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On the interplay of external and internal factors in the development of language

Josef Vachek

This article deals with the relationship between the internal and external factors that affect the development of language. Vachek is primarily interested in the levels of phonology and grammar, providing ample examples from English, a language that has been affected by numerous external factors in its development. He considers how external factors affect the phonic level, but notes that the operation of the external factors is possible only as far as the internal factors actually allow the former to be asserted. More specifically, he discusses the difference between negation in Czech and English, noting the change from multiple sentence negation in Old English to single sentence negation in Modern English. On the level of phonology, he also notes how the historical fate of certain phonemes (their gradual disappearance, preservation, phonologization, etc.) depends on the internal arrangement of the system and its changing balance, which is sometimes upset by external factors, e.g. the need of the language to incorporate foreign elements coming into the system.

I.

The question of the degree to which external (i.e. economic, social and cultural) factors can contribute to the development of language is undoubtedly one of the most complex and most controversial in linguistic theory. True, the impact of external factors upon the vocabulary of language has been only too obvious: the increasing complexity of the extra-linguistic reality, reflected in the corresponding increase, enrichment and differentiation of the word-stock of language, is preponderantly motivated by external factors.¹ Much less obvious, however, is the question if and how the influence of the external factors can assert itself in the development of other, non-lexical, levels of language, especially of its grammatical and phonic planes.

No serious student of language can easily overlook the said question, enforcing an answer, explicit or implicit. Among the answers proposed, even some extreme cases can be found. At the one end of the scale one finds the view of the followers of N.Y. Marr in whose opinion “all change in language is due to social causes”.² This statement, if thought out consistently, can only mean that even in the grammatical and phonic planes any change must be reducible to the operation of this or that external factor. At the other end of the scale one finds those linguistic groups which programmatically exclude any reference to the meaning of language utterance from their plan of research and demand – at least in theory – that the examination of language utterances should be exclusively confined to the formal structure of such utterances and their component parts.³

Fortunately, there were also scholars who did not allow themselves to be enticed by straightforward simplifying formulas. Such scholars duly realized that language never exists in a vacuum, and that some influence of the external factors must be allowed for even in the structural make-up of non-lexical levels of language. At the same time, however, they never lost sight of the fact that language constitutes a structural whole characterized by its own set of problems and by a specific tension of its component parts; consequently, they realized that the influence of external factors upon the given structure of language should always be examined with special regard to the inner laws governing that structure. Among the first who viewed the operation of external factors from such angle was B. Havránek, who, as early as in 1931, maintained that “ce ne sont que des raisons intrinsèques que peuvent résoudre la question de savoir pourquoi certaines influences étrangères agissent, tandis que d’autres restent sans effet”.⁴ Two decades later, V.N. Yartseva put forward an analogous thesis: in her opinion, the grammatical system of language accepts only such foreign elements as are not contradictory to its structure.⁵

It may be said that Havránek’s and Yartseva’s theses appears basically sound. Evidence of this is supplied by some interesting observations we made in examining the historical development of English (and, to some extent, of Czech). They will be briefly discussed in the following lines with the intention of finding out whether the above formulas may be approved in full or whether they need some sort of readjustment.

II.

A number of preliminary remarks, however, are due on some basic points. First of all, one should realize that the impact of external (i.e., economic, social and cultural) factors on the non-lexical planes of a language system is usually not a direct, immediate one.⁶ Most frequently it is a secondary impact mediated by the operation of some other language system, acting as an exponent of the external forces influencing the affected language system. Such mediating operation of some other language system becomes most obvious in an historical situation in which a certain language community becomes politically and economically (and, subsequently, culturally as well) dependent on some

other language community. This is exactly what happened in England after the Norman Conquest, and in Bohemia after the military defeat at the early stage of the Thirty Years' War in 1620; the mediating languages in the two situations were, respectively, Norman French and German. At other times, however, one has to do with a dependence primarily motivated by cultural circumstances: the mediating language system, enjoying high cultural prestige, is regarded as a model to be imitated by the national language (though it should be admitted that even here cases may be found where political prestige is not entirely out of play). As a typical instance of this kind of mediating language may be mentioned Latin of the New Learning period (and, to some extent, of the classicist period as well), whose influence, e.g. upon the syntax of national languages, is too notorious to need detailed documentation.

