

Social structure and language change

Peter Trudgill, Agder University

This chapter explores aspects of the hypothesis that the distribution of linguistic structures and features over languages is sociolinguistically not entirely random.¹ The suggestion is that there may be a tendency for different types of social environment and social structure to give rise to, or at least be accompanied by, different types of linguistic structure (Trudgill, in preparation). In this paper, I will outline facets of this sociolinguistic take on linguistic typology with respect to linguistic change, with a particular focus on changes that might be labelled *simplification* and *complexification*. I suggest that linguistic simplification is most likely to occur in social environments of certain types; and that linguistic complexification is most likely to occur against social backgrounds of other, different types.

The relevant key parameters which go into the composition of these different types of society would appear to include the following:

a) contact vs. isolation: the degree of contact that a linguistic community has with other communities speaking other language varieties;

b) dense vs. loose social networks: the key factor here as adumbrated, on the basis of sociological research, by James Milroy and Lesley Milroy

¹ I am very grateful for information, discussions, help and advice in connection with the subject matter of this paper to: Raphael Berthele, Kurt Braunmüller, Gunther De Vogelaer, Jan Terje Faarlund, Liliane Haegeman, Jean Hannah, Lukas Pietsch, Jacques Van Keymeulen, Wim Vandenbussche, Alastair Walker, and especially Peter Siemund.

(1985; and see also Milroy, 1992), is a distinction between communities with relatively dense, multiplex social networks, which is to say communities where it is common for everybody to know everybody else, and where, for example, your neighbour and your second cousin and your workmate may be one and the same person; and on the other hand communities with relatively loose networks, where the reverse is the case;

c) social stability vs. instability (cf. Dixon, 1997): the degree to which communities have relatively well established, long-term, continuing social structures and patterns;

and d) relatively small vs. relatively large community size (cf. Haudricourt, 1961).

While these parameters are in principle independent of one another, they are in practice of course by no means totally so: small, stable communities with relatively few outside contacts are more likely to demonstrate relatively dense social networks. In the rest of this paper, I will focus on communities with this particular cluster of features, which I will for convenience refer to as *high-contact* societies; as well as on communities of the polar opposite type: large, fluid, high-contact societies characterised by relatively loose networks, which I will term *low-contact* societies.

To begin our discussion with high-contact societies, there is considerable agreement in the literature about the relationship between high contact and one type of language change: language contact, it is widely believed, leads to simplification. This is the view which is quite naturally taken by linguists in pidgin and creole studies: koinés, pidgins, creoles, and creoloids

(Trudgill, 1996) are all widely and uncontroversially agreed to owe their relative structural simplicity to language contact. But agreement about the role of contact in producing simplification generally, in languages other than pidgins, creoles and creoloids, is also widespread in sociolinguistics and dialectology. For example, Milroy (1992: 203) suggests that the trend towards simplification in late Old English/early Middle English is clearly “at least to some extent associated with *language contact*”. Vogt (1948: 39) says that “on observe souvent qu’une langue perd des distinctions formelles, dans des circonstances qui rendent l’hypothèse d’influence étrangère assez naturelle”. Sankoff (2002: 657) notes that, according to Bokamba (1993), multilingual language contact situations “may result in morphological simplification” where a language is used as a lingua franca. And Kusters (2003) has demonstrated the link between contact and simplification quantitatively in connection with inflectional morphology. Jahr (2001) has argued for the role of language contact with Low German in producing the relative simplification of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian (as compared to Icelandic and Faroese), a view which has been shared by others including Pedersen (1999) and Askedal (2005). And many more examples could be given.

On the other hand, the linguistic-typological literature is notable for the widespread acceptance of the diametrically opposed point of view. For example, Nichols (1992: 192) says that “contact among languages fosters complexity, or, put differently, diversity among neighbouring languages fosters complexity in each of the languages”. Aikhenvald (2002) cites numerous examples of contact-induced complexification in Amazonia. Vanhove (2001) discusses language contact with its resultant

complexification in the history of Maltese. And once again many other examples could be cited.

It is a nice illustration of these two different perspectives that in a paper where he asks “what happens to inflectional morphology in cases of language contact?”, Comrie (2008) does not even mention a development which sociolinguists have routinely pointed to as being particularly likely to occur in such situations, namely a reduction in or total loss of inflectional morphology.

The conflict between these two opposing positions has been noted by historical linguists, who have contented themselves with observations such as “all the examples that support the claim that interference leads to simplification are of course counterexamples to the opposite claim” (Thomason, 2001: 65). Harris and Campbell, too, mention the claim that contact leads to “structural simplification”, but they also point out that “there are clear counterexamples” (1995: 133).

In Trudgill (2009) I have suggested that a sociolinguistic typological approach can help to shed light on this apparent contradiction. Language contact can indeed have two totally opposed types of outcome, but a sociolinguistically informed perspective suggests that this is likely to be due to the fact that the different outcomes involve two typologically different forms of contact, in terms of the sociolinguistic matrices in which they occur.

In Trudgill (2009) I make the not very startling suggestion that in fact simplification is most likely to occur in situations involving language learning by adults, who are typically poor second-language learners as compared to small children, particularly in short-term contact situations. In such situations, features which are “outsider difficult” (Kusters, 2003: 6) or

“L2 difficult” (Dahl, 2004: 294), are likely to disappear. The most extreme of these situations are of course those which lead to the emergence of pidgins.

