

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

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 22 Jul 2007 12:40:48 -0700
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On Jul 22, 1:48 pm, Dominic Bojarski <dominicbojar...@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Jul 22, 2:10 pm, "Peter T. Daniels" <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

My finger slipped and hit something that cause the partial reply to be sent. So I resume where I left off. I will apparently have to do a third reply because there's a "read more" at the end of the message, and I don't know how much, if any, content is contained down there.

And therefore they automatically substitute the correct phoneme for the phone that was actually uttered.

With a great deal of difficulty, if at all. It's not at all a natural substitution for most native English speakers. [f v] is not a very useful hint that the speaker meant to say [T D]. Most native speakers would leave the sound blank and try to fill it in based on the context rather than relying on [f v].

THAT'S THE POINT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It has nothing to do with "natural substitution" (whatever that may be), or unnatural substitution; it has to do with acoustic similarity and CONTEXT.

Let's say that [f v] and [T D] are 99% identical. Native speakers naturally ignore that 99% and focus exclusively on the 1% that distinguishes them.

No. They focus on the entire utterance, the entire discourse.

Furthermore, learning to make the substitution takes far longer than the length of an average conversation. This isn't a pure substitution, either. First the listener has to decide whether the substitution

should be made or not.

I suppose it's too late in life for you to learn some basic psycholinguistics. Language decisions like this occur during milliseconds, not during "the length of an average conversation," and they don't involve "decisions."

I doubt that many unexposed native speakers would readily interpret "vose" (those), "boaff" (both), and "maff" (math) without sufficient context. I also doubt that many of them would fail to notice it, as you seem to think.

Utterances do not occur "without sufficient context."

Lexical words occur more often without sufficient context than you would think, especially in brief conversations on non-mundane topics.

Examples?

Because it does. Extremely. Haven't you ever heard anyone with this problem before? It's downright irritating.

I'm afraid that's a problem with your attitude, not with the speakers you're denigrating.

And what attitude do you suggest that I take? Live and let live, and

Yes.

let the students retain their unpleasant accents? Get real, buddy.

Your job as a teacher is supposed to be to teach them to speak English. Since you have a problem with "unpleasant" accents, maybe you're in the wrong business.

That's exactly what they're paying me to do. It would also be inconsiderate of me not to reduce my accent when speaking Polish.

Hunh?

ALL of my native speaking agree, whether they're from the States, Canada, Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, South Africa or Australia.

"ALL of your native speaking"? Don't you realize that if you had said that, no one would even have noticed the mistake? People hear what you mean to say, not your slips of the tongue.

Typo. "ALL of my native speaking colleagues". Without exception, every single one notices it clearly and considers it a serious mistake.

Native speakers of what, colleagues where?

They were all taken aback when they first heard Poles using this pronunciation. Even the one from London, who has probably heard it all his life (48 years). As a matter of fact, he's the one who had the biggest problem with it.

Duh. That's what I've been saying all along. ONLY the "one from London" (scil. only the Brit) is aware of and attuned to the particular negative sociolinguistic trait of [f] for /T/.

Duh, no. ALL of them, without exception, find it objectionable.

Who is "them"? Did they spend years in "public school" acquiring RP and learning to despise the "lower classes" and the dialects they speak? If you happened to know some feature that distinguishes, say, a Liverpudlian accent from RP, would it "irritate" you as well?

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We spend a lot of time and effort trying to break this habit, as well as several other habits that Poles have, including:

A) using the Polish [o] sound in words like "cop", "not", "want" and "ball", which will be heard as "cope", "note", "won't" and "bowl". The Polish [o] sound does not exist in English, except maybe in some marginal dialects. Convincing Poles that it doesn't is difficult, because they "hear" it in the speech of non-American speakers. The sounds are radically different, though.

They also hear it in the speech of American speakers, because it's their phoneme represented by the American allophones.

No they don't. It's simply not there at all. Nor is there anything remotely like it. Period.

I suppose it's too late in your life to study a little American dialectology.

They should be hearing something that is practically identical to the Polish "a" sound (all of my American colleagues are cot-is-caught speakers, as am I).

(My sympathies.) Does that mean you are teaching them to not make the cot-caught distinction?????

The reason they hear "o" is because they see "o". I grew up surrounded by Poles who learned English, but who remained illiterate in it. They did not have this problem. In fact, their accent, which was based almost entirely on listening, is fundamentally different from that of my students, which is more based on familiarity with how the word is spelled.

Then maybe you should set aside written English for the first few weeks, and let them learn to pronounce the phonemes of the language.

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Try having someone read you something in which all of the "short o" sounds have been changed to "long o" sounds and see for yourself.

I lived 25 years in Chicago, frequently running into native speakers of Polish, and never had a problem.

Again, how is communication impaired?

B) using the Polish [a] sound in words like "cap" and "bag", which will be heard as "cop" and "bog". The Polish sound is the same as in the English word "father".

Again, how is communication impaired?

Because it phonemic and unnatural. Any time the listener has to fill in the blank for a word or sound that he can't guess, it impairs communication.

Evidence? You listen to someone with an accent for a couple of minutes, the magic computer in your brain makes all the adjustments that are needed. Why, we could even understand the late Pontiff!

C) pronouncing "it" as "eat", and "live" as "leave". Polish has approximately the same sounds as English. The problem is orthographic in nature. The letter "i" is universally pronounced like "ee" in Polish. I had the same problem in reverse when learning Polish.

Again, how is communication impaired
Millions of Spanish-speakers in the US also don't distinguish /i/ from /iy/ (or, if you insist, /I/ from /i/), and communication is not impaired.

D) terminal devoicing, as in German. This gets tiring very fast, and severely impedes comprehension.

Whom does it "tire"?

The listener who has to spend time and energy trying to figure out what the speaker was trying to say. Again, it a case of first deciding whether a substitution has to be made, and then making it. This takes time, effort, attention and practice.

No, it does not. If you never interacted with people with accents before you moved to Poland, you led a very sheltered life indeed, and you may feel free to blame your parents.

It's also typical of African American speech, and it's one of those (unconscious)

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