Most linguists agree that language has evolved in a manner of...
of languages can be explained well in terms of the theory of evolution if we only accept that the mechanisms of adaptation and selection that affect linguistics are determined by the linguistic environment, rather than by the principle of diachronicity. Though, for instance, spoken French has lost suffixal marking for the plural as in “chat,” “chats,” but introduced articles marked for plurality (les, les), the development is not accidental but is following a trend set by the linguistic environment of the language. Linguistic “fitness” in Western Europe requires that a language has articles and plural marking. A language lacking these features might have difficulties surviving in the region, but it would work perfectly in any other linguistic environments elsewhere.

Another important circumstance perhaps not sufficiently stressed in Language Origins is the influence of time. Even today, many linguists believe that it is possible to approach the origins of language with the methods of diachronic and comparative linguistics. These linguists believe that by applying the principles of linguistic reconstruction to a succession of increasingly ancient linguistic stages, it is possible to arrive at the “mother tongue” of the entire mankind. Fortunately, no such linguists were invited to contribute to this volume, nevertheless some of the arguments and other linguistic environments elsewhere.

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