

George Starostin

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Curriculum Vitae

Research interests

General theory and methodology of comparative-historical linguistics; deep-level genetic relationship of languages; linguistic taxonomy; areal linguistics and language contact; historical semantics and lexical change; classical philology and textual studies; interdisciplinary research on human prehistory.

Languages of interest

Most of the major and minor language families of Eurasia and Africa, with specific focus on Dravidian languages, Yeniseian languages, Chinese and Sino-Tibetan languages in general, Khoisan languages, Nilo-Saharan languages.

Fluent in: Russian, English, French. Reading knowledge: German, Italian, Chinese.

Qualifications

2000 Candidate of Sciences degree in Comparative-Historical Linguistics, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow.

1997 Specialist degree in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow.

Positions held

2018 onwards: [Chief Researcher Fellow](#) at the Center for Comparative and Phylogenetic Linguistics of the Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

2013-2018: Head of the Laboratory of Oriental Studies and Comparative-Historical Linguistics of the School of Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Russian Presidential Academy, Moscow.

2005 onwards: Head of the Department of Far Eastern History and Philology of the Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow.

2000-2018: Senior researcher at the Center for Comparative Linguistics of the Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow.

Teaching experience

2019–2023: «Diachronic processes in linguistics» / «Comparative-Historical Linguistics» (School of Linguistics, Higher School of Economics, Moscow).

2003–2020: Regular courses (in Russian, occasionally in English) on the theory and methodology of historical linguistics; linguistic geography; Old Chinese language; classical Chinese philology and lexicography (Russian State University for the Humanities).

2015, 2016: Courses taught at the Leiden University Summer School in Languages and Linguistics (Lexicostatistical Methods in Historical Linguistics; An Introduction to Macro-Comparative Linguistics).

Other information

2001 onwards: researcher (since 2005 — co-head) for the "Evolution of Human Languages" program in historical linguistics, Santa Fe Institute.

2008 onwards: Managing editor for the international periodical *Journal of Language Relationship* (currently issued by the Russian State University for the Humanities; <http://jolr.ru>).

2011 onwards: Supervisor and general editor of the "Global Lexicostatistical Database" website (<http://starlingdb.org/new100>).

Select publications

A. Books (all in Russian).

Jazyki Afriki: opyt postrojenija leksikostatisticheskoy klassifikacii. Tom I: Metodologija. Kojanskije jazyki [Languages of Africa: an attempt at a lexicostatistical classification. Vol. I: Methodology. Khoisan languages]. Moscow: Languages of Slavic Culture, 2013, 510 pp.

Jazyki Afriki: opyt postrojenija leksikostatisticheskoy klassifikacii. Tom II: Vostochno-sudanskije jazyki [Languages of Africa: an attempt at a lexicostatistical classification. Vol. II: East Sudanic languages]. Moscow: Languages of Slavic Culture, 2014, 736 pp.

Jazyki Afriki: opyt postrojenija leksikostatisticheskoy klassifikacii. Tom III: Nilo-saharskije jazyki [Languages of Africa: an attempt at a lexicostatistical classification. Vol. III: Nilo-Saharan languages]. Moscow: Languages of Slavic Culture, 2017, 838 pp.

K istokam jazykovogo raznoobrazija. D'esat' besed o sravnitel'no-istoricheskom jazykoznanii [Towards the origins of language diversity. Ten talks on comparative-historical linguistics]. Co-authored with Yevgeniy Satanovsky, Anna Dybo, Alexander Militarev, Ilia Peiros. Moscow: «Delo», 2015, 584 pp.

B. Papers.

On the genetic affiliation of the Elamite language. // *Mother Tongue*, v. VII, 2002, pp. 147–170.

A lexicostatistical approach towards reconstructing Proto-Khoisan. // *Mother Tongue*, v. VIII, 2003, pp. 81–128.

From modern Khoisan languages to Proto-Khoisan: The value of intermediate reconstructions. // *Aspekty komparativistiki III. Orientalia et Classica: Trudy Instituta vostochnyx kul'tur i antichnosti, XIX* [Aspects of Comparative Linguistics. Orientalia et Classica: Publications of the Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies, XIX]. Moscow: RSUH Publishers, 2008, pp. 337–470.

