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COURSE WORK

Theme: American-Based Pronunciation

Standards of English

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main difficulties a foreigner student may face when learning English pronunciation is the remarkable variety of accents . As our president I.A. Karimov said: “Nowadays, foreign languages teaching system proves that educational standards, Curricula and textbooks do not fully meet the up-to-date requirements in terms of application of the advanced information and media technologies. Teaching is being conducted using traditional methodologies. Both consistent learning of the foreign languages at all levels of the education system and teachers’ professional upgrading and equipping them with modern educational literature require further enhancement. In view of entire enhancement of the system of teaching youths the foreign languages and training of specialists able to communicate in foreign languages fluently, by introducing progressive teaching methods using modern teaching and information-communication technologies thus enabling them to access the achievements of the world civilization and globally available information resources, ensuring international collaboration and communication.” Like many other languages spoken in such a vast territory and by so many people, spoken English presents wide variation in pronunciation. In spite of that wide variation, three standard pronunciations are distinguished:

The Received Pronunciation, also called Oxford English or BBC English, is the standard pronunciation of British English;

The General American is the accent considered as standard in North America, and as such it is the pronunciation heard in most of American films, TV series, and national news;

The General Australian is the English spoken in Australia.

We think, these three main accents should be interpreted as broad categories, for the English language has a great and rich diversity of varieties. Many students are confused as to appreciate the difference between accents, and they often speak with a mixed of accents perplexing somewhat a native speaker. The purpose of this course work is to study the main differences between British English, as

represented by Received Pronunciation, and American English, as represented by General American. This study should help students to correct their pronunciation, be consistent with their accent, and acquire a new pronunciation with fewer traces of their native language. Although our standpoint here is primarily phonetic, British and American English have also been studied from a social and historical stand point and the references there in. One of the vital features of literary language, which distinguish it from its dialects, is the existence of more or less uniformed norms. A literary language has its own lexical, grammatical, and orthographic and pronunciation norms. Every national language possesses two forms: the written form, which is the literary uniform of a language and spoken form, which is not uniform and characterized by the individual features of the speaker. English is represented in writing and printing by the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, a dozen of punctuation marks and such devices as capitals and italics. In the spoken form of English we evidently use about a hundred sounds and variations in pitch, stress, pause etc. Each sound is used with some modifications in actual speech: For example some people have a full *lxl* and others a very slight indication of the sound. The pronunciation of words varies considerably among the different regions in which English is spoken, so that we can easily distinguish speakers according to their pronunciation.

In my opinion, there is no strict boundary between written and spoken forms of a language because some elements of the spoken form may be found in the written form. As to the dialects they are the linguistic varieties of the language used by some group of speech community only in the oral or spoken form and differ from the spoken literary form of a language in more or less degree. Dialects may be distinguished from each other by their pronunciation, grammar, lexicon and stylistics.

American English

Incidentally Generally speaking, the situation in the USA may be characterized as exoglossic, having several languages on the same territory, the balance being in favor of American English.

It is true; of course, that the formation of the American Standard underwent the influence of minorities' languages, but its starting point was the English language of the early 17th century. However, time has passed; American English has drifted considerably from English through as yet not enough to give us ground to speak of two different languages. Thus we speak of the national variant of English in America. American English shows a lesser degree of dialect than British English due to some historical factors: the existence of Standard English when first English settlers came to America, the high mobility of population, internal migrations of different communities and so on. As regards pronunciation, however, it is not at all homogeneous.

1. Structure of vowels

There is no strict division of vowels into long and short in General America, though some American phoneticians suggest that certain General America vowels are tense and likely to be accompanied by relative length:

[i:] in seat,

[u:] in pool.

They also admit that a slight rise in tongue position during the pronunciation of tense vowels leads to a diphthongal quality of tense vowels which contrasts to a monophthongal quality of lax vowels.

