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Toward a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Student Centered Accent and Dialect Coursework - THEA 403: Advanced Voice - Accents & Dialects – A Peer Review of Teaching Project Benchmark Portfolio

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Toward a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Student Centered Accent and Dialect Coursework
THEA 403: Advanced Voice - Accents & Dialects
A Peer Review of Teaching Project Benchmark Portfolio

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Abstract:

A benchmark portfolio for Theatre 403: Advanced Voice (Accents and Dialects). This portfolio describes considerations taken in developing a new course design, optimizing course assignments, implementing a perspective which moves toward the decolonization of the acting classroom, and integrating heightened awareness of cultural sensitivity with practical, skills-based learning. The author provides context around the course, its objectives, and its structure. Samples of student perspectives are provided within an in-depth look at an in-class conversation about diversity, inclusion, and practicing advocacy for appropriate casting choices. The reflection includes a conclusion that, while moving toward a destandardization of content has its challenges, the benefits of increasing exposure to conversations about representation are paramount to both industry change and a detangling of standardized expectations in the classroom.

Key words: voice, speech, accents, dialects, casting, vocal identity, cultural sensitivity, actors, theatre

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Portfolio Objectives

Author's General Objective: To develop as a faculty member who attends to course creation and curriculum change.

I am currently a second-year Assistant Professor of Practice in Voice, Movement and Acting. I am a Voice and Speech specialist. The Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film (JCSTF) at the University of Nebraska- Lincoln is currently in the process of devising a new Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BFA) in Acting. I will be formulating the Voice and Speech coursework within the BFA Curriculum. This Portfolio serves as a faculty development project to assist in my ability to develop coursework intentionally and thoughtfully, to ensure best practices for a .9 FTE teaching load, and to examine methods for tracking the simultaneous development of skill and knowledge in voice and speech courses.

Objective specific to THEA 403: To infuse the content of a traditionally skills based, practical course with 21st century understanding of cultural sensitivity.

The use and representation of accents and dialects in the theatre and film industry is currently in the period of drastic change. The performance industries are recognizing the need to decolonize speech representation. As an understanding of cultural appropriation increases, it follows that our storytelling techniques must also change. The pedagogy of this class must shift not only to mirror the shifts in the industry but also to educate, anticipate, and exemplify ethical considerations for our artists of the future. Speech classes for actors have previously followed a rather strict formula of learning the International Phonetic Alphabet and using it as a skill to create standardized, and thus generalized, aural landscapes. I have adopted an updated process in which students learn to codify their own idiolects (IE. the sounds and dialectical shifts they make in their own speech) in order to recognize idiolectal patterns in others. The students then build their ability to recreate historical persons and to adopt accents and dialects which are appropriate to their personal histories. This overhaul of course content reflects an integration of cultural awareness knowledge alongside skills-based development.

Objective specific to the development of the voice curriculum at the Johnny Carson School: To ensure the instructional development of the voice curriculum within the Acting Program at the Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film is intentional, supports the 21st century actor, and provides students with professional skills alongside an application of liberal arts education.

The Spring 2020 term was the first semester in which this class was offered as a semester-long experience at UNL within the last decade. Prior to my arrival, phonetic practices were a short unit within voice production training. While I have offered this course before at other institutions, refreshing the materials for UNL will require deep examination and will benefit from peer review. The structure of the course exemplifies the challenge of weaving vocational skills into an academic setting. Learning to balance the actor studio environment with traditional literacy within my documentation of this course will deeply affect my overall teaching load. The application of this project to Advanced Voice will filter directly into the entire voice curriculum.

Description of the Course

Course Description:

The course description below was created as part of the first Memo in the Peer Review of Teaching process in the Fall of 2019. It is a marked departure from previous course descriptions associated with Accents and Dialects. For reference, a traditional accents and dialects class includes learning a handful of standardized accents in an instructor-as-model approach. Accents often taught in American Conservatories include Standard British, General American, and US Southern. The description below highlights diversification over standardization and supports self-study and synthesis over rote repetition.

We live in a world of plurality. Every person has an accent. Every person also seeks to be heard and understood. Accents & Dialects (THEA 403 - Advanced Voice) is an upper level course for actors in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film (JCSTF) which invites students to take an interactive and inclusive look at the aural landscape of the English language. In this course, students develop the skills to recognize and analyze their own idiolect, to recreate idiolects other than their own, to accurately and appropriately adopt accents and dialects for the stage, screen, and other modes of performance, and to speak with great clarity at all times. Through the de-standardization of accents studied within the course, students are required to choose and practice highly individualized accent samples. Doing so calls each student to create a highly personalized approach to learning accents, become aware of the neurodiversity of actors within the rehearsal room, and develop a vocabulary for voice and speech topics within the industry. Woven into the course is an important discussion of the history of accent standardization, how speech has served as a colonizing tool, and how young actors can advocate for best practices within the industry.

Course Learning Outcomes:

The voice curriculum within the JCSTF seeks to prepare its actors for the rigorous expectations of actors within the industry, to speak with clarity within performance, to represent the plurality of our world with accuracy and empathy, and to ultimately hold the performance industry to the same standard.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) recognize, reproduce, and transcribe all symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, their corresponding sounds, and diacritical markings.
- 2) demonstrate the ability to hear and reproduce changes in oral zone, shifts in prosody, and changes in speech sounds.
- 3) investigate and make a case for accent and dialect design choices for characters in a play, film, or other performance medium.
- 4) formulate a personally crafted process for identifying, analyzing, and reproducing an accent which integrates strategies from class sessions.
- 5) synthesize voice production skills with speech skills in order to act through an accent having only a short amount of time to prepare.
- 6) speak and write critically about the importance of dialect design and performance in regard to cultural appropriation, representation, and access.

