EPD16
A review of the Cambridge *English Pronouncing Dictionary*,
16th edition, CUP 2003

Paul Tench

There are now three large, comparable, dictionaries of English pronunciation available from British publishers:

- **Cambridge *English Pronouncing Dictionary*, 16th edition, CUP 2003 (EPD16)**
- **Longman Pronunciation Dictionary, 2nd edition, Longman 2000 (LPD2)**
- **Oxford Dictionary of Pronunciation, OUP 2001 (OPD)**

They are comparable in size, aim and focus. All three contain at least 80,000 headwords, OPD claiming 100,000. All three provide broad phonemic transcriptions, with a range of variations; and all three focus on the main models of both British and American accents. (LPD2 also acknowledges Australian English in one of its language panels, and also refers to other common, but non-RP, pronunciations associated with educated people in England.)

The above list happens to be alphabetical, but the order was intended to represent the influence each has in the world today. The Daniel Jones 'label' of the EPD16 is featured on the cover, even though he passed away in 1967; the label acts as a guarantee of continuity and an impeccable pedigree. That pedigree stretches back to 1917 and is the reason why the EPD is found in more institutions around the world where any reference is made to British English pronunciation, than either of the other two dictionaries. Institutions across Europe, Africa and Asia will certainly have a tradition of obtaining revised editions of the EPD, and may not even know of the other two. Such is its fame; sales of EPD16 are thus guaranteed. But is it deserved?

The EPD was signally challenged by the arrival of LPD in 1990, with its important innovations: American pronunciations, acknowledgement of educated varieties in Britain beside RP, information on trends through poll preferences and graphs, warnings to the unwary learner, and colour coding. On the theoretical side, LPD introduced the weak vowels /i/ and /u/, displayed the strong vowels in different phonetic systems, introduced a theory of syllabification, and explained points of phonetic and phonological description in most helpful 'language panels'. In the meantime, EPD came out in a new edition (EPD15) in 1997, closely followed by a new edition of LPD (LPD2) in 2000, and both were followed by the OPD in 2001. There is no doubt that LPD set new standards, but it did not manage to displace the EPD in acceptance and affection around the world, although it probably did in UK. OPD has not seriously challenged either, with a rather muted marketing effort. Nevertheless, it has now become 'standard' to give equal prominence to American pronunciations as well as British (although British versions always come first in these three British publications).

EPD16 has two major innovations over its previous edition. The first is its own set of 'information panels'. This was one of those features that LPD had introduced and that was received with much enthusiasm. EPD16 has more panels than LPD2, with panels that are exclusive to it on abbreviations and acronyms, names of people and places, homographs, French and Latin words, phonetics, phonology, cardinal vowels, clusters

and rhyme/rime, and intonation, including tone and tone unit. They are very introductory, as are LPD2's; many topics deserve a more comprehensive treatment, such as the panels on weak forms, which could easily accommodate a full listing.

In other respects, EPD16 remains fairly conservative. The transcribed pronunciations are virtually the same as EPD15; however, *sure* is now recognized as /ʃɔː/ first and /ʃʊə/ second, as LPD2. Other trends are not caught (see my reviews of the other dictionaries), such as the increasing popularity of *schedule* in Britain with /sk-/ as opposed to /ʃ-/, of *princess* with primary stress on the first syllable, and of alternatives to *one* /wʌn/ such as /wɒn/. There is no /ə/ alternative offered for unstressed /ɪ/ in *–es* and *–ed* suffixes, and unstressed /ɪ/ is still preferred to /ə/ in *palace*, though not in *necklace.*

OPD introduced the symbol /a/ for British /æ/, in recognition of the distinct change in degree of opening in modern RP (see also Gimson 2001: 111, and Crystal 1997: 155, 162), and likewise /ɛ/ for /e/ (Gimson 2001: 110). Perhaps more daringly, it introduced /ɛː/ for British /ɛə/ (see Gimson 2001: 144) in recognition of the clear modern tendency of monophthongization of the vowel. But EPD16 in this respect also remains more conservative and retains the traditional symbols. I think there is distinct value in switching to /a/ to identify the obvious difference in phonetic realization between British and American versions of that vowel, reserving the /æ/ for the closer value of the American. (OPD also selected /ʌɪ/ for the PRICE vowel, which I could not accept (Tench 2003) and could not recommend.)

In a third respect EPD16 remains somewhat conservative. I pointed out in my review of EPD15 that Welsh names like Aberkenfig have /v/, not /f/, even for non-Welsh speakers, and Abersychan has /ʌ/ and not /ɪ/ in its primary stressed syllable. With its claim to reflect the increase in terms of international cuisine (p iv), EPD16 still does not include *galangal*, a spice that I can find in a local Mongolian restaurant in Taffs Well, and which is included in the Thai illustration of the *IPA Handbook* (IPA 1999: 149). Neither LPD2 nor OPD can oblige, but the *Collins English Dictionary* can: /gəˈlæŋgəl/.

EPD16 has introduced colour, a different shade of light blue to LPD2's. The latter has colour to mark the pronunciations recommended to the learner; EPD16 uses it to mark headwords from transcriptions. (In my copy, however, headwords with initial *O* are still black!) This certainly relieves the daunting appearance of EPD15, but the relatively small font size and three columns to a page still give it a rather crammed look. EPD16 has about 100 headwords to a page; OPD has about 80 in four columns and no colour, whereas LPD2 has only about 70 words per page in two columns. This gives LPD2 the edge in looking user-friendly, with a pleasanter appearance to the eye.

