

LME *-SHIP(E)*

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ABSTRACT

In the paper I attempt to present the semantic evolution of the suffix *-ship(e)* from Early to Late Middle English. The major development in Late Middle English was the replacement of the dominant EME sense 'a quality' in a fairly large number of derivatives by one of the originally minor senses, i.e. 'a status, rank, an office'. The original EME sense 'a condition, state of being', however, was commonly preserved in Late Middle English. The suffix was highly productive in the period not only in new coinages of native origin but also in Scandinavian and French hybrids. It appeared in all the dialects.

1. Introduction

The aim of the paper is to present the Late Middle English development of one of the EME suffixes which I investigated in my doctoral dissertation, i.e. *-ship(e)*, mostly for the reason that it displayed a vividly changing semantic profile between Old and Early Middle English. Thus, I will be basically interested in the further semantic development of *-ship(e)* although its productivity and dialect distribution will not be left out of consideration. I will use the same methodology which I devised for and applied in my dissertation. Here, the time span ranges from 1350 to 1500. The selection of the year 1350 as a starting point of Late Middle English is not random. Scholars such as McIntosh *et al.* (1986) in *A linguistic atlas of Late Mediaeval English* treated 1350 as a borderline marking the beginning of the investigated period. Moreover, the discussed date can be found as a closing border of the Early Middle English period in Kristensson (1965-2002). For problems concerning boundaries in the chronological division of English see Fisiak (1994).

The main tool which I used for my analysis is the *Middle English dictionary*

online, which is an extensive electronic database comprising all preserved ME texts. It is supplemented by several complete texts which facilitate a broader contextual analysis. Occasionally, I also refer to the diachronic part of the *Helsinki Corpus*. As for the results of the study concerning earlier periods, i.e. Old and Early Middle English, I will rely on Ciszek (2005 and in press).

The investigation of the productivity of *-ship(e)* will be based on the type value count (see Dalton-Puffer – Cowie 2000). Hence, the suffix in question is considered productive once it appears in new coinages in the period under discussion.

2. Previous studies

So far, the only study of LME word-formation can be found in the work *Morphemic structure of Chaucer's English* (1965) by Fisiak. As indicated in the title, the author, however, concentrates on the complete works of Chaucer, who is the major representative of Late Middle English. *-Ship(e)* is described by Fisiak as a productive, non-combinative suffix forming abstract nouns from other nouns, which is illustrated with a few instances together with their meaning, e.g., *felaw(e)shipe* 'fellowship' and *shendshipe* 'harm'. Other scholars such as Martin (1906), Dorskiy (1960), Fisiak ([1968] 2004), Marchand (1969) and Dalton-Puffer (1996) treat the suffix briefly and provide its features with reference to the whole Middle English period. Martin (1906) still remains the most extensive review of the ME *-ship(e)*. He provides a considerably long list of formations, however, with only one meaning each, which is insufficient for the presentation of the semantics of the suffix. The new LME *-ship(e)* derivatives are mostly deadjectival, e.g., *kindeschipe* 'friendliness' and *lotleschipe* 'smallness', or, denominal, e.g., *bondeschipe* 'servitude', *wardanscipp* 'supervision' and *werkmanshipe* 'work'. There is one coinage from a present participle, i.e. *conandschipe* 'cunningness'. Dorskiy (1960: 115-117) offers only a limited list of *-ship(e)* derivatives found in *A Middle English dictionary* by Stratmann (1891). Fisiak ([1968] 2004: 110) in *A short grammar of Middle English* states that *-schipe* was involved in the formation of nouns from other nouns, and exemplifies it with a few instances. Marchand (1969: 281) includes some LME *-ship(e)* derivatives, such as *workmanship*, *captainship*, *prōtectōrship* and *wardeship*. According to Marchand, the suffix assumed the sense 'state, condition'. Moreover, *ladyship* (1374) and *lordship* (1489) with a possessive pronoun were used as terms of address. Originally the OE *township* and the above mentioned *lordship* developed concrete meanings in Late Middle English. However, Marchand does not discuss the *-ship(e)* nouns which were lost on the way to Present-day English. Dalton-Puffer (1996) selects for her analysis three first subperiods of the *Helsinki Corpus* (1150-1420). This means that she concentrates

neither on Early nor on Late Middle English exclusively. In her corpus, Dalton-Puffer finds *-ship(e)* derivatives from both nouns and adjectives with the meanings ‘status’ and ‘legal position, power, authority’ as well as ‘property (quality)’. The study is supplemented with the frequency of occurrence of the *-ship(e)* words in the analysed subperiods.

