

# “UNCOVERING ORIGINS: A STUDY OF ETYMOLOGY AND WORD EVOLUTION”

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## Abstract

Etymology, a field within linguistics, utilizes comparative-historical analysis to reconstruct the earliest word-formation structures and the internal forms of words across languages. This study explores the evolution of word meanings, phonological changes, and the intersection of linguistic, cultural, and historical factors in word formation. Drawing on various etymological theories, including phonetic laws, folk etymology, and semasiological universals, it examines how words undergo transformations over time and the role of etymology in preserving cultural narratives. Emphasizing the scientific approach in modern etymology, this work discusses both the limitations and advancements in reconstructive linguistics, highlighting contributions from significant linguistic methodologies and scholars.

**Keywords:** Etymology, linguistics, comparative-historical method, word formation, phonetic laws, folk etymology, semantic evolution, lexical reconstruction, Indo-European languages, linguistic paleontology.

## ETIMOLOGIYA NIMA?

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## Annotatsiya

Tilshunoslikning bir sohasi bo'lgan etimologiya eng qadimgi so'z yasash tuzilmalarini va tillardagi so'zlarning ichki shakllarini qayta qurish uchun qiyosiy-tarixiy tahlildan foydalanadi. Ushbu tadqiqotda so'z ma'nolarining rivojlanishi, fonologik o'zgarishlar, so'z yasashidagi lingvistik, madaniy va tarixiy omillarning kesishishi o'rganiladi. Turli etimologik nazariyalarga, jumladan, fonetik qonuniyatlarga, xalq etimologiyasiga va semasiologik universallarga tayangan holda, u so'zlarning vaqt o'tishi bilan qanday o'zgarishlarga uchraganini va madaniy rivoyatlarni saqlashda etimologiyaning rolini o'rganadi. Zamonaviy etimologiyada ilmiy yondashuvni ta'kidlagan holda, ushbu ish rekonstruktiv tilshunoslikdagi cheklovlar va yutuqlarni muhokama qiladi, muhim lingvistik metodologiyalar va olimlarning hissalarini ta'kidlaydi.

**Tayanch so'zlar:** Etimologiya, tilshunoslik, qiyosiy-tarixiy metod, so'z yasashi, fonetik qonuniyatlar, xalq etimologiyasi, semantik evolyutsiya, leksik rekonstruksiya, hind-evropa tillari, lingvistik paleontologiya.

Etymology is a section of linguistics, within the framework of which, on the basis of comparative-historical method, the most ancient word-formation structures and “internal form” (elements of meaning) of a word, which, as a result of various interlinguistic, cultural-social, interlinguistic and territorial-temporal processes, have been broken, displaced, lost or contaminated (subjected to mixing), are restored (reconstructed). The nature of the word’s meaning motivation, possible crossing or concatenation of several semantic sequences or word forms, distribution area of the word (possible changes of area), as well as factors that have influenced the structure and meaning of the word are also reconstructed [the layering or collision of several languages in a given territory, the relationship between the meaning of the word and its changes with the facts of history, material culture, ethnography, religion and mythology of a particular people (so, taking into account the widespread ancient custom of eating the object one swears to eat, e.g. land, it can be assumed that English *oath* can be correlated with Old English *etan*, modern English *to eat*; English *bride* can be correlated with Russian *нрпым*, Old English *brod* ‘rod, branch’: in ancient times there was a custom to break a rod when concluding any transaction, including marriage; typologically cf. Lat. *brod* – “rod, branch”: in ancient times there was a custom to break a rod when concluding any transaction, including marriage; typologically cf. Latin *stipula* – “rod”, but Latin *stipulor* – “to conclude a transaction”];<sup>1</sup>.

According to V. N. Toporov, the task of etymological analysis is “to determine the coordinates of different systems (phonological, word-formation, lexical, semantic, poetic, etc.), the intersection of which generates a given word, and to determine the subsequent trajectory of the word”.<sup>2</sup> Hence it is clear that etymology is not in any way equivalent to the history of individual words separated or to the mechanical imprinting of similar forms and meanings: only if different connections between words within a given system are taken into account,

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<sup>1</sup> Chevalier J., Gheerbrant A. Dictionnaire des symboles. Paris, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Топоров В. Н. О некоторых теоретических основаниях этимологического анализа. - Вopr. языкознания, 1960, № 3, с. 49.

