Suppose that someone said, "My car stalled, so I raised the bonnet and looked at the engine." This sentence would make perfect sense to a person who had grown up in England. Someone raised in the United States, however, would express the same thought by saying, "My car stalled, so I raised the hood and looked at the engine." Americans use the word hood, but the English say bonnet because of differences in the dialects of the English language.

Dialects are systematic variations in the pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar of a language that distinguish one group from another. This lesson contains words that are used to discuss dialects and the variety of ways in which people talk to one another.

**Definitions**

After you have studied the definitions and example for each vocabulary word, write the word on the line to the right.

1. **accent** (ak'sen't) **noun** A style of speech or pronunciation that is characteristic of a certain region or country. **verb** To emphasize in speech or in music. (From the Latin ad-, meaning "to," and cantus, meaning "song")
   
   **Related Word** accentuate **verb**
   
   **Example** When Hans speaks English, he has a slight German accent.

2. **articulate** (är-tik'ə-lit) **adjective** a. Expressed in a clear and effective manner. b. Able to speak effectively. **verb** (är-tik'ə-lät') To express in words.
   
   **Related Words** articulately **adverb**; articulation **noun**
   
   **Example** In an articulate speech, the student council president talked about the exciting opportunities open to the graduates.

3. **dialect** (di'ə-lēkt) **noun** The form or version of a language that is spoken in a country or region or by a particular social group; a dialect has characteristic differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. (From the Greek word dialektos, meaning "language")
   
   **Related Word** dialectal **adjective**
   
   **Example** In the United States, people who speak northern dialects refer to "corn on the cob"; those who speak southern dialects refer to "roasting ears."
4. **diction** (dik’shan) *noun*  
   a. The choice and use of words in speaking or writing.  
   b. Distinctness of pronunciation. (From the Latin word *dicere*, meaning “to say”)  
   
   **Example** The diction of an encyclopedia article is more difficult than that of a comic book.

5. **enunciate** (in-nūn’sē-āt’) *verb*  
   a. To pronounce, especially in a clear manner.  
   b. To state or set forth clearly. (From the Latin *ex-* meaning “out,” and *nuntiare*, meaning “to announce”)  
   
   **Related Word** **enunciation** *noun*  
   
   **Example** The candidate carefully enunciated his words so that the huge audience would understand him.

6. **fundamental** (fūn’də-měn’tl) *adjective*  
   a. Basic; primary; essential.  
   b. Of major significance.  
   
   **noun** A basic or necessary part: the fundamentals of science. (From the Latin word *fundamentum*, meaning “foundation”)  
   
   **Related Word** **fundamentally** *adverb*  
   
   **Example** Plumbers must master the fundamental techniques of their trade.

7. **intelligible** (in-tēl’ē-jə-bal) *adjective*  
   Able to be understood. (From the Latin word *intellegere*, meaning “to perceive”)  
   
   **Related Words** **intelligibility** *noun*; **intelligibly** *adverb*  
   
   **Example** The telegram written in code was not intelligible to Eleanor.

8. **peer** (pir) *noun*  
   a. A person who is equal to another in age, class, or rank.  
   b. A member of the British nobility. (From the Latin word *par*, meaning “equal”)  
   
   **Example** Five-year-old Scott avoided his peers because he preferred to play with older children.

9. **status** (stāt’äs) *noun*  
   a. Position in society; condition.  
   b. A stage of progress or development. (From the Latin word *status*, meaning “position” or “standing”)  
   
   **Example** Owning a carriage was once considered a symbol of high social status.

10. **stress** (strēs) *verb*  
    To emphasize, particularly when speaking.  
    
