Article:
Wallis, C. orcid.org/0000-0002-8373-0134 (2020) Using the eighteenth century English phonology database (ECEP) as a teaching resource. English Language and Linguistics, 24 (Sp Issue 3). pp. 591-606. ISSN 1360-6743

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674320000143

Using the *Eighteenth Century English Phonology Database* (ECEP) as a Teaching Resource.

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the use of the *Eighteenth Century English Phonology database* (ECEP) as a teaching resource in historical sociolinguistics and historical linguistics courses at the University of Sheffield. Pronouncing Dictionaries are an invaluable resource for students learning about processes of standardisation and language attitudes during Late Modern English (1700-1900), however they are not easy to use in their original format. Each author uses their own notation system to indicate their recommended pronunciation, while the terminology used to describe the quality of the vowels and consonants differs from that used today, and provides an additional obstacle to the student wishing to interrogate such sources. ECEP thus provides a valuable intermediary between the students and the source material, as it includes IPA equivalents for the recommended pronunciations, as well as any metalinguistic commentary offered by the authors about a particular pronunciation. This paper demonstrates a teaching approach that not only uses ECEP as a tool in its own right, but also explores how it can be usefully combined with other materials covering language change in the Late Modern English period to enable students to undertake their own investigations in research-led courses.

Keywords: ECEP, research-led teaching, standardisation, Late Modern English, historical sociolinguistics

1 INTRODUCTION

Topics such as standardisation and prescriptivism form a key part of university courses on the history of the English language and related subjects, but until recently an extremely useful and interesting source of data – pronouncing dictionaries – has not been easily accessible to students and non-specialist teachers.[1] Pronouncing dictionaries from the eighteenth century provide a wealth of information about phonological change and attitudes to pronunciation, as they typically give detailed instruction on how to pronounce each entry, and many of them in addition contain further metalinguistic commentary in the form of supplementary textual notes or introductory material. As their titles often indicate, these dictionaries typically aim to help the reader achieve a 'proper' pronunciation, 'according to the present Practice of polished Speakers' (Kenrick 1773: title page), or 'According to the Present Practice of Men of Letters, Eminent Orators, and Polite Speakers' (Perry 1775: title page). However, using this wealth of data to teach students who are not specialists in the period can be a challenge, as each author uses their own individual notation system to indicate their recommended pronunciation (Beal & Sen 2014: 34-5). Moreover, the terminology used to describe the quality of the vowels and consonants differs from that used today, and provides an additional obstacle to the student wishing to interrogate such sources.

The *Eighteenth Century English Phonology database* (ECEP) is useful for teachers of courses such as the history of the English language, which can (and often do) cover long time-spans. Buck (2003: 45) notes that teachers of the history of the

[1] Overviews and descriptions of some of the pronouncing dictionaries which make up ECEP's source material are given by Mugglestone (2003: 25) and Beal (2004: 127).

English language typically do not have equal expertise in each period, or in its linguistic evidence, meaning that making lesser known material (such as that covered by ECEP) readily accessible is particularly helpful. ECEP thus provides a valuable intermediary between students/ teachers and the source material, as it includes IPA equivalents for the recommended pronunciations, as well as recording any metalinguistic commentary offered by the authors about a particular pronunciation (see Yáñez-Bouza, Beal, Sen & Wallis (2018) for a full account of the construction of the database). This combination of phonological and metalinguistic evidence also makes ECEP particularly useful for exploring issues of interest to students of historical sociolinguistics, such as standardisation and the social distribution of (and attitudes to) certain phonological features.

This article contributes to a recent and growing interest in the pedagogy of historical linguistics (Buck 2003; Hayes & Burkette 2017; Moore & Palmer 2019). It documents how ECEP was used as a teaching resource in two different classes at the University of Sheffield in the spring semester of 2018. Firstly, a group of final-year undergraduate students used ECEP in a historical sociolinguistics course to explore language change and attitudes to competing pronunciations in the eighteenth century. Secondly, students in an MA seminar focussing on different ways to present, handle and interrogate linguistic data used ECEP as a case study to investigate how this primary data can be turned into useful linguistic resources. In many instances the source texts that were used to compile ECEP are available in online facsimile through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO), meaning that students are able to view the database's source material and understand how that is transformed into the tool they use. In courses with an emphasis on student-led research, which pay particular attention

to material context and make use of archives and special collections, this opportunity for students to view the original source material alongside a database which collates the evidence in an accessible manner is especially valuable. In the next section I outline the ECEP database and its source material, while section 3 discusses the use of ECEP in undergraduate teaching; section 4 demonstrates some of the exercises used in this class. Section 5 demonstrates how ECEP was used to support teaching at MA level, before an evaluation of ECEP as a teaching tool in section 6.

