2012

THE ELIZA-HIGGINS MODEL: THE IDEOLOGY, RAPPORT AND METHODS OF DIALECT ACQUISITION

Stacey Cabaj
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd

Part of the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/318

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
THE ELIZA-HIGGINS MODEL:
THE IDEOLOGY, RAPPORT AND METHODS OF DIALECT ACQUISITION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts Theatre Pedagogy: Voice and Speech at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Stacey L. Cabaj
Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Boston Conservatory, 2008
Master of Fine Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012

Director: Janet B. Rodgers
Professor, Department of Theatre

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2012
Acknowledgment

To my artistic family at Victoria School of the Arts, thank you for lighting my fire and inspiring a life in the theatre. To all of my teachers and coaches, thank you for your wisdom, mentorship and encouragement. To the Barksdale Theatre, thank you for the opportunities to practice my pedagogy as a voice, text and dialect coach, and for inviting me to play Eliza Doolittle. To the cast and crew of *My Fair Lady*, most especially Renina Hoblitz, thank you for your dedication, hard work and talent. To the finest Henry Higgins a girl could imagine, the incomparable Joe Inscoe, with you I could have danced all night. To my classmates at VCU, thank you for your inspiration and friendship. To my students, thank you for being my beacons and my teachers. To Janet, Aaron and Noreen, thank you for always saying, “Yes, let’s” and believing that I could. To Theatre VCU and the Graduate School, thank you for the invaluable Teaching and Thesis Assistantships that supported my studies. To James, thank you for teaching me lessons of the heart. To my family, thank you for your light, your undying support and for being the most loving audience.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures ..................................................................................................................................v

Abstract ...........................................................................................................................................vi

Introduction .....................................................................................................................................1

Chapter I. The Ideology of Dialect Acquisition .................................................................4
   The Ideology of Eliza's Dialect Acquisition .................................................................7
   Dialect Prestige .............................................................................................................9
   The Standard Speech Debate ...............................................................................10
   Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall ............................................14

Chapter II. The Teacher-Learner Rapport ......................................................................18
   Sage on a Stage ..........................................................................................................18
   Higgins-Centered ......................................................................................................19
   The Difference Between a Lady and a Flower Girl ..............................................22
   The Inter-Actor: Coach with a Team .................................................................24
   I Could Have Danced All Night: The Galatea Effect .......................................27
   Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall ..........................................28

Chapter III. The Methods of Dialect Acquisition ......................................................32
   Henry Sweet and The Direct Method .................................................................32
   Higgins’ Methods ...................................................................................................34
   Higgins and Phonetics ............................................................................................37
   Contemporary Methods ..........................................................................................38
   Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall ..........................................42

Conclusion .....................................................................................................................................45

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................47

Appendix 1: *My Fair Lady* Dialect and Accent Actor Packets........................................51
Appendix 2: Selected Reviews of Barksdale Theatre’s *My Fair Lady* .........................65

Vita .................................................................................................................................................66
List of Figures

1. Comparison of Teacher-Centered and Learner-Centered Paradigms..........................24
Abstract

THE ELIZA-HIGGINS MODEL: THE IDEOLOGY, RAPPORT AND METHODS OF DIALECT ACQUISITION

By Stacey L. Cabaj, M.F.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts Theatre Pedagogy: Voice and Speech at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012

Major Director: Janet B. Rodgers, Professor, Department of Theatre

George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* (1912) and its musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady* (1956) offer 20th century’s most famous example of dialect acquisition: the transformation of Eliza Doolittle under the tutelage of Professor Henry Higgins. The opportunity to work on Barksdale Theatre’s production of *My Fair Lady* (2012), both as the actress playing Eliza Doolittle and as a dialect coach for the production, prompted an analysis of the dialect pedagogy of Henry Higgins. The centenary of *Pygmalion* is also a prime juncture to document, in contrast or complement to Higgins’ model, contemporary theories and techniques of dialect pedagogy. Chapter one of this thesis explores the ideology of dialect acquisition, addressing the issues of dialect prestige and standard speech. Chapter two examines the rapport between teacher/coach and learner/actor, including a comparison of teacher-centered and learner-centered pedagogies and the influence of expectancy theories on learner growth. Chapter three details the methods of dialect acquisition, addresses language learning theories as applied to dialect learning, and offers practical exercises and techniques. The conclusion outlines areas of future consideration to enhance the dialect acquisition process in the classroom and rehearsal hall.
Introduction

“I sat staring, staring, staring – half lost, learning a new language or rather the same language in a different dialect. So still were the big woods where I sat, sound might not yet have been born” (Carr 289).

It was in Boston that I realized I had a dialect. As a young Canadian studying musical theatre at The Boston Conservatory, I became acutely aware that I spoke differently from my peers. I had a dialect, a “form of language that is peculiar to a region or social group. It includes all the things that make up language: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation, stress, etc” that reflected my upbringing in northern Alberta (Barton and Dal Vera 177). When, in our freshman voice and speech course, we were required to learn a new dialect, General American, I came to understand how deeply my dialect reflected my culture, my values, my family, myself, and how resistant I was to change it.

Several years later, I am completing my graduate work in the pedagogy of stage voice and speech, and acting as a facilitator of the exciting, challenging, scary and rewarding process of dialect acquisition for actors. Based on my own experience with dialect acquisition, I have a keen personal and professional investment in fostering a safe, playful and joyous environment in which my students can study dialects.

In 2011 and 2012, I was honored to work on Barksdale Theatre’s production of My Fair Lady, the musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion. As the actress playing the role of Eliza Doolittle, and as a dialect coach for the production, I was afforded a unique opportunity to examine closely the process of dialect acquisition. My Fair Lady is arguably the twentieth century’s most famous example of dialect acquisition, charting the
relationship of a young cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, and a professor of phonetics, Henry Higgins. Set in 1912, Eliza is keen to advance her social station; instead of selling flowers on the streets of London, she aspires to life as a lady in a flower shop. Under the tutelage of Henry Higgins, and his fellow phonetician Colonel Pickering, Eliza learns the dialect of the upper classes, Received Pronunciation, to facilitate her social advancement. After six months of rigorous study, Eliza’s speech and manners are transformed, and she is able to pass herself off as a lady.

The 100th anniversary of the debut of Pygmalion is an opportune time to examine both the historical context and the efficacy of the Eliza-Higgins model of dialect acquisition. The character of Higgins is, if not modeled on, a reflection of the famed philologist Henry Sweet (Shaw 364). As such, Higgins’ work as Eliza’s dialect coach incorporates many of Sweet’s methods, which were popular in the early twentieth century.

The 100th anniversary is also a prime juncture to document, in contrast or complement to the Higgins’ model, contemporary theories and techniques of dialect pedagogy that were explored in my dialect coaching of My Fair Lady and in my instruction of the third-year dialects course in Virginia Commonwealth University’s theatre department.

This thesis, unfolding in three chapters, will explore the three main areas of dialect acquisition: ideology, rapport and methods. In each chapter, I’ll analyze the model provided by Eliza and Higgins and then outline alternative approaches in contemporary pedagogy. Chapter One explores the ideology of dialect acquisition, or why a student, like Eliza, might seek to learn a new dialect. I’ll first define the concept of dialect prestige, then provide an overview of the standard speech debate that rages on both sides of the Atlantic, and finally outline strategies to facilitate the students’ understanding of the dialect acquisition process.
Chapter Two focuses on the rapport between the dialect teacher or coach and the learner or actor. I’ll begin with an examination of Higgins’ Teacher-Centered pedagogy and the Pygmalion Effect, followed by a description of a Learner-Centered pedagogy and the Galatea Effect, and conclude with the results of the application of such theory to the coaching of *My Fair Lady*. Chapter Three investigates the methods of dialect instruction. I’ll analyze Higgins’ use of the Direct Method, summarize popular, contemporary methods for dialect pedagogy, and draw conclusions about the efficacy of methods used in the coaching of *My Fair Lady*.

The efficacy of the fictional dialect coach, Henry Higgins, is obvious; he supported the complete and extraordinary transformation of a student’s speech through six months of intensive and rigorous study. An analysis of why and how he facilitated this dialect metamorphosis will allow readers in the new millennium to recognize areas for further pedagogical investigation. Through the introduction of discoveries made post-Higgins, readers will gain insight into the pedagogical developments that enrich the process of dialect acquisition, supporting students’ playful, joyful, powerful discovery of the potential of their sound, speech and selves.
Chapter 1

The Ideology of Dialect Acquisition

Why might a person pursue dialect acquisition? It is important to first establish what a dialect is, what dialect acquisition means, the contexts in which a dialect is acquired, and what role a dialect coach or teacher plays in the acquisition process.

In popular parlance, dialect and accent are often used interchangeably. However, in sociolinguistics and stage voice and speech, dialect and accent are distinct terms, with two common definitions. Sociolinguist Jeff Siegel defines dialects as the “varieties of the same language that differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, and that are associated with particular geographic regions or social groups” (Siegel 2). By this definition, a dialect is an inclusive term embracing several elements of a language variety, and an accent is one element of a dialect, the pronunciation of words. In contrast, Paul Meier, a professor of stage voice and speech at the University of Kansas, asserts that his “North American dialect coach colleagues find it useful to talk about English language dialects in contrast with foreign language accents” (Meier 9). For these North American coaches, a dialect is a regional or social variant of language, as found in Appalachian or African American Vernacular English, while an accent refers to the pronunciation of a speaker’s native language manifesting in their pronunciation of another language, as in a native French speaker's accent while speaking English. As this thesis is exploring the role of a dialect acquisition and dialect coaching on the North American stage, the definitions proposed by Paul Meier will be used.

Every person speaks their native language with a particular dialect. The study of dialect acquisition is concerned with how a person learns another dialect of the same
language. In this process the speaker’s initial dialect is referred to as D1 and the acquired dialect is referred to as D2 (Siegel 1). There are three main reasons that a person might engage in dialect acquisition: the migration to an area in which a different regional dialect than the D1 is spoken, the desire to gain access to a social group that speaks in a dialect different from the speaker’s D1, and in a theatrical context, the actor’s need to represent a character’s dialect or to adopt a non-regional standard speech.

It may be useful to provide a personal example for each instance of dialect acquisition. In the instance of migration, when I first moved to Boston I spoke with a western Canadian dialect (D1), which was very noticeable to Bostonians; I felt compelled to adopt a D2 that incorporated elements of a Bostonian dialect to foster listeners’ attention to the content of my speech, rather than to my unusual dialect. In the instance of access to a social group, Shaw’s Eliza Doolittle seeks acceptance and employ within a higher socioeconomic group, which she believes she will be afforded if she can adopt their particular dialect. In the theatrical context, the actors involved in the production of My Fair Lady needed to acquire several dialects, including Cockney, Received Pronunciation and a dialect of Hungarian, to foster the audience’s belief in their characterizations within the context of the play.

Whether dialect acquisition is prompted by migration, desire for access to a social group, or theatrical representation, there are two major contexts for acquisition: naturalistic and educational (Siegel 5). The naturalistic context for dialect acquisition involves no formal instruction by a speaker of the D2. This is most common in the instance of migration, when a speaker intentionally or unintentionally adopts elements of the D2 through recurring immersion in an environment where the D2 is spoken. However, the major focus of this
thesis is on educational acquisition, which refers to formal dialect training with a teacher or coach.

