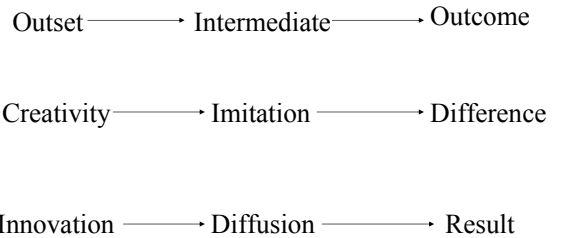


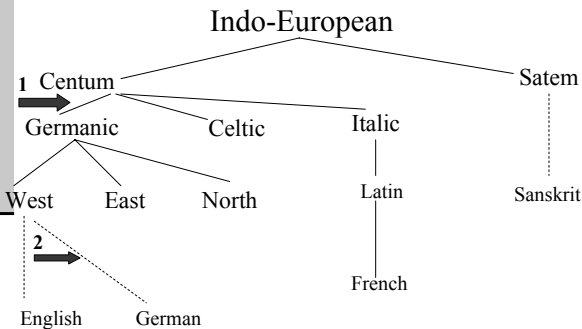
## Lexicon and language change

- Diachronic vs. synchronic linguistics
- Language change
- Comparative method
- Internal reconstruction
- Focus on the lexicon/lexical items → lexical resemblances
- Sound laws

## Language change



## The Indo-European language family



Examples of correspondences among Indo-European languages:

numerals 1-10 in ancient languages

	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>Gothic</i>	<i>Old English</i>
1.	ūnus	heis	eka	ains	ān
2.	duo	duo	dvau	twai	twēgen, twā
3.	trēs	treis	trayas	–	þrie
4.	quattuor	tettares	catvāras	fidwor	fēower
5.	quīnque	pentē	panca	fimf	fif
6.	sex	hex	sat	saihs	six
7.	septem	hepta	sapta	sibun	seofon
8.	octō	oktō	astau	ahtau	eahta
9.	novem	ennea	nava	niun	nigon
10.	decem	deka	dasa	taihun	tien

## Causes of language change

- language is ‚handed down‘ from one generation to the next
- all children use the same physiological and cognitive endowment in learning language
- therefore the same patterns of change are repeatedly manifested in all languages
- Also: language contact
- Also: ‚Cultural‘ changes (student’s presentation)

<i>Old English</i>	<i>Gothic</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>
eom ( <i>am</i> )	im	sum	eimi	asmi
eart ( <i>art</i> )	is	es	ei	asi
is ( <i>is</i> )	ist	est	esti	asti
sindon ( <i>are</i> )	sijum	sumus	esmen	smas
sindon ( <i>are</i> )	sijuþ	estis	este	stha
sindon ( <i>are</i> )	sind	sunt	eisi	santi

## Lexical change

- addition or loss of words
- often caused by cultural and technological changes that introduce novel objects and notions and eliminate outmoded ones
- filling of *lexical gaps*
- new words are added through word formation or through borrowing

## Examples

- loss of lexical items:
  - *beox*: OE ‚hunting spear‘
  - lost through cultural change
- addition of lexical items:
  - *government, royal...*
  - loanwords from French

## Semantic change

- word meanings rarely change suddenly
- usually words develop new meanings which are related to previous ones
- these changes take place continually

## Types of semantic change

- Change in denotation:
  - + generalisation
  - specialisation
- Change in connotation:
  - + amelioration
  - pejoration
- metonymy
- metaphor
- grammaticalisation

## Semantic broadening

- also referred to as: *generalisation, extension*
- the meaning of a word becomes more general or more inclusive than its historically earlier form
  - *bird*: ‚small fowl‘ > ‚any feathered vertebrate with a beak‘
  - *aunt*: ‚father's sister‘ > father or mother's sister

## Semantic narrowing

- also referred to as: *specialisation*
- the meaning of a word becomes less general or less inclusive than its historically earlier form
  - *hound*: ‚any dog‘ > ‚a hunting breed‘
  - *meat*: ‚any type of food‘ > ‚flesh of an animal‘
  - *fowl*: ‚any bird‘ > ‚a domesticated bird‘

## Amelioration

- also referred to as: *ameliorisation*
- the meaning of a word becomes more positive or favourable
  - *pretty*: ‚tricky, sly, cunning‘ > ‚attractive‘
  - *knight*: ‚boy‘ > ‚a man of honourable military rank‘

## Pejoration

- also referred to as: *deterioration*
- the meaning of a word becomes more negative or less favourable
  - *silly*: ‚happy, prosperous‘ > ‚foolish‘
  - *wench*: ‚girl‘ > ‚wanton woman, prostitute‘

## Weakening

- also referred to as: *distortion (vericide)*
- the meaning of a word becomes less forceful
- caused by exaggeration
  - *crucify*: ‚to kill by nailing to a cross‘ > ‚to cause pain‘
  - *tremendous, monstrous...*

## Semantic shift

- sometimes total shift of meaning; shift to opposite
- usually: a word loses some aspect of its former meaning, taking on a partially new, but related meaning
  - *bead*: ‚prayer‘ > ‚prayer bead‘ > ‚bead‘
  - *immoral*: ‚not customary‘ > ‚unethical‘

- sometimes a series of semantic shifts occurs over an extended period of time, resulting in a meaning which is (seemingly) completely unrelated to the original sense of the word

## Metaphor

- figure of speech based on a perceived similarity between distinct objects or actions
- one of the most striking and most important mechanisms of semantic change
- usually involves a word with a concrete meaning taking on a more abstract sense
- the meaning of many English words have been extended through metaphor

## Examples: metaphoric extension of meaning

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- *grasp*: ‚to understand‘
- *high*: ‚on drugs‘
- *down*: ‚depressed‘
- *sharp*: ‚clever, smart‘