Two National Varieties

American vs British English

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Course Structure

1. National Standard & Dialects
   - British English

2. Two National Varieties
   - American vs British English

3. Bilingualism & Language Contact
   - Welsh English & Welsh

4. Pidgins & Creoles
   - Caribbean English

5. English as a Second Language
   - Indian English

General American versus RP

Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General American</th>
<th>Received Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ] / [ɑ]</td>
<td>brought, talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɑ]</td>
<td>pot, cot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɑː]</td>
<td>father, calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>fast, path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æː]</td>
<td>bad, sat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[ɔ] / [ɑ] in General American
[bɔː] [bɑː] [bɑː] [bæː] in RP

Invariant Merger of [ɑ] and [ɔ]

2 or 3 vowels in Gen
2 or 3 vowels in Gen
= 4 vowels

2 or 3 vowels in Gen
2 or 3 vowels in Gen

E.g. cot / caught

Merger of [ɪ] and [ɛ] before nasals

e.g. *pin*/*pen*

The Northern Cities (Chain) Shift 1

*Figure 12.2 Dialect areas in the United States with the Northern Cities Shift*

(Svartvik & Leech 2006: 240)

The Northern Cities (Chain) Shift 2

General American versus RP

Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General American</th>
<th>Received Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ou] so, dough</td>
<td>[æu]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diphthongs + /r/

| /ɪə/ peer, dear | [ɛə] |
| /ɛə/ pair, care | [ɛə] |
| /ʊə/ tour, cure | [ʊə] |

Less pronounced diphthongs in Gen Am because it is rhotic (postvocalic /r/ is pronounced)
General American versus RP

Consonants

- **General American**
- **Received Pronunciation**

**Convergence of intervocalic /t/ & /d/; t/d tapping (flapped t/d)**

| [ɾ] | bitter, latter | [t] | Often no distinction in Gen Am |
| [ɾ] | bidder, ladder | [d] | |

**Convergence of intervocalic /nt/ /nd/ & /n/; nasal tapping**

| [ɾ̃] | winter, twenty | [n] | Often no distinction in Gen Am |

Differences in Lexis Differences in Lexis

1. **Crystal (2005: 308, after Benson et al 1986)** distinguishes between these types of *lexemes* (words or lexical items):
   - **Cultural differences**, not part of World Standard English (WSE)
     - e.g. AmE *the Ivy League*, BrE *A levels*, value added tax (VAT)
   - **Single sense & synonym in the other variety**
     - e.g. AmE *checking account*, BrE *current account*
   - **One meaning in WSE & synonym in one or both of the other varieties**
     - e.g. WSE *undertaker*, AmE *mortician*, BrE *undertaker*

2. **One meaning in WSE & additional meaning in one or both of the other varieties**
   - e.g. WSE *caravan* ‘group of travellers in a desert’
     - BrE *caravan* ‘vehicle towed by a car’ = AmE *trailer*
   - No WSE meaning, but different meanings in BrE & AmE
     - e.g. AmE *overpass*, BrE *flyover*
     - AmE *flyover*, BrE *fly-past*
   - Meanings exist in both, but differences in frequency
     - e.g. *apartment vs flat*, *mail vs post*, *store vs shop*

3. **Meanings exist in both, but differences in frequency**
   - e.g. *apartment vs flat*, *mail vs post*, *store vs shop*

**Items with stylistic labels (such as colloquial) have no matching items in the list.**
A cluster of lexical differences between BrE & AmE: Cars/ Automobiles

(Crystal 2005: 310, adapted from Longman Dictionary of English Language & Culture 1992)

There are relatively few grammatical differences between educated BrE and AmE. A leading reference grammar [Greenbaum & Quirk 1990] notes regional trends affecting only c. 250 points in morphology or syntax, with many of these affecting individual items (e.g. irregular verbs), and very few being general points of syntactic construction. (Crystal 2005: 311)

**Differences in the Verb Phrase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American English</th>
<th>British English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have: do you have?</td>
<td>have got: have you got?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences in Grammar 2

Differences in the Verb Phrase (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American English</th>
<th>British English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distinction made in AmE:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have got</td>
<td>have got</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s got a new boat</td>
<td>He’s got a new boat = has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s gotten a new boat</td>
<td>He’s got a new boat = obtained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

just/already + past simple | just/already + present perfect
I just ate | I’ve just eaten

Differences in Grammar 3

Differences in the Verb Phrase (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American English</th>
<th>British English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irregular vs regular verbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burn – burned</td>
<td>burn – burnt (burned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream – dreamed</td>
<td>dreamt – dreamt (dreamed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dive – dove</td>
<td>dive – dived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sneak – snuck</td>
<td>sneak – sneaked (snuck)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fit – fit – fitted</td>
<td>fit – fitted – fitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences in Grammar 4

Differences in the Verb Phrase (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American English</th>
<th>British English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong preference for:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will/won’t</td>
<td>rather than formal BrE shall/shan’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be arriving at …</td>
<td>I shall/will be arriving at …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong preference for collective nouns

+ singular verb | + plural (or singular verb)
the government is … | the government are (is) …
New York City has a very distinct accent.

