



# What Do You Say?

## American Accents and Dialects

### Week 3: *Words*

The words you choose are the “lexicon” part of your dialect. For example, do you say *garbage* or *trash*, *kitty-corner* or *catty-corner*? And, of course, the term for a carbonated beverage is different in different dialects. We’ll also look at your new made-up words.

- Goals of Week 3’s study of words / vocabulary / lexicon
  - Learn to listen for vocabulary-based dialect differences.
  - Be inquisitive about sources of dialect differences. These could be:
    - Gender (of speaker, of listener)
    - Age (of speaker, of listener)
    - Casual/polite speech
    - Speaking at work or play
    - Rank (of speaker, of listener)
    - Geographic or dialect region
    - Other dialect influences (parents, jobs, hobbies)
  - Identify unwritten rules of vocabulary.
- But first... some stuff we missed when we were talking about accents: The voices of women (vocal fry/creaky voice, uptalk, and pitch), and words that are different but (in some dialects) pronounced the same: the cot/caught merger and the pin/pen merger.

## Words / Vocabulary / Lexicon

- What do you say? Explore your vocabulary choices in the NYTimes Dialect Survey: [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/12/20/sunday-review/dialect-quiz-map.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/12/20/sunday-review/dialect-quiz-map.html?_r=0)
- New words: Anne Curzan, Lecture 6, “Smog, Mob, Bling—New Words” from *The Secret Life of Words: English Words and Their Origins* on Wondrium. [https://www.wondrium.com/the-secret-life-of-words-english-words-and-their-origins?tn=632\\_tray\\_Course\\_1\\_3\\_7193&lec=6](https://www.wondrium.com/the-secret-life-of-words-english-words-and-their-origins?tn=632_tray_Course_1_3_7193&lec=6) (30:00)
- Compound words and emphasis shift: BLACKbird vs Black BIRD, REbel (n) vs reBEL (v)
- New words: Jabberwocky and portmanteau words like “brunch”
- Review the homework: Made up words
  - Words that you or your child invented.
  - Words that are “missing” (for example, “hot spicy” vs “hot temperature”)
  - How to Invent a New English Word: <https://youtu.be/WdrZkl8WYlg> (5:54)
  - Optional homework: Can you determine some rules governing the pronunciation of “often” and “offen”?
- Two difficult words: Axe (Ask) and singular They
- Unwritten rules of word formation: Ding-dong, tick-tock and zig-zag
- Kiki or Bouba? <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/06/28/arts/kiki-bouba-effect.html>
- Lost words and phrases (you’re showing your age!) <http://verbivore.com/wordpress/old-words-and-phrases-remind-us-of-the-way-we-word/>

## If we have time...

- Unpaired words (you can be *disgruntled* but not *gruntled*). Enjoy “How I Met My Wife” <http://www.bigfishink.com/?p=5611>
- What do you say when you can’t think of the word for something? (Is it a gizmo or a whatzit?)
- Curse word euphemisms like “dagnabbit”

## Homework: Idioms

- Think of some expressions whose meaning can’t be deduced from those of the individual words, like “Straight from the horse’s mouth.”

Next class: July 27

## Syntax and Grammar

How you put words together into phrases and sentences, like “my car needs washed” or “y’all come back, now” is part of your dialect.



Note: links to the videos used in this presentation can be found at [tinyurl.com/OLLI-WhatDoYouSay](http://tinyurl.com/OLLI-WhatDoYouSay).