

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910953885603321
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Titolo	Historical and comparative linguistics / / Raimo Anttila
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia, : John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2009, c1989
ISBN	1-283-04725-X 9786613047250 90-272-8608-6
Edizione	[2nd ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (489 p.)
Collana	Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science.Series IV, Current issues in linguistic theory, , 0304-0763 ; ; v. 6
Altri autori (Persone)	AnttilaRaimo
Disciplina	410/.9
Soggetti	Comparative linguistics Historical linguistics
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS -- Editorial page -- Title page -- Copyright page -- PREFACE -- Table of contents -- INTRODUCTION 1988 -- APOLOGIA PRO REEDITIONE SUA -- SEMIOTICS AND CHANGE -- REFERENCES -- PART I. BACKGROUND: GENETIC LINGUISTICS IN RELATION TO GENERAL LINGUISTICS AND RELATED FIELDS -- CHAPTER 1. LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 2. WRITING AND LANGUAGE -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 3. LINGUISTIC VARIATION -- REFERENCES -- PART II. HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS: HOW DOES LANGUAGE CHANGE? -- CHAPTER 4. SOUND CHANGE -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 5. GRAMMAR CHANGE: ANALOGY -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 6. RULE CHANGE -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 7. SEMANTIC CHANGE -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 8. EXTERNAL CHANGE: BORROWING -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 9. WHY DOES LANGUAGE CHANGE? LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS -- REFERENCES -- PART III. COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS (GENERAL NOTIONS AND STRUCTURE): HOW CAN CHANGE BE REVERSED? -- CHAPTER 10. PRELIMINARIES TO THE HISTORICAL METHODS -- PHONEMIC ANALYSIS -- MORPHOPHONEMIC ANALYSIS -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 11. THE COMPARATIVE METHOD (THE CENTRAL CONCEPT) -- REFERENCES -- THE COMPARATIVE METHOD IN SYNTAX -- REFERENCES -- CHAPTER 12. INTERNAL RECONSTRUCTION --

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Sommario/riassunto

In any course of historical and comparative linguistics there will be students of different language backgrounds, different levels of linguistic training, and different theoretical orientation. This textbook attempts to mitigate the problems raised by this heterogeneity in a number of ways. Since it is impossible to treat the language or language family of special interest to every student, the focus of this book is on English in particular and Indo-European languages in general, with Finnish and its closely related languages for contrast. The tenets of different schools of linguistics, and the controversies among them, are treated eclectically and objectively; the examination of language itself plays the leading role in our efforts to ascertain the comparative value of competing theories. This revised edition (1989) of a standard work for comparative linguists offers an added introduction dealing mainly with a semiotic basis of change, a final chapter on aspects of explanation, particularly in historical and human disciplines, and added sections on comparative syntax and on the semiotic status of the comparative method.
