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Language Variation and Change in The English History

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April 2018

Dedication

To our family and friends

Acknowledgements

We owe an immense debt of gratitude to our supervisor **Lec. Lubna Ali** for her sound advice and careful guidance contributed to the completion of this paper.

Also ,we would like to express our heart felt gratitude and appreciation to our friends for providing the needed advice and encouragement.

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Abstract

Language is the methods by which people learn, interface and bond. Both verbal and non-verbal types of language impart inconspicuous subtleties that influence the significance of words and expressions. Language likewise has numerous and social uses, for example, implying bunch characters, social stratification, and in addition social prepping and excitement. Languages advance and differentiate after some time, and the historical backdrop of their advancement can be recreated by contrasting present day languages with figure out which attributes their genealogical languages more likely than not had all together for the later formative stages to happen.

This paper consists of two chapters . Chapter one which is entitled ‘Language Change and Development’, deals with the nature of the functions of language , historical linguistics change and causes of language change. Chapter two sheds light on the levels of language change which are phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic.

Finally, the conclusions sum up the findings of the study.

Chapter One

Language Change and Development

1.1 Language Change and Historical Linguistics

It is clear from the literature on language variation and change that analogy is difficult to capture in fixed rules, laws or principles, even though attempts have been made by, among others. Thus, relationship has not been conspicuous as a logical factor in generative diachronic investigations. All the more as of late, with the ascent of use based (De Smet and Fischer,2012: 1)

Language change is observed when a generation of speakers produces linguistic expressions that differ from those of previous generations, either in form or in distribution. Language change is explained when its causal forces are identified and their interactions are made clear. At least two components are essential for any causal theory of language change. One component, long recognized by historical linguists, is a theory of language acquisition by child learners: ultimately, language changes because learners acquire different grammars from their parents. In addition, as children become parents, their linguistic expressions constitute the acquisition evidence for the next generation (Yang,2000:3).

Following Battye and Roberts (1995:13), this iterative process can be stated in terms of the familiar distinction between externalized language (E-language) refers to the observable language outside people's mind (it's the language that people actually produce as it is perceived) and "internalized language (I-language) which refers to the internal linguistic knowledge in the mind of every speaker. Language change has become clear through the generative linguistics research of the past half century. Modern linguists and psychologists have drawn attention to an important fact of child language: namely, although child language differs from adult language, it differs in highly restrictive ways. Given the input to children, there are logically possible and computationally simple inductive rules to describe the data that are, however, never attested in child language (Ibid.).

The restrictiveness of the human language space, coupled with the similarities revealed in comparative studies of the world's languages, have led linguists to conclude that human languages are delimited in a finite space of possibilities. A Universal Grammar (UG) is proposed as part of our biological endowment, which consists of discrete rules and constraints that interact in infinite, yet nonarbitrary, ways. Therefore, language acquisition and hence language change are determined by both internal and external factors. The internal knowledge of UG determines the space of languages that learners can attain, and the external linguistic experience in the environment determines what language children do attain. Fundamental to modern linguistics is the view that human language is a natural object: human species-specific ability to acquire a language, our tacit knowledge of the enormous complexity of language, and our capacity to use language in free, appropriate, and infinite ways are attributed to a property of the natural world, our brain. This position needs no defense, if one considers the study of language is an empirical inquiry (Battye and Roberts ,1995:14)

The complexity and nonrestrictiveness of rules made the acquisition of language wildly difficult: the learner had a vast (and perhaps an infinite) space of hypotheses to entertain. The search for a plausible theory of language acquisition, coupled with comparative linguistic studies, led to the Principles and Parameters (P&P) framework (Chomsky 1981), which suggests that all languages obey a universal (and putatively innate) (Ibid.)

1.2 The Nature of The Functions of Language

A primary function of language is for humans to convey information to each other or request services of some kind in a variety of situations. Different contexts require different kinds of vocabulary and different expressions. Such contexts can be classified according to 'genres' such as narrative, recount, exposition, procedure, protocol, report, explanation, and interview (Butt et al ,2000:57).

