

Introduction

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**Historical Linguistics 2013: Selected papers from the 21st
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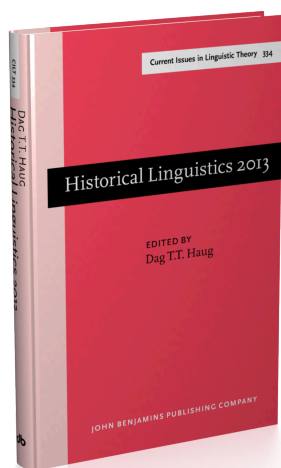
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Introduction

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The 21st International Conference on Historical Linguistics took place at the University of Oslo, 5–9 August 2013. Following the ICHL tradition, the program consisted of both thematic workshops and a general program. However, we opted for fewer and more focused workshops this year, which left more room – six parallel sessions over three and a half days – for the general program. This volume presents a selection of the papers that were presented there. I have tried to make the selection representative of the ICHL program, but there are limits to what can be achieved in this regard: 182 papers were accepted in the general session, but only 41 – less than a quarter – were submitted for consideration in this volume. Moreover, because of space limits, only 16 papers could be accepted, making the selection quite competitive. There were also five invited speakers, who are not represented in the volume: Juliette Blevins (City University of New York), Kersti Börjars (Manchester), Tecumseh Fitch (Vienna), Elly van Gelderen (Arizona) and Martin Maiden (Oxford).

The ICHL general program admits papers on all matters of diachronic linguistics, from all language families. There is certainly no other forum that can claim to present the field in such breadth, from philology to theoretical syntax, dealing with languages from all continents.

Grammaticalization phenomena continue to draw the interest of many scholars, and were the topic of a workshop at the conference. But grammaticalization *theory* seems to become less prominent. Instead of elevating grammaticalization to a linguistic theory, scholars connect with work in typology, and with both functional and formalist approaches. Because of the separate workshop on grammaticalization, there is only one contribution in this volume (Killie) that deals explicitly with grammaticalization, and this paper shows clearly how the study of grammaticalization – in this case of progressive markers – should be conducted on the basis of careful corpus studies, applying well known principles of morphological and semantic change to shed new light on an old and much-discussed question.

Corpora are becoming ever more prominent, and were the topic of another workshop. Historical linguistics has always – by necessity – been corpus-based.

But far more papers are now based on publicly available, digital data collections rather than ad hoc creations. This trend was already noted in the introduction to the 2009 volume of this series, but it is fair to say it has only increased in strength. Usage of corpora has also become more sophisticated: we see statistical tests used as a matter of course, and some historical linguists are now learning to apply advanced modelling techniques to their data. It is now widely recognized that statistical analysis should not be used as a substitute for linguistic theory, but to test hypotheses rooted in linguistic theorizing. As such, this work does not belong to a subdiscipline of diachronic corpus linguistics but to diachronic phonology, morphology or syntax, as the case may be. Therefore, this volume does not contain a separate section on corpus linguistics; instead we find corpus-based techniques used in all the different sections. Johnsen's paper in the phonology section, Hartmann's in the morphology section and Luraghi and Sausa's in the morphosyntax section are all papers whose hypotheses and main content will be familiar to those versed in the history of the English vowel system, German nominalizations and the argument structure of Greek verbs; but the arguments rely in crucial ways on less familiar methods and metrics, such as logistic regression, Kendall's tau and correspondence analysis (not the analysis of cognates!).

Another field where statistical methods have been prominent but the integration with diachronic linguistic theory less successful is in computational phylogenetics, the use of statistical methods in reconstructing language relationships and time depths. This method remains controversial within the discipline, not least because it has seemed to yield results that contradict many well-established results of historical linguistics. We should therefore welcome a closer integration of statistics and theory in this area too. ICHL21 saw some papers that aimed for this, but they were unfortunately not submitted for the proceedings.

Although there was no separate workshop on a phonological topic, there was a continuous series of phonological papers throughout the conference, making it perhaps the biggest subfield at the conference, and a large section of this book. A large array of languages were represented among the phonology papers at the conference, but due to a lack of submissions, this did not translate into corresponding variety in the book: four of the papers deal with Germanic (three on English and one on North Germanic), and one with Romance. Still, there is a breadth of topics in segmental and suprasegmental phonology and several approaches are represented ranging from evolutionary phonology to optimality theory.

The second section of the book deals with diachronic typology, understood as the use of typological comparison to evaluate the likelihood of postulated changes or to extract principles of change. Although there are only two papers in this section, they represent the use of this approach in very different domains. Gvozdanović looks at phonology and morphology and aims to evaluate

the likelihood of contact-induced change in Slavic and Celtic respectively, while Koch studies 'nomenclature systems' such as the European names of the weekdays and Australian social category terminology and argues for structural similarities between the systems and their evolution. Both papers demonstrate the potential that lies in combining genetic and typological comparison with the study of diachronic change.

The remaining papers are divided into a section on morphology and one on morphosyntax. Both these sections attest to the continued popularity of constructional approaches that emphasise the combination of form and meaning and have led some scholars to take a more positive view of the feasibility of diachronic syntax. To some extent, this blurs the traditional distinction between pure morphology and morphosyntax, often for the better. Hartmann, for example, takes a constructional approach to word formation and argues that his quantitative studies feed back into linguistic theory and helps answer major theoretical questions in a bottom-up fashion. But pure morphology is still doing well and its theoretical questions no less important. In this volume it is represented by Bach and Esher's paper, which argues that the Gallo-Romance infinitives must be understood as a mixed category not only at the syntactic level but also within morphology.

The constructional and more broadly functional approaches dominate the morphosyntactic section of this volume, as they did at ICHL itself. This no doubt reflects the state of the field, although the tendency may have been accentuated by the fact that Diachronic Generative Syntax conference (DIGS) took place the week before ICHL so that many scholars within the broad generative framework were unable to attend both conferences. Still, formalist perspectives were not absent from ICHL and are represented by Wolfe's paper on word order change from Latin to Romance. The topic was certainly not coincidental: the formally oriented papers largely dealt with issues of word order, while argument structure is a current favorite theme in constructionist papers, to judge from the conference and the papers presented here. So there is theoretical diversity, and in addition to this, the morphosyntax section also captures more of the linguistic diversity present in the conference than the phonology section of the book, with papers on Norwegian, Old Japanese, English, Ancient Greek and Austronesian.

All in all, I hope this volume succeeds in capturing the spirit of ICHL as manifested in all its diversity at Oslo University in August 2013. If there is one underlying trend to be observed, I think it is that approaches that have sometimes been presented as challenges and alternatives to "traditional" historical linguistics – grammaticalization theory and "hands off" quantitative techniques come to mind – are now slowly being integrated into the mainstream as supporting tools. I hope we will see more of this at future ICHLs.