



# Social Dialectology

In honour of Peter Trudgill

EDITED BY

David Britain

Jenny Cheshire



## **Social Dialectology**

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### **Volume 16**

**Social Dialectology: In honour of Peter Trudgill**  
Edited by David Britain and Jenny Cheshire

# **Social Dialectology**

**In honour of Peter Trudgill**

*Edited by*

**David Britain**

**University of Essex**

**Jenny Cheshire**

**Queen Mary, University of London**

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Peter Trudgill as he was then...



...and as he is now



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Second, we thank all the contributors for their co-operation in providing us with such good chapters on this theme, for acting as anonymous reviewers for the individual chapters, for helping us to meet the stringent deadlines, and for bearing with us as we tried to battle with what seemed like 20 different sets of phonetic fonts! It has been a pleasure to work with them.

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This volume is to be presented to Peter at a special conference, bringing him together with all the contributors, at the University of Murcia in Spain, in November 2003. We'd like to thank Prof. José Maria Jiménez Cano and Prof. Juan Manuel Hernández Campoy, the organisers of the conference on *Directions in Social Dialectology*, for initiating and staging such an event in Peter's honour.

Finally, of course, we want to record our gratitude to Peter, without whom neither of us would ever have produced this volume (nor, indeed, any published work of any kind). We feel we can speak for all the contributors and for his many friends, students and colleagues throughout the world in thanking him for his inspiration and his friendship, wishing him a very happy 60th birthday, and in looking forward to many more years of stimulating research both in social dialectology, and in sociolinguistics more broadly.

# Introduction\*

David Britain and Jenny Cheshire

University of Essex / Queen Mary, University of London

Peter Trudgill is 60 years old on November 7, 2003. His career has coincided with the development of dialectology from a discipline with a focus on rural, archaic varieties of language to one that studies the contemporary varieties of complex urban and rural communities alike and that deals with issues that no scholar of language can afford to ignore. These issues encompass the nature of sociolinguistic variation, the processes of language change, the influence of standard varieties and of standardisation, and, more recently, the understanding of language contact and dialect contact, of new dialect formation and language isolation.

Peter Trudgill has, of course, carried out influential original research of the highest standard in all these aspects, and more, of what is now often referred to as social dialectology; he has, to a large extent, shaped the direction of the discipline. He has also worked to define the field, to standardise terminology and clarify concepts, and to inform the public and eradicate prejudice and ignorance about social and regional dialects. Contemporary social dialectology owes a great deal to his work, and there are good reasons, therefore, for using the occasion of his 60th birthday to publish a volume of specially commissioned papers on topics that are currently preoccupying researchers in this field. One aim of the proposed volume, then, is to honour the contribution that Peter Trudgill has made to the field of social dialectology. A second, equally important aim, is to provide an indication of some of the main trends and issues in the field some forty years after the 'new turn' in social dialectology (which we date from the publication of Labov's *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, in 1966).

The chapters in this volume all deal, then, with language variation and change. Most of them make theoretical or general methodological points as

well as describing one or more specific examples of linguistic variation or change. We have not attempted to organise the volume as a whole into separate sections, since most of the papers would straddle more than one. Instead, we outline in this introduction some of the main points made in the separate chapters, and by doing so indicate some of the main concerns of contemporary social dialectology. This brief introduction, as readers will discover, cannot fully do justice to the richness of these contributions from some of the world's leading variationists, which serve, we believe, as a fitting tribute to Peter Trudgill's extraordinary contribution to research in language variation and change.

