

BOOK REVIEW

Jakab Máté: A 19. századi nyelvtudomány rövid története [A short history of linguistics in the 19th century]. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1997, 216 pp.

Jakab Máté: A 20. századi nyelvtudomány történetének főbb elméletei és irányzatai [The main theories and trends of the history of linguistics in the 20th century]. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1998, 359 pp.

Jakab Máté: A nyelvtudomány (vázlatos) története az ókortól a 19. század elejéig [An outline of the history of linguistics from antiquity to the beginning of the 19th century]. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 2003, 357 pp.

It is by now a commonplace that the history and historiography of linguistics has been enjoying a kind of vogue in recent decades. Many distinguished scholars have turned their attention or devoted their entire career to the study of linguistic thought in the past. Several journals and series of books have started appearing whose main or sole concern was the history of the linguistic sciences; one need only mention the *Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science*, *Historiographia Linguistica*, *Histoire épistémologique langage*, Lepschy's *History of Linguistics*, and the list could be continued. Publications in languages other than the major ones have been somewhat slow to follow—as is natural in any scientific field, but some Hungarian linguists, e.g., Zsigmond Telegdi, István Szathmári, János Balázs or Éva Jeremiás have made significant contributions, and the late 1980's and the following decade saw a definite surge in interest (see Kiss – Szűts 1990). The revised edition of Robins' now classic *A Short History of Linguistics* (1997) was translated into Hungarian and published in 1999; in 1996, Imre H. Tóth's short survey came out (*A nyelvtudomány története a 20. század elejéig. Csomópontok és átvezető szálak [The history of linguistics up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Focal points and channels of transmission]*, Szombathely), when Jakab Máté (1926–2001) had already been engaged in a project of a greater scope, the writing of an all-encompassing history of linguistics. This was eventually published by Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó in three volumes, the last of them only after the untimely death of the author. In sheer length (c. 900 pages combined) the three volumes are more than three times as copious as Robins (1999), which shows that the enterprise as well as its execution was of a different nature, more ambitious than a readable single-volume historical survey.

Here we shall discuss the three volumes in the chronological order of their contents, not in the chronological order of their publication. The volume on the nineteenth century was published first, followed immediately by volume 2 on the twentieth century. Volume 3 on pre-nineteenth century linguistics only appeared some five years later. It is because of this that two introductory chapters can be found in the volumes: one at the beginning of volume 1 and one at the beginning of volume 3. The two introductions discuss, with some overlap, issues pertaining to the nature and the recent fate of the historiography of science in general and of linguistics in particular. Máté

presents and discusses the views of several modern philosophers of science, ranging from Kedrov to Kuhn in order to place his own approach within a comparative framework. In these chapters we also find a useful summary of the history of linguistics in Hungary as well as outside it. After the introduction, volume 3 proceeds in a standard chronological fashion. The titles of the chapters are: *A nyelvészkezdés kezdetei* [The beginnings of linguistics], *Az ókori görög nyelvészet fejlődési útja* [The development of ancient Greek linguistics], *A római nyelvészet kialakulása és eredményei* [The evolution and achievements of Roman linguistics], *A kínai nyelvtudomány kezdetei és eredményei* [The beginnings and the achievements of linguistics in China], *Az ókori (görög-római) nyelvtudomány utóélete* [The legacy of classical (Graeco-Roman) linguistics], *A középkor nyelvtudománya (az 5. századtól a 12. századig)* [Linguistics in the Middle Ages, 5th to 12th centuries], *Az európai nyelvtudomány a 12. századtól a reneszánsz, a humanizmus és a reformáció koráig* [European linguistics from the 12th century to the Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation], *Nyelvészeti vizsgálódások a reneszánsz, a humanizmus és a reformáció korában* [Linguistic investigations during the Renaissance, Humanism and Reformation], *A racionalizmus és az empirizmus (a 17. és a 18. század nyelvtudománya)* [Rationalism and Empirism (linguistics in the 17th and 18th centuries)], *Az összehasonlító-történeti nyelvészet forrásai és közvetlen előzményei* [The sources and predecessors of comparative-historical linguistics], *A magyar nyelv a 17–18. századi összehasonlító nyelvészetben* [The Hungarian language in comparative linguistics in the 17th and 18th centuries], *Rövid kitekintés a magyar nyelvújító mozgalomra* [A bird's eye view of the Hungarian neologist movement]. Máté conveniently summarises mostly what is found in a couple of rather general works, such as Robins (1999), H. Tóth (1996) and Graur – Wald (1977). The reader will hardly find any attempt at original insight, the purpose of the work is largely reproductive and comprehensive in nature. The author shows high erudition and evidence of being well-read, though his secondary sources and references are largely confined to works published in Hungary and east of it. Describing and discussing ancient linguistics without a single reference to the works of Karl Barwick (esp. 1922; 1957) or P. H. Matthews (esp. 1994) and medieval linguistics without reference to Vivien Law (e.g., 1997 for an overview) or Louis Holtz (e.g., 1992) and with one single reference to Pinborg (1967), let alone without consulting the actual sources in the original languages, is definitely not unknown in professional circles, but certainly limits the author's capacity of contributing to historiography. Of course, his selection of secondary works has good sides as well: Graur – Wald (1977), for instance, would have otherwise remained unknown to readers not competent in Rumanian.

