

Linguistic Affinity between Russian and Sanskrit Language

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Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic affinity between Russian and Sanskrit, both belonging to the vast Indo-European language family. Cognates, words sharing a common origin, are explored to unveil historical connections and insights into language evolution. The research probes shared cognates and their implications, focusing on historical and cultural interactions between these languages. Basic cognate words shared between Modern Russian and Sanskrit highlight enduring linguistic connections, including inflectional systems, numeral systems, flexible word order, and limited use of auxiliary verbs. These parallels enrich our understanding of linguistic links between the languages. Finally, this study delves into linguistic affinity to unravel historical and linguistic connections between Russian and Sanskrit within the broader Indo-European language family.

Keywords

Russian language, Sanskrit language, Linguistic Affinity, Cognate Analysis, Language Evolution, Indo-European Heritage

Introduction

Russian and Sanskrit are both historical and linguistically significant languages. Russian is the most widely spoken language in Eurasia and belongs to the Indo-European language family (Künnap, 1999; Fortson, 2004; Gribble, 1981; Vinogradov & Zharnikova, n.d.). It is Russia's official language, and millions of people in neighbouring countries and diaspora communities speak it. Russian is well-known for its intricate grammar, extensive vocabulary, and adaptable word order. Its linguistic significance stems from its status as a major Slavic language, which adds to the diversity and depth of the Indo-European language family (Fortson, 2004; Gribble, 1981; Vinogradov & Zharnikova, n.d.; Comrie, 1989; Croft & Croft, 2001).

Sanskrit is an ancient Indo-Aryan language with deep historical, cultural, and religious roots in India. While it is no longer a common language, Sanskrit is still an important part of classical Indian literature, philosophy, and sacred texts. Its linguistic

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significance is essential because it is the language in which many ancient Indian scriptures, such as the Vedas and Upanishads, were written. The grammatical structure, precision, and expressive capabilities of Sanskrit have had a significant impact on the development of other Indian languages (Jamison & Brereton, 2014).

Cognates in Historical Linguistics

Cognates are words from different languages that have the same origin and can be traced back to the same ancestral language. They are linguistic relatives who evolved independently in different language branches but retain traces of their common ancestors. The concept of cognates is extremely important in historical linguistics because it allows linguists to reconstruct proto-languages—the hypothetical common ancestors of language families.

Cognates are typically discovered by comparing similarities in sound correspondences, phonetic shifts, and semantic changes between languages. These shared linguistic features provide evidence of historical connections and provide insights into language evolution, migration patterns, and language family relationships.

Research Question and Significance

The research question "What are the cognates shared by Russian and Sanskrit, and what do they reveal about linguistic connections?" is of great linguistic and historical significance.

Exploring Russian and Sanskrit cognates can shed light on the historical and linguistic relationships between these languages and their respective language families. Because both languages are members of the Indo-European language family (Künnap, 1999), the presence of cognates can indicate shared ancestry and ancient language contact.

Researchers can learn about the linguistic and cultural interactions that have occurred between Russian and Sanskrit-speaking communities by identifying cognates and analysing their phonological and semantic transformations over time. These cognates may also provide insights into areas such as trade, migration, or cultural exchange that have contributed to linguistic element.

The study of cognates shared by Russian and Sanskrit has the potential to unravel the intricate web of historical and linguistic connections between these languages, as well as to improve our understanding of their place within the larger context of Indo-European languages (Fortson, 2004; Gribble, 1981; Vinogradov & Zharnikova, n.d.).

Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit

Despite belonging to different language families and evolving in geographically distant regions, Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit share intriguing syntactical and structural similarities that highlight the complexity and richness of these ancient languages.

