the question (by what? with whom? with the help of what?).

Disyllabic

Masc. Neut. Fem.

Sg.

N	éadig (happy)	éadig	éadigu
G	éadiges	éadiges	éadigre
D	éadigum	éadigum	éadigre
A	éadigne	éadig	éadige
I	éadige	éadige	

Pl.

N	éadige	éadigu	éadiga
G	éadigra	éadigra	éadigra
D	éadigum	éadigum	éadigum
A	éadige	éadigu	éadigu

So not many new endings: for accusative singular we have *-ne*, and for genitive plural *-ra*, which cannot be met in the declension of nouns. The difference between monosyllabic and disyllabic is the accusative plural feminine ending *-a / -u*. That's all.

ja, jó-stems (*swéte* - sweet)

Sg.

Pl.

	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.
N	swéte	swéte	swétu	swéte	swétu	swéta
G	swétes	swétes	swétre	swétra	swétra	swétra
D	swétum	swétum	swétre	swétum	swétum	swétum
A	swétne	swéte	swéte	swéte	swétu	swéta
I	swéte	swéte	-			

wa, wó-stems

	Sg.		
	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.
N	nearu (narrow)	nearu	nearu
G	nearwes	nearwes	nearore
D	nearwum	nearwum	nearore
A	nearone	nearu	nearwe
I	nearwe	nearwe	
	Pl.		
N	nearwe	nearu	nearwa
G	nearora	nearora	nearora
D	nearwum	nearwum	nearwum
A	nearwe	nearu	nearwa

Actually, some can just omit all those examples - the adjectival declension is the same as a whole for all stems, as concerns the strong type. In general, the endings look the following way, with very few varieties (note that "-" means the null ending):

	Masc.		Fem.		Neut.	
	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
N	-	-e	-u	-a	-	-u
G	-es	-ra	-re	-ra	-es	-ra
D	-um	-um	-re	-um	-um	-um
A	-ne	-e	-e	-a	-	-u
I	-e				-e	

As for weak adjectives, they also exist in the language. The thing is that one need not learn by heart which adjective is which type - strong or weak, as you should do with the nouns. If you have a weak noun as a subject, its attributive adjective will be weak as well. So - a strong adjective for a strong noun, a weak adjective for a weak noun, the rule is as simple as that.

Thus if you say "a black tree" that will be *blæc tréow* (strong), and "a black eye" will sound *blace éage*. Here is the weak declension example (*blaca* - black):

	Sg.			Pl.
	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	
N	blaca	blace	blace	blacan
G	blacan	blacan	blacan	blæcra
D	blacan	blacan	blacan	blacum
A	blacan	blace	blacan	blacan

Weak declension has a single plural for all genders, which is pleasant for those who don't want to remember too many forms. In general, the weak declension is much easier.

The last thing to be said about the adjectives is the degrees of comparison. Again, the traditional Indo-European structure is preserved here: three degrees (absolute, comparative, superlative) - though some languages also had the so-called "equalitative" grade; the special

suffices for forming comparatives and absolutes; suppletive stems for several certain adjectives.

The suffices we are used to see in Modern English, those **-er** and **-est** in *weak*, *weaker*, *the weakest*, are the direct descendants of the Old English ones. At that time they sounded as **-ra** and **-est**. See the examples:

earm (poor) - *earmra* - *earmost*

blæc (black) - *blæcra* - *blacost*

Many adjectives changed the root vowel - another example of the Germanic ablaut:

eald (old) - *ieldra* - *ieldest*

strong - *strengra* - *strengest*

long - *lengra* - *lengest*

geong (young) - *gingra* - *gingest*

The most widespread and widely used adjectives always had their degrees formed from another stem, which is called "suppletive" in linguistics. Many of them are still seen in today's English:

gód (good) - *betera* - *betst* (or *sétra* - *sélest*)

yfel (bad) - *wiersa* - *wierest*

micel (much) - *mára* - *máést*

lýtel (little) - *læ'ssa* - *læ'st*

fear (far) - *fierra* - *fierrest*, *fyrrest*

néah (near) - *néarra* - *niehst*, *nýhst*

æ'r (early) - *æ'rra* - *æ'rest*

fore (before) - *furpra* - *fyrest* (first)

Now you see what the word "first" means - just the superlative degree from the adjective "before, forward". The same is with *niehst* from *néah* (near) which is now "next".

