

RP and GA

Standards of Pronunciation

- the extreme sensitivity of the British to variations in the pronunciation of E unparalleled in any oth. country
- => a standard pronunciations exists, though never explicitly imposed by any official body
- written language: the spelling of E fixed in 18th c., the conventions of grammatical forms, constructions and vocabulary accepted with no controversy
- spoken language: a great diversity in the spoken realisations of E used in different parts of the country and by different sections of the community

The History of the Standard

- poor communications btw regions, different external infl. (foreign invasion), etc. => a natural development of different varieties in different parts of the country
- since 16th c.: an increasing social prestige of the south-east England pronunciation for reasons of politics, commerce and the presence of the Court
- 19th c.: the establ. of the London region pronunciation as the speech of the ruling class due to the conformist infl. of public schools
- => pronunciation = a marker of position in society

Received Pronunciation

- RP = an implicitly accepted social standard of pronunciation, the term suggests its being a result of social judgement rather than of any official decision
- historically: regionally based = the educated speech of the south-east of England
- presently: the original concept of the RP speaker considerably diluted = 'General British' (GB) rather than RP
- traditionally taught to foreigners => no longer the exclusive property of a particular social stratum
- for historical reasons continues to serves as a model in Europe x GA used as a model esp. in Asia and Latin Am.
- certain types of regional pronunciation also firmly establ. and universally accepted (SE)
- main types of RP:
 - General RP
 - Refined RP = reflects class distinction, associated with upper-class (characterised by very open vowels /ɪ/, /ɜ/, and word-final /ə/)
 - Regional RP = reflects regional distinction, basically RP except for the presence of a few regional characteristics

General American

- the standard model for learners of E as a 2nd language in esp. Latin Am. and Asia
- Eastern pronunciation: incl. New England and NY City
- Southern pronunciation: incl. Virginia to Texas and southwards
- General pronunciation: all the remaining area
- GA = the form with no marked regional characteristics, in this way comparable to RP

Types of Differences

(a) realisational differences

- = differences in the phonetic realisations of the phonemes
- the same system and the same number of phonemes
- (RP: /t/ > CockE: [ʔ] btw vowels)

(b) systemic d.

- = differences in phoneme inventory
- different system and different number of oppositions
- (RP: distinction btw 'Sam' x 'psalm' > SE: homophones; RP: phonemic [ŋ] in 'sing' > NortE: no more phonemic [ŋg])

(c) lexical d.

- = differences of lexical incidence
- the same system x but: different incidence of phonemes in words
- (RP: opposition btw /u:/ x /ʊ/ > NortE: the same opposition x but: the use of /u/ in 'book, took')

(d) **distributional d.**

- the same system x but: limitation of the phonetic context for certain phonemes
- (non-rhotic accents: the distribution of /r/ limited to prevocalic positions ('red, horrid') x rhotic accents: the full distribution of /r/ ('part, car'))

Differences between RP and GA

(a) systemic differences

- lack of RP monophthong /ɒ/ and diphthongs /ɪə, eə, ʊə/
- /ɒ/ > GA /ɑ:/ ('cod, spot, pocket', loss of distinction btw 'bomb x 'balm') or /ɔ:/ before a voiceless fricative ('across, gone, often')
- /ɪə, eə, ʊə/ > GA sequences of vowel + /r/ ('beard' /bɪrd/, 'fare' /fer/, 'dour' /dʊr/)

(b) lexical d.

- RP /ɑ/ > GA /æ/ before a voiceless fricative ('past, after')
- RP /ɔ:/ > GA /ɒ/ (loss of distinction btw 'cot' x 'caught')

(c) realisational d.

- RP diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ > GA monophthongs [e:] and [o:] ('late' [le:t], 'load' lo:d])
- RP /r/ > GA [ɹ] = the tip of the tongue curled further backwards
- RP /t/ > GA [ɾ] = voiced tap, in unaccented intervocalic positions ('better' ['ber], 'butter, latter')
- RP /l/ > GA [ɫ], i.e. dark (in all positions)

(d) distributional d.

- RP /ɑ:/ > GA /æ/ + /r/ in words spelled with the vowel letter + <r> ('car, card, large')
- RP /ɜ:/ > GA r-coloured vowel [ɜ̞] in words spelled with vowel letter + <r> ('bird, farm, lord')
- RP /ə/ > GA r-coloured vowel [ə̞] in words spelled with vowel letter + <r>
- RP /ɔ:/ > GA /ɒ/ + /r/ in words spelled with vowel letter + <r> ('horse, cord, war')
- RP [aɪ] + [ɪ] > GA [aɪ] + syllabic [ɪ] ('fertile, futile, missile, reptile')
- RP /ɹ/ > GA syllabic [ɹ] when word final after a consonant ('razor' ['reɪzɹ], 'hammer' ['hæmɹ], 'tailor' ['teɪlɹ])
- RP /j/ + /u:/ after /t, d/ > GA /u:/ ('tune, dune, duty')