

Sociolinguistics
Lecture One

Hudson (1980) defines sociolinguistics as « the study of language in relation with society », however such a broadest definition has always been rejected by some specialists.

Being a branch of macrolinguistics sometimes it overlaps to a very considerable extent with ethnolinguistics which is the study of language in relation to culture.

Often culture presupposes society and in turn society is dependent on culture.

Hence, Sociolinguistics can be defined as the study of the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes to language, standard and non-standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, social varieties and levels of language, the social basis of multilingualism, and so on.

The study of dialects is sometimes seen as a branch of sociolinguistics, and sometimes differentiated from it, under the heading of dialectology, especially when regional dialects are the focus of study.

Moreover, the term accent is always used by people and therefore it deserves to be differentiated from others

Accent: is restricted to varieties of pronunciation
Dialect: covers differences of grammar and vocabulary.

Sometimes language users are confused -- someone speaking **Standard English** which is popularly described as a broad regional accent will be said to be speaking in dialect.

Such phrase « **in dialect** » could be used by non-linguists , to mean « **in a dialect other than Standard English** », « **with an accent** » is frequently employed in Great Britain, and especially in England to mean with an accent other than **RP** or with an accent other than the someone is used to hear.

It is fairly possible to say that everyone speaks in one dialect or another . It is also possible for different people to speak the same dialect with strikingly different accents.

One example of that (**Cockney / Newcastle– Geordie /Tyneside – Scouse the speech of Liverpool**) are used with reference to those whose dialect in grammar and vocabulary , is for practical intents and purposes classifiable as Standard English.

Hence, when one is describing the speech of inhabitants of Great Britain he can classify language to **Standard and non-standard dialects**

Frequently, the term **Received Pronunciation** converge with these two terms or sometimes we may speak of an other term

« **The Queen's English** » or « **BBC English** »

Moreover, it is worth pointing out that terms like « British English » and « American English » are often loosely employed even by linguists , as if they referred to two relatively uniform dialects of the same language.

There are of course many lexical differences between the speech of the average well-educated American and that of the well-educated Englishman , Welshman , Scot or Irish man.

Elevator Vs Lift

Gas Vs. Petrol

Yet most of the vocabulary of Standard American English and so far as there's such a thing , of British Standard English , is identical .

Grammatically speaking , there are constructions or forms or words that are typically American English « you not come, gotten... » and those that are typically British « in hospital, between you and I,... »

Such constructions and forms are not so numerous as far as the standard dialects of the two countries are concerned, and some of them are not used in all parts of either America or Britain.

Sometimes the term « British English » is misleading in a way that « American English, Australian English, Indian English, or Australian English , etc » is not.

What is meant by « American English » is usually meant by « Standard English » as spoken and written in the USA. Most authors who use the term « British English » restrict it to mean « Standard English » as spoken and written in England.

There are of course good sociopolitical reasons for doing so, since that was the version of standard English that served the purposes of administration and education throughout the empire. The term « British English » is nevertheless misleading in that it conceal the fact that Scottish English and Irish English stand in much the same relation to the English of England as American English does.

Yet, compared with many languages spoken over a wide area , English is quite highly standardized as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned.

Sociolinguistics as the scientific study of language in relation to society tends to find answers to all these linguistic differences and the way they come to exist from a social perspective.

Additionally , all terms as dialect, accent, idiolect, multilingualism, diglossia, code switching, register, jargon , class Are the key terms of sociolinguistic sphere.