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### **Beer and Veal: Looking at Misheard Lyrics in Songs by Linkin Park As an Introduction to Linguistics**

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Beer and Veal:  
Looking at  
Misheard Lyrics in  
Songs by Linkin  
Park As an  
Introduction to  
Linguistics

By Sophia Kelly

# Introduction

- ▶ What is the difference between the phrase “Got a long list of ex lovers” and “Got along with Starbucks lovers?”
- ▶ As many fans may recognize, the former is the correct lyric in Taylor Swift’s world-renowned song “Blank Space.” The latter is a misheard alternative of the same lyric.
- ▶ Mishearing lyrics is not an uncommon occurrence. Something as trivial as a faulty signal on the car radio to something more complex such as the linguistic background of the listener can create these discrepancies.



# Introduction (Cont.)

- ▶ People have misheard song lyrics from a wide variety of artists, but this occurs more frequently with artists such as ABBA, Adele, Madonna, Linkin Park.



# Abstract

For my research project, I am analyzing misheard lyrics from songs by the band Linkin Park. They are relative well-known, and there is a wide variety of misheard interpretations.

Some of these interpretations exist simply to be humorous while others fit given its context.

Looking at the phonological processes as well as where and how different phonemes are produced can give us insight as to why listeners "mishear" song lyrics in the first place.

# Quick Terminology

- ▶ Phoneme - A vowel or a consonant which is the smallest part in a word; makes a difference in both sound and meaning.
- ▶ Bilabial- A place of articulation where a sound is produced when the top and bottom lip come together.
- ▶ Labiodental-A place of articulation where a sound is produced with some combination of the lips and teeth.
- ▶ Velar- A place of articulation where a sound is produced via the velum (a soft palate located in the back of the mouth).
- ▶ Alveolar- A place of articulation which is the bony ridge behind the upper ridge.
- ▶ Postalveolar- A place of articulation located between the alveolar and the velum; also known as palatal.
- ▶ Stop- A manner of articulation where air ceases to pass through the vocal folds.
- ▶ Fricative- A manner of articulation when airflow is continuous.
- ▶ Liquid- A manner of articulation where sound is a continuous movement.

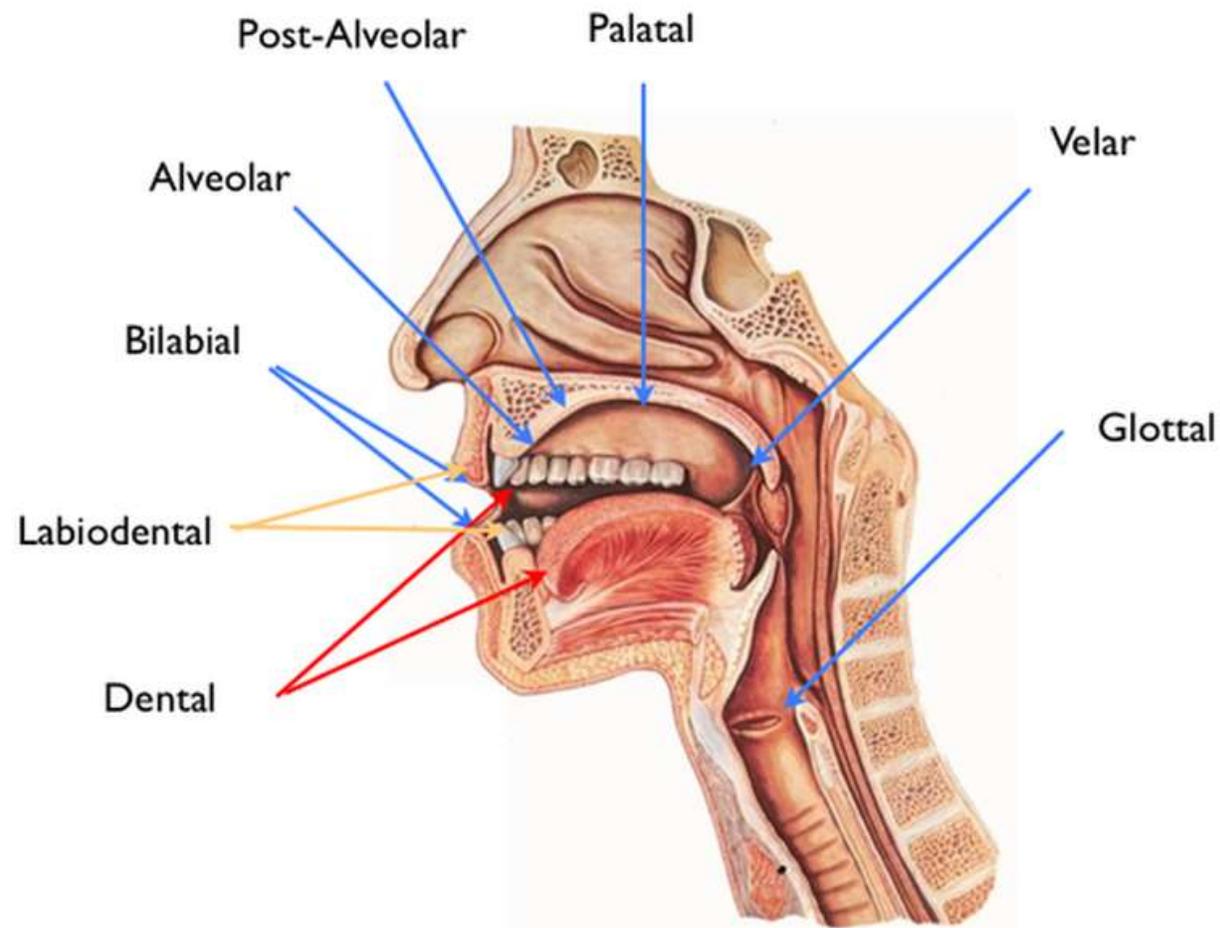
# Looking at the song “Crawling”

