

# Transcribing foreign-accented English

UT Dallas

Phonetics SPAU 3343

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# Background

- L1 influences on L2, or “foreign accent”
- Affected by many factors:
  - Subject’s age, verbosity, linguistic experience, intellect, motivation, social situation
  - Constraints from speech perception  
... and production

# Things to consider when transcribing

- Foreign accents are complex
- GAE sounds may be better realized in certain contexts than others (initial/medial/final; stressed vs. unstressed)
- Suprasegmental patterns will play a large role (phonemic length, tone, syllable vs. stress-timing, etc.)

# A sample corpus – “Mary passage”

- *Mary is only five and she loves to play in the water. This morning she got so dirty that I heard her mother call her in to take a bath. It was very early for I was still boiling water for my coffee. Also, there was still a little fog. After a while, however, Mary came across the path into my yard and sat down with me to eat an orange. As I had my second cup of coffee, I asked her if she had been bad. “No,” she said, “the dog had been the one.” He had gotten her so dirty she couldn’t brush it off.*



(GAE)

# Sample GAE transcription

Mary is only five and she loves to play in the water.

[ 'mɛɹɪ ɪz ɔ̃nli faɪv / ænʃɪ 'lʌvz tʰə pʰleɪ ɪn ðə wɔːtə /

This morning she got so dirty

/ ðɪs 'mɔːnɪŋ ʃi gɔtso 'dɜːtɪ /

that I heard her mother call her in

/ ðæt aɪ hɜd hɜ 'mʌðə kɔlɜr ɪn /

to take a bath.

[ tʰə tʰekʰə 'bæθ // ]



# Example: Russian accent



*Mary is only five and she loves to play in the water. This morning she got so dirty that I heard her mother call her in to take a bath. It was very early for I was still boiling water for my coffee. Also, there was still a little fog. After a while, however, Mary came across the path into my yard and sat down with me to eat an orange. As I had my second cup of coffee, I asked her if she had been bad. “No,” she said, “the dog had been the one.” He had gotten her so dirty she couldn’t brush it off.*

# Russian: Narrow Transcription

Mary is only five and she loves to play in the water.

[// 'mjɛɪ | ɪs ɔ̃nlɪ 'faɪf | æn 'ʃi lʌvs tʰu pʰlɛ ɪnɔ̃ɪ wɔtʰɐ |



This morning she got so dirty

'ðɪs mɔɾnɪ̃n | ʃi 'gɔt | sɔ 'dɪrtɪ |



that I heard her mother call her

ʰætʌɪ hɪr hɪr mʌðr | kʰɔt hɪr |



in to take a bath.

'ɪntʌ | 'tʰekə bɛθ // ]



“How do I know what sounds (s)he made?”

- Listen
- Research the talker’s native language (L1)

# Sources

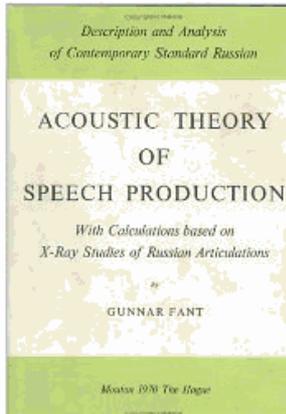
..from our  
text materials...

## *UCLA Phonetics Lab data*

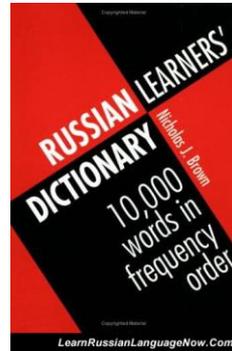
| Russian |           |             |                     |
|---------|-----------|-------------|---------------------|
| Plain   |           | Palatalized |                     |
| forma   | 'form'    | f'erma      | 'farm'              |
| vitʲ    | 'to howl' | vʲitʲ       | 'to weave'          |
| sok     | 'juice'   | sʲok        | 'he lashed'         |
| zof     | 'call'    | zʲof        | 'gawn'              |
| pakt    | 'pact'    | pʲatʲ       | 'five'              |
| bil     | 'he was'  | bʲil        | 'to strike'         |
| tot     | 'that'    | tʲotʲa      | 'aunt'              |
| domə    | 'at home' | dʲomə       | (name)              |
| kufatʲ  | 'to eat'  | kʲufʲetʲkə  | 'dish'              |
| mal     | 'little'  | mʲal        | 'crumple'           |
| nos     | 'nose'    | nʲos        | 'he carried'        |
| lof     | 'catch'   | lʲɛf        | 'lion'              |
| rasə    | 'race'    | rʲiasə      | 'priest's<br>frock' |

Russian is an Indo-European language (Balto-Slavic branch) spoken in the former USSR by over 150 million people.

