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EUROCOMSLAV - A ROAD TO SLAVIC LANGUAGES

What is EuroCom? EuroCom is the short name of the international project "EuroCom – a way to multilingualism for all Europeans". EuroCom stands for EuroComprehension and is the copyrighted name of a method for the acquisition of interlingual receptive reading competence in a number of genetically related languages. It makes optimum use of learners' previous knowledge of a language in the same subgroup as the language they wish to learn. It also includes the activation of special cognitive inference and learning strategies.

EuroCom, developed by an international team of researchers, pursues a very practical aim – giving Europeans a realistic way of becoming multilingual. In 1999, the project has been awarded the research award "European Seal for Innovative Language Projects" by the European Commission and the Austrian government.

EuroCom represents a trinity comprising EuroComRom, EuroComSlav and EuroComGer. As the coordinator of EuroComSlav I would like to briefly intro-duce EuroComSlav with special respect to the following main points:
1. EuroComSlav, the predecessors of Slavic intercomprehension and the bridging language for EuroComSlav.
2. The seven sieves of EuroComRom and the world of the Slavic languages.
3. Closing remarks: the prospects of EuroCom and EuroComSlav.

0. Introductory remarks

Our world seems to be changing faster than ever. This is evident from the inter-national handbook *Sprachwandel in der Slavia* (Zybatow 2000), which many contributors of this volume also helped to produce. It is also clear from the flood of new extra-linguistic and linguistic transformations which have arisen over-night as Europe converges, placing the question of understanding and communi-cation in a completely different light. With respect to languages and its language policy, there are many good reasons for Europe to have adopted a clear position comprising a plea for linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe, along with rejecting the domination of one language, a uniform pidgin idiom or culturally undistinguished Euro-Esperanto. The goal is not a Europe revolving around a

single language, but rather European multilingualism – the protection of the diversity of European languages and cultures. This goal also includes the integration of Slavic languages into a Europe of multilingualism.

Should the Slavists merely sit passively on the sidelines, silently observing the implementation of this goal? Of course not! Yet if we are to be involved, we need innovative ideas, especially, as a clear transformation is also taking place in this field of linguistic ideas.

Whereas not so long ago, no less a person than the famous Leo Weisgerber argued passionately for the use of a single language, nowadays anthologies appear under titles such as *Monolingualism can be cured*. These days we realise that, viewed globally, multilingualism is not an anomaly but actually the norm. Moreover, during the course of the globalisation and internationalisation of communication, multilingualism looks set to become increasingly normal. Furthermore, we are now doing away with some of the dogmas of language acquisition theory and treading new paths using alternative concepts of language acquisition, such as:

- a differentiated consideration of foreign-language competence (i.e. receptive multilingualism);
- the focused acquisition of partial competence with the option of modular expansion (i.e. the approach of receptive reading competence in languages for special purposes);
- the acquisition of competence using kinship between languages (i.e. intercomprehension research, which forms, for example, the basis of the EuroCom project).

Given these developments, the university Slavic departments are also called upon to depart from the traditional philological approach and to see what contemporary and practical contribution they can make under the motto "Slavic languages for Europe", and how they can contribute to enabling a better "European presence" of Slavic languages or an easier access to Slavic languages. One of such alternative and innovative approaches is provided by the project EuroCom.

1. EuroCom, the predecessors of Slavic intercomprehension and the bridging language for EuroComSlav

EuroCom combines linguistic, cognitive and language-acquisition foundations with the practical aim of giving Europeans a realistic route to multilingualism. For this purpose, EuroCom organises the areas in which the learner who knows a language in the same subgroup encounters familiar items in any other new language into seven categories known as the "seven sieves". After the language has been "sifted" seven times for familiar aspects, the information contained in

an original text in the new language turns out to be easily deducible. The meaning of the remaining parts of the text can then also be inferred relatively accurately.

When this method is applied, so many familiar items are sifted out of relatively unknown languages that the traditional practice of teaching just one language appears limited and obsolete, especially when it comes to the second or third foreign language. Therefore, by making completely new strategic usage of the little time available for language learning, receptive multilingual competence of Europeans is made possible. Learners using the EuroCom system are amazed to discover what they already know, even though they were not aware of it before. Learning with EuroCom is not, in fact, learning at all, but rather a system of playing and intelligent guessing. The system also includes calculable error, since the objective of creative, receptive competence rules out the dogma of so-called "nearly native speaker competence" and the anxiety involved.