- Partly ascribed to close early ties with England, but also because of influences from other immigrant languages, e.g. Yiddish, Irish, Irish English & Italian.
- More social stratification of accents than anywhere else in N. America (Trudgill & Hanna 2002: 47).
- Upper class features have far fewer local features than lower class accents.

**New York City Accent 2**

**Characteristic features:**
- In common with many other Eastern New England accents it is non-rhotic (lacking postvocalic /r/).

\[
\text{three o'clock in the morning} \quad [\text{mən}n] \\
\]

This is less so among young New Yorkers (esp. of higher social class):

\[
\text{[wɜk]} /\text{work}/ \quad \text{[wɜːkt]} /\text{workt}/ \quad \text{[jɔrk]} /\text{jork}/ \\
I \text{work in the city I've always worked in New York} \\
\]

**New York City Accent 3**

- The vowel [ɔ] followed by /l/ = [ɔ̃] in General American is characteristically vocalised as [ɔɪ] before a consonant, but not in a final position:

\[
\text{See, I was so nervous and upset that my pulse was goin' so fast, a::nd I couldn't talk} \quad [\text{nəvəs}] \\
\]

This pronunciation is **stigmatised** (and therefore not used by the upper class) and is being ousted among young people:

\[
\text{[wɜk]} \quad \text{[wɜːkt]} \\
I \text{work in the city I've always worked in New York} \\
\]
An additional /a/ phoneme (c.f. Gen. Am. pot [pət] and father [fɑðər]), often realised as a diphthong: [ɑə]

the lightning turned out to be my father who gave me two quick noogies on the top of my head [tɑp]

the men were comin' down their pajamas an' bathrobes, and they had bottles stickin' all out all over [bɑɾːz]

The same rounded quality of the /a/ occurs in the diphthong /ai/, e.g. in buy [baɪ], die [dai] which is often realised as [ɑɪ]

the dish stopped but the pasta became airborne an' it just slid out of the dish because it had been liquified by the sauce an' it just went flying all over him [flɑɪŋ]

Distinction maintained between cot [kɑt] and caught [kɔt] (unlike many varieties of Am. English), but this is typically realised as a diphthong: [ə]

I bought a lot of fancy bottles, little like one drink in, for souvenirs t- t- all of my friends [ɑbəd]

I had the opportunity to travel abroad for one year [əbəd]

The Pyramid of Standardisation

(Svartvik & Leech 2006: 127)
**Social Dialects (Sociolects) 1**

**sociolinguistics:** “the study of the relationship between language and society” (Yule 2006: 205)

**sociolect:** a language variety characterised by social class (often in urban areas) – correlating social and linguistic variables

**social markers:** the frequency of a certain linguistic variable in speech may mark a person as a member of a social group (Yule 2008: 207-8)

e.g. *fourth* [fɔːθ] versus *fou’th* [fɔ(ə)θ]

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**Social Dialects (Sociolects) 2**

**variation in pronunciation of postvocalic /r/**

- (r): [əɹ] versus (r): ø

- variable

- variant

  e.g. “fourth floor” Standard AmE: [ʃɔɹθ] fɔɹθ fɔlər/

**variable:** a unit in language that is subject to social or stylistic variation (and thus most susceptible to change)

**variant:** a specific linguistic form which a variable takes when it is used in a specific context by a speaker

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**Social Dialects (Sociolects) 3**

**Labov’s department store investigation:** elicit “fourth floor” in 3 NY department stores, lean forward pretending not to have heard properly to get a second more careful pronunciation (Labov 1972)

- **Saks, 5th Avenue:** high status
- **Macy’s:** middle status
- **S. Klein:** low status

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**Social Dialects (Sociolects) 4**

**Labov’s results for postvocalic /r/ on 1st & 2nd request**

(Labov 1972: 51-52)
Social Dialects (Sociolects) 5 (Yule 2006: 208)

**speech style**: situationally distinctive uses of language, e.g. making a distinction between *formal* (careful) and *informal* (casual) style

**style-shifting**: changing from one style to another

*According to Labov style depends on the amount of attention paid to speech production*

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**Bibliography**

Benson, M., Benson, E. & Ilson, R (1986) Lexicographic Description of English. Amsterdam: John Benjamins


