

## RECENZIJOS

Steponavičius A. *English Historical Phonology*. Moscow: Vyshaya shkola, 1987. 208 p.

The 1960's and 1970's was a period marked by a revival of historical linguistics both in the Soviet Union and abroad. In the 1960's a seminar on diachronic phonology of Germanic languages was initiated by Professor M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij at Leningrad University. The works of M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, his colleague Professor I. P. Ivanova and their numerous followers and pupils provided a powerful stimulus for the development of historical linguistics, and, in particular, of diachronic phonology of Germanic languages. The same period witnessed the appearance in many foreign countries of an impressive number of studies into the phonology of separate dialectal texts or dialectal areas, and into some more controversial aspects of English historical phonology. All these investigations were gradually preparing the ground for studies of a more comprehensive character which could now bring together the wealth of material and theoretical approaches of individual investigations, and unify them within the framework of a consistent and full theory of historical phonology.

"English Historical Phonology" is a work in this category. A. Steponavičius, a disciple of Professor M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij and a one-time participant of his famous seminar, sets out to provide a full theory of sound change and to present a structural interpretation of the historical development of the English sound system. The underlying theoretical approach offered by the author stems from his understanding of historical phonology within the framework of functional linguistics.

"English Historical Phonology" is a hand-book designed for undergraduate and postgraduate students of English, also for those interested in general and English historical phonology at a higher linguistic level.

The book consists of a preface, lists of abbreviations and symbols, four parts, each subdivided into two chapters, tables, references and a subject index.

Part I entitled "General Survey" contains two chapters: (1) Foundations of Diachronic Phonology, and (2) The Early Writings of the English Language. In Chapter One, which provides a theoretical basis for the subsequent analysis of the linguistic material, the author outlines his conception of diachronic phonology, defines its object and constituent parts. The starting point in this conception is the definition of language change which is understood as "changes in structure and function of language units and systems" (p. 8). Diachronic phonology studies sound change which is defined as "changes in structure or function of phonetic and phonological units and systems" (p. 8). The task of a diachronic linguist is, according to the author, to recon-

struct language systems at separate stages of their development, and to provide an explanation of how and why language change takes place.

Before presenting his phonological conception underlying the analysis of the development of the English sound system, the author gives an outline of the history of linguistics with a special emphasis on the problems of language change. It is a thoughtful and discriminating survey of the contribution made by the predecessors and pioneers of diachronic linguistics.

The survey is followed by a section which introduces basic principles of phonological analysis and concepts of the sound system. Distinctions are clearly defined between paradigmatics and syntagmatics, segmentics and prosody, phonology and phonetics, language and speech. The author views the phoneme as the basic unit of the sound system, paradigmatically defined as a cluster of DFs, and syntagmatically, as a minimal linear segment, found regularly in contrastive distribution with the other analogous segments, and characterized by constitutive and distinctive functions. At the present stage of the development of phonology, anyone aspiring to create a consistent theoretical framework cannot hope to build his structure on an empty place. It is quite understandable, therefore, that here the author should offer a critical assessment of his predecessors' achievement. A. Steponavičius integrates N. S. Trubetzkoy's system of DFs and oppositions into the binary system. He claims that there is a need of further elaborating the system of sound features by way of correlating phonemic distinctions with phonetic ones. According to him, the same DFs may have different phonetic correlates, and, on the other hand, the same phonetic features may be realizations of different DFs. DFs are looked upon as elementary units of the phonological structure, characterized by most elementary relationships, i. e., binary oppositions.

