

References

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An introduction to historical linguistics. By Terry Crowley. University of Papua New Guinea Press and the Institute of Pacific Studies, the University of the South Pacific, 1987. vi + 306pp. AUS\$29.95

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This is a revised version of a textbook that grew out of lectures on historical linguistics given by the author to undergraduates at the University of PNG in the early 1980s. At that time there was no suitable textbook available for teaching historical linguistics to PNG students for whom English is their second, third, fourth or nth language. Most such textbooks are difficult

to read even for native English speakers because of the rather high percentage of technical terms introduced (and often given in a German form) and the formal academic English style used. Consequently in designing this book the author's aim was to introduce and explain concepts and principles as simply as possible, without "simplifying the concepts themselves" (p.3). He was also at pains to illustrate these concepts and principles with examples taken from languages with which the students are familiar.

The book is divided into twelve chapters covering traditional areas of concern in historical linguistics. The first chapter is an introductory one in which the nature of linguistic relationships and attitudes to language change are discussed. The next three chapters describe and discuss types of sound change (Chapter 2), ways of expressing sound changes (Chapter 3), and phonetic versus phonemic change (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5 the comparative method is introduced and in Chapter 6 problems associated with it are outlined. Chapter 7 is devoted to internal reconstruction and Chapter 8 to grammatical and semantic change. The remaining four chapters have to do with subgrouping (Chapter 9), observing linguistic change (Chapter 10), causes of linguistic

change (Chapter 11), and cultural reconstruction (Chapter 12). The volume also includes an appendix in which sets of comparative data that are referred to in exercises in different parts of the book are gathered together. There are eleven sets taken from different areas of the Pacific including Australia. A language index, bibliography and general index conclude the volume.

As the title indicates this book is only intended to be an introduction to the complex subject of historical linguistics -- it is by no means intended to be a complete account. In keeping with its introductory and textbook nature each chapter ends with a section which raises questions for students to answer as they read, another containing exercises to be worked through in class or in private study and a third which directs students to more detailed readings. The latter two sections are not unexpected; the first, however, is novel, and in the PNG scene necessary; it is the experience of teachers in countries like PNG that students read more profitably if they have questions in mind as they read. Studies carried out at the University of PNG over the years have shown, for example, that students there have difficulty reading and understanding academic texts. Indeed, they read academic texts at only something like half to one third the rate at which comparable Australian students do, and comprehend and retain proportionally less.

For its size and nature this is an excellent little book and one I would recommend to all those wishing to 'get into' historical linguistics but who

have been daunted by the size and perhaps bad reputation of traditional texts. It is, moreover, relatively free of typographical and other errors -- I noted only about fifteen -- although I suspect that PNG students would find some unexplained symbols (e.g. the nasal tilde first used on p.12 is not explained until p.36) and crowded printing (p.57) disconcerting if using the book outside the classroom. There are as well a number of inconsistencies and omissions which should have been picked up and corrected by the author or publisher's copy editor. One particularly odd one is the claim made on p.270 that "only comparative culture can tell us anything about the non-material culture of a society." This is not only inconsistent with claims made later (pp.276-78) about the use of comparative linguistics in cultural reconstruction but also with the actual practice of historical linguistics. Another example is the lack of any reference in the beginning of the book (where one usually expects to find such information) to the sources used for examples in it. The information is there but it is not until one looks up the 'Language Index' at the bottom of p.295 that one finds it tucked away in a brief introductory note to this index. This note explains that the author avoided quoting sources in the body of the text to avoid creating a less readable, overly academic style. Consequently references to the sources of the information used is given in the list of languages in this section. But while this is admirable and certainly achieves a more readable text a quick cross-check of the references given in this index shows that not all of them are to be found in the bibliography as expected.

I was also interested to read on pp.240-41 that there is one sound used by the Lardil in North Queensland in a special speech style which is

thought to occur in no other language in the world as far as is known. This is the sound like that "we make with our lips when we want to imitate someone farting" (pp.240-41) and which Crowley symbolises with [p']. This is interesting because the Mountain Koiari inland of Port Moresby use this sound (if I understand Crowley correctly) in story-telling. It is generally made as a group response to some lively part of the story and could be translated with something like "Gee, that's hot" or "Right on" in modern colloquial English. Although I do not know how widespread this usage is it was common amongst teenage youths and young men who acted as carriers for me in the Owen Stanley ranges in the 1960s.

The above minor detractions aside, however, the book is, as I have indicated, very good value. Indeed, there could be no better recommendation for it than the fact that although originally designed for a PNG audience this book has been used and appreciated by staff and students at such overseas universities as the Australian National University and Auckland University where English is spoken natively.

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Modern Transformational Grammar. By Bent Jacobsen. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1986. xv + 441 pp. US\$64.75 / Dfl. 175.00.

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Generative grammar has changed rapidly and radically during the late 1970s and 80s. The most significant changes from the former 'Aspects' model (Chomsky 1965), otherwise known as the Standard Theory, have been: (i) The decline in the use of many kinds of transformations as the means of relating Deep structure (D-structure) to Surface structure (S-structure). This component has been replaced by a very general notion of Move- α , i.e. move anything anywhere, which is controlled by a range of constraints and principles which are sub-components of the theory; (ii) The transfer of the Semantic Representation component from the D-structure to the S-structure. This has now developed into the component Logical Form, a logical syntax of semantics, which relates entirely to S-structure; (iii) The development of a range of autonomous subcomponents (subtheories) such as X-bar theory, θ -theory, Case theory, Binding theory, Bounding theory, Control theory and Government theory. These sub-