

1.5. THE SYSTEMS OF ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN PHONEMES

The problem of the number of phonemes in English was treated by D. Jones, L. Bloomfield and others, as well as by the Russian linguists A.F. Birshert, G.P. Torsuyev, O.I. Dikushina and others.

There is no discordance of the opinion as to the phonematic independence of all the 24 English consonants.

They are: [p], [b], [m], [w], [f], [v], [t], [d], [n], [tS], [dZ], [s], [z], [T], [D], [S], [Z], [l], [r], [j], [k], [g], [N], [h].

The above sounds belong to the phonetic means of semantic expression in speech and can change the meaning of the words or their grammatical forms.

Their phonematic independence may be confirmed by numerous cases when the substitution of one consonant for another changed the meaning of the word or its grammatical form.

Opinions differ as to the system of vowels.

In his "Phoneme, its Nature and Use" D. Jones acknowledged the sense-differentiating function of the phoneme, suggested by L.V. Shcherba, but his acknowledgement remained formal and he nevertheless combined a short and a corresponding long vowel phoneme into one, ruled by their physical resemblance and underestimating the role of the semantic factor.

Though D. Jones considers length which is independent of the position of the vowel in the word to be one of the main characteristics of a separate phoneme, he does not mention the phonematic independence of length in the case of the English long vowel phonemes [J], [L], etc.

Thus, D. Jones treats the English [J] and [I] as members of the English i-phoneme, the English [P] and [L] as members of the English O-phoneme, etc., while each of these vowels presents a separate phoneme.

The combination of long and short vowels into one phoneme is considered wrong since:

1. length is semantically important here;

2. length of vowels here does not depend upon their position in the word;
3. long and short vowel phonemes differ not only in quantity but in quality as well.

Actually, though D. Jones treats long and short vowels as members of the same phoneme, he describes them as separate sounds in his “Outline of English Phonetics” (8th ed.).

A critical analysis of D. Jones’ viewpoint on the phonematic structure of the English language was given by A.F. Birshert, G.P. Torsuyev and others.

A.F. Birshert proved the phonematic independence of the neutral sound [q] (1940).

In the books by G.P. Torsuyev and O.I. Dikushina we find proof of the phonematic independence of English diphthongs.

Thus, most of the phoneticians come to the conclusion that in English there are twelve monophthongs which are independent vowel phonemes. They are: [J], [I], [e], [x], [R], [A], [L], [P], [H], [V], [E:], [q].

As to the English diphthongs, eight of them are considered to be independent phonemes. They are: [aI], [eI], [OI], [aV], [qV], [Iq], [eq], [Vq].

The diphthong [Oq] may be replaced in all cases in modern literary English by the phoneme [L], and therefore there is no reason to consider it as an independent phoneme.

Some phoneticians (Lloyd J., 1946; Torsuyev G.P., 1950) acknowledged the existence of the ninth diphthong [Oq] as in some cases the substitution of the English [Oq] for [L] changes the meaning of the word, e.g.

sore [sOq] – saw [sL]
pore [pOq] – paw [pL]

But still as the English [Oq] may be replaced by the phoneme [L] in nearly all the cases in modern literary English it is not considered an independent phoneme by most scientists.

The problem of the number of phonemes in Ukrainian was treated by O. Sinyavsky, M.S. Kalinovitch, I.P. Suntsova, G.F. Shilo and others.

Most linguists acknowledge the existence of six vowel phonemes in Ukrainian

[I], [E], [И], [A], [O], [Y].

There are many debatable points in the problem of Ukrainian consonant phonemes and the question is not yet settled.

The phonematic independence of the Ukrainian hard consonants [П], [Б], [М], [В], [Ф], [Т], [Д], [Н], [Ч], [ДЖ], [С], [З], [Ц], [ДЗ], [Ш], [Ж], [Л], [Р], [Й], [К], [Х], [Г] was proved by M.S. Kalinovitch, I.P. Suntsova, T.A. Brovchenko and others.