The *MED* offers quite a comprehensive definition of the suffix:

-ship(e) A derivational suffix frequent in nouns of OE origin, denoting a condition, state of being, status, rank, or an office: *feondscipe, frendshipe, hethenshipe, lordshipe, refshipe, worshipe*, etc.; a quality, characteristic quality, or an activity: *arghshipe, frendshipe, gladshipe, godshipe, golsipe, lordshipe, warshipe, wodshipe, worshipe, yepshipe*, etc.; a group of persons or a thing: *metshipe, theinship, tounshipe, watershipe, worldshipe*. A very active suffix in ME, *-ship(e)* was added: (a) to nouns to form nouns denoting a condition, state of being, rank, an office, etc.: *baillifship, capitainship, constableness, felaushipe, kingshipe, knightshipe, ladishipe, maistershipe, manshipe, parkershipe, steuardship, thralshipe, toun- clerkship*, etc.; (b) to nouns to form nouns denoting a quality, characteristic quality, an activity, etc.: *apeship, felaushipe, ferdship, knightshipe, manshipe, rotshipe, shamshipe, shendshipe, shondeship, sothship, werkmanshipe*, etc.; (c) to adjectives to form nouns denoting a quality, condition, state of being, etc.: *bisishipe, boldshipe, clenshipe, dimship, dusishipe, hardishipe, hardshipe, heighshipe, hendeshipe, idelshipe, kenshipe, kindeshipe, madshipe, mildeshipe, ohtscipen, quedshipe, rechelessshipe, sadship, sharpshipe, shreuedship, treushipe, unkindeshipe, wildship*, etc.

However, the definition fails to distinguish between the semantics of *-ship(e)* in Early and Late Middle English.

3. The semantics of *-ship(e)* in Late Middle English

In Old English *-ship(e)* was mostly a denominal suffix with the sense ‘a condition, state of being’. In Early Middle English it became a prevalingly deadjectival one with the sense ‘a quality’. Below, I would like to focus on how the suffix further developed semantically in Late Middle English. In my semantic analysis I will treat separately (1) the semantics of the LME *-ship(e)* in formations inherited from Old and Early Middle English and (2) the semantics of *-ship(e)* in new LME coinages.

3.1. The semantics of the LME *-ship(e)* in formations inherited from Old and Early Middle English

Here, the study is further subdivided into EME continuations of OE nouns and original EME formations. To the first group belong ten nouns such as: *frēndshipe*, *frēship*, *gladshipe*, *lōrdshipe*, *manshipe*, *mētshipe*, *tounshipe*, *warshipe*, *wōdshipe* and *worshipe*. In the LME period the suffix preserved the following senses: ‘a condition, state of being’ (in 5 nouns), ‘a quality’ (in 3 nouns), ‘a status, rank, an office’, ‘a group of people, collectivity’ and ‘a thing’ in two nouns each and ‘territory’ (in one noun). It also assumed new senses. The most common are ‘a quality’ (in 4 nouns) and ‘a group of people, collectivity’ (in 3 nouns). The nouns with the sense ‘a quality’ of the suffix are: *frēndshipe* ‘a friendly disposition, friendliness’ (1393), *lōrdshipe* ‘med. the predominance of a bodily humour or quality’ (1400), *mētshipe* ‘appetite’ (1400) and *wōdshipe* ‘unreasonableness, outrageousness’ (1400). The sense ‘a group of people, collectivity’ is newly evidenced in Late Middle English in *lōrdshipe* ‘a class or company of persons’ (1400), *manshipe* ‘a gathering of persons’ 1400 and *worshipe* ‘as a term of association: a company (of writers)’ (1486). The other registered senses are ‘a status, rank, an office’ (in *gladshipe* used as a noun of direct address (1400), ‘territory’ (in *tounshipe* ‘a territorial unit composed of a town or village and the land belonging to it’ (1414)) as well as ‘rights’ (in *lōrdshipe* in the plural ‘manorial or feudal rights and privileges, also, the rights and privileges derived from high office or social status’ (1390)). It is interesting that in this group of nouns the suffix preserves all its EME senses in Late Middle English. At the lexical level, only in *frēship*, *manshipe* and *warshipe* does *-ship(e)* lose one of its earlier senses from each word.

