FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Traballo de fin de grao

Changes in the morphological system from Old to Middle English, with special reference to the noun phrase

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Xullo 2019

Traballo de Fin de Grao presentado na Facultade de Filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela para a obtención do Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

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USC UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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CUBRIR ESTE FORMULARIO ELECTRONICAMENTE

Formulario de delimitación de título e resumo

Traballo de Fin de Grao curso 2018/2019

APELIDOS E NOME:	Kaakejian, Jack
GRAO EN:	Lingua e literatura inglesas
(NO CASO DE MODERNAS) MENCIÓN EN:	
TITOR/A:	López Couso, María José
LIÑA TEMÁTICA ASIGNADA:	Estudos de variación e cambio lingüístico con referencia á lingua inglesa

SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

Título:

Changes in the morphological system from Old to Middle English, with special reference to the noun phrase.

Resumo

The aim of this dissertation is to show how the English language has changed over time in one particular grammatical domain: the noun phrase, focusing on the morphological changes that affected nouns, adjectives and demonstratives from Old English to Middle English and on the transformation from synthetic to analytic language. Old English was a highly inflected language, i.e. grammatical meaning was indicated mainly through the use of inflections. Most of these inflections disappeared in the course of Middle English, when English became a more analytic language.

The first part of the dissertation is devoted to the characterization of the three relevant word classes, which were highly inflected in Old English. Nouns showed inflections according to gender, case and number and belonged to various declensions. Old English had grammatical gender and each noun was classified as masculine, feminine or neuter. As regards case, Old English nouns showed four different cases: nominative, genitive, dative and accusative, and two numbers: singular and plural. Adjectives also had inflections for gender, case and number and they were inflected according to two declensions, the strong declension and the weak declension. Moreover, Old English had a very complicated system of demonstratives, which were inflected for number, case and gender in agreement with the noun that they accompanied.

In the second part of the dissertation, I focus on Middle English, when we see the radical simplification of the Old English inflectional system due to two major factors. The first one has to do with phonology and it is related to the reduction of vowels in non-accented syllables which caused the levelling of inflections; the reduction consisted of the centralization of the vowels to schwa. The second cause for the simplification of the inflectional system has to do with analogy, which implies the regularization of irregular forms from the

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language as a result of "a process by which one form becomes like another one with which it is somehow associated (such as having the same function)" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 70).

In the final part of the dissertation I compare parallel texts from Old English and Middle English to illustrate some of the changes discussed in the theoretical part of the study.

Reference:

Brinton, Laurel & Leslie K. Arnovick. 2006. *The English Language. A Linguistic History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Santiago de Compostela, 2 de outubro de 2018.

Sinatura do/a interesado/a	Visto e prace (sinatura do/a titor/a)	Aprobado pola Comisión de Títulos de Grao con data 16 NOV. 2018 Selo da Facultade de Filoloxía

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Aims and outline

The aim of this dissertation is to show how the English language that was spoken by the Germanic tribes, Saxons, Angles and Jutes, after their settlement in Britain has changed over time in one particular grammatical domain: the noun phrase, with special reference to the morphological changes that affected nouns, adjectives and demonstratives. I will trace the most relevant changes from Old English to Middle English, mainly the loss and the radical simplification of the Old English complicated inflexional system, on the basis of information taken from various sources, including Blake (1992), Brinton and Arnovick (2006), Burrow and Turville-Petre (1992), Culpeper (2005), Gramley (2012), Hogg (1992) and Hogg and Denison (2006).

The second chapter of the dissertation is devoted to the characterization of the Old English morphological system of nouns, adjectives and demonstratives. In chapter three, I show the changes that affected these parts of speech in Middle English, focusing on the simplification of the inflexional system. In chapter four, I apply the theoretical information presented in chapters two and three to parallel texts from Old English and Middle English. Finally, chapter five summarizes the main issues discussed in the dissertation.

Chapter 2. The Old English noun phrase

Old English is the name given to the language that was spoken in the British Isles by Anglo-Saxons before the Norman conquest, and it is the ancestor of Present day English. Old English was characterized as a highly inflected or synthetic language. As Hogg (1992: 122) puts it:

> Nouns had four cases and three genders; verbs inflected for person and number and for indicative and subjunctive moods. Where inflexions for any of these categories exist today, they either do so in a greatly altered form, as with the modern possessive, or are little more than relics of an older stage, as with, for example, the subjunctive. Further, in the Old English noun phrase there was agreement between noun and modifying adjective rather as in present-day German, something lost from English at about the time of Chaucer. Like a language such as Latin, Old English also had noun (and adjective) declensions and verb conjugations.
>
> (Hogg 1992: 122)

In contrast to Present day English, Old English had three grammatical genders, which were masculine, feminine and neuter. This system came from Proto-Indo-European, and it is simply a way of grammatical classification, it has nothing to do with real life; that is, "grammatical gender, as expressed not only in Old English but also in other languages, is not based on sex" (Hogg 1992: 125); for example, *stan* 'stone' was masculine, *tungol* 'star' was neuter and *giefu* 'gift' was feminine. Note that it was the demonstratives that accompanied the noun that indicated the gender of the head of the noun phrase because in Old English there was agreement between the noun and the demonstrative; for example, *se* was masculine, *Þat* was neuter and *sēo* was feminine (see section 2.3 below). Meanwhile, Present day English has biological or natural gender, which means that *boy* is masculine and *girl* is feminine. Biological gender is also expressed through derivational affixes, such as *-ine* in *heroine*, *-ess* in *actress* and *-er* in *widower*, and through compound nouns (e.g. *boyfriend*, *girlfriend*). In other words, "Present-day English has only natural gender: *boy* is masculine because the word refers to a male, *girl* is similarly feminine, and *stone* is similarly neuter. Exceptions are most commonly for one of two reasons: (i) metaphor, as in the use of *she* to refer to a ship; (ii) avoidance of embarrassment as in the use of *it* to refer to a baby" (Hogg 1992: 124-125).

As regards number, Old English distinguished three numbers: singular, dual and plural.

Another difference from Present day English are the cases. Old English had four cases; nominative (the subject), genitive (the possessor), dative (the indirect object) and

accusative (the direct object).[1] In Present day English these functions are indicated mainly through word order. Let us take two examples from Present day English and their equivalents in Old English:

Present day English	Old English
(1) *the man sees the hunter*	(3) *se guma syhð þone huntan*
(2) *the hunter sees the man*	(4) *þone huntan syhð se guma*

(Culpeper 2005: 60)

In example (1), *the man sees the hunter,* it is obvious that *the man* is the subject of the sentence and *the hunter* is the object, since in Present day English declarative sentences what comes before the verb functions as the subject of the sentence and what comes after the verb functions as the object. However, the meaning of example (2) is not the same as in example (1): with the change in word order, the subject in example (2) is *the hunter*, while *the man* is the object. Meanwhile, in Old English word order did not indicate the role or the function of a given noun phrase. Examples (3) and (4) have the same meaning; it is the man who sees the hunter. In both sentences, *se guma* is the subject of the sentence, since the final *-a* in *gum-a* indicates the nominative case, and *þone huntan* is the object; the final *-an* in *hunt-an* indicates the accusative case.

Examples (3) and (4) show that Old English had more flexible word order than Present day English. It was a more synthetic or inflected language, where grammatical meaning was indicated mainly through the use of inflexions. During Middle English this system underwent various changes, and English became a more isolating or analytic language, and word order became less and less flexible.

The following sections deal with the characterization of the noun, the adjective and the demonstratives in Old English.

[1] Old English cases came from Proto-Indo–European (PIE), which "has eight cases: nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, ablative, locative, instrumental and vocative. In Germanic (by and large), nominative and accusative were already identical, the genitive remained distinct only in certain masculine and neuter declensions, and the dative, ablative, locative and instrumental had collapsed into a single case traditionally 'dative' – though it often continues an old locative or instrumental. In some dialects fragments of an independent instrumental remain" (Hogg and Denison 2006: 55).

2.1 Nouns

Nouns in Old English were highly inflected; they showed two numbers, four cases and three grammatical genders; for example, *fingr-es* was the masculine, singular and genitive form of the noun *finger* 'finger'.

Old English nouns were classified into two main groups: those belonging to the vowel declension, also called the strong declension, and those belonging to the consonant declension, or the weak declension,[2] also known as *n*-stem declension. There were other minor declensions, but the majority of nouns fell into one of these two major groups.

Nouns belonged to the vowel declension when the final element of the stem was a vowel and they belonged to the consonant or weak declension when the final element of the stem was a consonant. The stem is simply the combination of root + theme. In Germanic themes were of three types: (i) a vowel (vocalic nouns), (ii) a consonant (consonantal nouns) and (iii) zero (athematic nouns). To understand what a stem is I will refer to Proto-Germanic nouns, which had the characteristic structure of root + theme + inflexion. Let us take two different examples from Proto-Germanic: the words for 'stone' **stainaz* and 'friend' **wīniz*. The corresponding forms of root + theme + inflexion would be the following: **stain + a + z* and **win + ī + z*. The two nouns belong to the vowel declension because of the vowel that appears after the root; the inflexion *-z* is the nominative singular form in Proto-Germanic, but there is a differentiation in the theme: **stainaz* belongs to the *a*-stem and **wīniz* to the *i*-stem. Note that sometimes it is difficult to decide whether a noun belongs to the vowel or the consonant declension in Old English, because these thematic elements that appear after the root, such as the *a* in **stainaz* or the *ī* in **winīz*, had either been dropped or fused before the period of historic Old English.

In what follows I present the different declensions of Old English nouns, on the basis of information taken from various sources, including Brinton and Arnovick (2006), Gramley (2012), Hogg (1992) and Hogg and Denison (2006). I first discuss vocalic or strong nouns (section 2.1.1), then consonantal or weak nouns (section 2.1.2), athematic nouns (section 2.1.3) and minor consonantal nouns (section 2.1.4).

[2] The terms 'strong' and 'weak' were first used by Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) in the terminology of verbs, and thence transferred to nouns and adjectives.

