Stephen Colvin is Reader in Classics and Historical Linguistics at University College London. Previously, he was Associate Professor in the Department of Classics at Yale. He is the author of Defects in Aristophanes (1999), A Historical Greek Reader (2007), and editor of The Greco-Roman East: Politics, Culture, Society (2004).

“In A Brief History of Ancient Greek, Stephen Colvin provides a lucid, authoritative, and highly engaging introduction to the first two thousand years of the Greek language.”

Brent Vine, UCLA

“Colvin’s history is authoritative and elegantly written, elucidating a great deal of complicated material with minimum fuss.”

Joshua T. Katz, Princeton University

“A thoroughly well-informed, lucid, and sensitive presentation of the history of ancient Greek; this book is clear, accessible, and at the same time admirably careful both in facts, concepts, and debits.”

Philomena Probert, Wolfson College, Oxford

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Attested since the fourteenth century BC, and still spoken today by over 10 million people, Greek has been one of the most influential languages in human history. English, Spanish, French, Russian, and Arabic are among the many languages to have borrowed key terms and concepts from Greek.

A Brief History of Ancient Greek takes the reader through the history of this ancient language from its Indo-European beginnings right up to the present day, and explores key relationships between the language and literature of the Classical period (500–300 BC).

The development of the language is related to the social and political context, in line with modern sociolinguistic thought. The book reflects the latest scholarship on subjects such as koine Greek, and the relationship between literary and vernacular Greek.

All Greek is transliterated and translated where appropriate, so that the text is accessible to readers who know little or no Greek, including scholars and students who require an accessible overview of the history of the language, or linguists and professionals who need a quick source of data and background information.

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Contents

List of Figures vi

Preface and Acknowledgments vii

1 The Indo-European Beginnings 1
2 An Aegean Co-Production 17
3 Mycenean Greek 32
4 The Dark Ages 51
5 The Alphabet 68
6 The Greek Dialects 89
7 Homer and the Epic Tradition 113
8 The Language of Greek Poetry 134
9 Bare Words: The Start of a Common Language 156
10 Greek to Romaic and Back 178

Appendix: The Greek Alphabet and Pronunciation 200

Abbreviations and Symbols 202

Glossary 204

References 207

Index 211
List of Figures

1.1 Family tree of the Indo-European languages  
3.1 Linear B syllabary  
3.2 Linear B tablet: Pylos Cn 608  
5.1 Ox head to ‘alf  
5.2 Timotheos papyrus with koronis  
6.1 Map of the Greek dialects around 500 BC
All languages are, of course, equally “old”: what sets Greek apart from most other languages (apart from Chinese) is that (a) it has been recorded in alphabetic writing continuously for over 2800 years (and there is in addition a brief attestation in Mycenaean syllabic script from around 600 years earlier); and (b) it has kept its identity as “Greek” for most of that period. Latin would have a written history of around 2300 years if one included the modern Romance languages in the calculation; but Latin changed both name and cultural identity when it became known as Italian, Spanish, French, etc. If the territories of the Hellenistic empire of Alexander the Great and his successors had remained Greek-speaking, as those of the Roman empire in the West mostly remained Latin-speaking (with the exception of North Africa, and, for a time, the Iberian peninsula), it is likely that a number of competing “Hellenic” vernaculars would have emerged, and there would thus be not one but several Greek languages, some or all of which might have been renamed by speakers anxious to carve out separate national identities. The modern Cypriot dialect is about as distinct from standard Greek as the Spanish of Madrid is from the Italian of Florence; but Cypriots are taught standard Greek in school, and it is used in most printed material, so that there is constant pressure in the direction of the standard. In situations where such political, ideological, and cultural pressure does not exist, a new “language” emerges.
In the classical tradition in the West it is customary to use the term “Greek” to mean ancient Greek, and to use the qualifier “modern Greek” where necessary. Greeks do exactly the reverse for obvious reasons, thus “Greek” and “ancient Greek”. In this book the term Greek will refer to whichever period is under discussion in the chapter in question (modifiers are used if there is a risk of ambiguity). Greek words are transliterated and translated (longer passages are translated only): transliteration of ancient Greek gives vowel length, but not the ancient pitch accent; transliteration of modern Greek gives the modern stress accent. Transliteration of Greek names follows the inconsistent but widely adopted mixed system: familiar figures are given in their traditional Latin version (Aeschylus not Aiskhylos), and others are transliterated directly from the Greek (Alkaios).

