Synchronic vs. Diachronic Explanation and the Nature of the Language Faculty

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Abstract
The nineteenth century conception that linguistic structure was to be explained by recourse to the histories of languages was largely abandoned with the rise of synchronic theories in the twentieth century, but has recently returned to prominence. While traditional generative theories of language have tended to attribute cross-linguistic regularities to constraints imposed on the class of possible grammars by the human Language Faculty, some scholars have argued that this is often a mistake: that there are no (or at least very few) real substantive universals of language, and that the regularities in question arise on the basis of common paths of diachronic change having their basis in factors outside of the defining properties of the set of cognitively accessible grammars. This review surveys evidence for that position, primarily in the domain of phonology but also including morphology and syntax. It is argued that in phonology, there are at present no convincingly demonstrated substantive universals governing the set of possible regularities, and that the generalizations we find should be attributed to a combination of contingent historical developments and biases in the learning algorithm that relates available data to the grammars learners acquire. In morphology and syntax, it is argued that some apparent generalizations are indeed the product of diachronic change rather than synchronic constraint, though no broader conclusion is attempted.
1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the scientific study of language have been subject to a variety of interpretations over time, and the places linguists have looked for explanatory principles have varied accordingly. For example, the Neogrammarian revolution in the 1870s brought a focus on the systematic description of historical change, especially sound change, and with that came the claim that the only genuinely scientific study of language is historical (Paul 1880, p. 20), and a concomitant search for explanation in the regularities of diachrony.

With the shift of attention to synchronic systems in the early years of the twentieth century that is generally associated with de Saussure (1916 [1974]), the locus of potential explanation shifted from the ways linguistic patterns arise over time to the properties of those patterns themselves. For much of the first half of that century, however, the linguist’s task was taken to be the careful recording and analysis of the external manifestations of language: sets of sounds, words, sentences, and texts in as wide a variety of individual languages as possible. Categories developed in the course of this endeavor, such as those of phonemes, morphemes, immediate constituent analyses, etc. were taken to be those of the linguist’s analysis, validated to the extent they helped to elucidate the structure of the texts under consideration. Calling the linguistics of the period “descriptive” should be taken quite literally: the aim of the field was to develop complete and accurate descriptions of the observable facts of the world’s languages rather than explanations of those facts.

With the “Cognitive Revolution” of the latter half of the century came a major shift of the object of inquiry from the external manifestations of language to the systems of knowledge and the cognitive capacity that underlies the ability of someone who knows a language to produce and understand linguistic objects. With this, in turn, came a shift from the desire to provide maximally accurate descriptions of the observable data in particular languages to the effort to understand the fundamental nature of the cognitive faculty of language, and to explain why the systems we find are as they are and not otherwise.

Given the centrality of the cognitive underpinnings of this emerging conception of language, it made sense to think of the search for explanations of linguistic structures and regularities in terms of the study of the Language Faculty itself. This was to be developed through a precise characterization of “Universal Grammar,” the cognitive endowment of Homo sapiens that supports our capacity to acquire and use particular systems of natural

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1 I avoid use of this term in the present review, because it has taken on a wide range of diverse
Beginning in the 1980s, however, and acquiring momentum in the early years of the new millennium, proposals were made that in a way mark a return to the Neogrammarian view: the suggestion that in fact, much of what we find in particular languages is the product not of necessary constraints imposed by the Language Faculty but rather of the contingent outcome of the historical paths by which these languages have developed over time.

The tension between the search for explanations of the regularities we find in systems of language across the world, on the one hand in the nature of human cognitive organization, and on the other in paths of historical development, is the subject of the present review. Because much of the discussion in the literature has focused on properties of the sound systems of languages, this will be reflected below, but it is important to note that the basic issue of synchronic vs. diachronic explanation is in principle just as relevant to other domains of linguistic structure, and some attempt will be made to illustrate this for morphology and for syntax.

2. Sources of the properties of linguistic systems

Our evidence for the nature of language, of course, comes from the observed properties of particular languages, and from the inferences we can make about the grammars (in the sense of systems of knowledge) underlying these. When we ask for the foundations of the particular properties we observe, however, there are several distinct potential loci of explanation to consider.

The factors determining the content of particular grammars are illustrated schematically in Figure 1. Grammars arise in the individual on the basis of the learner’s experience with utterances in the surrounding community. As input to the process of acquisition, it is important to be clear that the Primary Linguistic Data should not be identified with the brute physical facts of these utterances, but must also take into account the filtering role of the perceptual systems through which these are presented to the mind for interpretation. The work of John Ohala in particular (e.g. Ohala 1981, 1993, *inter alia*) has stressed the extent to which properties of the perceptual system operating on speech data are crucial to an understanding of the ways sound systems can be altered in transmission across generations, a point that will be important in discussion below.
The Primary Linguistic Data are mapped onto a specific grammar by some learning algorithm characteristic of human cognition. Since the grammar that results is not simply a registration of the perceptually processed utterances that gave rise to it, some non-trivial principles of inference must be involved. The output of this process must fall within the space of grammar systems that are cognitively possible for humans. The two aspects, the character of the space that is the range of the learning algorithm and the nature of that algorithm itself, are frequently conflated in the notion of the human Language Faculty, but they are distinct: it is logically possible that there are some outputs of the learning algorithm that would lie outside the space of possible grammars (and which must thereby be rejected or adjusted), and also that there are some grammars which, while cognitively possible, are not accessible from any data on the basis of the learning algorithm. The distinctive role of the learning algorithm will take on special significance below, but in general we will refer to the Language Faculty as a unified notion.

The question of the existence of a Language Faculty in this sense is often conflated with that of the domain-specificity of its components, but this is not logically necessary. There is no question that the ability to acquire and use natural languages is a species-specific property of *Homo sapiens*, grounded in the biology of our species. Whether or not some — or even all — of that ability derives from broader aspects of human cognition, applicable in other domains beyond language, is strictly speaking irrelevant to the point that such a capacity exists and that its properties can be the object of scientific inquiry.

We can view the Learning Algorithm as a system of inference that maps a particular collection $D$ of Primary Linguistic Data onto some specific (cognitively possible) grammar $G$. With regard to the source of any particular property of $G$, we can identify at least three possibilities: (a) it might reflect regularities in the input data $D$; (b) it might be introduced as a consequence of the way the Learning Algorithm manipulates the data; or (c) it might be something that is cognitively necessary, in the sense of being constitutive of Language in general, and thus definitional for members of the set of possible grammars.

