

Гормакова А.А., Хачатрян Л.Г.

Научный руководитель: ст. преподаватель Фролова О.А.

*Муромский институт (филиал) федерального государственного образовательного учреждения высшего образования «Владимирский государственный университет имени Александра Григорьевича и Николая Григорьевича Столетовых»
602264, г. Муром, Владимирская обл., ул. Орловская, 23
E-mail: gormakova.33@mail.ru*

Phonetic Features of New Zealand English

Immigration to New Zealand from Australia and different parts of Britain has had a significant bearing on the way New Zealand English developed. Thus, the variant of English spoken in New Zealand was formed under the influence of Scottish English, dialects of the south of England, Australian English and the language of Māori (native people of New Zealand). Māori English differs in production of some vowels and diphthongs and is most noticeably different in its stress and rhythm. British pronunciation is highly appreciated in New Zealand because it is associated with being educated. Nevertheless, local dialects have much more influence. [1]

The English language of New Zealand is considered to be a variant of Australian, but it has much in common with the British English. It has its own phonetic peculiarities compared to Australian English. These differences are characterized by a range of changes in the vowel system. They include:

- centralization of [i] into [a];
- rise of [e] into [i];
- reduction of [æ] into [e];
- merger of [eə] and [iə]. [2]

These changes were first noticed in the speech of young women of the middle class. Nowadays they can be noticed among all classes of people in New Zealand [3]. New Zealand also tends to have a flattened short [i] which Australians hear as the short [u]. So, for example, “fish and chips” in New Zealand English is heard as “fush and chups”. [2]

The most widely reported intonation feature of New Zealand English is the High Rising Terminal Contour (HRT), a rise in pitch used on declarative sentences. Outsiders mistakenly interpret this as a questioning intonation pattern. The HRT is a politeness feature used by a speaker wishing to involve the hearer in a conversation. [1]

The consonant system of New Zealand English is unremarkable for a variety of English. G.W. Turner points out, “Distinction between wh and w is very often made in New Zealand, the wh being sounded as [h+w]. Thus, the difference between what and Watt, where and wear is being maintained”. There is a tendency to substitute [f] and [v] for [θ]. [2]

As with Australian English and American English, the intervocalic /t/ may be flapped, so that the sentence "use a little bit of butter" may be pronounced [ju:z ə lɪtə bɪt əv bʌtə] (phonemically [ju:z ə lətəl bət əv bətə]). [1]

The sound [ɪ] is velarized ("dark") in all positions, and is often vocalized in syllable codas so that ‘ball’ is pronounced as [bo:ɔ] or [bo:ə]. Even when not vocalized, it is darker in codas than in onsets, possibly with pharyngealization. Vocalization varies in different regions and between different socioeconomic groups; the younger, lower social class speakers vocalize [ɪ] most of the time. [1]

Thus, since the latter 20th century, New Zealand society has gradually divested itself of its fundamentally British roots and has adopted influences from all over the world. The Internet, television, movies and popular music have all brought international influences into New Zealand society and the New Zealand vocabulary.

Литература

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