

Re: Donkey and monkey

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- *From:* Mike Wright <news@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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benlizro@xxxxxxxx wrote:

I've suddenly become aware that in my English "donkey" and "monkey" seem to have a geminate /k/. At least, "donkey" is not an exact rhyme with "honky" or "shonky", and "monkey" is not an exact rhyme with "funky" or "flunky". And that's what the phonetic difference seems to be.
Should I worry?

Yes, 'cause you talk funny. (And what's "shonky"?)

It reminds me of the fact I think I mentioned here a few years ago, that I have geminate /t/ in "thirteen" and "fourteen". I doubt if the two cases are related, except insofar as they show how phonemic differences in the shape of common words can persist for years unnoticed.

I have that one, so it's perfectly normal. (By definition.)

Actually, what I have is a strong syllable boundary before "-teen", with what seems to be an unreleased stop (with a kind of simultaneous glottal stop) at the end of the first syllable, even with "fifteen" and "sixteen".

In the case of /'sɪkstɪjn/, it's the /k/ that's unreleased, and I have trouble deciding whether the syllable break really comes between the /s/ and /t/, or maybe between the /k/ and /s/. It's very smooth at normal speed, and when I emphasize a break at either place, it seems okay.

The second syllable of "thirteen", "fourteen", etc. seems to have more stress than the second syllable of "thirty", "forty", etc, with the vowel being longer, too.

Even the quality of the /t/ is different. The one in "-ty" is that flapped t/d thing, while the one in "-teen" is more clearly [t]--and the final stop of the preceding syllable doesn't have that unreleased/glottal quality.

Is all this difference in syllable boundaries caused by the final /-n/ of the "-teens"? Or is it because "teen" has become an identifiable standalone word in English? Or something else?

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Of course geminates are common in English when two of the same consonant come together at a morpheme boundary, as in "hot-tub" or "sackcloth". But I don't see any such explanation for these cases. I don't even have my pronouncing dictionaries here at the moment, so I don't know whether these pronunciations are recognized variants. Anybody know?

Maybe it has something to do with them being living critters? Try saying, "Look, Baby. See the cute little honky? Oh, and look at that lovely flunky over by the fence!" Does that change how you say them?

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Mike Wright

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