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« Boundaries between RP and Estuary English: linguistic attitudes from native speakers towards their own accents »

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ABSTRACT

The following research will walk us through the history of British English language. The initial objective was to find out how the perception of the native British English speakers is changing towards their own accents nowadays. We will focus on the Received Pronunciation accent, which has been the model of the Standard British form. Later we will compare it to a brand-new accent called Estuary English, term coined by Rosewarne in 1984. After that the theories of some of the most important linguists that have theorised on this topic will be exposed in order to have a look at the on-going debate on whether Estuary English accent should be considered as such or not. The main hypothesis was the suspicion that this so-called Estuary accent is currently gaining acceptability in Britain. On the basis of a phonetic point of view, so that the previous hypothesis is proved, two anonymous recordings of two different native speakers (one is an RP speaker and the other one is an EE) together with a questionnaire for each recording about linguistic attitudes to a total of 12 informants. These subjects are between the ages of 19 to 25 years old, all native British teenagers born and raised in the South-east part of England, especially London (the place where phoneticians localise EE accent). Our previous study was made considering the results of the questionnaire (see Appendix 2), bearing in mind the following hypothesis to be tested (besides the main one): in the first place, the subjects’ familiarity with accents will affect their acceptance of different varieties of English; second, young generations of native British English can find EE as good of a model for EFL teaching as RP; third, natives will agree on the fact that there exist moral associations with accents; and fourth, the subjects might find it hard to specifically localise the Estuary speaker.

KEYWORDS: British English, Received Pronunciation, RP, Estuary English, EE, England, South-east, London, native, Rosewarne, Wells, accents, linguistic attitudes

RESUMEN

En esta investigación haremos un recorrido a lo largo de la historia de la lengua inglesa británica. El objetivo inicial era averiguar los cambios que se están produciendo en la percepción de nativos ingleses sobre sus propios acentos hoy en día. Nos centraremos en el acento denominado “Received Pronunciation”, el que ha sido el modelo para la forma estándar de inglés británico. Más tarde lo compararemos con un nuevo acento llamado “Estuary English” o inglés del estuario, término adoptado por Rosewarne en 1984. Después de esto se expondrán las teorías de algunos de los lingüistas más famosos que han teorizado sobre este tema para centrarnos en el debate actual sobre el estado del EE.
La principal hipótesis era la sospecha de que el llamado acento estuario goza de una aceptación cada vez mayor en nuestros días. En la base de un punto de vista fonético y para así confirmar la hipótesis de partida, enviamos dos grabaciones anónimas de dos hablantes nativos diferentes (uno con un acento RP y el otro EE) junto con un cuestionario sobre actitudes lingüísticas para cada grabación a un total de 12 informantes. Estos sujetos comprenden un rango de edad de los 19 a los 25 años, y todos son jóvenes británicos nacidos y criados en la parte Suroeste de Inglaterra, especialmente Londres (el lugar donde los expertos fonetistas localizan el acento EE). Nuestro estudio previo se realizó considerando los resultados del cuestionario (véase Apéndice 2) y teniendo en cuenta las siguientes hipótesis a probar (además de la principal): en primer lugar, la familiaridad de los sujetos con los acentos afectará en su aceptación de las diferentes variedades del inglés; segundo, a las generaciones jóvenes de ingleses británicos nativos les puede parecer el inglés estuario un modelo tan correcto como el RP para la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL en inglés); tercero, los nativos estarán de acuerdo en el hecho de que existen asociaciones morales con los acentos; y cuarto, los sujetos quizá encuentran dificultad a la hora de localizar específicamente al hablante estuario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Inglés británico, Received Pronunciation, RP, Inglés del estuario, EE, Inglaterra, Suroeste, Londres, nativo, Rosewarne, Wells, acentos, actitudes lingüísticas
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives and personal interests

At present, English is the main means of communication between native as well as non-native speakers. According to Chiba et al. (1995), among the 750 million users of English around the world, 350 million are native speakers of English. In the European area of the world, standard British English or RP seems to have been the decisive model for everyone’s English. The initial objective of this project was to find out how the perception of the new generation of native British English speakers is towards RP and Estuary English nowadays. Our main hypothesis was the suspicion that EE is currently gaining acceptability in Britain; actually, Rosewarne (1984) states that it might get to substitute RP someday. Nevertheless, the panorama of linguistic opinions about this issue has raised a debate with conflicting views, which could be summarized in those who support Rosewarne and those who agree with Wells in the fact that EE is more of an evolution of contemporary RP rather than an accent itself (1997). The following study will give the reader an insight into this dispute. The hypothesis to be tested are (besides the main one):

A) The subjects’ familiarity with accents will affect their acceptance of different varieties of English.

B) Young generations of native British English nowadays will tend more to find EE as good of a model for EFL teaching as RP.

C) Natives will agree on the fact that there exist moral associations with accents.

D) The subjects might find it hard to specifically localise the Estuary speaker.

To achieve these goals we created two surveys on linguistic attitudes that were sent to a number of twelve anonymous British native speakers between the ages of 19 and 25, together with two recordings, one of an anonymous RP speaker and the other one of an EE speaker.

Regarding my personal interests on this project, they stem from my experiences while in England, making deep connections with people mostly born and raised in London. I started noticing their different accents, accents that I could not classify as standard RP nor the popular cockney. This was the point in which I began researching about accents in the South-East part of England and discovered this brand-new Estuary English that Rosewarne first coined in 1984.
1.2 Structure and Methodology

Following the structure of this Project, the first section is a walk along the history of the formation of British English more or less from a phonetic point of view. After this Standard British English content is exposed. It is at this point when Received Pronunciation is first introduced, when the reader will find a deeper insight into what it means. Some “acceptable” changes in phonetics can also be found in this part, mainly conducted by J. C. Wells’ *Accents of English* (1982a, 1982b).

The first approach to what the so-called Estuary English is can be found after the explanation of the RP accent, together with a comparison between EE and RP from a phonetic point of view. The fourth section is where the heart of this work lays: it gives some notions on what the main arguments are about the on-going debate of Estuary English as a controversial issue.

Based on this last part, the next section follows. It explains the practical experiment that has been done to affirm the previous hypothesis. The methodology we followed for this was the following: twelve native British informants were asked to listen to two one-minute recordings, each one with a different speaker of an RP and an EE accent, and to fill in two questionnaires, one for each different recording, with no previous information about the recording nor the objective of the research whatsoever so that they had no pre-judgements at all. The questions were centred on the informants’ perception of the accents of these two speakers. They responded anonymously, so that they felt more freedom to give their answers as they thought.

The surveys have three sections: the first one is composed of seven questions to give an answer quantifying from one to five, depending on the degree (from ‘low’ to ‘high’) of the adjective that the informants think of when they listen to the accents (correct, intelligent, polite) as well as the level of education and the social class of the speaker (see Appendix 2); the next section consists of three questions to give a short/long answer; and finally the last section is about personal details such as their age and the place where they were born and raised, so that we get to have some notions of their personal background for the specialization on the study.

Finally, the conclusions are stated in the last part. Furthermore the appendices to this project include additional information about the phonetic chart, the survey and the results in the
form of graphics directly taken from the original computer programme used to obtain the results and therefore, the final conclusions of our study.

2. THE HISTORY OF BRITISH ENGLISH

English is the most spoken language in the world nowadays, according to *Ethnologue* (2019)¹. It involves 379.0 million of native speakers and 753.3 million of speakers who have acquired it as a second language. This develops in a total of 1.132 billion of English speakers in 2019. A total of 67 countries use English as their official language and it is certainly seen as the form of the speech that wears the gauntlet for the most potential (Eton Institute, 2019).

In order to understand how English has arrived to the current point in today’s world, we should first focus on its history. The following storyline aims to provide some of the main events that brought about the English that we speak nowadays (in Great Britain only). This will create the framework for the issue that will be discussed further as we progress with the explanation of its history.

First vital fact to keep in mind: the history of English language can be translated into a story of contact between speakers of different languages². It is generally known that the place where English originated from was not the native British land; on the contrary, it is estimated that it initially came from a place around the north of Germany (Crystal, 2006: 103). Linguists have been able to reconstruct the proto Germanic Language from where three main dialects derived from: North Germanic, East Germanic and West Germanic. It was from the West Germanic dialect where languages like English, Dutch, German, and a supposed Anglo Frisian³ or Frisian⁴ were formed. This early period of the language is currently called Old English (500-1100).

The appearance of a spoken language that could be related to Modern English occurred when the Anglo-Saxons coming from the North Sea invaded Britain, occupied by the Romans

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¹ *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (stylized as *Ethnolo*ğue) is an annual reference publication both in print and online that provides statistics and other information on the living languages of the world. First issued in 1951, it is now published annually by SIL International, whose main purpose is to study, develop and document languages to promote literacy and for religious purposes.


³ See introduction to G. Knowles’ *A Cultural History of the English language*.

⁴ It depends on the author that they name it either Anglo-Frisian (Knowles, 1997) (if they believe there is a possibility English could have derived from here) or just Frisian (Owen, 2019).
and Celts who spoke a form of Latin and Celtic language⁵ (Owen, 2014) around the fifth century (450 AD). However, Knowles (1997) states it was not until the sixth century that these invaders, who became newcomers, settled permanently.

Both Knowles and Leith base their theories in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*⁶ written by the Venerable Bede in AD 731; it was translated into Old English in the ninth century. Following his work scholars distinguished three tribes by the late eighth century: Angles, Saxons and Jutes; both Crystal and Bede agree that the “main dialect divisions⁷ reflect the settlements of the invading tribes, with their different linguistic backgrounds” (Graddol et al., 1996: 97), belonging the territories of Mercia and Northumbria to the Angles, Kent to the Jutes and Wessex (together with East Anglia, Essex and Sussex) to the Saxons⁸. These three tribes were the ones that conquered all of England and changed the language of this land from Celtic to English⁹, the language that spread to become the one used by the mass population.