See the full Syllabus in [Appendix A](#).

Context

The ability to speak in an accent or dialect other than one's own is one of the degree outcomes of the Performance Option at the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film as such skills would be expected of a professional actor in the performance industry. Students register for this upper-level elective class in their third or fourth year of study. The students who enroll in THEA 403 have completed their foundational actor training (two semesters of basic acting, two semesters of intermediate acting, two semesters of stage movement, and two semesters of voice and speech production). As upper level actors they have, among many other things, an understanding of how to inhabit a character, where to find plays, and what characters and speeches are appropriate for them as unique individuals. These tools allow for an expectation for students to choose their own material in THEA 403. Voice and speech foundational coursework includes vocal anatomy, how the voice works, heightened awareness of personal voice and speech patterns and habits, increased agility of the articulators, and an understanding of each person have a unique and important voice. These tools allow for an expectation that students synthesize their developing accent and dialect skills with healthy vocal function and vocal acting choices.

Enrollment/demographics

This first iteration of the course in Spring 2020 had 12 enrollees. The Spring 2020 cohort were third-year actors. While the inclusion of a racial breakdown might seem inappropriate in some contexts, it is highly relevant here. As will be discussed below, the vocal identity of the students, which is heavily influenced by homelife, heritage, and accent, had a profound impact on the activities, assignments, reflections, and ultimately, my plans for the future.

The 2020 cohort included the following:

- 1 Mexican-American
- 1 Filipino-American
- 1 Texan
- 1 Arkansan
- 1 American, born in New Jersey, teenage years in Texas, current residence in FL
- 1 Russian-Pakistani, raised in Nebraska
- 1 Mexican-Korean, raised in Arizona
- 5 Native Nebraskan

Note that one third of the ensemble, four students, self-identify as mixed-race.

Methods, Materials, and Activities

Course Structure:

At the start of the Spring 2020 semester, the cohort of 12 students met twice a week for 75 minutes. The Monday session focused on discussion, contextualization, and interaction with examples and resources. The Wednesday session focused on practice-based skill building. Due to COVID-19, contact hours shifted to one 75-minute synchronous session via Zoom on Wednesdays with a series of asynchronous exercises to be completed individually between each session.

Course Units and Assignments:

The course was divided into four units. Each unit began with a “Flipped Class” which included a video lecture, a scholarly reading, a group discussion, and a quiz. Each unit ended with a performance of a monologue in an accent other than the student’s native accent. As you can see, the length of time students had to prepare the final acting performances for each unit became shorter as the semester progressed. This is highly important for professional preparation of acting students. There will be times in an actor’s career when a director asks for an accent at the very last minute.

UNIT ONE: Key Sound Changes.

This introductory unit included a review of the International Phonetic Alphabet, exercises to familiarize the students to the sounds they make in their own accent, and an overview of the vowels and consonants featured in one accent which was not native to any members of the class. This overview of one accent served as a model for strategies for learning other accents. It provided the “how” of learning the key sounds of an accent as opposed to focusing on the “what.” The chosen non-familiar accent for Spring 2020 was Multicultural London English. We focused on MLE because it features a conglomeration of influences, has great variety among its speakers, and maintains a major connection to its cultural history which could prime the students for deeper considerations of cultural representation in later units. The students practiced a short piece of text in MLE and then, for the conclusion of the unit, chose another non-rhotic accent (an accent which has a very certain set of rules for the pronunciation of “r’s”) to work on and perform individually. The students had 3 weeks to prepare the monologue in a non-rhotic accent of their own choosing.

UNIT TWO: Prosody

This secondary unit included analysis of the musical features of an accent. We covered pitch variety, intonation, inflection, tempo, and breath patterns. For this unit the students chose a video recording of a speech and recreated the prosodic patterns of the speaker verbatim. Some examples included political speeches, TED talks, and commencement speeches. The students had 2 weeks to prepare this idiolect performance.

UNIT THREE: Oral Zone

This third component of the triangulation needed to acquire an accent included a review of voice production as it pertains to vocal resonance and the musculature required to shift the tone of a vowel sound in the oral cavity. For this unit, the students chose an accent from a list they created for each other at the beginning of the semester. The students found a person whose accent matched their chosen accent, made a field recording, and prepared a breakdown document which would serve as a learning manual for the accent. Students had 2 weeks to prepare their breakdown.

UNIT FOUR: Synthesis

This final unit included an in-depth discussion of accents and dialects in regards to cultural appropriation and casting. The students created a dialect design project in which they discussed what accents and dialects would be appropriate for a chosen play, film, or other media. Then, an individual presentation on how to learn an accent based on key sounds, prosody, and oral zone integrated the skills from Units 1, 2, and 3 with a personal reflection on how each student could advocate for their own views on accent acquisition. The final project for this unit was an assigned mock-audition which included a casting director's request for a specific accent. The request was made 48 hours before the final exam time.

Assignments and Course Materials Organized by Course Outcomes

Each assignment was uniquely designed to address the learning outcomes for the course. Find a description of the assignments which satisfied each course outcome below.

Outcome #1: recognize, reproduce, and transcribe all symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, their corresponding sounds, and diacritical markings.

