

Standard English and standards of English

Raymond Hickey
University of Duisburg and Essen

1 Introduction

This book is about the plurality of standard English across the anglophone world, hence the deliberate use of the plural in the title and of a lowercase ‘s’ in the word ‘standard’. It may be thought that there is a contradiction here. Part of the popular conception of standard English is that it is a single form of language. But this view refers only to the written language and even there it is not wholly true. Across the English-speaking world there is variation in spelling, grammar and vocabulary in those forms of language which would be regarded by its users as standard. When it comes to the spoken word the variation among publicly used varieties of English is considerable, from country to country or often from region to region. A pluralistic conception of standard English is thus likely to be closer to linguistic reality in the societies across the world which use English. Furthermore, the particular standard of English, whether written or spoken or both and which applies in a given country, may be an indigenous development, albeit on the basis of input from outside, or it may be stem from an external source, in the main from either Britain or the United States, though other sources are identifiable in particular instances. This situation is historically the result of colonialism by which forms of English were carried to various parts of the world (Hickey ed., 2004). Certainly for the Northern Hemisphere, where anglophone settlement began in the seventeenth century, the question of standard English did not initially play a role. However, in the eighteenth century conceptions of standard English began to develop in Britain which were to dominate thinking about the public use of language in England and all her colonies at that time. This thinking led in the course of the eighteenth century to the codification of English in England and with that began the standardisation of the language (Garvin 1993).

2 How English was codified

Codification is a process which has historical roots. In Britain it can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century (Hickey 2010) when the grammar of English was largely codified (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006a, 2006b, this volume) and when prescriptive norms were set down for pronunciation by authors such as Thomas Sheridan (1780), see Harder (1977), and John Walker (1791). Before that period the notion of standard was confined to the establishment of the educated speech of London and the Home Counties as received usage in English society, see Holmberg (1964), Joseph (1987), Fisher (1996), Stein and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (eds, 1993), Wright (ed., 2000) and Nevalainen (2003); on pre-eighteenth century pronunciation, see Davies (1970 [1934]).

In the United States, overt codification of English was initiated and

undertaken on a lexical and orthographical level by Noah Webster (1789, 1828). In Britain the foundation for modern lexicographical work was laid by Samuel Johnson (1747, 1755). The nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries then saw the planning and compilation of the monumental *Oxford English Dictionary*. In recent years there has been an increase in research into the lexical codification of English, notably by Mugglestone (2003) and Brewer (2007).

The grammar of American English, in deliberate contrast to that of British English, has also been the object of research, most recently by Algeo (2006). The historical development of American English, specifically its gradual divergence from British English in its genesis as an overseas variety of English is treated in Schneider (2003a, 2007: 251-308).

2.1 The question of ‘standard’ in previous centuries

When looking at the recent history of English it is important to distinguish between the notion of ‘standard’ and the actual term ‘standard’. The earliest reference to ‘southern or standard English’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates from 1836. However, the notion of ‘standard’ existed before that and is essentially an eighteenth-century development. It is true that there was a fifteenth-century Chancery Standard (Fisher 1996: 36-64) but this was a register-specific variety of written English used for court and legal documents and should not be interpreted in the modern sense of standard which is a variety propagated by education, codified in books and favoured by non-regional speakers in a society.

Standard English, in the codified sense, is a development of the eighteenth century (Hickey 2010). There are many reasons why it should have arisen then. First it should be noted that there were precursors to the eighteenth-century notion of standard. John Hart (d. 1574) in *An Orthographie of English* (1569) offered a reformed spelling of English so that ‘the rude countrie Englishman’ can speak the language ‘as the best sort use to speak it’. George Puttenham (d. 1590) in *The Arte of English poesie* commented that ‘After a speach is fully fashioned to the common vnderstanding, & accepted by consent of a whole countrey & nation, it is called a language’. He then stated that in his view the prime form of this language was ‘the vsuall speach of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles and not much about’. Such comments show that, already by the end of the sixteenth century, the conception was prevalent that English was the language of the entire country of England and that its lead variety derived from the language of the established classes in the capital. About a century later, Christopher Cooper in his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1685) stated that he regarded London speech as ‘the best dialect’, the ‘most pure and correct’. These comments are significant as they firmly acknowledge the prestigious status of English in the capital. However, Cooper does not show the later judgmental dismissal of varieties outside of London and appears to have been tolerant of variation, consider his remark that ‘Everyone pronounceth them (words) as himself pleases’.

Because of the lack of a codified standard before the eighteenth century it would appear more pertinent to talk of careful, formal usage in documents which would be later classified as written in standard English, e.g. scientific or religious texts (Claridge and Kytö 2010). However, many of the features of these formal

written texts had disappeared by the eighteenth century at the latest. For instance, Claridge and Kytö (2010: 30-32) show that the oblique third person plural pronoun *them* was found as a demonstrative in relatively formal usage of the early modern period but later does not occur in textual records of this kind.

Is it then true to maintain that demonstrative *them* was once standard English but is now no longer so? Perhaps it might be more appropriate to say that certain features of earlier formal usage were not adopted into the codified standard of British English which emerged during the eighteenth century (see below) and which was shaped by the strictures of normative grammars which were published at that time. It may of course be the case that prescriptive usage of the general educated public – and not primarily of the grammarians – led to the demise of structures such as demonstrative *them*.

2.2 Deciding what belongs to the standard

Rational arguments for what elements of early modern usage should have been adopted into the standard are not generally available, in fact the opposite is the case. The arbitrariness of what was to become standard usage can be easily recognised, consider verbs in modern English. The majority of these are regular and show the suffix *-ed* in the past, e.g. *laugh, laughed*. But irregular verbs in English can display up to three distinct forms for the present, preterite and past participle respectively, though many have just two and others only one.

(1) a. *Verb forms in modern standard English*

	3 forms	2 forms	1 form
present	<i>blow</i>	<i>bring</i>	<i>cast</i>
preterite	<i>blew</i>	<i>brought</i>	<i>cast</i>
past participle	<i>blown</i>	<i>brought</i>	<i>cast</i>

b. *Verb forms in vernacular varieties of English*

	3 forms	2 forms	3 forms	2 forms
present	<i>see</i>	<i>see</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>
preterite	<i>saw</i>	<i>seen</i>	<i>did</i>	<i>done</i>
past participle	<i>seen</i>	<i>seen</i>	<i>done</i>	<i>done</i>

Today, the non-standardness of the two-form versions of the above verbs results from the syncretism of preterite and past-participle. But as the examples in (1a) show, this is accepted usage for a variety of other verbs. What may well have happened is that *seen* and *done* as preterites became associated with vernacular speech and were quite salient, given their high frequency in English. Hence they came to be excluded from formal usage and did not enter the later standard.