Something should also be said on the manner in which the external factors may interfere with the development of the phonic level of language. It is only too clear that here again a direct interference is usually out of the question: structural changes in the phonic plane can mostly occur if a considerable number of loan-words has become domesticated in the affected language. If, that is, such loan-words reveal a positional distribution of some sounds that clearly differs from the one found in domestic words, this may ultimately result in the phonematic revaluation of such sounds in the affected language (as a rule, what used to be a mere combinatory variant may acquire the status of a phoneme).⁷

The last of our preliminary remarks wants to point out that the status of an external factor, interfering with the development of language, must also be ascribed to the influence exercised upon this development by the written norm of that same language.⁸ All instances of what is commonly called spelling pronunciation fall under this heading. That one is really entitled to class the impact of the written norm as an instance of the operation of external factors is proved by the circumstance that optical factors here interfere with a structure that is essentially acoustic; in other words, the interfering factors are qualitatively heterogeneous to the structure interfered with. Besides, the rise and development of writing (and later of printing) are undoubtedly facts of cultural history, and as such they unquestionably rank as external factors influencing the development of language.

III.

After clearing up some of the basic points concerning the manner in which external factors can assert themselves in language development, we want to discuss a number of specimen instances revealing how this assertion is concretely effected. The instances have been drawn from the development of English, a language whose system has been repeatedly exposed to a powerful impact of other language systems (Norman, later Central French, Latin of the New Learning and classicist periods, etc.), and also of its own written norm. The large amount of strong external factors influencing its development

makes English a particularly suitable subject of investigation for the purpose of testing the validity of Havránek's and Yartseva's theses mentioned above.

The first instance to be discussed is the penetration of simple negation in English negative clauses expressing universal propositions. Simple negation in such clauses became firmly rooted in English only in the course of the 18th century: Old English, Middle English and, to some extent, Early ModE favoured multiple negation, such as is still common in ModCzech (and other Slavonic languages). Thus OE *Nān monn nyste nān þing* fully conforms, from the formal point of view, with ModCzech *Nikdo nevěděl nic* ['Nobody not-knew nothing'], but fundamentally differs from ModE *Nobody knew anything*, containing simple negation. The replacement of multiple by simple negation in the course of the development of English was often explained as having been due to the influence of Latin whose negative clauses expressing universal propositions also allow of simple negation only (*Nemo sciebat aliquid*).⁹ Other explanations believe that the abolishment of multiple negation is closely connected with the undeniable tendency ascertainable in the classicist and rationalist 17th and 18th centuries, i.e. with the effort to make language as "logical" (i.e. as rational) as possible.¹⁰ Clearly, explanations of the two types reckon with the operation of external, extra-linguistic factors upon the development of English, and one can hardly dismiss such explanations as wholly unfounded. The probability of such explanations is increased by the state of things found in Cockney English. This dialect, unaffected both by the influence of Latin and by the rationalizing tendencies of the 17th and 18th centuries, regularly employs multiple negation in its universal negative clauses (as a rule, such multiple negation is evaluated as a signal of strong emotional approach, intentionally opposed to the intellectual sobriety of the standard language).

However high the degree of probability of such explanations may seem, a closer analysis of the given problem and of the historical circumstances under which the examined change was brought about¹¹ reveal that such explanations can only claim a part of the truth, not the whole of it. It appears that apart from the external factors, such as the influence of Latin and/or of the rationalizing tendencies of the age, one should take into consideration also an internal factor, viz. the readiness of the system of language to accept the influence of the external factors and to conform to it. The importance of this internal, receptive factor is evidenced by a comparison of English, in this particular point, with Czech, faced with an analogous situation. Czech, which commonly employs the "illogical" multiple negation in its universal negative clauses, also experienced a period of strong rationalist influence in the latter half of the 18th and the early part of the 19th centuries. The influence was the stronger as, at that time (the period of the National Revival), foundations were being laid by a typically rationalist scholar J. Dobrovský for the new literary standard of Czech. And yet, all this influence of rationalist thinking failed to do away with multiple negation in Czech as it had done, if indirectly, in English. Obviously, Czech differed from English by lacking the internal factor whose operation had enabled English to conform to the operation of the external factor of rationalist influence.

