

A glossary of spoken language features

Term	Description
Accelerando	A term used to describe speech that is getting faster (marked accel. on transcripts).
Accent	The ways in which words are pronounced. Accent can vary according to the region or social class of a speaker.
Accommodation	A term used to describe the changes people make to their speech, prosodic features and gestures in order to emphasise or minimise the difference between them.
Adjacency pair	A sequence of two connected or parallel phrases uttered between speakers: "How are you?" "I'm fine thanks."
Assimilation	In phonology the way in which the sounds in a word can effect neighbouring sounds. "Handbag" ----- "Hambag."
Back-channelling	Interactive features that demonstrate a participant is listening (mm, yeah, ahh). They don't disrupt the speaker's turn.
Comment Clause	A commonly occurring clause in speech which adds a remark to another clause (I mean... I think...)
Contraction	A reduced form often marked by an apostrophe in writing: 'Cannot' becomes 'Can't' 'She will' becomes 'She'll'
Convergence	A process in which two speakers adapt their language and pronunciation to reduce the difference between them.
Declarative	A statement.
Deixis	Words such as 'this', 'that', 'here', 'there' which act as a sort of verbal pointing.
Dialect	The distinctive grammar and vocabulary that is associated with a regional or social use of a language. Think 'Geordie Shore' with "mortal" and "worldie".
Discourse Markers	Words and phrases which signal the relationship and connection between utterances. They act as a sort of signpost: 'first', 'On the other hand', 'now', 'right' etc.
Divergence	A process in which two speakers adapt their language and pronunciation to increase the difference between them.
Elision	The omission or slurring of one or more sounds or syllables: "going to" becomes "gonna."
Ellipsis	The omission of a part of grammar. "Are you going to the party?" "You going to the party?"
Emphatic stress	Stress placed upon syllables or words.
False start/Repair	This is when a speaker begins an utterance, then stops and either repeats or reformulates it.
Filled pause	A voiced hesitation.
Filler	Words with usually no semantic meaning 'er' 'umm' 'ah'.
Hedging	Words and phrases which soften the force with which something is said – perhaps, maybe, possibly, I think.
Idiolect	An individually distinctive style of speaking.
Imperative	A command.
Implicature	A term used to describe what a hearer infers from an utterance.

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Interrogative	A question.
Intonation	The quality or tone of voice in speech, which can stay level or rise and fall.
Latch on	A smooth link between speakers in an exchange.
Liaison	A process that changes the pronunciation of words at boundaries, usually inserting /r/.
Overlap	Where two speakers speak at the same time.
Paralinguistics	The study of non-verbal communication like body language and gestures.
Phatic speech	Words, phrases and clauses that serve a social function: 'morning' and 'lovely day isn't it?'
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound.
Phonetics	The study of spoken sounds and the way in which they are produced.
Phonology	The study of sounds used in different forms of communication and different texts.
Prosodic features	The use of pitch, pace, rhythm and volume in speech.
Rallentando	A term used to describe speech that is getting slower. Usually marked as 'rall' on a transcript.
Sociolect	A distinctive style of speech used by a particular group of people – teenagers, footballers, 'Mean Girls'.
Spontaneity markers	Distinctive features of spoken language that mark speech as spontaneous – such as fillers
Tag question	When a speaker turns a declarative into an interrogative by tacking on extra words: "It's a lovely day today, <u>isn't it?</u> "
Turn taking	The organisation of participants in a spoken interaction.
Utterance	Basically instead of referring to a sentence (written texts) we call lines in a transcripts, utterances.
Unintentional repetition	The accidental repetition of a monosyllabic word in spoken language: 'they...they've' and 'we we we'.