Further on the author discusses basic concepts of the theory of diachronic phonology: types of sound change, the mechanism of sound change and methods of reconstruction. Of these, the section on types of sound change presents considerable interest. Following, in principle, M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, who distinguished first of all, between allophonic and phonemic change, subdividing the latter into syntagmatic and paradigmatic, A. Steponavičius goes further and subdivides allophonic change into paradigmatic and syntagmatic. This seems to be a logical continuation of M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij's classification. Indeed, a paradigmatic allophonic change is of great importance in understanding complex relations of the phonological system at the stage preceding a phonemic change. According to Steblin-Kamenskij, allophonic change is a precondition of phonemic change, both syntagmatic and paradigmatic. It is natural to expect, then, that a paradigmatic phonetic change should be preceded by a paradigmatic allophonic change. Yet, as Steblin-Kamenskij had pointed out, allophones are not discrete units and do not form a system, and for them a distinction between a syntagmatic and paradigmatic change is not important. A. Steponavičius, however, holds that "phonetic realizations of phonemes in language may be regarded as discrete. They are aggregates of both distinctive and non-distinctive features, expressed in articulatory and acoustic terms" (p. 36). Consequently, changes in the phonetic realization of phonemes can be described in terms of the said features. True enough, addition or loss of a feature can be viewed as a paradigmatic phonetic change. But the author also maintains that the rise and loss of allophones, which are defined as positional realizations of phonemes, should also be regarded as a paradigmatic phonetic change. If the position of a pho-

neme in a syntagmatic chain predetermines the rise of its allophones, are we not facing here a more complicated phonetic change which, in fact, occurs at the intersection of both syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels? We might agree with V. K. Zhuravlev when he says that the introduction of phonetic laws into the conceptual apparatus of diachronic phonology will call for the elimination of the antonymy between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels.

In sum, Chapter One covers in a systematic and finely organized way a vast range of theoretical issues which form a full and consistent theory of diachronic phonology.

Chapter Two describes the early writings of the English language (Old and Middle English) with an emphasis on their provenance and dating.

Parts II, III and IV are devoted to the analysis of Old English, Middle English and Modern English phonology respectively. Each part falls into two chapters, one dealing with the structure of phonology of each successive stage synchronically, the other with the evolution of their phonological systems. The title "structure of phonology" is somewhat misleading and could cause unnecessary confusion for a beginner in the understanding of the notion "phonology". Of the three parts, Part II, undoubtedly, is of the greatest interest and is most stimulating and challenging academically. It is the longest (86 pages in comparison with the other two which cover 15 and 18 pages respectively) and the richest in the coverage of linguistic material and provides an exhaustive treatment of nearly all the aspects of Old English phonology. Such an emphasis on Old English can be partly explained by the fact that structural approach was applied first of all to the analysis of the OE sound system and has yielded very interesting results for both OE phonology and the theory of diachronic phonology in general.

Let us take a closer look at the problems highlighted in this part. The use of various methods of reconstruction and a consistent structural approach has enabled the author to present a complete and well-documented picture of the phonological system of Old English, embracing the inventory of its phonemes, their DFs, and their various oppositions and correlations. Along with the reconstruction and phonological analysis, the author offers a critical appraisal of various controversies over one or another aspect of Old English phonology. In the section on OE vocalism not only the overall pattern is subjected to a close analysis but also dialect divergencies are discussed at some length with due attention to the structural characteristics of one or another dialect system. The author reconstructs not only the paradigmatic phonological system of Old English but also attempts to give a description of the segmental and prosodic systems of Old English. It is to be regretted that similar descriptions are lacking in the part on Middle English phonology.

Chapter Four is an account of the evolution of the OE phonological system. Starting with the reconstruction of the Indo-European sound system (first vocalic and then consonantal systems), the author traces step by step the restructuring of that system via Proto Germanic and Proto Old English, bringing to the fore at every moment the systemic factors of development and viewing the changes in the system as changes of oppositions and correlations. All the stages in that development are subject to a very detailed analysis, taking into account controversial issues of the problems under discussion. The author feels quite at home on the vast field of Germanic and English phonology and painstakingly constructs his own model of the Old English

