

The Development of Grammatical Components in English

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Abstract

This paper is intended to describe the development of grammatical components in English such as item, order and suprasegmental by conducting a diachronic study of a language. It is found that the emergence of suprasegmental feature in English has brought about some changes in the development of the grammatical components.

Keywords: *English, diachronic study, suprasegmental*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is developed by human social usage, it is not built by computers, mathematicians or professors. As stated by Sapir (1921:147) a language is not static, it keeps changing and drifts. The change can either be prompted by an outside influence or by an internal force. Contact with another language can bring about the change, but the change is usually superficial. Language contact may bring new words (loan words) and sometimes also some new phonemes. But it does not end up in a dramatic grammatical change.

Language grows organically like a tree. Likewise, English keeps drifting naturally. There has been a tendency of changes from its early form. English was classified as a case language like its sisters in Indo-Germanic language family such as German. But, now English has lost its case markers, numeral system, gender and its inflections.

The changes of English include all aspects such as phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. The changes that English experienced have led to the positing of five distinct forms of English: *Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, Modern English, and Contemporary English*. Various historical and linguistic events led to changes in English over time. For instance, the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 ushered in the French influence on the English language, an influence that was so significant, particularly in the area of vocabulary, that linguists saw the need to distinguish Old English from Middle English (Meyer, 2009:20).

In the lectures published in *A course in General Linguistics*, Saussure made the distinction between synchronic and diachronic studies of language. Synchronic studies involve investigating a language in its present form as it is currently spoken and written. A synchronic study of English would focus on Contemporary English: the current version of English spoken around the world. Diachronic studies, in contrast, examine the historical development of a language, taking into consideration changes it has undergone over time.

In this study, the writer will attempt to explain the development of components of English grammar by conducting a diachronic study of a language. The attempt is offered to answer the research question that why the grammar of Modern English is different from its sister language such as German which still prevails its case markers?

Before going to the discussion, let us take a look the history of English to find the clear distinction among the varieties of English.

a) Old English

English is thought to have had its origins around AD 400, when the Romans ended their occupation of England. After the Romans departed, England was populated by Romans who had stayed behind, Celts, and various Germanic tribes who had begun coming to England during the Roman occupation. In the years that followed, additional Germanic tribes from Western Europe and Scandinavia (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) continued to come to England through a series of invasions, pushing the Celts north and west to places such as Wales and Scotland and firmly establishing English as a Germanic language that in its earliest incarnation is known now as Old English (or Anglo-Saxon).

b) Middle English

Old English continued being spoken in England until approximately 1100. What precipitated the change from Old English to Middle English was a significant historical event: the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The Normans came from the Normandy region of France and ruled England for approximately 300 years; they spoke a variety of French called Anglo-Norman. There were two significant changes to English during this period that have led to debates about the extent to which the Norman Conquest affected the English language: the addition of many words of French origin to the English lexicon, and the continuing decline in the number of inflections found in Old English.

c) Early Modern English

The transition from Middle to Modern English is not marked by any specific cultural event but rather by a linguistic event: the Great Vowel Shift. This shift resulted in vowels either being raised on the vowel or becoming diphthongs. Oneway that vowels can be classified is according to how high the tongue is placed in the mouth when the vowel is articulated. What happened between Middle and Early Modern English is that in certain words, vowels began to be replaced by vowels pronounced higher in the mouth. For instance, in Middle English the first vowel in word *swete* would have been pronounced /eI/ (similar to the first vowel in Modern English *race*). However, in Modern English, /eI/ was raised to /i/. Thus, we get the Modern English pronunciation of *sweet*.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Principle Underlying Syntactic Changes

As stated in *Filsafat Bahasa* (Poedjosoedarmo, 1990), grammar exists for purpose. The function of all sort of rules in a grammar is to enable a language to be clear and yet compact. Grammar exists so that a language can be generated in a efficient way and yet it can be understood clearly. In line with the principle, things that are redundant in grammar will certainly be dropped. On the other hand, things that are missing will be added.

