A Psycholinguistic and Corpus-based analysis of Language Change

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this project is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

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Thanks to my family for their constant support, financial and other during my final year and throughout my degree course, and for putting up with the moods! Thanks to Carl Vogel for all his time, help and encouragement as my supervisor and as course director over the last few years.
“Since ’tis nature’s law to change
Constancy alone is strange”
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester

“Time and the world are ever in flight”
William Butler Yeats

“Time changes all things: there is no reason why language should escape this law”
Ferdinand Saussure
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Abstract

As indicated by the title this project deals with many aspects of language change and includes a corpus-based experiment. The importance of the concept of language change is stressed and the effects it has on languages highlighted. I attempt to link together the many different aspects of language change from the types, to the effects to the reasons why it happens in a coherent project. I undertake a detailed psycholinguistic analysis on the perception of language change. It shall be shown that language change, even over as short a period as ten or twenty years, can be recognized by people with no linguistic background.
Chapter 1

Introduction
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Language change is a central aspect of language. Language itself is so central to human behaviour that the study of language in any way, shape or form puts us into a “complex web of relationships with many other disciplines” (Kess, 1993, pg. 2), and hence any analysis of language change will also incorporate many related areas.

“An understanding of the mechanisms of change and borrowing is....important because it sets potential limits on the extent to which we can draw theoretical conclusions from observed limitations on the content of linguistic systems” (Anderson, 1992, pg. 336). The study of language change is the study of how languages change and evolve inevitably over time. In this way, language is essentially like everything else in the world around us, that is, constantly changing. Traditionally, the study of language change is known as Historical Linguistics, but in more recent times linguists have begun to pay more attention to the changes currently taking place instead of concentrating on reconstructing the earliest possible stages of languages and describing sound changes over the years, and this type of study falls under the heading of Sociolinguistics. They now realise the importance of the sociolinguistic factors that underlie language change. Language change is a type of linguistic variation which has particular social properties. Why is language change of such importance? Because it is the sole force that makes different languages. In order to truly trace the history of a language, one must first understand the principles of language change to allow them reconstruct the features of a proto-language.1

In order to communicate effectively we not only need to have a firm grasp of linguistic knowledge but we also need to be aware of sociocultural linguistic norms2 which exist in the society where we wish to communicate. The ability to communicate with the specific society within which we are brought up comes to us innately, it is only when we enter a society which we are not used to that we must consciously adapt to the different linguistic norms. Sociolinguists concentrate on finding links between the variation that exists in language and the different societies which display this variation. They are interested in discovering why languages vary and indeed change in the way they do.

Language change is an essential aspect of human language and has been studied for numerous reasons over the years. Historical linguists have the task of tracing the history of languages and are therefore very interested in comprehending language change as it provides the key to this type of study. The work of historical linguists is used by experts in many other fields, and the ability to trace languages and understand languages of the past has had a crucial part to play in uncovering our history. In his book on morphology,3 Anderson (1992, pg. 336) outlines the importance of understanding language change, “most linguistic forms and regularities are inherited either directly or through the lens of linguistic change from previous states of the language; or else borrowed from the systems of

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1 A proto-language is the name given to an unrecorded and hypothetical language which is ancestral to one or more attested languages and whose properties are deduced by some process of reconstruction, most often comparative reconstruction in characterizing the ancestor of a language family.

2 An example of such a norm is using 'vous' when speaking in a formal context in France.

3 Morphology is the branch of grammar dealing with the analysis of word structure.
other languages. Given this we cannot necessarily understand the human language faculty simply by studying the content of attested natural languages”.

For students of language change it is generally the ‘why’ question which poses more of a problem than the ‘how’ question. There have been many views expressed on the basic roles in communication of the speaker and the hearer. Martinet suggests that “Linguistic evolution may be regarded as governed by the permanent conflict between man’s communicative needs and his tendency to reduce to a minimum his mental and physical activity” (Martinet, 1964, pg. 167).

1.2 Aims

This project shall address the concept of language change and the many issues surrounding it. Languages are constantly changing and evolving and like many other topics related to language, language change falls under various different areas. A fact which makes the literature on the topic appear somewhat unconnected and contradictory. Throughout this project I aim to outline the area of language change in a comprehensible manner, providing the reader with a coherent overview of the topic with reference to the various theories and ideas, from the plausible to the bizarre, which have been suggested over the years.

I will demonstrate with a simple experiment that language change is in fact more obvious than one would first imagine and is perceivable to those with no linguistic background. My experiment is quite current in keeping with the trend of focusing more on change which is happening at present, or at least in the last fifty years, as opposed to being concerned with language changes which happened between Latin and French, say.

1.3 Overview

This project is divided into six chapters. These are classified in relation to their contributors and to the literature they build on, as follows:

1.3.1 Types of Language Change

Chapter two provides an explanation of the different types of language change that occur. With sections describing syntactic change, morphological change, lexical change, semantic change, phonetic and phonological change, it is essential that these changes are described before we can comprehend the overall effect that they have on language. There are many ways in which the different types of language change are similar, and many ways in which they differ. I will also address these commonalities and differences in this chapter.

1.3.2 Effects of Language Change

Chapter three introduces the history of language, with a section on language families which outlines the most important long term effect of language change, that is, how it causes one
language to diverge into many different daughter languages. There is also a section on how language change is linked to language evolution. What I will attempt to answer in this section is: are the reasons why languages change today the same reasons why it evolved in the first place? And is the function of language the same as it was when language was evolving? Language death is one severe outcome of language change and so I deal with it in this chapter. There are different types of language death, each one comes about as a result of different social and economic pressures.

1.3.3 Why Language Changes

Chapter four is all about why these changes described in chapter two actually happen, a topic which is undoubtedly more interesting than how they happen. We now have a good background knowledge of the language changes that occur, what is even more important is to comprehend why these changes happen. Before looking at language change we must first look at language variation as this inevitably comes before language change. While the language changes that we see are not difficult to define, this is not the same case with the reasons these change occur, this is much harder to define, but perhaps more important to understand. I discuss the sociolinguistic factors which influence language change.

1.3.4 Tracking Language Change

Chapter five provides a background of the work of both historical linguists and sociolinguists. I outline the processes use by both, along with problems they encounter in their work. The historical linguists focus on piecing together the history of languages whereas the sociolinguists concentrate their research on language change in the here and now, a field which has emerged in much more recent years. There is a section on inferring change from public corpora which is particularly relevant as it is from public corpora that the material for the experiment outlined in the next chapter was obtained.

1.3.5 Experiment

The experiment I undertook is described in this chapter. Using articles dating from the 1950’s to today, I assessed how accurately, if at all, people could recognize language change. To do this I supplied the participants with pairs of newspaper articles from the Irish Times and asked them various questions regarding the time scale of the articles. This interests me as I believe that language change is more perceivable than one would initially imagine and so I hope to see results which suggest that this is true.

1.3.6 Controlling Language

Chapter seven talks about the disgust expressed on the topic of language change over the years, e.g. in 1710, Jonathan Swift launched an attack on the condition of English and even wrote a letter to the Lord Treasurer suggesting for there to be an Academy created to
monitor language use, as he believed that even writers of his time committed “many gross improprieties... which ought to be discarded” (Swift, 1966). There is a section with an example of the steps taken by the Académie Francaise to stop language change. This is an interesting topic as it is now known and accepted that language change is an unavoidable process which is constantly occurring. Language planning is the name given to the process where there are deliberate decisions made about the form of a language, especially when it is done more or less officially and on a large scale, and so this section undoubtedly has its place in this chapter on Controlling language.

1.4 Motivation

I chose this topic as I have a strong interest in languages and find the way in which they are constantly changing fascinating. Language is the singularly characteristic behaviour of the human species and the chief means of communication between members of the species. Language change is such an inherent aspect of human languages, yet most people remain quite unaware of the extent to which our language is eternally evolving itself. Without the process of language change our human languages would not have been able to evolve to the reach their current state of complexity which allows for a precision and abstractness which in turn makes possible the elaborate system of organization known as ‘human culture’.

I am also quite intrigued by the reaction of scholars over time to this topic, that is, their obvious disgust. Another reason I undertook this topic is that I believe it to be a hugely important area as being able to trace languages provides with much insight into our past, and the role of historical and comparative linguists is ever important. The topic of language change has a short history, and there still remains quite a lot to be discovered and understood which is another reason I am interested in the subject.

The topic also has its place in the area of language evolution, which is an area that appeals to me having undertaken a course Advanced Computational Linguistics in my final year, although my project is significantly different in content and validation methodology. To truly understand how languages change and evolve over time provides many clues to the mystery of language evolution and even language origins.

I was eager to conduct an experiment of my own, which highlights how language change can be recognized even by those who thought there wouldn’t be any change noticeable between articles written a quarter of a century apart. This experiment was a major motivation for me as it gave me the opportunity to research into something which there is no previous work published on. This was both an excited and a daunting factor.
Chapter 2
Types of Language Change
2.1 Introduction

One of the fundamental things that we need to understand about languages is that they are always changing. In this chapter, I will look at the various different types of language changes that can occur. I will examine which are most common and try to answer why, and I will attempt to determine the overall effect such language changes have on a language, which will be addressed in the following chapter. Changes in languages can occur in all aspects of the language, from the pronunciation and the lexicon, to the semantics and the syntax. The different types of changes differ in how they happen, some involve quite patterned and predictable changes, whereas others lack any kind of rhyme or reason in their changes. The different types of changes can also differ in why they change, for example it is not known why sound changes happen, whereas the reason why new words are introduced to a language is usually quite obvious. There are not always clear distinctions between the different types of change, which is explained in the chapter.

The only components of language truly immune to language change are language universals, those traits which all languages possess, regardless of their history. These traits will provide us with no insight into language history. For this reason the traits of language which concern us when speaking of language change are language specific. Language universals are a vital concept which is referred to right across the board in linguistic work. It is those features of language which remain constant and which can be seen in every human language that can tell us so much about human language.

2.2 Syntactic Change

There has been much syntactic change over the years. This type of change basically refers to a change in the form and order of words, i.e. the syntax of a language. Examples of such changes are the merging of different word endings to have the same form despite a difference in meaning, or the way in which a verb is used may change, e.g. ‘can’ was once used as a main verb preceding a direct object. As with other changes, all syntactic change involves variation, and there is a time where the old forms co-exist with the new. There is one type of variation that can exist for long periods of time without necessarily resulting in change, and that is stylistic variation and is dealt with in Chapter 4. In this case the old and new forms co-exist happily without having any major effect on one another.

Aitchison (2001) refers to some differences between British English and the English spoken in India, as this throws some light on the syntactic variation that exists between the two. While some constructions used in Indian English would not really be used in British English they are not judged to be ungrammatical by speakers of British English. They

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1The part of the grammar of a language which includes the lexical entries for all the words and/or morphemes in the language and which may also include other information depending on the particular theory of grammar (Trask, 1993).
2The branch of linguistics dealing with the meaning of words and sentences.
3The branch of grammar dealing with the organization of words into larger structures, particularly into sentences (Trask, 1993).
merely sound a bit strange but are most definitely understood perfectly and there would be a variation of the sentence used to convey the same meaning in British English. While they have almost exactly the same range of formations when using negative constructions, where the difference lies is in which they prefer to use. e.g. when using negatives in Indian English they would use a construction like ‘I think I’m not capable of working all night’, where the British English equivalent would more likely be ‘I don’t think I’m capable of working all night’. This is a case of stylistic syntactic variation and whether or not it leads to syntactic change remains to be seen, but it remains variation for as long as both forms are understood by both types of speakers.

There is an example of syntactic variation which is perhaps somewhat closer to becoming a syntactic change that can be seen in Canadian French. In French there are two ways of saying someone is at home. They say either ‘Julie est à la maison’ or ‘Julie est chez elle’. Due to the contact with English which French speakers experience in Canada they tend to use the former sentence more than the latter as it is syntactically closer to how the same meaning would be conveyed in English. This preference is constantly growing which may indicate that it is heading towards a change for Canadian French.

Verb endings being dropped is quite a common syntactic change which probably occurs due to fast speech. This would also be considered to be a morphological change and will be discussed under that heading later in this chapter. What this means is that when speaking fast we tend to omit the ends of verbs particularly when people generally make assumptions about what person we are speaking of. This omission gradually creeps into the written form of a language. This is an example of pointless variation, as in most languages we do not use a verb without stating the subject of the verb, so to then repeat the person and gender is in a sense repeating oneself. When the meaning of verbs lead to ambiguous sentences this tends to call for a reanalysis of the verb and for new meanings to be introduced.

So, syntactic change can a lot of the time be put down to changes which occur to make the spoken language speedier, like the way the French leave out the ‘ne’ in negative constructions, whether this will eventually be seen in proper texts is difficult to say but its almost complete omission from spoken language cannot be ignored eternally, or to get rid off pointless variation, like that seen in verb endings. Syntactic change is very similar to sound change as they both involve variation and they both tend to grab on to certain lexical items. Language changes happen through gradual implementation and gradual spread.

### 2.3 Morphological Change

Morphology refers to the study of morphemes which are the segments of words which have a certain meaning when added to an existing word. e.g. happi-ness. “Morphological change is any change in the morphological form or structure of a word, a word-form or a set of such forms” (Trask, 2000, pg. 218). Morphological change is a good example of how the different types of change overlap. In fact, I have already referred to morphological change under the last heading of syntactic change, when I spoke of verb endings being dropped.
This is a change which falls under both syntactic and morphological change headings, as it is a change, in this case a merging of different morphemes to become the same verb ending (morpheme), and also a change in the syntax of the language. An awareness of this integration between components of grammar in language change is important. The process of morphologicalization\(^4\) of syntactic elements is known as grammaticalisation.

Unlike phonological change there is not a lot of information on morphological change. Anderson (1992) points out that theories of phonological change are not well developed, and that any real results or established principles are difficult to find. For this reason most literature on the topic tends to concentrate on analogy,\(^5\) a type of morphological change. Analogy is a concept which is encountered regularly when speaking of language change and will be mentioned several times throughout this project. It has been said that it produces regularity despite its irregular nature, and is looked upon as something which tidies up a language somewhat, a ‘neatener’. Analogy is “primarily concerned with the link between sound and meaning, which combine to express particular morphemes or meaningful units” (McMahon, 1994, pg. 70). It fixes the damage done by sound change, keeping sound structure, grammatical structure and semantic structure in line. The link between sound change and analogy does not end there, their subtypes also share some of the same names, like assimilation and weakening.

The simplest and perhaps most written about morphological change is the plural -s ending to words. The way in which the plural ending has spread across the English language making it more uniform is known as analogical extension. The principal characteristic of this change is “the generalization of a morpheme or relation which already exists in the language into new situations or forms” (McMahon, 1994, pg. 71). This analogy is also addressed in the section on therapeutic change, as analogy brings regularity to languages which is naturally considered therapeutic. In Old English there were numerous endings (morphemes) which denoted plurality, in fact that is not all that these inflections indicated, they also indicated gender and case. So, due to the process of analogy the noun inflectional system has been much simplified with plural nouns not ending in ‘s’ becoming more irregular, and only occurring with extremely common nouns, e.g. man, men.

Another common type of analogy is know as analogical levelling. This type of change involves the merging of verb endings. An example of this can be seen in the verb ‘to chose’ which has the same form for past singular and past plural in Modern English, when it had different forms for them in Old English. This type of change is also mentioned in the section on therapeutic change as it neatens up needless variation.

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\(^4\)Morphologicalization is any change in which a formerly productive phonological process of alternation ceases to be productive and becomes confined to certain morphological environments or to certain lexical items only, thus becoming part of their morphology (Trask, 2000).

