



## **BRITISH AND AMERICAN ACCENTS ANALYSIS OF THE CONTESTANTS OF THE PUBLIC SPEAKING ACADEMY COMPETITION IN 2017: SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research entitled British And American Accents Analysis Of The Contestants Of The Public Speaking Academy Competition In 2017. This research aims to analyze the pronunciation of the British accent and the pronunciation of the American English accent. Using qualitative descriptive methodology, this study collected and analyzed speech data from two YouTube videos. This analysis focuses on identifying the distinct phonological features that characterize British and American accents. The findings show differences in pronunciation between British and American accents. The British accent displays strikingly non-rhotic features, as seen in the omission of the letter 'r' at the end of words, in contrast to the rhotic nature of the American accent which emphasizes the clear pronunciation of the consonant 'r'. Additionally, British accents often use long vowels, while American accents tend to favor short vowels with greater clarity. Additionally, American accents often exhibit diphthongization or reduction of unrounded vowels, which contributes to the complexity of phonological variation. This study emphasises the importance of recognising the phonological differences between British and American accents, especially in the context of public speaking competitions. The observed discrepancies reflect the many language landscapes influenced by historical, geographical, and cultural influences. This study advances our understanding of linguistic variety and accent variance within English-speaking populations by throwing light on these distinctions. Further research should look into the effects of accent differences on communication and perception in multicultural and global environments.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, accents, british, english american, phonological

### **INTRODUCTION**

To communicate effectively, humans rely on language as a means of interaction. Language serves as a tool through which we can share information, express thoughts, and



exchange ideas with others. Whether through spoken words or written text, language and communication play integral roles in our daily lives. According to Castro & Halliday, (1995) language serves as a medium for creating meaning, and speaking is one of how meaning is generated within the context of communication.

In the context of English language acquisition, proficiency is often assessed by four main skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Among these skills, speaking is particularly important as it involves active engagement and interaction with others (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). However, the effectiveness of oral communication can be affected by various factors, including dialect, idiolect and accent. Dialects are defined as linguistic variants that occur within a particular geographical area or social grouping. Dialects include variations in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. For example, American English and British English are considered different dialects of English, with each having distinct linguistic characteristics shaped by historical, cultural, and social causes (Crystal, 2003). Idiolects are speech patterns and language choices that are unique to each speaker. Upbringing, education, personal experiences, and social contacts all contribute to the development of an individual's idiolect. Idiolects might contain unique vocabulary, pronunciation preferences, and grammatical structures that set one person's speech apart from another's (Wells, 1982) However, accents refer to the diverse ways in which individuals or groups pronounce words, which can be influenced by factors such as where they are from, their native language, and their social background. These variations can manifest in differences in vowel and consonant sounds, intonation patterns, and the overall rhythm of speech (Wells, 1982)

Accents are a natural aspect of language evolution and occur in every language spoken throughout the world. Accents can express geographical identities, cultural history, and social affiliations, making them a valuable component of linguistic variety. Accents, namely regional accents, are the most well-known type, arising from different geographical locations such as the Southern accent in the United States, which is characterized by a lisp and elongated vowels, or the Cockney accent in London, which is known for its vowel shift and distinctive consonant usage. Social accents, on the other hand, are associated with specific social groupings and often reflect variations in education, financial level and community identification. In the UK, Received Pronunciation (RP), sometimes known as “the Queen's English”, has long been associated with higher social status and formal circumstances. Meanwhile, non-native accents develop when speakers of one language learn another and incorporate phonetic elements from their native language into their speech in the new language.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of grammatical and accent differences between American English and British English. The first study was research from Pratiwi et al., (2022) that analysis of the different phonological styles between British and American English in sophomores' speech errors at a senior high school found that rhythm was the indicator with the lowest score, indicating that the different rhythms in these accents affected speech errors but did not significantly alter meaning. In another study, research from Ula, (2021), a



descriptive analysis of British accents in the movie “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone”. The findings of this study revealed that characters like Harry and Hermione used Received Pronunciation, while Ron spoke in Estuary English. The students found the British accents in the movie clear and easy to understand, thus making it a recommended source for learning British English. Finally, (Sulaiman & Yuliani, 2017) research is a contrastive analysis between British and American varieties of English. The findings of this study identified two similarities in word meaning and function, but highlighted four dissimilarities in diction, spelling, grammar and pronunciation.

