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*Leeds Studies in English*  
School of English  
University of Leeds  
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## SUMMARY.

Gy. Laziczius, *Bevezetés a fonológiába* (A Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai 33 szám), pp. 109. Budapest, 1932. Price 3 pengos (= 2s. 3d.).

Phonematology<sup>1</sup> is perhaps the most widely discussed branch of modern philology, but the lack of a comprehensive work on the subject has been an obstacle to many would-be students. Dr. Laziczius' excellent and reasonably-priced "Introduction to Phonematology" is a hand-book of exactly the kind that is needed. It is a full but concise account of the subject; by reason of the many new ideas presented it will be of interest to the phonematological specialist and it can also safely be recommended to the elementary student. Most important of all, it stands out from almost all other works on phonematology by reason of the extreme clarity and simplicity of its style. It is unfortunate that the language in which it is written will render it inaccessible to many, and we must hope that Dr. Laziczius will soon give us a translation.

The book is divided into three sections—on general, Hungarian and historical phonematology respectively.

I. *General Phonematology.* After a few introductory remarks (§1), concerned, *inter alia*, with the speaker's power to apperceive a phonemal but not a phonetic difference, the history of phonematology is discussed in some detail (§2). Laziczius makes it clear that the study of the subject originated in Russia with Baudouin de Courtenay; although de Saussure

<sup>1</sup> In English the word *phonology* is used in the sense of German *Lautlehre*, Hungarian *hangtan*, etc. and it is moreover the only single word which expresses this idea; the use of *phonology* in the added sense of German *Phonologie*, Hungarian *fonológia*, etc., which is advocated by the Prague school and which is found in a few English works, is therefore to be deprecated as leading to considerable confusion (particularly in the minds of elementary students); in English it is therefore necessary to abandon this Prague usage and to coin a new word to render German *Phonologie*, Hungarian *fonológia* etc.; Professor Bruce Dickins suggests the very suitable *phonematology* (hence derivatives such as *phonematological*, *phonematologically*, *phonematologist*, *phonematologise*, *phonematologisation*) and throughout the present summary I use these terms.

certainly realised its importance he apparently made no very definite pronouncement on it and his influence was without immediate effect in this field. Baudouin de Courtenay was Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Kazan from 1875 to 1883 and he there developed the new study very actively. Of his pupils, Krushevskij was the first to embark upon an original line of work in this field. Baudouin de Courtenay founded the so-called Kazan school of phonematology (later moved to Petersburg) to which such constructive phonematologists as Polivanov and Tomashevskij owe their training. The next advance towards the modern point of view was due to Shcherba, also a member of this school. Although traces of the phonematological attitude are certainly to be found in the works of Sweet, Passy, Jespersen, Gombocz and Daniel Jones (early works), it is safe to say that phonematology did not really reach the West until three Russians, Troubetzkoy, Jakobson and Kartsevskij brought it (more or less in its 'Russian' form) before the Hague Congress of 1928. The new subject was at once enthusiastically received, notably by the Cercle Linguistique de Prague, who have since made it their special study. After this it developed rapidly and (as could clearly be seen at the Copenhagen Congress of 1936) continues to do so.

Laziczius next (§3) discusses the various definitions of the phoneme. The word itself is due to de Saussure; Krushevskij borrowed it from him but altered the sense. The definitions of de Saussure and Krushevskij (also Baudouin de Courtenay in his earlier works) are however so different from those current to-day that their interest is merely historical. The modern definitions are considered by Laziczius under three heads:—

(1) Psychological. This attitude is ultimately due to Baudouin de Courtenay who defined the phoneme as "the psychological counterpart of the speech-sound." Advocates of views of this type have been mostly Poles, notably Benni and Ułaszyn.

(2) Functional. Shcherba is the originator of this attitude.<sup>2</sup> Troubetzkoy is probably to be reckoned as belonging here and the modern functional attitude (exemplified in the works of Mathesius, de Groot, Chyzhevskyj, Doroszewski and Daniel Jones) represents a development of Shcherba's original view. This is the usual position to-day and Laziczius associates himself with it.

(3) Sociological. This attitude is only found in the USSR., e.g. in the works of Shor, Vinokur and Tomashevskij (who<sup>3</sup> defines the phonemes as "the socially valuable sounds of language").

