

Variety, change and relatedness in language

András Cser

BA seminar, BBNAN-14700

Practical points

- Course website (Institute > teachers > CserA) with info & slides
- Grade based on end-term test
- Test based on in-class material
- Three absences tolerated, no excuses required or accepted

What is this course about?

Variety in language:

- How are languages different?
- How are languages not so different?
- What follows from similarities and differences?
- How do languages change over time?
- How did language come to be written?

First topic:

variety in sound systems (phonology)

How varied are sound systems?

How many "sounds"?

Hawaiian (Polynesian): 18

m p w n l k h ?

i e a o u i: e: a: o: u:

How many "sounds"?

Kung (Khoisan): 161

Plain	i e a o u
Nasalized	ĩ ẽ ã õ ù
Breathy	ᵢ ẹ ǻ ɔ ʉ
Creaky	ᵢ ẹ ǻ ɔ ʉ
Pharyngealized	aˀ oˀ uˀ
Strident	ǻˀ ɔˀ ʉˀ
Breathy creaky	ᵢ ẹ ǻ ɔ ʉ
Creaky pharyngealized	aˀ ɔˀ ʉˀ
Creaky strident	ǻˀ ɔˀ ʉˀ

Table 1': The vowel inventory of !Xóõ

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Labiodental click	Dental click	Alveolar click	Lateral click	Palatal click	Velar	uvular	glottal
1.	p	t	ts		ǀ		!̥	ǁ	ǃ	k	q	ʔ
2.	b	d	dz		ǀ̣	̣	!̣	ǁ̣	ǃ̣	g	g̣	
3.	pʰ	tʰ	tsʰ		ǀʰ	ʰ	!ʰ	ǁʰ	ǃʰ	kʰ	qʰ	
4.	bʰ	dʰ	dzʰ		ǀʰ̣	ʰ̣	!ʰ̣	ǁʰ̣	ǃʰ̣	gʰ	gʰ̣	
5.	p'	t'	ts'		ǀ'	'	!'	ǁ'	ǃ'	k'	q'	
6.			dz'		ǀ'	'	!'	ǁ'	ǃ'	g'	g'	
7.											qʰ'	
8.											gʰ'	
9.					ǀ̃	̃	!̃	ǁ̃	ǃ̃			
10.	m	n		ɲ	ǀ̃	̃	!̃	ǁ̃	ǃ̃	ŋ		
11.	ʔm	ʔn			ʔǀ̃	ʔ ̃	ʔ!̃	ʔǁ̃	ʔǃ̃			
12.	f		s								χ	h
13.	w	r,l		j								
14.					ǀq	q	!q	ǁq	ǃq			
15.					ǀᵑ	ᵑ	!ᵑ	ǁᵑ	ǃᵑ			
16.					ǀqʰ	qʰ	!qʰ	ǁqʰ	ǃqʰ			
17.					ǀqʰ̣	qʰ̣	!qʰ̣	ǁqʰ̣	ǃqʰ̣			
18.					ǀq'	q'	!q'	ǁq'	ǃq'			
19.					ǀq'	q'	!q'	ǁq'	ǃq'			
20.					ǀqʰ'	qʰ'	!qʰ'	ǁqʰ'	ǃqʰ'			
21.					ǀqʰ'	qʰ'	!qʰ'	ǁqʰ'	ǃqʰ'			
22.					ǀχ	χ	!χ	ǁχ	ǃχ			
23.					ǀχ	χ	!χ	ǁχ	ǃχ			
24.					ǀh	h	!h	ǁh	ǃh			
25.					ǀh	h	!h	ǁh	ǃh			
26.					ǀʔ	ʔ	!ʔ	ǁʔ	ǃʔ			
27.					ǀʔ	ʔ	!ʔ	ǁʔ	ǃʔ			

Table 1: The consonant inventory of !Xóõ

How varied are sound systems?

Of course, counting sounds is not obvious:

lame vs. *pale* – same or different?

Hu *jön* vs. *lopj* – same or different?

(cf. phoneme vs. allophone)

How varied are sound systems?

E *sigh* vs. Hu *száj* 'mouth' – how many sounds?