2.1.1 Vocalic or strong nouns

In Old English there were four major vocalic subdivisions inherited from Germanic: the *a*-stem, the *ō*-stem, the *i*-stem and the *u*-stem. The most common were the *a*- and the *ō*-stems. In the *a*-stem there were no feminine nouns, just masculine and neuter nouns. Feminine nouns belonged to the *ō*-stem and there were no neuter nouns in the *u*-stem.

2.1.1.1 *a*-stem nouns

This was the most frequent declension of Old English. Sixty percent of nouns belonged to the *a*-stem declension, and it was the most important for the history of the English language, for two reasons: on the one hand, in Present day English to form the plural of most nouns we add the inflexion *-(e)s* to the singular form and its ancestor is the plural inflexional *-as* of the masculine *a*-stem; on the other hand, the Present day English possessive *-´s* derives from the genitive singular of *a*-stem nouns.

The main inflexional paradigm of masculine *a*-stem nouns is given in Table 1:

Table 1. The masculine *a*-stem declension in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	∅	*-as*
Accusative	∅	*-as*
Genitive	*-es*	*-a*
Dative/instrumental	*-e*	*-um*

Let us decline a masculine *a*-stem noun in Old English, for example, *mūþ* 'mouth', which belonged to this declension, since in Proto-Germanic the theme was a vowel **munþaz: *munþ+ a+ z.*

Table 2. The paradigm of *mūÞ* 'mouth' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*mūþ*	*mūþ-as*
Accusative	*mūþ*	*mūþ-as*
Genitive	*mūþ-es*	*mūþ-a*
Dative/instrumental	*mūþ-e*	*mūþ-um*

However, there were some *a*-stem nouns that did not follow the main paradigm of the masculine *a*-stem declension given in Table 1; for example, if a noun ended in *-e*, like *fiscere* 'fisherman', this letter was dropped before adding the inflexional endings, except in the nominative and accusative singular, where *-e* was retained. The paradigm is the following:

Table 3. The paradigm of *fiscere* 'fisherman' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*fiscer-e*	*fiscer-as*
Accusative	*fiscer-e*	*fiscer-as*
Genitive	*fiscer-es*	*fiscer-a*
Dative/instrumental	*fiscer-e*	*fiscer-um*

If a noun had /*æ*/ before a consonant, in the plural it changed the vowel to /a/; for example, *hwæl* 'whale', as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. The paradigm of *hwal* 'whale' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*hwæl*	*hwal-as*
Accusative	*hwæl*	*hwal-as*
Genitive	*hwæl-es*	*hwal-a*
Dative/instrumental	*hwæl-e*	*hwal-um*

In nouns that ended in */-h/* preceded by /*r*/ or /*l*/, for example *seolh* 'seal' (cf. Table 5), this /h/ was dropped before an inflexional vowel and there was a lengthening in the stem vowel:

Table 5. The paradigm of *seolh* 'seal' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*seolh*	*sēol-as*
Accusative	*seolh*	*sēol-as*
Genitive	*sēol-es*	*sēol-a*
Dative/instrumental	*sēol-e*	*sēol-um*

In nouns that are dissyllables, for example *finger* 'finger', when the first syllable is long, generally the vowel of the second syllable is syncopated before adding the inflexions:

Table 6. The paradigm of *finger* 'finger' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*finger*	*fingr-as*
Accusative	*finger*	*fingr-as*
Genitive	*fingr-es*	*fingr-a*
Dative/instrumental	*fingr-e*	*fingr-um*

Table 7 illustrates the main inflexional paradigm of neuter *a*-stem nouns:

Table 7. The neuter *a*-stem declension in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	∅	*-u* short stem/∅ long stem
Accusative	∅	*-u* short stem/∅ long stem
Genitive	*-es*	*-a*
Dative/instrumental	*-e*	*-um*

Note that the main difference from the masculine *a*-stem is the nominative and accusative plural. There were two different inflexions in the nominative and accusative plural of neuter *a*-stem nouns: while short stem nouns take *-u*, long stem nouns which contain a long vowel or a diphthong in their root or a short vowel followed by two consonants take the zero inflexion. In Present day English there are some nouns that show no distinction between the singular and the plural, such as *deer* and *sheep*. They come from this paradigm: the neuter long *a*-stem which has a zero plural in the nominative and the accusative. *Hof* 'court' has a short stem in its root and *land* 'land' has a short vowel followed by two consonants. The table below shows the paradigm of these two nouns:

Table 8. The paradigm of *hof* 'court' and *land* 'land' in Old English

Case	neuter-short stem		neuter-long stem	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*hof*	*hof-u*	*land*	*land*
Accusative	*hof*	*hof-u*	*land*	*land*
Genitive	*hof-es*	*hof-a*	*land-es*	*land-a*
Dative/instrumental	*hof-e*	*hof-um*	*land-e*	*land-um*

2.1.1.2 *ō*-stem nouns

Only feminine nouns belong to this declension, which is considered the largest vocalic class of feminine nouns. Twenty-five percent of nouns belonged to the *ō*-stem declension. There are no masculine or neuter nouns that follow the *ō*-stem.

The main paradigm of *ō*-stem nouns is given in Table 9:

Table 9. The *ō*-stem declension in Old English

Case	short stem		long stem	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*gief-u* 'gift'	*gief-a*	*wund* 'wound'	*wund-a*
Accusative	*gief-e*	*gief-a*	*wund-e*	*wund-a*
Genitive	*gief-e*	*gief-a*	*wund-e*	*wund-a*
Dative/instrumental	*gief-e*	*gief-um*	*wund-e*	*wund-um*

The *ō*-stem declension for feminine nouns is the simplest declension in Old English, since there are only a few different endings. The only difference between the short and the long stems is in the nominative singular; the short stem takes *-u*, while the long stem takes the zero ending. The same happens in the neuter short and long *a*-stems but in the plural nominative and accusative cases (cf. section 2.1.1.1 above). The genitive singular form in the *a*-stem has *-s* as a part of its inflexional ending, while here the genitive form does not show this inflexion. This makes difficult to distinguish between the cases, since the accusative, the genitive and the dative show the same ending. However, there are a few forms that are preserved today from the *s*-less genitive of the *ō*-stem, such as *Lady*

Day (meaning 'lady's day, a feast in celebration of the Virgin Mary') (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 189).

2.1.1.3 *i*-stem nouns

This declension contains chiefly masculine and feminine nouns; *i*-stem masculine nouns "had a paradigm not dissimilar to that of the *a*-stem, the only variations being due to differential effects of sound change on */i/ rather than */a/" (Hogg 1992: 131). The nominative and accusative plural of these nouns originally ended in *-e*, but we find *-as* because

> the *i*-stems lost their separate identity and transferred to the *a*-declension or, in later periods, the *as*-plural declension. This seems to have occurred gradually, with genitive and dative singular and plural taking the *a*-declension form well before the time of the earliest texts. The expected nominative and accusative plural in *-e* can be found with light bases, e.g. *wine* 'friends', and was only slowly superseded by the *-as* plural, but the shift occurred earlier with heavy bases where **wyrm* rather than *wyrmas* is never found.
>
> (Hogg 1992: 132)

The only *i*-stems that regularly retain *-e* in the nominative and the accusative plural and not the *-as* are names of nationalities, tribes or people. They were used just in their plural forms; for example, *Engle* 'Englishmen', *Norþymbre* 'Northumbrians' and *Lēode* 'people' could only be plural.

The paradigm of *wine* 'friend' is given in Table 10:

Table 10. The paradigm of *wine* 'friend' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*win-e*	*win-as (e)*
Accusative	*win-e*	*win-as (e)*
Genitive	*win-es*	*win-a*
Dative/instrumental	*win-e*	*win-um*

Note that *wine* has a short stem. Hogg (1992: 133) calls it a light base, because it takes *-e* in the nominative and the accusative cases, meanwhile long stems nouns (heavy bases) take the zero ending in the nominative and accusative cases, as in **wyrm* 'worm' (cf. Table 11):

Table 11. The paradigm of *wyrm* 'worm' in Old English

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*wyrm*	*wyrm-as*
Accusative	*wyrm*	*wyrm-as*
Genitive	*wyrm-es*	*wyrm-a*
Dative/instrumental	*wyrm-e*	*wyrm-um*

On the other hand, feminine short *i*-stem nouns, such as *fremu* 'benefit', had identical declensions to short *ō*-stems. The differentiation was in the long *i*-stems *cwēn* 'queen, woman', that differed from long *ō*-stems in the accusative singular in having the zero ending and the preference for *-e* rather than *-a* in the nominative and accusative plural. Compare Table 9 above, that shows the inflexional system of the feminine *ō*-stems, and Table 12 below.

Table 12. Feminine *i*-stems

Case	short stem		long stem	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*frem-u*	*frem-a*	*cwēn*	*cwēn-e*
Accusative	*frem-e*	*frem-a*	*cwēn-Ø*	*cwēn-e*
Genitive	*frem-e*	*frem-a*	*cwēn-e*	*cwēn-a*
Dative/instrumental	*frem-e*	*frem-um*	*cwēn-e*	*cwēn-um*

2.1.1.4 *u*-stem nouns

Few nouns in Old English belonged to the *u*-stem declension, feminine or masculine in gender; no neuter nouns are found. In later periods these nouns showed a strong tendency to transfer to the *a*-plural declension. This is most clearly seen in the long-stemmed masculine nouns of the *u*-declension. They were of high frequency, such as *sunu* 'son', *feld* 'field', *duru* 'door', *hand* 'hand'. Both genders in short-stemmed nouns retain the final *-u* of the nominative and accusative singular, while long stemmed nouns drop it. Tables 13 and 14 illustrate the differentiation between short and long stems for both genders, in the nominative and accusative singular.