sound system. At some points alternative solutions and interpretations might be suggested. One such point is the sound change known under the name of the second fronting. The author holds that both in Kentish and West Mercian the two related sound changes known under this name — the raising of /æ/ and palatalization of /a/ in open syllables before back vowels occurred in the period after i-umlaut (p. 121). Moreover, the change started with the palatalization of /a/ which changed the allophonic status of [æ] and [ɛ] (the allophones of the phoneme /æ/) and they became separate phonemes. How then are we to explain spelling evidence of such important Mercian texts as the early Glossaries which definitely point to the fact that the second fronting had a different sequence. Alternative spellings <æ>, <æ>, <ɛ>, and <e> for the phoneme /æ/ and fairly consistent spellings of /a/ for the phoneme /a/ in open syllables before back vowels would rather suggest that the two changes were not simultaneous: the raising of /æ/ must have taken place in the period after breaking but before i-umlaut, whereas the palatalization of /a/ occurred somewhat later, in all likelihood, in the period after i-umlaut and soon before back umlaut.

Another issue where spelling evidence seems to contradict some of the interpretations of the author is the development of the front rounded long vowel phoneme /ö:/ in the West Mercian dialect. The author claims that in the 10th century the Mercian vowel pattern was identical with the vowel pattern of the West Saxon dialect, i. e., it no longer had the phonemes /ø(:)/ (p. 82). In Part III Chapter Six, he says that the phonemes /ø(:)/ were lost in the West Mercian dialect (obviously in the 10th–11th centuries). This is true only as far as the short vowel is concerned. The long vowel /ö:/ had a slightly different way of development in the West Mercian and later in the West Midland dialect area. The spelling evidence from the Mercian texts of the 9th–10th centuries (the *Vespasian Psalter* and *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>) also from West Midland texts suggests that /ö:/ was retained in the Mercian vowel system of the 10th century. If the monophthongization of diphthongs occurred in the 10th–11th centuries, and if the result of the monophthongization of the diphthong /eo:/ was /ö:/, it would suggest that at the time of the monophthongization this vowel phoneme was still found in the West Mercian vowel system and that after the monophthongization its frequency increased.

On the whole, Chapter Four offers a fairly complete picture of the development of the Old English sound system, throwing into relief changes and processes which were decisive in the further evolution of the sound system. It is surprising, therefore, not to find a single line devoted to the sound change known as smoothing which operated in the West Mercian and Northumbrian dialects in the 7th–8th centuries, and, on a smaller scale, in the West Saxon and Kentish dialects in the 9th century. Smoothing is of double interest; firstly, it was one of those syntagmatic changes (perhaps the earliest) which gradually destroyed the foundations of the correlation based on the DF of gliding vs. non-gliding, and which resulted in the reduction of the frequency of diphthongs, first in the Anglian dialects, and later in the remaining; secondly, the analysis of smoothing as well as such a diametrically opposite change as breaking offer interesting insights into the relationships of the vowel and consonant subsystems and into their certain correlations as possible internal factors of the phonological evolution.

Part III devoted to the problems of Middle English phonology is considerably shorter than Part II, and offers fewer challenges for a language his-

torian. It is really surprising that Middle English which is attested by a very large body of dialect material and has fairly accurately established dialect boundaries should deserve less attention of a phonologist. Perhaps this can be explained by the existing situation in Middle English phonology in general. Contemporary dialectology and diachronic phonology have not yet joined their forces in the investigation of Middle English. On the one hand, there are numerous interesting studies into ME dialect material which are mostly done in the vein of traditional historical phonetics. On the other hand, there are major diachronic phonological investigations which are mostly concerned with separate areas of the ME sound system.

Chapter Six of Part III is given over to the analysis of major sound changes which were gradually shaping the sound system of the would-be Modern English. Among these the most important development was the replacement of the correlation long vs. short by the correlation checked vs. unchecked (free). Here the author pays tribute to a number of Soviet diachronic phonologists of the Leningrad school who have shown that the most important sound change which finally brought about the replacement of this correlation was the rise of gliding vowels resulting from the vocalization of the dorsal fricatives and the sonorant /w/. It was one of those developments where vocalic and consonantal systems were involved simultaneously. Though in the opinion of the author this change belongs to the syntagmatic change (p. 168), are we not facing here another instance where paradigmatics and syntagmatics intersect? This syntagmatic change led eventually to the rise of a completely new type of gliding vowels.

