

a passage of air is necessary for audible speech. If, therefore, the glottis is closed and reopened during a passage of speech, the result is a brief silence, known as a **glottal stop**. Glottal stops are very common in the languages of the world. In some languages they function as consonants, e.g. Arabic, Hawaiian. In some varieties of English, including Australian English, glottal stops are sometimes used as a variant of **t**, e.g. in *mountain*. Cockney English is notorious for its use of glottal stops in words like *bottle*.

Glottal stops are used in standard North German speech before words which begin with vowels. In a sequence like *eine alte Eiche* every word has a perceptible pause before it, even in rapid speech. Southern varieties of German do not make as extensive use of glottal stops as North German, which sometimes leads to confusion. For instance, most Swiss speakers do not use glottal stops. A Swiss speaking the Swiss variety of standard German and using the phrase *der Igel* "the hedgehog" might be understood by a north German speaker to have said *der Riegel* "the doorbolt", because the Swiss speaker not only does not use a glottal stop before *Igel* but also carries over (elides) the final *r* of *der* to the beginning of the next word if that word begins with a vowel. North German speech does not elide final consonants to the beginnings of following vowel-initial words under any circumstances because vowel-initial words **always** begin with glottal stops. The North German speaker expects to hear a glottal stop at the beginnings of words which start with vowels, does not hear one here, and therefore concludes that neither word begins with a vowel. Therefore, even though glottal stops are not consonants in German, as they are in Arabic and Hawaiian, their presence or absence can nevertheless be crucial to communication between speakers of different varieties of German.

The pronunciations indicated in Figure 7.2 are those for standard North German speech. Speakers from south Germany, Austria and Switzerland have different pronunciations of some sounds. I have chosen to use North German Standard German because it is the version recommended by all of the (German) pronouncing dictionaries listed at the end of the chapter. It is reasonably uniform across the northern part of the German-speaking area and is the version of German used by most radio and television announcers. Finally, it is the version of German most frequently taught to non-German speakers outside the German-speaking countries.