Old English affixation for adjectives:

1. **-ede** (group "adjective stem + substantive stem") - *micelhéafdede* (large-headed)

2. **-ihte** (from substantives with mutation) - *þirnihte* (thorny)

3. **-ig** (from substantives with mutation) - *hálig* (holy), *mistig* (misty)

4. **-en, -in** (with mutation) - *gylden* (golden), *wyllen* (wóllen)

5. **-isc** (nationality) - *Englisc*, *Welisc*, *mennisc* (human)

6. **-sum** (from stems of verbs, adjectives, substantives) - *sibbsum* (peaceful), *híersum* (obedient)

7. **-feald** (from stems of numerals, adjectives) - *þrífeald* (threefold)

8. **-full** (from abstract substantive stems) - *sorgfull* (sorrowful)

9. **-léás** (from verbal and nominal stems) - *slæpléás* (sleepless)

10. **-lic** (from substantive and adjective stems) - *eorþlic* (earthly)

11. **-weard** (from adjective, substantive, adverb stems) - *innweard* (internal), *hámweard* (homeward)

The Old English Pronoun.

Pronouns were the only part of speech in Old English which preserved the dual number in declension, but only this makes them more archaic than the rest parts of speech. Most of pronouns are declined in number, case and gender, in plural the majority have only one form for all genders.

We will touch each group of Old English pronouns and comment on them.

1. Personal pronouns

1st person			
	Singular	Plural	Dual
N	ic, íc	wé	wit
G	mín	úre	uncer
D	mé	ús	unc
A	mec, mé	úsic, ús	uncit, unc
2nd person			
N	þú	gé	git
G	þín	éower	incer
D	þé	éow	inc
A	þéc, þé	éowic, éow	incit, inc
3rd person			
N	hé (masc.), héo (fem.), hit (neut.)	híe (masc., neut.), héo (fem.)	
G	his, hire, his	hiera, heora	
D	him, hire, him	him	
A	hine, híe, hit	híe, héo	

Through the last 1500 years *mín* became *mine*, *gé* turned into *you* (*ye* as a colloquial variant). But changes are still significant: the 2nd person singular pronouns disappeared from the language, remaining only in poetic speech and in some dialects in the north of England. This is really a strange feature - I can hardly recall any other Indo-European language which lacks the special pronoun for the 2nd person singular (French *tu*, German *du*, Russian *ты* etc.). The polite form replaced the colloquial one, maybe due to the English traditional "ladies and gentlemen" customs. Another extreme exists in Irish Gaelic, which has no polite form of personal pronoun, and you turn to your close friend the same way as you spoke with a prime minister - the familiar word, translated into French as *tu*. It can sound normal for English, but really funny for Slavic, Baltic, German people who make a thorough distinction between speaking to a friend and to a stranger

2. Demonstrative pronouns ('I' means the instrumental case)

<i>sé</i> (that)				
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
N	sé	séo	þæt	þá
G	þæs	þæ're	þæs	þára
D	þæ'm	þæ're	þæ'm	þám
A	þone	þá	þæt	þá
I	þý, þon	-	þý, þon	-
<i>þes</i> (this)				
N	þes	þeos, þios	þis	þás
G	þisses	þisse	þisses	þissa
D	þissum, þeossum	þisse	þissum	þissum
A	þisne, þysne	þás	þis	þás
I	þis, þys	-	þýs, þis	-

3. Interrogative pronouns

N	hwá	hwæt
G	hwæs	hwæs
D	hwæ'm	hwæ'm
A	hwone	hwæt
I	-	hwý, hwí

These pronouns, which actually mean the masculine and the neuter varieties of the same pronoun, derive from Proto-Indo-European **kwis*, with **kw* becoming *hw* in Germanic

languages. In Gothic the combination *hw* was considered as one sound which is another proof that the Indo-European labiovelar sound *kw* was a single sound with some specific articulation.

Later Germanic languages changed the sound in a different way: in Norwegian it remained as *hv*, in German turned into *w* (as in *wer* 'who', *was* 'what'), in English finally changed into *wh* pronounced in most cases [w], but somewhere also like [h] or [hw].

