THE ROLE OF NEUTRALIZATION IN THE MECHANISM OF PHONOLOGICAL CHANGES

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The proposed conception solves some problems and explains general laws of diachronic phonology: "system pressure", "empty squares", catalysis, limitation of allophonic variation, etc.

Subjects

Having posed the corresponding formulae: a→b+c (1); a x b→c (2), Polivanov reduced the empirical experience to two main types of sound changes - 1) divergence and 2) convergence. The problem of close interconnection between them was set: convergence as a rule is accompanied by divergence, and vice versa. Jakobson having brought the formulae together, proposed the combined formula of phonological sound changes: $A_1:B_1 \rightarrow A_2:B_2$ (3). The case of Polivanov's 1 or 2 formula presupposes the appearance of a new opposition or disappearance of an old one. Another type of phonological changes was discovered. The opposition is preserved but the relationship between its members has been changed. The change of the phoneme turned out to be interconnected with the opposition. The necessity to solve these and other problems of diachronic phonology makes us look at the phenomenon of neutralization of phonological opposition at the present synchronic stage. Any neutralization may be expressed by the following combined formula: $\underset{Pr}{a:b} \leftrightarrow \underset{Pn}{C}$ (4).

The power of the phonological opposition and the power of neutralization can be calculated: $F^o = k\frac{d}{n}$, $F^n = q\frac{n}{d}$, where d is the number of differentiation positions (position of maximum differentiation), n the number of positions of neutralization (weak position). By means of coefficients (the number of correlated pairs - k, and the number of neutralized pairs - q) the investigated opposition is included into the system of related oppositions - into the correlations. The comparison of the combined neutralized formula with Polivanov's convergence and divergence formulae reveals the difference only in the dependency of strong and weak positions.

Conclusion

Phoneme convergence and divergence should obligatorily pass through the neutralization stage by means of a correlation between the numbers according to the formulae (5) and (6). Neutralization observed at the present synchronic stage may potentially be regarded as the way either to divergence or to convergence, i.e. the arrows in formula (4) may be two-directional.