

LING-UA 1 *Language*

Language Families, Regional Dialects, FRH 7-8

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Week 12 3:30PM, 24 November 2025

Logistics

- ▶ **HW 7:** Due tonight @ 10PM
- ▶ **Courses, Majors, Minors**
 - ▶ Come chat about this!

Questions from HW/Lecture?

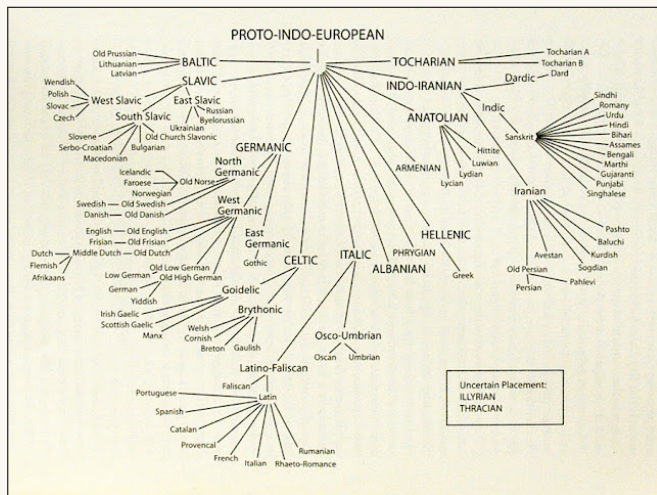
Language Families

- ▶ Languages are related to one another
 - ▶ acquisition from shared ancestor = related
 - ▶ + time = accumulation of changes
 - ▶ + distance = acc. of *different* changes
- ▶ **Language family** = set of languages sharing such a common ancestor

LF: Indo-European

- ▶ Extremely widely spoken (45%)
 - ▶ Indo-Iranian (Farsi, Hindi); Slavic; Baltic (Lith., Latv.); Greek; Germanic (incl. English); Romance; Celtic
- ▶ Important in the history of comparative ling
 - ▶ William Jones (c. 1786) realized Sanskrit, Greek, Latin could be derived from an unobserved common ancestor
- ▶ Now, fairly well understood

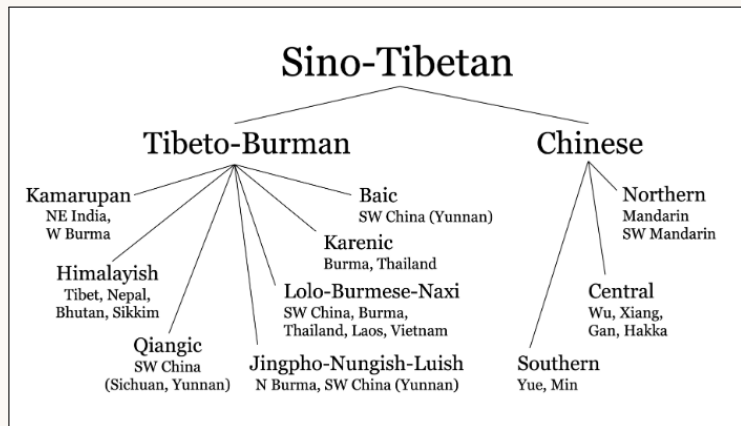
LF: Indo-European



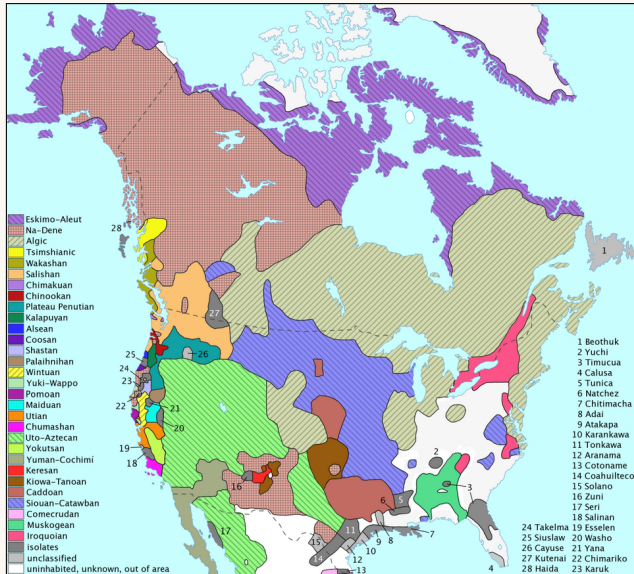
LF: Sino-Tibetan

- ▶ Also very widely spoken (22%)
 - ▶ Chinese (Mandarin, Wu, Min, Yue); Burmese; Tibetan
- ▶ Frequently tonal
 - ▶ aside: tone vs pitch accent

LF: Sino-Tibetan



"LF:" Native American Languages



LF: Salishan Languages

- Spoke in Pacific Northwest, from Washington to Western Montana



Figure: Salish Language Revitalization Institute (Video)

