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20 Acts of Conflicting Identity: The Sociolinguistics of British Pop-song Pronunciation

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Anyone with an interest in British rock and pop songs will have observed that there are 'rules' concerning the way in which the words of these songs are pronounced.[1] The label 'tendencies' might be more appropriate than 'rules' in some instances, but in any case it is clear that singers of this form of music employ different accents when singing from when they are speaking, and that deviations from their spoken accents are of a particular and relatively constrained type. This phenomenon of employing a modified pronunciation seems to have been current in popular music for some decades, probably since the 1920s, and has involved a number of different genres, including jazz , 'crooning', and so on. It became, however, especially widespread and noticeable in the late 1950s with the advent of rock-and-roll and the pop-music revolution.

Analysis of the pronunciation used by British pop singers at around that time, and subsequently, reveals the following rules and tendencies. (We ignore features such as the pronunciation of *-ing* as [ɪn] which are typical of most informal styles.)

1. The pronunciation of intervocalic /t/ in words like *better* as [t] or [ʔ], which are the pronunciations used by most British speakers, is generally not permitted. In pop-singing, a pronunciation of the type [d̠] (a voiced alveolar flap of some kind) has to be employed.
2. It is not permitted to pronounce words such as *dance*, *last* with the /a:/ that is normal in speech in south-eastern England. Instead they are pronounced with the /æ/ of *cat* (as in the north of England, although the realization is usually [æ] rather than the northern [a]). In addition,

Source: 'Acts of Conflicting Identity: The Sociolinguistics of British Pop-song Pronunciation', in Trudgill, P. (1983) *On Dialect: Social and Geographical Perspectives* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell and New York University Press) pp. 141–60.

words such as *half* and *can't*, which are pronounced with /a:/ by most of those English speakers, of north and south, who have the /æ/ – /a:/ distinction, must also be pronounced with /æ/. Thus:

	cat	*dance*	*half*
South-eastern England	/æ/ = [æ]	[a:/	/a:/
Northern England	/æ/ = [a]	/æ/	/a:/
Pop-song style	/æ/ = [æ]	/æ/	/æ/

3. Words such as *girl*, *more* tend to be pronounced with an /r/ even by those English English speakers (the majority) who do not have non-prevocalic /r/ in their speech.
4. Words such as *life*, *my* tend to be sung with a vowel of the type [a·] although they are normally pronounced by a majority of British speakers with a diphthong of the type [aɪ ~ ɑɪ ~ ʌɪ].
5. Words such as *love*, *done* tend to be pronounced with a vowel of the type [ə·] rather than with the [ɐ̈ ~ ɐ] typical of the south of England or the [ʊ ~ ɤ] typical of the north.
6. Words such as *body*, *top* may be pronounced with unrounded [ɑ] instead of the more usual British [ɒ].

There are, of course, British varieties which do have these features: most English northern and midland varieties have /æ/ in *path* and a few have /æ/ in *can't*, while some south-western English and most Scottish varieties have no /æ/ – /a:/ distinction and may have an [æ]-like vowel in all those words; many south-western English varieties have [d] in *better*; many western, north-western and Scottish (and other) varieties do have non-prevocalic /r/; some north-western accents do have /aɪ/ as [a·]; many midland and south-western varieties have [ə], although not usually [ə·], in *love*; and some East Anglian and south-western varieties have [ɑ] in *body*. The point is, however, that no single British variety has all these features, and the vast majority of singers who use these forms when singing do not do so when speaking. There can be no doubt that singers are modifying their linguistic behaviour for the purposes of singing.

EXPLANATIONS FOR LINGUISTIC MODIFICATION

An interesting question, therefore, is: why do singers modify their pronunciation in this way? One theory that attempts to deal with language modification of this kind is the socio-psychological *accommodation theory* of Giles (see Giles and Smith, 1979). This, briefly, attempts to explain temporary or long-term adjustments in pronunciation and other aspects of linguistic behaviour in terms of a drive to approximate one's language to that of one's interlocutors, if they are regarded as socially desirable and/or if

the speaker wishes to identify with them and/or demonstrate good will towards them. This may often take the form of reducing the frequency of socially stigmatized linguistic forms in the presence of speakers of higher prestige varieties. The theory also allows for the opposite effect: the distancing of one's language from that of speakers one wishes to disassociate oneself from, or in order to assert one's own identity.

