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Contents

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Historical Linguistics and Sociolinguistics: Strange Bedfellows or Natural Friends?

Abstract

Inasmuch as historical linguists and sociolinguists are both interested in different types of variation – diachronic in the former case and synchronic in the latter case – one might think that they necessarily have much in common. While it is ultimately argued here that such is indeed the case, by way of exploring the relationship between historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, several notions that are stock in trade for most sociolinguists are re-examined from a historical linguist's perspective. It is suggested, for instance, that 'change in progress' is a mirage, and that chain shifts are not as dramatic an event as one might think. At the same time, though, the enterprises are linked by the Uniformitarian Principle, and that construct is extended into general historical investigations through the positing of a 'social or humanistic uniformitarianism' that emphasizes what is similar across time in human circumstances and in human reactions to those circumstances.

1 Introduction

It should be clear that historical linguistics and sociolinguistics have something to do with one another and presumably something to contribute to one another. Both areas of investigation are interested in variation, diachronic variation in the former case, synchronic variation in the latter case. Moreover, since language is always embedded in some social context, language change necessarily takes place in a given social setting. Such

connections are part of the rationale for a characterization of the study of the social dimensions of language change as 'sociohistorical linguistics' and they suggest that both social historians and sociohistorical linguists might well be in a position not only to learn from one another but also to learn from the exploration of the interrelationships of language and history and of linguistics and historiography. At the same time, though, a comparison just of sociolinguistics with historical linguistics would seem to be a useful way of getting at the potential for 'value-added' that a consideration of social factors offers to historical linguistics. Accordingly, in what follows, I aim to see what points of similarity and difference there are between these two commonly paired concerns – note the very terms 'socio-historical linguistics' / 'historical sociolinguistics', after all – with an ultimate goal of determining if the coupling of the two is, as the title suggests, the result of joint membership in a natural class or is instead a forced marriage.

In the course of so doing, I re-examine and to some extent debunk, or at least attempt to debunk, a number of concepts that both historical linguistics and sociolinguistics hold dear. In many instances, I pose questions about notions and practices without necessarily offering answers. In the spirit of Socrates' adage about the unexamined life,[1] my hope is that asking the right questions is helpful even if clear answers are not offered.

Some of what follows may seem obvious and maybe even trivial to the intended audience of sociolinguists, historical linguists, and social historians, but my intent is in part to call attention here to some shortcuts that practicing socio-historical linguists routinely use. In this way, we can be sure that we are aware of what we are doing when we employ them. I see two important reasons for doing this. First, it is sometimes the case that practitioners can be deluded or deceived in the worst case or just even distracted by their own terminology and their own practices, so that raising questions can be a way of heightening awareness. Second, there is always a risk that others outside our subfield might adopt (and then alter or misconstrue) our practices without fully understanding why we do what we do, and being explicit about the practices can thus be a safeguard against that.

1 From Plato's *Apology* (38a): 'The unexamined life is not worth living'.

To illustrate this last point, we can note that historical linguists often compress sound changes when talking about them. Thus, the development in Latin in which an original *s* occurring between vowels ultimately turned into an *r*, known to linguists as 'rhotacism', is generally discussed as being simply *s* > *r* /V__V, even though there is good reason to believe that it went through a stage of *s* > *z* (and then *z* > *r*). For one thing, Proto-Indo-European *z independently developed into Latin *r*, as in *mergo* 'dive' from *mezg- (where Sanskrit *majj-* 'to dive' offers confirmation for assuming *mezg- as underlying Latin *merg-*). And, in Oscan, a language very closely related to Latin, *z* is found corresponding to Latin intervocalic *r* from earlier *s. Thus we talk about s > r in Latin, while recognizing this to be shorthand for *s* > *z* > *r* (maybe even *s* > *z* > *ž* > *ř* > *r*). Nonetheless, in an early generative historical linguistic account of this change (e.g. Kiparsky 1971), it was treated simply as the addition of a rule of *s* => *r* /V__V to the grammar, thus taking traditional historical linguists' *practice* as defining the issue conclusively. In this way, such a treatment failed to observe Andersen's (1989) crucial distinction between *diachronic correspondence*, the static comparison of two possibly widely separated stages of a language, and *innovation*, the first appearance of a new structure, sound, feature, etc.

2 Some similarities and differences

As noted at the outset, a key point of rapprochement between historical linguistics and sociolinguistics is that both disciplines are interested in variation, in the one case in variation across time periods and in the other in variation within a given time period. And relatedly, both are interested in change, but there is a difference here: for historical linguists, change is the focus, whereas for sociolinguists, change is just one side of the overall phenomenon of variation.

Even so, there is a further, far more crucial difference though, in the way each discipline approaches change, and that is in regard to the relevant *timescale*. Sociolinguistics typically examines what can be construed as

'change in progress' (on which see below), typically based on contemporary usage, while historical linguistics typically examines developments that are over and done with, often, but not always, long past over and done with.

Yet, even in this difference there is a point of contact, of course, in that the tenets of (contemporary) sociolinguistic investigation and interpretation can be applied to past situations, as done by Teodorsson (1976), for instance, with regard to the role of genderlectal variation in Koine Greek vowel changes. This is in keeping with the Uniformitarian Principle that the processes at work in the past are no different in kind from those evident today.[2]

Continuing in the point and counterpoint mode, I note that the available data is also a key point of difference. It is especially important to keep in mind here Labov's (1994: 11) telling characterization of historical linguistics as 'the art of making the most of bad data'. While I would prefer, following the reasoning given in Janda and Joseph (2003: 14), to say 'imperfect data' rather than 'bad data', because the data available in a historical account typically is simply not as complete as data collected in a contemporary investigation can be, it must be admitted that the sentiment expressed in Labov's statement is right on target: we do the best we can in a historical investigation within the limitations imposed by the data.

3 *Plus ça change* ... – the more things change the less things change

The points just made lead into what might be the single most important question bearing on possible differences between sociolinguistics and historical linguistics: with regard to changes (putatively) observable now, are there differences in nature/type of change or just in amount or degree?

2 On the history of the Uniformitarian Principle, first promulgated for geology, and its subsequent application to other historical sciences, including linguistics and for relevant references, see Janda and Joseph (2003).

That is to say, do present circumstances make for fundamentally different types of change now, and is an answer here tied to issues of the availability of data? Relatedly, if the answer is that any differences are just a matter of degree, we can ask how we might quantify rate of change in a meaningful way so as to make it possible to judge and compare the extent of change.

It is important to note here that the 'long (temporal) view' of historical linguistics teaches that the answer to these questions about the nature of change in different eras is that the types of change one observes now, that is the mechanisms and processes of change, are essentially the same now as they were in the past. This, again, is what the Uniformitarian Principle asserts. Still, for many, especially lay, observers, that is not the case; thus, there are some who say that the internet, for example, has created a new type of communication and a new type of human interaction; Paredes & Mário (2007), for instance, claim that 'the growth of the Internet and its associated technologies did open space for a new type of human interaction: virtual, social interaction environments,' and Yonkers (2008) confidently states that 'I see this [i.e. Facebook] as an emerging new method of communication in which the rules are still evolving.' One has to assume that with these new methods of communication and interaction, these observers would expect to eventually see different types of change emerging. My answer here is to stand by Uniformitarianism and expect that if any differences are to be observed, they will be differences in degree rather than kind. Presumably, time will tell here, but we can glean some insights into this matter from a few small case studies where developments today and those in earlier years are parallel but different, and the differences are quantitative and not qualitative.

For instance, there is a plethora of acronyms in American English today. Interestingly, a good many of these coinages derive from modern institutions, such as governmental agencies, e.g. *IRS* (Internal Revenue Service), *EPA* (Environmental Protection Agency), *FAA* (Federal Aviation Authority), and *OSHA* (Occupational Safety and Health Administration); from contemporary professional associations, including sports leagues, and related sponsored activities like conferences, e.g. *LSA* (Linguistic Society of America), *TESOL* (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), *CLS* ((annual meeting of the) Chicago Linguistic Society),

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), and *BCS* ((college football) Bowl Championship Series), to name a few; and from modern technology, e.g. *CPU* (central processing unit), *LOL* (laughing out loud (as a text-messaging abbreviation), among others. The obvious recency of these coinages makes it appealing to think of this acronymic coinage as a modern phenomenon. But is it really something new? As it happens, there are documentable instances of acronymic coinage from the past, including ancient times. The most likely source, for instance, of (Latin) *elementum* is acronymic in nature (see Ernout-Meillet 1939: s.v.), with the word deriving from a fixed sequence 'L M N', much like English '(learning one's) ABCs', a claim that gains some plausibility when one considers that these letters are the first three of the second half of the Canaanite alphabet from which the Latin alphabet ultimately was derived, and thus a likely starting point for some ancient scribal lessons. The ubiquitous English – and now worldwide – word *OK* is another case in point, if it derives, as Read (1963a, b) has argued,[3] from 'Oll Korrect', a 'comical misspelling' of an initialism reflecting a jocular pronunciation of 'all correct' in east coast American slang of the 1840s that revolved around the use of acronyms and humorous word play.

