

PROPOSAL FOR A PANEL — ICLAVE 7

1. TITLE:

EXPLORING SOCIOLINGUISTIC DETERMINANTS OF LINGUISTIC COMPLEXITY

2. ORGANISERS

SALI A. TAGLIAMONTE

Professor of Linguistics, University of Toronto, Canada

PAUL E. KERSWILL

Professor of Linguistics, University of York, UK

3. GENERAL DESCRIPTION [475 words]

In a recent culminating work on sociolinguistic typology, Peter Trudgill explores the idea that “the human mind may produce different types of language in different places and at different moments in history” (Trudgill, 2011). The major thrust of his theory is that key social characteristics of communities, e.g. small vs. large population, degree of language and dialect contact, dense vs. loose social networks, amount of communally shared information, and high vs. low social stability influences the nature of the community’s linguistic system with a pivotal role played by the interaction of social factors, as in Table 1.

<i>Table 1</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
size	small	small	small	small	large	large
network	tight	tight	loose	loose	loose	loose
contact	low	high	low	high	low	high

According to the model, simplification processes such as the regularization of verbal paradigms, e.g. *I/you/she/he/we/they goes*, tend to occur in large, loosely knit, high contact situations but complexification processes such as an increase in irregularity, syntagmatic redundancy, opacity etc. e.g. intransitive marker *-y*, e.g. *to run vs. to runny*, are more likely outcome in small, tightly-knit, isolated situations. While the predictions of his theory of sociolinguistic typology are well developed, particularly for the polar ends of the typological scale, i.e. 1 and 6 in Table 1, it lacks empirical validation. As Trudgill himself advocates: “if we look hard enough, we will probably be able to find representatives of all the six possible combinations”.

This panel aims to bring together a number of researchers who are exploring the ramifications of Trudgill’s model in varying sociolinguistic settings of linguistic variation, dialect differentiation and language change. Crucially, the range of communities they

study may be differentiated by key social attributes. Moreover, they represent a range of other cultural factors as well: old world vs. new world dialects (Kerwill; Tagliamonte,) and historical dialects (Warner) as well as spanning traditionally 'known' areas of the world (i.e. England) as well as other lesser known areas (Tagliamonte; Northern Canada, Sandøy; Norway). At the same time any explanatory account of linguistic change must be integrated with due consideration of the linguistic system. One area is grammaticalization, by which words evolve into grammatical markers. According to many practitioners (Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 1993) this is a critical component of linguistic change. As innovating linguistic features enter community grammars they do not remain stagnant, but undergo internal development. In particular, the idea that grammaticalization, and linguistic factors in general, plays a role in the emergence of structural complexity (Heine & Kuteva, 2007) means that Trudgill's model must also be reconciled with concomitant linguistic evolution alongside social influences.

The aim of the panel is to explore, discuss and expand on Trudgill's model by elaborating the sociolinguistic spectrum, analyzing the outcome of linguistic variation and change, as well as providing rigorous analyses of relevant linguistic features.

4. PAPERS:

Peter Trudgill will present the first talk in the panel, setting the scene and laying out the theoretical model

PETER TRUDGILL

Professor of Linguistics, University of Agder

ON THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF NON-EQUICOMPLEXITY

The notion that all languages have an equivalent degree of complexity was at one time very much part of the conventional wisdom of the linguistics community. And that view was, understandably, particularly strongly maintained in the face of a non-specialist public who still held to the view that some languages really were more "primitive" than others. Hockett (1958: 180-1) wrote that "the total grammatical complexity of any language, counting both morphology and syntax, is about the same as any other". The idea was that simplification at the level of morphology would be compensated for by complexification at the level of syntax, and vice versa. However, this invariance of linguistic complexity hypothesis has always been implicitly rejected by certain sorts of linguists, notably those variationists, sociolinguists, creolists and dialectologists who had learnt that language contact of certain sorts leads to simplification. It has always been obvious to them that, if the same language could be more or less simple at different points in time, then different languages could be more or less simple at the same point in time. This paper will address the topic of what exactly the social determinants of

linguistic simplicity and complexity might be.

Selected References:

Hockett, Charles F. 1958. *A course in modern linguistics*. New York: Macmillan

Sali Tagliamonte will offer her perspective from English dialects in the UK and Canada.

SALI A. TAGLIAMONTE

Professor of Linguistics, University of Toronto

EXPLORING SOCIOLINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY IN SYNCHRONIC ENGLISH DIALECTS

In this paper, I use comparative sociolinguistic methods (Tagliamonte, 2002) and communities spanning the UK and Canada to test the sociolinguistic typology outlined in Trudgill (2011:147). Further, because the use and patterning of a linguistic feature may manifest differently depending on its stage of development, I will integrate grammaticalization theory (Hopper & Traugott, 1993) into the analysis.

An ideal linguistic variable to test the impact of social typology and grammaticalization is the use of *have got* or *got* for stative possessive meaning: *I got a kid who just can't do it. He 's got a disability*. The use of *have got* is developmental in the UK, arising in the 1600's, and accelerating in the 1800's and beyond (e.g. Kroch, 1989). In contrast the use of *got* is highly differentiated by dialect, occurring robustly in the Southwest (Devon, Somerset) (Tagliamonte, 2013). In Canada *have got* has been diminishing since at least the early 1900's yet *have got* and *got* remain differentiated by dialect.

