

Ю. А. Тамбовцев, Компендиум основных статистических характеристик функционирования согласных фонем в звуковой цепочке английского, немецкого, французского и других индоевропейских языков, Новосибирск 2001. 129 pp.

The book is dedicated to the phonostatistical analyses of languages of the Indo-European language family. It focuses on several ancient and contemporary languages. The author has provided the phonostatistical data on dead and modern languages. Short references on the his-

tory of people speaking a particular language are provided in the book, which may be considered as an advantage of this edition. J. A. Tambovcev describes the phonetic structure of a number of selected languages. The book contains classifications of languages by the method

of consonant articulation and the type of obstacles (or the way of consonant formation). Consonants are also distinguished by sonority. With respect to the stated characteristics, the statistical analysis has been carried out with the aid of computer methods. The results of the analysis provide data on the frequency of each consonant group within the sample together with the proportions of each consonant group to the total number of phonetic units and to the total consonant number. A consonant coefficient has been calculated for each analysed language that allows correlating different languages. Also, the vowel rate has been set up and used in fixing the consonant frequencies within an established sample.

Statistical analyses have been carried out on literary texts, both prose and poetry, and on samples of words and phrases from dictionaries. The size and origin of the analysed sample is specified. The reference list provides the data on the analyzed texts, and grammar books help the author to identify the phonetic specifics of particular languages.

J. A. Tambovcev has arranged his book in accordance with language groups and families. He has adopted a widely recognized division of languages into genetic groups and families. Following other renowned linguists, the author states that languages are subdivided into families and groups on the basis of certain features common for the languages of a particular family and differentiating them from languages of other families. Thus, the Indo-European family of languages has been established on the

basis of certain common features. These features differentiate the Indo-European languages from other language families. Commonness of the Indo-European languages is reflected in regular correspondences of the grammatical and mostly of phonetic structures.

However, there is another hypothesis suggesting that in antiquity there was a union of initially different languages having resulted in a convergent development of these languages. J. A. Tambovcev relies on arguments that the convergent development of these languages might have led to 1) the formation of typologically similar structures; and 2) these structures have gained formal representations that allow establishing more or less regular correspondences between different languages.

J. A. Tambovcev argues that establishing the Indo-European language family suits mostly the historical aspect of development of modern languages. A scheme of historical linguistic developments allows establishing the simplest correlations between languages in the past, but it is generally not used in the analysis of contemporary languages.

The author correctly points to the important issue in the linguistic theory: establishing a scale, which would enable researchers to estimate the degree of closeness between languages. In his opinion, he has suggested the most reliable system — a numerical system and attempted to interpret interrelationships between languages in terms of numbers.

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