Accent and Identity
Prejudice and Insecurity

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Phonology for Listening

• Section C – Identity and Emotion
  • 11 British and American English
  • 12 Accents within the British Isles
  • 13 Accents of North America
  • 14 Accents around the World
  • 15 Emotion in Speech

• http://streamingspeech.blogspot.com/
Sonocent Audionotetaker

• http://www.audionotetaker.com/
Outline

1. Definitions
2. Prejudices
3. Accents, identity, change, variation
4. Insecurity & self-worth
5. Thriving with non-standard accents
6. English as a Lingua Franca – ELF
7. Final thoughts
1 Prejudice

• http://users.telenet.be/vdmoortel/dirk/Stuff/Prejudice.html
1 Prejudice

• ‘an unreasonable dislike of, or preference for a person, group, custom, etc especially when it is based on their race, religion, sex, etc.’ (OALD 8)
1 Identity

- Identity – ‘a person’s sense of themselves as an individual in relation to other individuals and groups whose values give them a sense of belonging and self-worth’.
1 Prestige accent

- What the British Pronunciation Dictionaries say it is
- Received Pronunciation
- General British English
- BBC English
## Prejudice League Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Best”</th>
<th>Received Pronunciation</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Educated Scottish English</td>
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<td>Educated Welsh English</td>
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<td>Northern English</td>
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<td>West Country</td>
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<td>Newcastle (Geordie)</td>
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<td>London (Cockney)</td>
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<td>Liverpool (Scouse)</td>
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<th>“Worst”</th>
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<td>Glasgow (Glaswegian)</td>
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<td>Birmingham (Brummie)</td>
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2 Prejudice in 19th Century

- Birmingham. ‘The parent of a boy at a day school in Birmingham was warned by the headmaster of the danger of his acquiring a ‘vicious pronunciation’ and a ‘vulgar dialect’ outside school hours.’ (Honey, 1989, p. 23)
2 Prestige accent

* ‘there is supposed to be a representative English Pronunciation a type to be aimed at as an ideal’ ...
* It is suitable for national broadcasting ‘without fear of any considerable body of hostile criticism’
2 Prestige Accent

*A man’s pronunciation is often the surest guide to his social status and to his education’

* [if one pronounces ‘County Council’ in a local London accent] ‘I must not be surprised if I am told that I am a cockney, that I am not as well-educated as I ought to be perhaps’

* ...‘certainly no business to teach the pronunciation of the English language to foreigners’
it is spoken by those often very properly called the best people but also because it has two advantages that make it intrinsically superior to every other type of English speech - the extent to which it is current throughout the country and the marked distinctiveness and clarity of its sounds. (Wyld, 1934, p. 605)
The ‘clarity of its sounds’
But you could argue that Karen’s Welsh accent on the word ‘delapidated’ makes the syllables much clearer than in the prestige accent.
2 Responses to prejudice

* Brian Dakin, BBC Voices – his father’s voice
* ‘When you go to grammar school you gotta drop your ‘dohs’ you gotta drop your ‘cors’ because you cor speak like that in grammar school’
* Note the change in strength of accent as he quotes his father ...

2 Responses to prejudice

* Brian Dakin his own voice
* ‘And you did experience for a time that until you realised well why am I doing this? You know, I’m I’m a council boy and I speak like this and I’m proud of it and then you just reverted back to your Bla... And they just took it or left it as far as we were concerned, you know.’

2 Responses to prejudice

* Gary O’Dea
* These blokes weren’t thick at all – they was anything but. It it was just something that ... perhaps it was a bit of the class thing that that...

2 Responses to prejudice

* Chamonix, BBC Voices
* ‘We were singing out once with er with the school’
* ‘Don't talk like that, don't talk like yer from Liverpool,’ she said because we'll lose marks ...
* It's cos she just expects us to be posh just like that when we're not. (BBC, 2005c)

2 Responses to prejudice

* Chamonix, BBC Voices
* Megan, Chamonix’s sister, adds the comment ‘It felt like she was ashamed of, of who we are and we shouldn’t be ashamed of like, what our accent is or somethin.’