This outcome will be measured by a pre-quiz and post-quiz, by the transcriptions turned in for each monologue, and by the Key Sounds section of the Chosen Monologue Breakdown. The course materials provided for this outcome include the official International Phonetic Alphabet, the required textbook *How to do Accents* by Edda Sharpe, and a series of online resources provided via the Canvas page.

Outcome #2: demonstrate the ability to hear and reproduce changes in oral zone, shifts in prosody, and changes in speech sounds.

This outcome will be measured through in-class exercises and a monologue performance at the end of each unit. Throughout the semester, students will peer review each of the presentations on whether instructor-provided feedback has been adopted and integrated.

Outcome #3: investigate and make a case for accent and dialect design choices for characters in a play, film, or other performance medium.

For the performances at the end of each unit, the students are required to choose material for themselves. Students are expected to advocate for their choices and talk about them with cultural sensitivity. Then, in the third unit, the students choose a play, film, or media performance and describe a dialect design for its production.

Outcome #4: formulate a personally crafted process for identifying, analyzing, and reproducing an accent which integrates strategies from class sessions.

Over the course of the semester, the amount of instructor support and provided material decreases incrementally. Performances are highly self-directed requiring students to adopt strategies for integration. At the end of the semester, each student offers the class a 5-minute presentation on how they will learn accents for the future.

Outcome #5) synthesize voice production skills with speech skills in order to act through an accent having only a short amount of time to prepare.

Over the course of the semester, the amount of time provided to prepare the ending performance for each of the four units becomes shorter. The final exam consists of a mock audition with material in an assigned accent. The students are uniquely prepared to apply their accent learning strategies to their acting choices after completion of outcome #4.

Outcome #6) speak and write critically about the importance of dialect design and performance in regard to cultural appropriation, representation, and access.

After choosing material for each performance, the third unit featured an in-class “Fishbowl” discussion based on questions provided at the conclusion of assigned reading on cultural sensitivity. ([See Appendix C.](#)) The students were then provided with a transcript of their discussion and asked to expound further in writing on the themes which arose among the group. This resulted in two reflection essays based on questions developed in class. Course Material for this outcome included “Coaching Asian Actors and Asian Accents with Cultural Sensitivity” by Joy Lanceta and “Are authentic accents important in Film and TV?” by Rachael Sigee.

Analysis of Student Learning

The simultaneous development of skill and the ability to critically discuss the representation of the diversity of the world has been a primary focus during the development, delivery, and reflection of this course. Here you will find data for both areas of analysis.

Analysis of Demonstrable Skills

The most measurable area of development for Accents and Dialects is a student's fluency with the International Phonetic Alphabet. There are two primary data sources for this area. The first is a pre-test measured against a post-test which asks students to identify symbols, practice transcription, and label anatomical structures (which assists in the codification of speech sounds). IPA is briefly introduced in a prerequisite course so a relatively high score on the pre-test was expected.

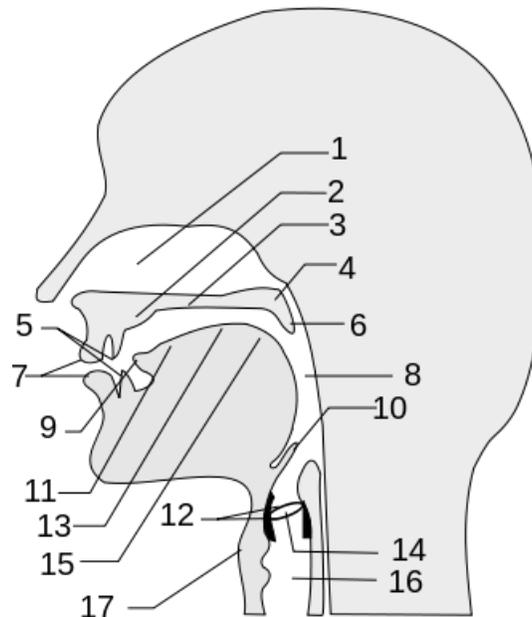
Find a brief summary of the quiz here:

Section I: Match the IPA with it's sound equivalent.

Section II: Transcribe the following IPA sentence by typing the orthographic (english alphabet) version in the box below (all lower caps, no punctuation).

ex. [ðə 'nɔ:θ ,wɪnd ɪ ðə 'sʌn wə dɪs 'pjʊtɪŋ 'wɪtʃ wəz ðə 'stʌŋgə wɛn ə 'tʌvələ]

Match the area labeled in the picture with the appropriate anatomical name.



As expected, over the course of the semester, fluency with IPA increased. The average score on the pre-test was 70% correct whereas the average score on the post-test was 93.9% correct. Between the pre and post tests, the students provided a transcript of two speeches and developed an accent breakdown using IPA. See an example of an IPA transcript as well as an example of an accent breakdown in [Appendix B](#). Each of these assignments served as practical interaction with the alphabet.

Meanwhile, the professional development focus in the course is the students' ability to teach themselves accents and dialects for future auditions and lower budget productions where a voice coach isn't available. Take a moment to listen to the following recordings. Each starts with a student speaking in their native accent, then speaking with in one or two non-rhotic accents for which a breakdown was provided by the instructor, then speaking in an accent of choice for which no resources were provided, and finally speaking in an accent after only two days' notice.

