



THE PHONETIC AND MORPHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VERB HABEN IN OLD HIGH GERMAN

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Abstract: *This research looks at the phonetic change of the nasal sound $m > n$ in Old High German (Althochdeutsch) to determine how it affects the language's morphological structure, specifically with regard to the verb haben. The study demonstrates how this phonetic shift, which mostly affected verb ends and unstressed syllables, helped to stabilise grammatical paradigms. The link between spoken and written Old High German is also examined in this research, demonstrating that the shift initially manifested in speech before being mirrored in writing. It also examines the process of vowel lengthening that took place throughout the change from Middle High German to New High German, as well as the creation of participles (habenti, gihabet). The study comes to the conclusion that the German language's morphological regularisation and phonological simplicity were significantly influenced by the $m > n$ shift and quantitative vowel modifications.*

Keywords: *weak verbs, participles, vowel lengthening, morphological development, Old High German, phonetic change, habēm and habenti.*

INTRODUCTION.

The grammatical and phonological structure of the linguistic system have been greatly impacted by phonetic changes that occur throughout phonetic development. These modifications, which may be seen in a variety of verb forms and tenses, are the outcome of general phonetic development. V.G. Nugaev said that key elements that might be emphasised are as follows: 1. The consonant -m at the end of a syllable without stress was replaced with -n in the eleventh century. This change got ingrained in the language system and is referred to as the $m > n$ phonetic shift. 2. Weak verbs, especially those in the first-person singular present tense forms, were usually affected by this shift. For instance, habem, which means "I have" in Old High German, changed to haben in Modern German (similar changes also happened in other verbs) [V.G. Nugaev 2002:86].

According to Boase-Beier, J. and Lodge, K. R., the morphological structures were often altered as a result of the $m > n$ transition, impacting not just verb forms but also other word forms. The change from -m to -n affected syntactic and semantic structures in addition to morphology due to phonetic development. For example, phonetic alterations and the development of systematic grammatical patterns were both mirrored in verbal modifications. First-person singular present tense verb forms are where this shift is most noticeable. For instance, several verbs underwent the change from habem to haben. Since strong verbs often kept their original forms, they largely appeared in weak verbs [Boase-Beier, J., Lodge, K. R. 2003:115].

Literature reviews and methods

B. Tursunov argued that the $m > n$ transition aided in morphological reorganisation in addition to phonetic development. As an instance, the morphological paradigm itself evolved new structural patterns while the first-person present tense verb forms underwent a phonological alteration. This shows that these modifications included morphological and syntactic development in addition to phonetic mechanisms. The $m > n$ shift played a crucial role in the phonetic evolution of Old High German, greatly impacting the language system's structural organisation, especially the present-tense verb forms. Despite being a phonetic phenomenon at first, this



alteration was crucial to the formation of the morphological structure. Both the phonetic and morphological systems of the language evolved as a result of the changes in verb forms [Berdiquil Tursunov 2006:38-40].

Analysis of written and spoken language is crucial in Old High German. The nasal consonant "-m" changed to "-n" mostly in grammatical suffixes, especially in unstressed syllables; the root portions of words were unaffected.

For instance: The ending "-m" in the first-person singular form changed to "-n" in Old High German: habēm → habēn. The decrease in nasal articulation and the weakening of sounds in unstressed syllables were probably the causes of this shift. The majority of linguists who research Old High German use phonological economy or analogy mechanisms to explain this change [Robinson, O. W. 2001: 96].

Results and discussions

Old High German Participle Forms of "haben"

The participle forms of the verb "haben" in Old High German adhered to certain conventions and regulations, especially when it came to the creation of present and past participles. These conventions are demonstrated by the following examples: habenti, the present participle and gihabet, the past participle. Habenti, the present participle : The suffix -enti, or a dialect-specific variation, was appended to the verb stem in Old High German to create the present participle. In English, habenti means "having," "expressing possession," or "an ongoing state." Gihabet, the past participle :The prefix "gi-," which denotes a finished action and is comparable to the English had, was typically added to the verb stem to create the past participle. The prefix "gi-" was frequently used to indicate a finished condition or action and to mark past participles. Old English and other Germanic languages have similar participle structures with Old High German. In Old English, for example, the past participle frequently starts with ge- (e.g., gehabed, "had") while the present participle finishes with -ende (habende, "having"). These participles were crucial for conveying both continuing and finished acts [Jeffrey Ellis 1953: 54].

One of the biggest phonetic changes in the German sound system during the Middle High German to New High German transition was the quantitative shift in vowels. Vowels were either lengthened or shortened in this process, which possessed a number of unique characteristics. During this time, one of the most significant phonetic changes was the lengthening of short vowels. It mostly happened when open syllables had short root vowels, which caused them to change into long vowels. For instance, haben (meaning "to have") in Middle High German.

New High German: haben, which has an extended "a" vowel

Key elements of vowel change:

1. Lengthening of short root vowels: Short root vowels in open syllables, such a, e, i, o, and u, were prolonged in Middle High German. Because it corresponded with consonant changes and made it easier to distinguish between long and short vowels, this process was crucial to phonetic evolution.

2. Conversion of short vowels into long vowels: Short vowels in open syllables were more prominent and emphasised as they extended. This has an impact on word form morphological changes as well as pronunciation.

Example: Haben (Old High German) → haben (New High German): the word's sound was altered by lengthening the short vowel "a."

The German phonetic system was drastically altered by this vowel development. The language's morphological and semantic features, as well as its syntactic and grammatical organisation, were all impacted by the shift in vowel quantity [Bennett, P. R. 1998: 36].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the m > n phonetic transformation, which first appeared in unstressed word endings and reflects a tendency towards phonetic simplification and articulatory ease, evolved into a morphological regularity over time, influencing the structure and stability of verb paradigms like haben, nehmen, and lieben. The analysis of participle forms (habenti, gihabet) further demonstrates that phonetic changes were closely linked to grammatical and morphological reorganisation, which improved morphological uniformity and



semantic clarity within the language system and simplified pronunciation. Other vowel lengthening processes supported these advancements throughout the shift from Middle High German to New High German, helping to modernise German's phonological structure. Both the vowel lengthening phenomenon and the nasal shift (m > n) show how phonetic evolution drove the morphological and grammatical stabilisation of German. The phonological and morphological system of Modern High German is based on these processes, which demonstrate the close relationship between sound change and grammatical structure.

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