In educational acquisition, a teacher (in a classroom context) or a coach (in a rehearsal context) guides the student or actor through the process of dialect acquisition. Although there are many approaches to this process (which will be explored in detail in Chapter 3), the ultimate goal is for the student or actor to be proficient in the dialect, both in terms of their fluency and their confidence. Dr. Nan Withers-Wilson, author and vocal director (another term for coach), offers the following responsibilities of a vocal director to foster an actor's proficiency with a dialect:

It is the responsibility of the vocal director to instruct each actor regarding the dialect's resonance placement, phoneme substitutions, lilt or intonation, and rhythm, and to bring to the actor's attention the idiom, word order, and grammatical changes provided by the playwright. Throughout the rehearsal process the vocal director listens for dialect consistency and intelligibility, and the optimal balance between authenticity and theatrical clarity. (Withers-Wilson 91)

By extension, these are the responsibilities of a teacher in the classroom context. A dialect teacher provides resources, exercises and feedback to increase students' intellectual understanding of the dialect's features, students' aural abilities to distinguish the features of the D1 and D2, and students' kinesthetic ability to produce the features of the dialect with consistency and intelligibility. Having outlined the meaning of dialect, dialect acquisition, naturalistic and educational acquisition, and the role of the dialect coach or teacher, I will now examine the ideology of Eliza Doolittle's dialect acquisition.
The Ideology of Eliza’s Dialect Acquisition

As the actress playing the role of Eliza Doolittle and as a dialect coach\(^1\) for the production of *My Fair Lady*, it was essential to examine the reasons why Eliza engages in educational dialect acquisition with Professor Higgins. A textual analysis of the libretto of *My Fair Lady* reveals a treasure trove of information about the social stratification of London society in 1912 and the nature of dialect prestige.

In *My Fair Lady*, the first scene and song clearly establish the primacy of class and dialects in the world of the play. Act one, scene one reveals Eliza selling flowers to affluent theatre patrons outside of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, while Higgins surreptitiously makes notes about her distinctive Lisson Grove dialect (a neighborhood-specific variant of the Cockney dialect). Higgins, a wealthy and educated phonetician, challenges Eliza’s insistence that she has a right to be in the cultured area of Covent Garden:

> A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech; that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible; and don’t sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (Shaw and Lerner 123)

Immediately, it is clear that the sounds and speech patterns of Eliza’s Cockney dialect are considered by Higgins, and by the privileged class that he represents, primitive and animalistic. Higgins intimates that Eliza is tarnishing the glory of her native language with her uncouth speech and scarcely deserves to live. He further argues that Eliza’s dialect is an offensive and criminal act: “Look at her – a pris’ner of the gutters; / Condemned by ev’ry

---

\(^1\)This production of *My Fair Lady* was co-dialect coached by Renina Hoblitz, a fellow Theatre VCU graduate student in the voice and speech track.
syllable she utters. / By right she should be taken out and hung / For the cold blooded murder of the English tongue” (Shaw and Lerner 124). This lyric reveals that her dialect is a sociolinguistic sentence, limiting her to a life of poverty and strife. Furthermore, Higgins unequivocally and unambiguously argues that Eliza’s dialect precludes her social mobility: “It’s ‘Aooow’ and ‘Garn’ that keep her in her place. / Not her wretched clothes and dirty face” (Shaw and Lerner 125). However, this is not only true in Eliza’s case, but of all English society: “An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him / The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him” (Ibid). In English society, as represented in My Fair Lady, it is an inescapable reality that one’s dialect broadcasts one’s region of origin, education, and class, resulting in persecution or respect from other members of society.

This elitist scorn is not new to Eliza, but the possibility that she has any agency in the situation is a revelation to her. Higgins boasts to fellow phonetician, Colonel Pickering:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English; the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days? Well, sir, in six months I could pass her off as a duchess at an Embassy ball. I could even get her a place as a lady’s maid or shop assistant, which requires better English. (Shaw and Lerner 126)

The possibility that she could learn “better English” and escape a life of poverty is thrilling to Eliza, who can scarcely believe that such a transformation is possible. Through dialect lessons, Higgins offers the unparalleled opportunity to redefine her position in society and her self perception.

In act one, scene three Eliza visits Higgins and offers to engage his services as a dialect coach. Eliza reveals that she wants “to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road” but understands “they won’t take [her] unless [she]
can talk more genteel” (Shaw and Lerner 136). This suggests that Eliza has no illusions of passing herself off as a duchess, one of the most elite members of society, but that she simply aspires to a modicum of social advancement through learning a more genteel manner of speech.

**Dialect Prestige**

The issues raised in the early scenes of *My Fair Lady* are not exclusive to the musical or to English society. In many societies, social stratification corresponds with a hierarchy of dialects as spoken by their respective social groups. Scholar William A. Stewart, in his 1965 article “Urban Negro Speech: Sociolinguistic Factors Affecting English Teaching,” was the progenitor of the terms to describe the different levels of dialect prestige or stigmatization. At the bottom of the dialect hierarchy is a *basilect*, an intermediate dialect in the hierarchy is a *mesolect*, and at the top of the hierarchy is an *acrolect*, a “prestige form associated with groups who exercise greatest (political and economic) power, and established in the educational system” (Honey 581). Often regional dialects, those specific to a geographical area, are judged as basilects by speakers of other dialects. Authors Robert Barton and Rocco Dal Vera astutely observe that though dialects are perceived to correspond with class and education, they may not always:

- Every language has these divisions. It doesn't seem to matter that a posh hyperlect speaker may be broke, uneducated and shiftless, or that a speaker with a clearly regional sound may be a brilliant, wealthy humanitarian; speech is an instant ‘reputation’ that one must either live up to or down from. (177)

---

2 A variant of acrolect that refers to the dialect of most privileged, but not necessarily the most educated, members of society, as defined by John Honey in *Does Accent Matter?* (1989)
In the world of *My Fair Lady*, Eliza’s Cockney dialect is a basilect. The genteel dialect required for the life to which Eliza aspires, that of a lady in a flower shop, is a mesolect. However, the dialect that Higgins ultimately teaches Eliza, Received Pronunciation, is a hyperlect or acrolect, one that allows her to pass herself off as a duchess, despite her impoverished upbringing and minimal education.

**The Standard Speech Debate**

Beyond the theatrical world of *My Fair Lady*, the concepts of dialect prestige and the acquisition of acrolects are controversial issues in contemporary American and British actor training. At theatre schools on both side of the pond, instructors must carefully consider what dialects to teach their students and whether an acrolect will be taught as a standard dialect. Linguist Jeff Siegel offers this comprehensive definition of a standard dialect:

...an abstracted and idealized version of the language as it was originally spoken by the upper middle classes of one dominant region of the country. Varieties close to this standard are believed to be “neutral” or “mainstream” (i.e. not evocative of any minority from a particular geographical area or social group. Thus, such varieties are considered most suitable for public speaking and radio and television broadcasting, and the fact that they are most often heard in these contexts reinforces the view that they are standard. (Siegel 4)

Although many of the components of Siegel’s definition are widely accepted and standard dialects commonly taught, there are also many scholars and teachers who resist the use and glorification of standard dialects. Linguist Rosina Lippi-Green is one member of the resistance, who argues that the idea of standard dialects is a dangerous myth.
The myth of standard language persists because it is carefully tended and propagated. Individuals acting for a larger social group take it upon themselves to control and limit spoken language variation, the most basic and fundamental of human socialization tools. The term *standard* itself does much to promote this idea: we speak of one standard and in opposition, non-standard, or substandard. (Lippi-Green 59)

As dialect instructors and coaches, whether we insist upon or resist our students’ and actors’ acquisition of standard dialects does much to perpetuate the use of these dialects in the public eye, either onstage or screen, and thus, by extension, in our cultures.

In England, the standard dialect is called Received Pronunciation (RP), and alternately Queen's English, King’s English, BBC English, or Oxford English. This invented dialect was taught, or received, in elite boarding schools and drama schools, and has been heard as the broadcast standard on the BBC since 1922. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, RP has been a popular choice for dialect acquisition, both in England and by non-native speakers of English around the world. However, as Michael McCallion, a former voice and speech teacher at London’s Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, noted, RP’s “sources are so widespread that a precise definition of it is impossible... Furthermore it is constantly changing and the standard pronunciation of a word for one generation may be old-fashioned and rarely used by the next” (McCallion 125). Defining RP and determining its role in actor training continues to provide challenges to voice and speech teachers in the twenty-first century.

---

3 The term first appeared in usage in Alexander Ellis’ *On. Early English Pronunciation.* (1889), but was popularized by Daniel Jones through its usage in the 1926 edition of his *English Pronouncing Dictionary.* (Jones, Mees and Collins iv)
Similarly, there is great debate raging about what American standard speech is and what it should be called. For much of the twentieth century, an acrolect codified by William Tilly, and disseminated by his pupils Marguerite DeWitt, Margaret Prendergast McLean and Edith Skinner, was perpetuated in American drama schools. This acrolect was a hybrid of features of Received Pronunciation and American English, and had several names including: World English, World Standard English, Euphonetis, Transatlantic, Midatlantic and, most famously, Good American Speech. This dialect has since waned in usage in the American theatre, in favor of a more distinctly American dialect.

This new dialect is commonly referred to as General American (GA), and though it is not spoken anywhere in America, it resembles some characteristics of dialects from the American midwest and northwest. Dr. Nan Withers-Wilson describes it as a dialect that is “devoid of regional or ethnic characteristics and does not reveal the geographical or cultural origins of the speaker. Standard American speech is that employed by the majority of educated persons in America, and its pronunciation is recorded in our semi-authoritarian dictionaries as first or preferred” (Withers-Wilson 9). Withers-Wilson’s definition, like many others, is controversial, raising questions about the evaluative judgements about education, class, ethnicity and gender in regional dialects.

The chief argument for learning a standard dialect like RP or GA in drama schools is that actors need to adopt the speech characteristics of various characters to support the

---

4 The debate over the teaching of this acrolect in actor training is well documented in Standard Speech, the Voice, and Speech Review published by the Voice and Speech Trainers Association in 2000.

5 Barton and Dal Vera also offer the terms “Neutral, Non-Regional, Broadcast Standard, Accent Reduced or Clean Speech” (Barton and Dal Vera 242)

6 This is a major point of contention; other scholars would assert that many educated persons speak with regional dialects.
audience’s engagement in the world of each play. In contemporary theatre convention, when plays are set in nonspecific locations actors use a corresponding non-regional dialect. Since a standard dialect is “regionally indeterminate”, its use fosters the audience’s focus solely within the world of the play, rather than on the actor’s own regional origin (Meier 175).

Professor of speech, Natalie Baker-Shirer, explains:

In an American production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, for example, we want the audience to be involved with Hamlet’s problem and how he attempts to solve it. We don’t want it to be distracted by the thought that Hamlet seems to be from Texas. Standard American English relieves the audience of wondering about where Hamlet learned his original speech patterns. (Baker-Shirer)

Though the audience’s attention on the issues of the play can be facilitated through the acquisition of a non-regional, standard acrolect, learning such a dialect may evoke resistance from student actors. One of my dialect students voiced this common concern: “I started to feel like I was being perceived as slower and less educated just because the way [the student’s D1] I spoke was generally a bit southern and African American...I guess I just felt dumb because the way that I was raised to speak wasn't considered correct or proper” (Cottman). The student’s perception that her D1 was a stigmatized basilect, unworthy of the stage, is an understandably alarming and off-putting notion. Other students may fear, as I did in my undergraduate degree, that the aim of the training is replacive acquisition, or the complete eradication of one’s D1 and the permanent adoption of the standard dialect; this replacive acquisition may prompt the pupil’s consideration of abandoning the aspects of self embodied in the D1, including their region of origin, ethnic or social affiliation, personal history, or class affiliation. Such fears are unnecessary and can
be avoided through the incorporation of the pedagogical approaches outlined in the following section.

Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall

Not all students are like Eliza Doolittle, keen to acquire an acrolect or standard dialect. If an instructor elects to teach a standard dialect, it is important that the students or actors can engage with a sense of eagerness and openness to the exploration, rather than resentment or anxiety. Two keys ways of fostering this élan are to provide a context for the dialect, and to establish a respectful and precise vocabulary to describe the dialect acquisition process.

One method of providing context that I found useful, both as a student and subsequently as a dialect instructor, is a group viewing and discussion of the 1988 PBS documentary *American Tongues*. PBS offers this synopsis of the film:

Rich in humor and regional color, this sometimes hilarious film uses the prism of language to reveal our attitudes about the way other people speak. From Boston Brahmins to Black Louisiana teenagers, from Texas cowboys to New York professionals, *American Tongues* elicits funny, perceptive, sometimes shocking, and always telling comments on American English in all its diversity. (“POV-American Tongues”)

Through a series of interviews with speakers around the country about their regional dialects and their perceptions of other dialects, this film prompts students to consider their own prejudices about and perceptions of regional American dialects. It also showcases one
speaker of General American, a voice actress who was the voice of the phone directory, inviting consideration of the usage of this standard dialect.

To facilitate a post-viewing discussion, linguist Walt Wolfram has developed a study guide with a series of questions about topics in the film. Available online, this study guide addresses three main areas: the nature of dialect differences, basic attitudes about dialects in American society, and the uses of standard and vernacular dialects (Wolfram). The last category is especially relevant, and offers the following points of consideration: “What are some advantages to speaking a standard dialect? Learning a standard dialect can often cause a dilemma for a person because of a conflict between the ‘outside’ world and the local community. Are there any disadvantages to speaking standard English in certain contexts?” (Ibid) These questions should prompt lively, candid discussion, setting the foundation for the study and practice of the General American dialect.

Another way to establish context is “Pronunciation Attitudes,” an exercise from Robert Barton and Rocco Dal Vera’s Voice: Onstage and Off (Barton and Dal Vera 176). In the exercise, students brainstorm a list of groups that have identifiable dialects or accents, break into pairs, identify the clichés that arise with each group and the ways that the group’s respective dialects reinforce or counter those clichés. Students are encouraged to notice when the discussion includes evaluative judgements, rather than neutral observations. The exercise concludes with the questions: “What increased awareness of how audiences unconsciously interpret speech and pronunciation choices has occurred? How are certain qualities assigned to a character because of the audience’s biases?” (Ibid) Both American Tongues and “Pronunciation Attitudes” foster awareness of how dialects inform the
audience’s perception of characters, and gently introduces the merit of a standard dialect for the stage.

The third way to establish a positive classroom dynamic is to introduce a respectful and precise vocabulary to describe the dialect acquisition process. Of crucial importance is the term used to describe the act of learning a D2. Although the terms “reduction” and “modification” are often used to describe the learning of a standard dialect, these terms have pejorative connotations about the D1, which may negatively affect the students’ receptivity to the process. Furthermore, the terms are imprecise; speech trainer Jennifer Pawlitschek “contend[s] that the term accent reduction is a misnomer. ‘Accent reduction is learning an accent. It is learning an American accent’” (Luongo). As such, the most precise and ameliorative terms to use are dialect acquisition and dialect learning.

This shift in terminology reflects a deeper philosophical and theoretical shift from replacive dialect acquisition to additive dialect acquisition. In Pygmalion and My Fair Lady, Eliza goes through replacive acquisition, the permanent shift to a D2, demonstrated by her remark in Pygmalion: “I have forgotten my own language, and can speak nothing but yours” (Shaw and Lerner 94). For most dialect students, the ability to return to their D1 is an asset and a priority. This is achieved through additive dialect acquisition, where the D2 (and all subsequent dialects) is learned in addition to, rather than in place of, the student’s D1. The aim is bidialectism, or multidialectism, meaning that the students have the versatility and facility to speak in each dialect at will, as demanded by the situation.

The ability of a bidialectal or multidialectal speaker to move between or among dialects is called style or code-switching. For students and actors, the ability to code-switch is advantageous and highly recommended. In this fashion, they can choose to adopt a
standard speech for a production, perhaps General American for *Hamlet*, or Received Pronunciation for a Shavian drama, and then return to their D1 at the end of each performance. The ideology of this additive multidialectal approach to learning standard speech allows students to learn a standard dialect as one option, without evaluative judgement of its prestige, to use when needed, onstage or off.
Chapter II

The Teacher-Learner Rapport

With a firm understanding of the \textit{why} of dialect acquisition, I'll now explore the \textit{who} of dialect acquisition: the rapport between the teacher or coach and the student(s) or actor(s) in the dialect acquisition process. This chapter focuses on pedagogical theory, chiefly a comparison of Teacher-Centered and Learner-Centered paradigms (their missions, learning theory and nature of roles) and the effect of expectation on student performance in the context of dialect acquisition. I'll begin with an examination of the pedagogical theory that underpins Professor Higgins’ instruction of Eliza, contrast it with some contemporary theory in the dialect classroom, and conclude with the application of this theory to the coaching of \textit{My Fair Lady}.

Sage on a Stage

The fictional Professor Higgins, working with Eliza Doolittle in 1912, demonstrates the use of pedagogies popular at the turn of the century. His overarching approach reflects a Teacher-Centered paradigm, usually defined in contrast with the Learner-Centered (or Student-Centered) paradigm. Psychologist Michael Mascolo describes the Teacher-Centered paradigm as:

...a style in which the teacher assumes primary responsibility for the communication of knowledge to students. From this view, because teachers command greater expertise about the subject matter, they are in the best position to decide the structure and content of any given classroom experience. (4)
In this paradigm, the mission is the transfer of knowledge from faculty to students (Barr and Tagg 2). Accordingly, this unidirectional transmission of knowledge usually features the teacher as lecturer, elaborating on their expertise on a certain body of knowledge. Students passively receive information in a linear, cumulative fashion, outside of its usable context, and are rewarded for the regurgitation of correct answers. Hancock, Bray and Nason further characterize the practices in a Teacher-Centered classroom:

The teacher (a) is the dominant leader who establishes and enforces rules in the classroom; (b) structures learning tasks and establishes the time and method for task completion; (c) states, explains and models the lesson objectives and actively maintains student on-task involvement; (d) responds to students through direct, right/wrong feedback, uses prompts and cues, and, if necessary, provides correct answers.... (366)

It is possible to summarize the nature of the roles in the Teacher-Centered paradigm by characterizing the teacher as a “sage on a stage” and the student as a passive recipient of the sage’s knowledge (Allen).

**Higgins-Centered**

With a foundation in the theory of the Teacher-Centered paradigm, we can now explore its manifestation in Higgins’ instruction of Eliza. Most of the evidence of Higgins’ pedagogy exists in Act One, Scene Five, which features a series of short lessons between Higgins and Eliza. The scene opens with the housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce, admonishing Higgins, “You simply cannot go on working [Eliza] this way. Making her say her alphabet over and over, from sunup to sundown, even during meals – when will it stop?” (Shaw and
This immediately establishes the teacher as the dominant leader that Hancock, Bray and Nason describe, one who sets the rules and expectations of the classroom. Much to Eliza’s chagrin, under the tutelage of this dominant leader, she has no agency in setting the terms of her education. Furthermore, since she cannot say her vowels to Higgins’ satisfaction, Higgins tells Pickering “drilling is what she needs” and proclaims that Eliza will “pronounce [her] vowels correctly before this day is out, or there’ll be no lunch, no dinner, and no chocolates” (Shaw and Lerner 153). This short exchange demonstrates a Teacher-Centered implementation of a learning task (vowels), the time for task completion (the end of the day), the method (drilling) and the consequences for failure (no food).

In a subsequent lesson, Eliza and Higgins explore the use of the consonant /h/, a sound that is often eliminated in the Cockney dialect. Higgins states, explains and models the lesson objective:

Watch closely, Eliza. You see this flame? Every time you say your aitch properly, the flame will waver. Every time you drop your aitch, the flame will remain stationary. That’s how you will know you’ve done it correctly; in time your ear will hear the difference. Now, listen carefully; in Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen. Now repeat after me, In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen. (Shaw and Lerner 155)

Though his description is clear and his demonstration thorough, Eliza lacks the facility and awareness to immediately perform the phrase with a consistently aspirated /h/. When she replies “In ’ertford, ’ereford and ’ampshire, ’urricanes ’ahdly hever ’appen!” Higgins reprimands her: “No, no, no, no! Have you no ear at all?” (Shaw and Lerner 155) Through this
exchange, it is clear that Higgins incorporates the Teacher-Centered practices of modeling lesson objectives and providing direct right/wrong feedback.

For Eliza, and for all learners in a Teacher-Centered paradigm, the expectations and activities of the student are straightforward. In Eliza’s case, Higgins guides her through a series of physical and vocal exercises, dealing with vowels, key sentences, breath, intonation, stress, and articulation. Although the featured moments in the lessons sequence of *My Fair Lady* show Eliza failing at each exercise, she ultimately and spontaneously synthesizes the skills from each exercise in a moment of epiphany. This demonstrates that the Teacher-Centered paradigm can facilitate the students’ acquisition of knowledge or skill and their ability to regurgitate that knowledge or skill in an isolated environment, like an examination or demonstration.

However, one disadvantage of the Teacher-Centered paradigm is that the material is not studied in real-life contexts. For Eliza, this means that despite her new skills with pronunciation and grammar, she lacks the ability to appropriately apply them in polite conversation, which leads to some humorous social gaffes. For example, her debut at Ascot, a famous English racetrack attended by high society, is marked by her verbal blunders. First, Eliza is limited by her list of key phrases which, though useful in the classroom, are not universally applicable. When Mrs. Higgins asks Eliza, “Will it rain do you think?” Eliza replies, “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain” (Shaw and Lerner 171). Second, although Eliza has learned to speak beautifully, Higgins has not offered a social context for vocabulary or topics of conversation, so Eliza does not know how to speak appropriately in certain contexts. At Ascot, Eliza naively rambles about her aunt’s murder, her father’s drinking and the pilfering of her aunt’s belongings; she does so with vocabulary only appropriate among
her Cockney companions, suggesting that her aunt’s housemates had “done the old woman in” (Shaw and Lerner 171). Finally, Higgins’ pedagogy has not offered Eliza the necessary opportunity to practice her new dialect extemporaneously. As Dover, the horse for which Eliza is cheering, slowly runs by, Eliza shouts “Come on, Dover!!! Move your bloomin’ arse” (Shaw and Lerner 173). In this moment, Eliza reveals a lack of control of her technique and familiarity with her social context, leading to an embarrassing and revelatory social faux pas. Given the manner of her lessons with Higgins, such a mistake is understandable, but, in the Learner-Centered paradigm, avoidable.

