

Міністерство освіти і науки України
Київський національний лінгвістичний університет
Кафедра германської і фіно-угорської філології

Курсова робота

на тему «Розвиток особових займенників в історії англійської мови»

Студентки групи МЛа 03-19
факультету германської філології
денної форми навчання
спеціальності 035 Філологія
Германські мови та літератури (переклад включно),
перша – англійська
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Національна шкала _____
Кількість балів _____
Оцінка ЄКТС _____

Київ 2023

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Kyiv National Linguistic University
Department of Germanic and Finno-Ugric Philology

Term Paper

“Development of Personal Pronouns in the History of English”

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Kyiv 2023

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INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to give a precise definition of a pronoun because, unlike a noun and an adjective, this part of speech does not name an object, but only indicates a person, object or phenomenon that was mentioned in the text earlier or its belonging to someone/something. That is, among all the parts of speech, the pronoun occupies a special position: it lacks a specific grammatical meaning, like a noun, but, being the most abstract word, it can denote any denotation. The absence of grammatical meaning in pronouns makes it necessary to distinguish them as a separate part of speech based on various criteria. However, there is no consensus among linguists as to what criteria and to which class certain pronouns should be assigned.

A large number of works have been devoted to the study of problems related to pronouns (Stephen Howe “The Personal Pronouns in the Germanic Languages”, 1996; Linda van Bergen “Pronouns and Word Order in Old English”, 2003; Katie Wales “Personal Pronouns in Present-Day English”, 1996 etc.).

Nevertheless, the topic of the origin and further development of personal pronouns is not fully covered. Therefore, the urgent need that I set in this study is the need to trace and analyse the main stages of the development of personal pronouns in English with the main focus on the Old English and Middle English periods, providing examples of their use in original sources.

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that despite the large number of works devoted to the study of English personal pronouns, there are still many controversial issues and unresolved problems related to their origin and further development.

The aim of the study is to investigate the peculiarities of the development of personal pronouns in the history of the English language.

The research objectives are the following:

– to identify the peculiarities of personal pronouns in Old English, to trace the history of their origin;

- to find out the reasons and main tendencies in the development of personal pronouns;
- to analyse the changes in personal pronouns in the Middle English period;
- to analyse the changes in personal pronouns in the Early New English period.

Object of the course paper: personal pronouns in all periods of the English language.

The subject of the study: the development of personal pronouns and their paradigms in the history of the English language.

Research methods: descriptive, historical, comparative methods, generalisation.

The practical significance of this study lies in the possibility of using the conclusions and materials, theoretical positions in linguistics, in the development of specific recommendations for studying the forms and meanings of the studied pronouns in English, and improving the methods of teaching English.

CHAPTER 1. PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD

1.1 General characteristics of personal pronouns in the Old English period.

In the Old English period, pronouns fell under 4 classes: personal, demonstrative, interrogative and indefinite. Other modern classes of pronouns were not yet fully developed and were not always separated from the 4 main classes.

In the Old English period personal pronouns had:

- three persons (1st, 2nd and 3rd),
- three numbers (dual in the 1st and 2nd p.),
- three genders in the 3rd p. (masculine, feminine, neutral).

The grammatical categories of personal pronouns were similar to those of nouns (hence they are often called "noun pronouns") and adjectives ("adjectival pronouns"). Like nouns in the Old English period, pronouns were declined according to four cases: Nominative, Accusative, Dative, Genitive. But in OE some pronouns started to lose case distinctions. It can be seen in the 1st and 2nd p. – sometimes their Accusative forms were replaced by Dative forms. Initially, this application was used only for plural pronouns, but later it was also applied to the singular. The process of their fusion was already finished in Early Old English, specifically in the West Saxon dialect. After the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 the merger of these two cases was promoted in other parts of the country.

1.2 Origin and paradigms of first-person pronouns.

Let's consider the paradigms of first person personal pronouns.

Table 1: “Paradigm of the First-Person Pronouns in the Old English Period”

First person			
Case	Singular	Dual	Plural

Nominative	ic	wit	wē
Genitive	mīn	uncer	ūser, ūre
Dative	mē	unc	ūs
Accusative	mec, mē	uncit	ūsic, ūs

The first person singular pronoun “ic” originated in Old English from the Proto-Germanic “ek”/“ik” and was pronounced as /itʃ/.

In further examples to illustrate the usage of pronouns in the Old English period, I will cite the work of Ælfric Eynsham, an Old English monk-writer, “Ælfric’s Lives of Saints”.

*Nom. case: **Ic com anginn þe eow to spræce – I who speak to you am the beginning** (Ælfric’s Lives of Saints, 10)*

The paradigms of the first person singular pronoun can be seen in Table 1. Similarly to the Nominative case, the other paradigms are also derived from Proto-Germanic forms. The Genitive case form “mīn” (/mi:n/) is derived from Proto-West Germanic and is cognate with Old Frisian and Old High German “mīn” and Old Norse “mínn”.

