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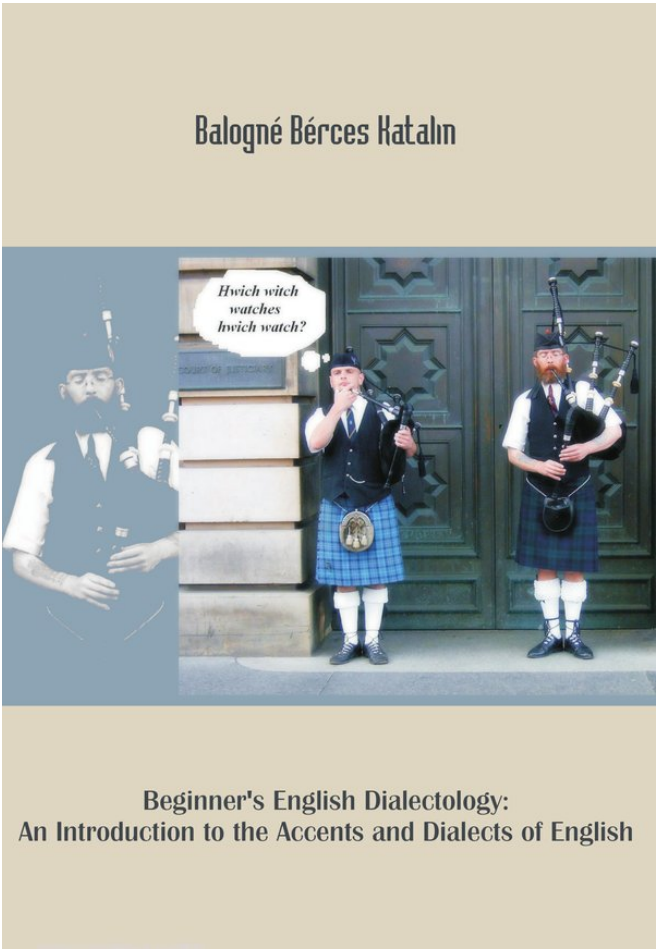


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**A könyv adatai:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Szerző: | Balogné Bérces Katalin |
| Cím: | Beginner's English Dialectology. An Introduction to the Accents and Dialects of English |
| Kiadás: | Ad Librum Kiadó |
| Kiadási év: | 2008 |
| ISBN: | 978-963-9888-44-9 |
| Terjedelem: | 129 oldal |
| Méret: | A5 |
| Ár: | 1990 Ft |
| Közvetlen vásárlás: | shop.adlibrum.hu |

**Balogné Bérces Katalin**

# BEGINNER'S ENGLISH DIALECTOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ACCENTS AND DIALECTS OF ENGLISH

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ISBN: 978-963-9888-44-9

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# Foreword and acknowledgements

This coursebook has emerged from a series of seminar handouts and my notes from various readings, which I gradually collected as teaching material to be used in the one-term elective dialectology seminar I started as an experiment at the Department of English, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, in spring 2006. It immediately turned out that my initial conception that this topic is very much in demand among the students was right: the course continued to be considerably popular in the terms to come. It soon became evident that we needed a coursebook which suited both our purposes and the circumstances we were working under: a coherent text written for a non-native audience, available in Hungary, and meant to be covered in one term (cca. 12 weeks). That was the motivation driving me to start compiling this material at the beginning of 2007. Its construction has been just as gradual as the collection of its sources: a number of draught versions have been tested in subsequent classes, whose members I owe gratitude for being the involuntary guinea pigs. In addition, special thanks should go to Kinga Földváry, who enthusiastically supplied me with sample material from the very beginning, who took up the teaching for two terms when I was not around, and who, as a consequence, found herself one fine day in the role of tester and proof-reader for this text, too. I am also grateful to my reviewers, András Cser and Patrick Honeybone, for their invaluable comments, and a whole lot of people who sent me photos to be used as illustrations in the book, kindly relinquishing copyright: (in alphabetical order) Melinda Dickerson (Mount Rushmore), Zsófia Ferencz (U.S. Capitol), Orsolya Hubert (Ireland), László Kristó (Wales), Andrea Laczay (skyscrapers in San Francisco), Dávid Palatinus (Sydney Opera House, Parliament House in Canberra), Károly Pintér (Statue of Liberty, cable car in San Francisco), Csaba Seregélyes (Canada) (and a few others, whose photos could not eventually find their way into the final version). The rest of the illustrations and maps were produced by myself.

The coursebook is supposed to be suitable for its primary target audience, advanced (especially BA) students of English, who have a pretty good command of (standard) English and some background knowledge of English pronunciation and grammatical terminology. The first half of the book surveys the major regional dialects of English, in comparison to the standard varieties. It concentrates on pronunciation differences for at least two reasons. First, the topic of the book is too wide for a single coursebook to be covered in 12 weeks, so it must be narrowed down somehow – the choice strongly reflects my own taste. Second, pronunciation is the very area where the differences are the most common and systematic. Consequently, the discussion is quite heavily loaded with phonetic terminology – the brief introduction entitled *Symbols used in the book*, immediately following this *Foreword*, is meant to clarify the interpretation of the most frequent special characters found in the text.