\(^5\)Analogy is any linguistic change which results from an attempt to make some linguistic forms more similar linguistic forms.
2.4 Lexical Change

The most obvious change that language undergoes is the introduction of new words. This is known as lexical change and is perhaps the easiest type of change to monitor, as it is quite clear when a new word comes into existence. In the same way that new words come into use, some old words may gradually drop out of use. This fact is not something new to languages, for as long as we’ve known, languages have been changing. An ‘English’ text dating from the 16th century is not be understood by English speakers of today. Yet, this language is still considered English, despite its lack of resemblance to the English of today. So, we must ask the question why. Well, Old English doesn’t really exist anymore; it has changed to the extent that the two are barely even comparable, so, why are they both called English? The English we know today is simply an evolved version of Old English, basically language change, while difficult to see happening at any given time has a huge effect on languages over long periods of time.

New words come about in many ways; e.g. borrowing from other languages ‘waltz’, compounding of existing words ‘jetlag’, clipping ‘hippo’. Lexical changes are common in all languages. As the world around us changes, there is a constant need for new words to describe new things and new ideas. The technological advances of the past few decades have made access to other languages through the internet and digital television easier which has led to an increase in the number of words being borrowed from other languages. As technology advances we become more open to and knowledgeable of other cultures. This allows us to be influenced and indeed to influence. It is not only our fashion sense or our ideas on modern art that change but also our language, which is greatly influenced by the increasing contact between ‘different’ cultures. Science is always advancing with new discoveries and new inventions happening daily, this also produces the need for new words to describe these new things.

2.5 Semantic Change

Semantic change is one form of language change which was looked upon with great displeasure in the nineteenth century. It was seen by many as a severe deformation of a language when the meaning of words could change. Even still today some writers are not at all happy about such changes in meaning, some even believe that it would be better for words to die instead of take on the new weaker meanings that some have acquired! Yet, historical and comparative linguists see it as the type of change which “shows the mental or psychological factors of change in their purest forms” (Anttila, 1972, pg. 133). Semantics is very central to the study of languages and it is a level on which all language are completely equal, in that it is the deepest level of grammar. “Semantic change is any type of change in the meaning of a linguistic form, usually excluding changes in the grammatical function of a grammatical morpheme” (Trask, 2000, pg. 303). In general semantics is considered to be somewhat more complex than other linguistic areas where language change is seen, like phonetics or syntax. This makes any analysis of semantic change rather difficult.
Semantic change was largely ignored until the 1820’s when there was an increase in the amount of work being published on the topic. Linguists concentrated on creating linguistic theories on other types of change but steered clear of the hazy and seemingly impossible task of understanding semantic change. For historical linguists, semantic change is not as easily detected as other types of language change as it is not always obvious from texts when a word obtains a slightly different meaning to that which is previously had. It is only more extreme changes in meaning which can be perceived from examining old texts. The meaning one takes from a word or an utterance is also quite an internal concept, one which cannot be easily defined. This obstacle encountered when studying semantic change is the “extreme obscurity of the semantic component of lexicon” (Sihler, 2000, pg. 98). For this reason semantic change has been looked upon as a weak component in the work of historical linguists and has been called “fuzzy, self-contradictory and difficult to predict” (Hock & Joseph, 1996, pg. 252).

The simplest form of semantic change is a change in the relation between form and meaning. What this refers to is an alteration in the meaning mapped to a certain word. Indeed there are many words whose meaning remains fixed for extremely long periods of time. e.g. it would be almost impossible to imagine any reason for a change in the meaning of a word referring to a body part. Unlike other types of language change there is a lack of pattern in semantic change causing it to be highly unpredictable. The result of this randomness relating to change is that the word family diverges to the extent where it is tough to link two words to a common source as their meanings are now so distant, e.g. secret and secretary.

An example of a semantic change can be seen in the word ‘nice’, which is used to mean ‘pleasant’ or ‘kind’, when it was not intended to have that meaning at all, but once meant ‘precise’ (Holmes, 2001), and that was not the only meaning it has had over history. Around Shakespeare’s time it meant ‘fastidious’.

There have been dozens of names given to the different types of change under the larger heading of semantic change, this fact alone illustrates the lack of structure and real understanding of the topic. There is amelioration\(^6\), pejoration\(^7\) and weakening\(^8\) to name but a few. The terms outline so many different types that they remain unhelpful. It is those linguists who have delved into the why question behind this type of language change that have provided us with greater insight.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the linguist Antoine Meillet suggested that the causes of words changing their meanings could be either linguistic, historical or social (Meillet, 1905). One approach that was taken to explain semantic change was focusing on the idea that words do not exist in isolation from one another. They function with the words which surround them. So, if the meaning of one word changes it inevitably has

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\(^6\)Amelioration is the process by which a word’s meaning improves or becomes elevated, coming to represent something more favourable than it originally referred to.

\(^7\)Pejoration is the process by which a word’s meaning worsens or degenerates, coming to represent something less favourable than it originally did.

\(^8\)Weakening is the process by which the meaning of a word becomes less forceful, e.g. the meaning of the word ‘marvellous’ has lost some of the intensity it once had in Middle English.
CHAPTER 2. TYPES OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

an effect on those words which surround it, a type of chain reaction. This is not really accurate, as words have differing degrees of relationships with those other words that they appear with.

As with the other types of change, semantic change doesn’t happen suddenly and often the old and new meanings of a word co-exist for a time. Our language has a high rate of homonymy.\(^9\) This would suggest a situation where a word took on a new meaning and never lost its original meaning, which is a type of semantic change. The frequency of semantic change simply highlights the versatility of words. There is of course a central meaning to any lexical item but the word can also be moulded and stretched to cater for other meanings or concepts. An example of such stretching of meaning can be seen in the way we often refer to other people as ‘pigs’, by this we wish to convey that they in fact have similar characteristics to the animal which lies in the central meaning of the word.

There is some amount of confusion surrounding metaphors in relation to semantic change. Something is a metaphor when a word is used in a non-prototypical way. It is difficult to decide whether the word is being used in such a way or if the word has acquired a new meaning. So, in conclusion I have not really succeeded in explaining the laws behind semantic change, but I will not worry about this as it is a topic which has still not been completely understood by linguists.

2.6 Phonetic and Phonological Changes

Changes in pronunciation are very common in language change. This type of change is difficult to trace as it is mostly seen, or should I say heard, in spoken word and does not always translate through to the written word, which is what is available to us when looking at languages of the past. There are some pronunciation features which orthography simply cannot render, and some spelling which do not indicate clearly what their phonetic equivalent is. Under the heading of changes in pronunciation there are different types. Assimilation is the name given to changes in which segments become more alike. Dissimilation is the opposite, when segments become less alike. Another change which happens under this heading is the addition or loss of segments. Such changes are so common that there is a name for each exact type, anaptyxis,\(^{10}\) germination,\(^{11}\) haplology\(^{12}\) and syncope\(^{13}\) are just some examples (Sihler, 2000).

Sound change differs from the other types of change in the sense that it is quite mysterious as to why it happens. We see the benefits in some syntactic changes as they can reduce ambiguity. It is clear why new words need to be admitted to our lexicon. But to understand why we change the pronunciation of a vowel in a word, for example, is some-

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\(^9\) This means that there are many words that have more than one meaning and can be used in many different contexts.

\(^{10}\) A vowel added between segments.

\(^{11}\) The lengthening of a consonant.

\(^{12}\) The loss of a sequence of segments.

\(^{13}\) The loss of a segment from between segments.
times difficult. Despite this difficulty it is clear to us that such changes would not happen without reason. Vennemann (1993) rejects the suggestion that the reason behind sound changes can be in any way linked to function, “what does it mean to say that the cause of sound change is function, or that sound change - one that is not a matter of fashion - is functional? It means nothing” (Vennemann, 1993, pg. 321).

Phonological change is “the most highly structured kind of language change” (Sihler, 2000, pg. 42). So, although the reasons as to why it happens are hard to define, the how part is somewhat simpler. The reason for the patterns displayed by phonological change is probably based on the fact that the phonological system is the only underlying system of language which is not directly related to the meaning. The other systems have a function. To take a real look at the structure of language change, therefore, requires a concentration on sound changes. The importance of phonological change in this respect cannot be stressed enough as it creates the foundation of all other studies in the field of historical linguistics.

I will now talk briefly about the two most common types of phonetic change, that is assimilation and dissimilation. Assimilation is the name given to the process whereby a phone becomes phonetically more like a nearby phone. The segment which undergoes the change may be found adjacent to or at a distant from the reference phone, the former being the much more common situation. There are different names for this type of language change, anticipatory when the phone that changes appears before the reference phone and lag when it appears after. Dissimilation is the name given to the process whereby a phone become less like a neighbouring phone. Where it differs from assimilation is that it occurs more often with phones which appear at a distance from the reference phone.

Analogical change is another type of change which falls under the heading of phonological change. It involves the influence of the pronunciation of one form on the pronunciation of another form. The literature on this topic of phonological change is vast, but I will not speak about it in depth for this reason, as often the best understood concepts are the least interesting. Edward Sapir said of sound change that it is a “consummated drift that sets in at a psychologically exposed point and worms its way through a gamut of psychologically analogous forms” (Sapir, 1921, pg. 178).

As with other types of language change, there are both external and internal factors behind phonological variation and change. Linguists in the past firmly believed that sound changes followed rules and happened simultaneously, that is, when one phone changes its pronunciation in one word, it does so in all other words where it appears. But when they actually took the time to research sound changes properly, they discovered that this was not the case. As with other changes, the two different pronunciations can exist side-by-side during the process of change, there have even been recordings of two different pronunciations of the same word within the same sentence. Changes in pronunciation have been found to affect more commonly used words before words which are not used so much. An example of this is the change in pronunciation which has occurred in words like adultery, factory and nursery, where people tend to pronounce the sound before the ‘r’ as
a ‘schwa’,\textsuperscript{14} whereas in similar but less common words such as \textit{desultory} and \textit{cursory}, the change has not yet taken hold.

Several main processes occurred to separate the Germanic language family from the rest of the Indo-European languages. The most famous of these is undoubtedly the set of sound-changes known collectively as \textit{Grimms Law}. Grimm’s Law is a principle of relationships in Indo-European languages which was first formulated by Jakob Grimm in 1822 and is a continuing subject of interest and investigation to 20th-century linguists. How the law came about is as follows: Jakob noticed and wrote about similarities between some consonants in Germanic languages (especially German, English and an older language called Gothic), Latin and the Romance languages (the Romance languages are the ones descended from Latin, such as French and Spanish), Greek (for Grimm, especially the varieties of ancient Greek) and Sanskrit. Grimm’s Law refers to certain changes which these sounds underwent in the Germanic languages only, as compared to the other ‘sister’ families of Indo-European, specifically to a certain related group of changes in the manner of production of these ‘original Proto-Indo-European’\textsuperscript{15} sounds. This highlights the importance of discovering and understanding sound laws in particular, and language change in general as it provides us with vital clues to the history of languages.

A good example which highlights the fact that it is the frequency of words which determines whether or not they are affected by sound changes can be found in the pronunciation of the word ‘trombone’. Professional trombone players would use a ‘schwa’ sound for the first vowel of the word (Aitchison, 2001). This can perhaps be explained by fast speech, as the ‘schwa’ vowel is short and unstressed. Another factor which we must look at when speaking of sound changes is ease of pronunciation. The loss of the ‘i’ vowel in the word family is partly due to the fact that the way it is pronounced now is shorter and easier than the old pronunciation. The proper terminology for this factor is linguistic susceptibility. So, the word \textit{every} is more susceptible to change than the word \textit{burglary}, for example, because the sequence of sounds [g lr] is not easily pronounced.

\subsection*{2.7 Summary of Chapter}

This chapter has given a description of the different types of language changes that occur. This is an important chapter as it is essential that the types of language change are understood as they give a basis for the rest of the project. There is still scope for improvement on the work on types of language changes as there are many aspects of the phenomenon that need a better understanding.

Firstly, I addressed syntactic change, which is a change in the form or order of words. I then spoke of morphological change which is linked to other types of change in numerous ways as it refers to a change in the parts of words which are known as morphemes. Lexical change is then dealt with. This type of language change is easy to monitor as it refers to

\textsuperscript{14}An example of this ‘schwa’ sound can be seen at the beginning of the word \textit{every}.

\textsuperscript{15}Proto-Indo-European is the name given to the single language spoken about 6000 to 8000 years ago which gave rise to all the modern European languages.
the introduction or loss of words from a language. I then address semantic change which is perhaps the type of change about which least is known or understood. The last type of change dealt with in this chapter is sound change. This is a common type of change which is highly structured although the reasons behind the changes are somewhat mysterious.

What is most interesting about this chapter is perhaps the vast difference between the different types of language change. From the reason behind the changes to the patterns of the changes, each type of change is quite distinct. On the whole it is the ‘why’ question which tends to puzzle linguists more than the ‘how’ question.
Chapter 3

Effects of Language Change
CHAPTER 3. EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

3.1 Introduction

Now that I have given a description of the different types of language change that can occur I will address in this chapter some effects that these language changes can have on language. Firstly I will address language families. The way in which the Romance languages all diverged from a common root in Latin to become entirely separate languages is an example of one of the most important long-term effects of language change. Another topic addressed in this chapter is language death. Here I deal with the ways in which languages come to an end. I then speak at length of language evolution, as it is a topic which interests me greatly and which is linked to language change in many ways.

3.2 Language Families

An English speaker cannot understand German. A French speaker cannot understand Spanish. Why? Because they are indeed different languages, why are they different languages? Because of language change over many years. Although diverging from a common root, the extent to which these languages have changed over the last 5,000 years has made them incomprehensible to speakers of other languages in the same language family.

It is vital that we understand language change before beginning to trace the history of languages, as it is the key to historical linguistics. Comparative linguistics finds similarities between languages and tries to link their history. They have the task of identifying, enumerating and evaluating cross-linguistics similarities and with such evidence propose the membership of languages in language families, by presuming that due to the similarities they derive from a common ancestor. The basic theory behind the idea of grouping languages into families is that they were once the same language, and for numerous reasons through language change they diverged. For example, English, German and Latin are all part of the Indo-European language family along with many other languages from as far off as India, and the common language from which they all came has come to be known as Proto-Indo-European, clearly not what the language would have been known as at the time.

Although vastly studied, there is still not a huge amount of information on this language due to how long ago it existed. A language family about which a lot more is known is the Romance languages, as these all came from Latin and the divergence happened more recently than that of in the Indo-European languages. The Romance language family is only one of the subfamilies of the larger Indo-European language family. For this reason there are clear signs of relationships within the Romance family, whereas it is much harder, if at all possible, to find relationships within the entire Indo-European family.

One of the most important principles which allows us to link languages in such a way is the fact that language is almost entirely\(^1\) arbitrary. What this means is that there is no inevitable and natural connection between a word and its meaning. For example,

\(^{1}\)The exception to this arbitrariness displayed by human languages is seen in onomatopoeic words such as click.
if I was to say the word ‘dog’, it doesn’t indicate to a non-English speaker that I am referring to the small animal. The fact that an English speaker can understand what I am referring to using this word is due to convention and not to some connection between the sound and the animal. For this reason, it is clear that there is no explanation, (besides borrowing which I will come to later) why two ‘different’ languages should bear so many similarities unless they were once the same language and these similarities that still exist are merely the parts of the ancestor language which have undergone the least amount of changes. In his book, Naming and necessity, Kripke (1980) states that names have ‘denotation’ but no ‘connotation’. Roughly, they are just marks for the individuals, but do not have a ‘sense’. So their meaning is just their reference. Ever since the publication of its original version, Naming and Necessity has had great and increasing influence. It redirected philosophical attention to neglected questions of natural and metaphysical necessity and to the connections between these and theories of reference, in particular of naming, and of identity.

It needs to be shown that the similarities are not just chance, as there are a finite number of sounds we can produce there are bound to be some coincidental likenesses between languages. There need to be adequate numbers of similarities found in order to claim they derive from common ancestors. There is another important reason that we have commonalities in languages, and that is borrowing. This is another factor which contributes to language change in perhaps the most obvious way. It causes lexical change, which is new words being introduced from contact with other languages.

