

Language System Contacts or Intersystem Factors?

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Abstract: Diachronic development of the English language has been shaped by the contacts with other languages more than once. This is obvious not only from the vocabulary point of view. But what the morphological changes have been initiated by? The paper examines the issue of reasons and mechanism of diachronic changes in the English language. The aim of the article is not to challenge the sociolinguistic origin of changes theory, but to provide a detailed description of the intersystem process. Step-by-step reconstruction of the process shows that three levels of the language system have taken part in it: accentological, phonological and morphological.

Key words: Diachronic development of the English language • Language change causes • Social and intersystem factors • Language system levels • Interrelation and cooperation of the levels

INTRODUCTION

Classically the diachronic development of the English language is divided into three periods of Old, Middle and Modern English. These periods have been described in many linguistic works [1], [2], [3], but the issue of the causes and mechanism of the language changes is still open for the discussion.

Majority of linguists have not come to the one and the same conclusion. Generally speaking, all recent linguistic researches in this field can be divided into two groups: the first group includes the linguistic researches, which have the sociolinguistic explanation of language change causes (language contacts or influence of the society), the authors of the second group combine extra linguistic factors and inter system factors as causes for language system development.

Sociolinguistic argument can be found in the books of T. Nevalainen and H. Raumolin-Brunberg [4], L. Brinton and L. Aronoff [5]. Elly van Gelderen kept to the viewpoint in the monograph "A history of the English language" [6] and said "Internal changes appear as a result of language contacts (between the speakers using foreign languages), or they may be the innovations of the speakers themselves, when they try to solve different political or social issues... Internal changes may occur when the native speakers stop to use the inflexions and start to use the words of, for, the, have".

The study of John Algeo "The Origins and Development of the English Language" [7] belongs to the second group too. The scientist stressed: "There are three general causes of language change. First, words and sounds may affect neighbouring words and sounds, the result of this influence is called syntagmatic change... The second type of changes is associative changes... The third - a language can change because of the events in the world."

A kind of summing up position is in the research of Scott F. Kiesling [8]: "That is still much that is mysterious how change works. One open question is the relative strength of social and structural factors in change."

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of this paper is to present a detailed theoretical description of the diachronic dynamics of the English language system, combining the thesis about the language system as a self-sufficient structure with the understanding of the constant influence of the social factors [9].

The English language system changed at definite moments of its diachronic development. At first it was inflectional and was characterized by the ramified system of declination and conjugation. But then gradually it started to change. Because of these changes diachronic periods were singled out. The time between the transition

from Old English to Middle English, from Middle English to Early Modern and Modern English language was the phase of revolutionary innovations at all levels of the inter language system and structure[10]. Majority of the inflexions have been lost and because of that fact some of the morphological categories vanished. We shall try to approach to causality of those changes.

It is a well-known assumption that Proto-Germanic language had free stress. But then the accentological situation changed: the tendency to a fixed stress appeared. It initiated the phonomorphological process at the juncture of two levels: phonological and morphological. The result of the new place of the stress on the root morpheme led to the reduction of the unstressed inflexions. The development of the inter structural process began when the connection between the morphological unit semantics and its phonetic representation broke down. Formal frames of the morphological structure broadened, its quantitative potential grew and its quality started to change. The whole language system balance was violated.

With the course of time chaotic accumulation of the innovations started to prevail over the English language system norm. In the process of self-adjustment the system began reconstruction of its structure. At the beginning the innovations emerged at the phonological level, but the results were realized at the morphological one. The morphological laws came into power. Phonological level was active, it dominated. The dynamic stress was fixed at root morpheme, it influenced the phonological changes: reduction of the inflectional vocalism of the unstressed syllable into *-e*, later this sound vanished from the language system. Violation of the system balance was at a crucial point.

