Historical Formation of Pronouns in German Language

AZIMOVA ZUHRO ISMATILLOYEVNA
Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

Periodic study of pronouns in the German language, comparing their forms in ancient written monuments with their modern forms, is one of the main goals of our topic. In the article, the phonetic, semantic, lexical meanings, number and agreement categories of the reflexive pronoun and its forms and characteristics in ancient language monuments, its function in the sentence were studied, compared and analyzed through examples. Changes in the historical development of each language primarily affect its lexicon and vocabulary.We focus on pronouns because despite constituting only a tiny fraction of the available words in the English language, they are among the most frequently used (Pennebaker 2011). Furthermore, extensive research has established that pronouns play a fundamental role in people's everyday experiences.

Keywords: Phonetic, semantic, lexical meanings, number and agreement categories of the reflexive pronoun, German language, comparing their forms in ancient written monuments with their modern forms.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the historical development of each language primarily affect its lexicon and vocabulary. Periodic study of pronouns in the Uzbek language, comparing their forms in ancient written monuments with their modern forms, is one of the main goals of our topic.

It became clear from our research materials that the linguist separately analyzed the synonymy, homonymy and grammatical categories of personal, demonstrative, interrogative, personal pronouns in the ancient German language.

The development of pronouns in German dates back to the ancient Germanic languages. The periodic changes in German pronouns occupy a very important place in the history of the language. The evolution of German pronouns is mainly associated with morphological and syntactic changes. Their periodic changes are observed in the period from Old German (Erkenneuhochdeutsch) to modern language.

2. OLD GERMAN LANGUAGE PERIOD (ALTNIEDERDEUTSCH)

Pronouns were used in a system of declension (form change). During this period, the language had separate pronoun forms for each grammatical case.

Pronouns were used mainly in nominal and attributive functions. They were used only in syntactic context to change their function when combined with other words.

3. MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN PERIOD (MITTELHOCHDEUTSCH)

Pronouns were widely used in the declension system during this period, but there were major morphological differences compared to modern language. Pronouns differed in person and gender and had many grammatical forms.

Pronouns were expanded to perform nominal functions. For example, demonstrative pronouns (dieser, jenner) and interrogative pronouns (wer, was) clearly indicated their place and function.

4. EARLY NEW HIGH GERMAN PERIOD (FRÜHNEUHOCHDEUTSCH)

Pronouns were used more to perform syntactic and semantic functions. They lost only their morphological forms, but began to perform many grammatical functions.

Many forms (plural, person) and categories of pronouns were simplified, and the grammatical system changed. Pronouns lost many forms and adapted to perform syntactic functions simply and clearly.

5.   MODERN HIGH GERMAN PERIOD (NEUHOCHDEUTSCH)

In modern times, pronouns have become morphologically much simpler. Pronouns distinguish grammatical forms mainly by person and plural, but other grammatical cases have become much simpler.

In modern German, pronouns are used only for demonstrative, interrogative, and multifunctional roles.

The pronoun system, the pronominal system, of the Old Low German (Altniederdeutsch) period is very different in its morphological forms, because the declension (case) system was much more developed during this period. Below is a table of the pronominal system used in the Altniederdeutsch period.

Old   Low   German   (Altniederdeutsch)   Pronoun   System (Pronomentabelle)

Pronoun	Nominativ	Genitiv	Dativ	Akkusativ
(Personalpronomen)				
1st person ich (I)	ik	min	mie	mi
2nd person du (you)	du	din	dir	di
3rd person er (he-male)	er	sin	him	him
3rd person sie (she-female)	si	sin	ir	ir
3 person es (it-neutra)	it	sin	im	im
(Demonstrativpronomen)				
The/ This (this man)	der	des	dem	den
that (that man)	jener	jenes	jenem	jenen
Interrogative pronoun (Interrogativpronomen)				
who?	wer	wessen	wem	wen
what?	was	wessen	wem	was
(Possessivpronomen– possessive pronouns)				
Mein	mine	minnes	minnem	minne

Dein	dine	dinnes	dinnem	dinne
sein (erkak)	sine	sinnes	sinnem	sinne
ihr (ayol)	sine	sinnes	sinnem	sinne

During the period of Old German (Altniederdeutsch), the declension system of pronouns was more complicated than in modern German. The historical development of pronouns in German is one of the most interesting and complex aspects of the history of the language. Pronouns are, first of all, words that replace words, denoting a person, thing or concept, and their development reflects the general morphological and syntactic changes of the language. In German, pronouns have gone through several main stages during the historical process, changes in their forms, functions and use have developed in accordance with the simplification or complexity of the language. Changes in cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative) were widespread, and each pronoun had its own specific forms. In modern German, this system has been simplified: many cases have disappeared or the same forms are used, for example, the demonstrative form "der" is also used for pronouns.

The pronoun system of Old Middle German (Altniederdeutsch (500-1050) reflects a period of much more advanced and complex grammar. Old German (Althochdeutsch) is the language that formed the basis of modern German in Germany. Pronouns during this period were morphologically very complex, as they had a system of declension (change by case), and the grammatical case of each word was clearly expressed. The personal, interrogative, demonstrative, and possessive pronouns were each expressed by separate grammatical forms. Pronouns during this period were based on a system of declension, and each case had its own specific forms.

