

Am I bowvered? - investigating idiolect and youth sociolect

Often when we speak we don't use Standard English grammar and vocabulary or standard pronunciation. In this lesson we will look at some examples and consider why we may not speak in a very standard way.

We all have our own **idiolect** or unique way of using spoken language (our written usage is described as 'style'). This idiolect reflects physical characteristics such as voice quality, pitch and tone, as well as inherited vocal features, like a tendency to lisp, or sensitivity to high or low frequency sound. Many external influences affect our idiolect including our family, schooling, peer group and the world at large. A **sociolect** is the language spoken by a social group, social class or subculture. It is a term combining the words 'social' and 'dialect'.

Using the grid below, try to identify aspects of the characters' sociolect.

Listen carefully to the language use on the film clips and use the accompanying transcription to help you identify particular lexical, grammatical and pronunciation features.

| Features | Questions to ask |
|-------------------|--|
| Words and phrases | Are there any words or phrases used repeatedly by the characters? Do they use words not normally considered Standard English? Can you put these into any kind of 'category'? (Think about areas of influence.) |
| Grammar | Are there any features of grammar that are not Standard English? |
| Accent | Are there any features of pronunciation that are non-standard? |

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Transcript 1 – Lauren and Beyonce

| | |
|--------|---|
| Lauren | Did you see Beyonce last night on the television? |
| Ryan | Yeh man. She is well fit |
| Lauren | That's a well nice song |
| Ryan | Yeh, she's fit as well |
| Lisa | She's better now she's left Destiny's, don't you fink |
| Ryan | Much better (.) but the other two were fit, man |
| Lisa | Yeh, I love that tune |
| Lauren | Yeh, right. She's well bing bing |
| Ryan | What? |
| Lauren | I said Beyonce is well bing bing |
| Lisa | What is she, mate? |
| Lauren | She is bing bing |
| Ryan | It's bling bling, mate. Bling bling |
| Lauren | What? |
| Lisa | Bling bling |
| Ryan | Bing bing. That is bad |
| Lauren | Am I bovered |
| Ryan | That is funny man |
| Lauren | Am I bovered though? |
| Ryan | Take the shame, man |
| Lauren | No, cos I ain't bovered |
| Ryan | You better show yourself out there though, innit |
| Lauren | No I ain't, cos I ain't bovered |
| Ryan | But that is funny though, innit |
| Lauren | No it ain't actually |
| Ryan | Well look just relax alright |
| Lauren | Don't tell me what to do |
| Ryan | Come on relax about it |
| Lauren | Are you telling me what to do? |
| Ryan | No I'm just saying don't worry about it |
| Lauren | Are you disrespecting me? |
| Ryan | No I'm not |
| Lauren | Are you disrespecting me though? |
| Ryan | No I'm not disrespecting you |
| Lauren | Your disrespecting me |
| Ryan | No, wait a minute |
| Lauren | No because you're disrespecting me |
| Ryan | I'm not disrespecting you, just chill out, man (pause) |
| Lisa | It was funny though |
| Lauren | Are you stupid? |
| Lisa | No I'm just saying |
| Lauren | Are you stupid though? |
| Lisa | No I'm just laughin' ain't I |
| Lauren | Are you stupid of somefink? |
| Lisa | No I'm just laughin' |
| Lauren | What don't you just shut up though? |
| Lisa | I'm not laughin' at you or nuffink |
| Lauren | Why don't you just shut up though? |
| Lisa | Cos it's just funny, ain't it |
| Lauren | Did I aks you to shut up? |
| Lisa | Yeh I know, but |
| Lauren | Well shut up then |
| Lisa | Well yeh, but |
| Lauren | But I don't care though |
| Ryan | Come on, man |
| Lauren | But do I care though? |
| Ryan | Yeh but you can't... |
| Lauren | But I don't care |
| Ryan | But I'm not sayin' |
| Lauren | I don't care |
| Ryan | But |

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| | |
|--------|--|
| Lauren | I'm not bovvered |
| Ryan | But wait |
| Lauren | Am I bovvered |
| Ryan | Come on |
| Lauren | I don't care |
| Ryan | But |
| Lauren | I don't care mate |
| Ryan | It's just |
| Lauren | Mate (.) I ain't bovvered (phone rings) |
| Ryan | I fink I can hear your phone bingin' mate |

Transcript 2 – Party

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Lauren | Aright (.) What you doin' all dressed up for? |
| Lisa | Goin' to that party, in'l |
| Lauren | You ain't got no business wearin' that (.) What party? |
| Lisa | Darren's party, innit. 'S gonna be mushup |
| Lauren | I don't know nuffin' about no party |
| Lisa | You do, you fick or something, he told us about it last week, didn't he? Party tonight, Saturday, innit? |
| Ryan | Aright |
| Lisa/Lauren | Aright |
| Ryan | You ready, Lis? |
| Lisa | Yeah, eh listen right, she didn't know there was a party at all |
| Ryan | I know |
| Lisa | What d'you mean you know? |
| Ryan | She ain't invited |
| Lisa | What? |
| Lauren | Am I bovvered? |
| Lisa | Ah don't worry about it. You know just come along, they won't mind |
| Ryan | Na, he will mind, he don't like you. You're not invited mate |
| Lauren | Am I bovvered though |
| Lisa | But what are you gonna do? |
| Lauren | Nuffin' cos I ain't bovvered |
| Lisa | Well yeh but you could just |
| Lauren | Do I look like I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | No I know but why don't you |
| Lauren | Do I look like I'm bovvered though |
| Lisa | Alright but I don't think it's |
| Lauren | No but does my face look bovvered though |
| Lisa | Why don't |
| Lauren | Is this face bovvered |
| Lisa | Well yeh but |
| Lauren | Is this face bovvered |
| Lisa | Why don't you just |
| Lauren | Cos I ain't even bovvered |
| Lisa | Do you want me to ring |
| Lauren | No cos I'm not even bovvered |
| Lisa | But |
| Lauren | Aks me if I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | Well |
| Lauren | Aks me if I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | Can't |
| Lauren | Aks me if I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | Why |
| Lauren | Aks me if I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | That's |
| Lauren | Aks me if I'm bovvered |
| Lisa | Are you bothered |
| Lauren | No (.) who told you I was bovvered |
| Ryan | She don't care, just leave it |
| Lisa | She does though |
| Ryan | Look we gotta chit, mate |