Table 13. The paradigm of masculine *u*-stem nouns; *se sunu* 'son', *se feld* 'field'

Case	short stem		long stem	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*sun-u*	*sun-a*	*feld*	*feld-a*
Accusative	*sun-u*	*sun-a*	*feld*	*feld-a*
Genitive	*sun-a*	*sun-a*	*feld-a*	*feld-a*
Dative/instrumental	*sun-a*	*sun-um*	*feld-a*	*feld-um*

Table 14. The paradigm of feminine *u*-stem nouns; *seo duru* 'door', *seo hand* 'hand'

Case	short stem		long stem	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*dur-u*	*dur-a*	*hand*	*hand-a*
Accusative	*dur-u*	*dur-a*	*hand*	*hand-a*
Genitive	*dur-a*	*dur-a*	*hand-a*	*hand-a*
Dative/instrumental	*dur-a*	*dur-um*	*hand-a*	*hand-um*

2.1.2 Consonantal or weak nouns

This is also known as the *n*-declension. The *n*-stem nouns include masculine, feminine and just two neuter nouns, *ēage* 'eye' and *ēare* 'ear'. The reason for calling these nouns *n*-stem nouns is because they contained in Germanic a thematic element of vowel plus */n/*, "but by the Old English period the unstressed inflexions had been lost, and so what had originally been a thematic element became at least partly inflexional" (Hogg 1992: 134). The most frequent ending of this declension was *-an*, which changed to *-en* in Middle English by a process known as weakening of unstressed syllables (cf. chapter 3, section 1). There were nouns that did not belong to the consonantal or weak declension but followed the paradigm given in Table 15, because "it began to compete with the *-es* of the *a*-stem as the regular plural ending. It lost out eventually and today is preserved intact in only one word, *oxen*" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 190). The inflexional system of weak nouns was the same in all genders (cf. Table 15), except in the nominative singular; masculine nouns took *-a*; however, feminine and neuter nouns took *-e*, and the accusative singular of neuter nouns also had inflexional *-e*.

Table 15. The paradigm of *n*-stem (weak) nouns: *hunta* 'hunter', *heorte* 'heart', *eage* 'ear'

Case	masculine		feminine		neuter	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*hunt-a*	*hunt-an*	*heort-e*	*heort-an*	*eag-e*	*eag-an*
Accusative	*hunt-an*	*hunt-an*	*heort-an*	*heort-an*	*eag-e*	*eag-an*
Genitive	*hunt-an*	*hunt-ena*	*heort-an*	*heort-ena*	*eag-an*	*eag-ena*
Dative/instrumental	*hunt-an*	*hunt-um*	*heort-an*	*heort-um*	*eag-an*	*eag-um*

2.1.3 Athematic nouns

Athematic nouns were either masculine or feminine in gender. Originally, they were "characterized by umlaut in three places: the dative singular, which in pre-Old English ended in *-i, and both nominative plural and accusative plural, which used to end *-is. The ending with *-i caused umlaut, which involves the fronting and/or raising of the front vowel" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 190).

Table 16 shows the inflexional system of athematic nouns; one for the masculine noun *fēt* 'feet' and one for the feminine noun *lūs* 'louse':

Table 16. The paradigm of athematic nouns in Old English

Case	masculine		feminine	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*fōt*	*fēt*	*lūs*	*lȳs*
Accusative	*fōt*	*fēt*	*lūs*	*lȳs*
Genitive	*fōt-es*	*fōt-a*	*lūs-e*	*lūs-a*
Dative/instrumental	*fēt*	*fōt-um*	*lȳs*	*lūs-um*

The inflexional system given in Table 16 explains the reason why Present day English has irregular plural forms such as *tooth/teeth*, *goose/geese*, *mouse/mice*, *man/men*, which did not take the analogical plural endings. However, other nouns take the analogical *-(e)s* in Present day English, while in Old English they showed umlaut in the root; instead of *bēc* and *frynd*, we have *books* and *friends.* If *bēc* had retained umlaut, we would have **beek* instead of *books*.

2.1.4 Minor consonantal nouns

Beside the inflexional system discussed in the previous sections, there were a few Old English nouns that belonged to minor consonantal declensions. For example, those words expressing family relationships, such as *fæder* 'father', *broðor* 'brother', *modor* 'mother', *sweostor* 'sister', masculine or feminine in gender, which belonged to the *r*-stem. In the dative singular they showed umlauted forms and no ending in the genitive, as shown in Table 17.

Table 17. The paradigm of *mōdor* 'mother' in Old English (Hogg 2002: 30)

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*mōdor*	*mōdru, mōdra*
Accusative	*mōdor*	*mōdor, mōdra*
Genitive	*mōdor*	*mōdra*
Dative/instrumental	*mēder*	*mōdrum*

Another minor declension is the *z*-stem; only a few neuter nouns belonged to this declension, such as *æg* 'egg', *lamb* 'lamb' and *cild* 'child' (cf. Table 18). They were declined as *a*-stem neuters just in the singular; however, in the plural form an *-r-* appears between the root and the rest of the inflexion. The only noun that shows this plural form in Present day English is *children*, which has a double plural: (i) the *-r-* from this declension and (ii) the *-en* from the *-an* weak declension of Old English (cf. section 2.1.2 above), which was a common plural inflexion in Middle English after the process of weakening that occurred in Old English unaccented syllables (cf. section 3.1 below). There was a tendency in the Old English period that nouns belonging to minor consonantal declensions transferred to the dominant *a*-stem pattern (cf. section 2.1.1.1 above).

Table 18. The paradigm of *lamb* 'lamb' in Old English (Brook 1955: 41)

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	*lamb*	*lambru*
Accusative	*lamb*	*lambru*
Genitive	*lambes*	*lambra*
Dative/instrumental	*lambe*	*lambrum*

The following sections are devoted to the characterization of adjectives (section 2) and demonstratives (section 3) of Old English, on the basis of information taken from various sources, such as Brinton and Arnovick (2006), Gramley (2012), Hogg (1992) and Hogg and Denison (2006).

2.2 Adjectives

Like nouns, adjectives in Old English were highly inflected. They agreed in case, number and gender with the head of the noun phrase that they modified. In present day inflected languages, such as French, Italian or Turkish, agreement between nouns and adjectives is fundamental. However, Old English had two adjectival declensions; the so called weak and strong declensions:[3] "for morphological reasons most grammarians used the terms 'weak' for the first type and 'strong' for the second type, since adjectives in a definite NP patterned according to the *n*- or weak declension, and adjectives in an indefinite NP patterned according to the vocalic or strong declensions" (Hogg 1992: 138). These two groups of declensions were syntactically determined; in definite noun phrases, when the noun was accompanied by a demonstrative, a numeral, a possessive pronoun or in the comparative forms and in direct address (e.g. *Jason, dear father, you…*), adjectives followed the weak declension; elsewhere, adjectives followed the strong declension.

Remember that nouns were classified into two main groups (weak and strong declensions) depending on the thematic element that appeared after the root (cf. section 2.1). We may expect that weak nouns had to agree with the weak adjectival declension, but because the inflexional system of adjectives was syntactically determined, a strong noun can occur with an adjective bearing a weak ending; for example, *þæs gōdan landes* 'of that good land' contains a strong *a*-stem masculine noun *landes*, modified by an adjective which follows the weak pattern in a definite noun phrase *gōdan*; definiteness is marked through the demonstrative *þæs*.

Adjectives, unlike nouns, had a separate instrumental case inflexion just in the singular; there was no instrumental case in the plural. Note that there is disagreement

[3] The Old English weak declension was a Germanic innovation and the strong declension was inherited from Proto-Indo-European.

between linguists: while some say that there was no separate instrumental case for the feminine singular in the strong declension, others disagree.[4]

Table 19 shows the weak and strong inflexional system of adjectives in Old English. The weak adjectival endings show similarities with the weak noun endings; they only differ from the weak noun endings in the genitive plural, since adjectives had *-ra*. The strong adjectival endings show similarities with the demonstrative and pronominal endings; for example, in the masculine accusative singular *-ne*, in the masculine and neuter dative singular *-um*, in the feminine genitive and dative singular *-re* and in the genitive plural *-ra*. Adjectives with heavy bases or long stems, such as *gōd* 'good', lost the final *-u* in the feminine nominative singular (cf. Table 19). In such cases, the strong nominative singular form of adjectives was identical for all genders, but when the stem was short or light, *-u* is retained, as in *glad-u* 'glad'.[5] Note that the plural was the same for all genders in the weak and strong declensions, except in the nominative and the accusative strong endings, where each gender had a different inflexion. The weak paradigm showed less variation in the inflexional system than the strong one. The most dominant inflexion in the weak paradigm was *-an*; the difference was in the nominative singular for all genders, the accusative singular neuter, the genitive and the dative plural for all genders.

[4] See Hogg (1992: 140) and Brinton and Arnovick (2006: 196). Hogg maintains that there was no separate instrumental case for the feminine, while Brinton and Arnovick include in their table 7.8 (*Weak and strong adjectives endings in Old English*) a separate instrumental case in the feminine singular strong declension.

[5] Hogg notes that "in classical Old English there was a very strong tendency to lose the final *-u* even in the short stems, to give nom.sig. *sum* rather than *sumu*, which, of course, made the nominative singular of indefinite adjectives identical for all genders" (Hogg 1992: 140).

Table 19. The paradigm of weak and strong adjectives in Old English

Weak				
	Singular			Plural
Case	masculine	neuter	feminine	all genders
Nominative	*-a*	*-e*	*-e*	*-an*
Accusative	*-an*	*-e*	*-an*	*-an*
Genitive	*-an*	*-an*	*-an*	*-ra, -ena*
Dative	*-an*	*-an*	*-an*	*-um*
Instrumental	*-an*	*-an*	*-an*	
Strong				
Nominative	∅	∅	∅*/ -u*	*-e* (masc.), *-u* (neut.), *-a* (fem.)
Accusative	*-ne*	∅	*-e*	*-e* (masc.), *-u* (neut.), *-a* (fem.)
Genitive	*-es*	*-es*	*-re*	*-ra*
Dative	*-um*	*-um*	*-re*	*-um*
Instrumental	*-e*	*-e*	*-re/*	

In Old English, as in Present day English, adjectives were inflected to show two degrees of comparison: comparative and superlative. Comparison was made with the Proto-Old English suffixes **-ora, *-ost*; the *-o-* in the comparative was lost through syncope. These two suffixes came from the earlier forms **-ira, *-ist*, and in this case umlauted forms are found; for example, *strang, strengra, strengest* 'strong, stronger, strongest'. These forms became regularized over time, but some of the umlauted forms survived into Present day English, as *elder* and *eldest*, in limited contexts. As today, these endings were added to the stem of the adjective; for example, *leof, leofra, leofost* 'dear, dearer, dearest'. The usage of periphrastic forms that exist in Present day English with *more* and *most* plus the adjective with more than one syllable was rare in Old English; it appears in later texts.

