Tobias Scheer
Université Côte d'Azur, CNRS 7320

Rule crossing in the lexical variation period

The purpose of this talk is to draw attention to a pattern of diachronic change, rule crossing in the lexical variation period (RC), which on the face of it is a clear case of multiple outputs, i.e. where a given input produces more than one output through diachronic evolution. Under neogrammarian exceptionlessness, this should not occur. It turns out, however, that all sound laws involved apply without exception, the paradoxical result being multiple outputs obeying neogrammarian exceptionlessness.

Sound laws are implemented over several generations of speakers: they need time before the new pronunciation affects all words concerned in all instances of their production by all speakers. This obvious fact was known by the neogrammarians (Paul 1880: 53), later documented by the Labovian study of ongoing change. Consider the case where during this variation period two rules apply successively in bleeding order: rule 1 has only yet transformed a subset of words that it is competent for when a freshly innovated rule 2 appears whose context of application is destroyed by rule 1. Thus in the evolution from Latin to Old French, intervocalic voicing applies to the t of cōg(i)tāre > *cuidier* (mod. *cuider*), but not to the t of com(i)te > *comte*. The multiple outputs at hand t/d are only found when the vowel preceding the voiceless intervocalic obstruent is subject to syncope (indicated by brackets). Application of syncope bleeds voicing since it removes the obstruent from its intervocalic position. What happened is thus that at a stage where syncope had already affected some words (com(i)te > °comte), but not yet others (cōg(i)tāre), intervocalic voicing was innovated and regularly applied to the latter, but not to the former.

Note that both sound laws at hand were working without any exceptions: syncope was implemented by lexical diffusion (LD), and eventually ended up applying to all words. Looked at from hindsight, it is a clean neogrammarian change. Its diffusing character is only indirectly visible because it was crossed by intervocalic voicing, which applied to all items that were in its purview upon its innovation.

The neogrammarian toolbox (analogy, borrowing, learned vocabulary, a yet to be discovered sound law, etc.) is unable to get a handle RC patterns. But since this was the only antidote against multiple outputs, neogrammarians were driven into analytic absurdities, which in turn fueld their critics: see, they are wrong, sound laws are not exceptionless.

RC was discovered by Wang (1969) but had little posterity and no impact on the exceptionlessness debate. In Wang's view, two rules compete for a shared input in a given word *at the same point in time*. By contrast, in the perspective outlined here, two different rules never compete for a given input: each one is implemented according to its regular workings (which may include LD) and at all given points in time applies to all words that are in its purview.

RC during the lexical variation period thus makes evaporate a number of multiple output patterns that on the face of it challenge exceptionlessness. Exactly how much of the multiple outputs pool is concerned remains to be seen – maybe 100%, which would obliterate the entire exceptionlessness debate. A critical factor here is LD: the RC mechanism only works if a rule progressively affects lexical items over time, so that another, freshly innovated rule faces a split lexicon. Thus so-called neogrammarian change where innovation does not spread through LD but affects all lexical items simultaneously does not qualify for RC. Therefore the talk also reviews the question whether all sound change involves lexical diffusion, as advocated e.g. by Phillips (2006), contra Labov (1994) and Bernúdez-Otero (2007): that is, whether all sound laws are eligible for the rule crossing pattern.

The empirical material presented is drawn from French diachrony (Grande Grammaire Historique du Français GGHF), where rule crossing is massive. In a number of cases, an apparent violation of exceptionlessnesss evaporates when the workings of rule crossing are understood: intervocalic spirantization, intervocalic voicing, Romance diphtongization, Romance palatalization, loss of velars and labials before or after back vowels, velarization.