

Chapter 1

1.1 The NATURE OF LINGUISTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Many linguists trace the history of modern linguistics back to the publication in 1913 of the book *Course in General Linguistics* by students of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. In this book, the foundation was laid for the scientific study of language. Saussure recognised, as we still do today, that language is made up of a collection of units, all related to each other in very particular ways, on different levels. These different levels are themselves related in various ways to each other. The primary function of language is to express meanings, and to convey these to someone else. To do this, the mental image in a speaker's head has to be transformed into some physical form so that it can be transferred to someone else who can then decode this physical message, and have the same mental image come into his or her head.

One of the points that Saussure stressed was the fact that we need to make a distinction between studying a language from a *diachronic* -point of view and from a *synchronic* point of view. Up until the time of Saussure, linguistics had basically involved the diachronic study of languages. This meant that scholars were only interested in describing relationships between various-- aspects of languages *over periods of time*. Linguistics was until then a purely historical field of study. Languages at a particular point in time were viewed not so much as systems within themselves, but as 'products of history'. Saussure disputed this interpretation and said that all languages could (and *should*) be described synchronically, *without reference to history*. When we describe a language synchronically, we describe what are the basic units that go to make up the language (that is, its phonemes, its morphemes, and so on) and the relationship between these units at that time, and that time only. He therefore proposed a rigid boundary between diachronic and synchronic linguistics, which has been part of linguistics since his time (though lately, many linguists have come to question the need for such a rigidly stated view). This book is intended to introduce you to the concepts and techniques of diachronic linguistics.

Another important concept that Saussure stressed was the fact that the mental image in a speaker's head and the physical form used to transfer this image are completely arbitrary. This accounts for the fact that a certain kind of domestic animal is called a **sisia** in the Motu language of Papua New Guinea, a **boo** in the Paamese language of Vanuatu, a **Ji~** in French, and a dog in English. If there were any kind of natural connection between a word and its meaning, we would all use the same word!

Saussure would not have denied that some parts of a language are strongly iconic, or natural. All languages have onomatopoeic words like rokrok for 'frog' and meme for 'goat' in Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, or kokoroku for 'chicken' in Motu. However, words such as these are usually very small in number, and not an important consideration in language as a whole.

If we compare two different words used by two different groups of people speaking different languages, and we find that they express a similar (or identical) meaning by using similar (or, again, identical) sounds, then we need to ask ourselves this simple question: *Why?* Maybe it is because there is some natural connection between the meaning and the form that is being used to express it. On the other hand, maybe the similarity says something about some kind of historical connection between the two languages.

Let us go on a diversion for a moment, and look at the topic of stories in different cultures of the world. Probably all societies in the world have some kinds of stories that are passed on from generation to generation, telling of the adventures of people and animals from a long time ago: Often, these stories are told not just for pure interest and enjoyment, but also as a means of preserving the values of the culture of their tellers. The fact that all societies have such stories is not particularly surprising. Even the fact that societies have stories about animals that speak and behave like humans is not particularly surprising, as all humans of whatever culture are able to see similarities between animals and humans.

However, what if we found that two different peoples had a particular story about a person who died, and who was buried, and from whose grave grew a tree that nobody had seen before? This tree, the story goes, bore large green' fruit right near its top, but nobody knew what to do with this fruit. A bird then came along and pecked at the fruit to indicate to the people that its thick skin could be broken. When it was broken open, the people found that the fruit contained a sweet and nutritious drink.

This story can be recognised by coastal peoples nearly three thousand kilometres apart, from Vanuatu through to many parts of Papua New Guinea. Surely, if two peoples share stories about the origin of the coconut which contain so many similar details, this cannot be accidental. The fact that the stories are widely dispersed can only be interpreted as meaning that there must be something in common in the history of these different peoples.

So, if we were to come across two (or more) different languages and find that they have similar (or identical) words to express basically the same meanings, we would presumably come to the same kind of conclusion. Look at the following forms that are found in a number of languages that are very widely scattered:

	Bahasa Indonesia	Tolai (PNG)	Paamese (Vanuatu)	Fijian	Māori
'two'	dua	aurua	elu	rua	rua
'three'	tiga	autul	etel	tolu	toru
'four'	empat	aivat	ehat	va:	fa:
'five'	lima	ailima	elim	lima	rima
'stone'	batu	vat	ahat	vatu	kofatu

These similarities must be due to more than pure chance. We must presume that there is *some* kind of historical connection between these five widely separated languages (and, we might suspect, some of the intervening languages as well). This connection (and the connection between the stories about the coconut that we looked at earlier) could logically be of two different kinds. First, it could be that four of these five languages simply copied these words from the fifth (or that all five copied from a sixth language somewhere).

Secondly, it could be that these forms all derive from a single set of original forms that has diverged differently in each case. Since these four languages are spoken in widely separate areas, we could

guess that the speakers have had little or no opportunity to contact each other until very recent times. Anyway, even if these people were in contact in ancient times, there would seem' to be little need for people to copy words for things like basic numbers and the word for 'stone' .These are the sorts of things that people from almost all cultures must have had words for already.

