The article deals with topical challenging issues that are related to the training of future teachers of the English language. The first of which is the absence of any Standards of English itself. The definitions of the term ‘Standard’ from the Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries are given. The paper also insists that neither the European Framework nor the English language proficiency exams (IELTS and TOEFL) are English language standards for their native speakers and that this type of standardization exists only for those for who English is a second language. The next problem that university teachers face in teaching correct pronunciation and vocabulary to future English teachers is that English is a large and flexible language, with a huge number of words, abbreviations and a large number of different accents. The article describes the three main London accents that exist today: RP, Cockney and EE. The latter is seen as a derivative version of the new modern accent from the mixing of RP and Cockney. At the end of the article, the author comes to the conclusion that first-year students should be introduced to the peculiarities of the English language (a variety of accents, vocabulary, teaching English to schoolchildren and future British English teachers), and Oxford and Cambridge English should be taken as the standard.

Keywords: English teacher training, diversity of accents, Standard English

English is the most widely spoken languages around the world. It is estimated that there are 300 million native speakers and 300 million who use English as a second language, while a further 100 million use it as a foreign language. It is the language of diplomacy, computing, science, tourism and business. This is an official or co-official
language of 45 countries. English today is the language used for the widest variety of purposes. As a result, the number of learners of English began to rise rapidly.

As a consequence of this, teaching English as a second language raises some questions over how to teach learners properly. Emerging from existing literature and the occupational author's experience English teacher training presents different challenges.

The first issue is that there are no standards for English. Standard English is largely a matter of using certain vocabulary and grammar, when spelling and written.

We propose to consider what the essence of the standard is. Online Cambridge Dictionary gives the following definition for Standard. “Standard - a pattern or model that is generally accepted”. The Concise Oxford Dictionary has another definition for this term, which can be related to Education. “Standard - a degree of excellence etc. required for particular purpose”. Both dictionaries different words are used for term ‘standard’, but their essence remains the same. A Standard is something that we can take for ourselves like a pattern. Amongst the diversity of British accents and dialects what can a lecturer, for whom English is just a second language, take as a fundamental basis in teaching proper pronunciation and vocabulary of future English teachers?

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard where we can find describing of language ability. The language ability is describes there on a six-point scale, from A1 (beginners), up to C2 (proficiency). Without a doubt this makes it easy for anyone who is responsible for teaching and testing, to see the level of qualifications. In CEFR is stated that the provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility. However in the most cases just two types of International Certificates are considered by universities and employers of the IELTS Certificate of the United Kingdom (UK) and TOEFL of the USA.

IELTS is an English language test for study, migration or work. Over 3 million people take our test every year. IELTS is accepted by more than 11,000 employers, universities, schools and immigration bodies around the world.
There are some IELTS test types: IELTS for migration (are approved by UK Visas), IELTS for study, IELTS for work.

The IELTS Academic test is suitable for those wanting to study at university (higher education) or in an English-speaking environment. The IELTS Academic can be also taken for professional registration purposes.

TOEFL tests prepare students for university study or immigration. It also features vocabulary that is familiar within an academic setting.

The results of both exams are only valid for 2 years. While Cambridge C2 English Proficiency Test scores are higher than ILET and TOEFL in European frameworks and are not statute of limitations, although they are not as widely accepted by universities and employers around the world.

But as we can see from the above, neither the European Framework nor the English language proficiency exams are standards of English for their speakers. These rules exist only for those for whom English is a second language.

There are the State Standards of general secondary education in the UK which are requirements for mandatory learning outcomes and competencies of a general secondary education student of the appropriate level. However there are not any standards for teaching of pronunciation or vocabulary. It can be spoken in most English accents and does not have a proper pronunciation. Perhaps due to absence of the institution that can be set up these standards or as part of the Prevent strategy Total People will be promoting Fundamental British Values to reflect life in modern Britain. These values are Democracy, Rule of Law, Respect and Tolerance, Individual Liberty. The British value "Respect and tolerance" implies not only a respectful and tolerant attitude towards faith and religion; it also applies to other everyday aspects of British society, including the vocabulary and pronunciation of the speaker.

The next problem in teaching the correct pronunciation and vocabulary of future English teachers is that English is a large and flexible language. There are probably between a million and two million words, not including the half a million abbreviations in English. An educated native speaker may have a vocabulary about 50,000 of active words and 25,000 again that are understood without being permanently produced. Becoming a successful English speaker does not just know the words and how to
pronounce them. It also involves knowing the wide range of different rules governing the way phrases and words are ordered into spoken discourse as well as the conventions that govern the ways varieties of English differ to include linguistic differences of region, formality, class, relationship and even gender.

