
Lecture 8

STYLISTIC AND REGIONAL VARIETIES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

§ 1. Spoken language as the object of linguistic investigation

The ability to use language presupposes the existence of two forms of it: spoken and written, which are different in origin and practice. Spoken language is as old as mankind, written language is a comparatively recent cultural development. Speaking is acquired without any specific formal instruction. Writing as the symbolic representation of the language by graphic signs must be taught and learned through a deliberate effort. Thus the origin of the written language lies in the spoken one, but not the other way round.

For a long time the linguistic research was based on the assumption that only the written form of language can serve an object of theoretical investigation. Written language usually has a generally accepted standard which is the same throughout the country. The spoken form of the language was considered not worthy of scientific analysis because of a great number of distinctions from the literary norm. The understanding that the language is not an isolated phenomenon, but the part of society, gave rise to sociolinguistics and changed the approach to linguistic studies.

Nowadays different language phenomena are viewed as a tool of communication and any linguistic system is explained in connection with numerous extralinguistic factors. Spoken language, which presents regular variations greatly depending on non-linguistic factors, has thus become a reliable object of linguistic investigation.

In the past years there appeared a great many of linguistic sciences correlated with different variations of language use in connection with social factors, such as functional stylistics, psycholinguistics, ethnolin-

guistics, anthropological linguistics, varianthology, and others. They can study language phenomena within three levels: phonetic, lexical and grammatical.

Speaking about phonetics it becomes obvious that pronunciation is by no means homogeneous. It changes under the influence of numerous factors. The linguistic factors are studied in phonology, whereas the extralinguistic ones refer to other branches of phonetics which are linked with sociolinguistic sciences.

The varieties of language phonetic means of different territoriality conditioned by language communities ranging from small groups to nations, are studied within **phonovarianthology**. The problems of different styles of pronunciation are studied within **phonostylistics**. It analyses the spoken form of language expression and deals with those phonetic means used in some particular situations under the influence of a certain set of extralinguistic factors.

It should be mentioned that problems of phonostylistics and phonovarianthology are thoroughly investigated in the book by M.A. Sokolova mentioned in the previous sections [19]. Here we'll try to give a brief overview of the main points and add some new information on the subject.

§ 2. Territorial varieties of English pronunciation

Territorial differentiation of any language is closely connected with social and cultural conditions and becomes the basis of its division into national variants and regional dialects. They are studied within rather a young branch of linguistics — **varianthology**, which conducts language research on the levels of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

2.1. National variants and regional accents of the English language

Territorial differentiations in pronunciation of the language observed in the speech of the whole nation are called **national pronunciation variants**.

National variants of the language evolve from conditions of regional, economic, political and cultural concentration which characterize the formation of a nation. They may have considerable differences, but numerous common features prove that they still belong to the system of one and the same language. Speaking of English, there is a great diversity of its spoken realizations in different regions of the world, particularly in terms of pronunciation.

British English and American English prove to be the two main national variants of the English language. They serve the bases for all other national variants in the English-speaking world. On the ground of political, geographical and cultural unity the following two groups of national variants may be distinguished:

- 1) the British-based group, including English English, Welsh English, Scottish English, Irish English, Australian English, New Zealand English;
- 2) the American-based group, including United States English and Canadian English.

Some foreign linguists (P. Trudgill, J. Hannah, A. Hughes, and others) consider that Scottish English and Irish English stand apart from these two groups. Russian phoneticians (M.A. Sokolova, K.P. Ghintovt, T.F. Leontyeva, and others) suppose that English English, Welsh English, Scottish English and Northern Irish English should be better combined into the British English subgroup on the ground of political, geographical, cultural unity which brought more similarities than differences for these pronunciation variants.

Every national variant of the language falls into smaller regional dialects, distinguished from each other by differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

The reference to pronunciation differences only presupposes the use of the term 'accent'. The two types of accents are usually distinguished:

- local accents, which reveal peculiarities in pronunciation used by smaller language communities in a particular district;
- area accents, which unite common pronunciation features of several local accents.

For certain extralinguistic reasons one of the dialects gradually becomes the standard language of the nation and its accent is acknowledged

as the standard pronunciation model. Still this standard is not homogeneous throughout the country and may have certain variations.

American English and British English have separated more than a century ago. Nowadays these are the two most widely used national variants of English, each of them possessing its own standards in all language systems.

It's important to note that pronunciation standards are not permanently fixed and undergo constant changes under the influence of various internal and external factors. Teaching practice should follow the rules of the most widely accepted pronunciation model.