if the connection of a word simultaneously allows to judge about connections of other words, if the validity of etymology of a word is confirmed and checked by the inconsistency of the links of this word and the intersecting relations with them of other words of the same system, It is possible to speak of the establishment of a certain etymology of the word, although in this case it can only be about one of the possible hypotheses, which can be confirmed, corrected or even rejected. On the other hand, the search for the so-called primordial elements of language – lexical (cf., for example, N. Y. Marr's postulated “primordial elements” *sal, ber, yon, rosh*, allegedly underlying all the languages of the world) or semantic (cf. A. Juret's thesis that all meanings represented in the Indo-European languages can be reduced to the two – “unity” and “to be – to act”) is completely futile. This is explained, in particular, by the fact that already at the earliest stages of its development language is presented as an integral system of levels, categories, links, which nevertheless unite different - chronologically, qualitatively and quantitatively – elements. If we take into account that the languages of mankind have existed for more than 30 thousand years, and also take into account the multiple reconstructions of the systems of individual languages, their mutual influences on each other and numerous layering – intralingual and foreign languages, it becomes clear that in historical linguistics it is impossible to operate with absolute categories. That is why the reconstruction of the Indo-European primordial language (Ursprache), as well as of the primordial languages of separate groups of Indo-European languages (Proto-Germanic, Proto-Romanic), is relative. Etymological analysis usually makes it possible to establish word formation-morphemic and semasiological correspondences between lexica-semantic elements both within the same language (internal reconstruction, i.e. establishing some forms and meanings on the basis of others) and within closely related and non-closely related languages (external reconstruction). Such an analysis also makes it possible to identify the earliest known (initial) form of a given unit of language (root, word, phraseological phrase), which is called “etymon”.<sup>3</sup> In this connection,

<sup>3</sup> Макаев Э. А. Структура слова в индоевропейских и германских языках. М., 1970, с. 34.

the depth of etymological analysis is very important, i.e. the establishment of either superficial or more ancient connections of this or that word or groups of words.

In American linguistics we sometimes speak of so-called linguistic paleontology, which is defined as the study of word meanings in reconstructed languages in order to obtain social, cultural and geographical data about (speech communities) that used these languages. By analyzing and comparing the constituents of words and their semantic transformations, the researcher-etymologist traces various possibilities of development of a certain sequence of meanings within a certain word-form (or several word-forms), the order of combination and properties of connections of these meanings, the analogy of semantic transitions in different languages, i.e. ultimately solves along with comparative-historical problems the problems of typology of lexical-semantic transformations.

Language is assimilated by a person from early childhood as a ready-made, well-oiled mechanism, although, as is known, the formation and development of language is a long dialectical process that takes place over millennia. The speaker is usually not aware of the complex and contradictory phenomena that led to the emergence, disappearance or preservation of certain elements of language, the possibility or impossibility of language changes. For him, language is only modern (or close to them in time) forms of oral and written speech, modern meanings of words.

However, much is lost in such an approach. After all, individual words, especially borrowed words, are mute witnesses of human history and culture. Changes in the meanings of these words, especially in their transition from one language to another, reflect human destinies, interests, morals, customs, ways of thinking better than any chronicles and testimonies of contemporaries. And although in every period of language existence words are “silent” like sphinxes, such “silence” is in itself a persistent call to unravel their mystery. As O. N.

Trubachev rightly pointed out, “an in-depth understanding of the modern meaning of a word is thus its reconstruction”.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the traditional thesis about the “uniqueness” of etymological solutions, i.e. that a word can have only one etymology, the special literature has recently increasingly emphasized the idea of multiple etymologies of the same word.<sup>5</sup> Within the framework of successive semasiological transitions within a given root, adjacent elements may reveal unidirectional or inter-directional dependence, while non-adjacent elements are not necessarily connected by dependency relations. In this connection, the possibility of matching a number of lexemes previously considered homonymic opens up.

The following may be pointed out as examples. The Indo-European root \**meu* - means “wet, damp; dampness” and at first sight seems to have nothing in common with the root \**meu-* meaning “to move; to hasten; to show strength”. However, on closer examination it turns out that these roots are not homonyms, but one and the same root. The point is that the meaning of “wet” in Indo-European languages often passes into the meaning of “male, man, strong” (literally “fertilizing”: cf. English *ox* - “bull” and Old Indian *uksati* - “to spray, wet”). Along with the meaning “wet”, the root \**meu* - has the meaning “cheerful”; cf. Old Indian *moda* – “joy, fun”, German. *munter* “cheerful”, Russian *мудрый*. Since the meaning “wet” is usually correlated with the meaning “to crush, to turn into a liquid mass” (cf. Goth. *Maitan* – “to cut”), the English “mood” can probably be attributed to the above corium (as a semasculological parallel, cf. Latin *putare* “to cut”, but *putare* “to think, reflect”), English “moat”, *mettle* – “character”, as well as French *mot* – “word” (the meaning “to cut; to beat” often turns into the meaning “to speak”: cf. German. *sprechen* – “to speak”, but German. *brechen* – “to break”, Goth. *qithan* – “to speak”, but English “to cut”, etc.). In the light of the above, we

