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Where is RP going?:

A Study of the British Royal Family's Speech

Author

Estela Estage Cambra

Supervisor

Ana María Hornero Corisco

FACULTY OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at tracing the evolution that Received Pronunciation has experienced from its origins to nowadays. This evolution is followed from a historical, social and linguistic perspective, which reveals that RP may be diluting into other varieties of British English. In order to test this hypothesis, the Refined RP of the Royal Family has been taken as a symbol of steadiness that may have been affected by these changes. For this purpose, a corpus of video files has been selected with data from 1953 to nowadays, taking Queen Elizabeth II and the heirs to the throne, Prince Charles and Princes William and Harry, as representatives of the Royal Family's speech. Following the evolution of several phonetic and phonological features through the samples, it is concluded that the Queen's and Prince Charles's accents are moderately adapting to the new times while Princes William and Harry's RP is much more advanced and similar to the general, educated speech of their young contemporaries. These results would imply that RP is rapidly changing and probably, therefore, merging into more modern varieties such as Estuary English.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo de fin de grado pretende trazar la evolución del acento *Received Pronunciation* desde sus orígenes hasta la actualidad. Dicha evolución sigue una perspectiva histórica, social y lingüística, lo que revela que el RP podría estar diluyéndose en otras variedades del inglés británico. Para comprobar esta hipótesis, se ha tomado el *Refined RP* de la familia real británica como símbolo de estabilidad que podría estar viéndose afectada por estos cambios. Para ello, se ha seleccionado un corpus de archivos de video que incluyen muestras desde 1953 hasta la actualidad, tomando como representantes del habla de la familia real a la reina Isabel II, el príncipe Carlos y los príncipes Guillermo y Enrique. Tras seguir la evolución de ciertos rasgos fonéticos y fonológicos en sus discursos, se llega a la conclusión de que los acentos de la reina Isabel II y del príncipe Carlos se están adaptando moderadamente a los tiempos mientras que el RP de los príncipes Guillermo y Enrique es mucho más avanzado y similar al del habla culta de los jóvenes de su edad. Estos resultados darían a entender que el RP está cambiando rápidamente y por tanto, que, con probabilidad, esté confluyendo con otras variedades del inglés más modernas, como el *Estuary English*.

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1. Introduction

Received Pronunciation, or RP, is recognised as the standard, educated accent of British English despite the fact that it is only spoken by around 3% of the population (Trudgill, 2001). That percentage mostly corresponds to people with access to an exclusive education and professional system. Due to this and its consideration as a prestige accent, RP has traditionally had strong stereotypes attached to its speakers. Nevertheless, times seem to be changing and many scholars from the linguistic field, as well as the British public opinion, claim that RP is disappearing. In this dissertation, I will explore the history of RP since the appearance of the first prestige features around the 16th century and the varieties which can be observed within at present; the social considerations that have traditionally been attached to RP and other British accents until today and the phonetic and phonological changes that RP has undergone in the last century. Regarding the latter aspect, these innovations will be traced by means of a deep analysis of the Royal Family's speech, taking Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles and Princes William and Harry as its representatives. This choice was made taking into account the line of succession to the throne and the quantity and quality of the acoustic data, which were not sufficient before Elizabeth II. Therefore, the acoustic samples, gathered in Appendix 1, cover the period from the Coronation Day in 1953 to the latest Christmas Broadcast and interviews in 2017. With the aim of proving my acoustic analysis, I will use a code of acronyms and numbers –indicated in Appendix 1– to refer to the different videos that constitute my corpus. Queen Elizabeth's samples will be referred to as QE(1-6), Prince Charles's will be referred to as PC(1-3), Prince William's will be referred to as PW(1-3) and Prince Harry's will be referred to as PH(1-2). These will help to follow the evolution of Refined RP, the variety traditionally spoken by the Royal Family, in one of the most change-resistant institutions in the UK in order to prove whether the structural

changes affecting RP have also made their way into this variety. This would mean that Received Pronunciation is undoubtedly moving to other more modern varieties and therefore, it could be losing its long-held position as the prestige accent. Before starting with the development of Received Pronunciation (section 2), I would like to call attention to the fact that the division made into historical, sociological and phonetic and phonological factors in my dissertation is an artificial one for the sake of clarity in the analysis, since the three elements equally contribute to the changing perspectives of RP and any other accent and they are not separate disciplines.

2. Historical Overview of Received Pronunciation (RP)

2.1. The Origins of RP

When the Normans arrived in England in 1066, Old English and Norman French started to influence each other. A new form of English emerged from them –which later would be called Middle English– and this acquired legal recognition in 1362 with the Pleading in English Act. Around the fifteenth century, the dialect spoken in the South-East of England began to be identified with the speech of the central institutions, being spoken in the capital, London, and in the only two universities in England by that time, Oxford and Cambridge (Williams, 2001). This way, the speech of this area acquired a special reputation. This is reflected in Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), where he advised young poets what type of English they should use: “ye shall therefore take the vsuall speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx [sixty] myles, and not much aboue” (p. 157). As Honey (1989) remarked, the “direct ancestor” of Received Pronunciation was already the “property of a limited social group within that region”: the Court, the gentry and the most educated part of society such as university professors (p. 15). The growth of this educated class was what motivated the spread of the standard ‘Southern’ accent.

