

Linguistics

Academicians Akaki Shanidze and Giorgi Akhvlediani – Forerunners of a New Theoretical Movement (“Structuralism”) in Linguistics

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(Presented by Academy Member Avtandil Arabuli)

Akaki Shanidze and Giorgi Akhvlediani laid the foundation for new linguistic thinking in Georgia. The creative work of Akaki Shanidze and Giorgi Akhvlediani is extremely important not only from the point of view of Georgian but also that of the general linguistics: it turned out that they are, in fact, the forerunners of the theoretical-linguistic movement, which can be characterized as a structural-functional (functional-phonological) analysis of language. This fact, unfortunately, is less known to the international scientific community, and it is our duty to make it well aware of their viewpoint and appropriate its well-deserved place in the history of world linguistics. © 2021 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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Akaki Shanidze and Giorgi Akhvlediani laid the foundation for new linguistic thinking in Georgia. In the words of Ivane Javakhishvili, creating a branch of linguistics at the University of Tiflis is the merit of three persons: Professor Ioseb Kipshidze, Professor Akaki Shanidze and Professor Giorgi Akhvlediani. Because of the untimely death of the first of them the greatest load fell on the shoulders of the two others.

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fact, the forerunners of the theoretical-linguistic movement, which can be characterized as a structural-functional (functional-phonological) analysis of language. This fact, unfortunately, is less known to the international scientific community, and it is our duty to make it well aware of their viewpoint and appropriate its well-deserved place in the history of world linguistics.

The history of European and American linguistics can be examined as a kind of alternation of “scientific paradigms” in time and space, which can be schematically represented in the following order:

Paradigm I:
“Universal Grammar” of A. Arnauld et C. Lancelot;

Paradigm II:
“Comparative-Historical Linguistics” (Franz Bopp, Karl Brugmann and Neogrammarians, Antoine Meyer ...);

Paradigm III:
“Japhetic Linguistics” of Nikolai Marr;

Paradigm IV:
Ferdinand de Saussure’s “Synchronous Linguistics”:

a) “Structural Linguistics” (Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Roman Jakobson);

b) “Descriptive Linguistics” (Leonard Bloomfield and American Structuralists ...);

c) “Linguistic Typology and Linguistic Universals” (Joseph Greenberg, Georgy Klimov ...);

V paradigm:
Noam Chomsky’s “Transformational-Generative Grammar”;

VI paradigm:
“Structural-Typological Comparative Studies” (Roman Jakobson, Oswald Szemerényi, Winfred Lehmann, Paul Hopper, etc.);

VII Paradigm:
“Nostratics and Linguistic Macrofamilies” (Holger Pedersen, Vladislav Illich-Svitych, Sergei Starostin, Allan Bomhard, Joseph Greenberg, Merritt Ruhlen) [1: 111-112].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, more precisely in the twenties, in linguistics, as well as in other fields of science, begins the period of phenomenological analysis, when the historical study of objects and events is replaced by their systematic analysis, comprehending of objects and events by means of revealing and studying of internal structural relations. Twentieth-century science is characterized by a kind of weakening of historicism, an evolutionary point of view, and moving attention to the internal synchronic analysis of events and relations.

It is these principles that are characteristic for the theoretical linguistics of the first half of this century, and these very principles underlie Akaki Shanidze's analysis of the Georgian language and Giorgi Akhvlediani's description of the phonetic composition of the Georgian language.

Although Akaki Shanidze did not give a complete formulation of his linguistic concept and methodology, with his whole scientific approach to language (in this case to Georgian language) and according to the methods and ways used in linguistic analysis, we should consider Akaki Shanidze's linguistic theory as structural-functional one and compare with those movements in linguistics that later developed in the form of the synchronic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structuralism of the Prague School of Linguistics (see Paradigm IV).

In connection with above-mentioned, it is enough to name the notion of the “opposition” of linguistic elements, which, as a basis for linguistic analysis, is so widely used by Akaki Shanidze; It is the principle of linguistic opposition that the basic concepts of structural-functional directions in modern linguistics are essentially constructed on.

In the grammatical system, created by Akaki Shanidze, the center of a sentence, its structural axis is a verb, around which gather all other members of the sentence and join/merge it with a certain internal link; the verb determines the internal structure of a sentence, essentially, all grammatical system of language. Such understanding of a sentence is formed by Akaki Shanidze quite early, at his first attempts to analyze a Georgian verb. This was naturally dictated by the structural character of the Georgian verb itself, its multi-personality, which makes it different from the verbal structures of other known languages.

This concept about the central place of a verb in the structure of a simple sentence in the European science is formed much more later, in the 30s of the 20th c., as a “Structural Syntax” theory of the French scientist Lucien Tesnière.