The Difference Between a Lady and a Flower Girl

Besides providing a model for dialect acquisition within the Teacher-Centered paradigm, Henry Higgins’ rapport with Eliza Doolittle provides a demonstration of the Pygmalion Effect. As described in Ovid’s Metamorphosis, Pygmalion was an ancient Cypriot sculptor who carved the statue of a beautiful woman and, enamored of her beauty, ardently prayed to the goddess Venus for the statue to be brought to life. Venus granted Pygmalion’s wish and he married the statue, named Galatea. Ovid’s story inspired George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion., the musical adaptation of Pygmalion. called My Fair Lady, as well as the research of Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson. In the early 1960s, Rosenthal, a professor of social psychology, and Jacobson, an elementary school principal, conducted a famous experiment at an elementary school, which revealed that if instructors were led to expect increased achievement from certain students, then the students demonstrated this achievement. Rosentha and Jacobson published their findings as Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development. (1968 and 1992). The conclusion of
their research, “When teachers expect students to do well and show intellectual growth, they do; when teachers do not have such expectations, performance and growth are not so encouraged and may in fact be discouraged in a variety of ways” is commonly called the Pygmalion Effect or the Pygmalion Phenomenon (Rhem 1).

Professor Higgins’ work with Eliza demonstrates the Pygmalion Effect, including the realization of negative and positive expectations. In terms of the fulfillment of negative expectations, the examples are abundant. The first lesson in act one, scene five reveals Higgins saying to Colonel Pickering (of Eliza’s imminent attempt at an exercise), “This is going to be ghastly! ...No one expects her to get it right the first time” (Shaw and Lerner 155). Higgins’ expectation colors Eliza’s belief in her potential to complete the exercise correctly, and she, as expected, fails. Shortly after, Higgins is dismayed by Eliza’s lack of ability and says, “Have you no ear at all?... We must start from the very beginning” (Shaw and Lerner 155-156). Instead of giving Eliza an opportunity to try the exercise a second time or practice independently, Higgins assumes that she has no potential and, with this assumption, revokes the opportunity for Eliza to realize her latent potential through more practice.

However, just when teacher and student are at their wits’ end, failing to achieve the progress they desire, Higgins changes his tack and demonstrates the positive power of the Pygmalion Effect. He delivers a rousing inspiration speech:

Eliza, I know you’re tired. I know your head aches. I know your nerves are as raw as meat in a butcher’s window. But think what you’re trying to accomplish. Think what you’re dealing with. The majesty and grandeur of the English language. It’s the greatest possession we have. The noblest sentiments that ever flowed in the hearts of
men are contained in its extraordinary, imaginative and musical mixtures of sounds.

That’s what you’ve set yourself to conquer, Eliza. And conquer it you will. Now, try it again. (Shaw and Lerner 160)

The respect that Higgins shows for Eliza’s person, the inspiring testament to the importance of their work, and the power of his belief in her ability are transformative; to great dramatic effect, Eliza immediately speaks in Received Pronunciation. Later, in Act One, Scene Nine, when Pickering is expressing his nervousness about Eliza’s ability to pass herself off as a Lady at the Embassy Ball, Higgins claims, “Eliza can do anything” (Shaw and Lerner 177). This affirmation and expectation, though unheard by Eliza, enables her to successfully navigate the Embassy Ball, and realize her vocal and verbal potential. By the play’s end, Eliza has fully realized the results of the Pygmalion Effect: “The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she is treated” (Shaw and Lerner 209). If we treat our students a high achievers, we allow them the opportunity to realize their potential as such.

The Inter-Actor: Coach with a Team

Since Henry Higgins’ work with Eliza Doolittle, another paradigm has dominated contemporary pedagogy, inviting consideration of its place in the dialect classroom or rehearsal hall. The Learner-Centered paradigm exists in almost direct opposition to the Teacher-Centered paradigm. For authors McCombs and Whisler:

Learner centered is the perspective that combines a focus on individual learners—their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities and needs—with a focus on the best available knowledge about learning and how it
occurs and about teaching practices that promote the highest level of motivation, learning and achievement for all learners. (McCombs and Whisler 9)

This approach is not limited by a certain methodology, but is highly pragmatic in its aim to foster student learning and success. The chart below outlines the major differences between the two paradigms, laying a foundation for a closer look at the mission, learning theory and nature of roles that characterize the paradigm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher-Centered Paradigm</strong></th>
<th><strong>Learner-Centered Paradigm</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge is transmitted from professor to students.</td>
<td>• Students construct knowledge through gathering and synthesizing information and integrating it with the general skills of inquiry, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students passively receive information.</td>
<td>• Students are actively involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis is on acquisition of knowledge outside the context in which it will be used.</td>
<td>• Emphasis is on using and communicating knowledge effectively to address enduring and emerging issues and problems in real-life contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professor’s role is to be the primary information giver and primary evaluator.</td>
<td>• Professor’s role is to coach and facilitate. Professor and students evaluate learning together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching and assessing are separate.</td>
<td>• Teaching and assessing are intertwined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment is used to monitor learning.</td>
<td>• Assessment is used to promote and diagnose learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis is on right answers.</td>
<td>• Emphasis is on generating better questions and learning from errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desired learning is assessed indirectly through use of objectively scored tests.</td>
<td>• Desired learning is assessed directly through papers, projects, performances, portfolios, and the like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus is on a single discipline.</td>
<td>• Approach is compatible with interdisciplinary investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culture is competitive and individualistic.</td>
<td>• Culture is cooperative, collaborative, and supportive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the Learner-Centered paradigm, as outlined in the above chart, the mission is the productivity of the learner, rather than the teacher. The student’s passivity in the Teacher-Centered model is here replaced by proactivity as the student realizes his or her own objectives within the classroom. The student also has the agency to control their environment and activities to a far greater degree than in the Teacher-Centered paradigm. Rather than learning a single subject in insolation, preparing for a regurgitation of knowledge in assessment, the student is able to explore a more integrative, interdisciplinary relationship of ideas and skills. Authors Barr and Tagg describe this learning theory as the “mastery of functional, knowledge-based intellectual frameworks rather than the short-term retention of fractionated, contextual cues” (“From Teaching to Learning”). And since the learning environment is “cooperative, collaborative and supportive” the likelihood of student success and enjoyment of learning seems high (Huba and Freed 5).

In this paradigm, the teacher’s role is vastly different, shifting from the filler of a vessel to a lighter of the student’s fire7 (Plutarch 259). Rather than assuming the teacher already has mastered the breadth and depth of the material, he or she participates in the learning process, continuing to encounter the material through and with the student. As the facilitator of the learning environment, the teacher also studies and applies the best methods for the student’s learning success; since the needs of each student and group are unique, no two students or classrooms would be the same. Barr and Tagg characterize the

---

7 “For the mind does not required filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only require kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth.” -Plutarch
role of the teacher as an Inter-Actor (“From Teaching to Learning”). Like a coach of a team, the teacher is engaged with the team members, problem solving, creating playful exercises or games, and responding to the unique challenges of the team. Ultimately each instructor and each classroom will find its own balance of teacher and learner-centered pedagogy, dictated by the needs of the students, the goals of the learning environment, and the available time for study.

By 2012 standards, Higgins’ pedagogy would be considered extremely Teacher-Centered, which invites consideration about Eliza’s dialect acquisition experience within a Learner-Centered paradigm. As a dialect student in a Learner-Centred environment, Eliza would have had the agency to state her objectives within her education, to self-direct her own exploration of sound and her individual practice, and the opportunity to examine the dialect within a sociocultural context. Accordingly, Higgins would have had a far more supporting role, assisting, rather than dictating, Eliza’s activities.

I Could Have Danced All Night: The Galatea Effect

In order for the Learner-Centered paradigm to function optimally, the student must believe that they have the potential to be an active agent in their education and to succeed highly in the process. Here the expectations and the outcome are not solely in the hands of the teacher, as they are in the Pygmalion Effect, but may also stem from the student, as through the Galatea Effect. First proposed by Eden and Ravid in 1982, the Galatea Effect occurs in situations when “self-expectations result in differences in performance” (Porter, Angle and Allen 185). The Galatea Effect can be produced in a variety of ways: a) As an indirect result of the Pygmalion Effect i.e. high expectations of teacher, b) When students
are explicitly told that they should have high expectations for themselves, i.e. expectant communication from a third party, c) Through indirect expectancy on the teacher’s part, i.e. role modeling, d) Existing student expectations of their progress, i.e. no relationship with teacher (Porter, Angle, Allen 186-187).

In *My Fair Lady*, Eliza demonstrates the Galatea Effect (a), by assuming Higgins’ high expectations and transforming them into a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, and (c) by internalizing Higgins’ role modeling as high expectations for her achievement. Following Higgins’ inspirational speech and her successful dialect transformation in “The Rain in Spain,” Eliza sings “I could have spread my wings / And done a thousand things / I’ve never done before” (Shaw and Lerner 163). Buoyed by Higgins’ belief in her, and its transference into a self-fulfilling prophecy, Eliza is empowered to realize her potential as a student and a human being.

**Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall**

How might the principles of the Learner-Centered paradigm and the expectancy theories manifest in the context of dialect acquisition? First, it is essential to note that in my work as a dialect teacher and coach, I have found the field to be incredibly conducive to, and the students receptive to, the incorporation of Learner-Centered practices and expectancy theories. However, as emerging coach and professor, the following findings are preliminary and have great room for further investigation and expansion.

There are five key ways that I’ve found to implement the Learner-Centered paradigm. The first is to have a discussion with the student or actor about the theoretical framework of dialect acquisition: What is a dialect? Why learn a dialect? How does the dialect of study fit into your training or the world of the play? How does your character
reveal his or herself through their dialect? Additionally, in this discussion, it is imperative that the student or actor have the opportunity to set goals for the process and ask questions of the teacher or coach. Second, throughout the dialect acquisition process, it is essential to accommodate a variety of learning modalities, whether teaching a class, groups of actors or an individual actor. It may be necessary to communicate information aloud or provide an audio recording for an auditory learner, to write the information in phonetics or transliteration for a visual learner, or to facilitate a tactile or physically active exercise for a kinesthetic learner, or any combination of the above. Students may also need a balance of interpersonal (group work) and intrapersonal (solo work) learning time. This multimodal approach is especially important when working with a large group of actors or students, to ensure that each individual's learning style is honored. The third way is the development of a cultural context for the dialect acquisition; I like to facilitate the student’s independent inquiry and sharing of the geography, climate, music, food, clothing, habits, jokes, etc., of a culture. This allows the student to pursue an area of interest and fosters an interdisciplinary study. Fourth, the inclusion of structured exercises that allow the students to practice the dialect in extemporaneous conversation, especially with other dialects. For example, I have recently incorporated an exercise called Speed Dating, where the students are partnered and have the opportunity to share some text and converse in the dialect with each other. Every five minutes, I ding a bell and the partners change, allowing me to work with each student individually and plenty of time for the students to practice with each other. Other exercises include short form improv scenes and the United Nations of Accents. Short form improv scenes offer structured settings, relationships, character or tasks in which the students have the opportunity to speak extemporaneously in the dialect; United Nations of Accents
involves groups of students in different dialect introducing themselves, sharing images of
the culture, teaching the physical life of the dialect culture, the three most important
characteristics of the dialect, and the superlatives of the country/region (Barton and Dal
Vera 311–312). Fifth, it is valuable to facilitate student assessment; by teaching the student or
actor how to recognize criteria for their improvement and then allowing them time to
implement changes, self-motivated and self-directed study can occur. Finally, throughout the
process, it is crucial that the students and actors are given time to lead the conversation and
ask any questions that they might have. Although Teacher-Centered learning may be
efficient in certain moments in the dialect acquisition process, there are plenty of
opportunities to create a more time-intensive Learner-Centered environment, and each
classroom will have its own balance of Teacher-Centered and Learner-Centered activities.