2 THE ECEP DATABASE

The *Eighteenth Century English Phonology database* presents data from eleven pronouncing dictionaries by ten different authors, published between 1757 and 1798:

James Buchanan. 1757. *Linguae Britannicae Vera Pronuntiatio: Or, a New English Dictionary.*

William Johnston. 1764. *A Pronouncing and Spelling Dictionary.*

William Kenrick. 1773. *A New Dictionary of the English Language.*

William Perry. 1775. *The Royal Standard English Dictionary.*

Thomas Spence. 1775. *The Grand Repository of the English Language.*

Thomas Sheridan. 1780. *A General Dictionary of the English Language.*

John Burn. 1786. *A Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language.* (2nd edn.)

William Scott. 1786. *A New Spelling, Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language*.

John Walker. 1791. *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language.*

Stephen Jones. 1797. *Genuine Edition. Sheridan Improved. A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd edn).

Stephen Jones. 1798. *Sheridan Improved. A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language* (3rd edn).

Buchanan's dictionary was the first comprehensive pronouncing dictionary published, and the popularity of this type of guide is indicated by the number of competing titles published in the second half of the eighteenth century. The authors did not work in isolation, and their influence on each other is clear; for example, Walker frequently compares his recommended pronunciations to those advocated by other writers, while Jones named his dictionary *Sheridan Improved*. Two editions of Jones's dictionary were included in ECEP because in the third, he distances himself further from some of those pronunciations advocated by Sheridan (1780) (see Beal, Sen, Yáñez--Bouza & Wallis, this issue). The authors themselves had varied occupations: Perry, Scott and Buchanan were schoolteachers, and Sheridan, Walker and Kenrick had worked in the theatre, while Jones and Spence had worked in the book production and distribution trade. Little, however, is known of Burn and Johnston beyond their grammatical writings. The authors also vary in their geographical origins, as Jones, Kenrick and Walker were from London, Johnston from south-east England (possibly Kent), Spence from Newcastle, Buchanan, Burn, Perry and Scott from Scotland, and Sheridan from Ireland (although he had lived and worked in London since 1744). This results in a dataset with considerable

diatopic variation, which records the pronunciation recommended in various cities for those in polite society during a period which saw the increasing popularity of grammars, dictionaries and other usage guides among the aspiring middle classes (Beal 2004: 93-4). While there is a wealth of corpora for the study of *written* English in the Late Modern period, ECEP is the only resource for the study of *spoken* English (see also Yáñez--Bouza this issue, section 2), and the dictionary entries and metacommentary which make up ECEP are a rich source of such data.

As noted above, eighteenth-century pronouncing dictionaries are very variable in their notation systems, and difficulties of interpretation may create a barrier to their use by teachers who are not already familiar with them, or with the descriptive terminology employed. Table 1 demonstrates this variety in notation for the phonemes /ɔ:/ and /ʌ/. Notation systems include respellings (Buchanan), the use of a range of diacritics (Perry), different fonts (Johnston) and numeric (Burn, Kenrick, Scott) and alphanumeric (Jones, Sheridan, Walker) systems. What is notable is that even in cases where a similar system is used, we cannot expect the authors to agree on a sound-symbol correspondence; while Jones, Sheridan and Walker all agree that /ɔ:/ is to be represented by a[3], Walker's /ʌ/ uses the notation u[2], in contrast to Jones and Sheridan's u[1]. This makes using more than one dictionary for classroom work rather complicated, as learning one notation system does not give easy and straightforward access to the systems used in other dictionaries.

Table 1. Different authors' notations for /ɔ:/ *and* /ʌ/ in ECEP.

	/ɔ:/	**/ʌ/**
Buchanan 1757	au, aw	ŭ

Burn 1786	5	1
Johnston 1764	*ā*	ŏ, u
Jones 1797, 1798	a[3]	u[1]
Kenrick 1773	5	1
Perry 1775	â	ŭ, ó
Scott 1786	12	9
Sheridan 1780	a[3]	u[1]
Walker 1790	a[3]	u[2]

