Today's topics:

- Semantic change

- Lexical change

- Intro to reconstruction

Genetically related languages and comparative reconstruction

- *IHL*, p 4: "If we compare two different words used by two different groups of people speaking different languages, and we find that they express a similar (or identical) meaning by using similar (or identical) sounds, then we need to ask ourselves this simple question: Why?"

- Answers we discussed:
  (a) Chance relationship
  (b) Borrowing
  (c) **Genetic relationship** — common source

Genetically related languages and comparative reconstruction

- If we can assemble information from genetically related languages, we can **reconstruct** (form hypotheses about) what their common ancestor language was like

- Starting point: Reconstructing **sounds** and **words** of the proto-language
  - Morphology, syntax, etc., can be reconstructed too; we'll discuss this a little later

Genetically related languages and comparative reconstruction

- What do we need in order to reconstruct sounds and words?
  - Sets of **cognate forms** (=descended from same proto-language form) from as many of the descendant languages as possible

Example: 'wolf' in Romance languages

French	Spanish	Galician	Portuguese	Italian	Romanian
[lu]	[loβo]	*lobo*	[lobu]	[lupo]	[lup]

Genetically related languages and comparative reconstruction

- How do we tell when forms in the daughter languages are cognate?
  - Similar sound
  - Similar meaning

- What counts as 'similar sound'?
  - We can take into account our understanding of types of sound change into account in making this decision

- What counts as 'similar meaning'?

Semantic change

- Goal: To develop a basic understanding of some of the ways in which the meaning of a form can change over time

- Examples: See data handout
  - What **categories** of semantic change can we propose, based on these examples?

Semantic change

- Some commonly discussed categories

A. Retains some connection to original meaning
  - Broadening
  - Narrowing
  - Semantic split (bifurcation)

B. Connection to original meaning lost
  - Semantic shift (…via broadening + narrowing?)

C. Connotations of change?
  - Amelioration — becomes more positive
  - Pejoration — becomes more negative

Semantic change

- Of the semantic types just listed, which is likely to pose the most problems in determining cognate sets? Why?
    - The less obvious the semantic relationship, the weaker the evidence for cognate status (unless, perhaps, the sound correspondences are already very well understood)

Lexical change

- Semantic change = change in the meaning of a form

- **Lexical** change = change in the **contents of the lexicon**
  - What circumstances could cause a lexical item to be **lost**?
  - What circumstances could cause a lexical item to be **added**?

Lexical change

- Some ways of adding new forms to the lexicon
  - Borrowing (*IHL* prefers the term 'copying')
  - Creating new words
    - Compounds, etc.
    - Semantic change types discussed above

- See examples on data handout

Borrowing and reconstruction

- What kinds of problems does borrowing pose for reconstructing a proto-language?
  - Borrowing replaces a cognate word with something new, meaning the language at hand doesn't contribute to figuring out what the proto-language form was like
  - Borrowing from a related language can be **hard to diagnose** ——> this might lead to incorrect hypotheses about what kinds of sound change have occurred in the language

Summary: Semantic and lexical change, and implications for reconstruction

- We need to find cognates in related languages in order to reconstruct proto-language forms

- Semantic change means that cognates may not always have identical meanings
  - But, now we have some idea of plausible differences

- Lexical change means that cognates may not always be available
  - Borrowing may make it hard to tell what the real cognates are

Next topic: Comparative reconstruction

Example: 'wolf' in Romance languages

French Spanish Galician Portuguese Italian Romanian

[lu]   [loβo]   *lobo*   [lobu]   [lupo]   [lup]

- Based on this information, and what you know about types of sound change, what might we conclude about the proto-Romance word for 'wolf'? (How does this compare to Latin?)
  - This is a relatively easy example; next time, we will start to consider more complex situations