Correspondingly, complexification is most likely to occur in long-term co-territorial contact situations involving child and therefore proficient bilingualism. The most extreme of these situations are probably those involving Sprachbünde/linguistic areas. For example, Dixon and Aikhenvald (1999) discuss the linguistic area formed by the languages of Amazonia, specifically the Amazon and Orinoco basins, which has at least ten major language families and many more smaller ones. Here, the vast majority of the languages, regardless of language family membership, have come over the centuries to share a large number of features. Dixon and Aikhenvald (1999:8-9) give a non-exhaustive list of fifteen features which are common to most or all of the languages of this vast region, including the expression of verbal categories through optional suffixes, and the formation of subordinate clauses through verb nominalisation.

The contrast between the two different types of contact becomes particularly clear if we compare Comrie (2008) with Kusters (2003); it is clear that they are looking at two very different types of social situation. Comrie discusses the way in which contact led to the growth of mixed languages such as Michif, which is a French-Cree mixed or intertwined language with considerable morphological complexity (Bakker, 1997); and says that it is clear that the generation which developed this language must have had a high degree of fluency in both French and Cree or some other form of Algonquian. Kusters, on the other hand, relates simplification in e.g. Arabic to the acquisition of Arabic by adult non-native speakers.

Simplification and complexification

Further light can be shed on this issue if we now further explore what is meant in the context of this chapter by the terms *simplification* and *complexification*. I readily acknowledge that there are other, perhaps many other, facets of linguistic simplicity and complexity which I am not addressing here. And I intend to illustrate my usage of the terms in this paper rather than define in any detail.

Following Mühlhäusler (1977), I suggest that consideration of the growth of pidgins leads to the understanding that simplification, as discussed by Milroy, Vogt and Kusters, consists of the following sub-processes:

- the regularisation of irregularities
- an increase in lexical/ morphological transparency
- a reduction in syntagmatic redundancy e.g. grammatical agreement
- the loss of morphological categories.

It therefore follows that complexification, as discussed by Nichols, consists of the reverse processes:

- irregularisation
- increase in opacity
- increase in syntagmatic redundancy
- acquisition of morphological categories.

We can now note, however, that the complexification discussed by Nichols consists of only one of these processes. In her data, there are no irregularisations, no increases in opacity, and no increases in syntagmatic redundancy. The complexification described by typologists such as Nichols consists solely of *the addition of morphological categories* – indeed, Nichols computes complexity in terms of numbers of morphological markers – and, moreover, it is a very particular type of addition. The cases studied by Aikhenvald (2002), which are quite typical, are all instances of morphological categories being acquired by one language from another language with which it is in contact – and, crucially, being acquired in addition to categories which it already has. That is, we are dealing with *additive borrowing* as opposed to *replacive borrowing*.

The interesting question therefore arises as to the origins of the other forms of complexity – of complexification which is the precise antithesis to the simplification which leads to pidgins. If simplification occurs in short-term, adult contact situations, and additive complexification in long-term child contact situations, then what exactly are the sociolinguistic conditions which give rise to irregularisation, increase in opacity, increase in syntagmatic redundancy, and to the *spontaneous* addition of morphological categories, i.e. categories which are not borrowed from other languages? As Thurston (1994: 603) says, what we need to do be able to do is “to explain how complexity arose in languages in the first place”. In the rest of this paper I attempt a preliminary investigation of this issue.

Language in isolation

It is clear that we cannot look for the development of this type of complexification in any type of *contact* situation. If short-term adult (post-critical threshold) contact tends to favour simplification, and if long-term co-territorial pre-threshold contact tends to favour additive complexification only, as illustrated in Trudgill (2009), then we must surely seek the locus of non-additive complexification in languages which experience low levels of language contact.

It does seem to be very clearly the case that, in general, languages spoken in low-contact societies tend to demonstrate the preservation of existing complexity. This is one of the major points made by the authors quoted above who have dealt with simplification in the Nordic languages: not only is it the case that the continental languages have undergone simplification, it is also true that the insular languages Icelandic and Faroese have preserved a very great deal of the complexity that was present in Old Norse.

In the rest of this paper, I hypothesise that it is in low-contact communities that we are most likely to find not only the preservation of complexity but also an increase in irregularity, opacity, syntagmatic redundancy and non-borrowed morphological categories. In other words, we should look for the growth of complexity in situations which are the opposite in every respect, including degree of contact, to those in which pidgins develop.

In this paper I look for this phenomenon in the Germanic languages. All the major standard language varieties in Europe today are now relatively high-contact koinés and creoloids which are the result in part of simplification resulting from dialect contact. The precursor to modern Standard English referred to by Hope (2000: 50) as “a Londonish–East Midlandish–Northernish–Southernish” mixture is

very typical. The hypothesis therefore suggests that cases of spontaneous, non-additive complexification should be looked for in relatively isolated low-contact nonstandardised varieties of modern European languages in comparison with their respective standards. We can also look at those languages which are spoken by small groups of speakers in tightly-knit communities and compare them to related languages. For English we can look at the Traditional-Dialects (Wells, 1982), and for German to the Mundarten, for instance. And we can also look at “small” languages like Frisian and Faroese.

It is important that this work be carried out comparatively, by ranging English Traditional-Dialects against General English (Wells, 1982), Mundart against Umgangssprache, Faroese against Swedish, and so on. And we must necessarily be concerned with diachronically demonstrable complexification, because different levels of complexity between high-contact and low-contact varieties will be due just as often to simplification in the high-contact varieties as to complexification in low-contact varieties. By doing this work comparatively and feature-by-feature, we will also be able to avoid the pitfalls associated with attempting to develop some kind of measure for the calculation of complexity.

There is no claim here, of course, that complexification occurs only in low-contact varieties, merely that there is a tendency for this to be more common – perhaps a good deal more common – in low-contact than in high-contact varieties. I simply suggest that if the most common pattern is one of complexification events in traditional dialects and “small languages” which are not paralleled by similar developments in high-contact urban, colonial or standard varieties, then the thesis that the growth of complexity does tend to depend for its genesis largely on low-contact linguistic environments will be strengthened.

