

Uto-Aztecan

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Uto-Aztecan (UA) is the Middle and Central American language family with the widest geographical extent, with most of its languages being spoken outside of the Mesoamerican language area and about half being spoken north of Mexico. This talk reviews the comparative phonology, morphology, and syntax of UA. While in comparison to other language families of Middle and Central America the phonology of UA may seem to be the “simplest” (cf. Suárez 1983), some areas of debate regarding particular aspects of historical reconstruction still persist—especially in regard to the development of stress, accent, and tone in various UA languages. Much of the talk will be devoted to comparative UA morphology, a very rich area of investigation given the complex word-formation processes that exist in most UA languages. An important issue is the reconstruction of inflectional and derivational morphology back to Proto-Uto-Aztecan (PUA), as well as the investigation of widespread irregular morphology, including prosodic morphology (reduplication and mora affixation) and suppletion. Regarding syntax, PUA is usually reconstructed as SOV because most of the languages retain the typological hallmarks of verb-finality (Langacker 1977), but some languages, especially those in the Mesoamerican language area, have shifted to verb-non-finality.