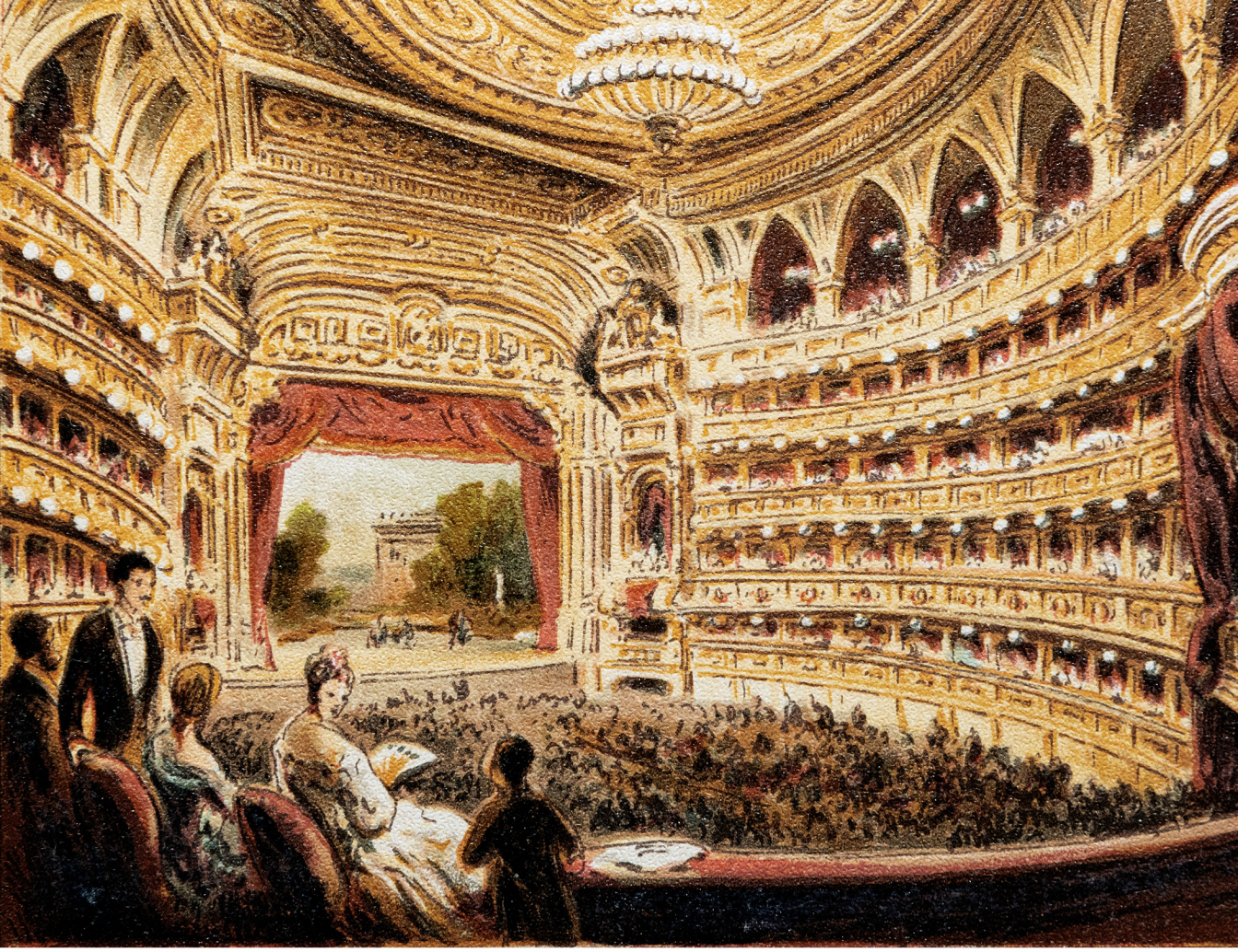

LINGUISTICS FOR SINGERS
An Introduction

Gregory Camp

ROUTLEDGE

LINGUISTICS FOR SINGERS

Linguistics for Singers: An Introduction is a textbook and manual that provides singers with a foundation in linguistic features of four major singing languages—English, Italian, French, and German—and shows how these features can be used to inform vocal performance and interpretation.