I now go on to produce evidence in favour of the hypothesis by describing linguistic changes which are of the complexification type and

which have occurred in varieties of the Germanic languages spoken in communities that most closely meet the category of *low contact* – and changes which, crucially, have no counterpart in related high-contact urban dialects or standard varieties. I will do so by examining in turn apparent cases of the four different subtypes of complexification as listed above (although close examination of the actual examples will show that the distinction between the four categories is not a clear-cut one).

Complexification 1: growth of morphological categories

Under this heading are examples of the historical development of new morphological categories which are not paralleled in other related varieties, and where there is no evidence of the new category having been acquired as a result of additive borrowing.

1. A few Traditional-Dialects in a small area of the southwest of England developed a new and fascinating marking of the difference between transitive and intransitive infinitives. Intransitive infinitives in these dialects are (or at least were – the distinction appears no longer to be current) marked by the word-final morpheme *-y*, while transitive infinitives were unmarked. So in Dorset we find (Trudgill 1999: 103):

Can you zew up thease zeam? ‘Can you sew up this seam?’

vs.

The cat vell zick an’ woulden mousy. ‘The cat fell sick and wouldn’t catch mice’.

The important point is that this is unparalleled anywhere else in the English-speaking world, and is quite possibly unparalleled anywhere else at all. My enquiry on the Linguistic Typology List asking for examples of other languages which have morphological marking for intransitive but not transitive infinitives received three answers, none of them producing a precise parallel.

2. A number of Traditional-Dialects in the southwest of England developed an interesting phenomenon described by Ihalainen (1976) in which there is a category distinction between habitual and punctual verb forms such as (note that the forms *do*, *did* are unemphatic):

I do go there every day.

I did go there every day.

vs.

I goes tomorrow.

I went last week.

This of course is a distinction between two categories which is common enough in the languages of the world. In English, however, it represents an innovation, and one which is unknown in any of the General English varieties.

3. Certain North Frisian dialects have developed a distinction between two different definite articles (Ebert, 1971; Ebert and Keenan, 1973; Walker,

1990: 14-15). In the Mooring dialect of the Bökingharde area the two sets of forms are:

Masc.	<i>di</i>	<i>e</i>
Fem.	<i>jü</i>	<i>e</i>
Neut.	<i>dât</i>	<i>et</i>
Pl.	<i>da</i>	<i>et</i>

The usage of the two forms is grammatically and semantically complex (see Markey, 1981: 228), but typically the *-e/-et* forms are proximal and/or refer to a unique referent, as in *e moune* 'the moon', *e wjaard* 'the truth', whereas the *di/jü/dât/da* forms are distal and/or are context-bound and apply to definite but non-unique referents. For example, 'I have spoken to the village-mayor' can be rendered in two ways:

a) *ik hääw ma e bürgermäister snaaked*

b) *ik hääw ma di bürgermäister snaaked*

'I have with the mayor spoken'

In (a) the reference is to the mayor of the one's own village, whereas in (b) it is to the mayor of some other village. Equally, in the Fering dialect, as Ebert (1984) points out, a question posed by some non-native-speaking outsider in a particular village along the lines of:

Huar wenet di bürgermäister 'Where does the mayor live?'

Would solicit the answer:

Hün bürgermäister manst du? ‘Which mayor do you mean?’

This distinction is clearly an innovation and, to say the least, has no parallel in any of the standard forms of other Germanic languages.

4. In the Toten dialect of Norwegian (Faarlund, 2000), complexification has occurred in the demonstrative system. A system of demonstrative pronouns and adjectives has developed which is not found in either of the standard forms of Norwegian, nor in most other Norwegian dialects. A three-way distinction has evolved, as follows.

a) There are, first, a group of proximal demonstratives corresponding to *this* in English and to *denne/dette/desse* (masc.-fem. sing./neut. sing./plur.) in Nynorsk and *denne/dette/disse* in Bokmål. In Toten these are:

denni/detti/dessi.

b) Then we find the second Toten group:

danna/datta/dassa.

These distal demonstratives refer “to something which is visible in the conversational situation, and which the speaker ... can point to” (Faarlund, 2000: 54, my translation):

Danna boka (somm ligg dær) har je itte lesi

‘That book (which is-lying there) have I not read’

Veit du åkke somm bor i datta husi dær?

‘Know you who that lives in that house there?’

Dassa såkka (somm ligg bortpå stola) er reine

‘Those socks (which are-lying over-there-on) the chair are clean’

c) The third series “is used for something which is not visible to the interlocutors, but has recently been mentioned in the conversation (Faarlund, 2000: 54, my translation):

Denn boka (somm du næmnde) har je itte lesi

‘That book (which you mentioned) have I not read’

Veit du åkke somm bor i dæ huse (somm vi nettopp tala om)?

‘Know you who lives in that house (which we just were-speaking about)?’

Dei såkka (somm du spør ætter) ær møkkete

‘Those socks (which you are-asking about) are dirty’

5. The rural English dialect of Norfolk has developed a new verbal category which is not found in Standard English. The non-negative present tense of the verb *to be* is identical to the Standard English paradigm: *I am, he/she/it is, we/you/they are*. However, there is also a distinct presentative form of the verb which has *be* for all persons (Trudgill, 2003):

Here I be!

Ah, here you be!

Where 's Bill - ah, there he be.

Complexification 2: increase in syntagmatic redundancy

It is interesting to note that the examples I have located under this heading are of two different types. Example 6 is a case of a particular discourse strategy whereby speakers choose to optionally repeat information more frequently in some dialects than others. Examples 8 to 11, on the other hand, represent examples of grammatical agreement. It is possible that the latter type derive diachronically from earlier stages which resembled the former type –and this may in fact be what we are seeing in example 7.

