

LAURIE BAUER and PETER TRUDGILL, eds. *Language Myths*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998. 189 pp.

This book, comprising contributions from highly qualified contributors in linguistics, explores some of the more infamous myths associated with language today. Each article brings to light some of the most outrageous assumptions about language, and attempts to explain the roots of these misconceptions.

Dennis R. Preston's 'They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City' and Walt Wolfram's 'Black Children are Verbally Deprived' deal with sociolinguistic issues. Conceptions relating to syntax are discussed in Lars-Gunnar Anderson's 'Some Languages are Harder than Others,' and Winifred Bauer's 'Some Languages Have No Grammar.' Anderson discusses inflectional and derivational morphology and claims that some languages really *are* more difficult than others – the claim being that the grammar of analytic languages is more easily grasped than that of synthetic languages.

Peter Trudgill's 'The Meanings of Words Should Not be Allowed to Vary or Change,' and J.K. Chambers 'TV Makes People Sound the Same' focus on historical linguistics. The latter essay shows how television is perceived to be a source of language change, but that sound or grammatical change cannot be so explained. C notes that if such credit were to be given to the role television plays in society, it could be thanked for the vast expansion of lexical terms it introduces and reinforces.

Finally, 'Double Negatives are Illogical' by Jenny Cheshire and 'You Shouldn't Say 'It is Me' because 'Me' is Accusative' by Laurie Bauer explore the relationship between Latin and English and the rules of logic imposed on English by prescriptivists. the former article mentioned takes up the notion that two negatives placed in a sentence cancel each other out,

thereby creating an affirmative. Bauer's article raises the question as to *why* English reflects the grammar of Latin; clearly, when left alone to generate its own rules, English is comprehensible to speakers and writers. A more important point is Bauer's example of the French *c'est moi*, literally "that is me" and the impossibility of **c'est je* "that is I," since *je* can occur only as a subject. B points out that if French, of a genetically *closer* relationship to Latin than English, has not retained this point of Latin grammar, why should English assume it? Bauer's insights, those of the aforementioned contributors, make for enjoyable and thought-provoking reading.

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