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QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION OF PHONETIC VARIATION OF ENGLISH (THE EXAMPLE OF EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES)

Abstract

The article presents the results of the analysis and quantitative assessment of the phonetic variation of English in selected countries of East Asia. We adapt Levenshtein's approach to the numerical description of linguistic distances to determine the degree of phonetic differences, based on the analysis of the phonetic transcriptions of words from the Swadesh list. The work uses methods of multidimensional scaling to visualize the results of the study. The obtained quantitative estimates demonstrate a high degree of robustness both in relation to the applied measurement methods, and in relation to the degree of detail of accounting for detected phonetic differences, as well as to (small) changes in the size used to construct vocabulary estimates. The results allow us to estimate the degree of mutual remoteness of the considered phonetic “variations” of the English language (for native speakers of Chinese, Korean and Japanese) and its “standard”. The constructed matrices of phonetic distances can further be used as “proxies” in empirical studies of the interaction potential of the respective countries.

Keywords: phonetic variation, English, language distances, East Asia.

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