LINGUISTICS 110 PAPER IDEAS

In addition to the sample papers posted on the website, we have seen several examples of data sets that are models that you could use as the basis of Linguistics 110 papers. All that any of these data sets would need to turn them into course papers would be to write up an introductory background section on the languages, add discussion about the data, and lay out a formalization of the analysis that would include consolidation of sound changes using features, establishing relative chronologies, and so forth. **OBVIOUSLY YOU CANNOT USE THESE DATA SETS FOR YOUR PAPERS, BUT YOU CAN CERTAINLY USE THEM AS IDEAS FOR PAPERS ON RELATED LANGUAGES OR RELATED SETS OF SOUNDS.**

**Sound change paper**

- Latin velars > French (APS reader, pages 33-38)
- Latin s and changes related to it > French (class handout on sound change, pages 3-6)
- Latin velars > Portuguese (Assignment 3)
- Germanic coronals > High German (discussion problem, APS reader, pages 44-45)
- The little Korean and Portuguese problems on Assignment 2 are actually sound change problems, but you would have to expand the range of data to make them full-fledged papers.

**Comparative reconstruction paper**

- Semitic fricatives (APS reader, pages 57-59)
- Turkic stops (discussion problem, APS reader, pages 61-63)
- Polynesian obstruents (Assignment 5)
- The little Chadic problems on Assignment 4 are actually comparative reconstruction problems, but you would have to add a third language to each problem and expand the range of sounds you were reconstructing to make full-fledged papers.

**Internal reconstruction paper**

- Greek nominal roots (APS reader, page 64)
- Spanish verb root vowels (discussion problem, APS reader, pages 68-69)
- Korean root initial sounds (Assignment 6)
DATA SOURCES AND IDEAS FOR THE LINGUISTICS 110 PAPER

Library Catalog and Other Online Sources

If you enter Comparative X (where “X” is a language or language family, like “Germanic”, “Dravidian”, “Chinese”, etc.) as a keyword in the library search page, http://www2.library.ucla.edu/, you will get a list of references, many of which will be sources of data, esp. for comparative reconstruction and sound change. You can do the same thing on amazon.com or other online booksellers. You don’t have to buy the books, but the list of books they have is extensive and works almost like a library catalog.

Journals Specializing in Language Areas

There are numerous journals that publish mainly descriptive and historical papers about languages in specific language areas (as opposed to journals that specialize in theoretical studies). These journals often publish extensive word lists, which are useful for historical studies. The journals listed here are just suggestions. There are such journals focusing on virtually every language area of the world.

*International Journal of American Linguistics.* This journal has tended to focus on languages of North and Central America, but it has published articles on languages from all over the world.

*Journal of West African Languages.* As the name implies, this journal concentrates on West African languages, but West Africa has the most languages of any part of Africa!

*Afrika und Übersee.* Another journal that has lots of descriptive articles. Many are written in English, so don’t worry about the fact that the journal title is German.

*Studies in African Linguistics.* This journal has tended to specialize in theoretically oriented articles using African language data, but there are descriptive and historical articles, too.

Workbooks

There several workbooks and textbooks on historical linguistics that have data sets meant as course problems but which can also serve as the basis for papers. Typically these data sets would require supplementary data from other sources, such as dictionaries, and of course you would need to add information about the languages and language families. Here are some that I know about:


Campbell, Lyle. *Historical Linguistics, an Introduction.* MIT Press, 1998. [Campbell has data problems at the end of each chapter.]


**NOTE:** A lot of the sound change problems in these sources use a reconstructed proto-language as the older form of the language. These would not be acceptable for a sound change paper in this class, which requires that the data from the older language be from an actually attested language.

### Some Comparative Sources

Here are some books that present data from related languages in list or dictionary form, making it easy to find cognate items. You should be able to find similar books for other language families or groups by doing a library catalog search as suggested above. Books like these are particularly useful for comparative reconstruction papers, but if the languages are descendants of an attested older language (as in the first reference below), they could also be sources for sound change papers.


### Internal Reconstruction Papers

Internal reconstruction is really just using phonological alternations in a language to reconstruct phonological change within that language. Therefore, any descriptive study of phonological alternations in grammars of specific languages or journal articles that describe phonological alternations are good sources. Even paradigms of irregular verbs, as one finds in grammars or dictionaries are good data, since “irregular” usually means “having alternations”. However, you need to distinguish between alternations related to phonology (like *keep/kept* in English, where the reason for different vowels is related to syllable structure) and inherited morphologically conditioned alternations (like *sing/sang/sung* in English, where it the vowel changes themselves are the markers of tense and have no phonological explanation within the history of English).