These two historical examples indicate that acronymic coinages have been possible for a long time. It may well be that modernity has provided increased opportunities for this seemingly mundane word-formation process to be realized and to flourish, but it is hardly a new type of change. Moreover, given that we actually know very little about one-off kinds of spontaneous colloquial coinages in ancient times or even in earlier stages of modern English, it is hard to feel confident about saying that *elementum* and *OK* are unique sorts of examples for their respective eras. The burden of proof rather should rest with anyone saying that these examples do not indicate a possible word-formation strategy for those periods, one with a possibly broad extent of use.

3 I am not completely convinced that Read is right about *OK*, but it is the etymology that seems to have gained the greatest acceptance. We must always remember that etymology, in the words of Eric Hamp (1998:14n.2) is a 'brittle science', in the sense that etymologies are generally hypotheses about the earlier form of a word and not established fact. This applies of course to the case of *elementum* too.

A similar sort of argument can be made with regard to blending as a type of compounding. That is, we find numerous examples in modern times of blended forms, not just the famous deliberate creations like Lewis Carroll's *chortle*, coined for comic effect, or weathermen's *snizzle* (for 'snowy drizzle'), coined to fill a lexical gap, but rather the considerable number of such forms to be found in names for new products or ideas and in the 'breathless' sort of celebrity-based journalism that is intended to attract the attention of readers interested in the latest about some well known personality. That is, the demands of these venues, all related to marketing ideas or products or newspapers or television shows, seem to call for something 'fresh' and 'new', and blends appear to fit the bill. Thus in the US today we find product names such as *Snausage* and *Pup-peroni* for doggie treats, the verb *decorganize* for the commercially based new concept of 'organizing your home or business with appropriate décor',[4] and labels in the US celebrity media for celebrity couples such as *Brangelina* (= Brad Pitt + Angelina Jolie) and *TomKat* (= Tom Cruise + Katie Holmes).[5]

In this regard one can even cite deliberately humorous coinages such as the following from the *Washington Post*'s 2009 Mensa Invitational, which asked readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and supply a new definition).

4 In a definition that recognizes the commercial side to the word and its use, this verb is defined by The Urban Dictionary <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=decorganize> accessed 4 May 2010) as: 'To organize one's belongings into trendy and obnoxious looking containers. These containers are typically purchased at specialty retail stores and departments such as The Container Store and Target. These containers usually involve the following concepts: large floral patterns, bright colors, transparent/translucent forms and unique methods of latching and sealing'.

5 There are at least two other relatively recently emerging 'social' domains where blending is rampant now: drink names, e.g. *appletini*, *crantini*, *mangotini*, etc., for mixed drinks served in a martini glass and consisting of vodka (or the like) and apple/cranberry/mango (etc.) juice, giving a pattern so prevalent that *-tini* could be treated as a morpheme (I thank Marivic Lesho for bringing this example to my attention) and names for hybrid dogs, e.g. *labradoodle* for a mix of Labrador retriever and poodle, *cockapoo* for a mix of cocker spaniel and poodle, etc.

Here is a sampling of the forms that emerged from the competition, each one ultimately a blend, even if created under a particular set of constraints:[6]

> *ignoranus* 'a person who's both stupid and a jerk'
> *bozone* 'the substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating'
> *Beelzebug* 'Satan in the form of a mosquito that gets into your bedroom at two or three in the morning and cannot be cast out'.

The social context for these creations – commerce, competition, and such – is certainly interesting, but so too is the apparent folk-linguistic view underlying them that words *should* be compositional in meaning.

