

***OTTO
JESPERSEN***



***LANGUAGE:
ITS NATURE,
DEVELOPMENT
AND ORIGIN***



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Otto Jespersen

Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin

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PREFACE

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The distinctive feature of the science of language as conceived nowadays is its historical character: a language or a word is no longer taken as something given once for all, but as a result of previous development and at the same time as the starting-point for subsequent development. This manner of viewing languages constitutes a decisive improvement on the way in which languages were dealt with in previous centuries, and it suffices to mention such words as 'evolution' and 'Darwinism' to show that linguistic research has in this respect been in full accordance with tendencies observed in many other branches of scientific work during the last hundred years. Still, it cannot be said that students of language have always and to the fullest extent made it clear to themselves what is the real essence of a language. Too often expressions are used which are nothing but metaphors—in many cases perfectly harmless metaphors, but in other cases metaphors that obscure the real facts of the matter. Language is frequently spoken of as a 'living organism'; we hear of the 'life' of languages, of the 'birth' of new languages and of the 'death' of old languages, and the implication, though not always realized, is that a language is a living thing, something analogous to an animal or a plant. Yet a language evidently has no separate existence in the same way as a dog or a beech has, but is nothing but a function of certain living human beings. Language is activity, purposeful activity, and we should never lose sight of the speaking individuals and of their

purpose in acting in this particular way. When people speak of the life of words—as in celebrated books with such titles as *La vie des mots*, or *Biographies of Words*—they do not always keep in view that a word has no ‘life’ of its own: it exists only in so far as it is pronounced or heard or remembered by somebody, and this kind of existence cannot properly be compared with ‘life’ in the original and proper sense of that word. The only unimpeachable definition of a word is that it is a human habit, an habitual act on the part of one human individual which has, or may have, the effect of evoking some idea in the mind of another individual. A word thus may be rightly compared with such an habitual act as taking off one’s hat or raising one’s fingers to one’s cap: in both cases we have a certain set of muscular activities which, when seen or heard by somebody else, shows him what is passing in the mind of the original agent or what he desires to bring to the consciousness of the other man (or men). The act is individual, but the interpretation presupposes that the individual forms part of a community with analogous habits, and a language thus is seen to be one particular set of human customs of a well-defined social character.

It is indeed possible to speak of ‘life’ in connexion with language even from this point of view, but it will be in a different sense from that in which the word was taken by the older school of linguistic science. I shall try to give a biological or biographical science of language, but it will be through sketching the linguistic biology or biography of the speaking individual. I shall give, therefore, a large part to the way in which a child learns his mother-tongue (Book II):

my conclusions there are chiefly based on the rich material I have collected during many years from direct observation of many Danish children, and particularly of my own boy, Frans (see my book *Nutidssprog hos børn og voksne*, Copenhagen, 1916). Unfortunately, I have not been able to make first-hand observations with regard to the speech of English children; the English examples I quote are taken second-hand either from notes, for which I am obliged to English and American friends, or from books, chiefly by psychologists. I should be particularly happy if my remarks could induce some English or American linguist to take up a systematic study of the speech of children, or of one child. This study seems to me very fascinating indeed, and a linguist is sure to notice many things that would be passed by as uninteresting even by the closest observer among psychologists, but which may have some bearing on the life and development of language.

Another part of linguistic biology deals with the influence of the foreigner, and still another with the changes which the individual is apt independently to introduce into his speech even after he has fully acquired his mother-tongue. This naturally leads up to the question whether all these changes introduced by various individuals do, or do not, follow the same line of direction, and whether mankind has on the whole moved forward or not in linguistic matters. The conviction reached through a study of historically accessible periods of well-known languages is finally shown to throw some light on the disputed problem of the ultimate origin of human language.

