

## METHODS OF COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LANGUAGES

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**Annotation:** Comparative linguistics is a branch of linguistics that seeks to understand the relationships between languages by examining their similarities and differences. The core aim of this field is to reconstruct the history of languages, trace their development, and understand their evolution through time. By comparing linguistic features such as vocabulary, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, linguists can derive the genetic relationships between languages, identify common ancestral languages, and uncover the processes by which languages change. The methods used in comparative linguistics are diverse and range from traditional techniques like phonological comparison to modern computational approaches. In this essay, we will explore the primary methods of comparative study of languages: comparative reconstruction, internal reconstruction, lexical comparison, phonological comparison, morphological comparison, syntactic comparison, typological comparison, areal linguistics, historical linguistics, and statistical methods.

**Keywords:** comparative reconstruction, internal reconstruction, lexical comparison, phonological comparison, morphological comparison, syntactic comparison, typological comparison, areal linguistics, historical linguistics, and statistical methods.

**Annotatsiya:** Taqqosiy lingvistika – tillar o‘rtasidagi o‘xshashliklar va farqlarni o‘rganish orqali tillar o‘rtasidagi munosabatlarni tushunishga intiladigan lingvistika sohasidir. Ushbu sohaning asosiy maqsadi tillarning tarixini qayta tiklash, ularning rivojlanishini izlash va vaqt o‘tishi bilan ularning evolyutsiyasini tushunishdir. Lingvistik xususiyatlarni, masalan, lug‘at, fonologiya, morfologiya, sintaksis va semantika kabi, taqqoslash orqali lingvistlar tillar o‘rtasidagi genetik munosabatlarni aniqlash, umumiy ajdod tillarini aniqlash va tillarning qanday o‘zgarish jarayonlarini ochib berishlari mumkin. Taqqosiy lingvistika usullari xilma-xil bo‘lib, an’anaviy usullardan fonologik taqqoslashgacha va zamonaviy hisoblash yondashuvlarigacha bo‘lgan usullarni o‘z ichiga oladi. Ushbu maqolada biz tillarni taqqosiy o‘rganishning asosiy usullarini ko‘rib chiqamiz: taqqosiy qayta tiklash, ichki qayta tiklash, leksik taqqoslash, fonologik taqqoslash, morfologik taqqoslash, sintaktik taqqoslash, tipologik taqqoslash, maydon lingvistika, tarixiy lingvistika va statistik usullar.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** Qiyosiy rekonstruktsiya, ichki rekonstruktsiya, leksik taqqoslash, fonetik taqqoslash, morfologik taqqoslash, sintaktik taqqoslash, tipologik taqqoslash, areal tilshunoslik, tarixiy tilshunoslik va statistik usullar.



**Аннотация:** Сравнительное языкознание – это отрасль лингвистики, которая стремится понять взаимоотношения между языками, изучая их сходства и различия. Основная цель этой области – восстановить историю языков, проследить их развитие и понять их эволюцию во времени. Сравнивая такие языковые особенности, как словарный запас, фонология, морфология, синтаксис и семантика, лингвисты могут определить генетические связи между языками, выявить общие языки-предки и раскрыть процессы, в результате которых языки изменяются. Методы, используемые в сравнительной лингвистике, разнообразны и варьируются от традиционных техник, таких как фонологическое сравнение, до современных вычислительных подходов. В этом эссе мы рассмотрим основные методы сравнительного изучения языков: сравнительная реконструкция, внутренняя реконструкция, лексическое сравнение, фонологическое сравнение, морфологическое сравнение, синтаксическое сравнение, типологическое сравнение, ареальная лингвистика, историческая лингвистика и статистические методы.

**Ключевые слова:** сравнительная реконструкция, внутренняя реконструкция, лексическое сравнение, фонологическое сравнение, морфологическое сравнение, синтаксическое сравнение, типологическое сравнение, ареальная лингвистика, историческая лингвистика и статистические методы.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the central methods in comparative linguistics is comparative reconstruction, which involves using the data from related languages to infer features of a common ancestor language. This method relies on identifying cognates — words in different languages that share a common origin – and systematically comparing these cognates across languages within a language family. By doing so, linguists can reconstruct aspects of the proto-language, such as its phonological system, vocabulary, and even some aspects of its grammar.

For instance, through comparative reconstruction, scholars have been able to hypothesize the features of Proto-Indo-European (PIE), the reconstructed ancestor of the Indo-European language family, by comparing languages such as Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Slavic languages. These reconstructions are not always perfect but provide valuable insights into how languages have evolved and branched out from a common root.

While comparative reconstruction focuses on the relationships between different languages, internal reconstruction examines the historical changes within a single language. This method does not rely on data from other languages but instead looks at irregularities in the language’s present form. For example, irregular verb forms, sound changes, or inconsistencies in word usage may indicate earlier stages of the language.

