Repercussions of the history of a typological change in Germanic.

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Abstract.
In acoustic experimental phonetic investigations, the distinction made by Pike (1945) and Abercrombie (1967) between syllable-timed and stress timed has been refuted on several occasions. (e.g. by Wenk and Wioland 1982). However, perceptual research (Dauer 1983, 1987) has given rise to re-instalment of this typology by Auer (1993, 2001). Auer proposes a gradual, multi-factorial typology between syllable counting languages (also called simply syllable languages) and stress counting languages (or word languages). In this typology, several indicators are used for positioning a language on the continuous scale between the syllable language prototype and the word language prototype. These indicators include, among others, complexity of syllable structure, the occurrence of geminate clusters, tonality, tonal phenomena, the occurrence of vowel harmony or metaphony, epenthesis, vowel deletion, liaison, the occurrence of internal and external sandhi, as well as morphological reanalyses.

In this paper, this typology will be used to show that in the course of time, most West-Germanic dialects have moved gradually from the syllable type to the word type. Evidence for this comes from research done on Old High German and Midlle High German texts, as well as from German dialectology.

It will be shown that the contrast between Northern an Southern Dutch with respect to liaison across word boundaries and the vowel deletion promoting regular syllable structure (both indicators for syllable language-hood), is not the result of a French influence (as assumed by Noske (2005, 2006, 2007). Rather, it is the product of an innovation undergone by Northern variants of Dutch. A reason is that apocope (an indicator for a word language) in Northern Dutch, which was absent in Southern Dutch, is clearly a later development. It can be assumed that Middle Dutch was already a relative syllable language because of the many examples of syllabically induced cliticizations (an indicator for a syllable language). Hence this is not due to the influence of French.

Another consequence of the research done on the typological history of West-Germanic is that the genesis of schwa in French (as a product of vowel reduction) cannot possibly be the result of an intensity accent of a Germanic superstrate, as stated in descriptions on the history of French, e.g. Pope (1952). This is because there was no strong intensity accent in Franconian at that time. Also, typically, there was no vowel reduction in Franconian at the time it reputedly cause vowel reduction in French.

This point of view is corroborated by a simple investigation of the oldest French text, the Strasbourg Oaths of 842, which is in fact a parallel French/Franconian text. It shows that in the middle of the ninth century, Old French was in fact more a word language than Franconian.

It can thus be demonstrated that French the genesis of French schwa must have been an independent development.

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