

Review

Crowley, Terry. *An Introduction to Historical Linguistics*.

Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press,

and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. 1987.

vi + 306 pp. \$NZ29.95

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Introductory textbooks on historical linguistics, unlike those on syntax where a moratorium is long over due, are relatively rare. Furthermore, such an introductory text which uses Pacific languages to illustrate techniques and exemplify points must be in the unique category. This text, which is actually a revised edition of Crowley (1981), falls into the unique category.

The revisions to the 1981 edition are outlined in the preface. These include: improved explanation and exemplification where the author felt it was necessary, replacement of the original transcription by an IPA-based one, additional problems from a wider range of languages, a redistribution of the 1981 chapter five into chapters two and ten, and the addition of two new chapters - Causes of Language Change and Observing Language Change.

The overall style of the text is straightforward, uncomplicated and, consequently, very easy to read. This is in keeping with Crowley's aim of producing a text which could be used by students for whom English is a second language. However, there are a number of places where a little more attention should have been paid to style, for example p.27 "So, for instance, [naif] in English 'strengthens' the final consonant to become [naip] in Tok Pisin." How can *knife* in English strengthen anything?

Throughout the book unfamiliar terms and new concepts are explained simply and illustrated with examples drawn from Pacific languages. The notion 'unfamiliar terms' does not just apply to linguistic terminology but is extended to the names of languages for which a geographical location and, if necessary, historical period is given, and to terms, including place names, familiar only to Papua New Guineans. This is in line with the author's aim of explaining simply all concepts and terms without simplifying the concepts themselves and not assuming that readers know what terms such as, for example *Umlaut*, *spiritus aspirate* and *sandhi* mean. Such an approach is welcome. Students beginning linguistics often complain that the discipline seems to consist only of endless lists of terms. While nothing can be done

to eliminate the terminology, any attempt to present it in a more acceptable form has to be good.

The book covers not just the areas one would expect to find in an introductory text, for example types of sound change, phonetic and phonemic change, the comparative method, internal reconstruction, semantic and syntactic change, but also includes chapters which cover writing and ordering phonological rules, observing language change, explaining language change and cultural reconstruction. This breadth is achieved at the sacrifice of depth. This is not necessarily bad, especially in an introductory text. However, there may well be issues where a little further discussion would be helpful for the students. Let me give two examples. Firstly, the discussion of opposition to the neogrammarian hypothesis makes no mention of lexical diffusion which introduces the time dimension into change. (See Chen 1972, Chen and Hsieh 1971 and Chen and Wang 1975 for a discussion of lexical diffusion.) Secondly, the chapter on internal reconstruction fails to point out that the method has been shown to give false results when tested against a language for which we have considerable historical texts. (See Lass 1975 where it is shown that internal reconstruction gives false results for the history of vowel nasalization in French.)

Each chapter concludes with a set of reading guide questions, designed to direct students to the important points of the chapter, a set of exercises which allow students to practice the concepts introduced in the chapter, and a list of further readings. Both the reading guide questions and the exercises are extremely useful in reinforcing the concepts introduced. Most aspects of linguistic analysis are better learned through practical application than by simply reading about them. Although the lists of further readings are helpful, especially to the motivated student, they raise a number of questions. Antilla (1972) is included in the list of recommended reading for a number of chapters yet this textbook is probably too demanding for most introductory students. In addition, the further reading for the chapter on syntactic change contains no reference to the works of Traugott or Lightfoot which are no more demanding than that of Antilla.

Although it is not my intention to comment on each chapter, there are two chapters I would like to discuss in some detail.

Chapter two - Types of Sound Change - is a good introduction to various phonological processes and contains material usually not found in historical linguistic textbooks and occasionally either omitted from or given only a

cursory discussion in phonology textbooks. The chapter covers lenition (but not fortition), apocope, syncope, haplology and cluster reduction (but not aphaeresis although an example of this is given). Various processes which insert segments are discussed, as are metathesis, fusion, unpacking, breaking, assimilation and dissimilation. Each process is clearly and simply defined and each definition is accompanied by an appropriate illustrative example.

