

Lgcs 101: Historical Linguistics. Lecture Notes. Thurs 20 Oct 2011.

0. Announcements

-Read for Tuesday: Chapters 7 and 8, up to 8.6.

-Assignment 6: Trukese, due next Thursday.

-Grading scale (for everything):

A+ 100	A	94-99	A-	90-93
B+ 87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+ 77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+ 67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62

1. Systematic Correspondences. Comparing the words in (1), we can observe the **systematic correspondence** in (2).

(1)

Sanskrit	Greek	Latin	English
pitā	patēr	pater	father
pad-	pod-	ped-	foot
pānca	pénte		five

(2)

Sanskrit	Greek	Latin	English
p-	p-	p-	f-

Such systematic correspondences can be explained if the languages are **genetically related**: they derive from a single original language, called a **proto-language**.

What was the original sound? What sound could have developed most naturally into these **reflexes**?

More terminology: We say that the words in the five languages are **cognate**, that is, they are descended from the same single ancestral word. Each word is also called a **cognate**. The set of related words together is called a **cognate set**.

2. Comparative Reconstruction

Using the **comparative method**, we can reconstruct not just individual sounds, but the whole phonological system of the **proto-language**, both its phonemic inventory and its phonological rules.

Note that the term **proto-language** is used to for both (a) the once spoken ancestral language from which daughter languages descend, as well as (b) the reconstructed ancestral language of the languages under comparison.

Steps of the comparative method:

1. *Assemble cognates.* Place side by side a number of words with similar meanings from the compared languages.
2. *Establish sound correspondences.* Write out the full set of correspondences, including those where the sounds are identical all the way through. Group together all correspondences that have reflexes that are phonetically similar.
3. *Reconstruct the proto-sound.* For each correspondence, posit a plausible-looking sound in the proto-language, using the following criteria:
 - (a) *Naturalness.* The original sound must be plausible, based on what we know about phonological change.
 - (b) *Majority wins.* The sound that has the widest distribution in the daughter languages is most likely to be the original.
 - (c) *Minimal changes.* Posit the fewest number of sound changes. A sound that does **not** occur in any of the daughter languages should **not** be reconstructed unless there are very good reasons for doing so.
 - (d) *Phonological fit.* Choose reconstructions that are phonologically plausible. For example, in the case of two possible reconstructions, one with a symmetrical phonemic system and one asymmetrical, the reconstruction with the symmetrical system is more likely to be accurate.
 - (e) *Typological fit.* Choose systems that are typologically plausible.
4. *Reconstruct individual morphemes.* For each word surviving in the various daughters, determine what the form of that word must have been in the ancestral language.
5. *Reconstruct the phonological system.* Look at the result of (5) and (6) to determine what system of sounds the proto-language apparently had and what its phonological rules were.

3. Determining the status of phonetically similar correspondence sets

Consider the correspondences in the initial consonants in the forms below:

(3) Romance cognate sets

<i>Italian</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>French</i>	
battere	batir	bater	batr	'to beat'
bolla	bola	bola	bul	'ball/bubble'
bev-	beber	beber	<i>boire</i>	'to drink'
venire	benir	vir	vənir	'to come'
valle	bal'e	vale	val	'valley'
vestire	bestir	vestir	vetir	'to dress'

(4) b b b b

(5) v b v v

What proto-sound(s) should we reconstruct here?

Compare the phonetically similar sound correspondences below:

(6) Romance cognate sets

<i>Italian</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>French</i>	
kapra	kabra	kabra	ʃɛvr(ə)	'goat'
karo	karo	karu	ʃɛr	'dear'
kapo	kabo	kabu	ʃɛf	'head, top'
kolore	kolor	kor	kuloer	'color'
korere	korer	korer	kuri(r)	'to run'
kostare	kostar	kostar	kuter	'to cost'

(7) k k k ʃ

(8) k k k k

What proto-sound(s) should we reconstruct in this case?