However, people do not only give information of a concrete nature to each other that has some inherent 'truth' about it. They put their own „spin“ on the information they give to either create an entertaining or emotive story, a convincing argument, a diplomatic inquiry and so on. In this sense, speakers are creating *interpersonal* meanings (Ibid.).

For example, a recount of events is not necessarily a true recount of facts. It is the narrator's version of events, with emotive language used at times to give an opinion as to what the participants in the recount were like, what the effects of the events were, what the intensity of the events were and so forth. Such 'spin' then provides an interpersonal aspect to the discourse and provides a starting point from which a conversation partner might decide to agree or disagree, or at least to have a reaction that might promote a social encounter (Armstrong,2010:5).

Language is purposefully used to engage others as well as simply convey certain types of information. Speakers can construe their own identity and authority and choose to align or disalign themselves with potential conversation partners through their choice of words and particular grammatical constructions. In addition, they adjust their style of language according to whom they are talking. For example, language may be relatively "formal" if talking with someone who is unfamiliar or has higher authority than the speaker. Conversely, contracted grammatical forms and shared "local" vocabulary may be used with friends (Ibid.).

Another function of language is to create coherent messages. For discourse to hang together in a logical and organized way, certain linguistic devices such as conjunctions and continuants (e.g., *however, therefore*) are used. Communication will break down if there is no continuity or coherence to a speaker's discourse. This occurs during both monologue and dialogue. The speaker must maintain coherence within his or her own discourse; while in dialogue, he or she must be able to continue on from the previous speaker, using similar vocabulary, referring to what has just been said, and developing the topic (Ibid:6).

Language consists of numerous devices that perform these different functions. Ideational (informational) content has been the primary focus in aphasiology and clinical practice to date, with an emphasis on linguistic form rather than function. In this way, the role of language in social interaction is further illuminated. Different types of nouns and verbs have different meanings that are used for specific purposes. Different sentence types and grammatical constructions have similar but varied applications (Ibid.).

1.3 Historical Linguistic Change

Historical linguistics is the historical study of language change and development. Its results are directly relevant to comparative linguistics, because only by taking into account the history of languages can one understand why some of them share some of the features they do. This can be for one of the three following reasons: 1) because they stem from some common source, in which case we speak about *genetic relatedness* of languages; 2) because they influenced each other during periods of intensive language contact, in which case we speak of *areal affiliation* of languages, and 3) because their failure to share the features in question would violate some basic and non-obvious principles determining the structure of a possible human language; in that case one claims that languages are *typologically related*, or that they belong to the same linguistic type (Matasovic, 2011:3).

In what follows, one can observe all three of these instances of linguistic relatedness, and examine the methods for discovering them. Although they made some interesting contrastive remarks about the grammars of Greek and Latin, classical grammarians did not show any interest in comparing languages systematically. The chief reason for this was the fact that for Greeks and Romans the study of language was not a theoretical discipline, concerned with explanations, but rather a practical one, whose primary task was to provide grammatical descriptions of the written language used by culturally important authors. Therefore, the study of barbarians' languages was not considered as a worthwhile objective. It was not until the interest in European vernaculars was aroused during the late middle ages that comparative approaches to language really took off (Ibid.).

In the eighteenth century information about Sanskrit, the learned language of India, became known among the learned circles in Europe. This was mostly due to the work of Christian missionaries in India, such as the French Pierre de Coeurdoux, or the Croat–Austrian Filip Vezdin (a. k. a. Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo, 1748-1806), who published the first European grammar of Sanskrit. While many scholars had thought that the similarities of major European languages could be explained as the result of language contact, the obvious similarities of basic Sanskrit words with their synonyms in the classical languages required a different explanation. It was highly unlikely that the similarity between, e. g., Sanskrit *pitar-* "father", *mātar-* "mother", and *bhrātar* "brother" with Latin *pater*, *mater*, and *frater* could have been the result of borrowing (Murray, 2015:6).