One issue that has always preoccupied dialectologists is charting and attempting to explain the spatial diffusion of innovative forms. Trudgill was a pioneer in adopting gravity models from human geography and adapting them to incorporate sociolinguistic factors. This strand of social dialectology is represented in the chapter from William Labov, which explores the gravity model of diffusion and the more general cascade model to explain the spread of new vocabulary forms in Philadelphia and Pittsburg in the United States. Juan Manuel Hernández Campoy, furthermore, uses the gravity model in his chapter to account for the spread of standard pronunciations at the expense of local, non-standard forms in the region of Murcia in southeastern Spain. Both chapters show the importance of taking account of social factors. Labov points out that we need to know more about how adults can influence the speech of others and how they can shift their own practices, long after the critical period of language learning is over and long after the vigorous acquisition of new forms in adolescence. Hernández Campoy shows that some local forms are more salient indicators of local identity than others, and that this crucially affects the rate and extent of diffusion.

Social dialectology differs from traditional dialectology in its shift of focus from rural, settled communities to communities characterised by immigration and mobility. Peter Trudgill's 1986 work on dialects in contact provided a rich framework for investigating processes of variation and change in communities of this type, and many of the contributions in this volume use this framework to advance our understanding of the mechanisms involved. Dennis Preston's chapter lays the groundwork for more detailed accounts of the development of a koinéised phonological system in Michigan. He notes that similar phonological systems follow similar paths to the same outcome, but not when the social arena mitigates against this. Thus the emerging systems of the African American migrants in his studies show some accommodation to a regional norm, but retain some phonological distinctions of the original dialect as an expression of ethnic identity. Enam Al-Wer assesses the importance of markedness

and simplification as processes determining the outcome of dialect contact and accounting for new dialect formation in Amman, the capital city of Jordan. Her analysis of a morphological change in 'Ammani' highlights the parallelism between the development of a regional identity by the younger generation of speakers in the community (both of Jordanian and Palestinian origins) and the emergence of a distinct and focussed new variety.

Margaret Maclagan and Elizabeth Gordon discuss the development of the distinctive variety of English spoken in New Zealand, focusing on the internal variability in the speech of individual speakers that occurs at a crucial stage in the formation of the new dialect. They note that researchers usually disregard free, or random variation in the speech of individuals; their analyses, however, show that it can be both a symptom that the language is changing and a part of the process of change. Daniel Schreier discusses the evolution of present tense marking in the English spoken on the island of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic Ocean. Comparing this with Trudgill's account of the development of the 'same' feature in Norwich English he observes that levelling processes may seem identical on the surface but have different system-internal constraints, indicating that contact-induced mechanisms operate independently in different varieties.

In the development of present tense marking in the English of Norwich and Tristan da Cunha language contact emerged as a relevant factor. Jack Chambers' contribution to the volume gives full weight to the role of language contact in processes of linguistic change. He points out that immigration is likely to become the social norm in all the developed countries, and that it could even become the main touchstone for social dialectology. For example, he notes that variants in the native speech of (otherwise) linguistically assimilated second or third generation speakers of English can become stable features of the region rather than of ethnicity. Richard Watts focuses on a specific case of language contact in his investigation of the integration of English loan words into German dialects spoken in Switzerland. He argues for the importance of loose social networks in accounting for the diffusion of the innovations, and addresses the actuation problem by considering the social, cultural and political climate of the period when a significant body of loan words appears to have been introduced.

A sign that social dialectology is maturing as a discipline is that scholars are now able to compare the results of a range of studies in order to locate and explain parallel developments. Most of the authors we have mentioned so far compare their findings with others. Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes' chapter, however, is an explicit comparison of the ongoing restructur-

ing of *was/were* variation in a range of southeastern US communities and in the British Fens (as analysed by David Britain). They identify linguistic conditions affecting the restructuring: specifically, the reduction of allophony and the existence of negativity as a linguistic prime. As always in social dialectology, the social dimension must be taken into account: in this case Wolfram and Schilling-Estes argue that a special set of social circumstances are also necessary to ensure the survival and spread of levelling to *weren't*, one of which appears to be its relative lack of salience as a symbolic marker of various types of identity.