To return to the issue at hand, however, again we can ask if such blending is really all that new, or if instead we are just witnessing an increase in the documentation of such forms and an increase in their use; thus again, one has to wonder if this is a qualitative change or just a quantitative one. Here the evidence of an apparent ancient composite blend may point towards the same-in-kind-but-different-in-extent assessment. In particular, the source of English *bring*, and more generally Germanic *bringan-, is disputed, as the verb in that form seems to be isolated within Indo-European; one etymology (in the *American Heritage Dictionary* s.v.) takes it to be a blended form of two roots for 'carry', thus *bher-enek- (=> *bhr-enk-). If this account is right, then it would constitute evidence of a very old blending process and thus suggest that the novelty and abundance we see in today's blends indicates a shift in degree associated with the demands of modernity rather than a new kind of change per se. Admittedly, what we do not, and probably cannot, know is whether this *bhr-enk-, if properly etymologized here, had the same sort of playful or edgy feel to it for speakers of Proto-Indo-European that some of the abovementioned recent blends in American English have; that is, we really have virtually no way

6 Further evidence of the prevalence of these formations comes from an article entitled 'Lingo-making' by Mark Leibovich and Grant Barrett in *The New York Times*'s Week in Review section of Sunday December 20, 2009. In reviewing some of the new words and phrases that constituted "Buzzwords 2009", they noted some presumably deliberately coined blends such as *aporkalypse* for 'undue worry in response to swine flu' and *vook* for 'a digital book that includes some video in its text'.

of getting at Proto-Indo-European playful word-formation strategies that would correspond among the PIE speech community to the 'hot news' sort of blends we see today. That is, a form like *bhr-enk- may offer a glimpse at the formal mechanisms at the disposal of Proto-Indo-European speakers, but unfortunately says nothing about its affective value.

It is important to note that if the *type* of change is not really different in these cases, then in a sense we are looking at a certain sort of *stability*. This fact must always be kept in mind when claims about change are made. I say 'a certain sort of stability' since there are several works recently that make claims about the relative stability of certain types of structures, where 'stable' means 'less prone to change',[7] but skepticism might be in order here. That is, talking about change/stability in language can be likened to talking about change/stability in the weather in Columbus (and elsewhere): 'if you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes!' That is, if you are willing to wait long enough, *everything* in language is subject to change – except for the most foundational aspects of Universal grammar, the elements, like the 'design features' (Hockett, 1960), without which we cannot say we have a 'language'. That is, a statement about some part of structure being 'stable' must be taken as relative at best, and can only make sense in social terms, i.e. in terms of what a speech community 'allows' to persist in their language.

As a related point, there is the very interesting set of observations that Harrington et al. (2000/2006) have made on change in the vowel realizations in Queen Elizabeth's Christmas speeches throughout her reign. In particular, over her fifty years or so on the throne, her vowels have shifted in these speeches to something more in line with younger speakers of the standard southern British dialect. While these differences would seem to be a clear case of change over the course of an individual's lifespan, they must be assessed against the fact that we do not really know how the Queen spoke colloquially, in unguarded moments, at other stages in her life. That is, one could argue that what Harrington et al. have measured is changes in the Queen's linguistic performance in a very circumscribed and

7 Nichols (2003), for instance, while recognizing (p. 284) that 'nothing in language … is truly immutable', argues nonetheless for certain elements showing greater stability, for instance personal pronouns.

controlled set of circumstances, or perhaps even changes in her perception of how a Queen could or should (verbally) behave in a certain context. We are not in a position, absent such data on the Queen's colloquial usage in earlier years, to tell if there has really been any change in her linguistic competence; she may simply be acting (or perhaps even reverting to) more colloquial realizations due to a recognition that expectations of the Queen's role may have changed over the years.

The same kind of objection can be raised to the fine and revealing study of 'changes' with the use of *as far as* to mark topics, as documented by Rickford et al. (1995). They demonstrate that in the materials they examined over a roughly 200-year span into contemporary English, topic-marking *As far as NOUN + 'VERBAL.CODA'* (e.g. *As far as Bristol is concerned, I just love the city*) shows a significant decrease in use compared to *As far as NOUN* (without the verbal coda, e.g. *As far as Bristol, I just love the city*); there *are* early examples (two occur in Jane Austen's *Emma*, 1816) but the increase in recent years is dramatic. Equally dramatic too, however, is the increase in the availability of colloquial materials in recent decades; that is, it is not clear how much of Jane Austen's writing, for instance, is suitably colloquial nor do we have a clear idea of what her own colloquial usage was – the couple of examples that are in her works may be the tip of the early nineteenth-century iceberg the mass of which is hidden from view.

The common thread in these last few examples is that because of an absence of crucial data, claims of change are perhaps overstated, and there may actually be more stability in such cases than change.[8] Moreover, change in external circumstances may give certain processes a chance to operate but – very much in Uniformitarian style – the processes themselves are familiar ones at all times.

