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Dialectal variation in English meets laryngeal typology

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Aims

- binary laryngeal obstruent systems, e.g., **b~p** (voiced~voiceless) and **pʰ~b̥** (fortis~lenis)
- **phonetic** similarities/differences vs. **phonological** categorisation
- laryngeal **phonology** is limited -> three types
- in language typology / in accent variation
- accents of English exemplify all three
- why exactly three? -> represented in a model based on unary subsegmental primes

Two-way laryngeal contrasts in obstruents

Examples	**p ~ b̥**	**b**	**pʰ**	**p’**
English, German, Welsh, Mandarin Chinese	[ ]		[sg]	
French, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Dutch	[ ]	[voice]		
K'ekchi (Q'eqchi'), Mam	[ ]			[cst gl]

Two-way laryngeal contrasts in obstruents: VOT

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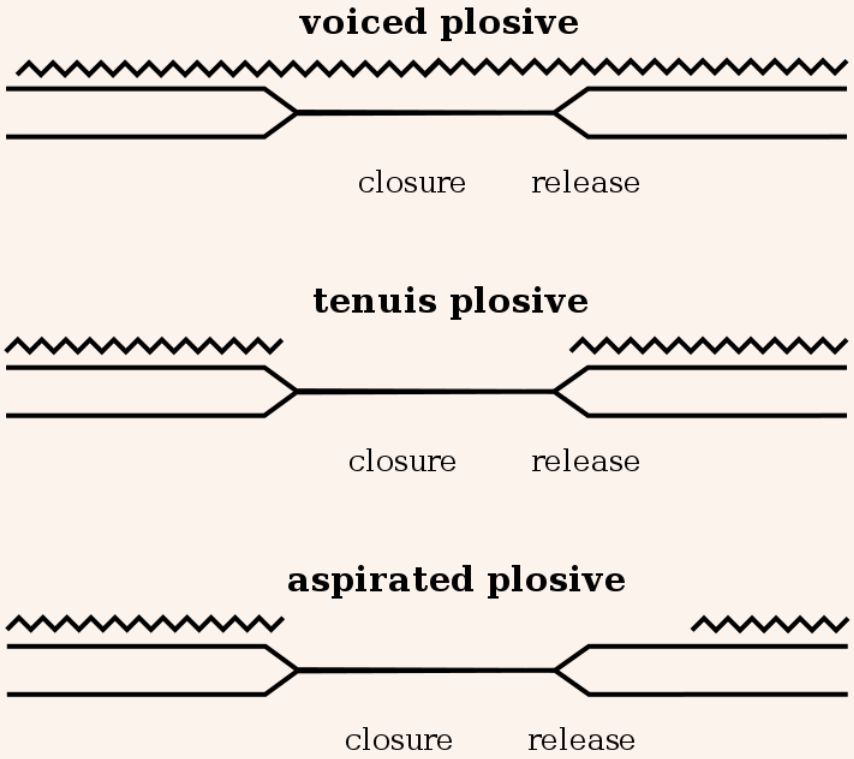

Two-way laryngeal contrasts in obstruents: VOT

Examples	p ~ b̥	b	pʰ
English, German, Welsh, Mandarin Chinese	[ ]		[sg]
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+ three- and four-way contrasts (Thai, Korean; Hindi)

Two-way laryngeal contrasts in obstruents: VOT

(Honeybone 2005, Iverson & Salmons 2008, etc.)

Examples	p ~ b̥	b	pʰ
English, German, Welsh, Mandarin Chinese	[ ]		[sg]
French, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Dutch	[ ]	[voice]	

- unmarked vs. marked
- aspiration languages (lenis/fortis) vs. voice languages (voiceless/voiced)

Two-way laryngeal contrasts in obstruents: VOT

(Honeybone 2005, Iverson & Salmons 2008, etc.)

Examples	p ~ b̥	b	pʰ
English, German, Welsh, Mandarin Chinese	[ ]		[sg]
French, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Dutch	[ ]	[voice]	

- [sg] = [asp] = H
- [voice] = L

(this interpretation of H/L in Government Phonology since Harris 1994)

- unmarked: passive voicing (in aspiration lang. only)

English-type vs. Hung-type lang's

- the difference is primarily **phonological**: two totally different phonological mechanisms
  - in voice lang's the [voice] feature is phonologically active (-> voice assimilation processes (RVA))
  - in aspiration lang's no signs of any laryngeal activity are detectable: no spreading due to the absence of a laryngeal prime (cf. Huber & Balogné Bérces 2010 and elsewhere)

