



Figure 3.2 Proto-Germanic and its descendants

of new varieties of Latino Englishes, which in their turn influence GA. One such influence is the acceptability of initial and stem-internal [h], as in *jojoba, rioja, fajita*.

### 3.3 The Germanic branch of Indo-European

Using the family metaphor again, English is a descendant of the North-West European branch of Indo-European. Figure 3.2 shows the modern Germanic languages that share that genealogical line.

**Proto-Germanic** (PrG) remained a relatively homogeneous group of languages spoken in the north-western parts of Europe. After c. 250 BC, speakers of Proto-Germanic settled large areas of Central, Western and Eastern Europe, from southern Scandinavia, the North Sea and the Baltic coasts, present-day Holland, east to the Vistula River in what is now Poland and in the lands along the rivers Rhine, Weser and Elbe to the south.

The most important **East Germanic** branch of PrG is **Gothic**, which became extinct during the sixteenth century. Gothic is important for the study of the history of the Germanic language family because, except for a few scattered runic inscriptions, Gothic records antedate those of the other Germanic languages by three to four centuries. The earliest Gothic writings date back to the fourth century AD, when a Christian