This analysis of the sources of grammatical properties allows us to formulate the tension between modes of explanation referred to above. In particular, if a particular property follows from the nature of the Language Faculty, either as a characteristic of the space of cognitively possible grammars or as a consequence of the way the learning algorithm operates, we can say it receives a synchronic explanation, though it may be necessary to distinguish two varieties of such explanation. On the other hand, to the extent the property in question merely reflects contingent regularities in the input data $D$, we must seek the source of those regularities outside of the characteristics of the Language Faculty. To the extent we can relate the regularity in question to the way linguistic change has operated in the history of the language to shape $D$ in specific ways, the explanation of this observed property of $G$ is a diachronic one, and as such logically external to the properties of the Language Faculty itself.

Among properties characteristic of all possible grammars $G$ (“Universals” of language), it is traditional to distinguish two sorts. **Formal** universals are architectural properties of grammars, such as the structure of various significant representations and their inter-relationships, the form and structure of the principles (rules, constraints, etc.) that operate over these representations, the internal organization of the sets of such principles that constitute grammars, and the like. In contrast, **Substantive** universals concern inventories of elements that may figure in such representations, assertions about possible (and impossible) patterns of alternation, and the like. For instance, a claim that assimilation of nasals to
following obstruents can be formulated as a matter of re-drawing association lines in an autosegmental structure involves an appeal to formal universals, while the claim that the labiality of a nasal segment can assimilate to the labiality of a following obstruent but not to its value for voicing is grounded in a set of substantive universals of phonological form. The distinction between these two sorts of property as encompassed in Universal Grammar will turn out to be be significant below.

3. Synchronic vs. diachronic explanation of properties of sound systems

The dominant approach to phonology (the study of sound patterns in language) from the 1960s through the end of the century was that of Chomsky & Halle (1968) and its various descendants (cf. Anderson 1985, chapters 12, 13). The goal of this program was a theoretical framework for phonological description that would accommodate all and only the systems of possible languages: in other words, to characterize explicitly the space of cognitively possible grammars (the Gs in Figure 1). The notion of explanation invoked was thus purely synchronic in the sense being developed here: any regularity considered to be characteristic of Language in general was to be incorporated into the definition of possible grammar.

The shift from rules to constraint based formulations of phonological regularities with the rise of Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky 2004) made this synchronic basis of explanation even more explicit. Grammars of this sort were to be represented as rankings among a set of universally given constraints. While classical Generative Phonology had attempted to characterize linguistically significant generalizations primarily by constraining the formal character of the rules and representations appearing in particular grammars, Optimality theory went further in incorporating into the theory the substance as well as the form of these generalizations.

3.1. Explanatory bases for Sound Patterns

An important challenge to theories of this sort was posed in the formulation of Juliet Blevins’ program of “Evolutionary Phonology” (Blevins 2004, 2006a). The target of this research program is the nature and status of regularities in synchronic phonological systems. Generative Phonology, including Optimality Theory, has as its goal the incorporation of all such regularities into the theory. To the extent we find that languages do such and such, and do not do some other thing, the theory on this view should make it possible to formulate grammars of the first sort and impossible (or at least fiendishly difficult) to formulate grammars of the second sort.

In these matters, Blevins advocates what is in effect a return to the Neogrammrian position: what does or does not happen should not be understood in itself, but rather in terms of how it came to be. Instead of accounting directly in the theory of grammar for regularities in the segment inventories of languages, and differences between rules that we find, find often, or do not find at all, the goal is substituted of accounting for these things in terms of what historical change can produce, or is especially likely to produce, or could not produce at all. The theory of the Language Faculty is intended to be an account of a human cognitive capacity; Blevins argues that the substantive content of grammars is not well accounted for in terms of such a specialized cognitive capacity, but only by taking into account what historical development produces as well as general properties of human cognition.
Blevins notes that when we find similarities between languages, these might be due to one or another of:

1. Inheritance from a common ancestor;
2. Language contact;
3. Chance;
4. Similar shaping effects exerted by the specific nature of linguistic change;
5. “Physical constraints on form and function.”

Of course, all commonalities might be the result of common inheritance of accidental properties of a single common ancestor of all existing languages (“proto-World”), but that cannot be the case to the extent they also appear in signed languages, which clearly do not derive from proto-World. Borrowing is probably responsible for some things, but not everything, and in her study of final devoicing she shows that some languages develop this without being in contact with other languages that have it. Chance resemblances occur — the Mbabaram word for “dog” was *dog, not a borrowing but the product of regular sound change from original *gudaga (Dixon 1991, pp. 361-363) — but in most cases that is not satisfying as an explanation.

The nature of the shaping effects of change can be studied on the basis of what takes place in the process of transmission of grammars across generations. Model speakers, on the basis of whose productions a grammar is learned, produce non-uniform and partially ambiguous outputs. Partly that is due to the fact that speakers’ “intentions” are realized in slightly different ways from one production to another; partly to inherent ambiguity and to the difficulty in recovering speakers’ intentions unambiguously from the surface form. When listeners correctly interpret what they hear, no change takes place. Variation is reproduced, and underlying forms stay the same. When one or another sort of misinterpretation intervenes, though, the relation between intention and realization is altered, leading to phonological change.

A vast amount has been written about the effects that are at work in this process (cf. Garrett & Johnson 2013; Hale 2007; Ohala 1993, among other surveys), and it is not necessary to review that literature here in detail. Let us assume a theory that relates potential re-analyses in the course of grammar construction to moderately well understood consequences of the way speech production and perception operate. The important point is that the principles governing those systems are not in themselves part of the Language Faculty, which is presumed to be a somewhat different aspect of human cognitive organization. To the extent some regularity can be reduced to the effects of those principles, an appeal to that cognitive system is not required, and thus not justified.

If we look at the range of things that can happen within well understood categories of sound change, we can study them in terms of the dynamics of speech production and perception to see why variation should exist and how it may be interpreted. The goal of the Evolutionary Phonology program is to show that the regularities we find across languages in the substantive content of their phonologies can be seen as the consequences of linguistic change explicable in those terms. If so, that leaves nothing as the content of a specifically phonological component of Universal Grammar.