Based on the explanation above about previous research on the analysis of British and American accents, all of these studies were conducted by examining students' perceptions of the two accents. However, the gap between this research and the previous one is that this research only focuses on collecting data on a video from social media, namely YouTube. This aligns with this aim of the research to find the phonological between British and to find out the phonological American accents of the contestants of the national public speaking competition in 2017. This approach will provide insights into how these accents are represented and understood in more dynamic and interactive media, reflecting real-world usage and relevant linguistic trends. This research will enhance our understanding of accent differences in popular media, contributing to more effective language learning and teaching strategies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *1.1. Sociolinguistic*

Sociolinguistic is the formal structure of language in linguistics and the structure of society in sociology. In the realm of sociolinguistics, it investigates the relationship between language and society, connecting two subjects that can be studied separately (Wardhaugh, 2006). Moreover, according to Bram and Dickey (1986: 146) define **sociolinguistics** as a field that focuses on examining the role of language within society. They emphasize that sociolinguistics aims to elucidate how individuals adeptly apply language principles in diverse social contexts. This means that sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society, exploring how language varies and changes in different social situations.

The field of sociolinguistics encompasses several key dimensions that are crucial to understanding the complex interplay between language and society. These dimensions include the social identity of the speaker, the social identity of the listeners involved in the communication process, the social environment where the speech event occurs, the synchronic and diachronic analysis of social dialects, the different social valuations by speakers and the behavior of speech forms, the degree of linguistic variation and variety, and the practical application of sociolinguistic research (Dittmar, 1983).



Firstly, the social identity of the speaker plays a significant role in shaping language use. Factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status can influence the linguistic choices individuals make in various social contexts. Secondly, the social identity of the listeners involved in the communication process also impacts language use. This dimension considers how individuals interpret and respond to linguistic cues based on their own social identities and perceptions. Language variation and communication style may differ based on the social characteristics of the audience, leading to code-switching or accommodation to facilitate effective communication. Synchronic and diachronic analyses of social dialects examine the temporal dimensions of language variation, considering both contemporary and historical linguistic patterns. This analysis involves studying the choice of dialect in relation to the social status of its users, as well as the evolution of language over time within specific social groups.

In its conclusion that Sociolinguistics provides a comprehensive understanding of how language operates in social contexts, highlighting the complex relationship between linguistic practices and social factors. Through the study of language variation, code switching, identity, power dynamics, and pragmatics, sociolinguistics offers valuable insights into the complexities of language use in society.

## ***1.2. Accent***

Accents play a crucial role in shaping our identities and how we are perceived by others. (Swan & Smith, 2001)) define accent as a form of speech that varies from other forms in terms of pronunciation, including intonation. This variation in pronunciation serves to identify a speaker concerning their regional origin, social status, and potentially their ethnicity. In simpler terms, an accent is how a person speaks, including the specific sounds and patterns of speech that can indicate where they come from and their social background.

A key aspect of the importance of accents lies in their role in shaping cultural identity. Accents often reflect a person's regional or national origins, and they also contribute to a sense of belonging and heritage. As noted by Smith accent is closely linked to a person's cultural and social identity, which influences how they are perceived within their community and beyond (Smith, 2009). Therefore, accent is not just a matter of speech patterns, but also a reflection of one's cultural heritage and sense of belonging.