Interesting that the instrumental of the word *hwæt*, once being a pronoun form, later became the word *why* in English. So 'why?' is originally an instrumental case of the interrogative pronoun.

Other interrogative pronouns, or adverbs, as they are sometimes called, include the following, all beginning with *hw*:

hwilc 'which?' - is declined as the strong adjective (see [adjectives](#) above)

hwonne 'when?' - this and following are not declined, naturally

hwæ'r 'where?'

hwider 'whither?'

hwonan 'whence?'

4. Other kinds of pronouns

They include definite, indefinite, negative and relative, all typical for Indo-European languages. All of them still exist in Modern English, and all of them are given here:

a) definite

gehwá (every) - declined the same way as *hwá*

gehwilc (each),

ægþer (either),

æ'lc (each),

swilc (such) - all declined like strong adjectives

sé ylca (the same) - declined like a weak adjective

b) indefinite

sum (some),

æ'nig (any) - both behave the same way as strong adjectives

c) negative

nán, næ'nig (no, none) - declined like strong adjectives

d) relative

þe (which, that)

séþe (which, that) - they are not declined

In Proto-Indo-European and in many ancient Indo-European languages there was a special kind of declension called pronominal, using only by pronouns and opposed to the one used by nouns, adjectives and numerals. Old English lost it, and its pronouns use all the same endings as the nouns and adjectives. Maybe the only inflection which remembers the Proto-language times, is the neuter nominative *-t* in *hwæt* and *þæt*, the ancient ending for inanimate (inactive) nouns and pronouns.

The Old English Numeral.

It is obvious that all Indo-European languages have the general trend of transformation from the synthetic (or inflectional) stage to the analytic one. At least for the latest 1,000 years this trend could be observed in all branches of the family. The level of this analitization process in each single language can be estimated by several features, their presence or absence in the

language. One of them is for sure the declension of the numerals. In Proto-Indo-European all numerals, both cardinal and ordinal, were declined, as they derived on a very ancient stage from nouns or adjectives, originally being a declined part of speech. There are still language groups within the family with decline their numerals: among them, Slavic and Baltic are the most typical samples. They practically did not suffer any influence of the analytic processes. But all other groups seem to have been influenced somehow. Ancient Italic and Hellenic languages left the declension only for the first four cardinal pronouns (from 1 to 4), the same with ancient Celtic.

The Old English language preserves this system of declension only for three numerals. It is therefore much easier to learn, though not for English speakers I guess - Modern English lacks declension at all.

Here is the list of the cardinal numerals:

1 <i>án</i>	20 <i>twentig</i>
2 <i>twá</i>	21 <i>twentig ond án</i>
3 <i>þrie</i>	30 <i>þritig</i>
4 <i>féower</i>	40 <i>féowertig</i>
5 <i>fif</i>	50 <i>fiftig</i>
6 <i>six, syx, siex</i>	60 <i>siextig</i>
7 <i>seofon, syofn</i>	70 <i>siofontig</i>
8 <i>eahta</i>	80 <i>eahtatig</i>
9 <i>nigon</i>	90 <i>nigontig</i>
10 <i>tien, tyn</i>	100 <i>hundtéontig, hund, hundred</i>
11 <i>endlefan</i>	110 <i>hundcelleftig</i>
12 <i>twelf</i>	120 <i>hundtwelftig</i>
13 <i>þriotiene</i>	200 <i>tú hund</i>
14 <i>féowertiene</i>	1000 <i>þúsend</i>
15 <i>fiftiene...</i>	2000 <i>tú þúsendu</i>

Ordinal numerals use the suffix *-ta* or *-þa*, etymologically a common Indo-European one (**-to-*).

1 <i>forma, fyresta</i>	15 <i>fiftéopa</i>
2 <i>óþer, æfterra</i>	16 <i>sixtéopa</i>
3 <i>þrida, þirda</i>	17 <i>siofontéopa</i>
4 <i>féorþa</i>	18 <i>eahtatéopa</i>
5 <i>fifta</i>	19 <i>nigontéopa</i>
6 <i>siexta, syxta</i>	20 <i>twentigopa</i>
7 <i>siofopa</i>	30 <i>þrittigopa</i>
8 <i>eahtopa</i>	40 <i>féowertigopa</i>
9 <i>nigopa</i>	50 <i>fiftigopa</i>
10 <i>téopa</i>	100 <i>hundtéontiogopa</i>
11 <i>endlefta</i>	
12 <i>twelfta</i>	
13 <i>þreotéopa</i>	
14 <i>féowertéopa</i>	

The Old English Adverb.