Russian contrasts plain and palatalized consonants. Contrasting pairs are illustrated here in word-initial position.



# Books, websites



**UCLA Language Materials Project**  
TEACHING RESOURCES FOR LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES

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To display one of these records in full form click on the "View" button to the right of the record you wish to view.  
To sort, click on "Author", "Title" or "Year".

| Author  | Title   | Year                      |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| Switidka-Cernanek, Maria                                    | Russian Poetry Reader   | 2007 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Parker, Philip M.   | Webster's Online Dictionary with Multilingual Thesaurus Translation | 2007 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Ager, Simon   | Omniglot: A Guide to Writing Systems                                | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
|   | Quia  | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
|   | Unizang   | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Robin, Richard; Becegergenova, Natalia                      | NCLRC Russian Webcasts  | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Vinogradov, Dmitry; Vinogradova, Eleonora; Sergeev, Mikhail | When doing business in Russia... It Pays to Speak Russian! [C0]     | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Kashner, Mara; Kagan, Olga; Morozova, Yulya                 | Cinema for Russian Conversation [2]                                 | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Thompson, Della   | Oxford Beginner's Russian Dictionary                                | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Froehlich, Christopher                                      | The Complete Idiot's Guide to Learning Russian                      | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |
| Kaufman, Andrew   |   | 2006 <a href="#">View</a> |

## Welcome to PHOIBLE

PHOIBLE is a repository of cross-linguistic phonological inventory data, which have been extracted from source documents and tertiary databases and compiled into a single searchable convenience sample. Release 2.0 from 2019 includes 3020 inventories that contain 3183 segment types found in 2186 distinct languages.

A bibliographic record is provided for each source document; note that some languages in PHOIBLE have multiple entries based on distinct sources that disagree about the number and/or identity of that language's phonemes.

Two principles guide the development of PHOIBLE, though it has proved challenging both theoretically and technologically to abide by them:

1. Be faithful to the language description in the source document (now often called 'doculect', for reasons indicated above)
2. Encode all character data in a consistent representation in Unicode IPA

In addition to phoneme inventories, PHOIBLE includes distinctive feature data for every phoneme in every language. The feature system used was created by the PHOIBLE developers to be descriptively adequate cross-linguistically. In other words, if two phonemes differ in their graphemic representation, then they necessarily differ in their featural representation as well (regardless of whether those two phonemes coexist in any known doculect). The feature system is loosely based on the feature system in [Hayes 2009](#) with some additions drawn from [Moisik & Esling 2011](#).

However, the final feature system goes beyond both of these sources, and is potentially subject to change as new languages are added in subsequent editions of PHOIBLE.

The data set also includes additional genealogical and geographical information about each language from [Glottolog](#).

# One web resource

- Speech accent archive (George Mason University)
- Gives sound files of foreign accents and regional American accents for a short read English corpus
- A rather broad transcription is also provided for each case
- <http://accent.gmu.edu>



# the speech *accent* archive

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There are 29 result(s) for your search.

[russian1](#), male, nizhni novgorod, russia

[russian2](#), female, izmail, russia

[russian3](#), female, zaporizhzhya, ukraine

[russian4](#), female, moscow, russia

[russian5](#), female, khabarovsk, russia

[russian6](#), female, moscow, russia

[russian7](#), female, kiev, ukraine

[russian8](#), male, moscow, russia



# the speech *accent* archive



how to browse search resources about

language/ speakers

russian

atlas/ regions

native phonetic inventory

## Biographical Data

birth place: nizhni

novgorod, russia (map)

native language: russian

(rus)

other language(s): none

age, sex: 37, male

age of english onset: 36

english learning method:

academic

english residence: usa

length of english

residence: 1 years

## russian / Elicitation Paragraph:



Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station.