*Gen. case: **Nu is mīn mod awend mycclum to ðe – now is my mind much inclined towards you** (Ælfric’s Lives of Saints, 34)*

It is worth noting that the Genitive case of personal pronouns used to have two main functions: as an oblique case of noun-pronouns, the Genitive case served as an object, but was more often used as an attribute or a noun determinant, like possessive pronouns. They then had characteristics of strong adjectives and agreed with the noun they modified in gender, number and case (Hogg, 1992: 145). However, despite this use of personal pronouns in the Genitive case, these forms cannot be considered as a separate class – possessive pronouns – because grammatical characteristics of these forms were not homogeneous. The Genitive forms of 1st and 2nd p. (mīn, ūre etc.) were declined like adjectives. This showed the agreement between the pronoun and the noun it modified. However, the forms

of 3rd p. didn't behave like adjectives – they didn't agree with the nouns they modified.

*Gen. case: Ne hate ic eow na þeowan . ác gé synd **mine** freond* (Nominative case, masculine, plural, Strong declension) – *I call you not servants, but you are my friends* (*Ælfrīc's Lives of Saints, 30*)

The Dative case of the pronoun “ic” was represented by the form “mē” (/me:/), which originated from Proto-West Germanic “mir”, which itself originated from Proto-Indo-European “me”.

*Dat. case: ac wryt **me** nú sylf wylles – but write me now, of your own will* (*Ælfrīc's Lives of Saints, 72*)

The form of the Accusative case – “mec” (/mek/) – originated from Proto-Germanic “mek” and is akin to Old High German “mih”. This form, however, as mentioned earlier, eventually disappeared in the Old English period and the Dative form was used instead.

(1) *oþþæt an minra wimmanna **mē** wið hine ahredde – until one of my women delivered me from him* (*Ælfrīc's Lives of Saints, 36*)

(2) *Ic bidde þe arwurða fæder þæt þu **mē** anes þinges tyðige – I pray you, venerable father, to grant me one thing* (*Ælfrīc's Lives of Saints, 80*)

In the first example (1) the pronoun “ic” is in the form of Dative case (mē), but in the sentence serves as direct object (in Accusative case). In the second example (2), this pronoun is also in the form of Dative case, but syntactically it is used as an indirect object (in Dative case).

The first-person plural pronoun – “wē” (/we:/) – in the Old English period was of Proto-Germanic origin, as were its paradigms. It is interesting to note that there were two forms of the Genitive case – “ūre” (/’u:.re/) and “ūser” (/’u:.ser/). The first form was more common, and the second was a Northumbrian or poetic alternative form.

Gen. case: þæt hé ne tó-wurpe ūre wynsuman burh – that he might not destroy our winsome city (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 66)

Just as with the pronoun “ic”, the Dative form was widely used to express the accusative. In the line from the Lord's Prayer in the Wessex dialect: *ure gedæghwamlican hlaf syle ūs to dæg (our daily bread give us this day)* – the pronoun ūs in the Dative form serves as an indirect object in the sentence. Let’s consider another example taken from the same source: *and ne gelæd þu ūs on costnunge (and lead us not into temptation)*. Although the pronoun ūs is in the form of Dative case, in the sentence it functions as a direct object in Accusative case.

1.3 Origin and paradigms of second-person pronouns.

There were two second-person pronouns in Old English – “þū” (/θu:/) for the singular pronoun “you”, and “zē” (ye) (/je:/) – for the plural form (see Table 2). Moreover, the difference between them was only in number: there were no sociolinguistic differences between two forms. They appeared only in the Middle English period after the Norman Conquest.

Table 2 “The Paradigm of Second-Person Pronouns in the Old English Period”

Second person			
Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	þū	zīt	zē (ye)
Genitive	þīn	incer	ēower
Dative	þē	inc	ēow
Accusative	þēc, þē	incit, inc	ēowic, ēow

The pronoun “þū” was derived in Old English from the Proto-Germanic “þū”, which itself is presumably derived from the Proto-Indo-European “túh”. Unlike its Middle English correlate, this pronoun was used without a hint of

informality or disrespect. Examples of the usage of its paradigms are presented below.

Nom. case: on ðam sixteodan geara þæs ðe þu munuc wurde – in the sixteenth year since you became a monk (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 152)

Gen. case: and þīn gebædda claudia . gebær mē to mannum – and your spouse Claudia bore me as a child (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 38)

The Dative and Accusative cases were of the same form.