So to simplify matters, the extent to which two different but related languages differ is entirely due to the different language changes that have occurred to each. As both languages were once the same, the differences that now exist between them are of interest when looking at the topic of language change. In his book on historical linguistics, Bynon (1977) refers to a neogrammarian model\(^2\) when addressing the topic of relatedness of languages, which is a theoretical model he believes to adequately describe and account for “synchronic irregularity within individual languages and the nature of the resemblances existing between related languages”. He therefore describes the process of language diverging by saying that “closeness of relatedness can therefore be seen to depend on the number of rules held in common” (Bynon, 1977, pg. 64). He sees the family tree of a language family as representing “the historical continuity between members of a language family, the unbroken chain of successive grammars linking the ancestor with each of the descendant languages”.

### 3.3 Language Death

Franz Bopp, the German scholar, claimed in 1827 that “Languages are to be considered organic natural bodies, which are formed according to fixed laws, develop as possessing a inner principle of life, and gradually die out because they do not understand themselves

\(^2\)This is a model set up by a procedure that establishes systematic correspondences and then uses these to identify and trace cognates and to set up a family tree with substantial subgrouping.
any longer, and therefore cast off or mutilate their members or forms” (Jespersen, 1922, pg. 65). An interesting theory no doubt but the general consensus today on the topic of language death is not quite so simple.

I discovered while researching this part of my project that there are many opposing opinions on language death. In fact, the first two papers I read stated quite the opposite opinion. In her book on language change, Aitchison (2001) suggests that Latin is not a dead language. She believes that it has merely undergone such an amount of change that people may believe it has died when it is still in fact quite alive and can be seen in the Romance languages. When she speaks of language death then, she is not referring to the gradual changes over time but she is referring to the more dramatic event, the disappearance of a language. Whereas, in his paper on language death, published in *The Handbook of language variation and change*, Wolfram (2004) says that one cause of language death is the gradual changes that Latin has undergone over the years which have resulted in no one speaking Latin today. Aitchison therefore excludes this type of language death described by Walt Wolfram in her understanding on the topic, which of course means that language death is a very rare occurrence in her sense of the concept, as gradual language death is by far the most common type of language death. I would tend to agree with Wolfram, and so take the view that Latin itself is a dead language despite the fact its legacy lives on in its daughter languages.

Some languages fall out of use gradually and eventually die. There are many factors which contribute to this happening. The life cycle of a language has often been compared to that of a human, they are born, evolve and change and eventually die. This death is again comparable to that of humans, as in the same way that humans leave much behind them in their descendants, children and grandchildren, languages too leave descendants and different traits of the language can be seen in its daughter languages, e.g. Latin can be seen in the Romance languages. Despite the fact that a language may be dead, its influence can still be seen for a long time after its death.

Language death has become more significant in recent years as it has been happening in epidemic proportions. Krauss (1992) has said that in this century up to 90% of the worlds languages face extinction. In his book, *Language Death*, Crystal (2000) agrees with this figure and presents arguments as to why this matters. They are from the general value of diversity, from the value of languages as expressions of identity, as repositories of history, as part of the sum of human knowledge, and as interesting subjects in their own right. Hale (1998) outlines what he believes to be the important results of a language dying, firstly, language researchers are deprived of enough information on a language variety if it has not been documented sufficiently and secondly, it deprives people of one of the most integral components of diverse cultural behaviour.

There have been an increased number of publications in recent years outlining the seriousness of the language endangerment at present, but many are still entirely unaware of it, as I’ll admit I was before reading on the subject. In their publication Campbell and Muntzel (1989) suggest four different types of language death which are as follows:
3.3.1 Sudden Language Death

This happens when the speakers of a language are all killed or die suddenly. Examples of this type of language death are Tasmanian and Nicoleno. Tasmania was first contacted by the Dutch in 1644, then by Captain Cook in 1776 and the English settled there in 1803. The unique native population of about 5,000 people who had lived there for over twenty thousand years spoke roughly 10 distinct languages. By 1832 the last free Tasmanians were put in a concentration camp by the British, while fugitives were killed for sport by bounty hunters. By 1876 all had died, except for cases of intermarriage. The only remains of the Tasmanian language today are seen in place and people names. This type of language death doesn’t have many if any structural consequences.

3.3.2 Radical Language Death

This is similar to sudden language death in terms of its abruptness. How it differs from it is that it involves a shift to another language by its speakers. This change of language by the speakers is usually due to political repression and genocide and the new language is taken on board as a survival tactic. An example of this was seen in El Salvador in the 1930’s when those believed to be Indian were “rounded up and killed in wanton acts of genocide” (Wolfram, 2004). This led many to discard their indigenous languages to avoid being recognized as Indians. In this type of language death there are structural consequences as there are still native speakers of the dead language alive.

3.3.3 Gradual Language Death

This is the most common type of language death. It is described by Sasse (1992, pg. 22) as language loss due to “the gradual shift to the dominant language in a contact situation”. In cases of this type, the older generations are usually more proficient in the language whereas the younger generations tend not to use the language at all and if they do, do so with less proficiency than their elders. When there are speakers who do not have full competency of a language they are known as semi-speakers (Dorian, 1977).

3.3.4 Bottom-to-top Language Death

This type of language death occurs when the language falls out of everyday, casual use but remain in use in formal contexts. This is much less common than the reverse, where languages continue to be used in casual setting but are replaced in formal settings. The most obvious example of this type of language death is of course Latin, which continued to be used in Church long after its death as a spoken language, and can be even heard here in Trinity College where it is the language used in prayer in Commons!
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One thing that must be said of these categorically defined types is that they are by no means mutually exclusive, and occur in unison with each other more often than not. Another thing to note is that these descriptions are quite basic, what really happens when a language dies is quite a bit more complex. I will now look at some of the causes of language death, which are always non-linguistic, i.e. not due to any factors particular to the language in question. There are a huge number of factors which can lead to language death and Campbell lists the following as being responsible:

- Discrimination, repression, rapid population collapse, lack of economic opportunities, on-going industrialisation, rapid economic transformation, work patterns, migrant labour, communication with outside regions, resettlement, dispersion, migration, literacy, compulsory education...etc. (Campbell, 1994).

Macro-variables is the name given to those factors which refer to broader situations outside the community in question, e.g. economic conditions and historical events, whereas micro-variables are those factors which specifically affect the speech community, e.g. communicative access for the community and compulsory education.

Language endangerment can be caused by any number of factors but they will normally include economic, political, ecological and cultural factors. Grenoble and Whaley (1998) believe that the economical factors are often stronger than all the other factors combined. Two critical reasons for this are that the cost of published materials, schools etc. for small minority languages is too great and, the greater opportunities linked with having a stronger, often more economic language.

Language suicide is a particular case of language death which falls under the type heading radical language death although somewhat less extreme. Decreolization is an example of language suicide which involves the speakers of a creole being strongly influenced by its parent language and borrowing words until their language in effect becomes the same as the parent language. Causes of the death of the creole in this situation are the social prestige associated with the parent language, and perhaps the economic advantage of being a speaker of the parent language. In conclusion, language death is a “complex sociolinguistic process involving alternative paths to obsolescence” (Wolfram, 2004, pg. 781). He again compares it to human life in the way that there are numerous complex paths which all end in the same way, death.

3.4 Language Change and Language Evolution

Yet again conflicting theories come into play in this area. Of those who believe that language evolved primarily as an adaptation, “the human language faculty is a complex biological adaptation that evolved by natural selection for communication in a knowledge using, socially interdependent lifestyle” (Pinker, 2003, pg. 16), one side of the field are of the opinion that the language changes we see at present are more social than those which took place as language evolved initially as there is no necessity for further adaptation, whereas the other side believe that languages are in fact still, or even eternally, adapting to meet the needs of an ever evolving function.
The former group suggest that when languages change today, it is not always a reflection on the function of language, whereas when language was evolving the changes it underwent provided clear improvements and made clear what the function of language was at the time, which was to provide more effective communication for survival.

The latter group believe that a central aspect of language that we must look at when speaking of language change is the function of language. To truly know what the function of language is will allow us to better understand the reasons why languages change. This can also be applied to the evolution of language. If we know the reasons humans acquired language, we can understand why it formed in the way it did i.e. the design of language. I would tend to agree with this group.

I will now introduce a section on language evolution for several reasons. Firstly, if we want to really understand why languages change and evolve constantly over time, we must first have a good basis of understanding of language itself, and more importantly, its function. A good starting point in the analysis of language function is to look at the origin of language, to determine why language evolved would be to understand its function and hence, gain more insight into why languages change.

To relate human evolution to language change is to address how languages produce offspring over time which carry out the functions of their ancestors. These offspring take over the communicative functions of their forebearers. There is also the view that language change and acquisition represent evolutionary processes in a sense that we nowadays tend to associate with Darwinism. That is to view languages as similar to organisms with life-cycles in the sense that they are first ‘born’, then grow into fully-developed, or maximally complex ‘adults’, and may finally degenerate, lose their complexity and possibly ‘die’. Language change was regarded as functional, ‘goal directed’ and, one could say, ‘adaptive’ in a sense similar to the one the term has in biology.

While language evolution is a topic in which historical linguists are undoubtedly interested, the reverse is also true. Language change is important in the area of language evolution as languages are constantly evolving, as we know, and understanding the way in which they change can aid two aspects of language evolution, if we are to presume that language changes improve a language. It helps them turn back the clock by comparing language changes that have been well documented in more recent times, and they also rely on the work of historical linguists to trace the history of language families and the history of language in general.

For these reasons in this chapter I will give a brief overview of language evolution and how the theories, although none proven beyond any doubt, aid our understanding of language change.

### 3.4.1 Why study Language Evolution

I have already stated the reason why we are looking into the origin of language but there are numerous other reasons outside the scope of this project, which I will mention in this section. I will look at the problems encountered on the quest to reach a language evolution theory that can be universally agreed upon. I will give a brief history of the progress and
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will mention the various theories that have been proposed. I will also take a quick look into some of the different approaches theorists take in coming to their conclusions, and will analyse how these theories aid in our understanding of language change.

To begin, it is important that we understand the reasons why people study the origin of language, besides the reason we are interested in it. One of the most intriguing things about the study of language evolution is how it attracts specialists from such a diverse range of areas. Among these are linguists, anthropologists, philosophers and psychologists. It is this broad range of interest that gives us the many differing and conflicting theories on the subject. It is when scholars from different fields get together and share views and ideas with a common focus that they aid each other in their research by increasing the scope of their individual understanding. The principal advantage of the various debates and discussions on the topic is that it has forced linguists to define such terms as ‘human language’ and has sent them on a serious quest for universals.

It is usually thought by us that, as humans, we are a ‘cut above the rest’. There exists a qualitative difference between us and the other millions of species that inhabit our planet. All the species in existence are exquisitely adapted to their ecological habitats, yet none participate in such hugely diverse and highly complex types of social systems like those seen in human groups. “Other species adapt themselves to the natural world — we adapt the natural world to us” (Bickerton, 1990, pg. 1). Despite the continuous and rapid expansion of our understanding of the world and indeed the universe we live in, there still remains much to be discovered, defined and understood of our place in this universe, and, more importantly what it is that makes us human. We share 99%, percent of our genetic material with chimpanzees (Bickerton, 1990), so why is it that our worlds are so vastly different?

Recently, the huge advances made in biological fields have thrown more light on how we are built, but this angle shows us how we are similar to other species as opposed to highlighting why we are different. “The essence of human uniqueness remains elusive” (Christiansen & Kirby, 2003, pg. 1). We must question how we have come to live in such a diverse society and how we have made such major scientific advances. There is no doubt that language has had a large part to play in the development of our world. It is “the feature of humanity that leads to the strange properties” and it is one of the most studied and perhaps the most intriguing aspects of human evolution. One of the reasons we know much less about language evolution than most other scientific areas is that a deep understanding of the origins of language would require the joint efforts of experts from a huge range of disciplines as many different aspects need to be studied in order to achieve the overall picture. These aspects range from understanding how our brain works to how the biology of hominids has changed.

3This fact makes one pause when reflecting on the acceptance of DNA evidence in forensic science.
3.4.2 Recent History

Back in 1859 when Charles Darwin published *The Origin of the Species*, there was a great interest and enthusiasm in the origin and evolution of language. This interest led to some ridiculous ideas and theories as there were no constraints to what could be published. Consequently, there was a ban put on all discussions of the origin and evolution of language by the *Société de Linguistique de Paris*. The effect of this ban was that the subject was not discussed for over a century. It was the conference on ‘Origins and Evolution of Language and Speech’ in 1975, where the interest in the topic was reborn, and by the 1990’s the field had emerged fully as a legitimate area of scientific enquiry (Christiansen & Kirby, 2003). Over the century there had been major advances in brain and cognitive sciences which disproved some previous theories. It is Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom’s paper ‘Natural Language and Natural Selection’, published in 1990, which is credited with being largely responsible for the return of great interest in the evolution of language. This can be seen in the increase of the appearance of language evolution works in the nineties (ISI Web of Knowledge index), from nine papers per year between 1981 and 1989, to 86 per year for the period 1990 - 1999. It is thanks to this resurgence that we have today the numerous and varying theories of language that I will discuss in this section.

3.4.3 Different approaches to explaining Language Evolution

To have a discussion on the evolution of language we must present an analysis of language itself, as a lot can be told from the design of human language. It is language which makes us unique as humans. It is extremely difficult to define language, as it exists as transitory utterances that leave no trace and as patterns of neural connectivity in the complex human brain (Christiansen & Kirby, 2003). What we do know is that the most fascinating thing about language is the power it has to express. From a finite lexicon and a small sound system, we can communicate infinitely many ideas ranging from theoretical information to film plots. This fact makes the most interesting aspects of the language faculty those principles that allow it to be so expressive, which are words and grammar.

The approach taken by most when researching language evolution is to look into the systems that underlie languages in depth. This is the way which Pinker begins his paper *Language as an adaptation to the cognitive niche*. He believes that “the starting point in an analysis of language must be an analysis of language itself” (Pinker, 2003, pg. 16). What follows is a brief overview of his approach. Ferdinand Saussure defined a word as “an arbitrary sign: a connection between a signal and a concept shared by the members of the community”. It is clear to us that the word ‘dog’ does not sound like a dog barking, nor does it look like a dog, but we can use it to refer to the animal because we, as Anglophones, all have learned the connection between the sound and the meaning. Therefore by saying the word ‘dog’, I make the listener think of the four legged animal, ‘mans best friend’. The symbols underlying words are bidirectional. What this means is that if I use the word ‘dog’, for example, when speaking then we can assume that if someone else uses the word ‘dog’ I will understand the meaning. This fact has a part to play in child language acquisition.
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When a child hears a person use a word, they know automatically that they too can use this word and that it will be understood.

These words would be quite useless were it not for the grammar that allows us to combine them in an infinite number of ways. By acquiring language, we learn a finite number of algorithms which enable us to create an infinite number of sentences. An example of the knowledge of English we have is that sentences can consist of a noun phrase and a verb phrase. As every sentence we create conveys a different thought, and there are an infinite number of sentences we can create, it is possible to convey an infinite number of distinct thoughts. “The abstractness of grammatical categories puts no restriction on the content of sentences; the recursive, combinatorial nature of grammar puts no limits on their complexity or number” (Pinker, 2003, pg. 18).

