




LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS

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AGENDA

1. WHAT IS **SOCIAL CLASS**?
 2. **LANGUAGE** AND SOCIAL CLASS
 3. **REGIONAL** VARIATION VS. **SOCIAL CLASS** VARIATION
 4. **RESEARCHING** SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION
 5. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS **CONCEPTS**
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1A. WHAT IS SOCIAL CLASS?

- A **LAYER** OF A **SOCIETY** THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY A SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF **WEALTH, PRESTIGE AND POWER**
 - DEFINES AN INDIVIDUAL'S OR A GROUP'S **STANDARD OF LIVING AND LIFE PROSPECTS**
 - HOW IS SOCIAL CLASS **MEASURED**?
OBJECTIVELY: ECONOMICS
SUBJECTIVELY: PRESTIGE, STATUS, POWER AND PERCEPTION
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1B. WHAT IS SOCIAL CLASS? DETERMINING SOCIAL CLASS

- A PERSON MIGHT **NOT** HAVE A LOT OF **INCOME** BUT FOR SUBJECTIVE REASONS, CAN STILL BE IN A **HIGHER** SOCIAL CLASS
 - A PERSON'S **OCCUPATION** DOESN'T ALWAYS REFLECT THEIR **INCOME**
 - A PERSON'S **FAMILY NAME** CAN DETERMINE THEIR SOCIAL CLASS
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1C. WHAT IS SOCIAL CLASS? DETERMINING SOCIAL CLASS

- HOME ASSIGNMENT: DISCUSSION FORUM
 - ANALYZE THE SOCIETY THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN....
 - A. WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL CLASSES THAT EXIST?**
 - B. HOW ARE THOSE SOCIAL CLASSES DETERMINED?**
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1D. WHAT IS SOCIAL CLASS? HOW DO WE IDENTIFY SOMEONE'S SOCIAL CLASS?