Dat. case: Ic secge þē eac nú . þæt eower sið – I tell you also now that your way (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 152)

Acc. case: Ic wolde mid cleennysse. criste þē be-weddian – I desired through chastity to wed you to Christ (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 74).

The second-person plural pronoun “*zē*” was derived from an early variant of the Proto-Germanic language – “*jūz*”, from the Proto-Indo-European “*yūs*”.

Nom. case: ác zē synd mine freond – but you are my friends (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 30)

Gen. case: Ic secge þē eac nú. þæt eower (/’eo:.wer/) sið – I tell you also now that your way (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 152)

Dat. case: swa swa hit gefyrn geset wæs þeah ðe we hit eow nu secgan – even as it was appointed of old, though we tell it you but now (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 262)

Acc. case: and ic for cristes lufe . forlæt eow ealle – And I, for Christ’s love, abandoned you all (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 38).

As mentioned earlier, in the Wessex dialect the Dative and Accusative cases had the same form. They could be distinguished through the context, as the Dative case was the main case that was used with conjunctions. Due to the variation between strong and weak adjectives, the Accusative case lost its distinctive endings and became identical to the Dative. The merger of cases in this period contributed to the merger after the Norman Conquest.

1.4. Dual number in the Old English period. First- and second-person pronouns.

As opposed to modern pronouns, in the Old English period, first- and second-person pronouns had an additional third number, the dual number. It was represented by the forms “wit” (/wit/) – “we two” and “ȝit” (/jit/) – “you two”. The Old English form of the dual number is a remnant of the dual number from the late Proto-Indo-European period. This number began to disappear long before the Old English period and finally fell out of use in the 15th century. Even in the earliest written sources, the duality of nouns and verbs disappeared. Only verbs and pronouns in the Gothic language and pronouns in the Old Germanic languages retained this feature. They have not survived in Modern English, as the dual number disappeared in the Middle English period, but they appeared in Old English texts when referring to a couple. Like other personal pronouns, they had four paradigms, corresponding to the four cases (see Tables 1 and 2).

The most comprehensive study of the duality in the Old English period is Bruce Mitchell’s work “Old English Syntax” (1985). In his work, he offers syntactic contexts for the use of personal pronouns in duality. Although he does not provide much detail, his main point is that dual pronouns are optional in the Old English corpus. Although examples of the usage of these pronouns can be found in in Ælfric Eynsham’s “Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints”, it is clear that their use was very rare.

*Nom. case: gif **wit** þurh-wuniað on ansundum mægð-hade – if we two continue in unbroken chastity (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 92)*

*Nom. case: gif þu hí onscunast **wit** cweðað þonne án – if you dost abhor them, then we two speak alike (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 200)*

*Gen. case: nu swelt **uncer** sunu for ðan soð-fæstan men – now our son is dying on account of the just man (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 68)*

*Dat. case: hwi woldest þu forsecgan **unc** unscildige swa? – Why would you thus falsely accuse us two guiltless ones? (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 276)*

The use of the second-person pronouns in duality is even rarer.

Nom. case: and ælmihtig godes sunu . þe git þegnas gode bodiað – and the son of Almighty God, whom you two servants of God preach (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 136)

The pronoun “*git*” (more frequently “*giet*” or “*gyt*”) also had the meaning “yet” or “still”. The only way to distinguish between them is by looking at the context from which they are taken.

Git þa basiliius gebæd for þæt wīf – still Basil prayed for the woman (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 82).

1.5 Origin and paradigms of third-person pronouns.

In terms of morphology and syntax, pronouns were not a homogeneous part of speech. To a certain extent, morphological variations depended on syntactic ones, but on the other hand, they arose as a result of historical events long before the Old English period. The third-person singular pronouns, despite the fact that they morphologically resembled the demonstrative pronouns, had the syntactic role of ordinary personal pronouns (Hogg, 1992: 145).

Unlike first- and second-person pronouns, third-person pronouns had a gender category consisting of masculine, feminine, and neuter genders. The plural forms were the same for all genders. The third-person singular pronouns were derived from the Proto-Germanic equivalents: “*hē*” from “*hiz*”, “*hēo*” – “*hijō*”, “*hit*” – “*hit*”, “*hīe*” – “*hijai*” (see Table 3). The variability of third-person pronoun paradigms was caused by the presence of a significant number of dialects; there were also identical forms.

Table 3 “Paradigm of the Third-Person Pronouns in the Old English Period”

Third person				
Singular				Plural
Case	Masculine	Feminine	Neutral	All genders
Nominative	<i>hē</i>	<i>hēo, hīo</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>hīe, hī, hȳ, hēo</i>

Genitive	his	hire, hierē	his	hira, heora, hiera, hyra
Dative	him	hire, hierē	him	him, heom
Accusative	hine	hīe, hī, hȳ	hit	hīe, hī, hȳ, hēo

An important feature of these pronouns in the Old English period is that they start with the letter /h/. The modern digraph /th/ was completely absent, as it appeared only in the Middle English period. Therefore, the presence of the familiar forms they, their, them does not refer to Old English pronouns. They arose as a result of Scandinavian influence, as will be discussed later (Hogg, 1992: 146).

