SOUNDS OF ENGLISH WORLDWIDE

RAYMOND HICKEY

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Sounds of English Worldwide

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Raymond Hickey

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List of Abbreviations

RP	Received Pronunciation
MAE	Mainstream American English
OE	Old English
ME	Middle English
EME	Early Modern English
LME	Late Modern English
ModE	Modern English
SSBE	Supraregional Southern British English

Preface

English is one of a small group of languages, to which Spanish and Portuguese also belong, which spread across the globe during the colonial period giving rise to many varieties overseas which form the focus of the present book. One can read this book for a number of reasons, e.g. to find out about different varieties of English, a very practical reason, or to learn more about phonology (sound systems) on the basis of variation in English. To accommodate both sets of potential readers, the book is divided into two parts. The first discusses general issues surrounding the study of varieties of English and change in the language while the second provides summaries of the main features of various varieties of English worldwide. This book is about pronunciation, that is, about one level of language but one which is intricately connected to the other levels: grammar, vocabulary, and language use. Readers not acquainted with phonetics and with sound transcription should consult Appendixes C and D on this subject and use the glossary at the back of the book. To learn about lexical sets and how they are used in variety studies readers should consult Part I, Section 2 and Appendix D for more information.

Books on phonetics are generally written by authors who are native speakers of the variety being used as a reference accent. English authors, such as Daniel Jones, A.C. Gimson, and J.C. Wells, and American authors, such as John Samuel Kenyon and Thomas A. Knott, were/are speakers of Received Pronunciation and Mainstream American English respectively (exceptions are books written by non-native teachers of English phonetics). The situation is different in my case. My native pronunciation is a somewhat conservative supraregional form of Southern Irish English. But throughout my academic career I have discussed (and taught) English phonetics with my students on the basis of Received Pronunciation, so I feel comfortable using this as the reference accent for English on the European side of the Atlantic and using Mainstream American English as that for English in North America. In addition, Received Pronunciation works well as a point of departure when describing Southern Hemisphere varieties of English. It hardly needs to be said that reference accents have no inherent merit or privileged status – this book is about all varieties of English, which are treated equally, irrespective of the number of speakers of a variety or the political status and power of the country where it is spoken. The concern here is with variation across the English-speaking world, and a feature attested in Appalachian, Shetland, Ugandan, Philippine, or Fijian English has the same inherent linguistic value as a feature from Received Pronunciation or Mainstream American English.

In the pages of the present book much information about the history of English can be found. There are good reasons for this. The sound system of English has undergone major changes during its history and it is instructive, when attempting to understand present-day forms, to consider the pathways which sound change in the past has taken. Furthermore, the varieties of English throughout the world stem in large part from input forms in previous centuries – as a by-product of the

colonial enterprise – and so previous stages of the language must be considered to grasp what features were characteristic of the earliest varieties in former colonies of Britain.

A book like the present one will bear the mark of its author. There are so many decisions to be made, not so much about what to cover, but about what to highlight, where to put a focus, how much space to allot and what weight to accord different topics. And naturally, when providing examples, an author will gravitate toward the variety they know best, their own linguistic comfort zone, so to speak. Thus this book would look very different if written by an English speaker of Received Pronunciation, an African American, a South African, an Indian, a Singaporean, or a Scottish scholar, to list just a few possibilities. Nonetheless, I have strived to produce a book which would be acceptable to as wide an audience as possible. It is intended to be eclectic and inclusive of all kinds of varieties found today. As can be seen from Part III, English today consists of a complex kaleidoscope of diverse forms. It is not possible to describe each of these in detail. Instead the approach has been to highlight features of a given variety, area, or type, offer illustrative examples, and provide references which can be used by readers who might wish to further pursue some matter beyond the current context.

This book represents a snapshot of variation in English pronunciation across the world in the early 2020s. Will the variation described here lead to new features establishing themselves in the near future? We simply do not know. Linguists have seen and analyzed many cases in the past where variation resulted in change, but predicting the future is a very different matter, given the broad range of language-internal and social factors whose values and relative weight cannot be determined in advance. However, if this book succeeds in engendering an awareness of the variation in the pronunciation of English worldwide, along with its possible sources and causes, then I have achieved the goal I set myself in writing it. Whether this is the case or not is up to the readers to decide.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers at the beginning and end of the project as well to my many colleagues who kindly provided me with much constructive criticism, above all Joseph Salmons, Christopher Strelluf, and James Grama.

Lastly my thanks also go to the friendly and encouraging staff at Wiley Blackwell, especially Laura Adsett, Anya Fielding, Rachel Greenberg, Rosie Hayden, and my copy editor, Giles Flitney, as well as to Gopinath Anbalagan for their continual support and professional advice on various matters concerning the preparation and production of the book.