In the eighteenth century, London was full of spelling-masters and pronunciation-coaches that began to tag uses of English as ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’, making people aware of the importance of their accents. Williams (2001) thus claimed that “the new ‘standard’ [...] was not [...] the result mainly of growth through contact and actual relationships, but to a considerable extent an artificial creation based on false premises” (p. 244). Between about 1775 and 1850, the pronunciation of this standard British accent changed markedly towards what is today called Received Pronunciation, so its essentials were already settled down by this date (Honey, 1989; Williams, 2001). Also, McCrum, Cran and MacNeil (1987) pointed out that ‘the Queen’s English’, which has traditionally been understood as an overlapping term to designate RP accent, was born during the Victorian era (1837-1901) as a “spoken standard to what ‘lesser breeds’ could aspire” (p. 21). Nevertheless, as they claimed, members of the higher classes from this era still retained their regional accents.

It was the Education Act of 1870 that meant the final and decisive promotion of RP as a non-localisable accent, suitable and necessary for important public posts and the most elevated positions in the social hierarchy. The passing of this law had as a result the emergence of a public school system which would become the cornerstone of education for the new generations in power. Honey (1989) gathered that these public schools were mostly boarding schools which effectively taught discipline and values through the figure of teachers, who acted as role models for their students. This type of education started from the age of seven or eight with preparatory schools and continued until the age of seventeen or eighteen, when they finished their education at public schools. This model of teaching attracted many upper and upper-middle class parents who wanted these schools as the education for their sons (only males were accepted in public schools at this time). Here began the close link between high classes and the

Queen's English or Received Pronunciation, term which started to be in use at this time (end of the nineteenth century) (McCrum *et al.*, 1987). Indeed, it has been proven that before 1870, school masters and the educated elite could speak with a regional accent but since the passing of the Education Act, an RP accent was a requisite for these positions (Honey, 1989; McCrum *et al.*, 1987). Public schools not only provided boys with this exclusive education, models and accent but also served as a pass to the most valuable professions in society: politicians, high-rank army officers, university professors and members of the royalty, they all shared a public school education. Nevertheless, McCrum *et al.* (1987) pointed out that although “the identification of RP with power, education and material success encouraged imitation, it also stimulated a distinct antipathy, and many people resented its implicit snobbery” (p. 25). The sociological perspectives on RP and their change in the last decades will be further analysed in section 3.

In the twentieth century, the creation of other major institutions in Great Britain contributed to the spread of RP from London, Oxford and Cambridge to homes all over the country. In 1922, the first radio broadcasting service, the BBC, was established in Britain and the accent chosen to be spoken by announcers and presenters was RP. This choice was made by the *Advisory Committee on Spoken English (ACSE)*, created just in order to deal with this linguistic issue. The reasons for adopting RP in this media were, according to one of its members –the poet Robert Bridges–, “to promote a sense of impersonality and impartiality” together with the promotion of English on a global scale (to the British colonies and other countries) (McCrum *et al.*, 1987, p. 27). From this moment on, RP started to be known also as ‘BBC English’. This meant the last boost that Received Pronunciation experienced as a prestigious accent. In the second half of the twentieth century, after the Second World War, debates regarding the importance of

RP sprang up, given that it was only spoken by less than a 5 per cent of the British population (Milroy, 2001) –a 3 per cent (according to Trudgill, 2001)– and it did not represent ‘real people’ but a rich, powerful, inaccessible few.

2.2. Varieties of RP

As it has been shown in the previous section, the traditional ‘guardians’ of RP as a prestigious accent have been the royalty, the army, politicians and the upper-middle class. However, not all of them speak the same variety of RP. Received Pronunciation, as an accent of a living language like English, is not stable and has been subject to changes and alterations through time. Leaving the diachronic analysis for later sections (see 3 and 4 below), this part will focus on the presentation of the varieties of RP traditionally considered by scholars. The views of Honey (1989), Wells (1989) and Gimson (1994) on this topic are explored in the following lines.

Honey (1989) traced the simplest division within RP. He distinguished between *marked* and *unmarked RP*. The point of comparison is their level of educatedness. He claimed that *unmarked RP* “suggests a fairly high degree of educatedness, although the class of its speaker need not be very exalted”, whereas *marked RP* implies “a privileged kind of education” (p. 38). The latter would be expected in some member of the royal family, dons at Oxford and Cambridge, senior officers in the armed forces and dukes. As this shows, marked RP is associated with the highest positions in the aristocracy whilst unmarked RP would correspond in the context of jobs such as a primary school teacher, a secretary, a doctor or solicitor or a BBC announcer. The main characteristic of marked RP is its ‘stiff upper lip’, which refers to a very distinctive articulatory set in contrast with speakers of unmarked RP or other accents (Honey, 1989). McCrum *et al.* (1987) also shared this division and pointed out that this characteristic of marked RP is

usually perceived by other speakers as “talking ‘with a plum in the mouth’, or ‘lah-di-dah’ or ‘fraffly-fraffly’” (p. 28).

