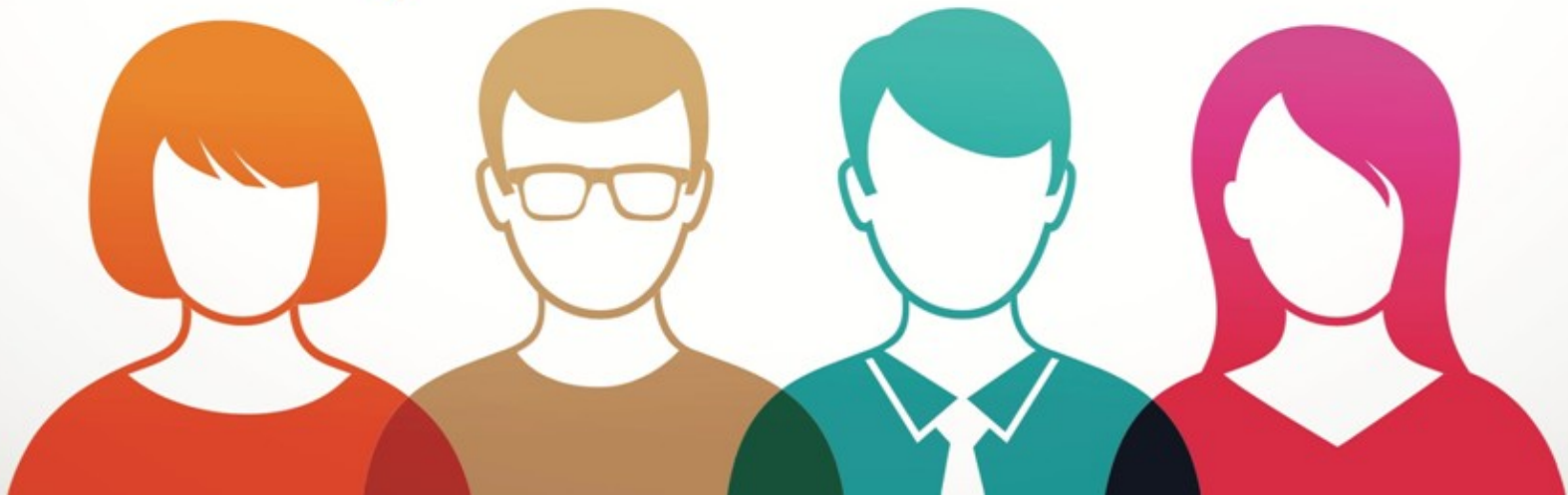


JOHN HONEY'S SOCIOPHONOLOGY

Vojtěch Bezděk
541025

MUNI



Who was John Honey?

Born in Cape Town
South Africa

Studied at Cambridge
University's Pembroke
College

Prominent
sociolinguist



Who was John Honey?

Authored:

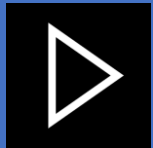
The Language Trap (1983)
Language is Power (1997)
Sociophonology (1998)

Wrote for *English Today*

The exact date of his death remains unknown



Understanding Sociophonology



Sociophonology focuses on socially significant pronunciation differences among groups of speakers



Includes intonation and articulatory set, shaping how language is spoken



Each group exhibits unique sound features, evident in dialects like British and American English

Understanding Sociophonology

Example:

British dialect:

Leisure ['leɜ.ər]

Lever ['li:vər]

American dialect:

['li:ɜə]

['lev.ə]



Evolution of **RP** Received Pronunciation

Standard varieties emerged between
15th-18th century

Rise of print and mass education
systems

Written forms were standardized first,
spoken followed behind

18th century -> **codification**, “correct”
pronunciation of words

“public schools”



Evolution of Received Pronunciation



Radio, established in 1922, played a pivotal role with controlled linguistic forms



TV, reaching mass audiences in the 1950s, further propagated the **RP** accent



“RP” → Initially labelled Public School Pronunciation by, it became known as **“Received Pronunciation”**



Meaning of “Received” → **RP** is akin to *“received opinion”*

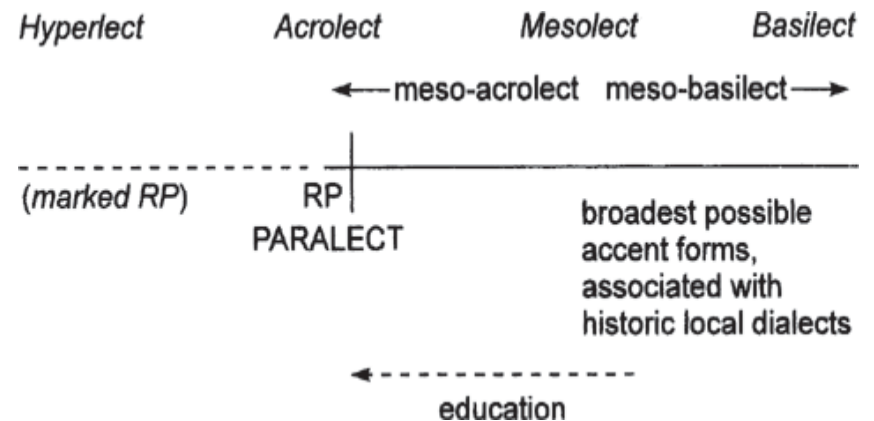
Two forms of RP

- **Marked** – royal family, aristocracy, senior army and naval officers, university teachers
- **Unmarked** – BBC, doctors, teachers
- **Markings** = indicators of special social privilege or pretension



