

SUPRASEGMENTAL PARAMETERS VIEWED AS THE BASIS OF SPEAKING STYLES CLASSIFICATION

Summary. The article attempts at defining one of the key concepts in phonetic studies known as speaking style which remains challenging and disputable at present. The paper focuses on the analysis of different approaches to interpret a linguistic value of this concept. The work puts forward grounds to classify speaking styles in the framework of experimental phonetic research. In this view speaking styles are classified into two big groups that reflect universal features of official and colloquial discourse. The proposed set of speaking styles is an attempt to the assays of contemporary phonetic studies into the synergy of stylistics, cognition, speech production and speech perception. The paper highlights the methodology of auditory research undertaken to attain the targets set. The auditory analysis is conducted at three stages involving different groups of interviewees summoned to solve a particular task. The experiment embraces an array of the auditory material that illustrates each subtype under consideration. The validity of the selected audio pieces is proven by perceptual analysis done by the group of native speakers. Besides, each stage of the experiment is grounded and described being illustrated by the examples of different sound segments that represent a particular speech style. The methodology and program of the experiment enable to single out and systemize suprasegmental units characteristic for a particular speech style.

Keywords: phonostylistics, phonetic experiment, auditory analysis, suprasegmental parameters, speech style, official speech style, colloquial speech style.

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СУПРАСЕГМЕНТАРНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ, ЯКІ РОЗГЛЯДАЮТЬСЯ ЯК ОСНОВА КЛАСИФІКАЦІЇ СТИЛІВ МОВЛЕННЯ

Анотація. У статті визначаються різні підходи до визначення поняття стиль мовлення у сучасній фоно-стилістиці та робиться спроба виявити основні загальнонаукові параметри для подальшого дослідження стилів мовлення у руслі експериментальної фонетики. Окреслено основні задачі фоностилістики з огляду її предмету та об'єкту. Систематизовані різні підходи до визначення поняття у сучасних фонетичних та загально лінгвістичних дослідженнях. Обґрунтовано підґрунтя для встановлення номенклатури інтонаційних параметрів, які можна розглядати як стильоформуючі з подальшим використанням як підґрунтя для аудитивного та акустичного експериментально-фонетичного стилів мовлення в англомовному дискурсі, які розглянуто у площині особливостей сприйняття звукової інформації реципієнтами у процесі спілкування. Робота визначає теоретичну базу для класифікації стилів мовлення, спираючись на функціональні, соціальні та комунікативні параметри. Описано доцільність класифікації стилів мовлення з урахуванням перш за все їхніх супrasegmentних характеристик, які розглядаються як акустичні ключі, що декодуються слухачем як ознака певного стилю мовлення. З урахуванням завдань запропонованого аудитивного аналізу була розроблена робоча класифікація стилів мовлення, які розподілено на дві групи: офіційний та розмовний стилі мовлення. Запропонована класифікація відображає надбання сучасних фонетичних досліджень, та спрямована на виокремлення універсальних інтонаційних підсистем з подальшим уточненням їхньої особливої ролі у формуванні підстилів. У статті описано методологія проведення трьох-ступеневого аудитивного аналізу, що спирається на викладену у роботі методологію аудитивного експерименту із залученням декількох груп інформантів, які виконують різні завдання. Описано завдання та результати кожного етапу експериментально-фонетичного дослідження, що уможливило систематизацію найяскравіших інтонаційних параметрів, що впливають на коректну ідентифікацію звукового повідомлення, яке втілює окремий стиль мовлення. Визначені та описані основні інваріантні просодичні ознаки визначених стилів мовлення у межах започаткованого дослідження.

Ключові слова: фоностилістика, фонетичний експеримент, аудитивний аналіз, просодичні ознаки, офіційний стиль мовлення, розмовний стиль мовлення.

Introduction. Over the last years scientists have devoted much attention to the analysis of speaking styles as the main object of research in the framework of a newly occurred scientific discipline – phonetic stylistics. This trend in phonetic research takes its origin in the works of scholars who are known as founders of Prague Schools of linguistics [18; 23]. The basic notion applied in this approach is that of function which is viewed differently as it derives from two different sources – biology and mathematics. However, in the framework of linguistic research, scholars [8; 10; 22] focus on

the function of language as the means of communication. Thus, viewing language as a functioning system, many researchers approach the subject-matter of phonetic stylistics as investigation into functional and stylistic potentials of language units related to goals and content of communication reflecting peculiarities of speakers' mentality and life expertise. In this view, phonostylistics is defined as a branch of phonetics that studies functional properties of segmental and suprasegmental units in communication [14; 24]. Notwithstanding the fact «function» being a central concept in the

framework of this approach, the latter is interpreted differently. On the one hand, function is referred to as the role played by different language units in the structure of the units of higher levels [6]. On the other hand, function is approached as a reference of utterances/texts to the objective reality or their purport in certain communicative terms or situations [13]. Besides, Language function is also viewed as the role of a language unit or a subsystem of such units in communication [19]. It goes quite clearly that the axes to the concept of «function» set further direction of research into the notion of «speaking style» that makes a backbone of contemporary studies in stylistic phonetics.

