

Dialectal words

Dialectal words - are the variety of a language that a group of people speak, separated either by geography, class, or ethnicity.

Dialects can be distinguished one from another by way of:

- ▶ Grammar
- ▶ Pronunciation
- ▶ Syntax
- ▶ Vocabulary

If there's *only* a difference in pronunciation, this is just an example of different *accents*. Note also that dialect refers to a group of people; the specific speech patterns of an individual are called an *idiolect*.

Dialectal words

- ▶ Some dialectal words have become so familiar in standard colloquial English that they are universally accepted as recognized units of the standard colloquial English

For example word **lass** meaning 'a girl or a beloved girl' and the corresponding **lad**, 'a boy or a young man'

- ▶ Dialectal words are only to be found in the style of emotive prose, very rarely in other styles.

And even here their use is confined to the function of characterizing personalities through their speech.

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Dialect, colloquialisms, and slang have much in common in that they all refer to variations in speech patterns in a given language. Dialect refers to an entire set of linguistic norms that a group of people use. Colloquialisms are also generally geographic in nature, but refer to specific words or phrases that people of that region use. Thus, colloquialisms are an important part of distinguishing between dialects. Slang refers to terms that are used in specific social groups, such as for teenagers.

Try not to confuse them!

Dialectal words



- ▶ Regional dialect

e.g British vs American

- ▶ Class dialect

e.g Upper/Middle/Lower class on a social scale

Example of lower-class British English: "I ain't"

- ▶ Temporal dialect

e.g Whether a person belongs to an old or a young generation, to the sixteenth or twentieth century etc.

Old British Dialect Words to Incorporate into Conversation

- ▶ **DAUNCY:** If someone looks noticeably unwell, then they're *dauncy*. Originally an Irish and northern English word, this eventually spread into colloquial American English in the 19th century. (Ireland)
- ▶ **FLOBY-MOBLY:** The perfect word for describing the feeling of not being unwell, but still not quite feeling your best
- ▶ **WEATHER-MOUTH:** A bright, sunny patch of sky on the horizon flanked by two dense banks of cloud is the *weather-mouth*. (Scots)
- ▶ **BANG-A-BONK:** It might not look like it, but this is a verb meaning "to sit lazily on a riverbank." (Gloucestershire)
- ▶ **ZWODDER:** The last entry in the *English Dialect Dictionary* describes "a drowsy, stupid state of body or mind." It's probably related to another word, *swadder*, used to mean "to grow weary with drinking." (SW England)

Modern British English dialectal words

- ▶ Sing-small

This means “to put up with less than was expected or promised”.(Essex)

- ▶ Fella

The word “fella” refers to a man, either in the third person (“your auld fella” would mean “your father”, as in the more widely used “old man” to mean father), or directly, as in “you alright fella?” (city of Liverpool and its surrounding counties).

- ▶ Chocka

This means “very busy” (as in “the station was chocka”) and it comes from the longer expression “chock-a-block”, which is actually of 19th century nautical origin and is heard more widely around the UK (city of Liverpool).



▶ Geet Geet Geet walla

This simply means “very big”, as in “there’s a geet walla tree in the road.”

▶ Eee by gum

This essentially means “oh my God”, and it’s the phrase all non-Yorkshire people say when they want to replicate this distinctive dialect.

▶ Oh aye?

This means “oh really?” and is generally an expression of surprise, that might be uttered with a raised eyebrow.

"Aussie" and "Murican" and Kiwi dialects

- ▶ 'Ow ya goin'?

In the UK, we might ask someone how they are by saying, "how are you doing?" In Australia, the equivalent expression is "'ow ya goin'?" or "how are you going?"

- ▶ Sheila

This woman's name is used in Australia to refer to any female person.

- ▶ **Flipped Flipped Flipped out**

This describes an angry reaction to something, as in, "He flipped out when I told him I was leaving." (American)

▶ Megabucks

This means “a lot of money”, as in “he’s on megabucks in his new job”, or “I couldn’t afford the laptop, it was megabucks.” (American)

▶ Totaled

You can work out the meaning of this word from the context: “I totaled my car when I hit a tree”. It means completely wrecked, resulting in what we would call in the UK, “a write-off” – a car so badly damaged that the cost of repairing it exceeds the value of the car. (American)

▶ Kia Ora

This is a Maori greeting meaning “hello”, but it’s common to see it around New Zealand used in an English context. (Kiwi)

▶ Hard yakka

This is a way of saying “hard work”.