

PHONOSTYLISTICS AS A BRANCH OF PHONETICS. STYLE-FORMING FACTORS

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The spoken language & the written language in general

Language functions can be divided into two main forms: the spoken language & the written language.

Scholars distinguish a number of functional styles of the written language, such as belles-lettres style, publicistic style, newspaper style, the style of official documents & that of scientific prose, which have clearly distinguishable lexical & syntactical peculiarities. Apart from a few scattered studies of oratorical & conversational styles, the styles of the spoken language are not as yet unanimously defined, though we are well aware of the phonetic differences between, say, a casual conversation & an official exchange of views.

A close examination of the speech characteristics of one & the same person easily reveals that each native speaker uses several varieties of the language. They use one at home, another with his colleagues, a third when addressing an audience & so on.

At home they usually speak rather carelessly, with colleagues their speech, though rapid at times, is less careless, & when addressing an audience their speech is more careful.

Each of these varieties may differ in the usage of items of vocabulary & in grammatical structures, but by far the most striking distinctions are phonetical. At times these varieties differ only phonetically, nevertheless they are easily identified by all the native speakers.

Extra linguistic factors

The main circumstances of reality that cause phonetic modifications in speech are as follows:

1. the aim of speech (which may be to instruct, to inform, to persuade, to narrate, to chat etc.);

2. the extent of spontaneity of speech (unprepared speech, prepared speech, etc.);

3. the nature of interchange, i.e. the use of a form of speech which may either suggest only listening, or both listening & an exchange of remarks (a lecture, a discussion, a conversation, etc.).

4. social & psychological factors, which determine the extent of formality of speech & the attitudes expressed (a friendly conversation with close friends, a quarrel, an official conversation, etc.).

These circumstances, or factors, are termed extra linguistic factors.

Styles of pronunciation according to different phoneticians

Different ways of pronunciation, caused by extra linguistic factors & characterized by definite phonetic features, are called phonetic styles, or styles of pronunciation.

The notion of styles of pronunciation was introduced by M. Lomonosov in the 18th century. Since then it has attracted many linguists.

Most of the phoneticians who deal with Russian pronunciation (R. Avanesov, L. Bulanin) distinguish 3 styles of pronunciation:

- the full style or elevated style (used when speaking officially, reciting & reading aloud to a large audience),
- the neutral style (used when lecturing, broadcasting),
- colloquial style (used in rapid & careless speech).

English phoneticians distinguish a greater number of styles of pronunciation, although among them there is no generally accepted classification of pronunciation styles either. Thus, D. Jones distinguishes 5 styles of pronunciation:

- a) The rapid familiar style,
- b) The slower colloquial style,
- c) The natural style used in addressing an audience,
- d) The acquired style of the stage,
- e) The acquired style used in singing.

J. Kenyon distinguishes 4 principal styles of “Good Spoken English”:

- a) Familiar colloquial,
- b) Formal colloquial,
- c) public-speaking style,
- d) public-reading style.

Speech styles

There is evidently a correlation between phonetic & the ‘speech styles’. ‘Speech styles’, just as phonetic styles, are conditioned by the circumstances of reality in which language functions, by the kind of situation the speaker happens to be in & by the aims of the speech situations. They may be a great variety of situations, aims & circumstances (the situation may be private or public, the speaker may be informing, entertaining, persuading, advertising, he may be excited, friendly etc.).

The question remains open whether there are just as many phonetic styles as there are speech styles.

Phonetic investigations of some of the speech styles have shown that there also exists definite phonetic distinction between lecturing, reading aloud, responding in an interview, casual conversation, official talk & other speech styles.

Varieties of speech forms

Some attempts have been made to classify all the numerous varieties of speech forms on account of their phonetic features & other linguistic characteristics. Thus, D. Abercrombie classes them into:

- a) Reading aloud (which includes most radio speech & recitation by heart),
- b) Monologue (it includes lectures, radio commentaries, etc.),
- c) Conversation.

But this classification is not consistent, as both “monologue” & “conversation” are spontaneous speech, they differ in the extent of spontaneity & the nature of interchange, whereas “reading aloud” is a different type of speech activity.

Some scholars distinguish between:

- a) Phonetic styles of spontaneous speech (conversation, spontaneous monologue, etc.),
- b) phonetic styles of prepared speech (lectures, speeches, etc.),
- c) Phonetic styles of reading aloud.

In their turn, the phonetic styles of spontaneous speech should be classified into:

- a) official style,
- b) Informal style or the style of everyday-life discourse,
- c) Familiar (careless) style.

The importance of the phonelistics

The investigation of phonetic styles have originated a new branch of phonetics-phonostylistics, which is concerned with the identification of the style – forming means, i.e. the phonetic features that enable the native speaker to distinguish intuitively between different styles of pronunciation.

References:

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11 MOST COMMON ENGLISH ACCENTS

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Today is no exaggeration to say that almost the whole world speaks English, its dialects appeared in many parts of the world. I propose to consider some accents of English from around the world.

Regulatory pronunciation (Received Pronunciation or RP) is considered the standard accent of English literature (Standard English). Received Pronunciation — Southern accent England. It is often used speakers BBC. In the US, the American general (General American) is considered a standard accent.