ENG501 — History of English Language

Midterm Preparation File (Lectures 1–22)

MCQs • Short Questions • Long Questions — with Answers

VU LEARNING HUB

This file is prepared from the ENG501 handouts (Lessons 1–22) for midterm preparation. Section A contains 50 MCQs, Section B contains 25 short questions and Section C contains 13 long questions, all with model answers.

Section A — Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. The ability of language to refer to times, places and people other than the "here and now" is called: *(Lesson 1)*

A. ArbitrarinessB. DisplacementC. DualityD. Productivity

Answer: (B) Displacement

2. "There is no natural connection between a word and the thing it stands for" — this feature of language is known as: *(Lesson 1)*

A. DisplacementB. Cultural transmissionC. ArbitrarinessD. Duality

Answer: (C) Arbitrariness

3. According to the Hindu tradition, language came to mankind from: *(Lesson 2)*

A. Sarasvati, wife of BrahmaB. VishnuC. The first human coupleD. A sacred river

Answer: (A) Sarasvati, wife of Brahma

4. In 1786, Sir William Jones pointed out the strong affinity of Sanskrit with which two classical languages? *(Lesson 2)*

A. French and GermanB. Greek and LatinC. Arabic and PersianD. Hebrew and Aramaic

Answer: (B) Greek and Latin

5. When one language, spoken by separated communities, slowly splits into two languages that are no longer mutually intelligible, the process is called: *(Lesson 2)*

A. Language contactB. Semantic shiftC. Divergent developmentD. Analogy

Answer: (C) Divergent development

6. Approximately how many speech sounds are there in English? *(Lesson 3)*

A. 26B. 32C. 44D. 52

Answer: (C) 44

7. The subdivision of morphology that creates entirely new words with new meanings (for example, “maltreat” from “treat”) is called: *(Lesson 3)*

A. InflectionB. CompoundingC. SyntaxD. Derivation

Answer: (D) Derivation

8. Who defined English in his famous mid-eighteenth-century dictionary simply as “the language of England”? *(Lesson 4)*

A. Robert CawdreyB. Dr Samuel JohnsonC. Noah WebsterD. William Caxton

Answer: (B) Dr Samuel Johnson

9. The estimated number of native (mother-tongue) speakers of English in the world is about: *(Lesson 4)*

A. 100–150 millionB. 350–400 millionC. 800–850 millionD. 2 billion

Answer: (B) 350–400 million

10. In George Bernard Shaw’s spelling joke, the word “fish” could be spelled as: *(Lesson 5)*

A. phishB. ghotiC. fysheD. fisch

Answer: (B) ghoti

11. William Caxton brought printing to England in the year: *(Lesson 5)*

A. 1400B. 1453C. 1476D. 1500

Answer: (C) 1476

12. The Statute of Pleading, which required court proceedings to be conducted in English, was enacted in: *(Lesson 5)*

A. 1204B. 1258C. 1362D. 1476

Answer: (C) 1362

13. Synchronic linguistics is the study of a language: *(Lesson 6)*

A. Across many centuriesB. At a given point in timeC. Only in its written formD. Only after it has died out

Answer: (B) At a given point in time

14. In Received Pronunciation (RP), the letter “r” is pronounced: *(Lesson 6)*

A. In all positionsB. Only at the end of wordsC. Only before vowelsD. Never

Answer: (C) Only before vowels

15. Diachronic linguistics is mainly concerned with: *(Lesson 7)*

A. Language at a single momentB. Language change over timeC. Methods of language teachingD. Speech sounds only

Answer: (B) Language change over time

16. A language that shows grammatical relationships mainly through word order, rather than through inflections, is called: *(Lesson 7)*

A. SyntheticB. AnalyticC. CreoleD. Classical

Answer: (B) Analytic

17. The dividing lines between the periods of English (Old, Middle, Modern) are best described as: *(Lesson 8)*

A. Fixed and exactB. Decided by royal decreeC. Purely arbitrary — a matter of convenienceD. Based only on spelling changes