The following examples show that, unlike other personal pronouns, when the Genitive forms of third person pronouns were used as possessive pronouns, they remained unchanged. I will demonstrate examples of their usage in Old English written sources on the example of the masculine singular pronoun and the plural pronoun.

*Nom. case: and symle **hē** fseste buton on freols-dagum – and he fasted ever, save on festival days (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 78)*

*Gen. case: and ealle **his** hiwan on þæs hælendes naman – and all his household, in the Saviour’s name (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 60)*

*Dat. case: and basiliuus (sic) sende sona **him** to-geanes – and Basil sent straightway to meet him (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 80)*

*Acc. case: Hwæt þā se biscop **hine** blipelice gefullode – So then the Bishop blithely baptized him (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 60).*

The forms of the pronoun “hīe” in Nominative and Accusative cases coincided, although there were several alternative (dialectal) variants for both the Nominative and Accusative cases.

*Nom. case: **hī** axoden æt wyccum and æt wisum dryum – they enquired of witches and of wise sorcerers (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 30)*

*Gen. case: and **hyra** geþeaht forseon . ic fæng to ðam hade – and despise their election, but accepted the office (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 32)*

*Dat. case: **Him** wearð þā gesæd to soþum þinge – Then it was reported to them for a true tale (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 30)*

*Acc. case: **Da nam eugenia hī** on sundor-spræce – Then Eugenia took them apart in conversation (Ælfrīc’s Lives of Saints, 28).*

Although the paradigms shown in Table 3 are the most frequently used in Ælfric’s work, there are differences with forms used in other texts. For example, /i/ is often replaced by /y/ – *hym* instead of *him*. There are also other variants: *hiene* instead of *hine*, *heora* instead of *hira* and *heom* instead of *him* (Hogg, 1992: 145). Such variability is not accidental. In the Old English period, there was no single standardised language, there was a so-called “focused language”, a range of variations of linguistic forms.

Conclusions to Chapter 1

Thus, the main source of Old English personal pronouns is the Proto-Germanic language. In this period, personal pronouns had three grammatical categories: person, number and gender. The dual number was a number characteristic of the Old English period only, because it began to disappear in the later stages of this period.

The Genitive case of personal pronouns had two uses in the Old English period: it could serve as an object, like other indirect objects, but primarily it served as an attribute or a noun determiner, like the possessive pronouns. Despite this usage, there was no possessive pronoun class in this period. Personal pronouns in the Genitive case behaved like strong adjectives, agreeing with the noun in gender, number and case.

Moreover, in this period, personal pronouns are characterised by a wide system of paradigms due to the developed system of inflectional morphology. As a result of dialectal differences, there were several variants of the paradigm forms of the third person singular feminine pronoun *heo* and plural *hie*. The modern plural forms with the digraph *th* do not derive from the Old English forms, because in this

period they began with the letter h, and the modern digraph appeared only in the Middle English period.

It was also stated that in the Old English period, personal pronouns were declined according to the four cases, but the Dative and Accusative began to merge into one – at the early stages only in the first and second person plural, later – in singular.

CHAPTER 2. PECULIARITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD

2.1 General tendencies in the development of the language in the Middle English period

In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, 787 is the year of the first landing of the Danes, an ancient Germanic tribe, on the British Isles. From then on, a hundred years after their first raid, they began to settle in British lands. The new settlers mixed with the indigenous people and this was facilitated by the similarities between Old English and Old Norse. Although the invasions took place in the Old English period, the impact on the language is particularly noticeable in the Middle English period.

The Norman Conquest of England (1066) is also regarded as one of the most important events in the history of the language. The two languages - the northern dialect of French and Old English – existed side by side and penetrated each other. Therefore, in the early Middle English period, the number of regional dialects began to grow. This development led to significant changes in the language system.

If Old English was inflected (synthetic), in the Middle English period it began to turn into an analytical language. Synthetic forms were lost and new ones were not generated. This had a significant impact on the development of personal pronouns.

Before considering the changes in pronoun paradigms, it is important to recall the transformations in the case system in the Middle English period. The Dative and Accusative cases merged into one – the Objective case – while the distinction with the Nominative case was retained. Their syncretism began in the Old English period, initially affecting only the first and second person plural, and later in the late Old English period, the singular. Gradually, pronoun reduction spread in all geographical directions from south to north. In the early stages of

Middle English, case merger occurred in the third person plural, and at the end of this period the process of syncretism of the two cases was fully completed.

