

Linguistic Principles and Theories:

- The English language has changed over time.
- Language is in a constant state of change. Language changes because the way in which speakers use it, and their experience of the world, is constantly evolving and the language they use needs to keep up with these developments.
- The study of language change revolves around the history of language but language change is not just about history. Language has changed both through time and space as English has spread all around the world.
- Students will continue to learn the **six language levels: Language Level 1 – Lexis and Semantics; Language Level 2 – Lexis and Semantics; Language Level 3 – Phonetics, Phonology and Prosodics; Language Level 4 – Graphology; Language Level 5 – Pragmatics; Language Level 6 – Discourse**
- Language can be investigated in a huge range of contexts and modes. Most texts will be categorised under **written** or **spoken** modes to an extent; however, numerous texts are **multi-modal**, i.e. they possess features of both writing and speech.
- **Old English – 5th century**
 - Before English, the language of Britain were Celtic. English developed from the speech of the Angles, Jutes and Saxons (Anglo-Saxon). Viking raids began in 793, continuing until the beginning of the 11th century. Both Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse had a significant influence on the English language, with vocabulary drawn from both. Latin was regarded as the language of a highly regarded civilisation, and it has remained a hugely influential part of the formation of English from this time onwards. The different areas of settlement resulted in different dialects. As English was largely a phonetic language at this time, it meant that there was little consistency in written language.
- **Middle English – 11th century**
 - The Norman invasion is a significant event in the history of English. French was the verbal language of the court and administration, while Latin remained important in written documentation, especially by the Church. English came to prominence towards the end of the Middle English period with writers such as Chaucer choosing to write in English rather than French. Dialectal differences remained with marked differences around the country.
- **Early Modern English – 15th century**
 - Caxton introduced the printing press from Europe and printed many works in English, helping to contribute to the establishment of a standard form of English, using the South East dialect as the basis for this new standard. The Early Modern English period saw a growing interest and pride in English: Shakespeare produced his work; James 1st commissioned the Authorised Version of the Bible.
- **Modern English – 18th century**
 - The English Language had grown at an incredible rate, with words borrowed from Latin, Greek and around the world. Grammarians began to examine the structure and grammar of the language to establish patterns in the ways that people used language, which in turn led them to propose correct ways of speaking and writing.
- **Present-day English – 20th century**
 - English has continued to develop and the influence of the media, technology and travel has helped to establish English as a global language.
- English can be seen as a **hybrid language** made up of many different sources – the product of years of invasion and settlement from Germanic tribes, Vikings and Norman French. Latin too has had a significant influence on the formation of English, from early Roman settlement in A.D. 43, to renewed focus on Latin in religious, intellectual and cultural contexts throughout the linguistic periods.
- Many of the simple words and phrases we use every day originated in Anglo-Saxon – words such as *time, day, thing, world, back, dark, head, evil, town, work*.