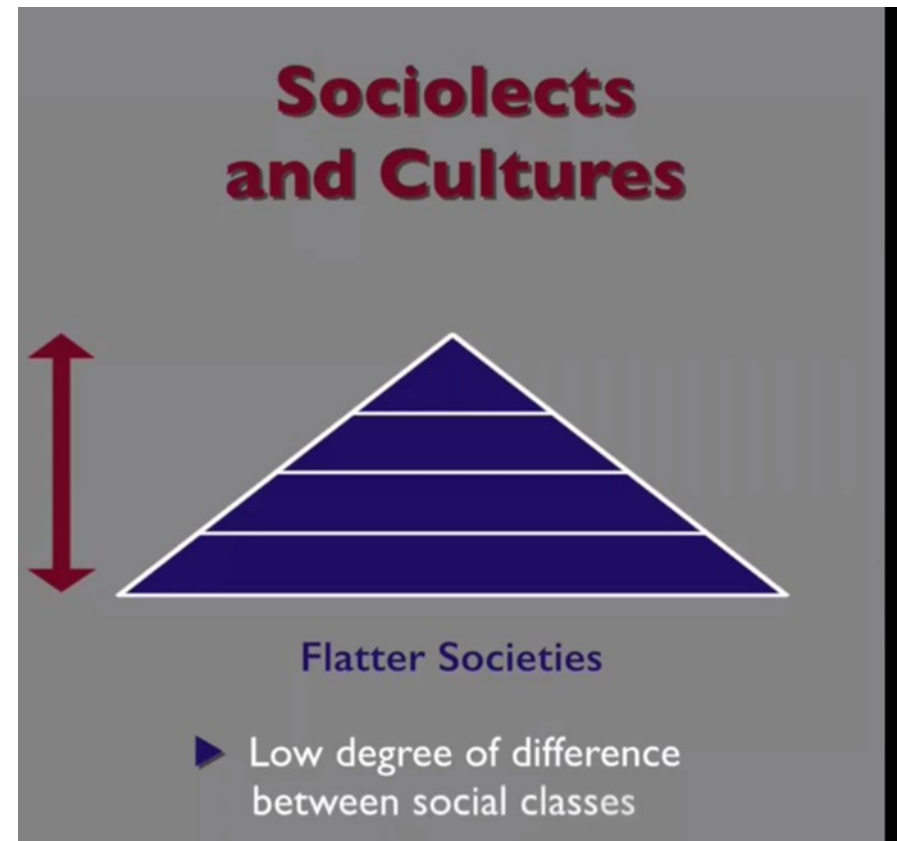
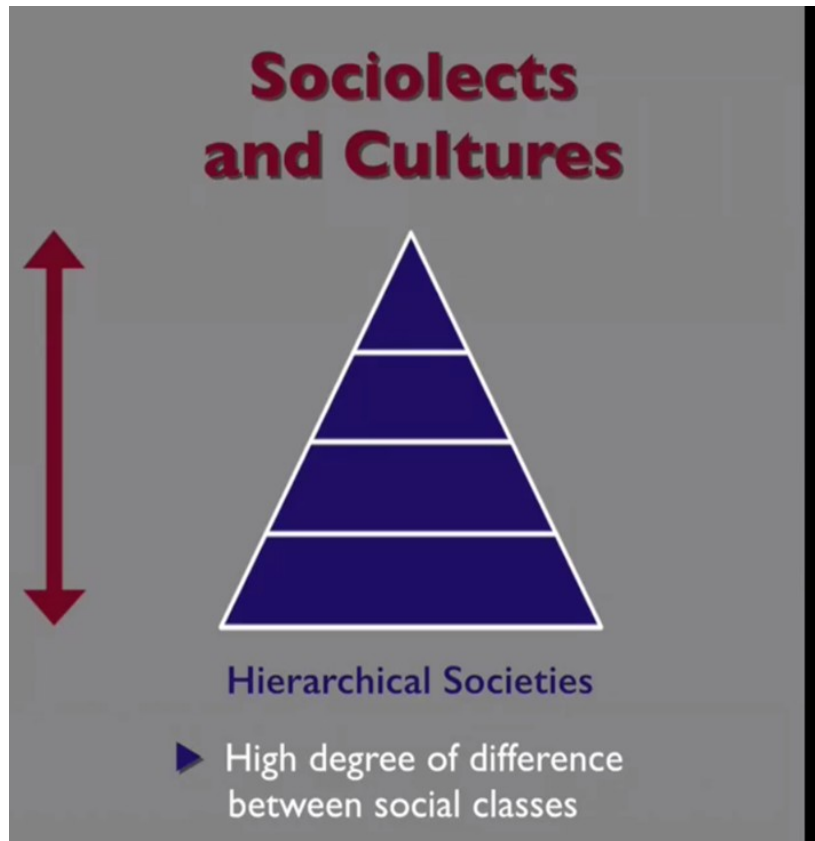
- AS HUMAN BEINGS, WE MAKE VERY QUICK **FIRST IMPRESSIONS** OF PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR:
CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES, PERSONAL STYLE
BEHAVIOR, NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
LANGUAGE USE
CAR, HOUSE, NEIGHBORHOOD
EDUCATION
 - THE FIRST IMPRESSION SYSTEM **ISN'T ALWAYS RIGHT!**
 - WE CAN **POSITION OURSELVES** AS BELONGING TO ONE SOCIAL CLASS, WHEN WE **ACTUALLY BELONG** TO ANOTHER
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2A. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS

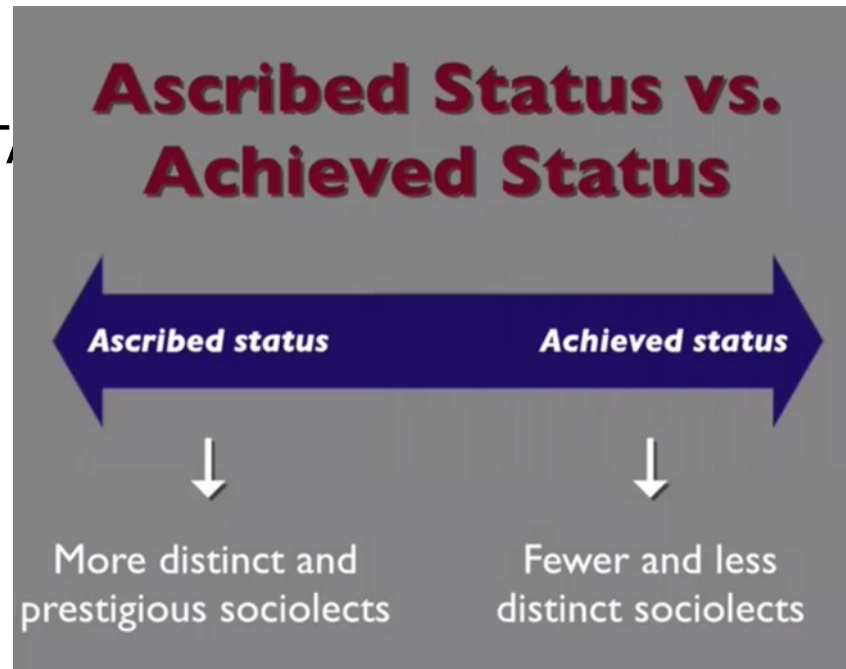
- **RESEARCH** SHOWS THAT THERE IS A **CLOSE CONNECTION** BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASS AND LANGUAGE USE CHOICES.
 - **SOCIOLECT**: A DISTINCT VARIATION OF A LANGUAGE THAT IS USED BY MEMBERS OF A SPECIFIC SOCIAL CLASS
 - IN **MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES**, MEMBERS OF DIFFERING SOCIAL CLASSES MIGHT CHOOSE TO SPEAK DIFFERENT LANGUAGES
 - **FRENCH** USE IN **EUROPE** (ARISTOCRACY)
 - **ENGLISH** USE IN **INDIA** (HIGHER SOCIAL CLASSES)
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2B. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS




20. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS: SOCIOLECTS AND CULTURES

- THE PEOPLE AT THE TOP OF **HIERARCHICAL** SOCIETIES HAVE VERY DISTINCT SOCIOLECTS
- IN **FLATTER** SOCIETIES, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SOCIOLECTS IS NOT AS CLEAR
- **ASCRIBED STATUS**: STATUS THAT IS ASSIGNED INVOLUNTARILY AT BIRTH OR LATER IN LIFE
- **ACHIEVED STATUS**: STATUS THAT IS GAINED THROUGH HARD WORK





2D. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS: SOCIOLECTS AND SOCIAL CLASS IN UK

- THE **UK** IS A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY WITH A LOT OF **ASCRIED STATUS** BASED ON **FAMILY NAME**
 - THERE ARE **A LOT OF SOCIOLECTS** WITH DISTINCT DEGREES OF PRESTIGE AND STATUS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM
 - UPPER CLASS SOCIOLECT: **RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION** (RP) “THE QUEEN’S ENGLISH”
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2E. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS: SOCIOLECTS AND SOCIAL CLASS IN THE UK


- A LOT OF **HIRING DECISIONS** ARE MADE BASED ON HOW SOMEONE SPEAKS
- **MARRYING** FROM ONE SOCIAL CLASS TO ANOTHER IS NOT VERY COMMON
- FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIOLECTS AND SOCIAL CLASS IN THE UK, WATCH THE MOVIE:

MY FAIR LADY





2F. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS: SOCIAL CLASS IN INDIA

- **INDIA IS A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY WITH MANY DISTINCT LAYERS**
 - THE CLASS THAT YOU'RE **BORN INTO** IS THE ONE THAT YOU STAY IN FOR LIFE (OFTEN DECIDED BY **FAMILY NAME**)
 - **SOCIAL CLASS INDICATORS:**
 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE USE
 - DIALECT CHOICES
 - LANGUAGE CHOICES
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2G. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS: SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION IN CANADA

- **NOT A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY**
 - **ONLY THREE SOCIAL CLASSES** (UPPER, MIDDLE AND LOWER)
 - **NO DISTINCT SOCIOLECTS**
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3. REGIONAL VARIATION VS. SOCIAL CLASS VARIATION

- **REGIONAL VARIATION:** LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES DEPENDING UPON THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA THE USERS LIVE IN
- **WHICH IS MORE POWERFUL?** SOCIAL CLASS VARIATION OR REGIONAL VARIATION

THE UK:

UPPER CLASSES – SOCIAL CLASS VARIATION (SOCIOLECT)

LOWER CLASSES – REGIONAL VARIATION

INDIA:

ALL CLASSES – SOCIAL CLASS VARIATION (SOCIOLECT)




4A. RESEARCHING SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION

- **WILLIAM LABOV** (1960'S)

THIS RESEARCH FOCUSED ON THE LANGUAGE THAT SALES STAFF CHOSE TO USE WITH CUSTOMERS IN THREE DIFFERENT DEPARTMENT STORES, EACH CATERING TO DIFFERENT SOCIAL CLASSES

RESULTS: THE SALES STAFF ADJUSTED THEIR LANGUAGE USE TO THAT OF THEIR CLIENTELE, ALLOWING RESEARCHERS TO IDENTIFY **CLEAR SOCIOLECTS**



