

Estuary English?!?

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1. 'Estuary English' (EE) was defined by Rosewarne (1984) as: 'a variety of modified regional speech, [...] a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation'. It received great media attention in 1993. Coggle's book (1993) is subtitled 'the new Standard English'. The Tory Minister of Education condemned it as 'a bastardized version of Cockney dialect'.

2. EE differs from Cockney in that it lacks

- /h/ dropping (in content words) 'hænd ɒn 'hɑ:t ('ænd ɒn 'ɑ:?)
- TH fronting θɪŋk (fɪŋk), 'fɑ:ðə ('fɑ:və)
- MOUTH vowel monophthong mæʊθ (ma:f), dəʊn (da:n)
- T glottalling within a word before a vowel 'bʌtə ('bʌʔə), 'wɔ:tə ('wɔʊʔə)

3. EE agrees with Cockney, but differs from RP, in having (perhaps variably)

- tense vowel in HAPPY 'hæpi, 'kɒfi, 'veəriəs
- T glottalling finally (etc.) 'teɪk ɪ? 'ɒf, 'ðæ? 'ɪz, 'pʌʔni
- vocalization of preconsonantal/final /l/ 'mɪɒk ɪbɔtə, 'dʒentə/'dʒenʔli
- yod coalescence in stressed syllables 'tʃu:zdeɪ, rɪ'dʒu:s, 'stʃu:dənʔ
- (?) diphthong shift in FACE, PRICE, GOAT fʌɪs, praɪs, gʌʊʔ
- (?) striking allophony (phoneme split?) in *sold* sɒʊ(t)d, 'rɒʊlə

4. Disregard Rosewarne's claims re

- glottalling of /d/ (!)
- phonetic quality of /r/
- yod dropping after /s/ and /l/ su:t, 'æbsəlu:t
- accenting of prepositions, use of rise-fall, use of question-tags
- usage: cheers 'thank you; goodbye'; there you go 'here you are' etc.
- international ratings (RP 84%, GenAm 71%, Australian 59%, EE 57%...)

5. Issues:

- Is EE a variety (lect, dialect) in its own right, or just the formal style for which Cockney is the informal?
- Does EE include stylistic variation? Does informal EE overlap with formal Cockney? (-ing? you?)
- Where is the boundary between EE and RP? Is localizability a workable criterion?

References

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