Introduction

Raymond Hickey

A cursory glance at recently published books on linguistics shows that the theme of language change is as much an object of interest among linguists as it has ever been. In the history of the discipline the main concern has been with language reconstruction, in the classical Neogrammarian sense, and this achieved its clearest theoretical statement in Herman Paul (1975 [1880]). The nineteenth-century concern with the gradual and wholesale mutation of sound systems was to lead to dissatisfaction at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the establishment of the structuralist paradigm, first in Europe and then in America, the synchronic perspective dominated. The structuralist paradigm of the first half of the twentieth century was important in that it led to a shift in focus from phonology and morphology, typical of Indo-European studies, to encompass other levels of language. However, despite the theoretical reorientation introduced by Chomsky in the late 1950s, the majority of linguistic discussions were based on data from present-day languages. In the late 1960s the application of generative grammar to concerns in historical linguistics was heralded by Robert King's 1969 monograph on the subject. In the 1970s much activity arose in connection with diachronic syntax (Li 1975, 1977; Lightfoot 1979; see also Fischer, van Kemenade, Koopman and van der Wurff 2000 as well as Pintzuk, Tsoulas and Warner 2001). While disagreement was quickly evident, the main thrust of the research became immediately obvious: the concern was primarily with the principles of language change and only secondarily with language reconstruction (for a recent interpretation, see Durie and Ross 1996). This interest in the way languages change was engendered by works such as Lass 1980, *On explaining language change*. The title reflects the concern then and now: the illumination of the principles which determine the dynamic nature of language. This interest among scholars has continued over the past two decades.

The investigation of language change has taken place within certain theoretical frameworks. Two others should be mentioned here. The first is language typology, which with the project under Joseph Greenberg at Stanford University in the 1970s (see Greenberg 1978), experienced a great expansion of interest in the details of typology far beyond simple language classification. This interest

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was soon to develop a diachronic dimension and since then studies in this field have been explicitly concerned with typological shifts. Among the more recent works broadly in this vein are Nichols (1992), Campbell (1998) and Croft (2000).

Some recent developments in linguistics are by their very nature diachronic. Perhaps the most salient of these is grammaticalisation theory which seeks to account for shifts in the formal status of linguistic elements throughout history, and in particular to make generalisations from data to typical pathways of language change (Hopper and Traugott 1993; Pagliuca 1994).

The second theoretical framework concerned with language change is of course that of sociolinguistics. From its beginning as an independent field within linguistics, established by the seminal work of William Labov in the 1960s, the issue of change resulting from the inherent variation in the social use of language was a central concern. As sociolinguistics was concerned with minute variation in present-day varieties of language, its attention was naturally drawn to linguists who were also concerned with small but observable change, that is with the Neogrammarians of the nineteenth century (Labov 1981, 1994, 2001).

The significance of sociolinguistics for the study of language change can hardly be overestimated. It led to the locus of change being established firmly with speakers (and not with a language system which of course can only be an abstraction of the knowledge of speakers). Sociolinguistics also established new standards in the methodology of data collection and data evaluation. Apart from extrapolating from present-day varieties to historical ones, there also arose a specific direction of historical sociolinguistics (Romaine 1982), a line of research which has been characterised by particular activity in the past two decades.

The rise of other new directions in linguistics led to their being applied to language change. This has been the case, for instance, with various developments in theoretical phonology. It is probably fair to say that every model of phonology, which has been developed in the past forty years, has been applied to various sets of intractable data from the history of English.

The chapters of the present volume are intended to reflect the areas of language and approaches to language change which are currently topical. The initial chapters are concerned with theoretical issues, such as the chapter by Peter Matthews on Chomsky's distinction between I and E language. Frederick Newmeyer deals in his chapter with a recurring issue in studies of language change, formal and functional motivation. The contribution by Jean Aitchison looks at metaphorical language and David Denison examines the progress of language change and its representation in S-curves. Richard Hogg looks at suppletion, especially with regard to established changes in the history of English.

There are two phonological studies on two central concerns in the history of Germanic sound systems, the major English vowel shift, treated by April McMahon, and umlaut, dealt with by Gregory Iverson and Joseph Salmons.

Among the models of language change which have of late been the object of great interest among linguists is grammaticalisation which, while reaching back to at least the beginning of the twentieth century, has been given a formal framework within which it is now interpreted. The chapter by David Lightfoot looks critically at grammaticalisation while that by Elizabeth Closs Traugott examines subjectification/intersubjectification and its role in speaker exchanges.