## ***1.3. Kind Of Accent***

An accent is a pronunciation style that is distinctive to a specific individual, locality, or nation and might identify the speaker's geographical region, socioeconomic status, or first language (Major & Crystal, 1992)

### **a. Regional Accent**

Regional accents can reveal one's origins within a country, such as the differences between American, British, and Australian British accents (Wells, 1982). Within a



country, there may be other differences; for example, in the United States, Southern, Midwestern, and New York accents are unique.

b. Social Accent

Social accents represent an individual's financial position or educational background and are frequently related with preconceptions or social judgements (Trudgill, 1974) For example, in the United Kingdom, Received Pronunciation is generally associated with better social status and education (Hughes, Trudgill, & Watt, 2012).

c. First Language

Accents can also show first language impact, commonly known as a foreign accent, when a person's original language influences how they pronounce a second language (Major, 2001). Because the phonetic and phonological systems of the two languages differ, a native Spanish speaker may pronounce English with a distinct Spanish accent (Flege, 1995)

Moreover, according (Birner, 2017) that there are two types of kind of accent, here are following:

a. Foreign Accent

In this terms, the human who doing code-switching occurs when an individual incorporates linguistic rules or sounds from a different language into their speech. For instance, when grappling with pronunciation challenges in a new language, a person might instinctively substitute similar sounds from their native language. Consequently, the influence of their first language's accent can permeate their speech in the second language, resulting in a "foreign" intonation that may be difficult for native speakers to comprehend, leading them to perceive it as incorrect.

b. Native Accent

The type of accent a person has is simply a reflection of how a group of individuals speaks their native language. It is influenced and shaped by their geographical location and social affiliations. Individuals who live in close proximity tend to adopt a similar way of speaking, or accent, which may differ from other groups in different locations. When someone listens to another person with a different accent, such as a British accent compared to an American accent, they will notice the distinction in speech patterns. In truth, everyone possesses an accent in the eyes of others.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are several types of accents based on the speaker's geographical area, socio-economic status, or first language. But there are also accent types that are divided into two, namely foreign



accents and native accents. But overall, these accent types are significantly divided within a single language, which illustrates the rich diversity of linguistic expression across different communities and social groups.

#### ***1.4. British and American Accent***

##### ***1.4.1. British English***

The national identity of the British people is influenced by the rich history of the United Kingdom, encompassing England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. While each of these nations boasts its own unique cultural and historical heritage, they are united by a collective British identity that is shaped by political and social cohesion (Colley, 2009) In her influential book delves into the formation of British identity, highlighting how shared historical events including wars, economic transformations, and the propagation of Protestantism have played a pivotal role in uniting the people of Britain.

The English language, as spoken in the United Kingdom, is characterized by a diverse array of regional accents and dialects, which serve as a reflection of the multifaceted nature of British society. According to linguist Peter Trudgill, this linguistic variation is a testament to the rich tapestry of British English, showcasing stark disparities between Received Pronunciation (RP) and regional dialects, each of which offers unique insights into the geographical and social complexity of the UK.

There are several distinctive features of Received Pronunciation (RP), including its non-rhoticity, the elongated "aa" sound, the trap-bath split, and the foot-strut split. Non-rhoticity refers to the phenomenon where the "r" sound is not pronounced, The long "aa" sound is characterized by a prolonged "a" in words like. the trap-bath split is evident in the differing pronunciations of words that has a short "a". Similarly, the foot-strut split is demonstrated by the different pronunciations and lightly more open vowel sound. This distinction is not present in all English accents and is a hallmark of RP and related accents.

##### ***1.4.2. American English***

American English is a variant of the English language spoken in the United States. It includes a variety of regional accents and dialects, which represent the country's immense geographical diversity and complex historical history. Understanding American English entails investigating its phonetic qualities, regional differences, historical development, and importance in international communication. The evolution of American English is inextricably linked to the history of the US. Early settlers brought English from diverse parts of Britain, and these dialects gradually mixed and changed in response to new social and geographical circumstances (Mencken, 1936). Other languages, including Spanish, French, German, and other Native American languages, have also influenced American English, contributing to its





distinct vocabulary and phrases (Romaine, 1998)

One characteristic of American English is that it is rhotic, meaning that the "r" sound is pronounced in all positions, as in the words "car", "hard", and "mother". This rhotic quality contrasts with the non-rhotic accents of some varieties of British English. Additionally, American English often features fluttering "t" and "d" sounds in certain contexts, resulting in similar pronunciations for "butter" and "budder"