ECEP takes a sample of entries from each dictionary, based on Wells's lexical sets for vowel phonology (1982). All of Wells's lexical sets are covered by the database, thus allowing users to interrogate relevant sound changes such as Pre-Fricative Lengthening in the BATH and CLOTH sets, the FOOT/ STRUT split, or variation in diphthongs such as FACE and GOAT. Wells's original sets are supplemented by five further ones to cover contemporary consonantal variation such as h-dropping, yod-dropping, palatalisation, and /hw/~/w/~/h/ variation (DEUCE, FEATURE, HEIR, SURE, WHALE sets) (see Beal, Sen, Yáñez -Bouza & Wallis, this issue). ECEP converts each author's idiosyncratic pronunciation notation into its IPA equivalent, and also includes any metalinguistic commentary provided. The database contains biographical and bibliographical data, and so searches can be performed by author or work. It is also possible to browse or search by lexical set, meaning that specific words or phonemes can be targetted, and search data can be downloaded in csv file format. Within the search function it is possible to select data according to lexical set or subset (for example, to search all words in the TRAP set, or subset BATH(a)), by individual example

word (e.g. *laundry*), by IPA symbol, or by attitude ('positive', 'negative', 'neutral'). Finally, users can search by the label given to a particular pronunciation by the author (e.g. 'vulgar', 'affected', 'disagreeable') (see Figure 1). These searches can be combined and used in class exercises to investigate recommended or dispreferred pronunciations of a given feature by particular authors.

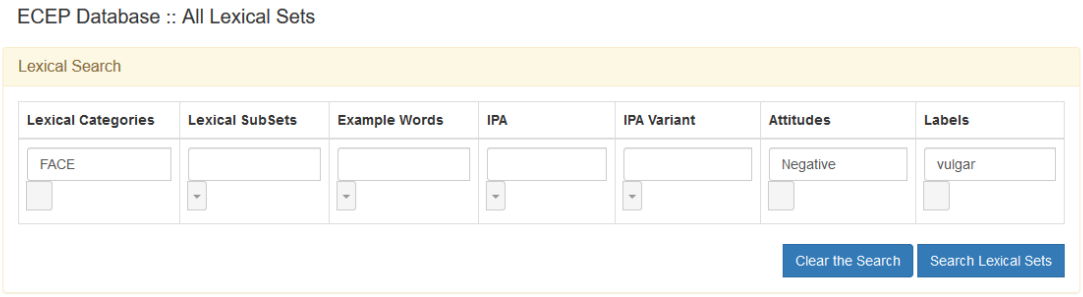


Figure 1. ECEP's Lexical Sets search interface

ECEP's data can help students engage directly with data illustrating language variation and change, and is an ideal resource for studying the interaction of language attitudes and language change. For example, it is possible for students to investigate how English was pronounced by speakers in a certain section of eighteenth-century British society, but because of the prescriptive element of these works, students can also find out about the authors' attitudes to variant pronunciations, as these attitudes (both positive and negative) are also recorded in ECEP; if an author advocates a 'good' pronunciation, they also have to distinguish and describe 'bad' pronunciation. As Langer & Nesse (2014: 612) suggest, 'the removal of undesirable elements can only really be effective if it is clear what needs to be cleansed from the language', and the dictionaries which make up ECEP contain abundant metalinguistic commentary of this

kind (Beal & Sen 2014: 34). The attitudinal labels attached to variant pronunciations give us an idea of how the speech of particular groups (for example, lower class speakers, or speakers of varieties such as Irish English or Cockney) was perceived by the writers of these dictionaries (and their readers). This makes the database a valuable resource for exploring questions not only of standardisation, but also of social and regional variation, and attitudes to this variation.

3 Teaching historical sociolinguistics with ECEP

My first teaching experience with ECEP was as part of a historical sociolinguistics course offered to undergraduates at Sheffield in their third (i.e. final) year. The course was part of the BA programme in English Language and Linguistics, though it was also open to visiting students on schemes such as ERASMUS. As a new course it had a small cohort of eighteen students with a wide range of backgrounds; some had taken one or more of the historical linguistics courses offered at Sheffield, while others had backgrounds in variationist approaches to language, having studied sociolinguistics, world Englishes, or language and gender. Most expressed an enthusiasm for furthering interests they had already developed in historical or sociolinguistic topics. Given the disparate nature of the students' experience prior to taking the course, it would have been difficult to use some of the pronouncing dictionary material as it stands; while most students had some training relevant to historical sociolinguistics, they were not specialists in eighteenth-century English, and were likely to have struggled with

notation systems and phonetic descriptions that used terminology very different from that encountered by present-day linguistics undergraduates (Beal & Sen 2014: 34).[2]

