

# Preface to the second edition

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/sihols.17.03pre>

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**The Study of Language in 17th-Century England: Second Edition**

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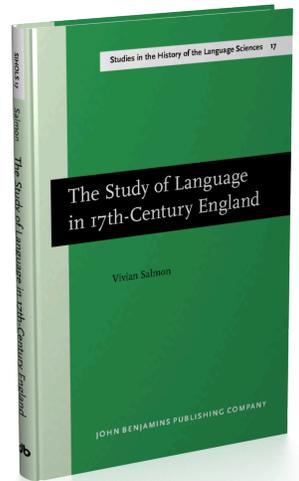
[*Studies in the History of the Language Sciences*, 17]

1988. x, 218 pp.

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Since the preceding Preface was written, increasing interest in the history of the language sciences has prompted a number of new scholarly developments, in particular, the establishment of an international conference (first held in Ottawa in August 1978) on a regular triennial basis (Lille 1981, Princeton 1984, and Trier 1987). In the year when the previous edition of this volume appeared, a second journal was established which was devoted, like its predecessor *Historiographia Linguistica*, to the history of the language sciences. This was *Histoire-Épistémologie-Langage*, the journal of a newly-founded society, *Société d'Histoire et d'Épistémologie des Sciences du Langage* ((S.H.E.S.L.)); and with the establishment in 1983-84 of a sister society, the *Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas* (HSS), directed more especially to the English-speaking world, the linguist interested in the history of this discipline was very well served, both with journals and with publications of the two societies issued to their members; and as interest in the subject increased, it was fostered by the organisation of colloquia and the production of some very valuable research tools, including catalogues of original sources.

The maturity of the subject has been particularly well demonstrated in two further ways; it has been possible, first, to present *Festschriften* to scholars who have won their reputations largely through their contributions to the history of linguistics; and secondly, to issue volumes of collected papers devoted to this subject. Among English-speaking scholars, three who have been most appropriately honoured by *Festschriften* are David Abercrombie, Geoffrey Bursill-Hall, and Robert H. Robins, and two whose papers have been issued in separate volumes, following the publication of R.H. Robins's papers in 1970, are Hans Aarsleff and the late Richard William Hunt (1908-1979), to the great benefit of those who are or were their colleagues.

For those who are chiefly concerned with the history of linguistics in 17th-century England, publications in the years since 1979 have been richly rewarding, but far too many to be listed here. At least mention must be

made of some outstanding works of devoted and patient scholarship — the two volumes by the late Professor G. Arthur Padley (1924-1986) on grammatical theory in Western Europe, 1500-1700 — volumes which have provided, and will provide for many years to come, the standard reference work in the field. Recent years have also proved particularly rewarding for another reason; historians with different interests have come to realise the value to them of a knowledge of linguistic studies in their chosen periods. Social historians, for example, have been concerned with the development of applied linguistics when discussing the history of literacy in relation to the social order. Historians of science have been indebted to linguistic analyses of the universal language movement of 17th-century England when describing the scientific taxonomies of the time, and literary historians and critics have explored the relationship between the study of language and the 'linguistic crisis' in 17th-century literature; and the influence of the Royal Society's views on prose style (largely dependent on John Wilkins) has been demonstrated as late as the 18th century.

An even more important development has been the increasing realisation of the outstanding nature of the achievements of a number of British linguists of the seventeenth century. John Wilkins has been discussed in a full-length study and in several important articles, while his early work, *Mercury*, partly devoted to universal character, has been reprinted with an excellent introduction. His colleague and rival, George Dalgarno, has been the subject of further studies, and his unpublished manuscripts are now being edited by David Cram. The third member of this distinguished trio of contemporaries, William Holder, has also been the subject of continuing research.

One of the most useful developments in the last few years has been the recognition of the history of English linguistics as an appropriate topic for fairly detailed discussion in *The Year's Work in English Studies*. Since 1983, the relevant section has been expanded so as to list and describe in some detail all scholarly publications within the field, and the length of the section seems to increase year by year. Most of the topics dealt with in the papers in this volume have been the subject of further research since 1979, and those interested in following up recent publications would do well to turn first to *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

For the convenience of readers who do not have easy access to this publication, a select list of books and articles relevant to the papers in this collection, and published since 1979, is appended. I should like to express, once again, my gratitude to Professor Konrad Koerner, for his continued support, and more specifically, for his invitation to prepare a second edition of this collection.

Oxford, January 1988

V.S.

