

History of the English Language

Code: 106296
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
English Studies	OB	3

Contact

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

The course requires an initial level of English of C2 (Proficiency) (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*). With C2 students can understand almost everything they read or hear without effort; they can summarise information from different oral and written sources, reconstruct facts and arguments and present them in a coherent way; they can express themselves spontaneously, with fluency and precision, distinguishing subtle nuances of meaning even in the most complex situations.

Students are advised to have passed the courses on English Linguistics from first and second years.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The course introduces diachronic linguistics, applied to the English language. The course heavily draws on the 1st and 2nd year-courses in English linguistics, whose skills and competences should have been acquired by students.

Upon completing the course, students will be able:

- to recognize and analyse linguistic features which differ from contemporary English
- to analyse and describe the phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic characteristics of every stage of the English language.
- to understand the relationship between external history and the most relevant linguistic characteristics of English in every stage of the English language.
- to understand and describe how linguistic features are maintained or change over time and apply this knowledge to text analysis using etymological dictionaries and glossaries.

Competences

- Apply scientific ethical principles to information processing.
- Demonstrate skills to work autonomously and in teams to fulfil the planned objectives.
- Describe and analysesynchronously and comparatively the main phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties of English and its historical development.
- Distinguish and contrast the distinct paradigms and methodologies applied to the study of English.
- Understand and produce written and spoken academic texts in English at advanced higher-proficient-user level (C2).
- Use written and spoken English for academic and professional purposes, related to the study of linguistics, the philosophy of language, history, English culture and literature.

Learning Outcomes

1. Apply the concepts and skills acquired to the analysis of texts from distinct historical periods of the English language.
2. Describe and analyse (synchronously and diachronically) the main phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic properties of English.
3. Describe and identify the linguistic characteristics of the distinct historical periods of the English language and their social and cultural context.
4. Express oneself in English in writing and orally in an effective and correct manner, in an academic register and using appropriate terminology in relation to the study of phonetics and phonology, syntax, semantics and the history of the English language.
5. Incorporate ideas and concepts from published sources into work, citing and referencing appropriately.
6. Plan work effectively, individually or in groups, in order to fulfil the planned objectives.
7. Produce written and oral academic texts at higher-proficient-user level (C2) on the concepts and skills relevant to the study of English linguistics.
8. Understand specialised academic texts on research in English linguistics at C2 level.

Content

- UNIT 1. Introduction to historical linguistics and the origins of the English language (from Indo-European to Old English)
- UNIT 2. Old English (spelling, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon) and the influence of external history in its evolution
- UNIT 3. Medieval English (spelling, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon) and the influence of external history in its evolution
- UNIT 4. Modern English (spelling, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon) and the influence of external history in its evolution

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Lectures	50	2	1, 8, 2, 3, 7
Type: Supervised			

Tutorials	15	0.6	8, 3, 4, 6, 7
Type: Autonomous			
Personal study and practice	60	2.4	1, 8, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Directed activities:

- Lectures.
- Group discussions.

Supervised activities:

- In-class exercises (including text analysis).
- Tutorials.

Autonomous activities:

- Reading of texts.
- Visualization of videos.
- Elaboration of study diagrams and summaries of texts.
- Practical exercises (individual and in group).
- Use of the Virtual Campus (Moodle).

IMPORTANT: We will adopt the *flipped classroom* approach for some of the units in this course. This means that students will be expected to revise the learning materials at home prior to class (either by reading assigned texts or by watching specific videos). In class, students will apply the newly acquired knowledge. Given this learning approach, autonomous learning activities will be essential for the successful completion of this course.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Assignment 1	10%	4	0.16	1, 8, 4, 5, 6, 7
Assignment 2	10%	4	0.16	1, 8, 4, 5, 6, 7
Exam 1 (Origins and Old English)	35%	8	0.32	1, 2, 3, 4
Exam 2 (Middle and Modern English)	35%	8	0.32	1, 2, 3, 4
In-class participation and exercises	10%	1	0.04	1, 2, 4, 6, 7

Assessment:

- All exams and assignments are obligatory.

- The dates are specified in the course program posted on *Moodle*. Any changes (for example due to unexpected cancelling of lectures) will be duly announced.
- Students will obtain a Not assessed/Not submitted course grade unless they have submitted more than 35% of the assessment items.
- The level of English will be taken into account in the correction of written work and in the final evaluation.
- In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.
- Irregularities refer, for instance, to copying in an exam, copying from sources without indicating authorship, or a misuse of AI such as presenting work as original that has been generated by an AI tool or programme.
- Partial or total PLAGIARISM will immediately result in a FAIL (0) for the plagiarised exercise and if plagiarism is repeated it will result in a FAIL of the whole subject. Plagiarism consists of copying text from unacknowledged sources -whether this is part of a sentence or a whole text- with the intention of passing it off as the student's own production. It includes cutting and pasting from internet sources, presented unmodified in the student's own text. Plagiarism is a serious offence. Students must respect authors' intellectual property, always identifying the sources they may use; they must also be responsible for the originality and authenticity of their own texts.
- In case of absence on a date of assessment (for example due to illness), students must provide a justification to gain the right to re-assessment.

Review:

- On carrying out each assessment activity, lecturers will inform students (on *Moodle*) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.

Re-assessment:

- Reassessment will consist of an exam and will only be possible for those students who have obtained an average mark 3.5 and 4.9 and have completed all assessment items.
- The maximum grade obtainable on a re-assessment exam is 5.

Single assessment:

Students opting for single assessment will have to carry out the following activities on the same day:

- Exam: 70%
- Text analysis: 15%
- Practical exercise: 15%

The same reassessment method as continuous assessment will be used.

IMPORTANT! Erasmus students that ask for a change of date of an exam must give their professor a written document from their university of origin that justifies their request.

This subject entirely prohibits the use of AI technologies in all of its activities. Any submitted work that contains content generated using AI will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade will be awarded a zero, without the possibility of reassessment. In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

Bibliography

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Comrie, Bernard, Stephen Matthews & Maria Polinsky (eds). 1996. *The Atlas of Languages. The Origin and Development of Languages throughout the World*. London: Quarto Publishing.

Freeborn, Dennis. (1992). *From Old English to Standard English: A Coursebook in Language Variation across Time*. Houndsills: Macmillan Press.

Hogg, Richard. (2002). *An Introduction to Old English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Shay, Scott. (2008). *The History of English. A Linguistic Introduction*. San Francisco: Wardja Press.

Various authors / various years, *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Cambridge: CUP.

Software

No specific software will be used.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(PAUL) Classroom practices	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	2	English	first semester	morning-mixed