In Georgian linguistics these principles were formed as a coherent concept quite early, causing such a great interest of American and European linguists in Georgian language and Georgian linguists today and putting Akaki Shanidze's work at the centre of this interest. The Georgian scientist in the process of successive analysis and study empirically formulated in reality the main principles of the methodology, which later creates the theoretical basis for the above-mentioned movements in linguistics. Thus, Akaki Shanidze by forming consistent grammatical system of Georgian language, created such linguistic values, which are important not only from the point of view of study of Georgian-Kartvelian languages, but also from the theoretical-linguistic point of view in general and from the point of view of linguistic theories and history of linguistics – in particular. Where there was structural chaos and nebulosity, Akaki Shanidze put extraordinary clarity into it and established structural order. By this he significantly contributed to introducing of Georgian linguistics to the wide arena and Akaki Shanidze was unanimously recognized in international circles as the Patriarch of Caucasian Linguistics.

A. Shanidze's grammatical doctrine in the main moments can be defined as one of the earliest types of structuralism in the field of morphology. The procedure of morphological analysis developed by him is of a clearly manifested "structuralist" character. From the movement of structuralism A. Shanidze's grammatical viewpoints are most in line with the ideas and methods of the Prague School (so-called "functional linguistics"): "Moving forward a function and giving it appropriate place", the advantage of the paradigmatic aspect compared to the syntagmatic one, a kind of tendency towards binarism, – are the features that give us the right to consider A. Shanidze's grammatical doctrine first of all as a peculiar variant of "functional linguistics" [2: 63-64].

Indeed, the Prague School approach is deemed as a mixture of structuralism (recognition of the primary meaning of context) and functionalism (each linguistic unit or component – phoneme, morpheme, word, sentence – exists because it has a certain function); they focused not only on the function of language, but also on the function of each of its elements in the system, and when analyzing language they considered the synchronic and diachronic approach in close connection with each other, for them language is a system of systems or subsystems. Unlike Saussure, they did not sharply distinguish between synchronicity and diachrony.

The main task of Akaki Shanidze's research, like that of the Praguers, was revealing of internal regularities of the system with a focus on "structural integrity". He created the doctrine, the fundamental basis for further synchronic research of the Georgian language, as evidenced by the researches that were written, are being written today and will indispensably be written in the future.

Phonology - a functional viewpoint in the study of the phonetic composition of a language, which was formulated in completed way in Prague and later in Vienna by the great Russian linguist Nikolai Trubetzkoy in the 1930s, opened up entirely new perspectives for linguistics (see Paradigm IV).

Giorgi Akhvlediani's work clearly reveals a functional point of view in the analysis of the phonetic composition of the language, and although we do not yet have here the notion of "distinctive feature" introduced into the science later by Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy, but already clearly shows up contradiction between a particular sound and a phoneme as a functional unit of language.

This was the greatest achievement for that time, one of the earliest examples in the history of linguistics of the examining of a sound unit of a language in terms of the functionality. Giorgi Akhvlediani studies the relations of Georgian

phonemes in the system and text, determines paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures of the Georgian language.

Examining of linguistic issues in such a systemic-functional sense, which appears in Giorgi Akhvlediani's earlier writings, is possible to ascribe to the influence of his teacher, L. Shcherba and Russian linguistics of that time in general, the continuer of brilliant traditions of which in Georgia became Giorgi Akhvlediani, and unfortunately died in Russia itself because of influx of the "New linguistic doctrine". These traditions later gave us the so-called phonological doctrine of the "Prague School", which formed the basis of modern phonological theories.

The functional point of view, conducted by Giorgi Akhvlediani is the reflection of these brilliant traditions, transferred to the Georgian-Caucasian linguistic world. Thus, Giorgi Akhvlediani's merits and thoughts go beyond the scope of his own Georgian linguistics and take a prominent place in the history of world linguistics. For certain, Giorgi Akhvlediani, along with other eminent linguists, is one of the earliest representatives of phonological theory, and his significant contribution to the formation of modern phonology should be duly appreciated in the history of linguistics.

Due to the ideological pressure of Soviet times, linguists became acquainted with late or completely never ever of the writings of their contemporary foreign colleagues (especially immigrants), which led to the closure of Soviet linguistics, hindering the mutual sharing of linguistic ideas and theoretical innovations. It seems that, for example, Giorgi Akhvlediani became acquainted with Nikolai Trubetskoy's work "Principles of Phonology" only when it was translated from German into Russian and published in the Soviet Union.

Prior to that, Giorgi Akhvlediani had been independently developing his viewpoints on the system of consonant triples in the Georgian

language, and his views are formulated in articles published in 1922-26. G. Akhvlediani's reasoning about the Georgian language triple system reveals a striking resemblance to the examples of correlation and phoneme correlation bundles in Trubetskoy's "Principles of Phonology". Also, Roman Jakobson became acquainted with G. Akhvlediani's work on Georgian and Caucasian abruptives only in 1951 from a scientific collection dedicated to L. Shcherba. Later he wrote a special paper about abruptives, published in 1968 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Here he gives a high rating to G. Akhvlediani's contribution to the study of Georgian and Caucasian abruptive consonants.

