

## Chapter 7

## Standard and regional accents

## 7.1 The emergence of a standard

In the three centuries after the Norman conquest official business was conducted in either Latin or French. There were accepted written standards in both languages. Classical Latin was that of Cicero and Horace; French was at first Norman French but later became that of the French court in Paris. Until the latter half of the fourteenth century English was very much the speech of the lower classes and little of it was written. But from then on English started to replace French in many areas and over the next four centuries a standard written English emerged (particularly in spelling and grammar), codified eventually by grammarians in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Although written English gained ground rapidly in the fifteenth century, any writing which commented on the spoken language did not appear until the sixteenth century, when one type of regional speech began to be said to have prestige. It was London and the speech of the monarch's court which was held up as the dialect to be imitated.<sup>2</sup> John Hart noted in 1570 that it is 'in the Court and London . . . where the general flower of all English country speeches are chosen and read . . . for that unto these two places, do dayly resort from all towns and countries, of the best of all professions'.<sup>3</sup> Around the same time George Puttenham (1589) gives advice about language to poets recommending:

the usual speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within 60 miles and not much above . . . Northern men, whether they be noblemen or gentlemen, or of their best clerks, [use an English] which is not so courtly or so current as our Southern English is.<sup>4</sup>

But there follows a hint that this form of speech may nevertheless sometimes be used in other areas of England: 'in every shire of England there may be gentlemen and others that speak . . . as good Southern as we of Middlesex or Surrey'. So there is the suggestion that courtly speech has to some extent spread as a national standard.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the speech of London and its court are held up as the acme of pronunciation. Price (1665),<sup>5</sup> for

example, gives rules 'whereby any outlandish or meer English man, woman, or child, may speedily attain to the exact spelling, reading, writing, or pronouncing of any word in the English tongue'. Writing 'to the ingenious student' he says: 'All grammars are rules of common speech; yet I have not been guided by our vulgar pronunciation but by that of London and our universities'. In the eighteenth century the influence of the court begins to be criticised and at the same time there begins an interest in codifying the pronunciation of English. In a letter to his patron, Swift complains that 'the Court which used to be the standard of propriety and correctness of speech, [is now] the worst school in England for that accomplishment'. He wants to set up a society 'made up of such persons, as are generally allowed to be best qualified for such a work, without any regard to quality, party or profession'. He hopes his patron himself will be part of it. He says that 'the persons who are to undertake this work will have the example of the French [the Académie Française] before them to imitate where these have proceeded right and to avoid their mistakes'.<sup>6</sup> Nothing came of this, and despite Swift's criticisms, the court continues to be held up by some as the model for polite speech. Sheridan asserts that 'the pronunciation of English, as used by people of the best taste at court is so perfect that there are few of our words capable of improvement'.<sup>7</sup> But there was in the eighteenth century a greater concern with correctness in grammar rather than in pronunciation. Not till the end of this century did pronunciation become centre stage.

Johnson in his dictionary (1755) had intended to give guidance on the pronunciation of words, but this obviously added too much to what was already a massive burden (it took him nine years to compile) and in the end he gave little guidance on pronunciation. While Johnson's dictionary was the first comprehensive dictionary to deal with definitions (previous ones had often limited themselves to hard words), Kenrick (1773) and Walker (1791) filled the pronunciation gap left by Johnson; both attempted comprehensive pronouncing dictionaries. Walker was conscious of the need to choose his model of pronunciation carefully. In the Preface he states that 'custom [= usage] is the sovereign arbiter of language' but, he asks, 'what is this custom to which we must so implicitly submit?' No one had ever suggested wholly relying on 'the usage of the greater part of speakers, good or bad'. Should it, he says, be based on the speech of the majority in colleges and schools, together with those in the learned professions? Or should it be based on the speech 'of those who, from their elevated birth or station, give laws to the refinements and elegancies of a court?' But

neither a finical pronunciation of the court, nor a pedantic Graecism of the schools, will be denominated respectable usage till a certain number of the general mass of speakers have acknowledged them; nor will a multitude of common speakers authorise any pronunciation which is reprobated by the learned and polite.

To conclude 'those sounds, therefore, which are the most generally received among the learned and polite, as well as the bulk of speakers, are the most

legitimate'.<sup>8</sup> This comes very near to recommendations in the twentieth century to attend to the actual usage of educated speakers.

In the last quotation in the previous paragraph there occurs the phrase 'generally received' and this recurs on other occasions in Walker's Dictionary. And the word 'received' eventually comes to dominate for a long time the idea of a model for British pronunciation.

