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HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Course Guide

Навчально-методичний посібник

Київ 2020

Національний університет «Києво-Могилянська Академія»

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Навчально-методичний посібник **“History of the English Language: A Course Guide”** призначений для студентів спеціальності філологія. У посібнику подається стислий виклад основних теоретичних тем курсу, пропонується спектр теоретичних питань і практичних завдань за темами курсу відповідно до Програми курсу історії англійської мови НаУКМА. Крім того, в посібнику подано тексти для читання з головних періодів розвитку англійської мови, таблицю визначальних подій, які вплинули на розвиток мови, і словник ключових термінів. Розрахований для використання під час аудиторної та самостійної роботи студентів.

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PREFACE

The course 'History of the English Language' takes a diachronic perspective towards the English language as the language is constantly and incrementally changing. The purpose of the course is to trace the development of the English language from its earliest forms to the present. To see how English went from a Germanic dialect to a global language. The history of the English language is going to be traced from prehistoric Indo-European days through Old English, Middle English, and Early Modern English up to the present time. The developments of the language are explored in order to deepen the understanding of the present permutations of English.

The course deals with the facts of language. The main focus is on the internal history of the English language: its sounds, grammar, vocabulary, word stock, writing, and uses through the centuries and around the world. That linguistic history is tackled from a perspective of sociolinguistics, the study of language in a social setting. To illustrate the state of the English language through time the extracts from famous texts are analysed including "Beowulf", Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the Bible.

The goals of the course are to:

- describe the milestones of the English language development;
- demonstrate the state of the English language during the main periods of its development;
- explain how and why the English language changes over time:
  - how sound changes happen;
  - how changes in morphology and syntax happen;
  - how the word stock and meaning of words change;
- analyse the main peculiarities of modern English and tendencies of language change.

1. The Backgrounds of English

Language change

Language change is natural, continuous and inevitable. There are three general causes of language change. First, words and sounds may affect neighboring words and sounds. For example, *sandwich* is often pronounced not as the spelling suggests, but in way that might be represented as “sandwich,” “sanwidge,” “samwidge,” or even “sammidge.” Such spellings represent informal pronunciations that result from the position of a sounds within the word. When nearby elements influence one another within the flow of speech, the result is called **syntagmatic change**.

Second, words and sounds may be affected by others that are not immediately present but with which they are associated. For example, the side of a ship on which it was laden (that is loaded) was called the *ladeboard*, but its opposite, *starboard*, influenced a change in pronunciation to *lardboard*. Then, because *lardboard* was likely to be confused with *starboard* because of their similarity of sound, it was generally replaced by port. Such change is called **paradigmatic** or **associative change**.

Third, a language may change because of the influence of events in the world. New technologies like the World Wide Web require new forms like *google* ‘to search the Internet for information’ and *wiki* (as in *Wikipedia*) ‘a type of web page designed so that its content can be edited by anyone who access it, using a simplified markup language’, from Hawaiian word for ‘quick’. New forms of human behaviour require new terms like *suicide bomber*. New concepts in science require new terms like *transposon* ‘a transposable gene in DNA’. In addition, new contacts with persons who use speechways differently may affect English pronunciation, vocabulary, and even grammar. This can be called **social change**.

The history of English is a gripping story of cultures in contact during the past 1500 years. Great Britain underwent waves of invasion by Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, and Norman French, each contributing to the life and language of the islands. Political and social events that have affected the English people in their life

and have generally had a recognizable effect on their language form **external linguistic history**. Changes in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary that occur in a language form its **internal linguistic history**. The history of the English language is traditionary divided into Old English Period, Middle English period, and Modern English period. The divisions between stages of the language's development though arbitrary are based on significant internal changes in the language and also correlate with external events in the community of speakers.

Indo-Europeans and the Prehistory of English

English developed from a speechway called Indo-European, which was the source of most other European and many south-Asian languages. This explanation was first proposed by Sir William Jones in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Working in India, which was a British colony, he began to notice certain features in the vocabulary and grammar of Sanskrit that were shared with Latin, Greek and the modern European languages. In particular, he noticed certain words, such as Sanskrit *raj*, Latin *rex*, German *Reich*, and Celtic *rix*, that seemed similar in sound and meaning (they were all words relating to a kingdom or ruler). He also noticed certain grammatical features, such as forms of the verb *to be* and certain case endings, that were shared in the different languages.

Sir William Jones made a revolutionary suggestion that languages from very different geographical areas must have some common ancestor. This common ancestor could not be described from any existing records but had to be hypothesized on the basis of similar features existing in records of languages that were believed to be descendants. During nineteenth century, a term came into use to describe that common ancestor. It incorporated the notion that this was the original form (Proto) of a language that was the source of modern languages in the Indian sub-continent (Indo) and in Europe (European).

The languages in the Indo-European group share certain sound relationships, words, and grammatical forms. Thus, genetic classification of languages was made on the basis of some correspondences of sound and structure that indicate relationship

through common origin. These correspondences were studied by nineteenth-century linguistic scholars.

The Indo-European family includes several major branches: the Germanic languages; the Celtic languages; Latin and the modern Romance languages; Greek; the Baltic languages of Latvian and Lithuanian (but not Estonian); the Slavic languages; the Indo-Iranian languages, including Hindi and Sanskrit. Two Indo-European language groups no longer survive, the language of the Hittites (known mainly from references in the Old Testament) and a group of languages called Tocharian.

The influence of the original Indo-European language can be seen today, even though no written record of it exists. Even now it is easy to see that English and German are similar. *Milk* and *milch*, *bread* and *brot*, *flesh* and *fleisch*, *water* and *wasser* are obviously words that have diverged from a common form. All Indo-European languages share some words that are similar in form and meaning. These words are all cognates, similar words in different languages that share the same root. Such words are supposed to be the historical survivals of Indo-European roots. However, both form and meaning may, of course, change with time. Thus, the Indo-European **oinos* 'one' has changed its form in Latin *unus*, and in Greek *oine* 'one-spot on a die,' it has both changed its form and narrowed its meaning.

A **cognate** is a word shared by different languages whose relationship can be explained by precise sound laws. The word for *father*, for example, is *vader* in Dutch, *vater* in German, *fadar* in Gothic, *pater* in Latin, and *pitar* in Sanskrit. By reconstructing sound (phonetic reconstruction), scholars compare the sounds of surviving languages and use sound laws to recover the Indo-European originals. In the process, much can be learned about how certain surviving words are related. The following examples will illustrate the common Indo-European vocabulary as it appears in the various languages of the group:

father in English, *Vater* in German, *pater* in Latin and Greek, *fadir* in Old Norse and *pitr* in ancient Vedic Sanskrit;

brother in English, *broeer* in Dutch, *Brüder* in German, *braithair* in Gaelic, *bróðr* in Old Norse and *bhratar* in Sanskrit;

three in English, *tres* in Latin, *tris* in Greek, *drei* in German, *drie* in Dutch, *trí* in Sanskrit;

is in English, *is* in Dutch, *est* in Latin, *esti* in Greek, *ist* in Gothic, *asti* in Sanskrit;

me in English, *mich* or *mir* in German, *mij* in Dutch, *mik* or *mis* in Gothic, *me* in Latin, *eme* in Greek, *mam* in Sanskrit;

mouse in English, *Maus* in German, *muis* in Dutch, *mus* in Latin, *mus* in Sanskrit.

Proto-Germanic, the ancestor of English, branched off from Proto-Indo-European about 3,000 years ago. Like English, it was an oddball language. Its grammar was strangely less complex than Proto-Indo-European's. And it was far less complex than its siblings.

Around the second century BC, this Common Germanic language split into three distinct sub-groups:

- East Germanic was spoken by peoples who migrated back to southeastern Europe. No East Germanic language is spoken today, and the only written East Germanic language that survives is Gothic.
- North Germanic evolved into the modern Scandinavian languages of Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic (but not Finnish, which is related to Estonian and is not an Indo-European language).
- West Germanic is the ancestor of modern German, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, and English.

Major Changes from Indo-European to Germanic

All Germanic languages share certain characteristics that distinguish them from other Indo-European languages.

1. Germanic has a large number of words that have no known cognates in other Indo-European languages. Probably, they were developed during the Proto-Germanic period or taken from non-Indo-European languages originally spoken in the area occupied by the Germanic peoples. For example, *broad, drink, drive, fowl, hold, meat,*

rain, and wife.

2. Germanic languages have only two tenses: the present and the preterit (or past). To illustrate, in English *bind–bound*, in German *binden–band* and Old Norse *binda–band*. In contrast, Indo-European had a much more complex verbal system.

3. Germanic developed a preterit tense form with a dental suffix, that is, one containing *d* or *t* (as in *spell–spelled*) alongside an older pattern of changing the vowels inside a verb (as in *rise–rose*). All Germanic languages have these two types of verbs. Verbs using a dental suffix were called **weak** by the early German grammarian Jacob Grimm because they needed the help of a suffix to show past time. Verbs that did not need such assistance, he called **strong**. An overwhelming majority of English verbs add the dental suffix in the preterit, so it has become the regular and only living way of inflecting verbs in English and the other Germanic languages. Historically speaking, however, the vowel change in the strong verbs, called **ablaut** or gradation (as in *drive–drove* and *know–knew*), was quite regular. On the other hand, some weak verbs, which use the dental suffix, are irregular. *Bring–brought* and *buy–bought*, for instance, are weak verbs because of the suffix *-t*, and their vowel changes do not make them strong.

4. All the older forms of Germanic had two ways of declining their adjectives. The **weak declension** was used chiefly when the adjective modified a definite noun and was preceded by the kind of word that developed into the definite article. The **strong declension** was used otherwise. Thus, Old English had *þā geongan ceorlas* 'the young fellows (churls),' with the weak form of *geong*, but *geonge ceorlas* 'young fellows,' with the strong form. The distinction is preserved in present-day German: *die jungen Kerle*, but *junge Kerle*. This particular Germanic feature cannot be illustrated in Modern English, because English has lost all such declension of adjectives.

5. The "free" accentual system of Indo-European, in which the accent shifted from one syllable to another in various forms of a word, gave way to the Germanic type of accentuation in which the first syllable was regularly stressed, except in verbs like modern *believe* and *forget* with a prefix, whose stress was on the first syllable of the root. None of the Germanic languages has anything comparable to the shifting accentuation of Latin *vírī* 'men,' *virṓrum* 'of the men' or of *hábeō* 'I have,' *habḗmus*

‘we have.’ Compare the Greek *patḗr* and Old English *fǽder*, which are both developments of Indo-European **pətḗr* ‘father’.

In the Greek forms, the accent may occur on the suffix, the ending, or the root, unlike the Old English forms, which have their accent fixed on the first syllable of the root. Germanic accent is also predominantly a matter of stress (loudness) rather than pitch (tone); Indo-European seems to have had both types of accent at different stages of its development.

6. Some Indo-European vowels were modified in Germanic. Indo-European *o* was retained in Latin but became *a* in Germanic (compare Latin *octo* ‘eight,’ Gothic *ahtau*). Conversely, Indo-European *ā* became Germanic *ō* (Latin *māter* ‘mother,’ OE *mōdor*).

7. The Indo-European stops *bh, dh, gh; p, t, k; b, d, g* were all changed in what is called the First Sound Shift or Grimm’s Law. These changes were gradual, extending over long periods of time, but the sounds eventually appear in Germanic languages as, respectively, *b, d, g; f, θ, h; p, t, k*. The cause of the change is not known. Whatever its cause, the Germanic Sound Shift is the most distinctive feature marking off the Germanic languages from the languages to which they are related.

Grimm’s Law

Perhaps the most important tool for reconstruction is the set of sound relationships known as **Grimm’s Law**. Discovered by the Grimm brothers in the early nineteenth century, it is a set of sounds characteristic of the Germanic languages that correspond to the sounds of non-Germanic Indo-European languages. In other words, certain consonants in the Germanic languages correspond to consonants in the non-Germanic Indo-European languages, and these point to cognates. Here are some examples: English *fish* ~ Latin *pisces,* English *tooth* ~ Latin *dentis,* English *hundred* ~ Latin *centum.* According to Grimm, *p* in Indo-European, preserved as such in Latin and Greek, was changed to *f* in the Germanic languages. Thus, the English equivalent of Latin *piscis* to begin with *f* is found in *fish*. This change affected all of the consonants

called 'stops'. Other examples from other languages generate the set of correspondences, as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

IE	Germanic	Examples
bh	b	Sanskrit: bhratar English: brother
dh	d	Sanskrit: dhrajati English: drag
gh	g	Sanskrit: stighnoti German: steigen
p	f	Greek: poda German: Fuβ
t	þ	Latin: tenuis English: thin
k	x	Latin: cordis Afrikaans: hart
b	p	Old Irish: ubull Dutch: appel
d	t	Latin: decem Dutch: tien
g	k	Hittite: juga English: yoke

The consonant changes described by Grimm may have occurred in the following order:

1. The Indo-European aspirated voiced stops *bh, dh, gh* became respectively the Germanic voiced fricatives *b, d, g*.

2. The Indo-European voiced stops *p, t, k* became respectively the voiced fricatives *f, þ, x* (later *h* in initial position).

3. The Indo-European voiced stops *b, d, g* became respectively the voiceless stops *p, t, k*.

What do these correspondences mean in practical terms? Historical relationships can be seen by comparing, for example, certain English and Latin words: *lip/labial*, *tooth/dental*, *heart/cardiac*, *gall/choleric*, *knee/genuflect*, *foot/pedal, fee/pecuniary*.

Certain apparent exceptions to Grimm's Law were subsequently explained by Kark Verner in 1877. It was noted that between such a pair of words as Latin *centum* and English *hundred*, the correspondence between the *c* and *h* was according to rule, but that between the *t* and *d* it was not. The *d* in the English word should have been a voiceless fricative, that is a *þ*. In 1875, Verner showed that when the Indo-European accent was not on the vowel immediately preceding, such voiceless fricatives became voiced in Germanic. In West Germanic, the resulting *ð* became *d*, and the word *hundred* is therefore quite regular in its correspondence with *centum*.

In accordance with **Verner's Law** voiceless fricatives became voiced when they were in a voiced environment and the Indo-European stress was not on the immediately preceding syllable. That is *p t k* changed to *b d g*. For example, Indo-European *pətēr* (represented by Latin *pater* and Greek *patēr*) would have been expected to appear in Germanic with a medial *þ*. Instead there is Gothic *fadar*, Icelandic *faðir*, and Old English *fæder* (in which *d* is a West Germanic development of earlier *ð*). The effect of the position of stress on voicing can be observed in some Modern English words of foreign origin, such as *exert* and *exit*, compared with *exercise* and *exigent*.

The z that developed from earlier *s* appears as *r* in all recorded Germanic languages except Gothic. This shift of *z* to *r* is known as **rhoticism**. The Indo-European */s/, which corresponds to the Proto-Germanic */s/, changed to */z/ and then changed to */r/. Here are some examples: Greek *oâç*, Latin *auris* (*auss*), Ukrainian *вухо* correspond to Gothic *auso*, Old Icelandic *eura*, Old English *eare* (*ear*), Old Frisian *are*, Old High German *ora* (*ohr*), Old English *wesun* changed to *weren* (Modern English *were*, but *was*), Old English *maize* changed to *māra* (Modern English *more*, but *most*),

Gothic *softiza* correspond to Ukrainian *тихиший* and Old English *softra* (Modern English *softer*). There are still some remnants of the changes described by Verner's Law in present-day English, such as the past tense of the verb *be* (*was* and *were)* and also *more,* but *most*.

English has some characteristics of the Germanic group. Interestingly, English and Frisian share certain features not found in other Germanic languages. Frisian (pronounced "FREE-zhun"), a language spoken along the coasts and on the islands off the coasts of the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark is English's closest living relative. They are sometimes treated as an Anglo-Frisian subgroup of West Germanic. The Frisian people were the closest to the Anglo-Saxons who left the area around the North Sea for England in the fifth century. The following poem shows how close these languages are even today:

Modern Frisian: *Brea, bûter, en griene tsiis is goed lngelsk en goed Frysk*.

Modern English: *Bread, butter, and green cheese is good English and good Frisian*.

English, brought by pagan warrior-adventures from the Continent to the obscure island that the Romans called Britannia, begins its separate existence. On the British Isles it developed into an independent language distinct from any Germanic language spoken on the Continent.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following people are important in studies of the Indo-European family of languages: William Jones, Jacob Grimm, Karl Verner.
2. Define the following terms: syntagmatic change, paradigmatic or associative change, social change, external linguistic history, internal linguistic history, family of languages, Sanskrit, Indo-European, cognates, ablaut, Proto-Germanic, West Germanic, Hittites, First Sound Shift (Grimm's Law), Verner's Law, rhoticism, comparative reconstruction.
3. English is constantly changing. Name the parts of the language that have been affected.

4. What linguistic features are shared by all Indo-European languages; that is, how are all Indo- European languages alike?
5. What are the main subgroups of Indo-European?
6. Into what three groups is the Germanic branch divided?
7. What linguistic features, shared by all Germanic languages, differentiate them from other branches of Indo-European?
8. How can similarities among languages be explained? Consider, for example, English *bong* and German *Bam* 'noise of a bell', English *filly* and French *fille* 'girl', English *brother* and Ukrainian *brat*.
9. Give examples of how Grimm's Law accounts for differences in pronunciation among certain Indo-European languages.
10. Some grammarians believe that because language can be described as behavior governed by rules, most language change is rule change. That is, a speaker learns a new rule or drops an old rule or modifies it, thus altering their grammar or pronunciation. Does the idea of rule change favor the view that language change is sudden or that it is gradual?

Exercise 1.1

How would you group the following languages into pairs that are closely related from a historical point of view: Bengali, Breton, Czech, English, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Portuguese, Swedish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Welsh?

Exercise 1.2

Consider the following lists of words from six Indo-European languages and a list of their reconstructed Indo-European sources. Sort the words into cognate lists.

Old English: brōþor, dohtor, ēast, eax, full, hund, mōdor, morðor 'murder,' nama, sunu, sweostor, Tīw, tōþ, widuwe;

German: Achse, Bruder, Hund, Mord, Mutter, Name, Osten, Schwester, Sohn, Tochter, Vater, voll, Wittwe, Zahn, (OHG) Zio;

Old Norse: austr, bróðir, dóttir, faðir, fullr, hundr, morðr, móðir, nafn, öxull, sunr, systir, tönn, Tȳr;

Gothic: broþar, dauhtar, fadar, fulls, hunds, maurþr, namo, sunus, swistar, tunþus, widuwo;

Latin: aurōra ‘dawn,’ axis, canis, dēns, frāter, Iuppiter, māter, mors, nōmen, pater, plēnus, soror, vidua;

Greek: axōn, ēōs ‘dawn,’ huios, kuōn, mētēr, mortos, odontos, onoma, patēr, phrātēr, plērēs, thugatēr, Zeus.

