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Introduction

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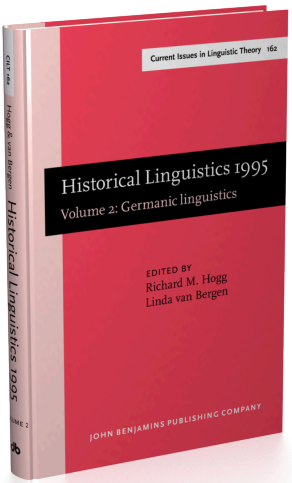

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Introduction

The Twelfth International Conference on Historical Linguistics took place at the University of Manchester, England, between 13 and 18 August 1995. This biennial conference is the major forum for the presentation of work in progress in the field of diachronic linguistics, and provides a snapshot of the discipline at the time at which it is held. Eight plenary talks were given during the conference, and the final day was given over to three workshops: "Changes in numeral systems", organized by Jadranka Gvozdanović; "Syntactic change in cross-linguistic perspective", organized by Lyle Campbell and Alice Harris; and "The influence of the Hansa and Low German on European languages", organized by Laura Wright and Ernst Håkon Jahr. However, the majority of papers at the conference were given in the general sessions. The present volumes contain selected papers from these sessions, which occupied most of the first four days. In this volume, we present those papers which deal with the Germanic languages. The companion volume contains papers on general problems in historical linguistics and specific studies of non-Germanic languages.

The quality and breadth of the abstracts submitted for the general programme necessitated four parallel sessions throughout the conference. As at previous ICHLs there was discernible predominance of papers on topics related to the history of English, but as is noted in the companion volume there is also an encouraging growth of diversity. This is reflected for example in the paper by Martin Ehala on "How a man changed a parameter value" which compares changes of word order in Old English with some remarkable changes in twentieth-century Estonian. Similarly, Young-mee Yu Cho, in "Language change as reranking of constraints" analyzes and compares the oppositions *r*/Ø in English and *n*/Ø in Korean in order to demonstrate how Optimality Theory can handle such language change in a principled manner over diverse languages. Two papers deal with Germanic languages which are not widely studied. The first of these, Kate Burridge's "From modal auxiliary to lexical verb", looks at the history of modal verbs in the variety of Pennsylvania German spoken by the Mennonite community in Waterloo County, Ontario and in particular the semi-grammaticalized verb *wotte* which has become relexicalized. The second paper, "Language change in progress" by Edith

Raidt, is a fascinating study of the process of morphological erosion in the language of mother tongue speakers of Dutch who emigrated to South Africa after 1945 which sheds light on the eighteenth-century evolution of Cape Dutch into Afrikaans.

Stepping back further in time and to more general topics, but ones which are a constant feature of every ICHL, there are two papers which deal explictly either with the history of Germanic or with a pan-Germanic comparison of linguistic structures. The pre-history of Germanic is discussed in John Hutton's "The development of secondary stress in Old English", in which he argues that secondary stress in Old English was non-cyclic (in contrast to Germanic secondary stress) and that this was due to changes in the derivational morphology of Germanic. Muriel Norde, in "Grammaticalization versus reanalysis", offers a bird's eye view of the major possessive constructions found in the contemporary Germanic languages and discusses their historical evolution in terms of grammaticalization and reanalysis. A further paper of general interest is Kimberley Farrar's "Some constraints on the borrowability of syntactic features (and why none of them work)", which argues that such borrowability is heavily context-dependent, the critical feature being the social setting in which the borrowing occurs.

This reference to social setting is a reminder that historical sociolinguistics featured strongly in the twelfth ICHL. Perhaps the most obvious representative of this approach is "Reconstructing the social dimension of language change", in which Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg report on a detailed study of such variables as *you/ye* and *which/the which* in Renaissance English, correlating the variations with quite precise aspects of social status. Still with English, Sharon Miller, in "Language prescription: a success in failure's clothing?", argues persuasively for a more sophisticated understanding of prescriptivism which severs the link between prescription and the standard language. Moving to German, in "Phonological simplification vs. stylistic differentiation in the history of German word stress", Elke Ronneberger-Sibold argues that native speakers have preserved two rule systems, one native, the other non-native, in order to allow the possibility of stylistic and pragmatic variation often associated with factors such as social prestige.

