

## REGIONAL AND SOCIAL DIALECTS

### 1. Diversities in languages

No language is as monolithic as some descriptive grammars suggest.

Whenever we have sufficient data from a language, we find diversity in all areas of the grammar.

These diversities can be studied along three dimensions:

- (i) *Geographical* → *Regional varieties*
- (ii) *Social* → *Social dialects (or sociolects)*:
  - a. socio-economic status
  - b. gender
  - c. ethnic group
  - d. age
  - e. occupation
  - f. education
  - g. others

Study the Example #1 on p. 131  
Review the anecdote in Trudgill (1974), Lecture #1

- (iii) *Functional* → *Registers*:
  - a. formal
  - b. casual
  - c. technical
  - d. intimate
  - e. others

### 2. Regional variation

#### 2.1. *International varieties*

- pronunciation differences;
- vocabulary differences;
- grammatical differences.

Study the Examples #2, #3 on pp. 132-133, and the Exercise #1 on p. 133.

2.2 *Intra-national or intra-continental variation*

Isoglosses:

Lines on dialect maps showing the boundaries between two regions which differ with respect to some linguistic feature (such as a lexical item, pronunciation, etc.)

Study the dialect map (Figure 6.1) on p. 136.

The importance of the *time* factor: Regional dialects need a long time to develop.

For example, British English and US English have more regional variations than New Zealand and Australian English.

Study the Exercise #3 on p. 135.

2.3 *Cross-continental variation: dialect chains*

Dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area may not be mutually intelligible, *but they will be linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility.*

At no point is there a complete break (with regard to mutual intelligibility); but the cumulative effect will be such that the greater the geographical separation, the greater the difficulty in comprehending.

e.g., Italian - French  
Paris -----> Italian border  
more and more 'Italian like'

Rome -----> French border  
more and more 'French like'

Study the Example #5 on p. 137.

Other examples:

Scandinavian chain: it links dialects of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish;  
German, Dutch, Flemish: dialect chain from Switzerland through Austria, Germany to the Netherlands and Belgium.  
etc.

Challenge: Where should be the boundary drawn between one dialect and another – linguistic features overlap, the criterion of “mutual intelligibility” is not sufficient either ( for example, Norwegians can understand Swedish).

Important: The attitudes and feelings of the speakers; they *choose* the language or dialect they wish to be affiliated with.

### 3. Social variation

RP: Received Pronunciation → a *social* accent; the regional origin of the speaker is concealed!

Study the relationship between linguistic variation and socio-economic levels: Figure 6.2 on p. 139.

Negative reactions to RP resulted in the development of a new variety: *Estuary English* (labeled also as the ‘new RP’). The rapid spread of this new variety illustrates the *leveling process*.

↓  
Reduction of variation!

Demonstrating Estuary English: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2X9L5llhTQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2X9L5llhTQ</a>
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### 4. Social dialects

#### 4.1 Standard English

RP: social accent  
Standard English: social dialect

There are more variations in a social dialect than in social accents.

Study the relationship between social and regional variations in relation to socio-economic levels: Figure 6.3 on p. 141.

Patterned variation: the role of significant social factors in speech.

#### 4.2 Caste dialects

Similar socio-economic factors for a group of speakers will determine the employing of a social dialect.

Examples: Brahmin vs. non-Brahmin castes in India (p. 142)

Javanese: six distinct stylistic levels in relation to social groups.

Study Table 1 on p. 143.

#### 4.3 Social class dialects

The term “social class” refers to prestige, wealth and education.

There is a consistent relationship between social class and speech.

##### 4.3.1 Pronunciation:

- [h] dropping

Study the Figure #6.4  
Comment!

- [in] pronunciation

Study the Table 6.2  
Comment!

- Post-vocalic [r]

Labov’s study (1966) p.147

The results show clear social stratification of /r/ pronunciation.

Post-vocalic /r/ is a *variable* which illustrates the arbitrariness of the particular forms which are considered prestigious: **SOCIAL JUDGEMENT.**

In New York City: **LOWER** social status → fewer post-vocalic /r/ is used;

In Reading (England): **HIGHER** social status → fewer post-vocalic /r/ is used.

New York City	% of /r/:	
	Reading	SOCIAL CLASS
32	0	UMC
20	28	LMC
12	44	UWC
0	49	LWC

(S. Romaine: *Language in Society*. 1994.)

Study the Figure 6.5 on p. 148.

- [l] deletion in Montreal French

Difference in [l] deletion between *social classes* and the *grammatical status* of the word!

Study the Table 6.3 (p. 151)

#### 4.3.2 Grammatical patterns

*Sharp stratification:* a sharp distinction between social classes with regard to the use of standard vs. vernacular grammatical structures.

Study the Example #17 on p.151.  
Study the patterns illustrated on p. 151.

Multiple negation use: more frequent in lower-class speech (see the sentence in the speech of a Detroit adolescent, p. 152.).

## 5. Methodology

Sociolinguistic interviews -- difficulties: time consuming and expensive!  
Rapid and anonymous surveys -- limitations: uncertainty regarding social backgrounds!

If interested in methodology further, you may read this article:  
Starks, D. & Z. McRobbie. 2001. Collecting sociolinguistic data: some typical and some not so typical approaches. *New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 16, 79-92.  
(you may find this paper on the instructor's web site).

