

The History Of Slavic Languages Family

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Abstract

Indo-European languages are a family which includes a great number of languages and dialects which relate to each other. This family contains the most basic languages which are spoken in Europe as well as the south and west of Asia. Slavic languages family is a subgroup of that big family. As any other groups of family, this subgroup includes related languages which share many phonological and syntactical aspects of the language. As a result, this paper will shed the light on talking about the history of this language and the time of establishing this family as a valid genetic grouping. It will look for the scholars that pioneered the research on this language family. Also, it will display the initial descriptive and contrastive studies of the Slavic languages. It will talk about the numerous aspects of the Slavic phonology, syntax, and morphology which characterize this group of family from other families. Finally, the paper will display the two fundamental problems of Slavic phonology as well as the common vowels and consonants systems.

Keywords: Slavic languages; history; phonology; syntax; morphology; vowels and consonants .

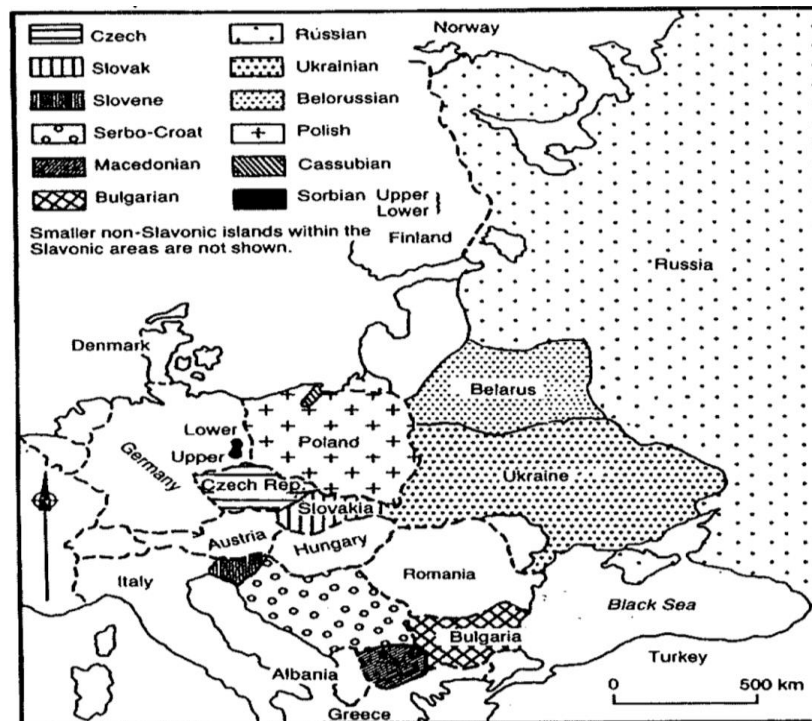
ملخص البحث

اللغات الهندية الأوروبية هي عبارة عن عائلة أو مجموعة تضم عددًا كبيرًا من اللغات واللهجات التي ترتبط ببعضها البعض. تحتوي هذه المجموعة على أهم اللغات الأساسية التي يتم التحدث بها في أوروبا وكذلك جنوب وغرب آسيا. عائلة اللغات السلافية هي مجموعة فرعية من تلك العائلة الكبيرة. مثل أي مجموعة أخرى من العائلات، تتضمن هذه المجموعة الفرعية اللغات ذات الصلة التي تشترك في العديد من الجوانب الصوتية والنحوية للغة. نتيجة لذلك، ستسلط هذه الورقة الضوء على الحديث عن تاريخ هذه اللغة ووقت تأسيس هذه المجموعة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سيتم التحدث عن العلماء الذين كانوا رائدين في البحث عن هذه المجموعة اللغوية. كما سيتم عرض الدراسات الوصفية والمقارنة الأولية للغات السلافية. أيضاً سيتم التحدث عن الجوانب العديدة لعلم الأصوات، وبناء الجملة، والنحو والصرف التي تميز هذه المجموعة عن المجموعات الأخرى. أخيراً، ستعرض الورقة المشكلتين الأساسيتين لعلم الأصوات السلافية بالإضافة إلى أنظمة الشائعة لحروف العلة والحروف الساكنة.

كلمات مفتاحية: اللغات السلافية؛ تاريخها؛ علم الأصوات؛ بناء الجملة؛ النحو والصرف؛ حروف العلة؛ الحروف الساكنة.