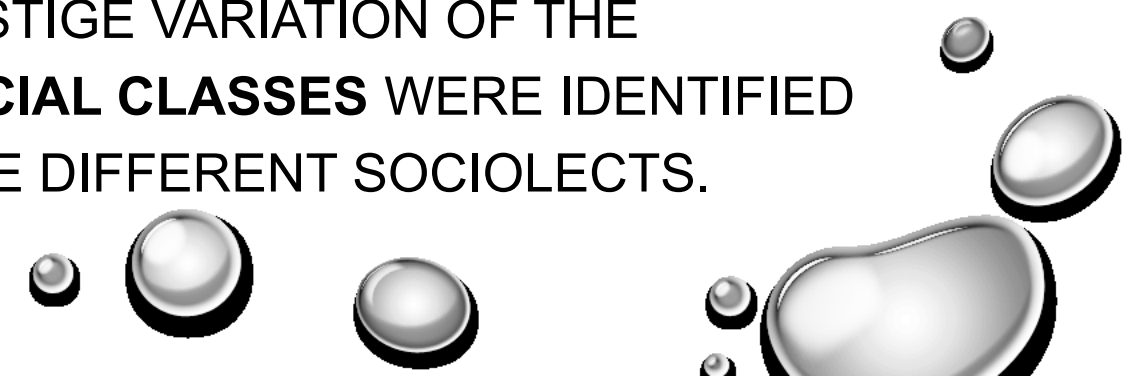


4B. RESEARCHING SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION

- **PETER TRUDGILL** (1960'S/1970'S)

RESEARCHERS CREATED A SOCIAL INDEX, HAD PARTICIPANTS SELF-IDENTIFY AS BEING PART OF A PARTICULAR SOCIAL CLASS, AND THEN ANALYZED THEIR LANGUAGE USE

RESULTS: THE HIGHER THE SOCIAL CLASS THE PARTICIPANTS SELF-IDENTIFIED WITH, THE CLOSER TO THE PRESTIGE VARIATION OF THE LANGUAGE THEY SPOKE. **FIVE DISTINCT SOCIAL CLASSES** WERE IDENTIFIED BY ANALYZING LANGUAGE FEATURES OF THE DIFFERENT SOCIOLECTS.





4C. RESEARCHING SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION

- **LABOV AND TRUDGILL**

SPEAKERS CAN **STRATEGICALLY CHOOSE** TO USE ONE SOCIOLECT OVER ANOTHER IN ORDER TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH A PARTICULAR SOCIAL CLASS





4D. RESEARCHING SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION

- **CURRENT RESEARCH**

FOCUSES ON **INDIVIDUAL LANGUAGE CHOICES** THAT PEOPLE MAKE, IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS, DEPENDING UPON HOW THEY WANT TO BE PERCEIVED





4E. RESEARCHING SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE VARIATION


- **MATCHED GUISE TESTING:** PARTICIPANTS RATE SPEAKERS ON THEIR SOCIAL CLASS, WEALTH, INTELLIGENCE, ETC., BASED ONLY UPON HOW THEY SPEAK

RESULTS: IF A PERSON CHANGED HOW THEY SPOKE, PARTICIPANTS WOULD RATE THEM IN A DIFFERENT SOCIAL CLASS






5A. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: STYLE

- **STYLE:** INDIVIDUAL LANGUAGE USE CHOICES, ON A SCALE OF FORMAL TO INFORMAL, BASED UPON CONTEXT OR HOW WE WANT TO BE PERCEIVED
FORMAL LANGUAGE: PERCEIVED AS BEING “THE STANDARD”
INFORMAL LANGUAGE: FOCUS IS ON EQUALITY, NOT POWER
 - STYLE IS CLOSELY RELATED TO SOCIOLECTS, SOCIAL CLASS AND LANGUAGE USE CHOICES
UPPER CLASS SOCIOLECTS ARE TYPICALLY MORE **FORMAL**
LOWER CLASS SOCIOLECTS ARE TYPICALLY MORE **INFORMAL**
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5B. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS

CONCEPTS: REGISTER

- **REGISTER:** COMMUNICATION SHORTCUTS DEVELOPED BY A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO REGULARLY COMMUNICATE TOGETHER TO BE AS EFFICIENT AS POSSIBLE
 - **REGISTER DEPENDS ON:**
 - THE TOPIC
 - WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO
 - WHERE YOU'RE TALKING
 - WHY YOU'RE TALKING
- 