Laziczius then deals with the different types of relation which can subsist between phonemes (§4) and with the phonetic variants of phonemes (§5). In §6 he discusses the fact that a difference phonemal in one language may be merely phonetic in another (he compares Polish *lata* pl. 'years': *tata* 'patch' with the same difference as that between the *ls* of English *leaf* and *feel* and, as an extreme case, he quotes Polivanov's example, *op. cit.* p. 215, of the South American language Botokudo<sup>4</sup> in which *d/n* and *b/m* are mere phonetic variants). This section is concluded by an interesting account of the importance of phonematology in the construction of alphabets<sup>5</sup> and some remarks on 'Lautersatz.' §7 is devoted to the use which languages make of their phonemes, in fact to the modern 'Lautstatistik'; this type of work is so well exemplified in Professor Trnka's recent book *A phonological analysis of*

<sup>2</sup> Shcherba's *Russkie glasnye* is unfortunately not accessible to me; but, according to Laziczius, Polivanov follows Shcherba almost word for word and I therefore quote here Polivanov's definition (*Vvedenie v jazykoznanie dlja vostokovednykh Vuzov* p. 217):—*Sushchestvujushchee v dannom jazyke predstavlenie zvuka jazyka, sposobnoe assotsirovat'sja so smyslovymi predstavlenijami i differentsirovat' slova, my budem nazывать FONEMOI.* "We shall define a *phoneme* as a presentation, existing in a given language, of a sound of the language, which is capable of being associated with meaning-presentations and of differentiating words." This definition is important as to it the current conception of the phoneme is ultimately due.

<sup>3</sup> *Jazykovedenie i materializm* p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> A. Meillet and M. Cohen, *Les langues du monde* p. 697.

<sup>5</sup> Admirers of that great scholar General Baron P. K. Uslar (1816-1875) will be interested to learn that, in constructing alphabets for the Caucasian languages, he betrayed an attitude which was almost phonematological.

*present-day standard English* (Prague, 1935) that perhaps nothing further need be said here on the subject.

II. *Hungarian Phonematology* (§§9-13). In this part of the book Laziczius applies his general methods to a descriptive phonematology of Hungarian and its dialects. Owing to the nature of the subject this section falls outside the scope of the present review. It is clearly written and should be easily intelligible to anyone familiar with the rudiments of Hungarian philology. It is documented by a most useful bibliography of the large and scattered literature of Hungarian dialect philology, a subject with which Dr. Laziczius is peculiarly fitted to deal.<sup>6</sup>

III. *Historical Phonematology*. Laziczius first of all (§§14-15) attacks Sievers' views as to the 'gradualness' of true sound-changes. He concludes by quoting Sommerfelt's remark<sup>7</sup> "Le changement par saut c'est une nécessité psychologique."

More than half of this last part of Laziczius' book (§16) is taken up by his interesting and entirely new theory as to the phonematological explanation of certain types of sound-change. He has here made by far the most detailed (and certainly the most lucid) of the few applications of the principles of phonematology to diachronic philology that have hitherto appeared. His theory (which he explains by the sound method of a detailed exposition of two typologically interconnected examples) therefore merits very serious attention. His two examples are:—

(1) In the dialects of the Csángós of Moldavia<sup>8</sup> standard Hungarian *a* (pronounced *â*) appears as *â* in general but as *à*<sup>9</sup> before *á* in the next syllable; thus d.<sup>10</sup> *ârân* = s. *arany* 'gold' but d. *âpâm* = s. *apâm* 'my father.' The difference between the *â* and the *â* is considerable but, since no pair of words or forms is distinguished only by the difference *â* : *â*, *â* and *â* are

<sup>6</sup> Cf. his recent book *A magyar nyelvjárások* ['The Hungarian dialects'], Budapest, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal de Psychologie* xxv, 683.

<sup>8</sup> S. Simonyi, *Die ungarische Sprache* pp. 131-51, gives (in German) a brief but good account of Hungarian dialects.

<sup>9</sup> For Laziczius' over-dotted *a* I print *a* with a grave accent throughout.