The widespread occurrence of two-form versions of *see* and *do* is attested by their presence in virtually all vernacular varieties of English, both in Britain and overseas. This would imply that these features have been present in colloquial forms of English for centuries but were excluded from formal usage in the eighteenth century. However, their existence on a vernacular level would explain

why they have continued in non-standard varieties of English throughout the anglophone world.

2.3 Disputed grammatical features

When it comes to grammar one cannot find quiet the same tenor of condemnation which characterises the authors on English pronunciation. It is true that of all eighteenth-century grammarians, Robert Lowth (1710-1787) has the greatest reputation for prescriptivism in the popular and all-too-often in the academic imagination as well. His *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), rightfully or wrongfully (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010a, 2011), became an icon of prescriptivism from the time of its publication. But as Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade has shown this view of Lowth is two-dimensional and a more nuanced view is called for (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010a, 2011).

Notwithstanding the historical accuracy of later views of Lowth, prescriptivism clearly has had a grip on English grammar since the eighteenth century. There are many prohibitions which can be traced to this time such as the following.

- (i) Double negation
They don't want no support.
- (ii) Preposition stranding
Something I am delighted about.
- (iii) Split infinitives
He advised them to seriously consider the matter.

The second and third of the above features have had a precarious existence down to the present-day. Preposition stranding (Yáñez-Bouza 2008a, 2008b) is more or less the rule today though it can still be avoided in formal styles as can split infinitives. Double negation disappeared entirely from standard English in the nineteenth century and is now seen as a purely dialectal feature. The relegation to non-standard English is a fate which many grammatical features experienced. For instance, double comparatives are no longer found in standard English (Gonzalez-Diaz 2008) though they are amply attested dialectally.

Change among grammatical constructions continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular structures involving non-finite verb forms (Molencki 2003) and sentential complements (Fanego 2010) underwent subtle shifts in the past two centuries, but were not the object of prescriptive comment in the eighteenth century.

2.4 The sociolinguistics of the standard

The crystallisation of 'standard English' as a concept in the eighteenth century had at least an intellectual and a social dimension. On an intellectual level one finds authors during the Augustan Age – the early eighteenth century comprising the reigns of Queen Anne (1702-1714) and King George I (1714-1727) – who showed

a distinct concern with ‘fixing’ the English language. Linguistically conservative writers, most notably Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), were keen to stem change in English and appealed to language use in the past. The notion of ‘fixing’ English represents a key aspect of the emerging standard, though one which does not correspond to reality, namely immutability. Later in the eighteenth century reconciling recommendations for the supposedly unchanging standard with the recognition that this in itself displayed variation was a difficulty for writers like Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788) and John Walker (1732-1807). Apart from literary authors, there were others for whom the ‘fixing’ of English was a practical concern. The eighteenth century is a period in which a large number of grammars appeared, mostly for practical purposes, i.e. for use in education, often private education. It was also the period in which women wrote many such works (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010b; Percy 2010) and these grammars do not concern themselves with variation but with imparting knowledge about a unified form of language.

The social dimension to eighteenth-century notions of standard English concerns attitudes to language use and the increasing concern of an incipient middle-class (then termed the ‘middling orders’, Rogers 2002) with the linguistic expression of their social status. This dimension is most clearly visible in the works on pronunciation from this time. As phonology is the aspect of people’s speech which is most readily accessible for social assessment it was a particular concern with writers of the time. The practice of elocution acquired a new meaning, not just the art of successful public speaking and oratory, but the technique of speaking with a non-regional, quasi-standard accent (Smart 1842). A significant market for works on this topic arose in the mid-eighteenth century and authors like Thomas Sheridan were responsible for both stimulating this market, by generating linguistic insecurity, and then supplying the market with works with which to alleviate this very insecurity (Hickey 2010).

These eighteenth-century developments are central to the judgmental attitudes towards non-standard speech which arose then and which fed directly into the nineteenth-century Victorian condemnation of regional and local accents. In the words of Norman Fairclough:

‘Standard English was regarded as *correct* English, and other social dialects were stigmatised not only in terms of correctness but also in terms which indirectly reflected on the lifestyles, morality and so forth of their speakers, the emergent working class of capitalised society: they were *vulgar*, *slovenly*, *low*, *barbarous*, and so forth.’ (Fairclough 2001: 48, emphasis in original)

A change had also taken place in both fictional and non-fictional literature. While pre-eighteenth century references to and examples of regional and local accents in literature served an illustrative purpose, as of the eighteenth century there was a clear message that these were socially unacceptable to the established classes of English society. The opprobrium attached to non-standard accents was initially felt by those outside England, first and foremost the Irish, but also the Scots, and to a much lesser extent the Americans (Cooley 1992). However, it was quickly extended to the regions of England outside the Home Counties, the north, the south-west, etc.

Indeed the standard became more and more characterised by its non-regional character. The divorcing of preferred public usage from regionality and local

identity meant that the emerging standard was an essentially non-regional form of English. Hence favouring this incipient standard in public, educated usage meant that the regional accents were condemned accordingly: ‘a strong provincial accent ... destroys all idea of elegance’ (Roscoe in Mugglestone 2003: 43). This notion was prevalent throughout the nineteenth century and was stated in no uncertain terms, consider the following quotation: ‘It is the business of educated people to speak so that no-one may be able to tell in what county their childhood was passed’ (Burrell 1891: 24).

In fact the more the standard became an instrument of social inclusion or exclusion the more it lost its geographical basis in the south-east. By the early nineteenth century the standard was being defined as a form of speech which is characterised by the lack of just this regional basis. Consider the remarks of Benjamin Smart in *Walker Remodelled* (1836) ‘The common standard dialect is that in which all marks of a particular place and residence are lost, and nothing appears to indicate any other habit of intercourse than with the well-bred and well-informed, wherever they be found’. Even clearer is the programmatic nature of works such as Smart’s *A Practical Grammar of English Pronunciation* (1810) which has a long subtitle beginning ‘on plain and recognized principles, calculated to assist in removing every objectionable peculiarity of utterance arising from either foreign, provincial, or vulgar habits, or from a defective use of the organs of speech’. The goal here is not far from what contemporary sociolinguists regard a ‘standard’ to be: ‘an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage will conform to a greater or lesser extent’ (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 23).

With this notion of standard also came the idea of its inherent value. The standard was ‘good’ and all forms of non-standard speech were ‘bad’. From then onwards remarks on standard and non-standard use of language became evaluative as many sociolinguists have remarked, e.g. ‘The belief in the existence of some “inherently good” variety of their language is one of the most deeply held tenets of public ideology in most Western countries. Yet a cursory inspection of the facts will reveal that these standard varieties are nothing more than the social dialect of the dominant class’ (Guy 2011: 162).