It was not long before William Jones (1746-1794) proposed that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and several other languages we now call Indo-European, had "sprung

from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists." In his programmatic lecture before the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1786, which became widely known in Europe, he also emphasized that the similarities between Sanskrit and the classical languages were not limited to the similar shapes of words, but also extended to grammar (Matasovic,2011:6).

In 1816, the German linguist Franz Bopp (1791-1867) used the correspondences between verbal systems of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and several other Indo-European languages to prove their genetic relatedness, and somewhat later Jakob Grimm (1785-1863) established the sound correspondences between the consonants of Germanic and those of the other Indo-European languages. These correspondences, which subsequently became known (Ibid).

The search for the genetic relationships among the world's languages continued without interruption throughout the nineteenth century, and it is fair to say that by the middle of the 20th century, with Joseph Greenberg's masterly classification of the languages of Africa into just four genetic groupings (Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Kordofanian, Nilo-Saharan, and Khoisan languages), most of the now undisputed language families of the world were discovered. However, the major advances in the methodology of historical and comparative linguistics were developed in the field of Indo-European studies. During the 1860's August Schleicher (1821-1868), influenced by the evolutionary biology, introduced the genealogical tree-diagrams into comparative linguistics; in this model, genetically related languages are represented as nodes on a *genealogical tree*, in whose root is the common proto-language of that family (Ibid).

1.4 Causes of Language Change

One of the most intriguing and widely studied topics in linguistics is the nature of language change. It is a well-known fact that natural languages of all

types keep changing constantly. Language change can be studied from several angles: One can reconstruct extinct languages, classify languages to language families, recognize trends in lexical and grammatical changes and draw historical conclusions from language change. However, perhaps the most prominent question regarding language change is why it happens in the first place. The causes of language change have been set aside during most of the time in which historical linguistics was studied. This foundational question was regarded as immaterial to the study of language change due to the fact that the regularity of language change, and with it language change itself, was assumed as an underlying axiom. Notwithstanding, later linguistic theory came to regard the causes of language change as a crucial part of its investigation (Am-David,2014:1).

Two major schools are known in the history of linguistics, namely, the functional and the formalist, also called generative. Their different perception of the essence of language has given rise to competing linguistic theories, of which the foundational assumptions as well as applied methods vary greatly. The distinction between these schools mostly relies on four pillars: the purpose language has, how first language acquisition takes place, how to collect linguistic data and what causes lead to language change. Whereas the functional school regards language as a primarily communicative tool, thereby motivating its existence sociologically, the formalist school regards it as a system which developed to sustain human cognition, thereby motivating its existence psychologically. The functional school generally assumes first language acquisition to take place similarly to other learning processes with emphasis on nurturing. Conversely, the formalist school assumes first language acquisition to be based on an innate mechanism called Universal Grammar which facilitates the acquisition process and delimits it. Data collection in the formalist research is normally based on grammaticality judgements reflecting the native speaker's internal competence. On the other hand, functionalist research relies on language performance often in the form of corpora or speaker elicitation (Ibid:2).

1.4.1 Internal Causes

As uncontroversial as this statement may sound, it cannot help much if one assumes, following the by now almost anecdotal quote from Chomsky (1965: 3), stating that “ linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener,

in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly". Since, as noted by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968: 188), "all change necessarily involves heterogeneity and variation," such a view of language clearly rules out any possible study of language change, simply because it leaves no possibility for change to happen.

Admittedly, since 1965 generative linguistics has tried to come to terms with the undeniable fact that languages do change, and has focused on inter-generational language transmission as the locus for change. Following this approach, language change corresponds to a different parameter setting by the new generation as a result of reanalysis.

According to I. Roberts (2007: 230), the issue of causation in language change can be formulated as follows: "if the trigger experience of one generation permits members of that generation to set parameter p_k to value v_i , why is the trigger experience produced by that generation insufficient to cause the next generation to set p_k to v_i ?" In the same vein, Lightfoot (2003: 505) claims that "[i]f one has a theory of language and a theory of acquisition, it is quite unclear what a theory of change is supposed to be a theory of."

