

ZSIGMOND SIMONYI
(1853–1919)

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Abstract: Zsigmond Simonyi was the most influential Hungarian linguist of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. He acquired wide and deep professional knowledge at various universities in Hungary and abroad. His work was influenced by Neogrammarian ideas but his attitude to them was also critical to the necessary extent. This is demonstrated by the fact that he studied the contacts between Hungarian and the languages spoken in neighbouring countries in the wake of Schuchardt's ideas. He was a Neogrammarian by education, but his views on historical linguistics were more modern, more akin to those of the younger generation of Neogrammarians. Thus, unlike most representatives of the classical Neogrammarian school, he did not restrict his attention to the phonological aspects of language change. Rather, he also studied larger units like phrases or sentences, as well as semantics. He attached special importance to discussing phenomena of the current spoken language, especially those of the various dialects, to keep track of linguistic facts as evidence for changes that have taken place. The enormous "Historical dictionary of Hungarian" that he co-authored with Gábor Szarvas has retained its value as a source of information to the present day, and continues to be an indispensable tool in research on etymology and historical linguistics.

Keywords: historiography, historical linguistics, Hungarian linguistics, Finno-Ugric linguistics, linguistic contacts

Zsigmond Simonyi was born in a bilingual (Hungarian–German) Jewish family in Veszprém, Hungary. He pursued his primary and secondary studies in his native town, then in Esztergom and in Pest. In Pest he was taught by Gábor Szarvas, one of the leading propagators of correct usage, who directed Simonyi's attention towards the problems of language

very early on. From the age of nineteen, Simonyi regularly published in the periodical *Magyar Nyelvőr* [Hungarian Philologist], of which he later became the editor. At the University of Pest, it was József Budenz who exerted the most important influence on him. Budenz, a German by origin, had settled down in Hungary and was in fact the instigator of Finno-Ugric studies in this country, dominating the field for a long time. He not only studied the Finno-Ugric family of languages and participated actively in the debate about the origin of Hungarian but also, as a university professor, he educated excellent experts like Simonyi who later also did an outstanding job of being a university professor himself. In comparative linguistics, Simonyi was clearly a follower of Budenz who negated the alleged relationship between Hungarian and Turkic, passionately propagated by some.

Thanks to the Minister of Education baron József Eötvös, Simonyi—among other talented students—obtained a scholarship to study abroad, which was an important event in his scholarly development. So he had the opportunity to go on a two-year study tour in Western Europe. For the 1874/75 academic year he registered at the University of Leipzig where the Neogrammarians, in hard battles with representatives of the former approach, were just developing their theoretical framework that was to determine the linguistic ideas of the coming decades. He primarily pursued classical and general linguistics and comparative Indo-European studies. Besides, he got acquainted with a positivist approach and research methods that were more exacting than those prevailing in contemporary Hungary. The time he spent in Leipzig where he attended August Leskien's lectures as well had a great impact on Simonyi. (It is worth mentioning that the would-be leading figure of Finno-Ugristics in Finland, Emil Nestor Setälä who was 11 years younger than Simonyi also committed himself to following the Neogrammarian tenets during his studies in Leipzig.) Simonyi learned Greek, etymology, and historical linguistics from Georg Curtius who was battling with the Neogrammarians and became a member of the *Grammatische Gesellschaft* founded by Curtius. (This society had served as a model for Simonyi when, as a university professor in Budapest, he founded the University Hungarian Grammar Society with his students in 1880.) He went on studying for another half a year both in Berlin and in Paris where he studied Romance linguistics. Due to these two years abroad, he became familiar not only with theoretical issues but also with Germanic and Romance, and did some Slavonic studies as well.

Returning to Hungary from his studies abroad, he was able to assess the real state of Hungarian and Finno-Ugric linguistics in this country. He clearly saw the problems related to mother tongue education, culture, and language use. In 1876, soon after his return, he took his doctorate, and then he habilitated in 1877. After some detours, in 1878 he was employed by the Department of Hungarian Linguistics founded at that time, though at first only as a deputy head of department. Between 1885 and 1889 he worked as an extraordinary professor, and later as a full professor there. In appreciation of his versatile scholarly achievement, he was elected corresponding member in 1879, and in 1893 a full member, of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Pál Hunfalvy, who kept an eager eye on the scholarly life of Western countries, took notice of Simonyi as a young man who had got acquainted with some of the significant contemporary linguists, who was well-informed with respect to the theories considered modern at the time, and whose foreign language skills also made him seem suitable for transmitting foreign views of linguistics. Therefore, when Hunfalvy suggested to the presidium of The Hungarian Academy of Sciences that Max Müller's linguistic lectures be translated into Hungarian, he also recommended that Simonyi should be appointed by the publishing committee of the Academy to do the work. The lectures were translated and published in two volumes. Simonyi willingly performed the task because the issues discussed by Müller had aroused his interest already during his foreign residence (in fact, he had begun to translate Müller's work at that time). These issues included the relation of linguistics to the natural sciences, the history and development of language, the principles and methodology of the descriptive and historical examination of language, the issues of phonological change (sound laws) and language varieties, the origin of language, and the relation of language and thinking. He reckoned Müller's statements to be sometimes one-sided but always interesting analyses that attracted experts' attention with good reason. Müller ranked linguistics among the natural sciences as a discipline examining law-governed phenomena, a view that was received with enthusiasm by several of the young Hungarian linguists of the age.

