Language Change: Dynamicity in Language

Terminology
You should be able to simply define or explain the following terms and concepts.

- Analogy
- Assimilation
- Broadening
- Cognate
- Comparative method
- Conditioned sound change
- Decategorialization
- Diachrony
- Erosion
- Family tree
- Grammaticalization
- Grimm’s law
- Language contact
- Language family
- Lenition
- Linguistic paleontology
- Loanword/borrowing
- Narrowing
- Proto-Indo-European
- Proto-language
- Recurring sound correspondences
- Renewal
- Routinization
- Synchrony

Important Points and Concepts
- All living languages are dynamic, constantly undergoing processes of change through everyday use by speakers in interaction
- All areas of language undergo change, including sounds, words, meanings, and grammar
- Sound changes are diachronic rules resulting from synchronic phonological processes
- Sound changes are regular (occurring everywhere that the conditioned environment is met)
- Sound change can be at the broad systemic level; an example is the Great Vowel Shift
- Due to regular sound change, the Comparative Method can be used to determine degrees of relatedness among languages, reconstruct proto-languages and proto-words, and state the sound changes that occurred to differentiate the daughter languages
- By reconstructing the proto-words of a language, we can determine a significant amount of information regarding the lifestyles and cultures of the speakers of the mother language
- Grammars also change; the most common type of change is grammaticalization, whereby lexical morphemes take on grammatical functions or grammatical morphemes change their grammatical meanings
Study Guide: Language Change

Skills
On completion of this chapter, you should be able to perform the following tasks:

• Explain the difference between words that are cognates and words that are borrowed
• Define the term “language family” and name several known families
• Say what the Comparative Method is and what it is used for
• Apply the Comparative Method to a data set, reconstructing proto-forms and stating sound changes
• Identify different types of sound change
• Given data, write a rule describing a sound change
• State the position of English in the Indo-European language family
• State some of the sound changes that occurred in the history of English
• Describe the Great Vowel Shift in English and its impact on spelling and pronunciation of English words
• Identify different types of semantic change
• Explain in general terms where grammatical markers come from
• Name and describe processes involved in grammaticalization
• Discuss linguistic paleontology and the sorts of information that you can learn by reconstructing proto-languages