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Abstract

Syllabic languages where the syllable is always a minimally meaningful unit and represents one morpheme possess phonological features which are common for these languages irrespective of their genetic relationships (relevant syllable division, monosyllabism, tones, specific syllable initials and finals differing both in number and quality). The subject of this paper is to trace phonological changes in Germanic languages which increase their affinity with syllabic languages.

1. Changes in contact type and syllable division

One of the most important changes in history of Germanic languages is the change of the correlation between vowel length and syllable division within the word. In old Germanic languages *CVCV* sequences had open syllables irrespective of vowel quantity and such free length is preserved in some modern High Alemannic, South Bavarian and Scandinavian dialects. In modern Germanic languages the syllable is always closed after a short vowel (close contact) and open after a long one (loose contact). Thus modern Germanic languages show the development from *CV-CV* language to *CVC-V* one. In the overwhelming number of close contact words of *CVCV(C)* type *CVC* sequences represent a root morpheme and the syllable and morpheme boundary coincide. Standard High German is a typical example of a languages with the contact correlation where the type of contact reflects chiefly the preceding opposition *V:C — VC:*. However in many Germanic languages the number of close contact words increases at the expense of loose contact words, thereby increasing the number of words with the coinciding syllable and morpheme boundaries. The first change that increases the number of close contact words and leads to the monophonemisation of original *VC*-sequences is the contact shift in the combinations *V: +j, w* that occurred in Middle English (cs. OE *growan*, ModE *grow*), in Frisian, Dutch and Low German dialects. This trend is quite obvious if

we compare Middle West Frisian which possessed 6 so called long diphthongs (i. e. biphonemic combinations of $V + C$) with the modern Frisian dialect of Schiermonnikoog where 5 of them were shortened and j and w got incorporated into the syllable nucleus [Spenter 1968]. Though this change is not often the case in High German dialects it can be observed even there (cf. Low Alemannic /sauə/, /sdeïə/, Standard High German *sagen, steigen*) [Жирмунский 1956]. The same type ^{/154//155/} of change is now taking place in Danish (cf. /bre²vəd/ > /brev²əd/ *brevet*, /fla²ʏen/ > flai²ən/ *flagen*). Not only [j] and [w] are apt to change the contact type and to become part of a monophonemic diphthong but also the resonants /r/, /l/ and /n/ can vocalise merging with the preceding vowel. Such is the development of the postvocalic /r/ in English, Danish, Low and High German dialects, the development of /l/ in Low and High German dialects, Dutch and English (cf. modern trend to vocalise /l/ both in *filling* and *feeling*) and the incorporation of /n/ into the nasalised vowel in various modern Germanic vernaculars.

The other type of contact shift leading to the increased number of close contact words affects root morphemes with voiceless stops and high vowels. We know that the vowel duration is dependent on the vowel height and on the quality of the consonant (the shortest are narrow vowels followed by voiceless stops). The degree of $V + C$ contact seems to depend on the same factors [Goudaillier 1973]. The change of the contact type (loose > close) of vowels (especially narrow) + voiceless or tense plosives can be observed in English, Frisian, Dutch, Low German and Danish dialects. In Frisian this change affects chiefly the combinations which are most suitable to be shortened (narrow vowels + voiceless stops). In many words here the contact shift is already completed (e. g. *dyk, bite, buk*) in some words it is still in progress (cf. free variations of contact type in *siik* /si:k/ — /sik/ or *broek* /bru:k/ — /bruk/). If Selkirk [1982] and Kukulshchikova [Кукольщикова 1984] are right and the syllables with postvocalic tense stops in English are always closed irrespective of the quantity and the quality of the preceding vowel (words like *pity* and *peaty* having the same type of contact and the same type of syllable division), we can suggest that the close contact ousted the loose one in all words with original long vowels followed by tense stops. In Dutch the contact type changes in the combinations of original /i:/, /y:/ and /u:/ with any consonant except /r/. Vowel length and syllable division in the words like *gieten* and *boeken* are the same as in the words *pitten* and *putten*. In both cases we have the same type of closing command after the short vowel [Nooteboom, Slis 1972].

2. Increase in difference between initials and finals

One of the most apparent phonological features of the syllabic languages is the qualitative and the quantitative difference between initials and finals. This difference coupled with morphologically determined syllabification indicates a particular manifestation of the morphological boundaries in a text. The number

of initials chiefly consisting of released consonants, glottal stop, /h/ and consonant clusters exceeds considerably the number of finals which can vary from 13 in Mon Khmer languages to 3 in Myao. Consonant clusters are intolerable as finals. The processes resulting in forming the same type of correlation between initials and finals are going on in Germanic languages. The simplification of final clusters *CC* occurs here according to two patterns: vocalization and nucleation of the first consonant or deletion of the second consonant. In both cases the patterns *CVCC* is ousted by the pattern *CVC*. Vocalisation affects at the first place the resonants and it is characteristic of English, Dutch, Afrikaans, Frisian, Danish, Low and High German dialects (cf. the changes *VrC* > *VC*, *VIC* > *VC*, *VnC* > *VC*). The second pattern is the deletion of stops. In Afrikaans two types of stop final clusters were simplified chiefly by the deletion of final stop /t/ after obstruents and all stops after resonants [Ponelis 1989]. The deletion of final stops is a characteristic feature of the Jutlandic Danish [Bengtson 1985], some Low German and English vernaculars.

3. Tones

Every monosyllable in the syllabic languages is characterized by a special tone. Most typologically similar to the tones of the syllabic languages are tones in Danish (Jutlandic) and Low German dialects where they occur exclusively in monosyllabic words. The tonal distinctions reflect here the original distinctions of monosyllabic and bisyllabic words (cf. Jutlandic Danish /¹hu:s/ — /²hu:s/ Standard Danish *hus* — *huse*). In Franconian dialects the tonal distinctions are also largely characteristic of monosyllabics and reflect original opposition of mono- and bisyllabic words but due to the so called spontaneous and combinatory accentuation the tone of the apocope can occur both in original monosyllabic and preserved bisyllabic words. Even though the problem of the origin of the tonal distinctions in Germanic languages can not be considered as finally solved there is much evidence that the traditional idea that the tones in Danish, Low German and Franconian dialects appeared in the period of the apocope is valid. Spontaneous and combinatory accentuation in words with original long broad vowels and voiced consonants in original monosyllabics and preserved polysyllabics in Franconian can be explained as depending on their longer duration connected with the quality of the corresponding vowels and consonants. The tonal distinctions become relevant in the period of the apocope, one of the phonetic features of the apocopated words being length. At this moment phonetically longer duration of the broad vowels and of the vowels before the voiced consonants become apocopically accentuated even in words which were not affected of the apocope. Thus the Low Franconian dialects where the longer duration is one of the features of the apocopated words and of the words with spontaneous and combinatory accentuation reflect the older stage of the development whereas the central Franconian “Scharfung” in apocopated

and spontaneous/combinatory accentuated words is the result of metatony. In English there is a trend to an abrupt (“entering”) tone to be formed in the words with unreleased tense stops. In West Jutlandic dialects we can see two types of the same kind of abrupt tones.

All above mentioned changes in spite of their seeming differences are the expression of one trend, the trend of morphosyllabism which is characteristic of the development of Germanic languages. /156//157/

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