There are three components in grammar: *items*, *order*, and *suprasegmentals*. The three components work cooperatively to produce grammar. The three components interacts with one another to create rule which will serve as a basis to generate clear but efficient language.

If for some reasons one of components changes. The other two will adapt themselves so that the language can be generated in efficient way, and yet it is still clear. In other words, every time one of the components changes, the other two will react to realign themselves, so that the grammar is still efficient, and the language can be brief and yet clear.

By item it is meant such a linguistic element as word, particle or affix. It can be a content word (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, numeral) or a grammatical word (preposition, conjunction, article, particle), it can also be a bound form such as prefix, infix, or suffix.

By order or arrangement it is meant a system of rules for the order of words or phrase or clause or affixes in the sentence. It is a system of rules which regulate the sequence of items: what items comes before what, and which elements comes after which. It is a system of rules for word order, phrase order, clause order, affix order and the like.

B. Multiple and Chained Changes

Concerning the way how the changes have developed in Modern English from forms that Old English preserves, the following hypothesis is suggested.

First of all, it is hypothesized that, apart from an ordinary change experienced by an element, some sort of multiple changes have occurred as well. There is some elements which changed, and the changed affected several changes on several grammatical elements.

Secondly, it is hypothesized that some sort of chained changes have also happened. There was an element that changed, and the change has caused some other elements to adjust themselves to an underlying syntactic principles, and consequently the changes have been followed by other changes.

In other words, there was one aspect of the language that became the prime mover of the changes, and this prime mover has affected several other elements to change. In turn the

change elements prompted a series of adjustment to things in the same element, resulting various other changes in the same elements.

This hypothesis is suggested because in such a relatively short time as experienced by dialect development. Modern English has become so different from some Indo-Germanic language such as German. Besides the change have not been limited to one type of language element, but they include their phonological system (inventory of vowels and patterns of intonation), their phrase order or word order, and morphosyntactic items.

Further, examining the differences (changes) in each of the grammatical components one can see that the number of changes are not even. In the suprasegmental system the change are limited, in the level of order or arrangement the changes are a little more extensive, and in the level of items the changes are numerous.

C. Three Possible Prime Movers

There are three possible prime movers of syntactic changes that one can think of. Referring to the basic components of a sentence, the prime mover can be one of the following: 1) items, 2) arrangement (word order), 3) intonation (suprasegmentals).

1. Change of an Item

One may suggest that the numerous changes that have occurred in the Modern English may have started from an element in language item. In another words, it started from inflections of language. For example it may started from the loss case markers in form of inflectional affixes. Case is a part of linguistic item. In observing the case markers, one should know the case markers that found in English.

1.1. Case

Case is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads. Traditionally the term refers to inflectional marking, and, typically, case marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clause level or of a noun to a preposition, postposition or another noun at the phrase level (Blake, 2004:1).

Examples of case found in Old English

While Modern English, as noted earlier, has lost most of its inflections for case, number, and gender, many of these distinctions can be found in Old English. These grammatical features are evident in the Old English version of “The Lord’s Prayer”:

“The Lord’s Prayer” Matthew 6:9–13.

1 Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum;
 Father our thou that art in heavens
 2 Si þin nama gehalgod
 be thy name hallowed
 3 to becume þin rice
 come thy kingdom
 4 gewurþe Din willa
 be-done thy will
 5 on eorðan swa swa on heofonum
 on earth as in heavens
 6 urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg
 our daily bread give us today
 7 and forgyf us ure gyltas
 and forgive us our sins
 8 swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum
 as we forgive those-who-have-sinned-against-us
 9 and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge
 and not lead thou us into temptation
 10 ac alys us of yfele soþlice
 but deliver us from evil. truly.

