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**Geoff Lindsey**, *English after RP: Standard British pronunciation today*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. Pp. xvi + 153. ISBN 9783030043568.

Reviewed by Kate Hammer , University College London

This book by Geoff Lindsey describes changes in the pronunciation of standard British English, known as Received Pronunciation (RP), which have taken place over the last few decades (since about 1950). It is a vital contribution to the current literature as it

provides an urgent update to the existing descriptions of standard British English which are, as stated by John Wells in the Foreword, simply outdated. The volume is composed of 31 chapters and is divided into six parts, preceded by an Introduction, which paints a picture of what RP *was* and how events in British history and culture contributed to its prominent rise and eventual fall. It is here where we learn of the origins of RP, about BBC English, language attitudes and associations surrounding RP, as well as their shifts and changes over the decades. Finally, we also learn that today RP can be referred to in the past tense, for RP is simply heard no more. Instead, the modern variety which replaced RP is called Standard Southern British (SSB).

General observations on the changes in standard British English are described in part I of the book (chapters 1–3). Here we learn that, overall and over the decades, the pronunciation of some words gravitated more towards their spelling, often transforming previously one-syllable words in RP into two-syllable words in contemporary British English, an example of which can be found in the word *towards* (cf. Wells 2008). This would of course result in shifts in word stress, which is a major sound change as far as pronunciation is concerned, and the topic of part IV of the book. The pronunciation of some words has also become stronger, reducing high numbers of weak and reduced forms typical of RP, and resulting in stronger contemporary realisations. Today we hear far fewer words with long sequences of weak syllables, which was typical of RP, owing to shifting primary stress within words and accenting differently, an example of which can be found in the word *primarily* (cf. Wells 2008). We also read in this section that the pronunciation of some words has been largely influenced by American English (chapter 2). Other pronunciations of words have been found, in a way, to assimilate to resemble other words starting with the same prefixes, for example *di-* (*dissect*, *dichotomy*, *digress*). The book offers an excellent collection of words the pronunciation of which has changed over time, presented in the Mini Dictionary at the end of the volume. The Mini Dictionary offers both older and newer pronunciations of words and provides explanations of the phonetic changes which took place, helping readers understand what happened phonetically so that a given word sounds as it does today. To explain and elaborate on sound changes, the author refers to the famous standard lexical sets (Wells 1982) throughout the chapters of the volume, which provides easy to follow consistency and spectacular attention to detail throughout the book.

Standard British English vowels, and changes in their broad domain, are the subject of part II of the volume (chapters 4–13). Prominent changes in vowel quality over the last few decades are said to have been brought about by a gradual yet substantial anti-clockwise shift in the vowel system, thoroughly described in the book and presented using a vowel Quadrilateral with associated standard lexical sets keywords (chapter 4). While the number of vowel contrasts remains the same, vowel quality has changed dramatically, with some front vowels having become lower (DRESS, TRAP), some more back (PRICE, STRUT), some more raised (THOUGHT, LOT) and some more central (FOOT, CURE). However, what has *not* evolved alongside the anti-clockwise vowel shift over time is the transcription system for standard British English vowels, which is said to make a large proportion of current academic research and publishing simply outdated.

The vowel symbols for standard British English, originally proposed and updated by Gimson (1962, 1977, 1981), are said to require an urgent revision in order to, once again, pair phonetic transcription with acoustic characteristics, and ensure that what we transcribe that we hear corresponds with what we actually hear in standard British English as it is spoken today. This is particularly important in the context of published materials used to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) so that accurate transcriptions and symbols are presented to learners. Notably, FLEECE and GOOSE vowels, which have long been known and taught as *long vowels*, are actually *diphthongs* in standard British English today, and their corresponding phonetic symbols should accurately reflect their quality as gliding vowels (chapter 5). We also learn that KIT and FOOT vowels are frequently replaced with a *schwa*, representing therefore what is referred to as the Weak Vowel Merger (chapter 10). Another prominent change described is the decline of the centring diphthongs (FORCE, CURE, SQUARE, NEAR) which are increasingly replaced with long vowels, namely, they have monophthongised, a popular example of which is found in the word *tourist* (chapter 13). Changes in vowel quality are addressed thoroughly in part II and numerous examples are provided, which makes reading this book very interesting indeed.

