

21st International Morphology Meeting

28–30 August 2024, WU Vienna

Call for Papers

As in the past, the next Viennese IMM will again be a thematically open venue hosting papers on all kinds of topics related to morphology. Workshops up to a limit of eight papers are welcome on any topic in morphology, excluding the meeting's main topic.

This time, the main topic will be **“Historical morphology and morphological theory”**.

While the first 100 years of the language sciences concentrated on the historical study of languages to the point of exclusivity, with the advent of structuralism and later generative grammar, the synchronic approach became dominant in the middle of the 20th century. Several decades ago, it may even have seemed as if historical linguistics was on the wane, but new generations of linguists have rediscovered the diachronic study of language, not as an end in itself, but with an eye to what historical linguistics can contribute to our understanding of human language in general. The dynamics of language change in fact often provides privileged access to the inner workings of language. In an endeavor to elaborate a comprehensive theory of human language, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics and the study of language acquisition, language typology and grammatical description complement each other in a complex interplay. If we understand why languages change continually, and why they do so in certain ways and not others, we have gone a long way in getting a grip on the nature of human language.

Morphology is present in human languages to vastly different degrees, ranging from just some compounding in highly isolating languages to the morphological exuberance of polysynthetic languages. It has been called a luxury, a logically unnecessary part of human language, and some theories of language have even tried to dissolve this nuisance in phonology, syntax, and semantics. Instead of banning the troublemaker, however, it could be more fruitful to try to explain why morphology arises in language after language, and why it evolves in certain ways but not in others. Once we have answered these and related questions, our understanding of human language will be greatly enhanced.

Participants who want to contribute to the central topic of the meeting are kindly asked not to lose sight of this general-linguistic perspective and to make it clear how their case study relates to it.