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<sup>4</sup> Трубачев О. Н. Реконструкция слов и их значений. - *Вопр. языкознания*, 1980, № 3, с. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Топоров В. Н. О некоторых теоретических аспектах этимологии. - В кн.: *Международный симпозиум по проблемам этимологии, исторической лексикологии и лексикографии. Тезисы докладов*. М., 1984; он же. Ведыское *rta-*: к соотношению смысловой структуры и этимологии. В кн.: *Этимология*. 1979. М., 1981, с. 140, and others.

can assume that English “*merry*” goes back to Indo-European. \**meregh* – “to wet”, and the latter is probably a fusion of two roots: “*meu-* and \**reg-* (both meaning “*wet*”). Similarly, O. N. Trubachev established that Russian *numь* and *nemь* are not different words (cf. homonymic forms: *ною* – “making sounds” and *ною* – “giving drink”), but a modification of the same root (it refers to a sacrificial libation accompanied by shouting). Cf. also the correlation of English *to sing* with Old English *sicerian* – “to drip, ooze”, *sicera* – “alcoholic drink”, on the one hand, and with Russian *(до)сязать*, *(при)сязать* (a loudly pronounced oath was usually accompanied by touching an object), on the other hand. When etymologizing, it is very important to take into account cases of merging several roots, which are often difficult to recognize. Cf.: Old English *faeger* (English *fair*) – “beautiful, lovely” < Indo-European “*ap-* – “water” + \**reg-* – “to wet”; English “noise” < Indo-European \**nau-* – “to wear out, exhaust” + \**eu-* – “lack; empty” + \**se(i)-* – “rest” (cf.: Schweizer *Deusch ösen* – “to empty”, *nieschen* – “to procrastinate”, *Osen* – “diligence”, *neuseln* – “to beat”, but *nislen* – “to speak”, cf. *Sakic najš* – “music”).

Philological analysis of the reliability of words and their meanings presented in ancient language monuments, as well as errors and contaminations of words and meanings in these monuments, is extremely important for etymology. The identification of so-called imaginary words (“ghost-words” – V. Skeet's term) requires special analysis. Thus, the word *crinc*<sup>6</sup> – “shoe, boot” (Latin *cothurnus*), found only once in Old English language monuments, turns out to be imaginary: if we take into account that the initial *c* in this word, as it often happens in manuscripts, could have arisen under the influence of the final *c* (and also under the influence of the first letter in Latin *cothurnus*), if moreover, we take into account the possibility of metathesis and the contamination of *nc h*, we get the true form of this word – *irch*, which finds confirmation in the modern German dialect

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<sup>6</sup> This word has no correspondence in any Indo-European language and is called “hapax ca” (hapax legomenon).

word *Irch*, *Irsch* – “wooden clogs for peasants”; cf. Old German. *ir* (a) *h* – the same.

On the other hand, the contamination of meanings is interesting. Thus, Old English *haefer* – “goat” is contaminated with Old English *haefer* (n) – “scorpion”, in connection with which *bucca* (synonym of *haefer* – “goat”) acquires an untypical meaning “beetle; insect” (cf. English *bug*). At the same time, Old English *haefer* – “goat” is contaminated with Old English *haefer* – “oats”, in connection with which, along with Old English *gat* - modern English *goat* (synonym of *haefer* – “goat”), an imaginary word *oat* – “oats” appears (at <\**gat*: concerning the possibility of mobile initial consonants in the word cf. Russian *коза*, but Lithuanian *ožys* – “goat”). English *hogshead* – “big barrel” purely outwardly as if literally means “pig's head” (many researchers, e.g. E. Klein, E. Partridge and others, claim that the barrel was named by analogy with the hog's head). This is a folk etymology. It can be assumed that the Old English *beor* – “beer” was contaminated with the Old English *bar* “hog” and replaced in this word by the synonym of the latter *hog* (cf. English dial. *hochie* – “beer barrel”). The second element of this word – “head” has no relation to the English *head*, but correlates with the Old English *heden* – “vessel”.<sup>7</sup>

Etymological extrapolation is also of great importance, i.e. the establishment, on the basis of existing forms and meanings, of those forms and meanings which are not actually represented, or of processes long overlapped by later processes; data on certain values of one area and the relations between them may lead to conclusions about those or other values and relations between them in other areas. It must not be forgotten, however, that not all evolution in language involves change, and not all linguistic change involves evolution. It is necessary, however, to take into account the fact that in a number of cases the evolution of forms can be read through the evolution of meanings, and the evolution of meanings through – the evolution of forms.

