Standard National Language(s)

**Definition:** An idealised language variety, most often accepted as the official language of a community or country. (Yule 2006: 194)

- the emergence of many modern European nation states by the end of 19th century accompanied by the spread of nationalist ideologies: one nation, one language
- Codification of *vernacular* (spoken) languages was influenced by traditions of unified written standard of Classical Latin, i.e. grammars prescribed a regulated and ‘refined’ language (akin to the language of the gentry) (Barber 1993: 203-4)
Language, Accent & Dialect

**accent** refers more specifically to regional or social variation in pronunciation. (Yule: 195)

**dialect** refers to regional or social variation in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. (Yule: 195)

- e.g. Geordie: *them days you didn’t live wi’ lasses.*

**language** “a dialect with an army and navy”

Distinguishing between dialect/language on grounds of linguistic features:
- a written standard?
- mutual intelligibility?
- linguistic similarity?

### Received Pronunciation

**Received pronunciation** has its roots in the south-east of England.

- e.g. *pass [paːs], home [həʊm], bird [bɜːd], poor [pʊə], hill [hɪl]*

- Established over 400 years ago as language of the court & the upper classes.

- Term coined in 1869 by the linguist A. J. Ellis in *On Early English Pronunciation* to mean **accepted or approved**.

  In the present day we may, however, recognise a received pronunciation all over the country […] It may be especially considered as the educated pronunciation of the metropolis, of the court, the pulpit and the bar. (23)

**Received Pronunciation 2**

- 19th century became the accent of public school system, the Civil Service of the British Empire, the armed forces, i.e. authority & power
- but nowadays it is a **regionless accent**
- understood and spoken all over Britain
- but by only 3-5 % of population
- it is still a **social accent** (middle & upper classes)
- shows variation from conservative to contemporary RP, typically spoken by older & younger speakers, respectively (Gimson 1990)
- but there are many more speakers of near-RP accents or ‘modified RP’
RP – New Developments 1

**T tapping** – a tap (or flap) sound produced by flicking the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, c.f. American English [ɾ]

**T voicing** – a /t/ pronounced almostidentically to a [d]

> a lot of them actually came and stayed with us. So they came over with their duty-free, their bottles of gin and vodka

RP – New Developments 2

**T glottaling** – the consonant /t/ is realised as a glottal stop [ʔ] increasingly in these two environments:

1. **syllable-final** before a following consonant
e.g. cut them [kʌʔθæm], fat content [fæʔkɒntɛnt], sitcom [sɪʔkɒm]

2. **with certain consonant clusters**, such as [ʧ] [ns] [mp]
e.g. watch [wɒʔʧ], since [sɪnʔs], camp [kæmʔp]

RP – New Developments 3

But **t glottaling** is also appearing **between vowels** (esp. at word boundaries) among younger RP speakers:

> this friend of mine had this studio apartment at very low rent and I thought, “Well, what the heck? Got a summer free [...]”

RP – New Developments 4

**Vocalised l** – the final /l/ is realised as a vowel [ʊ]

> e.g. well [wɛʊ], cold [kɔʊd], kill [kɪʊ]
**High rise intonation ('upspeak', 'uptalk')** – using a rising intonation at the end of statements (instead of falling) – more common among women, teenagers, the working class & ethnic minorities (Crystal 2005: 249)

*Uh, I guess the first time I, kind of, went abroad really by myself was straight after 'A' Levels and I went to Paris, so that was the summer of ninety-one and I stayed two and a half months in Paris.*

**Estuary English**

**Estuary English** – the term was coined in the 60s for the features of London regional speech spreading out along the Thames Estuary, especially to Essex and Kent. These features include vocalised l and glottaling, but also grammatical features.

*And there was, and there was a caravan park just, uh, [ʊ] nearby, which, uh, obviously is still there, which had the swimming pool and all the entertainment and everything.*

**Regional Dialects 1** (Yule 2006: 196-8)

Aim of traditional dialectology to discover regional differences in pronunciation and vocabulary

**“NORMS”:**
- non-mobile,
- older,
- rural,
- male speakers

were typically selected because thought to be less affected by external influences, i.e. outside their region.

**Regional Dialects 2**

**Dieth-Orton Survey** undertaken 1948-61
- over 1,300 items in 313 localities throughout England
- biased towards rural communities

**Topics:** e.g. farm/farming, animals & nature, house/housekeeping, human body, numbers, time, weather etc.

**Speakers:** mainly working class men mostly over 60, locally born in farming communities

**Dialect Boundaries 1** (Yule 2006: 197-8)

**isogloss**: a boundary between areas with different linguistic features, e.g. pronunciation or lexical items

**dialect boundary**: a boundary characterised by bundles of isoglosses (often along natural boundaries in the landscape)

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**Regional Dialects 3**

**Place**: Portesham, Dorset

**Topic**: Sid talks about traditional stacking and threshing techniques.

**Speaker**: Sid Hodder (b.1877; male, retired farm worker)

**Date**: 1956

*I don't care what nobody say. Sheep is the place for the farm and that's what the farm's, that's what the land is missing now, is sheep.*

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**Isoglosses 1**

Isoglosses for the pronunciation of “home”


RP (contemporary)

RP (conservative)

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**Isoglosses 2**

Isoglosses for post-vocalic /r/

(Hughes & Trudgill 1979: 33)

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**Isoglosses 3**

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**Isoglosses for the pronunciation of “path”**
(Hughes & Trudgill 1979: 30)

**Grammatical Features 1**

Tag questions – in standard English question tags agree with main verb of the clause (or use forms of *do*).
- e.g. He isn’t coming, *is he*?
- They arrived late, *didn’t they*?

Aggressive tags – in British usage, there is a special use of tag questions which works as a put down (rather than inviting the listener’s involvement) (Crystal 2005: 299)
- e.g. Well, you *would* say that, *wouldn’t you*?
- A: [to a young man on the phone] Is that your brother?

**Grammatical Features 2**

Invariant tags – In many parts of the world (especially where English is spoken as a 2nd language), *is it/isn’t it?* has arisen as an invariant form (Crystal 2005: 299)
- e.g. They do a lot of work, *is it?* (Wales)
- She’s gone to town, *is it?* (South Africa)

The fairly widespread (Cockney?) tag *innit* (*isn’t it*) in British English is also showing similar signs of invariance.

Ain’t – used in question tags and ordinary negations, this invariant negative form is found in many parts of the English-speaking world used for both *‘m not/isn’t/aren’t* and *hasn’t/haven’t*.

**Bibliography**


Hughes, Arthur & Trudgill, Peter (1979) *English Accents and Dialects*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd
