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What kind of /r/ is linking /r/? An analysis of the realization of linking /r/

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What kind of /r/ is linking /r/? An analysis of the realization of linking /r/ in RP on the basis of selected English phonetic books and usage-based accounts

Abstract:

The paper looks at the phenomenon of linking /r/ in RP and aims to find out what the realization of linking /r/ in RP is according to British phoneticians and according to specialists who carried out empirical research on linking /r/. The present author showed in a different article that according to several Polish phonetics scholars it was the alveolar tap that was typically used for linking /r/. However, this finding is not supported by the results of the present analysis: it is the post-alveolar approximant that is the principal realization of linking /r/ in the view of almost all of the leading British specialists as well as foreign researchers. Additionally, the alveolar tap has been found to possess certain associations which, claims the author, carry important implications for teaching pronunciation to foreign learners of RP English.

Introduction

The paper looks at the phenomenon of linking /r/¹ in RP² and aims to systematize our knowledge concerning the realization of linking /r/ in RP on the basis of selected English phonetic textbooks and usage-based accounts. More specifically, the paper seeks to find out what English phoneticians say the realization of linking /r/ in RP is. In a recent paper (M. Mizak 2016), I observe that it is not easy to achieve this aim if one is to base one's answer only on Polish phonetic sources. A new research paper, one looking at other phonetic sources, stands a chance of providing an adequate answer to the title question. The contents of the English phonetic books supported by usage-based accounts chosen for analysis have revealed interesting results about the matter at hand. First of all, the analysis has revealed that, by and large, there is consistency within the group of English scholars writing on the question of linking /r/: it is the post-alveolar approximant, and not the alveolar tap, that is most usually heard in linking /r/. At the same, the analysis has shown that the views expressed by many English phoneticians are not consistent with the views held by some of the

¹ See A. Cruttenden, 2008, for the term.

² See J. C. Wells, 1992b, for the term.

Polish specialists on the question of realization types of linking /r/ in RP. Thirdly, although the alveolar tap hasn't, obviously, been found to be totally absent from the linking /r/ context, it has been found to possess particular social associations of which, claims the present author, a foreign learner of RP English ought to be aware to make his/her pronunciation more natural and more consistent.

1. Summary of M. Mizak (2016)

I have noticed in a recent paper (M. Mizak 2016) that there is no consistency among some Polish phoneticians regarding the subject of the realisation of linking /r/ in RP. For W. Jassem (1971) linking /r/ appears to be an alveolar tap. In his later work (W. Jassem 1980), the alveolar tap is reserved for the usage of linking /r/ between words ending in schwa and words beginning with a vowel; for the other vowel endings the alveolar tap or the post-alveolar approximant are chosen, which is also restated in his 1983 work. A. Reszkiewicz (2005) as well as A. Miatluk *et al.* (2008) are very clear on the matter: an alveolar tap is always³ used in linking /r/. And so is W. Sobkowiak (1996) for whom it is an alveolar tap that is usually heard in this context. A secondary variant, the frictionless continuant, is likely to be recognized as a substitute for the tap for W. Sobkowiak (1996). For M. Nowacka *et al.* (2011) and A. Porzuczek *et al.* (2013) it is a post-alveolar approximant that is used for linking /r/. And thus, according to the analyzed group of Polish phoneticians who write about linking /r/ in their books it is the alveolar tap that is the usual type of /r/ used in linking /r/, the approximant being subsidiary to the tap. I stated in M. Mizak (2016) that it was evident that those views were not mutually consistent in their entirety, which made it impossible to assert confidently what kind of /r/ was linking /r/ for the Polish group of phoneticians taken as a whole. These findings warrant further research in the area. I indicated in M. Mizak (2016) that we face a major difficulty, possibly a contradiction, when this view – that it is an alveolar tap that is the most commonly heard variant of linking /r/ – is confronted with British phonetic books. D. Jones (1962) lends support to those Polish authors who say that it is the alveolar tap that is the usual variant of linking /r/, but his opinion is met with opposition from another prominent phonetician J. Windsor Lewis (2016b). Other specialists, such as A. C. Gimson (1965: 201) or A. Cruttenden (2008: 220-221) also include a sound different from an alveolar tap to be recognized as the usual value of linking /r/ in RP. This is why a call for investigation within this aspect of connected speech is warranted. This is where we now proceed.