Greek and Latin are the two “classical” languages of European culture; and since this is a book about language we can start off at once by looking at this word. They are classical because they are traditionally the languages learned in class: this is a late meaning, from French, which connects the adjective classique with the word classe “class.” They are also classical because they belong to the highest rank, are of the first order: this is the meaning of the rare Latin word classicus, which is merely an adjective derived from the noun classis, “group, class” (originally “called-up group, levy,” from the Indo-European root which also gave the Greek kaleō, “I call”). The Latin adjective denoted citizens of the top social class, and was not metaphorically extended to writers, let alone languages, until very late. It may seem odd to start a book on the history of Greek with a discussion of a Latin word: but it is an appropriate reminder that the two languages became quite intertwined (reflecting the interaction of the two civilizations), and penetrate the languages of Europe at every level and in every conceivable way.

For example, English has Greek words which were (a) borrowed into Germanic (bishop < OE biscop < ἐπίσκοπος [episkopos] “one who watches over”), (b) borrowed by Latin, and retained in the Romance languages, reaching English via Norman French (treasure < Fr. trésor < Lat. thēsaurus < θησαυρός [thēsauros] “store-room, treasury, treasure”), (c) borrowed by Latin, and borrowed from Latin into French and from French into English (allegory < Fr. allégorie < Lat. allēgoria < ἀλληγορία [allēgoria] “speaking differently”), (d) bor-
rowed by Latin, and then borrowed directly by English 
\((\text{comma}<\kappaόμμα [komma] \text{"short clause"})\), and (e) borrowed directly from Greek, both existing words \((\text{neuron})\), and new compounds 
\((\text{photograph}<\text{phot-} \text{"light"}, \text{graph-} \text{"write"})\).

The vocabulary of modern Greek is similarly intricate: the largest part consists of native Greek words derived from the ancient lexicon, mostly via the Hellenistic koine and the modern dialects of the Peloponnese, on which the modern standard language is based. This inherited stock is intermixed with (a) ancient Greek words, either taken from modern European languages and re-naturalized \((\text{ψυχολόγος [psychológos] "psychologist"})\), or borrowed directly, (b) borrowings from Latin \((\text{κλασικός [klasikós] "classical"})\), and (c) borrowings from other languages such as French, Italian, and English, some of which are from Greek roots \((\text{σινεμά [sinemá]}<\text{Fr. cinéma [tographe]}: \text{Anc. Gk. κίνημα [kinéma] "movement"})\).

This is in addition, of course, to a number of words borrowed from Turkish during the Ottoman period \((1453–1821)\). Modern Greek καλέμι [kalémi] “nib, chisel” comes from Turkish kalémı, itself a borrowing from Arabic qalam <Ancient Greek καλάμιον [kalamíōn], “reed, pen.” This word also survives in its “native” form in Modern Greek καλάμι [kalámi] “reed, bullrush,” extended to mean “(telescopic) fishing rod” (and the diminutive καλαμάκι [kalamáki] “drinking straw”). The history of Greek is a lesson that languages are cultural artefacts, and that a linguistic study is always part of a socio-linguistic study.

The word Greek and its relatives in the European languages derive from a Latin, not a Greek word. The Romans called the Greeks Graeci, from a tribe that they or some other Italic people encountered in the region of Epirus (opposite the heel of Italy, an obvious first point of contact). This is a perfectly common phenomenon in the naming of foreign peoples and places: the Germans call themselves “Deutsch” (a word simply meaning “of the people”), while the French call them after the Alemanni, a Germanic tribe \((\text{English German}<\text{Lat. Germānus}, \text{the origin of which is disputed})\).