Exercise 1.3.

Explain apparent root differences in English words of Germanic and Latinate origin: *father* and *paternal*, *ten* and *decimal*, *horn* and *cornucopia*, *three* and *triple*.

Exercise 1.4.

The First Sound Shift (also known as Grimm’s Law) occurred in five steps. Step 3 is called Verner’s Law. Each step was completed before the next began, so there was no overlapping or repetition of the changes. The shift is described here in articulatory terms. Complete the blanks to show the development of each sound.

step 1: All aspirated voiced stops became the corresponding voiced fricatives: bh > _______; dh > _______; gh > _______; gwh > _______.

step 2: Voiceless stops became the corresponding voiceless fricatives (except when they followed another voiceless fricative): p > _______; t > _______; k > _______; kw > _______.

step 3: Voiceless fricatives became voiced (when they were in a voiced environment and the Indio-Eropean stress was not on the preceding syllable: f > _______; þ > _______; x > _______; xw >_______; s > _______.

step 4: All voiced stops became unvoiced: f > _______; þ > _______; x > _______; xw > _______; s > _______.

step 5: Voiced fricatives sometimes became the corresponding voiced stops (the exact conditions depended on the sound, the environment, and the dialect): b >

_______; ð > _______; g> _______; gw > _______. In this same step, the voiced fricative z became an r-like sound that was spelled with a distinctive letter (transliterated r) in the early runic inscriptions of North Germanic; it later merged with the r inherited from Indo-European.

Exercise 1.5

For each of the reconstructed Indo-European roots listed below, complete the reconstructed Germanic derivative and the Old and Modern English words by supplying the consonant that resulted from the operation of Grimm's Law. (The same consonant occurs in Germanic, Old English, and Modern English.)

Indo-European	Germanic	Old English	Modern English	Borrowing from Latin
*pisk	*__iska	__isk	__ish	_____
*kerd	*__ertōn	__eorte	__eart	_____
*dent	*__anthus	*__ōþ	__ooth	_____
*kaput	*____aubidam	__ēafod	__ead	_____
*bher-	*__eran	__eran	__ear	_____
‘to carry’				
*dekṃ	*__ehun	__īen	__en	_____
*trei	*__rijiz	__rīe	__ree	_____

2. The Old English Period (449-1100)

The Beginnings of English

Modern English is a rich example of the role of language contact in language change. In broad strokes, it was shaped by a series of military and cultural invasions. The recorded history of the English language begins in the British Isles, where it was brought by Germanic tribes (the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians) from the Continent. English was later influenced by invading Norsemen, and finally transformed by the occupation of French-speaking Normans.

The earliest inhabitants of the British Isles whose language can be reconstructed were Celtic speakers who migrated from Europe sometime in the second half of the first millennium B.C. The impact of the Celtic languages on English is considered to be minimal. In fact, the predominant legacy is in place-names. The fact that England has three rivers named *Avon*, for example, can be traced back to the Celtic word for *river*. The place names below all have some distant Celtic link:

Cities: Belfast, Cardiff, Dublin, Glasgow, London, York;

Rivers: Avon, Clyde, Dee, Don, Forth, Severn, Thames, Usk;

Regions: Argyll, Cumbia, Devon, Dyfed, Glamorgan, Kent, Lothian.

The Romans colonized England under Julius Caesar and kept it as a colony until the middle of the fifth century A.D. The Romans withdrew from Britain as their empire collapsed in the early fifth century (by 410). They were soon replaced by Germanic-speaking invaders – the Jutes, the Angles, the Saxons, and later the Frisians. According to the Venerable Bede's account in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People, completed around 730, the date when the first Germanic tribes arrived is 449. With it the Old English period begins. The invading tribes came from northern Germany and settled in different parts of the island. They spoke a number of closely related and hence very similar Germanic dialects. By 600, they spoke dialects, which are called 'Old English', distinct from the Germanic languages spoken on the continent. The Anglo-

Saxons overwhelmed the Celts linguistically as well as military; Old English contained just a few Celtic words, but the most frequently used words in English today – words like *the, is,* and *you* – are of Anglo-Saxon origin. Gradually, the country became known as *Engla-land* – the land of the Angles – and their language was called *Englisc.*

The Germanic settlement comprised seven kingdoms, the Anglo-Saxon **Heptarchy.** North of the Humber River in England was Northumbria, the first real center of English speaking, writing, learning, literature, and culture. In the central part of England were the kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia, and Essex; in the southeast was Kent and Sussex; and in the southwest was Wessex. Four principal dialects were spoken in Anglo-Saxon England: Kentish, West Saxon, Mercian, and Northumbrian. 'Standard' Modern English or at least Modern English spelling, owes most to the Mercian dialect, since that was the dialect of London.

Old English was influenced by Latin in the seventh century when in 597 St. Augustine and a group of monks converted Britain to Christianity. Dozens of Latinate words survive from this period including *angel* and *devil, disciple, martyr,* and *shrine.* Christian churches and monasteries produced many written texts – excellent evidence of what Old English was like. However, Christianity had been introduced to the British Isles much earlier. Having been introduced to Ireland before the year 400, it developed there into a form quite different from that of Rome. England could have gone with the Celts, but at a Synod held at Whitby in 664 the preference was given to the Roman customs. That decision was symbolic of the important alignment of the English Church with Rome and the Continent.

The earliest writing which the Angles and Saxons brought over from the Continent used runes. Written English began after the establishment of monasteries in the seventh century. Monks wrote and copied Latin manuscripts and therefore adapted the Roman alphabet for the writing of English. The Old English alphabet had 24 letters. By the tenth century a stable spelling system had been established in the West Saxon dialect, which became a standard for written manuscripts throughout the country by the eleventh century. This standard was lost in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest.

Northumbria was the first area of Anglo-Saxon efflorescence. The historian known as the Venerable Bede, who was monk and scholar, started to write the first ever history of the English speaking people. He was writing in Latin, the language of scholarship. The monasteries of Northumbria produced beautiful manuscripts of the Bible and other literary texts. The earliest written records found in Old English are translations of these Latin texts written in the Northumbrian dialect.

But the real heart of later Anglo-Saxon culture was Wessex. And the most important dialect of Old English was West Saxon, the form of the language spoken and written in the southwestern part of the country. West Saxon was the dialect of King Alfred (899), who is the only king called “the Great”. From the time of King Alfred until the Norman Conquest, Wessex dominated the rest of Anglo-Saxon England politically and culturally.

Between 800 and 1050, invasions by pagan Viking raiders, who sacked various churches and monasteries, had a profound impact on Old English. The Vikings gained possession of practically the whole eastern part of England, where Danish law held sway, an area therefore known as the Danelaw. In 878 King Alfred of Wessex beat the Vikings in battle and forced a treaty by which the Vikings withdrew to the north and the Old English-speaking Saxons ruled the south. Alfred created a sense of national identity among the various groups of Saxons in the south by appealing to their shared language and mandating that English, not Latin, would be the language of education.

Alfred was a kind of defender of the English language. He established schools and courts of translation to teach the classics in Old English. He was responsible for translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and for the compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle – the two major sources of our knowledge of early English history. From Bede's Ecclesiastical History we know the Caedmon story. Caedmon was the illiterate farmer, cowherd who became England's first Christian poet we know by name, sometime in the late seventh century. Caedmon's Hymn is the earliest surviving Old English poem.

The English language was certainly one of the earliest highly developed vernacular tongues in Europe. The chief literary work of the Old English period is the heroic poem **Beowulf.** The poem is set in the fifth century, shortly after the Saxons started to settle in England, it is generally accepted that it was not written until the eighth century. It is quite likely that the story was passed down orally from generation to generation before it was eventually written down.

The poem revolved around three battles. At the start of the story, Beowulf goes to the aid of Hrothgar, King of the Danes, who is being tormented by a monster called Grendel. This monster has been attacking the resident warriors of the mead hall, but Beowulf shows great courage in slaying both Grendel and the monster's mother with a magical sword.

After these two battles, Beowulf returns home and becomes King of the Geats – his tribe. Many years later a servant steals a cup from the lair of a dragon. The dragon goes on a rampage, attacking homes across the kingdom, and Beowulf is forced to try to protect his people and defend his kingdom. He eventually tracks the dragon down and slays it, but in the process he is mortally wounded and dies.

The poem was written in England, but was set in Scandinavia. Although it is based on historical events, much of it is fictional and it is often difficult to separate fact from fiction. Clearly the dragon is not real – although many stories and legends at this time contain references to them. However, certain events and characters in the story certainly existed.

Pronunciation and Spelling

English adopted the Roman alphabet, in other words, the alphabet of another language – Latin. Today we have over forty phonemes in English, but only twenty-six letters by which to represent those phonemes. Even in Old English the Latin alphabet on its own was not enough. In addition to Latin consonant letters, the Runic 'thorn' *þ* and the Irish Gaelic 'eth' *ð* were used, some Old English phonemes were represented by pairs of letters, which we call digraphs (Old English *scep* – Modern English *sheep*, Old English *ecg* – Modern English *edge*). In addition to Latin vowel letters, the letter

'ash' æ was developed by combining a and e, and was used for the phoneme [æ] that we now represent with *a.* Also, the digraphs *ea* and *eo* were used, as in the Old English words *eare* 'ear' and *beor* 'beer'.

The vowel letters in Old English were *a, æ, e, i, o, u*, and *y*. Late West Saxon had two long diphthongs, *ēa* [æ:ə] and *ēo* [e:ə]. In Modern English period they fell together as [i:], as in *beat* from Old English *bēatan* and *creep* from *crēopan*.

Short and long vowels were contrastive in Old English , for example, *coc* with a short [o] meant *cock*, and with a long [o] meant *cook*; *ful* with a short [u] meant *full*, and with a long [u] meant *foul*. Sometimes long vowels were written with a double letter, for example, *cooc* for *cook* or *fuul* for *foul*, but although there are now plenty of words spelt with <ee> and <oo>, spellings with <aa>, <ii> and <uu> did not survive.

The consonant letters in Old English were *b, c, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, þ, w, x*, and *z*. The letters *j, q*, and *v* were not used for writing Old English, and *y* was always a vowel.

In Old English, [v], [z], and [ð] were not phonemes; they occurred only between voiced sounds. There were thus no contrastive pairs like *feel-veal, leaf-leave, seal-zeal*.

Mutation is a change in a vowel sound caused by a sound in the following syllable. The mutation of a vowel by a following *i* or *y* is called i-mutation or i-umlaut. **i-mutation** (the first vowel shift) or **i-umlaut** (a German term meaning 'sound alteration') is thought to have taken place during the seventh century. The Old English vowels changed in quality between the time Old English was first written down. In Germanic there were many words where a vowel in a stressed syllable was immediately followed by a high front vowel ([i]) or vowel-like sound ([j]) in the next syllable. The plural of **fōt* is thought to have been *f*ōtiz*, with the stress on *fō*. For some reason the quality of this high front sound caused the preceding vowel to change (mutate). The *ō* became *ē*, which ultimately came to be pronounced [i], as in modern *feet*. The -*iz* ending dropped away, for once the plural was being shown by the e-vowel, it was unnecessary to have an ending as well. *Fēt* therefore emerged as an irregular noun in English.

The accent of the Anglo-Saxon invaders after they arrived in Britain changed. Old English words of more than one syllable were generally stressed on the first syllable of their main element. *Be-, for-*, and *ge-* were not stressed in any part of speech. This heavy stressing of the first syllable of practically all words has had a far-reaching effect on the development of English. Because of it, the vowels of final syllables began to be reduced to a uniform [ə] sound as early as the tenth century.

The Major Linguistic Features

Old English was a very complex language, at least in comparison with modern English. Like all the Germanic languages, Old English had declensions for nouns, adjectives, demonstrative and interrogative pronouns. They could be inflected for up to five cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and instrumental). To signal relationships in a sentence, endings (not prepositions) were added to the words. These are known as case endings. Old English used more grammatical endings in words and was less dependent on word order and function words than Modern English.

There were seven classes of 'strong' verbs and three of 'weak' verbs, and their endings changed for number, tense, mood, and person. Word order was much freer than today, the sense was carried by the inflections (and only later by the use of propositions).

Old English differs markedly from Modern English in having **grammatical gender** in contrast to the Modern English system of **natural gender**. The three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) were characteristic of Indo-European and were preserved in Germanic. They survived in English into the Middle English period. Old English *wīf* ‘wife, women’ (German cognate *Weib*) and *mægden* ‘maiden,’ (German Mädchen) are neuter, *bridd* ‘young bird’ and *drēam* ‘joy’ are masculine, *strengþu* ‘strength’ and *eaxl* ‘shoulder’ are feminine.

Old English nouns were in different groups or classes (or stems) and had a large number of patterns for declining or declensions, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Old English Noun Declensions

	Masculine a-Stem	Neuter a-Stem	r-Stem	n-Stem	ō-Stem	Root-Consonant Stem
	‘hound’	‘deer’	‘child’	‘ox’	‘love’	‘foot’
Singular						
Nom.	hund	dēor	cild	oxa	lufu	fōt
Acc.	hund	dēor	cild	oxan	lufe	fōt
Gen.	hundes	dēores	cildes	oxan	lufe	fōtes
Dat.	hunde	dēore	cilde	oxan	lufe	fēt
Plural						
N.-Ac.	hundas	dēor	cildru	oxan	lufa	fēt
Gen.	hunda	dēora	cildra	oxena	lufa	fōta
Dat.	hundum	dēorum	cildrum	oxum	lufum	fōtum

More than half of all commonly used nouns were inflected according to the a-Stem pattern, which was in time to be extended to practically all nouns. The Modern English possessive singular and general plural forms in *-s* come directly from the Old English genitive singular (*-es*) and the masculine nominative-accusative plural (*-as*) forms. These two different forms fell together in late Old English because the unstressed vowels had merged as shwa. The Old English ending *–as* was reduced to *–es*. This ending was transformed to nouns of different Old English stems by analogy. In Middle English both endings were spelled *-es*. Already in the Old English period there appeared a tendency to the unification of plural endings in the noun paradigm. This process was intensified in Early Middle English. Only in Modern English have they again been differentiated in spelling by the use of the apostrophe. Nowadays the genitive case is the only living declension.

The adjectives in Old English agreed with the noun it modified in gender, case, and number; but Germanic had developed a distinctive adjective declension – the weak declension, used after the two demonstratives (1) *se, þaet, seo, þa* and (2) *þēs, þis, þēos* and after possessive pronouns, which made the following noun definite in its reference.

Adjectives were inflected for definiteness as well as for gender, number, and case. The so-called **weak declension** of adjectives was used to indicate that the modified noun was definite. The weak form occurred after a demonstrative or a possessive pronoun, as in "*se gōda dǣl*" ('that *good* part') or "*hire geonga sunu*" ('her *young* son'). The strong declension was used when the modified noun was indefinite because not preceded by a demonstrative or possessive or when the adjective was in the predicate, as in "gōd dǣl" ('a *good* part') or "*se dǣl wæs gōd*" ('that part was *good*').

Personal pronouns today are almost as complex as they were in Old English. Except for the loss of the dual number (we both and you both) and the old second person singular forms (*þu*).

Old English had a few verbs that were originally strong but whose strong preterit had come to be used with a present-time sense. Consequently, they had to form new weak preterits. They are called preterit-present verbs and are the main source for the important group of modal verbs in Modern English. Table 2.2 shows ones that survive as present-day modals. However, the Old English *willan* 'wish, want,' whose preterit was *wolde* and which became a part of the present-day modal system, does not belong to this group.

Table 2.2

Infinitive	Present	Preterit
āgan ‘owe’	āh	āhte (ought)
cunnan ‘know how’	cann (can)	cūðe (could)
magan ‘be able’	mæg (may)	meahte (might)
*mōtan ‘be allowed’	mōt	mōste (must)
sculan ‘be obliged’	sceal (shall)	sceolde (should)

The linguistic result of prolonged period of contact with Vikings was significant for English. The Scandinavian tongues of those days were enough like Old English to make communication possible between the English and the Danes. The Saxons and the Vikings lived alongside each other for generations (despite occasional wars), and their continued contact played a significant role in greatly simplifying the structure of Old English. Old English and Old Norse speakers shared many Germanic root words but their grammatical and inflectional systems differed. Over generations of contact, Old English lost many of its inflectional markings and borrowed dozens of words of Norse origin, like *again, awkward, fellow, take, Thursday, skin, want, window,* and *wrong.* Scandinavian personal pronouns *they, them,* and *their* replaced the earlier Old English forms: *heo, him, hira.* Old Norse influenced the verb *to be*. *Sind(on)* was replaced by *are*, which is almost certainly the result of Scandinavian influence, as is the spread of the 3rd person singular -*s* ending in the present tense in other verbs. Many of the borrowed words were added alongside Old English synonyms – for example, *rear* (English) and *raise* (Norse).

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Old English differed from that of later historical stages of English in two main ways: it included relatively few loanwords (3%), and the gender of nouns was more or less arbitrary, in other words grammatical gender.

Many Old English words of Germanic origin were identical to the corresponding Modern English words – for example*, god, gold, hand, helm, land, oft, under, winter*, and *word*. Others have changed in meaning. Thus, Old English *brēad* meant 'bit, piece' rather than 'bread', similarly, *drēam* was 'joy' not 'dream,' *dreorig* 'bloody' not 'dreary,' *hlāf* 'bread' not 'loaf,' *mōd* 'heart, mind, courage' not 'mood,' *scēawian* 'look at' not 'show.'

Some Old English words and meanings have survived in Modern English only in set expressions. Thus, Old English *guma* 'man' (cognate with the Latin word from which *human* have been borrowed) survives in the compound *bridegroom*, *tīd* 'time' when used in the proverb '*Time and tide wait for no man*.'

In the Anglo-Saxon period, there were two major influences on early English vocabulary. First, the Christian missionaries from Ireland and Rome brought with them a huge Latin vocabulary, mostly related to the Church and learning. The second big linguistic invasion came as a result of the Viking raids on Britain.

Latin loan words for newer religious concepts, older Celtic terms from the indigenous Celtic peoples living in the British Isles, and words from the Scandinavian languages of Viking and Danish raiders in England came into the Germanic languages. Words from Celtic and Latin Christianity borrowed in the sixth and seventh centuries include *cross*, *priest*, *shrine*, *rule*, *school*, *master*, and *pupil*.