Probably Simonyi was the most productive and creative Hungarian linguist of the period, with a wide intellectual horizon and range of interests. He published lots of articles mostly in *Magyar Nyelvőr* and less often in other periodicals (e.g., in *Magyar Nyelv* [The Hungarian Language] and *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* [Studies in Linguistics]). A special

feature of his activity was using pen-names after the Hungarianization of his surname (most of the time these pen-names were identifiable by his readers). First he used his original name (Zsigmond Steiner) then his Hungarianized one (Zsigmond Simonyi), later a number of seemingly real fictitious names (Asztrik Kovács, Márton Kovács, Jusztin Lakatos, Milán Mariánovics, Ádám Szilágyi, Gedeon Váró) and telling names, too (Antibarbarus, Philologist, Germanist, Old Teacher, Philofennus, Romanist). Some of his short writings were published anonymously, others were signed “The Editor”. His using so many names, especially the telling ones, suggests that he was a playful man. Moreover, he used the title of his handbook of correct usage (Antibarbarus) as a pen-name, too, and sometimes he commented on his own published statements under another name.

In accordance with the spirit of the age, Simonyi studied language mostly in its historical aspects. For him, the most important task of the researcher was to understand the changes of a language throughout its history, to uncover the reasons of these changes and to mark the stages of development. This was perhaps his scholarly *ars poetica* that can be demonstrated by the following quotations from him: “The real task of linguistics is not to give rules, laws and articles for the letters and forms, but to study and teach human thinking in the history of language” (Simonyi 1881, 48). “The human mind, human thinking, and the world of emotions manifest themselves most directly and freely in language. The history of a people’s culture is recorded in every language, we only have to read it” (Simonyi 1905, VI). In his view, this can be done as follows: “The systematic procedure [leads] from the known to the unknown, from today’s phenomena to older and the oldest ones” (*ibid.*, 3). In this way, he stressed current language use as a starting point. Owing to this point of view he directed his attention to studying the stages without linguistic records, but his knowledge of the prehistory of Hungarian, acquired with József Budenz’s help, and his comparative-historical studies abroad were effectively used in his writings, in the disputes on linguistics, in which he willingly referred to the results of comparative Finno-Ugric and Indo-European linguistics. In accordance with the methodology of the Neogrammarians, Simonyi paid great attention to the history of sounds, but he did not want to reconstruct the past states of the language. Rather, by understanding the stages of the history of language, he tried to explain and interpret the state of the contemporary language. With respect to phonological changes, he thought they were laws that

had to be obeyed by the speakers, even though they were unaware of them: thus he defined the regularities of language as objective ones.

The Neogrammarians' views about linguistic research were based on methods used in the contemporary natural sciences. They wanted to investigate the facts of usage (that is why and how they could formulate the concept of sound laws applying without exception), and Simonyi himself always expressed views that were strictly based on linguistic facts. Although Simonyi actually always worked according to the Neogrammarians' attitude, he looked upon their internal debates with some incomprehension, as was mentioned by his excellent student, Zoltán Gombocz.

Simonyi highly respected the facts of language, that was the reason of his gathering a large mass of data. This reflected the mentality of the Neogrammarians and the positivists. It was typical of his grammatical monographs that he grouped a vast number of examples (the "facts") very carefully, he divided the types into subtypes, and he came to his conclusions, in order for them to be reliable, strictly on the basis of the data. Present-day researchers of the history of Hungarian can also trust Simonyi's works if they need correctly interpreted contemporary or historical data. This is obviously explained, in part, by Simonyi's participation in compiling the three-volume *Magyar nyelvtörténeti szótár* [A historical dictionary of Hungarian] (Szarvas–Simonyi 1890; 1891; 1893).

