

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

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On Jul 22, 1:48 pm, Dominic Bojarski <dominicbojar...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

F) failing to complete n, m, l, and w at the end of a word.
Polish pronunciation stops far short of the portion of the sound that English speakers depend on for recognition. We just hear "something" that we cannot interpret.

I don't know what you mean by "complete" the sounds. American English is chock-full of "unreleased" final consonants.

Read it again. "Polish pronunciation stops far short of the portion of the sound that English speakers depend on for recognition. We just hear "something" that we cannot interpret." Another poster on this thread commented that for him, the English "n" seems to last FOUR TIMES as long as the "n" in his language, which I believe was Dutch. The same thing with Polish. Polish speakers break off the sound before they get to the part that we English speakers need in order to recognize it.

If you're unable to discuss language and linguistic phenomena using the terminology that phoneticians and linguists have developed over the past two centuries, maybe you should go learn the terminology before you try to express yourself. The above paragraph *_still_* is uninterpretable.

Where did you get the idea that there's a later portion of a sound "that English speakers depend on for recognition"?

Ruud is given to flights of fancy, and most of his observation of phonetics apparently comes from songs, from which you can tell little about the duration of spoken segments.

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G) pronouncing silent letters as in "half", "island", "listen", "comb" and "bought". They can't believe that they are truly silent, and that it is not more "correct" to pronounce them.

Again, a problem with spelling. Nothing to do with the topic.

Our job is made harder by the fact that native speakers here mainly teach advanced students in whom these habits are deeply ingrained because they were not corrected by Polish teachers, many of whom have the same habits. The students can't believe that their former teachers were gravely wrong, or that the differences are huge and impair comprehension.

Right, blame the English language or the learner's phonemic system for the shortcomings of the educational system.

Non sequitur.

That's what I said.

When the [f v] substitution is combined with these other problems, it is often impossible to figure out whether a Pole is trying to say "thirty", "thirteen", "forty" or "fourteen".

Isn't the notion of movable, i.e. phonemic, stress, among the very first things you should have taught in the Polish classroom? THAT all by itself could be the single most significant barrier to communication.

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And it is one of the first things they learn. Without any difficulty, actually. Learning to pronounce differences in vowel duration is a different matter, though, and most Poles have a great deal of trouble learning that. My boyfriend has been living with me for three years and now speaks intimidatingly good English, except for the fact that he just can't pick up the rhythm of the language, in spite of all the time we have spent working on it.

Are you saying he can't pronounce the difference between THIRty and thirTEEN?

(For whoever posted an earlier quibble: THIRteen is "list intonation" or a product of stress retraction before an initial stressed syllable in the following word.)

Cockney is regarded as "British" and hence prestigious in the US.

As for Cockney, I doubt that many Americans are aware that the [f v] substitution is a feature of that dialect. The first time I heard it, I considered it to be a speech defect particular to that speaker.

The very fact that you noticed it marks you as unusual.

Not at all. It stands out like a sore thumb.

TO YOU. Sheesh.

I remember watching Ali G. with some friends in the States. One of them asked what a "bovva" was. We concluded that it was simply some slang word. None of us figured out that it meant "bother".

I have never seen Ali G. No cable. Don't know what you're talking about.

Does he say "Oh, bovva" like Winnie the Pooh? If so, it doesn't matter

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that it's homophonous with the verb "to bother."

Aside from the [f v] substitution, there are no other similarities between the Polish accent and the Cockney accent, so there is no chance that an American would assume that a Polish speaker is speaking with a "prestigious" accent.

That wasn't the question, was it.

Well, then what was it?

Why you hate lower-class Englishmen.

An unexposed native speaking listener may be able to deal with the [f v] substitution if it is the only problem the speaker has, but would have to expend a great deal of effort trying to figure it out in combination with the other phonemically significant substitutions that Poles make.

Evidently you've never lived in a place with a great many Polish-L1-speakers in an English-speaking community. Try living in Chicago. Largest Polish-population city outside Warsaw, with still a very, very large number of monolinguals, and Polish accents are no harder to interpret than any other accents.

I'm not singling the Polish accent out at all. I lived in a Polish speaking community until I was 22, and later in Chicago for five years. Even though my ear is probably somewhat biased, I would still say that the Polish accent is far more comprehensible than some Asian accents.

BECAUSE YOU ARE USED TO IT. But of course you undercut your point, which seemed to be that a Polish accent is all but incomprehensible because it involves a stereotypical feature of Cockney English.

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From the point of view of an ESL/EFL teacher, the [f v] substitution

is a very bad habit that has to be quickly eradicated. The phonetic resemblance of [f v] to [T D] is simply immaterial, a linguistic curiosity of no particular teaching value. Close perhaps, but definitely no cigar.

The very fact that an ESL teacher conceptualizes his students' native-language traits as "very bad habits" bespeaks a very unfortunate attitude on his part.

No thing of the sort. I speak Polish myself, and would consider carrying over English sounds into Polish to be a very bad habit on my part as well.

Then why don't you teach your students to make the English sounds in the first place, rather than telling them to make one inappropriate substitution rather than another?

And if he thinks that the reason for the dispreference for [f v] is immaterial, then he is simply not qualified to be an ESL teacher.

Non sequitur again. I said that using the phonetic similarity as a justification for the substitution doesn't hold water. The reason for the dispreference is, as you say, a different matter altogether.

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We

saw exactly the same problem with "cybercypher" Franke, who (unlike

you) isn't even interested in why certain aspects of English are problematic for his Taiwanese students.

Unlike Franke, I wouldn't be able to live in a foreign country for a prolonged period without learning the language. I learned German before I went to Germany, and Danish before I went to Denmark. I came to Poland specifically to learn Polish, and got right down to work. Being aware of the differences between English and Polish has helped me learn Polish quicker and easier.

You just said you grew up in a Polish-speaking community [in the US].
How did you manage to not learn the language as an infant?

I'm not exactly sure what you are trying to get at. That accent reduction is a waste of time? I assure you it's not. Like it or not, people treat others, both fellow native speakers and foreigners, differently based on the quality of their accent. It's a natural human trait, and there's nothing you or I can do about it except help speakers with undesirable accents change theirs so that they are more acceptable.

You'd rather they use a fake accent than a natural foreign accent, or than something closer to a standard.

That is simply perverse.

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