Even 30 years ago, university lecturers could take the pronunciation and vocabulary of the BBC, which is also called the RP accent, as a standard. RP-Received Pronunciation is the accent which traditionally regarded as the Standard English and most prestigious form of spoken British English, due to in addition to the ‘BBC English’ there are such popular terms for this accent as ‘the Queen’s English’ and ‘Oxford English’. The term "Received Pronunciation" was coined by Daniel Jones, a well-known British linguist and phonetician. And the word “received” itself should be understood as “preferred”, and not “received”. It is believed that RP is the most widespread and widely studied variety of spoken English in the world.

However, it is worth noting that at the end of the twentieth century began a gradual process of spreading out the features of popular London speech geographically to other parts of the country and to the higher social classes.

In London, there have always been two main accents side by side, RP, which is called the Posh accent in the common people, and Cockney. British anthropologist Kate Fox describes in details in her book ‘Watching the English’, where she presents her research, what class differences exist in pronunciation and vocabulary in British society. At present there is also a third so-called Estuary English, which is a mixture of RP and Cockney.

Cockney is a very old dialect of English spoken in the East End, the London part of the city east of the City Wall. The eastern part of the city has historically been an industrial center and contrasted with the ‘high-end’ West End. Historically, the East End has been home to poor workers and immigrants. Gradually, this closed society in the eastern part of the city developed its own specific accent, which was later called Cockney.

Features of the Cockney accent are that in words beginning with the letter h, the sound [h] drops out. For example, the word "have" in Cockney would sound like [ɔv].
The sound [θ] in the words "everything" and "thing" will be pronounced by a representative of the Cockney accent as it sounds like [f]: [ˈevrifɪŋ] and [fɪŋk]. By the same principle, the sound [ð] turns into [v], ‘that’ becomes ‘vat’, ‘Worthing’ is ‘Worving’. By these characteristic features, this accent is easily recognized for almost all Cockneys.

There is still a huge class gap in the United Kingdom, which is accentuated by the particular accents of each class. With the advent of Estuary English, this class line becomes more transparent. It doesn't have the polish that many in the working class dislike in RP. But at the same time, EE has long since left the industrial zone. Many British businessmen speak with this accent to emphasize the class gap between them and the upper class. Many are even proud of their simple origin, so they basically do not want to use RP.

Estuary English is an extremely flexible system. There are no uniform features of phonetics here. But most often it includes the following features, which are also inherent in Cockney: the sound [l] is replaced by other sounds. The word "milk", for example, becomes "miwk". "Sold" becomes [sɔʊd] rather than [səʊld], and the phrase "girl out" becomes [ɡɛo ˈæoʔ]; glottal stop. In essence, this is a kind of sound when the root of the tongue overlaps the larynx. This sound often replaces the sound [t]. The word "can't" in Estuary sounds like [kaːnʔ], and "better" becomes "beh-eh".

Professor J. Wells, who is the author of Accents of English and the Longman Pronunciation Dictionary and the Head of the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics at University College London, in his article appeared in English Teaching Professional (1997) said - ‘There's a new buzzword going the rounds in England - Estuary English (EE). It's supposed to be a new kind of English that's due to take over as the new Standard English. We're told it's going to replace fuddy-duddy old Received Pronunciation as the standard accent. Not only are all sorts of politicians, sportsmen, and media personalities claimed as typical speakers of it, but even people as eminent as Queen Elizabeth's youngest son, Prince Edward’ (J. Wells, 1997).

In his article, he argues that despite the desperate resistance of Minister of Education Gillian Shephard to the introduction of the Estuary accent in school education, who in 1995 at a meeting of the Conservative Party launched into a
denunciation of Estuary English, condemning it as a slovenly, mumbling, illegitimate Cockney and stated that teachers obliged to do everything possible to eradicate it, the trend of its use continues to grow steadily.

The term ‘Estuary English’ was first used by EFL teacher David Rosewarne in 1984. He defines the term as ‘a variety of modified regional speech [...] a mixture of non-regional and local south-eastern English pronunciation and intonation. If one imagines a continuum with RP and London speech at either end, "Estuary English" speakers are to be found grouped in the middle ground.’ (J. Wells, 1997)

Rosewarne states that Estuary English, named after the ‘banks of the Thames and its estuary’, is to be heard in the City, the House of Commons, the Civil Service, the media, local government, advertising, and the teaching and medical professions in the south-east.

The phonetic features of Estuary English that distinguish it from RP lie in the traits it shares with Cockney: things that indicate its southeastern character because RP, for example, is not localized within England. However, these functions are increasingly spreading geographically and socially, losing their localizability and thus justifying the claim that Estuary English is the ‘tomorrow’s RP’.

The most important fact about the EE accent is that, apart from its natural distribution, it is being adopted and introduced into all spheres of life, with the support of linguistic professors and the government, which encourages BBC television to read the news with different accents.

Thus, the study showed that in order to prepare a highly qualified English teacher, first-year students need to be introduced to a variety of accents, vocabulary, features of teaching English to British schoolchildren and future British English teachers, and also to use Oxford and Cambridge English as Standard English.

References

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