The most important subsystem of grammar is known as syntax. This has the task of combining words into phrases and sentences. Syntax has many properties and rules which allow us to understand different ideas. An example of such a tool is linear order. This allows us to distinguish a difference between the following sentences ‘Beth loves John’ and ‘John loves Beth’. Another tool which is part of syntax is constituency. This enables us to embed ideas inside other ideas due to a sentences hierarchical structure. Phrase structure grammar is used to avoid ambiguity in sentences, this “ambiguity illustrates the essential place of constituency in interpreting meaning from sentences” (Pinker, 2003, pg. 18). Yet another essential feature of our grammar is what Pinker calls predicate-argument structure. This is the part of language which describes how the different elements of a sentence relate to each other. The semantic role of a noun can differ depending on the type of verb used; even when the word order is exactly the same e.g. ‘The man feared the dog’ and ‘The man frightened the dog’.

I will now look at the other systems involved in a grammar. Phonology is the system that combines the sounds of a language. It involves the study of a language in order to determine its distinctive sounds and which sounds are perceived as different to others. We do not form words by associating them directly with articulatory gestures like a movement of the tongue or the lips, but we combine a series of gestures, each defining a word. There are constraints placed on how sounds can be combined in all languages. Words are built from vowels, consonants, feet, syllables and features. Unlike syntax and morphology, we cannot get any meaning from the lowest units of phonology, e.g. there can be no meaning determined from /d/. There are endless studies into the intrinsic structures of language, from linguists in many areas stretching from phonetics to syntax, from speech analysis to semantics. There has been an equal amount of interest paid to the psychological aspect of language, with a huge amount of research done on the acquisition of language and speech perception. Yet, there is one area of linguistic study which has been somewhat neglected, and that is the function of language and its evolutionary origins.

The primary reason for this neglect is the fact that this area cannot be studied in real time, i.e. it is impossible to see language evolution happening, and there is limited information available. To define the function of language is a highly complex task, yet it is one that must be undertaken. It is necessary that we understand why we possess such a unique trait in order to fully understand its properties and its failures in individual
cases (Dunbar, 2003). In his paper, “Theory of mind and the evolution of language”, Robin Dunbar takes yet another approach. He believes that if we wish to understand a phenomenon properly, we must address four kinds of questions known as Tinbergen’s Four ‘Whys’, which is a formula scientists have used for decades. These refer to questions about function, mechanisms, ontogeny and phylogeny (Tinbergen, 1963) and are logically independent of each other. He primarily deals with the functionality of language, as in this area lie many answers to age-old questions, and feels that if we can understand exactly why language exists, its evolution will become somewhat clearer to us.

In his book, *The origins of complex language*, Carstairs McCarthy takes a unique approach to explaining the evolution of human language and looks at what he calls the “peculiarities of human language”. He believes that by highlighting how our communication system differs from animal communication systems we will gain more insight into how human language came to be. These peculiarities are vocabulary size, duality of patterning and the distinction between sentences and NP’s. These features are not the only ones which are particular to human language, but he feels they are the ones which will provide the most information. They are internal features, what is meant by this is that they are not seen in linguistic structure, like in syntax or phonology, but they have to do with the cognitive and social functions of human language. Carstairs McCarthy is of the opinion that the common view held that “the question of how language has evolved cannot be divorced from the question of how language has come to acquire the particular structural characteristics that it has” (Carstairs-McCarthy, 1999, pg. 10), is wrong, and aims to show this in the book.

### 3.4.4 Language Evolution Theories

There are numerous theories regarding the origin of language. I will aim to give a description of the some theorists’ views of language origin. When speaking of language origin the first thing we must note is that there are two kinds of theories, the *Continuity approach* and the *Discontinuity approach*. The continuity approach which has its roots in Darwinian theories, suggests that language could not have evolved out of nothing and tries to link it with animal communication systems. Whereas, discontinuity claims that human language is unlike any other communication system.

**Discontinuity Approach**

The famous linguist Noam Chomsky once stated that to claim continuity between any form of animal communication and human language would be to claim “evolutionary development from breathing to walking” (Chomsky, 1972, pg. 68). He also said that “Darwinian theory is so loose it can incorporate everything” (Horgan, 1995, pg. 154). There exists another discontinuity theory known as culturalism. This differs from Chomsky’s theory in that it argues that “humans are unconstrained learning machines who create a culture from which all relevant properties of the human mind (including language) derive” (Ulbaek,
Neither Culturalists nor Chomsky have suggested a satisfactory explanation for the origin of language, as they are more interested in other aspects.

**Continuity Approach**

Some continuity theorists disagree strongly with the Chomskyan idea of innateness and believe that learning is a fundamental aspect of the human mind. They rely strongly on the basic fact that language is unarguably learned as a basis for their theories. The continuity theorists who believe learning is a fundamental aspect of human mind and language use results from chimpanzee experiments to support their behaviourist view. They focus on the fact that though apes do not speak when in the wild, they have the ability to learn language and communicate in a fashion similar to humans. They study animal communication and relate it to language in order to gain insight into the evolution of language. It is the animals which are most closely related to us genetically who possess ‘language’ as we conceive it, though they cannot vocalize it. This is certainly no coincidence.

Another branch of theorists including Pinker and Bickerton’s beliefs fall under the headings of both continuity and innateness, which may first appear contradictory but when one considers that “some kind of discontinuity must exist if things are to be different and not the same” (Ulbaek, 1998, pg. 31) and that innateness may be viewed as coming in degrees, it then becomes more believable. These theorists agree with Chomsky on the subject of strong innateness. Where their theory differs to Chomsky’s is on the question of continuity. They believe that if they can build a path from a state without language to a state with language by Darwinian means then there is an explanation of how languages came about, which, for them, is enough of a reason to claim loyalty to continuity. At the same time they do not commit to the idea of language descending from simpler forms of communication. They claim that language evolved from animal cognition not from animal communication, and this is where the continuity lies. “Language grew out of cognitive systems already in existence and working” (Ulbaek, 1998, pg. 33). The theorists who hold this belief are of the opinion that cognitive systems were in place before language and not that language developed from other communicative systems. The following are some examples of evidence that animals are cognitive creatures:

- Tool-using and making — Apes are not only capable of using tools but also of making them, they use stones for cracking nuts.

- Cognitive knowledge — Apes have a sophisticated knowledge of their habitat and have the ability to plan routes to aid in food retrieval.

- Learning through imitation — Primates learn by social imitation. In an enclosure of chimpanzees the skill of ladder-climbing will spread rapidly.

- Social knowledge — There is a form of hierarchy within monkey groups, with a dominant male and lower-ranking males and females which suggests social skills.
• Deception — There exists evidence of intentional lying among apes and monkeys (Byrne & Whiten, 1988).

• Theory of mind — Chimpanzees have been shown to be capable of treating their fellow apes as intentional. In an experiment a Chimp could watch a videotape of a person trying to solve a problem and then find among alternatives the right tool to solve the problem.

It is on the basis of these facts that the theorists come to the conclusion that “if language developed from cognition, the ape had the means to fulfil the role, and so had the last common ancestor between ape and man” (Ulbaek, 1998, pg. 36). The theory that was first introduced by Pinker (2003, pg. 16) in 1990, states that “the human language faculty is a complex biological adaptation that evolved by natural selection for communication in a knowledge-using, socially interdependent lifestyle”. This theory, while the seemingly obvious one, has sparked controversy which can be seen in the commentaries in Pinker and Bloom (1990).

The following explanation is put forward by the linguists who take the continuity and innateness stance. Some six to eight million years ago, an ape-like primate existed which was the last known link between humans and apes. The evolution of the two species separated at this point. In one, language evolved, in the other there were no great changes. The ape’s brain did not make any major advances which suggests that they were already adequately evolved for survival in their habitat. In the other species, there were many changes from rapid brain growth and culture to upright walking and handedness. These changes and the many others which occurred would have all contributed to the development of language.

An important question we must ask is why do humans and not apes have such an elaborate and complex form of communication? In order to answer this, we must look into the biological role of language. At the beginning of the evolution of language it had the function of communicating thoughts through group members. That language still has this function is not agreed upon. Chomsky does not believe that language has any fixed function, but the theorists do not agree with him on this point. They do not believe that the function of language as thought is a primary one, because this function would be much better taken care of by an internal language.

3.4.5 Theory of mind in Language Evolution

In the most recent research on language function the main view has been that the required force was social, not technological or environmental (Barton, 1996; Byrne, 1995; Dunbar, 1996). They believe that the need to hold a large highly structured group together has been more important than the need to solve ecological problems (Dunbar, 1998). This must not be misunderstood as meaning that ecology is not the driving force in evolution, but what concerns us is whether ecology influences brain size directly or whether is does so indirectly via group size. The idea behind these theories that language evolved for social
means is that, in order for the large groups, which are needed due to ecological pressures, to remain stable, species develop larger brains to cope with the social tasks required (Byrne & Whiten, 1988). It is from this theory that the ‘social brain’ hypothesis (Barton & Dunbar, 1997) comes. This claims that the human brain is primarily a social tool, as opposed to an ecological one. This theory is strengthened when we look at the growing evidence that humans are significantly better at solving social problems than ecological ones (Cheney & Seyfarth, 1990). This claim is strongly supported by the fact that social group size correlates very closely with relative neocortex size in primates (Barton, 1996; Dunbar, 1996). On the other hand, neocortex size does not correlate to ecological variables that are associated with foraging demands (Dunbar, 1996).

3.4.6 Conclusion

There is still an enormous amount of study and research to be done in this field before we will ever reach a theory that can be universally agreed upon. Some people believe that we will never truly know the origin of human language. To reach a theory of language origin which can be proven beyond doubt would enable us to understand the origin of human uniqueness, which is something we strive towards as a species, as in a sense it would lead us to ‘the meaning of life’!

3.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has dealt with some important topics which arise as a result of language change. This is a central chapter as it highlights the huge effects that the process of languages change can have on a language. While most people are fully aware that languages diverge to form new, different languages and that languages become extinct, it is important to really get to grasps with how these things happen, which is of course through developing an understanding of language change.

Firstly, I deal with the concept of language families. The fact that languages, over long periods of time, diverge to form entirely new languages is truly fascinating and so central to every aspect of linguistics. Language change is the sole force behind the formation of language families and so this section is of great importance.

I then address the topic of language death. Languages can die for multiple different reasons, which are outlined in this section. I also introduce the different types of language death.

There is then a section linking language change with language evolution. The reasons why these two topics are related are addressed in this section and I give a general over view of language evolution and the theories that are out there.
Chapter 4

Why Language Changes
4.1 Introduction

Most general literature on the topic of why languages change offers two polar reasons. One side believe that language change is in ways like fashion, that it cannot be predicted and brings no improvements to the language, “There is no more reason for languages to change than there is for automobiles to add fins one year and remove then the next” (Postal, 1968, pg. 283). The people who believe this would put language change which occurs outside the realm of language contact down to non-functional stylistic change.

The other side have more confidence in the reason behind language change and believe that it is related to the function of language and changes accordingly allowing us to communicate in the best way possible. I would tend to agree with the latter, although not entirely. While I do believe that there are some language changes that are entirely inexplicable, there are more which seem to have some rhyme and reason to them. Whether we just do not know enough about the topic to see the function behind all language change or the truth lies somewhere between the two sides is hard to say. In the section of this chapter called therapeutic change, there are a number of examples highlighted which strengthen the ‘function’ claim.

There are then two factors which condition language variation and language change, and they are external factors and internal factors. External factors are those variables which exist outside the language such as age, gender, class etc. Internal factors are those systems which are internal to language, i.e. the structural systems which underlie language, that is the syntax, morphology, phonology etc. In this chapter I will look at language variation, and the sociolinguistic causes of language change. I will also delve into the psycholinguistic factors behind language change and look at how language contact and adaptation affect languages.

4.2 Language Variation

Studying language variation proceeds mainly by “observing language use in natural social settings and categorizing the linguistic variants according to their social distribution” (Chambers, 2004, pg. 3). There can be language variation which does not result in language change whereas there cannot be language change without language variation preceding it. “Not all variability and heterogeneity in language structure involves change, but all change involves variability and heterogeneity” (Weinrich, Labov, & Herzog, 1968, pg. 188). For this reason it is essential that I discuss language variation as it is what occurs before language change.

Language is comparable to nature in the sense that it is not static and no two objects in nature are exactly alike, as there are no two grammars which are identical. Linguists have pointed out that no one person pronounces a sound in exactly the same way more than once. Imagine the variation this provides when dealing with every speaker of a language. However, variation cannot only be found in sound differences but in all areas of a language. The study of language variation falls under the title of dialectology. Within dialectology
there are two distinct parts: dialect geography and social variation. A common question which arises in this area is when do differences in language mean a different dialect as opposed to a different language. The problem with this uncertainty is partly due to the way in which the word dialect is used. One of the contexts it is used in is with regard to the degree of difference between two forms of speech (Sihler, 2000). Another way it is used is when referring to the relationship between a language and its other forms that exist at the same time. Lastly, it is used, perhaps incorrectly, when referring to different languages that exist in one country say, one might speak of the different ‘dialects’ of China.

The first interpretation of dialect is really where the problem lies. To define clear-cut rules by which different forms of speech become a language in its own right is extremely difficult. As Sihler (2000) points out, “there are infinitely many gradations between same language and mutually unintelligible languages”. This difficulty leads to disputes over whether two different forms of speech are dialects or different languages. There are even people who argue that American and British English are in fact two different languages.

It has been said that if language did not vary in the way it does that there would be no sociolinguistics. Sociolinguists have the job of understanding what those factors are that lead to linguistic variation, in doing so they must focus on the relationship between linguistic and social structures. When speaking of language variation which is due to social factors, we can classify the variation under the headings age, gender and social class. Age being the primary social correlate of linguistic change. There is a noticeable difference in the ‘current’ speech of today’s youth and their grandparents, as there are words and phrases teenagers utter which they would not dream of saying when they reach adulthood! One could quite easily tell the difference between a transcript of a teenage boy from Inner City Dublin speaking and a middle aged woman from the well-to-do Dublin 4 area, and this difference is due to age, gender and social class, as are most cases of language variation.

When an innovation occurs in one part of the speech community, that is a variation in an aspect of the language, in order to constitute a change, it needs to be adopted by the remainder of the speech community. Such variation can co-exist for any length of time, and this situation is described in the following section on Stylistic variation, but for it to become a case of language change the old form must cease to be used.

### 4.2.1 Stylistic Variation

This is an appropriate place in the project to bring in the topic of stylistic variation. This is a type of variation which is usually context dependent and does generally not result in language change. What is meant by context dependent is that it involves the variation of language by one speaker which depends on the context which they are speaking in, this is known as *intra-speaker variation*, and *register* is the term used to describe the different ways of speaking. An example of when a person may speak using different registers is when they are with their close friends and when they are in a job interview.
4.3 Causes of Language Change

There are a huge amount of possible causes of language change. There is no problem in providing a seemingly endless list of these causes, where the problem lies is in deciding which of these causes need to be taken seriously. Over the years there have been many speculations over the reasons behind language change, some have even bordered on bizarre. Aitchison (2001) reminds us of a time when the following suggestion was taken seriously “The connection with geographical or climatic conditions is clear...because nobody will deny the residence in mountains, especially in the high mountains, stimulates the lungs”. This appeared in a book by the famous Danish linguist Otto Jespersen as an explanation as to where consonant changes begin (Jespersen, 1922, pg. 257).

One thing that contributes to the difficulty in unveiling the causes of language change is the fact that any one change can be attributed to multiple causes. This makes the process that bit more complex. This complexity and confusion in this area of linguistics has lead many respected linguists to avoid the topic entirely, “The explanation of the cause of language change is far beyond the reach of any theory ever advanced” (Harris, 1969, pg. 550). One thing that must be remembered when dealing with language change is that it occurs in the language as it is spoken by humans and does not take place in written word, but is merely transferred to the written word after changes are well enough established in the spoken word. “The drama of linguistic change is enacted not in manuscripts nor inscriptions, but in the mouths and minds of men” (Wyld, 1927). This means that the factors which make language change can be divided roughly under two headings. There are external sociolinguistic factors which lie outside the language system. Then there are those factors which are internal to language, that is, linguistic and psychological factors which are present in the language structure and in the speakers minds. These are also known as psycholinguistic factors.

