Although Martinet opens his book by stressing the autonomy of linguistics as a field, he makes it clear that language itself is not an isolate. The emphasis on "structure," which has made linguistics what it is today, carries with it the danger of a monolithic approach which will "result in giving the same status to things which differ, not only physically—which would be quite in order—but also in their role in the economy of language" (p. 4). To remedy this, Martinet recommends that we look to function. This has little appeal to some linguists because "it is obviously redolent of the uses to which languages are put; it suggests contacts with the world at large" (p. 3). But "structure can be found in language only, as it were, as an aspect of its functioning" (p. 5). The functional approach stresses those linguistic features which make a difference in communicative behavior. This involves distinguishing between "core" and "margin" features; thus in French, contrasts between [a] and its absence on the phonological level, or between masculine and feminine gender on the grammatical level, occur only in certain special contexts. The "totalitarian" procedure of the structuralist would put these contrasts on a par with all others, but the functionalist recognizes that they belong to the margins of the language.

In such terms, Martinet sets a tone for his book which should appeal to anthropologists with an interest in language—a tone of reasonableness, avoiding both European and American brands of extremism, and recognizing the role of language within culture as a whole. The weak points of Martinet's approach become apparent, however, in his second chapter, "Towards a Functional Syntax." In an era when the rigorous study of syntax is, at long last, becoming one of the liveliest branches of linguistics, Martinet proposes no explicit model either for the analysis or the generation of utterances. Syntactic "function," for all his emphasis on the concept, seems to be recognized only in terms of semantic intuition. Thus the first step in analyzing a sentence is, apparently, to break it up into its "elements of experience" (p. 42). Old-fashioned mentalism crops up continually: "It is easy to understand why so many languages have made it a rule never to use one moneme [= morpheme] by itself; even when centering his attention on the existence of a single being, thing, or process, a speaker will normally not be satisfied with the mere mention of that item, but will be inclined to locate it in time or space" (p. 61). It is ironic that Martinet should, between the same covers, criticize "psychologism" (p. 94). Another type of fuzziness crops up in passages like the following: "There are many languages where . . . " (p. 60); "There may be languages in which . . . " (p. 62); "The possibility that some languages do not clearly distinguish . . . " (p. 63). Why not point to specific languages; why not give examples? One of the main contributions of anthropological linguistics has been to provide documentation for the immense diversity of the world's linguistic structures.

In Chapter 3, "Linguistic Typology," Martinet takes up a currently fashionable topic, but with little more system than in his discussion of syntax, merely pointing at various principles that he considers important in typological classification. More interesting are Martinet's clear-cut views on the purpose of linguistic typology. He rejects the old notion that morphological types (isolating, agglutinative, inflective) mirror the psychic activity of populations. Rather, the discovery of nongenetic similarities be-
tween languages is seen as reflecting protracted contacts between communities, or the existence of a common substratum; or, where fundamental similarities are involved, "we may prefer to work with a theory which has division of labour and increasing social complexity as the main factors of linguistic evolution, so that, if by any chance their rhythm happens to be the same in two distinct communities, linguistic evolution may follow very much the same tracks in both" (p. 72). Thus Martinet firmly relates typology to the study of culture history, although, speaking in this book as a "pure linguist," he does not pursue the connections.

In Chapter 4, "Linguistic Variety," Martinet points out that the philological background of many linguists has conditioned a primary concern for the standardized languages of literary texts, along with a corresponding lack of concern for the actual diversity that exists within languages. Even today "structuralists" often behave as if a language were perfectly uniform. But in fact the variations bulk so large that "a linguistic description that is not expressly that of a dated idiolect should be expected to subsume divergent usages" (p. 107). Martinet presents some specific data on the sociolinguistic scene in France, and makes a useful distinction between two types of dialect: "dialect," is the type used by unilinguals (e.g., many local varieties of standard French), while "dialect2" (the sort of thing often called patois) is used as a vernacular by bilinguals who also know a standard language.

