

# BBN–ANG–141 Foundations of phonology

## 11. Accents of English

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## facts about dialects

there is no linguistic value difference between dialects

the prestige of standard dialects is sociological/historical: linguistically no dialect is clearer, purer, or more logical than any other: there is no criterion to select the “right” form of *latter* from among the forms *latə*, *latə*, *lætə*, *lɛtə*, *larə*, *larə*, *laʔə*, *lasə*, *latə*, *latə*, or other combinations

the difference between language and dialect

is unclear; mutual intelligibility ( $\approx$ ) could be a criterion, but it is not a transitive relation:  $A \approx B \ \& \ B \approx C \not\Rightarrow A \approx C$

ie if speakers of dialect *A* understand speakers of dialect *B* and speakers of dialect *B* understand speakers of dialect *C*, it doesn't follow that speakers of dialect *A* understand speakers of dialect *C*

Max Weinreich: *a shprakh iz a dialekt mit an armey un flot*

‘a language is a dialect with an army and a navy’

# facts about dialects

why do people speak different accents?

to project particular images of themselves: language use is just like clothing, hair style, or any other means of communicating one's identity

criticising other people's language use

is called LINGUISTICISM; linguists see this as improper behaviour, but it is a common prejudice in many societies (including Hungarian)

“aki azt mondja, hogy eszek-iszok, az egy közönséges piszok”

“aki suk-süköl az egyéb gaztettekre is képes”

unfortunately, such ideas are still to be found even in educated circles

# language variation

## language varies

- ▶ by geographic location (this is becoming less so as people move around and communicate more freely)
- ▶ by social status
- ▶ by age, sex, profession, &c
- ▶ in time (variation by age partly reflects this fact: younger people speak differently than older people, older people die first, so the language changes)

in fact, no two people speak language in exactly the same way (everybody speaks their own IDIOLECT), but linguists are interested in systems, not individual incidences

## accent vs dialect

dialect: variation involving morphology, syntax, lexical units

accent: variation involving only pronunciation (accent also means the mobile prominence on some stressed vowels, or the diacritics used to mark stress/accent — á, à, etc)

### SSBE

jɥw məst 'ɪjt it 'ɛp

only accent is different

SNBE: jə məst 'ɪjt it 'ɛp

West Indies: jɥw mɔs 'ɪjt it 'ɔp

dialect and accent are both different

traditional NBE: ða mʊŋ 'gɛr it 'ɛ:ɪŋ

Jamaican Creole: jʊ mɔs 'njam ɪ 'a:f

## types of accent differences

- ▶ irregular: involving individual lexical items

	SSBE	GA
what	wɒt	wət
Whatton	wɒtən	wɑ:tən
want	wɒnt	wɑ:nt
wander	wɒndə	wɑ:ndə
wash	wɔʃ	wɑ:ʃ

- ▶ regular: involving (almost) all of items in its scope
  - ▶ systemic
  - ▶ realizational
  - ▶ distributional

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SSBE /ɔ/ is generally GA /ɑ:/

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## types of accent differences

- ▶ irregular: involving individual lexical items

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Whatton	wɔtən	wɑ:tən
want	wɔnt	wɑ:nt
wander	wɔndə	wɑ:ndə
wash	wɔʃ	wɑ:ʃ

SSBE /ɔ/ is generally GA /ɑ:/, but in *what* it is GA /ə/

- ▶ regular: involving (almost) all of items in its scope
  - ▶ systemic
  - ▶ realizational
  - ▶ distributional



## realizational accent differences

a realizational difference between accents does not involve the phoneme systems of the two accents, eg

- ▶ SSBE /ɛj/ and /əw/ is Scottish Standard English /e/ and /o/:  
*gate* SSE /get/, *goat* SSE /got/
- ▶ SSBE /ɪ/ is NZE /ə/
- ▶ SSBE /p t k b d g/ is Merseyside English /ϕ s x β z ɣ/  
(between sonorants)

in themselves, these changes do not change phoneme inventories: the system remains unchanged (cf Saussure's chess analogy: the rook may be replaced by a piece of rubber, the game does not change)

## systemic accent differences

a systemic difference merges contrasts present in other dialects and retain others merged in other dialects

