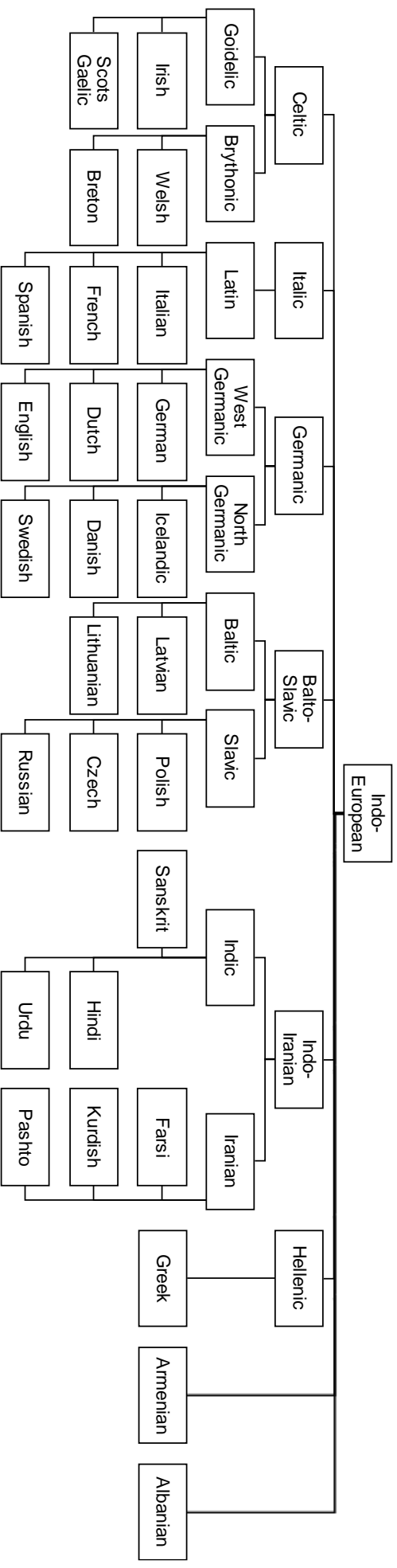# Language Awareness for Key Stage 3
2: Language Types and Language Families

Key Terms	Optional Terms
• Language Types • Word Order • Word Formation • Language Family • Mother Language • Daughter Language • Sister Language • Indo-European	• Syntax • Morphology • V2

- Introduction: Language Types and Language Families
  - Languages can be classified
    - in terms of the order of words in a sentence
    - in terms of how smaller units combine to form larger ones
  - In some cases, languages are similar because they are related
  - Related languages are languages that descend from a single, common ancestor
  - You can view these relationships in the form of a family tree
- Language types
  - In order to understand the similarities and differences between languages, it can be useful to classify them into different types
  - There are several different ways of classifying languages
  - One type of classification has to do with how the parts of a sentence are ordered (Linguists use the term *syntax* for the part of language having to do with word order)
    - English has the word order Subject–Verb–Object
      - For example, in the sentence 'Mary bought a book', *Mary* is the subject, *bought* is the verb, and *a book* is the object.
    - Japanese has the word order Subject–Object–Verb
    - Irish has the word order Verb–Subject–Object
    - There are also other languages with the other possible orders (Verb–Object–Subject, Object–Subject–Verb, Object–Verb–Subject)
    - In some languages, such as German, the verb always comes second, wherever the subject and object are
      - Maria *brachte* ein Buch gestern
        'Mary brought a book yesterday'
      - Gestern *brachte* Maria ein Buch
        'Yesterday Mary brought a book'
    - (Linguists call this sort of word order *verb-second*, or V2)
  - Languages can also be classified in terms of what they **combine** into a **single word** and what they leave **separate** as **multiple words**
  - All languages can create complex words by combining smaller units (Linguists call this part of language morphology)
    - un- + happy → unhappy
    - develop + -ment → development
    - chair + -s → chairs
    - talk + -ed → talked
  - However, languages differ in how much use they make of these combinations

- o A language like English has a single word *my*, and expresses past tense by adding a suffix *-ed* to a verb to form a single word like *walked*
- o A language like Chinese always says 'of me' (*wǒ de*) instead of 'my', and even the past tense in Chinese is a separate word (*le*)
- o There are also laguages like Mapudungun (spoken in Chile and Argentina), which have single words like *ngillawakan*, corresponding to a whole English sentence 'I bought a cow'
- Language families
  - One of the most important ways of classifying languages is in terms of their relationships with one another
  - Over time, all languages change
  - When varieties of a language change enough, they can become separate languages, whose speakers are no longer able to understand each other
  - One of the best-known examples of this process is Latin
  - Latin gradually developed from a single language into all the modern Romance languages, such as Italian, French, and Spanish
    - o In this sort of situation, Latin can be called the <u>mother language</u>
    - o The Romance languages are the <u>daughter languages</u> of Latin
    - o Each Romance language is a <u>sister language</u> of the other Romance languages
  - Because Italy, France and Spain are so far apart, people in each place wouldn't know how people in the other places spoke
  - But of course, Latin has a history too
  - By tracing back the history of Latin and other languages, we can build up a family tree showing Latin, its descendants, and its other relatives

Indo-European Language Family Tree

- **Indo-European**
  - **Celtic**
    - **Goidelic**
      - Irish
      - Scots Gaelic
    - **Brythonic**
      - Welsh
      - Breton
  - **Italic**
    - **Latin**
      - Italian
      - French
      - Spanish
  - **Germanic**
    - **West Germanic**
      - German
      - Dutch
      - English
    - **North Germanic**
      - Icelandic
      - Danish
      - Swedish
  - **Balto-Slavic**
    - **Baltic**
      - Latvian
      - Lithuanian
    - **Slavic**
      - Polish
      - Czech
      - Russian
  - **Indo-Iranian**
    - **Indic**
      - Sanskrit
      - Hindi
      - Urdu
    - **Iranian**
      - Farsi
      - Kurdish
      - Pashto
  - **Hellenic**
    - Greek
  - **Armenian**
  - **Albanian**

- As this tree shows, most European languages and many Asian languages belong to the <u>Indo-European</u> language family
- Just as the ancient Romans travelled from Italy into France and Spain, speakers of Indo-European languages spread out gradually from one place to another, until these languages were spoken in places as far apart as Spain and Nepal
- All the Indo-European languages descend from a single language, called Proto-Indo-European, which was spoken about 6000 years ago
- We have no direct records of Proto-Indo-European, as it was spoken before writing had been invented
- However, linguists have been able to reconstruct some of it, by studying the similarities among later languages
- In the lessons to come, you'll see examples of this type of reconstruction
- There are many other language families besides Indo-European, including:
  - Finno-Ugric (Finnish, Hungarian)
  - Semitic (Arabic, Hebrew)
  - Niger-Congo (Swahili, Zulu)
  - Sino-Tibetan (Burmese, Chinese)
  - Austronesian (Indonesian, Maori)
  - Athabaskan (Apache, Navajo)
- Other languages have no known relatives, such as Basque (spoken in France and Spain)
- All these languages and language families may have further relationships, which are too far back in time for us to recover
- Conclusion
  - Languages can be classified in terms of how they form words and how the words are ordered
  - Over time, languages change and develop into one or more new languages
  - Languages with the same origin can be grouped into language families
  - Classifying languages can help us to see the many different types of similarity that languages can share