

Reconstruction of morphology and syntax: Examples

- (1) Expressing the meaning ‘with’ in languages of the Balto-Finnic family:
Comparative reconstruction of a morpheme (and syntactic implications)

<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Karelian</i>	<i>Veps</i>	<i>Estonian</i>	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Livonian</i>
kanssa	kanssa	-ka	[-ka]	ka:sa	ka:zu
(word)	(word)	(suffix on N)	(suffix on N)	(word)	(word)

- (a) Was the proto-Balto-Finnic form meaning ‘with’ more likely to be a free form (word) or an affix, and why?
 (b) Can we reconstruct what this morpheme may have looked like?
 ... [spoiler space] ...

Based on a fuller range of data, Campbell (1998) reconstructs *kans(s)a?

- (c) What sound change (and other) rules are needed in each language?
 (d) This data set looks intriguing to consider from the perspective of subgrouping, but...
 • Problem: No good evidence here for shared innovation that isn’t a very common sound change

- (2) Adjective–noun word order in Romance: Internal reconstruction(?) of a syntactic pattern

	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>Romanian</i>
Neutral order	N–A	N–A	N–A	N–A	N–A
Exceptional order*	A–N	A–N	A–N	A–N	A–N

**Exceptional order* = found with a small number of highly frequently occurring adjectives

- (a) If we are seeing an ‘archaism’ here, which word order is it likely to be? If so, what word order might we want to reconstruct for Proto-Romance?
 (b) Are there other possible explanations for why there might be a small number of exceptional cases? [Hint: Should we be doing *internal* reconstruction or *comparative* reconstruction here?]

Finnish, Romance examples are from Campbell (1998)

- (3) An interesting, more complex example: Kartvelian case marking (Harris & Campbell 1995)

- Useful summary in a handout by George Walkden, found here (see §3.1):

<<http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/george.walkden/l111/Mich8.pdf>>

References

- Campbell, Lyle. 1998. *Historical linguistics: An introduction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
 Harris, Alice, & Lyle Campbell. 1995. *Historical syntax in cross-linguistic perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.