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3 **Millennia of Language Change: Sociolinguistic Studies in Deep Historical Linguistics.**
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9 When investigating how languages developed into what they look like today, consideration
10 needs to be given to the use of these varieties in the past, both from a linguistic and a
11 sociolinguistic point of view. This is a key component of the still relatively young field of
12 historical sociolinguistic studies, yet the time-depth of such studies is generally very limited, as
13 methodological limitations of comparative approaches do not allow going back to prehistory
14 (p. 1). That is unfortunate, especially because some linguistic features take a very long time to
15 develop. To genuinely understand the interaction of linguistic and social processes underlying
16 the actuation and transmission of linguistic changes, Peter Trudgill suggests the adoption of a
17 ‘long’ view on language change. Following Comrie’s belief (1992) that “certain linguistic
18 phenomena always develop from earlier linguistic states which those phenomena are absent
19 from”, Trudgill aims to explain language processes by exploring them from the very beginning;
20 starting from the era that embraces more than 90% of the linguistic past: i.e. Stone Age societies
21 (p. 2). Although actual linguistic data from the distant past may not be available, the author
22 demonstrates that certain factors influencing language change processes on a broad, almost
23 universal, level also enable explorations of linguistic developments in prehistory. In *Millennia*
24 *of Language Change. Sociolinguistic Studies in Deep Historical Linguistics*, he combines
25 sociolinguistic-typological perspectives with a ‘long’ view on language change. The book,
26 dedicated to Jim Milroy, is based on eight of Trudgill’s recent research articles (2004 – 2018)
27 in an updated and expanded form, and each chapter of the volume is devoted to an individual
28 paper.
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38 In chapter 1, Trudgill explains why sociolinguistics should get involved in studies of lengthy
39 periods of language developments. He points to the differences between prehistoric and
40 modern-day societies, and warns about the straightforward reflection of the present to the
41 distant past. As social differences might well have consequences for linguistic outcomes, the
42 author illustrates that the issue is indeed more a sociolinguistic fact than solely a social fact.
43 Tightly knit societies, for example, characterise prehistory. As such, they allow for certain
44 linguistic developments to take place; developments that could not exist in modern at-a-distance
45 societies. Trudgill discusses an example from the work of Tadmor (2015), who investigated
46 Onya Darat, a West Malayo-Polynesian language spoken in Borneo. In the Onya Darat pronoun
47 system, consideration is given to generational affiliation as a grammatical category. This means
48 that distinct pronouns are used to address members of the same generation and others of a
49 different generation. Such a system can only survive in face-to-face societies, as speakers have
50 to be familiar with every member in the community in order to use the correct pronoun (p. 10-
51 11). Also, linguistic changes proposed arbitrarily by one influential speaker are more likely to
52 succeed in a prehistorical context than in present-day societies of strangers. The same is true
53 for language developments taking place due to dense social networks, large amounts of
54 communally shared information, non-anonymity or non-optimality. All these factors are
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3 strongly associated with face-to-face societies and, therefore, they could have provoked
4 language change in prehistory (cf. Trudgill 2011).

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6 Social structure and organisation are related to the grammatical typology of languages in
7 chapter 2. With case studies on different varieties of Dutch, it illustrates how processes of
8 phonological, morphophonological, and morphological simplicity and complexity are the result
9 of social factors affecting linguistic structures. Whereas simplification is seen as typically
10 resulting in patterns of morphological regularisation and increasing transparency,
11 complexification is linked to an extensive use of morphological categories and large amounts
12 of morphosyntactic irregularity. Trudgill's social parameters (2011), such as community size,
13 social stability, and the degree of language contact, are embedded in discussions of languages
14 that show increasing complexity over time (Comrie 1992: 208). As morphology in both
15 polysynthetic and highly inflecting fusional languages became more complex out of an earlier
16 less-complex state, Trudgill explores the sociolinguistic conditions that produce these linguistic
17 changes. When diachronically investigating morphological developments in a range of
18 languages, he shows that processes of spontaneous complexification are more likely to succeed
19 in small, isolated, and low-contact communities. This way, he proposes social factors that are
20 universally attached to the development of morphologically complex languages.