Table 20 shows some of the regular and umlauted forms of Old English adjectives:

Table 20. Regular and umlauted forms of the Old English adjective

Regular		
Positive	Comparative	Superlative
earm 'poor'	*earmra*	*earmost*
lēof 'dear'	*lēofra*	*lēofost*
Umlauted		
geong 'young'	*gingra*	*gingest*
grēat 'great'	*grȳtra*	*grȳtest*
strang 'strong'	*strengra*	*strengest*

As today, Old English had a few very common adjectives which formed their comparative and superlative by suppletion (cf. Table 21), that is, by forming comparative and superlative forms from another root. According to Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007),

> Definition SUPPLETION is a process whereby, in irregular and idiosyncratic cases, substitution of a MORPHOLOGICALLY UNRELATED form is associated with the specific semantic and/or syntactic processes normally accompanying a morphological process.
>
> Example *Bad- worse* is a case of suppletion. *Worse* is clearly semantically related to *bad* in exactly the same way as, for example, *larger* is related to *large*, but there is no morphological relationship between the two words, e.g. there is no phonetic similarity between them.
>
> (Hurford, Heasley, and Smith 2007: 239)

This system survived from Old English into Present day English:

> The ModE suppletive paradigms *good/better/best* and *much/more/most* are direct descendants of the Old English forms (*sēlra* and *sēlest* have been lost). The modern *little* has developed regular comparative and superlative forms by analogy (*littler*, *littlest*), while *less* and *least* exist independently. Another example of such a development is OE *nēah* 'near', *nēarra* 'nearer', and *nȳhst* 'next', which gained an analogical superlative forms, *nearest*, while *next* has left the paradigm but continues to exist.
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 198)

Table 21. Suppletive adjectives in Old English and their equivalents in Present day English

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
gōd 'good'	*betra/ sēlra* 'better'	*betst/ sēlest* 'best'
yfel 'bad'	*wyrsa* 'worse'	*wyrst* 'worst'
micel 'much, many'	*māra* 'more'	*mǣst* 'most'
lȳtel 'little'	*lǣssa* 'less'	*lǣst* 'least'

2.3 Demonstratives

Old English had two paradigms for demonstratives: *Þes* 'this' and *sē* from unstressed *se* 'that'. In Present day English demonstratives agree with the noun in number (*this book, these books*). Besides number, Old English demonstratives indicated the gender and the case of the noun they modified. This means that they were fully inflected for number, case and gender, but just in the singular.

The paradigm of the demonstrative *se* 'that' is given in Table 22a and the paradigm of the demonstrative *Þes* 'this' is given in Table 22b:

Table 22 a. Demonstrative *se* 'that' in Old English

	Singular			Plural
Case	masculine	neuter	feminine	all genders
Nominative	*sē, se*	*Þæt*	*sēo*	*Þā*
Accusative	*Þone*	*Þæt*	*Þā*	*Þā*
Genitive	*Þæs*	*Þæs*	*Þǣre*	*Þāra*
Dative	*Þǣm*	*Þǣm*	*Þǣre*	*Þǣm*
Instrumental	*Þȳ*	*Þȳ*		

Table 22 b. Demonstrative *Þes* 'this' in Old English[6]

	Singular			Plural
Case	masculine	neuter	feminine	all genders
Nominative	*Þes*	*Þis*	*Þēos*	*Þās*
Accusative	*Þisne*	*Þis*	*Þās*	*Þās*
Genitive	*Þisses*	*Þisses*	*Þisse*	*Þissa*
Dative	*Þissum*	*Þissum*	*Þisse*	*Þissum*
Instrumental	*Þȳs*	*Þȳs*		

The inflexional system of the demonstratives shows more similarities to the inflexional system of pronouns than to that of nouns and they had a separate instrumental case just in the masculine and neuter singular; however, feminine singular and the plural forms do not show a distinct instrumental case. Both paradigms show some similarities; for example, the nominative and accusative of the neuter singular and the plural forms were identical, gender was only indicated in the singular, the genitive and the dative singular of the feminine were the same, the accusative singular of the masculine ended in *-ne*, the genitive plural ended in *-a*, the dative plural ended in *-m* and the dative singular of the masculine and neuter also ended in *-m*.

Present day English singular demonstratives *that* and *this* survived from the nominative neuter singular *Þæt* and *Þis*. Meanwhile, the plural demonstratives *those* and *these* had different sources, "with certain analogical additions it has also retained the nominative and accusative plural of the first demonstrative (*Þā* > *those*) and the nominative masculine singular of the second demonstrative (*Þes* > *these*) (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 194).

[6] Note that "all the forms with *-i-* also occurred with *-y-*, and in both Early and Late West Saxon there was degemination of medial /ss/ in the unstressed form" (Hogg 1992: 143).

2.4 The Old English noun phrase illustrated

After the individual description of the Old English noun phrase elements, let us consider the following two examples of fully inflected noun phrases with relevant explanations.

(5) *sēo gōde cwēn* 'the good queen'
(6) *gōdum cyningum* 'to good kings'

Example (5) is a definite noun phrase, because the head of the noun phrase *cwēn* is modified by the demonstrative *sēo*, which requires the weak declension in the adjective *gōde*. Note that *cwēn* in Proto-Germanic belonged to the feminine *i*-stem paradigm **kwēniz* (cf. Table 12). Since *cwēn* appears in the nominative feminine singular, its modifiers agree with the noun; *sēo* is the form of the demonstrative for the nominative feminine singular and the *-e* in *gōde* corresponds to the nominative feminine singular in the weak adjectival declension. Remember that although *cwēn* belonged to the strong or vocalic noun declension, the adjective that modifies it is declined here according to the weak adjectival declension. The corresponding indefinite form of this noun phrase would be *gōdu cwēn* 'the good queen'.

The noun phrase in (6) contains no demonstrative, which makes it indefinite, and so the adjective requires a strong adjectival ending according to the corresponding case. *Cyning* in Proto-Germanic belonged to the group of *a*-stem nouns **kuningaz* (cf. Table 1). Since the dative case in the plural form has *-um*, the noun phrase in (6) is inflected for the dative plural. Moreover, there is agreement between the noun and the adjective. The corresponding definite form of this noun phrase would be *Þām gōdum cyningum* 'to those good kings' or *Þissum gōdum cyningum* 'to these good kings', since *-um* was the dative plural inflexion for both paradigms (cf. Table 19 for strong and weak adjectival declensions), but it requires the demonstrative in the dative plural masculine form (cf. Tables 22a and 22b).

Chapter 3. The Middle English noun phrase

Middle English is the English that was spoken between the time of Norman conquest and the late 15th century. According to some linguists, Middle English is sometimes divided into two subperiods; Early Middle English and Late Middle English:

> ME may be distinguished from Old English or Anglo-Saxon (OE), the form of the language spoken and written before *c*. 1100, and from Modern English (ModE), which is the term used to categorise English after *c*. 1500. The ME period thus corresponds roughly with the centuries which lie between the Norman conquest of 1066 and William Caxton´s introduction of the printing in 1475. All three periods can be further subdivided chronologically; thus ME is sometimes divided into Early ME (EME) and Late ME (LME), dividing roughly in the middle of the fourteenth century correlating with the approximate date for the birth of Chaucer (*c*. 1340).
>
> (Horobin and Smith 2002: 1)

The English language of the Middle English period differed considerably from Old English, discussed in chapter 2. The following quotation, taken from Blake (1992), explains why and how Middle English differs from Old English:

> In Germanic linguistics Old vs Middle is in essence a typological distinction. A typical Old Germanic language (Gothic, Old English) will have: (a) a rich inflectional morphology, especially nominal case marking and person/ number/ mood inflection on the verb; (b) a relatively full system of unstressed vowels, with little or no merger of distinctive qualities; and (c) relative freedom in the distribution of vowel length. From this perspective, a Middle Germanic language has begun (a´) to lose its highly differentiated morphology; (b´) to reduce its unstressed vowel system, often with neutralisation to one or two qualities; and (c´) to reorganise vowel length, making it increasingly sensitive to syllable structure and phonetic context.
>
> (Blake 1992: 24-25)

Note that in this period, English was one of the four languages spoken in Britain. Besides the English language, there were (i) the Old Norse spoken by Scandinavians (Vikings) in the Danelaw area, (ii) Latin, which was still used as the language of the church and (iii) the language that was spoken by the newcomers: Anglo-Norman or Norman French, which was a rural dialect of French different from the French that was spoken in Paris at that time. This variety became the prestigious language spoken by the high class, such as kings and nobles, for more than 300 years, while Latin was used as the language of the church and English was considered as the language of the low classes. The outcome of this language contact between Old English and Anglo-Norman is usually referred to as Middle English.

As is explained in chapter 2, Old English had a very complicated system of inflexions. This system was simplified during Middle English, earlier in some parts of Britain. The period showed dialect diversity, since there was no standard variety until Late Middle English. Three large groups of dialects were identified: (a) the Northern dialect, that was spoken in Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria, northern Lancashire, and most of Yorkshire; (b) the Midlands dialect, subdivided into West and East Midlands, which was spoken between the Thames and the Humber and it corresponds to the Old English Mercian dialect; and (c) the Southern dialect, including Southeastern or Kentish, and Southwestern. Dialect differences were so strong at this time that sometimes a person from the north could not understand a person from the south. A famous example is given by William Caxton in his translation of the *Eneydos* (1490), when he tells a story about a person from the north who asks for eggs to a woman from the south and the good wife says that she cannot understand French, since *eggs* was the term borrowed from Old Norse and in native Anglo-Saxon the form used was *eyren*.

