PHONOLOGICAL AND LEXICAL VARIATIONS
ACCENTS

• Some accents of English:
  • General Australian English
  • London English
  • New York City English
  • Scottish Standard English (SSE)
  • Tyneside English
ACCENTS

• General Australian (GA), Received Pronunciation (RP), and Scottish Standard English accents are viewed socially as ‘standard’ accents.

• The notion ‘standard’ is a social one – no linguist would claim that there is any coherent notion of inherent phonetic or phonological sense.

• Many people judge some accents to be superior to the others or take some accents to be standard or non-standard accents.
CONT’D

- However, those judgments are founded on non-linguistic factors – to do with social attitudes in the societies in question.
- For example, RP, the standard accent in England, is non-rhotic, and the non-rhoticity of RP is therefore judged by some English people to be more prestigious than the rhotic accents found in many of the Western parts of England.
- Social judgments: it is common to regard some accents as ‘uglier’ or ‘harsher’ than others.
- In Britain, most non-standard accents which are judged ‘ugly’ or ‘uncivilised’ are spoken in industrial or post-industrial urban areas. (e.g., the working-class accents of London (COCKNEY), Birmingham Liverpool, Belfast, etc.)
Crystal identifies five key characteristics of Standard English (SE)

1. SE is not regionally based.

2. SE has distinctive features of grammar, lexis and spelling, but can be spoken in any accent.

3. It is the most prestigious variety of English, associated with high status.

4. It is the most widely understood variety of English, promoted by educational institutions, used in government, law and mass media.

5. It is the variety used for printed texts, however only a minority use it when they speak.
Which is SE and Which is Not?

- I give it to me nan.
- I gave it to my grandmother.

- We’ll get it sorted this arvo.
- We’ll sort it out this afternoon.
The Origins of Standard English

• SE originated from the East Midlands dialect, spoken in London, Oxford and Cambridge.

• When Caxton set up his printing press in 1476 he used the conventions of the East Midlands dialect.

• During the 18th century there was a growing inclination to standardise the grammar, spelling and vocabulary of the language through dictionaries e.g., Dr Johnson’s dictionary of 1755 and grammars & Robert Lowth’s grammar of 1762.
Received Pronunciation

• Also known as ‘BBC English’, ‘Public School English’ or ‘Oxford English’.

• It is a region-less accent, only indicating a speaker’s social class and not their regional origins.

• It is the accent associated with upper and middle-class speakers of English.
The Origins of RP

• Thought to have been the accent spoken at court and by members of the aristocracy in the late middle ages.

• RP was associated with the capital and came to be seen as prestigious.

• In the 19th and 20th centuries it was the accent of public schools and the officer class.

• Only about 3% of the populations speak RP. However many more speak modified RP.
References
