

Titel: Synchrony versus Diachrony, [Uldall] 031-0030

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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it can explain why. As I see it, it is impossible to explain by any method whatsoever why a certain group of people speak in a certain way, except in a few cases where linguistic change was brought ^{about} by non-linguistic factors. We can't even tell why people speak at all.

I believe that it is legitimate to divide linguistic changes into three main groups: 1) phonetic changes, which again consist of mechanical changes such as assimilation and harmony, and non mechanical changes such as the general 'closing' of the English vowels (ee > i, oo > u, etc); 2) morphological changes, which are brought about mainly by analogy, compensation and borrowing; 3) syntactic changes, which follow the same general laws as the morphological changes. Since we have in language a constant inter-influence of form and function, it is clear that these three main classes of change must of necessity overlap and combine in all sorts of ways. If the element A is brought by phonetic change to resemble closely element B, several things may happen: the distinction in function between A and B may be lost, if the phonetic change happens to coincide with a feeling that the grammatical concept expressed by one of the elements is no longer necessary; the distinction may be sufficiently expressed by the context ^{in each case,} so that homonymy is safe; B may be forced to take on another form*); the function of one of the elements may be taken over by a circumlocution, i.e. a syntactic expression. Which of these possibilities will be picked, depends on the 'genius' of

*) If both A and B are affected by the first phonetic change, there is, of course, no problem.