> And specyally he axyed after eggys. And the good wyf answerde that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry for he also coude speke no frenshe but wold haue hadde egges and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understood hym we.
>
> (William Caxton, *Eneydos*, 1490)

> And he asked specifically for eggs, and the good woman said that she spoke no French, and the merchant got angry for he could not speak French either, but he wanted eggs and she could not understand him. And then at last another person said that he wanted 'eyren'. Then the good woman said that she understood him well.
>
> (The British Library Board; http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126611.html)

The previous example shows that the Northern dialect was the most innovative one. This dialect shows many changes from Old English, while the Southern dialect is considered as conservative. The changes firstly occurred in the Northern dialect, maybe because of the language contact with Old Norse. Then, at a later stage, these changes were attested in the Southern dialect.

Middle English was less synthetic and more analytic than Old English, which means that it depended more and more on word order to mark the functions of the words in the clause, in contrast to Old English, which was a more synthetic language; i.e. grammatical meaning was indicated mainly through the use of inflexions. This difference

has to do with the loss and the radical simplification of the morphological system of Old English in the course of the Middle English period. The simplification occurred for two reasons:

(1) the reduction of vowels in non-accented syllables. This reduction was the most important phonological change in Middle English. It consisted of the centralization and laxing of unaccented vowels to schwa /ə/, which caused the levelling of inflexions. According to Brinton and Arnovick 2006, this levelling occurred in two stages:

> "1. the merger of unstressed *a*, *o* and *u* with *e* and their reduction to [ə]; and
> 2. the silencing of final *e*'s and the loss of medial *e*'s."
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 266)

Table 23 shows the first stage of this reduction, which approximately occurred around the eleventh century. It implies that "the vowel in the final syllable became *-e*, which we assume was pronounced [ə]. In words longer than two syllables, such as OE *mac**o**d**o**n* > ME *mak**e**d**e**(n)*, any unstressed vowel could be reduced" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 266).

Table 23. The reduction of Old English vowels in Middle English (adapted from Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 267)

Old English	Middle English
*glad**o**st*	*glad**e**st*
*mōd**o**r*	*mōd**e**r*
*bān**a**s*	*bōn**e**s*
*Þrot**u***	*throt**e***
*tal**u***	*tāl**e***
*hēaf**o**d*	*hēv**e**d*
*wic**u***	*wēk**e***

The second stage consisted of the silencing of final *e*'s, that is to say,

> From the twelfth century onward, the reduced vowel [ə] began to be silenced, even while being retained in the spelling. But as with any sound change, the loss of the reduced vowel did not occur in every case, and the *-e* has sometimes been preserved.
>
> Final e's were first to be lost – a type of apocope. We see this first in unaccented grammatical words such as *whanne* > *whan* and *Þanne* > *than*, and then (in the thirteenth

> century in the North and fourteenth century in the Midlands and South) in all other words, whether of native or foreign origin, e.g. *frendschipe* > *frendschip* and *solace* > *solas.*
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 268)

The second stage also shows the loss of medial *e*'s, which is "a kind of syncope. We find syncope affecting both suffixes and root syllables of polysyllabic words: e.g. *mægester* > *maister* […]" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 268)

Massive vowel reduction is considered as a distinctive feature of the Middle English period. The result was that Middle English inflexional endings were affected by this process of vowel loss. Brinton and Arnovick (2006) summarize this development in the following way:

> - In *-es*, the *e* disappeared everywhere except – for phonological reasons – following the sibilants [s, š, z, ž, č, ĵ], as in ModE *buses, bushes, mazes, garages, churches, judges*. This change started in the North and was completed by 1400.
> - In *-eÞ*, the *e* was lost after long syllables in the Midlands dialect (it had already been lost in the West Saxon and Kentish dialects during the Old English period). Written evidence shows considerable variation between *-eth* and *-th* in Middle English, as in *doeth* and *doth*.
> - In *-ed*, the *e* is preserved in past participles, especially when they function as adjectives, as in *blesséd, agéd, learnéd*. Past tense forms do not have the *e* except, for phonological reasons, following [t, d], as in ModE *rated* or *raided*.
> - In *-er* and *-est*, the *e* is preserved (even in Modern English).
> - In *-en*, the past participle, we see the entire suffix preserved, as in ModE *written*.
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 268)

(2) The second reason for the morphological simplification found in Middle English has to do with analogy, which implies the regularization of irregular forms from the language. In other words, analogy is a "synchronic or diachronic process by which conceptually related linguistic units are made similar (or identical) in form, especially where previous phonetic change had created a variety of forms. Analogy is often regarded as the result of the move towards economy of form or as a way to facilitate the acquisition of the morphological forms of a language" (Bussmann 1996: 55)

The outcome of this simplification was as follows:

1. Nouns lost their classes; their classification according to the thematic element (nouns belonging to the strong or vocalic declension and nouns belonging to the weak or consonantal declension) was irrelevant in Middle English.

2. Grammatical gender ceased to be distinct. Brinton and Arnovick (2006) explain how grammatical gender was lost in this way:

> Accompanying the loss of inflections in Middle English adjectives, nouns, and demonstratives was the disappearance, for internal and external reasons, of grammatical gender. Inherent difficulties exist when grammatical and natural (or biological) gender are at odds, even though grammatical gender systems are not fundamentally illogical and many languages have managed to preserve such systems. As early as the Old English period, these clashes were being resolved in favor of natural gender. Phonetic weakening is a second internal factor contributing to the loss of gender: it prompted the collapse of noun classes (which were based on gender), the loss of gender distinctions in the adjectives, and the reduction of the demonstratives (either to an invariable definite article or to a form indicating number alone). An external factor was at play as well: the dual gender system of French (masculine/feminine) may have caused confusion for English speakers. Moreover, sometimes the genders of an English noun and of its synonym in French differed, e.g. Fr. *lune* (fem.) and English *mona* (masc.). Given that the gender system was already changing in Old English, however, we might conclude that internal factors were the most important.
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 277-278)

3. Articles appeared and a distinction developed between the articles and the demonstratives.
4. As the nouns and the adjectives lost their cases and there was agreement between them, the simplification also occurred in the demonstratives.

Table 24 shows this levelling and its outcome in Middle English with some examples. Note that these examples include nouns, adjectives and verbs.

Table 24. The levelling of Old English inflections in Middle English (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 267)

Old English inflexion	Middle English inflexion	Example
-a, -u, -e	*-e, Ø*	*scipu > scipe*
-an, -on, –en, -um, -ne	*-e(n)*	*drīfan > drīven*
-es, -as	*-es*	*stānas > stōnes*
-aÞ, -eÞ	*-eth*	*drīfaÞ > drīveth*
-er, -or, -ra, -re	*-er*	*heardra > harder*
-est, -ost, -ast	*-est*	*heardost > hardest*
-ed, -od	*-ed*	*macod > maked*
-ena	*-en(e)*	*blindena > blinden(e)*
-ende	*-end(e)*	*drīfende > drīvende*
-enne	*-en(e)*	*tō drīfenne > to driven(e)*

The following sections deal with the development of the noun phrase in Middle English, paying attention to nouns, adjectives and demonstratives, on the basis of information taken from various sources, including Blake (1992), Brinton and Arnovick (2006), Burrow and Turville-Petre (1992) and Gramley (2012). It will trace the most important changes that occurred in the morphological system in the domain of the noun phrase from Old English to Middle English.

3.1 Nouns

Old English nouns had a very rich system of inflexions (cf. section 2.1). To some extent this system was ambiguous. Take, for instance, the inflexional ending *-e*, which showed ten possible declension combinations; in this case, it was difficult to identify to which case or number it belonged just by looking at the noun on its own. In Middle English the Old English system of inflexions went into processes of reduction and analogy. The outcome was that nouns lost their classes and the cases were reduced, especially in the plural. To understand this better, I will refer to Middle English noun inflexions given in Table 25:

Table 25. Middle English noun inflexions illustrated

Cases and number	Inflexion	Example
Sg. nominative, accusative	∅	*hound*
Sg. genitive	*-(e)s*	*hound**es***
Sg. dative	∅, *-e*	*hound(**e**)*
Plural	*-(e)s*	*hound**es***

This system applied to all nouns in Middle English. Although there were a few different endings according to the dialect (Northern, Midland and Southern), this system (cf. Table 25) was the productive inflexional system for all nouns. Note that the dative sometimes had *-e* as its inflexion; during the Early Middle English period this ending was already lost, which made the dative similar to the nominative and the accusative singular. The genitive singular *-(e)s*[7] was taken from the *a*-stem vocalic or strong nouns of Old English (cf. section 2.1.1.1), which became the analogical form during Middle English and it was applied to all nouns, including those that were borrowed from French, such as *villein/villeins*. Remember that Old English also had the *s*-less genitive (cf. section 2.1.1.2); this form was still in use and it appeared in Middle English texts; for example, "from the feminine *ō*-stem declension, in which the genitive was originally *-e* > ∅ (e.g. *Soule nede* 'soul's need'); from the weak declension, in which the genitive was originally *-an* > *-en* > *-e* > ∅ (e.g. *Herte blood* 'heart's blood'); and from the *r*-stem declension, in which the genitive was originally ∅ (e.g. *Doghter name* 'daughter's name')" (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 271).

The plural forms of Middle English showed greater simplification of the Old English inflexional system than the singular, since *-(e)s* was the only ending used for all classes of nouns and all the cases. It has the same source as the genitive: it comes from the nominative and accusative *-as* of *a*-stem masculine nouns which by the reduction of vowels in non-accented syllables into schwa became *-(e)s*. This became the analogical or the productive form for the plural. This ending was firstly used in the North and Midlands; then around the fourteenth century it started to appear in the South. There was a competition between two plural markers: the first one was used in the North from the nominative and accusative *-as* plural, later *-es*, and the second one was used in the South

[7] The apostrophe *-'s* of the inflexion of the genitive case of Present day English was a later innovation; it did not appear in Middle English texts.

from the nominative and accusative of the Old English weak declension *-an*, later *-en*; this ending was not productive any longer. In Present day English we just have two or maybe three nouns whose plural marker derives from the weak declension of Old English (cf. section 2.1.2): *oxen, children* and *brethren*. Even though *-en* is the plural marker that came from the weak declension of Old English, *-an* > *-en*, there were nouns that originally tended to be strong or vocalic nouns in Old English such as *dēoflas*, which belonged to the *a*-stem masculine declension (cf. Table 1), and *word* which belonged to the *a*-stem neuter declension (cf. Table 8), but which in Middle English, especially in the Southern dialect, was considered more conservative than the Northern dialect, took *-en* as their plural inflexion. The table below shows two strong nouns, *dēoflas* 'devils' and *word* 'words', and two of minor consonantal nouns, *brođor* 'brothers' and '*cildru*' children, taking *-en* in Middle English as their plural marker.