Linguistic Structural Similarities

Synthetic Languages: Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit are both synthetic languages. This means that through inflections and word endings, they convey a significant amount of grammatical information. To indicate their grammatical functions, words in synthetic languages undergo various changes, such as the addition of suffixes or prefixes. These inflections are critical for understanding sentence syntax and semantics (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Inflections for Grammatical Expressions: To convey grammatical information, both languages use a reliable system of inflections. Inflections are changes to nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives to indicate case, number, gender, tense, mood, and

voice. This extensive inflection system enables precise expression and disambiguation of grammatical relationships within sentences (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Numbers, Genders, and Persons: In their inflectional paradigms, Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit both have three grammatical numbers (singular, dual, and plural), three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter), and three persons (first, second, and third). This similarity in number and gender systems contributes to both languages' specificity and depth (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Case Systems: Both languages have case systems. The syntactical roles of nouns and pronouns within sentences are marked by seven grammatical cases in Proto-Slavic. In parallel, Vedic Sanskrit has eight cases, each with a specific function in indicating grammatical relations and roles (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Numeral Systems: The numeral systems of Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit are similar. They both have extensive number-expression systems, including cardinal and ordinal numbers. These numeral systems are required for quantity counting, enumeration, and description (Edgerton, 1965).

Syntactical Similarities

Flexible Word Order: Flexible word orders are used in both Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit. This means that the order of words in a sentence can change without significantly altering its meaning. Because of this flexibility, speakers of these languages can emphasise certain elements or convey specific nuances through word placement (Maurer & Fields, 2009; Macdonell, 2014; Speyer, 1886; Speijer, 1886). It also demonstrates their ability to convey meaning through inflections rather than solely through word order (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Inherent Syntactical Structure: Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit do not rely heavily on fixed syntactical structures due to their intricate inflectional systems (Maurer & Fields, 2009; Macdonell, 2014; Speyer, 1886; Speijer, 1886). These languages, unlike languages with strict word order requirements, such as English, can use a variety of word orders to convey meaning. This adaptability stems from inflections' ability to indicate the grammatical roles of words within sentences (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Absence of Auxiliary Verbs: The limited use of auxiliary verbs in both languages is another notable syntactical similarity. Auxiliary verbs, which are important in constructing verb tenses and moods in many modern Indo-European languages such as English, are absent from Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit (Maurer & Fields, 2009; Macdonell, 2014; Speyer, 1886; Speijer, 1886). Instead, these languages use their extensive inflectional systems to convey temporal and modal distinctions directly within verb forms (Baldi & Dini, 2004).

Given their distinct geographic origins and separate language families, the linguistic structural and syntactical similarities between Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit are intriguing. These similarities highlight the intricate and sophisticated nature of these ancient languages while also providing valuable insights into their historical development and linguistic richness.

Some Cognates of Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit

Despite their distinct language families and geographical separation, Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit share a number of basic cognate words, reflecting their common linguistic ancestry and providing valuable insights into their historical relationship (Fortson, 2004). Here are some examples of basic cognate words:

1. *Father*: In Proto-Slavic, the word for "father" is "отъсь," while in Vedic Sanskrit, it is "pitá." The word for 'father' is pətér, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit pitá, Old Church Slavonic отъсь. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word pətér is the ancestor of the Russian word "отъсь" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "pitá." The PIE word pətér is reconstructed as meaning "father." (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

2. *Mother*: The cognate word for "mother" in Proto-Slavic is "mati," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is "mātá." The word for 'mother' is mātēr, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit mātá, Old Church Slavonic "mati." The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word mātēr is the ancestor of the Russian word "mati" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "mātá." The PIE word mātēr is a compound word, made up of the root mā- "to wet" and the suffix -tēr. The root mā- is also found in the PIE words for "water" and "milk." The suffix -tēr is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the feminine gender. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

3. *Son*: In Proto-Slavic, "son" is expressed as "synъ," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is "sūnú." And there is 'suta'. In the Ramayana, Hanuma is referred to as 'Pawansuta'. The word for 'son' is sūnú, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit sūnú-. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word sūnú is the ancestor of the Russian word "synъ" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "sūnú." The word sūnú is reconstructed as meaning "son." The PIE word sūnú is a compound word, made up of the root su- "to grow" and the suffix -nú. The root su- is also found in the PIE words for "good" and "well." The suffix -nú is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the masculine gender. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