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How to Use this Book

The current book has been written for both scholars and students who are interested in learning about how English is pronounced throughout the world. It can be read without too great a knowledge of linguistics, but a basic acquaintance with the transcription system of the International Phonetic Alphabet is assumed. For those readers who perhaps do not feel entirely confident with this, it is recommended that they consult a practical book on phonetic transcription to brush up their knowledge of this field (see *Overviews* in the reference section at the back of the book).

If one were to ask what the narrative in this book is, the common thread running through the various sections, then the answer would be to examine the sound system of English and to consider in detail variation and change as it has occurred in different areas leading to all the varieties we recognize in the English-speaking world today. To this end the book has been organized into sections as shown below. Note that in the first part, for reasons of space, many topics are discussed in brief single-paragraph sections. Because of their number, these sections are not listed in the table of contents but their location in the text can be ascertained via the index.

I) Language and Variation

1) Studying Variation in Sound
   An introduction to language variation and change providing short summaries of key issues in the field.
2) The Sound System of English
   An overview of the main elements and processes which constitute the sound system of English.
3) Sound Change in English
   Discusses how to analyze change in sound systems and provides an overview of trends in present-day varieties of English.

II) The Spread of English

1) The Colonial Period
   A brief description of how English came to spread overseas during colonial times.
2) Transported Dialect Features
   A discussion of the main features of English dialects taken overseas from the regions of Britain and Ireland.
3) English in the World Today
   An outline of the geographical distribution of English in the world today with a discussion of the regions that have come to act as models for others.

III) Regions and Countries

1) England
   An overview of varieties of English in England today with a discussion of urban and rural forms in the different geographical regions.
2) The Celtic Regions
   A synopsis of forms of English spoken in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland with consideration of the possible effects of the Celtic languages on forms of English in these regions.
3) Europe
   A description of English as spoken in three small locations in continental Europe, i.e. the Channel Islands, Gibraltar, and Malta.
4) North America
   4.1) The United States
   An overview of the main forms of English spoken in the United States ranging from urban varieties to those in rural relic areas. Ethnic varieties, such as African American English and Chicano English, have dedicated sections.
   4.2) Canada
   An outline of supraregional speech in Canada as well as a consideration of ethnic and regional varieties.
5) The Caribbean
   A summary of the different forms of English in the anglophone Caribbean, what features they show, and how they came to have their particular forms.
6) Africa
   6.1) West Africa
   English as spoken in the countries, which are found along the southern coast of the west of Africa, from Cameroon to The Gambia, discussed in various sections.
   6.2) East Africa
   A summary of features of English found in the three main anglophone countries of East Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.
   6.3) Southern Africa
   An overview of English as spoken in the main anglophone countries of southern Africa with special attention paid to the ethnic varieties of English in South Africa.
7) The South Atlantic
   A summary of English as spoken on the small anglophone islands of the South Atlantic, i.e. St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha, and the Falkland Islands.
8) Asia
   8.1) South Asia
   A discussion of English as spoken today in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka with consideration of the colonial background to these present-day countries.
   8.2) South-East Asia
   An overview of English as spoken in this region, in Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore on the one hand and in The Philippines on the other hand.
   8.3) East Asia
   A discussion of the role of English as a second language in the East Asian countries China, Korea, and Japan with a dedicated section on English in the former British colony of Hong Kong.

9) Australasia
   Varieties of English in Australia and New Zealand are discussed here with information on their historical development and present-day forms.
10) The Pacific Region
   The anglophone locations in the three major ethnic divisions of the Pacific, Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, are discussed here with historical information on how they arose.
11) Pidgins and Creoles
   The sound systems of English-lexifier pidgins and creoles are considered here with a discussion of their typology and possible interrelatedness.
12) World Englishes and Second-Language Varieties
   English as a global second language is the highlight in this section which considers the broad characteristics of foreign language pronunciations of English.

IV) Outlook

The main text concludes with a discussion of how English might develop in the course of the twenty-first century and how the relationship of first- to second-language varieties will pan out, indeed whether this distinction will retain validity as the century progresses.

Additional material

The book also contains a number of appendixes which are geared toward providing summary information on a number of areas as follows.

Appendix A	Timeline for Varieties of English
Appendix B	The History of English
Appendix C	Transcription Conventions
Appendix D	Lexical Sets and Extensions

There is also a glossary of the main terms found in discussions of varieties of English and a comprehensive set of references along with a list of linguistic journals. These sections should be consulted when looking for further information about the issues and varieties discussed in the book.

