

INFLUENCE OF MIDDLE ENGLISH NORTHERN DIALECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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The article deals with the phonetic, grammatic and lexical features which penetrated into the London Dialect from the Middle English Northern and North-Eastern dialects and eventually were fixed in the literary language. The article claims that the penetration of the Northern features took place as the result of the London dialect base shift which took place due to the extralinguistic reasons, namely by social and demographic reasons. The article describes both direct influence (lexical) and indirect (partially phonetic and partially grammatic). The article claims that systemic changes in English, such as reduction of unstressed syllables and consequent simplification of grammatical paradigms were greatly facilitated by the influence of Northern dialects on the London dialect in Late Middle English period

Key words: Middle English Period, Scandinavian incursions, London dialect, Dialectal base, reduction of unstressed syllables, word-building paradigm, semantic shift.

Гурин О.В.

Вплив середньоанглійських північних діалектів на розвиток англійської мови

У статті розглядаються фонетичні, граматичні та лексичні риси середньоанглійських північних та північно-східних діалектів, що проникли у лондонський діалект, а відтак закріпилися у англійській літературній мові. У статті стверджується, що проникнення рис середньоанглійських північних діалектів у лондонський діалект відбулося внаслідок зміни його діалектної бази, що було спричинено екстралінгвістичними факторами, описано і прямий вплив (лексичний), і непрямий (частково фонетичний та частково граматичний). Стверджується, що системні зміни в англійській мові, такі як редуція ненаголошених складів та пов'язане з цим спрощення граматичних парадигм, були значною мірою підсилені впливом північних діалектів на лондонський діалект у період пізнього середньоанглійського періоду.

Ключові слова: середньоанглійський період, скандинавські завоювання, лондонський діалект, діалектна база, редуція ненаголошених складів, словотвірна парадигма, семантичний зсув.

Гурин О.В.

Влияние среднеанглийских северных диалектов на развитие английского языка

В статье рассматриваются фонетические, грамматические и лексические особенности, которые проникли в лондонский диалект со среднеанглийских северных и северо-восточных диалектов и позже закрепились литературном языке. В статье утверждается, что проникновение северных элементов произошло в результате смещения лондонской диалектической базы, которое произошло из-за внелингвистических причин, а именно из-за социальных и демографических причин, описывается как прямое влияние (лексическое), так и косвенное (частично фонетическое и частично грамматическое). В статье утверждается, что системные изменения в английском языке, такие как редуция безударных слогов и сопутствующее упрощение грамматических парадигм, были в значительной степени обусловлены влиянием северных диалектов на лондонский диалект в позднем среднеанглийском периоде.

Ключевые слова: среднеанглийский период, скандинавские набеги, лондонский диалект, диалектная база, редуция безударных слогов, словообразовательная парадигма, семантический сдвиг.

Introduction

It has been well established that a language reflects processes that take place in society: economic, social, ethnic, etc. In the epoch of cross-cultural contacts, the focus of linguistic research has been increasingly focused on the study of factors determining language development, internal and external: thus differentiating between changes, brought about by contact between speakers of different languages or dialects [8] migration to other countries [4].

Theoretical Background

Diachronic approach to language and dialect contacts suggests a wider scope of possible cross-cultural influences. English language in its history has demonstrated that both cross-cultural and dialectal interaction are interrelated and when combined can lead to significant language changes, which eventually can reshape the whole language system altogether.

Middle English period witnessed series of events, which included both interaction of different languages and cultures, as well as a series of events that led to interaction and assimilation of people, speaking different dialects, which eventually left a significant imprint on the language and determined its development.

The **aim** of the article is to highlight the main linguistic consequences of the Middle English northern and north-eastern dialectal influence on the development of English and trace the circumstances which enabled the influence.

Methods

This research suggests the usage of the scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, description and comparison as well as linguistic comparative-historic method in order to define linguistic consequences of the Middle English northern and north-eastern dialectal influence which have not been sufficiently solved yet.