Volume 1 is a survey of linguistics in the nineteenth century. As said above, this volume also begins with an introductory chapter devoted to general questions, then a four-page summary of pre-nineteenth century linguistics follows (*A nyelvészeti gondolkodás kezdetei* [The beginnings of linguistic thought]). The nineteenth century itself is introduced with a chapter on language comparison from Renaissance times to the end of the eighteenth century (*Az összehasonlító-történeti nyelvészet kialakulásának előzményei és forrásai* [The predecessors and sources of comparative-historical linguistics]). The bulk of the discussion in this volume falls into three chapters roughly on pre-Neogrammarians, Neogrammarians and their opponents or non-Neogrammarian contemporaries, respectively (*Az összehasonlító-történeti nyelvészet mibenléte* [The essence of comparative-historical linguistics], *Az újgrammatikus irányzat kialakulása, elméleti és módszertani alapelvei* [The appearance of the Neogrammarian doctrine, its

theoretical and methodological underpinnings], *Új utak keresése a századforduló éveiben és a 20. század első évtizedeiben* [*Searching for new ways around and after 1900*]). It is a merit on Máté's part that he includes discussion of significant Russian linguists (Potebna, Vostokov, Shakhmatov etc.) besides the standard list of outstanding figures, such as Bopp, Humboldt, Grimm, Rask, Schleicher and Steintal. His discussion of the Moscow and Kazan schools ranks among the most valuable parts of volume 1. Máté is a generally content-oriented historian of linguistics, and therefore devotes much more space to the development of ideas than to the development of institutional frameworks within which linguistics became a profession and an academic discipline in the course of the 19th century. This distinguishes him from certain other historiographers of the field (e.g., Morpurgo-Davies for the nineteenth or Murray for the twentieth century).

It is perhaps volume 2 that the majority of readers will approach with the most eager interest, and indeed it seems it is to this volume that Máté devoted most of his time and energy. He distinguishes three major periods in twentieth-century linguistics and it is to his credit that he devotes enough space to all the three instead of just discussing "structural" and then "generative" linguistics (in fact, the chapter on generative linguistics is the shortest). The three chapters are *A nyelvtudomány viszonylagos önállóságának (autonómiájának) korszaka* [*The period of the relative autonomy of linguistics*], *A generatív grammatika kialakulása és térhódítása* [*The emergence and spread of generative linguistics*], *A tudományközi kapcsolatok elmélyülése, a hagyomány és újítás egysége a hetvenes–nyolcvanas–kilencvenes évek nyelvtudományában* [*The deepening of interdisciplinary contacts, the unity of tradition and innovation in linguistics in the 1970's–80's–90's*]. The volume naturally begins with an ample, but not superfluous discussion of Saussure's views followed by a description of the major currents of mainstream structuralism. The discussion of glossematics (pp. 69–86) is especially enlightening and certainly useful for those who wish to understand this rather arcane and actually little-known theory. The forty-odd years of generative linguistics have been the object of a great deal of discussion in a variety of historiographical works, some of them reliable (Matthews 1993, Murray 1994), others highly partial and unmethodical (Newmeyer 1980), so it is with relief that the reader only finds a useful and interesting thirty-two page long discussion of this theory (or set of theories) and Máté moves on to further topics in the much longer third chapter. Here we find a detailed discussion of text linguistics, stylistic studies, sociolinguistics, mathematical linguistics and ethno-linguistics. While these do not necessarily cover the whole of what has been done outside mainstream generative and structuralist linguistics, they certainly represent fields to which Máté personally contributed throughout his career. The preponderance of Eastern European protagonists and references to their works on these pages is perhaps even more spectacular than in volume 3; on page 276, for instance, the author explicitly claims to have described the international sociolinguistic scene on the basis of Shveytser (1976), a choice that is likely to raise sociolinguists' eyebrows.

Perhaps the single greatest contribution of these three volumes, but especially volume 2, is that they make the reader aware of the immense variety of the field, since hardly anyone is nowadays likely to understand the scope of the activities that all run under the name of linguistics. Professional linguists tend to engage in narrower and narrower domains and read less and less of what does not pertain to their immediate concerns. We hope that Máté's three-volume enterprise will help widen the horizons of the practitioners of this discipline and make the field appear more interesting to outsiders as well.

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