

**2015 International History Olympiad  
Historical Linguistics Exam  
75 Questions – 40 Minutes**

**Scoring System: The scoring will be 2 points for a correct answer, 0 for a blank, and minus 1 for an incorrect response.**

**Test Distribution**

Languages and Language Families (1-35)

Historical Linguistic Terms (36-45)

Languages in History (46-60)

Historical Linguistics Problems (61-65)

Writing Systems (66-70)

History of Linguistics (71-75)

**Section 1 – Languages and Language Families (1-35)**

1. Which of the following is an extinct branch of the Indo-European language family?  
A) Anatolian            B) Assamese            C) Slavic            D) Celtic
2. Which of the following is a language isolate?  
A) Romanian            B) Basque            C) Icelandic            D) Romansh
3. Which canton of Switzerland is where you would find the highest percentage of Romansh speakers?  
A) Zurich            B) Graubunden            C) Vaud            D) Valais
4. Which of the following is a Romance language?  
A) German            B) Bulgarian            C) Portuguese            D) Danish
5. Which of the following is a language primarily spoken by members of an ethnic group that originated in Northern India and now live primarily in Europe and the Americas?  
A) Telugu            B) Kannada            C) Romani            D) Malayalam
6. After English and Sinhalese, which is the next most-widely spoken language on Sri Lanka?  
A) Hindi            B) Dutch            C) Tamil            D) Bengali
7. Which is not considered a language or dialect grouping in the Sino-Tibetan Family?  
A) Mandarin            B) Cantonese            C) Wu            D) Lao
8. Which language has the most native speakers?  
A) Greek            B) Italian            C) Turkish            D) Spanish
9. The Roman Emperor Claudius compiled a dictionary of which language, formerly spoken in much of Northern Italy?  
A) Scythian            B) Faliscan            C) Celtiberian            D) Etruscan
10. Which is a member of the Uralic language family?  
A) Slovak            B) Slovene            C) Hungarian            D) Polish

11. The linguist Edward Vajda has proposed which language family of languages native to both the Eastern and Western hemispheres?  
A) Sibero-Alaskan    B) Dene–Yeniseian    C) Beringian    D) Mongol-Tlingit
12. Nearly 50% of the world’s population natively speaks a language of which family?  
A) Sino-Tibetan    B) Austroasiatic    C) Afroasiatic    D) Indo-European
13. Which language family is native to the country of Georgia?  
A) Kartvelian    B) Nostratic    C) Mon-Khmer    D) Kordofanian
14. Which language is an official language of Paraguay, and is a language native to South America?  
A) Hopi    B) Tupi    C) Guarani    D) Quechua
15. Which language family contains both Malagasy and Hawaiian?  
A) Australian    B) Austrian    C) Austro-Asiatic    D) Austronesian
16. Which language has the world’s greatest number of native speakers?  
A) English    B) Spanish    C) Mandarin    D) French
17. Which language is spoken most widely among the native population of Hong Kong?  
A) Mandarin    B) Tibetan    C) Manchurian    D) Cantonese
18. Which obscure language is still spoken by just a few people on the island of Hokkaido?  
A) Avestan    B) Ainu    C) Chamorro    D) Yapese
19. Which two languages are considered most mutually intelligible?  
A) Norwegian & Swedish    B) German and English    C) German and Dutch  
D) Swedish & Finnish
20. Occitan is sometimes considered a dialect of which other language?  
A) Spanish    B) Italian    C) French    D) Sardinian
21. Which extinct branch of Indo-European was once spoken in Western China?  
A) Kalmyk    B) Buryat    C) Yakut    D) Tocharian
22. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of which language is closest to its 14<sup>th</sup> century version?  
A) English    B) French    C) Icelandic    D) Swedish
23. Which is a major native language family of North America?  
A) Algonquin    B) Quechua    C) Mari    D) Uralic
24. The words “chocolate” and “avocado” derive from which language spoken by the Aztecs?  
A) Moche    B) Mayan    C) Nahuatl    D) Quechua
25. Which language contains words that use click sounds to convey meaning?  
A) Persian    B) Xhosa    C) Swahili    D) Italian
26. Which language is a common lingua franca in Uzbekistan?  
A) Chinese    B) Russian    C) Hindi    D) Turkmen