He considered the investigation of living language, especially the various dialectal phenomena, really important, because these were the witnesses of the changes that had taken place. Simonyi had a positivistic approach and enough creativity and vitality to explore the connections in the enormous quantity of historical and contemporary data of language he had gathered with gigantic effort. In his synchronic descriptions of Hungarian he always referred to historical processes, and leaning on his knowledge of Finno-Ugric linguistics he aspired to use data from the related languages in interpreting Hungarian phenomena (which, unfortunately, can be said only about few other Hungarian historical linguists).

According to Simonyi, the two mainsprings of the changes of languages were preserving the existent state of affairs and renewing it at the same time, as we stick to the language inherited from our fathers then hand it down to the younger generation, but in the individual usage it goes through smaller changes and innovations that may come into general use (analogy). Though as a Neogrammarian, for him the description of a language meant the explanation of the contemporary state from the historical facts, he never undertook to write a comprehensive, systematic work on the history of Hungarian.

Educated to be a Neogrammarian, his historical attitude related him to the younger Neogrammarians, so in contrast to most representatives of the Neogrammarian school his attention was not limited to the phonological aspects of the changes of language; rather, he attended to larger units, phrases and sentences, and he also dealt with semantics. It is to be noted that Simonyi's view was not without antecedents in the history of Hungarian grammatical research: Sámuel Brassai had claimed the priority of the sentence over the word, and he had divided and defined the word classes on the basis of syntax. With foregrounding syntax, Simonyi, in fact, transgressed the Neogrammarian limits, but the historical background remained important for him in this regard, too: he pointed out that research on Hungarian syntax started only in his age (1905, 34), then he wrote about the outstanding researcher, Brassai's work as follows: "Auf dem Gebiete der ungarischen Syntax ist das »Über den ungarischen Satz« handelnde Werk von Sámuel Brassai nennenswert, das allerdings den großen Fehler hat, den nämlich, dass die Sprachgeschichte fast ganz außer acht gelassen ist" (1907, 12).

Let us briefly summarize the sub-fields in which Simonyi's achievements were outstanding. These are the themes that must be emphasized from his activities: the investigation of grammatical questions, writing textbooks, studying the relations of languages (etymology, borrowing morphological elements and syntactic structures), propagation of correct usage, popularization of science, spelling reform and lexicography.

1. The grammarian

He considered the comprehensive and scientific description of Hungarian grammar to be his primary task. He wrote about many questions of detail in shorter or longer articles, many of which were published as independent volumes, too. In Simonyi's time the historical view dominated grammatical descriptions, but he always strived for paying attention to the phenomena of living language as well, a fact that might have originated in his language cultivator's activity and Neogrammarian attitude. He declared that his aim was not to reconstruct the older states of the language but to explain the contemporary one. He aimed at explaining every phenomenon possibly from the psychology of the individual and from the genetic view of *Völkerpsychologie* (ethnopsychology). Following the contemporary European tradition, he was the first to organically include the whole of syntax into the scientific grammar of Hungarian, though for a

long time the Neogrammarians paid less attention to syntax, which was realized by Brugmann, one of the leading figures of the trend. This was why, to fill in the gaps, he began to deal with syntactic problems, too, after the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Simonyi consistently took the sentence as the fundamental unit of speech to be the basis of arrangement and interpretation in the system of grammar, in which partly the inspiration from Curtius and his Grammar Society and partly Hungarian syntactic research initiated by Brassai played a crucial role. Simonyi's view was sentence-centred because he thought that the sentence was both the basis and the target of linguistic changes.

Before his major monographs he wrote smaller essays, in which he treated various grammatical issues later naturally built into his comprehensive grammars.

He expounded his approach in his academic inaugural (1881a) entitled *A jelentés alapvonalai* [Fundamentals of meaning] bearing the influence of Völkerpsychologie. His grammatical typology and analyses are valid even today, according to which grammar should contain lexicon and syntax, the first studying compounding and word formation, and the meaning of the independent word, the second investigating the inflection of the word and describing the relations inside the sentence. He took phonology to be only an auxiliary discipline serving morphology, but he stressed that phonological research was to be based on live speech, so in contrast with earlier linguistics more attention was to be paid to living languages and dialects. Familiarity with dialects is important because they can provide help in genetic explanations just like linguistic records, and the territorial arrangement of dialect phenomena shows the directions of their spreading. Language psychology influenced Simonyi's grammatical approach based on syntax. This influence was shown by the great importance he assigned to analogical explanations in the changes of language. In Hungary he was the first to study the various types of analogical change. Among others, the following writings of his show this: *Az analógia hatásairól főleg a szóképzésben* [On the effects of analogy, mainly on word formation] (1881c), *Kombináló szóalkotás* [Word formation by combination] (1890), and *Elvonás (Elemző szóalkotás)* [Back-formation (word formation by analysis)] (1904).