### 7.2 Early uses of 'received' and 'received pronunciation'

'Received' as an adjective is little used nowadays being only commonly heard in a few set phrases, notably 'received wisdom' and 'received opinion'. But its wider use goes back to at least before Shakespearean times. Among others the OED records 'received form' (1542) and 'received custom' (1597), Walker's use (1791) is the first time it is used with reference to pronunciation and he uses it with reference to the pronunciation of words to be transcribed in his dictionary; there is as yet no idea of a standard system. In the hundred years or so after Walker (whose dictionary itself continued to be reprinted for all that time) there were numerous manuals of elocution published in England (directed at those engaged in public speaking or acting) which talk of southern and northern speech but certainly have no concept of a standard pronunciation. Nor does the use of the word 'received' applied just to individual sounds or words seem to become any more common; it is not used at all in any of Alexander Melville Bell's numerous publications (e.g. 1849). But Alexander Ellis tells us that

in the present day we may, however, recognise a received pronunciation [note no use of capitals] all over the country, not widely differing in any particular locality, and admitting a certain degree of variety. It may be especially considered as the educated pronunciation of the metropolis, of the court, the pulpit and the bar. But in so far as all these localities and professions are recruited from the provinces, there will be a varied thread of provincial utterance running through the whole.<sup>9</sup>

Two things should be noted about this statement: (1) there is still the reference to the court, and (2) it is accepted that there will be a regional element in the received pronunciation. Despite other occasional uses of the phrase 'received pronunciation' there is no systematic description of any type of standard pronunciation alongside the minutely detailed descriptions of very many dialect areas. Henry Sweet, who was the direct successor to Bell and Ellis, does not apparently use the term 'received pronunciation' at all nor does he attempt to set up any preferred model of English. But in his *Primer of Spoken English* he displays an ambiguous attitude to the idea of a standard:

I must disclaim any intention of setting up a standard of spoken English. All I can do is to record those facts which are accessible to me—to describe

that variety of spoken English of which I have a personal knowledge, that is, the educated speech of London and the district round it—the original home of Standard English both in its spoken and literary form.<sup>10</sup>

### 7.3 Daniel Jones, the BBC, RP and GB

The impetus for codifying something that is considered a standard system of pronunciation seems to have come from the increased interest in teaching English as a foreign language, plus the increased interest in spoken language resulting from the spread of literacy in elementary education. The journal *Le Maître Phonétique*, founded in 1886 (in the first three years called *Dhi fonètik títcer* and now the *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*) was prominent in this development. Daniel Jones became its editor in 1906 and was to dominate phonetics in England for the next half century. Three books by Jones, first published early in the twentieth century but all remaining in print in various later editions throughout the century, established the term 'Received Pronunciation' or 'RP' as representing standard spoken British English.<sup>11</sup> But it is also worth noting that Jones declared: 'I wish it to be understood that other types of pronunciation exist which may be considered equally good'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless Jones's books, particularly the *English Pronouncing Dictionary* and the *Outline of English Phonetics*, were regarded as the standard books from the 1920s to the 1960s and hence RP was the term used regularly to describe standard British English pronunciation. Most other books in these years promulgated a similar standard and generally called it RP.

The largest reason for the spreading of a standard pronunciation in the early twentieth century was the beginning of broadcasting by the BBC in 1926 with its formidable head John Reith, who was much concerned with prestige in that respect. The Advisory Committee on Spoken English, which he set up, had two phoneticians on it, Daniel Jones and Arthur Lloyd James, who managed to persuade it to adopt a relatively tolerant attitude. So even Reith himself in the Foreword to the Committee's first publication wrote: 'There has been no attempt to establish a uniform spoken language . . . The policy might be described as that of seeking a common denominator of educated speech'.<sup>13</sup> The BBC has never explicitly advocated a standard such as RP. 'In the early years of broadcasting, the announcers and newsreaders heard on the BBC spoke with an RP accent but this was a by-product of the restricted social group from which BBC employment was drawn, rather than a matter of deliberate policy.'<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless the BBC played a huge part in the promulgation of that accent described in Jones's books as RP.

The claim that only 3 per cent of the population of Britain use an RP accent is regularly made in the literature, usually without any attribution or evaluation.<sup>15</sup> The figure of 3 per cent may be correct if a dated version of RP is used as the model and if not one single regional feature is allowed. But even a figure as low as 3 per cent is almost certainly higher than that for any other established variety,

and no other accent is so widely spread (hence appropriate for foreign learners). Speakers of any dialect rarely regularly speak the broadest forms of their local accent and any modifications are usually towards RP. All this means that RP represents the 'common denominator' in many varieties of regional English, although, as is indicated below, the term General British (GB) is now preferred.

#### 7.4 'Modern RP'

In the latter half of the twentieth century the type of pronunciation represented as RP changed considerably (even in public schools). Newsreaders and other regular broadcasters before the 1960s sound noticeably different from their current equivalents (even if those with obviously regional pronunciations like Scottish English are excluded).<sup>16</sup> The same applies to (ex-)army officers of that period. At the same time, with the advent of universal secondary education in 1944 and a huge expansion of tertiary education between the 1970s and the 1990s, the difference in pronunciation habits between those in public schools and other types of secondary education was considerably reduced. So we get a modern type of pronunciation used by a wider range of people and specifically called 'Modern RP' by some writers.<sup>17</sup>

The existence of Modern RP has remained unacknowledged by some in using the term RP only to refer to the older type of pronunciation, one which lingers mainly in the speech of some older people. To such people RP remains regarded as class-ridden, outdated and limited to a small minority in southern England. One scholar writes: 'Since the late twentieth century, Received Pronunciation has been gradually lessening in social prestige, and is no longer used by many members of the social and professional groups with which it was traditionally associated.'<sup>18</sup> A BBC Radio 4 programme in 2011 was called 'RP, RIP?', in which RP was represented as upper-crust and dying.<sup>19</sup> Those who take this attitude probably have the sound of what we will in this book call Conspicuous General British (CGB) in their mind, a really 'posh' variety limited now mainly to some elderly people.