Adverbs can be either primary (original adverbs) or derive from the adjectives. In fact, adverbs appeared in the language rather late, and early Proto-Indo-European did not use them, but later some auxiliary nouns and pronouns losing their declension started to play the role of adverbial modifiers. That's how the primary adverbs emerged.

In Old English the basic primary adverbs were the following ones:

<i>þa</i> (then)	<i>hér</i> (here)	<i>eft</i> (again)
<i>þonne</i> (then)	<i>hider</i> (hither)	<i>swá</i> (so)
<i>þæ'r</i> (there)	<i>heonan</i> (hence)	<i>hwílum</i> (sometimes).
<i>þider</i> (thither)	<i>sóna</i> (soon)	
<i>nú</i> (now)	<i>oft</i> (often)	

Secondary adverbs originated from the instrumental singular of the neuter adjectives of strong declension. They all add the suffix *-e*: *wíde* (widely), *déope* (deeply), *fæste* (fast), *hearde* (hard). Another major subgroup of them used the suffixes *-lic*, *-lice* from more complexed adjectives: *bealdlice* (boldly), *freondlice* (in a friendly way).

Adverbs, as well as adjectives, had their degrees of comparison:

wíde - *wídor* - *wídoſt* (widely - more widely - most widely)
long - *leng* (long - longer)
feorr (far) - *fierr*
sófte (softly) - *séft*
éaþe (easily) - *ieþ*
wel (well) - *betre* - *best*
yfele (badly) - *wiers*, *wyrs* - *wierſt*
mícele (much) - *máre* - *mæ'st*

The Old English Verb.

Old English system had strong and weak verbs: the ones which used the ancient Germanic type of conjugation (the Ablaut), and the ones which just added endings to their past and participle forms. Strong verbs make the clear majority. According to the traditional division, which is taken from Gothic and is accepted by modern linguistics, all strong verbs are distinguished between seven classes, each having its peculiarities in conjugation and in the stem structure. It is easy to define which verb is which class, so you will not swear trying to identify the type of conjugation of this or that verb (unlike the situation with the substantives). Here is the table which is composed for you to see the root vowels of all strong verb classes. Except the VII class, they all have exact stem vowels for all four main forms:

Class	I	II	IIIa	IIIb	IIIc	IV	V	VI	VII
Infinitive	i	éo	i	eo	e	e	e	a	different
Past singular	á	éa	a	ea	ea	æ	æ	ó	é, eo, éo
Past plural	i	u	u	u	u	æ'	æ'	ó	é, eo, éo
Participle II	i	o	u	o	o	o	e	a	a, á, ea

Now let us see what Old English strong verbs of all those seven classes looked like and what were their main four forms. I should mention that besides the vowel changes in the stem, verbal forms also changed stem consonants very often. The rule of such changes is not mentioned practically in any books on the Old English language, though there is some. See for yourselves this little chart where the samples of strong verb classes are given with their four forms:

Infinitive, Past singular, Past plural, Participle II (or Past Participle)

Class I

wrítan (to write), *wrát*, *writon*, *writen*
snípan (to cut), *snáp*, *snidon*, *sniden*

Other examples: *belifan* (stay), *clifan* (cling), *ygrípan* (clutch), *bítan* (bite), *slítan* (slit), *besmítan* (dirty), *gewítan* (go), *blícan* (glitter), *sícan* (sigh), *stígan* (mount), *scínan* (shine), *árisan* (arise), *lípan* (go).

Class II

béodan (to offer), *béad*, *budon*, *boden*
céosan (to choose), *céas*, *curon*, *coren*

Other examples: *créopan* (creep), *cléofan* (cleave), *fléotan* (fleet), *géotan* (pour), *gréotan* (weep), *néotan* (enjoy), *scéotan* (shoot), *léogan* (lie), *bréowan* (brew), *dréosan* (fall), *fréosan* (freeze), *forléosan* (lose).

