

## **Areal effects on Slavic morphosyntax**

**Intro:** This paper pursues the question: Why are Slavic languages the way they are? While we are not in the position to provide for an exhaustive account of causal factors that have conditioned the development of Slavic into modern Slavic languages, the modest goal of this paper is to provide evidence for the claim that macroareal pressures are an important causal factor that shaped the development of Slavic.

Importantly, on the areal approach to causal explanations, a clear-cut separation between areal innovations and areal retentions of inherited structures and, thus, the traditional separation between genetic and areal factors conditioning the shape of a language is not meaningful. More generally, areal explanations will not be viewed here as complementary to the genealogical explanations. I argue that retentions of inherited properties need not be historically accidental, inert processes but may be conditioned by areal pressures.

Despite considerable intragenealogical variation, Slavic languages share a large amount of linguistic material that comprises all domains of grammar and lexicon. However, the question about why these languages share precisely this specific set of features is not trivial at all. For example, one may wonder why the old, Indo-European middle morphology was entirely abandoned in Slavic while it is still retained in Modern Greek, for example, or, why the old Indo-European perfect still found with *věd-ě* [know-1PERF.SG] ‘I know’ in the earliest Old Church Slavonic documents was entirely lost in Slavic while, for example, Germanic languages generalized it as the only past-tense form.

The present paper seeks to identify causal factors constraining the dynamics of particular morphosyntactic categories of Slavic. It claims that the modern inventory of Slavic languages is not simply a result of accumulation of historically accidental changes and non-changes. Instead, it is argued that macroareal pressures constrained by the geographic location and the particular language-contact configuration determine the selection of inherited features for either retention or loss and, subsequently, innovation.

**Data:** I provide evidence from two (morpho)syntactic categories: (i) verbal person-number indexes (subject agreement markers) and (ii) partitivity markers (cf. Russian *odin iz nix*). I rely on the respective databases: (i) a database on the dynamics of indexes, comprising 153 languages of Eurasia from 6 families (Indo-European, Dravidian, Semitic, Turkic, Uralic and Tibeto-Burman (only Kiranti and Gyalrongic)), including the main Slavic languages; (ii) a database on partitives, comprising 138 languages from all macroareas. I furthermore rely on the data published in WALS (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013).

**Results:** (i) I compare the dynamics of indexes across the languages. I show that the development of subject indexes in Slavic was not accidental and that Slavic languages match into a larger degree a major areal cline. Furthermore (ii), I also compare the changes in the coding of partitives in Slavic with the macroareal trends and, again, show that the development of the new partitivity markers in Slavic languages very much fit into the major areal trend.

## **References**

Dryer, Matthew S. & Haspelmath, Martin, eds., 2013. *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. (Available online at <http://wals.info>, Accessed on 2021-11-01.)