

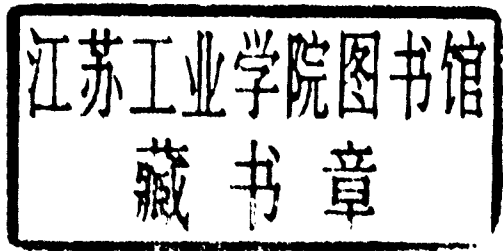
R. L. TRASK

The Dictionary of  
**HISTORICAL AND  
COMPARATIVE  
LINGUISTICS**

rhotalacism lumper  
taxon hlonipha  
semantic shift  
anaphonesis sorothaptic  
degemination hteronomy  
stadialism neologism elision  
lexification finnie

The Dictionary  
of  
Historical and Comparative  
Linguistics

R. L. Trask



Edinburgh University Press

© R. L. Trask, 2000

Edinburgh University Press Ltd  
22 George Square, Edinburgh

Typeset in Ehrhardt  
by Bibliocraft Ltd, Dundee, and  
printed and bound in Great Britain  
by The University Press, Cambridge

A CIP record for this book is available  
from the British Library

ISBN 0 7486 1003 0 (hardback)  
ISBN 0 7486 1001 4 (paperback)

The right of the R. L. Trask  
to be identified as author of this work  
has been asserted in accordance with the  
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

**The Dictionary  
of  
Historical and Comparative  
Linguistics**

**For Jan,  
“just like two schoolkids”**

## Preface

Historical linguistics was the first branch of linguistics to be placed on a firm scholarly footing, around the beginning of the nineteenth century, and for most of that century the study of language was virtually synonymous with its historical study. Like any discipline, historical linguistics has generated a sizeable number of specialist terms, and it continues to generate new terms today. Yet, in spite of all this, our venerable discipline has never received a dictionary devoted to its terminology. This book is an attempt to put that right.

It provides thorough coverage of the terminology of classical historical linguistics, including particularly Indo-European studies: *umlaut*, *palatalization*, *transferred sense*, *Schwebeablaut*, *lenition*, *sandhi*, *visarga*, *loss of the conditioning environment* and hundreds of other traditional terms are entered and explained. Also included are older terms which are now little encountered in the literature, like *proethnic*, *media aspirata*, *agglutination theory*, *crasis* and *grammatical change*.

Techniques of comparison and reconstruction, and the pitfalls they present, are well covered: *internal reconstruction*, *top-down reconstruction*, *indeterminacy*, *beech-tree problem*, *semantics control problem*, *overlapping correspondences*, *total accountability principle*, *portmanteau reconstruction* and many others. Particular attention is given to instances of faulty methodology: “*reaching down*”, *edited evidence*, *neglect of known history*, *false segmentation* and others.

All the named ‘laws’ and processes I have been able to track down are entered: *Verner’s Law*, *Bartholomae’s Law*, *Saussure’s Law*, *Dahl’s Law*, *rendaku*, *Caland’s Law*, *Whorf’s Law*, *Dorsey’s Law*, *Caldwell’s Law*, the *Great Vowel Shift*, the *Great Tone Split*, the *First Palatalization* and many others.

Our companion discipline of dialectology is well represented: *dialect geography*, *dialect mixing*, *relic area*, *peripheral-region criterion*, *discontinuous spread*, *buffer zone* and others.

Also entered are named processes of word-formation: **clipped form**, **acronym**, **stump compound**, *bahuvrihi*, **back-formation**, **calque** and others.

Specifically philological terms are well represented: **diplomatic**, **codex**, **by-name**, **lacuna**, *lectio difficilior*, **stemma**, **gloss** and others.

Treatment is provided equally, however, for the blizzard of new terms which have been coined, or have become prominent, only in recent years: **metatypy**, **exaptation**, **Traugott progression**, **rule inversion**, **esoteric language**, **entrenchment**, **multilateral comparison**, **phonogenesis**, **panchrony**, **Northern Cities Shift** and hundreds of others.

The vastly illuminating sociolinguistic study of language change has produced a sizeable number of new terms, among them **Bill Peters effect**, **lexical diffusion**, **actuation**, **speaker-oriented framework**, **variable rule**, **vernacularization**, **lower-middle-class crossover**, **historicization**, all included here together with many others.

Pidgin and creole studies, and contact and convergence phenomena generally, are covered in some detail: **non-genetic language**, **recreolization**, **abrupt creolization**, **post-creole continuum**, **mixed language**, **portmanteau language** and others.

