

→ comparative linguistics, **reconstruction**

Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics  
(Bussmann 1996)

In linguistics, the comparative method is a **technique for studying the development of languages** by performing a feature-by-feature comparison of two or more languages with common descent from a shared ancestor, as **opposed to the method of internal reconstruction**, which analyses the internal development of a single language over time.

Wikipedia s.v. "Comparative Method"

The Comparative Method is **the central tool in historical linguistics** for historical reconstruction **and also classifying languages**. A classification done with the Comparative Method is called a genetic classification. The result is that languages are arranged in language family trees. This means that languages are classified according to their genealogical relationships<sup>2</sup> and are interpreted as being in relation of child- or sisterhood to other languages. Such a way of classifying entities is called phylogenetic classification in biology; a classification by genealogical relationships.

Fleischhauer (2009)

The method of comparatistics today is generally known under the not very well-chosen term "comparative-historical method". It constitutes **a huge complex of abstract and concrete procedures for the investigation of the history of related languages** which genetically go back to some unofrom tradition of the past.

Klimov (1990), my translation

The method of **comparing languages to determine whether and how they have developed from a common ancestor**. The items compared are lexical and grammatical units, and the aim is to discover correspondences relating sounds in two or more different languages, which are so numerous and so regular, across sets of units with similar meanings, that no other explanation is reasonable.

Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics (Matthews 1997)

The comparative is both the earliest and **the most important of the methods of reconstruction**. Most of the major insights into the prehistory of languages have been gained by the applications of this method, and most reconstructions have been based on it.

Fox (1995)