2. Presentation and discussion. Part 1

When one inspects the textbooks or practice books on the subject of English pronunciation written by English scholars one also notices that it is no uncommon to leave the matter of the phonetic realization of linking /r/ undiscussed. J. D. O'Connor (2006) does not specify what kind of /r/ is linking /r/, but judging

³ See M. Mizak (2016) for discussion.

from what he has to say about the rhotic /r/ in RP, we may assume that it is a post-alveolar approximant [ɹ]. J. D. O'Connor (2006: 57) describes the RP /r/ as a gliding consonant on a par with the phonemes /w/ and /j/. All these consonants “consist of a quick, smooth, non-friction glide towards a following vowel sound”, a description which fits the category of approximant (*ibid.*, p. 57). Further descriptions (J. D. O'Connor 2006) point in the direction of the post-alveolar place of articulation for the RP /r/ (*ibid.*, p. 60). J. D. O'Connor (2006) advises foreign learners not to replace this sound by an alveolar trill [r] (as it's done in e.g. Russian or Arabic), a uvular trill [ʀ] (as it's done in Dutch or French) or a uvular fricative [ʁ] (as it's done in Danish or German) owing to the fact that all these approximations, much as they are understood by the English, “sound foreign” to them (*ibid.*, 2006: 60). O'Connor (2006) doesn't mention an alveolar tap as a possible articulation for /r/ in the linking context, but his remarks concerning the difficulties of English pronunciation that foreign speakers may face (*ibid.*, e.g. p. 138) clearly suggest that an alveolar tap is not the principal variant of linking /r/ in RP.

P. Roach (1999) discusses linking /r/ but he makes no mention of what kind of /r/ occurs in it. However, in his talk about r-sounds in English he mentions a post-alveolar approximant that he considers “really only one pronunciation that can be recommended to the foreign learner of RP.” On this basis one may presume that it is this very sound that is employed most commonly in RP within words, as in *red* or *hearing*, and across word boundaries, as in *for ever* or *Here it is*. P. Roach (1999) discusses other kinds of /r/ – the voiceless fricative that is found in words like *press* or *tress* and the one with a strong degree of lip-rounding that is commonly found in the speech of English children as a substitute for the adult /r/ – but he makes no suggestion to the effect that any of these could be a legitimate candidate for the linking /r/. Strictly speaking, this is not entirely out of the question. If we consider expressions such as *as a matter of fact* /əz ə 'mætəʔəv{kt/ as used in dynamic speech, we find that the linking /r/ is to some degree devoiced and slightly fricative (A. Cruttenden 2008). As for the other sound mentioned by P. Roach (1999), the one found in child language, it cannot be totally excluded from the realm of linking /r/ either. The labiodental approximant [ʋ], as I believe is the form of articulation meant by P. Roach (1999), “is spreading more widely [...] starting out from popular London moving into the south-west and then further afield”, as A. Cruttenden (2008: 221) reports. This means that we find it in not only in the speech of young children but also in the language of adults. This is supported by K. Lodge (2010: 180) who notices that there has been an “increase in the use of /ʋ/” among adults since the II World War⁴. Nevertheless, whether the labiodental articulation of linking /r/ is on the increase in RP needs careful investigation. In K. Lodge's words (2010: 180): “[w]hether or not linking /r/ [...] matches the labiodental articulation in all individuals needs systematic investigation.”

⁴ An interesting study of non-RP English speakers concerning, amongst other things, linking /r/ and its variants in colloquial speech can be found in K. R. Lodge 2015.

What is certain at the moment is that K. Lodge (2010) regards [ð] as the sound used in the linking context. Although he does not state it explicitly, it is clear from the narrow notation that he uses when discussing linking /r/, that it is the voiced post-alveolar approximant that is employed in such contexts as *far off*, *four eggs* or *bigger eyes*. It is the turned R [ð] that is used by him to transcribe the linking /r/ examples above (*op. cit.*, p. 157).