The Greeks themselves called their country Ἑλλὰς [Hellas] \((\text{modern Ἑλλάδα [Elláda]})\), and themselves Ἕλληνες [Hellēnes]. Ancient Greek did not have a word for “Greek” (the language): the Greeks referred either to “the Greek tongue” or used an adverb “in Greek,” which originally meant simply “in the Greek way” (with a verb such
as “they speak”). The Modern Greek word for “Greek” is Ελληνικά [Elliniká], which is the neuter plural of the adjective “Greek” (and analogously for other languages): this is first attested in the first century AD, but is likely to have been in use in the spoken language before then. The word Romaïka “Romaic” was also used to denote Greek in the medieval and modern period (see below). The non-Greek peoples of Asia Minor and the Near East have traditionally used words deriving from the term “Ionia” for the Greeks: Old Persian Υαύνα and Hebrew יואן to Turkish Yunan.

The interaction between Greek and Latin started to decline when the Roman empire was split into two halves, the Western empire (capital Rome) and the Eastern empire (capital Constantinople, the old Byzantium). This was done for administrative convenience by the Roman emperor Constantine I in AD 324, and the split was made permanent after the death of the emperor Theodosius in AD 395; after the collapse of the Western Empire in 476 the eastern emperor in Constantinople was the sole remaining Roman emperor: this is how the Greeks ended up calling themselves “Romans” and referring to Greek culture as “Roman-ness” (Ρωμιοσύνη [Romiosíni]).

The eastern empire continued until the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453; it was always predominantly Greek-speaking, though the Latin language probably continued to be spoken by a small number of people in Constantinople until the eighth century. Knowledge of classical Greek among the elite in the West survived into the sixth century; after that there is a gap of around 800 years until the Italian renaissance, when Greek scholars from the East arrived and started to teach Greek to the Italian humanists, and manuscripts started to arrive in Italy (brought by travelers, merchants, or Greeks escaping to the West). In fact, there were always Greek speakers living in southern Italy – remnants of the Greek colonists who had arrived in the seventh and sixth centuries BC – and there is evidence that instruction in written Greek for this Greco-Italian community continued in local monasteries. They were, however, cut off from the “high culture” of Constantinople and the pagan texts which survived there.

The language has been the lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, as far as India and Afghanistan; it was the official language of the eastern Roman empire, the greatest power in Europe in its day. Greek is now spoken by 13–14 million
people in Greece, Cyprus, and elsewhere: it is a small player by modern
standards, but shares with Latin the distinction of having one of the
most widely read literatures, of being one of the most widely learned
languages, and of having permeated some of the most widely spoken
languages in the world. In the second half of the twentieth century
two Greek poets won the Nobel prize for literature: George Seferis
(1963) and Odysseus Elytis (1979). It is unsurprising that Greeks of
the modern era have felt the “anxiety of influence” as they endeavored
to create a new spoken and literary medium out of a language so pres-
tigious that it had once seemed a good idea to try to freeze it for ever
in its ancient form. That Greek is a language with baggage no one
could dispute; that the baggage has been successfully incorporated
into a powerful and expressive living language will be evident to any-
one who delves into the riches of modern Greek literature.

This book is designed to be accessible to readers who know little
or no Greek. For this reason it aims to be a social history of the lan-
guage rather than a purely linguistic history, which would be of
interest to specialists only (there are other, excellent books for spe-
cialists). I have tried to give a sketch of the salient developments in
the language, while concentrating on the relationship between the
language and the social, literary, and political history of the speakers.
Chapter 4, The Dark Ages, is more technical (or convoluted) than
other chapters, for which I apologize. It seemed important to give a
reasonably detailed sketch of the various views which have been put
forward to explain this difficult period in the history of the language.