<sup>10</sup> d. = dialect, s. = standard.

not two different phonemes but merely two variants of the *a*-phoneme. Wichmann has pointed out that in one Csángó settlement (Szabófalva) the expected *á* before *á* in the next syllable does not always appear; this is due to analogy; thus d. *álá* (instead of d. \**álá*) = s. *alá* 'under' by analogy with d. *álátt* = s. *alatt* 'under.' Similarly in the word d. *rákász* (instead of d. \**rákász*) 'das Legen, das Setzen' the *á* is due to analogy with the verb d. *rák* = s. *rak* 'legen, setzen' in whose conjugation forms with *á* (regularly) predominate (cf. pres. ind. subjective s. *rakok, raksz, rak, rakunk, raktok, raknak* etc.); but in d. *rákász* 'Haufen' we have the phonologically regular form with d. *á-á*. In this way in the dialect of Szabófalva the two words *rákász* 'Haufen' and *rákász* 'das Legen, das Setzen' are distinguished by the difference *á* : *á*. We must therefore say that in this dialect, *á* and *á* are two distinct phonemes whereas in general in the dialects of the Csángós of Moldavia they are, as we have seen, merely two phonetic variants of one phoneme. In this way a new phoneme has arisen in the dialect of Szabófalva.

(2) As his second example Laziczius chooses one of the most famous problems of Finno-Ugrian philology, that of the initial *k*-sounds. According to the classical theory there were two *k*-sounds in PrFU.: a front *k'* occurring only before front vowels and a back *k* occurring only before back vowels; in the majority of FU. languages these have fallen together (hence Finnish *k*) but they are kept apart in the Ugrian languages: PrFU. *k'* > Hung. *k* while PrFU. *k* > OHung.  $\chi$  (*ch*) > MnHung. *h*; cf. PrFU. *k'* in Finn. gen. sg. *käden*: Hung. *kéz* 'hand'; PrFU. *k* in Finn. *kolme*: Hung. *három* '3' (Halotti Beszéd<sup>11</sup> *charmúl* 'three times'). But this theory leaves unexplained certain cases where Hung. *k* occurs before a back vowel e.g. Hung. *kap* 'obtain.' In propounding his new theory Laziczius first discusses the Obi-Ugrian counterparts of the Hungarian *kéz*- and *három*-series. He finds that:—

(i) Hung. *k* (as in *kéz*) = Vogul and Ostyak *k* in general but

<sup>11</sup> The oldest Hungarian text (XIII c.).

*k'* (aspirated *k*) in some Ostyak dialects; this *k'* however is not a separate phoneme but a mere phonetic variant of the Ostyak *k*-phoneme.

(ii) Hung. *h* (as in *három*) = in general,  ${}_1\chi$ <sup>12</sup> (back spirant) in some Vogul and Ostyak dialects,  ${}_1k$  (back *k*) in others—with purely phonetic variations in certain dialects. Moreover (as can be seen from certain pairs of words) this  ${}_1\chi$  and  ${}_1k$  are phonemes distinct from the *k*-phoneme mentioned above, not mere phonetic variants of it. The  ${}_1\chi$ -dialects of Vogul and Ostyak together form a northern Obi-Ugrian group, the  ${}_1k$ -dialects a southern Obi-Ugrian group. Hence we may suppose that in Primitive Obi-Ugrian itself there were two groups, a northern  ${}_1\chi$ -group and a southern  ${}_1k$ -group.

Laziczius now suggests that in Pr.Hung., just as in Primitive Obi-Ugrian, there were two groups of dialects, a  ${}_1\chi$ -group and a  ${}_1k$ -group. In general the  ${}_1\chi$ -forms predominated (hence Hung. *három*) but in some words  ${}_1k$  (hence Hung. *kap*). For Primitive Ugrian<sup>13</sup> he would therefore postulate the counterpart of Finn. *k* as *k* before a front vowel and, before a back vowel,  ${}_1\chi$  in the north and  ${}_1k$  in the south.

On the other hand, in the non-Ugrian languages, there is, according to Laziczius, only evidence for one *k*-phoneme;<sup>14</sup> the same would appear to be true of Samoyede. Laziczius therefore suggests that the non-Ugrian branch preserves the original PrFU. state of affairs; he would postulate for PrFU. only one

<sup>12</sup> For Laziczius' subscript < I print a preceding subscript 'one' throughout.

<sup>13</sup> Ugrian = Obi-Ugrian (Vogul and Ostyak) together with Hungarian.

