

Methods and techniques of internal linguistics in diachrony.

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Content

- The method of external reconstruction
- The method of internal reconstruction
- The successes and weaknesses of comparative historical research

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graph TD; A[Linguistics] --- B[synchronic]; A --- C[diachronic]
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Linguistics

synchronic

diachronic

synchronic

the study of a language at
a particular time

descriptive linguistics
or
general linguistics

diachronic

the study of the
development of a
language over time.

comparative linguistics
or
historical linguistics

Ferdinand de Saussure "Course in General Linguistics" (1916)

synchronistic
linguistics



analyzing the word
order in a sentence in
Old English

diachronic
linguistics



looking at how word order
changed in a sentence from
Old English to Middle
English and now to modern
English

synchronistic
linguistics



studies look at what
associates with what
(how parts interact) at
any given time.

diachronic
linguistics



studies look at what
causes what and how
things change over
time.

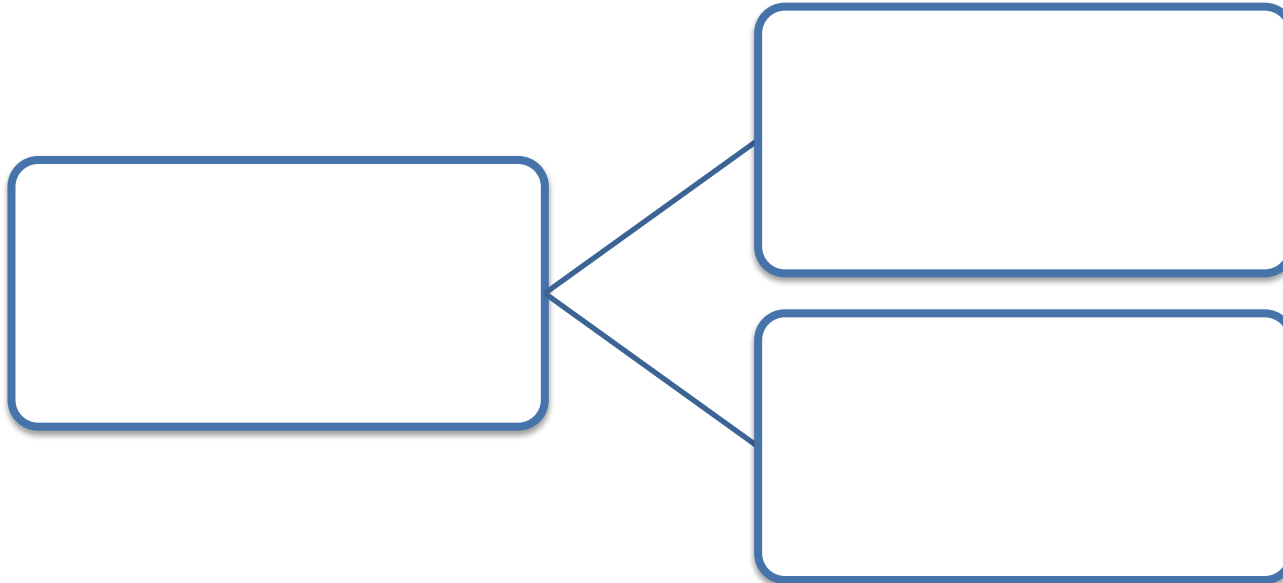
Historical linguistics, also termed **diachronic linguistics**, is the scientific study of language change over time.