I am as usual indebted to the kindness of friends and colleagues
for comments and criticism, and in particular to Alan Griffiths,
George Syrimis, Nick Baechle, and Nick Gonis, who read large
chunks of draft and provided polite corrections and criticism. I am
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reader for helpful comments and corrections. I have drawn freely on
the published and unpublished work of numerous scholars, includ-
ing colleagues and teachers. Errors and peculiarities which remain
are entirely my responsibility. The book is dedicated to UCL stu-
dents, who have put up with so much and argued so cheerfully.

Stephen Colvin
London, March 2013
The Indo-European Roots of Greek

Greek belongs to a family of related languages which are called “Indo-European” because at the time of the discovery of this family the known languages were distributed in Europe and the Indian subcontinent (Indo-European languages were subsequently discovered in Asia Minor and central Asia). The existence of such a family was suggested by William Jones, a British scholar and lawyer who was appointed to the Supreme Court at Calcutta in 1783. Jones was an expert linguist who had taught himself Arabic and Persian at Oxford in addition to Greek and Latin; he was also a radical politician, who supported the American revolution and bitterly attacked the slave trade. When he arrived in India as a judge he learned Sanskrit, the ancient classical language of India and the sacred language of Hinduism, in order to understand the principles of the native Hindu legal tradition (he wrote several books on Hindu and Moslem law in India). In 1786 he delivered a paper in Calcutta to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, which included the following famous words:

The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and
The Indo-European Beginnings

more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.

Throughout the nineteenth century work continued on the newly discovered family of languages, mostly in Germany, and this gave rise to the new science of linguistics in the West. In India there was a long and illustrious tradition of linguistics, going back to the late sixth century BC, when the famous grammarian Pāṇini composed his exhaustive grammar of the Sanskrit language (and the tradition of systematic thought about language in India was doubtless older than Pāṇini). There was no analogous “classic” in Greek or in Roman literature. Although in both the Greek and the Roman world there was interest in language, this was mostly related to its importance to philosophy and rhetoric in the early period; there was more technical work on language in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but this was focused more on textual criticism and the explication of archaic and classical forms of the language for educational purposes. Europeans were still rather unsophisticated linguists in the eighteenth century. However, the kick-start given by the comparison of Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, followed by study of Germanic and then Slavic, Celtic, and others, led to the development of what we now call historical linguistics: the study of the development of languages over time, and the reconstruction of an unattested “parent language” by systematically comparing the later languages which have survived in written form. This was the start of modern Western linguistics: at the end of the nineteenth century Ferdinand de Saussure, who had been trained in historical Indo-European linguistics, moved from considering the development of languages over time (historical linguistics) to the analysis of structural relations of languages at a given point in time (synchronic linguistics).

The Family Tree

Indo-European historical linguistics was, of course, a child of its time, and many of the linguistic models and metaphors which have become ingrained in our way of thinking about language reflect the
intellectual environment of the nineteenth century. Part of this environment was a fascination with biological taxonomy and the evolution of species: Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) provoked an intellectual revolution, and it is no coincidence that much of the terminology of historical linguistics is reminiscent of biology. Languages are described as related, and form a family; one aims to reconstruct a parent language, from which the daughter languages evolve; relations between languages are set out in branching tree diagrams, like a family tree. This type of relationship between languages is called genetic. Both the model and terminology have the potential to be extremely misleading, since languages are not in fact organisms: an essential difference from the Darwinian model is that languages (or rather, their speakers) do pass on acquired changes. In addition to this, language is a sociocultural force which plays a central role in the self-definition of the speaker: these two facts have consequences for the way we think about language change and the model of the family tree.

It is true that most speakers learn a variety of the native language from parents (or older speakers in general); in this sense a language may be said to be “inherited.” But the metaphor does not bear pressing: for in fact a speaker learns not just one native idiom, but a variety of idioms from a variety of different speakers. In addition to grandparents, parents, and siblings, most children are exposed to different varieties of the language from the community at large. A competent native speaker is capable of recognizing a wide range of varieties (and their social connotations), and has mastery of quite a few varieties which are employed in different social situations. This reflects that fact that the notion of a language is to some extent a social construct: a language typically consists of a variety of different idioms and dialects, and in many cases is not clearly distinguishable from neighboring languages. And even when neighboring languages are in fact distinct, they may still form part of the speaker’s linguistic competence (monolingual cultures are exotic in the world, not the norm). Of course, in many cultures there is a prestigious standard language which many speakers think of as *the* language (and other varieties may be seen as inferior by comparison to this standard), but this perception is a cultural and political phenomenon, rather than a reflection of linguistic reality.

