

theme of Act V, is again presented in its multiplicity and from the beginning is closely connected with the character of Prince Hamlet.

At the end of the play, however, all the parties in the struggle are dead, a new king comes to Elsinore in the shape of a Norwegian, Fortinbras, and we may just fear that he will prove to be another Claudius and that Hamlet's fight was in vain. The ending with "the soldier's music and the rite of war" (V, ii, 404) is really somewhat dubious, but one thing is definitely important: the word is no more dead. Horatio, who seemed to be a marginal figure up to now, is a true inheritor of Hamlet's task. He is not a poet himself, but has learned enough to keep the truth and the power in balance. From the point of view of the play's message he is a vital character and when we go back in the text we find that he appears at all the moments important for indicating the "poetic" identity of Prince Hamlet. Though fellow-students from the Wittenberg university, their real relationship in the play is that of a master and a disciple, in spite of the fact that Hamlet is a very unconscious, unwilling and only maturing master. With Horatio, the structural and thematic unity is completed.

A TYPOLOGICAL NOTE ON THE CATEGORY OF GENDER IN OLD ENGLISH

Jan Čermák

1. The collapse of grammatical gender and its subsequent replacement by natural gender is in our understanding well established as part of the progressive simplification of the inflectional system, one of the most fundamental structural developments in the history of English. The major systemic reasons for this replacement are phonological (levelling of vowels in the endings), morphological (analogical restructuring in the paradigm as the central organisational principle of inflectional morphology) and those often labelled 'psychological' (i.e. the conflict between gender and sex in nouns such as *wif*, 'woman', classified as of neuter gender).

1.1. Despite the relatively clear overall picture of this replacement, evidence for the chronology of the change to a consistently natural gender in Late Old and Early Middle English is scant; the need for more research into the minutiae of the transition has been long recognised.¹

1.2. In the explanatory framework of Prague School typology,² adopted here, the category of grammatical gender has received only a passing comment. Identified as a structural property of the inflectional type of language, it is seen as a classificatory sub-group to the word class.

1.3. The purpose of this note, therefore, is to offer a typological perspective on the beginnings in Late Old English of the collapse of gender distinctions in the morphology of the noun and noun phrase, with the aim of contributing to our understanding of typological change and its subtle mechanics.³

2. While the division of Old English (OE) nouns into masculine, feminine and neuter seems from a synchronic point of view to be merely a conventional terminological means to capture the inflectional variety in the noun morphology, its original function appears to have been primarily semantic (though it had nothing to do with natural gender).⁴ In the subsequent

¹ Cf. Mitchell (1987: 33, 35), Jones (1988).

² For its history, goals and methods, cf. Sgall (1995).

³ The other major domain of (grammatical vs. natural) gender marking in Old English – anaphora – is excluded from present discussion. Cf. Mitchell (1987: 35-37, §69-71), for an account of the agreement of the anaphoric pronoun and its antecedent noun, of occasional occurrences of natural gender in attributive demonstratives and in demonstratives/relatives.

⁴ The earliest form of the IE parent language probably distinguished only between animate and inanimate nouns. At a later stage, but before the emergence of the attested dialects, the animate class seems to have split into what are now masculine nouns and feminine nouns in those IE dialects that have a three-way gender system. While the 'masculine' came to denote a *definite* individual, the 'feminine' was associated with *generic* use, neither being

development from Indo-European (IE) into individual dialects (including Germanic), this semantic motivation of gender had been obscured: gender-class membership in Old English is not necessarily based on properties of the real-world denotata of its member nouns.

2.1. Old English is a relatively late product of a development in which considerations of form prevailed. From a typological point of view, this development is one of a transition from agglutination to inflection in word-structure: from a three-part (root – stem-formative – affix/ending) to a two-part structure (stem – ending). Thus in the earliest Indo-European there seems to have been a single set of case markers for all nouns regardless of stem-class. Later, with the rise of individual dialects, particular endings came to be associated with certain stem-classes and ultimately with specific combinations of gender- and stem-class. This association appears to have grown into a fusion, resulting in a two-part word-structure. In this process, grammatical gender itself, the main inflectional category along with number and case, developed covert marking. While the gender morpheme is still mapped, as are the morphemes of case and number, onto the single morph of the OE nominal ending, there is generally very little in the morph itself to express its gender affiliation. The OE grammatical gender becomes “a classifying device that predicts concord”.⁵

