

English Historical Linguistics

An International Handbook

Volume 2

Edited by

Alexander Bergs

Laurel J. Brinton

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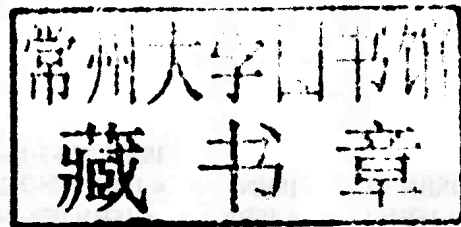
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Preface to the *Handbook of English Historical Linguistics*

The study of the English language has a lengthy history. The second half of the 18th century saw a phenomenal increase in the number of published grammars of the vernacular language, while the field of comparative linguistics arising in the 19th century was concerned in large part with the Germanic languages, including English. However, it is in the field of theoretical linguistics that English has played a truly central role. While there are no reliable statistics, it seems safe to say that the majority of studies in contemporary linguistics deal at least in part with English, and are also written in English.

During the 20th century, monumental works concerned with the English language, both synchronic and diachronic, were produced, following historical/comparative and more contemporary linguistic approaches. In keeping with developments in the field of general linguistics, today it is possible to find descriptions and analyses of the history and development of English from virtually any linguistic perspective: external, internal, generative, functional, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, comparative, phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic. There are numerous “Histories of English” to cater to just about every (theoretical) taste, as well as detailed descriptions of historical periods, language levels, or theoretical frameworks of English and specialized studies of individual topics in the development of the language. Work on the history of English has culminated most recently in the six-volume *Cambridge History of the English Language*, edited by Richard M. Hogg (1992–2001).

Study of the history of any language begins with its texts. Increasingly, however, scholars are turning to dictionaries and corpora of English that are available online or electronically. The pioneer historical corpus of English, the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, was first released to scholars in 1991. The third edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* online is now fully integrated with the *Historical Thesaurus*. The searchable *Middle English Dictionary*, completed in 2003, is available online along with the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. The *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* is also searchable online. ARCHER, *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers 1650–1990*, accessible at a number of universities, provides a balanced selection of historical texts in electronic form. COHA, a 400-million-word, balanced *Corpus of Historical American English 1810–2009*, was launched online in 2010. Smaller corpora, such as the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760*, the *Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts*, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*, the *Corpus of Early English Medical Writing*, and the *Old Bailey Corpus*, have made more specialized corpora available to scholars. Archives of historical newspapers online, including the *Zurich English Newspaper Corpus*, provide another source of electronic data. Finally, syntactically annotated corpora for historical stages of English are being produced, including the *The York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Poetry*, *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose*, *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English*, and *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English*.

Taking into account the important developments in the study of English effected by the availability of electronic corpora, this *Handbook of English Historical Linguistics* offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and theory-neutral synopsis of the field. It is meant to facilitate research by offering overviews of all the relevant aspects of the historical linguistics of English and by referring scholars and students to more in-depth coverage. The handbook is intended primarily for researchers in the field of (historical) linguistics generally, as well as for researchers in allied fields (such as history, literature, and culture). The handbook comprises two volumes, each volume consisting of approximately 70 articles written by a wide variety of authors from a number of different countries world-wide, representing a variety of theoretical approaches, and including both younger scholars as well as more established experts.

Volumes 1 and 2

The sequencing of material in the two volumes of the *Handbook of English Historical Linguistics* is bottom-up, beginning with detailed studies of the periods, levels, and linguistic components of each period. The second volume moves to a higher level, with a focus on general underlying concepts, theories, and methods as well as new and hitherto rather neglected approaches to the history of English. While the two volumes form a set, with cross-reference as far as possible in order to facilitate reader-guidance, they are also capable of standing alone.

Following this essentially inductive approach, then, the first volume (edited by Laurel J. Brinton) is focused on the details of English language history. After overviews of the recognized periods of English (Section I), the volume then treats the linguistic levels. These are broadly understood to include newer components such as prosody, pragmatics, phraseology, discourse, styles, registers, and text types as well as more traditional areas such as orthography and onomastics in addition to the fully acknowledged areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Section II). These summaries will be useful both to students and to those not working directly in the field of English historical linguistics, such as typologists. Sections III–VI contain detailed descriptions of the different periods – Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, and Late Modern English – in respect to the range of linguistic levels; discussions of language contact, standardization, sociolinguistics, and literary language are included for most periods. Moreover, for each period, selected important phenomena (such as the development of *do*-periphrasis, the Great Vowel Shift, pronoun usage, or relativization) have been chosen for more detailed study. Following the treatment of the different periods, the volume addresses a variety of questions of standardization (Section VII), such as the effects that dictionaries, the Bible, language attitudes, and codifiers have on normalizing the language. The last section (VIII) brings the handbook into the 21st century by treating the effects of new media (radio, television, computer) on forms of the language, as well as the longer established effects of newspapers.