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes a descriptive qualitative method to examine the phonological and lexical variations of the contestants of the national public speaking competition in 2017. This method allows researchers to collect data, conduct analysis, and draw thorough conclusions from the research findings. A qualitative approach is a research technique designed to gain in-depth understanding and description of phenomena. This approach emphasizes interpretation, significance, and context (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative descriptive studies aim to provide a comprehensive and detailed summary in everyday language of specific events experienced by individuals or groups (V.A. Lambert, 2012)

The focus of this research is a comprehensive analysis of every pronunciation and vocabulary in the public speaking texts delivered by contestants. Vocabulary and pronunciation in speech are topics of analysis that look at how the use of British and American accents is constructed in public speaking. Data were collected by transcribing spoken content from public speaking events into written text. This process involves listening to recorded speech and accurately converting the spoken words into written format. The transcription process captures nuances of pronunciation, intonation, and speech patterns, providing a detailed textual representation of spoken content. This data is also collected from YouTube, specifically from the "Public Speaking Academy" channel. Two contestants from two different videos were selected for analysis. The first contestant, Jadya Chua, who uses an American accent, is featured in a 4 minute 44 second video. The second contestant, Jacinda Tsen, is featured in a 4 minute 17 minute video.

This research data was collected using a structured approach involving data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions as proposed by Sugiono (2015:2). The initial step involves reducing the data to manage and organize it effectively. This process begins by focusing on the pronunciation of words. Once the data has been reduced, the next step is to display it in a way that makes interpretation and comparison easier. The final step is to draw conclusions from the data displayed. This process requires analysis of the transcribed and displayed data to identify pronunciation patterns and differences between the two speakers.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned at the beginning, this research aims to analyze the phonological of British and to analyze the phonological American accents of the contestants of the national public speaking competition in 2017 which was held by the Public Speaking Academy in 2018.

To answer the first research objective question, the results of the oral-to-written transcripts were further compiled to determine how the British accent pronounces the words found in the first video. The results of the analysis found that there were 160 vocabulary words with beritis pronunciation, but the researchers only presented a few words as examples. The detailed results will be summarized in the following table 1

Vocabularies	Pronunciation (British)
bath	bɑ:θ
laugh	lɑ:f
grass	grɑ:s
dance	dɑ:ns
heart	hɑ:t
half	hɑ:f
barn	bɑ:n
car	kɑ:
father	'fɑ:ðə(r)
grandmother	'græn(d), mʌðə(r)

Based on above, the findings show the existence of the phenomenon of non-rhoticity, long 'a', and differences in the pronunciation of "bath". Analysis of phonetic data reveals that the phenomenon of non-rhoticity can be seen in the pronunciation of words such as "car" kɑ: and "father" fɑ:ðə(r) 'fɑ:ðə(r), where the word-final 'r' is not pronounced, is consistent with Trudgill, (1974) view of the omission of word-final 'r' in some dialects of British English. For example, in "car", the omission of the 'r' at the end of the word indicates a distinctive non-rhotic characteristic.

Furthermore, the long pronunciation of 'a' can be observed in words like "bath" bɑ:θ. bɑ:θ and "laugh" lɑ:f, where 'a' is pronounced as a long vowel, indicates the use of vowel length as a feature of certain dialects (Wells, 1982) Phonological theory states that vowel length can indicate differences in meaning in words, and their use in particular contexts reflects specific dialect variations.





Finally, the difference in the pronunciation of "bath"  $ba:\theta$  with a different pronunciation from the sound 'a' can be interpreted as a manifestation of the 'trap-bath split' phenomenon, indicating a separation between two vowel sounds that originally had the same pronunciation, but then underwent changes in a particular dialect (Watt, 2002). For example, the different pronunciation of the 'a' in "bath" highlights the evolution of vowel sounds in the history of languages and the complex dialectal variations within them. By drawing on an established theoretical framework and relevant works in this field, this research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of phonological variation in British English.

In conclusion, the research offers a multifaceted exploration of British English pronunciation, unveiling key phonological phenomena and their implications for our understanding of linguistic diversity and evolution. Through rigorous analysis and contextualization within established theoretical frameworks, the study enriches scholarly discourse on phonological variation within British English, paving the way for further inquiry into the intricate interplay between historical, social, and geographical factors in shaping linguistic diversity.

