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INHERENT VERSUS CONFIGURATIONAL FEATURES

Abstract. There is no example of phonological loss of a High tone on the basis of its position in a word form (as opposed to tonal shift and syntactically conditioned loss). The typological parallels adduced by Olander are all instances of doubly accented word forms resulting from the rise of a new High tone. The new High tone on an initial syllable can be attributed to contact with languages that have initial stress.

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It is certainly not true that “We can consider accent to be a distinctive feature similar to such distinctive features as voicing, nasality, etc. Just as we have voiced and unvoiced consonants, so also we have accented and unaccented vowels” (Chomsky, Halle, Lukoff 1956, 79). This view is incorrect because such features as voicing and nasality are either present or absent in a segment whereas a vowel can only be stressed or unstressed in relation to another vowel in the same speech flow. The essential difference between stress and inherent features was first formulated by Kuznecov (1948). His argument is summarized by Panov as follows (1961, 7):

The sounds [ú] (stressed) and [ü] (unstressed) are not different phonemes in Russian because they are not found in one and the same position. The stress of the first [ú] in a disyllabic word conditions the absence of stress in the other vowel, and conversely: cf. *múku* ~ *mukú*; there is no opposition *múkū* ~ *múkú* or *múkū* ~ *mükū*. [...] Consequently, stress is phonemically present in a sequence of phonemes only.

It is therefore not the absolute prominence of the stressed vowel which is relevant from the functional point of view, but only its relative prominence in comparison with another vowel that is present in the same speech flow.

Ebeling has tried to clarify the issue by coining the term “configurational” as a designation of features that are relevant but not inherent to a phonemic unit (1968, 135):

Among the multifarious attributes of linguistic units a sharp distinction must be made between those which characterize a unit, within the larger whole to which it belongs, in comparison with the other constituents of the same whole, and those which are established on the basis of a comparison with another element not necessarily belonging to the same utterance. I propose to speak of configurational and inherent features, respectively. For configurational features the compared object is *in praesentia*, for inherent features *in absentia*.

Consequently, a phonemic unit can only be characterized by a configurational feature (e.g., stress) if there is at least one other phonemic unit in the same sequence such that the relation between the two units embodies the configurational feature.

In a more recent article, Halle claims that until about 1975 “it was generally believed that stress is an ordinary phonetic feature that distinguishes words from each other” (2001, 793) whereas he sees the facts in a radically different light because “unlike nasality or voicing, stress is not a phonetic feature, but rather a reflex of foot structure” (2001, 797). He does not mention the fact that the earlier view goes back to Chomsky, Halle, Lukoff (1956) and that other scholars have long recognized that this view is mistaken, most notably Kuznecov (1948). Halle now calls Ebeling’s “inherent” and “configurational” features, less appropriately, “phonetic feature” and “foot structure”. He confuses the issues by changing the terminology so as to present findings of earlier scholars as his own.

It appears that Thomas Olander has not yet understood the difference between inherent and configurational features. In a recent article he sticks to his Balto-Slavic “mobility law” (Olander 2019, 371): “Word-forms accented on the final mora become unaccented”. This is an unfortunate reformulation of his earlier statements: “a change of a high tone to a low tone in final short or hiatal syllables” (Olander 2006, 133) and “high pitch on a final mora in the phonological word (i.e. including clitics) became low” (Olander 2009, 156). The latter statements are formulated in terms of High versus Low tone, which are inherent features of syllables, as opposed to accented versus unaccented, which are configurational features referring to properties of word forms. While the shift of a High tone to the left or to the right is a common phonological change and the loss of a High tone under certain syntactic conditions is attested in Vedic Sanskrit and other languages (including Tokyo Japanese), I do not know any example of phonological loss of a High tone on the basis of its position in a word form. Olander’s “typological parallels” are invalid because they involve the rise of a High tone on the initial syllable of the word, contrary to Olander’s presumed “mobility law”.

Olander regrettably follows Andersen's unfortunate suggestion to compare his mobility law with the rise of initial accentuation in the Podravian dialects of Croatia. In these dialects, which did not share the neo-Štokavian retraction of the stress, there is a long rising vowel in *krāl̥j je došo* 'the king has come' and a short stressed vowel in *rūkà me boli* 'my hand aches' (cf. Klaić 1936; 2007, 17–23; Pronk 2018, 557–560). When a phrase ends in a syllable with a long rising or short vowel, the last word receives initial stress with a falling tone on a long vowel, e.g. *došo je krāl̥j, boli me rûka*, where the accent of *rûka* stands for a falling tone followed by a trace of the original final stress: *rūkà*, similarly imperative *pīši = pīṣ̌i* for *pīši* 'write', *krādi* for *krāḍi* 'steal', *pīsmo* for *pīsmò* 'letter', also *mūškārac* for *muškārāc* in *muškārāc je dōšo, ali cĭgānka je kāzāla* 'the man came but the gypsy woman said' and *svīrāce tāmburāš* for *tamburāš će svīrāti* 'the mandolinist will play', with the main stress on the initial syllable of the word. Klaić emphasizes the difference between gen. sg. *sĕljāka* for *seljākà* (b) 'peasant' and *cĭgānka* (a) and between *ù Beničānce* for *u Beničāncĕ* (b) 'to Beničanci' and *u Šljīvošĕvce* (a) 'to Šljivoševci'. It is clear that the initial accentuation did not arise from a phonetic retraction of the stress but developed as an autonomous word-initial boundary signal. Contrary to Olander's statement, such forms with initial accentuation are not "phonologically unaccented" but doubly accented. Olander is evidently unaware of the existence of similar systems with double accentuation in Slovak and Polish dialects along the river Orava (cf. Topolińska 1961, 86–89). In the Karelian dialects of Russian, we find variation between original final stress and new initial accentuation (cf. Ter-Avanesova 1989, 218f.; Pronk 2018, 555f.). In Polabian and in the Pannonian dialect of the Kiev Leaflets we find both retraction of the stress from final syllables and rise of initial accentuation, which are clearly independent developments (cf. Kortlandt 1980; 1989). None of these phenomena can be adduced as a typological parallel in support of Olander's rise of "unaccented word-forms".