Answer: (C) Purely arbitrary — a matter of convenience

18. The Middle English period is generally dated: *(Lesson 8)*

A. 450–1150B. 1100–1500C. 1500–1800D. 1800–present

Answer: (B) 1100–1500

19. The two branches of Celtic spoken in Britain were: *(Lesson 9)*

A. Gaelic (Goidelic) and BrythonicB. Latin and GreekC. Saxon and AnglianD. Norse and Danish

Answer: (A) Gaelic (Goidelic) and Brythonic

20. The actual Roman conquest of Britain was undertaken by Emperor Claudius in: *(Lesson 9)*

A. 55 BCB. AD 43C. AD 410D. AD 449

Answer: (B) AD 43

21. The serious Celtic uprising of AD 61 against the Romans was led by: *(Lesson 9)*

A. AgricolaB. BoudiccaC. ClaudiusD. Hengist

Answer: (B) Boudicca

22. The Old English period (450–1150) is often described as the period of: *(Lesson 10)*

A. Lost inflectionsB. No inflectionsC. Full inflectionsD. French inflections

Answer: (C) Full inflections

23. In Old English texts, the word *wealh* (originally "foreigner") was commonly used to mean: *(Lesson 10)*

A. A Roman soldierB. A Viking raiderC. A monkD. A Briton / Welshman

Answer: (D) A Briton / Welshman

24. The Old English letters þ (thorn) and ð (eth) were both used to represent the sound: *(Lesson 11)*

A. "sh"B. "th"C. "ch"D. "ng"

Answer: (B) "th"

25. The seventh vowel symbol of Old English, called "ash", is written: *(Lesson 11)*

A. æB. þC. ðD. &wynn;

Answer: (A) æ

26. In Old English, one letter "f" was used for both the sounds [f] and [v] because the two sounds were: *(Lesson 11)*

A. Separate phonemesB. Borrowed from LatinC. Allophones of a single phonemeD. Always silent

Answer: (C) Allophones of a single phoneme

27. How many cases did the Old English noun have? *(Lesson 12)*

A. TwoB. FourC. FiveD. Seven

Answer: (B) Four

28. In the phrase *sē gōda mann* (“the good man”), the adjective is in the: *(Lesson 12)*

A. Strong declensionB. Weak declensionC. Dual numberD. No declension at all

Answer: (B) Weak declension

29. In Old English, *thou / thee* were the pronouns used for: *(Lesson 13)*

A. Addressing more than one personB. Addressing one person (singular)C. Addressing only kingsD. Referring to things

Answer: (B) Addressing one person (singular)

30. Old English poetry possessed a very large stock of alternative words for warrior, horse, ship, prince and so on, chiefly because of the demands of: *(Lesson 13)*

A. RhymeB. TranslationC. PrintingD. Alliteration

Answer: (D) Alliteration

31. The name “Normandy” is derived from: *(Lesson 14)*

A. A Roman provinceB. The Northmen who settled thereC. A French king named NormanD. The River Seine

Answer: (B) The Northmen who settled there

32. For roughly how long after the Norman Conquest did French remain the language of ordinary intercourse among the upper classes in England? *(Lesson 14)*

A. About 50 yearsB. About 100 yearsC. About 200 yearsD. About 400 years

Answer: (C) About 200 years

33. England lost Normandy in 1204 during the reign of: *(Lesson 15)*

A. William IB. Henry IC. King JohnD. Edward III

Answer: (C) King John

34. The Hundred Years’ War between England and France lasted from: *(Lesson 15)*

A. 1066–1204B. 1204–1337C. 1337–1453D. 1453–1485

Answer: (C) 1337–1453

35. The overall death rate during the Black Death (1348–49) is estimated at about: *(Lesson 15)*

A. 10 per centB. 20 per centC. 30 per centD. 60 per cent

Answer: (C) 30 per cent

36. In 1362, for the first time, Parliament was opened with a speech in English by: *(Lesson 16)*

A. The king himselfB. The ChancellorC. Geoffrey ChaucerD. A London merchant

Answer: (B) The Chancellor

37. English had become the general medium of instruction in the schools by about: *(Lesson 16)*

A. 1200B. 1349C. 1385D. 1450

Answer: (C) 1385

38. Geoffrey Chaucer, the greatest English poet before Shakespeare and author of *The Canterbury Tales*, lived: *(Lesson 17)*

A. 1240–1300B. 1340–1400C. 1440–1500D. 1564–1616

Answer: (B) 1340–1400

39. If a single round year is taken for the general adoption of English in writing, it is: *(Lesson 17)*

A. 1300B. 1362C. 1425D. 1500

Answer: (C) 1425

40. In Middle English, the plural ending that spread from the north and Midlands until it was accepted all over the country was: *(Lesson 18)*

A. -enB. -eC. -ethD. -s

Answer: (D) -s

41. The disappearance of grammatical gender in Middle English was mainly the result of: *(Lesson 18)*

A. French grammar rulesB. The decay of inflectionsC. The invention of printingD. Direct orders of Parliament

Answer: (B) The decay of inflections

42. The text in which we can watch English changing “before our eyes” from a synthetic to an analytic language is: *(Lesson 19)*

