TRADITIONAL COCKNEY AND POPULAR LONDON SPEECH

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Abstract

This paper gives a full description of the phonetics and phonology of Traditional Cockney and Popular London speech, treating these varieties as constituting a continuum rather than two separate dialects. Exemplification of the vowels, diphthongs and consonants is provided, both in isolate words and in connected speech, along with their range of variation. The frequencies of the vowels have been charted on the basis of the pronunciation of three elderly male speakers. Regarding the consonants, there are detailed observations on the features typically associated with the linguistic varieties examined: strong aspiration of unvoiced plosives, glottalization, H-dropping, L-vocalization and TH-fronting. A section on prosody provides coverage of lexical stress, rhythm and intonation. The paper takes into account up-to-date research on these phenomena, but does not deal with the most recent vowel shifts, some of which form part of Multi-cultural London English.

Keywords
English dialectology, English sociolinguistics, Cockney, Popular London speech

EL “COCKNEY” TRADICIONAL Y EL HABLA POPULAR LONDINENSE

Resumen

El presente artículo proporciona una descripción detallada del “Cockney” tradicional (TC) y del habla popular londinense (PLS), que, para nuestro propósito, se consideran constituyentes de un continuo lingüístico, diferenciado al máximo de la así llamada “Received Pronunciation” (RP), antes que dos
variedades distintas. Se ofrece abundante ejemplificación de la articulación de las vocales, los diptongos y las consonantes, tanto en palabras aisladas como en la cadena hablada, junto con explicaciones sobre la gama de variación que estos segmentos presentan. Las frecuencias vocálicas que se registran se han calculado a partir de la pronunciación de tres hombres mayores, todos oriundos de Londres. Con respecto a las consonantes, se incluyen observaciones pormenorizadas acerca de los rasgos más típicos de las variedades sometidas a estudio: una fuerte aspiración de las oclusivas sordas, glotalización, caída de la [h], vocalización de [l] y anteriorización de las fricativas dentales. La sección consagrada a los aspectos prosódicos trata de la acentuación de la palabra, el ritmo y la entonación. El presente trabajo tiene en cuenta la investigación más reciente en torno a estos fenómenos, sin ocuparse de los cambios vocálicos de los últimos años, algunos de los cuales son más bien característicos del inglés londinense multicultural.

Palabras clave
dialectología inglesa, sociolingüística inglesa, “Cockney”, habla popular londinense

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed description of Traditional Cockney (TC) and Popular London Speech (PLS), which are treated as constituting a continuum of London speech that is maximally different to Received Pronunciation (RP), rather than two separate varieties. TC represents the basilectal extreme of the London accent continuum, while the term PLS is used, in accordance with Wells (1982: 302), to refer to a working-class accent that is “very slightly closer to RP than the broadest Cockney”. Features that distinguish TC from PLS might be the use in TC of a monophthong in words like *mouth* [maːf] ~ [maːf], RP /maʊθ/, and the glottalling of fricatives: *safer* ['sʌɪʔə], RP /ˈseɪfə/.

Although the pronunciation of the English of London has received attention from linguists (notably Wells 1982: 301-334), as far as I know there is no complete synthesis of the facts providing ample exemplification and vowel frequency charts based on recordings, which I offer here.

In recent times, the speech of London has been subjected to many external influences through the ever-increasing immigration into the metropolis. For instance, the speech of young inner London speakers today often contains narrow Creole-like diphthongs, or even monophthongs, so that the broad *FACE* and *GOAT* diphthongs of TC, [ʌɪ] and [ʌʊ], respectively, may now be articulated more like [eː] and [oː] (Cheshire et
al. 2006). However, the present account will not take into consideration these innovations, which are best considered as part of Multi-cultural London English; it aims to give a coherent, exhaustive characterization of the pronunciation features of the more familiar, long-standing aspects of the London dialect, and these features will be referred to in general as “Cockney”.

Although the term “Cockney” in popular usage is applied loosely to any working-class London accent that deviates noticeably from RP, thus including TC and PLS, strictly speaking, TC is associated with an imprecise area north of the River Thames referred to as the East End. The traditional core neighbourhoods of the East End are Bethnal Green, Stepney & Poplar (since 1965 forming the borough of Tower Hamlets), Shoreditch, Hackney, Mile End and Bow, and a little further south, nearer the river, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Wapping, Limehouse and Millwall. Nowadays, certain areas south of the river (Southwark, Bermondsey and Walworth) are also strongly associated with Cockney speech.

Moreover, despite my use of the term “Traditional Cockney”, the variety to which I am referring is not a traditional dialect in the sense of displaying any ancient dialectal features like the rural dialects of the rest of England. As Trudgill (1990: 44-45) says: “It is arguable whether modern Cockney contains any elements of Traditional Dialect at all ... .” “Nineteenth-century Cockney certainly was a Traditional Dialect, however...”, and one of its traditional features was the articulation of <v> as a kind of [w]-sound ([ʋ]) in words like vex and village, a pronunciation which, though now extinct in London, could still be heard in the Eastern Counties until recently.

There is a widespread, popular belief that a true speaker of Cockney is someone born within the sound of Bow Bells (which are mentioned in the children’s nursery rhyme “Oranges and Lemons” and constitute an important landmark in the story of Dick Whittington). However, these are the bells of the church of St Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside, which today is not in the East End but in the City of London (EC2), and are not bells pertaining to a church in Bow itself (E3).

Areas east of those mentioned above are sometimes also considered to be Cockney-speaking in the narrow sense, but this is probably to do with the eastward migration of East Enders. More precisely, places east of the River Lea, which joins the Thames at Bromley-by-Bow in the borough of Tower Hamlets, are part of East London or, further out, Essex, rather than the East End proper. On the south side of the Thames
out towards the estuary, as long ago as the 18th Century, Chatham Dockyard expanded and acquired large numbers of workers who were relocated from the dockland areas of London, which resulted in Chatham also developing a Cockney accent as opposed to nearby Rochester, which had the Kentish one.

Cockney is a low-prestige variety (which leads to frequent hypercorrection of some of its features — see below) but, by dint of being used as a vehicle of literature and comedy, it also has covert prestige. Everyone is familiar with the flower girl Liza Doolittle, Shaw’s character in *Pygmalion* (the basis for the award-winning musical *My Fair Lady*) whose speech the phonetician Professor Higgins strives to improve, or Sam Weller in Dicken’s *Pickwick Papers*, who pronounced his [v]’s like [w]’s (*wery good*). In more recent times, in the 1960s, Warren Mitchell played Alf Garnet, a larger-than-life Cockney Conservative bigot, in the BBC TV comedy series *Till Death Us Do Part*, created by Johnny Speight. The series was supposed to take place in Wapping in those years, although Mitchell himself was born in Stoke Newington (N16).

