

IFLTA 2009

Session A-3: Sarah DeMaris (Valparaiso University)

“How Language Works: Introducing Historical Linguistics to Students of German”

This handout is intended for German instructors who attended the session. It provides the specific examples that correspond to the final two pages of the handout you received at the session.

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. . . and why it matters for German and English

Example:

Some sounds in the Germanic Languages make a change that makes them different from other Indo-European languages:

Indo-European (and most of its descendant languages):

p	pater, pere, padre primary, primus pedes, pedestrian pregunta pescaro, pisces, pesce nepotism	t	tu tres, trio	k	cardio- canine caput, decapitate, cappuccino centum
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b	lubricare, lubricate labial	d	decem pedes duo, dos, deux	g	genu, genuflect
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(There are English words in these non-Germanic examples because English borrowed them later, usually from Latin or French; so that is why English sometimes has two forms of a word. Example: foot, but many words with “p” as in podiatrist, pedestrian.)

Germanic (also a descendant language of IE – but one that made certain changes):

f	Vater, father first foot, Fuß Frage Fisch, fish Neffe, nephew	th	thee, though	h	heart, Herz hound, Hund head, Haupt- hundred, Hundert
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p	slippery lip	t	ten foot two	k	knee, Knie
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Then hundreds of years later some sounds in German make another change that makes German different from other Germanic languages (makes it different from English):

Germanic (examples are English words, since English didn't make the changes):

p	pound	t	toe
	pepper		two
	palace		ten
	pentecost		heart
	dapper		salt
	Apple		set
	slippery		
	open		eat
	up		bite
	lope		what
	hope		foot
	ship		that
	sleep		

German:

pf	Pfund	ts	Zehe
	Pfeffer		zwei
	Pfalz		zehn
	Pfingsten		Herz
	tapfer		Salz
	Apfel		setzen
	schlipferig		
f(f)	offen	s(s)	essen
	auf		beißen
	laufen		was
	hoffen		Fuß
	Schiff		daß
	schlafen		

[Notice that the position of the “p” in the word or whether it is in gemination determines whether it will become “pf” or “f(f)” in German.]