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this is a lucid and up to date overview of language change it discusses where our evidence about language change comes from how and why changes happen and how languages begin and end it considers both changes which occurred long ago and those currently in progress it does this within the framework of one central question is language change a symptom of progress or decay it concludes that language is neither progressing nor decaying but that an understanding of the factors surrounding change is essential for anyone concerned about language alteration for this substantially revised third edition jean aitchison has included two new chapters on change of meaning and grammaticalization sections on new methods of reconstruction and ongoing chain shifts in britain and america have also been added as well as over 150 new references the work remains non technical in style and accessible to readers with no previous knowledge of linguistics

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