CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Languages of the World

What do all human languages have in common and in what ways are they different? How can language be used to trace different peoples and their past? Are certain languages similar because of common descent or language contact? Assuming no prior knowledge of linguistics, this textbook introduces readers to the rich diversity of human languages, familiarizing students with the variety and typology of languages around the world. Linguistic terms and concepts are explained, in the text and in the glossary, and illustrated with simple, accessible examples. Eighteen language maps and numerous language family charts enable students to place a language geographically or genealogically. A supporting website includes additional language maps and sound recordings that can be used to illustrate the peculiarities of the sound systems of various languages. "Test yourself" questions throughout the book make it easier for students to analyze data from unfamiliar languages. This book includes fascinating demographic, social, historical, and geographical information about languages and the people who speak them.

ASYA PERELTSVAIG is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at Stanford University.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Languages of the World

An Introduction

ASYA PERELTSVAIG

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521175777

© Asya Pereltsvaig 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2012
7th printing 2015

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Pereltsvaig, Asya, 1972–
Languages of the world : an introduction / Asya Pereltsvaig.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-00278-4 (hardback)
1. Language and languages – Study and teaching. 2. Multilingualism. I. Title.
P53.P4443 2012
417′.7 – dc23 2011041738

ISBN 978-1-107-00278-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-17577-7 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/pereltsvaig

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

To my mother, Freyda Pereltsvayg, ז"ל

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

List of figures *page ix*
List of maps *x*
List of tables *xi*
Words, words, words . . . *xiii*
Acknowledgements *xv*
Abbreviations used in the glosses *xvi*

1 Introduction 1
1.1 Languages, dialects and accents 4
1.2 Language families 7
1.3 Linguistic diversity 11

2 Indo-European languages 13
2.1 Discovery of the Indo-European family and comparative reconstruction 13
2.2 The Indo-European controversy 21
2.3 The Indo-European realm 27
2.4 Focus on: Lesser-known Indo-European languages 32

3 Non-Indo-European languages of Europe and India 39
3.1 Finno-Ugric languages 39
3.2 Basque 48
3.3 Dravidian languages 52
3.4 Focus on: Universals and the parametric theory of language 56

4 Languages of the Caucasus 64
4.1 Northwest Caucasian languages 66
4.2 Northeast Caucasian languages 67
4.3 Kartvelian languages 73
4.4 Indo-European languages in the Caucasus 77
4.5 Focus on: Field linguistics 81

5 Languages of Northern Africa, Middle East and Central Asia 86
5.1 Turkic languages 86
5.2 Semitic languages 92
5.3 Focus on: Language contact 99

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

6 Languages of sub-Saharan Africa 105
6.1 Nilo-Saharan languages 106
6.2 Niger-Congo languages 109
6.3 Khoisan languages 117
6.4 Focus on: Official languages, trade languages and creole languages in sub-Saharan Africa 120

7 Languages of eastern Asia 124
7.1 Sino-Tibetan languages 124
7.2 Austro-Asiatic languages 132
7.3 Tai-Kadai languages 136
7.4 Focus on: Isolating morphology and language change 139

8 Languages of the South Sea Islands 143
8.1 The Austronesian realm 143
8.2 The Austronesian prototype 146
8.3 The Polynesian controversy 155
8.4 Focus on: The mystery of Malagasy 160

9 Aboriginal languages of Australia and Papua New Guinea 166
9.1 Languages of Papua New Guinea 168
9.2 Languages of Australia 173
9.3 Focus on: Is Dyirbal a primitive language? 177

10 Native languages of the Americas 183
10.1 Languages of North America 184
10.2 Languages of Meso-America 194
10.3 Languages of South America 197
10.4 Focus on: The Pirahã controversy 201

11 Macro families 205
11.1 Afroasiatic languages 205
11.2 Uralic languages 209
11.3 Altaic languages 211
11.4 The Nostratic and Eurasiatic hypotheses 218
11.5 Other hypothesized macro language families 225

