

SOME BASIC ISSUES IN HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

1. According to Coseriu 1958:

- a. the “**rational**” problem of language change: Why are languages not invariant? Why are they always changing?
- b. the “**general**” problem of language change: What are the conditions that lead to language change?
- c. the “**historical**” problem of language change: Why does any particular change occur when it does?

2. According to Weinreich, Herzog, and Labov 1968:

- a. the “**constraints**” problem: What are the general constraints on change, if any, that determine possible and impossible changes and directions of change?
- b. the “**transition**” problem: By what route does language change?
- c. the “**embedding**” problem: How is a given language change embedded in the surrounding system of linguistic and social relations? (Cf. (1b))
- d. the “**evaluation**” problem: How do members of a speech community evaluate a given change, and what is the effect of this evaluation on the change?
- e. the “**actuation**” problem: Why did a given linguistic change occur at the particular time and place that it did? (Cf. (1c))

3. Others (including restatements of (1) and (2) in different terms):

- a. What is the relation between synchrony and diachrony? (cf. (2b))
- b. What constitutes “naturalness” in language change? (cf. (2a))
- c. What really changes when a language changes?
- d. What are the actual changes that are found in the languages of the world? (Cf. (2a))
- e. How does change occur without disrupting the function of the linguistic system?