The most prominent language families are entered, together with the names of the chief branches of the largest ones: **Indo-European**, **Uralic**, **Dravidian**, **Sino-Tibetan**, **Athabaskan**, **Pama-Nyungan**, **Afro-Asiatic**, **Celtic**, **Samoyed**, **Burmese-Lolo**, **Benue-Congo** and others. Also entered are the names of proposed larger groupings which are not generally accepted at present, together with assessments of their degree of acceptance: **Nostratic**, **Khoisan**, **Indo-Pacific**, **Aztec-Tanoan**, **Na-Dene**, **Penutian** and all the others which I have found in the literature.

Names of individual languages are entered only when the named language is an isolate, is the sole member of one branch of a large family, is extinct, or is of surpassing importance: **Basque**, **Yuchi**, **Greek**, **Armenian**, **Sumerian**, **Lepontic**, **Sicel**, **French**, **Arabic**, **Hebrew** and many others.

I have devoted particular attention to very recent work which has so far not made it into the standard textbooks, at least not prominently: notably, **population typology** (**accretion zone**, **genetic marker**), **mathematical and computational methods** (**probabilistic approach**, **Oswalt shift test**, **Monte Carlo test**, **best-tree approach**), **models of linguistic descent** (**crystallization model**, **rake model**, **social-network model**, **punctuated-equilibrium model**) and **grammaticalization** (**actualization**, **emergent grammar**, **grammaticalization chain**, **unidirectionality**).

Moreover, I have carefully entered the various Latin phrases and abbreviations used in historical and philological work, including a few which are not peculiar to us: *vel sim.*, *cf.*, *qq.v.*, *v. infra*, *apud*, *pace*, *err.*, *id.*, *ms.*, *om.*, *sc.*, *s.v.*, *passim*, among others. Under their names, I have also entered a number of symbols and notational conventions which occur in our work with special functions: question mark, square brackets, capital letters, pipe, swung dash, equal sign, slash, hyphen, asterisk and many others. A list of these can be found on the next page.

Finally, I have been careful to enter certain everyday historical terms which are commonplace in our field but often exasperatingly difficult for beginning students to look up, such as **mediation**, **comparandum**, **secondary**, **economy**, **reflex**, and the proper use of **common**, **Pre-** and **Proto-** preceding the names of languages or of families.

Wherever it seemed helpful to do so, I have provided both real linguistic examples of the term entered and references to the original literature.

I hope that colleagues and students everywhere will find this dictionary a valuable resource.



## List of Symbols Entered

angle brackets	< >
asterisk	*
capital letter	N, R, V etc.
dagger (obelos)	†
dash	—
division sign	÷
equal sign	=
exclamation mark	!
hyphen	-
parentheses	( )
pipe	
plus sign	+
question mark	?
shaftless arrow	>, <
slash	/
square brackets	[ ]
square-root sign	√
swung dash (tilde)	~

## List of Abbreviations

abl.	ablative
AUX	auxiliary
C	consonant
Eng	English
Fr	French
gen.	genitive
Ger	German
Gk	Greek
Go	Gothic
IE	Indo-European
It	Italian
Lat	Latin
ME	Middle English
N	nasal
nom.	nominative
NP	noun phrase
O	object
OE	Old English
OFr	Old French
OHG	Old High German
OIc	Old Icelandic
ON	Old Norse
p.c.	personal communication
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
pl.	plural
R	resonant
RP	received pronunciation
Russ	Russian
S	subject
sg.	singular
Skt	Sanskrit
V	vowel; verb
VP	verb phrase

## List of Tables

Table 1	19
Table 2	122
Table 3	123
Table 4	141
Table 5	191
Table 6	221
Table 7	301
Table 8	301
Table 9	301
Table 10	302
Table 11	336
Table 12	363

## Acknowledgements

In the writing of this dictionary, I have received advice and assistance of various kinds from dozens of colleagues: answers to queries, advice on vexed points, references to the literature, copies of published and unpublished work, and more. Most of this assistance came via the HISTLING electronic list, maintained by Dorothy Disterheft. All of the following have provided assistance: Rich Alderson, Phil Baldi, Jacob Baltuch, E. Bashir, Alan Bomhard, Lars Borin, Vit Bubenik, Lyle Campbell, Miguel Carrasquer Vidal, Richard Coates, John Costello, Peter Daniels, Scott Delancey, Guy Deutscher, Aharon Dolgopolsky, Isidore Dyen, Chris Ehret, Hans-Olav Engel, Alice Faber, Suzanne Fleischmann, Stefan Georg, Mark Robert Hale, Leonard Herzenberg, John Hewson, Richard Hogg, Martin Huld, Ernst Håkon Jahr, Richard Janda, Carol Justus, Harold Koch, Bh. Krishnamurti, Paul Lloyd, Marisa Lohr, Alexis Manaster Ramer, Witold Mańczak, Sam Martin, Lars Mathieson, April McMahon, Peter Michalove, Gary Miller, Donka Minkova, Marianne Mithun, David Nash, Johanna Nichols, Derek Nurse, Marc Picard, Jim Rader, Robert Rankin, Colin Renfrew, Don Ringe, Gonzalo Rubio, Steven Schaufele, Eric Schiller, Vitalij Shevoroshkin, Sergei Starostin, Sally Thomason, Theo Vennemann, Sasha Vovin, Benji Wald, Max Wheeler, Robert Whiting, Laura Wright and Roger Wright – and probably a few more whom I have embarrassingly overlooked. To all of them I am deeply grateful; the book is much better than it could have been without their help. Further, I am profoundly indebted to Dorothy Disterheft, who commented extensively, and very valuably, on a draft of the whole book. Naturally, these people do not necessarily share the views expressed in the book and any shortcomings remain my own responsibility.