In the later period of Middle English, the pronoun paradigm included only two cases: Nominative and Objective. The Genitive case also evolved. It was separated from other forms and turned into a new class of pronouns – the possessive. As previously mentioned, in the Old English period, personal pronouns in the Genitive case agreed with the noun in number and case. In Middle English, pronouns of this kind lost their forms of agreement with the noun and became uninflected. In the late Middle English period, possessive pronouns were divided into adjective pronouns (*my, our, thy/your, your, his, her, its, their*) and absolute possessive pronouns (*myn(e), ours, thyn(e), yours, hir*). Pronouns of the first group are often called “personal adjectives” and functioned solely as noun modifiers. Pronouns of the second group were noun-pronouns and in a sentence they performed the function of a subject, complement, predicate or determiner, but were not used as noun modifiers. This division has been preserved to this day.

2.2 Development of first-person pronouns.

Most of the Middle English personal pronouns came from the Old English period. The first person singular pronoun had two forms – “*ich/I*”. The “*ich-form*” was an alternative form to the “*I-form*” in the west central regions and in Kent. It began to disappear in the 15th century after the establishment of the Chancery Standard. This form does not appear in Chaucer's works.

To illustrate the usage of pronouns in the Middle English period, I will use lines from Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales”.

Nom. case: I wolde have toold yow fully the manere – I would have told you fully the manner (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Knight’s Tale”, 876)

Nom. case: ich wene ech londe best – the finest, I think, of all (Robert of Gloucester “Chronicle”)

Table 4 “The Paradigm of First-Person Pronouns in the Middle English Period”

First Person				
	Singular		Plural	
Case	Middle Eng.	Early NE	Middle Eng.	Early NE
Nominative	ich/I	I	we	we
Objective	me	me	us	us
Possessive	my/myn(e)	my/mine	our(e)/ours	our, ours

The Objective case form is a direct descendant of the Dative and Accusative case forms in Old English. So is the form of the possessive pronoun. Over time, the early Middle English pronoun “myne” loses its final -n when it precedes a word beginning with a consonant. In Chaucer’s works, two forms can be found.

*Posses. case: But shortly for to telle is **myn** entente – but briefly to tell is my intent* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Knight’s Tale”, 1000)

*Posses. case: And if so be **my** destyne be shapen – and if it be so that my destiny is shaped* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Knight’s Tale”, 1108).

The first person plural pronoun and its paradigm in the Obj. case have not changed either. However, the form of the Genitive case has changed. The Middle English period witnessed changes in spelling. Thus, the Old English long sound [u:] could now be represented by the digraph /ou/.

*Posses. case: Have mercy on **oure** wo and **oure** distress! – Have mercy on our woe and our distress!* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Knight’s Tale”, 919)

2.3 Development of second-person pronouns.

The paradigm of second-person pronouns in the Middle English period is presented below. Let us consider the main changes.

Table 5 “Paradigm of the Second-Person Pronouns in the Middle English Period”

Second Person				
	Singular		Plural	
Case	Middle Eng.	Early OE	Middle Eng.	Early OE
Nominative	thou/thow	thou/ye	ye	you/ye
Objective	thee	thee/you	you	you
Possessive	thyn(e)/thy	thy/your/thine/ yours	your(e)/yours	your, yours

The second-person singular pronoun in the Middle English period had two forms in the Nom. case – thou/thow (/θu:/, in Late Middle English /ðu:/). Due to changes in spelling, the Old English letter *thorn* – þ – was replaced by the digraph *th*, and the sound [u:] was rendered by the digraphs *ou*, *ow*.

The Obj. and Poss. case forms changed only in spelling: þē>thee – a new digraph *th*, the digraph *ee* transmitted the sound [e:]; þīn>thyn(e)/thy – a digraph *th*, the letter *y* transmitted the sound [i].

The plural pronoun – ye – and its paradigms have undergone changes in spelling. The letter *yogh* – ȝ – disappeared. At the beginning of a word, it conveyed the sound [j] before front vowels, and in the Middle English period it was replaced by the letter *y*.

The form “thou” was used to address one person, while “ye/you” was used to address more than one person. However, the difference between them was not only in number but also in social courtesy and the relationship between speakers. To some extent, Middle English has borrowed the French *tu/vous* distinction, where “tu” is used when speaking to friends, family and upper-class people when addressing a lower-class person, and “vous” is used by lower-class people when addressing upper-class people, strangers and simply for polite address.

There is evidence that the polite form of addressing a single person emerged in early Old English (“*for ðy mē ðynð betre, ȝif īow swe ðynð – because of this, I think it would be better, if you think so*”, Alfred politely addresses Bishop Warfert in the preface to his translation of *Cura Pastoralis*).