Alongside speakers of Modern RP there are also an increasingly large number of people who have this accent with the admixture of a limited number of regional features (e.g. /a/ in words like *after* and *dance* in northern England). This was called Regional RP in earlier editions of this book and will now be referred to as Regional General British (RGB). When a number of features are admixed into GB from the popular speech of the London area the resultant type of RGB is often referred to as Estuary English (see §7.12.3).

#### 7.5 Other names for RP

It will be gathered from the above that RP is not dead but very much alive, provided we understand by RP the successor to that accent described as RP in the middle of the twentieth century. But it remains true that many people,

laymen, linguists and phoneticians, object to the term in a variety of ways: either it is posh, it is an imposed standard, it is too regionally limited, or it is outdated. If we accept that the accent we are describing is one which we feel should continue to be the standard, can we call it something better than RP?

In the past the terms Oxford English and the Queen's (or King's) have been used. If, at some stage in the past, or ever, Oxford people, or just Oxford academics, spoke unadulterated RP, it is certainly not true now (as can be readily heard if we listen to various Oxbridge dons presenting series on British television). Although the present Queen's English has changed considerably during her reign, at the moment it still tends towards what in previous editions of this book was called Refined RP.

The term BBC English is used in recent editions of the *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary*, the Introduction to the fourteenth edition of which states:

The time has come to abandon the archaic name Received Pronunciation. The model used for British English is what is referred to as BBC English; this is the pronunciation of professional speakers employed by the BBC as newsreaders and announcers on BBC1 and BBC2, the World Service, and BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4.

It goes on to say that the accent is typical of broadcasters with an English accent (i.e. as opposed to Scottish, Welsh, or Irish). Given such restrictions the statement may be weakly true although there are some newsreaders and announcers who are English but have some regional characteristics. Moreover the Introduction to the *CEPD* goes on to say: 'Their speech does not carry for most people the connotations of high social class and privilege that RP and PSP [= Public School Pronunciation] have had in the past'. Thus the editors seem to be saying the accent they are describing is not RP, which is apparently still equated with PSP. Similarly it was recently written: 'The great majority of native speakers [of RP] ... are educated at private schools and it is a misnomer to call it an accent of British English'.<sup>20</sup> The RP in these quotations evidently refers to an older type of RP. The fact that the last quotation was based on the speech of a 50-year-old woman educated at a preparatory school, a grammar school and Oxford University confirms this, as do the vowel diagrams in the article: /a/ is not lowered and /u:/ is not fronted as they are in a modern, evolved form of RP.

What of Southern British, or Standard Southern British? It is true that the speech of south-east England is nearest to the standard described in this book, but what about central-southern or south-western England, where a 'pre-consonantal /r/' extends quite a way up the educational scale particularly in rural areas and is certainly not 'pure' RP. Moreover the main point about the variety we are describing is that it is not geographically limited: there may be more pure speakers of this variety in south-east England but there are a lesser number in all regions of Britain and even in those areas the influence of the variety is enormous.

However, despite many attempts to say that RP has evolved and includes considerable variation within it, non-phoneticians and even some British linguists and phoneticians, persist in identifying RP as a type of posh, outdated, falsely prestigious accent spoken, for example, by various senior members of the Royal family (e.g. Prince Charles, but compare Prince Harry's much more modern pronunciation). Because of this narrow use by many of the name RP, and the frequent hostility to it, the name of the accent described in this book has been changed to General British (GB). But it has to be made clear that, compared with previous editions of this book, it is not a different accent that is being described, but an evolved and evolving version of the same accent under a different name.

### 7.6 General British (GB)<sup>21</sup>

In considering what term would be best as a replacement for RP, it has to be noted that Gimson himself commented on the prospect of our eventual arrival at the present situation. In the third edition of this book (Gimson, 1980: 303) he remarked that 'GENERAL BRITISH' (GB) 'has been used and may in time supersede ... RP'. It is now indeed to be preferred, paralleling GENERAL AMERICAN and its abbreviation GA. The first time the term General British was used, at least in a serious publication, was in Windsor Lewis (1972). In the introductory section called 'The design of the dictionary' the author says:

this dictionary excludes any British pronunciations which are associated specifically only with a public boarding-school or any socially conspicuous background ... This most general type of educated British pronunciation ... is described fully in ... Gimson's ... *Pronunciation of English*. [General British is] a welcome avoidance of the less than happy, archaic-sounding term 'Received [Pronunciation]'.<sup>22</sup>

Maidment's *Speech Internet Dictionary* (2012) has the entry 'General British English' and describes it as

The British accent whose varieties are least associated with any specific areas of Great Britain. It is the most frequent model employed in the teaching of British English as an additional language. It is also known by various other names including BBC English, and Southern (Standard) British English and, very widely but decreasingly often, Received Pronunciation.

The eighth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* says 'The British pronunciations given are those of younger speakers of General British. This includes RP (Received Pronunciation) and a range of similar accents which are not strongly regional'.<sup>23</sup> To complete the full endorsement of these sentiments the term General British (GB) is now used in this book. Besides south-eastern

England there are lesser numbers of speakers of GB in south-west England, in the north of England, in Wales and in Scotland (it is not difficult to hear local speakers of GB in Cardiff and Edinburgh). There are an even larger number of speakers of Regional GB (i.e. GB with a small admixture of local characteristics) in all these areas. Ireland probably has fewer GB speakers (but Britain is not normally taken to include Northern Ireland).

