



Insight

Analysing Adolescence

Paul van Hoenswyk

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Seminar paper from the year 2012 in the subject Didactics for the subject English Literature Works grade 10 Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald Institut für Anglistik Amerikanistik course Sociolinguistics language variation and change language English abstract 1 Introduction In September 2010 a huge debate started in Britain after the famous actress Emma Thompson had given an interview for the BBC during which she complained heavily about the language of teenagers I went to give a talk at my old school and the girls were all doing their likes and innit and it ain't which drives me insane 1 she said indignantly Her statement probably mirrors what the majority of adults think of the language used by teenagers today Parents and teachers often have a critical and negative attitude towards adolescent language judging it as sloppy and attempting to correct vernacular features such as local accents slang words discourse particles or code mixing

Androutopoulos 2005 1501 This debate about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of vernacular language use traces back to the very roots of modern sociolinguistics The American linguist William Labov was the first who conducted several quantitative studies concerning language variation in the 1960s cf Becker Bieswanger 2006 193 He tried to find out how the social background of speakers influences their language use and why people decide to use either standard or non standard language Concluding from his studies he developed the concept of language prestige which assumes that standard forms have obvious overt prestige whereas non standard forms of language have a kind of hidden covert prestige among its speakers cf Becker Bieswanger 2006 197 So he argued that speakers do not merely use non standard forms of language because they are uneducated or not able to use the standard form but because the non standard form carries symbolic or indexical meaning that the speakers want to draw on According to that language choice can be used to express identity or to mark group membership Taking Labov's concept into consideration contemporary teenage language should not be solely interpreted as a sign of an increasing lack of education or language decay On the contrary it is an expression of children's growing identity that seeks for separation from the adult world Adolescence is a turning point in life as the individual matures both physically and cognitively and thus has a direct influence on language acquisition and development Martinez 2011a 5

Child Study ,1966 **Adolescent Behavior Research Studies** Rene S. Grenell, 2007 Developmentally puberty is accompanied by major physical and emotional changes that alter a young person's relationships and patterns of interaction with others The transition into adolescence begins the move toward independence from parents and the need to establish one's own values personal and sexual identity and the skills and competencies needed to compete in adult society Independence requires young people to renegotiate family rules and degree of supervision by parents a process that can

generate conflict and withdrawal from parents At the same time social networks expand and relationships with peers and adults in new social contexts equal or exceed in importance the relationships with parents The criteria for success and acceptance among peers and adults change Adapting to all of these changes in relationships social contexts status and performance criteria can generate great stress feelings of rejection and anger at perceived or real failure Young people may be attracted to violent behaviour as a way of asserting their independence of the adult world and its rules as a way of gaining the attention and respect of peers as a way of compensating for limited personal competencies or as a response to restricted opportunities for success at school or in the community Good relationships with parents during childhood will help in a successful transition to adolescence but they do not guarantee it

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Casts a new light on the problems and the thrill of growing up *Philosophy and Society* E. Kõlawõle Ogundõwõle,2004

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