It might be understandable if the words for 'coffee' or 'ice' were similar, as these are certain to be introduced concepts in these areas. Originally, these things would have had no indigenous name. When people first come across things for which they have no name, they very frequently just copy the name from the language of the people who introduced the concept. Since traditionally people in the Pacific did not grow coffee (as this drink was introduced by Europeans, who themselves learned of it from the Middle East), we would expect that the word for 'coffee' in most of the languages of the Pacific would have been copied from the language of early European sailors and traders who first appeared in the Pacific in the last 200 years or so. Thus, the word for 'coffee' in most Pacific languages today is adapted to the sound systems of the various languages of the region, and comes out something like **kofi or kopi**. (In areas of the Pacific where the French rather than the British were influential, of course, we find words like kafe or kape from French *cafe*).

Getting back to the words for 'stone' and the numbers 2, 3,4, and 5 that I showed you earlier, the most likely explanation for their similarity in these widely dispersed languages is that each of these sets of words is derived from a single original form. This brings us to the important concepts of *language relationship* and *protolanguage*. These ideas were first recognised in modern scholarship by Sir William Jones, who was a British judge in colonial India. Jones had studied a wide variety of languages, and in 1786 he delivered a speech about Sanskrit (one of the languages of ancient India) and his words have since become very famous. In this speech he said:

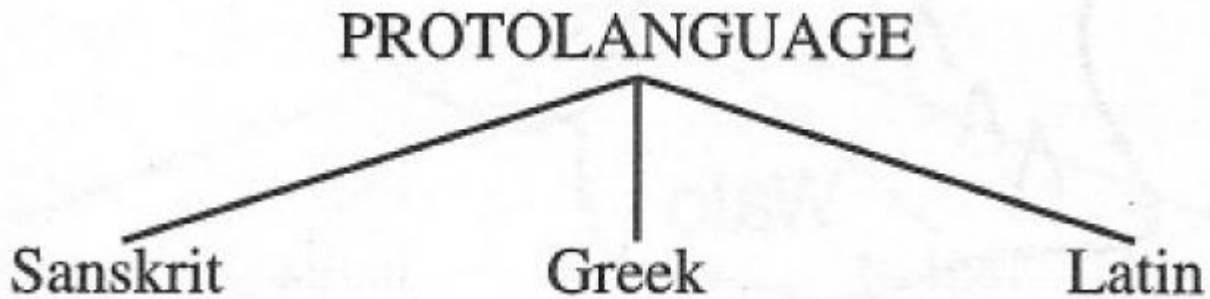
The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists: there is similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the Old Persian might be added to the same family.

This statement added two significant advances to the understanding of language change at the time. Firstly, Jones spoke of the idea of languages being related. Until then, people had tried to derive one language from another, often with ridiculous results. For instance, people had tried to show that all modern languages of the world ultimately go back to Hebrew, the language of biblical times. Kings of Europe even went to the .extreme of separating newborn babies from their parents to see what language they would speak naturally if they were left alone and not taught. The results varied from Dutch to Hebrew (and none of these claims is believable). The similarities between Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek that Jones was talking about were often explained before he delivered his speech by saying that Sanskrit developed *into* Greek, and that Greek then developed *into* Latin:

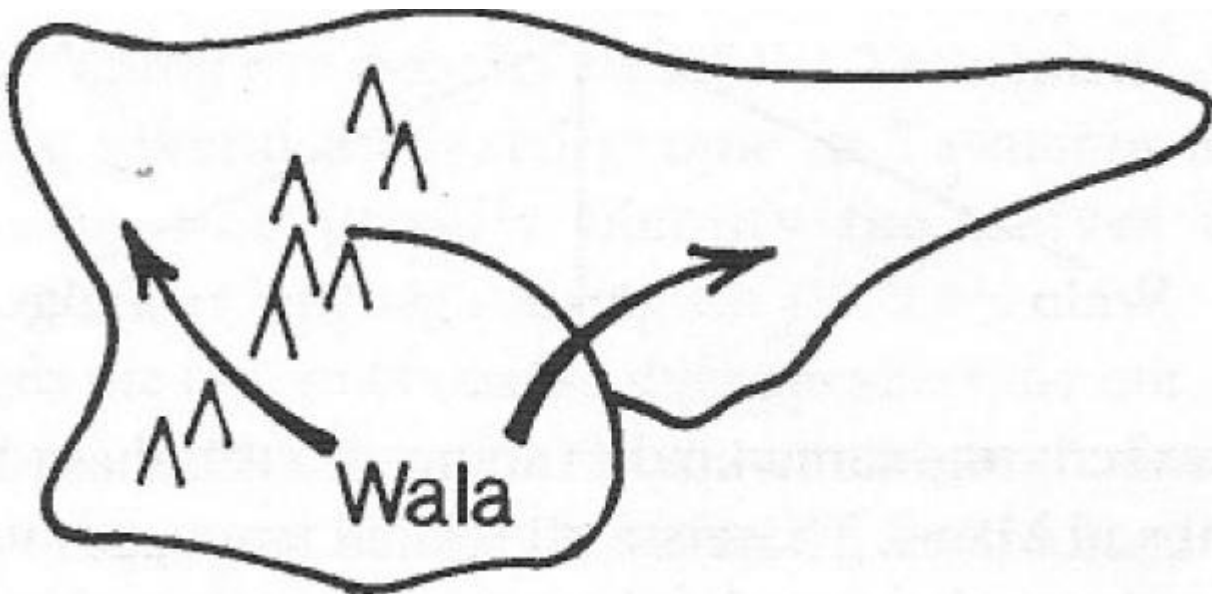
Sanskrit → Greek → Latin

Jones, however, introduced the idea of 'parallel' development in languages. The concept that he was introducing was therefore the concept of language relationship. He was saying that if two languages have a common origin, this means that they belong to a single *family* of languages.