- Hu *száj*, Fr *saille* 'stick out', Du *saai* 'dull', E *sigh*, G *sei* 'let be' are physically the same, but:
- *száj*, *saille*, *saai* 3 units [s+a+j] ↔ *sigh*, *sei* 2 units [s+aj] – why?
- E words don't end in 3 consonants, but *find*, *mild*
→ [aj] is a vowel, not vowel + consonant
- Hu *szájjal*, not **szájval* → [aj] vowel + consonant

Combinations of sounds

In every language, sounds can combine in various ways (phonotactics):

- (E) at most three C's at beginning of word; not random set
- (E) glides [j w] only next to vowel: *win, away, yes, beyond*
- Hu liquids [l r] only next to vowel, but not [j]: *szomj, férj, várj...*
- E, Cz liquids not only next to vowel: *little, Petr, trh* 'market'

Combinations of sounds

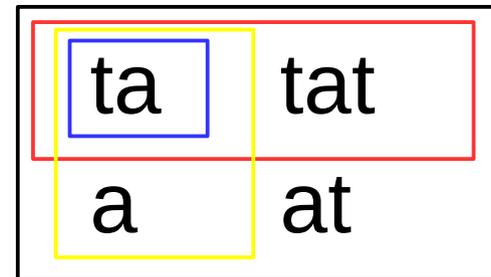
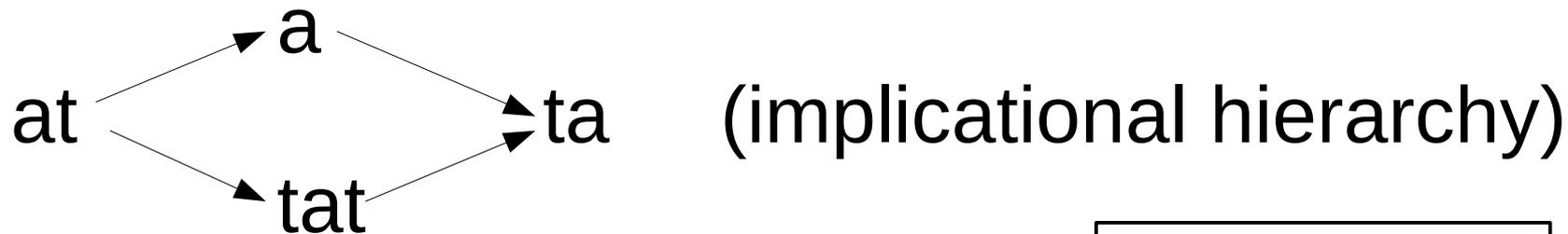
The syllable as a phonological unit

- can consist of several segments
- always has a nucleus, can have edges;
 - the nucleus can be a V in every language
 - in some it can be a consonant (*little*, Cz *trh*)
 - the edges are the onset (*ta*) and the coda (*at*);
- some languages distinguish light vs. heavy syllables (Hu *ka.ró* ↔ *ká.ró*, *kan.tár*)

Combinations of sounds

Basic syllable types: *a*, *ta*, *at*, *tat*

Not every language has all four, but they are not independent of each other!



four types: E, Hu, Arabic, Hawaiian, Hua (Papuan)

Combinations of sounds

Different rules appear in borrowing too:

Slavonic *brat, greg* → Old Hu *barát, görög...*

Turkish *dülbend* → Italian *tulipano* 'tulip'

E *keep left, contract* → Swahili (Bantu, East Africa)
kiplefiti, kundurati

Suprasegmentals: word stress

Free vs. bound

Free: e.g. English – complex rules with lots of exceptions, more than one stress per word possible

Bound: Hungarian (first syll.), French (last syll.), Polish (last syll but one); Latin →

Suprasegmentals: word stress

Latin stress depends on syllable weight:

If last syll but one is heavy then stressed:

- *vidéntur* ‘they appear’, *vidé́tur* ‘he appears’

If last syll but one is light then third-last stressed:

- *vídeo* ‘I see’, *réfíciť* ‘he repairs’, *refíciťur* ‘it is repaired’, *refíciunt* ‘they repair’

Suprasegmentals: word stress

Lenakel (Malayo-Polynesian, Vanuatu)

- a. [tɪnágɔl] 'you (sg.) will do it'
[tɪrébɔl] 'he will then do it'
[nínɔl] 'you (sg.) have done it'
[rínɔl] 'he has done it'
[éheŋ] 'to blow the nose'
[rɪmáwŋɪn] 'he ate'
[nápuk] 'lungs'
[tikómkom] 'branches'
- b. *Nouns*
[tup^wàlukáluk] 'lungs'
[lètup^wàlukáluk] 'in the lungs'
[nèlujánjaŋ] 'twig'
[kajèlawélaw] 'kind of dance'
- c. *Verbs*
[rìmolkéjkej] 'you (pl.) liked it'
[nìmarolkéjkej] 'you (pl.) were liking it'
[tìnakàrolkéjkej] 'you (pl.) will be liking it'
[nàdjagàmetwàtamní^wan] 'why am I about to be shaking?'

main stress on
last but one

secondary
stresses on every
other syllable

nouns: right to
left

verbs: left to right

Suprasegmentals: tone

tone:

in some languages words (or morphemes) have their own "melody"

e.g. Mpi (Sino-Tibetan, Thailand):
'rancid', 'blood', 'twist rope', [name], 'die', 'four'

(listen to recording)