

The history of organization of a University of Chicago unit dealing with linguistics

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Already in the first *Annual Register* of The University of Chicago, for the academic year 1 July 1892 – 1 July 1893, Carl Darling Buck is listed (p.34) as “Assistant Professor of Sanskrit and Indo-European Comparative Philology,” and the “Department” of which he was the sole member is titled “Department of Sanskrit and Indo-European Comparative Philology,” the caption matching precisely the name of William Dwight Whitney’s chair at Yale (Whitney [1827-1894] was William Rainey Harper’s teacher and *Doktorvater* for his 1875 Yale Ph.D.) Buck rose to Associate Professor in 1894, Professor in 1900, and “Head of Department,” a title bestowed by the administration both distinct from and concurrent with the professorship, in 1903. The short title of the Department was “Department of Comparative Philology.”

By the year 1905-06, as noted in the *AR*, p.198, Buck is joined in the Department by a varying succession of others, in that academic year notably including Samuel Northrup Harper, A.B., son of William Rainey Harper, as “Associate in Russian,” and Ghen-Ichiro Yoshioka, Ph.B., “Docent in Japanese.” These affiliations reveal that what we might term miscellaneous languages not under the purview of the various distinct Classical and Modern European Language and Literature departments were taken up by this Department of Comparative Philology as its charge, prefiguring the “LangLing” responsibilities of the present-day Department of Linguistics precisely.

Also notable for 1905-06 (*AR*, p.199) is the course numbered 1, “General Introduction to the Study of Indo-European Philology,” taught by Buck in Spring Quarter, 1906. In 1908-09, this course is retitled, “General Introduction to the Study of Language” (Summer, Buck), and the Department itself, though retaining the same overall name, is said to deal with “general comparative philology” and with “languages neither Indo-European nor Semitic,” such as Chinese, taught by a Mr. Yin Chwang Wang, and Japanese, taught by a Mr. Y. Tsunekawa (*AR*, pp. 288-90). The specific Sanskrit instruction is taken over by “Instructor in Sanskrit” Walter Eugene Clark.

In 1915-16, the name of the Department is changed to “Department of Comparative Philology, General Linguistics, and Indo-Iranian Philology,” with Buck listed as “Head of the Department and Professor of Comparative Philology.” Clark had been promoted to Assistant Professor as of 1915.

Other than comings and goings of instructors in various of the language courses offered, the next great period of change comes in the mid-1920s, with change and instability lasting for about a decade more. Edward Sapir had joined the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in Autumn, 1925, as “Associate Professor of Anthropology and American Indian Languages,” non-I-E, non-Semitic languages par excellence, of course. The Department under Buck, with the same tripartite name and now including Clark as Associate Professor of Sanskrit and Francis A. Wood, Professor of Germanic Philology (appointed in the Department of Germanic), lists Sapir’s courses as part of its courses of instruction, though offered under the other departmental numbers. His

Sociology 282, General Introduction to Linguistics (Summer, Autumn) and Sociology 383, Types of Linguistic Structure (Spring) round out the general philology offerings.

By the end of 1926-27, Wood had retired and had been replaced by Leonard Bloomfield (Ph.D., 1909, under Wood at Chicago). In the *Annual Register* for that academic year, published September, 1927, the "Officers of Instruction" of the Department are listed as Buck (Head), Clark, Bloomfield, and Sapir. Buck's old course number 1 has now become course number 301, retitled "Introduction to the Historical Study of Language," and the general linguistics offerings are Sapir's Sociology 282, 383, as before, and Sociology 385, "Psychology of Language." Two of Bloomfield's courses in Germanic are listed as well, German 303 Gothic (Autumn) and German 304 Old High German (Winter). In the *AR*, Bloomfield is listed as "Professor of Germanic Philology" (p.34), while Sapir, having by now been promoted to full professorship, is listed as "Professor of Anthropology and General Linguistics" as of 1927 (p.50). (It should be clear from all of the appointive titles that these are in much more specific areas than departmental names would dictate, if followed. Anthropology as a subject was still taught in the Department of Sociology, sometimes called the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, for example, and would not have its own departmental identity until early 1929.)

By 1927-28, the *Annual Register* lists the departmental "officers of instruction" as Buck, Bloomfield, and Sapir, together with a new "Instructor in Sanskrit," George V. Bobrinskoy, who had come to Chicago from Yale in 1927. Curiously, though there is an epistolary record of Buck's having offered, and Sapir's having accepted, an official appointment in the Department as of the beginning of 1928, in the 1928-29 *AR* (pp.202-3) only Buck (as Head) and Bobrinskoy are listed as officers of instruction! By the academic year 1929-30, Bobrinskoy had been promoted to Assistant Professor as of 1930, and he and Buck had been joined by Walter Pedersen (Ph.D., Yale, 1908), "Associate Professor of Comparative Philology" as of 1930, and by Buck's Research Assistant in Comparative Philology, George Sherman Lane, who would go on, after his Chicago days (Ph.D., 1930) working on Buck's massive Indo-European synonyms project, to a distinguished career as an Indo-Europeanist with a specialty in Tocharian.