The fact that people seem afraid of learning Slavic languages makes the approach of intercomprehension all the more important. By using the EuroCom strategy, those who have already gone to the trouble of learning one Slavic language can use it as a basis to access all the others.

As strange as it might seem, German Slavists seem not to have bothered about whether people also want to practically learn the Slavic languages. None of the existing German comparative presentations of the Slavic languages – such as Panzer (1996) or Rehder (1998) – are based on the approach of intercomprehension, even though it has, for instance, been used very effectively and convincingly in a whole series of works in English-language Slavic research.

I regard a range of English-language works and their authors as pioneers of Slavic intercomprehension research. We should mention, for example, the very thorough book *Reading Bulgarian through Russian* by Charles Gribble (1983). The book enables those with a knowledge of Russian to rapidly read and understand Bulgarian, including the main grammatical phenomena. Then there is Charles Townsend's book *Czech through Russian* (1981), which requires the learner to have spent two semesters learning Russian. It then uses this prior knowledge as a basis for the transfer at all levels of the language description of Russian to Czech. Thirdly, there is the three-volume *Guide to the Slavonic Languages* by de Bray (1980), whose conception and intention come quite close to our EuroComSlav project. The difference is that in the *Guide to the Slavic Languages*, learners are explicitly expected to have studied Old Church Slavonic rather than another Slavic language.

This brings us to the next point: the question of which bridging language (as we call it) is best for German-speakers working with the EuroComSlav course. In practicable terms – and I stress here: practicable, not ideological terms – there really are only two alternatives.

The first is Old Church Slavonic. Old Church Slavonic was the first Slavic literary language and was originally created as the church language for all Slavic dialects. Its importance for Slavic intercomprehension is similar to that of Latin for the Romance languages. Moreover, Old Church Slavonic has the advantage of being ideologically neutral, so to speak, as it would not favour one particular Slavic country or language. However, the serious disadvantage of Old Church Slavonic is that it is known by only a tiny number of people. Requiring non-Slavs hoping for receptive competence in all Slavic languages to master Old Church Slavonic is totally illusory.

The second alternative, Russian, appears much more realistic. It is the Slavic foreign language which is most widespread among German-speakers, and is taught not only at all university Slavic departments but sometimes even at schools. Another advantage of Russian as a bridging language is that it uses the Cyrillic alphabet. This of course facilitates access to other languages written in the Cyrillic script such as Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. Since German-speakers are already familiar with the Latin alphabet used in Czech, Polish, Slovak, Upper and Lower Sorbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Slovene, by using Russian as the bridging language, EuroComSlav will open up access to all the Slavic languages.

However, the main argument is the number of potential users. If EuroComSlav is to generate any sort of interest among German-speakers, the only realistic alternative is to follow on from Gribble and Townsend, and to use Russian as the bridging language.

This now brings me to the second and longest point.

2. The seven sieves of EuroComRom and the world of the Slavic languages

The main point here is that of the suitability of EuroComRom's seven sieves for EuroComSlav. I will proceed by simply trying out the sieves one by one on the Slavic languages. Let us start with Sieve 1 – the international vocabulary – and look at a short Ukrainian text:

2.1. Sieve 1: International Vocabulary

(1) Ukrainian text
Відомий американьский політолог Збігнев Бжезиньский, почесний громадянин Львова, приїде в Україну разом із Папою Римським Іоанном Павлом ІІ, який планує відвідати нашу країну 23 – 27 червня.

