Challenges for Computer-Assisted Language Comparison

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CALL

In contrast to purely computational approaches in historical linguistics that try to do without human annotation, computer-assisted language comparison aims to reconcile computational and classical approaches in historical language comparison by providing interactive workflows in which data are passed back and forth between humans and machines (List 2017). Computational approaches are mostly employed to preprocess linguistic data, while interfaces then allow experts to refine and correct computational annotation.

While some workflows and tools have been published that illustrate the benefits of computer-assisted as opposed to purely computer-based or purely manual approaches in historical linguistics (Wu et al. 2020; Hill and List 2017; Segerer and Flavier 2015; Starostin 2000), there remain many tasks in historical linguistics where computational and computer-assisted approaches are lacking so far. These include, for example, *semantic reconstruction* (Urban 2015), *phonological reconstruction* (Anttila 1972), and *sound law induction* and the establishment of *relative chronologies* (Fortson 2014).

For the workshop that will — pending final evaluation — be organized as part of the 27th International Conference on Historical Linguistics in Santiago de Chile (18-22 August, 2025), we invite contributions from both classical and computational linguistics who present open problems and potential solutions in historical language comparison that have so far not been addressed sufficiently in computer-assisted approaches. Our hope is that we find a good mix of contributions in which classical linguists present problems that cannot be addressed by computational approaches and illustrate how they solve them manually, while we also hope for contributions by computational linguists who share recently developed workflows that can be applied to data in historical linguistics.

DETAILS

Those interested in contributing to the workshop are kindly asked to send an abstract in the form to ichl25@calclab.org attaching the abstract in the form of a DOCX document with an accompanying PDF, in anonymized form, providing your name and affiliation in the email. We will then review the contributions with an internal team of reviewers and inform all who submitted an abstract until **30 of September 2024** about the outcome. In case of success, the workshop will be held at the ICHL conference in Santiago de Chile.

When submittin gyour abstract in DOCX form, please make sure that the abstract has no more than 800 words in length, excluding references (see also the official ICHL requirements for details at https://ichl27santiago.cl/about-us/). Abstracts can be submitted in English and Spanish.

References

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