

sci.lang: Re: accents

## Re: accents

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-03/3608.html>

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**Date:** 03/29/05

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 2005 13:41:08 +0200

29 Mar 2005 02:45:16 -0800: "Iain" <[iain\\_inkster@hotmail.com](mailto:iain_inkster@hotmail.com)>: in sci.lang:

>How would a traditional linguist view the role of text in all this? I  
>always disagreed with people who merely see written English as a lo-fi  
>misrepresentation of spoken English. To a somewhat deaf person like  
>myself, who once could hear and whose inner monologue is maybe  
>fading(although it's hard to tell), written English is a visual  
>language with no warts and a logical correspondance with meaning.

To me too. In English and in my native Dutch. I /can/ mentally or physically pronounce the words while reading, but I often don't, and it doesn't make comprehension harder, perhaps even easier, because the brain has fewer tasks to accomplish at the same time.

In a language I know less well, say Portuguese, I find that pronouncing while reading really hinders the comprehension process, instead of helping it. Visually reading and understanding is easier.

>Although language is an innately vocal instinct, wouldn't you say these  
>instincts have been successfully transferred to the much more hi-fi and  
>design friendly world of text, and that it is having a prescriptive  
>effect upon the spoken word, such as the reappearance of the /t/ in  
>"often" coinciding with increased literacy? Isn't text the real medium  
>for standardisation? Cannot spoken English be construed as a lo-fi  
>misrepresentation of text?

I think spoken and written languages are two separate entities, each in its own right. They are strongly related and intertwined of course, but both can exist without the other independently. And even where they exist in conjunction, they each have their own peculiarities and characteristics. I think it is a mistake to regard either as THE language, and the other as a derived entity.

In classic times the written language was often seen as most important, but modern lingists make the same mistake in the other direction.

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