We often adopt different uses of language as we go through our day: we may use a different style speaking with our children in the family, reporting to our boss at work or practicing sports. We change our speaking or writing styles to make a particular effect: imitating somebody's accent when telling a story, giving a humorous account of events in our choice of content of our message and the appropriate range of language to deliver the message effectively. The notion of using language [6; 15], for instance, involves much more than using our knowledge of its linguistic structure. It also involves awareness of the numerous situations in which English can be used as a special medium of communication with its own set of distinctive and recognizable features.

The language means we choose while communicating depend on many factors, the communicative situation (the components of communicative act being the major determining factor [1]. It includes:

- the purpose of communication;
- its participants;
- their number (two = dialogue, one-to-one/dyadic communication. More than two = a polylogue);
- the setting of communication act (at home, in the street, in an office, etc.) in each case the choice of language means will be different.

We can express the same information or idea in more than one way. If the situation is private, we may use informal language. In formal occasions, we choose words and intonation means much more carefully because it would be socially improper to use informal language. For example, to express an apology, one can say:

1. *Sorry, I'm late! – but I got badly held up.*
2. *I do apologize for being late. I'm afraid my train was delayed.*

It is obvious which of the two examples is suitable for informal intercourse and which well suits a formal occasion. This example clearly illustrates that the usage of style is conditioned by extralinguistic factors that result in the choice of certain segmental and suprasegmental features in the course of communication. Besides, we believe that suprasegmental features can be viewed as perceptual clues to recognize a particular speaking style by the listener.

The objective of this paper is to single out a set of reliable prosodic features that ensure a correct identification of a particular speaking style. We believe that this goal can be attained by solving a number of practical tasks:

- work out a definition of speaking style appropriate for the purposes of the phonetic research;

- define parameters for classification of speaking style;

- conduct an auditory experiment to select an array of style-perceptible intonation units.

Background of the research. Different scholars have defined speaking style differently at different times. To the best of our knowledge speaking style is first used by L. Shockley [17] as a term to define many speech variations during communication which are realized through acoustic-articulatory evidence. Though, phoneticians give various definitions of the notion “speaking style”, in our view, they can be boiled down to the following main groups:

1. A variety of segmental (rather articulatory) correlates that are traditionally used to produce melodic, harmonious utterance [16; 20; 21].

2. Generally decoded variables of human voice (tone of voice, rate, loudness) used to organize oral discourse addressed to a particular listener. Such units demonstrate style not only in a special choice of linguistic means but in their very arrangement, i.e. composition of an interview, lecture, a public address or a spontaneous speech [2; 3].

3. Individual manner of selecting segmental and suprasegmental units conditioned by the environment in which the speaker appears and reflecting his perception of the communicative situation as well as his education and background [5; 11; 19].

All these approaches to the notion of speaking style point out the systematic and functionally determined character of the notion of style. There exist certain rules of social and language behavior, which presuppose some situational restrictions on the usage of segmental and suprasegmental means. The broadest and the most widely recognized division of speaking styles is into formal/careful and informal/colloquial [13, p. 135–130]. This stratification is mainly based on the degree of spontaneity that has a direct impact on articulatory and acoustic parameters of style production and perception [5; 11]. Careful/formal speaking styles cover those varieties of speech that we hear from a lecturer, a public speaker, a radio announcer, etc. These types of communication are used in official and professional interviews.

A passage from the public speech by Martin Luther King «I Have a Dream» (1963) is an example of a formal style that has a direct emotionally persuasive impact on the audience due to accurate articulation of stressed vowels (dream, crooked, glory, revealed, etc) which are prolonged to rest the audience attention on them. Besides, the speaker slows down speed and employs long pause after the most important places in his speech (*I 'have a \dream \today. | | 'This is 'our \hope. | |*) to make the listeners understand key points of his appeal. Accidental rises at such words as (*\glory of the 'Lord, \every 'hill and 'mountain, the \mountain of \despair*) combined with voice quality modulation contribute to conveying speaker's emotions and eagerness to convince the public in trustworthiness of his hopes and dreams. A chain of falling tones used in enumeration (*we 'will be able to \work \together, \to \struggle \together, to 'go to \jail \together, \to 'stand up for \freedom \together*) is perceived as firmness and certainty and used together with increased volume give unity, clarity and climax to this public address.

