HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS?

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LECTURE SEVEN :
ANALOGICAL CHANGE

7.1 Introduction

Sound change, borrowing and analogy have traditionally been considered the three most important (most basic) types of linguistic change.

In spite of the importance of analogy, linguistics textbooks seem to struggle when it comes to offering a definition. Many do not even bother, but just begin straight away by presenting examples of analogical change.

Some of the definitions of analogy that have been offered run along the following lines: **analogy is a linguistic process involving generalisation of a relationship from one set of conditions to another set of conditions.**

Analogy is change modelled on the example of other words or forms; and **analogy is a historical process which projects a generalisation from one set of expressions to another.**

Arlotto (1972: 130), recognising the problem of offering an adequate definition, gives what he calls 'a purposely vague and general definition': '[analogy] is a process whereby one form of a language becomes more like another with which it has somehow associated'.

The essential element in all these definitions, vague and inadequate though this may sound, is that *analogical change* involves a *relation of similarity* (compare Anttila 1989: 88).

Analogy is sometimes described as **'internal borrowing'**, the idea being that in analogical change a language may 'borrow' from some of its own patterns to change other patterns.

Analogy is usually not conditioned by regular phonological factors, but rather depends on aspects of the grammar, especially morphology.

For the Neogrammarians, sound change was considered regular, borrowings needed to be identified, and **analogy was**, in effect, everything else that was left over. That is, almost everything that was not sound change or borrowing was analogy.

Analogy became the default (or wastebasket) category of changes.

In analogical change, one piece of the language changes to become more like another pattern in the language where speakers perceive the changing part as similar to the pattern that it changes to be more like.

By way of getting started, let us consider some examples of analogy. Originally, *sorry* and *sorrow* were quite distinct, but in its history *sorry* has changed under influence from *sorrow* to become more similar to *sorrow.*

Sorry is from the adjective form of 'sore',

Old English *sarig* '<u>sore</u>, pained, sensitive' (derived from the Old English noun *sar* 'sore'), which has cognates in other Germanic languages.

The original *a* of *siirig* changed to *0* and then was shortened to *0* under influence from *sorrow* (Old English *sorh* 'grief, deep sadness or regret'), which had no historical connection to *sorry.*

This is an analogical change, where the form of <u>*sorry*</u> changed on analogy with that of <u>*sorrow*</u>.

Some equate analogical change with morphological change, though this can be misleading. While it is true that many analogical changes involve changes in morphology, not all do, and many changes in morphology are not analogical

Proportional Analogy

Traditionally, two major kinds of analogical changes have been distinguished, **proportional and non-proportional,** ('the distinction is not always clear or relevant.

Proportional analogical changes are those which can be represented in an equation of the form, **a : b = c : x,** where one solves for **'x' - a** is to **b** as **c** is to what? (**x** = 'what?').

For example: **a : b = c : x,**

ride: rode = dive: x,

Where in this instance **x** is solved with **dove.** In this analogical change, the original past tense of **dive** was **dived**, but it changed to **dove** under analogy with the class of verbs which behave like **drive: drove, ride: rode, write: wrote, strive: strove**, **and so on.**

Not all cases considered proportional analogy can be represented easily in this proportional formula, and some cases not normally thought to be proportional analogical changes can be fitted into such a formula.

In the end, the distinction may not be especially important, so long as you understand the general notion of analogy

In English, the pattern of the verb **speak/spoke/spoken** ('present tense/'past tense/past participle') developed through remodelling on analogy with verbs of the pattern **break/ broke/broken**.

In Old English, it was (compare the spake 'past tense' **sprec/sprrec/gesprecen** of Early Modern English with present-day spoke).

Analogical Levelling

Many of the proportional analogical changes are instances of analogical levelling. **(Others are extensions; see below.)**

Analogical levelling reduces the number of allomorphs a form has; it makes paradigms more uniform. In analogical levelling, forms which formerly underwent alternations no longer do so after the change.

(1) For example, some English **'strong'** verbs have been levelled to the 'weak' verb pattern, as for instance in dialects where ;

throw/threw/   thrown   has   become *throw/throwed/throwed*.

There are numerous cases throughout the history of English in which strong verbs (with stem alternations, as in

sing/sang/sung or *write/wrote/written)* have been levelled to weak verbs (with a single stem form and *-ed* or its equivalent for 'past' and 'past participle', as in *bake/baked/baked* **or** *live/lived/lived).*

Thus *cleave/clove/cloven* **(or** *cleft)* 'to part, divide, split' has become *cleave/cleaved/cleaved* for most, while *strive/strove/striven* for many speakers has changed to *strive/strived/strived*.

