

Concepts in English Linguistics

Session 6 / Week 7: Indo-European and Germanic

Centem language A member of the Indo-European branch of languages that realized Proto-Indo-European palatal /k/ (i.e. [c]) as a velar plosive /k/ (mostly western languages)

Comparative linguistics A discipline concerned with establishing the relationships between languages

Dental suffix A dental sound /ð/, /d/, or /t/ used in Germanic languages to form the preterite tense and past participle of weak verbs: *sagte, laughed*

Free stress A system in which word stress is not fixed to one syllable but settles on different syllables depending on the inflected form and/or the function of the word, as in Proto-Indo-European and in the English examples *import* (noun) and *import* (verb)

Gemination Consonant lengthening

Gradation (ablaut) The regular alternation of sounds between inflectional forms of a word: *swim*
: *swam* : *swum*, *goose* : *geese*

Grimm's Law A sound law explaining the divergence between Germanic and other Indo-European consonants, as in *eat* and *edere*, *fish* and *piscis*

High German Consonant Shift A series of consonant changes that took place between the third and ninth centuries CE and caused High German to diverge from the other Germanic languages: *Affe*, *Apfel*, and *essen* correspond to *ape*, *apple*, and *eat*

Ingvaenic (North Sea Germanic) Old Saxon, Old Frisian, Old English, and their descendants

Language family Any group of languages descended from a common parent or ancestor language: Balto-Slavic, Germanic, West Germanic

Proto-Germanic (PG) The reconstructed language from which all Germanic languages are descended

Proto-Indo-European (PIE) The reconstructed language from which all Indo-European languages are descended

Root stress A system in which word stress is fixed to a word's root syllable, regardless of its inflected form, as in Proto-Germanic, Icelandic, and Finnish

Satem language A member of the Indo-European branch of languages that realized Proto-Indo-European palatal /k/ (i.e. [c]) as a palatal fricative approximately /j/ (mostly eastern languages)

Strong adjective In the conservative Germanic languages, an adjective whose syntactic context assigns it a richer diversity among its inflectional endings, somewhat like the more common nouns: *guter* : *gutes* : *guten* : *guten*

Strong verb In the Germanic languages, a verb that forms its preterite tense and past participle using vowel gradation: *sing : sang : sung*

Verner's Law A modification to Grimm's Law explaining some of the differences between Indo-European and Germanic consonants by the fact that the former used free stress, the latter root stress (i.e. fixed, initial stress)

Weak adjective In the conservative Germanic languages, an adjective whose context assigns it less diversity among its inflectional endings, with most forms converging in endings like *-an* or *-en*: *gute : guten : guten : guten*

Weak verb In the Germanic languages, a verb that forms its preterite tense and past participle using a dental suffix: *walk : walked : walked*