5C. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS

CONCEPTS: REGISTER


- THERE ARE **5 MAIN CATEGORIES** OF REGISTER:
 1. STATIC
 2. FORMAL
 3. CONSULTATIVE
 4. CASUAL
 5. INTIMATE





5D. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS


CONCEPTS: REGISTER

- **STATIC REGISTER:** A SET OF LANGUAGE USE THAT NEVER CHANGES
THE LORD'S PRAYER
CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS
LEGAL DOCUMENTS
 - **FORMAL REGISTER:** VERY FORMAL, ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION
SPEECHES
LECTURES
PRONOUNCEMENTS
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5E. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS

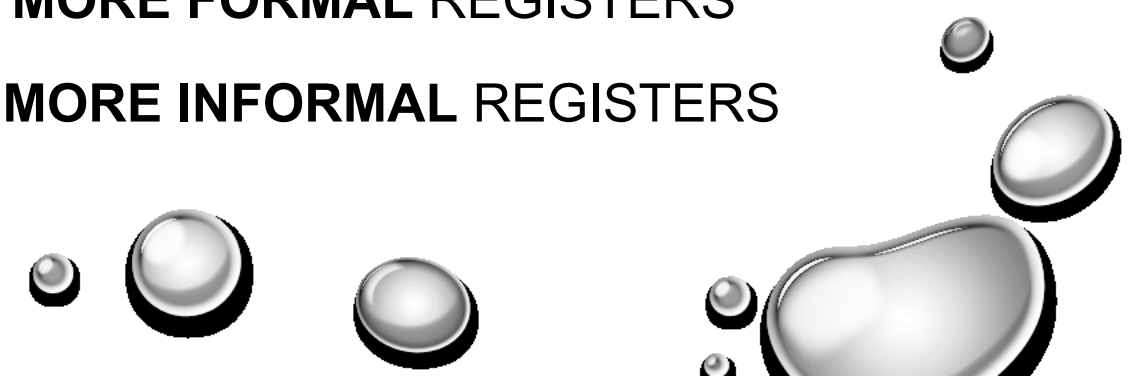
CONCEPTS: REGISTER

- **CONSULTATIVE REGISTER:** USED IN GROUPS OF TWO OR MORE PEOPLE, WHERE ONE PERSON, THE “KNOWER”, PROVIDES INFORMATION OR ADVICE
DOCTOR-PATIENT
LAWYER-CLIENT
 - **CASUAL REGISTER:** AN INFORMAL STYLE OF COMMUNICATION USED AMONGST PEOPLE WHO ARE SOCIALLY EQUAL (FRIENDS/PEERS)
INSIDE JOKES
VOCABULARY IS UNIQUE TO THE GROUP
COMMON SPECIFIC PHRASES
- 



5F. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS


CONCEPTS: REGISTER

- **INTIMATE REGISTER:** AN INFORMAL STYLE OF LANGUAGE USED BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO ARE VERY CLOSE (FAMILY MEMBERS, SPOUSES, ETC.) THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION
INTONATION
PET PHRASES AND NICKNAMES
NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
 - THE **HIGHER** SOCIAL CLASSES TEND TO USE **MORE FORMAL** REGISTERS
 - THE **LOWER** SOCIAL CLASSES TEND TO USE **MORE INFORMAL** REGISTERS
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5G. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS


CONCEPTS: POLITENESS

- **POLITENESS:** LANGUAGE CHOICES THAT WE MAKE WHEN WE'RE SPEAKING WITH SOMEONE, TO MAKE HIM OR HER FEEL COMFORTABLE
NOT IMPOSING ON SOMEONE
NOT DIRECTLY ASKING SOMEONE FOR SOMETHING
 - **FACE THREATENING ACT (FTA):** SOMETHING THAT A PERSON DOES OR SAYS THAT MAKES THE OTHER PERSON FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, EMBARRASSED OR THREATENED
USED WHEN DELIBERATELY TRYING NOT TO BE POLITE
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5H. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS

CONCEPTS: POLITENESS

- **POSITIVE POLITENESS:** “I RESPECT YOU AND I WANT YOU TO RESPECT ME.”
COMPLIMENTARY, PROFESSIONAL
 - **NEGATIVE POLITENESS:** “I WANT SOMETHING FROM YOU.”
INGRATIATING
PUTTING THE OTHER PERSON ABOVE YOURSELF
- 



51. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: POLITENESS

- **LANGUAGE USE STRATEGIES FOR NEGATIVE POLITENESS:**

HEDGING – HESITATING, SHOWING LITTLE CONFIDENCE

PESSIMISM – USING NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

INDICATING DEFERENCE – PUTTING THE OTHER PERSON ABOVE YOURSELF IN
TERMS OF POWER

APOLOGIZING – EXCUSING YOURSELF FOR IMPOSING

IMPERSONALIZATION – TAKING YOURSELF OUT OF THE PICTURE





5J. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- **BALD ON-RECORD STRATEGY:**

THE SPEAKER DOESN'T CARE IF S/HE USES FACE THREATENING ACTS,
EMBARRASSES OR MAKES THE HEARER UNCOMFORTABLE

URGENT SITUATIONS

TASK-ORIENTED SITUATIONS

MAKING STRONG REQUESTS

GIVING WARNINGS






5K. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- **POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGY:**

THE SPEAKER ASSUMES THAT A FRIENDLY, RESPECTFUL AND PROFESSIONAL
RELATIONSHIP EXISTS WITH THE HEARER

ATTENDING TO THE HEARER
AVOIDING DISAGREEMENTS
ASSUMING AGREEMENT
HEDGING AN OPINION





5L. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- **NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGY:**

THE SPEAKER KNOWS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT S/HE IS IMPOSING ON THE OTHER PERSON

BEING INDIRECT

APOLOGIZING

MINIMIZING THE IMPOSITION

PLURALIZING THE RESPONSIBILITY





5M. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: BROWN AND LEVINSON'S POLITENESS STRATEGIES

- **OFF-RECORD INDIRECT STRATEGY:**

A COMPLETE AVOIDANCE OF ANY FACE THREATENING ACT

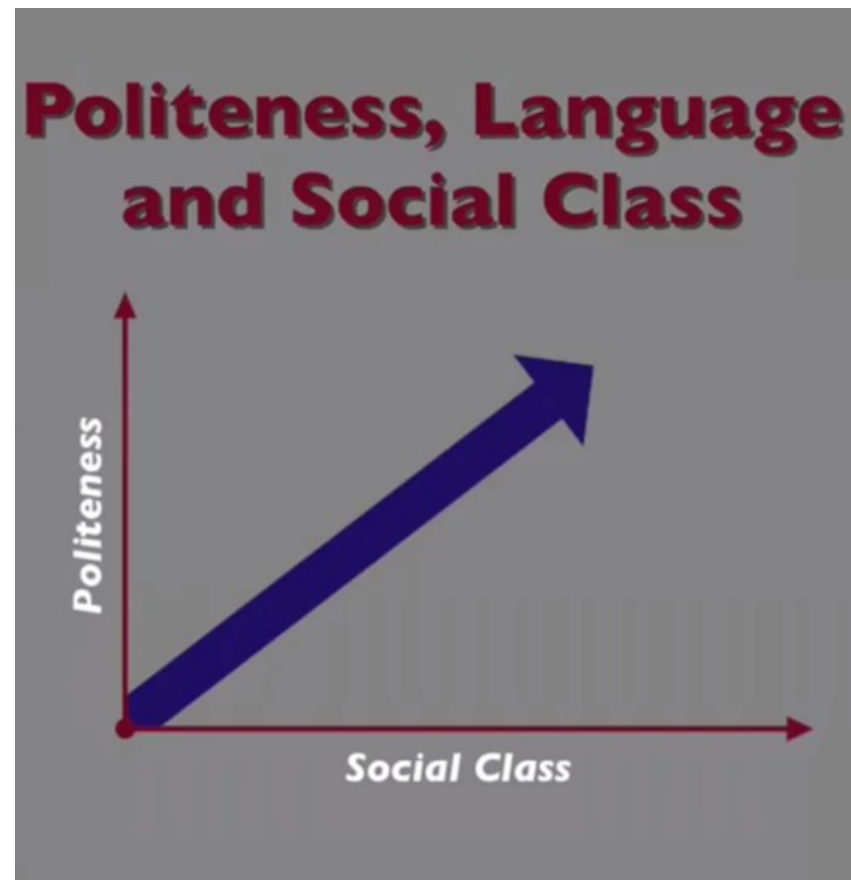
GIVING HINTS

BEING VAGUE

BEING SARCASTIC/MAKING JOKES



5N. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS





50. LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS CONCEPTS: LANGUAGE USE AND SOCIAL CLASS

- STUDENTS NEED TO BE **AWARE** OF ANY LANGUAGE VARIATION THAT EXISTS IN THE LANGUAGE THAT THEY ARE LEARNING:
 - **SOCIOLECTS**
 - **STYLE**
 - **REGISTER**
 - **POLITENESS**
- 