- The English language changes through the creation of new words:
 - External factors – we borrow ‘loan’ words from other languages.
 - Internal factors – we adapt existing words by modifying them (e.g., blending and compounding)
 - We also create entirely new words, neologisms or coinage, but this is less frequent than external or internal lexical expansion
- **The Inkhorn Controversy** – During the 16th-17th centuries, there was a growing pride in the mother tongue. A return to English following many years of French rule led to an increased sense of national pride. Writers of the Renaissance began to expand the vocabulary by coining new words, using compounding or affixation, or borrowing extensively from the classical languages Latin and Greek and from the romance languages French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.
- **Inkhorn terms** are foreign words borrowed into English which are considered unnecessary or overly pretentious.
- **Semantic change** – English has developed not only through the addition of new words, but also through shifts in the meanings of existing words.
- When we see words in older texts, it is logical to assume that these words were used in the same way we use them today. Over time, words begin to be used in different ways and acquire new meanings, a process known as **neosemy**.
- Processes involved with **neosemy**:
 - **Generalisation/broadening** – the meaning of a word broadens so that it retains its old meaning but also takes on added meaning(s).
 - **Specialising/narrowing** – the opposite of broadening – a word becomes more specific in meaning.
 - **Amelioration** – over time a word acquires a more pleasant or more positive meaning
 - **Pejoration** – the opposite of amelioration – over time a word becomes less favourable
 - **Weakening/bleaching** – the loss or reduction of the force of meaning of a word
 - **Metaphor** – words acquire additional meanings as physical ideas are extended to abstract ideas with similar qualities, allowing abstract ideas to be more clearly understood
 - **Euphemism** – the creation of polite, but roundabout, expressions for things that may be considered unpleasant
 - **Polysemy** – words acquire many possible meanings, which coexist with the original
- When examining semantic change, it is difficult to predict which words will undergo shift in meaning. However, it can be possible to examine **internal** and **external** factors that may influence neosemy.
- The English language is full of difficulties and inconsistencies with spelling.
- Old English was a phonetic language – words were spelt as they sounded and, as there was considerable dialectal diversity in England, this meant that there could be some very different spellings of the same words.
- Attempts to regularise the spelling began in earnest with Caxton but he was fairly irregular with his own spelling.
- A further difficulty in capturing the sound of English in spelling was due to **phonetic change**. The English language we use now sounds very different from that used 500 years ago. One contributing factor was **The Great Vowel Shift** which took place from the mid-14th to mid-18th century which involved a gradual changing of vowel pronunciation, where the production of long vowels was raised so that the position of the tongue moved closer to the roof of the mouth. This had a marked impact on the sound of English.
- Spelling reform (a move toward greater consistency in spelling) started in the 19th century; however, debate continues about the ‘correctness’ of various spellings.
- English grammar changes over time.
- English grammar was not seriously studied until the 18th century.
- **The second person pronoun** – Unlike other personal pronouns, the second person pronoun is now limited to ‘you’ and ‘yours’. However, in the Middle English period, the second person pronoun distinguished between singular and plural forms.
- **Haugen, 1966** identifies a four-stage process to standardisation of the English language:
 - **Selection** – Language selected – variety selected is usually a prestigious one
 - **Codification** – Reduction of internal variability, establishment of norms of lexis, grammatical structures and spelling
 - **Elaboration** – The selected language is developed for a variety of purposes. This may involve expansion of linguistic resources.
 - **Implementation** – The standard language must be given currency by making texts available in it, encouraging users to develop pride and loyalty.
- There are numerous theories describing how language spreads across the globe.

Vocabulary

- **Diachronic change** – the historical development of language
- **Prescriptivism** – the notion that language should be fixed, prescribing to a set of standard rules for language usage, with any shift away from these rules or standards being seen as incorrect.
- **Descriptivism** – where no judgement or negative attitude is imposed on language change, but an examination of language as it is and how it is used.
- **Synchronic change** – the study of language change at a particular moment in time
- **Coinage/neologism** – the deliberate creation of a new word
- **Borrowing/loan words** – borrowing of words/concepts from other languages. Words are either anglicised (so that we no longer recognise them as loan words) or they may retain their original spelling or phonology
- **Compounding** – words are combined together to form new words. These can be open, hyphenated or solid
- **Clipping** – words are shortened and the shortened form becomes the norm
- **Blending** – a combination of clipping and compounding: words are abbreviated and joined together to form a new word
- **Acronym** – first letters are taken from a series of words to create a new term
- **Initialism** – the first letters from a series of words from a new term, but each letter is pronounced
- **Affixation** – one or more free morphemes are combined with one or more bound morphemes
- **Conversion or functional shift** – a word shifts from one word class to another, usually from a noun to a verb
- **Eponym** – names of a person or company are used to define particular objects. Often they are the inventors or distributors of the object
- **Back formation** – a verb is created from an existing noun by removing a suffix
- **External factors** – external pressures will affect how language is used, either social, cultural or technological
- **Internal factors** – aspects of the language itself contribute to change
- **Stative verb** - a verb which describes a state of being (e.g. 'to seem', 'to believe') rather than a physical action; stative verbs don't usually show ongoing action so tend not to be used in the progressive form
- **L1** – English spoken as a first language
- **L2** – English used as a second language
- **English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)** – English used as a contact language between speakers of different first languages