Synchrony and diachrony: The Siamese twins syndrome

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I am going to support the hypothesis that **synchrony** and **diachrony** not only ***"fit in"*** with each other but rather ***"feed into"*** each other:

(1)   My first and most obvious claim is that -- by definition -- all diachronic analyses are essentially based on comparing and contrasting the synchronic analyses of a language in more than one period of time: i.e. **there is no diachrony without synchrony.**

(2)   My second and less obvious claim comes from synchronic analyses where so-called "irregular" or "exceptional" linguistic phenomena that appear to run contrary to our predictions can be explained by appealing to diachronic factors: i.e. **diachrony can be used to explain synchronic anomalies**.

I will expand these claims by citing examples from phonological and grammatical research from the sign-oriented Columbia School:

(a)   In his seminal article introducing the theory of Phonology as Human Behavior (PHB) William Diver (1979) explains the clear-cut synchronic statistical favourings of 'stop + /r/' versus 'fricative + /l/' collocations in initial consonant clusters in English. He then further explains the unexpected favourings of specific contrary 'fricative + /r/' combinations diachronically by appealing to the realignment of stops and fricatives by recorded sound changes within the history of the language such as *sk* $\rightarrow$ *š* and Grimm's Law.

(b)   Davis (1987:63) in his synchronic analysis of initial Italian consonant clusters found a similar '/f/+ /r/' favouring which did not support Diver's original hypothesis. Davis, like Diver, explainedthis synchronic failure of the prediction with a diachronic explanation based on the descendence of initial /f/ in Italian from various Indo-European aspirated stops mainly **bh* and **dh* (Buck 1933:121, 126).

(c)   Tobin (2002) in a synchronic analysis of initial consonant clusters in over 40 languages from eleven different Indo-European and Non-Indo-European language families found similar "exceptions" to the 'fricative + /l/' favouring which in the vast majority of cases could be attributed diachronically to phonological realignments by recorded sound changes within the history of these languages similar to those found by Diver (1979: 35-36) and Davis.

(d)   In addition, Tobin found a similar failure of the favoring of 'stop + /r/' prediction for the phoneme /p/ which he explained by appealing to a **physiological** and **behavioural** explanation related to the size of the oral cavity and the relative strength of the air pressure needed for the plosion of stops. Such physiologically and behaviour-based explanations are inherently ***panchronic*** and are thus ***equally relevant for both synchronic and diachronic analyses further emphasizing the underlying fundamental connection between the two.***

(e)   Dreer (2007) deals with the diachronic disfavoring of the Sunjunctive and especially of the Imperfective Subjunctive that occurred from Old French to Contemporary French. He argues that this disfavouring was motivated by the narrowing of the invariant meaning (*signifié*) of the Contemporary French Subjunctive – yet another example of a problematic diachronic distribution phenomenon which can be explained by comparing and contrasting two synchronic analyses.

Thus, we can describe ***the symbiotic and synergetic relationship between synchrony and diachrony*** similarly to the popular American song of the fifties about 'love and marriage': i.e. ***"You can't have one without the other!"***

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