Variability of languages in time and space

Lecture 1: Languages around the world – resources and classification

Magda Ševčíková

October 12, 2018
Lecture 1 – October 12, 2018
1. Intro
2. Approaches to classification of the world’s languages
3. Linguistic resources on the world’s languages

Lecture 2 – October 19, 2018
- Linguistic sign, linguistic disciplines

Lecture 3 – October 26, 2018
- Word formation

Lecture 4 – November 2, 2018
- Comparing word formation
Lecture 1 – October 12, 2018

1 Intro
   - Number of the world’s languages
   - Living language
   - Languages by region of origin and number of speakers

2 Approaches to classification of the world’s languages
   - Genetic classification
   - Areal classification
   - Linguistic typology

3 Linguistic resources on the world’s languages
   - *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*
Lecture 1 – October 12, 2018

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Printed and online resources differ considerably in estimating the number of languages

- *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911): app. 1,000 lang.

– the increasing figures are not due to any increase in the number of languages, but rather due to steadily improving documentation efforts

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Variability of languages
According to *Ethnologue* (2018), which is the most extensive catalogue of world’s languages,

7,097 living languages are used around the world.
A living language has at least one speaker for whom it is a first language.

- e.g. English, Catalan, Japanese, Swahili, French Sign Language

- it is distinguished from dead and extinct languages
A first language (L1)
is a language which a person acquires first in her/his life, usually naturally as a child.

A second language (L2)
is a language which a person acquires next to her/his first language.
Extinct vs. dead languages

- in *Ethnologue* (2018),
  - an **extinct language** is defined as having no longer any speakers.
    - e.g. Old Church Slavonic, Gothic
  - a **dead language** is no longer the native language of any community but is still in use
    - e.g. Latin
In maps at *ethnologue.com*, each language is located in its **primary country**
- each language shown **just once**, e.g.
  - English located in the United Kingdom
  - Esperanto located in Poland
Regions of origin of languages

https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/how-many-languages
Languages by region of origin

*Ethnologue* (2018):
- 2,300 languages (out of 7,097) are from Asia
- 2,143 languages are concentrated in Africa
- 288 languages belong to Europe

https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/how-many-languages
Language size

- **Language size**
  is the number of L1 speakers of a particular language

- **Average language size**
  - calculated, for instance, for a group of languages from a particular region
  - as the sum of speakers of the involved languages divided by the number of languages in question
Languages by region and by number of speakers

Europe (yellow): 288 languages

Americas (green): 49M
Pacific (orange): 7M speakers

Note: English listed as a language belonging to Europe. Therefore, all L1 speakers of English (e.g. incl. English speakers living in the USA) categorized under Europe.
Languages by number of L1 speakers

- nearly 6,778,000,000 speakers around the world
  - 86 % of speakers use languages from Asia or Europe as L1
  - 40 % of speakers use one of just 5 languages as L1
    - Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Hindi
## Number of L1 speakers vs. of L2 speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rank</th>
<th>as L1</th>
<th># of speakers</th>
<th>as L2</th>
<th># of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1,299 mil.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>660 mil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>442 mil.</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>215 mil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>378 mil.</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>204 mil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>260 mil.</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>153 mil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endangered languages

- the language size is used as an important indicator of whether a language is endangered

- features defining **language endangerment**
  - less than 1,000 speakers remaining
  - age distribution of the speakers
  - trends in population size
  - use of a second language in the community
  - use of the language as a second language
  - attitudes to the language
Examples of endangered languages

*Ethnologue* (2018) estimates the number of endangered languages at about a third of the languages listed in the resource.

- examples of languages classified as endangered
  - Tirahi (Afghanistan)
  - Urali (India)
  - Wymysorys (Poland) [vilamovština]
  - Krimchak (Ukraine) [krymčačtina]
  - Pipil (El Salvador)
  - Providencia Sign Language (Colombia)
A closer look: Languages in Spain

*Ethnologue* (2018) lists 16 living languages used in Spain:
- Aragonese [aragonština]
- Asturian [asturština]
- Basque [baskičtina]
- Caló
- Catalan [katalánština]
- Catalan Sign Language
- Erromintxela
- Extremaduran [extremadurština]
- Fala [falština]
- Galician [galicijština]
- Gascon, Aranese [gaskonština]
- Portuguese [portugalština]
- Quinqui
- Spanish [španělština]
- Spanish Sign Language
- Valencian Sign Language

https://www.ethnologue.com/country/ES/languages
10 living languages acc. to *Ethnologue* (2018):