Analysis of the phonetic system of the Georgian language has enabled Giorgi Akhvlediani to establish a number of linguistic regularities that are essential for the study of Kartvelian languages in the synchronic or diachronic aspects. In his phonetic-phonological works, which are dedicated to the description of the phonetic system of the Georgian language, Giorgi Akhvlediani studied the rules of consonant juncture rules, on the basis of which he further developed the theory of "accessive-decessiveness", determined phonetic-phonological nature of Georgian "abruptives" and "voiced stops", clarified the mechanism of combinatorial variability of sounds in Georgian and many others, which is essential not only for the description and study of the Georgian language, but also in terms of general linguistics, as excellent examples of phonetic-phonological research of a language system. Here are formed the main types of functional vowel alteration - "ablaut" (apophony) and is defined its role in the Georgian language system.

Giorgi Akhvlediani's theory of "accessive" and "decessive" complexes, which he developed based on the data of the Kartvelian languages, turned out that have a general linguistic character, as the regularities of the consonant juncture, established here, should have been characteristic for the vast majority of languages. As it has recently become

clear, the theory of “accessivity-decessivity” is also an effective way to reveal and explain a number of historical regularities of Indo-European languages, that puts this theory at the service of a comparative-historical study of the Indo-European languages and, thus, establishes for the name of Giorgi Akhvlediani a prominent place in the history of Indo-European linguistics.

Today, the functional analysis of the phonetic composition of a language is already a universally recognized and widespread method, and the world scientific community should be aware that a Georgian linguist stands at the origin of this linguistic movement.

The basis for the universal recognition of this or that people is made only by the objective, real and unexaggerated scientific or cultural values created by it, which ultimately become the permanent values of this people and according to which its contribution and place in human civilization is appreciated. It is such true scientific and cultural values that should become the primary basis for the self-establishment of Georgian people. The scientific heritage of Akaki Shanidze and Giorgi Akhvlediani has become such a timeless value for Georgian culture.

ენათმეცნიერება

აკადემიკოსები აკაკი შანიძე და გიორგი ახვლედიანი – ენათმეცნიერებაში ახალი თეორიული მიმდინარეობის („სტრუქტურალიზმის“) წინამორბედნი

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ა. არაბულის მიერ)

აკაკი შანიძისა და გიორგი ახვლედიანის შემოქმედება უაღრესად მნიშვნელოვანია არა მხოლოდ ქართული, არამედ ზოგადი ენათმეცნიერების თვალსაზრისით. ისინი, ფაქტობრივად, იმ თეორიულ-ლინგვისტური მიმდინარეობის წინამორბედნი აღმოჩნდნენ, რომელიც შეიძლება დახასიათდეს როგორც ენის სტრუქტურულ-ფუნქციური (ფუნქციონალურ-ფონოლოგიური) ანალიზი. ეს ფაქტი, სამწუხაროდ, ნაკლებადაა ცნობილი საერთაშორისო სამეცნიერო საზოგადოებისთვის და ჩვენი მოვალეობაა ფართოდ გავაცნოთ მათი ნააზრევი და დამსახურებული ადგილი მივუჩინოთ მსოფლიო ენათმეცნიერების ისტორიაში. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ აკაკი შანიძეს არ მოუცია თავისი ლინგვისტური კონცეფციისა და მეთოდოლოგიის მთლიანი ფორმულირება, ენისადმი (ამ შემთხვევაში ქართული ენისადმი) მთელი თავისი

მეცნიერული მიდგომითა და ენობრივი ანალიზის გამოყენებული ხერხებისა და მეთოდების მიხედვით, აკაკი შანიძის ლინგვისტური თეორია უნდა განვიხილოთ როგორც სტრუქტურულ-ფუნქციური და ენათმეცნიერების ისტორიაში ის იმ მიმდინარეობებს შევადაროთ, რომლებიც შემდგომ ფერდინანდ დე სოსიურის სინქრონიული თეორიისა და პრადის საენათმეცნიერო სკოლის სტრუქტურალიზმის სახით ჩამოყალიბდნენ. გიორგი ახვლედიანი ფონოლოგიური თეორიის ერთ-ერთი ყველაზე ადრინდელი წარმომადგენელია. გიორგი ახვლედიანის შრომებში აშკარად ვლინდება ფუნქციონალური თვალსაზრისის ენის ბგერითი შედგენილობის ანალიზისას, და, თუმცა აქ ჯერ არა გვაქვს „დიფერენციალური ნიშნის“ ცნება, შემოტანილი მეცნიერებაში უფრო გვიან ნიკოლოზ ტრუბეცკოისა და რომან იაკობსონის მიერ, უკვე აშკარად იჩენს თავს დაპირისპირება კონკრეტულ ბგერასა და ფონემას, როგორც ენის ფუნქციონალურ ერთეულს, შორის. ეს იყო იმ დროისათვის უდიდესი მიღწევა, ენის ბგერითი ერთეულის ფუნქციონალური თვალსაზრისით განხილვის ერთ-ერთი ყველაზე ადრინდელი ნიმუში ენათმეცნიერების ისტორიაში.

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