Classification of vowels according to the stability of articulation is the most controversial subject in General America. Some diphthongs are treated in General America as biphonemic combinations. The inventory of General America diphthongs varies from three to twelve phonemes. Following us distinguish here five diphthongs in General America:

[ei], nape, name dame

[ai], mine, type, night

[ɔ i], oil, boy ,coin

[au], august,

[ɔ u] _now, house

Another very important feature that causes different interpretations of diphthongs and vowel length in General America is the pronunciation of [r] sound between a vowel and a consonant or between a vowel and a silence:

turn [tɜ:rn] ,

Bird [bɜ:rd],

Star [sta:r].

It has been estimated that 2/3 of American population pronounce [r] and 1/3 omit it. Thus General America is rhotic in words like far, core, etc. It involves the characteristic hindering of the free flow of breath which we associate with consonants. The sound [r] in far closes the syllable more definitely than in British Received Pronunciation Of the word [fa:]. On the other hand, there is a vocalic, or vowel-like and syllabic [r] that occurs in words like bird, murmur. Ch. Thomas writes that in such cases we should better transcribe the words bird and murmur like [brd] and [mrmr]. In such cases [r] is responsible for the characteristic vowel-like quality within the syllable; it is responsible for syllabic quality as well. That's why Ch. Thomas says that [r] syllabic in bird and [r] non-syllabic in far should be transcribed differently. According to V.A. Vassilyev it is still the vowel of the word .hat forms a syllable ([ɜ:] in bird, [ɔ :] in corn,etc.), not the syllabic [r] sound. He mentioned although that all the vowel sounds in pre-[r] position sound more like [ə], [r] gives the preceding vowel a retroflex coloring. It means that the tip of the tongue glides to the retroflex position without; however, staying there long enough to produce a full-fledged retroflex [r] sound, [r] also prolongs the vowel a little. V.A. Vassilyev uses the term "[r]-compensating" vowels for the vowels in such words in British Received Pronunciation.

One more peculiar feature of pronunciation of vowels in American English is their nasalization, when they are preceded or followed by a nasal consonant (e.g.in such words as take, small, name, etc.). Nasalization is often called an

American twang. It is incidental and need not be marked in phonemic transcription.

General America front vowels are somewhat different from Received Pronunciation. Vowels [i:], [i] are distributed differently in General America and Received Pronunciation. In words like very, pity General America has [i:] rather than [i]. In word final position it is often even diphthongized. Vowel [e] is more open in General America. It also may be diphthongized before

[p] Peer, peep

[t], trade, toad

[k]: kid, khan

Let [læt].

There are four mixed or central vowels in General America:

[ɜ], **misol**

[ə], kernel

[ʌ], hull, grub

[a]. glass,

They differ markedly from Received Pronunciation vowels in articulation and distribution.

The three Received Pronunciation vowels [ɔ], [æ], [ɔ:] correspond to only two vowels in General America – [a] and [æ].

This combined with the articulatory differences between Received Pronunciation [ɔ] and General America [a] and a difference in vowel distribution in many sets of words makes it very complicated. The following chart vividly shows it: Besides, word distribution of [ɔ:], [ɔ] in RP and General America is completely different. A [ɔ] is intermediate in quality between the Received Pronunciation [ɔ:] and [ɔ]. In its production the lips are considerably less rounded.

Since General America is a rhotic accent with non-prevocalic [r], it has the consequence that the following RP vowels do not occur in General America:

[iə] in dear –GA [dir],

[Eə] in dare – GA [deir],

[uə] in tour – GA [tʊr].

Some words and names spelled er are pronounced [a:] in Received Pronunciation, but /ɜr / in General America,

E.g. clerk, [klɑ:k]

Derby, [dɑ:bɪ]

Kerry. [Kɑ:rɪ]

Words ending in -ille tend to be pronounced

[Aɪl] in Received Pronunciation but [ɜl] or [ɪ] in General America,

E.g.

