

April 25, 2003

CLASS 1: The External History of English

‘Our Father’ (Old English)

Fæder ure, þu þe eart in heofonum, si þin nama gehalgod. To becume þin rice.
Gewurð þin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum. Urne gedæghwamlican
hlaf syle us to dæg. And forgyf us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgyfað urum
gyltendum. And ne gelyd þu us on costmunge, ac alys us of yfele. Amen.

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Excerpt from Prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (Late Middle English)

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
When April, with its sweet showers
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
Hath in the Ram his halfe course yronne,
Has pierced the drought of March to the root,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
And small fowles maken melodye,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
And small birds make melodies
Of which virtue the flower is engendered;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
So priketh hem nature in hir corages —
When Zephirus, too, with his sweet breath
So does nature incite them in their hearts
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
Has inspired in every forest and field,
Then it is that people long to go on pilgrimages

Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene 1, Dagger soliloquy (Early Modern English)

Now o’er the one half-world
With Tarquin’s ravishing strides, towards his design
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
The curtain’d sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Pale Hecate’s offerings, and wither’d murder,
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
Alarum’d by his sentinel, the wolf,
And take the present horror from the time,
Whose howl’s his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
Which now suits with it.

What is language?

It is the **most complex communication system** known. It is also **unique to the human species**.

Crudely put, we can capture the way **language works** as follows:

linguistic forms (words/sentences) **activate thoughts/ideas** (meanings) **in mind of listener/reader**

It thus becomes clear that language consists of **component systems**:

Meanings: the semantic system
• concepts; what we know about the world
• ideas triggered by incoming language

Sounds: the phonological system
• makes words different from one another

Words: the morphological system and the lexicon
• provides labels for meanings

Phrases and sentences: the syntactic system
• blends meanings of words by stringing them together

Discourse: the text system
• organizes sentences into different kinds of texts

History of a language

Emergence:

We must first find out **when/where/how** the language emerged (or at least try to!).

Change:

We then look at the (change within the) language over the **period of its existence**.

- *all systems, from semantics to discourse, change over time*; consider for English:
 - lexical change/change in meaning of words (specific words, borrowing etc.)
 - major sound change through the Great Vowel Shift (1400-1600 CE)
 - change in morphological paradigms (Case, verb morphology)
 - change in word order/syntax (from OV to VO, loss of V2)
 - change in acceptability/use of language (from peasants to science)

Causes:

And finally we investigate what (could/would have) **caused language change**.

- *internal* or organic causes (e.g., ‘least effort’ pronunciation changes)
- *external* or socially-motivated causes (imitation of prestige language)

Language Families

Sir William Jones (1746-1794)

- judge and scholar of language
- stationed in India as part of British colonial administration
- studied Classical Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit
- noticed similarities among the three, too numerous to be coincidence

If these similarities are well-founded, they would involve the **geographical distances** separating (what we know today as) Greece, Italy, and India.

Jones' theory:

Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit are similar because they arose from a **common predecessor** or **ancestor language**. (Next class we will learn more about such **proto-languages**.)

Consider the numbers **1-10** in various languages:

	<u>Sanskrit</u>	<u>Cl. Greek</u>	<u>Latin</u>	<u>Basque</u>	<u>Turkish</u>
1	éka	heí:s	u:nus	bat	bir
2	dvá	dúo:	duo	bi	iki
3	trí	trei:s	tre:s	hiru	üç
4	catúr	téttares	quattuor	lau	dört
5	pánca	pénte	quinque	bost	beş
6	ḡaḡ	héx	sex	sei	alti
7	saptá	heptá	septem	zazpi	yedi
8	alfá	októ	octo:	zortzi	sekiz
9	náva	ennéa	novem	bederatzi	dokuz
10	dáça	déka	decem	hamar	on

Jones' observation led to **productive scholarship on the relationships** among languages.

First in **Europe and Near East** (19th century):

- *Indo-European* (Latin, German, English, Greek, Hindi)
- *Semitic* (Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic)
- *Finnic-Ugric* (Finnish, Hungarian, Estonian)

Then **rest of the world** (20th, 21st centuries):

- China, East Asia
- Africa
- Native American languages
- Pacific languages

Most of the world's languages can be classified as belonging to one or another language family. (The exact **classification** is still being debated and not our concern.) Good candidates can be found on the map depicting the **world's language families** (on the last page of this handout).

