Notes on Sievers (1901/1967) & Baudouin de Courtenay (1972/1910)
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Sievers, 1901
While Sievers distinguished himself in linguistic circles by recovering the poetic traditions of Old Saxon, he held a fairly sophisticated conceptualization of the role of phonetics in sound change. His view is distinctly *diachronic* in the neogrammarian (*Junggrammatiker*) tradition of espousing the regularity of sound change.

Who were the neogrammarians?
"Neogrammarian" is a term linguists generally use for 19th C. German (usually) philologists who proposed that sound changes were *regular.*⇒ Diachronic sound changes affect all words in the language which satisfy the environmental conditions of the rule, and this occurs without exception. These changes are gradual and imperceptible while underway. Gradual articulatory change is caused by random variations in exemplar memory. Neogrammarian approaches to language history allowed for a scientific reasoning behind sound changes, as it was *falsifiable*. Famous Neogrammarians include: Brugmann, Verner, Paul, Sievers

My sense is that Sievers viewed phonetics as a means to elucidate historical relationships ascertained via writing systems. This is in keeping with the "pre-modern" approach to phonetics as a discipline distinct from linguistics (cf. departments of "Linguistics and Phonetics"). For Sievers, synchronic phonetics, or the day-to-day of various phonetic processes in living languages, is in a sense a mirror of diachronic developments.

Sound Change

- Every change is "based upon inadequate reproduction of the traditional pronunciation"

- Sound change begins in an individual and the innovation is spread through imitation (What do sociolinguists say about this?)

    > Every sound change is based upon inadequate reproduction of the traditional pronunciation. The formation of new forms of pronunciation then originates with a single individual or with a group of individuals and only through imitation are such individual imitations spread adequately throughout larger parts of the speech community, or even its entirety. (p.265)

- Sound change can occur within one particular generation of speakers or as the result of transmission from one generation to the next → Sievers explicitly says that this is not an important distinction...we will see that others think it is **very** important!

- Acknowledges the idea that sound change proceeds in a manner that simplifies speech (in terms of least effort), but quickly rejects it

"We can admit that many phenomenon in the development of languages may be brought under this heading, but in the generality with which the statement is produced is definitely false." (p. 265) → Discuss this idea. It seems to be a popular one, in lay approaches to language and language change that speakers are lazy in their pronunciations. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

- In arguing against a *teleological* view of sound change, Sievers provides historical examples where the sound change results in a "strengthening"

  *twai**j**e* > Gothic twa**ddj**e
  OHG mê r > m**ái**s
  Lat. b**o**num > It. b**uo**no

Sievers then defines the concept of ease or articulation (or articulatory difficulty) as relative to the familiarity of sounds. Unfamiliar sounds are those that are prone to be either more or less difficult to produce.

Baudouin de Courtenay, 1910
For some context: The Polish linguist (Jan Niecisław Ignacy) Baudouin de Courtenay was writing in relative isolation and obscurity in Kazan (Russia) while his contemporary, the equally erudite de Saussure, became renown for his theory of vowel alternations in Indo-European. Like Winteler and Sweet, Baudouin independently arrived at the concept of the phoneme. For our purposes, Baudouin had

> a dualistic conception of language as a complex of physiological and psychological phenomena, and especially in his early writings he showed faith in the strict laws of causality and in the march of progress, leadings to the greater "humanization" of language and to its greater simplicity determined by the principle of least effort. (Stankiewicz 1972, p. 6)

I found this a curious statement: "...there exists only individual language, which is the sum total of articulatory-auditory representations that are associated with linguistic and extralinguistic concepts. The articulatory-auditory representations manifest themselves in phonetic phenomena which, can in no way be considered to have any real existence. **That is why languages are neither phonetic not acoustic in their nature.**"

Like Sievers, Baudoiun had a sophisticated understanding of the conversion of physiological "energy" into perceptive energy of the psychological system → *apperception*. Some points:

- He has a problem with *phonetic development of sounds* but rather proposes two aspects of phonetic "laws"

  1. *psychological laws*= laws of psychological states and change

2. *laws of the ways* (DISCUSS)

- Phonemes that are weakly *morphologized and semasiologized* (m&s) tend to disappear. Conversely, phonemes with "greater social value" remain stable. He relates m&s to psychological prominence and psychological stress → acoustic salience(?), and morphological junctures → phonemes that appear in monomorphemic structures are "stronger" than those that appear in polymorphemic structures.

  We need to discuss this issue. Counter examples?

- *Lapsus auris*: Errors in hearing…"when one word is mistaken for another, as a factor of change at any given moment of linguistic intercourse and in the history of language as a social phenomenon."

Questions for us to discuss in general

1. Have you given any deep consideration to the notion of the phoneme? In the history of western linguistics this idea was a big deal but it remains controversial to this day. How detailed is the phoneme? What's the process of acquiring a phoneme? Do we come with some biases that guide us to the phoneme?

2. We need to start thinking about modern sound changes. Can you think of any?

3. What is meant by morphologized and semasiologized?

4. Discuss the issue of ease of articulation. Do you buy it?