The incorporation of expectancy theories can also have a transformative effect in the
dialect acquisition process. Robert Rosenthal posits “If you think your students can’t
achieve very much, are perhaps not too bright, you may be inclined to teach simple stuff, do
a lot of drills, read from your lecture notes, give simple assignments calling for simplistic
factual answers” (Rhem 2). Thus, I have found it useful to establish my expectation for
excellence. The first way I do this is by role modeling clear, consistent dialect work, and by
setting high goals with the students or actors. For example, one actor in My Fair Lady
expressed that he had previously found dialect work awkward and distracting from his other
work as an actor; essentially he never achieved a level of unconscious competence with the
dialect to allow his full immersion in and focus on the scene. I assured him that our process
would be different and that I believed in his enormous potential to effortlessly communicate
classroom.
the dialect that I become unable to concentrate on my acting. That was not the case with *My Fair Lady,* which demonstrates the realization of positive expectancy theories (Hawke).

A second way to generate positive expectancy is through positive feedback. During coaching sessions and in post-rehearsal notes, I include at least one positive, affirmative or encouraging note to each student or actor, which boosts the recipient’s morale and belief in their potential. Another option is to recruit the director or musical director (or the teaching assistant) to reinforce these compliments and high expectations, validating that the recipient should continue to have high expectations. In the *My Fair Lady* rehearsal process, there was a decidedly favorable response to the affirmations. One actor described the coaches as “patient and positive,” suggesting our sensitivity and accommodation to the time and effort that the dialect acquisition required were valuable in his experience (Boothby). In conclusion, Rosenthal says of students involved in The Pygmalion Effect, “They don’t know it can’t be done; so they all do it. They do amazing things” (Rhem 3). In offering learners the central position in the dialect acquisition process and by creating positive expectancy, dialect learners can do amazing things.

---

8 “Notes” refer to written or oral feedback given from a dialect coach to an actor(s) after a rehearsal or performance.
Chapter III

The Methods of Dialect Acquisition

The major thrust of the dialect acquisition process is, of course, how the dialect is acquired. This chapter addresses the methods through which a D2 is learned, first examining the theory and methods used by Henry Higgins and then examining some of the contemporary methods of the twenty-first century. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the history and usage of methods for dialect acquisition, but to offer some context for Higgins’ pedagogy and invite the reader’s consideration of other options for dialect acquisition in the contemporary classroom or rehearsal hall.

Henry Sweet and The Direct Method

As previously mentioned, George Bernard Shaw modeled Henry Higgins on the famous philologist\(^9\), phonetician, and author Henry Sweet. An Englishman who lived from 1845-1912, Sweet profoundly affected the study of languages, phonetics, and dialects. Sweet was part of the Reform Movement in language teaching, a movement that rejected the dominant practices of the late nineteenth century, specifically “the teaching of modern languages through grammatical paradigms, specimen sentences, and word lists” (McArthur 582). Members of The Reform Movement, largely influenced by Sweet’s 1877 book *A Handbook of Phonetics*, adopted a new approach called The Direct Method. In this method, the spoken form of language is primary, and instruction is always conducted in the target language (L2).

\(^9\) One who studies the structure, development and relationships of a language or languages.
In Sweet's particular approach to The Direct Method, there are four stages of language learning: Mechanical, Grammatical, Idiomatic/Lexical, and Literary (Darian 545-546). Of particular interest to this study is the Mechanical stage, which linguist Steven Darian details as:

[T]horough mastery of pronunciation, which presupposes a general knowledge of phonetics. Phonetic exercises should include some of the most necessary and frequent elements of grammar and vocabulary plus a few indispensable idioms. When some progress has been made in the first stage, a few short texts for reading should be introduced, still without any grammatical analysis. (545-546)

The Mechanical Stage usually follows Teacher-Centered approach, where the teacher models the lesson objective and offers direct right-wrong feedback. Authors Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin describe the instruction in the Mechanical Stage as one in which “[p]ronunciation is taught through intuition and imitation; students imitate a model – the teacher or a recording – and do their best to approximate the model through imitation and repetition” (3). A more informal term to describe this approach is “call and response.”

In the character of Henry Higgins, many elements of Henry Sweet are present. First among them, is the characterization of Higgins as a famous phonetician who has invented a unique phonetic alphabet. Second, Higgins demonstrates many of the practices of The Direct Method, particularly the use of the Mechanical Stage, in the dialect education of Eliza Doolittle. The following section closely examines the exercises used in the Mechanical Stage of Eliza’s training.
Henry Higgins’ Methods

The lessons sequence of My Fair Lady offers a clear progression of exercises that demonstrate Higgins’ use of the Direct Method, focusing on the application of the Mechanical Stage as applied to dialect acquisition. The first depiction of Eliza’s training is vowel drills; Mrs. Pearce reveals that Eliza is required to practice her alphabet from sunup to sundown. This rote repetition of vowel sounds is Higgins’ method of aurally familiarizing Eliza with the phonetic sounds of her target dialect, Received Pronunciation. Through imitation and practice, Higgins expects that the pronunciation of Eliza’s vowels\(^{10}\) will shift from the Cockney [aɪ] [əɪ] [aɪ] [æ] [æ] to the Received Pronunciation [eɪ] [ɪ] [aɪ] [əʊ], [ju]. This vowel exercise is extended into key phrases, the “frequent elements of grammar and vocabulary plus a few indispensable idioms” that require the mastery of a given phoneme\(^{12}\) (Darian 545). For example, the phrase “the rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain,” incorporates the [eɪ] diphthong five times, giving Eliza an opportunity to use the sound in sentence context, rather than in isolation. Though the usage of the exact phrase in extemporaneous conversation is unlikely, the subject (the weather) is a frequent topic in British pleasantries, and therefore builds Eliza’s vocabulary of words that she can pronounce in her D2.

In addition to learning new pronunciations of her vowels and diphthongs, Eliza must also gain facility with the consonant /h/, a sound often eliminated in the Cockney dialect.

Higgins uses two methods to teach Eliza the appropriate use of the sound: a key phrase and

---

\(^{10}\) Though the script describes the focus of Eliza’s practice as vowels, Eliza works on both isolated vowels and combinations of two vowel sounds, known as diphthongs. e.g. [e] is a vowel, while [eɪ] is a diphthong.

\(^{11}\) In the script’s transliteration, this pronunciation is written as “Ahyee, E, Iyee, Ow, You.” (Shaw and Lerner 153)

\(^{12}\) A speech sound; the smallest unit in the sound system of language.
a flickering flame. Higgins begins with the key phrase, “In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen” (Shaw and Lerner 155). However, starting with the key phrase, without first isolating and practicing the target sound /h/, proves difficult for Eliza. Since Eliza is unsuccessful with both the vowel drills and the key phrases, it is reasonable to assert that she is not an auditory learner. Higgins adjusts his approach to incorporate a visually oriented exercise, one that isolates the target sound and provides an opportunity for repetition. Eliza is to practice the /h/ in front of a flame; when she produces sufficient aspiration, the flame will waver, giving her visual confirmation of her success. Though she nearly faints from hyperventilating, Eliza is successful in aspirating the sound and in blowing out the flame.

Once Eliza has made a modicum of progress with the pronunciation of vowels and the aspiration of the /h/ sound, Higgins introduces more advanced elements of dialect acquisition: intonation\(^\text{13}\) and stress\(^\text{14}\). Higgins teaches intonation, a primary way of stressing important words in Received Pronunciation, using a xylophone; he plays a single musical note for each word in the phrase, “How kind of you to let me come” (Shaw and Lerner 157). He aims for Eliza to understand that the most important word in the phrase is “kind,” which one communicates by speaking the word on the highest pitch. However, since Higgins does not clearly communicate the function of the exercise and uses an aural method, Eliza is unable to mimic the correct intonation for the phrase. Higgins realizes his error, and adjusts his tack. Still focused on the same goal (that is Eliza’s ability to emphasize words through pitch variance), Higgins introduces a simile, a kinesthetic description and a

\(^{13}\text{Intonation refers to the rising and falling of the pitch of the speaking voice.}\)

\(^{14}\text{Stress refers to the emphasis given a word through pitch, duration or volume.}\)
drill, hoping that at least one exercise will trigger Eliza’s understanding. The simile is “kind of you. It’s just like ‘cup of tea’” (Shaw and Lerner 157). Higgins assumes that the comparison of an unfamiliar phrase with a familiar phrase (which he believes incorporates the same intonation pattern) will help Eliza to recognize and replicate the intonation pattern. However, the Cockney dialect does not follow the same intonation pattern for that particular phrase, and Higgins’ simile is ineffective. Only when Higgins gives a kinesthetic description of the experience of the specific sounds, “Put your tongue forward until it squeezes against the top of your lower teeth” does Eliza correctly replicate the pronunciation and intonation (Ibid). Her success with the exercise is cemented through an isolated drill of “cup cup cup cup – of of of” (Ibid). From these examples, it is reasonable to assert that Higgins’ default of aurally based repetition exercises, typical of the Direct Method, is ineffective for Eliza. Only with the addition of visual and kinesthetic exercises that accommodate her learning modalities does she succeed.

With Eliza’s modest command of intonation and stress, Higgins introduces a text-based exercise through which to work on Eliza’s articulation. This follows the sequence of the Direct Method, “[w]hen some progress has been made in the first stage, a few short texts for reading should be introduced, still without any grammatical analysis” (Darian 545-546). Higgins uses the text of a poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson, entitled “Mariana.” Rather than simply reading the text, Higgins incorporates an exercise inspired by the ancient Grecian statesman and orator, Demosthenes, who is fabled to have overcome his speech impediment by speaking with pebbles in his mouth. Higgins places six marbles in Eliza’s mouth, and asks her to “enunciate as if the marbles were not in [her] mouth” (Shaw

---

15 Eliza works on the first quatrain of “Mariana: “With blackest moss the flower-pots / Were thickly crusted, one and all; / The rusted nails fell from the knots / That held the pear to the gable-wall.”
and Lerner 159). The prescriptive approach is ineffective on two accounts: first, Higgins “cannot understand a word,” suggesting that Eliza cannot enunciate to the degree that Higgins hopes and second, Eliza swallows a marble, compromising her well-being and the continuation of the exercise (Ibid).

