

Dialect Analysis of English

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Resumen: El propósito principal de este artículo es entender mejor la fonología de una región/variedad socioeconómica de inglés basada en dos grabaciones del sitio web de International Dialects of English Archieve (IDEA). En este context, Hansen, Yapanel, Huang & Ikeno (2004), reconoce que "Cada individuo desarrolla un estilo de habla característico a una edad temprana que depende en gran medida de su entorno lingüístico (es decir, de la lengua materna hablada), así como de la región donde el idioma se habla "(p.1). En este estudio, queremos analizar cómo la pronunciación de la pronunciación del hablante de inglés es diferente al inglés que conocemos (inglés americano) y cómo su entonación difiere de la entonación que estamos familiarizados. Por último, queremos analizar si el perfil del hablante (edad, educación, género, experiencia con el inglés y antecedentes socioeconómicos) influye en su pronunciación en inglés. Para este estudio transcribimos la grabación de forma escrita y fonética utilizando el Alfabeto Fonético Internacional (IPA) y luego realizamos un análisis comparativo.

Palabras clave: análisis del dialecto, ingles estándar, transcripcion fonética.

Abstract: The main purpose of this article is to understand better the phonology of a region/socioeconomic variety of English based on two recording from the International Dialects of English Archieve website (IDEA). As Hansen, Yapanel, Huang, & Ikeno (2004) state, "Every individual develops a characteristic speaking style at an early age that depends heavily on his language environment (i.e., the native language), as well as the region where the language is spoken" (p.1). In this study, we want to analyze how the speaker's pronunciation of English sounds is different from the English we know (American English) and how their intonation differs from the intonation patterns with which we are familiar. Finally, we want to analyze if the speaker's profile (age, education, gender, experience with English, and socioeconomic background) influence in their English pronunciation. For this study, we transcribed the recording in a written and a phonetic form using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and then we conducted a comparative analysis.

Key words: dialect analysis, standard english, phonetic transcription

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to understand better the phonology of a region/socioeconomic variety of English based on two recording from the International Dialects of English Archieve website (IDEA). As Hansen, Yapanel, Huang, & Ikeno (2004) state, "Every individual develops a characteristic speaking style at an early age that depends heavily on his language environment

(i.e., the native language spoken), as well as the region where the language is spoken” (p.1). In this study, we want to answer the following questions: 1) How is the speaker’s pronunciation of English sounds different from the English we know (American English)? 2) How does their intonation differ from the intonation patterns with which we are familiar? And 3) how does the person’s profile (age, education, gender, experience with English, and socioeconomic background) influence in their English pronunciation? To answer these questions we transcribed the recording in a written and a phonetic form using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and then we did a comparative analysis.

Background

The recordings we are focusing are under the category England 18. According to the information provided on the website (IDEA), the recordings were made by Lise Olson, 31 years old. The recording #1 (Comma gets a cure), probably was made at speaker’s usual settings of work – the theater. However, we are not sure where the recording #2 (Liverpool) was made. We think the recording #2 must have been done in a closed space but not in a studio. The recording #1 is scripted speech and recording #2 is unscripted speech and therefore is improvised by the speaker. We know that Lise was born in United Kingdom, Liverpool.

The transcription #1. Comma gets a cure.

Written transcription

[...] Pause longer than 3 seconds

[.] Pause shorter than 3 seconds

[!] filler sound

xxx: unintelligible

Well, here’s a story for you. Sarah was a nurse who had been working in a xxx territory. She was very happy to start a new job. On her first morning, she washed her face, put on a plain white dress and a fleece jacket, picked up her kit and headed for work. When she got there, there was a woman with a goose waiting for her. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease, which was surprising because normally you would only expect to see it in a goose. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for the bird. The goose began to strut around the office like a lunatic, which made an unsanitary mess. The goose’s owner, Merry Harrison, kept calling Comma, Comma which Sarah thought was an odd choice for a name. Comma was strong and huge, so it would take some force to trap her, but Sarah managed by gently stroking the goose’s lower back with her palm and singing to her. Her efforts were not futile. Very soon, Comma began to tire, and Sarah gave her a relaxing bath. Washed her and laid her on a cloth of diagnosis. Almost immediately, Sarah remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a lot of medicine. The treatment was very expensive, but Mrs. Harrison a millionaire lawyer thought it was a fair price for a cure.