Words from Scandinavian Germanic languages were borrowed after contact with the Vikings and the Danes during their raids on England in the eighth and ninth centuries. These words were distinguished by special sounds in the Scandinavian languages, in particular, the sounds *sk* and *k* which corresponded to the sounds *sh* and *ch* in Old English. Thus, Scandinavian *skirt* has Germanic family cognate in Old English *shirt*. Scandinavian languages also had a hard *g* sound that was not present in Old English; the words *ugly* and *egg* are Scandinavian borrowings; certain words with the *ll* sound, such as *ill*, were also borrowed (OE sick), the word *husband*.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, during the period of the Benedictine Reform, more elaborate and learned Latin words came into Old English, including *Antichrist*, *apostle*, *canticle*, *demon*, *font*, *nocturne*, *Sabbath*, *synagogue*, *accent*, *history*, *paper*.

Despite these foreign influences, the word stock of Old English was far more thoroughly Germanic than is our present-day vocabulary.

Old English created words by combining words, by adding prefixes, and by bringing together nouns and suffixes. The Old English vocabulary is immensely rich in compounds, new words coined by combining existing words. Modern English replaced this by borrowing. Determinative compounding is common to all the Germanic languages and involves forming new words by yoking together two normally independent nouns or a noun and an adjective. Examples of determinative compounding with two nouns include *earhring* 'earring', *bocstæf* 'letter', *aþwedd* 'oath-promise, vow', *bōchord* 'book-hoard, library', *cræftsþrǣc* 'craft-speech, technical language', *drēorwurþe* 'dear-worth, precious', *folcriht* 'folk-right, common law', *nīfara* 'new-farer, stranger', *rīmcræft* 'counting-skill, computation'. Examples with an adjective and a noun include *middangeard* (*middle-yard*, 'Earth'), and *bonlocan* (*bone locker*, 'body').

Many of these words make up the unique poetic vocabulary of Old English literature, especially in metaphorical constructions known as **kennings**. A kenning is a noun metaphor that expresses a familiar object in unfamiliar ways. For example, *hronrād* 'whale road', *bānhus* 'bone-house', *beadolēoma* 'battle light', *heofonrīces weard* 'guardian of heaven's kingdom', *moncynnes weard* 'guardian of mankind'. Beowulf stands out as a poem which makes great use of compounds: there are over a thousand of them, comprising a third of all words in the text.

Repetitive compounding brings together words that are nearly identical or that complement and reinforce each other for specific effect. Thus, *holtwudu* meant, essentially, *wood-wood*, in Old English, or forest; *gangelwæfre* meant the *going-about weaver* or the *swift-moving one*, that is, a spider. Noun-adjective formations constitute another approach to compounding, giving such words as *græsgrene* 'grass green', *lofgeorn* 'praise-eager, or eager for praise', and *goldhroden* 'gold-adorned'. In Modern English, this form of compounding is revived in such phrases as *king-emperor* or *fighter-bomber*.

Prefix formations were the most common way of creating new words in Old English and other Germanic languages. Old English had many prefixes that derived from prepositions and altered the meanings of words in special ways. For example, the prefix *and-* meant 'back' or 'in response to.' Thus, one could swear in Old English or *andswar*, meaning 'to answer.' The prefix *with-* meant 'against.' One could stand or *withstand* something in Old English, meaning 'to stand against.'

Most of Anglo-Saxon words gradually died out under the cultural attack of the Vikings and the Normans who would come after them. Less than 1% of modern English vocabulary is Anglo-Saxon, but it includes some of the most fundamental and important, such as *man*, *wife*, *child*, *son*, *daughter*, *brother*, *friend*, *live*, *fight*, *make*, *use*, *love*, *like*, *look*, *drink*, *food*, *eat*, *sleep*, *sing*, *sun*, *moon*, *earth*, *ground*, *wood*, *field*, *house*, *home*, *people*, *family*, *horse*, *fish*, *farm*, *water*, *time*, *eyes*, *ears*, *mouth*, *nose*, *strong*, *work*, *come*, *go*, *be*, *find*, *see*, *look*, *laughter*, *night*, *day*, *sun*, *first*, *many*, *one*, *two*, *other*, *some*, *what*, *when*, *which*, *where*, *word*, as well as the most important "function" words, such as *to*, *for*, *but*, *and*, *at*, *in*, *on*, *from*. Because of this, up to a half of everyday modern English will typically be made up of Old English words.

The Natural Changes in Old English before the Norman Conquest

Some natural changes in Old English took place from its earliest times. Both noun endings and adjective endings (such as those that delineated number or gender) were lost in this period of Old English. Verb endings were maintained, but simplified. The distinctive feature of Old English dual pronoun was also lost. Grammatical gender disappeared, to be replaced by natural gender. Nouns were no longer masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Why did these changes take place? Some theories have been proposed that hinge on stress, form, and function. Old English, like all Germanic languages, had fixed stress on the root syllable of the word. In other words, regardless of what prefixes or suffixes were added to the word, the stress remained on the root syllable. This insistent stress tended to level out the sounds of unstressed syllables. Any sound or syllable that did not take the full word stress, such as a grammatical ending, would not have been

pronounced clearly. As final endings became harder to distinguish, new ways of establishing meaning were necessary.

Old English had a fully developed set of prepositions: *of*, *with*, *before*, *on*, and *to*. These were used to signal relationships among words in various kinds of phrases, but case endings still served the same function. Thus, a noun in the dative case did not need a preposition. In Late Old English and Middle English, these grammatical categories lost their distinctions and prepositions took over. Patterns of word order also became regularized as syntax (rather than case endings) became the way of expressing grammatical relationships in a sentence. Thus, word order patterns were regularized. The order of subject-verb-object became the standard for the simple declarative sentence.

Over time, the sound of the language also changed. Old English began to lose some of the characteristic consonant clusters that gave it its distinctive sound. The *hl*-, *hr*-, *hn*-, and *fn*- clusters leveled out to *l*-, *r*-, *n*-, and *sn*-. Compression of syllables occurred in such terms as *hlaf weard*, *guardian of the loaf*, which was shortened to become *Lord*. Certain Old English words underwent a special sound change called **metathesis**. This is the inversion of sounds in order. We hear this when we identify certain regional dialects by the pronunciation "aks" for *ask*. During the Late Old English and Early Middle English periods, certain words permanently metathesized their sounds: *brid* → *bird*; *axian* → *ask*; *thurgh* → *through*; *beorht* → *bright*. Some strong verbs (*need*, *help*, *wax*) changed to weak ones.

The system of making meaning was changing at the same time that newer French words were inflecting the language.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following are important in historical discussions of the English language: *Beowulf*, St. Augustine, Alfred the Great, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede, Caedmon.
2. Define the following terms: vowel declension, consonant declension,

grammatical gender, dual number, i-Umlaut (i-mutation), palatal diphthongization, concord, kennings, weak declension, strong declension, dual number, conjugation, ablaut (gradation), metathesis.

3. What was the influence of the Scandinavian settlement on the English language?
4. What is the chief difference between the stress patterns of Old English and Modern English, and what historical events help to account for the difference?
5. How do Old English and Modern English differ in devices for indicating plurality?
6. How did the strong and weak forms of an Old English adjective differ in use?
7. What Old English adjective inflections have survived as living suffixes in Modern English?
8. From what class of Old English verbs are the Modern English modal auxiliaries *shall, should, may, might, can, could, must*, and *ought* derived?
9. In what ways was the Old English vocabulary expended?
10. Old English differs from Modern English in the amount of inflection for nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs. Name four or five other major differences between the linguistic systems of the two periods.

Exercise 2.1

Explain the difference between the Old English sound system and that of Modern English which is illustrated by the following pairs: *spanan* ‘attract, urge,’ *spannan* ‘join, fasten’; *suga* ‘sows,’ *sugga* ‘a bird’; *fela* ‘much, many,’ *fella* ‘of hides, skins’; *rǣde* ‘(I) give advice,’ *rǣdde* ‘(I) gave advice’?

Exercise 2.2

Mutation or umlaut is a change in the quality of a vowel resulting from its assimilation to a neighboring sound. In the following pairs, the first word has a mutated vowel omitted from its spelling, and the second word is a related form without mutation. Supply the missing vowel.

d___man 'to judge' / dōm 'judgement'; f___llan 'to fill' / full 'full';
sc___rtest 'shortest' / sceort 'short'; str___ngest 'strongest' / strang 'strong';
m___s 'mice' / mus 'mouse'; m___st 'most' / mā; ___ldra 'elder' / eald 'old'

Exercise 2.3

1. Write the declension of these Old English nouns:

   grund ‘ground’ *a*-stem, masculine

   gēar ‘year’ *a*-stem, neuter

   talu ‘tale’ *ō*-stem, feminine

   fēond ‘friend’ root-consonant stem, masculine

   bōc ‘book’ root-consonant stem, feminine

   lamb ‘lamb’ *r*-stem, neuter

2. Write the declension of these phrases:

   se tila hlāford ‘the good lord’

   þæt tile sweord ‘the good sword’

   sēo tile reord ‘the good meal’

   til hlāford

   til sweord

   tilu reord

Exercise 2.4

For each of the Modern English pronouns, give the Old English word from which it developed and tell the case of the Old English source pronoun: *I, me, mine, we, us, our, thou, thee, thine, his, she, her, it, (you tell)'em, who, whom, whose, what*.

Exercise 2.5

Conjugate the verbs *hǣlan* 'to heal' (weak verb) and *meltan* 'to melt' (strong verb).

Principal parts

Indicative

ic

þū

hē

wē, gē, hī

Subjunctive

ic, þū, hē

wē, gē, hī

Imperative

þū

gē

Participle

3. The Middle English Period (1100-1500)

English after the Norman Conquest: impact on the structure, sound, spelling, and vocabulary

The year 1066, the date of the Norman Conquest, marks the end of the Old English Period. The changes in English after the Norman Conquest affected English in its vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and sound.

The conquering Normands (Norsemen) were themselves descended from Vikings who had settled in northern France about 200 years before. However, they had completely abandoned their Old Norse language and adopted French. The Normans spoke a rural dialect of French with considerable Germanic influences, usually called Norman French or Anglo-Norman, which was quite different from the standard French of Paris of the period.

Medieval England was a trilingual culture. French (Anglo-Norman) was the verbal language of the court, administration, and culture. Latin (mostly for written) had become the language of the church, education, and philosophy. While English belonged to the street and the farm, the peasantry and lower classes (the vast majority of the population, 95%). English was the vernacular, the language spoken by the ordinary people in the country. French and English developed in parallel, only gradually merging as Normans and Anglo-Saxons began to intermarry. It is this mixture of Old English and Anglo-Norman that is usually referred to as Middle English.

French became the language of government, religion, and education in England for nearly 300 years. Bilingualism gradually became common among those who dealt with both upper (French-speaking) and lower (English-speaking) classes. By 1300, thousands of French words had been borrowed into English, especially in the domains of power: *nation, nobility, crown,* and *parliament* - not to mention *government* and *religion.* The language contact led to a further simplification of the English phonological system: Old English diphthongs were simplified into long vowels; word-initial consonant clusters like *kn-* in *knight* were simplified (though many kept their

earlier spelling); and short unstressed vowels merged into the schwa sound. These phonological changes led to the loss of most remaining case and gender morphemic distinctions, which in turn caused English to become a much more fixed word-order grammatical system.

In the fourteenth century, the English kings lost Normandy – and their ties to the French – and English once again became a symbol of national identity. In 1362 English became the language of the law courts – with many words borrowed from French, for example, *judge, court, attorney, crime,* and *sue.* Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* in Middle English around 1380. The London dialect's status at the 'standard' was codified in 1474 when William Caxton brought the printing press to England and based his spellings on London pronunciations. The Great Vowel Shift (c. 1450 – 1650) marks the transition from Middle to Modern English. The spellings of many English words persist from before the shift and reflect the Middle English pronunciation.

Norman scribes brought to England some innovations in Middle English spelling like the digraph *th*, the letter *w*, the letter shape *g*, the consonant sound *v,* consonant cluster *qu*. They adapted spelling to suit French spelling conventions and, as a result, introduced a number of apparent oddities of English spelling. Under French influence, scribes in Middle English times made English look very similar to Present day English.

Digraphs promoted by Middle English scribes include:

- *sh* replacing *sc* in words like Old English *scip* 'ship'.
- *qu* replacing *cw* in words like Old English *cwen* 'queen'.
- *gh* replacing *h* in words like Old English *riht* 'right'.
- *ch* replacing *c* in words like Old English *cin* 'chin'.
- *wh* replacing *hw* in words like Old English *hwæt* 'what'.
- *c* replacing *s* in words like Old English *is* 'ice'.
- *ou* replacing *u* in words such as Old English *wund* 'wound'.

Some of these innovations were actually advantageous. Until the adoption of *ch, c* had represented two phonemes: the first sounds of the words *chin* (Old English *cin)*

and *king* (Old English *cyning)*. Thus, *ch* helped make a useful distinction. The adoption of *ou* helped to indicate a long vowel without having to use double *u*. The problem with double *u* was legibility. The characters *u, uu, i, n,* and *m* were all written with straight down-strokes and were thus in danger of being confused. In fact, to make things clearer, scribes sometimes wrote *o* for *u* and y for *i*. Thus, the word *love* was once spelt *luve,* a spelling that was closer to pronunciation but not so legible.

New conventions for long and short vowels also developed. Increasingly, long vowel sounds came to be marked with an extra vowel letter, as in *see* (Old English *sē*) and *booc* (Old English *bōc*). Short vowels were identified by consonant doubling to avoid confusing, as in *sitting*. This convention became available once it was no longer needed to mark the lenghthened consonants which had been present in Old English, but lost in early Middle English. The long *a* of Old English became *o* in Middle English. An interesting example is an ancient aristocratic name *Stanley.* It may be known from the word *stanley nife*. It did not follow the normal pattern of sound change which affected the long *a* vowel in Old English.

At the same time as new letter shapes and preferences were emerging, there was a continual process of change affecting the way English was pronounced. In a few cases, new contrastive units emerged. The /v/ sound became much more important, because of its use in French loan words, and began to distinguish pairs of words, as it does today (for example, *feel* vs *veal*). Old English did not use them to differentiate words. Similarly, French influence caused /s/ and /z/ to become contrastive (for example, *zeal* vs *seal*). And *ng* sound at the end of a word also began to distinguish meanings (for example, *thing* vs *thin*).

The “Ormulum”, a 19,000 line biblical text written by a monk called Orm from northern Lincolnshire in the late twelfth century, is an important resource in this regard. Concerned at the way people were starting to mispronounce English, Orm spelled his words exactly as they were pronounced. For instance, he used double consonants to indicate a short preceding vowel (much as modern English does in words like *diner* and *dinner* or *later* and *latter*); he used three separate symbols to differentiate the different sounds of the Old English letter *yogh*; and he used the more modern *wh* for

the old-style “hw” and “sh” for “sc”. This unusual phonetic spelling system has given philologists an invaluable snap-shot of they way Middle English was pronounced in the Midlands in the second half of the twelfth century.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was continued at Peterborough for almost a century after the Norman Conquest. Another text of the twelfth century The Peterborough Chronicle illustrates the changes in grammar. Old English inflectional system decayed. Several of old endings are still present in the twelfth century text of the Peterborough Chronicle, but they no longer seem to play an important role in conveying meaning.

Diphthongs changed radically between Old English and Middle English. The old diphthongs disappeared and a number of new ones developed: [aɪ, eɪ, aʊ, ɛʊ, ɪʊ, ɔɪ, ʊɪ]. Just as Old English diphthongs were smoothed into Middle English monophthongs, so some new Middle English diphthongs have undergone smoothing in Modern English (for instance, Middle English *drawen*, Modern English *draw*). The process of smoothing still goes on: some inland Southern American speakers lack speakers lack off-glides in [aɪ], so that “my wife” comes out as something very like [ma waf]. On the other hand, new diphthongs have also developed: Middle English *rīden* [ri:dən], Modern English *ride* [raid]; Middle English *hous* [hu:s], Modern English *house* [haʊs]. And others continue to develop: some American dialects have glides in words like *head* [hɛəd] and *bad* [bæɪd].

In addition to the qualitative vowel changes mentioned above, there were some important quantitative changes, that is, changes in the length of vowels. In late Old English times, originally short vowels were **lengthened** before consonant sequences *mb, nd, ld, rd*, and *rð* (for instance, *clīmben* ‘to climb’, *bounden* ‘bound’). Short *a*, *e*, and *o* were lengthened when they were in open syllables (for instance, *bāken* ‘to bake’, Old English *bacan*), which was a new principle in English.

Conversely, beginning in the Old English period, originally long vowels in syllables followed by certain consonant sequences were **shortened** (for example, Old English *hidde* ‘hid’, Old English *hȳdde*, *kepte* ‘kept’, Old English *cēpte*). Vowels in unstressed syllables were shortened (for instance, *wisdom*, Old English *wīsdōm*).

Shortening also occurred regularly before two unstressed syllables, as reflected in *wild – wilderness*, *Christ – Christendom*, and *holy – holiday*.

As far as grammar of English is concerned, the most significant of all phonological developments in the language was the falling together of *a, o, u* with *e* in unstressed syllables, all ultimately becoming [ə] (for example, Old English *lama* ‘lame’, Middle English *lame*). The leveled final *e* was gradually lost. As a results of the leveling of unstressed vowels, the category of gender was lost.

A fundamental change in the structure of English took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Grammatical relationships in Old English had been expressed chiefly by the use of inflectional endings. In Middle English, they came to be expressed chiefly by word order. The switch from a synthetic to analytic type of grammar is the main characteristic of the Middle English period, with the development of new verbal grammatical categories.

Due to reduction of unstressed vowels in inflections, the grammatical category of case has been simplified. Case endings have been weakened and leveled. The Old English four-case system was reduced to three-case system in Late Old English (the nominative and the accusative case forms merged) and in Middle English it was further simplified (reduced to nominative and genitive).

During the Middle English period practically all nouns were reduced to two forms, just as in Modern English – one with *-s* for the plural and genitive singular and one without it for other singular uses. The old English plural ending *-an* found in the *n*-stems was reduced to the ending *-en* in Middle English, for example, Old English *naman*, Middle English *namen* 'names'. This ending could also be added to form plurals of nouns of different Old English stems by analogy. In some cases this ending could be added to the Old English plurals. For example Old English *cildru*, Middle English *childre(n)*. Then the Middle English ending *-es* (from the Old English nominative-accusative plural ending *-as*) came to be used as a general plural ending for most nouns, as shown in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

Table 3.1

	Old English		Middle English	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom., Acc.	stān	stān-as	ston	ston-es
Gen.	stān-es	stān-a	ston-es	ston-e/es
Dat.	stān-e	stān-um	stone	ston-es

Table 3.2

	Old English		Middle English	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom., Acc.	nam-a	nam-an	nam-e	nam-en/es
Gen.	nam-an	nam-ena	nam-en/es	nam-en/es
Dat.	nam-an	nam-um	nam-en/e	nam-en/es

Prepositions became particularly critical when noun endings were lost. For example, where Old English would have said *Þæm scipum*, with a dative ending on both the words for 'the' and 'ship', Middle English came to say *to the shippers*, using a preposition and the common plural ending.