Two papers deal exclusively with semantics, namely Xavier Dekeyser's "Loss of prototypical meanings in the history of English semantics or semantic redeployment", which considers the development in words such as *fare* where the core meaning has been lost but more peripheral meanings have been

retained, and Beatrice Warren's "What *is* metonymy?", in which she argues that metonymic shift is contextually determined and necessarily abrupt. There are rather more papers on syntax. In "Post-verbal complements in Old English" Susan Pintzuk argues, with the support of much data, that VO word order was introduced into Old English in the ninth century and was in competition with OV for at least the remainder of the period. Both Jack Hoeksema and Ton van der Wouden, in "On the (non)loss of polarity sensitivity" and "On the development of marked negation systems" respectively, discuss issues surrounding negation structures in Dutch. Morphosyntactic problems in English dialects form the focus of Carol Chapman's "A subject–verb agreement hierarchy" in which she argues that an explicit hierarchy of subject types, based on agreement relationships, is required.

Both Dieter Kastovsky and Wolfgang Wurzel deal with morphological matters, albeit in very different contexts. In "Morphological restructuring" Kastovsky looks at the radical changes in inflexional verb morphology in the Old and Middle English periods, whilst Wurzel's paper, "On the development of incorporating structures in German", discusses in detail an increasingly important class of verbs in Modern German. A link between morphology and phonology is established by the paper "Semantic stability in derivationally related words", in which Renate Raffelsiefen argues, with evidence from both German and English, that semantic stability between etymologically-related words is preserved over time only if phonological relationships remain transparent at surface level. Arjan van Leuvenstein's "Vowel variation in Proto-Germanic *ai* in 16th and 17th-century Holland" provides a close study of dialectal variation in early modern Dutch dialects. Phonological change is also the topic of Betty Phillips' "Word frequency and lexical diffusion in English stress shifts", in which she shows that the relationship between change and word frequency is more complex than is often thought, but nevertheless susceptible to interesting generalizations.

Phillips' paper, like several others mentioned above, for example those by Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg and Pintzuk, makes fruitful use of corpora-based techniques, and this is also a feature of Joyce Tang Boyland's "A corpus study of *would* + *have* + past-participle" in which she shows that *would* and *have* are becoming increasingly inseparable, especially in less formal contexts. These beneficial uses of historical corpora make it appropriate that we should conclude this survey with the paper "Backdating the English Constraint Grammar Parser for the analysis of English historical texts" by Merja Kytö and

Atro Voutilainen, whose clear discussion of the application of an automatic parser designed for contemporary English to texts of an earlier period is enlightening even for those unfamiliar with the techniques of parsing textual corpora.

The Manchester ICHL reflected the current health of diachronic linguistics. There were more papers and more participants than at past conferences, and the discussion covered a broader range of languages than hitherto. At some previous ICHLs, it has been possible to isolate a particular theoretical or methodological preoccupation which has dominated much of the conference; but the overall impression to be gained from the Manchester meeting was one of stimulating diversity — the discipline appears to be moving forward on many fronts simultaneously, yet without losing focus. There were other pleasures to be had, too. The city renowned as the rain capital of Britain basked in a heatwave throughout the conference, thereby enhancing the social programme, which included trips to the Lake District and to nearby stately homes, a meal at a Cheshire banqueting hall, and receptions organized by the City of Manchester (in the Victorian Gothic splendour of the Town Hall) and the University of Manchester. Nigel Vincent, who presided over the conference, is to be congratulated on organizing one of the most successful ICHLs to date.

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