Results and Discussion

Middle English is a period of dialectal diversity caused by the feudal society and foreign influence. It is overwhelmingly believed that the development of English during this period was due to French influence and, to a lesser extent, Latin [5, 98–116]. I believe that this short list underestimates the Scandinavian influence. Although the Scandinavian conquests took place in the 8th–11th centuries, the influence on the language became evident in the 13th–15th centuries. This can be proved after the analysis of the London dialect history.

The history of the London dialect reveals the sources of literary language of the late Middle English period and is the main source of literary norm. Linguists established that early Middle English scripts, beginning with the proclamation of 1258, testify to the southwestern base of the London dialect.

However, literary works of the 14–15th centuries indicate a change in dialect orientation, where features of the northeast and northern dialects begin to prevail. The most plausible explanation for this can be found after tracing socio-cultural conditions in which Londoners lived at the time (14th c.).

14th c. in England was quite tragic: in 1348, London was virtually devastated during the plague epidemic known as the Black Death and the subsequent outbreaks of bubonic plague (1360). In addition, a few years were quite poor in harvest, which caused famine. The ongoing at the time Hundred Years' War with France was also consuming human resources. All these events led to the fact that, according to various sources, the population of England decreased by 30–50% [5, 187–89]. Naturally, in cities with a higher population density, epidemics claimed the lives of more people than in villages. All these causes led to a shortage of workforce in London. It is obvious that new workers, who spoke their native dialect, moved to London from the most densely populated regions of the country with lack of income sources. According to the census of 1377, north-eastern lands, with a shortage of jobs were just the case. Consequently, by the 15th century, the London dialect changed its dialect orientation from the South West to the North East.

Middle English northern and east-central dialects as opposed to the southern dialects, displayed higher level of flexibility in the context of acquiring new features, as evidenced in particular by the simplified noun inflection system by 1300. This became possible among other reasons due to a more intense process of unstressed syllable reduction. Such a feature of this group of dialects is traditionally (O. Jespersen, D. Crystal, D. Leith) explained, by the Scandinavian influence. Eventually phonetic, lexical, and “radical” grammatical features of the northern and north-eastern Middle English dialects penetrated to the London dialect and, ultimately, to the literary language.

The influence of the northern dialects on the lexical system of the English language can be traced in the following aspects:

borrowing words from the northern dialects (in particular words of Scandinavian origin);

changing the semantics of existing words; the emergence of lexical and grammatical homonyms and improved conversion performance (as a result of the reduction of unstressed syllables).

As a result, these processes facilitated and strengthened the Germanic lexical segment in the Middle English language.

When a lexical unit was borrowed, one of the following scenarios could be implemented:

— Scandinavian words displaced their English counterparts, e.g.: EME. *niman* was replaced by Sc. *take*, EME *weorpan* — Sc. *cast*, EME. *clepjan* — Sc. *call*;

— the borrowings became nationwide, but the English etymological doublets were retained to indicate a slightly different object: *dike–ditch*, *skirt–shirt*;

— the borrowings came to be synonymous with Middle English words, for example: *sky* — *welkin*, *skin* — *hide*, *anger* — *wrath*, *die* — *starve*, *ill* — *sick*, *ugly* — *foul*, *husband* — *man*.

— complete word-formation paradigms were borrowed, for example: *gap* (Swed. *gap*, Dn. *gab* — open mouth); verb *gape*: (Swed. *gapa*, Dn. *gabe* — open mouth wide); verb. *bait*: (Osc. *beita* — hunt, haunt) — n. *bait* (Osc. *beist* — pasture);

— an English word, while retaining its form, «borrowed» the semantics of the Scandinavian (North English) correspondent, e.g.: *drēam* (joy, mirth) — ON *draumr* (dream); OE *mōdig* (brave, courageous) — ON *mōðugr* (sad, depressed). Present-day *dream*, *moody* display semantics closer to the Old Norse meaning than to Old English.

Yet another example of semantic shift is *dwel* (permanently stay, live): OE *dwellan* (bewilder), ON *dvelja* — postpone, idle, stay; *band*: OE *band* (bind horses) — Osc. *band* (bind) (6).