Key:

blue = potential areas for this generalization

red = actual areas for this generalization

## Phonetic Transcription:

[plʰɪs kɔlʲ stɛlɐ æsk hʲɪ tu  
bʲɪŋk zɪs θɪŋs wɪθ hʲɪ fɪɐm ðe  
stɔɪ sɪks spʊns ɒf fɹɛʃ sno pi:s  
faɪf θɪk sleps ɒv blu tʃɪs and  
meɪbi ə snek fɔɪ hʲɪ brʌðəɪ  
bɒp vɪ elʲso nɪt ə smɔl plæstɪk  
snek ænd bɪk tɔɪ fɔɪ fɹɔk fɔɪ  
zə kɪts ʃɪ kæn skʊpʲ zɪs ʃɪŋks  
ɪntu θɪɪ tɛt bæks ænd vɪ vɪlʲ go  
nɪt hʲɪ wende tɛt zə tuen  
stɛʃə n]

## Generalizations about

Clear

Consonant:

- final obstruent devoicing
- interdental fricative to stop
- w to labial fricative
- palatalization

Vowel:

- vowel shortening
- vowel raising

Syllable Structure:

# Another web resource

- IDEA
- <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/>
- Paul Meier, Dylan Paul
- VASTA (Voice and Speech Trainers Association)

## EXAMPLE: ITALY #23

BIO:

FEMALE /BRINDISI, ITALY/ STUDENT/  
BACHELOR'S DEGREE

STUDENT HAS NEVER LIVED OUTSIDE OF  
ITALY.

RAISED IN BRINDISI, SPENT SIX YEARS  
IN TURIN.

RECORDED: 2/04/07



# Sample spoken corpus



*“I was born in Brindisi, a town located in the southeast area of Italy. I have a two wonderful parents and a wonderful big brother that I look up to. I’ve lived in Torino for six years. I went to college there, where I majored in psychology.”*

*(47 words)*

# Translation posted at IDEA site

/aɪ wɒz bɔrn ɪn 'brɪŋ.dɪ.si ɛ tʌʊn 'lɒ.keɪ.tɪd ɪn ðə sʌʊf ɪst 'e.ɪə ov  
'i.tɛ.li / aɪ ɛv tu 'wɛŋ.dɛr.fʊl 'pɔ.rents ɛŋd ɛ 'wɛŋ.dɛr.fʊl bɪg 'brɛ.dɛɪ ðɛt aɪ luk ɛp tu aɪv  
lɪvd ɪn tɔ.'ri.ŋo fɔə sɪks 'i.əs aɪ wɛŋ.'tu 'kɒ.lɛdʒ ðɛɪ weɪ aɪ me.'jɔɪd ɪn psi.'kɒ.lɒ.dʒi

# Let' start...broad



- Suggestions:
  1. Type out the gloss in large font with extra spacing
  2. Do first pass in broad transcription

/ || aɪ wəz bɔːn ɪn brɪndɪsi ə taʊn lɒkətɪd ɪn ðə saʊθ ɪst aɪə əv ɪtəli /

"I was born in Brindisi, a town located in the southeast area of Italy"

# → Add detail



- Include metrical (pause) marks, lexical stress and tonic stress
- Listen for juncture

/ || aɪ wəz ,bɔ:n ɪn 'brɪndɪsi | ə 'taʊn ,ləʊkətɪd ɪn ðə | 'saʊθ 'ɪst ,ɑ:ɪə | əv 'ɪtəli /

“I was born in Brindisi, a town located in the southeast area of Italy”

## → More detail (narrow)

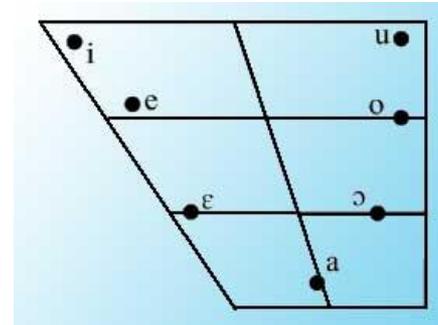
- Different quality of vowels and consonants
- Use background research to help

/ ɪ | wəz | 'bɔ:n | ɪn | ,brɪndɪsi | | ə | 'taʊn | ,ləkeɪtɪd | ɪn | ðə | | 'sʌθ | 'ɪst | ,ɑ:ɪə | | əv | 'ɪtəli | /