A. BeowulfB. The Canterbury TalesC. The Peterborough ChronicleD. The Governour

Answer: (C) The Peterborough Chronicle

43. The dialect that contributed most to the formation of Standard English was: *(Lesson 19)*

A. NorthernB. East MidlandC. KentishD. West Saxon

Answer: (B) East Midland

44. Words such as *felony, trespass* and *assault* came into English from French because French was long the language of: *(Lesson 19)*

A. The Church servicesB. The universitiesC. The law courtsD. The navy

Answer: (C) The law courts

45. Chaucer’s language may be taken as representing the dialect of which city at the end of the fourteenth century? *(Lesson 20)*

A. YorkB. OxfordC. CanterburyD. London

Answer: (D) London

46. In Chaucer’s English, the Old English long vowel ā had generally become: *(Lesson 20)*

A. ēB. īC. ōD. ū

Answer: (C) ō (as in *goon*, “go”)

47. During the Great Vowel Shift, the long vowels of English came to be pronounced with: *(Lesson 21)*

A. A lower position of the tongueB. A greater elevation of the tongue and closing of the mouthC. No change at allD. A distinctly French quality

Answer: (B) A greater elevation of the tongue and closing of the mouth

48. The change undergone by Chaucer’s short *u* (the vowel of *full*) in most words, giving the vowel of *but, cut, sun*, is known as: *(Lesson 21)*

A. LengtheningB. RoundingC. UnroundingD. Shortening

Answer: (C) Unrounding

49. In the sixteenth-century debate on spelling, Mulcaster based his reform of English orthography on: *(Lesson 22)*

A. A purely phonetic alphabetB. Latin spellingC. Custom or usage, as agreed by the learned communityD. A decree of the king

Answer: (C) Custom or usage, as agreed by the learned community

50. Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*, which raised the problem of enriching the English language, was published in: *(Lesson 22)*

A. 1476B. 1531C. 1604D. 1658

Answer: (B) 1531

Section B — Short Questions (with Model Answers)

1. What is meant by “cultural transmission” as a feature of language? *(Lesson 1)*

Answer: Language is not passed on through the genes like hair or eye colour. A child acquires whichever language is spoken in the community around it, regardless of the language of its parents. This handing over of language through culture and upbringing, rather than by biological inheritance, is called cultural transmission.

2. What is the natural sound source (“bow-wow”) theory of the origin of language? *(Lesson 2)*

Answer: This theory suggests that the first words appeared when early human beings imitated the sounds of the world around them — animal cries, thunder, splashing water and so on. It is supported by the words in modern languages whose pronunciation still echoes natural sounds (splash, bang, boom, hiss), and by natural cries of emotion such as pain, anger and joy.

3. What is meant by the divergent development of languages? *(Lesson 2)*

Answer: When one language comes to be spoken in two separated communities, change goes on in both places but not in identical ways. Over a few centuries the two varieties drift so far apart that they are no longer mutually intelligible and count as two separate languages, both descended from a common parent. This branching process is shown in the family-tree diagram.

4. Distinguish between inflection and derivation in morphology. *(Lesson 3)*

Answer: Inflection adjusts the form of a word according to its grammatical role in the sentence — its tense, number or case — without creating a new word. Derivation, on the other hand, builds a genuinely new word, often with a different meaning or word class; for example, “maltreat” is derived from “treat”.

5. How do semantics and pragmatics differ from each other? *(Lesson 3)*

Answer: Semantics studies the meaning that is conventionally "coded" in words, phrases and sentences themselves. Pragmatics studies how meaning depends on context — the speaker, the listener, the place, the time and the speaker's intention. Pragmatics therefore explains how hearers overcome the ambiguity that the coded meaning alone leaves unresolved.

6. Why was English retained as an official language in Pakistan after independence? *(Lesson 4)*

Answer: Under British rule, English had been the language of administration and higher education for about ninety years. Crucially, it was not identified with any single ethnic or religious movement inside the country, so it could appear neutral. Keeping it allowed the new state to run its government, courts and education without favouring one local language over the others.

7. What does Shaw's "ghoti" joke tell us about English spelling? *(Lesson 5)*

Answer: George Bernard Shaw joked that "fish" could logically be spelled *ghoti*: *gh* as in *enough*, *o* as in *women*, and *ti* as in *nation*. The joke exposes the deep inconsistency of English spelling — the same letters stand for different sounds in different words — and such oddities can only be explained by studying the history of the language.

