



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura inglesas

Mid-Atlantic English: A critical appraisal

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Mid-Atlantic English: A critical appraisal

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<p>Sinatura do/a interesado/a</p> 	<p>Visto e prace (sinatura do/a titor/a)</p>
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FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA



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SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

Título: Mid-Atlantic English: a critical appraisal.

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

Mid-Atlantic English refers to a form of speaking which was popular in the first half of the 20th century mostly among Hollywood's film stars, but also Presidents, First Ladies and renowned writers.

MAE has been widely considered to have been created at Hollywood just for the new "talking pictures" to be widely understood, and that it was just a kind of mixture of General American and Received Pronunciation. As for the former, MAE provides an excellent example of how advances in technology may impact on the evolution of a language.

In this study, I intend to provide a thorough description and a critical appraisal of existing research on the history, role and nature of MAE. To this aim, three different lines of research will be pursued:

a) I will trace its antecedents and evolution by analyzing the following items which influenced its origin: Stage-Speech, Good Speech, early days of radio, Newsreels and "Talkies". I will try to characterize the role of MAE in the evolution of Hollywood's industry and, especially, in the transition to sound films, trying to answer, among others, the following questions: In what way did this technological progress affect the language? Why did it originate in Hollywood and not in Europe? Why and when did MAE fade away?


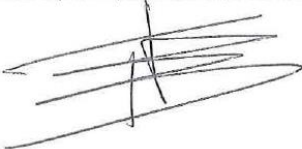

b) I will describe its formal characteristics, mostly drawing on important work on the topic by specialists like David Crystal and William Labov, paying attention (if relevant) to the various language levels of phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, which will be scrutinized and compared with other similar English varieties. Our ultimate intention is to establish whether MAE may be characterized as a dialect, slang, jargon, a register or something else.

c) Finally, by comparing MAE with other milestones in the evolution of the English language, I will try to discuss, in passing, issues related to the motivations underlying the rise and fall of a "vogue" language, which may shed some light into the present and future influence of today's technologies on the fate of English as a Global Language.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)



Santiago de Compostela, 05 de Novembro de 2018.

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SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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Abstract

“Language is the House of Being. In their home, human beings dwell”. (Heidegger)

From a linguistic viewpoint, Mid Atlantic English (MAE), is a consciously gained variety of the English language. Placed amidst British English (BE) and American English (AE), it was fashionable in America during the first half of the 20th century. Though some Presidents, First Ladies and renowned writers also spoke that way, most often its origins and evolution, relate to the early Hollywood *Talkies*. It was a kind of *acrolect*, or in Labov’s terminology a *social prestige* variety.

Sociolinguists like Labov exclusively consider MAE, as the variety spoken in the North Atlantic States (USA). Apart from that, Crystal quotes this term only, under the entry *koine*. Moreover, the same name was used to denominate a correct way of speaking for singers and actors. In the globalized and technological world we live in, English is the universal language of intercultural communication (World English). Because of this, the need for a global linguistic rendezvous is crucial. However, which English variety should play this role?

Perhaps, this role will be fulfilled by a new notion with the same name MAE, which has emerged in Northern Europe, dealing with the concepts World English, English as a Lingua Franca, and English as a foreign language.

On this basis, the relevance of an appraisal to a neutral geolect, (not related to a specific place), blending the two main English varieties, is undeniable, notably, if technological evolution has contributed vastly to its development.

Keywords: Mid-Atlantic English, Transatlantic English, English varieties, Language sociolinguistics; Theatre, Radio, Newsreels, and Talkies speech; World English, Lingua Franca

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
AE	American English-language
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BE	British English-language
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
FDR	Franklin D. Roosevelt (United States President)
GA	General American-language
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
MAE	Mid-Atlantic English-language
RCA	Radio Corporation of America
RP	Received Pronunciation-language
WWI	First World War
WWII	Second World War
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1 - Introduction

“British?”, *“No, just affected”* (Jonathan Harris, American actor; Dr Zachary Smith, the anti-hero of the 1960s American television series *Lost in Space*)

To brush up on my rusty English, I used to see old films (my favourites). To my surprise, I discovered that I could understand them much better than modern movies. While seeing them (or shall I say hearing), I also noticed that most actors in that period had in common an odd way of speaking, and came across the somewhat misleading name of Mid-Atlantic English, (henceforth MAE). All those things make me curious enough to investigate their real nature, thereupon the questions arose:

Why did they speak that way? What was it like, English, American, or halfway? Who, where and when, was it spoken? Also, why did it fade away?

Although, for non-native speakers to differentiate English varieties and accents is problematic, that way of speaking sound as a mixture of Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). Sometimes it reminds me of the English used by non-fluent speakers in Airports, Hotels, Shops, Etcetera. Looking for understanding, they usually stress the “content” words and contract the function ones while pronouncing carefully (especially the vowels). However, this fake English mockery fulfils its communicative function brilliantly.

Nowadays, the term MAE has reappeared in Europe, related to English as a second language teaching; Global English; world English and English as Lingua Franca. Traditionally British English (BE) is the most widely taught variety, particularly in its BBC or Received Pronunciation (RP) forms. However, in today’s Global and Technological world, General American (GA) is the most widespread and broadcast. To put it in a nutshell, even though mutually understandable, what students learn and what they heard and use, does not equal.

Quoting Bernard Shaw: “The United States and Great Britain are two countries separated by a common language”.

Due to these differences between the English variety learnt in the classrooms, and the one heard in the social media it may be, that except for strictly academic purposes, we are bound to choose between British and American English; Good and Correct English and Fluency vs Proficiency.

Those dichotomies rescue from the oblivion that artificial way of speaking, quoted at the beginning of this introduction, both British and American speakers perceive it as a kind of RP and GA in between. A neutral accent not identified with a particular location, beneficial when: "you don't want your audience to focus on the accent. You want them to focus on your message". (Quora, 2017).

This English-language variety was also termed Middle-Atlantic, (LaBouff, 2007) or Transatlantic English (Metcalf, 2000). Broadly speaking, it was in vogue, from the late 1920s to

1960s. Mainly, it is associated with the language used in old movies/films, but also could be detected in theatre, music, and the last century new mass media. In addition to this, Presidents, First ladies and renowned writers used it, astoundingly, in biblical films, we can hear it in God's voice, and even nowadays when it is definitively *passee*? It can be spotted in movies and TV by villains, denoting otherness or foreignness: (Darth Vader, Hannibal Lecter, etcetera). Besides this, its understandability, and neutral accent unification makes it a perfect choice for Comedy (musical, sophisticated, of manners), and music in general.

The use of this variety, usually associates with educated speech environments, that is, an acrolect, or in Labov's terminology: a social prestige. Consequently affecting Lakoff's concept of face-work, this is, the image one represents to society for informative or leadership purposes.

Finally, to close the circle around, MAE, Robert L Hobbs. in 1986 released, "Teach yourself transatlantic"; Also, as recently as 2008, Kathryn LaBouff published "Teach Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction", a book, about using the old MAE for professional singers and music schools. Both of them emphasize mainly elocution: pronunciation, and diction, MAE consequently is an ideal target for such a sociolinguistic approach.

Labov's 1963 publication of "The social motivation of a sound change, based on his MAE thesis, marked a turning point in the study of language change" (Hazen, 2010, p. 31). This book settled down the beginning of language sociolinguistics. Hazen cites Labov defining this new science as: "The sociolinguist's task is then to show the systematic covariance of linguistic structure and social structure – and perhaps even to show a causal relationship in one direction or the other". (Hazen, 2010, p. 26). When Labov and Bernstein, pioneered language sociolinguistics, MAE was fading away. So, there are not profound sociolinguistic studies on this subject, often overlooked by the linguists. Another reason for this fact is the initial sociolinguistic researches were conducted predominately on non-standard varieties, despising the common ones. This fact was also quoted by other authors when studying different English varieties, as an example, H. Fabricius wrote about RP as a sociolinguistic object: "The discipline is largely concentrated on the study of non-standard varieties". (H. Fabricius, n.d.)

In fact, in the: Atlas of North American English (Labov, Ash & Boberg), the term Mid-Atlantic relates only to a geographic reference, this is, the language spoken in the North Atlantic, or the Mid-Atlantic States, of the United States of America. (Labov. et al., 2006, p. 236).

Despite the increasing scholarly attention to the new conceptions of MAE, the old traditional use by theatre, radio and cinema has been academically disdained, even though there are a lot of essays, published in all kind of formats, most of them are merely descriptive, non-academic, contradictory and poorly substantiated. Also, there are several studies and essays about parallel variants, most of them mere steps in MAE evolution that will be analysed later on. All in all, this

variety undoubtedly deserves a place within descriptive sociolinguistics.

