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## **Title: Salience in language change**

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This paper will focus on the role of salience in language change and specifically discuss differences between salient and non-salient features and the implications of this for language change, if any. In addition, the outline of a research project currently under development investigating the role of salience in language change will be presented at the end.

According to Kerswill and Williams, salience is “a notion which seems to lie at the cusp of language internal, external and extra-linguistic motivation [ ] which we can provisionally define rather simply as a property of a linguistic item or feature that makes it in some way perceptually and cognitively prominent.” (2002:81). After reviewing studies and definitions of salience, they present their own three-tier model of what contributes to a feature becoming salient (*ibid*:105):

- 1) the linguistic feature must be undergoing change
- 2) language-internal explanations
- 3) extra-linguistic factors are linked with the linguistic feature undergoing change.

Kerswill and Williams add that at least one intra-linguistic factor seems a prerequisite for salience, however, it is the extra-linguistic factors that are “ultimately the cause of salience” (*ibid*: 105) as these directly influence speaker behaviour.

The paper will approach the topic of salience and its impact on change from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, which allows for the crucial unification of structural, sociolinguistic and psychological aspects of language change needed in the conceptualisation of this complex construct. The project to be outlined at the end of the talk considers *salience* as an explanatory factor in language change and in the process attempts an empirically based definition of this concept which seems to be situated between intra- and extra-linguistic aspects. The paper will outline progress so far and suggest interviewer-led questionnaires as a means of investigating the salience of selected morphosyntactic features.

### Bibliography

Kerswill, P. and A. Williams. 2002. "Salience" as an explanatory factor in language change: evidence from dialect levelling in urban England. In: M. C. Jones and E. Esch (eds.), *Language Change - the interplay of internal, external and extra-linguistic factors*, 81-110. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter