Contents

List of Figures xii
List of Tables xxi
Foreword xxiv
Preface xxvi
Abbreviations xxvii

1 Introduction to Cognitive and Cultural Factors in Linguistic Change 1
1.1 Cognitive Factors 1
1.2 Cultural Factors in Linguistic Change 2
1.3 Convergence and Divergence 4
1.4 The Darwinian Paradox Revisited 6
1.5 Divergence and the Central Dogma 7
1.6 The Community Orientation of Language Learning 8
1.7 The Argument of this Volume 10
1.8 The English Vowel System and the Major Chain Shifts of North American English 11

Part A Cross-Dialectal Comprehension 19

2 Natural Misunderstandings 21
2.1 The Collection of Natural Misunderstandings 22
2.2 Modes of Correction 23
2.3 How Common Are Misunderstandings? 26
2.4 What Is the Role of Sound Change in Misunderstanding? 27
2.5 The Linguistic Focus of the Misunderstandings 28
2.6 The Effect of Mergers 33
2.7 Chain Shifts 37
2.8 Philadelphia Sound Changes 40
2.9 r-less vs r-ful Dialects 44
2.10 Sound Changes General to North America 45
2.11 An Overview of Natural Misunderstandings 46
Contents

3 A Controlled Experiment on Vowel Identification 48
  3.1 The Peterson–Barney Experiment 49
  3.2 Replicating the Peterson–Barney Experiment 49
  3.3 Overall Success in Identification 52
  3.4 Responses to the Chicago Speakers 52
  3.5 Responses to the Birmingham Speakers 54
  3.6 Responses to the Philadelphia Speakers 56
  3.7 Overview 57

4 The Gating Experiments 59
  4.1 Construction of the Gating Experiments 59
  4.2 Overall Responses to the Gating Experiments 60
  4.3 Comprehension of the Northern Cities Shift in Chicago 64
  4.4 Recognition of Chicago Sound Changes in the Word Context 69
  4.5 The Effect of Lexical Equivalence 71
  4.6 Comprehension of Southern Sound Changes in Birmingham 72
  4.7 Comprehension of Philadelphia Sound Changes 77
  4.8 Overview of the Gating Experiments 83

Part B The Life History of Linguistic Change 87

5 Triggering Events 89
  5.1 Bends in the Chain of Causality 90
  5.2 Causes of the Canadian Shift 93
  5.3 Causes of the Pittsburgh Shift 96
  5.4 Causes of the Low Back Merger 99
  5.5 The Fronting of /uw/ 103
  5.6 The Northern Cities Shift 111
  5.7 An Overview of Triggering Events 118

6 Governing Principles 120
  6.1 The Constraints Problem 120
  6.2 The (Ir)Reversibility of Mergers 121
  6.3 The Geographic Expansion of Mergers in North America 130
  6.4 Principles Governing Chain Shifts 140
  6.5 Principles Governing Chain Shifting within Subsystems 145
  6.6 How Well Do Governing Principles Govern? 152

7 Forks in the Road 155
  7.1 The Concept of Forks in the Road 155
  7.2 The Two-Stage Model of Dialect Divergence 156
  7.3 The Fronting and Backing of Short a 157
  7.4 Divergent Development of the /o/ ~ /oh/ Opposition 161
8 Divergence
  8.1 Continuous and Discrete Boundaries 165
  8.2 The North/Midland Boundary 166
  8.3 Communication across the North/Midland Boundary 170
  8.4 The Two-Step Mechanism of Divergence 172
  8.5 Unidirectional Change: The Low Back Merger 173
  8.6 Consequences of the Low Back Merger for the English Vowel System 174
  8.7 Resistance to the Low Back Merger 175
  8.8 Further Differentiation by Chain Shifts 180
  8.9 A General View of Linguistic Divergence in North America 182

9 Driving Forces
  9.1 The Importation of Norms 184
  9.2 Locality 185
  9.3 Social Networks and Communities of Practice 186
  9.4 Socioeconomic Classes 190
  9.5 Acts of Identity 193
  9.6 The Relation of Social Classes in Apparent Time 195
  9.7 Gender as a Social Force 197
  9.8 The Regional Dialect 202
  9.9 Accounting for the Uniform Progress of the Northern Cities Shift 204

10 Yankee Cultural Imperialism and the Northern Cities Shift 208
  10.1 The North/Midland Boundary 208
  10.2 The History of the North/Midland Boundary 211
  10.3 The Material Basis of the North/Midland Opposition 214
  10.4 The Cultural Opposition of Yankees and Upland Southerners 216
  10.5 Coincidence with Geographic Boundaries of Political Cultures 218
  10.6 Red States, Blue States, and the Northern Dialect Region 221
  10.7 Relation of Dialects to County Voting Patterns 222
  10.8 The History of the Death Penalty 225
  10.9 Ideological Oppositions in the North 227
  10.10 The Geographic Transformation 231

11 Social Evaluation of the Northern Cities Shift 236
  11.1 The North/Midland Experiment 1 237
  11.2 Conclusion 244

12 Endpoints 245
  12.1 Skewness as an Index of Approach to Endpoint 246
  12.2 Social Characteristics of Endpoints 249