Part III of the volume focuses exclusively on consonants (chapters 14–22). Here we learn that a lot more aspiration of /p/, /t/ and /k/ is heard nowadays in standard British English, compared to RP, for it is no longer restricted to stressed syllables only. Also, word-final ejectives [pʰ], [tʰ] and [kʰ] are heard quite frequently, examples of which can be found in words like *Facebook* or *next week*, in which glottal stops are made word-finally during the oral closure (chapter 14). It is reported also that standard RP consonant clusters /tj/ and /dj/ are nowadays frequently replaced with /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in both weak and stressed syllables, examples of which can be found in words like *education* and *Tuesday*, respectively. Moreover, we also learn that RP alveolar consonants and yod clusters /sj/ and /zj/ tend to be pronounced differently word-initially, where /sj/ is simplified to /s/ alone with a simultaneous disappearance of yod altogether, examples of which can be found in words like *suit*, *suitable*, *supermarket* and *supervise* (chapter 15). A new trend has also been observed in the formation of clusters consisting of postalveolar stops /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ with postalveolar /r/ (where RP would only allow clusters of /r/ with alveolar stops /t/ and /d/), resulting in /tʃr/ and /dʒr/ realisations in words such as *trip* and *truck* and *drip* and *drunk*, respectively. Finally, glottal stops, which were not characteristic of RP at all, are commonly heard today as a form of /t/ before consonants and vowels in both word-internal and word-final positions, examples of which include *Sco[ʔ]land*, *Bri[ʔ]ish*, *Grea[ʔ] Bri[ʔ]ain* and *Grea[ʔ] Expectations*, respectively. The conclusive remarks of part III describe TH-fronting and address possible changes which standard British English could see in the future, which are explored in chapter 22, titled, suitably, ‘Fings to come?’

Parts IV and V of the volume are devoted to stress and connected speech, respectively (chapters 23–27). English is said to have a strong preference for alternating stress. We can *hear* it while reading or performing the works of Shakespeare, where rhythm and

regularity are core characteristics; we can also hear it in contemporary spoken British English today. This *love* of alternating stress has led to shifts in primary stress in words composed of long sequences of weak syllables, with stress placed on the first syllable, which was characteristic of RP (chapter 23). In some such words, primary stress has shifted to the antepenultimate syllable, reducing thus the number of sequential weak unstressed syllables, and therefore changing the sound of words and rhythm of sequences in which they appear. Examples where stress has shifted from the initial to the second syllable can be found in words like *comparable*, *controversy* and *transferable*. Some words, however, resisted shifts in stress and remained unchanged, ending in three weak syllables just the way they did when spoken by RP speakers, including *noticeable*, *difficulty* and *knowledgeable*. Interestingly, some other words also resisted shifts in stress but what happened instead was that they *lost* the first weak vowel, or *schwa*, typically before /l/ or /r/, which altered the overall sound of those words, examples of which can be found in *chocolate* and *camera*, respectively. Further changes in primary word stress heard today are attributed to the influence of American English (chapter 24). While British English prefers second-syllable stress, American English prefers first-syllable stress, which sometimes leads to *leftward* primary stress shifts being heard in Britain today, examples of which can be found in popular words such as *ice cream*, *weekend*, *princess* and *research*. In addition to primary stress, a proportion of what we hear in spoken British English today stems from what happens in connected speech. Noteworthy features of connected speech in Southern British pronunciation described in the book include intrusive /r/, hard attack and vocal fry. The perception of an unwritten /r/ in spoken sequences, like *vanilla/r/ ice*, referred to as intrusive /r/, is said to have shifted towards neutrality, compared to RP, as speakers of SSB do not tend to suppress it, unlike speakers of RP who did. Instead, intrusive /r/ is widely heard in SSB, including in the media (*data/r/ analysis*), business (*Pizza/r/ Express*) and news broadcasts including the BBC (*America/r/ and China*). Multiple other examples of both intrusive and linking /r/ are provided in chapter 25. Another feature of SSB described in the book is hard attack, in other words, a word-initial glottal stop used as a way to begin a word-initial vowel, found in phrases like *l[ʔ]am*. It is reported that speakers of RP tended to use hard attack primarily for emphasis, while speakers of SSB often use it simply as means of separating words in connected speech, as well as for emphasis. Chapter 26 offers a number of hard attack examples and elaborates further on the use of glottal stops in SSB. The final feature of connected speech described in the book is vocal fry, namely, low-frequency voicing or irregular ‘creaky voice’. We learn that vocal fry was a feature of male RP speakers in the past, while today it is commonly heard in young female speakers of SSB (chapter 27). This might perhaps reflect changes in language attitudes over time as well as broader changes in the use of language and voice in speakers of English in Britain today.