Going beyond the basics of lyric diction, a grounding in linguistics enables student musicians to understand language holistically and more fully comprehend the music they are learning. The comparative approach to four common languages allows readers to readily grasp similarities and apply principles across vocal repertoire. Beginning with the sounds of a language and gradually moving up through larger levels of linguistic structure, from words to full texts, the chapters illustrate concepts using real examples from art songs and opera. The clear explanations enable readers new to linguistics to connect these concepts with their own musical practice.

Designed for flexible use in courses on language and singing, lyric diction, repertoire studies, and collaborative piano, this book provides a vital resource for singers, vocal instructors, and conductors.

Gregory Camp is Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

LINGUISTICS FOR SINGERS

An Introduction

Gregory Camp

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I've been interested in both languages and vocal music for as long as I can remember; when most 12-year-olds were asking for toys or games for Christmas, I wanted language phrasebooks and opera scores (I thank my parents for indulging these odd requests). So I feel like this is the book I was born to write. The overall structure and many of the specific examples in this book have emerged from five years of teaching a "Linguistics for Singers" module at the University of Auckland School of Music. My biggest thanks go to the students in those courses; they made it clear which examples were most effective, and they stopped me from getting too esoteric in my presentation of these concepts. My colleagues at the University of Auckland in voice, collaborative piano, and conducting have graciously given me carte blanche with their students to experiment with this subject matter on them, as well as being sounding boards for the material here: Te Oti Rakena, Morag Atchison, Robert Wiremu, Catrin Johnsson, Rachel Fuller, and Karen Grylls. There is probably no other group of people in the world who care as much about vowels as this group! Robert Wiremu, the other big language nerd in the School of Music, especially deserves acknowledgement as the inventor of the Wiremu Vowel Clock, which I'm honored to finally bring into print here. Thanks to Genevieve Aoki at Routledge and the anonymous readers who responded to the initial proposal. Thanks to the cafés of Parnell for offering congenial places to write. The last stages of writing benefitted from a residency at the Maison des Écritures in La Rochelle, France; hearty thanks to the team there and to my Head of School David Chisholm for setting it up. While all of the help has been invaluable, all opinions and errors herein are my own.

PART ONE
Language

1

INTRODUCTION

Why Linguistics?

Aims and Offerings

Linguistics for Singers is a textbook that takes singers (and collaborative pianists, coaches, conductors, and others who work with singers) through a wide range of linguistic features of the major singing languages of the Western classical tradition: English, Italian, French, and German. The book seeks to fill a gap in voice pedagogy; while many comprehensive textbooks exist on lyric diction, there are far fewer resources for musicians that take in other linguistic concepts, notably grammar (the construction of language) and prosody (the organization of words and sounds into poetic or prose systems). This book seeks to rectify that omission by taking a holistic and comparative approach to the major singing languages.

This book is holistic in that it embraces the entirety of language in musical contexts: sounds, structure, versification, history, and aesthetics. Most of the available resources separate out these elements, most frequently lyric diction. While diction is a valuable topic on its own, removing it from other linguistic features can unhelpfully lead students to see sound as separate from sense. Approaching language holistically helps musicians more fully comprehend the music they are learning. The book is comparative in that all four of the major languages are taken up together, rather than separated out, so that readers may more easily see the many similarities between their sounds and structures. When students later learn the foreign languages in specialized courses, having some comparative knowledge makes the detail work go faster.

The book can be read straight through as part of a course on languages for musicians, or as a self-taught guide for those in other contexts who wish to be better informed, or it can be excerpted as needed to serve parts of other courses, such as lyric diction, collaborative piano, and repertoire studies. Pedagogues in these fields would agree that an informed performer, whether a singer, collaborative pianist, or conductor, is a better performer. Knowing how the texts being performed work from the inside out helps to convey them more effectively to an audience, even though the audience should not see the inner workings behind the magic of an excellent performance. By providing linguistic tools and demonstrating

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how they can be applied to vocal repertoire, *Linguistics for Singers* helps readers achieve this goal of musical excellence, offering a way into the fascinating and multifaceted world of language.