There are two nouns of Old English origin, i.e. *dronkenshipe* and *gōdshipe* which were not attested in Early Middle English but reappear in Late Middle English. In both nouns the suffix gains new senses. In *dronkenshipe*, apart from the preserved OE sense ‘a condition, state of being’ *-ship(e)* assumes also the sense ‘a quality’ represented at the lexical level as ‘the habit or vice of indulging in heavy drinking’ (1393) and the sense ‘a group of people, collectivity’ as in ‘a drunken company’ (1450). *Gōdshipe*, which reappears in 1390 with the meaning ‘goodness, virtue’, with the suffix having the sense ‘a quality’, soon employs *-ship(e)* also with the sense ‘a thing’ (1390) and ‘an act, activity’ (1393). The respective lexical meanings are ‘a good thing, benefit’ and ‘a good deed, a favour, a kindness, also, kindnesses collectively’.

Let me now concentrate on the nouns which survived till Late Middle English but were originally coined only in Early Middle English. This group includes 22 derivatives in which the suffix in all but four nouns preserves its original sense. Here belong: *bisīshipe*, *bōldshipe*, *fairshipe*, *fēlaushipe*, *fōship*,

hārdīshipe, hardshipe, hēndeshipe, hūse-wīfshipe, īdelshipe, lightshipe, mīldeshipe, neigheborshipe, shendshipe, thralshipe, untowenship, unwrestshipe and *yēmelesshipe*. The senses are ‘a quality’ (in 13 nouns), ‘a condition, state of being’ (in 10), ‘an act, activity’ (in 2), ‘a status, rank, an office’ (in 1) and ‘a group of people, collectivity’ (in 1). The exceptional four coinages in which one or all of the EME senses are lost are: *heighshipe, knightshipe, lādīshipe* and *wīldeshipe*. Moreover, in 4 derivatives, i.e. *fēlaushipe, hardshipe, heighshipe* and *lādīshipe* the suffix assumes one new sense each.

3.2. The semantics of *-ship(e)* in new LME coinages

When we subdivide the LME period into further two subperiods (the *Helsinki Corpus* ME3 (1350-1420) and ME4 (1420-1500)), we can see that the suffix *-ship(e)* follows two different paths in them. In ME3, the EME model still prevails. Specifically, most new nouns are coined from adjectives and *-ship(e)* assumes the sense ‘a quality’. To this group belong nine derivatives from native stems such as: *grēnshipe* ‘greenness of colour’ (1390), *kīndeshipe* ‘kindness, friendliness, also, gratitude’ (1393), *dimship* ‘dimness, murkiness’ (1400), *rēchelēsshipe* ‘negligence, failure to do something’ (1390), *shreuedship* ‘wickedness’ (1400), *sted-fastshipe* ‘firmness of purpose, resolve’ (1390), *wantounshipe* ‘undisciplined behavior’ (1400), *lotleshipe* ‘humility’ (1400) and *orpedshipe* ‘bravery, valour, spirit’ (1400) as well as two derivatives from ON stems, i.e. *sleighshipe* ‘wisdom, prudence’ (1390) and *unnaitship*¹ ‘frivolous behaviour, foolishness’ (1400). Two more coinages with the same sense of the suffix are: *werk-manshipe* ‘the skill of execution evinced in a product of craft; the manifestation of expertise, visible artistry’ (1393) (from a noun) and *conningship* ‘the moral sense, morality, benevolence, graciousness’ (1400) (from a past participle). Moreover, in four nouns, two from other nouns and two from adjectives, *-ship(e)* has the sense ‘a condition, state of being’. The coinages are: *sōthshipe* ‘truthfulness’ (1390), *shondeship* ‘disgrace, ignominy’ (1400), *nākedship* ‘nakedness, bareness’ (1400) and *neueshipe* ‘the new life in Christ’ (1400). Other new nouns are attested with different senses such as ‘a status, rank, an office’, ‘an act, activity’, ‘a thing’ and ‘territory’.