Hostile, [hɒstəl]

Missile, [mɪsaɪl]

Tactile, [ˈtæktəl]

Fertile, [ˈfe:təl]

Docile, [ˈdɒsaɪl]

Sterile, [ˈsteraɪ]

Agile, [ˈædʒəl]

Fragile [ˈfrædʒəl]

Futile [ˈfju:təl]

Many General America words with a syllable initial alveolar consonant [t, d, n] and now less frequently [l, s, z], before a sound spelled u, ew, or eu exhibit the preference for [tu, du, nu, su, zu]

In tune [tju:n]

Duke [dju:k]

New [nju:]

Lewd [lu:d]

Suit [sju:t]

Zeus (the so-called yod dropping), whereas Received Pronunciation has [j] after the alveolar sound

In General America [ɜ] is used in final unstressed syllables ending with -ion, or -ia, as in

Asia ['eiʒ ə],

Excursion [iks'ʒrʒ n],

Version ['vʒrʒ n],

In contrast to Received Pronunciation [ʃ]:

Asia [eɪf ə],

Excursion [ɪks'kɜ:ʃ n],

Version ['vɜ:ʃ n]

1.1. Words General America and Received Pronunciation

Ate [eit] [et]

Either, neither ['i: ðər], ['ni:ðər] ['aiðə], ['naiðə]

Figure ['fɪgər] ['fɪgə]

Leisure ['li:ʒ ə] ['leʒ ə]

Lever ['levər] ['li:və]

Process ['prɑ:səs] ['prəuses]

Schedule ['skedʒu:l] ['sedju:l]

Shone [soun] [sɔ n]

Tomato [tə'meitou] [tə'mɑ:təu]

Vase [veis] [va:z]

The vowels [ʌ] and [ə] can be generally regarded as allophones of the same phoneme in GenAm, e.g. some speakers pronounce

Cup [kəp],

Above [ə'bəv]

When Received Pronunciation has [ʌr] + a vowel most Americans use r-colored,

Mid-central [ɜr]:

Courage ['kɜ:riɔʒ],

Hurry ['hɜ:ri]

The General America phoneme [æ] is somewhat closer than its Received Pronunciation counterpart, and seems to be evolving into an even closer vowel in many speakers. Before [r] plus a vowel, as in

Carry [ˈkæri]

Marry [ˈmæri]

Parrot [pærət]

Stress Differences

In words of French origin General America tends to have stress on the final syllable, while Received Pronunciation has it on the initial one:

Frontier [ˈfrʌntiə] [frʌnˈtiə r]

Composite [ˈkɒmpəzɪt] [kəmˈpɑːzət]

Primarily [ˈpraɪməfli] [praɪˈmerfli]

Some words have first-syllable stress in General America whereas in Received Pronunciation the stress may be elsewhere.

Some compound words have stress on the first element in General America and in Received Pronunciation they retain it on the second element:

Weekend [ˌwi:kˈend]

Ice-cream [ˈaɪskri:m]

Hotdog [ˈhɒtdɒg]

New Year [njuːjəː]

Polysyllabic words ending in -ory, -ary, -ery, -mony have secondary stress in General America, often called "tertiary" on the vowel in the penultimate syllable, and Received Pronunciation has no stress in the same position:

Laboratory [ˈlæbrə,tɔri],

Dictionary [ˈdɪksə,neri],

Secretary [ˈsekrə,teri],

Testimony [ˈtesti,mouni].

This study should help students to correct their pronunciation, be consistent with their accent, and acquire a new pronunciation with fewer traces of their native language. Although our standpoint here is primarily phonetic, British and American English have also been studied from a social and historical standpoint and the references there in.

