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PHONETIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH DIALECTS

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the term dialect is often used in the sense of regional, local or geographic varieties of a language mainly used in oral speech. A language belongs to a nation or nations, as English does, therefore it is a social phenomenon, understandable by all its members. A language is not a complex combination of individual speech forms. The phonetic and phonological features of a language dialect relationship, natural bilingualism and also some types of speech communities classified by their social characteristics are studied in a new branch of phonetics, namely social phonetics. Idiolects and dialect speakers are identifiable by their sounds, tone or melody, words and also by expressions and constructions by their phonetics, grammatical, lexical and stylistic features. The distinction between language and dialect is based on the criterion of functional approach.

KEYWORDS

Dialect, Geordie, accent, Scottish dialect, Viking, Anglo-Saxon, Caribbean.

INTRODUCTION

The English language, being a nationally inhomogeneous language, has many national variants around the world: British English, American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, all of which have been studied in one way or another by linguists. Dialectological research within a single country is an equally interesting phenomenon that deserves

attention. Considering the varieties of English within Great Britain, it should be noted that there is a wide variety of dialects, which represents an extensive field for research among dialectologists, sociolinguists, phoneticians, and translators. Traveling around England, you can hear clear differences in the speech of speakers. The influx of a new wave of immigrants to

England, especially from the countries of the British Commonwealth, led to the emergence of new dialects and accents that increasingly enriched the English language. Among the urban population, speakers of Asian and Caribbean origin mixed their native languages with existing local dialects, thereby giving rise to new varieties of English, for example, such as London Jamaican (London Jamaican) and Bradford Asian English (Bradford Asian English) [Domashnev, 1985: 71].

This article will focus on the Geordie accent and dialect of the residents of Tyneside - a conurbation of Newcastle-upon-Tyne with nearby cities and towns on both sides of the Tyne estuary (Northumberland). Geordie is one of the most widely recognized accents in England.

The term "Geordie" has two meanings:

- 1) a native resident of Newcastle upon Tyne;
- 2) a dialect of the same name. This term is sometimes mistakenly used to describe the speech of the entire north-east of England, but it only applies to residents of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the surrounding towns and villages of Tyneside. Residents insist on a distinction between Geordie and several other local dialects such as Pitmatic and Makkem (Mackem) [Balash, 1983: 27]. Popular Internet resource: www.encyclopedia.com defines Geordie as a type of working-class speech that has its roots in the

Northumberland dialect of English, which, in turn, goes back to Old English.

According to the British themselves, they identify Geordie's speech without much effort, since this accent has several distinctive phonological characteristics. It is noteworthy that Geordie is the only dialect in England that was least influenced by the Vikings, as well as the Norman conquest of England in the 11th century, and therefore remained native English, retaining its Anglo-Saxon linguistic roots. Also, this happened due to the geographical distance of the north-eastern cities of England from London and the Tweed River as a natural obstacle to influence from Scotland. These reasons have contributed to the formation and maintenance of a strong sense of cultural identity among residents of the northeast. All languages change over time and vary depending on geography and social conditions. The way people speak is influenced by many factors: ancestral background, social and educational background, work environment, friends, as well as their sense of national identity. Dialects and accents, along with cultural and geographical features, constitute a person's awareness of the specific place in the world to which they belong. The terms accent and dialect are often mistakenly interchanged by uninformed people, but they certainly need to be distinguished.

What is a dialect?

A dialect is a type of national language characterized by the mandatory presence of three aspects: lexical, grammatical, and phonological. English dialects undoubtedly differ from each other, but in general, everyone in England can understand them. For example, a resident of Newcastle-upon-Tyne can use in his speech the local lexical unit *gan* instead of the generally accepted “to go” or *clarts* instead of “mud”, local grammatical constructions *I've went* and *I've drank* to express the past tense, as well as reflexive pronouns *mysel*, *yoursel*, *hissel* instead of the classical norm *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*.

In addition, he can speak with the local accent. This range of linguistic aspects suggests that it is undoubtedly a Geordie dialect.

What is an accent?

Accent, in turn, is determined only by the phonological features of a particular dialect. A Newcastle-upon-Tyne resident who uses conventional vocabulary and classical grammar, but whose pronunciation has an unmistakable Tyneside flavor, should correctly be described as having a Geordie accent. In other words, accent is an umbrella term that combines various aspects of language, one of which is accent. True, “full” speakers of a particular dialect are quite rare, but all English people speak with some kind of accent, or RP - received pronunciation, which can be translated as

“accepted/normative pronunciation” (the term was coined by phonetician Daniel Jones).

Since the early days of English accents, some have been considered “more correct” by the English themselves than others. Based on the way a person speaks, the British concluded that some accents can sound aristocratic, others aggressive, and unfriendly, some show a lack of intelligence or the simplicity, and ordinariness of their bearer. All of the above conclusions were based, rather, on the social factor rather than on the linguistic one. It should be said that such value judgments are still characteristic of some Britons, although in the second millennium, there was a reciprocal tendency to praise regional accents, proclaiming their social equality.

Thus, for many years, the Geordie accent was considered an indicator of the lack of education and low social class of its speakers, as well as their hostility in communicating with people. For this reason, unemployment rates among Tyneside residents remained quite high until the 1970s. In particular, television and radio presenters were prohibited from broadcasting in Geordie due to the specific features of pronunciation. With the advent of a new trend of growing celebration of “everything Geordie”, attitudes towards this accent in English society have changed. This was largely facilitated by a project launched in 2005 by the BBC called *Voices*, which proclaimed the equality of all English dialects. Also, some television

programs began to be broadcast in Geordie, which helped strengthen the status of this accent in English society. In particular, a TV show called *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and its hosts Ant and Dec, as well as actor and singer Jimmy Neil, managed to popularize the local dialect. Today, for many people in England, the accent is an expression of cultural identity and a source of national pride: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/northeast/series7/geordie_dialect.shtml].

