

# Preface & Acknowledgements

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**Practicing Linguistic Historiography**

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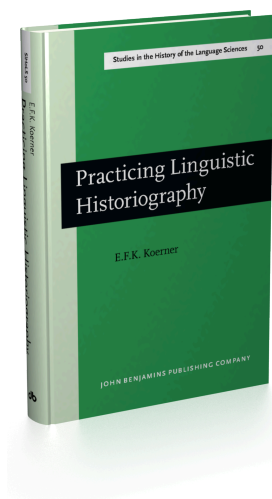
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## PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present volume brings together a number of previously published papers written during the past twelve or so years, but most of them are of a fairly recent vintage. Several chapters in this selection were first written during the past five or six years, and a number of them, such as chapters 6, 8, 16, 18, 19, 22, and 24 have been revised and/or enlarged, at times considerably. My student assistant of the 1986-87 academic year, Karen L. Palmer, put a number of earlier drafts on disquette with great care and good cheer. Andrew J. Romain, my part-time assistant during the 1987-88 period, deserves special thanks for offering me useful criticism of several of these earlier versions.

In those instances where papers have been reprinted from their original places of publication, acknowledgements are made at the bottom of the first page of each item in question, though a general expression of thanks to the editors of journals and volumes of collective papers and their respective publishers for granting the permissions is made here.

Ten years have passed since the publication -- as number 19 of the present series -- of my first collection of papers devoted to the history and historiography of linguistics. As a result, a comparison between the 1978 *Toward a Historiography of Linguistics* and the new volume offers itself.\* I prefer to leave it to my critics to undertake such a comparison, however, and simply note that the present volume is double the size of the earlier one, something that is perhaps not surprising, given the much longer harvest period.

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\* Those conversant with 20th-century historical scholarship will have noticed that the title of the present volume was inspired by that of the distinguished American historian Barbara Wertheim Tuchman, *Practicing History: Selected Essays* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1981).

During the past ten years demands on my time both as a teacher and as editor have significantly increased, giving me much less opportunity for research than I enjoyed during most of the 1970s. Looking at the table of contents of the present volume, developed without actually looking at the 1978 book, I notice similarities between the organization and content of the two: Each have three main sections with an equal number of chapters in each, and each deals with fairly similar subjects, problems, and issues in the history of 19th and 20th century Western linguistics. Section One in both volumes addresses questions of theory and methodology of linguistic historiography, but with more illustrative material being presented in the new book. It is possible that I have become less optimistic about progress in the principled treatment of the history of linguistics in recent years, marked as it is more by criticism than by constructive model building, and some may characterize the approach taken here as conservative. Since the 1978 International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences held in Ottawa, there have been three further successor conferences as well as a variety of other national and international colloquia both in Europe and North America, leading to a considerable increase in the number of participants in historical research and the theoretical debate. It is not clear to me that this has produced an exponential increase in quality in either area, though it may have led to more caution in the practice of both.

Part Two of the present volume is similar to Section III of the 1978 book, both containing chapters devoted to the evolution of specific terms and concepts in linguistics, and both dealing with certain traditions of the field. As a matter of fact, chapter 10 in the present book constitutes a slightly shortened Italian version, originally written in German, of the last item reprinted in the 1978 book. Part Three in this volume complements the middle section of the earlier one. Appraisals of the work of F. Schlegel, Bopp, Grimm, Schleicher, Kruszewski, Meillet, Pedersen, and Bloomfield have now been added to the earlier ones of Hermann Paul, Baudouin de Courtenay, Saussure, G. von der Gabelentz, and A. Dufriche-Desgenettes (1804-1878), the creator of the term 'phonème'.

In the 1978 volume Saussurean ideas loomed fairly large; in the present one only a few chapters (i.e., 16, 22, and 24) deal with particular aspects of the *Cours*. However, ten such papers have recently been brought together in a separate volume under the bilingual title *Saussurean Studies / Études saussuriennes*, and published in the native city of the *maître genevois* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1988); only one of these studies has been reissued here, though in a different context.

Various joint efforts are currently under way to provide a world-wide history of the language sciences; while developing the prospectus of such an undertaking, it has become more obvious and more urgent that a specific frame of reference be worked out to guide the individual researcher. Indeed, there are a number of challenges ahead of us, and I hope that we are sufficiently energetic and well-equipped to meet them.

Ottawa-Hull, 31 October 1988

Konrad Koerner

## BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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