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TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGES

Tursunpo'latova Lobar Erkin qizi
Abdulla Qodiriy Jizzakh State Pedagogical University
1st-year student of the Uzbek Language and Literature program
Scientific supervisor: **Dilnoza Fayzullayeva**
Associate Professor

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ABSTRACT:

This article discusses the typological classification of languages, that is, the principles of grouping languages according to their structural features. The article provides scholarly information about analytic, synthetic, and polysynthetic language types, and their distinctive grammatical structures are explained through examples. In addition, the criteria of phonological and syntactic typology are examined, and a comparative analysis of linguistic units in different languages is presented. The article reveals the significance of the typological study of language units in linguistics.

According to UNESCO data, there are currently more than 5,600 languages in the world. The level of development of these languages, their role in society, and the number of their speakers vary significantly. A language spoken by a tribe consisting of only 100–200 people is considered a distinct language, just as a language spoken by a nation of hundreds of millions of people is. A person capable of abstract thinking, when hearing or learning different languages, inevitably notices similarities in two main aspects: material similarities and similarities in grammatical structure, word formation, and the ways words are connected to one another in sentences. Serious study of these issues began in the nineteenth century.

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When discussing the classification of languages, genealogical, morphological, and structural classifications are given particular importance. Sometimes the classification of languages into types is referred to as linguistic typology. In linguistics, this is considered one of the most significant problems. Alongside foreign scholars, Uzbek linguists have also contributed to its solution.

It is well known that any typology requires comparison. According to J. Bo'ronov, comparative study of language systems involves both a general typological method and a historical-comparative method. General typology includes structural typology, language universals, typological and morphological classification of languages, special typological theory, and the identification of a standard (etalonic) language. The general typological method is defined as "a method that generalizes, compares, and studies the systems of different languages."

Language universals are general linguistic features common to all language systems. Language universals or universalism study general categories in language and are applied, along with descriptive and other methods, to identify typological generalizations and general laws of language. Universalism implies the generalization of linguistic laws.

Structural typology, which forms the basis of modern linguistic typology, relies on the methods of structural linguistics to systematize and interpret the structural features of different languages. Morphological typology deals with dividing languages into taxonomic groups based on their grammatical structure. The development of methods, specific rules, and techniques for typological investigation of language systems constitutes the main task of special typological theory. In creating special typological theory, the system of world languages serves as the object of structural typology. By using descriptive methods that study individual language systems and genetic methods that study groups of related languages, it develops general typological approaches.

Typological theory must be capable of identifying universals across all language systems. It defines methods for describing universals and selects special terminology for typological analysis. One of the main tasks of typology is to create a specific system that serves as a criterion for classifying different language systems. Such a system is called a metalanguage or a standard (etalon) language. The standard language is a general and universal language, and all specific languages are considered its realizations. A particular language or system may be taken as a standard language. The primary function of the standard language is to serve as a unit of measurement in describing language systems.

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According to the theory under consideration, the role of a standard language may be fulfilled by a symbolic language system composed of general artificial language rules, a well-developed concrete language, or specific phonological, morphological, syntactic models, and other systems. Morphological typology classifies languages into types based on their grammatical structure regardless of genetic relationships.

The first scientific work devoted to the morphological typology of languages was created in Germany in 1809 by Friedrich Schlegel. In his work On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, F. Schlegel divided languages into inflectional and affixal types. According to him, from the moment of their emergence, languages belong to one of these two types and remain so permanently. Thus, constant changes occurring in languages are denied. The classification is based on changes within the word stem. Schlegel considered languages in which the internal structure of the stem changes when words enter into syntactic relations as more advanced and called them inflectional languages; he included German and other Indo-European languages in this group.

According to him, in affixal languages, stems do not change, and grammatical forms change through the direct addition of affixes. Languages originate as root languages, and over time some roots lose their stress and become auxiliary words. These auxiliary words later attach to independent words, turning first into agglutinative affixes and later into inflectional affixes. In general, languages demonstrate the phenomenon whereby independent words become auxiliary words and, in turn, develop into affixes.

This process is still ongoing in Turkic languages today. For example, if we take the Uzbek sentence "Men talabaman" ("I am a student"), there is no doubt that the personal and number marker in the predicate is directly related to and derived from the pronoun men ("I"). As evidence for this claim, we can refer to the modern Bashkir and Tuvan languages. In these languages, the personal and number markers in the predicate are expressed by unstressed personal pronouns.

In Uzbek, this process has advanced further: the marker has turned into the suffix –man, which is written together with the predicate. However, in Bashkir and Tuvan, although this marker does not receive stress, it retains its independence and is written separately from the predicate. The example provided gives no grounds to claim, as Schleicher suggested, that Turkic languages have passed through three distinct stages. There is no evidence proving the existence of a root stage in the history of Turkic languages.

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However, the opposite process can be observed in some languages. For instance, English and French, which were once rich in internal and external inflection, later lost these features and began to rely, like Chinese and Burmese, on strict word order and extensive use of auxiliary words to connect words in sentences and express syntactic relations.

Inflectional languages include those belonging to the Indo-European and Afro-Asiatic language families. These languages are divided into synthetic inflectional languages and analytic inflectional languages. Synthetic inflectional languages include languages rich in inflections, such as German and Russian. In speech, syntactic relations between words are mainly realized through inflections.

In analytic inflectional languages, although inflections exist, their number is relatively limited, and syntactic relations between words in a sentence are primarily expressed through word order and auxiliary words. Therefore, in analytic languages, word order is strict, and each sentence component must occupy a fixed position. Analytic inflectional languages include languages such as English and French.

In these languages, the subject usually occupies the first position; if the predicate is expressed by a transitive verb, the object appears in the third position. The position of attributes cannot be predetermined; they are always linked to the noun. Wherever the modified noun appears, the attribute appears in the same position: it may precede a word functioning as the subject or stand before the noun that forms the nominal part of a compound predicate. Adverbials, depending on their meaning, may occupy various positions within the sentence.

Thus, when discussing word order, the positions of the subject, predicate, and object within the sentence are primarily considered. Consequently, what is expressed by a single word in polysynthetic languages may be expressed by several words in other languages.

When discussing the typological classification of languages, it is important to note that no language fully corresponds to another in terms of its features. Typology is not absolute but relative. Languages may belong to one type or another based on the predominance of certain features. It is natural for every language to contain inflectional, agglutinative, and other elements. For example, Uzbek is an agglutinative language, yet inflection can also be found in it: in the word keldik ("we came"), the suffix –k simultaneously indicates both person and number.

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Although English is an analytic inflectional language, it also possesses agglutinative-like elements. When classifying languages into particular types, the determining factor is which features are more prevalent.

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