

## Historical linguistics: Phonology (part 1)

### I. Historical phonology

- (1) What sources of information do we have available about the sound system or pronunciation of older forms of a language?
  - (a) **Written records** — but how were older forms of the language pronounced?
    - Suppose English were a dead language. How is *light* pronounced?
    - Does it help if we know that Japanese borrowed this word as ライト?
    - Does it help if we know that there is a variant spelling, *lite*?
  - (b) Other ways of reconstructing the history of a language
    - **Dialect comparison** — essentially, doing comparative reconstruction (see below) on dialects to reconstruct a point of origin
    - **Internal reconstruction** — trying to simplify the reconstructed older form of a language, working on the assumption that morphemes which alternate today had one consistent source (looks a lot like phonological analysis sometimes...)
  - (c) **Comparative reconstruction** — Investigating the ancestor of related languages
    - Question: What is Japanese related to, if anything?

### II. Chronology and terminology

- (2) Classical Japanese — 文語 *bungo* ‘literary language’
  - Survived as a literary language into the modern period (19th/20th centuries) — compare the role of Latin vs. Romance vernaculars in the medieval period
  - Quick summary chronology (other language names, etc., also used):

	Language name	Roughly corresponding hist. period	
<i>bungo</i> 文語 ‘classical J’	Old Japanese	Nara	710-794
	Early Middle Japanese	Heian	794-1185
	(Late) Middle Japanese	Muromachi/Kamakura	1185-1603
	Early Modern Japanese	Edo	1603-1868
<i>gendaigo</i> 現代語 ‘modern J’	Modern Japanese	Meiji-present	1868–

### III. Phonology of Early Modern Japanese: Portuguese materials

- (3) Japanese written in romanization (based on Portuguese orthography); 16th century
  - João Rodrigues and other Portuguese missionaries
    - Dictionary and grammar of Japanese
    - Collection of *Aesop’s Fables* — see data-set handout
- (4) Evidence for:
  - (a) Dialect differences, word usage, etc.
  - (b) Oldest attested written examples of many Japanese words

- (c) However, vowel length not systematically represented (except <ô> )  
 (d) Distinction between <o> and <ô> — evidence for the midpoint of a sound change that is not directly represented in kana: /a+u/ → [ɔ:] (later → [o:])

#### IV. About the "ha-row" kana sounds 「はひふへほ」

- (5) Morphophonological alternations (internal reconstruction)  
 (a) Rendaku — what happens to /h/?  
 (b) What usually happens to Sino-Japanese /h/ when it follows a nasal?  
 (6) The kana chart consonant order is linguistically motivated — except for *h*  
 (NB: based on Sanskrit tradition)  
*k s t n “h” m | y r w*  
 (7) Riddle from the 16th century (transliterated according to modern pronunciation)

Original:	はは (母) には	二度	あひたれども
Transliteration(?):	<u><b>haha</b></u> -ni-wa	ni-do	a -i.ta r-e do mo
Gloss:	<i>mother</i> -DAT-TOP	<i>2-times</i>	<i>meet-PAST(?)</i> -although
	ちち (父) には	一度も	あはず
	<u><b>titi</b></u> -ni-wa	iti-do mo	aw-az-u
	<i>father</i> -DAT-TOP	<i>1-time even</i>	<i>meet-NEG-NONPAST</i>

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_ — Why?

- (8) How are the *ha*-row kana transliterated in Portuguese missionary materials? (see above)  
 (9) And there's still more to the story...

- (a) Some case markers and postpositions are written with “irregular” kana spellings

topic	[wa]	は <ha>
goal	[e]	へ <he>

- (b) Post-WWII spelling reform changed how certain verbs are spelled in kana:

Verb ‘to meet’ (the character 会 is read [a] here)

“Historical” spelling	会ふ	会はない	会へば	会ひます
Post-war spelling	会う	会わない	会えば	会います
Modern pronunciation	[au]	[awanai]	[aeba]	[aimasu]

- What analysis did we develop for the root-final consonant of verbs of this type?

- (10) Putting it all together, what sound changes affected the sounds originally spelled by the kana in the は row?

- (a) What was the original consonant in the syllables spelled 「はひふへほ」 ?  
 (b) What happened to this consonant in word-initial position?  
 (c) What happened to this consonant in word-internal position (including “particles”)?