Lastly, Higgins’ use of the Direct Method, as previously outlined, does not include a study of grammar. Eliza studies with Higgins for approximately six months and, though it is possible that the training advanced to the Grammatical, Idiomatic and Lexical, and Literary Stages, these are not highlighted onstage. Even after her studies with Higgins have concluded, Eliza employs some unique grammatical features of her D1. When Higgins and Eliza meet in Act Two, Scene Five, she displays some lingering confusion about correct verb tenses, using the present tense in place of the simple past tense. “What I done – (Correcting herself) What I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come – came to care for you” (Shaw and Lerner 212). These small grammatical errors indicate that Eliza has not fully induced the grammatical rules of the D2 and gained a level of unconscious competence. Although the Direct Method of dialect acquisition ultimately facilitated Eliza’s consistent and believable use of the pronunciation of the D2, the Method did not offer explicit study of grammatical features or sufficient conversational practice.

**Higgins and Phonetics**

It is important to examine the use of phonetics in the dialect acquisition process. In the Reform Movement, phonetics are central to the learning process. Authors Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin outline that in the Reform Movement, “teachers must have solid training in phonetics” and “[l]earners should be given phonetic training to establish good
speech habits” (3). Higgins certainly has a solid training in phonetics, identifying himself as the “author of *Higgins’ Universal Alphabet*.” (Shaw and Lerner 126). He also alludes to his command of Broad Romic16 and Bell’s Visible Speech,17 two versions of phonetics that predate the development of The International Phonetic Alphabet in 1888. However, despite Higgins’ phonetic expertise, Eliza receives very little, if any, written phonetic training. This may be due to the limited six-month education period, to Higgins’ assessment of Eliza’s initial intelligence and capabilities, or to the difficulty in dramatizing phonetics for the stage. Though the study of phonetics is not essential to the process of dialect acquisition, it can be a helpful tool, particularly for learners with a visual modality, like Eliza.

**Contemporary Methods**

Since the Reform Movement of the early twentieth century, there have been several new approaches to language learning. These new approaches include: the Audio-Lingual Method, the Cognitive Code Approach, the Structural Approach, the Situational Approach, the Notional-Functional Approach, the Communicative Approach. From these diverse methods, many pronunciation exercises can be extracted and applied to the dialect acquisition process. Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin outline a number of techniques and practice materials to teach pronunciation, six of which are explored below in the context of dialect acquisition (7-9).

16 A form of phonetic transcription proposed by Henry Sweet in his *Handbook of Phonetics* (1877).

17 Invented by Alexander Melville Bell in 1867, this notation system provides visual representations of the positions of the speech organs required to articulate individual speech sounds; Bell specifically designed Visible Speech to assist deaf students in learning to speak.
**Listen and Imitate**

This technique is found in the Direct Method, and used by Henry Higgins in the teaching of Eliza Doolittle. Very simply, teachers model pronunciation of a sound or phrase, the students listen and then repeat. This approach can be used at the beginning of the acquisition process, calling and repeating key words or phrases, or much later in the process to address isolated errors. With the abundance of audio and video recordings online, students can also listen to electronic recordings of dialect speakers and imitate these samples. Some notable resources include: The Visual Accent Archive, The International Dialects of English Archive, The Speech Accent Archive and forvo.com, all available online.

**Phonetic Training**

First incorporated in the Reform Movement, phonetic training offers students a kinesthetic, visual and aural vocabulary to describe and distinguish sounds. Phonetic training might include the study of the International Phonetic Alphabet or the IPA (which has eclipsed Bell’s Visible Speech and Broad Romic as the predominant phonetic system), diagrams and descriptions of the anatomical production of each sound, reading phonetic transcriptions, and writing phonetic transcriptions. Of particular interest is the work of Dudley Knight, who offers an innovative, prescriptive method to studying phonetics and dialects, detailed in his forthcoming book *Speaking with Skill* (2012).

**Visual Aids**

With increased understanding of learning styles, the inclusion of visual aids in the dialect acquisition process ensures that visual learners’ needs are met. This may include the use of mirrors to examine the movement of the tongue and lips, phonetic charts, and the viewing of video clips. Many students find it helpful to watch a dialect speaker’s mouth move,
noticing the placement and muscular tensions, on film. Ginny Kopf’s *The Dialect Handbook* is particularly helpful as it includes a list of films, television series and documentaries (among other things) in which each dialect can be heard.

**Tongue Twisters**

These short phrases, designed to be difficult to articulate, often provide challenging and humorous ways to cultivate the target pronunciation of sounds. I’ve found that students enjoy tongue twisters as part of their warmup and as a fun way to strengthen their articulation. Because tongue twisters involve the repetition of one or two sounds, they also provide the opportunity to isolate and drill key sound changes from the D1 to the D2.

**Reading Aloud/Recitation**

The application of pronunciation skills to longer passages of text can be a satisfying realization of the students’ progress. Whether it’s poetry, speeches, monologues or dialogues, the opportunity to practice, read aloud and memorize text synthesizes all the elements of dialect. In a dialect classroom and the rehearsal hall, dialect acquisition usually culminates in the sharing of a monologue or scenework, demonstrating the students’ proficiency with sound changes, rhythm, stress, intonation, and breath.

**Recordings of Learner’s Production**

Whether it's audio or video, a recording of the learner's own speech offers a tremendous opportunity for analysis and growth. Playback of specific sounds, either desired or undesired, can facilitate feedback from classmates/peers, the teacher and the learner. Recording can also be a helpful benchmark for the student’s progress or facilitate ongoing study if the teacher and student cannot physically meet.
Although Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin offer a fairly comprehensive list of methods for studying pronunciation, there are three other methods that I have found to be useful. The first is total immersion, a popular method of language training that the aforementioned authors do not list, in the D2. This means that the teacher or coach speaks in the D2 for the duration of the class or rehearsal and encourages students to attempt to do the same. I have noticed that students hear a larger number of words in the D2 this way, and have more opportunities to practice the dialect, as they are asking questions and conversing with their peers in the D2. Usually there is some initial trepidation, but very quickly the learners exhibit competency and enthusiasm.

The second method is establishing a cultural context for the dialect, which is best when student generated. The following prompt is a helpful starting place for individual research: “what do you need to know about the culture, geography, body language, dress, music, climate, etcetera to understand and embody this dialect?” Students’ homework is to investigate an area of their choosing and to report their findings to the class. This helps learners avoid a purely technical demonstration of the dialect’s features, and enables them to imaginatively incorporate cultural knowledge into the expression of an individual experience through a specific dialect.

The third method is the inclusion of structured extemporaneous conversation. Rather than deter side-conversations between students or limit off topic discussion, I encourage it. I’ve found it useful to begin work with a check-in, offering a simple question to each learner and allowing them to answer in dialect. Once a working knowledge of the dialect is established, I also include structured improvisational exercises, from telling jokes in the dialect, to holding a mock audition, to creating a student-led cooking show. Lastly, I
encourage the learners to speak and think in the dialect outside of the classroom and rehearsal hall.

In conclusion, there are a wide range of methods for the dialect acquisition process, many of which originate from language learning methods. As evidenced by Henry Higgins’ work with Eliza Doolittle, not every method is successful with every student. It is important that the instructor or coach has a familiarity with a broad range of methods and is able to draw upon them to accommodate a variety of learning styles, abilities and interests.

Conclusions for the Classroom and Rehearsal Hall

Having described Higgins’ methods and outlined some contemporary methods for dialect acquisition, I will now detail the methods used in the dialect coaching of My Fair Lady. Knowing that the cast included a wide range of ages, ability and comfort with dialect acquisition, it was important to construct a comprehensive pedagogical model, anticipating and accommodating the actors’ diverse needs. My co-dialect coach, Renina Hoblitz, and I met several months before rehearsals began and worked to assemble actor packets\(^\text{18}\) for Cockney, Received Pronunciation and Hungarian. The structure of the packet closely mirrored our coaching model within the rehearsal room.

We felt it important, especially since the production did not have a dramaturg and the actors had limited time to conduct research, to begin with some cultural context for the dialect. This context was provided at the top of each packet and reviewed orally with the company in dialect coaching sessions. We divided the cast into dialect groups (determined

\(^{18}\) An actor packet is a short resource guide outlining the basics of a dialect, including cultural context; phonetic changes (often in transliterated form); features of rhythm, stress, intonation; online samples of dialect speakers; and practice phrases.
by which dialects were required in the actors’ role assignments) and began coaching sessions by modeling the sound changes, using the listen and imitate approach outlined in the previous section. Since most of the actors had not studied phonetics and we did not have ample time to provide comprehensive phonetic training, we developed a transliteration\textsuperscript{19} of the phonetic sound changes, facilitating the actors’ comprehension and individual practice.

In the \textit{My Fair Lady} rehearsal process, we attempted to find a balance between group coaching sessions and individual coaching sessions. During group sessions, ensemble members who did not have many solo speaking lines, were offered the time to speak through the song lyrics in tempo and rhythm, and given feedback to ensure the consistency of clarity of the group’s dialect work. In solo sessions, actors with speaking lines took the time to read aloud lines from the script and the song lyrics. During both group and individual sessions, some actors elected to record the coach(es) and/or their own voices, creating a tool for feedback and individual practice.

There were several possible methods that were not included in the dialect acquisition process for \textit{My Fair Lady} including visual aids, immersion and tongue twisters. The visual aids were limited to the transliteration provided on the dialect packet and the referral of actors to online video samples of the dialects, and did not expand to include an optional phonetic transcription, the use of mirrors or props. For most actors, this did not prove to be an issue. However, one actor did voice a concern: “listening and imitation works great for me. But I’m also a visual learner. Perhaps offering more instruction for those familiar and comfortable in the use of IPA would have been useful. If I could have the audible demonstration that coincided with an IPA transcription, that would have been ideal

\textsuperscript{19} In our case, a simplified version of phonetics that uses the Roman alphabet to represent the sound of a word.
for me” (Anonymous). This is a useful reminder to incorporate as many methods, and for varying levels of ability, as possible in the dialect acquisition process. Full immersion was not used in the coaching process, simply because several dialects were being used in the production, so the actors and the coaches were switching among dialects (Received Pronunciation, Cockney, and Hungarian) frequently. Finally, tongue twisters were not formally incorporated as practice tools, but the actors were encouraged to take practice sentences from the Actor Packets or difficult lines of text from the script and practice them crisply and briskly, as one might practice a tongue twister.

Lastly, we felt it was important to maintain a multimodal pedagogy through the process, including post run-through notes sessions. Generally, actors were emailed notes that detailed areas of success and areas for more growth. If time and schedule permitted, actors were also given an opportunity to review the notes orally with the coach(es), and ensure their understanding and correction. Considering the overwhelmingly positive response from the actors and the critical reception\textsuperscript{20} to the dialect work, it appears that the methods used in the dialect acquisition process in this production of \textit{My Fair Lady} were successful.

\textsuperscript{20} Reviews of the dialect coaching are provided in Appendix 2.
Conclusion

“What could possibly matter more than to take a human being and change her into a different human being by creating a new speech for her? Why, it’s filling up the deepest gap that separates class from class, and soul from soul. She matters immensely” (Shaw and Lerner 178).

Since I first discovered, in Boston in 2004, that I had a dialect, I have gained tremendous insight into the process pedagogy of dialect acquisition. As a dialect student, coach and teacher, I am certain that an explicit discussion of standard speech a validation of the students’ D1 and an emphasis on the students’ ability to code-switch between dialects are essential components of a dialect acquisition process. More strongly than ever, I believe that a Learner-Centered model and the integration of positive expectancy theories, focusing on praise, positivity and empowerment, encourage students’ success. Finally, I have determined that a multimodal pedagogy that accommodates a variety of learning styles promotes the students’ functional independence with the dialect.

