LECTURE 2.

PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

1. Comparative-Historical Method.

With the languages having evolved with time due to different ***intercultural influences*** and ***historical reasons***, and with the scarce, if any, literary monuments, it is difficult to reconstruct the language in its primary form. However, possible with the help of the **Comparative-Historical Method**.

The method was developed at the dawn of the **19th** century when Europeans first found out that ***Sanskrit*** (ancient Vedic language of India) had much in common with the modern European languages. The method was first developed and applied to the comparison of languages by ***Franz Bopp, Rasmusk Rask, Jacob Grimm, Aleksandr Vostokov, Friedrich von Gumboldt, August Schleicher, Karl Verner, Herman Paul.*** This method is used to corroborate that languages compared are **kin languages** or not. If they are, the reconstruction of the proto language becomes possible when there are no written monuments. It is done in the following stages:

- Comparison of **sounds** and **morphemes** in *kin languages* on the basis of comparison of meaningful units;
- Regular correspondence between units compared has to be traced;
- Relative chronological correspondence between the phenomena under comparison has to be present;
- Reconstruction of the Proto form or pattern (**archetype**).

2. Principal Features of Germanic Languages

1. PIE dynamic stress began to be **fixed** mainly upon the 1st syllable (root).
2. Changes of vowels:
   a. Common Germanic vowelshift;
   b. Germanic Fracture (deals with open/close sounds);
3. Changes of consonants:
   a. Grimm's Law;
   b. Verner's Law;
4. Specific morphological structure of the word;
5. Specifically Germanic system of noun declensions;
6. Strong and weak declensions of adjectives;
7. Strong and weak verbs.

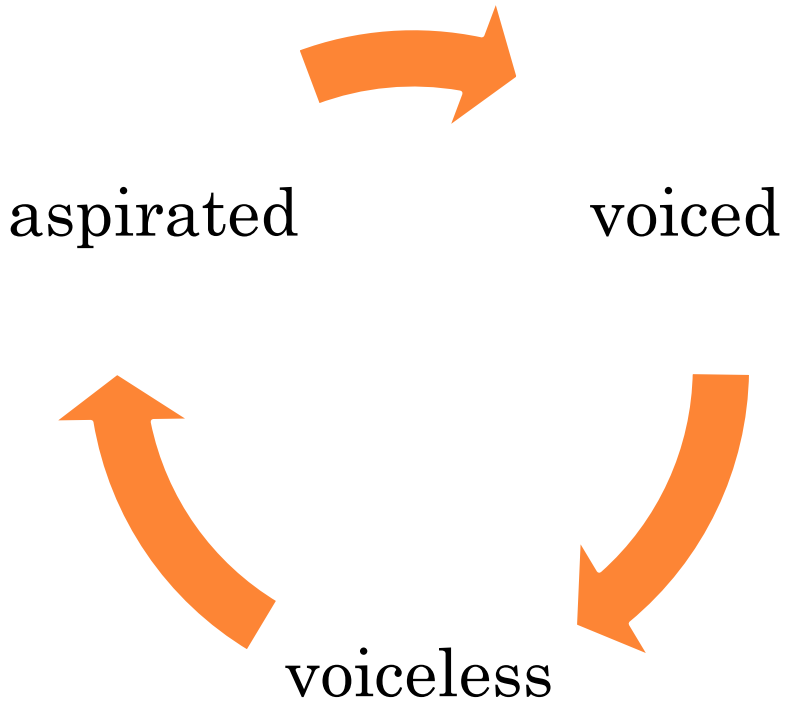
3. Changes of CG Consonants
a. Grimm's Law – 1st Sound Shift

Jacob Grimm (1822)

discovered regular correspondence between Indo-European languages within the phonology with the help of the Comparative-Historical Method.

- The law reflects the change (shift) of type of articulation by **stops** in Germanic languages. It was the *simultaneous shift* of 3 groups of *stops*: *voiced, voiceless and aspirated*.

- This shift was completed by 5th-beginning of 6th century A.D.