Parts of my theory of sound-change, and especially my objections to the dogma of blind sound-laws, date back to my very first linguistic paper (1886); most of the chapters on Decay or Progress and parts of some of the following chapters, as well as the theory of the origin of speech, may be considered a new and revised edition of the general chapters of my *Progress in Language* (1894). Many of the ideas contained in this book thus are not new with me; but even if a reader of my previous works may recognize things which he has seen before, I hope he will admit that they have been here worked up with much new material into something like a system, which forms a fairly comprehensive theory of linguistic development.

Still, I have not been able to compress into this volume the whole of my philosophy of speech. Considerations of space have obliged me to exclude the chapters I had first intended to write on the practical consequences of the 'energetic' view of language which I have throughout maintained; the estimation of linguistic phenomena implied in that view has bearings on such questions as these: What is to be considered 'correct' or 'standard' in matters of pronunciation, spelling, grammar and idiom? Can (or should) individuals exert themselves to improve their mother-tongue by enriching it with new terms and by making it purer, more precise, more fit to express subtle shades of thought, more easy to handle in speech or in writing, etc.? (A few hints on such questions may be found in my paper "Energetik der Sprache" in *Scientia*, 1914.) Is it possible to construct an artificial language on scientific principles for international use? (On this question I may here briefly state my

conviction that it is extremely important for the whole of mankind to have such a language, and that Ido is scientifically and practically very much superior to all previous attempts, Volapük, Esperanto, Idiom Neutral, Latin sine flexione, etc. But I have written more at length on that question elsewhere.) With regard to the system of grammar, the relation of grammar to logic, and grammatical categories and their definition, I must refer the reader to *Sprogets Logik* (Copenhagen, 1913), and to the first chapter of the second volume of my *Modern English Grammar* (Heidelberg, 1914), but I shall hope to deal with these questions more in detail in a future work, to be called, probably, *The Logic of Grammar*, of which some chapters have been ready in my drawers for some years and others are in active preparation.

I have prefixed to the theoretical chapters of this work a short survey of the history of the science of language in order to show how my problems have been previously treated. In this part (Book I) I have, as a matter of course, used the excellent works on the subject by Benfey, Raumer, Delbrück (*Einleitung in das Sprachstudium*, 1st ed., 1880; I did not see the 5th ed., 1908, till my own chapters on the history of linguistics were finished), Thomsen, Oertel and Pedersen. But I have in nearly every case gone to the sources themselves, and have, I think, found interesting things in some of the early books on linguistics that have been generally overlooked; I have even pointed out some writers who had passed into undeserved oblivion. My intention has been on the whole to throw into relief the great lines of development rather than to give many details;

in judging the first part of my book it should also be borne in mind that its object primarily is to serve as an introduction to the problems dealt with in the rest of the book. Throughout I have tried to look at things with my own eyes, and accordingly my views on a great many points are different from those generally accepted; it is my hope that an impartial observer will find that I have here and there succeeded in distributing light and shade more justly than my predecessors.

Wherever it has been necessary I have transcribed words phonetically according to the system of the *Association Phonétique Internationale*, though without going into too minute distinction of sounds, the object being, not to teach the exact pronunciation of various languages, but rather to bring out clearly the insufficiency of the ordinary spelling. The latter is given throughout in italics, while phonetic symbols have been inserted in brackets []. I must ask the reader to forgive inconsistency in such matters as Greek accents, Old English marks of vowel-length, etc., which I have often omitted as of no importance for the purpose of this volume.

I must express here my gratitude to the directors of the Carlsbergfond for kind support of my work. I want to thank also Professor G. C. Moore Smith, of the University of Sheffield: not only has he sent me the manuscript of a translation of most of my *Nutidssprog*, which he had undertaken of his own accord and which served as the basis of Book II, but he has kindly gone through the whole of this volume, improving and correcting my English style in many passages. His friendship and the untiring interest he has

always taken in my work have been extremely valuable to me for a great many years.

OTTO JESPERSEN.

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN,

June 1921.

ABBREVIATIONS OF BOOK TITLES, ETC.

