

Language and Regional Variation




The Standard Language

It is the variety which forms the basis of printed English in newspapers and books , which is used in the mass media and which is taught in schools .


It is the variety we normally try to teach to those who want to learn English as a second language .’




It is also the variety which  some people consider to be the only type of 'correct' English and, as such, should be kept 'pure'.



Accent and Dialect

The term ‘ accent ‘ is restricted to 
the description of aspects of
pronunciation which identify where
an individual speaker is from ,
regionally or socially .

Every language – user speaks with 
an accent



Accent is to be distinguished from 'dialect' which describes features of grammar and vocabulary , as well as aspects of pronunciation .





Accent ↔ **Pronunciation**

Dialect ↔ **Grammar and Vocabulary**



Regional Accent

It can relate to any locale , 
including both rural and urban
communities within a country
(e.g. ‘ countryside‘) 



Social Accent

It can relate to the cultural and 

educational background of the speaker .

Traditional social-class system can be well-defined in countries.

Accent is often a marker of class (e.g. in 

Britain , the accent associated with public-school , law court, the Court ,
BBC English, etc.)



A. How long are youse here ? 

B. Till after Easter . 

(Speaker A looks puzzled) 

C. We came on Sunday . 


A. Ah. Youse're here a while then . 



No one variety is better than another. 

They are simply different.



Some varieties become more 
prestigious

(e.g. London for British English and 
Paris for French)




Regional Dialect

The existence of different regional dialects is widely recognized and often the source of humor for those living in different regions.


Some regional dialects clearly have stereotyped pronunciation associate with them.




It is usually possible to draw a line  across a map separating the two areas . This line is called “ isogloss “ and represents a boundary between the areas with regard to that one particular linguistic item .



Dialect Continuum

At most dialect boundary areas , one  variety merges into another.

We can view regional variation as  existing along a continuum , and not as having sharp breaks for one region to the next.

This occurs with related languages existing on either side of a political border.



Bilingualism

In many countries , there are two distinct and different languages.


Canada is an officially bilingual country;

English (majority) and French (minority).

Individual bilingualism can be the result of having two parents who speak different languages.



Diglossia

refers to a situation in which  two dialects or usually closely related languages are used by a single language community.



Language Planning

Government , legal and educational bodies in many countries have to plan which varieties of the languages spoken in the country are to be used for official business.



E.g. Swahili is the national language of Tanzania in East Africa though there are a number of tribal languages but the government and educational body have introduced Swahili and the official language.



Stages of Language Planning

1. Selection 
2. Codification 
3. Elaboration 
4. Implementation 
5. Acceptance 



Pidgins and Creoles

A Pidgin is a variety of a language which developed for some practical purposes , such as trading , among groups of people who did not know each other's language .

Pidgin refers to the Chinese word ' business' .



Creole

When a Pidgin develops beyond its role as a trade language and becomes the first language of a social community.

Creole languages have large number of native speakers . They often develop and become established among former slave populations in ex-colonial areas.

