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P. H. Matthews

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# INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY

A THEORETICAL STUDY  
BASED ON ASPECTS OF  
LATIN VERB  
CONJUGATION

P. H. MATTHEWS

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University of Cambridge*

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## Preface

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This is effectively the first instalment of a work which was planned in two simultaneous parts. The second part is not yet ready for submission to a publisher; the editors have persuaded me, however, that the first may usefully be published as an independent volume.

Some of my friends have expressed surprise (or was it despair?) on learning that my research into morphology had reached such a length. Inflections are not a fashionable subject for linguistic theory. Moreover, the views which I hold are ones which only an ignoramus could consider original. But there is more to linguistics, one hopes, than the incessant unveiling of new or allegedly new grammatical theories. There is, in particular, a need for philosophical elucidation. What makes a linguist prefer one treatment of a language to another? When linguists differ, how far can the causes of their difference be resolved? A facile answer is that the issues reduce to simplicity; my detailed arguments help, perhaps, to discredit this panacea. An alternative fancy is to believe that they are issues of fact: one treatment is Correct and the others are simply Wrong. Like the Anabaptists of old, one is comforted by the invalidity of all other revelations. Now of course there *are* factual questions, and there *are* questions which we can answer by simplicity alone. But between these shallows there is an area requiring deeper exploration. By selecting a small aspect of language-structure, and debating each problem as carefully as I can, I have tried to draw attention to a few of the difficulties.

My arguments are entirely addressed to my fellow structural linguists. I do not know if a pure classicist could follow the arguments; I can only say that I would be very flattered if they tried. One consequence is that some of my readers will be ignorant of Latin. I have felt it my duty to assist these readers; in particular, I have adopted a transcription which is on strictly phonetic principles (thus *kok<sup>w</sup>o:* or *koksi:* in place of 'coquo', 'coxi' in the normal spelling), and I have given translations, word-by-word glosses and other explanations where it seemed necessary. At the same time, other readers will have a better knowledge of Latin than I have. Will they bear with me if these expedients seem tiresome? It is

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hard to see what else I could do. Will they also forgive me if I refer to less than the minimum of manuals, dictionaries, and other factual contributions? The book is already over-annotated to some tastes; it is not in this theoretical context, moreover, that such classical scholarship as I possess can best be marshalled.

I would like to thank various colleagues who have helped me with this book. It began as a long work-paper; I am particularly grateful to F. R. Palmer for discouraging me from publication at that stage. Seven years ago it existed as the draft for a monograph; at that time I was much helped by comments from F. W. Householder. Fortunately, I did not like this version, and suppressed it apart from a few articles. In the past few years I have rewritten the theoretical part completely. During this rewriting I have had encouragement and comments from C. E. Bazell, R. W. P. Brasington, D. Crystal, S. C. Dik, E. C. Fudge, J. Lyons, F. R. Palmer and H. Pinkster, all of whom were kind enough to look at larger or smaller parts of the MS. To these scholars I am very grateful; they will forgive me for the passages where I still disagree. To some (to Bazell, Lyons and Palmer in particular) I would like to believe that my debt is much wider. So too an earlier debt to W. S. Allen, who gave me my first supervision in linguistics.

Most of this book was written at the University of Reading. Some sections, however, were completed at Deccan College, Poona, and another part at King's College, Cambridge, from which the MS goes to the Press. I would like to thank both colleges for their hospitality. I would also like to thank the Press for their forbearance (I have taken much longer to write this than I promised).

*March 1971*

P.H.M.