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22 In chapter 3, Trudgill follows the hypothesis of Vennemann (2010a: 388) that Vasconic, the
23 predecessor of modern-day Basque, was in long-term contact with Indo-European varieties
24 spoken in Northwestern Europe during the second and first millennia BC. Vennemann argues
25 that the languages spoken in the area where Vasconic was once found developed substratum
26 features that are absent from languages in the rest of Europe. One of these Vasconic
27 characteristics is the use of two copulas; a feature that is also found in (Proto-)Celtic. Trudgill
28 investigates the extent to which the existence of the two-copula system in Europe is related to
29 complexification consequences as a result of language contact. In speculating whether Celtic –
30 and possibly also Vasconic – influenced Northwestern Romance, continental West-Germanic,
31 and Old English, he guides us through a number of consecutive episodes of language contact in
32 England from the first millennium onwards. He suggests that, during the sixth and the seventh
33 century, Brittonic or Late British, British Latin or Northwestern Romance, and Old English
34 were spoken in Britain, and all three of these languages had the two-copula paradigm. Although
35 the system faded in the medieval period and eventually got lost in most of England, an offshoot
36 of the two-copula system survived in Welsh.

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38 Language contact need not always lead to complexification, however. As Trudgill discusses in
39 chapter 4, multiple episodes of language contact shaped the English language as it is today. He
40 chronologically explains different episodes of language contact which commence with
41 prehistorical contact situations it is plausible to suppose to have existed in the transition from
42 Indo-European to Proto-Germanic (cf. Vennemann 2003, 2010). These instances of language
43 contact are considered to be responsible for Proto-Germanic to have been “influenced in its
44 phonology by contact with Finnish; in its grammar and phonology by contact with Vasconic
45 and in lexis by contact with Afro-Asiatic” (p. 53). Other cases of language contact, of which
46 the effects are more visible in modern-day English, include multiple episodes of contact
47 between West Germanic/English and Celtic, between English and Old Norse, and between
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3 English and French. All these contact situations had varying outcomes, depending on the
4 context in which language contact took place. Trudgill shows, for example, that long-term
5 contact between speakers of Old English and a – more dominant – group of Brittonic speakers
6 resulted in child bilingualism and, consequently, additive complexification in Old English up
7 until 600. A later instance of contact between the two varieties was of a different kind, since a
8 period of Germanic dominance led to L2-learning of Old English by native speakers of
9 Brittonic. Because of imperfect adult second-language learning, simplification occurred, and a
10 pidginised version of Old English developed in the course of the fifth to the ninth century. As
11 the sociolinguistic context determines what the outcome of language contact will be, Trudgill's
12 typology also allows speculation on how remote instances of language contact affected the
13 English language (Trudgill 2011).

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18 Modern-day variation in traditional Germanic dialects and spoken vernaculars also affords a
19 window into longer, diachronic changes. Chapter 5 focusses on the use of *was* in the past tense
20 for plural *were* in vernacular English, and asserts that the phenomenon cannot be explained by
21 the typological *default singular*. This stance is illustrated with a broad overview of the evolution
22 of verb paradigms in other Germanic varieties. Trudgill's exploration shows that a small
23 number of Germanic languages and dialects have a similar conjugation pattern as vernacular
24 English, e.g. Afrikaans also demonstrates a full s-paradigm (p. 71). An explanation for
25 generalisation is offered with regard to the s/r-alternation that affected the North- and West-
26 Germanic languages. In most of these varieties, the alternation in verb paradigms was levelled
27 out as an effect of Verner's Law – which explains the sound change from voiceless to voiced
28 fricatives in the transition from Indo-European to Germanic, which subsequently resulted in the
29 s/r-alternation in North- and West-Germanic languages. Whereas s-generalisation is, for
30 instance, found in some dialects of English – including the dialect of the Home Counties –, r-
31 generalisation is a much more common pattern (e.g. in German: *war* vs. *waren*). The paradigm
32 of regularisation in vernacular English may thus favour s-forms; this quite recent change is
33 presumably due to the influence of the Southeast of England. Trudgill clarifies that the levelling
34 to s-forms in vernacular English did not occur because of the typological 'unmarked' status of
35 singular forms; instead, the phenomenon can only be correctly interpreted by taking a long and
36 wide view of Germanic varieties as a whole.