Accommodation theory does go some way towards accounting for the phenomenon of pop-song pronunciation. It is clearly not sufficient, however, since it applies only to conversational situations. And we cannot assume that pop musicians adjust their pronunciation in order to make it resemble more closely that of their intended audience, since what actually happens is in many respects the reverse.

Another, less elaborate way to look at this problem is simply to discuss it in terms of the sociolinguistic notion of 'appropriateness'. As is well known, different situations, different topics, different genres require different linguistic styles and registers. The singing of pop music in this way, it could be argued, is no different from vicars preaching in the register appropriate to Church of England sermons, or BBC newsreaders employing the variety appropriate for the reading of the news. Certainly 'appropriateness' is obviously a relevant factor here. But, equally obviously, it is not on its own to provide an explanation for why it is this type of singing which is regulated in this way, nor why it is characterized by this particular set of pronunciation rules and tendencies rather than some other.

A more helpful approach, it emerges, is the theory of linguistic behaviour developed by Le Page. Indeed, the pronunciation of pop-song lyrics provides a useful site for a microstudy which exemplifies many aspects of Le Page's thinking. This theory, expounded by Le Page in a number of writings (see Le Page 1968, 1975, 1978; Le Page *et al.*, 1974) seeks to demonstrate a general motive for speakers' linguistic behaviour in terms of attempts to 'resemble as closely as possible those of the group or groups with which from time to time we [speakers] wish to identify'. ...

In Le Page's terms, British pop singers are attempting to modify their pronunciation in the direction of that of a particular group with which they wish to identify – from time to time (i.e. when they are singing). This group, moreover, can clearly, if somewhat loosely, be characterized by the general label 'Americans': the six pronunciation rules and tendencies outlined above are all found in American accents, and are stereotypically associated by the British with American pronunciation. (If there were any doubt about the identity of the model group, this could be confirmed by reference to the words of pop songs themselves which, even if written by British composers for British consumption, tend to include forms such as *guy* (= *chap*, *bloke*), *call* (*phone*), etc., which are still Americanisms for many British speakers today, and were certainly Americanisms in the 1950s and 1960s. [They are even less clearly Americanisms in Britain today – Eds.]

The next question therefore is: why should singers attempt to imitate what they consider to be an American accent? The reason for this is reasonably apparent, even if somewhat intuitively arrived at, and without empirical verification. Most genres of twentieth-century popular music, in the western world and in some cases beyond, are (Afro-)American in origin. Americans have dominated the field, and cultural domination leads to imitation: it is appropriate to sound like an American when performing in what is predominantly an American activity; and one attempts to model one's singing style on that of those who do it best and who one admires most.

There are parallels here with other musical genres: British folk-singers often adopt quasi-rural accents; and singers of songs in the reggae style often attempt Jamaican accents. We also have to note that, in many European countries at least, it is not a particular variety of English but simply English itself that has become associated with pop music: at one time, for example, many West German pop groups had English-language names and sang songs, written by Germans, in English – a phenomenon which cannot be entirely explained by a desire to conquer international markets. (It is difficult to think of precise parallels of cultural domination in fields other than music, but one candidate might be the quasi-English accents adopted by American Shakespearean actors even when acting in plays set in, for example, Verona.)

CONSTRAINTS ON LINGUISTIC MODIFICATION

British pop singers, then, are aiming at an American pronunciation. The end-product of this language modification is, however, by no means entirely successful. One obvious measure of their lack of success is that many American listeners are utterly unaware that this is what British singers are trying to do. The results of this modification, too, are complex and subject to change.

