

# Five reasons to make you more cheerful about change

Peter  
Trudgill



email: [newsdesk@archant.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@archant.co.uk)

All languages change through time. Older people can find that annoying. People don't like change. It's very irritating to get used to something and then suddenly find you have to get used to something else. It still annoys me that I can't drive up Prince of Wales Road and round Castle Meadow.

When it comes to linguistic change, there's nothing we can do about it. You can tell how unhappy that makes some people feel by looking at the letters columns of the EDP. It's not always easy to feel positive about changes in your own language, like 'fing' and 'bovver'.

So I've been compiling a list of things about language change that we can all can try and feel happy about. Here's my first attempt – Linguistic Change: Reasons To Be Cheerful, Part I.

1. English and German are different languages. We're happy about that, aren't we? Would you want it otherwise? Two millennia ago they were the same language – West Germanic – and if it hadn't been for different changes occurring in different places, we wouldn't have had our own language.



■ Listen out for fans' voices when Norwich City play Hull. Picture: PAUL CHESTERTON/FOCUS IMAGES

2. Old English had three grammatical genders and five grammatical cases. There were six ways of saying 'ship(s)' depending on the grammar: scip, scipes, scipe, scipu, scipa, scipum. Linguistic changes that have taken place in the last thousand years have removed these complexities – which must surely mean that English as a Foreign Language courses are shorter and cheaper than they would have been...

3. If it wasn't for linguistic change, people in the south of England would still pronounce 'paths' to rhyme with 'maths', and 'budding' to rhyme with 'pudding', like northerners do. Isn't it rather fun that there's now a difference? Such distinctions

can be useful, too, when Norwich are playing Hull and you want to know which supporters are which.

4. If it wasn't for language change, there'd be no such thing as the Norfolk dialect. Our dialect is distinctive because of changes that have taken place here that haven't taken place elsewhere – and vice versa. When we say "Come you on!", we're using an older form that's been lost elsewhere. When we make 'road' and 'coat' rhyme with 'good' and 'put', we're using an innovation which is all our own.

5. And – one more good thing – we no longer have to go around pronouncing the K in Knapton.