

1. First assignment: Short introduction

In lieu of an answer key

The motivation for the first two parts of the exercise will be obvious, I imagine. It's always good to have a sense of who people are, why they're in class and what their expectations are. Every time I've taught this course, there have turned out to be interests, concerns and knowledge among the students that change what we do and how.

The third part, though, has more immediate motivation, one that goes to the book's subtitle, "what the past reveals about today's language". The things that students find difficult or puzzling are generally things that knowing the history of the language can help with, to varying degrees. In the set of responses I just graded while writing this note, the following issues came up more than once:

- German plurals
- German gender
- word order, especially verb final order
- various issues about regional differences
- modal particles

Other issues included comparisons within the Germanic family (how English and German compare, or Norwegian and German) and things like language and identity in the German-speaking world.

For all but one or two of the points raised, history is a or even the key perspective for understanding what's going on, and most of the issues are treated directly in the book.