6. The empirical and theoretical work of Berthele (2006), which is based on field recordings of discourse in dialects of Swiss German (as well as French and Romansch), is especially helpful on this topic because it provides some quantitative data. One of the phenomena which Berthele has focussed on is the use of complex, redundant pleonastic constructions involving prepositions and adverbials with motion and posture verbs, in which information appears to be given twice. Swiss German examples from his recordings (Berthele, 2006) include:

und iez tuet er ufe baumstamm uufchläddere (183)

and now does he up-a tree-trunk up-climb

‘and now he climbs up a tree trunk’

de hirsch hed ne da übernes bord abbegrüärt ine täich ine (p. 184)

the stag has him then over-a bank down-thrown into-a pond into
‘the stag then threw him over a bank down into a pond’

ischer dri usse gsprunge übernes nesseli usse (p. 184)

is-he in-there out jumped over-a nettle out

‘he jumped out into there over a nettle’

Of particular value is Berthele’s discussion of the data from the Swiss German dialect of Muotathal. The Muotathal “is a place with a high degree of linguistic and cultural idiosyncrasy. The population is characterised by relatively dense, close-knit and multiplex social networks, which can easily be inferred from the small set of last names borne by a large portion of the native population” (Berthele, 2004: 101). And it has “relatively traditional language-ecology conditions” with “low levels of migration, higher education, and valley-external ties” (p. 102).

According to Berthele, Swiss German dialects as a whole tend to show greater syntagmatic redundancy in both stative and dynamic spatial expressions than Standard German, which is of course interesting for our thesis. But it is clear from his data that this is much truer of Muotathal than of the other dialects he investigated: the rural dialect of the Wallis/Valais, the rural Sensler dialect of Canton Freiburg, the urban dialect of Berne, and Standard German. The percentage of verb phrases with redundant direction marking in the different Swiss dialects is as follows:

Wallis	12%
Berne	15%
Sensler	17%

Muotathal 23%

Speakers of the high-contact Standard German in Berthele's sample, on the other hand, use less than half the number of redundant expressions as those used by Muotathal speakers: 11% (Berthele, 2006: 188). This is consistent with the suggestion that it is in small, dense, close-knit societies that redundancy is most likely to increase.

7. In the English Traditional-Dialect of Norfolk, a form of double tense marking or 'past-tense infinitives' can be found which is absent from Standard English. For example:

Have the fox left?

No that ain't, do Bailey would've let them went.

'No it hasn't, or Bailey would've let them [the hounds] go.' (Trudgill, 1995)

8. According to Van der Auwera and Neuckermans (2004: 455), some dialects of East Flemish have developed considerable redundancy of the repetition-of-information type in the form of triple negation, as in:

'k en ben niemand ni tegengekomen

I not am nobody not met

'I haven't met anybody'

Crucially, triple negation in this dialect is clearly an innovation out of earlier double negation: as Van der Auwera and Neuckermans say, while *en* is an "old negative marker", *ni* is a "relatively new marker" (p. 455).

Even more remarkable, the peripheral West Flemish dialects, as described by Haegeman (1995: 132), have gone even further down this path of growth of syntagmatic redundancy, with the development of no less than quadruple negation, as in:

da Valère nooit an geen mens niets gezeid en-oat

that Valère never to no person nothing said not-had

'that Valère had never told anyone anything'

Standardised Dutch, in contrast, has single negation only:

dat Valeer aan niemand ooit iets gezegd had

that Valère to nobody ever anything said had

9. De Vogelaer (2004:190) notes that subject doubling occurs in a number of Belgian Dutch dialects. For example,

Ze hebbe-en zieder drie kinderen

they have they three kids

'They have three kids'

contains three person markers: the *-en* third-person plural marker on the verb, the clitic pronominal form *ze*, and the pronoun *zieder*.

More remarkably, in East Flemish dialects (de Vogelaer, 2004:191), subject tripling actually occurs, in the first-person plural. A verb can take a preverbal pronoun and two post-verbal pronouns. The three pronominal forms are *wij* 'we', *we* 'we' [weak form], and *me* 'we' [clitic form]. De Vogelaer cites as an example:

We zulle-me wij dat doen
we shall-we we that do
'We shall do that'

10. According to De Vogelaer (2005: 35), certain Flemish dialects have developed a system of obligatory person agreement on the words corresponding to English *yes* and *no*, referred to by him as 'answer particles'.

Zullen we gaan? Jom. 'Shall we go? Yes [1pl]'.
Heb je dat gedaan? Jok. 'Have you done it? Yes [1sg]'
Is het warm vandaag? Jot. 'Is it warm today? Yes [3sg]'

11. Dialects of Bavarian German (Bayer, 1984) have developed person agreement marking on complementisers. For example, second-person singular marking occurs on *ob* 'whether' in agreement together with the pronoun *du* 'you-sg.' and *kumm-st* 'come-2nd sg.' in:

.....obst du noch Minga kummst
whether you (sg) to Munich come
'.....whether you are coming to Munich'

Second person plural marking occurs on *ob*, with the suffix *-ts* being repeated, in:

.....obts ihr noch Minga kummts
.....whether you (pl) to Munich come
'.....whether you are coming to Munich'

The same phenomenon occurs in certain dialects of Dutch/Flemish (Van Haeringen, 1939).

Complexification 3: increase in morphological opacity

The most relevant aspect of opacity for the current discussion is one which has been treated by a number of authors and is referred to by Kusters (2003:21) in his *transparency principle* as a demand "that the relation between form and meaning is as transparent as possible". The highest level of transparency or analyticity is when "every single meaning is expressed in a separate form". Kusters cites the loss of allomorphy in Arabic as an obvious simplification under this heading. Growth in allomorphy, obviously, correspondingly represents a clear case of loss of morphological transparency, and thus an increase in complexity. The examples in this section are all cases of increases in allomorphy.

