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Notice of The Initiation of Sound Change

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**The Initiation of Sound Change: Perception, Production, and Social Factors.** By MARIA-JOSEP SOLÉ AND DANIEL RECASENS, eds. (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2012. Pp. x, 250. ISBN 9789027248411. \$158 (Hb).

Reviewed by NATALIE OPERSTEIN, *California State University, Fullerton*

This volume contains revised and peer-reviewed contributions to the Workshop on Sound Change which was held in Barcelona in October of 2010. It consists of the “Editors’ Introduction”, highlighting the volume’s purpose and main themes, and eleven papers organized into three sections.

The first section focuses on the hypothesized perceptual mechanisms of sound change initiation. **John Ohala** presents an updated account of an earlier and well-known work of his on the role of the listener in sound change. **Patrice Speeter Beddor** examines cross-listener variation in the perception of coarticulated signals and its possible influence on sound production, and by extension, change. **Daniel Recasens** draws on certain developments involving dark /l/ in Romance languages to illustrate how the same diachronic sound changes may be accomplished through different underlying mechanisms. **Michael Grosvald** and **David Corina** investigate cross-listener differences in sensitivity to sub-phonemic vowel-to-vowel coarticulation at different distances from the influencing vowel, and examine connections between the perception and production of such coarticulation.

The next section focuses on production-triggered sound change mechanisms. **Jonathan Harrington** studies the effects of consonantal context on the production of high back vowels and assesses their role in diachronic back-vowel fronting. **Maria-Josep Solé** argues, on the basis of several laboratory studies, that the same phonetic principles are responsible for both ‘natural’ (cross-linguistically common) and ‘unnatural’ (cross-linguistically less common) sound changes. Variation in the outcomes is attributed to different timing and/or magnitude of the relevant articulatory gestures. **Marianne Pouplier** re-examines the role of articulatory effort in spoken language and argues for the need for a more elaborate approach to its measurement.

The final section is devoted to the identification of social and structural factors in the initiation of sound change. **Joseph Salmons**, **Robert Fox** and **Ewa Jacewicz** explore the hypothesis that the emphatic realization of vowels in caretaker speech may result in children’s systematically acquiring a different phonological grammar from that of the earlier generation. They hypothesize that the persisting cultural pattern of special child-directed speech may be responsible for such multi-generational changes as vocalic chain shifts. **Svetlin Dimov**, **Shira Katseff** and **Keith Johnson** set out to discover whether there is a connection between the initiation of sound change and individual speakers’ personality traits. **Joan Bybee** examines patterns of lexical diffusion – from high frequency to lower frequency words, and vice versa, – as a possible source of information about the causes of sound change. **Mark Hale** ponders the question of whether the Neogrammarian hypothesis about the regularity of sound change and theories focusing on the mechanisms of sound perception and production may be combined into a coherent theory of sound change.

This collection offers a variety of views on and contributes to a better understanding of the causes and mechanisms of sound change. It will be of interest to a range of scholars interested in sound change in both its synchronic and diachronic aspects.