2.2. British English

The term '**British English**' is generally used nowadays as the synonym of 'English English', the national variant used in England and contrasted to American English.

There are two groups of accents in English English, which may be further divided into smaller groups of area accents, each of them consisting of local accents.

1. The Southern accent group includes:

- Southern accents (Greater London, Cockney, Surrey, Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire);
- East Anglia accents (Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire);
- South-West accents (Gloucestershire, Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire).

2. The Northern and Midland accent group includes:

- Northern accents (Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland);
- Yorkshire accents (North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire);
- North-West accents (Lancashire, Cheshire);
- West Midland accents (Birmingham, Wolverhampton).

In the course of language development London local accent became the pronunciation standard in the 19th century. It was acknowledged as the

Received Pronunciation (RP). The use of this pronunciation type marked the speaker as the representative of high society. For a long time RP has been referred to as “King’s (Queen’s) English”, it characterized the speech of aristocracy and the court. The spread of education gradually modified the characteristics of this accent in the direction of social standards. Received Pronunciation was taught at public schools and used in the best society by cultured people. It has become a social marker, a prestigious accent of an educated Englishman. Nowadays only about 5% of the population in Britain speaks RP, though it is still regarded as a conservative model for correct pronunciation, particularly for educated formal speech.

The wide distribution of radio and television caused considerable changes in the sound system of the present-day English, and there appeared a new pronunciation model — **the BBC English**. This is the pronunciation of professional BBC newsreaders and announcers. It is based on RP, but also takes into consideration modern linguistic situation and thus becomes more flexible and true-to-life. Moreover, the wide spread audio-visual means of mass communication make it accessible to general public. The last edition of English Pronouncing Dictionary fixes the BBC accent as the most broadly-based pronunciation model accent for modern English.

The remarkable systemic modifications in the standard can be mentioned both in the vowel and consonant systems in the course of the last century.

I. Vowel changes include the following:

1. increasing diphthongization of the historically long vowels [i:] and [u:];
2. frequent lengthening of a historically short vowel [æ];
3. gradual monophthongization of some diphthongs:
 - [au], [aɪ] followed by neutral [ə] are smoothed (*power* [pauə] → [paə], *fire* [faɪə] → [faə]);
 - [oə], [uə] are pronounced like long [o:] or short [ɔ] with an [ə]-shade (*poor* [puə] → [po:]/[pɔə]);
 - [ɛə] is levelled to long [ə:] (*careful* [ˈkɛəfʊl] → [ˈkə:ful]);

4. mutual vowel interchanges:

- between diphthongs [ou] and [əu] (*phone* [foun]/[fəun], *note* [nout]/[nəut];
- between monophthongs [æ] and [a] (*have* [hæv]/[hav], *dance* [dans]/[dæns]).

II. Consonant changes include the following:

1. gradual loss of the voiced/voiceless distinctions in certain positions:
 - increasing devoicing of final voiced stops (*dog* [dog] → [dok], *cab* [kæb] → [kæp]);
 - voicing of intervocalic [t] (*letter* ['letə] → ['ledə]);
2. loss of final [ŋ] and initial [h] in rapid speech (*He saw her sitting there* [hi· →so: hɜ· 'sɪtɪŋ ðeə] → [i: →so: ɜ· 'sɪtɪn ðeə];
3. wide usage of typical elements of the American pronunciation:
 - dark [ɪ] instead of [I] (*believe* [bɪ'liv] → [bɪ'hɪv]);
 - palatalized [k] in final positions (*quick* [kwɪk] → [kwɪkʰ]);
 - linking and intrusive [r] (*far away, the idea of*);

III. Combinative changes generally concern the pronunciation of [j] in certain phonetic contexts, which include:

- loss of [j] before [u:] (*student* ['stju:dnt] → ['stu:dnt], *suit* [sju:t] → [su:t]), sometimes accompanied with palatalization of the previous consonant (*Tuesday* ['tju:zdi] → ['tʃu:zdi]);
- intrusion of [j] before [u:] after [l] (*illuminant* [ɪ'lu:mɪnənt] → [ɪ'lju:mɪnənt]);
- change of [j] by other sounds in original combinations [tj], [dj], [sj] (*factual* ['fæktjuəl] → ['fæktʃuəl], *graduate* ['grædjuət] → ['grædʒuət], *issue* ['ɪsju:] → ['ɪʃu:]).

Other combinative changes gradually follow the general tendencies of assimilation and reduction.

These are variations which get systemic representation in modern British English pronunciation. There are also non-systemic variations in standard pronunciation which appear in different accents, but they are too numerous and need a separate consideration.