2.1.1. In the declensional system of the OE noun, traditionally based on stem-class and gender-class membership, only 14.29 % of all endings are gender-sensitive.⁶ Other signals of gender-class membership in nouns are provided by a limited range of derivational suffixes (e.g. *-end*, *-ere*, *-had* for masculine; *-nes*, *-ing/ung* for feminine; *-et(t)*, *-lac* for neuter) and correlative derivational pairs of the type *hana* (‘cock’) : *henn* (‘hen’), *god* : *gyden* (‘goddess’), the latter group with an overlap of grammatical and natural gender-membership but with only residual productivity, a fact due probably to the increasingly opaque variation in the stem.⁷

restricted to the male or female sex respectively. The ‘neuter’, with inflection modelled on the masculine in the sg. and on the feminine in the pl., arose in association with an *objective-collective* function. For details, cf. Prokosch (1939: 228-9).

⁵ Lass (1992: 106).

⁶ 57.14% of all OE noun endings are number-sensitive, 28.57 % function as unambiguous signals of number/case membership; no OE noun ending can be found to unambiguously mark the noun in question for number/case/gender affiliation. The corresponding figures for Gothic are 46.81%, 80.85%, 55.32% and 29.79%, respectively; for Modern Czech (rounded to whole numbers) 28%, 68%, 48% and 16%, respectively. Cf. Jan Čermák, *Tvaroslovná charakteristika staroanglického substantiva z hlediska proměny typu angličtiny* (‘Typological Re-shapement as Reflected in the Morphological Characteristics of the Old English Noun’), Unpublished Diploma Dissertation, Faculty of Arts, Charles University Prague, 1985, p. 67.

⁷ This feature, exhibiting the tendency in OE word-formation to abandon allomorphy, is of course typologically highly relevant. – Apart from the varying degree of productivity, another problem associated with derivational suffixes that are sensitive to grammatical

2.1.2. Considerations of natural gender are of little significance here, the main problem being that while nouns used of males are normally masculine and those used of females are normally feminine, asexual nouns are not necessarily neuter. Some nouns referring to both a male and a female being/animal have only one gender (e.g. *freond*, ‘friend’, m.; *fisc*, ‘fish’, m.; *ylfett*, ‘swan’, f.), some, despite their single nominal form, show a double gender-class membership by means of concord and anaphora (e.g. *leo*, ‘lion’, ‘lioness’). Particularly with names of animals, natural gender is expressed through compounding (*fugol*, ‘bird’, m., but *karlfugel*, ‘male bird, cock’, *cwenefugol*, ‘hen-bird’; *buccagat*, f., *gatbucca*, m., ‘billy-goat’; typologically, this is polysynthesis). Some natural gender oppositions are based on different stems (*cniht*, ‘boy’, m., vs. *mægden*, ‘girl’, n.; typologically, this is isolation).

3. There seem to be two major kinds of variation in affiliation to grammatical gender in OE.⁸ One has the form of restructuring among the OE noun declensions, with grammatical gender functioning as typologically subordinate to stem-class. The other is a variation in concordial gender marking, with ‘changes of gender’ depending on unhistorical congruence of noun with demonstrative or strong adjective. The latter assumes, at the same time, the form of a diatopic variation, as it can be first observed on a larger scale in late Northumbrian glosses (*Gloss to the Lindisfarne Gospels*, *Gloss to the Durham Ritual*) of the 10th century.

3.1. The major manifestations of the restructuring among the noun declensions in pre-OE and OE are the following:

- a) the so-called minor declensions (such as *r*-stems, *nd*-stems, *þ*-stems, etc.) exhibit a rise of analogical masculine *a*-stem formations linked to a gradual ousting of the original forms based on rich stem allomorphy;
- b) athematic nouns re-model their *i*-mutated gen. sg. and (later) dat. sg. form on *a*-stems (masculine) or *o*-stems (feminine); this is another instance of a replacement of the forms with allomorphy in the stem by those having an invariant stem-form;
- c) the only OE ‘major’ noun declensions with three-way gender membership, i.e. *i*-, *u*- and *n*-stems, have a weak neuter class, with *u*- and

gender is their cross-gender homonymy coupled with a not always clear semantic status (consider e.g. *-en*, a suffix that forms, besides the above-mentioned female nouns from nouns denoting male beings, also abstract as well as concrete deverbal and denominal nouns: *fæsten*, f., ‘fortress; fast’; *fæsten*, n., ‘fastener’).