With regard to the semantics of borrowed words, there are several well-defined semantic fields: words denoting objects and food of daily consumption (cake, egg, knife), words describing landscapes, pastures, and agricultural objects and actions (*dike*, *carr*, *fell*, *balk*), body parts (anle, leg), legal terms (law, from fellow), nautical terms (afloat, ferry, keel). However, for the most part, the borrowed words were words of daily usage, denoting ordinary, everyday actions (lift, get, give, hit, anger, kettle).

Beside lexical borrowings, there were affixes borrowed from the North English dialects. Literary monuments of the 13th century southern dialects display suffix *-ild*, referring to the female gender of a certain action performer: *beggild* (beggar woman), *cheapild* (tradeswoman), *grucchild* (grunting woman), etc. The Old English West Saxon literary works display just a few examples of the use of this suffix, unlike in the Old English Northumbrian ones, where they are numerous. Obviously, this suffix in the Middle English had been borrowed from the northern dialects.

The influence of the northern dialects on the phonetic system lies first and foremost in accelerating the process of unstressed syllables reduction. It caused changes in both grammatical and lexical language systems:

— the loss of infinitive endings removed formal distinction between the Nominal case of a noun and the form of the verb infinitive and thus led to the emergence of lexic-grammatical homonyms *fish* — *to fish*, *love* — *to love*. Such homonymy served the basis for the emergence of a new word-forming model, which became highly productive over the next

centuries, e.g.: OE *būzan* > ME *bowe* [bu:] (verb) > *bowe* [bu:] (noun);

— the loss of the final *-e* in adjectives and possessive pronouns caused their loss of the number and case category, for example: EME *the yvele men* > LME *yvel men*; EME *hise lordes* > LME *his lord(e)s*. After *-e* dropping adjectives and possessive pronouns became indeclinable.

Consequently the abovementioned two processes made it possible to use nouns in attributive function (*mountain river*, *stone wall*). Such functional load is observed in PDE.

— the loss of final *-e* in nouns appeared somewhat slower. Testual data suggests that in the northern dialects it had been lost by the 13th century. However, the London dialect reached this stage in the early 15th century. The endings were still preserved in spelling, but no longer pronounced. This is evident in rhyming in Chaucer's writings, e.g.: *the droghte of March* ([θə 'dru:xt of 'mɑ:ʃ]) (3, 17: 2).

Likewise, the loss of final [ə] had phonological consequences:

— the rise of new diphthongs — [ɛə], [ɔə], [iə], as well as [uə]; after the loss of the final [ə] originally disyllabic words with the CVrV developed a CVr structure, thus [r] found itself in the final position. This eventually led to vocalization of [r] in the 16th c., giving rise to the new diphthongs. E.g.: ME *fare* ['fa:rə] > ENE *far* [fa:r] > [fæ:r] > [fɛə]; ME *queer* [kwɛ:r] > ENE. [kwi:r] > [kwiə]; ME *povre* > *poor* [po:r] > ENE [pu:r] > [puə].

— the increase of homophony in the language. E.g., *right* and *rite* became homophones, as well as *son* [sʌn] and *sun* [sʌn] (from ME *sunne*).

— the change of syllabic structure: all originally disyllabic CVCV words become monosyllabic (e.g.: *time* [ti:m], *rise* [ri:z], etc.). These words developed and joined the existing CVC structure (e.g.: *hous* [hu:z], *our* [u:r], etc.), thereby increasing the load on that structure and increasing the number of monosyllabic words in English, which couldn't but influence the language rhythm.

Such changes can be considered typological, i.e. English lost a number of features characteristic of Indo-European languages, while modern English, in its characteristic features, approached the agglutinative-type languages. It displays such agglutinative features as affixational word-formation, indeclinable adjective and possessive pronoun and to some extent — noun.

Another phonetic influence of the northern dialects on the English language is also revealed through a qualitative change of some Old English sounds in the Middle English language. The change in the articulation of labialized Old English [y] can serve an example of this. In Middle English southern dialects Old English [y] corresponded to [u], in the Kentish dialect [e], in the northern dialects —

to [i], e.g.: OE *fyllan*, ME South. *fullan*, ME Kent. *fellan*, ME North. *fillan* (PDE *fill*).