"I have a dream today. || I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. ||

This is our hope. || This is the faith that I go back to the South with. | And with this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. | With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. | With this faith we will be able to work together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day." ||

The next example is also a passage from the direct speech, but it illustrates an informal speech manner. Informal styles (the informal speech manner / colloquial speech) are used in personal everyday non-official communication. Most typically informal type of speech takes shape of a conversation. It plays a very important role in our life, being its indispensable part. Colloquial speech is actualized in informal Lexis and grammar. For example:

Don't nobody try to fancy pants. | Freeze the mits on the bar. Yeh. You'll know me. | You ain't forgetting me, pals, just tell them Johns not to get careless is all. | Well, so long, punks. I gotta catch a street car. ||

Reflecting the peculiarities of oral speech of an uneducated Afro-American the passage abounds in pauses that appear in the middle of an intonation group, variation of pitch level reflecting the change of the speaker's emotional state and falling-rising terminal tones perceived as his uncertainty and insecurity.

The work of speaking style is progressing beyond research into correlations between stylistic context and phonetic variants. A number of works on this topic show a focus on speakers' creative and active deployment of various prosodic elements and their nomenclature [12; 3; 7]. Prosodic resources are used to construct stylistically-marked messages. In performing social roles, speakers consciously position themselves with respect to social environment and also with respect to the talk itself, i.e. style in this case plays «stance-taking» role [7]. Another emerging focus is how intonation units enable listeners to decode stylistically marked messages [4; 12]. Taking into consideration the assays discussed we have undertaken an auditory analysis to single out an array of prosodic units contributing to an adequate recognition of stylistically marked texts.

Results and discussions. The auditory experiment has undergone three stages and involved

two groups of respondents. At the first stage the auditory material was selected in the framework of dichotomy: formal/colloquial texts. The group of formal texts embraces lectures, news coverages, press releases, lectures, news coverages and official statements. The second group is represented by talks, debates, street interviews and casual conversations. Following the methodology of a contemporary auditory research [9] (Krasovskaya) the material was processed and analyzed by professional phoneticians applying the method of a structured interview. It involved question-answer interviewing with the aim to select the prominent intonation parameters that structure the texts under analysis. Respondents engaged in this stage of the experiment were challenged to characterize two groups of texts utilizing the following set of variable suprasegmental parameters: 1) *type of syllable accentuation* (1.1. unaccented, 1.2. semi-accented, 1.3. accented, 1.4. strongly accented); 2) *type of intonation scale* (2.1. descending stepping scale, 2.2. descending broken stepping scale, 2.3. descending sliding scale, 2.4. descending scandent, 2.5. ascending, 2.6. level high, medium, low); 3) *type of terminal tone* (3.1. falling, 3.2. rising, 3.3. falling-rising, 3.4. rising-falling, 3.5. level); 4) *pitch level* (4.1. extra high, 4.2. high, 4.3. medium high, 4.4. medium low, 4.5. low, 4.6. extra low); 5) *pitch range* (5.1. broad, 5.2. medium, 5.3. semi-narrow, 5.4. narrow); 6) *interval* (6.1. positive-broad, expanded, medium, semi-narrow, narrow; 6.2. negative-broad, expanded, medium, semi-narrow, narrow); 7) *rate* (7.1. fast, 7.2. semi-fast, 7.3. normal, 7.4. slowed, 7.5. slow); 8) *pauses* (8.1. broken, 8.2. short, 8.3. long, 8.4. extra-long, 8.5. unbroken); 9) *volume* (9.1. high, 9.2. semi-high, 9.3. normal, 9.4. semi-low, 9.5. low).

The third stage of auditory experiment was aimed at defining prominent intonation units that function as perceptive clues and enable listeners to decode the gist of a message and attribute it to either formal or colloquial style. Respondents of this group were native speakers and students of foreign language department at Kyiv linguistic university. Summing up the results obtained, we have defined a number of intonation parameters that can be viewed as style-forming suprasegmental features on the hand, and perceptual clues of the style, on the other hand. Table 1 gives a schematic overview of the suprasegmental parameters selected. The auditory analysis has testified that the usage and distribution of pauses is an essential style marker. Thus, evenly distributed pauses are characteristic of texts representing official styles as they are usually scripted in advance. Short pauses mark the boundaries between intonation groups, while long pauses delimit utterances. However, there are cas-

Table 1

Essential style-forming intonation parameters

Prominent intonation units	Official style	Colloquial style
Distribution of pauses	even and logical	uneven, random
Rhythmic organization of intonation groups	ordered	broken
Rate	normal, controlled	varied, emotionally-biased
Volume	normal, controlled	varied, emotionally-biased
Pitch level	medium low, medium high	high, low
Pitch range	medium	narrow, broad

es when broken pauses as well as an accidental rise inside an intonation group serve to attract attention of the listeners to certain intonation knots.