One of the first British phoneticians, if not the first one, to state clearly what is the realization of linking /r/ was Daniel Jones (1962: 196):

[...] when a word ending with the letter *r* is immediately followed by a word beginning with a vowel, then a r-sound (generally the flapped variety [...]) is usually inserted in the pronunciation.

D. Jones (1962) uses the name “the flapped variety” or “flapped r” to mean an alveolar tap⁵. Much as it is very clearly stated what the variant of /r/ is generally or usually used in linking /r/, some confusion concerning this variant arises. On page 195 of his *Outline*, D. Jones remarks that

[m]any speakers of Received English use a ‘flapped’ r [...] as a subsidiary member of the r-phoneme; it occurs chiefly in unstressed intervocalic position [...], and when inserted at the end of a word [...]. The use of this subsidiary r is not essential; the fricative r is also quite commonly used in such cases.

For D. Jones (1962: 194) it is the fricative /r/ mentioned in the quote above that is “[t]he most usual English r.” He defines it as a voiced post-alveolar fricative (*op. cit.*, p. 194) and distinguishes it from a frictionless continuant [ð], which, pronounced by “[m]any English people,” differs from the fricative /r/ in the width of the aperture between the tongue tip and the alveolar ridge as well as in the amount of the exhaling force. On page 47 of *An Outline...* he names the frictionless continuant as “the principal English r.” All this, however, brings more complexity and confusion to the question of linking /r/. D. Jones (1962) says that the usual English /r/ is the fricative /r/, incidentally very similar to the frictionless continuant [ð], and that the usual English linking /r/ is the flapped /r/. Additionally, D. Jones (1962: 195) asserts that the flapped /r/ is “a subsidiary” (secondary, less important) member of the r-phoneme, whose use is not necessary, as is evidenced by the common use of the fricative /r/ in the linking context. Some of these inconsistencies have already been pointed out by the renowned phonetician, J. Windsor Lewis (2016a):

A [...] confusion was caused by the either unjustified or over-subtle assertion in §756⁶ that “generally a flapped variety” of /r/ was used for the linking /r/. Again there seems to be partial self-contradiction or at least vagueness at §750⁷ where a flapped variety of /r/

⁵ Due to the fact that I have found many specialists use the terms *tap* and *flap* interchangeably I am therefore following this usage in this paper. This issue, however, may, under other circumstances, be approached in a different way (cf. for example P. Ladefoged 1975: 147-148, P. Ladefoged & I. Maddieson 1997: 230-232, R. L. Trask 1996: 145-146).

⁶ Page 196 of *An Outline...* (D. Jones 1962).

⁷ Page 195 of *An Outline...* (D. Jones 1962).

was referred to as used “in unstressed intervocalic position” by “many” speakers as opposed to a fricative variety “quite commonly used in such cases”.

More importantly, these discrepancies question the validity of the assertion made by Jones (1962: 196), that it is the flapped variant that is the usual realisation of linking /r/. This is to be expected, given the existence of the powerful law of non-contradiction, a tool conducive to finding discrepancies (J. Łukasiewicz 1987: 138), a good method for finding what is correct or incorrect (M. Mizak 2014). J. Windsor Lewis (2016b) notices that Jones’s comment on the articulation of linking /r/ “suggests a usage very far from current natural conversation, unless it entails a flap so weak as to sound different from a normal /r/ purely by its brevity.” J. Windsor Lewis (2016a) calls it an “either unjustified or over-subtle assertion”. Other phoneticians do not seem to side with D. Jones (1962) on the kind of /r/ used for the linking /r/.

