### Human Language Families

- **Language family**: collection of attested languages that are descended from a single ancestral language.
- **Proto-language**: a language which was the common ancestor of related languages that form a language family.

E.g., Romance; Indo-European; Japanese

Creole and mixed languages

### Historical (Diachronic) Linguistics

1. Determining language relationships and relative divergences through comparative linguistic method
Comparative Method

- Objective is to model divergence and change within groups of related languages
- Comparative analysis of basic vocabulary to statistically determine (lexicostatistics) relative distances and relationships between individual languages

Lexicostatistics

- Cognates: word alterations
- Swadesh’s Classification
  - sharing 80% cognates: dialects
  - 18-80%: same family
  - 12-28%: separate families
  - 4-12%: different stock of same phylum

Glottochronology

- Based on constant and measurable rate of language change
- divergences and sequences are relative

Other ways languages can change:
Grammar
Sound changes
Vocabulary changes
Language Isolates

- Basque
- Ainu
- Japanese

Language Families

- Eskimo-Aleut (9)
- Caucasian (38)
- Niger-Kordofanian (1,064)
- Austronesian (959)
- Indo-European (1.5 billion)
- Sino-Tibetan (> 1 billion)
Austronesian Languages

- Tasmanian
- N. Andamanese
- Papuan

Excludes Australian Aboriginal languages
Language Families of Australia and the Pacific

• Australian
• Papuan
• Austronesian

Australia

Late 18th c. 350-750 languages or dialects
21st c. less than 200
Only 20 not highly endangered

Northern Australia: Pama-Nyungan
Austronesian Dispersals

External Relations

- Austric Phylum
- Old Chinese (Sagart 2002)
- Tai-Kadai languages
- Japanese?