2.5 What was previously ‘non-standard’

Given that the term ‘standard’ with reference to English is a label which does not appear until the nineteenth century, is it permissible to speak of ‘non-standard’ before this time? This would appear justified because authors writing on matters of language and concerned with condemning usage which they saw as socially unacceptable use labels such as ‘vulgar, ignorant, inaccurate, barbarous, uneducated, shameful, disgraceful’ (see discussion in Hickey 2010). The forms of English which prescriptivists such as Thomas Sheridan and John Walker criticised are what would be termed ‘non-standard’ today. The concept of ‘non-standard’ usage already existed in the eighteenth century, even though this precise label was not employed.

Usage which was censured in previous centuries was usually connected with choices which speakers could make. Where variants were available more than one

possibility existed for a pronunciation, word or syntactic structure. Of the existing variants one was generally regarded as preferred in public, educated usage and the other or others were stigmatised as what would now be called ‘non-standard’. The only real exception to this were cases of archaic language where prescriptive authors, such as John Walker, simply recommended that more modern words be used (Hickey 2010).

2.6 The yardstick for preferred usage

The decisions on what variants of a variable were to be preferred were not always conscious and rarely rational, though authors such as John Walker did attempt, when making recommendations, to apply the notion of ‘analogy’, i.e. regularity and symmetry among similar forms and in paradigms. Well into the eighteenth century, a common yardstick of good usage was the language of ‘our best authors’. The works of writers from the Augustan period (see above) were regarded as embodying the English language in an elevated form, e.g. Jonathan Swift’s writings which were much admired by Robert Lowth.

The implicit notion of standard in the early eighteenth century involved the idea of a ‘national’ variety of English. This idea of ‘national’ appears already in the early eighteenth century: Richard Johnson talked of his *Grammatical Commentaries* (1706) as ‘being an Apparatus to a new National Grammar’. What is being referred to here is a work which would unify usage throughout the regions of Britain and Ireland. This notion was taken up repeatedly by authors in the eighteenth century, especially those concerned with educational matters, see Thomas Sheridan’s *British Education* (1756). This view of a standard as a national variety led later to the empowerment of standard English as the language of government and state and hence superior in status to all other varieties with which it might be contrasted (McColl Millar 2005). There is a curious paradox here: the ‘national’ variety was promoted as a form of English for the whole nation, but in essence it corresponded to the speech of a small and privileged section of the population.

However, within England certain types of record did not participate in the increasingly depersonalised and factual nature of public texts. Private correspondence remained rooted in familiar usage so that letters from regional speakers show an abundance of non-standard features (Claridge and Kytö 2010). Testimonies such as those found in the depositions of *The Old Bailey Corpus* (Huber 2009) illustrate regional speech. Furthermore, in the constructed speech of literary drama there are many attestations of regional features (Culpeper and Kytö 2010).

2.7 Public use of language

The idea of a single nation and a single form of language emanating from its centre is a predominant theme in eighteenth century writings. These are public matters and the use of language in public was an integral part of the national language complex. Hence, training for speaking in public was a concern which was addressed in print,

consider, for example, the title of John Mason's *An Essay on Elocution, Or, Pronunciation intended chiefly for the Assistance of those who instruct others in the Art of Reading. And of those who are often called to speak in Publick* (1748).

The major language commentators of the time were concerned with elocution and some of them published dedicated books on the subject. Notable among these is Thomas Sheridan's *Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762) and John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* (1781). The tradition continued across the threshold to the nineteenth century with Samuel Whyte *An Introductory Essay on the Art of Reading, and Speaking in Public* (1800) and William Graham *Principles of Elocution* (1837). Indeed one can note that in 1842 Benjamin Smart's *The Practice of Elocution* was already in its fourth edition.

It is only a small step from the effectiveness of public speech to the acceptance of its pronunciation and with this step one reaches that concern of eighteenth-century authors which has had the most enduring effect in English society, namely a concentration more on the form of speech than on its content. First and foremost, the form of speech encompassed pronunciation with grammar a good second.

The shift in emphasis can be recognised by considering what authors highlight in their discussions. For instance, it is significant that Mason (1748: 6-39) in his list of points about what constitutes a bad and what a good pronunciation does not mention any social factors, such as acceptance of one's accent in public. This changes with Sheridan who a little more than a decade later, in 1762, is concerned with specifying a standard for English, a lasting concern of this author, consider his *General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780), published towards the end of his life, of which Sheridan says that 'one main object of [the dictionary] is to establish a plain and permanent standard of pronunciation', though, as pointed out below, many of his pronouncements are about what is not part of the standard rather than what is.

2.8 The divergence of sound and spelling

Not only the results of the Great Vowel Shift (Pyles and Algeo 1993 [1964]: 170-173) led to a divergence between the pronunciation and spelling of English. There are a number of other developments of the early modern period which contributed to this divergence. The lowering and unrounding of short [ʊ] to [ʌ] in the STRUT lexical set and the lengthening of the vowel in the BATH lexical set can also be mentioned in this context. Many changes of this period gave rise to homophony and hence to distinctions in spelling which did not correspond to differences in pronunciation, for instance the TERM and TURN lexical sets which merged to a rhotacised schwa which was then simplified solely to schwa (in south-eastern English English).

The increasingly divergent nature of writing and pronunciation was a concern which was dealt with openly. Lists of words which were spelled one way and pronounced another were published, e.g. Richard Brown *The English School Reformed* (1700) which in the long subtitle specifies that the book contains *A Collection of Words that are writ one way and sounded another*. This concern is a common motif in many works on phonetics throughout the century, e.g. that by

Abraham Tucker (1773) which contains a section ‘English not spelt as spoken’ (Tucker 1773: 3-7).

The phonological changes in English at the time led many authors to publicly campaign for a fixed form of the language in which these changes would no longer disrupt the relationship of spelling and sound. For example, Rice (1763) closes his treatise on education with an appendix in which he offers ‘the sketch of a plan for establishing a Criterion, by which the Pronunciation of Languages may be ascertained; and, in particular that of the English Tongue, reduced to a Certain fixt Standard’ (1763: 307) (emphasis added, RH). This notion of fixing the language is different in motivation from that put forward by Jonathan Swift in his *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Language* (1712). While Swift wished to have the language fixed so that works of literature would be accessible to later generations, non-literary authors, such as Rice just quoted, were concerned with the practical implications of not having a fixed standard.