12 Pidgins, creoles and other mixed languages 230
12.1 Pidgins 231
12.2 Creoles 237
12.3 Mixed Jewish languages 244

Glossary 254
References 260
Index of languages 271
Index of terms 277

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Figures

1.1 Partial tree of family relationships amongst Indo-European languages. *page* 9
2.1 Branches within the Indo-European language family. 30
3.1 Partial tree of the Finno-Ugric language family. 42
3.2 The Finno-Ugric language family. 47
3.3 The nominative–accusative case system of Latin and the ergative–absolutive case system of Basque. 51
4.1 The Northeast Caucasian language family. 68
4.2 The Mxedruli alphabet. 73
5.1 The Turkic language family. 88
5.2 The Semitic language family. 96
5.3 Wiki subjects in Maltese. 101
6.1 The Niger-Congo language family. 110
7.1 The cycle of morphological type change. 140
8.1 The Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family (simplified). 148
11.1 Pedersen's Nostratic proposal. 219
11.2 Illyč-Svityč and Dolgopolsky's Nostratic proposal. 221
11.3 Greenberg's Eurasiatic proposal. 222
11.4 Nostratic vs. Eurasiatic. 223
11.5 Eurasiatic as a branch of Nostratic. 224
11.6 Starostin's Dené-Caucasian hypothesis. 226
11.7 The Sino-Austric hypothesis. 226

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Maps

2.1	Indo-European languages of Europe.	*page* 28
2.2	Indo-European languages of Asia.	29
3.1	Non-Indo-European languages of Europe.	40
3.2	Finno-Ugric languages.	41
3.3	Dravidian languages.	53
4.1	Languages of the Caucasus.	65
5.1	Turkic languages.	87
5.2	Semitic languages.	92
6.1	Languages of sub-Saharan Africa.	106
6.2	Languages of Western Africa.	107
6.3	Languages of Southern Africa.	107
7.1	Languages of eastern Asia.	125
8.1	Austronesian languages.	144
9.1	Languages of Papua New Guinea.	169
9.2	Languages of Australia.	174
10.1	Languages of North America.	185
10.2	Languages of Meso-America.	195
10.3	Languages of South America.	198

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Tables

2.1 James Parsons' list of cognate numerals (abridged). *page* 14
2.2 Numerals 1–10 in unrelated languages. 15
2.3 Partial paradigm of Sanskrit and Latin cases. 16
2.4 English and Latin cognates. 18
2.5 Pronunciation of cognates in several Romance languages. 18
2.6 Some cognates in English, Latin, Greek and Irish. 19
2.7 Case forms of the word for 'wolf' in several Indo-European languages. 21
2.8 Romani, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi numerals. 36
3.1 Central European numerals. 41
3.2 Some Finno-Ugric cognates. 42
3.3 Additional Hungarian/Finnish cognates. 43
3.4 Ugric numerals. 46
3.5 Numbers in Dravidian languages and Bengali. 54
4.1 Location and direction case markers in Avar. 72
4.2 Location and direction case markers in Lezgin. 72
4.3 Case forms of the noun *kali* 'woman' in Georgian. 76
4.4 Subject and object agreement markers in Georgian. 77
4.5 Cognates in Ossetian and other Indo-European languages. 78
4.6 Talysh and Persian cognates. 80
5.1 Cognates in several Turkic languages. 89
5.2 Cognates in Semitic languages. 95
5.3 Cognates in Uzbek and some other Turkic languages. 103
6.1 Noun classes in Swahili. 115
6.2 Symbols for click sounds in Khoisan. 119
7.1 Tones in Mandarin. 129
7.2 Tones in Cantonese. 129
7.3 Tones in Vietnamese. 134
7.4 Tones in Thai. 137
8.1 Cognates in Western and Eastern Malayo-Polynesian. 146
8.2 Numerals in Austronesian. 147
8.3 Some Polynesian cognates. 149
8.4 Some cognates in Malagasy and Ma'anyan. 163

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

9.1 Noun classes in Dyirbal. 179
11.1 Cognate consonantal roots in Afroasiatic. 208
11.2 Proposed cognates in Altaic. 213
11.3 Proposed cognates between Altaic, Korean and Japanese. 216
11.4 Proposed Nostratic cognates. 221

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Words, words, words …

Words are often the first thing that fascinate us about a language, whether our own or a more exotic one. The words on the cover of this book are those that at some point have captivated me. Some of these words have exquisite, intriguing or plain weird meanings; others mesmerize by their beautiful or otherwise unusual sound or attract by the look of their orthography.

