PART I

PHONETIC THEORY

I. TYPES OF PRONUNCIATION

§ 1. No two people pronounce exactly alike. The differences arise from a variety of causes, such as locality, early influences and social surroundings; there are also individual peculiarities for which it is difficult or impossible to account.

§ 2. It is thought by many that there ought to exist a standard, and one can see from several points of view that a standard speech would have its uses. Ability to speak in a standard way might be considered advantageous by some of those whose home language is a distinctly local form of speech; if their vocations require them to work in districts remote from their home locality, they would not be hampered by speaking in a manner differing considerably from the speech of those around them. A standard pronunciation would also be useful to the foreign learner of English.

§ 3. But though attempts have been made to devise and recommend standards, it cannot be said that any standard exists. Londoners speak in one way, Bristolians in another, Scotsmen in several other ways, and so on. American speech too (of which there are many varieties) is very different.

§ 4. There are also styles of speech for each individual. There is rapid colloquial style and slow formal style, and there are various shades between the two extremes.

§ 5. The science dealing with such matters is called Phonetics. This book is an elementary manual of phonetics dealing particularly with the pronunciation of the English language, and the subject is treated from the view-point of the English student. In it is given a fairly detailed description of one form of English pronunciation which, though not a standard, can at

least be said to be easily understood throughout the English-speaking world, and attention is called to some of the more outstanding divergences commonly heard in various localities and to differences of style employed by individual speakers. The 'widely understood pronunciation' here described may be termed 'Received Pronunciation' (abbreviation RP). This is not a particularly good term, but it is doubtful whether a better one can be found.

§ **6.** Nearly every reader is likely to find points in which his pronunciation differs from the RP here described. It is to be hoped that users of this book will take note of the discrepancies. It will probably be found in the majority of cases that the differences are not such as would cause them to be unintelligible in any part of the English-speaking world.

'Good' speech and 'bad' speech

§ **7.** 'Good' speech may be defined as a way of speaking which is clearly intelligible to all ordinary people. 'Bad' speech is a way of talking which is difficult for most people to understand. It is caused by mumbling or lack of definiteness of utterance.

§ **8.** A person may speak with sounds very different from those of his hearers and yet be clearly intelligible to all of them, as for instance when a Scotsman or an American addresses an English audience with clear articulation. Their speech cannot be described as other than 'good'. But if a speaker with an accent similar to that of his hearers articulates in a muffled way so that they cannot readily catch what he says, his way of speaking must be considered 'bad'.

§ **9.** A dialect speaker may speak 'well' or 'badly'. The sounds of his dialect are, it is suggested, neither good nor bad intrinsically. They are adequate for communicating with others speaking the same dialect, unless he mumbles his words.

§ 10. The sounds of London dialect (Cockney), for instance, are not in themselves bad. Words pronounced in Cockney fashion are perfectly intelligible to others who speak with local London pronunciation. Users of RP often find London dialect pronunciation difficult to understand, but their difficulty is to be attributed to unfamiliarity with that manner of speech and not to any inherent 'badness' in the sounds.

§ 11. The view has sometimes been expressed that for speech to be 'good' it must not only be clearly intelligible but also 'pleasing' to the hearer. It is suggested that this condition is not one that can be applied in practice. For what is 'pleasing' to one person is not necessarily pleasing to another. People's ideas as to what is pleasing or displeasing are often determined by associations with circumstances under which certain kinds of pronunciation are used, and not by any inherent goodness or badness of the sounds uttered.

II. ORGANS OF SPEECH

§ 12. To get an understanding of the nature of speech and the means by which it is produced, it is necessary in the first place to have a rough idea of the structure and the functions of the various parts of the 'organs of speech'. A detailed study of the anatomy and physiology of these organs is not needed.

§ 13. The following diagrams show most of what is required for the purposes of this book. A study of these diagrams should be supplemented by an examination of the inside of the mouth by means of a hand-mirror. The best way of doing this is to stand with one's back to the light and to hold the mirror in such a position that it reflects the light into the mouth, and at the same time enables the observer to see the interior thus illuminated. It is not difficult to find the right position for the mirror. It is also useful to feel the roof of the mouth with the

tip of the tongue, beginning at the edge of the upper front teeth and sliding the tongue-tip backwards until it is curled up as far as it will go.

§ **14.** It will be observed in particular that the main part of the roof of the mouth is divided into two parts, the front part constituting the *hard palate* and the back part the *soft palate*. The foremost part of the roof of the mouth which is convex to

B. Back of Tongue.
Bl. Blade of Tongue.
E. Epiglottis.
F. Front of Tongue.
FP. Food Passage.
H. Hard Palate.
LL. Lips.
P. Pharyngeal cavity (Pharynx).
R. Root of Tongue.
S. Soft Palate.
TR. Teeth-Ridge.
TT. Teeth.
U. Uvula.
V. Position of Vocal Cords.
W. Wind-pipe.