2.9 Variation in the emerging standard

English phonology in the eighteenth century shows a number of instances of change where co-variation existed for some time and where it was not certain which variants would be preferred in a ‘fixed standard’ of the language. Syllable-final /-r/ was being lost in the south-east of England (Jones 2006: 110-112; 336-344) and those writers who favoured a more conservative pronunciation or one where there was the greatest degree of correspondence between spelling and sound were uncertain about what to recommend. For instance, John Walker, who favoured a one-to-one relationship between spelling and sound, supported the use of syllable-final /-r/ while recognising that it was being lost across a broad front of English society in his day.

3 Effects of standardisation

3.1 Linguistic insecurity

While the novelist and travel writer Daniel Defoe could remark non-judgementally in the 1720s (Defoe 1724-27) on the attitude of the Northumbrians to features of their pronunciation, after the mid-eighteenth century comments became far more critical. A vocabulary was adopted by authors on language which is condemnatory of all features which are not part of received southern English usage.

It is remarkable that ‘vulgarisms’ and ‘provincialisms’ are lampooned by commentators like Sheridan and Walker but there is little attempt to specify just what is meant by the standard pronunciation. The standard would seem to have arisen not through an explicit specification of what it entailed, but rather by a process of exclusion. In a way, the standard pronunciation arose by default: it was what remained after all the ‘unacceptable’ features had been weeded out.

One could ask why the late eighteenth century commentators did not attempt a specification of the standard rather than an exclusion of features they disapproved of. One of the difficulties lay in the variation which existed with speakers who

these authors would have approved of. Walker not infrequently sees himself in a quandary given that the established classes of English society used pronunciations which he would not have favoured himself, e.g. the variation in the pronunciation of *great* – with [e:] or [i:] (Walker 1791: 30).

‘Vulgar’ is one of the key labels used by the eighteenth-century prescriptivists (Beal 2004b, 2010). Walker is particularly keen to point out what he thinks merits this label. For instance, given that provincial speakers are required to look to the capital for phonetic guidance, any ‘vulgarisms’ used by the inhabitants are especially to be condemned. In his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* a list of ‘faults of the Londoners’ is given, faults of people, who, he argues, ‘as they are the models of pronunciation to the distant provinces, ought to be the more scrupulously correct’ (Walker 1791: xii).

The upshot of all this criticism and brow-beating of the public was to create an atmosphere of linguistic insecurity. The message from the prescriptivists was clear: English as spoken by nearly everyone was in a dire state and people needed to act to improve their language. But Sheridan, Walker and other authors like them did not offer a clear solution to what they see as a serious problem. Instead they were content to criticise at every turn without offering an overall remedy. However deficient this stance, it did ensure them continuing attention from an audience plagued by linguistic doubt, see the many editions of Walker throughout the nineteenth century. Such prescriptive works serve to engender a consciousness of the standard as a variety above what was found in vernacular speech and that this variety was logical, consistent and essentially correct as James Milroy has pointed out in several publications on this subject.

the awareness of a superordinate standard variety is kept alive in the public mind by various channels (including the writing system and education in literacy) that tend to inculcate and maintain this knowledge – not always in a very clear or accurate form – in speakers’ minds. The main effect of these is to equate the standard language – or what it believed to be the standard language – with the language as a whole and with ‘correct usage’ in that language, and this notion of correctness has a powerful role in the maintenance of the standard ideology through prescriptivism. (Milroy 1999: 18)

3.2 Attitudes to dialects

The linguistic study of dialectal variation (Ihalainen 1994) is generally associated with the rise of historical linguistics in the nineteenth century and with the work of scholars such as Alexander J. Ellis (1814-1890), see Ellis (1869-1889), and somewhat later Joseph Wright (1855-1930), see Wright (1898-1905; 1905). The lack of academic concern with dialects could be put down to the absence of a scientific framework for the study of language in general. However, looking at the eighteenth century one recognises a deliberate neglect of regional features in English, indeed of severe condemnation of all traits of language which do not correspond to ‘standard’ usage, whatever the latter might mean exactly.

Prior to the eighteenth century there would seem to be two basic attitudes to dialects. One is neutral with regard to dialect and the other decidedly in favour of southern speech. John Hart (d. 1574) spoke of ‘the flower of the English tongue’, referring to the language of the court in London. John Ray in *A Collection of*

English Words not Generally Used (1674) mentions regional pronunciation, but without evaluative comments.

The more neutral attitude can be recognised in the detailed entries which some authors offer in dictionaries of English of the seventeenth century. Here is William Bullokar on dialect:

Dialect, a difference of some words, or pronunciation in any language as in England the Dialect or manner of speech of the North, is different from that in the South, and the Western dialect differing from them both. The Grecians had five especiall Dialects: as in The property of speech in Athens: 2 in Ionia; 3. In Doris; 4. In Eolia: and 5. that manner of speech which was generally used of them all. So every country hath commonly in divers parts thereof some difference of language, which is called the Dialect of that place.

(Bullokar, 1616, entry for *Dialect*, [no pagination]).

His entry is echoed later in the century by Thomas Blount who has an even more comprehensive definition:

Dialect. is a manner of speech peculiar to some part of a Country or people, and differing from the manner used by other parts or people, yet all using the same Radical Language, for the main or substance of it. In *England*, the Dialect, or manner of speech in the North, is different from that in the South; and the Western differs from both. As in this example: At *London* we say, *I would eat more cheese if I had it*, the Northern man saith, *Ay sud eat mare cheese gin ay hader*, and the Western man saith, *Chud ee'at more chiese on chad it: Chud ee'at more cheese un ich had it*. The Grecians had five especial Dialects ... So every Country commonly hath in diverse parts of it some difference of language, which is called the Dialect or Subdialect of that place. In Italy, there are above eight several dialects or Subdialects as ...

(Blount, 1656, entry for *Dialect*, [no pagination]).

Blount is remarkable in that he gives examples to illustrate different dialects of English. However, he is not followed by others. Some time later (1676), Elisha Coles published *An English Dictionary* in which he sees dialects as 'Logick, speech; also a particular Propriety or Idiom in the same speech' with no reference to regions whatever. Some authors do at least specify that dialects are found in different parts of a country, e.g. John Kersey who in his *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* (1708) defines dialect as 'a Propriety of manner of Speech in any Language, peculiar to each several Province or Country'.

But the great lexicographers of the eighteenth century pay no attention to the regional essence of dialect, at most referring to dialects of classical Greek. Instead they concentrate on its meaning as a manner of expression. Here is the definition offered by Samuel Johnson in his authoritative *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).

DIALECT

1. The subdivision of a language; as the Attic, Doric, Ionic, Æolic dialects.
2. Stile; manner of expression.

When themselves do practise that whereof they write, they change their dialect; and those words they shun, as if there were in them some secret

- sting. Hooker, b. v. s. 22.
3. Language; speech.

.....

Both Thomas Sheridan and John Walker were content to adopt this definition and repeat it. They had no time for dialectal variation in speech as this was in direct conflict with their ideology of a standard in English (Milroy 2001), hence their derisory comments on the speech the regions of Britain and of Ireland.