Apart from Warren Mitchell, many other comedians have exploited their Cockney accents as a source of humour: Arthur Haynes, Tommy Trinder, Michael Medwin, Charlie Drake, Alfie Bass, Bernard Bresslaw, to name just a few. Cockney has also been used by many singers, as is the case of Bermondsey-born rock-and-roller Tommy Steele (with such songs as *What a Mouth!* and *Little White Bull*), and others such as Alma Cogan, Lonnie Donegan, Joe Brown and His Bruvvers, and Bernard Cribbins, known for his comedy songs *Right said Fred* and *Hole in the Ground*. In the 1980s, a duo known as Chas and Dave came to the fore through their beaty renditions of old Cockney tunes like *Knees Up Mother Brown*, *Gertcha*, *Margate*, *London Girls*, *When I’m cleaning windows*, *Any Old Iron*, *Run Rabbit Run* and *The Laughing Policeman*. Their style became known as Rockney (Rock + Cockney) and their debut album was *One Fing ‘n’ Anuvver* (1975) (‘One Thing and Another’). The fake Cockney accent which is used by actors who are not themselves from London, and which is usually characterized by an extreme realization of the diphthong [ei] with a very open onset so that it sounds something like [ai], is sometimes described as *Mockney*. In fact, it is this diphthong that often causes Australians to be mistaken for Londoners.

People often associate Cockney with Rhyming Slang, e.g. *plates of meat* ‘feet’ and *trouble and strife* ‘wife’, but this jocular use of language may never have been limited to London. It is common in most big cities in the UK, as well as in Australia,
New Zealand and the United States (Lillo 2010: 124; McArthur 1992: 868-869), and far from disappearing, it seems to be on the increase. For example, Lillo (2010: 123) refers to “... the recent growth of rhyming slang in the language of the young generation living on the Southside of Dublin.”

There are expressions in the standard language which many people no longer actually recognize as being originally Cockney rhyming slang: butcher’s (= butcher’s hook ‘look’), loaf (= loaf of bread ‘head’), china (= china plate ‘mate’), taters (= potatoes in the mould ‘cold’) and rabbit (= rabbit and pork ‘talk’). Alongside these, Mockney (or Popney) has created such neologistic formations as Bacardi Breezer for geyser ‘bloke, individual’, Hank Marvin (lead guitarist of the Shadows) for starving, and Shania Twain for pain (in the backside) ‘nuisance’. These last two examples reflect the trend that John Ayto (2002: xi) refers to when he says “…the favoured current model is a rhyme based on the name of a fashionable or well-known personality”. Unmistakably modern creations, for example, are Richard Gere ‘beer’ and Britney Spears ‘beers’.

Some phonetic phenomena traditionally associated with the speech of London (glottalization, [u] for [r], TH-Fronting, i.e. pronouncing <th> as [f] or [v]) have also arisen further afield, in parts of England and Scotland and, rightly or wrongly, been attributed to influence of the metropolis. For example, TH-Fronting, a merger most likely due to the phonological markedness of [θ] and [ð] as compared to [f] and [v] (Kerswill 2003: 240), has been recorded in Glasgow (among other places), and Glaswegian speech containing this feature is sometimes referred to humoristically in the press and popular literature as Jockney. Regional speech which has incorporated such features of the London variety has sometimes been called Estuary English, but this term has attracted some criticism and is not heard quite so much nowadays as it was a few years ago.

2. Vowels

The vowel frequency chart below (Figure 1) was devised from recordings made with three men from London, aged 55, 63 and 67 at the time of recording, reading the
vowels of their London speech in the context /h-d/. The words recorded were the following:

(1) heed  (2) hid  (3) head  (4) had  (5) hard  (6) hod  
(7) hoard  (8) hood  (9) who’d  (10) Hud  (11) heard  (12) header

This is the environment chosen by Wells in his 1962 study (see II. Experimental procedure. Recording procedure) and it was adopted by Hawkins & Midgley (2005: 185). As Wells says, “The frame /h-d/ is particularly suitable for studies of English vowels, since (i) /h/ has so little influence on following vowels, and (ii) it so happens that a real English word results for nearly every ‘pure’ vowel in this sequence.” To record instances of schwa in final position, where it may be particularly open, the word header was added. To avoid beginning and end-of-list effects in reading (see Hawkins & Midgley 2005: 185) and to have various tokens of each vowel from which to choose for analysis, the participants were asked to repeat each word three times.

Figure 1. Vowel height and frontness in Cockney calculated from the average F1 and F2 values obtained from three elderly male speakers for each of the 12 vowels.

The symbols that have been chosen to represent the vowels of TC and PLS speech and which are listed alongside the RP vowels in Figure 2 are considered to be indicative of the commonest values, though the usual range of variation is also given.
Usual range of variation in TC and PLS

1. /iː/ [ɪi ~ əi] bee [b̥ɪi]
2. /ʊ/ [ʊ ~ ʊ̟] look [luʔ]
3. /e/ [ɛ] bed [b̥ɛd̥]
4. /æ/ [æ ~ ɛ] mat [mæʔ]
5. /ɑː/ [ɑː ~ ɑː̱] Margate [ˈmɑːɡɪʔ]
6. /ɒ/ [ɒ ~ ɔ] jot [dʒ̊ɒʔ]
7. /ɔː/ [oː ~ o̞ʊ ~ ɔo] yawn [joːn]
   (see Diphthongs below) yourn [jɔən] ‘yours’
8. /ʌ/ [a ~ ɐ̟] London [ˈlandn̩]
9. /ɜː/ [ɜː ~ ɜ̟ː ~ œ̈ː] nurse [nɜːs]
10. /ə/ [ə ~ ɐ] water [ˈwoːʔə]
11. /iː/ [ɪi ~ əi] bee [b̥ɪi]
12. /uː/ [ʊʉ ~ əʉ] loopy [ˈlʊʉʔɪi] ‘mad’

As can be seen from the above chart, the short vowels are often similar to those of RP, especially in less broad varieties of Cockney, though the field of dispersion of the allophones may not coincide exactly. For example, [ɪ] may be more central than in RP, and [æ] and [ɒ] less open: [ɛ] and [ɔ], respectively (Wells 1982: 305). The pronunciation of the word Saturday, for example, is sometimes [ˈsɛʔədi]. In a few words like gawd (god), gone, off and cough, the long vowel [oː] instead of [ɒ] may still be heard from the older generation of Cockneys, but it is recessive and often ridiculed or used in jocular expressions like Now you’ve been and gone and done it! [ˈnæː jəv ˈbɪin ən ˈɡoːn ən ˈdan ɪʔ].

Note also that [ʊ] can be more fronted than in RP in some words, particularly the adjective good [ɡʊd], and that RP [ʌ] is in general noticeably more open in TC, resulting in [a], as in come [kʰʌm], present and past tense in Cockney of the verb to come. Schwa is also perceptibly more open in word-final position: dinner [ˈdɪnə].

Instead of [ɛ], broad Cockney may occasionally have closer allophones with a palatal off-glide before a voiced consonant: bedroom [b̥ɛˈdɹʊʉm], leg [leˈɡ̊].

As for the vowels corresponding to RP long vowels, these are often appreciably more diphthongal than in RP. The FLEECE vowel tends to close after beginning with a more open tongue position than in RP, which may be as low and centralized as [ə], and it is usually diphthongal too when word/morpheme-final and unstressed, as opposed to RP [i] (the happy vowel), as in Steve [stɪv̥] and busy [ˈb̥ɪzɪi], and also where RP
traditionally has initial unstressed [ɪ], as in effect [ɪˈfɛkt], electric [ɪˈlɛktrɪk] and economy [ɪˈkɒnəmɪ], though Wells (2008) says that the unstressed prefixes be-, de-, e-, pre-, re-, and sometimes se-, are now associated with a shortened fleece vowel, [i]. Barltrop & Wolveridge (1980: 104) claim that a long fleece vowel is even heard in TC in words like escape and estate, which in RP would never have initial [i], but either [ɪ] or [ə].