(Strive is a borrowing from Old French *estriver* **'to quarrel, contend'**, but came to be a strong verb very early in English, now widely levelled to a weak verb pattern.

(2) Some English strong verbs have shifted from one strong verb pattern to another, with the result of a partial levelling.

For example, in earlier English the 'present' /'past' / 'past participle' of the verb *to bear* was equivalent to *bear/<u>bare</u>/born(e),* and *break* was *break /<u>brake</u>/broke(n).*

They have shifted to the *fight/fought/fought*, *spin/spun/spun* pattern, where the root of the 'past' and 'past participle' forms is now the same *(bear/<u>bore</u>/born(e), break/<u>broke</u>/broken).*

(3) In English, the former 'comparative' and 'superlative' forms of *old* have been levelled from the pattern *old/elder/eldest* to the nonalternating pattern *old/older/oldest*. Here, **0** had been fronted by umlaut due to the former presence of front vowels in the second syllable of *elder* and *eldest,* but the effects of umlaut were levelled out, and now the words *elder* and *eldest* remain only in restricted contexts, not as the regular 'comparative' and 'superlative' of *old*.

Near was originally a 'comparative' form, meaning 'nearer', but it became the basic form meaning 'near'. If the original state of affairs had persisted for the pattern 'near'/'nearer' /'nearest', we should have had *nigh/near/next,* from Old English (*neah 'near'/nearra 'nearer'/neahsta* 'nearest'.)

However, this pattern was levelled out; *nearer* was created in the sixteenth century, then *nearest* substituted for *next.* Both *nigh* and *next* remained in the language, but with more limited, shifted meanings.

Similarly, **far** was also comparative in origin (originally meaning 'farther'), but this became the basic form meaning 'far', which then gave rise to the new comparative *farrer*, which was replaced by *farther* under the influence *of far* *further* 'more forward, more onward, before in position'.

The pattern *late/later/latest* is also the result of an analogical levelling without which we would have had instead the equivalent of *late/latter/last,* with the 'comparative' from Old English */retra/* and the 'superlative' from Old English *latost*.

(In this *case,later* replaced *latter*,which now remains only in restricted meaning; and *last*, though still in use but different in meaning.

Analogical Extension

Analogical extension (somewhat rarer than analogical levelling) extends the already existing alternation of some pattern to new forms which did not formerly undergo the alternation.

An example of analogical extension is seen in the case mentioned above of *dived* being replaced by *dove* on analogy with the 'strong' verb pattern as in *drive/drove*, *ride/rode* and so on, an extension of the alternating pattern of the strong verbs. Other examples follow.

(I) Modern English *wear/wore*, which is now in the strong verb pattern, was historically a weak verb which changed by extension of the strong verb pattern, as seen in earlier English *werede* 'wore', which would have become modern *weared* if it had survived.

(2) Other examples in English include the development of the nonstandard past tense forms which show extension to the strong verb pattern which creates alternations that formerly were not there, as in: *arrive/arrove* (Standard English *arrive/arrived)*, and *squeeze/squoze* (Standard *squeeze/squeezed).*

From the point of view of the speaker, analogical levelling and extension may not be different, since in both the speaker is making different patterns in the language more like other patterns that exist in the language.

The Relationship between Analogy and Sound Change

The relationship between sound change and analogy is captured reasonably well by the slogan (sometimes called 'Sturtevant's paradox'):

sound change is regular and causes irregularity; analogy is irregular and causes regularity (Anttila 1989: 94). **That is, a regular sound change can create alternations, or variant allomorphs.**

For example, umlaut was a regular sound change in which back vowels were fronted due to the presence of a front vowel in a later syllable, as in *brother + -en > brethren*; as a result of this regular sound change, the root for **'brother'** came to have two variants, *brother* and *brethr-*.

Earlier English had many alternations of this sort. However, an irregular analogical change later created *brothers* as the plural, on analogy with the nonalternating singular/plural pattern in such nouns as *sister/sisters.*

This analogical change in the case of *brethren* in effect resulted in undoing the irregularity created by the sound change, leaving only a single form, *brother,* as the root in both the singular and plural forms; that is, analogy levelled out the alternation left behind by the sound change *(brethren* survives only in a restricted context with specialised meaning).

In this context, we should be careful to note that **although analogical changes are usually not regular processes** (which would occur whenever their conditions are found), **they can sometimes be regular.**