But if one leaves aside the prescriptivism of both Sheridan and Walker then another motivation is recognisable in the neglect of dialect in the eighteenth century. To see this, one can return briefly to Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* where one finds the following: 'After a speach is fully fashioned to the common vnderstanding, & accepted by consent of a whole countrey & nation, it is called a language'. This is again the view of language as a unifying factor, in this case among the different regions of Britain. Here we have a very early reference to a 'national language', a nation which was picked up by later authors, see section 2.4 above. Attention to dialects would not be reconcilable with the desire for a 'national language'.

Standard pronunciation was identified with the pronunciation of the socially higher classes in London and its surroundings. This was a fluid entity in itself, but it could be specified sufficiently to delimit speakers with this pronunciation from those without it. Thus the standard became a yardstick with which to measure others and very quickly became a prerequisite for social advancement. The view that mastering the standard improves one's lot in life becomes increasingly apparent during the eighteenth century. Some of the authors of this era explicitly recognise this. For instance, female grammarians, such as Anne Fisher, Ellin Devis and Eleanor Fenn, as well as male authors like Thomas Spence and William Cobbett.

3.3 Self-appointed authorities

Standard English has always had its guardians and often these are self-appointed authorities who pronounce on 'correctness' without necessarily having external legitimacy to do so. This behaviour reached an early zenith with the rival figures of Thomas Sheridan and John Walker in the late eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth. Prominent among the figures then were Benjamin Smart (1786?-1872) and the many authors, often anonymous, of the mid-nineteenth century who were concerned with 'educating accents' (Mugglestone 2003: Chapter 6) and who produced pamphlets, booklets and books offering alleviation from the linguistic doubt from which certain groups in English society, notably the burgeoning middle classes, were seen to suffer. Parallel to these publications were the countless editions and reprints of Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*.

Pronunciation was the main level of language where remedies were felt to be required, given that it is immediately obvious if individuals have traces of 'vulgarity' in their speech. But prescriptivism was found on other levels as well. In the field of vocabulary a notable figure in this respect is Henry Watson Fowler (1858-1933), an English lexicographer whose principal work is *A Dictionary of*

Modern English Usage (1926; later revised by Sir Ernest Gowers in 1965, by Robert Burchfield in 1996 and by David Crystal in 2009). This is a loosely structured commentary on English usage and style. Together with his brother he also wrote *The King's English* (1906), a work in a similar vein.

A scholar who at first sight appear to differ from his predecessors is the phonetician Daniel Jones who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, virtually single-handedly established a codified norm of British English pronunciation, first laid out in *The Pronunciation of English* (1909), later in his pronouncing dictionary (Jones 1919). Jones's professional expertise – phonetics – was seen as a means of correcting 'cockneyisms and other undesirable pronunciations'. The advantage of phonetics was made clear: 'The dialectal peculiarities, indistinctiveness and artificialities which are unfortunately so common in the pronunciation of public speakers may be avoided by the application of the elementary principles of phonetics' (Jones in Crowley 2003: 139). Jones continued his plea for a standard in his *Outline of English Phonetics* (1919): 'the existence of all these differences [in pronunciation – RH] renders it necessary to set up a standard of pronunciation' (Jones 1976 [1919]: 4).

Jones, like Sheridan before him, is evaluative in talking about 'undesirable pronunciations', implying that the pronunciation which he was laying out was indeed desirable. His justification was that the system of pronunciation which he was advocating was that which was 'received in the best circles', hence the later term 'Received Pronunciation' (Upton 2004). For an assessment of Jones's work and the tradition in English which he established, see Upton, this volume.

The prescriptive publications of the nineteenth century have had their continuation throughout the twentieth and indeed into the twenty-first century. Manuals of usage are readily available for both British and American English, emphasizing the necessity to master correct grammar, apply correct spelling and avoid the pitfalls of incorrect vocabulary. A circle is maintained, vicious or virtuous as it may be, by generating a market for the linguistically uncertain and feeding into just this market with products which promise remedies. Both the printed and the digital word are involved here: a large number of websites, personal homepages and blogs keep the issue of correct language and mastery of standard English alive and collectively represent a movement dubbed 'New Prescriptivism' by scholars in the field (Beal 2009). And where variation is found there are individuals who capitalise on it to project their own notion of what is standard, cf. the debate of English punctuation engendered by Truss (2003) and the linguistic reasonableness echoed in Crystal (2006). This concern with standard English is also manifested in the many public debates of the matter and the assumed link between standard English and British culture (Crowley 1989).

3.4 Changing standards

It is a truism to say that standard forms of language continually change.¹ For instance, in Britain the glottalisation of /t/ is increasingly found in the speech of

¹ See the contributions in Dziubalska-Kořaczyk and Przedlacka (eds, 2005) for discussion how this leads to changes in pronunciation models.

individuals who use Received Pronunciation (Fabricius 2002). In grammar, the progressive with modals such as *want* has established itself in the twentieth century, e.g. *She's wanting to join the group* (Leech et al. 2009: 124). The mandative subjunctive, e.g. *She insists that he come tonight*, has experienced a revival (Leech et al. 2009: 58) while *get*-passives, e.g. *He got stopped by the police*, are clearly on the increase (Leech et al. 2009: 157). The receptiveness of the standard for new features has to do with salience. If features are below the radar of standard speakers, so to speak, above all if they are a matter of more or less rather one or the other, then they are likely to establish themselves in the standard imperceptibly. A case in point is presented by semi-modals such as *have to* for (deontic) *must* (Leech et al. 2009: 97), e.g. *You have to re-write this essay*. These and similar changes have implications for prescriptivists defending the immutability of standard English and, on a more practical level, have consequences for foreign language teaching concerned with transmitting a publicly acceptable form of English for any given anglophone country.

4 Standards of English

The concern so far has been with the rise and change of standard English in Britain. But this volume is specifically dedicated to standards of English world-wide and so it is appropriate to consider how such varieties arose outside the historical British context.

There has been considerable research in recent years into the relationship of English English to other varieties of the language both within the context of the British Isles (Britain and Ireland) and of overseas forms of English (outside the British Isles). Some of this research has been dedicated to alternative streams in the development of English, e.g. Watts and Trudgill (eds, 2002) *Alternative Histories of English* and Crystal (2004) *The Stories of English*. This has led to the now-established plural reference 'Englishes' with its emphasis on the plurality of varieties in the anglophone world and on their right to explicit recognition (Schneider ed., 1997; McArthur 1998; or within a subarea of the anglophone world, e.g. Tristram ed., 1997, 2000, 2003). In this research arena change in varieties of English has been the focus of attention, e.g. in Bauer (1994) *Watching English Change*.