The *Annual Register* having ceased publication at that point, we can follow the story of the Department through variously titled issues of the *University of Chicago Announcements*, which list faculty, degree requirements, and course offerings on an academic yearly cycle. In the *Announcements* vol.30, no. 11a, issued 5 January 1930, for "The Departments of Greek, Latin, and Comparative Philology, 1930-31," the still tripartite "Department of Comparative Philology, General Linguistics, and Indo-Iranian Philology" lists (pp. 27ff.) as officers of instruction Buck and then, by rank, Petersen, Bobrinskoy, and Lane, followed by Bloomfield and Sapir under them. (Also listed as summer visiting faculty in 1930 are Francis K. Preveden, Professor of Classics at DePaul University, Joshua Whatmough, Assistant Professor of Comparative Philology at Harvard University, and P. S. Costas, Instructor in Modern Greek. This practice of listing visitors contracted ahead of time continues.) The course listings are inclusive and capacious, given in a "Conspectus of Linguistics Courses" throughout the various named departments. They include, under the subheading "General Linguistics," Sapir's courses (now offered under a distinct "Anthropology" number) and under the subheading "Germanic Languages" Bloomfield's courses.

By the end of 1930 it was settled that Sapir would be departing for Yale as Sterling Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics in the 1931-32 academic year. Accordingly, in "The Humanities Number for the Sessions of 1931-32" (vol.31, no.9, 10 December 1930) of the *Announcements*, pp.19-21, the Department lists Buck, then recently elevated to the Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professorship, followed, in order of rank, by Petersen, Bobrinskoy, and Lane, with Bloomfield listed underneath as Professor of Germanic Philology. In the conspectus of courses that follows, under "General Linguistics" Sapir's several courses are listed, but to be taught by two new faculty members of the Department of Anthropology, Manuel J. Andrade, who came as Associate Professor, and Harry Hoijer (a Chicago Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1928 under Sapir), Instructor. Together, they offered Anthropology 220, General Introduction to Linguistics (Hoijer), Anthropology 376, Types of Linguistic Structure (Andrade, Hoijer), and Anthropology 385, Psychology of Language (Andrade). Additionally, under the rubric of "Phonetics" in the course listings, they jointly offered Anthropology 375, Phonetics. Bloomfield's courses continue to be listed under "Germanic Languages."

Interestingly, in this *Announcements* for the first time are listed (pp.121-22) the cumulative list of Ph.D.s in Comparative Philology granted under Buck, amounting to one a decade: E. H. Sturtevant in 1901, Carlos Everett Conant (died, 27 I 25) in 1911, Hans Kurath in 1920, and George Sherman Lane in 1930.

Some kind of rethinking of courses of study and degree requirements was clearly under way during the next academic year. By the time of the publication, on 25 March 1933, of *Announcements* vol. 33, no. 8, "Arts, Literature, and Science for the Sessions of 1933-34," we find that the Department is headed by Gordon Jennings Laing, a Professor of Latin, though the officers of instruction remain the same as before. More interesting is the fact that a precursor to the institution of degree-granting "committees" at Chicago is in place among the humanities departments. There are three degree-granting committees overseeing "Group Studies in the Humanities," offering all of BA, MA, and PhD degrees, requirements for which are set out at pp. 191-195. One such is the "Literature Committee," chaired by the eminent literature scholar Ronald S. Crane; another is the "History of Culture Committee," chaired by the semiotician and philosopher Charles W. Morris; the third is the "Languages Committee," chaired by none other than Leonard Bloomfield. The members of this committee include Manuel J. Andrade (Anthropology), Carl Darling Buck (Comparative Philology), Hayward Keniston (English), Clarence Edward Parmenter (Romance), and Martin Sprengling (Germanic). Note, even considering Buck's probably necessary membership, the tilt here away from any Classical or other ancient languages and toward contemporary concerns of linguistics as a field.

The conspectus of linguistic courses (pp.192-94) includes distinct rubrics for the following, in order: General Linguistics (including both the Anthropology offerings noted above and the enduring introduction to general comparative philology); Phonetics; Indo-European comparative philology; Indic and Iranian languages; Greek; Latin; Romance languages; Celtic languages; Germanic languages; English; Baltic and Slavic languages; Semitic languages; Egyptian and Coptic; and "languages of other groups." Note the progression through the ancient Indo-European field to the modern daughter branches; then out to Semitic and finally to others.

By Spring, 1934, Carl Darling Buck had retired. A new, "Divisional" organization of the graduate, as opposed to undergraduate, departments and their faculties was coming into institutional shape. In the *Announcements* vol.34, no.7, issued 10 April 1934, for "The College and The Divisions for the Sessions of 1934-45," we find (pp.168-71) a listing for the same entity as had previously had a tripartite name under Buck. This is "The Department of Linguistics," of which Leonard Bloomfield is listed as Chairman. Its officers of instruction are, in order of listing, Buck, now Ryerson DSP Emeritus and, for the time being, "Lecturer in Comparative Philology," followed by Bloomfield, Professor of Germanic Philology; Clarence Edward Parmenter, Professor of Romance Phonetics; Samuel Northrup Harper [A.B.!], Professor of Russian Language and Institutions; Walter Petersen, Associate Professor of Comparative Philology; Manuel J. Andrade, Associate Professor of Anthropology; and George V. Bobrinskoy, Assistant Professor of Sanskrit.