In the ninth century Alfred the Great, King of Wessex (871 - 886) and King of the Anglo-Saxons (886 - 899), is a significant figure to highlight in this matter. At the time of his reign, only the South-West of England was Anglo-Saxon. According to Leith (1996), this king asked for the translation of Latin texts into the West Saxon dialect of Old English most probably to normalise it and establish it as the standard way of speaking amongst the people. According to Graddol et al., “the desire to find evidence of standardization has tempted scholars to seek it in the West Saxon dialect of Old English” (1996: 102) in the search for a ‘progressive story’ that originates from humble origins.

After all these invasions, it is apparent that the Old English pronunciation at the time came from the Anglo-Saxons and was influenced by the Danish and the French. This is why “contact must be taken into account when we consider the origin of the English language” (Knowles,

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⁵ According to J. Owen (2014) Latin and Celtic should not be considered ancestors of English as they had very little influence in Old English; but not all authors think the same (see G. Knowles (1997)).
⁶ Originally written in Latin and named *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.
⁷ It is important to emphasize the fact that all evidence of Old English dialects come from written texts, so it is impossible to know how well reflected spoken languages were when written (Graddol et al., 2006: 102).
⁸ However, the same author declares: “Exactly what happened during this period which led to the regional differences in OE is thus obscure. But we do know that in more recent times there have been perhaps similar linguistic consequences of migration, settlement and the building of new communities.” (Graddol et al., 2006: 101)
⁹ G. Knowles declares that even though scholars referred to them as Anglo-Saxons, their language has always been called ‘English’ (Knowles, 1997: 5).
Furthermore, based on the varied evidence Leith (Graddol et al., 1996) arrived to the following assumptions: Old English spelling is a closer representation of pronunciation than is the case with Modern English. ‘Silent letters’ were unlikely, because the change of sound was then reflected by a change in spelling. On the other hand, spellings had the sound-values that were associated with spoken Latin, as the Latin alphabet was assimilated into their dialect/speech. However, there is an evident issue whereby the sounds of their consonants and vowels, apart from having unfamiliar sounds and spellings, could also differ from one dialect to another, just as it is apparent in British English nowadays

Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings settled in the English island until the Norman Conquest took place in 1066, the time when the language of government became Old French. Old English became the language spoken by the mass population of peasants, the lower orders, since no one from the higher ranks were writing it anymore. However, changes were reflected into the language and scholars state that Old English came to its end by the eleventh century. This is the reason why the Norman Conquest is regarded as “decisive, not only for the history of England (and consequently Britain) but for the English language as well” (Leith, 1996: 120).

It was not until the fourteenth century that the language of government was replaced by a brand-new form of English influenced by French and Latin and known as Middle English (Knowles, 1997; Owen, 2014). It turned into a Latinate form due to the change of power from the Church to the State in medieval times, as Latin had been the language used by intellectuals for centuries. J. Owen (2014) declares that there is a quite radical and sudden change from Old English to Middle English that can be seen in the texts from one generation to another. This author forms a theory about this rapid evolution stating that it may have formerly began when spoken language was changing but the written form remained in a standard Old English. As the

10 “In southern English pronunciation water, for instance, rhymes with ‘caught a’, whereas in some northern dialects it rhymes with ‘matter’. The sound /w/, which is made by rounding the lips, has in the south influenced the pronunciation of the following vowel, which also is rounded, whereas in the north what was probably the original pronunciation, the short a has been retained.” (Graddol et al., 1996: 114)

11 Old French can also be found as Medieval Latin.

12 According to Knowles, it is very difficult to know until what extent Latin influenced the way English was written, as “the writers of the first English texts were primarily literate in Latin, and they transferred their literacy practices from Latin to English” (Knowles, 1997: 14). Furthermore, by this time there was an intolerant yet dominant view that there was something inherently wrong with the language practices of the unprivileged (Knowles, 1997: 15).
Normans invaded Britain, people stopped writing English while the spoken language kept evolving until the standard Old English disappeared. When English made its comeback a couple of centuries later, people wrote in the same manner that they spoke as there was no standard form anymore; this would explain the numerous dialectical variation in Middle English.

G. Knowles explains that due to evidence, the loss of the [r] sound after a vowel (probably one of the most remarkable characteristics of British English) is traced back to the fourteenth century. According to Knowles, this pattern has occurred for a long time in history whereby the capital imitates the fashions of the court and similarly, the provincial towns imitate those from the capital as “innovations spread along lines of prestige” (1997: 12).

The Middle English era (1100-1500) appears to be unclear since Knowles states there is a “missing link in English evolution” from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. However, Lotspeich (1930) implies that the language is constantly progressing towards a higher goal even if there is not much written during this era.

This goal Lotspeich (1930) was implying is clearly translated in the creation of a standard form of English as Knowles (1997) and Leith (1996) both agree, which led to the emergence of the Early Modern English with the introduction of the printing machine in England by W. Caxton. He was the first English printer who also published in the English language, attracting many necessary labourers from different parts of the region, which led to a more rapid standardisation of the language. This is why W. Caxton is considered to have played a crucial role in the standardisation process (Leith, 1996: 139). It led to an upheaval in the sixteenth century, which is linked to the Renaissance and the Reformation, as scholars began to write in English and no longer in Latin. It was clear that within only fifty years the press generated an entire new international form of power (Knowles, 1997: 6). The transition from a medieval to a modern society is described as both “complex and traumatic” by Leith (1996) due to the inequalities in the privileges between the intellectuals and the peasants. This is why there was an obsession with only one variety of English that was related to social status: the royal court speech (Stallybrass and White, 1986, cited in Leith, 1996: 151).

The introduction of the printing machine set the basis for the later modern worldwide Standard English; by the time it meant the appearance of a new form of English that “could
serve as a ‘national’ language of first England then Britain” (Leith, 1996: 136). Regarding this matter, Knowles declares:

We can think of Standard English in this way. Modern English was standardized from the fourteenth century on by people who had the power to impose their own kind of English, and the process was completed by a wide range of people including schoolmasters, Anglicas, scholars, pedants and gentlemen. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the process by which it came about, the practical result is that, for the first time in history, millions of people literally all over the world have an effective means of communicating with each other. (Knowles, 1997: 18)

The so-called Golden Age of English took place by this time, a period marked by three main events: the translation of the Bible from Latin to English; Queen Elizabeth’s reign, one of England’s most successful monarchs (BBC history, 2011); and the author who is credited to have lifted English literature and helped it to flourish, Shakespeare (1564-1616).

Regarding the English language, it was after 1660 that the argument arose about which individuals of the society were in power of the “correct forms of language” (Knowles, 1997: 15). There was an interest by this time to develop a more standard form of English so it could be taught in schools as educators were concerned about the difference between writing and pronunciation. The increasing of awareness came to be conceived in a ‘recommended pronunciation’, and orthoepy was the term used to convey this concern (Leith, 1996: 151)\textsuperscript{13}. The pronunciation of Southern accents was already clearly more prestigious than others by this time. However, when attempting to agree about the descriptions of the vowels in this century, the decision makers faced much disparity with regards to the subject. Leith suggests that this could mean either that some accounts were wrong, or the existence of considerable diversity in pronunciation.

The eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries are marked by the Industrial Revolution, an event that deeply affected spoken language, according to this last same author. This revolution sets the time period for the development from Early Modern English to Late Modern English as people had to relocate from rural areas to work in the industrial towns.

It was in the debates in the coffee houses in London during the eighteenth century that the word ‘standard’ was applied to issues that were related to language (Leith, 1996: 157). Following Knowles’ (1997) and Leith’s (1996) storyline, some of the main events of the

\textsuperscript{13} John Hart was a famous orthoepist of this century.
eighteenth century are the following: 1712 was the year that Jonathan Swift proposed to set up an Academy to fix the language (which was not developed in the end); several grammars of the English language were published; there happened to be an increasing interest in ‘fixing’ a standard form of English pronunciation, which led to the study and publication of pronouncing dictionaries, like John Walker’s *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* in 1791 for instance. He focused his attention on the Londoner’s pronunciation as the style of elocution that people from distant provinces aspired to have. In spite of this, he accused the cockney accent of being the lower class accent and described it as ‘offensive’ and ‘disgusting’ in a rather condescending and patronising tone. However, one of the most important pronouncing dictionaries according to Knowles was Daniel Jones’ *Received Pronunciation*, which was the first one to describe standard pronunciation in detail. This one was adopted by the BBC in 1920s.

The term ‘standard English’ was not properly used until the following century with the appearance of middle class. State education became compulsory around 1870 and its aim was the teaching of ‘Standard English’. The large number of national institutions and societies helped to implement a standard, national language. Leith describes this process of standardization as the transition of English from a vernacular language into a standardized variety that can be identified with England as a nation. Even though there was this strong feeling of nationalism, an opposing force appeared “towards regional rather than national pride and celebration of dialect rather than standard speech” (Leith, 1996: 161). According to this author, although dialects were considered to be rural in this century, it was this opposing movement that influenced the famous poet Wordsworth, the pioneer of dialectical literature, to write the preface to his *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) in the language of ordinary people.

In the twentieth century broadcasting together with mass communication led to the massive spread of RP; however it is alleged that in the 1990s there happened to be some kind of decay with respect to earlier in the century, “as though language decline had somehow followed the decline of the British Empire” (Knowles, 1997: 8). This ‘decay’, together with the

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14 “A standard language is one that provides agreed norms of usage, usually codified in dictionaries and grammars, for a wide range of institutional purposes such as education, government and science. Sociolinguistics tend to use the term ‘Standard English’ to denote the primarily written, especially printed, usage of educated people.” (Leith, 1996: 138)
change of power to the US since the twentieth century, might have consequences in the near future, as Knowles already thought back in 1997.

Who do people blame for this decay of “proper standard English”, which is to say RP? These complaints present evidence that the barbarians that damaged Old English are now represented by the working class population in England who damage Modern Standard English. This concept is underlined if we look back to the Golden Age and the problem of mass education (Knowles, 1997: 8).

G. Knowles stated that the pattern of the younger generation of his time was changing due to the mass media which made them identify as a group. He declares that the long-term effects were not possible to predict but a new style of speech had already emerged called Estuary English that was “neither localized nor based on school norms” (Knowles, 1997: 5). The same author states that “language evolution creates non-standard dialects” and this Estuary English is the perfect example. This is the style of speech we will focus on later.