2.3. American English

The development of American English began with the settlement of the first British colonists in the North American continent. In the course of its formation American English has undergone the influence of many other languages spoken by the Native Americans (the Indians), by the immigrants from Ireland, Spain, France, Holland, Germany, by the Negroes. Nowadays the impact of Spanish and Chinese is easily felt in American English.

As for American pronunciation, it's not homogeneous at all. The three main regional types of pronunciation are distinguished: eastern, southern and western.

1. The Eastern type is spoken in New England and New York. It resembles Southern accents of British English and includes:
 - the cases of linking and intrusive [r];
 - initial [hw] (*which* [hwɪtʃ]);
 - monophthongization of diphthongs with [ə]-glide (*fierce* [fɪəs] → [fɪ:s]).
2. The Southern type is spoken in Southern and South-Eastern states and is characterized by a specific Southern drawl. It is a vowel drawl, which causes:
 - diphthongization of pure monophthongs (*egg* [eg] → [eɪg], *yes* [jes] → [jeɪs]);
 - monophthongization of original diphthongs (*eight* [eɪt] → [ɛ:t], *drain* [dreɪn] → [drɛ:n]).
3. The Western type is spoken in Western and central Atlantic states. It is characterized by the so-called 'Western burr'. This phenomenon includes:
 - the pronunciation of retroflexed vowels with r-colouring in the middle of the word (*bird* [bɜ:rd], *worm* [wɜ:rm], *first* [fɜ:rst], *card* [kɑ:rd], *port* [po:rt]);
 - the pronunciation of retroflexed [r] in the final position (*far* [fɑ:r], *here* [hɪər]).

A.D. Schweitzer offers to divide these types of pronunciation into 2 groups on the basis of the presence or absence of the Western burr. These are:

- the non-rhotic group pronounced without Western burr, which includes the Eastern and Southern types of pronunciation;
- General American pronunciation with Western burr, which includes the Western type of pronunciation.

Some linguists treat **General American (GA)** as a standard pronunciation type, because it is spoken by the majority of Americans. It is true that GA is used in the states, which constitute about 90% of all the territory of the USA. It is also frequently heard from professional voices on national media (radio, television, movies, CDs, etc.).

But many linguists state that no dialect can be singled out as an American standard, because different types of pronunciation are constantly mixed and even professionally trained speakers retain their regional pronunciation features.

The peculiar situation with the absence of the codified pronunciation standard is intensified with the specific status of the English language in the USA. It is not fixed in the Federal Constitution as the official language of the United States, though it really is.

Still American pronunciation is different from RP. American English possesses a set of systemic peculiarities both among the segmental and suprasegmental units.

The segmental peculiarities include:

1. Specific pronunciation of vowel phonemes:

- absence of clear distinction between short and long vowels (*sit/seat* [sɪ·t], *pull/pool* [pu·l]);
- existence of only 5 diphthongs, compared to 8 in RP — [eɪ], [aɪ], [oɪ], [aʊ], [oʊ], while other diphthongs are treated as biphonemic combinations;
- rhotic pronunciation of vowels before [r] in all positions (*turn* [tɜ:rn], *star* [sta: r]);
- ‘nasal twang’ — nasalization of vowels preceded or followed by nasal consonants (*stain, small, name, stand, time, any, make*);
- pronunciation of [æ] instead of [a] before a consonant or a cluster (*class, after, path, dance, plant, grass, bath, half*);
- pronunciation of [a] instead of [o] (*dog, body, shot, hot*) and a complete loss of long [o:] (*cot* [kat] vs. *caught* [kot]);

- monophthongization of diphthongs and diphthongization of monophthongs, including the reverse pronunciation of [ɪ] and [aɪ] (*civilization* [ˌsɪvɪlɪˈzeɪʃn] → [ˌsɪvɪlaɪˈzeɪʃn], *direct* [dɪˈrekt] → [daɪˈrekt], *specialization* [ˌspeʃɪəlɪˈzeɪʃn] → [ˌspeʃɪəlaɪˈzeɪʃn]; *simultaneous* [ˌsɪməlˈteɪnjəs] → [ˌsaɪməlˈteɪnjəs]);

2. Specific pronunciation of consonant phonemes:

- loss of [t] after [n] in the middle of the word (*twenty* [ˈtwenti], *wanted* [ˈwɒnd], *winter* [ˈwɪnə]);
- flapping — pronunciation of [t] like [d] in the intervocalic position and before [l] (*bitter*, *battle*, *little*);
- existence of only dark shade of [l] (*look* [lʊk], *lamp* [læmp], *luck* [lʌk]);
- omission of [j] between a consonant or a vowel [u:] (*news* [nuːz], *tube* [tuːb], *during* [ˈduːrɪŋ]).

