Reasons for languages changes.

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What are the main reasons for language changes? Given its crucial nature, historical linguists have been concerned with this question over the last two centuries. It is a well-known fact that natural languages of all types keep changing constantly. Language change can be studied from several angles: One can reconstruct extinct languages, classify languages to language families, recognise trends in lexical and grammatical changes and draw historical conclusions from language change.

The idea that the main cause of change, at least as far as so-called internal causes are concerned,lies in imperfect language transmission from one generation to the next is not new: as shown in Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) similar views were held by Herman Paul in the 19th century. Similar to modern generativists, Paul, too, indicated the competence of individual speakers as the proper object of linguistic research.

Two major schools are known in the history of linguistics, namely, the functional and the formalist, also called generative. Their different perception of the essence of language has given rise to competing linguistic theories, of which the foundational assumptions as well as applied methods vary greatly. The distinction between these schools mostly relies on four pillars: the purpose language has, how first language acquisition takes place, how to collect linguistic data and what causes language change. Whereas the functional school regards language as a primarily communicative tool, thereby motivating its existence sociologically, the formalist school regards it as a system which developed to sustain human

cognition, thereby motivating its existence psychologically. The functional school generally assumes first language acquisition to take place similarly to other learning processes with emphasis on nurturing. Conversely, the formalist school assumes first language acquisition to be based on an innate mechanism called Universal Grammar which facilitates the acquisition process and delimits it. Data collection in the formalist research is normally based on grammaticality judgements reflecting the native speaker's internal competence.

Factors that influence the spread of an innovation among social groups are connected with identity: speakers want to identify with specific groups, depending on their social prestige and on other factors relating to the speakers' status within a community. Various sociolinguistic variables,such as age and sex, play a role in pushing a certain group to be more or less open to innovations: renownedly, young females are more ready to pick up innovations than males,6 and older people are more conservative than younger ones, who are most often among early adopters of innovations and thus the ultimate responsible for language change.

Many changes in the grammar, in phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, take place unconsciously and do not involve several speaker communities. They often adhere to strict formal rules that can anticipate the direction of the change with high probability. The adoption of these principles is crucial for any account of language change.

In these thesis were both language-internal and language-external accounts of language change introduced , based on the formalist and functional schools in linguistic thought respectively.