

Yuri Tambovtsev, Novosibirsk Pedagogical University, Novosibirsk.

yutamb@mail.ru

Typological Distances between Lithuanian and some Slavonic Languages on Phonetic Level.

The goal of this paper is to measure the phono-typological distances between Lithuanian and some Slavonic languages. In this case, these distances are calculated on the basis of the mathematical statistical criterion called Chi-criterion. In fact, the sound picture of Polish is compared to several Slavonic languages in order to understand how typical it is. In a language group some languages are more typical and some are less typical for it (Tambovtsev, 1986). The method which we invented and developed is supposed to check the distances between the languages taken for the investigation on phonetic level. The value of the distances indicates how similar these languages. The more similar the languages, the less the distances. The more similar the languages in a taxon, the greater its compactness (Tambovtsev, 2004). The great value of dispersion in a language taxon means that the languages in it are not similar (Tambovtsev, 2006). The sound picture of the language is the total of the frequency of occurrence of the elements of the speech sound chain in this language.

We computed the frequency of occurrence of speech sounds in some Slavonic (Russian, Belorussian, Serbo-Croatian, Sorbian, Macedonian, Slovene) languages, but the data on the other languages were taken from the publications (see the details in Tambovtsev, 2001).

The data on the frequency of occurrence of Lithuanian were obtained by B.I. Svecevichus and A. Girdeinis. Their material of folklore and dialogues and the phonemic frequency of occurrence united in 9 different groups are discussed elsewhere (Tambovtsev, 2001: 67 – 69). The Latvian data were received by Z. Baikov, E. Kuzina, A. Lorenz, Z. Nesaule, E. Piel and T. Jakubaitis. We united all their data in one sample to obtain the sound picture of Latvian (see the details in Tambovtsev, 2001: 64 – 67).

Lithuanian and the other Baltic language – Latvian, may give a good clue to the phonetic language closeness. The distance between Lithuanian and Latvian comprised 6.45. The distances between Lithuanian and some other languages may serve as a standard of the distance. This is why, we must calculate the phono-typological distances between Lithuanian and some other languages. It is a common place to say that Baltic languages (Lithuanian and Latvian) used to belong to the so-called Balto-Slavonic language community. Thus, first of all, it is advisable to verify, how close the Lithuanian language is to the Slavonic languages, especially Old

Russian. The typological distance between Polish and Lithuanian is 24,62. Is this distance big or small?

We received the following ordered series of the distances between Lithuanian and some other languages on the basis of 9 phonetical features (TMB coefficient): 1)Belorussian – 1.92; 2)Old Russian – 2.84; 3)Ukrainian – 3.64; 4)Russian – 6.07; 5)Czech – 6.14; 6)Latvian – 6.45; 7)Slovenian – 7.46; 8)Slovak – 12.99; 9)Macedonian – 17.11; 10)Sorbian – 18.22; 11)Bulgarian – 19.64; 12)Polish – 24.62; 13)Serbo-Croatian – 25.66.

One can see that the phono-typological distance between Lithuanian and Latvian (6.45) is greater than between Lithuanian and some Slavonic languages (c.f. Belorussian, Old Russian, Ukrainian, Russian and Czech). The closeness between Lithuanian and Slavonic languages may be ascribed to the common Balto-Slavonic language unity. It is believed that Slavonic and Baltic languages have the same Balto-Slavonic proto-language. Some linguists think that the Baltic and Slavonic tribes lived together and had very similar languages. Their languages were so similar that they could understand each other all right (Ambrazas et. al., 1966: 502).

The greater closeness of Lithuanian to Belorussian may be explained by the intensive contacts between them in the frame of the ancient Belorussian-Lithuanian common state. Krivitskij A.A., Mihnevich A.E., Podluzhnyj A.I. and other Belorussian linguists underline that in this common Belorussian – Lithuanian kingdom all the books were written in the Belorussian language. The upper crust of the feudal society of this kingdom spoke Belorussian because it was fashionable. The Belorussian language was used as the only language for teaching at schools. Before that the Belorussian tribes assimilated the Letto-Lithuanian tribes of the Jatv'ags (Krivitskij et al., 1973: 6-7).

References:

Ambrazas et. al., 1966 – Ambrazas V., Vajtk'avichute V., Val'atskene V., Morkunas K., Sabal'auskas A., Ul'vidas K. Litovskij jazyk. - In: Jazyki narodov SSSR. T.1. Indoevropskie jazyki. - Moskva: Nauka, 1966, p. 500-527.

Krivitskij et al., 1973 – Krivitskij A.A., Mihnevich A.E., Podluzhnyj A.I. Belorusskij jazyk dl'a nebelorussov. - Minsk: Vysshaja shkola, 1973.

Tambovtsev, 1986 – Tambovtsev Yu.A. Review. Arakin V.D. Sopostavitel'naja tipologija skandinavskix jazykov. - M., 1984, 136p. - In: Language, V.62, N2, 1986, p.459.

Tambovtsev, 2001 – Yuri Tambovtsev. Kompendium osnovnyh statisticheskikh harakteristik funkcionirovanija soglasnyh fonem v zvukovoj

tsepochke anglijskogo, nemetskogo, frantsuzskogo I drugih indoevropskih jazykov. - Novosibirsk: Novosibirskij Klassicheskij Institut. - 129 pages.

Tambovtsev, 2004 – Tambovtsev, Yuri. Uralic Language Taxon: Natural or Artificial? (Typological Compactness of Uralic Languages and other Language Taxons: Branches, Subgroups, Groups, Families and Superfamilies). - In: Fenno-Ugristica, # 26, 2004 (Tartu, Estonia), p. 200 – 233.

Tambovtsev, 2006 - Tambovtsev, Yuri. Degrees of Dispersion of Various Language Taxa as the Index of Their Typological Similarity. - In: Favete Linguis. Studies in Honour of Viktor Krupa. - Bratislava: Institute of Oriental Studies of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2006, p. 219 – 260.