Another possible source of similarities across languages noted by Blevins is “Physical constraints on form and function.” In context, that refers in part to the fact that the only things phonologies will mandate are things the vocal apparatus can produce and the perceptual system recover. It is also clear, however, that this includes any regularities of
phonological systems that are due to general properties of human cognition. The assumption here is that there will be nothing specific to phonology (or, indeed, to language) about this, but in the absence of more specific arguments to that effect, the question will not be further explored here.

The summary of the theory in Blevins (2006a) illustrates it with an extended case study, the appearance of final devoicing rules across many languages. As is well known, a great many languages have such processes (as opposed to the opposite change, final voicing), and this cannot in general be attributed to common descent or borrowing. There are also enough cases that accidental resemblance is not a plausible explanation for what is found. On the other hand, there are some specific phonetic factors that are likely to favor such a change.

1. Phrase-final devoicing may be a consequence of laryngeal gestures commonly accompanying the ends of phrases (spreading or constricting the glottis).

2. Segments tend to lengthen in phrase-final position; lengthening a voiced stop makes it more likely voicing will not persist through the entire segment.

3. In final position, release may be absent, and in many languages releases provide essential cues to voicing contrasts.

From this, Blevins concludes that individual productions of final voiced obstruents are often likely to involve fully or partially devoiced variants, a state of affairs that conduces to an interpretation as final devoicing when learners acquire a grammar from such data. On the other hand, there are no known phonetic effects that seem likely to favor the production of voiced variants of voiceless obstruents, and so a change in the opposite direction is effectively excluded as a unitary sound change.

In Blevins’ view, the phonetic factors invoked above provide an explanation for the occurrence (and frequency) of final devoicing patterns in language, and nothing more is needed. She opposes this to an account that says final devoicing occurs because it is a possible rule, while final voicing is not; or because voicelessness in obstruents is promoted by a markedness constraint, which excludes the opposite; or something along similar lines. All of these explanations localize the phenomenon in the theory of grammar, rather than the external data, and are thus synchronic explanations in the present sense. But as Blevins sees the matter, once we have found a reason for a given pattern (such as the prevalence of final devoicing rather than voicing) in the processes of historical change, that is sufficient, and there is nothing further to be said and no need to invoke any aspect of the Language Faculty.

Kiparsky (2006) responds to Blevins’ presentation with a rather more nuanced story. His view is that what we find in individual grammars is the product both of what change can produce, and of what the theory of grammar allows (or perhaps encourages; this may depend on the extent we want the theory to say something about frequency effects). We certainly want to pursue analyses such as the one Blevins offers, but that does not mean that such historical accounts should be expected to exhaust the phenomena.

Kiparsky makes passing reference to a possibility that should probably be taken quite seriously: the notion that if recurrent change shapes grammars so that they will usually conform to some regularity, that regularity could profitably be incorporated into the learner’s expectations (and thus into the Language Faculty) as a bias in the learning algorithm that would facilitate the rapid and efficient learning of the languages likely to be encountered. This is an instance of the Baldwin Effect in evolution (Weber & Depew 2003), arguably
essential if we are to believe that the Language Faculty has much specific content. Such content is unlikely to be explicable in terms of direct selectional advantages (why does adhering to subjacency enhance one’s likely reproductive success?), except to the extent it facilitates the learner’s entry into a surrounding community of language users. If this is a reasonable view, the linguist’s life will be difficult: many aspects of the Language Faculty will closely track phenomena for which functional or historical explanations are also available, and teasing the two apart will not be easy (Anderson 2008).

In the particular case of final devoicing, Blevins observes that a constraint in phonological theory allowing final devoicing and prohibiting final voicing says that final voicing is not only rare but non-existent, while the historical account makes a less categorical prediction. In fact, it has long been observed that languages often contain “crazy” rules: regular alternations that do not appear to have a basis in phonetic phenomena of the sort that might lead to their introduction, or to conform to generally observed patterns. Bach & Harms (1972) explored the possibility that over time, sets of regularities that are individually perfectly natural could be collapsed (“telescoped” and/or “inverted”) through re-analysis to produce unnatural seeming results; see also Anderson (1981). Absolute prohibitions against such regularities would be predicted to block such a result, while Blevins’ historical analysis would permit it.

Much of the argument in Blevins (2006a,b) is devoted to arguing that final voicing rules do in fact exist, a point which would imply that the much greater predominance of final devoicing cannot be due to a limitation on phonologically possible regularities. Without going into the details of the proposed examples, it would appear that Kiparsky (2006) is successful in showing that in most of them, Blevins has mis-interpreted (or over-interpreted) the phonetic facts, and they do not in fact involve a rule of final voicing.

Kiparsky therefore wishes to maintain that phonological theory does indeed contain a substantive prohibition against final voicing rules, since there are various scenarios that might be expected to yield a “crazy rule” of this sort, and yet we do not seem to find them. There is, however a major exception in the facts of Lezgian, where data from Haspelmath (1993), together with a close analysis by Yu (2004), do seem to warrant positing a rule of final obstruent voicing.

Lezgian has a four way laryngeal contrast in stops, distinguishing voiced, voiceless unaspirated and aspirated, and ejective segments. In monosyllabic nouns that show a final voiceless unaspirated segment when followed by a vowel, that segment is voiced when it appears in coda position: thus, ʧep-edi but ʧeb ‘day’; gat-u but gad ‘summer’, qap-uni ‘box-obj’ but qab-mab ‘boxes and similar things’, xp-er ‘sheep-pl’ but xeb-mal ‘animal-cattle’, etc. This behavior contrasts with that of non-alternating voiced obstruents, as in dad-uni, dad ‘taste’, zarb-uni, zarb ‘quickness’, etc. These facts appear to support the neutralization of voiced and voiceless unaspirated stops as voiced in coda position.

Kiparsky (2006, 2008) suggests that the voiceless unaspirated stops are really voiced geminates, and that these devoice and degeminate in non-coda position while simply degeminating in codas. On that view, there is no final voicing rule, but only degemination of voiced stops. This analysis cannot account for all of the facts, however, because we find similar alternations involving the ejectives: q’ep’-ini but q’eb ‘cradle’, qyt’-yz but q’yd ‘winter’, fp’-er but t’ib ‘owl’, etc. Since both the apparent voiceless unaspirated stops and the ejectives are neutralized with voiced stops in codas, the geminate analysis of the former will not suffice to eliminate the final voicing rule.