Secondly, Jones spoke of the concept of the proto language (without actually using the term, as this did not come into general use until modern times). When he said that these three languages, and possibly the others he mentioned (and he was later shown to be correct), were derived from some other language, he meant that there was some ancestral language from which all three were descended by changing in different ways. So, the model of language and relationship that he proposed to replace the earlier model looks like the model that we use today:

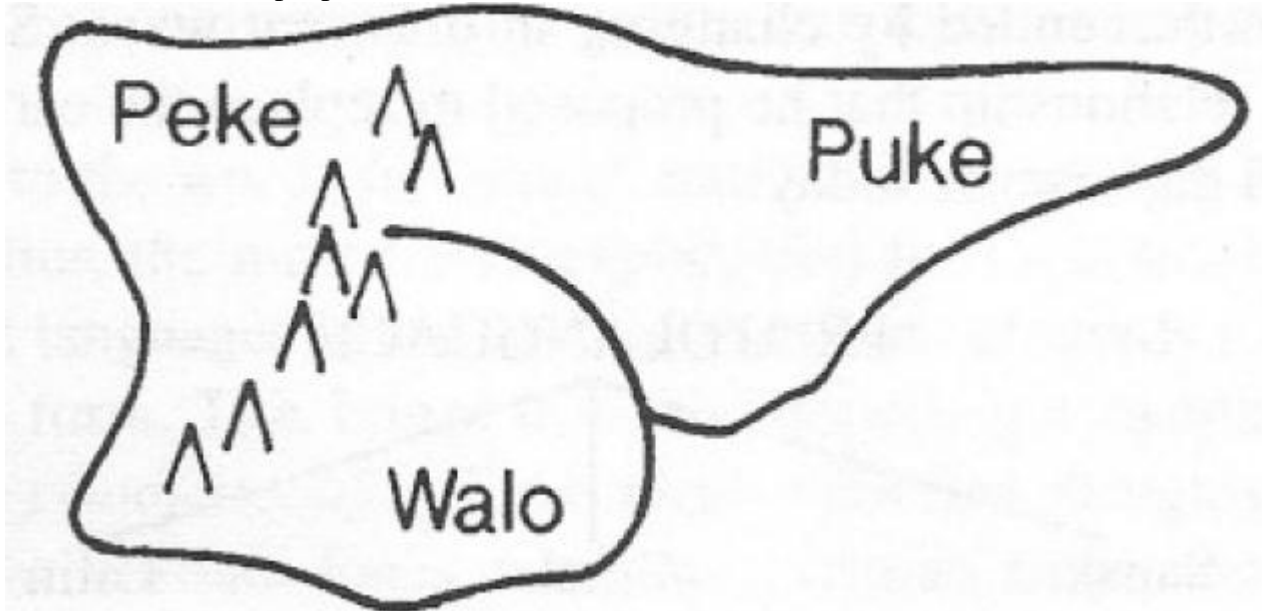


The concepts of 'protolanguage' and 'language relationship' both rest on the assumption that languages change. In fact, *all* languages change *all* the time. It is true to say that some languages change more than others, but all languages change nevertheless. But while all languages change, the change need not be in the same direction for all speakers. Let us imagine a situation like this:

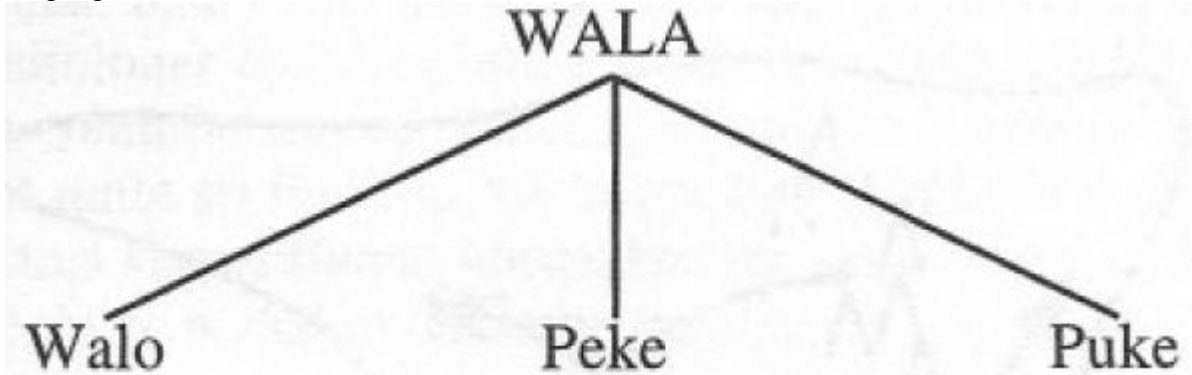


We will assume that there was an area on this island occupied by a group of people who spoke a language called Wala. Perhaps under pressure from population density, perhaps because of disputes, or perhaps out of pure curiosity, some of the Wala people moved out across the river and some across the mountains, and they settled in other areas. As I have said, all languages change, and the Wala language was no exception. However, the changes that took place in the Wala language across the mountains and across the river were not necessarily the same kinds of changes that took place in the original Wala homeland. Eventually, so many changes had taken place in the three areas that people could no longer understand each other. The Wala people in their homeland ended up calling themselves the Walo people, rather than their original name, Wala. Across the river the people came

