

## PHONOLOGICAL TYPE IN MOVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Dynamic approach in phonological typology makes it possible to show that the movement of a type in time involves two mutually bound processes: cyclic changes and an outstripping development of the secondary typological features before the primary ones have fully developed.

Many different ways exist for arriving at phonological types, but it is quite impossible to outline them here even briefly. Along with the inventory-configuration approach set up by Trubetzkoy (cf. his typology of vocalic systems), only some of the most typical can be mentioned.

Particular attention paid by Trubetzkoy to configurative traits of sound systems, incidentally, gave rise to purely surface representations of them. Thus, in the not too remote past there was a vogue for "geometric" typology that gave much room for drawing impressive pictures but too little - for enrichment of our still poor knowledge of the deeper structures and languages changes. Quite another, more fruitful trend of the configurative approach concerns the ascertainment of universal implicative relations between the feature categories that set the sound space of a language, cf. /1/.

There was also (and still is) an "arithmetic" typology based on the consonant-to-vowel ratio in sound systems and/or in sound sequences which represent some (no matter how sampled) texts in some (ideally in all) languages. This approach makes it possible to show the rough structure of the phonic substance of expression and to get a phonological typology of rather modest informativeness and of even more modest historical significance. Such a typology is still less promising when it is letters, not sounds that are counted.

Yet another line of typological reasoning deserves closer attention. The phoneme can be considered a mode of sto-

rage of the information about the most constant and "pressed" blocks of distinctive features. The other mode can be a syllable, in which case it acquires the status of an emic unit - syllabeme. Thereby a simple but universal typology can be (and actually has been) obtained that distinguishes phonemic vs. syllabemic languages, cf. /2/, especially /3/. This approach has the merit of being not eurocentric since it is applicable to practically all languages.

All the typologies mentioned above, however, are obviously static by their nature, whereas more effective is a dynamic approach, most soundly vindicated by J.H.Greenberg, aimed not merely at the arrangement, but at the explanation of the attested data by means of a complex procedure including both synchronic and diachronic argumentation (cf., for instance, /4/).

Such an approach implies the focusing of attention on the evolution of phonological types. There are two, to a certain extent mutually exclusive, properties of any language (permanent changeability and restrictedness of language technique) which induce one to suggest that the main principle of the language-type movement in time should be a cyclicity, despite the fact that some particular changes in the system can be irreversible. The cyclicity is apparent both in separate cells of the system and in the whole inventory of its items. It must be noted, though, that the cyclic movement by no means implies a precise repetition of the previous state of the system (type). In other words, a chain of evolution represented as  $S_0 \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$  (where  $S_0$  is some initial state) is but a particular case along with a more common case:  $S_0 \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S'_0$ , i.e. the question is not of a return to the initial state but of the transition into a state partly mapping the previous one.

Thus, in Polish a current process of denasalization of the nasal vowels is observed, but it leads to the restitution of the "initial" state only in some envi-

ronments. There are yet other positions where the nasality either disappears ( $\bar{V} \rightarrow \bar{V}$ ) or is substituted by the labiality ( $\bar{V} \rightarrow \bar{V}p$ ), e.g. *zoby* -- /zemby/ 'teeth', but *idę* -- /ide/ 'I'm going', *z toba* -- /stoboy/ 'with you'.

An example of the cyclicity at the level of a whole subsystem can be found in Bantu languages where some of them have seven-phoneme vocalism while the others have five-phoneme vocalism. As soon as for the Proto-Bantu a system of seven vowels has been reconstructed while for the Proto-Benue-Congo (of which the Bantu is an offspring) - a five-vowel system, it means that we are faced with a cyclic movement: \*5  $\rightarrow$  \*7  $\rightarrow$  5.

The above examples present simple and evident cases of cyclicity. One can find more complicated instances as well where an analysis of the phonological movement implies a phonological type to be correlated with more general types (in the first turn, with grammatical types).

In these latter cases another peculiarity of the type evolution can come to be better noticeable - an outstripping development of the secondary (implied) traits while the primary (type-forming) features have not yet evolved as a complete system. Such an evolutionary situation could be called the type anticipation, but in reality not every fact of the outstripping development means an obligatory transition to a new type: the movement can slow down or completely cease, and the new secondary features already in view either vanish or undergo restructuring. Below, a probable example of a "deep" phonological cyclicity will be regarded in some details, which is bound up with the evolution of the hierarchically higher - morphological - type.

Generally speaking, in every language the phonetic system may contain some more or less evident discrepancies in the sound production (or variation), due to the articulatory nature of different sounds or to a change (drift) affecting the system. In the last case, those discrepancies could be of a high typological value as indicative of some profound changes that affect the phonological system as a representative of a certain phonological type. However, within the Procrustean bed of rigorous phonemic interpretations, most of the allegedly marginal phonic anomalies inevitably come to be smoothed over. Undoubtedly, a functional view of speech data is a virtue and the very essence of linguistic analysis, but this view must not lose sight of the incessant movement of "language matter".

In the Russian phonetic system, the following discrepancies and anomalies can be observed that are of interest in view of the topic in question:

(1) acoustically poor and articulatorily non-homogeneous expression of the non-privative opposition of the "hard/soft" consonants mostly identified according to the properties of subsequent vowels /5;6/;

(2) weakening of the rule of assimilative "softening" of consonants before a soft consonant, the process spreading from morpheme-juncture positions to the intramorphemic positions /7/;

(3) a much higher degree of the articulatory cohesion in the unstressed syllables as compared to that of the stressed ones /8/;

(4) a sort of harmonization of the unstressed syllables /9/;

(5) phonetic asymmetry of the syllable patterns CV/VC, the latter showing the extraphonemic elements of Knacklaut type before V- and a voiceless vowel after C-/10/.

These apparently strange facts can be clear enough if put into relation with the agglutinative tendency observed in the Russian morphemics /11; 12/, i.e. with a change of the morphological type, and then (2) and (4) could be treated as facts of the outstripping development of secondary syntagmatic (antifusional) traits of a new paradigmatic type that is but taking shape. As regards the (1), (3) and (5), they reflect perhaps the competition of the cyclically bound phonological types - phonemic and syllabemic, the (3) probably meaning that in the Russian phonetic word two alternative patterns coexist - the phonemic one in stressed syllables and the syllabemic one in the stressed ones. The syllabemic type is supposed (R.Jakobson, R.I.Avanesov, V.K.Zuravlev) to be older, therefore we must be faced with the cyclic movement "syllabemic type -- phonemic type -- (quasi)syllabemic type". At the present stage, the elements of the syllabemic type turn out to be consonant with the new tendency to the agglutination proper to the Russian morphemics.

A phonetic background of the cyclicity outlined here could be seen in the far gone qualitative variation of vowels due to the consonantal domination in the Russian syllable, which causes the phonetic unstability of morphemes. And what is more, the usurpation of the timbre category ("fronted/backed") by consonants threatens the very existence of vowels as an autonomous phonemic class, that is why in the discrepancies mentioned above one can see a "phonetic riot" against phonemic regime, a riot directed towards the morphemic process of restructuring that goes from above.

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