4.3.1 Sociolinguistic

Some, though not many, linguists believe that the sound changes that occur are entirely random. The changes that language undergoes have even been compared to fashion, in the sense that they are completely unpredictable. The American linguist Charles Hockett came up with a theory for language change based on random deviation. He suggests that when speakers pronounce a word they aim for it to sound as close to bull’s-eye as possible, that is the ideal pronunciation. With time, the pronunciation deviates a bit from the bull’s-eye and eventually a new bull’s-eye is set. “It is just this sort of slow drifting about of expectation distribution, shared by people who are in constant communication that we mean to subsume the term ‘sound change’ ” (Hockett, 1958, pg. 443-445).

Another similar theory is that “the ‘causes’ of sound change without language contact lie in the general tendency of human cultural products to undergo ‘non-functional’ stylistic change” (Postal, 1968, pg. 283). This is quite an extreme opinion and is widely unaccepted. It is not doubted that fashion and social influence do indeed influence language change, yet there are substantial reasons why they are not regarded as major causes of language
change.

Firstly, if sound changes were as random as suggested by Hockett and Postal, then language would eventually become quite chaotic. Secondly, similar changes can be seen to occur in unrelated languages, this would suggest that there is some rhyme and reason to language changes. Lastly, there are certain aspects of language which are more susceptible to language change, which would indicate again the changes are not so random after all.

The overriding theory among linguists is that the principal cause of language change lies in the interference or infiltration of foreign bodies. There are many different versions of this view the most accepted being the Substratum theory. This theory suggests that when immigrants enter a new region they learn the new language imperfectly, or when indigenous populations are conquered they may also learn the language of their conquerors imperfectly. These imperfections are passed on to the children of the inhabitants and to others in the social circle, until the language is altered. An example of when this happens quite commonly is along the borders of countries where different languages are spoken, I will address this example in the section languages in contact.

There exist two types of importers of foreign elements: the imperfect learners and those who pick-up small useful parts of languages. It is the difference between these two types that creates the distinction between borrowing and substratum influence. When someone learns a new language it is the sound system of their old language which can be seen in the new language, whereas when people pick-up bits from other languages and add them to their own language it is usually vocabulary. Let us now look at borrowing. To begin, there are a number of characteristics of borrowing. The first highlights the fact that in order for a word to be borrowed from a language it must present a certain amount of detachability from its donor language. It must also not affect the structure of the borrowing language. Another characteristic is that sometimes the borrowed word may be adapted to a certain extent to fit into the borrowing language better, despite the fact that this adaptation is for the most part subconscious. An example of such an adaptation is seen in Russian where the word ‘biznismen’ is clearly adapted from our English word ‘businessman’. When borrowing from another language what is borrowed tends to be closely linked to the borrowing language. An example of this characteristic is seen on the French-German border where the French have changed the position of the adjective to be that displayed in German. That is, instead of saying ‘le chien blanc’, the French now say ‘le blanc chien’, but it is likely that this syntactic structure would not have come about if there wasn’t already a similar structure in the French language, as they do place the adjective before the noun when using the most common adjectives. The last characteristic is that there are no large shifts in a language due to borrowing, well that is that borrowing occurs in very small steps and any substantial effect will not be seen for some time. In conclusion, borrowing does not disrupt the structure of the borrowing language and is quite a common occurrence with few if any side effects.

Many hold the belief that the reason languages change is to better enable them to fulfil their function. This is known as the functional view and basically suggests that as the speakers needs change they adapt their language to cope with these changes in needs. This view can most definitely be understood when speaking of vocabulary, and an example
of how speakers languages fulfil their function can be seen in synonymy\(^1\) avoidance. When words are not in use anymore or when they are replaced by other words they simply fall out of use. In the technological world we live in there is a constant need for new words to describe the new things and this need is always met. Sometimes, social needs result in language changes in aspects of language apart from vocabulary. One change which has become more common in recent times is conversion. Conversion is the transfer of words between word types, as in, verbs become nouns and vice-versa. An example of such a conversion is ‘John upped the requirement’, yet we cannot be sure that this kind of change is due to social factors.

The function of spoken language is what is interesting as it differs from the function of written language and as already mentioned it is in the spoken word that language changes manifest themselves. “Speech is a social activity in a sense that writing is not, and the primary locus of speech is conversation” (Milroy, 1993, pg. 217). A crucial point to note is that language is spoken only when there is more than one person involved and so it is always social exchange, and is always observed in this context. For this reason, any analysis of speech must take the situation, society and the speaker/listener into account. In his paper on the social origins of languages changes, Milroy (1993, pg. 217) states that “linguistic change is one of the things that is negotiated by the speakers in the course of speech-exchanges”. The way in which the stable states of languages are maintained is attributed to the speakers and not to the language itself. This would suggest the strong social impact on languages, their change and their stability.

Another reason why language changes are said to be sociolinguistic is because if there is language variation, for example variation in pronunciation, for it to reach the stage where it has become a sound change, the speakers of the community must agree on the new pronunciation as realizations in their linguistic environment. The change would simply not happen if the speakers in question did not agree on the new pronunciation. Language change is also considered social because of the spread involved for a change to take hold. This spread from person to person, from speech community to speech community is quite a social phenomenon too.

Social Class

There are only a small number of social variables which divide a speech community and social class is one of them. The notion of class it quite difficult to define concretely despite the fact that most people are very aware of its existence. Sociolinguists do not take full advantage of the work done by sociologists to better define social class, but tend to use ad hoc definitions. It was said that “Sociology has only one independent variable, class” (Wright, 1979, pg. 3).

When speaking of social class there are two principal components. Firstly there is the economic wealth acquired through the ownership of property, which allows a certain

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\(^1\)Synonymy is the semantic relation that holds between two words that can (in a given context) express the same meaning.
amount of power and control to the owner. Secondly there is the somewhat more subjective component which refers to prestige and status. Sociologists can be seen to rely on occupational categories to divide up the social classes, while this is not a concrete division to make, it is simple and can be relied upon to a certain extent. Once this problem of how to stratify classes is overcome we can then undertake research into the variability of language in relation to social class.

An example of such a study based on class was undertaken by William Labov in 1972 and as it merits a mention in almost every book and article written on language variation or language change, I too felt I should refer to it in some way. The first thing Labov did was decide in what way he would divide up the classes. He established three strata defined by prestige and to collect the data then chose three department stores in New York City, each appropriate to the strata already chosen. These were Saks of Fifth Avenue, for the upper class, Macy’s for middle class and Klein’s for lower class. What Labov was interested in this case was the post-vocalic ‘r’. His procedure was to go into each of the stores and ask a member of staff where a particular section which he knew to be on the fourth floor was. His results indicated that the higher the class the more the staff pronounced the ‘r’, whereas in Klein’s the majority of staff didn’t pronounce it at all.

4.4 Language in Contact

“Language contact is part of the social fabric of everyday life for hundreds of millions of people the world over” (Sankoff, 2004, pg. 638). In countries where there are linguistics minorities and around the borders of countries which have different first languages, language contact comes into effect. There are consequences involved when people are subjected to a language that is not their own on a daily basis. The most obvious outcome of the effect of language contact is internal, languages spoken by bilinguals are can have an influence each other. Many people living near the border between two countries will speak the languages of both countries fluently i.e. they will be bilingual. This section will look at how this language contact affects the languages.

Language contact can also be viewed in a much broader sense, and it could be said that all language change is due to ‘contact’ when understood as being any interaction between speakers. So, with this idea of contact it is indeed the principal aspect of any language change as in order for a variation in language to spread to result in language change there must be contact involved. Thomason (2004) believes that the process of spread is a function of contact between speakers. Consequently, there are essentially two types of language spread. Those innovations which spread within a speech community and those which spread somewhat further outside the speech community in which they were initiated and into other dialects and even other languages. For the sake of clarity I will take the latter meaning of contact in this project.

There are linguistic constraints present when there is language spread from one language to another as they have differing underlying structures and borrowing cannot happen as easily as it does between say, dialects of the same language. Yet, Thomason suggests that
the principles underlying the spread of linguistic change within one dialect and between languages are not quite so dissimilar as one might presume. There are situations where contact with speech communities of different languages is more regular than contact with speech communities of different dialects, for example. For this reason, Thomason believes that both linguistic and social factors must be taken into account whatever type of language contact is being examined.

The term interlanguage is used to describe the way bilinguals speak in a way which is influenced by the other language which they can also speak. The field of second language acquisition has its root in psycholinguistics, as the way in which a bilingual’s language is affected by their knowledge of both languages is an internal concept. However, it is the field of sociolinguistics which has provided us with the more insightful and useful studies on language contact. An example of such a study was undertaken by Sankoff and Sankoff (1973) on French in Montreal. They found that “these Montreal French speakers share an invariant structural base that anchors the sociolinguistic variability we observe” (Sankoff, 2004, pg. 640). It has always been recognized that language contact is the historical product of social forces, which makes the research on the topic more diverse and varied as there are numerous, sometimes subjective factors influencing language. This leads to the description of a bilingual community involving “more social parameters, more daunting inter-individual variation and major sampling and other methodological problems” (Sankoff, 2004, pg. 640).

What past studies have concentrated on is examining is the social history among populations. How much and in what way different speech communities and their language will influence other speech communities and their language will depend on economic and political factors along with others. It was suggested by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) that in fact, anything can happen as a result of social pressure, that internal, structural constraints can be cancelled out. But the combination of other works on the topic provide adequate evidence to reject this claim made by Thomason and Kaufman, not disagreeing that there can be drastic linguistic outcomes resulting from language contact, but that the internal structural constraints always hold. In Sankoff’s review of work from the field, she comes to the conclusion that “internal constraints have been shown to act jointly with external constraints in shaping language contact outcomes” (Sankoff, 2004, pg. 641).

Results from the studies have shown that almost every aspect of a language system can be affected by language contact, the lexicon, the phonology, the syntax and the morphology. There is one theory which must be mentioned in this section and that is the Substratum theory which has already been mentioned in the sociolinguistic section in this chapter. This theory describes what happens when immigrants come into a new area. It is believed that they learn the adoptive language imperfectly, carrying on some features of their own language, and then pass on these imperfections to their children, which results in language change.

In very rare cases, the language of the invaders and the language of the indigenous population actually combine over time to form a new language, known as an amalgam, which is a combination of both languages. An example of when the indigenous language prevailed is when the Franks invaded the Romanized Gauls in Burgundy. They came to
speak the language of the Gauls. An example of the opposite, when the invaders language took hold is the emergence of Latin in the Roman Empire, which led to the disappearance of many local languages such as Semitic and Germanic.

Studying the effects of one language on the other in bilinguals is a complex task. “It is next to impossible to make an unambiguous determination, either in a general or in any one particular instance, of either the source or the direction of the interference” (Alexander, 2000, pg. 9). Confusion often arises over whether a language has borrowed lexical items from another language, or whether they have common ancestry. Yet, what can be said without any doubt is that language contact, in every sense of the concept, leads to language change.

4.5 Language Adaptation

As with many other topics I have dealt with in this project, I have come across conflicting views about language adaptation. In the preface of a book containing a collection of essays on the topic, Coulmas (1989) suggests that language adaptation refers to any changes which the speakers of a language make to the language which enable them to better communicate. This would then include the types of changes talked about in the section therapeutic change in Chapter 2. In this sense, language adaptation “provides the conceptual foundation for a theory of how languages adjust when they come under pressure resulting from new or changed functional requirements” (Coulmas, 1989). Whereas others claim that one of the fundamental differences between language change and language adaptation which must be made clear is that language adaptation is forced to a certain extent, whereas language change occurs quite naturally and even subconsciously. I will keep with the second line of thinking and will approach this topic under the chapter title of ‘why languages change’ as the fact remains that any adaptation of a language, whether deliberate or subconscious inevitably results in language change.

Some historical linguists do not completely accept language adaptation as a concept which falls into their area of study as it involves the deliberate intervention into linguistic evolution. Language is there to allow the speakers to function effectively in their community. One reason why languages differ is because their speech communities differ with respect to the way in which they use their language and the communicative functions that their language fulfils.

An example of language adaptation was seen when, in the nineteenth century, European languages, Czech and Finnish were “charged with the new task of becoming the national standard languages of their countries” (Coulmas, 1989, pg. 1). This led to a need to adapt in order to fulfil both the social and official function of such a national standard language. So, language adaptation is a type of language change which is usually brought about by those macro-variables of language change which are dealt with in Chapter 3 in the section on ‘Language Death’, that is, those factors which are quite external to language.
4.6 Therapeutic Change

It has been suggested that one of the reasons behind language change is to keep the language in a good state, which allows it to be used by humans as efficiently as is possible. This need that humans have to keep the structure of language has been linked to how our memories work, in the sense that we cannot remember random information but need a solid structure to retain large amounts and even infinite amounts of information. So, the changes that are made to language which improve or retain its structure are in fact a form of self-preservation of the language. Aitchison (2001) outlines three degrees of this theory, as a strong, medium and weak version.

In the strong version, speakers deal with the problems even before they happen. This is known as prophylaxis. In the medium version, problems are tackled as soon as they occur and before they become a problem. In the weak version, the speakers only react to the problem when it has reached a disastrous stage.

It is quite obvious that language does not abide by the strong version as language change is quite a natural process which doesn’t always anticipate the results of the changes. So we would tend to lean towards the medium and weak versions. Minor changes have been seen to be smoothed away before they cause any major problems. At other times there have been larger problems which have developed to the stage where they need serious changes in order to restore the order of the language.

Despite the huge variety that each different language displays in its sound patterns there is almost always some patterning and ‘rhyme and reason’ inherent. In most languages there are opposing pairs of voiced and voiceless sounds, for example. The sound [t] has a voiced equivalent which is the sound [d]. This type of symmetry occurs also among fricatives in English. Where the ‘f’, ‘th’, ‘sh’ and ‘s’ sounds, all have their voiced equivalents, yet this was not always the case. In the eighteenth century there was no voiced counterpart to the ‘sh’ fricative. In what is referred to as pattern neatening a partner for ‘sh’ was created in the nineteenth century in the sound ‘j’.

The same type of pairing can also be seen in vowels with the distinction lying with the place of articulation of the sounds. The attributes we associate with vowels are high or low and front or back. So, front vowels tend to be paired with a partner back vowel and when one of the pair changes its place of articulation the partner vowel will tend to follow suit. What this means is that the distance between the highest point on the tongue during the articulation of each vowel will remain the same regardless of what changes in pronunciation the vowels undergo. This type of pattern neatening involving sounds is quite inconspicuous and usually goes unnoticed. However, this is not the case with more obvious pattern neatening such as that which is seen when word-endings are dropped.

There has been much change over the years regarding the plural and singular distinction. The vegetable pea used to have a singular form ‘pease’, but this came to be looked upon as the plural form due to the ‘s’ ending, which consequently gave rise to the new singular

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2 As pronounced at the beginning of the words fog, thin, ship and sound respectively.
3 This sound can be heard in the middle of the word pleasure and at the end of the word beige.
form that we have today ‘pea’. This process of tidying up plurals has been happening for quite a long time in English. Back in the days of old English, plural forms of nouns were denoted by many different endings, from ‘u’ to ‘as’ to ‘a’, whereas now almost every plural form ends in ‘s’ with very few exceptions.

Verbs have also been subject to some changes which have neated them up. The meanings that we now use the word crept for, that is, the past participle, singular and plural forms of the verb ‘to creep’, at one time had a different word for each of these meanings. This type of language changes essentially gets rid of pointless variety. When there are forms that do not really need to be distinguishable, one or more of the forms is lost and they converge to have the same word denoting the various meanings.