Про це повідомив директор оргкомітету з питань підготовки візиту и Папи Римського до Львова Іван Рудницький. За його словами львівскі власті направили запрошення 200 почесним гостям, у тому числі

американцю польского походження З. Бжезиньскому. Він займав посаду радника з національной безпеки президента США Джіммі Картера з 1977 по 1981 рік. ("Молодь України", 08. 05. 2001)

(2) International Vocabulary

Ukrainian:	*German:*	*English:*
політолог	Politologe	politologist
планує	planen	to schedule
директор	Direktor	director
оргкомітету	Abk. für Organisation und Komitee	abbr. organisation and committee
візиту	Visite	visit
радника	Berater; (be-)raten	adviser
національной	national	national
президента	Präsident	President
американьский	amerikanisch	American
Львова	Lwow/Lemberg	Lviv
Україну	Ukraine	Ukraine
із Папою Римським	Papst aus Rom	Pope from Rome
Іоанном Павлом ІІ	Johannes Paul II	John Paul II
американцю	Amerikaner	American
польского	polnisch	Polish

(3) Polish text

Quelle
mail order international
Perspektywy 2000
Jedno spojrzenie
i wiesz wszystko!
Nowy katalog Quelle
Wiosna/lato już się ukazał
Aktualne trendy mody,
bogata oferta -
na 160 stronach!
Zamów bezpłatny egzemplarz
Telefon:
0-61 879 39 01

(4) International Vocabulary

Polish:	German:	English:
perspektywy	Perspektiven	perspective
katalog	Katalog	catalogue
aktualne	aktuell	topical
trendy	Trends	trend
mody	Mode	fashion
oferta	Offerte	offer
egzemplarz	Exemplar	copy/issue
telefon	Telefon	telephone

Sieve 1 can be used to identify the international vocabulary from the new language, Ukrainian and Polish. The international vocabulary means foreign loanwords which German readers can guess on the basis of their native language. The internationalisms listed here can easily be deduced from the Ukrainian and Polish text.

One well-known but very important fact in this respect is that internationalisms are clearly on the increase in all the Slavic languages. This has been apparent from everyday language ever since the Slavic world opened itself up to the West. It can be observed in the languages of the Slavic media, in the new technical terminology being created, and so on. In other words, for the EuroComSlav project these familiar trends mean that in the future, using Sieve 1 on Slavic languages will bear more and more fruit.

2.2. Sieve 2: Pan-Slavic vocabulary

Sieve 2 looks for common Slavic words, termed by Klein/Stegmann (2000) as the pan-Slavic vocabulary. (6) lists the lexical items of the following Bulgarian text which can be easily understood with a knowledge of Russian.

(5) Реклама в списание "Славянин":

Велико Търново. Старата българска столица Велико Търново е град с богато истерическо минало, с неповторимо амфитеатрално разположение и живописна природа, с множесто уникални паметници на културата и динамична съвременност.

В старинната част на града се експонират и съхраняват ценните стенописи на църквите "Петър и Павел", "Св. 40 мъченици", "Св. Димитър" и други паметници на средновековната живопис, които са гордост на българската култура.

(6)

Bulgarian:	Russian:	German:	English:
в	в	in	in
българска	болгарский	bulgarisch	Bulgarian
столица	столица	Hauptstadt	capital city
град	город	Stadt	town/city
с	с	mit	with
богат	богатый	reich	rich
неповторим	неповторимый	unvergleichlich	unique
разположение	разположение	Lage	position
и	и	und	and
живописен	живописный	malerisch	picturesque
природа	природа	Natur	nature
множесто	множесто	Vielzahl	large quantity
паметник	памятник	Denkmal	monument
старинен	старинный	alt	old, ancient
част	часть	Teil	part
съхранявам	сохранять	erhalten, schützen	preserve, keep safe
ценен	ценный	wertvoll	valuable
стенопис	стенопись	Wandmalerei	mural
стена	стена	Wand	wall
мъченик	мученик	Märtyrer	martyr
друг	другой	anderer	other
средновековен	средновековый	mittelalterlich	medieval
живопис	живопись	Malerei	painting
гордост	гордость	Stolz	pride

As we can see, the second sieve used to sift out pan-Slavic vocabulary has an even higher yield in EuroComSlav than the corresponding pan-Romance vocabulary in EuroComRom. Why is this? The reason is that, compared to the pan-Romance vocabulary, the pan-Slavic vocabulary coincides much less with the international vocabulary. As a result, the sieve for the pan-Slavic vocabulary taps a much larger additional lexicon than the corresponding sieve in EuroComRom.

