



Figure 3.1 Some branches of the IE family of languages

into the lower ones; the branches evolve independently from each other, though the cessation of human linguistic contact cannot have been abrupt or complete, and therefore some linguistic continuity must be assumed.

The chart is simplified.<sup>1</sup> An asterisk (\*) is used to mark languages of which we have no physical record, but which are reconstructed on the basis of the forms found in the daughter languages. Bold are the branches whose daughter languages have played some role in the development of Germanic or English.

Starting from the geographically most distant IE relative, we can say that the influence of Greek on the phonological shape of English is minimal. Most etymologically Greek words came into English via Latin, or via Latin and Old French. Some orthography, but not the pronunciation, carries through, so only the spellings <ch-, ph-, pn-> in *chorus*, *physics*, *pneumonia* signal their Greek origin. Further, words spelled with <chth, phth, hy-, ps-, rrh, chr-, pt-, ct-, rh-, x-, sth-, mn-, bd->, are almost exclusively of Greek origin, but the non-native clusters have been simplified to fit the system of English consonants. In some rare cases when a direct Greek loanword survives with its original pronunciation – for example, *chthonic* or the combining form *ichti(o)-* with /kθ-/ , *phthisis* with /(f)θ-/ , *sthenic* with /sθ-/ – recognisably foreign consonant clusters can be added to the periphery of the inventory of allowable consonant groupings in English (see 5.6). Some words have variable realisations: *asthma* can be [ˈæzmə], [ˈæsmə], [ˈæsθmə], earlier [ˈæstmə], and *isthmus* is [ˈɪsθmə] [ˈɪstməs], [ˈɪsməs] (OED). The initial cluster in

<sup>1</sup> For a complete chart of the Indo-European language family see the inside of the back cover of the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, any edition.