



Middle English Syntax

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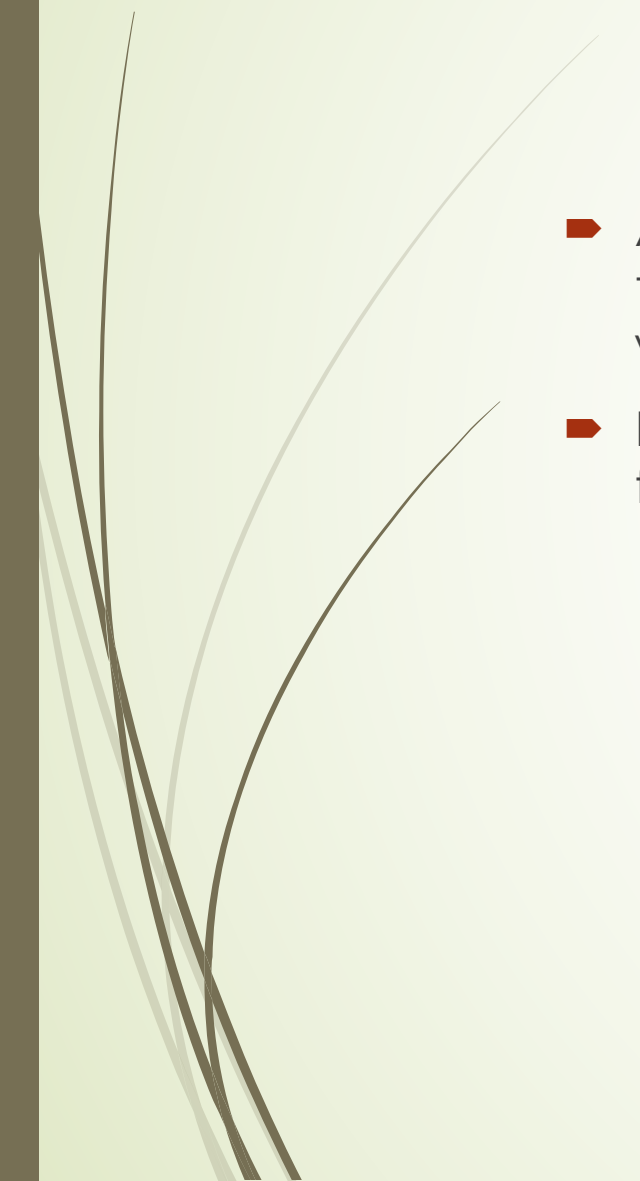


Word order

- The inflectional system replaced by different means
- WO became more important: inflections were increasingly incapable of showing which noun was the subject of the sentence, and which the object
- this function was taken over by the use of the S–V–O word-order
- The S–O–V word-order found in some subordinate clauses disappeared in Early Middle English.
- The use of V–S–O order, especially after certain adverbs, persisted throughout the period
- Middle English period: S–V–O was established as the normal type, as it still is