This type of simplification can also be seen in the syntax of a language. An example is the way in which in spoken French the ‘ne’ before a negative verb is rarely used, as the meaning can be communicated through the use of ‘pas’ alone. The ‘ne’ is another example of pointless variability.

4.7 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has dealt with the reasons behind language change, a topic which has been much disputed over the years and even today there are various conflicting theories. I address language variation to begin with as for language change to occur there must first be language variation. This means that the reasons why language varies can also be attributed to language change.

I then introduce a section on the causes of language change. These causes are almost too numerous to mention but generally fall under the heading of sociolinguistic. The infiltration of foreign bodies is seen by many as the principal cause of language change which is why there is a section on language contact.

Language contact has a huge part to play in language change as it involves the infiltration of foreign bodies as referred to above. I address the effects that language can have on one another. Language adaptation is another concept which leads to language change and so is dealt with in this chapter. It refers to the way in which language is consciously adapted to fulfil its needs.

There is one argument which underlies this whole chapter, and that is whether language changes to fulfil its function or whether the changes language undergoes are merely random and do not reflect the function of language. I would tend to agree with the functional view and so include the section on therapeutic change which provides what I feel to be adequate arguments to back up the claim that many language changes occur to keep language in a good state.
Chapter 5

Tracking Language Change
5.1 Introduction

In a discussion on linguistic methodology William Labov once classified the different areas of linguistics with reference to where their specialists could be found working as follows, “the library, the bush, the closet, the laboratory ......[or] the street” (Labov, 1972b, pg. 99), by this he was referring to historical linguists, anthropological linguist, the theoretical linguists who come up with their own theories without much evidence to back them up, the psycholinguists and the sociolinguists, the group to which he himself belongs.

This chapter gives some background to how historical linguists and sociolinguists go about their work. To track language change is by no means an easy task, it is for this reason I will devote an entire chapter to explaining how it is done. The job of sociolinguists interested in language variation and change is extremely different to that of the historical linguist. The sociolinguists must adopt a more hands on approach and go directly into the speech community to collect data, whereas the historical linguists study their old texts from the comfort of their offices!

5.2 Sociolinguists’ Methods

In sociolinguistic papers and books, the general consensus on language variation and change is that language varies in three different ways. They are over time, or diachronic, in physical space, or geographic and socially, or social. It is the latter two ways which contribute to the language change which occurs over time.

An assumption which most believed to be true was that language change happened continuously but so slowly and gradually that it was unobservable. The American linguist Leonard Bloomfield, said in 1933 that “the process of linguistic change has never been directly observed — we shall see that such observation, with our present facilities, is inconceivable” (Bloomfield, 1933, pg. 348). It is only in more recent years that linguists have realised that language change can in fact be observed as it happens. This has led to a huge increase in the amount of work being undertaken in this area of sociolinguistics.

It was when sociolinguists began their hands-on research into language variation and change that many of the old mysteries of historical linguistics disappeared. For example, it was now recognized that periods of stability could be followed by periods of considerable flux.

5.2.1 How to track Language Change and Language Variation

To study language change in a speech community, language variation must be understood and then taken into account. I will firstly address the language variation types about which most is known, these are social and geographic variation. Geographical variation simply refers to the way in which the grammatical rules of a language tend to alter slightly from region to region. Enough is know of this type of variation for it not to hamper or interfere with a sociolinguists work when tracking language change. The same can be said of social
variation, which is the type of variation that is seen between different classes in society. Where these two types of variation differ is in the fact that social variations co-exist in the one region, whereas geographical variations depend on region.

The first step to take when embarking on a study is to choose the speech community. This will depend on exactly what type of change or variation that is being looked for. Having chosen the community, there must then be background work regarding the community carried out. Some examples of information which is needed are major industries, religious institutions and historical development (Feagin, 2004). This type of information will help the researcher to gain a better general idea of the community in question.

The next step is to look for previous linguistic work on the community, as this may provide insightful results and will also enable the linguist to compare their results with those found by others in the past, which may of course highlight language change.

Ethnography is “the scientific description of peoples and cultures” (OED online) and carrying out such a study is a vital step which sociolinguists must take as “it is through an understanding of both the structure and the dynamics of the local community that the structure and dynamics of the speech community can be understood” (Feagin, 2004, pg. 22). Linguists carrying out this type of work has been much criticized as many believe that linguists are not adequately qualified to undertake this sociological task, but it is considered necessary by others.

Now, a defining step is to chose the linguistic variable to focus the study on. This concept of linguistic variables was originally defined by Labov as a “linguistic entity which varies according to social parameters, stylistic parameters and/or linguistic parameters” (Feagin, 2004, pg. 23). The linguistic variable can be found in any of the linguistic areas from phonology to syntax to morphology.

Then comes the hard part. All previously mentioned steps complete, the investigator must now go out there and speak to the people. For the most part, researchers tend to be interested in communities with which they have some connection, this makes things that bit easier as they remain aware of the ‘way of the people’, and have no cultural or indeed language differences to overcome. Feagin describes how he went about this part of the task, dressing differently for elderly people and teenagers, and telling people that he was interviewing them as research for a thesis he was writing on their town. These two steps taken made the interviewees more at ease and hence allowed them to speak more naturally.

Tape recording is the obvious choice for interviewing for a number of reasons:

- Permanency - the researcher has the opportunity to return to the recording again and again
- Principle of accountability - as defined by Labov (1972a, pg. 72). This ensures that “all occurrences as well as non-occurrences of the variable can be identified and accounted for” (Feagin, 2004, pg. 26).
5.2.2 Problems Encountered

The principal problem encountered by sociolinguists in this field is known as Observer’s paradox and is described by Labov (1972b, pg. 61) as follows “our goal is to observe the way people use language when they are not being observed”. This problem must be overcome in the fieldwork undertaken by sociolinguists, and must be taken into account whatever methodology is being used.

There is one type of variation which can prove to be problematic to sociolinguists, and that is stylistic variation. This type of variation exists in the speech of individual speakers, and is related to the situation which the speaker is in, e.g. a male may speak in a slightly different manner when hanging out with the lads to that he uses when meeting his girlfriend’s parents. This is closely linked to the aforementioned Observer’s paradox, as in order to truly get an accurate record of the speech of a person they must speak in a natural way, and not allow the ‘observer’ influence their manner.

5.3 Historical Linguistics Methods

We must take into account that language is primarily a spoken system. Today there exists somewhere in the region of 6000 languages (MSN, Encarta), the majority of which have no written form as writing is merely a secondary coding and a language does not need such coding to exist. When spoken records are not available, we need to focus on using written records which is the case when we are looking at changes that have occurred over a long period of time, the technology for voice recording did simply not exist before 1877, when Edison invented the phonograph, and it would not have been until some time after this that such technology would have reached the hands of a linguist!

It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that linguists began to set down guidelines for the study of language, which although somewhat over simplified, were a hugely important step. One of the major steps which was taken was the distinction between diachronic linguistics,\(^1\) the study of language change and synchronic linguistics,\(^2\) the study of “the state of a language at any given point on time” (Aitchison, 2001, pg. 38), and is attributed to Saussure. Although quite distinct from one another, where the two do overlap is in the study of historical linguistics where researchers use the work of linguists which examines a language at a particular moment in time piecing it together with other synchronic work to ultimately produce an overall diachronic study.

5.3.1 How to track Language Change

When using written documents for studies into language change, we trust that they hold significant and reliable insight into the language system. The written records function as a filter (Schneider, 2004), the information provided is not perfect or direct but is the best

\(^1\) The study of language change over time.
\(^2\) The study of the state of a language at a particular point in time.
we have access to, it gives us an idea of the variation and change of the language system in itself. We must ask the questions ‘to what extent does the medium through which we receive the information affect its accuracy?’ and ‘how far removed is written language (what’s available) from spoken language (what we wish to find answers about)?’ i.e. how accurately the original speech event is represented. An analyst is faced with the task of removing the filter which lies between them and the original record. This greatly helps with the accuracy of their findings.

As languages change over time it becomes more and more difficult to recover the history of the language families due to the extent to which they have diverged. In order to understand the current features of language it is necessary to have a good knowledge of older forms. Transliteration is the term used to describe how linguists obtain meaning from old texts. There are difficulties encountered when dealing with the phonetic elements of language as one can never be sure what they really represent when only having written documents as evidence of older forms of language. One aspect which provides us with a wealth of reliable material on languages which are now dead is the use of words borrowed from the language in other current languages. Latin is the best example of this, today we see hundreds of words which have been borrowed from Latin being used in the Romance languages. One thing must be taken into account when looking at words which have been borrowed from another language, the pronunciation of the word will probably have been adapted to the phonology of the borrowing language. It is the fact that the amount of data required to believe a particular interpretation is valid is entirely subjective which leads to disagreement in this field. Much of what I have said above does not really apply to the empirical studies I undertake in this chapter but it is useful to provide a general background of the study of written records anyway.

5.3.2 Precursors and Neighbours (other fields who study texts)

An area which is very familiar with the difficulties involved with extracting reliable data from written documents is historical linguistics. Historical linguists are primarily concerned with studying earlier stages of language. A few things one must undertake when using written documents as evidence of language change are:

1. Collect reliable data
2. Evaluate sources
3. Assessing style levels
4. Editing

“There is nothing built into the comparative method which would allow it to address variation directly” (Campbell, 1998, pg. 146). The principal difference between the work carried out by historical linguists and that which is carried out by variationists has been that the historical linguists would be more concerned with studying documents with either
a diachronic orientation or a synchronic orientation, whereas variationists paradigm has transcended Saussure’s claim of a separation of synchrony and diachrony (Poleme, 1990), and have taken the approach of studying diachrony-in-synchrony. What this means is that they look for ongoing changes as reflected in social, stylistic, or linguistics distributional patterns (Schneider, 2004). As such work requires large amounts of documentation to produce results, it has been focused on more recent times and hence, more recent changes in language. While historical linguists can look to poetry and formal written texts for research, variationists do not have the same luxury and must examine texts which are closely related to the vernacular at the time as these are a truer representation of a language. The drawback here is that they are harder come by.

5.3.3 Assessing the Sources

There are a number of basic requirements for texts to be acceptable for variationist analysis, these are outlined in Schneider’s paper on Investigating variation and change in written documents. I am concerned with those which refer to the type of document I will use in my experiment, a newspaper article. The requirements are as follows:

1. Texts should be as close to the spoken language as possible, this obviously excludes poetry and legal documents and other formal writings. This leads us to look for “documents often of no particular interest to scholars in any field but linguistics” (Montgomery, 1997, pg. 227).

2. To rule out individual extralinguistic elements we should look for texts of different origins with varying styles.

3. The texts used by variationists must be of a certain size, as quantification is the staple method of variationists (Schneider, 2004).

4. Texts must display variability of the phenomenon under investigation (Schneider, 2004).

Some styles of text are better suited to the study of variation and change than others. The main determinant of their suitability is their proximity to speech. The factors which we look at to determine proximity to speech are whether or not the texts are speech-based, what the relationship between the speakers involved in discourse is and whether a communication system is private or public (Kyto, 1991). Taking these factors into account, we come to the conclusion that the most accurate texts to use when wishing to study variation would be interview transcripts, trial records or ex-slave narratives as these are as close to speech as is possible from a written document. Direct transcripts are the most suitable for this type of study as they represent the vernacular. As I do not have access to such documents and recordings I have chosen of to use the articles from the Irish Times. I hope this will give us accurate insight into language change when taken over a long enough period of time.
5.3.4 Using Public Corpora to track Language Change

I will now focus on inferring variation and change from public corpora, as, although it is not the ideal way of tracking language change, it is the method which is used in the experiment undertaken as part of this project. There is no doubt that the texts that the participants of the experiment will read from the Irish Times are all written in English, but I hope to find that there will be some differences displayed which will be of course attributed to language change. This type of study is known as a corpus based analysis.

The word corpus has represented different things over the years. Today, thanks to major advances in technology, what comes to mind initially when speaking of corpus is an “electronically searchable text database". Before embarking on a discussion of what is involved when undertaking a corpus based analysis, we must first understand what we mean by public corpora. Corpus is defined by Kennedy (1998, pg. 1) as “a body of written text or transcribed speech which can serve as a basis for linguistic analysis and description”. In this definition by using the word ‘text’ he excludes sound recordings, which are perhaps the best source for the analysis of phonetic change. Bauer (2004, pg. 98) believes Kennedy’s definition to be too narrow and alters it somewhat to give his definition for corpus as “a body of language data which can serve as a basis for linguistics analysis and description”, this allows it to include sound recording and word lists.

What is meant by public when referring to corpora is simply that it is ‘open to the view or knowledge of all’. This encapsulates anything which has ever been published as this allows open access, along with what Bauer calls ‘marginally public’ material, giving as an example the information he used for his empirical studies into change in the English language, i.e. newspaper articles from The Times. He calls these marginal as it would take considerable effort to collect together the data he used as it is not available as a body of text.

There are many different types of corpora. I have chosen to use newspaper articles over a period of fifty years for my experiment and there are a number of things we must note about this type of corpus. Firstly, given the time span of the articles it will enable the participants to look at linguistic changes over that period of time, i.e. diachronic change. Another thing to take into account is that this corpus is of written language. The articles are not transcripts of conversations but passages written by the journalists. This is somewhat unfortunate as, as I have already mentioned, language is primarily spoken, and if we wish to track real language change it would be ideal to look at transcripts. Written language does not always reflect spoken language, but having no access to recordings, I will have to make do with texts.

5.3.5 Problems Encountered

There are a number of drawbacks from using public corpora to track language variation and change which I will outline in this section. Firstly, there is only a finite number of texts which one can examine in a particular study, yet, the results provided are predominantly said to be about language use in general, but can such a generalization really be made
when the results are in fact only derived from the collection of texts used in the study?

Secondly, a problem arises when comparing two texts. It is quite appropriate to talk about this problem as it is relevant to the experiment I undertake with this project. When linguistic differences are noted between two articles which are written say 20 years apart, can these differences be entirely put down to the time difference, or did they merely occur due to a difference in the writing style of the two writers, or slightly different dialects of a language? This problem can really only be ignored if there is some consistency in the findings, this would allow us to ignore the possibilities of style and geographical origin differences.

Another problem is the size of the corpus. A corpus must be of a certain size to be worth analysing, yet too large a corpus involves the analysis of unnecessary data. Bauer (2004) refers to this as Murphy’s Law applied to corpora. The size of the text needed is directly related to the type of language change which one wants to monitor, e.g. lexical changes require large texts. Bauer states that “different corpora assume different degrees of idealisation about the speech community they attempt to represent” (Bauer, 2004, pg. 104).

5.4 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I began by addressing the work of the sociolinguist. Firstly, I talk about the work which must be done before even entering into the speech community to get the recordings. I then spoke about the procedures they use when they enter the speech community to gather information on language variation and change. I also refer to the problems which the sociolinguists may encounter in their task.

I then deal with the work of historical linguists. Their procedures are also addressed as well as other fields who study texts. There is a section devoted to the sources historical linguists use to track language change with particular attention paid to public corpora as this is the source used in the experiment later on in the project. While the problems encountered when undertaking this type of work are different to those which sociolinguists are faced with, they are just as important and are dealt with in another section in this chapter.

I hope this chapter has given a good insight to how historical linguists and sociolinguists go about their work. While the procedures used by both differ greatly, they are both interested in the same phenomenon, that is, language change. The work of historical linguists is ever important in uncovering the history of languages, while the work of sociolinguists is vital in understanding the concept of language variation and of course change. This chapter precedes the chapter with a description of the experiment as it is through the use of public corpora that the experiment is conducted.
Chapter 6

Experiment
6.1 Introduction

I undertook an experiment to find out how obvious language change is to the average person. As in keeping with the recent trend within Sociolinguistics of observing change in progress I limited my experiment to language change over the last fifty years. To do this I collected a number of articles from the Irish Times dating from the 50’s to today and asked people various questions regarding whether or not they can tell that the articles are from different decades. I thought it would be extremely interesting to find out if and how non-linguists perceive language change, particularly after researching into the extensive methods used by historical linguists and sociolinguists.