8. What is synchronic linguistics? Illustrate with one example. *(Lesson 6)*

Answer: Synchronic linguistics studies a language as it exists at one particular point in time, ignoring its earlier and later history. For example, a synchronic comparison shows that Australian English has almost the same vowel system as RP, yet realises the vowels differently, so that Australian *pan* can sound like *pen* to an English listener.

9. How does the wave model differ from the family tree model? *(Lesson 7)*

Answer: The family tree model pictures languages splitting cleanly away from a parent language, like branches from a trunk, on the assumptions of regular change and clear relatedness. The wave model instead pictures a change spreading outward like ripples on water, crossing language boundaries and affecting neighbouring languages unevenly, so that the borders between languages are blurred rather than sharp.

10. Distinguish between synthetic and analytic languages, with reference to the history of English. *(Lesson 7)*

Answer: A synthetic language expresses grammatical relationships through changes inside words — inflections of case, tense and person. An analytic language expresses the same relationships through word order and separate helper words such as prepositions. Old English was largely synthetic; over the centuries it shed most of its inflections and became the strongly analytic language we use today.

11. Why are the dividing lines between the periods of English said to be arbitrary? *(Lesson 8)*

Answer: The development of English over fifteen hundred years has been continuous and unbroken; the language did not change its nature on any single date. Dates such as 1100 or 1500 are chosen afterwards, for convenience, at points where clusters of changes or great historical events make a division useful for study.

12. Why did Latin fail to replace the Celtic language in Britain, although it succeeded in Gaul? *(Lesson 9)*

Answer: In Britain, Latin was used mainly by the army, officials, the upper classes and town dwellers; the rural majority went on speaking Celtic, and Latin never became the language of everyday life for the population as a whole. Once the legions were withdrawn around 410, its use declined, whereas Celtic survived even the upheaval of the Germanic invasions.

13. Why is the name “English” older than the name “England”? *(Lesson 10)*

Answer: From the very beginning, writers in the vernacular called their language *Englisc*, from *Engle*, the Angles, and used it for the speech of all the invading tribes. The country itself was long called *Angelcynn* (“Angle-kin”); the name *England*, “land of the Angles”, only began to take its place from about the year 1000.

14. Why did Old English need only one letter, “f”, for the sounds [f] and [v]? *(Lesson 11)*

Answer: Because in Old English the two sounds were not separate phonemes. They were allophones — automatic variants of a single phoneme: the voiced variant [v] appeared between voiced sounds, and [f] appeared elsewhere. Since a speaker never had to choose between them, one written symbol was sufficient.

15. Explain the strong and weak declensions of the Old English adjective. *(Lesson 12)*

Answer: Old English adjectives had two sets of endings. The strong declension was used when the noun stood without a defining word, as in *gōd mann,* "a good man". The weak declension was used when the noun was preceded by a definite article, demonstrative or possessive, as in *sē gōda mann*, "the good man".

16. What was the "dual number" in Old English pronouns? *(Lesson 12)*

Answer: In addition to the singular and plural, Old English pronouns preserved a set of forms used for exactly two persons or things — the dual. The personal pronoun, because of its frequent use, kept fuller inflections than other word classes, but even in the pronoun the distinction between dual and plural was already disappearing in the Old English period.

17. How did "you" come to be used when addressing a single person? *(Lesson 13)*

Answer: In Old English, *thou/thee* were singular and *ye/you* were plural. During the Middle English period it became polite and deferential to address one person with the plural forms *ye/you*. The respectful usage spread through society, and *thou* and *thee* gradually dropped out of everyday speech, surviving only in some dialects.

18. How did the French language spread beyond the Norman ruling class in England? *(Lesson 14)*

Answer: French spread chiefly through intermarriage between Normans and English families, and through social ambition: people of English birth who associated with the ruling class found it to their advantage to learn French. The division between the two languages was therefore social rather than ethnic, while the great mass of the population continued to speak English.

19. How did the loss of Normandy in 1204 benefit the English language? *(Lesson 15)*

Answer: Losing Normandy broke the first and strongest link tying England to the continent. Nobles holding estates on both sides of the Channel were forced to choose their allegiance, and after about 1250 the English nobility had no practical reason to consider itself French. England became a nation in its own right again, and the strongest motive for keeping up French disappeared.

20. How did the Black Death raise the status of the English language? *(Lesson 15)*

Answer: The plague of 1348–49 killed roughly a third of the population, and the resulting shortage of labour increased the wages and the economic importance of the English-speaking labouring classes. Since the importance of a language depends largely on the importance of the people who speak it, the rise of workers, craftsmen and merchants carried the English language upward with them.

