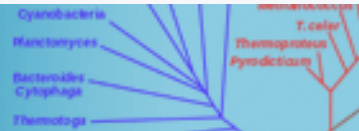


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Curious Parallels and Curious Connections— Phylogenetic Thinking in Biology and Historical Linguistics FREE

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Systematic Biology, Volume 54, Issue 4, 1 August 2005, Pages 513–526,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10635150590950317>

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Abstract

In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin observed “curious parallels” between the processes of biological and linguistic evolution. These parallels mean that evolutionary biologists and historical linguists seek answers to similar questions and face similar problems. As a result, the theory and methodology of the two disciplines have evolved in remarkably similar ways. In addition to Darwin's curious parallels of process, there are a number of equally curious parallels and connections between the development of methods in biology and historical linguistics. Here we briefly review the parallels between biological and linguistic evolution and contrast the historical development of phylogenetic methods in the two disciplines. We then look at a number of recent studies that have applied phylogenetic methods to language data and outline some current problems shared by the two fields.

Keywords: [Comparative method](#), [Darwin](#), [evolution](#), [historical linguistics](#), [phylogeny](#), [Schleicher](#)

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Online ISSN 1076-836X

Print ISSN 1063-5157

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