

# LAD Conferences

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L a b o r a t o i r e d e r e c h e r c h e s u r l e s a s y m é t r i e s d ' i n t e r f a c e s

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## Wackernagel's so-called 'Law' and the Study of Diachronic Syntax

Wackernagel's Law is often said to be the first, and for many Indo-Europeanists, e.g., still the most significant achievement of linguists in the domain of diachronic syntax. Its influence has spread well beyond its original narrow concerns (the refutation of a proposed etymology for the Sanskrit particle 'sma'); it has become an oft-invoked concept in discussions of clitic distribution in a typologically diverse set of the languages of the world.

An examination of Wackernagel's original discussion of the phenomenon reveals a surprisingly modern (for 1897) conception of certain aspects of the nature of syntax and syntactic argumentation. However, a detailed consideration of the actual empirical foundations for Wackernagel's Law unfortunately reveals that there is simply no such phenomenon in the languages Wackernagel was writing about.

Wackernagel's Law turns out to be the epiphenomenal by-product of well-motivated and independent principles of grammar. This talk will explicate what these principles are and show how a more accurate conception of the mechanisms which underlie clitic distribution in archaic IE languages allow for a straightforward account for certain diachronic developments regarding clitics.

**Mark Hale** received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from Harvard University in 1987. He was on the Harvard faculty from 1987 until 1994, coming to Concordia University, Montreal in that year. He is now a Professor of Linguistics at Concordia.

### Selected Publications

- Hale, M. and Reiss, C. 2008, The Phonological Enterprise. Oxford University Press.
- Hale, M. 2007, Historical Linguistics: Theory and Method. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hale, M. and Kisko, M. 2007, The Phonetics-Phonology Interface and the Acquisition of Perseverant Underspecification, in Handbook on Interface Research in Linguistics, (Ramchand, G. and Reiss, C. eds.), Oxford University Press.
- Hale, M., Kisko, M. and Reiss, C. 2007, Microvariation, Variation, and the Features of Universal Grammar. *Lingua* 117.4. 2007.

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