Table 26. The inflexion *-en* as a plural marker in Middle English

Old English	Middle English	Modern English
dēoflas (*a* -stem masculine)	*dev(e)l**en***	*devils*
word (*a*-stem, neuter)	*word**en***	*words*
brođor (*r*-stem)	*breth(e)r**en***	*brothers, brethren*
cildru (*z*-stem)	*childr**en***	*children*
cū (root consonant stem)	*kȳ**n***	*kine*

Brinton and Arnovick note that

> As you can see by the ModE forms *devils*, *words*, and *brothers*, the *-en* has been replaced by the analogical *-s* plural. However, *-en* is preserved in the double plurals of *children*, *brethren*, and the poetic *kine* (although this last is very rare today). The *-en* plural remained popular even to Shakespeare's time in words such as *shoen*. The ending is also preserved legitimately in *oxen*, a remnant Old English weak noun. Umlauted plurals of the root-consonant-stem declension remain in Middle English (eg. *foot*/*feet*), but we see these replaced gradually with analogical *s*-plurals: eg. OE *frēond*/*frȳnd* > ME *freend*/*freendes* 'friends' or OE *burg*/*byrig* > ME *burȝ*/*burȝes* 'cities'. Similarly, endingless plurals of the neuter *a*-stem can be found (eg. ME *swyn/swyn*) but give way to analogical *s*-plural in later texts: eg. ME *hors/hors*, *horses* or *thing/thing*, *thinges*. *R*-plurals of the *z*-stem declension survive in ME *lambre, calvre*, and *childre*, although often with the addition of a weak *-en* plural marker, yielding *lambren, calvren, childre*. The plural native word for 'egg', *ǣg*, invariably appears in Middle English with a double plural inflection as *eiren*. We do not find the analogical plural *cows* until texts from the seventeenth century.
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 272)

3.2 Adjectives

The inflexional system of adjectives in Old English depended on the definiteness of the noun phrase (cf. section 2.2): the weak declension was used when the noun phrase was definite; elsewhere, the strong declension appeared. This system showed the greatest change of the inflexional system during Middle English. The complicated Old English system (cf. section 2.2) was reduced affecting both the strong and the weak declensions. The processes of vowel reduction and analogy played an important role in this simplification; the strong declension made a distinction between the singular, which had a zero ending, and the plural, which had *-e*; however, the weak declension had *-e* as the inflexion for both numbers, singular and plural.

The paradigm of Late Middle English adjectival endings is given in Table 27:

Table 27. Late Middle English adjectival endings

Number	Strong declension	Weak declension
Singular	∅	*-e*
Plural	*-e*	*-e*

The only feature that this system preserved from Old English is that adjectives were still inflected for number, but not for case or gender. The paradigm shown in Table 27 corresponds only to adjectives with one syllable, the so called monosyllabic adjectives, which ended in a consonant; for example, *leef* 'dear', *hard* 'hard' or *brood* 'broad', which were inflected. The rest of the adjectives, with more than one syllable, such as *bisy* 'busy' or *hethen* 'heathen', were uninflected.

> The principle holds for adjectives borrowed from French: *seynt* 'holy' is inflected, but *gentil* 'gentile' is uninflected. Inflection of the adjective ceased altogether after the thirteenth century when the final *e*'s were lost. The exception is in the conservative Southern dialects, which kept some adjectival endings (eg. *-ne*, *-es*, *-e*, *-re* in the strong and *-en* in the weak declension) throughout the period. Overall, though, we can say that Middle English shows a strong tendency towards invariable forms, i.e. forms not inflected to show grammatical differences.
>
> (Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 270)

Table 27 shows the adjectival endings of Late Middle English where cases were lost, but in Early Middle English adjectives were still inflected for case and gender. Let

us take an example, the adjective *blind*, to trace the change that occurred from Old English to Middle English:

Table 28. Changes in the declension of the adjective from Old English to Middle English (the weak declension)

	OE	Early ME	Late ME
Sg. nominative	*blind-a/e*	*blind-e*	*blind-e*
Sg. accusative	*blind-an*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*
Sg. genitive	*blind-an*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*
Sg. dative	*blind-an*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*
Pl. nominative	*blind-an*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*
Pl. accusative	*blind-an*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*
Pl. genitive	*blind-ra/ena*	*blind-en/ene*	*blind-e*
Pl. dative	*blind-um*	*blind-en*	*blind-e*

Table 29. Changes in the declension of the adjective from Old English to Middle English (the strong declension)

	OE (masc., neut., fem.)	Early ME (masc., neut., fem.)	Late ME
Sg. nominative	*blind, blind, blind-u*	*blind, blind, blind*	*blind*
Sg. accusative	*blind-ne, blind, blind-e*	*blind-e, blind, blind-e*	*blind*
Sg. genitive	*blind-es, blind-es, blind-re*	*blind-es, blind-es, blind-er*	*blind*
Sg. dative	*blind-um, blind-um, blind-re*	*blind-e(n), blind-(n), blind-er*	*blind*
Pl. nominative	*blind-e, blind-u, blind-a*	*blind-e*	*blind-e*
Pl. accusative	*blind-e, blind-u, blind-a*	*blind-e*	*blind-e*
Pl. genitive	*blind-ra*	*blind-er*	*blind-e*
Pl. dative	*blind-um*	*blind-e(n)*	*blind-e*

The forms of the comparative and the superlative did not change much in Middle English. The only change that occurred was that the forms of the comparative *-ra* of Old English appeared as *-er* in Middle English and the superlative *-est* or *-ost* of Old English appeared as *-est.* The Old English umlauted comparative and superlative forms were retained in Middle English (*older/ elder/ eldest, long/ lenger/ lengest*), but there were other umlauted forms which suffered analogical changes and they were regularized. These forms firstly appeared in the Northern dialect. Some of the comparative and superlative forms showed the doubling of the consonant of the root; for example, *great* and *late* (*greet/ gretter/ grettest, late/ latter/ lattest*). Analogy played an important role to regularize these forms and the outcome was *great/ greater/ greatest, late/ later/ latest*. The periphrastic forms with *more* and *most* already existed in Old English but their usage was extended in Middle English. They differed from Present day English in that *more* and *most* appeared with adjectives of one or two syllables. Sometimes the result was double comparison (eg. *most fairest),* which is not accepted nowadays in the standard language, although some speakers still use it in colloquial style.

3.3 Demonstratives

Old English demonstratives were fully inflected for two numbers, three to five cases and three genders in the singular (cf. Tables 22a and 22b). By the end of the Middle English period this system was simplified into just five distinct forms. However, Early Middle English texts showed inflected forms of the demonstratives, but as the nouns and the adjectives lost their cases and there was agreement between them, the simplification also occurred in the demonstratives. This simplification of the inflexions and their loss was earliest in the North and East, while texts from South and West remained more conservative.

The article *the* of Present day English comes from the Old English masculine singular nominative demonstrative *se* 'that', which was declinable (cf. section 2.3). By Middle English *se* developed into *Þe/the* under the influence of the *th*-demonstratives; it became undeclinable and its function changed from deictic to anaphoric function.

The use of the article *the* in anaphoric function firstly appeared in Peterborough's *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, where *Þe/the* was already used as a definite article. This is an important grammatical change since the usage of the articles, unlike that of the demonstratives, is obligatory. *That/those* and *this/these* continue to have a deictic

function, as in Old English. Brinton and Arnovick (2006) summarize the sources of the demonstratives in the following way:

1. *That* derives from the neuter singular nominative and accusative of the OE 'that' demonstrative, *Þæt*.
2. *Those* derives from the nominative and accusative plural of the OE 'that' demonstrative, *Þā* (with ME shift of [ā] > [ɔ̄]) plus the addition of an analogical *-s* plural ending (Lass 1992: 114).
3. *This* derives from the neuter singular nominative and accusative of the OE 'this' demonstrative, *Þis*.
4. *These* derives by analogy with the addition of the adjectival plural ending *-e* to the masculine singular form of the OE 'this' demonstrative, *Þes + e*.

(Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 276-277)

Chapter 4. Parallel texts: *The three Magi* (Mt. 2. 1 – 4) and *The kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 13. 45)

In this chapter I compare two parallel texts from Old English and Middle English, to illustrate the changes that occurred in the morphological system of nouns, adjectives and demonstratives. I have chosen some biblical passages from Matthew: *The three Magi* (Mt. 2. 1- 4) and *The kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 13. 45), taken from Görlach (1997: 156-157, 174-175). I provide the same passage in three versions: Old English (West Saxon dialect), Middle English (Wycliffite translation) and Present day English (Revised English Bible).

Text 1. Old English, West Saxon version

1 Eornustlīce Þā sē Hǣlend ācenned wæs on Iudeiscre Bethleem, on Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes, Þā cōmon Þā tungolwītegan fram ēastdǣle tō Hierusalem,

2 and cwǣdon, Hwǣr ys sē Iudea cyning Þe ācenned ys? Sōđlīce wē gesāwon hys steorran on ēastdǣle, and we cōmon ūs him tō geeadmēdene.

3 Đa Herodes Þæt gehȳrde, đā wearđ hē gedrēfed and eal Hierosolim waru mid him.

4 And Þā gegaderode Herodes ealle ealdras Þǣra sācerda and folces wrīteras, and āxode hwǣr Crīst ācenned wǣre.

45 Eft is heofena rice gelīc Þām mangere Þe sōhte Þæt gōde meregrot;

Text 2. Middle English, Wycliffite translation version

1 Therfor whanne Jhesus was borun in Bethleem of Juda, in the daies of king Eroude, lo! astromyenes camen fro the eest to Jerusalem,

2 and seiden, Where is he, that is borun king of Jewis? for we han seyn his sterre in the eest, and we comen to worschipe him.