The final part of the volume is devoted to intonation (chapters 28–31). Here we learn that out of the three constituent subsystems of intonation, namely, phrasing, accentuation and contour, it is contour alone which has changed greatly since the times of RP. Different intonation contours are described and elaborated on, including High Drop and Low Drop,

both of which involve a fall in pitch from the head to the nuclear syllable, to varying degrees (High Fall and Low Fall). What was very characteristic of RP was a frequent use of downstep, which made the nuclear syllable begin at a lower pitch than what preceded it. Nowadays, a falling pitch, or fall, is still popular at the end of intonation phrases, but very Low Falls are more associated with RP than with contemporary English, so today they may sound rather dated, or even patronising (chapter 28). Another change in intonation observed is in the domain of Yes–No Questions, the contour of which has become more neutral, as it typically ends in a Fall–Rise nuclear tone, conferring a degree of politeness (chapter 29). Additionally, various continuation patterns are referred to in this section, and associated intonation contours are described thoroughly. The final chapter of the book focuses on Uptalk, namely, high rising intonation, also referred to as High Bounce or High Rising Terminal. In RP, the core function of Uptalk was that of changing statements into questions. Nowadays, the function of Uptalk has broadened, for it is used much more frequently on conversational statements, as a means of seeking acknowledgement that hearers are actively engaged in conversations. This new function, of what is an existing intonation contour, is said to be similar in nature to final tags such as *okay? yeah? right?* used by speakers to maintain hearers' interest, and to increase the flow of conversations. Used entirely in conversations, Uptalk is not employed in news broadcasts or public announcements. While Uptalk can sometimes be met with a somewhat frosty reception, it is emphasised that it is for its function that critics might be tempted to view it more favourably, for it attempts to support engaged interaction between people (chapter 31).

Overall, this volume is an excellent guide throughout important changes which have been observed in standard British English over the past few decades. It has a very logical, well-ordered structure, and the titles of individual chapters are not only precise and succinct, but also refreshingly original and witty, some of which benefit from the use of pronunciation spelling and smart fusions of content and form. The book is extremely reader-friendly, which makes it accessible not only to experts but also to students who wish to learn more about standard British English as it is spoken today. In fact, the book offers numerous pointers aimed at EFL learners, typically placed at the end of most chapters, on what to pay attention to in speech, what to potentially avoid, and what to be aware of as far as contemporary pronunciation is concerned. Those comments add a pedagogical element to the volume, and demonstrate how accessible it is to everyone who is interested in standard British pronunciation today. An undivided focus and superb delivery are what make this book stand out by a wide margin.

To conclude, this is a very important book on standard British English as it is spoken today. It offers detailed explanations and a multitude of examples, and spells out very clearly that the sound of standard British English has changed considerably since the times of RP. It is a critical read for anyone involved not only in the study of English, but also in EFL teaching and learning. This book is also an urgent call to revise the vowel symbols currently used in academia and publishing in order to, once again, pair

phonetic transcription with what we actually hear in standard British English today. A truly compelling publication.

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**Salikoko S. Mufwene, John R. Rickford, Guy Bailey and John Baugh (eds.),** *African-American English: Structure, history and use* (Routledge Linguistics Classics). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xvi + 368. ISBN 9780367760687.

Reviewed by Walter F. Edwards , Wayne State University

Salikoko S. Mufwene, John R. Rickford, Guy Bailey and John Baugh's edited volume *African-American English: Structure, History and Use (A-AE)* was first published by Routledge in 1998. It was an instant classic, providing African American Vernacular English (AAVE) scholars and college students with a much-needed textbook that covered the principal areas of research on the variety. The volume is edited by four of the leading scholars in the field, and comprises ten full-length, in-depth essays on the structure, history and use of AAVE. It is certainly worthy of republication, but my initial expectation was to see a second edition with more recent studies and not a republished volume with only the addition of a thoughtful Foreword by Sonja Lanehart, editor of the authoritative *Oxford Handbook on African American Language* (2015). However, on reflection I concluded that it is unwise to attempt to improve a classic, especially since *A-AE* remains the best textbook of its kind. Other edited