The account Yu (2004) offers of this is historical:
1. The alternating stops were originally voiced, and this is preserved in final position.
2. The suffixes in the alternating items were stressed after monosyllabic nouns.
3. Voiced obstruents became voiceless geminates pretonically.
4. The resulting geminates were later degeminated (while remaining voiceless).
5. Where the initial C of a noun was an ejective, glottalization spread to a following voiceless unaspirated stop (with glottalization being replaced by aspiration when the vowel between is lost).
6. Other words with non-alternating final voiced obstruents are borrowings introduced after these developments.

Kiparsky’s attempt to refute this analysis does not succeed, and we must conclude that Lezgian really does have (synchronically) a rule of final voicing of obstruents; and thus, that such rules are not absolutely prohibited by the theory of the Language Faculty.

In fact, as Blevins (2006b) acknowledges, both she and Kiparsky accept that apparent generalizations across languages may be due either to common paths of historical change or to constraints inherent in the content of the Language Faculty. They differ primarily in which of these is seen as the primary locus of explanation. Blevins is primarily concerned to stress the role of diachrony in yielding common effects across languages, and does not discuss ways to distinguish the two types of explanation, but Kiparsky (2006, 2008) does. He suggests that “true universals” (i.e., generalizations grounded in the Language Faculty) can be distinguished from “typological generalizations that are by-products of tendencies of change” in several ways:

1. Universals should have no exceptions; typological generalizations are in principle tendencies.
2. When multiple paths of change converge on the same result, this reflects the effects of a universal.
3. The effects of true universals emerge spontaneously in language change, without need for prior exemplars (“TETU” effects).
4. Universals are manifested in child language as constraining effects, while typological generalizations need not be.
5. Universals provide the pathways for analogical change.
6. Universals are structurally encoded within grammars, while typological generalizations stand outside of the individual grammars that conform to them.

Some of these principles may be valid, but somewhat difficult to apply. For example, it is simple enough to show that a regularity does have exceptions (consider the example of coda voicing just discussed), but rather harder to show that some regularity which holds for all languages that have been examined does not admit exceptions in principle. It is also rather difficult to demonstrate non-circularly that some regularity really is part of grammar $G$ and not an external generalization about the linguistic forms $G$ admits.

Others of these principles are probably not generally applicable. We shall see in section 4.1 below that multiple paths can in fact converge on a common result without that being a necessary consequence of a universal principle. Analogy is often based on principles that are exquisitely language particular, and not universal: a standard example is the restoration of the -s- in the sigmatic aorist of vowel stems in Greek. The relevant basis for this is a rule that says $\text{add } -s$ to form the aorist stem. Surely this is not a universal. The principles governing consonant harmony in child language are significantly different from those found in adult grammars (Levelt 2011), suggesting that these do not represent
true universals in the sense Kiparsky intends.

de Lacy & Kingston (2013) pursue an approach similar to Kiparsky’s. While accepting
that some cross-linguistic generalizations are due to common paths of diachronic develop-
ment, they maintain that there are some constraints imposed by the Language Faculty on
phonological development, such that where historical change might be expected to give rise
to a phonological rule that is contrary to such a constraint, this is blocked.

The case on which de Lacy & Kingston focus is that of consonantal epenthesis, generally
seen as providing onsets to otherwise vowel-initial syllables. In most languages where this
occurs, the segment inserted is either a laryngeal ([h] or [ʔ]) or a semi-vowel ([w] or [j]). In
a few cases, however, a stop is inserted. Where this occurs, the segment in question has no
correspondent in the input (in Optimality Theoretic terms), and thus its identity must be
determined by general conditions of markedness, on their view. Given that coronals (e.g.
[t,d]) are universally considered less marked than velars (e.g. [k,g]) or labials (e.g. [p,b]),
such an epenthetic consonant must always be a coronal. Thus, they suggest, we should
find instances of epenthetic [t,d] but not of [k,g]. Even though historical changes can be
envisioned as a result which a velar stop could function to provide required onsets, no such
rule should be possible.

As with the question of whether coda voicing rules are allowed in phonologies, the force of
this argument depends on the available data. Although de Lacy & Kingston claim that rules
of t-epenthesis exist, it is not clear that the examples they point to are valid. In particular,
they discard any rule with grammatical conditioning as not a valid instance of phonological
epenthesis, and the cases they rely on fall into this category. Epenthesis of [t] in Axininca
Campa, the most widely cited example of this type in the phonological literature, is subject
to grammatical conditions: in particular, (Payne 1981, p. 110) makes clear that t-epenthesis
only applies in the case of suffixation to a verbal root: “the epenthesis process would not
apply to strings constituting the suffixal morphology of nouns or adverbs, nor could it
apply with prefixes [to words of any category].” Their other example, Odawa Ojibwa, is
even more circumscribed: in this language, as in other languages of the Algonquian family,
[t] is inserted precisely between a person-marking prefix and a following vowel-initial verb
tem or possessed noun. This is actually the inverted reflex of an original process of t-deletion
in initial position, except where protected by a prefix. In any event, neither of the instances
of supposed epenthetic [t] cited by de Lacy & Kingston appears to be valid in their terms.

On the other hand, at least one instance of general epenthesis of a velar does appear
to exist. In standard Halh (“Khalkha”) Mongolian, (Svantesson et al. (2005); cf. also Vaux
(2002) and Staroverov (2014)), a consonant is inserted to break up vowel sequences that is [g]
in words of the “non-pharyngeal” vowel harmony class, and [g] in words of the “pharyngeal”
class. The environments for g-insertion include a variety of affixes and stems of various
categories, and cases of contrast with corresponding elements containing an underlying
consonant /g/ or /g/ (see examples provided by Staroverov (2014, pp. 145ff.)). We must
conclude, therefore, that a phonological regularity involving epenthetic stops other than
coronals is not in fact excluded by any general principles of the Language Faculty.

It appears, therefore, that no absolute constraints on the content of phonological reg-
ularities attributable to the Language Faculty have thus far been demonstrated. While
that suggests that there are no substantive universals in this domain, that is not the only
possible conclusion. Hansson (2008) surveys a range of work on the apparent phonetic
naturalness of most phonological regularities and discusses an apparent contradiction. On
the one hand, cross-linguistic typological generalizations show that the regularities incor-
porated into particular grammars are strongly biased in fairly specific ways. On the other, as we have seen, there appear to be no such generalizations that are clearly exceptionless, such that they could be regarded as absolute constraints (substantive universals) imposed by the Language Faculty. Purely synchronic theories of phonological explanation fail to accommodate all observed grammars, while purely diachronic ones fail to provide sufficient bases for clear biases.

