

Conference report 'Sprachlehre und Sprachpflege'

Joint Meeting of the Studienkreis 'Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft' and the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas, Helsinki, 18-21 July 2007

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From 18 to 21 July, 2007, a joint meeting of the *Studienkreis 'Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft'* and the *Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas* was held in sunny Helsinki. The meeting was very well organized by Aino Kärna, Anneli Luhtala, and Anders Ahlqvist, and it was hosted by the University of Helsinki.

The theme, and title of this – depending on the perspective – Anglo-Germanic or Germano-English conference was, in German: *Sprachpflege und Sprachlehre*. Perhaps this monolingual title was on purpose. In any case, Fred Karlsson (Helsinki) in his opening speech on Thursday morning immediately attacked the matter by discussing the trouble of translating the title into English. Of course, *Sprachlehre* is not the more problematic term to translate, though *grammar* and *language teaching* might serve as alternatives. The difficulty lies with *Sprachpflege*, for which all sorts of translations, such as *language maintenance* and *linguistic purism* were suggested during the conference. The best translation is probably *language maintenance* since the German noun *Pflege* contains this element of 'keeping' or 'taking care of something valuable' which can also be attributed to *maintenance*. That *Sprachpflege* or language maintenance has an educational counterpart and then turns into *Sprachlehre* was a recurrent topic in most papers explicitly addressing the conference theme.

The first plenary paper, read by Friederike Spitzl-Dupic (Clermont-Ferrand) on Thursday morning, zoomed in on this educational aspect of German texts on language from the late 17th to the early 19th centuries. A quote from the late 18th-century author Johann George Sulzer, one of Spitzl-Dupic's main sources, very well demonstrates what motivated early modern 'linguists':

Die Rede ist die größte Erfindung des menschlichen Verstandes, gegen die alle andre für nichts zu rechnen sind. Selbst die Vernunft, die Empfindungen und die Sitten, wodurch der Mensch sich aus der Classe irdischer Wesen zu einem höhern Rang herauf schwingt, hängen davon ab. Wer die Sprache vollkommener macht, der hebt den Menschen einen Grad höher. Schon dadurch allein verdienen die Beredsamkeit und Dichtkunst die höchste Achtung (Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, I, 1771: 102).

Sulzer's appeal to *Sprachpflege* revealed an educational approach – to which individuals as well as groups of persons or even whole nations could be subjected – when Spitzl-Dupic connected it to a Skinner-like discourse study of the word *Kunst* in its historical textual environment. *Kunst*, as a translation of *ars*, refers to practical or

technical knowledge, and *Erziehung* and *Sprachlehre* mainly consisted of getting acquainted with and learning to adjust to the rules and the standards of the *Kunst* in question.

Unfortunately but necessarily, the conference then continued with two parallel sessions; therefore I can only comment on a selection of the papers. Göran Wolf (Dresden), who preferred the narrow interpretation of *Sprachpflege* as linguistic purism, gave an interesting overview of prescriptive and puristic tendencies in the history of English 18th-century grammar. Hiroyuki Eto (Yokohama) also spoke of 18th-century grammar but concentrated on Japan, especially the work of Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), thereby amply demonstrating not just the linguistic connections between early modern Japan and Europe (esp. the Netherlands) but also the cultural similarities, since Norinaga conceptualized language study as national learning and was motivated by the desire to establish and protect a Japanese national identity.

After lunch, Saskia Daalder (Amsterdam) unveiled a fascinating part of the history of linguistics, namely social networks and their implications, focussing on Antoine Meillet (1866-1936) and some of his Dutch correspondents, such as Jozef Schrijnen (1869-1938), with regard to the organisation of the first International Congress of Linguists at The Hague in 1928. Dan Olsson (Umeå) gave a comprehensive bio-bibliographical sketch of the dialectologist, pedagogue and grammarian Max Wilhelm Götzinger (1799-1856), whose verbocentric theory deserves more attention. Another too long neglected linguist, Karl Philipp Moritz, was presented by Ute Tintemann (Berlin), focussing on his very popular *Englische Sprachlehre für die Deutschen* which was printed no less than five times between 1784 and 1805. Camiel Hamans (Brussels/Strasbourg) convincingly showed how the debate on the diphthongization of OWG [û] and [î] in Dutch fits into the history of 20th-century linguistics, and how the debate still goes on since linguistics keeps on developing.

