

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

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On Jul 22, 2:21 am, "Peter T. Daniels" <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Jul 21, 8:13 pm, Dominic Bojarski <dominicbojar...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

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.

Look at spectrograms of the two sounds. They are almost identical.

Almost, but not quite. Because the difference is phonemic, native speakers are more aware of the differences between the sounds than of the similarities.

For example, as a cot-is-caught speaker, I don't even hear the difference in the speech of cot-is-not-caught speakers unless I make an intentional effort. The difference is not phonemic for me, so I simply ignore it. Just as the Poles do with [T D] and [F V].

However, the distinction is phonemic in English, and you are a native speaker of English, so it's obvious to you.

That's where I misunderstood you. I thought you meant that they were almost indistinguishable to native speakers. You're right, though. CONTEMPORARY Polish speakers can't hear the difference except with training.

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

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.

That's because you're a native speaker but not an acoustic phonetician.

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.

When acting, or in their normal speech?

When acting. Especially in stereotypic roles.

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

Do you not contradict yourself? This shows how similar they are!

To Poles, yes. To native speakers, no. No contradiction.

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.

Why don't you teach them how to make [T] and [D]?? You're as bad as Mark misleading his Hungarians!!

Depends on the level and goals of the student. It takes a Pole a lot of practice to say [T D]. Not all of them are willing to spend that much time on one sound of many that they have problems with.

It's a matter of proximal and distal goals. The proximal goal is to stop the student from using [f v]. This is relatively easy and can be accomplished quickly. The distal goal is to get the student to correctly pronounce [T D]. This demands a lot of time and effort. It is also a lot easier to do if the student is starting out from [t d] than from [f v].

I do not mislead them at all. I tell them quite clearly that using the POLISH [t d] is a compromise, but one that does not impair comprehension as does using [f v].

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.

As Nathan explained, it's a lot more complicated than that.

And many, many educated African Americans have phonetic traits that reveal their origins that they are simply unaware of -- this one happens to have reached general consciousness.

To the point that it has become a shibboleth. It's not a matter of a voice being recognized as African-American that is the issue, but of the voice being recognized as uneducated. It has reached general consciousness because it clearly stands out and sounds bizarre to non-AAVE native speakers, few of whom are, as you said, acoustic phoneticians.

Dominic Bojarski

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