1.2 Words and Pronunciation

There are many five-syllable words ending in -ily for which General America gives primary stress to the third syllable whereas Received Pronunciation gives primary stress to the first syllable. In these words Received Pronunciation speakers also tend to reduce or drop the third syllable (compression), thus pronouncing them with four rather than five syllables,

E.g. Customarily General America: [ˌkʌstə'merəli],

Received Pronunciation: [ˈkʌstəmərəli]

And in the words as

Momentarily,

Necessarily,

Ordinarily,

Voluntarily,

In some cases, words in General America and Received Pronunciation have the same number of syllables but simply take different stress patterns, with concomitant differences in pronunciation:

Advertisement:

General America [ˌædvər'taɪzmənt],

Received Pronunciation [əd'vɜːtɪsmənt];

Adult: General America [ə'dʌlt] (main pronunciation),

Received Pronunciation ['ædʌlt] (main pronunciation),

Laboratory,

Address,

NB! Speaking about different stress patterns in General America and Received Pronunciation, the following general trend can be established: there is greater use of secondary / light stress in General America along with a tendency to retain syllables, and there is more syllable reduction in multisyllabic words in RP.

Intonation Differences

General America intonation on the whole is similar to that of Received Pronunciation. But there are, of course, some differences that should be mentioned

here. North American English speakers tend to perceive British speakers as pretentious and tanned, and British speakers tend to perceive Americans as monotonous and negative. This can be explained by the fact that British English has a greater pitch range (i.e. the distance from the highest to the lowest level in a sentence is generally greater) with a marked rise, then a gradual fall with a final glide down on the last syllable, i.e. a more step like movement from high to low. General American intonation begins with a much smaller rise-fall, maintaining a mid-level pitch with a marked rise-and-fall glide on the final syllable. Other differences concern mainly the use of similar tones. General America clearly makes more use of high rise rather than of low rise in yes-or-no questions, and the use of high rise seems to be increasing, on declaratives, as a marker of casualness, particularly in narrative monologues. Cruttenden also explains that the British low rise sounds patronizing or ingratiating to North Americans whereas the North American English high rise appears casual and almost flippant to British speakers.

2. The differences between English and American Pronunciation

When it comes to teaching English globally, and in particular spoken English, there are two main standards: Received Pronunciation and General American. Received Pronunciation consists of British English pronunciation as used by James Bond and many BBC newsreaders and documentary narrators. General American is a fairly neutral form of Mid West American English and is used by many ABC and CNN newsreaders.

However what are the differences and which form is best used for students of spoken English?

First of all, Received Pronunciation does have more sounds with some 50 identified phonemes. Correspondingly, General American pronunciation has less with 44 to 48.

Secondly, different vowel phonemes are used in different words – for example in the word chance (or dance) – a long vowel is used in RP whereas a short one is used in American. Speech School.TV, a leader in online speech training initially offered both English pronunciation courses, the American Accent (based on General American) and the English Accent (based on Received Pronunciation). According to the School, the majority of students signing up world wide – even in some of their most popular markets like the USA and Canada, preferred to subscribe to the English Accent course in order to gain what they perceived as the most pure basis possible for their spoken English. Moreover, practice demonstrated that when learning the principles of Standard English pronunciation it is relatively easy to adapt that to any English speaking environment, whereas the American accent tends to be more regionally based.

Research has also suggested that a more pure English accent is preferred in the United States and Canada than any of the home grown American accents as it is perceived to be more sophisticated. According to Speech School, international students are best to learn Standard English pronunciation and adapt it accordingly in the US. Further research in the call center industry shows that Standard English has the lowest rate of errors and highest level of customer preference worldwide. This would further cement the view that the best option for English pronunciation training is to begin with the pure Standard English accent. Returning to the main differences between British English and American English, they can be summarized as follows.

Returning to rhotic accent, it can be found associated with the following sounds:

- Long vowels [a:], [o:], and [ɜ:], as in

Hard [ha:rd],

Borne [ho:rn],

Hurt [hɜ:rt],

Respectively

- After the short sound schwa [ə] in the comparative endings, as

In later [ˈleɪtər],

Taller [ˈto:lər].