As Lesley Milroy points out in her chapter, some researchers are now going beyond the time-honoured global social categories of social class, gender and ethnicity to consider how relevant social categories are created locally and how – or if – they map onto the conventional global categories. Social categories are then seen as ideologically-driven processes; and this, she shows, can throw new light on processes of language change. It becomes possible to distinguish between global, ideologically free changes and local, ideologically-driven changes. Global changes may be internally motivated or may be attributable to dialect levelling processes occurring independently in speech communities widely separated by space and time; local, ideologically-driven changes, on the other hand, are driven by the relative salience of different social groups at specific times in specific communities. There are psycholinguistic implications here: Milroy argues that levelling and simplification processes come into play as the social and cognitive prerequisites for supporting highly localised norms disappear, and as language learners are less exposed to complex, localised linguistic structures, and become less likely, therefore, to acquire them. Like James Milroy (see below) this paper throws light on the distinction commonly drawn between internal and external determinants of language change.

Social dialectologists have always given a central place to how speakers perceive and evaluate language, and have recognised that this is an important factor in explaining patterns of language variation and change. This field of enquiry developed further during the last few decades of the twentieth century, with research on perceptual dialectology. Miklós Kontra's chapter illustrates this approach, analysing the mental maps of majority and minority groups of Hungarian speakers and showing how these reflect the dramatic modifications that have been made to the national borders of Hungary. He provides quantitative evidence of language change in progress that appears to be largely caused by the resulting shifts in national identity and national consciousness.

David Britain systematically explores the importance of the outlier in explaining linguistic change, showing that it is important to consider social integration when accounting for language use and in demonstrating the time

depth of variation existing in a community. He analyses a number of phonological and grammatical variables in the speech of two outliers in the Fens, demonstrating that speakers from socially and/or geographically isolated parts of the speech community can highlight earlier stages of the dialect because of the braking effect that social isolation has on language change. However he finds that it is necessary to carefully differentiate those apparently 'divergent' speakers who show linguistic continuity with previous generations from those who are truly outliers.

Several social dialectologists are currently exploring, questioning and deconstructing concepts that have previously been taken for granted. Some of the chapters in this volume represent this trend. Maclagan and Gordon probe the relevance of free variation, as we have already seen. James Milroy addresses a question that is not commonly asked in the research literature: how do we know when patterns of variation indicate that a sound change is in progress? More generally, what is a sound change, when does it start, and when can we say it has gone to completion? The answer to these questions, he shows, depends crucially on how we understand the term 'sound change'; and this, in turn, is affected by the subtle effects of the standard ideology. The answer also depends on the distinction conventionally drawn between internally induced and externally induced variation and change. It is difficult, Milroy points out, to distinguish these retrospectively; but the issues are clarified if we carefully distinguish between innovations, on the one hand, which may be internally or externally induced (and which lead to variation within a community), and sound change, on the other hand, which, as distinct from variation, requires some kind of external trigger. It is the external factors, Milroy explains, that are decisive in explaining how and why a particular linguistic change takes place at any particular time.

The term 'dialect levelling', Paul Kerswill points out here, became something of a catchphrase in the late 1990s, and needs to be deconstructed. He carefully distinguishes between the process of levelling, defined by Trudgill as the long-term result of accommodation between speakers, and its measurable outcome, which may result from a number of processes including levelling, standardisation and geographical diffusion.

Jenny Cheshire examines the boundaries of syntactic variation, asking whether syntactic variation distinguishes social groups in the same way that phonological and morphological variants do. She stresses the importance of considering syntactic alternants in their interactional context: in other words, of paying attention to the meanings conveyed by syntactic forms and to their communicative functions. This, as her analysis of unattached *when* clauses

shows, may then lead researchers to analyse different aspects of the construction of discourse, rather than to analyse 'pure' syntactic variation; and this, in turn, may indicate important differences in how different social groups construct their social worlds. Thus syntactic variants can distinguish social groups, but the relationship between social and linguistic variation is likely to be more indirect than in the case of phonological variation.

