Language variation

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct category for each language variation word.

Word | Sound | Vocabulary | Social group | Region

1 sociolect [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2 pronunciation [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
3 vernacular [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
4 mutual intelligibility [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
5 idiolect [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
6 code-switching [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
7 dialect continuum [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
8 lexical variation [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 She speaks sociolect of her generation. _____
2 His pronunciation of vary by region. _____
3 They speak the local vernacular of. _____
4 The two dialects have mutual of intelligibility. _____
5 Everyone has an idiolect of their own. _____
6 She code-switch between languages easily. _____
7 The region has dialect of continuum. _____
8 There is lexical of variation across the country. _____

3 Choose the more suitable description.

1 For a language variety linked to a social class or group: sociolect / idiolect.
2 For the informal, everyday speech of ordinary people: vernacular / official language.
3 For the ability of speakers of different varieties to understand each other: mutual intelligibility / total incomprehension.
4 For a single individual's unique way of speaking: idiolect / sociolect.
5 For switching between languages or varieties mid-conversation: code-switching / monolingual speech.
6 For gradual dialect change across a geographic area with no sharp boundaries: dialect continuum / a single fixed border.

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4 Complete the sentences with words from the box.

code-switching | dialect continuum | idiolect | lexical variation | mutual intelligibility | pronunciation | sociolect | vernacular

1 Researchers noted significant 1 _____ between neighbouring dialects, particularly for common household items.
2 The region forms part of a broader 2 _____, with speech gradually shifting from village to village.
3 Bilingual speakers often practise 3 _____, moving fluidly between languages within a single conversation.
4 Despite different accents, the two groups maintained reasonable 4 _____.
5 Every speaker develops a distinctive 5 _____, a personal linguistic fingerprint shaped by their unique history.
6 The teenagers' 6 _____ included vocabulary unfamiliar to older generations.
7 The local 7 _____ differs noticeably from the formal, standardised written language.
8 Regional 8 _____ can make certain vowel sounds hard for outsiders to distinguish.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why every speaker has their own idiolect

Sociolinguists emphasise that language variation exists at every level, from broad regional dialects down to the idiolect, the unique linguistic fingerprint of a single individual speaker. No two people, even from the same family and region, speak in exactly identical ways, since vocabulary, pronunciation and even grammatical preference are shaped by a person's entire individual history of language exposure. This insight has practical applications: forensic linguists sometimes analyse distinctive idiolectal features, such as characteristic word choices or sentence patterns, to help identify the likely author of an anonymous document, treating individual linguistic variation as a form of identifying evidence not unlike a fingerprint.

1 What do sociolinguists emphasise about language variation? _____

2 What is an idiolect? _____

3 Why does no two people speak in exactly identical ways, according to the text? _____

4 What practical application does this insight have? _____

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5 What do forensic linguists sometimes analyse? _____

6 What is individual linguistic variation compared to in the text? _____

6 Rewrite each phrase using the word in capitals.

1 She switched between two languages mid-sentence. CODE-SWITCHING _____

2 Everyone can understand each other despite different dialects. MUTUAL INTELLIGIBILITY _____

3 He has his own unique way of speaking. IDIOLECT _____

4 The vocabulary differed noticeably between the two regions. LEXICAL VARIATION _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word account of how language varies across a region, social group or generation you know well. Include specific examples.

[ ] Use at least ten target expressions. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Social group 2 Sound 3 Region 4 Region 5 Social group... note adjust 6 Social group 7 Region 8 Vocabulary

2 Corrections

1 speaks the sociolect 2 pronunciation varies by region 3 speak the local vernacular
4 mutual intelligibility 5 an idiolect of their own 6 code-switches between languages
7 a dialect continuum 8 lexical variation across the country

3 Suitable descriptions

1 sociolect 2 vernacular 3 mutual intelligibility 4 idiolect 5 code-switching 6 dialect continuum

4 Sentences

1 lexical variation 2 dialect continuum 3 code-switching 4 mutual intelligibility 5 idiolect 6 sociolect 7 vernacular 8 pronunciation

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 That it exists at every level, from broad regional dialects down to the idiolect.
2 The unique linguistic fingerprint of a single individual speaker.
3 Because vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical preference are shaped by a person's entire individual history of language exposure.
4 Forensic linguistics.
5 Distinctive idiolectal features, such as characteristic word choices or sentence patterns.
6 A fingerprint.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 She used code-switching. 2 There was mutual intelligibility.
3 He has his own idiolect. 4 There was lexical variation.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.