LANGUAGE COMPARISON:

By comparing the language of Mizo with other languages like English, Hindi etc., we will see some kind of peculiarities and complexities of Mizo language. Comparative and historical linguistics may be said to have begun in 1786. The date when Sir William Jones made the famous statement pointing out that Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Celtic and Germanic appeared to have sprung from a common source. Mizo language which is said to have been mostly originated from what we called the language of Pawi (Lai) (as it is commonly known) who were inhabited in the area of Chindwin valley and Kabow valley which is in the western corner of Burma. Mizo and Pawi are closely related. The style of living, behaviour, culture and tradition, attitude of these two groups are almost the same. As a result, the language of Mizo could not be separated from the language of Pawi (Lai). They are like the two items of the same pot. Because most of our typical language, folk songs, folklore and folktales are mostly originated from what we call Pawi (Lai). As comparative linguistics traces the evolution of language and by comparing one with another, establishes the relationships between them. In Europe and America, historical linguistics and historically orientated comparative linguistics played a dominant role in linguistic studies during the nineteenth century.

By studying the characteristics of languages, automatically, we are supposed to see the evolution, development and change of a particular language within a certain time. For example, Mizo language which has close relationship with the language of Pawi is changing and developing in its style, form, structure, sound and manner etc. like English which belongs to Indo-European language changes and develops. Mizo language is not so old, even our Alphabet is framed and designed by English Missionaries J. Herbert Lorrain and F.W. Savidge only in the year 1894. So, it is considerably young comparing with the Alphabet of English, Hindi etc.
There is a proverb in Indian villages which says that language changes every six miles. One of the results is that "all grammars leak" because language is not a static entity. It is said that language is 'modifiable, extendable' and that language changes in time and space. About sixty years ago, Edward Sapir introduced a valuable new concept into linguistics. 'Language,' he wrote, 'moves down time in a current of its own making. It has a drift .......... Nothing is perfectly static. Every word, every grammatical element, every locution, every sound and accent is a slowly changing configuration moulded by the invisible and impersonal ..........' (E. Sapir, Language: An Introduction to the study of Speech, New York, repr. 1942. P.g.150).

The truth is that all through the period which we call the old English period, the language was slowly and steadily growing and changing so that it had become materially changed in every aspect by the time it had reached what we generally call the Middle English period. Language changes because of linguistic, social, cultural, psychological, historical and geographical too. According to Saussure, language changes due to the innovations of individuals and of community and historical reasons. Language change may be very broadly divided into two categories - external change and internal change which may be studied under the following heads:

(i) Sound change
(ii) Grammatical and Lexical change
(iii) Semantic change.

(i) Sound change: A sound change may be defined as the creation of disappearance of phonemes. A sound change can be said to have occurred when the pronunciation by a social unit (town, village or nation) of that sound at a time is different from what
it was at in earlier time. For example, Old English /a:/ (long a) changes everywhere to Middle English /o:/ (and later to /ou/). O.E /a:/→M.E/o:/→Mod.E/ou/. The word ham/ha:m/ for example, became hoom/ha:m/ and later home/houm/. Similarly, the word ban/ba:n/ became boon/bo:n/ and later bone/boun/.

(ii) Grammatical and Lexical change: It is the change in grammar and vocabulary. It is most obvious in child language, when children form plurals for example, as mans, mouses, foots, after hearing plurals such as cats, dogs, horses or from Past Tense such as maked, dranked, brokeed, sleepy after hearing Past Tense forms such as played, called, cooked, jumped. It is because of analogy that many English plurals mostly ending in 'en' have gradually been ousted in favour of S. In the days of Shakespeare, eyen, housen and schoon were normal forms but these have been replaced by eyes, houses and shoes.

(iii) Semantic change: The main sources of Semantic change are vagueness in meanings, loss of motivation, polysemy, ambiguous contexts, the structure of the vocabulary. Semantic change is also caused by foreign languages, e.g. French 'Parlement' which originally meant 'Speaking' and then came to denote a 'judicious court', acquired at a later date, under the influence of English Parliament, its modern sense of 'Legislative Assembly'.

Above all, language is changing and developing from period to period. All languages are continually changing their sounds, their grammar, their vocabulary and their meanings for various reasons. A look at the old inscriptions and manuscripts, at Chaucer or Shakespeare shows how many of English sounds and spellings have changed. For example, the final 'e' in numerous Chaucerian words is no more seen in Modern English; the sound phonetically /j/ which occurs before /u/ in words such as tune, duty, muse has disappeared in words such as rute, flute. Sound in Hindi words such as varkha (meaning 'rain') has been replaced by changing varkha into varsha. Hindi once had no terms such as radio, television, train, signal etc. Similarly, Mizo language
had no terms such as radio, television, carpet, chalk, pencil, electric etc. Once the expression 'It is me' was ungrammatical but now it is quite acceptable.

In studying the history of any language, we have to consider not only the development of its grammatical structure and the additions of new words to its vocabulary, but also the changes which have taken place in the meanings of many words in the language. English language (Old English) for instance which belongs to Indo-European Language is an inflected language which is changing and developing from time to time. The word 'England' itself came from the word Angle Tribes or Englaland (Land of the Angles), which were used to denote collectively the Germanic peoples in Britain: Angles, Saxons and Jutes alike. The land of these tribes changed into England. The word 'English' itself came from the word spoken by these tribes, 'Englisc'. From the beginning, the language was always Englisc. So, English language is changing slowly in its forms from Old English language to modern used language. As a result, we can see the change and development of every language from time to time or from period to period.

Typology and Universals of Languages:

Typology is really an attempt to provide a formal and systematic way of answering every tiro's question about a language new to him. 'What is this language like?'. Languages are typologically classified according to the similarities of form they exhibit with other languages at any level or levels. Linguists compare languages for several reasons, e.g. to note their similarities and dissimilarities; to form a typology - the classification of languages into different types, to find out what language have developed from what other languages. Different types of typology is shown here like:

(i) Phonetic typology (ii) Phonological typology
(iii) Grammatical typology (iv) Linguistic typology & Linguistic Universals.