

REVIEWS

Christina Y. Bethin. *Slavic prosody: Language change and phonological theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. (*Cambridge Studies in Linguistics*, 86.) 349 pp. ISBN 0-521-59148-1.

Reviewed by *Ronald F. Feldstein*

Slavic prosody, a recent monograph by Christina Bethin, can be described in many ways. It is a comprehensive treatment of both the diachronic and synchronic syllabic and prosodic systems of the Slavic languages, presented in a manner which is radically different from previous treatments of the subject. From the perspective of extant works on the subject, the book's novelty is due to the fact that it treats its subject in terms of constraint interaction and metrical syllabic theory. In a sense, the book seems to be aimed at two potential audiences: (1) general linguists who have a background in metrical and optimality theory and who would like to expand their knowledge to include the Slavic facts; and (2) Slavists who would like to see the familiar historical and synchronic issues in the light of recent linguistic research. Since I have approached this volume as a traditional Slavist, lacking a background in metrical syllabic theory, my review will necessarily reflect this bias. The ideal reader, of course, would have a background both in metrical syllabic theory as well as the basic facts of Slavic linguistics. I found that one of the later chapters of the book, "Constraints and Constraint Interaction," (246-51) was helpful in giving an insight into the basic goals of the book. Whether the reader agrees with the use of "constraint interaction" or traditional rule-based statements, the book is a valuable introduction to what this method does and how it functions. From the traditional perspective, the most unusual aspect of the optimality theoretical method is the fact that "constraints may be violated" (250). It might therefore appear that constraints are less rigorous than more traditional rules and relative chronologies, since violations can be easily explained as instances of a constraint being less highly ranked at a given point in time. If a more traditional rule is violated, it would most likely have to be restated in order to cover any violations.

The book is divided into three main sections, dealing with syllabic structure, accentual and prominence features, and theoretical issues. The general Slavist would probably be most interested in the first two sections, which present familiar subjects in a very new light. The main point of the first section is that the traditional Jakobsonian notion of a "rising sonority

principle" or "open syllable law" is inaccurate, because there was a period in which obstruents were excluded from closed position, but sonorants were not. Therefore, such concepts as the "moraic constraint" and "no coda constraint" should replace the earlier ones, in order to deal more precisely with the differences between syllable final obstruents, moraic sonorants, and non-moraic sonorants, all of which are lumped together under the traditional open syllable concept. The first chapter makes the radical proposal that the various syllabic constraints and their interaction are more important for the linguistic history of Slavic than the loss of jers *per se* (107, 261), which is usually viewed as the single most crucial event in the phonological history of the Slavic languages. I feel that B does not fully succeed in making the point that jer-fall should be accorded a lesser status, since the specific time and place of jer-fall has been shown by Jakobson (1929) to determine whether phonemic consonant palatalization ensues, which in turn can be directly related to whether phonemic pitch is preserved. Since the institution of consonant palatalization entails first the loss of pitch and then the further loss of either distinctive quantity or stress, one can say that the prosodic pattern of the modern Slavic languages ultimately derives from the loss of jers, contrary to B's implication. On the other hand, B does make the convincing point that a number of very significant differentiating Slavic isoglosses can be attributed to differences in syllabic treatment, which preceded the fall of the jers.

In the second chapter, another radical proposal is made: that the neo-acute stress shift was less significant than the shortening of the acute in the prosodic history of Slavic (126, 262). Yet there is evidence that the Czech-Upper Sorbian area did not shorten the acute, so that the neo-acute shift had more applicability across Slavic than did the old acute shortening. Furthermore, one could argue that the neo-acute shift introduced the motivation for acute shortening in the first place, since it threatened the prosodic merger of accentual paradigms *a* and *b* and was the spark that led to either acute shortening or merger of acute and neo-acute. However, the second chapter does introduce several valuable insights, such as the importance of the bisyllabic domain to prosodic phenomena, as well as the fact that all three types of Slavic fixed stress (initial, penultimate, and antepenultimate) can be uniformly treated as trochaic, with the proviso that initial stress counts from the anlaut (as in Czech and Slovak), penultimate from the auslaut (as in Polish), and antepenultimate from the auslaut, with an extrametrical syllable (as in Macedonian).

