

Complex Sound Changes

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Discussions of sound change assume that a single phonological innovation cannot simultaneously affect two or more segments through phonetically unrelated processes. Evidence is presented for three sound changes in individual Austronesian languages, and a fourth change that is recurrent over a number of languages, which appear to violate this expectation. Although one of these changes may involve still poorly understood morphology, at least three others exhibit what appear to be concurrent multiple segment alterations (glide fortition and high vowel centralization in a number of the languages of Borneo, systematic vowel metathesis and centralization of non-high vowels in Hawu, schwa fronting and final stop devoicing in Pa' Dalih Kelabit). It is suggested that such innovations be called 'complex sound changes'. As with sound changes that involve simultaneous alteration of multiple feature values, complex sound changes cannot easily be reconciled with the view that all sound change is phonetically or phonologically motivated.