[Student A](#)

(0:00) free speech (native accent)
(00:16) Modern London English practice
(00:36) Chosen Dialect presentation
(00:58) Mock audition for Final Exam

You can hear in the Student A recording that there is a distinct difference in pitch and fluidity of their native accent and the three non-native samples. The three non-native samples, however, seem to have a similar prosody. A bit halted. This choice is a hallmark of the student's chosen dialect (Hong Kong - Cantonese speaker) which points very strong personal material choices

[Student B](#)

(0:00) free speech (native accent)
(00:16) Non-rhotic accent presentation
(00:36) Modern London English practice
(00:52) Mock audition for Final Exam

You can hear that student B's accuracy of sound changes is strong from the beginning of the semester but a sense of confidence and readiness to integrate the accent work with their acting drastically improves from non-native sample one through three.

[Student C](#)

(0:00) free speech (native accent)
(00:19) Modern London English practice
(00:39) Non-rhotic accent presentation
(1:01) Chosen Dialect presentation
(1:15) Mock audition for Final Exam

You can hear in student C that the accent samples where a clear resource recording was available (Modern London English and Chosen Dialect presentation) appear to feature grounded and specific work, which provides a sense of authenticity. The samples where deductions were made without a specific recording (Non-rhotic accent presentation and Mock audition for Final Exam) feature accuracy but sway toward caricature.

Assessment of Cultural Sensitivity Awareness

The Flipped Class that kicked off Unit Four included a video on how Dialect Designs are researched and created for the Nebraska Repertory Theatre, two scholarly articles on bringing cultural sensitivity to voice coaching relationships, and a series of questions to prepare for an in-class conversation. **You can read those questions in [Appendix C](#).** What follows is a summary of the themes which arose during the week following the assignment of this Flipped Class.

One of the surprisingly difficult realizations in our in-class conversation was whether familiarity with an accent had come about because of authentic exposure or because of representations

on Film and Television. Many were quick to say they knew what an accent sounded like only to realize that they had only encountered a handful of truly authentic accents off screen. One brave student talked about her recognition that she'd never heard an authentic accent from the Indian subcontinent until seeing the Feature Film *Lion*, the producers of which cast Indian actors who spoke in their native accents. "I never heard real people from India speak before. I realized, I was like, wow, the only representation I have of Indian speakers or people from India is through Television. I'd never heard what that actually sounded like. A lot of stereotypes were perpetuated for me until I saw that documentary." This discussion made space for a broadened perspective of the importance of considering cultural exposure not only in daily life but on our various entertainment platforms.

One of the themes which started to recur in our conversation was a focus on visual diversity in the arts. One student remarked "I think it's appropriate for an actor to adopt an accent when the accent is required for the story and if it doesn't matter how they look." Then, shortly after, another student asserted that casting an actor in a role with an accent should be based on how they look. This spurred a conversation about whether being able to "pass" as a certain ethnicity means that an actor can and should portray ethnicities other than their own. In the next section you will see that an important discussion ensued about how hard it is to see a variety of races associated with one accent. A project called "Yes, I'm Irish" has attempted to address this visual stigma by making video recordings of non-white speakers with native Irish accents.

The conversation started to circle around famous actors who have portrayed a wide variety of ethnicities. The class concluded that actors should be encouraged to "tell the stories that you are in a place to tell." One student brought up an all too frequent practice of tokenization for the sake of visual diversity: "we shouldn't just have representation for the sake of representation. If something is poorly thought out, it can do more harm than good."

One of her peers responded by addressing the reality that not all representation is equal. We finished the conversation by pondering ways to advocate for the creation of roles that are "whole bodied people instead of their ethnicity, comma, their job." The consensus that our art should reflect the easy transportation and globalization of our world.

Before and after our conversation I surveyed via a Zoom Poll the class on how anxious they felt about entering the conversation, how equipped they felt to advocate for culturally sensitive practices, and provided several examples of past casting choices which have proven questionable to see whether they found them appropriate or inappropriate. At the end of the conversation, the sense of comfort and readiness to enter the conversation and advocate for culturally sensitive practices had greatly increased. Making decisions about appropriate casting had only a small change. The students recognized the struggle to bring in marketing dollars with recognizable actors which would prevent more authentic choices. The complexity of the issue seemed primed for a few days of digestion.

Three days later the students were provided with two essay questions which drew upon themes that arose within the discussion. One question attempted to deepen the conversation about exposure and the other asked the students to ponder examples of diverse representation that didn't tokenize or solidify the oversimplification of a culture. **Read the full prompts in [Appendix C](#).**

The first prompt allowed for a much more tangible, action-oriented discussion than we had encountered in our group discussion. Students brought up their role in the industry. One talked about being brave enough to step outside of their comfort zone and challenging artists to expect the same of their audiences. Another talked about turning to the skills we were developing in class to ensure that situations where casting isn't in their control they have the tools to do extensive research and be as accurate as they possibly can in representing an ethnicity other than their own.

These remarks allowed the students to remember their own skills as actors.

No matter how 'accurate' or believable my learned accent is, the only authentic exposure I am providing as an actor is the story from the playwright. Diversifying peoples' perceptions can only come from true stories or people with those experiences, and it is an actor's job to still do justice to the authenticity when handed a piece to perform. While I cannot showcase the experience of a true Ukrainian woman, I can give a voice to a story someone else wrote. As an actor, it is my job to know my role in authentic exposure when I am representing someone I can only empathize with as a human.

The topic of turning to the playwright's intentions arose in the second prompt as well.

I think that some of the biggest responsibility lies upon the shoulders of writers. When productions incorporate diversity in a show that wasn't written in a way that allowed for it, it almost never comes off as natural and it almost always comes across as a pushy attempt at being inclusive.