Principal concerns of historical linguistics include:

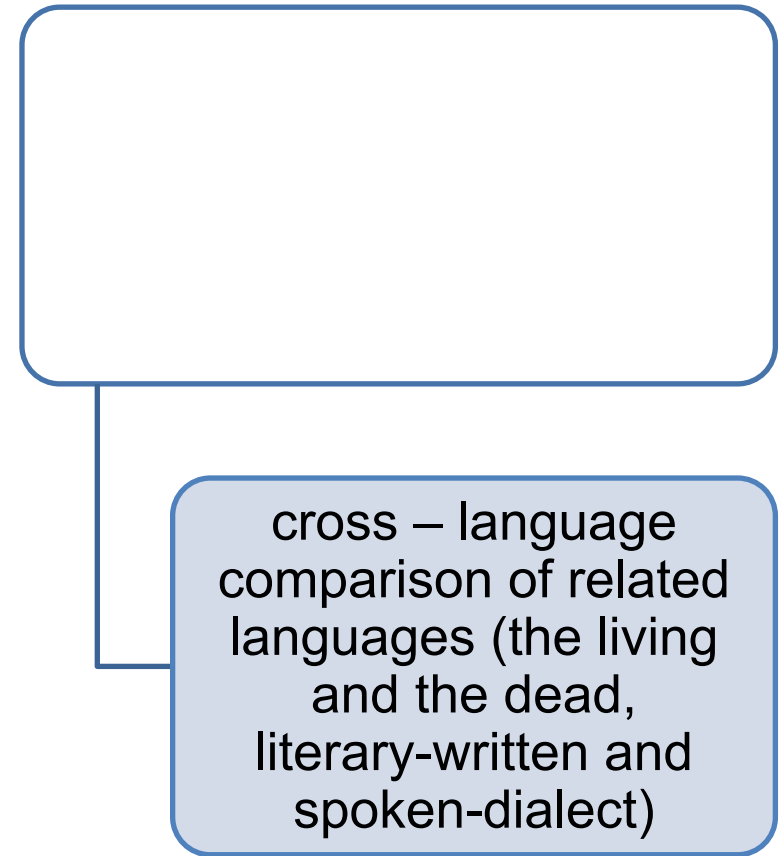


The method of external reconstruction

Linguistic reconstruction is the practice of establishing the features of an unattested ancestor language of one or more given languages.