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Bally LV = Ch. Bally, *Le Langage et la Vie*, Genève 1913.

Benfey Gesch = Th. Benfey, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, München 1869.

Bleek CG = W. H. I. Bleek, *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, London 1862-69.

Bloomfield SL = L. Bloomfield, *An Introduction to the Study of Language*, New York 1914.

Bopp C = F. Bopp, *Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache*, Frankfurt 1816.

AC = *Analytical Comparison* (see ch. ii, § 6).

VG = *Vergleichende Grammatik*, 2te Ausg., Berlin 1857.

Bréal M = M. Bréal, *Mélanges de Mythologie et de Linguistique*, Paris 1882.

Brugmann VG = K. Brugmann, *Grundriss der Vergleichenden Grammatik*, Strassburg 1886 ff., 2te Ausg., 1897 ff.

KG = *Kurze Vergleichende Grammatik*, Strassburg 1904.

ChE = O. Jespersen, *Chapters on English*, London 1918.

Churchill B = W. Churchill, *Beach-la-Mar*, Washington 1911.

Curtius C = G. Curtius, *Zur Chronologie der indogerm. Sprachforschung*, Leipzig 1873.

K = *Zur Kritik der neuesten Sprachforschung*, Leipzig 1885.

Dauzat V = A. Dauzat, *La Vie du Langage*, Paris 1910.

Ph = *La Philosophie du Langage*, Paris 1912.

Delbrück E = B. Delbrück, *Einleitung in das Sprachstudium*, Leipzig 1880; 5te Aufl. 1908.

Grfr = *Grundfragen der Sprachforschung*, Strassburg 1901.

E. = English.

EDD = J. Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Oxford 1898 ff.

ESt = *Englische Studien*.

Feist KI = S. Feist, *Kultur, Ausbreitung und Herkunft der Indogermanen*, Berlin 1913.

Fonetik = O. Jespersen, *Fonetik*, Copenhagen 1897.

Fr. = French.

Gabelentz Spr = G. v. d. Gabelentz, *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, Leipzig 1891.

Gr = *Chinesische Grammatik*, Leipzig 1881.

Linneken LP = J. v. Linneken, *Principes de Linguistique Psychologique*, Amsterdam, Paris 1907.

Glenconner = P. Glenconner, *The Sayings of the Children*, Oxford 1918.

Gr. = Greek.

Greenough and Kittredge W = J. B. Greenough and G. L. Kittredge, *Words and their Ways in English Speech*, London 1902.

Grimm Gr. = J. Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik*, 2te Ausg., Göttingen 1822.

GDS = *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, 4te Aufl., Leipzig 1880.

GRM = *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*.

GS = O. Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, 3rd ed., Leipzig 1919.

Hilmer Sch = H. Hilmer, *Schallnachahmung, Wortschöpfung u. Bedeutungswandel*, Halle 1914.

Hirt GDS = H. Hirt, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, München 1919.

Idg = *Die Indogermanen*, Strassburg 1905-7.

Humboldt Versch = W. v. Humboldt, *Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues* (number of pages as in the original edition).

IF = *Indogermanische Forschungen*.

KZ = Kuhn's *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*.

Lasch S = R. Lasch, *Sondersprachen u. ihre Entstehung*, Wien 1907.

LPh = O. Jespersen, *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, 3te Aufl., Leipzig 1920.

Madvig 1857 = J. N. Madvig, *De grammatische Betegnelser*, Copenhagen 1857.

Kl = *Kleine philologische Schriften*, Leipzig 1875.

ME. = Middle English.

MEG = O. Jespersen, *Modern English Grammar*, Heidelberg 1909, 1914.

Meillet DI = A. Meillet, *Les Dialectes Indo-Européens*, Paris 1908.

Germ. = *Caractères généraux des Langues Germaniques*, Paris 1917.

Gr = *Aperçu d'une Histoire de la Langue Grecque*, Paris 1913.

