Language variation

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 diglossia ____	**a** the coexistence of two distinct language varieties within a community, each for different social purposes
2 language contact ____	**b** the situation where speakers of different languages interact, influencing each other's speech
3 dialect levelling ____	**c** the process by which distinct dialect features diminish as speakers converge towards a shared variety
4 koine ____	**d** a common language or dialect that emerges from the mixing of related varieties
5 isogloss ____	**e** a boundary line on a map marking a difference in a particular linguistic feature
6 prestige variety ____	**f** a language variety associated with high social status, education or power
7 stigmatised variety ____	**g** a language variety associated with low social status, often subject to negative attitudes
8 linguistic accommodation ____	**h** the tendency for speakers to adjust their speech to become more similar to their conversation partner
9 substrate influence ____	**i** the influence a speaker's first language has on a second language they later acquire
10 register variation ____	**j** the way language use shifts depending on the level of formality required by the situation

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For two varieties coexisting for different social purposes: diglossia / a single monolithic variety.

2 For distinct dialect features diminishing over time: dialect levelling / dialect divergence.

3 For a common variety emerging from mixing related dialects: a koine / an isolated dialect.

4 For a variety associated with high status and education: a prestige variety / a stigmatised variety.

5 For a variety associated with low social status: a stigmatised variety / a prestige variety.

6 For adjusting speech to match a conversation partner: linguistic accommodation / rigid consistency.

7 For a first language's influence on a later-acquired one: substrate influence / independent development.

8 For language shifting depending on formality: register variation / a single fixed style.

3 Complete the language-variation collocations with one word.

1 a situation of _____ (= two varieties for different purposes)

2 sustained language _____ (= interaction between different languages)

3 _____ levelling (= dialect features diminishing)

4 speak the local _____ (= a common mixed variety)

5 map an _____ (= a boundary of a linguistic feature)

6 the _____ variety (= associated with high status)

7 a _____ variety (= associated with low status)

8 linguistic _____ (= adjusting speech towards a partner)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

diglossia | dialect levelling | isogloss | koine | language contact | linguistic accommodation | prestige variety | register variation | stigmatised variety | substrate influence

Case A: The community exhibits 1 _____, using the formal national language in official contexts and a distinct local vernacular at home.
Case B: Extended 2 _____ between the two groups produced a shared 3 _____ used for regional trade.
Case C: Researchers mapped a clear 4 _____ separating two vowel pronunciations across the region.
Case D: Increased mobility has accelerated 5 _____, as distinct local features gradually give way to a more homogeneous regional speech.
Case E: The urban dialect functions as the 6 _____, associated with education and social advancement, while the rural variety remains a 7 _____ in many people's minds.
Case F: Speakers unconsciously demonstrated 8 _____, subtly adjusting their pronunciation to match their listener during the conversation.
Case G: Linguists identified clear 9 _____ from the region's original language, still detectable in aspects of the modern dialect's grammar, and noted careful 10 _____ depending on whether the speaker addressed elders or peers.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

How dialects are disappearing

Sociolinguists studying dialect levelling document how increased geographic mobility, mass media exposure and urbanisation have accelerated the erosion of distinct regional dialects across many countries, as speakers increasingly converge towards more standardised, widely intelligible forms of speech. This process typically does not eliminate variation entirely but rather narrows its scope, with the most distinctive local features often disappearing first while more subtle regional differences in intonation or vocabulary persist considerably longer. Linguists studying this trend express mixed reactions: while acknowledging that increased mutual intelligibility offers genuine practical benefits for communication, many also lament the loss of linguistic diversity as a form of cultural heritage worth documenting and, where possible, actively preserving before it disappears entirely.

1 What do sociolinguists studying dialect levelling document? _____

2 Name two factors mentioned that have accelerated this process. _____

3 Does this process typically eliminate variation entirely? _____

4 What kind of features often disappear first, according to the text? _____

5 What genuine practical benefit does increased mutual intelligibility offer? _____

6 What do many linguists lament, alongside acknowledging this benefit? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 The community used two varieties for different social purposes. DIGLOSSIA _____

2 Distinct local dialect features gradually disappeared over time. DIALECT LEVELLING _____

3 The urban dialect was associated with education and status. PRESTIGE VARIETY _____

4 She unconsciously adjusted her speech to match her listener. LINGUISTIC ACCOMMODATION _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing how dialect levelling affects linguistic diversity, distinguishing observation from evaluative judgement.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

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

2 Connotation

1 diglossia 2 dialect levelling 3 a koine 4 a prestige variety 5 a stigmatised variety 6 linguistic accommodation 7 substrate influence 8 register variation

3 Collocations

1 diglossia 2 contact 3 dialect 4 koine 5 isogloss 6 prestige 7 stigmatised 8 accommodation

4 Case notes

1 diglossia 2 language contact 3 koine 4 isogloss 5 dialect levelling
6 prestige variety 7 stigmatised variety 8 linguistic accommodation 9 substrate influence 10 register variation

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 How increased geographic mobility, mass media exposure and urbanisation have accelerated the erosion of distinct regional dialects.
2 Any two: geographic mobility, mass media exposure, urbanisation.
3 No.
4 The most distinctive local features.
5 Genuine practical benefits for communication.
6 The loss of linguistic diversity as a form of cultural heritage.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The community exhibited diglossia. 2 Dialect levelling occurred.
3 It was the prestige variety. 4 She showed linguistic accommodation.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.