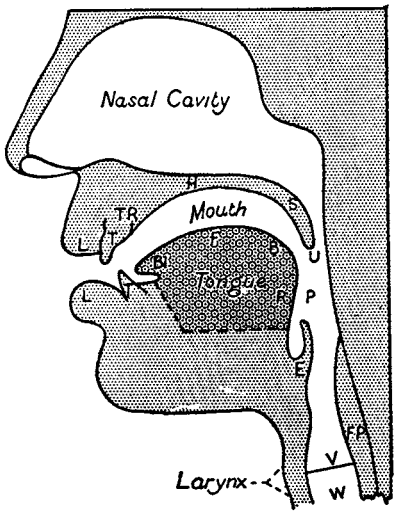

Fig. 1. The organs of speech.

the tongue is called the *teeth-ridge* (or *gum*). It extends from the back of the upper front teeth to the point where the roof of the mouth ceases to be convex to the tongue and begins to be concave.

§ **15.** *AA* in Fig. 2 is the *pharyngeal arch*. The sides of it are generally held wide apart as shown in the illustration. It is, however, possible to draw the sides towards each other so as to leave only a narrow aperture between them. It is a good

exercise for students of speech to practise widening and narrowing this aperture, while looking at the throat in a mirror. The width of this opening has an effect on voice quality.

§ **16.** The *soft palate* is movable upwards and downwards with a sort of hinge where the hard palate begins. When lowered,

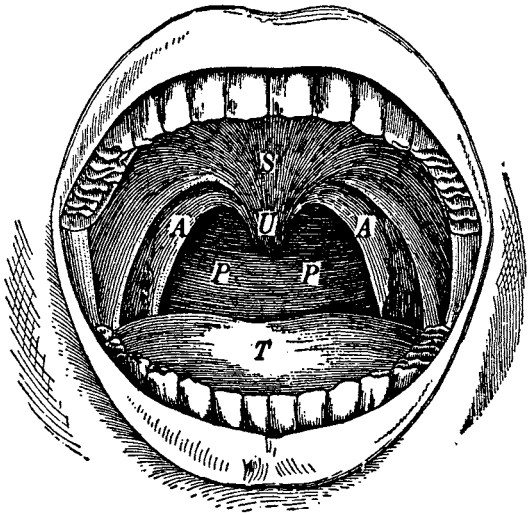

Fig. 2. The mouth seen from the front.

AA. Pharyngeal arch. *PP*. Pharyngeal cavity (pharynx).
S. Soft palate (velum). *T*. Tongue. *U*. Uvula.

it takes up the position shown in Fig. 1. When raised to its fullest extent it touches the back wall of the pharynx as shown approximately in Fig. 5 (p. 13).

§ **17.** The tongue has no physical divisions like the palate. It is, however, convenient for the purposes of phonetics to imagine the surface of the tongue to be divided into parts corresponding to the parts of the roof of the mouth. The part normally lying opposite the soft palate is called the *back*. The

part normally lying opposite the hard palate (excluding the teeth-ridge) is called the *front*. The part lying opposite the teeth-ridge when the tongue is in the position of rest is called the *blade* (see Fig. 1). Particular note should be taken of the technical meaning in phonetics of the terms *back* and *front*.

§ **18.** The epiglottis acts as a kind of lid to the windpipe. It is used in the action of swallowing, but is not known to be used in the production of any speech sounds.

The vocal cords. Breath and voice

§ **19.** The vocal cords are situated in the larynx; they resemble two lips. They run in a horizontal direction from back to front (see Figs. 1 and 3). The space between them is called the

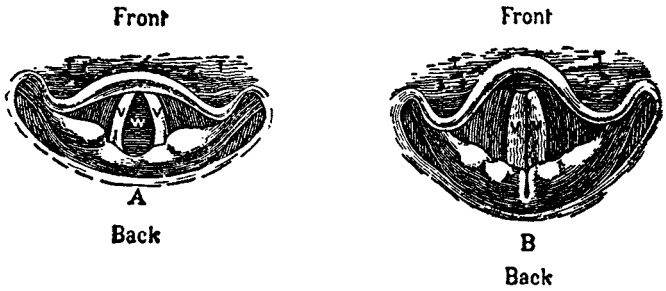

Fig. 3. The larynx as seen through a laryngoscope.
A. Position for breath. B. Position for voice.
TT. Tongue. VV. Vocal cords. W. Windpipe.

glottis. The cords may be kept apart, or they may be brought together so as to close the air passage completely. When they are brought close together and air is forced between them, they vibrate, producing the sound known as *voice*. When they are wide apart and air passes between them, the sound produced is called *breath*. Certain intermediate states of the glottis give rise to *whisper*. The sound h (§ 369) is pure breath; voice is heard in many sounds and particularly in the vowels.