(Adapted from Dan Kies, "Cuneiform and Distance Learning":
papyr.com/hypertextbooks/cuneiform.htm, accessed June 5, 2010)

The prayer illustrates some notable differences between Old English and subsequent periods of English. For instance, many of the nouns contain inflections marking case, number and gender. In line (1), the *-um* on *heofonum* marks this noun as masculine, dative, and plural; in line (5), the *-an* on *eorðan* marks this noun as feminine, accusative, and singular. Lines (1) and (2) contain two forms of the verb *be*. In Modern English, of all the irregular verbs, *be* has the most different forms (e.g. *is*, *are*, *was*, etc.). In Old English, it had even more different forms. In line (2), *Si* is a subjunctive verb form. In Modern English, subjunctive forms of *be* can be found in hypothetical clauses such as *if I were you* to mark contrary-to-fact assertions. In Old English, *Si* is a subjunctive form expressing a desire or wish. Finally, the verb *gehalgod* in line (2) contains a prefix, *ge-*, commonly found on participles (i.e. verbs in English following the auxiliary *have*, as in *have driven* or *had walked*). Of course, there are many other grammatical features of Old English evident in the prayer, but the examples described here point to how truly different Old English is from Modern English.

Rest of the Case Markers which still Prevail in Modern English

If a language the three Noun Phrase (Np) (subject, direct object, and indirect object) can stand next to each other without being interrupted by the Verb Phrase (Vp), case markers are usually already needed. They are needed especially when the Np's are inter-changeable in

terms of distribution in the sentence. The case markers are usually in the form of morphological inflections.

On the other hand, language such as English, Malay, and Javanese do not make use of case markers. They are of SVO types or the type of Np Vp Np Np. Front position of Np marks the subject, the position of Np immediately after the Vp is the indirect object, and the Np after that is the direct object. If the two objects are interchanged, a certain preposition is used to mark the indirect object. In SVO language, sentence position (word order) serves to indicate the function of the nouns.

In some languages which still prevail numerous case marks, there is a tendency to have preposition or postposition in form of affixation. On the other hand, in English a preposition is a free word. It is not an inflectional affix. The case markers in form of inflectional affixes in English have in general faded away, only few case markers prevail such as pronouns him, her, me, and them. Thus, we cannot say *she kills he* or *her kills he*.

1.2. Loss of Strong Verbs

The form of numerous strong verbs in Old English have gone away. In certain case, about ninety strong verbs has disappeared without any written form after 1150. Some of the strong verbs had been used in certain period of time in spoken form. In Old English, most of the strong verbs seems to be shorter so that they are able to move around their position in a sentence. On the other hand, in Modern English, the form of verb tends to be longer and it seems to be limited in its motion. It is caused by the fixed word order in English.

1.3. Strong Verbs Became Weak Verbs

The basic analogy of a tendency that a language follows the certain word order is to adapt the form which is not prevalent to the more prevalent one. The conjugation that is found in weak verb offers a fixed word order for the past tense and past participle. On the other side, there are many variations in class differences of strong verb. For example:

Sing – sang – sung

Drive – drove – driven

Fall – fell – fallen

In that time, English was a language used by low level society and far from the education and standard literature influences. It is nature that the speakers of English at that time seemed to be wrong in applying the pattern of weak verbs that should be used as strong verbs. Old English had numerous strong verbs. At that time, English was not an official language. After the

no longer back to use English, some of loan words that derived from French generally have long form. Based from that reasons, the need of –ed suffix is required to synchronize the past and the participle form for the words which are longer. This statement needs further study.

In relation to the case above, Baugh (1963) has a different statement about this case. As described by Baugh, strong verbs, which form their past tense and past participle by a vowel change, are dominant in Chaucer's time, but since then there has been a tendency to use the weak verbs, which means easier to move around, and are more suitable in a syntax with free word order. When the word order is fixed, the need to have compact phrase is not that urgent, and hence the preference for the weak verbs.