A more detailed analysis of the problem, submitted in our treatise referred to above, note 11, shows that Czech, unlike English, lacked two important structural prerequisites which had been essential for the materialization of the change from multiple to single negation. The necessary pre-requisite for the rise of the English type *I have not anything* was the existence in the grammatical system of the indefinite pronouns of the type *any*. The meaning of this type is, that it combines the features of universality within certain limits and of potential realizability of the asserted relation in all implied individuals. No Czech indefinite pronoun, it will be noted, combines both above-mentioned semantic features: the pronouns *kterýkoli* ‘whichever’, *jakýkoli* ‘whatever’ lack the former, while the pronouns *každý* ‘every’, *všechn* ‘all’ miss the latter feature.¹²

To turn to the type *I have nothing*, co-existing in English by the side of *I have not anything*, the pre-requisite for its rise in English was the semantic neutrality of the finite verb form as regards the positive or negative quality of action. In other words, the actually positive meaning of the English finite verb form (i.e. its reference to the actual existence of the predicated action) or its actually negative meaning (i.e. its reference to the actual non-existence of that action) is not signalled by the finite verb form taken by itself but by the contextual absence or, respectively, presence of some other negating word within the given sentence. This pre-requisite of semantic neutrality of the finite verb form is again wholly absent from Czech: a Czech finite verb form is either intrinsically positive, signalling the actual existence of the predicated action, or intrinsically negative, signalling its actual non-existence – *tertium non datur*. This thesis of ours is corroborated by some rare cases of Czech sentences of the type *Nobody knows* which, however, do not refer to an absence but to a presence of the predicated action. Thus a sentence like *Nic se na něho šklebilo* is not an equivalent of ModE ‘Nothing grinned at him’ (referring to an absence of grinning) but of ModE ‘Nothingness grinned at him’ (referring to the presence of grinning, attributed to the hypostasized, personified ‘Nothing’). And it was exactly for the intrinsically positive character of the formally positive Czech finite verb that Czech multiple negation for the type *Nemám nic* [I not-have nothing] could not be replaced by the simple negation of the type **Mám nic* [‘I have nothing’].

Our above analysis has shown that in Czech universal negative clauses, unlike in their English counterparts, multiple negation could not be replaced by the “more logical” simple negation, because the grammatical system of Czech was lacking some internal pre-requisites (possessed by the grammatical system of English), essential for the adoption of the external influence exercised by the Latin language and/or by rationalist thinking. In the examined instance, it was the grammatical level of language that was subjected to outside influence. Instances, however, can be found (though less frequently) in which external factors can bring about changes in the phonic make-up of words or even influence the phonematic system of language. One is faced here, as already stated, with the instances in which the written norm of language is seen to exercise some influence on the corresponding spoken norm. Two particularly interesting instances of the kind, again drawn from the history of English, will be discussed further on.

IV.

The first of the two instances is concerned with the ModE words of the type *joint*, *point*, whose spoken form contains the diphthong [ɔi]. Till the end of the ME period, however, such words contained the diphthong *ui*. From the beginning of the EModE period, the first component part of that diphthong was developing on lines strictly parallel to those followed by the development of the ModE short u-sound.¹³ Thus the diphthong *ui* gradually passed on to *oi*, *ɔi*; this latter stage is still evidenced for the middle of the 18th century. The poets of the 17th and 18th centuries often rhyme word-pairs such as *joins—refines*. The latter word originally contained ME *ī* which, as is generally known, became gradually diphthongized into *Ii* > *ei* > *ɔi* > *ai* within the so-called Great Vowel Shift. The stage *ɔi* was reached in the course of the 17th century, so that at that period (and well into the 18th century) word-pairs like *refines—joins* made perfect rhymes. Under these circumstances, one might have expected the diphthongal *ɔi* of words like *joint*, *point* to develop into *ai*, along with the *ɔi* that had been traced back to ME *ī*. The ultimate merger of what were originally the ME sounds *ī* and *ui* really did take place in a number of dialects but not in the standard language. On the contrary, in words of the type *joint*, *point* one can note, from the middle of the 18th century onwards, the penetration of the diphthong [ɔi], which has remained characteristic of the standard pronunciation of such words until the present day.