Consequently, this appraisal aims to deepen from a diachronic perspective, in the sociolinguistic aspects of this neutral English variety. If we assume a possible future British and American English agreement to reach a European English Unification (Euro-English), MAE could be a good starting point for something similar to the unifying agreement between Brazil and Portugal, when they signed The Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement of 1990.

In this process, we expect to debunk some persistent myths and fallacies about MA, for instance:

- It was a Hollywood produced artificial language, for the spoken films understanding on both sides of the Atlantic;
- RP is the only British accent that has no specific geographical correlate (Potter, 2018).
- MAE was only used for singers and actors.

According to those previous statements, a detailed sociolinguistic assessment of MAE's evolution will be conducted, focusing on its phonetic characteristics, and in defining its real nature. Later on, a step by step analysis of the different stages followed to reach its maturity. We shall show the importance of mass media evolution on its growing, to reach its maturity with the Cinema. The eventual decay and marginal persistence of MAE will end up this section. Finally, MAE's present status and possible future relevance will be stated and foresighted.

Chapter 2 - Defining MAE

In order to reach a definition of this English variety, we will start by sporting its polysemic nature, followed by a phonetic analysis of its characteristics, and finally ending it up, with an approach to its real nature.

2.1. Same name, several realities.

First of all, as MAE is a concept with at least four different approaches, so that, we must clarify the exact target of this appraisal. Those perceptions are:

a) A geographical perspective: An imaginary point placed somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean (The Mid-Atlantic Ridge); A region of the USA (The Mid-Atlantic or the Middle-Atlantic States). (Britannica, n.d.; Nag, 2018).

b) Northern Europe perception about a midway English variety mixing British and American English, used by non-native speakers, and similar to the so-called World English. (Modiano, 1996).

c) The odd way of speaking of some individuals that had lived in both sides of the Atlantic (like Cary Grant and Vincent Price). (Hutchinson, 2016).

d) Some other varieties, although with alternative names, very closely related to the different intermediate steps of its evolutionary process (radio, theatre, music). (LaBouff, 2007; Skinner, Monich & Mansell, 1990).

e) The spoken variety used in Hollywood's early sound films. Also used by well-spoken people, singers and actors. (thevintagenews.com, 2018) . This last one is the target of this thesis. Although some of the others are closely related.

Secondly, and in order not to get lost in the troubled and muddy waters of linguistics terminology, to set some milestones is of *rigour*. Two books form the frame around which articulate the terms used in this appraisal: For sociolinguistic concepts, The Atlas of North American English (Labov et al., 2006), will be the reference. Also, for the exact meaning of the linguistic terms, and unless indicated so, the resource used will be: A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (Crystal, 2008).

At the beginning of this book, he quotes: "One sign of immaturity [in science] is the endless flow of terminology. The critical reader begins to wonder if some strange naming taboo attaches to the terms that a linguist uses, whereby when he dies they must be buried with him". (Bolinger & Sears, 1981), p.554).

Surprisingly, the most significant Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias: (Britannica,

Merriam-Webster, Oxford English Dictionary, Thesaurus, Word Reference, and The Free Dictionary) only contain indirect references, as an accent, to the term MAE.

Finally, as scholars agree neither in the name nor in establishing the exact nature of MAE, we will continue denominating this particular English way of speaking, with the neutral term *variety*.

2.2. Characteristics.

MAE is not a unique variety, but a diachronic assortment of similar ones. They had had several names, and also different connotations for the same name. Nonetheless, this appraisal will be focused on the speech of educated people and Hollywood actors, from approximately 1920 to 1950. This concrete variety, as we have seen, has been randomly named, or in the case of Labov not directly named. Talking about Roosevelt's accent; Labov s called it “that international English standard”. (MacNeil & Cran, 2005). Roosevelt's way of speaking was also called “Patrician accent” (Leuchtenburg, 2001, p. 136) or “Boston Brahmin” (Boston, 2019), by the way, FDR wife was said to spike “Aristocratic American” (Dialectblog.com, 2012). There are indeed some prescriptive studies, explaining how to speak it, but they refer only to some of the intermediate MAE's evolutionary stages. Conversely, there are several descriptive studies about the Northern Europe conception of the word MAE. This European designation refers to the language spoken by non-native English students. They mindlessly mix BE (learned) and GA (listened in social media). However, this, although similar, is entirely different in both chronological and evolutionary aspects, and will be analysed later.

All in all, the lack of academic interest on this particular subject (ie. Hollywood, and educated speech), results in the almost total absence of descriptive analyses. I just was able to find one: The excellent and innovative work of Wang (2014), about the Language of Catherine Hepburn. By using new computer technologies, Wang dissects her language variety, through several of her most famous films.

Despite the scholarly disdain of this concrete MAE aspect, there are many essays, commentaries and descriptions, published in all kind of formats. Most of them are merely descriptive, non-academic, contradictory and poorly substantiated.

2.2.1. Describing MAE; Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics.

Is it British? Is it American? It's Just "Rich"

Everybody agrees that MAE is (or at least sounds) part BE and part AE. This appreciation will be later confirmed by analysing MAE origins. So that the right way of starting MAE dissection would be by pointing out that both its forefathers, had a common root, most of the time they even sharing instructional text books. So that from now on, we will concentrate only on the most significant differences between RP and GA.

Although RP and GA are mutually understandable, they differ mainly in pronunciation. Consequently, we will focus this approach on this last aspect, in order to reach a descriptive analysis of MAE. Especially taking into account, that being a hybrid modality, the differences in spelling, grammar and vocabulary become blurred; let us start pointing out the essential characteristics of MAE:

According to an informal but very descriptive internet article called: "Oh, That Transatlantic Accent!", the main MAE characteristics are:

1. Start with a mainstream American accent.
2. Drop your r's at the end of words, like in "fear" and "winner".
3. Say all your t's as t's not d's (like in "water" and "butter").
4. Use RP (British) vowels. So "dance" becomes "dahns".

If you start from a British accent, the rules are different. It is an Americanized RP accent." (privateclubmarketing.com, 2015).

The more influential text about MAE is Skinner's book: *Speak with distinction*, written in 1942. This publication made her the High Priestess of MAE codification. "Speak with Distinction is incredibly dense, but it's also very thorough".(Atlas Obscura, 2016). We may simplify MAE main characteristics, according to her Bible:

1. Start with a mainstream American accent. This accent also called General American Western standard is the most widely used accent in the USA, especially in the western areas, It is also very similar to the Standard Canadian English, and fulfills the same role than RP in England.

Its main Characteristics are:

- Rhoticity (or r-fulness).
- T- Glottalization (/t/ is pronounced as a glottal stop).
- Flapping, /t/ or /d/ are pronounced as a flap [ɾ].
- Yod-dropping, /j/ is normally dropped or deleted.
- L velarization, /l/ sounds are pronounced darker.

-Wine-whine merger, w and wh are pronounced the same.

2. Drop your r's at the end of words, like in "fear" and "winner".Rhoticity is one of the most noticeable differences between BE and AE. It refers to the way the letter /r/ is pronounced (or not pronounced). In the case of MAE, this difference is lost, uttering it as in RP.

Examples:

/ɑ:r/	in GA becomes	[ɑ:]	in MAE	barn, car, park
/ɪər/	in GA becomes	[ɪə]	in MAE	fear, peer, tier
/ɛər/	in GA becomes	[ɛə]	in MAE	fare, pair, rare
/ʊər/	in GA becomes	[ʊə]	in MAE	poor, sure, tour
/oər/ and /ɔ:r/	in GA becomes	[ɔə]	in MAE	bore, torn, short
/ɜ:r/	in GA becomes	[ɜ:~ə:]	in MAE	burn, first, herd
/ər/	in GA becomes	[ə]	in MAE	doctor, martyr, surprise

(Mid-Atlantic accent, n.d.).

3. Say all your t's as t's not d's.

In GA sometimes the grapheme (t) is pronounced voiced [d], or even [n]; In MAE is always voiceless, [t], and never flapped: Examples: grateful ['grɛɪtʃf]; winter ['wɪntə]; water ['wɔ:tə].

4. Use RP (British) vowels.

So dance is pronounced [da:ns]; aunt [ɑ:nt]; class [kla:s]; path [pɑ:θ]; chance [tʃɑ:ns].

