

## STRUCTURAL PECULIARITIES OF OLD ENGLISH NP IN GENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

**Volnytska D.O.,**

Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University

*The article considers peculiarities of the Old English syntax in general with the specific reference to OE Noun phrase. The paper highlights basic structural components of NP used in Old English prose and verse. The author makes a brief comparison between structural peculiarities of NP in OE and ModE. The results of the analysis are interpreted in the light of a modern linguistic approach namely X-bar theory.*

**Key words:** generative grammar, Old English syntax, noun phrase, X-bar theory, modification, word order.

*У статті розглядаються особливості давньоанглійського синтаксису, зокрема специфічні риси іменної фрази у світлі генеративної парадигми. Розвідка висвітлює типові приклади іменних фраз на матеріалі віршованих та прозових творів давньоанглійської мови. Використовуючи процедурний апарат сучасної лінгвістичної науки, а саме Ікс-штрих-теорії, проілюстровано основні моделі іменних фраз у давньоанглійській мові.*

**Ключові слова:** генеративна граматики, давньоанглійський синтаксис, іменна фрази, Ікс-штрих-теорія, модифікація, порядок слів.

*В статье рассматриваются особенности древнеанглийского синтаксиса, в частности специфические свойства именной фразы в свете генеративной парадигмы. Исследование освещает типичные примеры именных фраз на материале стихотворных и прозаических произведений древнеанглийского языка. Используя процедурный аппарат современной лингвистической науки, а именно Икс-штрих-теории, проиллюстрированы основные модели именных фраз в древнеанглийском языке.*

**Ключевые слова:** генеративная грамматика, древнеанглийский синтаксис, именная фрази, Икс-штрих-теория, модификация, порядок слов.

Modern linguistic schools present an increasing interest towards the grammatical system research of any language. Diachronically and synchronically earlier investigated notions need to be interpreted in a new light of up-to-date theories.

**The research goal** is to analyze syntactic and structural peculiarities of Old English noun phrase applying the methodology of generative grammar.

**The object** of the investigation is noun phrases in OE prose and verse.

**The subject** of the paper is the structural peculiarities of NPs, the analysis of their syntactic peculiarities in generative framework.

Language plays an essential role in forming our thoughts about abstract notions, objects in general. In generative linguistic theory it is obvious that one of the qualities that all languages have in common is their **“creative” aspect** [4]. An important function of the language lies in giving a possibility to express a lot of thoughts and react to an indefinite number of new situations. Due to the last investigations in modern linguistics the dominant trend of syntax is generative grammar. The emergence of generative grammar marked a new approach to studying language and language process. N. Chomsky as an originator

of this linguistic field talks about ***I-language*** as an inborn ability to speak any (particular) language. Noam Chomsky also calls this the **Human Language Capacity** [3]. The rules and theories of the generative grammar help to analyze historical syntactic notions in a new light.

Researching Old English syntax one may notice that it presents a combination of the old and the new. Modern English sentences have much in common with the Old English ones but there are several significant differences between them.

Old English belongs to a synthetic language type that is why it is characterized by a great number of inflections and the grammatical relations in a sentence are represented with the help of inflectional endings. Old English is considered to be a language with relatively free word order, inversion of SV to VS is quite common for OE texts, for example (1) *“þa wurdon hie” — “then became they”* [9]. Old English is described as a language with the so-called **“rule of concord”** that means that the parts of a sentence which belong together have to agree in gender, number, case. For example, in (2) *“se munuc” — “the monk”*, the definite article *“se”* and the noun *“munuc”* are both masculine nominative singular. Likewise,

in (3) “*Ʒa gesette se munuc*” — “*Then put down the monk*”, “*se munuc*” is the subject and the verb “*gesette*” agrees with it in person and number [12].