A. C. Gimson (1965: 201) considers the voiced post-alveolar frictionless continuant to be “[t]he most common allophone of RP /r/” stating unequivocally that it is this allophone of /r/ that is used for the linking /r/ (A. C. Gimson 1965: 200–201). On the other hand, he also says that the tap allophone “frequently” replaces the frictionless continuant in intervocalic position (A. C. Gimson 1965: 202), thus allowing the tap variant for the linking /r/, though not as the major variant. A. Cruttenden (2008: 220–221) is equally explicit on the matter of linking /r/ allophones, repeating almost word for word what A. C. Gimson said in 1965: 201, making the post-alveolar approximant the principal variant used for the linking /r/. A. Cruttenden no longer acknowledges that the tap allophone “frequently” replaces the post-alveolar frictionless continuant (the post-alveolar approximant) (A. Cruttenden 2008: 221), saying that an alveolar tap “may” replace it in Refined RP in intervocalic positions⁸. J. C. Wells (1992b: 294) largely concurs with these views stating that “[m]ainstream RP has [...] approximant /r/ as the norm,” as in “[vɛðl, 'tɛð@bll]” (*ibid.*, p. 282). According to him, considering the tapped /r/ as “the usual realisation of RP” is “mistaken” (*ibid.*, p. 282), the alveolar tap being “rare in mainstream RP [...]” Much as the tapped /r/, [Q], is possible to be used in RP, it is “by no means the most usual kind of /r/,” says J. C. Wells (*ibid.*, p. 372). We can therefore infer from these declarations that according to J. C. Wells (1992b) it is the post-alveolar approximant that is the principal variant of linking /r/ in RP, especially that this is also visible in his treatment of r-liaison in RP (1992a: 222–227).

P. Carr (2000: 119–127) is very straightforward on the point of the realization of linking /r/ in RP. He indicates that by transcribing the phrase *linking /r/* as “linking [ð]” (*ibid.*, p. 119ff.), which is clearly indicative of the post-alveolar approximant allophone of /r/. M. Davenport/ S. J. Hannahs (1998: 32), having enumerated “a wide variety of articulations” grouped under the heading of rhotics found in English: [r], [Q], [ð], [ʔ], [ʀ], [ð̥], proceed to the discussion of distribution of /r/ in English.

⁸ See also what A. Cruttenden says (not entirely consistently, it seems to me) about taps in various places of *Gimson’s Pronunciation of English*: 2008: 80, 223, 224.

This is where they also discuss sandhi /r/s in non-rhotic accents, such as RP. It is evident from their usage of phonetic symbols that it is [ð̠] (the post-alveolar approximant) that is used in the sandhi context (*ibid.*, p. 33). The alveolar tap is mentioned in the context of regional variation being “heard more commonly in Scotland” (*ibid.*, p. 32) as well as a possible intervocalic variant (*ibid.*, p. 34): “[i]n a number of English English accents which typically have the continuant [ð̠], this may become a tap [Q] between vowels, as in ‘ve[Q]y’ [...]” M. Davenport/ S. J. Hannahs (1998: 34) do not fail to notice that some speakers may have a varied degree of lip-rounding for the rhotic, which may result in a labiodental or labiovelar articulation, “not unlike a [w]” (*ibid.*, p. 34).

R. Ogden (2009: 90) is also clear on the matter under discussion: “[...] linking- and intrusive-r are the same phenomenon: a way to join two vowels together by using an alveolar approximant.” It is, however, interesting to note that R. Ogden (2009: 90-91) finds the description “voiced alveolar approximant” for the most common allophone of rhotic in English a simplification, due to the fact that other, secondary sounds accompany the production of /ð̠/. For example, the /r/ in *red* could be transcribed as /ð̠^w/ (thanks to the rounding of the lips) or /ð̠^v/ (thanks to the labiodental co-articulation) or /ð̠^δ/ (thanks to the velarisation of /ð̠/). It is not impossible then that these articulations may be potential realization for linking /r/. R. Ogden (2009) adds that it is not uncommon in phonetics to see sounds lose their primary articulations to secondary articulations (R. Ogden 2009: 91 cites vocalization as an example). This, R. Ogden (2009) continues, results in many speakers of English producing /ð̠/ as /V̠/ or /V̠^δ/. Accordingly, owing to its common labialization and velarisation, one may assume that a labiodental approximant or a velarized labiodental approximant can potentially be used as linking /r/s. This observation agrees to a great extent with what was said above by P. Roach (1999), by A. Cruttenden (2008), by K. Lodge (2010) and by M. Davenport/ S. J. Hannahs (1998)⁹.