“I was born in Brindisi, a town located in the southeast area of Italy”

# IPA charts - Italian

| Italian Consonant Sounds |          |              |                 |               |         |       |
|--------------------------|----------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|-------|
|                          | Bilabial | Labio-dental | Dental-Alveolar | Post-Alveolar | Palatal | Velar |
| Nasal                    | m        |              | n               |               | ɲ       |       |
| Plosive                  | p b      |              | t̪ d̪           |               |         | k g   |
| Affricate                |          |              | tʃ dʒ           |               |         |       |
| Fricative                |          | f (v)        | s z             | ʃ             |         |       |
| Trill                    |          |              | r               |               |         |       |
| Lateral                  |          |              | l               |               | ʎ       |       |
| Approximant              |          |              |                 |               | j       | w     |



- Except /z/, all consonants after a vowel and before /r/, /l/, a vowel or a semivowel may be geminated
- Stressed vowels are long in non-final open syllables: *fato* ['fa:to], *fatto* ['fatto]

# Let's work on sections

- [aɪ wəz ˌbɔːn ɪn ˈbrɪndɪsi]



- I was born in Brindisi

- ə ˈtaʊn ˌloʊkətɪd ɪn ðə ˈsaʊθ ˈiː ˌɑːiə



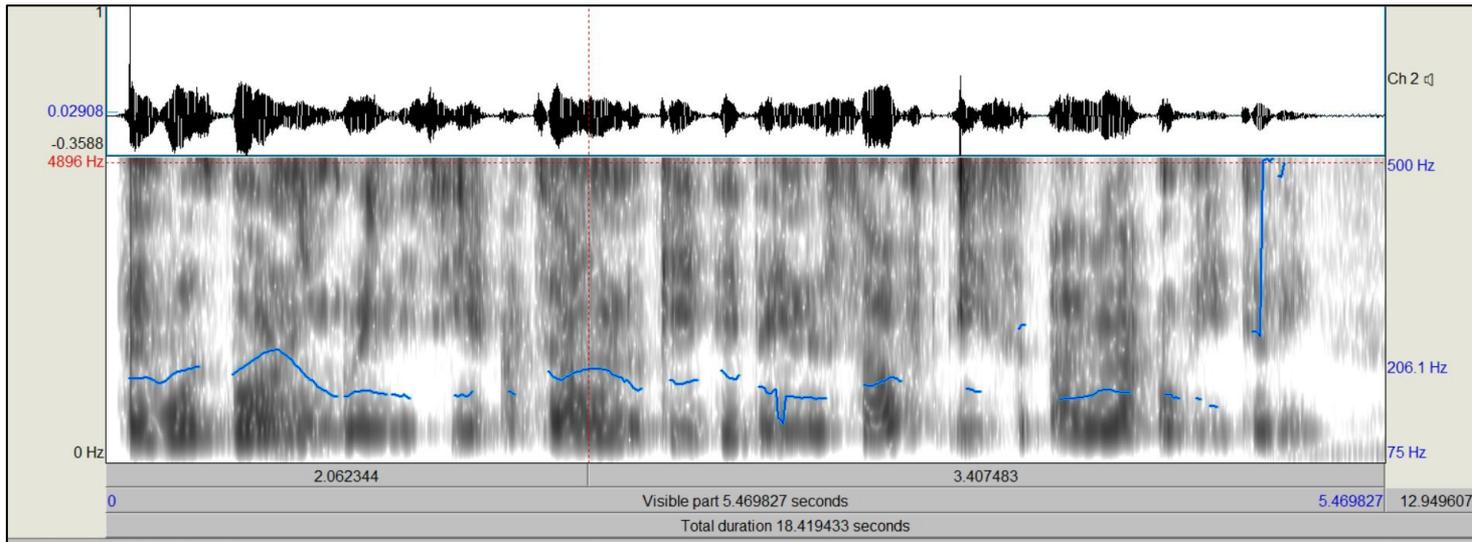
- a town located in the south east area

of ˈɪtəli



- of Italy

# TIPS: PRAAT CAN HELP WITH PROSODY



“I was born in Brindisi, a town located in the southeast area of Italy”

Check our online resources for  
a PDF giving specific info on  
how to use PRAAT for your  
final project!