AMERICAN PRONUNCIATION

By

JOHN SAMUEL KENYON, PH.D., LITT.D.

Professor of the English Language, Emeritus, in Hiram College

TENTH EDITION
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"A teacher of speech untrained in phonetics is as useless as a doctor untrained in anatomy."
—GEORGE SAMPSON, M.A.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This book is designed primarily for a textbook on pronunciation. Its material is presented from the point of view of a teacher of college students who for some years has laid it before them with varying success, but at least with increasing hope and growing confidence in the value of the effort. Though in form it is adapted to pedagogical ends, in content it is believed to be scientifically trustworthy. If the scholar finds in it an annoying fulness of statement with somewhat of repetition, he is asked to remember that this is due to its aim.

The author has found the excellent books on phonetics that are based on British pronunciation unsuccessful in teaching American pronunciation, and believes that more American works on the subject are needed. College teachers of English are increasingly realizing that the teaching of pronunciation is inadequately provided for by the comparatively slight contact and scattered criticisms of speech in the classroom. The student needs some introduction to the whole subject as a science with its own set of principles that will guide him independently of the instructor. Accordingly the teaching of phonetics to undergraduates is on the increase, and it is hoped that this book will assist in that direction.

The book should also be useful to public-school teachers who desire to fit themselves more fully to guide their pupils in their use of speech. Not that they will wish to present the material in this form to their pupils, but that they can find here systematically treated virtually all the problems of pronunciation they are daily encountering, many of which are insoluble without a scientific approach to them. Textbooks of grammar and composition contain only scattered comments on pronunciation, and a good deal of their information is false or misleading.

The field of English as a subject for teaching has been revolutionized in the past twenty-five or more years by the great specialists in the different parts of the field in European and American universities. Yet the very names of these scholars are often unfamiliar to the great body of American schoolteachers and the intelligent public. It is one purpose of this book to make a little of this material more generally accessible.

The author has tried to avoid dogmatism with regard to preferable pronunciations. No attempt is made to set up or even to imply a standard of correctness based on the usage of any part of America. He believes that the state of cultivated pronunciation in America does not warrant the more prescriptive method used by Professor Daniel Jones and Mr. Walter Ripman with reference to standard pronunciation in England. Whether there is ever to be a single standard in America or not, the time is not yet ripe for it. This book is therefore primarily a science of pronunciation; and though the author believes that the art of good pronunciation can be best attained through the scientific approach, the art as such is here little emphasized. The main purpose of the work is to help the student to study the facts of pronunciation till he is somewhat conversant with phonetic principles. He will then be in a better position to consider questions of correctness. The author is aware that an attitude of great confidence as to correctness is likely to gain a quicker audience; but he prefers the slower way of helping to disseminate sound knowledge, with faith in the greater soundness of the culture that will result from it.

With this principle in mind, the author has based his observations on the cultivated pronunciation of his own locality—the Western Reserve of Ohio. It is his belief, however, that this is fairly representative of what will here be called the speech of the North, which is virtually uniform in its most noticeable features from New York State west, in the region north of a line

drawn west from Philadelphia. There is no intention of implying any preference for this speech over that of the East or the South. The main differences in the pronunciation of these different regions are pointed out, with the aim of making the book useful in different parts of the country.

The author is deeply indebted to the British phoneticians Sweet, Ripman, Jones, and Grant, to the Danish scholar Jespersen, and to the Americans Emerson, Krapp, and Grandgent (see Bibliography). It would be impossible to indicate all that he has learned from them which appears in this book; yet he has tried to take nothing, without acknowledgment, not common to students of phonetics, or that he has not thoroughly tested by his own observation. The personal debt is especially great to Professors O. F. Emerson of Western Reserve University and Charles H. Grandgent of Harvard University for guidance and encouragement, and to my colleague, Professor Lee Edwin Cannon, for assistance in reading proof and for valuable suggestions.

Hiram, Ohio, January 1, 1924.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

The gratifying reception of *American Pronunciation* indicates the rapidly increasing interest in the history and phonetics of American English, and a desire to put aside the still abundant quackery based on eighteenth century knowledge and twentieth century ignorance about matters of standards and correctness.