(1) Introduction:

According to Comrie and G. Corbett (1993) in their studies about Slavic languages, the Slavic languages is also called the Slavonic languages, but it is known by the first one especially in the United States. The Slavic languages family is a group of a number of languages which relate to each other and it is considered a subgroup of Indo-European languages which is the family of the languages that cover most of Europe areas as well as the south and south western parts of Asia. These languages are the major languages which are spoken in the eastern and central Europe and by around 315 million people. They have started to be spoken from its original in the eastern Europe across Northern Asia to the Pacific coast. The following picture will present a map which include the distribution of Slavic languages.



All of all, the purpose of this paper is an attempt to review and analysis the reconstruction of Slavic languages as a subgroup family of the Indo-European Family. As a result, the first section summarizes the beginning of the Slavic and the process of its spreading. The second section exhibits the ancient and initial studies of the Slavic. The third section presents the descriptives, contrastive, and historical studies of the Slavic languages especially Russian language. The fourth section points out to the principal aspects and features of Slavic in multiple fields including phonology, morphology, syntax, agreement system, and the subordinations.

The last section indicates to the primary issues and affairs regarding the phonology of Slavic languages.

(2) The history of Slavic Languages:

According to Frederik Kortlandt in his study about the beginning of Slavic languages (1994), the history of Slavic languages returns to more than three thousand years. The name of Slavic languages is a later name for these present days because it was called Proto-Slavic. In the Period from 5th to 9th centuries, there were no writing or works talked about these languages. The building and creating these languages depended on the comparative method with the features and characteristics of Indo-European languages. From the beginning of 10th centuries, there was a massive expansion of Slavic speaking because many different dialects appeared, and several sound changes entered in these languages. Later, many other dialects emerged, and new sound changes appeared which differed from the previous sounds. As a result, we can observe that the Slavic languages passed through three various periods. The first period was from 5th to 9th in which there was no writing and no dialects regarding Slavic languages. The second period was witness to the appearance of different dialects and sound changes, while the third period was full of writings, great amounts of dialects, many studies and works regarding this family of Slavic language. We can conclude also that the comparative linguistics of Slavic languages passes in three important periods including the vocabulary of the languages, syntax, morphology, phonetics, and so on.

(3) Pioneering works about Slavic languages:

According to Mihaila (1978), the past decades have strong evidence regarding the beginning of the studying of Slavonic and its influence on neighboring countries. The late form of written Old Slavic, which was in the middle ages, was the language of the culture in most of Slavic countries and non-Slavic neighboring countries including the Romanian Principalities and Lithuania alongside of Byzantine Greek in the southeast of Europe, and Latin in the western and central Europe.

His study also refers to Petre P. Panaitescu who was the first historian and philologist who helped in spreading the Slavic languages. He has a significant contribution regarding the cultural and historical framework about Slavic languages. This contribution led the Old Slavic and the Cyrillic alphabet to penetrate into Romanian in the 10th and 11th centuries. After the appearance of this contribution, Old Slavic became the language of the church as well as the language of administration and cultural generally especially after the construction of the feudal states of Wallachia and Moldavia. He published several works and wrote various books and studies. The beginning of his writing and publishing was after 1944. His first works did not focus on linguistics instead of that they were talking about the general facts and other problems and issues of Old Slavic. Also, they mentioned to the general framework of Slavonic in order to understand the part which related to Romanian Principalities especially from the 14th to 16th centuries.

In addition to that, he edited chronicles, literary texts, Old Slavic- Romanian documents and printings. The most major works among his books include the chapters dealing with Old Romanian culture and literature in several collective works and treaties (1947), the monograph (1965), and the synthesis which he wrote in the last year of his life (1969).

The linguistic studies of Old Slavic and Romanian existed in some of the research works which is written by I.C. Chitimia (1972).

According to Townsend (1993), Pogacnik's book is one of the most useful and valuable works which gave a perfect introduction about Slovene literature and its European cultural diversity without being part of the Yugoslav historical and literary context.

Also, in his paper, he presents the book of Terence R. Carlton (1991) which is called "*Introduction to the Phonological History of the Slavic Languages*" is the first main book in English language which talked about the history of Slavonic languages family and its different aspects regarding its linguistic literature. This book is considered the major textbook for courses in the anglophone universities for those who want to study the comparative Slavic linguistics.