⁸ Instances of multiple or ambiguous gender-membership in individual lexical items (such as *secg*, ‘man’ when masc., ‘sword’ when fem., and ‘sedge’ when n.) are hard to assess in terms of the change of gender. The difficulties are primarily associated with limited evidence and with a likely interplay of factors such as morphological analogy, contextual analogy, cross-linguistic analogy (gender in Latin), inheritance of a double or confused gender-membership from Germanic. For specific examples, cf. Mitchell (1987: 32-3, §64-65).

- n*-stems being re-modelled on the feminines of the same stem-class and with *i*-stems showing formal affiliation to neuter *ja*-stems;
- d) masculine *u*-stems and, to a large extent, *i*-stems are re-modelled on the pattern of masculine *a*- (*ja*-) stems;
 - e) feminine *u*-stems and, to a large extent, *i*-stems are re-modelled on the pattern of feminine *o*- (*jo*-) stems;
 - f) feminine *n*-stems, distinguished from the parallel masculine declension only in the nom. sg., come to abandon that distinction altogether;
 - g) from very early on, masculine *a*-stems and feminine *o*-stems are being reinterpreted as analogical targets, 'prototypes'⁹ for their gender classes.

3.2. The re-structuring of OE declensional system in terms of stem- and gender-class membership can be seen in connection with the low degree of sensitivity in the OE noun to gender marking. Another powerful factor precluding the loss of this category in OE was the fact that the domain of marking for grammatical gender was the whole noun phrase, with congruent forms of demonstratives or strong adjectives functioning as prime carriers of gender distinctions. However, even concord in noun phrase, which is an essentially inflectional feature, begins to show in what at first appears as diatopic variation instances of unhistorical (i.e. grammatically 'incorrect') agreement between the noun and its accompanying demonstrative or strong adjective. As reflected in the late Northumbrian glosses, this still very minor and slowly developing type of grammatical use builds primarily on phonetically more distinctive forms of the demonstrative or strong adjective (in particular, the strong masculine endings *-es*, *-ne* and the strong feminine form *-re* are employed). Several explanations for this have been offered. The theory based on the idea of a systemic reorganisation around the principle of gender, with OE inflectional distinctions replaced in Early Middle English by an association of different word patterns with particular genders, has now been abandoned, and so has the idea that in the language of the glosses there was a widespread gender re-assignment under the influence of the gender of Latin nouns in the original text. While some of the above-mentioned uses can be accounted for as instances of the so-called neutralization,¹⁰ the central argument seems to be that rather than *changes of grammatical gender* these instances of unhistorical gender concord exhibit marking for *case irrespective of gender*.¹¹

4. In typological terms, the developments discussed in 3.1. and 3.2. can be interpreted as signalling, and promoting, a decrease of inflectional properties in the system of noun declension.

4.1. While most of the transitions between declensions (3.1.) still observe gender-class membership and imply a continuing awareness of gender distinctions in speakers of the language based not solely on the concord in the noun phrase, it is the declensions most varied in terms of stem- and gender-class membership (i.e. *i*-, *u*-, *n*-stems) that seem to be dissociated among the first. The consolidation of *a*-stems and *o*-stems as two basic patterns of declension reduces inflectional variety – in particular synonymy and homonymy in the endings and rich allomorphy in the stem. Masculine *a*-stems may well owe their status of the most productive and numerous among the OE noun declensions to two typologically relevant facts: a) that they lack synonymy of ending in the nom. sg. (in contrast to the allomorphy of light- and heavy-stemmed nouns in *o*-, *i*-, *u*- stem-classes as well as in *a*-stem neuters); and b) that they display an identical zero-ending form in the nom. and acc. sg. (in contrast only to those stem- and gender-classes that subsequently undergo analogical restructuring and adopt (by-)forms modelled precisely on masculine *a*-stems). The latter property foreshadows the development in Middle English towards an invariable, endless word form which will come to depend for marking grammatical contrasts largely on word combination (which is a primary feature of typological isolation/analysis).

4.2. The incipient use of unhistorical gender agreement discussed in 3.2. above, too, marks a development of the typological system of the language away from the inherited inflection. The redistribution of the phonological/morphological material in inflectional endings aimed at reinforcing the marking for case at the expense of grammatical gender is a distinct step towards a reduced number of grammatical meanings in inflectional endings. The category of gender, weakened by its covert patterning and obscured semantic motivation in nouns, will be the first to go. While the language still strives to preserve the inflectional principle in sentence structure,¹² it is gender that contributes least of the grammatical categories expressed in OE noun to the semantics of the sentence.¹³ At the same time, the endings prominent in the unhistorical gender uses are of distinct phonemic form (being based invariably on consonants) and clear-cut semantic function (such as *-es* for gen. sg., *-ne* for acc. sg.). These properties contribute to establishing a much clearer boundary between the (now invariable) stem and ending, with all morphological information concentrated on the latter. Given also the overall reduction in the number of declensional patterns, the nature of the 'new' endings in this peripheral and, as we know, transitory system makes

⁹ For the term, cf. Lass (1994: 132).