It appears that ample evidence has been collected to draw valid conclusions concerning the type of /r/ used for linking /r/ in the view of leading British phoneticians. Still, more evidence can come to light if usage-based accounts are taken account of.

3. Presentation and discussion. Part 2

Laurie Bauer from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand conducted an auditory analysis of nearly forty recordings made between the years 1949 and 1966. A reading performance of all RP-speaking students and staff members of the Department of Phonetics at the University of Edinburgh was recorded and analyzed with respect to various aspects of usage of linking /r/. The thirty seven RP speakers were asked to read two versions of *The Story of Arthur the Rat*, whose transcript can be found in Abercrombie (1964: 65, after L. Bauer *op. cit.*, p. 75). The story contained from 6 (version used until 1957) to 8 (version used after 1957) potential

⁹ See also Wells 1992b: 282.

linking /r/s. The most pertinent to the present discussion finding made by L. Bauer (1984) is that the majority of cases of linking /r/ that occurred in the reading performance of the speakers were post-alveolar approximants, which casts doubt on the validity of the judgement made by D. Jones (1962: 196) regarding the variant of linking /r/. In L. Bauer's words (1984: 75):

Although some of these linking /r/s were flapped, the majority were approximants, suggesting that Jones [...] is wrong to say that linking /r/ is "generally the flapped variety" [...].

Another empirical investigation worth noting here is the one conducted by B. R. Hannisdal (2006). D. Jones (1962: 196) excepted, the results of B. R. Hannisdal's empirical research corroborate the data provided by the phoneticians mentioned in the present paper. B. R. Hannisdal (2006) collected hours of data from thirty RP television news casters of three different TV news channels and analyzed them auditorily quantifying them using statistical methods. She investigated different phonological variables in her study, one of which was r-sandhi (linking /r/ and intrusive /r/), which is of particular importance to the present paper. In this respect, B. R. Hannisdal (2006: 158) reports that it is the post-alveolar approximant [ɔ̞] that is the principal variant of /r/ used in the linking context by the news presenters in broadcast RP, with the alveolar tap [ɾ] having a low degree of occurrence (*ibid.*, p. 158):

The /r/ variant is realised as a post-alveolar approximant [ɔ̞] virtually throughout. In a handful of cases it occurs as [ɾ], but only if the *r* is part of a foreign name (*Igor Ivanov*, *Amir al Sadi*).

The most recent usage-based research concerning r-liaison (linking and intrusive /r/) was conducted by Radoslav Pavlík (2016). It deserves to be mentioned owing to its direct relevance for the present discussion. R. Pavlík (2016) examines over thirty hours of recorded material – a collection of over 600 r-linking tokens collected from 22 RP newsreaders presenting news bulletins on three different BBC radio stations. Although R. Pavlík's (2016) research was focused on whether linking /r/ and intrusive /r/ were realized or not, rather than *how* they were realized, he does not fail to notice that there were detected "several different realizations of /r/-liaison" (*ibid.*, p. 113) with the post-alveolar approximant being the most usual one (*ibid.*, p. 113):

When the /r/-liaison variable was realized as a rhotic consonant, its most common form was a postalveolar frictionless approximant [ɹ].

These findings are only to be expected, given the amount of supporting data acquired from the other scholars of phonetic science mentioned above. They are also corroborated by substantial evidence accumulated by J. Mompeán-Gonzalez/P. Mompeán-Guillamón (2009) in an earlier, larger and more diverse empirical study on r-liaison in RP-speaking radio newsreaders. J. Mompeán-Gonzalez/P. Mompeán-Guillamón (2009: 746) observe that the most common variant of linking /r/ is [ɔ̞], the post-alveolar approximant:

In most cases, the phonetic identity of the /r/ is a postalveolar approximant [ɹ̠] [...], with a few instances of slightly retracted place of articulation, making it similar to a retroflex approximant [ɹ̠] (but not quite) and a few instances of voiced alveolar taps [ɾ] in very conservative RP speakers. Realizations of /r/ as a labio-dental approximant [ɹ̠] or as a truly retroflex variant [ɹ̠] were generally considered as a feature of a non-RP accent and speakers who produced them were not analysed.

