

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18454/RULB.11.11>Тюрина С.Ю.¹, Староверова Е.Б.²¹Доцент, кандидат филологических наук, ²Доцент, Ивановский государственный энергетический университет
АКЦЕНТ И ЕГО ВОСПРИЯТИЕ В ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ**Аннотация**

В работе исследуются вопросы восприятия иностранного акцента в профессиональном дискурсе. Актуальность работы определяется ростом академической и профессиональной мобильности в современном обществе. Акцент рассматривается в контексте проблемы эффективности речевой коммуникации. Описываются функциональные и прагматические особенности профессионального дискурса. В исследовании используются качественные и количественные методы для сбора и обработки данных. На основе полученных данных сделан вывод о роли акцента в профессиональном дискурсе. Результаты исследования могут быть интересны специалистам в области фонетики и преподавания иностранного языка для профессиональных целей.

Ключевые слова: иноязычное образование, иностранный акцент, профессиональный дискурс.

Tyurina S.Yu.¹, Staroverova E.B.²¹Associate professor, PhD in Philology, ²Associate professor, Ivanovo State Power University**FOREIGN ACCENT PERCEPTION IN PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE****Abstract**

This paper examines the attitude to the accent in professional discourse. The paper focuses on linguistic approach to accent, thus, the communicative effect of accent in professional discourse is evaluated. Discourse is considered as one of the key concepts of contemporary thinking. The key goal is to study how native speaking and non-native speaking people evaluate the accents in professional sphere. The study is considered to have important implications due to academic and professional mobility. Both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data were used. The results of the research may be interesting for phoneticians and ESP teachers.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, foreign accent, professional discourse.

Почта авторов / Author Email: tsu1999@mail.ru

Introduction

One of the major concern Second Language (L2) learners face is accented speech. The issue of *foreign accent* has gained much attention in recent studies. Accent-related issues are given much attention due to growing awareness of the key role of pronunciation in communication. Studies have shown that listeners can recognize accent easily [7].

Recent studies cover issues of speech comprehensibility, different attitude towards non-native accents of English, foreign accent perception and production, factors that affect the degree of foreign accent and the ways to minimize it, foreign accent problem of non-native teachers etc. [1]; [8]; [10]. The number of studies focused on the relationship between language learner's identity and accent [4]. However, the number of researches to examine perception of foreign accent in professional discourse is rather limited. Therefore, this paper is intended to highlight the attitude to accent in professional discourse.

Accent-related issue

Accent-related issues are discussed by different branches of linguistics, such as phonetics, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition and language teaching; thus, the term *accent* is viewed according to their own theoretical framework and the focus of the research interest.

In general, *accent* is defined as a manner of pronunciation. In terms of phonetics, O'Grady gives a narrow definition of accent as a certain type of pronunciation that is determined by the phonetic characteristics of the speaker's mother tongue [9]. From the point of sociolinguistics accent is the characteristic we use to identify someone as unfamiliar or foreign. Accent in terms of sociolinguistics is a symbol of social identity.

Macmillan English Dictionary defines *accent* as "a way of saying words that shows what country, region or, social class someone comes from" [6, P. 7]. Can it be considered as a hint on accent discrimination? Is it accepted in the modern society? And in the professional community?

According to the survey [3], 53% of nonnative English speakers in Canada believed that they would be respected more if they spoke with a native like accent. Speakers with strong foreign accent feel themselves like an outsider, studies say [2]. Therefore, nonnative speakers try to modify their communication according to situational, personal, or interactional variables. The reason is that the speaker wants to be understood or to assert him/herself as belonging to the community [5].

If speech is considered in the linguistic context, the communicative effectiveness is important. The native speakers will evaluate the speech in terms of communicative effectiveness. Therefore, the speech is considered to be defective if the presented ideas are not clear due to speaker's foreign accent.

It is important to distinguish a foreign accent and a dialect. A dialect may be defined as speech habits of the person at the given time and at the given place. And a foreign accent is an overlap of speech which leads to interference between a native language and a second language.

So, the paper focuses on *linguistic* approach to accent, thus, the communicative effect of accent in professional discourse is evaluated.

Professional discourse issue

The paper is aimed at studying the attitude to accent in professional discourse. Discourse is considered as one of the key concepts of contemporary thinking as it concerns the ways language mediates and shapes interactions in social, political and cultural spheres of life.