This also can be accounted for in Le Page's theory. The theory provides for the fact that, in modifying our linguistic behaviour, our performance as speakers 'is constrained by considerations which fall under one or another of four riders to the general hypothesis'. We will discuss these riders in turn. The first of Le Page's (1978) riders is that our modification of our linguistic behaviour is constrained by:

(i) the extent to which we are able to identify our model group.

We have already seen that British pop singers have, presumably without giving it too much conscious thought, successfully identified their model group as 'Americans', and that they attempt, again presumably for the most

part below the level of conscious awareness, to model their language behaviour on that of American singers. More detailed study, however, suggests that they have not been especially successful in identifying *exactly which* Americans it is they are trying to model their behaviour on. Comparison with the linguistic behaviour of American pop singers is instructive at this point, for there is a strong tendency for them, too, to modify their pronunciation when singing. Modifications made by American singers include (a) the use of the monophthong [a·] in *life*, etc. by singers who have diphthongs in their speech (i.e. the same modification made by British singers); and (b) the *omission* of non-prevocalic /r/ in *car*, etc. by singers who are normally *r*-ful in their speech. A good example is provided by Bob Dylan, who is from Minnesota, in the American Mid-West, and who has /ai/ = [ai] and non-prevocalic /r/ in his speech. His singing style incorporates frequent use of [a·] and r-loss:

You may be an ambassador [æm'bæsədə]
To England or [ə] France
You may like [la·k] to gamble
You might [ma·t] like [la·k] to dance
('Gotta serve somebody', *Slow Train Coming*, 1979)

These two features suggest that the model group whose pronunciation is being aimed at by American singers consists of Southern and/or Black singers, since the combination of [a·] = /ai/ and r-lessness is most typical of the varieties spoken by these groups. The reason for this is again clear: it is in the American South and/or amongst Blacks that many types of popular music have their origins. (This is most obviously true of jazz, rhythm-and-blues, and rock-and-roll.) Cultural domination therefore causes singers with White non-Southern accents to modify their pronunciation when singing.[2]

This leads us to suppose that it is these same groups whose accents British singers too are aiming at, since they also, as we have already seen, have the [a·] = /ai/ feature in their singing styles. This supposition is strengthened, first, by the fact that other features of Southern and Black pronunciation, in addition to [a·], can be heard to occur from time to time in British pop songs:

1. pronunciations such as *boring* [bourɪn], and the occasional rhyming of words such as *more* with words such as *go*;
2. the occasional inhibition of the pronunciation of linking /r/, as in *four o'clock*, without the insertion of a pause or glottal stop;
3. the pronunciation of /ɪ/ as [ɛ∼ë] before /n/, /ŋ/, as in *thing* [θëŋ], in imitation of the Southern and Black merger of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ before nasals.

Secondly, it is also confirmed by the occurrence, even in songs written by British pop musicians, of grammatical features associated with Southern and Black dialects:

1. *copula deletion*
   'He livin' there still' (Beatles *White Album*)
   'My woman she gone' (Dire Straits *Dire Straits*)
2. *3rd-person -s absence*
   'She make me cry' (Stranglers *Rattus Norvegicus*)
   'Here come old flat top' (Beatles *Abbey Road*)
3. *negativized auxiliary pre-position*
   'Ain't nothin' new in my life today' (Supertramp *Breakfast in America*)

If this is so, then in one respect the British singers are in error. Blacks and Southerners are typically *r*-less. This fact is, as we have seen, recognized by many American singers, who (variably) delete non-prevocalic /r/ when singing even though their speech is *r*-ful. British singers, on the other hand, do the reverse: they insert non-prevocalic /r/ in singing even though their speech is *r*-less. (This contrast between British and American singers was particularly marked in the late 1950s when singers such as Cliff Richard, who were to a considerable extent imitators of Elvis Presley, attempted the pronunciation of non-prevocalic /r/ in their songs, even though Elvis himself was for the most part *r*-less.) We do not deny, of course, that some Southern varieties are *r*-ful. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that, in their performance of pop songs, British singers exhibit a certain lack of success in identifying who their model group is. The two perceptions – that the model group consists of (a) Americans in general, and (b) Southerners and/or Blacks in particular – conflict when it comes to non-prevocalic /r/, since the case of the particular model group being aimed at, the stereotype that 'Americans are *r*-ful' is inaccurate.