The absence of laryngeal activity

ob̲tain [əb̥ˈtʰeɪn]	*matchb̲ox* [ˈmætʃb̥ɒks]
chees̲ecake [ˈtʃiːz̥kʰeɪk]	*baseb̲all* [ˈb̥eɪsb̥ɔːɬ]
bigfoot [ˈb̥ɪg̊fʊt]	*cookb̲ook* [ˈkʰʊkb̥ʊk]
egghead [ˈeg̊hed̥]	*life gear* [ˈlaɪfg̊ɪə(r)]
road̲ster [ˈrəʊd̥stə(r)]	*Shoot b̲ack!* [ˈʃuːt ˈb̥æk]

English: *ma̲tch* [-tʃ] + *b̲ox* [b̥-] -> *ma̲tchb̲ox* [-tʃb̥-]
vs. **Hungarian**: *ma̲tchb̲ox* [-dʒb-] ‘small toy car’
English *ob̲tain* [-b̥tʰ-] vs. **French** *ob̲tenir* [-pt-]

English *chees̲e* [-z̥] vs. *chees̲ecake* [-z̥-] vs. *chees̲es* [-z-]

“RVA languages” (Huszthy 2019)

rabtól [ˈrɒptoːl]	*matchbox* [ˈmɛdʒboks]
rézkarc [ˈreːskɒrts]	*baseball* [ˈbeːzboːl]
hangfal [ˈhɒŋkfɒl]	*tökből* [ˈtøgbøːl]
éghez [ˈeːkhɛz]	*afgán* [ˈɒvgaːn]
roadshow [ˈroːtʃoː]	*kertből* [ˈkɛrdbøːl]
(glosses: 'from prisoner'	(glosses: 'toy car'
'copper etching'	'ibid.'
'loudspeaker'	'from pumpkin'
'to sky'	'Afghan'
'ibid.')	'from garden')

- pre-obstruent delaryngealisation/neutralisation
- producing unmarked obstruents + spreading
- no evidence of active [voicelessness]

But…

- the category of “RVA languages” is not uniform: RVA may be limited:
  a) lenisness/voicedness assimilation only
  b) fortisness/voicelessness assimilation only
- Polish: **Warsaw Polish** (WP) vs. **Cracow Polish** (CP) (Cyran various publications, e.g., 2014)
- identical phonetically but differ phonologically in terms of laryngeal features:
  - WP: “classical” [voice] system (analysed as an “**L**-system” by Cyran)
  - CP: “**H**-system”, with phonologically active **H**

brak [brak] ‘lack’ (cf. *brak-u* [braku] ‘lack, gen.sg.’)

obraz [ɔbras] ‘picture’ (cf. *obraz-u* [ɔbrazu] ‘picture, gen.sg.’) (Cyran 2014: 154)

		WP	*CP*	
a.	brak oceny ‘lack of mark’	[k ɔ]	[g ɔ]	__ V
b.	brak jasności ‘lack of clarity’	[k j]	[g j]	__ S
c.	brak wody ‘lack of water’	[g v]	[g v]	__ C^{+v}
d.	brak pieczątki ‘lack of stamp’	[k p]	[k p]	__ C^{-v}
e.	obraz anioła ‘picture of angel’	[s a]	[z a]	__ V
f.	obraz mistrza ‘picture of master’	[s m]	[z m]	__ S
g.	obraz burzy ‘picture of storm’	[z b]	[z b]	__ C^{+v}
h.	obraz człowieka ‘picture of man’	[s t͡ʃ]	[s t͡ʃ]	__ C^{-v}

- voice assimilation in both WP and CP: **L**-spreading (voicedness assim.) vs. **H**-spreading (voicelessness assim.)
- final obstruent delaryngealisation (FOD)
- CP: **H**-system with unmarked lenis obstruents + passive voicing -> “cross-word pre-sonorant voicing”
- cf. Standard Hungarian vs. Western Dunántúl (Fodor 2003)

Three subtypes of binary laryngeal systems

a) Type A: fortis/lenis; no RVA; the lenis set undergoes passive voicing in sonorant contexts (**no source element**)
   - cf. English *cheesecake*

b) Type B: voicelessness assimilation; the lenis set undergoes passive voicing in sonorant contexts (active **H**)
   - cf. Cracow voicing

c) Type C: voicedness assimilation (active **L**)
   - Warsaw Polish, (Standard) Hungarian

But: RVA without pre-obstruent delaryngealisation?