The equivalent back vowel (the goose vowel) is similarly slightly diphthongal, beginning more open and centralized than in RP and gliding to a higher, generally centralized position ([ʊθ]). In recent times, this vowel has shown a tendency to become much fronter while retaining some of its rounding: [yː], which is particularly noticeable when the vowel is preceded by [j], as in you [jʊː]. Kerswill & Williams (2005) refer to the proliferation of this vowel outside London.

The palm vowel has a fully back allophone ([ɔː]) considered to be a marker of broad Cockney, while the thought vowel tends to be higher than RP [ɔ] in closed syllables ([ɔː]) and very often diphthongal, with a glide in the region of [ɒʊ ~ ɔə], and centring in open syllables ([ɔə ~ ɔə]), including derivatives ending in a consonant. Thus board [bɔːd] is in phonological opposition to bored [bɔːd] < bore [bɔː] (this phonemicization is referred to in Wells (1982: 310) as the thought split. The nurse vowel may be slightly fronted and/or slightly rounded with allophones in the [ɜː ~ ɵː] range.

2.1 Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RP</th>
<th>Usual range of variation in TC and PLS</th>
<th>Sample word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ai/</td>
<td>[eɪ ~ eɪ ~ æɪ ~ æɪ] Spain [spæɪn]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/au/</td>
<td>[æʊ ~ əʊ] so, sew, sow [sɔʊ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ɔʊ ~ ɒʊ ~ aʊ] soul [sɔʊ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æi/</td>
<td>[eɪ ~ ɪ] light [lɛɪʔ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/aʊ/</td>
<td>[æʊ ~ əʊ ~ ɪə] mouth [mæʊθ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/aʊ/</td>
<td>[əʊ ~ ʊ] boy [bʊə]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/əʊ/</td>
<td>[iə ~ ɪə ~ ɪə] near [nɪə]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/əʊ/</td>
<td>[eɪə ~ ɛə] chair [tʃɛə]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/əʊ/</td>
<td>[ɔɪə ~ ɔwə] door [dʊə]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʊə/</td>
<td>[ʊə ~ ʊ] boor [bʊə]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. The diphthongs of Cockney
As is widely recognized, urban accents are more progressive when it comes to sound change. Cockney, together with London urban speech in general and that of other southern and Midland dialects, has taken the Great English Vowel Shift a stage further than in RP: the closing diphthongs [æʊ] and [ʌʊ] show a clockwise movement with respect to RP [əʊ] and [ɔə]: mouth [mæʊf], boat [bʌʊʔ]; the remaining closing ones, [ʌɪ], [ɪi] and [ʊi], show an anti-clockwise movement with respect to RP [eɪ], [ai] and [ɔi]: paint [pʰæɪʔ], pint [pʰʌɪʔ], point [pʰɔ̝ɪʔ]. As the starting point of the PRICE diphthong is considerably more retracted than in RP, and the starting-point of the
MOUTH diphthong is considerably fronter, so that they cross over and the diphthong in each of these words may be [æi] and [æʊ]/[æə], respectively. Wells (1982: 310) refers to this phenomenon as the PRICE-MOUTH Crossover.

The diphthongs [æi] and [æʊ] may reduce to [iɪ] in unstressed my and suffixed -day, respectively: my pants [mi ˈpænɪs], Friday ['fræɪdɪ]. The unstressed [æʊ] of words or morphemes as in pillow, follow, tomorrow, potato, tomato, photo(graph) and sellotape often reduces to schwa in less careful speech: ['pʰɪlə, 'fɔlə, ˈtʰəʊməʊə, pʰətʰəʊiə, tʰəʊməʔə, ˈfəʊʔəɡɹæf, ˈsɛlətʰʌɪʔb̥]. The main shopping street in Hackney is known as the Narrow Way ['næɹəwʌɪ].

The traditional London equivalent of RP [əʊ] has a much lower nucleus; hence boat tends to be articulated as [ɨʊə]. Moreover, the use of a noticeably different allophone, [oʊ], before velar [l] means that, owing to L-vocalization, [æʊ] and [oʊ] are potentially in phonological opposition in pairs such as so/sew/sow and soul: /səʊ/ v. /səʊl/ (the GOAT Split, Wells 1982: 312-313). Other such minimal pairs are bow /bəʊ/ v. bowl /bɔʊl/, Coe/co- /kəʊl/ v. coal /kɔʊl/, mow /məʊ̯l/ v. mole /məʊl/, toe /təʊ/ v. toll /tɔʊl/, go /ɡəʊl/ v. goal /ɡɔʊl/, and show /ʃəʊl/ v. shoal /ʃɔʊl/. Note also that holy /ˈhʌʊlɪ/ forms a minimal pair with wholly /ˈhɒʊlɪ/, which retains the vowel of whole /hɔʊl/, although this is not the case for speakers that pronounce wholly with a geminate [l]: ['hɒllɪ].

In RP, the words Boer and boor are generally distinguished as /ˈbəʊə/ and /bʊə/, respectively, though Boer may also be given the homophonous pronunciation /bʊə/. In TC and PLS, these two words also tend to be pronounced as homophones, but with the diphthong [əʊ]. Thus The Boer War will be pronounced as [də ˈbɔʊə ˈwɔʊ].

All three centripetal diphthongs, [iə], [eə] and [ɔə], but particularly [ɔə], may be pronounced with glide insertion in the broadest Cockney, especially in final position. Thus more/More (moor, Moor[e]) and poor/paw may be articulated as ['mɔə] and ['pɔə], respectively, while here and there may occasionally be heard as ['hɪə] ~ ['iə] and ['ðɛə], respectively.

The monophthongal versions of the centring diphthongs tend to be used more word-internally, but there is no hard-and-fast rule.
2.2 Vowels before [l]

Dark [l] ([\textipa{\l}]), as a liquid, has a lowering and/or backing effect in English but additionally brings about neutralization in TC and PLS through vocalization. Thus *peel*/*peal* and *pill*, with the underlying contrast /\textipa{IL} v. /\textipa{IL}/, fall together as [pr\textipa{\l}], and thus rhyme with *real* [\textipa{\r\l}]. In like manner, the back vowels [ou] and [o], as in *fool* and *full*, respectively, and the [o\textipa{\l}] in *fall*, also neutralize, and are all usually pronounced as [fo\textipa{\l}], thus generally rhyming with *cruel* and *crawl* [\textipa{\k\r\l\u\l}]. In like manner, the vowels of *TRAP*, *FACE* and *MOUTH* (/æ, ʌ, əʊ/, respectively) also undergo neutralization as a result of [l]-vocalization in TC and PLS so that, when followed by the vocoid liquid, they may merge as [æ\textipa{\l}]. Thus *sale* may sound like *Sally*, and *pail* like *pal*, while *hail* may fuse with *howl*, and these in turn with *ale* if their initial <h> is not pronounced. In very broad accents, [a\textipa{\l}] and [a\textipa{\l}] plus [l] may also participate in this kind of contextual merger, so that words like *Carl* [\textipa{k\h\l\a\l}] and *style* [\textipa{st\l}] have the same rhyme, [æ\textipa{\l}]. (For other examples, see Wells 1982: 316-317)

Pairs like *Moll* and *mole*, and *doll* and *dole*, with the underlying opposition [ʌ] v. [o\textipa{\l}], may also converge as [\textipa{m\h\l\u\l}] or [\textipa{m\r\l\a\l}] and [ \textipa{\dh\l\u\l}] or [\textipa{\dh\r\l\a\l}]. The word *dull* can be a homophone of the latter pair. In the stressed syllable of words like *involve* and *solve*, Londoners say [\textipa{\h\l\u\l}] rather than [\textipa{\l}], the latter being the traditional RP pronunciation.

