

Homework assignment #6: Internal reconstruction, lexicostatistics

Due Monday, November 12

Reminders:

- You may complete and turn in a homework assignment in groups of up to 4 members
- Make sure you understand the material yourself, even if you are working in a group
- You/your group may discuss the assignment with other people/groups, but if you do, please acknowledge your collaborators

(1) Internal reconstruction: San Juan La Laguna Tz'utujil (Campbell 1998)

San Juan La Laguna is a principal dialect of Tz'utujil, a Mayan language of Guatemala. The forms in column 3 have a preposed hyphen ([-...]) because they would not be used without additional morphemes, but this fact is not relevant for your analysis. Also, assume that all forms in column 3 have the **same suffix**, even though there are some slight differences in the translations.

- (a) Use the techniques of internal reconstruction to reconstruct an earlier, more consistent form of the language.
- (b) State the diachronic changes that are needed to produce the attested forms, given your reconstruction.
- (c) Present your reasoning: Why did you choose the solution you chose, and reject other possible hypotheses?

te:p	‘cold’	-te:wil	‘coldness’
kop	‘hard’	-kowil	‘hardness’
ule:p	‘land’	-ule:wil	‘(pertaining to the) land’
tap	‘crab’	-tapil	‘(pertaining to the) crab’
tʃkop	‘bird’	-tʃkopil	‘(pertaining to the) bird’

(2) Lexicostatistics: Use the Swadesh 200-word basic vocabulary list (Table 8.1, *IHL* p 141).

- (a) For this part of the question, you may wish to use a dictionary to look at the etymologies of words. Recommended: *Access the Oxford English Dictionary Online* from a UNC connection at: <<http://www.oed.com/>>
 - Find at least one term on this list that was borrowed into English from a Scandinavian language. (You should know how to find these quite easily, based on our class discussion of Scandinavian/Old Norse loans into English. Talk to your classmates if you can't remember.) Confirm the etymology with a dictionary.
 - Find at least one term on this list that was borrowed into English from French or Latin. There appear to be several of these per column, so even if you don't know French or Latin it shouldn't be hard to find one by checking etymologies. Again, confirm the etymology with a dictionary.
- (b) In class, we talked about how including both ‘leg’ and ‘foot’ on the list might be problematic, because some languages might use the same word for both. We also talked about ‘snow’ as a problem for a universal list, since not all regions have snow. Find at least one more term or term pair that would seem to be problematic for a list of “basic” vocabulary, and explain your choice.