There are some other differences both with Standard AE like:

- No wine /w/-whine /w/ merger:ap–bath split: [æ] trap; [a] bath.
- No æ-tensing: hang [hæŋ]; lap [læp]; bat [bæt]; manage [mænɪdʒ].
- Father-Bother distinction: father ['fa:ə]; brother ['brʌ:ə].
- Mirror-nearer distinction: mirror [mɪrə]; nearer [nɪə].
- Mary-merry distinction: Mary [mɛəri]; merry [mɛri].
- Lack of happy tensing: happy [hæpi:].
- Lot-cloth assonance: lot [lɒt]; cloth [klɒθ].
- Cot /ɔ:/–caught/ɒ/ distinction.
- Hurry/ʌr/–furry: /ɜ:r/ distinction

Being this a mere appraisal to MAE, and not an exhaustive examination of MAE characteristics, also some other minor differences are not analyzed, most of

them being mere idiolects, moreover, to digest Skinner's work will be out of place in an appraisal.

As it was pointed out previously starting from RP, the process to speak MAE is different, more or less the other way around.

2.2.2. How MAE must be considered: Variety, Lect, Accent, Pidgin or Creole.

Some essential cornerstones must be set to define and establish the real nature of MAE:

a) From a fundamental point of view: It is an English language variety that has components of BE and AE.

b) From an evolutionary point of view: It started in the English rooted and educated, Mid-Atlantic States, being later codified by Mrs Skinner, and adopted and adapted by the new social mass media.

c) From a linguistic and sociolinguistic classification: This variety has been quoted described and codified under several meanings and names, depending on the point of view used to focus on each study.

According to Edward Finegan, "In the end, language varieties come down to judgments, often illogical". (Finegan, 2015)

Despite this affirmation, let us consider MAE from some of the many dissimilar and contrasting language classifications.

Until now we have been considering MAE as a language "variety", although Crystal quotes "For some sociolinguists, 'variety' is given a more restricted definition, as one kind of distinctive situational style – a specialized type of language within a dialect, e.g. for occupational purposes.". (Crystal, 2008, p.509).

Nevertheless, we will consider the standard meaning of *variety*, also called by other *authors' language, level or lect*, although not always setting the exact delimitation of the concepts. However, precisely what type of *lect*:

From a Geographical point of view, it is not a dialect as it has no regional reference (geolect), MAE may also be considered in some aspects as an ethnolect spoken by a social/cultural group; Finally, it is a panlectal and polilectal variety sharing grammar with BE and AE.

On the other hand, from a sociolinguistic point of view, it is a *sociolect* as the way a specific social group speak and also an *acrolect* as opposed to *basilect* and *mesolect*. Finally, and obviously, the variant used by each speaker is an idiolect.

From the standardization point of view, it is, or at least for Skinner was a

standard variety, as it has been codified and used by a relatively large group of people.

MAE has also been denominated accent, and indeed, it is a social accent, but, it is not a regional one as it is not related to a specific place; moreover, it has been *codified* by Skinner in more aspects than just pronunciation.

Another possible classification, according to Crystal, is *substrate*: “A substrate language (linguistic substrate or substratum) is particularly evidenced when a language is imposed on a community, as a result of political or economic superiority”- (Crystal, 2008. p. 463). Well, it may not be imposed, but if you go to the cinema, you heard it, and also if you wanted to work in the film industry in those years, you need to use it.

Moreover, it has components of two *superstrata* (EA and RP), and also it may be considered an archistratum, as it is considered a privileged variety.

From another point of view, MAE is an *appropriate variety*: “An application of the general sense of this term in linguistics, and especially in sociolinguistics, pragmatics and stylistics, to refer to a linguistic variety or form which is considered suitable or possible in a given social situation”. Crystal, 2008, p. 31)

If we consider *register*, as the way, a speaker uses language differently in different circumstances. Some of the MAE speakers use it as an Acting register.

Crystal also cites MAE, as *a koine* as he defines this term as: “The spoken language of a locality which has become a standard language or lingua franca” (Crystal, 2008, p. 262). Other denominations like *Jargon*, *Creole*, *Postcreole*, and some others, will add little more information.

Chapter 3 - MAE History

MAE origins are rooted in England, but with an apparent American birthplace. In this chapter, we will analyse MAE historical evolution, from its BE & AE ancestors to the mix of GA & RP, to conclude with the evolutionary stages of its development.

3.1. Origins: BE & AE

The birth of a new language or language variety is not a matter of “Hocus Pocus”, but a complex process involving the interaction of multiple linguistic variables. MAE is not an exception; there is a long process in its development, with many intermediate steps. Nonetheless, most analysts agree on the fact that MAE is, or at least sound, part British, and part American.

English is a clear example of how complex language evolution can be. It will be redundant to restate its thoroughly researched and described origins and development. Thus, it will be more practical to go straight to the point in which the two main components of MAE diverge. Three different steps pinpoint the progressive divergence between BE and AE (Svartvik & Leech, 2006, p. 70)

-1st Period: Colonial: From 1620 (Mayflower) to 1789 (United States Constitution):

In this stage, English-language was established as the standard language of the Colonies. Today it seems obvious, but at the time of the Independence, there were some other candidates, as other languages were spoken in the territory; French in Louisiana and Canada borderline; Spanish in Florida, California, New Mexico and Texas and even Russian in the North West Coast. But, in spite of considering The British as wicked exploiters, English was consensually agreed as the common language or *koine*.

- 2nd Period: National Expansion: 1789 to 1865 (End of the Civil War):

In this phase, AE spreads throughout the country, especially Westwards. Unifying its reality as a separate variety of the BE. Certain areas and elites preserve a distinctly British accent, because of trade recovering with the UK, and the adoption of the British educative standards. This dissociation between East and West may be considered MAE’s cradle.

- 3rd Period: From 1865 to 1929 (change of immigration laws):

At this stage, the USA progressively became a powerful Country, standing at

the same level as the great Nations after winning the war with Spain and The WWI, and so did the GA.

Right from the beginning of its colonisation, North America was a melting pot in which cultural, social and linguistic diversity, stir, boil, and cook. Inside this crucible, filled with dissenters, transported, indentured and all kind of individuals from any possible origin or circumstances, the need for mutual understanding, both mutated and steadied (albeit contradictory) British English (BE), The result was American English (AE). To give an idea of how hard life in the “colonies” could be, think that prisoners in the UK could choose between the death penalty and transportation as narrated in Defoe’s Moll Flanders.

In the first period, communication was the primary concern, and something similar to English, in its various forms was the common language. Afterwards, when particular communities settled down in specific areas, distinctive accents began to appear. Variations are copious, to say the least, mainly because once BE and AE divorced, they continue evolving, but following different paths.

Once again, scholars agree neither in the number nor in the characteristics of the differences between BE and AE, probably because they analyse language from their small marble tower in Swift’s floating island of Laputa.

Wikipedia (today's informative compendium), include differences in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary (lexis), spelling, punctuation, idioms, and formatting of dates and numbers. (Comparison of American and British English, 2019).

Others, like Janicki, enumerate pronunciation, stress, intonation, spelling, vocabulary, phraseology, grammar and morphology. (Janicki, 1977, p. 26)

Some others are not so specific; however, most of them agree that they are present in every linguistic level (phonetic, phonological, syntactic and semantic). Most studies emphasise Phonetics (accent), but surprisingly, there are not much scholar references to suprasegmental aspects like *intonation* (prosody, diction and elocution), one of the most distinctive and easy to recognise characteristics of AE and BE.

It would be tiresome and useless to recapitulate on those thoroughly studied and explained elements, whatever their number, except for those relevant and significant in spotting the differences. Therefore those concerning MAE must be not only mentioned but outlined. Despite this never lost, mutual understanding, there were more similarities than differences. “In the rest of the country, there are no dramatic differences of accent, but sometimes a Midland accent is recognised for the east-coast”- (Svartvik & Leech, 2006, p. 82).

3.2. Diachronic divergence

"Language groups cut off geographically from the mother country tend to be more conservative, and as such retain older features, while in the country of origin there is a natural inclination for the language to evolve at a quicker pace?". (Modiano, 1996, p.10).

Add to this the struggle for intercommunication with non-fluent speakers; Sum the gratifying perception of belonging to a Great Country with its own voice, and the result is a language with few dialects, and accents, despite the immensity of the territory. However, the year of the definitive dissociation is 1828. In this year Noah Webster published *An American Dictionary of the English Language*". From that moment onwards the two different English variants stand at their own. Once divorced, they follow different evolution paths, and although it has been quoted time and again, that AE is closer to Shakespeare's language than BE. It is not entirely true, because of the Great Vowel Shift, it would be more accurate to say that nowadays, the pronunciation of Robinson Crusoe's characters, should sound more American, than British. (Ro, 2018).