Finally, note that [\textipa{\g\h\l\a\l}] is a common pronunciation of *girl* [\textipa{\g\h\l\l}], and that there is possible neutralization to [æ\textipa{\l}] of the vowels of RP minimal pairs like *well* /\textipa{\w\l}\l/ and *whirl* /\textipa{\w\l\l}\l/ (Wells 1982: 317), both of which may be realized as [we\textipa{\l}].

2.3 Vowels in hiatus

Rather than monophthongize sequences of diphthongs ending in [i] or [u] + [ə] as in RP (*fire* [\textipa{\f\a\l}] > [\textipa{\f\u\l}], *tower* [\textipa{\t\h\a\w\l}] > [\textipa{\t\a\l}], *slower* [\textipa{\s\l\u\w\l}] > [\textipa{\s\z\l}]), the broadest Cockney accents tend to resolve the vowel hiatus by glide insertion. Thus the aforementioned words may be pronounced [\textipa{\f\u\l\l}], [\textipa{\t\h\a\w\l\w\l}] and [\textipa{\s\l\a\w\l\w\l}], respectively. However, the majority of Londoners use forms of the type [\textipa{\f\a\l}], [\textipa{\t\h\a\w\l}] and [\textipa{\s\l\a\w\l}].
pronunciations with glide insertion may, in fact, be acquired during childhood but abandoned in adulthood.

The above-mentioned pronunciations with glide insertion also operate across morpheme boundaries; thus high-er [ˈhɪər] , allow-ance [əˈləʊəns] and throw-er [ˈθɛər], for example. Moreover, high monophthongs may also be involved, as in freer [ˈfɹɪər] , fewer [ˈfjuər] , piano [piənə] and influence [ˈɪnfluəns], and cases with the definite article followed by a vowel, like the end of the road [ðə ɪnd ə ˈrəʊd] , the artful dodger [ðə ˈɑːrtfʊl ˈdɒdʒə] and where the hell (have) you been? [ˈwɛə ðə ˈhɛl (ˈhæv) ˈjuː bɪn], or the prepositions to and through plus a vowel: we went to a party [wɛi ðə ˈpɑːti]; he drove through a wall [hɪ ˈdrəʊv ə ˈwɔll].

3. Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labio-dental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Post-alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>s (θ)</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>ɹ, ʒ</td>
<td></td>
<td>(h)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ɹ</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. The consonants of Cockney

The following lists of words give examples of the consonant phonemes of TC and PLS, as shown in the Table above, in initial, medial and final position, where applicable, in order to show the phonological distribution of the consonants and illustrate any noticeable phonetic variation. Some words will be given in more than one form to show common variant pronunciations of the sound being illustrated. Not all possible variants will be given, however, for each individual word.
Initial position | Medial position | Final position |
---|---|---|
**p** | pork [pʰɔuʔkʰ], [pʰouʔkʰ] | scarper ['skæpʰə] ~ ['skæʔə] | cap [kʰæʔpʰ] ~ [kʰepɸ] ~ [kʰæʔpʰ] |
**b** | better [ˈbeθtʰ] ~ [ˈbeʔə] | Khyber [kʰəubə] ‘arse’ | gob [ɡəb] ‘mouth’ |
**t** | tea [tʰi] ~ [tʰi] | Betty [ˈbeθtʰi] ~ [ˈbeθtʰi] ~ [ˈbeʔtʰi] ~ [ˈbeθtʰi] | hat [hæʔtʰ] ~ [hæʔtʰ] ~ [əʔ] |
**d** | do [dəu] | ladder ['lædə] | glad [ɡlæd] |
**k** | come [kʰəm] ~ [kʰəm] | jockey [dʒəkʰi] ~ [dʒəkʰi] ~ [dʒəθi] | Jack [dʒəθkʰ] ~ [dʒəθkʰ] ~ [dʒəθkʰ] |
**g** | govern [ˈɡəvən] ‘boss’ | bigger [ˈbɪɡə] | fag [fæɡ] ‘cigarette’ |
**ʧ** | china ['tʃənə] | Archie [ˈɑːʔtʃɪi] | catch [kʰæʔtʃ] |
**dʒ** | jam [dʒəm] | codger [ˈkʰɑdrə] | dodge [dɒdʒ] |
**m** | my [mɑɪ] | hammer ['hæmə] ~ [ˈæmə] | lamb [læm] |
**n** | no [nəu] | pony [ˈpʰənəu] | own [ʌʊn] |
**ŋ** | – | banger [ˈbæŋə] | sing [sɪŋ] |
**f** | five [fəu] | coffee [kʰəfi] | laugh [lɑːf] |
**v** | very [ˈvəri] | fiver [ˈfærə] | dive [dəv] |
**θ** | thin [θin] ~ [fin] | Kathy [ˈkæθi] ~ [ˈkæθi] | Smith [smɪθ] ~ [smɪf] |
**ð** | then [ðen] ~ [yen] | brother [ˈbʰæθə] ~ [ˈbʰæθə] | bathe [bæθi] ~ [bæθi] |
**s** | sorry [ˈsərɪ] | massive [ˈmæsɪv] | miss [mɪs] |
**z** | zoo [zu] | carsey [kʰəzзи] ‘toilet’ | booze [bʊz] ‘alcohol’ |
**ʃ** | shovel [ˈʃəvəl] | luscious [ˈlʌʃəs] | moosh [mʊʃ] ‘mate; face’ |
**ʒ** | – | measure [ˈmɛʒə] | – |
**h** | heat [hæɪtʰ], [hiʔ] ~ [tiʔ] | behind [bɪˈfaɪnd] ~ [bɪˈaɪnd] | – |
**l** | lie [lai] | wally [ˈwɔlɪ] ‘man’ | tell [tʰɛl] ~ [tʰɛ] |
**r** | real [rəu] | marry [ˈmærɪ] | – |
**j** | yellow [ˈjɛlə] | higher [ˈhærə] ~ [ˈaɪɾə] | – |
**w** | well [wəu] | lower [ˈlʌwə] | – |

Figure 8. The consonants of Cockney. Examples

### 3.1 Plosives

TC and PLS, like other varieties of English have six plosive phonemes, /p, b, t, d, k, g/, three pairs of unvoiced and voiced segments produced at the bilabial, alveolar and velar places of articulation. The unvoiced ones are heavily aspirated in pre-stress
position, as a general rule. Cockney speakers also produce noticeable aspiration outside the pre-stress position: intervocically as in *cuppa* (= cup of tea) [kʰapʰə], *matter* [mætʰə], *nicker* ‘pound’ [nɪkʰə]; finally as in *cup* [kʰapʰ], *mat* [mætʰ] and *nick* [nɪkʰ], though [k] shows less aspiration than the other two consonants. Affrication is also common, particularly of /t/ and /k/ in all positions, but of /p/, too, in final position (see examples in the Table above). Sometimes, the voiced plosives are affricated, too, particularly /d/: *do* [d̥ʊʉ], *bad* [b̥æd̥z].