The **Indo-European** language family is the one interesting for us — at least because it includes English. Table 1 presents some information on its subgroupings:

Subgroup	Members	When spoken	Where spoken
Anatolian	Hittite Palaic Lydian Lycian	2000 BCE - 0	Turkey
Indo-Iranian	Sanskrit Avestan Hindi Urdu Punjabi Farsi Pashto Kurdish...	since 1000 BCE	N. India; Persia (Iran)
Greek	Classical Greek Modern Greek	since 13000 BCE	Greece; E. Mediterranean
Italic	Latin (+ modern descendants) Oscan Umbrian	since 500 BCE	Italy; W. Mediterranean
Celtic	Welsh Cornish Breton Irish Scots Gaelic Gaulish	since 400 CE	British Isles; parts of France
Germanic	English German Dutch Gothic Scandinavian lgs. (and many dialects)	since 400 CE	Northern Europe
Armenian	Armenian (2 dialects)	since 400 CE	Armenia
Tocharian	Tocharian A Tocharian B	700 - 900 CE	Chinese Turkestan
Balto-Slavic	Russian Polish Czech Serbo-Croatian Bulgarian...	since 800 CE	Eastern Europe
Albanian	Albanian (2 dialects)	since 1500 CE	Albania; Italy

Table 1. Subgroups of Indo-European

How do we define **language family**?

A **group of languages** which are all descended from a **common parent language** and which all bear **systematic similarities** to each other.

Two basic questions language families raise:

1. *Why are languages alike?*
 - arise from a single root or parent language
 - language contact
 - random chance/coincidence
2. *Why are languages different from each other?*
 - arise from different parent languages
 - language contact innovates new forms
 - different natural changes within each daughter language

Language contact:

The kind and degree of contact determine language outcomes.

- A. In what ways do different peoples come into contact with one another?
- trade, conquest, exploration, slavery, migrant labor, migration/immigration, spread of technical innovation, learning/education, international aid
- B. What **level of intensity** is likely to accompany these different contacts, with what sort of **linguistic outcomes**? What kinds of contact are likely to lead to **Superstratum/Substratum** relationships and **Adstratum** relationships? What are the likely **language outcomes** of adstratum vs. super-/substratum relationships?

Study of Indo-European languages

Historical or Comparative Linguistics, about 200 years old shows the ancestry of English and many other languages methodology can be applied to other language families

Significant Milestones

William Jones, 1786 speech to the Asiatick Society
Franz Bopp, 1816, *On the Conjugational System of the Sanskrit Language, in Comparison with that of the Greek, Persian, and Germanic Languages*
Karl Brugmann, 1900, *Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages*
Eight main branches: Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Greek, Albanian, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Balto-Slavic PLUS Anatolian (Hittite), Tocharian, Phrygian, Thracian, Illyrian (see also Table 1)

Methodology

Assemble data => form hypotheses => establish relationships (“One fact, one hypothesis”) metaphor of **genetic relations**
elements included **lexicon, phonology, morphology, syntax**
need to distinguish **true cognates** from **borrowings** or **chance** similarities

Proto Indo-European Culture

One side-benefit of the linguistic project: a glimpse into IE culture, thanks to shared vocabulary.

5000 BCE

Environment

bee, bear, sturleon, beaver, eagle etc.
forest: oak, birch, beech, elder, elm, ash, apple
snow

no common word for “ocean, sea”

Culture

plow, draft animals in yoke
rye, barley; milling,
domesticated animals
spinning and weaving wool
copper, bronze, gold, silver -- no iron
wheel, ship, ax
decimal counting system

Religion

patriarchal system, probably sun-worshipping: **deiw-os* “to shine”
burial of the dead shows a belief in afterlife

Location

inland, temperate, central to early migrations
perhaps Kurgan, north of Caspian Sea — but no one knows for sure

Oetzi the Ice Man

found in 1991, Austrian/Italian Alps
5300-year-old body

Britain before English

Physical traits of the island of Britain

- Stone Age inhabitants
- The Celts
- Roman occupation: 43 CE - 410 CE [*Map 1*]

Stone Age inhabitants

- What was their culture like?
- Was their language Indo-European?

The Celts [*Map 2*]

Roman occupation: 43 CE - 410 CE [*Maps 3-4*]

Onset of the “Dark Ages”:

Germanic and West Asian **invaders overrun Europe** — the last years of the **Roman Empire** — **departure** of the Roman colonists from Britain: **consequences** for the Celtic inhabitants

Reading

Recapping and reading up on this class:

Pyles & Algeo 1982, chs. 1-4 [including a lot of semi-technical background; in *Handapparat*]

Preparing for and reading up on next class:

Barber 1993: ch. 2; Baugh & Cable 2002: ch. 2; Pyles & Algeo 1982: ch. 4; Hogg 1992: ch. 2