EPD16's second major innovation is its CD - and it is excellent. I had no difficulty in installing it, despite my general lack of confidence with electronic material. And I had no difficulty in following the User's Guide, which seems to be designed especially for people like me. You are offered a 'text search', which means looking up a word, in order to read the transcription(s) of it and listen to one rendering of it. You are also offered a 'sound search', which allows you type up the transcription of a word from a screen keyboard, and then hear it; it also allows you to type up 'part transcriptions' so

that you can access a group of words with an identical sequence of sounds, eg all the words that end in /-ɑːv/.

The 'text search' is very easy to use. You type in a word, say, *nonchalant*; you are unsure perhaps whether the letters *<ch>* should be pronounced as /ʃ/ or as /tʃ/. The word appears immediately on screen, with transcriptions for British and American pronunciations; if you select from the Options menu *Turn on automatic sound*, you will hear a British male's voice pronouncing it with /ʃ/. Only one pronunciation is provided, the first British version; neither the alternative with /-tʃ/, nor the American version is made available. The transcription is displayed extremely clearly, very easy on the eye, and is thus pleasanter to use than the hard copy.

Here is the display for *direct*:

direct dɪˈrekt, daɪ-, də- **US** dɪˈrekt, daɪ-
    directs -s
    directing -ɪŋ
    directed -ɪd
    directest -ɪst, -əst
    directness -nəs, -nɪs
    ˌdirect ˈmail
    ˌdirect ˈobject

I have chosen this one because I was surprised in this instance to hear not the first alternative, but the second, with the automatic voice (this time a female voice). Nevertheless, the ease on the eye compared to the hard copy is very noticeable.

I also tested the pronunciations of the words that Michael Vaughan-Rees (2002) used as his checklist for variant pronunciations:
nephew is pronounced with /-f-/;
exit is pronounced with /-ks-/;
graph is pronounced with /-ɑː-/;
plaque is pronounced with /-ɑː-/, contrary to the trend indicated in LPD2;
salt is pronounced with /-ɔː-/; contrary to the trend indicated in LPD2 (but the main LPD2 entry is also with /-ɔː-/);
scone is pronounced with /-ɒ-/;
privacy is pronounced with /-ɪ-/;
primarily and *incomparable* are both pronounced with main stress on the second syllable, in line with the majorities in LPD2.

Vaughan-Rees (2002) also tested variants with potential simplification (eg elision and assimilation); he chose a number of compounds with *hand-*:
handbag and *handcuff* are pronounced with /d/ elided;
handball, *handbook*, *handbrake*, and *handgun* are pronounced with /d/ retained; also
sandwich is pronounced with /d/ elided;
sandcastle is pronounced with /d/ elided; and
landmine is pronounced with /d/ retained.

Just as Vaughan-Rees (2002) discovered within and across dictionaries, there is an inconsistency in this respect in EPD16 too, depending largely on the actor. Alternative transcriptions do allow for elision plus simplification, eg /ˈhæmbæg /, /ˈhæŋgʌn / in most cases (although curiously not for *handcuff*). These are relatively minor matters. The overall impression of the displays, the sound quality and the practicality of the 'text searches' is very positive indeed.

I also found the 'sound search' facility extremely helpful too. A phonetic keyboard on screen allows you to select a sequence of sounds as a whole word, or as part of a word. The User Guide illustrates the former with /reɪz/ which leads you not only to *raise* and *raze/rase* but also to *rays, res, Reyes*; thus all homophones are captured in one swoop. The sound search also provides the opportunity for searching part transcriptions, which helped enormously in my search for minimal pairs. Type in ? (for one sound) or * (for more than one sound) plus /ɑːf/, and then plus /ɑːv/, and you get lists that could be used for discrimination tasks involving the contrast between voiced and voiceless final fricatives. (Mind you, I found it useful to select *UK only* for /*ɑːv/ having found an American alternative of *absolve* as the top item!) I tried /bʔd/ for minimal pairs for vowels and found 22 orthographic matches with monophthongal vowels, but I had to select /bʔɪd/ in order to get front-closing diphthongs. As you get used to the facility, you begin to see its great potential.

Finally, there is a QUICKfind feature, which is available from the Options menu. This enables you to consult the dictionary while you are engaged in word processing and email and the internet. I found this very valuable in composing this review, because it meant that I didn't need to switch continually from my document to the dictionary. With QUICKfind turned on, all I needed to do was to highlight a word and listen to a pronunciation of it.

The CD is a great achievement, of enormous practical value. Some may find it somewhat constraining to be provided with access only to what used to be called RP, but many non-native speakers in TEFL will appreciate it. I greatly value its text and sound search facilities for their pedagogical and research potential.

What used to be called RP is now called *BBC English*, a contentious term in my view, since the pronunciation is not confined to the BBC, nor does the BBC now confine itself to what used to be called RP – the editors actually acknowledge this (see p v in the Introduction of this new edition). But I am also convinced that the term RP should be abandoned as being quaintly out of date, and would advocate a 'sociolinguistic' term like Southern English Standard Pronunciation, indicating its status and provenance.

The CD makes this the best pronunciation dictionary currently available – not just a *proNOUNcing dictionary*, but also a *proNOUNcing DICTionary*!

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