There are clear consequences for the genetic metaphor of language relationship and language change when we replace the idea of
a uniform language inherited from parents with that of a continuum of language varieties taken over from across the language community. First, it can be seen that the native speaker’s competence has multiple sources, and is subject to continuing development, so one cannot contrast the validity or purity of a genetic relationship with “contamination” or “influence” from other sources. The second point is closely related to this: a language change occurs when a majority of speakers adopt for use in a majority of situations a variant which was previously used by a minority of speakers, or in a restricted social context, or both. The reasons that prompt speakers to adopt such changes are complex: sociolinguistic research indicates that these decisions – like decisions pertaining to clothing and personal appearance – are the result of the speaker’s desire to shift his or her identity with regard to a particular section of the community. This type of behavior is easy to observe in adolescents, but research indicates that it persists in a subtler form in people of all ages. Speakers may be unconscious of many of the linguistic shifts they are making.

Since the growth of sociolinguistics enabled linguists to understand how languages change, it has become common to emphasize the importance of “areal” factors in describing linguistic change and language relationships, at the expense of the traditional “genetic” family tree. This shift in emphasis offers important insights into the historical development of Greek, even though we have seen that the distinction itself is slightly dubious. “Genetic” can be applied, metaphorically, to features of a language which were observable in an earlier stage of that language, while “areal” covers features which have entered the language from elsewhere.

The language groups which are now derived from the Indo-European parent language are: Albanian, Baltic, Anatolian, Armenian, Celtic, Germanic, Greek, Indic, Iranian, Italic, Slavic, Tocharian. Very poorly attested languages or groups include Illyrian, Phrygian, Thracian; it seems certain that many other languages have disappeared without trace. The relationships between these groups are not identical: for example, Indic and Iranian are so close that they are generally grouped together as “Indo-Iranian,” and Celtic, Germanic, and Italic show overlapping similarities which are best explained by their contiguity in the northwestern area of the Indo-European world. It is generally agreed that the Anatolian group must have split off from the parent language earlier than the others, since
Figure 1.1  Family tree of the Indo-European languages. Source: Benjamin W. Fortson IV, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), Figure 1.1.
it has peculiarities which sets it apart from the rest of the “family” (such as lack of a separate feminine gender). There are a number of different types of reason for thinking that these languages are related.

**Systematic correspondences in the phonology**

This means that for Indo-European an inventory of phonemes (sounds) is reconstructed by comparing the daughter languages: we use words which appear to have a similar form and meaning across the I-E languages to build an inventory of phonemes for the parent language, and to postulate a number of sound-change rules for the daughter languages.

Example: the word for “foot” (accusative case):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>πόδα [poda]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>pedem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>pādam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>fotum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hittite</td>
<td>pada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example Greek [p] corresponds to a [p] in Latin, Sanskrit, and Hittite, and to an [f] in Germanic (Gothic). On this basis a phoneme [p] is reconstructed for Indo-European (written *p), and a sound change *p>f is posited for Germanic. This is known as the comparative method, and is fundamental to historical linguistics. The comparative method does not like sound changes to have exceptions; if we state that an I-E *dh (aspirated d) becomes Greek *th (aspirated t, written θ) in one word, then the same change has to operate in all words.