- in such systems, only the unmarked set is able to receive a spreading feature
- partial RVA systems
- non-standard accents of English ☺

“Yorkshire assimilation”

- certain North-of-England English varieties
- H-system (like Cracow Polish) with no FOD and no POD
- a “simple” devoicing assimilation system with word-internal and cross-word passive voicing of the lenis series

“Yorkshire assimilation”

(Wells 1982: 366-367, data from Honeybone 2011):

jazz	[dʒaz]	*pass*	[pas]
jazz music	[dʒazmjuːzik]	*pass Molly*	[pasmɒlɪ]
jazz band	[dʒazband]	*pass Barry*	[pasbaɹɪ]
jazz dance	[dʒazdans]	*pass Dave*	[pasdeːv]
jazz club	[dʒasklʊb]	*pass Keith*	[paskiːθ]
jazz pub	[dʒaspʊb]	*pass Pete*	[paspiːt]

pass Barry: YE = StE [-sb̥-] (cf. CP/WP [-zb-])

jazz club: YE [-skʰ-] vs. StE [-z̥kʰ-]

Durham English

- Harris (1994: 137-138): fully voiced series in *bin*, *din*, *gun*, contrasting with voiceless unaspirated ones in, e.g., *pin*, *tin*, *kin*
- plus voice assimilation (also cf. Kerswill 1987, Cyran 2014)

top gun	to[b g]un
football	foo[d b]all
pitch black	pi[ǰ b]lack
backbone	ba[g b]one

(Harris 1994: 138)

Great Britain	*Grea*[d b]*ritain*
each deputy	*ea*[dʒ d]*eputy*
this village	*thi*[z v]*illage*

(Kerswill 1987: 42, 44 via Cyran 2014)

- L-system (like Warsaw Polish) with no FOD (like (Standard) Hungarian) but with no POD, either

RP vs. Yorkshire vs. Durham

	RP	*Yorkshire*	*Durham*
white blouse	[tb]	[tb]	[db]
wide shot	[dʃ]	[tʃ]	[dʃ]
ripe beans	[pb]	[pb]	[bb]
drab conditions	[bk]	[pk]	[bk]
black velvet	[kv]	[kv]	[gv]
five votes	[vv]	[vv]	[vv]
rough boys	[fb]	[fb]	[vb]
this village	[sv]	[sv]	[zv]
bad joke	[ddʒ]	[ddʒ]	[ddʒ]
live performance	[vp]	[fp]	[vp]
Bradford	[df]	[tf]	[df]
that night	[tn]	[tn]	[dn]
at last	[tl]	[tl]	[dl]

(note the cross-word pre-sonorant voicing in Durham affecting the unmarked, voiceless obstruents)

Gussenhoven & Jacobs (2011: 196)

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c) Type C: voicedness assimilation (active **L**)
   - Durham
   - Scots

Scots

- **unaspirated** [p, t, k] and (**pre-**)**voiced** [b, d, g] (well-documented); plus:
- **RVA**, e.g. *blackboard* [gb] (Iverson and Salmons 1999: 22-23, via Abercrombie 1967: 136)

"Historically, we suspect that Scots speakers imposed [voice] onto English in displacement of [spread glottis] while still maintaining the standard English laryngeal alternations. As a result, plural *-s* alternates the same way as in other dialects. […] Thus, even though the medial cluster in *blac*[gb]*oard* reveals this dialect's operative laryngeal feature to be [voice], the [spread glottis] patterns of the culturally dominant variety of English are still maintained."

Scots

- Wells (1982: 412 (-413)):

One notices in Scottish English from time to time instances of Voicing Assimilation, thus ['moz 'valjəbl] *most valuable*. (The Elision of the /t/ of *most* before a following consonant is found in virtually all accents of English; but the change from [s] to [z] under the influence of the following voiced /v/ would not happen in most places – perhaps only in Scotland, Trinidad, and Guyana. It is commonplace in the foreigner's English of French people, and there counted an error.) I do not know what phonological, social, or stylistic constraints there may be on the operation of this process.

Conclusion

- the attested dialectal variation in laryngeal phonology is limited to the three categories above
- this limited variation is due to constraints on laryngeal systems which can be modelled with **privative/unary** subsegmental representations in such a way that Type A, B, and C, are respectively derived by:
  - the total **absence**/inactivity of a laryngeal prime
  - the activity of [voiceless] (or [aspirated]/[spread glottis] or Element Theory's **H**)
  - the activity of [voiced] (or the element **L**)
- RVA in its classical form is the result of the combined effect of laryngeal activity (H or L) and pre-obstruent delaryngealisation

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