1.4. Loss of Gender Markers

When inflections from some gender markers faded away and shifted to fixed form of demonstratives (the, this, these, that, and those), the form of the grammatical gender markers are eliminated. Poedjosoedarmo (1999) described that Old English has inflectional affixes that mark the gender: masculine, feminine, and neuter. In Modern English, however, gender affixes have disappeared, except for some remnants such as prince-princess, emperor-empress, tiger-tigress, hero-heroine, and also for third person singular pronouns (he, she, it). The pronouns are perhaps needed to facilitate cohesion between sentence in the paragraph of the discourse, and the remnant affixes –ess, and –ine are used especially in literary style to mark important figures.

1.5. Plural Markers

The affixes for gender in Modern English have in general faded away. However, plural affixes are still productive, even though they have been simplified or regularized (i.e. –s, –es). With the word order fixed, we expect that the plural affixes should have been dropped from use. But number markers are still productive. Plural affixes are still maintained by the grammar because they still have a function. In addition to marking the number of the noun. Without the plural affixes, nouns can be easily mistaken as adjective or another part of speech.

One can state, therefore, that grammar is needed to make clear the function of words in the sentence as subjects or objects, and also the identity of the words used in the sentence (as nouns, verb, adjective, adverb). In order to generate sentences that are clear, the grammar must also clearly distinguish the identity of each of the parts of speech. Grammar must

produce sentences that are brief, yet must also be clear. In the case of English, inflectional affixes are needed to make clear the identity and the function of the words in the sentence. The tendency of an inflectional affix to disappear when the word order is fixed can be halted by the need to make clear the distinction between parts of speech.

2. Change in Order (Word Order or Phrase Order)

A better hypothesis for the prime mover of the changes would be word order rather than words and affixes.

2.1. The Drift to the Fixed SVO Order

In a language which is free in word order, there has been a tendency for the Np and the Vp can be permuted and they are mobile in sentence. This is why, inflectional affixes tend to be present in a language with free word order. **Let us** compare Modern English to German

I bought my wife a bike [Eng]

Ich kaufe meiner Frau ein Rad. [Ger]

I bought a bike for my wife [Eng]

Ein Rad kaufe ich meiner Frau [Ger]

I sent my parents a letter [Eng]

Ich sende meinen Eltern einen Brief [Ger]

I sent a letter to my parents [Eng]

Einen Brief sende ich meinen Eltern [Ger]

It can be seen that English needs preposition to mark the function, whereas German does not need prepositions because it has distinctive case markers (inflectional affixes) to mark the both objects (accusative and dative). As stated earlier, in the languages which have case system, there are preposition and post position in form of affixation, whereas in English preposition is a free word and it can stand alone.

2.2. Preposition and the Word Order of Noun Phrase in English

The statistical finding of Greenberg (1966) and Hawkins (1983) shows that in a SVO language, preposition should prevail, and the order of an Np should be NA and Ngen rather than AN and GenA. English does make use of preposition rather than postposition, but why is it that in Np the Head (N) does not precede the modifier (adjective, A) nor the Genitive (Gen). English has the opposite order. In a Np, the modifier precedes the N rather than the opposite. What keeps the adjective and the genitive from moving away from the front position to the back one.

We have not had any definite answer yet. Perhaps it is because of the use of articles as a Np marker. In English, Np is usually marked by *the*, *an*, *a* or by the genitive *my*, *your*, *his*, etc. In Old English the function of article is not only to mark cases, but also to mark Np. Apparently, the case marking has faded away, but the Np marking still prevails. The article is still needed to mark the beginning of the noun phrase. From this point, we can think that the appearance of genitive phrase with N of N is probably a beginning of the drift toward Ngen, which will be followed by NA.

2.3. The Appearance of N of N

An interesting development since the Middle English is the way of indicating possession with *of*. As a result, Modern English has two means of showing possession, using 's and *of*. In Old English and Middle English the longer mode with *of* was non-existent. It has become possible only when the word order is relatively fixed and Vp and Np do not have to be too compact. Some people think that the appearance of *N of N* has been the result of French influence.