2 Prejudices – self loathing

* Someone who moved from Northern England to work as a congregationalist minister in the South at the end of the eighteenth century
* ‘as I had lived entirely among the lower class my pronunciation was miserably uncouth and repulsive’.... (Honey, 1989, p. 34)
2 Self-image

...sometimes I feel frustrated because I look stupid here, just because I can’t speak ... fluently or ... or speak with those, ... mm preferred ... pronunciation ... sometimes people are just impatient. (Golombek & Jordan)
3 Foreign language syndrome

• Linda Walker from Newcastle

• ...Italian ...Slovakian...
French Canadian ... Jamaican ...

• ‘I was just devastated. I've lost my identity, because I never talked like this before. I'm a very different person and it's strange and I don't like it (BBC, 2006)
3 People change, accents change

Harriet Harman’s accent moved from being ‘cut-glass’ to being less posh - in order to fit in better with her left of centre, pro-trade union political party.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/29/harriet-harman-accent
I began to change my accent at secondary school ... since moving further south I have modified even more ... Like most people, I slip back into my natural accent very easily when talking to family or friends from childhood.
3 Accents vary - Leeds

* My mate’s gran had a caravan in the farm
* ... was a farm at the end of the street
* I wanted to be at the back of the house because I missed the farm
4 Prestige accent – embarrassment

* Embarrassed discussion around definitions
* BBC English
* Received Pronunciation (Received at Court)
* General British English
4 Received Pronunciation

* John Wells blog 24 November 2010
* the implicitly agreed model of good BrE speech?
* a codification intended mainly for EFL pedagogical purposes?
* or an objective description of how people at the top of BrE social stratification actually speak?
4 Attainment models?
Hector from Venezuela

Then I realised that it wasn’t enough money for me to be able to live in such a city [OK] and than and go to a school so I decided to leave

To live

To leave
Caroline from France

My secondary school was maybe I don't know twenty minutes away from my home and I had to go back for lunch.

Secondary school

For lunch
6 Thriving in English - Anke

* Anke from Germany
* Bus
* Had
* http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELFI.htm
Ulises from Argentina

So at the end of the secondary school I had in biology and health matters a teacher who was a doctor who was a surgeon and he has this strong personality some surgeons have and he was very charismatic and very influential.

http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELF.htm
Andrzej from Poland
But I guess that there are some minor climate changes because winters in Poland these days are not as harsh as they used to be.
These days

http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELF.htm
6 English as a Lingua Franca

- English is not ours
- Reference models are very useful – but they are not what people speak
- ELF movement can help us identify attainment models
6 English as a Lingua Franca

* ELF can remove the sense of professional inadequacy improve sense of self-worth
* Add power to the ‘protest of nobodies’
6 ELF – academic power

We do need …[researchers] … to arouse the public awareness since people tend to prefer expertise to the protest of nobodies.
7 Final thoughts

* No such thing as a ‘good accent’ for all circumstances
* Stuart-Smith (1999, p. 204) reports that ‘RP has little status in Glasgow, and is regarded with hostility in some quarters’.
* Everyone carries around a bag of prejudices which familiarity slowly removes
* Some will always remain – but they can be controlled
7 Final thoughts

* People are multi-accented they speak with a number of voices.
* The Prestige Accent is something of an embarrassment.
* The Prestige Accent has too many roles, it is only suitable for one
* We are surrounded by voices of people who do not speak the reference model, the prestige accent
* They thrive!
7 Final thoughts

* Use the prestige accent as a reference model
* Not as an attainment model/achievement target
* Not as a measure of professional expertise
* Not as a generator of professional insecurity
* Not as a moral touchstone
* Listen, observe, and become familiar with all these other accents ...
* People have a repertoire of identities
* People have a repertoire of pronunciations & accents
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Thankyou