That Professor Krapp's term, General American, is abundantly warranted for the type of pronunciation chiefly described in this book is shown by even the most conservative estimates of the number speaking it in the United States and Canada (see section 5 below). Certain criticisms, however, make it necessary to affirm again that the author does not advocate this or any

one type as the sole standard for America. To help students escape from such a point of view was one of the objects of this book. The author admits no rivalry in his admiration of that clear, intelligent pronunciation of the best types of Southern and Northern British, of Scottish standard English, of Eastern, Southern, and General American, which is the best index of personality, that most interesting of all facts. But apparently this does not satisfy such critics. One must not even describe or speak respectfully of the traditional speech of ninety million people. Some of the astonishing specimens of neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring that greet the radio listener appear to be prophetic of what we may expect from a continued fostering of the naïve assumption that only one form of speech can be correct.

It is impossible to add the names of all those scholars to whom the author has become indebted for valuable criticisms and help since the publication of the first edition; but he cannot refrain from mentioning with gratitude Professors Samuel Moore, Hans Kurath, and Miles L. Hanley in America, and Professor Daniel Jones, Mr. A. Lloyd James, and Mr. Stephen Jones in England.

Hiram, Ohio, August 22, 1930.

PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

The present edition has been entirely rewritten. My experience in teaching both undergraduates and graduates has made it increasingly evident that even those students who have studied foreign language have little idea of the principles and processes of language. I have introduced considerable in the way of question and suggestion intended to awaken the interest of students in their mother tongue, its behavior and laws of development, particularly as these have a bearing on an in-

telligent attitude toward what constitutes good English speech.

The arrangement of material is somewhat shifted. The teacher is free to change the order of presentation or to omit what does not suit his purpose.

It is impossible to name all those scholars who have made this book possible. In addition to those named in former prefaces, I wish to express special obligations to Dr. Bernard Bloch, of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, and to Professor William Cabell Greet of Barnard College, Columbia University, and editor of *American Speech* for valuable suggestions; to Mr. Martin Joos of the University of Wisconsin, for valuable suggestions and for making the Index; to Professor Miles L. Hanley of the University of Wisconsin for valuable suggestions and for reading proof; to my colleague, Dr. Ralph H. Goodale, for the uniform-scale photographs in figure 8; and to my daughter, Martha E. Kenyon, of the James Ford Rhodes High School, Cleveland, for making the drawings (except Figs. 8 and 9). I also desire to thank the G. and C. Merriam Co., publishers of *Webster's New International Dictionary*, for their kind permission to use certain material contributed to the *Second Edition* (1934).

Hiram College, April 9, 1935.

PREFACE TO THE TENTH EDITION

Although the main substance of the book remains the same as in the sixth and subsequent editions, innumerable changes in detail have been made in the tenth. In particular the use of the phonetic symbols r and ə has been simplified and brought into conformity with that in the *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*. The sections on the phoneme have been rewritten in the interest of greater clearness for the elementary student, and have been shifted to a later position in the book in order to

give the beginning student the benefit of more phonetic knowledge before taking up the study of the phoneme and its bearing on phonetic facts.

The Index has been greatly expanded by the addition of many more words of phonetic interest and by references to many aspects of American speech, so that it may serve not only for current guidance in progress through the book, but also for a convenient means of reviewing the whole work.

Finally, I wish to bear witness to my sense of gratitude to the late George Wahr and my admiration for his scholarly spirit that led him in 1923 to undertake the publication of this book when such works gave little promise of being self-supporting, and when this one had been refused by several publishing houses.

J. S. K.

Hiram College, October 27, 1949

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INTRODUCTION

There are few subjects on which educated Americans are so ready to pass judgment and give advice on the basis of so little sound knowledge as the pronunciation of the English we use. Influenced by certain types of teaching in the schools, by the undiscriminating use of textbooks on grammar and rhetoric, by unintelligent use of the dictionary, by manuals of "correct English," each with its favorite (and different) shibboleth, and, it would seem, by anybody or anything that has an air of cocksureness about it, we accept rules of pronunciation as authoritative without inquiry into either the validity of the rules or the fitness of their authors to promulgate them.