### 7.7 Conspicuous General British (CGB)<sup>24</sup>

CONSPICUOUS GENERAL BRITISH (CGB) is that type of GB which is commonly considered to be 'posh', to be associated with upper-class families, with public schools and with professions which have traditionally recruited from such families, e.g. officers in the navy and in some army regiments. But the number of speakers of CGB, even in these areas, has considerably declined in the last fifty years and is now mainly limited to older speakers. For many other speakers, both of GB and of regional dialects, a speaker of CGB is often regarded as affected and a figure of fun. Particular characteristics of CGB are the conspicuous use of the vowel /ɪ/ finally in words like *city*, *happy*, *fully*, etc. (though this also occurs in some dialects) and of a very open word-final /ə/ (and where [ə] forms part of /ɪə/ and /ʊə/) in words like *bitter*, *here*, *sure*. The vowel /ɜː/ is also pronounced very open, this time in all positions (e.g. in *burn*, *occur*, *certain*). The vowel /a/ is often diphthongised as [eə] (e.g. in *mad*, *matter*) and /əʊ/ as [ēʊ] (e.g. in *bone*, *open*, *window*) (though this last refinement has never been as widespread or persisted as long as the others). A common factor in most of these vowels is that the tongue and jaw positions are more open than in mainstream GB. Among consonantal pronunciations the maintenance of /tj,dj,sj/ in words like *tube*, *duty* and *suit* is notable.

### 7.8 Regional General British (RGB)<sup>25</sup>

Attempts in the early history of the BBC to use announcers who had even a mild regional accent used to provoke protests even from the region whose accent was used. But increasingly nowadays we hear speech which is GB with the inclusion of regional markers. We call such hybrids REGIONAL GENERAL BRITISH (or RGB). Although we choose for convenience to use two distinct categories of RGB on the one hand and a regional accent on the other, in practice there is a gradient between the two. But all types of RGB have something in common; they all contain a large proportion of GB features.

Compared with Conspicuous General British (CGB), Regional General British (RGB) reflects regional rather than class variation and will vary according to which region is involved. Hence, strictly speaking, we should talk of RGBs in the plural. Yet it is useful to have such a term as RGB to describe the type of speech which is basically GB except for the presence of a few regional characteristics which may well go unnoticed even by other speakers of GB. For

example, vocalisation of dark [ɪ] to [ʊ] in words like *held* [heʊd] and *ball* [bɔʊ], a characteristic of London Regional (and some other southern accents), now passes virtually unnoticed in an otherwise fully GB accent. Or, again, the use of /a/ instead of /ɑ:/ before voiceless fricatives in words like *after*, *bath* and *past* (part of the Northern English accent within England) may be likewise acceptable in an RGB. But some other features of regional accents may still be too stigmatised to be describable as GB, e.g. realisation of /t/ by a glottal stop word-medially between vowels, as in *water* (in broad London speech) or the lack of a distinction between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/ (in much of the north of England). Even these two examples are becoming much less stigmatised than they were.

Special mention must be made of London RGB, because, under the name of 'Estuary English', it has provoked much discussion in the press. The vocalisation of dark [ɪ] to [ʊ] has already been noted as one of the features of this form of RGB. The name Estuary English was first used because such a pronunciation was thought to have spread outwards from London along the Thames Estuary into Essex and North Kent. But claims have been made that this type of pronunciation has spread not only into areas all around London (i.e. the 'Home Counties') but also into urban areas remote from London, e.g. Norwich, Bristol, Hull, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow. If this should be confirmed, Estuary English is said to be competing with the RGBs of these cities.<sup>26</sup> Estuary English is said to be being adopted by those wishing to avoid the stigma of GB as 'posh' and by upwardly mobile speakers of local accents. It is often characterised among younger speakers as having 'street credibility' or 'streetcred' or being 'cool', i.e. as being fashionable. The phonetic features of Estuary English are discussed further in the section on London English below (§7.12.3).

CGB and RGB are not accents with precisely enumerable lists of features but rather represent clusterings of features, such clusterings varying from individual to individual. Thus there are not categorial boundaries between the three types of GB; a speaker may, for example, generally be a GB speaker but have one noticeable feature of CGB. And the concept of RGB reflects the fact that there is nowadays a far greater tolerance of accentual variation in all walks of life, although only certain types of regional dilution of GB are generally acceptable.

### 7.9 GB and foreign learners

GB (often under its former name of RP) has traditionally been the type of pronunciation taught to learners of British English as an L2 and that most commonly described in reference books like this one and in textbooks and dictionaries on the pronunciation of British English. But it has to be recognised that the role of British English in the English-speaking world has changed very considerably in the last century. It has been estimated that 750 million people now speak English as a first or second language and a further 750 million learn it as a foreign language;<sup>27</sup> of this number native speakers of British English form only a very small proportion. At least 150 million use English in varying ways as an official

language and in these cases it is usually a form of local pronunciation of English which predominates (e.g. in India). However, despite the discrepancy in numbers, GB continues for historical reasons to serve as a model in many parts of the world; if a model is used at all, the choice is still effectively between GB and General American (GA) or some amalgam or 'cut-down' version of either or both (see §§13.2.3 and 13.4). Some sort of model based primarily on GB is more common than one based on GA; some form of British English is generally the target in Europe, in Africa, in the Indian subcontinent and increasingly in other parts of Asia and in South America. In Chapter 13 some suggestions are made about the way in which the pronunciation of GB may be adapted to suit local and international needs.

