

Linguistics 446
English Phonology

Course description

This course provides an overview of English phonology. The course discusses pan-dialectal features of the phonology of English, including consonants, the distinction between tense and lax vowels, and stress. There is a particular focus on differences among vowel systems in different regions. Some sound changes and historical events are presented throughout the course. Aspects of English morphology will also be discussed as relevant.

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 transcribe different varieties of English in way that is appropriate for that variety
- to understand differences among different transcription systems for English, and the nature of the differences
- to generate and analyze acoustically-based vowel plots
- to become familiar with Wells' framework for the analysis of English

Prerequisite

LING 450 or equivalent

Administrative details

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Grading and exams

Assignments

Final grades will be based on scores on the following assignment categories:

Personal vowel plot			15%
Transcription			20%
Midterm			14%
Term project			26%
	prospectus	1%	
	presentation	10%	
	write-up	15%	
Final exam			25%

Personal vowel plot: you will record yourself (or a different speaker), plot your vowels, and interpret the results.

Transcription (5): you will transcribe a minute or so of connected speech of selected varieties of English.

Midterm and final exam will be traditional in-class exams. No blue book is required.

The term project will be a description of some variety of English not discussed in class, or a deeper description of one of the varieties we touch on.

Grading and Gradebook

The assignments will each be worth a certain number of points. When it comes time to calculate final grades, I will use Excel to reweight assignments as needed. E.g. homework 1 may be worth 17 points, but it is worth 10% of the final grade for UGs and 25/3% for grad students. So whatever score a student receives on HW 1 becomes the equivalent score out of 10 or 25/3. Then I will create a final percentage, posted in the gradebook as Actual Final Percentage, which is the sum of the reweighted assignments. In calculating final grades, the final percentage will be converted to 4.0, 3.9 etc. via the following linear scale.

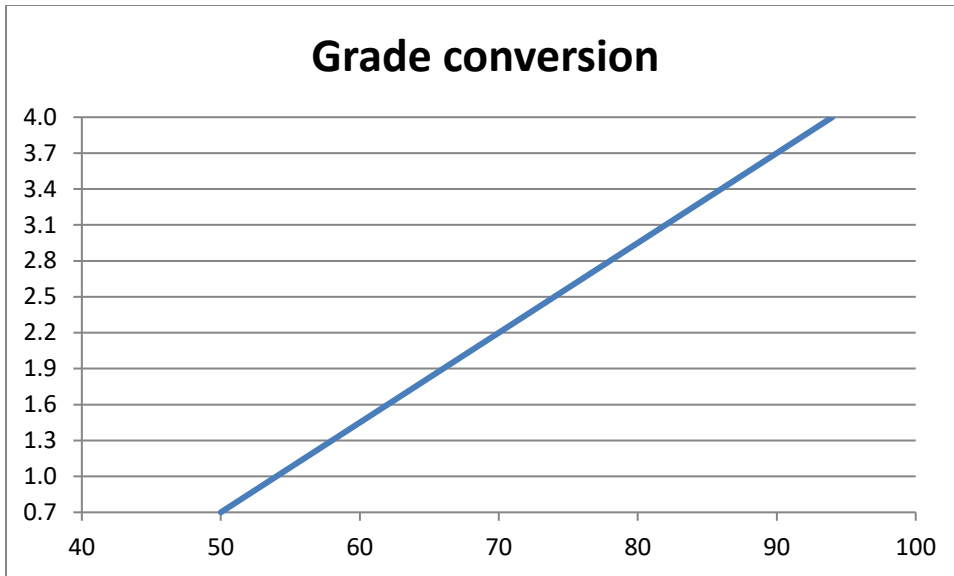
$$\text{grade} = \text{final percentage} * .075 - 3.05$$

I.e.

94% and above 4.0

50% and below 0.0

51-93% interpolated



According to the system, every student could in principle receive a 4.0 in this class. (Note that this is not “grading on a curve”. In practice, “curving” means shifting the line down (rather than fitting grades to a bell curve).)

Class policies

Individual effort

All work on quizzes, exams, problem sets, term project, etc., which constitute the basis for determining your final grade, whether in-class or take-home, should be individual efforts. Unauthorized collaboration will be considered cheating and will result in a score of zero on any assessment devices.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for following the rules outlined in the UW Student Conduct Code. In particular, plagiarism will not be tolerated. Some resources to help you avoid plagiarism are linked to the class web site.

