



Dialects and Accents

And some review for Exam 2



Review

- The way people naturally speak is very systematic.
- Linguists describe the systems with “Descriptive rules”
- Each spoken dialect has its own (descriptive) rules
- No dialect is less logical than another
- No dialect “lacks grammar”



Accents

- Everyone has an accent!
- If English is your first language, you have an L1 accent.
- If not, you have an L2 accent.
- Common (though false) claim: *I* don't have an accent.



Dialect vs. Accent

- Two **speech-type** varieties are divided by an **accent** when differences are restricted primarily to phonology.
 - My southern CA “valley” /a/ is a strictly phonological difference and therefore **accentual**.
 - Mergers:
 - “cult” vs. “colt” → LA area
 - “pin” vs. “pen” → Southern, Carolinas
 - <https://aschmann.net/AmEng/>



Determining Dialects

- If two **speech-type utterances** also differ in morphological structures, syntax, lexicon, and semantics, then they are different **dialects** of the same language.
- Gym shoes, sneakers, or tennis shoes?
- Grinder, hero, hoagie, or sub?



Distinguishing Languages

- And if in addition they have distinct literary histories, distinct orthographies, and/or geopolitical boundaries, then they are called different **languages**.



What about ‘mutual intelligibility’?

Mutual intelligibility:

- *is a relationship between languages or dialects in which speakers of different but related varieties can readily understand each other without prior familiarity or special effort.*



Non-rhoticity

- Non-rhotic varieties only pronounce /r/ when it immediately precedes a vowel.
 - Most English varieties from England and Wales (but not Scotland)
 - Australian and New Zealand English
 - Boston English and Southern English



R - Dropping

- Car, yard, Barbie, party, wear
 - four ≠ fou poor ≠ poo beer ≠ bee
- R is retained in: road, carry, Darrin, parrot, wearing
 - r → /ə/ in the end of syllable, when no vowel comes after it
- tuner and tuna are pronounced identically as: /'tju:nə/ (or /'tu:nə/)
- R-Drop rule:
 - r → [ə] (“uh”) / V _ C (or end of word)



Linking R


- A final r does get pronounced sometimes if immediately followed by a vowel:
 - water or tea
 - batter up
 - butter and toast
 - So tuner amp may be pronounced ['tju:nər æmp].



Intrusive R

/r/ is inserted as a linking R between vowels

- the boy from cuba (r) is
- spa (r) on the corner
- law (r) and...
- Intrusive R rule:
 - [ə] → r / V__V (between 2 vowels)



"I have no idear if the movie begins at nine or ten," but, "Does the movie begin at 9 or 10? I have no idea."



Dialects?

- In contemporary British prestige dialect, r-dropping is considered “correct” and “educated-sounding”
- In contemporary American English, r-dropping in Boston is considered “incorrect” and “uneducated sounding” (to some)
- Why?



Prescriptivism of Dialects

- “correct” dialect = the dialect of those in power.
 - Which dialect is “standard” is a matter of fashion (and power), not of logic, completeness, “correctness” or comprehensibility