In his recent article, Olander adds an alleged parallel from Žemaitian (2019, 371f.; for more details see Pronk 2018, 561–564): "in these dialects the accent is retracted from a final accented short syllable or a circumflex syllable to the initial syllable of the phonological word, e.g. nom. sg. *šàkà* 'branch' (standard Li. *šakà*), nom. *pāvāžà* 'sledge runner' (standard Li. *pavažà*), gen. sg. *šàkuōs* (standard Li. *šakōs*), *i_ męškūs* 'to the forests' (standard Li. *i_ miškūs*) (for the material see also Zinkevičius 1966, 37–49). By contrast, the accent is not retracted from a final acute syllable or a medial syllable, e.g. dat. pl. *šakūoms* (standard Li. *šakóms*), *kepōr^(e)* (standard Li. *kepūrĕ* (no retraction))." Here again, the initial syllable receives a tone that is different

from the Low tone of the unstressed syllable, e.g. *šakuōs* versus *šakûoms*. It follows that *šakuōs* is not an “unaccented word-form”: it differs from *šakûoms* both in the place of the prominent ictus (first versus second syllable) and in the tones of both syllables. As in the case of the Podravian examples such as *müşkârac* = *müşkârâc* for *muškârâc* and *tâmburâš* for *tamburâš*, the alleged “unaccented word-form” is actually doubly accented.

Another faulty parallel that Olander adduces is “the well-known Ancient Greek change of an acute to a grave in the final syllable of a word followed by an accented word, e.g. *agat^hôs anér* ‘a good man’, [which] is also simply a change of a high tone to a low tone in the final mora of the word, resulting in a phonologically unaccented word-form, thus again very much resembling the Mobility Law. The fact that the high tone remains before an enclitic word, e.g. *agat^hôs tis anér* ‘a good man’, is the Greek equivalent of Vasil’ev–Dolobko’s Law in Slavic”. This is all wrong. While the Greek acute denotes a High tone on a short vowel and on the second mora of a long vowel or diphthong and the circumflex denotes a High tone on the first mora of a long vowel or diphthong, the grave accent originally denoted a Low tone in the Alexandrian papyri, where the High tone remained unmarked, as in Vedic Sanskrit. When the acute and the circumflex came into use in the Byzantine tradition, the grave accent became superfluous and was substituted for the acute as a marker of a following word boundary within a phrase, e.g. ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ (but not before a clitic, as in ἀγαθός τις ἀνὴρ). The Coptic script borrowed the Byzantine grave accent to signal the end of a word (Schwyzer 1953, 375). There is no doubt that the grave accent now denoted a High tone in the same way as the acute. In particular, the High tone was transferred to the preceding syllable in the case of elision, e.g. φοβερὰ ἄλγη > φοβέρ’ ἄλγη and δεινὰ ἄλγη > δειν’ ἄλγη (Bally 1945, 15). Before a clitic, an orthotonic word received an additional High tone on its last syllable, which resulted in doubly accented word forms such as ἄνθρωπος τις, σῶμά τι. These doubly accented word forms have survived into Modern Greek, e.g. τὸ αὐτοκίνητό μου [to aftokínitó mu] ‘my car’, where the noun has two High tones before the Low tone clitic. This is quite different from Dolobko’s law, where all syllables have Low tones before a clitic that has a High tone.

Contrary to Olander’s statement, there is no example of phonological loss of a High tone on the basis of its position in a word form (as opposed to tonal shift and syntactically conditioned loss). The alleged typological parallels are all instances of doubly accented word forms resulting from the rise of a new High tone. In the instances mentioned above, the new High tone on an initial syllable can be attributed to language contact with languages that have initial stress (cf. Kortlandt 2011, 349–352; see also Pronk 2018).

INHERENTINIAI IR KONFIGŪRACINIAI POŽYMIAI

Santrauka

Negalima rasti jokių aukšto tono fonologinio netekimo dėl padėties žodyje pavyzdžių (kitaip nei tono perkėlimo ar sintaksiškai nulemtu netekimo). Olanderio pateiktos tipologinės paralelės tėra dvigubą kirtį turinčios žodžių formos, atsiradusios dėl naujo aukšto tono atsiradimo. Naujas aukštas tonas pirmajame skiemenyje gali būti atsiradęs dėl kontaktų su pirmojo skiemens kirtį turinčiomis kalbomis.

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