

Review of Principles of Historical Linguistics.

By Hans Henrich Hock.

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Hock has produced a book that makes a reviewer's job an easy one. This "state-of-the-art" compendium provides such a wealth of information on historical linguistics--covering both standard topics and new areas--and such a range of interesting facts and analyses on virtually all aspects of language change that it is hard to find significant fault with any part of it. Indeed, this book will undoubtedly be the standard general work for years to come on the tenets and concepts that define historical linguistics as a subfield of linguistics.

After an introductory chapter and a (useful but--see below--perhaps unnecessary) chapter on the mechanics of notation and terminology, H covers in 18 substantial chapters all the major topics relevant to the study of language change: sound change (chh. 3-8), analogy and morphological change (chh. 9-11), semantic change (ch. 12), syntactic change (ch. 13), linguistic contact (chh. 14-16), internal reconstruction (ch. 17), comparative method and reconstruction (chh. 18-19), and causation of change (ch. 20). While it might seem at first glance that socio-historical linguistics is slighted in the presentation, this is not so: the extensive section on language contact (long and detailed enough to form an introductory book on the topic in its own right) is strongly sociolinguistic in content, as is chapter 20 on causation. In what strikes me as a wise decision, H omits any systematic discussion of writing systems (e.g. their decipherment and interpretation), a subject covered in many books on historical linguistics (e.g. Arlotto 1972, Lehmann 1973, Jeffers & Lehiste 1979), though comments on the philological interpretation of written records are

certainly in order and H does make passing references to this necessary side of historical linguistic research.

In his presentations, H digests an enormous amount of secondary literature, covering both topics that are much discussed and those that are rarely talked about in the literature. In doing so, he treats areas that do not get a full airing in other general works on historical linguistics, such as the account of tonogenesis in chapter 5, the catalogue in chapter 7 of properties of various segment types diachronically, and the extended discussion and comparison in chapter 10 of Kurylowicz's "laws" of analogy (Kurylowicz 1947) with Manczak's "tendencies" of analogical change (Manczak 1958). In addition, H ventures numerous analyses of his own, as with the interesting discussion on initial strengthening as a quasi-analogically induced sound change (pp. 162-4, 207-8). Despite being generally well-supported with data, some of H's claims may strike a few readers as quite controversial, e.g. when he says that "it remains to be seen whether major syntactic processes like the passive are ever completely lost [from any language]" (p. 346). I personally, however, found myself in agreement with most of what H said, and am confident that most "mainstream" historical linguists will find their views reflected in H's presentations.

A few points on which I disagreed with H's interpretations and emphases should be noted though. For instance, H underplays (p. 172) the role of phonetic and phonological similarities as a basis for proportional analogy, yet well-documented examples can be found, such as the occurrence, discussed in Hogg 1980, in the Anglian dialect of Old

English of 1SG forms such as *fleom* 'I flee' (for *fleo*, attested elsewhere) based on a rhyme association with the Anglian innovative 1SG indicative *beom* (for *beo*, attested elsewhere). Also with regard to analogy, in sharp contrast with Anttila 1972, H does not give much attention to the "one-form-one-meaning" principle that seems to motivate much of analogical change; while he acknowledges its effects in levelling (p. 168), and hints at it in his discussion of folk-etymology (pp. 202-3), much more can justly be made of it. Many of the processes H treats as "non-systematic" (pp. 189-204), especially blending and recombination, can be seen as being motivated by speakers aiming for a better fit between form and meaning. Finally, treating taboo distortion in the chapter on semantic change seems somewhat unusual; perhaps the Jeffers and Lehiste approach, treating such matters under a rubric of "lexical change" is preferable in this case.

Besides the wide coverage of the field, one further real strength of the book is the fact that H does not merely present and rehash data that other textbooks on historical linguistics have already dealt with; in many instances, the reader is presented with "new" examples of the phenomenon in question, be it sound change, analogy, syntactic change, or whatever. Importantly also, much of this new data comes from the Indic (especially Sanskrit) and old Germanic languages which H is himself an expert on, thus allowing the reader to feel quite secure as to the quality of the data (a goal H himself states (p. viii) as a necessity for the proper evaluation of claims about language change). Indeed, H's attention to detail and concern for accuracy in the presentation of data is a welcome change from many works on historical linguistics that are

occasionally all too cavalier in their coverage of the facts upon which claims are based.

In a book that covers so many diverse topics in such detail, it is hard to find recurring themes that serve to define the overall approach to the subject matter, but at least two are evident. First, H insists on the importance of reinterpretation as a mechanism of virtually all types of linguistic change, including semantic change. The importance of this emphasis lies in the fact that it is reasonable to argue that all linguistic "structures" (rules, constructions, patterns, and the like) that are not in a language by virtue of inheritance or borrowing or universal properties have resulted from the reinterpretation of existing material. Second, the distinction between regular and irregular types of changes--the former encompassing most imperceptible types of sound change, the latter comprising the perceptible types of sound change, e.g. dissimilation and metathesis, as well as morphological and syntactic change--comes up again and again as H delineates his (sensible) interpretation of Neogrammarian dogma and practice regarding sound change and differentiates among changes in the various components of a grammar.

This book, however, is not without some faults. The biggest problem is with audience. On the one hand, H clearly expects a high degree of linguistic sophistication on the part of his readers, to judge from both the breadth and depth of coverage. Yet, in many instances the reader encounters lectures on matters that are rather elementary, for example most of what is contained in chapter 2 on phonetics, phonemics, and morphology, or the discussion of language as infinite (p.

280), or the bases of syntactic investigation (pp. 309-313. While in some cases it is undoubtedly beneficial for H to spell out his particular theoretical biases in order for the reader to understand more fully the import of the discussion, not all of these remarks seem necessary. Another problem is stylistic in nature, namely the large number of important comments that are seemingly trivialized by being enclosed in parentheses, as with the account of avoidance of repetition as a poetic/stylistic device (p. 284), or the notion of "proof" in historical linguistics (p. 567). Overall, though, these are more a distracting annoyance than a significant failing.

For a book this size, there are remarkably few typographical errors, none of which are significant (except perhaps for the rather unusual reconstruction (p. 125) *rkstos for PIE 'bear', where *rkpos, *rksos, or *rktos might have been intended).

All in all, this is a fine work, a true contribution to historical linguistics and to general linguistic science. Moreover, it is a real bargain at the paperback price, and probably even at the hardback price!

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