Despite the variety of dialects and accents in the USA, the need for communication was crucial. "As a consequence, the unifying variety called General American, (a kind of umbrella variety) is spoken throughout the whole country, notably in the West." (Modiano 1996, p.10).

Skinner, talking about the same subject said: "General American is that dialect of North American English most frequently found in the ordinary speech of people who live in the Western States. It does not sound like the speech of any particular region, yet it sounds distinctly contemporary and American; a similar term currently in use is *Western Standard*. General American is acceptable to all American listeners." (Skinner et al. 1990, ix).

Back in the UK, things evolve in an entirely different way. The non-stopped language evolution, and the belonging to a concrete Kingdom, region, or even city, resulting in a lot of distinctive geographical accents. The consequence was the need for a standard, proper way of speaking, and this is called Received Pronunciation (RP). Abusing of the Modiano (1996) cites: "Traditionally this form of English was used as an educational standard in Europe and elsewhere" (Modiano 1996, p.11).

To cut a long story short, while America tended to convergence; Albion favoured divergence.

3.3. GA & RP

GA & RP form the two main components of MAE. We cannot consider MAE as a new English variety. Even though the designations are bewildering and confusing, talking about New English Crystal quote: "The term is applicable only when there has been considerable linguistic development away from the traditional standards of British and American English", (Crystal, 2008, p. 327).

The name GA sometimes mismatched to Standard American, is the one with more native speakers, (approximately 70%). Conversely, RP, also an artificial variety "fostered at elite schools such as Eton and Harrow". (Svartvik & Leec., 2006, p.125). Is only spoken by 3% of the British population

RP similar varieties are numerous; some authors even had studied not only subdivisions (General RP, Refined RP and Near RP) but also their different evolution. In order to explain the similar varieties and different names, the following quote is beneficial to clarify RP's nature. "The study of RP is concerned exclusively with pronunciation, whereas Standard English, the Queen's English, Oxford English, and BBC English are also concerned with matters such as grammar, vocabulary, and style". (Received Pronunciation, 2019).

Reality is not straightforward. Still, the enumeration of similar aspects and names of almost the same matter made the quote valuable: Crystal, under the entry accent, and talking about social accents, said: "hence the labels 'Queen's English', 'BBC English', and the like. Received Pronunciation (RP) is the name given to this accent, and because of its regional neutrality RP speakers are sometimes thought of as having 'no accent'. This is a misleading way of putting it, however"- (Crystal, 2008, p. 03).

As indicated previously, and to avoid confusions from now on, we will follow Crystal's definitions, and use the concepts RP and GA exclusively: to trace the origins, evolution and characteristics, of MAE. Especially because they are the most relevant, widespread and well established standard versions of English Language.

Also, we will not use the term neutral, because for Crystal in the same book, it is only cited in its phonetic meaning, and in general is quite obscure. "But there is no *neutral* or *accentless* accent; you can replace one accent with another, but the idea that there is some perfect, is a myth hat's long been squashed." ('Atlas Obscura, 2016).

Moreover, both RP and GA refer to varieties that: "conveys little or no information about the regional speaker background." (Crystal, 2008, p. 207), and also in both cases: "The term indicates that its prestige is the result of social factors, not linguistic ones" (Crystal, 2008, p. 404). So we have on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, two English varieties, sharing:

correctness, widely using and geographical neutrality, but differing in some other formal aspects.

Once stated the staircase curtail, we can initiate the ascending through the five stages in MA evolution, tread by tread.

Chapter 4 - MAE Evolution

MAE reached its Golden Age between 1930 and 1945. From that moment onwards, it progressively decayed. To achieve its moment of Glory was not an easy task; it has to pass through a growing process and various intermediate steps to reach its maturity. Those stages can be established in seven different levels, although to set the boundaries among them is not always easy.

Those seven steps are Good Speech; Stage Speech (Theatre); Sound recording; Radio, (Announcer speech); Newsreel Speech; Talkies; TV and Fading away (posh and archetypes).



4.1. Good Speech

The first step to go upstairs is called Good Speech and started its evolution after the United States Independence. We will analyse it from four different aspects: Socio-economics; Technological-, Linguistics and a Diachronic analysis:

From 1800 onward, relationships with England, and Europe, progressively increase and normalise social and political reasons, this fact added to the revolution in industrial mechanisation and communication technology, vastly developed economic and personal relations. The steam engine operated mechanisms: steamships, trains, paddle steamers, and manufacturing machines put the USA in the international arena. To lustrate the importance of only one of these changes, we may take into account several quotes: "The steamship has been described as a major driver of the first wave of trade globalisation, and contributor to

an increase in international trade that was unprecedented in human history. (Steamship. 2019).

Trade relations, especially with England, settle down mainly in the area designed by Labov as the Mid-Atlantic States. As a result, this area became the financial and cultural navel of the country. Consequently, vaguely English institutions and accent, grown in this area,. All this lead to the creation of *an elite*, with its distinctive diction and institutions. One of those institutions was *private schools*, and this means elocution lessons.

Those same technological advances also produce significant changes in the whole country: think of the trade development through the Mississippi River (Huckleberry Finn); The impressive, train driven, expansion to the West (Zane Grey); And the Industrial Revolution (Sister Carrie).

One of the most remarkable results of those changes was the massive arrival of waves of immigrants, with their different native languages, economic and cultural characteristics and accents. This fact contributed to the relevance of the language each social group used. Language discrimination qualifies people as newcomers or established, poor or rich, educated or not educated, literate or illiterate, free or slave, and so on so forth.

4.1.1. Elocution & Status

Therefore, who was more established, rich, free, literate, and educated than the WASP descendants of the first colonisers of the Mayflower? Curiously enough, most of them live in the Mid-Atlantic States, were rich and speak an odd British articulation learned at expensive Public Schools.

In other parts of the old British Empire, but following different evolution glides, similar *lects* arouse: like the Canadian Dainty, and some distinctive social accents in Australia. New Zealand and South Africa, though without clearly established linguistic boundaries between them.

Even in the USA´s same area, different regional accents came up: Delaware Valley English; Locust Valley / Long Island lockjaw, Philly, Baltimore accent, Theeeeeahtah Voice. Etcetera-

The main point of the previous lines is the term “Elocution”, related to English teachers, Elites, and Prestige. “For me, the model of that international English standard was always FDR. He was a New Yorker who had the prestige pattern of the upper class in New York, and it was really R-less”. (Labov cited in, MacNeil et al., 2005)

In sociolinguistics, there are no right or wrong language varieties, and Labov probably will blush at the mere idea. However, as previously quoted, the concepts *acrolect* and social prestige language are deeply grounded in MAE origins.

To explain this influence, a couple of a large number of scholar quotes will help us:

a) “B.E. has a history of power and has been seen as the most prestigious variant of English, with superior status, whereas A.E. has been seen as less educated “(Tottie, 2002, p. 01).

b) “By tradition, R.P. has had a higher prestige than American English, and often stands for status and is considered to be more correct and elegant” (Odenstedt, 2000, p. 137).

The social importance of this elegant language brought about that some *snob* economic growing classes emulated its distinctive accent. This fact generated diglossic situations, when several “varieties of a language co-occur throughout a speech community, each with a distinct range of social function”, (Crystal, 2008, p. 145).

However, emulation and status were not the only way of acquiring MAE. As an apocryphal internet quote explains: Mid-Atlantic English is usually acquired in one of four ways:

a) Naturally, by spending extended time in England and in North America (Cary Grant and Vincent Price were born in the U.K.).

b) At a boarding school in America before the 1960s, after which it fell out of vogue (Audrey Hepburn, assist at Bryn Mawr College, and Jacqueline Kennedy at Miss Porter’s School).

c) Intentionally for stage practice or other use. A version codified by voice coach Edith Skinner, American Theatre Standard, is widely taught in acting schools (John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart).

d) By non-native Anglophones, from different British and American sources (New North Europe speakers).

For this appraisal, all of them must be taken into account, although the second one must be pointed out in the sense that learning elocution and diction are the starting point of this story. By the way, Crystal does not have an entry for *Elocution*, but Labouff quotes *Diction*, according to Webster's International Dictionary, as “the execution of text with regard to pronunciation, enunciation, and expression”. (Labouff, 2007, p. 03)

4.1.2. Chronology and Culprits

From a chronological point of view, it all began with Henry Sweet, the nineteenth-century philologist who was the model for Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion*. One of Sweet's students was William Tilly, when this Australian phonetician who had trained in Germany (he was punctilious, a lover of discipline) settled in New York City in 1918. (Langbein, n.d.). He taught, at Columbia University, what he called World English or World Standard English. This way of Speech was considered at that time: educated, cultivated, or cultured. Tilly's scope of work was limited to the academic environment, but he sowed the seeds for one of his pupils to spread the concept beyond the classrooms.

