

Theoretical Foundations of The Study of Segmental Units in Linguistics

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Abstract: This article covers the concept of segmental units, their place in linguistics, and their analysis from the perspective of phonetic and phonological approaches. Also, based on structuralism and distribution approaches, the classification and functional features of segment units are considered. Based on scientific sources, attention is also paid to the stages of formation and development of the theory of segment units.

Keywords: Phonetics, stylistics, segment, branch, aspects, articulation, phonology, speech.

Introduction: Human expresses their psyche, mood, attitude towards others and reality directly through language, speech. He strives to make the expression clear, understandable, and effective. Due to this need, various ways of using language in the speech process have been discovered. For the correct and complete delivery of information, the speaker tries different ways of connecting speech fragments in the speech process. One of such methods is the transmission of speech into parts, fragments, and in linguistics this method led to the emergence of the phenomenon of segmentation.

METHOD

Segmental units have been widely studied in European linguistics, in particular, in Russian linguistics. Starting from the 60s of the last century, views on specific devices that were initially widely used in oral speech and later transitioned to written speech began to be illuminated. Prominent representatives of European linguistics, such as Sh.Bally, A.M.Peshkovsky, A.S.Pepov, G.Akimova, N.S.Valgina, conducted research on segmental constructions. While the views on segmental constructions were first observed in the works of Sh.Bally, their specific features and differences from other phenomena were discussed by the Russian linguist A.M.Peshkovsky, and syntactic-semantic features by A.S.Pepov [1].

From the 60s of the 20th century, the term "expressive syntax" appeared in linguistics. The main function of

expressive devices is not only to express information, but also to direct the addresser's attention to a certain event, phenomenon, object, to hold attention to that object, to distinguish it from others, to emphasize it. The first views on segmental constructions in Uzbek linguistics are found in the dissertation of A.Gafurov, who studied nominal sentences in the Uzbek language. Although the scientist did not call the phenomenon by this exact name, he spoke about the stylistic features of the units corresponding to this device. Information about the nature, origin, and appearance of segmental structures is given in the article of A.Akhmedov [2].

In Uzbek linguistics, views on pragmalinguistics were first presented in the works of A.Nurmonov, N.Mahmudov, D.Lutfullaev, while the research of Sh.Safarov, M.Hakimov, S.Boymirzayeva, A.Pardayev, M.Kurbanova serves as a theoretical basis for future work in this direction. Nevertheless, to date, the linguopragmatic features of segmental constructions in Uzbek linguistics have not been specifically studied in a monographic plan.

In linguistics, sound units are divided into two - segmental and suprasegmental units. Segmental units are the smallest independent sound units in language, which are manifested on the basis of sequence in the linear flow of speech. Their nature and function are among the main objects of research in phonetics and phonology.

Segmental units are units that stand out in a linear

speech flow, are expressed in the form of sounds, and have a meaning-differentiating function. They mainly consist of vowels and consonants. The phonetic features of segmented units study the real sounds produced by speech organs, and the phonological aspects study their function in the phonemic system.

The phonetic approach considers segmental units as real, physical sounds. In this regard, their articulatory, acoustic, and aerodynamic properties are important. The phonological approach interprets segmental units in the form of phonemes, i.e., units belonging to an abstract system and possessing the property of semantic differentiation. In phonology, one phoneme can manifest itself in various phonetic realizations - in the form of allophones.

Representatives of the structuralist movement, in particular N. S. Trubetskoy and R. Jakobson, took a systematic and oppositional approach to segmental units. According to Trubetskoy, the presence of each phoneme in a phonological system is determined based on its distinctive features compared to other phonemes. Jakobson and Halle analyzed phonological features based on distinctive features.

In the distribution approach, segment units are analyzed based on their positioning. This approach was developed by L. Bloomfield, who emphasizes that phonemes can be identified based on their interchangeability and fusion. Through distribution analysis, the system of phonemes is determined, and the differentiating relationships between them are revealed [3].

Segmental units are linear (sequential) sound units, and each sound is considered an independent segment. Suprasegmental units (intonation, stress, tempo, intonation) affect the entire phrase or sentence. They are located on segmental units and determine the emotional, pragmatic functions of speech.

Phonetics is itself divided into two major components: segmental phonetics, which is concerned with individual sounds (i.e. "segments" of speech) and suprasegmental phonetics whose domain is the larger units of connected speech: syllables, words, phrases and texts. The way these elements of the phonetic structure of English function in the process of communication will be the main concern of this course. The description of the phonetic structure of English will be based on the so called Received Pronunciation.