Two chapters in the present volume concern themselves specifically with spoken language and language change. The chapter by James Milroy sees the role of the speaker as central and Raymond Hickey examines the scenario of new dialect formation with regard to the genesis of later varieties of English outside Britain (New Zealand English).

The importance attributed to contact in studies of language change has been addressed by many scholars in recent years (see Thomason 2001), some backgrounding contact as a factor in change (Lass 1997) and others demanding an objective reassessment of language contact. The chapter by Markku Filppula returns to the contrast between internal and external factors, this time with much data from Irish English. Malcolm Ross brings his interest and knowledge in this sphere to a consideration of contact in the prehistory of Papuan languages.

Broader questions of language organisation and typology are reflected in two chapters in this book, one by Bernard Comrie on typology and reconstruction and the other on reanalysis by language learners and typological change by Raymond Hickey.

When producing a book on such a popular topic as language change, it is difficult to strike on a title which has not been used before. Furthermore, the title is naturally intended to reflect the contents of the book. The present title was chosen after much deliberation and consultation with others. The editor feels that it reflects the common strand of thought which runs through the chapters. However, there is one reservation which should be made explicit here: the word *motives* in the title implies a degree of agency which may not be quite the intention of each contributor. The use of *motives* here is intended in an inclusive sense: it covers internal and external forces in language change while also encompassing the behaviour of speakers, though usually on an unconscious level.

Among the many publications broadly located in diachronic linguistics there have been some in which an author or group of contributors have decided to stand back for a moment and take stock of what insights have been reached in the field, where disagreement exists and what questions are still in need of answering. The present volume has been conceived in this spirit and can hopefully contribute, to whatever extent, to our understanding of the subject.

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Part I

The phenomenon of language change

1   On change in 'E-language'

Peter Matthews

In a view that is widespread among linguists, change in language is not simply change in 'speech': what is affected is 'a language', and by that is meant a system, at an underlying level, that in any community constrains the forms that speech behaviour can take. As a system changes so the speech in that community, which is partly determined by it, also changes. But a historian is not concerned directly with observed shifts in how people behave. We are seen instead as trying to explain how languages, as underlying systems, change from one state to another. We may speculate that they are subject to specific structural laws. We may posit laws of history by which changes in their structure have to follow one route rather than another. In this light, we develop theories in historical linguistics of a sophistication quite unheard of in most other fields of history.

The distinction between speech and language goes back to Saussure, and arguably beyond. In the terms, however, in which Chomsky has recast it, every individual speaker has what he calls an 'I-language', and the underlying changes are among I-languages developed by a changing population in successive periods. In any individual, the one formed in childhood will determine, in part, how that individual will speak; and that speech, in turn, will be part of the experience by which new members of the community form their own I-languages. When I-languages are different, we will expect to see shifts in the way a population speaks. In corresponding terminology, these will be shifts in an 'E-language': in a language as it is 'externalised'; but our primary concern is not, in this view, with E-language. I-languages are seen as subject to laws. In Chomsky's account, their structure is at its 'core' constrained by our genetic inheritance. For Chomsky himself, the central problem is then to explain how languages can vary. For historians who follow this lead, it is to explain how speakers in one period can develop an I-language different from the ones developed in an earlier period.

The answer must, in part, lie in the speech that they experience. Let us suppose, for example, that a word is borrowed from a neighbouring language. In Saussurean terms, this is an element in a new 'état de la langue'; in Chomsky's terms, there is at least an additional lexical entry in the minds of new speakers.

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But how does it come to be there? The 'language' we are positing would not, at
one stage, have included it. Therefore, to the extent that speech is determined
by that system, it too would not have included it. But then, despite that, it
would be borrowed by some speakers; others would follow their example;
and, in time, it would become an element indistinguishable from others in the
speech that children were exposed to. It would therefore become part of the
'language' as they came to know it; and this is again the system that would be
reflected in their speech from then on. In such cases at least, it seems that, for
the underlying system to be different, speech must change first. In Chomskyan
terms, a difference in I-language would then follow from a difference in the
experience on which its development is based.

A conclusion like this is again quite widely implied. But it is reasonable to ask,
at that point, why a change in language has to be conceived of at two separate
levels. The word, in cases like this, would be borrowed by some speakers,
whose example would be followed by other speakers. These could as naturally
include those of new generations. Why are changes not straightforwardly at just
one level?

