

LIGN 101 Section Activity - Language Variation

Today, you're going to work as a group to investigate how your English differs according to your native language, your region, your social circle, and your own language. To do this, work with members of your group (or, if you're making up the assignment later, with a friend, family member or roommate) to answer these questions, taking notes and being ready to share your findings with the class. If you find your group discussing one person's answers in more depth, great, but do try to at least talk a bit about each of the questions below.

We're all English speakers in this class, with many variations, many backgrounds, and different levels of familiarity and comfort. The goal of this discussion is to realize that 'English' is not one uniform thing, and to kindly and positively, without judgement, discuss language variation among your group members.

1. To start, have everybody in the group share their native language(s). For anybody who grew up speaking a different language, discuss ways that you feel this language has affected your English, and ways that you can identify speakers of your language *while they're speaking English*. Remember that learning languages is *hard*, and that being bilingual is *amazing*, so keep it kind and positive!
2. Now, think about the region of the world (whether that means country, state, city, or other dialect region) that you grew up in or identify strongly with. Interpreting 'region' at whatever size makes most sense, I'd like each person in the group to share...
 - One word, pronunciation, sentence structure, or idiom ('language feature') that immediately lets you know somebody's from your region/area
 - One language feature that immediately lets you know somebody's from a different region (whether that means 'not from here' or 'from the next city over')
 - One language feature that you noticed when you moved to California/San Diego, or, if you're a Cali native, one thing that caught you off guard when you left.
3. Think about a social group that you're a part of. This could be an online community, folks who share your hobbies, folks in a specific social circle or organization, or another aspect of your personal identity which you share with others and feel comfortable discussing. Now, taking care to be kind and sensitive, each person should share and discuss...
 - One language feature that you feel is relatively unique to this particular group or which would immediately 'reveal' somebody to be in this same social circle if you heard it 'in the wild'.
 - One piece of 'jargon', that is, a word which is only really used and understandable in that community, because it describes something related to that experience (e.g. 'natural 20' meaning a value of 20 rolled on a 20-sided dice is a piece of jargon really only understood by tabletop gamers)
 - One word that's developed in that group (or another smaller one) that you don't think *anybody* outside your friend group would understand, what it means, and why/how it developed?
 - One word or language pattern which is *age-graded*, that is, occurs (or doesn't) only in people who are older or younger than you.
4. Now think about your own specific language, independent of your languages, region(s), and social groups. What makes you unique? And again, each person should answer...
 - Do you have a language feature that your friends or family might immediately associate with you? Do you have a 'catchphrase', or a word/emoji/gif that you over-use? These things shift over time, so focus on recent use.
 - Think about a good friend or person you interact with *very regularly*. What makes their language unique? If somebody stole their phone and started texting you, what language features would let

you know that they were being impersonated?

- Your instructor, Will, has a very odd idiolect. What language features, if any, have you noticed are frequent or distinctive in his speech? What does he say that make