

## Re: accents

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-03/3655.html>

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**Date:** 03/29/05

Date: 29 Mar 2005 06:53:31 -0800

Ruud Harmsen wrote:

> 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.

As a Scot, I can pick up Dutch fairly easily. The Dutch words for "now"  
and "know" are the same as the Scots dialect ones(aurally).

> 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.*

Are you sure one is not more derived from the other than the other?

Standard Written English has scarcely evolved at all since it ended its function as a method of medieval sound recording, but spoken English hath.

Don't you think that if Standard Written English didn't exist, spoken English would have evolved further beyond recognition? Or perhaps the "recognition" in question is provided by writing.

Writing is an axiom reminder than the /t/ sound at the end of "chased" has the same semantic function as a written "-ed" -- our mental image of the "-ed" distinguishes "chased" from "chaste" in our minds.

I always feel, when listening to linguists, that they underestimate how integral text is to spoken English. Even an illiterate person may be speaking a language kept in check by writing, via school curricula, publishers, etc.

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

By "classical times" do you mean millenia ago? What evidence do you have for that attitude? Wasn't it Plato who said we ken how to read once we've learnt the alphabet?

~Iain