Moreover, the book includes eight various chapters which covered all the different linguistic history of Slavic languages. These various chapters including the topics of the past and present of the languages of this family, the writing system of Slavic languages, the Beginnings of Slavic literature, Slavic as a member of a larger family, the reconstructed phonology of Proto-Indo-European, from Indo-European to Proto-Slavic, Phonological developments in the period of disintegration, and the prosodic features of Late Proto-Slavic. At the end of these chapters, the author gives a summary of the main differences in the Slavic languages. These chapters covered the first half of the book, while the second half involves vocabulary lists, parallel texts, dialect maps, glossaries, bibliography, and finally the index. Even though this book has an important gap in the instructional material on Slavic linguistics for English speakers, it is considered the standard one which gives the western reader an obvious data about the linguistic history of the Slavonic languages and it covers a wide range of topics and levels regarding the family of Slavic languages.

In addition to that, this book is considered a complement book for the book of Shevelov (1965) which concentrated more on the early stages of Slavonic languages. Through the analysis of this book, we can note that this book heavily depended on other major works which talked about the history of Slavic family and its various features and aspects related to its linguistics such as the books of Stang (1957) and Trofymovyc (1960) as well as Shevelov (1965).

To sum up, the ancient and major works which mentioned and presented the history of Slavic languages and displayed its comparative Linguistics including the books and studies of the different Romanian linguists as we mentioned above. The first and the standard major book about Slavic languages which is written in English is the book of Carlton (1991) which is more valuable work to the Western reader to get enough data about Slavonic languages and its other aspects in linguistic literature.

(4) The descriptive, contrastive, and historical study of Old Slavic:

According to Mahaila (1978), the expansion of the study of Slavic languages first with Russian language started from the philological faculties after 1948. This intensification and expansion were as a result of the gradual publication of the textbooks, methodological works, and the theoretical courses of lecture which they were suitable for teaching these languages at different levels starting from elementary to the highest level of education. In addition to that, there were many theses and articles which presented different features of the contrastive, descriptive, and historical study of Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak, Czech, Bulgarian, and Serbo-Croatian.

The vast majority of this type of works allocated to the Russian language. Many researchers and linguists devoted their works and studies to talk about Russian language. Their works contain the study of Russian language descriptively, contrastively and historically.

4.1 The descriptive studies:

Regarding the descriptive studies, the first work about the systematic Russian grammar, morphology and phonology was done by A. Zacordonet (1994). Later after several years, this work was followed by some theoretical lectures which were done by some linguists including Nadejda Mangul, V. Vascenco, and I. Oita. Their contribution consisted of presentation which covered all different fields of Russian linguistics including morphology, syntax, phonetics, and lexicology in (1962).

Romanian researchers and linguists also worked to publish a valuable and useful dictionary. The first rich Russian- Romanian Dictionary was done by a group of researchers (1959-1969). It was followed by another one which was called “The Russian- Romanian Phraseological Dictionary” which was edited by Gh. Bolocan (1968). There was also another dictionary especially for the linguistic terms which was called “The Dictionary of Linguistic Terms” which was written by a group of V. Vasceno (1970).

4.2 The contrastive studies:

Different features and aspects of Russian vocabulary and grammatical structure was considered contrastive manner by specific researchers and linguists. The first work regarding the contrastive studies was about the derivations in the nouns like the suffixes and prefixes which was done in 1962. There was also another work which mentioned to the various features and characteristics of the polysemy and the homonymy on the basis of the Russian - Romanian dictionaries which was in 1970. It was followed by an interesting monograph about the difficulties in Russian by A. Zacordonet (1975). Moreover, there were other several works and studies which examined and concentrated on the different parts of speech from 1969 to 1972.

4.3 The historical studies:

The historical grammar and phonology studies started from university courses of lectures beginning from 1963. There were also monographs and studied regarding the historical morphology, phonetics, and syntax. For instance, A. Ionasco had a special work which talked about the phonological statues of intense vowels in Old Russian (1967). Maria Dumitrescu was one of the special linguists who devoted her doctoral thesis to talk about the development of semantic and syntactical functions through the history of Russian.

To sum up, these works were not the only studies which talked and described the different fields of Russian language and its history. There were also a huge and great amount of studies which devoted to the history of Russian language and its various fields of linguistics, but this paper mentioned only to the initial works and studies which assigned to Russian language. Moreover, the same thing happened with other Slavic languages which means that there were several works and studies which devoted to describe the historical various fields of other Slavic languages. However, the paper focuses only on the descriptive and contrastive study of Russian because Russian is the major language in the group of Slavic languages.

(5) The basic features of Slavonic languages including phonology, syntax, and morphology:

The following paragraphs will talk about the diverse features and aspects of Slavic linguistics according to the study of Comrie and G. Corbett (1993).

