Preface

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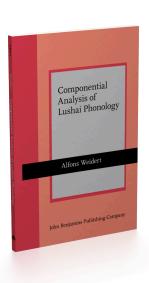# PREFACE

This essay is the preliminary result of my studies with problems
of generative phonology. Although, on a closer inspection of this
book, the reader will be well aware that almost all the basic tenets of
this theory have been subject to interpretations diverging in one way or
another with respect to their content and range of application, I ex-
plicitly admit how strongly I have been influenced by works like Chomsky
and Halle's *The Sound Pattern of English* (1968). Some of the main rea-
sons that have led me to depart from the beaten track, however, are
> (1) my belief that the concept of the phoneme cannot be entirely
>   dispensed with, no matter how a phonological theory is formal-
>   ized;
> (2) my belief that a semantic theory has to be incorporated into
>   phonological analysis much more strongly and more consistently
>   than generativists have been doing;
> (3) my belief that it is insufficient merely to state whether any
>   kind of phonological phenomenon is subject to, or becomes an
>   exception to, a given rule; and, finally,
> (4) my conviction that the uncontrolled use of all kinds of rules
>   in phonological analysis must be severely limited with regard
>   to the plausibility that the application of a certain rule in-
>   volves, or, in other words, my conviction that restrictions
>   must be imposed with reference to the common practice of 'ex-
>   plaining' any kind of phonological phenomenon by stating any
>   kind of rule no matter how it fits the overall context of the
>   phonological system of a given language.

Concerning these four criticisms of current phonological work, a few re-
marks about each of them may be to the point:

Ad (1):

The omission of an intermediate level has led to the postulation of only
two prominent levels of phonological representation, that is, the ab-
stract phonemic and the concrete phonetic levels, respectively. At-
tempts like Šaumjan 1967 and Fudge 1972, as well as long-term experience
gained from linguistic fieldwork, have led me to assume the existence of
three distinct and prominent levels of phonological description, each
one having its own intrinsic structural representation of particular
phenomena. In accordance with Fudge I have termed them 'morphophonolog-
ical level', 'abstract phonological level', and 'relational-physical (or
phonetic) level', respectively. Within these levels, the abstract pho-
nological level is conceived of as constituting its own *phonological hi-
erarchy* which, according to Fudge (1972:144), describes parameters like
breath group, stress group, word, syllables, and segments. I would like
to reserve the term 'phoneme' for segments. The major chance that I see
for the separate existence of phonemes in phonological analysis is that,
if handled from the point of view of redundancy-free representations,
they are able to provide information about the *typological disposition*
of the structure of a particular language. Consequently, considerations
of redundancy-free representations have been put at the beginning of
this essay (see section 0.3 of the study).

Ad (2):

An interpretation of the synchronic morpheme system of a language re-
quires more systematization in terms of dichotomies than the two popu-
lar ones of 'lexeme' vs. 'grammeme' and 'bound form' vs. 'free form'.
First of all, the terms 'lexeme' and 'grammeme' must be made more pre-
cise. I shall treat any kind of phonological element or combination of
phonological elements as a 'morpheme', if and only if a meaning can be

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attached to it. The particular meaning of a morpheme will be called
its 'sememe'. Within morphemes, a distinction is made between gram-
memes and lexemes. A morpheme that conveys any kind of meaning with
reference to *grammatical information*, will be termed 'grammeme', and
all other morphemes must be classed as 'lexemes'. It will also be in-
structive to conjoin this dichotomy with the concept of open and closed
inventories, as has been proposed by André Martinet in his *Éléments de
linguistique générale* (Paris: A. Colin, 1960; 2nd rev. ed., 1967). Ac-
cording to him lexemes appear in open inventories and grammemes in
closed inventories. The closed inventory is determined by the fact, as
Klaus Heger puts it,

> ...that the disappearance or the emergence of an element has
> as consequence functional changes - and this means in signems
> signem = significative unit on the *langue* level; A.W. which
> stand in semantically motivated inventories: sememe changes -
> in at least another element of the inventory, while, in an
> open inventory, this consequence does not need to follow.*

The two terms of the semantic dichotomy, i.e., 'morpheme contain-
ing an exclusively reflexive-metalinguistic sememe' vs. 'morpheme con-
taining a not exclusively reflexive-metalinguistic sememe', might sound
difficult to understand to readers unfamiliar with the semantic theory
of Heger; nevertheless, they are doing a marvelous job by providing the
criteria which we need for the semantic classification of morphemes.
The use of these terms might be objected to on the ground that morphemes
containing an exclusively reflexive-metalinguistic sememe are too rare
to deserve any comment. Yet the answer to this objection is very sim-
ple: not all languages offer only sporadic instances of 'heterosemicity'
like German or English for instance; in this essay, a language is ana-

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* "Dabei ist das geschlossene Paradigma dadurch bestimmt, daß in ihm das
  Verschwinden oder Neuhinzutreten eines Elements Funktionsveränderungen
  - und das heißt bei Signemen, die in semantisch begründeten Paradigmen
  stehen: Sememveränderungen - bei mindestens einem weiteren Element des
  Paradigmas zur Folge hat, während in einem offenen Paradigma diese
  Konsequenz nicht einzutreten braucht." (Heger 1971:54-55)

lyzed in which the inventory of heteroseme (this is a synonymous, albeit less precise, term of 'containing an exclusively reflexive-metalinguistic sememe') morphemes becomes extremely important if we do not want to allow unnatural and odd results to creep into the analysis with reference to the structural system of the morphophonological level. Various other terms for heteroseme morphemes have been proposed; e.g., 'morphan' by James A. Matisoff (cf. his *A Grammar of the Lahu Language*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973, §3.33) "for hapless 'orphan-morphs' of this type", or in German 'unikales Morphem' or 'blokkiertes Morphem' (cf. *Funkkolleg Sprache: Eine Einführung in die moderne Linguistik*, Studienbegleitbrief 3, p. 67, Weinheim: J. Beltz, 1971). All of these proposals are terminological notations that denote something negative and spurious; as for myself, I prefer a scientific nomenclature that is devoid as much as possible of any value-assigning or value-invoking terms. In order to permit the reader of this essay to get accustomed to the above term, 'morpheme with exclusively reflexive-metalinguistic sememe' as well as its counterpart will be written in its full form without abbreviation.

