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PRONUNCIATION DIMENSIONS OF AN IDIOLECT

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Стаття присвячена визначенню сукупності параметрів для аналізу й опису вимовного аспекту ідіолекту мовця, які корелюють із фонетичними та фонологічними змінними у вимові. Виокремлено чотири групи маркерів: антропологічні, соціальні, мовні та комунікативні, які зумовлюють індивідуальний вибір вимовних засобів мовцями. Кожна із зазначених груп інкорпорує чинники нижчих класифікаційних рівнів.

Ключові слова*: ідіолект, вимовний тип, соціолект, антропологічні, соціальні, мовні та комунікативні маркери.*

Статья посвящена определению совокупности маркеров для анализа и описания произносительного аспекта идиолекта говорящего, которые коррелируют с фонетическими и фонологическими вариантными чертами в произношении. Выделены четыре группы маркеров: антропологические, социальные, языковые и коммуникативные, которые определяют индивидуальный выбор произносительных средств говорящими. Каждая из упомянутых групп включает факторы низших классификационных уровней.

Ключевые слова*: идиолект, произносительный тип, социолект, антропологические, социальные, языковые и коммуникативные маркеры.*

The paper views a set of parameters which can be applied for the analysis and description of a speaker's idiolectal pronunciation features and which correlate with phonetic and phonological variables. Four groups of markers have been singled out: anthropological, social, linguistic, and communicative, defining the speaker's individual choice of pronunciation means. Each of the above said groups incorporates factors of lower classificatory levels. The anthropological markers embrace the physiology of the speaker's vocal tract, his/her temperament, mood, age, gender, ethnicity; social factors enlist a speaker's education and socio-economic status; linguistic markers incorporate a speaker's choice of phonological and phonetic means of expression; and communicative markers consist of field of discourse, communicative situation, mode of interaction. This set of markers correlate with clusters of pronunciation variables as individual speakers' adaptive response to changing socio-communicative situations in which they find themselves.

Key words*: idiolect, accent, sociolect, anthropological, social, linguistic, and communicative markers.*

How can we understand each other if we use different idiolects?

Carlo Penco.

Introduction. The language of any speaker displays variation within many types: region, social group, field of discourse, spoken or written medium, formal or informal type of verbal

149

interaction etc. (see: [6, p. 4]). The markers that serve to identify a person's affiliation with a particular language variety or their membership in a given social group have been in the focus of many research studies in the field of sociolinguistics (J. Chambers; L. Milroy and M. Gordon; W. Labov; P. Trudgill; G. Trousdale; R. Wardhaugh and others). Alongside with various *lects*, currently, an *idiolect*, or "a person's individual speech patterns" [11], is becoming a popular topic in sociolinguistic discourse, due to the fact that "linguistic impressions" created by a given speaker/writer "could be usable just like a signature to identify them" [3]. Pronunciation features of an idiolect constitute the speaker's most accurate "linguistic fingerprint" (the term coined by Coulthard [4, p. 432]) as it can be measured instrumentally (e.g. acoustic or prosodic characteristics). In spite of this, the concept of "pronunciation idiolect" remains elusive as many ontological and methodological aspects of its research need clarification.

This paper will discuss pronunciation dimensions of an idiolect by which we understand a set of pronunciation variables as individual speakers' adaptive response to changing socio-communicative situations in which they interact verbally with other speakers. To build a conceptual model of a pronunciation idiolect it is necessary to establish a set of markers with which these phonological and phonetic variables correlate.

Literature review. One of "the idiolect problems" consists in finding the answer to the question of the priority: language over idiolect or idiolect over language. A detailed discussion of it can be found in [11]. We support W. Labov's opinion about the central dogma of sociloinguistics: "the community is conceptually and analytically prior to the individual" [8, p. 24], i.e. "in linguistic analysis, the behavior of an individual can be understood only through the study of the social groups of which he or she is a member of" [ibid., p.24].

When the speech of a given speaker is viewed as "a group marker of the speaker's membership of a certain social group, it is termed *sociolect*" [10, p. 70]. The speech of a given speaker viewed as "an individuating marker uniquely identifying the speaker against the mass of other members of the wider group is termed the speaker's *idiolect*, whereas an accent without specific implications for its sociological or idiolectal status is termed *lect*" [ibid., p.70].

Alongside with expressing semantic information by using language means, the speakers use signs in speech which are treated as the basis on which to attribute their personal characteristics. According to John Laver, such attributes fall into three groups: *physical markers* – those that indicate physical characteristics; *social markers* – those that indicate social characteristics; *psychological markers* – those that indicate psychological characteristics of personality [10, c. 14].

