

Origins and behaviour of pharyngealisation in (Southern) Rutul

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Rutul is well-known for making a large use of pharyngealisation (retracted tongue-root) as a phonologically distinctive secondary feature; for examples, see Alekseev (1994).

We will first posit that pharyngealisation is a feature primarily associated with and triggered by consonants, although phonetically it is realised also on vowels, often across the whole word. It spreads (back- and forwards) to all syllables which have a "pharyngealisable" consonant at their onset. Non-pharyngealisable consonants are a minority: only dentals and sonorants, which have, instead, palatalised counterparts.

On syllables with the latter type of consonants at their onset, the vowel of a pharyngealisation-bearing word is fronted; and these consonants / these syllables block the spread of pharyngealisation: the secondary, suprasegmental feature "switches" to palatalisation.

Then we will attempt a classification of Rutul pharyngealised consonants according to their respective age and origin in the language:

- Uvular pharyngealising consonants are old and can be traced back as far as proto-lezgian at least;
- velar pharyngealising consonants seem to be recent reinterpretations of consonants originally bearing a feature of "intensity";
- palatal (hushing) pharyngealised consonants are also recent as such, and always associated with labialisation, which is their originally basic secondary feature;
- labial pharyngealised consonants are either expressive or the outcome of recent phonetic changes;
- glottal pharyngealised consonants are either allophones in pharyngeal context or found in words ultimately borrowed from Arabic.

Apparent exceptions to the rules can be explained without positing autonomous pharyngealised vowels, at least for common Rutul.

The complementary distribution of pharyngeal and palatal secondary features would justify the reassessment of Troubetzkoy's term "mouillierung" or maybe TTR "tracted tongue-root" ?

All data will be drawn from personal fieldwork on Southern Rutul, the most conservative dialect in this respect, with some reference to the corresponding data in Tsakhur.

References

ALEKSEEV, M., 1994, "Rutul", in R. Smeets (ed.), *Indigenous languages of the Caucasus*, Vol. 4., Delmar, New York.