

RISE of Standard English

English is a language now spoken by millions of men and women spread over the entire world belonging to different social classes and following different occupation. It is as much the speech of the Cockney bus conductor and of the butcher's boy as it is the speech of the masters of Winchester or Harrow or of the precise Oxford don. In other words it include the speech which is neglected and eloquent period of the cultivated and scholarly. All these different speakers of English neither use identical sound nor employ the same vocabulary. But because all of them are shades of English vocabulary they influence into a certain extent.

Beside these different classes of people using the English language, the writers, the poets, the scholars, the journalists and the speaker on the radio also influence into some extent. As we move from the one social class to another we cannot help becoming the conscious of the separate current in the broad river of English speech. Of the three main current which are discernible, the first is that of local dialect, which are well defined in character and confined to restricted area. The second is that of a form of English spoken by some people in all parts of English, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, while the third represents the speech of majority of people in each region.

more or less closely related to the second - present but lacking its uniformity, the bearing traces of affinity to one or another of the local dialects. The last two forms of English speeches are commonly known as Standard English. Professor H.C. Widd distinguishes the second from the third by the term "Received Standard" while he uses the term "Modified Standard" for the third.

Last two forms of English speech, the last two which constitute Standard English, only are of any importance now. Though English men of all ranks spoke their respective regional dialect till the 13th century. Written English began acquiring a single standard form after the introduction of printing and the fixation of spelling by the printers. The dialect have gradually lost their importance and have become more and more overriden by Standard English, so that they are now mixture of Standard and dialect forms.

Standard English rose into prominence as the speech of the metropolitan population and gradually spread over the whole country.

Between the age of middle ages and the close of 16th Century were rapid changes occurring in the shape and sound of English words and effecting particularly the pronun-

clearer of the vowels. By the end of 16th Century, however, the language had become standardized in the form it still retains except for minor modification in spelling and pronunciation. Though this standard English had at first been affected, to some extent, by local varieties of speech, any change which has come over it during the last three centuries had been due to the influence of various forms of modified English standard. What professor Widd designates as received standard in the speech of more socially fortunate and best educated people. As it is the speech of the products of the English public school education it is often referred to as public school English. It is also the speech of the products of the public school system. It is more uniform in pronunciation than the modified standard.

Modified Standard which is spoken by the majority of people in England is the most important variety of English now in use. It may be defined as the speech of that large number of people who have been brought up in a regional or occupational dialect and have corrected its sound and usage in the light of the received standard taught in schools and colleges. However, they have not succeeded in achieving

any thing more than a compromise between their original speeches and the standard English which is used. It is seen that this modified standard has been closely related to its counterpart in other regions as to well received standard. The compass of modified standard in each region is a wide one, ranging from a speech hardly distinguishable from received standard to the inferior speech of slum-dwellers in the city and of the villagers whose immediate ancestors spoke the regional dialect.

In speaking about standard English, one question which is usually asked is "What is good English and what is the relation of standard English to other forms of good English?". The answer to the question is that good English is "the English of the educated classes used without self-consciousness". It is presupposed that such educated people would have well assimilated the good traditions of English speeches, would have discipline enough to avoid vagueness or jargon or clichés and would have developed their personality in such a way as to use the resources of the language fully. They will naturally use that relatively uniform pronunciation which is becoming current generally. It is also to be remembered that

The term 'Received Standard' applied to the educated speech of England. So far as pronunciation is concerned, there are many other types of 'good English' used by speakers of the language outside England, like that of Edinburgh in Scotland, or of Pennsylvania or New York in America. However, so far as the written language is concerned, we find that there is relative unity among the more educated users of English the whole world over. Good English, therefore, has to be taken to mean what educated speakers use - not what they ought to use, according to notions of grammar or lexicon. Received Standard is all the time gaining at the expense of the modified standard which having no social prestige to confer, gradually becomes neglected and degenerate.

It is now recognized that the real life of a language lies in its speech. Though formerly the written tradition alone was considered worthy of study. In spite of the great change which has recently taken place in the attitude towards the spoken language, the teaching technique is still not quite developed.

The written form of English language more self-conscious and less spontaneous than the spoken one.

It is also conservatism in nature, lagging behind the spoken language, in pronunciation and idiom.

Like every living language, Standard English is subject to change and development.

Hence, Standard English like other living languages, is likely to change undergo and development, and cannot be expected to remain as it is at present.