

## REVIEWS \* ОБЗОРЫ И РЕЦЕНЗИИ

**Niina Aasmäe, *Stress and Quantity in Erzya*, Tartu 2006 (Dissertationes philologiae Uralicae Universitatis Tartuensis 6). 204 pp.**

The book "Stress and Quantity in Erzya" submitted by Niina Aasmäe for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy includes an introductory chapter, seven previously published papers and bibliography. Niina Aasmäe is the single author of three of the papers. In three of the joint papers she is the first author. Chapter 2 of the book "Erzya prosody"<sup>1</sup> is based on Niina Aasmäe's masters theses "Erzya prosody. Findings over time". So, the prevailing part of publications belong to Niina Aasmäe. Her dissertation gives a very clear impression of the whole work done by the researcher: a very detailed overview of previous research in Erzya prosody, the description of language material, speakers and experimental procedures.

Niina Aasmäe's doctoral dissertation is the first empirical study of word stress in Erzya which is based on a large group of informants, representing the major varieties of the Erzya language (40 speakers from different dialects in the Republic of Mordovia) as well as different communicational situations (reading and spontaneous speech). The choice of speakers and dialects is based on the preliminary observations of stress-patterns in the field materials collected by the author.

The phonetic nature of word stress and its placement has ever been a problem in the study of Erzya as well as

in some other Finno-Ugric languages (for example — Udmurt). Many researches do mention difficulties in the location of stress in polysyllabic Erzyan words, the possibility of shifting the stress to other syllables, very subtle difference in the phonetic characteristics of stressed and unstressed syllables.

One of the most important results of N. Aasmäe's study is the conclusion that the degree of the mobility of stress in Erzya is dialect-dependent and that there is dependence between the location of stress and the reduction of unstressed vowels. The speakers of idiolects lacking vowel reduction show the least difference between the cases of initial and non-initial stress (initial stress in 50% of cases, non-initial stress in 37%), the speakers of idiolects with reduction use the pattern of initial stress significantly more often (60—68%). So, different opinions by earlier researchers can partly be explained by the dialect background of speakers and the choice of dialectal varieties of Erzya.

Another important observation made in the investigation concerns the realization of word-stress patterns in different communicational situations — controlled speech (reading disyllabic and trisyllabic in a carrier sentence) and spontaneous speech (informal dialogs, answering a standard set of questions). The data analyzed demonstrate that the alternation of stress might be conditioned by the functional role of a word in an utterance. For example, N. Aasmäe states that "repeating an answer the speakers

<sup>1</sup>I. Lehiste, N. Aasmäe, E. Meister, K. Pajusalu, P. Teras, T.-R. Viitso, *Erzya Prosody*, Helsinki 2003 (MSFOu 245).

occasionally changed the pattern of stress". Emotional or attitudinal implications "could contribute to the increase of non-initial stress in the speakers' production". For languages with weak and non-distinctive stress (opposed to languages with strong and distinctive stress, such as Russian or German) such behaviour of stress seems to be characteristic: marked communicative situations or some syntactic categories (for example, expressive forms, imperatives) can contribute to the shift of the word stress from its predominant (unmarked) position — initial in Erzya or final in Turkic languages, or for example in Udmurt.

Both findings made in the dissertation are of great value for the study of languages with different accentual systems, especially for the solving the problem of the existence of the so called unaccental languages.

For the experimental part of the investigation N. Aasmäe chooses quantity (vowel length) as one of the possible phonetic correlates of word stress in Erzya. In languages without phonemic vowel length ("at synchronic level, the length of vowels in Erzya is not distinctive") the parameter of vowel (or syllable) duration can really serve as a correlate of stress (as in Russian, for long vowel also in German). Measurements of vowel duration (under careful control of vowel quality, rhythmical structure of the word and the type of syllable structure (open/closed)) show differences in the duration ratios between stressed and unstressed syllable nuclei in the idiolects lacking reduction and idiolects with reduction. At the same time these measurements confirmed some of the universal tendencies in the temporal organization of speech, found by Ilse Lehiste and many other researchers (for example, the duration of vowels in trisyllabic words was lower than in disyllabic words). Acoustic data on

vowel length allows the author of the dissertation to come to a very strong theoretical conclusion about the "...divergency of the rhythmic tendencies in the dialectal varieties of Erzya. The idiolects using full vowels gravitate to the syllable-timed structure, while the idiolects with vowel reduction display the tendency toward stress-timing". So, duration consistently appears to be related to stress only in the idiolects with vowel reduction.

As for the last (but not least important) component of the dissertation, the bibliography, I appreciate the richness of its Finno-Ugric part, but I miss some important theoretical works on word prosody pertaining to the subject, such as the theory by T. Nikolajeva or the new book by Werner Lehfeldt "Akzent und Betonung im Russischen" (München 2003), and also some works on the prosody of other languages with different stress systems.

The reviewed dissertation is written in a very clear scientific language, all terms used are well defined. I have only some minor, marginal questions and requests. For example, the term "movable stress" is used in this work in the same meaning as "alternating stress", that is — freely changing in the same word or wordform, whereas in Russian linguistic tradition "movable stress" (подвижное ударение) is used for morphophonologic distinctions (shifting of the stress in different forms of the word, for example: *ста́рик — стари́ка, выходи́ть — выхо́дить*).

On the whole, the material presented in Niina Aasmäe's book and theoretical conclusions testify to her broad linguistic competence. It is a thorough, careful, exhaustive and innovative research. Niina Aasmäe's work "Stress and Quantity in Erzya" satisfies all the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in the branch of theoretical and experimental phonetics.

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