This unexpected turn of development is commonly attributed to the influence of spelling¹⁴; as is well known, the written form of words like *joint*, *point* had contained the diagraph *oi/oy* since the ME take-over of these words from Norman French. There is no reason why this explanation should be refuted; and yet, it again contains only a part of the truth, not the whole of it. It is worth pointing out that the said explanation leaves one aspect of the process unaccounted for: why is it that the impact of the written norm upon its spoken counterpart has come to assert itself in this particular type of words, while in some other word-types in which the written *o* also corresponded to the spoken *ə* no such impact can be observed – see, e.g., words like *come*, *done*, *love*, pronounced in ME as [kum, dun, luv], in the 17th century as [kəm, dən, ləv], in ModE as [kam, dan, lav]. No trace of the influence of written *o* upon the pronunciation can be established here. How can the difference of development in the two word types be accounted for?

In attempting to answer this question one should again recall the fact that the impact of the written norm of language upon its spoken counterpart is only a specific instance of that more general phenomenon, viz. of the influence of external factors on the development of the system of language. Convinced as we are of the specific character of the system of the written norm (see above, note 8), the external character of the interventions of that norm into the structure of the corresponding spoken norm is not open to doubt: the interventions are qualitatively different from the internal changes going on within the structure of the spoken norm. As however, these internal changes often appear to be motivated by the structural needs and wants of the spoken norm, a hypothesis

may naturally emerge to the effect that the very intervention of the written norm may be somehow connected with the structural situation within the spoken norm. In other words, one should ask whether the spelling pronunciation [ɔi] in words like *joint*, *point* may not have been motivated by what Havránek calls “raisons intrinsèques” of the English spoken norm.

To answer this question adequately, one should recall the fact that the diphthong [ɔi] plays a very specific part in the ModE phonematic system. As has been shown in some detail elsewhere,¹⁵ the ModE [ɔi] signals the synchronically foreign character of the word containing it.¹⁶ It must have been felt as such signal since the EME period when the diphthong *ɔi* (and *ui!*) appeared for the first time in English in loanwords of Norman French origin. Graphically both diphthongs were recorded by one and the same digraph, viz. *oi/oy*. When words containing the ME *ui* reached the stage of *əi*, a concrete possibility arose of the definite merger of what originally had been ME *ī* and ME *ui*. It should be realized that such phonematic merger would have deprived the words of the type *joint*, *point* of their signal of foreign character; i.e. words of that type would have become virtually domesticated. This domestication would have drastically separated such words from those lexical items of French origin which had contained the diphthong *ɔi* (also a signal of foreign character) and were to preserve this diphthong also in the future (see e.g. *choice*, *joy*). One may thus conclude that in EModE a tendency emerged counteracting the possibility of domestication of words like *joint*, *point*; this tendency may have been aimed at strengthening the lexical and stylistic links joining the words of that type with those of the type *choice*, *joy*, equally felt as synchronically foreign, by the introduction of *ɔi* into the words of the former type. There can be no doubt that the diphthong *ɔi*, an outstanding and, on account of its structural asymmetry,¹⁷ also a very striking phonematic item of the language, was particularly fitted for the purpose of underlining the synchronically foreign character common to both discussed word categories.

The need to differentiate, as clearly as possible, synchronically foreign words from those which were synchronically domestic was indicated in English with particular urgency, in view of the important stylistic part played in that language by foreign lexical items since the ME period.¹⁸ But other languages, too, present analogous instances of increased differentiation: see e.g., the part played in vulgar Colloquial Czech by the phoneme /g/, unknown in domestic words but often introduced into synchronically foreign words, again for the purpose of underlining their synchronically foreign character (see inst. like *balgón* ‘balcony’, *cirgus* ‘circus’, *bicygl* ‘bicycle’, *plagát* ‘placard, poster’, for the first time pointed out by V. Mathesius).¹⁹