    **noun**  
    a. Emphasis, particularly when speaking.  
    b. Importance; significance.  
    
    **Example** People learning some foreign languages may stress the wrong syllables in words.
Exercise 1  Matching Words and Definitions

Match the definition in Column B with the word in Column A. Write the letter of the correct definition on the answer line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. enunciate</td>
<td>a. To pronounce, especially in a clear manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. peer</td>
<td>b. Choice of words in speaking or writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. stress</td>
<td>c. Expressed in a clear and effective way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. fundamental</td>
<td>d. A person who is equal to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. intelligible</td>
<td>e. A form of a language spoken in a region or by a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. articulate</td>
<td>f. Position in society; stage of progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. status</td>
<td>g. A style of speech or pronunciation that is characteristic of a certain region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. dialect</td>
<td>h. To emphasize, particularly when speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. accent</td>
<td>i. Able to be understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. diction</td>
<td>j. Basic or essential; of major significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise 2  Using Words Correctly

Decide whether the italicized vocabulary word has been used correctly in the sentence. On the answer line, write Correct for correct use and Incorrect for incorrect use.

1. The Franklin family has enjoyed high status in this city for many years.  
   1. ________

2. People should enunciate clearly when writing letters.  
   2. ________

3. The director told the actors and actresses to work on perfecting their English accents.  
   3. ________

4. People stopped listening to the speech because it was so articulate.  
   4. ________

5. Army officers and their peers, the enlisted men, must cooperate on the battlefield.  
   5. ________

6. If your teacher stresses a certain subject, you would be wise to study that subject carefully.  
   6. ________

7. The dialect is an important part of the telephone.  
   7. ________

8. Drivers today need a fundamental understanding of automobiles in case their cars break down.  
   8. ________

9. Dana could not figure out what the note said because it was intelligible.  
   9. ________

10. People can improve their diction by using electronic calculators.  
    10. ________
Exercise 3  Choosing the Best Word

Decide which vocabulary word or related form best completes the sentence, and write the letter of your choice on the answer line.

1. Paula, who grew up in Maine, still speaks with a New England ___.
   a. status b. accent c. fundamental d. peer
   1. __________

2. The actors’ ___ improved so that they could be heard in the last row of the auditorium.
   a. peer b. status c. dialect d. enunciation
   2. __________

3. My brother muttered a comment that was barely ___.
   a. intelligible b. fundamental c. dialect d. diction
   3. __________

4. Buddy enjoyed his ___ as class president.
   a. diction b. dialect c. status d. stress
   4. __________

5. The politician’s remarks were so ___ that the crowd cheered.
   a. articulate b. accented c. dialectal d. enunciated
   5. __________

6. Instead of always pleasing their ___, people should also please themselves.
   a. status b. diction c. dialects d. peers
   6. __________

7. A(n) ___ requirement for the job is the ability to type fifty words per minute.
   a. accented b. fundamental c. intelligible d. status
   7. __________

8. What makes Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address so great is its simple but eloquent ___.
   a. dialect b. status c. diction d. accent
   8. __________

9. The ___ of the magazine article was on the importance of exercising regularly.
   a. enunciation b. stress c. peer d. fundamental
   9. __________

10. When Roger spoke, his ___ indicated that he had grown up in our part of the country.
    a. fundamental b. status c. peer d. dialect
    10. __________

Exercise 4  Using Different Forms of Words

Decide which form of the vocabulary word in parentheses best completes the sentence. The form given may be correct. Write your answer on the answer line.

1. The board of directors was ___ opposed to major advertising expenditures. (fundamental)
   1. __________

2. The comedian is a master of many foreign ___. (accent)
   2. __________

3. Gloria seemed much older than her ___ in high school. (peer)
   3. __________

4. Yesterday Mr. Chang ___ that the final examination would cover ten chapters. (stress)
   4. __________

5. The coach of the debate team spent an hour discussing ___. (enunciate)
   5. __________

6. If you do not speak ___, people may misunderstand you. (intelligible)
   6. __________
7. I could not determine where Joni lived from hearing her ___.
   (dialect)
8. The poem's __ was both formal and ornate. (diction)
9. Some people are better than others at __ their feelings.
   (articulate)
10. Each committee member reported on the __ of his or her project.
    (status)

**Reading Comprehension**

Each numbered sentence in the following passage contains an italicized vocabulary word. After you read the passage, you will complete an exercise.