Le Page's second rider also turns out to be relevant for our study of the linguistic behaviour of British pop singers. This rider states that our linguistic behaviour is constrained by:

(ii) the extent to which we have sufficient access to [the model groups] and sufficient analytical ability to work out the rules of their behaviour.

There is evidence that British singers' analytical abilities are in fact sometimes not sufficient. This is provided, again, by the case of non-prevocalic /r/. Like, for example, many British actors attempting to imitate

r-ful rural accents, British pop singers often insert non-prevocalic /r/s where they do not belong. This is a form of hypercorrection. Singers know that, in order to 'sound like an American', one has to insert an /r/ after the vowels /aː/ as in *cart*; /ɔː/ as in *fort*; /ɜː/ as in *bird*; /ɪə/ as in *beard*; /ɛə/ as in *bared*; and /ə/ as in *letters*. The problem is that some singers have not mastered the principle behind where this should and should not be done; they are liable to insert an /r/ after the above vowels even where an /r/ is not required, as in *calm*, *taught*, *ideas*, *Americas* (*bird* and *bared*-type words are not a problem, since these vowels occur only before a potential /r/). The correct strategy to follow (except in the case of the word *colonel* – which does not occur too often in pop songs) is to use the orthography, which always has *r* where an /r/ is required... Examples of complete lack of success in analysing the model accent correctly include:

1. Cliff Richard, 'Bachelor Boy' (1961):
   'You'll be *a bachelor boy*...' /ər bæčələr bɔi/ – repeated many times.
2. Kinks, 'Sunny Afternoon' (1966):
   '... *Ma and Pa*' /maːr ən paːr/
3. Paul McCartney, 'Till there was you' on *With the Beatles* (1963):
   'I never *saw them* at all' /sɔːr ðɛm/...

Le Page's fourth rider (we shall return to the third shortly) is:

(iv) our ability to modify our behaviour (probably lessening as we get older).

We have already touched on this point in our discussion of hypercorrection: it is possible that imperfection in imitation is due to lack of ability. We can further demonstrate the validity of this rider by pointing to the fact that most of the modifications British singers make in their pronunciation are variable, irregular, and inconsistent. We can assume, for instance, that many singers would pronounce all non-prevocalic /r/s if they could. It is simply that, in the flow of the song, they are not consistently able to do so. It is also of interest to observe that some phonological environments cause more difficulty than others. Most difficult, apparently, is the insertion of non-prevocalic /r/ in an unstressed syllable before a following consonant, as in *better man*. Here, fewest /r/s are pronounced by British singers. Correspondingly, it is in exactly the same environment that *fewest* /r/s are *deleted* by American singers.

The observation that non-prevocalic /r/ is only spasmodically inserted in singing can be confirmed quite simply by counting. For instance, in spite of a strong impression, to British listeners, that they are in this respect

successfully imitating Americans, the Beatles, on their first British LP, *Please Please Me* (1963), manage to pronounce only 47 per cent of potential non-prevocalic /r/s.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF LINGUISTIC MODIFICATION

To count /r/s in this way is to acknowledge that, in British pop music, (r) is a linguistic variable in the Labovian sense. Employing the concept of the linguistic variable in this way, to examine this and the other features typical of British pop-song pronunciation, opens up the possibility of examining Le Page's theory in more detail, especially in so far as it allows for the possibility of accounting for conflict and change.