Phonological level was active and disruptive. Phonomorphological process led to the breakdown of the language structural symmetry. Morphological level has its own laws. The aim of these laws is to control the symmetry between the morphological categories and their plane of expression. The laws “cement” functional and distinctive potentials of new allomorphs, they press the morpheme variants to keep the balance state. Then morphological factors of interaction started to act. Phonological processes have led to the morphological results: fixation of the stress > reduction of inflexions > vanishing of inflexions > disappearance of the morphological categories markers and then the categories themselves > reconstruction of the whole morphological system of the English language. This is the way of the intersystemdiachronic changes.

On the other hand any language is a complex, open system. The self-regulation of this system depends on two groups of factors: inter and outer (extra) ones. Outer (extra) factors are the factors of the interrelations between the language and other systems (for instance, society). Inter factors are the factors of self-controlling and self-regulating, which give the language inter system the possibility to accept or repulse the innovations in the process of self-development. In most of the cases two systems interchange power or information. When two language systems contact with each other– language units of different levels start to penetrate into the other system. During its diachronic cause the English language contacted with other languages a lot of times. But each time the penetration of the language units was not the same. The process was important, because it influenced and shaped the further diachronic development and changes. Together with the other factors it initiated the system process of self-organization of the English language and resulted in the quality change of its system and structure.

It is a known fact that only an open system, which is in an unbalanced state, when accumulating innovations may start to regulate itself. Chaotic accumulation of the innovations of the new language units or new function of the units may result in a loss of system balance state and create a new state of variation of the norm. The constant interrelation with the other systems is an indispensable condition of the self-regulation and self-control of the language system. If any language system does not interrelate with other systems, its entropy level is low and the possibility of the imbalance is low too. The system of such a kind is characterized as an inert and inactive one.

It is necessary to mention one more attribute of the language system evolution – it is movement. The diachronic movement (evolution) of the English language is complicated. This movement can be described as variable, changeable, unsteady and continuous. There is a threshold nature of its rise. That can be proved by the research of the English language diachronic development. In the cause of its evolution the language contacted with other language systems. For our research two contacts were the most interesting: the contact with the Scandinavian Vikings language and the contact with the language of the Normans led by William the Conqueror. The English language operated in the society and performed its main function – to be a mean of communication. While doing so, the language system contacted heavily with the above mentioned languages. The systems interchanged the language units, which were

completely new. These innovations were accumulated and the English language system lost its balanced state. The norm was violated.

CONCLUSION

Language system imbalance is a very important state of the system existence. The accumulated innovations create the uncertainty and ambiguity condition. The language system enters the intricate phase of its diachronic development, because several ways of potential evolution are possible. The language system has a choice what way to choose. The rudiments of future evolution already exist in the language system. They are influenced by the inter system laws of development. The language system memory controls them. Due to it the next phase of evolution – imbalance – is not constant. The language system innovations disturb the balanced state of language paradigms.

The further phase is the system develops itself controlling the process and finally new order in the inter structure of the language system is established. New structural order differs from the previous one in quality. It is a new adjustment. And chaos and disorder transform into a new normalization of the language units. Different language systems restore the order in diverse ways. The English language system did it in a way of abolishing the syntax-orienting system. Gradually it was changed in to the analytic alone.

Summing Up: The mechanism of diachronic changes of the English language was shaped by two groups of causes: extra linguistic and inter system ones. Migration, relocation and language system contacts belong to the first group of factors. Inter relation and cooperation of inter system levels are the factors of the second group. If our aim is to understand the diachronic changes and causes of the language system evolution – it is better to take into consideration both groups of causes. Language systems contacts are important and influenced the language evolution, but the inter system factors of stress fixation and reduction of inflexions showed the functional inter relation between the inter structure accentological, phonological and morphological levels. Inter level cooperation led to the fact that phonological innovations had results on the morphological level. The further reconstruction of the system was initiated by them.

So, for the diachronic evolution of the English language the factors of the language contacts and inter system factors were the causes of the evolution.

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