The other variants, the voiced retroflex approximant [ɹ̠] and the labiodental approximant [ɹ̠], were not taken into account in the analysis owing to their being considered outside the scope of RP English. Indeed, the retroflex variant is generally regarded as being characteristic of accents other than RP (see e.g. J. C. Wells 1992b: 342, 370, 411, 432, 446; J. C. Wells 1990: 648; A. Cruttenden 2008: 27, 85, 222). If we look at the dialectal distribution of the retroflex approximant we will find that it is to be found mostly in rhotic accents, so it doesn't apply so much to linking /r/, which is, by and large, a non-rhotic phenomenon. However, as Ken Lodge of the University of East Anglia in the city of Norwich notices (personal communication¹⁰) that many Norwich speakers frequently use [ɹ̠] as a link between vowels, even though the accent is non-rhotic and non-RP. The labiodental approximant [ɹ̠], "as a feature of a non-RP accent" appears to be a more troublesome case, for example in the light of the observations made above, which concerned this phonetic development. Further investigation in this field may bring about more desired results.

As J. Mompeán-Gonzalez/ P. Mompeán-Guillamón (2009: 746) report, the detection of another variant of /r/, the alveolar tap, was not significant, being identified only several times "in very conservative speakers." This comment is in accord with R. Ogden's (2009: 92; see also p. 115) remark that "[t]aps occur in very conservative varieties of RP especially between vowels, and can be commonly heard in old British films." This, in turn, appears to agree with Gillian Brown's (1990: 27) aside that an alveolar tap "is rare in younger RP speakers."¹¹ J. Windsor Lewis

¹⁰ On 23.02.2016.

¹¹ In this connection, it is worthwhile to quote at length from J. Harrington *et al.* (2000: 65) who notice that the alveolar tap is produced intervocalically by Queen Elisabeth II, a representative, one might say, of conservative RP (in contrast to General RP, see A. C. Gimson 1965: 84-85, see also A. Cruttenden 2008: 80): "As far as the Queen's accent is concerned, this has some characteristics of what A. C. Gimson (1966) describes as 'conservative RP', a form "used by the older generation and, traditionally, by certain professions or groups" and only some, but certainly not all, of the features of what J. C. Wells (1982) refers to as Upper Crust, or U-RP. For example, in common with U-RP speakers, the Queen has an intervocalic tapped /r/ [...]." The purpose of J. Harrington *et al.*'s (2000) paper is to analyse monophthongal vowel changes in RP on the basis of the Queen's pronunciation. The authors conclude by saying that a change within the same individual *can* be noticed over a span of time and that the change shifts from a conservative form of RP in the direction of a more general type of RP. It would be interesting to find whether a similar kind of change could be noticed with respect to the Queen's taps, taps in the linking context and the use of linking /r/ in general. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any empirical, large-scale study of this kind, but even a cursory glance at two Christmas broadcasts made by the

(2016a), the author of *People Speaking*, published in 1977 by Oxford University Press, noticed that pronouncing a word like *very* with a tap was “likely to sound quite old fashioned” by 1950s. The same author notices elsewhere (2016b) that Daniel Jones’s (1962: 196) comment on linking /r/, that it is usually the alveolar tap, “suggests a usage very far from current natural conversation.”