In traditional grammar NP is considered to be a part of a sentence where it takes the position of subject, verb complement or prepositional complement. For example:

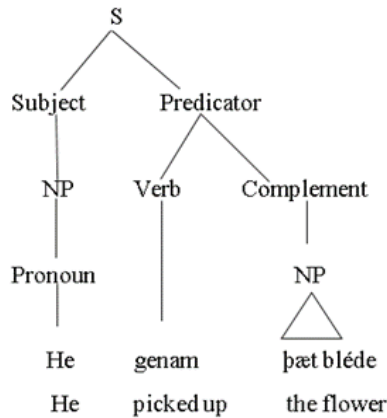


Fig. 1. NP as Verb complement

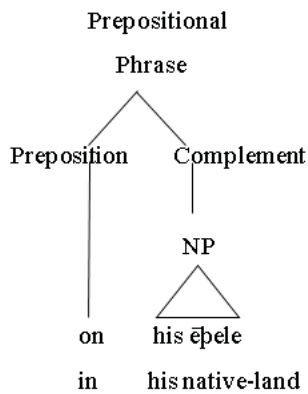


Fig. 2. NP as Prepositional complement

The main element of the noun phrase is the **head** that can be explicated as a noun or a pronoun. If the head is a noun so the NP can be extended and include adjectives, determiners (or designators), other NPs, possessive pronouns or a part of a relative subordinate clause [8]. Using the rules of X-bar theory we illustrate the model of NP with a determiner and an adjective:

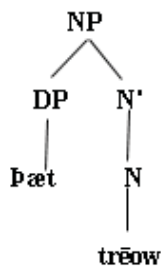


Fig. 3. NP with a determiner in adjective in X-bar theory

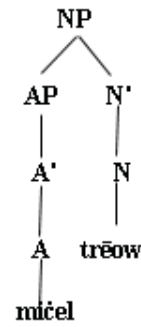


Fig. 4. NP with an X-bar theory

NP is the maximal projection of a noun. In fig. 3 the position of the **Specifier (Spec)** is occupied by a determiner expressed by a demonstrative pronoun *Ʒæt*. N is the head of the phrase with a complement *trēow*. In fig. 4 the position of the **Specifier** is taken by **Adjective phrase (AP)** with the head *mīcel* and a complement *trēow*.

Basic syntactic elements of NP in Old English agree in number, gender and case. According to J. Hladký there were two types of inflections in OE: thematic and athematic [7]. The mentioned types of declension are based on the presence (thematic declension) or absence (athematic declension) of the stem suffix. Such a notion is not common to Modern English. Consider the following examples:

- (4) ModE: “*The woman gave the man the book*”.
- (5) OE: “*Ʒæt wif geaf Ʒæm menn Ʒā bōc*” [9].

Judging by the example (5) we can observe three different instantiations of the definite article usage in OE. Each NP has a different case: nominative, accusative and dative. Nouns in ModE never demonstrate case inflection. There is only one situation in ModE where we have the relicts of case inflection that is possessiveness. For example:

- (6) “*The man’s tree*”.
- (7) “*Ʒæs mannes trēow*”.

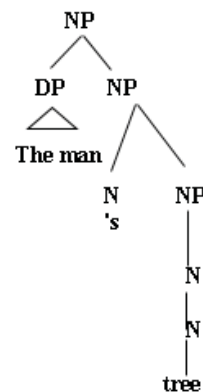


Fig. 5. ModE genitive NP

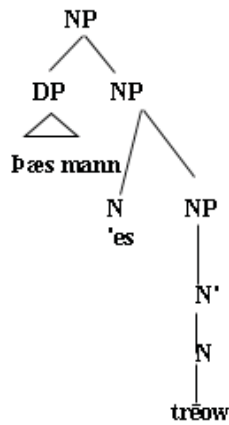


Fig. 6. OE genitive NP

In ModE ‘s is no longer an inflection but a **clitic** which is attached to an immediately-preceding NP. The present-day possessive in comparison to the OE genitive is not a case inflection because it is not attached to a preceding noun, but rather to a whole NP [8].

The average Old English NP resembles modern English NP especially in prose texts. For example, a typical ModE model of NP like **determiner+adjective+noun** is also found in OE texts:

(8) OE: “*se maga geonga*” [15] — “*молодий чоловік*”.