### 7.10 Recent changes in GB

In this section we survey changes in GB which have begun approximately in the last fifty years but which a number of speakers, either small or large, have not yet embraced. The decision to regard a change as 'almost complete', 'well established', or 'recent trend' is largely based on the judgement of phoneticians although collected data is referred to wherever it exists.

#### 7.10.1 Changes almost complete

This involves pronunciations which are now typical of almost all speakers of GB:

- (1) The distinction between /ɔ:/ and /ɔə/ is lost, e.g. *paw* and *pour* (or *pore*) are pronounced the same and usually as [ɔ:].
- (2) /j/ is lost before /u:/ following /l,s,z/, e.g. *luminous*, *suit* and *exhume* are /lu:mnəs/, /su:t/ and /ɪg'zʊ:m/.
- (3) /r/ is realised as a post-alveolar approximant in all positions and not, as formerly, as a tap [ɾ] in intervocalic positions following an accented syllable, e.g. *very* and *error* are pronounced as [ve.ɹi] and [e.ɹə] rather than [veri] and [erə].
- (4) /əʊ/ is now regularly realised as [əʊ] rather than the older realisation as [öʊ], e.g. *over*, *boat* and *comb* as [əʊvə], [bəʊt], [kəʊm] rather than [öʊvə], [böʊt], [köʊm].
- (5) /tj,dj/ are regularly changed to /tʃ,dʒ/. The change has been established longer in unaccented syllables, e.g. *culture* [kʌltʃə], *soldier* [səʊldʒə], than in accented syllables, e.g. *tune* /tʃu:n/, *endure* [ɪn'dʒʊə].

#### 7.10.2 Changes well established

This section describes pronunciations which are now typical of the majority of speakers of GB:

- (1) The vowel in *bad, land, amateur* is lowered from [æ] to [a], i.e. it is close to C.[a], e.g. in *mad, rat, flank, bang* and *cap*. In this way it has become closer to the vowel used in such words in the north of England (see §7.12.4.) although it retains greater length than the northern vowel.<sup>28</sup> This change is reflected in the changed phonemic transcription used in this book, i.e. from /æ/ to /a/. Retention of the [æ] quality is a marker of CGB.
- (2) /ʊ, u:, ʊə/ are fronted to [ʊ, u:, uə],<sup>29</sup> e.g. *good* [gʊd], *soon* [su:n], *cure* [kjʊə] including when /ʊə/ is used rather than /ɔ:/, e.g. *poor* [pʊə]. The fronting will in many cases be accompanied by unrounding giving [i:, i:], e.g. [gid], [si:n], [kjiə]. This fronting (and unrounding) of [ʊ] may also occur in /əʊ/, e.g. *boat* [bəʊt] or [bəit].
- (3) The final vowel in words like *city, happy, flabby, witty, daddy, lackey, sparky, baggy* now has the quality [i] rather than [ɪ], which is now a marker of CGB. Recent editions of pronouncing dictionaries transcribe this with /i/ without length marks, indicating that this final /i/ is shorter than /i:/ (and not subject to diphthongisation), cf. the final vowel in *city, possibly, chilly* [ˈsti] [ˈpɒsəbli] [ˈʃili] with that in *settee, jubilee, pedigree* [seˈti:] [dʒuːbrɪli:] [ˈpedigrɪ:]. In the transcription used in this edition /i/ is enclosed in slant brackets to draw attention to the recent change; but in the description of vowels it is treated as an allophone of /i/.
- (4) Former [eə] becomes monophthongal [ɛ:], e.g. *fare* and *tear* as [fɛ:] and [tɛ:]. This is reflected in the revised phonemic transcription of /ɛ:/ in the present edition rather than /eə/ in earlier editions.
- (5) /t/ pre-consonantly becomes [ʔ], e.g. not *very* [nɒʔ veɪ], although such glottalisation is not acceptable before /l/, e.g. *little* [lɪʔ] is inclined to be stigmatised.<sup>31</sup>
- (6) /j/ following /n/ is increasingly lost,<sup>32</sup> *news* [nu:z], *neuter* [nu:tə]. This may be under the influence of popular London or of American where it is already standard.
- (7) /ʒ/ is increasingly used in imports where formerly they were anglicised to /dʒ/, e.g. *beige, rouge, adagio, management, gigolo, genre*.
- (8) /ɔ:/ may be used in place of /ʊə/ in some, particularly monosyllabic, words, e.g. in *sure, poor, cure, moor, tour*. This change is lexically conditioned: some words, like monosyllabic *pure* as well as non-monosyllabic *curious, puerile, endure* and *secure*, are less likely to have /ɔ:/ while in others it is impossible, e.g. in *dour, gourd, lure, Ruhr* and *Ure*. It is also impossible in words derived from /u:/ plus a suffixal /ə/ like *doer, fewer, newer, two-er, viewer, sewer* (although, strictly speaking, this last is not analysable into root morpheme plus suffix). Use of /ʊə/ or /ɔ:/ is highly idiosyncratic and shows no sign of obliterating the phoneme /ʊə/. Spelling may influence the choice so that *pure* is [pjʊə] while *poor* is [pjɔ:] or [pɔ:].
- (9) A 'checking' high rise is used on declarative sentences in conversational narratives, where some form of fall would previously have been expected, e.g. (the mark ' indicates the high rise) 'I was at Heath'row yesterday.