Wells (1989) partially mirrored Honey’s division but he distinguished one more variety within RP and a fourth one near it: he differentiated between Mainstream RP, U-RP, Adoptive RP and Near-RP. The latter is outside the definition of RP, since it refers to “any accent which [...] includes very little in the way of regionalisms which would enable the provenance of the speaker to be localized within England” (p. 297). On the other hand, Mainstream RP is defined negatively, by identifying the other two varieties: U-RP and Adoptive RP. Whereas Mainstream RP is related to the upper-middle class, U-RP is only upper-class. According to Wells (1989), the latter is the type of speech found in occupations such as the aristocracy, upper-class army officers, Oxford and Cambridge dons or a “schoolmistress at an expensive private girls’ school” (p. 280). Together with certain phonetic characteristics, this variety is identifiable by the ‘plumminess’ of its voice quality. Finally, Adoptive RP is the variety spoken by those who did not speak it as children, but that ‘adopted’ it when growing up, usually due to a change in their social circumstances. Their speech is characterised by a “lack of control over the informal and allegro characteristics of RP” (Wells, 1989, p. 284).

Gimson’s division of RP will be finally considered. His perspective is parallel to that of Wells (1989) but without considering the variety of Adoptive RP. Gimson distinguished General RP, Refined RP and Regional RP (paralleling Wells’ Mainstream RP, U-RP and Near RP, respectively). What Gimson added to the previous characteristics noted by Wells is that while Refined RP is a relatively homogenous variety, Regional RP is spreading and is much more heterogeneous, reflecting thus an increasing tolerance towards regional dialects (Cruttenden, 2008).

It is necessary to consider the fact that the three authors stressed the artificiality of these divisions. They acknowledged the importance of the individual and denied the existence of categorical boundaries between varieties. Nevertheless, they can be used as an orientation to observe the changes of RP in the different social groups that use this accent. Since my study is going to focus on the speech of the Royal Family, I will refer to their way of speaking as Refined RP, using Gimson's terminology.

3. Social Considerations of Received Pronunciation

3.1. Changes until the 21st century

As explained above, the origins of RP relate it, geographically, to the south-east of England (although today it is a non-localisable accent) and, socially, to the high classes, a high level of education and important public posts. Therefore, since its beginnings, it has developed as a prestigious variety and, as Trudgill (2001) described it, as an unusual, rather unique, minority accent. These characteristics made of RP the model accent to be imitated. According to Milroy (2001), it is from the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the public school system, that RP acquired its special status as a regionless accent and as a "badge of identity" for the higher professional and business classes (p. 20).

Wells (1988) claimed that accents are powerful indicators not only of geographical identity –this is not the case of RP– but also of a person's social position, sex, ethnicity, age and their styles and roles. He also indicated that, because of these implications, accents are a great source of stereotypes and prejudgements, especially in Britain. Taking this into account, Wells devised a relation between the geographical and the social variables affecting accents. He concluded that a strong (or broad) local accent, usually used by low-class people, is the furthest that it can be from RP (1988). This

explains the fact that whilst RP was the most positively-valued accent in the British Isles according to tradition, all the rest were stigmatised as a symbol of belonging to the uneducated, working-class part of society in a higher or lower degree: London Cockney, Scouse, Brum, Glaswegian and Belfast accent score the lowest in this scale whereas others can be somewhere in-between, such as the Yorkshire accent or the Educated Scottish Standard, the latter being the closest to the positive values of RP (Honey, 1989).

These implications led to an acceptance of certain stereotypes attached to the different types of accents. Giles indicated the association of RP speakers with ambition, intelligence, confidence and hard-work (as cited in Wells, 1988) and Honey (1989) marked their relation even to “good looks, tallness and cleanliness” (p. 60). Both researchers agreed that non-RP speakers are also related to other qualities such as friendliness, honesty, companionability and sense of humour. This was made evident already with the rise of the sound broadcasting from the 1920s. Back then, RP was the only accent chosen for broadcasting with the aim of giving a sense of distance and authority but also of spreading its use among the general audience (Milroy, 2001). Although the latter goal was a complete failure, the identification of the BBC with RP had long-term consequences. The Second World War acted as a great leveller of social class divisions and this influenced the traditional social perception of accents. From the end of the war and, especially from the 1960s, the BBC started including some non-standard accents in their broadcasts, especially in advertising (since regional accents are believed to be felt as more sincere and friendly), the weather forecast, comedy programmes and some characters in TV series (Honey, 1989). Furthermore, attempts began to be made to introduce some broadcasters whose speech contained regional features. At the beginning, these personalities were much criticised and even received

hate-mail but from the 1960s and 1970s, this situation changed and the accent spectrum of BBC widened (Honey, 1989; McCrum *et al.*, 1987).

By the end of the 20th century, the associations of an RP accent acquired more negative traces and the increasing tolerance of regional features was also noticeable in the fields of politics and education. As Trudgill remarked, nowadays RP can be seen as a disadvantage in certain social situations, being perceived as “snobbish” and “posh” (2001). He claimed that “RP accent is no longer the necessary passport to employment of certain sorts that it once was” (p. 8). Indeed, politicians of both the Labour and the Conservative Party such as Tony Blair or George Osborne –the latter already in the 21st century– became notorious for including non-standard features outside RP in their speech, presumably with the intention to be felt closer to ‘real people’ and less posh (Honey, 1989). In education, McCrum *et al.* (1987) showed how this change of perception was already visible in a traditional RP institution as Winchester public school three decades ago. Its students claimed that the accent typically associated with public schools was seen as “posh”, “lah-di-dah” and too “plummy”, so that those with such accent had to move it to a more middle-class one (p. 31). Despite these improvements towards the abandonment of the presumptions attached to accents in the United Kingdom, some scholars like Gimson and Trudgill seemed to agree with the fact that accent discrimination still occurs to regional, broad accents and that General or Regional RP will still be expected and demanded in the positions that previously used to feature Refined RP.

