



Vojtěch Merunka

INTERSLAVIC

ZONAL CONSTRUCTED LANGUAGE
an introduction for English-speakers

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zonal constructed language

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Interslavic zonal constructed language is an auxiliary language, which looks very similar to real spoken Slavic languages in Central and Eastern Europe and continues the tradition of the Old Church Slavonic language. Interslavic shares grammar and common vocabulary with modern spoken Slavic languages in order to build a universal language tool that Slavic people can understand without any or with very minimal prior learning. It is an easily-learned language for those who want to use this language actively. Interslavic enables passive (e.g. receptive) understanding of the real Slavic languages. Non-Slavic people can use Interslavic as the door to the big Slavic world.

Zonal constructed languages are constructed languages made to facilitate communication between speakers of a certain group of closely related languages. They belong to the international auxiliary languages, but unlike languages like Esperanto and Volapük they are not intended to serve for the whole world, but merely for a limited linguistic or geographic area where they take advantage of the fact that the people of this zone understand these languages without having to learn them in a difficult way. Zonal languages include the ancient Sanskrit, Old Church Slavonic, and Lingua Franca. Zonal design can be partially found also in modern languages such as contemporary Hebrew, Indonesian, and Swahili.

Vojtěch Merunka

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to
Iveta, Anna and Jan

Preface

Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.

Your knowledge is nothing when no one else knows that you know it.

Ničto jest tvoje věděnje, ako li jego drugi ne znajut.

Aulus Persius Flaccus, Sat. 1-27

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

Vymysljenje jest najlučši put prědpovědanja budučnosti.

Alan Curtis Kay, 1971

Dear reader, it is my duty to thank all of the people who have contributed to the creation, development and preservation of the Interslavic language.

First of all, I must acknowledge the brilliant Constantine the Philosopher (Cyril), a professor at the University of Constantinople in Magnaura (Πανδιδακτήριον της Μαγναύρας), philologist, alphabet and conlang creator and his brother Methodius, the first Slavic archbishop, Bible translator and author of many other religious and secular publications. Brothers Constantine and Methodius are honorably declared by the Western and Eastern churches as co-patron saints of united Europe. I also acknowledge those people who assisted Constantine and Methodius in their work: the disciples and followers Gorazd, Angelarios, Sava, Lazar, Clemens of Ohrid, Eastern Roman Emperor Michailos III, Patriarch Fotios of Constantinople (teacher of Constantine the Philosopher and rector of the University), princes Rostislav, Kocel and Bořivoj and the king, Svato-pluk. Finally, I acknowledge enlightened Roman Pope Hadrian II and librarian Anastasius in Rome, as well as all those who in subsequent centuries at various places continued this pioneering work and preserved it. They are many other brothers and sisters of Preslav, Ohrid, Sázava, Senj, Croatian Islands, Holy Mountain Athos and many others from various nations to this day.

The Interslavic project was a great experience for me, because to a certain extent I probably touched problems and challenges as were solved by the Slavic language revivalists, reformers, designers and Interslavic idea propagators and defenders in the past. They are in alphabetical order: Bohuslav Balbín, Vjačeslav Bambas, Antonín Bernolák, Josef Dobrovský, Ljudevit Gaj, Josef Jungmann, Vuk Karadžić, Ján Kollár, Konstantin Maladinov, Pavel Šafárik, Ľudovít Štúr, Faust Vrančić, Matija Ziljski, Partenij Zografski and many others having our sincere respect and admiration.

I also want to honestly thank my intensely respectable colleagues from our Interslavic community and our supporters for their hard work, enthusiasm and significant contribution to the broadcasting of the Interslavic project idea in media, Facebook discussions, internet news, real business, etc. They are in alphabetical order: Bojan Antić, Karol Biegała, Petr Bolf, Ivan Canjar, Vratislav Datel, Emil Heršák, Petr Jandáček, Jozef Janočko, Artur Kamiński, Maria Kocór, Světlana Lavičková, Roberto Lombino, Václav Marhoul, Jozef Mikita, Lubor Mojdl, Andrej Pyžov, Steeven Radzikowski, Ondrej Rečnik, Rostislav Řepka, Anna Řepková, Pavel Skrylev, Dušan Spáčil, Jan van Steenbergem namely for his knowledge and co-editing of our “Memorandum” (see page 27), Gabriel Svoboda, Michał Swat, Antonios A. Tachiaos, Andrej Teterevov, Tomáš Vaňák, Jan Vít, Leoš Wolny, Mateo Žagar and many others. And at last but not least to Rumjan Lazov for his lovely Cyrillic font and Filip Cvitić for his beautiful Glagolitic font.