LF: Salishan Languages



Figure: School bus in Missoula with Salish Writing

LF: Salishan Languages

		Labial		Alveolar		Post-	Velar	Post-velar		Pharyngeal		Glottal
		<i>plain</i>	<i>sibilant</i>	<i>lateral</i>		<i>alveolar</i>	<i>labial</i>	<i>plain</i>	<i>labial</i>	<i>plain</i>	<i>labial</i>	
Plosive	<i>plain</i>	p	t	ts		tʃ	k ^w	k	k ^w			ʔ
	<i>ejective</i>	p'	t'	ts'	tɬ'	tʃʷ	k ^w	k'	k ^w			
Fricative				s	ɬ	ʃ	x ^w	x	x ^w			h
Sonorant	<i>plain</i>	m	n		^d l ~ ^d ʒ	j	ɰ			ʕ	ʕ ^w	
	<i>glottalized</i>	ʔm	ʔn		ʔl	ʔj	ʔɰ			ʔʕ	ʔʕ ^w	

Table: Montana Salish Phonology

“LF:” Altaic

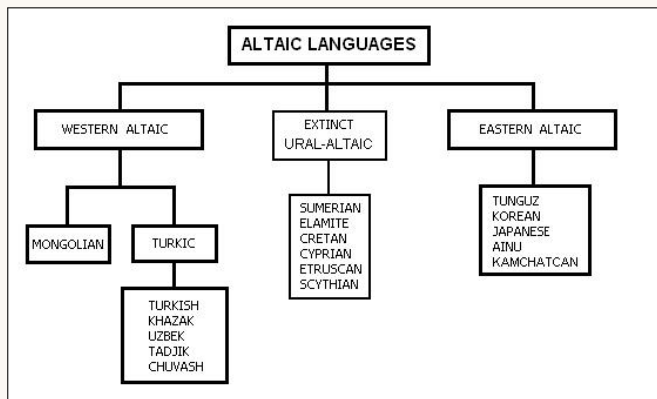


Figure: Learn for quiz & forget

Demonstrating Relation/Families

- ▶ How do we know that languages are related?
 - ▶ **Easy case:** *Latin* → *Romance languages*
We know the history, have written records for all intermediate steps
 - ▶ **Harder:** *Indo-European*
No written records, lots of unknown history
- ▶ Desiderata for relatedness evidence:
 - ▶ Systematic across candidate languages
 - ▶ Explanatory parsimony
 - ▶ Motivated intrinsically (articulatory constraints) or extrinsically (x-ling frequency)

Demonstrating Relation/Families

- ▶ **Good Evidence:** Sound Correspondences in Basic Lexicon (Swadesh)
 - ▶ Systematic, if different, across languages
 - ▶ Regular in their rule application (“exceptionless”)
 - ▶ Exceptions form their own rules
 - ▶ Reasonably well-understood
 - ▶ Basic terms are harder to borrow
- ▶ **Bad Evidence:**
 - ▶ Word order
 - ▶ technical words
 - ▶ broad phonological properties

Ex: Grimm's Law

<i>Shift in Germanic</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>Greek</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>English</i>
p > f	pād-	pod-	ped-	foot
t > θ	tanu-	tanaós	tenuis	thin
k > x	çatam	hekatón	centum	hundred
b > p	—	—	lūbricus	slippery
d > t	daça	déka	decem	ten
g > k	aḥras	agrós	ager	acre
bh > b	bhrātā	phrātēr	frāter	brother
dh > d	vidhavā	ēitheos	vidua	widow
gh > g	hansas	khēn	(h)ānser	goose

Table: Grimm's Law

Language Change & Dialects

- ▶ **Language** and **dialect** are very loaded terms
 - ▶ We say “a *language*” to mean the collective set of mutually-intelligible individual languages
 - ▶ By “a *dialect*” we mean any subset which is distinguished on the basis of some features
 - ▶ → everyone speaks a dialect, there is no “real” language
- ▶ Differs from popular usage, which is informed by politics, religion, class, etc.

Regional Variation

- ▶ Dialects often pattern by physical location
 - ▶ Speech communities, isolation, group identity, ethnic groupings, etc
- ▶ **isogloss** = boundary line for particular feature (eg, *needs washed*)
- ▶ **dialect boundary** = set of mutually-overlapping isoglosses

Regional Variation in American English

TheUpshot

How Y'all, Youse and You Guys Talk

By [Josh Katz](#) and [Wilson Andrews](#) Dec. 21, 2013

 Share full article  

What does the way you speak say about where you're from?
Answer all the questions below to see your personal dialect map.

Figure: The NYTimes dialect quiz

Regional Variation in American English

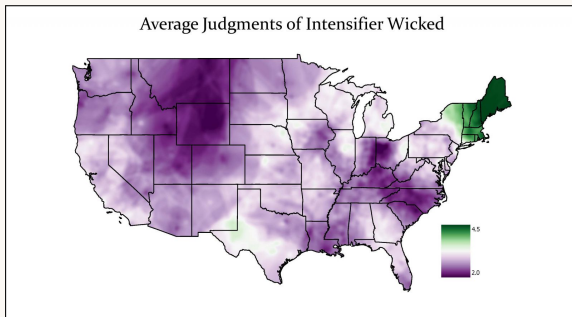


Figure: “My boy’s *wicked* smaht” (video 1, video 2)