The course had at its heart the aim of giving the students sufficient grounding to undertake their own small-scale studies in historical sociolinguistics, and the final assessment set them the task of designing, undertaking and reporting on a study into a topic of their choice within historical sociolinguistics. To that end, the course was designed according to what Jenkins & Healey term 'research-oriented' and 'research-led' principles. Research-oriented teaching 'develop[s] students' research skills and techniques' (Jenkins & Healey 2012: 132), whereas research-based teaching allows students to learn through 'doing some form of research or enquiry' (2012: 129). Each week, to build on the theoretical background, students were introduced to a number of datasets so that they could explore primary data for themselves. Such datasets included, for example, the *Eighteenth Century English Grammars database* (ECEG), the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, the letters of Bess of Hardwick, and a number of letter facsimiles from the forthcoming *Letters of Artisans and the Labouring Poor* (LALP)

[2] An earlier, pre-ECEP version of the seminar tasks described below was delivered to a similar student group at Newcastle University in 2015. The tasks required rather a lot of scaffolding; for example, it was necessary to restrict the exercises to one particular feature (the TRAP-BATH split), and to provide an IPA-equivalence chart for the relevant vowels. This version of the tasks thus did not offer the same opportunities for research-based or research-orientated learning as those developed for use with ECEP, and students were not really in a position to use the pronouncing dictionaries later on as primary sources in their own assessments.

corpus (Auer, Laitinen, Gordon & Fairman 2014).[3] This data-driven approach using a variety of corpora and databases was fundamental to the aims of the course, in providing students with an opportunity to undertake research for themselves:

> The point of departure for corpus linguistics is that rather than being a type of teaching material to be specially produced, corpora and corpus tools are what real scholars use in their work. (Tyrkkö 2017: 142)

In using these linguistic sources each week, the students were able to practise the skills required to perform their own research, and to work as what Tyrkkö calls 'real' linguists.

In addition to exploring databases and corpora, the group was able to spend time exploring a selection of historical documents, both printed and handwritten, in Sheffield University Library's special collections, and in Sheffield City Archives. In this way, my aim was to give the students an understanding, on the one hand, of the electronic databases and corpora at their disposal, and on the other, of the real-life documents that lay behind them and the processes that go into making such data accessible. Dossena notes the value of digitised resources for teaching, which 'enabl[e] the collection of authentic documents and their possibilities for student analysis' (2019: 128). This

[3] I am grateful to Anita Auer of Lausanne University, for kindly sharing some of the letter images from this ongoing project for the use of my students (https://LALPcorpus.wordpress.com/). I would also like to thank Nuria Yáñez-Bouza for sharing backup files for the ECEG database with our group during a temporary access problem.

understanding of how such electronic resources are built and the documents that underpin them was key to the students' ability to successfully plan and execute their final assessments.

In the initial sessions of the course, students were introduced to some of the main theoretical topics in historical sociolinguistics, and this was supplemented with tasks to familiarise them with useful data sources that could ultimately be used in their assessments. For example, when covering the topic of social variation, they used the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* and Francis Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* ((1785) available in facsimile through ECCO) to explore the use and presentation of cant in two very different text types. In a session on ego-documents, they examined facsimiles of letters from the LALP corpus and transcribed a selection to create a mini-corpus for the class to work on. ECEP was the basis for tasks to explore standardisation in speech, which were designed to complement the previous week's work on written standardisation using the ECEG database. The aim of these two sessions was for the students to see in more detail some of the processes at work in the standardisation of English, and to use the ECEG database and ECEP alongside the original publications, accessed through ECCO. For example, when working on ECEG, the students were directed to use the database to explore the range of grammars of the period, and then locate a particular grammar to present to the class in more detail. Thus, ECEP formed an integral part of the historical sociolinguistics course, in providing one of many angles for students to explore the standardisation of English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; from below in the form of archive materials and the LALP correspondence written by unlettered writers, and from above (with some valuable metacommentary on lower-class usage) through the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, the ECEG database and

ECEP. I was therefore able to use ECEP to highlight themes from other recent work on non-standard usage:

> Over the last twenty years, the approach to English historical linguistics has changed considerably; we no longer assume that the history of English was a fairly linear progression toward the present-day standard, a standard typically identified as British, using what is in fact a political label. The field has extended its interest to varieties of language and documents that do not belong to literary, religious or diplomatic genres, thus enabling studies of texts authored by both educated and partly or minimally schooled writers. (Dossena 2019: 128)

The examination of documents 'from below' was an opportunity to provide a more rounded history of English, and allowed students to see for themselves some of the linguistic usage and variation that eighteenth-century grammarians and dictionary writers were referring to in their publications. In addition, it opened up seminar discussions about the kinds of data that survive and are privileged in language histories, and how our approaches to these questions as researchers continue to change.