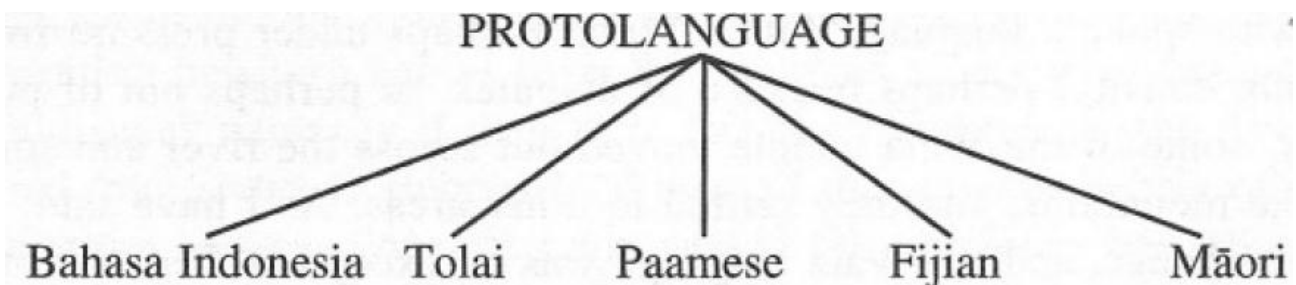
to call themselves the Peke, while the people on the other side of the mountains ended up calling themselves the Puke people. So, what we now have is a situation like this:



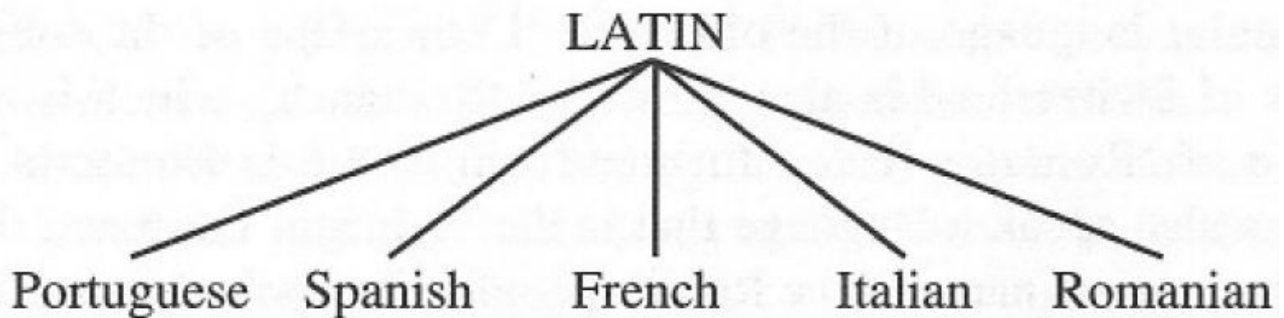
The three languages, Walo, Peke, and Puke, still show some similarities, despite their various differences. What we say, therefore, is that they are all related languages, all derived from a common ancestor, or protolanguage. We could therefore draw a family tree diagram for these three languages which would look like this:



We can say exactly the same kind of thing about Bahasa Indonesia, Tolai, Paamese, Fijian, and Maori. These are all related languages which are derived from a protolanguage that was spoken in the distant past at a time when writing was not yet known. Thus:



Generally, when a protolanguage evolves to produce a number of different daughter languages, we have no written records of the process. In the case of some of the languages of Europe, however, we have written records going back some thousands of years, and we can actually observe the changes taking place in these records. Latin was the language of most of Western Europe at the time of Christ. However, as the centuries passed, Latin gradually changed in its spoken form in different parts of Europe so that it was quite different from the older written records. It is important to note that Latin changed in different ways in what is now Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, and Romania. The eventual result of this was that there are different languages in Europe that are today called Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, and Romanian. These languages are all similar to some extent, because they all go back to a common ancestor. In this case, we can draw a family tree to describe this situation, in which the protolanguage actually has a name that was recorded in history:



We should ask ourselves this question: did Latin die out? The answer is that Latin did not die out in the same way that some languages have died out. Some languages die out because their speakers die out. The Tasmanian Aborigines, for instance, were badly affected by the diseases introduced by Europeans in the early 1800s, and many died. Many who did not die from disease were shot or poisoned by the Europeans. The last fully-descended Tasmanians died in the 1870s and 1880s, and knowledge of their languages died with them. (Contrary to popular belief the Tasmanians did not become extinct. There are several thousand people in Tasmania today of partly Aboriginal descent who proudly identify themselves as Aboriginal Tasmanians, though their language is English.)