Class III

III a) a nasal consonant

drincan (to drink), *dranc*, *druncon*, *druncen*

Other: *swindan* (vanish), *onginnan* (begin), *sinnan* (reflect), *winnan* (work), *gelimpan* (happen), *swimman* (swim).

III b) *l* + a consonant

helpan (to help), *healp*, *hulpon*, *holpen*

Other: *delfan* (delve), *swelgan* (swallow), *sweltan* (die), *bellan* (bark), *melcan* (milk).

III c) *r*, *h* + a consonant

steorfan (to die), *stearf*, *sturfon*, *storfen*

weorþan (to become), *wearþ*, *wurdon*, *worden*

feohtan (to fight), *feaht*, *fuhton*, *fohten*

More: *ceorfan* (carve), *hweorfan* (turn), *weorpan* (throw), *beorgan* (conceal), *beorcan* (bark).

Class IV

stelan (to steal), *stæ'l*, *stæ'lon*, *stolen*

beran (to bear), *bæ'r*, *bæ'ron*, *boren*

More: *cwelan* (die), *helan* (conceal), *teran* (tear), *brecan* (break).

Class V

tredan (to tread), *træ'd*, *træ'don*, *treden*

cweþan (to say), *cwæ'þ*, *cwæ'don*, *cweden*

More: *metan* (measure), *swefan* (sleep), *wefan* (weave), *sprecan* (to speak), *wrecan* (persecute), *lesan* (gather), *etan* (eat), *wesan* (be).

Class VI

faran (to go), *fór*, *fóron*, *faren*

More: *galan* (sing), *grafan* (dig), *hladan* (lade), *wadan* (walk), *dragan* (drag), *gnagan* (gnaw), *bacan* (bake), *scacan* (shake), *wascan* (wash).

Class VII

hátan (to call), *hét*, *héton*, *hátan*

feallan (to fall), *feoll*, *feollon*, *feallen*

cnéawan (to know), *cnéow*, *cnéowon*, *cnáwen*

More: *blondan* (blend), *ondræ'dan* (fear), *lácán* (jump), *scadan* (divide), *fealdan* (fold), *healdan* (hold), *sponnan* (span), *béatan* (beat), *blówan* (flourish), *hlówan* (low), *spówan* (flourish), *máwan* (mow), *sáwan* (sow), *ráwan* (turn).

So the rule from the table above is observed carefully. The VII class was made especially for those verbs which did not fit into any of the six classes. In fact the verbs of the VII class are irregular and cannot be explained by a certain exact rule, though they are quite numerous in the language.

Examining verbs of Old English comparing to those of Modern English it is easy to catch the point of transformation. Not only the ending **-an** in the infinitive has dropped, but the stems were subject to many changes some of which are not hard to find. For example, the long **í** in the stem gives **i** with an open syllable in the modern language (**wrítan** > **write**, **scínan** > **shine**). The same can be said about **a**, which nowadays is **a** in open syllables pronounced [æ] (**hladan** > **lade**). The initial combination **sc** turns to **sh**; the open **e** was transformed into **ea** practically everywhere (**sprecan** > **speak**, **tredan** > **tread**, etc.). Such laws of transformation which you can gather into a small table help to recreate the Old word from a Modern English one in case you do not have a dictionary in hand, and therefore are important for reconstruction of the languages.

Weak verbs in Old English (today's English regular verbs) were conjugated in a simpler way than the strong ones, and did not use the ablaut interchanges of the vowel stems. Weak verbs are divided into three classes which had only slight differences though. They did have the three forms - the infinitive, the past tense, the participle II. Here is the table.

Class I		
Regular verbs		
Inf.	Past	PP
déman (to judge),	démde ,	démed
hieran (to hear),	hierde ,	híered
nerian (to save),	nerede ,	nered
styrian (to stir),	styrede ,	styred
fremman (to commit),	fremede ,	fremed
cnyssan (to push),	cnysede ,	cnysed

When the suffix is preceded by a voiceless consonant the ending changes a little bit:
cépan (to keep), **cépte**, **cépt** / **céped**
grétan (to greet), **grétte**, **grét** / **gréted**

If the verb stem ends in consonant plus d or t:
sendan (to send), **sende**, **send** / **sended**
restan (to rest), **reste**, **rest** / **rested**

