

62. Prof. A. LLOYD JAMES (London): *The relation of phonetics to broadcasting.*

It is not easy to describe or to define the relation between phonetics and broadcasting. Perhaps it would be easier to say that scarcely a day passes in the history of broadcasting without some question arising that has to do with the study and practice of phonetics. I am not competent to speak of the electrical and experimental aspects of the subject, which are safe in the hands of the experts.

I have watched with interest the broadcasting of English in these islands from its beginning; have studied the problems involved, and have been called upon to act as the official adviser to the B.B.C. upon matters of the spoken word. Some of the results of my observations have been given to previous Congresses, or published in other places. I beg to offer the Congress some further remarks.

The first is this: it is a repetition of the lesson I tried to teach in the film you saw on Monday. The result of broadcasting the Visual Language, over a period of some five centuries, through the medium of the printing press, has been to bring about in that field a remarkably high degree of standardization and uniformity. The study of the Visual Language has acquired a high degree of prestige, and linguistic education has for centuries centred mainly around this form of language. So much is this so that we have come to regard the rules and regulations that govern the Visual Language as binding upon the ordinary speech of our everyday life. Linguistic theories often rest upon the structure of the Visual Language, and upon that form of the language which has emerged therefrom, namely the Literary Language.

The broadcasting of the Spoken Language, which is in its infancy, has made it abundantly clear that Speech and Print are two very different things, and that the linguistic education provided by the schools and colleges of this country, however excellent in the departments of literature and all that concerns the Visual Language, is hopelessly inadequate in the realm of Speech. Reading is seldom taught after the primary school, and such instruction as is available in the mother tongue is almost always empirical. No attempt is made to instil the general linguistic principles of intonation, sentence accent and rhythm. It is gratifying to observe that even after so short a period as has elapsed since the introduction of broadcasting, there is a growing recognition of the seriousness of this gap in our linguistic education. Language is, or can be, the focus of many excellent disciplines, and indeed there is room for all; but the prestige which the study of the Visual and Literary Languages has acquired is out of all proportion to their relative importance in the life of most individuals and communities. The average man, for better or worse, spends more of his life in talking than in writing, more in listening than in reading. More time is wasted in reading than most of us would be ready to admit, and usually in the belief that reading is an intellectual exercise. Phonetics provides the only safe and sure basis for the study of the Spoken Word, and it must become a

compulsory discipline for those whose business it is to raise the study and teaching of the Spoken Language from the level of an empirical dogma to that of a rational and scientific body of knowledge.

I have spoken at length in other places of the extreme difficulty of finding a nationally acceptable form of Speech, and indeed of defining Standard English, that fiction so dearly loved by so many of us. You will find the constitution and work of the B.B.C. Advisory Committee on Spoken English fully described in the relevant publications. One aspect of the problem is new in the sense that I have only recently had the opportunity of observing it. It is the question of English in Scotland. Scotland has for centuries had its own centres of culture and education in its Universities. Owing to its social organization, its geographical formation, to the comparative isolation of many of its centres of population, the regional dialects of Scotland have always enjoyed a higher degree of prestige than prevails in England. There are many varieties of educated Scots English, and nowhere in Scotland, except in a few girls' high schools, is there any desire to accept Southern English as a national standard. But Southern English is broadcast, although an occasional announcer may have been Scottish born. This is accepted, although not without protest. Nevertheless, in the performance of English drama, for instance, most Scottish people would expect to hear in Scotland, if not the advanced dialect of the London stage, some very close approximation to what is known as Standard English, reserving to themselves the right to define that fiction in their own terms. Lessons in Speech are now for the first time being broadcast in Scotland to the school-children. The broadcaster is a Scottish woman, an eminent phonetician, and she broadcasts her own pronunciation, which is pure Scottish. Here is a linguistic situation quite unlike anything that has come under my notice, in this country or elsewhere, and I watch the outcome with much interest.

There are signs that the North of England and the Midlands are becoming more tolerant of at least one feature of South-Eastern English that used ten or twelve years ago to cause them intense annoyance. Such pronunciations as "grax", "pa:θ", "daxns" are, I suspect, becoming less unpopular in the North. My evidence for this is that whereas ten years ago I used to receive many letters of complaint on this score, now I seldom receive one.