- ▶ Lyrics in songs by the band Linkin Park are misheard quite often. For instance, in the well-known song “Crawling,” the lyric “Fear is how I fall, confusing what is real” is misheard as “Beer is how I cope, consuming what is veal.”



# Phonology

- ▶ The reason why the word “fear” is misheard as “Beer” is due to the replacement of the consonant /f/ with the consonant /b/.
- ▶ The phoneme /b/ is a voiced bilabial stop while /f/ is a voiceless labio-dental fricative. They are both produced using the lips as part of or the main part of the manner of articulation.
- ▶ When a phoneme is voiced, this means that air moves through the vocal folds (more commonly known as chords) to create sound.
- ▶ The lips may move together before reaching the teeth, creating a stop instead of allowing the airflow to continue.



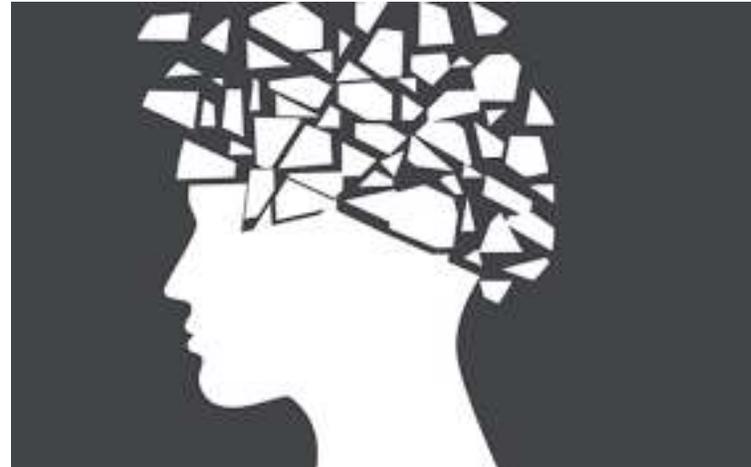
# Phonology (Cont.)



- ▶ Many of Linkin Park's songs touch heavily on subjects such as isolation and various mental illnesses.
- ▶ Thus, it makes sense that the word "Beer" could be heard instead of "Fear," especially when considering that the word "fall" is misheard as the word "cope" due to the replacement of the consonant /f/ with the consonant /k/.
- ▶ As stated before, the phoneme /f/ is a voiceless labio-dental fricative, while /k/ is a voiceless velar stop.
- ▶ The tongue may remain in the back of the mouth because of the /a/ vowel sound produced in the word "how," and so the velar is closer than the lips. Because of this, the airflow stops instead of remaining continuous.

