

Preface & Acknowledgments

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/sihols.104.01pre>

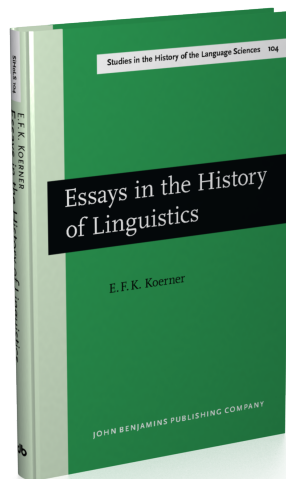
Pages v–vi of

Essays in the History of Linguistics

E.F.K. Koerner †

[*Studies in the History of the Language Sciences*, 104]

2004. x, 271 pp.



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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For a long time now, as the record shows, I have made it a habit to produce volumes on the basis of previously published papers, first in the form of reprints from their original sources, then after I felt more comfortable in the handling of a word processor, on the basis of camera-ready text. This has allowed me to revise the papers included in such a collection and turn them into a more thematically unified book. A comparison between my 1989 volume and the one from 1995 (see the front matter of the present book for bibliographical details) would illustrate this amply, I believe. The present volume is no different. As on earlier occasions, it includes material that has appeared in hard-to-come-by places and some that has not previously been published or only in much shorter form. I am hoping that the result is fairly balanced, at least when one takes the three sections as forming a unit by themselves. The difference between a programmatic article addressing problems in linguistic historiography, a research paper dealing with a particular topic, and the at times rather autobiographical statements will be obvious to anyone.

Marcel Proust is quoted as noting that with age humans don't become different but 'more so'. I suppose he meant to say that personal characteristics become more pronounced as we grow older. Applied to myself in terms of my work over the past thirty-five years, it may have become more obvious that I have practiced what I'd like to call a historiography engagé: an effort, on the one hand, to defend persons whose work has been maligned by later generations and, on the other, to set the record straight (as much as I have been able to on the basis of the available evidence). The clearest example of the former has been my work devoted to August Schleicher's legacy (cf., e.g., my 1989 *Practicing Linguistic Historiography*, chapters 13 and 20); an example of the latter would be Chapter 4 in the present volume (and many papers I have written over the years concerning the 'Chomskyan Paradigm'). If Count Buffon (1707–1788, in his *Discours sur le style* (1753), was right in saying that 'le style est l'homme même' (the style of writing represents the person), I may have to admit that in my life too, I have always, within my means, defended the underdog and have tended to be critical of authority or those who claim it for themselves, whether it concerns a particular scholar or officialdom wherever it may be.

After I had finished work on my 1999 *Linguistic Historiography: Projects & prospects*, I felt that this was my most personal book ever. Maybe the present one is even 'more so', and so be it. It would hardly be missed by my contemporaries that the subtitle of the probably most severe piece in the present

volume (Chapter 2) makes use of Chomsky's first public statement outside linguistics.¹ By that time, his most important linguistic works, including *The Sound Pattern of English*, written together with Morris Halle (though published only in 1968, it had been circulating in manuscript by 1965), were already done.

One more autobiographical detail about yours truly. The late Vivien Law has remarked that I was among those historians of linguistics who "are compulsive bibliographers, and almost any of the articles or books will provide [the reader] with copious bibliographical leads".² This is very true, and the *fare la bibliografia* has always been with me from my earliest student days onwards. (As a key example, I may refer to my *Bibliographia Saussureana* of some 450 pages which was about as long as my thesis on Ferdinand de Saussure published in book form a year later.) In the final analysis, I believe that this is not a bad trait, even though contributors to my journals and monograph series may not always have been happy to supply more detailed bibliographical information than they originally had. Good bibliographies are a service to the profession, and I know I'm not the only person who has lived by it. The one on the late Zellig Harris added here, I trust, fulfills this requirement.

I realize that I have used here the term 'acknowledgment' in a non-technical sense. Where I felt I had to seek permission to reuse previously published materials, I have indicated this in the first, asterisked footnote at the beginning of a chapter. Indeed, for the bibliographical sleuth I have provided reference to any predecessor version; however, I have dropped my original plan to provide a list of my 1999–2004 publications continuing those of my 1995 and 1999 books.³

However, a general word of thanks to editors and/or publishers who have gracefully granted permission to republish revised versions of papers is definitely in order, not to forget those who hold copyright to photographs here included. Last, but not least I would like to express my gratitude (as on previous occasions) to my publisher, John Benjamins. As will be obvious to the reader, this book contains more autobiographical material than previous volumes which have appeared in the same series since 1978. I very much appreciate this privilege of bringing out the present collection with their imprint.

Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, 5 February 2004

E.F.K.K.

¹ First published in *Mosaic* 7:1.2-16 (Cambridge, Mass., Spring 1966), this paper had a very successful publishing history; it was revised, extended, and translated into a number of other languages; see Konrad Koerner & Matsui Tajima, *Noam Chomsky: A personal bibliography, 1951–1986* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1986), pp. 91-92.

² Vivien Law, *The History of Linguistics in Europe: From Plato to 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 285.

³ For a very detailed accounting of my work until 1999 inclusive, I'd like to refer to Pierre Swiggers (ed.), *E.F.K. Koerner: A biobibliography* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 195 pp.