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<sup>7</sup> Wright T. *Old English Vocabularies*. Darmstadt, 1968, vol. I-II, p. 212 (24).

The word-formation analysis, in particular the structure of the root, the nature of determinatives and mobile formatives, is of exceptional importance for etymology [here we should note the interesting theory of the dynamic character of the Indo-European root put forward by E. A. Makayev according to this theory, the Indo-European root does not represent a frozen formation, as E. Benveniste postulated, but underwent significant changes in the process of language evolution].<sup>8</sup>

The term “etymology” originated in ancient Greece. It was introduced by the Greek stoic philosopher Chrysippus and literally means “the true meaning of a word” (Greek *etymos* – “true” + *logos* – “word, doctrine”). In the history of science, the term in question appears in a variety of meanings. Etymology was the art of interpreting (exegesis) texts of various contents, which was the main subject of so-called hermeneutics. Cf., for example, the erroneous convergence of Latin *malum* – “evil” and *mālum* – “apple”, in connection with which far-reaching conclusions were drawn that the language supposedly confirms the correctness of the biblical legend of original human sin. F. Engels justly criticized this kind of arbitrary “etymologies” on which pseudo-philosophical conclusions are based. He wrote that “etymology ... must be studied, it cannot be invented”.<sup>9</sup>

The Stoics resorted to etymological research to substantiate their views in physics, cosmology, ethics, theology, and jurisprudence. Etymology was often identified with rhetoric, in particular with the selection and combination of words and the construction of stylistic (rhetorical) figures. Finally, up to the end of the 19th century, etymology, as opposed to syntax, was also referred to as the department of grammar devoted to the study of basic phonetic rules, morphology (inflection, conjugation) and word formation. In Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, where semasiology was involved in the realm of philosophical scholasticism, the word and its meaning were considered the essence, the inherent

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<sup>8</sup> Schmidt L. Über den Gebrauch des Terminus “Wurzel” in der Sprachwissenschaft. – In: Gedenkschrift für Jost Trier. Köln, 1975.

<sup>9</sup> Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Соч. 2-е изд., т. 36, с. 257



belonging of the object it names, like its shape, color, chemical and physical properties, and composition. This view is particularly evident in Plato's famous dialog "Cratylus", in the writings of the Stoics and Heraclitus, and in Marcus Terentius Varron's treatise "On the Latin Language". In all these works, the fascination with sound-imitation (onomatopoeia) and sound symbolism in the interpretation of words can be clearly traced. The proponents of this concept believed that, since names are "composed" of letters of the alphabet, it is the letters that should primarily reflect the properties of the object in question. For example, it was argued that the Greek letter *po* supposedly expresses impulse, movement, rigidity, while *a* the letter *lambda* – expresses something smooth, soft. Things themselves were thought to affect us in the way words were felt. In this connection, one of the most important research techniques, often leading to fantastic results, was the decomposition of words into parts, each of which was assigned its own meaning. Thus, the Latin *lapis* – "stone" was interpreted as "*laedens pedem*" – "damaging feet" (a person stumbles on stones); the Latin *fenestra* – "window" was interpreted as "*ferensnos extra*" – "taking us outside"; Latin *cadaver* – "corpse" was broken down into *ca* (from *cadere* - "to fall", "to perish"), *da* (from *dare* – "to give"), *ver* (from *vermis* – "worm") and interpreted as "fallen, given to worms"; *capillus* – "hair" was raised to *capitis pilus* – "head down". By performing any operations on a name, the proponents of this concept argued, we influence the corresponding object as well, subjugate it to our will. In this connection, the meaning of verbal magic becomes clear, the desire to classify the names of those objects that need to be "secured" from hostile influence. Hence the desire to search for "primary", "istanic" names, meanings and forms of words in order to better understand the essence of things and phenomena and the possibility of influencing them, which to a large extent determined the actual subject and methods of etymologizing in the period of antiquity and the Middle Ages. This concept was opposed to the view that all words of human language

arose “by agreement” (Democritus, Aristotle). In accordance with this concept, the so-called well-assigned and badly, incorrectly assigned names were distinguished.

