

上海市高等学校教育高地英语项目

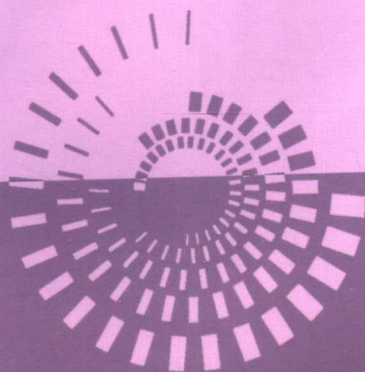
英语语言学与教学丛书

丛书主编◎蔡龙权

英语语音变异及其语用蕴涵

Sound Variation in English
and Its Pragmatic Implication

宋学东◎著



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Preface

This writing is concerned with sound variation in English and its pragmatic implication. It points out that, from the angle of acoustic, articulatory and auditory analysis of speech sounds, variations in pronunciation of the English language, minute or gigantic, as with allophone, pitch, intonation, and in terms of standardized regulations of pronunciation, such as Received Pronunciation (RP), are all referred to as sound variation. The book also discusses the issue that sound variation is related to history, geography, social class, sex, ethnic group, age, and the social relationship between speaker and hearer, public speaking or private talk, the purposes, style and speaker's mother tongue. Language has its true value only when it is under the process of varying in accordance with social development. This investigation, therefore, tries to explicate the pragmatic implication of sound variation in communication as well as teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) regarding communicative competence and give an applied discussion about objective variation and subjective variation to highlight the significance of sound variation in language communication and language learning. Meanwhile, this research proposes that sound variation be taken as a construct of communicative competence and calls for attention to the construction of TEFL with respect to the factual sound variation among native English speakers and the actual variation among non-native speakers whose ability to accommodate is critical in achieving the success

of TEFL. Here still remains a lot to explore when this writing summarizes my studies in the past, heads my investigation at present, and heralds my serial research in the future.

Throughout this writing, the influence of my supervisor, Professor Cai Longquan, is obvious. To him my sincere gratitude is everlastingly due, not only for his academic but humorous classes and lectures, but also for his persistent enlightenment and encouragement of my professional pursuit, for his profound criticisms and insights about my investigation, and for his precise comments and improvements on my writing of this book.

I also greatly appreciate the help of Professor Su Chengzhi who has generously allowed me to use his unpublished writing on sociolinguistics. Meanwhile, my sincere thanks go to all those professors at the Foreign Languages College, Shanghai Normal University, who ever taught me directly and indirectly. Equally, I thank those authors for their discussions referred to in my writing.

One more person deserving my thanks is Ms. Lu Yaqin, the college librarian who has been staying quietly behind and helping me whenever I was in need.

No doubt, I am most grateful to my parents, my husband, and my lovely daughter. Their understanding and support has stood firm with me all the time during the season of this writing.

Song Xuedong
December 6, 2006
Shanghai

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Notations

h	aspiration, as in <i>peak</i> [p ^h i:k]
=	unaspirated, as in <i>speak</i> [sp=i:k]
ɾ	non-audible release, as in <i>peep</i> [p ^h i:p̚]
—	retracted variety, as in <i>pork</i> [p ^h ɔ:k] —
w	labialization, as in <i>poke</i> [p ^h əuk] w
~	nasalization, as in <i>mean</i> [mĩn]
ʔ	glottal stop, as in <i>box</i> [bɔʔks]
//	phonemic transcription, as in <i>spin</i> /spɪn/
[]	phonetic (allophonic) transcription, as in <i>spin</i> [spɪn]
æ̣	used for American English, as in <i>worker</i> [wə̣:r.kə̣]
ɹ	potential pronunciation of /r/ in British English, as in <i>worker</i> [wə̣:r.kə̣]
˘	flapping, as in <i>better</i> [ˈbɛt̬ə]
.	indicates a syllable boundary, as in <i>worker</i> [wə̣:.kə̣]
:	indicates full length of preceding vowel, as in <i>meed</i> /mi:d/
ˑ	indicates half length of preceding vowel, as in <i>meet</i> [miˑt]
ˈ	primary stress, as in <i>afterˈnoon</i>
ˌ	secondary stress, as <i>afterˌnoon</i>
˙	the first stressed syllable in the tone unit, low pitch

- the first stressed syllable in the tone unit, high pitch
- ↘ falling tone
- ↗ rising tone
- ↘↗ falling-rising tone
- level tone

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Definition of sound variation

The definition of sound variation in speech appears, in the first place, no easy job. It is hard to find a separate entry of it in virtually all dictionaries, whether of general linguistics, or particularly of phonetics and phonology. The only immediately relevant terminology uncovered is 'variation' in *A Dictionary of Phonetics and Phonology* by Trask (1996), which covers any type of speech sound change made by individuals of various ages, social backgrounds, and communicative situations. This definition prompts us into concerns about the term 'change' which sounds more common in tone with general linguistic descriptions.

Crystal (1985: 283) views sound change first from the intralinguistic perspective by saying that sound change

have been recognized, e.g. whether the change affects the total number of phonemes (as when two phonemes merge into one, or one phoneme splits into two) or affects only the allophones of a phoneme. He also notes that the nature of the environments which can restrict conditions of sound change is critical. When a series of related sound changes takes place at a particular stage of a language's history, the change is known as a sound shift, and when there has been a regular series of changes, the study of these changes is termed as a sound law.