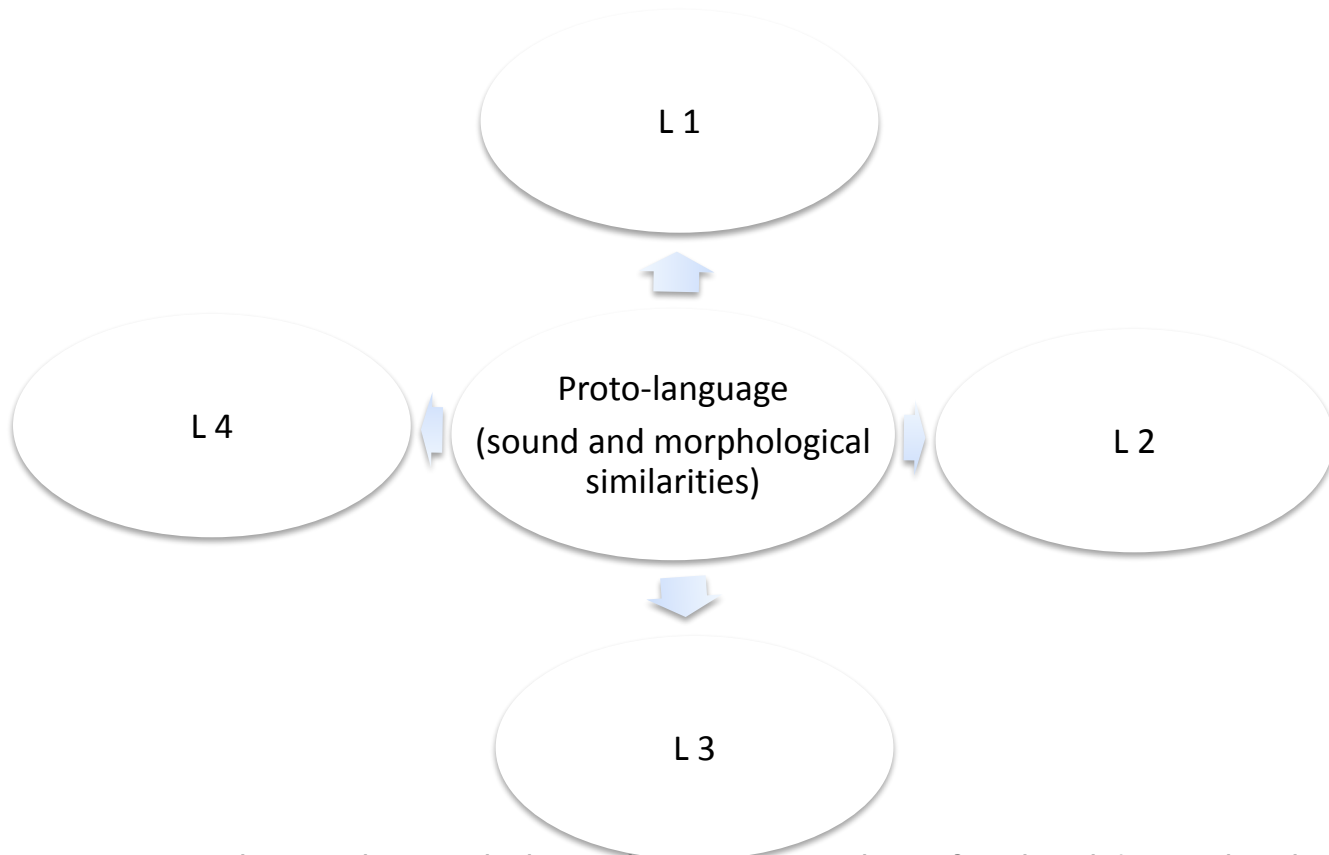
The method of external reconstruction



The method of external reconstruction

- **The essence of external reconstruction** consists in interlanguage genetic identification to establish patterns of development of related languages through the restoration of the linguistic state of a period not fixed by written monuments.

- "Two languages are called related when they are both the result of two different evolutions of the same language formerly in use..."[Meyer, 1938]