In the subperiod ranging from 1420 to 1500, the dominating sense of *-ship(e)* in new coinages is ‘a status, rank, an office’ (cf. Ciszek 2005: 40). This observation concerns as many as 40 derivatives out of 75 formed in ME4. With this sense the suffix is attached to 11 native and 19 foreign, mostly Old French,

¹ The *MED* indicates that *unnaitship* is derived either from a noun or from an adjective. However, since the adjective is earlier and more frequent, I assume that *unnaitship* is coined on an adjectival base.

nominal stems. The coinages on the Germanic basis can be exemplified by: *dēkenship* ‘the office of a deacon’ (1450), *rīdership* ‘the office of a mounted forest ranger’ (1450) and *pōpeshipe* ‘the office or position of a pope’ (1450). Among the formations from loanwords are *constablenesship* ‘the office of a governor or a warden of a castle’ (1438), *portership* ‘the office of a doorkeeper or gatekeeper’ (1450), *botelership* ‘the position of a cupbearer’ (1462), *empīreship* ‘the position or status of an emperor’ (1470) and *officiālshipe* ‘a position as an ecclesiastical official’ (1475). The other commonly attested sense of the suffix *-ship(e)* is ‘a condition, state of being’ in coinages from both nouns (10) and adjectives (5) both native and foreign. Here for instance belong the denominal formations such as *borweship* ‘suretyship’ (1450) and *loveship* ‘love, a love affair’ (1500) and deadjectival ones such as *sādship* ‘maturity, seriousness; firmness of belief; evidence, confirmation’ (1500), all on EME stems, as well as the denominal *tīranship* ‘despotism, tyranny’ (1500) and deadjectival *hīdousshipe* ‘fear, horror’ (1450), from OF bases. The same number of occurrences, i.e. fifteen, has the sense ‘a quality’ when attached to both nouns and adjectives of various origin. The examples are: *āpeshipe* ‘ape-like behaviour, simulation’ (1450) (from a native noun), *hōlīshipe* ‘sanctity’ (1390) (from a native adjective), *nīgardshipe* ‘stinginess, parsimony, the sin of niggardliness’ (1439) (from an ON noun) and *excellentship* ‘excellence, eminence’ (1500) (from an OF adjective). Similarly as in ME3, the suffix has also other different senses such as ‘an act, activity’ and ‘territory’ again both from nouns and adjectives. Each sense, however, appears only in a few derivatives. Moreover, one formation, i.e. *dēmship* ‘judgment’ (1450) is coined on a verb with the sense of the suffix ‘an act, activity’. As compared to EME, LME *-ship(e)* can be found with its original OE sense ‘territory’ as in *baillifship* ‘the district or estates administered by a *baillif*’ (1460), *archepreštship* ‘a deanery’ (1439), *markeshipe* ‘a marquisate’ (1464), all from OF nouns. The sense ‘a group of people, collectivity’, however, is discontinued.