In his three-volume work, *A magyar kötőszók* [Hungarian conjunctions] (1881b; 1882; 1883) he analysed the co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions and their functions in detail. His follower, József Tompa appreciated the work as follows: "It is not by chance that foreign

linguists who speak Hungarian were also amazed by the monograph, and considered it a great benefit in terms of general linguistics. It was Fr. Misteli, professor of the University of Basel, who called the profession's attention to it" (Tompá 1975, 136–7).

In his work entitled *A magyar szótők* [Hungarian stems] (1888), Simonyi analysed Hungarian stems on the basis of historical data, the etymological equivalents in related languages, and the behaviour of loan-words.

Both the morphological and the syntactic analyses of his huge, two-volume work, *A magyar határozók* [Hungarian adverbials] still serve as source material for those who want to study this question. The first part (1888–1890) contains the historical description of nominal suffixes, the second (1892–1895) that of postpositions, adverbs and participles, and outlines their functions in detail. With a huge historical and contemporary material, he illustrates the development of each element (its formal and functional changes); wherever it is possible he lists the equivalents from the related languages (that is, he makes comparative linguistic remarks), often refers to the equivalents of the individual elements in the Finno-Ugric and other languages (Indo-European, Turkic and sometimes Semitic), so, in fact, he presents contrastive linguistics-type chains of ideas. In discussing the individual types of adverbials he gives the chronologically arranged data, then he tries to interpret the changes psychologically, and states their living or obsolete functions, some of which can be traced back to foreign influence. Of course, he built the results of this enormous work into the respective chapters of his work entitled *Tüzetes magyar nyelvtan* [A detailed Hungarian grammar].

This last one, perhaps his most important work, can normally be found under this incomplete title in the literature, its complete title being *Tüzetes magyar nyelvtan történeti alapon* [A detailed Hungarian grammar on a historical basis] (Balassa–Simonyi 1895). Only the first volume was written and published with the sub-title “Hungarian phonology and morphology”. Its introduction (“The methods and sources of grammar”), in fact, contained the theoretical foundations in an unambiguously Neogrammarian spirit. Simonyi wrote this volume together with József Balassa, summarizing the state of the art in Hungarian phonology and morphology. (Balassa's parts were the phonology and a chapter of the morphology, that about compounds.) The two authors gave a very detailed description of the phonological patterns, the written records from the beginnings, as well as the morphology, of the Hungarian language.

The volume contains a huge mass of data, which is a treasury of useful information even for the present-day researcher in need of historical or dialectal data for understanding certain phenomena (the index of the volume, of course, is a great help, too). It cannot be very far from the truth if we say that both *A magyar nyelv* [The Hungarian language] (1889; 1905) and *Die ungarische Sprache* (1907) are mainly the abridged versions of this work in a lighter style. The last-mentioned work was reviewed by Zoltán Gombocz, who emphasized in his introduction that this work had filled a gap. He wrote:

“Some years ago, I was talking to Wundt, who had just finished the first two volumes of his great work, *Völkerpsychologie*. He mentioned how much he would have been interested in the results of Hungarian and Finno-Ugric comparative linguistics, but, he added reproachfully, not speaking these languages he could not read up on these topics [...]. I think a number of foreign linguists has been in the same situation. Yet, there is no doubt that, for instance, an Indo-European or Romance scholar would find it instructive and thought-provoking if he or she could become familiar with the structure and history of a Finno-Ugric language with the help of a professional guide. From now on such a reliable guide is Simonyi’s work in German for the inquisitive foreigner. With this work Simonyi has obliged not only the foreign scholars but has done Hungarian scholarship a service, too.”

(Gombocz 1909, 25)

The reviewer goes on with some rightful objections in connection with phonetic notation and sound history, but he has an unambiguously positive opinion of the morphological and syntactic parts of the work.

In his *A jelzők mondattana* [The syntax of attributes] (1913), Simonyi analysed the types, syntactic functions and morphology of the adjectival, participial, nominal, pronominal and numeral attributes, the emergence of the articles, the morphology and functions of appositive and possessive structures, etc., making comparative and contrastive remarks all the way through.