The supra-segmental peculiarities generally concern word stress and include:

- placement of stress on the final syllable instead of the initial one in words of French origin (*ballet* [bæˈleɪ]);
- placement of stress on the first element in compound words (*'weekend*, *'hotdog*);
- existence of tertiary stress in polysyllabic words with suffixes *-ory*, *-ary*, *-mony* (*laboratory* [ˈlæbrəˌtɔːri], *secretary* [ˈsekrəˌtɔːri], *ceremony* [ˈserəˌmɒni]).

American intonation patterns on the whole are similar to those of RP. The differences generally convey emotional and attitudinal meaning. For example, the intonation contour of a general question is neutral if it is used in RP. In General American it conveys the meaning of surprise or reserved curiosity:

I've ordered some oysters for dinner. — Do you like them?

2.4. Spread of English

Nowadays the English language is spoken all over the world. The process of modern intercultural relations demands the use of English as

the language of world communication. This results in constant interrelation of English with other world languages. That's why linguists state that new variants of English appear in the countries which originally do not belong to the English-speaking ones.

The present-day linguistic research data show that besides Australian English, Canadian English, New Zealand English, certain regular peculiarities can be found in the so-called Indian English, South African English and other languages. Some scientists even speak about such variants as Japanese English, Mexican English or Russian English, which appear because of contemporary globalization processes. The possibility to treat these variations as national variants of English is hotly debated in modern linguistics and it needs further consideration.

Speaking about Russian English the linguists of this trend use the term 'Ruslish'. They state that it is possible to mention certain systemic modifications of segmental and supra-segmental units of English in the speech of Russian users of this language.

In case of phonetics, there are typical mistakes usually made by most Russian speakers both on segmental and suprasegmental levels. For example:

- dental articulation of consonants instead of the apical one (tree [t] → [ɾ], day [d] → [ɽ]);
- devoicing of voiced sounds at the end of the word (standard ['stændət]);
- absence of secondary stress in polysyllabic words (*six'teen*);
- use of rising intonation instead of falling one in detached special questions (*Where's my book?*).

These peculiarities have a tendency to fix in the speech of Russian people because of the influence of the native language.

The problem is whether to treat them as phonetic mistakes or as manifestations of a new rising variant of the English language. This question is still awaiting its solution.

§ 3. Stylistic varieties of English pronunciation

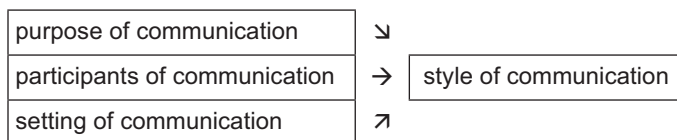
The same word or a sequence of words may be pronounced quite differently by different speakers under different circumstances. Thus in

rapid colloquial speech the conjunction *and* is frequently pronounced like [n], but the same word might be pronounced like [ænd] in slow everyday speech or even like [ænd] in a careful serious conversation. In other words, the pronunciation of speech sounds is greatly determined by the style of pronunciation. Stylistic variations of pronunciation are quite numerous. They are studied within **phonostylistics** — a comparatively new branch of linguistics which has links both with phonetics and stylistics.

3.1. Style-forming and style-differentiating factors

Phonostylistics explains the use of definite phonetic features in certain kinds of extralinguistic contexts, and helps to identify the segmental and suprasegmental phenomena in order to classify them.

Special extralinguistic analysis shows that speech communication is connected with the following three factors: the purpose, the participants and the setting of communication. So the style of communication is determined by these factors as well.



Any act of communication presupposes the presence of the speaker and the listener, whose conversation arises from a certain topic and happens at a certain place. According to it they use different linguistic means which result in stylistic variations. Thus the combination of different linguistic and extralinguistic means depends on a number of factors on any level of linguistic analysis including the phonetic one.

The style of speech can be analyzed from the point of view of style-forming and style-differentiating factors. The difference between them is that the first ones concern the production level, while the second ones relate to the perception level.

I. The style-forming factors determine phonostylistic patterns used on the part of the speaker. According to the degree of their significance they may be divided into: proper style-forming, style-modifying, and in-

cidental factors. They are interdependent and show different phonetic phenomena as a part of the whole system.

1. The the aim (purpose) of the utterance is the only style-forming factor which sets the style of conversation.

It is presupposed by the type of activity (working, teaching, public speaking, chatting, etc.) and its subject matter. These affect pronunciation and make the speaker select functional phonetic means of a certain phonostylistic pattern in order to realize the purpose more effectively.