- Bavarian [bavorština]
- Czech [čeština]
- Czech Sign Language [český znakový jazyk]
- German, Standard [spisovná němčina]
- Polish [polština]
- Romani, Carpathian [karpatská romština]
- Romani, Sinte [sintská romština]
- Rusyn [rusínština]
- Silesian, Lower [dolní slezština]
- Slovak [slovenština]

https://www.ethnologue.com/country/CZ/languages
A language can be used in more varieties = **dialects**
- usually spoken in a specific part of a country or other geographical area
- **not** counted as separate items in the total of living languages, but
- subsumed under the particular language
Distinguishing dialects from languages

Ethnologue (2018) defines dialects of a language as “speech varieties which are functionally intelligible to each others’ speakers because of linguistic similarity”
Dialects: intelligibility and linguistic similarity

- **intelligibility**
  - how speakers of one variety of a language understand another variety
  - difficulty in comprehension with less than 85 %

- **linguistic similarity** often specified as **lexical similarity**
  - comparison of standardized lists of words
  - for a dialect, similarity of at least 85 % expected

– however, cultural and/or linguistic traditions often important for whether a variety is considered a dialect
A closer look: Dialects of Spanish

- in *Ethnologue* (2018), Spanish (alternate name: Castilian) listed as 1 of 16 languages used in Spain

- Spanish itself has 8 dialects:
  - Andalusian (Andalusí, Andaluz, Andalú) [andaluzština]
  - Aragonese [aragonština]
  - Murcian [murcijština]
  - Navarrese [navarština]
  - Castilian [kastilština]
  - Canary Islands Spanish (Isleño)
  - American Spanish (Chicano)
  - Silbo Gomero

https://www.ethnologue.com/language/spa
Dialects of Czech

**Ethnologue (2018):**
1. Central Bohemian
2. Czecho-Moravian
3. Hanak
4. Lach (Yalach)
5. Northeast Bohemian
6. Southwest Bohemian

**vs. ÚJČ AV ČR:**
1. česká nářečí v užším smyslu
   - severovýchodoceská nářeční podskupina
   - středoceská nářeční podskupina
   - jihozápadoceská nářeční podskupina
   - českomoravská nářeční podskupina
2. středomoravská nářeční skupina
   - centrální středomoravská podskupina
   - jižní středomoravská podskupina
3. východomoravská nářeční skupina
   - severní (valašská) podskupina
   - jižní (slovácká) podskupina
4. slezská nářečí
   - západní (opavská) podskupina
   - východní (ostravská) podskupina
   - jižní (frenštátská) podskupina
   - přechodová nářečí česko-polská

https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ces


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Similarities and differences between languages

Languages of the world do share some features, but display differences at the same time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>En.</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Slovene</th>
<th>Croatian</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>Vater</td>
<td>otec</td>
<td>oče</td>
<td>otac</td>
<td>père</td>
<td>padre</td>
<td>padre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- WHY are they similar?
- WHY do they differ?
Some similarities can be explained by the **common origin** of languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>En.</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Slovene</th>
<th>Croatian</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>father</td>
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<td>otac</td>
<td>père</td>
<td>padre</td>
<td>padre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- languages that developed from the same ancestor language and belong to the same **language family** share common features
  - English and German belong to **Germanic** languages
  - Czech, Slovene, and Croatian to **Slavic** languages
  - French, Spanish, and Italian to **Romance** languages
But what about similarities between unrelated languages? They can result from language contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>En.</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Basque</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
<th>Maori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pepper</td>
<td>pepř</td>
<td>piperra</td>
<td>pilipili</td>
<td>pepa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The country of origin of black pepper is south India. The origin of the word can be found in Sanskrit pippali. The merchants from India distributed to other countries not only spice but also its name. In this way languages got in touch, in contact.” (Körvélyessy 2017:80)
Classification of languages

Similarities and differences among languages explained

- by the origin of languages
  → genetic classification
- by language contact
  → areal classification

Both perspectives are taken into account within classification based on linguistic analysis of structural features of languages

→ linguistic typology
Languages that display systematic similarities and differences are assumed to have descended from a common source language = ancestor language / proto-language.

- regular correspondences between languages studied by comparative methods
- proto-languages not attested, they are reconstructed from available documents of the descendent languages
Language family
is a group of languages that have developed from the same proto-language.