Let us turn for comparison to another field of social history. As speech
changes so too, for example, do the things that people drink; and, once upon a
time, no one in Britain drank tea. Therefore, if we must talk after the manner
of linguists, we will say that the community's drinking habits were determined,
in part, by an underlying system in which tea was not an element. Then some
members came into contact with societies whose systems, we will say, were
different, and, despite the one in which we say they were brought up, they
acquired a habit of tea-drinking from them. This habit they brought home and
introduced to other members of their own society. But these at first were people
who, like them, would have to have been brought up to the earlier system. So, if
they too started drinking tea, it would be because, despite that system, they were
curious or it was recommended to them; because it was a new fashion; because
they found they liked it. Such explanations bear directly on the behaviour of
specific individuals, in response to that of other individuals. Then, at a later
stage, some members of the community would be familiar with tea-drinking
from their childhood. Therefore, if we still talk in the manner of linguists, we
will say that their behaviour is constrained by a new system of drinking habits,
in which tea, although in practice some might never touch it, had a place like
that which it has had since. They would thus have 'internalised' a set of rules
concerning times and circumstances in which it was drunk, what forms of silver
or crockery were used in drinking it, and so on. But it is not at all clear why
we should be obliged to talk in that way. Is it not sufficient to say simply that
some people started to drink tea, at specific times or in specific circumstances,
using specific kinds of vessel, and other people imitated them? This explanation
is again in terms of the behaviour of individuals, in response to that of other

individuals. What else is there, that we have to explain in terms of changes at an underlying level?

But when it comes to change in language, linguists do talk in just such a manner. The issue is an old one, with which Roger Lass, to whom this essay is dedicated, has long been familiar. But recent work, ostensibly at least Chomskyan, has raised it in what seems to be a new form.

Let us begin with Ian Roberts's conception of a 'step' in syntax. The context in which it was defined is that of Chomsky's theory as it developed in the 1980s, and the changes that were of special interest were those in which a parameter of 'Universal Grammar' could be seen as reset. These are, as Roberts put it, 'diachronic relations among I-languages' (1993: 159). An E-language was described, in contrast, as 'some set or corpus of sentences' (158), and another kind of relation is, accordingly, 'between the E-language of one generation . . . and the I-language of a subsequent generation'. A step, however, is a mere relation between E-languages. This is, as Roberts saw it, 'the traditional notion of change', and can involve 'the appearance of a new construction, or a significant change in the frequency of a construction, in a set of texts'. But when 'a language takes a new step' this does not 'necessarily imply' a change (in alternative terminology) in 'the grammar'. Changes in the 'traditional' sense are thus the nearest equivalent, in linguistics, of a change in actual habits of drinking. Their explanation must, in part at least, be independent of I-languages or 'grammars', since these may not change. But, of course, when such a step is taken, the experience of a later generation of speakers will be different. Therefore the 'grammar', as they develop it, may, in the light of their experience, be different also.

I will return to Roberts's formulation in a moment. But a theory of change in 'grammars' has also been developed, for some twenty years, by David Lightfoot. Since 1990 he too has appealed to Chomsky's theory of parameters; and, for most resettings, we must again envisage differences in the speech experienced by successive generations of children. These must be due to 'nongrammatical factors' (1999: 225). 'Some changes', more precisely, 'take place while grammars remain constant' (1991: 160), relating, as he put it, 'to the ways in which grammars are used rather than to their internal structure' (1991: 166). These might be 'explained by claims about language contact or socially defined speech fashions' (1999: 166) or, as in his first book on syntactic change, by 'foreign influence, expressivity and "after-thought"' (1979: 381). But, once they happen, changes in the speech that children hear may subsequently 'trigger' changes in the 'grammar' itself.

Two questions naturally arise. The first concerns the kinds of 'triggering' change we must allow for. In what ways, for example, can the speech of a community be influenced, independently of 'grammars' that its members are already said to have, by 'socially defined speech fashions'? What kinds of 'step', in

Roberts's definition, can be explained entirely by what Lightfoot calls a 'non-grammatical' factor?

Whatever the answer, these are changes that affect the speech of individuals, regardless of their 'grammars', in response to their perception of the speech of other individuals. It is therefore reasonable, again, to ask what other explanation is needed. What is a change in language other than, in Lightfoot's words, a change in 'socially defined speech fashions'?