12. The first example of increase in allomorphy comes from an English dialect and, crucially, has not been paralleled in high-contact varieties of English. This concerns the third-person singular neuter pronoun. In nearly

all English dialects, including Standard English, *it* is both the subjective and the objective form. In the dialect of Norfolk, however, a complication has developed. In preverbal position the neuter singular pronoun is not *it* but *that*. This is particularly clear in the case of the “weather pronoun” where no possibility exists that we are dealing with the homophonous demonstrative:

That's raining.

That's cold in here.

But there is no doubt that it also operates in genuine pronominalisation:

I see the cat – that was on the wall.

However, in postverbal position the pronoun takes the form *it*:

Oh, that's raining, is it?

That's cold in here, in't it?

The cat? – I just see it on the wall

13. In the Traditional-Dialect of East Somerset (Ihalainen, 1991) a pronominal allomorphy more complex than that found in other dialects has developed, notably in the third-person singular masculine. The subject form of the pronoun is the expected *he*:

He's older than what I be.

The object form is *ʔn / ɛn ̃ n ʔ /*

I looked up to un and said 'What's say?'

However, there is an additional form of the subject pronoun which Ihalainen refers to as a question clitic, and which occurs obligatorily in tag questions. This Ihalainen writes as *her* or *er*, but it is phonologically */ɛ̃ ã ñ #/*:

He do live in Latcham, don' er?

14. Most varieties of Frisian have two forms of the infinitive, but the Bökingharde dialect of North Frisian (Walker and Wilts, 2001:295-6) has developed an even richer allomorphy, with three different infinitival forms.

a) Forms with the suffix *-e* occur after modal and auxiliary verbs: *hi wal bål kaame* ‘he will soon come’. In some cases, this form of the infinitive shows even greater opacity by being irregular and having palatalisation in place of the *-e* suffix: *düünj* cf. *douen* ‘to do, give’, *schijnj* cf. *schaien* ‘to happen’.

b) Forms ending in *-en* occur when the infinitive stands alone, after the preposition *tu* ‘to’, and after certain verbs such as *bliwe* ‘to stay’, *hiire* ‘to hear’: *douen än fouen hiire tuhuupe* ‘giving and receiving belong together’.

c) Forms with a zero ending occur after the conjunction *än* ‘and’: *dât as ai lacht än snååk tjüsch* ‘it is not easy to speak German’. The corresponding form of the verb ‘to do’ is *dou*.

Complexification 4: irregularisation

Here I discuss two cases of irregularisation. The first is quite clearly due to sound changes which, as is usually the case, were themselves quite regular. The second is rather different. Some of the irregularisations are examples of regular verbs fitting into established strong verb patterns, but others of them are somewhat mysterious.

15. Older Faroese had a complex system of noun declension, including numerous irregular paradigms such as that for *dagur* ‘day’:

	<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>
nom.	[dagur]	[dagar]
acc.	[dag]	[dagar]
gen.	[dags]	[daga]
dat.	[degi]	[døgum]

This was a system which was relatively complex in post-threshold learnability terms. There were seven different forms to learn, and there was a low level of morphological transparency.

However, crucially for our hypothesis, the complexity of the nominal system of modern Faroese is now even greater than that of the earlier language. The contemporary declension for this same noun is (Braunmüller, 2001: 73):

	<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>
nom.	[dèavúr]	[dè:ar]
acc.	[dèa]	[dè:ar]
gen.	[dagás]	[dè:a]
dat.	[dè:ji]	[dø:vún]

The complexity – the irregularity – of this paradigm is colossal. As Braunmüller says, only the consonantal onset remains constant throughout the paradigm. Braunmüller cites similar cases in a number of other modern noun subclasses also.

High-contact continental Scandinavian, on the other hand, has lost complexity rather than adding it. The corresponding noun *dag* in Standard Norwegian Bokmål, for instance, has only two forms: *dag* (sing.), *dager* (pl.).

16. In the English Traditional-Dialect of Norfolk, for example, we find a number irregular preterites which occur in cases where Standard English has regular forms. These include (Forby 1830; Trudgill, 2003):

<i>hoe</i>	<i>hew</i>
<i>mow</i>	<i>mew</i>
<i>owe</i>	<i>ewe</i>
<i>row</i>	<i>rew</i>
<i>save</i>	<i>seft</i>
<i>sew</i> /sou/	<i>sew</i> /sù:/ (as of stitches)
<i>show</i>	<i>shew</i>
<i>snow</i>	<i>snew</i>

sow *sew* /sù:/ (as of seed)

thow (*thaw*) *thew*

shriek *shruck*

wave *weft*

wrap *wrop*

In fact, a few of these verbs did have strong or irregular preterites on their first attested appearance in Old English or Middle English. This is true of *mow* and *row*, while *sew* had both strong and weak forms in Old English. In these cases, then, regularisation has taken place in Standard English and in the General English nonstandard dialects, while the Traditional Norfolk Dialect has preserved the original irregularity. The other irregular forms, however, are not historical. *Show*, for example, was a weak verb in OE, with the preterite *sceawed*, as was *thaw*; and the other verbs were also regular from their earliest appearance. The only exception is *owe*, which goes back to Old English *aƿan*, with the early OE preterite *ahte*, which later of course gave rise to *ought*, and was superseded as preterite by regular *awede* > *owed*. So the Norfolk forms *ewe*, *hew*, *sew* (of *sew*), *shew*, *snew*, *thew*, *shruck*, *seft*, *weft*, *wrop* are all innovations which involved irregularisation. The changes to *ewe*, *hew*, *sew*, *shew*, *sew*, *thew* are obviously the result of analogy with the *blow* class, but the origins of *shruck*, *seft*, *weft*, and *wrop* are less clear.

