

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

19: Ways of Speaking

| Key Terms | Optional Terms |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register • Formal • Colloquial • Slang | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal • Neutral |

- Introduction: Ways of speaking
 - Today we will look at different ways of speaking
 - We will see how people speak differently in different situations
 - These different ways of speaking are called registers
 - They can involve changes in word choice, grammar, and pronunciation
 - Sometimes people are perceived differently based on how they speak
- Different ways of speaking
 - You probably know already that people don't always speak the same way in every situation
 - People have ideas about what sorts of speech are appropriate to which situations
 - People change the way they speak even when they're not trying to
 - If you think about it, you probably speak differently depending on where you are:
 - Speaking to friends
 - Speaking to parents
 - Speaking to teachers...
 - One very simple way to characterise different ways of speaking is in terms of how formal they are
 - In English, less formal speech is different from more formal speech in a number of ways

| Less formal | More formal |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>isn't</i> | <i>is not</i> |
| <i>won't</i> | <i>will not</i> |
| <i>a lot of food</i> | <i>much food</i> |
| <i>not much food</i> | <i>little food</i> |
| <i>the man I spoke to</i> | <i>the man to whom I spoke</i> |

- These different styles of speaking are called registers
- We can talk about less formal registers and more formal registers of English
- Of course, this isn't just a two-way distinction
- There are many different ways of speaking, and there are more than two registers
- Formal English isn't just a single category
- We can talk about specific registers of formal English for
 - Religion
 - Law
 - Medicine...
- Likewise, in less formal speech, we might draw a distinction between colloquial English and slang
- Colloquial forms are an essential part of the language; they're things that almost everyone who speaks English might say when they're with family and friends

- Slang words are words that not everyone uses; people use slang to show that they belong to this group, or they don't belong to that group (e.g. hip-hop slang)
- We can talk about colloquial grammar, as in the examples we saw, but not about 'slang grammar'
- Slang refers to specific words and phrases
- It's possible to think of different registers in terms of a scale
- Other languages have these distinctions too

| | Formal | Neutral | Colloquial | Slang |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| English | <i>individual</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>guy, bloke</i> | <i>dude, ...</i> |
| French | <i>individu</i> | <i>homme</i> | <i>type, mec</i> | <i>jules, ...</i> |

- What can be different?
 - Different ways of speaking can involve
 - Changes in vocabulary (e.g. *man/bloke*)
 - Changes in grammar (e.g. *is not/isn't*)
 - Changes in pronunciation
 - Some people change their accent depending on the situation
 - Other people prefer to use the same accent all the time
- Language and attitudes
 - Research has shown that in settings like job interviews, interviewers' choices are affected by how applicants speak, even if applicants are equally qualified
 - This does not mean that it's wrong to speak in certain ways
 - It doesn't mean that people who speak in those ways are different from other people
 - It just means that wherever differences exist, bias is likely to exist as well
- Conclusion
 - We have looked at different ways of speaking
 - We have looked at different registers, and how language varies in different registers
 - We have seen how registers can differ in word choice, grammar, and pronunciation
 - We have seen how people can be perceived differently based on how they speak