4 ECEP EXERCISES FOR TEACHING UNDERGRADUATES

The exercises using ECEP consisted of two different types. In the first instance, exercises were chosen which would help the students familiarise themselves with the interface and explore what categories could be searched. However, the exercises were

also designed to help students learn more about the specific changes and variation in pronunciation during the eighteenth century, in part to help them generate ideas for their own final research projects. Examples 1) and 2) show the kind of exercise set.

1) Search ECEP by lexical set:
    1. In the Lexical Sets search, go to the 'Lexical Categories' box and type in HEIR. This lexical set records the presence or absence of /h/ in words like *hour* and *honour* (if a pronunciation with /h/ is recommended, the IPA column will show <h>; if a zero pronunciation is recommended it will show <0>).
    2. Browse the results. Do the authors recommend the same pronunciations?
    3. Are there any particular words that the authors agree on in their recommended pronunciations? Do these words have anything in common?

2) Search by attitude:
    1. Clear your search using the 'Clear the Search' button.
    2. Click on the arrow underneath the 'Attitudes' box and select 'negative'.[4]
    3. What kinds of labels are attached to these negative attitudes? What does this tell us about the attitudes of the authors (and their readers) to particular non-standard varieties?

[4] These values were assigned by the database compilers, and users of ECEP can choose from 'positive', 'negative', 'neutral' and 'no comment' labels on this drop-down menu.

In example 1), the students are directed to examine a particular feature, the presence or absence of initial /h/ in words of French origin such as *heir, honour, herb* and *hospital*. While writers such as Buchanan and Walker advocate pronunciations without /h/, Kenrick has /h/ in several items in the lexical set, as well as metalinguistic comments indicating his awareness of the variation. The second exercise allows students to explore the kinds of negative labels attached to particular pronunciations, such as 'wrong', 'vulgar' or 'Irishism', allowing discussions about the role of social class and geographical origin in the perception of linguistic correctness.

Tyrkkö (2017: 145) distinguishes between two types of data-driven learning, either teacher-mediated 'that is, learning in which the teacher guides students through carefully prepared exercises and well-punctuated teachable moments', or research-focussed, which he defines as 'learning through personal initiative of the students'. The seminar tasks in examples 1) and 2) are designed according to the first of these principles, in order to prepare students for the final assessment, which was far more 'research-focused' in its approach.

Even at this early stage, I designed the seminar tasks to engage the students with the original texts through ECCO. Integrating the tasks in this way was a good opportunity to get the students moving back and forth between the two resources, allowing them an insight into how the data in the original source material had been presented in ECEP. Example 3) is a task which directs the students back to ECCO, to explore in more detail some of the prefatory matter, including the authors' overt recommendations to speakers of non-standard varieties:

3) Using the information and examples you have found in ECEP, use ECCO to find out more about how a particular author discusses these features.

   Hints: a good place to look for more detail on attitudes is the Preface or Introduction (use the contents to guide you). For example, some authors give particular directions on avoiding Irish, Scottish or (lower class) London pronunciations, while the sections devoted to particular consonants or vowels can be very informative (you can use the 'Attitudes' search to help you locate a suitable feature). The 'Metalinguistic Comments' section and the lexical sets CHOICE, HEIR, DEUCE, CLOTH, BATH, STRUT are also good (but not the only) places to look.

In these exercises, the students were already familiar with ECCO, having used it in a previous class to investigate Francis Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), and in combination with the ECEG database to explore some of the grammars of the period. Therefore they were directed to look at the original publications to see the varying notation systems for themselves, and better understand the raw data that made up ECEP. Having seen the original dictionaries for themselves, the students commented on how difficult it would have been to work from the originals, without ECEP as an intermediary.

Following these introductory sessions to ECEP, further exercises were devised towards the end of the course, as the students were planning their own investigations for the final assessment. For the assessment the students were tasked with designing and carrying out their own small investigation of a linguistic feature of their choice, using sources and datasets covered in the course. To prepare for this task, a number of

problem-solving exercises invited students to combine multiple resources to explore a particular feature. Two of these exercises involved ECEP:

4) H-dropping:

   Using the following sources, see what you can find out about attitudes to h-dropping in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

   - The *Eighteenth Century English Phonology database* (ECEP) – look at the HEIR lexical set, and see what the comments in the 'Metalinguistic Comments', 'Attitudes', 'Labels' and 'Notes' columns tell you about the way h-dropping is perceived.
   - ECCO (use this to look at the introduction to at least one of the pronouncing dictionaries in ECEP)
   - *Don't: A Manual of Mistakes or Improprieties* (Bunce 1884)

   Is h-dropping viewed positively or negatively? Is the feature associated with any particular type of speaker (e.g. social or regional background)?