Some of the rules are well founded, no doubt; but many of them are quite without foundation in the usage of past or present. Some of them are purely traditional, formulated a century or two ago on theoretical grounds by teachers and writers who had no adequate knowledge of the history or phonetics of English; and they have been reverently copied and taught by later writers and teachers without a knowledge of either their ultimate origin or their validity. Yet we not only accept many of these rules ourselves, but seek to impose them on others by criticizing their pronunciation when it differs from what we suppose correct.

A remarkable aspect of our readiness to criticize pronunciation is the fact, which becomes overwhelmingly obvious to even the beginner in phonetics, that we do not know what sounds we ourselves actually pronounce, until we have attained some elementary knowledge of phonetics. To the teacher of even mature students in phonetics certain deficiencies appear at the beginning. Students have no definite notion of the position of the accent in words; they cannot distinguish between spelling and

sound; often they cannot isolate a sound from the rest of a word; often they cannot distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants, even after knowing the meaning of the terms; between such different sounds as the vowel of *father* and that of *all* or that of *poor* and that of *purr;* between a simple vowel as in *let* and a diphthong as in *ice.*

A serious aspect of this general lack of knowledge of the simplest phonetic facts of our own language, is that many schoolteachers have wrong habits of speech, usually artificially acquired, and they unintentionally mislead their pupils in pronunciation. This is to be deplored, not as a matter of blame to the teachers, but as a serious defect in an educational system which fails to provide and require the necessary preparation of the teacher. Realizing this defect, the Board of Education in England several years ago made phonetics a requirement in the preparation of elementary-school teachers.

To cite only a single instance of the present situation in our schools, the writer has repeatedly heard schoolteachers insist on the full pronunciation of the vowels in the unaccented syllables of words—a rule which neither they nor their pupils can follow in natural, unconscious speech. One city teacher of high standing drilled her pupils carefully to pronounce the noun *subject* with the full sound of the *e* as in *let,* and in the same recitation, after passing to another topic, herself repeatedly pronounced the same word naturally, with obscure *e* (ɪ), as is usual in standard English. The author has observed scores of similar instances of false teaching in the pronunciation of teachers otherwise well prepared and devoted to their work.

A valuable result of an elementary knowledge of phonetics is the interest it creates in the pronunciation of English in different regions of America and England. Probably no intelligent person actually expects cultivated people in the South, the East, and the West to pronounce alike. Yet much criticism, or politely

silent contempt, of the pronunciations of cultivated people in other localities than our own is common. A student of phonetics soon learns not only to refrain from criticizing pronunciations that differ from his own, but to expect them and listen for them with respectful, intelligent interest. He is able to refer the pronunciations he hears to natural and regular laws of linguistic development and behavior. He is apt to learn that certain tendencies he has been tempted to criticize are just as natural and reasonable as many that he follows himself. As his observation becomes more accurate, he will cease to help perpetuate such popular fallacies, as, e.g., that the Bostonian drops all his *r's*, or that every Englishman drops his *h's*. He will learn that he has been observing the speech of others only in the most superficial and fragmentary way; and, in turn, his attention will be sharpened to the peculiarities of the speech of his own region.

Some knowledge of phonetics will not only broaden one's mind in his attitude toward the speech of other localities, but will put him in a more rational position with reference to the questions of authority and standards of usage. No standard of speech can be slavishly followed with safety. There can be no standard of speech that dispenses with a large element of individual choice requiring the decisions of the judgment in applying it. The student of phonetics substitutes an enlightened judgment in matters of pronunciation for every other kind of authority. Not that he becomes independent of standards, but that he learns to evaluate those standards as well as to render intelligent to himself his own attitude toward them.