Other languages die out, not because their speakers die out, but because - for whatever reason - they abandon their own language. Sometimes people abandon their own language as a result of having been forced to do so, while at other times people make the choice to switch to another language. In some parts of Australia, for example, Aboriginal people were gathered together and the children were separated from their parents in dormitories and punished by missionaries or government officers if they were caught speaking anything other than English. The result is that many of these languages have disappeared, and the descendants of the original speakers now use only English. There are parts of Papua New Guinea today, most notably in the area of the Sepik River, where parents are coming more and more to speak to their children in the national lingua franca, Tok Pisin, rather than their local vernacular. Some people have predicted that, within a generation or two, some of these vernaculars could be close to extinction, though in these cases the speakers are not being forced to give up their language. In these cases, there have been no movements of outsiders into these communities. People are making their own subconscious choice to switch from one language to another because Tok Pisin is associated with modernity and development, whereas the vernaculars are associated with tradition and backwardness.

But neither of these situations is true for Latin. Latin is not a dead language in the same sense that Tasmanian Aboriginal languages are dead. A protolanguage can in some ways be compared to a baby. A baby changes over time and becomes a child, then a teenager, and then an adult, and finally an old person. A baby does not die and then become a child, and so on. Similarly, Latin did not die and 'become' French. Latin simply changed gradually so that it came to look like a different language, and today we call that language 'French'. The name 'Latin' was not lost either, as there is a little-known language spoken in Europe that is called 'Ladin'. This is the modern form in that particular language of the old word 'Latin'. One of the four official languages of Switzerland is also known as 'Romansh', which is a modern derivative of 'Roman'. (Even further from Rome is Romania, but the Romanians also speak a language that is derived from Latin and they have retained the original name of the Roman people who spoke Latin as the name of their language today!)

The changes between Latin and French (and Romansh, and Romanian) were gradual. There was no moment when people suddenly realised that they were speaking French instead of Latin, in the same way that there is no single moment when a baby becomes a child, or when a child becomes a teenager. *After* enough changes had taken place, people who compared the way they spoke with the older written forms of Latin could see that changes had occurred. But this is like looking at a photograph of ourselves taken when we were younger. We may look very different, but the person that we can see is definitely not dead! ¹

French and Romanian and Romansh have not stopped changing either. The change continues into the present. French may well turn out to be the ancestor language from which a whole future family of languages is derived. So too may English, Bahasa Indonesia, Tolai, Paamese, Fijian, or Maori.

1.2 ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGE CHANGE

Since we are studying language change in this book, I would like to look at some of the common attitudes that people have towards the ways that languages change. As you saw in the preceding section, all languages are in a perpetual state of change. Sometimes, members of a particular society can observe changes that have taken place. In the case of written languages, people can see the language as it was written a number of generations ago, or even a number of centuries ago. In the case of unwritten languages, we obviously cannot observe how the language was spoken that far back in time, but very often people are able to recognise differences between the way the older people speak and the way the younger people speak.

¹ There is one sense in which we *can* say that Latin is a 'dead language.' In medieval and Renaissance Europe, the language of international scholarship and education was Latin, which was based on the written classical varieties of the language that was spoken during the heyday of the Roman Empire before the birth of Christ. After the 1600s, written Latin became more and more rare, as the local vernaculars (i.e., English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, etc.) replaced Latin to the point where Latin is now used only as an official language of the Roman Catholic church for certain religious functions (and there is a continuing trend away from Latin in the church as well). While spoken Latin did not die, we could argue that the situation with regard to the written language is somewhat different.

It seems that in almost all societies, the attitudes that people have to language change are basically the same. People everywhere tend to say that the older form of a language is in some sense 'better' than the form that is being used today. In villages all around the Pacific today, it is not unusual to hear the parents and grandparents of today's generation of children, who have generally been educated in school, saying that their children do not speak the language 'properly' any more. Students at the University of Papua New Guinea or the University of the South Pacific often say that they cannot speak their own language as 'well' as their lesser educated parents speak it. In the early 1980s, Cecil Abel, an elderly European who was born and brought up in the Milne Bay area of Papua New Guinea and grew up speaking both the local Suau language and English, complained on the radio that the Suau spoken by young people today was nothing but 'doggerel'. This seems to be a fairly common attitude.

In most cases, if you ask people what they mean when they say these kinds of things, it turns out that they feel that the younger generation doesn't use some of the words that the older generation uses, or that the younger generation uses words of English origin in its speech. For instance, in Vanuatu, the younger people on the island of Paama very often say **ka:ren** for 'garden' and **bu:s** for 'bush', both of which come from English. There are perfectly good Paamese words to express these meanings, i.e., **a:h** 'garden' and **leiai** 'bush'. Although the younger people know these words, they seldom bother to use them. In the Suau example that I just mentioned, Cecil Abel subsequently went on to say that what he meant by 'doggerel' was that some of the expressions used by Suau speakers of his generation are no longer being used by members of the younger generation.

In the preceding section, when I was discussing the ideas of Saussure, I said that forms in language are completely arbitrary. That is, there is no natural connection between a word and its meaning. This means that any sequence of sounds can express any meaning perfectly adequately, as long as members of the particular speech community agree to let those sounds represent that meaning. This means that **ka:ren** and **a:h** are both perfectly efficient ways of expressing the idea of 'garden'; similarly **bu:s** and **leiai** both express the meaning of 'bush' equally clearly. Neither is 'better' than the other. While the younger generations of Suau speakers no doubt use different expressions from those their grandparents used, the young have their own distinct sets of expressions that the elderly do not use. Who are we to judge which expressions are 'better'?

