ABSTRACT

The problem of descriptive units is of paramount importance for any typology. Isomorphism (similarity), which prevails over allomorphism (dissimilarity) in the iconic (onomatopoeic and sound-symbolic) words of any two (unrelated) languages, cannot, as a rule, be revealed on the level of individual phonemes. The paper is a first report on the implications for typological phonosemantics of a notion introduced earlier by the author - the notion of the phonemotype (i.e., a "semantically loaded" acoustic or articulatory type of phonemes). The phonemotype as a unit is shown to possess a number of unique features.

The emergence of the new linguistic science, phonosemantics (dealing with the iconic, i.e., onomatopoeic and sound-symbolic, system of language), necessitates the elaboration of typological phonosemantics, or a phonosemantic typology of the world's languages. Linguistic iconism is an absolute language universal, and the scope of the iconic system in language is, contrary to popular sentiment, extremely great. This system does not include exclusively words that are felt to possess a phonetically motivated connection between sound and sense - it also embraces all those countless words where in the course of historical development, this connection has become obscured but where it can be uncovered with the aid of "deep down" etymological analysis buttressed by "external" typological data.

Invading the realm of iconicity, the researcher, like Alice in Wonderland, probes a world where many things are "so different" and "so unlike"; prepared to relinquish some of the hallowed age-long linguistic shibboleths and willing to work out a new set of values, the explorer presses on in his quest. Phonetic (phonological) typology and semantic typology are venues for the study of sound and, disconnectedly, sense. The blazing gap is there - to be bridged by phonosemantic typology exploring the sound/sense connection in the lexis of different - primarily unrelated - languages.

The problem of descriptive units is of paramount importance for any typology. Isomorphism (similarity), which prevails over allomorphism (dissimilarity) in the iconic words of any two (unrelated) languages, cannot, as a rule, be revealed on the level of individual phonemes (instances like the English ting and Indonesian ting, both signifying the sound of a small bell, are very infrequent). This paper is a first report on the implications for typological phonosemantics of a notion introduced earlier by the author - the notion of the phonemotype (i.e., a "semantically loaded" acoustic or articulatory type of phonemes).

Taking by way of illustration a number of onomatopoeic groupings, I shall attempt to retrace the steps in arriving at the notion of the phonemotype in phonosemantic typology.

Illustration 1: Instants. These onomatopoeic roots designate pulses (the pulse is an instant sound like a tap, tick, or knock). Cf. examples from four languages (of diverse language families), viz. English (Eng.), Estonian (Est.), Bashkir (B.), Indonesian (Indon.). Eng. tap, tick, pat, pop, click, clop-clop, chop; Est. tikk-takk - tick-tack (of a clock), klop-klop - imitative of tapping on the door, kloabisema - to go clop-clop (of wooden shoes), pligisema - to click; chatter (of teeth); B. tap - instantaneous sound of hard object falling to the ground, dök - dull knock or tap (on the door), qup - sound of object striking wood, kelt-kelt - to tick; Indon. tuk - imitation of knocking, tak - sound of a stone striking wood, bap - imitative of an object falling on a soft surface, bak - a pat; sound of fruit falling on the ground, lepik - sound of matchbox falling on the floor. Listing the initial consonants in the roots of the enematopes cited, we find them to be: /t,p,k,k,d,b,
The root-final consonants are:
- /p, t, k, b, d, g/ (plosives, initial and root-final)
- /s, z, j, v, h/ (fricatives, initial and root-final)
- /l, n, m, ɾ, ŋ/ (nasals, initial and root-final)
- /0, ɾ, ŋ, f, v, s, z/ (affricates, initial and root-final)

Initial and root-final consonants in these examples are, respectively, /t, p, k, b, d, g/.

Plosives (as well as affricates) dominate onomatopoeic designations of a pulse, as the articulatory element that generates them are not purely phonetically accented. Hence plosives (as well as affricates) do not belong to the "semantically loaded" and charged with instrumental reality. Hence plosives (as well as affricates) do the delicate task of conveying meaning; they are the primary the phonemes that do the semematic job for the entire onomatopoeic root. Plosives in Instants are an example of what I term the phonemotype. For these onomatopoeic designations a pulse, it is primarily the plosives that do the semematic job for the entire onomatopoeic root.

The purport of this is that for the phonemotype, a phonetic vowel is here irrelevant.

The phonemotype, instrumental in tapping the typical phonematic space in a manner independent of the referent sound, is the echoic symbol (textualized form or voiceless fricative) by structural phonetic elements referred to as "phonosemantic variables". This transphonemic reference is, as has been shown, the very essence of the phonemotype, in terms of linguistic phonosemantics; as well as in typological phonosemantics. For the latter, cf. Prof.R.W. Jespersen's "Phonosemantics. Leningrad, 1982. (In Russian)."

The phonemic inventory of languages, though differing somewhat from the phonemic inventory of onomatopoeic roots, is fundamentally the same entity as the one outlined above (a detailed analysis calls for discussion in a separate paper).

The phonemotype in the iconic vocabulary of languages designates a number of highly specific features. To name just a few: the phonemotype is a semionic entity.

It is a two-faced entity, both phonetically and phonemic. (Here one might be tempted to introduce the sesquisemiotic type or second "phoneme".

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