Unit 1_THEORY: Introduction:
Kinds of Language Varieties

This document helps you expand the information provided in the textbook on the topic of *Kinds of Language Varieties*.

An appendix has been included at the end of this document with information not covered in the textbook. It is for reference only and is not part of the study material.

1. Factors accounting for variability

Several factors explain the variability in pronunciation among speakers. Differences may arise from "**personal**" (or 'static') variables, including:

> *Age* (and *sex*) of the speaker: Pronunciation often differs between younger and older generations, and between men and women.

> *Social class*: Certain social groups, such as the upper class, may exhibit features that differ from those of other groups.

> *Educational background*

> *Profession* o role

> *Personality*: A speaker may avoid vulgarisms, such as the use of glottal stops for /t/ in certain environments.

> *Attitudes to language and to other speakers*

> *Age of accent acquisition*: If an accent is acquired after childhood, a speaker is likely to avoid typical features of faster speech, such as dropping the unaccented /h/ in pronouns, as seen in RP.

> *Frequency of word usage*: Less frequently used words tend to change less than words used more often.

> *Feeling of correctness*: A speaker may perceive the pronunciation of a word by a teacher as the "correct" one.

Other **situational** factors include:

> ➢ The ***social relationship between speaker and hearer***: how well they know each other, relative status, etc.

> ➢ The ***topic*** being discussed (spoken or written)

> ➢ The ***setting of the conversation***: Whether it takes place in public or in private.

> ➢ The ***purposes*** for which the speaker is using the language

2. Kinds of variability

English exhibits significant regional and social variation, both within the British Isles and across the world. These social and geographical variations are known as **dialects**. Every individual speaks a dialect. Dialects include regional vocabulary and grammatical structures. There is a clear correlation between social and regional variation, with greater regional diversity among lower social strata and less diversity among upper social groups. Although **Standard English** holds the highest prestige in the UK, linguistically it is not superior to non-standard varieties, each of which represents a distinct grammatical system.

A dialect may be spoken with different **accents**, which refer specifically to pronunciation. Your accent is the way you pronounce English when you speak. Social status and regional variation are also reflected in accents. Those with higher social standing tend to show less marked regional accents, often resembling pronunciation models such as RP, as taught in the course *Pronunciación en la lengua inglesa*. Some speakers, in an attempt to raise their social status, may modify their accent towards RP and adopt inaccurate forms—known as **hypercorrections**.

There are also pronunciation differences unique to a particular speaker that result from the combination of accent and dialect, known as an **idiolect**. This refers to the speech of an individual and includes features such as voice quality, pitch, and rhythm.

Beyond regional and social accents and dialects, English includes various **styles**, used in different social contexts. These stylistic differences arise from situational factors. In formal settings, speakers tend to articulate more carefully and slowly, with fewer elisions, resulting in a more careful speech pattern. In informal settings, speech is usually quicker, with more elision or assimilation depending on context. However, most differences occur in vocabulary rather than pronunciation. Words used in highly informal settings are often referred to as **slang**.

Another type of variation exists independently of dialect or style and relates to the subject matter and the roles of the speakers. Varieties of language that reflect this are called **registers**. Registers indicate membership in a group or profession and are mainly signalled through vocabulary. For example, the specialised terms used by doctors differ from those used by journalists. Outsiders may label these registers as **jargon**, but here we categorise them as technical or non-technical registers.

It's important to note that there is no inherent connection between a specific dialect or accent and a particular register or style! ✋

Finally, some pronunciation differences cannot be explained by change over time or by speech style. Instead, they result from the speaker's personal preference for one pronunciation over another. For example, in a word such as *pot*, a speaker may produce either a glottal stop or a full plosive at the end, both of which are widely accepted. These sounds are considered to be in **free variation**, meaning that two (or more) sounds can occur in the same phonological environment without altering meaning.

> Once you have read and understood all the theory, you are ready to move on to the practical part! 😊

APPENDIX 1: Symbols & Diacritics Missing in Trudgill & Hannah's (just for reading if needed!)

Below is a list of the <u>vowel</u> symbols and diacritics missing from the preface of Trudgill & Hannah's book *International English. A guide to the varieties of Standard English* (2008, 5th edition):

i	Cardinal vowel no. 1: close front unrounded vowel (also used for RP /iː/ in *see*)
ɪ	Lax Cardinal vowel no. 1: Centralised (fairly front) fairly close unrounded vowel (as in RP *hit*)
e	Cardinal vowel no. 2: close-mid front unrounded vowel (also used as a <u>conservative</u> pronunciation for RP in *red*)
ɛ	Cardinal vowel no. 3: open-mid front unrounded vowel (also used for RP in *red*)
a	Cardinal vowel no. 4: open front unrounded vowel
ɑ	Cardinal vowel no. 5: open back unrounded vowel (also used for RP /ɑː/ in *car*)
ɔ	Cardinal vowel no. 6: open-mid back rounded vowel (also used for RP /ɔː/ in *saw*)
o	Cardinal vowel no. 7: close mid back rounded vowel
u	Cardinal vowel no. 8: close back rounded vowel (also used for RP /uː/ in *do*)
ʊ	Lax Cardinal vowel no. 8: fairly back fairly close rounded vowel (as in RP *pull*)
ø	Cardinal vowel no. 10: close-mid front rounded vowel
ɒ	Cardinal vowel no. 13: open back rounded vowel (also used for RP in *doll*)
ʌ	Cardinal vowel no. 14: open-mid back unrounded vowel (also used for RP in *cup*)

ɤ   Cardinal vowel no. 15: close-mid back unrounded vowel

ʉ   Cardinal vowel no. 18: close central rounded vowel

ə   Cardinal vowel no. 22: 'schwa', mid central unrounded vowel (also used for RP in *lett**er***)

ɵ   Cardinal vowel no. 23: close-mid central rounded vowel

ɐ   Cardinal vowel no. 24: fairly open central unrounded vowel

æ   Cardinal vowel no. 25: fairly open front unrounded vowel (also used for RP in *cat*)

ɜ   Cardinal vowel no. 26: open-mid central unrounded vowel (also used for RP in *bird*)

:   Indicates long vowel (as in RP /iː/, /uː/, /ɑː/, /ɜː/, /ɔː/) (IPA symbol ː)

ˑ   Indicates half long vowel (IPA symbol ˑ)

V̝   Indicates more closed (or raised) vowel (C̝ means more closed consonant)

V̞   Indicates more open (or lowered vowel (C̞ means more open consonant)

V̟   Indicates more front (or advanced tongue root) vowel (C̟ means more front consonant)

V̠   Indicates more back (or retracted tongue root) vowel (C̠ means more back consonant)

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