

WEEK 11: Language and social variation

Topics: Social dialects. Education and occupation. Social markers. Speech style and style-shifting. Prestige. Speech accommodation. Register and jargon. Slang. Social barriers. Vernacular language.

Exercise 1: Consider the following data and predict the social group that might have uttered them.

- (a) I finish that book yesterday.
- (b) Nobody don't want any chips.
- (c) Nobody wants any chips.
- (d) Jim ain't stupid.
- (e) Jim isn't stupid.
- (f) 'ouse
- (g) speakin'
- (h) I done it last week.

Exercise 2: Below are utterances that might be spoken between two friends chatting informally. For each utterance, state what the Standard English equivalent would be.

- (a) Where've ya been today?
- (b) Watcha gonna do for fun?
- (c) Him go to church?
- (d) There's four books there.
- (e) Who ya wanna go with?

Exercise 3: Decide if the following utterances form part of a formal or an informal exchange.

- (a) Hello mate, it's me again.
- (b) Good morning, Sir. How can I help you?
- (c) We were rather dismayed by his lack of response to our invitation.
- (d) We were upset that he didn't call us to say he wouldn't come.
- (e) When we got home last night, he was knackered.

Exercise 4: Can you identify the register involved in each of the following?

1. Yesterday, I downloaded a new anti-virus programme which has additional spyware protection.
2. For the purposes of the Act a person discriminates against another if on the ground of colour, race, ethnic or national origins he treats that other, in any situation to which section 2.2.1 or 2.3.7 below applies...
3. A sentence usually consists of a noun phrase and a verb phrase.
4. Thou who takest away the sins of the world. Thine only son Jesus Christ.

Exercise 5: Compile a list of jargon terms from some profession (e.g. lawyer, musician, doctor etc). Give a definition for each term in non-jargon terms.

Exercise 6: Suppose someone asked you to help compile items for a new Greek dictionary of slang. List ten slang words or expressions that mean 'really good' and consider the types of contexts that you would use them.

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Exercise 7: Consider the following data from African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and determine how this variety differs from the standard language.

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|-----|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) | lef han | 'left hand' |
| (b) | iced tea | 'ice tea' |
| (c) | I pass the tess. | 'I passed the test.' |
| (d) | tink | 'think' |
| (e) | dat | 'that' |
| (f) | [də] | 'the' |
| (g) | John girlfriend | 'John's girlfriend' |
| (h) | She love him. | 'She loves him.' |
| (i) | two guy | 'two guys' |
| (j) | one of my friend | 'one of my friends' |
| (k) | He don't know nothin. | 'He doesn't know anything.' |
| (l) | She workin now. | 'She is working now.' |
| (m) | She be workin downtown now. | 'She is working downtown now.' |
| (n) | She bin workin there. | 'She was working there.' |