I will use texts from the Arts section of the newspaper, and select predominantly play reviews and book reviews as this type of article should not give any insight into the date the article was written, apart from that provided by the use of language, of course. There are examples of some of the results obtained from the participants in the Appendix.

6.2 Aims

My aim in this experiment is to show that despite the fact that most people remain unaware of the constant language change which occurs even over a short period of time, between ten years and half a century in this case, they are still capable of differentiating between texts written in different decades. I also aim to discover on what grounds they noticed the difference between texts. I hope to see results which suggest that it is not so difficult to notice language change, even to those who have not had any exposure to linguistics.

6.3 Procedure

As outlined in the section Using Public corpora to track language change in Chapter 6, using articles from newspapers is not ideal for tracking language change as language change occurs in the spoken tongue and is merely translated into written language. Yet, as I do not have access to transcripts, I must make do with the articles. I chose twenty articles with which to run the experiment, taken from newspapers dating from 1950 to 2000. I blacked out any references to political or public figures which could have given to reader an idea as to when the articles were written and then asked the following questions before they undertake the experiment.

6.4 Questions

1. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written a quarter of a century apart?

2. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written half a century apart?
3. If so what differences do you think you will notice?

These questions were asked as I believe that most people remain unaware of the fact that languages are constantly changing and even those who are aware of that fact, for the most part, don’t seem to think that it is observable. I informed the participants that they would be given pairs of articles dating from different decades between 1950 and 2000. I gave the participants pairs of articles, both written some time between 1950 and 2000 and asked the following questions:

1. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
2. Why?
3. How many years do you think came between them?

### 6.5 Results and Discussion

I was pleased with the results of my experiment as they prove that language change is in fact noticeable over as short a period as ten or twenty years. 45 participants took part in the experiment and the statistical results were as follows:

The first table refers to the answers given for the question about which article came first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time difference between articles</th>
<th>Percentage of correct answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years difference</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years difference</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years difference</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years difference</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 years difference</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is difficult to define the type of language change perceived by the participants of the experiment, it is evident enough to allow over half of the participants to differentiate between articles with only ten years between them. I may even go so far as to say that the language changes cannot even be placed under a heading of any type spoken about in Chapter 2 of my project. That is to say, there are no spelling changes, morphological changes or obvious syntactic changes, but just a general sense of not sounding good to the ear.

When asked how they had come to the correct conclusion regarding the years between articles, participants gave responses like “difference in style”, and found the language in the older article to be “quite complicated”. One participant thought that the language in the older of the two articles was “a bit stilted, not very fluid”. While another found
the language in the more recent article to be “more straightforward” than in the article written a longer time ago. The general consensus is that the more recent the article, the “more natural” the language seems. This is quite interesting as it suggests another type of language change which I did not cover in this project as it is difficult to define.

When a person cannot specifically say why they find the language use to be more current in one article than in another, it is most likely that there is a change in the use of vocabulary, and slight syntactic preference changes, as no participant suggested that anything was ungrammatical. While these changes are so slight that the participants were not always able to point out specific examples, the accumulation of these changes allow a person to have a good guess as to how many years from today the articles were written. One participant put an exact year on an article written in 1950, which suggests that, despite the fact he had previously claimed he would not be able to differentiate between articles written fifty years apart, there is an inherent capability which language speakers have which allows them to perceive language change.

The following provides the results of how accurate the participants were at gauging the difference in time between the articles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of years both sides of article year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>within 5 years</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 10 years</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 15 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 20 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the older the participant the more accurate their suggestion of time difference between articles. This is not surprising as being alive at the time the articles were written gives them an advantage, as they may recognize the language use.

Another aspect of this experiment which interests me greatly is the attitude of the participants before undertaking the experiment. The following results were noted regarding this aspect:

- percentage of participants who thought they would not be able to differentiate between texts written a quarter of a century apart and then did in fact provide accurate answers to the questions - 80%

- percentage of participants who thought they would not be able to differentiate between texts written half a century apart and then did in fact provide accurate answers to the questions - 100%
6.6 Conclusion

Before I started this experiment, I hypothesized that the participants would be able to differentiate between texts written over a quarter of a century apart. I am very satisfied with the results obtained from the experiment and although my study was conducted on a small scale, the findings do in fact seem to corroborate my hypotheses. Thus, I can conclude, that whether or not people were aware of it before participating in the experiment, they are capable of differentiating between texts written over a quarter of a century apart, although sometimes find it difficult to express how they came to this conclusion! In fact, the participants were even better at perceiving language change that I had anticipated, with more than half being able to differentiate between articles written a mere decade apart.
Chapter 7

Controlling Language
7.1 Introduction

One scholar stood out from the crowd and stated that “the worst thing that one can do with words, is to surrender them”, language is meant to be “an instrument for expressing and not for concealing thought”, then one must “let the meaning choose the word and not the other way about” (Orwell, 1953, pg. 169-70). He was among very few scholars of his time who accepted language change and in this chapter I will describe the attitudes of scholars to the phenomenon of language change. I will then deal specifically with the Académie Française as this was a particular organization who were against language change. Language planning is any intentional standardisation of a language, and there is a section on it in this chapter as it has been used over the years with the aim of controlling language.

7.2 Why Scholars are so against Language Change

Over the years, large numbers of intelligent, educated people have condemned language change, regarding it as the decay of a language. The amount of condemnation on the subject is too vast to ignore or to simply be put down to stupidity. For this reason I am interested in the reasons why such highly regarded writers and intellects as Jonathan Swift, Robert Lowth and Jakob Grimm to name but a few, found such a natural process to be so distasteful.

This distaste exists still today. In 1990, there was an article published entitled “They can’t even say it properly now”, where the author expressed his worry over the way in which he believes “we are moving towards a social and linguistic situation in which nobody says or writes or probably knows anything more than an approximation to what he or she means” (Aitchison, 2001, pg. 5). A Victorian English language scholar, when commenting on the dropping of [h] by English speakers said “Those whom we call ‘self-made men’ are much given to this hideous barbarism...Few things will the English youth find in after-life more profitable than the right use of the aforesaid letter.” (Oliphant, 1873, pg. 226). I will focus on the eighteenth century as we can see in this era what was perhaps the height of the puristic movement, and so it should provide us with sufficient insight to better understand the anti-language change plight.

A large factor in this dislike for language change is based on social-class prejudice. If you are to think about it logically, this dislike is not really surprising as it is not the only area in which people tend to hold things from the past in higher regard. In society in general, there is a convention in place that seems to favour that which has past over what seems to be the current trend. We all know how an older generation can look in disgust at the latest fashion statement from the younger generation. As Aitchison states “Every generation inevitably believes that the clothes, manners and speech of the following one have deteriorated” (Aitchison, 2001, pg. 8). Also, people hold past literary writers in high regard, this has an effect on what they view as good usage of language.

In the eighteenth century statements of dismay and disgust were commonplace and there was a true sense of worry expressed on the topic. One writer in particular was so
distraught over the direction in which the English language was heading that he asked for there to be an academy formed to regulate language use. The writer in question was none other than Jonathan Swift. In his “A proposal for correcting, improving and ascertaining the English tongue”, he expresses his anger over the decline in the standard of English usage by his fellow writers. In 1755, Samuel Johnson published his famous dictionary and states in the preface that “Tongues, like government, have a natural tendency to degeneration”. Even the clergy were involved in the bashing of language change and in 1762, the Bishop of London, Robert Lowth, voiced his concerns over the future of the English language, “the English language hath been much cultivated during the last 200 years...but...it hath made no advances in grammatical accuracy” (Lowth, 1762, pg. i, ix). He was not impressed with the grammatical errors that writers were making. The scale of this linguistic fervour has never before been seen, so, I will now look at the reasoning behind this movement.

The primary reason behind this reluctance to accept the forever changing state of English was the admiration and respect for Latin at the time. In short, this reverence for Latin was due to it being a language of the past. It was the language of the church in the Middle Ages and the language of European scholarship from the Renaissance onwards, which gave it its prestige. The most bizarre influence of Latin was that its grammar was used as a model for the description for other languages, despite the absence of any similarities in grammatical structure. Latin was taught in schools, despite the fact that it was a ‘dead’ language, spoken by no one.

There were three obvious effects of Latin on attitudes towards language and these are outlined by Aitchison (2001). Firstly, because people looked to Latin at a particular stage of its existence, when it was written be the great authors of its time, they came to believe that there should be a fixed form for any language. Secondly, because of its historical origins, all the Latin they had access to was in written form, out of this grew the belief that the written language was primary, and spoken merely secondary. This of course caused languages which had only a spoken form and no written form to be considered lesser languages. This belief was quite ‘off the mark’, as we know today that language is most definitely primarily spoken. Lastly, they began to compare certain grammatical structures in English to their equivalent in Latin, not remembering to take into account that the two languages are only very distantly related. This led to the condemnation of certain features of the English language for the sole reason that they differed from the Latin language.

This ridiculous idea of linking English to Latin could even be seen as recently as 1921 when Edward Sapir wrote “A linguist who insists on talking about the Latin type of morphology as though it were necessarily the high water mark of linguistic development is like the zoologist that sees in the organic world a huge conspiracy to evolve the race-horse or the Jersey cow” (Sapir, 1921, pg. 124).

It was this obsession with comparing English to a ‘better’ language that encouraged Samuel Johnson to publish his dictionary. In this dictionary he chose to detail the language used by the middle and upper-classes and ignore that which was spoken by other people. He says that what he tries to do with this dictionary is to “refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms and irregular combinations” (The Rambler, 1752).
This book was seen by many as an appropriate guide to ‘proper’ English, and interestingly, its influence can still be seen today. Have you ever been told, perhaps in primary school, that you should not end a sentence with a preposition? Well, why is it that this is considered bad grammar? Believe it or not, the reason can be traced back to Johnson’s dictionary.

When the number of English speakers has increased so dramatically is it not obvious that language change is not bad for a language? (Aitchison, 2001) suggests that it is the ‘anti-slovenliness’ beliefs that these language change critics hold that makes them anti any form of change, not just that which happens to language.

7.3 Académie Francaise

The Académie Francaise was founded in 1635 and was given the task “rendre le langue francais non-seulement élégant, mais capable de traiter tous les arts, et toutes les sciences” (Lodge, 1993, pg. 159-160), this translates to “to make the French language not only elegant, but also capable of handling the arts and sciences”.

Quite unhappy with the way in which the French language was changing in the 17th century, the Académie Francaise decided to place a ban on language change to retard the changes they believed were causing the French language to lose some of its prestige and high-standing. These changes that were occurring were perhaps due to the exceptional demographic growth in and around Paris. Due to the increase of non-nationals and the two Frondes, the city was experiencing social tensions which resulted in widespread social and linguistic insecurities. The aristocracy were outraged by the changes they were seeing happening to the French language and went to great lengths to preserve their higher-class style of language. In his book, A history of the French language, Rickard (2002) describes the seventeenth century in France as “an age of increasing control and regimentation of language”. Language wasn’t the only aspect being controlled, and this linguistic legislation reflected the “increasingly tight control of an increasingly despotic regime over every aspect of national life” (Rickard, 2002).

After numerous publications, from Remarques sur la langue francoise (1647) written by Claude Favre de Vaugelas to Grammaire générale et raisonnée written by Claude Lancelot and Antoine Arnauld, by the end of the seventeenth century there was “rigid codification and a fixed and hierarchised vocabulary” (Rickard, 2002) which had replaced the flexibility the language had in the sixteenth century. As the academy members were writers, poets and other highly regarded literary figures, the language they strove for was far from that which was spoken by the average French man or woman. Louis XIV forbade all printers to publish any other dictionary and gave those dictionaries published by the academy legal existence in 1674, long before the first one was published. It wasn’t until 1694 that they published their first dictionary of what they considered to be ‘proper’ French which deviated greatly from the normal French language which so many spoke at the time. The

\footnote{These were wars which happened in 1648 and 1651 and were caused by the unpopularity of Richelieu’s successor Mazarin and by equally unpopular fiscal measures to finance wars in Spain and Germany.}
dictionary was full of inconsistencies and they made many inexplicable changes to the
language. Lodge (1993) believes that in the France of today, the “depth of reverence felt
in many parts of society towards the standard language” has its roots in the influence of
the Académie Française.

On their website today, in the section about the role of the organization, the Académie
Française state that “Pour s’en acquitter, l’Académie a travaillé dans le passé à fixer
la langue, pour en faire un patrimoine commun à tous les Francais et à tous ceux qui
pratiquent notre langue”\(^2\). Here they address the work they have done in the past to ‘fix’
the French language.

### 7.4 Language Planning

There are numerous textbooks available throughout the world claiming to aid in the teach-
ing of various languages. I myself must admit to owning a few on the French language in
which the rules of verb conjugations are outlined and the vocabulary for numerous sce-
arios is given. Despite the vast literature on all the world’s major languages, it must be
remembered that, need I even say it once more, all languages “are observed to be variable
within themselves and not uniform at all, and they are also in a continuous state of change”
(Milroy, 1999). So, the fact that publications of the ‘standard form’ of a language exist is
due to the fact that they have undergone a process of standardisation.

In their book, *Authority in Language*, Milroy and Milroy (1999) suggest that language
is similar to many other aspects of human behaviour in so far as it is subject to convention.
What this means is that in the same way that it is inappropriate for a woman to walk
around in a bikini in Arab countries, there are particular English usages, e.g. *He never said
nothing*, which are viewed as unacceptable. Consequently, it can be said that convention
has a big part to play in language planning. It is predominantly the dialects which are
considered ‘better’ which are taken to be standard, e.g. BBC spoken English would be
generally considered ‘better’ than other varieties spoken in the United Kingdom such as a
Birmingham urban dialect.

The consequences of such a standardisation of a language are numerous. Those who
speak a ‘substandard’ variety may find that their “social mobility is blocked” (Milroy &
Milroy, 1999), and that they have difficulty gaining employment, although the fact that
their language use determined their success in an interview would never be openly admit-
ted by the interviewer! In fact, such language discrimination merely stands as proxy for
discrimination on other grounds, as the English spoken by lower class or minority speakers
tends to be of the variety that is considered ‘substandard’, thus, to discriminate against
someone in terms of their language use is nothing but avoidance of the true discriminatory
behaviour.

In order for language planning or ‘language engineering’ as it has come to be known
as more recently, to work, the speech community must be willing to speak the particular
language or variety of language which is being put forward. Tact and skill are required for

\(^2\)www.academie-francaise.fr : last verified 26/04/05
any type of language planning to achieve acceptance. The effects of language standardisation are of course language change. Either direction is possible, to change one’s language to be more like the standard language may allow a person to be more socially acceptable, or may increase their chances of acquiring employment. The other direction of change is also seen, particularly in adolescents who, perhaps intentionally, avoid the standard tongue usually as a statement of rebellion.

In any standard introductory textbook on linguistics, the fact that the linguistics of today is primarily concerned with a descriptive analysis of language as opposed to a prescriptive analysis will be emphasized. What this means is that linguists are concerned with what people actually say as opposed to what they should say or the rules which govern languages. For this reason, language planning has not been included in studies as an important sociolinguistic phenomenon. Generally, linguists would steer away from dealing with such ‘planning’ and standardisation as they understand the centrality of language change. However, they should not ignore the effects that language planning has on a language and the fact that it does indeed affect ‘what people actually say’.

7.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has dealt with numerous aspects of controlling language. The first section addresses the attitudes of scholars over time to language change. This attitude may surprise and even shock readers, as we now know that language change is an entirely inevitable and natural process. I then give a particular example of one organization who were so distraught by the way in which their language was changing that they went to some lengths to retard this language change. There is a section on language planning as this is one way in which language can be controlled and the effects of such a standardisation of a language are outlined.

