

ISOMORPHOUS AND ALLOMORPHOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
CAUCASIAN AND SOME INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES IN THE
FIELD OF PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Similar and distinctive phonetic and phonological features of a number of languages of diverse types (analytical English, synthetic Russian and Ukrainian, and agglutinative Caucasian languages with some touch of polysynthetic characteristics in north-western branch and fusion in north-eastern branch) have been ascertained.

The main methods used in the investigation were: method of analytical comparison and questionnaire method.

1. INTRODUCTION

The choice for analysis of the languages of diverse types was conditioned by the fact that their fundamental characteristic features matter not only to the morphological and word-building levels, but also to other ones, including phonetics and phonology. For example, the leading feature of the agglutinative languages is haplosemy that is the attachment of one element of the form to one element of the content, which provides a higher degree of stability of the language system than the availability in the inflexional languages of synthetosemy (simultaneous polysemy) creating asymmetry. The latter involves fluctuating articulatory norms.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If we compare such Indo-European languages as English, Russian, Ukrainian with the Caucasian languages, we shall observe more advanced articulation of the former set of languages. The sound systems of the Caucasian languages contain velar, pharyngeal and partly laryngeal phonemes. In both English and Ukrainian there is only one pharyngeal phoneme (rendered by the letter "h" in English and "p" in Ukrainian). Russian has no pharyngeal sounds at all. In all three languages there are no laryngeal consonants.

One may note some tendency for rapprochement of Caucasian phonological systems to those of the Germanic and Slav languages under review. We mean the advance of the articulations of pharyngeal and laryngeal series in the Caucasian languages. The strong glottalized affricates turned into the corresponding aspirate sounds this way in Tindin.

Separate phonemes of the Caucasian languages are articulated differently; for example, lateral consonants in some Caucasian languages (Georgian, Zan, Rutul, Udi) are similar to the corresponding Russian and Ukrainian phonemes (dental), in some (Lezgian, Lack, Dargi, Agul, Tabasaran, Tsakhur) to

English ones (alveolar), in some — different from the corresponding phonemes of the Indo-European languages under review (front palatal — in Budukh and Hinalug; noisy — in Kabardian).

Besides the privative binary opposition according to a distinctive feature "resonance/lack of resonance", inherent in consonantal systems of all the languages under review, in the Caucasian languages there is one more opposition closely interwoven with the former; breath consonants can be aspirate and checked. That equipollent opposition embrace only obstructive sounds. It does not apply to spirants.

English is vocalic, while the Caucasian languages, as well as Ukrainian and Russian, belong to a consonantic type. The consonantal system is especially developed in Ubykh (80 consonants), Abaza (66 consonants), Hinalug (59 consonants), etc. The availability of the small number of vowels (2 - 3 vowels in some Caucasian languages) predetermines the absence of restrictions in their use and vice versa: the availability of the large number of vowels creates prerequisites for such limitation. For instance, open syllables cannot be concluded with short vowels in English, where there are many (27) vowels.

Accumulation of a great number of diverse consonants is a rare phenomenon for all the languages. This universal is connected with the tendency of effort economy: it is difficult to pronounce the great number of consonants without vowels. But in a small quantity of cases such clusters are found even in vocalic English. As to the

possibility of flowing several diverse consonants together, it is on the average more characteristic of Caucasian languages than of English, Russian and Ukrainian because there are fewer vowels in the former. The location of adjacent consonants and their highest possible number is individual for each language. For example, consonant clusters in the final position are typical for Svan and Tabasaran whereas ones in the initial position and inside the word are typical for Georgian. Russian can tolerate a cluster of four consonants in preposition, while English permits only three.

Some Caucasian languages (different sets) have oppositions; analogous to English — short/long vowels (Chechen, Ingush, Hunzib, Lack), open/close vowels (Chechen); analogous to Russian and Ukrainian — hard/soft consonants (Adyg, Abkhazian, Abaza, Ubykh). It is necessary to mention that the force of the opposition "open/close vowels" is great neither in English, nor in Chechen.

Some Caucasian languages (different sets) have phonological oppositions absent in English, Russian and Ukrainian: a) palatalization/lack of palatalization of a vowel (Svan, Udi); b) orality/nasality of a vowel (Batsby, Botlikh, Godoberin, Karatin, Hunzib); c) labialization/lack of labialization of a consonant (Abaza, Abkhazian, Adyghe, Kabardian, Ubykh).