Phonetic transcription

XXX unintelligible

(:) long vowel

1. wɛl hɪəz ə stɔ:ri fɔ: jə:
2. se:rə wəz ə nɜ:s hu: hæd bi:n we:kɪŋ m e XXX tɛrɪtəri
3. ʃi: wəz veri ha:pi tu: stɑ:t ə nju: dʒɒb
4. dɪs taɪm m nɔ:θ skwe nɪəðə dju:k stri:t taʊə
5. ʊn hɜ: fɜ:s? mɔ:nən ʃi wɒʃt hɜ: feɪs pʊt ʊn ə plem waɪt drɛs
6. ænd ə flɪ:s dʒækɪt pɪkt ʌp hɜ: kɪt ænd hɛdɪd fɔ: wɜ:k
7. wɛn ʃi: ɡɒt ðeə ðeə wəz ə wɒmən wɪð ə gu:s weɪtən fɔ: hɜ:
8. də wɒmən geɪv se:rə ə letə fɒm ðə vɛt
9. də letər ɪmpleɪd dæt ðə ænɪməl kʊd bi: sʌfərən fɒm ə reə fɔ:m
10. ɒf fʊt ænd məʊθ dɪzɪ:z wɪf wəz səpraɪzən bɪkɒz nɔ:məli
11. ju: wʊd əʊnli ɪkspekt tu: si: ɪt m ə gu:s
12. se:rə wəz sentɪməntl səʊ ðɪs meɪd hɜ: fi:l sɒri fɔ: ðə be:d
13. ðə gu:s bɪɡən tu: stræt əraʊnd ði ɒfɪs laɪk ə lu:nətɪk
14. wɪf meɪd ən ʌnsænɪtəri mes
15. ðə ɡʊsɪz əʊnə mɛri hæɪrɪn keɪp kɔ:lən kɒmə kɒmə
16. wɪf se:rə θɔ: wəz ən ɔd fɔɪs fɔ: ə neɪm
17. kɒmə wəz strɔŋɡ ænd hju:ɔz səʊ ɪt wʊd teɪk sʌm fɔ:s tu: trʌp ɜ
18. bʌt se:rə mænɪdʒd bʌɪ dʒenli strəʊken ðə ɡu:sɪz læʊə bæx
19. wɪð hɜ: pɑ:m ænd sɪŋen tu: ɜ:
20. hɜ:ri efəts we: not fju:taɪl
21. veri su:n kɒmə bɪɡən tu: taɪər ænd se:rə geɪv hɜ: ə rɪlæksɪŋ bɑ:θ
22. wɒʃt ɜ: ænd leɪd hɜ: ʊn ə klɒθ ʊv daɪəɡnəʊsɪs
23. ɔ:lməʊst ɪmi:dʒətli se:rə rɪmɛmbəd ən əfektɪv tri:tmənt?
24. ðæt rɪkwæɪəd hɜ: tu: meɪzər əʊ? ə lɒ? ʊv mɛdsən
25. də tri:tmənt? wəz veri ɪkspensɪv bʌ? mɪsəs hæɪrɪn ə mɪljəneə
26. lɔ:jə θɔ:t ɪt wəz ə feə prais fɔ: ə kjuə

Analysis

The phonemic representation of the words in a language is not identical for every speaker of that language. Lise's pronunciation of English sound very different from the English we know. Lise uses British English and in particular, Liverpool English (LE) which is the variety of English spoken in Liverpool and much of the surrounding county of Merseyside, in the northwest of England (Watson, 2007, p.351). Here are some phonological differences between American English we speak and Lise's Liverpool English:

- a) The fricative /ð/ are often produced as a stop [d] and usually is in a word-initial position.
Examples:
the [də] in lines #8, 9; *this* [dɪs] in line #4; *that* [dæt] in line #9.
- b) Post-vocalic /r/ in the coda position is absent in many words in such examples:
for [fɔ] in lines #1, 12, 16; *her* [hɜ] in lines #5, 6, 7, 12, 17, 19, 21, 21, 24, 26;
there [ðeə] in line # 7; *force* [fɔ:s] in line #17; *bird* [be:d] in line #12.
- c) The speaker uses the alveolar trill /r/ instead of the approximant /ɹ/:
remembered [rɪmɛmbəd] in line #23; *treatment* [tri:tmənt?] in line #25;
praise [praɪs] in line #26.

