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# East, West and South Slavic

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## Summary

Languages, their linguistic and sociolinguistic status; Common Eastern Slavic features; Common Western Slavic features; Common South Slavic Features; Further differentiation of the Western and Southern Slavic branches

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## Homework

HW # 3 (due end of Week 3): Take a look at [this list](#). It contains seven columns with lexical lists of basic 200 lexical items from the software package Glotto by [j.guy@trl.oz.au](mailto:j.guy@trl.oz.au). The list includes English and seven mysterious languages. Do the following: a) determine which languages are Slavic, b) determine to which branch of Slavic languages each of these languages belong, c) provide examples of ten common Slavic vocabulary items, d) for each Slavic language provide three examples of the structural features characteristic for their respective branch (East, West or South). Your task is exacerbated by the fact that there are inconsistencies in transcribing the lexical items on the list (one Slavic language is transcribed phonetically, others are not) and in the choice of lexical items. If you are an adroit detective, you will still be able to accomplish your task. If you need more help, use [Your Dictionary](#). Good luck!

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## Three Branches of Slavic Languages

The following three branches of Slavic Languages have evolved from the CS:

- East: Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian with Ruthenian

- West: a) Lechitic: Polish with Kashubian and †Slovincian, †Polabian b) Czecho-Slovak: Czech, Slovak, c) Sorbian: Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian
- South: a) Western: Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, b) Eastern: Bulgarian, Macedonian, †Old Church Slavonic

The present-day distribution of these languages is as follows (the map taken from

<http://indoeuro.bizland.com/aarchive.html>)



### Structural Characteristics

In addition to the features characteristic for each of the Slavic branches, there are also common features of the Eastern and Western branch as well as common features of the Eastern and Southern Branch. There are no common Western-Southern features. This is explained by geographical proximity and historical ties of Eastern and Western Slavic languages (as opposed to their isolation from the Southern branch by the Romanian-Hungarian-German continuum and also by cultural ties (Cyrillo-Methodian tradition) of the Southern and Eastern branch.

Not all languages of any given branch share each of the characteristic features. The features are as follows:

- East Slavic Features:

1)

ъ љ > or, љ љ > ol, ь љ > er, ь љ > el

Rus. горло, зерно vs. S-Cr. grlo, zrno, Pol. gardło, ziarno

2)

[cons] {or,er,ol,el} [cons] > [cons]{oro,ere,olo,olo} [cons]

Rus. город, берег, голова, молоко vs. S-Cr grad, brijeg, glava, mlijeko, Pol. gród, brzeg, głowa, mleko

3)

d',t' > č,ž

Rus. свеча, межа vs. Pol. świeca, miedza, S-Cr. svijeća međa

4)

\_je > \_o

Rus. один, озеро vs. S-Cr jedan, jezero, Pol. jeden, jezioro

5)

r' remains unchanged Rus. море [mor'e] vs. Pol. morze, S-Cr more

- East and South

1)

kvě, gvě > cvě, zvě

Rus. цвет, звезда, S-Cr cvijet, zvijezda vs. Pol. kwiat, gwiazda

2)

{d,t}l > l

Rus. горло, плела, S-Cr grlo, plela vs. Pol. gardło, płotła

3)

epenthetic l

Rus. земля, люблю vs. Pol. ziemia, lubię

- East and West

Inflectional endings (Inst. Sg. masc. and neut., Gen. Sg., Nom.-Acc. Pl.; Present Participle

- West

1)

t', d' > c, dz(z)

Pol. świeca, miedza vs. S-Cr svijeća, međa, Rus. свеча, межа

2)

h > š (2nd and 3rd palatalization)

CZ mouše vs. S-Cr musi

3)

r' evolves into a soft consonant

Pol. morze [može] vs. Rus. [mor'e], S-Cr more

4)

No epenthetic l, no dl, tl > l, no kvě, gvě > cvě, zvě

• South

1)

lack of positional palatalization

S-Cr. telo vs. Pol. ciało

2)

ör[cons], õl[cons] > ra[cons], la[cons]

S-Cr. ravan, lakat vs. Pol. równy, łokieć

3)

[cons] {or,er,ol,el} [cons] > [cons]{ra,rě,la,lě} [cons]

S-Cr. grad, brijeg, glava, mlijeko vs. Rus. город, берег, голова, молоко vs. Pol. gród,  
brzeg, głowa, mleko

4)

r' evolves into a regular r

S-Cr. more vs. Rus. [mor'e], Pol. morze

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### **Sociolinguistic Status**

Slavic languages exhibit varied socio-linguistic status in both their dialectal variation and in their standard forms. The following relevant facts should be stated at this point:

- In terms of dialectal variation Slavic languages vary from low-fragmented Russian with three major dialects covering a vast geographical area to Slovene with eight dialectal groups on a very limited geographic area
- In terms of the language vs. dialect or ethnic variant problem, the following situations are of interest:
  - a) Czech and Slovak as well as Bulgarian and Macedonian are mutually intelligible and very similar in their structural features but they are generally considered separate languages,
  - b) There is a dispute of whether Kashubian is a separate language or a dialect of Polish,
  - c) There is a dispute of whether the three ethnic variants of Serbo-Croatian constitute three separate languages

Deciding one way or another in these political disputes will not affect the analysis of historical development. We can therefore disregard them.

- Slavic languages vary in terms of the number of their speakers (from Russian to Sorbian) and the level of bilingualism (from mostly monolingual Russians to mostly bilingual Ukrainians)
- Slavic languages vary as to the period of their standardization (from the early standardization of Polish to the 1945 standardization of Macedonian)