4. *Daughter*: The word for "daughter" in Proto-Slavic is "дъьсра," while in Vedic Sanskrit, it is "duhití." The word for 'daughter' is d^hughtér, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit duhití, Old Church Slavonic дъьсра. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word d^hughtér is the ancestor of the Russian word "дъьсра" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "duhití." Word d^hughtér is reconstructed as meaning "daughter." The PIE word d^hughtér is a compound word, made up of the root d^hugh- "to milk" and the suffix -tér. The root d^hugh- is also found in the PIE words for "milk" and "to suckle." The suffix -tér is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the feminine gender. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

5. *Water*: Proto-Slavic uses "voda" for "water," and Vedic Sanskrit employs "udán" for the same concept. The word for 'water' is wód^hor, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit udán, Greek ύδωρ (hydōr), Old Church Slavonic voda." The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word wód^hor is the ancestor of the Russian word "voda" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "udán." The PIE word wód^hor is reconstructed as meaning "water." The PIE word wód^hor is a compound word, made up of the root wód- "to wet" and the suffix -^hor. The root wód- is also found in the PIE words for "to wash" and "to moisten." The suffix -^hor is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the neuter gender. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

6. *Night*: In Proto-Slavic, "night" is referred to as "ночь," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is "náktam."

The word for 'night' is $nók^{wts}$, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit $náktam$, Greek $\nuύξ$ ($núx$), Latin nox , Old Church Slavonic $ночь$. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word $nók^{wts}$ is the ancestor of the Russian word "ночь" and the Vedic Sanskrit word " $náktam$." The PIE word $nók^{wts}$ is reconstructed as "night." The PIE word $nók^{wts}$ is a compound word, made up of the root $nek-$ "to be dark" and the suffix $-ts$. The root $nek-$ is also found in the PIE words for "darkness" and "shadow." The suffix $-ts$ is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the neuter gender. The Proto-Slavic word "ночь" is a direct descendant of the PIE word $nók^{wts}$. It is pronounced as $/n'io:č̑j/$ in Modern Russian. The Vedic Sanskrit word " $náktam$ " is also a direct descendant of the PIE word $nók^{wts}$. It is pronounced as $/na:ktam/$ in Vedic Sanskrit. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

7. *Sun*: Proto-Slavic uses " $sъnъce$ " for "sun," while Vedic Sanskrit employs " $súrya$." The word for 'sun' is $sóuel$, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit $súrya$, Old Church Slavonic $sъnъce$. The Proto-Indo-European word $sóuel$ is the ancestor of the Russian word " $sъnъce$ " and the Vedic Sanskrit word " $súrya$ " The word $sóuel$ is reconstructed as meaning "sun." The PIE word $sóuel$ is a compound word, made up of the root $sū-$ "to burn" and the suffix $-el$. The root $sū-$ is also found in the PIE words for "to shine" and "to be hot." The suffix $-el$ is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the masculine gender. The Proto-Slavic word " $sъnъce$ " is a direct descendant of the PIE word $sóuel$. It is pronounced as $/sʉn'it̑ə/$ in Modern Russian. The Vedic Sanskrit word " $súrya$ " is also a direct descendant of the PIE word $sóuel$. It is pronounced as $/su:rja:/$ in Vedic Sanskrit. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

8. *Moon*: The cognate word for "moon" in Proto-Slavic is " $měsęcъ$," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is " $māsá$." The word for 'moon' is $méh_2sōs$, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit $māsá$, and old Church Slavonic $měsęcъ$. The Proto-Indo-European word $méh_2sōs$ is the ancestor of the Russian word " $měsęcъ$ " and the Vedic Sanskrit word " $māsá$." The PIE word $méh_2sōs$ is reconstructed as meaning "moon." The PIE word $méh_2sōs$ is a compound word, made up of the root meh_2- "to measure" and the suffix $-sōs$. The root meh_2- is also found in the PIE words for "month" and "measure." The suffix $-sōs$ is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the masculine gender. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