- d) Word final /t/ sounds are replaced by glottal stops:
first [fɜ:sʔ] in line #25; *treatment* [tri:tməntʔ] and *but* [bʌʔ] in line #25;
out [aʊʔ] and *lot* [lɒʔ] in line #24.
- e) Word-initial /h/ sounds can be deleted:
her [ɜ:] in lines #17, 19, 22.
- f) The speaker uses alveolar nasal stop [n] for the velar nasal stop /ŋ/ in the context of V + ing endings:
waiting [weɪtən] in line #7; *suffering* [sʌfərən] in line #9;
surprising [səpraɪzən] in line #10; *calling* [kɔ:lən] in line #15
stroking [strəʊken] in line #18; *singing* [sɪŋən] in line #18.
- g) The speaker uses a low-back vowel /ɑ/ instead of low-front /æ/ in the example:
happy [hɑpɪ] in line #3.
- h) The speaker uses a mid-back vowel /ə/ instead of low-back /ɑ/ in the example:
was [wəz] in lines #2, 3, 7, 10, 12, 16, 17, 25.
- i) The speaker uses a short mid-back vowel /ə/ instead of a long front-back vowel /u:/ in the example:
you [jə] in line #1.

Transcription #2. Liverpool

[...] Pause longer than 3 seconds

[.] Pause shorter than 3 seconds

[!] filler sound

xxx: unintelligible

Written transcription

Liverpool's a city that attracts a lot of attention. xxx its people tend to be quite outgoing. Um, and they also tend to have quite a lot of get-up-and-go. It's also a city that's been through a lot of, of difficulties over the last thirty years. And before, really, um but in particular the last thirty years. Very high unemployment, and because of that a lot of Liverpoolians have traveled to other parts of the country to find work. There's also been a lot of bad press about the city. Um, people have an image that is perpetuated by the media really, of, of the way that the people of Liverpool are and who they are. Um, one of the biggest stereotypes, I would say, is of the comedian or, like, the chirpy xxx that kind of comes along and entertains. And you find like when you travel away, as I did when I first moved away, people kind of want to stick you in a cage and prod you with a stick so you'll entertain them, with jokes or whatever. Um, one of the things that like feeds into that is the different expressions that we have. Um, we do have a lot of different ways of saying things, um, that people find odd or find amusing. Um, we don't say things straightforwardly really. [!] Um, somebody who's on their own is "on the Bill" or is a "Billy-no-mates." Somebody who, I don't know, lots of things, those, all those sort of things.

Phonetic transcription

1. 'lɪvə.pu:lz ə 'sɪtɪ ðæt ə 'træktz ə lɒt ɒv ə 'tenʃ(ə)n. xxx its
2. 'pi:pl tɛnd tu: bi: kwɑɪt aʊt 'gəʊɪŋ. əm, ænd ðeɪ 'ɔ:lʒəʊ tɛnd tu:
3. hæv kwɑɪtə lɒt ɒv get-ʌp-ænd gəʊ. its 'ɔ:lʒəʊ ə 'sɪtɪ ðæts bi:n θru:
4. ə lɒt ɒv, ɒv 'dɪfɪkəltɪz 'əʊvə ðə lɑ:st 'θɜ:ti jɪə
5. z. ænd bɪ'fɔ:, 'rɪəli, əm bʌt ɪmpə'tɪkjʊlə ðə lɑ:st 'θɜ:ti jɪəz.
6. 'veri haɪ ,ʌnɪm'pləɪmə
7. nt, ænd bɪ'kɒz ɒv ðæt ə lɒt ɒv ,lɪvə'pʌdlɪənz
8. hæv 'trævlɪ tu: 'ʌðə pɑ:ts ɒv ðə'kʌ
9. ntri tu: fɑɪnd wɜ:k. ðeəz 'ɔ:lʒəʊ bi:n ə lɒt ɒv bæd
10. prɛs ə'baʊt ðə 'sɪtɪ. əm, 'pi:pl h
11. əv ən 'ɪmɪdʒ, ðæt ɪz pə'pɛʃʊeɪtɪd baɪ ðə'mɛdɪə
12. 'rɪəli, ɒv, ɒv ðə weɪ ðæt ðə 'pi:pl
13. ɒv 'lɪvə.pu:l a:r ænd hu: ðeɪ a:. əm, wʌn ɒv ðə 'bɪgɪst
14. 'stɪəriətɑɪps, aɪ wɒd seɪ, ɪz
15. ɒv ðəkə'mɪ:dʒən ɔ:, laɪk, ðə 'ʃɜ:pi xxx ðæt kaɪnd
16. ɒv kʌmz ə'lɒŋ ænd ,ɛntə'teɪnz.
17. ænd ju: fɑɪnd laɪk wɛn ju: 'trævl ə'weɪ, əz aɪ dɪd
18. wɛn aɪfɜ:st mu:vd ə'weɪ, 'pi:pl
19. kaɪnd ɒv wɒnt tu: stɪk ju: ɪn ə keɪdʒ ænd prɒd ju: wɪð ə
20. stɪk səʊ ju:l ,ɛntə'teɪn ðe
21. m, wɪð dʒəʊks ɔ:wɒt'ɛvə. əm, wʌn ɒv ðə θɪŋz ðæt laɪk
22. fɪ:dz 'ɪntu: ðæt ɪz ðə 'dɪfr
23. ənt ɪks'pɛʃənz ðæt wɪ: hæv. əm, wɪ: du: hæv ə lɒt ɒv
24. 'dɪfrənt weɪzɒv 'seɪŋ θɪŋz,
25. əm, ðæt 'pi:pl fɑɪnd ɒd ɔ: fɑɪnd ə'mju:zɪŋ. əm,
26. wɪ: dəʊnt seɪ θɪŋz streɪt'fɔ:wədli
27. 'rɪəli. wɪ: tɛnd tu: fɑɪnd *ən 'ɪmɪdʒfɔ:r ɪt, ə 'mɛtəfə, ɔ:
28. wɒt'ɛvə. əm, 'sʌmbədi hu:
29. z ɒn ðeə əʊn ɪz “ɒn ðə bɪl” ɔ:r ɪz eɪ“'bɪlɪnəʊmɛnts.
30. 'sʌmbədi hu:, aɪ dɒn'ti:nəʊ
31. , lɒts ɒv θɪŋz, ðəʊz, ɔ:l ðəʊz sɔ:t ɒv θɪŋz.

