

Sociolinguistics: Aspects of Accents

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DEFINITION OF BASIC TERMS

• 1. The roads are dirty.

VS

• 2. The roads is mucky.

DEFINITION OF BASIC TERMS

Accent

pronunciation

Dialect

• syntax, morphology, lexicon and pronunciation

Idiolect

- from the Greek idio- meaning "one's own" and –lect
- the specific way that a single person speaks
- "[A person's idiolect is] not just vocabulary; it's everything from how we pronounce certain words to how we put them together to what we imagine they mean. Ever have a disagreement with someone over whether an ambiguously-shaded object was actually blue or green? Congratulations, you've witnessed differences in idiolect.... ,,
 (Gretchen McCulloch)

TRADITIONAL DIALECT

- a coherent alternative language variety
- found in various parts of England
- not so common outside the British Isles
 - Newfoundland and the Appalachians
- relexification
- primary vs secondary dialect features

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION

- Accents as powerful indicators of geographical identity
- Socially distinct: vulgar vs posh
- Geographically distinct: Scottish accent, Australian accent, southern accent, American accent,...
- regionality
- RP vs GenAm
- urban vs rural
- geographical diffusion (Trudgill)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS

Speech stratification correlates with social stratification



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS

- William Labov
 - The Social Stratification of English in New York City (1966)
 - -> Variability in a New York accent is socially stratified

	(r)	(dh)	
Middle class	25	17	
Working class	13	45	
Lower class	II	56	
			(Derived from Labov 1966: 221)

AGE

- Innovations in the speech of children and adolescents
- mouse -> mouses
- thin /f/

STYLES AND ROLES

- social context
- casual style (CS)
- formal style (FS)
- reading-passage style (RPS)
- word-list style (WLS)

	WLS	RPS	FS	CS
Middle middle class	0	0	3	28
Lower middle class	0	IO	15	42
Upper working class	5	15	74	87
Middle working class	23	44	88	95
Lower working class	29	66	98	100

STYLES AND ROLES

Labov-hypercorrection

PROJECTING AN IMAGE

convergence × divergence