Abandoning this principle of regularity means that any random, haphazard, or frankly lunatic etymology can be constructed for any language, and this was regularly done from antiquity until the eighteenth century. Compare, for example, the etymologies of the Roman scholar Varro (5.20):


The word for wild boar [*aper*] comes from the fact that they have a rough [*aper*] habitat; unless it is from Greek, because the Greek word...
is *kapros*. The roe deer [*caprea*] is named from a certain resemblance to the she-goat [*capra*]. Stags [*cervus*] are so called because they bear [*gerunt*] large horns, the *G of gervus* has changed into a C, as often happens. … The fox [*volpes*] is so called because, as Aelius said, it flies [*volat*] with its feet [*pōs*].

The comparative method does not allow such random deletion and substitution of sounds: when sounds change, they do so in accordance with clearly defined rules. The Latin word *cervus* “stag” is in fact derived from the I-E *ker-* “horn”, which gives the Greek κέρας [*keras*] “horn” (as well as the English word *horn*).

However, a force that can undo regular sound change is analogy, which plays an important role in all aspects of human language. In English, for example, the verb *to dive* had an original “weak” past tense *dived*, but in some dialects this has changed to *dove* on the analogy of “strong” verbs such as *drive*→*drove*. In Greek an *s* inherited from Indo-European first became an *h* and finally disappeared between vowels, as in the nom. plur. of γένος [*genos*] “family”: *genes-α*→*geneha>*genea*. But in some cases the force of analogy led to the retention of an intervocalic *s*. For example, the future tense in Greek was created by adding an *-s-* to the verbal stem:

\[
\text{klep- “steal”} \rightarrow \text{future stem kleps-} \quad \text{klepō “I shall steal”}
\]
\[
\text{lu- “release”} \rightarrow \text{future stem lus-} \quad \text{lusō “I shall release”}
\]

Normally we would expect the intervocalic *-s-* in *lusō* to disappear; but in this case the *-s-* was maintained or restored on the analogy of consonant-stem verbs like *klepō*. It would have been inconvenient for the future marker to disappear: this would have given *luo*, identical in form to the present tense.

**Fundamental similarities in the morphology**

Indo-European clearly had a complex inflecting morphology, since all the daughter languages have preserved elements of this. An inflected language is one in which grammatical significance is carried
by changes in the form of the word, usually in the ending and often in the stem as well. A typical Indo-European word is built as follows:

root + suffix + grammatical ending

The root of a word carries the basic meaning: adding a suffix to it creates a stem to which the endings can be added. Thus, to take the verb “to release” that we considered above: \( lus\) “I shall release” breaks down as:

\[
lu- \text{ (root)} + \text{ stem} + 1\text{st person ending} \rightarrow lus\text{-}ô “I shall release”
\]

We could also add the “agent” suffix \(-të\) (related to Latin \(-tor\) as in pastor, Engl. \(-er\) as in maker) to the root \( lu\)- to make an agent noun: \( lutë\) “one who releases, deliverer.”

In languages such as modern English much of the meaning is carried instead by a fixed word order rather than by endings, and by “auxiliary” words such as will, had, etc. The older Indo-European languages preserve the complex morphology that we can see in Greek and Latin: of course, they have all changed and innovated in various ways, but on the whole the basic morphological building blocks (the morphemes) are the same, or very similar. For example:

(i) I-E verb “to be” (root \(*h₁s\)-): \(*h₁s\)-mi “I am,” \(*h₁s\)-ti “s/he is”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Hittite</th>
<th>Gothic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>emi, esti</td>
<td>asmi, asti</td>
<td>sum, est esmi, eszi</td>
<td>im (&lt; *immi), ist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) I-E noun “sheep”: nominative \(*h₂\)ewis→ accusative \(*h₂\)ewim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Luwian (Anatolian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(o(w)is), (o(w)in)</td>
<td>avih₂, avim</td>
<td>ovis, ovem</td>
<td>hawis, hawin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example (i) Latin \( sum\) is the result of a complicated process of sound change and analogical pressure; apart from that, differences between the forms are the result of regular sound changes. In example (ii) all the differences between the forms are the result of regular sound changes: in Greek the phoneme \([w]\) is found in many dialects, but not in classical (Attic) Greek.
A morphological oddity that is evident in all I-E languages is the alternation of the vowel ɛ with the vowel o. This is not a sound change but a morphological marker of Indo-European: thus the Greek verb πέρο “I carry” has an ɛ in the stem πέρ-, but the related noun φορός “tribute” has an o (stem φορ-): the same process in the same root can be seen in English bear versus burden. A third possibility is that the vowel disappears completely: compare the I-E root *genh₁- “procreate, family” in Greek γένος “race, family”, gonos “offspring”, and γνήσιος (adj.) “belonging to the family, legitimate” (the root appears here as gn-, as in Latin gnatus “son”). This process, known as ablaut, is fossilized (no longer productive) in the daughter languages, and has suffered analogical interference, with the result that the e/o variation appears almost random (hence Latin ped- “foot” but Greek pod-).

