

GLOSSARY

This list defines some of the terms used in Paul Meier Dialect Services' products. All these terms appear in those products in italics. Further technical information can be found in the charts of the International Phonetic Association, reproduced in PMDS texts and ebooks, and at the author's website at <http://www.paulmeier.com/ipacharts/>. Text in Roman letters appearing between forward slash marks, such as /text/, denotes English spelling while text appearing between square brackets, such as [tɛkst], is phonetic transcription.

accent reduction: term often used to describe the process of modifying a non-prestige dialect or accent, or changing a foreign-language accent toward a perceived standard, mainstream, or prestige dialect.

acrolect: the most prestigious dialect or variety of a language. The term is used especially in the study of *creoles*.

affricate: a co-articulated plosive and fricative, such as we hear in *church*, *age*, *tsunami* [tʃ] [dʒ] [tʃ], etc., in English.

allophone: a contextually modified variant of a *phoneme* (see separate entry). Notice, for example, how the /t/ in *team* varies from that in *try*. These are said to be *allophones* of the *phoneme* /t/.

alveolar ridge: the little bump behind the top teeth.

approximant: a consonant in which the vocal tract is narrowed, but not enough to cause turbulent air flow. The /r/ in many English dialects is often spoken as the *approximant* [ɹ].

aspiration: literally breath. Often used to denote the little puff of air that accompanies the release of the *voiceless plosives* [p t k] in most English dialects' pronunciation of *pick*, *tick*, and *kick*, etc.

assimilation: denoting the fusion of two consonants into one; for example the /s/ and /y/ of *as you*, so that [æz ju] becomes [æzju].

basilect: the least prestigious variety or dialect of a language, with *mesolect* as intermediate, and *acrolect* being the most prestigious.

bilabial: sound made with the two lips.

close: referring to a vowel in which the highest part of the tongue is raised toward the roof of the mouth. The jaw will also be fairly closed.

co-articulation: referring to simultaneous articulation of two phonemes; for example, the /t/ and /s/ in *tsunami*.

code switching: referring to the practice of varying the style of one's speech according to its purpose or social context. For example, the contrasting styles of a formal address in public versus casual conversation with a friend.

consonant: a sound characterized by constriction or closure at one or more points of the speech tract.

consonant cluster: e.g., /sps/, /cts/, /sts/.

continuant: referring to a consonant that may be prolonged indefinitely rather than having the finite duration of a stop; for example, /v/, /m/, /l/.

creole: a language that emerges from the collision of two other languages, evolving from an earlier *pidgin*.

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dark /l/: sometimes called a *velarized /l/* [ɫ]. You will note the difference in quality between the two /l/ sounds in RP and GenAm *leak* and *call*. The latter contains the dark /l/.

dental: referring to the teeth.

devoiced: referring to a normally voiced consonant losing some or all of its voicing, as often occurs to final voiced consonants. Dutch and German, for examples, call for final voiced consonants to be somewhat devoiced. A useful distinction from *unvoiced*.

diacritic: a mark placed above or below a *phonetic* symbol, modifying it. For example, [˘] above a vowel indicates *r-coloration* of that vowel.

dialect: a regional variant of a language distinguished by pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar from other regional varieties. Variants based on class and other types of sub-grouping also exist. It has been said that a language is a dialect with an army, suggesting the political nature of the definition. The two terms, *accent* and *dialect*, are often used interchangeably, even though accent refers more to pronunciation alone. However, I like to maintain a distinction between English-language *dialects* and foreign-language *accents*. This is a fairly common theatrical tradition in North America.

diphthong: a vowel that glides from one position to another. The vowel [aɪ] in GenAm and RP *price* is an example, gliding from [a] to [ɪ].

drawl: term denoting the lengthening of vowels, or their diphthongization, as occurs in some dialects.

dynamics: generally referring to *pitch*, *duration*, and *volume* as the musical qualities that can be varied for expressive purposes.

elide (elision, noun): to omit. For example, we might say that some American speakers *elide* the /t/ when speaking the word *sentence*. Some people also use the term to refer to a *legato* transition between one word and (usually) a vowel-initial word that follows, e.g. *we all*, or *not ever*.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

fortis: strong. For example, in most English dialects the /c/ of *peace* is *fortis* while the /s/ of *peas* is *lenis*, or weak. Generally a quality associated with *voiceless* consonants.

fricative: *consonant* made by narrowing the vocal tract sufficiently to cause turbulent airflow. The /f/ and /v/ in *five* are examples.

