

1: Old English Basics and Nominals

Optional Tutorials

Language/Seminar Tutorial

- ▶ Thursdays 4pm: Waldweg 26, room 4.105
(starts next week)

Lecture Tutorials

- ▶ Friday 29 June 10:00–14:00, SEP Medienraum (0.244)
- ▶ Friday 6 July 14:00–19:00, SEP Medienraum (0.244)



Figure: Northwestern Europe c. 400 (map: public domain / WMC)

Script

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f ū þ ō r c g w h n ī g ē p e s t b e m l i ē d ā æ y ī ē
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A Æ B C D E F G H I L M N O P R S T þ Ð U ƿ Y
a æ b c d e f g h i l m n o p r s t þ ð u ƿ y

ƿ = “and”

A Taste of Old English

Genesis

“

On angynne gesceop God heofonan 7 eorðan.

Se eorðe soðlice wæs idel 7 æmti, 7 þeostra wæron ofer ðære
nywelnysse bradnysse; 7 Godes gast wæs gefeod ofer wæteru.

God cwæð ða: “Gewurðe leoht,” 7 leoht wæarð geworht. ”

A Fusional Language

Fusional languages (Latin, German, Old English) may overlay multiple data points onto the same morpheme.

m	singular	plural
Nom.	stān	stān as
Acc.	stān	stān as
Gen.	stān es	stān a
Dat.	stān e	stān um

Flexible Word Order

The servant	seeks	the king
The king	seeks	the servant

Se þēow	sēceð	þone cyning
Þone cyning	sēceð	se þēow
Þone cyning	se þēow	sēceð
Se þēow	þone cyning	sēceð
Se cyning	sēceð	þone þēaw

Language Learning Strategy

Learn to parse!

- ▶ Divide a sentence up into clauses where applicable

She says | she can't

It helps to identify conjunctions:

I run | because I must

- ▶ Identify subject, predicator, direct object, indirect object

[Mary] gave (John) <a punch in the face>

- ▶ Identify prepositional and adverbial phrases

It was Colonel Mustard (in the library) (with the lead pipe)

The world ended (yesterday)

- ▶ Identify inflections to analyze syntax and phrases

Dem Mann gab die Frau ein Geschenk Gottes

Hie wæron englum gelice

Language Learning Strategy

Memorize

1. Pronouns (6 “inclusive” paradigms)
2. 3 noun classes (4 to 6 paradigms)
3. Weak verbs (2 paradigms)
4. Basics of strong verb conjugation
5. Principles of adjectival declension (2 “inclusive” paradigms)
6. Core vocabulary

Tools

- ▶ Textbook
- ▶ Paradigms ([handout](#))
- ▶ Magic Sheet of Old English Inflections ([handout](#))
- ▶ Strong verb cheatsheet ([handout](#))
- ▶ Flashcards (e.g. yorku.ca/inpar; flash.langeslag.org; DIY)

Nominals: Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives

Old English nominals inflect for:

- ▶ **case**: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, (instrumental);
- ▶ **number**: singular, (dual,) plural;
- ▶ **gender**: masculine, neuter, feminine;
- ▶ pronouns also inflect for **person**: first, second, third.

Case

These are the basic uses of the cases:

Nominative	subject, subject complement, address
Accusative	direct object, object complement
Genitive	possession, description, adverbial uses (note the partitive genitive construction)
Dative	interest, instrumental , possession, adverbial uses (e.g. time), comparison, (absolute)
Instrumental	means/manner, comparison, (accompaniment), time

Nominative

- ▶ Se cyning is gōd
The king is good

Accusative

- ▶ Ic gesēo mīnne cyning
I see my king

Genitive

- ▶ Æðelflæd wæs þæs cyninges dohtor
Æthelflæd was the king's daughter
 - ▶ Se wæs þāra manna mōdgast ealra
He was the bravest of all those men
-

Dative

- ▶ Hē geaf his dohtor Burgrēde cyninge
He gave his daughter to King Burgred
- ▶ Þā wearð God þām werode wrāð
Then God became angry with that host
- ▶ Hīe wāron englum gelice
They were like angels
- ▶ Him wæs þearf micel
lit. To him there was great need

Dative with
instrumental
function

- ▶ Se palm þe drihten sylf sette his āgenum handum
The palm tree which the Lord planted with his own hands
 - ▶ Þā wæs gāst ofer holm boren miclum spēdum
Then the spirit was carried across the sea at great speed
-

Prepositions

<i>be</i> “about, near”	+dat.	<i>be streame</i>
<i>ymb</i> “about, after”	+acc.	<i>ymb stream</i>
<i>andlang</i> “along”	+gen.	<i>andlang streames</i>
<i>mid</i> “with”	+dat./acc./inst.	<i>mid stream(e)</i>
<i>wið</i> “against, towards”	+acc./dat.	<i>wið stream(e)</i>

With many locative prepositions, motion dictates case:

Preposition	Stasis/Dative	Motion/Accusative
<i>in</i>	<i>þām hūse</i>	<i>þæt hūs</i>
<i>ofer</i>	<i>þām staðe</i>	<i>þone sǣ</i>
<i>under</i>	<i>þām hrægle</i>	<i>þæt hrægel</i>

Cf. German *in der Stadt* vs. *in die Stadt*;
Latin *in ecclēsiā* vs. *in ecclēsiam*.