Having addressed some of the more general aspects of the book, I would like to turn to specific statements and issues of Slavic linguistics

which raise questions of fact or interpretation. In making her case for the superiority of metrical theory and constraint interaction over the more traditional concerns of phonological rule ordering and relative chronology, B often cites examples of disagreement and diametrically opposed views of more traditionally oriented Slavists as evidence that their approach cannot solve the problem, in contrast to the method of syllabic constraints. For example (64), after summarizing a large number of competing opinions about the development of liquid diphthongs in the history of Slavic, B indicates that “issues [...], such as chronology or rule ordering, are either not critical issues or are subsumed in the relative ranking of constraints”. In other words, she is suggesting not that the earlier views are right or wrong, but that they are necessarily contradictory, since they operate in a system of chronology and rule ordering. I would suggest that this situation results from the fact that the traditional rules must be stated more rigorously with respect to phonological facts and ordering, which necessarily leads to disagreement, since the facts of Common Slavic are hypothetical and not attested. One can dispute whether constraint interactions produce fewer contradictions than do traditional analyses. A statement of constraint interactions may conceivably lead to fewer disagreements since, unlike ordered rules, constraints can vary in terms of higher or lower ranking and can even be violated. However, this does not eliminate the value of a specific rule or chronology that is based on the known facts. As a matter of fact, even the use of constraints is not immune to the need to establish chronology, as B herself attempts to do on a number of occasions, such as her concluding periodization of Slavic on the basis of constraints (263). On p. 58 she states that “in northeastern dialects monomoraic syllables became the norm”. This implies the relative chronology that East Slavic lost quantity before experiencing pleophony, in spite of B’s previously cited view that relative chronology is not critical to constraint theory. In the conclusion of part one (110), speaking of the **tort* groups of Slavic, B says that my views are in conflict with those of Sidorov, since Feldstein (1994) “postulates loss of syllabicity on the liquid and jer strengthening in East Slavic jer plus liquid sequences while Sidorov [...] makes the opposite claim that the jer was preserved because the liquid was syllabic”. Since Sidorov (1966: 18) actually states that “the liquids lost their environmentally conditioned syllabicity”, and that this “caused the lengthening of the jers which preceded them”, this is precisely in accord with my position and not in the least at variance with it. Therefore, I feel that at least some of the examples of scholarly disagreement have been exaggerated or inaccurately stated.

The early Slavic period might have been presented in more detail. The Dybo Law is briefly referred to in section two (160–61), but is never presented as such, as a syllabic or prosodic phenomenon. As I have written previously (in Feldstein 1990, a paper which appears in B's bibliography), the effect of the Dybo Law was to relegate automatic enclitomena stress to the word boundaries (first or last moras), but to confine non-automatic stress to interior positions (by moving non-automatic first mora stress to the second mora in cases like *osà*). It would have been helpful to have more information on B's position about Balto-Slavic. In her interpretation of the phonological consequences of shortening long diphthongs, B indicates that Mareš was wrong to suggest a "change from trimoraic to bimoraic syllables" (p. 29). She then goes on to state that "the shortening of the vowel in these sequences would then be the consequence of moving a coda into the moraic position of the syllable". In Feldstein 1990 (50–51), I referred to the fact that Skljarenko (1987: 18–19) assumes that diphthongal shortening entailed making the second diphthongal element an "intonable part of the syllable". Instead of only citing the assailable opinion of Mareš on this subject, it would have been appropriate to cite the relevant earlier literature which is in agreement with B, including Feldstein 1990 and Skljarenko 1987, which does not appear in the bibliography. Other scholars, including Garde and P. Kiparsky, have also made pertinent contributions to the notion that the second diphthongal component was moraic.