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| | |
|--------|---|
| Lisa | Yeh but I want her to come though |
| Ryan | She can't pitch up lookin' like that anyways, isn't it? |
| Lauren | Are you callin' me a pikey |
| Ryan | What |
| Lauren | Are you callin' me a pikey though |
| Ryan | No I'm just sayin' |
| Lauren | Are you disrespectin' me |
| Ryan | No I'm just saying |
| Lauren | Are you disrespectin' my family |
| Ryan | Look I just that |
| Lauren | Are you callin' my mum poor |
| Ryan | Ah listen right |
| Lauren | Are you callin' my dad a wino |
| Ryan | Just calm down |
| Lauren | No because my dad's not even a wino |
| Ryan | It's cool right |
| Lauren | He ain't even a wino though (pause) |
| Lisa | That was well out of order I ain't goin' now |
| Ryan | What |
| Lisa | You're disrespectin' people. I don't need it |
| Lauren | Innit though |
| Ryan | But I didn't mean |
| Lisa | I don't need it mate |
| Ryan | But I didn't mean nuffin' by it |
| Lauren | She don't need it |
| Ryan | Look I just |
| Lauren | She don't need it mate |
| Ryan | No, wait a minute |
| Lauren | She ain't goin' though |
| Ryan | But the fing is |
| Lauren | You're on your jack though |
| Ryan | But can I |
| Lauren | You're on your jack mate |
| Ryan | Right I'll go without you then. I'm bustin' it |
| Lauren | She ain't bovvered (pause) |
| Ryan | I fink your dad's come to pick you up, innit |

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List three features that sum up each character's idiolect.

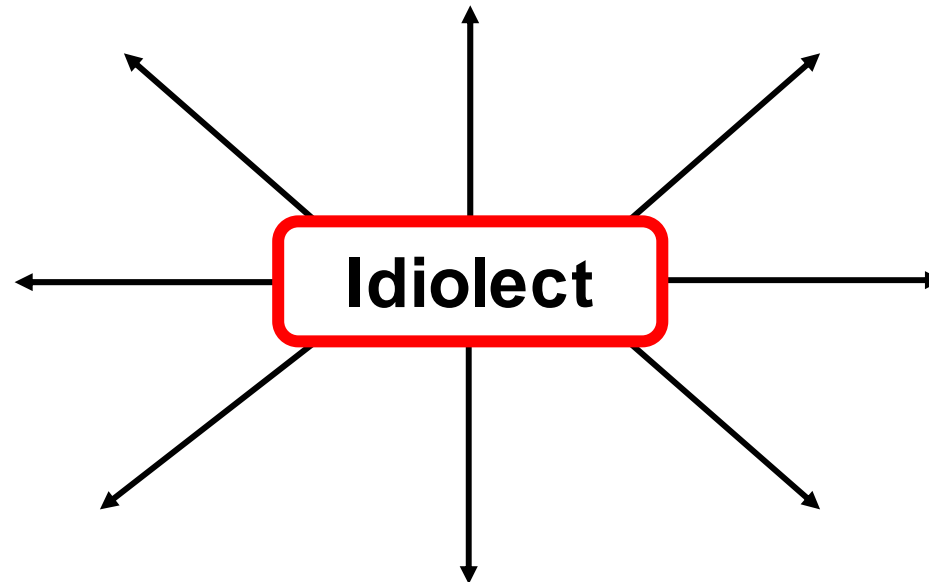
| | |
|--------|--|
| Lauren | |
| | |
| | |
| Ryan | |
| | |
| | |
| Lisa | |
| | |
| | |

Why are the characters using language in this way? Why not just speak in Standard English?

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Our language is influenced by many factors. You may have heard people using language this way yourself. Can you suggest what may influence an individual's language? Write some suggestions below.



Extension task:

Use the suggestions from this lesson to write your own linguistic fingerprint. Try to...

- include the areas that influence your own language
- give examples of your language use
- include some of the new terms covered in this lesson.

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Suggested responses

Why are the characters using language in this way? Some key terms:

- covert prestige
- inclusion/exclusion
- idiolect
- youth sociolect
- standard versus non-standard English

What may influence an individual's language?

Some key ideas:

- job/occupation
- gender
- places they've lived
- peer groups and friends
- family
- social background or class
- education – school, teachers, books, ideas, knowledge they have had contact with
- culture and media – TV, films, music, books, magazines