The purpose of this exercise was to investigate the attitudes to h-dropping revealed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources by combining the ECEP and ECCO data with later manuals such as Bunce's *Don't: A Manual of Mistakes and Improprieties More or Less Prevalent in Conduct and Speech* (1884), an etiquette guide covering not only errors of speech, but also errors in dress, table manners and visiting etiquette. In this way the students would be developing some of the skills required for the final assessment. The students enjoyed looking at Bunce's advice alongside the

recommendations of works such as John Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* to see how linguistic prescription fed into wider concerns about how to behave appropriately. An advantage of using Bunce's nineteenth-century guide was that students could see the progression from eighteenth-century writers, only some of whom demonstrate an awareness of h-dropping in their dictionary entries and prefaces (as shown by a search of ECEP and ECCO), through to later writers who emphasised the social stigma, not only of h-dropping, but also to the insertion of inorganic /h/:

> DON'T put in an "*h*," where that valuable letter should be omitted. It is very unpleasant to the cultivated ears of others to say "*a horange*," or "*a hanimal*." (Bunce 1884: 38).[5]

The final exercise combined ECEP and ECCO with some of the letters from the LALP corpus:

5) Among the non-standard spellings in the LALP letters are some that suggest their writers used a different pronunciation from that in present-day RP. Using the ECEP database (do all authors agree on the pronunciation?) and ECCO (Walker is particularly useful), see what you can find out about the following:
    - *darter* (daughter)
    - *sarvant, survant* (servant)
    - *gorn* (gone – CLOTH lexical set)
    - *wittles* (victuals)

[5] See also Mugglestone (2003: 108) for commentary on this feature.

- *marster* (master)
- *foller* (follow)

Hint: the numbers in brackets at the end of Walker's dictionary entries refer to the numbered paragraphs at the beginning of the work, where he talks in more detail about particular pronunciations.

This exercise was designed to prompt the students to consider non-standard spellings which might give evidence for lower-class pronunciations. For example, Walker in particular describes pronunciations such as /a:r/ for /ɛ:r/ in words such as *servant* and *merchant*, describing /a:r/ as an older pronunciation:

> Thirty years ago everyone pronounced the first syllable of *merchant* like the monosyllable *march*, and as it was anciently written *marchant*. *Service* and *sarvant* are still heard among the lower order of speakers, as if written *sarvice* and *sarvant:* and even among the better sort, we sometimes hear, *Sir, your sarvant*; though this pronunciation of the word singly would be looked upon as a mark of the lowest vulgarity (Walker 1791: 13).

This gave students the opportunity to consider and discuss sound changes in progress, as well as the social status of speakers of the older variant, and attitudes towards this pronunciation. Likewise, the schwa pronunciation by 'vulgar' speakers of final, unstressed syllables in words like *follow* is described by Walker (1791: 37) as 'almost too despicable for notice', while the pronunciation of /w/ for /v/ is described as 'a

blemish of the first magnitude' which is not confined to lower-class Londoners (1791: xii-iii). By cross-referencing some of the non-standard spellings found in the LALP documents, the students were able to consider how (and whether) such spellings can be used as evidence for pronunciation, and to gain insights into how a linguistic investigation of this kind of feature might proceed.

Exercise 5) was set during the week when the students visited Sheffield City Archives and viewed, among other sources, letters of request and thanks from early-twentieth-century recipients of aid from the St Vincent de Paul Society. Many of these letters also contain non-standard spellings, however they betray a much deeper level of engagement with formal schooling than the LALP letters discussed by Fairman (2007).[6] The aim of this exercise was to get the students to reflect on the extent to which non-standard spellings can reflect pronunciation, and the effect of education on these writers. The examples from the LALP letters also demonstrate very neatly that the pronunciations used by their writers were often exactly those discouraged by writers such as Walker and Sheridan.

[6] While non-standard spellings are rarer in the Sheffield material than in the LALP letters looked at by the class, a number of examples do exist. For example, one man's account of his accident with a 'motar combination' shows a spelling reflecting schwa pronunciations of unstressed final syllables, while another writer requests those considering her application for financial help to tell her the outcome 'has soon has you can', echoing the frequent h-dropping and h-insertion found by the students in the LALP letters (Sheffield City Archives, St Marie's Conference, Sheffield (Society of St Vincent de Paul) X276).

