

RECENSE, REFERÁTY, ZPRÁVY

André Martinet: Éléments de linguistique générale. Paris, Armand Colin, 1960. Pp. 224, price not stated.

The outward appearance of the reviewed little volume might easily mislead a casual reader. Published in a well-known series of handbooks, under a not particularly attractive form, it certainly has a popularizing aim in view: its avowed purpose is to initiate an intending student of language (and probably even a general reader) into some of the most fundamental problems of language theory, and the author's clear thinking as well as his ability of lucid exposition cannot fail to attain the set purpose. At the same time, however, the more or less encyclopaedic character of the book, presenting for the first time a synthesis of the views of one of the leading linguistic thinkers of our period, makes the present little volume considerably exceed the status of a mere initiating handbook. In reading the book, one increasingly acquires the impression that in compiling it its author has deliberately made use of the opportunity of conceiving it as a blue-print of a much more extensive and thoroughgoing synthetic work to be published at some future time. This double function of the present volume is naturally apt to make it most attractive even to a linguistic specialist, but may sometimes interfere with the originally intended pedagogical mission of the book. This is especially seen in Chapter 4, discussing the system of „significant units“ of language: with its necessary succinctness and relative scarcity of illustrative materials it will most probably disappoint both the beginner and the linguistic specialist. The author, it is fair to state, has himself foreseen this, as may be inferred from his remark in the Preface (p. 7), admitting that some points in the subject matter discussed in Chapter 4 may be „trop neuf pour un manuel comme celui-ci.“ Apart from the said chapter, however, the subject matter is presented in a manner that may be classified as remarkably clear and easily palatable.

The book is divided into six chapters: 1. La linguistique, le langage et la langue, (pp. 9–33), 2. La description des langues (pp. 34–51), 3. L'analyse phonologique (pp. 52–96), 4. Les unités significatives (pp. 97–145), 5. La variété des idiomes et des usages linguistiques (pp. 146–176), and 6. L'évolution des langues (pp. 177–217). The very titles of the chapters give ample evidence of the wide range of the author's interest. This first impression is confirmed if Martinet's most recent approach to general linguistic problems is compared to that revealed by his well-known *Économie des changements phonétiques*, published in Berne five years earlier. (1) True, the phonematic conception outlined in the *Économie* has, in principle, been upheld in the *Éléments*, and economy is, even in the present little book, still regarded as the most essential factor asserting itself both in the synchronistic and in the diachronistic aspects of language. But there is an important difference: the operation of the factor of economy is also traced on the „higher“ levels of language. The whole of Chapter 4 is devoted to an attempt at systematizing the significant units of language, the basic unit being here the moneme (covering what is usually termed as *semanteme* and *morpheme*). Besides, the impact of the principle of economy has been aptly harmonized with some vital consequences drawn from the theory of information, the bearing of which upon the theory of language has been most ably delimited in the present volume. Further, it is duly realized that the assertion of economy is sometimes hampered by a number of other forces, even by the too rigid structure of this or that part of the system of language (see, e. g., the author's observations on „fréquence et forme en phonologie“, p. 197). In general the approach to language in the *Éléments*, if compared with that of the *Économie*, appears to have grown more sensitive to the dialectic nature of language: it is duly pointed out that „économie des systèmes phonologiques est une chose complexe dans laquelle interviennent des facteurs d'ordres divers“ (p. 217); stress is laid on the fact that „à tout point de la chaîne parlée, on peut . . . identifier un jeu des tensions divers qui s'équilibrent,“ but that, naturally, „l'équilibre ne sera jamais acquis une fois pour toutes“ (p. 208). By all this, Martinet's standpoint has become, at least in some of its basic points, markedly closer to that of the Prague group, with which he has always shared a number of important functional concepts (see, among

other things, the terms *corrélation phonologique*, *marque de corrélation*, *rendement fonctionnel*, *neutralisation*, etc. etc.), though often conceived in his own particular manner.