The examination of anglophone varieties across the world but without an emphasis on their possible function as national or supraregional standards has also engendered significant research, cf. the recent monograph by Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008). Such forms of English are given the label 'World Englishes' and their investigation is taken to represent an independent strand within variety studies (with its own journal: *World Englishes*, Oxford, 1981-), see Bolton and Kachru (2006), Kachru, Kachru and Nelson (eds, 2006), Kirkpatrick (2007), Kachru and Smith (2008). In some cases, 'World English(es)' simply refers to English across the world, e.g. Gramley (2001), Melchers and Shaw (2011).

The narrative of standard English has many dimensions and these have direct bearing on this volume. In particular the scope of standard English has been revisited notably in Bex and Watts (eds) 1999 *Standard English. The Widening Debate*. This question of scope is directly linked to the themes of this volume with

the important distinction that here standard English is viewed as a set of entities in the anglophone world, each associated with a particular country or region.²

4.1 Spoken and written standards

The variety in a country, or the varieties in a region such as the Caribbean (Devonish and Thomas, this volume), which represents the basis for its standard of English will have both spoken (Cheshire 1999) and written forms (Cheshire and Stein eds, 1997). The contrast between these, and the essential question of how dynamic and changing a standard is, will be considered in the chapters of the volume. In their written forms, standards of English display much less variation, on American English, see Kretzschmar (2004) and Kretzschmar and Meyer (this volume). Essentially, there are two main blocks, British and American English with variants subordinate to one or both of them. For instance, written standard Canadian English (Boberg, this volume) occupies a position intermediary between British and American English³ reflecting the historical position of Canada and contemporary influences from the United States. Other countries have a more clearly defined link with one of the main blocks. This is true of South Africa which in its written standard maintains a close link with British English; this fact is furthermore evident in the existence of *A Dictionary of South African English* (Silva ed., 1996) published by Oxford University Press. Indeed it is true of the Southern Hemisphere in general that British English has been and to a large extent still is the exonormative model for written standard English. For spoken standards the situation is different and countries like Australia and New Zealand are entirely independent of Britain in this respect, although the historical roots of their Englishes can be recognised in the phonetic parallels with south-east English English (Hickey 2003).

The distinction between spoken and written standards demands that a further distinction be made, namely that between standards which are codified overtly and those which are not. Written standards are overtly codified: they are specified in dictionaries, often in grammars, and not least in manuals of usage, all of these lay out clearly what belongs to the standard being described and what does not.

With spoken standards the matter is far less clear cut. Certainly major varieties, again British and American English, are overtly codified in that there are linguistic descriptions of the public norms for the spoken standard in Britain and the United States. But even though this is the case, it is doubtful whether non-linguists ever consult a work like Upton, Kretzschmar and Konopka (2001) or Wells (2000) on disputed cases of pronunciation. The spoken standard, to a greater or lesser extent, is something which speakers of a certain segment of society will have internalised in their early childhood. Pronunciation judgements by such speakers are then made by implicitly comparing their own speech with that of

² The question of standards has been the object of research for other languages and the standards of Germanic languages, bar English, have been looked at in some detail in recent research, see Linn and McLelland (eds, 2002), Ammon and Mattheier (eds, 2003), Deumert and Vandebussche (eds, 2003), Elspaß, Langer, Scharloth and Vandebussche (eds, 2007).

³ On the phonetic diffusion of American features into Canadian English, see Boberg (2000).

others assumed not to speak the standard. These judgements are rarely if ever made on the basis of consulting a reference work on the pronunciation of the standard in the country in question. What this means is that spoken standards are essentially covertly codified varieties for their speakers: these individuals appreciate the range of pronunciation which is found in the public speech norm of their country ('unspoken' norms, Deumert and Vandebussche 2003: 457) without recourse to overt codifications of the latter, i.e. reference works. In a country like England, i.e. Britain without Scotland, though perhaps with anglophone Wales, and in a country like the Republic of Ireland, speakers have conceptions of standard pronunciation which apply in their countries, even though in Ireland there is no overt codification of the spoken standard as there is in England with the pronunciation dictionary of Wells (2000) or the descriptive study of Received Pronunciation in Cruttenden (2008).

4.2 Overt codification: Haugen's model

This type of codification involves public awareness and discussion of the codified variety, primarily in its written form, and it implies printed literature in which the codified variety is described. In the relevant linguistic literature, discussions of standard languages in fact refer to overtly codified languages. Take for instance the famous four-way distinction from the Norwegian linguist Einar Haugen.

Table 1 *Haugen's criteria for standard languages*

	<i>Form</i>	<i>Function</i>	
<i>Society</i>	Selection	Acceptance	
<i>Language</i>	Codification	Elaboration	(Haugen 2003 [1966]: 421)

Here a variety is selected in a society. Selection is especially obvious in those cases, such as Norway, where two main varieties (here: *bokmål* and *nynorsk*) were available and with which particular ideologies were associated. Selection has never been an issue for English: in England it was never in doubt, by virtue of the location of the court and government, that the speech of London and the Home Counties would be preferred.

Acceptance has not been a major issue for England though it has been in many post-colonial countries (Schneider 2007) and some, such as Malaysia, have chosen to distance themselves from English and to bring indigenous languages centre-stage.

Codification is a largely historical process whereby a certain privileged variety came to be explicitly specified, see the discussion in 2. above for the situation in eighteenth-century England.

With elaboration the codified variety is rendered impersonal and treated as something separate from the vernacular usage of speakers. This separation of the standard from the speech of individuals can be a first step towards treating the

standard as something divorced from concrete use and more a conception, a notion of standard rather than a concrete set of features (Milroy and Milroy 1991).

Elaboration is not a characteristic of covertly codified varieties. These forms of language arise in a largely unconscious process (Hickey 2012) in which non-vernacular varieties aggregate into a supraregional variety of the language spoken in a country. The aggregation scenario is found where a number of similar, non-vernacular varieties co-exist with approximately equal status; this may well have applied to New Zealand in the early twentieth century (Hickey 2003). However, if one such variety is dominant, as in centrally organised countries, then this provides the input to the covertly codified variety which later becomes a *de facto* standard. This happened in Ireland in the early twentieth century after a supraregional variety of English had arisen in the south of Ireland during the nineteenth century. The external impetus for this supraregional variety was provided by the formation of a Catholic middle class which established itself after Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and after the introduction of general education for the native Irish in the 1830s (largely a domain of the Protestant sector of the population prior to that).