4. Productivity

As regards the productivity of the suffix *-ship(e)*, Martin (1906: 55) makes an observation that “[f]ür die große Mehrzahl der me. Neubildungen ist die Entstehungszeit demnach zwischen 1200-1250 anzusetzen; doch bleibt das Suffix die ganze me. Period hindurch beliebt und produktiv”. However, he has recorded significantly fewer coinages than discussed in this paper. Martin (1906: 51-53) lists 3 new coinages from native nouns, 10 from adjectives and 1 from a present participle as well as 8 hybrids, both on Scandinavian and Romance bases in Late Middle English. Dorskiy (1960: 116-117) gives 9 new coinages in Late

Middle English.² He also states that after the 13th c. *-ship(e)* was hardly productive (1960: 115-117). Dalton-Puffer (1996: 86) concludes her investigation of the first three ME subperiods in the *Helsinki Corpus* (1150-1420) with the following remark: “the overall indications are that the productivity of the suffix is failing”. In ME3, which is the subperiod of my interest, she finds two deadjectival and six denominal types, all on native bases, and not necessarily newly derived then, as she makes no distinctions between the new formations and the inherited ones.

My research has revealed that there are considerably more *-ship(e)* derivatives in Late Middle English than assumed in previous studies. In a subperiod parallel to ME3 in the *Helsinki Corpus*, i.e. 1350-1420, I have found 21 new coinages: 5 from native nouns, 12 from adjectives and 1 from a past participle. There are also 3 deadjectival hybrids. In the latter subperiod of Late Middle English, i.e. 1420-1500 (ME4), the suffix *-ship(e)* occurred in 75 derivatives: 30 on native and 45 on foreign stems. The native formations are: 22 from nouns, 7 from adjectives and 1 from a verb. The hybrids include 36 denominal and 9 deadjectival ones. Thus, the suffix *-ship(e)* displays a noticeable growth in productivity from ME3 to ME4, contrary to Dorskiy and Dalton-Puffer.

5. Dialect distribution

Both Martin (1906) and Dalton-Puffer (1996) claim that the use of the suffix was restricted to the South or even to the South-West Midlands. My investigation clearly demonstrates that the suffix was used in other dialects as well. In the West-Midlands *-ship(e)* is frequently attested in *Stanzaic life of Christ* (1450). Eastern texts such as, for instance, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1393), the *Bible* (1400), *King Alexander* (1400), Lydgate's *Fall of princes* (1439), Paston's *Letters* (1450), Pecoock's *The Donet* (1475) as well as various documents from London also employ the suffix. In the North, *-ship(e)* appears in *Cursor Mundi* (1400), *Alphabet of tales* (1450) and *Wars of Alexander* (1450) to mention but a few.

6. Conclusions

The aim of the present paper was to discuss the semantic development, the productivity and the dialect distribution of the suffix *-ship(e)* in Late Middle English. As regards semantics, the OE *-scipe* was most frequently attested with the

² *Shendschepe*, which he finds in the *Prick of conscience* and the *Wycliffite Bible*, is actually an EME coinage.

sense ‘a condition, state of being’. The sense ‘a quality’ came second. In Early Middle English this order was reversed. Moreover, originally the mostly denominal suffix grew to be prevailingly attached to adjectives in Early Middle English. 32 out of 89 EME *-ship(e)* nouns survive into Late Middle English. Of these, 10 are original OE formations and the suffix assumes new senses in them. The remaining 22 nouns, the EME new coinages inherited into Late Middle English, rather preserve their original sense of *-ship(e)*. Additionally, there are two originally OE formations, i.e. *dronkenshipe* and *gōdshipe* which are not attested in Early Middle English but reappear in Late Middle English. In them the suffix gains new senses. In new LME derivatives the suffix is primarily employed to convey the sense ‘a status, rank, an office’. Here belong 41 denominal derivatives, all but one found in ME4 (1420-1500). The other attested common senses are ‘a quality’ (in 29 nouns) and ‘a condition, state of being’ (in 19 nouns). As regards the derivational bases, these are mostly nominal.

In terms of productivity, the study provides the following values: 21 new types in ME3 (1350-1420) and 75 in ME4 (1420-1500). Hence, *-ship(e)* can beyond any doubt be considered productive, with the tendency towards an increase in its usage. This is also true of the latter subperiod of Early Middle English, i.e. ME2 (1250-1350). The productivity of *-ship(e)* is further confirmed by the number of hybrids, both on French and Scandinavian stems, which constitute about a half of all new LME formations.

The dialect distribution of the suffix is much broader than proposed by Martin (1906) and Dalton-Puffer (1996).

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