LI = *Introduction à l'étude comp. des Langues Indo-Européennes*, 2e éd., Paris 1908.

Meinhof Ham = C. Meinhof, *Die hamitischen Sprachen*, Hamburg 1912.

MSA = *Die moderne Sprachforschung in Afrika*, Berlin 1910.

Meringer L = R. Meringer, *Aus dem Leben der Sprache*, Berlin 1908.

Misteli = F. Misteli, *Charakteristik der haupts. Typen des Sprachbaues*, Berlin 1893.

MSL = *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*.

Fr. Müller Gr = Friedrich Müller, *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, Wien 1876 ff.

Max Müller Ch = F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. iv, London 1875.

NED = *A New English Dictionary*, by Murray, etc., Oxford 1884 ff.

Noreen UL = A. Noreen, *Abriss der urgermanischen Lautlehre*, Strassburg 1894.

VS = *Vårt Språk*, Lund 1903 ff.

Nyrop Gr = Kr. Nyrop, *Grammaire Historique de la Langue Française*, Copenhagen 1914 ff.

OE. = Old English (Anglo-Saxon).

Oertel = H. Oertel, *Lectures on the Study of Language*, New York 1901.

OFr. = Old French.

ON. = Old Norse.

Passy Ch = P. Passy, *Les Changements Phonétiques*, Paris 1890.

Paul P = H. Paul, *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, 4te Aufl., Halle 1909.

Gr = *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*.

PBB = *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* (Paul u. Braune).

Pedersen GKS = H. Pedersen, *Vergl. Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen*, Göttingen 1909.

PhG = O. Jespersen, *Phonetische Grundfragen*, Leipzig 1904.

Porzezinski Spr = V. Porzezinski, *Einleitung in die Sprachwissenschaft*, Leipzig 1910.

Progr. = O. Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, London 1894.

Rask P = R. Rask [Prisskrift] *Undersögelse om det gamle Nordiske Sprogs Oprindelse*, Copenhagen 1818.

SA = *Samlede Afhandlinger*, Copenhagen 1834.

Raumer Gesch = R. v. Raumer, *Geschichte der germanischen Philologie*, München 1870.

Ronjat = J. Ronjat, *Le Développement du Langage chez un Enfant Bilingue*, Paris 1913.

Sandfeld Jensen S = Kr. Sandfeld Jensen, *Sprogvidenskaben*, Copenhagen 1913.

Sprw = *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, Leipzig 1915.

Saussure LG = F. de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Lausanne 1916.

Sayce P = A. H. Sayce, *Principles of Comparative Philology*, 2nd ed., London 1875.

S = *Introduction to the Science of Language*, London 1880.

Scherer GDS = W. Scherer, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, Berlin 1878.

Schleicher I, II = A. Schleicher, *Sprachvergleichende Untersuchungen*, I-II, Bonn 1848, 1850.

Bed. = *Die Bedeutung der Sprache*, Weimar 1865.

C = *Compendium der vergl. Grammatik*, 4te Aufl., Weimar 1876.

D = *Die deutsche Sprache*, Stuttgart 1860.

Darw. = *Die Darwinische Theorie und die Sprachwissenschaft*, Weimar 1873.

NV = *Nomen und Verbum*, Leipzig 1865.

Schuchardt SID = H. Schuchardt, *Slawo-Deutsches u. Slawo-Italienisches*, Graz 1885.

KS = *Kreolische Studien* (Wien, Akademie).

Simonyi US = S. Simonyi, *Die Ungarische Sprache*, Strassburg 1907.

Skt. = Sanskrit.

Sommer Lat. = F. Sommer, *Handbuch der latein. Laut- und Formenlehre*, Heidelberg 1902.

Stern = Clara and William Stern, *Die Kindersprache*, Leipzig 1907.

Stoffel Int. = C. Stoffel, *Intensives and Down-toners*, Heidelberg 1901.