3.2. Sociological Perspectives on RP today and their Consequences

Gimson greatly summed up the real meaning of RP. According to him, Received Pronunciation is “the result of social judgment rather than of an official decision as to

what is 'correct' or 'wrong' (Cruttenden, 2008, p. 77). For this reason, it would not be surprising that, with the blurring of social boundaries and the entering in a globalised world, these social judgments started to fade together with the prestige strongly attached to RP. Gimson (1994) claimed that, because of these social connotations, RP can now be seen as a handicap and that it is rejected by young people as a form of 'the Establishment'. Nevertheless, these theoretical reflections seem to be challenged by the most recent research polls on this issue. In 2013, the polling company ComRes asked adult population in Great Britain about the trustworthiness, friendliness and intelligence that the different English accents suggested to them. This survey revealed that in general the stereotypes attached to accents were still very active: RP was shown to imply more trustworthiness and intelligence than regional accents such as Cockney or Scouse, but less friendliness. The most surprising fact was that the analysis based on age revealed that young people between 18 and 24 years old responded more strongly in favour of the traditional stereotypes than people over 65; especially in the case of RP, whose implications seem to be the most categorical (see Table 1). These data contradict the theoretical perspectives explained, in which most scholars seemed to point towards the dissolution of the stereotypes. The only results that can be extracted from this survey in this line of thought is that there seems to be a growing tendency towards the neutral response (e.g. 'neither intelligent nor unintelligent'), at least, regarding regional accents (intelligence and trustworthiness in Cockney and Scouse). When interpreting Table 1, it is necessary to take into account that the data are extracted from a much larger database which considered other accents and variables. Also, the results were summed up by considering only the net sums. Therefore, 'Agree' corresponds to the title 'NET: Trustworthy/ friendly / intelligent'; 'Neutral' corresponds to 'Neither trustworthy/

friendly / intelligent nor untrustworthy/ unfriendly / unintelligent; and ‘Disagree’ corresponds to ‘NET: Not trustworthy/ friendly/ intelligent’.

		RP		Cockney		Scouse	
		Young (18-24)	Old (+65)	Young (18-24)	Old (+65)	Young (18-24)	Old (+65)
Trustworthy	Agree	60%	48%	25%	35%	25%	29%
	Neutral	27%	42%	33%	46%	34%	46%
	Disagree	6%	6%	29%	15%	31%	20%
Friendly	Agree	36%	43%	42%	52%	29%	45%
	Neutral	33%	37%	30%	29%	35%	28%
	Disagree	25%	18%	23%	18%	29%	24%
Intelligent	Agree	64%	58%	14%	19%	12%	18%
	Neutral	28%	32%	37%	47%	37%	48%
	Disagree	3%	3%	40%	28%	44%	27%

Table 1. Summary of the data gathered by ComRes (2013).

As it has just been shown, the social stereotypes attached to accents are very popular and widely accepted. Although the latest data seem to contradict what scholars had previously stated, some sociological changes, whatever they may be, have been observed by the general public in the last decades. The British public opinion, embodied in the mass media, reflects the British concern with accents and the changing tendencies that these are experiencing. An article from *The Independent* already commented on how “once people aspired to speak posh” but then RP was “seen as naff and unfashionable” and “nobody is [was] proud to speak posh” (Morrish, 1999). Some

media have also turned the spotlight on the Queen's speech and the royal accent. Being one of the oldest and most emblematic of British institutions, the fact that the Royal Family seems to be adapting their speech to the times is engaging to many. *BBC News Online* published an article based on the findings of Australian experts from Sydney's Macquarie University, who proved that "the Queen's accent is [was] moving towards the standard accent of southern England, away from the cut-glass "upper-crust" accent of the 1950s" (2000). In the same media, Robson used the same term ('cut-glass accent') to refer to the traditional monarchy speech and, supporting his arguments on Harrington's studies, he wrote about how the Queen had not been able to resist the times and her accent had become more similar to that of the standard, middle class, Southern English at the same time that increasingly more aristocrats adopt a "a kind of aristo-cockney hybrid" (2016). These media articles reflect that accent is a matter of national interest in Great Britain and they echo the many studies that have been conducted on the changing patterns of accents. Most of these changes are connected with the increasing influence of General American on British society and, above all, of Cockney and Estuary English on the British way of talking. Their influence and the changes that they have triggered on RP, mostly noticeable on the phonetic and phonological aspects of speech, are the subject of my study and they are going to be explored and analysed in the following sections (4 and 5).