They've got a new duty-free shop'. This was a new trend in Australia and New Zealand some fifty years ago and perhaps even before that in parts of the U.S. How it has spread to Britain in the last twenty-five years is a matter of some dispute; suggested strong influences have been the high number of Australasian shop assistants in London and the popularity of Australian soap operas on British television. It remains to be seen whether an intonational practice of this sort becomes more widespread and whether it is permanent.

### 7.10.3 Recent trends

This section describes pronunciations which are now heard in GB but are not yet typical of a majority of speakers:

- (1) /ɪə/ /ʊə/ are realised as [ɪ:] and [ʊ:], e.g. *beer* [bɪ:], *sure* [ʃʊ:]. The latter change intersects with the replacement of /ʊə/ by /ɔ:/ (see §7.10.2(8)).
- (2) /r/ is realised with no upward curl of the tongue tip, i.e. /r/ = [ɹ] or [ɹ̥], *red* as [ved] or [ʊed]. This has been described as one of the features of Estuary English, but it seems more likely that it is general tendency within GB and not something particularly typical of the London area.
- (3) /e/ is lowered, following the lowering of /a/ (see §7.10.2(1)). i.e. it is being 'pulled' downwards'.<sup>33</sup>
- (4) [ə] plus a non-syllabic consonant is used where previously a syllabic consonant has been the norm (and where the use of the [ə] was considered babylike), e.g. *garden* [gɑ:dən], *bitten* [bɪtən], *middle* [mɪdə], *bottle* [bɒtəl].<sup>34</sup>
- (5) The vocalisation of dark [ɨ] to [ʊ] is increasingly heard more widely than in just London RGB. It is particularly common after labial consonants, e.g. in *ball, field, well*, but can certainly be heard following other consonants, e.g. in *deal, kill, kneel*.
- (6) Use of the variant [ɒʊ] of /əʊ/ before [ɨ], e.g. in *goal, bold, moult*, has now spread so widely that it is reasonable to consider it part of GB, rather than confined to London RGB.

### 7.11 Systems and standards other than GB and their influence on RGB<sup>35</sup>

Certain types of regional pronunciation are firmly established as alternative standards. Some, especially Standard Scottish English (SSE), have been accepted for at least the last thirty years; others, particularly the popular forms of pronunciation used in large towns, are still often characterised as ugly (e.g. Liverpool or Birmingham) or strange (e.g. Newcastle) by those (especially of the older generations) who do not use them. This remains so even though these accents (often only in a less broad variety) are heard daily on TV and radio. This is a reflection of the social connotations of speech features which, though they have

lost some of their force, have by no means completely disappeared. On the other hand, GB itself (and particularly where there are some features of CGB) can be a handicap nowadays, since it may be taken as a mark of affectation or a desire to emphasise social superiority.<sup>36</sup> Most speakers of GB have themselves become aware of the fact that their type of pronunciation is one which is used by only a very small part of the English-speaking world. An American pronunciation of English, for instance, is now completely familiar in Britain and a 'mid-Atlantic' accent is common in pop-singers. The changing awareness of different English accents has been bolstered by the large number of recent immigrants who speak English with hugely varying competence and a multiplicity of accents.

### 7.12 Comparing systems of pronunciation<sup>37</sup>

A comparison of pronunciation in two dialects will reveal differences of several kinds (as first discussed in §5.3.5):

- (1) SYSTEMIC DIFFERENCES (or differences in the inventory of phonemes)—The system is different, i.e. the number of phonemic contrasts is smaller or greater. The GB contrast between /a/ and /ɑ:/ may not be present in Ulster or in Scotland, e.g. *Sam* and *psalm* being pronounced the same. The contrast between GB /ʌ/ and /ʊ/ may not be present in the English of the north of England, e.g. *putt* and *put* are pronounced the same. The presence of /g/ after [ŋ] in such a word as *sing* deprives [ŋ] of its phonemic status in the north-west midlands of England, i.e. [ŋ] then only occurs as an allophone of /n/ before /k, g/ as in *sink*, *sing* which are pronounced as /sɪŋk/ and /sɪŋg/ and there is no minimal contrast between /ŋ/ and /n/ as there is in GB, e.g. between *sin* /sɪn/ and *sing* /sɪŋ/ (see §7.12.4).
- (2) DISTRIBUTIONAL DIFFERENCES (or different phonotactic possibilities)—The system may be the same, but the phonetic context in which a phoneme occurs may be limited, e.g. in GB /r/ has a limited distribution, being restricted in its occurrence to pre-vocalic position as in *red* or *horrid* (accents of this sort are called NON-RHOTIC). Others like most American and Scottish accents have a wider distribution of /r/ and are termed RHOTIC. In these accents /r/ occurs pre-consonantly and pre-pausally as well as pre-vocalically, thus *part* and *car* will be pronounced /pɑ:rt/ and /kɑ:r/ (cf. GB /pɑ:t/ and /kɑ:/). The distribution of /r/ in this sort of accent more closely reflects the spelling (see §§7.12.1, 7.12.2, 12.4.7). But note also that pre-consonantal /r/ may occur even in GB as a result of elision (see §10.8(1)(b)), e.g. *carol* [kɑrl].
- (3) LEXICAL DIFFERENCES (i.e. different phonemes in particular words)—The system may be the same, but the occurrence of phonemes in some words is different and this difference is not simply a consequence of syllable-position as in (2) above. The English of parts of the north of England has the opposition /u:/-/ʊ/ like GB, but nevertheless uses /u:/ in, for example, *book* and *took* (see §8.9.10). Other accents have /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ like GB but /ʊ/ is used