For the final assessment students designed and carried out a small-scale investigation on a related topic of their choice. Several excellent projects were produced, many focusing on issues of standard and non-standard usage. One student used ECEP as a source to study the BATH vowel in eighteenth-century English, while other students chose projects which were informed by work undertaken using ECEP during the course. Examples include studies of h-dropping in the LALP letters, 'Welsh' English dialogue in nineteenth-century British fiction, and the influence of pronouncing dictionaries on the enregisterment of non-standard features in dialect literature. While this project was certainly a challenge for some (and these students often indicated that choosing a topic was one of the most daunting tasks), it was also clear that the students had put a lot of effort into thoughtful design and careful analysis during the projects, and this was reflected in the large proportion of very good and excellent marks.

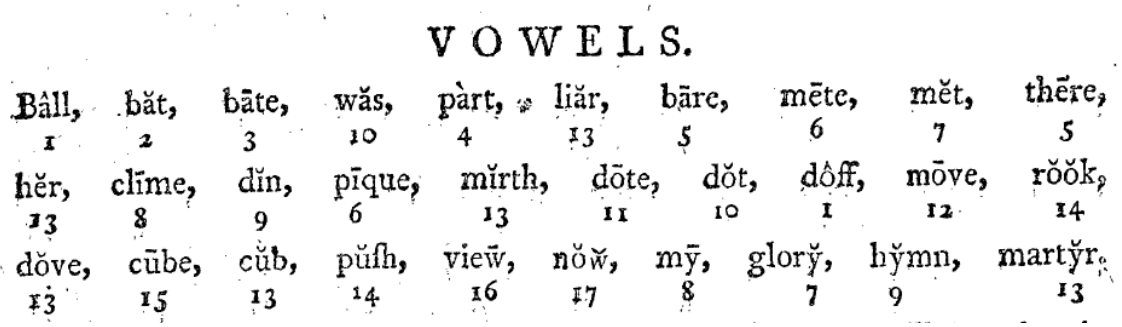
Overall, the students reported that they enjoyed using ECEP and that its results were easy to interpret. It was notable that in later weeks, when undertaking the problem-solving exercises, the students seemed more at ease in using both ECEP and the ECCO versions of the texts to work through the tasks.

5 USING ECEP TO TEACH MASTERS STUDENTS

ECEP was also used for teaching a small class of two Masters students, both of whom had some previous background in historical linguistics. The students were taking a 'Linguistics in Practice' course which aimed to introduce them to different linguistic datasets (in this case historical ones) and give them practice in using, manipulating and

presenting this data. Previous iterations of this course have typically introduced students to manuscripts and facsimiles, databases, corpora, and printed editions, and the course provides key training for the research which students will undertake in their MA dissertations.

Some introductory exercises similar to those given to the undergraduates were used to familiarise the MA students with ECEP. Following the research interests of one member of the group in American English, ECCO was used to access an American pronouncing dictionary, Caleb Alexander's *Columbian Dictionary of the English Language* (1800).[7] I provided the group with an IPA-equivalence chart as Alexander's notation system, again, differed from those used by other writers covered by ECEP. Alexander makes use of a number of diacritics, in a system similar (but not identical) to Perry's, as can be seen in Figure 2:



VOWELS.

Bâll, băt, bāte, wăs, pàrt, liăr, bāre, mēte, mĕt, thēre,
1 2 3 10 4 13 5 6 7 5

hĕr, clīme, dĭn, pīque, mĭrth, dōte, dŏt, dôff, mōve, rŏŏk,
13 8 9 6 13 11 10 1 12 14

dŏve, cūbe, cŭb, pŭſh, view̆, nŏw̆, mȳ, glorў, hўmn, martўr.
13 15 13 14 16 17 8 7 9 13

Figure 2. Alexander's (1800: 6) notation system

[7] There are fewer American-published pronouncing dictionaries represented in ECCO, and although Alexander's is not the only one (Elliott's *Selected Pronouncing and Accented Dictionary* (1800) also appears), it was chosen because of its clear basis in American (rather than British) English.

