

AAE103

## L13 : Estuary English

*David Deterding*

## accents of England

- RP (SSB) is spoken by maybe 5% of the population
- very few young people speak RP
- it is important to be familiar with other accents

## Estuary English (EE)

- new style of pronunciation in England
- influenced by London
- becoming increasingly common throughout England

## features of EE

- glottal stop for /t/
- [f] in place of /θ/
- fronted /u:/ and /ʊ/
- vocalisation of dark /ɪ/

## glottal stop for /t/

- SgE has glottal stop at end of word
- EE also has intervocalic glottal stop
- SgE listeners find this difficult

Nottingham City



## [f] for /θ/

- SgE has [f] for /θ/ at end of word: *both, with, mouth*
- SgE has [t] for /θ/ at start: *three, think*
- [f] at start causes problems

we were only there for three nights



### even context cannot help

"I am certain that it was 'free nights' that I heard, although this sentence and the previous sentence do not make sense as they contradict each other. I do not know what the speaker means when he said that they went out a few times and they did not have free nights."

### back vowels

- both /u:/ and /ɔ/ have a central quality
- to SgE listeners, *good* sounds like *gig*

quite good



### vocalisation of dark /l/

- dark /l/ becomes a vowel
- this follows an historical process: *folk*, *walk*, *could*, *palm* once had an /l/
- SgE also vocalises dark /l/
- not a problem for SgE listeners

she was back there as well



### SgE listeners find EE frustrating

"... seems to be slurring most of the time, thus portraying his speech to be lazy ... [he] almost made my blood boil because I could hardly understand his words"

"... gives me the impression that he is not making a conscious effort to pronounce his words properly, hence a sense of laziness is felt in his speech"

### however

- EE is very common in England today
- even on TV : Ian Wright (Lonely Planet), Trevor Brooking (EPL)
- students need to be familiar with non-standard accents

### Reading

- Deterding, D (2005) 'Listening to Estuary English in Singapore'. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39:3, 425-440.