GenAm (General American): contentious, but useful term, referring to an ill-defined mainstream or “prestige” dialect of American English. It may be thought of as a “non-regional” style.

glide: sometimes used to mean *diphthong*.

glottal (glottis, noun): a sound articulated by the vocal folds themselves. The most famous glottal consonant is the *glottal stop* or *glottal shock* [ʔ], such as we hear in the classic Cockney *butter* [bʌʔə], or that we sometimes intrude between two words such as *my eye* where the second begins with a vowel.

glottal reinforcement: term often meaning the *co-articulation* of the glottal stop [ʔ] with another consonant, usually a stop. One hears this in Newcastle speech, for example, on the /t/ in *fourteen*, spoken as [fɔʔtʰin]. Frequently this also can be observed in unreleased stops at the end of an utterance, as in *stop!* [stɒʔp].

glottal shock: (see glottal.)

glottal stop: (see glottal.)

glottis: the space between the vocal folds.

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hypercorrect: referring to how we sometimes overcompensate in correcting our mispronunciations while learning a foreign language, or in changing our dialect. For example, knowing they often fail to observe the /h/ in English words, French speakers sometimes overdo it.

IDEA: The International Dialects of English Archive, online at <http://www.dialectsarchive.com/>, a repository of recordings of native speakers speaking English in their own accents and dialects.

inflection: in this discipline, referring to melody contour or pitch change, as in *rising inflection*, *falling inflection*.

intervocalic: occurring between two *vowels*, such as the /r/ in *Paris*.

intonation: term virtually interchangeable with *inflection*; referring to the melody contour of a phrase.

intrusive /r/: the phenomenon, chiefly observed in non-rhotic dialects, of intruding an /r/ where none occurs in the spelling. For example, *idea of it* where /r/ is used to connect the first two words [aɪdɪə.ɪəvɪt].

IPA: both International Phonetic Alphabet and International Phonetic Association.

labial(ized): referring to the lips. For example, /r/ is labialized in some speakers and some dialects; for example, in elevated RP *very sorry* [veɪr^wɪ sɔɪr^wɪ].

labiodental: lips and teeth. e.g., *labiodental fricatives* in English, [f v].

lateral: sideways. For example, in English /l/, a *lateral approximant*, the point of contact is *alveolar*, while the air stream escapes laterally. The Welsh phoneme inventory contains *the unvoiced, alveolar, lateral fricative* [ɬ] (think lateral lisp) for /ll/ words like *Lloyd*, *Llandudno*, etc.

lax: relaxed. An important distinction from *tense* in discussing vowels, for example. Contrast the vowels in *sheep* and *ship* to feel the difference.

legato: smooth, flowing; the opposite of *staccato*. Useful, for example, in describing the transition to a vowel-initial word in a phrase like *All Americans eat every ounce of avocado available* (comprising only vowel-initial words). A *staccato* delivery might use a *glottal* to initiate each word while a *legato* delivery would be smooth, fluid, and use no glottal attack.

lenis: weak. The opposite of *fortis*.

lexical set: a set of words all employing the same phonetic vowel, regardless of spelling. *Care*, *air*, *bear*, *heir*, *their*, *there*, *prayer*, and *scarce* are all members of the *square* lexical set, for example. J.C. Wells devised the system now widely employed by those in the field.

liaison: linking: the strategy of using the final sound of one word to initiate the following. A defining quality of French speech.

linking /r/, linking /l/: the terms I use to refer to the way /r/ or /l/, elided when a consonant follows, and are used when a vowel follows. For example, in non-rhotic dialects, when /r/ following a vowel is normally silent, it is sounded to link to a following vowel-initial word. Contrast RP *here we* [hɪə wɪ] with *here are* [hɪə.ɑ]. Similarly, in Cockney, for example, contrast *well no* [wɛʊ nəʊ] with *well I* [wɛləɪ]; notice the linking /l/.

mesolect: an intermediate dialect or variety of a language, with *basilect* and *acrolect* as the terms for the least prestigious and most prestigious respectively. The three terms are used frequently in the study of *creoles*.

minimal pair: a pair of words differing in only one *phoneme*, e.g. *pit*, *peat* [pɪt pɪt].

