Week 1: Introduction

1. Historical and comparative linguists study the origins and development of languages and relationships between languages.

2. Historical/comparative linguistics is an important area of study, since languages inevitably change over time: Neither for the better, nor for the worse, they simply change.

3. Change can occur at several levels.

4. An example from the Bible at different stages in English.

Modern English

Shortly afterwards the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you are another of them; your accent gives you away!’ (The New English Bible, 1961)

Early Modern English (1476-1700)

And after a while came vnto him they that stood by, and saide to Peter, Surely thou also are one of them, for they speech bewrayeth thee. (The King James Bible, 1611)

Middle English (1066-1476)

And a litil aftir, thei that stooden camen, and seiden to Petir, treuli thou art of hem; for thi speche makith thee knowun. (The Wycliff Bible, 14th century)

Old English (prior to 1066)

þa æfter lytlum fyrste genēalæton þa ðe þær stodon, cwædon to petre. Soðlice þu eart of hym, þyn spræc þe gesweotolað.

5. Some observable changes.

6. *From Early ME > ME*

   • Lexical:

      replacement of word bewrayeth ‘expose (a deception), malign’
• Syntactic:

subject-verb inversion eliminated ‘and after a while came vnto him they’ > ‘and after a while they came….’ (still obligatory in German)

• Morphological change:

‘thou art’ (singular familiar vs. ye/you plural, sg. formal) > ‘you are’ (morphological neutralization)

Third person singular verbal suffix –eth (as in bewrayeth) > -(e)s

• Borrowings:

Speech > accent (borrowing from Old French)

• Orthography:

[Not of central concern to historical linguists, except to the extent that it provides information about pronunciation; Historical linguists often rely on spelling to try to figure out pronunciation (more later]

vnto > unto: ‘v’ and ‘u’ used to represent same sound (‘v’ used initially and ‘u’ intervocalically) where realization as consonant or vowel is dependent on context)

7. Middle English > Early ME

• Grammatical change:

Loss of final –n in third person plural: stooden > stood, camen > came

• Borrowing:

3rd person plural object pronoun hem > them (borrowing from Old Norse)

8. OE > ME

• Lexical replacement of ðenēalæton ‘approached’, cwædon ‘said’ (archaic quoth), soðlice ‘truly’, gesweotolað ‘shows, reveals’

• Sound change

Sporadic loss of ‘r’ as in spræc > speech
Great vowel shift: /e/ > /i/, /o/ > /u/, /i/ > /aɪ/, /u/ > /au/
    Soðlice /soːθ/ > sooothly /suθ/
• Morphological

Loss of case endings: dative plural suffix –um is lost: æfter lytlum > after little
Loss of perfect ge- prefix: ǧenēalaþon, gesweotolað

• Orthographic:

Distinction between thorn (þ) and eth (ð) lost; both became ‘th’; Ash (æ) lost

9. Comparing Shakespeare (Early Modern English) with Modern English

Saw you the weird sisters? (Macbeth)
I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers (Henry V)
Macduff is fled to England (Macbeth)
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont (Othello)
He is torn with a bear (The Winter’s Tale)
He which hath no stomach to this fight, let him depart (Henry V)

10. Much of this course will be devoted to language change of various kinds in various languages

11. Genetic relationships between languages

12. English and German

English:  I came with a broken finger to the man.
German:  Ich bin mit einem gebrochenem Finger zum Mann gekommen.

13. There are many similarities between the English and German sentence

Lexical:
  German ‘Finger’ vs. English ‘finger’
  German ‘Mann’ vs. English ‘man’
  German ‘gekommen’ vs. English ‘came’
  German ‘gebrochenem’ vs. English ‘broken’

Sound:  German ‘Finger’ /ˈfinger/ vs. English ‘finger’ /ˈfinger/  
  German ‘gebrochenem’ /ˈɡebruːkən̩m/ vs. English ‘broken’ /ˈbrokən/  
  German ‘Mann’ /ˈmʌn/ vs. English ‘man’ /ˈmeɪn/  

Morphological:
  German ‘gebrochenem’ vs. English ‘broken’
Syntactic:

German ‘mit einem gebrochenem Finger’ vs. English ‘with a broken finger’

14. The similarities between German and English are not coincidental: German and English are closely related languages (both belong to the Germanic branch of Indo-European)

15. Language families

16. Some terminology

**Dialect:** a variety of speech which is mutually intelligible with another variety of speech

**Language:** a variety of speech which is not mutually intelligible with other such varieties (more humorously: a dialect with an army, since speech varieties are termed separate languages as opposed to dialects often on political rather than linguistic grounds, e.g. Swedish and Norwegian could be termed dialects of same language)

**Language family:** group of related languages

**Subgrouping:** internal classification of languages within families

**Subgroup:** group of languages within a family which are more closely related to each other than to other languages in family (also termed subfamily or branch)