The Middle English period is particularly interesting because it shows where several important features of Modern English grammar have come from. (1) Postmodifying genitive construction employs *of* instead of the genitive case in the noun phrase: the back of the house. The 'group genitive' also emerged at this time: *the Duke of York's hat*. (2) Negation. The principle shown in the earliest English texts is simple: extra negative words increase the emphasis, making the negative meaning stronger, having the cumulative effect: *(they) had no more to give for there was none in the land*. By the end of the period the Old English double negative (*ne...naht*) was simplified to the Middle English form *not (naht > nat > not)* and was marking negation, and *ne* was being dropped before other negative words. (3) Marking the infinitive. In Old English the infinitive was shown by an inflectional ending *-(i)an*. As this decayed, the particle

to began to take over. (4) Foundations. The Middle English period laid the foundation for the later emergence of several important constructions: progressive form and perfect aspect.

Personal pronouns retained a considerable degree of their complexity from Old English, as shown in Table 3.3. The dual number disappeared in Middle English. The forms *they, them, their* derived from Scandinavian, prevailed in the North and displaced all the native English forms.

Table 3.3

	Case	Old English	Middle English
Interrogative pronoun	Nom. Gen. Dat.	hwā hwæs hwām	who whos who
First person personal pronoun singular	Nom. Gen. Dat.	ic min mē	I/ich me min/mi
Second person personal pronoun singular	Nom. Gen. Dat.	þū þīn þē	þu/thou þi/thin/thine þe/thee
Second person personal pronoun plural	Nom. Gen. Dat.	gē ēower ēow	ye your you

English underwent a phonological change leading to a grammatical change: the inflections at the ends of many words ceased to be stressed, and were thus liable to blend with other inflections and disappear altogether (since people could not hear them so well). Furthermore, given that British English has experienced contact with an array of different languages (such as Celtic, Scandinavian and French), there may well have been pressure for regularisation, in order to make it easier for people to communicate.

Outside Britain, English has come into contact with many languages, creating yet further pressure to simplify the inflectional system.

After the Norman Conquest, French terms for government, political organization, high culture (especially cookery), and educated discourse came to be preferred. Old English resisted bringing in loan words and preferred to coin its own. In altering the vocabulary structure of English, the Norman Conquest did not simply increase the raw number of words, but it changed the vernacular in the British Isles from one that resisted the acceptance of loan words to one that accepted them eagerly.

The borrowings from French into Middle English came during two periods, one associated directly with the Normans; the other, with later Parisian or Central French loans. The Norman French loans came in the eleventh and twelfth centuries from the original group of conquerors, their families, and their descendants. Religious terms (such as *cathedral, divine, faith, immortality, mercy, miracle, prayer, repent, saint, temptation, virgin, virtue*), words of social and political control (such as *attorney, authority, court, fine, fraud, government, liberty, parliament, prison, punishment, realm, royal, sir, treaty*) and words for food and fashion (such as *appetite, biscuit, cream, diamond, dinner, dress, fruit, fur, herb, olive, oyster, plate, spice, sugar, taste, vinegar, wardrobe*) entered the English language.

After the Norman Conquest, a new wave of speakers came to the British Isles, bringing with them what is known as Central or Parisian French, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Note that the Normans ("Northmen") were originally a Germanic people from Scandinavia. Thus, the pronunciation of Norman French has some similarities to that of the Germanic languages, whereas the pronunciation of Central French has sounds that are far closer to those of the Romance languages.

French loan words in English are easy to spot:

• words spelled with *ei*, *ey*, or *oy*: *cloy disgust*, *joy*.

• endings in -*ion* or -*ioun*: *extension*, *retention*.

• endings in *-ment*: *emolument*, *condiment*

• endings in *-ence* or *-aunce*: *existence*.

• endings in *-or* or *-our*: *colour*, *honour*.

In Central French, words that end in *-ous* are adjectives; words that end in *–us* are nouns. Thus, *callous* 'cruel, unkind' is an adjective, while *callus* 'hard skin' is a noun. This spelling convention still works in Modern English.

French influence became increasingly evident in English manuscripts of the thirteenth century. It has been estimated that some 10,000 French words came into English at that time. About three-quarters of all these French loans are still in the language today. Sometimes French words replaced Old English words; *crime* replaced *firen* and *uncle* replaced *eam*. Other times, French and Old English components combined to form a new word, as the French *gentle* and the Germanic *man* formed *gentleman*. Other times, new words duplicated words that had already existed in English. They both co-existed but develop slightly different meanings, adding to beauty and diversity of English. Thus, we have the Germanic *begin* and the French *commence*, *hearty welcome* means 'enthusiastic' but *cordial welcome* means 'friendly' but formal, or *wish* and *desire*. The later forms are usually more formal, careful, and polite. Some other examples are *help* and *aid*, *love* and *charity*, *wedding* and *marriage.*

The influence of French is especially apparent in matters of cuisine, itself a French word. The words for animals are Old English (*cow, calf, sheep, deer, pig*) and words for meats are French (*beef, veal, mutton, venison, pork*). An Anglo-Saxon peasant might be imagined raising a *cow* on his land, but when that cow appeared as meat on a Norman Frenchman's table, it became *boeuf* 'beef'. The same transformation is seen in *calf – veal*, *deer – venison*, and *sheep – mutton*. These kinds of pairings show us how French became the language of high culture, while English remained the language of the land.

French is the most dominant influence on the growth of Middle English vocabulary during Middle English period, but not the only one. During fourteenth and fifteenth centuries several thousand words came into the language directly from Latin For

example, *immortal, infinite, magnificant, mediator, memento, pulpit, scripture; client, conspiracy, conviction, homicide, implement, legal, memorandum, testimony; comet, contradiction, desk, discuss, dislocate, equator, essence, explicit, formal, genius, history, index, intellect, item, library, major, prosody, recipe, scribe, simile.* Most of these words were professional or technical terms, belonging to such fields as religion, law, science and literature.

The simultaneous borrowing of French and Latin words led to a highly distinctive features of Modern English vocabulary – sets of items expressing the same fundamental notion but differing slightly in meaning or style. Table 3.4 shows some lexical triples.

Table 3.4

Old English	French	Latin
ask	question	interrogate
rise	mount	ascend
fast	firm	secure
kingly	royal	regal
holy	sacred	consecrated
fire	flame	conflagration

In 1384, John Wycliffe (Wyclif) produced his translation of 'The Bible' in vernacular English, a landmark in the English language. Considered the challenge to Latin as the language of God, this translation was banned by the Church. Wycliffe tried to preserve the original style, relying greatly on the Latin text. Consequently, there are over a thousand Latin-based words recorded in his translation including *barbarian, birthday, canopy, child-bearing, communication, cradle, crime, dishonor, emperor, emvy, godly, graven, humanity, glory, injury, justice, lecher, madness, mountainous, multituse, novelty, oppressor, philistine, pollute, profession, puberty, schism, suddenly,*

unfaithful, visitor, zeal as well as well-known phrases like *an eye for an eye* or *woe is me*.

Dialect Representations in Middle English

Dialects have been spoken at all periods in England. Present-day dialect variation on the British Isles derives from the Old English dialects as they developed in Middle English. Those dialects were affected by historical events, such as the Viking influence in the Northern and East Midland areas and the growth of London as the metropolitan center of England. Six major present-day dialects: Southwest, East, West Central, East Central, Lower North, and Northeast correspond roughly to the Middle English dialects.

Middle English had five major regional dialects that roughly corresponded to the Old English dialect differences. The dialect boundaries were both natural and manmade. The major rivers of England made up boundaries of speech communities, as did the old Roman roads, which effectively divided the country and, well into the Middle Ages, were still the central lines of transportation through the island. The Mercian dialect area has split in two: there is now an eastern dialect (East Midland) and a western one (West Midland). And the East Anglia region is sometimes separately distinguished.

The Northern dialect of Middle English was the language spoken north of the Humber River, in Northumbria. Its most distinctive features were a rich Scandinavian vocabulary and a set of sounds keyed to certain Scandinavian habits of pronunciation. The predominance of *sk*- and *k*- sounds in Scandinavian (*sh*- and *ch*- in Old English) became distinctions between Northern and Southern English. Thus, in Northern English, we have *kirk* and *skirt* instead of Southern English *church* and *shirt*.

A set of vowel shifts was also important in marking the difference between Northern English and the dialects spoken in the south and the Midlands. The Old English long *a* vowel sound eventually become a long *o* sound in Southern and Midlands Middle English but was retained as a long *a* in the north.

The East Midland dialect was spoken in the eastern-central part of the country, broadly to the east of the old Roman north-south road that linked York and London. It was an important dialect because many Londoners came from the area. This dialect formed the basis of the major literary language of England at the close of the Middle Ages; much of Chaucer is written in the East Midland dialect.

The Southern dialect was spoken in the southwestern part of England, roughly corresponding to Wessex. Southern dialects sound more advanced from our perspective; that is, they undergo certain sound changes that pass into standard Modern English pronunciation. The dialect's distinctive feature was the pronunciation of any initial *s-* and *f-* as *z-* and *v-*, respectively. Thus, the Southern dialect preserves some distinctions that pass into Modern English: For example, the words for the male and female *fox* were *vox* and *vixen* in Southern English; the latter word is kept in Modern English. Table 3.5 summarises the differences between Middle English dialects.

Table 3.5

Northern -and(e); -s ik, they, their, them kirk; skirt; stane	**East Midland** -end(e); -s ich/I, shē
West Midland -ind(e); -th ich/I, heo	**Southern** and **Kentish** -ing; -th ich/I, his, here, hem church, shirt; stone

The political heart of the country moved from Winchester to London after the Conquest. And the major linguistic trends during Middle English increasingly relate to the development of the capital as a social, political, and commercial centre. The

universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in 1167 and 1209 respectively, and general literacy continued to increase. A written standard English began to emerge during the fifteenth century.

There are local dialects and social dialects. One example of urban dialects is cockney, a working-class variety of London speech. The Cockney accent is one of the best known of all English accents. It is spoken in the East-End of London. Many features of the present-day Cockney speech can be traced to the London dialect of the thirteenth century with a southern orientation. The main non-standard features of the cockney dialect are (1) a narrow variation of the open sound [ǣ]: *mep* 'map', *beck* 'back', *fency* 'fancy'; (2) the h-dropping *'ot* 'hot', *'hous* 'hous'; (3) the substitution of the diphthon [ei] by the diphthon [ai]: *plite* 'plate'; (4) double negation: *I have nothing to say about nobody that ain't no customers*; (5) double degrees of comparison: *The most awfullest fing* 'thing' *you ever see*; (6) the use of the adverbs without the suffix: *It was done quick*; (7) the use of rhyming slang: *pen and ink* 'sink', *trouble and strife* 'wife', *God forbids* 'kids', *Barney Rubble* 'trouble', *Adam and Eve* 'believe'.

Chaucer, who wrote in London dialect, is the first person to put regional dialect into literature. The story from 'The Reeve's Tale'. Two Cambridge undergraduates are sent to the miller in order to find out what has happened to their corn supply. The miller has been cheating the college. The two undergraduates go to the miller's place and establish what is going on. They discover the nature of the problem. They decide to corn the miller. They succeed in getting their corn for their college. The point is that the undergraduates are being portrayed as intelligent, bright, sharp guys. The miller is being portrayed as somewhat stupid and inefficient. Chaucer gives the undergraduates a northern dialect and the miller a southern dialect. The miller says words like *go* spelt G-O. The students say G-A. The southern miller uses the verb *goeth*. The undergraduates use *goes*, *says*. A southern spelling *no* vs *na* and *so* vs *swa*.

Chaucer and the Birth of English Literature

The languages of Latin, French, and English coexisted in medieval England. These three languages coexisted for more than 200 years, and, in their coexistence,

gave rise to a form of the vernacular that reached its literary apogee in the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer did his major work in English, but he had close contact with French and Latin, and his English synthesizes several regional dialects.

Chaucer's word order patterns seem to stand midway between the inflected forms of Old English and the full, uninflected patterns of Modern English. Chaucer used the standard subject-verb-object word-order pattern for a declarative sentence. To ask a question in Middle English, however, the order of subject and verb was inverted. *Gave you the ball?* (The word *do* was not added at the beginning of a sentence to ask a question until the mid-sixteenth century.) Similarly, word order could be reversed for a command, in claims of negation, or for emphasis: *Gave the ball, you? I, the ball gave*.

It is important to note that negation, in Old, Middle, and even Early Modern English, was cumulative. Double negatives did not cancel each other out; they reinforced each other. Chaucer's description of the knight, for example, in the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* is as follows: *He nevere yet ne vylanye ne saide unto no maner wight*, 'He never yet, in no way, said anything bad, nohow, to nobody'.

The most famous example of Middle English is Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Unlike Old English, Middle English can be read, although with difficulty, by modern English-speaking people. Chaucer wrote in English, yet he brings the vocabulary of his trilingual world together in a profound synthesis of landscape and culture.

Chaucer explored the mutability of language, both diachronically (across time) and synchronically (across space). He argued that languages change meaning over time: "the forms of speech have changed over a thousand years, and words that had meaning then now seem to us remarkably odd and strange. … " Chaucer feared the miswriting and misreading of his own poetry by scribes and readers who did not speak his dialect. He was worried that his text, once recopied, might not rhyme or scan.

Throughout the Middle Ages, there were three languages used in the British Isles, with Latin and French as the prestige languages of court and culture, education, and economy. Anglo-Norman French became the language of the kings and nobility of England for more than 300 years. But instead of replacing English, French was

assimilated into it and Middle English, a close relation to the language, is still spoken in Britain today. This is a language made up of German vocabulary and simplified German grammar mixed with French-derived – often Latin-based – words. During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, however, English seemed to return as a prestige language. English replaced French as the language of government in the late Middle English period. In 1362 English was first used at the opening of Parliament. Henry IV, who came to the English throne in 1399, was the first monarch since before the Conquest to have English as his mother tongue. Henry V (r. 1413-1422) established English as an official language. And English replaced Latin as the language of religion after the Reformation, and particularly with the 1549 adoption of the Book of Common Prayer, which presented church services in a language understood by the people.

The beginning and ending dates of the Middle English period are two points in time when ongoing language changes became particularly noticeable: grammatical changes about 1100 and pronunciation changes about 1500. The language continued to remain quite organic until the invention of the printing press and the wider publication of the written word, when it started to become standardised.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following people are important in historical discussions of the English language: William duke of Normandy, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Wycliffe.
2. What was the chief influence of the Norman Conquest on the English language?
3. In general, which parts of the population spoke English, and which French?
4. What phonetic changes brought about the leveling of inflectional endings in Middle English?
5. Generally what happened to inflectional endings of nouns in Middle English?
6. Which variety of Middle English became the standard dialect and when did it become the literary standard?
7. Which sound change between Old and Middle English had the most far-reaching effect on the language?

8. What is the chief difference between Old and Middle English grammar?
9. What factors contributed to the loss of grammatical gender in Middle English?
10. What are the five principal dialects of Middle English?

Exercise 3.1

Which of the following words are likely to be from Old English and which from French: *bacon, beef, calf, deer, ox, pig, veal, venison?*

Exercise 3.2

Eleven consonantal changes occurred during the Middle English period:

1. loss of [h] before [l], [n], and [r]
2. [g] > [w] after [l] or [r]
3. loss of [w] between consonant and back vowel
4. loss of final [c]ˇ in unstressed syllables
5. loss of medial [v]
6. prefix [yɛ] (ge-) > [i] (i-, y-)
7. loss of final [n] in many unstressed syllables
8. Southern voicing of [f], [s], and [u] in initial position
9. borrowing of words with [v] and [z] in initial position
10. voicing of initial [u] in usually unstressed grammatical words
11. [v], [z], and [ð] left in final position by the late loss of -e.

Identify the change which each of the following Middle English words illustrates. For many of the words, you will find it necessary to compare the Middle English with the corresponding Old English form to determine what change has occurred. You can find the Old English form in the etymology given for the word in any good dictionary. The modern form of the word is given in parentheses whenever it differs from the Middle English spelling.

also; breathe; eve; ho (who); *I; icleped* (yclept); *lady; laughen* (to laugh); *lothely* (loathly); *maide* (maid); *neyen* (to neigh); *o* (a); *raven; sorwe* (sorrow); *swelwen* (to swallow); *then; thong; vane; very; ynogh* (enough); *zenith*.

Exerxice 3.3

The Old English demonstratives consisted in part of these forms:

Nominative singular *sē* 'the, that'; *þes* 'this' (masc.); *sēo* 'the, that', *þēos* 'this' (fem.); *þæt* 'the, that', *þis* 'this' (neut.).

Nominative plural *þā* 'the, those'; *þās* 'these'.

Instrumental singular *þē* 'by the, that'

Middle English had the following forms:

singular and plural *the*

singular *that*

plural *tho, thos*

singular *this*

plural *these*, *thise*

Indicate which Old English form each developed from, and explain any irregularities in the development.

Exercise 3.4

Write the following phrases in Middle English. All of the nouns are declined alike according to the usual Middle English pattern. The adjectives, however, vary.

Vocabulary

the 'the' free 'noble' lord 'lord'

oold 'old' long 'long' wyf 'wife'

helthen 'heathen' feend 'fiend' yeer 'year'

________________ old friend ________________ the old friend

________________ old friend's ________________ the old friend's

________________ old friends ________________ the old friends

________________ heathen lord ________________ the heathen lord

________________ heathen lord's ________________ the heathen lord's

________________ heathen lords ________________ the heathen lords

________________ noble wife ________________ the noble wife

________________ noble wife's ________________ the noble wife's

________________ noble wives ________________ the noble wives

Exercise 3.5

The Middle English weak verb *hēlen* 'to heal' and strong verb *helpen* 'to help' are typical developments of their Old English counterparts. Conjugate them, using the endings characteristics of the Midland dialects. The imperative endings are regular developments of the Old English forms.

