

Linguistics 446
English Phonology

Course administrative details

TuTh 2-3:20

BLM 302

Credits: 3

Prerequisite: LING 450 or equivalent

Web page: <http://courses.washington.edu/lingclas/446/446.html>

Course description

This course aims to provide an overview of English phonology. Aspects of English phonetics and morphology will also be discussed as they pertain to the phonology of English. A major focus of the class is differences in the vowel systems of different varieties of English. In order to talk about vowels objectively, we will need to use the tools of speech analysis. For that reason, LING 450 is prerequisite to this class.

We begin talking about what are for the most part pan-dialectal features of the phonology of English, beginning with consonantal phenomena, the distinction between tense and lax vowels, and stress. After that, we will be talking mainly but not exclusively about vowel systems, specifically, geographically conditioned variation in vowel systems of English.

This is not a class in the history of English, but some aspects of synchronic variation are easier to understand in their historical contexts. Some sound changes and historical events involving English will be presented throughout the course.

Learning goals

The goals for student learning in this course are:

- to be able to understand the kind of geographical variation that exists in the phonological systems of different varieties of English
- to be able to distinguish real linguistic differences between systems of English from notational/transcriptional differences
- to practice and/or refine reliable, verifiable methods for studying English phonology, such as acoustic analysis

Professor administrative details

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Textbooks

The bookstore should contain copies of Wells 1982b, Wells 1982c, and Wells 1982d. Only vol. 1 of this three-volume set is required for the class, but you may find vol. 2 and/or 3 useful.

Grading and exams

Your grades will be based on the following work:

Homework, quizzes (announced ahead of time or not): 30%. There may be an extra assignment for the grad students in the class.

Term project: 30%

Final exam: 30%

Class participation: 10%

Vowel analysis homework

Everyone will need to download and install Praat, a free speech analysis package. The program can be found at <http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>

You will need to create a recording of yourself (if you are a native speaker of English). If you are not a native speaker of English, you will need to find a willing native speaker of a North American dialect of English. You will need to record your vowels in a consonantal frame which does not vary (much), such as:

heed, hid, hayed, head, had, who'd, hood, hoed, hawed, hod or sod, HUD

We will set aside one class meeting day for recordings in the phonetics lab. You will record each other, which will be good practice for the recording you will need to do for the term project.

You will need to identify the words on the recording and transcribe them. The recording will contain three repetitions of each word. Using Praat, you will measure the first and second formants at the midpoint of each vowel. Using Excel or perhaps PlotFormants, a non-shareware program which I could bring to class on a Mac laptop, you will plot your measured vowels. You will turn in your plot, your numerical values, and a brief description/write-up of what you consider to be the noteworthy features of the

vowel system compared to what you have been learning about English vowels up to that point in the course.

Term project

The goal of the term project is to get you familiar with the vowel system of a dialect of English which we will not discuss (much) in class. To that end, I recommend that you focus on a variety of English that is spoken outside of North America, such as Australian, New Zealand, South African, Indian, Caribbean, or UK/Ireland.

First, you will need to find a native speaker of that variety who is willing to sit with you for about an hour and be recorded by you.

Second, having identified the variety you will be working with, you should check on what Wells (and any other sources) have to say about it. In this class, a major focus is dialect differences involving vowel mergers, vowel splits, and/or vowel allophones. You should therefore pay particular attention to claims about the vowel system of the variety you are investigating.

Before you work with your speaker, you should come up with a possible set of topics for them to talk about, as well as a list of words that you would like to check with that person. You may get only one opportunity to work with that person, so you want to be really prepared before you do. The words you have selected will hopefully tell you whether or not certain mergers or splits have taken place in your speaker's dialect, as claimed by Wells (or someone else).

Part 1: You will record a 5-minute text from your speaker and transcribe a portion of it. What you will turn in is:

- a list of consonant and vowel phonemes for your speaker's dialect
- a phonetic transcription of 2 minutes of your text using appropriate phonetic transcriptional symbols
- a transcription using normal English orthography
- the 2-minute transcribed sound file from your 5-minute recording

Part 2: You will make a recording of words which illustrate the system of contrasting vowels in your speaker's dialect, and you will acoustically analyze them along the lines of the earlier vowel analysis homework assignment. What you will turn in is:

- a list of words which illustrate the contrasting segments
- plot of the first and second formants of the vowels
- write-up of any interesting or unusual features of your speaker's vowel system
- discussion of any possible differences between the word list and narrative recordings

Schedule of lectures, readings and assignments

The schedule below is subject to change.

Lectures will generally be accompanied by PowerPoint slides. These will be available on the course web site after each lecture (not before, sorry).

The reading listed is what you should read before that day's lecture.