A Canadian born, elocution teacher, took Tilly's lessons out of the University, her name was Skinner, and she got a Bachelor's degree in 1930 and a Master in 1931. "The codification of the Mid-Atlantic accent in writing, particularly for theatre training, is often credited to American elocutionist Edith Warman Skinner. Her 1942 book, laid out her idea of Good Speech." (thevintagenews.com, 2016)

That book was named, *Speak with Distinction*, and reached great success in theatre performing. In Skinner own words: "Good Speech is hard to define but easy to recognise when we hear it. Good Speech is a dialect of North American English that is free from regional characteristics; recognisably North American, yet suitable for classic texts; effortlessly articulated and easily understood in the last rows of a theatre". (Skinner et al. 1990, ix).

She, who had coined the idea of Good Speech, some years later (1942), rendered her lessons, in her book *Speak with Distinction*. Initially intended for her students at Carnegie Mellon, it is an exhaustive and thorough description of the way people should speak in order not to go away from established *good taste*. The book is so descriptive graphically (mouth positions), and phonetically (International alphabet symbols), that to simplify its content would be futile. "In her efforts to create a neutral accent, Skinner created one of the most non-neutral accents in the past few centuries". (Atlas Obscura, 2016).

Due to her importance in the codification of MAE, we will find quite often Mrs Skinner's name throughout this appraisal. To, give a slight idea of her attitude. A mockery of both Tilly and Skinner, teaching diction to the actors are depicted in the following sequences that also showed the early talkies recording difficulties.

“This scene from *Singin' in the Rain*—one of the greatest movies of all time, but also a trenchant look at the logistical challenges Hollywood's transitional period between silent films and talkies—shows how challenging it was to get a good take.” (Kushins, 2017)

Those are the scenes:

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFW-QEHTws\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFW-QEHTws)

And

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6jsXQm5IrM\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6jsXQm5IrM)

By the way, in the second sketch, they are recording with the early Vitaphone system (the sound recorded in an independent wax disk), substituted later on, for the Movietone system, (the audio was recorded optically on the film),

“But, as *Moustache*, said in Willy Wilder's, *Irma la Douce*.

That's another story.....

4.2. Stage speech

The origins of Theatre in the USA date back to 1752 when Lewis Hallam's troupe arrived at Williamsburg. They came from England and settled down a deep cultural relationship between England and The Mid-Atlantic States. The first representations were classic English plays performed by English groups. Still, in the early years, most of the plays produced came from Europe, but progressively native actors went onto the stage; Only with Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* in 1767 do we get a professionally produced play written by an American. (Theatre in the United States, 2019).

So that this same geographical area, especially Boston and New York, turn into the cultural heart of the whole country, and at the same time the economic kernel. Consequently, the way of speaking of the upper classes of the North Eastern area, both influenced, and was influenced by Theatre Speech.

The rest of the country stage standards were humbler, not to say precarious. To remember Twain's characters of *The Duke* and *The King*, may give an idea (exaggerated, but real), of the theatrical state-of-the-art, and the importance of affected language in rural westwards areas.

Wang (2014, p. 02), quotes LaBouff citing and describing the moment in which Theatre and “Good Speech” came together. It goes like this: “In the 1930s, the acting troupe under Sir Tyrone Guthrie was a blend of American, Canadian, and British actors who all had different accents. Frustrated and distracted by the continually changing pronunciation he

heard between actors during dialogues, Guthrie enlisted the help of voice teacher Edith Skinner”. (Labouff, 2007, p. 241)

Whether this fact affected Theatre and Cinema language severely or not, may be argued, but the importance of this teacher in diction is undeniable, and indeed, she was a cultural catalyst that coined the relation between upper classes and Theatre.

Skinner was born in New Brunswick, Canada. After studying phonetics at Columbia University, she began to assist Margaret Prendergast McLean, a leading stage-speech consultant; moreover, she was a voice coach and consultant to Broadway actors, gaining a national reputation, “It’s now the 1930s, and Edith Skinner is Hollywood’s go-to advisor for all things speech-related” (Atlas Obscura, 2016)

Skinner once told The Milwaukee Journal. “Your voice expresses you”, and “You don't want to lose that individual voice God gave you. What I try to do is get rid of the most obvious regionalisms, the accent that says, 'you're from here, and I'm from there,' the kind of Speech that tells you what street you grew up on.” (Taylor, 2013)

Mrs Skinner was the link among the several stages and conceptions of Mid-Atlantic. Actors and singers following Good Speech method went to Hollywood, and so do some teachers, recruited as diction consultants.

But not all the theatre performances were so cultivated, proximately from 1880 to 1930 the most important shows throughout the whole Country were Vaudevilles, an eclectic assortment of unrelated acts from every *artistic activity*. The importance of this entertainment form, apart from its great success, lied in the fact that it shares representation place, and attitudes, with Newsreels, and Cinema, sometimes included in the same bill. In those early times, both shared the interaction between performers and public, (placed at a tomato’s thrown). It must have been a real “Performance”, in the modern conception of the world. Most of the future cinema actors cut their teeth, in those shows, sharing sometimes stage with actors speaking MAE, and narrators of the Newsreels with such an affected voice.

4.3. Sound Recording

“Verba volant, Scripta manent” (Cayo Tilo)

Only at the end of the 19th century sounds stopped from being an intangible cultural object. Until that moment sound was by definition ephemeral It is true that words could be written, and music transcribed to musical notation, but the little details and the real nature of each sound performance, immediately vanish in the ether. Until that moment, emotions,

feelings and suprasegmental characteristics could be indicated, but not exactly duplicated or repeated.

Alphabet appeared circa 2300 BC, and set a before (Prehistory) and an after (History). In the same way, sound recording established a new era in linguistics, from that moment onwards philologists might count on documentary evidence. The possibility of preserving and duplicating sounds is consensually dated: August 12, 1877, when Thomas Alba Edison recorded: Mary had a little lamb. (Knihadoucha, 2011). We will hear from Mr Edison later.

Previously in 1857, a Frenchman, Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville, had developed the phonograph, the Edison invention was suspiciously similar, but the recordings were only graphics, and only in 2008, by optically scanning the old records, the song "Au Clair de la lune" could be heard.

For the first time in history, human beings could now hear their natural voice as the rest of the world perceived it. Usually, our sounds are transmitted to our additive system, through our head bones vibration, so that we cannot hear our real sounds. Thanks to sound recording music, actors, politicians, etcetera, could modulate, improve, and even correct, their voices. Moreover, their possible mistakes would remain for all to see, not being carried away by the wind, as it used to happen.

Later on, we will see how Cinema and sound recording joined together to give birth to talkies, and the early systems used in the first films. (William Fox, Movietone; De Forest, Phonofilm; Warner Brothers, Vitaphone, and RCA, Photophone).

More or less in those years, similar inventions also progressed, (Radio, Telephone); previous designs evolve from mechanical to electric; Big Companies burst in the media business, (previously managed by small firms). And last but not least the initial deficiencies of the devices, determined increasing importance of diction, pronunciation and elocution.

4.4. Radio Speech.

William Labov explained in an interview. And so thought Jay O'Berski, a teacher at the same Carnegie Mellon University where Mrs Skinner studied.

"This nasally, clipped pronunciation is a vestige from the early days of Radio. Receivers had very little bass technology at the time, and it was tough, if not impossible to hear, bass tones on your home device". (HowStuffWorks, 2014)

This idea seems quite logical, but according to other resources, and as usually happen, things are not so easy as they seem.

Let us start from the beginning. The Radio arrived at that moment of the history, in which inventors, scientists, and entrepreneurs, not always differed. So that, although, “Guglielmo Marconi is usually cited as the radio father, the harsh reality, was that: “Astute patent dealings were a must in the early radio industry, (F.M. Radio: Technology and Patent Suits)”. (The History of the Radio Industry in the United States to 1940, n.d.). Consequently, radio beginnings were more related with patents, licenses (once again Edison was involved), and what The Reader’s Digest called “Popovism” (in the cold war era, The Russians always cite a so-called “Popov”, as a forerunner).