17. Drawing family trees

18. Over time, languages change sufficiently to develop into separate languages; in this way a parent language gives rise to daughter languages

19. The parent language is termed a proto-language

20. By looking at languages belonging to the same subgroup we can hypothesize about the shape of the proto-language

21. A short example from Indo-European: the numbers 1-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wan</td>
<td>eːn</td>
<td>ains</td>
<td>òë</td>
<td>uno</td>
<td>adˈlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuː</td>
<td>tweː</td>
<td>tsvai</td>
<td>dø</td>
<td>due</td>
<td>dva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θiː</td>
<td>driː</td>
<td>dɾai</td>
<td>tswa</td>
<td>tre</td>
<td>trˈi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foːj</td>
<td>fɪr</td>
<td>fɪk</td>
<td>katʃ</td>
<td>kwatro</td>
<td>tʃetirˈe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faiv</td>
<td>fəif</td>
<td>fynf</td>
<td>sɛk</td>
<td>tʃiŋkwe</td>
<td>pˈlatj</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. All of these languages are genetically related, since there are clearly similarities in the phonological shapes of the words shared between all six languages.

23. Thus, all six languages belong to the same family, Indo-European.

24. Looking at these data, it looks like English, Dutch, and German share very similar properties; similarly, French and Italian share many phonological traits; Russian looks like the odd man out.

25. So, we can say that English, Dutch, and German are very closely related and share a parent language (proto-Germanic) to the exclusion of other languages.

26. Also, French and Italian share a parent language (proto-Romance).

27. Russian forms its own branch; because it is a single language, there is no need for an intermediate branch between it and Indo-European.

28. So, our final tree (at least in our brief example) looks like the following:

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        Proto Indo-European
           /       \
       Proto Germanic  Proto Romance
       /       \         /       \
   English  Dutch  German  French  Italian  Russian
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29. In reality, there are a lot more Indo-European languages than six and the structure of the Indo-European is considerably more complex.

30. We will return later to subgrouping and the procedures used for determining subgroups.

31. A very brief overview of the language families of the world

32. Some sources:

33. Large genetic groups (note that not all of these groups are well established; some are controversial and based on weaker evidence than others).
34. Australian

- Single genetic group with 258 lgs. (Eth.), of which almost 3/4 belong to the Pama Nyungan family
- Approx. 50 lgs. are already extinct and most are near extinction
- Largest languages in terms of numbers of speakers are Kala Yagaw Ya (3,000 on Torres Strait Island) and Western Desert (4,000 in Western Australia)

35. Indo-Pacific (Papuan)

- Over 700 lgs. spoken mainly in New Guinea, Central Solomons, Bouganville, Timor considered by some (Greenberg, Ruhlen) to be a single genetic group
- more conservatively viewed as 12 separate families (Wurm 1982)
- largest family is Trans New Guinea (over 550 lgs.)

36. Austric

- consists of 4 genetic groups which have not been convincingly demonstrated to be related
  a) Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien): consists of 32 languages/dialects spoken in parts of China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam
  b) Austro-Asiatic: 168 languages spoken in southeast Asia, includes Vietnamese
  c) Tai-Kadai (70 lgs), includes Thai
  d) Austronesian (1262 lgs.), spoken over a wide area, from Madagascar (Malagasy) to Taiwan

37. Sino-Tibetan

- Includes Sinitic branch (14 lgs.), including Chinese, and larger Tibeto-Burman (341 lgs.) branches, e.g. Tibetan.

38. Dravidian

- 75 lgs. broken into 4 subbranches, includes Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam

40. Altaic (65 lgs)

- More conservatively treated as three separate language families: Turkic, Mongolian, Manchu-Tungusic

41. Uralic-Yukaghir (38 lgs. plus Yukaghir which may be an isolate) including Finnish, Hungarian

42. Chukotko-Kamchatkan (5 lgs)
43. Indo-European

- 144 lgs. divided into 10 branches: Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Greek, Albanian, Balto-Slavic, Armenian, Indo-Iranian, Anatolian, Tocharian (the last two are extinct)

44. Caucasian

- Consists of two groups: South Caucasian and North Caucasian

45. Khoisan (29 lgs.), includes click languages

46. Niger-Congo (1489 lgs.), includes Bantu lgs. like Swahili

47. Nilo-Saharan (199 lgs.)

48. Afro-Asiatic (372 lgs.), includes Hausa, Arabic, Hebrew

49. American Indian (really a geographical cover terms for a lot of language families)

   a) N. American (between 7 and 62 families depending on source)
   b) Central American (9 families spoken predominantly in Central America
   c) South American (500 lgs. in over 30 groups, some of which are very small)

50. Isolates (i.e. languages with proven relatives), e.g. Korean, Japanese, Ainu