The idea that the main cause of change, at least as far as so-called internal causes are concerned, lies in imperfect language transmission from one generation to the next is not new: as shown in Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) similar views were held by Herman Paul in the 19th century. Similar to modern generativists, Paul, too, indicated the competence of individual speakers as the proper object of linguistic research Roberts, 2007: 230)

In spite of various implementations, the "child based theory" (Croft 2000: 44) leaves some basic questions unanswered, that is, in the first place: how do children independently come up with the same reanalysis at exactly the same time? and, second, why does this happen in certain precise moments, while preceding generations of children have apparently done quite well setting parameters the same way as their parents did? In other words, the second question shows that the child based theory does not account for the fact that not only languages may change, but also that they may exhibit no changes over remarkably long periods of time (Hock 1992: 229).

Critics of the child based theory have often pointed out that children do in fact make deviations and overgeneralizations in their L1 acquisition, but these are not of the type that generates language change. Besides, recurrent deviations and

overgeneralizations tend to be abandoned at a certain age, and this process repeats itself over generations. In fact, to radicalize the argument, following the child based theory one might expect that features of baby talk go into language change, which is patently not the case (see the discussion in Chambers, this volume). Moreover, proponents of the child based theory belonging to any school of thought, whether generativists or structuralists or neogrammarians, have never really tackled the serious problem that there is no positive evidence, in terms of real data from field research, for language change to happen between generations (Aitchison, 2003: 739).

Nonetheless, there are major aspects of language change for which this model offers no explanation. Language change does not only involve changes in the grammar. It additionally involves changes in the lexicon to both the meaning of existing words and the formation and borrowing of new words. These cannot be always be accounted for language-internally as they necessarily involve non-structural mechanisms such as metaphorical extension (Ibid.).

Moreover, as Crowley and Bower (2010:45) emphasise, substratum (as well as language contact in general) can often account for far-reaching changes not only in the lexicon, but also in the grammar. These changes cannot be accounted for language-internally. Firstly, such changes often involve conscious decisions on behalf of the speaker such as borrowing a foreign word or a foreign sound. Moreover, these changes cannot take place within a single language system, but require the interaction of several separate ones. Such an interaction necessarily has to take sociological factors into account that are foreign to the language-internal approach.

1.4.2 External Causes

Language change is often brought about by contact between speakers of different languages or dialects, rather than by variation internal to a given speech community. Such changes are said to be due to external causes. Contact between populations who speak different languages involve extensive bilingualism:

accordingly, the crucial role of bilingual speakers as the locus for language contact. However, high prestige languages may influence other languages without necessarily involve bilingualism. Historical research on contact induced language change relies on more documentation than historical research on social variation, since we often know what languages have been in contact with each other, and the spread of bilingualism or multilingualism within populations in the past is often attested indirectly or even directly. On the other hand, our knowledge of language contact in the past is limited by the fact that some languages have left no written documentation. Thus, interference from substratum is often hard to evaluate, when the substratum is constituted by an unknown language. Whether changes brought about by contact differ in type from changes brought about by internal causes is a matter of discussion (Weinreich, 1953:33).

According to Labov (1994:67), phonological change “from below”, that is, starting within a speech community, results in higher regularity (it corresponds to “neogrammarian” change) than phonological change “from above”, that is, deriving from contact, which takes the form of lexical diffusion. This view is criticized by Milroy (1999:24), who remarks that “no empirical study so far carried out has actually demonstrated that sound change can arise spontaneously within a variety”. Milroy further points out that specific changes are thought to be internally caused when there is no evidence for external causation, that is, for language contact. These remarks imply that all changes are ultimately due to contact, which, as we will see in the next section, is an arguable position, depending on what one means when one speaks of “a variety”.

According to Trudgill (1989:228-9), contact induced changes and changes which initiate inside a low contact speech community have different outputs. Trudgill observes that koineization is typical of contact situations. Koinés are “compromise varieties among diverse dialects of the same language” (Mufwene 2001: 3); they tend to lose “marked or complex variants” in favor of “unmarked, or simpler forms”. Trudgill regards the high number of adults acquiring a second language in contact situations as the cause for simplification.