Primary attention is given to the major languages of the classical vocal repertoire: English, Italian, French, and German. While these are certainly not the only languages we sing in, they are the most frequently encountered. To avoid too unwieldy a book, my focus will rest on these four. This is not a linguistics textbook, but rather a selective and accessible overview of the field as it pertains to the understanding and interpretation of sung texts. The "Further Reading" sections and footnotes in some chapters will point to more technical resources for those interested. This is also not a diction textbook. While it does include chapters on sounds, they are approached primarily from a perspective that sees phonetics in connection with other linguistic features rather than one of giving instruction on how to sing the sounds (there is no need for yet another diction book in an already saturated market). A specialized diction course can teach students the best way to produce the sounds in a classical singing context; this book provides grounding to show how sounds work in the various languages, considered holistically. The book uses the International Phonetic Alphabet as its phonetic teaching tool, and up-to-date models of syntax and comparative linguistics are at the root of its sections on grammar and structure. That said, all technical jargon used will be carefully explained with real examples from the repertoire, and the structure of the book is scaffolded to introduce elements one-by-one, culminating in a sample of analyses of complete texts to put all of the concepts into practice.

Each chapter will include many examples from the core art song and opera repertoire, mostly in the public domain so that the full texts and the scores can be easily accessed online through lieder.net, oxfordlieder.co.uk, and imslp.org. The division of the book into 15 chapters allows it to be easily used in a standard 15-week semester, or it can be excerpted as needed for other courses.

Note on Existing Literature

While many books exist on lyric diction, this is the first comprehensive, holistic, and comparative manual on languages geared towards musicians. The diction books, whether they take in multiple languages like David Adams' *A Handbook of Diction for Singers* or Amanda Johnston's *English and German Diction for Singers*, or focus on one language like Thomas Grubb's *Singing in French* or Kathryn LaBouff's *Singing and Communicating in English*, take a micro-level approach to the languages.[1] Existing books on understanding verse in song, like Carol Kimball's *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* and Jonathan Retzlaff and Cheri Montgomery's *Exploring Art Song Lyrics*, tend to take a very broad, impressionistic view without the detail usually found in diction books.[2] *Linguistics for Singers* bridges between those two approaches, providing detail in order to fill in the bigger picture of how languages "work" for singing. David Hunter's *Understanding French Verse* is especially helpful with versification and singing French, and Richard M. Berrong provides a detailed guide to Italian grammar specifically for sung texts in *Grammar and Translation for the Italian Libretto*.[3] One resource that shares some of my goals is Marcie Stapp's *The Singer's Guide to Languages*, but Stapp's focus is primarily on diction and she mostly does not take a comparative approach.[4] Her book also uses extensive conjugation/declension charts and lists, useful resources to be sure, but not as user-friendly as I hope

this "prosier" book is. Interested readers can easily find charts of verb conjugations and noun declensions online.

Many good books have been written for general audiences that introduce readers to the various aspects of language. Linguist David Crystal's many books are a good starting place; his style is accessible and his work is full of interesting facts, especially about the history of English. *A Little Book of Language* is a good introduction to his work.[5] Some well-known books that delve into more detail include Steven Pinker's important *The Language Instinct*, a highly readable introduction to language and the brain (but then read Vyvyan Evans' *The Language Myth: Why Language Is Not an Instinct*).[6] More textbook-like is Barry J. Blake's *All About Language*, which systematically goes through the various major subfields within linguistics.[7] A fun study of deep grammatical structures and typologies is Mark C. Baker's *The Atoms of Language: The Mind's Hidden Rules of Grammar*.[8]

In addition to these general guides, you will want to acquire good grammars and dictionaries in each of the target languages. When it comes to dictionaries, a bigger one is usually better because it is more likely to include the archaic words that often appear in song texts and libretti. For Italian, the grammar I have found most useful is Martin Maiden and Cecilia Robustelli's *A Reference Grammar of Modern Italian*.[9] The best online Italian–English dictionary is Garzanti's (garzantilinguistica.it); in print, the Harper Collins dictionary is quite good.[10] Roger Hawkins and Richard Towell's *French Grammar and Usage* is indispensable.[11] The Oxford Hachette French dictionary smartphone app is very good, and for print you will want the unabridged Larousse French–English dictionary.[12] *Hammer's German Grammar* is the classic for English-speaking German learners, and the Langenscheidt bilingual dictionaries are well respected.[13] Using dictionaries effectively is an art in itself, and it takes practice and imagination. Some hints will be offered along the way.