It appears, then, that the 18th century spoken norm of English readily conformed to the external influence of its corresponding written norm because the intervention of the latter was found acceptable by, and even beneficial to, the former, whose two lexical strata, so important for stylistic purposes, could in future be delimited and differentiated more effectively than before. At the same time, this functional conception of our problem can satisfactorily account for the fact that no spelling pronunciation asserted

itself in the above-noted instances like *come*, *done*, *love*, whose 17th century structure also opposed written *o* to spoken *ə*. It will be easily seen that in instances of this type there were no structural pre-requisites for the penetration of the spelling pronunciation. First, words like *come*, *done*, *love* do not belong to the synchronically foreign, but to the synchronically domestic lexical stratum which, being an unmarked member of the opposition foreign – domestic, needs no specific phonic signals to mark it off from the rest of the vocabulary. Second, the phoneme /ɔ/, which might have benefited from the assertion of spelling pronunciation in *come*, *done*, *love*, has never been characteristic of this or that stratum of the English vocabulary. It is frequently found in both the opposed strata and therefore, unlike the diphthong [ɔi], it is not fitted to act as a phonic signal characterizing any of the two.

To sum up, it appears that also the circumstances accompanying the penetration of the spelling pronunciation [ɔi] in words like *joint*, *point* fully confirm the validity of the above-quoted thesis of B. Havránek; it may be suggested, then, that the validity of the thesis is not confined to the grammatical level of language (as V.N. Yartseva's formulation of her analogous thesis might suggest) but applies to its phonic level as well.

V.

Another interesting case of the assertion of spelling pronunciation in EModE is concerned with the unstressed suffix *-ing*, frequently added to verbal bases (such as *be-ing*, *mak-ing*, *speak-ing*). As is commonly known, the final [-ɪŋ] of that suffix became simplified into [-ɪ] (the change may have taken place as early as the 14th century; in the standard pronunciation it must have penetrated by the end of the 16th century at the latest). In the EModE period (in some dialects even earlier) this [-ɪ] became simplified into [-ɪ] which also penetrated into the standard pronunciation. As, however, the written norm of the standard language retained the spelling *-ing*, English orthoepists made every effort to restore the original pronunciation [-iŋ]. The effort proved to be successful: by the end of the 17th century [-iŋ] came to be restored in the standard pronunciation, while the pronunciation [-ɪn] has been preserved only in dialects (and, to some extent, in the speech of conservative aristocracy).²⁰

The assertion of the spelling pronunciation in this case presents some specific features which, from the general linguistic point-of-view, make it even more remarkable than the assertion of spelling pronunciation in words like *joint*, *point*. One had not to do here, that is to say, with the problem of differentiating two lexical strata, but with one of the structural problems of the English phonematic system considered as a whole, without any regard to stylistic differentiation.²¹ The change of the suffixal [-iŋ] > [-ɪn], it should be noted, seriously jeopardized the very existence of the phoneme /ɪ/ in English. After that change, the phoneme /ɪ/ could only occur in one single position, viz. at the end of a stressed morpheme (as in *sing*, *tongue*, etc.). and even there the sound

[-ŋ] might have been interpreted differently, i.e. as a manifestation of the biphonemic group /ng/ (though it is fair to state that this alternative phonemic interpretation, too, would have involved some specific difficulties). Under the circumstances, the discarding of the phoneme /ŋ/ seemed to be near at hand, the more so that in words like *ink*, *tank*, *finger* the velar articulation of [-ŋ-] was clearly due to the following [k] or [g], so that these instances of [ŋ] could be easily explained away as combinatory variants of the phoneme /n/. The more surprising appears, then, the restoration of [-ŋ] in the suffix *-ing*, as this restoration obviously ran counter to the trend of development ascertainable in English before the time of that restoration. On the face of it, the external intervention of the written norm in this case looks like a factor that was not merely inorganic but even destructive, because it invalidated the impending solution of an urgent phonemic problem, i.e. it made impossible the abolishment of the phoneme whose functional yield had become extremely slight and which, therefore, must have appeared as a most uneconomic item of the language. In other words, the intervention of an external factor here appears to have been not only non-conforming to the needs and wants of the system of language, but even flagrantly opposed to such needs. And, of course, it also appears to be in glaring contradiction to Havránek's thesis referred to above.

