

[SQUEAKING]

[RUSTLING]

[CLICKING]

ARTHUR BAHR: Everybody, go ahead and open up to chapter 6 of Baker, Nouns. So the good news about nouns is that the strong noun endings should have looked familiar at least, some elements, from the pronoun paradigms that you memorized for Monday.

If we take a look at the top of page 51, this boxed section is helpful. So patterns within the paradigms-- the neuter and masculine genitive singular forms are always going to be the same. All dative singular forms are the same within each major declension. And then these next two are very helpful. All genitive plural forms end in A. We started to see that just last time when we were doing our first mini-text. And all dative plural forms end in -um. And then as it says, there are resemblances between the noun and pronoun paradigms.

Now, Old English is different from modern English, in that it has two different kinds of nouns-- strong nouns and weak nouns, as you discovered for today. The strong noun endings, on table 6.1, that is right up there with tables 5.3 and 5.4. 6.1 is going to be on every single exam, just like 5.3 and 5.4. So these are three of the four-- these are three of the four paradigms that are just-- it's just easy, easy money, easy points, however you want to think of it. Memorize this now and you will never have to think of it again.

You do not need to memorize the weak verb-- sorry, the weak noun endings. But you will need to be able to recognize them. I'll get back to-- or deal with them, I suppose I should say. We'll get back to that in a moment. But for strong nouns, these are the endings that you need to know. And 6.2 and 6.3 put those nouns-- or rather, put those endings onto specific nouns so that you can see them in the flesh, as it were, as opposed to just disembodied case endings.

Now, one thing to note is that neuter plural nouns very often look the same as neuter singular nouns. And as Baker points out at the bottom of 52, an endingless plural may seem like a great inconvenience at first. How will you be able to tell a plural if you see it?

In practice, you'll find that one of three things will be true when you come across an endingless neuter-- either a nearby pronoun will tell you what you need to know, so *þæt þing* is singular, "that thing," *þā þing* is plural. And you know that because of the *þā*. Again, this is why the pronouns are so important because pronouns generally give you more information than nouns. So you're often going to have to be using the pronouns as your guide, all right?

Or, Baker, goes on, "The context will make it clear whether the noun is singular, or plural; or 3) It won't matter." I'm not quite sure what that means. One might suppose that it would always matter. But whatever, it's fine. If you stay alert to the likelihood that some plural nouns will lack endings, you won't get into trouble.

Also, because the masculine strong-- and indeed, the neuter strong noun-- look the same in the nominative and the accusative, you'll need to be flexible. You'll need to keep your mind flexible in terms of whether a given noun is accusative or nominative. And again, the pronoun is often going to help you. So *se stān* versus *þone stān*. And we're going to come back to some stones later on when we get to the mini-text.

All right, so that's strong nouns. Take a look at weak nouns on page 54, table 6.4. So what do you notice, just off the top of your-- what do you notice immediately about the weak noun endings? Yeah, Alyssa.

AUDIENCE: They do follow our rules about, oh, genitive plural always ends in *-a*, dative always ends in *-um*, like that. But other than that, there's very few unique endings.

ARTHUR BAHR: Very few unique endings, well put. So *-an*, all over the place. And *-an* is going to be one of your-- for that reason, *-an* is going to be one of your most challenging, frankly, endings when you see an Old English word because, in addition to-- it can be-- *-an* is-- I think we discussed last time, *-an* is the typical ending for an infinitive, that is to say a verb, your base verb form.

But it is also accusative singular masculine, accusative singular feminine, genitive of any of them, dative singular of any of them, nominative or accusative plural of any of them, tons of things. So yeah, *-an* is often going to be the puzzle. *-an* words are often going to be the puzzle that you have to figure out, that you have to use other parts of the sentence in order to solve for, as it were, the confusing *-an* word in a sentence, all right? And Baker goes into this a little bit on pages 54 and 55.

"Don't lose heart," he says at the top of 55. "Writers of Old English, when they wanted to be understood--" I like how he leaves open the possibility that they also perhaps did not sometimes want to be understood-- "did not write clauses containing unresolvable ambiguities. After you've puzzled out a few difficult instances of weak nouns, you should start to get the hang of them."

I realize that sounds like perhaps unhelpful reassurance at the moment. But my experience teaching Old English over the years suggests that this is, indeed, the case and that as long as you know, as long as you're aware of the challenge going in, you should be able to figure it out as you get more practice, OK?

All of these next-- the athematic nouns, 6.1.3, you do not have to memorize any of these. You don't have to memorize any of this. But you do need to be cognizant of the fact that some nouns are going to change their internal vowel as they get declined in various cases. So this means that if you're looking up the word *hnyte*, the genitive singular of *hnutu*-- I just think that's a super adorable word, *hnutu*, *hnutu*-- You may need to be flexible in and how you look it up.

This is something that, if you've studied an ancient language, will not be unfamiliar to you. But if you haven't, it may be, that using the glossary, using the dictionary involves a little bit of trial and error, shall we say, in a way that is not true if you just look up a word in modern English and you can be confident of its spelling. So as we get into reading, you will definitely get more experience with this. Any questions about these first few pages of chapter 6? Yeah, [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: How can we be sure that these are l-mutations that we see and not alternative spellings?

ARTHUR BAHR: Ah, that's a very good question. The short answer is that alternate spellings are most common with pronouns. And you don't have it-- it's less likely to be the case-- you're less likely to have that for just a random noun.

