Tutorial: The history of linguistics

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Spring 2012  

Time: 3-5  
Location: Sever 215  
Office hours: Thu 3-5

1 Course description

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the history of linguistic thought. For reasons of time, most introductory courses to various linguistic subfields barely review more than a few decades of their respective developments. However, conscience of the development of one’s own field is crucial for understanding where current debates, problems, methodologies and even data stem from and putting current theoretical frameworks and debates into perspective. It also broadens the students’ horizon with the respect to the internal diversity of linguistic thought throughout history, which tends to be marginalized by the currently dominant Anglo- and Eurocentric versions of linguistic theory. The course will start with an overview over ancient Far Eastern, Near Eastern and European early linguistic analysis, focusing in particular on the achievement of Panini’s Sanskrit grammar. The next section will focus on the Port Royal grammarians and the introduction of universalism to linguistic thought, followed by the impact of the colonial ‘rediscovery’ of Sanskrit on the development of comparative linguistics and especially the comparative method in the early 19th century. The next session will introduce the Neogrammarian turn and the discovery of the regularity of sound change. One session will be dedicated to biologism and racism in late 19th and 20th linguistics and the impact of national socialism on linguistics. Finally, post-war developments such as behaviorism and the generative turn will be discussed.

The aim is to give concentrators in linguistics a better understanding of the development of the field as well of its subfields and help contextualize their own interests and research with respect to it. Furthermore, one of the goals will be to familiarize students with the primary literature by reading passages of Panini, Bopp, De Saussure and Chomsky (where English translations/originals are available).

2 Requirements

- Attendance & participation 20%
- Six discussion questions 20%
- Presentation 20%
- Five reading responses 40%

The class will be lecture based, so attendance is crucial. Active participation is highly encouraged. The discussion questions (2-3) are due each week before class and are intended to provide a basis
for in-class discussion. The reading responses (ca. 2 pages) will assure that students have read and understood the weekly reading assignment. Each student is furthermore expected to give a 15-20 min. presentation of one of the optional materials on the reading list.

3 Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Early Sanskrit &amp; Chinese grammarians. Linguistics in classical antiquity.</td>
<td>Robins ch. 2, Harris &amp; Taylor ch. 1., Kiparsky, Staal pp. 4-10; 20-22</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Descartes and the school of Port Royal; Humboldt</td>
<td>Harris &amp; Taylor ch. 8 &amp; 13, Chomsky (2002) 51-87, Aarsleff</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The ‘rediscovery’ of Sanskrit &amp; the beginning of comparative linguistics.</td>
<td>Lepschy ch. 3 &amp; 4, Lehmann ch. 1,2,4 &amp; 8, Staal 138-154; 165-184</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Neogrammarian turn: the scientification of linguistics. De Saussure, structuralism.</td>
<td>Lepschy ch. 9, Lehmann ch. 11, Saussure 65-78, Morpurgo-Davies</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The first half of the 20th century: Biologicalism and racism in linguistics.</td>
<td>Mefling, Hutton ch. 9, Hock &amp; Joseph 486-504, Olender ch. 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Post-war linguistics: behaviorism and the generative turn</td>
<td>Robins ch. 8, Chomsky 1959, Chomsky (1957) 11-60.</td>
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4 Readings


