

Sociolinguistics

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Sociolinguistics is the study of relationship between language and society. It involves two types of variables –

1. pronunciation and word choice (linguistic variables)
2. education, income/wealth, age, occupation and family (social variables)

Sociolinguistics is the study that involves other academic fields like

Anthropology

Sociology and

Social psychology.

Social Dialect/ Sociolect

A **dialect** is a regional or social variety of a **language** distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, and/or vocabulary. There are various types of dialects like

Regional Dialect – The study of speech of speakers in rural areas.

Idiolect – The study of speech of individual speakers. It is also called personal dialect.

Social Dialects/Sociolects – The study of speech of people in towns and cities.

Social dialect is the social study of dialects. speakers are divided into groups, according to their social class. The groups of speakers share common things among them.

The social dialect studies speakers of two main groups –

1. Middle class – people who have more years of education and perform non-manual work.

It is further subdivided economically into

- a. upper middle class
- b. lower middle class

2. Working Class – people who have fewer years of education and perform manual work.

Examples of sociolects

Working class speech, upper middle-class speech etc.

A practical example of social dialect- usage of the verb **ain't**.

I ain't finished yet is mostly used by working class speakers. (ain't- haven't)

Education and Occupation vs Idiolect

Each of us have an individual way of speaking. But we have similar patterns of speech, which we share with people of similar educational backgrounds and /or occupations. The speech of bank officers and janitors provide examples for social variable.

‘The boys threwed somethin’ and

‘It wasn’t us who done it’ clearly are examples of working class speech of England.

The middle-class English men would use **threw** instead of threwed and **who** in place of what.

Social Markers

The pronunciation features that occur often in one’s speech is called as social markers.

‘The boys threwed somethin’ will be produced by middle-class people as

‘The boys threw something’.

The grammatical as well as the pronunciation feature differ in both classes.

The working class people never pronounce *ing* as /ŋ/ instead they pronounce it as /n/.

The middle class pronounces it as /ŋ/

Reference: The study of Language by George Yule