Major changes occured in the language between the time of the Anglo-Saxons and the time of Chaucer - most of these changes were in the **grammatical system** and the **vocabulary** of the language.

A primary change in the grammatical system was the falling off of most word endings - as your text states, in the Old English system, there were **ten** different ways to express the phrase, “the day” -by Chaucer’s time, there were only **three**.

By way of comparison, words like **seke** and **wende** in Middle English became **seek** and **went** in Modern English as the **e** at the end of most nouns disappeared.

The majority of these changes were, for the most part, in place at the time of the Norman conquest – it is in the area of **vocabulary** where the Normans had the greatest influence on the language with the addition of Norman French!

With the conquest, England became, in effect, a **trilingual** country, with **Latin** as the language learning, **French** as the language of the aristocracy, and **English** as the language of the masses - as we have discussed before, the stubborn Anglo-Saxons steadfastly refused to give up many of their old words in favor of the more than 900 French words to enter the vocabulary during the first two centuries following the Conquest - thus, words like the French ***residence*** and ***purchase*** existed side by side with the Anglo-Saxon words ***home*** and ***buy*** - even today, animals on hoof have Anglo-Saxon names (cow, pig) and, at table, French names (beef, pork)! The Anglo-Saxon word ***borough*** exists alongside the French word ***city*** - the French ***village*** and the native English ***town***.

Significant during the Middle English period was the gradual standardization of the language - consider that, by the late 1200’s, there were five major regional dialects of Middle English - using the phrase “***she loves***” as a model:

Northern - scho loves

East Midland - sche loveth

West Midland - scho loveth

Southeastern (Kentish) - he loveth

Southern (Southwestern) - heo loveth

From these numerous dialects, the one that ultimately prevailed, becoming the basis for Modern English, was the East Midland dialect, descended from the **mercian** dialect of Old English - from about 1400 on, written English conformed to the usage of this “London dialect” throughout all of England - this was the dialect in Chaucer’s day!

**The Great Vowel Shift**

This very important grammatical change in the language involved the pronunciation of the long vowel sound - in Middle English, as in other languages that were written in the Latin alphabet…

A = “ah”

Long “e” = “a”

Long “I” and “y” = long “e”

Long “o” = “oh”

Long “u” = “oo”

So…

In Middle English, wade would sound like wad

Sheep would sound like shape

My would sound like me

To would sound like toe

And south would sound like sooth