

ON THE COMPONENTS OF THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF PHONEMES

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It may be assumed that the distinctive features of phonemes (at any rate, some of them) dissolve into smaller linguistic units. The fact that these units are variously "assessed" in different languages may be taken as an index of their linguistic nature.

Thus, the feature "continuant - interrupted" can be split into at least two components: one connected with the duration of noise and the other with the rate of noise intensification. At a constant duration of noise, depending on the rate of noise intensification, sounds can be perceived as continuant or interrupted. It is feasible to synthesize a sound that is perceived by a Georgian either as spirant s or as affricate c, depending on the manner of reproduction: from beginning to end or from end to beginning.

The change of a spirant into an affricate is attained by removal of both the beginning and the end. In the latter case only the duration changes, whereas in the former both components are altered. The values of components compensate for each other. The effect of compensation depends here not only on the value of their parameters, but also on their relative weights in any given language. Obviously, the relative weights of noise intensification should be different in languages where this characteristic may differentiate sounds of the type s, c, t, and in languages where sounds of the type c (affricate) are absent. The weights of the noise duration component in languages where long and short phonemes may or may not be differentiated by noise duration, should also be different.

A parameter of distinctive feature with several components can be represented as a sum of the values of these components. The value of each component has its own coefficient. The latter reflects the component's relative weight, i.e. its power of compensation in a given language. In contrast to this, different distinctive features cannot compensate for each other.