

Course name: 4.41473 ~ COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

Credit Points 3

Contact Two lectures and 1 tutorial / week

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Prerequisites: 4.11406 – Introduction to Linguistics
 4.214xx – Linguistic Analysis
 4.31435 – Study Description of PNG Languages I

Course Description

This is an introduction to historical / comparative linguistics with a focus on the interface of the **various aspects of language change**:

- **Phonological:** we shall look at some of the principles of sound change through time, and the methods used to study it. We shall use examples from both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages
- **Morphological:** we shall briefly review the concepts of morphological rules and word formation, and see how the changing patterns of derivational morphemes and their use produce far-reaching changes in all the other language systems (lexis, syntax and semantics)
- **Lexical:** we shall consider the various types of lexical change, i.e. direct/indirect borrowing, loan translation, language contact and diffusion, as well as innovation and loss of words as a reflection of the changing social realities
- **Syntactic:** we shall consider the effect of phonological reduction, morphological fusion and morphological reduction on the syntactic structure of language
- **Semantic:** this part of the course will focus on the changing *meanings* of words and phrases. We shall look at the major types of semantic change involving broadening/narrowing of meaning, as well as the major types of semantic shifts (amelioration and pejoration)

In the course of our studies, we will consider language structures as they change in time; moreover, we'll try to explain *why* they change, and describe how these changes happen.

We will get acquainted with the 'technical' side of tracking linguistic change through the use of the comparative method of linguistic analysis, learn about the concept of linguistic reconstruction (internal, external and typological), and get to know how languages are classified according to their genetic and typological characteristics.

Course Objectives

The main objective of this course is to create a basic understanding of how languages change through time, thus stimulating creative and analytical thinking with regard to the study and understanding of language.

The knowledge of patterns, regularities, and tendencies in language change will put language systems in perspective, providing a clearer view of language and its role in human society. This course also aims to stimulate linguistic enquiry in Papua New Guinea – we hope that it will motivate our linguistics students to turn their attention to the still largely untapped wealth of linguistic heritage in this country. We trust that their interest and efforts will help preserve the richness of human linguistic heritage, as well as deepen our understanding of this country's history.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will be expected to understand:

- The concept, reasons for, forms, and directions of linguistic change
- The use and application of the Comparative Method in linguistic analysis
- Genetic relationships between families of world languages and their general classification

You should also be able to competently apply this knowledge in your further study of Language.

Course Content:

- The aims and scope of historical / comparative linguistics: the diachronic vs. the synchronic approach
- The 'founding fathers' of Historical and Comparative Linguistics
- Family trees and family relationships
- Comparing languages: language similarities
- Language types
- The comparative method and reconstruction
- *How* language changes: Types of Language Change
- Sound change
- Morphological change and criteria for language classification
- Syntactic change and criteria for language classification
- Semantic change: language contact, broadening, narrowing, pejoration & amelioration
- Forces of Change: *Why* languages change
- Language Origins, Life, Death, Birth, and Re-Birth
- Attitudes toward change
- Linguistic Universals

Course Materials

Terry Crowley: *An Introduction to Historical Linguistics*: Oxford University Press, 1997.

John McWhorter: *The Power of Babel – A Natural History of Language*. New York, 2001

Jean Aitchison, *Linguistics*. Hodder Headline, U.K., 1999

Lecture Notes will be made available for photocopying.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on 2 in-course written assignments (each worth 15%), class participation (tests and quizzes during tutorials – combined value of 30%) and a final examination (40%).

4.41473~Comparative Linguistics: Lecture Schedule

Mondays	11 – 12 KD 234(L)
Tuesdays	13 – 14 KD 223 (T)
Thursdays	11 – 12 KD 201 (L)

Week 1

1. Introduction: Language & Change (Crowley Ch 1, McWhorter, Ch. 1)
2. A short history of historical linguistics

Week 2

3. Saussure and modern linguistics (Crowley Ch 2)
4. Language – a Living Structure

Week 3

5. The Neogrammarian/regularity hypothesis (Crowley Ch 2)
6. Beginning sound change: Revision of Phonetic Symbols

Week 4

7. Expressing Sound change: Writing Rules (Crowley, Ch. 3)
8. Sound Change: Phonetic vs. Phonemic Change (Crowley, Ch. 4)

Week 5

9. The comparative method (Crowley Ch 5)
10. The comparative method. The Swadesh List

Week 6

11. Morphological change (McWhorter, Ch. 1, Crowley Ch 7)
12. Morphological change: Typology & Grammatical Change

Week 7

13. Syntactic change (McWhorter, Ch. 1, Crowley Ch 7)
14. Syntactic change: Grammaticalisation

Week 8

15. Semantic Change (McWhorter, Ch. 1, Crowley, Ch. 7)
16. Semantic Change & Lexical Change

Week 9

17. Subgrouping: Lexicostatistics & Glottochronology (Crowley, Ch. 8)
18. Subgrouping (continued)

Week 10

19. Explaining language change (McWhorter, Ch. 1, Crowley, Ch. 9)
20. Observing Language Change (Crowley, Ch. 10)

Week 11

21. Language Contact: Convergence (Crowley, Ch. 12)
22. Language Genesis: Pidgins and Creoles

Week 12

23. Language Death
24. Variation - change in progress?

Week 13

25. Speech communities, social stratification and variation
26. Overview of course; Exam discussion