

Restructuring of Stress Phonetic Parameters as a Stimulus for Accentual System Evolution

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1. A SORT OF INTRODUCTION

We accept the assumption that there is a set of axiomatic presuppositions (premises) rested on evidence obtained experimentally.

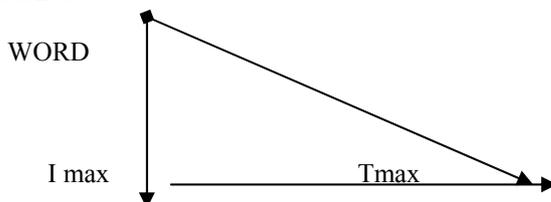
Axiomatic premise N 1.

In the word prosody there exist three components which are analogous - both theoretically and empirically - to the same three level hierarchy in segmental strata. Namely, a) real sound; b) the type of sound (i.e. the fact of phonetic description) and c) the phoneme (i.e. the fact of phonological description).

And we have such analogous correlations in the sphere of word prosody : a) the prosody of a real word; b) the prosodic scheme (i.e. the fact of phonetics); c) the word prosody of "high level" the stress including.

What is new in this description proposed? It is the notion of prosodic scheme. I have introduced it in my previous publications. This notion was conceptualized on the base of my experimental study of Slavic and Balkan languages.

The prosodic scheme of a word is described as a triangle such as



with I max at the beginning and t max in the end.

Thus, there are two perceptually "strong" points : the beginning (I max) and the end (T max). Usually the natives don't realize it because of weak human conscience of prosody retroflexion.

But in the process of real speech the human being can increase these maxs and then this point can be perceived as "word stress".

This is why we have the right to name these max'points accentogeneous (the first syllable and the last syllables are more frequent for stress place in the most of languages). And the stress as prosodic phenomenon is thus the fact of phonology not simple phonetics (prosodic scheme) . And , really, languages can change these usual places of stress, but there are concrete reasons for that in the each case.

There are as it well known three possibilities of stress manifestation : Frequency, Intensity and Duration (

Quantity). But although they can combine languages usually prefer one of these three acoustic parameters. And because of that we can speak about I-oriented languages, f-oriented languages and t-oriented ones.

Axiomatic premise N 2.

Language changes by increasing of information quantity reported in a unit of time.

What is information ? Any data in communication : objective and subjective, concern the code and the denotate, the adresant and the adresat, the code and the message.

The increasing of information quantity in the unit of time is being realized by two ways - at the level of language formal structure and at the level of language content structure (according to F.de Saussure).

What can languages do on this way (we speak only about phonetics) ?

- To increase the rate of speaking, the tempo;
- To strengthen the coarticulation of sounds in speech fragment;
- To underline by means of phonetics the most important part of a word (usually ,the root);
- To use shorter words (up to reconstruction of grammatics as the whole);
- To develop the set of intonation paradigmatic units which can create the additional information during the process of speech;
- To manipulate by temporal characteristics;
- To change prosodic characters of word, in particular, the phonetic means of stress realization.

All these ways don't exclude each other and all of them are steps for language evolution.

The stress changing.

Let us consider the last step mentioned : changing of the phonetic means of stress realization. It is evident that for the expressing of stress by the most economically mode the stress itself might be fulfilled by one (or more) of such possibilities :

- the stress realization ought to be carried out by the simplest way in according to phonetics area;
- the stress realization doesn't demand much of time;
- it ought to be very "vivid" in perception.

Because of all this said above it is clear that a language with tonal accents can't answer these demands: the realization of such "musical" accents is very complicated and it demands much of time. These languages are the languages of East and the periphery of Europe. It is also

clear that a language with quantitative accent can't answer these demands too : this prosodic mode demands too much of time. We would here remind the classic Latin.

And languages with long words also can't answer these demands : it might be too long chain of syllables from one stress to another in the speech .Such languages are Slavic ones and German, for example.

And French also can't answer these demands because of difficulty to perceive words separately.

2. Did some languages adapt to these demands of language evolution?

Yes, they did. For example, just at the same time (IV –V c.a.Chr.) Greek and Latin had changed the type of stress, passing to dynamic type. Old Greek had lost its tonal accents and Classic Latin – its quantity.

We may say now many interesting things on contemporary Russian in this sense. Sometimes, but often, we hear the stress changing and educated Russians perceive these changings as blunders. For example, ВКЛЮЧИТЬ instead of ВКЛЮЧИТЬ, ОСУЖДЕННЫЙ instead of ОСУЖДЕННЫЙ, ПОЛОЖИТЬ instead of ПОЛОЖИТЬ and so on. In reality we ought to see in these “mistakes” the clear-cut tendency to underline by means of stress the most important part of the word (the root).

3. Is our “prosodic scheme” universal?

No, it is not. It was revealed ,for example, that the prosodic scheme of Turkic languages looks like a mirror in relation to Indoeuropean ones. Namely, the beginning of words have there t max, not I max, and the end of words has I max.

It might be proposed because of this that so called “neoštokavian shift” of stress in Serbian , i.e. the movement of stress to the beginning of word , could be interpreted by Turkic influence because just at the same time the Turkeys had conquered the Balkan peninsula.