

J.C.WELLS

Accents of English 2

The British Isles



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To the memory of my father,
Philip Wells (1909–1974),
who encouraged me

Preface

I believe that the three volumes of *Accents of English* represent the first attempt ever to offer a reasonably comprehensive account of the pronunciation of English in all its native-speaker varieties.

I have of course exploited my own familiarity with the various accents – such as it is, varying in depth in accordance with the varying exposure to them which life has happened to give me. These biases will no doubt be apparent. But I have also endeavoured to make appropriate use of all kinds of scholarly treatments of particular regional forms of speech, wherever they have been available to me and to whatever tradition they belong (philological, dialectological, structuralist, ‘speech’, generativist, sociolinguistic, variationist). My aim has been to bring together their principal findings within a unified and integrated framework.

My own descriptive standpoint, as will be seen, lies within the University College London ‘phonetic’ tradition of Daniel Jones, A. C. Gimson, and J. D. O’Connor. I am fortunate to have been their pupil. This standpoint could be said to involve an eclectic amalgam of what seems valuable from both older and newer theoretical approaches.

Where surveys based on substantial fieldwork exist, I have made use of their findings. Where they do not, I have had to rely partly on my own impressions. The reader must bear in mind that some of the statements I make are for this reason necessarily tentative.

Inevitably I may be laying myself open to the charge of rushing in where angels fear to tread. Many readers will know more about the socially sensitive pronunciation variables of their home areas than I can hope to. The Rotherham native will look here in vain for a discussion of the features which distinguish his speech from that of Sheffield a few miles away – features obvious to the native, but opaque to the outsider (vol. 1, 1.1.4). There is a great deal of descriptive work remaining to be done.

I see the original contribution of these volumes as lying princi-

Preface

pally in the following areas: (i) the description of certain neglected accents, including certain accents of the British Isles and the West Indies; (ii) the identification and naming of a number of phonological processes, both historical and synchronic; (iii) the bringing together into a single descriptive framework of accounts by scholars working in many different places and in many different traditions.

Many people have helped me through discussion or correspondence, and in some instances by reading parts of the manuscript. In this regard I would mention particularly D. Abercrombie, K. Albrow, C.-J. N. Bailey, A. Bliss, N. Copeland, R. Easton, A. C. Gimson, T. Hackman, J. Harris, S. Hutcheson, L. Lanham, R. Lass, F. MacEinri, J. D. McClure, J. Milroy, J. D. O'Connor, H. Paddock, S. M. Ramsaran, H.-H. Speitel, P. Trudgill and J. Windsor Lewis. Our views do not always coincide, nor have I accepted all their suggestions; responsibility for the facts and opinions here presented remains mine. I am aware that these are far from the last word on the subject. For any shortcomings I beg indulgence on the grounds that something, however inadequate, is better than nothing.

I am also grateful to J. L. M. Trim for first suggesting that I write this work, and to G. F. Arnold and O. M. Tooley – not to mention Cambridge University Press – for enquiring so assiduously after its tardy progress.

London, January 1981

JOHN WELLS

Typographical conventions and phonetic symbols

Examples of pronunciation are set in *italics* if in ordinary spelling, otherwise in / / or []. Sometimes methods are combined, thus *disapp[ɪə]rance* (which draws attention to the quality of the diphthong corresponding to orthographic *ea* in this word).

/ / is used for **phonemic** transcriptions: for representations believed to be analogous to the way pronunciations are stored in the mental lexicon (= underlying phonological representations); for transcriptions in which only significant sound units (phonemes) are notated.

[] is used for **allophonic** transcriptions: for representations believed to include more phonetic detail than is stored mentally (= surface phonetic representations); for transcriptions involving the notation of certain non-significant phoneme variants (allophones); also for **general-phonetic** or **impressionistic** notation of unanalysed data.

Note that symbols enclosed in [] are only selectively 'narrowed'. Thus on occasion [r] is used to stand for the ordinary English voiced post-alveolar approximant, more precisely written as [ɹ]; similarly [i] or [i:] may sometimes stand for [ii], etc. But where the quality of /r/ or /i(:)/ is the topic under discussion, then the precise symbols are employed.

Phonetic symbols are taken from the International Phonetic Alphabet (see chart, p. xx). The following additional symbols are employed:

- ʒ r-coloured ɜ
- ω unrounded ʊ
- L voiced velar lateral
- C[̣] unreleased C
- C⁼ unaspirated C
- C any consonant

Typographical conventions and phonetic symbols

V	any vowel
→	goes to, becomes, is realized as
~	or
\$	} syllable boundary (indicated only when relevant)
.	
#	stem boundary, word boundary
	sentence boundary, end of utterance
Ø	zero
/	in the environment:
X → Y / A _ B	X becomes Y in the environment of a preceding A and a following B, i.e. AXB → AYB.

Words written in capitals

Throughout the work, use is made of the concept of **standard lexical sets**. These enable one to refer concisely to large groups of words which tend to share the same vowel, and to the vowel which they share. They are based on the vowel correspondences which apply between British Received Pronunciation and (a variety of) General American, and make use of **keywords** intended to be unmistakable no matter what accent one says them in. Thus 'the KIT words' refers to 'ship, bridge, milk . . .'; 'the KIT vowel' refers to the vowel these words have (in most accents, /ɪ/); both may just be referred to as KIT.

RP GenAm

i	ɪ	1. KIT	ship, sick, bridge, milk, myth, busy . . .
e	ɛ	2. DRESS	step, neck, edge, shelf, friend, ready . . .
æ	æ	3. TRAP	tap, back, badge, scalp, hand, cancel . . .
ɒ	ɑ	4. LOT	stop, sock, dodge, romp, possible, quality . . .
ʌ	ʌ	5. STRUT	cup, suck, budge, pulse, trunk, blood . . .
ʊ	ʊ	6. FOOT	put, bush, full, good, look, wolf . . .
ɑː	æ	7. BATH	staff, brass, ask, dance, sample, calf . . .
ɔ	ɔ	8. CLOTH	cough, broth, cross, long, Boston . . .

Typographical conventions and phonetic symbols

ɜ:	ɜr	9. NURSE	hurt, lurk, urge, burst, jerk, term . . .
i:	i	10. FLEECE	creep, speak, leave, feel, key, people . . .
eɪ	eɪ	11. FACE	tape, cake, raid, veil, steak, day . . .
ɑ:	ɑ	12. PALM	psalm, father, bra, spa, lager . . .
ɔ:	ɔ	13. THOUGHT	taught, sauce, hawk, jaw, broad . . .
əʊ	o	14. GOAT	soap, joke, home, know, so, roll . . .
u:	u	15. GOOSE	loop, shoot, tomb, mute, huge, view . . .
aɪ	aɪ	16. PRICE	ripe, write, arrive, high, try, buy . . .
ɔɪ	ɔɪ	17. CHOICE	adroit, noise, join, toy, royal . . .
aʊ	aʊ	18. MOUTH	out, house, loud, count, crowd, cow . . .
ɪə	ɪ(r)	19. NEAR	beer, sincere, fear, beard, serum . . .
ɛə	ɛ(r)	20. SQUARE	care, fair, pear, where, scarce, vary . . .
ɑ:	ɑ(r)	21. START	far, sharp, bark, carve, farm, heart . . .
ɔ:	ɔ(r)	22. NORTH	for, war, short, scorch, born, warm . . .
ɔ:	o(r)	23. FORCE	four, wore, sport, porch, borne, story . . .
ʊə	ʊ(r)	24. CURE	poor, tourist, pure, plural, jury . . .