Chapter Fourteen: Language Change

1. DIACHRONIC VS. SYNCHRONIC LINGUISTICS

Diachronic linguistics → studies how languages change over time
Synchronic linguistics → studies language at a single historical period of time

2. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

- Constancy of Language Change
- Pervasiveness of Language Change
- Systematicness of Language Change

3. LANGUAGE CHANGE

3.1. Phonetic Change
By investigating Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and the Germanic languages, Jacob Grimm formulated a set of generalizations known as **Grimm's Law**:
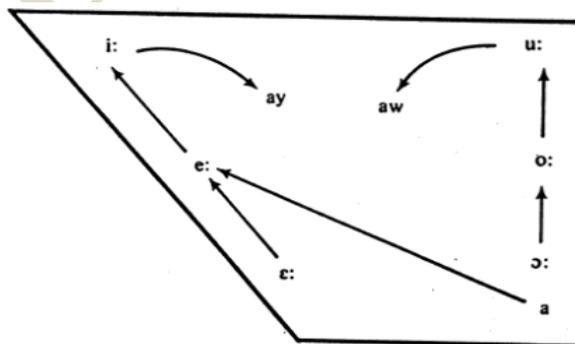
voiced aspirated become unaspirated
voiced stops become voiceless
voiceless stops become fricatives

Earlier stage	bh	dh	gh	b	d	g	p	t	k
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Later stage	b	d	g	p	t	k	f	θ	x(or h)

Another systematic phonetic change took place from Middle English to Modern English known as **The Great Vowel Shift**:

3.2. Morphological Change
Rule extension → the application of productive rules to cases formerly subject to non-productive rules → we tend to see more regularity in language which is appropriately called **regularization**
Leveling → the loss of irregular cases as a result of extending productive rules to cover these cases

➲ Such rule extensions are known as **analogical change** (or **internal borrowing**) which results in 'economy of memory'.

3.3. Syntactic Change

Case → suffixes indicating nouns' grammatical function:

Noun	Noun Stem		Case Ending	Case	Example
Lupus	lup	+	us	nominative (subjective)	The wolf runs.
Lupō	lup	+	ō	dative (object of Prep)	Give food to the wolf.
Lupum	lup	+	um	accusative (objective)	I killed the wolf.

English retains the genitive case, which is written with an -*'s*, as in *Jeffery's computer* ; Pronouns retain a few more trace: *I/they* are nominative, *me/them* accusative and dative, and *my/their* genitive.

4. LANGUAGE EXTINCTION

- **Sudden language death** → all of the speakers of the language die or are killed
- **Radical language death** → all speakers stop speaking the language rather being killed
- **Gradual language death** → in each generation fewer and fewer children learn the language until there are no new learners
- **Bottom-to-top language death** → a language survives only in specific contexts