Speculative Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a good case to be made for the role of societal type in language change by examining briefly the social

contexts in which simplification occurs; and then by producing comparative evidence in favour of the argument that complexification, in the sense in which the term has been used in this paper, is most likely to develop in low-contact communities. I have argued for the legitimacy of this sociolinguistic typological insight with examples from morphological data, but there is some indication that it may well be valid for phonology as well (see Trudgill, 2004). The argumentation, moreover, has relied on material from Germanic languages only. These languages do lend themselves particularly well to this discussion, because in Germanic languages we can find striking contrasts, within a limited geographical area, between communities speaking related dialects and languages in which we can deduce with some accuracy which complex features are retentions, corresponding to simplification in other varieties, and which are the result of actual complexification. But comparisons within other language families would obviously be desirable.

Of course, it is one thing to demonstrate that there may be a link between community type and simplification/complexification, but it is another matter to explain why there should be such a link. What exactly can the connection be between social structure and linguistic features of this type? I now attempt some elucidation of this point by discussing further the relevance of the sociolinguistic parameters outlined at the beginning of this paper: networks, size, and stability.

As far as social network structure is concerned, we can follow the lead of the Milroys who argue, on the basis especially of their work in Belfast, that dense networks lead to strong social ties, and that strong social ties lead to closer maintenance of community norms, in language as in other forms of behaviour. On the other hand, loose networks lead to weaker social ties and so to a relative lack of maintenance of community norms. The Milroys argue

that the consequence is that “linguistic change is slow to the extent that the relevant populations are well established and bound by strong ties whereas it is rapid to the extent that weak ties exist in populations” (see also L. Milroy, 2000). Dense social networks, as we noted earlier, are most likely to be found in small, stable communities with few external contacts and a high degree of social cohesion. Loose social networks are more liable to develop in larger, unstable communities which have relatively many external contacts and a relative lack of social cohesion. Linguistic change is therefore liable, other things being equal, to be faster in larger than in smaller communities (see Trudgill, in preparation).

This insight about speed of change can also be extended to differences of the sort we have been discussing here, between types of change. Given that there is a strong tendency for relative density of social networks to correlate with community size, we can note the comment made by Grace (1990: 126), who writes:

A language exists in the people who speak it, but people do not live very long, and the language goes on much longer. This continuity is achieved by the recruitment of new speakers, but it is not a perfect continuity. Children (or adults) learning a language learn it from people who already speak it, but these teachers exercise considerably less than total control over the learning process.

We must accept that no teachers exercise total control, but this perspective does also suggest that, because of network structure, there is a possibility that in smaller, more stable communities the “teachers” have more control than in larger societies. Because of this, small tightly-knit communities are better able to encourage the

preservation of norms and the continued adherence to norms from one generation to another, *however complex they may be*; and the absence of external contacts and social instability will also strengthen a community’s ability to maintain linguistic complexity.

If this is so, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that these same societal factors may also assist in the *production* of complexification. In small isolated communities, linguistic change will be slower. But when it *does* occur, there is a greater chance that it will be of the complexification type – the other side of the coin from high contact and loose networks leading to rapid change and simplification. Small isolated communities are more able, because of their network structures, to push through, enforce and sustain linguistic changes which would have a much smaller chance of success in larger, more fluid communities – namely changes of a relatively complex type. So not only is there less simplification in low-contact situations, there is indeed also more complexification, because changes which complexify the system have a greater chance of succeeding than they would in other types of community. That is, it may well be that innovations of a complexification type occur with roughly equal frequency in all types of community, but that it is simply the case that these innovations are likely, perhaps much more likely, to succeed and become established linguistic changes in small isolated communities. If we can agree that irregularity is more complex than regularity then we can see why it is in larger language communities that irregular verbs are more likely to become regular, while the reverse may occur in smaller communities - irregularisation is just less likely to succeed in larger societies.

The same point can be made from the point of view of opacity. In an important paper, Braunmüller has argued that *Undurchsichtigkeit* (a more

transparent form that English *opacity!*) is a typical characteristic of small languages. We can now see why this would be. Innovations which render forms less transparent - these are typically phonological innovations - may well develop in all types of community, but they are much more likely to be successful ultimately in communities with tight social networks.

On the other hand, the tendency we have seen for syntagmatic redundancy - repetition of information - to become more common in smaller communities is less obviously explicable. Indeed, it would seem have seemed more logical if it were the other way round. In small tightly-knit communities where there is a higher degree of shared knowledge and information, one would have thought that less repetition would be necessary, not more. The clue, however, may lie in the word "necessary". Linguistic change is not teleological (Lass, 1990;1997: 340ff); changes are never "necessary"; they just happen. And the development of agreement does seem to be an extraordinarily common process in linguistic change, since agreement is a very common phenomenon in the world's languages; it is "a widespread and varied phenomenon" (Corbett, 2006). That is, if linguistic change proceeds without the involvement of non-native speakers, agreement is rather likely to develop even in constructions where there was none before. We can suppose that this type of development is less common in large fluid high-contact communities because, as we said above, repetition of information means that there is more for non-native speakers to learn - it makes for L2 difficulty/outsider complexity. Moreover, as Corbett says, the functions of agreement are by no means totally clear, and "agreement often appears to involve a lot of effort for a questionable payoff" (2006: 274). It is therefore hardly surprising that pidgins, creoles and other high-contact varieties tend to manage without it. As to why it is typical for linguistic

changes to occur in which agreement develops out of situations in which there was originally none - this seems not yet to be fully understood: Corbett's book (2006) on *Agreement* consists of 284 pages of text, only five of which are actually devoted to origins. As Corbett says "agreement remains deeply puzzling" (2006: 1). Perhaps we can content ourselves for the time being with noting that human languages are "like that" in situations where no significant intervention of non-native speakers occurs.