The etymology of antiquity and the Middle Ages was generally guesswork. From the point of view of the form of words, it was based on the possibility of arbitrary addition, deletion, transposition (inversion) and replacement of letters in a word. From the point of view of meaning, the rhetorical figures of similarity, proximity, contiguity (i.e. the relationship between cause and effect, between what contains and what is contained, between part and whole), catachresis (the use of a word in an unrelated, inaccurate or incorrect sense) and contrast (the opposite of meaning) were taken into account. In addition, etymology operated with naive approximations of consonant words and, as already mentioned, sound and religious symbolism. The absurdity of such constructions was obvious even to the Christian theologian Augustine (354-430), who wrote: “The origin of words is the same as the interpretation of dreams: everyone interprets them according to his own reasoning”. This characterization also applies to etymology in much later times, until the creation of the comparative-historical method and the overcoming of the naive constructions of pre-scientific linguistics.

The compilation of the first etymological dictionaries in Britain dates back to the 17th century. Most authors attribute the entire vocabulary of the English language to one of the known ancient languages – Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Celtic languages, which are considered by them as peculiar primordial languages. At the same time, the peculiarities of the languages with which it is compared are often transferred to English. Thus, authors who correlate English vocabulary with Semitic vocabulary, taking into account the regularities of the latter, usually take into account only the combinations of consonants and pay no attention to vowels. It should also be pointed out that some authors reduce almost all English words to onomatopoeic (sound-imitation) formations. As for the meaning of words, early English etymological dictionaries are characterized by naive mnemonic interpretations of words based on the principles of etymologizing that prevailed in

the Middle Ages (cf. the correlation of English monkey with French manqué – “a creature that never managed to become a man”).

The material given in modern English etymological dictionaries is, unfortunately, rather scarce. Some long-outdated etymologies swarm from one dictionary to another without any critical reflection, and the vast majority of common English words remain without any etymology at all (they are labelled “of uncertain etymology”, “origin unknown”). Special works (monographs and articles) devoted to the etymology of individual English words are not reflected in etymological dictionaries. The most reliable (though the least interesting) in etymological dictionaries of the English language are those etymologies that correlate with Latin (we are talking about French borrowings in English). Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of words which, according to dictionaries, have no etymology, are quite amenable to etymologization. Thus, English ache – “pain” goes back to the Old English eacian – “to increase” (typologically cf. Russian *большой*, but *боль*). English “dog” goes back to the Indo-European root \*dogh – “to burn, to shine; to watch”: it refers to a dog as a guardian of the herd (typologically cf. Russ. *печь*, but *онекать*); since words with the meaning “to burn, to shine” correlate with words meaning “to move quickly” (cf. English to cast – “to throw”, but Ossetian. caest – “eye”, kasyn – “to look”), we can assume that the meaning of the word dog was also superimposed on the indicated meaning of “hound, following the trail” (cf. Ossetian doğ – “racing, running”). Most of the words denoting a house, a flat, correlate with the notion of “to burn; to warm; to warm” (cf. Czech *tepla* – “room”; German *Stube* – “room”, but English *stove* – “oven”). However, as we have already said, words with the meaning “to burn” correlate with words meaning “to move quickly” (cf. German *brennen* – “to burn” < *be-rennen* – “to run, to move quickly”). We can assume in this connection that English *flat* – “apartment” has no relation to *flat* – “salverform”, *a* is a prefixal formation (with a truncated prefix *for-*) from the root represented by German dial. *lättern* – “to move quickly; to hang around”, Tocharian. A *lät* – “to run” (cf.

German. lodern – “to blaze”, but Swiss dial. Lottern – “to move, walk”). English “fish” – correlates with Tocharian *A pusāk* “muscle” (pl. puskas). Cf. English dial. *fish* – “flat iron plate”; Indo-Aryan. *pišur* – “muscle, flesh”. In this connection, it should be noted that in a number of languages the notion of “fish” correlates with the notion of “muscle” – cf. the paired word in Adygean: *lepca* – “fish”, literally “muscle” + “fish”. The word *fish* correlates also with Old English *fysan* – “to move quickly”, English dial. *to fish* – “to strive, to achieve”, English *busy*. English *to play* – “to play” correlates with Russian *плакать* (originally “to perform cult actions accompanied by body movements and shouts”). Similarly, the English *toy* correlates with Russian *стучать, стук*. The etymology of the English word *ape* – “monkey” is interesting. Taking into account that, according to ancient beliefs, the monkey was a symbol of fertilization, it is possible, apparently, to compare this word with Tocharian *A apa* – “water; river”, Old Indian *apa* – “water”, Prussian *ape* – “river” (cf. the above etymology of the English *ox* – “bull”). In this connection it is interesting to compare also English “monkey”, but Tocharian. *A muk* – “force”, Indo-European *\*mak-* “to knead, knead, press” > English *to make* – “to do”. English “star” correlates with Indo-European *\*ter* – “to rub” > > “to shine (from friction)”. In its turn, the meaning Russian “to rub” gives the meaning “hard” (cf. typologically, on the one hand, English *to grind*, but *ground*, and on the other hand, Russian *жесткий*, but *жечь*), in connection with which the same root can be attributed to the Latin *terra* – “earth” (in our case we mean the celestial firmament as the residence of stars). To the same root belongs the numeral *three* Russian *три* (as a symbol of heaven, in contrast to the numeral *two*, which is the personification of all earthly things). The etymology of English *weed* – “grass” is also interesting (cf. Russian *ветка*, English *to wed*, Russian *сватать* (branch as a symbol of a deal), *to swathe* – “to wrap up” (the bride's face was usually covered), “wet” (as a symbol of ritual libation), German *schwätzen* – “to speak, talk” (shouts as an attribute of ritual)].<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Маковский М.М. Английская этимология. М., 1986 – in print

