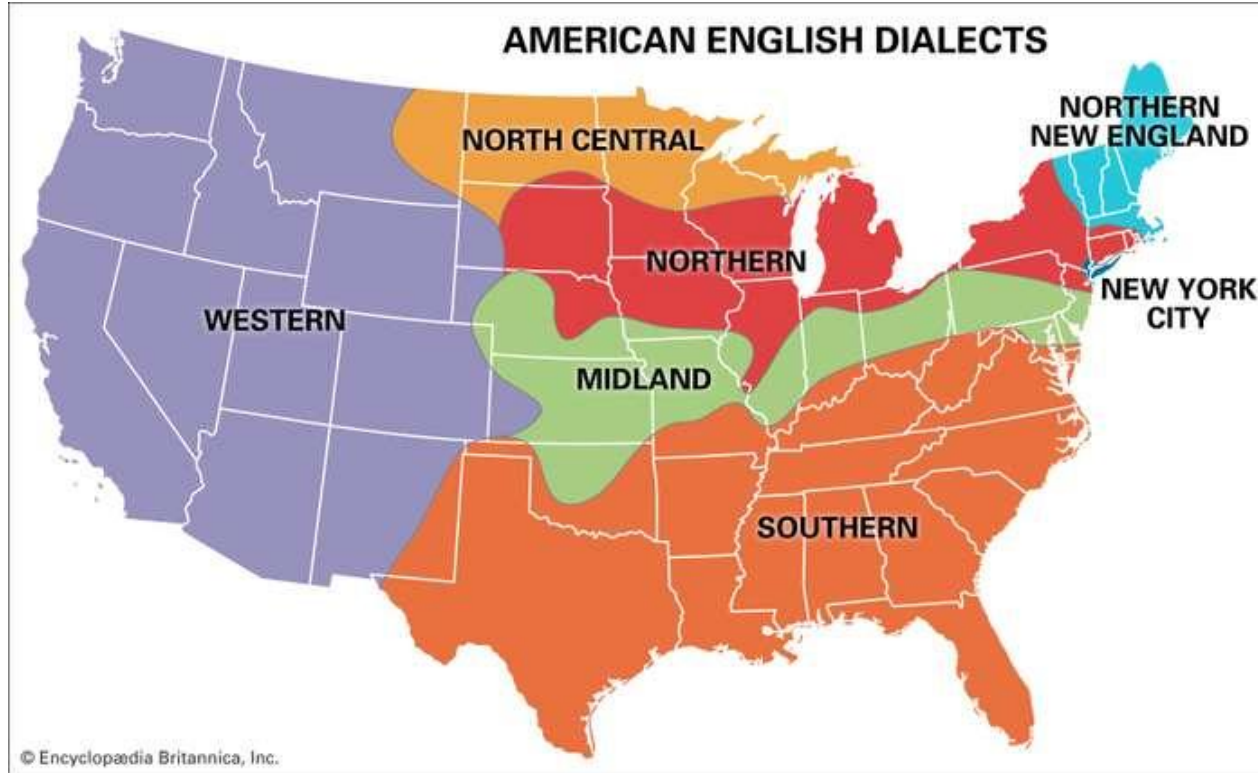

Theoretical Phonetics

— Lecture 9 —

Part 2 American based standard
pronunciation of English

Three dialects can be defined: Northern, Midland, and Southern.



The Northern dialect

is spoken in [New England](#). Its six chief subdialects comprise

- northeastern New England ([Maine](#), [New Hampshire](#), and eastern [Vermont](#)),
- southeastern New England (eastern [Massachusetts](#), eastern [Connecticut](#), and [Rhode Island](#)),
- southwestern New England (western Massachusetts and western Connecticut),
- the inland north (western Vermont and upstate [New York](#)),
- the Hudson Valley, and metropolitan New York.

The Midland dialect

is spoken in the coastal region from Point Pleasant, in [New Jersey](#), to [Dover](#), in [Delaware](#).

Its seven major subdialects comprise

- the Delaware Valley,
- the Susquehanna Valley,
- the Upper Ohio Valley,
- northern [West Virginia](#),
- the Upper Potomac and Shenandoah,
- southern West Virginia and eastern [Kentucky](#),
- western [North Carolina](#) and [South Carolina](#),
- and eastern [Tennessee](#).

The Southern dialect area

covers the coastal region from Delaware to South Carolina.

Its five chief subdialects comprise

- the [Delmarva Peninsula](#),
- the Virginia Piedmont,
- northeastern North Carolina (Albemarle Sound and Neuse Valley),
- Cape Fear and Pee Dee valleys,
- and the South Carolina Low Country, around [Charleston](#).

General American

This refers to the spectrum of ‘standard’ English spoken by newscasters, TV actors, and a large percentage of middle-class Americans.

Prominent Features:

- The *short-a* (as in *cat*) is raised and diphthongized before nasal consonants. Hence *man* and *can't* are pronounced something like IPA **meən** and **keənt** (“meh-uhn” and “keh-uhnt.”)
- *Rhotic*, meaning the *r* is pronounced at the end of words like *car* and *mother*.
- Words like *lot* and *rod* are pronounced with an *unrounded vowel*, as **lat** and **rad** (“laht” and “rahd”).
- The diphthong in words like *boat* and *rode* is pronounced relatively back: i.e. IPA **boot** and **rood**

Accent samples [News Anchor Brian Williams, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sVnogueuRo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sVnogueuRo)

[Doctor and writer Atul Gawande. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iYI6l0MrNc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iYI6l0MrNc)

Eastern New England English

This describes the classic “Boston Accent.” It also refers to related accents in Eastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Eastern New Hampshire and Eastern Connecticut. The most important feature of this is *non-rhoticity*: unlike other American accents, New Englanders drop the “r” at the end of syllables. Hence the famous phrase “pahk yuh cah in hahvuhd yahd” (Park your car in Harvard Yard).

