INITIAL CONSONANT CLUSTERS IN PRUSSIAN

Although a considerable amount of work has been done on the Prussian language, so far comparatively little attention has been paid to its phonotactics. The linguists’ analysis has been mostly concentrated on the presentation of some distributional consonant patterns not characteristic of other Baltic languages. In the present paper an attempt is made to investigate different ways of combining Prussian consonant phonemes and compare them with those of Lithuanian.

The evidence was drawn from the works on Prussian consonant clusters by V. Mažiulis, G. Gerullis, R. Trautmann’s works as well as from the works by M. Strimaitienė.

The list of utterance-initial consonant clusters in Prussian is as follows:


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2 Mažiulis V. Prūšų kalbos paminklai II.


In the addition to the above mentioned Prussian consonant phonemes sequences, Lithuanian has /gv/, /km/, /sr/, /šl/, /šm/, /šn/, /šp/, /št/, /šv/, /žl/, /žl/, /žm/, /žn/, /žv/, e.g. gvaζdikas „pink“, kmynas „caraway“, šlamêti „rustle“, šmaiikaς „flexible“, šniokšti „roar“, špûlê „spool“, štai „here“, švarus „clean“, zliaukti „stream“, žlûgōtas „soaked washing“, žmogus „man“, žnaibyti „ pinch“, žvalgyti „reconnoitre“. Table 1 lists all clusters to be found in Lithuanian, the examples are presented in a candidate’s thesis by M. Strimaitiené.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cl.</th>
<th>L.</th>
<th>Pr.</th>
<th>Cl.</th>
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<th>Pr.</th>
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<th>Cl.</th>
<th>L.</th>
<th>Pr.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bj</td>
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<td>(−)</td>
<td>kl</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>sl</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>šn</td>
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<tr>
<td>bl</td>
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<td>dr</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>kr</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>zm</td>
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Though Table 1 lists /pj/ it is not clear whether the Prussians had consonant combinations with /j/. The letters i, y, g were used to indicate the palatalization of a preceding consonant; yet /j/, when followed by labial consonants, may have

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6 All the examples were drawn from the Third Catechism and clusters /bl/, /gn/, /sm/, /sl/ were taken from the Elbing Vocabulary. /šk/ schûdan „harm“, /šl/ schlûsitwej „to serve“ presented in the Third Catechism were excluded since they occurred only in foreign words.


8 Analysing the consonant clusters attention was not paid to palatalization. The letter L. signifies a Lithuanian cluster and the letters Pr. – a Prussian cluster. The plus sign + means that the cluster occurs; the minus sign means that the cluster does not occur. An asterisk in parenthesis shows the phoneme sequence which is supposed to have existed in the language. The plus sign in parentheses (+) shows that the combination is found only in G. Gerullis’ and R. Trautmann’s works.

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also been pronounced\(^9\). J. Levin claims that clusters with /j/ occurred before back vowels\(^10\). Therefore /bj/ must have been pronounced, but since the extant Prussian texts are rather scarce, /bj/ has not been found in them. Besides, all Prussian clusters consisting of a voiceless stop and a liquid have counterparts with a voiced consonant and a liquid. /pj/ is the only exception in this pattern (see Table 1).

Spoken Prussian must have had cluster /gv/ because, as R. Trautmann points out, it could be found in names of persons, e.g. Gvyles\(^11\). The cluster is congenial to Prussian structure and is supported by phoneme sequences consisting of a stop and a liquid (see /bl/, /br/, /dr/, /dv/, /gl/, /gn/, /gr/, /kl/, /pl/, /pr/).

As mentioned above, /šl/, /šm/, /šn/, /šp/, /šť/, /šv/, /žl/, /žm/, /žn/, /žv/ do not occur in Prussian. The Lettish and Prussian /š/ derived from * /sj/, and /ž/ from * /zj/\(^12\). As * /sj/ and * /zj/ were pronounced only before vowels, clusters with /š/ and /ž/ do not occur in Prussian. K. Büga writes that the Lithuanian /š/, /ž/ have changed to /s/, /z/ in Selian, Semigallian, Curonian and Prussian\(^13\). That is why Lithuanian clusters with /ž/ (viz. /žm/, /žv/) and /š/ (viz. /šm/, /šn/, /šp/, /šť/, /šv/) have counterparts with /z/ and /s/ in Prussian (see Table 1). Only /žl/ does not occur in the Prussian texts and Vocabularies evidently because they are not numerous\(^14\).