Still, a more detailed analysis of the structural situation of EModE is bound to reveal that even in the case of the restoration of [ŋ] in the suffix *-ing* the external influence of the written norm could only be asserted because the EModE spoken norm had been possessed of an important structural pre-requisite, enabling it to conform to that external influence. This pre-requisite was what A. Martinet²² calls the "full integration" of the phoneme /ŋ/. As is commonly known, as fully integrated within its phonemic system is regarded that phoneme which is opposed, by means of its distinctive features, to a greater number of phonemes co-existing with it in the system. Thus, /p/ may be regarded as fully integrated in English, because it is opposed not only to /b/ (from which it is differentiated as its tense counterpart), but also to /f/ and /t/ (the differentiating features being here, respectively, the explosive and the gravis articulation, of [p]).²³ The principle of economy, the importance of which for language Martinet duly points out, is responsible for the tendency aimed at having the phonemes of language integrated as fully as possible. In Martinet's opinion, the more integrated a phoneme is, the firmer is its foothold in the system and, *vice versa*, an unsatisfactory degree of integration of a phoneme may lead to a palpable weakening of its foothold in the system, and even to its ultimate abolishment in it.

Concrete investigation of language development seems to endorse Martinet's theory. Some time ago we tried to show²⁴ that one of the main reasons of the gradual but consistent process of abolishment of the ModE phoneme /h/ is its structural isolation among the ModE consonant phonemes (i.e., its lack of integration), and a similar comment of ours, though less radically stated, attaches to ModE /r/.²⁵

The important part played by the degree of integration of this or that phoneme is also evidenced by the fact that fully integrated phonemes may often subsist in language

despite their low frequency of occurrence in actual contexts and despite their slight functional yield. Martinet himself mentions ModE /ʒ/ as a specimen case of this category. Statistical investigation has shown that /ʒ/ is the least frequent of ModE phonemes; its inability to occur in a number of important word-positions (e.g., word-initial and word-final) is responsible for its very slight functional yield. And yet, for all these grave handicaps, the phoneme /ʒ/ not only subsists in English but does not show any signs of its impending abolishment. In Martinet's opinion, its firm foothold in the system is due to the relatively high degree of integration: /ʒ/ is a member of two correlative series, being opposed to /ʃ/ and to /č/ (the concerned types of opposition being, respectively, those of lax—tense, and of continuant—discontinuous). Clearly, should the phoneme /ʒ/ become discarded from the ModE system of consonant phonemes, an empty space ("case vide", as Martinet calls it) would arise in the network of ModE phonematic relations. It appears that it is exactly the tendency to prevent the rise of such an empty space that is responsible for the continued existence of /ʒ/ in the ModE phonematic system, despite all its above-mentioned handicaps.

Let us take up again the problem of the ModE phoneme /ŋ/. It will be recalled that it is a fully integrated phoneme, and it has been such from the very beginning of its existence in English (i.e., from Late ME or EModE). This is clearly shown by the following scheme:

$$\begin{array}{l} /p/ - /t/ - /k/ \\ /b/ - /d/ - /g/ \\ /m/ - /n/ - /ŋ/ \end{array}$$

The scheme reveals that the phonologization of /ŋ/ has filled an empty space that existed in the English phonematic system before that phonologization, and that the abolishment of the phoneme /ŋ/ would re-establish that empty space. The above-discussed instance of ModE /ʒ/ has shown that the tendency aimed at the full integration of a phoneme may be so powerful as to render insignificant the troubles caused by low contextual frequency and slight functional yield. One may, therefore, venture to suppose that also in the case of ModE /ŋ/ its full integration in the system counted for more than its relatively small functional yield. Seen in this light, even the restoration of [-ŋ] in the suffix *-ing* does not appear to be a factor so inorganic and destructive as one might be tempted to think. Indeed, in view of the fact that the influence of the written norm, enforced by the effort of the orthoepists, helped to prop up the position of the jeopardized phoneme /ŋ/ by restoring one of its lost positions in English words, the operation of external factors appears, in this case too, to have been motivated by the needs and wants of the system of language. Exactly as in the case of /ʒ/, the full integration of /ŋ/ helped to preserve in language a phoneme whose foothold, judged by quantitative standards, had not been particularly firm. Under these circumstances, it appeared profitable to conform to the operation of external factors where this operation was able to underline the phonematic status of the jeopardized but fully integrated phoneme.

It is worth pointing out that in popular dialects (which, unlike the standard language, were free from the impact of orthoepists) the position of /ɲ/ in the system, despite its full integration, remained unstable; as has been shown in our paper quoted above, note 21, the process aimed at the abolishment of /ɲ/ as a phoneme (i.e., at the phonematic revaluation of /ɲ/ into /ng/ or, in other positions, into /n/) is there in a fairly advanced stage.

