Multi-Cultural Classroom, Multicultural Sociolect and Idiolects.

Students from a large socially diverse school discuss the influence of their culture and social environment on their idiolect.

*Joshua* says:

**How would you describe your accent?**

I would describe my accent to be low in tone but of a well spoken manner partly because of growing up in London but also perhaps because of growing up for a while in Gloucester for a while when i was younger but that part is not very evident. However there are elements of slang speech which sometimes alter my accent to a certain extent.

**What features of a London dialect do you think that you use? Or are there features of another dialect that you think you use instead?**

I probably use language that is evident in teenage conversations across London, but that is edging towards sociolect. However I will use words and phrases such as ‘jus get the bus down the road init’ when speaking to someone or ‘dun know’ to emphasise a point and ‘allow’ to avoid doing something. Words that I have undoubtedly picked up growing up in London.

**What factors do you think influence your sociolect? Do you talk differently in different social contexts? If so, what are your reasons for your different styles of speech in each situation?**

When I’m around older people I don’t know such as bank workers and Business’ I tend to speak in received pronunciation as I like to seem intelligent and precise on the phone and in person. With older people I know I will be more relaxed and less coherent. With peers of my age I will tend to use phrases and words specific to that sociolect as I explained before. When I am hesitating in an utterance, instead of using fillers such as ‘umm’ and ‘err’, i tend to click my fingers in trying to think of what to say, although I don’t know why this tends to happen.

**In addition to the factors above, what factors make up your idiolect? Remember that this includes physical characteristics such as pitch, tone, a tendency to lisp etc**

I tend to have a low tone but when I am disagreeing or am shocked by a point i will heighten my pitch and sometimes raise my voice to allow me to be heard in the situation. I don’t really monitor people by saying yeah after every line but I do not my head occasionally in acknowledgement that I am listening to the speaker.

*Emma* says:

**How would you describe your accent?**

I think my accent is fairly well spoken partly due to my parents not really using much colloquial language. I do use some slang when speaking, but this varies depending on where I am and who I’m with. I also notice that it changes depending on how often I hear things. For example when I visit Scotland I think I pick up a bit of their accent, but I loose it as soon as I return to London as I’m not constantly hearing it anymore.

**What features of a London dialect do you think that you use? Or are there features of another dialect that you think you use instead?**

While I think I do use grammar and vocabulary typical of a London dialect, I don’t think I use much of the slang associated with London. The main time that I do use it is when with a friend who uses slang a lot, and I tend to use it, like Zeynep, for a joke. I also think some of my dialect comes from Scotland though, as I use words such as “wee” (to mean little).

**What factors do you think influence your sociolect? Do you talk differently in different social contexts? If so, what are your reasons for your different styles of speech in each situation?**

Who I am with and where I am definitely influences my sociolect. For example, with certain friends I sometimes swear more often (possibly because they do too) and tend to be less coherent as I assume that they will understand me. However, when in a more formal situation I try to speak using more received pronunciation in order to create a good impression.

**In addition to the factors above, what factors make up your idiolect? Remember that this includes physical characteristics such as pitch, tone, a tendency to lisp etc.**

I think that when I make statements I can tend to raise my pitch at the end so it sounds like a question. Sometimes this is unintentional and I don’t really realise I’m doing it until someone points it out to me, but it can also be to get reassurance that I am talking about the correct information or that they understand me.I also used to use ‘like’ a lot as a filler, until my dad used to point it out every time I used it so I tried to stop, as it got very annoying. However, as most people around me say it, I still do use it to a certain extent. Also, when I’m excited I tend to speak faster and my pitch gets higher, and when nervous I can stumble on my words sometimes (e.g. when reading a speech).

*Christoban* says:

**How would you describe your accent?**

I would say I am generally well spoken and like to speak in a manner that will let people know I am intelligent. I think my accent is difficult to place, and I would simly describe it as a middle class english accent. I think my voice has a low pitch and I speak quieter than my more egotistical/ boisterous friends. When talking to parents/ teachers/ adults in general I try to sound intellectual, for example using my best vocabulary and grammar when speaking. I also have a tendency to occasionally speak down to those that I deem inferior in intellectual capacity (<— like there) which is a bad habit as it can make me seem arrogant, when in truth I am not especially clever or well spoken.

**What features of a London dialect do you think that you use? Or are there features of another dialect that you think you use instead?**

I tend to use london slang regularly, however very rarely when speaking to adults or in formal situations such as family dinners. Some examples would be using the words ’sick’ and ‘nang’ to express something positively, ‘peng’ or ‘fine’ to describe an attractive female, ’safe’ instead of saying goodbye, and ‘fam’, ‘blud’ (generally used jokingly) or ‘cuzzie’ when addressing friends.