This affirmation was written in 1997 and we can now confirm his hypothesis because the language we use and the way we communicate are imperative influences in adjusting the way our social lives develop on a daily basis.

Knowles (1997: 8) interprets “change as a progress to a goal” and he makes the metaphor of language evolution as the natural evolution of the human being from the Homo sapiens. In the same way, language evolution can be interpreted as the progress towards Standard English; on the other hand language evolution also creates dialects that are non-standard. This is where Estuary English can be found. We will phonetically develop this kind of Standard English known as Received Pronunciation, RP, and the dialect called Estuary English, EE, in the following chapters.

3. STANDARD BRITISH ENGLISH PHONETIC CONTENT

Especially during the last century, it has been established that Modern Standard British English has a pronunciation model called Received Pronunciation (for short, RP). It is also sometimes called ‘BBC English’, ‘The Queen’s English’ or even ‘Oxford English’ in a misleading way according to L. Bauer (1994). This RP is what speakers refer to when they say
someone has not got an accent (Wells, 1982a: 117). Everyone in Britain has a mental image of this accent, even if they do not call it RP and even if the image might not be a hundred percent accurate (Wells, 1982b: 280).

According to G. Knowles this type of English does not derive from any of the dialects of Old English, but from those dialects that take place in the East Midlands, together with a “rich admixture” of Northern English, Western and Kentish forms, shaped within a mainly Latin and French dominated literacy culture (Knowles, 1997: 12).

Nowadays, although there has not been a calculated investigation about the variability of RP accent, Wells distinguished between mainstream RP, U-RP, adoptive RP, Near-RP, conservative RP, general RP and advanced RP. Thus we will focus on the general RP in this study. In this section, we will also display some of the main recent acceptable changes in the Standard British English form from a phonetic point of view.

To avoid any possible misunderstandings, it is important to differentiate between two terms that will be frequently used in this essay: dialect and accent. Dialect is a language variety that is separated from other varieties due to differences in grammar and vocabulary mainly; nevertheless, the concept of an accent is only concerned with variations in pronunciation (Hughes et al., 2013: 3). What we called before Standard British English is therefore just a dialect of English language, not only standard but also non-standard ones. RP is this dialect’s accent.

The term ‘Received Pronunciation’ is understood in the context of the nineteenth century, when ‘received’ was accepted in the most elite circles of society, as Hughes states. Today, speakers of RP are still found at the top of the social scale, whereas the lower rankers are associated with the speakers of the most obvious, the ‘broadest’, regional accents (Hughes et al., 2006: 10). The occupations most usually associated with an RP accent are barrister, stockbroker and diplomat (Wells, 1982: 117).

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16 It is called British English Standard as there is also General American Standard which is studied in detail by J. C. Wells. See the following for further information: J. C. Wells’ Accents of English. An Introduction (1996), chapter ‘2.1 The reference accents’, subsection ‘2.1.4 The two vowel systems compared’ (122-124).
The term ‘Received Pronunciation’ was first introduced in 1926 by Daniel Jones in the third edition of his *English Pronunciation Dictionary*, as a preference to the previous term ‘Public School Pronunciation’ (Levey and Harris, 2002: 17). It has somehow survived until today.

Following Wells’ text, after later decades, the term ‘received’ was understood as ‘generally accepted’. Nonetheless, this term has been changed recently by some linguists to ‘Standard Southern British English’ (SSBE) as the label RP is seen as ‘old-fashioned’ and negative. This consequence the change of the social status it used to be connected to.

Unlike prestigious accents in other countries, RP does not belong to any region in particular; in fact, it seems impossible to know where an RP speaker is from. This was not the case at the beginning as the original speech had its roots in London and the surrounding area. Nowadays it is geographically related to England, but with no territory in particular and for a long time socially classified to the accent of the upper class and the upper-middle class.

According to what Well’s text suggests from the data he collected in 1982, no more than about ten percent of the population in England could be considered RP speakers. There are more recent studies like that of Trudgill in 2002, where the author concluded that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, only three or five percent of the population of England spoke in an RP accent. Bauer states that regardless of this, it is ‘the best-described accent of British English’ (Bauer, 1994: 93). This leads to the definite conclusion that it is clearly a minority accent. After this realisation, Wells states the following thoughts:

> With the loosening of social stratification and the recent trend for people of working-class or lower-middle-class origins to set the fashion in many areas of life, it may be that RP is on the way out. By the end of the century everyone growing up in Britain may have some degree of local accent. Or, instead, some new non-localizable but more democratic standard may have arisen from the ashes of RP: if so, it seems likely to be based on popular London English. (Wells, 1982: 118)

Nowadays Hughes utters that even though RP is still highly valued as it is linked to being ‘well-spoken’ and is a sign of intelligence, it is no longer primordial for certain occupations. Later in the discussion, we will refer back again to the popular London English Wells was thinking about in 1982. Before this, we will set the main phonetic aspects of RP. As
a reference it is important to keep in mind the International Phonetic Association\textsuperscript{17} chart Kiel font (see Appendix 1). It is the newest and the recommended version from 2015.

The main focus will be in vowels instead of consonants, as following Wells theory he states that a suitable typology for accents of English must be based upon vowel rather than consonant characteristics. In the next section we will compare RP to a very singular accent of English, Estuary English. This is why vowels will have the main role.

J. C. Wells describes RP as having its proper vowel system and he sets it out in figure (1).

![Figure 1. The vowel system of RP. From: Wells 1982.](image)

This linguist decided not to count /ɔ/ as this vowel is restricted to weak and unstressed syllables. Leaving this vowel to one side, there is a total of nineteen vowels in the system. To show how the use of a vowel occurs in particular words in RP, lexical items have been listed in a set of keywords that can be seen accordingly in figure (2).

![Figure 2. RP vowels in lexical items. From: Wells 1982.](image)

\textsuperscript{17} The aim of the IPA is to promote the scientific study of phonetics and the various practical applications of that science. In furtherance of this aim, the IPA provides the academic community world-wide with a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages - the International Phonetic Alphabet (also IPA). The latest version of the IPA Alphabet was published in 2015, and IPA charts are re-issued annually. (International Phonetic Association, 2019)
Regarding the consonants, RP consonants are divided into seven different parts based on their manner of articulation. A. Hughes, P. Trudgill and D. Watt’s classification (2016) will be followed in this case.

The first group is ‘plosives’, which includes a closure in some point of the vocal tract, before the air compresses behind the obstruction to finally release that air as if it was an explosion. RP plosives are divided into voiceless and voiced phonemes. The voiceless which are often marked by aspiration are the following: /p/, /t/ and /k/. On the other hand the voiced ones are /b/, /d/ and /g/. Both sets of voiced and voiceless phonemes are classified as bilabial, alveolar and velar in the same order as announced and depending on their point of articulation.

‘Fricatives’ are those that involve the cause of a friction due to a narrow gap in between the articulators of the mouth. This leads to a passing through of the air in a turbulent manner. There is a total of nine fricative RP phonemes, which are divided into voiceless and voiced sounds just like the last group. The voiceless ones are /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/ and /h/, classified as labio-dental, dental, alveolar, palato-alveolar and glottal, the same order. This last glottal sound /h/ only takes place in syllable-initial positions, immediately followed by a vowel, except for when it occurs in unstressed pronouns (he, him, her, his) and auxiliary verbs (has, have, had) (Hughes et al., 2016: 45). On the other hand, the voiced phonemes would be labio-dental /v/, dental /ð/, alveolar /z/ and palato-alveolar /ʒ/. Regarding this last phoneme, there seemed to be a tendency between speakers to pronounce /dʒ/ instead of /ʒ/ as it was considered to be more ‘correct’ by many RP speakers, according to Wells (1982); however BBC commentators during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games pronounced the name of the host city with a [ʒ] instead of [dʒ] (Hughes et al., 2016: 44).

‘Nasal’ phonemes occur when a closure is involved somewhere within the mouth forward of the uvular place of articulation, but the velum is lowered too so that some air can escape via the nasal cavity through the nostrils (Hughes et al., 2016: 46). The three RP nasal phonemes are the bilabial /m/, alveolar /n/, and the velar /ŋ/. Normally, they are all voiced but Hughes states that there might be partial devoicing when they follow a voiceless consonant.

The only lateral phoneme in RP is /l/. According to Hughes this sound involves the continuous escape of air from one or both sides of the obstruction formed by the tongue in the midline of the oral cavity. This phoneme is usually voiced. Moreover it has three allophones:
clear [l], dark [l] and voiceless [l]. These authors state that there is an influence of popular London speech in the vocalisation of /l/ in RP, as in /ˈteɪbə/ instead of /ˈteɪbol/.

The post-alveolar approximant corresponds to /ɹ/ in RP English. It only occurs before a vowel. Therefore, RP is a non-rhotic accent (Hughes et al., 2016: 46). This phoneme as several allophones but the most common one is a voiced post-alveolar frictionless approximant [ɹ]. Also a so-called linking /ɹ/ appears when the word finishing in /ɹ/ is followed by a vowel in historical times. Not only intrusive /ɹ/ exists but it also does an ‘intrusive /ɹ/’ which appears when a word ends with a non-high vowel and is preceded by a word that begins with a vowel. It is in between those two that this intrusive /ɹ/ is inserted. An interesting fact these authors claim is that only in RP does this phoneme have a prestigious connotation as it is related, socially, to the upper-class. For example Brian Sewell, a speaker of RP who spoke with this post-alveolar approximant /ɹ/ was once described as ‘the poshest man in the world’ or ‘the only man I have ever met who makes the Queen sound common’ by the British Independent newspaper and by J. Humphrys (Humphrys 2005 cited in Hughes et al., 2016), respectively.