To come full circle, the following statement from a student addressed our discussion in light of their current training:

I think I have a responsibility through my privilege of being white as well as the privilege of having accent/dialect training to make well-informed choices on what work to accept and what accents I feel are appropriate for me to do in a production. I also think I have a responsibility to be an advocate for myself and others by asking questions about the specificity/authenticity of an accent/dialect choice and how it serves the character and production as a whole. I hope to never reach a place in my career where I lose sight of how important diversification through authentic exposure is, no matter how big the project, director, or paycheck is.

Reflection on the Course

By taking part in the Peer Review of Teaching Project, the first iteration of a semester-long course of Accents and Dialects at the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film featured measurable, intentional, and specific outcomes-based course content. Focusing on backwards design allowed for an incremental progression toward each of the course outcomes, strong justification for each of the assignments and materials, and an intentional implementation of an open discussion around a complex subject. The students are armed with the speech skills they need when they enter the industry while also having the ability to address the complexity of the topic. Culturally sensitive representation has been broached enough to raise awareness but not so much that the ability to perform is hampered.

Building the course around a solid framework made space for the students to open up about their experiences. At mid-semester, I reached out to the students individually to check in on how things were going. We were just finishing the idiolect project (end of Unit Two) and preparing to launch into our discussion on cultural awareness. Here are some open-hearted responses that were very eye opening for me:

Sometimes I think assignments (as they have existed in several of our required-for-major classes) that are oriented around the student resembling or being able to perform as a real person from history can feel a little isolating for students of color, especially mixed students. I understand how useful and even fun the assignments can be for everyone, but sometimes trying to narrow down someone I could play and be an accurate cultural representation of feels impossible.

I've been internally struggling when some of the assignments say "Choose a monologue from a role that you'd likely be cast in," because honestly I don't feel like I'd be cast in most things. I've gotten rejected from far too many roles because I wasn't white enough and I've also gotten rejected from several roles because I wasn't colored enough. I know that "the industry is changing" but it doesn't really feel that way yet. I managed to pick out monologues for each assignment, but I can't say that I actually believe I'd get cast in any of those roles. Which makes learning accents a little weird to wrap my brain around, conceptually, because I feel like I really don't look like *any* ethnicity. *Could* I be cast as Greek/Mexican/Spanish/Brazilian/New York/Parisian? Yeah, technically. But I still feel like they're always going to choose someone who genuinely looks the part.

Fortunately, my students were ready and willing to help me broaden my perspective and find stronger language to align with the desired outcomes. They agree that the following version of the assignment details for the Idiolect Project made more space for the outcomes without creating a sense of isolation:

This assignment serves to apply the practices of the prosody unit in performance. Learning to recognize, notate, and recreate a single person's melody, rhythm, and pitch variety allows students to notice patterns and step outside their personal prosody habits. Students are to choose a three-minute speech (excerpting from a longer speech is acceptable) to transcribe, notate, and practice recreating. For this assignment, the key sounds of the idiolect can be as close to or far from the student's own idiolect as the student chooses. Focus is to be placed on recreating "the groove."

A note on choosing the idiolect. It is encouraged that the students choose a speech that is interesting and inspiring to them and which showcases a wide variety of emphatic phrases for optimum pitch variety. **Since speech is inherently cultural, students**

should also consider whether portraying and representing the chosen idiolect in performance is appropriate. Sometimes, learning an idiolect can be justified for reasons other than the speaker's cast-ability.

I'm looking forward to reviewing and editing the course assignment descriptions to ensure that similar language is utilized.

This first iteration of the course has been extremely informative. I feel strongly that the materials, the assignments, and the structure are very strong. I must admit that coaching twelve different accents multiple times through the semester was far more challenging than coaching the whole ensemble on the same three or four accents throughout the semester. Doing so, however, made space for far more student-centered learning. Looking ahead I am hoping to implement more specific rubrics for the assignments in Unit Four in order to delineate more specific gradations of success. I am also planning to develop more examples of successful accent acquisition for the students to watch and discuss so that my own examples do not serve as the primary model.

Appendices

Appendix A - Course Syllabus

Ann Marie Pollard

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Office Hours: 9-11am Tuesdays/Thursdays or by appointment

THEA 403 Advanced Voice Techniques
M/W 11:00am-12:15pm in Temple Building 306
Spring 2019

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) recognize, reproduce, and transcribe all symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, their corresponding sounds, and diacritical markings.
- 2) demonstrate the ability to hear and reproduce changes in oral zone, shifts in prosody, and changes in speech sounds.
- 3) investigate and make a case for accent and dialect design choices for characters in a play, film, or other performance medium.
- 4) formulate a personally crafted process for identifying, analyzing, and reproducing an accent which integrates strategies from class sessions.
- 5) synthesize voice production skills with speech skills in order to act through an accent having only a short amount of time to prepare.
- 6) speak and write critically about the importance of dialect design and performance in regard to cultural appropriation, representation, and access.

Textbook and Required Materials

- IPA Study Aids:** a personally chosen set of tangible IPA symbols (flashcards, sculptures, etc.)
- Textbook:** *How to do Accents: Revised Second Edition* (Edda Sharpe & Jan Jaydn Rowles)
- Attire:** Loose, comfortable, movable, attire appropriate for an actor in rehearsal.
- Regular and Frequent Access to Canvas** (with notifications turned on)

Attendance Policy

Voice work (and all acting practices) requires focused presence. Since what we are learning together is practice-based, missing an experience with your classmates cannot be made up outside of the classroom. If you are not present and demonstrating professional practice in each class your final grade will immediately reflect a change.

