

LYLE CAMPBELL'S INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS*

Campbell's *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction* constitutes a hands-on book to the new student in the topic. As the author comments on page xiii, this volume is rather a different historical linguistics book. His aim is to teach students both the intricacies of the topic, and the ways to perform historical studies of languages.

The book is divided into fifteen chapters which cover all areas of historical linguistics. Each chapter is subsequently subdivided into different headings that allow the reader to find specific pieces of information quickly. The contents are clearly indicated in the table which opens the book. Just by comparing this table with the one in Arlotto's *Introduction to Historical Linguistics* (1972), the reader may realize that, despite the similarities in the contents of both books, the organization of the information is quite different. While Arlotto prefers digging into the complicated world of the Indo-European languages first, Campbell introduces the types of changes which occur in language, being the second one more attractive to students. To the best of my experience, students enjoy discovering how much their own language has changed, together with the rules that apply in those changes. This is especially relevant when, as in the case of the book reviewed here, students themselves learn how to explore the changing elements of a language in order to work out the set of rules that account for such changes.

In his definition of historical linguistics, Campbell lists the areas covered by this field of linguistics, besides stating what historical linguistics is *not* about as an attempt to avoid confusion with, say, the history of linguistics and the origin of human language. The last claim, I suggest, should be further clarified since the novice reader may not understand why historical linguistics does not deal with the origin of human language. At this point, it must be also noted the author's efforts to explain the fact that languages change, and that this fact poses no problems during the act of communication. He uses an everyday-life metaphor to show that negative attitudes to linguistic change are based neither on linguistic grounds, nor on the functional perspective of a language as a social tool to communicate.

The author also describes the different kinds of sound changes (which he also relates to analogy later on in the book) by dividing them into phonemic and non-phonemic sound changes. These are, in turn, classified into conditioned or unconditioned (non-) phonemic changes. After that, he moves on to describing general kinds of sound changes—each one of those clearly indicated by the use of subheadings—and kinds of common sound changes which, besides indicating them in subheadings, the author summarizes in the form of an invented word. The concepts of relative chronology,

and chain-shifts are also described. As a matter of example, the author uses the cases of well-known chain-shifts in the history of English as Grimm's law and the Great Vowel Shift, although I must say that the description of those phenomena given here might be insufficient and a somewhat unclear for the non-advanced student of historical linguistics.

Regarding borrowings, the author shows how loanwords enter a particular language. In addition, he defines the concept of loanword before describing the complex issue of how to identify loanwords in languages. Such a description of the process of loanwords identification can render extremely difficult to follow for the beginner (though far too simple for the knowledgeable reader). This is due to the fact that novice readers are expected to have some understanding of linguistic concepts, such as *canonical forms* and *phonotactics*. I suggest here that, since the book is intended also for the beginner, a glossary of linguistic terminology should be appended so that the reader can resort to it if needed.

One of the main shortcomings of the book is the distribution of some topics in the book, such as the comparative method, linguistic reconstruction, linguistic classification, models of linguistic change, internal reconstruction, explaining linguistic change, areal linguistics and distant genetic relationship. In my opinion, these topics should be rearranged so as to show an alternative organization which may benefit the beginner's understanding of these tightly related issues. For instance, Campbell first deals with linguistic classification, rather than describing the models of linguistic change. In addition, he postpones the topic of genetic relationship until chapter thirteen, but he sets proposals of distant genetic relationship in chapter twelve. Even, the topics dealing with linguistic classification (chapter six) and areal linguistics (chapter twelve) are far apart from each other, though the connection between them is evident. Finally, I wonder whether the chapter focusing on explaining linguistic change (i.e. chapter eleven) is conveniently placed where it actually is. I really think that it would benefit the reader's understanding if placed immediately after chapter one, or alternatively, after all chapters dealing with changes at all levels of grammatical description.

Regarding syntactic, semantic and lexical changes in language, the author offers a rich description of the processes related to such changes. In the particular case of syntactic changes, the material presented by Campbell may be regarded as difficult for the beginner. This is due to the fact that the topic is complicated in itself, and an alternative to facilitate this would involve omission of information which is not recommended.

Later on in the book, the author comments on the concept of philology. He also describes the role of written records for historical linguistics, and he presents some examples of how to draw significant information from past written material. The last issue in the book deals with linguistic prehistory. The author describes some findings about the prehistory of Indo-European-speaking peoples based on the evidence posed by Indo-European roots. He includes information on some aspects of Proto-Indo-European's cultural inventory obtained from linguistic evidence. Thus, he covers topics such as social structure and people, economy, agriculture, domestic animals, transport, technology, household and food terms, clothing and textiles, and religion. This sort of information is also relevant for the historian, and not only for the linguist.

Finally, he shows the methods for linguistic prehistory with clear examples which may greatly benefit the students' understanding of linguistic prehistory.

The book also includes descriptions regarding phonetic symbols and conventions, and the chart of phonetic symbols. In addition, it presents a series of indexes, namely language, name, and subject to help the reader find the specific information required. It is also worth noting the fact that the author, in an attempt to help the readers' understanding of topics, exemplifies the theory with instances taken from various languages like English, Spanish, Finnish, Hungarian, Portuguese, and others.

Furthermore, the author tries to explain the concepts in plain language but, at the same time, he introduces students to new historical linguistics terminology which increases their command in linguistics. The book also offers a number of exercises at the end of each chapter for students to put into practice what they have learnt in that specific chapter. The exercises are designed following the author's initial aim: how to *do* historical linguistics? (xiii). However, an important drawback in this book is precisely related to the exercises. In my opinion, it would be helpful for students to have the key to the exercises since the book can be used as a self-study tool for this topic.

Despite my reservations with certain aspects of the book, I must say that Campbell's *Historical Linguistics. An Introduction* is fairly well written and presented, containing numerous inner cross-references to help the student find his/her way through the work. The book is absolutely reader-friendly and subversive in the fact that it does not present tedious theoretical information on historical linguistics, but rather it constructs the theory step by step describing *how* to perform historical linguistics. The reader may perceive his/her degree of autonomy in the learning of the topic, especially in the exercises. All said, I definitely consider Campbell's work as an important contribution to the study and teaching of historical linguistics.

Francisco Alonso Almeida

* Campbell, Lyle. *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998. 396 pages.

Works Cited

- R. Anttila. *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1989.
 A. Arlotto. *Introduction to Historical Linguistics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.