Vojtěch Merunka, Prague 2018,
www.interslavic-language.org, www.neoslavonic.org

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Introduction

Welcome to the book of the Interslavic language - Neoslavonic edition, which belongs to the non-commercial *Interslavic language project* of the Interslavic Community. Interslavic is a "zonal constructed language" intended to facilitate communication among the speakers and writers of the modern day Slavic languages - *Belorussian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Kashubian, Slavo-Macedonian, Montenegrin, Polish, Russian, Rusyn, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sorbian (i.e. Lusatian, Wendish), Ukrainian* and their various dialects - all of which derive from an original "Proto-Slavic" tongue, which over thousands of years, morphed into very divergent "dialects," each becoming a separate language unto itself. (www.neoslavonic.org)

Over half of Europe's territory is inhabited by Slavic-speaking communities; moreover, the worldwide population of people of Slavic descent is estimated to be about 400 millions.

All our Slavic languages derive from that common Proto-Slavic tongue, knowledge of one Slavic language will often allow one to have at least a rough understanding of a text written in another Slavic language - but not sufficiently to achieve thorough comprehension. This fact has inspired linguists and others over the centuries to attempt to create a universal Slavic language that would be more understandable to all Slavs. Among these include Old Church Slavonic, developed in the 9th century by two Byzantine Greek missionaries and co-patrons saints of Europe, the brothers Constantine the Philosopher (Cyril) and Methodius of Thessalonica, as well as dozens of other projects to the present day. What they have in common is that they are all based on the assumption that the Slavic languages are still similar enough to make such an auxiliary language possible at all.

Interslavic language design is based on the harmony of the following three principles:

1. To share grammar and common vocabulary with modern spoken Slavic languages in order to build a universal language that Slavic people can understand without any prior learning.
2. To be an easily-learned language for those who want to use this language actively. Non-Slavic people can use this language as the entrance door to the big Slavic world. We believe that knowledge of Interslavic enables both Slavic and non-Slavic people greater passive (e.g. receptive) understanding and better learning of the real national Slavic languages.
3. Interslavic follows the tradition of the Old Church Slavonic language (OCS). OCS was the first literary Slavic language, believed to have been artificially developed in the 9th century by two brave Byzantine Greek missionaries Saints Cyril and Methodius, who were credited with standardizing the Slavic dialects and using it for translating the Bible and other ecclesiastical texts as a tool of the Christianization of the Slavic people. OCS is still frequently used by the Orthodox Church and sometimes also by the Roman-Catholics in many Slavic countries up to the present day. Neoslavonic version of Interslavic is designed as the modernized and simplified but still sufficiently compatible version of this old language.

Our Interslavic project is not the only one of its kind. Over the last two centuries, several other similar constructed languages were proposed, the most progress in which was made during the 19th century by the Slovenian priest and linguist Matija Majar Ziljski and the Czech translator and writer Václav František (Vjačeslav) Bambas. Our project has also been inspired by the successful reconstruction of the modern Serbian, Czech, Slovak, Indonesian, Arabic and Hebrew languages.

Our Memorandum says, that our Interslavic language project is based exclusively on forms that exist throughout the Slavic language continuum and that Esperanto-like artificiality is carefully avoided: every word stem, grammatical ending or morphological element can be found in several Slavic languages and ideally in all of them. This design strategy locates the Interslavic language at the very center of living Slavic languages.

why do we need an artificial interslavic language?

We know that about one-half (maybe more) of the total number of Slavic-speaking people use the Russian language. If the Russian language is sufficiently simple and understandable to other Slavs without learning, our project would be unnecessary; but unfortunately it is not. Russian is far from the imaginary linguistic centre of Slavic languages. It has a specific alphabet, phonetics, grammar and significant portion of its vocabulary without the universal Slavic validity. Of course, the same holds true in varying instances for all of our modern national Slavic languages.



European countries with Slavic as an official language (from Wikimedia)



Indo-European language tree (from Nature 449, 665-667, Oct. 2007)

Our strategy is to develop and broadcast Interslavic project in such a way that it can be naturally incorporated into the collection of spoken Slavic languages as an auxiliary language tool, enabling international dialogue, knowledge and cultural transfer without the need of translating information into several national languages.

Our experience is that speakers of Slavic languages tend to perceive the Neoslavonic/Interslavic language as either an ancient or remote dialect of their own native language, or as a neighboring language closely related to their own. People are often surprised how much they can understand of it.

Spoken languages are living things and we know that no constructed language (Esperanto, Interlingua, ...) or reconstructed modern national language (Slovak, Hebrew, Indonesian, ...) in the world is used in the exact same form as when it was first published. Therefore we welcome anybody – linguist, non-linguist, native speaker, non-native speaker – to join our ranks and work with us on this great task!