Grading disputes

If you want to dispute a score you received on an assignment, you must make an appointment to see me (do not ask me about grades before or after class).

Late assignments

Canvas will penalize late assignments 10% per hour turned in late.

Reopening assignments (or forgiving late assignments)

Assignments whose due date has passed will only be reopened for students with medical or serious life issues. They will not be reopened for reasons such as the following: forgetting about due date, erroneous recall of due date, unhappiness with

score, taking the wrong quiz or homework, internet access issues (unless affecting the whole class).

E-mail

I will send all correspondence to your UW e-mail address. If that is not your preferred address, please either start checking it regularly or configure it to forward messages to your preferred address. Forwarding instructions are linked to the class website. I also request that you write to me from your UW e-mail address.

Disability accommodations

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Resources for Students, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924 (V/TTY). If you think I have already received a message about you from DRS, please check in with me in person near the beginning of the quarter.

Religious accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

Readings

John Wells' classic books on regional variation in English are the starting point for this class: Wells 1982a, Wells 1982b, and Wells 1982c.

It may also be useful for you to review some passages of Ladefoged & Johnson 2006, your LING 450 textbook. These are marked on the syllabus.

Schedule of lectures, readings and assignments

The reading listed is what you should read before that day's lecture. Parenthesized reading from Wells 1982b and Wells 1982c is recommended.

Abbreviations:

Wells1 = Wells 1982a

Wells2 = Wells 1982b

Wells3 = Wells 1982c

LJ = Ladefoged & Johnson 2006

<i>wk</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>lecture topic</i>	<i>reading</i>	<i>assignment due</i>
1	Mar 28	Review of syllabus. Overview of Wells vols. 1-3. Term project. Expectations of written work (citations, cross-referencing, sections). Consonants.		
	Mar 30	Overview of English historical phonology up to Early Modern English.	Wells1 1.2.11, Wells 1 3.1 (LJ ch. 3)	
2	Apr 4	Sound changes affecting American English. Tense and lax vowels; vowel quality before rhotics and velar nasal; [ə] and syllabic sonorants.	Wells1 2.1-2.3, 3.3.1-3.3.3 (Wells3 6.1), LJ ch. 4	
	Apr 6	Different approaches to the transcription of American English. Tapping (flapping).		
3	Apr 11	Phonological variation in N. America. TELSUR and <i>The Atlas of North American English</i> . Acoustic studies of vowels. Personal vowel plot assignment.	Wells1 3.3.4 (Wells3 6.1.4, 6.2-6.4), Ladefoged 2003 (1.4-1.5)	
	Apr 13	/æ/ tensing and Northern Cities Shift. Canadian English.		
4	Apr 18	Jamaican English.	Wells3 6.5, 6.6	transcription 1
	Apr 20	Southern U.S. English.		
5	Apr 25	African-American English.	Wells1 3.2, Wells2 4.1-4.3	vowel plot
	Apr 27	Received Pronunciation/BBC English.		transcription 2
6	May 2	RP vs. other southern dialects.	Wells2 4.1-4.3, Wells1 3.4, Wells2 4.4	

	May 4	Phonological differences between dialects of England.		transcription 3, term project prospectus
7	May 9	Dialects of northern England. The “Foot-Strut split”.	Wells3 §8	midterm
	May 11	S. hemisphere English: Australian, New Zealand and S. African English.		
8	May 16	S. hemisphere, cont.	Wells2 5.2	transcription 4
	May 18	Irish English.		
9	May 23	Scottish English.	Wells2 5.3	transcription 5
	May 25	N. Ireland English		
10	May 30	HOLIDAY	Wells3 §7	
	Jun 1	Student presentations.		term project presentation
F	Jun 8			final exam
	Jun 11	Term project due		term project write-up

References

- Ladefoged, Peter. 2003. *Phonetic Data Analysis: An Introduction to Fieldwork and Instrumental Techniques*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ladefoged, Peter & Keith Johnson. 2006. *A Course in Phonetics*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Wells, J.C. 1982a. *Accents of English. 1. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, J.C. 1982b. *Accents of English. 2. The British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, J.C. 1982c. *Accents of English. 3. Beyond the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.