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- monophthong:** a single-stage vowel; from the Greek, *phthong* (sound) and *mono* (one).
- nasal:** concerning the nose.
- nasality:** nasal resonance. Frequently heard on vowels before or after a nasal consonant, i.e. [m n ŋ].
- neutral:** sometimes referring to the neutral vowel, or *schwa* [ə].
- neutral onset:** referring to the phenomenon of gliding on to the vowel from a neutral position. For example, in Cockney, *team* would receive a neutral onset producing [təim]. Sometimes called *onglide*.
- open:** used to refer to a vowel where the highest part of the tongue is low in the mouth.
- palate:** the roof of the mouth can be divided into hard and soft palate (velum).
- patois:** coming from Old French for rough, vernacular, uncultivated speech. It is a term used informally as synonymous with *creoles*, *dialects*, and *pidgins*.
- pharynx (pharyngeal, adjective):** area of speech tract between the uvula and the larynx.
- phone:** An actual speech sound, without regard to the *phonology* of a language, as revealed by *phonetic* analysis. Note that the /t/ in *tab* is *aspirated* in English [t^h], while in *stab* it is not [t]; and that the /t/ in *little* and *try* are also somewhat differently sounded. *Phones* that are variants of the same *phoneme* are called *allophones* (see separate entry) of that *phoneme*.
- phoneme (phonemic, adjective):** the smallest single segment of speech capable of distinguishing meaning. Unlike a *phone* (an actual speech sound), a *phoneme* is simply the “idea of a sound,” its actual realization taking many forms, resulting in different *phones*. /t/ and /d/ are examples of *phonemes*, since they contrast sufficiently in *minimal pairs* (see separate entry), such as in *bit/bid* to change the meaning of the utterance.
- phonetics:** the science of speech; can also refer to phonetic analysis or transcription of speech.
- phonology:** is distinguished from *phonetics* by its concern with how sounds function in a given language or group of languages, rather than simply their mechanical or acoustic properties.
- pidgin:** the earlier stage of a *creole*, and arising from the collision of two languages and allowing the speakers of those languages to communicate with each other in the absence of a third, mutually intelligible language. The children of pidgin speakers elevate the pidgin language into a *creole*.
- pitch:** the relative musical note of an utterance.
- plosive:** a consonant characterized by a total occlusion of the speech tract, followed immediately by an explosive release of the trapped air.
- polysyllabic:** referring to words composed of more than one syllable.
- post-vocalic:** after a vowel.
- pre-vocalic:** before a vowel.
- prosody:** that aspect of an utterance that has to do with duration, pitch, and stress, i.e., its supra-segmental qualities, or its qualities that go beyond a description of its phonetic segments. In other contexts, the term has more to do with the study of versification.
- pulmonic:** referring to the lungs. All spoken languages use pulmonic sounds, while some also contain non-pulmonic sounds (clicks, implosives, and ejectives) that do not rely on lung pressure to create the air stream.
- r-coloration:** refers mostly to vowels that may be “colored” in a given dialect by the following /r/.