# Contents

Preface	vi
List of Symbols Entered	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
List of Tables	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
A-Z of Entries	1
References	373

# The Dictionary of Historical and Comparative Linguistics

## A

**abduction** A type of reasoning in which we observe a result, invoke a general law which could derive that result from a given starting point, and conclude that that starting point must be true. Example: 'Communists want to ban handguns; Susie wants to ban handguns; therefore Susie must be a Communist.' Such reasoning is invalid but it appears to be important in human affairs. The linguist Henning Andersen has particularly stressed the importance of abductive reasoning in accounting for certain types of linguistic change, such as **reanalysis**. Andersen distinguishes between an *abductive mode of innovation*, in which elements of grammar are inferred from speech, and a *deductive mode of innovation*, in which elements of speech are derived from a grammar. In the abductive mode, a speaker reasons as follows: 'I have heard someone utter U; utterance U could be produced by a rule R; therefore R must be a rule of the grammar.' In the deductive mode, the reasoning is different: 'My grammar has a rule R; if I apply R in the present case I will get U; therefore I will say U.' An example of the first: 'I have heard people saying things like *books* and *trees*; therefore there must be a rule of English that nouns are pluralized by adding -s.' An example of the second: 'I have a rule that nouns are pluralized by adding -s; I have just encountered the new noun *CD-ROM*; therefore its plural must be *CD-ROMs*.' When one of these processes leads to a change in the language, we speak of *abductive change* or of *deductive change*, respectively. See Andersen (1973) for the original account, Andersen (1980) for further discussion and Anttila (1989: 196–203) for a survey.

**aberrant formation** A new lexical item constructed in an anomalous manner which is at variance with ordinary patterns of word-formation, or the process of forming a word in such a manner. Examples include English *typist* (for expected \**typer*), the Turkish Language Academy's proposed *inerçikar* 'lift, elevator' (literally, 'it-goes-down-it-goes-up') and Basque *aurrehistoria* 'prehistory' (literally, 'front-history'), which competes with the regular formation *historiaurre* (literally, 'history-front').

**aberrant language** A language which clearly belongs to an established family but which has undergone such complex changes that its prehistory cannot be worked out in any detail, and hence its precise location within the family cannot be determined with confidence. Such a language may fail to exhibit regular systematic correspondences with other members of the family, it may be typologically highly divergent within its family, recognizable cognates may be few, and the language may be of minimal assistance in reconstructing its proto-language. The term has been particularly applied by Grace (1981, 1990, 1996) to certain problematic Austronesian languages, especially to some of those in New Caledonia. The opposite is an **exemplary language**.

**Abkhaz-Adyge (also Northwest Caucasian)** A family of five languages spoken in and near the Caucasus to the east of the Black Sea. There are three subgroups: *Abkhazan* (*Abkhaz* and *Abaza*), *Circassian* (*Adyge* and *Kabardian*) and the single language *Ubykh* (now extinct).

**ablaut (also apophony, vowel gradation)** In IE languages, variation in the vowel of a root for grammatical purposes, as in English *sing/sang/sung*, when this derives from PIE and not from more recent assimilations, as in **umlaut**. Ablaut is prominent in the older IE languages and was apparently a central morphological feature of PIE; it may well have been conditioned by the word-accent at some early stage, but its occurrence is completely morphologized in the older IE languages, and the absence of any clear phonological conditioning factor is commonly taken as part of the definition. In PIE, a root could appear in any of five forms, with any one of the nuclei /e/, /o/, /ē/, /ō/ or Ø (zero), though few if any roots are attested in all five, and the original system was largely disrupted in most of the daughter languages, with various forms being preserved. For example, PIE \**ped-* 'foot' appears as *ped-* in Latin, as *pod-* in Greek, as \**pōd-* in Germanic \**fōt-*, and as *pd-* (among others) in Sanskrit. English *sing/sang/sung* continues PIE \**sengwh-* / \**songwh-* / \**sngwh-*. A series of such forms distinguished by ablaut is an **ablaut series** (Ger *Ab-lautsreihe*).