Next, to answer the second research objective question, the results of the oral-to-written transcript were further compiled to find out how the English accent pronounces the words in the second video. The results of the analysis found that there were 146 vocabularies whose pronunciation was American English, but the researchers only presented a few words as examples. The detailed results will be summarized in table 2 below

<b>Vocabularies</b>	<b>Peronunciation (American English)</b>
ear	/ɪr/
world	/wɜrlɪd/
dark	/dɑrk/
nature	/'neɪtʃər/
wonder	/'wʌndər/
dare	/dɛr/
for	/fɔr/
glass	/glæs/
over	/'oʊvər/
stand	/stænd/
add	/æd/
want	/wʌnt/



have	/hæv/
what	/wʌt/
lot	/lɑt/
got	/gɑt/
shut	/ʃʌt/
regular	/'rɛgjələr/

From table 2, it can be seen that In the analysis of the American accent, the findings reveal three main phenomena: rhoticity, short 'a', and diphthongated or less pronounced unrounded vowels, as well as back relativity vowels. First, the phenomenon of rhoticity is seen in words like "ear" ɪr and "world" wɜrld, where the 'r' at the end of the word is consistently pronounced, indicating the characteristic rhotic characteristic of the American accent (Labov, 1994). For example, the pronounced 'r' in "world" emphasizes the rhoticity that is a key characteristic of the American accent, distinguishing it from the non-rhotic accents common in some dialects of British English.

Second, the short 'a' pronunciation can be observed in words like "dark" dark and "glass" glæs, which indicates the use of short vowels as a feature of certain dialects. Phonological theory states that vowel length can influence meaning in language, such that the use of short vowels in certain contexts reflects phonological variations typical of the American accent. Furthermore, the phenomenon of diphthongated or ill-defined unrounded vowels, as well as back relativity vowels, can be observed in words such as "nature" 'neɪtʃər and "want" want. In this example, the vowel 'a' in "nature" is diphthongized to [eɪ], whereas in "want" the vowel 'a' is less clear, closer to the back vowel [ɑ], indicating variations in the pronunciation of unrounded vowels in American accents (Labov, 1990) By referring to these phonological phenomena and relating them to existing theories, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the American accent and the phonological variations associated with it.

## CONCLUSION

Following the research objectives, researchers can conclude the results of research conducted on contestants in the 2017 public speaking academy competition. As mentioned above, this research has two objectives. This research aims to analyze how the pronunciation of the British accent and the British American pronunciation are examined from the two contestants' videos.

From the research results it was found that both of them clearly used British and American accents. In studying British and American accents, it can be concluded that both have distinctive phonological characteristics that differentiate them from each other. British accents



tend to be non-rhotic, with the omission of the 'r' at the end of words a key feature, while American accents tend to be rhotic, with the 'r' pronounced clearly. Additionally, in British accents, there is a prominent use of long vowels, such as the long 'a' in , while American accents tend to use short vowels with greater clarity. In addition, American accents often experience diphthongization or reduction of unrounded vowels which can make pronunciation more complex. These differences reflect not only phonological variations in the languages, but also the different histories, geographies, and cultures of the two countries. By understanding these differences, we can enrich our experience in understanding linguistic and cultural diversity around the world.

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## Appendix

### Transcript of Video 1

What is love, and what does it do? Many people think that love is a sweet breath whispering into your ear to make you feel better. Others think that love is someone doing nice things for your happiness. Well, I think that love is many things.

When I was young, I used to think that love meant me saying "I love you" to someone else. I used to think that love meant hugs and kisses and love means smiles. But after all these years in my life, though only 16, I have seen and heard so much that has completely changed my perception of this word known as love.