B (25) refers to syllables inherited by "Proto-Slavic" (PS) from "Proto-Indo-European" (PIE). For example, she refers to *mṛtv-*, but *dūmu* for traditional *mṛtv-*, *dymv* (25). If the final *-os* had already changed to short *-u*, why is the syllabic *ṛ* still present, when the change to *ur/ir* is even shared by Baltic? She refers to Proto-Slavic **ūps-* > Common Slavic (CS) **uys-*, but there must have been an intervening stage in which the prothetic glide appeared before the rounded vowel (**uū*). B states (39) that "PIE **eu* has the reflexes OCS *pľvati* and *pl'ujǫ*". However, the first example actually is the zero grade **u*, and it is only the second example that really reflects **eu*, similar to the ablaut relationship of **i/ei* in *pvsati/pišǫ*. On p. 28, the Russian form *sed'moj* is contrasted to that of the other East Slavic languages which lack the *d*. However, this is considered to be a Church Slavonicism, in view of Russian dialectal *sěmyj* (Shevelov 1965: 194).

Table 1.3 (57) contains a misleading citation of Czech *břeg*, as being on a par with Polish *krowa*, in having an apparently Common Slavic short vowel reflex, in contrast to the long vowels in South Slavic examples *krava* and *brěgv*, cited for Old Church Slavonic. However, the Czech *e* of *břeg* is really a shortened *ě* (and not the short vowel reflex of original Common

Slavic *e*). The reason for the shortening of *ě* was the circumflex accent of accentual paradigm *c*. This is clear if one looks at a Czech paradigm *a* example, such as *břída*, with its retention of the long vowel reflex *í* from *ě*. Perhaps, table 1.3 inadvertently cited Czech *břeg* instead of the more appropriate Polish *brzeg*.

In analyzing the well-known reflexes of Common Slavic **tort* (56 and elsewhere), B uses the modern reflexes of *a/ě* as reflecting length at the time of resolving this sequence, and *o/e* as an indication of vowel shortness. I feel that one can convincingly make the case that such sequences always experienced the loss of liquid moraicity, which led to the addition of a compensatory vowel mora and generally two-mora **tort* reflexes throughout most of Slavic. This is rather obvious in the South Slavic, Czech, and Slovak long reflexes of *a/ě*, and in the pleophonic *oro/ere* of East Slavic. However, I think that it also can be maintained for Polish and Sorbian *e/o*. It simply indicates that at the moment of the loss of the liquid mora in Polish and Sorbian (i.e., the *trot* zone), *ǫ/ā* and *ě/ě* were no longer paired as the short/long values of the same vowel, and that the new quantitatively correlated pairs *ǫ/ō* and *ě/ě* were in existence. This is borne out by the fact that Polish reflexes of **tort* behave exactly as do long vowels—short reflexes in accentual paradigms *a* and *c*, but long reflexes in paradigm *b*, including both neo-acute and pretonic position. Thus, we have Polish *król, króla; wrócić; bruzda* (< *brózda*); etc. Short vowels would not manifest length in such instances and it would be overly hasty to automatically take any Polish *o/e* as evidence for shortening. This can only mean that in the chronological period between the southern West Slavic (Czech and Slovak) **tort* resolution and that of northern West Slavic, the original long/short pairs of *ǫ/ā* and *ě/ě* split apart, so that the only conceivable lengthening of *ǫ* and *ě* at the moment of *ř > r* was to *ō* and *ē*. This allows us to treat virtually all Slavic reflexes of **tort* as mora preserving and allows us to discard the cumbersome theory of Lekhitic **t̃rot* reflexes.

After establishing that the East Slavic syllabic model was CV, on the basis of the pleophonic **tort* reflexes (66), B's explanation of why CV syllables do not result in the East Slavic reflexes of **t̃rot* seems a bit incomplete. On p. 77, she states only: "It is not clear that the No Coda Constraint was of any importance here [...] So it appears that codas were irrelevant, or tolerated."