21. What effect did the Norman scribes have on English spelling? *(Lesson 17)*

Answer: The Norman scribes disregarded the traditional West Saxon spelling and wrote English as they heard it, following French spelling habits. Sound changes that conservative spelling had hidden therefore suddenly became visible on the page, and English writing took on a completely new look, including some new consonant symbols.

22. How did grammatical gender disappear from English? *(Lesson 18)*

Answer: In Old English, a noun's gender was shown mainly by agreement — the distinctive endings of its adjectives and demonstrative pronouns. When Middle English levelled those inflections to a single ending, the signals of gender disappeared with them, and English was left with natural gender only (*he, she, it* according to meaning). The change happened earliest in the North, where inflections decayed first.

23. Why did the East Midland dialect become the basis of Standard English? *(Lesson 19)*

Answer: The East Midland district lay between the extreme divergences of North and South, so its speech was a compromise in sounds and inflections; it was also the largest and most populous of the dialect areas, and it contained the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Above all, it was the dialect underlying the speech of London, the capital.

24. What was the Great Vowel Shift? *(Lesson 21)*

Answer: The Great Vowel Shift was the systematic change, spread over the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, in which all the long vowels of English were gradually raised — pronounced with a higher position of the tongue and a more closed mouth — and the highest of them turned into diphthongs. Because spelling had already become fixed before the shift, our vowel letters no longer represent the sounds they once stood for.

25. Why is the period 1500–1650 described as “radical” for vocabulary but “conservative” for grammar? *(Lesson 22)*

Answer: Printing, spreading education and increased communication circulated new ideas rapidly, and the growth of specialised knowledge demanded thousands of new words, so the vocabulary expanded in a radical way. The same forces, however, created a social concern for correctness and a standard of grammar and usage, so grammatical change in this period was comparatively slight and conservative.

Section C — Long Questions (with Model Answers)

1. Discuss the main features of human language that distinguish it from other systems of communication. *(Lesson 1)*

Model Answer: Human language is not simply a set of signals; it has special design features that separate it from animal communication. Five of these features are regularly listed by linguists.

- **Displacement:** Human beings can talk about things that are absent — past and future events, distant places, imaginary people, even things they know to be false. Animal calls are tied to the immediate situation.
- **Arbitrariness:** There is no natural or necessary connection between a word and its meaning. Nothing in the sound of the word “dog” makes it fit the animal; the link exists only by convention.
- **Productivity:** From a finite stock of words and rules, speakers can produce and understand an unlimited number of completely new sentences. Language is an open-ended, creative system.
- **Cultural transmission:** Language is acquired from the surrounding culture, not inherited biologically. A child learns the language of the community it grows up in.
- **Duality:** Language works on two levels at once: a small set of meaningless sounds (phonemes) combines into thousands of meaningful units (morphemes and words), which combine again into sentences.

Together, these features explain why human language is so flexible, learnable by any child, and capable of expressing unlimited experience.

2. Describe the main theories that have been proposed about the origin of language. *(Lesson 2)*

Model Answer: Nobody knows how language began; no direct evidence survives from the speech of our distant ancestors, and spoken language probably developed between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago. In the absence of evidence, scholars have proposed several sources.

- **The divine source:** Most religions hold that language was a gift of God. In the biblical tradition Adam named every living creature; in the Hindu tradition language came from Sarasvati, wife of Brahma.
- **The natural sound source (bow-wow theory):** Early words were imitations of natural sounds — animal cries, thunder, water — and of instinctive cries of pain, anger and joy.
- **The social interaction source:** Language grew out of the grunts, hums and groans made during shared physical effort, which developed a principled use inside social groups.
- **The physical adaptation source:** The human mouth, teeth, lips, tongue and larynx evolved in ways that make a wide range of speech sounds possible.
- **The tool-making source:** Manual gestures used alongside tool-making may have been a stepping-stone to spoken communication.
- **The genetic source:** The human brain is specially equipped for language; children are born ready to acquire it.

None of these theories can be proved; each highlights one ingredient — sound, society, body or brain — in the still mysterious birth of language.

3. What is a language family? Explain, with examples, how related languages develop from a common ancestor. *(Lesson 2)*

Model Answer: A language family is a group of languages that have descended, by continuous change, from a single parent language. Interest in such families began famously in 1786, when Sir William Jones observed that Sanskrit resembled Greek and Latin so closely in verb roots and grammar that all three must have sprung from a common source that no longer exists.