Indicative

I ___________

thou ___________

he ___________

we, ye, they ___________

Subjunctive

I, thou, he ___________

we, ye, they ___________

Imperative

thou ___________

ye ___________

Participle

4. The Early Modern English Period (1500-1800): Society, Spellings, and Sounds

The early Modern period was transformative for both England and the language. Beginning from the middle of the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century, changes in vocabulary and word meanings, syntax, and attitudes toward language use, regional variation, and public idiom took place in English. Together with the change in pronunciation, these features of the language transformed Middle English into Early Modern English.

This is the period of English Renaissance, which roughly covers the sixteenth and early seventeenth century and is often referred to as the "Elizabethan Era" or the "Age of Shakespeare" after the most important monarch and most famous writer of the period. The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were a time of revolutionary development, opening the way for English to become a world language.

English spelling used to represent speech sounds in a relatively simple way, but a variety of changes have led to a much more complex system. Spelling has become less phonemic over the years. A number of oddities in spelling were introduced by Middle English scribes, particularly the Normans, and later by the early printers. Etymological respellings have added to the number of 'silent letters'. English spelling is complicated by the fact that it contains the spelling conventions of other languages. Much of the apparent inconsistency in Modern English spelling is caused by the fact that changes in the pronunciation of vowels were not matched by appropriate changes in the spelling. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a standard spelling system had fully evolved by the eighteenth century. But spellings were fixed when great changes were occurring in pronunciation.

The Advent of the Printing Press

The first major factor in the development of Modern English was the advent of the printing press, one of the world's great technological innovations, introduced into

England by William Caxton in 1476. Among the first books were Caxton's own translations, such as *The Collection (Recuyell) of the Histories of Troy (*a French courtly romance written by Raoul Lefèvre) and *The Knight of the Tower,* and also *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer.

From the arrival of the Normans up until about 1430, all official documentation was written in French or Latin. During the fourteenth century, the prestige of French became somewhat reduced, at least amongst some sectors of the population, for political reasons: from 1337, England had been engaged in the so-called 'Hundred Years War' with France. Moreover, by the fifteenth century, the administrative system needed an efficient medium for communication, not a language understood by a very small elite. The Chancery or government scribes adopted a variety of English that was based on London, but with some central Midland elements, and this variety has been called the Chancery standard. The significance of this is that at that point there was an institution producing masses of paperwork in one variety of English which is then sent all over the country. Caxton set up his printing press in Westminster in 1476, close to the government offices. His adoption of a London-based variety of English, including some features of the English of official circles, was the obvious choice.

A standard form of English accompanied the rise of the institution known as "Chancery." *Chancery* comes from the word *chancel*, or chapel of the king, where the chaplains, people responsible for religious needs of the court originally spent their time between services, writing the king's letters. By the end of the fourteenth century, Chancery was the production house for official government documents. Chancery established special forms of spelling and handwriting that were taught to scribes for the production of official documents. William Caxton opened his print shop in Westminster, the site of Chancery and the administrative seat of government, to establish the idea that his documents were printed in "official" English (Chancery English).

By using Chancery English, William Caxton established a national literary standard in print based on the written standard of official documentation. This was a radical change in the notion of a standard and in the standard's relationship to regional

dialect and official forms. Chancery English contributed to the development of a form of writing that was a standard, irrespective of the speech or dialect of the writer. Spelling was standardized without regard for pronunciation. The official language ceased to represent any living spoken dialect. Writing became truly conventional and arbitrary, not based on reason. Chancery was the first standard of writing in the vernacular in England since Aethelwold's school at Winchester 400 or so years before.

Printing did not create or increase national literacy overnight. Early printed books were expensive, did not appear in large quantities, and were designed for a readership of clerks and gentlemen. Printed books at first looked no different from manuscripts; the typefaces were based on handwriting. However, later the books became cheaper and as a result, literacy became more common. Publishing for the masses became a profitable enterprise, and works in English, as opposed to Latin, became more common. Finally, the printing press brought standardization to English. Printing did foster the rise of Chancery standard English. The dialect of London, where most publishing houses were located, became the standard. Spelling and grammar became fixed, and the first English dictionary was published in 1604. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, published in 1755, became a cornerstone of the English language. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* became a standard reference for private use.

This is not to suggest that the early printers entirely agreed on what the standard should be or were consistent in applying it. In some respects the printers added to the oddities of spelling. Many of the early printers were Dutch. Sometimes Dutch spellings influenced English words. For example, the word *ghost* in Old English was spelt *gast,* but the Dutch printers added an *h,* presumably influenced by the Flemish word *gheest.*

Printers often added a superfluous *e* (for example, *Olde),* doubled up consonants (for example, *Shoppe),* or used *y* instead of *i* because they took up more space. This was done in order to increase the length of a line so that it would match the others of a text. All this added to the general variability in spelling. Line justification today, as in this very text, is automatically achieved on a word processor without varying the spelling.

There was a growing gap between educated writing and speech. As Chancery had set up a system of spelling for official documents which could be learned by scribes regardless of their regional backgrounds, spelling was gradually becoming conventionalized and divorced from speech; it no longer represented pronunciation.

The Great Vowel Shift

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) is the second most important change that separates Middle English from Modern English. Being a relatively simple phenomenon, it had a significant impact on the sound and shape of the English language between the time of Chaucer and the time of Shakespeare. Indeed, it is because of the GVS that the language of Chaucer was so different from the language of Shakespeare.

From a linguistic point of view, the terms "long" and "short" relate to quantitative vowel length, that is, the period of time through which the vowel sound is held. This length of time made a difference in meaning in Old and Middle English. For example, in Old English, the word *god* could be pronounced "gode," meaning *God*, or "gooade," meaning *good*. The length of time the vowel was held signaled a different meaning for the word. This distinction was lost to Modern English during the GVS. There is no difference in meaning if *sat* is pronounced "sat" or "saat."

One striking difference between the Anglo-Saxon's pronunciation and modern English is that vowel length was a significant distinction in Old English: *gōd* 'good' versus *god* 'god'. A further sound change which took place in the early Middle English period explains another of the spelling conventions of Modern English - the lengthening of short vowels in two-syllable words (1) before certain consonant sequences *mb, nd, ld*: for example, *cōld, ground*; and (2) in open syllables: for example, *dōre* 'door', *tāle*, *hōpe*. A large set of words became monosyllables in pronunciation with the reduction of the second unstressed syllable, many of them retaining the final letter <*e*> in spelling. Because the vowels were now long, they all took part in the later GVS. Their spelling remained the same, however, and is another example of the failure of the spelling system to mark change in pronunciation. Only seven vowels were affected. These are long, stressed monophthongs: *i:, e:, ɛ:, a:, ɔ:, o: u:*.

The following represents a scholarly reconstruction of the changes.

The low back vowel written in Middle English as *a* (/a/) rose to /ei/. Thus, a Middle English word *ma:ken* became *maken*. The long, open *o* (/ɔ:/) was raised to the long *o*. Thus, the Middle English word *go:t* came to be pronounced *goat*.

The mid vowels represented by the letters *e* (/e/) and *o* (/o/) were raised. Thus, Middle English *mɛ:t* came to be pronounced as Modern English *meat*. Middle English *gre:n* came to be pronounced as Modern English *green*, Middle English *fo:d* as Modern English *food*.

Finally, the two high front vowels represented by the letters *i* (/i/) and *u* (/u/) in Middle English became diphthongs. In other words, they were pronounced differently, each as a cluster of two sounds: /i/ became /ai/, and /u/ became /au/. Middle English, *ti:de* became Modern English *tide*, and Middle English *hu:s* became Modern English *house*.

/ai/ and /au/ from /i/ and /u/ didn't become full diphthongs overnight. The word *my*, for example, would not have been pronounced as Middle English "me" but "moy"; *bite* would be "boyte"; *fight* would be "foyt." These interim pronunciations seem to be the origin of "pirate English." In other words, we might say that pirate English is a form of the language in which the GVS hadn't fully run its course, and the high front monophthongs of Middle English hadn't fully diphthongized.

A small group of words spelled with *ea*, such as *steak*, *great*, and *break*, did not undergo the GVS. If they had, they would have been pronounced "steek," "greet," and "breek." As with other linguistic anomalies, we have no explanation for the fact that these words didn't change, while similar words did.

More than one explanation exists for the GVS. Dialects in England during the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries were in contact in new ways. Migrations from the north and the midlands into London brought speakers into contact. This mix of dialects created social pressures to develop or select a set of pronunciations that would have new social status or prestige. The sounds that were chosen or developed appear, in retrospect, as the sounds of the GVS. Of course, people did not consciously decide to change their pronunciation according to the GVS. There were many ways of

pronouncing vowels, some regional and some historical, but over time, a particular system of pronunciation arose as an accepted standard form. An additional explanation is that, with the change in the social status in English itself and with the loss of French as the prestige language, the need was felt to fill the social gap with a new form of speech.

It's also true that the GVS had not fully run its course as late as the early eighteenth century. There survives a large body of letters from the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, mostly family correspondence, that provides evidence of the GVS in process. The Paston Letters. In this correspondence, we see people with varying degrees of education writing to each other. Some of them used Chancery forms; some used older Middle English spellings; and some used spellings that reflected their speech habits. Old spelling conventions are often used in these letters to indicate new sounds. For example, *meet* would have been pronounced "mayt" in Middle English but is spelled *myte* or *mite* in fifteenth and seventeenth century writing to reflect its new pronunciation, "meet." Many of these created spellings indicate changes in the vowels to diphthongs.

The "Inkhorn terms" and etymological respellings

During the period of the GVS, the English language vocabulary was also changing dramatically, with words coming in from science, colonial exploration, and philosophy, and from all languages of the world. The next wave of innovation in English vocabulary came with the revival of classical scholarship known as the Renaissance, which makes the third factor that separates Middle English from Modern English. There were no words in the language to talk accurately about the new concepts and inventions which were coming from Europe, so writers began to borrow them. Most of the words which entered the language at the time were taken from Latin.

The additions to English vocabulary during the period were deliberate borrowings. Latin was still very much considered the language of education and scholarship at this time, and the great enthusiasm for the classical languages during the English Renaissance brought thousands of new words into the language, peaking

around 1600. A huge number of classical works were being translated into English during the sixteenth century, and many new terms were introduced where a satisfactory English equivalent did not exist.

Some scholars adopted Latin terms so excessively and awkwardly at this time that the derogatory term "inkhorn" was coined to describe pedantic writers who borrowed the classics. Such words were perceived to come right from the inkhorn, or inkwell, and thus were a mark of reading and writing rather than of speech. Some examples of inkhorn terms still in the language include *allurement*, *anachronism*, *autograph*, *capsule*, *dexterous*, *disregard*, *erupt*, and *meditate*.

The idea of "correct spelling" is an invention of the pedagogues and pedants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The issue of spelling was a major problem for schoolmasters of the Renaissance. Under the influence of teachers and scholars, literary writers and translators began to respell certain native or long-accepted loan words in new ways – ways that were not really etymological or historical but pseudo etymological. Here are some examples. Such words as *debt* and *doubt* came into Middle English from French forms and were never spelled with what we might call a silent "b". But these words came to be respelled to look like the Latin words *debitum* and *dubitare*. Such silent letters are the "fantasies" of schoolteachers. The word *adventure* came into Middle English as *aventure* (with no "d" in the spelling), also by way of French. The "d" was later added to reflect an imagined etymology from the Latin *advenire*, "to enter into", "to journey into". The same is true of the words *perfect* (from French *parfait*) and *verdict* (from French *voir dit*); in Middle English, neither was spelled with a "c". Both were respelled to resemble Latin. For the same reason, *island* gained its silent "s", *scissors* its "c", *anchor, school* and *herb* their "h", people its "o" and *victuals* both a "c" and a "u", *faute* and *assaut* became *fault* and *assault*. However, this attempt to bring logic and reason into the apparent chaos of the language has actually had the effect of just adding to the chaos.

Spelling became a mark not of pronunciation – or in cases such as these, not even of word history – but of learning itself. Those who could not spell well were

considered illiterate. The equation of spelling with a moral or ethical, as well as an educational, level of accomplishment is the legacy of the Renaissance schoolroom.

If spelling represented an ideal of education, the idea of "educated speech" also emerged at this time. Old criteria for a standard form of speech, such as region, class, or official affiliation with religion, gave way to a new criterion: education, which effaced regional and class boundaries. The idea that an individual's birth did not determine uniquely or irrevocably his or her class was an important change in the court and diplomatic life of Renaissance England. The result can be seen in the figure of Shakespeare, the son of a glover, who rose in society through education, however, he did not get higher education.

The influence of Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was the canonical writer of the English language. He is believed to have contributed, perhaps more than any other writer, new words and idioms to English. Many familiar words and phrases were coined or first recorded by Shakespeare, some 2,000 words and countless catch-phrases are his. Newcomers to Shakespeare are often shocked at the number of clichés contained in his plays, until they realize that he coined them and they became clichés afterwards. *In one fell swoop, vanish into thin air, love is blind, it's Greek to me*, *a tower of strength, cruel only to be kind* and *flesh and blood* are all Shakespeare's. Words he bequeathed to the language include *barefaced, critical, leapfrog, monumental, majestic, obscene, dwindle, gloomy* and *pedant*.

Using the resources of historical linguistics, the sound of Shakespeare's language has been reconstructed. Given that the GVS had not completely run its course in the seventeenth century, certain vowel sounds would not be pronounced as they are in Modern English. For example, *təid* for 'tide', *me:t* for 'meat', *mɛ:k* for 'make', *həus* for 'house'. Moreover, there are many aspects of his grammar that may seem archaic. He used, for example, multiple negatives and comparatives: *The most unkindest cut of all*. He used older endings for the second-person and third-person singular forms of verbs (for example, *thou doest* or *he doth*). He used two different pronouns for the

second person: *thou* forms for the singular and informal and *you* forms for the plural and formal.

The early Modern period was transformative for both England and the language. The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were a time of revolutionary development, opening the way for English to become a world language.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following people are important in historical discussions of the English language: William Caxton, William Shakespeare, Robert Cawdrey.
2. Define the following terms: inkhorn term, etymological respelling, Great Vowel Shift, orthography.
3. What are major factors that served to separate Middle and Modern English?
4. From what kinds of evidence do we learn about the pronunciation of earlier period?
5. What new forces began to affect the English language in Modern English period? Why may it be said that these forces were both radical and conservative?
6. What problems did the English language face in the sixteenth century?
7. Which factors from the history of the language can explain the discrepancy between the English spelling and pronunciation?
8. What were the main sound changes in the history of the English language?
9. What are the principal features in which Shakespeare's pronunciation differs from contemporary pronunciation.
10. What are your favourite Shakespearean idioms?

Exercise 4.1

Which of these statements about English spelling are true?

1. Spelling has become less phonemic over the years.

2. A basic problem is that there are not enough letters to represent phonemes on a one-to-one basis.
3. A number of oddities in spelling were introduced by Middle English scribes, particularly the Normans, and later by the early printers.
4. English spelling is complicated by the fact that it contains the spelling conventions of other languages.
5. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a standard spelling system had fully evolved by the eighteenth century. But spellings were fixed when great changes were occurring in pronunciation.
6. Much social prestige is now attached to conforming with the standard.

Exercise 4.2

Vowels were lengthened during the late Old English period or in early Middle English times

1. before certain consonant sequences (especially *mb, nd, ld*) and
2. in open syllables.

They were shortened

3. in closed syllables before two or more consonants (other than those above),
4. in unstressed syllables, and
5. in a syllable followed by two unaccented syllables.

Which of the conditions accounts for the vowel length of the first syllable in each of the following words? Vowel length is indicated by macrons or by spellings with two vowel letters.

abīden 'to abide'; *asken* 'to ask'; *ground*; hōpe; *kīnde* 'kind';
sutherne 'southern'; *today*; *wimmen* 'women'

Exercise 4.3

Although many changes of various kinds affected the English vowel system as it developed from Middle to Modern English, those changes to which the long vowels were subject are especially worthy of note. The seven Middle English long vowels underwent a remarkably systematic shift in their place of articulation, a shift for which there was no cause that we can discover.

Show the changes effected by the Great Vowel Shift by writing the appropriate phonetic symbols.

[___] as in *mice*: Middle English [mi:s] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *mouse*: Middle English [mu:s] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *geese*: Middle English [ge:s] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *goose*: Middle English [go:s] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *break*: Middle English [brɛ:kən] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *broke*: Middle English [brɔ:kən] > Modern English [___]

[___] as in *name*: Middle English [na:mə] > Modern English [___]

Exercise 4.4

In one particular study, the following were found to be common misspellings: *gallery, successful, exhibition, definite, politician, extasy, mortgage*. On the basis of these misspellings, describe some potential problems in English spelling. Trace the origins of these words to discover why they have troublesome spellings.

Exercise 4.5

Trace the phonological history of these words by transcribing their pronunciation during each of the three periods.

	Old English	Middle English	Modern English	
ynce				inch
seofon				seven
hnutu				nut
hȳdan				hide
hwēol				wheel
cnēo				knee
dag				day
gnayan				gnaw
yfel				evil
sceadowe				shadow

5. The Early Modern English Period (1500-1800): Forms, Syntax, and Usage

The Early Modern English Period is the period of unprecedented new inventions and the discovery of America. The English language attained its definitive structure in the sixteenth century, when spelling began to be standardized and grammar acquired the characteristics known today. The major shifts in English grammatical structure were over by the time of the Renaissance; but many important changes were continuing to take place.

The Bible in English

Next to Shakespeare, the King James Bible (or the Authorized version), printed in 1611, was perhaps the most important influence on subsequent speakers, readers, and writers of English mostly through its idioms. It is said to have exercised enormous influence on the development of the language.

The King James Bible is not a translation into the everyday speech or written communication of 1611 but a deliberately archaic form of the language that maintains distinctive syntactic and verbal features that can be traced back to earlier translations. 54 translators, who were university scholars, were carrying out the translation for more than four years. They were trying to reflect biblical tradition of the past. As the translators say in their Preface, their aim was not to make a new translation, "but to make a good one better". The King James Bible was influenced by the previous bibles by Wycliffe (1384) and Tyndale (1525). It has been estimated that about 80 per cent of the text of the Authorized Version shows the influence of Tyndale.

There are many phrases in the King James Bible which have entered the general idiom of the language. David Crystal claims that he has counted all of them, reading the Kings Jame's Bible twice from cover to cover. According to David Crystal, there are 257 of them (18 of them are unique, others were introduced in previous bibles by Wycliffe and Tyndale, or they were already in English). King James did not originate them but popularized them. Here are some of them: *I'm not my brother's keeper; eye*

for eye; the apple of his eye; the root of the matter; the skin of my teeth; go from strength to strength; at their wit's end; can the leopard change his spots?; sour grapes; the salt of the earth; cast your pearls before swine; in sheep's clothing; in the twinkling of an eye; the straight and narrow; money is the root of all evil; rule with a rod of iron.