When we talk about professional discourse, we mean some practical English command of the language of professional discourse: the commands of English related to a specific job, communicative tasks and purposes in professional environment. These tasks and purposes are determined not by the criteria of everyday life but by functional and practical language requirements of professional community.

The fact is that professional communication is cognitively demanding, it means that success of interaction depends on speech production quality. Accent as the indicator that identity may influence communication fluency. Non-native accents can make speech more difficult to parse and thereby may reduce cognitive fluency. So, comprehensibility and intelligibility are the key elements in professional communication.

Can an employer deny a job to a non-native speaker arguing that a foreign accent impairs communication skills essential at the workplace? Studies show that speakers with certain accents may experience discrimination in employment and are more likely to be evaluated negatively [11].

Present study

The study is aimed to investigate the attitude to accents in professional discourse. Native speakers took part in this research. To conduct the research some background information was asked (sex, age, ethnicity, country of residence, professional sphere). Respondents come from a wide range of backgrounds and from countries.

Method

A mixed approach was used in the study; firstly, quantitative method to collect and analyze data in order to get answers to the research questions was used; secondly, qualitative method in the form of interview was applied. Follow up interviews were carried out with the participants.

The data was collected by means of the questionnaire and the follow up interviews. The aim of the interview was to go further insights into the results.

Data analysis

The data collected by means of the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. The background data was analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. Most of the participants are male (62.5 %); most of them are from the UK and a quarter of them is from Germany, the rest is from France and America. Most of the participants are between 40 and 45 years old, a quarter of them is between 60 and 65. The average age of the participants is 47.

The participants are from different professional backgrounds, most of them are from academic institutions. The analyses of the answers to the key research issues shows that most of the participants (87.5 %) can recognize native speakers and non-native at their work place, and they can hear any accent of their customers/ partners/ colleagues. However, only a quarter of them (25 %) can distinguish the accent at the work place. More than a half of the respondents (62.5 %) have no "association" when they distinguish the accent, a quarter of them (25 %) can identify the nonnative speaker and only 12.5 % can name the country. It is interesting to note that most of the participants (87.25 %) admit that accent affects professional communication, but rather slightly (81.25 %), only 6.25 % says accent affects professional communication considerably. Foreign accent slightly affects the content in professional communication,

62.5% says and most of the participants (81.25 %) always are able to understand their nonnative speaking customers, partners, or colleagues in professional situation. As for personal communication, only a quarter of respondents (25 %) admits that accent affects it. Accent slightly affects the content in personal communication and most of the participants (81.25 %) always are able to understand their fellows. The fact is that more than half of the participants have many nonnative speakers at their work place (56.25 %) and a few among friends (56.25 %).

Interview Data Analysis

Four people were interviewed to get more clarified answers to the research issued. The interview was carried out in English.

Lady A, 65, Germany, retired. She had been in business for more than 30 years and did not have any difficulties to understand a nonnative speaker counterpart in professional communication. Now, she has many friends in Russia, Vietnam and other countries. "I can easily communicate with them and really enjoy it", she says.

Lady N, 33, France, a ski instructor. Every day she deals with many people from different countries. "Accent is not a problem in my profession neither with my colleagues nor with customers", she says.

Mr. C, 44, England, a military man. He mentioned there was no problem to understand the command and to follow the instruction. Mr. C is married to a Russian girl and adores her accent. It does not interfere every day communication, it makes it pleasant.

Mr. D, 33, America, Information Technology company. He is sure accent does not play any role in IT sphere. "There are a lot of people from China, India, Russia and all of them are professionals in IT technology. The knowledge is important", he says.

Conclusion

This paper examined perception of foreign accent in professional discourse and the attitude to accent in professional discourse. The results show that most of the participants have many nonnative speakers at the working place and can recognize nonnative speakers in professional communication. Accent slightly affects professional communication. It means that in professional communication content is important, while native speakers focusing on the content they do not pay great attention to the accent. The results of the interview prove that in professional discourse knowledge is profound.

Accent affects personal communication slightly, says 81.25 % of the participants. Some of them find accent-speaking people attractive.

Although further study is required to gain a more thorough analysis to examine attitude to various accents in professional discourse, the findings of this research may suggest some pedagogical approach to study English for Special Purposes.

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