In the Mittelhochdeutsch (Middle German) period (c. 1050-1350), the morphology and declension system of pronouns were further developed. During this period, pronouns were declension (change by case). The system of change was widespread and there were grammatical forms specific to the language.

- **Pronouns and declension system**: Pronouns were distinguished by male, female and neuter gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) and were used in the nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative cases.

  ich (I) – nominativemin (mine) – genitivemir (I) – dativemich (me) – accusative

- **Possessive pronouns**: Pronouns were also used in the possessive form, for example, "mines" (mine) or "deines" (yours).
- **Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns**: In this period, demonstrative pronouns (eg der, die, das) and interrogative pronouns (egwer, was) were already in use, but the declension system was much more complex than in modern German.

6. MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN (MITTELHOCHDEUTSCH) – 1050-1350

The Middle High German (Mittelhochdeutsch) period is a period of great change and development of the German language in Germany. During this period, there were significant changes in the use of pronouns and their grammatical forms.

- **Pronouns and the declension system**: Although the nominative, genitive, dative and accusative cases still existed, grammatical forms began to simplify. During this period, the declension forms of pronouns changed, and some forms began to resemble each other.
      Personal pronouns (Personalpronomen) were used more in the dative and accusative cases. For example, there were forms such as ich (I), mir (I), mich (me).
- **Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns**: Demonstrative pronouns existed in forms such as der, die, das, jener, jene, and these forms differed only in gender and case. Interrogative pronouns (wer, was, wen) were used according to declension.

- **Semantic expansion of pronouns**: During this period, pronouns took on more semantic functions. They were used to perform many functions, such as indicating, asking, possessing, and expressing a specific person or thing.

7. EARLY HIGH GERMAN (FRÜHNEUHOCHDEUTSCH) – 1350-1650

During the Early High German (Frühneuhochdeutsch) period, the syntactic and morphological system of the language continued to simplify. The use of pronouns also underwent a great deal of change.

- **Simplification of pronouns**: Pronouns decreased in many cases and forms. That is, the grammatical differences between many pronouns decreased and became much simpler compared to Middle High German.
    Personal pronouns (ich, du, er, sie, es) lost many of their forms and were reduced to a few. For example, the forms "ich" (I), "du" (you), "er" (he), "sie" (she), "es" (he - neuter gender) remain close to the present language.
- **Pronouns and syntactic changes**: Pronouns began to acquire syntactic functions. Unlike Middle High German, pronouns began to perform not only nominal, but also syntactic functions. For example, pronouns sometimes acted as predicates (i.e., replacing verbs).

8. MODERN GERMAN (NEUHOCHDEUTSCH) – 1650 - PRESENT

During the Modern German (Neuhochdeutsch) period, the morphology and syntax of pronouns became extremely simplified. The indication of grammatical cases became much more minimal, and pronouns were adapted to perform more syntactic and semantic functions.

- **Simplification of pronouns**: Pronouns have lost many of their grammatical forms. Demonstrative pronouns and

interrogative pronouns have changed not only in form, but also in contextual functions.

Personal pronouns still exist, but morphological changes remain minimal and in simplified forms. For example, there are forms such as "ich" (I), "du" (you), "er" (he), which have remained almost unchanged in the declension system.

- **New semantic functions of pronouns**: In modern German, pronouns have developed more semantically, sometimes performing an adjectival function, and sometimes being used to express direct and indirect predicates.

These examples show how pronouns change in Old High German, Middle High German, and Modern High German. Below is a table of the oldest pronouns in German and examples of them. These pronouns are borrowed from Old High German and at that time changed according to gender, number, and case.

Table of Old German pronouns

Person	Old form (Proto-Germanic)	Present tense of German	Nominativ	Akkusativ	Dativ	Genitiv
1st Person	*ek*	ich	*ek*	*mik*	*miz*	*min*
2nd Person	*þū*	du	*þū*	*þik*	*þiz*	*Þin*
3rd Person	*iz/si/it*	er/sie/es	*iz/sī/it*	*inak/sī/ita*	*ima/sī/ita*	*is/si/is*
1st Person	*wīz*	wir	*wīz*	*uns*	*uns*	*unsar*
2nd Person	*jūz*	ihr	*jūz*	*iŋk*	*iŋkiz*	*iŋkar*
3rd Person	*sijōz*	sie	*sijōz*	*si/jōz*	*sijōm*	*si/jōz*

Above is a periodic table of the changes in German pronouns from ancient times to the present day. The emphasis is on the phonetic, morphological, and functional changes of pronouns in each period.