The role of learners in bilingual situations, and the bearing of imperfect learning on language change is also highlighted in Thomason (2003:692). Thomason remarks that features introduced by learners into a T(arget) L(anguage) are mostly phonological and syntactic, rather than lexical, and that one of the effects of imperfect learning will be that learners “fail to learn some features of the TL, usually features that are hard to learn for reasons of universal markedness”. This observation is in accordance with Trudgill’s remarks on simplification.

However, there appears to be more than simplification in the effects of language contact and bi- or multilingualism. In the first place, a role is also played by typological distance of the TL from the learners' language, not necessarily connected with markedness (Ibid.).

Chapter Two

Levels of Language Changes

Introduction

Language change is variation over time in a language's phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and other features. It is studied by historical

linguistics and evolutionary linguistics. Some commentators use the label corruption to suggest that language change constitutes a degradation in the quality of a language, especially when the change originates from human error or prescriptively discouraged usage. Descriptive linguistics typically does not support this concept, since from a scientific point of view such changes are neither good nor bad (Lyons,1968:42)

2.1 Phonological Changes of Language

The sound system of English has undergone considerable change in the 1,500 years or so for which documents of the language exist. So great is this change that the earliest forms of the language are not readily comprehensible to speakers of English today. Major sound changes occurred every few centuries, continuously increasing the distance to earlier stages of the language (Hickey,2017:3).

The sound of spoken English has also changed over time. Of course, there are lots of regional varieties (accents) today, and the same was even truer the further back you go in time as communities were less likely to travel and experience other region's versions of the language. As people travelled more, their ways of speaking became more similar as they converged (Ibid.).

Although all components of the grammar are susceptible to change over time, some types of change yield more obvious results than others. Variation and change are particularly noticeable in the phonology of a language. Several common types of sound change can be distinguished (Murray,2015:253).

Most sound changes begin as subtle alterations in the sound pattern of a language in particular phonetic environments. The linguistic processes underlying such phonetically conditioned change are identical to the ones found in the phonology of currently spoken languages. The application of such processes usually brings about an articulatory simplification, and over time significant changes in the phonology of a language can result (Murray,2015:254).

Although all aspects of a language's phonology (e.g., tone, stress, and syllable structure) are subject to change over time, one will restrict the attention here to change involving segments. Since most sound changes involve sequences

of segments, the main focus will be on sequential change . However, one will also discuss one common type of segmental change, involving the simplification of an affricate (Ibid.).

Phonetic change is qualitatively different from other kinds of language change, and cannot be described in terms of competition, or variation between categorical alternatives. Rather, it is best described as the continuous movement of a phonetic target through the phonetic space (Fruehwald ,2011:5).

Sound is a system of interlocking elements, in this case, sounds, which have a specific order in relation to each other. Various different sequences are permitted but There are limits to what is allowable. Have a look at the following words,for example, *clan*; *blame*; *bulb*; *drip*; *hard*; *swan*; *snow*. These are all monosyllabic words. In those words which have two sounds before the vowel, the combinations are *cl*, *bl*, *dr*, *sw*, *sn*. There are no words in English which begin with the reverse combinations, that is, *lc*, *lb*, *rd*, *ws*, *ns*. This is not to say these combinations do not occur at all in English Clearly they do, but one finds them at the ends of syllables, not the beginnings, for example *talc*, *bulb*, *hard*, *news*, *runs*. Correspondingly, there are no words which end with the initial combinations, *cl*, *bl*, *dr*, *sw*, *sn*. So although there are in theory a great many possible combinations of sounds, the number which actually occur together are relatively few, and their distribution within individual words is strictly controlled. The particular branch of phonology which studies these permissible sound combinations is called phonotactics (Finch,1997:51).

Sound changes generally operate for a limited period of time, and once established, new phonemic contrasts rarely remain tied to their ancestral environments. For example, Sanskrit acquired "new" /ki/ and /gi/ sequences via analogy and borrowing, and likewise /ču/, /ju/, /čm/, and similar novelties; and the reduction of the diphthong */ay/ to Sanskrit /ē/ had no effect at all on preceding velar stops (Finch,1997:52).