Upshot: When two or more sound correspondences are phonetically similar ('overlapping'), you need to determine whether they correspond to the **same** proto-sound, or to **two distinct** proto-sounds. You can do this by determining whether the correspondences are in **complementary distribution**: if they are, then you have evidence of a single proto-sound undergoing a conditioned sound change.

4. Practice

(9) Middle Chinese

(10) Proto-Peninsular Spanish

(11) Proto-Numic

(12) Proto-Polynesian

5. Subgrouping

Within a language family, we can further **subgroup** languages that are more closely related to each other than to other languages of that family.

The main justification for subgrouping is **shared innovation**, and in particular: (a) more than one shared innovation, and (b) innovations that are not likely to occur independently, or to be the result of borrowing.

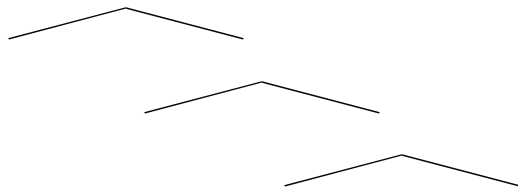
Note that **shared retentions** do not provide any evidence of subgrouping, even though they may result in shared similarities among daughter languages.

"Subgrouping can only be as successful as the reconstruction upon which it is based... if the reconstruction is wrong, there is a strong possibility that the subgrouping which depends on it will be wrong as well... Subgrouping is very much at the mercy of how accurate the reconstruction upon which it is based is." (Campbell 2006 pp. 198-199).

Assignment 6: Trukese. Problem Set from Professor Matthew Gordon, UCSB.

You have just taken a field trip to the band of islands in the Pacific where Trukese is spoken. You have visited four islands, on each of which a different variety of Trukese is spoken. Consider the following data produced by speakers of these four varieties and answer the questions that follow.

- Set up correspondence sets for all of the sounds occurring in the above words and reconstruct the proto-Trukese sound for each correspondence.
- Provide a list of sound changes for each variety of Trukese, including any crucial orderings.
- Reconstruct each word in proto-Trukese.
- Provide the apparent phonemic inventory for proto-Trukese.
- Based on **shared innovations**, provide the most plausible tree for Trukese. The tree is as follows; you just need to fill the blanks in with names.



- Provide **four** shared innovations that argue for your tree. The four changes can be evidence for any of the branchings in the tree.

Satawal	Sonsoral	Pullap	Moen	
ŋi:	ŋi:	ŋi:	ŋi:	‘tooth’
jæ:	jæ:	jæ:	jæ:	‘he’
ly:	ry:	ny:	ny:	‘coconut tree’
wa:	wa:	wa:	wa:	‘canoe’
ro:	so:	ro:	tʃo:	‘copra’
jit	jita	jit	jit	‘name’
tet	teta	tet	tet	‘peace’
ryt	ryty	ryt	ryt	‘breast’
far	fasa	far	fatʃ	‘write’
wuŋ	wuŋa	wuŋ	wuŋ	‘buttock’
mawul	mawuri	mawun	mawun	‘war’
gæri	gasi:	gæri	gætʃi	‘finger’
met	meta	met	met	‘what’
hæt	tati	hæt	sæt	‘cut’
rot	rota	rot	rot	‘water’
hat	tata	hat	sat	‘foot’
jæp	gæpi	jæp	jæp	‘heart’
lop	lopi	lop	lop	‘cross’
fær	fasi	fær	fætʃ	‘boat’
go:	go:	go:	go:	‘star’
ja:	ja:	ja:	ja:	‘ice’
maha	mata:	maha	masa	‘bird’
lyf	lyfi	lyf	lyf	‘dog’
hæ:	tæ:	hæ:	sæ:	‘leg’
sæŋ	sæŋa	sæŋ	sæŋ	‘tree’
lar	lara	lar	lar	‘sand’
hæsi	hæsi:	hæsi	hæsi	‘board’
so:	so:	so:	so:	‘finger nail’