In the majority of cases overt codification of a variety is unidirectional: once a variety is codified it remains so and also retains the socio-political status which this codification confers on it. However, this is not necessarily the case and under certain external circumstances a codified variety may lose status. An obvious case is where the publicly accepted form of language changes as happened with Malta (Mazzon 1993) where Italian, the formerly official language was replaced (in 1934) by English and Maltese (Krug and Rosen). A case of status change within the anglophone context occurred in the history of Scots: the earlier codified form of the language suffered diminished status with the political union of Scotland with England, largely reducing the codified variety to one heteronomous to standard English English.

A codified variety may be indirectly influenced by the official position in a country, usually by augmenting its status. However, this is more a legal issue than one affecting language use. For instance, despite the many attempts at an English Language Amendment in the Constitution of the United States (Adams and Brink, eds 1990; Crawford 1992) there is no federal official language, although individual states, such as California, do have English as an official language (due to the acceptance of Proposition 63, Ruiz 1990: 11).

4.3 Covert codification: supraregionalisation

If overt codification is a conscious process involving acceptance and elaboration then covert codification is the opposite. It is unconscious, or at least for the majority of speakers of the variety which undergoes this process. Because it is largely unconscious there can be no question of explicit acceptance though this does occur implicitly in as much as the variety is used consistently by speakers who perceive themselves as standard speakers in the country in question.

Covert codification is found where openly discussed and conscious decisions about what constitutes standard English have not taken place. A prime example of a country where English is covertly codified is the Republic of Ireland. Here the written standard of English is clearly founded on British norms. However, in

pronunciation, varieties of Irish English all differ from those in Britain and, importantly, they differ from the accepted standard of southern British English, Received Pronunciation.

4.3.1 *Suppression of variation*

The historical process of covert codification can be linked to external factors which trigger it and to internal developments which are its manifestation. In anglophone countries the trigger has been the rise of an educated middle class with a desire for a non-stigmatised, publicly accepted varieties of English which are clearly delimited from vernacular varieties. In Ireland this has led to the suppression of certain structures and features, phonological and morphosyntactic, which were perceived as too indicative of vernacular forms of Irish English.⁴

Table 2 *The position of supraregional English in Ireland*

vernacular Irish English	[covert codification]	→	supraregional Irish English		[standard British English]
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Just what structures or features are suppressed and what survive covert codification is difficult to account for in any linguistic manner. The key probably lies in the perception by non-vernacular speakers. If these individuals do not perceive a structure or feature as vernacular then it can slip through the net and be incorporated into the embryonic covertly codified variety, i.e. the later standard for English in the country involved. An example of this would be the past tense of *use* without *do* support (*They usedn't smoke a lot* rather than *They didn't use to smoke a lot*). The source of features, whether Irish contact or English input features in the case of Ireland, plays no role here. Nor is it relevant whether the features are present in an extra-national norm, in this case southern British English.

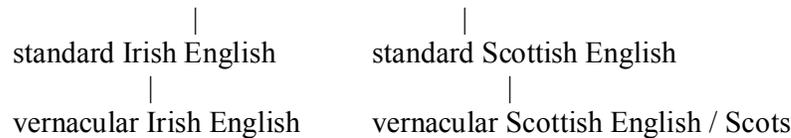
Covertly codified varieties are supraregional in character, that is they do not correspond to the vernacular of any particular location but are generally typical of an entire country or region.⁵ However, they are always clearly distinguishable from extranational norms, not least because these varieties serve an identity function for their speakers. This applies both between countries and between comparable entities within a larger political unit, a good example of the latter being Scotland in the context of the United Kingdom.

Table 3 *Varieties of Irish and Scottish English*

standard Southern British English	
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⁴ Indeed in some cases the stigmatised features may be lost entirely (Hickey 2008). For further details, see Hickey, this volume.

⁵ In this context, see the discussion in Milroy, Milroy and Hartley (1994).



The relationship of the two covertly codified varieties in Table 3 to standard Southern British English is not the same. For Irish people, standard Southern British English is a recognisable form of English but for none of them is this a form of speech which is acceptable in Ireland. For many Scottish people the same is true but, given that Scotland is a region of the United Kingdom, the use of standard Southern British English in Scotland cannot be ruled out in the same categorial way as with Ireland. The situation is further complicated in Scotland by Scots (Corbett and Stuart-Smith, this volume; Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith, eds, 2003; Stuart-Smith 2004; Dossena 2005) which, whatever its status today as an endonormative form of English, is historically quite separate from English and can claim to have been an independent language up to the early modern period (Jones, ed., 1997).

4.3.2 Feature preference and covert codification

The occurrence of features in codified varieties may not always be a binary issue, i.e. be a matter of presence or absence. But rather the occurrence may manifest itself as a preference for, or tolerance of, particular structures or phrasing. Consider the following examples gleaned from the Ireland component of the *International Corpus of English* (Kallen and Kirk 2007, 2008). *None* when qualifying a plural noun phrase itself takes the plural in Irish English (*None of the psychiatry books are in James'; ... none of us are more than human*), certain verbs do not take the infinitive marker *to* (... *and we used Ø go up there ...; ... friends used Ø come out and stay ...; ... they used Ø make me drive on my own ...; ... staff members who help Ø do up posters ...; ... avail of this opportunity and help Ø develop the necessary co-operation ...*) and the compound adverb *outside of* rather than the simple adverb *outside* (... *things outside of the little island we live on ...; ... those outside of the city boundary ...; ... pub owners outside of Dublin ...*).

4.3.3 Prescriptivism again

Speakers of both an overtly and a covertly codified variety of English show prescriptivism. The difference is that with overtly codified varieties the items of prescriptivism are usually explicitly formulated (Peters 2006), such as 'Don't end your sentences in a preposition'. With a covertly codified variety, speakers express prescriptivism not via precise directives but more by censoring vernacular features or just quoting non-stigmatised equivalents of stigmatised structures. For instance, speakers of supraregional Irish English often censure vernacular speakers for their use of alveolar stops in words like *thin* or *this* by mockingly repeating the vernacular realisations. Criticism can also take the (somewhat milder) form of

repetition of the vernacular and the non-stigmatised form, as in the case of the habitual with *do*, e.g. ‘It’s not *He does be eating too much* it’s *He eats too much*’.

4.4 Pluricentrism in contemporary English

It is a truism that English is nowadays a pluricentric language (Leitner 1992, Clyne 1992) and that the many national and supraregional varieties around the world do not gravitate towards just one or the other exonormative form of English. This was previously that of England, then the United States came to form a further exonormative norm and has been such since the early twentieth century at least. The contrast between a British and an American norm can be seen in South-East Asia where a British model has largely held in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong whereas an American model prevailed in The Philippines from 1898 onwards. But increasingly, there are regions which are not directly linked to Britain or the United States. For instance, the anglophone states of the South Pacific, see Hundt and Biewer (2007) and the discussion in Biewer, this volume. If anything, it is English in New Zealand / Australia (Biewer 2007) which acts as an exonormative guideline for the Polynesian island states, such as Fiji (Tent 2001; Geraghty, Mugler and Tent 2006), in which English has a publicly recognised position.

