

## FINDING YOUR VOICE: TOWARD AN INDIVIDUALIZED AND HUMANIZED APPROACH TO DIALECTICAL PRAXIS IN THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRE REHEARSAL ROOM

Adam Goldstein, Assistant Professor of Theatre  
CMT, F229, 773-442-5954

As a professional accents and dialect coach, I have long worked toward defining the most dynamic function of the coach in the room and toward shaping a personal methodology to grant life and “authenticity” to our vocal work as actors. Traditional dialectical approaches often stipulate an exacting adherence to static, generalized representation of dialectical populations via generic sound structures, demand for phonetic fluency, and a right/wrong approach to dialect training. This methodology often breeds self-consciousness in the actor and a tendency to get caught in the intellectual aspect of rather than embodiment within a given dialect. A contemporary approach to dialect coaching aims to render dialect work repeatable, accurate, and most importantly emotionally accessible to the professional actor who seeks to gain a deeper understanding of their character through an embodied, customized approach that makes space, sees the individual, and shapes the dialect around each voice and spirit in the room. It is not enough to do it “right.” Instead, an actor must understand what that “right” means to their performance and how it empowers their pursuit of deeper work.

Why does a country speak with a certain rhythm or pitch structure? What is the effect on thought when one language’s sound base is transferred to another? How does one stressed sound dictated by a regionalism alter the intention of a line, moment, or action? How does dialect empower the choices and arc of this character from moment-to-moment in a script? From these questions, and along with a thorough technical grounding, I have built a personal approach to dialect work and coaching that strives to give actors a tool not just for an external character trait, but that instead provides an access point to character that utilizes the text, technique, and the body in order to make dialect and accent the prime delivery system of a character’s value system, intentions, and embodiment. In other words, I work to craft and relay a repeatable technique for actors toward the learning and synthesizing of dialect into the actor’s process.

I aim to present an overview of the professional dialectician’s work as well as an interactive custom method to professional dialectical coaching and learning via a self-crafted system with the acronym S.L.I.N.G. Through this step-by-step roadmap to building character specific accents and dialects, I posit that any professional actor or novice can develop the skills to craft repeatable, dynamic, and character driven dialects with or without a fluent background in the IPA system, Phonetic Pillows, or other frequently used training models. This approach represents the seeds of an in-process collaborative book on which I am working, entitled *Accent on Acting*, that utilizes this technique alongside an acting colleague’s perspectives in an effort to demystify the dialect process and place it at the forefront of the actor’s approach to understanding, accessing, embodying, and interpreting the music of the world’s myriad voices.