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Your Speech Reflects You

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A MIDWESTERNER visiting New York City recently found it quite humorous when an easterner asked him what "toim" it was. That midwesterner was even more amused and puzzled as he traveled to Virginia and there heard the natives speak of the "tam" of day. How strange it seemed that the people in these states spoke with such a funny accent. How strange that they don't speak the right way, the way midwesterners do.

But, wait a minute, sir. Let's be a little more broad minded. You think it's interesting to hear the different accents, but you're so thankful that you don't have one yourself. After all, your character, your social standing, your intellectual capacity are all judged by the way you talk. But did it ever occur to you that nobody in Brooklyn talks with a Brooklyn accent? When you are in Brooklyn, *they* all talk standard brand American-English. *You* are the guy with the funny accent.

But just what is an accent? Primarily, an accent is a matter of pronunciation. In the south, a barn is a "bahn," in the west it is a "barr-rn," and in northern New England it is a "baa-hn." In the Midwest we speak of "woishing" but in the east it is "wahshing."

In general, midwesterners tend to speak with a more nasal quality and slower than easterners. Isn't it possible that this difference could account for the well-known concept that easterners have of people from the Midwest as being rather slow-moving and unintellectual? Southerners are often thought of as being lazy just because of their slow drawl. It is certain that our word pronunciation is extremely important in the impression we make upon others.

Ashley Cooper, columnist for the News and Courier newspaper in Charleston, South Carolina, devised a dictionary of "Charlestonese" to aid newcomers in the city. To illustrate the drastic differences in the speech of the inhabitants of one city and that in the midwest, are the following excerpts from the Charlestonese dictionary.

air—what you hear with
beckon—meat from a pig, often eaten with aigs for brake-fuss
bun—consume by heat, "when you make toe-est, don't bun the braid"
coined—humane, "he was always coined to animals"
layman—a fruit from which laymanade is made
mine eyes—salad dressing
poet—to transfer a liquid, "poet from a pitcher to a glass"
sex—one less than seven, two less than eh-et, three less than noine, foe less than tin
snow—to breathe loudly and heavily while sleeping
wretched—the long name for "Dick"

Since accent suggests mainly pronunciation, dialect would probably be the better word to use. For your speech consists also of your choice of words, which probably contains many localisms, or unusual words or phrases used only in a limited area. The word griddlecake illustrates the occurrence of localisms, for it is also called corncake, johnnycake, johnnikin, corn dodger, and hoecake.

You may wonder about changing your dialect, since it is so important in the impression you give others.

Your Speech Reflects YOU

by Carole Boughton

Science Sophomore

Characteristic speech sounds of substandard speakers in Iowa. (Some also used in other parts of the United States.)

deesh — dish	sich — such
offeacial — official	laig — leg
forgit — forget	aig — egg
pitcher — picture	instid — instead

But just what would you change it to? For there is no entirely correct way of speaking American-English. The only rule you can follow is, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." You can adapt your dialect to the way of speaking depending upon what part of the country you're in.

Of course, always remember that what you say is more important than how you say it. However, as your talk becomes closer to that used in a particular locality, people will pay more attention to what you say because they will be less distracted by how you say it.