

FUN WITH PHONOLOGY!

If you like **Accent Hacks #1 and 2**, then congrats—you're becoming a language geek—and you'll love this deeper dive.

IT'S NOT A CASE OF "POTATO, POTAHTO"

When linguists use the terms *phonetics* and *phonology*, they may seem interchangeable, but they have some important distinctions. Phonetics refers to the acoustic and articulatory properties of sounds—basically the mechanics of articulating a sound and what it...well... *sounds* like. Phonology, on the other hand, refers to the sound system in a native speaker's mind. So how is this useful? There are some finer points about accents that fall into this category.

For example, if you're a speaker of Standard American English (SAE)—also known as General American English (GAE)—and are looking to try your hand at a Standard British or Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, you might see that both dialects have the [p], [t], and [k] sounds. However, the way these sounds interact with other sounds can be very different.



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A SPOT OF “T”

Let’s focus on the [t] sound for a moment. They all might seem like a “t” in a native English speaker’s brain, but as a speaker of American English, I say the “t” in *team* with a burst of air ([tʰ], called an *aspirated t*), the “t” in *beauty* as a tap or flap [ɾ] (a sort of fast-action “d” sound), and “t” in *not* with no audible release [t]. (There are additional variations, but I’ll stop there for the sake of brevity.) Standard British or RP speakers, their pattern is different—they will have the aspirated sound in all three words.

BONUS TIP

Check out the use of the glottal stop (the choppy back-of-the-throat sound in the middle of *uh-oh*) for T in Standard/General American English, compare it with Standard British/RP English, and with the Cockney accent. (NOTE: American speakers do employ this sound for T’s before certain [n] sounds, as in *button* or *Britttain*.)

To bring it all together, compare all three of these accents pronouncing the sentence: “The British writer bought a little bottle of beetlejuice.”

