

GENEALOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGES: LANGUAGE FAMILIES
AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract. This article examines the genealogical classification of languages, highlighting their division into groups based on origin. It explores the relationships between languages, noting that related languages, sharing a common root, are united into a single language family. The main language families discussed include Indo-European, Turkic, Finno-Ugric, Caucasian, and Sino-Tibetan, with an emphasis on their distinctive features. The primary objective of the article is to demonstrate the role of genealogical classification in linguistics and to highlight the differences between language families.

Keywords: genealogical, classification, related, language, families, types, characteristics

Introduction. The genealogical classification of languages is the branch of linguistics that studies the origin, historical development, and relationships between languages. Although each language possesses its own phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features, some languages share a common root and exhibit similarities. Based on these connections, languages are grouped into language families.

The world's languages are numerous and diverse, having developed over time in different regions. Studying language families helps deepen our understanding of human culture, the history of peoples, and linguistics itself. For example, the Indo-European language family is one of the most widespread in the world, encompassing many individual languages, while the Turkic languages are widely spoken in Central Asia and neighboring regions, characterized by unique phonetic and grammatical features. Therefore, the study of language families and their characteristics is important not only for understanding the origin and development of languages but also for international communication, intercultural dialogue, and language learning.

Main Part. The genealogical classification groups languages according to their common origin, identifying which languages are related to each other. This classification takes into account words, affixes, and other grammatical features, dividing languages into specific groups based on these criteria. In genealogical classification, the origin of grouped languages, the emergence and source of their vocabulary, and their semantic proximity are considered, along with similarities in phonetics and affixes. This approach allows linguists to trace historical relationships and connections among languages more accurately¹. In the genealogical classification of languages, the hierarchy of language family → group → subgroup → individual language is considered conditional. This is because a deeper study of genetic relationships between languages may lead to a revised classification. Currently, the world's languages are estimated to belong to approximately two hundred language families, of which 22 are found in Eurasia (Europe and Asia), around 20 in Africa, and the remaining families are distributed across

¹ Sharipova O', Yo'ldoshev I. Tilshunoslik asoslari. TDPU, 2006, –B. 84-86.



the Americas, Australia, and New Guinea². The history of the development of languages worldwide demonstrates that linguistic boundaries do not necessarily coincide with tribal, ethnic, racial, or territorial boundaries. For example, in the United States, people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds—such as English and French (Caucasian), Chinese (Mongoloid), and African American (Black)—live together. Nevertheless, the majority of these populations communicate primarily in English. Similarly, in India, more than 70 languages are spoken, while in China, over 30 languages are in use. In Central Asia, communities speak Uzbek, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Russian, Arabic, Persian, and other languages. The richness of language is not determined by race, whether white, yellow, or black. Thus, genealogical classification groups related languages based on their historical development from a common ancestral language. It considers their mutual relationships, meanings of words, grammatical structures, and the similarities and proximities of speech sounds when organizing languages into families and subgroups³. The emergence of the genealogical classification of languages is closely associated with the development of comparative-historical linguistics. In some sources, the term “*genealogical classification of languages*” is also referred to as “*tree (or dendritic) classification of languages*”⁴. At present, based on historical studies, the following language families have been identified as consisting of related languages:

1. Indo-European Language Family:

In these languages, words change their form through affixes or modifications. Indo-European languages are used widely across Europe, large parts of Asia, and many countries around the world. Related languages share a significant number of words with similar roots. According to A.A. Reformatskiy, this group includes more than 96 living languages. Among them are Hindi and Urdu (sometimes collectively referred to as “Indo-Aryan” in certain sources). Hindi is the official language of India and is written using the ancient Devanagari script. Urdu, the official language of Pakistan, is based on the Arabic script and encompasses several dialects, including Punjabi, Lahnda, Dalendi, Sindhi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, Bihari, Oriya (Odri/Utikali in Eastern India), Assamese, Kashmiri, and others.

2. Turkic Language Family:

In Turkic languages, affixes are added sequentially, with each affix expressing a single meaning. Words in Turkic languages do not mark gender (male/female). Lexical similarities are strong, with many words appearing in similar forms across all Turkic languages. There are five or more case forms. The root of a word remains largely unchanged, while its meaning expands through affixes. Languages in this family include Azerbaijani (Ottoman Turkish), Turkmen, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tatar (Kazan Tatar), Uyghur, Chuvash, Bashkir, Yakut, Karakalpak, and Tuvan.

Mongolic Languages: The Mongolic group includes Khalkha Mongolian, Buryat, and Kalmyk.

Tungusic-Manchu Languages: This group includes Evenki, as well as Manchu languages such as Manchu and Nanai⁵.

3. Finno-Ugric Language Family:

The Finno-Ugric language family is traditionally divided into two main groups: the Ugric languages and the Finnic languages. Each of these groups is further subdivided as follows: Ugric Languages: Hungarian (Magyar), Mansi, Khanty. Finnic Languages: Finnish, Estonian, Komi-Permyak, Komi-Zyryan, Udmurt, Mari. Additionally, Erzya and Moksha-Izhora are also classified under the Finnic group.

² Abduazizov A.A. Tilshunoslik nazariyasiga kirish. Toshkent, Sharq, 2010, –B.117.

³ Sharipova O', Yo'ldoshev I. Tilshunoslik asoslari. TDP, 2006, –B. 156.

⁴ Uluqov N. Tilshunoslik nazariyasi. Toshkent, Barkamol fayz mediya, 2016. –B.43

⁵ Muhammedova S. Tilshunoslik Asoslari. Toshkent, MCHI, 2021. –B.43



5. Sino-Tibetan Language Family:

One of the most distinctive features of Sino-Tibetan languages is their use of tones. In Chinese, there are 4–5 primary tones, while in Tibetan, Burmese, and other related languages, tones also play a crucial role. Incorrect pronunciation of tones can lead to changes in meaning. However, the process of word formation is highly productive, with new words created by combining multiple morphemes. The Chinese language has the largest number of native speakers in the world. It is one of the ancient languages and possesses a rich written heritage. There are numerous dialects within Chinese. The standard literary language is based on the Northern (Mandarin) dialect, which is considered the dialect of the capital, Beijing. For several thousand years—from approximately the 1st millennium BCE to the 20th century CE—the Wenyan (Classical Chinese) dialect served as the written language. During this period, the Baihua dialect also began to develop as a vernacular literary language. Modern Standard Chinese (Putonghua) is based on the Baihua dialect⁶.

Summary:

The study of language families provides insights into the history of peoples and nations. Genealogical classification of ancient languages examines where languages originated, which languages are closely related, and how they have developed. Although each language is unique, some languages share a common root and exhibit similarities, which is why they are grouped into language families. Major language families such as Indo-European, Turkic, Finno-Ugric, Caucasian, and Sino-Tibetan are distinguished by their phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features and provide more information about cultural and social connections. Similar words and shared grammatical structures among related languages indicate a common origin. Today, genealogical classification is essential for language learning, translation, intercultural communication, and scientific research. Grouping languages into families helps to study, compare, and develop them more effectively. In conclusion, genealogical classification is a scientific method that plays a crucial role in organizing world languages, understanding their history, and identifying similarities and differences between them.

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⁶ Muhammedova S. Tilshunoslik Asoslari. Toshkent, MCHI, 2021. –B.43