Summarizingly, it may be said that the sound changes concerning EModE /ɲ/ furnish highly instructive evidence of the interplay of external and internal factors in language development. It will be noted that, for all the importance of the external factors, the decisive part in the interplay, here too, appears to be invariably reserved to factors of internal order. In other words, not even the sound changes concerning EModE are in contradiction to the thesis of B. Havránek; on the contrary, they may be said to be in full agreement with that thesis.

VI.

Our rapid glance at three remarkable points of the historical development of English has confirmed that the influence of external factors upon the development of the structure of language could only assert itself because its assertion was in harmony with the needs and wants of the structure exposed to that influence. This conclusion, of course, will have to be checked by further research into the development of other languages before general validity can be attributed to it. At present, at least one objection should be briefly touched upon. It may sometimes be observed that in the development of a language evidence of such external influence may be found as cannot well be regarded as motivated by the structural needs and wants of that language. A remarkable instance of the kind is mentioned by Martinet (op. cit. p. 191): a foreign language (in the given case, Basque) may exercise an influence upon one of the dialects of the native language (in the given case, Catalanian) which, in some of its points, becomes changed in a manner which wholly lacks any structural motivation. In reflecting upon such instances, Martinet does not hesitate to give vent to his distrust of consistently functional explanations of language development. He says expressly that “...il y a des cas où, quoiqu'on fasse, elles [= les solutions fonctionnelles, J.V.] sont impuissantes,... elles ne sont pas un ensemble de recettes permettant d'expliquer tout à partir de n'importe quoi” (p. 191).

Still, as we have already pointed out elsewhere,²⁶ it is hardly necessary to draw from the given premises a conclusion so very sceptical. Instances of the type pointed out by Martinet certainly exist but they by no means suspend the validity of the thesis urging the necessity of the functional approach to the study of external influence upon language; they only impel the linguist to formulate the said thesis with some caution. Obviously, it will not be possible to maintain that a language system (and particularly its phonic level) submits *only* to such external influence as conforms with its structural needs and wants.

Clearly, a negative formula will be more up to the mark: a language system (and particularly its phonic level) does *not* submit to such external influence as would be incompatible with its structural needs and wants. To put the thing differently, language so to speak exercises the right of control with regard to the external influence with which it is faced. The role of the system of language is thus rather regulative than initiative.²⁷

If our negative formula is confronted with the thesis of B. Havránek, repeatedly discussed in the above lines, it will be found that no basic difference exists between the two. Our final formula only specifies and makes more explicit Havránek's references to "des raisons intrinsèques". One may indeed say that Havránek's approach to the problem, though dating from more than three decades ago, was fundamentally sound. As regards V.N. Yartseva's formula, going back to 1952, it may be credited with having duly implied the regulative part played by language in conforming to outside influence. On the other hand, her thesis refers to the grammatical level of language alone. Our above observations show, however, that the thesis has a wider scope, and that it will have to be applied even to the phonic level of language.²⁸

Notes

- * From *Lingua* 11 (Amsterdam, 1962), 433–448. Reprinted in Josef Vachek (ed.) (1976) *Selected Writings in English and General Linguistics*. Prague: Academia, 91–103.
- ¹ For English see, e.g., the well-known fundamental works of O. Jespersen, A. C. Baugh, B. A. Ilyish, and many others.
- ² I. I. Meshchaninov, *Pražské přednášky o jazyce* [Prague Lectures on Language] (Praha, 1950), 40.
- ³ E.g., B. Bloch and G. L. Trager, *Outline of Linguistic Analysis* (Baltimore 1942), 68.
- ⁴ *Travaux du CLP* 4 (1931), p. 304. – It is fair to state that some other scholars have anticipated this approach to the problem earlier, failing, however, to give it precise formulation (see esp. R. Jakobson, *Travaux de CLP* 1. Prague 1929, 97 et pass.).
- ⁵ *Izvestiya AN SSSR, otd. lit. i yaz.* 11 (Moskva, 1952), 193 if.
- ⁶ Cf. F. Engels, *Ausgewählte Briefe*, (Berlin, 1953), 503.
- ⁷ Tims, ME phonologized the voiced fricatives [v, z, ð], until then mere combinatory variants of the phonemes /f, s, þ/. One of the causes of this phonologization was the emergence in English of Norman loanwords in which [v, z] occurred in word-positions until then reserved for the fundamental variants of the concerned phonemes, viz. for [f, s]. Cf. *Ztschr. f. Anglistik u. Amerikanistik* (Berlin), 5, (1957), 22.
- ⁸ For the discussion of the problems of written norm see J. Vachek, *Brno Studies in English* I (1959), 7–38.