3 But king Eurode herde, and was trubid, and al Jerusalem with hym.

4 And he gaderide to gidre alle the prynces of prestis, and scribis of the puple, and enqerueride of hem, where Crist shulde be borun.

45 Eftsoone the kyngdom of heuenes is lijk to a marchaunt, that sechith good margaritis;

Text 3. Present day English, Revised English Bible version

1 Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers from the east arrived in Jerusalem,

2 asking, 'Where is the new-born king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star, and we have come to pay the homage'.

3 King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this, and so was the whole Jerusalem.

4 He called together the chief priests and scribes of the Jews, and asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

In what follows, I provide the noun phrases found in Text 1 and their equivalents in Text 2.

Old English (West Saxon)	Middle English (Wycliffite translation)
• *sē Hælend*	*Jhesus*
• *Iudeiscre Bethleem*	*Bethleem of Juda*
• *Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*	*the daies of king Eroude*
• *Þā tungolwītegan*	*astromyenes*
• *ēastdǣle*	*the eest*
• *Hierusalem*	*Jerusalem*
• *sē Iudea cyning*	*king of Jewis*
• *hys steorran*	*his sterre*
• *Herodes*	*Eurode*
• *eal Hierosolim*	*al Jerusalem*
• *ealdras Þāra sācerda*	*the prynces of prestis*
• *folces wrīteras*	*scribis of the puple*
• *Crīst*	*Crist*
• *heofena rice*	*the kyngdom of heuenes*
• *Þām mangere*	*a marchaunt*
• *Þæt gōde meregrot*	*good margaritis*

The different noun phrases in the Old English text (West Saxon dialect) can be classified as follows:

- Noun phrases that consist of a noun on its own, either a common noun:
  - *ēastdǣle*

or a proper noun:

  - *Hierusalem*
  - *Herodes*
  - *Crīst*

- Noun phrases that consist of a pre-modifier and the head noun. The modifier can be either another noun, such as:
  - *folces wrīteras*
  - *heofena rice*

or an adjective, as in:

  - *Iudeiscre Bethleem*

- Noun phrases that consist of a determiner and a noun. The determiner can be a possessive which precedes the head noun:
  - *hys steorran*

or a demonstrative, as in:

  - *sē Hǣlend*
  - *Þā tungolwītegan*
  - *Þām mangere*

- Noun phrases that consist of a demonstrative, the head noun and one or more modifiers. In such cases the head noun can be modified by a proper noun preceding the head noun:
  - *sē Iudea cyning*

or an adjective, also placed before the head noun:

  - *Þæt gōde meregrot*

or a common noun, inflected for the genitive, which functions as pre-modifier (before the head noun), and a proper noun, also inflected for the genitive, functioning as post-modifier (after the head noun), as in:

  - *Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*

- Noun phrases that consist of a head noun post-modified by a noun phrase of the type ‘demonstrative + head noun’ inflected for the genitive:

- ealdras Þǣra sācerda

In what follows, I provide the meaning, gender, case, number and declension of the different constituents in the noun phrases given above from the Old English (West Saxon) version, using Marsden's (2004: 396-516) glossary. The forms are provided below in alphabetical order.

- *Bethleem*: proper noun, feminine dative singular; 'Bethlehem'. The dative case is determined here by the preposition *on* in *on Iudeiscre Bethleem*.
- *Crīst*: proper noun, nominative singular; 'Christ'. *Crīst* is inflected for the nominative case because it functions as the subject of the clause *hwær Crīst ācenned wǣre*.
- *Cyning*: noun, masculine nominative singular; 'king, ruler'. *Cyning* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension given in Table 1. *Cyning* is inflected here for the nominative case because it functions as the subject of its clause, in agreement with the demonstrative *sē* in *Hwǣr ys sē Iudea cyning Þe ācenned ys*.
- *cyninges*: noun, masculine genitive singular; the nominative singular is *cyning* 'king, ruler'. *Cyninges* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension (cf. Table 1). The genitive case is marked through the inflexion *-es* is used here and because it modifies *dagum* in the noun phrase *Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*. It shows agreement in case, number and gender with the determiner and with the post-modifier *Herodes*.
- *dagum*: noun, masculine dative plural; the nominative singular is *dæg* 'day', which follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension of *hwæl* given in Table 4. The dative case is marked through the inflexion *-um* and it is determined by the preposition *on* in the prepositional phrase *on Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*.
- *ealdras*: noun, masculine accusative plural; the nominative singular is *ealdor* 'leader, master, chief'. The noun follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension given in Table 1. The accusative case, which is marked through the inflexion *-as*, is used here because it functions as the direct object of the verb *gegaderode* in the clause *Þā gegaderode Herodes ealle ealdras Þǣra sācerda and folces wrīteras*.
- *ēastdǣle*: noun, masculine dative singular; the nominative singular is *ēastdǣle* 'eastern part'. *Ēastdǣle* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension of *fiscere* given in Table 3. The dative case is marked through the inflexion *-e* and it is required by the preposition *fram* in *fram ēastdǣle*.

- *folces*: noun, neuter genitive singular; the nominative singular is *folc* 'people'. *Folces* follows the strong neuter *a*-stem declension given in Table 7, specially that corresponding to the long stem. The genitive case is marked through the inflexion *-es* since it modifies *wrīteras* in *folces wrīteras*.
- *gōde*: adjective, neuter accusative singular; 'good'. *Gode* follows here the weak adjectival declension given in Table 19. Adjectives follow the weak declension in definite noun phrases and definiteness is marked in this case through the demonstrative *Þæt* in *Þæt gōde meregrot*. The accusative case is marked through the inflexion *-e* and there is agreement between the determiner, the adjective and the noun.
- *Hælend*: noun, masculine nominative singular; 'a healer, a saviour, the Messiah: Jesus Christ'. Marsden (2004: 271) classifies *Hælend* in the *nd-* declension; he explains that "these are AGENT NOUNS (all masc.), derived from the present participles of verbs (and sometimes collectively ascribed to an '*nd*-declension'). They have alternative inflections, or no inflection, in the nom./acc. pl. and insert *r* before the gen. pl. ending." *Hælend* is inflected for the nominative case because it functions as the subject of its clause in *Þā sē Hælend ācenned wæs on Iudeiscre Bethleem*.
- *heofena*: noun, masculine genitive plural; the nominative singular is *heofon* 'heaven'. *Heofena* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension of *finger* given in Table 6. The genitive case is marked through the inflexion *-a*; it modifies *rice* in the noun phrase *heofena rice*.
- *Herodes*: proper noun, masculine genitive singular; 'Herod'. *Herodes* is inflected for the genitive case because it modifies *dagum* in the noun phrase *Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*.
- *Herodes*: proper noun, masculine nominative singular; 'Herod'. *Herodes* is inflected for the nominative case because it functions as the subject of its clause in *Ða Herodes Þæt gehȳrde* and in *Þā gegaderode Herodes ealle ealdras Þǣra sācerda and folces wrīteras*.
- *Hierusalem*: proper noun, feminine dative singular; 'Jerusalem'. The dative case is required by the preposition *tō* in the prepositional phrase *tō Hierusalem*.
- *hys*: possessive pronoun for the third person masculine genitive singular, 'his'.

- *Iudea*: proper noun, genitive plural of *Iudei*; 'the Jewish'. *Iudea* is inflected for the genitive case because it modifies *cyning* in *sē* <u>*Iudea*</u> *cyning*.
- *Iudeiscre*: adjective, feminine dative singular; 'Jewish'. *Iudeiscre* follows the strong adjectival declension given in Table 19. Adjectives follow the strong declension in indefinite noun phrases, as in <u>*Iudeiscre*</u> *Bethleem*. The dative case is marked through the inflexion *-re* and is required by the preposition *on* in the prepositional phrase *on Iudeiscre Bethleem*. The noun phrase shows agreement in case, number and gender between the adjective and the noun.
- *mangere*: noun, masculine dative singular; the nominative singular is *manger* 'merchant, trader, dealer'. *Mangere* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension given in Table 1. The dative case is marked through the inflexion *-e* and is required here by *gelīc* in *gelīc* <u>*Þām mangere*</u>.
- *meregrot*: noun, neuter accusative singular; the nominative singular is *meregrot* 'pearl'. *Meregrot* follows the strong neuter *a*-stem declension given in Table 7. The whole noun phrase functions as the direct object of *sōhte* in *sōhte* <u>*Þæt gōde meregrot*</u>.
- *rice*: noun, neuter nominative singular; 'kingdom, realm, authority, rule, power'. *rice* follows the strong neuter *a*-stem declension given in Table 7. Marsden (2004: 366) points out that "NOUNS IN ***–e*** (originating in the '*i*-declension') are declined like *scip* with the *-e* dropped in the pl." *Rice* is inflected for the nominative case because it functions as the subject of its clause in *Eft is* <u>*heofena rice*</u> *gelīc Þām mangere*.
- *sācerda*: noun, masculine genitive plural; the nominative singular is *sācerd* 'priest'. *Sācerda* follows the strong masculine *a*-stem declension given in Table 1. The genitive case is marked through the inflexion *-a*; it modifies *ealdras* in *ealdras* <u>*Þǣra sācerda*</u>.
- *sē*: demonstrative, masculine nominative singular in agreement with *Hǣlend*; 'the' (cf. Table 22a).
- *steorran*: noun, masculine accusative singular; the nominative singular is *steorra* 'star'. *Steorran* follows the masculine *n*-stem (weak) declension given in Table 15. The accusative case is used here because *steorran* functions as the direct object of the verb *gesāwon*.

