English Historical Linguistics Approaches and Perspectives 1st edition Brinton Solutions Manual

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Sample solutions to end-of-chapter exercises

Sample solutions to Chapter 2 exercises

1. A comparison of approaches

The Neogrammarians regarded language change, above all sound change, as happening gradually and affecting all possible input forms, e.g., the raising of OE /ɑ:/ to PDE /əʊ/ as in *ham* to *home*. In this respect they viewed change as without exceptions, though some changes were later masked by analogical alignment of forms with established patterns as when the alternation of /s/ and /r/, still seen in *was* ~ *were*, was removed in verbs like *choose* and *lose*, which do not have any forms showing an original /r/ anymore.

2. Internal and external motivation

The first shift (/ʊ/ > /ʌ/) was probably motivated by speakers adopting a fashionable tendency in seventeenth southern English to lower the vowel in *but* somewhat; i.e., this change was externally motivated. In contast, the shift of *-th* to *-s* for the third person singular present tense ending was probably motivated internally, by purely linguistic factors, such as the increased audibility of /s/, with reinforcement from the presence of an ending /-s/ in the language already. There may have been a combination of both motivations if the /-s/ ending was fashionable among speakers and others adopted it to be up-to-date in their speech.

3. Analogy

One type is proportional analogy where people apply the pattern in *drive : drove* to *strive :* ??? (a verb borrowed from French), creating the form *strove* in the process. Analogical remodelling would be responsible for *roofs* for *rooves* or *leafs* for *leaves* because the older plurals were remodelled on the basis of the widespread simple /-s/ plural with no change in voice for the ending.

4. Grammaticalization and lexicalization

Wedlock is a case of lexicalization because we can no longer recognize the elements *wed* and *lock* as having separate meanings as a noun + suffix. Such cases are liable to be re-interpreted by later generations, e.g., *sandblind* 'having poor eyesight' which does not contain the word 'sand' but OE *sam-* 'half' related to Latin *semi-*. *Fatherhood, motherhood, priesthood* are cases of grammaticalization because the word *-hood* in the sense of 'person, quality' no longer occurs as an independent word. *She has to learn Russian* also shows grammaticalization as the meaning of *have to* is now one of obligation and cannot be derived from the individual meanings of *have* + *to*.

5. Reconstruction

The comparative method is based on comparisons between languages, so claiming that *foot* and *pes*, or *heart* and *kardios*, are related is to apply this method. The vowel length in both *five* and *wise* (with later diphthongization) resulted from the fact that long vowels were favored before syllable codas which had only one consonant. Relating these words to *fifth* and *wisdom* respectively would be an instance of internal reconstruction.

6. Relative chronology of change

Routine and *police* have long vowels because they were borrowed from French after the period when /i:/ was diphthongized to /ai/, whereas *resign* and *polite* were borrowed from French before this change and hence underwent it.

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7. Avoidance of homophony

One could argue that using *vat* from Kentish for former *fat* 'barrel for wine, spirits' was to avoid homophony with *fat* 'overweight'. However, despite such instances there are many examples of homophony which arose where speakers did not attempt to 'avoid' the change, including *horse* and *hoarse*; *which* and *witch*; *meat* and *meet.* One argument for why this did not take place could be that the like-sounding words just listed belong to different word classes and so the likelihood of confusion did not exist in practice.

8. Vowel changes

The Great Vowel Shift was a change which affected all the long vowels of English and which began during the late Middle English (1100–1500) period and was not concluded until the Late Modern English period (1800–) for standard southern English. It consisted essentially of a raising of all low and mid vowels and the diphthongization of the high vowels /i:/ and /u:/ to /ai/ and /au/ respectively. The Great Vowel Shift did not affect the pronunciation of *police* while the present-day pronunciation of *young* in standard English is due to a different change, the lowering of /u/ to /ʌ/ in the south of England during the seventeenth century.

9. The history of /h/

The sound /h/ was lost in clusters in the history of English, e.g., OE *hnutu* > PDE *nut*, which does not contain /h-/ at the beginning. The /h/ at the beginning of *which* was also lost so that the initial sound became voiced and identical with that in *witch*. In initial position there is a strong tendency in all urban forms of British English to delete /h-/ colloquially so that *hall* is pronounced like *all*, *hat* like *at*, etc. Hypercorrection is found where speakers, who do not normally have initial /h/, try to speak with this sound and insert it in words in which it does not exist in standard English, e.g., *hobviously*.

10. Regional origins

Yes, for instance, the word *uncouth* is pronounced with /u:/ betraying a Northern pronunciation which did not undergo the Great Vowel Shift. The word *busy* is written with /u/ but pronounced with /i/ indicating a West Midland pronunciation. The word *vixen* (female fox) has an initial voiced fricative which stems from a Southern pronunciation.

Sample solutions to Chapter 3 exercises

1. Linking /r/ and intrusive /r/

a. In early generative phonology, we would assume a lexical form /kar/ for both stages. Then the non-rhotic dialects added a rule deleting /r/ before a word beginning with a consonant:

$$r \rightarrow ø \,/\, __\ \#C$$

In Optimality Theory, we need to assume a re-ranking of constraints. We can assume two universal constraints: a faithfulness constraint and some sort of markedness constraint discouraging sequences of a word-final C followed by word-initial C. (This markedness constraint is reasonable as valuing easier pronunciation). Before the development of "linking /r/", the faithfulness constraint was more highly ranked than the markedness constraint. In some dialects, however, there was a re-ranking of these two constraints, so that the output was faithful to the input only when it did not result in two consonants.

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