

Revisiting the phonemic status of Hungarian [dʒ]

The paper discusses the status of [dʒ], a debated item of the Hungarian phoneme inventory. First, the history of what is called ‘the affricate controversy’ is briefly reviewed. Then, the author looks at Siptár’s (1994) arguments who proposes to derive [dʒ] from a consonant cluster (except when it is the result of some other phonological process, primarily voicing assimilation). He deploys a number of historical data and diachronic counterarguments that bolster up the status of [dʒ] as a phoneme in its own right. For instance, he points out that although [dʒ] hardly ever occurs word initially or word finally, this does not necessarily traverse its phonemic status. The palatal stop [c] only occurs in a single lexical item word initially; and the palato-alveolar affricate [dʒ] occurs in a single lexical item word finally. Yet, their phonemic status is not debated. As far as the intervocalic long (geminate) occurrence of [dʒ] is concerned, there are historical data proving that the sourcelanguage antecedents of *madzag* ‘string’, *bodza* ‘elderberry’ had short (singleton) consonants in that position, and that the fricatives concerned first underwent gemination and then affrication. Similarly, affrication may also be involved in items like *vakarószik* ‘scratch oneself’, given that the alternative analysis would assume inorganic stop epenthesis.

Keywords: descriptive and historical phonology, phonetics, affricates, affrication.

Forgács Tamás
Szegedi Tudományegyetem