2.2 Morphological Changes of Language

Languages make an important distinction between two kinds of words. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are content words. These words denote concepts such as objects, actions, attributes, and ideas that one can think about like children, build, beautiful, and seldom. Content words are sometimes called open class words because one can often add new words to these classes, such as

Facebook (noun), blog (noun, verb), frack (verb), online (adjective, adverb), and blingy (adjective) (Twain, 2013: 36).

Other classes of words do not have clear lexical meanings or obvious concepts associated with them, including conjunctions such as **and**, **or**, and **but**; prepositions such as **in** and **of**; the articles **the** and **to** / **an**, and pronouns such as **it**. These kinds of words are called function words because they specify grammatical relations and have little or no semantic content. For example, the articles indicate whether a noun is definite or indefinite 'the boy' or 'a boy'. The preposition **of** indicates possession, as in "the book of yours," but this word indicates many other kinds of relations too. The pronoun **it** in 'it's raining' and the archbishop found it advisable are further examples of words whose function is purely grammatical they are required by the rules of syntax and we can hardly do without them (Ibid.).

Function words are sometimes called closed class words. This is because it is difficult to think of any conjunctions, prepositions, or pronouns that have recently entered the language. The small set of personal pronouns such as **I**, **me**, **mine**, **he**, **she**, and so on are part of this class. With the growth of the feminist movement, some proposals have been made for adding to genderless singular pronoun. If such a statement existed, it would have prevented the department from making the incongruous statement: "We will hire the best person for the job regardless of his sex." Various proposals such as "e" have been put forward , but none are likely to gain traction because the closed classes are unreceptive to new membership. Rather, speakers prefer to recruit existing pronouns such as **they** and **their** for this job, as in "We will hire the best person for the job regardless of their sex." A convenient ploy used by writers is **s/he** or **she / he** pronounced "Shee-hee" when read aloud, as in If any student wishes to leave early, **s / he** must obtain special permission (Ibid: 37.).

According to Twain(2013: 37) thousands of English adjectives begin with **un-**. If one assumes that the most basic unit of meaning is the word, what do one says about parts of words, like **a-**, which has a fixed meaning? In all the words in the B column, **one-**means the same thing 'not.' Undesirable means 'not desirable,' unlikely means 'not likely,' and so on. All the words in column B consists of at least two meaningful units: **a + desirable**, **a + likely**, **an + inspired**, and so on. Just as **un-**occurs with the same meaning in the previous list of words, so does **phon-** in the following words.

A

B

C

Phone	phonology	phoneme
Phonetic	phonologist	phonemic
Phonetics	phonological	allophone
Phonetician	telephone	euphonious
Phonic	telephonic	symphony

Phon- is a minimal form in that it can not be decomposed. Ph does not mean anything; pho, though it may be pronounced like foe, has no relation in meaning to it; and on is not the preposition spelled o-n. In all the words on the list, phon has the identical meaning 'pertaining to sound.' not by suffixing it(Ibid.).

2.3 Syntactic Changes of Language

Crystal (2002:263) admits that forms that languages take are many and varied, and one of the goals of linguistics is to try to understand the sources of such diversity. One way to understand why languages assume the forms they do is to look at historical change. Snapshots of language behavior at any point in time may be less revealing than tracing the path of that behavior as it evolves over time. In a paper called "How do languages get crazy rules?" make exactly this point. They show, with a number of examples, how synchronically complex and apparently arbitrary rules may result from an earlier set of simpler rules that are well-motivated from a phonological viewpoint; the effect of historical change can be to render the environments for rules opaque and bring about reanalysis, leading to more complex - sometimes "crazy" - rule systems.