Finally we have two semi-vowel phonemes in English which are the approximants /w/ and /j/. They are classified with the consonant group as they function better that way as they usually occupy syllable margins rather than syllable nuclei which would be the placing of the vowel. Some RP speakers may omit /w/ in some words that begin /kw/ in order to avoid its anticipatory lip-rounding. Yod-coalescence is a phenomenon that occurs in words such as soldier [ˈsɔldər]. Some careful speakers may try to avoid it in their speech, although younger RP speakers may consider it as a habit of affectation (Hughes et al., 2006: 48).

3.1 Recent acceptable changes in RP

There are times when phenomena have no reason why they appear; they either just occur as they do or linguists have not arrived to a conclusion yet. “Within RP there are differences of pronunciation which cannot be explained in terms either of change over time or of speech style” (Hughes et al., 2006: 9); an example of this is the word economic, whose phonemic transcription can be either as /ˌiːkəˈnɒmɪk/ or as /ˌekəˈnɒmɪk/ (MacMillan 2019), but there is no explanation given why there exist two different forms. These authors explain this is known as ‘free
variation’. However, we will focus this time on what changes have been labelled as ‘accepted’ in nowadays RP because they have had widespread effects in the Standard British English speaking world. Most of these changes are innovations that arose in popular accents and now have come to characterise RP.

According to Hughes, Trudgill and Watt (2006), the most common tendency among RP speakers (although there is no such exact correlation between age and accent and the adoption of certain features really depends on the attitude of themselves towards this new tendency) is a process known as ‘smoothing’. Wells (1982) describes this phenomenon as what happens when the possibility of a monophthongal realisation exists at the time when diphthongs and triphthongs happen to be in a prevocalic environment. Smoothing can happen in words like *tyre* which is pronounced with its triphthong as [ˈtʰaɪə]. It can evolve to a diphthong and be pronounced as [tʰə] (diphthong), until it leads to a monophthong and finally remains as [tʰə]. The same evolution can happen to words such as *tower* or *hour* (Hughes et al., 2016: 11).

Sound change has occurred in words like *matriarch*. This word used to be pronounced as /meɪtrɪək/ in RP, but has recently been pronounced as /mætrɪək/ due to a ‘phonemic sound change’. This process happens when “one phoneme or contrastive sound has replaced another” (Bauer, 1994: 94), exemplified with the sound /eɪ/ which contrasts /æ/.

Another case of innovation these authors express is the change of the phoneme [w]-like labio-dental approximant [v] as a pronunciation of /l/. These authors state that it has been rapidly spread to a considerable number of varieties of British English, especially to the range of young RP speakers. This phenomenon can be noticed in words such as *road, brown,* or *very* (Hughes et al. 2016: 6). According to these authors it is less stigmatized than the ‘smoothing’ innovation phenomenon and in these last decades it has not been regarded as defective by teachers of English anymore, whereas previously it used to be seen as a ‘foppish affectation’. Due to being free from stigma, children do not lose this phenomenon in their speech once they become adults, so it stays in their RP for their whole life times.

There happens another RP innovation in words whose final sound is /r/, and then happens preceding ‘pre-R breaking’ and a ‘pre-Schwa laxing’ afterwords. This is the case of

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words like beer [ˈbɪə], chair [ˈtʃeə], more [ˈmɔː] and sure [ˈʃʊə] ~ [ˈʃɔː], which have stayed as [bɪr, tʃe:r, mɔː:r,ʃʊr] in conservative accents such as Scottish.

An early stage phenomenon that has been noticed since the beginning of the process of change in RP is the ‘high-rising tone’, also called the ‘high rise terminal’, ‘Australian Question Intonation’ or ‘uptalk’ (Hughes et al., 2016: 7). This refers to the rising intonation pattern normally associated with questions in RP accent. The reason for this phenomenon is still being studied by linguists; however, these authors give the explanation that this happens in British English due to the influence of active or passive interaction with Australian and New Zealand English (by means of face-to-face conversations, media, TV, students that take their gap years there, etc.). New Zealanders are known to be relaxed, friendly, open and sporty people. These are attributes that English people may look up to and want to imitate. Nevertheless, this can just be a coincidence.

Although this phenomenon has been perpetuated in English for a longer time, another phenomenon is the elimination of historical /r/ in RP before a consonant or in absolute final position, except in the environment of a following vowel is known as ‘R Dropping’. Its counterpart is the so-called ‘R Insertion’, by which new generations of RP speakers started underlying forms without /r/, inferring a phonetic /r/ introduced in a certain intervocalic environment, optionally across a morpheme or word boundary (Wells, 1982: 222). This is considered to be a prestige innovation, same as ‘Gide Cluster Redaction’ when whine and wine started being pronounced the same with no /hw/ sound at the beginning of the word. This sound is not a ‘natural’ possibility for many RP speakers nowadays, according to Wells. Another innovation introduced by Gimson back in 1962 is the pronunciation of the diphthong in goat as [ˈɡəʊt]. This has received the name of ‘Goat Advancement’.

Further British innovations that have taken place over the last decades and that have changed the English language, though not RP itself, are named as it follows: /h/ dropping, diphthong shift, HappY tensing, /l/ vocalisation, glottalization and the –ing variable\(^{19}\).

\(^{19}\) See Wells (1982) for further information.
Some of these changes remind us of a new accent of English which some linguists have named as ‘Estuary English’. The differences between RP and Estuary English will be discussed in the next section.

4. BOUNDARIES RP - EE

Contact between speakers of different dialects or languages leads to both short and long-term changes in each other’s speech, which will have in turn consequences for their language varieties themselves (Kerswill & Williams, 2000: 1). Bauer (2008), based on Trudgill’s theory, states that there is a correlation of concepts addressing contact-related change, such as levelling, simplification, diffusion, focussing and reallocation. All of these are associated with a process named as koinéization by Kerswill & Williams (2000), a process by which speakers coming from different varieties create a brand new variety.

In the last decades, there has appeared a trend of younger speakers to not sound RP, which has been also noticed by media. Many have written about the ‘dumbing down’ of this Standard form by young British people (Hughes et al., 2016: 5). It is said that when death happens, birth comes afterwards; according to these authors, this new variety that has emerged is the so-called Estuary English:

Many media pundits have become so convinced of the decline of RP and Standard English that the emergence of a new replacement variety first dubbed ‘Estuary English’ by Rosewarne (1984) has been accepted almost universally, in spite of the fact that the existence and separate identity of this ‘new’ variety are argued for on the basis of rather little reliable linguistic evidence. (Hughes et al., 2016: 5)

This argument about the validity of Estuary English will be retaken later on. But now we will focus on defining what the term Estuary English stands for and its boundaries with RP.

D. Rosewarne, a graduate of Oxford University and a current senior lecturer at Kingsway College in London, was the first person to raise the issue of a new variety that was spreading in and around London and along the Thames Estuary. It was while he was doing his post-graduate studies that he realized there were no existing descriptions of accents intermediate between RP and localisable English forms, plus there was a lack of studies about South Eastern varieties in
England, back in 1983\textsuperscript{20}. After having heard one of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s speech and Princess Diana once say “there’s a lo(?) of i(?) abou(?)” he decided to coin the term *Estuary English* (EE for short) in 1984 for this new accent which is ‘the strongest influence in RP English’ (Rosewarne, 1994a). He declares this is the accent that may eventually replace RP as the most influential in the ranking of the British Isles’ accents. However, he admitted in 1994 that it is harder to imagine EE at the same level of RP’s prestige.

Estuary English is defined by Rosewarne as it follows:

Estuary English is a variety of modified regional speech. It is a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation. If one imagines a continuum with RP and popular London speech at either end, Estuary English speakers are to be found grouped in the middle ground. They are “between Cockney and the Queen” in the words of the headline of the article on Estuary English which *The Sunday Times* carried in its Wordpower supplement on 28 March 1993. (Rosewarne, 1994a: 3)

Estuary English is therefore a variety localised in the centre of the continuum from RP to ‘popular London’ speech\textsuperscript{21}. Rosewarne’s initial research suggested it is more frequently used in the suburban areas of Greater London and the counties of Essex and Kent, to the north and south of the Thames Estuary. This author claimed that the most probable reason for this appearance was the movement from ‘popular London’ speakers towards the east of the city.

\textsuperscript{20} See ‘Estuary English: tomorrow’s RP?’ by D. Rosewarne (1994) for further information.

\textsuperscript{21} Rosewarne does not use the term ‘cockney’ until his second article ‘Pronouncing Estuary English’ (1994b) which is, as he says himself, a development of the preceding article ‘Estuary English –tomorrow’s RP?’ (1994a). He does so because “it could be argued that this term should be restricted to usage in the east end of the city” (Rosewarne, 1994b: 3).
Figure 3. Visual representation of RP and the appearance of Estuary English in the continuum. From: Rosewarne (1994a)

Regarding the development of Estuary English as it is illustrated in the process from circle number one to circle number two in Figure (3), the key year for the starting point of the study of this accent seems to be 1993. Apart from other important events, Rosewarne states that it was the year that BBC reported EE as the accent spoken by Conservative members of Parliament and Labour. Nowadays it is also well established in business, where it is said to be used “to become more consumer-friendly” (Rosewarne, 1994a: 4-5).

Rosewarne explains that if you take a comprehensive school or a private school in England, you will most likely have students that are speakers of both RP and local accents. Because of ‘peer group pressure’, a powerful force especially for this age group, you will end up having a considerable number of the pupils who will end up leaving school speaking with an Estuary English accent. The author claims this happens because “the acquisition of Estuary English is a process of accommodation, generally to a reference group.” Although he has little

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22 See Rosewarne (1994a) for further information.
evidence, he concludes that RP speaking students accommodate ‘downwards’ adopting Estuary English to increase their “street credibility” for the “fitting in the group” feeling that is so common during teenage; in the same way students with local accents will try to accommodate ‘upwards’ seeking for “sophistication” in Estuary English, looking forward to speaking with an RP accent in the future (Rosewarne, 1994a: 7). This authors points out that the popularity of Estuary English among the younger generations is significant for the future.

Regarding the phonetic characteristics of Estuary English, we will find that many of its features that distinguish this accent from RP are shared ones with Cockney and this is why it is said to be in a continuum between these two accents. Due to the fact that these features are spreading both geographically and socially and therefore losing its localizability (Wells, 1997: 2), it is for this reason that Wells can find a justification for Rosewarne’s claim that EE could be ‘tomorrow’s RP’.