Streitberg Gesch = W. Streitberg, *Geschichte der indogerm. Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg 1917.

Urg = *Urgermanische Grammatik*, Heidelberg 1896.

Sturtevant LCh = E. H. Sturtevant, *Linguistic Change*, Chicago 1917.

Sütterlin WSG = L. Sütterlin, *Das Wesen der sprachlichen Gebilde*, Heidelberg 1902.

WW = *Werden und Wesen der Sprache*, Leipzig 1913.

Sweet CP = H. Sweet, *Collected Papers*, Oxford 1913.

H = *The History of Language*, London 1900.

PS = *The Practical Study of Languages*, London 1899.

Tegnér SM = E. Tegnér, *Språkets makt öfver tanken*, Stockholm 1880.

Verner = K. Verner, *Afhandlingar og Breve*, Copenhagen 1903.

Wechssler L = E. Wechssler, *Giebt es Lautgesetze?* Halle 1900.

Whitney G = W. D. Whitney, *Life and Growth of Language*, London 1875.

L = *Language and the Study of Language*, London 1868.

M = *Max Müller and the Science of Language*, New York 1892.

OLS = *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, New York 1873-4.

Wundt S = W. Wundt, *Die Sprache*, Leipzig 1900.

PHONETIC SYMBOLS

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' stands before the stressed syllable.

· indicates length of the preceding sound.

[a·] as in *alms*.

[ai] as in *ice*.

[au] as in *house*.

[æ] as in *hat*.

[ei] as in *hate*.

[ɛ] as in *care*; Fr. *tel*.

[ə] indistinct vowels.

[i] as in *fill*; Fr. *qui*.

[i·] as in *feel*; Fr. *fille*.

[o] as in Fr. *seau*.

[ou] as in *so*.

[ɔ] open *o*-sounds.

[u] as in *full*; Fr. *fou*.

[u·] as in *foorl*; Fr. *épouse*.

[y] as in Fr. *vu*.

[ʌ] as in *cut*.

[ø] as in Fr. *feu*.

[œ] as in Fr. *sœur*.

[~] French nasalization.

[c] as in G. *ich*.

[x] as in G., Sc. *loch*.

[ð] as in *this*.

[j] as in *you*.

[b] as in *thick*.

[ʃ] as in *she*.

[ʒ] as in measure.

[ʔ] in Russian palatalization, in Danish glottal stop.

BOOK I HISTORY OF LINGUISTIC SCIENCE

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CHAPTER I BEFORE 1800

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§ 1. Antiquity. § 2. Middle Ages and Renaissance. § 3. Eighteenth-century Speculation. Herder. § 4. Jenisch.

I.—§ 1. Antiquity.

The science of language began, tentatively and approximately, when the minds of men first turned to problems like these: How is it that people do not speak everywhere the same language? How were words first created? What is the relation between a name and the thing it stands for? Why is such and such a person, or such and such a thing, called *this* and not *that*? The first answers to these questions, like primitive answers to other riddles of the universe, were largely theological: God, or one particular god, had created language, or God led all animals to the first man in order that he might give them names. Thus in the Old Testament the diversity of languages is explained as a punishment from God for man's crimes and presumption.

These were great and general problems, but the minds of the early Jews were also occupied with smaller and more particular problems of language, as when etymological interpretations were given of such personal names as were not immediately self-explanatory.