8 A similar view is expressed by Dennis Baron in the 14 November 2009 posting on his "Web of Language" blog (<http://illinois.edu/db/view/25>) entitled 'Dirty words you can say on television: WTF as the newest cable channel?'. In commenting on whether swearing is more prevalent now than in the past, he says 'It's hard to track whether people are swearing more than they used to, since there's little swearing in the historical record, and it's just about impossible to know how much people swore in conversation fifty years ago, or in the eighteenth century, or back in Middle Ages, or when humans first emerged from the primordial mists'.

4 Yet another key point – a basic foundational issue: What is change?

A concept that has figured prominently in the discussion so far is 'change', and indeed much in the conclusions drawn here depends on how one defines 'change'. In particular, is change to be located in the initial structural innovation or rather in the spread of the structural innovation? Linguists take different stances on this; moreover, the position taken has consequences for various interrelated issues. I survey here some of those issues that stem from a decision one way or the other on this matter, though, as promised, some are merely posed as questions without there necessarily being answers attached to them.

First, if change is defined in terms of the structural innovation itself, then there is less of a rapprochement between historical linguistics and sociolinguistics. This is because historical linguistics examines completed changes (innovations) both as to their actuation (point of origin of the innovation), and their complete or incomplete spread (since that is how dialect/language differentiation occurs), whereas sociolinguistics focuses just on the spread of an innovation. Second, we might add *contact linguistics* as a subfield interested in change, and as closer to some extent to historical linguistics in terms of focus.[9] In particular, while contact linguistics examines change brought on by a particular social setting (contact between peoples), and thus might seem to be more aligned with sociolinguistics, studies on language contact have tended to be focused more on actuation (contact as a cause of innovations) than on spread. Third, if change is defined rather in terms of the spread of innovations, then something akin to observation of change is possible (contrary to the traditional view, as in Bloomfield (1933), whereby change was held to be inherently unobservable); this is what sociolinguists mean by talking about examining 'change in progress'. Admittedly, in another sense, this notion could relate

9 I thank my colleague (and contact linguist par excellence!) Don Winford for reminding me of this important point.

to the time-scale issue mentioned above, with historical linguists looking at completed events at a great time distance and sociolinguists looking at unfolding events in a more finely grained time scale.

This leads into a fourth issue or question: The sociolinguistic literature notwithstanding, is there really observable change in progress? Haugen (1958: 777) had an interesting point to make in this regard concerning borrowing (cited in Thomason, 1997: 181): 'Since the actual moment of borrowing is rarely observable, most conclusions about interference are based on inferences'. If change is defined as the innovation, then Haugen's point could be made too with regard to change; however, even if change is defined in terms of spread, Haugen's skepticism is justified since it is not the spread itself that is observed but rather only evidence of the aftermath of spread (in the form of certain distributions in the population at large). This means that talking about vowel fronting in terms, say, like 'Speaker X shows a high degree of *fronting* of [u]' may technically be inappropriate, for it seems to imply that the movement itself is being witnessed. Rather, what is in fact being viewed is a *static* result of (someone having engaged in) the process of fronting; and, that act of fronting need not even have been undertaken by the speaker who is observed, in that such a speaker may well have simply inherited a word (i.e. learned it from a source such as a parent) with a particular vowel in it that happens to be fronter than the realization inherited (learned) by some other speaker. In some ways, this is rather like the situation commented on in Joseph (2011) regarding use of the term 'grammaticalized'. There I suggest that instead of saying that a speaker shows a *grammaticalized* feature (or structure, or construction, etc.), we might rather say, more neutrally, that the speaker shows a more *grammatical* feature (structure, etc.); my reason for this terminological suggestion is that talking in terms of something being 'grammaticalized', rather than simply stating the static fact of the speaker showing grammatical status for the feature in question, implies that the history of the feature in question and the directionality of its development are known when oftentimes the history is just a matter of speculation.

Fifth, as a matter closely related to the consideration of 'change-in-progress', there is yet another way one might interpret this notion that merits some discussion. This other interpretation has to do with the widespread belief that much of what is seen in language change is gradual. That is, a

progression of shifts is often given as a basis for talking about change as gradual, so that the Latin rhotacism change alluded to above in section 1 could be called gradual if it in fact proceeded as s > z > r (or even s > z > ž > ř > r). This characterization is a reasonable one, and common to be sure, but it must be recognized that a language could in principle stop after any of these steps. That is, progression to the next step is not a necessary outcome, and indeed, if there was any appreciable time between the shifts, perhaps as little as a generation or even less, then clearly the stage reached by a given shift was a viable language state that speakers could learn and use unaltered. This means that in a certain sense, each shift can be treated as a change in and of itself, each one an innovation. Admittedly, from an etymological standpoint, *gradual* means 'step-by-step', but under the interpretation suggested here, instead of using examples like Latin rhotacism to show 'gradual change', it might be better to call it '(the result of) cumulative change', so as to emphasize the temporal sequencing of separate and distinct innovations. In this view too, it might be said that every change, every shift, every innovation, is abrupt, in that each one represents a break from, a deviation from, an existing norm, even if it is a 'micro-step', just a small innovation.