Illustration of the statements in the last two paragraphs is found in the questions and discussion that frequently arise over the pronunciation of *u* in *rule, lute, blue, new, tutor*, of *tu* in words like *nature, fortune*, of *du* in *education, verdure*, of *a* in *ask, class, half, laugh, aunt*, of *o* in *coarse, door, core*, of *a* or *e* in *care, there*, and in many similar questions. The oft repeated question,

"Which is correct?" and the too oft repeated dogmatic answer are both quite inapplicable to the cases. For an intelligent answer something more is needed than a firm conviction of one's own way of pronouncing them and a readiness to criticize those who differ. There is necessary some knowledge of the phonetic nature of these sounds, and of their historical development and distribution, together with the judicial state of mind that results from such knowledge.

Among the practical uses of phonetics is to be mentioned its effect in stimulating good articulation. Familiar knowledge and daily observation of the manner in which the sounds of speech are made with the speech organs develops an habitual consciousness of the operation of those organs in daily speech that results in improved articulation. The habit of good articulation—which in its purely muscular aspects can be taught by a good elocutionist—by the study of phonetics is at the same time combined with some scientific knowledge of the phonetic structure of English, so that the result is not artificial but natural. And the need in present American speech of clear and deliberate enunciation, which at the same time shall not be artificially "elocutionary," is very great, not only in respect to the communicative and expressive function of spoken English, but also in respect to its function in the interpretation of literature—especially poetry.

Great as is the practical value of phonetics, and the need of such study in America for the improvement of our speech, the author wishes to emphasize his firm conviction, not much shaken by the numerous onslaughts of recent educational theory, of the supreme importance of the study of speech as a part of the larger field of English considered as a branch of science. Whatever of practical value phonetics, or any study of English, may have, its place in an educational program is determined by its value as a branch of knowledge.

Phonetics has exceptional qualities as a branch of science

adapted to educational ends. Its large field of basic facts—its raw material—lies all about us and is immediately available to every student—the facts of pronunciation always within reach of our personal observation. Moreover, they are facts of constantly vital and social interest. They are elemental facts of mental behavior in one aspect of experience; and the observation of these facts constitutes as real an approach, so far as it goes, to the understanding of mental phenomena as the study of psychology.

The handling of these facts by the student involves the same mental processes of accurate observation, comparison, logical deduction, and generalized concepts, that have been rightly the chief argument for the disciplinary value of the study of Latin and Greek. No argument has been adduced for the disciplinary value of Latin and Greek that does not equally apply to the study of English language if undertaken with equal thoroughness. The author would heartily approve more study of Latin and Greek, but we should open our eyes to the wealth of material, fresh and unstaled, which we have mostly neglected, in our native language, admirably suited as a basis of a sound culture in a program of liberal arts, and implying as well a far more certain attainment of the practical ends already theoretically claimed for the study of English.

HISTORICAL SUGGESTIONS

In order to understand many aspects of our modern English it is essential to be able to form some idea of the way in which various features of our language have come to be what they are. It is therefore necessary for the student of phonetics to have some background of the history of the English language. The following facts should be mastered by the student.

1. English is a descendant of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Latin and Greek are sister branches to the Germanic. Since English is descended from the Germanic branch, and French and Spanish from the sister Latin branch, English may be said to be a cousin of French and Spanish. Since modern German and English are both descendants from the Germanic branch, they are sister languages, more recently related than Latin and Germanic.

The speakers of the English descendant of the Germanic branch migrated from northwestern Europe to England in the fifth century A.D. There the language went on developing. The earliest written records of English we have are from the seventh century. The language from that time till about 1150 is called Anglo-Saxon or **Old English (OE).** King Alfred, who wrote several important works, may conveniently be taken as the chief representative of the Old English period. From the reign of Henry II (about 1150) to that of Henry VIII (about 1500) the language is called **Middle English (ME).** Chaucer (1340–1400), in the reign of Richard II, may be taken as the chief representative of Middle English. From about 1500 to the present is **Modern English (MnE),** that from 1500 to 1700 being **Early Modern (EM),** and from 1700 to 1950+, **Late Modern (LM).**

The student should avoid the mistake of applying the term "Old English" to any stage of early English later than 1150. The term is often wrongly applied to Chaucer's English, or even