Societies of intimates and mature phenomena
Peter Trudgill

A. Sociolinguistic Typology

- Contact vs. isolation: degree of contact with other language communities
- Dense vs. loose social networks (Milroy, 1980)
- Social stability vs. instability (Dixon, 1997)
- Relatively large vs. relatively small community size
- Small vs. large amounts of shared information (Perkins, 1995)

1. Sociolinguistics, pidgin and creole studies
   Language contact leads to simplification

2. Language typology
   Language contact leads to complexification

3. Historical linguistics
   Thomason: “All the examples that support the claim that interference leads to simplification are of course counterexamples to the opposite claim.”

4. Sociolinguistic typology
   **High contact societies** – two types of contact:
   a) short-term pre-critical threshold contact \( \rightarrow \) simplification
   b) long-term co-territorial post-threshold contact \( \rightarrow \) complexification

   **Low-contact societies**
   a) preservation of existing complexity, **BUT:**
   b) where does development of complexity come from “in the first place”? In particular, where do irregularisation, opacity, syntagmatic redundancy “come from”? And what is origin of new, i.e. non-borrowed, morphological categories?

5. Simplification (Mühlhäusler, 1977)
   a) regularisation of irregularities
   b) increase in lexical/ morphological transparency
   c) loss of redundancy
      - reduction in syntagmatic redundancy
      - loss of morphological categories

   Complexification
   a) irregularisation
   b) increase in opacity
   c) increase in syntagmatic redundancy
   d) additive borrowing: acquisition of additional morphological categories

6. Hypothesis
   In small tightly-knit communities we are most likely to find an increase in irregularity, opacity and syntagmatic redundancy. And not only are morphological categories most readily lost during language contact, but they are also more readily developed in isolation.
B. Traditional dialects/”Small” languages vs. Standard/Urban/Colonial dialects

1. Growth of categories
   a) SW Eng transitive vs. intransitive infinitives – intransitives in -y (Gachelin, 1991):
      *Can you zew up thease seam?* ‘Can you sew up this seam?’
      *The cat vell zick an’ woulde mousy.* ‘The cat fell sick and wouldn’t catch mice.’

   b) SW English habitual vs. punctual (Ihalainen, 1991a):
      *I do/did go there every day.*
      *I goes tomorrow / I went last week.*

   c) North Frisian distinction between two different definite articles (Ebert, 1971; Walker, 1990: 14-15):
      Mooring dialect, Bökingharde:
      |   | masc. | fem. | neut. | pl.  |
      |---|---|---|---|---|
      | e | di | jü | dát | da |
      | et|   |   | et  |
      The –e/-et forms are proximal and/or refer to a unique referent, as in *e moune* ‘the moon’, *e wjaard* ‘the truth’. The other forms are distal and/or are context bound and apply to definite but non-unique referents.
      cf. (a) *Ik hääw ma e bürgermäister snaaked.*
      vs. (b) *Ik hääw ma di bürgermäister snaaked.*
      ‘I have spoken with the mayor’

   d) Norfolk English dialect presentative *be* (Trudgill, 2003):
      *I am, he/she/it is, we/you/they are, but*
      *Here I be!*
      *Ah, here you be!*
      *Where’s Bill – ah, there he be.*

   e) Old Norse had a distinct singular imperative form, but none for the plural. Modern Faroese has developed a singular-plural distinction:
      *Far til hús!* Go home! (sing.)
      *Fariö til hús!* Go home! (plur.)
      Thráinsson et al. (2004): “we have here an innovation in Modern Faroese”.
f) Thráinsson et al (2004: 92): “Germanic languages typically do not have a plural form of the indefinite article”. Faroese has innovated one: used with nouns that only occur in the plural or to indicate “a pair of” something.

Singular forms:

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Plural forms:

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_Eg keypti einar skógvar_ I bought a pair of shoes
_Eg keypti einar buksur_ I bought a pair of trousers
_Eg keypti eini hús_ I bought a home

In the last example, the neuter noun _hús_ is in the accusative plural. The singular form of the same noun, _eitt hús_, would mean ‘a building’.

2. Increase in syntagmatic redundancy

a) East Flemish subject tripling (de Vogelaer, 2004:191):

Some Belgian Dutch dialects have doubling:

_Ze hebbe-en zieder drie kinderen_
they have they three kids
‘they have three kids’

East Flemish tripling in 1st-pers plur ‘we’: _wij_ [full form], _we_ [weak form], _me_ [clitic]

_We zulle-me wij dat doen_
we shall-we we that do
‘we shall do that’

b) Answer particles in Flemish dialects: person agreement on _yes, no_ (De Vogelaer 2005:35)

_Zullen we gaan? Jom._ (‘yes’-1pl)
_Heb je dat gedaan? Jok._ (‘yes’-1sg)
_Is het warm vandaag? Jot._ (‘yes’-3sg)

c) Bavarian dialect person marking on complementisers (Bayer, 1984): e.g. 2sg marking on _ob_ ‘whether’ in agreement with pronoun _du_ ‘you-sg’ and _kumm-st_ ‘come-2sg’:

_obst du noch Minga kummst_
whether you-sg. to Munich come
‘whether you are coming to Munich’
3. Decrease in morphological transparency

a) Norfolk 3rd pers. sing. neut. pronouns (Trudgill, 2003):

That’s raining.
That’s raining, is it?
That’s cold in here.
That’s cold in here, in’t it?
I see the cat - that was on the wall.
The cat? I just see it on the wall.

b) East Somerset pronominal allomorphy (Ihalainen, 1991b):

He’s older than what I be.
I looked up to un and said ‘What’s say?’
He do live in Latcham, don’ er?


- forms in -e after modal and auxiliary verbs: hi wal bål kaame ‘he will soon come’.
- forms in -en when infinitive stands alone; after preposition tu ‘to’; after verbs like bliwe ‘to stay’, hiire ‘to hear’: douen än fouen hiire tuhuupe ‘giving and receiving belong together’.
- forms with zero after än ‘and’: dåt as ai lacht än snååk tjüsch ‘it is not easy to speak German’.

4. Irregularisation

a) Faroese noun declension of dagur ‘day’ (Braunmüller, 2001: 73):

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<tr>
<th>OLD FAROESE</th>
<th>MODERN FAROESE</th>
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b) Norfolk irregular preterites (Forby 1830; Trudgill, 2003):

hoe hew show shew shriek shruck
owe ewe snow snow save seft
sew sew (as of stitches) sow sew (as of seed) wave weft
thow thew (‘thaw thawed’) wrap wrop

C. Complexification

- Low amounts of adult language contact
- High social stability
- Small size
- Dense social networks
- Large amounts of communally shared information

1. Mature phenomena (Dahl, 2004): “presuppose a non-trivial history” – e.g. inflectional morphology

2. Societies of intimates (Givon and Young, 2002): chronological bias in typology?

3. Cross-linguistically dispensable categories: e.g. evidentials
References


Publications on sociolinguistic typology: Peter Trudgill


1999 Language contact and the function of linguistic gender. Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics 35.

2001 Contact and simplification: historical baggage and directionality in linguistic change. Linguistic Typology 5.2, 371.


