

Analogy as a source of irregularity: The role of phonologically conditioned form variants

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The domain of analogy as a process of language change is generally taken to be the inflectional paradigm of a lexeme and its outcome is often assumed to be greater morphological regularity (cf. Hock 2021: 192, 195). However, a similarly paradigmatic relationship as between the functionally conditioned inflectional forms of a lexeme exists between the phonologically conditioned form variants of a single word-form. These form variants, which come into being via conditioned sound changes, are associated with each other as instances of the same word-form and can therefore be affected by analogical changes. Contexts where the phonologically conditioned form variants of more than one base form coincide can act as pivots for the analogical formation of innovative base forms, just as morphological syncretisms create pivots for analogy in inflectional paradigms.

An example of this is the development of certain lexemes with the Old Indo-Aryan sandhi variation *ś-* ~ *ch-* in later Indo-Aryan, where the variant with initial *ch-* became generalized in analogy with lexemes that have invariant initial *ch-*, as in Gāndhārī *chada* ‘sound’ < OIA *śabda-* (cf. Buddruss 1975). Since analogy does not apply equally in all parallel contexts, such changes can produce outcomes that suggest irregular sound change at first glance (e.g. Gāndhārī *chada* < *śabda-* vs. *śata-* ‘sworn’ < *śapta-*), as is the case with morphological analogy.

Since they operate over the variants of a single word-form and not over the inflectional forms of a lexeme, analogies of this type can introduce irregularity into previously regular inflectional paradigms. This will be demonstrated in the talk with the example of a number of verbal inflectional forms in Katē (Nuristani), which can be shown to derive from analogical innovations in the domain of phonologically conditioned form variants.

The sporadic nature of the changes discussed in this talk implies that at least some cases of “phonological analogy” are instances of the well-known type of proportional analogy and cannot be accounted for in terms of Hock’s (2021: 248–277) concept of rule extension.

References

- Buddruss, Georg. 1975. Gāndhārī-Prakrit *chada* “Ton”. *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 1. 37–48.
- Hock, Hans Henrich. 2021. *Principles of Historical Linguistics*. 3rd edn. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.