

Kelih, Emmerich (2012): *Die Silbe in den slawischen Sprachen. Von der Optimalitätstheorie zu einer funktionalen Interpretation*. München, Berlin, Washington: Sagner (Specimina philologiae Slavicae, 168) ISBN 978-3-86688-255-3, 186 pp.

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The problems of syllable have a beginning but they have no end. One discovered it not only in language and script but also in poetry millennia before European linguist began to consider it as something that maybe existed. But at last one accepted it as existent, even if it does not bear meaning. But if something exists in language and is not a ghost, it must have some linguistic boundaries. And this step brought not only a new problem but a regular battle of schools which tried to crisply determine the boundaries of the syllable. The book under review describes the history and all these trials in great detail. The references consist of 23 pages. The history of the syllable problem begins with structuralism in which perhaps the most important book was that by PULGRAMM (1970), continues through natural generative phonology, VENNEMANN's (1972, 1988) very exact rules (called sometimes misleadingly laws at that time), analyzes the results of optimality theory, takes into account the sonority hierarchy and phonotactics. Since in qualitative linguistics not only definitions and descriptions are preferred, one consequently looks at many languages and sets up a classification and describes the role of syllable in areal linguistics. Some adventurous linguists risk a look at the descriptive statistics of syllables but here the authority and the interest of qualitative linguistics usually finds its end. The problem is solved, *rien ne vat plus!*

KELIH shows that the problem begins to be prolific just at this point. The syllable whose epistemological and linguistic existence is founded by Menzerath's law (CRAMER 2005) has a number of properties and these properties are not isolated but have some relations to other linguistic properties. Of course, these relations are probabilistic, that means, not taken into account in qualitative linguistics where everything is deterministic (except for exceptions existing for every rule) and stochastic relations are taboo. But even physicists are ready to accept the probabilistic nature of reality, even if atoms are harder than syllables. Perhaps we still need some centuries to discover that linguistics is a science, not only the teaching of grammar.

After a thorough historical review, KELIH shows the Köhlerian control cycle (KÖHLER 1986, 2005) integrating syllable length, syllable frequency, frequency of syllable types, canonical syllable types, word length, accent, the mirror effect, word classes, and onset and coda restrictions. All in all many hypotheses regarding some interrelations are set up *pas-*

sim, but unfortunately no further empirical results are presented. Hence, at this point the research has to begin. If we succeed in setting up empirical or theoretical hypotheses concerning these links and succeed in their positive testing, we make a great step towards theory. The hypotheses can acquire the status of laws if they are substantiated both empirically and theoretically. Unfortunately, every individual case, e.g. language, is merely a small mosaic stone on this endless way. If one finds specific (or deviating) phenomena in a certain language, then these phenomena must also be subsumed under the control cycle but provided with some boundary conditions. In the control cycle, all links must be substantiated linguistically, and starting from these arguments, translated into the language of mathematics the links must be presented as some functions. Statistical testing of these functions for goodness-of-fit is a *conditio sine qua non* (see KÖHLER & ALTMANN 2005).

Having a bit of theory set up in this way, everything changes. The criteria for separation of syllables or determining their boundaries are prolific only if the result abides by the respective function, if the counts of some properties of syllables follow the respective theoretical distribution, etc. The best criterion is, of course, a theoretical law (not rule!). That analysis of the phenomenon (e.g. phoneme inventory) is better which leads to a better agreement with the law. In this way linguistic phenomena are not considered as something that can be analyzed in isolation, but at least in case of hesitation or doubt, a linked property must be questioned. All these elementary principles of scientific research can be found dispersed in the whole book.

The book shows both the past way of thinking and its relevant results which are still today important for syllabic analysis; but at the same time it shows the present-day insight into the problem based on synergetic linguistics. In the given domain it is the first systems theoretical survey of the syllable problem. It roots in different quoted works of the author and is a preparation for a more extensive work encompassing all levels from phoneme up to word structure. The statistical examples in the book are taken from Slavic languages, the special domain of the author.

The book is of interest for all those who do not see only a punctual problem but want to get a wider horizon and are interested also in the philosophy of science.

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