It permits, for example, the quantitative comparison of the pronunciation of pop songs from the late 1950s and early 1960s with that of later periods. This turns out to be very instructive. For example, an analysis of four LPs from the period 1963–65 (the first two British albums produced by the Beatles and Rolling Stones respectively) gives an overall (r)-count, based on 372 tokens, of 36 per cent (i.e. 36 per cent of potential non-prevocalic /r/s were pronounced). On the other hand, analysis of four British albums, selected at random, from 1978 and 1979 (Dire Straits *Dire Straits*; Supertramp *Breakfast in America*; Clash *The Clash*; Sham '69 *Hersham Boys*) gives an (r)-count, based on 546 tokens, of 4 per cent. Obviously it would not be legitimate to draw any conclusions from such a haphazard and small-scale comparison. At the same time, it does suggest that something has happened to pop-song pronunciation, and it does tally well with casual observations to the effect that things have changed.

This is further reinforced by Figure 20.1. This figure portrays the (r) scores per album for ten of the eleven LPS released by the Beatles in Britain between 1963 and 1971, and paints rather a surprisingly dramatic picture. During the Beatles' recording life there was a very considerable falling-off in non-prevocalic /r/ usage. From a high of 47 per cent in 1963 this falls to a low of 3 per cent in 1970.

The same pattern is repeated in Figure 20.2. This graph deals with the same ten Beatles records, together with scores for four records by the Rolling Stones. In addition to (r) scores, it also shows the percentage of intervocalic /t/s realized as [ɾ] = (t), and a less dramatic but equally clear picture emerges. (In calculating (t) scores, both environments such as *better* and *get a* have been included. The phrase *at all* has been omitted from calculations since British speakers, unlike Americans, have for the most part resyllabified this as *a#t all*. In the case of (t), the phonological environment which causes British singers most difficulty is as in *adversity*, *nobility*, where there is some variability even in American English.)

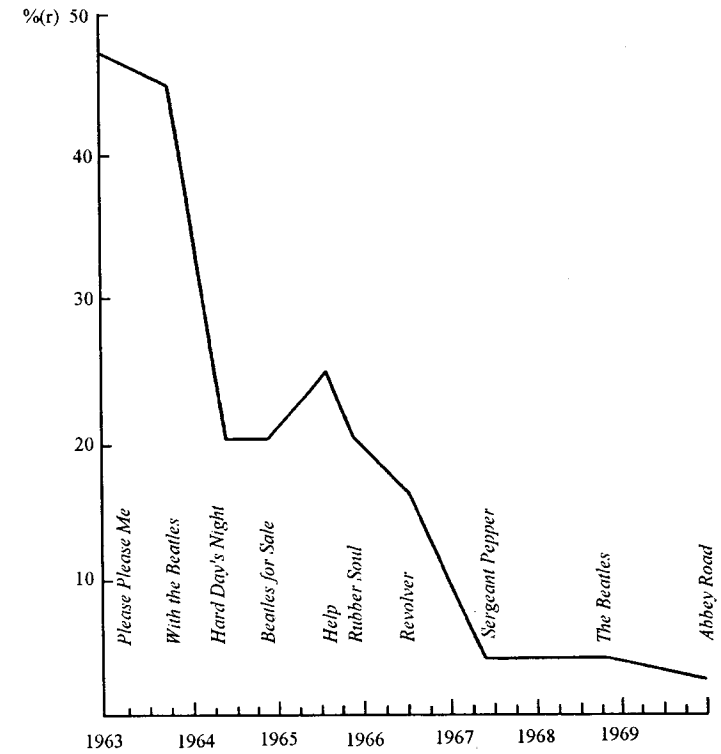

Figure 20.1: Non-prevocalic /r/: the Beatles

Other quasi-American features, too, can be shown to have declined in frequency. We can draw no conclusions from the Beatles' pronunciation of *dance*, *past*, etc., as their native northern (Liverpool) English accents have /æ/ in these words in any case. It is, however, possible to detect a change in their treatment of items such as *can't* and *half* which have /æ/ in the USA but /a:/ in the north as well as the south of England. The progression is:

	Album	*can't, half*
1963	Please Please Me	/æ/
1963	With The Beatles	/æ/
1964	Hard Day's Night	/æ/
1964	Beatles for Sale	/æ/
1965	Help	/æ/
1967	Sergeant Pepper	/æ/ ~ /a:/
1968	The Beatles (White Album)	/æ/ ~ /a:/
1969	Abbey Road	/a:/

