

Foreword

The scholars who assembled in Budapest in early September 1988 will never forget the beauty of the city or the cross-frontiers accord that marked the conference and all its social events.

As the days passed it became clear that several main themes were dominant. Contingents of lexicographers came to the microphone to announce or comment on ways of improving existing dictionaries for foreign learners and bilingual dictionaries or to suggest entirely new methods of preparing such dictionaries. Project reports were presented about languages—for example that of the Warlpiri-speaking Aboriginal people of Central Australia—still not scientifically recorded, and dictionaries that are in progress or do not yet exist. Considerable emphasis was placed on the importance of examining spoken data as well as the written records of the main European languages. Abbreviations, acronyms, and collocations came in for plenty of attention, as did more recent concepts and terms like Qsort, terminography, and metalexigraphy. By contrast papers on diachronic linguistics needed to be searched out, though this general field (once dominant) was by no means totally neglected. One of the most entertaining and informative papers of all those given was a diachronic account by Dr Reinhard Hartmann of all lexicographical conferences held between 1960 and 1988 (see pages . . .).

Unquestionably lexicographers are now firmly locked into the age of the microchip. Paper after paper described the astonishing power and intricacy of electronic databases and the proliferation of lexical work stations. It became clear as the conference proceeded that the limitless storage capacity of modern computers and the relative ease with which items of information can be retrieved from the stored electronic bases may lead in due course to a substantial merging of the functions of dictionaries and grammars. All four speakers in the Presidential Debate—a debate marked more by the almost total agreement of the speakers with one another than by any discernible differences—commented on the substantial overlap between existing dictionaries and grammars. In the decades ahead it seems likely that, at any rate in electronic form, the larger dictionaries will absorb the entire contents of the larger grammars. Existing software could easily be adapted to enable users to retrieve any type of information required from such lexicogrammatical sources.

The great majority of the papers were read in abridged form in four separate lecture rooms. No one person could attend more than a quarter of the sessions. Only now, in the pages that follow, are the full riches of the material presented at BudaLEX revealed.

The abiding message of this memorable conference was that, despite the immense amount of lexicographical work done throughout the world in the present century, more counsel and further endeavour are needed to bridge gaps that still remain between theoretical linguists and lexicographers on the one hand and

between lexicographers and the users of dictionaries on the other. The will is there even though the horizons seem to recede apace.

It remains for me, on behalf of the 250 or so people who attended the conference, to congratulate the organizers, and in particular Dr Tamás Magay and his Hungarian colleagues and the retiring President of EURALEX, Professor Noel Osselton, and his senior colleagues, on the undoubted success of BudaLEX 1988.

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