

Today's topic:

- **Reconstructing morphology and syntax**

Review: Internal reconstruction

- Results of the exercise on Paamese (IHL Ch 7, ex 1)

Reconstructing morphology

- Use the **comparative method** to reconstruct protolanguage morphemes
- Carry out **synchronic morphological analysis** on a protolanguage
- Apply the methods of **internal reconstruction** to morphology

Reconstructing morphology

- Can we use the **comparative method** to reconstruct protolanguage morphemes?
 - We already have been, in some cases (when some of the words in our cognate sets are single morphemes)
 - We could also form cognate sets that include bound morphemes, and try to reconstruct those explicitly

Reconstructing morphology

- Can we do **synchronic morphological analysis** on a protolanguage?
 - Why not! (if we have enough forms)
 - Conclusions would generally be tentative, but that is true of other aspects of a protolanguage as well

Reconstructing morphology

- Can the methods of **internal reconstruction** be applied to morphology?
- What kind of phenomenon do we need to find in order to apply internal reconstruction?
 - Is it plausible to find this phenomenon in the domain of morphology?

Reconstructing morphology

- We've already talked about the guiding principle in internal reconstruction that we may be able to posit a prelanguage with a more closely **one-to-one** sound-meaning correspondence
 - This principle obviously has consequences for the morphology of the prelanguage
- The usual warnings about internal reconstruction are relevant for morphology too

Reconstructing syntax

- A key to doing internal reconstruction is finding **inconsistency** in the patterns of a language
 - What might be inconsistencies in **syntax** that we can use in this way?

Reconstructing syntax

Inconsistencies in syntax

- Word order: within the same phrase type
 - Example: Romance N/A order (data set)
- The way this approach is usually implemented is to suggest that ‘minor’ or highly restricted patterns are **relics** of an older stage of the syntactic grammar
 - Is there evidence from English that examples of such a situation exist?

Reconstructing syntax

Inconsistencies in syntax

- Criticism: Are there other reasons for an ‘exceptional’ pattern to exist, other than because it is a relic?
- Still, this method may be worth considering, especially if there is corroborating evidence

Reconstructing syntax

Inconsistencies in syntax

- Word order: between different phrases
 - This is an inconsistency if we assume that having a uniform X-bar structure for all phrases is the ‘consistent’ pattern

Reconstructing syntax

Inconsistencies in syntax

- Criticism: Some languages remain “typologically inconsistent” for centuries; are we justified in seeing this as a “transitional” stage?

Reconstructing syntax

Comparative reconstruction

- In doing comparative reconstruction on words and phonemes, what do we need?
 - Cognate sets, from which we extract sound correspondences
- What is the equivalent in syntactic reconstruction of cognate sets and of sound correspondences?
 - Do we expect to find **cognate sentences** in related languages?

Reconstructing syntax

Simplified summary of Harris & Campbell (1995) on syntactic correspondence (via Thomason 2006)

- Sentences in related languages correspond if:
 - (a) they mean the same [kind of] thing
 - (b) the **grammatical morphemes** crucially involved in the syntactic structure under consideration are cognate
- Crucial point: the goal is to reconstruct **patterns**, not specific sentences
- Example via [Walkden handout](#)

Reconstructing syntax

- What kinds of processes can obscure systematic sound-change relationships between languages?

Reconstructing syntax

- What kinds of processes can obscure systematic sound-change relationships between languages?
 - Borrowing—two forms are not truly cognate and do not show systematic correspondences
 - Analogical change — a change applies to some special form, not on the basis of systematic sound change
- Are similar interfering factors relevant for syntactic change as well?

Reconstructing syntax

- Are similar interfering factors relevant for syntactic change as well?
 - Borrowing / change through contact
 - Reanalysis / same surface form now has a different syntactic representation

Reconstructing syntax

- General criticism of the enterprise:
More than one set of syntactic rules can produce the same surface word order, so how much about the syntactic grammar can we actually reconstruct?
 - It may simply be the case that more data leads to stronger conclusions
 - The more examples of surface syntax we have, the more possible it may become to narrow down what syntactic grammar is compatible with all of them
- Syntactic reconstruction is possible in principle
 - Determining correspondences is difficult