A truly scientific approach to etymological research emerged only after F. Bopp's justification of the comparative-historical method (comparativists) in the early twentieth century. It was the discovery of phonetic correspondences (so-called phonetic laws) of the Indo-European languages on the basis of this method that for the first time created a solid ground for understanding many deep phenomena of the language and excluded mechanistic convergence of outwardly consonant words. Only the comparative method, unlike the linguistic techniques that preceded it, presupposes the use of the principle of historicism in linguistic research. This principle, however, does not mean simply presenting the material in chronological sequence or mechanically identifying the earliest of the presented linguistic phenomena or realities. It requires the disclosure of those internal relations and interconnectedness of linguistic phenomena which determine not only their linguistic status and the reasons for their historical change, but also the whole process of linguistic development as a whole.

It should be emphasized that taking into account only the formal (sound) side of the words being compared cannot be the basis for a reliable etymology. Up until recently, however, just the establishment of the sound correspondence of certain words was considered the main proof of their genetic identity, and the semantic relations of the compared lexemes were arbitrarily interpreted on the basis of the researcher's "common sense" and "intuition". Meanwhile, it is quite clear that if we did not know the meanings of the compared words, we would not be able to correlate them phonetically with certain words of related languages or with other words of the same language. However, there are still no firm criteria for analyzing the semantic proximity of words. The determination of semasiological identity of the compared lexemes on the basis of "psychological associations" is unreliable due to quite objective facts - the same concepts may underlie completely different words [cf. the Indo-European root \*ger- – "to twist; to bend", which gives Lithuanian krem—blys - "mushroom" (lit. "curve"), German Kranz – "wreath", Krampf – "cramp", krank – "sick", Kringel – "bagel", Lithuanian. krumpelys –

“joint of the finger”, English grease, Lithuanian. kreipti – “to turn over”, Latin carpere – “to tear”, Old Indian krpitam – “shrub”, Russian *крепкий* “strong”, etc.), and different notions can participate in the formation of the same meaning (cf. the meaning of “beautiful”: 1) “form, outline”: lat. formosus, rum. frumos, sp. hermoso; 2) “jewel”: Welsh. tlws – “red” < “jewel” (cf. Irish tlus – “cattle”); 3) “to squeeze”: Danish. smuk < New German. smuk – “flexible” (cf. German Schmuck and schmiegen); 4) “to wash”: Dutch mooi, cf. moi(e) – “beautiful”, but Russ. *мыть*, Lithuanian. maudyti, Latvian maudat; 5) “fight, battle; to beat”: Welsh. cadr, Brit. Kaer – “beautiful”, but Welsh, cadarn – “strong”, Irish cath, Welsh. cad - “battle”].

Etymologizing only on the basis of phonetic laws invariably narrows, schematizes, simplifies (or, on the contrary, complicates) the scope of the study (in a number of cases the etymology of a word becomes impossible at all due to the lack of suitable sound correspondences), does not allow us to consider the language in all its complexity, in all its aspects and perspectives. Proceeding from the erroneous thesis of language homology (meaning the consideration of language as an absolutely “homogeneous” entity for all speakers, abstracting from its inherent variability, social, territorial and temporal heterogeneity), phonetic etymology focuses the researcher only on one facet of the language complex. A scholar who blindly follows the phonetic laws in etymology is often deprived of the possibility of attracting truly ancestral forms and lexemes for comparison, since they may not fulfil the predetermined formulae, but at the same time he is forced to interpret arbitrarily various phenomena of language in the light of these formulae, thus nullifying the main *raison d'être* of these laws - their strictness. Therefore, the phonetic laws, which in a number of cases undoubtedly constitute one of the most important parts of the procedure of etymological identification, are in themselves clearly insufficient to solve the question of the relation of individual words. Proponents of phonetic laws usually proceed from the erroneous theses that 1) language change is analogous to evolution in the animal and plant world, where