¹⁰ I.e., the use of neuter forms of the demonstrative with historically masculine or feminine nouns denoting asexuals, cf. Ross (1936).

¹¹ This has been convincingly demonstrated by Jones (1988).

¹² For links between gender, concord in noun phrase and word-order in general, cf. Skalička (1982).

¹³ Subsequently, number will prove to be the central noun category by dissociating itself from case; a parallel development will take place in verbs, with the category of tense winning over person and number; for a more detailed analysis, cf. Lass (1994).

them more closely resemble the affixes of agglutination (which, it is interesting to note, knows no gender).

NOTES ON SOME BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE THEORY OF FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE

Jan Firbas

REFERENCES

- Bammesberger, A. (1992), in: Hogg, R. M. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 26-66.
- Brunner, K. (1965), *Altenglische Grammatik*, 3rd rev. ed., Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Campbell, A. (1983), *Old English Grammar*, rev. ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Jones, Ch. (1988), *Grammatical Gender in English: 950 to 1250*, London, Croom Helm.
- Lass, R. (1992), in: Blake, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume II: 1066-1476*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 23-154.
- Lass, R. (1994), *Old English: A historical linguistic companion*, Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, B. (1987), *Old English Syntax. Vol. 1: Concord, The Parts of Speech, and the Sentence*, 2nd, rev. ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Mustanoja, T. (1960), *A Middle English Syntax. Part 1. Parts of Speech, Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki XXIII*, Helsinki.
- Prokosch, E. (1939), *A Comparative Germanic Grammar*, Linguistic Society of America, Philadelphia.
- Ross, A. S. C. (1936), "Sex and Gender in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35, pp. 321-330.
- Sgall, P. (1995), "Prague School Typology", in: Shibatani, M. and Bynon, Th. (eds.), *Approaches to Language Typology*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp. 49-85.
- Skalička, V. (1982), "Asymetrický dualismus jazykových jednotek" ('Asymmetric Dualism of Linguistic Units'), in: Palek, B. (ed.), *Lingvistické čítanky III*, Prague, SPN, pp. 49-54.
- Strang, B. M. H. (1970), *A History of English*, London and New York, Methuen.

1. Functional sentence perspective as the interplay of multiple factors

I cannot but agree with Robert de Beaugrande that real language does not display a level of syntax that can be conceived of in a narrow formalist sense. Syntax is an organizing force which cannot be severed from meaning. As for the relationship between meaning and syntax, I should like to point out the following. With an amplification to be stated presently, I accept Mathesius' view that a sentence comes into existence through the process of naming (the onomatological process) and the process of syntactic structuration. In this connection I find the formulations of Reichling and Danes' truly felicitous.

In answering the question whether the functional perspective of the sentence is imposed upon the semantic and syntactic (grammatical) sentence structure after this structure has been created, I find that the language users produce the perspective during the sentence creation process. The communicative purpose to be fulfilled and to be communicated by the perspective has been a concern from the very start.

My enquiries have shown that functional sentence perspective (FSP) is determined by the interplay among multiple factors, each yielding its own signals by its own criteria. In written language, these include the contextual factor, the semantic factor, the factor of linear modification. In spoken language these three factors are joined with the factor of intonation.

The enquiries have further shown that this interplay constitutes a system, not a rigidly closed one, because it has its periphery; it is, however, a system that is strongly operative. The contextual factor operates by assessing the retrievability of a piece of information from the immediately relevant context, verbal and/or situational. The criteria for this factor are determined by the presence or absence of a piece of information in the immediately relevant context and its re-expression in the act of communication. The criteria yielded by the semantic factor are determined by the semantic content of a linguistic element and the character of semantic patterns into which this content enters. The criteria yielded by the factor of linear modification are determined by the positions in the linear arrangement. The criteria yielded by the factor of intonation are determined by the prosodic features at varying degrees of prominence. The interplay of all these factors determines the distribution of

¹ Cf. Firbas (1992: 14).