The same predilection for etymology, and a similar primitive kind of etymology, based entirely on a more or less accidental similarity of sound and easily satisfied with any fanciful connexion in sense, is found abundantly in Greek writers and in their Latin imitators. But to the speculative minds of Greek thinkers the problem that proved most attractive was the general and abstract one, Are words natural and necessary expressions of the notions underlying them, or are they merely arbitrary and conventional signs for notions that might have been equally well expressed by any other sounds? Endless discussions were carried on about this question, as we see particularly from Plato's *Kratylos*, and no very definite result was arrived at, nor could any be expected so long as one language only formed the basis of the discussion—even in our own days, after a century of comparative philology, the question still remains an open one. In Greece, the two catchwords *phúsei* (by nature) and *théseis* (by convention) for centuries divided philosophers and grammarians into two camps, while some, like Sokrates in Plato's dialogue, though admitting that in language as actually existing there was no natural connexion between word and thing, still wished that an ideal language might be created in which words and things would be tied together in a perfectly rational way—thus paving the

way for Bishop Wilkins and other modern constructors of philosophical languages.

Such abstract and *a priori* speculations, however stimulating and clever, hardly deserve the name of science, as this term is understood nowadays. Science presupposes careful observation and systematic classification of facts, and of that in the old Greek writers on language we find very little. The earliest masters in linguistic observation and classification were the old Indian grammarians. The language of the old sacred hymns had become in many points obsolete, but religion required that not one iota of these revered texts should be altered, and a scrupulous oral tradition kept them unchanged from generation to generation in every minute particular. This led to a wonderfully exact analysis of speech sounds, in which every detail of articulation was carefully described, and to a no less admirable analysis of grammatical forms, which were arranged systematically and described in a concise and highly ingenious, though artificial, terminology. The whole manner of treatment was entirely different from the methods of Western grammarians, and when the works of Panini and other Sanskrit grammarians were first made known to Europeans in the nineteenth century, they profoundly influenced our own linguistic science, as witnessed, among other things, by the fact that some of the Indian technical terms are still extensively used, for instance those describing various kinds of compound nouns.

In Europe grammatical science was slowly and laboriously developed in Greece and later in Rome. Aristotle laid the foundation of the division of words into “parts of

speech” and introduced the notion of case (*ptôsis*). His work in this connexion was continued by the Stoics, many of whose grammatical distinctions and terms are still in use, the latter in their Latin dress, which embodies some curious mistakes, as when *geniké*, “the case of kind or species,” was rendered *genitivus*, as if it meant “the case of origin,” or, worse still, when *aitiatiké*, “the case of object,” was rendered *accusativus*, as if from *aitiáomai*, ‘I accuse.’ In later times the philological school of Alexandria was particularly important, the object of research being the interpretation of the old poets, whose language was no longer instantly intelligible. Details of flexion and of the meaning of words were described and referred to the two categories of analogy or regularity and anomaly or irregularity, but real insight into the nature of language made very little progress either with the Alexandrians or with their Roman inheritors, and etymology still remained in the childlike stage.

I.—§ 2. Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Nor did linguistic science advance in the Middle Ages. The chief thing then was learning Latin as the common language of the Church and of what little there was of civilization generally; but Latin was not studied in a scientific spirit, and the various vernacular languages, which one by one blossomed out into languages of literature, even less so.

The Renaissance in so far brought about a change in this, as it widened the horizon, especially by introducing the study of Greek. It also favoured grammatical studies

through the stress it laid on correct Latin as represented in the best period of classical literature: it now became the ambition of humanists in all countries to write Latin like Cicero. In the following centuries we witness a constantly deepening interest in the various living languages of Europe, owing to the growing importance of native literatures and to increasing facilities of international traffic and communication in general. The most important factor here was, of course, the invention of printing, which rendered it incomparably more easy than formerly to obtain the means of studying foreign languages. It should be noted also that in those times the prevalent theological interest made it a much more common thing than nowadays for ordinary scholars to have some knowledge of Hebrew as the original language of the Old Testament. The acquaintance with a language so different in type from those spoken in Europe in many ways stimulated the interest in linguistic studies, though on the other hand it proved a fruitful source of error, because the position of the Semitic family of languages was not yet understood, and because Hebrew was thought to be the language spoken in Paradise, and therefore imagined to be the language from which all other languages were descended. All kinds of fanciful similarities between Hebrew and European languages were taken as proofs of the origin of the latter; every imaginable permutation of sounds (or rather of letters) was looked upon as possible so long as there was a slight connexion in the sense of the two words compared, and however incredible it may seem nowadays, the fact that Hebrew was written from right to left, while we in our writing proceed from left to

right, was considered justification enough for the most violent transposition of letters in etymological explanations. And yet all these flighty and whimsical comparisons served perhaps in some measure to pave the way for a more systematic treatment of etymology through collecting vast stores of words from which sober and critical minds might select those instances of indubitable connexion on which a sound science of etymology could eventually be constructed.