So in general, I mean, the slightly longer answer is that miss-- not misspellings, alternate spellings aren't going to follow any particular-- aren't necessarily going to follow a particular rule, whereas I-mutation is a particular set of sound changes that always happen. And you can go back to table 2.2.2, which was back on page-- back on page 17, table 2.1. That gives you the rules for how I-mutation works.

And if you say allowed those shifts from unmutated to mutated, you'll start to hear them in your-- well, you'll start to hear them. And that'll start to give you a sense of the difference between I-mutation and other forms of irregularity. But for the most part, I wouldn't worry about it too much. Yeah, Alyssa?

AUDIENCE: Just to be clear, despite the fact that I-mutation from [a] to [æ] is also like the connection between those, the stem changes and things like *daga* are distinct from that, right?

ARTHUR BAHR: That's correct, yes.

AUDIENCE: It was a separate linguistic process.

ARTHUR BAHR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUDIENCE: That's why it's not the same places in the paradigm.

ARTHUR BAHR: Now, you're looking-- now you're looking further along.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

ARTHUR BAHR: 6.8. Yeah, exactly.

AUDIENCE: There was also slightly different treatment of these different stem changes in Baker versus--

ARTHUR BAHR: Mitchell and Robinson?

AUDIENCE: Mitchell and Robinson, how they group them or whatever. It was a little bit different.

ARTHUR BAHR: Yeah, yeah. And since I'm not deeply invested in all of the ins and outs of these subsets of nouns, but yeah. I mean, the short answer is don't worry about it too much, frankly. Take the measure-- well, I'm actually just going to-- I'm actually just going to go in order. We'll get two more strong nouns in due course.

So page 56 and 57, 6.1.4, the noun phrase-- so really, all this is trying to do here is encourage you to look at the noun in an Old English sentence in its fuller-- in its bigger picture, the bigger context. So that means looking for the adjectives and the pronouns that go with the noun because often the noun itself is not going to tell you as much. It's not going to give you as much information as the pronoun or the adjective. We haven't gotten to adjectives yet. But trust me, it's true.

So for example, the demonstrative pronoun *se* resolves the ambiguity of who the subject of that sentence is toward the bottom of page 56. *Pa sende se cyning et cetera, et cetera*. We always know that *se* is what?

AUDIENCE: Nominative.

ARTHUR BAHR: Nominative?

AUDIENCE: Singular masculine.

ARTHUR BAHR: Singular masculine, nominative singular masculine. Exactly, very good. Whereas þone is always going to be accusative singular masculine. So those unambiguous pronoun forms are some of your best friends in the language because they are going to help you parse the sentence pretty readily.

Let's take a look at page 57, the bottom of the-- the bottom of that section. Careful attention to the noun phrase can help you resolve the ambiguities of the endless-- sorry, endingless neuter plural discussed above. *þā ġeseah hē þā wīf and hira lýtlingas and cwæð, hwæt synd þæs?*

So then he looked at the women and their children. *Sowīf* because the Old English word for woman is grammatically neuter, *wīf* has no ending in the plural. But you know that it's plural because of the *þā* since *þā* is plural. So if it were, "Then he looked at the woman," in the singular, what would that *þā* be instead?

AUDIENCE: *þæt.*

ARTHUR BAHR: *þæt*, exactly. *þā ġeseah hē þæt wīf.* That would be singular. Very good. All right, so more about strong nouns on the following pages, 58 through 60. Again, these are not-- to I'm not actually going to really go into this because they all still-- you'll see that they all still have the strong noun endings. And that's the most important thing. The other slight shifts I'm not going to test you on, all right?

A few minor declensions-- for whatever reason, the words for family relationships in Old English tend to be-- like brother and daughter, as you see on 612-- they seem to be-- they're unusual in various ways. But other than that, not much to see, not much to see there. This is really just in the interest of fullness. This is the completionist part of the chapter, all right?

So the long story short of this is you must know-- you must memorize table 6.1 with the strong noun endings. And you must be comfortable enough with the weak noun endings of table 6.4 that you are able to disambiguate them and work with them when it comes to sight translation on the exam, all right? So those are your main those are your main challenges.

And we're going to put those skills to the test in the next part of class, at the bottom of page 62. We're going to read "A Miracle of Saint Benedict" from Bishop Wærforþ of Worcester's Old English translation of the dialogues of Pope Gregory the Great.

And what I love about Baker, the reason I use this text instead of Mitchell and Robinson, which is what I learned with-- what I love about Baker is that it starts us really working with Old English almost from the very beginning of our encounter with the language because that's really--

I mean, when I think back to how I learned Old English, and how I learned Latin, and how I learned Greek, and how I learned all of the dead languages that I've learned, the reason that I'm not as good at knowing them as I am at the modern languages that I've learned is that I never had to use them actively. It was always passive. It was always passive recognition of the forms for passive reading of the language.

And it wasn't until I did this Living Latin course in Rome where we all had to speak Latin, and the class was in Latin, and it was super fun that I was like, oh yeah, Latin is not an unspeakable language. I mean, the professor was so great. He was like, people think Latin is hard. It's like stupid, stupid, stupid Romans spoke Latin totally fluently.

It is not an impossible language to learn to speak. People did. It's just that we don't, and similarly with Old English. So although we're not learning to speak Old English-- that's not yet a bridge I've tried to cross-- we are going to be trying to learn it as actively as possible, all right?