The attendance policy of the Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film is as follows:

- Attendance and punctuality for all classes is mandatory.
- Students are allotted two absences.
- Two tardies are equal to one absence.
- After a student misses an equivalent of one week's worth of classes, each subsequent missed class will result in the reduction of the final grade by a full letter grade (i.e., A to B, B to C).

Professional Practice Includes but is not limited to:

- Arriving having fully prepared course material
- Arriving with the appropriate attire
- Arriving fully warmed up
- Participating Fully
- Taking action toward self care
- Not talking during presentations

- Respecting fellow theatre makers
- Turning cell phones and devices off

- Applying coursework to subsequent exercises

Late Work:

Credit for work turned in after the due date is offered at the instructor's discretion and will amount to no more than 50% of the possible grade.

Final Exam Time

9am on May 8th. The assigned accent and audition side for the final exam will be provided on Saturday, May 6th at 9am. See Outcome #5.

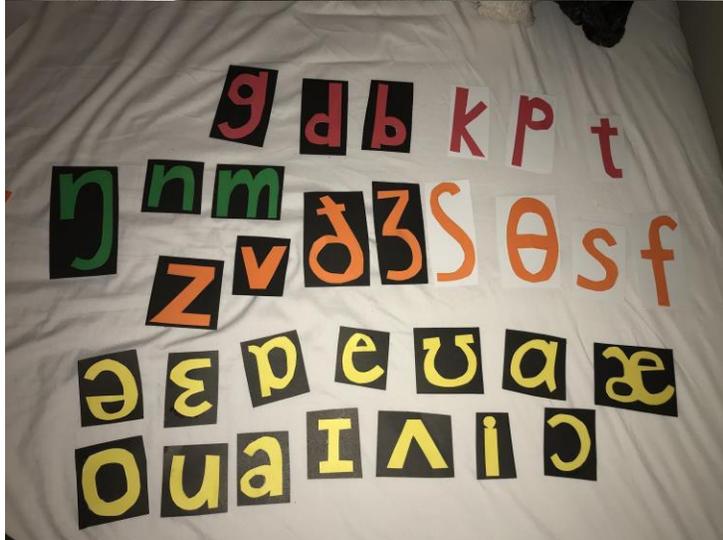
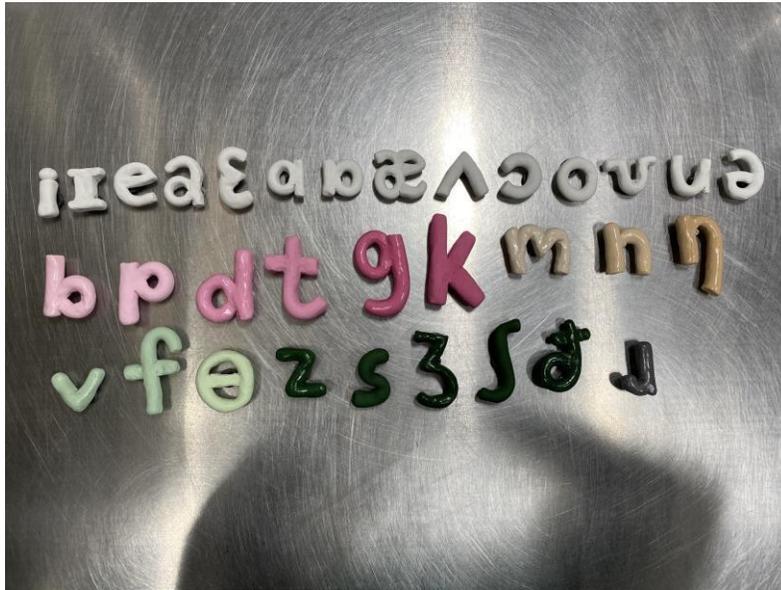
Assignments & Evaluation

IPA Prop Photo Upload	2pts
Flipped Class Quiz 1, 2, 3	10pts
Unit Discussion Topic 1, 2, 3	10pts
Modern LondonEnglish Accent Performance Upload	4pts
Non-Rhotic Accent Project	12pts
Accent & Monologue Choice - 2 pts	
Transcription - 5pts	
In-Class Presentation - 5pts	
Historic Idiolect Project	15pts
Idiolect/Speech Choice - 2pts	
Breakdown - 5pts	
Presentation with Transcription - 8pts	
Dialect Design Presentation	10 pts
Chosen Accent Monologue Project	27pts
Field Recording - 5 pts	
Monologue Choice - 2pts	
Accent Breakdown - 5pts	
Monologue Performance 5 pts	
Personal Process Presentation 10pts	
Final Exam (assigned sides with an accent audition)	<u>10 pts</u>
	TOTAL: 100pts

