Language Variation

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Introduction

- Regional Variants
- Social Variants
- British and non-British variations of the English Language
- Australian, New Zealand and South African English
Regional or geographical variation (I)

- Regional varieties:
  - regional accent
  - dialect
Regional or geographical variation (II):
The standard language.
Accent and dialect

- **Accent**: aspects of pronunciation which identify where an individual speaker is from, regionally or socially.

- **Dialect**: features of grammar and vocabulary as well as aspects of pronunciation.

- From a linguistic point of view, no one variety is ‘better’ than another.

- From a social point of view, some varieties are more prestigious.
Regional or geographical variation (III):
Geographical and regional dialects

- **Geographical dialect:**
  - the variation corresponding to large speaking communities,
    - i.e. British English, American English, etc.

- **Regional dialect:**
  - the variation found in smaller communities existing within larger communities.
Regional or geographical variation (IV):  
Isoglosses and dialect boundaries

- **Isogloss**:  
  - a line representing a boundary between areas with regard to one particular linguistic characteristic.  
    - Differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.
  
- Indicate dialect boundaries.

- However, one variety merges into another.
Social variation (I)

- Social dialect
- Occupation and social class
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnic background
- Style and register
- Idiolect
Social variation (II)

- It indicates membership of different groups or different speech communities.
- Two people growing up in the same geographical area, at the same time, may speak differently due to social factors.
Social variation (III): Social Dialect

- Social dialects
  - varieties of language used by groups defined according to class, education, occupation, age, sex, and other social parameters.

- The influence of written language in educated speakers.

- The importance of U-English.
Social variation (IV):
Occupation and Social class

- Occupation and social class affect the speech of individuals.
- ‘Jargon’
Social variation (IV): Age

- Within the same social class, differences may correlate with the age or sex of the speakers.

- Grandparent-grandchild time span.
Social variation (V): 

Sex

- Females more prestigious forms?
- Differences even within the same social background.
Social variation (V): Ethnic background

- **Black English**
  - absence of the copula,
    - e.g. *You crazy*
  - The use of a double negative construction
    - e.g. *He don’t know nothing*
Social variation (V): Style and Register

- **Style:**
  - Formal
  - Informal, colloquial, etc.

- **Register:**
  - variation due to the field, domain or specialty of the users due to their occupation.
    - E.g. plaintiff
Social variation (V): Idiolect

- Idiolect:
  - The personal dialect of each individual speaker of a language.
British and non-British variations of the English Language (I)

English:
- England
- Southern and Eastern Scotland
- Wales (but also Welsh)
- Ireland (mainly into southern Ireland from the west of England) in medieval times,
- North America in the 17th and 18th centuries,
- Northern Ireland (from Scotland),
- South Africa,
- Australia and New Zealand (not before the late 18th or 19th c.).

South African English, Australian English and New Zealand English are phonologically similar to RP and to one another.
British and non-British variations of the English Language (II)

- **British:**
  - Southern English (RP)
  - Scottish English
  - Irish English
  - Welsh English
  - Australian English
  - New Zealand English
  - South African English

- **Non-British:**
  - American English
  - Canadian English
Australian, New Zealand and South African English

- Australian English
- New Zealand English
- South African English