

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2021.28.4.36>**ИСТОРИЯ И СОВРЕМЕННОСТЬ НОРМАТИВНОЙ ТРАДИЦИИ В БРИТАНСКОМ ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИИ**

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена рассмотрению истории возникновения нормативной традиции английского языка в грамматике, фразеологии и произношении. Отдельное внимание уделено грамматике Джозефа Пристли и нормативной традиции в газете *The Times*. Автор указывает, что ранние нормы появились еще в период господства латинской и греческой традиций, а также упоминает источники, которыми пользовался Джозеф Пристли при написании грамматики. Интересно, что в ту эпоху учебники по грамматике включали в себя примеры «плохого английского». В XX веке появилось общеизвестное RP (Received Pronunciation - стандартное произношение), которое в настоящее время постепенно вытесняется EE (Estuary English – эстуарный английский).

Ключевые слова: норма, грамматика, произношение, традиция, акцент.

HISTORY AND MODERNITY OF NORMATIVE TRADITION IN BRITISH LINGUISTICS

Research article

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Abstract

The article deals with studying the history of English normative tradition in grammar, phraseology and pronunciation. Special attention is paid to the grammar by Joseph Priestley and normative tradition in *The Times*, British daily national newspaper. The author states that early norms appeared during the dominance of Greek and Latin traditions and mentions the sources that Joseph Priestley used while writing his grammar book. It is interesting to note that during the time studied grammar books included some examples of ‘bad English’. In the 20th century, RP (Received Pronunciation) norm appeared and it is now gradually superseded by EE (Estuary English).

Keywords: norm, grammar, pronunciation, tradition, accent.

Introduction

Looking at the problems of normative tradition it is necessary, first of all, to define and understand what a norm actually is. By saying ‘norm’ we usually imply a literary or a linguistic norm or standard and understand that it has been historically formed and is now considered to be the correct way of pronouncing, spelling or using words [7].

The article will examine some facts from the history of normative tradition, principles of correct pronunciation and phraseology, correctness in Joseph Priestley’s grammar, normative tradition expressed in *The Times* and specialized bilingual dictionaries.

Theoretical background

The present research is based mostly on a selection of papers that were presented at workshops at different conferences of the European Society for the Study of English held at different times in different European and Asian cities. The Society itself was founded in Rome in 1990 and now comprises more than 7000 members from different countries. The findings of the research may be interesting for university lecturers, professors and researchers of English who work with literature, linguistics, culture in European countries.

Methods

Methods of our analysis include studying papers of British scholars critically, basing on examples provided in their works. At the end of the article some conclusions about the present day state of normative tradition are drawn.

Early norms in the traditions of English grammar

This section of the paper touches upon some initial norms of English and identifies their major roots.

Some norms can be actually traced back to the time of foundation of linguistic thought during the classical period. At that time, the problem of norm was closely connected with the practical interests pursued while reflecting about the language, philosophical, rhetorical, literary. But some central and long-lasting arguments and polemic issues had remained not settled by the end of the period of Middle Ages.

Grammar books “Pamphlet for Grammar” (1586) by W. Bullokar and “Key to the Art of Letters” (1700) written by A. Lane [2] display evidence from the classical tradition of scholarship, which means that there was sudden appearance, designing and making of grammars of the European vernaculars. It happened at the time when Latin and Greek were considered instituted languages. The status of the producer of norms was challenged and debated.

At the same time the challenging of norms itself implies their existence. It is known that in the second half of the sixteenth century scholars reduced the rules of Latin to quite a low number as they were seen as inappropriate. “The English grammarians of the time were not only struggling to adapt a general Latin pattern to the vernacular, they were also pointing out

its fallacy... The debate over the parts of speech, or the progressively revisited pattern of moods and tenses, was inspired by a genuine willingness to express the true nature of a vernacular” [2, P.11].

The inquiry of norms is to be carried out along the lines of custom, authority and patterns, as authority varies with time, custom may not always prevail on nature or reason and patterns may be adapted to various states of a language. Therefore, norms will probably always be judged as adverse to actual language usage. And although norms change together with language the history of their development cannot be forgotten.

Sources of norms in Joseph Priestley’s grammar

This section of the article is devoted to the well-known grammar book “The Rudiments of English Grammar” [8] written by Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). It is seen by many linguists as one of the few descriptive English grammars of the time. Priestley intended his grammar for schools and so it was obviously based on a normative principle.

“The Rudiments of English Grammar” [8] is a truly influential work in the codification of the English language. It is considered that Joseph Priestley held the publications appearing in “The Spectator” as examples of very good English and identified himself with middle-class values. It is also known that Priestley was elected a member of the Royal Society of London in 1766 and between the years 1769 and 1971 he published 16 articles in the Society’s publications.

Turning to the authoritative sources for Priestley we should mention Samuel Johnson’s “Dictionary of the English Language” (1755). It was valuable in terms of lexicography and lexicology. Johnson supplied his dictionary with a short grammar, which was used by Priestley when preparing his own English grammar. It is interesting to note that Priestley did not accept all the observations and rules and sometimes even criticized Johnson.

