

**METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFICATION
OF DEGREES OF LANGUAGE AFFINITY IN LINGUISTIC
COMPARATIVE AND MACRO-COMPARATIVE STUDIES**

(According to the Version of S.A. Burlak and S.A. Starostin)

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Actuality of attention on the concept of “affinity”, which remains one of the key not only for Comparative (L.P. Dronova, A.V. Korolyova, V.V. Ivanov et al.), but also for Macro Comparative (A. Bomhard, A. B. Dolgopolsky, VM Ilyich-Svitych) Studies is obvious, because its study enables to provide hypothetical assumptions about the place of a particular language in the genealogical classification, to find out its language-ancestor (Proto-Language), etc., and, consequently, trace the theoretical and methodological operations of the comparative scholar-etymologist, which provides reconstruction to separate language groups, language families, as well as a macro-comparative scholar-etymologist, who tries to “prove” distant language affinity between / among separate language families, in turn, depending on the data of every separate language family. Of course, it is important to establish an approximate diachronic limit, to which the etymologist refers. We will try to clarify the definitions of the concept of “language affinity” and find out its degrees, special for Linguistic Comparative and Macro-Comparative Studies.

At one time, A. Maye, the scholar of classical comparative studies, assumed that “those two languages are considered to have affinity which are the result of two different evolutions of the same language that was used before” [8, p. 50]. If *affined languages* are different time and spatial variants of the same continuous linguistic tradition, then the *affinity of languages* is a material closeness between two or among more languages, which is manifested in the sound correspondence of language elements of different levels [1, c. 16]. Due to this fact, E.A. Makayev said that the notion of “language affinity” requires specification and revision [3, p.

5, 18–19; 4, p. 50–57], because it is the key concept for Comparative-Historical Linguistics [6], “without which the genetic classification of languages, the reconstruction of the Proto-Language and almost any study of the history of languages are impossible.” S.A. Starostin adds that “the term “language affinity” itself, as a rule, is not explicated, but is accepted as a given” [5, p. 779].

In the course of linguistics A.Ya. Shaykevich presents the distinction between the *ontological approach* to language affinity: “*affined languages* are different time and spatial variants of the same continuous linguistic tradition” [7, p. 198]) and *gnoseological approach*, i.e. the evidence of language affinity. It is possible to show the fact of language affinity only on the ontological approach, only when the parable of the studied languages is certified by written monuments and it is possible to trace the history of its development into the modern language(s). But such cases are not known so much. In most cases, language inheritance and affinity require substantiation, and hence, the procedural (gnoseological, according to A.Ya. Shaykevych) is necessary for the determination of language affinity [6].

S.A. Starostin [5] provides various definitions of scholars about understanding the essence of *language affinity*: 1) in Lehman: “comparing different languages has led to the assumption that some languages are related, because they develop from a common source” [9, p. 6]; 2) in Trask (on the example of the Romance languages): “we are talking about the fact that Romance languages are genetically related, which means that they all began to emerge as nothing else than regional dialects of a single native language” [11, p. 179]; 3) in Ruhlen: “genetic classifications [...] allow tracing the genealogy of the language family from the parent language to the daughter language” [10, p. 2]. The scholar suggests that the above-mentioned definitions outline not only *the concept of genealogical tree*, but also *the concept of language divergence* as one of the key models of historical development of language. Therefore, in spite of the fact that “this model has been challenged in a number of works, it is undoubtedly universally accepted, as well as the absolute majority of linguistic classifications are constructed precisely in this way” [5, p. 779]. In this case, the position of E.A. Makayev is as follows: “in the case of

language affinity, it is necessary to speak about the presence of a certain set of general structural features in the languages of a certain area, common only in terms of content, which makes it impossible and simply meaningless to summarize these general structural features to any source state” [2, p. 69].

S.A. Burlak and S.A. Starostin singles out different degrees of language affinity. First of all, we propose to consider the degrees of language affinity, special for Linguistic Comparative Studies.

The most obvious affinity is language identity, i.e. the awareness of the identity of the language. In this case, specific varieties of language (“idioms”) may almost completely coincide, but may differ somewhat, forming dialects. The most characteristic feature of such idioms is a fairly free understanding of the carriers. From the lexicostatistical point of view, it can be argued that related dialects usually have more than 95% of coincidences in the basic vocabulary. The relationship between the dialects (and idiolects) within one language can be called **trivial**.

The language affinity in families such as Slavic, Germanic and Turkic are not of necessity of special proof: it is, as a rule, obvious for the speakers of the respective languages themselves. Even in the absence of mutual understanding, carriers recognize a large number of common words and know that their languages are “close”. The experience of lexicostatistics shows that with such a relationship, languages usually have about 70% of lexical coincidences and more. Such affinity is called **significant**.

As a rule, the language affinity in the profound families – Indo-European, North Caucasian, Uralic, Sino-Tibetan, etc. – is not obvious for carriers. Lexicostatistics shows that in such families the percentage of lexical coincidences between the descendant languages is 15–30%. Those who speak Russian do not perceive German or Persian as “close”. However, specialists in the language history of the existence of families such as the Indo-European or the Urals, as a rule, do not cause doubts (although periodically there are critical discussions). Such affinity is called **conventional**.

In studios of Linguistic Macro-Comparative Studies, the attention is focused on the language affinity at the level of specific two or more language families, where the percentage of correspondences between modern languages is about 5–10%. This is the most difficult case, and the hypotheses of such affinity cause the profound split among the comparative scholars. The fact is that at this level of affinity it is already much harder to establish correspondences and to distinguish real correspondences from random ones, and it is here that the most important thing is to have a strict procedure for establishing a language affinity. Such affinity is called **distant**.

In conclusions, it should be noted that: if affined languages are different time and spatial variants of the same continuous linguistic tradition, then the language affinity is the material closeness of two or more languages, which is manifested in the sound correspondences of the linguistic elements of different levels. If Linguistic Comparative Studies are characterized by a trivial, notable, conventional affinity, the Macro-Comparative Studies – by distant.

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