The second volume (edited by Alexander Bergs) then abstracts away from these details and moves outward to address theoretical concerns raised by the topics covered in Volume 1. Volume 2 first surveys resources for the studying and teaching of English (Section IX). Section X on interdisciplinarity (in particular literature and music) and historiography explores some of the debates involved in writing a history of English, questioning, for example, how the continuum of history is divided into accepted

“periods”, how oral and written forms of the language are accommodated in a history of English, and how new and perhaps “alternative histories” relate to the more established stories. This is followed by a history of the discipline of English historical linguistics itself, as it has developed in different parts of the world (Section XI). A significant part of Volume 2 covers changes in the English language as they have been theorized in various linguistic fields in the 20th century (Section XII). As Neogrammarian and Structuralist approaches are, to a great extent, embodied in the treatment of topics in Volume 1, this volume begins with later 20th century theories, including Generative Grammar, Construction Grammar, Lexical Functional Grammar, Rates of Change, Frequency, Lexical Diffusion, Grammaticalization, Lexicalization, and Language Acquisition. Related to the theoretical perspectives are new approaches which have been developed in the analysis of the history of English, including Historical Dialectology, Historical Sociolinguistics, Historical Pragmatics, Corpus Linguistics, Information Structuring, and Actuation/Change from Below. Another important aspect of Volume 2 is its focus on the effects of language contact and the often neglected history of different varieties of English. It offers a section on language contact in the history of English, organized by contact languages, and supplemented by discussions of pidginization and creolization in the history of English and its varieties (Section XIII). Section XIV comprises historical sketches of more than ten varieties of English, and complementary theoretical discussions of dialect contact, diffusion, and supra-regionalization. The history of several second-language varieties is treated in Section XV, ending with a discussion of Global English.

The beginning of a new millennium seems the right time for taking stock of the long span of scholarship in English historical linguistics and for surveying the field as a whole. Furthermore, the availability of electronic resources has changed the study of the history of English in fundamental ways, and it is important that a new handbook recognize this turning point in the study of English.

Laurel J. Brinton, Vancouver (Canada)
Alexander Bergs, Osnabrück (Germany)

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In memoriam

We commemorate those friends and colleagues who passed away since this project came into being. Without them, English historical linguistics will not be the same: Richard Bailey, Derek Britton, and Richard Hogg.

General abbreviations

ACC	accusative case
ACT	active
ADJ	adjective
ADV	adverb
AN	Anglo-Norman
Angl.	Anglian
AUX	auxiliary
AP	adjective phrase
C	consonant
C	complementizer
COMPR	comparative
DAT	dative case
CP	complementizer phrase
DEM	demonstrative
DM	discourse marker
DU	dual
EModE	Early Modern English
EWSax.	Early West Saxon
FEM	feminine
Fr.	French
GEN	genitive case
Ger.	German
Gk.	Greek
Go.	Gothic
Grmc.	Germanic
IE	Indo-European
IMP	imperative
IND	indicative
INF	infinitive
INFL	inflected
INSTR	instrumental case
IP	inflection phrase
Kent.	Kentish
Lt.	Latin
LModE	Late Modern English
LWSax.	Late West Saxon
MASC	masculine
ME	Middle English
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
ModE	Modern English
NEG	negative
NEUT	neuter

N	noun
NOM	nominative case
NP	noun phrase
O	object
OBJ	objective case
OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OFr.	Old French
OFris.	Old Frisian
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OSax.	Old Saxon
OV	object-verb word order
P	person
PASS	passive
PAST	past
PDE	Present-day English
PGrmc.	Proto-Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PL	plural
PP	prepositional phrase
PREP	preposition
PRON	pronoun
PRTC	participle
PRES	present
PRET	preterit
S	subject
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive mood
SUP	superlative
SOV	subject-object-verb word order
SV	subject-verb word order
SVO	subject-verb-object word order
SVX	subject-verb-other parts of sentence word order
T	tense
THM	thematic vowel
TMA	tense-modality-aspect
TVX	topic-verb-other parts of sentence word order
V	verb
V2	verb second
V	vowel
VO	verb-object word order
VP	verb phrase
WGrmc.	West Germanic
WSax.	West Saxon
XP	variable phrase
XSV	others parts of sentence-subject-verb word order

XVS	other parts of sentence-verb-subject word order
>	changes to, becomes
<	derives from
Ø	no ending
*	reconstructed form, ungrammatical form
< >	spelling

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