In phonology, the presence of palatal or palatalized consonants is considered one of the most typical characteristics in Slavic languages. Many consonants of Slavic languages consist of two basic pairs, the palatalized form (soft) and the non-palatalized form (hard). The extreme case of this is Russian language in which each consonant has this palatalization opposition which means that every consonant in Russian has two basic forms one soft, while the other hard. The following table will show the two forms of the consonants.

Consonant phonemes of Russian

	Labial		Dental & Alveolar		Post-alveolar/ Palatal		Velar	
	hard	soft	hard	soft	hard	soft	hard	soft
Nasal	m	mʲ	n	nʲ				
Stop	p b	pʲ bʲ	t d	tʲ dʲ			k g	kʲ gʲ
Affricate			ʦ	(ʦʲ)		ʧ		
Fricative	f v	fʲ vʲ	s z	sʲ zʲ	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	x	xʲ
Trill			r	rʲ				
Approximant			l	lʲ		j		

The second important feature of Slavic languages is the rich set of the morphophonemic alternations including inflectional and derivational morphology which occurred between velar and postalveolar consonants, front and back vowels, and between a vowel and no vowel. Morphophonemic means that the given morpheme has more than one phonemic representation in different words into which that morpheme enters. Morphophonemic alternations of Slavic languages represent the innovations of the Proto-Slavonic and the individual Slavonic languages. The result of the massive amount of the morphophonemic is the existence of the various palatalization of the Slavic languages and this is considered the first kind of morphophonemic alternations. Another type of morphophonemic alternations is between back and front vowels relying on the preceding consonants if it is hard (non-palatalized) or soft (palatalized). These two kinds of alterations arose in the period of Proto-Slavic. In the period of late Slavic languages, there was a new kind of morphophonemic alternations which arose between vowels and zero. These alterations occurred as a result of the loss of the reduced vowels. Vowels which alternate with zero is called mobile, fugitive, or fleeting vowels. The appearance of these various kinds of morphophonemic alternations made the linguists and researchers placed a level of morphophonemic representation in which a given morpheme would be a given consonant. The braces [...] were used to show the morphophonemic representations. Many linguists and researchers attributed these innovations of various morphophonemic to the new sound changes which occurred through the three different periods of Slavic languages.

Because Slavic languages are considered from the conservative groups in Indo-European languages, all Slavic languages have a rich morphology. Even though some languages as Bulgarian and Macedonian lost some of their morphological aspects especially the inflectional categories, all Slavonic languages maintain a great number of morphological categories even with the few innovation which relate to this subgroup family. Most of the morphological categories of Slavic languages are familiar with those of Indo-European languages.

The most prominent feature of syntax in Slavic languages is the free word order. The order of the major constituents in the sentence is not determined by the grammatical relations or syntactical factors as the subject, object, and so on, but by the pragmatic factors as the topic, focus, and so on. This means that any one of the six logical word order is suitable with any sentence. This freedom of word order makes it difficult to characterize whether the order of the main constituents of Slavic languages consists of Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), or Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). We can observe these two optional orders in the principal constituents of the clause when it includes the subject, verb or predicate, direct object, and indirect object. On the other hand, the order of the individual constituents is more fixed. As a result, genitives usually follow the head noun, while demonstratives, numerals, and adjectives precede the head noun. All Slavic languages have prepositions and postpositions, but the extensive use is for the prepositions. Even though this freedom of the word order is hard to determine what is the main order for the sentence, it is the result behind the richer morphology of Slavic languages.

There is extensive agreement system in all Slavic languages as the agreement between the adjectives and their nouns or as the agreement of the verbs with their subjects, and so on. One of the agreements that occur in the Slavic languages is that the finite verbs encode the numbers of person with their subjects which leads to the probability of deletion the unstressed subject pronouns. This process of deletion is different from one language to another in the Slavic family. For instance, the omitting of the unstressed subject pronouns is normal in some language like Serbo-Croat, while in other languages as Russian, they tend to keep the unstressed subject pronouns.

In general, the subordinations of the Slavic languages are familiar with those of the Indo-European languages. The only difference is that Slavic family prefer to use finite subordinate clauses with clause-initial conjunctions in most languages of this family except Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbo-Croat. Their strong preference to the finite subordinations because the use of the infinitives in Slavonic languages have particular constructions. Even though the use of non-finite constructions is not found in the Slavic spoken languages, the writing system of Slavic family use the non-finite constructions extensively such as the substitutions of participles with relative clauses and verbal adverbs substituting for adverbial clauses.