Estuary English is associated with standard grammar and usage, unlike Cockney, as both Rosewarne (1994a; 1994b) and Wells (1997) state. According to these two phoneticians some of its main phonetic characteristics are the following:

- Vocalisation, the equivalent to non-alveolar dark [l] in classical RP when it is pronounced like [w]. It happens in a post-vocal position at the end of a syllable, before a consonant; an example of this situation could be the word milk pronounced as [ˈmɪlk] in RP but as [ˈmɪk] in Estuary English, or the word football pronounced as [ˈfʊtboʊ] in RP but as [ˈfʊʔbɔʊ] in EE. Also it can occur in some environments as a syllabic consonant; an example of this case would be the word drizzle pronounced as [ˈdrɪzəl] in RP but as [ˈdrɪzəw] in Estuary English.

- Glottaling, which is using a glottal stop [ʔ] instead of a [t] sound in certain positions. The most obvious positions in where this occurs is in syllable-final, as in but [ˈbʌt] when it would be [ˈbʌt] in RP, or as in plate [ˈpleɪt], pronounced as [ˈpleɪt] in RP. Rosewarne admits this glottaling characterises Cockney speech more than EE. In EE, when the sound orthographically represented t does not occur at the initial of a word in a cluster between two consonants (for instance before /w/), the voiceless alveolar plosive is glottalised as it happens in the word network, [ˈnetw3ːk]. Moreover this feature of Estuary English appears to be already shared by current RP speech as we
saw in the previous section. A remarkable fact is that in those environments where \( t \) is not glottalised, EE speakers produce a different sound from RP; for some EE speakers the contact of the tip and the blade of the tongue is distinguishable from RP as well, as it is more relaxed (Rosewarne, 1994: 4).

- **happY-tensing**, by which EE-speakers use a sound that is more similar to the \([i:]\) of *beat* or *sea* than to the \([b\,i]\) at the end of words such as *happy*, *coffee*, *valley*, *city* or *ferry*. According to Wells, many recent works transcribe this weak vowel as \([i]\), which leads to different interpretations depending on the speaker’s accent. In weak syllables the distinction between sounds like \([i:]\) or \([i]\) does not apply; thus the precision in the quality of the final vowel in words like *happy* is not important.

- **Diphthong shift**, particularly on the case of FACE, PRICE and GOAT vowels.

- **yod coalescence**, using \([t\,ʃ]\) rather than \([t\,j]\) in words like *Tuesday* which would be pronounced as \([ˈtjuːzdeɪ]\) in RP, but something like \([ˈtʃuːzdi]\) in EE, or *tune* which would sound like \([ˈtʃuːn]\) in RP but like \([ˈtʃuːn]\) in EE. According to both Rosewarne and Wells, the same development is likely with the change from RP /d\,j/ to EE /d\,ʒ/, making the sound of the second consonant in *reduce* identical to the first one in *juice*. Words like *media* \([ˈmiːdʒə]\) would evolve to sound like \([ˈmiːdʒə]\).

Wells adds that unlike Cockney, Estuary English does not have the characteristics of h-dropping (when words like *hand* \([ˈhænd]\) evolve to \([ˈænd]\)) nor th-fronting (when words like *think* \([ˈθɪŋk]\) or *mother* \([ˈmʌðə]\) evolve to \([ˈfɪŋk]\) and \([ˈmʌvə]\)).

However, Estuary English has become a controversial issue between linguists almost since its birth happened a couple of decades ago. Rosewarne states the following in his article from when he coined the term Estuary English:

> For many, RP has long served to disguise origins. "Estuary English" may now be taking over this function. For large and influential sections of the young, the new model for general imitation may already be "Estuary English", which may become the RP of the future. (Rosewarne, 1984)
But, will it become the RP of the future? Many linguists have done research and given comments and opinions on this topic. The next section will give further information about this on-going debate.

5. EE AS A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

David Rosewarne focused his postgraduate research on “recent developments in the speech of millions in and around London and the lower Thames” (Rosewarne, 1994a), which he summarized in a new accent he named as Estuary English.

This new accent was first defined in 1984. A definition of EE is the one given by Hughes in 2016 as it follows:

An amalgam of RP and working-class London speech (cockney), and is thus a ‘neutral’ variety which simultaneously provides the opportunity for lower-class speakers to appear higher status than they are, and for middle- and upper-class speakers to appear lower status than they are, in keeping with the social levelling claimed to have been a key characteristic of life in the UK in recent decades. (Hughes et al., 2016: 6)

The social levelling about which Hughes, Trudgill and Watt theorise is the process described by L. Milroy (2014: 158) that involves the “eradication of socially or locally marked variants (both within and between linguistic systems) in conditions of social or geographical mobility and resultant dialect contact”. For Rosewarne (1994b: 6) this might have been the first attempt to investigate the “levelling” of British accents after the interest in transcribing EE increased.

Estuary English has been accepted almost universally, in spite of the fact that this new variety has had its pitfalls and has been argued for on the basis of rather little reliable linguistic evidence; there have happened diverse reactions towards it, not only by linguists and phoneticians but also by popular media or politicians, for instance the one given by the Prime Minister Tony Blair (Hughes et al., 2016: 5). The disagreement towards EE is something that

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23 See authors such as Rosewarne (1994a) or section six in chapter two of Joanna Ryfa’s Estuary English. A controversial Issue? (2003).

24 See “The role of adolescents in dialect levelling” (Chesire et al., 1999) for further information.
can be seen in important linguists such as Gimson’s successor J. C. Wells (1997; 1998) as well. In this section we will give an insight into the various opinions that have conformed EE as a controversial issue. A chronological order will be followed for this, highlighting the authors that have shaped the image of Estuary English that we have nowadays.

The new concept of Estuary English started gaining on fame from the 1990s, when media, BBC radio and other phoneticians popularised it. Most probably due to this, Rosewarne published an article titled “Estuary English: tomorrow’s RP?” (1994) in English Today, where he stated that “because its obscures sociolinguistic origins, Estuary English is attractive to many” (1994: 3).

Rosewarne admits that what seemed at first an adaptation to the progressive adoption of EE into private life as well can be seen as the “development of less exclusive linguistic networks in Britain” which is translated into a sign that “class barriers are coming down” (1994: 7). This is not a new process; he bases his theory of the history of this accent on Wells’ statement that London working-class accent is today “the most influential source of phonological innovation in England and perhaps in the whole English-Speaking world” (1994: 8).

About the future of Estuary English Rosewarne declares that anything can happen: it can influence in every single accent except for the most isolated ones, or there can be an elite group that refuses it, or a group can choose to speak it together with elements of whatever their regional accent might be.

It was in that same year, 1994, when J. Wells published his article “Transcribing Estuary English: A Discussion Document” in Speech Hearing and Language: UCL Work in Progress. This might have been the paper that unleashed the on-going debate about EE. He starts this article with a patent ironical tone he will keep on going along with in the rest of his writing:

Many of our native-speaker undergraduates use a variety of English that I suppose we have to call ‘Estuary English’, following Rosewarne 1984, 1994, Coggle 1993, and many recent reports on press and television.” […] “I would really prefer to call this variety simply ‘London English’, although obviously its ambit is much wider than the GLC area, covering at least most of the urban south-east. Other names we could refer to it by might include General London (GL), McArthur's New London Voice, and Tebbit-Livingstone-speak. (Note that Rosewarne seems to use the term 'London speech' to refer to what I call Cockney, since he refers to 'a continuum with RP and London speech at either end', with his Estuary English speakers 'grouped in the middle ground'.) Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the term 'Estuary English' has already
achieved some degree of public recognition. As with the equally unsatisfactory term ‘Received Pronunciation’, we are forced to go along. (Wells, 1994)

Not only is noticeable the ironical tone in the presentation of the subject he is going to talk about (“a variety of English that I suppose we have to call Estuary English”) but also we have a bittersweet taste of the differences between Wells and Rosewarne, something Wells has noticed: Rosewarne refers to well’s Cockney accent as “London speech”. It seems to be clear that these two linguists have not come to an agreement.

Wells also states that the boundary between Estuary English and RP is hard to establish. According to Rosewarne it lies on the question of localizability (RP is not localizable whereas EE belongs to the Southeast of England), but Wells criticises the fact that EE’s promoter does not focus on this topic as he puts more emphasis on change over time. Wells denounces the following: “things like cheers for thank you/goodbye are surely part of contemporary casual RP/StdEng – at least I use them, and no-one has ever suggested that I am a speaker of EE!”; he adds that commentators do not appreciate RP spoken in informal situation. This leads to his conclusion that he denies defining EE as a new accent as he would rather modernise RP to add these features of EE. Another option is that it could be considered a variety or a formal register for Cockney as he does not see it clear as an accent.

This author suggests two more problems we would have to front in considering EE an accent. First one is how comparative the EE transcription would have to be, as we would have either to use explicit symbols different from those of RP phonetically or to use the same symbols with different conventions of interpretation. He personal preference would be taking “a minimalist position” and making it as similar as possible to the one already used for RP.

Another problem he proposes is how we would symbolize the l – vocalisation, for which he states three different solutions taking the word milk as an example: as U mIUk; as w mIwk; or as o mIok, although all of these options have its pros and cons. His suggestion is adopting [o] for the symbol of l- vocalisation, regarding it still as a member of the /l/ phoneme and as an allophone. This would lead to another problem: if we accept to write /o/ then the glottal stop /ʔ/, which is a “particularly salient although heavily stigmatised form of Estuary English”
(Hughes et al, 2016: 65) should also be conventionally accepted. This acceptance of /ʔ/ would also bring about further problems with words such as *roll, cool, call* and *real*.25

Wells states that if ideas such as applying the RP /i, u/ to EE are accepted, we will end up with a standardized systematic (as opposed to phonemic) transcription system for Estuary English and makes a call to his phonetician colleagues to come to an agreement.

