Language variation

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 sociolinguistic variable ____	**a** a linguistic feature whose use varies systematically according to social factors such as class or age
2 linguistic marketplace ____	**b** a metaphor for the economic value certain language varieties carry in social and professional contexts
3 covert prestige ____	**c** the hidden social value a non-standard variety carries within its own speech community despite lacking overt status
4 hypercorrection ____	**d** the overapplication of a perceived prestige rule beyond its correct grammatical scope
5 indexicality ____	**e** the way a linguistic feature comes to signal or point towards a particular social identity or group
6 enregisterment ____	**f** the process by which a linguistic variety becomes recognised as a distinct, socially meaningful style
7 speech community ____	**g** a group of speakers who share norms about how language should be used and evaluated
8 variationist sociolinguistics ____	**h** the branch of linguistics that studies how language use correlates systematically with social variables
9 apparent-time study ____	**i** research comparing speakers of different ages at one point in time to infer historical language change
10 real-time study ____	**j** research comparing the same community's speech across two distinct historical periods

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 A feature varying systematically by social factors is a sociolinguistic variable / a random occurrence.

2 The economic value of language varieties in social contexts is the linguistic marketplace / a fixed, valueless system.

3 The hidden value of a non-standard variety within its community is covert prestige / overt status.

4 Overapplying a perceived prestige rule beyond its scope is hypercorrection / accurate application.

5 How a feature signals a particular social identity is indexicality / arbitrary variation.

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6 A variety becoming recognised as a distinct, meaningful style is enregisterment / total obscurity.

7 Comparing different ages at one point in time to infer change is an apparent-time study / a single snapshot.

8 Comparing the same community across two historical periods is a real-time study / a single interview.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 correlate ____	**a** a sociolinguistic variable with class
2 index ____	**b** social identity through speech
3 stigmatise ____	**c** a non-standard feature
4 quantify ____	**d** variable frequency across a corpus
5 track ____	**e** change through apparent time
6 enregister ____	**f** a distinct social style
7 exploit ____	**g** covert prestige for group solidarity
8 model ____	**h** speech community norms statistically

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

apparent-time study | covert prestige | enregisterment | hypercorrection | indexicality | linguistic marketplace | real-time study | sociolinguistic variable | speech community | variationist sociolinguistics

Researchers working within 1 _____ systematically track how a given 2 _____ correlates with factors such as social class, age or gender across a 3 _____, a group sharing norms about language evaluation. Some non-standard features persist despite official stigma because they carry 4 _____, signalling authenticity or in-group solidarity valued within a particular community even as it remains disfavoured more broadly. This connects to broader 5 _____, the process by which linguistic features come to systematically signal particular social identities. Speakers occasionally exhibit 6 _____, overapplying a perceived prestige rule in contexts where it does not actually apply, revealing genuine awareness of, if imperfect mastery over, standard norms. Researchers distinguish an 7 _____, comparing speakers of different ages at a single point in time, from a genuine 8 _____ that instead compares the same community across two distinct historical periods, since apparent-time methodology risks confounding genuine language change with individuals simply speaking differently as they age. Sociologists further apply the concept of a 9 _____, describing how particular varieties accrue social or economic value depending on context, while 10 _____ captures how specific linguistic features become recognised by a community as constituting a coherent, socially meaningful style in their own right.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The puzzle of covert prestige

Variationist sociolinguists have long grappled with the puzzle of covert prestige: why do speakers sometimes persist in using non-standard linguistic features despite awareness that these features carry overt social stigma and are disfavoured in formal or institutional contexts? Research increasingly suggests that such features often index valued social identities within a speaker's immediate community, such as toughness, authenticity or group solidarity, values that can matter more to a speaker in everyday interaction than the more distant, abstract prestige associated with the standard variety. This finding complicates any simple model in which speakers uniformly aspire towards standard forms, revealing instead that language choice reflects competing social pressures and locally meaningful values that vary considerably depending on the immediate social context in which an interaction actually takes place.

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1 What puzzle have variationist sociolinguists long grappled with? _____

2 What does research increasingly suggest non-standard features often index? _____

3 Give examples of values these features might index. _____

4 Why might these local values matter more than distant, abstract prestige? _____

5 What does this finding complicate? _____

6 What does language choice reflect, instead of uniform aspiration towards standard forms? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 The non-standard feature carried hidden value within the local community. _____

2 The speaker overapplied a prestige rule beyond where it actually belonged. _____

3 The feature came to signal a particular social identity through repeated use. _____

4 The researchers compared speakers of different ages at a single point in time. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on why speakers sometimes maintain stigmatised linguistic features despite social pressure to standardise, distinguishing observation from theoretical claim.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 a sociolinguistic variable 2 the linguistic marketplace 3 covert prestige 4 hypercorrection 5 indexicality 6 enregisterment 7 an apparent-time study 8 a real-time study

3 Academic collocations

1 a correlate a sociolinguistic variable with class 2 b index social identity through speech 3 c stigmatise a non-standard feature 4 d quantify variable frequency across a corpus
5 e track change through apparent time 6 f enregister a distinct social style 7 g exploit covert prestige for group solidarity 8 h model speech community norms statistically

4 Analysis

1 variationist sociolinguistics 2 sociolinguistic variable 3 speech community 4 covert prestige
5 indexicality 6 hypercorrection 7 apparent-time study 8 real-time study
9 linguistic marketplace 10 enregisterment

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Why speakers sometimes persist in using non-standard linguistic features despite awareness of overt social stigma.
2 Valued social identities within a speaker's immediate community.
3 Toughness, authenticity or group solidarity.
4 Because they matter more to a speaker in everyday interaction than the more distant, abstract prestige of the standard variety.
5 Any simple model in which speakers uniformly aspire towards standard forms.
6 Competing social pressures and locally meaningful values that vary depending on the immediate social context.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 covert prestige 2 hypercorrection 3 indexicality (enregisterment) 4 an apparent-time study

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.