

Preface

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PREFACE

The Fourth International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (ICEHL) was held the week after Easter, from 10th to 13th April 1985 at the University of Amsterdam. Like its bigger sister the ICHL (International Conference on Historical Linguistics), the ICEHL was born in England in the seventies and has been growing ever since. It is held at two-yearly intervals alternately in England and on the continent of Europe. The first conference met in Durham in 1979; the next two were held in Odense (1981) and Sheffield (1983). The present conference was 'blessed' by weather which ensured that delegates' attendance was optimal; it progressed in a highly congenial atmosphere culminating in a festive luncheon cruise through the Amsterdam waterways on a steamed-up canal boat.

The number of participants has grown steadily ever since the first conference, and so has the number of papers offered. This time twice as many abstracts for papers were received as could be accommodated, even with the institution of parallel sessions. A quite rigorous selection, therefore, was necessary. This was not an easy task — and it was hard on some delegates — but we think it contributed to the high quality of the conference. For this, we also owe a debt of gratitude to the invited speakers: Jean Aitchison, William Labov, Frans Plank, M. L. Samuels and Thomas Toon. Here we also would like to include Roger Lass, who managed to come in spite of some considerable hurdles put in his way. These scholars also agreed to contribute to a workshop on 'Language Change and Explanation', which took place a few days before the conference. Not surprisingly perhaps, this topic became a point of focus for the conference itself; many of the papers included in this volume are concerned with finding an explanation for a given change, as well as providing an adequate description for it.

Not all the papers given at the conference are included in this volume, in part because of editorial selection. The papers published here are given in alphabetical order (the papers by Minkova and Nevalainen were not presented at the conference). Most studies — and this is only to be expected in connection with a conference on English Historical Linguistics — deal with

some aspect of an earlier stage of (British) English, though present day varieties of English are also under investigation. The work of Labov and others has shown that the study of ongoing change can provide new insights into the nature of change. In this connection, Aitchison and Agnihotri's paper studies the difference in the development of negative constructions in Indian and British England; Beal is interested in a phonetic aspect of present-day Tyneside; Ihalainen deals with syntactic variation in present-day English dialects. Lass and Wright discuss certain phonological differences between South African and other types of English and provide a historical explanation for the South African development.

Many papers in this volume show that there is a growing interest in the question *why* a certain change has taken place, this especially in the field of phonology and morphology, where so much descriptive work has already been done by Luick, Jordan, Dobson and others, although Toon's paper on Old English glosses shows that not all data sources have been exhaustively studied. Minkova, Poussa and Stockwell each offer a new explanation for otherwise well-documented changes in the phonology of Middle English; Keyser and O'Neill propose a reinterpretation of the Old English strong noun system as a single class, and Plank offers a historical explanation for the fact that no voice alternation takes place in genitives.

Historical syntax has attracted less attention in the past than phonology and morphology, but this situation has changed considerably, partly as a consequence of the publication of Visser's monumental work and partly because of new insights developed in modern generative grammar. This explains the relatively large number of papers on syntax in this volume. Van Kemenade, Koopman and Travis all deal with questions related to word order change; Denison offers a new explanation for the origin of periphrastic *do*; Austin looks at variation in the early Modern English relative pronoun system, and Nagucka's paper is on verbal complementation in Old English.

Two papers on syntactic and morphological variation, Lagerquist and Stein, can be grouped together in that both explain variable forms in terms of a difference in discourse function. Finally, there is a paper by M.L. Samuels on the influence of the Scandinavian settlers on northern English dialects, and two papers on lexical variation, by Nevalainen and Rissanen, both dealing with the system of exclusive adverbs in various phases of the English language.

The organizers would like to express their gratitude to the students of the English Department at the University of Amsterdam for their freely given,

enthusiastic help. They made sure there was enough coffee when and where it was needed; they took care of the nitty-gritty of the registration; they acted as living signposts in our labyrinthine university buildings and brightened up dull rooms with spring flowers. Without them the organizers would not have been able to listen to the conference papers themselves. We would also like to thank the technical and administrative staff of the English Department, especially Margaret Oomen and Ity Siesling for their assistance in typing up the abstracts and a number of these papers, and for doing all the correction work involved. Further, we must not forget to thank the contributors to this volume, who supplied the editors with camera-ready copies of their own papers. Thanks to them and to the publishers, Claire and John Benjamins, we have managed to bring out this volume within less than a year after the conference. Finally, we are grateful to the Ministry of Education and Science and the City of Amsterdam for a generous welcome reception given at the Amsterdam Historical Museum; to Cambridge University Press for a subsidy towards the conference (which the Organization received for providing time and space for a workshop on the new *History of the English Language*, to be published by C.U.P.) and to the Faculty of Arts of Amsterdam University for their financial help towards the organization of the conference and the publication of these papers.

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Organizers of the
Fourth International Conference
on English Historical Linguistics

