Historical Linguistics-Internal Reconstruction

Although internal reconstruction and morphemic analysis are identical, they differ in their focus. Internal reconstruction focuses on unproductive irregular alternations, while morphemic analysis ignores them. Internal reconstruction is a methodology used in traditional historical linguistics to explore previous language forms in addition to the comparative method.

Comparing forms inside a single language to see whether they provide any clues about an earlier stage of that language is the essence of internal reconstruction. In modern linguistics, descriptive linguistics—more especially, morphophonemic analysis—has largely replaced the work that was previously included under internal reconstruction. However, from a historical perspective, internal reconstruction is still a useful tool for gaining insight into earlier linguistic phases.

In the nineteenth century, Grassman, a renowned Indo-Europeanist, identified this technique and provided a notable example. Some Indo-European correspondence sets were problematic since they didn't seem to follow established patterns. By analyzing the data in Greek and Sanskrit, Grassman was able to demonstrate that the apparent anomalies were caused by changes unique to these languages. Let's look at the Greek forms.

(1) (a) trikh - o ' I walk'.   (b) thrik -s- o 'I will walk'.
(2) (a) thrik - s 'hair'   (b) trikh -os 'of the hair'.

First we note that in each of the above forms only aspirated consonants occur, but this varies in each of the two sets. In 1 (a) and 2 (b) we have a /kh/ and in 1(b) and 2 (a) we have a /th/. In other words, in these paradigms we have aspirated consonants (kh and th) altering with unaspirated (t, k) and this gives us different forms of the stem (trikhs, thrik, thrik -, thrik-, trikh-).

Internal reconstruction is predicated on the idea that certain sound alterations are to blame for the current state of a language, which had previously lacked alternations like these. Grassman was able to infer from the aforementioned forms that the original stems in Pre-Greek were

threkh-

thrick-

Then, two sound modifications occurred in Greek. The first one deaspirated a consonant when it was followed by another aspirated consonant in the same stem, whereas the second one removed the aspiration from the consonant when it was followed by s.

1. ch - c/ - s
2. ch - c/ - ..ch

The appearance of the recorded words can be explained by applying these two principles to Pre-Greek forms. It turned out that Grassman had arrived at the exact Pre-Greek forms required to address the Indo-European issue at hand. Sanskrit also follows the second criterion mentioned above, which is known as Grassman's law and states that two aspirated consonants cannot appear in the same stem.

Reconstructing forms and proposing sound laws to explain alternations in a single language requires ensuring that the forms were there at an earlier linguistic stage.

Grassman's internal reconstruction suggests that the alternations may have existed for an infinitely long period of time or that other irreversible sound modifications may have occurred.

Reconstruction is the process of identifying and characterizing the components and conventions of the common language. And because it compares various linguistic systems, the approach used to accomplish this is typically referred to as the comparative technique.

One technique that aids in reconstructing a language's earlier phases is internal reconstruction. Since the internal reconstruction approach uses data from a single language, which are frequently insufficient and challenging to interpret, it is undoubtedly constrained. In a nutshell, the strategy calls for us to examine a language for any phonological or grammatical distributional quirks that could be explained by a known process of change.

For instance, we may find no occurrence of [k] before [i] except in words obviously borrowed from other languages. But instances of all other consonants including [c] before [i] are in native words. There might also be no instance of [c] after vowels. The hypothesis is that such variations did not exist at some previous time in the language. We therefore postulate that at one time [k] did occur before [i] but that palatalization - a process by which front vowel affects a proceeding consonant - produced a shift of [k] to [c] before [i]. The English words children and cold provides examples in which palatalization occurred in the first word (children) but not in the second (cold) where the original beginning consonants were [k].

The relationships between consonants and vowels and stems and affixes in pair of words such as 'same-sanity', 'weep-wept', 'wise-wisdom', 'lose-lost', and 'holy-holiday' enable us to postulate the existence of a previous stage of the language in which each pair of words contained the same vowel [, e, i, o,] respectively. We can point to processes such as diphthongization, vowel shortening, and vowel raising to account for the currently observed differences.

There is a clear connection between the internal reconstruction method and several types of morphological and generative phonological research. Frequently, the outcomes are quite similar. The method's value varies depending on the type of data being used; for example, while it is useful in some phonological and morphological work, it is nearly useless in syntactic investigations. Apart from the assistance it offers in reconstructing earlier stages of the individual languages, among which any relationships must be searched, the method is also not very helpful in establishing relationships among languages.

Reference
Lehmann