Irregular		
sellan (to give),	sealde ,	seald
tellan (to tell),	tealde ,	teald
cwellan (to kill),	cwealde ,	cweald
tæ'can (to teach),	táhte ,	táht
ræ'can (to reach),	ráhte ,	ráht
bycgan (to buy),	bohte ,	boht
sécan (to seek),	sóhte ,	sóht
wyrca n (to work),	worhte ,	worht
þencan (to think),	þóhte ,	þóht
bringan (to bring),	bróhte ,	bróht

Other examples of the I class weak verbs just for your interest: **berian** (beat), **derian** (harm), **erian** (plough), **ferian** (go), **herian** (praise), **gremman** (be angry), **wennan** (accustom), **clynnan** (sound), **dynnan** (resound), **hlynnan** (roar), **hrissan** (tremble), **sceþpan** (harm), **wecgean** (move), **féran** (go), **læ'ran** (teach), **dræfan** (drive), **fýsan** (hurry), **drygean** (dry), **hiepan** (heap), **métan** (to meet), **wýscean** (wish), **byldan** (build), **wendan** (turn), **efstan** (hurry). All these are regular.

Class II		
macian (to make),	macode ,	macod

lufian (to love), *lufode*, *lufod*
hopian (to hope), *hopode*, *hopod*

This class makes quite a small group of verbs, all of them having **-o-** before the past endings. Other samples: *lofian* (praise), *stician* (pierce), *eardian* (dwell), *scéawian* (look), *weorþian* (honour), *wundrian* (wonder), *fæstnian* (fasten), *mærsian* (glorify).

Class III

habban (to have), *hæfde*, *hæfd*
libban (to live), *lifde*, *lifd*
secgan (to say), *sægde*, *sægd*
hycgan (to think), *hogde*, *hogod*
þréagan (to threaten), *þréade*, *þréad*
sméagan (to think), *sméade*, *sméad*
fréogan (to free), *fréode*, *fréod*
féogan (to hate), *féode*, *féod*

Old English verbs are conjugated having two tenses - the Present tense and the Past tense, and three moods - indicative, subjunctive, and imperative. Of these, only the subjunctive mood has disappeared in the English language, acquiring an analytic construction instead of inflections; and the imperative mood has coincided with the infinitive form (*to write* - *write!*). In the Old English period they all looked different.

The common table of the verb conjugation is given below. Here you should notice that the Present tense has the conjugation for all three moods, while the Past tense - for only two moods (no imperative in the Past tense, naturally). Some more explanation should be given about the stem types.

In fact all verbal forms were generated in Old English from three verb stems, and each verb had its own three ones: the Infinitive stem, the Past Singular stem, the Past Plural stem. For the verb *writan*, for example, those three stems are: *writ-* (infinitive without the ending *-an*), *wrát-* (the Past singular), *writ-* (the Past plural without the ending *-on*). The table below explains where to use this or that stem.

	Present		Past	
	Singular (infinitive stem +)	Plural (infinitive stem +)	Singular	Plural (past plural stem +)
1st person (I, we)	-e	-aþ	Past singular stem	-on
2nd person (thou, you)	-est	-aþ	Past plural stem + -e	-on
3rd person (he, she, they)	-eþ	-aþ	Past singular stem	-on
Subjunctive	-e	-en	Past plural stem + -e	-en
Imperative	infinitive stem	-aþ		

Additionally, the participles (Participle I and Participle II) are formed by the suffix **-ende** to the Infinitive stem (participle I), or the prefix **ge-** + the Past Plural stem + the ending **-en** (Participle II).

Tired of the theory? Here is the practice. We give several examples of the typical verbs - first strong, then weak, then irregular.

Class I strong - <i>writan</i> (to write)					
Pres.			Past		
Ind.	Subj.	Imper.		Ind.	Subj.
Sg. 1	write	-		wrát	
2	wrítest	wríte		write	} wríte

3 wriþeþ	-	wrát	
Pl. wriþaþ	wriþen	2 wriþaþ	writon writen

Infinitive	Participle
wriþan	I wriþende II gewriþen

Class II weak - **lufian** (to love)

	Pres.		Past	
	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind. Subj.
Sg. 1	lufie		-	lufode
2	lufast	} lufie	lufa	lufodest } lufode
3	lufaþ		-	lufode
Pl.	lufiaþ	lufien	2 lufiaþ	lufodon lufoden