9. *Fire*: In Proto-Slavic, "fire" is expressed as " $огнь$," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is " $agní$." The word for 'fire' is $h_1égnis$, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-European, including Sanskrit $agni$, Greek $\tilde{\alpha}γνίς$ ($hēgnís$), Old Church Slavonic $огнь$. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word $h_1égnis$ is the ancestor of the Russian word " $огнь$ " and the Vedic Sanskrit word " $agní$." The PIE word $h_1égnis$ is reconstructed as meaning "fire." It is also the ancestor of many other Indo-European words for "fire". The PIE word $h_1égnis$ is a compound word, made up of the root h_1eg- "to burn" and the suffix $-nis$. The root h_1eg- is also found in the PIE words for "to ignite" and "to kindle." The suffix $-nis$ is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the masculine gender (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

10. *Earth*: The word for "earth" in Proto-Slavic is " $zemlja$," and in Vedic Sanskrit, it is " $záman$." The word for 'earth' is $dh_1égh_2mōs$, with reflexes in all branches of Indo-

European, including Sanskrit *záman*, old Church Slavonic *zemlja*. The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) word *dh₁éǵ^hmōs* is the ancestor of the Russian word "zemlja" and the Vedic Sanskrit word "záman." The PIE word *dh₁éǵ^hmōs* is reconstructed as meaning "earth." The PIE word *dh₁éǵ^hmōs* is a compound word, made up of the root *dh₁eg-* "to dig" and the suffix *-mōs*. The root *dh₁eg-* is also found in the PIE words for "to build" and "to create." The suffix *-mōs* is a nominal suffix that indicates a noun of the feminine gender. The Proto-Slavic word "zemlja" is a direct descendant of the PIE word *dh₁éǵ^hmōs*. It is pronounced as /'zɛmlʲə/ in Modern Russian. The Vedic Sanskrit word "záman" is also a direct descendant of the PIE word *dh₁éǵ^hmōs*. It is pronounced as /'zɑːmɛn/ in Vedic Sanskrit. (Mallory & Adams, 2006, 1997; Künnap, 1999; Tikhomirov & Tikhomirova, 2018; Renfrew, 1990; Díez, F. L.-M., n.d.; Szemerényi & Szemerényi, 1999)

Modern Russian and Sanskrit

The linguistic structural similarities between Russian and Sanskrit are notable, and they reflect their Indo-European linguistic heritage. Let us broaden on these parallels.

Synthetic Languages: Russian and Sanskrit are both regarded synthetic languages (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997). The extensive use of inflections, which modify words to convey grammatical information, distinguishes synthetic languages. These inflections are important in the syntax and semantics of both languages (Crystal, 2012).

Inflections for Grammatical Expressions: Inflections are heavily used in Russian and Sanskrit to convey various aspects of grammar, such as tense, aspect, mood, case, number, and gender (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997). In Sanskrit, for example, verbs are conjugated to indicate tense, mood, and person (Macdonell, 1997; 2014). Russian verbs, too, are inflected for tense, aspect, mood, and person (Forsyth, 1970).

Numbers, Genders, and Persons: Both languages distinguish three grammatical numbers (singular, dual, and plural), three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter), and three persons (first, second, and third) (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997). This fine distinction allows for precise expression in both languages (Lyovin et al., 2017).

Case Systems: Case systems are used in both Russian (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997) and Sanskrit to indicate the grammatical role of nouns and pronouns within sentences. Sanskrit has an eight-case system, while Russian has six (Comrie, 1989; Croft & Croft, 2001; Macdonell, 1997; 2014). These examples provide structural similarity and help to clarify meaning.

Numeral Systems: The numeral systems of Russian and Sanskrit are similar. Numbers one through ten have distinct words in both languages (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997). In Russian, "один" (odin) means one, whereas "एकम्" (ekam) means one in Sanskrit. These linguistic similarities reflect historical and cultural ties.

