



ANNELIESE MAIER RESEARCH PRIZES AWARD CEREMONY ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG (GERMANY)

On 11 September 2014 the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation awarded the Anneliese Maier Research Prizes in Hamburg for the third time. The prizes were each worth €250,000 and were awarded to researchers in the humanities and the social sciences. The seven award winners were selected from among sixty nominees from seventeen countries.

The Anneliese Maier Research Award is presented to world-class researchers from abroad from the fields of the humanities and social sciences whose academic achievements have been internationally recognised in their research area. The award winners independently choose the people with whom they would like to collaborate in Germany and the collaborative research projects last for up to five years. The research award is endowed with 250,000 euros.

The aim is to sustainably internationalise the fields of humanities and social sciences in Germany. In addition to researchers who already number among the established leaders in their subject, the award is also aimed at researchers who are not yet so advanced in their careers but are already internationally established figures in the academic world and are expected to sustainably shape humanities and social sciences in Germany through long-term collaborations.

Nominations are made by researchers in Germany; candidates cannot nominate themselves. The award winners are expected to conduct active research over the coming years with great academic influence. Particular importance is attached the nomination of qualified female researchers.

The award is named after the German philosopher and science historian Anneliese Maier (born 1905 in Tübingen, died 1971 in Rome). She studied philosophy, physics and mathematics in Berlin, Zurich and Paris and received her Ph.D. in 1929 on completing her dissertation on Kant's categories of quality. She was unable to complete her habilitation for political reasons during the Nazi era. For a researcher of her time, her biography is extraordinarily international. Maier conducted research on the emergence of modern scientific thought from the 14th to 18th centuries, particularly in the natural sciences. She was awarded the title

of Professor by the Minister of Education and the Arts of North-Rhine Westphalia in 1951 and was appointed as a scientific member of the Max Planck Society in 1954. She was also a corresponding member of the Academies of Science in Mainz, Göttingen and Munich.

The inaugural Anneliese Maier Research Award was presented to seven researchers in 2011. The Humboldt Foundation annually grants up to eight of the Anneliese Maier Research Awards funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Mary Esther Beckman

Language acquisition and change

Linguist Mary E. Beckman from the USA is recognised as a world leader in her subject and one of the pioneers of laboratory phonology. Her work investigates, for example, the systematic relationship between individual first language acquisition and long-term language change. Her insights into language acquisition in childhood have also helped to improve our understanding of speech processing in adults. Mary E. Beckman conducts comparative research in languages such as Korean, Japanese, Greek and English, tracking down cross-cutting phenomena. Her role in Munich will be to participate in and help initiate various national and, especially, international collaborations.

Nominating university: LMU Munich, Institute of Phonetics and Speech Processing

Host: Prof. Dr Jonathan Harrington

Prof. Dr Mary E. Beckman, born in 1953, has taught at Ohio State University, USA, since 1985 and been a professor of linguistics there since 1993. After completing her doctorate at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, in 1984, she worked at AT&T Bell Laboratories in New Jersey in the Department of Linguistics and Artificial Intelligence Research. She was one of the initiators of the Association for Laboratory Phonology and has received numerous awards, such as the Ohio State University Harlan Hatcher Arts and Sciences Distinguished Faculty Award in 2011 and the Humanities Distinguished Professorship in 2003.

GRIMM'S LAW AND THE EVOLUTION OF PHONOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Modern linguistics began with the development of a model of pronunciation differences across related languages. A key landmark is Jacob Grimm's table of correspondences among consonant sounds in Old High German, Gothic, and Greek. Grimm's description of these correspondences, now known collectively as "Grimm's Law", established 3 critical ideas. First, it is the systematic relationships, and not any raw similarities among the consonants, that argue for historical links among the three languages.

Second, the relationships are systematic because the words in the sets were transmitted generation-by-generation via different lines of descent from a common ancestral speech community. Third, Grimm described the relationships as historic shifts along a graded scale. More recent research has filled in the following details.

Shifts like Grimm's Law have been documented for other languages, including an ongoing shift in Japanese that will be described in this paper. The graded nature of such shifts is based in physical parameters that infants must learn to control in order to speak. In saying a word that begins with a "t" or "g", the talker raises the tongue tip or bunches up the tongue body to momentarily close off airflow. Air pressure builds up in the cavity behind the closure and is released in a loud puff of air when the talker then lowers the tongue tip or flattens the tongue body.

The voiceless plosives "t" and "k" differ from the voiced plosives "d" and "g" in how the talker coordinates the tongue gesture with other gestures, such as posturing the vocal folds to make a resonating valve at the larynx. Infants must learn to produce the appropriate gestures and to coordinate them appropriately to be understood by other speakers.

Also, variation in pronunciation is ubiquitous. Every speech community that has been examined closely shows a range of audibly different ways

in which gestures are produced and coordinated. These audible differences are associated with socially meaningful differences in speaking style and speaker identity. For example, the patterns of coordination between tongue gesture and laryngeal gesture for "t"/"k" versus "d"/"g" in many languages (e.g., English, Japanese) differ between formal speech and casual speech and between men's speech and women's speech. Moreover, when there are differences between men's and women's patterns, mothers might use the men's pattern instead of the women's pattern in talking to their baby boys.

In short, children must learn not only how to pronounce words intelligibly, they must also learn how to vary their pronunciations appropriately to signal socially meaningful differences. By studying patterns of systematic variation over time and by comparing older talkers to middle-aged talkers, as well as young adults to children, we can begin to see how systematic variation within a speech community can lead to systemic shifts in pronunciation over the history of a culture.

Relevant Publications

- Mary E. Beckman, Fangfang Li, Eun Jong Kong, & Jan Edwards. 2014. Aligning the timelines of phonological acquisition and change. *Laboratory Phonology*, 5(1): 151-194.
- Eun Jong Kong, Mary E. Beckman, & Jan Edwards. 2012. Voice onset time is necessary but not always sufficient to describe acquisition of voiced stops: The cases of Greek and Japanese. *Journal of Phonetics*, 40(6): 725-744.
- Mary E. Beckman & Jan Edwards. 2010. Generalizing over lexicons to predict consonant mastery. *Laboratory Phonology*, 1(2): 319-343.

*Віце-президент Гумбольдт-Клубу Україна
Петлюченко Наталія (Одеса):
npetljutschenko@onu.edu.ua*