



# Dialects

## - English Social Dialects



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# What is a Dialect?

- . A variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers
- . A dialect is very different from accent
- . Standard English
- . Dialects can be divided into two types : Regional and Social.

# Social Dialects vs. Regional Dialects

## SOCIAL DIALECTS

Difference in use of language due to social class discrepancies

Social Barriers

Distance is not an important factor

The distinction is not clear-cut

Can be easily influenced by external factors

## REGIONAL DIALECTS

Difference in use of language due to geographical discrepancies

Geographical Barriers

Distance is an important factor

The distinction is clear-cut

Not easily influenced by external factors

# Examples of Social Dialects in England

(1) Words that initiate with 'h'

- Two types of pronunciation for 'h' in words such as 'house' – [h] or Ø
- The rate of 'h' omission in word initials increase as we go lower in social class

< Comparison between social class and the rate of 'h' omission >

| Social Class | Rate of 'h' omission |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1            | 17                   |
| 2            | 21                   |
| 3            | 43                   |
| 4            | 64                   |
| 5            | 96                   |

## (2) 'r' that comes behind a vowel

- Two types of pronunciations in 'r' in words such as 'carr' or 'cartr' – [r] or Ø
- People of high social class have the tendency to omit the sound 'r' behind a vowel

< The realization of [r] in words >

| Social Class | Reading |
|--------------|---------|
| 1            | 0       |
| 2            | 28      |
| 3            | 44      |
| 4            | 49      |

### (3) Suffix '-ing'

- Two types of pronunciation in '-ing' in words such as 'swimming' and 'sleeping' – [in] or [ɪŋ]
- Higher social classes use more [in] compared to [ɪŋ]

< Use of pronunciation [ɪŋ] for suffix '-ing' >

| Social Class | Norwich | West Yorkshire |
|--------------|---------|----------------|
| 1            | 31      | 5              |
| 2            | 41      | 34             |
| 3            | 91      | 61             |
| 4            | 100     | 83             |

# The Background of English Social Dialects

## (1) Prefix 'h'

- 'h' in Old English
- The evolution of sound 'h' after the Norman Conquest
- 'h' pronunciation in Early Modern English
- 'h' during the 18th century

### Example

Charles Dickens' – *Great Expectations* (1860)

Joe : Old orlick he's been a **bustin'** open a dwelling-**ouse**

Pip : Whose?

Joe : Not, I grant you, but what his manners is given to blusterous, still an Englishman's '**ouse** is his castle, and castles must not be busted 'cept when done in war time. And **wotsume'er** the failing on his part, he were a corn and seedman in his heart

Pip : Is it Pumblechook's **house** that has been broken into then?





(2) 'r' that comes behind a vowel

- People of high social class have a tendency to omit r behind a vowel

Example

Chales Dickens – *Great Expectations* (1860)

Pip : Yes, Joe. I tell you, I heard her.

Joe : Which I **meanter**say, Pip, it might be that her meaning were.



### (3) Suffix ‘-ing’

- Use of ‘-ing’ from Old English to 18th Century

#### Example

Swift - *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1731)

He labour'd many a fruitless hour  
To reconcile his Friends in Power;  
Saw Mischeif by a Faction **brewing**  
While they persu'd each others **Ruin**.

- ‘-ing’ since 18th Century


#### Example

Charles Dickens – *Great Expectation* (1860)

Joe : Old orlick he's been a **bustin'** open a  
dwelling-ouse  
Pip : Whose?

# The significance of Social Dialect Studies

- . Time
- . Environment
- . Historical background
- . Social background
- . Understanding the past
- . Understanding literature

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Thank You!