Li11 Historical linguistics
Supervision 6: Diffusion and sociohistorical and variationist approaches to change
http://ling.cam.ac.uk/li11/

Essay Titles
Write an essay on ONE of the following topics:

1. Do sociohistorical approaches to language change explain why languages change?

2. * Discuss and evaluate the evidence for Constant Rate Effects and the Double Base Hypothesis. [You will need to use Kroch (1989) for the Constant Rate Effect, and Santorini’s work for the Double Base Hypothesis.]

3. * Discuss how linguists have attempted to account for the fact that syntactic innovations spread gradually through a community over one or more generations.

4. ‘Linguistic change is best understood at the level of the individual rather than the group.’ Discuss.

5. ‘While diffusion of linguistic innovations seems to be mediated by complex hierarchies of social and linguistic factors, the structure of these hierarchies is largely unmotivated.’ Discuss.

If you are unsure which essay to choose, it is recommended that you do one of the starred titles, as these cover a broad range of core material.

Reading
Generative variationists

*Kroch, Anthony S. 1989. Reflexes of grammar in patterns of language change. Language Variation and Change 1, 199-244.


Theoretical underpinnings of sociohistorical linguistics and variationist historical linguistics


Case studies in sociohistorical approaches


**S-curves and diffusion**