Note on Formatting and Terminology

Writing a book that extensively quotes four different languages creates challenges in formatting. I quickly realized that putting everything not in English in quotes would make the text look unwieldy on the page, and to use italics for both foreign words in English (the conventional use of italics) as well as on their own would be confusing. I settled on using SMALL CAPS for single lexical items (usually single words but sometimes a whole grammatical phrase) in any language, "quotation marks" for longer excerpts in any language, and *italics* as per their conventional use for foreign-language words being used in English. Full texts are given with translations alongside (or under each line if the lines are too long to fit on the page side-by-side). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted, and (as will be discussed in the next chapter) I have gone for blunt literal translations rather than poetic ones.

Much of this book is about poetry, as most of the texts set by composers are poetic. The terminology used across the study of poetry is inconsistent. Depending on the writer, the divisions of a poem can be called verses, stanzas, or strophes. For consistency, I use STANZA to refer to such a division. The individual lines of a poem are sometimes called verses; I use LINE to refer to those. Other analytical words are defined as they are introduced.

My use of grammatical terminology is primarily grounded in linguistics, but for some usages I have applied a more "popular" term if to do otherwise might cause confusion; those will be highlighted as they come. After all, this is not a linguistics textbook, but rather a practical guide for musicians, so user-friendliness is paramount.

Structure

The primary goal of this book is to guide you through the elements of linguistics that are most salient to the study of vocal music. Because the texts we deal with as singers are almost always pre-existing, the branches of linguistics that deal with the "making" (or *poietic*) side of language are not the focus (these include subfields like first and second language acquisition, dialectology, and sociolinguistics). Instead, the focus here is on the interpretative and structural elements of language (the *esthesic*). Translation, phonetics, syntax, and literary (especially poetic) structure are foregrounded. All of these linguistic concepts are necessarily simplified, but references to wider literature on the subjects are cited throughout the book if you want to expand your knowledge.

The approach to language taken in this book is a hierarchical and structural one. After this introductory chapter and one on translation, we will build up our knowledge of linguistic structures from the ground up, moving from single sounds to entire texts:

1. Sound (Chapters 3 and 4).
2. Word (Chapters 5–8).
3. Phrase (Chapters 6–8).
4. Clause (Chapter 9).
5. Sentence (Chapter 9).
6. Text (Chapters 10–15).

But before jumping in at the ground level (sounds), we will start with a full text and move backwards through it to explain what these levels mean. Most classical singers start their training with some of the standard Italian songs and arias, one of the most commonly taught being "Amarilli mia bella," words by Alessandro Guarini and music by Giulio Caccini, published in Caccini's collection *Le nuove musiche* in 1602. Here is the text:

> Amarilli, mia bella,
> non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio,
> d'esser tu l'amor mio?
> Credilo pur: e se timor t'assale,
> prendi questo mio strale,
> aprimi il petto e vedrai scritto in core:
> Amarilli, Amarilli, Amarilli
> è il mio amore.

The first step in dealing with any text is figuring out what it means on a general, broad level. This is what translation is for, the subject of Chapter 2. As we will see, translations are not created equal; here I provide two translations, a word-for-word one and an idiomatic one. First, here is the word-for-word one:

> Amarilli, my beauty,
> not you-believe, o of-the my heart sweet desire,
> of-to-be you the-love my?
> Believe-it really: and if fear you-assails,
> take this my arrow,

open-me the breast and you-will-see written in heart:
Amarilli, Amarilli, Amarilli
is the my love.

This translation does not make much sense. The reasons why it doesn't are the main subject of Chapters 5 through 9 of this book. To put it succinctly, the grammar of Italian is different from the grammar of English. The rules around word construction (morphology) and word order (syntax) are not the same across languages. Here is a translation that shifts the words around so that they make sense in English, and that chooses more idiomatic meanings to translate some of the words:

Amarilli, my beautiful one,
don't you believe, sweet desire of my heart,
that you are my true love?
Believe it: if doubt assails you,
take my arrow,
pierce my breast, and you will see written on my heart:
Amarilli, Amarilli, Amarilli
is my beloved.

Having found figurative rather than literal English equivalents of the poem's words and phrases, we now have a working translation that makes sense, even though it isn't very elegant and the translator is not likely to impress Amarilli.