By studying these irregularities, linguists can make inferences about how a language has developed over time. For example, internal reconstruction is often used to trace the history of Old English or other historical forms of a language, identifying

phonological changes or shifts in morphology that reveal earlier stages of the language.

Lexical comparison is a foundational method in comparative linguistics, focusing on the vocabulary of languages. By comparing the lexicon (i.e., the words) of related languages, linguists can identify cognates that indicate shared origins and thereby establish relationships between languages. Lexical comparison often forms the first step in establishing a genetic connection between languages and can provide valuable information about the culture and history of a language community.

For example, the English word "mother" is cognate with the German "Mutter," the Latin "mater," and the Sanskrit "mātr." By comparing such cognates across languages, linguists can trace the common linguistic ancestry of these languages and understand their historical connections.

The study of phonological comparison involves analyzing the sound systems of languages, comparing how consonants, vowels, and other phonological features have changed over time. This method focuses on identifying regular sound correspondences between languages and examining how phonemes have evolved in different linguistic contexts.

A key tool in phonological comparison is the identification of sound laws, such as Grimm's Law, which explains systematic consonant shifts in the Germanic languages. For example, the PIE *p* sound became *f* in Germanic languages (e.g., PIE *pater* became English "father"). By identifying these shifts, linguists can track the historical development of languages and the relationships between them.

Morphological comparison examines the structure of words, including how words are formed through affixes (prefixes, suffixes), inflections, and derivational processes. Comparing the morphological systems of related languages can provide insights into how these systems evolved over time. In the case of inflected languages like Latin, Greek, or Sanskrit, morphological comparison is particularly useful in tracing the development of case systems, verb conjugations, and noun declensions.

For example, Latin's inflectional system (nouns changing form based on case and number) can be compared to its descendants like French, Spanish, and Italian, which have simplified or lost many of these inflectional markers over time.

Syntactic comparison focuses on the structure of sentences and the rules governing word order, phrase structure, and grammatical relations within sentences. By comparing the syntactic structures of related languages, linguists can identify shared syntactic features, which may indicate a common linguistic ancestry or demonstrate the influence of language contact.

An example of syntactic comparison might involve comparing the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order in English with subject-object-verb (SOV) word order in languages like Japanese or Hindi. Identifying these syntactic differences and similarities can reveal not only how languages are related but also the typological features that set them apart.

Typological comparison looks at linguistic features across unrelated languages to identify common patterns or types. This approach does not focus on language relationships but instead seeks to classify languages according to the types of



grammatical structures they exhibit. Typological linguistics is particularly interested in universal features like the presence of noun cases, vowel harmony, word order patterns, or tense-aspect systems.

For example, Finnish (Uralic) and Turkish (Turkic) are unrelated languages, but both exhibit vowel harmony in their phonological systems. Typological comparison is valuable for identifying universal linguistic features that may arise independently in different linguistic environments.

Areal linguistics, also known as contact linguistics, studies the influence of language contact on the development of languages. When languages are spoken in the same geographic region for extended periods, they may influence each other in terms of vocabulary, phonology, and syntax. This type of linguistic borrowing can result in languages sharing features that are not genetically related.

For example, the influence of Arabic on languages like Spanish and Portuguese during the period of Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula is an example of areal linguistics. Despite these languages belonging to different families (Romance and Semitic), they share a number of lexical items and syntactic structures due to centuries of contact.

Historical linguistics is a broader field that incorporates many of the methods mentioned above. It examines how languages change over time, looking at sound changes, grammatical evolution, and the historical development of languages. Historical linguists rely on comparative and internal reconstruction to track the stages of language development and understand the processes of linguistic change.

The study of the history of the English language, for example, involves examining Old English, Middle English, and Modern English to trace their transformation from a Germanic to a largely Romance-influenced language.

In recent years, statistical methods and computational linguistics have become increasingly important in comparative linguistics. By using algorithms and statistical models, linguists can analyze large corpora of data across multiple languages to detect patterns, relationships, and historical developments that would be difficult to identify manually. These methods can help in constructing language family trees, studying the evolution of phonetic features, and even predicting language changes.

For example, computational methods have been used to analyze sound changes across Indo-European languages and to map the diffusion of language features across geographic areas.

## CONCLUSION

The methods of comparative study of languages offer valuable tools for understanding the historical, structural, and typological aspects of human language. Through techniques such as comparative and internal reconstruction, lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic comparison, linguists can trace the evolution of languages, uncover their genetic relationships, and explore how languages change over time. The field of comparative linguistics continues to evolve with the advent of computational tools, expanding our ability to analyze vast amounts of linguistic data and uncover patterns that were once difficult to discern. Ultimately,

these methods contribute to a deeper understanding of human language, its diversity, and its common origins.

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