2. The style-modifying factors are considered to be less important, as they cause modifications within the style set by the style-forming factor. They include:

— the speaker's attitude to the situation realized in numerous intonation varieties and reveals emotions of an individual;

— the form of communication: a monologue or a dialogue, which need different phonetic organization and imply distinctions in the possibility of interruption, continuity, ability to participate, etc.;

— the degree of formality, that reflects the influence of social roles and relationship on the distinction and precision of articulation;

— the degree of preparedness or spontaneity, which leads to differences in the rate of speech and the number of hesitation pauses;

— the kind of speech activity: speaking or reading, presupposed by the absence or presence of reference to a written text, which has a decisive influence on the phonetic organization of the utterance.

3. The incidental (concomitant) factors are characteristic of a language user and cannot much influence on the choice of style.

These are the speaker's individual characteristics, the temporal limits of the utterance, the social status, the sex and age of the speaker. They are not deliberately chosen in the act of communication and are generally considered to be informative.

II. The style-differentiating factors are revealed on the part of the listener when interpreting the style of a given utterance. The variations of

the following characteristics are the first to attract attention: the speech tamber, delimitation and accentuation of semantic centers.

1. Speech tamber is a special voice colouring, which shows the speaker's attitude to the situation of communication. Its interpretation is usually combined with non-verbal communication markers, like movements of face or body parts.
2. Delimitation refers to the number, length and character of pauses. They divide an oral text into larger units, like phonopassages in monologues or semantic blocks in dialogues. These are furtheron divided into smaller units, like phrases and intonation groups. Thus the emotional state of the speaker and his preparedness to the conversation are revealed.
3. Accentuation of semantic centers denotes a special prominence given to the parts of the utterance which the speaker supposes to have a considerable functional value. They are contrasted with the help of intonation and the degree of contrast serves the marker of the style.

All in all, phonetic factors realized in different styles include suprasegmental variations of pitch direction, pitch range, pitch level, loudness, tempo (by means of pauses and speech rate), rhythm and positional modifications of segmental phonemes. But it's necessary to remember that realization of these phonetic variations is exercised only together with lexical and grammatical ones in the process of oral transmission of ideas by verbal means.

3.2. Classification of phonetic styles

There is no generally accepted classification of phonetic styles. Still it is possible to distinguish the main approaches to this classification.

I. Some linguists try to unite the classification of phonetic styles with that of **functional styles**. For instance, S.M. Gaiduchic distinguishes the following styles of pronunciation: solemn, scientific business, official business, everyday, familiar. These phonetic styles correlate with functional styles of the language differentiated on the basis of different spheres of discourse.

But there are certain lacks in this approach, because oral texts referred to different functional styles may have identical phonetic features. Thus, an extract from a piece of prose or an advertisement does not reveal any phonostylistic differences if read aloud with the same pragmatic aim.

II. Another group of phoneticians suggests that the classification of pronunciation styles should be based on different degrees of formality and familiarity between the speaker and the listener. For example, J.A. Dubovsky suggests the following phonetic styles: informal ordinary, formal neutral, formal official, informal familiar, declamatory.

The degree of familiarity may be also combined with the **number of listeners**. Thus, L.V. Shcherba suggests the existence of only two styles of pronunciation: the colloquial style characteristic of people's quiet talk, and the full style used in distinct public speech. On the same basis A.D. Jones distinguishes: the rapid familiar style, the slower colloquial style, the natural style addressed to a fair-sized audience, the acquired style of the stage, and the acquired style of singing.

The theories stated above are suitable for presenting texts for description and analysis, but they still don't create a symmetrical classification of speech acts.

III. A different view is presented by the linguists, who consider the problem of phonostylistic classification in connection with **style-forming factors**. For instance, M.A. Sokolova singles out five intonational styles according to the purpose of communication: informational style, academic (scientific) style, publicistic style, declamatory style, conversational (familiar) style. The use of each of these styles results in evident variations of suprasegmental phonetic units.

This approach makes up a rather adequate system of phonostylistic varieties, but still differentiation of intonation according to the purpose of communication is not enough. There are other factors that affect intonation in various situations. Moreover, the changes of the segmental units are not clearly defined.

It's possible to say that the question of phonostylistic classification is still open in modern linguistics, as the peculiarities of different styles of pronunciation have not yet been sufficiently investigated. But no matter which classification is taken into account, it's always necessary to remember that any style is seldom realized in its pure form. Every oral text presents a fusion of styles and includes different phonostylistic characteristics.