The EuroCom strategy must of course take account of the fact that the "common" vocabulary of a subgroup is not always obvious at first glance. Instead, words have to be reconstructed or related to the corresponding words in the bridging language. This especially goes for the Slavic subgroup. And this is where the third sieve of EuroComSlav comes in – that of inter-Slavic sound correspondence.

2.3. Sieve 3: Sound correspondence

This sieve is designed to enable EuroComSlav users to identify common lexical features regardless of their separate historical phonetic development. Important is that the phonetic shift – an area which has been described in greater detail than any other in the Slavic languages – does not need to be explained at great length. Instead, merely the main types of phonetic correspondence resulting from this shift and which are didactically relevant will have to be deduced and presented in a way which is as economic and effective for the user as possible.

For instance, to mention but one example, the phenomenon of liquid metathesis, which addresses the transformation of the Late Common Slavic *-or-* and *-ol-* between two consonants will not have to be explained in its comprehensive diachronic context. Instead, it only needs to be made available to the EuroComSlav user in the correspondence types deduced so that the user can infer simple transfer rules, such as from the Russian *дорогой (= dear)* to the Czech *drahý*, the Polish *drogi* or the Bulgarian *драги* etc.

(7) Sound correspondences for Russian *-oro-* and *-olo-* between two consonants:

		дорогой	-ra-/-rá-	Cz. *drahý, mráz, strana, prach*
-oro-	Rus.	мороз	≅ -ro-/-ró-	Pol. *drogi, mróz, strona, proch*
		сторона	-ra-	Bul. *драг, мраз, страна, прах*
		горох		

		голод	-la-/-lá-/-lé-	Cz. *hlad, bláto, mléko, mléčný*
-olo-	Rus.	болота	≅ -lo-/-le-	Pol. *głod, błoto, mleko, mleczny*
		молоко	-ля-/-ла-/-ле-	Bul. *глад, блато, мляко, млечен*
		молочный		

And now we come from Sieve 3 to a sieve which is especially important for EuroComSlav.

2.4. Sieve 4: Orthography and pronunciation

The well-known fact of the division of the Slavic languages into an East and West Slavic group is of course not a purely graphemic matter, but EuroCom is chiefly interested in the graphemic aspect.

Since the Cyrillic script matches the demands of the Slavic phonetic systems better than the Latin alphabet, learning Slavic languages via Russian is a useful way of imagining the sound of Slavic words written in the Latin alphabet. The pronunciation conventions of the ligatures and diacritics help us to discover

word kinships, or in other words, to comprehend words spelled differently in various Slavic languages when their pronunciation is known.

The fourth sieve is thus designed to clarify the orthographic conventions for the originally Slavic sounds in the Slavic languages using the Latin alphabet. Organising and presenting the regularities in the most effective way is not easy, and calls for creative solutions we are looking for.

(8) Slavia latina and slavia byzantina

	North		
	Polish	Russian	
	Lower Sorbian		
Upper Sorbian		Belarusian	
Slovak			
Czech		Ukrainian	
West			**East**
	Latin alphabet	**Cyrillic alphabet**	
Slovene		Bulgarian	
Bosnian		Macedonian	
	Croatian	Serbian	
	South		

2.5. Sieve 5: Morphosyntax

This Sieve 5 is designed to help the German EuroComSlav user to detect all the relevant grammatical phenomena. The information which can be obtained using Sieve 5 cannot be shown exhaustively here, and so I limit myself to the illustration of how Sieve 5 can be applied to an Ukrainian text.

(9) Рятуймо українську мову!

Триває жваве обговорення правопису української мови. Значна частина цього обговорення стосується іноземних слів. Насправді біда не в правописі, а в тому, що українські слова замінюються іноземними, наприклад президент, адміністрація, парламент … Таким чином, наші державні діячі роблять українську мову упослідженою, бо викидають її із побутування в громадському та суспільному житті України.

Люди добрі! Рятуймо мову, а правопис прикладеться!