Analysis of phonetic and morphological changes

1. **Personal pronouns**:
   - Proto-Germanic period: ek → ich; þū → du; this is due to phonetic contractions and sound adaptations.
   - Old and Middle High German: the formiz was divided into three genders, creating the formser, sie, es.
   - Modern High German: Pronouns were consolidated in their grammatical system.
2. **Plural forms of pronouns**:
   - Proto-Germanic period: Plural forms (wīz, jūz, sijōz) were simplified to the modern forms wir, ihr, sie.
   - Middle High German: The declension system developed and differences in conjugations were consolidated.
3. **Conjugation forms**: The conjugation system in Old High German was complex. In modern German, most of the cases are clearly separated: Person Proto-Germanic forms Modern forms
   - 1st singularek/mik/mizich/mich/mir
   - 2nd singularþū/þik/þizdu/dich/dir
   - 3rd singulariz/sī/iter/sie/es

   a. Proto-Germanic → Modern German:
      ekgā → ichgehe (I go).
      þūnemiþ → dunimmst (Youtake).
   b. Middle German → Modern German:
      ichsagedir → ichsagedir (I tellyou).
      Wirsingenein Lied → wirsingenein Lied (Wesing a song).

The Nibelungenlied is an epic poem written in Middle High German, written by an unknown author around 1200. It is considered one of the most important works of German folk literature and uses many pronouns. Below are examples of pronouns used in the work. These examples, taken from the original text of the work, show how pronouns were used in Middle High German.

Examples from the "Nibelungenlied"

1. **Personal pronouns**
   - Original Middle High German:
     "chbindirholt, ichdiendir"
     (I am loyal to you, I serve you.)
   - Modern German:
     "Ichbindirtreu, ichdienedir."
   - Analysis: This sentence uses personal pronouns such as ich (I), dir (you). The pronoun "dir" is used in the dative case.
2. **Demonstrative pronouns**
   - Original Middle High German:
     "o diuvrouwenlobelîchen"
     (This woman is praise worthy.)
   - Modern German:
     "o DieseFrauistlobenswert."
   - Analysis: Here diuisan Old Middle High German demonstrative pronoun, used in Modern German asdiese.
3. **Possessive pronouns**
   - Original Middle High German:
     "sînmuotwasviledele"
     (His heart was very noble.)
   - Modern German:
     "Sein Mutwarsehredel."
   - Analysis: sîn is the form of sein (his) in Middle High German. Here it shows possession.
4. **Possessive pronouns**
   - Original Middle High German:
     "o ervluocsîdazleben"
     (Hegaveuphislife.)
   - Modern German:
     "o ErverlorseinLeben."
   - Analysis: In this sentence, sîis used as a possessive pronoun.
5. **Interrogative pronouns**
   - Original Middle High German:
     "o weristderdegene?"
     (Who is this person?)

- Modern German:
  "o WeristdiesePerson?"
- Analysis: The interrogative pronoun Wer (who) is used in the same form both in ancient times and in the present.

Sources and pages of the "Nibelungenlied"
Complete manuscript forms of the work are preserved in various libraries in Germany (e.g. the St. Gallen manuscript).
- Printededitions:
  "o DasNibelungenlied", edited by Lachmann (19th century).
  "o A scholarly publication edited by R. G. Haile (20th century).
- Summary: Although German pronouns had a complex form in ancient times, over time they were shortened, simplified and took on their present form. The division of pronouns by gender, number and case developed, which laid the foundation for a clear grammatical system of the German language.
  Explanation with examples
  - 1st person singular:
    Old form: ekgā (I go.)
    Current form: Ichgehe.
  - 2nd person singular:
    Old form: þūsias (You read.)
    Current form: Duliest.
  - 3rd person singular:
    Old form: iznemiþ (Hetakes.)
    Current form: Ernimmt.
  - 1st person plural:
    Old form: wīzhabum (Wego.)
    Current form: Wirhaben.
  - 2nd person plural:
    Old form: jūzslahiz (Youspeak.)
    Current form: Ihrsprecht.
  - 3rd person plural:
    Old form: sijōzgivabum (Theygive.)
    Current form: Siegeben.

Analysis and development process

1. **Phonetic changes**: Overtime, sound changes have led to the shortening and simplification of old forms.
   Changes such as o ek → ich, þū → du.
2. **Grammatical indicators**: Although the conjugation patterns in Old High German were excessively complex, some of them have been lost in Modern German.
3. **Gender and number indication**: Although the gender indication in old forms was not sufficiently clear, this function is better developed in Modern German.

9. CONCLUSION

The evolution of pronouns in German reflects the complex processes of the history of the language. In Old and Middle High German, pronouns were morphologically quite rich, with a wide range of forms and case systems. However, over time, the simplification of the language, syntactic and semantic changes simplified the morphology of pronouns and allowed them to acquire new functions. In modern German, pronouns exist mainly in the personal and plural forms and are aimed at performing syntactic and semantic functions.

The historical development of pronouns in German includes the processes of morphological simplification and semantic expansion. The complex declension system in Old High German has become simpler in modern language, and many forms have disappeared. However, the semantic role of pronouns has become even stronger, since they began to play an important role in performing the syntactic and pragmatic functions of the language. The historical development of pronouns in German shows that the evolution of the language is taking place in the direction of simplification and functional enrichment.

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AZIMOVA ZUHRO ISMATILLOYEVNA
DOCTORAL RESEARCHER,
SAMARKAND STATE UNIVERSITY,
SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN.
E-MAIL: <ZUHRO.AZIMOVA@MAIL.RU>