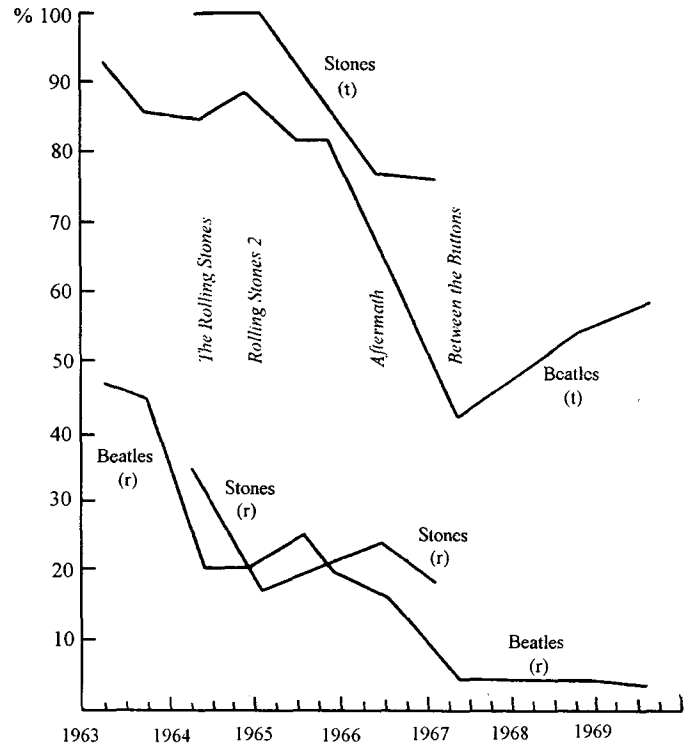

Figure 20.2: (r) and (t): the Beatles and the Rolling Stones

(The Rolling Stones, on the other hand, have always been /æ/-users, their lead singer Mick Jagger consistently scoring 100 per cent on all albums.)

So what has happened? One factor that may be important in examining the performance of a group such as the Beatles is that it could be argued that their change in pronunciation reflects a change in genre. Their early songs are often clearly in the rock-and-roll mould, while later songs tend to be more complex, contemplative, poetic, and so on. The subject-matter of the songs changes, too, and the later songs, now written entirely by themselves, show an increase in more obviously British themes and locales. (It may also be of some relevance that songs written by British composers tend, naturally enough, to have *r*-less rhymes of the type *bought-short* (Beatles *Revolver*), *Rita-metre* (Beatles *Sergeant Pepper*) (cf. Zwicky, 1976).) The particular 'image' that particular groups try to project will also be a factor.

But it is also clear that, from around 1964 on, British singers generally began trying less hard to sound like Americans. Why should this have been? Within the framework provided by Le Page, we can say that the strength of

the motivation towards the American model has become weaker. If this is the case, then this change can in turn be ascribed to developments within the world of pop music itself. The enormous popularity of the Beatles, which extended to the USA by 1964, and, in their wake, of other Liverpool-based (and other British) groups, led to a change in the pattern of cultural domination. For a while, it was Britain that dominated America in this field, and, while this is no longer the case [this text published in 1983 – Eds], the *strength* of American domination was permanently weakened. British pop music acquired a validity of its own, and this has been reflected in linguistic behaviour.

CONFLICTING MOTIVATIONS

Le Page's third rider is:

(iii) the strength of various (possibly conflicting) motivations towards one or another model and towards retaining our own sense of our unique identity.

