

# Concepts in English Linguistics

## Week 6: Language Change

**Analogy** The extension of an observed regularity to new contexts: *fare : fared : fared*

**Anglicism** A word or expression of English origin used in another language

**Anticipatory assimilation** see **Regressive assimilation**

**Assimilation** The modified realization of a phoneme to match or resemble its context: <own goal>

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**Code-switching** Using different languages or dialects for different aspects of life

**Cognate** A word that goes back to the same origins as another word in the same or another

language: *twig* and *Zweig*; *food* and *feed*

**Creole** A language with native speakers originally developed to be used between speakers who share no common language (i.e. as a pidgin)

**Descriptive grammar** The rules of language use as deduced from actual language use: *The constructions “to go boldly” and “to boldly go” are both valid because both are commonly used*

**Diachronic variation** Change over time: OE *dīc* > ME *dik* > PDE *dike*

**Diglossia** A multilingual community in which a language of lesser prestige is spoken at home and in informal settings while a more prestigious language is used in schools and business

**Elision** The omission of one or more sounds (to ease pronunciation): <knight> /naɪt/

**Epenthesis** The addition of sounds (to ease pronunciation): /ˈnju:kjʊlə/ instead of /ˈnju:klɪə/ for <nuclear>

**Hapology** The loss of a syllable where two successive syllables begin with the same or similar sounds: <library> /ˈlaɪbrɪ/

**Idiolect** The dialect spoken by a single individual

**Idioglossia** An idiolect that differs greatly from its language context (e.g. a secret language)

**Isogloss** A geographical dividing line between two linguistic features

**Lag assimilation** See **Progressive assimilation**

**Metathesis** The reversal of the order of two successive sounds: <iron> /aɪərn/

**Pidgin** A language without native speakers developed to be used between speakers who share no common language

**Prescriptive grammar** The rules of grammar as authorities believe they ought to be used, regardless of actual use: *Don't split infinitives; Don't end a sentence in a preposition*

**Principle of least effort** The tendency for languages to move towards greater ease of pronunciation, e.g. by assimilation, elision, or epenthesis

**Progressive assimilation (lag assimilation)** The assimilation of a later sound to a preceding sound: the devoicing of /z/ in *Pete's not here*

**Received Pronunciation (RP)** The prestigious southern English standard of pronunciation prescribed in 20th-century Britain

**Regiolect** A dialect defined by geographical region

**Regressive assimilation (anticipatory assimilation)** The assimilation of an earlier sound to a following sound: Latin *inbibere* > *imbibere* (> PDE *imbibe*)

**Sociolect** A dialect defined by social class

**Synchronic variation** Variation between concurrent dialects: *dike* vs *ditch* for German *Graben*

**Syncope** The loss (i.e. elision) of an unstressed vowel from the interior of a word: OE *beofod* → *beafdes*; ON *himinn* → *himni*