Distant Language Relationship: The Current Perspective (with Murray Gell-Mann, Ilya Peiros). // *Journal of Language Relationship*, № 1, 2009, pp. 13–30.

Preliminary lexicostatistics as a basis for language classification. A new approach. // *Journal of Language Relationship*, № 3, 2010, pp. 79–116.

The Swadesh wordlist. An attempt at semantic specification (with Alexei Kassian, Anna Dybo, Vasily Chernov). // *Journal of Language Relationship*, № 4, 2010, pp. 46–89.

Dene-Yeniseian and Dene-Caucasian: Pronouns and Other Thoughts. // *Working Papers in Athabaskan Languages 2009*. Berkeley, California, July 10–12, 2009. Alaska Native Language Center: Working Papers № 8, 2010, pp. 107–117.

Dene-Yeniseian: a critical assessment. // *Journal of Language Relationship*, № 8, 2012, pp. 117–138.

Lexicostatistics as a basis for language classification: increasing the pros, reducing the cons. // H. Fangerau, H. Geisler, Th. Halling, W. Martin (eds.). *Classification and Evolution in Biology, Linguistics and the History of Science: Concepts – Methods – Visualization*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013, pp. 125–146.

Macro-comparative linguistics in the 21st century: state of the art and perspectives. // *Journal of Language Relationship*, № 11, 2014, pp. 1–12.

Proto-Indo-European-Uralic Comparison from the Probabilistic Point of View (with Alexei Kassian, Mikhail Zhivlov). // *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 43, 2015, pp. 60–80.

Genomic study of the Ket: a Paleo-Eskimo-related ethnic group with significant ancient North Eurasian ancestry (w. Pavel Flegontov, Piya Changmai, Anastasiya Zidkova, Maria D. Logacheva, N. Ezgi Altınışık, Olga Flegontova, Mikhail S. Gelfand, Evgeny S. Gerasimov, Ekaterina E. Khrameeva, Olga P. Konovalova, Tatiana Neretina, Yuri V. Nikolsky, Vita V. Stepanova, Igor V. Travinsky, Martin Tříska, Petr Tříska, Tatiana V. Tatarinova). // *Nature Scientific Reports*, 6, 2016.

Pitfalls of the geographic population structure (GPS) approach applied to human genetic history: A case study of Ashkenazi Jews (w. Pavel Flegontov, Alexei Kassian, Mark G Thomas, Valentina Fedchenko, Piya Changmai). // *Genome Biology and Evolution*, 8/7, 2016, pp. 2259–2265.

From wordlists to proto-wordlists: reconstruction as «optimal selection». // *Faits de langues*, 47/1, 2016, pp. 177–200.

The "Nostratic" roots of Indo-European: from Illich-Svitych to Dolgopolsky to future horizons (w. A. Kassian, M. Zhivlov). // *Slovo a slovesnost*, 77, 2016, pp. 392–415.

Macrofamilies and agricultural lexicon: Problems and perspectives. // Martine Robbeets, Alexander Savelyev (eds.). *Language Dispersal Beyond Farming*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017, pp. 215–234.

Lexicostatistical Studies in Khoisan I: The Ju-ǀHoan Relationship. // *Journal of Language Relationship* 16/2, 2018, pp. 19–61.

Studying language evolution in the age of big data (with: Bhattacharya T., Retzlaff N., et al.). // *Journal of Language Evolution*, 3(2), 2018, pp. 94–129.

Chinese basic lexicon from a diachronic perspective: implications for lexicostatistics and glottochronology. // *Journal of Language Relationship* 17/2, 2019, pp. 153–176.

Lexicostatistical Studies in East Sudanic II: The Case of Nyimang. *Lexicostatistical Studies in East Sudanic II: The Case of Nyimang*. *Journal of Language Relationship*. 2020, 18/1-2, pp. 111–125. doi: 10.31826/jlr-2020-181-209 (<https://www.jolr.ru/index.php?article=285>).

