

# Class 24

## Sprachbunds

12/12/19

- **Reading (required): Campbell Ch. 7, Ch. 12.1 & 12.2 (pp. 298–309)**
  - *Reading (recommended): Campbell Ch. 6 (linguistic classification), rest of Ch. 12, Ch. 16 (long-distance linguistic relationships)*
- **PSet #3 due at noon on Wednesday, Dec 18th**

### 1 *Sprachbunds* (linguistic areas)

- Our discussion about wave-like innovations has thus far focused on the diffusion of these innovations within dialects of the same language.
- However, shared innovations (or general *convergence*) can develop also between neighboring speech varieties that are *unrelated* (or distantly related).
- ★ In some parts of the world, big groups of neighboring unrelated languages that are in close contact all *converge* on the same linguistic features. This is called a “**sprachbund**” (linguistic area).

### 2 The Balkan Sprachbund

- The most well-known current sprachbund is the Balkan sprachbund.
  - Greek, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Romanian (and to a lesser extent Turkish and Romani) now share a huge number of features in common despite not being closely related genetically.
- Here’s a list of some of the shared features (Campbell 2013:300):
  - (1) A central vowel /i/ (or /ə/) (not present in Greek or Macedonian).
  - (2) Syncretism of dative and genitive (dative and genitive cases have merged in form and function); e.g., Romanian *fetei* can mean either ‘to (the) girl’ (DAT) or ‘(the) girl’s’ (GEN) [cf. *fată* ‘girl’ (NOM)]
 

a. <i>am data o carte fetei</i> ‘I gave the letter to the girl’	b. <i>frate fetei</i> ‘the girl’s brother’
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  - (3) Postposed articles (not in Greek); for example, Bulgarian
 

a. <i>məʒ</i> ‘man’	b. <i>məʒ-ət</i> ‘the man’
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  - (4) Periphrastic future — futures signaled by an auxiliary verb corresponding to ‘want’ or ‘have’ (not in Bulgarian or Macedonian); e.g. Romanian
 

a. <i>voi fuma</i> ‘I will smoke’ (literally ‘I want smoke’)	b. <i>am a cînta</i> ‘I will sing’ (literally ‘I have to sing’)
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  - (5) Periphrastic perfect (with an auxiliary verb corresponding to ‘have’).
  - (6) Absence of infinitives (instead, the languages have constructions such as ‘I want that I go’ for ‘I want to go’); e.g., ‘give me something to drink’ has the form corresponding to ‘give me that I drink’, as in:

- a. Romanian *dă-mi să beau*      b. Bulgarian *daj mi da pija*      c. Tosk Albanian *a-më të pi*      d. Greek *dós mu na pjó*

(7) Use of a personal pronoun copy of animate objects so that the object is doubly marked:

- a. Romanian *i-am scris lui Ion*  
lit. to.him-I wrote him John  
'I wrote to John'
- b. Greek *ton vlép-o ton jáni*  
lit. him.ACC see-I the/him.ACC John  
'I see John'

- All of these features originated in one language or another, and *spread/diffused* into the other languages of the area.  
→ These can thus be referred to as “**areal**” features, i.e. typical properties of languages of that geographical area.
  - (This term can be used whether the area is thought of as a true sprachbund or not.)
- ★ There are many more known sprachbunds in the world (see Campbell for more examples), including South Asia, Mesoamerica, the Baltic, Ethiopia, and the Pacific Northwest.

### 3 Using language contact to diagnose genetic relationship

- Areal features are bad clues for determining genetic relationships.
    - Especially in sprachbund situations, areal features are just as / more likely to represent borrowing than true language-internal innovations.
    - Therefore, it's multiple related languages could end up displaying the same innovations without representing a “shared” innovation.
  - Consider the following sound correspondences from the Nootkan languages, which are part of the Pacific Northwest sprachbund:
- (8) Sound correspondences in Nootkan (Campbell 2013:307)  
[“C’ ” = *glottalized C*, ʕ = voiced pharyngeal fricative, h = voiceless pharyngeal fricative, χ = voiceless uvular fricative, q = voiceless uvular stop]

TABLE 12.1: Nootkan sound correspondences

	<i>Makah</i>	<i>Nitinat</i>	<i>Nootka</i>	<i>Proto-Nootkan</i>
(1)	b	b	m	*m
(2)	bʰ	bʰ	m̥	*m̥
(3)	d	d	n	*n
(4)	dʰ	dʰ	n̥	*n̥
(5)	qʰ	ʕ	ʕ	*qʰ
(6)	qʰʷ	ʕ	ʕ	*qʰʷ
(7)	χʷ	χʷ	h̥	*χʷ
(8)	χ	χ	h̥	*χ

- Many of the languages of the Pacific Northwest sprachbund **lack nasal consonants**.
- ★ With that in mind, *how should we subgroup Makah, Nitinat, and Nootka?*