To make it even more challenging, several outstanding contributions in Radio evolution came both from Big Companies and individuals, from various Countries. Those apportion added several important innovations (not always initially reckoned) to the basic idea.

Unfortunately and probably because of this strained environment, Radio, in those early days, was not a very profitable business. Being a wholly deregulated brand new concept, everyone does as he pleased, and that meant big trouble and a terrible mess

In the U.K., It was the Government that assumed the control of the Broadcast, it was called BBC, and the language was selected by: "seeking a common denominator of educated speech" (James, 1935, p. 42). Those early broadcast must have sounded very RP-ish, later known as BBC English.

Alternatively, in the USA, freedom was the norm. Although, several small regulations try to bring order to the chaos, in 1924 the Secretary of State declared that the Radio. *Was probably the only Industry in the nation that was unanimously in favour of being itself regulated.* Finally, in 1927 the Radio Act settles down the Radio business standards.

Until that point the competition among small Radio Stations was fierce. The only way of making them profitable was through advertisements; consequently, in America, they call the speakers, radio announcers. Most of the early small Radio Stations, in fact, were owned by Commercial firms, to sell their products.

Once the activity settles down, large Corporations cope with dominating the Industry, mainly because its extensive patent gave them power (RCA, NBC, CBS, ABC). From that moment onwards, until the TV arrival. Radio popularity multiplied rapidly. This period was called the Golden Age of Radio. New forms of art appeared, most of them inspired in theatrical ways, like the Soap Operas, so-called because of most of them, were sponsored by soap brands. The pick point of this era came in 1938, when Orson Welles, who had used his announcer voice in wine ads, broadcasted the War of the Worlds, with his “mighty Wurlitzer of a voice”, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzC3Fg_rRJM]

Later on, he would use his MAE accent in his film “Citizen Kane”,

Most actors had studied diction or elocution. So they know how to modulate and use the voice in different ways, they could learn lines by heart, and they could learn how to recommend and sell goods, if necessary. Most of them had or had discovered, a certain affected way of speaking, and yes, it was MAE, or at least, something similar, let us call it “MAE-ish”. To understand the close and obvious relation between Voice and Radio, an American radio executive said in 1932:

"An announcer should be such a friendly voice in the house that the listener is tempted to answer him back". (Abbot, 1969, p.103).

Also, another one wrote:

"An announcer in the NBC is expected to average well in the following: a good voice, clear enunciation; and pronunciation free of dialect or local peculiarities". (Herbert & Charles, 1989).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, at this step, the communication established through the Radio was not peer-to-peer. One of the first mass followed broadcast was a discourse of the president of the USA, Roosevelt (educated at Groton). Those facts mean that someone from above, with a special accent talking about the New Deal, was immediately followed by someone, in a convincing and polite similar voice, recommending you goods. It does not matter, if he is a dirty old man in slippers and undershirt, speaking from a cubbyhole, he could convince anyone, just through his voice, that he is an Ambassador speaking from The Vienna Opera Ball. That is the magic of the Radio, and that is a mighty, economically, and socially profitable reason.

“Well, most linguists recognise that there is a broadcast standard pronunciation, which is not fixed, but which converges towards a pattern that is not local. And that's changed over time” (MacNeil et al, 2005)

Under these circumstances,. an idiosyncratic character epitomised the announcer's voice; his name was Cornelius Westbrook van Voorhis, nicknamed: *the Voice of Doom*. Furthermore, Mr. van Voorhis served as a link to the next step in the staircase, as his voice is more famous for his Newsreels narrations.

4.5. Newsreels.

The Press Secretary to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, said: "The newsreel brings to a modern world a truer picture of itself, and its people, than any other agency heretofore known to mankind." (Rogers, 2015, p.

41)

For those Spanish readers of a certain age, to understand, and compare the Newsreel concept, and voice will be more natural, as this country was one of the last (1981), projecting in such a format. (It was called NODO). It was usually narrated by Matías Prats, Mr Van Voorhis was his American “alter ego”. He was the narrator of one of the leading USA Newsreel producers (Time-Life Group), called: The March of

Time´s, it was so well known that even Orson Welles parody it in Citizen Kane.

Here there are three samples of them, just for comparison:

NODO:

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlpG68Y9KSE\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlpG68Y9KSE)

THE MARCH OF TIME´S:

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R1wZm0ups8&t=65s\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R1wZm0ups8&t=65s)

NEWS ON THE MARCH (“Citizen Kane”)

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzUVWQ0_BNc\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzUVWQ0_BNc)

Talking about Van Voorhis, Fallows said: “The plummy announcer voice that hovers over the Atlantic midway between the Eastern Seaboard and England was mortally wounded in 1959”. (Fallows, 2013).

Filming the news is almost as old as cinema itself, those short informative films, had no a specific name yet, but were very popular in the Nickelodeon period (1906-1912),. Both in Europe and USA, they reached successful expansion filming a sweetened version of WW1.

The term *Newsreels*. Was used for first time in 1919, when William Randolph Hearts, (depicted and parodied in Citizen Kane), created International Newsreel. To appreciate the importance of those short films, we may think how through that high voice the spirit of an ever growing nation was modelled after Roosevelt´s New Deal spirit.

Dos Passos analyses this in his works, speculating about “the socialisation of the individual´s mind which is taking place through the new mass media” (Seed, 1984, p. 182-192). Unfortunately, some years later in Germany, Goebbels take good note of the power of media, in conducting masses. As stated by Victor Klemperer in LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii.

Previously, in the Theatre section, we have pointed out that in the beginnings of the cinema, it shared premises, audience, and even bill, with Vaudeville performances.

Short subjects acted as a buffer, a curtain raiser to prepare the audience for the feature that followed”. (Crafton 1998, p. 381)

The idea of silence, under such circumstances, was out of place. The noise of the

projectors, the aloud read out subtitles, (as not everybody could read), the constant traffic of people moving back and forth, the eating smoking and drinking and the cheeky comments, made such spectacles boisterous.

Subsequently, texts to read were added to the documentary films and were narrated by someone, with “good speech”, and an affected voice, like the one they had heard on the Radio. Sometimes adding their own comments, not always elegant.

Later on, recorded disks were added to the films, as the synchronicity with the short duration newsreels, if not perfect, was acceptable. Those recordings contained either music, Speech, or commentaries, all of them sounded very similar to the announcer's voice. This system of film plus disc was called Vitaphone.

“Vitaphone maintained the substantial lead it had established for its sound shorts”. (Crafton 1998, p. 381)

This relationship between vaudeville and movie industry before the arrival of sound was both collaborative and competitive, but the advent of full developed talkies, made them indeed diverge. The next step in the evolution is film and voice synchronicity, and this meant the Vaudeville downfall. Newsreels, for its part, adopted Talkies advances, and resist for some tears, but TV arrival dug its grave.

"Sound added to the novelty value of shorts, opened up a new world of verbal comedy, and provided film-makers with a laboratory in which the new technology could be tested and fine-tuned." (Crafton 1998, p.381).

4.6. Talkies.

"We didn't need dialogue. We had faces". (Gloria Swanson).

In the basement of the Grand Café, in Paris on December 28 1895, the Lumière brothers, projected Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory, this moment is usually agreed as the beginning of motion pictures, they patented the system but considered it just a curiosity. Although other people in other countries had tried some new previous and parallel methods, not falling in localisms, everybody assumed the Lumiers invention of cinema.

But not all was about business: “Throughout the history of the cinema, the film has been about illusion.” (Monaco, 2003, p.337). Cinema is both an Art, and an Industry. The Seventh Art began in France (Pathe, Gaumont, Alice Guy, Melies). Nevertheless, the development of the cinema as an industry belongs certainly to North America, and to get into it enormous amounts of money were needed. In the USA, things are different,

businesses are business, and unambiguously cinema industry was born in this country. There the well-known Thomas Alva Edison, inventor, and/or patent expert, registered his? Previous invention of the Kinetoscope, although it can be seen only by a person at a time.

During the late 19th and early 20th Century, Edison held many of the patents, needed to create movies. (He had about 1000) .With this power in his hands, he controlled almost every aspect of the film business, creating a monopoly (Motion Picture Patent Company, or MPPC), that controlled every aspect of film production and projection. That meant much control, taking into account, that: “Going out to a movie theatre was a public act” (Monaco, 2003, p. 336)

Fleeing from this constrictions, and the New Jersey weather, some independents, went Westwards to sunny California, far from Edison rapacity, with much sunlight for filming and also close to the Mexican border, just in case Edison would start legal claims. There, near Los Angeles, they settle down in a place named Hollywood. It was the beginning of the American Film industry, but Edison has not said his last word yet.