While this does not imply that synchronic grammars recapitulate change in the strong sense sometimes assumed by early works in generative grammar, the forces which give rise to change must presumably be present in synchronic grammars. These forces may arise from a variety of reasons, which include learn ability considerations as well as sociolinguistic factors, for example, has argued that "the same mechanisms which operated to produce the large-scale changes of the past may be observed operating in the current changes take place around us" (Labov ,1973:161)

Plunkett and Marchman (1991:43) have used connectionist models to show that tensions arise when analogically-based systems are required to learn and store

multiple generalizations. One shall suggest that one consequence of such tensions is that the system changes over time to relieve the internal system stress. The focus of this article will be to explain the principles that underlie this pressure, and to illustrate their effect on the verbal morphology of English.

The pressure to eliminate imbalances in a morphological system is often referred to in the linguistics literature as "paradigm simplification", or the tendency toward regularization. A clear example can be found in the history of English verb inflection. In Old English there were a minimum of 10 forms of past tense marking on verbs. Four distinct subclasses of 'weak' verbs took variants of the suffixes -t or -d, and at least six 'strong' classes*1 marked the past through a stem vowel change, or ablaut, as does the modern verb give - gave. Over the past 1000 years the system has simplified dramatically as the suffixed past tense classes coalesced into one, which then spread through the ablaut classes. The result is the modern system in which the regular suffix /d/ applies to all but a handful of irregular verbs(Bybee,1985:76).

Regularization processes such as these are extremely common cross-linguistically, and raise a number of questions. First, the complex inflectional system of Old English existed for hundreds of years - what permitted that stability in the face of an apparent drive toward simplification? What eventually disrupted that stability and caused the system to change? Can the direction of change be predicted? It is also true that many irregular forms survive, despite the tendency to eliminate irregularity. What factors contribute to this immunity to regularization? Even more intriguingly, some weak forms become irregularized, adopting the patterning of the strong verbs. Why should this happen? What follows is an attempt to answer these questions, and to show the extent to which the answers fall naturally out of basic connectionist principles of learning and generalization (Bybee,1985:76).

Many languages have a special grammatical item called a copula ,which serves to link two elements of a sentence, especially two noun phrases. The English copula is the verb **be**, its use is illustrated by examples like *Esther is a businesswoman* and *Paris is the capital of France*. But lots of languages have no copula in Turkish, for example, the sentence *Ali biyiik* means 'Ali is big', but it consists merely of the name *Ali* and the adjective *biyiik* 'big', so the sentence structure is literally 'Ali big'. We may reasonably ask, then, how it is that some languages have acquired-in the first place (Trask,1996:134).

In the following examples, the word 'drinking' is replaced firstly by a slang term boozing and then by a dialect word from East Anglia, codswobbling, but as one can see, the structure of the string remains the same (Finch,1997:93).

1. I spent the night drinking
(stylistic variant)
He spent the night boozing
I spent the night codswobbling (dialectal variant)

An example of syntactic change in English can be seen in the development from the verb second (V2) word order, used before the 15th Century, to the modern word order.[3] Just as with other Germanic languages, Old and Middle English had V2 word order. An example from Middle English is shown in (1), where nu 'now' is in first position, and the verb loke 'look' is in second position.

2. Nu loke euerich man toward himsuelen.

now look every man to himself

'Now it's for every man to look to himself.' (Roberts 2007: 59).

2.4 Semantic Changes of Language

When the meaning of an existing word changes without a simultaneous change of word class it is called semantic change. These changes are normally neither foreseeable nor ordered, and the causes of such a change can be found outside of language, as in developments in technology, society, religion and so on.. The new meanings developed in these cases are usually connected in some way to the original meaning (Campbell 2006:268).

There are a number of ways in which this semantic change can occur; for instance, the use of a word can be narrowed down: acorn used to mean 'fruit' in Early Modern English, but today it has narrowed down to a specific fruit, namely that of the oak tree (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309).

Conversely, the use of a word can be widened and increase its range of meaning, as in the case of salary, which originally meant 'wages for soldiers' but has come to mean 'wages' in general. A word that has widened its range of meaning can thus be used in new situations but retain its primary meaning in the original context at the same time (Campbell 2006:254).