Part I

Language and Variation

1

Studying Variation in Sound

1.1 Introduction

English is the most widespread language in the world today, both geographically – present on five continents – and demographically – spoken as a first or second language by several billion people. The distribution and the functional expansion, which English has experienced over the past few hundred years, has of necessity led to variation in the way the language is spoken and used. For the world in the early twenty-first century an important consideration is the degree to which English is employed as a second language by great numbers of people across the globe (Schneider 2020). Indeed there are many more second-language speakers than there are first-language speakers and the boundaries between these groups are becoming increasingly blurred given that they form a continuum rather than two separate blocks. Nonetheless, at one end of this continuum one has speakers who use English as a native language among others in the same position, and at the other end there are people who have a different native language and only use English in specific domains of their society or when engaging with others who do not share their native language. Linguists generally make a distinction here between countries where English is used as a second language, in the economy, technology, and science, as well as in official and/or public contexts, and those countries where people only have recourse to English with individuals who do not understand each others' languages. English in such situations is technically known as "English as a second language" and "English as a foreign language" respectively. The latter type, in its pronunciation, is heavily influenced by the sound systems of other languages, while the former group is perhaps less so, but there is often more intermingling among users of English as a first language and users of English as a second language and hence the chance of mutual influence is greater. For the current book the sound systems of both first- and second-language English will form a focus, with the former receiving the bulk of the attention. Nonetheless, the situation of English as a second and foreign language will also be taken into account, especially given the burgeoning numbers of people in this group across the globe (see Section III.12).

Why the Label "Variety"?

It is necessary to specify at the outset what is understood by "varieties of English" (Hickey 2014a; Bauer 2002). The label is taken to refer to any forms of English which have a recognizable sound profile making them identifiable as separate from other forms.[1] Thus the label "variety of English" applies to many different forms of English and avoids the connotation which may sometimes adhere to the label "dialect" as a conservative rural form of English (Wakelin ed., 1972, 1984),

Sounds of English Worldwide, First Edition. Raymond Hickey.
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spoken mostly by older males.[2] Varieties can refer equally to urban and rural forms of language, to local and less local forms.

Importantly for the current book, the label "varieties of English" has an additional historical dimension to it. Forms of the language were taken to overseas locations during the colonial period – roughly from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries – and developed in specific ways, depending on such factors as regional English input and the demographic composition of early settler groups. In this context the adjective "overseas" simply means "beyond the islands of Britain and Ireland" and is not intended to carry any connotation of anglocentricity or imply any evaluative stance.

Further factors were the social status of the settlers relative to each other and conditions at the overseas locations, particularly whether the latter developed to become independent nations with their own standards of English. In this sense the study of varieties of English is closely linked to what is known as *new dialect formation* (Trudgill 1986, 2004; Hickey 2003a), the rise of new varieties from a mixture of inputs at locations outside the British Isles. Here examining possible historical connections between older and newer varieties plays a major role.

When discussing varieties it is common to use the plural noun "Englishes," e.g. *World Englishes*. This is now established practice and the plural label is often used for forms of English outside Britain, e.g. in the phrase *New Englishes*, *Asian Englishes*, or *Pacific Englishes*. See Section III.12.

Finally, I should say that I am aware of recent discussions which criticize the blanket use of language names, like English, Spanish, etc., and which stress the fluidity of language, especially in high-contact urban contexts (the locus of superdiversity as originally envisaged by Vertovec 2007), often focusing on translanguaging, the simultaneous use of several languages in communicative contexts. This does not, however, invalidate the notion of an underlying sound system which is shared by first-language speakers of English (though this does not necessarily apply to creoles). It is this common stock of systemic knowledge which justifies the use of a general label "English" when talking about varieties in the present book.

Phonetics and Personal Identity

Phonetics is the level of language which is closest bound to personal identity. Firstly, the pronunciation of language (for native speakers) is based on acquisition in early childhood, and the nuances of one's accent become hard-wired into the neuronal circuits responsible for your production of language. Secondly, once you start speaking, your language is open to assessment by others, much more so than for other levels of language like syntax or vocabulary. This means that the sociolinguistic significance of phonetics is far greater than that of other levels of language (Sharma forthcoming) and explains why the concern of sociolinguists has first and foremost been with sound whereas formal linguists primarily investigate sentence structure with related aspects from other levels also considered. The primacy of sound in sociolinguistics explains why there is a subfield called sociophonetics (E. Thomas 2011; Di Paolo and Yaeger-Dror eds, 2011; Celata and Calamai eds, 2014; Stanford 2019; Kendall and Fridland 2021) but none called sociosyntax or sociolexis. Sociophonetics is a starting point, looking at variation in minute detail, but this can later lead to insights on the phonological level, i.e. on that of the system of sounds.

Accent

Everyone has an accent: it is the manner in which they pronounce the sounds of their language. However, people normally only become aware of an accent when it is used by another person and