1 What is (Proto)-Indo-European?

"The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists."

(William Jones, 1786)

2 How to reconstruct

Step 1: Find the cognates

Latin		English	Latin		English	Latin		English
/p/	~	**?**	**/t/**	~	**?**	**/k/**	~	**?**
pater			tres			cornus		
piscis			tu			cordis		
pedis			tonat			centum		
/b/	~	**?**	**/d/**	~	**?**	**/g/**	~	**?**
cannabis			dentis			ager		
			decem			granum		
			duo					

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When is a cognate a cognate?

Egyptian	Uto-Aztecan
i'w 'old'	*yo'o 'old'
sd 'tail'	*sari 'tail, dog'
qdi/qty 'go round'	*koti/koli 'turn around, return'
thw 'drunkard'	*tïku '(be) drunk'
dbh 'ask'	*t—pina/*tïpiwa 'ask'
qni 'sheaf, bundle'	*kuni/kuna 'bag'
bit 'bee'	*pita 'wasp, bee'
km '(be) black'	*koma 'dark color, black, brown, gray'
dqrw 'fruit'	*taka/tuku 'fruit'
sbk 'crocodile god'	sipak-tli 'crocodile' (Nahuatl)

Indo-European has better cognates

Indo-European vs. non-Indo-European vocabulary

INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

English	one	two	three	mother	brother	sister
German	ein	zwei	drei	Mutter	Bruder	Schwester
French	un	deux	trois	mère	frère	soeur
Latin	unus	duo	tres	mater	frater	soror
Russian	odin	dva	tri	mat'	brat	sestra
Old Irish	oen	do	tri	mathir	brathir	siur
Tocharian	sas	wu	trey	macer	procer	ser
Lithuanian	vienas	du	trys	motina	brolis	seser
Sanskrit	eka	duva	trayas	matar	bhratar	svasar
PIE*	oynos	dwo	treyes	mater	bhrater	suesor

NON-INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

Finnish	yksi	kaksi	kolme	äiti	veli	sisar
Foré*	ka	tara	kakaga	nano	naganto	nanona

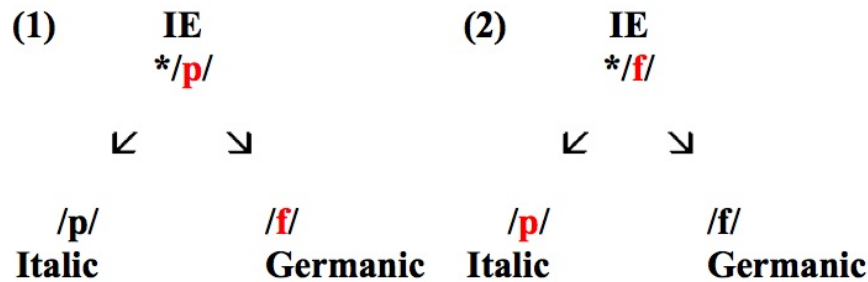**Study of our Latin to English data led to Grimm's Law**
Need to specify contexts:

- Eng. *spew*, Ger. *speien*, Lat. *spuere*

- Eng. *stand*, Ger. *stehen*, Lat. *stāre*

Grimm's Law does not operate after /s/

Neogrammarian Hypothesis: *Sound change is regular and exceptionless*

Step 2: Find a plausible reconstruction

(1)   IE   (2)   IE
        */p/   */f/

        ↙   ↘   ↙   ↘

/p/   /f/   /p/   /f/
Italic   Germanic   Italic   Germanic

Majority principle

- Lat: pater, Skt: pitar, Grk: pater, Eng: father

Principle of most natural development

- phonetically more natural, more frequent cross-linguistically

1. /p/ > /f/: Lenition (weakening) plosive > fricative = expected

2. /f/ > /p/: Fortition (strengthening) less common

Thus, IE */p/ is reconstructed - hence, */p/ > /f/ in Germanic.

3   Complications and consequences

Proto-Indo-European is an abstraction and not a normal language

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Who were the Indo-Europeans?

Cognates for 'beech' in Indo-European languages

Gaul.	bāgos	'beech'
Lat.	fāgus	'beech'
OE	bōc	'beech' (also book)
OHG	buocha	'beech'
Russ	buz	'elder'
Alb	bung	'oak'
Greek	φηγός	'oak'
PIE	*bhāgo-	'some kind of tree?'

A Proto-Indo-European Fable

Owis, quesyo wlhnaa ne eest, ekwoons espeket, oinom gwrrum woghom weghontm, oinomque megam bhorom, oinomque ghmmenm ooku bherontm.

Owis nu ekwomos ewewquet: "Keer aghnutoi moi ekwoons agontm nerm widntei."

Ekwoos tu ewewquont: "Kludhi, owei, keer aghnutoi nsmei widntmos: neer, potis, owioom r wlhnaam sebhi gwhermom westrom qurnneuti. Owioomque wlhnaa esti."

Tod kekluwoos owis agrom ebhuget.

References and further reading

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