

Burridge, K., & Bergs, A. (2017). *Understanding Language Change*. New York: Routledge.

Pirada Anuwech
Chandrakasem Rajabhat University
pirada.an@gmail.com

Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher stated – “all is flux, nothing endures, but change” in Fromkin et al. (2014) and variations and changes in human languages across time and places can be one of the most concrete examples of this. As the readers can see in this book language is not only a tool to record history, but in itself it can also be one very interesting branch of history to study. *Understanding Language Change* written by Kate Burridge and Alexander Bergs, and edited Bernard Comrie and Greville Corbett is a recent sequel in the ‘Understanding Language’ series. The series consisted of eleven books providing simple to understand, yet authoritative foundation knowledge for major aspects in linguistics as follows; Pragmatics, Child Language Acquisition, Semantics, Syntax, Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Language Testing, Second Language Acquisition, and the presently reviewed publication concerning *Language Change*. In this book, readers can find comprehensible and easy to digest content concerning historical and sociolinguistics. Despite the simplicity of this introduction to variations and changes throughout the chronology of language, the writers also provide both theoretical examples, and hints of laughter in several between-the-line statements. This can help novice linguistic disciples gain more insight into the sociology of language, historical pragmatics, and language evolution and enjoy several interesting case studies in each chapter. As a learner, language instructor, and linguist, you may find some chosen examples very amusing, yet the book very helpfully and illustratively explains certain linguistic concepts in plain and simple scenarios that are easy enough for an elementary linguist. Although the editors essentially promote the series as a complete guide to linguistics for learners with little or no prior knowledge, this does not mean that any layman can enjoy this book. Readers would be able to make more use of the insights into changes in sound structure, lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics when complimented with a parallel foundation linguistics course, or as a review of a historical linguistics course.

The content of this book has been structured and presented in an orderly fashion. A certain connection emerges as the book develops its themes. Though the development of content may not conform to the traditional linguistic flow of language units, which usually start off with the smallest unit then move up to the larger ones and continue to develop into a string of longer and longer utterances, it does cover all necessary aspects of language change. The book consists of 10 chapters. The first chapter: Setting the Scene, gives a complete introduction and outline for the whole book. This helps familiarize the readers with the major subject content of the book in a simple and easy to understand manner. In addition, the readers will be able to understand and draw a distinctive line between language variation and language change from reading the first chapter. Language variation is an important factor in language change, yet not all variations can lead to language change (Burridge & Bergs, 2017).

According to the authors' statement in their introduction, this book aims to provide the readers with a foundation of all central aspects of historical linguistics; therefore after the introduction chapter they begin the subject content with the most familiar and obvious kinds of changes in lexicon and lexical changes. After that, content relating to changes in semantics, sound structure, word structure, and sentence structure can be found in chapters 3 – 6, respectively. Detail concerning how language changes spread from an individual to another, or further in the speech community, and how changes develop in the context will be found in chapters 7 - 8. Furthermore, chapter 9 provides a retrospective view into language history and relatedness between languages within as well as across family trees. In addition, we can get to know how these trees grow over time. Lastly, in chapter 10, the additional theoretical perspectives including insights from new developments in historical linguistics can be observed. The authors also discuss some challenges and difficulties that can be found in particular for historical linguistics and language change in the 21st century. Therefore, we can gain some insight on rate of change, the media and the endangerment of language.

Besides the outstanding subject content and structure, the summary and exercises at the end of each chapter are very useful. They provide the readers and language learners another glance to help them review the content and evaluate their understanding. Language change is not something that only happened in the past; it is happening all around us, all the time (Burridge & Bergs, 2017). The authors of this book strongly recommend their readers to “keep ears and eyes open.” Furthermore, in order to understand the dynamics of language, a descriptive linguistic mindset is required. Effective historical and sociolinguistic studies demand linguists to work descriptively and simply document whatever is happening in the language without making any judgment or evaluating this from a “right or wrong perspective.” This book will help open the readers' mind and expand their horizons into looking at language as a natural social phenomenon of which the evolution and adaptation can be studied objectively.

Reference

Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2014). *An introduction to language*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.