

# Обзоры и рецензии \* *Reviews*

<https://doi.org/10.3176/lu.1966.4.12>

Leho Vörk, *Viron kielen ääntämys*. *Studia Philologica Jyväskyläensia II*, Jyväskylä 1966. Pp. 79.

The Estonian language is included in the curriculum at a number of the world's universities where Fenno-Ugric philology is taught. Despite this the number of textbooks of Estonian that have appeared in foreign languages is not at all large. Consequently any textbook of the Estonian language that is published abroad deserves to be closely examined.

Leho Vörk's "Viron kielen ääntämys" ("Pronunciation of the Estonian Language") is a textbook of Estonian pronunciation for students of Finnish philology. The treatment of the subject-matter corresponds to this purpose.

The book does not set out to achieve any ambitious scholarly aims. Its task is of a practical nature and is accomplished with great competence. The relations *orthography* → *pronunciation* and *pronunciation* → *orthography* have been discussed with equal thoroughness. The reviewer fully acknowledges the systematic character of the book and its author's complete mastery of the subject-matter and problems involved. In the following pages we shall deal with some aspects of the book that merit special praise or which constitute its shortcomings.

An underlying methodological tendency of the book is the frequent association of phonetic and phonological facts with morphology. This is especially evident, e. g. in the treatment of stress and quantity relations (§ 34, pp. 49—53), palatalization (§ 39, pp. 61—65), the spelling of *b*, *d*, *g* in a voiceless environment (§ 41, pp. 67—70), etc. Such a connection of phonetics and phonology with morphology is fully expedient in a textbook. In

some cases, however, morphology has influenced phonetic transcription and this is no longer justifiable.

The introductory chapter "Ääntämykseen ja oikeinkirjoitukseen liittyviä yleisiä seikkoja" is a considerable achievement in every respect. Attention should be drawn to the use of a rhythmic unit in words (a pair of syllables) to elucidate relations of quantity.

A problem arises, however, in connection with syllabic description (§ 5, p. 11). L. Vörk maintains that only a word-initial syllable can begin with a consonant cluster. It is, nevertheless, possible in special cases for a syllable other than the initial one to begin with a cluster of consonants: *nõ-dra*, *vints-klub*, etc. (such words as *nõdra*, *puuru*, *vagla*, *vigla*, *kabla*, etc. should accordingly be regarded as in quantity 1). It is, of course, obvious that a textbook need not necessarily list debatable points.

When speaking of the fact that [ŋ] does not have its own character in spelling (§ 2, p. 9), it would have been appropriate to add that this is not even necessary because [ŋ] is not a phoneme in Estonian.

The quality of sounds is dealt with in the second ("Eräistä äännevaliteeteista ja niiden merkitsemisestä") and fourth ("Lisätietoja äännevaliteeteista") chapters of the book.

The comparative survey of Estonian and Finnish sounds is entirely satisfactory.

The inclusion of *õ* among back vowels ("Alkulause", § 13, p. 17) is justified from the phonological point of view, too.

Nevertheless, attention should be drawn to a few shortcomings in the treatment of

the quality of sounds. The pronunciation of *z* and *ž* as voiced sounds is an error identical with the voiced pronunciation of *b*, *d*, *g*. In correct pronunciation the letters *z* and *s*, *ž* and *š* have the corresponding voiceless pronunciations [z] and [s], [ž] and [š] (depending on the environment).

In discussing *o* (§ 17, p. 21) it could have been added that *o* can occur in a non-initial syllable also in loanwords (*auto*, *kilo*, *kino*, *silo*) and not only in proper names.

Exaggerated use has been made of the transitional sound [j]: § 10 (p. 16) *magneesium* [mac'neēsijum] instead of [mac'neēsium] ([j] merely indicates the syllable boundary without the transitional sound; in L. Võrk's transcription ['] and [j] mark primary and secondary stress respectively); § 38 (p. 58) *materialism* [matterija'lism] instead of [matteri,a'lism].

In the account of the pronunciation of *h* (§ 40, p. 66 ff.) it should have been added that the pronunciation of *h* in a word-initial position is optional also today. In fully standard speech the word-initial *h* may be omitted. After World War II there was a tendency to drop the initial *h*, whereas at the present time there is again a noticeable trend to reintroduce the *h*.

The treatment of palatalization (§ 39, pp. 61—65) calls for a minor correction: nowadays *r* is not palatalized in standard speech at all. L. Võrk regards palatalization as epenthetic in Estonian. This corresponds to actual fact. L. Võrk's manner of indicating palatalization in transcription is entirely expedient. In a textbook, the treatment of palatalization in connection with morphological facts is expedient as well. The systematization of the phenomena of palatalization is excellent. A few mistakes may be pointed out where palatalization has not been indicated in illustrative words: § 9 (p. 15) [kaās] and [caās] instead of [kaā's]; § 12 (p. 17), <sup>3</sup>*pill* [pi'll] for [pi'll], § 21 (p. 26) *kool* [koōl] for [koō'l], § 30 (p. 40) *pilt* [pi'l't] for [pi'l't], § 38 (p. 60) *kabinet* ['kaBi,ne'tt] for ['kaBi,ne'tt].