The discovery and publication of texts in the old Gothic (Germanic) languages, especially Wulfila's Gothic translation of the Bible, compared with which Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Old German and Old Icelandic texts were of less, though by no means of despicable, account, paved the way for historical treatment of this important group of languages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But on the whole, the interest in the history of languages in those days was small, and linguistic thinkers thought it more urgent to establish vast treasuries of languages as actually spoken than to follow the development of any one language from century to century. Thus we see that the great philosopher Leibniz, who took much interest in linguistic pursuits and to whom we owe many judicious utterances on the possibility of a universal language, instigated Peter the Great to have vocabularies and specimens collected of all the various languages of his vast empire. To this initiative taken by Leibniz, and to the great personal interest that the Empress Catherine II took in these studies, we owe, directly or indirectly, the great repertories of all languages then known, first Pallas's *Linguarum totius orbis vocabularia comparativa*

(1786-87), then Hervas's *Catálogo de las lenguas de las naciones conocidas* (1800-5), and finally Adelung's *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde* (1806-17). In spite of their inevitable shortcomings, their uncritical and unequal treatment of many languages, the preponderance of lexical over grammatical information, and the use of biblical texts as their sole connected illustrations, these great works exercised a mighty influence on the linguistic thought and research of the time, and contributed very much to the birth of the linguistic science of the nineteenth century. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that Hervas was one of the first to recognize the superior importance of grammar to vocabulary for deciding questions of relationship between languages.

It will be well here to consider the manner in which languages and the teaching of languages were generally viewed during the centuries preceding the rise of Comparative Linguistics. The chief language taught was Latin; the first and in many cases the only grammar with which scholars came into contact was Latin grammar. No wonder therefore that grammar and Latin grammar came in the minds of most people to be synonyms. Latin grammar played an enormous rôle in the schools, to the exclusion of many subjects (the pupil's own native language, science, history, etc.) which we are now beginning to think more essential for the education of the young. The traditional term for 'secondary school' was in England 'grammar school' and in Denmark 'latinskole,' and the reason for both expressions was obviously the same. Here, however, we are concerned with this privileged position of Latin grammar

only in so far as it influenced the treatment of languages in general. It did so in more ways than one.

Latin was a language with a wealth of flexional forms, and in describing other languages the same categories as were found in Latin were applied as a matter of course, even where there was nothing in these other languages which really corresponded to what was found in Latin. In English and Danish grammars paradigms of noun declension were given with such cases as accusative, dative and ablative, in spite of the fact that no separate forms for these cases had existed for centuries. All languages were indiscriminately saddled with the elaborate Latin system of tenses and moods in the verbs, and by means of such Procrustean methods the actual facts of many languages were distorted and misrepresented. Discriminations which had no foundation in reality were nevertheless insisted on, while discriminations which happened to be non-existent in Latin were apt to be overlooked. The mischief consequent on this unfortunate method of measuring all grammar after the pattern of Latin grammar has not even yet completely disappeared, and it is even now difficult to find a single grammar of any language that is not here and there influenced by the Latin bias.

Latin was chiefly taught as a written language (witness the totally different manner in which Latin was pronounced in the different countries, the consequence being that as early as the sixteenth century French and English scholars were unable to understand each other's spoken Latin). This led to the almost exclusive occupation with letters instead of sounds. The fact that all language is primarily spoken and