At least at present, diachronic views such as that of Evolutionary Phonology go only part way toward building in the observed asymmetries of regularities that we find. Consider the example of coda devoicing, for example. It is undeniable that while counter-examples such as the Lezgian case discussed above exist, coda devoicing of obstruents is overwhelmingly preponderant over coda voicing. The phonetic explanations provided, however, leave some important questions:

1. Why should devoicing affect fricatives as well as stops? At least some of the aerodynamic effects Blevins invokes depend on a closed cavity, but in fact we do not find rules devoicing stops but not fricatives in final position.
2. How does phrase final devoicing generalize so easily to word-final or even syllable-final? Again, the relevant aerodynamic and acoustic effects invoked do not obviously generalize from phrase final position.
3. If the phonetic cues lead to ambiguity between voiced and voiceless obstruents in final position, as argued, why do we never find speakers interpreting the result as evidence for final voicing of voiceless obstruents (hypercorrection in the terms of Ohala (1981))? An alternative considered briefly by Hansson (2008) is the notion that while the Language Faculty does not impose absolute constraints on the regularities that can be incorporated into grammars, the learning algorithm does incorporate some substantive biases. Thus, while a variety of patterns may well be learnable in principle, the algorithm may privilege some hypotheses over others. A similar point is made by Morley (to appear) in the context of a computational simulation of a learning problem. She notes that given the uncertainties inevitable in our theories of historical change and of grammar learning, it is probably impossible in principle to demonstrate that any particular typological asymmetry across languages must be due to constraints imposed by the Language Faculty.

We might suggest, then, that the Language Faculty does indeed contain substantive universals, but that these are (a) biases toward certain systems, and (b) located in the learning algorithm, rather than in the boundary conditions for cognitively accessible grammars, in Figure 1. This view would be consistent with the proposal briefly noted above: to the extent certain properties of grammars are likely to arise in particular languages through the operation of (phonetically natural) historical change, the Baldwin Effect suggests that it would be advantageous to incorporate a bias toward such properties into the procedure by which such systems are learned, because that enhances the speed and efficiency of efficiency of learning.

### 3.2. The Bases of Distinctive Features

Discussion of the tension between synchronic and diachronic explanations for phonological patterns has largely been concerned with substantive rather than formal universals. It has generally been assumed that such principles as the overall architecture of a grammar, ways in which rules or constraints can interact, the role of general principles such as disjunctive
application, the Obligatory Contour Principle (McCarthy 1986), etc. are constitutive of the space of grammars rather than being acquired contingently from the primary data and thus subject to shaping by linguistic change. There is one part of phonological theory that might at first glance appear to be of this sort, however, whose nature as a universal of grammar has recently been brought into question: the feature system that provides the basic vocabulary of phonological description.

The notion that there is a single set of distinctive features that characterizes phonological forms in a uniform way across languages has been a staple of phonological theory at least since work such as that of Trubetzkoy (1939) and Jakobson et al. (1952 [1963]); while the identity of the specific features was a matter of some discussion in the theory of Chomsky & Halle (1968) and its immediate descendants, the notion that there was such a universal set was largely unquestioned. The internal organization of this set and the relations among the features was the subject of discussion in work on “Feature Geometry” (for a review, cf. McCarthy 1988) in the 1980s and 90s.

Potentially universal theories of features are presumed to respond to several distinct requirements:

An adequate theory of phonological distinctive features must meet four criteria: (a) it must have a relatively consistent and direct relation to the phonetic properties of speech sounds; (b) it must be able to describe all and only the distinctions made by the sound systems of any of the world’s languages; (c) it must be able to characterize all and only the natural classes of sounds that recur in the phonological phenomena of different languages; and (d) it must correctly characterize the sub-groupings of features by recurrent phonological phenomena. The third criterion is the most important one and probably the hardest to achieve. (McCarthy 1994)

It is by no means obvious that it will be possible to satisfy all of these logically distinct demands simultaneously in a way that generalizes to all languages, and the difficulty of this project is clear from the literature.

Some phonologists had suggested at various times that the project of a universal features system in this sense was unrealizable, but a major challenge to that project was presented by Mielke (2008). On the basis of a survey of phonological patterns in more than 600 languages, Mielke suggested that a single set of features grounded in substantive properties of the Language Faculty is inappropriate. Different languages require different natural classes of segments in mutually incompatible ways. Mielke’s proposal was that rather than being given a priori, the distinctive features relevant to the phonology of each language emerge as a contingent by-product of the acquisition of the language’s phonological regularities. The fact that many generalizations about the necessary features are largely valid across languages then results from the fact that similar substantive phonetic phenomena influence the historical development of all languages, so that the regularities that emerge (and thus, the featural apparatus necessary to support) will be broadly similar — though not identical.

As is to be expected from a survey of so many languages, which is necessarily quite superficial in most cases, a number of Mielke’s proposed counterexamples to the applicability of standardly assumed feature systems do not support close examination. The general point has been widely accepted, though, and most of the papers a recent collection investigating the sources of distinctive features (Clements & Ridouane (2011); see especially the summary paper by Cohn (2011)) concludes that feature systems should in fact be treated as emergent,
rather than as substantive universals provided by the Language Faculty as properties of the set of cognitively accessible grammars.

Without resuming these arguments in detail, it is possible to bring this emerging consensus about the source of distinctive features into line with the remarks above about the locus of explanation for apparent substantive universals in phonology. Cowper & Hall (2014) and Dresher (2014) argue explicitly that features emerge through the properties of the learning algorithm that allow learners to identify and correlate contrasts. If some properties are more likely than others to emerge as the basis of features in particular languages, this is because the learning algorithm may involve biases as to which hypotheses to consider first, not because it imposes absolute constraints on hypotheses.

