

Using the majority principle, we can suggest that the older forms will most likely be based on language 2 or language 3. If this is correct, then the consonant changes must have been [p] → [b], [t] → [d] and [k] → [g] in order to produce the later forms in language 1. There is a pattern in these changes that follows one part of the 'most natural development principle', i.e. voiceless sounds become voiced between vowels. So the words in Language 2 and 3 must be older than those in language 1. Which of the two lists 2 or 3 contains the older forms? Remembering one other 'most natural development' type of sound change (i.e. final vowels often disappear), we can propose that the words in language 3 have consistently lost the final vowels still present in the words of language 2. Our best guess, then, is that the forms listed for language 2 are closest to what must have been the original proto-forms.