/tl/ is not characteristic of Lithuanian though it is found in Prussian toponyms such as Tlooke, Tlokenpelk\(^15\) and in names of persons such as Tloke and Tlokte\(^16\). The absence of the Lithuanian /tl/ may be accounted for by the fact that Lithuanians and Latvians replace it by /kl/\(^17\), e.g. Pr. absentliums „having marked“ : L. ženklas „mark“; Pr. Tłoke „bear“ : L. lokys „bear“. The Elbing Vocabulary\(^18\), however, presents the word clokis „bear“ with the initial /kl/. R. Schmalstieg, supporting V. Kiparski’s point of view that /kl/ and /tl/ in the above-mentioned words are allophones having a minimal possible difference, points out that Prussians might

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\(^9\) Mažiulis V. Prūsų kalbos paminklai, p. 55.
\(^13\) Büga K. Aisčių praeities vietųvardų šviesoje, p. 10.
\(^14\) This apparently accounts for the fact why in Prussianized Lithuanian place names to be found in German documents only /s/, /z/ occur but not /š/, /ž/, e.g. Birsten „Birštonas“, Semyen „Žeimiai“ (see Steponavičienė I. Dėl lietuvių vietovardžių prūsinimo kryžiuočių ordinio raštuose // Baltica, 1974, vol. 10(2), p. 166–167). Similarly /š/, /ž/ are changed in Slavonic loan-words (see Levin J. F. Op. cit., p. 44).
\(^18\) Mažiulis V. Prūsų kalbos paminklai II, p. 40.
have pronounced the words in one way, only Germans failed to perceive them and recorded two different clusters\(^{19}\).

For convenience's sake let us indicate the first member of the cluster by the symbol \(C_1\) and the second member by \(C_2\). We see that in both languages /b/, /d/, /g/, /k/, /p/, /s/, /t/, /z/ (in Lithuanian /š/ and /ž/ as well) can be only as \(C_1\); /l/, /r/, /v/, /n/, /m/ (and L. /j/) can occur only as \(C_2\); and /k/, /p/, /t/ may be both as \(C_1\) and \(C_2\).

In Prussian as well as in Lithuanian the phonemes entering into the position of \(C_1\) are predominantly fricatives and stops (e.g. Pr. /s/ occurs in 7 clusters, /k/ is found in 5 combinations, L. /s/ is recorded in 8, /š/ in 6, /k/ in 5, /ž/ in 4, /b/ in 3 clusters), liquids, however, are not used in this position at all. Inversely, it is to be noted that most often liquids are as second members of \(C_1 \times C_2\) clusters (Pr. /r/ in 6, /n/ in 3 clusters, /v/, /l/ form 5 combinations each, L. /l/, /v/ are found in 8, /r/ in 7, /m/, /n/ in 5 clusters each), stops are very rare (Pr. /k/, /p/, /t/ form 1, L. /p/, /t/ 2 combinations each, L. /k/ occurs only in 1 cluster), fricatives are not used at all (see Table 1). Both languages are similar in this respect.

The analysis of the frequency of the cluster shows that the most common combination in Elbing's and Simon Grunau's Vocabularies is /kr/ (12.5\% of all initial clusters); in Lithuanian it is /pr/ (11.1\%; in the connected texts predominate Pr. /st/ (38.9\% and L. /pr/ (22.5\%)\(^{20}\). The most frequent member entering into the position \(C_1\) and found in the dictionaries in both languages is /s/ (Pr. 40.1\%, L. 23.4\%); in the connected texts predominate Pr. /s/ (53.2\%) and L. /p/ (26.2\%). The most frequent second member of the cluster in the dictionaries is Prussian and Lithuanian /r/ (Pr. 30.5\%, L. 30.7\%) and Prussian /t/ (38.9\%), L. /r/ (43.4\%) in the texts.