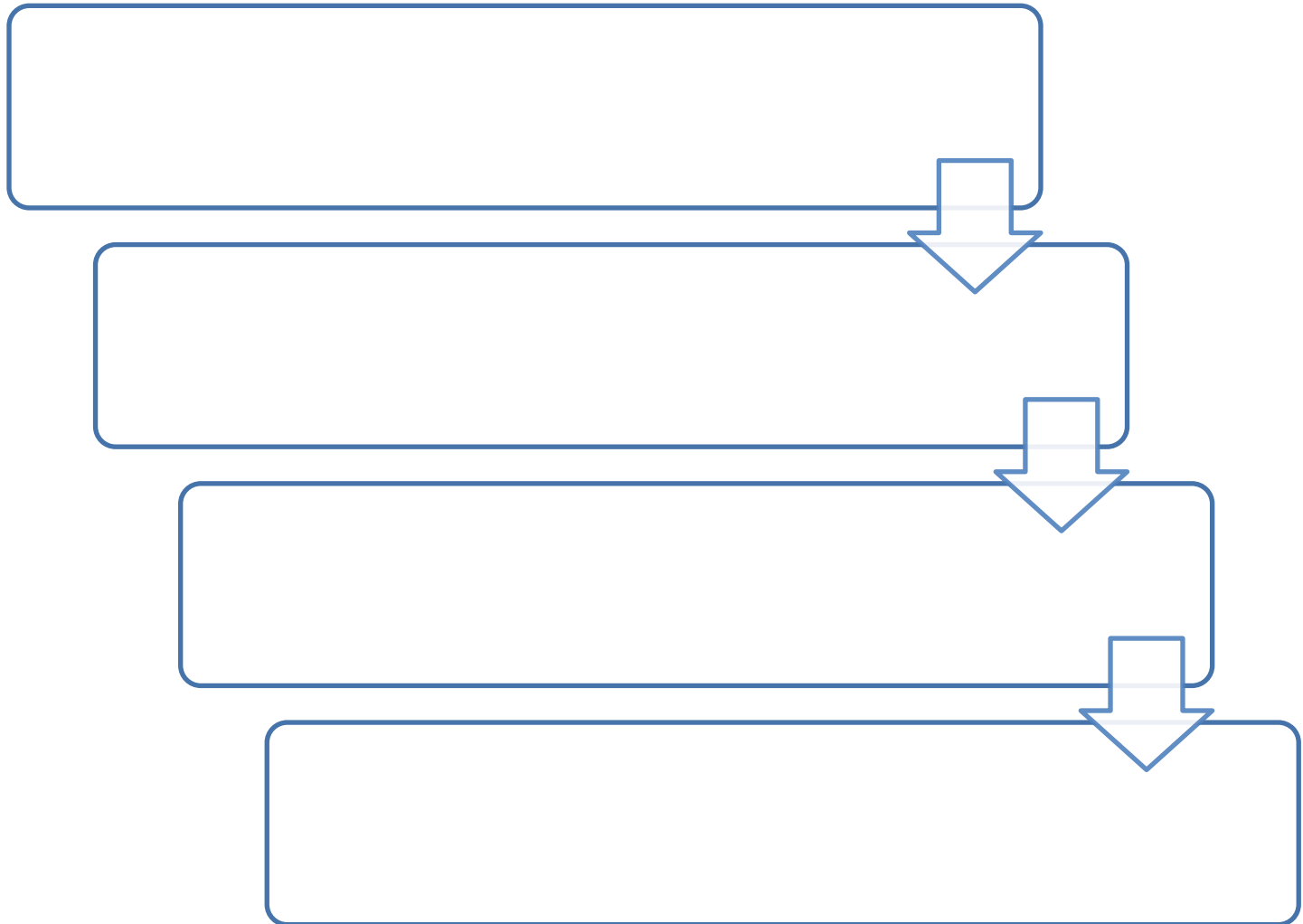
- "Comparison is the only tool that the linguist has for building the history of languages"
[Meyer, 1938]