The experiment has shown that rhythmic organization of an intonation group is adequately perceived by the recipients as a marker of a certain style. Ordered and neatly organized intonation groups are characteristic of official style testifying thorough preparation of the speaker. For example, an excerpt from a lecture on building-up brand image loyalty consists of intonation groups which nucleus is a fully-accented syllable (¹Gucci, ¹collection) and which borders are distinctly marked by rising (like ¹Balen ¹ciaga, ¹Bedat) or falling terminal tones (The ¹Guc² Group is ¹now a ¹multi-brand cong¹lomerate, ²Sergio Rossi under its ¹finely ¹crafted um ¹brella. | |).

E.g. The ¹Gucci ¹Group is ¹now a ¹multi-brand cong¹lomerate, ²with a ¹collec¹tion of ¹high-fashion ¹brands ²like ¹Balen ¹ciaga, ²Stella Mc ¹Cartney, ²Bouche ¹ron and ¹Yves Saint ¹Laurent, ²YSL ¹Beaute, ¹Bo ¹ttega ¹Veneta, ¹Bedat & ¹Co and ¹Sergio Rossi under its ¹finely ¹crafted um ¹brella. | |

This rhythmic organization ensures proper communication of the message and enables the listeners to decode its gist. However, rhythmic organization of colloquial style (see example below) abounds in level terminal tones (will ¹separate and **dis¹t¹inguish a ¹company**, is the ¹face of the ¹company, ²), broken intonation groups (¹I ²feel ¹qualified to ¹do ¹both² be¹cause ¹good ¹corporate image, ²like a ¹brand ¹image ²will ¹separate and **dis¹t¹inguish a ¹company² and its ¹products² and ¹services from all ¹others. A ¹brand in ¹this ¹case² is the ¹face of the ¹company, ²the ¹one ²that the ¹public ¹sees. ¹When you ¹have a ¹face, ²you ¹have a ¹brand you ¹own.**

E.g. I ²feel ¹qualified to ¹do ¹both² be¹cause ¹good ¹corporate image, ²like a ¹brand ¹image ²will ¹separate and **dis¹t¹inguish a ¹company² and its ¹products² and ¹services from all ¹others. A ¹brand in ¹this ¹case² is the ¹face of the ¹company, ²the ¹one ²that the ¹public ¹sees. ¹When you ¹have a ¹face, ²you ¹have a ¹brand you ¹own.**

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Besides the intonation parameters highlighted, the styles in focus have different rate and volume that are perceived as their distinctive features. Thus, increase of intonation (highlighted in the example given below) combined with rate slowed down foreground vital stretches of information in both styles that can viewed as universal perceptive clues and unmistakably identified by the listeners.

E.g. However, nowadays the advertising industry is **passing through** one of the most **disorienting periods** in its history. This is due to a combination of **long-term changes**, such as **the growing diversity of media** and the arrival of new technologies, notably the Internet.

It is noteworthy to mention that in relevance to the data obtained pitch range and pitch volume can be described as variable in colloquial style. If a speaker is emotionally disturbed these parameters take their extreme realization. If a speaker is in the state of elation of joy the pitch level is high while pitch range is narrow. On the contrary, the state of stress or deep sorrow is marked by a low pitch level and broad pitch range being decoded as sincerity of the speaker. Official style is characterized by a medium high or medium low pitch level in combination with a medium range that ensures objectivity and impartiality of the information transmitted.

Conclusion. Summing up, it is essential to point out that intonation is a decisive factor to ensure proper decoding of the information communicated by the speaker. The assays of the auditory experiment prove that speaking style is a product of speaker's creativity on the one hand, and a structured system of interrelated segmental and suprasegmental features. Moreover, intonation features of the styles under survey function as essential perceptive clues that are interpreted by the speakers as style-forming features. Thus, the auditory experiment conducted and its results analyzed have opened up new horizons to further research into a broader nomenclature of speaking styles and defining their style-forming intonation characteristics.

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