- instead of /ʌ/ in, for example, *one* and *among* (see §8.9.6). GB has /ʊ/ in *off*, *cloth* and *cross* but popular London (and indeed CGB) have /ɔ:/ (see §8.9.8).
- (4) REALISATIONAL DIFFERENCES—The system of contrasts is the same in two dialects but the phonetic realisation of some phonemes is different. The GB opposition between the vowels of *bait* and *boat* is maintained in the English of the north of England, but the realisation of both vowels is monophthongal compared with the diphthongs in GB (see, for example, §7.12.4). Accents of English throughout Britain and Ireland have an /l/ occurring in words like *lesson* and *field* but in most of Ireland and Wales the /l/ is 'clear' [l], while in most of Scotland it is 'dark' [ɫ]; whereas in the south of England it is clear [l] before vowels (e.g. in *lesson*) and dark [ɫ] in other positions (e.g. in *field*).

#### 7.12.1 General American (GA)

The traditional (although not undisputed) division of the United States for pronunciation purposes is into Eastern (including New England and New York City, although the latter has pronunciation characteristics of its own), Southern (stretching from Virginia to Texas and to all points southwards) and General (all the remaining area). General American (GA) can thus be regarded as that form of American which does not have marked regional characteristics (and is in this way comparable to GB) and is sometimes referred to as 'Network English' (just as GB, not entirely justifiably nowadays, is sometimes referred to as 'BBC English'). It is the standard model for the pronunciation of English as an L2 in parts of Asia (e.g. the Philippines) and parts of Latin American (e.g. Mexico).

There are two major areas of systemic difference between GB and GA. First, GA lacks the GB diphthongs /ɪə,ʊə/ and the long vowel /ɛ:/ which correspond in GA to sequences of vowel plus /r/, e.g. *beard*, *sure*, *fare*, /bɪrd/, /ʃʊr/, /fer/. This reflects the allied distributional difference between GB and GA, namely that unlike GB, where /r/ essentially occurs only before vowels, GA /r/ can occur before consonants and before pause (GA is rhotic and GB non-rhotic—see §7.12(2)). Second, GA has no /ʊ/. Most commonly those vowels which have /ʊ/ in GB are pronounced with /ɑ:/ in GA, e.g. *cod*, *spot*, *pocket*, *bottle*. But a limited subset has /ɔ:/, e.g. *across*, *gone*, *often*, *cough*, *orange*, *porridge* (as can be seen from the examples, these frequently involve a following voiceless fricative). Moreover for an increasing number of GA speakers (and most Canadians) not only do GB /ʊ/ and /ɑ:/ fall together but /ɔ:/ also falls in with this group; for such speakers *cod*, *calm* and *cause* will have the same vowel.

The main difference of lexical occurrence concerns words which in GB have /ɑ:/ while in GA they have /a/. Like the change from /ʊ/ to /ɔ:/ this commonly involves the context of a following voiceless fricative, or alternatively a nasal followed by another consonant thus GB /pɑ:st/ ~ GA /past/, GB /ɑ:ftə/ ~ GA /aftər/, GB /plɑ:nt/ ~ GA /plant/ (in this GA is like much of Northern English—see §7.12.4). Allied to the pronunciation of /r/ in pre-consonantal positions mentioned

in the previous paragraph, there is considerable re-alignment of vowels before /r/, so that *merry* and *marry* (and sometimes *Mary* too) may be pronounced the same while *short* and *sport* may have different vowels (/ɔ:/ in the former and [o:] in the latter, corresponding to GB /əʊ/).

Differences of realisation are always numerous between any two systems of English pronunciation and only the most salient will be mentioned. Among the vowels this includes the realisation of the diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ as monophthongs [e:] and [o:], hence *late* [le:t] and *load* [lo:d]. Among the consonants, /r/ is either phonetically [ɹ], i.e. the tip of the tongue is curled further backwards than in GB, or else a similar auditory effect is achieved by bunching the body of the tongue upwards and backwards (this latter form of /r/ is now intruding into GB);<sup>38</sup> /t/ intervocalically following an accent is usually a voiced tap in GA, e.g. *better* [berə] and may sometimes become [d] producing a neutralisation between /t/ and /d/; and /l/ is generally a dark [ɫ] in all positions in GA, unlike GB where it is a clear [l] before vowels and a dark [ɫ] in other positions (see §9.7.1).

