

Study questions for „History and Change of English“

Dr. Martin Schweinberger

Session

Diachronic linguistics and origins of English

1. Similarities between which languages lead Sir William Jones to assume that they must be related?
 - (a) Sanskrit, Latin, and (ancient) Greek
 - (b) Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish
 - (c) Old English and Old German
2. When was the common ancestor of Sanskrit, Latin, and (ancient) Greek spoken?
 - (a) Probably around 2,000 BC (Proto-Indo-European)
 - (b) Probably around 4,500 BC (Proto-Indo-European)
 - (c) Probably around 8,000 BC (Proto-Indo-European)
3. What is the family of languages called that English and German belong to?
 - (a) North-Germanic languages
 - (b) East-Germanic languages
 - (c) West-Germanic languages
4. What is the family of languages called that Swedish and Norwegian belong to?
 - (a) North-Germanic languages
 - (b) East-Germanic languages
 - (c) West-Germanic languages
5. What is the majority principle in comparative reconstruction?

6. Which types of words are used to compare two languages in order to determine if they are related and why are these terms particularly suited for this task?
7. What is the main aim of diachronic linguistics?
 - (a) The aim of diachronic linguists is the description and explanation of language change over time.
 - (b) The aim of diachronic linguists is the description and explanation of language.
 - (c) The aim of diachronic linguists is the explanation of the origin of language itself.
8. Which two main factor groups cause language change?
 - (a) Internal factors (language changes from within, e.g. change in the vowel system) and external factors (language is changed from the outside, e.g. through language contact)
 - (b) Causal factors (definite reasons for language change) and probable factors (likely reasons for language change)
 - (c) Light factors (factors that only lightly affect language) and heavy factors (factors that strongly influence the workings of language)
9. What does it mean to say that a language is analytic?
10. Who inhabited England before the Romans and later the Germanic tribes arrived?
 - (a) Jutes
 - (b) Huns
 - (c) Celts
 - (d) Anglians
11. When did the Romans leave England?
 - (a) 400BC
 - (b) 43
 - (c) 410

12. What were the Germanic tribes that began to settle in England in 450?
- (a) Jutes, Frisians, Angles, and Saxons
 - (b) Scandinavians and Celts
 - (c) Romans and Kents
13. Why did the Latin brought to England by the Romans only have a very weak influence on Old English?
- (a) The Romans and the Germanic tribes did not interact much.
 - (b) The Germanic tribes did not want to include Latin words into their language.
 - (c) The Romans had already left when the Germanic tribes arrived.
14. When and why did Old English come into contact with Latin?
- (a) 410 when the Romans left England
 - (b) During the 6th to the 8th century due to the christianization of England.
 - (c) During the 5th century due to travelling merchants.
15. Decide whether the following statements are true or false.
- (a) The noun system of OE had more cases than ModE.
 - (b) The Great English Vowel Shift affected all short vowels of Middle English.
 - (c) The arriving Germanic tribes ended the Roman occupation of England.
 - (d) ModE is an analytic language.
 - (e) English belongs to the North Germanic branch of languages.
16. Which Germanic language has had a very strong influence on English starting in the 9th century?
- (a) Old German
 - (b) Old high German
 - (c) Old Norse
17. What happened when the case endings in Old English disappeared and what was likely a important factor for the break down of the case system?
18. What is the core source of the English lexicon?
- (a) Germanic words that survived since Old English
 - (b) Vocabulary adopted from Latin, French and other European tongues
 - (c) Words from Russian due to prolonged diplomatic exchange
 - (d) Words that were adopted into English during the expansion of the British Empire