

**PAPER 7 (HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS)
INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY**

No other language family has been studied so intensively as Indo-European and the reconstruction of the parent language is generally acknowledged to be one of the real achievements of the 19th century science. Indo-European is also a very interesting family because many written records of its branches have been preserved from various points in time. Within the family itself there is also a wide range of divergence or difference among the various member languages. It is a very well defined family. Linguists are in agreement as to which languages are and which languages are not Indo-European.

Indo-European family was preserved by Karl Brugmann in his famous book "Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages" and in his "Introduction to the Comparative Study of Indo-European Languages." Antonic Meillet presented the same system. Though there has been some progress in Indo-European studies since the time of Brugmann and Meillet in the early 20th century, yet in its basic structure the Brugmann system is still valid.

The various sub-groups of the Indo-European family of which representations are spoken today are as follows:

1. INDO-IRANIAN: This branch consists of languages of present day India, Iran and certain neighboring areas. It consists of two sub-groups-Indic and Iranian of which the former is more important than the latter.

The earliest Indic material is contained in Rigveda. Since the poems of Rigveda and other vedas were considered sacred, they were memorized and transmitted orally for many generations. As a result of linguistic analysis, a standardized language emerged and was so completely described and regulated (Sanskrita) that it underwent few further changes which is known to us as Sanskrit. In the period before Christ, we have three stages of Indic-vedic Sanskrit, classical Sanskrit and prakrits. Vedic and classical Sanskrit are often referred to as 'old Indic', the prakrits as 'Middle Indic' of which emerges 'Pali' and at the end of the Middle Indic period, we get materials known as Apbhramsas which means 'off-branching'. From the Apbhramsas developed modern Indic dialects including 'Hindi' and 'Urdu'. Others are Bengali, Gujrati, Marathi, Punjabi, Sinhalese and Romany.

On the Iranian side, we have two important ancient languages: 'Old Persian' and 'Avestan'. In Avestan we have the sacred books of the Zoroastrian religion. At present the various Iranian languages include 'Persian', 'Balochi', 'Pashtu', 'Kurdish' and 'Ossetic'.

2. ARMENIAN: Until 5th century A.D., no material was available on Armenian. The oldest materials were composed in 5th century A.D. and are almost translations of Christian writings. The language of these texts are known as 'the classical Armenian'. Modern Armenian exists in two branches-Eastern spoken in USSR and Iran and Western spoken in Turkey. Armenian has been highly influenced by other languages and particularly by Iranian.

3. ALBANIAN: The early history of Albanian is even more adequately known. Before 1685, when a Latin Albanian dictionary was produced, we had few materials. The production of dictionary was followed by religious translations and collection of folk-tales in the 19th century. There are two dialects - Geg in the north and Tosk in the south,

extending into Greece and Italy. It has also undergone many changes in its vocabulary, influenced successively by Latin, Greek, Slavic and Turkish. Some scholars consider it as a modern representative of Illyrian or Thracian.

4. BALTO-SLAVIC: The Balto-Slavic group consists of two large sub-groups: Baltic and Slavic. Three principal languages make up the Baltic group: Old Prussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian. Old Prussian is extinct today but Lithuanian and Latvian are still spoken along the southern coast of the Baltic sea in the Lithuanian and Latvian republic of Soviet Union.

The Slavic languages spoken today are classified in three groups: South, West and East Slavic. South Slavic comprises: Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. West Slavic comprises: Czech, Slovak, Polish and Wendish. East Slavic comprises Great Russian, White Russian or Byelorussian and Ukrainian.

The differences between the various Slavic languages are slight, much smaller than those between the Germanic languages.

5. GREEK OR HELLENIC: Historically Greek is extremely important but it has a relatively low speakers. It is attested in inscriptions from seventh century B.C.

In Greek we have a diversity of dialect materials sub-divided into two large groups: West group and East group. West group is further divided into North-West Greek and Doric. To east Greek belongs Attic-Ionic, the language of Attika and Asia Minor. Historically, the most important dialect is that of Athens, Attic Greek. Because of intellectual domination of Athens, its dialect came to be used throughout Greek speaking areas.

6. ITALIC: Among the Italic languages, the most important is, of course, Latin, the language of ancient Rome and the ancestor of modern Romance languages. It includes Italian, Provençal, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese and Rumanian. Besides these seven important languages three minor ones are also included from modern times: Sardinian, Rhaeto-Romance, Romansch or Ladin. Compared with early Latin they are lesser known, but often helpful dialects of Oscan and Umbrian, of which we have several inscriptions.

7. CELTIC: The Celtic languages themselves divide into two groups: Continental and insular. The Continental branch is known through a single language. Gaulish, which was spoken in an area centering around present day France. Insular Celtic is further subdivided into two branches: Brythonic and Goidelic. Welsh, Breton and Cornish are Brythonic languages. The first attested Goidelic language is Old Irish. Old Irish has two present day descendants: Modern Irish and Scots Gaelic.

8. GERMANIC: The Germanic branch of Indo-European family is generally broken down into three main divisions: East, North and West. East Germanic is known from a single language, 'Gothic' which was attested in a Bible translation of the 4th century A.D. North Germanic consists of two groups- East Norse, composed of Swedish, Danish and Gutnish; and West Norse composed of Norwegian, Faroese and Icelandic.

West Germanic is divided into three major subgroups: High Germanic, Low Germanic and Anglo Frisian. Modern Standard German is a high German dialect, as is Yiddish. Low German is represented by modern languages such as Dutch, Flemish and Afrikaans. Anglo-Frisian branch consists of two branches- English, the most important member of the branch, and Frisian. Old English (formerly called Anglo Saxon) is attested as early as the seventh century A.D.; the Middle English period extends from

twelfth to the fifteenth centuries; New English continues the same language down to the present. In Old English there were three distinct dialects, Kentish, Saxon and Anglian or Northern, further subdivided into Northumbrian and Mercian.

In Middle English, we may follow a classification into four subgroups: Northern, West Midland, East Midland and Southern. The dialect of London, on the border between Southern and Midland, came to be model for Standard English. Like New High German, Modern English is therefore a direct continuation of the prominent language of the older period.

Since approximately 1600, English has expanded continually. It is now the language used most widely as a second language and as an auxiliary language for internal communication.

9. ANATOLIAN: It consists of three principal languages: Hittite, Luvian and Lydian. Of these the most important is Hittite since there are a large number of its documents some dating back as far as 1300 B.C. Luvian and Lydian are attested in only few inscriptions.

10. TOCHARIAN: The Tocharian languages which are found in texts unearthed in Central Asia, are attested in the seventh century A.D. It has two dialects labeled as A and B: Agucan or West Tocharian for Tocharian B. One of the remarkable features of Tocharian is the preservation of palates as /k/ before back vowels. Nothing is known about the provenience of the speakers of Tocharian.