Sixth, relevant here too is the claim that 'chain shifts' represent a special *mechanism* of change (so Labov, 2007); we can understand 'chain shift' in a *broad* sense, referring to *any* linked sound changes, including cases where sounds A and B move jointly in the direction of sounds C and D respectively, or in a *narrow* sense, including cases where sound A moving in the direction of sound B is said to trigger a change in B, moving it in the direction of a different sound C. With a view of 'change' that focuses on innovation rather than spread, this claim needs to be re-examined as to mechanisms and outcome. In particular, if sound A moves in the direction of sound B, then one of two things can happen: either there is merger (of A with B) or there is no merger. And, as for the no-merger situation, while it can be the case that there is no merger because A does not move all the way into the realm of B, another way in which there could be no merger would be B moving somewhere; in such a case, why must that be viewed as having been caused by A's movement? In such a case, how do we rule out the possibility of these simply being two independent changes, especially since we know that mergers *do* happen.

To elaborate on this last point somewhat with a real example, we can consider the sound shifts between Proto-Indo-European (PIE) and the Germanic (Gmc.) languages known collectively as 'Grimm's Law' whereby PIE *dh ultimately gives Gmc. *d*, and PIE *d ultimately gives Gmc. *t*. It is possible to conceptualize these changes as chain shifts in that when PIE *dh moved in the direction of PIE *d on the way to Gmc., PIE *d moved in the direction of *t. This certainly looks like a chain shift when presented this way, with *dh > d triggering the *d > t change. However some other languages, for instance the Balto-Slavic group, underwent a merger of *dh and *d, so that when *dh moved in the direction of *d for Balto-Slavic, the *d stayed put, and a merger occurred. Thus a causal connection between the two Gmc. changes may be hard to maintain.

Seventh, there is the related issue, related since chain shifts would seem to involve whole systems of sounds, or at least subsystems within the overall phonological space, of whether there can be 'system-based' motivation for change, e.g. change motivated by such considerations as symmetry and balance in the phonological inventory. Here, I would suggest that it is fair to at least wonder whether the system is a reality, and a concern – subconsciously – for speakers as such, or rather is actually just a nicety that is important for linguists only. In other words, are speakers as taken by 'symmetry' as linguists are?

Eighth, apparent chain shifts seem to involve one change causing another change, but more generally, it can be asked what it means to talk in terms of one 'event' *causing* another? In some instances, temporal adjacency is all that can be demonstrated or perhaps one event is just one contributing factor to an outcome. To take an analogy from sports, if Bristol City's Liam Fontaine makes a pass to Nicky Maynard that leads to a goal, he is credited with an assist, and rightly so, but it may be as much Maynard's effort that caused the goal as Hartley's pass. Moreover, in a certain sense, *everything* that precedes X lays the foundation for X, so one could argue that Fontaine's being born on 1 July 1986 was a causal contributor to the pass he made leading to a Maynard's goal.

And, to continue with a critique of chain shifts, one kind of chain shift – the *broad*-sense type in which A & B both undergo the same shift, e.g., to C & D – can be reinterpreted to be really just a matter of how we

formulate the relevant events. For instance, mid-vowel raising in northern dialects of Modern Greek affects both *e* and *o*, but their shifting in tandem may be a function of generalization over mid-vowels rather than *e* going first and then 'pulling along' with it the *o* (in what is sometimes called a 'drag chain'). In that case, rather than seeing the change(s) as two separate events that are linked by a special type of shifting mechanism, one could simply say that the relevant mechanism is 'rule generalization'. And, once one takes that step, then it would seem that the real mechanism involved is *analogical* in nature, specifically a 'phonetic analogy' (in the sense of Vennemann, 1972) that can be schematized as: *e* is-to *i* as *o* is-to *X*, with *X* then 'solved for' as *u* (that is, *e* : *i* :: *o* : X, X => *u*). And, if that is the case, then the change involved may not be sound change in the strict sense, if it is analogically induced. Alternatively, it may have to be admitted that analogy plays a far greater role in sound change than we might think. In this regard, the interpretation offered by Anttila (1977) for the Grimm's Law shifts is noteworthy, as he suggests that they may have had an analogical basis (*p* : *f* :: *t* : *θ* :: *k* : *x*, etc.); see also Hock (2003), where there is further argumentation about sound change as analogy, and Durian (2009, 2011), who pursues a similar line of reasoning concerning some of the vowel shifts evident in contemporary English of Central Ohio.