But people still like to insist that the earlier form of a language is 'better' than the later form, and they still like to say that the newer ways of speaking and writing are 'incorrect'. This applies to speakers of English, just as it does to any Pacific language. For instance, the following comments once appeared in the *Post-Courier*, the main daily newspaper in Papua New Guinea:

The English language is murdered daily on the National Broadcasting Corporation and, I regret to say, particularly in your *Post-Courier*. ... It is true that English is a living and developing language and new words and phrases are introduced from time to time. But the essential grammar must be maintained.

The writer of this letter was complaining not just about new words creeping into English, but also about the 'loss' of grammatical standards. In particular, he complained about people who 'split' their infinitives, by placing adverbs between the word *to* and a verb. He objects when people say things such as:

The minister intended to **speedily** examine the proposal for the introduction of bilingual education.

He says that people should say instead: “The minister intended *speedily to examine* the proposal ...”

You can see in the first sentence that it says *to speedily examine*, while in the second sentence it says *speedily to examine*. People who complain about this practice (and there are many) are ignoring the fact that almost everybody follows the pattern of the first sentence (even they themselves when they are not thinking about it!). The writer of the letter went on to suggest that a good solution to the problem was for children to be physically punished in school when they produce 'incorrect' sentences such as this!

It is doubtful if there was ever a time when English speakers did not split their infinitives like this. This prescriptive rule derives from an assumption that because infinitives in Latin consisted of just a single inflected verb form, the *to* should not be separated from the verb in English. Constructions which contain split and ‘unsplit’ infinitives are both perfectly adequate ways of getting the meaning across. The choice of construction is purely a stylistic one, but we cannot judge either construction as being inherently 'better' than the other.

Attitudes like those that I have been talking about in this section are probably common to all cultures. Not only this, but these kinds of attitudes also have a long history. Samuel Johnson was the first person to attempt to write a complete dictionary of the English language. His work appeared almost 250 years ago, and he said that its aim was to:

“... refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms. . .”

However, the choice between what is 'barbaric' and what represents 'purity' is completely arbitrary. He always chose to include the 'pure' written forms of the upper classes (of which he was, of course, a member), and labelled the spoken forms of the lower classes as 'barbaric'.

Even among serious scholars of language, we find such attitudes. The words of Sir William Jones which were quoted in the previous section are, of course, laden with such value judgments. It was a common belief among specialist scholars in the nineteenth century that the languages of today were degenerating, and were not as 'pure' in structure as their ancestor languages. For instance, one famous nineteenth century scholar of language, Max Muller, claimed that in the written history of all of the languages of Europe he could observe only a 'gradual process of decay'. The protolanguage from which Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit were derived (that is, the languages that Sir William Jones first mentioned as being related in 1786) was seen as being the most 'pure' form of language that was possible.

The common fault in this line of thinking is that such people regard language change as unnatural, and wish that it would never happen. But all human societies are always changing, and language is just another aspect of human social behaviour. Language change is *natural*, and it is *inevitable*. Even if the language of a Pacific Islander contains more words of English origin than was the case a generation ago, it is still a *Pacific* language. In fact, if this were how we measured how 'real' a language is, then English would be one of the most unreal languages of the world, because about half of the words in the English language originally come from other languages!

1.3 DELIBERATELY CHANGING LANGUAGES

Up till now, I have stressed the fact that language change is *natural*. If we, as speakers of our languages, let things take their natural course, our language will inevitably change in one way or another, given sufficient time. Sometimes purists such as Samuel Johnson have tried to reverse changes that have already taken place, but generally even the most ferocious teachers in schools with the most fearsome whips cannot turn time back, as far as language is concerned.

However, there are situations in which the deliberate action of speakers can affect the future of a language. In times of rapid social, cultural, and technological change, speakers of a language need to add new words to their vocabulary in order to talk about new things that come into their daily lives. For speakers of many languages the most natural thing to do in this kind of situation is simply to copy the word from some other language, though at the same time adapting the sound of the word to the sound system of their own language. Typically the source of a new word like this is the language of the people who have introduced a particular new thing or a new belief or activity, as I have already said. That is why we find that in most of the languages of the South Pacific, the word for 'coffee' looks something like **kofi** or **kopi**.

As we have already seen, people tend to be linguistic 'purists', and sometimes people regard words derived from another language as some kind of a threat to the integrity of their own language. It sometimes happens that a colonised nation, after gaining its independence, makes a conscious decision to replace the language of the former colonisers with one of their own languages as the official language of the new nation. For example, at the same time that Indonesia declared its independence from the Netherlands just after the Second World War, Bahasa Indonesia was declared to be the national language, in place of Dutch. This meant that Bahasa Indonesia jumped from being a language of relatively lowly social interaction, to being a language that was to be used as a language of the legal system, as well as a language of university education. Suddenly, chemistry lecturers in the universities had to teach their subjects in Bahasa Indonesia. Even though these people were fluent speakers of Bahasa Indonesia, they faced immediate difficulties because until then they had always used Dutch in their teaching, and the only technical vocabulary they knew was in Dutch.

The government of the new Indonesian republic appreciated this difficulty and set up what it called the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, or the 'Language and Literature Council'. The task of this council was to develop terminology in areas where Bahasa Indonesia lacked it, and also to translate materials already available in Dutch into the new national language (using, of course, any new terminology that the council had developed). With the establishment of this council, the Indonesian government had become involved in a language planning activity, i.e. the deliberate government-sanctioned intervention in the course of language change.