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45 Another remarkable language change is the focus of chapter 6, where a case study of contrasting
46 phoneme inventories in Austronesian languages is presented. The Austronesian language
47 family has known an immense geographical spread because of migrations to neighbouring
48 regions and to islands across the Pacific Ocean. All the languages that arose out of the Eastern
49 expansion remained mutually intelligible until the early nineteenth century. The phoneme
50 inventories of these languages, however, were diachronically reduced from 23 consonants in
51 Proto-Austronesian to 8 consonants in Hawaiian, which indicates the geographical end point of
52 the dispersion. Here, Trudgill illustrates the link between the reduction of phoneme inventories
53 and geographical spread, but he also explores the possibility of sociolinguistic explanations
54 related to language contact and isolation, viz. community size and social network structure.
55 Whereas non-isolated and large communities will most likely have medium-sized phoneme
56 inventories, small and isolated communities are more prone to the development of either
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3 unusually large or very tiny inventories. In these small and isolated communities with tightly
4 knit social networks, adult second-language learning is not involved, which implies that
5 memory difficulties of L2-learners do not prevent the language from developing very small or
6 very large phoneme inventories.
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9 From the fifteenth century onwards, colonial expansion led to the emergence of new language
10 varieties, such as English in the United States and French in Canada. In chapter 7, Trudgill
11 counters two common fallacies in the study of the formation of colonial varieties. To make his
12 case he uses the oldest colonial variety known – the Hellenistic Koiné (320 BC – 550 AD) –,
13 while at the same time reinforcing his argument with no less than 19 case studies on more recent
14 colonial varieties that developed over different periods of time. He refutes the *monogenesis*
15 *fallacy* by investigating the structure of the Greek Koiné, which clearly shows patterns of dialect
16 mixture and second-language influence that resulted in processes of simplification. As the same
17 effects are also discernible in other colonial varieties under scrutiny, one cannot claim that
18 colonial varieties are simply transplanted Western European languages. The *identity fallacy*
19 assumes that colonial varieties develop deliberately as speakers want to create their own
20 colonial identity, apart from the national identity that is attached to the mother tongue. Trudgill
21 refutes this for not being an explanatory factor because identity formation “typically post-dates
22 new-dialect formation” (p. 100). He argues that mutual adaptation always occurs in face-to-
23 face interaction between speakers of different dialects, which in turn results in the emergence
24 of new mixed colonial dialects (Trudgill 1986, 2004).
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27 Chapter 8 is devoted to the feminine gender, which emerged as a new grammatical category
28 about 6,000 years ago but is now getting lost again in different languages spoken around the
29 North Sea. Trudgill focusses on sociolinguistic explanations for why some varieties preserve
30 three genders, while other languages ended up with just two genders (by merging the masculine
31 and the feminine into a common gender, which persists in addition to the neuter) or have lost
32 grammatical gender distinctions altogether. Internal-linguistic explanations for this
33 phenomenon have been offered by other scholars, but the importance of also considering social
34 factors is illustrated with an in-depth study on the evolution of the grammatical gender in
35 Bergen. This urban variety, found in the largest city in Norway, has lost the feminine gender,
36 while neighbouring cities have not. A detailed account of the demography of the city, the effects
37 of language contact and dialect contact, but also the geography and the diffusion of the change
38 from focal and kernel areas across Europe, once more underscores why purely linguistic reasons
39 alone are insufficient to explain particular language developments such as the loss of
40 grammatical gender.
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51 As Trudgill points out in the prologue of *Millennia of Language Change*, going back many
52 millennia when investigating language evolution from a sociolinguistic and typological
53 perspective has not been done in many previous studies. Not only is the applied method in this
54 book highly innovative - taking into account data from a wide range of case studies and
55 languages - the accuracy with which every case study is mapped out aids the author in making
56 a compelling argument. Although there are limitations to what is known about past languages
57 and societies, and the time depth of the book necessarily leads to fair amounts of speculation,
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3 the sociolinguistic-typological approach chosen by Trudgill does lead to promising results,
4 illustrating the added value of exploring language change in the longer perspective. The way in
5 which the author manages to account for such long periods of language developments and at
6 the same time relate these linguistic events to sociolinguistic factors is impressive. It is exactly
7 the combination of a 'long' view together with a highly multidisciplinary approach drawing on
8 insights of many branches in linguistics – e.g. dialectology, sociolinguistics, typology, language
9 contact, etc. – which makes the book into a highly relevant reference work for further
10 explorations into language change.

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14 The greatest strength of the volume lies in the large number of case studies and the diversity of
15 language varieties discussed. The broad overview offered, ranging from Indo-European
16 languages to earlier European substrates, and from colonial varieties across the world to
17 evolutions in Polynesian, is highly enriching for every scholar in the field. Furthermore,
18 combining such a broad, typological view with keen insights from sociolinguistics and social
19 determinants of language change testifies to a bird's-eye view that ranges far across linguistic
20 as well as disciplinary boundaries, which only a seasoned scholar can pride himself in.

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24 The structure of the volume is clear and the individual papers are well-connected, with the first
25 chapter illustrating the need for combining a sociolinguistic-typological perspective to a 'long'
26 view on language developments, an approach that is consistently applied to the different case
27 studies in the following chapters. The book is, moreover, written in a pleasant style, which
28 makes *Millennia of Language Change* a must-read, both for academic experts and for graduate
29 students with an interest in (historical) sociolinguistic research.
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