

Travel Report(Type: Attending an International Conference)

The 19th International Conference on Historical Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

The 19th International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHL XIX) was held at the Radboud University, Nijmegen from August 9-14, 2009, with over 200 participants presenting papers from a wide range of language families, including Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Australian, and Austro-Asiatic. This conference is organized every second year by the International Society of Historical Linguists, to which linguists who do research on the historical development of languages and their historical reconstruction belong.

My presentation was entitled 'Reconstructing a Dual Pronoun to Proto-Malayo-Polynesian', the parent of all the Austronesian languages outside of Taiwan, and provided a solution to a long-standing issue in the description of Western Malayo-Polynesian languages regarding the origin of a ubiquitous first person dual inclusive pronoun, found in Philippine and Northern Sulawesi languages.

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Purpose of Travel

The 19th International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHL XIX) is the major conference to which linguists who work on the historical development of languages and language families and the reconstruction of their parent languages present papers. The wide range of language families on which papers are written and the international stature of the linguists participating provides an extremely stimulating intellectual environment, and one to which all historical linguists aspire to attend.

My primary purpose in attending the conference was to present a paper reporting the result of my research on the pronominal systems of the Philippines, and their historical development. The second purpose was to discuss problems related to my research with some of the internationally known historical linguists who were attending the conference.

Procedure

I arrived in Nijmegen on the evening of Friday August 7, two days before the conference started because of the unavailability of flights arriving in Amsterdam during the weekend of August 8-9. During the weekend I was able to visit and confer with several other conference participants staying at the same hotel, and recovering from the jetlag resulting from more than 20 hours of travel time between Hsinchu and Nijmegen.

I attended the conference each day choosing among the six concurrent sessions, and joining all the plenary sessions. The speakers at the plenary sessions and their paper titles were the following:

Prof. Pieter Muysken: South American historical linguistics - approaches from structural phylogenetics
Prof. William Labov: Conditions for Divergence
Prof. Giuseppe Longobardi: Toward a phylogeny of grammars

Prof. Theresa Biberauer: Cycling and recycling: Afrikaans meets Jespersen's Cycle
Prof. Russell Gray: What do evolutionary biologists have to offer historical linguists?
Prof. Shana Poplack: Transcending synchrony in the study of linguistic change in progress
Prof. Charles

Yang: Predicting language change Prof. Antonella Sorace: Native language attrition in individual speakers: Investigating the beginning of diachronic language change Prof. Gillian Sankoff: Life cycle differences in language transmission and language change: the case of Quebecois French Prof. Michael Dunn: Evolutionary processes in language Prof. John Whitman: Radical Reanalysis and Syntactic Change

My presentation was given on the third day of the conference and was entitled .Reconstructing a Dual Pronoun to Proto-Malayo-Polynesian.. Proto-Malayo-Polynesian is the parent of all the Austronesian

The Business Meeting of the International Society of Historical Linguists was held on the fourth day of the conference. A new slate of officers was elected, including Prof. Ritsuko Kikusawa, a Japanese linguist specializing in Austronesian linguistics, as the incoming president of the Society. She will be hosting the 20th International Conference of Historical Linguistics in Osaka, Japan, at the National Museum of Ethnology, in 2011.

Comments and Suggestions

Despite the fact that the Austronesian language family is one of the biggest in the world with well over a thousand languages, the number of linguists working on historical reconstruction in this family is relatively small, including, in addition to myself, such well-known names as Prof. Robert Blust, Prof. Malcolm Ross, and Prof. Paul Jen-kuei Li. Since it is a well-recognized fact that Taiwan was the homeland of the Austronesian language family, and there are still a number of Austronesian languages spoken in Taiwan, it is disappointing that there were no professors or students from this country attending the conference and presenting papers on the historical relationships among the Austronesian languages spoken here, or on their historical developments.

It is to be hoped that over the next two years there will be some Chinese scholars and their students who will be preparing papers for presentation at the next Historical Linguistics conference, especially considering the fact that its location will be in Osaka, Japan, and the

costs for attending the conference will be a lot less than for attending one in Europe or North America where such conferences have usually been held.