**Individuals, Community, and Language Evolution:**

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In this paper the term *language evolution* subsumes language change, language speciation, and language vitality (my umbrella term for language endangerment and loss, as well as language resilience). *Language* as constructed by linguists will be reinterpreted as counterparts of biological species, projected from organisms, which are the counterparts of idiolects, as explained in Mufwene (2001, 2008, very much influenced by Hermann Paul 1891). *Community* is invoked because this is the level at which evolution has been discussed in both historical and genealogical linguistics, typically without reference to the actuation of change, as noted by, e.g., Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog 1968). It is also the level at which most descript analyses have focused, even in the variationist sociolinguistics literature. I will focus on the dialectic between idiolects and language, with individual speakers characterized as the unwitting agents of change (Mufwene 2001) regarding both structure and practice. While individuals alternate as innovators and copiers/spreaders (William Croft 2000, Mufwene 2008), we must also consider the community as providing feedback and thus exerting constraints on the diffusion of change and facilitating speciation in case of fission. Why and how does speciation happen that produces new languages or varieties thereof? This is a question that deserves attention, especially if one adopts an ecological approach to evolution. Hermann Paul, Ferdinand de Saussure, and William Labov all tell us in different and complementary ways how the distinction between individuals and the community are engaged in historical (rather than phylogenetic) language evolution.