**What factors do you think influence your sociolect? Do you talk differently in different social contexts? If so, what are your reasons for your different styles of speech in each situation**?

As previously mentioned, I am purposely more polite and well spoken around adults or in formal situations than I am when around friends or school teachers when lessons are more casual. I tend to speak in a lazy manner when around friends, one reason for this may be to avoid stereotypes such as being a ‘nerd’, another reason may be that i feel more relaxed. Also, being on the same wavelength as friends means that it is less necessary to talk in received pronunciation or talk in full sentences, as it can be in situations where you do not know the person you are speaking to, such as in a bank.

**In addition to the factors above, what factors make up your idiolect? Remember that this includes physical characteristics such as pitch, tone, a tendency to lisp etc.**

I would say that the social situation always has a major impact on the way that I speak, for example it being unacceptable to swear around grandparents, but alright around friends as a teenager. In some situations I purposely talk myself up, for example when debating in sociology in order to seem more knowledgeable, however in a more casual setting such as at a friend’s house this can lead to insults/ ridecule, so it is safer to sound uninspired and unmotivated to do anything other than be lazy and act like a stereotypical teenager.

*duygu sevik* says:

**How would you describe your accent?**

I would describe my accent as working class, or sometimes with a bit of Turkish accent because it was my first language. I recon I do not have an upper class accent.

**What features of a London dialect do you think that you use? Or are there features of another dialect that you think you use instead?**

I do use slang while speaking therefore this also depends on who I am talking to and where I am.

**What factors do you think influence your sociolect? Do you talk differently in different social contexts? If so, what are your reasons for your different styles of speech in each situation**?

I use many slang words which is not proper English therefore this is also because of my social background, I constantly use it and cannot stop! Even though I am trying to change. I also have a habit of mixing English and Turkish whilst speaking if the person I am talking to knows both languages. I generally try to speak in English because people around sometimes get the wrong idea or take it personally.

**What features of a London dialect do you think that you use? Or are there features of another dialect that you think you use instead?**

I generally use words such as ‘kool’ in a way to express good or nice. ‘kaz’ or ‘bruv’ which is really manly therefore still pops out my mouth sometimes! I also use ‘mate’ to refer to a friend or ‘peng’ to something which is nice.

**What factors do you think influence your sociolect? Do you talk differently in different social contexts? If so, what are your reasons for your different styles of speech in each situation?**

With young people which is my age or my friend I tend to speak in a comfortable way and do not hesitate t use slang because often people my age also use slang. If I am speaking to older people who I do not know I speak in a quieter and calm way to show my respect towards them. I also do not use slang and speak proper English to show my intelligence. Towards people such as teachers I tend to stay quiet and prefer not to answer back if thee is a situation, therefore if it was to be a friend I will not hesitate to answer back.

**In addition to the factors above, what factors make up your idiolect? Remember that this includes physical characteristics such as pitch, tone, a tendency to lisp etc.**

I would say my voice is an average pitch for a girl, but could sound quiet manly sometimes depending on a situation (if I’m angry).Which I hate! It could also get really high if I’m energetic and happy or when I’m laughing. I am not really confident to talking to people I do not know, I also hate presentations, I am unconfident which makes me struggle to speak out loud. My idiolect changes depending on who i am speaking to or where i am.

**Task - Answer in your Onenote or green books.**

**A very information response from the students. Highlight any key dialect that the students used or identify. Can these examples be added to the glossary?**

**Do the students recognise similar influences of their sociolect on their idiolect?**

**Task -.**

These four students were given feedback by their teacher. Try and identify which teacher response was given to which students answer. To find out the correct match you will need to answer the quiz. Teacher response:

*All your responses show a good understanding of the contextual factors underpinning use of language, which is excellent – you are all conscious of adjusting speech to suit audience and situation. More specifically*

A Interesting to hear about the influences on your dialect. Swearing more in certain situations can be common (just not in front of the grandparents). Taboo lexis is the usual term for swear words in spoken english analysis (the term may encompass words other than swear words, though this would be contextual – eg blasphemy in a church)

B Clicking your fingers as an alternative to a verbal filler is an example of a paralinguistic feature, as is your nodding to express agreement or understanding. I’m confident you know the differences but make sure you clearly separate accent from some of the other factors. Remember grammar, pitch or tone and slang are all examples of dialect.

C Thanks for this really honest and thoughtful analysis. Your analysis of contextual factors is detailed and illuminating. I’m pretty sure you know the differences.

D I’m interested in your discussion of ‘bruv’ being a ‘manly’ word to use. We haven’t really discussed how sociolect might be influenced by gender, but can anyone think of other ways that mean and women might speak differently?