Then, the second half of the book takes the differences between Standard British English and Standard American English under scrutiny: besides pronunciation, we also discuss vocabulary, grammar and spelling differences in considerable detail. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the text of the book itself is written consistently according to the regularities of British English grammar and orthography.

Each chapter concludes with questions and exercises for revision and practice, a list of recommended further reading and of the references in the text, and, finally, a (not in the least exhaustive) list of electronic links, some of which may be far from academic in their content but still, they may motivate the students to do further browsing and research. At the end of the book an appendix is found entitled *Pronunciation of names and technical terms* (containing the expressions marked with an asterisk * in the text) followed by the *Subject index* (containing the **boldfaced** expressions), both of which are supposed to help the reader.

As can be guessed from the acknowledgements above, the book is full of illustrations: maps, drawings, photos. In most cases they are closely connected to the topic they accompany, but some of them are just there to interrupt the monotony of the text. I hope the reader will find the discussions informative, and the illustrations entertaining.

Katalin Balogné Bérces
December 2008

# Symbols used in the book

The coursebook consistently uses the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), more specifically, its version which was compiled to describe English by A.C. Gimson. This is the transcription system employed in several dictionaries including *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (4th or later edition) and *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. Here follows a brief intoduction to these symbols and the sounds they represent.

The vowels of standard English are either monophthongs (with one vowel quality, like all the vowels of standard Hungarian) or diphthongs (with two vowel qualities combined). In the charts below keywords are used to identify the vowel phonemes (following the practice introduced in John C. Wells (1982) *Accents of English* – throughout this book, such keywords will be typed in CAPITAL letters).

First, the monophthongs of standard British English can be classified as front (pronounced in the front of the oral cavity) or back (pronounced in the back of the oral cavity) or central (pronounced in the middle); as high (or close) (with the tongue body in a high position, close to the palate) or low (or open) (with the tongue body in a low position and the mouth open) or mid (in the middle); as rounded or unrounded (with or without lip-rounding); as short (indicated by just a single symbol) or long (with a colon [ː] after the basic symbol), in the following way:

| | Front | Central | Back | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | unrounded | unrounded | unrounded | rounded |
| High/ close | [iː] FLEECE | - | - | [uː] GOOSE |
| | [ɪ] KIT | - | - | [ʊ] FOOT |
| Mid | [e] DRESS | [ə] COMMA<br>[ɜː] NURSE | - | [ɔː] THOUGHT/ NORTH |
| Low/ open | [æ] TRAP | [ʌ] STRUT | [ɑː] BATH/ START | [ɒ] LOT |

The vowel at the end of COMMA has a name of its own: schwa.

The diphthongs of standard British English can be classified according to their second terms as fronting, centring and backing:

| Fronting | Centring | Backing |
|---|---|---|
| [eɪ] FACE | [ɪə] NEAR | [əʊ] GOAT |
| [aɪ] PRICE | [eə] SQUARE | [aʊ] MOUTH |
| [ɔɪ] CHOICE | [ʊə] CURE | |

The consonants of English can be classified as labial (pronounced with the lips), coronal (pronounced with the tongue), velar (pronounced near the soft palate in the back of the oral cavity) or glottal (produced by the vocal cords only); as stops or fricatives (with or without the stopping of the airflow), affricates (with stops and fricatives combined), nasals (with the air coming out through the nose) or approximants (with just a slight approximating movement); as voiced or voiceless (with or without vocal cord vibration):

| | Stop | | Fricative | | Affricate | | Nas | Appr |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | v-ed | v-less | v-ed | v-less | v-ed | v-less | voiced | |
| La | [b] bit | [p] pit | [v] vine | [f] five | | | [m] me | [w] wet |
| Co | [d] did | [t] tip | [ð] this<br>[z] zoo<br>[ʒ] beige | [θ] thin<br>[s] sea<br>[ʃ] she | [dʒ] jet | [tʃ] chat | [n] nice | [l] let<br>[r] run<br>[j] yet |
| Ve | [g] get | [k] key | | | | | [ŋ] sing | |
| Gl | | | | [h] hot | | | | |

Of these consonants, the TH-sounds ([θ ð]), often referred to as interdentals (because they involve the insertion of the tongue tip between the upper and lower front teeth), are worth special attention as they are frequently replaced by other consonants in non-standard Englishes.

Finally, throughout the book two types of brackets are used: phonetic transcriptions are given in square brackets [ ], while spelling (also called orthography*) is separated from the commentary by angle brackets < >.

The very brief description above introduced the most frequent symbols used in the rest of the book – less frequent characters are explained within the running text upon first mention.

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