- Diphthongs ending by sound

Schwa [ɪə] and [eə], as in

Here [hɪər], and there [ðeər], respectively.

- The combination [ju], as in

Cure [kjur],

pure [pjur].

- After the short sound [u], as in

Poor [pur],

Moor [mur],

Boor [bur].

Furthermore, rhotic accent is produced according to the following circumstances.

- There is rhotic accent when a word is pronounced in isolation or at the end of a prosodic break. For example, it was very hard.
- The rhotic accent is lost when the letter r does not belong to the same syllable.

Compare

Water [ˈw:təð]

Watery [ˈwo:təðɪ].

- If within a prosodic unit the last syllable of a word ends by [ð] and the next word begins by a vowel, then the rhotic consonant is substituted by [ô] or [R], depending on the particular accent. For example, the sentence That water is cold is pronounced as [ðætˈwo:təðɪzˈkould]; notice the change from [ð] to [ô] in water. It is documented that up to 1776, when the American Revolution broke out, there was no such thing as British and American accents. Both were indistinguishable, as attested to by the following paragraph from the book of Algeo. “Received Pronunciation developed at the end of the eighteenth century, during the period of the American Revolution. At that time there was no pronunciation by which people in America could be distinguished from people in England. In the impressment

controversies of the 1790s, naval officers on both sides found it so difficult to tell whether sailors were British or American that the American government considered providing certificates of citizenship. Towards the end of 18th century the upper classes of Southern England started to remove the rhotic accent as a way of marking class distinction. Gradually, the new accent took off and middle classes adopted it as well. Scotland and Ireland, where the population was mainly composed of lower working classes, did not take on the change of accent, and at the present time both remains rhotic. In America there are two notable exceptions, namely, New York and New England areas. It has been hypothesized that those areas kept the non-rhotic accent because of their strong links with the British.

Change of Diphthong [əu] to [ou] the shift from the British diphthong [əu] to [ou] is also very distinguishing. The shift consisted in the change of the mid central unrounded vowel [ə] to the close-mid back rounded vowel [o] in the first vowel of the diphthong. This shift is considered to be systematic. In Table 1 several examples of this shift are shown.

2.1 Words Received Pronunciation and General America

Go [ge u] [gou]

No [nəu] [nou]

Crow [krəu] [krou]

Cocoa [ˈkəukəu] [ˈkoukou]

Component [kəmˈpəunənt] [kəmˈpounənt]

Promotion [prəˈməusn] [prəˈmousn]

Romantic [rəuˈmæntɪk] [rouˈmæntɪk]

2.2 Change of Vowels

The Main Changes Letter o is pronounced in many different ways in English. Here we have a few illustrative examples of such diversity:

Hot [hot] in RP, but [ha:t]

In GA; love [lav];

Corn [ko:n] in RP , but [ko:rn] in GA;

Continue [kən"tɪnju:];

Moon [mu:n];

Coast [kəʊst] in RP, but [koust] in GA;

The so-called “short o”, which often appears in a stressed syllable with one letter o such as in dog or model, underwent a change in American English. In British English that sound is pronounced as an open back rounded short sound, as in hot [hot], or possible [ˈposəbl]. In American English it is pronounced either as an open back unrounded long sound [a:], as in hot [ha:t], or as an open-mid back rounded long vowel [o:], as in dog [do:g]. Note that British English prefers a short sound as opposed to American English, which prefers a long sound in all cases.