Ad (3):

With reference to the 'exceptional status' of certain phonological phenomena, I think that generative phonological theory has so far offered too simplistic ideas in order to furnish definite criteria for the treatment of exceptions. Of course, I do not deny the fact that in the whole universe exceptions can be found by stating their non-membership to any kind of postulate or rule. This view of the world produces its assumptions with the help of (usually implicit) deterministic reasoning; if viewed, however, from the different angle of statistical-probabilistic reasoning, I think that positive rather than negative statements can be made at least within the sphere of structuralizations in phonology. Instead of negatively characterizing phonological structures by stating them to be exceptions to certain rules, I make the

assertion that all kinds of structural phenomena can be positively
classed with reference to something: this ultimately leads to the as-
sumption of phonological extension systems. It goes without saying
that, for this particular aspect of phonological theory, I have been
greatly influenced by concepts like the core:periphery distinction of
the Prague School and the Prosodic Approach of the Firthian School.

Ad (4):

The concept of rules holding a key position in generative theory must
be subject to criticism as long as no further criteria are imposed re-
garding uncontrolled and unwarranted applications. Instead of applying
criteria such as 'naturalness conditions' in phonology which, in its
most ridiculous attempt, has amounted to counting symbols as sole indi-
cators of different degrees of complexity, I have developed a criterion
which is based on plausibility considerations. The 'cost' with which
the explanation by a rule is imputed, is, in my theoretical framework,
immediately calculable by measuring the degree of plausibility with re-
ference to the explanatory value that is attached to every component of
the morphophonological level. In this context, the reader may be re-
minded of the three kinds of possible concepts of measurement, viz.,
classificatory concepts (e.g., terms like *warm*, *hot*, *cold* in measuring
temperature), comparative (or topological) concepts (e.g., terms like
warmer than, *as warm as*, etc.), and metrical, that is, purely quantita-
tive, concepts (e.g., *20 degrees centigrade*). The phonological compo-
nents as introduced in this essay have been conceived as comparative
terms.

   Throughout the book, phonetic forms have been put between square
brackets in accordance with the conventions established by the Interna-
tional Phonetic Association (revised *International Phonetic Alphabet* of
1951).
   The translation of Lushai words has been taken over literally from

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Lorrain's (1940) invaluable dictionary in order to facilitate cross-
checking. Usually, the first one or two translated items quoted under
a lemma suffice to guarantee the identity of the respective lemma in
Lorrain's dictionary. Those acquainted with the dictionary know that
it is entirely unmarked with respect to tone and that expressive ad-
verbs (which I shall also call 'expressives') have only sporadically
been listed. In this essay, all Lushai forms have been tonally marked,
and a large portion of expressive adverbs have been cited in a manner
that the reader may have at least a glimpse into the phonaesthetic uni-
verse of this language.

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge my indebtedness to
three persons who have contributed significantly to the outcome of this
book. First of all my friend and teacher, well-known among the Mizos
in his two capacities as poet and news speaker in All India Radio
(Shillong station), Mr. P. S. Chhawngthu, who initiated me into the
mysteries of his mother tongue, supervised my work and corrected many
misjudgments, though, I fear, not all of them. I show my deep grati-
tude by dedicating this book to him.

The second person to whom I owe a lot in preparing the final draft
of this book, is Dr. James A. Matisoff, Professor of Linguistics at the
University of California at Berkeley. He related his criticisms on an
earlier draft of this book in a letter to the third person mentioned be-
low. I found his proposals for correction (which in fact came close to
a critical review) so stimulating that I could not refrain from citing
at least those longer remarks from his letter that make reference to
historical perspectives of Lushai phonology, all the more because in my
book an attempt is made to bridge the gulf between synchronic and dia-
chronic viewpoints with the help of my etymological component ε. The
reader will find four of these remarks as footnotes 15, 16, 21, and 25,
respectively. Again I would like to thank Prof. Matisoff for the great
trouble that he took in reading the typescript of this study.

Last but not least, it is Dr. E. F. K. Koerner to whom I must be

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thankful for having agreed to bring out the book. Together with the corrections made by Prof. Matisoff, he contributed to the precision of the style of this book in the most indefatigable manner. The occasion of publishing my work in one of his linguistic series is particularly worthy of remembrance since, having met each other under peculiar circumstances ten years ago in Berlin (at a time when I did not even dream of ever becoming a student of linguistics), there was a long period in which our respective 'karmas' went their own different ways, and then, after having re-established contact, we found ourselves in the same field of scientific occupation.

Finally, my thanks are due to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Bonn which sponsored my Lushai fieldwork in such a generous way.

It is needless to say that all errors, either typographical or factual, that might have entered into this analysis, are entirely my own.

Heidelberg, January 1975.   A.W.