A very important process of Standard Estonian pronunciation is dealt with in

§ 38 (p. 59 ff.). This is the shift of the primary stress from a non-initial syllable to the initial syllable in foreign words possessing a certain structure and the concomitant vacillation in pronunciation and even in spelling. The examples adduced to illustrate this vacillation are not of the best. Several of the examples presented here have clearly acquired a primary stress on the initial syllable in post-war usage, e. g. *veteran*, *paradiis*, *delegaat*, *kabinet*.

The marking of secondary stress is somewhat inconsistent. Especially in compound words and in foreign words with the structure of a compound (e. g. *anekdoot*), the stress of the second component has frequently been omitted (e. g. p. 68—70).

The description of quantity (Part III "Kvantiteetista ja niiden merkitsemisestä") is on the whole entirely traditional in the spirit of Estonian school grammars. The determination of internal characteristic sounds (§ 19, p. 23 ff.) is undertaken along traditional lines. In the treatment of internal sounds insufficient attention has been paid to the fact that word quantity may be affected only by the two consonant sounds following the stressed vowel, whereas the more distant consonants at the end of a syllable are not in quantitative alternation and to regard them as internal characteristic sounds is a matter of convention. (This fact has been pointed out in the paragraph devoted to the quantity and spelling of consonant clusters — § 28, p. 37). The use of a rhythmic unit in the form of a pair of syllables in discussing quantitative relations is very helpful (§ 96, pp. 54—56; see also "Alkulause" and § 7, p. 12 ff.).

An excellent general table showing the vowel and consonant quantity combinations in internal characteristic sounds is given in § 27, p. 33. The subsequent detailed discussion in §§ 29—31 could have been linked with this table by means of more direct references.

§§ 32—33 (pp. 45—49) contain a very systematic account of the spelling of the degrees of quantity. Nevertheless, the wording of one of the rules (No. 5) on p. 49 is clearly unconsidered: "Jos sanassa on ylipitkä konsonanttiaines, tavun ylipituus

heijastuu aina myös edellä olevassa pitkässä vokaaliaineksessa.”

In the treatment of the quantity of concrete sounds and sound clusters there are a few cases which cannot be regarded as conforming to present-day Standard Estonian usage. Thus the correct pronunciation of the word forms *plüüš*, *plüüši* (gen.), *plüüsi* (part.) is [plüüš], [plüüši], [plüüši], ([plüž], [plüži], [plüži]), and not [plüüşš], [plüüşši], [plüüşši] (§ 26, p. 32). It is also dubious whether the pronunciation of the quantity 2 forms *harfi*, *punši* and *parhi* with the geminates [ff], [šš] and [hh] as [harffi], [punšši] and [parhhi], can be regarded as correct (§ 30, p. 41).

When discussing geminate stops (§ 25, p. 31), it could have been added that a stop consonant at the beginning of the second component may in exceptional cases be pronounced as a geminate: *õunapuu* — [õunapp,puu], *maantee* — [maanttee] (in L. Võrk's transcription; the semi-length of a second-syllable vowel is not indicated before a stop geminate). The same is true in the case of *s*: *kullassepp* — [kullass,sepp].

With regard to the marking of the semi-long vowel in a second syllable, it is dubious whether the vowel that precedes a stop geminate and consonant cluster in words of quantity 1 and 2 is semi-long as repeatedly indicated in the book (e. g. p. 50). Evidently it is also largely a matter of what is meant by semi-length (cf. § 36, p. 54 ff.).

L. Võrk maintains that the quantity of a long stop following an unstressed syllable is identical with that of a long (quantity 2) internal consonant occurring after a stressed syllable nucleus (§ 34, p. 49). Such a statement is correct phonologically speaking. I. Lehiste's recent investigations have shown that a long stop or stop geminate which follows an unstressed syllable is phonetically intermediate between quantity 2 and 3 in a stressed syllable.

In connection with problems of quantity a few of the more important moot points in L. Võrk's book might also be mentioned.

The pronunciation of word-initial orthographical *b*, *d*, *g* is dealt with in the

second part of the book “Eräistä äänne-kvaliteeteista ja niiden merkitsemisestä”. In § 9, p. 15, the initial stops in the word-pairs *paar* — *baar*, *tekk* — *dekk*, *kaas* — *gaas* are consistently transcribed as distinct: [paār] — [Baār], [tekk] — [Dekk], [kaās] — [Gaās] (it would be more correct to write [kaā's] — [gaā's]). Although it is claimed in the same place that there is little difference in the pronunciation of these words, such a notation leaves no doubt that [p, t, k] and [B, D, G] are phonologically contrasted in a word-initial position. Actually this is not true. In correct Estonian the pronunciation of a stop that precedes a word-initial vowel can range freely from a short tenuis stop to a voiceless media in all cases (if the environment does not influence the pronunciation): [p, t, k] and [B, D, G] are equally possible classes of sounds in a word-initial position before a vowel: [paār ~ Baār] = *paar*, *baar*, [tekk ~ Dekk] = *tekk*, *dekk*, [kaās ~ Gaās] = *kaas*, *gaas*.