<sup>14</sup> One might however object that there is at all events a scrap of evidence for the existence of two widely-different *k*-sounds in non-Ugrian, though admittedly in different positions in the word (naturally we cannot hope to be in a position to decide whether this difference was ever used phonematically in the initial position or not). On the one hand ON. *Kyrjalar* 'Karelians': Finn. *Kärjala* 'Karelia' (and also ON. *Kvenir*, if we accept the somewhat problematical equation with Finnish *Kainulaiset*—see J. Laurosela, *Kveen-Kainulais-kysymys*, Historiallinen Arkisto XXII. ii. 4), attests the presence of a Primitive Baltic Fennic *k* (before a back vowel) formed exceptionally far back; and, on the other, Finn. *-deksän*, *-deksan* (in the 'subtractive' numerals *yhdeksän* '9' cf. part. *yh-tä* '1', and *kahdeksan* '8' cf. part. *kah-ta* '2'): IndE. *\*dek'm* '10' would, however obscure the forms may be (see E. N. Setälä, *Suomen suku* i, 142-3), appear certainly to attest the presence of a very front *k* in some early form of Ugrian.

*k*-phoneme, with, however, two phonetic variants, a back *k* before back vowels and a front *k* before front vowels. In Ugrian however this purely phonetic difference became 'phonematologised' giving rise to the new phoneme-pairs *k* : <sub>1</sub>*k* in the south and *k* : <sub>1</sub>*χ* in the north. The phonematologisation may well have taken place in a manner somewhat similar to that in which the Moldavian Csángó phonetic difference *á/â* was phonematologised to *á* : *â* in Szabófalva.

Laziczius concludes his book with some remarks (§17) on the interdependence of sound-changes from the phonematological point of view and brings forward some Hungarian sound-changes by way of illustration. Hungarian is strikingly similar to Modern English in the typology of its sound-changes and Laziczius' views are here rather reminiscent of the theories of Jespersen and Luick as to the Modern English vowel-shift.

A useful bibliography of the widely scattered literature of phonematology is appended.

In conclusion I put forward one or two criticisms, not of Dr. Laziczius' excellent book (for which one can have nothing but praise) but of the general theory of which he is such an able exponent.

To many philologists phonematology can only be of value in so far as it explains phonology.<sup>15</sup> Laziczius' application of the principles of phonematology to the problem of sound-change is certainly the most plausible that has hitherto been made, but, even so, it is far from convincing. The postulated phonematologisation of a phonetic difference would, in the first place, seem to be rather too artificial. Secondly it depends, like most of phonematology, upon a hypothetical aversion to homonyms, even if these homonyms are numerically quite insignificant. Are homonyms really so important a factor in language as the phonematologists would have us believe? In a paper read before the Philological Society in London (1/2/1934) entitled "Some possible factors in linguistic

<sup>15</sup> Except of course for the facts that:—(i) it incidentally inculcates the relativist attitude so essential in the modern theory of language; (ii) it is of great use in the designing of new alphabets.



change"<sup>16</sup> I discussed this question of the problematical importance of homonyms with reference to a very different theory of linguistic change, that of Gilliéron, which, however, like the phonematologists', ultimately presupposes that linguistic change is due to a tendency to avoid the ambiguity which is, or might be, caused by homonyms. I suggested then that we might possibly (but by no means certainly) ascribe to this tendency phenomena such as the extensive use of synonym-compounds (of the *look-see* type) and classifiers in Chinese, a language in which the homonym-possibilities are very great; but that we could hardly explain in this way the sound-changes of the majority of languages (such as Hungarian and English), in which the homonym-possibilities are comparatively small. In such languages the possibilities for confusion due to the existence, or possible formation, of homonyms are too slight to be considered a serious factor in linguistic change. Moreover, even if a tendency to avoid homonyms exists, it may well be realised by various conscious and simple methods (such as the use of unambiguous synonyms, reliance upon the context, etc.) rather than by the subconscious and extraordinarily complex ones which are postulated both by the phonematologists and by the Gilliéron school. Finally, even if we accept the suggestion of either of these schools as a possible hypothesis, it remains a pure hypothesis, awaiting a *statistical*<sup>17</sup> testing which has so far not begun.<sup>18</sup>

ALAN S. C. ROSS.

<sup>16</sup> This paper was not published in full; a very brief summary will be found at p. 99 of *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. my paper mentioned above.

<sup>18</sup> I adhere to the 'indeterminist' view of sound-change which I expressed in *Nature* cxxix, 760-1.