Although this study of dialect pedagogy from 1912-2012 has been very fruitful, there are many areas for further study. Chief among them is a consideration of the effect that the increasing globalization and transnationalism, particularly in the digital age, will have on standard speech, and consequently, dialect acquisition. Second, it will be essential to pay close attention to the effect that the evolving student demographic (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) will have on the teacher-student or coach-actor rapport. Third, the rapid advances in technology may have a massive affect on the methods of dialect acquisition; how might teachers, coaches, students and actors draw upon the capabilities of tablets, smart phones, and emerging technologies for support in the classroom or rehearsal
Ultimately, each teacher must, inspired by Henry Higgins, continue to be curious about how to better serve each student in their journey to sounding and speaking, exploring and playing, crafting and creating whatever dialect the play requires or their heart desires.
Bibliography


Anonymous. Personal Interview. 4 January 2012.


Boothby, Andy. Personal Interview. 4 January 2012.


Hawke, Michael. Personal Interview. 4 January 2012


Appendix 1

My Fair Lady Dialect and Accent Actor Packets

Guide to the Cockney Dialect

Dialect in Context

Historically, Cockney was a dialect spoken by persons born within earshot of the bells of St. Mary-Le-Bow, a church in East London. The sound of the bells actually covered a several mile radius, so Cockney was a very common dialect of English.

Cockney was a working class dialect, and its speakers were generally poorly educated and economically disadvantaged. However, there was also great pride in being a Cockney speaker, evident in the popular rhyming slang. (Examples: “Dog and bone” is rhyming slang for “phone” and “trouble and strife” is slang for “wife.”)

This musical gains its title from the popular song “London Bridge is Falling Down.” The words of the last line in the song, “Mayfair Lady,” when spoken by a Cockney speaker, sounds like “My Fair Lady.” (Mayfair is an aristocratic area of London.)

Facial Sensation

Kinesthetic Trigger:
Drop your jaw and say, “Ah.” This gives you a sense of the general position of the jaw. In the dialect, the mouth is half open with the lips a bit forward. There is also quite a bit of nasality (often called a nasal whine) in the dialect. Try saying Eliza’s phrase, “Garn!”

Manner of Articulation:
Easygoing. While in RP the emphasis is on the consonants, in Cockney the emphasis is on the vowels.

Pitch:
Just like RP, Cockney uses a wider pitch range than does General American. Again, higher pitches and large jumps between pitches are used for emphasis.

Rhythm and phrasing:
The difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is much greater in Cockney than in American English. Cockney speakers tend to choose a few key words to emphasize and pounce on them with higher pitch. Eg: She’s haunted by the memories of ghosts.

Generally, the dialect has a legato, rather than staccato, feeling.
Key Sentence: “He’s balmy and a bit on the howling side, if you ask me.”

Key Sound Changes

1. The “ay” sound as in “way” moves towards the “I” sound as in “fly.”
   Practice words: train, late, came, face, maintain, able, stay
   Practice sentence: The train was late when it finally came.

2. The “oo” sound as in “you” is in two parts: an “uh” followed by an “oo.” This sound is produced with less lip rounding than in General American English.
   Practice words: who, cool, choose, boot, food, moving, beautiful, few
   Practice sentence: Who’s used my beautiful blue boots?

3. The “ob” sound of “goat” becomes “ow” as in “bow.” There is less lip rounding than in General American English.
   Practice words: show, road, hose, clothes, go, boat, slope, hopeless, owner, moan
   Practice sentence: Joe knows he’s got to row the boat slowly.

4. The “ee” sound as is “tree,” is produced in two parts “uh” and “ee.”
   Practice words: eat, bleed, feelings, ceiling, achieve, reason, Peter, pizza
   Practice sentence: Steve leaves beans on his clean cream jeans.

5. The “r” sound is dropped in Cockney (unless the “r” begins the word or a syllable).
   Practice words: bird, bored, bard, butter, spare, spire, fear, blower, pliers, employer, hour
   Practice sentence: I started thirty-four hired cars Thursday morning.

6. The “aw” sound is very lip rounded and very long.
   Practice words: awful, daughter, awkward, caught, Laura, call, small, water
   Practice sentence: Paula is awkward when talking and walking.
7. In many words that are spelled with “o” vowel, we increase the lip-rounding, creating a *slight* “aw” sound, rather than the “ah” sound of American English.

Practice words: dog, obvious, knowledge, collar, along, want, fox

Practice sentence: The dog without its collar was obvious prey for the fox.

8. In certain words, where the short “a” sound (as in “apple”) would be used in General American English, the long “ah” (the vowel in “father”) is substituted.

Practice words: pass, past, dance, chants, ask, answer, laughter, bath, can’t, plaza, master, half

Practice sentence: I passed on the chance to dance with the master.

*Please refer to the “Ask/Bath” List for a detailed listing of words that observe this shift.

**An important exception is the word “can,” which retains the short “a” sound of American English, while “can’t” uses the long “ah” and becomes “cahnt.”

9. When the consonant /l/ ends a syllable, it becomes /w/. However, if the next word begins with a vowel, the /l/ is sounded regularly. (eg. Bill allows)

Practice words: always, call, pill, feel, elbow, kneel, William, million, smell, cattle, brittle, middle, official

Practice sentence: Bill’s pal Phil still feels ill.

10. The voiced /th/ sound, as in “these,” will become a /v/ sound.

Practice words: either, mother, with, slither, feather, breathe, other, bothersome, without

Practice sentence: Those other brothers then were breathing.

11. The voiceless /th/ sound, as in “thick,” will always become a /f/ sound.

Practice words: things, nothing, three, thirty, birthday, pathway, breath, through, throughout, south, southeast, southwest

Practice sentence: I thought about thirty three thistles.

12. The /ing/ sound found at the end of words will be shortened to /in/, as in “dancing” to “dancin’.”
Practice words: feeling, stopping, bothering, shattering, bartering, talking, stirring
Practice sentence: He’s thinking about moving into buying and selling.

13. We’ll replace the final /t/ in word or syllable with a glottal stop (the closing of the vocal folds, following by an explosive release of air).

Practice words: better, lot of, shatter, attitude, Milton, motive, thirty, eating, writer
Practice sentence: You need a better attitude if you’re going to be a beautiful writer.

14. If a word that starts with an /h/ begins a sentence, we’ll replace the /h/ with a glottal attack.

Practice words: home, handsome, harken, who, whose, happiness

Otherwise, we’ll remove the initial /h/ and use the final consonant of the previous word to glide between the words.

Practice words: we’re handsome, please hearken, says who, my home
Practice sentence: Harry hurt his hand helping with the harvest.

15. Although most “r” sounds are dropped in Cockney, when the “r” ends a word and the next word begins with a vowel, we will sound the final “r” using it to link the words together.

Practice words: here is, there are, her eyes, fear of death
Practice sentence: Victor isn’t here any more in our everyday thoughts.

Special Pronunciations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tuppence</td>
<td>two pence (pennies)</td>
<td>tuh-puhns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bloke</td>
<td>informal word for man/guy</td>
<td>blowk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>row</td>
<td>a dispute or quarrel</td>
<td>row (not roh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blooming</td>
<td>a euphemism for bloody, an intensifier</td>
<td>bloom-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tec</td>
<td>slang for detective</td>
<td>teck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selsey</td>
<td>a seaside town on the south coast of England</td>
<td>sell-see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisson Grove</td>
<td>a street and, historically, a London slum</td>
<td>lih-son gr-o-v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blimey</td>
<td>interjection to express surprise or excitement</td>
<td>bleye-me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckingham</td>
<td>official London residence of English monarchs</td>
<td>buck-ing-um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garn</td>
<td>a contraction of “go on,” with disbelief or derision</td>
<td>gahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farthing</td>
<td>a British currency worth 1/4 pence</td>
<td>fah-vin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>a village in Cheshire, north west England</td>
<td>aht-fuhd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hereford  
a town in the West Midlands of England  
eh-ruh-fuhd

Hampshire  
a county on the southern coast of England  
amp-shuh

shilling  
a British currency worth 12 pence  
shill-in

Brighton  
part of a city in East Sussex, south east England  
bry-(glotta)uhn

blighter  
a person held in low esteem  
bly-(glotta)uh

Movies/TV for Further Study

Christmas Carol

Monty Python

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

East Enders

(Ricky Gervais is also a good model)

Notes:

Prepared by Renina Hoblitz and Stacey Cabaj, adapted from Paul Meier's *Accents and Dialects for the Stage and Screen*, Ginny Kopf’s *Dialect Handbook*, and others. 2011
Guide to Received Pronunciation, or Standard British

Dialect in Context

Received Pronunciation is a dialect of English spoken by the wealthy and educated Brits. It is learned, or received, in elite boarding schools and drama schools, and heard in the media, particularly on BBC radio and television. People who have chosen to cultivate this dialect are ones practiced in social graces, both their carriage and their manners.

Qualitative words that might describe the dialect include: held, restrained, reserved, formal, and having a psychological shield or mask.

Questions to consider: how are your characters quintessentially British? How do they want to be viewed by the outside world? How do they use their speech and dialect to support those perceptions?

Facial Sensations

Kinesthetic Trigger: Teacup on the tongue; potato in the mouth; stiff upper lip.

Manner of Articulation: Jaw and lips tend to be held while the tongue does the work.

Pitch: While speakers of American English often use volume for emphasis, RP speakers use higher pitches for emphasis. The pitch range in American English is generally 3-5 tones, while in RP, a full octave is often used within one sentence.

Rhythm and phrasing: The difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is much greater in RP than in American English. RP speakers tend to choose a few key words to emphasize and pounce on them with higher pitch. Eg: I’m sorry I’m late, but there was a traffic jam.

There is also an increased focus on the consonant sounds, rather than the vowel sounds.

Comparison of Characteristics: Let’s look at an example of some key differences of the dialects in sentence context.

I can’t believe that Harry would really just give up his job and walk away.

An exaggerated General American dialect has the following characteristics:

• Begins strongly and ends weakly,
• Is slower, louder and harder toned,
• Is lower in pitch,
• Avoids higher pitches,
• Evenly distributes stress,
• Uses volume for emphasis.
I can't believe that Harry would really just give up his job and walk away.

This sentence spoken in the RP dialect:
• Begins weakly and ends strongly,
• Is faster, quieter,
• Is softer in tone,
• Is higher in pitch,
• Selects fewer key words to stress,
• Uses high pitches to stress them rather than volume.

Key sentence: “I love pigeons; they’re so wonderfully oval.”

Key Sound Changes

1. In certain words, where the short a sound (as in “apple”) would be used in General American English, the long “ah” (the vowel in “father”) is substituted.

Practice words: plaza, master, half, answer, laughter, bath, can’t, pass, past, dance, ask

Practice sentence: He laughed as he danced to the bath past his aunt in pajamas.

*Please refer to the “Ask/Bath” List (Pg. 4) for a list of words that observe this shift.
**An important exception is the word “can,” which retains the short “a” sound of American English, while “can’t” uses the long “ah” and becomes “cahnt.”

2. In many words that are spelled with “o” vowel, we increase the lip-rounding, creating a slight “aw” sound, rather than the “ah” sound of American English.

Practice words: dog, obvious, collar, along, fox, popped, bottle, copper, fog, nonsense

Practice sentence: They stopped a lot of nonsense at a college in Watford.