Early Modern English Syntax and Grammar

By the time of the Renaissance, the major shifts in English grammatical structure were over. However, many important changes were continuing to take place. The most dramatic change in English grammar has been the loss of inflections. This has been counter-balanced by a rise in the use of auxiliary verbs.

Here are some examples of grammatical differences from today. *"My life is run his compass"*, says Cassius (Julius Caesar), where today people say *has run* – and this sentence also illustrates one of the pronoun uses typical of the time. Constructions involving a double negative (*I cannot go no further*) were commonplace; double comparison (*more better, most unkindest*); there are still signs of impersonal verbs (*me thinks he did*); and during the period a number of verb inflections (such as *pleaseth*, *know'st*) fell out of standard use.

In Early Modern English there coexisted two competing grammatical forms of the third person singular: with the ending *-th* under the influence of the Southern dialects and with the ending *-s* under the influence of the Northern dialects, which is a Scandinavian borrowing. The ending *-th* disappeared from the usage in the eighteenth century. Shakespeare used both forms – *loves* and *loveth*. *'s* for plural are used both in King James Bible and Shakespeare.

Two little words, *do* and *will*, and a suffix, "-ing," changed their function and meaning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so radically that it might be said the very shape of modern spoken idiomatic English hinges on their changes.

Proponents of the Celtic substrate argue that these features are so unusual that they could only have been borrowed into English from Celtic languages. John McWhorter explains the theory in his 'Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold

History of English', 2008. He says that English grammar is weird. Some ordinary aspects of English do not exist in other Germanic languages, such as the use of *do* in questions and negative sentences and using *-ing* in the present tense. These elements may have entered Old English through Celtic languages.

The development of the auxiliary verb *do* represents one of the most important changes in the English language. Today, it can be used as an auxiliary in a variety of ways: for emphasis in statements (*They do look for trouble*), to form a negative statement (*They do not look for trouble*), and in questions (*Do they look for trouble?*). In Old English the use of *do (ġe)dōn* was somewhat different. As a main verb, it seems to have originally meant 'to put or place something somewhere'.

As a full verb, *do* means to perform an action: "I did this." This usage appears in Old English; it is the oldest and most sustained use of the verb. *Do* can also be used as a replacement verb: "I went to the store, and having done that …" Here, the verb *do* replaces the verb *go* in the second part of the sentence; this usage developed in the Middle English period. In the Early Modern English period, *do* also came to be used as a periphrastic, or place-holding verb, in questions: "Do you know the way?" This represents a change from the earlier inversion of word order to ask a question: "Know you the way?" The typical way of forming questions in Old English had been to reverse the normal subject-verb order. This question-forming method was still used in Early Modern English. Thus, Shakespeare could write "*Spake you of Caesar*?" But by Shakespeare's time questions were being formed simply by placing *do* before the subject: *"Do you see this*?" (Hamlet).

In Old English, negative statements could be formed by supplying the word *ne* (usually before the verb). They could also be formed by adding *ne* before the verb and *not* after: *"Ne con ic noht singan"* (King Alfred, Caedmon's Hymn, ninth century) 'I know not [how] to sing'. The principle of 'double' or 'triple' negatives shown in the earliest English texts is simple: extra negative words increase the emphasis, making the negative meaning stronger. In Middle English multiple negation was quite common: *They kan nat seen in that noon avantage, Ne in noon oother wey, save mariage* 'They can not see in that any advantage, or in any way, except marriage'. Later

ne ceased to be used, leaving just *not*. In Early Modern English *do* started to be used: *Or never after look me in the face. Speak not, reply not, do not answer me*.

From Late Middle English *do* became popular as a 'dummy' auxiliary, that is to say, an empty or meaningless auxiliary, it served no particular function. Shakespeare and other literary writers often used *do* if they needed an extra syllable to make a metrical line. Finally, *do* emerged in the sixteenth century as an emphatic modal, or helping, verb: *"I do know the answer"*. In Irish English such grammatical constructions are used as *do* and *be* to indicate a habitual action: *He does work, He bees working*, and *He does be working*.

In addition to these changing forms of *do*, there were also changes in the forms of the suffix *-ing*. Old English had words that ended in *-ing* or *-ung* (as did all Germanic languages) to indicate, in nouns, ownership or genealogy, or to turn a verb into a noun. For example, *Hrunting* is the name of a sword; in *Beowulf*, the *Scyldings* are a clan or a family. Further, in the Middle English period, *-ing* forms as participles (for example, *going*, *having*, *doing*) were used only in Southern dialects. In Northern and Midland English dialects, participles were formed with -*ende* or *-ande* (for example *lovande* 'loving'). From the sixteenth century, it can be seen wide extension of the use of progressive forms:

- Expressions such as *The house being on fire, he ran out*.
- Expressions such as *the mowing of the grass*, *the growing of the grain*, an idiom that did not appear until the late sixteenth century.
- Expressions such as *don't blame me for having done it*. Shakespeare was really the first writer to use this form.
- New ways of expressing perfect tenses: *I have been waiting; I had been waiting.* Note that these examples express the past in different ways. In the first, the action began in the past and continues into the present. In the second, the action began in the past, continued for some time, then ended in the past.
- New ways of expressing the future: *I am going to get something to eat*. Although this last form appeared by the late sixteenth century, it did not gain currency until the nineteenth.

- The extension of progressive forms to the passive: *the house is being built* was even later development. It belongs the the end of the eighteenth century. Old English had no progressive passive.

The wide extension of the use of progressive forms is one of the most important developments of the English verb in the modern period. In Old English such expressions as *he wœs lœrende* ‘he was teaching’ are occasionally found. But their development must be credited mainly to the period since the sixteenth century.

A group of the Old English preterite-present verbs was transformed into a special group of modal verbs which was fully established in Early Modern English. The composition of the group changed with the loss of five verbs in Middle English and was rebuilt with the inclusion of the Middle English verb *willen* 'will' (OE *willan*) which did not originally belong to that group of verbs. Modal verbs, or helping verbs, include *shall*, *will*, *can*, *may*, and *ought*. These verbs can modify the tense or mood of a main verb but cannot by themselves be the only verb in a sentence. In Modern spoken English, they are not transitive verbs because they cannot take an object alone. Originally, these modals were full verbs. In the seventeenth century, for example, it would be grammatical to say, *“I can music”*, meaning ‘I have a certain skill in music’. In the fourteenth century, Chaucer wrote, *“I shall to God and you”*, meaning ‘I am indebted to God and you’.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these verbs changed usage and meaning. The distinctions between *shall/should*, *will/would*, *may/might*, and *can/ could* arose during this period to create a subjunctive mood in English comparable to that in Latin. English grammars were based much on Latin grammars. Latin language was regarded as real, correct, perfect. The subjunctive in Latin was used to express the counterfactual (something that had not happened) and the optative (desire): *“O, that she would love me”*. This usage was deliberately designed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to evoke a Latin grammatical category. The subjunctive mood in Old English was used differently.

Shall/will came to be restricted for forms of the future, losing their full verbal sense by the end of the sixteenth century. *Shall* was no longer used as a form of obligation, and *will* no longer expressed an individual's will or desire. In Bible translation, *will* was used to translate Latin *volo*, the verb meaning desire or volition; *shall* came to be used for a general future tense. In everyday speech, the distinction came to be one of emphasis. Schoolchildren were once taught that *I shall*, *you will*, *he will* were the standard, non-emphatic forms of expressing futurity; *I will*, *you shall*, *he shall* were considered emphatic. Idiomatic Modern English is founded on changes such as these.

The main factors that worked in shaping a Modern English tense-aspect system in Middle and Modern English were the leveling of old inflectional endings as a result of **reduction**, the operation of **analogy** and the rise of the analytical forms as a result of the process of **grammaticalization** of some free word combinations (future, passive, perfect, continuous).

According to George Yule, grammaticalization is the process by which a form with lexical meaning (a lexical morpheme) develops into one with grammatical function (a grammatical or inflectional morpheme). Modern English passive, perfect and continuous forms have been formed as a result of the process of grammaticalization. Old English could form verb phrases by combining the verbs for 'have' and 'be' with participles (as in Modern English *has run* and *is running*).

The grammaticalization process made it possible for the English verb forms *go* and *will* to be used in sentences such as *I'm gonna be late* and *I'll be at work until six.*

Well-documented examples in English are the auxiliary verbs. In Shakespeare's time, *will* was a verb with a lexical meaning similar to *want*, as in *What wilt thou?* 'What do you want?'. In the development of modern English, *will* became an auxiliary verb, generally used to mark future reference for the main verb, and mostly lost its former lexical meaning, as in *I will be at work until six*, which does not mean 'I want to be at work until six'. The existence of a contracted form, as in *I'll,* is a further common stage in the grammaticalization process.

Another example is the grammaticalization of the verb *go* from having a lexical meaning of "movement" (*I'm going to school*) to being a grammatical auxiliary in *I'm going to be late for school*. The verb *go* can still be used as a lexical verb expressing movement, but not in the contracted form associated with the auxiliary (*I'm gonna be late.*) The development of auxiliary verbs from lexical verbs through the process of grammaticalization, often with contracted forms, can be found in many languages.

The inflectional complexity of the past has its legacy in (1) irregular plurals: *sheep, deer* (uninflected plural, *fish* has uninflected plural by analogy), *children* (-n plural); *feet, geese, mice, men* (mutated-vowel plurals). (2) Genitive and plural ending *-s* and the apostrophe -s of written English, the group-genitive constructions (for example *the little boy that lives down the street's dog*). Old English noun inflection -s is now used with a phrase.

Today, personal pronouns are almost as complex as they were in Old English. Second-person pronouns used to be more complex, and in the Early Modern English period were used to signal social information. The *th-* forms of the singular (*thou, thee, thy, thine*) were regularly used by persons of higher rank addressing an inferior, by parents speaking to a child, and by lovers. The *y-* forms (*you, your, yours*) were used by persons of lower rank to a superior and by children to a parent. Interestingly, in King James's version of the Bible, God is addressed informally.

Today, there is one remaining inflection for person, the *-s*. The Anglo-Saxon inflection used in Old English, the *-eth*, lingered on until the eighteenth century.

Eighteenth-century attitudes towards grammar and usage

The Early Modern English period saw the establishment of the standard written language known today. After the introduction of the printed press, a standard language has to be described. This can be done with the dictionary and the grammar book. Dictionaries focus on the words of a language; grammar books, on how words relate to one another in a sentence. The writing of dictionaries and of grammar books for English began during the Early Modern English period.

There were some attempts to impose order on the English grammar. The dramatist Ben Jonson wrote *An English Grammar ... for the Benefit of all Strangers, out of his Observation of the English Language now Spoken and in Use*, which was published in 1640. John Wallis's *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (Grammar of the English Language, 1653) was written “because there is clearly a great demand for it from foreigners, who want to be able to understand the various important works which are written in our tongue” (which is why he, as others of his time, wrote in Latin).

Over 200 works on grammar and rhetoric appeared between 1750 and 1800. The most influential was Bishop Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762). This book inspired another grammar Lindley Murray's *English Grammar* (1794), which was widely used in English schools in the early nineteenth century. This was the period which gave rise to the concept of “traditional grammar” and in which the rules of “correct” grammatical usage were first drawn up. In 1774 John Walker published his idea for a *Pronouncing Dictionary of English*, with the aim of doing for pronunciation what Johnson had done for vocabulary and Lowth for grammar.

The second half of the eighteenth century differs fundamentally from modern age in its attitudes towards English. The earliest English grammarians tried to force the language into Latin's shoes. Latin was regarded as a “perfect” language. When English grammars came to be written, they were based on Latin grammar. The aim of the grammarians was to prescribe, to make a rule and to proscribe, to forbid. Many of the conventions now accepted and held up as preferable in modern handbooks were first stated in this period. This was the prescriptive era in which the recommendations of such writers were seen as authoritative. Only by following their rules would speakers be perceived to be educated.

The prescriptive tradition has been perpetuated till the recent times. Modern linguists understand that a language is a living and hence changing thing. English grammar did not stand still during the twentieth century. Geoffrey Leech and Christian Mair in their book *Change in Contemporary English: A Grammatical Study* outline the following modern trends in English grammar: rise of semi-modals (as *be going to and have to*); rise of progressive (or continuous) verbs; decline in passive forms; rise in the

genitive and decline in of-phrases; rise in that relative and zero relative (as *someone I spoke to*).

Although the GVS had changed pronunciation from Middle English, and the influx of words in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is still represented in its vocabulary today, the English of this period is not Modern English. That said, however, the highly idiomatic quality of Modern spoken English is a legacy from the time of Shakespeare. A large part of the idiomatic quality of English comes from developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including changes in the verb *do*. Just the reverse of what was true in the Middle English period, in modern English times changes in grammar have been relatively slight and changes in vocabulary extensive.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following people are important in historical discussions of the English language: Robert Cawdrey, Samual Johnson, Robert Lowth, Lindley Murray, John Walker, Ben Jonson.
2. Define the following terms: prescriptive grammar, uninflected plural, his-genitive, double comparison, analyticisation, grammaticalisation.
3. When was the first English dictionary published? What was the main purpose of English dictionaries throughout the seventeenth century?
4. What are the living inflections of present-day English, that is, the inflectional endings that we might add to newly created nouns, adjectives, and verbs?
5. What is the historical source of each of those inflections?
6. What are the main factors that worked in shaping a Modern English tense-aspect system?
7. Give examples of the process of grammaticalization in the history of the English language.
8. Give examples of how English grammar and syntax changed in the history of the English language.

9. How do early Modern and present-day English differ in inflections?
10. What criteria, other than the observation of actual use, guided the eighteenth-century grammarians in their making of rules for English?

Exercise 5.1

Describe the history of the Modern English regular noun plural ending -s, using the forms cited below as illustrations. Consider the history of (1) the pronunciation, (2) the meaning, and (3) the domain (that is, the number and kinds of nouns that take the ending).

Old English: hundas 'dogs', hunda 'of dogs', hundum 'to, with dogs'.

Middle English hundes '(of, to, with) dogs', hounds.

Exercise 5.2

A number of Modern English irregular noun plurals are survivals of inflectional patterns that once had much wider domains. Describe the origin of the following plurals, and list other words that have a similar plural form in Modern English.

thief–thieves; foot–feet; ox–oxen; deer–deer.

Exercise 5.3

Woman and its plural, *women*, have had a complex history. The forms cited below illustrate some of the most important changes the word has undergone (the Middle English rounding of [wɪ] to [wu] was a dialect variation). Describe the development of the Old English forms into the current singular and plural; explain each step of the development as due to sound changes you have already studied or to such factors as dialect borrowing and analogy.

Exercise 5.4

As the inflections of English nouns disappeared, prepositions became more important as grammatical signals, and their number increased. Prepositions have been created from phrases (*because, of, from, by, cause, of*), adapted from inflectional forms

(*during* from the archaic *to dure*), or borrowed from other languages (*per* from Latin). Describe the origin of the following prepositions:

amidst, among, between, despite, down, instead of, near,
past, pending, plus, since, via.

Exercise 5.5

Here are three translations of the paternoster (Lord's Prayer) corresponding to the three major periods in the history of the English language: Old English (or Anglo-Saxon), Middle English, and early Modern English. The first was made about the year 1000, the second is from the Wycliffe Bible of 1380, and the third is from the King James Bible of 1611.

Old English: Fæder ūre, þū þe eart on heofonum, sī þīn nama gehālgod. Tōbecume þin rīce. Gewurðe þīn willa on eorðan swā swā on heofonum. Ūrne gedæghwāmlican hlāf syle ūs tō dæg. And forgyf ūs ūre gyltas, swā swā wē forgyfað ūrum gyltendum. And ne gelǣd þū ūs on costnunge, ac ālȳs ūs of yfele. Sōðlice.

Middle English: Oure fadir that art in heuenes halowid be thi name, thi kyngdom come to, be thi wille don in erthe as in heuene, yeue to us this day oure breed ouir other substaunce, & foryeue to us oure dettis, as we foryeuen to oure dettouris, & lede us not in to temptacion: but delyuer us from yuel, amen.

Early Modern English: Our father which art in heauen, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdome come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heauen. Giue vs this day our dayly bread. And forgiue vs our debts, as we forgiue our debters. And leade vs not into temptation, but deliuer vs from euill: For thine is the kingdome, and the power, and the glory, for euer, Amen.

1. Try to make a word-for-word translation of the Old English by comparing it with the later versions. Write your translation in the blank spaces under the Old

English words.

2. Some Old English words that may look completely unfamiliar have survived in Modern English in fixed expressions or with changed meanings. Finding the answers to these questions in a dictionary may help you to translate the Old English paternoster: What is a ‘bishopric’? (cf. rıc̄e) What is the meaning of worth in ‘woe worth the day’? (cf. gewurðe) What are the Old English words from which came Modern English so and as? (cf. swā swā). What is the Old English source word for Modern English loaf? What is the meaning of sooth in soothsayer or forsooth? (cf. sōðlice)
3. What three letters of the Old English writing system have been lost from our alphabet?
4. At first sight, the letters *v* and *u* seem to be used haphazardly in the King James translation, but there is a system in their use. Which is used at the beginning of a word? Which is used medially?
5. What different forms does Old English have for the word *our*? Can you suggest why Old English has more than one form for this word?
6. List three phrases from the Wycliffite translation in which the use of prepositions differs from that in the King James version.
7. List three phrases from the Wycliffite translation in which the word order differs from that in the Old English version.
8. In general, does the Middle English version appear to be more similar to the Old English translation or to the King James translation? Give several reasons to support your answer.
9. The King James version of the paternoster may be familiar, but in many ways its language is archaic. Rewrite the prayer in normal, contemporary English. Notice the kinds of changes you must make to avoid an ecclesiastical flavor.
10. What reasons might an Elizabethan have for thinking the language of your version to be “corrupt”? What reasons might an Anglo-Saxon of the year 1000 have for thinking the language of the King James version “corrupt”? Why would they both be wrong?

6. Late Modern English (1800-Present)

Foreign influence on English vocabulary

Vocabulary has always been the most noticeable manifestation of language change. English has an extraordinarily large vocabulary, much larger than that of many other languages. There are several reasons for this: its extensive contacts with other languages, the large numbers of people all over the world who have come to use it, and the increasingly manifold purposes for which it is used. An overwhelming majority of English words came from other languages or were coined from elements of foreign words. English is an insatiable borrower. Although over 300 languages are recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as direct sources of English vocabulary, the richest foreign sources of its present word stock are Latin, French and Greek.

