

Grimm, Jacob (Ludwig Carl); (b. 1785, d. 1863; German), librarian in Kassel, professor and librarian at Göttingen University (1829-1837), finally professor at Berlin University (1840-1863). Historical linguist, philologist, folklorist, anthropologist, lexicographer and Germanist, whose pioneering and enduring work is foundational in all these areas. (See Also: *Bopp, Franz, *Brugmann, Karl, *Rask, Rasmus).

Grimm was born in Hanau, one of six children (including his younger brother Wilhelm, a life-long collaborator). After studying law at Marburg, Grimm began a prolific working life, sometimes interrupted by political engagement (he and Wilhelm were dismissed from Göttingen for political protests). He spent over a third of his working life as a librarian with light duties, giving him time to write.

One of the best known of all linguists, Grimm's greatest fame came as one of the 'Brothers Grimm' (with Wilhelm), publishing collections of fairy tales, which were seen as serious contributions to the study of folklore. This was linked with Grimm's linguistics by the then widespread Romantic worldview and by his politics: both the fairy tales and his work on the history and origins of the German and Germanic languages were a link to a mythical mediaeval past; they were also a link among Germans who had suffered from foreign occupation and from the proliferation of small German statelets. Among general linguists, his fame derives from his description of the phonological changes (now known as 'Grimm's Law') which describe how Germanic consonantal systems differ spectacularly from those of other Indo-European languages (for example, English *Father* and *broTHer* correspond with Latin *Pater* and *fraTer*).

This was set out in the second edition of his monumental *Deutsche Grammatik* (= 'Germanic Grammar', 1819-1837), quite an early work at its commencement, but not his first. It forms only one part of the *Grammatik*, however, which for the first time described the historical development of the phonology, morphology and simple sentence syntax of all Germanic languages. The *Grammatik* established historical work (particularly historical phonology) as the centrepiece of linguistics, following *Bopp's pioneering comparative work, and providing the foundations for the neogrammarians' sound laws (see *Brugmann). While his results have often since been revised, the concepts Grimm discovered, shaped or named (such as *auslaut*, *umlaut* and *ablaut*) often still underlie linguistic work, diachronic and synchronic, Germanic and general.

He published much other work, typically descriptive rather than theoretical, but paradigm-creating, nonetheless. The last years of his life were largely spent working on another key work, the vast *Deutsches Wörterbuch* ('German Dictionary', 1854-1960) which he founded jointly with Wilhelm. This was the first such compendious (and non-prescriptive) dictionary on historical principles.

With *Rask and *Bopp, whose work he valued, Grimm is seen as a pioneer of nineteenth century scientific uniformitarian historical linguistics, which eventually led to the development of modern formal linguistics. He was certainly the founder of German(ic) historical linguistics, and his work was immediately recognised as crucial by his contemporaries. He survived Wilhelm by four years and was still working on their Dictionary when he died at the age of 78.

Chapman, S. & Routledge, P. (eds) (2005) *Key Thinkers in Linguistics and the Philosophy of Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp 114-116.

Primary works

Grimm, Jacob (1819-1837; 2nd edition of volume one 1822). *Deutsche Grammatik* (4 vols). Göttingen: Dieterich'sche Buchhandlung. Reprinted (1999) London: Routledge.

Grimm, Jacob & Grimm, Wilhelm (and later collaborators) (1854-1960). *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (16 vols). Leipzig: Hirzel.

Further reading

Collinge, N.E. (1985). 'Grimm's Law' and 'Appendix II'. In N.E. Collinge. *The Laws of Indo-European*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Koerner, E.F.K. (1989). 'Jacob Grimm's place in the foundation of linguistics as a science'. In E.F.K. Koerner. *Practicing Linguistic Historiography*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Morpurgo Davies, Anna (1997). *History of Linguistics*. Vol. 4: *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics*. London: Longman.

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NB: The (*See Also's*) at the start, and asterisked names in the text refer only to other linguists who feature in *Key Thinkers in Linguistics and the Philosophy of Language*. It's a good book – buy it!

Further further reading and notes

(Titles and things which I could not include in the published version due to constraints on space: 500 words in total...)

- There is a quite vast literature on Jacob (and Wilhelm) Grimm, much of which is well worth consulting. One of many interesting pieces is Wilhelm Scherer's (1879) 'Jacob Grimm' *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, Vol. 9, 678-688 (reprinted in Thomas Sebeok (ed.) *Portraits of Linguists*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 154-169). Scherer piece is also now interesting from a historical perspective in its own right, of course; Sebeok's book is a great source for the history of linguistics.
- Morpurgo Davies (1997) is a wonderful book, and highly to be recommended as a discussion of nineteenth century linguistics; also well worth consulting is R.H. Robins' (1967, fourth edition 1997) *A Short History of Linguistics*, London: Longman.
- As for 'Grimm's Law'... his fame through this is perhaps ironic, as his own main interests lay in morphology and the lexicon, and, as has been noted by many people in many places, the crucial correspondences had been noted previously by others. It is normal to mention Rasmus Rask's (1818) discussion of the topic, but Lehmann (1993, 290) points out that Schlegel (1806) also discusses some of the simple correspondences. (Winfred Lehmann's (1993) *Theoretical bases of Indo-European linguistics*, London: Routledge is another excellent book, which discusses much of the history of our understanding of *Indo-European*, and is also well worth consulting.
- Grimm's (1848) *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, Leipzig: S. Hirzel is arguably also a key primary work.
- The reference to Collinge (1985) above is to one of the best recentish discussions of 'Grimm's Law'. This clearly but concisely sets out a fair understanding of the process(es) and its/their interaction with the 'Glottalic Theory' of Indo-European consonantism. Collinge's conclusion, however, that Grimm's Law is pretty much dead is too extreme, I think. My ideas on this are presented in: Honeybone, P. (2002) *Germanic obstruent lenition: some mutual implications of theoretical and historical phonology*, PhD dissertation: University of Newcastle upon Tyne. This version of the current piece corrects a misleading description of the phenomenon in previous versions (thanks to John Joseph for the impetus for this).