Although his conclusion in the article of 1994 sounds pretty friendly and sympathising, he continues with the ironical starting tone in another article from 1997 named “What is Estuary English?” as he starts it as follows:

> There’s a new buzzword going the rounds in England — Estuary English (EE). It’s supposed to be a new kind of English that’s due to take over as the new Standard English. We’re told it’s going to replace fuddy-diddy old Received Pronunciation as the standard accent. Not only are all sorts of politicians, sportsmen, and media personalities claimed as typical speakers of it, but even people as eminent as Queen Elizabeth’s youngest son, Prince Edward. But at the 1995 Conservative party conference the Minister of Education, Gillian Shephard, launched into a denunciation of EE, condemning it as slovenly, mumbling, bastardized Cockney. She claimed that teachers have a duty to do their utmost to eradicate it. As often happens in language matters, the English have got into a muddle. (Wells, 1997: 1)

Not only he uses ironic terms such as “new buzzword” or “fuddy-diddy old Received Pronunciation”, but also expresses his concerns about condemning Prince Edward as a EE speaker. Moreover he seems to agree in the view of EE as “slovenly, mumbling, bastardized Cockney”. However he justifies Rosewarne’s belief that EE might be tomorrow’s RP due to how it is spreading to the point of not having clear boundaries anymore. He raises once more the problems he stated already in his article from 1994. For him, EE is a new name but not a new phenomenon, it is the continuation of a trend that has been going on for five hundred years or more: “the tendency for features of popular London speech to spread out geographically and socially.” Today this trend is more noticeable than before due to the social mobility in Britain. It is in this article where he states that instead of adopting EE, EFL teachers and learners should keep up to date the description of RP and not remaining it “fossilized in the form codified by Daniel Jones almost a century ago” (Wells, 1997).

Ulrike Altendorf engages with the EE – RP debate in 1999 with her article “Estuary English: Is English going Cockney”. The beginning of this article has a certain ironical tone

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25 See Wells (1994) for further information.
that reminisces Wells’ articles (1994, 1997), as the title for her first sections are: “the concept of ‘EE’ according to its ‘founder’ David Rosewarne” and “attempts at further precision”. She states it as if Rosewarne was trying to prove something she does not believe in.

Altendorf sees as more correct the view of Coggle as opposed to Rosewarne’s, as this author states that EE cannot be typecasted to a set of pronunciation and grammar rules and he is, to her mind, more aware of the “demarcation problem” and places EE as a ‘continuum’ variety on a continuum between Cockney and RP. Moreover he adds more Estuary markers than Rosewarne does and with which Altendorf agrees, as for example in [ˈθɪŋk] for think ([ˈθʊŋk] in RP), for those at the Cockney end of the spectrum. Her conclusion on this debate is clear: “whether this is an embryonic variant hailing a future sound change or a mere slip of the tongue, only the future can tell” (Altendorf, 1999: 3).

Three years later D. Levey and T. Harris would write the article “Accommodating Estuary English” (2002). The basis they use to conform their opinion with is Maidment’s term called “Disgusted-of-Tunbridge-Wells Syndrome” (DTWS for short): “one thing that DTW is hot on is the purity of the English language. The furore in the press and on the radio about EE has really given DTW something to rage about.” (Maidment, 1994: 7). This is the evidence we needed to show that the ironical tone we had already noticed in Wells’ article was right: “the fear that Standard English is usurped by the usage of people who are NOT OUR CLASS” (1994: 8). Levey and Harris absolutely do not agree with this fear Wells shows, what Maidment realizes and gives the name of DTWS. These two authors define Wells’ syndrome as horror, “as if we were in the presence of a contagious and potentially devastating disease” (Levey & Harris, 2002: 17).

On the other hand, Levey and Harris have a much more progressive view than that “Disgusted-of-Tunbridge-Wells” that looks towards the future and not back to the past, a view that not only believes, but declares that the “English language has always evolved and will continue to do so” (2002: 17). Like Rosewarne and Wells state, they also know that EE is not a brand-new discovery or invention and recognise that its status is questionable due to the various doubts about its legitimacy as an accent (Wells, 1994, 1998, or Maidment, 1994). This lack of legitimacy in EE, these authors explain, is due to the fact that there is nothing phonetically new in it and most of its features are already present in RP and/or Cockney.
The positive side of EE is that it is understood to be a non-class-based accent, seen as a “halfway house between two phonetic extremes” (Levey & Harris, 2002: 18). EE is the perfect solution for a British class society where RP sounds too posh and Cockney is taken as uneducated, dishonest or even comic, as these authors define it. It is the perfect pass ticket for the ‘fitting in the group’ feeling that Rosewarne talked about when he first showed the world what he had to tell (Rosewarne, 1994a). This receives the name of “relative neutrality” in Levey and Harris’ article.

In addition they give evidence of the main advantage of EE, this being a wider approval for the speaker as being in a middle ground without compromising too much:

Whereas before the 1960s, RP defined a minimum requirement for social and professional advancement, today it may even be considered a handicap to speak in what some may deem to be a posh accent. (Levey & Harris, 2002: 19).

These authors highlight the importance of tolerance and the capacity for adaptation in the near future for a better communication in a globalised world, leading to accommodation as a source of survival.

J. Ryfa publishes in 2003 “Estuary English. A controversial issue?” where she deals with topics like the areas of controversy, different voices on the debate of EE, causes and spread of this accent or its influence of the media. She states the main issues that have lead EE to be a controversial topic are its duration, the causes of the rise and spread of EE, and determining boundary-marking features of this “quasi-variety” (Ryfa, 2003: 8). However what seems to be the main issue for her is the application of EE to the real world, to the areas of teaching language to non-natives as well as business communication.

Nonetheless, she seems to shyly leave her opinion when she declares “the author is not in authority to decide whether Estuary English is a regiolect, a dialect, an accent or a style” (Ryfa, 2003: 21) and concludes that it is probably none of those, agreeing with Wells (1998) when he said there is no such real entity as EE, as it is just a construct.

As opposed to Ryfa’s conservative view of EE, we have J. A. Mompean’s article “Estuary English: revisiting the debate on its status as a new accent of English and potential EFL pronunciation model” (2006). This one is in the same line as D. Levey and T. Harris’
article as he agrees and gives arguments on the view of EE as an accent, and Cockney as a dialect.

One of the most highlighted Mompean’s opinion might be his thought on this non-stop debate of EE. He states that given the non-clear-cut differences between EE – RP – Cockney, the debate may just be actually a trivial one; furthermore, RP only became popular thanks to the popularization of the EE label (Mompean, 2006: 9).

Regarding the issue of EE as a EFL model, he suggests that some exposure to accents other than the model selected may be very for students of English, as they will probably encounter more non-standard speakers than standard ones (2006: 9). This opinion is similar to that of Levey as he agrees with Wells in the fact that some renovation is certainly needed, but that accents as EE, which are representative of the South-East of England, should also be taught to non-natives in class. A very representative statement that Levey does about this issue is the following:

Every generation speaks in a different way from the last and there is always talk of declining standards and calls to stem the tide – an impossible task since oral English has always changed and will continue to do so. […] English is, and has always been, a fickle language – the norm of yesterday sounds abnormal today, and so what sounds abnormal today may well be the norm of tomorrow (Levey, 2001: 271).

On this debate regarding EFL pronunciation models, Mompean (2006) concludes that EE may just be regarded as a valid model of British English pronunciation as descriptions of RP are being updated already.

Altendorf publishes another article in 2016 with a very ontological character, where she states that EE has come to stay, and this is just the main reason to not to stop using the term coined by Rosewarne and therefore to not forget about it. In this article she also presents data from this on-going project in perceptual dialectology.

All in all, it seems to be pretty clear that Estuary English is still a very controversial term. Not only this but authors have not come to an agreement yet, so that the future of EE is not certain at all just yet; it is a matter of time. However it is known, from personal experience, that lecturers such as Levey already gives some notions on Estuary English to his students of phonetics in the Universidad de Cádiz. This makes non-native students more aware of the fact that only a three per cent of the population in England speak with an RP accent, and that it will
be more probable for them to talk with someone with an Estuary accent rather than with the standardised one if they ever go to London.

6. PRACTICAL EXPERIMENT ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRONUNCIATION MODELS

6.1 Methodology

No accent is intrinsically good or bad, but it has to be recognized that the way we perceive accents does play a role in our attitude to others. Different people have differing perceptions. (Rosewarne, 1984)

Rosewarne was the one that set the flame in the issue surrounding London accents that still continues nowadays. Our main objective in this project was to find out what the status of RP as opposed to the one of Estuary English is in 2019. To achieve this goal first we did some research that we added to the theoretical framework of this essay. After having acknowledged what the main differences between RP and EE are, we looked for two speakers with these accents via youtube videos: Hugh Grant representing an RP accent, and Ricky Gervais for the Estuary English accent. An extract of their speeches from two interviews were recorded and presented to a total of twelve native English speakers with no previous background whatsoever about the recordings as it was sent to them with no specific name on the archive so that they had no previous judgment about the people they were going to listen to. These were sent together with two questionnaires, one for each recording.

6.1.1 The recording sample

In agreement with the tutor of this project, the phonetician D. Levey, the speeches of Hugh Grant and Ricky Gervais were selected to represent the accents of RP and EE, respectively. This selection was made based on Jim Johnson’s criteria, who is currently the Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Houston School of Theatre.

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26 We only decided to do this instead of directly recording people’s speech due to the difficulty in finding natives to do this with in a country like Spain.
& Dance. Professionally, he works as an actor and director. Moreover he is a voice and dialect coach, and the founder of the website Accent Help (IDEA 2019).

This dialect coach uploaded a review of London accents as a youtube video where he explains briefly the following: classic RP, contemporary RP (which he addresses to Hugh Grant as an example), Estuary English (from what Ricky Gervais is a representative speaker), Cockney and Multicultural London English (MCL according to Johnson). After some analysing, both the tutor of this project and I agreed on taking these examples he exhibits (Hugh Grant and Ricky Gervais) as representative of the RP and the EE accents.

