

# *Comparative linguistics*

## **1. Course Description**

### **a. Title of a Course**

*Comparative linguistics* is a course for 1<sup>st</sup>-year Master's students of the National Research University Higher School of Economics.

### **b. Pre-requisites**

Basic knowledge of the following disciplines: phonology, morphology, and syntax; genetic classification of languages; language diversity of the world.

### **c. Course Type (compulsory, elective, optional)**

*Comparative linguistics* is a compulsory course.

### **d. Abstract**

The course is a presentation of a discipline emerging at the crossroads of classical comparative method and modern typological and sociolinguistic studies, best exemplified by recent course books both in the generative and functional framework. It includes both theoretical lectures and practical analysis of linguistic data, including doing linguistic problems.

## **2. Learning Objectives**

The objectives of the course are to show the modern trends and achievements in the domain of diachronic (historical) linguistics at the intersection of traditional comparative linguistics and synchronous linguistic disciplines.

The main problem areas where alternative theories of language change are possible are presented (including the theories related to the generative and the functional paradigms)

The methodology and tools of historical analysis, classification and explanation of changes and reconstruction is taught.

## **3. Learning outcomes**

After completing the course the students should know the main technical terms of historical linguistics, the main types of linguistic change at different levels and the scholarly hallmarks in the domain of linguistic change, including modern theories.

They should be able to determine a type of linguistic change, to build hypotheses of its source and systemic aftermath, to build reconstructions of different types, to work with the literature on the topic.

They are to have experience of solving linguistic problems build on historical material.

## **4. Course Plan**

1. Specific traits of the domain of historical linguistics (material etc)
2. Sources and causes of linguistic change and methods for studying them

3. Different stages of contact-induced change (CIC)
4. CIC: lexical borrowing
5. CIC: grammatical borrowing
6. Main types of phonetical change
7. Totality of change and phonetical law
8. Phonological consequences of a phonetical change: a typology
9. Changes in prosody
10. Changes in phonological rules
11. Morphological change and its cause
12. Analogy
13. Kuryłowicz's laws
14. Changes in syntax: general properties
15. Changes in syntax: re-interpretation
16. Lexical semantics: types of change
17. Lexical semantics: general tendencies
18. Genetic relationship and its proof: technical terms
19. Linguistic reconstruction: methods
20. Incompleteness of reconstruction in linguistics
21. Reconstruction beyond phonetics/phonology: morphology, syntax, and semantics

## 5. Reading list

### Required reading

Don Ringe, Joseph F. Eska. *Historical Linguistics: Toward a Twenty-First Century Reintegration*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013

### Optional reading

Бурлак С. А., Старостин С. А. *Сравнительно-историческое языкознание*. М., Академия, 2005.

## 6. Grading system

Type of grading	Type of work	Parametres
	Essay	6-8 pages
	Homework	Doing linguistic problems, historical comments to words and phenomena
Final	Exam	Oral exam on the main topics of the course

In the essay, students should show their command of theoretical information and their skills to analyze linguistic works and build hypotheses concerning difficult cases.

In their homework, the students should show practical use of the tools and methodology of modern linguistics, analyze linguistic material, identify and describe linguistic change on different language levels, make suppositions of their sources, make internal and external reconstructions.

In the exam, the students should make use of theoretical material and apply analytical skills to linguistic data.

## 7. Guidelines for Knowledge Assessment

Accumulated grade ( $G_a$ ) for the student's work during the module(s) is the lecturer's assessment of the student's work during seminars

Examination grade ( $G_e$ ) is the arithmetic mean of the grade for the mid-term essay and the examination.

The final grade ( $G_f$ ) is the arithmetic mean of the accumulated grade ( $G_a$ ) and the examination grade ( $G_e$ ):

$$G_f = 0.5G_a + 0.5G_e$$

The grades are rounded in favour of the student.

### Table of Grade Accordance

Ten-point Grading Scale	Five-point Grading Scale	
1 - very bad 2 - bad 3 - no pass	no pass - 2	<b>FAIL</b>
4 - pass 5 - highly pass	pass - 3	<b>PASS</b>
6 - good 7 - very good	good - 4	
8 - almost excellent 9 - excellent 10 - perfect	excellent - 5	

During *the re-examination*, the student has no possibility of obtaining additional mark to raise the grade for current or mid-term assignments.

The resulting grade for the course counts towards the certificate of Master's degree.

## 8. Methods of Instruction

## 9. Special Equipment and Software Support

The course requires a laptop and projector. For the mid-term and final-class essays students need access to computers and to the Internet.