Among the words with beautiful meanings are the Brazilian Portuguese *cafuné* meaning 'to soothe someone by tenderly running one's fingers through their hair'; my mother used to do that and this book is dedicated to her memory. Similarly delicate is the Japanese word (儚い) (pronounced [hakanai]) which refers to 'something that, in its ephemeral nature, reminds you of how short and beautiful life is, for example, cherry blossoms' (more on Japanese in Chapter 11).

Two words with heart-warming meanings made my list: the Dutch *gezelligheid* 'time spent with loved ones in a cozy atmosphere of togetherness' and the Yiddish מאַמעלאָשן (pronounced [mame′loshen]) meaning literally 'mother tongue' but referring most often specifically to Yiddish itself. In addition to being the speakers' native tongue, Yiddish was literally the language of mothers, while fathers prayed and traded in Hebrew (more on Yiddish in Chapter 12).

And some words have a meaning I wish we could express in English but a good translation is sorely lacking: one example of this is the Scots word *kilfuddoch* meaning roughly 'a meeting and discussion' but then also so much more (Scots is discussed in Chapter 2).

Other words fascinate me not so much by their meaning but by the way the meaning derives from the parts of the word. Take, for example, the Tok Pisin word *manmeri* 'people': it is composed from two parts, *man* (from the similar-sounding English word) plus *meri* from the English *Mary*, extended in Tok Pisin to mean all women, regardless of their name (I discuss Tok Pisin in Chapter 12). Or consider the Russian word *лоботряс* (pronounced [laba′trjas]), which comes from the words *lob* 'forehead' and *trjasti* 'shake' and means 'a lazy person, a do-nothing' – I hope you are not such a person and will read this book!

There are also words with beautiful or peculiar sound to them. One of my favorite examples is the Hebrew word בקבוק meaning 'bottle'. It is pronounced [baq′buq]; say it over and over again and it sounds like wine being poured from a bottle, doesn't it? (Turn to Chapter 5 for a further discussion of Hebrew.)

But perhaps the most strange sounds that have captivated the popular imagination in recent years are the click sounds, found in languages of southern Africa.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

To illustrate, here is a Xhosa word *ukúk!^{h}ola* meaning 'perfume': the sound represented here as k!^{h} is a voiceless aspirated alveopalatal click (now, that's a mouthful!). How exactly click sounds like this are pronounced is explained in Chapter 6 of this book.

Among words with unusual (for us, English speakers) sound are the Tagalog *ngilo* meaning 'to have tooth-edge pain', but also 'the physical sensation of nails scratching the chalkboard' and the Warlpiri *ngarrka* 'man'; both of these words start with the [ŋ] sound that in English is found only at the end of words (e.g. *sing*) and in the middle of words (e.g. *singing*). Tagalog is discussed in Chapter 8 and Warlpiri – in Chapter 9.

Speaking of word-initial consonants, some languages allow us to pile them up in a way that exceeds our English-based expectations. Two examples of that are the Polish word *chrząszcz* 'beetle' and the Georgian word გვფრცქვნი 'he peeled us' pronounced [gvprskvni], with eight consonants in the beginning! (Georgian is one of the languages discussed in Chapter 4.)

Notice also that this Georgian word expresses a meaning that we would render with a three-word sentence. It is not unusual in the world's languages to have words with sentence-like meaning; an additional example comes from Cherokee, where the word ᏘᏅᏕ (pronounced [hinvsi]) means 'hand him something flexible (like clothes, rope, etc.)'. Native American languages such as Cherokee are discussed in Chapter 10.

The last group of words here are interesting for the way they are written. For example, the French word *août* 'August' uses four letters to represent just one sound [u] (and you thought English spelling was the champion of perverseness?!). In contrast, the spelling of the Danish word *ø* 'island' is so minimal, it looks like the mathematical symbol for an empty set.