One of B's general theses is that the proposed constraints can have a much more extensive application than diphthongal structure per se. The theory is applied to numerous other phonological areas, including tense jers, contraction, compensatory lengthening, nasal reflexes and jer

reflexation. In B's discussion of tense jers, a question arises with regard to the open or closed syllable status of the *j* that conditions the quantitative neutralization. Representation (24) on p. 90 appears to mean that Common Slavic would have had such syllables as *bij-ǫ*, *no-vyj-i*, rather than *bi-jǫ*, *no-vy-ji*. It is unclear why the sonorant *j* would not be the onset of the next syllable, since a vowel follows. In her application of syllabic theory to nasal reflexation (88), B states, "Nasal vowels were more likely to be retained in areas where the syllable could be bimoraic and especially those areas where a syllabic coda was allowed". If the syllabic coda refers to the possibility of a nasal itself, this formulation appears circular.

B also relates consonant devoicing in clusters and in final position to syllabic structure. After citing internal Serbian/Croatian clusters such as "srpski", as well as similar phenomena in other Slavic languages (109), she states that "in all of these languages there is also final devoicing". This statement is not accurate for Serbian/Croatian, which does not experience word-final devoicing, as seen in such pairs as [srb] vs. [srp], [trg] vs. [trk], [rad] vs. [rat], etc.

The following points relate to questions that arise within section two, which deals with the topic of accentual prominence. In her discussion of Slovene stress advancement (137–38), B addresses the issue of what caused only circumflex enclitomena to experience the shift. She states that "the circumflex forms are better represented without H, and thus distinct from acutes". Yet a few lines later she states that her analysis, in contrast to those of Ramovš and myself, "does not have to postulate rising vs. falling pitch contours on short vowels". However, using the presence or absence of "H" seems to be tantamount to the same thing, since it refers to pitch and can affect the movement or non-movement of ictus from a short vowel. On p. 141, the Slovene form *bràta* is cited with a short vowel, which is long rising in the current language. Apparently, B is referring to a previous language stage, though it is unclear exactly which one.

In speaking of the "southern LCS area" (161), B posits that "the opposition between accented (with H) and unaccented (without H) syllables was reinterpreted as one of quantity". This works well if one compares the old acute to the circumflex. But, if the neo-acutes are considered, they retain length just as do the circumflexes *krâlj* and *grâd*. Perhaps this is meant to refer to a situation before the neo-acute shift occurred. In any case, B should have explained such an apparent exception to her statement about quantity taking over for pitch.

All in all, B's book is a useful introduction to metrical and constraint theory for Slavists who are familiar with more traditional approaches. Some of my aforementioned comments refer to simple factual errors

which can easily be corrected. However, others stem from my doubts about whether the system of constraints is really a significant improvement over previous treatments of the subject. In spite of the many interesting ideas and relationships presented, I am still not fully convinced that constraint theory offers a better methodology for solving the problems of Slavic prosody than the relative chronologies and structuralism of such scholars as Jakobson and Trubetzkoy.

References

- Feldstein, Ronald F. (1990) "On the structural motivation for Dybo's Law". *Indiana Slavic studies* 5: 43–60.
- . (1994) "On the evolution of jer + liquid diphthongs in Polish and West Slavic". Charles E. Gribble, Richard Pope, Charles E. Townsend, Ronald Feldstein, and Cornelis van Schooneveld, eds. *James Daniel Armstrong in Memoriam*. Columbus, OH: Slavica, 25–41.
- Jakobson, Roman (1929/1971). "Remarques sur l'évolution du russe comparée à celle des autres langues slaves". *Selected writings, vol. 1: Phonological studies*. The Hague: Mouton, 2nd edition, 117–36.
- Shevelov, George Y. (1965) *A prehistory of Slavic: The historical phonology of Common Slavic*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sidorov, V.N. (1966) "Reducirovannye glasnye *ъ* i *ь* v drevnerusskom jazyke XI veka." *Iz istorii zvukov russkogo jazyka*. Moscow: Nauka, 5–37.
- Skljarenko, V.H. (1987) "Akutovani j cyrkumfleksovani dyfthonhy ta dyf-tonhični spolučennja v praslov'jans'koi movi". *Movoznavstvo*, No. 6, 16–24.

Dept. of Slavic Languages
Ballantine 502
Indiana University
1020 E. Kirkwood Ave.
Bloomington, IN 47405–7103
feldstei@indiana.edu

Received: 15 April 1999