But, of course, some fundamental differences remain unbridged. Within the narrow limits of a brief review, only some of the most essential can be singled out. Perhaps the most outstanding of them is that, despite his awareness of the limitations to which is subject the operation of the principle of economy, Martinet does not always seem to view the facts of language (and especially those of language development) in their entire complexity. In one of his papers (2) the present reviewer tried to show that a truly "structural" conception of language regards the latter — to use a very adequate formula of V. V. Vinogradov — as "a system of systems" (or, rather, of systematically arranged levels). If it is so, the mutual interdependence of those levels plays a hardly insignificant part in language development, and the structure of any of the levels must often be adjusted so as not to hinder the smooth functioning of its fellow-levels. As a result of this, the impulse to a change in language may issue from any of its levels, but the consequences of the impulse may reach far beyond the level from which the impulse had issued. (Some such interdependences were outlined in the paper quoted above, Note 2.) Instances of such interdependences and interrelations in language do not seem to be reducible to the principle of economy (even in its modified version) and obviously call for an application of more delicate and more subtle methods of linguistic analysis.

Another point which seems to claim finer methods than those used by Martinet appears to be the vexed problem of the inner and outer factors in the development of language. Here Martinet even goes so far as to state that "seule la causalité interne intéresse le linguiste" (p. 181). True, he is aware of the fact that some "repercussions" resulting from social and allied changes cannot be denied, but he points to the utmost difficulty experienced in tracing the exact links existing between the social changes and changes of communicative needs. This is true enough, but it hardly exculpates the linguist from distancing himself from this category of problems. In addition to this, it should be pointed out that the whole problem seems to have been rather blurred by the vulgarizing approach to it by some linguists (and linguistic groups, such as the followers of N. Ya. Marr). As has been pointed out in the paper quoted above, Note 1, a number of concrete instances, drawn from the development of individual languages, seems to reveal that outside influence affects the structure of language only if such intervention is in agreement with the structural needs and wants of the affected language system. (3) In other words, the structure of the affected language accepts the influence only if the latter is found to be compatible with the structural situation existing in the former. If this conception is true to facts, it means that the ascertainment of the impact of outer factors on the development of language may not always be a task quite so hopeless as one would be tempted to think (and as Martinet, too, appears to suppose).

Another doubtful point is Martinet's attitude to Written Language. Insisting on the "caractère vocale" of language, he comes to the conclusion that the study of "writing" ("l'étude de l'écriture", as he puts it) constitutes a branch of research lying outside the province of linguistics ("une discipline distincte de la linguistique", p. 11). Later on, however, he is forced to admit close interdependence of the "spoken and written forms of the same language" (p. 164); this admission is tantamount to an acknowledgement of two more or less parallel norms within language, each of the two serving specific situations in which the language user may find himself placed. Martinet's keen observation of linguistic facts cannot overlook the functional complementariness of the two norms of language (p. 163), and the necessary corollary of the functional specialization of the two, viz. that it is "absolutely normal" for the "usage parlé" and "usage écrite" to become differentiated (p. 165). If all this is true, however, i. e. if the written norm of language has its specific *raison d'être*, its specific tasks that cannot be performed (or, at least, performed so adequately) by the spoken norm, one can hardly approve of the relegation of the study of the written norm of language to some sphere lying outside the province of linguistics. Rather it appears advisable to reconsider the thesis of the exclusively vocal character of language: at least for those language communities which have attained some higher cultural status the thesis appears unable to cover a large portion of the established facts. (4)

Lack of space prevents the reviewer from commenting upon some minor points included in the volume (e. g., on the problem of the phonematic interpretation of affricate consonants, on the problem of compounds, etc.). But even those sections which it was possible to touch upon here, however briefly, may have convincingly revealed the richness and profundity of the author's theses. Presented with admirable clearness, they supply highly stimulating, and sometimes even provocative, food for thought. It is only to be hoped that before very long Prof. Martinet will be able to replace this blue-print of his linguistic creed by a more comprehensive and even more beneficial volume the book under review so promisingly foreshadows.

NOTES

¹ The *Economie* was commented upon in the present reviewer's paper. *Dvě významné fonologické publikace zahraničí* [Two Outstanding Foreign Books on Phonology], *Slovo a slovesnost* 19, 1958, pp. 52–60.