Flexible Word Order: Russian (Krylova & Khavronina, 1988; Neidle, 2012; Zauber, 1997) and Sanskrit allow for more flexible word orders than analytical languages due to their rich inflectional systems and extensive case markings. This adaptability allows for stylistic changes to word order without changing the core meaning of a sentence (Hock, 1991).

Auxiliary Verbs: Russian and Sanskrit, unlike many modern Indo-European languages, do not rely heavily on auxiliary verbs (helping verbs) to express tense, aspect, mood, or voice. Instead, such information is encoded directly within the verb through inflections in these languages (Forsyth, 1970; Macdonell, 1997; 2014). This feature reduces the need for additional words in sentences while emphasising their synthetic nature.

These linguistic similarities between Russian and Sanskrit reflect their Indo-European linguistic ancestors and contribute to their intricate and expressive identities. Both languages have structural features that have shaped their grammar, syntax, and overall linguistic character.

Future Research: Future research into the linguistic affinity between Russian and Sanskrit should delve deeper into a number of promising directions.

Expanded Cognate Analysis: Beyond basic vocabulary, researchers can conduct a more comprehensive analysis of cognates, examining cognates in more specialised domains such as science, technology, and culture. This can help us gain a more nuanced understanding of how language interactions have evolved over time.

Phonological and Semantic Shifts: The study of phonological and semantic shifts in cognates between Russian and Sanskrit can provide insights into language evolution and contact. Understanding how these shifts occurred and what they mean for both languages can be a rewarding area of research.

Historical Documentation and Textual Analysis: Historical documents, archives, and texts from Russian and Sanskrit-speaking regions can be used to reconstruct the historical context of language contact and cultural exchange. Textual analysis can shed light on how linguistic interactions influenced literature, philosophy, and other disciplines.

Dialectal Variations: Dialectal variations within Russian and Sanskrit, as well as their relationships to cognates and language evolution, can provide a more complete picture of linguistic connections.

Computational Linguistics: Using computational linguistic methods like natural language processing and machine learning can help with large-scale cognate detection and comparative analyses, thereby accelerating research in this field.

Interdisciplinary Approach: Collaborations with historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists can provide a broader historical and cultural context for linguistic interactions between Russian and Sanskrit-speaking communities.

Language Contact and Sociolinguistics: Examining the sociolinguistic aspects of language contact, including bilingualism and code-switching, can shed light on how daily interactions between speakers of these languages influenced their linguistic development.

Incorporating these directions into future research will further unravel the linguistic and historical connections between Russian and Sanskrit, enriching our understanding of their shared Indo-European heritage and the broader tapestry of language evolution.

Conclusion

The study successfully investigated the linguistic affinity between Russian and Sanskrit, two languages of historical and linguistic significance within the Indo-European language family. The research has highlighted on the historical connections and

language evolution between these two languages and their respective language families by identifying and analysing cognates, or words with a shared origin.

The research question, which centred on identifying shared cognates and their implications, revealed evidence of a common linguistic ancestry as well as ancient interactions between Russian and Sanskrit-speaking communities. These findings not only add to our understanding of linguistic history, but they also suggest at historical phenomena such as trade, migration, or cultural exchanges that have influenced linguistic development.

Furthermore, despite differences in geographical origins and language families, the study has highlighted the intriguing structural and syntactical similarities between Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit, highlighting their intricacies and richness. This new understanding heightens our recognition for the sophistication of these ancient languages.

The research question, which focused on identifying shared cognates and their implications, revealed evidence of a common linguistic commonality and ancient interactions between Russian and Sanskrit-speaking communities. These findings not only add to our understanding of linguistic history, but also hint at historical phenomena such as trade, migration, or cultural exchanges that have influenced linguistic development.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted the intriguing structural and syntactical similarities between Proto-Slavic and Vedic Sanskrit, highlighting their complexity and richness despite differences in geographical origins and language families. This realisation heightens our appreciation for the sophistication of these ancient languages.

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