Statistical analysis of eighteen communities, 8920 tokens and 540 individuals reveals that the linguistic constraints on this variable remain steadfast over centuries (*have got* favoured with concrete complements, e.g. *I 've got a cat*); others differ depending on region (*have* favoured for noun phrases, e.g. *Cats have nine lives*). *Got* not only embodies the linguistic evolution of the system (favoured with 1st person, concrete) but also indexes affective meaning, identity, non-conformity, etc. (e.g. *I just got shit luck!*). Moreover, this is particularly salient in the smallest, most intimate localities. The finding that an ongoing linguistic change is sensitive to community type offers empirical evidence that Trudgill's theory of sociolinguistic typology operates in tandem with linguistic mechanisms of change.

Selected References:

Heine, Bernd, Claudi, Ulrike & Hünnemeyer, Friederike (1991). *Grammaticalization: A conceptual framework*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Heine, Bernd & Kuteva, Tania (2007). *The genesis of grammar: A reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hopper, Paul J. & Traugott, Elizabeth Closs (1993). *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kroch, Anthony S. (1989). Reflexes of grammar in patterns of language change. *Language Variation and Change* 1(3): 199-244.
- Tagliamonte, Sali A. (2002). Comparative sociolinguistics. In Chambers, J. K., Trudgill, P. & Schilling-Estes, N. (Eds.), *Handbook of language variation and change*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 729-763.
- Tagliamonte, Sali A. (2013). *Roots of English: Exploring the history of dialects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trudgill, Peter (2011). *Sociolinguistic typology: Social determinants of linguistic complexity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Anthony Warner will offer his perspective from Middle English dialect data.

ANTHONY WARNER

Professor of Linguistics, University of York

INTER-RELATING ENGLISH AND NORSE

In this paper I shall discuss evidence for the historical typology of Middle English dialects. Trudgill (2011a, b) presents an analysis of the nature of the contacts between Old English and Old Norse, and Old English and Celtic, which straightforwardly illustrates one of his major oppositions. He suggests that the simplifications which can be seen in Middle English are due to contact with Celtic rather than contact with Old Norse, and that the English-Norse situation was a 'long-term co-territorial contact of the child-bilingualism type' (2011a: 52). In terms of his major distinction between situations showing different types of bilingualism, simplification is the likely outcome of English-Celtic contact (with adult bilingualism, and language shift), whereas the intense contact between English and Norse (with a supposedly high level of child bilingualism) would be likely to lead to increased complexity.

Yet the effects of the impact of Norse on English remain controversial. For example, Jespersen (1938: section 79) sees the impact on inflection as simplification. In contrast, Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 303) argue that 'Norse did not stimulate simplification in English'. Moreover there has been disagreement about the extent of bilingualism, with one recent analyst claiming that English-Norse bilingualism was uncommon (Townend 2002).

Much of the evidence for the English-Norse contact situation is necessarily linguistic. I shall re-examine the dialect situation in Middle English in order to assess the possible simplificatory impact of Norse and Celtic, looking principally at morphology and syntax. I will suggest (contra Trudgill) that the interpretation of the English-

Norse contact situation as one which results in simplification and in which child bilingualism is relatively unimportant is reasonable. We could place it among Trudgill's situations of long-term co-territorial contact. It would however be one in which untutored, adult second language learning and language shift had more impact than child bilingualism.

Selected References:

Jespersen, O. (1938). *Growth and Structure of the English Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Thomason, S. G. and Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*.

Townend, M. (2002). *Language and History in Viking Age England*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Trudgill, P. (2011a). *Sociolinguistic Typology*. Oxford: OUP.

Trudgill, P. (2011b). A tale of two copulas: Language-contact speculations on first millennium England. *Nowele* 62/63.285-320

Helge Sandøy will offer his perspective from Norwegian dialects in Western Norway

HELGE SANDØY

Professor, University of Bergen

TYPES OF COMMUNITIES AND DIALECT CHANGE IN NORWAY

In this paper, I report on the project "Dialect Change Processes"¹, which studies the degree of change in Norwegian dialects using a quantitative model comparing cumulative scores of change and relative frequency (Sandøy 2009). On the level of variables we can discern a tendency that changes causing structural complexification, e.g. a retroflex flap added to the phoneme inventory, have a lower chance of success, whereas changes causing simplification, e.g. merging of two present tense suffixes *-e* and *-a*, demonstrate a higher success rate than the average of variables studied in the community. These results can easily be interpreted theoretically using Trudgill's (2011) theory of sociolinguistic typology. However, statistical methods enable us to more closely investigate other possible factors, e.g. the location of a change on the S-curve. Since different locations on the curve are likely to correspond to differences in indexed social values, we expect this aspect to have some explanatory power.

This comparative approach enables us to test general sociolinguistic claims and helps us construct a more detailed model where the interrelation of different conditions and

¹ Dialect Change Processes, <http://folk.uib.no/hnohs/DEP/>

factors can be measured. A demography-centred model needs to be modified to accommodate both linguistic structure and sociolinguistic factors. One promising social determinant is whether the communities integrate newcomers or whether newcomers constitute enclaves within the society. Additionally, differences between input dialects need to be included. I will expand on the impact of these factors by using data we have collected in Western Norway.

References

- Sandøy, Helge. (2009). Quantifying linguistic changes: Experiments in Norwegian language history. In: Monique Dufresne et al., *Historical Linguistics 2007*, 285–294. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Trudgill, Peter. (2011). *Sociolinguistic Typology. Social Determinants of Linguistic Complexity*. Oxford: Oxford Press.

The panel will end with a discussant, Professor Paul Kerswill, who will critique the papers, summary their interpretations and offer a synthesis.

PAUL E. KERSWILL

Professor of Linguistics, University of York