Another major debatable point involving quantity is connected with the treatment of orthographically exceptional monosyllabic words (§ 37, p. 57 ff.). The phonetic transcription of the members of the word-pairs *tal* — *tall*, *kel* — *kell*, *mis* — *miss*, etc. indicates that they differ in pronunciation: [tall] — [tāl], [kell] — [kēll], [miss] — [mīss], etc. Such an interpretation is not satisfactory. In isolation such words are pronounced identically, but when they occur in an unstressed position within a sentence, the shorter pronunciation of the forms *tal*, *kel*, *mis*, etc. should be regarded as a phenomenon of syntactophonemics. When transcribed as single words, however, a difference in transcription is not justified (a minor problem arises in connection with high vowels in the word-pairs *mu* — *muu* and *mi* — *vii*, where the first words (a genitive form of the personal pronoun and the name of a note) may be represented in a stressed position by the variants [mŷ] and [mī] (in L. Võrk's transcription [mū] and [mī]) which contrast qualitatively but not quantitatively with the pronunciation of the indefinite pronoun *muu* and word form *vii*).

In Estonian the stress system and quantity system are in direct mutual dependence. In the morphological system of the language the system of stresses and quantities need not coincide with that in the phonetic and phonological system. It is true that in morphology the stress and quantity structure of the word *kabinet* is regarded as being different from that of the word *madalat* (see § 34, p. 51 ff.). If L. Võrk claims that these words have phonetically (hence also phonologically) the same stress and quantity structure, then one should not even in a textbook allow the stress and quantity of these words to be transcribed differently because of morphological considerations as [*kaBi,ne'it*] (actually it should be [*kaBi,ne'it*]) and [*maDàlati*]. The present reviewer finds that such a differentiated manner of marking is justified also phonetically and phonologically because it is possible to observe phonetic phenomena in Estonian which permit a distinction between secondary stress in non-compound words and secondary stress in compounds (level stress). Words such as *kabinet*, *kompvek*, *piiskop* are pronounced (resp. they may be pronounced) according to the pattern of a compound and with the ensuing consequences as regards quantity (the semi-long vowel of the second syllable in quantitatively short or long component-words of compounds is likewise one of the features that serves to distinguish the stress and quantity structure of compound words from that of non-compounds: cf. [*tulè,tikkùv*] — see § 36, p. 56 in the book under review, and [*kaBi,netti*] but [*maDàlatte*]; there are also other phenomena of quantity and phonetically manifested juncture which enable one to distinguish compound words as well as words with a compound structure from non-compounds; lack of space does not permit us to list all such cases). Thus the reference to morphology in the different transcription of the stress and quantity structures of the word-types *kabinet* and *madalat* is not justified and is actually unnecessary.

The orthoepy of quantity is also touched upon in Part IV, "Lisätietoja äännevaliteeteista", § 41, pp. 67—70, in connection with the pronunciation of orthographical *b*, *d*, *g* in a voiceless environment. The problem here is that of the pronunciation of *b*, *d*, *g* when they precede a voiceless consonant (a stop or *s*) and following a long syllable. The pronunciations [*kärpsed*] and [*raüsed*] are listed as dialectal by L. Võrk. In reality these (and the analogical [*õn'sad*], [*soo'sad*], [*tu'n'sin*], [*jalksi*], etc.) are entirely acceptable pronunciational variants which occur even more frequently in northern pronunciation than the variants [*kärpsed*], [*raüsed*], etc. In such cases the intensity of pronunciation is generally shifted to the stops when preceding *s* (nevertheless one also has [*añtkem ~ anikem*], [*hoitku ~ hoitku*]; in front of the ending *-ki* there is generally no such forward shift in pronunciational intensity). In standard pronunciation this undesirable tendency is at present tolerated.

The minor shortcomings of the book include a few errors in the use of present-day Estonian forms: the translation of <sup>3</sup>*veere* [*veëre*] as 'viereen' is incorrect from the standpoint of contemporary Estonian (§ 7, p. 12); <sup>3</sup>*kaare* [*kaäre*] is not a correct form in Estonian today, and it cannot be translated as 'kaareen' (§ 27, p. 36). The orthological dictionary of Estonian (*Õigekeelsuse sõnaraamat*, 1960) does not recognize the word-form <sup>2</sup>*tapet* [*tappètt*] (§ 38, p. 59), the accepted form being only *tapeet* [*tap'peètt*].

The non-phonological transcription used in the book is a felicitous simplification of phonetic transcription.

Certain drawbacks and debatable features do not appreciably detract from the practical usefulness of this book, the principal achievement of which is its admirable presentation of subject-matter.

MATI HINT (Tallinn)