Prominent Features:

- *Non-rhoticity*, as mentioned above.
- Fronted pronunciation of words like *father* and *palm*, so these are pronounced IPA **faðə** and **pa:m** (i.e. this vowel is close to the vowel in words like “cat” and “mad” in General American).
- Unlike most other American accents, the vowel in *lot* and *rod* is rounded as in most British dialects, pronounced IPA **lɒt** and **ɹɒd** (“lawt” and “rawd”). Note that this feature is less prevalent in some sub-dialects, such as Rhode Island.
-

Accent samples : [Boston Mayor Thomas Menino](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LabuH1PnUoo) , <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu-N2FpwGDI&feature=related>
[Maine Governor Paul LePage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu-N2FpwGDI&feature=related) . <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu-N2FpwGDI&feature=related>

New York City English

One of the more famous American accents, the classic “New Yorkese” has been immortalized by films (“Goodfellas,” “Marty,” and “Manhattan,” among countless others), TV shows (“All in the Family,” “Seinfeld,” “King of Queens”) and plays (“A View from the Bridge,” “Lost in Yonkers,” “Guys and Dolls”).

Prominent Features:

- *Non-rhoticity*: see explanation above.
- *Tense-lax split*: this is a bit hard to explain. In New York City the *short-a* in words like *cat*, *mad*, *can't* and *last* follows a complex set of rules whereby some words are pronounced *tensely* (slightly higher in the mouth) while other words are pronounced *laxly* (lower in the mouth).
- The *long-a* in words like *father* and *cart* is often pronounced back and sometimes rounded: i.e. IPA **fʌːðə** and **kɑːt** (“fawthuh” and “kawt”).
- The vowel in words like *thought*, *north* and *dog* are pronounced is high and diphthongized, pronounced IPA **θʊət**, **nɔəθ**, and **dɔəg** (“thaw-uht,” “naw-uht” and “daw-uhg”).
-

Accent Samples:

- [Comedian Rodney Dangerfield](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwZAI07q9v8). - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwZAI07q9v8>
- [Musician Marky Ramone](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Vk2PnJbZHw). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Vk2PnJbZHw>
- [Music Mogul Russell Simmons](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pFcwQbmLso). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pFcwQbmLso>

Mid-Atlantic English

Not to be confused with another meaning of “mid-Atlantic English” that describes the old-fashioned British-sounding accents you hear in movies from the 1930s. This “Mid-Atlantic” refers to the American accents spoken along the urban corridor from the Philadelphia area to Baltimore. It sounds slightly similar to New York City, but with a few major differences.

Prominent Features:

- *Tense-lax split*, similar to New York City (see explanation above).
- *Rhotic*: unlike New York City, the *r* is pronounced at the end of *car*, *mother*, *fur*, etc.
- The vowel in *long-a* words like *father* and *palm* is often back and rounded (i.e. “fawther,” “pawm,” etc.) as in New York City.
- As in New York City, the vowel in *thought* and *dog* is pronounced with a high vowel. In the Mid-Atlantic, this tends to be further back: IPA **θoət** and **doəg** (“thoh-ut” and “doh-ug”).
- The diphthong in words like *right* and *kite* is raised before *voiceless consonants* so that *kite* is pronounced something like IPA **kəit** (that is, “kuh-eet”).
- The diphthong in words like *goat* and *road* is pronounced fronter in the mouth than in General American accents: hence *coat* becomes IPA **kəot**.
- The “oo” sounds in words like *goose* and *food* is pronounced more forward in the mouth than in General American: IPA **gus** and **fud**.

Accent Samples:

- [TV presenter Chris Matthews](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLIasbt_oxE) (from Philadelphia). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLIasbt_oxE
- [TV writer/producer David Simon](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wsMEeoXXOY&feature=related) (from Baltimore). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wsMEeoXXOY&feature=related>

Inland/Mountain Southern

This is the other Southern dialect, sometimes perceived as more guttural. You hear this accent amongst Appalachian natives, Texans, Tennesseans and many others.

Prominent Features:

- *Pin-pen merger:* This means that words ending in *-in*, *-en*, *-im* and *-em* are pronounced with the same vowel (this why when somebody from this region says “Ben” is sounds a bit like “bin” to a Northerner.)
- *Vowel breaking:* This means that in words with short vowels like *cat* and *dress*, these vowels can turn into diphthongs (or even triphthongs). So *cat* can become IPA **kæjət** for example (i.e. “ka-jut”).
- The vowel in words like *thought* and *dog* is diphthongized, as in Coastal/Lowland Southern, although here it tends to be a lower: IPA **aʊ**.
- The *oo* sound in *goose* is more fronted than in General American accents: IPA **gus**.
- The long-o in words like *goat* is also more fronted than in General American (as in Midatlantic English, described above).
- The diphthong in words like *ride* and *right* tends to be a monophthong, : i.e. IPA **ɹa:d** and **ɹa:m**.

Accent Sample: [Tennessee governor Bill Haslam](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8G5hcUoispg&feature=related). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8G5hcUoispg&feature=related>