4. Linguistic Change in Received Pronunciation

As previously said, Received Pronunciation is experiencing changes regarding its consideration as the prestige accent in the UK, both officially and socially. It is not clear whether these changes are the outcome of its phonetic and phonological modifications or *vice versa*; however, it seems that its variation in form is a consequence of RP trying to adapt to the new times and being influenced by other –more popular– accents. Before

going directly into the innovations of RP, it is interesting to consider William Labov's studies about the social factors that influence linguistic change. Regarding the causes of linguistic change, he claimed that it is not possible to completely link social dimensions and linguistic traits because they are "the result of an arbitrary and accidental concatenation in history" (Labov, 2001, p. 503). Therefore, this should be taken into account when trying to trace the causes of the innovations affecting RP. With regard to the role of gender in linguistic change, he recognised the 'Gender Paradox', which concludes that "women conform more closely than men to sociolinguistic norms that are overtly prescribed, but conform less than men when they are not" (p. 293). This means that, in environments where they can be judged, women are more conservative but if, otherwise, they feel free, they are more innovative in terms of speech. The 'Gender Paradox', therefore, could help to explain why the accent of the Duchess of Cambridge is closer to Refined RP than her husband's, Prince William, as Ben T. Smith noticed in his 'Dialect blog' (2011). Finally, Labov also located the leaders of change in the social scale. With his 'Curvilinear Principle', he stated that "Linguistic change from below originates in a central social group, located in the interior of the socioeconomic hierarchy" (2001, p. 188). The 'central social group' usually corresponds to the upper working class or the lower middle class, so it is the social groups in the extremes that exert the minor influence on linguistic change (Labov, 2001).

In the case of British English, it seems to be affected by two parallel phenomena: dialect levelling and standardisation, which are believed to be the result of the greater movements of people across the country and the radical changes in people's social networks (Kerswill, 2001). People now are also more socially mobile and, as Trudgill (2001) pointed out, those who go up in the social scale tend to reduce the number of regional features in their accents "but they will no longer remove such

features altogether” (p. 10). For some, this conjunction between educated speech and regional traces is defined as a variety of RP, called ‘Regional RP’ by Gimson (1994) or ‘Near-RP’ by Wells (1989); but, for others, it corresponds to Estuary English. David Rosewarne coined the term and defined it as a “variety of modified regional speech [...], a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation”, a middle ground between RP and London speech (1984). The former group, that of Wells and Gimson, seems to oppose the idea that Estuary English will take over the role of RP, whereas the defenders of the opposite view already consider this new variety as the model for general imitation, especially for young people. Without entering in this ongoing terminological debate, the most noticeable changes in the phonetics and phonology of RP are going to be outlined. Their presence in the Royal Family’s speech will be traced and analysed in section 5.

4. 1. Phonetic and Phonological Innovations occurring in RP

R-Sandhi

Hannisdal (2006) defined R-Sandhi as comprising “the phenomena of linking and intrusive /r/, which involve the insertion of /r/ in cases of vowel hiatus” (p. 106). RP is a non-rhotic accent, so /r/ is not pronounced before a consonant, after mid central vowels or in absolute final position. However, ‘linking /r/’ occurs when a word ending in historical /r/ is followed by another starting with a vowel. This phenomenon has been part of this accent since the R dropping in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, some time afterwards ‘intrusive /r/’ appeared. This /r/ is unetymological and can take place after /ɪə, ə/ and certain vowels at a word boundary when the next word begins with a vowel, or even word-internally (i.e. *the idea (r) of, draw(r)ing*) (Wells, 1988, pp. 218-227). Whereas ‘linking R’ is correct and desirable by RP speakers, the use of ‘intrusive R’ is stigmatised (Hannisdal, 2006).

The case of CLOTH

Lexical sets such as that of CLOTH –*off, across, often*– used to be pronounced with the long [ɔ:] because of the Pre-Fricative Lengthening (also affecting the /a:/ of BATH). However, it has become the short vowel /ɒ/ for General RP and the long vowel is now seen as an archaism attributed to Refined RP (Wells, 1988, pp. 232-234; Cruttenden, 2008).

CURE lowering

The phenomenon of CURE Lowering, or Second FORCE Merger, consists in the lowering and monophthonging of the CURE vowel (/ʊə/), resulting in /ɔ:/, phonetically identical to that of FORCE-NORTH-THOUGHT (Wells, 1988; Hannisdal, 2006). According to Cruttenden, this is a well-established sound change which is now used by the majority of General RP speakers (2008).

The Realization of GOAT (or GOAT Allophony)

The traditional vowel of GOAT is /əʊ/; however, many speakers now use [ɒʊ], a contextual allophone with a back rounded starting point, before dark /l/: *home* [həʊm] but *hole* [hɒʊl] (Hannisdal, 2006, p. 102). According to her findings, GOAT allophony is now not only part of London accents but furthermore, it is becoming firmly established in General RP.

Smoothing

This refers to the phenomenon by which certain types of diphthongs in a prevocalic environment can have a monophthongal realisation. This can apply to /eɪ/ (becoming [e:] as in *player*), /əʊ/ (becoming [ö:, ɜ:, e:] as in *going*) and /aɪ, aʊ/ (becoming [a:, ɑ:] as in *empire*). Smoothing in RP can also occur in /i:/ and /u:/, laxing

them to [ɪ:] and [ʊ:] respectively (as in *seeing* or *fluent*). It seems that this phenomenon is widely criticised as a vulgarism (especially the *shire-shower-Shah* homophony) but also contradictorily heard in RP speakers (Gimson, 1980 as cited in Wells, 1988; Wells, 1988, pp. 238-242). The triphthongs /aɪə/ and /aʊə/ can also undergo this process and lose their second element (becoming a diphthong) or even, the final schwa (becoming a monophthong). Therefore, words such as *tyre* and *tower* could become homophonous (Hannisdal, 2006).