Regarding the speakers of the recording samples, Hugh Grant is an English actor and film producer born in Hammersmith, London, and educated in Oxford University dramatic society. His accent has been chosen to represent the prototypical contemporary RP as Johnson declared (Accent Help 2018) and it is also said to be one of the most desirable British accents according to Fraser Mcalpine in BBC America (2014). The piece of speech that has been recorded belongs to an interview on line from that can be found in the following link, in the extract from minute 0:21 to 1:15: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2YoUbAEFTI&t=75s. The accent he has is similar to the classic RP sound, but his intonation does not spread as far and he sounds more relaxed, as Johnson explains in his channel Accent Help (2018).

Born and raised in Reading, Berkshire (London), Ricky Gervais is a British comedian who is known for refusing to adopt an RP accent because he advocates embracing our own regional accents and dialects as the ones we have grown up with and acknowledged since we were born. With a rather middle-class background, he did his studies at the University College London. He is 58 years old now. The recording sample of his speech has been extracted from an interview in The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon (2019), which can be found in the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDgsmFjxqIg&t=8s. The piece of voice recording that has been cut to show to the informants doing the questionnaire comprises from minute 1:54 to 3:02. Some remarkable phenomena of Estuary English that can be heard in his accent and that are present in this extract are the glottal stops and the diphthong shift in words such as “saying”, where instead of pronouncing [ˈseɪɪŋ] he does [ˈseɪɪŋ].
6.1.2 The questionnaire

First of all some drafts of a questionnaire on linguistic attitudes from native British English speakers towards RP and EE were designed. This questionnaire has been made by using the computer programme ‘Google questionnaires’, the same from where the graphics of the Appendix 3 have been taken from. After some refinement, it was sent to the twelve informants under the name of ‘Speaker A PURPLE’ and ‘Speaker B ORANGE’ based on the colour of the screen for each survey (so that no confusion was created), together with the two recordings under the same name, one for each survey (purple for the RP accent; orange for the EE accent). The content of the questionnaire for each speaker was the same, but had a different background colour that belonged to each different recording. This questionnaire can be found in “Appendix 2. Questionnaire: English Accents”.

The twelve native British informants were asked to fill in the two questionnaires, one for each different accent RP and EE, with no previous information about the recording nor the objective of the research whatsoever so that they had no pre-judgements at all. The questions were centred on the informants’ perception of the accents of these two speakers. They responded anonymously, so that they did not feel coerced nor forced to answer one way or another. The results obtained in both surveys are presented in “Appendix 3. Questionnaire results: graphics” and discussed in the following section, differentiating and comparing the results obtained from the RP recording from the ones obtained from the EE recording.

The questionnaire consists of three sections: the first one is formed by seven questions to give an answer quantifying from one to five the response depending on the degree of the adjective given (from ‘low’ to ‘high’) that the informants perceived when listening to the recordings, as well as the level of education and the social class of the speaker; the next section consists of three questions to answer writing a short/long answer; and finally the last section is about personal details to know what background the informants have, the place where they were born and raised and what their age and sex is.

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27 I would like to thank the tutor of this project D. Levey for his helpful comments on the original drafts of the questionnaire in the first stages of the process. Any remaining infelicities and errors are my own responsibility.
6.1.3 The informants

The totality of informants are native English students between the ages of 19 to 25 (one is 19 years old, eight are 20, two are 21 and one is 25), six female and six male, who attend to the University of Nottingham in the East Midlands of England (United Kingdom). However, all of them were born and raised in the areas of London and the South-East part of England (except for one who is from the Midlands): Buckinghamshire, High Wycombe, Reading, Wembley, East and South-east London, Windsor and Nottingham.

The intention in the choice of this selection was to be as accurate as possible in how 2019 teenagers see EE and RP accents in the modern world after all the on-going debate on whether EE should be considered as such or not has already been thrown. Also we wanted to figure out if all those negative stereotypes about Estuary speech that Wells seemed to have (thing that later led to the adoption of the term of Disgusted-of-Tunbridge Wells Syndrome) are still alive or the panorama is currently changing (which is our main hypothesis in this study).

6.2 Data collection and questionnaire findings

From a methodological point of view, this work on Estuary English and RP accents bears a certain resemblance to Altendrof’s survey on the perceptual prototype approach to Estuary English (2016). By collecting and analysing the production data in the first place then we proceeded to a perceptual study based on the main points that have surrounded the issue about the differences between the Estuary English and RP accents and the linguistic attitudes towards these coming from native British English speakers. A total of 12 young speakers who are natives from England were sent this questionnaire together with two extracts of recordings, one for each accent, in the year 2019. The following sub-sections will give an insight of the findings and conclusions we arrived to.

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*As a reminder to the reader, the questionnaire that has been distributed to the informants can be found in Appendix 2.*
6.2.1 First Section

First of all, it is important to notice that the original graphics of the questionnaire given by the computer programme we used to formulate them, Google Questionnaires, can be found in “Appendix 3. Questionnaire results: original graphics.” However we generated a series of comparative graphics where the columns of the answers to each speaker is situated next to each other, so that the difference is more remarkable and so that it is, therefore, easier to read.

Figure 4. Section 1. Question 1.

A total of ten informants considered the RP speaker to be “correct” or “very correct” (83, 33%) whereas only four rated the Estuary speaker in the same way as a majority of 58, 33% stayed in the middle ground by voting a degree three of correctness for this last speaker. This means informants still find RP more correct than EE, which was expected; nevertheless it is significant that no subject found EE as not correct, and only an 8, 3% voted a degree 2 which could be translated in not very correct. Also it could be highlighted that a 8, 3% of the informants went for the degree 2 of correctness when listening to the RP accent, same thing that happened with EE speaker.
It was noteworthy that the RP speaker was judged to be intelligent or very intelligent by 75% of the raters yet only 33, 33% felt the same way about the Estuary speaker. Instead, the majority of the subjects with a 58, 33% stayed in the middle ground with a degree 3 of intelligence for the EE recording.

These results were expected following the negative thoughts of DTWS, something that could be translated into prejudices from natives towards people using an EE accent bearing in mind both the RP speaker (Hugh Grant) and the Estuary speaker (Ricky Gervais) have a university degree and therefore, both have received a higher level of education. This wants to say that probably both speakers have a similar degree of intelligence.
Figure 6. Section 1. Question 3.

The rater’s opinions were a bit more spread out this time as the graphic illustrates it. A majority of 66% thought the RP speaker was polite or very polite, against a surprising finding of a 25% of the informants who rated him of not very polite. On the other hand 50% of the informants found the Estuary speaker polite or very polite, against the other half who thought he sounded quite polite with a degree three.

Again another interesting finding can be seen in this case because of the 25% who found the RP speaker not very polite whereas none of the subjects thought the EE speaker was not polite nor not very polite (degrees 1 and 2). This could be another evidence of the changing panorama towards EE accent that is currently happening nowadays.
When the expected thing was to find informants thinking that the RP speaker was not aggressive against the Estuary one sounding quite aggressive, what is most surprising about this part is that there is practically no difference in the opinions of the informants towards the aggressiveness of the RP and the Estuary speakers. Half of the raters found the speakers a bit aggressive, and only a 16.66% found both of the accents aggressive.

Some little evidence of the change in the status of EE against RP was already found in previous answers. Contrary to Wells’ opinion (1994) on the stigmatized status of EE, here we find the perfect evidence to demonstrate that there might be happening some change surrounding the issue of this accent as “less correct” or as “more aggressive” than standard British RP.
Opposite to the equality in the responses to last question, we can clearly see in this case that the majority, a 50% of the informants found the RP speaker’s academic background as privately educated whereas a 66% thought the Estuary speaker’s was somewhere in between the state education and the private one, with a 25% thinking he was state educated. Again the Estuary speaker is stigmatized just because of his accent, even if we know both speakers have been university students and therefore have been privately educated.
The majority of the informants, a 91, 66%, rated the RP speaker as a upper class or a very upper class citizen whereas the Estuary speaker was rated in between lower and upper class with a 66% of the votes in the degree three of the social class, which means the majority found him as a middle class speaker. This could throw some light to the issue too as none of the informants rated the Estuary speaker as belonging to the lower class and only a 25% indicated a degree two.

According to Rosewarne (1984) and Johnson (Accent Help 2018), the Estuary accent is somewhere in between the Cockney, which is highly stigmatized, and the RP. This graphic could be considered as the representation of these three, leaving cockney for the lower class as degree one in the social class ratio and RP in the upper class, as the informants rated. Following this line, Estuary is somewhere in the middle, just as it can be found represented in the figure 9.
For EFL teaching, only a 25% of the informants rated the RP accent as a good or very good model, whereas the majority, a 75%, stayed in the middle with a more neutral opinion. Regarding the opinions on the Estuary speakers, these were more spread out; the majority of a 41, 66% stayed in the middle ground and only a 16, 66% thought it was a good model for teaching.

It is true that the RP accent is still seen as the best teaching model; however, opinions are quite different from each other as the graphic represents, which could be interpreted as another sign of change in the stigmatization of Estuary English and in the model chosen to be taught to non-native speakers. This result together with the ones from the last questions will lead onto conclusions we will go to later on.

6.1.2 Second Section

After finishing the first section the informants went on with this second section. It consists of three questions that the informants had to answer to by giving short/long replies. Speaker A corresponds to the RP accent and speaker B is the Estuary accent.
As can be seen in Appendix 2, the first question was the following: “how would you describe your moral associations to this speaker’s accent? Do you think there are any kind of moral associations with accents in general? In the case of yes, please give your reasons”. The answers to the recording of the RP speaker and the EE speaker will be compared showing some of the full texts the informants replied.

In between the answers to Speaker A’s RP accent, we find that the 41, 66% of the informants do not think that there are moral associations linked to someone’s accent. One of the informants explained it is not easy to associate morality to an accent. Another informant was not sure about this association. Not only this, but another informant said the following: “the thoughts of what people are hiding in their minds are hard to judge based off an accent. In my experience accents do not correlate fully with morality. Accents tend to correlate with education”.

The rest of the informants, the 58, 33%, said that there are moral associations with accents in general. They defined Speaker A’s accent as “posh”, “well-educated”, “upper-class”, “intelligent”; however there was an informant who described it as “pretty pretentious and slightly obnoxious”.