It was on several occasions that Simonyi dealt with issues of word order and (sentence) stress, for instance in *Magyar nyelvészet a középiskolák legfelső osztályainak és tanítóképző intézeteinek* [Hungarian linguistics for the upper classes of secondary schools and teacher training colleges] (1905), in the grammar book *A magyar nyelv* [The Hungarian language] (1889; 1905) and in many short papers. Among other things, he stated that “Word order does not depend on which word is which part of a sentence (viz. subject, predicate) but on which part of the thought is considered to be more important, to be enhanced or emphasized for the listener or the reader in a given situation” (Simonyi 1905, 467).

An important part of his activity was writing grammar books for schools. A crucial ingredient of his intentions was not to write rules for rote learning but to analyse example sentences on a psychological basis in order to make students understand the various linguistic phenomena. He compiled his examples for the lower classes of secondary school from simple spoken utterances and from texts of the classical literature for the upper classes. He worded his theoretical messages in a simple, clear way, and he motivated the students as well to strive for simple and clear ways of spoken and written communication and logical thinking. Later his school grammar books were supplanted by the ones written by József Szinnyei.

He never published a complete scholarly grammar, though he planned to write further volumes (II and III) of his *A detailed Hungarian grammar*, in which he would have dealt with syntax. This project remained unaccomplished, though he was working on it until his death (allegedly, the almost ready manuscript got lost in the Second World War, in the siege of Budapest by the Russians).

A part of his grammar-writing activity was to work up the grammar books written by earlier scholars, moreover, he republished István Geleji Katona's *Magyar Grammatikatska* [Little Hungarian grammar] written in 1645 (Geleji Katona 1906).

His colleague and contemporary, József Szinnyei wrote about him that “Hungarian linguistics has hardly a field he did not work on. His most special field of activity was syntax. On this field he worked the most enthusiastically and precisely, and it is here that we owe him the most” (Szinnyei 1925, 15).

2. The student of language contact

Simonyi was highly interested in the contacts between Hungarian and other, especially Slavic, languages and the structures and idioms that got into Hungarian because of these contacts. It is likely that he was inspired by the writings of Hugo Schuchardt, a desperate enemy of the Neogrammarians, as several of his references reveal. This is clearly shown by the title of one of his papers *Történeti vagy elemi rokonság?* [Historical or elementary relatedness?] (1915). This paper was a positive reaction to Schuchardt's writing published in *Magyar Nyelvőr* both in German and in Hungarian under the same title (“Geschichtlich verwandt oder elementar verwandt?”, Schuchardt 1912a, b). Simonyi comple-

mented Schuchardt's article with Hungarian–German, Hungarian–Slavic and Hungarian–Romanian analogies. Out of respect for Schuchardt, he dedicated the German translation of the revised edition of his book *The Hungarian language* to him, and the German version of the title of a subchapter “Foreign influence in general” (1905, 72) was “Sprachmischung in allgemeinen” (1907, 57), with a distinct Schuchardtian flavour. Schuchardt's influence must have had a crucial role in the fact that Simonyi considered some syntactic structures to be the naturalization of certain foreign patterns, so he was also haunted by the thought of *Sprachmischung*. From among the languages that were or had been in contact with Hungarian, he especially sympathized with Slavic languages (which is perhaps also shown by one of his pen-names, *Milán Mariánovics*). He tried to explain several Hungarian constructions from these languages, most of the time wrongly, for instance the ‘dativus possessivus’ function of the suffix of the dative, and the use of verbal particles. He considered the dativus possessivus and genitive functions of the Hungarian dative suffix *-nak/-nek* the result of Slavic influence after the Hungarian Conquest, though he also pointed out that dativus possessivus was known in many languages (1913, 153; 1912, 20–3). Similarly, he explained the Hungarian verbal particles by the influence of neighbouring Slavic languages, also wrongly (1907, 250–1; 1912, 21). In other cases he was more careful; for example, he did not attribute the temporal function of the Hungarian instrumental suffix *-val/-vel* to a Slavic influence, though he mentioned that this phenomenon was known in Slavic languages as well, like in Serbian *noću danju* ‘night and day’ (1898–1890, 387–8; cf. also Russian *днем и ночью* ‘id.’). So he did not follow Schuchardt without restraint. This is well illustrated by the fact that he was more patient with phrases previously rated as foreign by Gábor Szarvas and his colleagues, like (*jól*) *néz ki* ‘look (nice)’ (cf. German *aussehen*): he realized that idioms might reflect a similar view of reality even in languages geographically far from each other, and though he did not like them, he accepted these widely used forms.

