# Linguistics 611

**Nonphonological results from application of Comparative Method (in IE):**

Though much of the success of the Comparative Method has been focused over the years on phonology, its application in nonphonological domains has yielded useful results too. Here are a few such results (in each instance, decisions are made by comparing elements across related languages and reconstructing based on plausible paths of change and/or indications as to which of the compared elements represents an innovation or retention, just as with phonological reconstruction):

a. **forms**, besides roots and derivational affixes such as *-ti- for abstract nouns, also inflectional elements such as person/number endings, e.g. *-mi for 1SG present, or case endings, e.g. *–s for nominative singular, *-m for accusative singular

b. **grammatical categories**, such as present tense, aoristic aspect, nominal cases (nominative, accusative, locative), etc.

c. **morphological processes**, e.g. *e/o/Ø* ablaut, both for derivation and for inflection

d. **morphophonemic rules**, e.g. the shared degemination of /*-ss-/ to [-s-] as in Sanskrit 2SG *asi* 'you are' from /as-si/ paralleled by Greek *eî* 'you are' from /es-si/ (admittedly, one reaches these results in each language by internal reconstruction, but then in putting the results of the internal reconstructions in each language in juxtaposition with one another, one is using the comparative method to project back to the common ancestor of Greek and Sanskrit, that is, PIE)

e. **syntax**, e.g. the agreement pattern by which neuter plural nouns trigger singular agreement, found in Hittite, Vedic Sanskrit, Avestan, and Ancient Greek; thus presumably a PIE pattern

f. **semantics**, e.g. Sanskrit *dyaus pita:* 'father sky (designation of a god)', *Greek Zeu pater* 'father Zeus (chief god of Greek pantheon)', Latin *Iu:piter* 'Jupiter (chief god of Roman pantheon)' points to a specialized (metaphorical) semantics for already in PIE *pater- 'father' (presumably otherwise just '(biological or adoptive) father')

g. **poetic formulas**, e.g. Adalbert Kuhn's (1853) demonstration that Sanskrit *śravaḥ akṣitam* and Homeric Greek *kléos áphthiton*, both meaning 'imperishable fame', are to be equated and reflect a PIE poetic formula; themes of poetic diction (cf. Watkins 1995 on IE dragon-slaying myths)

h. **legal practice** as well as **legal diction** (cf. Watkins 1987; discussed in Hock & Joseph 1996: 510-11).