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)
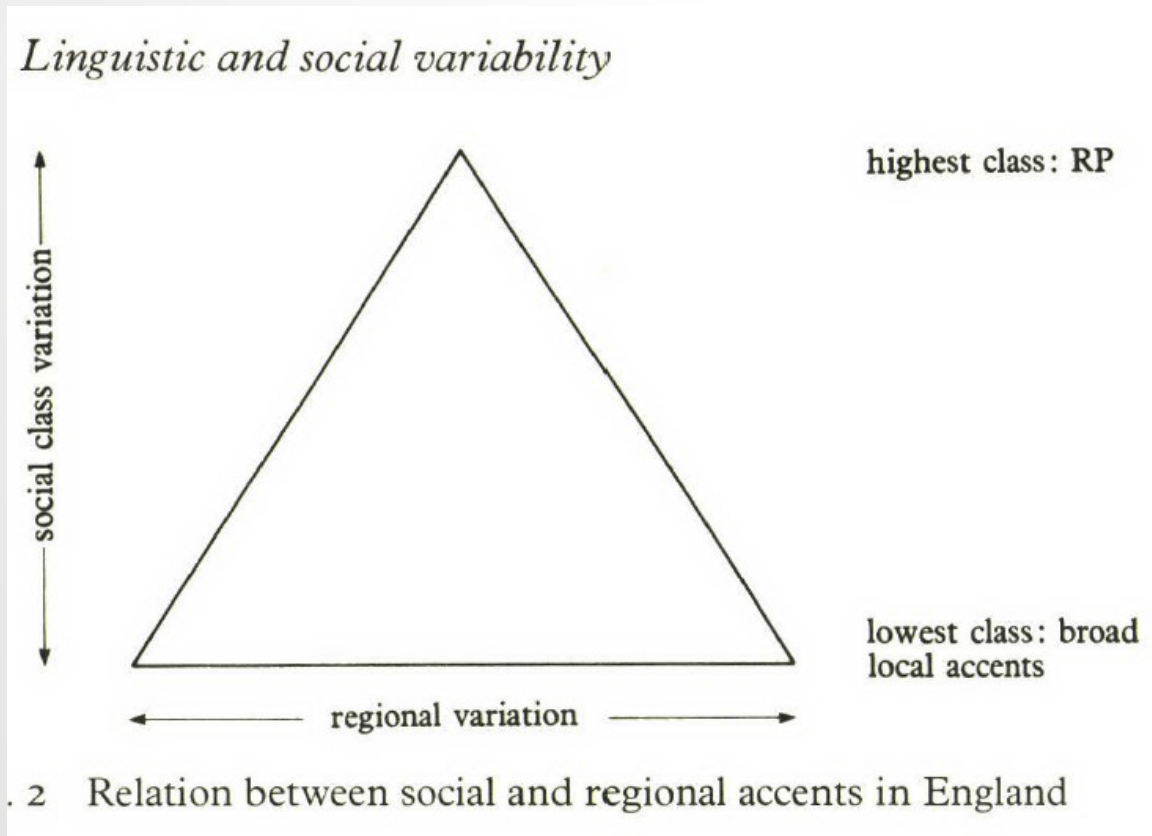
TRADITIONAL DIALECT

- 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**

Linguistic and social variability

highest class: RP

lowest class: broad
local accents

social class variation

regional variation

. 2   Relation between social and regional accents in England

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	11	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	10	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** x **divergence**