Continuum of Linguistic Variation

- Features cluster around **acrolect** (standard), **basilect** (broad popular speech), and **mesolect** (majority)
- **hyperlect** (marked RP accent) and **paralect** (close to RP with minor nonstandard features)
- Education influences movement towards RP on the continuum



Significance of **RP** and Standard Accents



RP SPEAKERS
→ 3% OF
BRITAIN'S
POPULATION



RP AS A
TARGET AND
MODEL,
INFLUENCING
NUMEROUS
SPEAKERS



RP IS
DIFFICULT TO
PRECISELY
DISTINGUISH
AND IS
CHANGING

Social Significance of Accent Variation

- Variants can be positive or negative, often based on social perceptions
- We distinguish between:
 - **indicators** (variants with minimal social significance)
 - **markers** (variants with clear social significance)
 - **stereotypes** (general characterizations of speech forms)
- Stereotypes extend to languages, with some languages perceived as “beautiful” while others are deemed “ugly” or “harsh”
- Cultural differences influence evaluations; for example, the **Kipsigis** language in East Africa was praised for its melodiousness by a British colonial governor

Hierarchy of Accents in **UK**

RP

```
graph TD; A[RP] --> B[Educated varieties of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish English]; B --> C[Provincial English accents like northern English and West Country]; C --> D[Urban lower-class sociolects such as Birmingham, Belfast, London ('Cockney'), Glasgow, and Liverpool ('Scouse')];
```

Educated varieties of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish English

Provincial English accents like northern English and West Country

Urban lower-class sociolects such as Birmingham, Belfast, London ("Cockney"), Glasgow, and Liverpool ("Scouse")

Persistence of Accents



Despite accent flattening, certain accents persist



Linguists question why individuals maintain accents with negative evaluations



Accents serve as markers of **social identity**



Regional identity, nationalism and **ethnicity**

Accent Adoption

- What influences our accent?
- Adolescents adopt nonstandard accents as badges of **identity**
- Language serves as a powerful expression of **local identity**
- **Pygmalion**, educatedness = “well spoken”



Register and Accent Variation

Factors influencing register choice:

- Age
- Sex
- Socioeconomic status
- Regional background
- Intimacy between participants
- Formality of the situation

“Hyperadaptation”

Accommodation theory – convergence / divergence

Related paper 1

Variability and change in Received Pronunciation

A study of six phonological variables in the speech of television newsreaders (2006)

Dissertation by Bente R. Hannisdal

University of Bergen



Variability and change in RP

- Empirical investigation of current **RP** as spoken by television newsreaders
- Aims to explore aspects of **RP** variability by a detailed analysis of a set of phonological variables
- Empirical basis for the investigation is 30 hours of speech produced by 30 news presenters from three different television news channels
- Speech aspects
- Honey claims that social class was never the most important defining characteristic of **RP**, and “superior social rank was not in itself a guarantee of the right accent”

Variability and change in RP

- No spoken standard
- **RP** displays considerable variability and that the phonetic properties of the accent have not remained static
- Updating **RP**
- Further research

Related paper 2

**Sociophonology of Received Pronunciation:
Native and Non-Native Environments (2017)**

Dissertation by Ludmila Urbanová

Masaryk University

M U N I



Sociophonology of RP

- Aims to offer an analysis of varieties of **Received Pronunciation**
- Updating the **ELT** (English Language Teaching) model
- **RP** significance to Czech teachers
- Research is conducted using recordings and an additional questionnaire

Sociophonology of RP

- These recordings are evaluated by 20 English and 20 Czech respondents
- **Differences** between respondents:
 - **Native speakers** → intuition, higher sensitivity and relative terms
 - **Non-native speakers** → absolute terms
- The research suggest that traditional **RP** needs an update



Related paper 3

**Translation Challenges in
Rendering Idiolects of Literary
Characters (2019)**

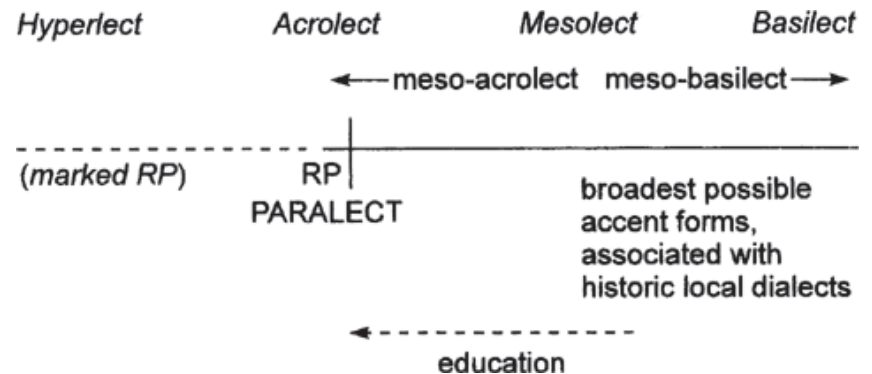
Article by Olha Sung

Kyiv National Linguistic University



Translation Challenges in Rendering Idiolects of Literary Characters

- Usage of Honey's Continuum of Linguistic Variation
- Translation strategies
- Comparative analysis
- **Russian vs Ukrainian** translations of a short story "For Esme With Love and Squalor"



Thank you for your attention!

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