Part.
I lufiende II gelufod

Class III strong - **bindan** (to bind)

	Pres.		Past	
	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind. Subj.
Sg. 1	binde		-	band, bond
2	bindest	} binde	bind	bunde } bunde
3	bindeþ		-	band, bond
Pl.	bindaþ	binden	bindaþ	bundon bunden

Inf. Part.
bindan I bindende II gebunden

Class V strong - **séon** (to see)

	Pres.		Past	
	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind. Subj.
Sg.1	séo		-	seah
2	siehst	} séo	seoh	sáwe } sáwe,
3	siehþ		-	seah sæge
Pl.	séop	séon	2 séop	sawon sáwen

Participle
I séonde II gesewen, gesegen

Class VII strong - **fón** (to catch)

	Pres.		Past	
	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind. Subj.
Sg. 1	fó		-	feng
2	féhst	} fó	fóh	fenge } fenge
3	féhþ		-	feng
Pl.	fóp	fón	2 fóp	fengon fengen

Participle
I fónde II gefangen, gefongen

Class III weak - **secgan** (to say)

	Pres.		Past	
	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind. Subj.
Sg.1	secge		-	sægde
2	sægst	} secge	sæge	sægdest } sægde
3	sægþ		-	sægde
Pl.	secgaþ	secgen	2 secgaþ	sægdon sægden

Part.
I secgende II gesægd

Class III weak - *libban* (to live)

Pres.		Past		
Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind.	Subj.
Sg.1 libbe		-	lifde	
2 liofast	}libbe	liofa	lifdest	} lifde
3 liofaþ		-	lifde	
Pl. libbaþ	libben	2 libbaþ	lifdon	lifden

Part.
I libbende II gelifd

A special group is made by the so-called Present-Preterite verbs, which are conjugated combining two varieties of the usual verb conjugation: strong and weak. These verbs, at all not more than seven, are nowadays called modal verbs in English.

Present-Preterite verbs have their Present tense forms generated from the Strong Past, and the Past tense, instead, looks like the Present Tense of the Weak verbs. The verbs we present here are the following: *witan* (to know), *cunnan* (can), *þurfan* (to need), *dearan* (to dare), *munan* (to remember), *sculan* (shall), *magan* (may).

Present of *witan* (= strong Past)

	Ind.	Subj.	Imp.
Sg. 1 wát			-
2 wast	} wite	wite	
3 wát			-
Pl. witon	2 witen	witaþ	

Past (= Weak)

	Ind.	Subj.
Sg.1 wisse, wiste		
2 wissest, wistest	} wisse, wiste	
3 wisse, wiste		
Pl. wisson, wiston	wissen, wisten	

Participles: I witende, II witen, gewiten

cunnan (can)

Pres.		Past	
Ind.	Subj.	Ind.	Subj.
Sg. 1 cann		cúþe	
2 canst	} cunne	cúþest	} cúþe
3 cann		cúþe	
Pl. cunnon	cunnen	cúþon	cúþen

þurfan (need)

Sg. 1 þearf		þorfte	
2 þearft	} þurfe	þorfteft	} þorfte
3 þearf		þorfte	
Pl. þurfon	þurfen	þorfton	þorften

magan (may)

Sg. 1 mæg		meahte	mihte, mihten
2 meaht	} mæge	meahtest	
3 mæg		meahte	

Pl. magon mægen meahton

The main difference of verbs of this type in modern English is their expressing modality, i.e. possibility, obligation, necessity. They do not require the particle *to* before the infinitive which follows them. In Old English in general no verb requires this particle before the infinitive. In fact, this *to* before the infinitive form meant the preposition of direction.