In Chapter 5, "Linguistic Evolution," Martinet proposes to account for change of languages by reference to "the needs of their users" (p. 135). For the most part he does this by describing, in the terms of information theory, the "unstable balance" between "the requirements of communication, the need for the speaker to convey his message," and, on the other hand, "the principle of least effort, which makes him restrict his output of energy, both mental and physical, to the minimum compatible with achieving his ends" (p. 139). But it is useless to try to quantify these factors exactly, since "other factors... which might, for instance, tie up with sociology, would remain so potent that we would not know what to do with our hard-won mathematical accuracy" (pp. 141–42). One such social factor may be the prestige attached to certain uneconomic forms (p. 140). And on a deeper level, echoing the theory noted above in his discussion of typology, Martinet proposes that "an increasing complexity of social relations will be accompanied by an increasing complexity of syntax" (p. 137). Although Latin is cited as an example of this, more evidence would be welcome. Thus, although Martinet seems to treat French je donne "I give" as a syntactic construction, it is hard to see why it should not be considered a morphological one, /5don/, with a prefix /5-/; in which case the French verbal complex, as compared with its Latin source, would show a shift, not to syntactic, but to morphological complexity—a reflection of what social changes? In fact, Martinet seems to discourage testing of his ideas on social conditioning, since he warns that "linguists, once they have ascertained the decisive influence exerted by social factors on language, should not try to do what they are not trained to do and what might lead them into the realm of unverifiable hypotheses, namely to examine the details of that influence and venture into the realm of culture history" (p. 138). This ban may apply for "plain" linguists, as Martinet calls himself—but the lure of the shaky hypothesis apparently tempts even him. Surely no such ban should apply to the anthropological linguist, one of whose tasks should be to develop well-documented, non-glottocentric theories which will give language history its rightful place within the larger framework of culture history.

If this book were being rewritten, one might ask for a little more rigor, a little less
writing off the top of the head. But Martinet’s readability is a rare virtue in linguistic writings, and he can be relied on to provide a commonsensical antidote to the excesses of those whose interest is more in the form of their grammars than in the range of man’s linguistic (and non-linguistic) behavior.


Reviewed by PAUL FRIEDRICH, University of Chicago

The Caucasus is a cultural mosaic of rare antiquity, and statistical measures place it with Oaxaca and Upper Nigeria in degree of linguistic diversity. The four authors of *Peoples and Languages of the Caucasus* have therefore rendered a signal service by providing concise information on 50 of its speech communities, the page or so devoted to each covering: names (own, Russian, other), population (usually for 1926), location (by river, village, mountain mass), political affiliation, language and dialects, “traditional economy,” and religion (e.g., the great majority adhere to Sunni Islam). By my count, the 36 Caucasian speech communities fall into three linguistic families (Northwest, Northeast, South), 29 languages, and 77 named dialects. Coverage is given to two Indo-European stocks (Armenian and Iranian), two Altaic ones, and one Semitic group (the Aramaic Aisor). Future research is suggested by the information on the spread of standard literary languages (which is Georgian for many groups), and by such tantalizing nuggets as the 21,000 Tat-speaking “Mountain Jews” of eastern Dagestan, and the 14 Georgian villages south of Isfahan in Persia. The value of the book would have been enhanced by more data on Indo-European groups, notably the Cossacks, on bilingualism, and social structure (e.g., family type), and by a detailed map of the physical geography.


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Kabardian, spoken by 182,000 persons in the USSR, forms part of the Circassian branch of the Northwest Caucasian linguistic family. Analysis of the language was advanced as part of the phonological theory of Trubetsky, and, above all, by the intensive labors over the past 30 years of an outstanding Russian linguist, N. Yakovlev. Aert Kuipers, after five years with émigré informants and twice that number of analysis, has produced first a doctoral dissertation, and then the present study, “a superstructure based on the foundations in Yakovlev’s work.” Kuipers, Yakovlev, and this particular reviewer agree emphatically that Kabardian is “one of the most remarkable languages that have ever been the object of linguistic investigation.” *Phoneme and Morpheme in Kabardian* appears to merit a somewhat more detailed discussion than is usually accorded on the pages of this journal to the technical analyses of particular linguistic structures.

Kuipers states Kabardian as a cumulative proof, with the facts and arguments introduced only as they become relevant to his general theory of the language. He begins with an elegant description of the sounds in terms of articulation and auditory