90-100pts = A, 80-90pts = B, 70-80pts = C, 60-70pts = D 0-60pts= F

Appendix B - Samples of Student Work

IPA Props



Excerpt of an IPA transcription

13

And by and large the panel couldn't and
[ɛŋd bɪ ɛŋd lɑːʒ ʒi pænl kʊldnt ɛŋd]

wouldn't give a definitive answer. Tyson
[wʊldnt ɡeɪv ə defɪnɪtɪv ɔːnsɜː. taɪsɒn]

himself put the odds at 50:50. And I'm not
[hɪmsɛlf pʊt ʒi ɔːds ɛt fefti : fefti. ɛŋd ɪm nɒt]

sure how scientific that was but it had
[ʃʊə həʊ sɪntɪfɪk ʒæt wɒz bʌt ɪt həd]

numbers in it, so I was impressed. But it got
[nʌmbɜːs ɪn ɪt, sɒ ɪ wɒz ɪmpɹɛsɪd. bʌt ɪt ɡɒt]

me to thinking. What if this, all of this is a
[mi tu θɪŋkɪŋ. wɒt ɪf ʒɪs, ɔːl ɒv ʒɪs ɪz ə]

simulation. I mean it's a crazy idea but what
[sɪmjʊleɪʃn. ɪ miːn ɪts ə kɹeɪzi aɪə bʌt wɒt]

if it is. And if there are multiple simulations,
[ɪf ɪt ɪz. ɛŋd ɪf ʒɛrɛ ɑː mʌltɪpl sɪmjʊleɪʃnz]

how come we have to be in the one where
[həʊ kʊm wi hæv tu bi ɪn ʒi wɛz wɛrɛ]

Donald Trump becomes the Republican
[dɒnald trʌmp bɪkʊmz ʒi ɹɪpʊblɪkən]

^ ^mz ^bɪkən

Example of Chosen Accent Breakdown

INTRODUCTION

Ukraine is an Eastern Europe country and is the second largest country on the continent after Russia. Ukraine shares borders with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Russia, and Belarus and the Black Sea acts as its southern border. Between World War I and 1991 Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union as a single state entity. Following the aftermath of the Cold War, Ukraine was able to gain its independence in 1991. A common misconception among English speakers is to refer to the country as "The Ukraine," but it is more correct to refer to the country by its name, Ukraine.

Ukraine is among the poorest countries in Europe, and the country suffers from a very high poverty rate and severe corruption. The many fertile farm lands make Ukraine one of the world's top grain exporters. Between the world wars, Ukraine suffered greatly alongside Russia and other parts of the Soviet Union. Famine, oppression and the great depression and many other economic and natural events placed great strain on the people of Eastern Europe.

Holodomor is a man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine that killed millions of Ukrainians between 1932-33. Holodomor, a term derived from the Ukrainian words for hunger (holod) and extermination (mor). This was just one country affected by the greater Soviet famine of this time frame, and Ukraine has only started officially recognizing this tragedy since 2006. The victims were mainly rural indigenous Ukrainians. Before 1932, there was a rebellion forming a protesting Soviet rule in Ukraine, and there are sources that support Stalin crafted this famine to take action against the Ukrainian countryside that was against him. At least 3.9 million Ukrainians died from starvation by 1934. This famine provided enough distraction that the USSR was able to truly infiltrate the Ukrainian political system. To further crush Ukrainian identity, the Soviet police created a of repression and persecution against religious leaders, Ukrainian culture, and the Ukrainian language. The term "Ukrainian" was discouraged all together. The famine was denied by public officials for more than 50 years, but has created a lasting memory in Ukrainian public memory. Many recognize this famine as a genocide because of the refusal of outside aid and the purposeful starvation of the Ukrainian people.

The Ukrainian language is a descendent of the conversational language from the first East Slavic state. The language is closely related to Russian and Belarusian, but these three dialects were not distinguishable until the 12th century. For centuries, Ukrainian have very little literary documentation because of the country's long political subordination, and it was not until the late 1700's "that modern literary Ukrainian emerged out of the colloquial Ukrainian tongue." Ukrainian is not commonly spoken outside of Eastern Europe, and the language contains many words borrowed from Polish.

After becoming an independent nation, Ukrainian became the official language of Ukraine. Since then, Ukrainian has been added to the education system, media and other more accessible locations because of a push from the government. They wanted Ukrainian to be encouraged in everyday life since Russian was still the common language. In the 2001 census, over half of the Ukrainian population claim Ukrainian as their native language but nearly thirty percent claim their native language is Russian. Despite government regulations encouraging the

population to encourage the use of Ukrainian, most of Ukraine still use Russian heavily in their daily lives.

Ukrainian culture is rich in the arts and overflowing with pride. Although their literary development did not flourish until the 18th century, Ukraine recognizes their successful authors in contribution to the country's rich literary history. The Britannica article about Ukrainian culture describes that "art galleries featuring contemporary Ukrainian artists have become commonplace in larger urban centres. The country's strong tradition of folk art also continues to this day. In addition, high-calibre performing artists and ensembles appear regularly in Ukraine's numerous theatres and concert halls." The arts contribute massively to Ukraine's cultural associations.

After years of corruption, oppression and war, independence allowed for Ukraine to reclaim cities to be cultural and economic centers. Many large cities now contain high-end stores and fashionable art galleries and cafes. Most Ukrainian cities have ornate theatres and companies for ballet and opera. According to one reporter "Rejecting Russian culture, which dominated the Ukrainian space for centuries, many Ukrainians are going back to their roots" and this rise of nationalism is good for Ukrainians. While this is one person's opinion, there is data to support the idea that Ukraine is becoming more accepting of all Ukrainians as part of their culture rather than feeling the need to divide between 'us and them' for self-preservation. While strong feelings of nationalism can be dangerous and exclusive, Ukraine has seen the positivity of having their independent national identity.

ORAL ZONE PLACEMENT

There are many similarities and associations between Ukrainian and Russian. There is a blogger that breaks down a Ukrainian accent, and she claims "One of the biggest differences between Ukraine and Russian language is placement in the mouth. In Ukraine, placement is very far in back of throat and it had a bit of nasal quality to it." I agree with her, and in relation to my American accent, I can hear much harsher teeth and hard palate resonance. There is little movement in the lower jaw, and the tongue seems to be doing most of the work when intonation is shifting. The sound comes over the tongue and hits many places around the nasal cavity including the sinuses, teeth, alveolar ridge and hard palate.