There are some periods that present peaks of borrowing actively in the history of English. Great Britain underwent waves of invasion by Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, and Norman French, each contributing to the life and language of the islands. There are very few Celtic loans during that period. The influence of Latin is strong, especially after the arrival of Christianity (for example, *bishop, church, priest, school, giant, lobster, purple, plant*). The Viking invasions resulted in about 2,000 Scandinavian words coming into English (for example, *dirt, egg, kid, leg, skin, sky, window*). After the Norman Conquest, the influx of words from the continent of Europe, especially French, doubled the size of the lexicon to over 100,000 items. By the end of Renaissance, the growth in classically derived vocabulary, especially from Latin, had doubled the size of the lexicon again. The examples of borrowings from Latin after 1500 are *abdomen, anorexia, area, compensate, data, decorum, delirium, digress, editor, fictitious, gradual, imitate, janitor, jocose, lapse, medium, notorious, orbit, peninsula, polyglot, quota, resuscitate, series, sinecure, superintendent, transient, ultimate, urban, urge,* and *vindicate.* Since the 1950s, a fresh wave of borrowing has been taking place. The emergence of English as a world language has promoted regular contact with an unprecedented number of languages and cultures.

Nevertheless, the core vocabulary of English is, and has always been, native English. The words we use to talk about everyday things (*earth, tree, stone, sea, hill, dog, bird, house, land, roof, sun, moon, time*), relationships (*friend, foe, mother, father, son, daughter, wife, husband*), and responses and actions (*hate, love, fear, greedy, help, harm, rest, walk, ride, speak*), as well as the basic numbers and directions (*one, two, three, ten, top, bottom, north, south, up, down*) and grammatical words (*I, you, he, to, for, from, be, have, after, but, and*) are all native English. The Oxford English Corpus, analyzing its vast collection of texts, has quantified that 15 of the 25 most common nouns, 20 of the top 25 verbs, and 17 out of the top 25 adjectives are all from Old English, or 70 percent total in these grammatical categories, indicating that most (including *most*) of the commonest words in modern English come from its earliest, native roots. All in all, some 60 percent of the 20,000 words in common use are borrowed. Although English has been a heavy borrower of words from other languages throughout its history, its most frequently used words are overwhelmingly "native" (that is, of Anglo-Saxon origin).

Modern English Vocabulary

During the Modern English Period English continued its acquisitive ways, adding thousands of borrowed words to its lexicon. During the Early Modern Period the word stock of English was expanding greatly in three ways. As literacy increased, a conscious need was felt to improve and amplify the vocabulary. As English speakers traveled abroad, they encountered new things that they needed new words to talk about. And as they traveled, they increasingly met speakers of other languages from whom they borrowed words. During the Renaissance, an influx of Latin and Greek words was associated with a vogue for inkhorn terms. French also continued to be a major source of loanwords into English, as it has been from the time of the Norman Conquest until today. In addition, Spanish and Portuguese became significant sources for new words, especially as a result of colonial expansion in Latin America.

Shakespeare, writing in the late 1500s and drawing from continental sources for his plots, also imported many foreign words. The King James Bible, first published in

1611, set a long-standing model for written English. During the eighteenth-century classical period of English literature, writers not only borrowed hundreds of Latin and Greek words, they even coined new words using Latin and Greek morphemes.

From the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century British colonialism thrived. This had two implications for the English language: the first was the importation into the language of yet more words (for example, *pyjama* and *bungalow* from India); the second was the spread of English around the globe – to India, America, East Africa. With its spread came adaptation. Each country stamped its own mark on the language used, making it something different from the English spoken in Britain.

Compared to Early-Modern English period, Late-Modern English has many more words. These words are the result of two historical factors. The first is the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the technological society. This necessitated new words for things and ideas that had not previously existed. The second was the British Empire. At its height, Britain ruled one quarter of the earth's surface, and English adopted many foreign words and made them its own. The British Empire imported words from all around the world. The scientific, industrial, and communication revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inspired new technical vocabularies, and English spread throughout the world, particularly as a scientific lingua franca. English **scientific** and technical vocabulary had been growing steadily since the Renaissance, but the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth in this domain. By the end of the century, there was a recognizable variety of scientific English.

The industrial and scientific revolutions created a need for neologisms to describe the new creations and discoveries. For this, English relied heavily on Latin and Greek. Words like *oxygen*, *protein*, *nuclear*, and *vaccine* did not exist in the classical languages, but they were created from Latin and Greek roots. Such neologisms were not exclusively created from classical roots though, English roots were used for such terms as *horsepower*, *airplane*, and *typewriter*.

This burst of neologisms continues today, perhaps most visible in the field of electronics and computers. *Byte*, *cyber-*, *bios*, *hard-drive*, and *microchip* are good examples. Some recent English words: *app, coffice, cybercommunity, digital democracy, Dracula sneeze, emoticon, epic fail, Generation Z, hacktivist, high def, intexticated, lol, sexploitation, sexting, staycation, troll, whiteboard*.

One of the most recent neologism is *covidiot*. It means 1) a stupid person who stubbornly ignores 'social distancing' protocol, thus helping to further spread COVID-19; or 2) a stupid person who hoards groceries, needlessly spreading COVID-19 fears and depriving others of vital supplies.

In recent time the technology has been influencing the English language greatly. It is said that memes and emojis are the language of the 21st century. The word ***meme*** was introduced in 1976 by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* as a shortened form of mimeme, from a Greek word meaning “that which is imitated”. A meme is a unit of cultural transmission which spreads throughout a population and which can persist for a considerable time.

Samuel Johnson's Dictionary

The most important event of the eighteenth century was the publication of Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary*. This great two-volume *Dictionary of the English Language* fixed English spelling and established a standard for the use of words.

Johnson expressed the hope that, by registering usage, he could fix the language. When it was published in 1755, The Dictionary included a preface in which Johnson explained that his plan to fix the language was unrealizable. He had come to recognize that language was mutable, in flux. Thus, Johnson recognized that his goal was not to fix but “to register” the language.

Johnson’s Dictionary was really innovative for that time. His was the first dictionary for the general reader rather than the specialist. It was not a list of “hard words”, that is, guides to the new vocabulary of science, trade, and exploration. The challenge was in defining “words of general usage”. For example, *Oats*: “a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland appears to support the people”.

Johnson sought to excise slang and colloquialism from polite speech by distinguishing classes of words that he called "low". This, in turn, made it possible for individuals to educate themselves using the Dictionary. Johnson's was the first dictionary used in the home and the first to be reprinted in smaller versions to make it affordable for personal use.

The eighteenth century was a century of manners, class, and politeness, and one of the ways in which class distinction was expressed was through language, and especially through the way one spoke. There was a new concern to "find the rules" governing polite usage, and a climate grew in which writers attempted to formulate them. In speech, the legacy of the eighteenth-century concern about class and correctness led to the emergence of one accent which attracted more prestige than others – the speech of polite London society. By the 1830s, writers were advising provincials to speak like Londoners, and by the end of the nineteenth century this accent received a name. It was called "**received pronunciation"** (now usually referred to by its initials, RP) – that it, the kind of pronunciation passed down from one educated generation to the next.

RP quickly came to be associated with a public-school education followed by higher education at Oxford or Cambridge. It remained the accent of educated choice for most of the twentieth century, going by such varied labels as the "Oxford accent", "BBC accent", the "King's/Queen's accent", and a "public-school accent". To illustrate the change in the educated standard an example can be given from Daniel Jones's *The Pronunciation of English* (1919), where he describes the British pronunciation of the vowel in such words as *lord* which must have sounded to the way *lard* is pronounced now.

Standard English is a variety of English, the linguistic features of which are chiefly matters of grammar, vocabulary, and orthography. Standard English is not a matter of pronunciation: it is spoken in a wide variety of accents.

Oxford English Dictionary

At the end of the nineteenth century scholars in England set out to create a new dictionary, which would eventually become the Oxford English Dictionary. Dictionaries are the most vital source for information about the facts of language. The greatest dictionary ever made is thought to be the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. It was begun in 1857 as a project of the Philological Society of London for a "New English Dictionary" and published in 1928. And in 2000, the OED was made available online.

Oxford English Dictionary aims to record every English word, present and past, and to give for each a full historical treatment, tracing the word from its first appearance until the present day with all variations in form, meaning, and use. In addition, the dictionary illustrates the history of each word with quotations (all in all over 3,000,000 of them) showing the word in context throughout its history. In other words, it studies the etymology of each word. The importance of the study of etymology can be explained by the fact that it may throw light on how a present-day meaning developed.

Semantic changes

The most obvious way in which Modern English differs from Old English is in the number of borrowed words that have come into the language since the Old English period. Less obviously, many words have ceased to be used. A common Old English word for 'man' was *were*, but it has fallen out of use, but in horror films where the compound *werewolf* occasionally appears. Amongst the most striking examples of language change is semantic change or changes in the meanings of words. The main ways in which words may change meaning include generalization, specialization, amelioration, pejoration, and transfer.

One process is described as **generalization** or broadening of meaning, as in the change from *holy day* as a religious feast to the break from work called a *holiday*. Another example is broadening the use of *foda* (fodder for animals) to all kinds of *food*. Old English words such as *luflic* 'loving' and *hræd* 'quick' not only went through sound changes, they also developed more complex evaluative meanings "wonderful"

and “preferentially”, as in their modern uses: *That's a* <u>*lovely*</u> *idea, but I'd* <u>*rather*</u> *have the money*. Another example is the modern use of the word *dog*. It is now used very generally to refer to all breeds, but in its older form (Old English *docga*), it was only used for one breed.

The reverse process, called **specialization** or narrowing of meaning, has overtaken the Old English word *hund*, once used for any kind of dog, but now, as *hound*, used only for some specific breeds. Another example is *mete*, once used for any kind of food, which has in its modern form *meat* become restricted to only some specific types. The Old English version of the word *wife* could be used to refer to any woman, but has narrowed in its application nowadays to only married women. Similarly, the word *business* originally meant “a state of being active”, but the meaning was extended over time to include “occupation”, “a piece of work”, “a concern, matter, affair”, “a commercial enterprise”.

Amelioration is elevation of meaning. This type of change can take a word with a negative meaning, derived from Latin *nescius* (from *ne* + *sci*) meaning “not knowing” or “ignorant”, and over time give it more positive meaning in the modern word *nice*. Another example is the word *pretty,* which began with the negative sense of “cunning, crafty”, and the word shrewd began with the negative sense of “depraved, wicked”.

Pejoration is degradation of meaning. It can lead to a negative meaning for some words, such as *notorious* (which used to mean “widely known”, but now means “known for something bad”), *vulgar* (which used to mean simply “ordinary”) and *naughty* (which used to mean “having nothing”). To give another example, King James II (1685-1688) upon seeing the new St Paul's cathedral described it as “amusing, awful and artificial”, by which he meant it was wonderful. *Amusing* had the sense of “capturing one's attention”; *awful* of “being impressive, majestic (literally, full of awe)”; and *artificial* of “being skillful, displaying art”.

Transfer of meaning. Sometimes the meaning of a word shifts, so that the word refers to a different set of things. For example, *bureau* in the twelfth century meant woolen cloth, then in the fourteenth – counting table, in the seventeenth – room containing the table, and now it means an organisation or a business. There are many

ways to transfer a word's meaning. One specific way in which meaning can be transferred is through metaphor.

The matter of the fact is that the meaning of every word is susceptible to change, and some words have changed meaning radically in the course of their history. New words are constantly entering the language. As English has spread over the world, it has continuously influenced and been influenced by the world's other languages.

For review and discussion

1. Define the following terms: doublet, standard English, slang, etymology, standardization, colloquialization, specialization, generalization, amelioration, pejoration, transfer of meaning.
2. Which factors influenced the development of the English vocabulary in the course of its history?
3. What languages have had the main influence on the English vocabulary?
4. What language has had an influence on the English vocabulary over the longest period of time? Why has that language, more than any other, had such an influence?
5. How would you characterize the vocabulary of the Modern Period?
6. What is special about the publication of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary?
7. Why the Oxford English Dictionary is called the greatest of all English dictionaries?
8. What is the relationship between a word's etymology and its meaning?
9. What are the main ways in which words may change meaning?
10. What are the main sources of enriching the English word stock?

Exercise 6.1

In the sentence below every word longer than three letters is not English. That's how bastardized the English language is. Use an etymological dictionary (like OED online) to find out the origin of all these borrowed words.

Yet the vast majority of our vocabulary originated in foreign languages, including not merely the obvious Latinate items like "adjacent" but common, mundane forms not processed by us as continental in the slightest.

Exercise 6.2

Consider the following statements about Standard English and try to decide whether you agree or disagree with them, providing a reason in each case for your decision.

Standard English is not a language.

Standard English is an accent.

Standard English is a speech style.

Standard English is a set of rules for correct usage.

Exercise 6.3

The words below are fairly well known in most world Englishes. But in which variety of English did each of the words originate? Where possible, also try to identify which language supplied the word to English.

aardvark, amok, apartheid, bangle, boomerang,
bungalow, calypso, caribou, commando, cot, dungaree,
guru, jodhpurs, juggernaut, jungle, kangaroo, kayak, kiwi,
loot, parka, punch (the drink), pundit, pyjama, reggae,
safari, shampoo, thug, veranda, voodoo, yoga, zebra

Exercise 6.4

The following paragraph is logically incoherent if we understand all of its words in their current meanings. If, however, we take each of the underlined words in a sense it had in earlier times, the paragraph contains no inconsistences at all. For each of the underlined words, write an earlier meaning that will remove the logical contradictions created by the current sense. The earlier meanings need not be contemporary with one another. They can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary.

He was a happy and sad girl who lived in a town forty miles from the closest neighbor. His unmarried sister, a wife who was a vegetarian member of the WCTU, ate meat and drank liquor three times a day. She was so fond of oatmeat bread made from the corn her brother grew that she starved from overeating. He fed nuts to the deer that lived in the branches of an apple tree which bore pears. A silly and wise boor everyone liked, he was a lewd man whom the general censure held to be a model of chastity.

Exercise 6.5

A doublet is one of two or more words that have come from the same source but that followed different routes of transmission. Doublets have a common etymon, or earliest known form, but different etymologies. Give the etymology for the doublets from each set, tracing the members of the set back to the same etymon.

sure, secure;

regal, royal;

poor, pauper;

place, plaza, piazza;

cipher, zero; frail, fragile;

count, compute;

wine, vine;

poison, potion;

palaver, parable, parabola, parole;

lodge, loge, lobby, loggia;

corpse, corps, corpus, corse;

spice, species;

tradition, treason.

7. English as a world language

The English Language in America

The two major national varieties of English are those of the United Kingdom and the United States – British English and American English. Today American English has become the most important and influential dialect of the language as the baton of influence was passed about the middle of the twentieth century.

The first permanent settlement in North America dates from 1607. The colonists called their settlement Jamestown (after James I) and the area Virginia (after the 'Virgin Queen', Elizabeth). From the outset, the cosmopolitan nature of American life had its effect on the language (and especially on its vocabulary). The Spanish had occupied large parts of the west and southwest. The French were present in the northern territories and throughout the middle regions.

The first English-speaking colonists in America continued to speak as they had in England. But the language gradually changed on both sides of the Atlantic. Having changed dramatically, the English spoken in America has retained many characteristics of earlier English that have not survived in contemporary British English. Most Americans pronounce *r* where it is spelled, while in British English *r* is pronounced only before vowels. In pronunciation and grammar, American English is more conservative than British English. American English has also retained certain features that haven't survived in British English. A good example is *gotten*, which is the usual past participle of *get* in older British English and is an example of grammatical conservatism.

The writer George Bernard Show famously spoke of Britain and America as "two nations divided by a common language". The new English-speaking settlers in America were keen to set their language and their country apart from Britain, and so brought in new words and new spellings, as well as a new more direct style of speaking.

Webster's Influence on American Spelling and Pronunciation

There are some striking phonological differences. American English did not have a shift like the modern standard British had of an older [æ] to [ɑ] in words like *ask, path*, and *class*. [æ] survived in American English except before *r* as in *far*, *lm* as in *calm*, and in *farther*. The British English loss of [r] except when a vowel follows it, is somewhat more complicated in American English. In parts of the deep South, it may be lost even between vowels, as in *Carolina* and *very*. But away from the Atlantic Coast, it is retained in most positions. Furthermore, secondary stress on the penultimate syllables of polysyllables in *-ary*, *-ery*, and *-ory* (for example, military, obligatory) was lost in British English, but is retained in American English, as in *monastery, secretary, territory*.

In 1828 appeared *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, in two volumes, containing some 70,000 words. It took Noah Webster 25 years to complete the dictionary. *The American Dictionary* made Webster a household name in the USA. Through the influence of his spelling book and dictionaries, Noah Webster was responsible for Americans settling upon *-or* spelling in such words as *armor, behavior, color, labor, neighbor*, and the like. Webster is also responsible for the American practice of using *-er* instead of the *-re*, for instance, *caliber, centre, metre,* and use of *-se* in *defense, offense*, and *pretense*. Webster drew parallels between the landscape of America, specifically the Mississippi River, and the new nation's language – both natural and uncontrollable. Webster was concerned with issues of spelling and advocated a moderate spelling reform. In general, Webster argued that spelling should be more representative of pronunciation than British convention had it.

Joseph Worcester, who was employed to edit Webster's American Dictionary, in 1830 wrote his own, *A Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language,* a work was more conservative in spelling than Webster's. This was a kind of the war of dictionaries based on different lexicographical principles.

Often Americans were accused of corrupting the English language by introducing new and unfamiliar words. The first person to use the term **Americanism** was John Witherspoon, one of the early presidents of Princeton University. In 1781, he

defined it as "an use of phrases or terms, or a construction of sentences, even among persons of rank and education, different from the use of the same terms or phrases, or the constructions of similar sentences in Great-Britain."

The American Dialects

One variety of language is standard English. In contrast to standard English are all the regional dialects of the United States and other English-speaking countries. The main regional dialects are Northern (from northern New Jersey and Pennsylvania to New England), North Midland (from northern Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia through southern New Jersey and Pennsylvania), South Midland, also called Inland Southern (the Appalachian region from southern West Virginia to northern Georgia), and Southern, or Coastal Southern (from southern Delaware and Maryland down to Florida, along the Atlantic seaboard). The dialect boundaries are not always clearly defined.