Богдан Островський ("Літературна Україна", 22.03.2001)

(10) Help for translation of text (9) from Sieve 5

Рятуймα	1. p. pl. imp.; cf. рятувати – to save
Триває	3. p. sg.; cf. тривати – to last
Жваве	„-e": short ending of an adj., nom. sg.
Обговорення	„-ення": suffix of nominalisation
Правопису	„-у": noun ending, gen., masc. sg.
в правописі	„-i": noun ending, loc., sg.
в тому	„в тому": Ukrainian locative, Ru: в том
українські слова	„i": plural ending of adj.
Замінюються	„-ся": pass.
Роблять	„-ть": verb ending, 3. p. pl.
Упослідженою	„-ою": adj. ending, instr., sg., fem.
її	pers. pronoun, 3. p. sg. fem, cf. Ru. её
із побутування	nominalisation suffix
в громадському ... житті	„-ому": loc. ending of adj.

By the way, the information on the main typological differences between the Slavic languages should – according to the EuroCom-design – be placed in the so-called "Mini-portraits of individual languages", which will provide information on the individual linguistic peculiarities and exclusivities of any Slavic language.

For a brief typological survey of the nowadays 14 Slavic standard languages – in other words, from EuroCom's bird's-eye view recording the most prominent contours – the traditional division of the Slavic subgroup into East, West and South Slavic languages seems to be less suitable than the tetrachotomy proposed by Mareš (1986) comprising North-West, North-East, South-West and South-East Slavic languages.

This division into four categories enables the main typological common features to be illustrated, such as polnoglasie or the complete absence of the *m*-ending of the verb in the first person singular present in the North-East Slavic group (Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian), the possible AcI constructions in the North-West Slavic group (such as Czech and Slovak), the usage of the same conjunction *da* in affirmative and final clauses in the South-West Slavic group (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Slovene), or the numerous typological exoticisms of the two South-East Slavic languages Bulgarian and Macedonian, such as analytism and the absence of noun declination as a Romance substrate, the many Balcanisms, as well as the lack of an infinitive, the final article for determinedness etc.

2.6. Sieve 6: Pan-Slavic syntactic structures or core sentence types

The Slavic languages are usually said to have free word order. This is not to say that Slavic sentences do not have any basic syntactic structure; of course they do. However, in a sentence in which a certain context is figured, the syntactic structure is combined with the theme-rheme structure or, as we nowadays say, the information structure. However, as EuroComSlav chiefly deals with inferring the content of another Slavic language, these interesting grammatical questions can be neglected and the learner can be advised on how to identify the constituents of the sentence by using the endings.

Practically speaking, we shall limit ourselves to determining the core of the sentence – i.e. the subject and predicate – and infer the other component parts of the sentence lexically by means of their relationship to the predicate in terms of content. As far as simple declarative sentences are concerned, we usually distinguish between three types in the Slavic languages.

(11)	Russian:	Czech:
Two-part sentences	Мама поет.	Maminka zpívá.
	Mamma is singing.	Mamma is singing.
One-part sentences	Вечереет.	Stmívá se.
	Evening is falling.	(It is) becoming dark.
	Мне сообщили	Připravili mi
	Tell me (pret. 3. p. pl.)	Prepared me (pret. 3. p. pl.)
	приятную новость.	příjemné překvapení.
	pleasant news.	pleasant surprise.
	Someone told me	Someone prepared me a
	some pleasant news.	pleasant surprise.
Copula sentence	Мой отец здоров.	Otec je zdráv.
	My father (is) well.	Father is well.

The two-part sentences contain a subject and a predicate. The one-part sentences do not contain both a subject and a predicate, but only one or the other. They also include the so-called impersonal sentence constructions, which also have no subject.

In the copula sentences, the peculiarity of the East Slavic languages – Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian – is that in the present tense the copula appears in the zero form, whereas in the other Slavic languages it is implemented in all tenses and persons.

2.7. Sieve 7: Eurofixes (prefixes and suffixes)

The seventh sieve concerns lists of interslavic correspondences between prefixes and suffixes. They can be used to help EuroComSlav learners work out the meaning of words whose roots are known. In (12), for example, we see the Russian, Czech and Polish correspondences of the verbal prefix *vy-* in the Russian выпить (dt. *austrinken*/eng. *drink up*).