2.4. The Tense Markers

Compared to German, that has relatively free word order, Modern English has relatively fixed word order, SVO. But Old English was an inflected language with three genders and four cases in the noun, a fifth case for some pronouns and adjectives (Grebanier, 1948). In Modern English the overt case markers and gender markers have been greatly reduced. According to the hypothesis English should not have the need for neither case markers nor inflectional affixes. Case markers have faded away, but tense markers are still in use, although they have been simplified or regularized compared to those in Old English or Middle English. What keeps tense markers from going away completely? Tense markers are still needed because they still have functions. Actually, tense markers have double function in English. First, they indicate time of the action of the verb. Secondly, tense markers are needed to mark the identity of the verb. Without tense marker, an English verb would look the same with adjective or noun. Without tense marker, (-ed), we would have difficulties in identifying a verb from the other parts of speech.

2.5. The Explicitness of Phrase

A language with free word order tends to have better capability to produce explicit phrase. For example, German often use more specific words than English to represent a certain concept. The following examples provided by Hawkins (1986).

English	German
To know	kennen, wissen, kennen
To leave	lassen, verlassen, überlassen, abreisen, abfahren, gehen
To put	stellen, legen, setzen

The use of more specific word in a free word order language seems to agree with its need to have compact phrases. Specific words do not need modifiers or qualifiers to make explicit. On the other hand, words with broader semantic reference would need further modifiers to refer to specific meaning. Hence, English may use such general words, because it does not need to have too compact phrase.

Besides, German distinctly differentiates between a compound word and a phrase. A Np in German makes use of an inflectional affix to link between the modifier and the noun modified, while a compound does not. In German, a compound noun is formed by joining together the modifiers and the noun, and is written as a single word, even if it is rather long. The following are some examples.

GERMAN PHRASE

Nominative	der gute Wein
Accusative	den guten Wein
Dative	dem guten Wein
Genitive	des guten Wein

ENGLISH

<u>Phrase</u>		<u>Compound Word</u>
white 'house		'White House
hot 'dog		'hot dog
'foot 'ball		'foot ball
GERMAN		
Compound word	weis + Haut	Weishaut
Phrase	weis + Haut	wieser Haut
Compound word	weis + Haus	Weishaus
Phrase	weis + Haus	weises Haus

English does not apply any affixes to mark a phrase, and make use of a less apparent prosodic feature to mark the compound. English does not have the inflectional affixes to build the phrases.

3. Change in Intonation (suprasegmental)

English gives great importance in its word stress and sentence stress. In English every single word consist of one strong stress, and every sentence has one sentence stress. If the word is of one syllable, then the word has the stress. But if it is of two syllables, one syllable has the strong stress and the other has weak stress. Sometimes the word stress is used to distinguish between the class of nouns and verbs. If the stress falls on the first syllable, the word is a noun. If the stress falls on the second syllable, then the word is a verb. For examples: ‘export vs ex’port, ‘import vs im’port. We can say the stress is phonemic. In a sentence the sentence stress can change the place of the new information. The strong sentence stress falls on the new information. The strong stress indicates the focus of attention in the sentence. For examples:

Question : How did you like the movie?

- a. It was pretty **good**. (she liked it.)
- b. It was **pretty** good. (she didn’t like it much.)

according to Poedjosoedarmo (1999), the rise in status of the word stress is closely related to with the so-called “Great Vowel Shift”, the loss of final –e in some words, the loss of consonant in some other words, and the aspiration of the phoneme /p/, /t/ and /k/. The rise significance of strong stress often affects the quality of vowels and also the phonemic shape of words. As a comparison, in Minangkabau diphtongization of the vowel in the final syllable also occurs together with the application of strong stress on the syllable. E.g. Malay *kampung* ‘village’ has become Minangkabau *kampuan*, Malay *kambing* ‘goat’ has become Minangkabau *kambian*.