It is common knowledge that in communication practice, speakers are aware of underlying features/attributes of language use functioning within the speech community they are affiliated with: 1) the existence of language use norms and expectations; 2) the existence of standards or rules of speaking which are not entirely fixed, or absolute, but rather varying according to different types of circumstances/factors. At the same time language users having an identical regional and social group: can communicate in more than one regional and social variety; and can switch varieties (consciously or subconsciously) according to the context/situation of communication (code-switching).

In the *non-prescriptive* linguistic approach no one way of speaking is seen as inherently superior to any other; nevertheless, an actual fact of language use is that the way of speaking received by the speakers who are most educated and/or who hold social and political power is often viewed as the most prestigious variety and the one of the greatest social advantage [12, c. 17]. G. Yule draws attention to one particular interaction between *social values* and *language use* in general: there are implicitly recognized 'better' or positively valued ways of speaking in social communities typically understood in terms of *overt prestige*, and there is, however an important phenomenon called *covert prestige* – 'hidden' type of positive value often attached to non-standard forms and expressions of certain sub-groups, e.g. members of some youth sub-cultures seem to attach covert prestige to forms of 'bad' language (swearing and 'tough' talk) that are not similarly valued in the larger community [14, c. 240]. Above-mentioned research findings are relevant for establishing a framework for a pronunciation idiolect description.

Pronunciation idiolect is a speaker's "multidimensional share of an accent (sociolect)".

Paraphrasing W. Labov, we can tentatively claim that the starting point for idiolect research is the concept of an *accent*, namely, a unified entity of pronunciation patterns used for communicative interaction by members of a speech community sharing a relevant social or geographical attribute and successfully maintaining a uniform set of phonological (systemic and structural) characteristics, despite a certain amount of limited phonetic (realizational) and lexical-incidental / selectional variation between the speakers [2, p. 28]. An *accent* as a collective mental representation of pronunciation used by the speakers of the same speech community is a construct, while *an idiolect* is a material individual realization of an accent by a definite speaker, the speaker's "pronunciation" passport.

The pronunciation variables of an idiolect can correlate with four groups of markers: 1) *anthropological* (the physiology of the speaker's vocal tract, his/her temperament, affective state or mood, age, gender, ethnicity); 2) *social* (education, socio-economic status); 3) *linguistic* (the speaker's choice of phonological and phonetic means of expression); 4) *communicative* (field of discourse, communicative situation, mode of interaction). The problem whether the above-given parameters constitute any kind of hierarchy remains a perspective for further research, but an obvious fact is that they can be structured into two larger groups:1) those relating to the *language user* – anthropological, and social; and 2) those relating to *language use* – linguistic, and communicative. We will briefly characterize them in that order.

According to our understanding, some of the anthropological markers in case of pronunciation idiolect can serve signs of the speaker's immediate identification, especially in face-to-face communication. Our claim is that, from the perceptual point of view, the speaker's *voice* defined by the individual structure of their vocal tract can be "a number one" marker of the speaker's "pronunciation passport". *Voice quality* is the auditory impression made by certain mechanical setting of the speech organs over stretches of speech [12, p. 156]. The tongue, jaw opening, lip shape and vocal cords may have different physical postures, due to this an individual voice quality is achieved, e.g. tense voice, nasal voice, back voice, front voice, labialized voice etc. Voice quality can be thought of as the most global and longest-term aspect of prosody, because intonation and stress, as well as the articulation of vowels and consonants, are produced within the limits of the voice quality set by the articulators and the breath stream coming from the lungs [12]. Moreover, voice quality is an important aspect of the geographical, the social and the personal identity of speakers, e.g. a pervasive nasal quality is often said to characterize American and Australian speech [13, p. 604]; the American English voice setting is described as combining apico-alveolar articulation with uvularization, nasalization and lax voice [12, p. 161].

The speaker's temperament, mood can also define features of pronunciation idiolect, e.g. individual speech tempo, accurate or casual pronunciation of speech sounds, etc. Such an attribute as age can correlate with definite pronunciation features: variation according to age is most noticeable across the grandparent – grandchild time span [14, p. 241]. Young people are "more susceptible than older people to adopting innovations spreading into a local speech community from outside" [12, p. 16]. So an idiolect can reveal pronunciation features of an *annolect*, a choice of pronunciation patterns typical of the age group the speaker belongs to.

A set of features in pronunciation ascribed to the speakers on the basis of their gender – *sexolect* – can also be phonetically distinctive in the pronunciation idiolect. Surveys of research data show that female speakers tend to use more prestigious forms than male speakers with the same social background [14, p. 242], and males generally orient their speech more to localized norms than do females [12, p. 17].

In the process of socialization speakers acquire the communicative norms of their native culture, and in intercultural verbal interaction they can reveal signs of *xenolect*, pronunciation features which can help identify their ethnicity.