We can conclude that the search for the bases of substantive universals of phonological phenomena is miscast as a binary choice between synchronic and diachronic explanation. Pathways of historical change do surely shape some regularities we find in particular languages: most obviously in the case of unnatural or “crazy” rules. The broad applicability of general typological patterns, on the other hand, should be seen not as following from absolute constraints on the content of cognitively accessible grammars, but rather from the coincidence of phonetically guided historical change and corresponding biases in the learning algorithm by which grammars are induced from the Primary Linguistic Data available to the learner.

4. Synchronic vs. Diachronic Explanation Beyond Phonology

The tension between diachronic explanations of observed linguistic phenomena and explanations relying on presumed properties of the Language Faculty has primarily been attended to in the domain of phonology, but very similar issues can be argued to arise in other areas of grammar. Section 4.1 below is devoted to accounts of morphological phenomena in terms of historical paths of development, while section 4.2 explores some related issues in syntax.

4.1. Diachronic Explanation in Morphology

An example of a property of morphological systems that has been claimed to represent a substantive universal of grammar is the correlation between case marking and Tense/Aspect in “split ergative” languages where the split is based on the latter category. In languages of this sort, the familiar pattern in which subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs are treated alike (marked as “Nominative”), as opposed to the direct objects of transitive verbs (marked as “Accusative”) is found only when the verb is in certain Tense/Aspect categories. In other categories, the subject of intransitives and the direct object of transitives are formally the same (marked as “Absolutive”), as opposed to the subjects of transitive verbs (marked as “Ergative”).

It has been observed that in all familiar cases of such a split, Nominative/Accusative marking is found in clauses where the verbal Tense/Aspect is imperfective (or continuative, progressive, etc., or some tense form that is a reflex of such an aspect at an earlier stage), while Ergative/Absolutive marking is found in clauses with perfective aspect or some tense form descended from that. It has been widely assumed (Delancey (1981), Dixon (1994), Tsunoda (1985)) that this should be treated as a substantive universal of grammar, representing this link between ergativity and perfectivity, accusativity and imperfectivity, as a constraint on possible grammars.
There is reason to believe, however, as argued in earlier work (Anderson 1977), that the observed generalization about a link between case marking and Tense/Aspect is actually the result of the accidental convergence of a number of logically independent paths of historical development. This argument can only be sketched below; for further discussion, see Anderson (2004) (from which some of the discussion below is derived) and references cited there.

The developmental paths in question produce change in a language that is consistently either Nominative/Accusative or Ergative/Absolute in its morphology. When such a language undergoes change that results in an innovative aspectual category, this may yield either a new perfective or a new imperfective, depending on the language. As it happens, common sources from a new perfective can be derived, on the one hand, and for a new imperfective on the other, converge on similar patterns of split ergativity, although they are quite unrelated to each other.

One source of historically innovative perfective forms, studied by Benveniste (1952) in several branches of Indo-European, is the re-analysis of originally passive forms. The semantics of passive sentences typically includes the interpretation that the action described is a fait accompli, which facilitates their use as focusing on perfectivity. If the morphology of the passive is then re-interpreted as a signal of the perfect, the result is a construction in which the original, notional subject is marked with a special form (instrumental, or with a preposition such as an English by) while the original, notional direct object appears in the same form as an intransitive subject.

This development is widely considered to be the source of the ergative constructions found in modern Indic languages, such as Hindi and Nepali. The subsequent development of the relevant verbal category with respect to Tense/Aspect significance varies from language to language, so that the perfects derived in this way may in some instances be subsequently re-analyzed as simple past tenses.

When such an innovation takes place in a language with a basic Nominative/Accusative system, it produces perfect or past tense forms that have the formal characteristics of an ergative construction, while the (unchanged) non-perfect forms continue to be associated with an accusative construction. This is a standard sort of split-ergative system, but note that the parameters of the split are determined by the case marking properties of the (passive) ancestor of the new perfect, not by some constraint imposed by the Language Faculty.

Benveniste (1960) documents a different source for the creation of perfects in other languages. In a great many languages, whatever verbal expression serves to express possession is also pressed into service as a marker of the perfect — e.g., in English, where have serves both functions. The expression of possession is often a transitive verb (such as English have, Spanish tener, Latin habeó (not cognate with have)). In some languages, however, a distinct prepositional construction is used, as in Russian У меня книга ‘at me is a book; I have a book’, or Breton Eur ve le c’hab a m’eu ‘a bicycle blue at me is; I have a blue bicycle’.

If such a construction were to be employed as an auxiliary for perfect verbal forms, the consequences would quite parallel to those just seen in the case of perfects with a passive source: the subject of a transitive perfect verb will be marked with some oblique (originally locative) case, while the object will be marked in the same way as the subject in copular constructions: as a nominative. Once more, the result is that the new perfects are associated with what is formally an ergative construction, while non-perfects are associated with the
original (presumably accusative) construction. Benveniste argues that this can be seen in the origin of the Armenian perfect, where the subject appears in the genitive, betraying the possessive origin of the construction. He also proposes that the Old Persian form *ima tyu manā krtam* ‘that is what I have done’ with genitive marked subject represents this same evolution of a perfect from a possessive.

Once again, the result is a split ergative system in which the perfect is associated with ergative marking, the imperfect with accusative marking. The two developments (from passives and from possessive constructions) are logically quite independent, and in neither instance is the case marking of the original construction mandated by a constraint of the Language Faculty. The two developments happen to converge however, on systems with the same inherited, synchronically accidental correlation of case marking and verbal aspect.

The other side of the coin is supplied by cases in which a language that was originally consistent have an Ergative/Absolutive system undergoes change to produce an innovative imperfective verbal category. It would appear that a reasonable source for such a development would take advantage of a frequent distinction between two constructions of a basically transitive verb. When the object of such a verb is “demoted” and treated as an oblique, a difference in interpretation results that is typified by pairs such as English *Jones (read vs. read from)* *War and Peace to his wife at bedtime*, *Fred (shot vs. shot at) my cat*, etc. In each of these pairs, the variant with oblique object is interpreted as an action not necessarily completely carried out, the object not completely affected, etc. Similar pairs form the basis of comparable contrasts in a wide range of languages, as discussed in Anderson (1988). The constructions in question clearly overlap semantically with the verbal notion of an ‘imperfective’, and form a plausible source for a new verbal aspect of this type, where a semantically transitive verb is constructed intransitively, with its notional object appearing in an oblique or prepositional form, to serve as the starting point for the development of such a category.

