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Ohio State University Working Papers in Linguistics No. 52

Historical Linguistics

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Introduction

As a discipline, Historical Linguistics takes in a number of related but distinct pursuits. Historical linguists compare different stages of the one language to determine what changes have taken place, they examine present-day variation for evidence of language change in progress, they reconstruct earlier pre-historic stages of languages and language families, they determine relationships among languages, they investigate the effects of contact between and among speakers of different languages, they analyze earlier synchronic stages of a language, and so on. In short, they cover most aspects of both the study of language history and the study of language change.

The papers in this volume present research carried out primarily by graduate students in linguistics, but in two instances by graduate students in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures (Weller and Whaley), in one instance by a undergraduate minor in linguistics (Kamitis), and in one instance by a visiting scholar (Arvaniti) engaged in a research project with a Linguistics Department faculty member. Overall, these papers represent the field of historical linguistics well, inasmuch as there are papers on aspects of the history of individual languages, on variation as it pertains to change in language, on reconstruction, on language relatedness and the methods for testing such relations, and on patterns of change in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

Brian D. Joseph

Columbus, June 1999