From suprasegmental units we shall dwell on accent. The accent in all the languages under review, except the Rutul language and the Munib subdialect of Andy characterized by tonic (musical) accent, is dynamic.

It is in Russian where the accent is expressed most strikingly, a little bit less — in English, still less — in Ukrainian, and quite slightly — in many Caucasian languages.

Within the Caucasian languages themselves, even closely related, the accent has different intensity. For example, it is weaker in Andy than in Avar (both refer to Avar-Ando-Tsez subgroup of Daghestan group of languages); it is weaker in Georgian and Zan than in Svan (all three refer to Kartvel group of Caucasian languages). Weak stress of Modern Georgian literary language resembles the sea after a storm /5, 14/.

The degree of unstressed vowels reduction is connected by direct dependence with accent intensity. That is at the bottom of intensive reduction of unstressed vowels in Russian. That is the reason of stability for phonetic changes in Modern Georgian where there is weak stress and, on the other hand, frequent reduction of vowels (right up to their falling out) in the Old Georgian language, where strong stress dominated. The relatively strong accent of Modern Svan, Abkhazian, Abaza, Lezgian also results in the reduction of unstressed vowels.

English prefers close syllables, Russian and Ukrainian give preference to open ones. Caucasian languages are not identical in this respect. Even within one south-Caucasian branch the indices, according to our calculation, are quite different: close syllables prevail in Svan, whereas open ones dominate in Georgian and Zan, share of open syllables in Zan exceeding their share in

Georgian. Note should be taken that a close syllable was typical for Georgian historically /2, 29/. In the course of the Georgian language development the quantity of open syllables was being increased. For instance, the number of close syllables is greater in "Hero in tiger's fell" by Shota Roostavelli than in the works of literature by modern Georgian writers, although even there the quantity of open syllables prevailed over close ones.

Vowels serve as syllable-building sounds in Lack, Russian and Ukrainian, while in English not only vowels but also sonorous consonants "n" and "l" can fulfil that function: [kə:|tn], [ou|ld].

Let us dwell on living phonetic processes.

In contrast to English, Ukrainian, and Kabardian, where the neutralization of the opposition "voicelessness/resonance" in the final consonants does not take place, in Russian, Budukh, Lezgian the final voiced consonants are devoiced.

The neutralization of that opposition occurs in an ultima in Ingush, but the direction of the phonetic process is opposite: voiceless fricative affixal consonants "c", "ш", "x" are sonorized.

The notions "accommodation" and "assimilation" are often mixed being used as absolute synonyms. We consider that accommodation presupposes the adaptation within the bounds of one phoneme, while assimilation presupposes the substitution of one phoneme for another.

In the languages under review one can meet both regressive and progressive assimilation. But their proportion in various languages is different. In some

Caucasian languages (similar to Russian and Ukrainian) regressive assimilation prevails over progressive (Bezhitin, Zan, Adyghe, Tsez), and in some (similar to English) — quite the reverse (Chechen, Tabasaran).

Vowel harmony — non-contiguous assimilation of affix vowels to root ones — functions in some Caucasian languages like in Turkic languages (and often under their influence). A final vowel is liable to likening in Avar. Preverbs receive vocalism depending on a vowel in the root of the verb in Tabasaran. That phenomenon is not observed in the Indo-European languages under review.

Dissimilation is peculiar to a number of Caucasian languages (Abkhazian, Andy, Lack, Svan, Zan). It is found comparatively seldom in English, Russian, and Ukrainian (English "laurel" came from "laurer", Russian "верблюд" came from "велоблюд", Ukrainian "лицар" came from "рицар").

In all the Indo-European languages under review the speech of a male and a female is less differentiated than, for instance, in Hushtadin subdialect of the Bagvalin language. Intervocalic "д" turns into "p" in women's speech, while in men's speech "д" is not changed.

3. CONCLUSION

The comparative research of the given languages is interesting not only from the point of view of typological theory but also from the standpoint of practical application for the intensification of education process.

Reference to the isomorphous phenomena in a

mother tongue will save time on explanation, while attention to the allomorphic phenomena will help to avoid interference.

4. REFERENCES

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