PROSODY

English speaking Ukrainian accent appears to be a sustained, light dialect that flows between direct and indirect storytelling. Ukrainian Laban efforts primarily go between glide and float. The history of the language indicates a 'colloquial' background, so I have been trying to contrast the formality to a posh British accent. Ukrainian is much less formal and more conversational. Ukrainian is a major accent that relies on a rise and then fall pattern. The blogger I found says that most stress is on the penultimate syllable, and I believe that is true of sentences as well. There is a low bounce rhythm to thoughts.

KEY SOUND CHANGES

Consonants:

- Ukrainian is a rhotic language.

- Ukrainian speakers either use [t] or change [l] to [j] for l's.
- The person used for my field recording said that the [θ] and [ð] are not used in Ukrainian. They tend to use [s] or [z]
- From the Ukrainian accent blog: "The [h] is replaced with the [x] which makes us sound like we have something stuck in the back of our throats."
- [g] is accompanied with breathiness, making the sound more hidden within a word.
- While r's are not entirely trilled, there is a bit of a roll to them.

Vowels:

KIT: [ɪ] fit, little, kitty, literally, nitty, gritty

DRESS & FACE: [e] desk, set, next, Chester, Elaine, wait, station, take, cake, away

STRUT: [ʌ] lovely, cup, drunk, uncle

FOOT & GOOSE: [u] shook, book, nobody, looked, accuse, Lucy, loose, refuse, you

FLEECE: [i] eat, meat, cheese, feel, freeze, breeze

NURSE: [ɜ] worse, herd, nerd, worth

TRAP & BATH [a] gap, back, factory, medallion, grasshopper, laughing, aunt, daft

PALM: [ɒ] balm, calm

START: [ɔ] farm, alarm, garden, car

LOT & CLOTH: [ɔ] John, gone, bottom, allotment, Robert, moth, knocked, off, broth

THOUGHT: [ɑ] bought, fought

NORTH & FORCE: [ɔə] ignore, boredom, York, mornings, glorious, galore, seashore

GOAT: [ɔ] Joseph, hoped, nobody, lonely, boat, Rome

PRICE: [aɪ] bright, lights, almighty, sunlight

CHOICE: [ɔɪ] boys, loitering, annoy

MOUTH: [aʊ] down, south, allowed, surrounded, crowds, loud, proud

NEAR: [iə] queer, steered, rear, beer

SQUARE: [ɛə] nightmare, stairs, careless, Mary

CURE: [uə] alluring, sure, demure, lurid

HAPPY: [ɪ] dainty, fairy, pretty, family, party

LETTER: [ə] shinier, mirror, better, keeper

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Appendix C – Samples of Reflection Prompts

Culturally Sensitive Dialect Design Discussion Questions

Stereotype

What accent(s) (whether native or adopted) have you only ever heard because of a film/tv show/or play?

What potential stereotypes have you come to believe as true because of the representation of an accent on film/tv/stage?

Casting:

When is it appropriate for an actor to adopt an *accent* ?

Does your answer remain the same for adopting a *dialect*?

When is it *not* appropriate for an actor to adopt an accent? or dialect?

Season Selection:

What responsibility does performative media (film, tv, voiceover, staged plays) have to represent the diversity of the globe (accurately)?

Should a theatre choose to produce a play which represents a specific culture if no actors with a tie to that culture or heritage audition?

Non-performance accent training:

What role does accent reduction have in our society?

Would you expect/ask someone to work with a voice or dialect coach to shift their at home/social voice idiolect? If you were living/working somewhere where you were immersed in a language other than english would you seek out assistance with your accent?

Essay Question Prompts

Hello everyone,

Thank you for your thoughtful participation in our class discussion.

This is a transcript of the conversation (Links to an external site.)

Please do return to it/reference it as you take this quiz. There are some absolute gems from each of you. Really fruitful conversation which I trust will continue.

Please cite both of the articles you read for class (Lanceta & Sigee) at least once in your responses to this quiz.

Question 1:

One of the primary themes of our Accents and Dialects class has been "diversification over standardization" - we are in the act of decolonizing speech in our industry and you, young professional actors, are the frontier. Consider just "how mutable the self is" (Sarah Jones) and how many unique identities you have when code switching through a regular day.

One of the primary themes of working with Cultural Sensitivity (return to the Lanceta article) is to favor "authentic exposure over assimilation."

If these two themes are brought together we get the following:

1) Diversification is achieved via authentic exposure.

2) Assimilation is achieved via standardization.

We must recognize that decolonization is nowhere near the progress it needs to be as, in our own conversation today, standardization/neutralization/reduction of diverse accents as a part of actor training was accepted as a norm that is very much in existence and a general consensus that assimilation plays a huge role in our current society was met. Underpinning currents that you must have a standard accent in order to get a job and you must assimilate to be accepted are deep-seeded.

Write critically about which phrase above (1 vs 2) you hope to exemplify through your career in the arts. Consider how you could self-advocate for your thoughts on the matter.

What role does your accent and dialect training play in your ability to support this point of view?

Question 2:

Tell me about a play, movie, film, or other performance you have seen which introduced you to an accent or dialect for the first time without creating a sense of "othering" "tokenization" or "representation for the sake of representation."

Who do you think was responsible for making choices about the authenticity of the vocal identities in this piece?