The language of African Americans, one of the most prominent ethnic groups in the United States, is also called African American English or Black English. African American vocabulary is influencing the English language. For example, *nitty-gritty, jazz,* and *yam* came from African American use. African Americans are more likely to drop the [t] from words like rest and soft; to use an r-less pronunciation of words like bird, four, and father; and to pronounce words like *with* and *nothing* with [f] rather than [θ]. Differences in grammar include consuetudinal *be* (uninflected be to denote habitual or regular action, as in *She be here every day*) and the omission of *be* in other uses (as in *She here now*) as well as the omission of the *-s* ending of verbs (as in *He hear you*).

African Americans may have first learned a kind of pidgin – a mixed and limited language used for communication – perhaps based on Portuguese, African languages, and English. As they had no other common language, the pidgin was creolized, that is, became the native language.

The Future of English: Three Circles

Although American and British are the two major national varieties of the English language, there are other varieties of English used around the globe. It has been argued that English was successful in its global reach because it was a versatile and flexible language. However, the spread of English had far more to do with economic factors. People needed a language to do business and English was in the right place in the right time.

As the eighteenth century reached its close, English had either been established, or was about to be established, in as many as seven regions outside the British Isles and the United States: in the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, South Africa, South Asia, West Africa, and Southeast Asia. In each of these places, English was adopted and then immediately adapted to express the new circumstances and identities of the people. And it would not be long until the birds came home to roost, with fresh patterns of immigration introducing these new accents and dialects back into the mother country.

The term World English (or World Englishes) refers to the English language as it is variously used throughout the world. The English language is now spoken in more than 100 countries. The World English paradigm developed largely by Braj Kachru, who in 1985 divided the varieties of World English into three concentric circles: inner, outer, and expanding.

The inner circle refers to the traditional bases of English, where it is the primary language: it includes the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The outer or extended circle involves the earlier phases of the spread of English in non-native settings, where the language plays an important “second language” role: it includes Singapore, India, Malawi, and over 50 other territories.

The expanding circle involves those nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle, nor have they given English any special status in their language policy. In these areas, English is taught as a foreign language.

This classical model succinctly summarizes the historical spread of English, and it allows for the development of complexities within it. Braj Kachru argues that World Englishes develop largely in Outer Circle countries because in such countries two or more languages are in constant contact.

Tom McArthur invented the circle of world English theory in 1987 (world standard English). First group – world standard English which is written international English, therefore universally understood. Second group-band of regional varieties, including both standard and standardizing forms. Third group is described as a crowded (even riotous) fringe of subvarieties (for example, aboriginal English and black English).

McArthur believes that ENL (English native language) differs from one territory to another such as the USA and UK. In each area the standards of English are different. There have always been large groups of ENL speakers in ESL (English as a second language) territories due to colonialism. There is also large number of ESL speakers in ENL countries due to immigration, for example the USA.

There are many contexts in the world where only partial command of a language is necessary. A great deal of communication can take place with just a few hundred words and an elementary grammar. This kind of speaking is called a pidgin version of a language. The word comes from Chinese *pei tsin*, “pay money”, which is what traders in Canton called the pidgin English they used there from the 1600s to the 1900s.

A **pidgin** is a system of communication which has grown up among people who do not share a common language, but who want to talk to each other, usually for reasons of trade. Such languages typically have a limited vocabulary, a reduced grammatical structure, and a narrow range of functions, compared to the languages from which they derive. They are used only when they need to be, as a “contact language” in circumstances where communication would not otherwise be possible. They are the native languages of no one.

When Native Americans first encountered English, they usually retained their native languages and used English only when necessary, such as trade. This is how

pidgins typically arise, and as a result, an English pidgin was spoken by Indians across the continent.

But there have been situations when people speaking pidgins, which are not real languages, have found themselves in situations where they needed to use the pidgin as their main language. In such situations, people build the pidgin into a new real language. This is called a creole, and creoles are the world's only truly new language. Creolization is a general process in language change. A **creole** is a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue of a community – a definition which emphasizes that pidgins and creoles are two stages in a single process of development. In what specific way is a creole different from a pidgin? A creole has native speakers, a pidgin has none.

Creoles are spoken throughout the world, wherever history has forced people to expand a pidgin into a full language. For example, in Louisiana, African slaves developed a Creole based on French, just as South Seas natives developed one based on English. Interestingly, in Europe English-based pidgins and creoles are notably absent.

For review and discussion

1. Explain why the following people are important in historical discussions of the English language: Noah Webster, Braj Kachru, Tom McArthur, John Witherspoon.
2. Define the following terms: Americanism, Briticism, dialect, pidgin, creole, creolise, world englishes, African-American (Black) English.
3. In what respects is American English more conservative than British English, and in what respects is it less so?
4. Which are more important, the differences or the similarities between British and American English?
5. What kinds of variation occur in a language? What is the usefulness of such variation?

6. What factors have promoted the use of English as a world language?
7. List the important differences between British English and American English. Which of the differences is the most significant?
8. What importance has the study of British dialects for an understanding of American English?
9. What kind of variation occur in a language? What is the usefulness of such variation?
10. What is the likelihood that English will split up into a number of mutually unintelligible languages?

Exercise 7.1

Give the distinctively British English equivalents of the following American terms:

billion, can (of soup), (potato) chips, elevator, eraser, flashlight, gasoline, hood (of a car), (to) mail, orchestra seat, sneakers, station wagon, streetcar, traffic circle, truck, turtleneck, undershirt.

Exercise 7.2

The following terms either are exclusively British English or have at least one special sense that is predominantly British. Give the American English equivalents of the British senses:

accumulator, bespoke, biscuit, boot (of a car), gangway, holidays, chemist, draughts, drawing pin, dustbin, fanlight, (to) queue up, underground.

Exercise 7.3

In British use, the past participle *gotten* has been generally replaced by *got*, except for set expressions and derivatives like *forgotten*. In America both past participles remain in use, but with a specialisation in meaning. Describe the American differences between *got* and *gotten* as it appears in the following examples:

He doesn't have much hair, but he's got a full beard.

So far he's gotten most of his ideas about ecology from the Reader's Digest.

She's got a neurosis.

She's gotten a neurosis.

Whether he wants to or not, he's got to take the exam.

As a result of his petitions, he's finally gotten to take the exam.

Everybody's got to do it.

Everybody's gotten to do it.

Exercise 7.4

Read the lines from a song titled 'Kantoi' by the Malaysian singer Zee Avi. This is in what is colloquially known as 'Manglish', a blend of English and Malay. In Malay, this type of language use is also known as *bahasa rojak*, which means 'mixed language'. Such mixed or 'hybrid' languages are quite frequent around the world. But they are also often quite controversial, and are viewed by some as being sloppy or incorrect uses of 'proper English'. On the other hand, many people consider it to be a distinctive aspect of Malaysian culture and, when used in songs such as this, see it as a way of expressing a unique cultural identity. What is your opinion about hybrid languages? How much does it resemble Standard English?

So I called and called *sampai* you answer

You *kata*"Sorry *sayang*. *Tadi tak dengar.*

My phone was on silent, I was at the gym"

Tapi latar belakang suara perempuan lain

Sudahlah, sayang, I don't believe you

I've always known that your words were never true

Why am I with you? I *pun tak tahu*

No wonder *lah* my friends *pun tak suka you*

(Zee Avi, 'Kantoi')

Exercise 7.5

The following example of Hawai‘i Creole English has some characteristic forms and structures. How would you analyze the use of *da, had, one, stay* and *wen* in this extract?

Had one nudda guy in one tee-shirt was sitting at da table next to us was watching da Bag Man too. He was eating one plate lunch and afterwards, he wen take his plate ovah to da Bag Man. Still had little bit everyting on top, even had bar-ba-que meat left.

"Bra," da guy tell, "you like help me finish? I stay full awready."

Timeline

400 BC	The Celts migrated to the British Isles.
43 BC	The Romans colonized and ruled the southern half of Britain for 400 years.
449	Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians began to occupy Great Britain, thus separating the early English language from its Continental relatives.
597	Saint Augustine of Canterbury arrived in England to begin the conversion of the English, thus introducing the influence of the Latin language.
664	The Synod of Whithy aligned the English with Roman rather than Celtic Christianity, thus linking English culture with mainstream Europe.
787	The Scandinavian invasion began with raids along the northeast seacoast.
865	The Scandinavians occupied northeastern Britain and began a campaign to conquer all of England.
871	Alfred became king of Wessex and reigned until his death in 899, rallying the English against the Scandinavians, establishing the Danelaw, securing the kingship of all England for himself and his successors, and sponsoring the translation of Latin works into English.
1066	The Normans conquered England, replacing the native English nobility with Anglo-Normans and introducing Norman French as the language of government in England.
1384	John Wycliffe died, having promoted the first complete translation of scripture into the English language (the Wycliffite Bible).

1400	Geoffrey Chaucer died, having produced a highly influential body of English poetry.
1476	William Caxton brought printing to England, thus promoting literacy throughout the population.
1590-1611	William Shakespeare wrote the bulk of his plays, from *Henry VI* to *The Tempest.*
1604	Robert Cawdrey published the first English dictionary, *A Table Alphabeticall*.
1607	Jamestown, Virginia, was established as the first permanent English settlement in America.
1611	The Authorized or King James Version of the Bible was produced by a committee of scholars and became, with *The Book of Common Prayer* and the works of Shakespeare, a major influence on English literary style.
1755	Samuel Johnson published his *Dictionary of the English Language*.
1775-83	The American Revolution resulted in the foundation of the first independent nation of English speakers outside the British Isles.
1788	The English first settled Australia near modern Sydney
1828	Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* was published.
1857	A proposal at the Philological Society of London led to work that resulted in the New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (1928), reissued as the Oxford English Dictionary (1933), 2nd edition 1989, now revised online.
1983	The Internet was created.

Texts for reading

BEOWULF

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,

5

monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð
feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,
weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,
oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra

10

ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!
Ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned,
geong in geardum, þone god sende
folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat

15

þe hie ær drugon aldorlease
lange hwile. Him þæs liffrea,
wuldres wealdend, woroldare forgeaf;
Beowulf wæs breme (blæd wide sprang),
Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.

20

Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean,
fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme,

þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen
wilgesiþas, þonne wig cume,
leode gelæsten; lofdædum sceal

25

in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.
Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile
felahror feran on frean wære.
Hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,
swæse gesiþas, swa he selfa bæd,

30

þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga;
leof landfruma lange ahte.
þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna,
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær.
Aledon þa leofne þeoden,

35

beaga bryttan, on bearm scipes,
mærne be mæste. þær wæs madma fela
of feorwegum, frætwa, gelæded;
ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,

40

billum ond byrnum; him on bearme læg
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon
on flodes æht feor gewitan.
Nalæs hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
þeodgestreonum, þon þa dydon

45

þe hine æt frumsceafte forð onsendon
ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.

þa gyt hie him asetton segen geldenne

heah ofer heafod, leton holm beran,

geafon on garsecg; him wæs geomor sefa,

murnende mod. Men ne cunnon

secgan to soðe, selerædende,

hæleð under heofenum, hwa þæm hlæste onfeng.

THE CANTERBURY TALES GENERAL PROLOGUE
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,

And bathed every veyne in swich licour

Of which vertu engendred is the flour;

Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth

Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne

Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,

And smale foweles maken melodye,

That slepen al the nyght with open ye

(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,

And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,

To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;

And specially from every shires ende

Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,

The hooly blisful martir for to seke,

That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

Bifil that in that seson on a day,

In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ACT I

SCENE I. Athens. The palace of THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants

THESEUS

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour

Draws on apace; four happy days bring in

Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow

This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,

Like to a step-dame or a dowager

Long with'ring out a young man's revenue.

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;

Four nights will quickly dream away the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver bow

New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night

Of our solemnities.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate,

Stir up th'Athenian youth to merriments;

Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;

Turn melancholy forth to funerals;

The pale companion is not for our pomp.

Exit PHILOSTRATE

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,

And won thy love, doing thee injuries;

But I will wed thee in another key,

With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renownèd duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint

Against my child, my daughter Hermia.

Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,

This man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke,

This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast giv’n her rhymes,

And interchang’d love-tokens with my child:

Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,

With feigning voice, verses of feigning love,

And stol’n the impression of her fantasy

With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,

Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers

Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth:

With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,

Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,

To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,

Be it so she will not here before your grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,

I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,

As she is mine, I may dispose of her:

Which shall be either to this gentleman

Or to her death, according to our law

Immediately provided in that case.

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? be advised fair maid:

To you your father should be as a god;

One that composed your beauties, yea, and one

To whom you are but as a form in wax

By him imprinted and within his power

To leave the figure or disfigure it.

Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is;

But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,

The other must be held the worthier.

HERMIA

I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

I do entreat your grace to pardon me.

I know not by what power I am made bold,

Nor how it may concern my modesty,

In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;

But I beseech your grace that I may know

The worst that may befall me in this case,

If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

Glossary

ablaut or **gradation** An alternation of vowels in forms of the same word, as in the principal parts of strong verbs, such as *sing-sang-sung*.

asterisk A star (*) used to indicate either a reconstructed ancient form or an abnormal or nonoccurring form in present-day use, as Indo-European *dwō 'two' or present-day **thinked*.

B.B.C English Standard English as maintained by British Broadcasting Corporation announcers.

cognate Of words, developed from a common source.

conjugation The inflection of verb for person, number, tense, and mood.

creole A language combining the features of several other languages, sometimes begun as a pidgin.

creolise To become or make into a creole by mixing languages or, in the case of pidgin, by becoming a full native language for some speakers.

Danelaw The northeast part of Anglo-Saxon England heavily settled by Scandinavians and governed by their law code.

declension The onflection of a noun, pronoun, or adjective for case and number and, in earlier English, of adjectives also for definiteness, as *they-them-their-theirs*.

digraph A combination of two letters to represent a single sound, as *sh* in *she*.

doublet One of two or more words in a language derived from the same etymon but by different channels, as *shirt, short*, and *skirt*; *faction* and *fashion*; *antique* and *antic*; *warranty* and *guarantee*; *chattel* and *cattle*. Also referred to as *etymological twins*.

dual number A grammatical form indicating exactly two; survivals in English are the pronouns *both, either*, and *neither*.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) English used as a common means of communication between speakers from different first-language backgrounds.

etymological respelling Respelling a word to reflect the spelling of an etymon; also a word so respelled, as *debt* for *dette* because of Latin *debitum*.

etymology The origin and history of a word; also the study of word origins and history.

etymon, pl. etyma A source word from which a later word is derived.

grammatical gender The assignment of nouns to inflectional classes that have sexual connotations without matching the sex of the noun's referent.

Great Vowel Shift A systematic change in the articulation of the Middle English long vowels before and during the early Modern English period.

Grimm's Law A formulation of the Girst Sound Shift made by Jakob Grimm in 1822.

group genitive A genitive construction in which the ending 's is added at the end of a noun phrase to a word other than the head of the phrase: *the neighbor next-door's dog*.

Heptarchy The seven kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England.

his-genitive The use of a possessive pronoun after a noun to signal a genitive meaning: *Jones his house*.

inflected infinitive A declined infinitive used as a noun in Old English.

inflection Changes in the form of words relating them to one another within a sentence.

inkhorn term A word introduced into the English language during the early Modern English period but used primarily in writing rather than speech.

Internet linguistics Phrase coined by David Crystal to describe the scientific study of all manifestations of language in the electronic medium.

i-umlaut or **i-mutation** The fronting or raising of a vowel by assimilation to an [i] sound in the following syllable.

language family A group of languages evolved from a common source.

learned loanword A word borrowed through educated channels and often preserving foreign spelling, pronunciation, meaning, inflections, or associations.

leveling or **merging** Loss of distinctiveness between sounds or forms.

macron A diacritic (¯) over a vowel used to indicate that it is long.

metathesis A reversal in the order of two sounds, as in task and tax [tæks].

monophthong A simple vowel with a single stable quality.

monophthongisation or **smoothing** Change of a diphthong to a simple vowel.

natural gender The assignment of nouns to grammatical classes matching the sex or sexlessness of the referent.

Network English Standard American English as maintained in the U.S. by network television announcers and other media.

Norman French The dialect of French spoken in Normandy.

orthography A writing system for representing the words or sounds of a language with visible marks.

overgeneralization The creation of nonstandard forms by analogy, as *bringed for brought by analogy with regular verbs.

paradigmatic or **associative change** Language change resulting from the influence on an expression of other expressions that might occur instead of it or are otherwise associated with it, as *bridegum* was changed to *bridegroom*.

pejoration A semantic change worsening the associations of a word.

personal ending A verb inflection to show whether the subject is the speaker (first person), the addressee (second person), or someone else (third person).

phonetic alphabet An alphabet with a single distinct letter for each language sound.

pidgin A reduced language combining features from several languages and used for special purposes among persons who share no other common language.

pitch The musical tone that marks a syllable as prominent in some languages.

prescriptive grammar Grammar mainly concerned with prescribing the "right" forms of language.

preterit-present verb An originally strong verb whose preterit tense came to be used with present-time meaning and which acquired a new weak preterit for past time.

preserit tense A form of the verb that represents past time.

qualitative change Change in the fundamental nature or perceived identity of a sound.

quantitative change Change in the length of a sound, especially a vowel.

received pronunciation or **RP** The prestigious accent of upper-class British speech.

reconstruction A hypothetical early form of a word for which no direct evidence is available.

rhoticism A shift of the sound [z] to [r].

schwa The mid-central vowel or the phonetic symbol for it [ə].

scribal -e An unpronounced *e* added to words by a scribe usually for reasons of manuscript spacing.

semantic change Change in the meaning of an expression.

slang A deliberately undignified form of language that marks the user as belonging to an in-group.

standard language A prestigious language variety described in dictionaries and grammars, taught in schools, used for public affairs, and having no regional limitations.

standardization The linguistic term *codification* refers to the methods by which a language is standardized, the creation and use of dictionaries, grammar textbooks. The most important period of codification was probably the 18th century, which saw the publication of Samuel Johnson's monumental Dictionary of the English Language (1755) in Great Britain and Noah Webster's The American Spelling Book (1783) in the United States.

strong verb A Germanic verb whose principal parts were formed by ablaut of the stem vowel.

syntagmatic change Language change resulting from the influence of one unit on nearby units before or after it, as assimilation or dissimilation.

transfer of meaning A semantic change altering the kinds of referents of a word as by metaphor or metonymy.

typological classification A grouping of languages based on structural similarities and differences rather than genetic relations.

umlaut or **mutation** The process of assimilating a vowel to another sound in a following syllable; also the changed vowel that results.

uninflected plural A plural identical in form with the singular, as *deer*.

weak verb A Germanic verb whose principal parts were formed by adding a dental suffix.

world English English as used around the world, with all of its resulting variations; also the common features of international standard English.

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