One of the informants even criticised it as it follows: “He sounds very comfortable in his space of wealth. People with posher accents tend to give off this feeling of being unaffected or uncaring about matters that do not directly concern them. These underlying thoughts are influenced by the media, television, film and politics whereby usually privately educated people stick to themselves and do what they can to help their class”.

On the other hand, the answers to speaker B’s Estuary English accent differed a lot from speaker A’s RP accent. To start with, the 41, 66% of the informants said they could not think of any moral associations but one of them added that “he sounds calm, what could be a sign of kindness”.

The rest of the speakers who thought of moral associations to this accent said he sounded “state educated” who can speak the “local linguo and slang” with probably his misconceptions about the higher class, as well as they said he could not be taken as serious as speaker A (RP) because “he has a strong accent”. Another informant said that “he sounds like he has come from a lower class background and worked to become more educated but you can still tell what
“class” he is from”. This speaker B (EE) was also described as “pretty unaffected and gracious man” and also “seems genuine”. A rather surprising comment about this EE speaker comes from an informant who said that he trusted this speaker less than the RP one.

The following question the informants had to reply to was giving three adjectives to describe the speaker. Regarding speaker A’s comments, the RP accent, the informants described him with more positive adjectives than negative ones as expected. Between the positive adjectives, the most repeated ones were “posh”, “articulate”, “educated”, “well-spoken” and “polite”, but they also mentioned the following: “sociable”, “calm”, “confident”, “aristocratic”, “established”, “eloquent”, “honeyed”, “confident”, “gentle”, “elegant”, “smart”, “intellectual”, “competent” and “assertive”. As opposed to the twenty positive adjectives they mentioned about the RP speaker, there were only nine negative ones: “egocentric”, “ignorant”, “fatalistic”, “negative”, “flat”, “simple”, “headstrong”, “talkative” and “stern”.

On the other hand, the Estuary English speaker was classified by the informants as middle-class (as it corresponded in the figure 9 from last section), colloquial, informal and casual. Only some negative definitions were given such as “orotund”, “quiet”, “nervous”, “tentative”, “common”; on the contrary a lot of positive closer adjectives defined him: “relatable”, “friendly”, “easy-going”, “funny”, “clear”, “smart”, “relaxed”, “pleasing”, “positive”, “empathetic”, “casual”, “relatable” and “happy”.

To finish with this section, the last question was about localizability. Regarding the RP speaker, the vast majority thought he was from London or the home-counties around London. Some informants gave more specific answers by placing speaker A in the areas of Surrey, Kent or Chelsea (two said South-east, two said West London).

The majority of the informants decided speaker B was from London or the South-east of England. A 25% of the subjects ventured to say Essex and an informant even said Grays, the largest town in the borough of Essex. Also another of the informants specified this accent as London cockney. What is most surprising is that there was one who placed him in the suburb of Whitley, in the town of Reading.
7. CONCLUSIONS

A previous study was made about the history of Standard British English and the debate about the status of the new Estuary English as opposed to the one of RP nowadays. Rosewarne (1984) states that Estuary English might end up being the new RP someday, whereas Wells (1998) does not agree with defining it as an accent; instead he theorises about the fact that maybe linguists should make some innovations in what they understand by RP accent. Based on the results from the linguistic attitudes surveys obtained so far and the previous framework on the situation of Received Pronunciation and Estuary English nowadays together with the different arguments about its on-going debate, we can come up to the following conclusions.

RP speakers still sound more correct, more intelligent and more polite to native British English people than Estuary English speakers, as it also did some decades ago when Rosewarne started his studies on EE, although some changes can be seen in the degree of the adjectives that they defined. Same thing happens with RP being related to private education as well as a higher social class. However, out of the results of the surveys we can conclude that the most outstanding one is the fact that EE’s status towards the perception of aggressiveness has decreased as the informants thought it practically sounds as little aggressive as the RP speaker.

In terms of the EFL teaching debate, all informants thought of RP as a good or a very good teaching model to non-natives; however, the majority of them also thought Estuary English accent was quite good or good as a teaching model too, which means this could be another evidence of some change in the way native speakers see Estuary English as a good teaching model to foreigners. This idea that there might be some change in the way British people see Estuary English can also be seen in the number of positive adjectives that these twelve native informants give to this Speaker B.

Finally we can conclude that the local differentiation the informants guessed of Hugh Grant’s accent was right as the majority placed him in London and he was actually born in Hammersmith, London. However they did not do so well with the Estuary English recording of Ricky Gervais’ speech as the majority placed him in Essex, probably due to its close relation to cockney accent which is usually localised in this area. Only one of them made a right guess: he is from Reading, Berkshire. These results about local differentiation coincide with those Altendorf achieved in her survey from three years ago (Altendorf, 2016). In her article (2016:
she concluded that the EE localisation does not seem marked enough for young speakers, which may be due to their lack of perceptual competence and life experience. However, according to this author this explains why applied linguists and lay speakers tend to classify EE as a supra-local Southern accent.

Modern dialects studies, it might be time to reconsider the status of Estuary English and come to an agreement about how it should be classified. As D. Levey (2001) states it is also time to open up to teaching different accents from RP and Standard English in EFL classes to non-natives as it is true that most students find it really hard to understand native speakers when they fly to England for their first times in life (I can also agree with this out of personal experience).

Although this is a very preliminary study, and the results are not always clear-cut, they generally seem to confirm our various hypothesis, especially the main one that Estuary English is currently gaining acceptability in Britain. Not only this, but it was also true that the subjects’ familiarity with these accents affected their acceptance of them as they had prejudices towards them. The spread opinions of the young generations of native British English people nowadays on whether Estuary English is a good teaching model for EFL showed that there is happening a change in their minds towards this accent (as realistically a very little amount of people truly speak RP accent in their day-to-day lives). The majority also admitted that there exist moral associations with accents in the second section of the survey, as well as also found it hard to give a specific localisation for the Estuary speaker.

As J. C. Wells (1997) once said language evolves with the world, and so we have to do too as we must “keep up to date”. Whether it is an accent or just an evolution of contemporary RP, linguists do not seem to have come to an agreement yet. What everyone agrees with is, as Altendorf (2016: 131) stated, “the term has come to stay”. Nevertheless, Rosewarne always went above and beyond:

For many, RP has long served to disguise origins. "Estuary English” may now be taking over this function. For large and influential sections of the young, the new model for general imitation may already be "Estuary English", which may become the RP of the future. (Rosewarne 1984)
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APPENDIX 1. The IPA chart.

### THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2015)

#### CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

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<tr>
<td>Lateral Approximant</td>
<td>l l</td>
<td>l l</td>
<td>l l</td>
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<td>l l</td>
<td>l l</td>
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</table>

Symbols in the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

#### CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tones</th>
<th>Voiced Implosives</th>
<th>Ejectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilabial</td>
<td>B Bilabial</td>
<td>B Bilabial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>D Dental/alveolar</td>
<td>D Dental/alveolar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatal</td>
<td>G Velar</td>
<td>G Velar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alveolar lateral</td>
<td>G Velar</td>
<td>G Velar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### OTHER SYMBOLS

- Vowels
- Voiced labial-velar fricative
- Voiced labial-velar approximant
- Voiced labial-velar approximant
- Voiced epiglottal fricative
- Voiced epiglottal fricative
- Epiglottal fricative

#### VOWELS

- Front
- Central
- Back

#### TONES AND WORD ACCENTS

- Level
- Contour
- Rising
- Falling
- High
- Low
- Extra
- Downstep
- Upstep

Typeface: Duodec SL (serif), Duodec SL, IPA Key, IPA IS Gnu (symbols)
APPENDIX 2. Questionnaire: English Accents.

SECTION 1

Please, answer the following questions by evaluating from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest).

· How correct does the Speaker X sound? 1 2 3 4 5
· How intelligent does the Speaker X sound? 1 2 3 4 5
· How polite does the Speaker X sound? 1 2 3 4 5
· How aggressive does the Speaker X sound? 1 2 3 4 5
· How high do you think Speaker X’s level of education is? (1 being state educated/ 5 being privately educated) 1 2 3 4 5
· What social class do you think the Speaker X might belong to? (1 being lower class/ 5 being upper class) 1 2 3 4 5
· How good of a teaching model do you find X for non-native speakers? 1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 2

Please, answer the following questions.

· How would you describe your moral associations to this Speaker X’s accent? Do you think there are any kind of moral associations with accents in general? In the case of yes, please give your reasons.

____________________________________________________________________________________

· Give three adjectives to describe Speaker X.

____________________________________________________________________________________
· Where do you think Speaker X is from? Please give a specific part of Great Britain, if possible.

____________________________________________

SECTION 3

Last questions… you are almost there!

· What is your age?

____________________________________________

· What is your sex?

Male  /  Female

· Where are you from? (Give the specific area and city where you are from or have been raised)

____________________________________________
APPENDIX 3. Questionnaire results: original graphics.

Figure 4. Question 1. Speaker A.

Figure 5. Question 1. Speaker B.
Figure 6. Question 2. Speaker A.

Figure 7. Question 2. Speaker B.
Figure 8. Question 3. Speaker A.

Figure 9. Question 3. Speaker B.
Figure 10. Question 4. Speaker A.

Figure 11. Question 4. Speaker B.
How high do you think Speaker A's level of education is? (1 being state educated / 5 being privately educated)

Figure 12. Question 5. Speaker A.

How high do you think Speaker B's level of education is? (1 being state educated / 5 being privately educated)

Figure 13. Question 5. Speaker B.
What social class do you think the Speaker A might belong to? (1 being lower class / 5 being upper class)

Figure 14. Question 6. Speaker A.

What social class do you think the Speaker B might belong to? (1 being lower class / 5 being upper class)

Figure 15. Question 6. Speaker B.
How good of a teaching model do you find A for non-native speakers?
12 respuestas

Figure 16. Question 7. Speaker A.

How good of a teaching model do you find B for non-native speakers?
12 respuestas

Figure 17. Question 7. Speaker B.