Ninth, to shift to a different thorny issue, we can ask how one might go about quantifying change – assuming, that is, that we even *can* quantify change – in the light of these different definitions. In particular, if each 'micro-innovation' counts as a change, and if each micro-innovation involves a relatively small shift of some sort, then even fairly straight-forward changes that can be characterized as the alteration of a single feature, such as *k* => *x* (where only manner of articulation changes from stop to fricative) could represent a large number of minute adjustments, each of which could constitute a separate change, e.g. *k* first becoming aspirated, then various adjustments to the strength and timing of the aspiration occurring leading to an affricate-like realization (e.g. as k^x or even ^{k}x), which is then simplified to *x*.

Tenth, if change is to be located in micro-innovations, then it becomes hard, in taking the long temporal view that many historical linguists do, to legitimately talk about the 'same' change over long periods of time. For

instance, repeatedly throughout the history of Greek, though sometimes at a time distance of several hundred years, one finds the loss of word-final *-n* occurring. However, is it the 'same' change, activated at different points in time or a separate and distinct change in each era in which it is found? Without a clear reason for linking the events, such as the recurrence in different time periods of a highly unusual or particularistic constraint on the change, it would seem prudent to treat such cases as involving temporally and ontologically distinct instances of final *n*-loss, even at the expense of seeming to miss a generalization (a 'recurring tendency' in a given language) over a long time-span; for one thing, once one is talking about time spans of 120 or more years, it must be borne in mind that the speakers, i.e. the members of the affected speech community, are an entirely different set of individuals. For such reasons – the absence of any 'smoking gun' types of special conditions repeated across time, and the complete turnover of the affected population with each 'wave' – I am inclined to distinguish (at least) three waves of *n* > Ø /__#, i.e. loss of *n* in word-final position, in the history of Greek, instead of talking about a persistent final-*n*-loss change that stretched over a thousand or more years.

Eleventh, once the issue of attempting to quantify rate of change is considered, a related question arises. In particular, except perhaps in cases of intense language contact of the sort that can lead to language mixing, one has to wonder if it is really possible to talk (as some sociolinguists and historical linguists do) about 'massive' or 'far-reaching' changes. It would seem that every language at every stage of its development is an amalgam of elements (sounds, morphemes, words, constructions, etc.) that are carried over from previous stages and elements that have been altered in some innovative way. Thus 'massiveness' of change often simply means that the analyst has identified a set of elements that show change, without a concern for the concomitantly conservative elements that show no change. This view is especially compelling when one considers that linguists at any one time typically focus on at best a handful of elements that do change when in fact a language contains thousands and thousands of 'points' (sounds, morphemes, words, constructions, meanings, etc.) that could in principle change. Thus, 'massiveness' may only be in the eye of the linguist attending to a small subset of changing points in the language overall.

Taking this one step further, if this amalgam view is right, then it would seem difficult to talk about languages and dialects being 'conservative' or 'innovative' (in general). It would seem that such an assessment makes sense only as *relative* to particular features. A useful example to always remember in this regard is the situation with Lithuanian. Lithuanian is often said to be highly 'conservative' within Indo-European, but on closer inspection, that is only true with regard to there being a large number of cases within the nominal system (eight, as reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, and seven in modern Lithuanian, and then only if one ignores the gain of three cases (illative, allative, and adessive) in Old Lithuanian[10] and their subsequent loss by the modern era; that is, conservatism is there but only for the noun system and only for (most of) the eight original cases.