Within a group-identifying sociolect, finer details of idiolectal pronunciation can be associated with such speakers' social attributes as education and socio-economic status. *Acrolect, mesolect,* and *basilect* are sets of pronunciation distinctions differentiated on the basis of the speaker's educational level [7, p. 54]. *Acrolect* describes the accent with the highest prestige mostly because of its associations with the speaker's high level of education and socio-economic status. On

the contrary, *basilect* (the 'broadest' form of speech) enjoys the lowest social prestige. *Mesolect* is placed between *acrolect* and *basilect* in its prestige [7, p. 79]. Examples of less prestigious pronunciation forms as a stable indication of lower class and less education throughout the English-speaking world are as follows: the occurrence of /n/ rather than /ŋ/ at the end of words like *walking* and *going*; another social marker is /h/- dropping, which results in 'ouse and 'ello and associated with uneducated pronunciation [14, p. 240].

The social network of people that the speaker spends time with and the speaker's socio-economic status are attributed with the following distinctions within the same sociolect: "speakers who are less socially mobile and who have a relatively homogeneous network of friends and associates tend to be more conservative and more oriented to localized speech norms than those who are more socially mobile and who associate with a more diverse network of people" [12, p. 16]. J. C. Wells suggests a set of distinctions within RP/BBC English correlated with the speakers' education and social status: Mainstream RP (the accent of middle class educated speakers), U-RP (upper-crust, aristocratic RP), Adoptive RP (the accent of the adults who did not speak RP as children), Near-RP (the accent of the speakers preserving strong regional features) [13, p. 279]. But some scholars claim that there is no any longer so straightforward a correlation between social background and profession or type of education, especially in mobile urban speech communities, thus it is quite unrealistic to try to label the accent as belonging to a particular section of society. But in case of an idiolect, certain clusters of features can be identified as markers of the speaker's group-membership and education.

All of the factors we have considered so far can serve as markers correlating with pronunciation distinctions according to the *user* of an idiolect.

The impact of linguistic and communicative factors determining pronunciation variables in idiolectal language *use* include: definite patterns of segmental and prosodic means as a speaker's preferential choice out of those typical of a certain accent, a field of discourse /sphere of communicative activity.

All accents have characteristic phonological and phonetic features which can be divided into *segmental* and *prosodic* (*prominence, pitch, loudness, speed of utterance*), the latter are superimposed on the segmental chain of sounds and carry the information which the sounds do not contain [See more on it in: [2, p. 51-56]). Idiolectal pronunciation can reflect distinctions in the speaker's use of segmental and prosodic means.

The language/speech correlates of the sphere of communicative activity are called speech functional styles. Part of linguistic behavior signals the speakers' assessment of the relative formality or informality of their relationship with other participants in the conversation [10, p. 67]. The appearance of particular features in speech both on the segmental and prosodic levels is conditioned by a particular extra-linguistic situation in which an idiolect is functioning (co-occurrence of two or more interlocutors related to each other in a particular way, having a particular aim of communicating etc.). Phonetically relevant parameters of a communicative situation incorporate: 1) social relationship between the speakers (social distance vs. social proximity); 2) psychological relationship between the speakers (personal, polite vs. impersonal, casual speech); 3) spatial setting (public speech vs. private speech) which can be collectively subsumed under the dimension of *formality vs. informality* [1, p. 16]. The degree of formality-informality enhances physical alterations in idiolectal pronunciation: the closer the speaker is (in terms of relationship, membership of the same micro-lect, social group, shared background knowledge and assumptions) to the other speaker(s), the less obliged they are "to maintain clarity and articulatory 'fine tuning', there is an option for producing a rather blurry message from which the listener will have to extract the relevant material using the skill in 'resynthesis'" [9, p. 298].

According to J. Laver, speech style in English relies on at least three different types of manipulation of the pronunciation material of the utterance: 1) re-organization of the phonemic structure of individual words; 2) modifications of speech rate; and 3) associated prosodic changes of pitch and loudness behavior [10, p. 67]. The variations in the pronunciation of a single speaker which are attributable to pronunciation style used in different circumstances testify to the fact that the phonological rules underlying informal speech are often different from those applicable to

formal speech [9, p. 296-298].

Conclusion. In summary, a pronunciation idiolect should be viewed as part of a corresponding accent, a speaker's "share" of that accent, an individual creative use of the accent repertoire. An accent and a pronunciation idiolect correlate as a whole and its part, as a mental construct and an individual's material realization of it. Similarly to an accent, a pronunciation idiolect is a multidimensional continuum which is made up of sets of clusters of features correlating with *anthropological, social, linguistic* and *communicative* markers which can be singled in the pronunciation of an individual speaker at the background of an accent of a definite speech community. Each group of these markers incorporate further subdivision of factors correlating with idiolect phonological and phonetic variables.

Prospective research of idiolectal pronunciation distinctions associated with the parameters indicated above will result in a systematic point-by-point description of a speaker's "pronunciation fingerprints".

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

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