Once the basic meaning is understood, we can examine the song on a whole-text level. This is a short poem, with some rhymes, and with a fairly consistent verse structure. We will see in Chapter 11 that the poem is written in *versi sciolti*, a mix of lines with seven and eleven syllables. The text is written as a series of individual sentences; checking for end punctuation like question marks and periods, we can see that there are really only two long sentences here, the first three lines and the last five. A longer poem would probably have more sentences in it, but sentences in poetry, especially classical Italian poetry, do tend to be long. To help make sense of them, we can divide the sentences into parts, or clauses. The first sentence has three parts, a complete independent clause with an interruption (called an appositive) in the middle: Amarilli, mia bella, non credi,//o del mio cor dolce desio,//d'esser tu l'amor mio? By dividing the sentence into its constituent parts, we can make easier sense of it.

Each of these chunks can be further divided into grammatical phrases. In a grammatical phrase, words come together to form units of wider meaning. The first part (the first half of the main clause) has three phrases: a direct address noun phrase (Amarilli), another noun phrase (mia bella/my beautiful one), and a verb phrase (non credi/don't you believe). Each phrase then divides into its constituent words, AMARILLI being the only word in the first phrase, MIA and BELLA in the second, and NON and CREDI in the third. Some of those words contain a lot of information. MIA (my) is a possessive pronoun that indicates that the possessor is in the grammatical first person (I) and that the possessed one is female. CREDI is a verb in the second person (you) and in the present tense (in English we need two words, YOU BELIEVE, where Italian only needs one). Each word then divides into sounds: CREDI [kre.di] has two syllables, the first syllable with three phonemes (two consonants and a vowel) and the second with two (a consonant and a vowel).[14]

Language therefore can be seen as a set of Russian dolls, with structures embedded within each other. To review, we'll now build up the poem again:

Phonemes

[a m a r i l: i m i a b ɛ l: a
n o n k r e d i o d e l]
etc.

Syllables

a ma ril li mi a bel la non cre di o del mi
o cor dol ce de si o d'es ser tu l'a mor mi
o *etc.*

Words

Amarilli mia bella non credi o del mio cor dolce desio d'esser
tu l'amor mio *etc.*

Phrases

Amarilli mia bella non credi o del mio cor dolce desio d'esser tu
l'amor mio *etc.*

Clauses

Amarilli, mia bella, non credi o del mio cor dolce desio d'esser tu l'amor mio *etc.*

Sentences

Amarilli, mia bella, non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio, d'esser tu l'amor mio? *etc.*

Text

Amarilli, mia bella,
non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio,
d'esser tu l'amor mio?
etc.

The text having been reconstituted, now we can move to the next stage of preparation, interpreting the meaning of the song. What does it actually mean? Who is the singer, and what is his attitude towards his beloved Amarilli? What context was Caccini working in, and how does this inform the song and its performance? This interpretation stage is made easier by the fact that the song has been so thoroughly analyzed on a textual level; interpretative mistakes that might have slipped through without such a clear understanding of the text are less likely. Thorough preparation leads to a more committed and convincing performance.

Historical and Comparative Background

This book focuses on four languages: English, German, French, and Italian. As different as they seem at first glance, they are all quite closely related. Let's look again at the text of "Amarilli mia bella" to start figuring this out. Especially with its highly poetic early 17th-century Italian, we saw that attempting a direct translation into English resulted in a nonsensical mess. Translating it into German or French like this would also result in a mess. But the mess is actually less messy than it might seem at first. Many of the individual words have recognizable equivalents in English:

AMARILLI: Amaryllis is no longer a common name in English, but the similarity is clear (musical theatre fans might remember there is an Amaryllis in *The Music Man*).
MIA (my): English MY has almost the same sounds as the Italian equivalent.
BELLA (beautiful): This exists as a name in English, as does its French equivalent, Belle. The Italian word itself is familiar from the expression "Ciao, bella!"
NON (not): English NO or NOT are almost the same as this word, and our prefix NON- is exactly the same (NON-NEGOTIABLE, NON-BINDING, etc.).
CREDI (believe): This shows up inside English words like CREDIBLE, CREDENCE, and CREDIT, all to do with believing.
O (oh):Interjections like this are very close across most languages. It seems natural to open your mouth and say "oh" or "ah" if you are feeling a strong emotion.
COR (heart): This shows up as part of English words like CONCORD and DISCORD (concord = with + heart, so if you are in concord with someone you share their heart). CORE (as in the core of an apple) might derive from the same word, but those who study word origins (etymologists) are uncertain of this.
DESIO (desire): The link between the words is obvious.
AMOR (love): This word shows up as part of many English ones to do with love, like AMOROUS and AMIABLE.