We all agree that we are to study the "norm" of English, as a whole, and the "norm" of English pronunciation in particular. There is no much agreement, however, as far as the term "norm" is concerned. This term is interpreted in different ways. Some scholars, for instance, associate "norm" with the so-called "neutral"

style. According to this conception stylistically marked parameters do not belong to the norm. More suitable, however, seems to be the conception put forward by Y. Screbnev, who looks upon the norm as a complex of all functional styles. We shall give priority to the second point of view as it is clearly not possible to look upon the pronunciation norm as something ideal which does not, in fact, exist in objective speech. We shall look upon the norm as a complex unity of phonetic styles realized in the process of communication in accordance with varying extralinguistic and social factors [4].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The phonetic system of language is a set of phonetic units arranged in an orderly way to replace each other in a given framework. Phonetics is divided into two major components (or systems): segmental phonetics, which is concerned with individual sounds (i.e. "segments" of speech) and suprasegmental phonetics dealing with the larger units of connected speech: syllables, words, phrases and texts.

1. Segmental units are sounds of speech (vowels and consonants) which form the vocalic and consonantal systems;
2. Suprasegmental, or prosodic, units are syllables, stress, intonation groups and utterances. Now we may define phonetics as a branch of linguistics that studies speech sounds in the broad sense, comprising segmental sounds, suprasegmental units and prosodic phenomena (pitch, stress, tempo, rhythm, pauses).

As we know the phoneme is the main unit of the segmental units of phonetics. There are several definitions of the phoneme in phonetics which were given by different linguists. So they differ from one another in a slightly way. Let's take some of definitions of the phoneme as an example: L.V.Shcherba: the phoneme may be viewed as a functional, material and abstract unit. V.A.Vassilyev: The phoneme is a smallest unit capable of distinguishing one word from another word, one grammatical form of word from another Bloch: phoneme is a class of phonemically similar sounds contrasting and mutually exclusive with all similar classes in the language Jakobson: phoneme is a minimal sound by which meaning may be discriminated.

And now, let us consider the phoneme from the point of view of its three aspects.

1. The phoneme is a functional unit. Function is usually understood to mean discriminatory function, that is, the role of the various components of the phonetic system of the language in distinguishing one morpheme from another, one word from another or also one utterance from another. The opposition of

phonemes in the same phonetic environment differentiates the meaning of morphemes and words, e.g. said— says, sleeper — sleepy, bath — path, light — like. Also phoneme can fulfill a distinctive function - Sometimes the opposition of phonemes serves to distinguish the meaning of the whole phrases, e.g. He was heard badly — He was hurt badly.

2. The phoneme is material, real and objective. That means that it is realized in speech in the form of speech sounds, its allophones. The sets of speech sounds, that is the allophones belonging to the same phoneme are not identical in their articulatory content though there remains some phonetic similarity between them. English phoneme [d] when not affected by the articulation of the preceding or following sounds is a plosive, fore-lingual apical, alveolar, lenis stop. This is how it sounds in isolation or in such words as door, darn, down, etc., when it retains its typical articulatory characteristics. In this case the consonant [d] is called the principal allophone. The allophones which do not undergo any distinguishable changes in the chain of speech are called principal. At the same time there are quite predictable changes in the articulation of allophones that occur under the influence of the neighbouring sounds in different phonetic situations. Such allophones are called subsidiary, [d] is slightly palatalized before front vowels and the sonorant [j], e.g. deal, day, did, did you. [d] is pronounced without any plosion before another stop, e.g. bedtime, bad pain, good dog; it is pronounced with the nasal plosion before the nasal sonorants [n] and [m], e.g. sudden, admit, could not, could meet; the plosion is lateral before the lateral sonorant [l], e.g. middle, badly, bad light. The alveolar position is particularly sensitive to the influence of the place of articulation of a following consonant. Thus followed by [r] the consonant [d] becomes post alveolar, e.g. dry, dream; followed by the interdental [θ], [ð] it becomes dental, e.g. breadth, lead the way, good thing. When [d] is followed by the labial [w] it becomes labialized, e.g. dweller. In the initial position [d] is partially devoiced, e.g. dog, dean; in the intervocalic position or when followed by a sonorant it is fully voiced, e.g. order, leader, driver; in the word final position it is voiceless, e.g. road, raised, old. These modifications of the phoneme [d] are quite sufficient to demonstrate the articulatory difference between its allophones, though the list of them could be easily extended. If you consider the production of the allophones of the phoneme above you will find that they possess three articulatory features in common, all of them are forelingual lenis stops [6].

CONCLUSION

Consequently, though allophones of the same phoneme possess similar articulatory features they

may frequently show considerable phonetic differences. Allophones are arranged into functionally similar groups, that is groups of sounds in which the members of each group are opposed to one another, but are opposable to members of any other group to distinguish meanings in otherwise similar sequences.

Segmental units have important theoretical and practical significance in linguistics. Through their phonetic and phonological analysis, the sound system of the language, interphonemic relations, and the structure of speech are deeply analyzed. The combination of theoretical approaches (structuralism, distribution, phonology) contributes to a deeper understanding of segmented units.

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