

MODERN AND MEDIEVAL LANGUAGES TRIPOS Part II

LINGUISTICS TRIPOS Part II AND LINGUISTICS PRELIMINARY  
EXAMINATION

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Monday 2 June 2008 9 to 12

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Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos Part II Paper Li.7  
Linguistics Tripos Part II and Linguistics Preliminary Examination Paper 7

HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

Answer THREE questions, AT LEAST ONE from EACH section.

Do NOT use substantially the same material in more than ONE answer.

*STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS*

*20 Page Answer Book x 1*  
*Rough work pad*

*SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS*

*None*

You may not start to read the questions  
printed on the subsequent pages of this  
question paper until instructed that you  
may do so by the Invigilator

## SECTION A

1 EITHER (a) ‘Assimilatory changes can be explained by speech production; dissimilatory ones by speech perception.’ Discuss.

OR (b) ‘Lexical frequency effects suggest that sound change is driven by adults, rather than by children.’ Discuss.

2 ‘Proper subgrouping of sample languages is the most important factor in reliable comparative reconstruction.’ Discuss.

3 ‘We cannot predict whether a particular language contact situation is likely to result in phonetic change, phonological change, or no change at all.’ Discuss.

4 ‘Syntactic change is a generally slow and multi-generational process and thus defies explanation in terms of parameter resetting.’ Discuss.

5 ‘The study of lexical semantic change remains one of the most unenlightening areas of historical linguistics.’ Discuss.

6 ‘Although we have a good understanding of the mechanisms of syntactic change, we still cannot predict with any certainty when such change will take place.’ Discuss.

## SECTION B

7 ‘Grammaticalization presents the only convincing attestation of “drift” in language change.’ Discuss.

8 ‘Understanding the mechanisms which relate before and after states is crucial to an understanding of language change. Understanding why something happens at a particular point in time is irrelevant.’ Discuss.

9 ‘Non-uniform syntactic systems and gaps in phonological systems do not diminish the relevance of typological considerations for language change.’ Discuss.

10 ‘Written records for a particular language at two points in time will always tell us more about sound change than about grammatical change.’ Discuss.

11 ‘The most important factor in understanding language change is understanding how changes are transmitted socially.’ Discuss.

12 ‘Language change typically results in simplification of the grammar.’ Discuss.

13 ‘A hard and fast distinction between internally motivated changes and externally motivated changes cannot be drawn.’ Discuss.

END OF PAPER