

My personal idiolect



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In order to fulfil these assessment objectives, I will be exploring and reflecting on my personal idiolect. I will be analysing its features and influences and how it alters according to context. Moreover, I will also be examining the various perceptions of my own idiolect, including my own opinion and others. I have lived my entire life in Birmingham. My primary socialisation did not expose me to the “ Brummy” accent or dialect. My mother was born in Nottinghamshire and later moved to live in Birmingham.

From the responses I received from my father, it seemed that she dominated an accent typical of most speakers from the cities such as Nottingham and Derby. However, after having lived in Birmingham for fifteen years, I believe that she has now picked up the localised pronunciation pattern of this region. Therefore, as a pre-school child, it appears that I do speak with a slight accent of my mother’s region; however, this is not greatly distinguished.

As an infant in my domestic background, I was accustomed to hearing conversations in Punjabi, since my grandparents often speak this language in order to encourage me to learn and understand my culture. I often communicate with my grandparents in Punjabi regardless of the context I am in. This is because from their perspective, it is a representation of showing respect and portraying a polite attitude. This supports the idea that culture has a major impact on our idiolect.

However, with my parents, I generally tend to speak Standard English because the setting is quite relaxed and informal, compared to when I communicate with my grandfather. During primary school, I was often accused of having a “ posh” accent. In my opinion, I think this was because

my upbringing was engrossed in British media involving programs discussing moral issues. Evidentially, this media would be making use of sophisticated language and refined words, which has had an influence on my idiolect. I took their views as a compliment as it gave me a sense of intellectuality.

However, at the beginning of secondary school, I began to adapt my accent and engage myself more in colloquial language in order to fit in with my peers. This led to criticism made by my family, including comments on my use of misleading phrases and pronunciation. For example, in terms of pronunciation, I would often drop my aspirates, for instance instead of saying hopeless, I would pronounce it “opeless,” which is incorrect. My mother has noticed that I frequently use words which are not particular to the region.

I would say “lush” instead of beautiful, which I may have picked up from my geography teacher who has a Welsh dialect. I would have blending our idiolects, where I would frequently select words or phrases to suite my particular circumstance. My teacher picked up on the fact that I did this and commented that it was because of my interest in her unique idiolect as opposed to other “Brummy” accents. This suggests that, she has had a large influence on my ways of talking in short span of time. My everyday language consists of informal colloquialism such as elisions and vague language.

For example, I would often say “m’brover” which has slurred “my brother” into one utterance. From the example it is clear that I do use elisions and my pronunciation lacks clarity. However, it is a quick way of getting my message across to people in a concise manner. From the perspective of the person

being spoken to, it is seen as a standard method of communicating since their interpretations are quite similar to my own when they also use elisions. Furthermore, when I am with my social group, I am assured that they will understand what I say because we have developed a sociolect.

This means we are able to use particular words which others may not know the meaning of. For example “OMG” is an abbreviation of the phrase “oh my gosh.” However, although this phrase was commonly used as a short form in order to write a quick text message, it has now evolved and become part of the customary language used particularly with young people, such as myself. This is normally said when a person is in the state of being shocked or excited, therefore their mood is shown by this abbreviation. In this circumstance, this is an example of spontaneous speech; therefore this phrase is not planned.

It acts like a dramatic filler and allows the speaker to overcome their perturbed state. Although, this abbreviation cannot be classified as a filler, it may be seen as particular filler related to emotions, in contrast to the usual “um” or “hmm.” Moreover, from the transcript recorded, involving me and a friend, I have discovered that there are certain environmental factors which have an influence on their speech. In this case, the dull, gloomy weather has affected my mood and therefore my tone of voice appears quite sullen.

The pauses shown in the transcript, “well” suggest that the speaker needs “thinking time” and also portrays the lack of enthusiasm which I had moments earlier, regarding the test. However, if it were to be a bright, sunny day, the tone and loudness of her voice would be more cheerful. As a result

this example demonstrates how a person's idiolect alters according to their emotion and the setting they are in. In addition, when I am communicating with teachers of adult literacy, my idiolect dramatically changes.

For example at parents evening, my speech alters demonstrating the ability to change between ways of talking according to the context. The issue regarding my academic progress is more formal which means the vocabulary is more sophisticated, for example words and phrases such as “ theory work” and “ case studies” With my teachers I generally tend to speak in a courteous register. My father who was listening to my conversation commented that I sounded much more “ well-mannered” as opposed to when he hears me speaking to my peers.

The language I would use with my teachers would be near Standard English and I would try to use elaborate words in my discussion in order to portray the right impression. I have also discovered that people of different backgrounds perceive my idiolect in various ways. For example, in the interview recorded, including me and a native French teacher I have learned that I tend to put on a French accent in order to gain a sense of interaction within a French-speaking audience.

From the interview I have learned that I do this in order to feel part of the conversation being held. I often achieve this by asking questions and providing feedback for people who are speaking to me in order to engage myself in the conversation. My teacher suggested that it “ made me seem interested in the situation and therefore people would be more prepared to

listen to my views. ” Additionally, I have learnt that depending on where you are in the country, you have different perceptions of the same accent.

Family and friends who live in Manchester recognised, a “ Brummy” accent and dialect instantaneously. They commented that I “ often elongated my words and talked rather quickly. ” I then asked my relatives in Birmingham whether their perception was the same. According to them I had no trace of a Brummy accent and instead speak very clearly with no false starts and the use of little or no repetition. The different perceptions have outlined the fact that people from different regions have different interpretations in the way that I speak.

As a result, this is perhaps because my relatives in Manchester are not accustomed to this regional accent; therefore it is more apparent to them. In conclusion, this project has been very interesting as it has revealed the many variations a person has regarding their idiolect. It has been made apparent that my speech greatly changes according to context and that different people have various perceptions of my idiolect. It has been useful studying this topic as it demonstrates the ways in which both a writer and speaker alter their style according to audience, purpose and context.