Obviously, it was due to his commitment to Schuchardt that in his (historical and descriptive) discussions of Hungarian phenomena he always tried to call the reader's attention to similar phenomena and constructions in other languages, and to the possible connection and quality of this connection between them. If somebody deals with the areal contacts of Hungarian today, he surely will find useful remarks, references and data in Simonyi's works.

He was interested in etymology, too. In a number of papers, he dealt with words borrowed by various European languages from Hungarian, and investigated the German, Slavic, Latin and Romance loanwords in Hungarian. A number of ingenious etymologies are due to him.

3. The educator

The Hungarian language had two editions (1889; 1905) and *Die ungarische Sprache* was a revised edition of the second for the professional world. Both studies are on the borders of educational and scholarly descriptions. Here I handle the two works (that is, the three volumes) as one. I try to briefly present the author's views according to the German edition, and I will refer to the second edition of the Hungarian version only where I happen to discover essential differences between the two.

In *The Hungarian language* we can find the lessons drawn from Simonyi's previous shorter and longer writings as well. In the first chapters of the book he deals with general problems that were interesting mostly for the wider public. In the introduction he familiarizes the reader with the subject-matter and basic concepts of linguistic research. The topics are: The sign-like nature of language, the essence of historical linguistics, the motivating forces of the changes of language (preservation and innovation), irregularities and exceptions in the language system, regularization and change caused by analogy, and contamination. The historical summary of general and Hungarian linguistics gives a good picture of the developmental stages of linguistics, from the beginnings to Simonyi's age.

The question of language relationships was always important for the general public interested in their mother tongue. Simonyi gave an authoritative answer to this question by exposing the criteria of (genetic) relationship: first of all, the common elements of the basic lexicon, then the similar or structurally identical compounds, common morphological elements (affixes, nominal and verbal suffixes) and the regular phonological correspondences on the basis of the common vocabulary (of Hungarian and its relatives, in this case). As for syntactic equivalents he referred only to certain types of government. It is worth mentioning that he judged the genetic relationship of Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages a bit ambivalently: "Mit ziemlicher Wahrscheinlichkeit können wir [...] behaupten,—wenn es auch methodisch noch nicht bewiesen ist, dass diese finnisch-ugrische Sprachfamilie in weiterer Verwandtschaft mit vier anderen Familien steht, nämlich mit dem Samojedischen, dem Türkischen,

dem Mongolischen (Mandschu)” (1907, 17), but some pages later an illustration showed the Finno-Ugric and the Samoyedic languages under a common label, “Uralische Sprachen”, clearly separated from the other “Ural-Altaiic” languages. In the German edition, Japanese was also listed among the Ural-Altaiic languages, albeit with a question mark (1907, 34), although this statement was not yet included in the Hungarian edition (1905, 58).

Simonyi’s work summarized the foreign influences that had affected Hungarian. First of all, he wrote about borrowings and foreign words, then about loan translations and borrowed syntactic structures. He expounded the early linguistic records of Hungarian quite in detail and explained the characteristics of the language of the codices, i.e., Old Hungarian, in comparison with the contemporary language. An important chapter of the book dealt with the dialects, analysing the relationship between the standard language and the dialects, and listed the groups of dialects with their phonological and morphological features.

In the chapter on the standard language he stated that this is more conservative than the spoken everyday language. He referred to the works (the translations of the Bible, works by outstanding Hungarian writers, Péter Pázmány, János Arany, Mór Jókai) that had played an important role in the development of this version of the language. He devoted a relatively lengthy discussion to the Language Reform, but he considered it to include not only the movement of the turn of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Very rightly he pointed out that writers and translators of earlier centuries had consciously created new words, many of which came to be built into the standard and everyday language. Nevertheless, as a neo-orthologist, he noted that some members of the Language Reform movement “had as a main aim to make our language meet the requirements and standards of the German language” (1905, 189). This reproach is not included in the German version of the book. At the same place he listed a number of foreign-like syntactic constructions the naturalization of which in the Hungarian standard language he explained with Latin and German influence. He did not condemn their use *expressis verbis*, but his style and wording made it clear that he judged them to be forms to be avoided. As part of this theme, he dealt with correct usage, mainly presenting the principles to be followed.

The second part of *The Hungarian language* was the actual grammatical part. The chapter in the Hungarian version had quite a modern-sounding title: “The structure of the Hungarian language” (1905, 221),

while in the German edition it rather stressed the historical aspect: “Geschichte der sprachlichen Erscheinungen” (1907, 193). However, in his view the two were the same: the descriptions of synchronic phenomena were accompanied by their diachronic interpretations and, wherever it was possible, he referred to various dialectal deviations of certain phenomena from the standard language. In that framework, then, he discussed phonology, spelling (!), morphology (the stems, as well as derivation and other types of word formation), semantics and etymology, verbal and nominal inflection, and syntax.