- **Divergent development:** When speakers of one language separate — for example by migration — change continues in each community, but in different directions.
- **Loss of mutual intelligibility:** After some centuries the separated varieties differ so much that their speakers can no longer understand each other; they are then counted as distinct, but related, languages.

- **The family tree:** This branching history is drawn as a tree, with the parent language as the trunk and the daughter languages as branches.
- **Examples:** The Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian and others) all descend from Latin, each with its own sounds and grammar yet all bearing marks of the common origin. Similarly, the Semitic languages — Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic and others — go back to an older Hamito-Semitic ancestor.

Today more than six thousand languages exist, and grouping them into families is the basic map of the world's linguistic history.

4. Discuss the roles of phonology, morphology, semantics, pragmatics and syntax in the historical study of a language. *(Lesson 3)*

Model Answer: To write the history of a language we must track change at every level of its structure. Five branches of linguistics supply the tools for this work.

- **Phonology** studies how sounds are organised in a language — its inventory of sounds (English has about 44) and features such as pitch, stress and juncture. Sound systems change steadily, and much of the difference between periods of English is phonological.
- **Morphology** studies the structure of words through the morpheme, the smallest unit of meaning. Its two subdivisions, inflection and derivation, together with compounding, show how word-forms and vocabularies are built and rebuilt over time.
- **Semantics** studies meaning. Meanings change just as forms do; this semantic shift — for instance, *should* and *would* were once plain past tenses — is a central topic in language history.
- **Pragmatics** studies how context, the speakers' knowledge and the speaker's intention contribute to meaning, beyond what grammar and dictionary meanings supply.
- **Syntax** studies sentence structure and word order. Syntactic change is real but usually slower than change in sounds or word-forms, which is why the sentence patterns of a language can look stable while its pronunciation is transformed.

A complete history of English must combine all five viewpoints.

5. "English is now the world's lingua franca." Discuss the global position of English and its special position in Pakistan. *(Lesson 4)*

Model Answer: English began as, in Dr Johnson's phrase, simply "the language of England", but it has become a language belonging to the whole world. It is no longer defined by one community; modern dictionaries describe it as a West Germanic language spoken in England and used in many varieties throughout the world.

- **Speakers:** Some 350–400 million people speak English as a mother tongue, but far more important is its reach: around one and a half to two billion people can understand it, and over 700 million use it as a foreign language.
- **Vocabulary and media:** The Oxford English Dictionary lists about 500,000 words, besides half a million un-catalogued technical terms. About three-quarters of the world's mail and 80 per cent of the information stored in computers is in English; it is also the language of aviation, navigation and most scientific publishing.
- **Lingua franca:** English serves as a shared medium for people who have no mother tongue in common — the clearest sign that it now belongs to its users everywhere, not to England alone.
- **Pakistan:** Pakistan inherited English from roughly ninety years of British rule, during which it was the language of administration and education. Because English was not tied to any local ethnic or religious movement, it appeared neutral, and so was retained after independence for government, law and education — despite later movements, such as the Urdu-medium policy of 1978, and despite continuing debate.

6. Compare and contrast the synchronic and diachronic approaches to the study of language. *(Lessons 6–7)*

Model Answer: The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure distinguished two dimensions along which language can be studied. Both terms contain the Greek root *khronos*, "time": *syn-* means "together" and *dia-* means "through".

- **Synchronic linguistics** examines a language at one given moment — the present, or a chosen point in the past — without reference to its history. It asks how the system works now: its sounds, grammar and vocabulary as a functioning whole. A comparison of present-day Australian English and RP, or of General American and RP pronunciation of “r”, is synchronic work.
- **Diachronic (historical) linguistics** studies language through time. Its aims are to describe and explain observed changes, to reconstruct prehistoric languages and group them into families, to build general theories of why languages change, and to study the history of words (etymology).
- **Relationship:** The two approaches are complementary, not rivals. A language at any moment is the product of its past, so diachronic study explains how the present system arose; in practice, synchronic description of successive stages provides the evidence from which diachronic accounts are built.

Saussure’s chess comparison sums it up: one may study the position on the board at a given moment (synchrony) or the moves by which it was reached (diachrony).

7. Describe the Norman Conquest of 1066 and discuss its effects on the English language. *(Lesson 14)*

Model Answer: The Normans were descendants of Scandinavian Northmen who had settled in Normandy, in northern France, in the ninth and tenth centuries; by 1066 they had given up their own tongue and become French in language and civilisation. When Edward the Confessor died childless, William, Duke of Normandy, defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings and was crowned king on Christmas Day 1066.