[y:] underwent a similar process, e.g.: OE *mȳs*, ME South. *mus*, *muis*, ME Kent. *mees*, ME North. *mis* (PDE *mice*). The following words: *hill*, *fire*, *king*, *kiss*, *kin*, *little*, *busy* (the latter retains the spelling of southern dialects and pronunciation of northern dialects) are other examples of the same process.

In addition, Old English diphthong [io] developed into [eo] in the late Old English period. In the Northumbrian and North Mercian dialects [io] remained unchanged, while in the Middle English period it was monophthongized into [i], e.g.: OE *mioluc* > *meoluc*, *meolc* > ME *melk*; Northumb. Merc. *mioluc* > North ME *milk*.

The influence of the northern dialects on the grammatical system reveals itself in borrowing the third person plural pronoun paradigm from the northern dialects, in influencing the paradigm of different parts of speech and on the syntax as a result of the reduction of unstressed syllables.

The major grammatical influence of the northern dialects on the grammatical system is the borrowing

of the entire paradigm of the third person plural pronoun. It must be noted that the paradigm was not borrowed altogether. Literary data demonstrate that the first borrowed form was *they*, the next — *theirs*. J. Chaucer uses the forms *they* / *hir* / *hem*. Example:

...*(so priketh hem nature in hir corages) /
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages, /
...And specially from every shires ende /
Of engelond to caunterbury they wende, /
The hooly blisful martir for to seke, /
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke...*
(3, 17: 11–17).

At the end of the 15th century. W. Caxton uses the forms *they* / *their* / *hem*.

The “success” of the northern forms can be explained by their phonetic similarity to the third person singular and plural pronouns of the 14th century London dialect. This similarity can be traced in *Table 1*, where such similar forms are marked in bold type.

Table 1

PERSONAL PRONOUNS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Ном.	ic	þu	he	he(o)	hit	we	ze	hi
Ген.	min	þin	his	hire	his	ure	eower	hire
Дат.	me	þe	him	hire	him	us	eow	him
Ак.	me	þe	hine	hi	hit	us	eow	hi

The borrowed third person plural form of the personal pronoun replaces the original London dialectal form *hemself* at the beginning of the Early New England period. For example, in W. Caxton’s work, “The Game of Chesse”, the third-person plural pronoun has the form *hemself* in one case, and *themself* in six (2).

The system of Middle English verbal endings in the northern dialects was considerably simplified as compared to that of the southern dialects, where the endings *-e*, *-(e)s(t)*, *-(e)th* in the three persons singular and endings *-(a)th* (*-(e)n* in central dialects in all persons plural. However it was from the northern dialects that the third person singular ending *-(i)s* was borrowed from the Northern dialects into Early New English. It should be noted that both the northern ending *-s* and the end of *-(e)th* were used as parallel options for several decades. For example, in Shakespeare’s works we can still find both forms “*The bird of dawning singeth.../ And then... no spirit dares stir abroad;*” (7, AISI).

The mentioned flexibility of the Northern dialects can be traced in particular by the example of spelling a negation particle. Text material of the Middle

English period indicates that the tendency to write negative pronouns together spread from north to south. For example: *nathyng* (York dial.) — *no thing* (Lond. dial). Thus, in the first half of the 15th c. Chaucer’s works demonstrate 41 cases of one-word spelling 7 cases of separate spelling.

Syntactically, as a result of reduction of unstressed endings, agreement gave way to joining, which thus affected the language type — a synthetic language became predominantly analytical.

Conclusions

Diachronic approach to the influence of Northern dialects on the development of English suggests that though a Scandinavian influence on Northern dialects occurred in Late Old English period, its consequences revealed themselves in the London dialect 300–500 years after the Scandinavian influence had taken place. This became possible due to social and demographic factors. This postponed influence suggests that any serious cross-cultural or dialectal interaction can have a time-delayed action on the main bulk of a language.

The influence itself of the Northern dialects on the English language was systemic and had

consequences in lexical, grammatical and phonetic systems. The mentioned affecting processes were most intensive at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries as a result of the change in the London dialectal orientation from south-west to north-east.

Perspectives

The study proves to be perspective, as the role and influence of other Middle English dialects on the system and structure of English still offers a lot of research material.

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