The most difficult is the problem of the Ukrainian palatalized and long consonant phonemes.

It should be mentioned that though all the Ukrainian consonants may be palatalized, palatalization is not always phonematic.

Labial consonants in Ukrainian are slightly palatalized only under definite conditions, namely before [I] and sometimes before [A].

There is not a single pair of words having different meaning in Ukrainian which differ only by the presence of a soft labial consonant in one word and a corresponding hard consonant in the other.

Hence the Ukrainian palatalized labial consonants may be considered as variants of the corresponding non-palatalized labial consonant phonemes.

The same can be said about the Ukrainian soft consonants [Ш'], [Ж'], [Ч'], [ДЖ'], [К'], [Г'], [Х'], [Г'], which are not independent phonemes, but only variants of the corresponding hard phonemes.

The Ukrainian soft forelingual consonants [Т'], [Д'], [Н'], [С'], [З'], [Ц'], [ДЗ'], [Л'] occur in all the positions, at the beginning, at the end and in the middle of the word and before any vowel. The replacement of any of these phonemes by a corresponding hard consonant gives a new word and therefore they may be considered independent phonemes in Ukrainian.

Examples:

повід [ПÓВ'ІД]	повідь [ПÓВ'ІД']
лук [ЛУК]	люк [Л'УК]
знати [ЗНА́ТИ]	зняти [ЗН'А́ТИ]
саду [СА́ДУ]	сяду [С'А́ДУ]

The Ukrainian soft forelingual consonants [Т'], [Д'], [Н'] are independent

phonemes of the Ukrainian language too.

The use of the Ukrainian [P'] is rather limited. It is used only before [I] and before back vowels. But even in such positions a new word will be formed if it is replaced by the non-palatalized [P].

Examples:

рад [РАД]	–	ряд [P'АД]
друк [ДРУК]	–	дрюк [ДP'УК]

The Ukrainian soft forelingual consonant [P'] is therefore an independent phoneme.

The question of Ukrainian long consonant phonemes is not settled yet.

Though the existence of long consonants is mentioned by a number of linguists, only few of them treat the question of phonematic independence of long consonants.

To prove that long consonants are independent phonemes most of the authors apply the method of interchanging long and the corresponding short consonants in a pair of words differing only in these consonants.

In this way the phonematic independence of the Ukrainian long consonants [Д̄'], [Н̄'], [С̄], [Л̄], [Л̄'] has been proved.

Comparing words differing only in one sound, comparing long and corresponding short consonants in similar positions in a word, it is possible to conclude that there are eight more long consonant phonemes in Ukrainian besides the above-mentioned. They are: [М̄], [Т̄], [Т̄'], [Н̄'], [Р̄], [З̄], [Ж̄], [Ч̄].

The phonematic independence of these phonemes may be illustrated by the following examples:

Митю [МІТ'У]	миттю [МІТ̄'У]
у Вані [У ВА́Н'І]	у ванні [У ВА́Н̄'І]
мото [МО́ТО]	мотто [МО́Т̄О]
міра [М'ІРА]	мірра [М'ІР̄А]
гама [Г'А́МА]	гамма [Г'А́М̄А]
галузі [ГА́ЛУЗ'І]	галуззю [ГА́ЛУЗ̄'Ю]
подорожі [ПО́ДОРОЖ'І]	подорожжю [ПО́ДОРОЖ̄'Ю]
у вічі [У В'І́Ч'І]	увіччя [УВ'І́Ч̄'А]

Though we failed to find examples in which long [C̄], [Ḳ], [Ḳ̄] and the corresponding short consonants are interchangeable, they may be treated as independent phonemes because their length does not depend upon their position in the word, the morphological border always passes before or after the long consonant, not within it. Each of the above mentioned features may be considered an evidence of the phonematic status of these sounds.