The analysis of Middle English and, in particular, Modern English phonology in a work of such a scope as "English Historical Phonology" could have given more attention to the shifting relations between the dialects, especially in the face of the emerging London dialect which marked the early stage in the development of the national language.

Part IV is devoted to the analysis of the Modern English vowel system. Here the author does not limit his interest to presenting the characteristics of the paradigmatic system only. An outline of the syntagmatic sound structure and some prosodic features is also presented. Chapter Eight of this part dealing with the evolution of the Modern English phonological system centres on one of its major changes — the development of the free vowels and the causes of their rise. Another area of considerable interest in that evolution was the replacement of the correlation voiced vs. voiceless by the correlation fortis vs. lenis.

Regrettably, no concluding chapter has been given in the book. A general review of the most salient points in the evolution of the English sound system could have added more weight to this important contribution to historical linguistics and English historical phonology.

A few of the remarks given above did not aim to detract from the value of this work. "English Historical Phonology" by A. Steponavičius does what it sets out to do and does it with great competence and dedication. It is the first English historical phonology of such a scope, so well documented, comprehensive and authoritative. The author is constantly aware of his reader and is never carried away either by a very sophisticated theorizing or a very elaborate argumentation. The rich empirical material and its theoretical interpretation is presented succinctly and precisely. The author demonstrates critical acumen and academic objectiveness in assessing the existing body of literature on English historical phonology and historical linguistics.

## REFERENCES

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W e ł n a, J e r z y. *A critical survey of a historical phonology of English vowels (with special reference to Karl Luick's "Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache")*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1987.

Professor Jerzy Wełna of Warsaw University is the author of currently widely known works on diachronic and synchronic English phonology [Wełna, 1978; 1982]. This time he has produced a book specially devoted to a critical analysis of Karl Luick's "Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache" and his contribution to English historical phonetics. For decades, Karl Luick's historical grammar has been a mine of information for students of the history of English, a most important source of both concrete material and innovative ideas. Yet only in Professor Wełna's book do we receive a full critical account of Luick's views on the evolution of English vowels, comparing his theories of sound change in general, and English vowel changes in particular, with those of his predecessors, contemporaries and, especially, with modern investigators of English historical phonology. Jerzy Wełna's approach is far from being purely descriptive, as many original interpretations for selected controversial problems of English vowel change have been suggested in this book.

In addition to the "Historische Grammatik", Jerzy Wełna makes references to Luick's other monographs and articles as well.

Jerzy Wełna's study consists of four chapters: Chapter 1. *Introduction: Karl Luick and His Work* (p. 15-35), and the following three chapters, which deal respectively with Old English, Middle English, and Modern English vocalism - Chapter 2. *The Development of Vowels until the 11th Century* (p. 37-81); Chapter 3. *The Development of Vowels from the 11th Century until the 15th Century* (p. 83-122); Chapter 4. *The Development of Vowels from the 15th Century On* (p. 123-177). To these, short "Concluding Remarks" (p. 179-181) and extensive "References" (p. 183-203), which begin with Luick's works on English phonetics, are added.

The introduction is quite welcome since it provides us with information otherwise not so easily available about Luick's life, academic career and his works. It is worth reproducing at least some of these facts in the present review.

Karl Luick was born on January 27, 1865, in Floridsdorf, now part of Vienna. In 1884 he enrolled at Vienna University, where he began his studies of the German language (as a result, he published a few articles on the German language, and the monograph "Deutsche Lautlehre" in 1904). However, very soon his interests shifted towards English philology. His main interest was English metrics and its history, and his Habilitation dissertation was