27. Of the following, which language has the smallest sound inventory (i.e. the number of vowels and consonants it uses)?  
 A) Armenian      B) Latin      C) Hawaiian      D) English
28. Which is a common areal feature of the languages of Southeast Asia?  
 A) Monosyllables      B) Clicks      C) retroflexes      D) agglutination
29. Which is the only Semitic language commonly written with the Latin alphabet?  
 A) Arabic      B) Ge'ez      C) Armenian      D) Maltese
30. Which language is related to Turkish?  
 A) Greek      B) Georgian      C) Kyrgyz      D) Tajik
31. Which country is where Warlpiri is natively spoken?  
 A) Japan      B) Australia      C) France      D) Mexico
32. Which of the following is a Slavic language native to Germany?  
 A) Serbian      B) Sorbian      C) Slovak      D) Moldovan
33. Which is the most commonly spoken Celtic language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?  
 A) Scottish      B) Welsh      C) Manx      D) Cornish
34. Which languages are native to Nigeria?  
 A) Yoruba and Igbo      B) Swahili and Arabic      C) Ge'ez and Amharic  
 D) Zulu and Xhosa
35. Tok Pisin is the most widely used language in...?  
 A) Papua New Guinea      B) East Timor      C) Indonesia      D) New Zealand

## Section 2 - Historical Linguistic Terms (36-45)

36. Which German word is cognate with the English word "brother"?  
 A) Bratwurst      B) Bruder      C) Schwester      D) Badewanne
37. Which two sounds are allophones?  
 A) The /s/ sound at the end of the word "cats" and the /z/ sound at the end of the word "dogs"  
 B) The /w/ sound in "word" and the /y/ sound in the word "yellow"  
 C) The /th/ sound in "the" and the /θ/ sound in "thought"  
 D) The sounds produced by the letter "O" in "rod" and "road"
38. Which word begins with a voiced consonant?  
 A) History      B) Bowl      C) Quiz      D) Test
39. Technically speaking, English words that begin with a vowel are not pronounced beginning with a vowel, but with what sound that obstructs air in the back of your mouth?  
 A) Guadalcanal      B) Glottal Stop      C) Plosive      D) Lateral

40. Which is an example of a “phoneme”?  
 A) “berry” in the word “Cranberry”      C) “PH” as in “Phoneme”  
 B) “Cran” in the word “Cranberry”      D) “neme” in the word “phoneme”
41. Which English word is a borrowing from Swedish?  
 A) Spaghetti      B) Champagne      C) Smorgasbord      D) Wonton
42. Which word begins with a fricative?  
 A) Word      B) Begins      C) With      D) Fricative
43. Which language underwent the Great Vowel Shift in the Middle Ages?  
 A) English      B) French      C) German      D) Russian
44. The rules and principles that govern sentence structure and word order in a language are collectively known as what?  
 A) Morphology      B) Phonology      C) Constructs      D) Syntax
45. Symbols such as ~ and ¨ which are used to modify letters are known as  
 A) Philology      B) Syntax      C) Modals      D) Diacritics

### Section 3 - Languages in History (46-60)

46. Which language was a language Jesus Christ spoke fluently?  
 A) Akkadian      B) Aramaic      C) Coptic      D) Nabatean
47. The Treaty of Tordesillas meant that...?  
 A) French would become more widely spoken throughout South America  
 B) Western South America would become Spanish-speaking and Brazil would be Portuguese speaking  
 C) Swedish would not be a major language in South America  
 E) The pope would henceforth not use Latin or Italian
48. Who was the only member of the Ptolemeic Dynasty in Egypt to speak Egyptian?  
 A) Pompey      B) Ptolemy III      C) Alexander the Great      D) Cleopatra VII
49. Which work of literature was written in Old English?  
 A) Canterbury Tales      B) Hamlet      C) Paradise Lost      D) Beowulf
50. Of the four following choices, the most likely site of where Proto Indo-European actually would have once been spoken is in present-day:  
 A) Italy      B) India      C) Ukraine      D) Norway
51. Which man was a British lexicographer, meaning that he compiled a dictionary?  
 A) John Keats      B) Samuel Johnson      C) Edmund Spenser      D) Charles Dickens
52. The discovery of which object allowed Egyptologists to read hieroglyphic inscriptions?  
 A) Phaistos Disc      B) Stonehenge      C) Narmer Palette      D) Rosetta Stone
53. Over the past six millennia, which has NOT been one of the primary Semitic languages of the Mideast?  
 A) Aramaic      B) Akkadian      C) Arabic      D) Sumerian