Aims and objectives

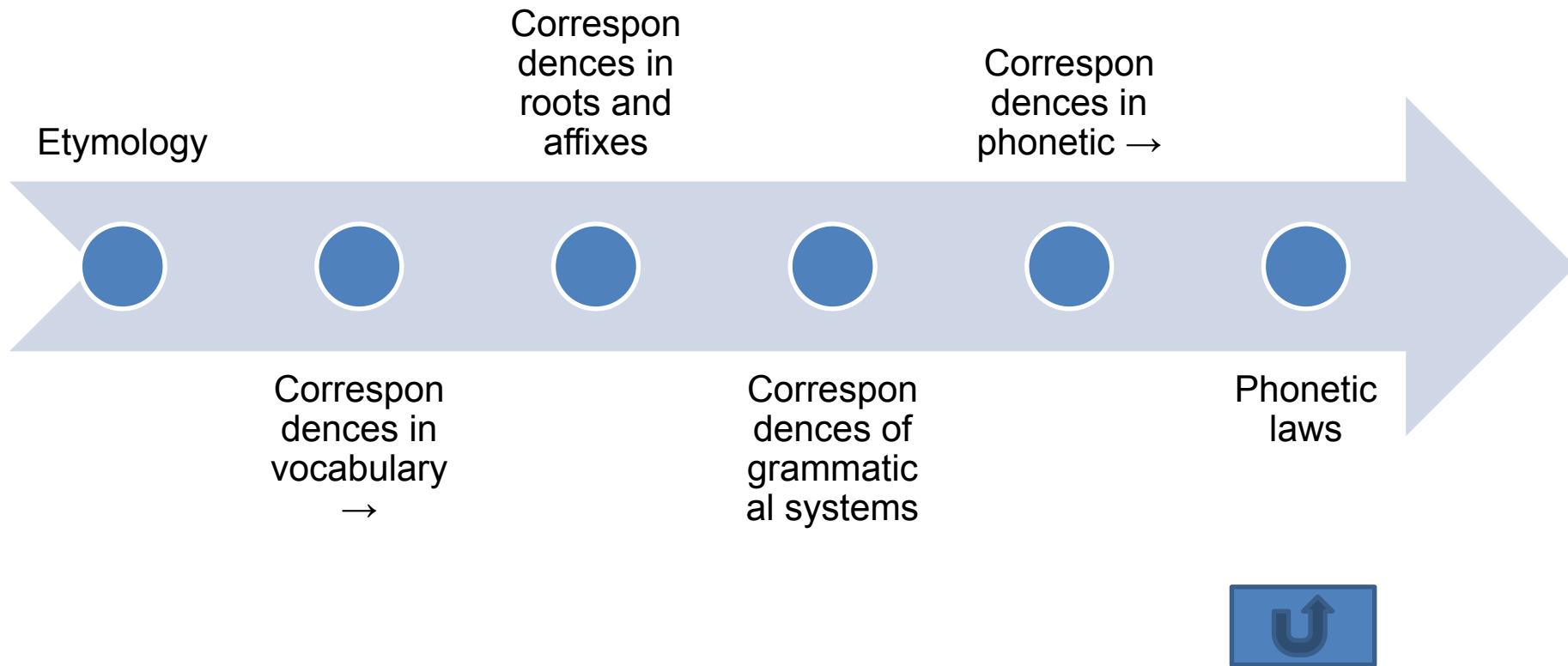
1. To establish the primary source (proto-language) of all related languages and dialects of a group or a family
2. To study the laws of divergent development and occurrence in writing fixed languages from a hypothetical base language.
3. To recreate models of proto-linguistic states of individual families and groups related languages of the world
4. To create the genetic (genealogical) classification of the languages of the world

Stages and techniques

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The formula of the sequence of procedures



The method of internal reconstruction

The object

any language in its
historical perspective

The subject

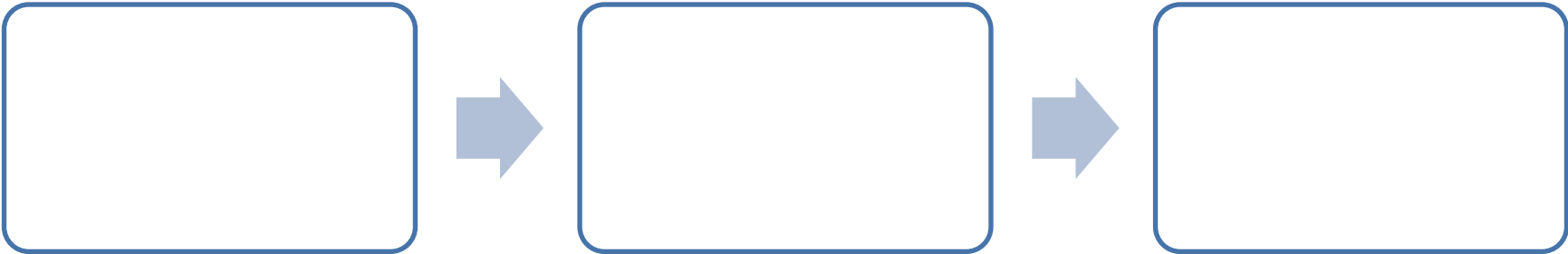
multi-temporal forms
of a language, fixing
different periods of
development of the
same language

Aims and objectives

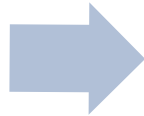
- To identify the laws of historical development of a particular language on the basis of data from written sources;
- To establish the residual forms and anomalies reflecting features of the corresponding language in the pre-written period, or to reveal new forms which arose as a result of language contacts (borrowing);
- To explain the current state of the language system as a result of identify of historical changes and set the time and causes this change.