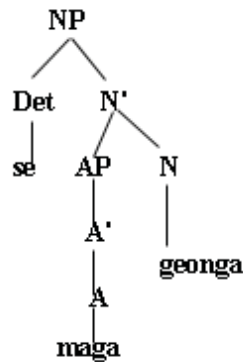


Fig. 7. Model of NP in Old English

(9) ModE: “*the young man*”

While studying NP we have to be careful because the position of its components may differ from ModE one. This may happen to adjectives which come not only as premodifiers of a modified noun. At the same time two adjectives which modify noun can be presented on either side of the noun. For example:

(10) OE: “*Sidroc eorl se ealda*”.

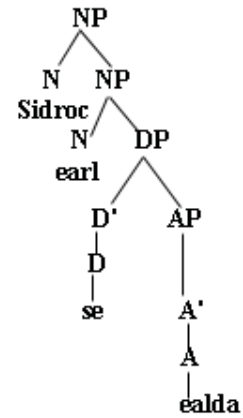


Fig. 8. NP with two modifiers

(11) ModE: “*Earl Sidroc the elder; the elder earl Sidroc*” [14]. — “*Граф Сидрок старший*”.

In OE noun phrase a possessive pronoun may come after the noun, it modifies especially in direct address. For instance:

(12) OE: “*Fæder min, hwær is seo offrung*” [13].

(13) ModE: “*My father, I ask where is the offering*” — “*Отець мій, а де ягня для жертвоприношення*”.

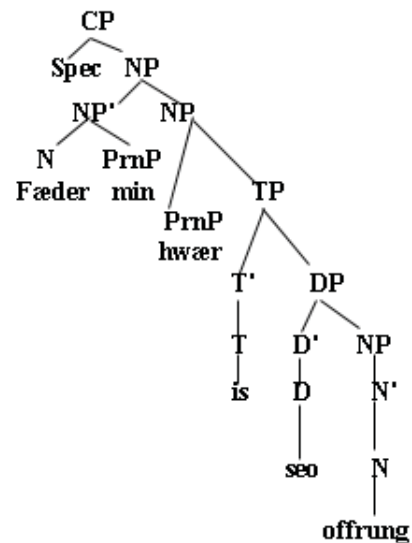


Fig. 9. OE NP with direct address

In sentence (12) we see the direct address “*fæder*” has a postmodifier “*my*” which is expressed by a possessive pronoun.

In ModE to use two determiners at the same time (articles and possessives are the main determiners) is restricted. In OE we may observe such examples:

(14) “*...hæleð mīn se lēofa*”, (15) “*my beloved hero*” — “*мій коханий герой*” [16].

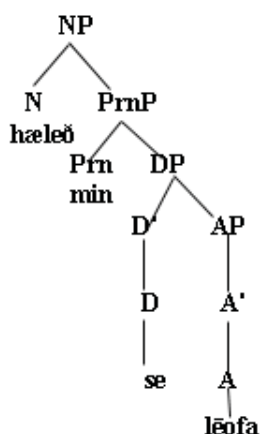


Fig. 10. OE NP with two determiners

The ModE translation (15) “*my beloved hero*” does not have a demonstrative “*se*” as it is in Old English version.

Taking into account the studied data we may highlight several examples of NP patterns in Old English:

1. Det+Noun: *se aéglaéca* (the wretch), *séo cwén* (the queen) [15].
2. Adj+Noun: *dyrnra gásta* (obscure spirits), *dýgel lond* (secret land) [15].
3. Det+Adj+Noun: *se hwíta helm* (the shining helm), *se wísa mann* (the wise man) [15].
4. NP+PossPrn: *Fæder min* [13].
5. NP+PrnP+Det: *hæleð mīn se lēofa* [16].

### Conclusions

Generative grammar gives a possibility to investigate syntactic elements of OE in a new light. One of the basic elements of the Old English syntax is a noun phrase that needs up-to-date investigation and explanation in generative framework. We have analyzed only some aspects of the NP in OE that is why the perspective of further research is to find out new frequently used NP patterns in Old English written records.

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