Geoff Lindsey (2012) mentioned the tapped /r/ sound as the most typical phonetic feature of Timothy Dalton’s Bond¹². But G. Lindsey (2012) says that he was surprised when he had heard the frequent use of the tap in T. Dalton’s portrayal of Bond at the end of 1980s. He ascribes T. Dalton’s tap to his “classical theatrical background” and calls this usage rather “stagey”¹³. G. Lindsey (2012) explains that “from a sound-symbolic point of view, an abrupt strike of the tongue to the alveolar ridge is probably more dramatic than a smooth approximation with little or no contact”¹⁴. Thus, a tap appears to leave a better, perhaps a more lasting impression on the audience, which is the reason why T. Dalton’s Bond may have used it, although, I think, it may not compare to Noel Coward’s “old-fashioned poshness and theatricality” achieved by his “trademark taps” (G. Lindsey 2012) that we can hear, for example, in his songs¹⁵. In this connection, it is worth mentioning what Ben Trawick-Smith (2012) said about another English actor, Rex Harrison, who played the role of the professor of phonetics Henry Higgins in the film *My Fair Lady* (1964). B. Trawick-Smith (2012) observed that R. Harrison had frequently used the tapped /r/ sound in the film, although he had never or almost never tapped his /r/s in the interviews that were carried out with him around that time. This squares well with G. Lindsey’s (2012) comments on the theatrical use of the voiced alveolar tap. G. Lindsey (2012) also notes that the tap “is chiefly a regionalism” in Britain, which is a well-attested fact (G. Wells 1992b: 324–325, 368, 372, 379, 411, 438, 445; J. C. Wells 1990: 648–649; A. Cruttenden 2008: 84–85).

The upshot of all these remarks is that the alveolar tap is not only a strictly phonetic phenomenon, but also a social one (cf. I. Wotschke 2014, P. Trudgill

Queen, one from 1957 and the other from 2015, suggests that a variation of some kind in the Queen’s use of linking /r/ and the realisation thereof can be observed. In addition, this quick look at the broadcasts demonstrates that an intervocalic tapped /r/ that J. Harrington *et al.* (2000) talk about, although quite frequently employed by the Queen, is not *always* used by her.

¹² T. Dalton portrayed James Bond in, for example, *The Living Daylights* (1987), in which the memorable sentence, “If the R[ɔ]ussians don’t get you, the Amer[Q]icans will,” was pronounced by T. Dalton’s Bond, with the former /r/ being an approximant and the latter a tap.

¹³ According to G. Lindsey (2012) “[t]he use of tapped *r* in the more prestigious forms of British English has declined almost to vanishing point over the past century, but it seems to have lasted longer on the stage.”

¹⁴ See also J. Windsor Lewis’s comment on the tapped /r/ (2016a): “[a] strongly flapped /r/ from most speakers [...] tends to sound markedly ‘precise’.”

¹⁵ J. C. Wells (1992b: 282) remarks that Noel Coward’s accent may have left many Americans with a “mistaken impression that [Q] is the usual realisation of RP (or ‘British’) /r/.”

1980), which is implied by the use of such phrases as “part of a foreign name”, “very conservative”, “old films”, “rare in younger RP speakers”, “old fashioned”, “usage far from current natural conversation”, “stagey”, “more dramatic” or “regionalism”. Its usage can be compared to the usage of /r/ across accents. P. Trudgill (1980: 21) reports that in England “accents *without* postvocalic /r/ [such as RP] have more status and are considered more ‘correct’ than accents *with*.” Characters who use postvocalic /r/, e.g. in the theatre or on television, come across as “rural, uneducated or both” (*ibid.*, p. 21). In the United States, however, this situation is, by and large, reversed, with accents which retain the postvocalic /r/ as being more prestigious and “more ‘correct’” than those which do not. P. Trudgill concludes (1980: 21):

There is nothing inherent in postvocalic /r/ that is good or bad, right or wrong, sophisticated or uncultured. Judgements of this kind are social judgements based on the social connotations that a particular feature has in the area in question.

The usage of taps can also be compared to the usage of linking /r/ within a single accent. The question is: should linking /r/ be pronounced or not by an EFL learner? J. Windsor Lewis (2016b) takes issue with J. D. O’Connor who invites EFL learners not to pronounce linking /r/ if they “find it easier” (J. D. O’Connor 2006: 61) because “some R.P. speakers do not use it (and say *nev@ @gen*)” (*ibid.*, p. 61). J. Windsor Lewis (2016b) objects on the grounds that the number of British speakers who do have linking /r/ in such expressions as *never again*, *cheer up* or *an hour or so* “is very small indeed”. What is most significant for us now is what J. Windsor Lewis has to say next (2016b):

This style of utterance, when heard at the rate of delivery generally found most comfortable by EFL speakers, is widely felt to be precious or effeminate and very often correlates with socially conspicuous varieties of pronunciation.