The first question cries out for an answer. But, although such theories are ostensibly Chomskyan, it seems clear that the relation of E-language to I-language cannot be as Chomsky himself originally conceived it. In his account, the former was 'the object of study in most of traditional or structuralist grammar or behavioral psychology'; and, since different structuralists, for a start, did not define 'a language' in the same way, that is perhaps not wholly illuminating. But whatever the definition of E-language, it was 'now regarded as an epiphenomenon at best' (Chomsky 1986: 25). For Roberts, as we have seen, it was 'some set or corpus of sentences'; for Lightfoot, in a passage I have not yet cited, it is 'external linguistic production' (1999: 66). But it is of the essence of their theory that such external production, or the character of such sets of sentences, can change independently of 'grammar' or I-language. Therefore, if this is what Chomsky also meant by an E-language, it cannot be merely epiphenomenal.

If we grant this, we are left with a theory that in part at least is like the one developed by Eugenio Coseriu (1958) in the heyday of European structuralism. I have remarked on this parallel elsewhere (2001: 114f., 150f.), and will not labour it. But 'a language', in Coseriu's account, could be identified not only as a system, but as a system plus a set of 'norms' by which it is realised. The system of Latin included, for example, a *k* phoneme. But there were also norms by which it was realised, variably as, among other things, a front velar or a back velar. Change in 'a language' can then have its origin in individual departures from a norm. For example, a phoneme that was normally realised by a velar might sometimes have been realised, before front vowels, by an affricate. This might increasingly become a new norm; but, at that stage, such a change was still at the level of realisation only. Only later might the system itself change, as in the history of Romance, to a state in which the affricates realise a new phoneme.

In Coseriu's account the system was one of 'possibilities': it distinguished 'routes', or ways of speaking, that are 'open' to a speaker from others that implicitly are 'closed' (1962: 98). His examples were not from syntax; but the structures constituting an I-language will, in a similar sense, define a set of possible forms of sentences. Some arrangements of words, to speak in the most neutral manner, will be open and others closed, all else being equal, to the speaker whose language it is. But the frequency with which an open route is taken may then vary independently. A specific arrangement of words might

come to be 'used', for example, much more rarely. This would be one kind of step in Roberts's definition: 'a significant change', in his terms, 'in the frequency of a construction'. In Coseriu's theory, it would again be a change in norms by which constructions are realised. But, like any such step, it affects the speech to which a child of a new generation is exposed. If the construction is rare they may no longer have sufficient 'evidence', from what they hear, that the possibility is open. Therefore they may take it to be closed; and, with whatever accompanying repercussions, the 'language' they develop may come to exclude it. In this way, changes in the frequency of constructions, due to no more than a shift originally in usage, may be claimed, in Lightfoot's terminology, to trigger 'catastrophic' changes at the level of the 'grammar'. As Coseriu had put it earlier, the norms that a community follows may change to the point at which a system 'overturns' (1962: 107).

To what extent, then, might E-language, as determined by I-languages and an accompanying set of 'norms', change independently of I-languages themselves? In Coseriu's account, a change in norms would be within the 'possibilities' determined by the system. Each construction would represent a 'possibility', just as, in a case he did discuss, a pattern of word formation (1962: 78–9). But the system itself did not determine the range of words formed in a certain way. It would be a matter of norms that, for example, a noun formed from *reasonable* is realised as *reasonableness* not *reasonability*. Nor might the system determine, for example, which verbs take specific patterns of complementation. That too might be a matter of norms, and that too might change independently. The system itself would then change when new 'possibilities' are added or old 'possibilities' disappear. For example, English did not at one time have a productive formation in *-ee* (*employee, trainee*, and so on); as soon as it did, the system had to be in a new state.

But is the generativist theory quite the same? A step, in Roberts's definition, can again be a change in the frequency of a construction. But it can also be the 'appearance' of a new one. Is this also a step that does not 'necessarily imply' a change in the 'grammar'? Roberts did not confirm at this point that it was. But, if it could be, it would be a change in norms that would itself change what was 'possible' for a speaker. Only in the next stage, when it would have affected the experience of new members of the community, might the 'grammar' come to allow it.

How then do these theories account for new constructions? One answer is that they might arise directly through a process of reanalysis. A new generation of speakers would accordingly be said to have developed a 'grammar' based on reinterpretation of the speech heard from their elders. They could also be said to follow indirectly, when a parameter is reset for other reasons. In Lightfoot's account, parameters are set in accordance with specific 'cues' in speech that children experience. If a cue becomes, for example, rarer they will be set