- **A new ruling class:** The Conquest was far more than a change of king. The English nobility was replaced by Anglo-Normans, and Norman churchmen took over the great offices; within little more than a decade, nearly all English abbots had been displaced.
- **French at the top, English below:** For some 200 years French remained the language of ordinary intercourse among the upper classes and of literature written for them, while English remained the speech of the masses. French spread further through intermarriage and social ambition, though the Normans showed no active hostility to English — merely indifference.

- **Effect on the language:** English lost its position as the language of government and writing, its conservative restraints were removed, and in time it absorbed an enormous stock of French words, becoming in vocabulary almost as much Romance as Germanic. Had William failed, English would probably have kept more of its inflections and a more purely Germanic word-stock, like its sister languages on the continent.

8. Discuss the factors that led to the re-establishment of English between 1200 and 1500. *(Lessons 15–16)*

Model Answer: In the century and a half after 1066, French was the natural language of England's rulers. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries conditions changed so completely that by 1500 French had virtually disappeared from English life.

- **Loss of Normandy (1204):** When King John lost Normandy, nobles holding land on both sides of the Channel had to choose between England and France. After 1250 the English nobility was English in interest and loyalty, and French lost its practical foundation.
- **The Hundred Years' War (1337–1453):** A century of hostility, with victories at Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt, made French the language of a national enemy and fanned English patriotism.
- **The Black Death and the middle class:** The plague (1348–49) killed about a third of the population; labour grew valuable, wages rose, and the English-speaking labourers, craftsmen and merchants rose with it, carrying their language's prestige upward.
- **Official and educational use:** The Statute of Pleading (1362) required court proceedings in English; in the same year the Chancellor first opened Parliament in English; guilds reported in English from 1388; and after 1349 English replaced French in the schools, becoming general by 1385.
- **Literature:** Writers shifted from French to English, crowned by Chaucer's generation, until polite literature itself was English.

9. Give an account of the grammar of Old English, with reference to nouns, adjectives and verbs. *(Lesson 12)*

Model Answer: Old English was a highly inflected language: grammatical relationships were shown mainly by endings on words, which gave it a much freer word order than Modern English. Its prose style, rich in subordinate clauses, is called hypotactic, in contrast to the paratactic style of short, simple sentences.

- **Nouns:** The noun distinguished number (singular and plural) and four cases. Nouns fell into declensions — the strong or vowel declension and the weak or consonant declension, according to the ending of the stem in Germanic — each with its own set of case-endings.
- **Pronouns:** Personal pronouns were richly inflected for person, gender and case, and even preserved, besides singular and plural, special dual forms for exactly two persons.
- **Adjectives:** Every adjective had a twofold declension: the strong forms were used when the noun stood alone (*gōd mann*), the weak forms when a definite article, demonstrative or possessive preceded (*sē gōda mann*). Old English also had a fully inflected definite article, like its sister language German today.
- **Verbs:** The verb was much simpler than in Latin or Greek: only two tenses, present and past, were distinguished by inflection, and there were almost no passive forms. Verbs divided into two great classes — strong verbs, which changed their root vowel (as in *break, broke, broken*), and weak verbs, which formed their past with a dental suffix; the strong verbs numbered only a little over three hundred.

10. "The Middle English period was a period of revolutionary grammatical change." Discuss the main grammatical changes that took place in this period. *(Lesson 18)*

Model Answer: Between 1150 and 1500 English underwent changes more extensive and fundamental than in any other period of its history. Some resulted from the Norman Conquest, which removed the restraining influence of a literary standard; others continued tendencies already visible in Old English. The overall effect was to reduce English from a highly inflected language to an extremely analytic one.

- **Levelling of noun inflections:** Case-endings were weakened and confused until most distinctions vanished. Of the many plural signs, two survived into early Middle English; the southern *-en* plural was eventually driven out by the *-s* plural, which spread from the north until, by the fourteenth century, it was accepted everywhere.
- **Pronouns and adjectives:** The many gendered forms of the demonstrative (*sē, sēo, þæt*) were reduced to *the* and *that*. The adjective lost almost all its endings: strong and weak declensions alike collapsed to a final *-e*, which carried no grammatical meaning.
- **The strong verbs:** The strong conjugation suffered serious losses; nearly a third of the Old English strong verbs died out early in the period, ninety of them leaving no trace in writing after 1150. New verbs, and verbs borrowed from other languages, were regularly conjugated as weak.
- **Loss of grammatical gender:** As the inflections that displayed gender decayed, grammatical gender disappeared with them, leaving only natural gender.