As in RP, the voiced plosives, like the voiced fricatives and the affricate [dʒ], are not fully voiced in absolute initial and final position or when contiguous with an unvoiced consonant: *big* [b̥ɪɡ̊], *dead* [d̥ɛd̥], *both go* [b̥ʌʊf ɡ̊ʌʊ], but it should be mentioned that degree of voicing in obstruents can be unpredictably irregular, presumably in both RP and Cockney accents.

The unvoiced plosives tend to be subject to pre-glottalization when not in absolute initial position in RP and following a vowel: *cup* [kʰaʔpʰ], *mat* [mæʔtʰ], *nick* [nɪʔkʰ]. In TC and PLS it sometimes happens that the segment is realized as a bare glottal stop (cup [kʰʌʔ], *mat* [mæʔ], *nick* [nɪʔ]), even when a vowel follows: *cup of tea* [kʰʌʔ iʔ], *mat and carpet* [mæʔ ən ˈkɑːʔɪʔ], *he’ll nick it* [iʔ ˈnɪʔ ɪʔ]. This is most frequently so in the case of underlying /t/, but with the other unvoiced plosives there tends to be a gesture accompanying the glottalling which identifies them as either bilabial or velar; this may be heard as a weakly articulated plosive: *paper* [pʌɪʔb̥ə], *Wilkins* [ˈwɪoʔɡ̊ɪnz]. As can be seen, glottalization takes place in TC and PLS most commonly when the following syllable is unstressed. Notwithstanding, the glottal stop is occasionally found before stress, as in *tata* [tʰæʔɑː] ‘goodbye’ and *cartoons* [kʰɑːʔʊʉnz].

In educated British English accents (what Collins & Mees (2003: 245) call NRP, non-regional pronunciation), pre-glottalization and glottal replacement very commonly affect a group of high-frequency words, namely: *it*, *bit*, *get*, *let*, *at*, *that*, *got*, *lot*, *not* (and contracted forms: *don’t*, *can’t*, *aren’t*, *isn’t*, etc.), *what*, *put*, *but*, *might*, *right*, *quite*, *out*, *about* (Collins & Mees, 2003: 82). However, in TC and PLS, glottalization is the norm and tends to be used across the board, except in highly self-conscious speech styles or careful reading.

The unvoiced bilabial and velar plosives are most commonly fully glottalized after a nasal, as in *crumpet* [kʰʌmʔiʔ] and *sink* [sɪŋʔ], an environment in which the
unvoiced alveolar plosive can also be subject to glottalling: *Clinton* [ˈklɪnʔ]. Full glottalling can take place in this context without risk of ambiguity, as the nasal consonants identify the place of articulation. The [b] of *able* (RP [ˈeɪbə]) is often vocalized like the [l], so that, in fast speech at least, the word may sound the same as *ale/ail* [ˈələ].

The intervocalic alveolar plosive after a stressed vowel is not only frequently glottalized but can also be tapped, as in *British* [ˈbrɪtʃ] and *got it* [ˈɡoʊtʔ]. Instead of a tap a voiced alveolar plosive may be used, as in *better* [ˈbɛtə] and *hospital* [ˈhɒspɪdəʊ]. Occasionally, in a few expressions, intervocalic /t/ is rhotacized (a phenomenon more closely associated with varieties of English spoken in northern England): *Shut up pushing me!* [ʃaɪ tʃ ˈpʰʊʃɪn mɪi] ‘Stop pushing me!’.

The alveolar plosives are sometimes elided not only preconsonantly (*Your dad’s coming* [jə ˈdæz kʰʌmɪn]), but also in absolute final position in certain words: *nothing left* [ˈnafɪn ˈlɛf], *bacon rind* [ˈbʌɪʔn ɹɑɪn]. In the case of less familiar words like *rind*, the speaker may be unaware of the existence of the final [d] in the spelling, so that the word is reinterpreted as not having this underlying final segment and it is never restored even when a vowel follows.

In the word *dreadful*, final preconsonantal [d] is sometimes realized as [t] and/or glottalized: [ˈdɪəʔtfəo].

### 3.2 Affricates

As in RP, non-initial unvoiced affricates are pre-glottalized: *match* [mæʔtʃ], *satchel* [ˈsæʔtʃəʊ]. In some cases where the recommended RP pronunciation is with [ʧ], as in the ending *-wich*, Londoners tend to use the voiced counterpart, with the partial devoicing typical of the voiced plosives in initial and final position: *Greenwich* [ˈɡɹɪnɪdʒ̊], *sandwich* [ˈsæmwɪdʒ̊].

The affricates often surface through a process of palatalization or coalescent assimilation, in which a [j] palatalizes a preceding consonant. Such is the case of [ˈɡoʔtʃə] (*I’ve* got you) and [ˈdɪdʒə] (*Did you?*), and the Cockney expression [ˈɡɔtʃə]
(Gertcha — often without preglottalling) < *Get out (of it), you*, expressing disbelief or something like ‘Come off it!’ For further examples see *Connected speech phenomena* below.

### 3.3 Nasals

The nasals have the same distribution as in RP, i.e. [m] and [n] in all positions, but [ŋ] only in codas. Although [n] and [ŋ] are usually distinct (e.g. *thin* [fɪn] v. *thing* [fɪŋ]) and occupy the same contexts as in RP, it should be noted that the -*ing* gerund ending is always pronounced with an alveolar nasal in the broadest Cockney accents (*hoping* [ˈhʌʊðɪŋ], *thinking* [ˈfɪŋɪŋ]), while the indefinite pronouns *something*, *anything* and *nothing* have a range of variant pronunciations as follows:

- *something* [ˈsʌɱfɪŋ, ˈsʌɱfɪŋʔk, ˈsʌɱfɪn, ˈsʌnɪk]
- *anything* [ˈɛnɪfɪŋ, ˈɛnɪfɪŋʔk, ˈɛnɪfɪn]
- *nothing* [ˈnʌfɪŋ, ˈnʌfɪŋʔk, ˈnʌfɪn]

Naturally, nasal consonants usually nasalize preceding vowels to a greater or lesser extent (thus [ˈsʌɱfɪŋ] could be [ˈsʌɱfɪn] ~ [ˈsʌɱfɪŋ]), but nasalization of vowels is particularly noticeable in TC and PLS when the nasal consonant is followed by an unvoiced stop, as in *can’t* [kɑ̃ːt], *don’t* [d̥ʌʊ̃t] *ain’t* [ʌɪ̃t] and *thank* [fæ̃k], in which case the nasal consonant may virtually disappear (see also *Connected Speech Phenomena*, below).