And now finally a few irregular verbs, which used several different stems for their tenses. These verbs are very important in Old English and are met very often in the texts: **wesan** (to be), **béon** (to be), **gán** (to go), **dón** (to do), **willan** (will). Mind that there was no Future tense in the Old English language, and the future action was expressed by the Present forms, just sometimes using verbs of modality, **willan** (lit. "to wish to do") or **sculan** (lit. "to have to do").

wesan (to be) - has got only the Present tense forms, uses the verb **béon** in the Past

Present		
Ind.	Subj.	Imp.
Sg.1 eom	-	
2 eart	} síe, sý	wes
3 is	-	
Pl. sind	sien, sýn	2 wesap

béon (to be)

Present		
Ind.	Subj.	Imp.
Sg. 1 béo		-
2 bist	} béo	béo
3 biþ		-
Pl. béoþ	béon	2 béoþ

Past	
Ind.	Subj.
Sg. 1 wæs	
2 wære	} wære
3 wæs	
Pl. wæron	wæren

Participle I is **béonde** (being).

gán (to go)

Pres.			Past	
Ind.	Subj.	Imp.	Ind.	Subj.
Sg.1 gá		-	éode	
2 gæ'st	} gá	gá	éodest	} éode
3 gæ'þ		-	éode	
Pl. gáp	2 gán	gáp	éodon	éoden

Participles:

I gánde, gangende II gegán

So there were in fact two verbs meaning 'to be', and both were colloquial. In Middle English, however, the verb **wesan** replaced fully the forms of **béon**, and the words **béo** (I am), **bist** (thou art) fell out of use. The Past tense forms *was* and *were* are also derivatives from **wesan**.

Syntactically, the language had only two main tenses - the Present and the Past. No progressive (or Continuous) tenses were used, they were invented only in the Early Middle

English period. Such complex tenses as modern Future in the Past, Future Perfect Continuous did not exist either. However, some analytic constructions were in use, and first of all the perfective constructions. The example *Hie geweorc geworhten hæfdon* 'they have build a fortress' shows the exact Perfect tense, but at that time it was not the tense really, just a participle construction showing that the action has been done. Seldom you can also find such Past constructions, which later became the Past Perfect Tense.

Verb syntax includes a number of suffixes and prefixes which can be met in Old English texts and especially in poetry:

Suffixes:

1. **-s-** (from substantive or adjective stems) - *mæ'rsian* (to announce; from *mæ're* - famous)
2. **-læc-** - *néalæcan* (to approach)
3. **-ett-** - *bliccettan* (to sparkle)

Prefixes

1. **á-** = out of, from - *árisan* (arise), *áwakan* (awake), *áberan* (sustain)
2. **be-** = over, around, by - *begán* (go around), *bepencan* (think over), *behéafðian* (behead)
3. **for-** = destruction or loss - *fordón* (destroy), *forweorþan* (perish)
4. **mis-** = negation or bad quality - *mislician* (displease)
5. **of-** = reinforces - *ofsléan* (kill), *oftéon* (take away)
6. **on-** = change or separation - *onbindan* (unbind), *onlúcan* (unlock)
7. **tó-** = destruction - *tóbrecan* (break)

The Old English Auxiliary Words.

These traditionally include prepositions, conjunctions, different particles and interjections. All Indo-European languages have this system of auxiliary parts of speech, though there are languages which lack some of them. Japanese, for example, has no prepositions, and the service function in the sentence belongs to postpositive words which have cases, the same as nouns. Korean does not use any conjunctions, replacing them by about 50 different kinds of verbal adverbs. As for Chinese, it simply does not make any distinction in the sentence between basic and auxiliary words.

Most of Old English prepositions are easily recognizable:

Primary: *of* (of, out of), *æt* (to), *fram* (from), *tó* (to), *wip* (against), *in*, *of*, *mid* (with), *on* (on, at), *be* (by, near, to, because of, about), *þurh* (through), *under*, *ofer* (over), *æfter* (after), *bufan* (above), *út* (out).

Secondary: *beforan* (before), *bútan* (without), *benorþan* (north of), etc.

æt means 'to' and *wip* means 'against'. In Germanic all prepositions divided into those who used nouns in dative, accusative or genitive. But in the Old English period this distinction begins to disappear, and only some of the prepositions use dative (*mid*, *bútan*, sometimes *on*, *in*) or genitive (*fram*, *út*, *æfter*).

Conjunctions included the following:

Primary: *and* / *ond* (and), *ac* (but), *gif* (if), *or*.

Secondary: *ægþer ge... ge* (both... and..., either ... or...), *hwonne* (when), *þa* (when), *þonne* (when), *þéáh* (though), *þætte* (that), *ær* (before), *swá... swá...* (so... as...).

And a few interjections: *íá* (yes), *wá* (woe!, wow!), *hwæt* (there! what!).