English increasingly relied on word order and prepositions where Old English had relied on endings.

11. Discuss the influence of French on the vocabulary of Middle English. *(Lesson 19)*

Model Answer: French and English lived side by side in England for centuries in unusually intimate contact, so a massive transfer of words was natural. Unlike the loss of inflections, which French caused only indirectly, its effect on vocabulary was direct. The borrowing was neither sudden nor uniform: it began slowly, quickened, and flowed both through everyday speech and, increasingly, through literature.

- **Government and administration:** *government, crown, state, empire, realm, royal, sovereign, majesty, court, council, parliament, tax, treaty, revenue*; and titles such as *chancellor, treasurer, marshal, mayor, minister*.
- **Law:** Because French was the language of the law courts, legal English is full of French: *felony, trespass, assault, arson, larceny, fraud, slander*.
- **Army and navy:** *army, navy, peace, enemy, battle, combat, defence, soldier, captain, lieutenant, sergeant*.

- **Fashion and social life:** The upper classes set the standard in dress, so French gave *fashion, gown, robe, garment, coat, button, veil*, names of colours such as *blue, scarlet, russet*, and jewels such as *ruby, emerald, sapphire, pearl, diamond.*
- **Domestic life, art and medicine:** *curtain, couch, chair, blanket, towel*; *art, painting, music, beauty*; *physician, surgeon, pain, plague, stomach, remedy, poison*.

Latin also contributed words in this period, but mainly through books; French supplied the vocabulary of daily life.

12. Discuss the rise of Standard English and the part played by London and the printing press in its spread. *(Lesson 19)*

Model Answer: Medieval England had many local dialects and no agreed written norm. Towards the end of the fourteenth century a standard written language began to emerge, won general recognition in the fifteenth, and has remained the recognised standard in speech and writing ever since. Its basis was the East Midland dialect.

- **Why East Midland:** Geographically it stood between the extremes of North and South, so in sounds and inflections it was a compromise — less conservative than the Southern dialect and less radical than the Northern. It was also the largest and most populous dialect area, its land was valuable, and it contained the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the country's intellectual centres.
- **The role of London:** London was the political capital, the great commercial centre, the seat of the highest courts and the focus of social and intellectual life. Constant migration brought speakers of other dialects into contact with London English; visitors absorbed its forms and carried them home, so influence flowed in both directions. The history of Standard English is therefore almost the history of London.
- **Official use and printing:** From about 1430 the Chancery and town records were kept in this form of English. When Caxton set up his press in 1476, London was the centre of publishing and he printed in current London speech, giving the standard a fixed, reproducible form that spread through the whole country.

13. Discuss the major changes in English between 1500 and 1650, including the Great Vowel Shift. *(Lessons 21–22)*

Model Answer: The years 1500–1650 saw new conditions that had never existed before — the printing press, the rapid spread of popular education, improved communication and a growth of specialised knowledge — and these pushed the language in new directions.

- **Pronunciation — the Great Vowel Shift:** The short vowels changed little (the important exceptions are *a* and the unrounding of *u*, as in *but, cut, sun*), but all the long vowels were gradually raised in the mouth, most reaching roughly their modern values by the sixteenth century. Because spelling had already become fixed, vowel letters ceased to match their sounds.
- **Weakening of unaccented vowels:** In all periods, vowels in unstressed syllables tended to weaken and sometimes disappear, one more reason why modern spelling does not match pronunciation.
- **Vocabulary — radical change:** The new conditions were favourable to the spread of ideas and stimulated an enormous growth of vocabulary, fed by the Renaissance revival of learning and the need to discuss new knowledge in English rather than Latin.
- **Grammar — conservative change:** Paradoxically, the same forces promoted a standard of correctness, so grammar changed only slightly in this period, in sharp contrast to the revolutionary grammar changes of Middle English.
- **Orthography and recognition:** Spelling, chaotic in the sixteenth century, was debated by reformers such as Mulcaster, who rested reform on the usage of the learned community, and moved steadily towards uniformity. At the same time English fought for recognition against Latin as a language fit for serious literature and learning, driven by popular demand to share in the Renaissance — a struggle that raised the linked problem of enriching its vocabulary, voiced by Elyot in *The Governour* (1531).

— End of File — Prepared by VU Learning Hub from the ENG501 handouts (Lessons 1–22) for midterm preparation.