2.4 Development of third-person pronouns.

Let's consider the paradigm of third-person pronouns in the Middle English period and the main changes.

Table 6 “Paradigm of the Third-Person Pronouns in the Middle English Period”

Third Person						
Case	Singular			Plural		
	Middle Eng.			Early OE	Middle Eng.	Early OE
Nominative	m. he	f. he/she	n. hit/it	he, she, it	hie/they	they
Objective	him	hir(e)/her	him/it	him, her, it	hem/them	them
Possessive	his	her(e)/ hir	his	his, her, his/its his, hers, his/its	her(e)/ their(e)	their, theirs

The masculine pronoun did not undergo significant changes in the Middle English period. The Acc. case disappeared, and the new Obj. case retained the form of the old Dat. case. The merger of “hine” and “him” began early, but the form “hine” remained an alternative variant in Southern texts. Examples from the works of the 14th-century English writer Dan Michael show that the two forms could exist side by side until the 14th century: “me hine anhongeþ” – one hangs him, “and him halt” – and holds him (Blake&Hogg, 1992: 118).

The Middle English pronoun “it” was a direct descendant of the Old English “hit”. The initial /h/ disappeared. The Nom. and Acc. forms were homonyms.

Nom. case: That it ne semed nat by liklynesse – that it seemed not likely (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Clerk’s Tale”, 396)

Obj. case: Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn – thou lovest me, I know it well for certain (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Clerk’s Tale”, 309)

The masculine and neuter forms of the former Gen. case coincided. The neuter form of “his” survived until the age of Shakespeare. However, in the early

modern English period, a new neuter possessive pronoun “its” appeared, formed by analogy with the nouns in Gen. case.

In the early period of Middle English, the feminine third-person singular pronoun “hēo” was substituted by a group of variants – he, ho, sce, sho, sche, she. In the early period of Middle English, the feminine third-person singular pronoun “hēo” was substituted by a group of variants: he, ho, sce, sho, sche, she. The last one survived in the late ME period. Its origin is quite controversial (Blake & Hogg, 1992: 118). I will discuss 3 theories of the origin of the pronoun “she” (/ʃe:/) which firstly appeared in North-Eastern dialects and later spread to others. According to the most widespread opinion, it derives from the Old English feminine demonstrative pronoun “sēo”. Through palatalisation and syllabicity shift – [seō] > [sēo] > [sjo:] > [ʃo:] – *scho*-form could appear, but not the *sche*-form. The vowel e could have come from OE *he*-form. However, the demonstrative pronoun “sēo” died out much earlier, which means that it is unlikely that the ME form could have evolved from it. There exist one more theory – the “Shetland Theory” – that presumes the development of the ME form “she” analogically to the development of *Shetland* < *OScand. Hjaltland*. The OE form “hēo” is more chronologically and morphologically preferable to be the origin of the ME form – [heō] > [hēo] > [hjo:] and then [hj-] > [ç-], and [ç-] > [ʃ-] (due to syllabicity shift and vowel reduction). The syllabicity shift, as well as the development of [hj-] into [ç-] is reasonable (confirmation of these processes could be found in other examples). But the [ç-] > [ʃ-] evolution cannot be fully justified. Thus, no theory is perfectly satisfactory.

The substitution of OE “hēo” by ME variant illustrates the mechanism of linguistic change as a combination of extra- and intralinguistic factors. The divergence of dialects in the Early ME period also contributed to this. Most likely, this variant has been preserved, since the form “hēo” turned into “he” due to the disappearance of diphthongs in Middle English and was identical to the masculine pronoun “he”. The necessity to distinguish between these two pronouns was an internal factor. Extralinguistic factors include the influence of northern and eastern dialects on the London dialect, which became the basis of literary English.

*Nom. case: Thanne was **she** oon the faireste under sonne – Then was **she** the fairest of all under sun* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Clerk’s Tale”, 212)

The paradigms of other cases of this pronoun have been preserved: hire/her

*Obj. case: Wedde **hire** oonly, if evere he wedde sholde – wed her only, if ever he should wed* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Clerk’s Tale”, 245)

*Posses. case: And she set down **hir** water pot anon – and she set down her water pot quickly* (Geoffrey Chaucer “The Clerk’s Tale”, 290)

Another important change took place in the Middle English period. In the Old English third-person plural pronoun “hīe”, the diphthong [ie] became a monophthong (hīe>he). In order to distinguish the plural from the homogeneous singular forms, the word of Scandinavian origin “they” (/θeɪ/) was borrowed. Like the pronoun “she”, it originally appeared in the North-Eastern regions and was eventually adopted into the London dialect.