The following is a picture of the change of some English vowels into diphtongs given by Henry Alexander (1962): What is long [i:] in Middle English (M.E) is [ai] in Modern English (Mod.E). And what is long [u:] in M.E is [au] in Mod.E.

M.E	myn	thyn	ride(n)	rise(n)	tid	bite
Mod.E	mine	thine	ride	rise	tide	bite
M.E	hous	cou	thousand	aboute	mouth	

Mod.E	house	cow	thousand	about	mouth
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The change of long [i:] into [ai] and [u:] into [au] has affected the pronunciation of some other vowels, and hence the “great vowel shift”. For example M.E. [e] has become Mod.E. [i:], M.E. [o] has become Mod.E. [u:], M.E. [a--e] has become Mod.E. [ei], M.E. [aw] has become [ou].

M.E	feet	teeth	mete(n)	rede(n)	bete(n)	lede(n)
Mod.E	feet	teeth	meet	read	beat	lead

M.E	sone	foot	doom	god(e)
Mod.E	soon	foot	doom	good

M.E	name	take
Mod.E	name	take

M.E	ook	hoom	stoon	hope
Mod.E	oak	home	stone	hope.

The adoption of the strong word stress has also affected the loss of several sounds, some at the beginning of the word (K-, g-, p-) and some are the end of the word (-e, -b). As examples – e has been dropped (mute) into following words in Mod.E.

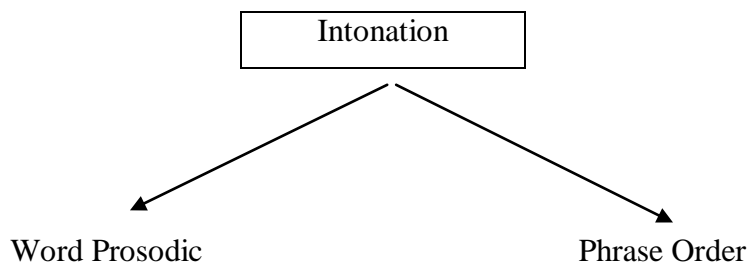
Mod.E	M.E (Chaucer)
Star	stere
Dark	derke
Heart	herte
Starve	sterve
War	werre

The initial consonant sounds k-, g-, w- have been dropped in such words as *know*, *knight*, *knee*, *gnat*, *gnaw*, *wrong*, *wry*, *wright*, and the final –b and –g have been dropped at a final consonant cluster in such words as *bomb*, *wright*, *night*, *nought*, *debt*, *bomb*, *comb*.

The adoption of strong word stress in English seems to have a multiple effect. It has only resulted in the rise of several diphthongs, but also in the rise of several new vowels and as a consequence, in the rise of many monosyllabic words. Besides, the new diphthongs and monosyllabic words have arisen at the expense of the loss of final –e sound and the loss of initial consonant clusters. Further, as the case in Chinese, the adoption of strong word stress

has also given the voiceless plosive sounds /p/, /t/, /k/ strong aspiration (Yip Po-Ching and Rimmington, 1997:2).

As stated above, it should also be noted that intonation pattern is not only closely related to the phrase order, but also the prosodic pattern of words. Thus, intonation pattern has influenced the word order or phrase order.



III. CONCLUSION

This brings us to the conclusion that the development of the components of changes in Modern English grammar is hypothesized as follows: The loss of case markers is a result of the fixed word order in English. In English the over case markers and gender markers have been greatly reduced. Case markers have fade away, but the tense markers are still in use. In languages which have case system, there has been a tendency to have preposition or postposition in form of affixation, whereas in English, a preposition tends to be a free word like *kata depan* in bahasa Indonesia and it can stand alone. English does not have inflectional affixes to produce the phrase and compound word, English does apply the prosodic features to distinguish both phrase and compound word. The appearance of word stress in certain syllable in English words can be used to mark the parts of speech, while the appearance of stress in certain word in a sentence is needed to make focus of new information. The appearance of stressing in English has also resulted some vowels become diphtongs.

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