

Selfish Sounds and Linguistic Evolution: A Darwinian Approach to Language Change



This new perspective on language change looks at a number of developments in the history of sounds and words and explains them in terms of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Nikolaus Ritt demonstrates how the constituents of language can be regarded as mental patterns, or memes, which copy themselves from one brain to another when communication and language acquisition occur. Challenging established models of linguistic competence, Ritt's controversial approach will stimulate debate among evolutionary biologists, cognitive scientists and linguists.

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