Happy Tensing

Final /ɪ/ in words such as *happy* or *coffee* is now becoming closer, as the vowel in FLEECE [i(:)] (Wells, 1988). Cruttenden (2008) classified the so-called ‘happy tensing’ as a well-established change in General RP speech.

Yod Coalescence

This is a type of assimilation where /j/ fuses, or coalesces, with preceding /t, d, s, z/, resulting in affricates /tʃ, dʒ/ or fricatives /ʃ, ʒ/, e.g. *tune* /tju:n/ > /tʃu:n/. Yod coalescence in unaccented positions (as in *culture*) is almost complete in RP, although it may coexist with the original form (with /j/) in careful speech. Coalescences in stressed syllables (as in *assume*) or in words boundaries (as in *not yet* or *this year*) are characteristic of rapid, familiar speech but they are spreading to RP (Hannisdal, 2006; Cruttenden, 2008).

4.2. Some further British Innovations

The following innovations account for sound changes which are rapidly spreading in British English, usually originating in the popular speech of the south-east of England. Because of the great changes that RP is undergoing, some of these may have begun to permeate into the prestige accent (this will be discussed in Section 5).

Glottalisation

This seems to be one of the more modern changes occurring to English. The voiceless plosives /p, t, k/ and the affricate /tʃ/ are often preceded in certain, variable syllable-final environments by a glottal stop [ʔ], that is, the closure of the vocal folds which interrupts the passage of air into the supraglottal organs. Some RP speakers produce [ʔ] when syllable-final /p, t, k/ are followed by a consonant (as in *that table*). The use of glottal stop to replace /t/ in other contexts was until recently stigmatised in RP and its use word-medially inter-vocalically is still considered non-RP (Fabricius, 2002 as cited in Cruttenden, 2008).

L Vocalisation

This is one of the changes that is believed to become entirely standard in English (and therefore, in RP) over the course of the next century. It consists in the vocalisation of dark L [ɫ] (occurring before a consonant or in final position) into [ɻ], [o] or [ʊ]. Thus, *milk* would be pronounced [mɪɔk] (Wells, 1988, pp. 258-259). Cruttenden (2008) locates this change ‘on the verge of RP’.

5. Phonetic and Phonological Changes of RP in the Royal Family’s Speech

5.1. HM Queen Elizabeth II

In order to analyse the evolution of the Queen’s Refined RP, I have focused on speeches from 1953 (QE1), 1957 (QE2), 1997 (QE3), 1998 (QE4), 2011 (QE5) and 2017 (QE6), from her coronation to nowadays. Although all the samples correspond to careful speech, remarkable differences are found between them. Regarding prosodic features (rhythm, intonation and stress), the Queen’s diction is notably less plummy and the speech seems to be more connected in the most recent samples. Overall, she appears

much more relaxed and natural. This is also reflected in her syntax and lexis, since it is not until the last decade's speeches that contracted verbal forms become common, together with the presence of some more informal expressions: "when I was born, you weren't expected to be around that long" (QE6).

These changes are only a part of the Crown's attempts to become closer to the people in the last decades. Regarding accent, the Queen's RP has also varied along her reign. Although her speech has resisted the most modern innovations such as glottalisation, L vocalisation or intrusive R (even though there were suitable contexts for their appearance, no examples of these were found), it has been affected by other phonetic and phonological changes. Linking R is a common feature of her speech, being present in all the samples: 'near or far' /nɪər ə: fa:/ (QE1), 'there are lessons' /ðər ə/ (QE3), 'were an example' /wər ən/ (QE6). Despite its presence, her use of linking R is not systematic. As Hannisdal (2006) noticed in newsreaders's speech, this could be due to the formality of the speech or to the slower rate of utterance.

In the case of words of the CLOTH type (*often*, *lost* and *gone* have been analysed), I observed that they are pronounced with a long /ɔ:/ until the sample of 2011 (QE5, 3:31). Nevertheless, *gone* and *lost* seem to be pronounced with a shorter, more open vowel –closer to /ɒ/– in the Christmas message of 2017 (QE6, 1:52, 3:35). Hinton (2015) understood the CLOTH transfer as a mere reflection of the Queen's individual speech patterns on his research until that date, so perhaps it is too soon to claim the loss of /ɔ:/ in Refined RP. In what his results and mine coincide is in the fact that GOAT allophony is not found in Her Majesty's speech whereas CURE lowering is. *Old*, *whole*, *hold* and *gold* are words which reappear in all the samples and, although the first element of the diphthong in *gold* in 2017 is closer to /ɒ/ (QE6, 5:03), the realisation of

/əʊ/ as [ɒʊ] is not completed. On the other hand, the word *sure* is already pronounced with /ɔ:/ in 1953 as result of the CURE lowering (QE1, 3:31).

Smoothing is another well-established innovation in the Queen's speech, especially in the case of triphthongs. The samples show the dropping of the central vowel in the cases of *Empire*, *our* and *fire* consistently since the first sample, the result always being a centring diphthong [aə] (QE1, 3:11; QE1, 3:36; QE6, 3:28). These findings are in line with those of Hannisdal (2006), which proved Smoothing to still be a common process in RP.