# Phonology (Cont.) Again

- ▶ Also, the reason why the word “confusing” is misheard as “consuming” is because of the replacement of the consonant /f/ with the consonant /s/.
- ▶ The phoneme /s/ is a voiceless postalveolar fricative. The only attribute that separates the sounds produced with these two phonemes is the place of articulation. The tongue may move from the alveolar after producing the consonant /n/ because it is closer than the teeth and lips.
- ▶ It does not make sense to produce another /s/ because doing so would create a word which does not exist in the English language but producing the nasal /m/ does.
- ▶ Isolation and trauma are consuming for many people, and so it makes sense for this word to be heard.



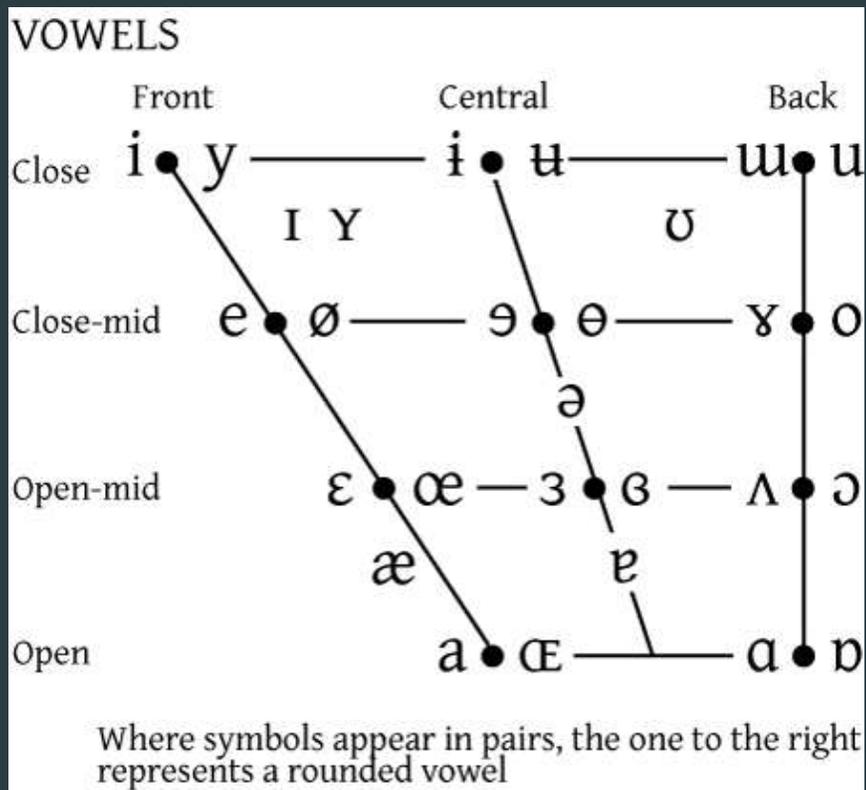
# The link between Cows and Sadness

- ▶ Furthermore, the reason why the word “real” is misheard as the word “veal” is because of the replacement of the consonant /r/ for the consonant /v/.
- ▶ The phoneme /r/ is a voiced alveolar liquid, while the phoneme /v/ is a voiced labio-dental fricative. For some people, the tongue does not move as far back in the mouth to produce the consonant /r/.
- ▶ Since liquids move easily, the sound may be produced with the lip and teeth instead. Both sounds are continuous when it comes to airflow, so this mishearing is possible.
- ▶ This misinterpretation does not have a logical connection. As in frequent occurrences, mishearing lyrics can be humorous.



# Phonology and vowels

- ▶ There are several aspects which determine how a vowel sound is produced. These include the height of the tongue, whether the tongue is tense or relaxed, the position of the tongue in the mouth (front, center, back), and whether the lips are rounded or unrounded.
- ▶ Another reason for this phenomenon is because of the replacement of the /a/ vowel sound for the /o/ vowel sound.
- ▶ The phoneme /a/ is a low-back unrounded vowel sound, and the tongue is also lax. The phoneme /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel sound, produced when the tongue is tense.
- ▶ The tongue may not fall enough to produce the /a/ vowel sound, and since the lips round when the word “how” is produced, it feels natural to produce another rounded vowel sound.
- ▶ Given the first misheard word in the lyric, which is “Beer,” it makes sense to pair “cope” with that word instead of “fall.”



# Conclusion

Bands like Linkin Park continue to have such a large following because they focus on struggles many people endure daily.

Some of these misheard interpretations, while incorrect, can make sense given their individual contexts.

To a certain extent, these individuals are not necessarily wrong for hearing these incorrect versions, but they may produce or hear sounds differently than what is generally conventional.

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