Most of these processes are familiar and require little further comment. However, I would not refer to them as types of sound change but as phonological processes which may lead to either phonetic or phonological change. There are two types of change which do require further comment. These are 'compression' and 'unpacking'.

Crowley states that compression is not very general and occurs only with a few words in a language. It occurs when one or more syllables are dropped off the end or middle of a word, for example *administration* > *admin.* or *university* > *uni.* One particular type of compression reduces certain words to their initials, for example *television* > *TV* and another type, referred to as 'word mixes' produces the following; *administrative college* > *adcol.* I do not consider these processes to be of the same status as phonological processes such as, for example, epenthesis, apocope or metathesis, and consequently they do not belong in this chapter. Whereas one may write phonological rules to express the other processes, it is impossible to write a rule or rules to express such an irregular and highly restricted change.

Unpacking is defined as being the opposite of fusion. An original sound may develop into a sequence of two sounds, with each sound having some of the features of the original sound. Two examples of this process are given. One involves the unpacking of French nasalized vowels into a sequence of oral vowel plus nasal in Bislama, for example French [kamiõ] > Bislama [kamioŋ]. The other, also from Bislama, involves the unpacking of English /æ/ into /ai/, e.g. English 'bag' [bæg] > Bislama [baik]. The first example is transparent and convincing but the second is slightly opaque and not so convincing. In contrast to Crowley's analysis, Clark (1987:87) claims that the change of English /æ/ into /ai/ occurs only when there is an adjacent velar. The sequence /ai/ in Tok Pisin and Bislama consists of a low vowel followed by a high front glide, represented by /i/. The glide is a result of the transition from vowel to velar. When the velar precedes the vowel /æ/, the glide precedes the vowel for example English 'captain' /kæptən/ > Bislama /kiap/ 'government'. The change of /æ/ to /ai/ would appear to be a case of assimilation rather than

unpacking.

The other chapter on which I would like to comment is chapter five - Sound Correspondences and Reconstruction. This chapter is one of the clearest expositions of the comparative method I have come across in any historical linguistics textbook. Tongan, Samoan, Rarotongan and Hawaiian provide the data for a fully worked reconstruction of the Proto-Polynesian sound system. This reconstruction includes discussion of whether or not the Proto-Polynesian sound system had /l/, /r/ or both.

However, despite the care taken to achieve clarity in an area which, to introductory students, often looks more like a neat conjuring trick rather than the application of a logical method, it is in this chapter that the book's main editing error occurs. Page 94 concludes with the following sentence:

Similarly, in the word for 'gall' given on the next page, we find that there are sound in Tongan corresponding to nothing in the other languages:

and we would expect the next page to begin with a set of correspondences which illustrate this point. However, page 95 begins with a set of correspondences to be used in the first stage of reconstructing the stop system of Proto-Polynesian. The missing paragraph may be reconstructed by comparing mother and daughter texts.

The switch to a more IPA-type transcription system has clearly caused some problems for the typesetters who, it would appear, have had to cobble together some of the symbols. This is particularly noticeable with /ŋ/. There are also a number of misprints but I do not intend to mention these here. However, it must be mentioned that the publishers have managed to produce this text for \$NZ29.95, which is not outrageous and within the budget of most students.

Despite the criticisms mentioned above, I wish this book had been available ten years ago, when I was a student of historical linguistics. I would have found it extremely helpful and interesting and later, as a lecturer in historical linguistics, I would have adopted it as prescribed reading ahead of other introductory texts such as, for example Bynon (1977) and Jeffers and Lehiste (1982). Its clear style and lack of Indo-European based data would make it an ideal textbook for students of historical linguistics in the U.K. where familiarity with European languages other than English often leads students to follow their intuitions rather than to learn and apply thoroughly the methods of

comparative and internal reconstruction. I hope that UPNG and USP can be persuaded to produce a second edition of this volume in which the misprints can be corrected.

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