In the case of Yod Coalescence, as Cruttenden (2008) predicted, words such as *future* or *culture* already show this phenomenon in the first speeches. However, in the cases of *during* or *duty*, the Queen produced /dj/ in her first speeches but she has progressively moved their first sound to /dʒ/. As an example, in 1998, she pronounced /dʒʊər ɪŋ/ (QE4, 3:28), but still /'dju:ti/ (QE4, 8:31). Later, it will be observed if this phenomenon is complete in the younger members of the Royal Family.

Finally, regarding Happy Tensing, my analysis of the Queen's acoustic samples did not reveal her total raising and fronting of the /ɪ/ vowel in *happy* (QE3, 1:55; QE6, 6:09). Some changes were perceived in its realisation but they were not conclusive with regards to this phenomenon. Carrying out a more exhaustive study on the Queen's *happy* vowel, Harrington (2006) concluded that this vowel shows a greater raising than fronting, so the Happy Tensing is still not complete in her speech. As it has been proved, the Queen shows a partial adoption of the RP innovations, some of which are claimed to be well-established in General RP. Now, the accent of younger members of the Royal Family will be analysed in order to note their differences.

5.2. HRH Charles, Prince of Wales

In the case of Prince Charles, the samples date from interviews in the middle 80s (PC1A-C) and 2006 (PC2) and a special video message from 2016 (PC3). Having been born in 1948, he belongs to a different generation than his mother Elizabeth II but, being Charles the heir apparent to the British throne, his speech may not reflect the current innovations affecting RP. Analysing the samples, it seems that there is still no trace of intrusive R or L vocalisation in his speech, since no examples of these have been found. However, he does produce the T glottalisation in the 80s and 2006 samples. In the first case, the glottalisation takes place before a consonant ('ate /eɪʔ/ meat' PC1B, 6:03) which, according to Cruttenden (2008) is a well-established innovation in RP – he also pronounces *ate* with the diphthong /eɪ/ instead of following the current tendency in RP which pronounces *ate* as /et/. Nevertheless, in 2006, Prince Charles produces a glottal stop before a pause ('bring out /aʊʔ/' PC2, 0:43) which is surprising, taking into account that Cruttenden locates it 'on the verge of RP' (2008).

His speech has some features in common with that of the Queen. Both consistently reflect the CURE lowering in *sure* and the Smoothing of triphthongs to diphthongs (as in the case of *entire*, *diet* or *our*). However, Charles' RP is notably more advanced. In the samples from the 80s, some innovations are shown to be taking place but they do not seem to be completely established until 2016. In the case of the CLOTH transfer, in the 80s, *often* is produced with /ɔ:/ (PC1A, 6:22) whereas the vowel of *off* seems to be closer to /ɒ/ (PC1B, 9:53). By 2016, his realisation of *across* reveals a clear /ɒ/ (PC3, 2:07). The same occurs with the final /ɪ/ sound in words such as *country* or *very*, which shows a progressive tensing from the 80s to 2016, resulting in /i/. GOAT allophony is present inconsistently in all the samples: *whole* [hɔʊl] in the 80s (PC1A, 6:04) but *old* [əʊld] in 2006 (PC2, 6:32) and *told* [tɔʊld] in 2016 (PC3, 0:23).

Therefore, this phenomenon appears to be still in process, at least among the older members of the Royal Family. Above all, the analysis of Prince Charles's speech shows that it is not only more relaxed, but also more modern than that of the Queen.

5.3. Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex

Having been born in 1982 and 1984, Prince William and Prince Harry's accents are going to be considered simultaneously. The samples chosen for the analysis are interviews from 2006 (PW1) and 2010 (PW2) and a forum in 2016 (PW3), in the case of William; and, interviews from 2006 (PH1) and 2017 (PH2), in the case of Harry. Due to their young age, their accents are expected to be the most innovative ones in the Royal Family. The first aspect in which this is observable is the profuse presence of glottal stop. Both William and Harry produce the T glottaling in all the samples and in almost every context, except from word-internally. Some of the clearest examples take place before a fricative: *out there* /ʌvʔ ðeə/ (PW2, 0:34; PH2, 2:18); but also before a pause: *alright* /,ɔ:l 'raɪʔ/ (PW2, 6:14), *chat* /tʃæʔ/ (PH2, 3:57). In William's speech, there is also an example of intrusive R: *Kenya and* /'ken jə r ən/ (PW2, 0:18). These innovations reflect how their speech is much closer to General RP, or even Estuary English, than to the Refined RP of their father and grandmother.

Furthermore, they have fully incorporated all the other phonetic and phonological changes that were subject to analysis. *Off* is articulated as /ɒf/, with the short, open vowel; *sure* /ʃɔ:/ is affected by the CURE lowering; *whole* and *role* present the GOAT allophony and are articulated with [ɹoʊ]; and, words such as *family* and *carry* show Happy Tensing in their last vowel ([i]). Other changes in which both Prince William and Prince Harry go further than the previous generations is in the articulation of Yod Coalescence in stressed vowels, as in the case of *opportunity/ies* /ɒpə'tʃu:n

əti(z)/ (PH2, 14:44; PW3, 2:43). Although this was considered well-established in General RP by Cruttenden (2008), it was not consistently present in the previous samples. The same occurs with Smoothing. William and Harry share the diphthongising in *diamond* as /daəmænd/ (PW2, 1:49; PH2, 18:35) but the latter goes one step further and seems to monophthongise the triphthong in *player* to /e:/ (PH2, 8:48).