Abbreviations:

Wells1 = Wells 1982b

Wells tape = Wells 1982a

Foulkes = Foulkes and Docherty 1999

Kortman = Kortmann and Schneider 2004

Labov et al. = Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2007

English Speaking World = McCrum and MacNeil 1986a

Mother Tongue = McCrum and MacNeil 1986b

Muse of Fire = McCrum and MacNeil 1986c

The Guid Scots Tongue = McCrum and MacNeil 1986d

Black on White = McCrum and MacNeil 1986e

Pioneers O Pioneers = McCrum and MacNeil 1986f

Muvver Tongue = McCrum and MacNeil 1986g

Loaded Weapon = McCrum and MacNeil 1986h

Next Year's Words = McCrum and MacNeil 1986i

<i>wk</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>lecture topic</i>	<i>reading</i>	<i>multi-media clips from</i>	<i>assignment</i>
1	Tu Jan 8	Introductions. English speaking varieties. Syllabus. Overview of Wells vols. 1-3. Consonants.	Wells1 1.2.11, 3.1.2, 3.4.1	Wells tape, Kortmann	
	Th Jan 10	Introduction to Wells' descriptive framework for English vowels. Tense and lax vowels of "Standard" American English. Sound changes affecting American English.	Wells1 2.1, 2.3, 3.3.1-3. Be familiar in a general way with 2.2.	<i>Mother Tongue, A Muse of Fire</i> , Wells tape, Kortmann	
2	Tu Jan 15	Approaches to the transcription of American English vowels.	Wells1 1.1, 1.2.11, 2.1.3-2.1.5	Ladefoged 2005, Whitley 2004	
	Th Jan 17	Stress in unaffixed verbs, adjectives, nouns. Acoustic correlates of stress in English.	(review) Ladefoged 2006 (ch. 5, 10), Wells1 1.3.8		
3	Tu Jan 22	[ə] and syllabic sonorants in American English.	(review) Ladefoged 2006 (chs.4), Wells1 2.2.25		
	Th Jan 24	Review of acoustic phonetics. An American English vowel space.	(review) Ladefoged 2006 chs. 8-9		
4	Tu Jan 29	Meet in phonetics lab (PDL A216). Recording each other for vowel analysis homework.			Vowel analysis homework distributed
	Th Jan 31	Review of Praat measurement technique for vowels. Plotting vowels using Excel or Plot Formants.			
5	Tu Feb 5	Phonological variation in N. America. Flap.	Wells1 3.3.4	<i>Pioneers O Pioneers</i> , Wells tape, Labov et al., Kortmann	Term project description due (identify speaker and

					dialect)
	Th Feb 7	Phonological variation in N. America. /æ/ tensing. Canadian English.		<i>Pioneers O Pioneers</i> ; 2006 2006 guest videoconference with Rob Hagiwara, Labov et al., Kortmann	
6	Tu Feb 12	Consonant clusters. African-American Vernacular English.		<i>Black on White</i> , Labov et al.	
	Th Feb 14	English in the Pacific Northwest project (guest lecturer: Mike Scanlon)			
7	Tu Feb 19	Tense and lax vowels of “Received Pronunciation”. “broad a”.	Wells1 2.2.7, 3.2.6, 3.5.3, Wells1 3.3	Ladefoged 2005, <i>English Speaking World</i> , Foulkes, Kortmann	
	Th Feb 21	Phonological differences between dialects of England. London, the south, the north. Foot-Strut split.	Wells1 1.1.4-5, 3.1.7	Foulkes, <i>Muvver Tongue</i> , Kortmann	
8	Tu Feb 26	Irish and Scottish English.	Wells1 3.1.2, 3.1.8	<i>Guid Scots Tongue, Loaded Weapon</i> , Wells tape, Foulkes, Kortmann	Vowel analysis homework due.
	Th Feb 28	NO CLASS; SH at a conference			
9	Tu Mar 4	Australian, New Zealand and S. African English.		<i>Muvver Tongue</i> , Wells tape, Kortmann	Part 1 of term project due.
	Th Mar 6	Jamaican English.		2006 guest	

				videoconference with Alicia Beckford Wassink, <i>Next Year's Words</i> , Wells tape, Kortmann	
10	Tu Mar 11	Loose ends. Review for final. Course evaluation.			
	Th Mar 13	In-class final exam.			Final exam
F	M Mar 17				Part 2 of term project due.

References

- Foulkes, Paul, and Gerard Docherty, eds. 1999. *Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles*. London: Arnold.
- Kortmann, Bernd, and Edgar W. Schneider. 2004. *Varieties of English: A multimedia reference tool*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. CD.]
- Labov, William, Sharon Ash, and Charles Boberg. 2007. *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change. A Multimedia Reference Tool*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.]
- Ladefoged, Peter. 2005. *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Ladefoged, Peter. 2006. *A Course in Phonetics*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
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- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986c. 3. A Muse of Fire. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986d. 4. The Guid Scots Tongue. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986e. 5. Black on White. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986f. 6. Pioneers O Pioneers. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986g. 7. Muvver Tongue. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986h. 8. The Loaded Weapon. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- McCrum, Robert, and Robert MacNeil. 1986i. 9. Next Year's Words. In *The Story of English*. Chicago: Films Incorporated.
- Wells, J.C. 1982a. *Accents of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. cassette tape.]
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- Wells, J.C. 1982c. *Accents of English. 2. The British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, J.C. 1982d. *Accents of English. 3. Beyond the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitley, M. Stanley. 2004. *The Phonicon 1.0*. Dallas: SIL International. CD.]