

WEEK 10: Language and regional variation

Topics: The standard language. Accent and dialect. Regional dialects. Isoglosses and dialect boundaries. The dialect continuum. Bilingualism and diglossia. Language planning. Pidgins and Creoles.

A. The standard language

Exercise 1: Decide whether the following utterances belong to a standard or a non-standard variety of English.

1. We are not coming.
2. We ain't coming.
3. doze tree guys
4. those three guys
5. He doesn't know anything.
6. He don't know nothing.
7. John be happy.
8. John is always happy.
9. John is happy now.
10. John happy.

B. Accent and dialect

Exercise 2: How do you pronounce *batter*? How many different pronunciations of this word have you noticed?

Exercise 3: The following words and phrases are collected from regional dialects of British English. Can you guess what they mean?

1. snowblossom
2. mash the tea
3. The place was all frousted.
4. I'll fill up your piggy, it's time for bed.

Exercise 4: In the speech of many people in Reading, UK, a distinction is drawn between endings on main verbs and endings on auxiliaries. Thus, you will hear the following forms:

Main verbs
I goes shopping every Saturday.
You doos that every day.
He wants it.
We wants it, too.
You has to do it.
They doos their shopping on Mondays.

Auxiliary do and have
I don't like it.
You have seen it.
She don't want it.
We do like it, though.
They don't like it.

Translate the following Standard English passage into Reading dialect, assigning present tense -s endings according to the pattern above.

My husband and I have a number of different properties. We do our best to maintain them all. We don't always succeed and we have often had problems, but on the whole I have to admit that we do very well. Do you own a weekend place yourself? My husband does much of the gardening, but I do the painting, and we also have to do quite a lot of the general maintenance. Every time we go over to France, we find something that has to be done. We have been very fortunate, mostly, though.

Exercise 5

5.1. Check the extent to which you use British vs. American vocabulary items.

- (a) Do you walk on the *pavement* or the *sidewalk*?
- (b) Do you fill your car with *gas* or with *petrol*?
- (c) Do you have *blinds* or *shades* and *curtains* or *drapes* at home?
- (d) When you've made a mistake, do you remove it with a *rubber* or an *eraser*?
- (e) When you go on holiday do you take *baggage* or *luggage* with you?

- (f) Do you buy *chips* or *crisps* at a supermarket?
- (g) Do you use the *lift* or the *elevator*?

- (h) Do you use a *tin* or a *can* opener?

- (i) Do you *queue* up or *line* up for something?

- (j) When there is a power cut, do you use a *torch* or a *flashlight*?

5.2. Check the extent to which you use British or American English spelling:

- (a) *centre* or *center*?
- (b) *humour* and *neighbour* or *humor* and *neighbor*?
- (c) *realise* and *specialise* or *realize* and *specialize*?
- (d) *programme* and *traveller* or *program* and *traveler*?
- (e) *advise* and *practise* (V) or *advice* and *practice* (V)?

C. Bilingualism and diglossia

Exercise 6: Fill in the following table on the basis of your predictions about when a high (H) and when a low (L) variety will be used in diglossic communities.

	H	L
Religion (sermon, prayers)		
Literature		
Newspapers (editorial)		
Broadcasting (TV news)		
Education (written material, lectures)		
Education (lesson discussion)		
Shopping		
Gossiping		

D. Pidgins and Creoles

Exercise 7: Pidgins may have fewer prepositions than the languages they are based on. Consider the following data from an English-based pidgin spoken in Cameroon, and determine the meaning of 'fo'.

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| (a) | Gif di buk fo mi. | 'Give the book to me.' |
| (b) | I dei fo fam. | 'She is at the farm.' |
| (c) | Dem dei fo chos. | 'They are in the church.' |
| (d) | Dud dis wan fo me, a beg. | 'Do this for me, please.' |
| (e) | Di moni dei fo tebul. | 'The money is on the table.' |
| (f) | You fit muf ten frank fo ma kwa. | 'You can take ten francs from my bag.' |