1. IE voiced aspirated plosives (stops) > CG voiced plosives (stops)

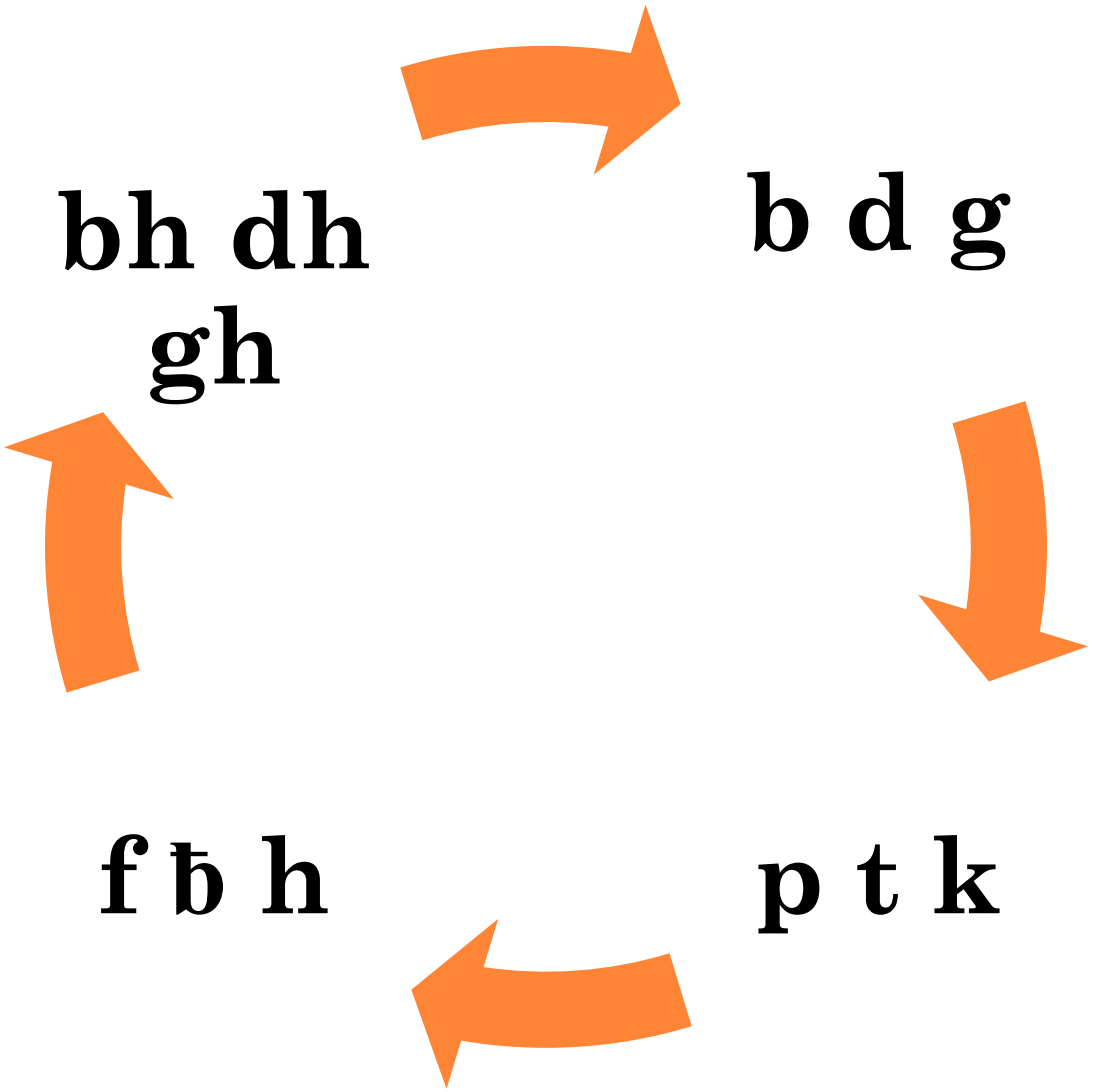
bh > b	Sanskr ***bh**rātar* **>** Gt ***b**roþar*, ME ***b**rother*
dh > d	Sanskr *me**dh**u*, R *Мёд* **>** OE *me**d**u*
gh > g	PIE ****gh**ostis* > Gt ***g**asts*, OE ***g**iest*

2. IE voiced plosives (stops) > CG voiceless plosives (stops)

b > p	R слаб**ы**й > Gt sle**p**an
d > t	R два > ME **t**wo
g > k	R иго > ME yo**k**e

3. IE voiceless plosives (stops) > CG voiceless fricatives

p > f	Sanskr ***p**itar*, Lat ***p**ater* **>** Gt ***f**adar*, OE ***f**æder*
t > þ	Sanskr ***t**rayas*, R ***m**pu* **>** Gt ***þ**reis*, OE ***þ**rie*
k > h	Lat *no**c**tem* > Gt *na**h**ts*


b d g
p t k
f ƀ h
bh dh
gh

B. Verner's Law – Voicing Law (CG)

Karl Verner

1875

discovered a law of phonetic change in

PIE > CG due to the position of stress.

Verner noticed that in Germanic *strong* verbs

- *voiceless spirants* in **intervocal position** appear in those cases when in *Sanskrit* stress falls *on the root*,
- and the *voiced spirants* appear when in Sanskrit stress falls *on the ending*.

- PG voiceless spirants f, þ, x, s in intervocal position and in the ending remained voiceless, if the *main stress fell on the preceding vowel*. If the *preceding vowel* was not stressed by the primary stress, *the spirants f, þ, x, s became voiced* > *b, d, g, z*.

- **f > b** Lat *cá**p**ut*; ON *ho**f**oþ*; Gt *hau**b**iþ*; OS *hō**b**id;* OHG *hou**b**it* (голова)
- **þ > d** Sanskr *ma**t**ār*, R *ма**м**ь*; OS *mo**d**ár;*
- **x > g** Greek *de**k**as;* R *де**с**ять*; Gt *ti**g**us*; ON *ti**g**er*; OE OS *ti**g**;*
- **s > z**

- If an IE voiceless stop **(p, t, k)** was proceeded by an unstressed vowel, the voiceless fricative **(f, þ, h)** which developed from it in accordance with Grimm's Law became voiced**,** and later this voiced fricative became a voiced stop **(b, d, g).**

Eg. Greek dé<u>k</u>a; де́сять > Gt tái<u>h</u>un;

BUT: de<u>k</u>ás; десяток > ti<u>g</u>us

If the preceding vowel is unstressed, **s** in Germanic languages becomes voiced, changes into **z**. Eventually this z becomes **r** in Western Germanic and Nothern Germanic languages. This latter change **z >r** is termed **rhotacism**.

Common Germanic Vowelshift

Germanic languages have some peculiarities in the sphere of vowel sounds, which distinguish them from other IE languages. Their main characteristic in the sphere is the treatment of the IE ***o, ā,*** which is called

Germanic Vowel Shift

- IE
  - **o**
  - **a**

  > PG **a**

Lat n**o**ctem Rus н**о**чь> Gt n**a**hts

Lat **o**cto > Gt **a**htau

Rus **Я**блоко > Germ **A**pfel

- IE
  - **ō**
  - **ā**

  > PG **ō**

Lat fr**ā**ter > Gt br**ō**ƀar

OE br**ō**ƀor

Lat fl**ō**s > OE bl**ō**ma

Lat m**ā**ter > OE m**ō**dor

- Thus, there was neither a short ***o*** nor a long ***ā*** in Germanic languages.

Germanic Fracture

- **Fracture** concerns two pairs of vowels ***e/i*** and ***u/o.***
- An IE ***e*** in the root syllable finds its counterpart in Germanic ***i***, if it is followed by ***i, j*** or the cluster **'nasal + consonant'**. Otherwise the Germanic languages have ***e*** in the corresponding words.

IE ***i, e***

- PG ***i*** - in a **narrow position** (before *i, j or nasal + consonant*)
- PG ***e*** - in a **wide position**

Eg.

- Lat **me**d**i**us > OE m**i**ddle
- Lat v**en**tus > OE w**i**nd
- Lat edere > OE etan
- Lat ferre > OE beran

- An IE ***u*** finds its counterpart in Germanic ***u,*** if it is followed by ***u*** or by the cluster ‘nasal + consonant’, otherwise the IE **u** finds its counterpart in PG ***o***.

- IE ***o, u***
  - PG ***u*** in a **narrow position** (before u or ‘nasal+consonant’)
  - PG ***o*** in a **wide position**

Eg.

- Lat sun**u**s > OE sunu
- Lat ingum > OE ȝe**o**c
- Celt hu**rn**an > OE horn

IE & Germanic Ablaut

- In all IE languages (as well as in all families of West Nostratic branch) there is a special kind of vowel **alternation**, usually called **gradation**, or **ablaut**.

Eg. Russ: везу/ воз; гремит/ гром.

- It is believed that the 3 variants of a root distinguished by gradation, are due to conditions of stress.
- IE Qualitative ablaut: ***e* – *o* – *Ø***
  (full stress brings about ***o,*** weakened stress ***e,*** and unstressed position ***Ø***)

Class	Infinitive	Past Sg	Past Pl	Participle II
I	i:	ai	i	i
II	iu	au	u	u
III	i	a	u	u
IV	i	a	ē	u
V	i	a	ē	i

These are 5 classes of strong verbs in Gothic

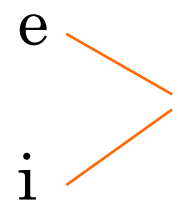
- Qualitative Ablaut:

  - e - a (due to Germanic fracture and the vowel shift **o>a**)

  - i - a

  Gt genum – gam; itan - at

- Quantitative Ablaut:



bindan - bndans

a	-	Ø	can	-	cnawan
a	-	ā (ō)	faran	-	fōr