By the *Announcements* for College and Divisions for 1939-40, vol. 39, no.7, issued 15 March 1939, Harry Hoijer, still Instructor in Anthropology (who was to depart to become part of the founding faculty in Anthropology at UCLA the next year), had been added to the Linguistics roster. For the first time, moreover, Bloomfield, whose great book, *Language*, written at Chicago, had come out in 1933, taught a general introductory course at Chicago. He had been brought in due to Sapir's final illness to teach such a course at the Linguistic Institute at Ann Arbor in the summers of 1938 and 1939, and one presumes he thought it high time to take over the "Introduction to Linguistics" from the Department of Anthropology staff. It is listed under this title as Linguistics 330, and differentiated from the long-offered course started by Buck in 1905-06, now entitled "Introduction to the Historical Study of Language," numbered Linguistics 301 still, offered by Walter Petersen.

Bloomfield, too, like Sapir before him, was lured to Yale during the 1939-40 school year, with a Sterling Professorship tailored to his expertise – and Yale's needs – in Germanic Philology and Linguistics. (Bloomfield's old Wisconsin teacher, Eduard Prokosch, Sterling Professor of Germanic Philology, had died in late 1938; Sapir in early 1939. Bloomfield was the apotheosis of their two specialties combined.) Hence, in the *Announcements* for "The College and the Divisions for the Fiftieth Anniversary Sessions of 1940-41," vol.40, no.10, issued 25 April 1940, the Department of Linguistics, pp. 202-4, is listed without chair or head, though the officers of instruction remain Parmenter, Harper, Andrade, Bobrinskoy, and Hoijer, with Buck listed as Emeritus. Interestingly, leaving reluctantly as he did, Bloomfield offered both course number 301, "Introduction to the Historical Study of Language," Buck's old course, not his general linguistics, and two Germanics courses as a parting gift in Summer Quarter, 1940, before driving to New Haven that September.

In the wartime might-have-beens of the Department, it should be noted that in the *Announcements* for 1944-45, vol. 44, no. 8, issued 15 May 1944, along with the list (pp.159-60) of regular faculty – now reduced to Parmenter, Bobrinskoy, and George J. Metcalf, Assistant Professor of Germanic Philology and Bloomfield's replacement – there is listed Roman Jakobson as Visiting Associate Professor for Summer Quarter, 1944. Richard P. McKeon, then Dean of the Division of the Humanities, had been making inquiries about creating a first-rank Slavic Department, and, when all indicators pointed to the then underemployed Jakobson, he arranged for this invitation. Alas,

Jakobson suffered injuries including a badly broken leg in late Spring, 1944, and the visit never took place. (He was to have given Linguistics 250, Sound and Meaning in Language, and Linguistics 350, Introduction to the Study of Slavic Languages and Cultures, by the way.)

As well one should note that the Committee of which Bloomfield had been the first chairman continued to exist. In *Announcements* vol.45, no.7, issued 15 June 1945, p.150, the first among the three “Interdepartmental and Interdivisional Programs in the Humanities” was “Studies in Language and Communication,” now chaired by George Bobrinskoy. Its membership included, additionally: Ralph A. Beals, Professor of Library Science; Ernest C. Colwell, Professor of New Testament, Federated Theological Faculties; Benedict Einarson, Assistant Professor of Greek; James R. Hulbert, Professor of English; Richard P. McKeon, Professor of Greek and of Philosophy; George J. Metcalf; and Clarence E. Parmenter. With a slight variant title, we are informed of its charge: “The Committee on Studies in Linguistics and Communication [is concerned with] ... problems of symbolic expression and communication ... viewed broadly” (By the time of the 1948-49 *Announcements*, vol.48, no.4, issued 25 May 1948, a fourth such committee was added, “Analysis of Ideas and Study of Methods,” which was later to become a fiefdom of McKeon and congenial others for several decades.)

The last appearance of this Committee on Studies in Language and Communication is in the *Announcements of the Division of the Humanities* for 1951-52 (vol. 51, no. 2, issued 10 May 1951), where it is listed on p.69. It disappears thereafter.

By this time, of course, though the Department had undergone various further changes of personnel, among its members listed at pp.41-44 are Norman Anthony McQuown, for 1951-52 Assistant Professor of Linguistics and Anthropology, who had come to the University of Chicago from Hunter College in 1946 after Andrade’s death and some instability in linguistics offerings through Anthropology, and Eric Pratt Hamp, M.A., Instructor in Indo-European Linguistics, who had come in 1950 [his Harvard Ph.D. dated 1954]. These scholars, organizing a large group of cooperating others in various University departments, would be the agents of the next era of transformation of the Department of Linguistics.