**From the history of phoneme theory. Schools of phonology**

There is a great number of definitions of the phoneme. Baudouin de Courtenay was an adherent to and an active exponent of the so called psychologistic school of thought in linguistics widely current in his time. The truly materialistic view of the phoneme was originated by the Russian linguist L.V.Shcherba, his pupil and disciple, who took the phoneme theory a stage further. His work can be subdivided into two periods. During the first (pre-revolutionary) period L.V. Shcherba was under the influence of B. de Courtenay. He gave such a definition of a phoneme at that period of time: "The phoneme is the shortest phonetic perception capable of being associated with semantic perception of distinguishing words and of being easily isolated from a word". In the the 2nd (post- revolutionary) period he treats phonemes as sound types which are capable of distinguishing the meaning and the form of words. Later prof. L.R. Zinder developed Shcherba's original theory of phonemic independence. He stated that: 1. A phoneme is a phonetic unit expressed in actual speech in the form of a number of variants. 2. Everyone is able to recognise phonemes in his mother tongue. 3. We recognise sounds of our mother tongue in unfamiliar or invented words, e.g. [абака], [ням]. 4. If phonemes were not independent, we should not be able to construct borrowed words by means of Russian phonemes (the construction of foreign names and other words, such as джемпер, леди, Диккенс).

Famous Suisse scholar Ferdinand de Saussure used the term "phoneme" in the meaning of "speech sound". His definition of a phoneme is as follows: "A phoneme is the sum of acoustic impressions and of articulatory movements, of that which which is heard and of that which is pronounced, both mutually dependent." One of his conceptions is the dualistic nature of human linguistic activities. He differentiates between language and speech.

We'll start with so-called **morphological (Moscow phonological) school** (R.I. Avanesov, V.N. Sidorov, P.S. Kuznetsov, A.A. Reformatsky, and N.F. Yakovlev). The exponents of this school maintain that two different phonemes in different allomorphs of the same morpheme may be represented on the synchronic level by one and the same sound, which is their common variant and, consequently, one and the same sound may belong to one phoneme in one word and to another phoneme in another word.

In order to decide to which phoneme the sounds in a phonologically weak (neutral) position belong, it is necessary to find another allomorph of the same morpheme in which the phoneme occurs in the strong position, i.e. one in which it retains all its distinctive features.

The school of thought, originated by L.V. Shcherba, advocates the autonomy of the phoneme and its independence from the morpheme. Different allomorphs of a morpheme may differ from each other on the synchronic level not only in their allophonic, but also in their phonemic composition. According to the **Leningrad (Petersburg) phonological school** (L.V. Shcherba, L.R. Zinder, M.I. Matusevich), speech sounds in a phonologically neutral position belong to that phoneme with whose principal variant they completely or nearly coincide.

**Prague Phonological School**. N.S. Trubetzkoy studied at Moscow University where he got acquainted with the phoneme theory through the works by B.de Courtenay and L.V. Shcherba. He does not approve the definitions of the phoneme formulated by them. He shares his view with R. Jacobson. Main principles of his theory are: 1. The separation of phonology from phonetics; 2. The theory of phonologic opposition; 3. The theory of arch-phoneme. According to N.S. Trubetzkoy phonology is a linguistic science, while phonetics is a biological science. N.S. Trubetzkoy further develops his system of oppositions by giving special prominence to the most essential members: the phoneme and the speech sound. The arch-phoneme is defined as a unity of relevant features common to two phonemes.

But the maximal estrangement between phoneme and sound is advocated by the founder and head of **Copenhagen Linguistic School**L. Hjelmslev and Russian linguist S.K. Shaumyan. L. Hjelmslev's view of the phoneme has been aptly termed as "algebraic" by R. Jacobson and R. Halle because the champion of this trend, Hjelmslev, calls on linguistic to become "an algebra of language operating with unnamed entities, i.e. arbitrarily named entities without natural designation".

Summing up different treatments of phoneme nature, we see that they fall into four main classes. The "**mentalistic**" or "**psychological**"view regards the phoneme as an ideal "mental image" or a target at which the speaker aims. According to this conception allophones of the phoneme are varying materialisations of it. This view was originated by the founder of the phoneme theory, B. de Courtenay. The same point of view was shared by other linguists, Alf. Sommerfelt, e.g., who described phonemes as "models which speakers seek to reproduce".

It is definitely not possible to establish such ideal sounds which do not exist in reality. For this reason the American linguist L. Bloomfield and his followers rejected the view. It was not taken up by Soviet linguists as well.

There is so called "**functional**" view. In those definitions of the phoneme in which its functional aspect is reflected, it is only distinctive function which is referred to because it is the specific function of the phoneme as such. Its constitutive and recognitive functions have been singled out by prof. V. Vassilyev. The functional approach extracts non-distinctive features from the phonemes thus divorcing the phoneme from actually pronounced speech sounds. This view is shared by many foreign linguists, such as N. Trubetskoy, L. Bloomfield, R. Jakobson, and M. Halle.

The functional view of the phoneme gave rise to a branch of linguistics called "phonology" or "phonemics" which is concerned with relationships between contrasting sounds in a language.

There's so-called "**abstract**" view of the phonemes, which regards them as essentially independent of the acoustic and physiological properties associated with them, that is of speech sounds. This view of the phoneme was pioneered by L.Hjelmslev and his associates in the Copenhagen Linguistic Circle.

All the views mentioned above can be qualified as idealistic since all of them regard the phoneme as an abstract conception existing in the mind but not in the reality.

The "**physical**" view regards the phoneme as a "**family**" of related sounds satisfying certain conditions, notably: 1. The various members of the "family" must show phonetic similarity to one another, in other words be related in character. 2. No member of the "family" may occur in the same phonetic context as any other. The representatives of this approach are D.Jones, B.Bloch and J.Trager. This approach may seem to be vulgarly materialist since it views the phoneme as a group of articulatorily similar sounds without any regard to its functional and abstract aspects.