each change is a consequence of a preceding movement (the principle of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*), 2) there were no intermediate links between phonetic elements and they themselves are not intermediate links (thus often confusing cause and effect), and 3) any phonetic change is an isolated phenomenon, occurring independently of the linguistic environment in which it takes place, although, as it is now established, any linguistic change, including phonetic change, is the product of the interaction of a whole complex of phenomena, different in their hierarchical level, functional status and nature. The proponents of phonetic laws are characterized by the orientation only on unambiguous correspondences, the consideration of linguistic change as a mechanical transition of some elements into others, and the refusal to find out the causes of sound transitions. It is indicative that F. M. Müller, one of the prominent representatives of Young Grammatism, wrote: “Sound etymology has nothing to do with sound. We know words to be of the same origin, which have not a single letter in common and which differ in meanings much as black and white”.<sup>11</sup>

It should be borne in mind that on the basis of one and the same sound correspondence in a number of cases quite different roots may be equated, i.e. sound correspondences cannot be an absolute guarantee of the infallibility of the identity established. On the other hand, one and the same phonetic element can change in several different ways, in connection with which it is hardly legitimate to postulate the uniqueness of phonetic transitions. In addition, the use of sound laws does not take into account such common phenomena in language as mobile formatives, change of consonants and vowels in the root. Cf. Swiss-German *baggen* ~ *gaggen*, – “to smell bad”; *baugen* ~ *maugen* ~ *moggen*, – “to squint (with the eyes)”; *miren* ~ *tiren* ~ *liren*, – “to be unsuccessful in work”; English dialect *little* ~ *lickle* – “little”; *arrish* ~ *eddish* – “stubble”; German argot *Miß* ~ *Moß* ~ *Meis* ~ *Mese* ~ *Mais* ~ *Maus* ~ *Mosch* – “girl”; *Maure* ~ *Moire* ~ *Murer* ~ *Maier* – “fear”; *Rasch* ~ *Rosch* ~ *Resch* ~ *Risch* – “head” and etc.

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<sup>11</sup> Müller F. M. *The Science of Language*. London, 1899, vol. II, p. 303.

The use of phonetic laws in the process of etymological analysis caused controversy among linguists from the very beginning. A strong Opponent of these laws was G. Schuchardt.<sup>12</sup>

Along with phonetic methods of etymological analysis, the analysis of meanings is also used. In this analysis, it is important to take into account the so-called semasiological universals (parallels) that arise when creating similar combinatorial conditions in a language [linguistic combinatorics – is a branch of linguistics, studying within the linguistic time qualitative and quantitative characteristics both of the language continuum and of the language elements that comprise it in order to determine the possibility (impossibility) and the results of various types of their interaction (grouping and regrouping elements and their transformations - crossing, overlapping, merging, entering into and exiting from the system, reshuffling, folding, unfolding, changing order, etc.;]<sup>13</sup>, e.g. “place of prayer” > “pawnshop”: English slang *mosk* (*mosque* < “mosque”), cf. French *mont-de-piété* – “pawnshop” (literally “mountain of godliness”); “reed” > “wicked, steep”: Old English *hreod*, German *Riedgras* – “reed”, but Latin *crûdélis* “wicked”, Old Nidian *krudh-jak* – “to make angry”, Old English *hreode* – “tough”; “calf”, “sheep” > “to rejoice, to joke”: Latin *vitulus* - “calf”, but *vitulor* - “to exult”, Latin *ovis* - “sheep”, but *ovare* - “to rejoice, to express joy loudly” (cf. Russian loanword *овацья* and also Russian *телячий восторг*), German *Kalb* - “calf”, but *kalbern* – “to joke”; “to go, to move” > “experience, art”: Old Icelandic *arna* – “to go”, but Latin *ars* – “art”, German *fahren* – “to go”, but *Erfahrung* – “experience”, Latin *curro* – “to run”, but Old Indian *carana* - “art”, Old Icelandic *mentr* – “attendant”, but *ment* – “art”; “share” > “crowd”: Old Indian *cât-ajati* – “to divide”, but Latin *caterva* – “crowd”, German. *scheren* – “to shear”, but *Schar* – “crowd”; “think” > > “chase”: lat. *cogere* – «think», but also «chase», old-engl. *witan* - «know», but. *gewitan* - «persecute, punish».<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that when

<sup>12</sup> Schuchardt H. Ein Vademecum der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft. Darmstadt, 1976; see also the collection: The Lautgesetz-controversy. Amsterdam, 1977

<sup>13</sup> Маковский М. М. Проблемы лингвистической комбинаторики. Вopr. языкознания, 1985, № 3