### 3.4 Fricatives

Just as Londoners are aware of where [h] is expected in pronunciation (see below), they are also cognizant of the [f] - [θ] and [v] - [ð] distinction in RP, and often exploit the opposition themselves. However, there is generally a merger of these labio-dental and dental segments in London, so that *thin* sounds like *fin*, and *breathe* sounds like *breve*. In a separate development, initial [ð] is often strengthened to [d] (note *that* [dæʔ], *then* [dɛn] [see also Figure 8], *there* [də], *though* [dəʊ], and the borrowed Creole term *bredren* [ˈbredɹɪn] ‘friend’, which also contains this stop as opposed to RP *brethren*.
[breðɹɪn]), or it may assimilate completely to a preceding nasal (see Connected speech phenomena below).

In the word *thanks*, initial [θ] may be reduced to a glottal fricative: [hæŋʔs].

The unvoiced alveolar fricative, [s], may be palatalized in TC and PLS through assimilation in triconsonantal clusters: *strooth!* [ʃtɹ̥ʊʉf] (< God’s truth), *strike a light!* [ʃtɹ̥ɑɪʔkʰ ə lɑɪʔ]. Foulkes & Docherty (2003: 66) offer the examples *stupid* [ʃtʃʉpɪd] and *strong* [ʃtɹɒŋ] (though not specifically from London speech).

Whereas in RP there are many instances of synchronic variable H-loss in grammatical words in unstressed environments, and historically in the suffix -*ham* and the pronoun *it* < *hit*, this type of elision is extended, at least among older Cockney speakers, to lexical words like *hat* [æʔ], *heavy* ['evii] and *help* [ɛoʔpʰ], so that we can say that it is generalized across prosodic environments, being less likely when foot initial. As the phenomenon is highly stigmatized, Cockney speakers and Londoners in general will make a conscious effort to pronounce [h] in more careful speech, and they are usually aware of where [h] is pronounced in RP, although cases of hypercorrection like *h-educated* [ˈhɛdʒʊəkʰʌɪʔɪd̥] and *h-ignorant* [ˈhɪɡnərənʔ] occasionally arise, but nowadays these are more often than not facetious pronunciations rather than genuine lapses. At least as far as young people in South-east London are concerned, H-loss, though still widespread, seems to be stabilizing or has stabilized (Tollfree 1999: 173).

Although glottalling is mostly associated with plosives, in TC and PLS the labiodental and dental fricatives, notably [f] can also be glottalized: *office* ['ɒʔɪs], *different* ['dɪʔɪnʔ], *safer* ['sʌɪʔə]. Note, in particular, the pronunciation of the modal verb *have to* [ˈæʔə] (also past tense, *had to*, with the same pronunciation): *I’ll have to go and look at my tomatoes* [ɪlˈæʔə ˈgɒʊən ˈlʊʔ ˈæʔ mi tʰəˈmɑːʔəz]. Glottalling of [v], [θ] and [ð] is much less common, and I refer the reader to Wells (1982: 327-328) for information.

As in RP, the voiced fricatives, like the voiced plosives and the affricate [dʒ], are not fully voiced in initial and final position: *valve* [væov̥], *zoos* [z̥ʊʊz̥]. According to Linda Shockey (2003: 30), [z] is hardly ever fully voiced in English.

### 3.5 Approximants

When pronounced after vowels, /l/ is very dark in TC and PLS: [ɬ]. In fact, in this position it is more often than not vocoid, as in *bowl* [bou] and *tall* [tʰɬə], the resulting
back vowel being in the region of [o], [u] or unrounded [y]. The “darkening” of post-
vocalic [l] has a notable effect on the preceding vowels (see below).

Although the environment in which [l]-vocalization has been traditionally attested
is word/syllable-final pre-consonantal or pre-pausal, Tollfree (1999: 174) has found
instances in word-final intervocalic contexts among the younger generation in South
East London (1999: 174). This means that from now on we may find increasing
vocalization in phrases like the Millwall area [də miˈwoː w eə] Muswell Hill
[ˈmazwʊ ˈwɪl] and He took a bowl over his mate’s ‘He went to his friend’s house’ [i
tʰʊʔ kə ˈbɒuəɹ ʌvəɹ ɪz ˈmʌɪʔ] without recovery of the underlying lateral segment.

As in RP, in TC and PLS the consonant <r> is not pronounced after vowels, this
occurring without any of the low prestige which is attached to H-dropping, no doubt
precisely because post-vocalic [l] “has also been lost in what became the institutional
accent” (Milroy 1983: 40). The loss of final [l] is a complete, irreversible process which
always operates unless the next syllable begins with a vowel, in which case a linking [l]
is used: pour [pɔː], pour it out [ˈpɔː iʔ ‘æʊʔ]; occur [əˈkɜː], occurring [əˈkɜːɻi]; far
[faː], how far is it? [‘æʊ ‘fæɻ iʔ].

Prevocalic [l] may be articulated as a labio-dental approximant, [v], rather than a
postalveolar approximant: real [ˈvəi], red [vɛd]. After [p] and [k], [l] or [v] is often
devoiced, as is also the case of [l] in RP: price [pɹəi] ~ [pʋəi], crash [kɹəi] ~ [kʋəi];
after [t], the segment is also very noticeably fricative: train [tɹəi] ~ [tʋəi].

Note that the [v] corresponding to RP [v] in words like very, and which was the
kind of articulation supposed to be used by Charles Dickens’ character Sam Weller, is
no longer found in London speech.

Like American English, TC and PLS delete [j] after coronal consonants, of which
the dental [θ] and the alveolar segments [t, d, n, s, z, l] are most relevant to our present
description. The post-alveolar articulations [ɹ, ʃ, ʒ, ʤ] which, like RP, have either
caused the yod to drop historically, as is the case of [r], or merged it with the palatal
articulation in a process of coalescent assimilation, do not count here. There are very
few cases of [j] after [θ] in RP, the principal one being the word enthusiasm, which in
TC and PLS has the variant pronunciations [ɛnˈθʊʉzjæzm] ~ [ɪnˈθʊʉzjæzm] ~
[ɛnˈθʊʉzjæzm] ~ [ɪnˈθʊʉzjæzm]. Note also that few [ʃəu] may occasionally lose its yod:
[ʃəu]. Examples of alveolars with yod deletion are tune [tʰʊn], duty ['dʊʔɪi], new
[nuh], assume [əˈsʊm], presume [pɹɪiˈzʊm] and allude [əˈlʊd], and these require

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some comment, too. Whereas yod loss after the alveolar nasal is well established, it seems that the overriding tendency in Modern Cockney is to palatalize [t] and [d] + [j], so that tune and duty are usually pronounced [tʃʊʉn] and [ˈd̥ʒ̊ʊʉʔɪi] nowadays (Wells 1982: 330-331). Older speakers may say stew [stʊʉ] and Tuesday [ˈtʰʊʉzdɪ], and I have heard only the form Teuton [ˈtʰʊʉʔɒn] from one male speaker of eighty, though the younger generations are apt to use palatalization in many common words. Yod-deletion after [s], [z] and [l] is quite normal in TC and PLS, and there is also a tendency towards it in other varieties of British English according to Wells’ 1988 poll, though the actual poll figures given in Wells, 2008 for assume and presume show a marked preference for the yod (84% and 76%, respectively), while allude is given first as [əˈluːd] and secondly as [əˈljuːd].

