

Direction of Linguistic Change

C. F. VOEGELIN, DePauw University

Summary: Most linguistic change is in one direction, diversification from a prototype; the LeBoullanger and Dunn manuscripts provide material for suspecting a secondary change in the opposite direction, a merging of two dialects, Peoria with Miami. But Peoria is not supplanted by Miami, for some dialectic peculiarities are retained.

One speaks of a relationship between languages, in a descriptive sense, when differences between the languages compared are not haphazard but, rather, follow a regular point-for-point pattern of difference. Thus a *bh-* sound in a Sanskrit word will correspond to a plain *b-* in English, to an *f-* in Latin (*bhratar-*, brother *frater*), and so on in all the related languages.

From a dynamic point of view, however, languages are regarded as related because they have a single parent, a language no longer spoken naturally; the prototype of the three sounds of the word given above in three languages (*bh-*, *b-*, *f-*) happens to be identical with the sound in the first mentioned daughter language (*bh-*), but occasionally the prototype is not identically preserved in any of the daughter languages. Thus Indo-European *g^w h-* never appeared as such, but changed to Greek ϕ or θ or χ , and to Latin *f-* or *v-* or *gu-* or *g-* (depending on position in the word and neighboring vowels), not to mention other changes in English and the remaining daughter languages.

Linguistic change, unless otherwise defined, would indicate a change in a direction away from the parent language. Sapir's fertile concept of "drift" limits change to a particular direction rather than permitting random change in many directions; at most, the various branches of the daughter languages can express their willingness or conservatism in following the general "drift."

The sounds of Proto-Algonkin have been changed so as to be almost unrecognizable in the daughter languages, Cheyenne and Arapaho, whereas in two other Algonkin branches of the family, Blackfoot and Eastern Algonkin, the sounds of the parent language have been only moderately changed.

One sub-branch of the Eastern Algonkin branch was represented in the 18th century by at least two dialects, Peoria and Miami. In order to make the successive Algonkin diversifications clear, let us say that 18th century Peoria and Miami diversified from a single parent language, which we may call Primitive P-M; let us say the Primitive P-M, together with other Algonkin languages, must have diversified from an even earlier parent language, Primitive Eastern Algonkin, while this last together with Primitive Cheyenne-Arapaho may have diversified from a still earlier language, Proto-Algonkin. To return to 18th century Peoria and Miami, we should expect to find today all the differences recorded two centuries ago, and, given more time in the future and isolation of groups, we might expect local bands of Miami to father new Miami dialects and local bands of Peoria to father new Peoria dialects.

Our expectations are not fulfilled. Peoria and Miami are not even as distinct as they were two centuries ago (the intervening period doubtless presented far from ideal conditions for dialectic differentiation).

In one of the several manuscripts given by the Jacob P. Dunn family to the Indiana Historical Society, Dunn compares Gatschet's Peoria (recorded in Oklahoma) with Godfroy's Miami (recorded in Indiana) and finds that recent speakers of these languages showed numerous dialectic differences so far as words and meanings are concerned; no sound correspondences show any significant differences. Dunn feared Gatschet had mistakenly taken a Miami informant to be a speaker of the Peoria dialect. In order to test the correctness of his own impressions, Dunn visited Oklahoma, but failed to find really satisfactory informants for the scientific discussion which he contemplated (none of his informants spoke Peoria from childhood on). We have for modern Peoria, then, no other evidence than that presented by Gatschet and, for modern Miami, Dunn's material.

A comparison of a few hundred words shows instances of Peoria and Miami words which are not cognate but which have identical meanings (e. g., Peoria *metcikiletakuka*, Miami *toondwa*, both meaning "bull-frog"), on the one hand, and on the other instances of words having identical form in both Peoria and Miami, but specialized meanings (e.g.: *Nila menätowa* means in Peoria "I bewitch somebody," but in Miami "I am the devil." So also *älikwa* is "grub-worm" in Peoria, but "ant" in Miami.) Far from modern Miami supplanting modern Peoria, the lexical differences are so numerous that we must suppose the speakers had some difficulty in understanding each other completely.

Old Miami, that is Miami as spoken about the 18th century, does not differ from modern Miami, as may be seen from the word comparisons which Dunn has made of older Miami manuscripts and his modern Miami.

Old Peoria, as recorded by LeBoulanger in the early 18th century, shows numerous phonological differences when compared to Miami, whereas the only differences between modern Peoria (Gatschet) and modern Miami (Dunn) are lexical.

Examples of words from the LeBoulanger manuscript are given with Miami cognates in Appendix A in a recent paper in the Prehistory Research Series of the Indiana Historical Society.¹ I may summarize here the phonological differences which distinguish old Peoria from Miami:

- (1.) P. *-w-* may correspond to M. *-y-*.
- (2.) Various vocalic correspondences are encountered which are difficult to value.
- (3.) P. *-r-* generally corresponds to M. *-l-*.
- (4.) P. *-r-* also corresponds to some M. *-n-*.
- (5.) Most Miami stems beginning in a stop or affricate, at least, have an homorganic nasal consonant before the stop when the first person pronoun *ni-* is prefixed; Peoria employs such a nasal in somewhat less than half of the examples compared.
- (6.) Peoria words may end in consonants, while Miami words always end in vowels.

¹Voegelin, C. F., 1938. Shawnee stems and the Jacob P. Dunn Miami dictionary. Part I, Stems in *p* —. Prehistory Research Series, Indiana Hist. Soc. 1:16-108.