Die ungarische Sprache continued to serve as a reliable source for linguists who do not speak Hungarian for several decades. Sometimes this work is cited even today, though it is now dated in many respects.

As a practical-minded man, Simonyi ended every chapter with a bibliography to help the inquisitive reader access other sources as well.

4. The dictionary-maker

Magyar nyelvtörténeti szótár a legrégebb nyelvemlékektől a nyelvújításig [A historical dictionary of Hungarian from the oldest linguistic records to the Language Reform] (Szarvas–Simonyi 1890; 1891; 1893) is an enormous work, still a valuable source and essential aid for etymological and historical research. It aimed to cover the vocabulary of the handwritten and the sporadic records as well as the printed ones from the beginnings to the age of the Language Reform, that is, to the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century. The authors listed, in a chronological order, the first occurrences of the data in the entries, as well as their variants and meanings (in Latin and German); where possible, the data were embedded in their contexts (sentences). The relevant compounds and most of the derivatives were also included by the editors, always exactly giving the sources of the data. The editors of the dictionary clearly knew and emphasized that a natural obstacle of completeness was that part of the possible sources was hidden in archives (later on, other people published the material of the sources that had been found). The authors noted that some data of their sources might have been left out because of subjective mistakes. The third volume ends with a voluminous index that makes the use of the dictionary a lot easier. The dictionary had great significance in the historical elaboration of the headwords of Hungarian etymological dictionaries published in the past few decades as well as in the preparation of the historical grammar of this language.

His German–Hungarian dictionary (Balassa–Simonyi 1899) and a terminological dictionary he wrote for secondary schools (Simonyi 1906) served practical purposes.

5. The propagator of correct usage

As most of the linguists studying Hungarian on a scholarly level, Zsigmond Simonyi also had to deal with linguistic questions that the so-called educated public was interested in. These questions mostly concern correct usage, language cultivation, and spelling.

Questions like “how to say it/how to say it correctly?” and “how to spell it?” are essentially of the same age as grammar writing itself. These questions especially became a hot issue for the educated public with the starting of the periodical *Magyar Nyelvőr* in 1872. Of course, Simonyi was also intrigued by these questions: he published mostly short articles about usage and spelling in periodicals (in *Magyar Nyelvőr*, among others). As for correct usage, naturally, everybody feels “competent” in it. It was not different in Simonyi’s age, as he points out in vivid terms.

“Nichts hat in der Philologie so viel erbitterten Streit verursacht, als die Fragen der Sprachrichtigkeit, und dennoch gilt von vielen solchen Fragen jener alte Hexameter: *Grammatici certant, sed adhuc sub iudice lis est*. Nirgends begegnen wir einer grössern Kühnheit von Seiten der Dilettanten, aber auch einer grössern Befangenheit von Seite der Fachgelehrten, als in der Beurteilung der Sprachrichtigkeit.” (Simonyi 1907, 182–3)

As a propagator of correct usage he argued for the recognition and enforcement of regularities, and he extensively took into consideration the dialects and the spoken language. He took the regularities of sentence construction to be important. In his book, “Antibarbarus” (1879), subsequently republished several times, he criticized foreignisms and erroneous constructions: he compiled a list of them and tried to offer better Hungarian phrases instead of the defective ones. In his later works, especially in *Helyes magyarság* [Correct usage] (which was also republished several times) he essentially dealt with correct, idiomatic Hungarian and polished style, though he wrote about “incorrect” phrases as well. At the beginning of his career he fiercely objected to less successful, often malformed words of the language reform. This was because many newly created words violated certain regularities of the Hungarian language. Instead of these, he considered the use of the original foreign words the lesser

evil, and admitted that it was useless to harass naturalized, commonly used foreignisms.

Simonyi's view was the same as Müller's, according to which an attribute of a language is its always changing character, that is, the changes of a language are independent of man's will, so grammarians' and purists' ambition to impede this process was completely pointless. When judging correct usage Simonyi, following the ideas of neo-orthology, relied on popular usage, the dialects and generally the spoken language, not the consciously cultivated literary language, but very carefully tried to avoid exaggerations on this point; moreover, he highly valued literary language.