The increasing influence of social dialectology has resulted in many dialects that were not previously well known now being accurately described within a sociolinguistically informed framework. Maria Sifianou's chapter, however, reminds us that the possibility of serious dialect study depends on the political and ideological climate that prevails in a society. She explains that social dialectology in Greece is a relatively recent phenomenon, albeit one that is now flourishing (together with research projects on all aspects of Greek). She describes some recent studies that analyse language variation and change in present-day Greek communities and also points to some earlier work on social variation in Greek. Some of this early work is on a range of secret languages, or anti-languages, used by marginal groups to show their opposition to society or to keep the content of their interactions secret. Ernst Håkon Jahr's chapter provides a detailed sociolinguistic account of a secret language, Smoi, that developed in Mandal, Southern Norway. He discusses the linguistic characteristics of Smoi in relation to the Norwegian dialects spoken in the Mandal region, and also in relation to linguistic processes common to secret languages or language games generally.

One relatively recent strand of work in social dialectology aims to explore and explain folk understanding of dialect. Sharon Millar's chapter provides a new dimension to this field of research, stressing that a developmental perspective is important and illustrating this with an account of her investigation of Danish children's notions of 'correctness' and normativity. A more long-standing aspect of the work of social dialectologists has been to try to raise the status of dialect in communities of dialect speakers and in society generally. Trudgill has recently raised the stakes, claiming that dialectologists should not only describe dialects but should take some responsibility for their preservation. Henry Widdowson and Barbara Seidlhofer consider this argument in the wider context of general language intervention, alongside the views of commentators on English such as Orwell, Swift and Addison. The desire to purify the language, they say, perhaps provocatively, is in fact the same phenomenon as the desire to preserve dialects: the arguments on both sides are based on beliefs about basic human values, and all deny natural processes of language variation and change.

Standardisation, of course, is a particular case of language intervention where attempts are made to artificially halt processes of variation and change. Jan Terje Faarlund outlines the principles that have informed language planning in the case of the Nynorsk standard variety in Norway. He discusses the problems of establishing standard forms that can represent a range of different dialects, some of which differ quite significantly from each other, and then considers recent reforms proposed by the Norwegian Language Council that affect the representation of dialect diversity.

These, then, are some of the main points addressed in this volume. In line with the dual aim of the volume, the contributors are all scholars who have worked closely with Peter Trudgill in a range of different roles, as co-author, colleague, graduate student or co-researcher. One or two contributors are known more for their work in other areas of linguistics than for their work in social dialectology, but they have written papers for this volume that focus on topics of current importance in this field.

Of course, there are problems in trying to meet two different aims in a single volume, especially when it is also necessary to meet the market demands of present-day publishing. For example, there are other social dialectologists whose work has been prominent in shaping the discipline. Their work is not represented here because they have worked less closely with Peter Trudgill than the contributors to this volume – their influence can, nevertheless be seen in several of the chapters. Furthermore, of course, Peter Trudgill is well known for his work in sociolinguistics generally, and many of his friends and colleagues who are eminent scholars in the wider field – and, indeed, in other areas of linguistics – would have wanted to contribute to a volume in his honour. Our focus on social dialectology meant that we could not invite all these researchers to contribute to the volume, but we hope that they, and Peter, will understand the constraints with which we were faced.

We have included at the end of the volume a list of Peter Trudgill's publications (along with works of which he is first author), a list which amply demonstrates not only the energy, depth and breadth of his contribution to the field, but also his role as one of the founders and leading scholars in the discipline (Trudgill 1974a, 2002b); as a sociolinguist who has actively and influentially engaged in research not just on a wide and geographically dispersed number of Anglophone communities (1974a, 1986b, 1999c, 2000b, 2002f, 2003c) but also on languages other than English, such as Norwegian (e.g. 1979d, 1982b, 1991b, 1995e) and Greek (e.g. 1978d, 1989e, 1992e); as an author able to introduce the discipline to the non-linguist as well as the linguist (e.g. 1975a, 2000a, now in its fourth edition); and as a true 'professor' – an academic who has

ideas (sometimes controversial ones (e.g. Trudgill 1998i), develops new theoretical approaches (e.g. 1986a), and is prepared to make brave and innovative incursions into underexplored theoretical terrain (e.g. 2002c).

