

Wonders of Words: A Linguistics Challenge

Linguistics · Answer Key · 18 Questions

1. What part of your mouth do you use to make the 'p' sound in 'pat'?

- A) Your tongue behind your teeth
- B) Your lips together**
- C) Your throat
- D) Your soft palate

2. Which of these is a type of language where words change their ending to show their job in a sentence (like 'dog' changing to 'dogs')?

- A) Isolating language
- B) Agglutinative language
- C) Inflectional language**
- D) Polysynthetic language

3. What is the scientific study of the meaning of words called?

- A) Phonetics
- B) Syntax
- C) Morphology
- D) Semantics**

4. Which of these is NOT a way that languages can be grouped together by linguists?

- A) By the sounds they use
- B) By their age or how old they are**
- C) By how they are written
- D) By similar grammar and vocabulary

5. What is the smallest unit of sound in a language that can change the meaning of a word, like the 'p' and 'b' in 'pat' and 'bat'?

- A) Morpheme
- B) Phoneme**
- C) Grapheme
- D) Syllable

6. In linguistics, what is 'syntax' mainly concerned with?

- A) The meaning of individual words
- B) How words are combined to form sentences**
- C) The history of words
- D) The study of different speech sounds

7. Which is an example of a language family, meaning a group of languages that have descended from a common ancestor?

- A) Mandarin
- B) Spanish**
- C) English
- D) Swahili

8. What is the term for a word that sounds the same as another word but has a different meaning, like 'to', 'too', and 'two'?

- A) Homograph
- B) Homonym**
- C) Synonym
- D) Antonym

9. The study of how words are formed and how they are built from smaller parts is called:

- A) Phonology
- B) Pragmatics
- C) Morphology**
- D) Etymology

10. What is the scientific study of the patterns of sounds in a language called?

- A) Acoustic phonetics
- B) Phonology**
- C) Articulatory phonetics
- D) Auditory phonetics

11. When an older word or phrase is used to describe something new or modern, what is this process called?

- A) Neologism
- B) Borrowing
- C) Archaisim**
- D) Semantic shift

12. What is the term for a language that is being learned and used by a group of people who didn't have a common language before, often developing in trade situations?

- A) Pidgin**
- B) Creole
- C) Lingua franca
- D) Dialect

13. Which type of word describes a word that sounds like the noise it represents, like 'buzz' or 'meow'?

- A) Metaphor
- B) Onomatopoeia**
- C) Alliteration
- D) Simile

14. What is the study of the history and origin of words called?

- A) Morphology
- B) Semantics
- C) Etymology**
- D) Phonetics

15. What is the scientific study of how we produce speech sounds called?

- A) Auditory phonetics
- B) Acoustic phonetics
- C) Articulatory phonetics**
- D) Phonology

16. Which of these is a type of language where words are typically short and don't change their endings much to show their grammatical function?

- A) Inflectional language
- B) Agglutinative language
- C) Isolating language**
- D) Polysynthetic language

17. What is the term for a language that has become a standardized, official language used for communication between groups of people who speak different native languages?

- A) Pidgin
- B) Creole
- C) Lingua franca**
- D) Dialect

18. When a word's meaning changes over time, for example, 'nice' originally meaning 'ignorant' but now meaning 'pleasant', what is this linguistic change called?

- A) Neologism
- B) Semantic shift**
- C) Borrowing
- D) Archaism