2.3 Word British English and American English

Box [bɒks] [ba:ks]

Chocolate [ˈtʃ uɒklət] [ˈtʃ uɑ:klət] or [ˈtʃ uo:klət]

Clock [klɒk] [kla:kl]

Cost [kɒst] [ko:st]

Dog [dɒg] [do:g]

Gone [gɒn] [go:n]

Got [gɒt] [ga:t]

Hot [hɒt] [ha:t]

Job [jɒb] [ja:b]

Lot [lɒt] [la:t]

Not [nɒt] [na:t]

Off [ɒf] [a: f] or [o:f]

Possible [ˈposəbl] [ˈpa:səbl]

Sorry [ˈsɒri] [ˈsa:ri] or [ˈso:ri]

Stop [stɒp] [sta:p]

Want [wɒnt] [wa:nt] or [wo:nt]

Wasn't [wɒznt] [wɔznt]

What [wɒt] [wa:t] or [wɔt]

The father- bother merger. This merger is responsible for the transformation of into [a:]. Vowel [a] underwent two main changes: first, it was lengthened to [o:], and later it lost its roundedness becoming finally [a:]. Roundedness is perhaps the most distinctive difference between and [a:] in daily speech rather than vowel length. This change took off in all varieties of American English, except for the areas of Eastern New England. The merger was quite generalized and by the end of 19th century was completely consolidated. Examples illustrating this merger are

Bother [ba:ðər],

Doss [da:s],

Top [ta:p],

Lot [la:t],

Model [ma:dl],

Problem [pra:bləm],

Rock [ra:k],

Slot [sla:t].

The lot-cloth split. This split came about at the end of 17th century. The sound was first lengthened to [o:] and later rose to [o:]. In principle, the split took place before voiceless fricatives [f], [t], [s], but later it was extended to velars like [k], [g], and Thus, in GA we find

Loft [lo:ft],

Cloth [klo:t],

Lost [lo:st],

Chocolate [tʃ uo:klət],

Dog [do:g],

Long [lo:ŋ]

Are pronounced as [O:], whereas in RP they are systematically pronounced as. There is a certain degree of overlap between both phenomena. For example, it is possible to find words with two pronunciations such as loft

([lo:ft] and [la:ft]),

Chocolate ([tʃ uo:klət] and [tʃ ua:klət]),

Or long ([lo:ŋ] and [la:ŋ]).

However, the father-bother merger acted upon a larger number of words than the lot-cloth split did

• First-syllable stress in Received Pronunciation but second-syllable stress in General America:

Adult,

Baton,

Beret,

Bidet,

blas´e,

Brochure,

Buffet,

Caf´e,

Chalet,

Chauffeur,

clich´e,

coup´e,

Debris,

Debut,

d´ecor,

Detail,

flamb´e,

frapp´e,

Garage,

Parquet,

p^at´e,

pr´ecis,

Sachet,

Salon,

Vaccine

With more than two syllables we have

matin´ee,

n´eglig´ee,

Nonchalant

(The word *matin´ee* has a certainly difficult pronunciation [-mætn"eɪ].)

- Second-syllable stress in RP but last-syllable stress in GA:

attach´e,

consomm´e,

d´ecollet´e,

fianc´e (e)

- Common words where GA has a first-syllable stress and RP has last-syllable are

address,

Cigarette,

Magazine

Conclusion

“A good pronunciation of any language is similar to being well dressed; it is the outward semblance of culture and refinement in matters of speech, and it should be a thing of pride to any one because it is one’s principal badge of honor and recommendation to the natives of that speech. Without a good pronunciation one can never be accepted by foreign people; he is always an outsider and can never really know the people whose language he is butchering. All of us are cautious and a bit suspicious of one who cannot pronounce English well, but we tend to accept with open arms one who probably knows little English, provided he can pronounce that little in a creditable manner. If we bore people, they tend to dispense with our society, and I, personally, soon separate myself from one who antagonizes me with unaccustomed and foreign English sounds.” Excellent, readable accounts of the pronunciation but also cultural differences are the books of Darragh and Davies. The Wikipedia web page [American and British English pronunciation differences](#) provides many tabulated examples of pronunciation

differences, but without examination of the causes and origins of such differences. Moreover, some of the differences described in are not reflected in the phonetic transcriptions provided by some authoritative dictionaries. Phonetic transcriptions given in this article have been taken from. Pronunciations of endings were located with the help of.

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