3. The “aw” sound is very lip rounded and very long.

Practice words: awful, awkward, caught, call, water, chalk, law, bought, daughter

Practice sentence: Paul’s daughter Laura is awfully awkward when she walks and talks.

4. The “ob” vowel is in two parts: an “ub” sound and then an “ob” sound.

Practice words: bolt, bold, comb, so, owned, though, lonely, slow, moan, mobile
Practice sentence: Oak Road is zoned for mobile homes only. Oh no, don't go.

5. Where in American English we'd use the “-er” sound, in RP we drop the “r” (unless the “r” begins the word or a syllable.)

Practice words: letter, perhaps, our, fire, spare, court, heart, fair, poor, pore, curdle

Practice sentence: Fern's father is sure the four fearful fires barely carried far.

6. At the end of words that in American English would use the “ee” sound, RP will use the “ib” sound.

Practice words: party, lovely, crazy, pretty, ugly, city, silly, forty, we laugh, he came, she heard

Practice sentence: We had a lovely, silly party when Billy was fifty.

7. The “ay” sound, as in “way,” and the “I” sound, as in “fly,” should be produced with a relaxed and dropped jaw, without a hint of a smile.

Practice words: late, weigh, name, place, find, lime, sign, rice, drive

Practice sentences: The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain.
I like rice and limes when I dine.

8. Certain words that begin with d, t, n, l, and s, followed by the “u” sound, will include an initial “y” sound.

Practice words: during, lure, assume, student, tune, suit, supervise, education, infatuated, new, nuisance, tune

Practice sentence: The tumultuous news assumed the duke fought a duel in the nude.

Important Exceptions: to, do

9. The consonant “t,” found in the middle of words, requires crisp articulation, and should be voiced as a “t” rather than a “d” sound.

Practice words: better, lot of, shatter, attitude, Milton, motive, thirty, eating, writer.

Practice sentence: You need a better attitude if you’re going to be a beautiful writer.
10. Although most “r” sounds are dropped in RP, when the “r” ends a word and the next word begins with a vowel, we will sound the “r” allowing it to link the words together.

Practice words: here is, there are, her eyes, fear of death

Practice sentence: There is a twinkle in her eyes as she confronts her fear of death.

Other Features and Special Pronunciations

1. Words with the ask/bath shift: (See Key Sound Change #1)
   advantage, after, ask, answer, blast, basket, bathroom, brass, can’t, castle, chance, class, dance, danced, enchanting, enchantment, example, exasperating, ghastly, half, last, pass, phonograph, rather

2. Words with “-ile” endings: RP speakers pronounce the suffix as “aisle”
   Practice words: infantile, mobile, fertile, tactile

3. Words ending in -tory, -tary, -bury, and similar endings are contracted from two syllables to one, as in “strawberry” becoming “straw-bree”
   Practice words: extraordinary, library, momentary, ordinary, stationary, strawberry

4. Places
   • Words that end in “-ham” are contracted to “um”
   Examples: Cheltenham (chelt-num), Buckingham (buck-ing-um), Tottenham (tot-n-um)
   • Words that end in “-shire” are pronounced “shuh”
   Examples: Yorkshire (yawk-shuh), Hampshire (hamp-shuh)
   • Words that end in -ford are pronounced “fuhd”
   Examples: Wallingford (walling-fuhd), Hertford (haht-fuhd), Hereford (he-ruh-fuhd)

5. Words that end in “-man” are pronounced “muhn”
   Examples: Cornishman, Englishman, Irishman, Yorkshireman
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenging Words</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Places:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascot</td>
<td>a racecourse located in Berkshire, UK</td>
<td>ass-kiht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covent Garden</td>
<td>a district in London</td>
<td>kah-vunt gah-dn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>the south Asian country</td>
<td>in-dyuhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Names:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demosthenes</td>
<td>an Athenian statesman and orator</td>
<td>dih-moss-thuh-neeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themistocles Stefanos</td>
<td>the Greek diplomat</td>
<td>thuh-miss-tuh-kleez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>steh-fah-nohs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoltan Karpathy</td>
<td>the Hungarian phonetician</td>
<td>zohl-tahn cah-puh-thee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Götterdämmerung</td>
<td>the final opera of Richard Wagner's <em>The Ring of the Nibelung</em></td>
<td>goh-tuh-dim-uh-roong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballet</td>
<td></td>
<td>bal-ay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilious</td>
<td>irritable</td>
<td>bihl-ce-uhhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blackguard</td>
<td>a scoundrel</td>
<td>blag-ud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha’pence</td>
<td>half pence</td>
<td>hay-puhns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hurricanes</td>
<td></td>
<td>huhr-ih-kuhnz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moral</td>
<td></td>
<td>mor-uhl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millionaire</td>
<td></td>
<td>mih-lee-yuh-neh-uh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonsense</td>
<td></td>
<td>non-suhns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noblest</td>
<td></td>
<td>noh-blihst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>proh-gress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with</td>
<td></td>
<td>with (voiced /th/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without</td>
<td></td>
<td>with-out (voiced /th/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yavol (actually jawohl)</td>
<td>old fashioned, emphatic word for “yes” in German</td>
<td>yah-vole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Movies for Further Study

Bednobs and Broomsticks  Time Bandits
Mary Poppins  Oliver Twist
Camelot

Notes:

Prepared by Renina Hoblitz and Stacey Cabaj, adapted from Paul Meier’s Accents and Dialects for the Stage and Screen, Ginny Kopf’s Dialect Handbook, and others. 2011
Guide to the Hungarian Accent

Dialect in Context

The Hungarian language (Magyar) is linguistically related to Finnish and Estonian. It is spoken by an estimated (14) million speakers, in Hungary and in neighboring countries especially Romania.

Facial Sensation

Kinesthetic Trigger: Relax the mouth, slightly close the jaws, and project the lips slightly forward. The tongue returns to a position just on the gum ridge behind the upper front teeth.

Manner of Articulation: Hungarian has a strong frontal articulation.

Pitch: The pitch is fairly even with a gentle rise on stressed syllables and a gentle fall on unstressed syllables. The tone falls at the end of declarative sentences and questions.

Rhythm and phrasing:
The tendency is lengthen vowels in stressed syllables.

The stress pattern is uniform, with the stress always on the first syllable of words. Eg. attempt, compare.

*However, this stress pattern is generally preserved in a thick Hungarian accent, which may or may not be appropriate for your character in this production. Consider this stress pattern an option if we decide to use a thicker accent.

Key Sentence: Transylvania is a home of more than castles.

Key Sound Changes

1. The “aw” sound, as in “law,” moves toward “oh,” as in “goat.”

Practice words: naughty, ought, applaud, hawk, jaw, chalk, all, bald, fault

Practice sentence: They ought to applaud for the bald hawk.

2. The “ib” sound, as in “kit,” is pronounced as “ee” as in “fleece.”

Practice words: ship, rib, dim, milk, slither, myth, pretty, build, women, busy

Practice sentence: The pretty women are busy building the ship.
3. The “uh” sound, as in “cup,” becomes “aw” as in “law.”

Practice words: strut, rub, hum, pulse, butter, done, monk, touch, blood, duck

Practice sentence: That monk struts and hums as he rubs butter on the duck.

4. Final voiced consonants (v, g, d, b, j, z) become unvoiced (f, k, t, p, ch, s).

Practice words: love, bag, blood, dab, judge, please

Practice sentence: Please don’t judge this bag. I love it.

5. The “r” is lightly trilled with the tip of the tongue.

Practice words: run, bring, strict, approach, crowd, growl, scrape, marry, sorrow

Practice sentence: Karina’s brother is running errands in the crowded street tomorrow.

6. “W” is pronounced as a “v” and “qu” is pronounced as “kv.”

Practice words: with, weather, when, which, quick, question, square

Practice sentence: We will watch the West Wing in the central square while eating hot wings.

7. The voiced “th,” as in “these,” is pronounced as a “d.”

Practice words: though, that, breathe, there, with, without, bathing

Practice sentence: Although there is that movie, I’d rather be bathing.

8. In this accent, the unvoiced “th,” as in “thick,” is pronounced as a “t.”

Practice words: think, things, theatre, south, method, thrilling

Practice sentence: Three things to see are south of your theatre.

9. The “ing” sound of “king” is pronounced with a final “k” sound. Example: kingk

Practice words: making, wishing, king, song, gong
Practice sentence: The wishing girl making the cake was singing a song.

Movies for Further Study

Bela Lugosi (Dracula, 1931)
Zsa Zsa Gabor (Moulin Rouge, 1952)
Eva Gabor (Artists and Models, 1955)
Paul Lucas (The Lady Vanished, 1938)
Lilian Hellman (Watch on the Rhine, 1933)

Sound Clips of Native Speakers

http://web.ku.edu/~idea/europe/hungary/hungary.htm
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=find&language=hungarian

Notes:

Zoltan Karpathy would be pronounced as zol-TAHN KARRR-pah-tea

Prepared by Renina Hoblitz and Stacey Cabaj, adapted from Robert Blumenfeld’s *Accents for the Actor*, Herman and Herman’s *Foreign Dialects*
Appendix 2

Selected Reviews of Barksdale Theatre’s *My Fair Lady*

“The supporting cast is uniformly great. There’s not a misstep among them, and that’s particularly noteworthy when the entire cast is performing in British accents. Renina Hoblitz and Stacey Cabaj’s dialect coaching deserves credit for the fact that you’re never taken out of the story because of a bad accent.”

-“My Fair Lady Play Review” by Liz Jewett of richmond.com

_____________________________________________

“Language is a focus of the story, so the accents must be perfect, and with the dialect coaching of Renina Hoblitz and Cabaj herself, they are.”

-”Theatre Review: My Fair Lady” by Susie Haubenstock of the Richmond Times-Dispatch

_____________________________________________

“Miller has placed a meticulous emphasis on the diction, including English cockney and upper-class accents, into the deft hands of dialect coaches Renina Hoblitz and Stacey Cabaj. This is important given the musical’s subject matter centers on Professor Higgins transforming Eliza Doolittle (Stacey Cabaj) from a common flower girl into an English Lady by improving her speech and rhetoric. I shared the sentiments of my companion that the accents were authentic.”

-”Theatre Review: My Fair Lady” by Matthew Miller of gayrva.com
Vita

Stacey L. Cabaj was born in Elk Point, Alberta, Canada on August 24, 1985, and is a Canadian citizen. She graduated from Victoria School of the Arts in Edmonton, Alberta in 2003. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre (summa cum laude) from The Boston Conservatory in 2008.

At Virginia Commonwealth University, as a graduate teaching assistant and adjunct instructor, she taught Effective Speech, Sophomore Voice and Speech, Junior Voice and Speech, and The Creative Processes and Contemplative Practices. She has also been an instructor at the School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community, Appomattox Regional Governor’s School, and The National Ice Theatre of Canada.

As a performer, she has appeared in productions at The Edmonton International Fringe Festival, The Charlottetown Festival, The Shakespeare Theatre, Barksdale Theatre/Theatre IV, Firehouse Theatre, as well as in numerous television series and films. As a voice, text and dialect coach, she has worked at Barksdale Theatre, Henley Street Theatre, Firehouse Theatre, Shafer Alliance Laboratory Theatre, and Raymond Hodges Theatre.