Another source of grammar material and norms for Priestley was Lowth’s Grammar [6]. Priestley found that Lowth placed too much value on analogy and idealized norms and not enough on their actual usage.

It is also necessary to note that some grammars of that time also included examples of incorrect usage and this phenomenon was new during the period of Late Modern English. The origin is known. It was Ann Fisher’s with her book “New Grammar, with Exercises of Bad English” [5]. These examples quickly became popular, but Joseph Priestley excluded such illustrative sentences from his grammar.

Like many other contemporary grammarians Priestley also used well-known authors as examples. The norms of linguistic correctness were in fact collectively created by a discourse community of grammarians in the second half of the 18th century to which Priestley belonged. This community collected the usage of the best authors and examples of bad English and that was the basis of a canon of norms for the English language.

Critical Pronouncing Dictionary by John Walker

This dictionary was published in 1791 [12] and was based on a lexicographic tradition started by Johnson [3] and also on the British elocutionary movement. Walker’s innovational idea implemented in the dictionary was to compare the data of previous dictionaries and add his own critical notes and commentaries on pronunciation.

This dictionary had a long editorial success which later on was superseded only by Daniel Jones’ English Pronouncing Dictionary [4]. Walker recommended a polite pronunciation and condemned another one for being pedantic or vulgar. This very thing was one of the reasons for success. Walker’s critical notes were later edited and compiled into a corpus and provide now a separate database useful for the study of eighteenth-century norms of pronunciation together with sociolinguistic patterns.

“At the end of the eighteenth century Walker offers a new vision of correct pronunciation by trying to arbitrate between three main sociolects of his time, and considering the productions of the upper classes as well as those of the vulgar. The rational ideals of the century led him to invoke science as an objective judge, by drawing on the principle of analogy and limiting the spread of typically ‘learned’ pronunciations based on classical languages rather than the speakers’ intuition of English” [10, P.35].

Some modern authors [11] believe that despite some simplistic visions and subjective characteristics Walker’s ironic critical pronunciation descriptions have brought new light on the standard language and began to challenge and question so-called ‘polite’ pronunciation at that time.

Normative attitude in *The Times*

The Times national newspaper was a mirror of the Late Modern English standard accent ideology and normative tradition. It is believed that the press in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain actually helped in promoting and reinforcing the standard English ideology which characterized most of the early Late Modern English period [10]. It allowed people to have their say and also significantly contributed to reinforce and promote so called ‘false myths’ which were to characterize prescriptive attitudes on a social and a linguistic level.

The Times was a widely read paper. Another reason why *The Times* was used as a source of investigation of standards and norms was because “it has always enjoyed a high prestige and has had an educated readership” [10, P.41]. The material of study carried out by M. Sturiale [9] were letters to the editor published in *The Times*. He draws the conclusion that readers and editors made an effort to indicate and safeguard a model accent as the linguistic ideal to be attained. In so doing the newspaper played an important role in the prescription of British English pronunciation which imposed itself as a status emblem in the nineteenth century.

Modern tendencies in pronunciation norms

Speaking about the present-day state of things concerning norms we should point out that due to the process of globalization more and more people are learning English and using it for professional communication. The world is facing a global shift which requires British bilingualism as for many people both in Asian and European countries English has actually

become the second used for everyday and professional communication. The British RP (Received Pronunciation) norm meets most of the requirements of choosing a language standard [1]. In the twentieth century, BBC presenters became the standard. However, with the passing of time, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, some presenters with their local accents started working at BBC which led to the influence of local pronunciation on the standard. In these conditions we may now speak about so-called Estuary English (EE). So EE may actually become tomorrow's RP. Estuary English includes some peculiarities of South-East accent on segment and intonation levels, which is spoken along the river Thames and its estuary.

Linguists tend to mark some specific features of Estuary English. They are as follows: t-glottaling, l-vocalization and the London vowel shift. T-glottaling can be seen when in a phrase 'like a lot of' the sound [t] becomes a glottal stop. L-vocalization is revealed when in words like 'bell' the letter 'l' becomes a vowel sound and the words is pronounced as [bew]. Vowel shift typical of London implies that the vowel in *face* moves towards *price*, *lace* moves towards *lice*.

Concluding remarks

When we speak about a norm in English we usually imply a norm in pronunciation or accent. "The prestige of using this or that form is socially important as well as any deviation from it" [1, P.5]. However, as we have seen above, British normative tradition does not include only pronunciation norms, as it also has a long history of grammar norms. The first grammar books of English appeared at a time when Latin and Greek were considered instituted languages. A special mention deserves Joseph Priestley's grammar. We have covered in our research dictionaries by John Walker and Daniel Jones. In the nineteenth century, the normative tradition was established and observed by the newspaper *The Times*, and in the twentieth century by the BBC, world's leading public service broadcaster. At present time RP (Received Pronunciation) is being substituted by EE (Estuary English), spoken along the river Thames and its estuary.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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