This volume has been published in honour of Peter's contribution to linguistics. In producing it, we look forward to many more years of his insight, inspiration and friendship.

## Note

\* We'd like to thank our partners, Paul Cheshire and Sue Britain, for their patience and understanding during the production of this Festschrift, and to thank each other for taking over the reins of the project whenever the other was overburdened with the day-to-day strains of the British academic system from which Peter sensibly decided to escape!

# Pursuing the cascade model

William Labov

University of Pennsylvania

Granted that language is a social fact, and not the property of any individual, it follows that a linguistic change is equivalent to the diffusion of that change. An understanding of language change therefore demands an understanding of the mechanism of diffusion. It has long been observed that linguistic features spread outward from an originating center, but in a progressively weaker form as distance increases.<sup>1</sup>

A major step towards the understanding of diffusion was made by Trudgill (1973b) in his study of language change in the Brunlanes peninsula of Norway. In Trudgill's gravity model of diffusion, change spreads from the largest to the next largest city, in a predictable order, the influence of one city on another being proportional to the relative sizes of the city and inversely proportional to the distance between them. The model showed a good fit to the variable ( $\text{æ}$ ), involving the progressive lowering and backing of / $\text{æ}$ /, and to the spread of London influence into Norfolk. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) develop the parallel of the palatalization of (s) in this area with similar results.

In his study of 18 freshman women at Northwestern University, Callary (1975) found that the raising of / $\text{æ}$ / in northern Illinois was correlated with the size of the speakers' home city. The efforts of Chambers and Trudgill to apply the gravity model to these data (1980:201–202) met with only partial success, in parallel with efforts of students in successive dialectology classes that I have taught. The more general pattern of the "cascade model" does appear to be supported: that change proceeds from the largest city to the next largest city, and so progressively downward. The problem of establishing the mechanism that produces this effect seems to be the same for the more specific gravity model and the more general cascade (or "hierarchical") model.

It is not suggested that all linguistic changes follow the same pattern of diffusion. Bailey, Wike and Sand's (1993) investigation of Oklahoma cataloged three distinct patterns, showing that some changes spread geographically rather than hierarchically (the "neighborhood" effect of Chambers & Trudgill). The low back merger of /o/ and /oh/ is given as an example of the cascade model, though it is not demonstrated in the same detail as in Trudgill's Norwegian studies. Boberg (2000) finds that this same feature does not follow predictions of the cascade model across the U.S.-Canadian border, where political (and structural) boundary is a categorical boundary, and shows furthermore that the spread of American influence on foreign (a) words is governed by an urban hierarchy.

A number of other studies reflect the cascade model of diffusion over a smaller number of points of comparison. A clear example is Modarelli's study of Tehran (1978), which was coupled with an auxiliary study of Ghazvin. Ghazvin is a city of considerable historical importance, about 150 km from the metropolis, but with a current population that is only a small fraction of Tehran's half million. Figure 1 shows the variable (an): the percentage raising of

