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Varieties of English: Phonetic Aspects

British English and American English prove to be the two main national variants of the English language. They are usually subdivided into two large groups of national variants. The national variants may have considerable differences on different linguistic levels but numerous common features prove that they still belong to the system of one and the same language [1]. We will take into consideration the phonetic level and determine certain pronunciation features of some British English dialects.

The first accent is defined in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary as “the standard accent of English as spoken in the south of England”. It is Received Pronunciation (RP). This is the pronunciation type of people from high society. Nowadays this accent is a conservative model for correct pronunciation and transcription in most English dictionaries.

Some linguists call RP the BBC English. Although the BBC English developed on the base of RP it is more flexible. It is a common pronunciation for professional BBC newsreaders and announcers.

The Welsh English accent is spread throughout Wales. It has been heavily influenced by the Welsh language. There some common phonetic features of this dialect:

- 1) this is a sing-song sounding accent because of the huge glide from high pitch to low pitch;
- 2) the sound [æ] is pronounced like a short open [a]: trap [trap] and man [man];
- 3) the central open short vowel [ʌ] becomes a mid central [ə]: butter [ˈbʊtə];
- 4) the diphthongs [eɪ], [oʊ], [eə], [uə] are monophthongised: cake [ke:k]; soap [so:p]; pear [pe] tour [tuə].

The Scots language has a huge impact on the formation of the Scottish English accent. There are some phonetic features according to which we can distinguish the Scottish English speaker:

- 1) the phoneme [r] is a postalveolar phoneme in RP, while it is more common alveolar tap or the alveolar trill in the Scottish accent;
- 2) the consonant [w] is more aspirated and often pronounced as [hw];
- 3) in many cases there is no distinction between long and short vowels. So, words “beat” and “bit” are pronounced the same;
- 4) Scottish English has no [ʊ] phoneme. Words “pull” and “pool” are pronounced like [pu:l];
- 5) in most varieties, [æ] is replaced with [ɑ:]; “bath”, “trap”, and “palm” have the same vowel – [ɑ:].

The Cockney English is the accent or dialect of English traditionally spoken by working-class Londoners and is considered to be non-prestigious. It also has some phonetic peculiarities:

- 1) sounds [θ] and [ð] are often replaced with [f] or [v];
- 2) the sound [h] is pronounced before vowels like in ‘egg’ ([heg]) and is omitted at the beginning of words, for example, ‘ham’ ([æm]);
- 3) the diphthong [oi] is pronounced instead of RP [ai] (find [foind]), while [ei] is replaced with [ai] (face [fais]).

The Irish English accent is known for its melodious intonation. Among other phonetic peculiarities, the following ones seem the most significant:

- 1) Irish English [r] is pronounced clearly in all positions;
- 2) interdental [θ] and [ð] are replaced with alveolar [t] and [d]: that [dæt], thirty [tʰɜ:ti];
- 3) the combination [dj] turns into [dʒ]: duty [dʒu:ti];
- 4) the diphthong [ai] is pronounced as [ɔi]: like [lɔik], Irish [ɔiɾɪʃ] [2].

Here are just some of the national pronunciation variants of the British-based group. These accents thereby have many other spoken realizations in different regions. The pronunciation features vary among speakers. The difference is closely connected with regional, economic, political and

cultural aspects. The aim of the work was to observe phonetic features of some of them as it is important to understand people from different regions. Besides, judging from this point of view, we may say for sure where this or that person comes from.

Литература

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