The Northern dialects of the Middle English period had their own early set of paradigms of this pronoun: þeir, þeirra, þeim (Nom., Obj., Poss. case). The þ-paradigm gradually moved southwards, while the h-paradigm remained for a long time in the conservative south. The plural forms “hi”, “hem” and “her(e)” can be found in English literature until the 16th century. However, their newer forms “they”, “them” and “their” began to be used much more frequently, eventually completely replacing the previous ones.

Conclusions to Chapter 2

As a result of the influence of extra- and intralinguistic factors on the English language in the ME period, personal pronouns underwent significant changes. The dual number completely disappeared. Due to the influence of the French language, English spelling was modified, and many forms were changed. As a result of the transition of English from analytical to synthetic, there were changes in grammar. The Dat. and Acc. cases merged into one – the Obj. case. The Gen. case of the Old English personal pronouns turned into a separate class of pronouns in ME – the possessive pronouns.

Second-person pronouns were no longer only different in number, but could also convey the meaning of social politeness and the relationship between speakers.

The Old English forms of the third-person singular feminine and plural pronouns were replaced by new forms. The new feminine pronoun form was derived from the OE demonstrative pronoun, and the OE plural form was replaced by a word of Scandinavian origin.

Overall, it can be concluded that in the Middle English period some pronouns evolved, while others were replaced by borrowed forms. In general, pronouns began to acquire the forms that are familiar to us today.

CHAPTER 3. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN THE NEW ENGLISH PERIOD

3.1 Development of first-person pronouns.

During the New English period, the paradigms of personal pronouns became more stable. In spelling, they were similar to the ME pronouns, but there occurred significant changes in pronunciation due to the Great Vowel Shift.

In Early New English and New English, the form “ich” has not survived. There exists only one form of the first-person singular pronoun – “I”. This pronoun is always capitalised, regardless of its position in the sentence. This unusual rule arose by accident. Initially, the pronoun was written with a lowercase letter, but at the end of the 14th century, in Chaucer’s works, it can be seen that the pronoun was slightly higher than other lowercase letters. In Chaucer’s time, there were no specific rules for capitalising certain words. Uppercase and lowercase letters could be mixed in words – the former were usually used to add emphasis. Nowadays it is still capitalised because it is the only pronoun that contains only one letter.

The form of the Obj. case has changed only in pronunciation. The form of the Obj. case has changed only in pronunciation. After the Great Vowel Shift, the sound [e:] changed into [i:].

The modern first-person singular possessive pronoun “me” has also changed in pronunciation compared to its predecessor in ME. As a result of the Great Vowel Shift, the sound [i:] changed into the diphthong [ai].

In Modern English, the second-person plural personal pronoun has retained the forms from ME in spelling, but the pronunciation has changed due to the Great Vowel Shift (except for “us”).

ME we /we:/ > NE we /wi:/

ME our(e) /'u:r(ə)/, ours /u:rz/ > NE our, ours /'aʊə/, /'aʊəz/

ME us /ʊs/ > NE us /ʌs/

3.2 Development of second- and third-person pronouns.

Since the 15th century, the second person plural forms – ye, you, your – have been increasingly used to refer to individuals. In Shakespeare’s days, these forms were used as equivalents of the singular pronoun forms (thou, thee, thine). Shakespeare freely alternated between these forms.

But if thou live, remember’d not to be,

Did single, and thine image die with thee. (Sonnet 3)

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,

Or you survive when I in earth am rotten. (Sonnet 81)

Later, the pronoun “thou” became obsolete in Standard English. Nevertheless, it can still be found in poetry, religious treatises and some dialects.

The modern pronoun “you” is derived from the ME Obj. case form. Together with the modern pronoun “it”, they are the only pronouns that have lost all case paradigms. The Nominative case form “ye” has become obsolete.

The old case forms were reconsidered and stylistic differentiation was made between them: the old Obj. form “you” became a common Nom. and Obj. form, typical of the neutral style, while the form “ye”, which also lost its case distinctions, became a poetic archaism, acquiring a stylistic coloring of solemnity.

In Early NE and Modern English, the masculine third-person singular pronoun remained unchanged. Only the pronunciation of the Nom. case has changed due to the Great Vowel Shift.

ME he /he:/ > NE he /hi:/

The same reasons led to changes in the pronunciation of the feminine pronoun.

ME she /ʃe:/ > NE she /ʃi:/

As mentioned previously, in the Middle English period, modern forms of the third-person plural pronoun were replacing h-paradigms. In Early NE, the latter disappeared completely.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

Thus, in the New English period, the paradigms of personal pronouns did not undergo significant changes in spelling, but their pronunciation changed dramatically as a result of the Great Vowel Shift, which began in the early stages of this period and ended in the 18th century.