Finally, the greater likelihood of the development of morphological categories in smaller communities is also a puzzling phenomenon. Here the social factor of community size may be relevant, however. Linguists are naturally sceptical about relating linguistic and cultural complexity. As Bickerton (1996) says, "if there were any link between cultural complexity and linguistic complexity, we would expect to find that the most complex societies had the most complex languages while simpler societies had simpler languages...We do not find any such thing." Interestingly, though, I would like to point out that in this paper we have presented some data which could be interpreted as suggesting that there *is* a relationship but that it is the other way round: some aspects of linguistic complexity may be more evident in simpler than in more complex societies.

Some suggestive work which bears on this point has been carried out by Perkins (1980, 1995). He investigates certain aspects of linguistic complexity, concentrating on morphological categories in deixis. He takes as the starting point for his research a suggestion by Keenan (1976) that deictic systems are better developed in non-literate communities with fewer than 4000 speakers. Kay (1976), for instance, says that "in small, homogeneous speech communities there is a maximum of shared background between speakers, which is the stuff on which deixis depends. As society evolves toward complexity and the speech community becomes less homogeneous, speakers share less background information, and so one would need to build more of the message into what

was actually said.” Givón (1979), too, observes that people in more complex cultures are more frequently required to interact with other people who they do not know.

Perkins’ argument is that “deictics identify referents by connecting them to the spatial–temporal axis of speech events”. Deictics in his terms include persons, tenses, demonstratives, directionals (*here, there*), inclusive vs exclusive etc. The point about deictics, he argues, is that they “involve the requirement that the spatio-temporal context of their use be available for the interpretation of the intended referents”. Sacha Aikhenvald (p.c.) also points out that large complex systems of evidentiality - with 4, 5 or six specifications - are found only in small communities. She suggests that this may be because in such communities there is much pressure for everyone to be fully explicit about their source of information.

Perkins thus conjectures that deictics will be more salient in less complex than in more complex cultures, and are therefore more likely to appear in the central inflectional systems of the languages concerned than more peripherally in the lexis or periphrastically. This is in turn because the more frequently free deictic morphemes occur, the more likely they are to be subject to grammaticalisation processes which turn them into bound morphemes through coalescence and morphologisation.

Perkins investigated 50 languages and their usage of seven deictic affixes: tense, person on verb, person on nouns, spatial demonstratives on verbs, spatial demonstratives on nouns, inclusive vs exclusive on person markers, and dual in person markers. Communities are ranged for cultural complexity from 1 (e.g. Andamanese) to 5 (e.g. Vietnamese). The measurement of cultural complexity that Perkins uses is based on the work of anthropologists such as Carneiro (1973) and computed in terms of factors such as type of agriculture, settlement size in terms of population, craft specialisation, and numbers of levels in political and social hierarchies.

Perkins shows statistically that there is a correlation between complexity and the presence of deictic affixes. For example, languages associated with the most complex

cultures – those scoring 5 – have on average 1.22 deictic affixes, while those scoring 1, the lowest, have on average 3.28. Perkins concludes “deictic affixes...are lost as cultures become complex”.

Most linguists are likely to feel a little uncomfortable about the notion of cultural complexity. I am therefore happy, at least for the time-being, to leave this issue to the anthropologists, and to point out that we probably do not need to look any further, for our own linguistic purposes, than actual community size. What is probably crucial here is simply how many individuals are involved in a particular speech community, and how much shared information is available.

We may speculate, then, that the crucial factors stemming from social structure which help to determine aspects of language structure of the type discussed in this chapter are social network structure and degree of shared information, both of which of course also relate to community size and degree of contact and social stability.

References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra. 2002. *Language contact in Amazonia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Askedal, J.O. (2005) The typological development of the Nordic languages I: morphology and syntax. In Bandle, Oskar (ed.) *The Nordic languages: an international handbook of the history of the North Germanic languages II*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1872-86.
- Bakker, Peter. 1997. *A language of our own: the genesis of Michif, the mixed Cree-French language of the Canadian Métis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bayer, Josef. 1984. COMP in Bavarian syntax. *Linguistic Review* 3, 209-274.
- Berthele, Raphael. 2006. *Ort und Weg: die sprachliche Raumreferenz in Varietäten des Deutschen, Rätoromanischen und Französischen*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Bickerton, Derek.
- Bokamba, Eyamba. 1993. Language variation and change in pervasively multilingual societies: Bantu languages. In S. Mufwene and Lioba Moshi (eds.) *Topics in African Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 207-252.
- Braunmüller, Kurt. 1985. Morphologische Undurchsichtigkeit - ein Charakteristikum kleiner Sprachen. *Kopenhagener Beiträge zur germanistischen Linguistik* 22, 48-68.
- Braunmüller, Kurt. 2001. Morfologisk typologi og færøsk. In K. Braunmüller & J.L. Jacobsen (eds.) *Moderne lingvistiske teorier og færøsk*. Oslo: Novus, 67-88.
- Carneiro,
- Comrie, Bernard. 2008. Inflectional morphology and language contact, with special reference to mixed languages. In Siemund, Peter & Noemi Kintana (eds.) *Language contact and contact languages*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Corbett, Greville. 2006. *Agreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dahl, Östen. 2004. *The growth and maintenance of linguistic complexity*. Amsterdam: Benjamin.
- De Vogelaer, Gunther. 2004. Person marking in Dutch dialects. In B. Kortmann (ed.) *Dialectology meets typology: dialect grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 181-210.
- De Vogelaer, Gunther. 2005. *Persoonsmarkering in de dialecten in het nederlandse taalgebied*. Ghent: Universiteit Gent.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1997. *The rise and fall of languages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dixon, R.M.W., and Alexandra Aikhenvald (eds.) 1999. *The Amazonian languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ebert, Karen Heide. 1971. *Referenz, Sprechsituation und die bestimmten Artikel in einem nordfriesischen Dialekt (Fering)*. Bredstedt: Nordfriisk Instituut.
- Ebert, Karen Heide. 1984. Zur grammatischen Differenziertheit des Dialektes (am Beispiel Fering). *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch* 20, 227-238.
- Ebert, Karen, and Ed Keenan (1973) A note on marking transparency and opacity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4, 421-424
- Faarlund, Jan Terje. 2000. *Totenmålet*. Lena: Østre Toten Kommune.
- Forby, R. [1830] 1970. *The vocabulary of East Anglia*. New York: Augustus Kelley.

