

At all times, keep in mind the truth about comparative linguistics, indeed about all of linguistics. Nothing is real except the raw facts of the language, the words people say, the scratching on the rock. All linguistic analysis is fiction or educated guess; all linguistic description is a more-or-less simplified and distorted mapping of the complexities of speech on a sheet of paper. When drawing a conclusion that is elegant and innovative, one should not fall in love with it. Remember, with honesty and humility, that one new fact can reshuffle the cards and force a totally different (but equally elegant) analysis.

Patrick. R. Bennett: *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*. Eisenbrauns, 1998, p. 67.