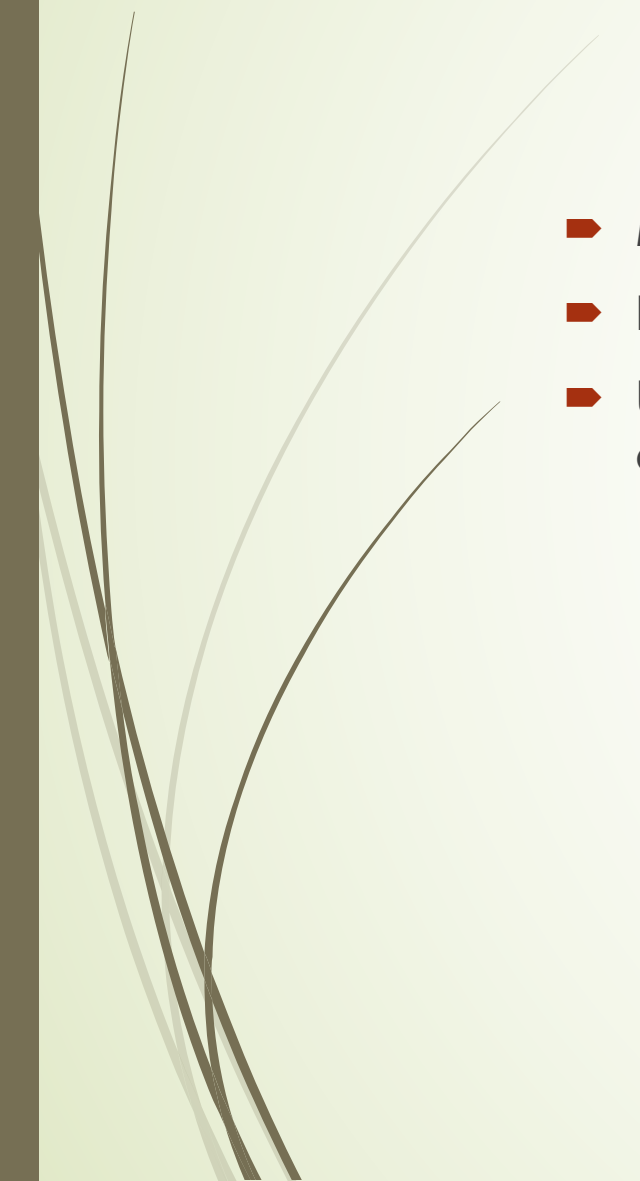


Use of separate words

- ▶ Another device encouraged by the decay of the inflectional system was the **use of separate words** to perform the functions formerly carried out by word-endings.
 - ▶ For example, prepositions like **in**, **with** and **by** came to be used more frequently than in Old English.
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Early Modern English

- Middle Ages: restoration of English as a major literary language in England
 - Latin still had great prestige as the language of international learning
 - Under the influence of the humanists, the grammar-school syllabus was centred on Classical Latin from the early sixteenth century onwards
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English vs Latin



- **The first factor:** religious disputes (15th to 17th cent)
- During the Reformation, people engaged in controversy wanted to be read by as large a public as possible
- Thomas More (Pamphlets), a century later – Milton (defences of the English Republic) - both written in Latin
- ...but... The bulk of controversial prose was written in English
- **The second factor** – national self-awareness
- **The third factor** - rise of social and occupational groups which had little or no Latin, but which were eager to read and to learn, and wanted books in English



Early Modern English loanwords from Latin

- peak period being between about 1580 and 1660
- Come from a number of translations made from Latin.
- strong tendency for writers to invent English technical terms by adapting those of the Latin originals
- there was also a 'purist' movement (another manifestation of English nationalism) – against Latin loanwords – e.g. **endsay** 'conclusion', **foresays** 'premisses'
- By 1600 Latin is the greatest source of loanwords in English



loanwords



- ▶ Latin word, Latin spelling: genius, species, radius, specimen
- ▶ Sometimes, when borrowed into English, they had different meaning e.g. Latin Focus means fireplace
- ▶ Some of the loans, however, were adapted, and given an English form. - Latin ending -ātus is often replaced by -ate, as in desperate, Latin ending -itas sometimes becomes English -ity (as in immaturity), Latin -entia and -antia can appear as English -ence, -ency and -ance, -ancy (as in transcendence, delinquency, relevancy)



Remodelling words

- ▶ existing words to be reshaped in accordance with their real or supposed Latin etymology
- ▶ E.g. **Dette** - **debt**, **doute** – **doubt**
- ▶ In Middle English we find the words **assaut**, **aventure**, **parfit** and **verdit**, which in the Renaissance were remodelled under Latin influence to **assault**, **adventure**, **perfect** and **verdict**.



Loanwords from other languages

- **French loans** included military words (such as **bayonet**) and words from the life-sciences (such as **anatomy, muscle**), but also many words from the general vocabulary (for example **entrance, invite**)
- **Greek: cosmos, larynx and pathos**
- **Italian loans** include words to do with warfare (fuse, salvo, squadron), with commerce (argosy, artichoke, felucca)
- **Spanish: armada, cargo,**



Word formation

- ▶ English words by traditional methods of word-formation, especially affixation, compounding and conversion
- ▶ For example, in the fourteenth century the adjective **comfortable** was borrowed from French; by the end of the century the adverb **comfortably** had been derived from it, followed by the adjective uncomfortable (1592).





Most productive word-formation processes...

- **Affixation:** e.g. Noun forming affixes: -ness, -er. (feeler).
- **Compounding:** They are nearly all nouns, and the commonest type is Noun + Noun (waterdock).
- Adjective + Noun (Frenchwoman, freshman)
- Verb + Object (scrape-penny 'miser')
- **Conversion:** verbs from nouns (to bayonet, to gossip, to invoice)
- nouns from adjectives (an ancient 'an old man
- nouns from verbs (an invite, a laugh)



Early Modern English Grammar

- **the present-plural of the verb** has a zero inflection, as today, occasionally – plural ending –en or –eth (hath)
- In **the third-person singular**, the passage has -es ('rides'), but also the -eth morpheme ('hath')
- For **noun-plurals**, the EME uses the -es morpheme (masters,markes)
- The **adjectives** are invariable
- EME uses the forms **they, them** and **their**, as against Chaucer's **they, hem, hire**
- An innovation of the early modern period was the pronoun determiner **its**.

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- **Perfects with be** are common with verbs of motion (come, enter, run, etc.) and verbs denoting change of state (become, grow, turn, etc.). Even with such verbs, however, we also find **perfects with have**, as in I have gone ('walked') all night
 - **Word order:** SVO, VSO



Dummy auxiliary

- **If I become not** (we should use the auxiliary do and say 'If I do not become')
- On the other hand, we use an auxiliary do where we should omit it: '**I do assure you.**'



Thank You!

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