This chapter, while not necessarily being closely linked to the other chapters in this project, covers what I find to be an extremely interesting area of language change, as attitudes to the phenomenon and indeed attempts to ‘change’ the process of ‘language change’ are fascinating.
Chapter 8

Conclusion
8.1 Achievements

This project has been an extremely challenging task but a rewarding one. It has allowed me the opportunity to research and analyse a topic which interests me and which had not yet been addressed during my undergraduate course. In this project I have studied many features of language through an analysis of language change and by examining some aspects of language evolution. This has greatly increased my knowledge of the subject and has also given me the opportunity to improve on my research and indeed writing skills.

The linguistic content of CSLL has been for the most part scientifically based, from Speech science, to Phonetics to Syntax, so, to undertake a theoretically based project was a challenge but I was grateful of the opportunity to diverge somewhat from the subject matter covered in my undergraduate course.

I feel the experiment was successful in highlighting how language change is a phenomenon which can be observed over a short span of time, and the fact that it was non-linguist participants who recognized this change I hope would make the topic of language change more appealing and accessible to people in other fields.

8.2 Summary of Main Topics

Language change is a central topic in the study of linguistics. To understand the concept, from how languages change, to why languages change, to the effects of these changes, is vital, and these are some of the topics I address in this project.

To begin with I gave a description of the different types of language change which occur, as I believe this to be an important starting point. In language, changes can be seen in every aspect except in the language universals which are those traits that can be seen across every human languages and remain unchanged over time. Syntactic change is the first type I address. This is a very common type of change and examples are seen in word order change and changes in verb endings. These kind of changes can, for the most part, be said to be due to fast speech, where needless variation is gotten rid of. I then deal with morphological change which is a change in the morphemes of words. This is closely related to syntactic change and verb ending changes also fall under this heading and so, the reasons behind these changes are also closely related to speech. There is then a section on lexical change which is the easiest change to understand, as it is clear how and why it happens. New words are constantly entering a language, from new technological terms to new words borrowed from other languages, there is little which needs explaining about this type of change. Semantic change is at the complete other end of the scale as far as ease of understanding is concerned! This type of change is as complex as the area from which is gets its name, semantics. It involves a change in meaning and it is not understood why such changes take place. Changes in pronunciation fall under the heading of phonetic and phonological changes and are described next. While the pattern of such changes are very regular, the reasons behind them remains unknown.

The next chapter dealt with some of the overall effects that the aforementioned language
changes have on a language. The way in which one language diverges over a long period of
time to form many other daughter languages is probably one of the most important effects
of language change. The death of a language is another effect that language changes can
have. I outlined some different types of language death and the reasons behind language
death. There are many links between language evolution and language change, from under-
standing the function of language to comparing how languages produce offspring, daughter
languages, to fulfil the functions of their ancestors.

Language variation must be addressed is any project on language change as language
must first vary before it can change. Factors which affect language variation are age,
gender and social class to name but a few. The causes of language change have been
much disputed over the years, but the general theory and what I believe to be true is
that there are reasons behind these changes and they are not random. As for the actual
causes, the main theory is that language changes are caused primarily by the infiltration of
foreign bodies. This is also highlighted in the section on languages in contact. Each of the
languages spoken by bilinguals has an effect on the other language. In a similar way, for
people living near the border of two countries where there are different primary languages,
the contact with another language can lead to language change. To back up the theory
that language changes taking place to improve, or keep constant the state of language,
there are many examples of language changes which are considered to be therapeutic.

In the past many scholars have looked upon language change as the decay of a language.
This is a fascinating topic, as we now know that language change is inevitable and has been
happening since day one. The reasons behind the disgust are discussed and a particular
example is explored in Académie Francaise along with a section on Language Planning.

The methods and procedures used by historical linguists and sociolinguists are of great
importance when dealing with the topic of language change, as it is in these areas that all
the research is done. This is also of particular relevance as the experiment undertaken as
part of the project uses public corpora.

The findings of my experiment were as expected and suggest that language change is
more obvious than one would have previously believed.

8.3 Further Study

As the topic of language change is quite a new field there still remains much to be discovered
on the subject. I found which researching the topic that there are many conflicting theories
in various areas, this can perhaps be put down to the short length of time the field has
existed and also perhaps to the difficulty involved in defining anything related to the
abstract topic that is language. There is an obvious need for further sociolinguistic research
into language changes in progress as I believe there is much to be discovered through this
type of hands on analysis.

I feel the results of my experiment were truly fascinating and believe that this type of
research into human perception of language change deserves more attention. Had I had
more time I would have liked to further my experiment to include enough participants to
achieve more accurate and reliable results, and to have made more distinctions between the participants, e.g. age, where I would expect for the older participants to provide more accurate answers, social class, as I believe it would be interesting to discover if ‘lower-class’ participants have a lesser command of language which would inhibit them from noticing language change as accurately as someone from a higher-class background, I personally believe the results would not differ, but imagine that many would think otherwise, see section on language planning, and lastly, handedness, as it is said that left-handed people are more forgiving of grammatical errors or variations due to the fact that they themselves are a ‘variation’ of the norm, and so I would suggest that they may not be as successful in recognizing language change as their right-handed counterparts.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

I have thoroughly enjoyed both researching and writing this project. I have learnt a huge amount and believe I have succeeded in answering some questions which I felt were important in the area of language change. I have tried to bring together ideas and theories put forward by linguists over the years and to formulate my own ideas and opinions on the topic providing what I feel to be adequate arguments to back up my conclusions.

I hope this project has provided the reader with an interesting and coherent account of language change and some topics which surround it, and that it has perhaps sparked an interest in the topic.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Experiment Results
This appendix contains some of the results of the experiment I undertook as part of this thesis. The years of the articles are printed here but were obviously not available to the participants before undertaking the experiment.

A.1 Result 1

Questions

1. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written a quarter of a century apart?
   no

2. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written half a century apart?
   yes

3. If so what differences do you think you will notice?
   *Difference in style, more complicated language in older article.*

I will now give you three pairs of articles dating from different decades between 1950 and 2000.

Set 1

4. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) Deirdre (1950)
   (b) Trotsky (1975)

   *a came first*

5. Why?
   *Language is quite complicated in Deirdre*

6. How many years do you think came between them?
   20
A.2 Result 2

Questions

1. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written a quarter of a century apart?
   no

2. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written half a century apart?
   no

3. If so what differences do you think you will notice?
   I will now give you three pairs of articles dating from different decades between 1950 and 2000.

Set 1

4. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) Three women in a boat (1975)
   (b) His journey and other animals (2000)
   a came first

5. Why?
   Language slightly more complicated and sentences longer

6. How many years do you think came between them?
   30

Set 2

1. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) Trotsky (1975)
   (b) A black shawl (1995)
   a came first

2. Why?
   The use of One would indicate that the Trotsky article is somewhat older than the other article. Language use seems more natural in A black shawl which would suggest to me that it is more recent.

3. How many years do you think came between them?
   30
APPENDIX A. EXPERIMENT RESULTS

Set 3
1. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) The evolution of a idea (1955)
   (b) Hearts and spirits (1990)
   a came first

2. Why?
   The word antithierocrats is unfamiliar to me, and some words, while I understand them are not seen in todays English, such as annotated.

3. How many years do you think came between them?
   45

A.3 Result 3

Questions
1. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written a quarter of a century apart?
   no

2. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written half a century apart?
   no

3. If so what differences do you think you will notice?
   I will now give you three pairs of articles dating from different decades between 1950 and 2000.

Set 1

4. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) Recent Fiction (1950)
   (b) His journey and other animals (2000)
   a came first
5. Why?
Language in second article sounds much more natural. Too much concentration required to read first article.

6. How many years do you think came between them?
50

A.4 Result 4

Questions

1. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written a quarter of a century apart?
   yes

2. Do you think there will be an obvious difference between articles written half a century apart?
   yes

3. If so what differences do you think you will notice?
   Language might be more complex on older articles.

I will now give you three pairs of articles dating from different decades between 1950 and 2000.

Set 1

4. These articles are from different decades, which do you think came first?
   (a) Home truths (1985)
   (b) The evolution of an idea (1955)

   b came first

5. Why?
   Because language is harder to understand in b and there is a differences in phrasing and terminology which would make me think it was written a longer time ago.

6. How many years do you think came between them?
   20
Appendix B

Newspaper Articles
In this appendix I will include some of the newspaper articles given to the participants of the experiment.
Figure B.1: Deirdre — 1950
APPENDIX B. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA
By Joseph Hone

This is a learned and surprisingly approachable book, written by a historian of the University of London. The author traces the evolution of the Papal system from its earliest origins to the modern era, focusing on the role of the Popes in the political and social development of Europe. His work is based on extensive research and a deep understanding of the historical context.

Evolution of an Idea
What Dr. Hone shows, or at least suggests, is that the triumph of the "hierarchic theme"—the separation of the Papacy from the Empire, and the logical evolution of an idea. Given the St. Thomas argument for the Papacy being the successor of the Empire, it is difficult to see how this conclusion could be challenged by any form of anti-clericalism that does not recognize the legitimacy of the Empire as a political institution.

Evolution of the idea is more difficult to understand. Pope St. Peter's efforts to undermine the authority of the Papacy, according to Dr. Hone, were successful only if they were accepted by the people. However, the Papacy had succeeded in convincing the people of the legitimacy of its position. It was by way of a gradual process of winning hearts and minds, that the Papacy was able to achieve its ultimate goal.

International Affairs
In my field of activity it is not difficult to achieve the desired result, but in the field of international relations it is not so easy. The difficulties are manifold and the stakes are high. However, with a clear understanding of the historical context, it is possible to navigate the complex landscape of international politics.

Figure B.2: The evolution of an idea — 1955
HAVING READ MUCH of Mr. Carmichael's previous work, one did not approach this book with great expectations of an outstanding biography. One was not greatly surprised. The text is clumsy and indignant. Hasty writing probably explains the lapses in grammar and the frequent use of the inappropriate word, not to mention such expressions as "post factor."

The blur claims that the author "for the first time provides the full story of the secret, never-voiced alliance between the Bolsheviks and the German Imperial Government" and of the "last sums of money" which were transmitted to Lenin, which provided the Bolsheviks with a visibly important group. The claim is completely unjustified. The author carries in no farther than Zemian and Scharlau. He proves nothing at all; if anything, he undermines belief in a plausible case by adding quite inadmissible evidence.

For instance, he accepts as valid Rakovsky's "confession" (during the great Show Trial in Moscow in 1938) of collaboration with the Germans in Romania during the first World War, and by implication, of acceptance of money from the German Imperial Government for the running of Trotsky's paper, Nezhno Shvo. This is the charge levied at Rakovsky by right-wing nationalists in Romania in 1913 and repeated by hireling Vyzhinsky in Moscow in 1938. (Rakovsky has since been "rebuddled"). All that really emerges from a reading of the transcript of the Show Trial is that Rakovsky, a doctor of medicine and son of a wealthy landlord, spent all of his inherited money in the cause of the Socialist revolution. As for the "secret alliance between the Bolsheviks and the German Imperial Government", it must have been a strange alliance indeed that produced the terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.

Trotsky attributes the "revolt" of the Czech Legion against the Bolsheviks to the "fact" that the Legion "had learned that it was to be handed over to the Germans." Since this is something new to the student of Soviet history, one naturally looks for proof but all one gets is the epee dixit.

Figure B.3: Trotsky — 1975

TROTSKY
Seamus O Coigligh
THREE WOMEN IN A BOAT
by Terence de Vere White

APPENDIX B. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Figure B.4: Three women in a boat — 1975
The Celtic World
by Liam de Paor

The CELTS by T. G. E. Powell, Thames and Hudson, (U.K. Price)

Terence Powell's book on "The Celts" was one of the first to appear in the "Ancient Peoples and Places" series which Thames and Hudson began publishing more than twenty years ago under the general editorship of Dr Glyn Daniel of St John's College, Cambridge. It remains one of the best. It is not just one of the best books in that series; it is one of the best general works on its subject.

Powell had an Irish background. He grew up in Dublin, and did some of his early work on Irish megalithic tombs - a subject in which both he and his friend Daniel remained closely interested. He worked also in Wales, and became head of the department of Prehistoric Archaeology in the University of Liverpool. It was natural that he should turn his attention to matters Celtic. He died in 1980, and is much missed by his friends. Happily, his contribution to Irish studies had been acknowledged by an honorary degree of the National University of Ireland. It is a pleasure now to see this part of his work re-apPEARING in a new format.

"Ancient Peoples and Places", like all such series, had been published in a uniform style which looked very well in 1962. The "Celts" first appeared. Now the publishers have decided to revive the form, printing on a larger format, dispensing the half-tone plates through the text, supplying colour plates as well. This revised volume has been seen through the press by Professor Stuart Piggott, who supplies a short introduction and notes on the additional illustrations. Otherwise the original text is unchanged, but this need cause the new reader no disquiet. Fresh discoveries in the field since give no grounds for significant changes in Powell's account or conclusions.

There are two valid scholarly approaches to the study of "The Celts". One is linguistic; to study peoples who spoke languages of the Celtic group. These are abundant in the medieval and later periods, but very sparse for so much earlier. Antiquity is filled with allusions in the pages of this paper, but, alas, not much of Gaulish has remained for us to read. The other approach is to begin with the accounts supplied by ancient writers of the major European population groups who called themselves Celts, and who were also known variously as Gauls or Galatians.

They are reported in central and western Europe in the centuries immediately before the Roman conquests, with circumstantial accounts of their appearance, customs and beliefs. A unified, if not uniform, culture can be identified archaeologically in the appropriate area for the appropriate date, and we can say with reasonable confidence that the material civilisations whose archaeological labels are "Hallestatt" and "La Tène" represent the Celts. By adding linguistic and archaeological information to the evidence of early Irish literature (which provides striking parallels to classical descriptions of Celtic ethnography) we can add Ireland to the Celtic world, although the early Irish themselves may well not have been aware that they were "Celts".

Powell's is the second approach. He illustrates the archaeology with the literature, the literature with the archaeology; he never overstates appropriate on the findings of the linguists. The result is a clear, concise and readable account of an ancient people about whom we are quite well informed but who are for us in this part of Europe a special interest. Celtic culture provides many contrasts with that of the ancient Mediterranean; most significantly perhaps in its brilliant, technically superb art. This is one of the best introductions to it.

Figure B.5: The celtic world — 1980
Figure B.6: Home truths — 1985

Archimedes is a red setter, joyful, good-natured and exceptionally loyal in his ability to read and write. He cannot talk, he cannot sing, but he is an informed observer of humankind and of the universe, and there is nothing joyless or unduly sentimental about his comments.

Hanna Arendt is said to be the inspiration of Arthur Cohen’s latest novel about a German-Jewish intellectual who emigrates to America before the Second World War and makes a brilliant career in philosophy. The difficulty of exploring — still more, exploiting — other people’s intellectual processes in fiction makes for arid reading, but despite rewarding relationships with his lover, Erika Hertz, remains a cold and arrogant creature, unlikely to attract any more sympathy than she deserves or wants or spares for others.

The Jewish family in “A Morning Noon” is much more satisfactory, and their adventures have plenty of popular appeal. Three children living in a small Austro-Hungarian village before the First World War are dominated by their emotionally-maimed mother, who has been forced by her own family into a divorce from her beloved first husband. Her inability to love the kindly second husband dictates the future shape of the children’s lives.

In time, all three of them fetch up in America — the son almost by accident as a result of wartime internment in Britain, the eldest daughter by way of a sad spell as a courier in Vienna, the youngest at her mother’s behest to look for the long-lost first husband. Their trials and tribulations and romances make
Figure B.7: A black shawl against the snow — 1995
Figure B.8: His journey and other animals — 2000