PROLEGOMENA TO DIACHRONIC PHONOLOGY

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The problem of neutralization of phonological oppositions as a corner stone of phonology was for the first time put forward by count Trubetzkoy at the first Congress of phonetic sciences (1932). By that time Jakobson had published the first trial of historic phonology (1929) and clearly formulated its "Principles" (1931).

The XI Congress is proposed with the synthesis of these outstanding achievements of the 20th century linguistics which was expected for a long time. This synthesis makes it possible to construct the diachronic phonology paradigm which remained uncompleted up to now.

An unprejudiced analysis of the state of affairs in our science reveals striking contradictions between synchronic and historic phonology in general and the classical Prague concept in particular. The former one has been worldwide recognized and has become a kind of an epicentre of the 20th century linguistic thinking whereas the diachronic phonology has not won proper recognition even among specialists of the history of the language despite the fact that it is one of the first attempts of the special theory of structural transformations whose importance has been realized only nowadays.

It is realization of the central system-forming role of neutralization that made Trubetskoi revise all his earlier material in phonology, namely, all its notional apparatus (Viel, pp. 175-176; 183-188) and this made it possible to cauplete in 1933-1935, the construction of the paradigm of the general phonology as an integral science on phonological oppositions and conditions of removing these oppositions, i.e. neutralization. Jakobson's conception of historical phonology was established in 1927-1930. The fundamental concept of position was not properly ducidated in his work and, quite naturally, the concept of neutralization was not introduced at all. This concept as well as more recent "distinctive feature theory" (1952/56) is "a paradigmatic type phonology, and ignored the problems of syntagmatic relations" (Stankewicz, 1967, 394-5).

Many adherents of historical phonology, deliberately or instinctively and may be even for reasons of principle, focus their attention just on paradigmatics (Hoenigswald et al.). Martinet who paid great attention to neutralization could not, howerer, find a proper place for it in his diachronic phonology (1955), there is no place in it for the concept of position either. Nevertheless outstanding successes of the young-grammarians arc due to the fact that they tried to explain phonetic changes just by "phonetic environment" in positional conditionality, i.e. in syntagmatics. Therefore one more contradiction is revealed, namely, contradiction between historical phonetics and historical phonology.

Diachronic phonology could come into the world only having positively broken all ties connecting it with classical historical phonetics in whose depth it was generated. Jakobson gave a brilliant interpretation of the historical phonetics by Shakhmatov and contraposed "integral method" of historical phonology to "isolationism" of young-grammarians. From that time on "diachronic phonology is still in its infancy" (Wartburg, p.49). It can, at last, pass the adolescence age and assimilate the richest heritage of the previous generations. It is necessary to remove contradiction between historical phonetics and phonology, rehabilitate the postulate of immutability of phonetic laws and to bring all empirical material derived with their help into the most valuable capital of our science. It is necessary to remove the contradiction between the classical general and historical phonology by completing the construction of its paradigm.

From time to time attempts are made to give phonological interpretation of the phonetic law concept (A. van de Groot, J.Fourquet et al.), Sometimes it is stated that all phenomena covered by the Jakobson "mutation" formula can be due to an influence coming from the syntagmatic level "and any change in phonemic inventory" comes through a "rephonologization" of certain positional facts" (Ivić, p.52-53). Rather seldom the attention is paid to the role of neutralization in phonological changes: "from neutralization to neutralization the opposition disappeared completely" (Fourquet, p. 131). However attempts to remove cardinal contradiction of our science, to reconsider its entire notional apparatus and to perform the proper synthesis have never been made.

The proposed synthetic conception of phonology is based on neutralization as a nucleus of oppositions of the phonological system: there is an opposition (in position of differentiation) and there is no opposition (in position of neutralization). Neutralization connects paradigmatics and syntagmatics by means of positional (syntagmatic) removal of paradigmatic opposition. Being strictly synchronic neutralization is turned to diachrony, convergence or divergence, dephonologization of a neutralized opposition or phonologization of potential opposition in past or future. Thus it connects synchrony and diachrony removing, at last, the Saussure's antinomy.

Neutralization has actually turned out to be the most powerful system-forming factor. It integrates uniting phonemes and allophones, positions, oppositions and correlations, vocalism and consonantism as a single whole.

The centre control the periphery via the neutralization mechanism thies stimulating the corresponding phonetic laws as means of generation of allophonic variation aimed to create potential phonological oppositions which can increase the integrative force of central correlations (cf traditional concept of the "system pressure").

Chaos of accomodations becomes Cosmos of regular neutralizations determinated by the particular system as a tendency of growth of its integrative properties. Thus one more contradiction of our science is removed, namely, the young grammarians managed to find regularity in the past, in the history of the language and we cannot reveal phonetic laws in the present, in the observed synchronous state. Accomodations, assimilations, dissimilation and even neutralizations which were considered to be a destructive factor weakening the distinctive (differentiative) force now turn out to be the system integration factor. The loss in differentiation is compensated by the gain in internal integrity, coherence of the system.

Being very sensitive to integrative needs of the system neutralization, this "demiurge" of Trubetzkoy, gives rise not only to new allophones but also to the rules of their positional functioning at the given synchronous state of the language, i.e. creates the phonological essence of the socalled phonetic laws of the young-grammarians.

The neutralization mechanism employs quantitative and qualitative change in differentiation and neutralization positions thus performing convergence-divergence of phonemes and allophones as a main way of phonologization of potential opposition and dephonologization of obsolete ones. "Demon" of Polivanov "enables or disables" the phonetic laws by taking off the former allophones from the state of the complementary distribution and by removing their positional dependence (the law is disabled). It also selects those potential convergents and divergents from the allophonic variation which are able to take part in the following convergent-divergent process (the law is enabled).

Now it is not typology of correlations and not survey of the inventory of distinctive features but typology of neutralizations, mechanisms and rules of its performance that are put in the foreground of the diachronic phonology. Since it (typology of neutralizations) is constructed and tested using the material of different languages irrespective of their genetic affinity it can serve as a more reliable base of the diachronic reconstruction than isolated facts of similar changes in unrelated languages of the conventional typology.

To complete the paradigm of the diachronic phonology means to give the main role not to a phoneme or a distinctive feature, or an opposition, or a correlation, or a position and not event to a neutralization but, at last, to the phonological system as a whole, to its integrating properties and the system-forming factors and their dynamics. In this case an investigator will pay his attention not to the aspect of mutability (cf "phonetic changes" of traditional historical phonetics and phonology) but to stability, to dialectics of self-preservation and self-motion of the phonological systems. And only now it becomes possible to reveal the profundity of Trubetzkoy's idea that "the phonological evolution makes sense only if it is applied to the reasonable reconstruction of the system... Many phonetic changes are caused... by the necessity to form stability... to correspondence to structural laws of the phonetic system (1929, p. 65). Revision and intensification of "the integral method" of diachronic phonology make it possible to recover and enhance its explanatory function. The notional apparatus of the modern diachronic phonology allaws us to reconstruct continuous sequence of phenomena and processes of the phonological system history as a continuous chain of causal-resultative relations.

References

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