For [j] as an an epenthetic consonant between vowels, see Vowels in hiatus above.

As in RP, [w], like [j], is only used in prevocalic position: witch/which [wrɪʧ], twitch [twɪʧ], squint [skwɪʔ], square [skwə]. For [w] as an epenthetic consonant between vowels, see Vowels in hiatus above.

As in RP, all the approximants undergo devoicing when preceded by an unvoiced consonant: flanker [ˈflæŋə] ‘trick’, terrific [ˈtɹɪfɪʔ], puke [pjuʔɪ], twit [twɪʔ].

4. Connected Speech Phenomena

In connected speech, TC and PLS sometimes manifest types of accommodation which are avoided in more formal accents, while sharing with these accents many other continuous-speech phenomena.

Place assimilations as in I can’t believe it [a ˈkʰæm brɪliɪv ɪʔ], I’m going to go [aŋ ˈɡənə ˈɡʌʊ], and I won’t go [a ˈwʌʊ̃k ˈɡʌʊ] are also found in accents nearer to RP, though not with the same degree of nasalization that seems to affect Cockney vowels adjacent to nasal consonants: [a ˈkʰæm brɪliɪv ɪʔ], [æŋ ˈɡənə ˈɡʌʊ], [a ˈwʌʊ̃k ˈɡʌʊ]. Vowels in general, as in other English accents, are influenced by contiguous or nearby segments: witness the labializing effect of the [w] in the word well [wʊə], and the effect of [H] on preceding vowels (see Vowels before [l] above).

Like more formal accents, TC and PLS also show many instances of coalescent assimilation or palatalization giving rise to the post-alveolar consonants [ʃ, ʒ, ʧ, ʤ], but
exploits the phenomenon far more frequently than these latter types of speech. Examples: What class (are) you in? [ˈwɒʔ ˈkɔːlɪʃənɪn], What colour’s your hair? [ˈwɒʔ ˈkʰæləʒəˈɹɛə], last year [ˈlɑːstˈʃiə], mind your head [ˈmɑɪdʒəˈɹɛd̥].

Complete assimilations leading to elision are also particularly common. Note, first of all, the reduction of not to n(’t) when followed by a vowel: don’t I [ˈd̥ʌʊnɪ] ~ [ˈd̥ənɪ], wouldn’t it [ˈwʊdnɪt], aren’t I/ haven’t I [ˈənɑɪ], ain’t it [ˈʌɪnɪʔ] or the somewhat less stigmatized variant isn’t it [ˈɪznɪʔ] ~ innit [ˈɪnɪʔ]. The same phonological process is realized in other cases of [nt] + vowel, too: He went away [iː ˈwɛn əˈwʌɪ], do you want it? [d̥ʒ̊ə ˈwɒn ɪʔ]. As in the case of isn’t it, the [z] of was is also usually dropped in broad Cockney in the question tag wasn’t I [ˈwɒnɑɪ] ~ [ˈwənɑɪ], which then makes it potentially homophonous with won’t I [ˈwəʊnɑɪ] ~ [ˈwənɑɪ].

The dental [ð] can be elided, as in RP, when preceded by a lateral or nasal: What’s all the noise about? [ˈwɒs əl ə ˈnɔ̝ɪz əbæʊʔ], pay for the beer and that [ˈpʰʌɪ fə ðə ˈbiəɹ ən æʔ]. But unlike RP, Cockney extends this elision to other contexts, one notable case being the expression of comparison with adjectives ending in -er, where linking [r] is used when the [ð] of than is dropped: he’s older than me [iːz ˈbɑːɹə ən ˈmiː]. Consider also Don’t shut the door, will you? [ˈd̥ʌʊ̃nʔ ʃʌʔ ə ˈdɔə ˈwɪəjə]. Alveolar plosives may be dropped before other consonants, as in Cor/Gor Blimey [ˈkʰɔə ˈblɑɪmɪi] ~ [ˈɡ̊ɔə ˈblɑɪmɪi] (< God blind me) and Old Mick [ˈʌʊ ˈmɪʔ], but note that the variant of Cor/Gor, Gawd, remains intact: Gawd love us [ˈɡ̊ɔd ˈlav əs], Gawd Christ [ˈɡ̊ɔd ˈkɹ̥ɑɪst]. The form give us ‘give me/us’ may reduce to [ˈɡɪs] and the preposition of frequently loses its consonant, as in a bottle of beer [ə ˈbɒʔɪ ə ˈbɪə] and of course [ə ˈkʰɔəs], this forming the basis of many humoristic truncated expressions like a taster [ə ˈtʰʌɪstə] ‘a taste of it’ and a cuppa [ə ˈkʰaʔb̥ə] ‘a cup of tea’. Many other types of consonant elision, as in months [mænθs] > [mans] and empty [ˈemptɪi] > [ˈemptri], are common to RP, too.

Although TC and PLS prefer to maintain contiguous vowels uncompressed or to use glide insertion as a solution to avoid hiatus (see Vowels in hiatus above), there are also cases of the compression of unstressed syllables not involved in vowel hiatus: I suppose so [ˈspɒsə əʊ], for instance [fɪ ˈɪnstɪŋkts], perhaps [pəz ər], because [kʰəz̥] ~ [kʰəʔ]. Note also the drastic reduction in fast speech of the adverbs actually [ˈæktʃuəlɪ] > [ˈækʃlɪi] and usually [ˈjuːʒlɪi] > [ˈjuːʒlɪi], which do contain vowels in hiatus.
One particularly interesting case of compression involves the deletion of schwa, usually representing the indefinite article. Wells (1982: 321) draws attention to this as a neglected phenomenon and observes that it may occur when schwa is preceded by a glottalled [t], as in better have another one ['bɛʔ æv ə'naːvə wan] (my transcription) and about a week ['bæːʔ 'wɪk]. From my own personal experience, I have the example You got a(n) invite, like? ['jʊʉ ɡɒʔ ˈɪnvɑɪʔ lɑɪʔ] ‘Have you got an invitation?’, in which the indefinite article is preceded by a glottalled [t] and followed by a vowel, but examples like half a(n) hour [ɑːʔ æː], Give us (an) ‘and’ [ˈɡɪs ˈænd] and after (a) hard day’s work [ˈɑːftəɹ ˈɑːd dʌɪz ˈwɜːk] show that the preceding segment in the environment of a deleted indefinite article need not be a glottalled [t]. In fact, what these examples show is that there is a tendency in TC and PLS to use the indefinite article a, and not an, even before vowels, and that it may be deleted. There is also a tendency to use the definite article [ðə] rather than [ði] in this context. Sue Fox in her unpublished PhD dissertation suggests that the attrition of the allomorphy of both articles is a diffusing innovation from within the ethnic minority community (Britain 2007: 104). However, just how recent the phenomenon is remains a moot point. Dickens seems to have been aware of it, as there is at least one instance in the speech of Mr. Bumble: ‘...the law is a ass—a idiot.’ (Oliver Twist, chapter 51)

Older speakers, it might be added, may be more familiar with cases of intrusive [r] with the indefinite article (see below): ar ‘orse [ə ˈɔːs] ‘a horse’, ar ‘ouse [ə ˈæs] ‘a house’.