As we have just seen, the strength of the motivation towards the American model diminished from 1964 on. Imitation of this model, however, was not in conflict with any other, and the American model remained the sole motivation there was for pop singers to modify their pronunciation. British singers were indeed trying *less hard* to sound like Americans; but it cannot be said that they were actually trying to sound *more British*. Nor does it actually appear to be true, although it was often claimed to be the case at the time, that from 1963 on singers from elsewhere tried to imitate a Liverpool accent. (The Beatles themselves sounded both more American, as we have seen, *and* more Liverpudlian on their early records than on their later records. Obviously Liverpool features included: the heavy aspiration/affrication of voiceless stops (*passim*); the rhyming of *gone* and *one* (*With The Beatles*); the rhyming of *aware* and *her* (*Rubber Soul*); the pronunciation of *book*, etc. with long /u:/ (as late as *Sergeant Pepper*); the pronunciation of *hang a*... and *long ago* with [ng] (*Revolver*).)

In more recent years, however, especially since 1976, this situation has changed. A new and conflicting motivation *has* arisen. This new motivation is most apparent in the performance of music by pop groups categorized under the heading of 'punk-rock' and/or 'new wave'. The music of 'punk' groups is typically loud, fast and aggressive, and the songs concerned, often, with themes such as violence, underprivilege, alienation, and rejection. The songs are also frequently – in non-punk mainstream societal terms – in bad taste. The intended primary audience is British urban working-class youth.

'Punk-rock' singers, like their antecedents, modify their pronunciation when singing. Analysis of their pronunciation, however, shows that there has been a reduction in the use of the 'American ' features discussed above, although they are still used, and an introduction of features associated with low-prestige south of England accents. These features, crucially, are employed in singing even by those who do not use them in speech. They include:

1. the use of wide diphthongs, as /ei/ = [æɪ] *face*, and /ou/ = [æʉ] *go*;
2. the pronunciation of/ai/ as [ɑɪ] *sky*, and of /au/ as [æu ~ɛu] *out*;
3. the vocalization of /l/, as in *milk* [mɪʊk]:
4. the (occasional) deletion of /h/;
5. the use of [ʔ] realizations of /t/ not only finally, as in *get*, but also intervocalically, where it is most socially stigmatized and conspicuous, as in *better*.

The use of these low-status pronunciations is coupled with a usage of non-standard grammatical forms, such as multiple negation and third-person singular *don't*, that is even higher than in other sub-genres of pop music, and the intended effect is assertive and aggressive. There is also clearly an intention to aid identification with and/or by British working-class youth, and to appeal to others who wish to identify with them, their situation and their values. The 'covert prestige' [see Chapters 14 and 22] of non-standard, low-prestige linguistic forms is clearly in evidence, and the overall motivation, conflicting with that towards the American model, is clearly towards a working-class British model, and towards retaining, although at a group rather than individual level, a sense of a unique (and non-American) identity. (Note that accommodation theory (see above) might be applicable here.)

The continued use in punk-rock of 'American' forms, however, shows that the assertion of a unique British working-class identity is not the whole story. The old motivation of sounding American has not been replaced by the new motivation, but remains in competition with it. Not only, for instance, are American pronunciations retained, but American locutions, such as *real good*, continue to be employed. Moreover, many obvious British features are not employed – intrusive /r/, for example, is extremely rare, even on recent recordings. And at points where the two pronunciation models are in direct conflict, such as the realization of /ai/, forms like [a·] and [ɑɪ] alternate, even in the same song.

We therefore have, in Le Page's terms, conflicting motivations towards different models – the American and the British working class. This conflict, however, is not equally apparent in all types of British pop music. This is clearly revealed in Table 20.1. This table is based on data from seven albums only, and can again therefore be no more than suggestive. These albums are nevertheless possibly quite representative of those produced by many other singers and groups. The albums are: Rolling Stones *Some Girls* (1978);

Table 20.1: Usage of 'American' and 'British' features (percentages)

	'American'			*'British'*
	(r)	*(t)*	*/æ/*	*[ʔ]*
Rolling Stones	19	46	100	0
Supertramp	7	81	—	0
Dire Straits	1	92	—	0
Stranglers	0	88	80	0
Clash	6	71	24	10
Sham '69	1	57	50	9
Ian Dury	0	5	0	22

