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FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS OF PHONOLOGY: SEGMENTATION

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Epigraph:

“There are no languages without phonemes”

Patrick Sériot

Roman Jakobson (1896 – 1982)



Analytic transcription

m

– vocalic
+ consonantal
– compact
+ grave
+ nasal

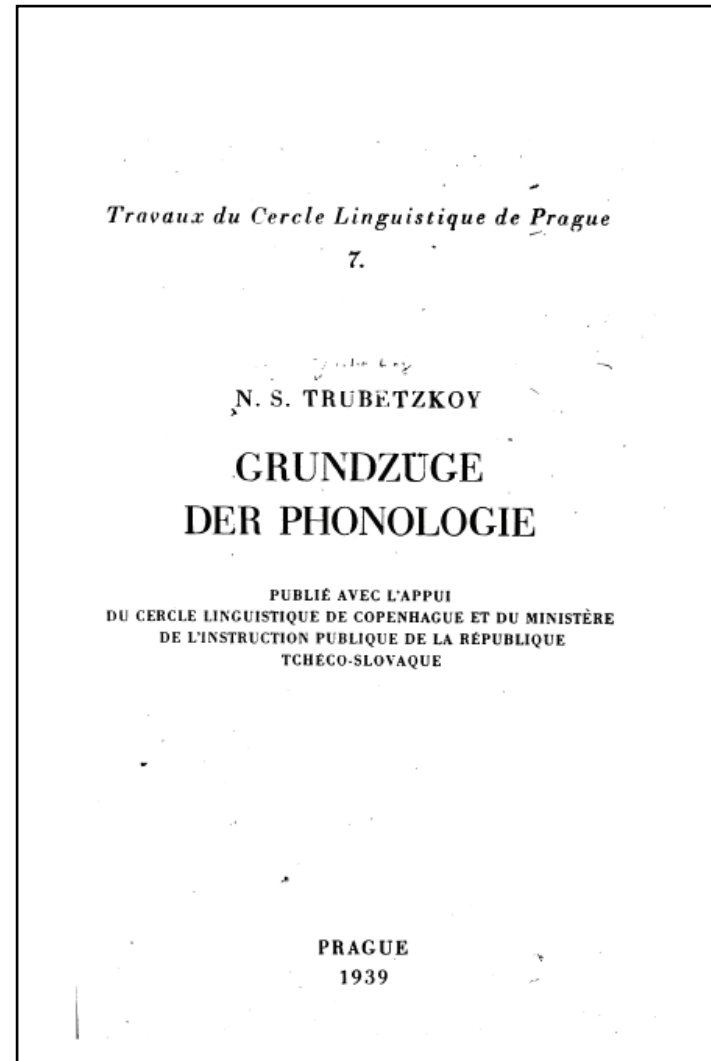
a

+ vocalic
– consonantal
+ compact
+ grave
– flat

j (glide)

– vocalic
– consonantal
etc.

Nikolaj Sergeevich Trubetzkoy (1890 – 1938)



Phonology and Phonetics

We designate the study of sound pertaining to the act of speech by the term

phonetics,

the study of sound pertaining to the system of language by the term

phonology

N.S. Trubetzkoy. *Principles of Phonology*.
Los Angeles: University of California, 1969. 4

+/- recognition

- Trubetzkoy: “scholars who reject the distinction between act of speech and system of language cannot recognize phonetics and phonology” (6)
- “for most, such nonrecognition is simply a consequence of inertia, mental lethargy, and stubborn rejection of any new thought” (ibid.)
- “there are also linguists who may recognize the difference between act of speech and system of language, as well as the difference between distinctive and nondistinctive phonic oppositions, who nevertheless do not want to separate phonology from phonetics” (ibid.)
- A.A. Reformatzky: ‘The position of phonology is clear: like grammar and lexicology, it is a lawful aspect of linguistics, which is a social science. But what is the position of phonetics? Among what kind of sciences? If speech sounds are a “thing” used due to their physical properties, they definitely are an object lying outside social sciences’. “The problem of the phoneme and phonology.” *Izvestija Akademii Nauk SSSR. Otdelenije literatury i jazyka*. (1952) Vol. 11/5. P. 454).
- Trubetzkoy: The absence of a sharp division between phonology and phonetics was a methodological shortcoming of the classic handbooks on phonology, which had the consequence of slowing down the development of phonetics as well as phonology

Phonetics

- “the term “phonetics” is always used to designate the study of the physical or physiological constitution of speech sounds.”
- Since the signifier of the act of speech is a nonrecurring natural phenomenon, that is, a flow of sounds, the science in which it is studied must use the methods of the natural sciences.
- Depending on whether the object of study is the constitution or the production of sounds—though actually both aspects must be studied simultaneously—either the purely physical, acoustic aspect or the physiological articulatory aspect of the sound flow can be studied.

Trubetzkoy: flow of sounds

m

[contoid]

a

[vocoid]

j

?

Phonetics

Language & Languages

- LANGUAGE
- Russian, Chinese, English, $n + 1$

Analysis

- “Breaking up of anything complex into its various simple elements” (OED)

Minimal Pairs

- Russian *dom – tom*
- English *sit – sat*
- Names: *Bitter : Chitter : Ditter : Fitter*, etc.
- “As an English-speaking person, ,, you easily divide the continuous sound-flow into a definite number of successive units”
(Jakobson R. & Moris Halle. *Phonology in Relation to Phonetics*)
- **/a + i/ bind : */a + u/ bound*
- */i/ : /æ/ sit – sat*

Gordina's rule: resyllabation

- stol-Ø 'table, desk' (zero-ending)
- stol-a 'Gen.'
- stol-u 'Dat.'

- *da-j* 'give!' (imper.),
- *da-t'* 'to give'
- *da-m* 'I will give'

- *daju* [*da-ju*] 'I give', cf.
- [*sta-lá*], [*stal-ú*], etc.

- *da-t'* 'to give',
- *da-m* 'I will give'

Gordina's rule: no resyllabation



/ai/ 'love'

Syllabic Languages?

- Συλλαβὴ δὲ ἐστὶν φωνὴ ἄσημος συνθετὴ ἐξ ἀφώνου καὶ φωνὴν ἔχοντος
- 'A syllable is a non-significant sound composed of a mute and a vowel'

Aristotle. *Poetics* XX

English

- [bai-in] *buying* vs *[ba-jin] (/ma-ja/)
- *peat* [pi:t] – *peaty* [pi:-tɪ]
- *pity* [pɪtɪ], *city* [sɪtɪ]

Where is the boundary?

Language Typology

1. **phonemic**, having both vowels and consonants as minimal units of the plane of expression (Slavic, Romance languages);
2. **isolating** (erroneously, 'syllabic'), with minimal units of the plane of expression coinciding with the exponents of the respective words/morphemes; hence, no vowel and consonant phonemes, nor syllables as /CV/-combinations.
3. **mixed type**, with phonemic long vowels/diphthongs and consonants, plus indivisible /NCV/-complexes.

A comment on English

- Partly like Russian: *tea*
- Partly like Chinese: *sing*
- but worse: *pity, city, body*

Thank you!