The variant with /e/ is called the *e-grade*, while that with /o/ is the *o-grade*, formerly also called the *deflected grade* or *Abtönung*.

The contrast between /e/ and /o/, and also between /ē/ and /ō/, is *qualitative ablaut*, while that between /Ø/, /e/ and /ē/, and between /Ø/, /o/ and /ō/, is *quantitative ablaut*. The nuclei /e/ and /o/ are called the *full grade* (German *Vollstufe*, *Normalstufe* or

*Hochstufe*, French *degré plein*, Sanskrit *guna*); the nuclei /ē/ and /ō/ represent the *lengthened grade* (German *Dehnstufe*, French *degré long*, Sanskrit *vr̥ddhi*); and Ø is the *zero grade* (German *Nullstufe* or *Schwundstufe*, French *degré zéro*; the Sanskrit grammarians took this grade as basic and had no name for it). A *reduced grade* (German *Reduktionsstufe*), or *schwa secundum*, proposed by Hirt and notated as /ɛ/, is no longer generally recognized, since the forms supporting it are more economically explained by the introduction of laryngeals and the action of Sievers's Law (sense 1).

For discussion, see Beekes (1995: 164–167), from which this account is largely taken, Watkins (1998: 51–53) or another handbook of IE, and see Anttila (1989: ch. 12) for an example. See *Schwebeablaut* and *samprasāraṇa*, and compare *umlaut*. See also *accent in PIE*.

The term *ablaut* is also applied to similar phenomena in languages outside IE, such as Kartvelian. Coates (1994) recommends restricting *ablaut* to the historical change which brings such an alternation about and using *apophony* for the resulting alternation.

**abnatural development** The term applied by Bailey (1996 and elsewhere) to any linguistic change best interpreted as resulting from socio-communicative pressures, such as a shift from synthetic to analytic structures. Compare *connatural development*.

**abnormal change** Another term for *unnatural change*.

**abnormal transmission** A label sometimes applied to the development of a non-genetic language.

*Abnutzung* (Ger 'abrasion') The phonological reduction of grammatical morphemes of high frequency, which is typically greater than the degree of reduction suffered by other elements. For example, English *going to* is often reduced to *gonna* when serving as a grammatical marker, as in *I'm going to do it*, but the same sequence cannot be so reduced when *going* represents a lexical verb, as in *I'm going to the beach*.

**aboriginal language** Another term for *indigenous language*, now little used.

**abrupt creolization** The process in which a *creole*, instead of developing normally from an earlier *pidgin*, is constructed directly from



existing mother tongues in a single generation; the result is an **early-creolized creole**. It is not clear how often this happens, or even if it happens, but there are a few plausible candidates, such as Pitcairnese, which derived from the English and Tahitian of a handful of settlers. See Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 48, 147–166) for discussion; these authors suggest that abrupt creolization should be understood as resulting from ‘extreme unsuccessful acquisition of a target language’. See also **semi-creole**.

**abruptness of change** See the discussion under **gradualness of change**.

**absolute chronology** The assignment of linguistic changes to specific dates in the past, as when we conclude that **Anglo-Frisian Brightening** probably occurred in the early fifth century AD. Compare **relative chronology**.

**absorption** Another term for **demorphologization**.

*Abstand* Linguistic distance – the presence of a clear distinction between two or more closely related language varieties. In **language planning**, speakers are often eager to distance their language from a related language whose speakers may be inclined to see only a dialect of their own language; this is the case, for example, for Macedonian with respect to Bulgarian and for Belarusian with respect to Russian.

**abstraction** (rarely also **abstractification**) The process in which a word or morpheme of highly specific and concrete meaning loses that meaning in favour of broader and more abstract meanings and possibly further in favour of purely grammatical functions, as in **grammaticalization**. Abstraction was identified by Sapir (1921a); a recent summary is given in Heine *et al.* (1991a: 41–45). These authors cite the case of Ewe *ta* ‘head’, which has acquired a number of extended senses including ‘intellectual ability’, ‘main issue’, ‘division, part’ and ‘kind, class’ (called *structure-preserving abstraction* by the authors), and further some grammatical functions as a postposition and clause subordinator, with such senses as ‘over’, ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘in order to’ and ‘because’. (This is *structure-changing abstraction*.)

*Abtönung* [rare] See under **ablaut**.