This is what has happened in the history of Georgian, as suggested originally by Braithwaite (1973), developed in Anderson (1977), and made much more precise by Harris (1985). On this account Georgian was originally a consistently ergative language. In the course of its history, a new series of imperfective forms developed from an ‘object demotion’ construction similar in form to that exemplified by the English pairs above, although already systematic in Old Georgian. These forms underlie what are now called the ‘series I’ tenses, in which case marking is nominative/accusative. A different set of forms, the ‘series II’ tenses, continues the original situation.

Roughly, the division between series I and series II tenses can be seen as (originating in) a difference between imperfective and perfective forms. Again, as with the two paths of development for new perfects summarized above, the result is a split between ergative perfects and accusative imperfects. There is no need to see this split as mandated by properties of the Language Faculty, however, as opposed to an accidental consequence of the formal properties of the earlier construction on which the innovated forms — here the imperfectives — are based.

Another (quite distinct) development with a similar outcome is exemplified by some Mayan languages, including Chol (see Coon 2013, and references cited there, for discussion). These languages are in general consistently Ergative/ Absolutive, although subordinate clauses are often constructed as nominal expressions, with subjects of all verbs in the genitive — a structure that appears to be Nominative/Accusative in form. Imperfectives have been innovated in some cases by treating an original matrix verb as an
auxiliary, while retaining the case marking of the originally embedded clause. Once more we arrive (by a quite different route) at a state in which imperfectives appear to have Nominative/Accusative marking while perfective forms appear in Ergative/Absolutive constructions.

These completely independent developments all happen to converge on the same kinds of data. Each results in a state of affairs in which perfective forms (or their descendents) are associated with an Ergative/Absolutive pattern, while imperfectives (or their later reflexes) are associated with Nominative/Accusative patterns. This is not, however, due to a substantive universal of the Language Faculty which relates case marking and verbal aspect: rather, it is an epiphenomenal regularity that emerges from a number of unrelated lines of development.

To show that the aspect/case-marking relation really is accidental, we would need to find a language in which (for whatever historical reason) the correlation goes the other way, or at least completely fails. One candidate for such a counter-example is Coast Tsimshian (Mulder 1994; Dunn 1979). The facts are complicated, but grossly as follows. There is a set of connective clitics, shown in Table 1, which precede the nominal expression but attach phonologically to the preceding word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Tsimshian Case marking clitics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common N:</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N:</td>
<td>= (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper N:</td>
<td>= (a)s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the present, as illustrated by the examples in (1a), we get Ergative marking. In the past, however, as illustrated by the examples in (1b), we do not.

1. a. i. yagwa baa\[=a wan\]  
   *Pres run-[Abs deer]*  
   The deer is running  
   ii. yagwa\[=t niis\[=da ts’uu’ts\][=a laalt]*  
   *Pres-3sgE see-[ERG bird]-Abs worm*  
   The bird sees the worm  

1. b. i. nah siipg\[=a hana’a]  
   *Past be.sick-[Abs woman]*  
   The woman was sick  
   ii. nah t’uus\[=a ‘yuuta\[=a hana’k]  
   *Past push-[Abs man][-Acc woman(Acc)]*  
   The man pushed the woman

Even in the absence of a convincing counter-example, however, there is no basis for assuming a substantive universal of the Language Faculty that requires case marking and verbal aspect to correlate in the way they generally do in such split-ergative systems. The properties of individual languages are quite well accounted for in terms of the contingent properties of their sources and the existence of a variety of quite unconnected paths by which historical change can create new aspectual distinctions.
4.2. Diachronic Explanation in Syntax

There are also examples in which an apparent syntactic generalization can be seen to be grounded in patterns of diachronic development. One such case is discussed by Kiparsky (2008), who notes that a variety of authors have attempted to provide theoretical bases for the claim that “there are no Nominative anaphors.” For languages in which anaphors must be bound by a subject within their clause, and where only subjects are Nominative, this is trivially true. It is less obvious why it should also be true in a language like Icelandic, where non-subjects can take Nominative case with certain verbs, such as finnst in example (2a); and non-local subjects can bind anaphors logophorically, as in example (2b) under conditions that have been much discussed (cf. Anderson 1986, as well as much subsequent literature).

(2) a.*Honum finnst (sjálfur) sig/sér/sín (vera) veikur
   him-DAT finds (self-NOM) REFLEX-NOM (to be) sick-NOM
   He considers himself to be sick
b. Hann sagði að sig vantði hæfileika
   he-NOM said that REFLEX-DAT lacked-SUBJ ability-ACC
   He said that he lacked ability
c. Jón segir að hann/*sig/*sér/*sín komi ekki
   John says that he/*self/*come-SUBJ not
   unless you invite.SUBJ self
   John says that he won’t come unless you invite him

In example (2a) a nominative form of the object is required by the verb, but Icelandic does not have a nominative reflexive, so the sentence is ungrammatical. In example (2b), on the other hand, the subject of the embedded clause is a reflexive, but since the verb vanta ‘lack’ takes Accusative case on both its subject and its object, the required reflexive form is an Accusative and this presents no problem. In contrast, since the embedded verb in example (2c) takes a Nominative subject, the only possibility is a non-reflexive pronoun.

The lack of a Nominative reflexive thus has syntactic consequences, and requires an explanation, since there are circumstances in which such a pronoun would be required by the syntax. The absence of Nominative reflexives cannot be attributed to a substantive universal of the Language Faculty, however, since some languages (e.g. Georgian, Marathi, Choctaw) do have such forms. What is different about Icelandic? When we examine the paradigms of some Icelandic pronouns in table 2, an explanation suggests itself.

Table 2  Icelandic Personal Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1sg</th>
<th>2sg</th>
<th>3sgM</th>
<th>3sgF</th>
<th>3sgN</th>
<th>3plM</th>
<th>reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>ég</td>
<td>þu</td>
<td>hann</td>
<td>hún</td>
<td>það</td>
<td>þær</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>mín</td>
<td>þín</td>
<td>hans</td>
<td>hennar</td>
<td>þess</td>
<td>þeirra</td>
<td>sín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>mér</td>
<td>þér</td>
<td>honum</td>
<td>henni</td>
<td>því</td>
<td>þeim</td>
<td>sér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>mín</td>
<td>þíg</td>
<td>hann</td>
<td>hana</td>
<td>það</td>
<td>þá</td>
<td>sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The forms in table 2 are all inherited from earlier Germanic, but since earlier forms of Icelandic did not have (or need) a nominative form of the reflexive, none has been inherited.
When the syntax changed so as to provide a role for such a form, through the introduction of the possibility of long-distance reflexivization, there was really no way to create it: the inherited paradigms are suppletive and Icelandic has no productive way of inferring the Nominative from the oblique cases of pronouns. Thus, the learner has no data that would determine such a form, and so constructions where it would be required are blocked. Here the historical story covers all the facts without recourse to a principle of the Language Faculty prohibiting nominative anaphors.