Changes in the second-person include the disappearance of the singular form “thou”, which has become obsolete. The plural form was used for both numbers and was formed from the old Obj. case. The pronoun “you”, together with the neuter third-person pronoun “it”, were the only pronouns that lost all case paradigms. Still, the loss of distinctions between cases by pronouns it and you didn’t break up the paradigm of personal pronouns. Case distinctions between Nominative and Objective was preserved by other personal pronouns.

As a result of all these changes, in Modern English, personal pronouns can be divided into Nominative and Objective pronouns. Personal pronouns in the Nominative case serve as the subject of a sentence, while those in the Objective case usually function as the object. They have three persons (first, second and third), two numbers and three genders (in the third-person singular). The first-person singular includes the pronouns “I” and “me”, and the plural includes “we” and “us”. As for the second-person, the singular and plural are represented by the pronoun “you” in both cases. The third-person singular includes “he”, “she”, “it” (in the Nom. case) and “him”, “her”, “it” (in the Obj. case). The plural third-person singular is represented by the pronouns “they” (Nom. case) and “them” (Obj. case).

CONCLUSIONS

To summarise everything mentioned above, it can be noted that pronouns in English are classified in a wide variety of ways and from different points of view. A pronoun is a part of speech that indicates objects, phenomena and attributes, but does not name them. A pronoun as a part of speech does not have grammatical unity. By conveying meanings that can be described as subjective-objective, pronouns can replace such parts of speech as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and, accordingly, perform the syntactic function of subject, attribute, nominal part of the predicate and adverbial modifier in a sentence.

Old English pronouns are divided into personal, demonstrative, interrogative and indefinite. Personal pronouns are distinguished by the grammatical categories of person, number, gender and case. The examples of personal pronouns in written sources from the two periods show that their use was widespread in all periods.

Throughout its history, English has undergone a process of simplification, transforming from a synthetic to an analytical language. This has led to a reduction in the number of personal pronoun paradigms. While in Old English there were approximately 60 paradigms for personal pronouns, in Modern English there are only 13. At the initial stage of my research, the main paradigms of personal pronouns in the OE period were identified and it was found that most of them are of Proto-Germanic origin. A special characteristic of that period was the presence of a dual number in the first- and second- persons. However, this particular feature completely disappeared in the ME period. In addition to this change, the ME period underwent changes in spelling, which, however, had little effect on pronunciation. The Dative and Genitive cases merged into one – the Objective case. This process began in the previous period but was fully completed in the ME period. Another important event in the development of personal pronouns in this period is the transformation of personal pronouns in the Genitive case into a separate type of pronouns – possessive pronouns.

In the NE period, there were no significant changes in form of pronouns, only pronunciation changed as a result of the Great Vowel Shift in the English language.

The most significant change in the pronoun system is the gradual disappearance of the 2nd person singular pronoun thou (Obj. “thee”) together with the possessive pronoun “thy” (“thyne”) from the spoken language. It acquired a certain expressive colouring and became a word of archaic style, expressing solemnity or excessive rudeness. Thus, the second-person pronoun has lost, on the one hand, the numerical distinction (thou – you) and on the other hand, the grammatical difference between the Nominative and Objective forms, but instead, the subtlest stylistic differences have appeared: you, ye, thou.

Having analysed the origin of personal pronouns, it can be concluded that modern pronouns are mainly of Proto-Germanic and Scandinavian origin. Under the influence of external and internal factors, the English language has undergone significant changes, which has also affected the development of the personal pronoun system: some personal pronouns have evolved, others were replaced by borrowed forms. External changes include the influence of other languages, mainly Old Norse, French and Latin. Internal changes include adjustments within the language – simplification in pronunciation for easier perception, search for new forms to avoid homonymy, analogy, and others.

RESUME

This paper work is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of the development of personal pronouns in all periods of the history of the English language – Old English, Middle English and New English. During the research, the origin of personal pronouns was investigated and the reasons and tendencies of their development were analysed.

Each of the chapters is devoted to a separate period of the English language. The first chapter reveals the peculiarities of the origin and use of personal pronoun paradigms in the Old English period. The second chapter, which covers the Middle English period, deals with the main changes in the personal pronoun paradigms due to internal and external factors that influenced the language in that period.

The more detailed coverage of the first two periods (Old English and Middle English) suggests that the main changes occurred in these periods. Therefore, less attention has been paid to the New English period, in which no significant changes occurred (other than the changes in pronunciation due to the Great Vowel Shift that took place in the early stages of the New English period).

Consequently, as a result of the analysis of the personal pronouns' development in the history of the English language, it can be argued that some of them have evolved, some have disappeared and been replaced by pronouns of Scandinavian origin, which again indicates the influence of both internal and external factors on the development of the language.

The practical part is devoted to the study of the forms of the main paradigms of personal pronouns in all periods of the English language. Examples of the use of personal pronouns in written sources from different periods are also presented.

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