	SSBE	GA
PALM	ɑː	ɑː
COT	ɔ	ɑː
CLOTH	ɔ	oː
THOUGHT	oː	oː

	SSBE	SSE
TRAP	a	a
PALM	ɑː	a
LOT	ɔ	ɔ
THOUGHT	oː	ɔ
FOOT	ʊ	y
GOOSE	ʊw	y

Saussure: if the rook and the knight become indistinguishable, the rules of the game changes

## systemic accent differences

	CUBE	GA
NORTH	o:	ɔr
FORCE	o:	ɔr
THOUGHT	o:	o:
CURE	o:	ɪr

	CUBE	GA
<i>Mary</i>	ɛ:	ɛ
<i>marry</i>	a	ɛ
<i>merry</i>	ɛ	ɛ

	CUBE	SSE
<i>berth</i>	ə:	ɛ
<i>birth</i>	ə:	ɪ
<i>burst</i>	ə:	ə

## distributional accent differences: yod after consonant

	RP	oSBE	CUBE	GA	EAnglia
pure	j	j	j	j	∅
beauty	j	j	j	j	∅
few	j	j	j	j	∅
music	j	j	j	j	∅
new	j	j	j/∅	∅	∅
Tuesday	j	j	tʃ	∅	∅
duke	j	j	dʒ	∅	∅
thuja	j	j	∅	∅	∅
lewd	j	∅	∅	∅	∅
suit	j	∅	∅	∅	∅
Zeus	j	∅	∅	∅	∅
chew	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
Jew	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
rule	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅
cube	j	j	j	j	∅

## distributional accent differences: r

	GA	NewE	SBE	S US
rat	r	r	r	r
era	r	r	r	∅
tar	r	r	∅	∅
art	r	∅	∅	∅

distributional accent differences:  
word-final nasal+plosive clusters

	SNBE	SSBE	SSE
lamb	m	m	m
long	ŋg	ŋ	ŋ
land	nd	nd	n

## nonnative accents

- ▶ as the *de facto* international language, English has the greatest number of nonnative speakers (speakers whose first language is other than English) in the world; accordingly, English has many nonnative accents, among them Hunglish
- ▶ other similar dialects/accents: Engrish (Far Eastern variants), Finglish, etc
- ▶ the term Hunglish and its counterparts are often used to denote a dialect (not only an accent), and they are often used pejoratively

# Hunglish

Hunglish is useful for an effective Hungarianization of English loanwords: it replaces sounds not occurring in (standard) Hungarian by others which do, eg

- ▶ SSBE /ɛj əw/ become HE /e: o:/ (like in SSE!): *Shakespeare's Globe* → *sékszpír glóbjá*; mergers: *laud=load, law=low, called=cold*, etc
- ▶ SSBE /a/ becomes HE /ɛ/: *Macintosh* → *mekintos*; mergers: *bed=bad, letter=latter*, etc
- ▶ SSBE /θ/ becomes HE /s/: *Thackeray* → *szeköré*, *Thatcher* → *szecsör*, *Bath* → *bász*; mergers: *sink=think, pass=path*, etc
- ▶ SSBE /ð/ becomes HE /d/: *The Times* → *dö tájnz*
- ▶ SSBE /w/ becomes HE /v/: *William* → *viliem*; mergers: *veil=whale, vine=wine*, etc



óIDÓ prájMERili inTENDid for inKORpöréting INglis LÓNvördz önd NÉMZ  
in hanGERiön TEKSZTSZ, disz KÁJND öv pröNANSziÉsön kön iFEKtivli  
bí JÚZD tu köMJÚnikét vid INglis SZPÍkörz. di EKszönt iz KLÍRli  
NÓtiszöbli hanGERiön, bat ökSZEptöböl öt dö szem TÁJM. ÓLszó, der iz  
nó NÍD tu MEMörájz ól dóz FENSzi ÁJpíej SZIMbözl!

diszól tönötivträn szkripsön ejmzötprö vajdinöömó fejföl reprizön tejsönöv  
karönt sztändöd britis inglisprö nönszi ejsön, sztil jüuzinjödökön  
vensönzövhön gērijön szpeliŋ. ijcs wódbi ginzwidö sztreszt szilöböl.  
nöütdöt töütölijpri szajszträn szkripsönizim poszöböl.