

## Re: Substitutes for English /T/ and /D/

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  - *Date:* Sat, 21 Jul 2007 17:13:13 -0700
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On Jul 20, 12:55 pm, "John Atkinson" <[johna...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:johna...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

"Peter T. Daniels" <[gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote...

Harlan Messinger <[hmessinger.remove...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hmessinger.remove...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Peter T. Daniels wrote:

On Jul 17, 8:20 am, Seán O'Leathlóbhair  
<[jwlaw...@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jwlaw...@xxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Speakers of a dialect which  
uses [T D] usually notice  
when they  
hear

the [f v] variety.

Only because the (almost inaudible)  
distinction is fetishized in

Britain. Most people do not (almost, \_cannot\_) hear the  
difference.

Not so. It leaped right out at me when Jamie Oliver opened  
his mouth  
when I first watched The Naked Chef.

You're not exactly linguistically unsophisticated.

Seems to me there must be a reason why Peter claims the difference  
between [T D] and [f v] is "almost inaudible" while others here  
(including me) find it quite obvious.

## Re: Substitutes for English /T/ and /D/

Perhaps it's dialectal thing. For example, in Britain (and Australia) T and D are dental fricatives, made with the tip of the tongue behind the upper front teeth, while many (most?) Americans use interdental fricatives, with the tip of the tongue protruding between the teeth. They don't sound quite the same, and ISTM that the latter sounds a little more like [f v].

I'm not convinced this is the exact explanation, but it's surely something of this sort, and certainly not some "fetishization" that some Americans seem to think we have — perhaps they've watched too much My Fair Lady.

I'm also baffled that Peter says that the difference between [T D] and [f v] is "almost inaudible". I have been hearing [f v] substituted for [T D] hundreds of times each and every day for the last five years by the Poles I teach English to, and I have to say that it is still as jarring as the first time I heard it.

For me, [f v] is as close to [T D] as [k g] is, or [m], [gl] or [str], for that matter. That is, there is absolutely no similarity to my American ear.

I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania populated by Polish immigrants, so I heard English spoken with a Polish accent every day for the first 22 years of my life. These immigrants came to the US in the late 1800s and early 1900s. I never once heard any of them substitute [f v] for [T D]. All of them used the Polish [t d], which is formed with the tongue and upper teeth, and not with both upper and lower teeth as in English. All in all, a pretty good approximation. It is quite similar to the Italian-American [t d] that Sylvester Stallone, Al Pacino, and Joe Pesci use.

Five years ago, I moved to Poland and have since been teaching English to Poles. All of them start out pronouncing [T D] as [f v]. Many Poles who teach English themselves also do so. This is an extremely irritating mistake and I correct it every time I hear it. As a matter of fact, I tell them that it is an "unforgivable mistake", and to use the Polish [t d] instead.

Sean asked whether there were any American accents that use [f v] for [T D]. Uneducated African-Americans often do, and this is considered an extremely negative feature of their speech. Anyone who says 'wiff' for 'with', or 'ax' for 'ask', is going to be at a disadvantage on the labor market. It really raises hackles, including among better educated African-Americans.

Dominic Bojarski

Five years ago, I moved to

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