As exercise 6) shows, the class were encouraged to compare the information available on the British pronunciation dictionaries in ECEP with what they could work out about Alexander's notation system from his descriptions in the introduction:

6) Go to ECCO and access:

   Alexander, Caleb. 1800. *The Columbian dictionary of the English language: in which many new words, peculiar to the United States, and many words of general use, not found in any other English dictionary, are inserted. ...*

   Looking at Alexander's notation and using the IPA equivalents to help you, compare his dictionary with the pronunciations in ECEP. For example, have a look at some features you associate with American English and see if they are represented in Alexander's dictionary. Features could include:

   - Yod-dropping in the DEUCE set (e.g. *new* /nu:/, *duke* /du:k/ for RP /nju:/, /dju:k/) (Wells 1982: 207)
   - *Cot-Caught* merger (i.e. merger of the LOT and THOUGHT sets) (Wells 1982: 131, 175)
   - FOOT-STRUT split (Wells 1982: 196-9)
   - Differences in consonant cluster simplification in the WHALE set (i.e. /hw/ instead of /w/) (Yáñez-Bouza, Beal, Sen & Wallis 2018)
   - Differences in the TRAP-BATH split (/æ:/ or /æə/) (Wells 1982: 134, 232)

Part of the aim of this exercise was to see whether it was possible for the students to easily gauge the recommended pronunciations, and whether the descriptions of the sounds were detailed enough to distinguish the examples above (some, such as the

presence or absence of yod, were a challenge, because from Alexander's description it is not clear whether the feature is present in the variety he describes). The students commented on how difficult and time-consuming it was to work out the new method and correspondences compared with ECEP. The task also allowed the group to follow up their interests in American English by looking at differences in pronunciation, and exploring how a work such as Alexander's might reflect Americans' attitudes to their own variety.

This kind of exercise allowed the students to see some of the challenges of accessing pronouncing dictionary material in its raw form; although they had a good level of competence in many aspects of historical linguistics, the terminology used to describe the sounds and the notation system were considerable barriers to easily using the data. In addition, viewing challenging data such as that represented by Alexander's dictionary gave the group an opportunity to reflect on how and why resources such as ECEP are created, how they relate to the source material, and the benefits and drawbacks of using them for their own research.

6 Evaluations

Informally the students in both groups indicated that they enjoyed using ECEP and generally did not have problems using the database. The end-of-semester evaluations indicated that the undergraduate students enjoyed using primary sources such as ECEP on the course. One area that they picked up on was the opportunity the research-led approach gave them to hone and put to use their research skills. Many students

appreciated this, because a final-year dissertation is not compulsory for students studying the English BA at Sheffield, and so for some this was a substantial research project. The quotations below are taken from the undergraduate evaluations:

> The course introduced a diverse range of primary and secondary resources for historical investigation and the seminar preparation was engaging and helped us to practice our research skills.

> It felt like I actually learnt things! The course teaches skills and themes and then allows students to actually use said skills to follow aspects that interest them.

One benefit that I found of using ECEP for teaching is the fact that the source material is in many cases readily available via ECCO. ECEP can therefore be used in teaching that also emphasises the material context of the data that underpins our historical linguistic narratives. It is also helpful in demonstrating to students the processes of turning raw data into linguistic resources such as databases and corpora. Using this approach meant that, unlike some corpora, it was possible on the one hand to view the data as it occurs in the books (and because ECCO consists of facsimiles it is possible to focus on details such as mis-en-page, paratextual elements, pricing information, numbers of pages, etc.), and on the other to use the database to gather linguistic data that allows students to see the patterns in a meaningful way; I found combining the resources in this way to be a good way of getting the best of both worlds. A further advantage was that ECEP allowed students easy access to the data contained in the dictionaries; the historical sociolinguistics course did not have any academic

prerequisites, which meant that my students did not necessarily have the detailed historical knowledge required to interpret the data as it stands. Therefore, combining ECEP with ECCO was helpful because students could not only use it for linguistic enquiry, but also come to understand how such an investigative tool is related to its source material, developing a deeper understanding of the processes involved in making the resources they use (see Bond & Butler 2009 on using rare books and special collections for non-specialist students).

7 Conclusion

This article outlines some of the ways ECEP has been used as a teaching tool in classes at undergraduate and Masters level. ECEP collates information across a number of relevant areas, such as changing pronunciation and language attitudes, and can fruitfully be used as a standalone resource, or in combination with other electronic resources covering Late Modern English. It is relatively easy to use, and thus appropriate for classroom-based tasks, as well as in independent student research projects. Finally, although this article discusses the use of ECEP in specific historical sociolinguistics and historical linguistics courses, the exercises could easily be adapted for use in other courses with a focus on areas such as electronic resources in linguistics, language attitudes, or language variation and change.

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