**A large number of lexical roots in common**

It is clear that related languages are likely to have a large amount of vocabulary in common (although sound changes may have changed the form of the words to some extent): we have already come across some examples above. However, languages very often change the meanings of words, and drop words for no apparent reason (dropped words may be replaced by borrowings, or by other words which have been pressed into service, or which have had their meanings extended). Words which are more likely to resist replacement include the so-called “core” vocabulary: numerals, body parts, family members, and certain others. It is rare, however, for a lexical root to survive in all the major attested branches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-E</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Anatolian</th>
<th>Germanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*māter-</td>
<td>māter-</td>
<td>mātar-</td>
<td>māter-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ph₂ter-</td>
<td>pater-</td>
<td>pitar-</td>
<td>pater-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*dʰueh₂ter-</td>
<td>tʰugater-</td>
<td>dubitar-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>tuwatri</td>
<td>daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nas-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>nāsus-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*wed-r/n-</td>
<td>hudr-</td>
<td>udn-</td>
<td>unda</td>
<td>wadar</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*dwo</td>
<td>duo</td>
<td>dvā</td>
<td>duo</td>
<td>dā</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*gʷous</td>
<td>bous</td>
<td>gauh</td>
<td>bōs</td>
<td>uwa</td>
<td>cow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

i Luwian (hieroglyphic)  
ii Hittite
Common vocabulary by itself is not a reliable indicator that two languages are related, since languages borrow words from each other freely: common vocabulary needs to exhibit regular phonological correspondences, and similar morphological patterns (this is important, as morphology seems to be one of the areas of language which is most resistant to transfer across language boundaries).

**Similarities in syntax and certain widespread poetic features**

Since the I-E languages inherited very similar morphological systems (complex inflected morphology), their syntactic patterning is on the whole similar, at least in the early attested languages. Word order is free rather than bound: there is a tendency for the main verb to come at the end of a clause or sentence, and enclitic words generally follow the first accented word in the sentence. All I-E languages have relative clauses introduced by a relativizing pronoun (as in Engl. “The man who came to dinner”): I-E *yos gave the Greek relative “who” (Gk. hos, Skt. yah), while other languages use the interrogative and indefinite stem *kʰi-i/*kʰo- (> Lat. qui, Hitt. kwis). This stem survives in Greek tis (and in Latin quis) with interrogative and indefinite functions “who?”/“a certain.”

Language is also, of course, used for poetic and aesthetic purposes: in most of the major I-E languages there are traditions of epic poetry which show some interesting commonalities. Now, similarities between poetic or literary traditions do not prove a “genetic” relationship, since these things travel by processes of imitation and osmosis as well: there are also striking thematic similarities between Greek and non-Indo-European traditions of the ancient Near East (for example, the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh), which must be indicative of regional influence. Nevertheless, the I-E poetic traditions come from areas as far removed as Ireland and India, and often raise the possibility of tying thematic echoes to common linguistic forms. In 1853 the German scholar Adalbert Kuhn noticed that the Homeric phrase (Iliad 9.413) “undying fame”, κλέος ἀφθιτον [kleos aptʰitɔn], was exactly cognate with the Sanskrit phrase śrāvas … áksitam (Rig Veda 1.9.7). This concept is an important part of the ideology of