(12)	*Russian:*	*Czech:*	*Polish:*	*Bulgarian:*	*Translation:*
	выпить	vypít	wypić	изпия	drink up

Affixes which do not correspond, for example in Bulgarian, where in this case the prefix *iz-* is used, do not pose a problem. After all, although Bulgarian does not have a *vy-* prefix, it systematically uses *iz-* instead of *vy-*:

(13)	*Russian:*	*Bulgarian:*	*Translation:*
	выгнать	да изгоня	hunt out of
	выйти	да излезя	go out of
	вылететь	да изхвърча	fly out of

Optimised inference

To sum up, I would like to make a short remark about text inference. One important factor in EuroCom is choosing optimum texts. Texts must be carefully selected to make inference easier, both on the basis of their purely linguistic context and also on the basis of their further socio-cultural context. However, the interaction of linguistic and world knowledge as well as cultural knowledge would open up a whole new can of worms which I cannot go into now.

Finally, I would like to present a brief illustration of how text inference functions using the small Bulgarian text I mentioned earlier.

In the first step, the learner tries to understand the text with a number of gaps.

Optimised inference: step 1

(14) Advertisement in *списание* "The Slavs"
  Veliko Târnovo. *Старата* Bulgarian capital city Veliko Tirnovo *e град* with a rich historical *минало*, with a unique amphitheatrical position and picturesque nature, with a large quantity of unique *паметници* to culture and dynamic present.

In the old part of the town *ce* are exhibited and preserved *ценните* murals at the churches Peter and Paul, Holy 40 *мъченици*, Holy Dimitrius and other monuments of medieval painting *коитo ca* pride of Bulgarian culture.

As you can see, some parts of the text and certain lexemes have not yet been inferred. In step 2, the learner tries to deduce the meanings of the unknown words and word forms with the help of the context and the seven sieves.

Optimised inference: step 2

(15)

Старата:	Similar to the Russian старая.
	The morphosyntactic sieve indicates that the suffix -та is the definite feminine (final) article – *the old*
е:	*is* – in contrast to Russian, the copula is realised and conjugated in the present tense
град:	Compare with Petro*grad*, Volgo*grad* – *castle, city*
минало:	Has to be looked up: past (possible association with the Russian verb миновать – *to pass*
паметници:	Russian памятник, ц results from the consonant change к → ц – *monument*
monument	
to culture:	The morphosyntactic sieve reveals that in Bulgarian prepositions are used to indicate the case of the nouns and adjectives and are grammatically ambiguous
ce:	Russian ся – in contrast to Russian, the reflexive pronoun is not written together with the verb
ценните:	-те indicates the final article in the plural – *the valuable*
мъченици:	Looked up: *martyr*
които:	Guessed to be a relative pronoun
ca:	*are*

The third step finally leads to translation or complete text inference, during which EuroCom learners constantly experience amazement over what they already know without being aware of it.

Optimised inference: step 3

(16) Advertisement from the magazine "The Slavs"
Veliko Târnovo. The old Bulgarian capital Veliko Târnovo is a city rich in history with a unique amphitheatrical position and surrounded by picturesque

countryside, with a large number of unique cultural monuments and a dynamic present.
In the old part of the town, the precious murals in the churches of SS. Peter and Paul, the Holy 40 Martyrs, St. Dimitrius and other monuments to medieval painting are exhibited and preserved – the pride of Bulgarian culture.

All in all, understanding takes place in accordance with EuroCom's optimised text inference using spontaneous deduction by means of Sieves 1, 2 and 4, reflected deduction using Sieves 3, 5, 6 and 7, and by using the so-called "profile vocabulary".

3. Closing remarks: the prospects of EuroCom and EuroComSlav

More than half the world's population is multilingual. This proportion is rising, and in the future, a multilingual upbringing will be the norm. This tendency will of course increase as European integration proceeds – a process in which linguistic and cultural diversity must still be preserved. The slogan "many languages – one Europe" implies that the Slavic languages must also be included in this diversity, despite any difficulties this may cause. The Slavic languages and cultures will play their unmistakable violins within the colourful European linguistic and cultural orchestra. The EuroCom strategy will open up some of the related languages of the Indo-European language family to the Slavic nations, while in turn the Slavic languages will be made accessible to people in Western Europe with the help of EuroComSlav.

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