

ON FUNCTION OF PHONEM AND SYLLABEM IN THE PROCESS OF
TRANSFERENCE OF INFORMATIONS IN THE ISOLATING LANGUAGES
OF THE FAR EAST AND THE SOUTH EAST ASIA

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Human language, as it is known, is very important means of accumulation, preserverence and transference of informations. If we consider informations as that, passing on from one source (man) to another, and as well as the process of transference or receipt of these informations, then it is obvious that the main interest for the study of linguistics is not in the informations as such, but in the technique of its transference and in learning mechanism of the process itself.

Phonology plays an important role in studying of this question, as it is connected with the non-semantical units of a language which serve to form signs of the language and participate in distinguishing them. The type of a language defines the specification of use of its phonological units. Each language possesses its own peculiarities in phonological syntagmatique, consequently in the mechanism of transference of informations. From this point of view the main typological differences of languages are connected with phonetical syntagmatique. Many languages, which are different typologically, such as Russian, English, Arabic, Bantu, Hindi, Chinese, Vietnamese and others

are different from each other by syntagmatique at the the phonological level. Phonological syntagmatique, by this reason, becomes the main dominant to determine the type of language.

In the process of transference of informations in the Indo-European languages an important role belongs to the isolated sounds, i.e. phonemes which are characterized in these languages by relative freedom at the syntagmatic axis. Isolated sounds in these languages can pass on informations independently. Compare, for instance, in English: SPEND - SPENT; SPEAK - SPEAKS; SING - SANG etc.

In the isolating languages of the Far East and the South-East Asia to which belong languages like Chinese and Vietnamese (tone languages) a little role is taken by isolated sounds in the process of transference of informations. The peculiarity of these languages is that isolated sounds (phonemes) in these languages can not carry informations independently. The tonal syllable is the smallest unit, able to carry out this function in these languages. The term " syllabem " is used to mean syllable in this function in phonology of the Isolating languages of the Far East and the South East Asia, which was proposed by prof. E.D.Polivanov of St.Petersburg University (Russia) in his works.

Toned syllable in those languages as Chinese and Vietnamese, as a rule, is correlated to morphem or word, having one syllable. So, we may say that the informations

and the process of its transference in these languages are based on syllabems and their chains. That same process in the Indo-European languages is based on the sounds and their chains, not necessarily correlating to the syllables. In this case, informations can be passed by the sound chains, consisting of several sounds, combination of a few or a lot than syllable.

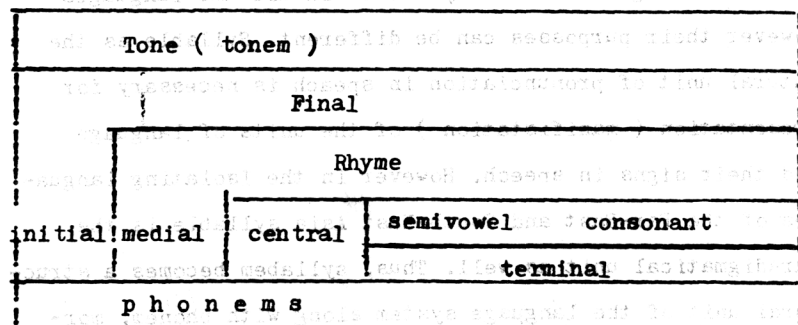
Though there are syllables in all the languages however their purposes can be different. Syllable as the natural unit of pronunciation in speech is necessary for presentation (manifestation) of the units of language and their signs in speech. However in the Isolating languages of the Far-East and South-East Asia syllable is the paradigmatical unit as well. Thus, syllabem becomes a structural unit of the language system along with phonem, morphem and lexem.

Another distinctive peculiarity of transference of informations in the languages like Chinese and Vietnamese is that the intermediate units are distinguished in these languages due to strict limitations imposed the combination of sounds in syllable and their distribution between phonem and syllabem. They are so called Initials and Finals, which traditionally are distinguished by the National Linguistic schools. These intermediate units take part actively in the process of transference of informations, as at the syntagmatical axis they possess more freedom and agility then phonems in these languages. Similar intermediate units in

other not Isolating languages are not distinguished as there are no grounds for that.

So that the syllable in the isolating languages we can show below as the scheme.

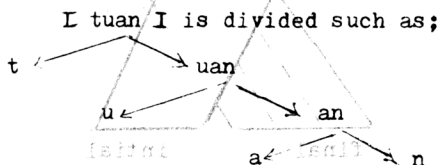
The syllabem and it's constituents in the isolating languages



The syllable in isolating languages can not have more than four phonemes. But in non-isolating languages- in Russian, for instance, the syllable can include nine or even eleven sounds; VSPLESK, VZDROG-, VSKHRAP, ZDRAVSTV - and so on. Due to strict limitations imposed the combinations of sounds in syllables and their distribution, there is limited number of syllables in the isolating languages. There are about 420 syllables in Chinese (if we ignore the tonal characteristics of syllable) and more then one thousand in Vietnamese (ignore tonal characteristics).

But there is no such restriction in the Indo-European languages. Therefore theoretically the number of syllables

has no limitation here. So we have no any grounds to divide "European" syllables according to the scheme which was shown above. The structure of the concrete syllables in Chinese and Vietnamese has very specific hierarchy which based on the bipartitive segmentation of the syllable. For example, in Chinese



t - initial; uan - final; u - medial; an - rhyme;

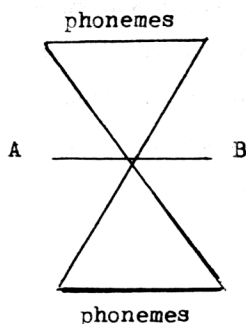
a - central; n - terminal.

Though the sounds; t, u, a, n actually are phonemes, but on the syntagmatic axis they are very passive. In isolating languages three constituent elements of the syllable have more freedom and agility in the process of forming new syllables which as a rule are correlated with the signs of language. These three phonological units are: initial,

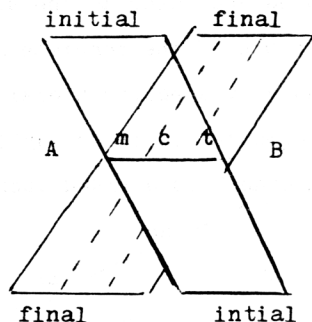
final and rhyme. So we can say that in the European languages informations is transferred by signs which are formed with crossing classes of phonemes. But in the isolating languages the informations is transferred by syllables (correlated with signs as usual) which are formed with crossing classes of initials, finals and rhymes.

The process of transference of informations and forming languages signs in isolating and non-isolating languages will be shown below as two different schemes:

Non-isolating



Isolating



On these two schemes the central line A - B is designated by concrete signs in speech. For example:

In English

Tale - Late

Spot - Tops

Pots - Sop

In Chinese

Tuan - Guan

Kuai - Gwai

Huang - Hang

In Vietnamese

Duong - Muong

Luat - Luan

Nuoc - Nuong

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