“Es hat Philologen gegeben, die im Gegensatz zur allein »natürlichen« Volkssprache die Schriftsprache als entartet bezeichneten. Dies war aber ein übereiltes Urteil, welches sich in Ausserlichkeiten, und hauptachtlich auf die Form der Wörter gründete. Der wertvollste Teil der Sprache, ihr Ideengehalt, die Bedeutung der Wörter und Redensarten entwickelt sich um so höher um so feiner, je höher sich das in der Schriftsprache ausgedrückte geistige Leben eines Volkes entwickelt.”
(Simonyi 1907, 152)

In general, it is true that he stood for the acceptance of the changes of language and was against favouring archaic idioms. Nevertheless, it is not true—though stated by some Hungarian linguists today who, in the name of liberal tolerance, do not only oppose but fiercely attack the present propagation of correct usage movement in a conspicuous, extremely intolerant and aggressive tone—that the present propagators of correct usage—unlike Simonyi and his followers—would mix up correct usage with “high-brow and refined” norms of usage (e.g., Kálmán 2005). In fact, Simonyi stated that examples of “the beauty and fineness of true Hungarian style” had to be gathered and presented. Which means that he was really an adherent of the careful mode of expression, proved not only by his propagator's activity but the way he wrote as well.

He was very tolerant of views different from, or opposed to, his own. He even published them in *Magyar Nyelvőr*, which was edited by himself. A telling instance of this was that he published the critical remarks of the Hungarian poet, János Arany, then secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, about the views of *Antibarbarus* in that journal.

He held spelling and its reform important from a practical point of view—from that of how it can be learnt. He fought a desperate fight for reforming the illogical spelling of the time, characterized by “prodigal use of letters”. In *Magyar Nyelvőr* he used his own innovative spelling, but the Hungarian Academy of Sciences kept refusing his proposals for

a spelling reform. Finally, the Academy withdrew its almost indispensable subsidy from the periodical; moreover, it withdrew the slogan that the periodical was published under the auspices of the Academy. After this, Simonyi published the periodical at his own risk, but the authors, both from Hungary and abroad, as well as the readers, remained loyal—so their writings and subscriptions helped Simonyi and his periodical through that difficult period. Simonyi's fight about spelling was not totally unsuccessful: the Ministry of Education introduced his method still in his lifetime, but the Hungarian Academy of Sciences accepted his system only after his death (1919), in 1922, and that was the time when the difference between the two kinds of spelling, the “school” vs. “academy” orthography, came to an end.

6. The organizer of science

Simonyi also worked hard for strengthening the position of his discipline as a member of committees at the Academy and as editor of series and periodicals. He was not only the editor of *Magyar Nyelvőr*, but also its saver and maintainer for a time. For a short time, in 1892–1895, he also worked as the editor of *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* and, as a member of the Linguistics Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he proposed that that periodical should regularly cover the results and theories of linguistics in other countries. However, from among the periodicals of his time, he was the most intimately involved with *Magyar Nyelvőr*, so it was understandable that right after the death of Gábor Szarvas he resigned from the editorship of *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, so that he could continue the same work for *Magyar Nyelvőr* until his death.

7. Conclusion

Simonyi did a pioneering work in adopting the methodological principles of the Neogrammarian school developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century and transplanting them into the practice of Hungarian linguistics without delay. In his university lectures he was the first to deal with comprehensive theoretical questions of linguistics, and in his seminars he aimed at elucidating the views, principles and methods of the Neogrammarian school with the help of his enthusiastic students. So Simonyi was a mediator of those new ideas, he transplanted the theory

of the Neogrammarians to Hungary, giving Hungarian linguistic research a new momentum. He assisted his students, motivated them for research work, and willingly published their writings (often as reprints of papers first published in one of the periodicals) in the series *Nyelvészeti Füzetek* [Brochures in Linguistics] founded by himself. Among the authors there were a number of his former students, who also became outstanding researchers of Hungarian linguistics, like Zoltán Gombocz, Ödön Beke, Dávid Rafael Fokos-Fuchs, or Imre Antal Klemm. So Simonyi—as a university professor, an active participant of scientific life, author of educational articles and books, writer of grammar books for schools and, last but not least, a reformer and consolidator of Hungarian grammatical terminology—had a very positive influence on the later development of Hungarian linguistics.

Simonyi's activity as a university professor, his textbooks—for instance, *A magyar nyelv* (1889; 1905)—and his popularization of *Magyar Nyelvőr* significantly affected the Hungarian intelligentsia, too. Moreover, the German version of *A magyar nyelv* (*Die ungarische Sprache*, 1907) provided foreign scholars with well-organized information on this language: it is sometimes referred to even today. Mother tongue education has a lot to thank to his school grammar books, which had a significant role in (at least partly) renewing and unifying the Hungarian grammatical terminology.

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