Apart from accent, their speech reflects their youth and modernity with the abundant use of colloquial expressions such as ‘you know’, which both of them use throughout their interventions, or ‘a hell of’ and ‘like’ in the case of Harry’s interviews. Although the accents of Prince William and Prince Harry are very similar and both of them are far from Refined RP, William’s speech could be expected to be a bit more conservative and conventional, taking into account that he is second in the line of succession to the throne. Therefore, despite the difficulties in classifying accents, I would say that both of them speak General RP but Prince Harry sounds definitely closer to Estuary English.

6. Conclusions

Having traced the evolution of Refined RP through the speech of three different generations, Queen Elizabeth’s, Prince Charles’s and Princes William and Harry’s accents show that Refined RP is disappearing. My findings indicate that the younger heirs to the throne no longer use this variety. On the contrary, they are closer to the speech of most of the educated, young people in the south of England, that is, General RP or even more recent varieties, like Estuary English. Due to her long life, the Queen’s accent has evolved and modernised through time, leaving behind some of the traditional archaisms of Refined RP. This conclusion is in line with that of Harrington, Palethorpe and Watson (2000), who found that the changes in the Queen’s speech were not related

to geography, style or age, but to the moving towards the Standard Southern British accent, that is, mainstream RP –as they call it–. Harrington (2007) reinforced this idea and claimed that Her Majesty’s accent was moving towards a “more modern, less aristocratic form of RP” (p. 15). Nevertheless, as my analysis has proved, she resists some of the innovations affecting RP. On the other hand, the speech of Prince Charles is a bit more advanced and despite having also evolved, nowadays his accent can be classified as General RP. In the case of Prince William and Prince Harry, their incorporations of glottal stops, intrusive R and all the other innovations –except from L vocalisation– locate their accents nearer Estuary English and, as a consequence, very far from the traditional Refined RP that was expected from the Royal Family. Therefore, as Smith (2011) commented in his blog, Prince William will perhaps be the first monarch in British history to have “an accent relatively close to how “average English people” speak”.

Due to all the reasons mentioned above, Received Pronunciation is shown to be changing rapidly. It is being affected by the new trends in speech and by the strength of all the other, more-widely spoken British accents. These are permeating into the positions where RP was previously demanded, so that even such a traditional institution as the Crown has given itself up to speech innovations coming from the low classes and to more trendy accents, as Estuary English. Taking into account all the aspects mentioned in the evolution of RP in history, sociological perspectives and phonetics and phonology, I believe that Received Pronunciation as it was understood in the 19th century is very close to disappearing. In spite of the ongoing acceptance of accents’ stereotypes, Estuary English or the most advanced version of RP –depending on the views of scholars (section 4) – may overcome these because of their conjunction of regional features and educated speech. Furthermore, the incorporation of these new

varieties' phonetic and phonological innovations by the Royal family members contributes to bring them closer to the rest of citizens. These innovations would definitely help to the decreasing of the exclusivity of RP and, as a result, of its historical supremacy.

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APPENDIX

All of the recordings below were taken from the site www.youtube.com.

HM Queen Elizabeth II (QE)

1. 1953 – HM Queen Elizabeth II – Coronation Day Speech

(https://youtu.be/S2pgmKeGEZg?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

2. 1957 – First televised Queen’s Speech

(https://youtu.be/mBRPo6Q85s?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

3. 1997 – Queen Elizabeth: Diana Princess of Wales Tribute

(https://youtu.be/heLTBaLGNQs?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

4. 1998 - The Queen's Christmas Message 1998

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0GC7763zY>)

5. 2011 – The Queen’s Christmas Message 2001

(https://youtu.be/UE0W_ffgLPQ?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

6. 2017 – The Queen’s Christmas Message

(https://youtu.be/XVWGYmrXjH0?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

HRH Charles, Prince of Wales (PC)

1. Mid 80s – Charles and Diana together

A. Part I:

(https://youtu.be/I3n4cE1VYJI?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

B. Part II:

(https://youtu.be/-gnH0LD71fQ?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

C. Part III:

(https://youtu.be/RTz5IWvqZIA?list=PL9N_PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

2. 2006 – Prince William, Prince Harry and the Prince of Wales Interview with Ant and Dec

(https://youtu.be/IBvix8cJ_zc?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

3. 2016 – HRH Prince Charles condemns “evil” persecution in special video message

(https://youtu.be/MY2m6JKQKeY?list=PL9N_PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (PW)

1. 2006 – Prince William, Prince Harry and the Prince of Wales Interview with Ant and Dec

(https://youtu.be/IBvix8cJ_zc?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

2. 2010 – Prince William and Kate Middleton – Full interview

(https://youtu.be/U4RcE9G1MhM?list=PL9N_PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

3. 2016 - Meghan Markle Prince Harry Prince William Kate Middleton Royal Foundation Forum

(https://youtu.be/cOUiA4ALdqU?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (PH)

1. 2006 – Prince William, Prince Harry and the Prince of Wales Interview with Ant and Dec

(https://youtu.be/IBvix8cJ_zc?list=PL9N_-PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)

2. 2017 - Prince Harry and Meghan Markle detail proposal and romance| First post-engagement Interview

(https://youtu.be/ipuU0hHYiF4?list=PL9N_PqoXyVNO0dj4X6X1WbjqFNyx7w0b)