The council recognised that, in order to develop new terminology, there were three basic choices available to them. Firstly, they could simply 'Indonesianise' Dutch words. Indeed, speakers of Bahasa Indonesia had already been doing this to express new concepts. The Dutch word *bioscoop*, for example, was copied into Bahasa Indonesia as *bioskop* to refer to a picture theatre, and that is the only way that Indonesians have of referring to this concept.

Another way to refer to new concepts was to take two words already found in the language, and to join them together according the patterns of the language to make up a new word. For instance, the

word *juru* means 'expert' in Bahasa Indonesia, and this has been joined to a number of verbs to refer to a wide range of new professions:

<i>pustaka</i>	'book'	<i>juru pustaka</i>	'librarian'
<i>tulis</i>	'write'	<i>juru tulis</i>	'clerk'
<i>terbang</i>	'fly'	<i>juru terbang</i>	'pilot'
<i>berita</i>	'news'	<i>juru berita</i>	'journalist'

One final way to refer to new concepts is to take an existing word and to extend its meaning to refer to a new thing. Thus, for example, while *surat* originally referred to a letter, the same word has now come to mean a certificate as well.

The examples of change in the vocabulary of Bahasa Indonesia that I have just given are natural, in the sense that they happened spontaneously, without the deliberate intervention of any individuals or any committee. However, the language council that was set up in Indonesia noted these three different ways in which the language had evolved in the past, and decided to follow the same methods in *deliberately* creating new words that had not yet evolved of their own accord.

Rather than take what would probably have been the easiest path, the council chose to use words of Dutch origin only as a last resort. The members of the council felt that it was important that the Indonesian republic should rely as far as possible on its own linguistic resources. Thus, in order to express the linguistic technical term 'voiceless', the council settled upon *takbersuara*. *Tak* is a Bahasa Indonesia word meaning 'not'; *ber-* is a prefix meaning 'having'; and *suara* is the word for 'voice'. An 'exclamation', it was decided, would be a *seruan*, from the verb *seru* 'call' and the suffix *-an*, which makes a verb into a noun, i.e. 'a calling'. However, the council did not reject words of foreign origin altogether. A dictionary of modern Bahasa Indonesia includes large numbers of words copied from Dutch. Most of these are technical terms. Specialist terms that have become fully integrated into the language now include the following: *melokalisir* 'localise', *kampanye* 'campaign', *personalia* 'personnel', *pesimisme* 'pessimism'.

The deliberate creation of new vocabulary in this way can only succeed if a number of conditions are first met. To begin with, those who are responsible for creating the vocabulary must have some way of getting their new words into the community at large. This means that the new words must be incorporated into the education system of the country, and the schoolteachers must be taught to use these words when they are training to be teachers. There must also be some way of ensuring that the editors of books, magazines, and newspapers in the country follow the decisions of the council rather than simply borrow Dutch terms at random. Finally, there must also be a measure of public support for this kind of activity. If ordinary speakers of Bahasa Indonesia felt that it was unimportant to try to keep foreign words out of their language, then the work of the committee would probably be doomed from the outset.

It is the attitude of speakers of a language which is perhaps the most important consideration here. People who do not feel themselves to be under any kind of threat from the bearers of a new culture or a new technology will probably let new words flood into their language. However, when people feel themselves to be under some kind of threat from the new culture, perhaps because they have

lost their political independence, or because they have been swamped as a people by an intrusive population, then they are more likely to resent foreign words coming in. When a people perceives itself as being under threat, new concepts are more likely to be expressed by using the indigenous resources of the language rather than simply copying words from some other language.

In New Zealand, the indigenous Maori people make up just over 10 percent of the total population, with the remainder being predominantly English speaking Europeans who have dominated in the country for over 100 years. The great majority of Maori today speak English as their first language, and even those whose first language is Maori also speak fluent English. There is a widespread fear that if the situation is not reversed in the immediate future, the language could disappear altogether. The Maori, therefore, are a people who feel very much under threat from the speakers of another language. A language council similar to that which I have already talked about for Indonesia has been set up in New Zealand in order to modernise the vocabulary of Maori. This council is known as *Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori*. It has issued a whole set of new vocabulary in Maori for use in the office (and many other domains as well), and includes terms such as the following:

<i>papa pātuhī</i>	‘keyboard’	(from <i>papa</i> ‘board’, <i>pā</i> ‘touch’ and <i>tuhī</i> ‘write’)
<i>wai ngārahu</i>	‘ink’	(from <i>wai</i> ‘water’ and <i>ngārahu</i> ‘black’)
<i>pae patopato</i>	‘typewriter’	(from <i>pae</i> ‘beam’ and <i>patopato</i> ‘type’)

In one sense, probably none of these words are really *needed* in the Maori language, as almost all people who speak Maori are fluently bilingual in Maori and English and probably know and use the English words anyway. Thus it would have been easier for everybody if the English words were simply copied in a Maori form into the language. *Kipotī* ‘keyboard’ and *tihiketī* ‘diskette’ would be readily understandable to any speaker of Maori who already knows the corresponding English words. However, *Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori* felt that it was important for the Maori language to be ‘protected’ from the overpowering influence of English, as a way of ensuring the independence of the threatened Maori language, and so there has been a tendency to avoid words of English origin.