- One of the main concepts of comparative linguistics is **periodization** (<Greek periodos - “rotation”) - the establishment of time intervals during which the stability of the phenomena of the language system is maintained.

Periods in Indo-European languages



- **The essence of the technique** is the comparison different periods of relative stability of any language phenomena (sound, root, form, word...) based on interlanguage comparison.



Techniques of internal reconstruction

internal retrospection

- (<lat. retro – "back" + spectare "to look")
- is associated with the reverse: from the modern state to determine the nature and timing of changes to older periods.
- Печь – пеку, пекут, but печешь. The conditions that caused the historical alternation к // ч are studied.

internal projection

- is associated with the analysis of the forward axis of time, starting from the ancient forms, recorded in written sources, to modern.
For example, Old Eng. gos-gos ("goose-geese") > Middle Eng. gas-gas > Mod. Eng. goose-geese



Comparative historical research is a method of social science that examines historical events in order to create explanations that are valid beyond a particular time and place, either by direct comparison to other historical events, theory building, or reference to the present day.

Generally, it involves comparisons of social processes across times and places. It overlaps with historical sociology. While the disciplines of history and sociology have always been connected, they have connected in different ways at different times. This form of research may use any of several theoretical orientations. It is distinguished by the types of questions it asks, not the theoretical framework it employs

There are several difficulties that historical comparative research faces. James Mahoney, one of the current leading figures in historical comparative research, identifies several of these in his book "Comparative Historical Analysis". Mahoney highlights key issues such as how micro level studies can be incorporated into the macro level field of historical comparative research, issues ripe for historical comparative research that continue to remain overlooked, such as law, and the issue of whether historical comparative research should be approached as a science or approached as a history.

This is one of the more prevalent debates today, often debated between Theda Skocpol, who sides with the historical approach, and Kiser and Hechter, who are proponents of the scientific view that should search for general causal principles. Both Kiser and Hechter employ models within Rational Choice Theory for their general causal principles. Historical researchers that oppose them (Skocpol, Summers, others) argue that Kiser and Hechter do not suggest many other plausible general theories, and thus it seems as though their advocacy for general theories is actually advocacy for their preferred general theory. They also raise other criticisms of using rational choice theory in historical comparative research.

So what then are the advantages of the comparative approach? The authors of the introduction identify two major levels of comparison: the macro approach, which attempts to highlight areas of difference and similarity at an abstract level. This exists above individual actions, structures and sets of behavior in society—the micro level.

The volume's editors have opted for the micro approach and brought together eighteen contributions in six different areas: the establishment of power and the attempt to maintain power over everyday life; the justice system and instruments of repression; the education system; trade unions and the workplace; the media; and, finally, the Church and middle-class institutions.

The widespread use of comparison can easily cause the impression that this method is a firmly established, smooth and unproblematic mode of analysis, which due to its unquestionable logical status can generate reliable knowledge once some technical preconditions are met satisfactorily. Yet, as we have already seen, comparison is a quite demanding method strategy that requires reflection and careful consideration.

Indeed,
there are a number of severe limitations and
constraints associated with comparison that,
calling for serious
attention, should warn against and prevent any
easy-minded uncritical adoption of this mode of
analysis. Any
comprehensive and detailed discussion of these
limitations and constraints would, however, require
a
treatment that exceeds the scope of this paper by
far.

Therefore, in this section only a couple of very elementary issues are taken up for discussion while many other important aspects of the question are left out.

One of the most basic issues here regards the autonomy of units chosen for comparison. As various species of entities are picked up to be compared, there is often an underlying and tacit assumption about their autonomy and a silent tendency to ignore the complex interplays and mutual influences among the units.

References

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