As we have seen in Vaudeville and Newsreels, although spectacles, were never completely silent, but, reality has sounds, and so films must have. The idea of recording songs, effects, and voices, and then synchronise them with the movie, worked decently with the short duration Newsreels, but worst with full films. Moreover, Edison also had *invented* and patented the sound recording (Phonograph), and the electrification of the necessary mechanical devices.

Despite the initial problems, the advances in electrification of sound recording (microphones and loudspeakers) and synchronicity, lead to the first Talkie: *The Jazz Singer* billed as *The greatest story ever told*, released on October 06, 1927. This film used the Vitaphone sound-on-disk system. And although it only has sound in some isolated song and speech sequences, was considered a significant achievement. The main advantage of the Vitaphone system was its compatibility with the current projecting devices. However, as it can be appreciated in the film *Singing in the rain*, filming in Vitaphone was a real nightmare.

Alternative film projection methods, like Movietone, were also deficient and not evolved. Although based on an optical sound-on-film system, that integrated the sound in a lateral band of the new 35mm film, also patented by Edison. This system proved to be better, although very expensive because of the need to refurbish cameras and projectors either by producers and exhibitors. However, until another inventor/patent expert, Lee de Forrest, set it up definitively was far from perfect.

Film Industrial mayor groups, started a race, in winch nobody wished to be left behind. However, they should not adopt a system that rendered short termed obsolete, or

unacceptable in economic terms for the small cinema theatres. Nobody was sure what the future would deserve to talkies if they were just another entertainment, a curiosity to be served in small doses, or it may confirm a new type of complete and profitable films, and if so how long should they be?

“The serious problem of injecting sound into the now silent drama is in the offing. What producers will do in this regard, of course, is an unknown factor”. (Maurize Kann, film daily, 1928, cited in Crafton. 1997 Introduction)

The economic crisis did not help at all. In 1929, the Black Thursday,(Wall Street crash) and the resulting Great Depression may transform any inversion in a dilapidated waste of money. The whole Country reality was so crude that any investment inversion in entertainment that is the first thing to be economically postponed may render a broken-down of money and efforts. Because of this, private inversions where constrained, and consequently, only the Majors could afford the task.

In Hollywood early years, actors were closer to a band of Gipsies or a Circus troupe, than to the glamorous image they project. To make things even more problematic, a significant number of actors flee to Hollywood from a devastated post-War Europe. Not without reason, it was called Babylon.

Obviously, and as far as films were silent, the language was not a problem and consequently, if actors speak MAE or not. However, the arrival of talkies raised a new difficulty. Some voices were sharp others squeaky, hoarse or gruff and some others with such a strong accent that made them almost non-understandable. This fact, together with the deficiencies of the early systems caused that diction turned into a decisive factor, for choosing actors and actress. The variety chosen, bestowed or simple favoured was very similar, and with the same origins that those we have to analyse in the previous stages. So if you do not speak MAE or something very similar, and you are a wannabe actor or actress, unless you had a sweet and naturally educated voice, you had to choose between being tamed by a voice coach or, alternatively being thrown away. All in all, a couple of quotes, talking about Hollywood, will help us to establish the actual situation:

“In the late 1920s, the American film industries dictated to the world”. (Barrios, 2010, p. 4).

Alternatively:

“At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Hollywood remains the dominant force in global cinema”. (Monaco, 2003, p.335).

Also, talking about the way Hollywood spoke in those days, Lawrence Christon said:

“---- in the first half of the twentieth century, "actors spoke in a kind of neutralised Midwestern dialect". (American Accents / Useful Notes, n.d.)

4.7. TV & Fading away, (posh and archetypes)

Language changes, and there is nothing you can do about it.

In an interview, when asked about this, Labov said:

“Robert: (program conductor) So, people wanted to sound more English before *World War II* and less so after *World War II*.

Bill Labov: We hear British people use that pattern and we love it, but it's not right for an American". (MacNeil et al., 2005)

Surprisingly, for the same reason that has made it fashionable, before WWII, MAE variety has been derided as posh, odd and affected, as an example, just think of Margaret Dumont elegant speak and manners, scorned by Groucho Marx. Consequently, MAE did not disappear all of a sudden but progressively died out.

There are several reasons for MAE falling out of Hollywood’s favour:

a) Labov cites the advances in Micro-phonic technology as a reason for language on films becoming more “natural”. The quality of the film sound recording, even allowed that during WWII, some renowned Hollywood Directors filmed live war scenes on the battlefield, with a decent sound.

b) While being in the Army, soldiers from every origin and status joined together and ascertained that they might communicate without using any particular accent.

c) Thousands of these soldiers were sent to a war impoverished England, and checked, in situ, that all the supposed charm and elegance of this ancient Country had vanished.

d) During and after WWII, many U.S. citizens change residency; this fact reduced the social connotations of accents. Moreover, a high number of immigrants settle down in the “rich” Mid-Atlantic States, and that area accent became related to alterity and lack of American authenticity

e) In the same way as after winning the Independence War, the feeling of belonging to a Great War winner Country, potentiate its linguistic independence. Consequently, it began to sound more and more American.

f) To seal the fate of MAE, most Disney’s villains sounded in such an odd variety, (Cruella de Ville, Malefica, The Queen), and to make things worse, the TV arrival, with its natural and live way of speaking, put the nails in the MAE’s coffin. As previously quoted n

the beginning of the introduction, any hope should be abandoned, when the bad guy in the TV series *Lost in Space* spoke out in such an affected voice.

Adding more arguments to MAE's fading away, Labov puts the stone on the grave. "According to William Labov, the teaching of this pronunciation declined sharply after the end of World War II. As a result, this American version of a *posh* accent has all but disappeared even among the American upper classes." (Fallows, 2015)

Chapter 5 - Present & Future

We have analyzed MAE past and evolution, but are it actual status, now we will analyze its present status, and try o guess its probable future. To condense the findings we may say: It already breaths and it has surviving possibilities.

5.1. Present: Is it dead or just asleep? Old name, New Conceptions.

MAE may have been comfortably numb for some decades, but it certainly awakens from time to time, so that it not only seems to be aroused but also conscious. Moreover, it is not totally lost, as it remained in some of the best films, and recorded historical moments (Roosevelt's Infamy Speech), it is only a matter of knowing and appreciate it. Finally, as it was previously pointed out, MAE has been non-stop used in Films, TV, Publicity, Theatre, and Singing.

5.2. New European MAE

MAE is accepted and easily understood on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, this may be the most substantial reason for the increase use of this variety as our new European International language (Modiano 1996, p.135), even though there is still a lack of social unawareness when it comes to this variety, probably because not many people have heard about it, probably due to the disputes among the European Community members, for assuming a common language.

The fact is that some scholars analysing the language used by European students of English, found out that they speak something very similar to MAE. From a different starting point, they reached similar conclusions. The BE that they learn, and the AE they ear in movies, TV, Internet, and Electronic Games are dissimilar, so that, they just mix them, using a variety that for some authors like Modiano is named Also MAE. He even differentiate between Old and New MAE, being this last one the variety which is mainly used in Northern Europe, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Etcetera). Nevertheless, a combination of the two primary varieties of the language has created the best possible platform for second language English speakers. But Modiano, also said that "recent findings indicate that even an increasing number of native speakers mix features from both British and American English and pronounce words in a recognizable way"..(Modiano, 1996, p.12).

Even there are studies showing “How Americanisms are killing the English language”. (Anderson, H. 2017).

One of the possible reasons for the birth of this variety, maybe that most of the students just do not differentiate the various English accents. Even some teachers possibly cannot do it.

But instead of dismissing it as some sort of unacceptable mongrel English, he stated that it was in fact “already commonplace, not only among an increasing number of proficient non-native users in the European Union but also among many native speakers.” (Modiano, 1996, p.135).

5.3. Future: Science & Language.

When men due to their technological advances, defy God, building the tower of Babel, the Almighty said: "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." (Genesis 11:7). From that moment onwards, technology and language came together.

Language is like a mirror where each and every aspect of human nature reflects. So that, as reality changes, so language does. Some of these changes belong to language itself (intrinsic), other to external factors (extrinsic). Technology belongs to this last type and has become more and more important as its evolution grows exponentially.

Since the invention of the alphabet by Phoenicians and the change in ancient Greece from using writing for cultural matters rather than just for commercial ones to the actual robotics, computing and communication development, language has followed the pace of science. New things and processes demand new names, and he who discovers anything chooses typically the name and the word, (*He who pays the piper calls the tune*).