(6) Brief description of the most important issues of Slavic language phonology:

According to Gladney (1993), a principle issue in Slavic languages phonology is the development of the earlier eight vowels which is defined by the features +,- back, +,- tense and +,- high to the late eleven vowels of common Slavic languages. Carlton discusses the various possible routes by which old ‘U’ turned into unrounded “Y” and ‘U’ developed out of the diphthong ‘au’. The problem is that the shift $au > a$ cannot have preceded the shift $u > y$ because then the output of the former would have undergone the latter and *sanau would have yielded *syny instead of attested synu. On the other hand, we don't want to claim that $a > y$ preceded $au > a$ because there is existed a vocalic system without any u-type vowel and this is an unusual situation.

The second issue in Slavic languages is the velar palatalization. The major problem is that the satem palatalization of “k” did not merge with any of the specifically Slavic palatalization.

According to Andersen (1996), from this point, we can mention that the vowels and consonants of Slavic languages passed through three important period and in each period the system of vowels is changed. For instance, the earliest Common vowel system is homologous to the one that is reconstructed from the Proto-Slavic. The following table will present the three different stages of the development of Common Slavic vocalism.

CS-I	CS-II: After monophthongization	CS-III: East Slavic, after qualitative differentiation	
ī i u ū	ī i y u ū	i y u	tense
		-----ī-----ū-----	lax
ē e a ā	ē e a ā	ě	tense
		-----e-----o-----	lax
	ę ǫ	ǣ a	

The vowel of Old Slavic is different from that of the middle and the late. The first four tables will represent the middle Common Slavic vowels, while the last table will display the late common vowels.

Middle Common Slavic Vowels

Short vowels				Long vowels				Nasal vowels (long)				Liquid diphthongs			
	Front	Central	Back		Front	Central	Back		Front	Central	Back		Front	Central	Back
Close	ɨ/ĩ		ɯ/ũ	Close	i	y	u	Close				Close	ɨl/ĩl, ɯr/ũr		ɨl/ũl, ɯr/ũr
Mid	e			Mid	ě			Mid	ɛ̃		ɔ̃	Mid	el, er		
Open			o	Open			a	Open				Open			ol, or

Late Common Slavic Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	(i)	u
Mid	e		o
Open		a	

The same thing happened with the consonants. The consonants also pass through different and important periods. However, we will only introduce the late common consonants of Slavic languages.

	Labial	Coronal	Palatal	Velar
Nasal	m	n	nʲ	
Plosive	p b	t d	tʲ: dʲ:	k g
Affricate		ts dz	tʃ	
Fricative		s z	ʃ, (sʲ ¹)	ʒ x
Trill		r	rʲ	
Lateral		l	lʲ	
Approximant	ʋ		j	

(7) Conclusion and Recommendations:

The goal of this paper is to introduce the beginning of the Slavic languages, to look for its history, and to present the various fields in its comparative linguistics. The following is a summary for the most important features and results.

- 1- The comparative linguistics of Slavic languages passes in three important periods including the vocabulary of the languages, syntax, morphology, phonetics, and so on.
- 2- The first and the standard major book about Slavic languages which is written in English is the book of Carlton (1991) which is more valuable work to the Western reader to get enough data about Slavonic languages and its other aspects in linguistic literature.
- 3- Russian is the major language in the group of Slavic languages.
- 4- The main features of the Slavic phonology are the rich set of morphophonemic alternations and the palatalized consonants.
- 5- The basic characteristic of syntactical Slavic is the free word-order.
- 6- The various agreement system in Slavic languages as well as the different aspects of the subordinations in Slavic are also other main features of Slavic languages.

To sum up, the paper starts with a brief introduction about the family of Slavic. The introduction includes a short description for the different areas as well as the numbers of people who speak these languages and the origin of this group of family. It is followed by a concise report about the history of this family, its descent, and the three various periods which Slavic languages passed through. The paper also mentions to the pioneering works which study the Slavic languages and its comparative linguistics. It also presents the descriptive, contrastive, and historical studies of the Slavic languages. Moreover, the paper mentions to the basic features and characteristics of Slavic in each field of its linguistics. The paper ends with portraying the fundamental issues that faced the linguistic and researchers in the phonology of Slavic languages. After presenting the issues of Slavic phonology which relate to the reconstruction of the vowels and consonants, the paper displays the common vowels systems through the three diverse periods the earliest period, the middle, and the late one as well as the common consonants system. Since this paper focuses on Russian language, future research may be required to look into other languages in Slavic groups. Even though Russian share some features with other Slavic languages, each one of the other Slavic languages has its specific features and patterns that need to be well represented. Also, this paper presented the field of comparative linguistics of Slavic languages, thus; future research can look at the other fields of these languages.

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