Restoring “Nile-Nubian”: How to Balance Lexicostatistics and Etymology in Historical Research on Nubian Languages. *Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies*, 2020, vol. 7, pp. 233–262. doi: 10.5070/D67052249 (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6663f1nt#main>).

Permutation test applied to lexical reconstructions partially supports the Altaic linguistic macrofamily (with Alexei S. Kassian, Ilya M. Egorov, Ekaterina S. Logunova, Anna V. Dybo). *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 3, E32, 2021. doi:10.1017/ehs.2021.28.

Rapid radiation of the inner Indo-European languages: an advanced approach to Indo-European lexicostatistics (with Alexei S. Kassian, Mikhail Zhivlov, Artem A. Trofimov, Petr A. Kocharov, Anna Kuritsyna, Mikhail N. Saenko). *Linguistics* 59/4, 2021, pp. 949–979. doi: 10.1515/ling-2020-0060.

Lexicostatistical Studies in Khoisan II/1: How to make a Swadesh wordlist for Proto-Tuu. *Journal of Language Relationship*. 2021, 19/1–2, pp. 99–135.

The Difficulties of Reconstructing the Cultural Lexicon for a Macrofamily-Level ProtoLanguage (Based on the Afrasian Example). *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021/4, pp. 267–273. doi: 10.31857/S086954150016798-7.

Lexicostatistical Studies in Khoisan II/2: Towards a more precise phylogeny for the Tuu family. *Journal of Language Relationship*. 2022, 20/1–2, pp. 25–70.

The value of “triangulation” in determining phylogenetic relationship: On the areal and genetic connections of the Berta languages. *Language In Africa*. 2022, 3-2, pp. 352–367.

Cognate maximization versus cognate minimization: in search of a “golden middle” for Altaic etymology. In: Valentin Gusev, Anna Urmanchieva, Aleksandr Anikin (eds.). *Siberica et Uralica: In memoriam Eugen Helimski*. Vol. 56: *Studia Uralo-Altaica*, pp. 277–293. University of Szeged.

Complete list of publications available online at: <http://rqgu.academia.edu/GeorgeStarostin>.

Select conference talks and presentations

Dene-Yeniseian and Dene-Caucasian: Pronouns and Other Thoughts. // Presented at: Dene / Athabascan Languages Conference. University of Berkeley, California, July 10, 2009.

Lexicostatistics as a basis for language classification: increasing the pros, reducing the cons. // Presented at the international conference: Bridging Disciplines: Evolution and Classification in Biology, Linguistics and the History of Sciences. University of Ulm, June 25, 2011.

Limits of unpredictability in the evolution of word meanings: how the study of semantic shifts may help linguistic reconstruction. // Presentation for the Seminar at the Santa Fe Institute, August 17, 2012. On-line video at: santafe.edu/research/videos/play/?id=44f2b12f-c8da-46ff-b40d-b0a78d8e37ff.

Lexicostatistics in Africa and its role in the reconstruction of Proto-Niger-Congo. // Presented at: Proto-Niger-Congo — Comparison and Reconstruction. International Congress. Paris, 18–21 September 2012.

On the Issue of the Genesis of the Khoe (Central Khoisan) Language Family. // Presented at: XIVth Conference on Africanistics. Moscow, Institute of Linguistics, May 27, 2014.

Macrofamilies and agricultural lexicon: problems and perspectives. // Language of the first farmers: workshop of the 49th Annual Meeting of the SLE. University of Naples, September 2, 2016.

The Dene-Yeniseian Hypothesis: A narrow linguistic bridge between the Old and the New Worlds, a piece of a bigger puzzle, or a hopeless fantasy? // Lecture given at Leiden University (Summer School in Linguistics), July 10, 2017.

Computational methods and long-range linguistic comparison: friends or foes? // Presentation for the Seminar at the Santa Fe Institute, August 7, 2017.

Chinese basic lexicon from a diachronic perspective: implications for lexicostatistics and glottochronology. // Presented at: "Old Chinese and Friends: Advances in the Reconstruction of Old Chinese Phonology", Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, April 27, 2018.