COMPARATIVE METHOD PROCEDURE

A	**B**	**C**	gloss
siza	*sesa*	*siza*	'strawberry'

1. Compile cognate sets, eliminating borrowings

(A cognate of a word is another word which has descended from the same source; cognates are similar in form and meaning).

2. Determine sound correspondences which exist between sounds in the same position in the words in each cognate set.

position	**A**	**B**	**C**
1	s	s	s
2	i	e	i
3	z	s	z
4	a	a	a

3. Reconstruct a sound for each position

a. Total correspondence

If all languages exhibit the same sound in some position in a cognate set, reconstruct that sound.

In the example, in positions 1 and 4, each of the languages has the same sound, so we reconstruct *s* for position 1 and *a* for position 4.

*s--a

b. Natural development

For each of the remaining positions, reconstruct the sound which would have undergone the most *natural* sound change.

For example, in a position between vowels, the change of a stop to fricative at the same point of articulation is very common (more natural!), the reverse is less common. Thus, if one cognate contains a stop and the other contains a fricative, the stop should be reconstructed.

Common sound changes:

- voiceless sounds become voiced between vowels and before or after voiced consonants
- consonants become palatalized before front vowels
- consonants become voiceless at the end of words
- consonant clusters are simplified
- vowels become nasalized before nasals
- fricatives become [h]
- [h] deletes between vowels

In the example, we reconstruct *s* because *s > z* is a natural change (voiceless sounds become voiced between vowels)

c. **Majority rules**

Reconstruct the sound which occurs in the greatest number of languages being compared.

In the example, for position 2 we reconstruct *i*.

The proto-language form is **sisa*

4. **Check for regularity of sound change**

Although the procedure outlined in steps 1-3 can be used to reconstruct a proto-form, we have to check to see if the results are *consistent* across the whole collection of cognate sets.

Sound change is regular, and therefore we should be able to give each daughter language (A, B and C in the example) a list of sound changes which applied regularly to all words in the proto-language -- *Regularity Hypothesis*!

A	**B**	**C**	gloss	Proto-language
siza	sesa	siza	strawberry	**sisa*
sizu	sisu	sizu	pitchfork	**sisu*

Confirm that steps 1-3 produce **sisu* for 'pitchfork'.
Problem: in position 2 we posited a **i >e* change for language B. This would mean that the **i* in *sisu* should also become *e*. in language B. Because both instances of **i* occur in the same environment, it is not possible to add a condition to the rule.

Solution: we have to reverse the decision made in step 3, making our reconstruction for 'strawberry' **sesa*. This way the sound changes listed below can apply regularly, giving the correct forms.

A	**B**	**C**
**s > z/ V_____V	none	**s > z/ V_____V
**e > i		**e > i