

me that the earliest at present ascertainable centre of dispersion of the tribes of Eskimo stock lies in Alaska.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF PHONETIC AND MORPHOLOGIC FEATURES.

It is well known to students of language that striking phonetic and morphologic similarities are not infrequently found between neighbouring languages that, so far as can be ascertained, are in no way genetically related. Such resemblances, insofar as they are not merely fortuitous, must be due to the assimilatory influence exerted by one language over another. This may either mean that in the acquisition of an originally foreign language that gradually displaces the native one certain habits of speech (phonetic or structural peculiarities) are carried over by the speakers from the old into the new language¹ or that such peculiarities are, more or less unconsciously² and through the medium of bilingual individuals, created in one language on the model of analogous features in the other. Which of these factors is involved in any particular case it may often, or generally, be quite impossible to tell.

One of the most striking American examples of phonetic accord overriding fundamental linguistic independence is the occurrence in a considerable number of West Coast linguistic groups (Na-dene; Tsimshian; Kwakiutl-Nootka, Chemakum, Salish; Chinookan; Lower Umpqua, Coos) of velar consonants, voiceless laterals, and glottalized ("fortis") stops. These far-reaching resemblances in rather uncommon types of sounds are likely to be in part due to such assimilatory processes as we have mentioned. Examples of important morphological resemblances in unrelated, but geographically contiguous languages are the sex gender of Coast Salish and Chinookan; the occurrence of numeral classifiers and distributive (or plural) reduplication both in Tsimshian and in Kwakiutl-Nootka, Chemakum, and

¹ Just as we, when a foreign language has been but imperfectly mastered, involuntarily substitute familiar for difficult and unfamiliar sounds and literally translate morphological and syntactic usages that are familiar to us into the new medium of communication.

² Sometimes no doubt also consciously. Fashions in speech, peculiar to one language, particularly if associated with ceremonial or literary values, may be directly imitated by the speakers of another.