A wholesale change in the realisation of the short vowels in GA is increasingly reported, sometimes called the 'Northern Cities Shift',<sup>39</sup> although it now seems more widely spread than this. The vowel principally affected by this shift is /a/ which becomes closer to [ɛ] or [ɛə], or even [e] or [eə]. This affects both those words like *sad* which have /a/ in GB and those words like *after* where the GA /a/ corresponds to /ɑ:/ in GB. In other areas of the U.S. including Columbus, Ohio, and Jackson, North Carolina, short vowels seem to be going in the opposite direction, i.e. /ɪ, e, a/ are lowering and losing a tendency to diphthongisation.<sup>40</sup>

### 7.12.2 Standard Scottish English (SSE)

There are nowadays taken to be three languages in Scotland: Gaelic, Scots and (Scottish) English. The Northumbrian dialect of Old English spread into the south and east of Scotland at much the same time as it spread through England and has continued in use as present-day Scots. A different type of English was re-introduced from the south of England in the eighteenth century but was subsequently much influenced by Scots; it is this that is now described as Scottish English. Most speakers in Scotland will slightly or considerably vary their style of speech between Scots and STANDARD SCOTTISH ENGLISH according to different situations. The typical vowel system of Scottish English involves the loss of the GB distinctions between /ɑ:/ and /a/, between /u:/ and /ʊ/, and between /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/. Thus the pairs *ant* and *aunt*, *soot* and *suit*, *caught* and *cot* are pronounced the same. On the other hand there may be a phonemic split corresponding to GB /e/: while most such words have a vowel of an [ɛ] quality, a small group of words have a vowel of an [ɛ̃] quality, e.g. *heaven*, *eleven*, *next*.

SSE also has no /ɪə,ʊə/ because, like General American, it is rhotic and *beard* and *dour* are pronounced as /bɪrd/ and /du:ɹ/ (= [dy:ɹ]). Similarly GB /ɛ:/ (formerly /eə/) is followed by an /r/, so *fare* GB /fe:/ becomes SSE [fe:ɹ]. Some speakers will also have different sequences of (short) vowel plus r

corresponding to GB /ɜ:/ in *bird*, *serve* and *turn*; others have the same r-coloured schwa [ə] in such words. Rhoticity in SSE is declining with many speakers now only semi-rhotic (i.e. pre-pausal and pre-consonantal /r/ may be treated differently). Moreover the lexical incidence of vowels before /r/ may not correspond to GB: *short* and *sport* may have different vowels as in GA, *short* rhyming with *caught* but *sport* with *boat*.

The SSE vowels corresponding to GB /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ are typically monophthongal (as in General American), e.g. *gate* and *boat* are [ge:t] and [bo:t]. Moreover the vowel common to *soot* and *suit* is not like either of the GB vowels in these words, but is considerably fronted to something like [y], hence [sy:t]. More generally there is no systemic durational difference between long and short vowels, as there is in GB.

The chief differences from GB in the realisation of the consonants lies in the use of a tap [ɾ], e.g. *red* [red] and *trip* [tɾɪp], though there is variation between this and [ɹ] (the usual type in GB), the use of [ɹ] being more common in post-vocalic positions and generally more prestigious. The phoneme /l/ is most commonly a dark [ɫ] in all positions, *little* [htɫ] and *plough* [pɫəʊ]. Finally, intervocalic /t/ is often realised as a glottal stop (like London below), e.g. *butter* [bʌʔə].

### 7.12.3 London English, Estuary English (EE) and Multicultural London English (MLE)

The most dialectal type of London speech is called Cockney. Unlike the previous two varieties above (General American and Standard Scottish English), Cockney is as much a class dialect as a regional one. In its broadest form the dialect of Cockney includes a considerable vocabulary of its own, including rhyming slang. But the characteristics of Cockney pronunciation are spread more widely through London speech than its vocabulary; this type of pronunciation we henceforth refer to as popular London or broad London. The prevalence of a Cockney pronunciation in London is now much challenged by the growth of what has come to be known as Multicultural London English (MLE), dealt with towards the end of this section.

Unlike the previous two types of pronunciation there are no differences in the inventory of vowel phonemes between GB and popular London and there are relatively few (compared with GA and SSE) differences of lexical incidence. There are, however, a large number of differences of realisation. The short front vowels tend to be uniformly closer than in GB, e.g. in *sat*, *set* and *sit*, so much so that *sat* may sound like *set* and *set* itself like *sit* to speakers from other regions. Additionally the short vowel /ʌ/ moves forward to almost C.[a]. Among the long vowels, most noticeable is the diphthongisation of /i:/ (= [ɛi]), /u:/ (= [əu]) and /ɔ:/ which varies between [ɔʊ] morpheme-medially and [ɔwə] morpheme-finally, thus *bead* [bɛid], *boot* [bɛut], *sword* [sɔʊd], *saw* [ɔwə]. Broad London speech also uses distinctive pronunciations of a number of diphthongs /eɪ/ = [aɪ], /aɪ/ = [aɪ], /əʊ/ = [əʊ] and /aʊ/ = [aɪ], e.g. *late* [laɪt], *light* [laɪt], *no* [naʊ], *now* [naɪ]. The