EDITORIAL

For a journal that specializes in diachronic matters, and specifically issues of language change, it is not unusual to have to admit that change is inevitable, and in this issue, some changes in the journal itself are taking shape.

First, I have taken over as Executive Editor for the journal, and so will try to follow in the excellent tradition of the only other head editor that this journal has known in its 15 years of existence, E.F. Konrad Koerner. This task will not be an easy one, in that Konrad's tenure in that position, and thus his service to the journal as well as to the field, was nothing short of remarkable, as he built *Diachronica* up from scratch to a place among the leading journals in historical linguistics. I confess to being somewhat humbled by my selection to follow in his footsteps and hope that I can achieve even a modicum of the success that Konrad has in his 15 years with the journal.

Fortunately, though, Konrad will continue to be active in the editorial management of *Diachronica*, but in a reduced role that he will define for himself. As a result, we have added to the editorial 'junta' that runs the journal, with Joseph Salmons ("Joe"), Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, taking over my former role as Review Editor. The full editorial junta therefore now includes myself, Konrad, Joe, and the ever able Sheila Embleton of York University, Toronto (see the adjoining photo of the group, taken on the occasion of an editorial meeting at York in June of 1998).

These changes at the top do not affect the key aspect of running this journal, namely a commitment to publishing the highest quality work in the study of language diachronically and thus in the examination, description, and explanation of language change. We feel strongly that there is a need for a journal that addresses issues in historical linguistics where the focus is on the diachronic dimension of language itself, rather than synchronic studies of particular historical stages of languages. For this reason, *Diachronica* has been dedicated in the past — and will continue to be in the future — to publishing research that leads to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and processes by which languages evolve and develop through time, whether that diachronic movement involves change or stability.
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editor, I hope to make clear what the plans the editors have for the journal as
planning through time, to enunciate various
will be established, and in general to
where the reader can be informed about

so to extend my personal thanks to my
be this journal a success, to the editorial
the review process, to the folks at John
their continued support of Diachronica
ual, and to the readers whose interest in

1. Introduction
A common conception of Chinese is that most of its words are mono-
syllable historically but disyllabic in modern times. Since Chinese lost over
50% of its syllables in the past 1000 years, a standard explanation for the
increase of disyllabic words is that they are created to avoid homonyms. I
argue instead that, although disyllabic words have increased recently,
Chinese has always had many disyllabic words. In addition, the increase of
disyllabic words is not primarily due to homonym avoidance, but due to an
increase in new vocabulary, most of which consists of polysyllabic borrow-
ings, polymorphemic translations, and polymorphemic creations, which
cannot be represented by monosyllabic words. In support of the present
analysis, I offer illustration that the use of disyllabic words is not dictated
by homonym avoidance but by metrical structure. I also discuss a few other
approaches to disyllabic words in Chinese.

In Section 2, I review the basic facts about disyllabic words in Chinese.
In Section 3, I discuss previous approaches to disyllabic words and point out
their inadequacies. In Section 4, I offer the present analysis. I argue that the
creation of disyllabic words can be influenced by functional considerations,
but the use of disyllabic words is determined by metrical structure. In
addition, metrical requirement can prompt the truncation of a disyllabic
word to a monosyllabic one, and the stretching of a monosyllabic word into a
disyllabic one. In Section 5, I discuss some further issues and in Section 6,
I give the summary.

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Morris Halle, Brian Joseph, Yafei Li, Bingfu Lu, the audience at the 6th Annual Workshop on
Comparative Linguistics, and an anonymous Diachronica reviewer. I also thank Marc Pierce
for the German and Pam Beddor and Chutamanee Onuwan for the French abstract.