Distal Demonstrative Pronoun *se*

	Masc. sg.	Neut. sg.	Fem. sg.	Plural
Nom.	se	þæt	sēo	þā
Acc.	þone	þæt	þā	þā
Gen.	þæs	þæs	þære	þāra
Dat.	þām	þām	þære	þām
Inst.	þȳ	þȳ		

- ▶ Se cyning is dēad
- ▶ Ic sēo þone cyning
- ▶ Ic eom þæs cyninges sunu
- ▶ Ic hier e þām cyninge
- ▶ Þȳ sweorde ic hine ofslōh

Proximal Demonstrative Pronoun *þes*

	Masc. sg.	Neut. sg.	Fem. sg.	Plural
Nom.	þes	þis	þēos	þās
Acc.	þisne	þis	þās	þās
Gen.	þisses	þisses	þisse	þissa
Dat.	þissum	þissum	þisse	þissum
Inst.	þȳs	þȳs		

Personal Pronouns: First Person

	1 sg.	1 dual	1 pl.
Nom.	ic	wit	wē
Acc.	mē	unc	ūs
Gen.	mīn	uncer	ūre
Dat.	mē	unc	ūs

Personal Pronouns: Second Person

	2 sg.	2 dual	2 pl.
Nom.	þū	git	gē
Acc.	þē	inc	ēow
Gen.	þīn	incer	ēower
Dat.	þē	inc	ēow

Personal Pronoun: Third Person

	Masc. sg.	Neut. sg.	Fem. sg.	Plural
Nom.	hē	hit	hēo	hīe
Acc.	hine	hit	hīe	hīe
Gen.	his	his	hire	hira
Dat.	him	him	hire	him

Interrogative Pronoun

	Masc./fem.	Neut.
Nom.	hwā	hwæt
Acc.	hwone	hwæt
Gen.	hwæs	hwæs
Dat.	hwām	hwām
Inst.	hwȳ	hwȳ

Weak Versus Strong

Any given noun or verb is either strong or weak; it doesn't routinely switch between these categories.

Old English adjectives decline according to context: they decline strong where they are the first element in the noun phrase, otherwise they are weak.

- ▶ Strong: OE *bār stān* (“a grey stone”) or German *großer Mann*
- ▶ Weak: OE *Se bāra stān* (“the grey stone”) or German *der große Mann*

Weak Versus Strong

- ▶ Strong adjectives typically convey more precise grammatical information:
 - ▶ Strong German *großes* vs. weak *großen*
 - ▶ Strong Old English *hārne* vs weak *hāran*
- ▶ Weak adjectives have simplified inflection, thus have to be analyzed using their modifiers and governing verbs.

Der Koffer gehört dem großen Mann.
Das ist der Koffer des großen Mannes.

On ðām hāran stān. (“On/in the grey rock.”)
On ðone hāran stān. (“Towards the grey rock.”)

Gemyndig ic bēo naman þīnes. (“I am mindful of your name.”)
On naman þinum gebæl me. (“In your name heal me.”)

Weak Versus Strong

m	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	stān	stānas	nama	naman
Acc.	stān	stānas	naman	naman
Gen.	stānes	stāna	naman	namena
Dat.	stāne	stānum	naman	namum

Strong Nouns: Masculine and Neuter

m	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	stān	stānas	dæg	dagas
Acc.	stān	stānas	dæg	dagas
Gen.	stānes	stāna	dæges	daga
Dat.	stāne	stānum	dæge	dagum

n	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	word	word	scip	scipu
Acc.	word	word	scip	scipu
Gen.	wordes	worda	scipes	scipa
Dat.	worde	wordum	scipe	scipum

Strong Nouns: Feminine

f	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	lār	lāra	giefu	giefa
Acc.	lāre	lāra	giefe	giefa
Gen.	lāre	lāra	giefe	giefa
Dat.	lāre	lār <u>um</u>	giefe	gief <u>um</u>

Weak Nouns

m/n	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	nama	naman	ēage	ēagan
Acc.	naman	naman	ēage	ēagan
Gen.	naman	namena	ēagan	ēagena
Dat.	naman	namum	ēagan	ēagum

Example Sentences

Strong masculine *a*-stem noun: *stān*

Se stan is ormætlice micel.

Hwilc fæder wile syllan his cyldre stan?

Stephanus wæs stanum worpod.

Stanes gecynd is heard.

Hi druncon of ðam gastlican stane, and se stan wæs Crist.

Hi ne forlætað on þe stan ofer stane.

Heora mulas þa mihton gan sona, þe ær stodon astifode on stana gelicnysse.

Weak masculine noun: *nama*

Adam him eallum naman gesceop.

Ða sette Adam eft hire oðerne naman: Aeua.

On minum naman hi adræfað deoflu.

Hys nama wæs Symeon.

Practice Sentences

- ▶ Se casere wæs ofslagen.
- ▶ Se yrðling lufað þone æcer.
- ▶ Þa gesawon þæt his þegnas.
- ▶ Ða com Willelm eorl fram geondan sæ.
- ▶ Gyt ne com min tid.
- ▶ Eower tid is symble gearu.
- ▶ Samuhel ða ferde be Godes hæse to Bethleem.