Apart from the numerous cases of linking [a] which are the norm in other accents of English (far away ['fɑːɹ əˈwʌɪ], etc.), and cases of intrusive [l] like the ones just mentioned, TC and PLS also uses many other instances of intrusive [l]. Typical examples, also found in accents close to RP, are I saw it [a ˈsəːə tʔ], drawing [ˈdɹəʊɪŋ] and data input [ˈdəɪʔəɹ ɪnpʊʔ].

Other phenomena that bear some relationship to connected speech, such as [l]-vocalization, [t]-tapping, glottalization and use of an alveolar nasal instead of a velar nasal in the verbal suffix -ing, have been dealt with in other sections of this paper.
5. Prosody

5.1 Lexical stress

The word stress patterns of TC and PLS largely follow those of RP. As in RP, there is a quantity-sensitive system, so that stress is assigned to heavy syllables, i.e. those with a long vowel or diphthong as the nucleus, as in agree \( [\text{əˈɡɹɪi}] \) and reply \([\text{ˈpɹ̥ɪ̃r̥iˈpl̥ɑɪ}]\). Stress placement is computed from the end of words, with certain nuclei in final position, such as [ii] (RP [ii]) in sunny \([\text{ˈsanɪi}]\), [ʌʊ] \(\sim [\text{ə}]\) (RP [əʊ]) in yellow \([\text{ˈjɛlə}]\), and [ʊ] (RP [ʊ]) in menu \([\text{ˈmɛnjʊ}]\), being regarded as extrametrical and therefore irrelevant to computation. As in RP, too, stress tends to fall within a three-syllable window, i.e. either on the last, penultimate or antepenultimate syllable, with a clear preference for non-final stress.

5.2 Rhythm

Cockney rhythm is governed by the same factors as in RP (see the notes on stress placement in the previous section) with a similar strong tendency towards trochaic patterning, i.e. regular alternation of feet consisting of a strong syllable followed by a weak one: \( \text{Gó and gét yoursélf an (h)áircut} \). The patterning can be shown to be trochaic, rather than iambic or otherwise, as feet are no-go areas for expletive insertion, which means that “expletive infixation cannot interrupt a foot” (Hammond 1999: 163). Simplifying a little, we can say then that expletives can only be inserted before a foot, which, if English feet are trochaic, as is claimed, implies before stress. Thus, the expletive fucking could only be introduced into the above utterance at the points marked by an asterisk: \( \ast \text{Gó and } \ast \text{gét your*śeľf a(n) } \ast (h)áircut. \)

Vowel reduction in unstressed syllables is legion in English, and Cockney contains examples that are unusual in RP. An extreme case in point is that of the loss of the indefinite article referred to under Connected speech phenomena. Others include reduction of go \([\text{ɡəʊ}] \) to [gə] and [ɡəʊz] to [ɡəz] through diminution of stress, as in I saw a postman go by \([\text{a ˈsɔəɹ ə ˈpʰʌʊsməŋ ɡə bɑɪ}]\) and Can you do gazinta (= goes into) sums? \([\text{ˈkʰæn jə ˈdʊʉ ɡəˈzɪ̃nə samz̥},\] reduction of
the place-name suffix -gate [ɡæt] to [ɡiːt] (Margate, Aldgate, Ramsgate), and the rather old-fashioned loss of the full vowel in suffixed -house (workhouse ['wɜːkhaus], washhouse ['wɒʃhaus]). Additionally, no and nor may be pronounced with schwa in rapid speech in expressions like not no more ['nɒʔ nə 'mɔə] and not for love nor money ['nɒʔ fo 'lʌv nə 'mænii]. The form [ja] for you is not usual in thank you ['fæŋkju], but is often heard outside this context, while the second syllable of cowson ['kæʊsən] 'bastard' usually keeps its full vowel.

5.3 Intonation

An account of intonation in an overview of this kind must needs be brief. On the whole, it can be said that TC and PLS follows the intonation patterns of RP, and we can make the following generalizations (based on the O’Connor & Arnold 1973 framework) about the examples given below:

(i) Completed information, such as often occurs at or near the end of utterances, ends on a fall (e.g. utterance 1).
(ii) Incomplete information, as expressed in non-final phrases or clauses, is normally said on a rise or, more often than not, on a fall-rise (e.g. the IF-clause in 1). The alternative question (7) is said with a rise in the first part (which could have been on look, but here it is on Had) and a fall in the second, thus giving a see-saw effect.
(iii) Final adverbials after the nucleus usually end on a rise, thus often constituting the final part of a fall-rise (2). Initial adverbials that are highlighted are usually said on a fall-rise (1).
(iv) Utterance 10 illustrates a more tentative kind of statement and therefore ends on a fall-rise, which shows that there is something in the speaker’s attitude that has not been fully expressed (see also ix below).
(v) WH-questions are usually said on a fall (3).
(vi) YES/NO questions are usually said on a rise (10).
(vii) Utterance 6 presents a more threatening kind of YES/NO question, which is said on a fall-rise (cf. ix).
(viii) Question tags expecting agreement or confirmation end on a fall (4); question tags which are genuine questions or more doubtful end on a rise (5).

(ix) Unmarked imperatives end on a fall, but the one in (8) is more like a veiled threat and is spread over a fall-rise (cf. vii). Exclamations usually end on a fall, too, but exclamations mixed with surprise or exasperation may end on a fall-rise (9). This utterance is in keeping with the idea that the fall-rise often suggests that there is something in the speaker’s mind that has not been explicitly stated in the words s/he has used (see also iv above).

(x) Greetings incorporating the addressee are said on a fall-rise, the person addressed constituting the rise (10).

The utterances that illustrate the intonation of TC and PLS were performed as follows:

Sentences 1, 2, 3: SW (male, 55, from Deptford)
Sentences 4, 5, 8, 9: TC (male, 67, from Paddington)
Sentences 6, 7, 10: TS (male, 63, from Barnes)

(1) \(\downarrow\uparrow\) Years ago, if you were cheeky to the \(\downarrow\) teacher, you’d cop a back \(\downarrow\) hander.
(2) We’re going up my \(\downarrow\) nan’s on \(\uparrow\) Sunday.
(3) Where’s that \(\downarrow\) money gone to?
(4) Makes you \(\downarrow\uparrow\) wonder, \(\downarrow\) don’t it?
(5) He’s \(\downarrow\) mental, \(\uparrow\) isn’t he?
(6) Want \(\downarrow\uparrow\) bother? (Eye-dialect spelling: bovver) (‘Are you looking for trouble?’)
(7) \(\uparrow\) Had a good look or do you want a \(\downarrow\) photo?
(8) \(\downarrow\) Don’t \(\uparrow\) come it! (‘Don’t try those tactics with me!’)
(9) Gor \(\downarrow\uparrow\) blimey! He’s only gone and spilt the tea all \(\downarrow\) over the fucking \(\uparrow\) place.
(10) \(\downarrow\) What ho, \(\uparrow\) John! Got a new \(\uparrow\) motor?
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