

Social Uses of Language

1. Men and women use language differently. Adult and children use language differently. Teenagers sometimes seem to have a language of their own, but teenage boys and teenage girls speak differently.

See if you can tell who would be most likely to say the sentences below. Choose from the following:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Adult male | Teenage boy |
| Adult female | Teenage girl |

That dress is like so yesterday!
 Nice coat.
 The sunset is just beautiful this evening.
 Hey! Cool shirt!

2. People also use language differently in different situations and when talking to different people. Explore your language use!

You want the door to a room closed. How would you ask the following people to close it?

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Your brother or sister | Your best friend |
| Your mother | Your favorite aunt |
| Your father | Your next door neighbor |

You are having lunch and don't like what is served. Someone asks you how you like your meal. How would you answer if the speaker was your best friend? What if the speaker was one of the following people?

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Your mother | Your principal |
| Your minister/priest/rabbi | Your grandparent |
| Your teacher | Your next door neighbor |

3. People use language to show that they belong to a group. Each generation of kids comes up with new slang words that separate them from their parents' generation. About 80 years ago, young people used "the bee's knees" to describe something really special. About 50 years ago, the term was "neat." "Cool" arrived shortly after that (and is still used). About 30 years ago, kids used "boss."

Can you think of any words you use that your parents don't use?