**Dialects of the English Language**

1. When people from Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia gather in the same room, they speak with a wide variety of accents. (2) In spite of this variety, however, they are able to make themselves intelligible to one another. (3) This is because they all speak dialects of the English language.

A dialect is a version of a language that distinguishes one group of speakers from another. (4) People learn the dialects they speak from their families and from adults and peers in the areas in which they grow up.

Usually there is not a fundamental difference between the dialect of one region or country and that of another. There are minor differences, though, in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

The first difference that most people notice between dialects is in pronunciation. For example, when Americans say garage, they emphasize the second syllable.

6. In Britain, though, people put the stress on the first syllable.

   Even within a country, there are regional differences in pronunciation. To take just one example, when many Americans say the word aunt, they pronounce it in the same way that they pronounce ant. Many others, though, pronounce the word so that it rhymes with font.

7. Another major difference among dialects is in diction. In the United States, people say gasoline and truck. In Britain they say petrol and lorry. In some parts of the United States, people refer to the basement; in other areas, cellar is the more common word.

8. No dialect in itself is better than another; a person speaking one dialect can be just as articulate as a person speaking another. (9) Dialect, however, may indicate a person's social status. This fact was the basis of the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw's play Pygmalion, which was later adapted into the successful musical My Fair Lady.

   In both the play and the musical, the main character is a young Englishwoman, Eliza Doolittle, who speaks the dialect of one of London's poor districts. Professor Henry Higgins teaches her to speak — and act — like a woman of the nobility. (10) In one famous scene, Eliza practices enunciating the sentence "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain." Once she does so successfully, she rapidly acquires the dialect that Higgins has been attempting to teach her.

The best way to learn about dialects is to listen closely to other people. Do they pronounce words differently? Do they use expressions with which you are not familiar? Do they use some grammatical constructions that are different from the ones that you use? By listening closely, you will add to your understanding of the English language.

Please turn to the next page.
Reading Comprehension Exercise

Each of the following statements corresponds to a numbered sentence in the passage. Each statement contains a blank and is followed by four answer choices. Decide which choice fits best in the blank. The word or phrase that you choose must express roughly the same meaning as the italicized word in the passage. Write the letter of your choice on the answer line.

1. People from Canada, the United States, Britain, and Australia display a variety of ?.
   a. ways of spelling words  c. fashions in dressing
   b. ways of behaving  d. ways of pronouncing words

2. People from these countries make themselves ?.
   a. suspicious  b. understood  c. helpful  d. at home

3. The people from these countries speak ? of English.
   a. well  b. versions  c. fondly  d. the rules

4. People learn dialects from their families and ?.
   a. people their age  c. television announcers
   b. teachers  d. language records

5. Usually no ? differences in dialect exist between regions.
   a. noticeable  b. minor  c. special  d. basic

6. The British ? the first syllable in garage.
   a. drop  b. almost drop  c. emphasize  d. mispronounce

7. Another difference among dialects is in ?.
   a. spelling  c. word choices
   b. handwriting methods  d. dictionaries

8. A person speaking one dialect can be as ? as a person speaking another dialect.
   a. confusing  b. clear  c. fancy  d. artistic

9. Dialect may indicate one's ?.
   a. profession  c. popularity
   b. self-confidence  d. social position

10. In one scene of Pygmalion, Eliza Doolittle practices ? a particular sentence.
    a. pronouncing clearly  c. memorizing
    b. singing  d. explaining briefly

Writing Assignment

This lesson refers to differences among the English dialects spoken in Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Find a book or an encyclopedia article in the library about the English language, and read about the differences between the English spoken in the United States and that spoken in one of the other countries. Then write a report in which you explain to other students what some of those differences are. In your report use at least five of the words from this lesson and underline them.