

Language from the Stone Age

Everyone ¹*agree / agrees* that language is ²*always changing / changing always*. For example, words often disappear after a few years and new ones – especially among teenagers and young adults – ³*are appearing / have appeared* all the time. But speakers of English ⁴*are using / have been using* certain words ⁵*for / since* tens of thousands of years. That's what researchers at the University of Reading now ⁶*believe / are believing*.

Dr Mark Pagel, who is leading the research at the University of Reading, ⁷*thinks / is thinking* that words including 'I', 'we' and 'two' ⁸*are / have been* with us ⁹*for / since* the

Stone Age. Over the last few months, his team ¹⁰*is comparing / has been comparing* modern and ancient languages using computers and the results show that humans ¹¹*have said / have been saying* some words for the last 15,000 to 20,000 years. Since these findings, Dr Pagel ¹²*is also studying / has also been studying* how quickly words change or disappear. For example, numbers and pronouns ¹³*don't often change / aren't often changing* because we use them extremely often. However, less frequently used words ¹⁴*evolve / are evolving* more quickly and are also likely to die out very quickly.