As a word may have more than one meaning, Lichtenberk (1991:478) points out that "a certain component of the total meaning" of a word may provide the basis for an extension while other features are irrelevant.

There can therefore be semantic widening in more than one direction, picking up on various nuances of the original word. Semantic change is sometimes referred to as metaphorical extension (Finegan 2004:56), and the meaning of a word can indeed change through its use in a metaphor and it is often mentioned as one of the major factors in semantic change (Campbell 2006:256).

In a metaphor, the meaning of a word is extended to create a semantic link between a new sense and the original. For instance, the word used for the computer device mouse was derived from its resemblance to the rodent, thereby creating an extension by metaphor. This is a good example how advances in technology connect with an established meaning of a word, and it also proves that the semantic change could not have been predicted (Norlin,2013:5).

Changes in connotation can also influence the meaning of a word. A change towards a more negative connotation, pejoration, is more common than a positive change, amelioration (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309).

The word 'awful', for instance, is originally meant 'awe-inspiring', which has a positive connotation, but has through pejoration changed to mean 'extremely bad' or 'unpleasant'. On the other hand, the word sophisticated, for example, originally meant 'altered' or 'adulterated', but now refers to someone or something 'refined', that is, it has acquired a more positive meaning. (Norlin,2013:6).

The denotation of a word can in fact shift until it has become something completely different from the original meaning, as in the case of the Old English word moody. It has taken the leap from meaning 'brave' to meaning 'indulging in moods of ill humour or depression' (OED). However, even in cases where the present meaning of a word does not seem to be related to its original meaning, the

shift has not been random . There is always a connection to some part of the meaning in the original word, even though that meaning may have changed over the years (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309).

There are different types of change which will be discussed presently. The most neutral way of referring to change is simply to speak of semantic shift which is to talk of change without stating what type it is. To begin with a series of shifts are presented to familiarise students with what is possible in the realm of semantic change. For example, *skyline* formerly referred to any *horizon*, but now in the USA it has narrowed to a horizon decorated by *skyscrapers*. Old English *fæger* ‘fit, suitable’, Modern English *fair* came to mean ‘pleasant, enjoyable’ then ‘beautiful’ and ‘pleasant in conduct’, from which the second modern meaning ‘just, impartial’ derives. The first meaning continued to develop in the sense of ‘of light complexion’ and a third one arose from ‘pleasant’ in a somewhat pejorative sense, meaning ‘average, mediocre’, e.g. *He only got a fair result in his exam.* (Jeffers,1979:34)

Conclusion

The study of language change is often narrowed to consideration of change in one aspect of language: lexis, semantics or syntax. But one should have a sense of the broad historical development of English. It is a commonplace to state that language use is characterized by continual variation. Virtually all of this is entirely otiose. But occasionally some items of variation become established by spreading from single speakers or small groups to larger sections of a community. When this happens, the variation then becomes sociolinguistically significant. Speakers are unconsciously aware of any social value superimposed on variation by its being indicative of a certain subgroup or subgroups in their speech community.

If items of variation, e.g. phonetic segments, show differing degrees of distance from outset values, then speakers appreciate the relative distance to the originals: some items of variation will be closer to the outset and others somewhat further away. This fact allows speakers to grasp the trajectory of a change, which is generally only visible to analysts viewing it retrospectively. By and large the

variation in a language which can become sociolinguistically significant and lead to change across a community is regular, but this does not necessarily hold for every individual case, indeed closely-knit communities and networks can carry irregular changes forward if these accrue identificational value in the community in question.

While the variation in a language is largely regular, it cannot be predicted for every individual instance. In the pool of variation in a language there will be some which is irregular, seen in the context of the language system at the time. For instance, ejective plosives would be highly irregular with respect to the sound system of present-day English and are unlikely to establish themselves, but they did so in historical stages of Caucasian languages, for example.

Language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions. At the time people talk about language functions, they are talking about the reason for using language. At its most basic, the function of language is communication or usually called by speech function; people use language to give and receive messages between themselves. It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language, because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behavior that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behavior in which language does not play its part.

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