The rapid development of second language varieties of English (Sharma 2005) to near-native varieties, for instance in Singapore (Deterding 2007), has meant that anglophone locations in Asia may come to act as models for the larger regions in which they are to be found. The binary division between standard British or American English is increasingly less relevant for Asian countries but rather supraregional varieties which are identifiably Asian in character (Lim and Gisborne eds, 2009; Lange, this volume) may lead, and often are leading, the way. This development will of necessity bring with it a renewed consideration of what constitutes a native speaker of English today, see Lim (this volume).

5 Common themes in standard varieties

5.1 The colonial legacy

In many anglophone countries outside Europe the process of standardisation is closely linked to critical attitudes to the former colonial power (Pennycook 1998). The historical introduction of English to such countries is often seen as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) which lives on in a covert form. At the very least the rise of standards in parts of Africa or Asia runs parallel to a rejection of the centrality of English (Moore ed., 2001), in either Britain or America, and is often linked to the rise of nationalism in overseas countries (Blommaert ed., 1999; Barbour and Carmichael, eds, 2000). However, despite the separation from major anglophone countries of the West and the empowerment of former colonies, prescriptivism may well accompany the formation of new codified varieties through education (Wolf and Igboanusi 2006), irrespective of their proximity to their historical progenitors. This already happened historically in the United States (Lippi-Green 1997) which in a way continued notions of linguistic purism which

existed and still exist in Britain as well (L. Milroy 1999).

5.2 Characteristics and domains of standard varieties

Although standards have arisen, and continue to arise, in very different social situations, there are many characteristics of such standards which are the same across the world. In all cases the standard is a supraregional variety which is free of any strongly vernacular associations. This is true even where a standard may historically be grounded in a particularly locality, such as London and the Home Counties with British English. Here the standard has become a sociolect and characterises usage in higher social groupings.

Standards are always non-stigmatised public varieties of language, they are the voice of authority (Milroy and Milroy 1999), the manifestation of correct language, they are regarded as logical and consistent and hence also employed as the medium for education. As such they act as yardsticks for linguistic conduct in their respective societies. Standards may also function as a vehicle of great literature though writers by no means keep to notions of standard in their countries. Rather it can be, as with Shakespeare in England, Dante in Italy, Cervantes in Spain or Pushkin in Russia, that the usage favoured by a great author is instrumental in the forging of a standard. Great literature might serve more the function of providing a noble pedigree, cf. the many appeals to Shakespeare's English in discussions of many varieties of English, not just standards (Schneider 2003b). These occur although Shakespeare used many structures which are no longer part of the present-day standard, such as multiple negation, double comparatives, periphrastic *do* and *be* as an auxiliary verb to mention just a few of the more prominent features of his language. Nonetheless, the association of a standard with literature provides support for the view that a standard is aesthetically pleasing, and certainly is when compared to dialects.

The link with great literature serves a further function for all standards: it emphasises that they lie at a remove from the present-day world and highlights the degree of linguistic lag which lends them respectability. This is the standard as nostalgia, a harkening back to supposedly classical forms of language. In this sense a standard is also the language of religious scripture, nowhere more clearly visible than in the model provided by the King James Bible in England for centuries after its appearance in 1611 (Crystal 2010).

5.4 Changing standards again

Especially in their phonetic dimension standards of English are in a state of relative flux. Some of the changes are relatively slow, such as the gradual encroachment of glottalisation in Received Pronunciation (Wells 1994). But in other instances external triggers can lead to rapid change within a period of just some years. This was the case in Ireland in the 1990s where the sudden increase in prosperity and the attendant upward movement of individuals from lower social groups resulted in new varieties arising, first in Dublin and later spreading to the rest of the country (Hickey 1995). These changes became integrated into supraregional Irish English,

the spoken standard in Ireland, changing its character in a number of key ways, e.g. by introduced raising among back vowels, the velarisation of syllable-final /l/ and the retroflexion of /r/.

Again for external reasons, the standard of English found in South Africa has undergone change in recent years and become restandardised (Bowerman, this volume). In this country there was a standard deriving from acrolectal varieties of White South African English (Bowerman 2004a, b) and this survived until the end of the apartheid era in 1994. Since then the empowerment of the black population and its increased presence in public has meant that features of Black South African English, such as a reduced vowel system and the absence of vowel length, have lost their stigma and become acceptable public usage.

There need not be clearly identifiable external triggers for change in all instances. More gradual developments may also be observable as is shown by the fine-grained phonetic analysis of standard and non-standard forms of Australian English offered by Cox and Palethorpe (this volume). This applies in particular to the variation in vowel realisations (Cox 1999).

Even in those countries where an overtly or covertly codified standard does not yet clearly exist, as with the anglophone nations of West Africa (Gut, this volume) and East Africa (Schmied, this volume), the nature of acrolectal English will continue to be dynamic, not least due to the enduring contrast between vernacular and non-vernacular forms of English (Schreier, this volume) which will fuel the development of supraregional forms of English in these countries.

Variation in acrolectal varieties of English in countries outside Europe and North America has been the focus of recent research. This has been the case for Caribbean varieties, for example, cf. Irvine (2004) which examines phonological variation in the Jamaican acrolect or Deuber (2009a) which does this in the same variety, but with reference to grammar. The use of standard English in education in Trinidad has also been investigated, see Deuber (2009b). Much of this research has been fuelled by the compilation of additional corpora within the framework of the *International Corpus of English* (this is the case with Trinidad just mentioned) which is specifically concerned with acrolectal varieties of English in anglophone countries. This type of research has also been extended into the domain of second language forms of English, see Mukherjee and Hundt (eds, 2011); Gut and Hundt (eds, forthcoming).

6 Conclusion

The three centuries which have passed since the English language began to be codified as a standard have shown that this is a dynamic entity with inherent variation although its proponents would gladly view it as immutable. The reactions to this dynamism and variation, by standard supporters and scholars investigating variation and change, are various and range from defences of fixed usage to pleas for more linguistic tolerance.

The pluralistic conception of standard English is confirmed by the many variants which have arisen and continue to do so throughout the anglophone world and which are reflected in the title of this book. For all the countries which work with the notion of standard English one can offer an operational definition of such a

standard, especially in its endonormative spoken form, namely as non-stigmatised public usage in the country in question. Of course the dynamic nature of any standard means that this usage is subject to constant revision. It is this adjustment to ongoing change which makes standards of English entities which have to be continually redefined and repositioned and which ultimately renders them rewarding objects of linguistic research.

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