- ⁹ H. Sweet, *An English Grammar, logical and historical*, I. (Oxford, 1900), § 1520.
- ¹⁰ M. Knorrek, *Der Einfluß des Rationalismus auf die englische Sprache* (Breslau, 1938).
- ¹¹ For an attempt at such an analysis see J. Vachek. *Obecný zápor v angličtině a češtině* [Universal Negation in English and Czech], *Facultas philosophica univ. Carolinae Pragensis, Práce z vědeckých ústavů* 51 (Praha, 1947), 7–72 (with a detailed summary in English).
- ¹² Attempts at establishing a pronoun of the type were not lacking in the course of the historical development of Czech (see OCz. *ikto, žádný*), but ultimately they proved unsuccessful.
- ¹³ K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik d. engl. Sprache*, I. (Leipzig, 1914–40), § 544.
- ¹⁴ K. Luick, 1. c.; W. Horn and M. Lehnert, *Laut und Leben* (Berlin, 1953), § 185.
- ¹⁵ J. Vachek, Über die phonologische Interpretation der Diphthonge mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Englischen, *Facultas philosophica univ. Carolinae Pragensis, Práce z věd.ústavů* 33 (Praha, 1933), 87–170 (esp. 133, 1(55)).
- ¹⁶ On synchronically foreign words see V. Mathesius, *Englische Studien* 70, 1935, 21–35.
- ¹⁷ See our treatise quoted above, note 15, esp. 110.
- ¹⁸ A.C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language* (London, 1952), esp. 230 ff.
- ¹⁹ *Travaux du CLP* 1 (1929), 67–85.
- ²⁰ K. Luick, op. cit. § 767; W. Horn and M. Lehnert, op. cit. § 408.
- ²¹ For a more detailed analysis of the problem see J. Vachek, *Notes on the Phonematic Value of the Modern English η-Sound* (in Honour of Daniel Jones, London 1964, 191–205).
- ²² *Économie des changements phonétiques* (Berne, 1955), 79 ff.
- ²³ For the less common terms see R. Jakobson, M. Halle and C. G. M. Fant, *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis*, Technical Report No. 13 (Acoustics Laboratory, Massachusetts Technological Institute, January 1952).
- ²⁴ See our paper quoted above, note 7, p. 11.
- ²⁵ *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské university* A8, 1960, 79–93.
- ²⁶ *Slovo a slovesnost* 19 (1958), 52–60. Cf. also P. Trost's observations *ibid.* 21, 1960, 7–9.
- ²⁷ Incidentally, analogous regulative control seems to be exercised by the system of language with regard to the rules governing the mechanism of speech-organs. These rules undoubtedly motivate (or at least co-motivate) many a sound-change, e.g. various assimilations, reductions in unstressed syllables, etc. Sometimes it happens, however, that a change which might appear imminent, is not materialized, obviously because its materialization would interfere with the structural needs and wants of the language. (On this point, see also J. Vachek, *Brno Studies in English* 4, 1964, 21–29.)

- ²⁸ A. Sommerfelt's valuable paper *External versus Internal Factors in the Development of Language*, NTS 19 (1960) [in fact, late 1961], reached the present writer after the MS of the above lines had been handed over to the printer, and so could no longer be evaluated here.

Comprehension questions

1. In what sense is spelling pronunciation the outcome of external factors?
2. Why is there only one negation in English sentences, as opposed to Czech?
3. What is, in Vachek's view, the difference between the English and the Czech verb, as far as the expression of negation is concerned?
4. Why do aristocrats in England "go huntin'"? Why was the earlier pronunciation of the suffix *-ing* restored in Standard English?
5. What is the mutual relationship between external and internal factors? Which of the two prevails? Why (not)?
6. Why has the English phoneme /ŋ/ been phonologized?