Let us consider the phonological features of the accent under study. Like any dialect, Geordie covers a wide range of speakers, from those with a broad dialect to those with a faint Tyneside accent.

A strong accent is found among speakers of the dialect, generally geographically concentrated in the north of Northumberland, while a weak accent may be noticeable among some social groups, such as older people, middle-class people and women:

[<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/text-only/regionalvoices/phonological-variation/>].

1) Geordie is a non-rhotic dialect, which means it does not pronounce the preconsonantal combination 'rs'. It is also the only urban English accent that does not drop the initial 'h'.

2) A hard attack (glottal stop) is observed in several consonants /p, t, k/ in the last syllable of a word, and

also sometimes in the initial position, before a weak vowel sound, as, for example, in the words *caper*, *city*, *local*. So far, phoneticians have not reached a consensus on whether a glottal stop precedes or follows a consonant.

3) In all positions, the sonorant 'l' sounds clear.

4) The uvular 'r' sound, known as the Durham or Northumberland burr, was common in Geordies in the past, but researchers now claim that this feature is disappearing. It is roughly similar to the French pronunciation of "r". "Burr" has been studied quite a bit by linguists. Some phoneticians consider this sound to be a speech impediment. Pronunciation of the r sound is now mainly alveolar or postalveolar, but back of the tongue pronunciation of the r sound has left its mark in the pronounced Geordie accent, where certain vowel sounds are pronounced as if they were still followed by burr: for example, *cure* sounds like 'kyooah', *nurse* as 'noahss'. This is one of the most remarkable

Geordie characteristics. It should be noted that this is not a universal feature of Tyneside pronunciation, but is more common in mining communities further north.

5) In words like *all*, *talk*, *walk*, *war* with a long o /o:/ in RP, in Geordie the vowel /a:/ is usually found. Thus, the word *walk* is pronounced as 'waak', and *work* as 'walk'. Words are written without "l", for example "board" sounds approximately the same as in RP. It is

noteworthy that the vowel /ɛ/, as in "bird", is pronounced /o:/ in Geordie, as in "chalk", so that "heard" becomes indistinguishable from "hoard", and "bird" from "board". There is a fairly well-known joke in England that illustrates this phonological feature. A working-class Geordie comes to see the doctor because his knee hurts due to an accident. Geordie speaks with a pronounced Geordie accent, which ultimately leads to misunderstandings between the RP-speaking physician and the patient.

Doctor: Come in, please.

Geordie: Ah, morning doctor.

Doctor: Ah good morning, Mr Armstrong. And how are you today?

Geordie: Well, I'm not too good, like, you know, my knee's giving us [me] a lot of pain. Ai, just here.

Doctor: Here, eh?

Geordie: Fffsss! Aye, that's the place.

Doctor: What did you do to it?

Geordie: I knackered it.

Doctor: Yes, I mean what exactly happened?

Geordie: Well I was gannin [going] down Percy Street on my bike last night. I was gannin pretty fast 'cause I was late and this truck just backed out into the road without any warning. Anyway, I fell off my bike and

knackered my knee and now I can't walk. I was wondering, like, if you could give us a sick note, 'cause I called them up already at the Council to tell them I'm not coming in today.

Doctor: Let's have a look, shall we? Can you walk?

Geordie: Work? You're kidding, man, how can I work? I telt [told] you man, I can't even walk.

6) In words like don't, goat, know, told, where the standard pronunciation contains a diphthong /ou/, in Geordie there are vowels /o/ or a diphthong /oə/. Thus, "cold" (ou) becomes cold or cowl'd, but in words such as "flow" and "slow" the vowels do not change in this way.

7) The vowel sound in words such as down, town varies from /u/, as in the Scottish dialect called Scots down, toun, to its standard pronunciation. The word "town" with the /au/ diphthong in Geordie is typically pronounced "toon." By analogy, the words "brown", "about", "pound" are pronounced broon, aboot and poond. This vowel sound gives Geordies their unique character. Some diphthongs, such as in the words "eight" /ei/ and "throat" /ou/, sound overly diphthongized, namely "ee-ut" and "throw-ut". This Geordie feature is observed in all speakers of the accent, while some phonological features of the accent are variable. Among the more rare and exceptional features is the pronunciation of the diphthong /ei/ as

/e/ or /ai/: "take" can be pronounced tek, and "face" fyes.

8) The vowel sound in the last syllables of words like bonny and happy is pronounced stretched out /i:/ - 'bonne', 'happee'. The final vowel is usually given more emphasis than in RP, so words like "fighter" and "mother" sound like feita and mutha.

9) The Geordie intonation contour is quite distinguishable due to the rising intonation at the end of declarative sentences, which creates the impression of "uncertain, cautious" speech. However this issue is quite multifaceted and has not yet been sufficiently studied.

10) Endings -ing are usually reduced to -in.

11) In the flow of speech there may be an insertion of the consonant "v", for example, "give it tiv us" ('give it to me') or "A sez tiv im" ('I said to him'): [<http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/definitions/geordie.html>].

Some scholars believe that certain words have pronunciations possibly preserved in Geordie from earlier periods in the development of the English language, mainly the Anglo-Saxon period. These are words like gan for 'go', lang for 'long', aks for 'ask' and deed for 'dead'. The modal verb "can't" is usually pronounced cannet.

Thus, the Geordie accent is one of the most famous and easily recognizable accents in England, due to its

distinctive phonological features. Speakers of this accent are very proud of it and value their sense of national identity. A Geordie accent can be pronounced or subtle, depending on the age, gender, and social background of the speaker.

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