According to their frequency, consonant clusters in both languages can be classified in the following way:

a) combinations consisting of a stop and a liquid (Pr. 58.6\%, L. 58.9\% in the dictionaries, Pr. 44.6\%, L. 61.6\% in the connected texts);

b) Prussian clusters involving a fricative and a stop (in the Vocabularies they make up 26.3\% and 44.2\% in the texts) and Lithuanian combinations made of a fricative and a liquid (20.3\% in the dictionary 20.0\% in the texts)\(^{21}\);

c) clusters consisting of a fricative and a liquid in Prussian (14.3\% in the Voca-

\(^{19}\) Schmalstieg W. R. Studies in Old Prussian, p. 122.

\(^{20}\) Here we present the joint data of the frequency of the Prussian cluster as found in Simon Grunau's and Elbing's Vocabularies as well as the combined evidence drawn from the three Catechisms and fragmentary texts.

\(^{21}\) The Prussian pronoun stas „that“, „those“, used as a definite article, must account for the great frequency of /st/.  

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bularies, 1.5% in the texts) and Lithuanian combinations made of a fricative and a stop (14.9% in the dictionaries, 15.7% in the texts).

Prussian and Lithuanian initial-consonant clusters involving three consonants (C₁C₂C₃) are comparatively limited in number as compared with those consisting of two consonants. Only /skl/²² Schläit „but“, /skr/ /skeiis/ „crucified“, /str/ /strecies/ „once“, /stv/ /stwi/ „here“ are found in Prussian and /skr/ /skradzias/ „through“, /skv/ /skvarbus/ „piercing“, /spj/ /spjauti/ „spit“, /spr/ /sprogti/ „burst“, /str/ /strybas/ „club“, /stv/ /stverti/ „snatch“ occur in Lithuanian.

Prussian must have had /skv/, /spr/ — see R. Trautmann and G. Gerullis who present proper names and localities such as Skwabe, Sprau道教²³. /spj/ was evidently used as well, but owing to the scarcity of extant Prussian texts it was not attested.

The analysis of the two-member and three-member clusters in both languages reveals the fact that C₁C₂C₃- combinations are made of C₁C₂- clusters consisting of a stop and a liquid and the preceding /s/ (see Table 1). All three-member clusters may be dissolved into two-member groups; in other words, whenever a particular C₁C₂C₃- cluster occurs, both the C₁C₂- and C₂C₃- sequences which occur in it also occur as two-consonant clusters. Hence, three-member clusters are possible only when two-member pairs having the same member (i.e. the second member of the first sequence and the first member of the second cluster — C₁C₂- and C₂C₃- exist in the language. But not all possible C₁C₂C₃- clusters, however, made in this way actually occur, e.g. Prussian has /sp/ : /pl/, /sp/ : /pj/, but /spl/, /spj/ do not exist²⁴.

The most frequent sequence in the Prussian Vocabularies is /skr/ (2.8% of all initial clusters) and /skl/ in the connected texts (2.6%). In Lithuanian predominates /skr/ (1.4% in the dictionary, 0.8% in the texts).

The analysis has shown that the structural relations in Prussian are similar to those of Lithuanian, i.e. they are of STR type²⁵, which means that R never precedes T and S; T never occurs before S (see Table 1).

The analysis of initial consonant clusters in Prussian and Lithuanian has revealed the greatest similarity within the systems of two-member and three-member clusters. The similarity manifests itself both in patterning and individual clusters, the difference being observed only in sequences with /š/ and /ž/ (characteristic of Lithuanian) and /tl/ (found in Prussian toponyms).

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²² Under the influence of the German language the word is sometimes transcribed with /śl/.
²⁴ See the non-existent but possible Lithuanian C₁C₂C₃- clusters in Strimaitienė M. Op. cit., p. 47.
PRŪŠŲ KALBOS PRADINIŲ PRIEBALSIŲ JUNGINIAI

Reziumė