5 Conclusions

Even if historical linguistics is focused more on change and less on the spread of change, every practicing historical linguist recognizes that understanding spread is one dimension to a full understanding of the forces of diachrony. Thus overall, historical linguistics and sociolinguistics form a natural class rather than an uneasy forced alliance. Still, it is possible to express some wishes for historical linguists and for sociolinguists in terms of practices and research questions. First, historical linguists could be more interested in stability, even if, as stated above, all we can really talk about is relative stability and not absolute or inherent stability. As noted above in section 3, there is recent literature on this topic, but still for most practicing historical linguists, change is where the action is, so to speak, and not stability. Relatedly, a key question to be addressed is whether change is the default state for language diachronically or whether instead (relative)

10 These cases were secondary formations that came about from the fusing of existing 'primary' case forms (genitive, accusative, locative) with postpositions.

stability is the default state. And sociolinguists could be less concerned about 'change in progress' since it is often hard to be sure that there really is a change going on; with any variation claimed to betoken change, the question of directionality is an issue (which form is innovative and which is conservative) and so too, as a result, is the question of whether the innovative variant will ultimately take hold or not, as it is not always the case that it does. Admittedly, investigations of change in progress will always be important and revealing and it is not entirely clear what should take the place of interest in the phenomenon; 'identity sociolinguistics' is not enough, as there are real issues in determining which states of affairs constitute generational change and which do not that identity alone does not answer.

As for social history and social historians, to return to the theme sounded at the outset, perhaps there is a different type of uniformitarianism to consider and always keep in mind, another dimension to the adage that 'plus ça change plus c'est la même chose'. In particular, the raw material that many historical linguists have to work from are written or orally transmitted texts and thus typically literature or historical accounts from days gone by. Importantly, they generally show humans from thousands of years ago to be much like humans of today in terms of the things that they are interested in and worry about. That is, there is a uniformitarianism with regard to the hopes and aspirations of individuals in the distant past and those we observe and feel today. Similarly, day-to-day concerns about one's welfare, about being nourished and loved, and so on, seem to be as important to individuals in the past as they are to us today. We can refer to this uniformitarianism as a 'social or humanistic uniformitarianism', and, drawing on Joseph (1999), we can note a couple of examples that reflect this state of affairs, and show stability, and thus uniformity, in what individuals' lives and interests and concern were.

A first example comes from Wendy O'Flaherty, in her 1981 translation of the Rigveda (the oldest Sanskrit text, composed c. 1200 BC but with parts much older). In her preface, she comments on the content of the text as follows, noting that the hymns of the Rigveda show 'conflict within the nuclear family and uneasiness about the mystery of birth from male and female parents; the preciousness of animals ...; the wish for knowledge,

inspiration, long life, and immortality'. In many ways, these seem to be universal human concerns, and such a characterization of content could be applied to what one sees today in the tabloid press (such as the *National Enquirer* in the US) or in titles on bestseller lists.

A second example is Melchert (1991), writing on the last minutes of life for Hittite king Hattusili (from the second millennium BC). Here are the relevant facts as Melchert lays them out: Hattusili was apparently dictating his last will and testament to a scribe when he suffered an ultimately fatal or near-fatal episode as he finished the official dictation at the end. He then began reflecting somewhat incoherently about his impending death, producing ravings which were dutifully copied down and recorded for posterity by the scribe.[11] Hattusili ends with an exhortation to a woman he has been calling for: 'Protect me on your bosom from the earth', apparently his real last words. Melchert interprets these last words as follows: it is known that the Hittites practiced burial (not cremation) but believed in an afterlife and immortality in divine form for its kings; thus, he writes, 'Despite [...] assurances of happy immortality, however, the dying Hattusili is frightened. He sees only the immediate certainty that he will soon be put down into the cold, dark earth alone, and like many a poor mortal since he finds this a terrifying prospect'. Further, by way of linking modern-day folks with those that preceded them 3,500 years ago, Melchert says, with real eloquence: 'there seems to be little fundamental difference between us and ancient peoples when it comes to facing death. Hattusili's words speak to us directly across the centuries. His fear is palpable. We not only at once understand but also are moved by his agony and his desperate cry for his loved one's tender comfort. These emotions are neither Hittite nor Indo-European, neither ancient nor modern, but simply human'.

And, finally, to bring this social/humanistic uniformitarianism back to the issue of language change per se, let me mention these notable lines from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (II.22–28):

11 This is presumably the closest we will ever come to having a tape recording of spontaneous speech from the second millennium BC!

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

'You know too that in form of speech there is change
within a thousand years, and words as well
that had value now wondrously odd and strange
they seem to us, and yet they spoke them in this way,
and it served as well in love as men do now;
also to win love in various ages,
in various lands, various were the usages.'

Thus, not only is change itself something that is pervasive, but so too is the recognition of change and an interest in change.

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