54. Which island is considered to be the ancestral homeland of all the Polynesian languages?  
 A) New Zealand      B) Fiji      C) Taiwan      D) Honshu
55. A type of creole is the most common language spoken in which country?  
 A) Canada      B) Cuba      C) Haiti      D) Bahamas
56. The inability to correctly pronounce the Spanish word for parsley prompted a massacre where?  
 A) Trinidad      B) Antigua      C) Dominican Republic      D) Puerto Rico
57. Which erudite US president was famous for a party trick where he simultaneous wrote in Latin in one hand and in Greek in the other?  
 A) Bill Clinton      B) George W. Bush      C) George Washington      D) James Garfield
58. The outcome of which battle limited the spread of the Arabic language in Europe?  
 A) Hattin      B) Manzikert      C) Tours      D) Lechfeld
59. Which language was used in World War II to send coded messages in the Pacific Theater?  
 A) Icelandic      B) Navajo      C) Zulu      D) Lenape
60. Which language was most widely spoken by Jews in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries?  
 A) Hebrew      B) English      C) Yiddish      D) Slovak

#### Section 4 - Historical Linguistics Problems (61-65)

61. Which is the most likely reconstruction of a hypothetical proto-language word that gave rise to the following hypothetical words in daughter languages: babu, pabu, baku, babo  
 A) pabo      B) paku      C) babu      D) babo
62. Which types of words are least likely to change in time?  
 A) Cardinal numbers 1-10      B) Greetings, such as "Hello"  
 C) Cooking terms      D) Words for trade goods
63. Which landforms are most conducive to development of many different dialects in a small geographic range?  
 A) Coastlines      B) Plains      C) Forests      D) Mountains
64. The Proto-Indo European word for "five" began with which sound?  
 A) "F as in Frank"      B) "P as in Peter"      C) "G as in Girl"      D) "H as in Henrietta"
65. Grimm's law states that as Proto-Indo European became Germanic...  
 A) the sound for "Th" as in "This" became extinct  
 B) D sounds became "th" sounds  
 C) The language became easier to speak  
 D) The vowel sound "ee" became "oy"

## Section 5 - Writing Systems (66-70)

66. Which is the fastest growing writing system in the United Kingdom?  
A) Egyptian Hieroglyphics   B) Mayan glyphs   C) Cuneiform   D) Emoji
67. Which of the following languages is written using an abjad?  
A) Arabic   B) Chinese   C) English   D) Japanese
68. The alphabet we currently use ultimately traces its origins back to which culture?  
A) Sarmatian   B) Sumerian   C) Phoenician   D) Persian
69. Which writing system was deciphered by the scholar Michael Ventris?  
A) Linear A   B) Linear B   C) Linear C   D) Linear D
70. The adopted Chinese characters used in the Japanese writing system are called what?  
A) Bunji   B) Fungi   C) Abuja   D) Kanji

## Section 6 - History of Linguistics (71-75)

71. Of the following four languages, records in which began to be written down earliest?  
A) Hebrew   B) Latin   C) German   D) Zulu
72. Which scholar gave a famous speech to the Asiatic Society in 1786 which is considered a watershed moment in the development of comparative linguistics?  
A) William Jones   B) Alexander Pope   C) Horace Smith   D) John Johnson
73. Which MIT linguist and left-wing philosopher is known for his theory of generative grammar?  
A) Joshua Katz   B) William Empson   C) Noam Chomsky   D) Peter Samuelsson
74. Which island is home to the greatest number of languages that have not been fully documented?  
A) Madagascar   B) Mauritius   C) New Guinea   D) Sumatra
75. Which American Indian leader invented a syllabary for his people's language?  
A) Sequoyah   B) Geronimo   C) Red Cloud   D) Osceola