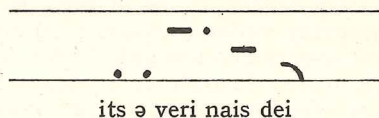
On the other hand, the resistance to certain prevalent South-Eastern forms is as considerable as ever, e.g.:

fɑ: for faie
 ɑ:lənd for ælənd
 empɑ: for empaie

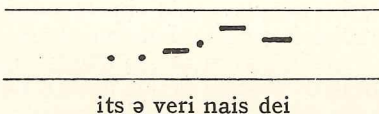
continue to bring forth protests in abundance, while the intrusive *r* causes nightly offence to millions. These two features are very strongly established, and resist all efforts on my part to remove them from the speech of announcers. Possibly it is idle to attempt it; and the young man who, despite—or perhaps on account of—his public school and Cambridge education, despite his high honours

degree in Modern Languages, and despite all my admonishing, spoke recently of a "flotillar of motor launches" is probably beyond redemption.

Nowhere is the deficiency in Speech Education more manifest than in the realm of Intonation. There is only one traditional intonation common in public utterance in England; it is that which is known as the "clerical" intonation, although its use is by no means restricted to members of the clergy. It is the National Speech Anthem. It differs in all essentials from the intonation of the vernacular, and has very little in common with the intonations described by the authorities. It consists of a haphazard arrangement of tones, with little or no regard to their syntactic or emotive functions, and a studious avoidance of any rise or fall within the body of a syllable. Thus what in the vernacular is:



might become in this traditional intonation:



or any other fanciful arrangement. This is the Englishman's only resource, and he regards any departure from this as an unwarranted display of emotion, and consequently as a breach of good taste. When one considers the extraordinary richness and variety of the tones used in the daily speech of the Englishman, one can only attribute this prevalent distortion to a complete lack of understanding of the function of intonation. The wider aspects of this question are fully discussed elsewhere; here I need only say that nothing has been as effective in awakening the public to the importance of intonation as broadcasting; and that no section of the public has been more anxious to have intelligent guidance on the proper function of intonation in public utterance than the clergy.

Lastly, there is a word to be said about the nature of the criticism levelled at the decisions of the Advisory Committee on Spoken English, who are now mainly guided by its four specialist members who are, I am happy to say, all members of this Congress or of its organizing committee, Prof. DANIEL JONES, Prof. WYLD, Mr ORTON and myself.

First, there is the usual resentment at what is felt to be the Englishman's inalienable right to speak as he chooses. The Press, which has been instrumental in standardizing the visual language, is often completely unaware of the analogy between printing and broadcasting, and fails to see that anarchy in speech-broadcasting is as undesirable as anarchy in print-broadcasting.

Secondly, there is the criticism of the philologist, who complains that the Committee does not sufficiently respect traditionally established pronunciations. *Conduit* was first given as *ˈkɔndjuɪt* largely because

(a) I formed the view that many people in the habit of referring to Conduit Street use that pronunciation, and

(b) because the casing used by electrical engineers for enclosing cables and wires is usually referred to in that way.

This decision raised a violent discussion in *The Times*, in which one eminent man of letters referred to another as a "bumptious amateur". This word really caused a reconstruction of the Committee, and when it came up for reconsideration was promptly reverted to its older form *ˈkændɪt*.

It has recently been decided to call Marylebone *ˈmæɪrəbən* despite the fact that there now remain but very few elderly people who use this form.

Personally I have very little philosophy left in this matter, despite the fact that I was brought into phonetics through the broad avenue of Philology (Romance). But when two or more variant pronunciations are available, it appears to me that ease of verbal communication is promoted if that variant is chosen in which the discrepancy between the visual and aural forms is least pronounced. Sometimes variants are not available.

Lastly, there is criticism of the doctrinaire kind, a good example of which will be found in Sir RICHARD PAGET's recent book, *This English*. Sir Richard wishes that the Committee would introduce more system into its deliberations, and impose upon the public pronunciations which, in his view, despite the fact that they may be non-existent, would make for uniformity.

Such are the observations upon a unique linguistic situation which I offer to the Congress, with an expression of the honour I feel in being invited to address it.

Note. For a fuller discussion of many of the points dealt with above see the author's *The Broadcast Word* (Kegan Paul, 1935).

63. Prof. C. M. WISE (Louisiana): *A comparison of certain features of British and American pronunciation.*

As the Dialect Atlas of the United States and Canada proceeds towards completion, and when a similar Atlas of the British Isles is undertaken, comparisons of British and American speech can be illuminated by historical data. Sources of colonial groups, and their movements subsequent to reaching American shores, will then be better known. Comparative British and American linguistic study can then be more easily "vertical" or historical, as well as "horizontal" or contemporaneously descriptive. Meantime, this paper limits itself to descriptive commentaries chosen selectively as follows:

1. The comparison of the relative standing, in the two countries, of certain British and American pronunciations.