Indeed, Gimson (1970) sets up a separate section discussing sound change in the preface to his second edition of *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English* (IPE). It is noticeable that he had no obvious intention to distinguish the two, although what he actually discusses involves both and a margin in between, opaque as it is, stays sketched out: his primary task was to do nothing but make sound change manifest in display after his meticulous investigation into the variety of pronunciation of English. However, the difference between the two terms, change and variation, should be noted when more inquiries have been carried out and when more fruitful information is available after thirty years of research in the discipline(s) of phonetics and phonology.

According to the cross-reference explanations made by *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* (1978), *variation* frequently implies a difference or a series of differences due to change as by shifting, diversification, or growth. By contrast, *change* frequently implies either an essential

difference, even a loss in identity, or the substitution of one thing for another. This differentiation means what I intend to on the basis of various findings obtained by others and the research here.

Change, in its general sense, may be mild or dramatic, gradual or sudden, temporary or eternal, in appearance or in essence. When it occurs in speech sound, it may be phonemic or allophonic, a matter of infrastructure transformation of sound. It may also spread to tone and intonation, a suprasegmental structure of speech, and range too from person to person, an interpersonal issue of interaction. In comparison, such these variations in pronunciation within a language, minute or gigantic, as in allophone, pitch, intonation, and in terms of standardized regulations such as Received Pronunciation (RP for short), are referred to as sound variation which, in its broader range of study, also contains the varieties of standard language, a sociolinguistic concern related to geographic region, to social class, to educational background and/or to the degree of formality of a situation in which the variety of sound is implemented with a pragmatic respect for participants, event, time, and place in order to make a speech appropriate or relevant. This research, therefore, prefers and adopts 'variation' as its key term, and enacts it throughout the discussion even when 'change' is in substitution for it for the good of diction.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Overseas

As there are variations everywhere in oral communication, there are researches in track accordingly. Variation has affected nearly every aspect of the English language, its morphology, syntax, and vocabulary as well as its pronunciation. Hudson (1996: 42) indicates that the sensitivity of pronunciation is more obvious in regional and social differentiation than that of grammar and vocabulary. There are a good many obvious reasons to account for the distinction; one reason is that people speak more than write in daily communication when in normal situation everyone has to speak but not everyone has to write in communication with others. Another reason is that in perception, due to the difference in the load of task and the speed of perception, sound difference is easier to tell than that of grammar and vocabulary. Phoneticians abroad have therefore made considerable efforts to record the changes while scholars, in contrast, to retain the unchanged.

There are quite a few theoretical problems connected with phonemic analysis that are too important to ignore, such as the number of vowels. Some phonologists have suggested that the schwa /ə/ is not a phoneme of English, but is an allophone of several different vowel phonemes when those phonemes occur in an unstressed syllable. Thus RP has nineteen vowels in its system. The idea that

/ə/ is an allophone of many English vowels is not new and recent---it was discussed, for example, by Bloomfield (1933), though unfortunately this discussion was left out of the edition sold in Britain. It is explained by Chomsky and Halle (1968) that in generative phonology, /ə/ results from vowel reduction in vowels which have never received stress in the process of the application of stress rules. Also there is an interesting discussion of the /ə/ and /ʌ/ contrast in Wells (1970).

Consequently, in *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*, a milestone in the field, a new English pronouncing transcription of twenty vowels (including twelve pure vowels, five closing diphthongs, and three centering diphthongs) were proposed by Gimson in 1962 for the first time. These conceptions were adopted and further developed later by him in the 13th edition (Jones: 1967) and the 14th edition (Jones: 1977) of *Everyman's English Pronouncing Dictionary* (EPD in short for all editions). Comparing the 13th edition with the 14th edition of EPD, we can find the problem that has received a lot of attention is simply the choice of symbols for representing English phonemes. In the 13th edition, Gimson uses most of the EPD transcription from the 12th edition which is revised by Jones himself except the changes of tongue positions of the four English pure vowels /ʌ/, /ɔ:/, /ə/, and /æ:/ and the starting-point of the diphthong /o/ into /ə/. And in the 14th edition, Gimson revises a lot about EPD transcription of the vowels. A brief summary is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 Comparison of long vowels and short vowels
between EPD 13th edition and EPD 14th edition**

EPD 13 th edition		EPD 14 th edition	
long vowels	short vowels	long vowels	short vowels
i:	ɪ	i:	ɪ
ɔ:	ʊ	ɔ:	ʊ
u:	u	u:	u
ə:	ə	ɜ:	ə

As we can see from Table 1, the four pairs of vowels (/i:/—/ɪ/, /ɔ:/—/ʊ/, /u:/—/u/, /ə:/—/ə/) in the 13th edition are compared only by the full length mark :, while in the 14th edition, these four pairs are compared not only by the symbol but the transcriptions themselves as well. It shows that the difference of each pair is not only a matter in length, but also in quality. In concern of the eight diphthongs, we find the transcriptions of /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /ɛ/ in the 13th edition are changed into /ɪ/, /ʊ/, and /e/ in the 14th edition.

But the number of phonemes in RP still raises arguments. It involves the assignment of /tr/ and /dr/. Phoneticians like Jones (1967; 1981) prefer 46 phonemes including four affricates /tr/, /dr/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. While O'Connor (1973), Roach (2000), and Cruttenden (2001) prefer 44 phonemes which include only two affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/.

Another aspect of variation deserving topical attention here is seen in the making of a standard pronunciation. According to Gimson (1970: 67), the language spoken in