While a language still has a fighting chance, it is possible for the purists to succeed in keeping out words of foreign origin. If the tables are not turned for the Maori language and it becomes clear to its remaining speakers in the twenty-first century that the language is doomed, *Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori* is likely to find the battle against words of English origin increasingly difficult. You will see in Chapter 12 of this book that Dyirbal is an Australian Aboriginal language that will almost certainly not survive into the next generation. Although the older people still insist on correctness, the younger speakers of this language today make almost no attempt to keep English words (and even whole phrases) out of their speech, much to the annoyance of the older generations who still hope that the old language can be maintained.

READING GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What statements did Ferdinand de Saussure make that influenced the course of linguistic science from his time on?

2. What is the significance of the discussion of stories told by people of different cultures in this chapter?
3. What possible explanations can we offer if we find that two languages express similar meanings by phonetically similar forms?
4. What do we mean when we say that two or more languages are genetically related?
5. What is a protolanguage?
6. What was the significance of the statement by Sir William Jones in 1786 about the relationship between Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek?
7. Does a protolanguage die out and then get replaced by its daughter languages? What, for example, is the nature of the relationship between Latin and Romanian?
8. How are people's attitudes to language change and ideas of standard and non-standard forms in language interrelated?
9. What is linguistic purism?
10. How is language planning both different from and similar to language change?
11. What are the three ways in which new terminology can develop in a language?
12. What conditions have to be met for language planning to succeed?

EXERCISES

1. What do you think is the importance to historical linguists of the fact that Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek were written languages? Would we have been able to make the same early advances in linguistic reconstruction if they were not?
2. Saussure and the modern linguists who followed him made a great deal of the arbitrary nature of language. How arbitrary is language? Examine the pairs of words below in a number of different languages. One word of the pair for each language means 'big' and the other means 'small'. Say which of each pair of words that you think means 'big' and which means 'small'. Compare the results across the class. Can you offer any explanation for what is going on? What do you think is the importance of such facts to the historical study of languages?

Paamese (Vanuatu)	mari:te	titi:te
Russian	malenkij	bolšoj
Fijian	levu	lailai
Bahasa Indonesia	kətsil	bəsar

Tagalog (Philippines)	maliʔit	malaki
Kwaio (Solomon Islands)	sika	baʔi
Gumbaynggir (Australia)	barwaj	ɟunuɟ
Samoan	lapoʔa	laiti:ti
Dyirbal (Australia)	midi	bulgan
Lenakel (Vanuatu)	ipwɪr	esua:s

(To find out which of these words mean 'big', refer to the answers at the end of these exercises)

3. The word *tooth* in English has a long history in English writing, and it goes back to the same source as the German word *Zahn* [**tsa:n**] and the Dutch word *tand* [**tant**], indicating that these three languages are closely related.

Latin also has a root for 'tooth' [**dent-**]. This is sufficiently different from the English, German, and Dutch forms to suggest that it is more distantly related to these languages. In written documents in English that are less than a few hundred years old we start finding words such as *dental*, *dentist*, *trident* (a fork with three 'teeth'), and *denture*. What do you think this indicates about the historical relationship between Latin and English?

4. Look at the Lord's Prayer (King James version). Point out the expressions and constructions that would not normally be used in ordinary everyday speech today. Rewrite the prayer as it would be expressed in modern English. Why do you think people prefer to pray in an old-fashioned form of English that is sometimes hard to understand?

5. In his statement in 1786, Sir William Jones said that the various Indo-European languages that he was discussing must have 'sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists'. What did he mean by the comment that the original language perhaps no longer exists? Is he saying that the language became extinct? What sort of wording could you suggest that might more accurately reflect the actual situation?

6. For what sorts of reasons may a society give up its language and replace it with somebody else's? Can you think of any examples from your own general knowledge where such a thing has happened, or where it might happen in future?

7. Comment on Sir William Jones's statement that Sanskrit, which resembles the protolanguage from which Latin and Greek were derived, 'is of a wonderful nature, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.'

8. French newspapers contain many English words, like *le football*, *le weekend*, *le camping*, and so on. There are many speakers of French who want to keep the language 'pure', and to prevent the development of what they jokingly call *Franglais* (or *Frenghish*). There is even a government agency called the *Academie Fran-aise* (i.e. the 'French Academy'), whose job it is to keep such words from appearing in the dictionary, and to find good French words for all of these things. What comment would you make to members of this council?

9. If you were addressing *TeTaura Whiri i te Reo Maori* who were agonizing over whether to accept the word *komopiuta* 'computer' into the Maori language or to encourage the use of the coined word *rorohiko* (from *roro* 'brain' and *hiko* 'electric'), what would you say? What do you think the representatives on that committee might say to somebody who insisted that, as everybody knows the English word *computer* already, they might as well accept *komopiuta* as a new Maori word?

ANSWERS

The following are the words for 'big' from the forms that were given:

Paamese	mari:te
Russian	bolʃoj
Fijian	levu
Bahasa Indonesia	bəsar
Tagalog	malaki
Kwaio	baʔi
Gumbaynggir	barwaj
Samoan	lapoʔa
Dyirbal	bulgan
Lenakel	ipwir