The reason these lexical (word) similarities exist is not because English and Italian are directly related like siblings, but rather mostly because they are second cousins: Latin (the ancestor of Italian) also gave birth to French, which heavily influenced English after the Norman conquest in 1066 (when French-speaking Normans invaded England and the official court language became their French dialect).

Let's take a step back: the first principle to understand here is that languages change over time. Look at Shakespeare: it is clearly English, but not English the way we speak it today. By looking at examples of literature between Shakespeare's time and ours, we can witness a series of gradual changes that lead little by little to current English. Here is a bit of Shakespeare in its original First Folio spelling (the opening of *Twelfth Night*), published in 1623:

If Musicke be the food of Loue, play on,
Giue me excesse of it: that surfetting,
The appetite may sicken, and so dye.
That straine agen, it had a dying fall:
O, it came ore my eare like the sweet sound

That breathes vpon a banke of Violets;
Stealing, and giuing Odour. . . .

Again, clearly this is English, especially obvious when we modernize the spelling.[15] There are some words we probably would not use today (SURFEITING, ORE) although they are easily looked up. There are also some features of word order that would sound stilted today ("that the appetite may sicken and so die"). With Shakespeare, it is possible to develop an ear for the language so that it quickly starts to sound more natural. Compare this to Geoffrey Chaucer, writing in the late 1300s:

Whan that Aprill with his showers soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephyrs eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth . . .

This, the opening of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, is still English (technically Middle English) but it requires a lot more work to figure out. Some words that look unrecognizable are just strangely spelled or have different vowels: SOOTE means SWEET. But even out the spellings and word order (which isn't very hard to do once you know what to look for) and only a few words (like EEK, which means ALSO) remain as stumbling blocks. Nevertheless, Chaucer is usually translated from Middle English into present-day English, published either on a facing page with the original or as a translation on its own, as puzzling through it takes more time than many readers want to spend.[16]

Go back a few more centuries to the anonymous poem *The Seafarer*, written in the tenth century, and the situation changes considerably:

Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan,
siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
earfoðhwile oft þrowade,
bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe, . . .

This is almost entirely unintelligible. The first half of the first line can have its spelling updated to "may I by my self," which now that you've seen the transliteration into modern English is probably easy to spot, but after that the language is too difficult to be understood without specialist knowledge. Old English is, for all intents and purposes, a different language from Modern English. Here is a translation that keeps the words mostly in the Old English order but finds the modern equivalents:

May I about myself truth-song relate,
experience tell how I in days of toil
hardship times often suffered,
bitter breast-cares experienced have.

The "bitre breostceare" are recognizably English, as is the "oft," probably the only word here that has remained totally unchanged, although it sounds somewhat archaic today. But you might think that overall it looks more like German. There is a good reason for this: English and German are both Germanic languages, and they share a common ancestor that historical linguists call Proto-Germanic. Proto-Germanic at some point split into a few dialects: a northern one that would become Old Norse and which would later split into Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, a Western one that would split into German, Dutch, and English, and an Eastern one that became the now extinct Gothic language. Proto-Germanic is not a language that survives in any way; it was never written down. In order to reconstruct it, linguists study the earliest available texts,[17] compare them to each other and to what we know about how sounds generally change over time, and posit ancestral forms. Proto-Germanic is not the kind of language you could write a text in; rather, it is a linguistic construct that is more like a list of words and a set of hypothesized rules for sound and syntactic changes.[18] For example, English WOLF was probably *WULFAZ in Proto-Germanic; TO BURN was probably *BRINNANĄ; I was probably *EK.[19]

A quick look at a German text (don't worry, there are many more to come) can demonstrate these similarities. Here is the first stanza of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Gretchen am Spinnrade," most famously set by Franz Schubert:

Meine Ruh' ist hin,	My quiet is gone,
Mein Herz ist schwer;	My heart is heavy;
Ich finde sie nimmer	I will find it never
Und nimmermehr.	And never more.