- language families represented as trees
## Major language families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lang. family</th>
<th>lang.</th>
<th>mil. of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austronesian</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-New Guinea</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Tibetan</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-European</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>3,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Asiatic</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- plus another 146 language families
proto-language: Proto-Indo-European (PIE)

- reconstructed on the basis of Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, Latin, and others
- assumed existence: 4,500–2,500 B.C.E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Gothic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asmi</td>
<td>eimi</td>
<td>sum</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asi</td>
<td>essi</td>
<td>es</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asti</td>
<td>esti</td>
<td>est</td>
<td>ist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Variability of languages
Language families are subdivided into smaller groups. However, there is consensus neither on granularity (number of levels) nor on terminology.

for instance:

*language family*

  — *language group (branch)*

  —— *language subgroup (subbranch)*

  ——— *individual language*
from Indo-European family to Czech:
- the Indo-European language family subsumes several groups, e.g. Germanic, Italic, Indo-Iranian, **Slavic** languages
- the group of Slavic languages is divided into the subgroups of East, South, and **West** Slavic languages
- the subgroup of West Slavic Languages involves **Czech**, Slovak, Polish etc.

the other way round:
- **individual language**: Czech
- **language subgroup**: West Slavic language
- **language group**: Slavic language
- **language family**: Indo-European
Slavic languages

Variability of languages
Language isolates

- natural languages that cannot be assigned to any language family
- assumed to be remnants of families
- e.g. Basque, Korean, Japanese
Areal classification

Languages that are geographically in contact may influence each other

- based on the regional location of languages
- without respect to their genetic classification
- speakers of the languages interact and influence each other
  - pronunciation
  - grammatical constructions
  - borrowing of words
Sprachbund

is a group of languages that are spoken in the same region and have developed similar features.
Balkan sprachbund

Greek, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Romanian, Albanian, Turkish etc.
  e.g. in spite of being genetically not related, the languages have developed postponement of articles as a common feature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>language</th>
<th>‘woman’ – ‘the woman’</th>
<th>‘man’ – ‘the man’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>жена – жената</td>
<td>мъж – мъжът</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>femeie – fememia</td>
<td>бărbat – бărbatul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>grua – gruaja</td>
<td>burre – burri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Variability of languages
Typological classification is based on the study of structural and functional features of languages.

- phonological features
- morphological features
- syntactic features
- word formation
- lexicon
Typological approach to phonology covers the following questions:
- How many vowels and consonants are used in the language?
- Which features do they have?
- How are syllable formed in the language?
- Which prosodic features are employed in the language?
Typological approach to morphology includes, for instance, the following questions:

- Are grammatical categories conveyed by morphemes, auxiliaries, and/or by word order?
- How many morphological cases are available in the language?
Typological approach to syntax:

- How are sentence elements ordered in a linear sequence (sentence)?
- Focus on three main elements: subject, verb, object
- The order of the elements analysed in simple indicative sentences
Examples of questions asked:
- How are things/abstract phenomena/actions named in a language?
- Which word-formation processes are available in a language to coin new words?
- How frequent are particular word-formation processes in a language?
• Examples of questions asked:
  • How are the same objects or actions named in particular languages?
  • – esp. body parts, colour terms, weather terms, motion verbs
  • What meanings can be expressed by a single word in the language?
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Available resources on the world’s languages

- linguistic description of languages for cross-linguistic research available
  - in printed publications
    -> see selected titles in References
  - in online resources
Online resources on the world’s languages

- Ethnologue: Languages of the World
  - http://www.ethnologue.com
  - http://wals.info
- APiCS – Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures
  - http://apics-online.info
- WOLD – The World Loanword Database
  - http://wold.clld.org
- for other resources see e.g.
  - http://www.linguistic-typology.org/resources.html
different approaches in individual resources
here, an example comparison of genetic classification with a focus on **Slavic languages** in

- *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*
Classification of languages in *Ethnologue*

- multiple-level classification of languages
  - language family
    - sub-family
    - group
    - subgroup
    - sub-subgroup
    - individual language

- classification of Slavic languages
  - Indo-European lang. family
    - Balto-Slavic sub-family
    - group: Slavic lang.
    - subgroups: East, South, West
    - e.g. sub-subgroups of South Slav. lang.: Eastern, West.
    - 20 Slavic languages in total
Classification of languages in \textit{WALS}

- three-level genetic classification of languages:
  - \textit{language family}
  - genus
  - individual language

- classification of \textbf{Slavic} languages:
  - Indo-European family
  - genus: Slavic languages
  - 17 individual Slavic languages in total
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnologue</th>
<th>WALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>Belorussian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>Bosnian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>Serbian-Croatian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovene</td>
<td>Slovene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>Czech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashubian</td>
<td>Kashubian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Sorbian</td>
<td>Lower Sorbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Sorbian</td>
<td>Upper Sorbian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ethnologue only:*
- Croatian
- Montenegrin
- Church Slavonic
- Slavomolisano
- Rusyn

*WALS only:*
- Sorbian
- Polabian
- Slovincian
A closer look: *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*

- a catalogue of languages
  - print and web publication
  - published by SIL International
    - “Summer Institute of Linguistics”
    - a Christian linguistic service organization studying and supporting lesser-known languages
- work in progress
  - 1st edition 1951
  - current edition: 21st edition 2018
    [http://www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)
7,097 descriptions of living languages
for each language
- multi-level genetic classification (cf. previous slides)
- number of L1 and L2 speakers
- list of dialects
- list of countries where the language is used
- basic typological information
  - inventory of phonemes, selected grammatical categories, basic syntactic information

>>> cf. the entry for Dutch on the next slide
A language of Netherlands

ISO 639-3  nld

Autonym  Hollands, Nederlands

Population  16,000,000 (European Commission 2012). Total users in all countries: 23,025,430.