A somewhat more general point regarding the potential for diachronic explanations of apparent synchronic generalizations was argued by Aristar (1991). He explores the observation of Greenberg (1963) that the order of modifiers with respect to their heads tends to correlate with the ordering of verbs and their arguments: verb-final languages tend to have preposed modifiers, while verb-initial languages have postposed modifiers, and verb medial languages vary between the two possibilities.

After examining and rejecting a variety of previous accounts, both synchronic and diachronic, of these asymmetries, Aristar proposes that they result from the historical origin of many nominal modifiers (genitives and relative clauses, and from these, adjectives) through what he calls a “binding-anaphor strategy.” This views the sources of modifiers as part of a construction involving an anaphoric element coreferential with the head, and he argues that the relation between such an anaphoric element and the head is correlated with the difference between verb-final and verb-initial order. Later developments simplify the complex structures involved to produce structurally simpler relations between modifiers and their heads, but the original ordering induced by the binding-anaphor strategy remains, as a historical relic.

No attempt will be made here to examine Aristar’s argument in detail, given the intricacy of the language-particular facts and the shifts in assumptions about syntax that have taken place over the past quarter century. What is important is to note the general form of the argument: a correlation is assumed to have existed at an earlier point on the basis of particular structural relations. Whatever the basis of that correlation, it is maintained in later stages of the language, even after the relevant construction has changed so that the original structural basis is no longer present. The result is a generalization that may well be maintained across a great many languages, but which has come to be supported on the basis of the Primary Linguistic Data available to learners, and not as a consequence of some synchronic principle of the Language Faculty.

Somewhat similar reasoning is followed by Newmeyer (2006) in discussing a variety of apparent cross-linguistic regularities in the order of syntactic elements.

He shows first of all that there are rather robust generalizations about languages that are quite unlikely to fall out from the logical structure of the Language Faculty. For instance, VO languages are much more likely than OV languages to have fronted wh-phrases; and much less likely to have final question particles. Among VO languages, VSO languages show these tendencies to a greater extent than SVO. Purely synchronic explanations for these facts are unlikely, because the structural characteristics provided by recent versions of syntactic theory provide no obvious linkage between the features that cause the verb to move in one way or another and those that cause a wh-expression to move. On the other hand, Newmeyer suggests that the parsing strategies associated with VO vs. OV orders provide different preferences for filler-gap dependencies.

Given the range of typological tendencies that have been observed, and the limited apparatus provided by syntactic theory to accommodate such things, there is really no con-
trovery to the claim that functional pressures have an effect in shaping the way speakers structure their sentences. Newmeyer then appeals to the “Performance-Grammar Correspondence Hypothesis” of Hawkins (2004, p. 3):

Grammars have conventionalized syntactic structures in proportion to their degree of preference in performance, as evidenced by patterns of selection in corpora and by ease of processing in psycholinguistic experiments.

This asserts that performance preferences will be incorporated into grammars as a function of their strength in relation to alternatives.

That, in turn, provides the point of entry for historical change. Where performance effects lead to situations in which certain regularities are likely to characterize the input data for subsequent generations of learners, those regularities are likely to be incorporated into the grammars that are acquired — not because the Language Faculty requires them, but because the available data support them. Arguments along these lines suggest that languages as we find them are the complex product of a complex history, and that diachrony has shaped them in particular ways that persist beyond the effect of the original determining conditions.

5. Conclusion

We conclude that the nineteenth century notion that truly scientific explanations for the properties of linguistic systems were to be sought in detailed accounts of their history was not as misguided as much twentieth century theorizing about language presumed. In many cases, in morphology and syntax as well as in phonology, it is reasonable to suggest that things are as we find them in substantial part because that is the outcome of the shaping effects of history, not because the nature of the Language Faculty requires it. In phonology in particular there are few if any well-established substantive universals governing the class of possible relations (whether these are described by rules or by constraints). The generalizations that we do observe seem to have a more contingent character that may usefully be attributed to biases in the way the learning algorithm constructs and assesses the hypothesis space in grammar construction, rather than to absolute limitations on the class of cognitively accessible grammars. In morphology and syntax, there is also evidence that some apparent generalizations have their origins in language history rather than universal constraints, although the scope of that observation remains to be explored in more detail.

SUMMARY POINTS

1. Since the properties of the grammar a learner acquires are determined by a combination of (a) properties of the input data; (b) the way the learning algorithm interprets the data; and (c) the constraints on the class of available grammars, explanations for linguistic regularities might be grounded in any one of these.
2. The tendency in generative treatments of language has been to attribute observed regularities to constraints on the set of possible grammars. Recent work has argued, in contrast, that many if not most such regularities are actually the product of common paths of diachronic change, and thus to be seen as regularities in the input data.
3. Existing arguments for absolute constraints on phonological relations are not in general successful, which suggests that cross-linguistic regularities are to be seen as the result of a combination of recurrent paths of historical change and inherent biases in the learning algorithm.

4. A similar point can be made for some regularities in other areas of grammar, where absolute constraints seem not to be motivated but accounts in terms of historical development give reasonable answers.

FUTURE ISSUES

1. While it is clear that some observed regularities have their basis outside of synchronic constraints on the class of grammars, this does not necessarily mean that there are no valid substantive universals, and the search for arguments of that form cannot be abandoned.

2. Where synchronic and diachronic accounts overlap substantially, it is not necessarily the case that only one is correct, despite the apparent duplication of explanatory effort. It may well be that (via something like the Baldwin Effect), diachronically based regularities may have been incorporated into the Language Faculty (specifically into the learning algorithm), so that both accounts are true.

3. Where both synchronic and diachronic accounts are potentially available, criteria need to be developed that will allow the two to be differentiated.

4. The possibility of diachronically based explanation in morphology and syntax needs to be taken seriously, and its extent explored.

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