Some words are clearly close cognates, like MEIN and MY; HERZ and HEART; ICH and I; FINDE and FIND; AND and UND.[20] There are more of these between English and German than there were between English and Italian, where the similarities were less direct, usually going through Latin. Ancestors of those words have also been reconstructed in Proto-Germanic. HERZ comes from Proto-Germanic *HERTÔ. English kept the t sound at the end, while German changed it to z (pronounced [ts]); while German kept the simple e vowel, and English changed it to ea. Some other words in the poem do not exist with these same meanings in Modern English, although they do come from Proto-Germanic, such as RUH' (QUIET) and SCHWER (HEAVY). RUH' (a contraction of RUHE) comes from Proto-Germanic *RŌWŌ (which also means quiet); in Old English that became *RŌ, which survives in Modern English inside the word UNRULY. SCHWER comes from Proto-Germanic *SWĒRA, which survived into Middle English SWERE (meaning either heavy or lazy), but it dropped out of the language after that, other than in some Northern English and Scottish dialects.

So far, though, historical sound changes do not explain all the similarities we saw previously between English and Italian. Since English and German are both Germanic languages, we would expect similarities, but Italian is not Germanic. It is, along with French, Spanish, Catalan, and Romanian, a Romance language derived from Latin. A major historical difference between the Romance and Germanic language families is that we *do* have a great deal of writing in Latin, the common ancestor of Italian and French. That means we can study

very clearly how these languages diverged. The divergences from Latin started to snowball around the 500s–800s, when the Roman Empire was dissolving and local tribes began to take over Roman territories politically as well as linguistically. They started to write in local varieties instead of Classical Latin.

As mentioned earlier, English, unlike German, was heavily influenced by French because of the Norman conquest in 1066. Middle English is set apart from Old English mostly because of this influence: suddenly, the language was flooded with new French words and it became uniquely hybridized. Look up each word in any modern English paragraph in an etymological dictionary, and you will see that about half of the words are of Germanic origin and the others are mostly Romance. More than most languages, English has long been happy to take in loan words from elsewhere. The plus side of this is that there are many cognates in all of our major singing languages. But English is absolutely still a Germanic language: as we will see in the course of this book, its grammatical and sound systems have much more in common with German than with Italian or French. The Romance influence is primarily lexical (on the word level) rather than grammatical or phonetic.

Linguists have reconstructed Latin back a level to Proto-Italic, based on what little we know of other related languages like the extinct Oscan and Umbrian. Proto-Italic shares some similarities with Proto-Germanic, as well as with other European proto-languages like Proto-Celtic and Proto-Slavic. These are all part of a super-family called Indo-European, and Proto-Indo-European (PIE) is the most famous of all the reconstructed languages. It would have been spoken at some time between 4500 to 2500 BC, probably in the area north of the Black Sea in what is now Ukraine. In the 18th century, orientalists began to notice significant similarities between Sanskrit (which they had just begun studying) and Latin and Greek (which they knew very well). This led linguists to examine these languages in more depth, along with others in Europe and Asia, and by the early 20th century the existence of PIE was an accepted hypothesis. The proof is in the pudding, as the more you look into these languages the more evident are the similarities.[21]

For an example, we can use some words we have already seen: COR in Italian (which in modern Italian would be CUORE) and HERZ in German. At first glance they seem quite different. CUORE comes from Latin COR, which has been reconstructed as a Proto-Italic ancestor *KORD. HERZ comes from Proto-Germanic *HERTO. Now the two reconstructed forms look more similar: both have a vowel that is followed by an r and a dental sound (d or t). H and k are both made in the back of the mouth. The PIE reconstruction of the word is *kér. We can trace this back down through other branches of the Indo-European family as well: in Ancient Greek it became καρδία (kardía) (witness all the English words, especially medical ones, that start with cardio-; this was borrowed from Greek). In the Slavic languages, the initial [k] softened to [s] and resulted in words like Russian се́рдце (sérdtse) and Croatian SRCE. In Sanskrit it became हृद (hrd), which led to modern Hindi हृदय (hrday). In the Celtic branch, it became CROÍ in Irish. All of this shows that what look like strongly divergent, mutually unintelligible languages are actually more closely related that they might at first seem.

Despite these similarities, though, our Indo-European languages still require translation in order to be understood. The next chapter will explore the ins and outs of translation before we launch into specific linguistic features.