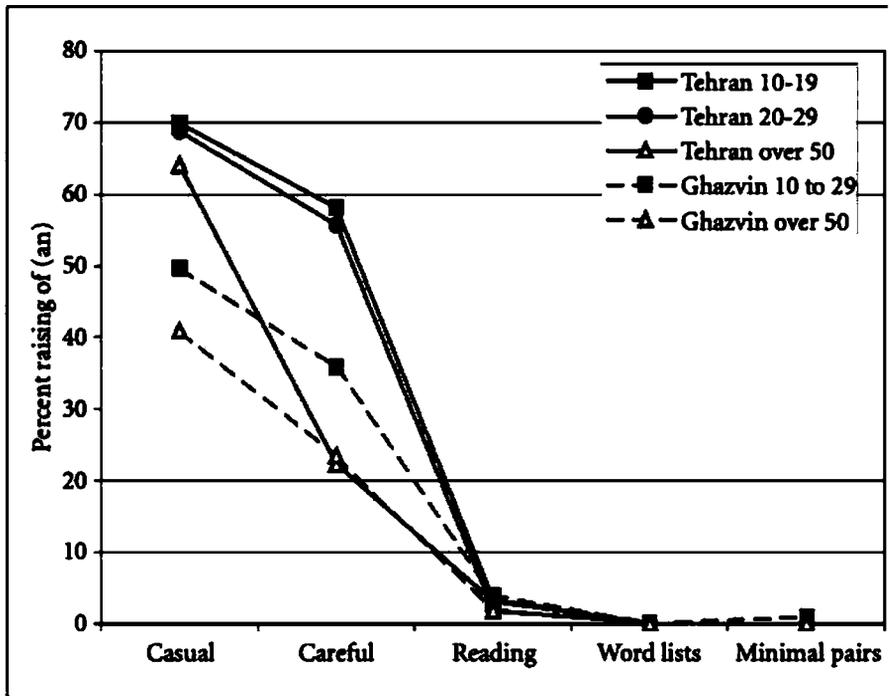


Figure 1. Percent raising of (an) in the Farsi of Tehran and Ghazvin.

of standard /an/ to [un]. This is a well-known characteristic of the Tehran dialect of Farsi, fairly stable in its age distribution. All age groups from Tehran show a high frequency of the vernacular variant in casual speech but a reduction to vanishingly small levels for controlled speech. There is some suggestion of change in apparent time, with speakers over 50 somewhat behind the others. The speakers from Ghazvin follow the same pattern at a lower level, indicating that the variable may have diffused outward from the capital to the smaller city, and may still be continuing to do so.

The Atlas of North American English (ANAE) has traced the progress of a number of linguistic changes in progress (Labov, Ash, & Boberg, in press). Of these, the Northern Cities Shift (NCS) is the most likely candidate for a study of the cascade model, since it was first discovered in the major cities of Chicago, Detroit and Buffalo, and is now seen to cover a vast area involving many cities (71 cities with a population of 17,000,000 people in a territory of 33,000 square miles). This shift is a rotation of five vowels of English in the pattern of Figure 2.

The earliest and most extended elements of the change involve the raising and fronting of /æ/ and the fronting of /o/, followed by the lowering of /oh/ to low back position. The most recent changes are the lowering and backing of /e/ and the backing of /ʌ/ to the position formerly occupied by /oh/.

The NCS is found in the North (the broken isogloss in Figure 3), a dialect region defined by the conditions that permit the NCS to occur. These are (1) the relatively back position of /ow/ (F2 of the nucleus < 1200 Hz) and a lax front nucleus for /ey/ (F2 of the nucleus < 2200 Hz).<sup>2</sup>

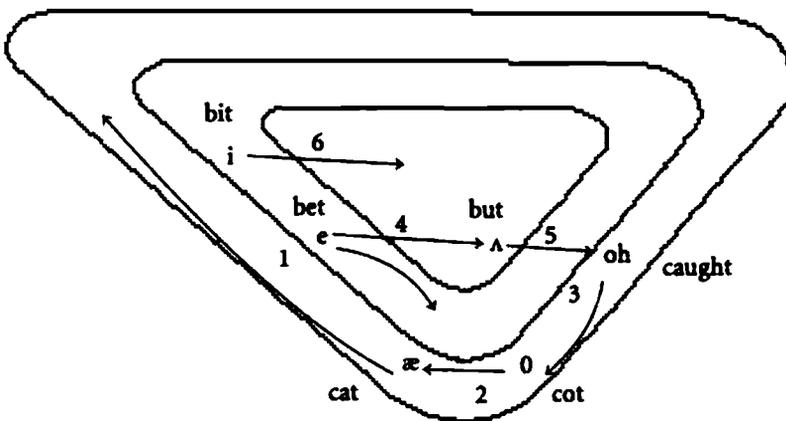


Figure 2. The Northern Cities Shift.