

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH SYNTAX

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ABSTRACT *This article explores the historical development of English syntax, tracing its evolution from Old English through Middle English to Modern English. It examines the key syntactic changes that have occurred over the centuries, including shifts in word order, the use of auxiliary verbs, and the development of complex sentence structures. The study highlights the influence of language contact, particularly with Norse and Norman French, and the role of socio-political factors in shaping syntactic change. By analyzing historical texts and linguistic data, the paper provides insights into the mechanisms of syntactic evolution and the dynamic nature of language. This exploration not only enhances our understanding of English syntax but also contributes to broader discussions on language change and development.*

Key words: *auxiliary verbs, Modern English, syntactic change, dynamic nature, analyzing, mechanisms, socio-political, broader discussions.*

INTRODUCTION In the course of the Middle English period, a number of major changes took place in the structure of English. The most important of these were the reduction of the system of inflectional endings, the reorganization of the patterns of word order and the trend toward the use of analytic constructions instead of synthetic ones. These developments were related, and their roots can be found in Old English. The effects of these changes on English syntax can be clearly seen in the first two centuries of the Modern period, from about 1500 to

about 1700. At that time, the structure of the language was gradually established so that eighteenth-century standard written English closely resembles the present-day language. The language of most sixteenth-century authors still reflects the heritage of Middle English, whilst it is possible to read long passages from eighteenth-century novels or essays and find only minor deviations from present-day constructions. It is thus obvious that a description of English syntax from the late fifteenth to the late eighteenth century should pay constant attention to change. It is equally obvious that the description will mainly focus on the first two Early Modern centuries. Sixteenth-century texts are characterized by a richness of variant forms and constructions, inherited from Middle English and, to a lesser extent, influenced by Latin. In seventeenth-century writing, the abundance of variants was gradually reduced.[1]

LITERATURE REVIEW Old English and Old Norse language combination have been influenced by the Scandinavian invasions and settlement in the eighth and ninth century that impacted the “English language”. 46% of the words in English have the flavour of Scandinavian influence considering the present day English lexicon. The Scandinavian “language of English” has been mostly influenced by the grammar of modern English including the noun, pronouns, verbs and adverbs [2]. Strengthening the grammatical perspectives of the modern language of English has a great contribution of the Scandinavian influences. Vocabulary improvisation of the language also has been impacted by the Scandinavian language that enhances the speaking and writing ability of the common people and the schools are also adopting the language to teach the students to strengthen the roots of the children's English. Revolution in the daily life of the English based language has a remarkable influence on the Scandinavian language. The Norwegian language, considering the Scandinavian language is mostly used in the language of English as the Norwegian language is the easiest and accessible language to learn. The origin of the English and Norwegian languages both originated from the Germanic language therefore they are infinitely similar with each other. 60% of daily words of the English based language are rooted from the Old Norse which is considered as the Scandinavian

language. The core language family of the English, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish are the same as a result they share various similarities in English literature.[3]

Syntactic change differs from lexical change in at least two important ways. First, it generally unfolds much more slowly, sometimes taking hundreds of years to run its course to completion, and secondly, it tends to proceed below the threshold of speakers' conscious awareness, which makes impressionistic or introspection-based statements on ongoing changes in English grammar notoriously unreliable. A third difficulty in pinning down syntactic change in present-day English is that a rather small number of alleged syntactic innovations are strongly stigmatized. This has biased discussion in favour of such high-profile issues at the expense of developments which are, arguably, more comprehensive and far-reaching in the long run. Examples which come to mind include the use of like as a conjunction (as in And it looks like we could even lose John) or the use of hopefully as a sentence adverb (Hopefully, they'll go back and set it up).[4] Such shibboleths have aroused an inordinate amount of expert and lay comment, while developments which appear to be systematically if gradually transforming the grammatical core of standard English, such as the continuing increase in the frequency of the progressive aspect or the spread of gerundial complements at the expense of infinitival ones (see section 4 below), tend to go largely unnoticed. Syntactic change refers to the evolution of sentence structure and grammatical rules over time in a language. In the case of English, these changes have been significant throughout its history, from Old English (450–1150 AD) through Middle English (1150–1500 AD) and into Modern English (from 1500 onwards). One of the most noticeable syntactic changes in English is its shift in word order. Old English had a relatively flexible word order due to its inflectional system (words were heavily marked for case, number, gender, etc.), allowing for variations like Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) and Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) constructions. Over time, as English lost many of its inflections, it became more dependent on a fixed word order. In Old English, word endings (inflections) indicated grammatical relationships, such as case (nominative, accusative,

genitive, dative) and tense. Over time, these inflections were lost or reduced. As English lost its case system, word order became more important to indicate grammatical roles like subject and object. Verbal inflections also simplified; for instance, Old English had many more verb conjugations depending on tense, person, and number, which have been reduced in Modern English. Modern English relies heavily on auxiliary verbs (like do, have, will, be) to form complex tenses, negations, and questions. This is a development from earlier stages of English. In Old English, negation and questions were formed without the help of auxiliaries. Middle English saw the rise of periphrastic constructions (using auxiliary verbs) for expressing tense and mood. Over time, some words in English have undergone grammaticalization, meaning they shifted from being full words with lexical meaning to grammatical markers. For example, "will" originally meant "want" or "wish" but is now used as a future tense auxiliary. Similarly, "be going to" shifted from expressing physical movement to signaling future intent ("I'm going to read"). Modern English developed the use of the auxiliary verb "do" in questions, negatives, and emphatic constructions, which was not common in Old or Middle English. This is known as do-support and became a standard feature of English in the Early Modern English period (after 1500). In Old English, relative clauses (used to describe a noun, like "The man who saw the dog") were introduced by various relative pronouns (such as "be" or "se"). These have been replaced over time by "who," "which," and "that" in Modern English. Old English had much more agreement between subjects, verbs, and objects (in terms of gender, number, and case). As English shed its inflectional endings, this agreement became less strict, and word order became the main way to signal grammatical relationships.

CONCLUSION The “language of English” has a long history that has impacted the English literature of the current era. The origin of the language is based on the arrival of “Germanic tribes” Saxon, Angels and Jutes in 5th century AD in Britain. Revolution of the “English language” has been gradually developed with the comfort ability of the communities. Gradually development of language has been explained in the chronology of the language Different

influences of the “English language” also have been discussed over here considering the Latin influence, Scandinavian influence, Norman influence and the French influence. 60% of English words are flavored with Latin influence that reflects on the dictionary words of “English. Modern English” is highly influenced by the Latin language whereas the old English is mostly inspired by the Germanic language. The Eight and Nine century has been influenced by the Scandinavian “English language” that reflects on the old “English language”. Vocabulary improvisation started the journey followed the Scandinavian “English language” which enhanced the speaking and writing skills of the common people in England. Mostly the daily used words are influenced by the Scandinavian language which increases the popularity of the “English language”. [5] Vocabulary improvisation started the journey followed by the Scandinavian “English language” which enhanced the speaking and writing skills of the common people in England. Mostly the daily used words are influenced by the Scandinavian language which increases the popularity of the “English language”. The Norman language and the French language simultaneously impacted the “English language” and created a royal dignity for the “English language” that has a vintage value of the language. The English period has been divided into specifically time periods according to the revolutionary act of the language. The 5th to 7th century has been considered as the pre old English period which helps to maintain the phonological and morphological changes in the English literature in successive manner. [6]

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