
Difference Between Dialect And Accent

Today's content is all about dialects and accents, and what makes them totally unique to one another. This is a subject that many people struggle with, so we want to show you how to make full sense of it. A 'dialect' and an 'accent' is something that we all use every day to help form a normal part of our communication. An accent is usually a little easier to detect and understand than the other, (a dialect.) We're going to consider the important but subtle differences that help to set accents and dialects apart, and provide you with some simple explanations to break them down.

Once you've absorbed these differences, it's all going to make perfect sense to you going forwards. You'll soon be far better equipped to tackle the dialect vs accent 'debate' along with their respective structures. We'll present their meanings to you in a really accessible way to avoid any confusion.

Definition Of Dialect

Dialect is simply a regional, or 'local' interpretation of an overriding language. We'll start things off by taking a look at the exact definition of dialect, to lay the right foundations for better a understanding of the word: 'A form of language that people speak in a particular part of a country, containing some different words and grammar etc.' That might sound a little confusing at first, but it actually isn't. To put it in simple terms, all a dialect really is, is a different version of a language. Based purely on someone's location.

An easy way to look at this, is that if a language was a colour, then dialect would simply be a different shade of that colour. Like maroon to the colour red, or dark blue to the colour blue. The language itself is always the same depending on the country (Chinese, Italian etc.), but what's different is how certain people use it depending on the part of a country they live in. A person in the United States Of America for example, would almost definitely use the American version of English as their normal way of speaking.

If you talked to two individuals in the U.S.A however, one from South Carolina, and one from New Jersey. Precisely how they'd use the structure of that language (or way of speaking) would be totally different. They'd have slightly altered wording for a variety of objects & actions, and overall their use of 'American English' would be different to one another. All of this would be true, despite the overall language they were using still being the same.

When it comes to understanding the difference between accent and dialect, the most important part to grasp is that what many people believe is an accent, is actually a dialect. To help separate the two further, we'll now take a look at precisely what an accent is to create a better and clearer understanding.

Definition Of Accent

Accent is simply the way we speak, or say a word or sentence. It's the way something sounds. As with dialect, the best starting point for understanding how accent separates itself from

dialect, is to look at the definition of the word: 'The way in which people in a particular area, country, or social group pronounce words.'

We'll shortly check out a table that'll provide a quick reference guide for you to easily sum up differences between the two, to make things a little easier. But let's explore them both more first. An accent is usually far more 'noticeable' than a dialect. For example, if someone from England said 'Thank you, ma'am'. This sentence is immediately recognised as being 'British' English.

However, the word 'Ma'am', actually comes under the dialect category. This word is associated with addressing the Queen of England, which makes it location specific to England (UK). Even though 'Ma'am' is a form of dialect, you would know that the person saying it is 'British' due to the sound of the word being delivered by the person, when compared to yourself for instance.

The sound of the word is an accent, but the word itself is part of a dialect. The dialect is a different 'version' of the language English. In this instance, the version would be 'British' (or UK) English. This is in exactly the same way as America has its own version of English, based on location. So the language stays the same, but the version of the language changes. As does the way it sounds.

Even with no understanding of a language, you're far more likely to recognize the native origin of a person that is speaking purely by their accent. This is because they are a very recognisable series of sounds. In comparison dialect is different, because it's a combination of words that we actually use to describe the world around us. But it isn't a 'noise'. Instead it's a choice or selection of words.

Nationality and living in different areas of a country are still what create them both, but it's the way in which both language forms get used that makes them different.

Conclusion

With some luck, you now have something easily accessible to help you understand the difference between dialect and accent. As you can see, it really isn't as complicated as it might have seemed at first! The reason why there is so much confusion is usually because one is a sound, and one is a structure. And that makes them very similar.

You can learn both a dialect and an accent if you spend enough time in a location, but the fundamentals will never, ever change: 'Dialects are different versions of languages. Accents are the way we make languages sound.' If you absorb that one sentence alone, then you've got all the basis you need to separate the two.