Analysis

The pronunciation we have seen in this piece of speech is mainly Liverpool English as Watson mentions in his article “Liverpool English” there are some similarities between LE’s phonological system and those of Irish Englishes. (p. 351).

- a) One of the patterns found in the pronunciation is the use of the long /u:/ for example the word Liverpool in line 1 and 8 Liverpool /'lɪvə.pu:l/, the word to line 5, 11 and 15 /tu:/, and the word do in line 13 /du:/.
- b) The high front vowel /i/ is pronounced as long and tense in any context as stated in the article of Marrotta and Barth "Acoustic and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Lenition in

Liverpool English". Examples of this phenomenon as in words such as city on line 1, 3, and 6 /'siti/.

- c) Another phonetic feature found in this speech is the pronunciation of the word work /wɜ:k/ in line 6. The /r/ at the end of the word is not pronounced, while in American English and as we have learned the pronunciation is /wɜrk/. The same phenomenon happens in the word whatever in line 15 /wɒt'evə/. This is also mentioned by Watson "Post-vocalic /r/ is absent in LE, so that words like car, farm, park are r-less" (p. 352).
- d) Other difference that we could identify is the different use of the diphthong /oʊ/ for /əʊ/ as in the case of no in line 16 /nəʊ/ and in line 3 go /gəʊ/.

Discussion and Conclusion

Before entering into the discussion, we want to establish the difference between dialect and accent. According to Hansen, et. al. (2004) "Dialect is defined as "a regional variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary." Accent on the other hand, is defined as "the relative prominence of a particular syllable or a word in pronunciation determined by a regional or social background of a speaker" (p. 1). In this context, both recordings present a British English accent, which is relatively new for us because we have the experience only with American English variety. The speaker tends to speak very fast with a raising and falling intonations. The first words of each sentence are usually stressed more than the following ones. However, the intonation of last part of the sentences rises. These aspects have also been studied by Nance, Kirkham and Groarke, stated that "Liverpool is firmly within the group of northern British cities that typically use typologically unusual rising intonation patterns" (p.4). In the variety of English we speak, we usually have falling intonation at the end of the sentences (not including question sentences).

As was mentioned in the beginning, the transcription of the passages is based on the speech of a 31-year-old female speaker who was born in Liverpool, which is located in Merseyside, England. It is a port city, which has a diverse population, particularly from Ireland. The speaker is white, with a university degree which was gained in Cardiff, Wales for three years. Even though Lise has studied in a different place for 3 years, her Liverpool English accent remains in her speech. As it was mentioned on the website, Lise is an actress and a teacher, and therefore we assume that she comes from middle-class family.

Since Lise was born and raised in Liverpool, she has acquired Liverpool British English variety. According to the phonological analysis that we have provided above, in which we emphasized the differences between Lise's pronunciation and Standard English pronunciation, which is given in Logman English Dictionary, we can assume that Lise doesn't speak Standard English. On the other hand, Hickey (2012) states that across the English-speaking world there is variation in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary in those forms of language, which would be regarded by its users as standard (p. 1). Therefore, Standard English is a mere illusion, and every speaker has a right to call his or her language as standard.

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