Language Maps  Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands

Language Status  1 (National). De facto national language.

Classification  Indo-European, Germanic, West, Low Saxon-Low Franconian, Low Franconian

Dialects  Northern North Hollandish (Westfries). Belgian variety of Dutch (not Vlaams [vls]) only slightly different from that of the Netherlands.

Typology  SVO (OV in subordinate clauses); prepositions; noun head final; gender (common/neuter); definite and indefinite articles; passives (middle, active, passive); tense and aspect; comparatives; 21 consonants, 13 vowels, 3 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on first syllable.

Language Use  Most speakers of other languages are also fluent in Dutch. Most also use English [engl] (European Commission 2006), Standard German [deu] (European Commission 2006). Some also use French [fra] (European Commission 2006).


Language Resources  OLAC resources in and about Dutch

Writing  Braille script [Brai], used since 1951. Latin script [Latn], primary usage.

- database of phonological, grammatical and lexical properties of languages
  - obtained from reference grammars and other descriptive material
- 55 authors
  - Greville G. Corbett, Martin Haspelmath, Bernard Comrie, Matthew S. Dryer et al.
WALS editions

- 1st version 2005
  - book with CD-ROM, Oxford University Press
- 1st online version (*WALS Online*) 2008
  - a separate publication of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
- current version from 2013

http://wals.info
Linguistic features in *WALS*

- 144 features in total
  - structural properties of language that describe “one aspect of linguistic diversity”
  - concise linguistic description of each feature
  - 2 to 28 values of the feature
  - assigned to one of 11 areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phonology</th>
<th>nominal syntax</th>
<th>lexicon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>morphology</td>
<td>simple clauses</td>
<td>sign languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nominal categories</td>
<td>complex sentences</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbal categories</td>
<td>word order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- distribution of the feature values on the map
  >>>> see ex. on the next slide
WALS feature 33A: Coding of Nominal Plurality

Values

- Plural prefix: 126
- Plural suffix: 513
- Plural stem change: 6
- Plural tone: 4
- Plural complete reduplication: 8
- Mixed morphological plural: 60
- Plural word: 170
- Plural clitic: 81
- No plural: 98

Variability of languages
an entry for each language
  - name
  - geographical info
  - two-level genetic classification
    - language family and genus
      e.g. Dutch: Indo-European, Germanic
  - list of relevant features and their values

>> cf. the entry for Dutch on the next slide
### Language Dutch

**WALS code:** dut

Showing 1 to 89 of 89 entries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fid</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14A</td>
<td>No fixed stress</td>
<td>Fixed Stress Locations</td>
<td>Kager 1989; Trommelen and Zonneveld 1999a; van der Hulst 1984</td>
<td>Phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15A</td>
<td>Right-oriented: One of the</td>
<td>Weight-Sensitive Stress</td>
<td>Kager 1989; Trommelen and Zonneveld 1999a; van der Hulst 1984</td>
<td>Phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>last three</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16A</td>
<td>Coda consonant</td>
<td>Weight Factors in Weight-Sensitive</td>
<td>Kager 1989; Trommelen and Zonneveld 1999a; van der Hulst 1984</td>
<td>Phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17A</td>
<td>Trochaic</td>
<td>Rhythm Types</td>
<td>Kager 1989; Trommelen and Zonneveld 1999a; van der Hulst 1984</td>
<td>Phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26A</td>
<td>Strongly suffixing</td>
<td>Prefixing vs. Suffixing in</td>
<td>Koolhoven 1968;</td>
<td>Morphology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Located in:** Netherlands

**Coordinates:** WGS84 52°30’N, 6°E

52.50, 6.00

**Alternative names**

- **Ruhlen:** Dutch
- ** Routledge:** Netherlandic
- **Ethnologue:** Dutch

**Sources**

- Kager 1989; Trommelen and Zonneveld 1999a; van der Hulst 1984
- Koolhoven 1968;
References

other online resources:

- **APiCS – Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures.** Available online: http://apics-online.info
- **WOLD – The World Loanword Database.** Available online: http://wold.cldd.org
- https://www.linguisticsociety.org
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- https://www.omniglot.com
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