Love is patience. Love is waiting for your partner, a surgeon at a hospital, working tirelessly and endlessly to save lives. You understand that they may spend more time on their career than on you, but you still wait for them to spend time together, even though it may be short. Love is waiting for your father to come home after a long day at work. You ask him about his day and make him a nice cup of warm tea to soothe his nerves, despite you being so tired and really wanting to sleep. Love is waiting for your child to start talking on her own, despite pressures from your family asking, "Why isn't she talking yet?" But you understand that this child needs time, and you wait for her because you love her. Love is waiting for the small things that truly matter, even if you are naturally impatient.

Love is kindness. Love is taking out a piece of clean tissue from your bag and offering it to a lady who has been crying on the bus non-stop for whatever reason, despite you having social anxiety and finding it hard to talk to others. You give it to her, and that piece of tissue is the last piece you have in your bag for the rest of the day. Love is helping your elderly neighbor to press the lift button because his eyesight is deteriorating, and he can no longer see. You do this for him every time he comes into the lift. Love is lending your two shoulders to your grandmother, who can no longer balance on her two feet and now leans on you for support. Love is going out of your way to help others around you, people that you love, despite you being naturally selfish.

Love is brave. Love is cycling in the rain, braving the storm with one hand holding the umbrella and the other balancing the bike. You do this to deliver your son's bottle to his classroom because he left it at home, and you want him to get enough water for the day. Love is cooking porridge for your sister, who is so sick, weak, and tired to get up from her bed. You are so scared of the fire, yet you do it because you want her to get better. Love is climbing up a ladder against a tree, constantly peeping down because you are so scared of falling, but you continue because you want to save that kitten who has been up there for hours. Love makes you do the bravest things, makes you courageous so that you may be able to make others happier or healthier.



Love is not simple, and it is not just sweet or empty words. Love is complex, and it is the driving force for so many wonderful virtues. Love is what makes an ordinary person extraordinary.

Thank you.

## **Transcript of Video 2**

Friends, judges, countrymen, lend me your ears. The world is a dark place; there are things in this world that shouldn't exist, things that go against our ethics, our morals, our beliefs, things that make us question the very nature of the universe, things that make us wonder why. Why do we exist? Why does justice suffer? But today, I want to talk about one of these things. It's a very controversial topic, but it's what I have to speak out against. Ladies and gentlemen, today I'll be talking about coleslaw.

Coleslaw, that white piece of filth, makes its way onto the plate with fish and chips. That monstrosity dares to serve as a side to fish, the enemy of everything I stand for. Coleslaw is disgusting. I have never once ordered coleslaw on purpose. I don't go up to the guy at KFC and say, "Please, add coleslaw." No, nobody does that. Why would you do it? It's putrid. I would rather crawl over broken glass, use more broken glass, than eat coleslaw.

The Chinese have a saying that directly translates to "putting legs on a snake," and I think that's a fair saying for coleslaw because it adds something unnecessary to a dish that's fine on its own. It's a side dish that messes with the other sides. Just like adding legs to a snake, coleslaw disrupts a perfectly good meal. Why would I want to ruin my meal and make it worse? That just makes no sense.

I know what you're thinking: if I don't like coleslaw that much, why order it? Why eat it? And you're right, why would I do any of those things? Yet, at KFC, I order some chicken, and I get coleslaw on the side. I take a bite out of it and think, "Wow, this is disgusting." It makes me question the point of it. Why would I do that when I have the choice to avoid it? It's my decision to keep coleslaw off my plate and enjoy a delicious piece of chicken without ruining it with coleslaw.

This is how things like offensive language, offensive words, and offensive jokes work. You are the ones giving them the power to affect you, to offend you. If someone makes a joke about race or a sensitive topic and you react strongly, you are giving that topic and that joke all the power to affect you. Ironically, those who want to shut off offensive words from the rest of the world are the ones making them so powerful.

In the end, you have a choice. You can choose to be offended, or you can choose to take it as what it is—a joke. One of my favorite YouTubers once said, "Continue saying what you have to say, and I will continue treating you like a regular human being." The people who put



offensive words and phrases on a pedestal, trying to shield others from them, are making them more detrimental.

There are three things I want you to take away from this speech. Number one, you choose what you want to affect you; that's your choice. Number two, choose the right choice, make the choice that makes you happy. And number three, most importantly, please order coleslaw off your menu.