Finally, I included a few words to represent several more exotic writing systems: the Greek αλφάβητο 'alphabet' (after all, it was the Greeks who came up with the concept!), the Sanskrit ऋतु 'season' (pronounced [ṛtu], with the initial vowel sound), the Arabic كتب 'book', pronounced [kitab] and representing the best-known tri-consonant Semitic root K-T-B (this vowel-less nature of Semitic roots is explained further in Chapter 5).

Last but not least is the Udmurt expression гажаса ӧтиськом 'welcome', pronounced [gažasa ötis'kom]; Udmurt is a Finno-Ugric language (see Chapter 3), but like many other languages in the former Soviet Union it uses the Cyrillic alphabet, even though it is not related to Slavic languages for which this alphabet was originally invented.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Acknowledgements

This book has required a great deal of work collecting information and figuring out the best way to present it. It is my pleasure to express my gratitude to all those who have helped to make this book a reality.

First, the three *sine qua non*:

- Helen Barton, my editor at Cambridge University Press, who first suggested that I write a textbook to go with the course that I was teaching at Stanford University at the time: her continuing support, encouragement and guidance through the publication process made this book possible;
- Martin Lewis, a geographer extraordinaire: our frequent discussions of history, geography and languages shed new light on many issues discussed throughout this book and his help with the matters of cartography was invaluable;
- Karen Sherwood Sotelino, who has read different versions of the manuscript and suggested many improvements to the content, presentation and style: without her, this book would have been full of unexplained terminology, clumsy sentences and missed opportunities to use this or that English article.

I am also very grateful to all those who read parts of the manuscript, asked challenging questions, caught factual and stylistic errors, mentioned tidbits of interesting information about various languages and provided references to useful sources which I would not have found otherwise (in alphabetical order): Doug Ball, Renee A. Berger, David Erschler, Stephane Goyette, Joel Hoffman, Pavel Iosad, Olga Kagan, Ekaterina Lutikova, Johanna Nichols, Sergei Tatevosov and Rory van Tuyl. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewer for Cambridge University Press, who provided suggestions for significant improvements.

In addition, I'd like to thank my students of the various instantiations of the "Languages of the World" course at Stanford University's Linguistics Department, Stanford Continuing Studies Program, Santa Clara University OLLI, San Francisco State University OLLI and the Forum at Rancho San Antonio, as well as the readers of my Languages of the World blog who took the time to share their comments.

Finally, I wish to express thanks to Byron Ahn, Venelina Dimitrova, Rebecca Greene, Patrycja Jablonska, Kasia Miechowicz-Mathiasen, Stephanie Shih and Vitaliy Rayz for suggesting some great words for the cover of this book.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

Abbreviations used in the glosses

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
A	agent-like argument of a canonical transitive verb
ABL	ablative
ABS	absolutive
ACC	accusative
ADESS	adessive
ANTIP	antipassive
AOR	aorist
APPL	applicative
ART	article
ASP	aspect
AT	actor topic
AUX	auxiliary
CLF	classifier
COMP	complementizer
CONT	continuative
CT	circumstantial topic
DAT	dative
DEF	definite
DU	dual
DUR	durative
ERG	ergative
EVID	evidential
F	feminine
FACT	factitive
FORM	formal
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual
HON	honorific
INS	instrumental
INTNS	intensifier
IPFV	imperfective

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00278-4 - Languages of the World: An Introduction
Asya Pereltsvaig
Frontmatter
More information

LOC	locative
M	masculine
NEG	negation
NFUT	non-future
NMLZ	nominalizer/nominalization
NOM	nominative
OBJ	object
OBL	oblique
P	patient-like argument of a canonical transitive verb
PART	particle
PASS	passive
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
POTENT	potential
PROG	progressive
PRS	present
PRTV	partitive
PST	past
PUNC	punctual
Q	question particle/marker
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
SBJ	subject
SG	singular
SGL	singulative
TMA	tense-mood-aspect
TR	transitive
TT	theme topic

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org