- Givón,
- Grace, George. 1990. The 'aberrant' (vs. 'exemplary') Melanesian languages. In: P. Baldi (ed.) *Linguistic change and reconstruction methodology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 155-173.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 1995. *The syntax of negation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haudricourt, André. 1961. Richesse en phonèmes et richesse en locuteurs. *L'Homme* 1, 5-10.
- Harris, Alice, and Lyle Campbell. 1995. *Historical syntax in cross-linguistic perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ihalainen, Ossi. 1976. Periphrastic *do* in affirmative sentences in the dialect of East Somerset. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 77, 608-622.
- Ihalainen, Ossi. 1991. On grammatical diffusion in Somerset folk speech. In P. Trudgill and J.K. Chambers (eds.) *Dialects of English: studies in grammatical variation*. London: Longman, 148-60.
- Jahr, Ernst Håkon. 2001. Historical sociolinguistics: the role of Low German language contact in the Scandinavian typological split of the late Middle Ages. *Lingua Posnaniensis* 43, 95-104.
- Kay, Paul
- Keenan,
- Kusters, Wouter. 2003. *Linguistic complexity: the influence of social change on verbal inflection*. Leiden: Leiden University.
- Lass, Roger. 1990. How to do things with junk: exaptation in language evolution. *Journal of Linguistics* 26: 79-102.
- Lass, Roger. 1997. *Historical linguistics and language change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Markey, Thomas. 1981. *Frisian*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Milroy, James. 1992. Middle English dialectology. In N. Blake (ed.) *The history of the English language II: 1066-1476*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 156-206.
- Milroy, James, and Lesley Milroy. 1985. Linguistic change, social network and speaker innovation, *Journal of linguistics* 21, 339-384.
- Milroy, Lesley (2000). Social network analysis and language change. *European Journal of English Studies* 4, 217-24.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1977. *Pidginisation and simplification of language*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic diversity in space and time*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Pedersen, Karen Margrethe. 1999. Genusforenkling i Københavnsk. *Danske Folkemål* 41: 79-106.
- Perkins, Revere.
- Sankoff, Gillian. 2002. Linguistic outcomes of language contact. In J. K. Chambers, P. Trudgill and N. Schilling-Estes (eds.). *The handbook of language variation and change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Thomason, Sarah G. 2001. *Language contact: an introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Thurston, William. 1994. Renovation and innovation in the languages of north-western New Britain. In T. Dutton and D. Tryon (eds.) *Language contact and change in the Austronesian world*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 573-609.
- Trudgill, Peter. 1992. Dialect typology and social structure. In E.H. Jahr (ed.), *Language contact: theoretical and empirical studies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 195-212.

- Trudgill, Peter. 1995. Grammaticalisation and social structure: nonstandard conjunction-formation in East Anglian English. In F.R. Palmer (ed.), *Grammar and semantics: papers in honour of John Lyons*. Cambridge University Press. 136-47.
- Trudgill, Peter. 1996. Dual-source pidgins and reverse creoloids: northern perspectives on language contact. In E.H. Jahr and I. Broch (eds.) *Language contact in the Arctic: northern pidgins and contact languages*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 5-14.
- Trudgill, Peter. 2003. *The Norfolk dialect*. Cromer: Poppyland.
- Trudgill, Peter. 2004. Linguistic and social typology: the Austronesian migrations and phoneme inventories. *Linguistic Typology* 8, 305-320.
- Trudgill, Peter. 2009. Contact and sociolinguistic typology. In R. Hickey (ed.) *Handbook of language contact*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Trudgill, Peter. in preparation. *Language in contact and isolation: social determinants of linguistic structure*.
- Van der Auwera, Johan, and Annemie Neuckermans. 2004. On the interaction of predicate and quantifier negation in Flemish. In B. Kortmann (ed.) *Dialectology meets typology: dialect grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 453-478.
- Van Haeringen, C. B. 1939. Congruerende voegwoorden. *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 60, 126-127.
- Vanhove, Martine. 2001. Contacts de langues et complexification des systèmes: le cas du maltais. *Faits de langues* 18, 65-74.
- Vogt, Hans. 1948. Dans quelles conditions et dans quelles limites peut s'exercer sur le système morphologique d'une langue l'action du système morphologique d'une autre langue? In M. Lejeune (ed.) *Actes du Sixième Congrès International des Linguistes*. Paris: Klincksieck, 31-45.
- Walker, Alastair. 1990. Frisian. In C. Russ (ed.) *The dialects of modern German: a linguistic survey*. London: Routledge, 1-30.
- Walker, Alastair, and Ommo Wilts. 2001. Die nordfriesischen Mundarten. In H.H. Munske et al (eds.) *Handbuch des friesischen/Handbook of Frisian studies*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 284-305.