§ 20. Just above the vocal cords there is another pair of lips called the *false vocal cords*. They are generally held much wider apart than the true vocal cords; they are not shown in Fig. 3. It is possible to constrict them, but it is doubtful if they can be brought into complete contact along their whole length. There is constriction of the false cords in the production of loud whisper.

§ 21. *Breath* and *voice* may be illustrated artificially by the following simple experiment. Take a short tube of wood or glass T, say 1½ in. long and ¼ in. in diameter, and tie on to one end of it a piece of thin rubber tubing, of a rather larger diameter, say ¾ in., as shown in the accompanying diagram. The tube of wood or glass represents the windpipe, and the rubber part the larynx. The space enclosed by the edge of the rubber *EE*, represents the glottis. If we leave the rubber in its natural position and blow through the tube, air passes out, making a slight hissing sound. This corresponds to breath. If we take hold of two opposite points of the edge of the rubber *E*, *E*, and draw them apart so that two edges of the rubber come into contact along a straight line, we have a representation of the glottis in the position for voice, the two edges which are in contact representing the two vocal cords. Now, if we blow down the tube, the air in passing out causes the edges to vibrate and a kind of musical sound is produced. This corresponds to voice.

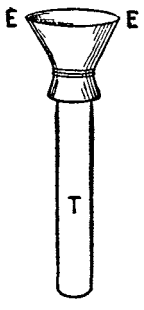

Fig. 4. Tube illustrating the working of the vocal cords.

§ 22. Most ordinary speech sounds require either breath or voice in their articulation. Those which contain breath are called *breathed*,[1] and those which contain voice are called

[1] Recommended pronunciation: brɛθt.

voiced. Examples of breathed sounds are p, f, h; examples of voiced sounds are b, v, ɑ:.[1]

§ **23.** When we speak in a whisper, voice is replaced throughout by whisper (§§ 19, 20), the breathed sounds remaining unaltered. It will not be necessary to deal further with whisper.

§ **24.** It does not require much practice to be able to recognize by the ear the difference between breathed and voiced sounds. The following well-known tests may, however, sometimes be found useful. (*a*) If breathed and voiced sounds are pronounced while the ears are stopped, a loud buzzing sound is heard in the latter case but not in the former. (*b*) If the throat is touched by the fingers, a distinct vibration is felt when voiced sounds are pronounced, but not otherwise. (*c*) It is possible to sing tunes on voiced sounds but not on breathed ones. Compare in these ways f with v, p with ɑ:.

§ **25.** The 'glottal stop' (§ 254) is an exceptional sound in which there is neither breath nor voice during its articulation. A 'click', such as the sound we use to urge on horses, has no voice and does not necessarily have any breath either. It is possible to pronounce a click with simultaneous voice, and sounds of this description actually occur in the Zulu and Kaffir languages. It is good practice for students of speech to exercise themselves by making such sounds.

§ **26.** When one listens to connected speech, it is generally easy to tell which of the sounds are breathed and which are

[1] Letters in black type are phonetic symbols. In naming the phonetic symbols, many teachers consider it expedient to designate them by their sounds and not by the ordinary names of the letters: p and not pi:, f and not ɛf. It may be said on the other hand that it is convenient that easily recognizable names should exist for the graphic designs which we call the letters of the alphabet, as also for the special additional letters needed in books on phonetics.

voiced. One can usually hear quite easily that such sounds as p, k, f, s, h are breathed and that ɑː, uː, b, g, v, z are voiced. There are, however, a few sequences of three consonants in which the breathed or voiced character of the middle one is not very definite. Examples are the sound of *s* in *obstacle* or of the *d* in *looked like*. It is probable that a majority use breathed s and t ('ɔbstəkl, 'luktlaik).

§ **27.** It has to be noticed too that in some situations the sounds represented by the letters b, d, g, v, ð, z, ʒ are not voiced. (See §§ 225, 240, 252, 326, 332, 339 and 345.)

§ **28.** General quality of voice varies from one individual to another. When someone says 'I like that man's voice', it often means that he likes the quality (*timbre* or *tamber*)[1] of the sounds uttered when the speaker's vocal cords vibrate. The expression is also used loosely meaning that he likes the general effect of the speech, including the particular shades of vowel used and the intonation.

§ **29.** Some particular voice qualities appear to be connected with locality. A husky voice quality, for instance, seems rather prevalent in parts of the North of England, and a more strident voice quality may be heard in London.

III. SOUNDS AND LETTERS

§ **30.** Sounds are heard. Letters are seen. Letters provide a means of symbolizing sounds. If they do so in a logical manner —in other words, if the essential sounds of any particular language or dialect are represented consistently—the writing is said to be *phonetic*.

[1] *Tamber* is an anglicized form of the French *timbre*. The term was invented by Robert Bridges, the late Poet Laureate.