² J. Vachek, *Some Less Familiar Aspects of the Analytical Trend of English*, *Brno Studies in English* 3, 1961, pp. 9–78.

³ As early as in 1931, B. Havránek pointed out that "ce ne sont que des raisons intrinsèques qui peuvent résoudre la question de savoir pourquoi certaines influences étrangères agissent, tandis que d'autres restent sans effet" (Travaux du CLP 4, 1931, p. 304).—As a concrete illustration of the said thesis may be adduced the influence exercised upon English by French in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. It is now commonly admitted that this influence had its share in the reshapements of the originally synthetic morphological structure of English on analytical lines, French morphology being already markedly analytical at the time when English and French got into close mutual contact. But this influence could only assert itself because as early as in Late Old English soil had been prepared for the ensuing victory of the analytical principle. (Cp. A. C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, London 1952, p. 205).

⁴ For a discussion of the problems of the written norm of language see, e. g., J. Vachek, *Zum Problem der geschriebenen Sprache*, *Travaux du CLP* 8, 1939, pp. 94–104; Same, *Two Chapters on Written English*, *Brno Studies in English* 1, 1959, pp. 7–38.

Josef Vachek

Henry Kučera: *The Phonology of Czech*. 's-Gravenhage (Mouton & Co) 1961. Pp. 112.

It is certainly rather humiliating for Czech phonologists, who proudly and justly refer to their own country as the cradle of phonology, to see their own language for the first time phonologically described, in a systematic manner, by a scholar of some other country. The author of the reviewed monograph, an American of Czech extraction, is no novice in problems of Czech phonology: he has made himself known in linguistic circles by a number of articles treating of Modern Czech (and, especially, Modern Colloquial Czech); one of these papers was read at the 1958 Slavist Congress in Moscow.

The author's approach to the involved problems is, of course, different from that of the Prague group: the theoretical and terminological framework employed for the purpose is basically that of the Harvard group, working with the concept of distinctive sound features, standing in binary oppositions. (1) This framework is, however, modified by some descriptivist elements in the variety represented by C. F. Hockett. (2) Within the possibilities afforded by this approach the author has managed to outline a fairly consistent and practically workable (if rather static, and therefore not quite convincing) scheme, and, in addition to this, to illustrate by some concrete, though somewhat scanty materials his theory of the mixed character of Modern Colloquial Czech. In the author's opinion, Colloquial Czech /ClCz/ has not the status of another literary code, different both from Literary Czech /LCz/ and from the Czech common language /CnCz/ (the latter being an interdialect steadily replacing Czech dialects), but rather a mixture of elements characteristic of the other two codes, i. e. of LCz and CnCz (p. 16). The question is, of course, highly controversial: apart from the fact that the author's use of the term ClCz does not tally with that established in Czech linguistic tradition, it should be noted that the specific purpose of ClCz, different both from that of LCz and from that of CnCz, seems to suggest that the elements constituting ClCz should be regarded, for all their variability, rather as a synthetic whole, than as a kind of mechanical mixture. One should especially note the hierarchy that can be established in the manner in which the elements of LCz and CnCz can be combined for the purpose of ClCz (for some highly suggestive observations on this point, see Kučera, p. 101f). Such hierarchy appears to show that, despite its vacillation, the constitution of ClCz is governed by some structural laws. Fortunately, whatever may be the actual status of ClCz, the phonological problems of LCz and, for that matter, of ClCz, are not affected by it.

In analyzing Czech utterances phonematically, the author bases his procedure on purely formal criteria. He establishes three categories of junctures (which he calls, more aptly, disjunctures), viz. the terminal /#/ , the external /+/, and the internal /=/, e. g., /# ještě + se + ne = vra:fil#/ and, consequently, divides utterances, as most descriptivists do, into macrosegments (i. e. phonematic sequences roughly corresponding to closed sentences), phonemic measures (determined by successive strong stresses), microsegments (portions of macrosegments between two successive occurrences of disjuncture, i. e. — very roughly — stem morphemes, prefixal morphemes, and a small number of suffixal morphemes), and the like. However formal, however,