- *tungolwītegan*: noun, masculine nominative plural; the nominative singular is *tungolwītega* 'planet-knower or astronomer'. *Tungolwītegan* follows the masculine *n*-stem weak declension given in Table 15. The nominative case is marked through the inflexion *-an.* It functions as the subject of its clause in *Þā cōmon Þā tungolwītegan*.
- *wrīteras*: noun, masculine accusative plural; the nominative singular is *wrītere* 'writer, scribe, copyist'. *Wrīteras* follows the declension of *fiscere* given in Table 3. The accusative case is marked through the inflexion *-as*. It functions as the direct object of its clause *Þā gegaderode Herodes ealle ealdras Þǣra sācerda and folces wrīteras*.
- *Þā*: demonstrative, masculine nominative plural in agreement with *tungolwītegan*; the masculine nominative singular is *se* 'the' (cf. Table 22a).
- *Þǣra*: demonstrative, masculine genitive plural in agreement with *sācerda*; the masculine nominative singular is *se* 'the' (cf. Table 22a).
- *Þæs*: demonstrative, masculine genitive singular in agreement with *cyninges*; the masculine nominative singular is *se* 'the' (cf. Table 22a)
- *Þæt*: demonstrative, neuter accusative singular in agreement with *meregrot*; the masculine nominative singular is *se* 'the' (cf. Table 22a)
- *Þām*: demonstrative, masculine dative singular in agreement with *mangere*; the masculine nominative singular is *se* 'the' (cf. Table 22a).

If you compare Text 1 and Text 2, you will notice that Text 2 is more understandable, since it was written during the Middle English period, which is considered a less synthetic and a more analytic language, closer to present day English, which means that it depended more and more on word order to mark the functions of the constituents in the clause. This has to do with the morphological simplification of Old English nouns, adjectives and demonstratives. As mentioned in chapter 3, this simplification occurred for two reasons: the reduction of vowels in non-accented syllables and analogy.

The reduction consisted of the centralization and laxing of unaccented vowels to schwa, which caused the levelling of inflexions. According to Brinton and Arnovick (2006: 266), this levelling occurred in two stages (cf. chapter 3). The first stage is shown in the following examples, where we find the reduction of unaccented /*a, o, u*/ to schwa, which occurred around the eleventh century:

- OE (WS) *dag**u**m* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *dai**e**s*
- OE (WS) *steorr**a**n* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *sterr**e***
- OE (WS) *heofen**a*** > ME (Wycliffite translation) *heuen**e**s*
- OE *ealdr**a**s* > ME *ealdr**e**s*
- OE *wrīter**a**s* > ME *writer**e**s*

The second stage of the levelling of inflexions occurred from the twelfth century onwards, and consisted of the silencing of final *e*'s, even while being retained in spelling, as shown in the following example:

- OE (WS) *steorran* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *sterr**e*** > PDE *star*

The result of the massive vowel reduction that occurred during Middle English was that the inflexional endings were affected by the process of vowel loss, as shown in the following examples:

- OE (WS) *dag**u**m* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *dai**e**s* > PDE *days*
- OE (WS) *heofen**a*** > ME (Wycliffite translation) *heuen**e**s* > PDE *heavens*
- OE *wrīter**a**s* > ME *writer**e**s* > PDE *writers*

Analogy played an important role in the process of morphological simplification during the Middle English period, especially in the plural. Most nouns took *-(e)s* as their plural marker deriving from the Old English strong masculine *a*-stem declension (cf. section 2.1.1.1), as shown in the following examples:

- OE (WS) *dagum* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *dai**es***
- OE (WS) *heofena* > ME (Wycliffite translation) *heuene**s***

Note that *-um* in *dagum* and *-a* in *heofena* are inflexions for the dative and the genitive plural in Old English.

The main difference between Text 1 and Text 2 is the use of cases to mark the role of noun phrases. Text 1 uses a number of inflexions attached to nouns and adjectives, such as *-re*, *-es*, *-um*. However, Text 2 uses more prepositions than inflexions to indicate the relation between the different constituents in the clause. Take for instance the following examples:

(7.a) *Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*
(7.b) *the daies of king Eroude*

(8.a) *sē Iudea cyning*
(8.b) *king of Jewis*

(9.a) *ealdras Þāra sācerda*
(9.b) *the prynces of prestis*

Examples (7b), (8b) and (9b) show the use of the preposition *of* to indicate possession. However, in examples (7a), (8a) and (9a), possession is indicated through the genitive case inflexions, such as *-es* in *cyninges*, *-a* in *Iudea* and *-a* in *sācerda*.

Noun phrases in the Old English (West Saxon) version show the complicated morphological system of that time. On the other hand, in Middle English (Wycliffite translation) this system is simplified. Example (7a) has two inflexions: *-es* in *cyninges* and *Herodes* indicates the genitive singular of strong masculine *a*-stem nouns and *-um* in *dagum* the dative plural which is determined by the preposition *on* in *on Þæs cyninges dagum Herodes*. However, example (7b) shows these functions mainly through the preposition *of* and word order. As mentioned in chapter 3, during Middle English these inflexions were lost; the examples in (b) show the changes that occurred in the inflexional system. Note that *king* in (7b) has no inflexion and *daies* has the dominant plural ending; the analogical *-s* was the dominant plural ending from the vocalic or strong masculine *a*-stem nouns. First the *-u* in *dagum* changed into schwa by the process of the weakening of vowels in unaccented syllables; then the final *-m* was lost. Moreover, in example (8a) *cyning* shows no ending, since it is the nominative singular of a strong masculine *a*-stem noun (cf. Table 1), in agreement with the demonstrative *sē* (cf. Table 22a). The inflexion *-a* in *Iudea* indicates the genitive plural of *Iudei*, which is inflected for this case because it modifies *cyning* in the noun phrase *sē Idudea cyning*. However, in the Middle English example in (8b), this function is indicated through the preposition *of* in the noun phrase *king of Jewis*, which consists of the head noun *king* modified by the prepositional phrase *of Jewis*. Something similar occurs in example (9). (9a) is a noun phrase that consists of a head noun *ealdras*; the inflexion *-as* indicates the accusative plural of strong masculine

a-stem nouns, post-modified by a noun phrase of the type 'demonstrative + head noun' inflected for the genitive case *Þǣra sācerda*; the inflexion *-a* in *sācerda* indicates the genitive plural of strong masculine *a*-stem nouns (cf. Table 1) in agreement with the demonstrative *Þǣra* (cf. Table 22a). However, in the Middle English version of this example (9b), the genitive case is indicated through the preposition *of* in the noun phrase *the prynces of prestis*, which consists of the determiner *the* (definite article) followed by the head noun *prynces*, which is modified by the prepositional phrase *of prestis*.

Another difference is found in the demonstrative system of Old English. Example (7) shows the changes that occurred in the demonstrative system and the emergence of the definite article *the* during the Middle English period. Example (7a) shows the demonstrative *Þæs* in agreement with the noun *cyninges*, which is the masculine singular genitive (cf. Table 22a). However, example (7b) has the definite article *the*, which was an innovation from the masculine nominative singular *sē* of Old English (cf. section 3.3).

Example (10) is the most obvious example that shows the changes discussed in this dissertation:

(10.a) *Þæt gōde meregrot*
(10.b) *that good margaritis*

(10a) is a definite noun phrase, containing a head noun *meregrot*, an adjective *gōde* modifying the noun and a demonstrative *Þæt*. Definiteness is marked through the nominative/accusative singular neuter demonstrative *Þæt* (cf. Table 22a), and the adjective *gode* follows the weak adjectival declension (cf. Table 17), since adjectives in definite noun phrases are inflected according to the weak declension. The noun *meregrot* belongs to the vocalic or strong neuter *a*-stem declension (cf. Table 7). The corresponding indefinite form of example (10a) should be *gōd meregrot*.

During the Middle English period adjectives were inflected just to show number, while cases were lost (cf. section 3.2). *Good* in (10b) should have *-e* as the weak plural ending of adjectives in Late Middle English (cf. Table 27), but after the thirteenth century the inflexional system of adjectives changed when the final *e*'s were lost; because of this *good* shows no inflexion here, taking into account that Text 2 was written during the fourteenth century.

Chapter 5. Summary

This dissertation has explored the changes that occurred in the morphological system of the noun phrase, especially nouns, adjectives and demonstratives, from Old English to Middle English. Chapter 2 was devoted to introducing the characterization of the three word classes, and how Old English was a highly inflected language. Chapter 3 examined the loss and the radical simplification of the inflexional system during Middle English and the emergence of the definite article from the demonstrative system of Old English. In chapter 4, I compared two parallel texts from Old and Middle English.

The morphological system of English underwent a number of changes until reaching Present day English. The changes started during the Old English period and continued until the English language had a standard variety. As mentioned in chapter 2, the majority of Old English nouns fell into two major groups: the so-called vocalic and consonantal declensions. There were four major vocalic subdivisions, according to the vowel that appears after the root: *a*-stem, *ō*-stem, *i*-stem and *u*-stem. There were other minor and athematic declensions. Old English also had two adjectival systems: weak and strong declensions. The weak declension was used in definite noun phrases; elsewhere adjectives followed the strong declension. Moreover, Old English adjectives were inflected to show two degrees of comparison and a few adjectives formed their comparative and superlative forms by suppletion. Chapter 2 also presented the two paradigms of demonstratives in Old English and how they indicated the number, the gender and the case of the noun they accompanied.

The core of this dissertation is found in chapter 3, which was devoted to the discussion of the most relevant morphological changes in the noun phrase during the Middle English period. As mentioned in this chapter, these changes occurred for two reasons: (1) the reduction of vowels in non-accented syllables, which caused the levelling of inflexions and (2) analogy, which implies the regularization of irregular forms from the language. The outcome of this simplification was that nouns lost their classes and the cases were reduced, especially in the plural. In Late Middle English, adjectives were just inflected for number, while case and gender distinctions were lost. The demonstrative system was simplified too; as the nouns and the adjectives lost their cases and there was agreement between them, the simplification also occurred in the demonstratives. The

definite article emerged from the masculine singular nominative *se* 'that' and it became indeclinable with a new anaphoric function.

In chapter 4, we saw how the morphological system of Old English has changed during the Middle English period. The most relevant changes taking place in the noun phrase were shown through the comparison of parallel texts from Old and Middle English.

We have seen in this dissertation how difficult Old English is to contemporary speakers, and how the English language changed through history. Middle English is much easier to be understood, even though in some situations we have to consult a specialized dictionary. This dissertation explored two main periods of the English language, Old English and Middle English, focusing on the main changes that occurred in the morphological system of the noun phrase, but the changes did not stop there; in later periods there are more changes, since languages are always changing, even though we, as speakers of the language, are not necessarily aware of it.

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