Supertramp *Breakfast in America* (1979); Dire Straits *Dire Straits* (1978); Stranglers *Rattus Norvegicus* (1977); Clash *The Clash* (1978); Sham '69 *Hersham Boys* (1979); and Ian Dury *Do It Yourself* (1979). The Rolling Stones, Supertramp and Dire Straits represent the 'mainstream' pop-music tradition, while the other performers represent the newer, punk-rock-oriented school. Information is given in the table on the percentage of non-prevocalic /r/s pronounced = (r); the percentage of intervocalic /t/s realized as [ɾ] = (t); the percentage of /æ/ rather than /a:/ in the lexical set of *path, dance* (except for Supertramp and Dire Straits, whose singers are from the north of England); and the percentage of intervocalic /t/s pronounced as a glottal stop.

It can be seen from Table 20.1 that the Rolling Stones, so far as their pronunciation is concerned, are still at the no-conflict, semi-American stage typical of the mid-1960s (and indeed it has always been apparent that Mick Jagger has more self-consciously than most in many respects modelled his singing style on that of Black American rhythm-and-blues singers.) The Stones' (r) and (t) scores are, however, still much lower than they would have been in the early 1960s.

The two newer mainstream groups, Supertramp and Dire Straits, represent the phase after the weakening of American influence. This is apparent from a comparison of their (r) scores with that of the Rolling Stones: the very low (r)-count is typical of nearly all recent British singers. These two groups, however, still heavily favour the 'American' realization of (t) – unlike the Rolling Stones (their low score on *Some Girls* may be influenced by one particular song where the word *pretty* is repeated many times with [tʰ]). It seems, in fact that British singers now have considerable freedom in the extent to which they feel obliged to conform to the earlier 'American' norm for (t). (It is perhaps relevant that the Supertramp record was recorded in the USA, is entitled 'Breakfast in America', and expresses sentiments such as 'Like to see America/See the girls in California...'.)

The supposedly 'punk' group the Stranglers also come out has having an orientation only towards the American model, in that they closely resemble the 'mainstream' groups in their linguistic behaviour. (This is probably of more interest to rock musicologists than to linguists, but it is interesting to note that The Stranglers have been one of the groups accused of having 'sold out' and of not being 'really punk'. Perhaps giving your records Latin titles does not help here either.)

The Clash and Sham '69, on the other hand, can clearly be placed, on phonological grounds alone, in the punk-rock category. In their scores the conflict between the 'American' and 'British' motivations is clearly portrayed. Scores for (r) and /æ/ are low, and [ʔ] is quite heavily used (scores for word-final [ʔ] would be considerably higher than these intervocalic (t) scores). And, interestingly enough, the orientation towards the 'British' model receives overt recognition in one of the songs on the Clash album, which is entitled 'I'm so bored with the USA.' On the other hand, 'American' forms are still used extensively. Punk-rock singing style is probably the only accent of English where the combination of *can't* /kaːnt/, *high* [haˑ] and *face* [fæɪs] is possible.

The scores given for Ian Dury are interesting in a different respect. These show no real signs of any conflict at all: his single model is clearly that of the speech of working-class London. Not too much, however, should be concluded from this as far as pop-song pronunciation in general is concerned. Dury is in some respects on the fringes of the pop-music tradition, and his bawdy and amusing lyrics owe perhaps as much to the comic tradition of the music hall as to pop. His extensive usage of [ʔ], for instance, can certainly be attributed in part to the aggressive style of punk-rockers, but it can also be attributed to the music-hall tradition which has often used Cockney pronunciation for comic effect. (A similar interpretation has to be placed on pronunciations used in the Kinks' 'Little bit of real emotion' (1979) where [lrʔɬ brʔ əv] alternates, in the chorus, with [t^h] and [d̪] allophones of /t/. The effect of this is certainly not aggressive, and is perhaps more whimsical than anything else.)

NOTES

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2 There are other (e.g. choral) American singing styles which are deliberately r-less. These, however, have /aɪ/ as [aɪ], and are probably modelled on Eastern and/or English English accents.

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