In the case of the English language, the starting point of this relation is 1477, when William Caxton printed in Westminster Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. *Per se* the printing press did not change the English language, as printing was expensive (elitist), and the number of literate people scarce, but it indeed unified, and established Chancery English, as the standard language. (William Caxton and the introduction of printing to England, 2017).

When in 1535, Miles Coverdale printed the Bible in English, and Thomas Cranmer's publisher the Book of Common Prayer in 1549, English got its maturity. If there was any doubt about it, Shakespeare wrote his plays only some years later:” The writings of Shakespeare actually influenced the English language, as his works contributed to standardizing English language rules and grammar.” (Racoma, 2017).

Although the concept Encyclopaedia was of French origins, the edition in 1768 of

the *Encyclopaedia Britannica, or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, compiled upon a New Plan*, put this language in the scientific arena, From that moment onwards English language has superseded other scientific languages (French, German), especially in the American variety and as we have seen in the previous pages. Modern world specific languages are almost universally English based, except for ballet, music and very few more.

Still, technological advances had influenced not only linguistic evolution but also linguistic analysis, from Helmholtz Resonator to Computational linguistics, Philology has used every single technical progress, to improve language study and analysis, though unfortunately not making significant advances in terminology consolidation and unification.

5.4. Crystal Ball & Conclusions.

Being this humble appraisal, a mere glimpse to a concrete linguistic variety, his aim is merely to spot the nature and characteristics of a specific language variety, especially, when purely external factors like social status, technology, and mass media affect their evolution, and not the traditional geographic and internal ones.

War has traditionally been one of the main factors in technological evolution, WWI put the USA in the Nation's Premier League, and WWII consecrated it as the World technological leader, (after taking over all the war losers knowledge Booty). A similar and extra linguistic evolutionary process to the one that put MAE on Stage, and in front of the cameras and the microphones, rendered it passé, outmoded and posh, when discoveries render its use unnecessary, finally the arrival of TV definitively seal its fate.

The analysis of MAE evolution shows that it is more relates to "external factors", (Political, Social and Technological changes), than the usual internally-motivated linguistic development. In the particular case of the relation between Technology and Language, the interaction dually takes place:

a) By spotting their influence in language contact and evolution, especially in communication, transport and those circumstances where language contact reaches its pick.

b) By pointing out the importance of new Technological advances in the study and analysis of language, especially in computer analysed linguistic.

Several English varieties are not linked to a geographical area, but to a specific common technical situation, Especially on subjects that connect people of different languages and cultures, but with a common concern, this is called Jargon: Aeronautical; International News Broadcasts, Travel Agencies, Hotels, Online shopping, Maritime and so on so forth. Those facts mean that Geographical based studies probably have lost some of

their past preponderance. Language study must come closer if he wants to be Real Science, to a more dense interaction with other sciences. By using this most profound relation, new analysis models and systems will develop and unify a minimum common agreement point, and standardization.

Playing Zoltar, I daresay, that in the future it will be more important the language you use in a particular circumstance than which your standard language is or where are you from. Because bilingualism, trilingualism, and even diglossia and triglossia, will be a common practice. As an example in the Cold War Era, people behind the Iron Curtain spoke: Russian (mandatory), their Official National language (mandatory), and their Regional Dialect. Even after the fall of the Berlin wall, some of those dialects become National languages.

Galaxies, Empires and Languages, suffer from periods of expansion and contraction. Where are we now? English is absolutely in an expansive moment. However, how long and in which way will it last? Will Automatized Mobil phone and online translation render a Common language like MAE unnecessary? Alternatively, it may be reduced to a strictly commercial and professional tool, limited to 200 words. Sometimes I feel like Captain Toby Shandy (Uncle Toby, with his obsessive attention to History and Science. In this case not of fortifications, but language.

I cannot guess what the future deserves us. Probably, the English language will continue ruling the international professional intercultural communication, however, only for some time decaying and progressively being simplified to a mere 200 words language.

Music is always there to help us:

Doris Day sang: The future is not ours to see (With words in Italian)

Even the Beatles use non-stand varieties “Tomorrow never knows.”

Finally, Fred Astaire sang, (mocking MAE accent): Let's Call the Whole Thing Off.



While I was writing this appraisal, it reminded me more and more an old fairy tale. I cannot help writing it. So, and just for educational purposes, It goes like this.

Long ago, when the wind spoke with a voice, you could understand. The King of an old country arrived in a new land. His name was English, and once there he fell in love with a beautiful native girl, named America, they married, lived happily and have a child, they called him Mid-Atlantic, usually shortened to MAE.

Time went by, and The King missing both his homeland and his voyages, soon find America, just one more impolite conquest. She, for her part, hated his disdain and egotism, hence he returned to his domains, and she remained there and went well off.

MAE received from his father his proper education and his love for adventure, and from his mother, her strength, and curiosity, especially for new inventions, and discoveries. When he grew up, his power was not free of a touch of class, and his knowledge, of a bit of *naiveté*.

Feeling restrained in his ambitions in the East, he went westwards, and on the way, he acquired a lot of useful technical skills. There in the West Coast, he found lovely weather, and soon he met a girl named California, so he settled down. While the rest of the country evolved and developed, he remained there, rendering lazy, rich and affected, and falling into neglect.

Meanwhile, back in the Old Continent, his Old Grandmother Europe was in trouble. Her sons were rioting for her kingdom. His father, once a well-positioned candidate, was old and whimsical. He had withdrawn, to his small kingdom, surprisingly, in the middle of the spat.

Late in the past, his Northern Cousins had helped his father kingdom several times, even some of them move there. So though there had been some disputes, the affinities weighted more than the differences.

They knew MAE strength and feared their Southern Cousins. Moreover, his uncle on his voyages had had some other children, that backed MAE up unconditionally, and the rest of the countries considered him, if not the best, at least a perfect go-between.

And so it was, and so it is.

To be continued.

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APPENDIX

This is a list of characters who had spoken MAE. This list is only an illustration of some of the most representative. Especially if we consider that some actors use this variety on purpose for a specific film. Even there are some English actors who had this accent, when acting in the USA.

The list is alphabetically ordered, but is easy to notice that most of the characters are actors / actresses, with some Private School Educated personalities, and a few Writers.

MAE Speakers list:

Bette Davis (Actor/Actress)
Billy Zane (Actor/Actress, Titanic)
Carrie Fisher (Actor/Actress, Princess Leia)
Cary Grant (Actor/Actress)
Claude Frollo (Disney)
Christopher Plummer (Actor/Actress)
Cruella de Vil (Disney)
David Hyde Pierce (Actor/Actress.(Frazer)
Elizabeth Banks (Actor /Actress, The Hunger Games)
Elizabeth Taylor (Actor/Actress)
Evan Peters (Actor/Actress, American Horror Story)
Frances Fisher (Actor/Actress, Titanic)
Franklin Delano Roosevelt (President)
Gore Vidal (Writer)
Horned King (Disney)
Ingrid Bergman (Actor/Actress)
Izma (Disney)
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (First Lady)
Jaffer (Disney)
James Earl Jones (Actor/Actress, Darth Vader)
James March (Actor/Actress ,American Horror Story)
Jim Backus (Actor/Actress, Gilligan's Island)
Joan Crawford(Actor/Actress)
John Houseman (Actor/Actress, The Paper Chase)
John Kerry (Politician)
Jonathan Harris (Actor/Actress, Lost in Space)
Kate Winslet

Katherine Hepburn (Actor/Actress)
Kelsey Grammer (Actor/Actress, Frazer)
Lady Tremaine (Disney)
Laird Cregar Actor/Actress)
Maleficent (Disney)
Mare Winningham Actor/Actress)
Mark Hamill (Actor/Actress, Joker)
Mark Windham (scientist)
Natalie Portman (Actor/Actress, Queen Padme. Amidala)
Natalie Schafer (Actor/Actress, Gilligan's Island
Orson Welles (Actor/Director/Radio broadcaster)
Peter Jennings (Journalist)
Prince John (Disney)
Professor Ratigan (Disney)
Richard Chamberlain (Actor/Actress)
Richard Chamberlain (Actor/Actress)
Roscoe Lee Browne (Actor/Actress)
Scar (Disney)
Shere Khan (Disney)EAA
Tammy Grimes (Actor/Actress)
The Evil Queen Snow White (Disney)
The Tin Man (The Wizard of Oz)
Tom Lehrer (Humorist)
Tyrone Power (Actor/Actress)
Vincent Price (Actor/Actress)
Walter Pidgeon (Actor/Actress)
William F Buckley (Writer)

.....And many more.