This is why J. Windsor Lewis (2016b) does not find J. D. O’Connor’s advice to foreign learners of English pronunciation commendable.

Let us review the social aspect of pronunciation discussed above by asking pertinent questions. Firstly, should postvocalic /r/ be pronounced or not? Secondly, should linking /r/ be pronounced or not? Thirdly, should alveolar taps be pronounced in the linking /r/ context or not? We have seen that an answer to the first question depends on social factors: if you’re in Rome do as the Romans do, one might say. In other words, if you’re an RP speaker, the natural act would be not to pronounce the postvocalic /r/ discussed by P. Trudgill (1980). This accords fully with J. D. O’Connor’s (2006: 5) remark on the subject of a choice of a good model of pronunciation for a foreign learner of English. An answer to the second query is similar: if a majority of speakers have r-links in expressions like *never again* or *an hour or so* then the natural, unaffected thing to do for an EFL learner would be to have r-links as well. Finally, if alveolar taps are far from being the most prevalent variant used for linking /r/ in General RP, as is beginning to be evident from the findings presented in this paper, and if alveolar taps are characteristic of other dimensions (social [conservative vs modern], spatial [regional vs non-regional] and temporal [old vs

young]) than the dimension of current RP usage, then it would be more natural, e.g. for an EFL learner, not to use it in the linking context. Naturalness, lack of affectation, is a powerful factor in language. This carries wide implications for the practice of second language pronunciation teaching and learning. In my experience of a teacher of RP pronunciation in Poland, I have noticed that some of my more advanced students use alveolar taps in some intervocalic, or other positions. But, I have observed, they use them indiscriminately; they appear to be playing with the sounds, they want to sound different, they try out different phonetic options as if their system has not been internalized yet. Playing with sounds is a good thing to do, but it seems equally essential to me that they also be informed and taught about the natural, current usage of the allophones of linking /r/ within RP English nowadays so that their pronunciation is natural and consistent with the model they are acquiring.

4. Conclusion

Ample evidence has been collected to draw valid conclusions concerning the type of /r/ used for linking /r/ in the view of leading British phoneticians. Although some of them do not elaborate on the allophones of linking /r/ in their books, one may, with a degree of certainty, infer from their talks on rhotics in English that the value given to linking /r/ is that of a voiced post-alveolar approximant, [ɹ]. Complete certainty regarding the matter at hand is found in a definite majority of the specialists who openly discuss the issue. Daniel Jones (1962) excepted, they all say that it is the voiced post-alveolar approximant, [ɹ] that is used for linking /r/ in RP. This finding is corroborated by substantial empirical evidence in the form of usage-based accounts of linking /r/ conducted by many leading specialists in the field. Most importantly, this finding stands in stark contrast to the stance assumed by several Polish scholars on the question of the manifestation of linking /r/ in RP who assert that it is the voiced alveolar tap, [ɾ], that is usually heard in the linking context (M. Mizak 2016). One has to admit that the alveolar tap cannot be altogether dismissed as a form of linking /r/. It has indeed been discovered that tapped /r/s can be found to be r-links, as can a labiodental approximant, but certainly the alveolar tap has not been found to be the *usual* variant of linking /r/ in RP. These findings may be useful as correctives or updates to discussions of the phonetic identity of the /r/ allophone used for linking /r/ in some Polish phonetic textbooks and practice books. In addition, alongside social associations regarding the usage of tapped /r/s in RP, these findings suggest that a certain course of action for the teacher of RP English be taken. In the view of this author, foreign learners of RP English should not only be taught what the principal, most natural for the current usage variant of linking /r/ is, but also they ought to learn about the social connotations that a particular feature of an accent may possess. The awareness raised in this way is likely to produce a beneficial effect on the understanding a foreign learner concerning how language works, thus, one hopes, leading to steady and consistent improvement in his/her pronunciation.

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