Preface: Papers in Historical Phonology

Citation for published version:
https://doi.org/10.2218/pihph.1.2016.1689

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):
10.2218/pihph.1.2016.1689

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:
Papers in Historical Phonology

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
Preface

PATRICK HONEYBONE, JULIAN BRADFIELD, JOSEF FRUEHWALD, PAVEL IOSAD, BENJAMIN MOLINEAUX AND MICHAEL RAMSAMMY

University of Edinburgh

Many groups of people working in a range of distinct branches of study all contribute to our understanding of the ways in which phonology can change. Papers in Historical Phonology aims to provide a platform where these groups can talk to each other. It aims to celebrate this diversity of approach, to tie in with the long traditions of research on phonological change, variation and reconstruction, and to push forward debate and understanding, both by welcoming methodological innovation (alongside time-honoured approaches) and by pushing the boundaries of current publication practices.

PiHPh thus defines ‘historical phonology’ broadly, taking in all areas of linguistics which link the study of sound systems to the past in any way. It is concerned both with how and why the phonology of languages changes in diachrony, and with the reconstruction of past synchronic phonological states. These are inextricably linked: we need to understand what the past stages of languages were in order to understand which changes have occurred, and we need to understand which kinds of changes are possible in order to reconstruct past synchronic states. We also need to investigate the patterns of contemporary variation in phonology, in order to gain insight into how change is occurring now, and how it was implemented in the past. Historical phonology is thus an inherently inter(sub)disciplinary enterprise — no one disciplinary approach can hope to understand it fully. We need to combine insights from theoretical phonology, phonetics, sociolinguistics, dialectology, philology, language acquisition, and, no doubt, other areas. We need to interact with the traditions of scholarship that have grown up around individual languages and language families, and with disciplines like history, sociology and palaeography. While it is natural that individual scholars will focus on specific parts of the whole, we will need to bring together work from all these distinct subfields in order to fully understand how phonological
change can happen in general, and in order to understand any specific
change in the phonological history of any language.

PiHPh wants to understand both the innovation of change and its
propagation through speech communities, both ‘sound change’ and
‘analogy’, both endogenous and exogenous causations of change, both
time and space, and both the interaction of variation and change and
the interaction of language acquisition and change. The kinds of
questions that PiHPh wants to ask therefore include at least the
following:

• Which changes are possible in phonology?
• What is the precise patterning of particular changes in the history of
  specific languages?
• How do changes arise and spread through communities?
• Are there characteristics that phonological changes (or particular
types of changes) always show?
• What counts as evidence for change, or for the reconstruction of
  previous stages of languages’ phonologies?
• What kinds of factors can motivate or constrain change?
• Are there factors which lead to stability in language, and militate
  against change?
• To what extent is phonological change independent of changes that
  occur at other levels of the grammar, such as morphology, syntax or
  semantics?
• What is the relationship between the study of completed
  phonological changes and of variation and change in progress?
• What is the relationship between phonological change and (first and
  second) language acquisition?
• What types of units and domains, at both segmental and prosodic
  levels, do we need in order to capture phonological change?
• How can the results of historical phonology inform phonological
  theorising?
• How does phonologisation proceed — how do non-phonological
  pressures come to be reflected in phonology?
• How can contact between speakers of different languages, or
  between speakers of distinct varieties of the same language, lead to
  phonological change, or to the creation of new phonological
  systems?
• How has historical phonology developed as an academic enterprise?

Many different types of evidence are used to shed light on the
concerns of historical phonology, such as: the interpretation of written
records, the analysis of patterns in contemporary variation, the
comparison of related systems, the investigation of spoken sequences in the laboratory or in corpora, and the application of theoretical constructs to historical data. Similarly, the many distinct positions that exist in general phonological theory are all found in historical phonology: some argue that perception is crucial in determining phonological patterns and in driving change; others argue that pressures in articulation play a central role; still others argue that autonomous phonological entities, such as constraints on structure or derivations can drive or limit change. PiHPa welcomes all of this.

It has often been argued that analyses developed in historical phonology can be used as evidence about the nature of phonological theory, and, vice versa, that developments in phonological theory both need to be tested against historical data and can shed new light on issues in historical phonology. PiHPa is interested in both these lines of enquiry. It has also often been argued that phonological theory can only be done properly if we consider the limits of diachrony and the start of synchrony: is a pattern (in a specific language or recurring in lots of languages) due to synchronic phonological knowledge or a remnant of a diachronic change? PiHPa welcomes fundamental debate in such areas.

PiHPa has emerged from loose groups of researchers who were brought together for the creation of The Oxford Handbook of Historical Phonology (Honeybone & Salmons 2015) and then for the biennial Edinburgh Symposium on Historical Phonology, which grew in part from that volume. These are just starting points, however: PiHPa hopes that any who share its interests will read it, contribute to it, and comment on articles published in it.

PiHPa operates under a permissive open access licence, and will have a quick turnaround process for articles, so we hope that it will be a good venue to field new ideas about data, methods or theories. Papers published in PiHPa are subject to peer scrutiny. Before appearing in PiHPa, all submissions are assessed (by the editors and/or advisory board), to ensure that they are fundamentally sound and accessible to readers. Submissions which lack any originality, or which do not connect with historical phonology in any way, or are conceptually or empirically fundamentally flawed will be rejected. However, the editors expect to publish both material that they disagree with, and which may be speculative or at an early stage of development. PiHPa also operates a post-publication peer review process, which encourages readers to comment on the ideas that appear in its pages, and we hope that this will, where so desired, strengthen authors’ argumentation for future publications. We editors aim to engage with the papers in PiHPa through the submission of post-publication comments, and we hope that other readers will, too. Likewise, PiHPa hopes that authors will
reply to those comments. Further details of the practicalities of the pre-
publication scrutiny and post-publication review are available on PiHPh’s website: http://journals.ed.ac.uk/pihp.

PiHPh takes as its symbol the diachronic shaftless arrow ‘>’ because it wants to understand everything connected to the ways in which phonology can change. We invite everyone interested in any of the points discussed here to perceive themselves, at least in part, as doing historical phonology, and we hope that PiHPh will provide a forum for this.

Comments invited

PiHPh relies on post-publication review of the papers that it publishes. If you have any comments on this piece, please add them to its comments site. You are encouraged to consult this site after reading the paper, as there may be comments from other readers there, and replies from the author. This paper’s site is here:

http://dx.doi.org/10.2218/pihp.1.2016.1689

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for many comments on this piece, which have improved it considerably, from the members of PiHPh’s advisory board and from the first wave of authors whose papers were published in PiHPh.

Author contact details

Fruehwald, Honeybone, Iosad, Molineaux & Ramsammy
Linguistics and English Language
University of Edinburgh
Dugald Stewart Building
Edinburgh, EH8 9AD, UK.

Bradfield
School of Informatics
University of Edinburgh
Informatics Forum, 10 Crichton Street
Edinburgh, EH8 9AB. UK.

benjamin.molineaux@ed.ac.uk, jcb@inf.ed.ac.uk, josef.frueh@ed.ac.uk,
pavel.ioasad@ed.ac.uk, patrick.honeybone@ed.ac.uk, m.ramsammy@ed.ac.uk