The second day, Friday 20 July, began with a second, very clear plenary paper, read by Andrew Linn (Sheffield). He introduced Johan August Lundell (1851-1940) as one of the new Scandinavian language professors along with Otto Jespersen and Johan Storm, for whom Henry Sweet served as an ‘intellectual godfather’. Linn also elaborated on the concept of discourse community as a means of studying (professional) social networks, demonstrating its usefulness for a study of the course of linguistic ideas. The session I then attended was devoted to interjections. Minne de Boer (Utrecht/Hengelo) presented a broad yet thorough overview of the way in which linguists have treated interjections, from Antiquity up to cognitivism. Els Elffers (Amsterdam) drew attention to the remarkable fact that even five prominent linguists and psychologists from the early 20th century who had an eye out for language functions (such as Karl Bühler and Roman Jakobson) did not succeed in revising the traditional view of interjections as non-linguistic emotional outbursts.

After the coffee and strawberry break, Kjell-Åke Forsgren (Umeå) showed the problems German linguists from the 19th and 20th centuries engaged when discussing adverbs. Nicola McLelland (Nottingham) in a way turned this approach upside down by demonstrating the multiple discourses in which just one linguist, Justus-Georg Schottelius, participated when composing his 1663 masterpiece *Ausführliche Arbeit von der Teutschen HauptSprache*. Boris Djubo (St. Petersburg) again turned things the other way around in his paper on the multiple influences from members of the

Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft on Schottelius' theoretical, usage-oriented opponent Christian Gueintz when he was writing his *Deutscher Sprachlehre Entwurf* (1641). The political theme was then taken up later that afternoon by Klaas-Hinrich Ehlers (Berlin). He revealed that in pre-War Germany the so-called non-political (because scientific) *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* was not as impartial as claimed, for it e.g. secretly supported linguistic research into German within Czechoslovakia. Karlijn Navest (Leiden) took us back to 18th-century England, where John Ash (1724-1779) and Ellin Devis (1746-1820), who relied on Ash's work, tried to teach young men and women 'correct' English, i.e. the upper class educated English which was used in polite London circles.

The second day's programme ended with the *Sitzung* of the *Studienkreis* 'Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft'. It was suggested that there will not be an independent *Studienkreis* meeting next year, when ICHoLS XI will take place in Postdam. Instead, we will meet at ICHoLS.

The third and last day of our conference was opened by Gerda Haßler (Potsdam) who again took up the politics of linguistics in her lucid and thought-provoking account of the rise and fall of the functional-communicative paradigm in the German Democratic Republic, successfully advocated by Wilhelm Schmidt. Equally thought-provoking was David Cram's (Oxford) paper on the equation of music with language, minus semantics plus pragmatics, departing from grammar and music as two of the seven liberal arts, and therefore rightly studying their relationship in the 17th-century, but also discussing the intersection of language and music in modern linguistics, in relevance theory and in musicology. Finally, Serhij Wakulenko (Charkiw) gave an insightful account into the small yet telling differences in the classification of languages as recorded in Ukrainian manuscripts on logic dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. The last two official parts of the programme were the Annual General Meeting of the Henry Sweet Society and the conference dinner.

No doubt we shall look back on a fruitful conference, where everything combined very well: the papers were good, the people were nice, the sun was shining (most of the time at least), and last but not least the organisation was outstanding, for which we have to thank the members of the organising committee. Also, in the late afternoon and the evening there was just enough time to not think of the history of linguistics for a moment, as the pictures might show.

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Linguists discussing architectural history



Linguists having fun