<sup>14</sup> Persson P. Beiträge zur indogermanischen Wortforschung. Leipzig, 1913, Bd. II.



forming the meaning of a word in some languages, only a certain conceptual attribute is selected due to the internal combinatorial peculiarities inherent in this or that period of language development, and all other conceptual attributes are neutralized: this is the specificity of a certain sequence of ways of modelling the surrounding world. It should be taken into account, however, that semasiological parallels are not always provable, since correlated pairs of meanings may belong to homonyms (cf. Russian *весь* – obsolete “village, region” and *весь* – “whole”). In connection with the semantic side of etymological research, it is of great importance to take into account the phenomena of analogy, decomposition, pollination and the so-called folk etymology, i.e. the desire to look for the internal form of words as a rational explanation of their meanings without taking into account the real facts of their origin. Thus, English *fund*, Russian *фонд*, etc. are usually correlated with Latin *fundus* – “estate”, but English *fund* goes back to a shortened form of Arabic *fondūq* – “tavern for foreign merchants; warehouse for goods” (from Greek *pandocheion* – “containing everything”); English *lurch* (in the expression *to leave smb. in the lurch*) has no relation to English *lurk* – “to hide in the garden, to hide”, but corresponds with Latin *orca* – “dice box”, which in Old French merged with the definite article *l'ourche* - *lourche*.

Since the creation of the comparative-historical method, etymology has always been considered the touchstone of linguistics. Linguists belonging to the most diverse schools of linguistics and working in the most diverse fields of linguistics have been engaged in etymology. A huge contribution to the development of etymology was made by Soviet scientists. The works of O. N. Trubachev, V. N. Toporov, E. A. Makayev and others have firmly entered the golden fund of etymological science.

Already in the 19th century attempts were made to regulate in a certain way the methodology of etymological research [cf., on the one hand, the etymological canons of W. Skeat<sup>15</sup> and on the other hand, the – “rules of etymologizing” put

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<sup>15</sup> Skeat W. Principles of English Etymology. Oxford, 1891.

forward in the 1960s by O. Szemerényi].<sup>16</sup> The methods of linguistic geography, the study of toponymy, the method of “words and things” (“Wörter und Sachen”), successfully developed by O. Schrader and A. Nehring (the study of etymologies on the basis of the study of the history of material culture) became widespread. J. Trier drew attention to the need to take into account the peculiarities of joint labour activity of different human collectives (ergo-logical principle). V. N. Toporov proposed to use the concepts of probability theory and game theory in etymologizing words. Y. Malkiel in his numerous works showed various “pitfalls” of etymological research, usually not taken into account in the analysis.<sup>17</sup> All these methods, especially when combined judiciously, should certainly lead (and have already led to some extent) to an improvement in the reliability of etymological reconstructions.

At the same time, it should be noted that the use of the so-called component analysis has recently become widespread in etymology. Since this method is based on the artificial decomposition of meaning into components, and the criterion of such decomposition is not facts, but the researcher's intuition (of course, different for different scholars) and so-called common sense, component analysis in the study of the real history of words can hardly clarify anything. Thus, in the component analysis of words with the meaning “thief” the meaning “to burn” is never singled out (and cannot be singled out) (cf. Eng. steal, but Indo-Aryan *tāl* – “to burn”, Eng. thief, but Russian *менло*; typologically cf. Eng. slang to burn – “to cheat”); in the component analysis of words with the meaning “berry” the meaning “to beat” cannot be singled out (cf. Eng. berry, but English dial. to berry – “to beat”: transition of the meaning “to beat” >> “lump”); in the component analysis of words with the meaning “to lack” the following meanings cannot be singled out: 1) “to move quickly [cf. English to want, but to wander, English dial. want – “mole” (lit. “forcing its way into the ground”)]; 2) “branch”, “stick” (cf. English

<sup>16</sup> Szemerényi O. Principles of Etymological Research in the Indo-European Languages. - In: II. Fachtagung für indogermanische und allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft. Innsbruck, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> Malkiel Y. Essays on Linguistic Themes. Oxford, 1968; Malkiel Y. From Particular to General Linguistics. Amsterdam, 1983.

wand); 3) “to make sounds” (cf. Tocharian. A wark – “to speak, chatter”, Pahlavi vang “voice”; typologically cf. Indo-Eur. ghei – “empty”, but Old English ceigan – “to call”); 4) “thing” (cf. Tocharian. B wantare – “pestle”, “object”). As O. N. Trubachev rightly points out, “not a mechanical composition, but a single content, durable and changeable at the same time - this is the meaning of the word. The lexicosemantic reconstruction connects its hopes with its durability, as well as with its changeability”.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Trubachev O. N. Op. cit., p. 14).

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