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- Received Pronunciation (RP):** term coined by Daniel Jones to refer to that dialect of English most widely “received” or understood; sometimes called Standard British English, the Queen’s English, or Oxford English.
- released:** may refer to a *plosive* fully completed by the speaker, where the pent-up air is released; as opposed to one where only the stop stage is present, with no audible release.
- retroflex, retroflexion:** refers to a consonant in which the tongue tip is curled up and back.
- reverse mistakes:** a term I coined to refer to the phenomenon that occurs when, conscious of a potential mistake, we make a correction where none is needed. For example, French speakers, knowing their tendency to elide the /h/ in English, will sometimes place one where none is needed – for example *inhabit* [hɪnæbɪt] – and also produce it *hypercorrectly*.
- rhotic, rhoticity:** referring to a wide range of phonemes that are “r-like” in nature.
- rhythm:** an important and complex aspect of speech, referring predominantly to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.
- r-less:** referring mostly to dialects where *post-vocalic* /r/ is silent, a.k.a. *non-rhotic*.
- schwa:** the central neutral vowel [ə], found in great abundance in casual English; as in *among*, *particular*, *fascination*, and a host of *unstressed* syllables in *polysyllabic* words, and in the *weak forms* of some monosyllabic words too. “Careful” English may elevate many of these schwas to other vowel sounds, such as [ʊ] or [ɪ].
- semi-vowel:** another term for those *approximants* that are rather vowel-like in nature, or serve vowel-like functions within the syllable structure of words; specifically [w] and [j] in English.
- shadow vowel:** a term much favored by some singing teachers, referring to the “ghost” of a vowel that sometimes can be heard following a particularly well-defined consonant. Consider an emphatic question, “When?!!!” and the /n/ might well be released into a shadow vowel.
- signature sounds:** term I coined to refer to those sounds that are the hallmark, or “footprint” of a dialect, serving to sum up its distinct differences from other dialects.
- staccato:** rapid, brief, clipped: the opposite of *legato*, referring to a series of short, sharp syllables, often using a *glottal* to begin vowel-initial words. Think of a musical phrase on the flute with a tiny silence between each note, as opposed to that same phrase where each note is smoothly replaced by the next.
- standard lexical set:** see *lexical sets*.
- stress, stressed:** referring to those syllables in an utterance receiving emphasis, signaled by extra duration, a jump in pitch, extra loudness, or a combination of all three. Primary and secondary stress can be notated in IPA as [ˈ] or [ˌ] as in *phonetician* [ˌfəʊəˈtɪʃɪən].
- tap, tapped /r/:** an /r/ made by a single tap of the tongue tip on the *alveolar ridge*.
- tense:** the opposite of *lax*, and referring to the muscularity of the tongue.
- tone:** an ambiguous word that sometimes means *pitch* (as in semi-tone, full tone) but usually refers to quality or “tone of voice,” i.e., *harsh*, *soft*, *nasal*, *denasal*, etc.
- tongue-bunching:** refers to one among several strategies for creating the sound of /r/. Research shows that some people curl their tongues up and back while others simply bunch up the center of their tongues to produce the same effect. Lip-rounding and tongue root tension can also enhance our perception of *rhoticity*.

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trill: refers chiefly to /r/ sounds in some languages and dialects involving multiple taps of the tongue.

triphthong: a three-stage vowel; for example, RP *prior* [pɪaɪə] when spoken as a monosyllable; especially useful in versification.

twang: highly unscientific but useful onomatopoeic term, usually connoting some *nasality* of tone.

unreleased: see *released*.

unstressed: see *stressed*.

unvoiced: a.k.a. *voiceless*: referring to sounds that do not involve the vibration of the vocal cords. During the /ss/ in *missing*, for example, the vocal cords momentarily cease vibration.

uvula (uvular, adjective): small appendage of the soft palate.

velum (velar, adjective): the soft palate.

voiced: referring to sounds that involve the vibration of the vocal cords. During the /s/ in *miser*, for example, the vocal cords are vibrating.

voiceless: synonymous with *unvoiced*.

volume: loudness or amplitude.

vowel: speech sound characterized by total absence of obstruction to the airflow. It is usually the dominant and central part of the syllable.

weak form: refers to the change that may happen to a word when it occurs in an *unstressed* position. For example, we use the strong form of *can* when saying *She CAN; I CAN'T* [ʃi kæn aɪ kɑnt] but the weak form in *I know I can DO it!* [aɪ noʊ aɪ kən du ɪt].

yod: name for the palatal *approximant* [j], as in *music, youth, few* [mjuːzɪk juθ fju], etc.

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